

# The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

April 1995

New Series No. 90

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## Editorial

THIS NUMBER of the *Bulletin* includes articles on Wordsworth, Wollstonecraft, and De Quincey, alongside three on Lamb. Among them, we are pleased to present two papers originally delivered as lectures to the Society: Sandra Clark's 'Charles Lamb and Jacobean Drama', and Harriet Jump's "'A Meritorious Wife"; or, Mrs Godwin and the Donkey'. They delighted members when first delivered, and it is a pleasure to make them permanently available here. In addition, it is a pleasure to include the work of Robert Morrison, Susan Abbotson, and Bonnie Woodbery. Rob is one of the editors of the forthcoming *Collected Works of De Quincey*, forthcoming from Pickering and Chatto; Bonnie has already appeared in these pages, and her present essay on Lamb's *Confessions of a Drunkard* extends her preoccupation with our author; in her fine article, Susan Abbotson offers a new perspective on a favourite Wordsworth poem.

## Charles Lamb and Jacobean Drama

By SANDRA CLARK

IN THE TONGUE-IN-CHEEK autobiography-cum-obituary he wrote dated 18 April 1827, Charles Lamb drew attention to his *Specimens of English Dramatic Writers who lived about the time of Shakespeare* in terms characteristic of the wry, self-denigrating character he had created for himself;<sup>1</sup> except that he is misleading about its date (it was published 19 rather than, as he says here, 15 years earlier) his account of it is accurate: he was 'the first to draw the public attention to the old English dramatists'. He was also the inspiration for others. Coleridge's *Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare and some of the Old English Dramatists* and Hazlitt's course of lectures on the Elizabethan Dramatists (1821) were to follow: Wordsworth and Keats were both stimulated by Lamb's interest, and full of admiration for *Specimens*; Keats in fact gave Fanny Brawne a copy of it for her birthday, and he noted of Lamb's comments on Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* that 'this is the most acute deep sighted and spiritual piece of criticism ever penned'.<sup>2</sup> Victorian critics also acknowledged the importance and interest of *Specimens*; James Russell Lowell in 'Shakespeare Once More' praised Lamb for coming to these dramatists 'with the feeling of a discoverer' and Swinburne in 'Charles Lamb and George Wither' thought him their 'strongest as well as . . . finest' critic.<sup>3</sup> Swinburne's introductions to the volumes of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays he did for the influential Mermaid series frequently acknowledge Lamb's inspiration. More recently, Edmund Blunden has described *Specimens* as 'the most striking anthology perhaps ever made from English literature'.<sup>4</sup> In the wake of Lamb's discoveries followed a number of new editions: for example, those of Beaumont and Fletcher and Jonson by Stockdale (1811), of Beaumont and Fletcher by Darley (1839) and Dyce (1843), and Gifford's editions of Jonson (1816), Ford (1827), and Shirley (1833).

*Specimens* was published by Longman in 1808 at a time when anthologies of extracts, sometimes accompanied by notes and commentaries, were appearing in increasing numbers, as Lamb observed with some ambivalence in a letter to Thomas Manning before his book came out:

Specimens are becoming fashionable. We have Specimens of Ancient English Poets. Specimens of Modern English Poets. Specimens of Ancient English Prose Writers, without end. They used to be called Beauties. You have seen Beauties of Shakspeare? - so have many people, that never saw any Beauties in Shakspeare.<sup>5</sup>

But in Lamb's case, although he looked to the work for financial profit - 'money & employment in the end', as he put it in a letter to Clarkson of June 1807<sup>6</sup> - it was also a

<sup>1</sup> See *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (7 vols., London, 1903-5), i 320. This edition, from which all quotations to the *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets* are taken, will hereafter be referred to as *Works*, and the *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets* as *Specimens*.

<sup>2</sup> The comment was made by Keats on page 112 of his copy of *Specimens*. See Roy Park, *Lamb as Critic* (London, 1980), pp. 40-1.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Lucas in *Works* iv. 601-2.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Blunden, *Charles Lamb* (London, 1964), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marris Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marris), ii. 272.

<sup>6</sup> Marris ii. 258.

labour of love, evolving naturally from his own literary interests and particular habits of study. His first references to an attraction to Jacobean drama appear, as one might expect, in correspondance with Coleridge. In a letter of June 1796 he refers to an extract book in which he records his favourite passages from Beaumont and Fletcher, which he introduces to his friend:

To your list of illustrative personifications, into which a fine imagination enters, I will take leave to add the following from Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Wife for a Month;' 'tis the conclusion of a description of a sea-fight; - 'The game of *death* was never played so nobly; the meagre thief grew wanton in his mischiefs, and his shrunk hollow eyes smiled on his ruins.' There is fancy in these of a lower order from 'Bonduca;' - 'Then did I see these valiant men of Britain, like boding owls creep into tods of ivy, and hoot their fears to one another nightly.' Not that it is a personification; only it just caught my eye in a little extract book I keep, which is full of quotations from B. and F. in particular, in which authors I can't help thinking there is a greater richness of poetical fancy than in any one, Shakspeare excepted. . . . One more passage strikes my eye from B. and F.'s 'Palamon and Arcite.' One of 'em complains in prison: 'This is all our world; we shall know nothing here but one another, hear nothing but the clock that tells our woes; the vine shall grow, but we shall never see it,' &c. Is not the last circumstance exquisite?<sup>7</sup>

Lamb's enthusiasm, his characteristic preferences for fanciful detail, for pathos, and his eye for the vivid poetic detail are well illustrated in this extract.

In his next letter Lamb had a project for Coleridge:

I wish you would try to do something to [bring] our elder bards into more general fame. I write with indignation, [whe]n in books of Criticism . . . I find no mention of such men as Massinger or B. and Fl. . . . Stupid Knox hath notic'd none of 'em among his extracts.<sup>8</sup>

At this time Lamb and Coleridge were very close, exchanging long letters every few days, often meeting in the little room at the Salutation and Cat, where, he later recalled, 'we have sat together thro' the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy'. But later that year tragedy intervened in Lamb's life, with Mary's madness and its consequences, and along with 'every vestige of past vanities' he burned 'all my verses, all my book of extracts from B. and F. and a thousand sources', as he wrote sadly to Coleridge in December.<sup>9</sup> But the following year he resumed writing poetry and reading old plays; he retranscribed passages into a new notebook, recorded purchases of rare old books, and continued quoting favourite passages from old dramatists in letters to friends, especially Coleridge and Southey, to whom he sent a passage from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, in which he drew attention to 'a mixture of the ludicrous and the terrible', and admired *Edward II* for 'certain lines unequal'd in our English tongue'.<sup>10</sup> Lamb had also begun to interest Wordsworth in the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries. In a letter of 13 October 1804 he apologises for not sending various books Wordsworth had asked for ('I am not plethorically abounding in Cash at this present'):

<sup>7</sup> MARRS i. 30-1.

<sup>8</sup> MARRS i. 35.

<sup>9</sup> MARRS i. 78.

<sup>10</sup> MARRS i. 138-9.

The books which you want I calculate at about £8. - Ben Jonson is a Guinea Book. Beaumont & Fletcher in folio, the right folio, not now to be met with; the octavos are about £3. - As to any other old dramatists, I do not know where to find them except what are in Dodsley's old plays, which are about £3 also: Massinger I never saw but at one shop, but it is now gone . . .<sup>11</sup>

In the same year Southey evolved a scheme for an anthology of poetic extracts (which would later become *Specimens*) and wanted Lamb to work on it - it would be 'the fittest thing in the world for Lamb to manage, if he like it'. Lamb applied for a reader's ticket to the British Library in May 1804; he loved working there, despite the problems of making time for it, since it was open only during office hours; it was 'like having the range of a Nobleman's library'. With Wordsworth, he had already begun earnestly collecting material for another anthology to include dramatic poets; he was at this time in great need of money - 'I must do something, or we shall get very poor'.<sup>12</sup> He hoped that his farce, *Mr H.*, staged at Drury Lane in December 1806, might solve the problem, but he was mistaken. The play's only performance was hissed so vehemently that Lamb himself felt obliged to join in 'because I was so damnably afraid of being recognised as the author'.<sup>13</sup>

The failure lent urgency to Lamb's writing, and *Specimens* was prepared for publication. He wrote enthusiastically to Manning:

Longman is to print it & be at all the expence and risk, & I am to share the profits after all deductions i.e. a year or two hence I must pocket what they please to tell me is due to me. But the Book is such as I am glad there should be.<sup>14</sup>

It appeared in 1808. Coleridge reviewed it favourably in the *Annual Review*, but Lamb was hurt by a notice in the *Monthly*: 'The Monthly Review sneers at me and asks if *Comus* is not good enough for Mr Lamb.' He begged Coleridge, 'O Coleridge, do kill those reviews or they will kill us'.<sup>15</sup> There were no mentions in the *Edinburgh* or *Quarterly Reviews*.

The subsequent history of *Specimens* in Lamb's lifetime is soon told. In 1818 his two-volume *Works* reprinted the preface and editorial notes (without the extracts) as *Characters of Dramatic Writers Contemporary with Shakspeare*. In 1827 Lamb prepared a supplementary selection of dramatic extracts gleaned from reading done at greater leisure now that he had retired from the East India Company; in this he made use of the playtexts bequeathed by Garrick to the British Library. It was printed in William Hone's *Table Talk*, in extracts which appeared throughout the year. Lamb worked on this material almost to the last. In a letter of 1830 he mentions 'so much additional matters for the SPECIMENS as might make two volumes in all, or ONE (new ed), omitting much better known authors as B. and Fletcher, Jonson etc.'<sup>16</sup> But nothing came of this scheme.

In many ways the *Specimens* are highly characteristic of Lamb's tastes and literary attitudes. As Cecil says, they are 'fragmentary, impressionistic, idiosyncratic'.<sup>17</sup> They constitute a personal reaction to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, rather than a balanced

<sup>11</sup> Marris ii. 146.

<sup>12</sup> Marris ii. 177.

<sup>13</sup> As quoted by David Cecil, *A Portrait of Charles Lamb* (London, 1983), p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Marris ii. 272.

<sup>15</sup> Marris iii. 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Works* vii. 838.

<sup>17</sup> Cecil, op. cit., p. 130.

judgment, and perhaps in this way his brief but memorable remarks affected readers as monumental editions and works of scholarship did not. But Lamb was not fragmentary in an arbitrary or careless way. He disliked anthologies of snippets and 'elegant extracts', as he stated forcibly in a letter to Robert Lloyd:

To your enquiry respecting a selection from B'p Taylor I answer - it cannot be done, & if it could it would not *take* with John Bull. - It cannot be done, for who can disentangle and unthread the rich texture of Nature & Poetry sewn so thick into a stout coat of theology, without spoiling both *lace & coat*? how beggarly and how bald do even Shakespeares Princely Pieces look, when thus violently divorced from *connexion & circumstance*! when we meet with To be or not to be - or Jacques's moralizings upon the Deer - or Brutus and Cassius' quarrel & reconciliation - in an Enfield speaker or in Elegant Extracts - how we will stare & will scarcely acknowledge to ourselves (what we are conscious we feel) that they are flat & have no power.<sup>18</sup>

In another letter he comments wryly on Pope's convention in his edition of Shakespeare, a copy of which he had purchased on Wordsworth's behalf, of typographically signalling favourite passages.

The fault of Pope's edition is, that he has comically & coxcombically marked the Beauties: which is vile, as if you were to chalk up the cheek & across the nose of a handsome woman to show where the comeliest parts lay.<sup>19</sup>

His own preface to *Specimens* made the point that he had, where possible, given scenes rather than 'beauties'.<sup>20</sup>

But he was very conscious, in a work with pretensions to scholarship, of his own status as an amateur among professionals, without the university education, private income, or, at least in his earlier years, time for study, enjoyed by many of his friends. The tendency to deprecate his own learning and scholarly methods stayed with him, even after his retirement from the East India office; he wrote apologetically to William Hone in 1827 apropos of his *Extracts from the Garrick Plays* to be published in *Table Talk* that he read 'without order of time; I am a poor hand at dates; and for any biography of the Dramatists, I must refer to writers who are more skilful in such matters'.<sup>21</sup> But as Lowell noted in 'Shakespeare Once More' Lamb's fragmented mode of commentary was crucial for his subject: 'himself a fragmentary writer, he had more sympathy with imagination where it gathers into the intense forms of passionate phrase than . . . where it is the faculty that shapes, gives unity of design and balanced gravitation of parts'.<sup>22</sup>

Lamb's method in *Specimens* is undeniably amateurish, with random editing, omissions unsignalled, lack of dating, inconsistency of annotation, and comments often highly personal in tone. This comment on a scene from *The Revenger's Tragedy* is not untypical:

The reality and life of this Dialogue passes any scenical illusion I ever felt. I never read it but my ears tingle, and I feel a hot blush spread my cheeks, as if I were about

<sup>18</sup> Marris ii. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Marris ii. 205.

<sup>20</sup> *Works* iv. p. xi.

<sup>21</sup> *Works* iv. 397.

<sup>22</sup> *The Complete Writings of James Russell Lowell* (16 vols., Boston and New York, 1864-93), iii. 248.

to 'proclaim' some such 'malefactions' of myself, as the Brothers here rebuke in their unnatural parent.<sup>23</sup>

In a different vein he admires a scene from Middleton's *The Old Law* for its 'exquisiteness of moral sensibility, making one to gush out tears of delight'.<sup>24</sup> Commentary of this style clearly forms part of the charm of *Specimens*, easily conveying a sense of enjoyment, enthusiasm, and personal warmth. For the well-read in Lamb's audience it implies that Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Heywood, Dekker, Massinger, and so on were figures they ought to know, in the interests both of enlarging their knowledge of English literature, salvaging lost treasures of a great era, and of extending their human sympathies.

Predictably, Lamb proceeded on the basis of Shakespeare's accepted superiority over his contemporaries; he took it as read that 'in his divine mind he surpassed them and all mankind'.<sup>25</sup> But he does not labour this point, as Coleridge is sometimes inclined to do, taking instead a finely judicious attitude. In his note on Henry Porter's *The Two Angry Women of Abington*, which remains almost as obscure today as it was in 1808, he calls for more editions of such plays as this, and a moratorium on those of the more familiar, arguing that by such means a truer sense of the relationship of Shakespeare to his successors would be created:

That he was their elder Brother, not their Parent, is evident from the fact of the very few direct imitations of him to be found in their writings. . . . I resent the comparative obscurity in which some of his most valuable co-operators remain, who were his dearest intimates . . . while he lived.<sup>26</sup>

His desire for better scholarly coverage of and greater popular access to Elizabethan dramatists generally echoes the feeling expressed in an early letter to Coleridge;<sup>27</sup> Lamb had always a striking sense of the individuality of these writers.

His choice of passages for inclusion reflects his theory of drama as an essentially moral art; his emphasis fell on tragedy and plays which 'treat of human life and manners, rather than masques and Arcadian pastorals' because his aim was 'to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors'.<sup>28</sup> For Lamb, literature at its best expressed the moral complexity of experience, best embodied in tragedy; and this view bears significantly on his feelings about the unfitness of Shakespeare's tragedies for stage representation. But he had also an emotional inclination towards tragedy, and was constantly attracted to what Swinburne calls 'the sublimity of suffering and the extravagance of love'. This is very evident in his comments on Marlowe, Webster, and, especially, Ford. His admiration for Ford's tragedy is of particular significance; he was the first to bring it to critical prominence, and he set an influential trend whereby Ford's plays were for a long time admired for individual moments of poetic beauty and intensity rather than for sustained effects. *Specimens* contains extracts from numerous of Ford's plays: *The Ladies' Trial*, *Love's Sacrifice*, *Perkin Warbeck*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and, most of all, *The Broken Heart*. From this play, which is centrally concerned with subjects close to Lamb's heart such as suppressed grief and unhappiness, love

<sup>23</sup> *Works* iv. 160.

<sup>24</sup> *Works* iv. 368

<sup>25</sup> *Works* iv. p. xii.

<sup>26</sup> *Works* iv. 426.

<sup>27</sup> *Marrs* i. 35.

<sup>28</sup> *Works* iv. pp. xi-xii.

denied, contentment sacrificed, he gives long sections from the two final scenes, focussing on the long drawn-out suffering of the Spartan Princess Calantha, and her stoic death. He appends a lengthy comment, in justification of his view that 'Ford was of the first order of Poets.'

I do not know where to find in any Play a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as this. This is indeed, according to Milton, to 'describe high passions and high actions'. The fortitude of the Spartan Boy who let a beast gnaw out his bowels till he died without expressing a groan, is a faint bodily image of this dilaceration of spirit and extenteration of the inmost mind, which Calantha with a holy violence against her nature keeps closely covered, till the last duties of a Wife and a Queen are fulfilled. Stories of martyrdom are but of chains and the stake; a little bodily suffering; these torments

On the purest spirits prey  
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,  
With answerable pain, but more intense.<sup>29</sup>

The comment illustrates Lamb's interest in a poetic sublimity approached through rendering general truths about human life, and especially the feelings. 'John Ford is the man after Shakespear', he wrote to Wordsworth.<sup>30</sup> Weber reprinted this passage about *The Broken Heart* in his edition of Ford in 1811, occasioning the well-known gibe at Lamb's emotional outburst by William Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, which offended Lamb profoundly. Gifford said that Weber had 'polluted his pages with the blasphemies of a poor maniac, who it seems once published some detached scenes from *The Broken Heart*. For this unfortunate creature every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation.' Gifford's claim to have known nothing of Lamb's personal life when he wrote these words has been regarded as disingenuous.<sup>31</sup>

Lamb's sensitivity to violent emotion is everywhere evident in *Specimens*. For his second extract, from Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, he chose two scenes illustrating the madness of Hieronimo after the death of his son Horatio, commenting that they were 'full of that wild solemn preternatural cast of grief which bewilders us in *The Duchess of Malfi*'. Both passages come from additions made to the play in 1601, not from the original text, and Lamb demonstrates an instinctive scholarly penetration in his note about their authorship, at once recognising their poetic quality and dismissing the claim that they were 'foisted in by the players'.<sup>32</sup> Webster was, in fact, one of his favourites, and he particularly admired the Duchess of Malfi's death scene, for its representation of the 'strange character of suffering'. The Gothic quality of Webster's imagination especially appealed to him:

To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit - this only a Webster can do.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Works* iv. 218.

<sup>30</sup> *Marrs* ii. 147.

<sup>31</sup> See the account given in Lucas's notes on *Specimens*, *Works* iv. 610-11, and the extensive note in *Marrs* iii. 131-2.

<sup>32</sup> *Works* iv. 10-11. Lamb is, however, sceptical about the possibility of Jonson's authorship, although it is now widely accepted.

<sup>33</sup> *Works* iv. 179.

Equally he admired the King's death scene in Marlowe's *Edward II*, because 'it moves pity and terror beyond any scene ancient or modern with which I am acquainted'. Although he had many good things to say of Massinger, he thought him lacking in 'the higher requisites of his art' as found in Ford, Webster, or Heywood, because 'he never shakes or disturbs the mind with grief. He is read with composure and placid delight'.

His fondness for Heywood - 'a sort of prose Shakespeare' - and for Beaumont and Fletcher, shows that he could be responsive to emotion delineated in more delicate terms. A surprising inclusion in *Specimens* is a scene from Beaumont's little-known *The Triumph of Time*, showing the heroine attended at childbirth by her mother; Lamb comments:

Violanta's prattle is so very pretty and so natural *in her situation* that I could not resist giving it a place. Juno Lucina was never invoked with more elegance. Pope has been praised for giving dignity to a game of cards. It required at least as much address to ennoble a lying-in.<sup>34</sup>

It is, in fact, in his handling of the extracts from the Beaumont and Fletcher plays that Lamb particularly characterizes himself as a critic of Jacobean drama. While these playwrights had been second only to Shakespeare in popularity and status during most of the seventeenth century, their reputation had declined steadily since the time of Dryden.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, they were not unknown when Lamb came to them; there had been three editions of their work in the eighteenth century, and in 1797 William Mason published his *Comments on the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*. But Lamb's evaluation of them in *Specimens*, and also his role in interesting Coleridge in them, was highly influential. Four new editions of their plays followed, between 1811 and 1846 - the first, Stockdale's, hot on the heels of *Specimens*. Lamb's interest in their work is first evident in the reference to his 'little extract-book' of quotations from their plays in the letter to Coleridge of 1796.<sup>36</sup> In 1804 he was looking for a Folio edition of their plays for Wordsworth, but couldn't find 'the right folio'.<sup>37</sup> In his 'Thoughts on Books and Reading' he said that, contrary to his practice when reading Shakespeare, he could only read Beaumont and Fletcher in Folio, because the rare format suited writers for whom a taste was unusual. In 'Old China' he described at length the pleasure of tracking down and buying such a volume, eyed longingly for weeks, and finally purchased as the shop was about to close at ten o'clock on a Saturday night for 15 or 16 shillings. Fantasy to some extent though this account may have been, Lamb did acquire a copy of the Second Folio of 1679, which he lent to Coleridge, who annotated it; it now resides in the British Library.<sup>38</sup>

Lowell saw a special affinity between Beaumont and Fletcher and Lamb, saying of their humour that it was 'playful, intellectual, elaborate, like that of Charles Lamb when he trifles with it'.<sup>39</sup> But in other ways the plays disclose preoccupations very foreign to Lamb, in particular in their representations of sexuality. Lamb was aware that drama of this period

<sup>34</sup> *Works* iv. 281.

<sup>35</sup> For an account of the reputation of Beaumont and Fletcher since the seventeenth century, including the attitudes of Romantic writers to them, see Sandra Clark, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation* (Hemel Hempstead, 1994), pp. 3-10.

<sup>36</sup> Marris i. 30.

<sup>37</sup> Marris ii. 146.

<sup>38</sup> See the note on this volume in Lucas, *Works* ii. 327-8, and the full account given of it in Coleridge, *Marginalia* ed. George Whalley, vol. 1 (London, 1980), pp. 365-72.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Old English Dramatists', *Complete Writings* viii. 281.

might call for special treatment on this account. He had said in the Preface to *Specimens* that he intended to exercise censorship, and to expunge 'without ceremony all that which the writers had better never written, that forms the objection so often repeated to the promiscuous reading of Fletcher, Massinger, and some others'.<sup>40</sup> Hence, in the case of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays, he found himself obliged to omit some texts completely, although references elsewhere indicate that he was familiar with them, and in other cases he had to select his scenes carefully. For example, he prints nothing from *A Wife for a Month*, *Valentinian* or *The Captain*; with *The Maid's Tragedy*, then as now perhaps the most well-known of the collaborative works, and one which he could hardly omit, despite its central emphasis on sexual power, he concentrated on the pathetic and the improving aspects. He chooses scenes showing the grieving Aspatia and the repentant Evadne and omits others with equal or greater claims to poetic and dramatic achievement, which are morally more risky, such as the wedding night of Evadne and Amintor, and Evadne's killing of her lover, the King.

His choice of scenes often suggests a particular interest in Beaumont and Fletcher's representation of women, although, in fact, this has always been one of the most controversial aspects of their work. His perceptive comment on Aspatia's transvestite role suggests that he was not unaware of the potential hazards of this subject:

One characteristic of the excellent old poets is their being able to bestow grace upon subjects which naturally do not seem susceptible of any. I will mention two instances: Zelmane in the *Arcadia* of Sidney, and Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* of Shakspeare. . . . Aspatia, in this tragedy, is a character equally difficult with Helena of being managed with grace. She too is a slighted woman, refused by the man who had once engaged to marry her. Yet it is artfully contrived, that while we pity her, we respect her, and she descends without degradation. . . . But Aspatia must not be compared at all points with Helena. . . . After all, Beaumont and Fletcher were but an inferior sort of Shakspeares and Sidneys.<sup>41</sup>

The comment on Sidney shows a considerable degree of scholarly acumen, since *Arcadia* was an important source for several of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, though Lamb may not have known this; at any rate he seems to be the first to make a connection between these writers. His comment on another transvestite character, Bellario in *Philaster*, shows the same ability to toss out a casually provocative observation which raises, but skirts round, difficult issues:

Our ancestors seem to have been wonderfully delighted with these transformations of sex. Women's parts were then acted by young men. What an odd double transformation it must have made, to see a boy play a woman playing a man: one cannot disentangle the perplexity without some violence to the imagination.<sup>42</sup>

In both these instances, it is the secondary female character, pathetic and wronged, who claims Lamb's attention, rather than the main one. Lamb's desire to use the extracts to 'illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors' necessitated the suppression of elements in the drama which did not contribute positively to this 'moral sense'. He was obviously drawn to the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, despite its being in many important ways quite inappropriate for his purposes; but in the case of plays like *The Maid's Tragedy*

<sup>40</sup> *Works* iv. p. xi.

<sup>41</sup> *Works* iv. 285.

<sup>42</sup> *Works* iv. 295.

and *Philaster* his inability to include central scenes depicting the active sexuality of the female characters results in rather drastic misrepresentation of the real nature of the plays. Curiously, despite his stated intention to ignore 'Arcadian pastorals', he includes a long extract from Fletcher's pastoral play, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, but then appends a censorious comment on certain elements which he left out:

If all the parts of this Play had been in unison with these innocent scenes, and sweet lyric intermixtures, it had been a poem fit to vie with *Comus* or the *Arcadia*. . . . But a spot is on the face of this moon. - Nothing short of infatuation could have driven Fletcher upon mixing up with this blessedness such an ugly deformity as *Cloe*: the wanton shepherdess! Coarse words do but wound the ears: but a character of lewdness affronts the mind. Female lewdness at once shocks nature and morality.<sup>43</sup>

By contrast with the reprobate *Cloe*, Lamb strongly admires the self-sacrificing wife *Ordella* in *Thierry and Theodoret*, whom he calls 'the most perfect idea of the female heroic character, next to *Calantha* in the *Broken Heart of Ford*, that has been embodied in fiction'.<sup>44</sup> It is evident that Lamb's strong conception of the relationship between virtue and the feminine nature largely dictated his choice of Beaumont and Fletcher passages for inclusion. His comment on *Thierry and Theodoret* makes a further important point in the nature of the comparison he draws between the Beaumont and Fletcher plays and Shakespeare's.

Another striking difference between Fletcher and Shakespeare is the fondness of the former for unnatural and violent situations. . . . He seems to have thought that nothing great could be produced in an ordinary way. . . . Shakspeare had nothing of this contortion in his mind, none of that craving after romantic incidents, and flights of strained and improbable virtue, which I think always betrays an imperfect moral sensibility.<sup>45</sup>

A similar view of this relationship is given in the comment on *Wit Without Money*, where Fletcher's wit is described as 'strained and far fetched . . . mistrustful of Nature', whom Shakespeare 'chose . . . without reserve'. This view, which owes, of course, something to seventeenth-century tradition from Jonson onwards, was to be highly influential; it permeates Romantic criticism and persists well into the twentieth century. In Coleridge it turns into a much harder line. Collier, in his preface to Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* records a conversation which took place at Lamb's house in October 1811:

Lamb led Coleridge on to speak of Beaumont and Fletcher: he highly extolled their comedies in many respects . . . but he contended that their tragedies were liable to grave objections. They always proceeded upon something forced and unnatural; the reader never can reconcile the plot with probability, and sometimes not with possibility. . . . The situations are sometimes so disgusting, and the language so indecent and immoral, that it is impossible to read the plays in polite society. The difference in this respect between Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher . . . is, that Shakespeare always makes vice odious and virtue admirable, while Beaumont and

<sup>43</sup> *Works* iv. 312.

<sup>44</sup> *Works* iv. 328-9.

<sup>45</sup> *Works* iv. 329.

Fletcher do the very reverse - they ridicule virtue and encourage vice; they pander to the lowest and basest passions of our nature.<sup>46</sup>

There is an instructive contrast to be drawn here between the tone of this and Lamb's much more relaxed comments on the collaborative play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, so often used as a means of demonstrating Fletcher's inferiority where he allows that the differing styles of the two playwrights may have their own peculiar qualities.

*Specimens* has rightly been seen as one of the most personal and most enjoyable of Lamb's works, possibly, as Lucas thought, Lamb's own favourite. Despite its unpretentious presentation, it is a work of scholarly archaeology, which excavates a number of curiosities (the plays of Fulke Greville and William Rowley, for example) and presents Renaissance dramatists as living authors, with much to teach readers and also theatregoers of the early nineteenth century. Lamb sometimes found in them a truth to feeling lacking in contemporary plays. In the comment on Middleton's *The Old Law* he admonishes audiences who 'come to the theatre to be complimented on their goodness' and urges them to search such unfamiliar old plays for 'something more of a moral sense, somewhat a greater delicacy of perception in questions of right and wrong' than were to be found in 'the insipid levelling morality to which the modern stage is tied down'.<sup>47</sup> His tastes were admittedly eccentric and partial, but his love for the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries made him a sensitive as well as an enthusiastic proselytiser for them, one whose influence was to be, like Dorothea's in *Middlemarch*, 'incalculably diffusive'.

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<sup>46</sup> Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism* ed. T. M. Raysor (2 vols., London, 1907), ii. 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> *Works* iv. 114-5.

'I hereby present you, courteous reader':

## The Literary Presence of Thomas De Quincey

By ROBERT MORRISON

DE QUINCEY'S REPUTATION has always been an odd blend of disparagement, neglect and praise. Many commentators have attacked him for egotism, indiscretion, plagiarism or irresolution. Others have noted that his writings are not well-known, and do not deserve to be so. 'De Quincey is a figure', notes Thomas McFarland, 'who seems never to have been taken entirely seriously, either by later critics or by his own contemporaries.'<sup>1</sup> Yet on the other hand, De Quincey has always had admirers, and the range of his achievement is highlighted in the diversity of their praise. Though often damned or dismissed, De Quincey's influence has been deep and remarkably pervasive.

De Quincey has been criticized for a wide variety of reasons. When his career began in 1809, Coleridge thought that his work on Wordsworth's *Convention of Cintra* pamphlet had produced a 'strange & most mistaken System of punctuation-. The Periods are often alarmingly long perforce of their construction; but De Quincey's Punctuation has made several of them immeasurable, & perplexed half the rest.' Nearly a decade later Wordsworth repeatedly objected to the way De Quincey edited the *Westmorland Gazette*. 'I have frequently urged De Quincey to adopt this plan [of terminating long-winded discussions]', the poet writes on one occasion; 'he acknowledges the propriety of it; but he has no firmness - I shall be at him again upon the subject.' In 1821, Henry Crabb Robinson described *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* as 'a melancholy composition, a fragment of autobiography in emulation of Coleridge's diseased egotism.' Coleridge himself thought it 'a wicked book, a monstrous exaggeration', while for many others, including Francis Thompson and perhaps Branwell Brontë, the impact of *Confessions* was even more adverse, for it tempted them to try a drug that enslaved them as it had De Quincey. Indeed, De Quincey's opium addiction became the best known fact about him. According to P. G. Patmore, Hazlitt 'pronounced verbally that [De Quincey] would be good only "whilst the opium was trickling from his mouth"', and a generation later Gerard Manley Hopkins recorded that

De Quincey would wake blue and trembling in the morning and languidly ask the servant 'Would you pour out some of that black mixture from the bottle there.' The servant would give it him, generally not knowing what it was. After this he would revive.<sup>2</sup>

The rumour mill regularly portrayed De Quincey as a hopeless addict.

Egotism and drug-peddalling were not the only charges levelled at the *Confessions*. One critic contended that the 'Malay Dream' from the 'Pains of Opium' section was derived from

<sup>1</sup> *Romantic Cruxes* (Oxford, 1987), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), iii. 214; John Jordan, *De Quincey to Wordsworth* (California, 1963), p. 287; *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers* ed. Edith Morley (3 vols., London, 1938), i. 276; S. T. Coleridge, *Table Talk* ed. Carl Woodring (2 vols., Princeton, 1990), i. 581; Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London, 1969), p. 105; P. P. Howe, *The Life of William Hazlitt* (New York, 1922), p. 331; *The Papers and Journals of Gerard Manley Hopkins* ed. Humphrey House (Oxford, 1959), p. 53.

a tale by James Hogg, and two years later Hazlitt suggested that De Quincey was again guilty of borrowing without acknowledgement, citing a 'rather striking coincidence' between his own article on Robert Malthus' *Essay on Population* and a later one by De Quincey. In 1824, De Quincey's savage review of Carlyle's translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* provoked a bitter response: De Quincey 'writes of things which he does not understand', Carlyle snarled.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1830s, De Quincey's articles in *Tait's Magazine* on Coleridge and Wordsworth were deplored for their indiscretion by Edward FitzGerald, Julius Hare, Harriet Martineau and several others. After reading the articles Southey urged Hartley Coleridge to 'take a strong cudgel, proceed straight to Edinburgh, and give De Quincey, publicly on the streets there, a sound beating.' In the 1840s De Quincey published nothing as controversial and by 1851 Nathaniel Hawthorne could declare that 'no Englishman cares a pin for him.' When De Quincey died in 1859, the *Athenaeum* lamented his 'sad and almost profitless career.'<sup>4</sup>

In the decade following De Quincey's death, John Henry Newman grumbled that De Quincey's remarks on *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* made him 'wonder if he saw even the outside of my book.' The *British Quarterly* thought the recently completed edition of De Quincey's *Collected Works* contained 'not one great work, not a single essay, discussion, or treatise, or tale, on which a lasting literary reputation can be built.' James Hutchison Stirling was the first of many to find De Quincey 'guilty of monstrous injustice' in his writings on Kant, and in 1874 Leslie Stephen stated flatly:

in a life of seventy-three years De Quincey read extensively and thought acutely by fits, ate an enormous quantity of opium, wrote a few pages which revealed new capacities in the language, and provided a good deal of respectable padding for the magazines.

As the century closed, W. E. Henley referred to De Quincey slightly as 'Thomas De Sawdust.'<sup>5</sup>

In this century, notions of De Quincey as plagiarist, hack, charlatan and bore have been argued and extended.<sup>6</sup> Critics have complained recently that he accomplished 'nothing better

<sup>3</sup> *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey* ed. David Masson (14 vols., Edinburgh, 1889-90), ix. 39, 20; *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* ed. C. R. Saunders et al. (21 vols., Durham, 1970-), iii. 260.

<sup>4</sup> *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald* ed. Alfred and Annabelle Terhune (4 vols., Princeton, 1980), i. 159; Julius Hare, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the English Opium-Eater' in the *British Magazine* 7 (1835) 25; Harriet Martineau, *Biographical Sketches* (London, 1868), p. 416; David Wright, Introduction to *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* (Harmondsworth, 1985) (hereafter, Wright), p. 25; *The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* ed. W. Charvat et al. (20 vols., Ohio, 1962-88), xvii. 202; Anon., 'Thomas De Quincey' in the *Athenaeum* (17 December, 1859), p. 814.

<sup>5</sup> *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* ed. C. S. Dessain (vols. 11-22, London, 1961-72), xx. 54; Anon., 'De Quincey and his Writings' in *British Quarterly Review* 80 (1863) 14; James Hutchison Stirling, 'De Quincey and Coleridge Upon Kant' in *Fortnightly Review* NS 2 (1867) 383; Leslie Stephen, 'Thomas De Quincey' in *De Quincey Selections* ed. M. R. Ridley (Oxford, 1927), p. 30; Judson S. Lyon, *Thomas De Quincey* (New York, 1969), p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, V.R., 'De Quincey: Some Objections and Corrections' in *Notes and Queries* (17 June 1939), pp. 417-18; (1 July 1939), pp. 3-6; (15 July 1939), pp. 42-5; (9 September 1939), pp. 189-91; (21 September 1940), pp. 204-7; (14 December 1940), pp. 417-20; (21 December 1940), pp. 434-6; René Wellek, 'De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas' in *Philological Quarterly* 23 (1944) 248-72; Albert Goldman, *Thomas De Quincey: The Mine and the Mint* (Carbondale, 1965) (hereafter Goldman).

than literary odd-jobbing' or that his 'enormous output contains . . . much flatulent and pretentiously overwritten stuff.' Amis and Rose find the 'Dream-Fugue' from *The English Mail-Coach* conjures up 'irrepressible memories of, well, Walt Disney and *Fantasia*.' New charges have been laid concerning De Quincey's imperialism, and the notion persists that De Quincey is insignificant. Eric Christiansen begins his 1991 review of John Barrell's *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* with a question: 'The *what* of *who*? - you ask, if you are not one of the five professors and four undergraduates and three asylum patients who still read the Q in question.'<sup>7</sup> From the inception of his career until the present day, critics have doubted or denied De Quincey's worth.

Much of the criticism levelled at De Quincey over the past 185 years is justifiable, yet it must be set against a long and varied background of praise. Dostoyevsky and Turgenev were great admirers of the *Confessions*. Alfred de Musset translated the book in 1828 and Baudelaire consolidated De Quincey's influence on French literature with *Les Paradises Artificiel*. Melville thought *Confessions* 'a most wondrous book' and, in 'How to Write an Article for Blackwood', Poe proclaims exuberantly, 'Fine, very fine! - glorious imagination - deep philosophy - acute speculation - plenty of fire and fury, and a good spicing of the decidedly unintelligible. That was a nice bit of flummery, and went down the throats of people delightfully.'<sup>8</sup>

The *Confessions* were not De Quincey's only work of the 1820s to make an impression. Lamb said of 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', '[De Quincey] has written a thing better than anything I could write; - no - not better than anything I could write, but I could not write anything better.' J. R. McCulloch referred to De Quincey's examination of Ricardian economics in 'Dialogues of the Three Templars' as 'unequaled, perhaps, for brevity, pungency and force', and Sara Hutchinson thought De Quincey's pseudo-*Waverley* novel *Walladmor* 'very far beyond anything in merit you meet with in such publications - seldom indeed any where.' After reading De Quincey's essay on 'Rhetoric', Wordsworth noted 'some things from my Conversation - which the Writer does not seem aware of', but acknowledged that 'whatever [De Quincey] writes is worth reading.'<sup>9</sup>

In the 1830s and 1840s Coleridge admired De Quincey's Gothic novel *Klosterheim* while his daughter Sara agreed that De Quincey's *Tait's* articles on her father were 'infamous' but went on to assert that

of all the censors of Mr Coleridge, Mr De Quincey is the one whose remarks are the most worthy of attention. . . . The Opium-Eater . . . had sufficient inward sympathy with the subject of his criticism to be capable in some degree of beholding his mind, as it actually existed, in all the intermingling shades of individual reality; and in few minds have these shades been more subtly intermingled than in my father's.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Mills, *Peacock his Circle and his Age* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 53; F. W. J. Hemmings, *Baudelaire the Damned* (London, 1982), p. 157; John Amis and Michael Rose, *Words About Music* (London, 1989), p. 367; John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* (New Haven, 1991); Eric Christiansen, 'Portrait of an Artist for Young Men' in *The Independent* (18 May 1991), p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Catteau, *Dostoyevsky and the Process of Literary Creation* tr. A. Littlewood (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 57, 459; Nicole Ward Jouve, *Baudelaire: A Fire to Conquer Darkness* (New York, 1980), pp. 197-285; Frederick Rockwell, 'De Quincey and the Ending of *Moby-Dick*' in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 9 (1954) 161; *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* ed. T. O. Mabbott (3 vols., Harvard, 1978), ii. 339.

<sup>9</sup> E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb* (London, 1905), ii. 69; Goldman 158; *The Letters of Sara Hutchinson* ed. Kathleen Coburn (London, 1954), p. 354; *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years* ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Alan Hill (4 vols., Oxford, 1978-88), ii. 17.

J. S. Mill favourably reviewed *The Logic of Political Economy*, and the Brontë sisters sent De Quincey a volume of their poetry 'in acknowledgement of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works.'<sup>10</sup>

In 1852, the *New Monthly Magazine* found De Quincey 'one of the wittiest of humorists and most humorous of wits', and two years later the *Westminster Review* praised the first four volumes of his *Collected Works* as 'filled with passages of a power and beauty which have never been surpassed by any other prose writer of the age.' That same year the *Eclectic Review* lauded De Quincey as 'since Tacitus, potentially the greatest of history writers' and added that, when completed, his *Works* would 'constitute the most valuable and most enduring collection of papers, which had originally appeared in a periodical form, to be found in the entire world of literature.'<sup>11</sup>

In the years following De Quincey's death, the *Quarterly* wondered at the 'slight impression' he made 'upon the public' and championed, among much else, his 'style' and 'imagination.' Marx cites De Quincey in *Capital* and a year before his death Dickens told a guest that among all the books which he admired those of De Quincey belonged to his 'especial favourites.' When a student at Harrow, John Addington Symonds was 'a diligent student' of De Quincey, and George Saintsbury thought De Quincey could not be 'overpraised' as a writer of 'ornate English.'<sup>12</sup>

In this century Virginia Woolf has been one of De Quincey's most enthusiastic admirers. He is the model for Mr Carmichael in *To the Lighthouse*, and in her essay on 'Impassioned Prose' she credits him with altering 'slightly the ordinary relationships': 'He shifted the value of familiar things. And this he did in prose, which makes us wonder whether, then, it is quite so limited as the critics say, and ask further whether the prose writer, the novelist, might not capture fuller and finer truths than are now his aim if he ventured into those shadowy regions where De Quincey has been before him.' Bernard Shaw wrote that when he 'was a young man not much past 25', he was 'of a very revolutionary and contradictory temperament, full of Darwin and Tyndall, of Shelley and De Quincey, of Michael Angelo and Beethoven.' James Joyce 'knew by heart whole pages of . . . De Quincey', and he imitated De Quincey's impassioned style in the 'Oxen of the Sun' chapter of *Ulysses*. D. H. Lawrence liked De Quincey 'because he . . . dislikes such people as Plato and Goethe, whom I dislike'; Wallace Stevens thought De Quincey's essay on 'Oliver Goldsmith' 'remarkably well-done'; and Dylan Thomas listed De Quincey as among the first writers he read and sought to imitate.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Griggs vi. 911; Wright 15; James Murray, 'Mill on De Quincey: *Esprit Critique* Revoked' in *Victorian Newsletter* 27 (1970) 11; *De Quincey Memorials* ed. A. H. Japp (2 vols., London, 1891), ii. 208.

<sup>11</sup> John Jordan, 'Thomas De Quincey' in *The English Romantic Poets and Essayists* (London, 1966), p. 313; Henry Bright, 'Thomas De Quincey and his Works' in *Westminster Review* NS 5 (1854) 520; Anon., 'Selections, *Grave and Gay*, by Thomas De Quincey' in *Eclectic Review* NS 8 (1854) 398, 399.

<sup>12</sup> T. E. Kebbel, 'Selections, *Grave and Gay*, by Thomas De Quincey' in *Quarterly Review* 110 (1861) 1; Karl Marx, *Capital* ed. G. D. H. Cole (London, 1974), pp. 420-1; Christopher Herbert, 'De Quincey and Dickens' in *Victorian Studies* 17 (1974) 247; *The Letters of John Addington Symonds* ed. Herbert Schueller and Robert Peters (Detroit, 1969), iii. 271; *The Collected Essays and Papers of George Saintsbury* (4 vols., New York, 1923), i. 231-2.

<sup>13</sup> John Ferguson, 'A Sea Change: Thomas De Quincey and Mr. Carmichael in *To the Lighthouse*' in *Journal of Modern Literature* 14 (1987) 45-63; *Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf* ed. Leonard Woolf (4 vols., London, 1966-7), i. 172; *Collected Letters of Bernard Shaw* ed. Dan H. Laurence (4 vols., London, 1965-88), ii 476; Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1960), p. 176; Dermot Kelly, *Narrative Strategies in Joyce's Ulysses* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1988), pp. 51-4; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* ed. James T. Boulton et al. (7 vols., Cambridge, 1978-93), iii. 407; *Letters of Wallace Stevens* ed. Holly Stevens

More recently, scholars have praised De Quincey as embodiment of nineteenth-century angst, innovative prose stylist, economist, autobiographer, self-effacing autobiographer, precursor of Freud, and much else.<sup>14</sup> De Quincey makes appearances in the fiction of Malcolm Lowry, Jean Rhys and Stevie Smith. 'I abhor the star-system fashions and all the novelists who play at that', Smith added in a 1963 interview, 'I read De Quincey. I like Evelyn Waugh.' Earlier, and perhaps most memorably, in 'To a Certain Ghost, 1940', Jorge Luis Borges turned to De Quincey to save England from 'the German boar and Italian hyena.' 'Dream again, De Quincey', Borges avers

Weave nightmare nets  
as a bulwark for your island.  
Let those who hate you wander without end  
inside your labyrinths of time.  
Let their nights be measured by centuries, by eras, by pyramids,  
Let their weapons dissolve to dust, their faces dust,  
let us now be saved by the indecipherable structures  
that filled your sleep with horror.  
Brother of night, eater of opium,  
father of winding sentences which already are mazes and towers,  
creator of unforgettable words -  
do you hear me, unseen friend,  
through these fathomless things:  
the sea and death?<sup>15</sup>

Despite much criticism, De Quincey has appealed to a large and varied group of major writers.

The uncertain nature of his reputation is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that he is still regularly submitted to the indignity of having his name spelt three different ways - 'De Quincey', 'de Quincey' and 'DeQuincey.' There is something curiously indistinct about a literary figure whose name nobody agrees on how to spell. Yet at the same time De Quincey's literary presence has been persistent and widespread, and his reputation now seems more assured than at any time since his death. Detractors remain, yet as biographer, autobiographer, novelist, historian, rhetorician, economist and literary critic, De Quincey has haunted, entertained and influenced some of the most significant names in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.

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(London, 1966), 29-30; *Dylan Thomas: Early Prose Writings* ed. Walford Davies (London, 1971), p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 17-80; Lawrence Stapleton, *The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 119-65; P. D. Groenewegen, 'Theories of Value and Distribution since Adam Smith by Maurice Dobb' in *The Economic Journal* 84 (1974) 191-3; Wright 7-27; Stephen Spector, 'Thomas De Quincey: Self-Effacing Autobiographer' in *Studies in Romanticism* 18 (1979) 501-20; Charles Proudfit, 'Thomas De Quincey and Sigmund Freud: Sons, Fathers, Dreamers - Precursors of Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology' in *Thomas De Quincey: Bicentenary Studies* ed. Robert L. Synder (Oklahoma, 1985), pp. 88-108.

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 140; Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 63; Stevie Smith, *Novel on Yellow Paper* (London, 1936), pp. 114-15; Jonathan Williams, 'Much Further Out Than You Thought' in *In Search of Stevie Smith* (Syracuse, 1991), p. 45; Jorge Luis Borges, 'To a Certain Ghost, 1940' in *In Praise of Darkness* tr. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London, 1975), pp. 53, 55.

## 'A Meritorious Wife'; or, Mrs Godwin and the Donkey

By HARRIET DEVINE JUMP

IT IS DIFFICULT to be objective about Mary Jane Godwin. This is partly because some of the most memorable comments which have been made on her character (and even her appearance) were made by Lamb. Once read, they are hard to forget: 'a very disgusting woman';<sup>1</sup> 'a pitiful artificial Wife' (24 September 1802, Marrs ii 70); 'the bad baby' (29 January 1807, Marrs ii 256); 'Mrs. ----- grows every day in disfavour with God and Man' (28 March 1809, Marrs iii 4); and last, but not least (though written under severe stress)<sup>2</sup> 'that damn'd infernal bitch' (28 November 1810, Marrs iii 68).

Recent biographers of the Godwin and Shelley circle have argued that Mary Jane was not as bad as these comments suggest. William St Clair points out that the Lambs remained 'friends of the Godwins for . . . thirty-three years - for long periods scarcely a week passed without some contact between the two families'<sup>3</sup> and suggests that for every occasion on which Lamb was driven to make a malicious comment there must have been many other unremarked occasions on which the two families met and passed the time together harmoniously. He draws attention to her literary abilities - she translated a number of works from the French, wrote numerous children's books for the Juvenile Library (which she helped Godwin to set up and run with some success for many years), and composed a travel book, *A Picture of the New Town of Herne Bay, its Beauties, History, and the Curiosities in its Vicinity*, published in 1835 when she was nearly 70 - as well as to the fact that Thomas Robinson described her in 1803 as an elegant and accomplished woman (p. 242). Aaron Burr, a former Vice-President of the United States, who considered himself to be a follower of Godwin, also admired her, describing her in a letter to his daughter as 'a sensible, amiable woman' and 'a charming lady'.<sup>4</sup> And when Harriet Shelley first met her, in October 1812, she wrote that:

The many trials that Mrs Godwin has had to encounter makes me very much inclined to believe her a woman of great fortitude and unyielding temper of mind. There is a very great sweetness in her countenance. In many instances she has shown herself a woman of very great magnanimity and independence of character.<sup>5</sup>

It must be added, however, that by the following June Harriet could not stand her company.

Certainly her daughter Claire, at the age of 73, remembered or at least described family life in Skinner Street, where the Godwins lived over their bookshop for many years, as happy, lively and harmonious:

<sup>1</sup> 16 September 1801, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marrs), ii 22.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Lamb had been severely ill, in part owing, according to Lamb, to insomnia brought on by 'Mrs Godwin coming & staying so late' (Marrs iii. 68).

<sup>3</sup> William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London, 1989) (hereafter St Clair), p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> 18 November 1811. Quoted Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Claire Clairmont and the Shelleys, 1798-1879* (Oxford, 1992) (hereafter Gittings), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Claire Clairmont, *The Journals* ed. M. K. and D. M. Stocking (Cambridge, Mass., 1968) (hereafter Clairmont), p. 16.

All the family worked hard, learning and studying: we all took the liveliest interest in the great questions of the day - common topics, gossiping, scandal, found no entrance in our circle, for we had been brought up by Mr Godwin to think it was the greatest misfortune to be fond of the world, or worldly pleasures or of luxury or money; and that there was no greater happiness than to think well of those around us, and to delight in being useful and pleasing to them'.<sup>6</sup>

'All the family' perhaps needs some elaboration. There were five children living in Skinner Street with Godwin and Mary Jane Fanny Imlay (or Fanny Godwin as she was often called) was the oldest, and the only child without either parent living in the household. Born in 1794, she was the illegitimate daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay, and had lived with Godwin since she was three. Her mother had died in 1797, ten days after giving birth to her second daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Godwin, devastated by his first wife's death, had struggled on with the two little girls for over three years, but in May 1801 he had succumbed to the charms of Mary Jane Clairmont, his next-door neighbour, who is said to have made his acquaintance by leaning across from her balcony to his and calling out: 'Is it possible that I behold the immortal Godwin?', or, alternatively, by walking up and down her garden while he took his evening walk next door, murmuring, with clasped hands, 'You great Being how I adore you' (quoted St Clair 238).

Mary Jane and Godwin evidently soon became lovers, and Mary Jane's first pregnancy was the inevitable result, although the child did not, in the event, survive. When Mary Jane told Godwin of the pregnancy, and that he must now marry her, he is supposed to have said 'Well, if I must, I must' (St Clair 241), and they were married on 21 December 1801 at St Leonard's, Shoreditch. Then they were married again an hour later at St Mary's Whitechapel. The reason for this appears to have been that Mary Jane had been living under an assumed name: the first wedding register describes her as 'Mary Clairmont, widow', and the second, probably more truthfully, as 'Mary Vial . . . spinster' (Gittings 4). The probability seems to be that she had never been married, but 'was kept and abandoned by her keeper, or, rather, left destitute at his death', as Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in 1819,<sup>7</sup> leaving her with two children, possibly by different fathers. These two, Charles Gaulis Clairmont and his younger sister, Clara Mary Jane (later Claire) Clairmont, were added to the Godwin household. In 1803, a second pregnancy resulted in the birth of William Godwin Jr.<sup>8</sup> In 1803, then, the family came to be composed of five children, all under the age of eight, and all of different parentage.

It seems probable that Claire's idyllic picture of family life in Skinner Street, seen through the rose-coloured spectacles of the intervening 60 or more years, glosses over much that was complex and difficult in the relationships between the parents (or step-parents) and the children, Fanny, the eldest, seems to have inherited her mother's tendency to depression without Wollstonecraft's compensating charm and liveliness - Lamb described her in a letter of 1805 as 'sulky Fanny Imlay alias Godwin' (10 November 1805, Marrs ii 188). There is no indication that Godwin treated her any differently from the rest of the children, but it has been suggested that Mary Jane found her difficult, and never fully accepted her right to be a member of the household, although there is little firm evidence for this. But it was with

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Trelawney, April 1871, quoted Gittings 8.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *On Books and their Writers* ed. E. J. Morley (3 vols., London, 1938) (hereafter Robinson), i. 235.

<sup>8</sup> These complex events, and Mary Jane's background, are fully discussed in St Clair 254 ff.

Mary, the daughter of Godwin's beloved and talented first wife, that Mary Jane seems to have had the most problematic relationship. A few months after her elopement with Shelley, in October 1814, Mary referred to Mrs Godwin as 'a woman I shudder to think of'<sup>9</sup> - hard words to write of someone who had been her stepmother since she was three years old.

But it must be remembered that Mary was writing in the wake of the stupendous events of the previous three months - events which had shaken the Godwin household to its foundations and had undoubtedly destroyed whatever affection or cordiality had ever existed between Mary and her stepmother. It is these events, and more specifically Mrs Godwin's reaction to them, which are the subject of this paper.

The story of Shelley's elopement with Mary (and Claire) is well known. Shelley's involvement with the family began in January 1812, when he wrote two Godwinian letters, introducing himself to the philosopher. He and Harriet called on the Godwins in October of that year: Mary and Claire were both away, Mary in Scotland and Claire at school, but Fanny, aged seventeen, was at home. The Shelleys were out of London a great deal for the next twelve months, but in December 1813 Godwin seems to have started approaching Shelley for financial help, and by the beginning of 1814 the two were corresponding regularly. By this time Shelley and Harriet were living in Windsor, and relations between them had become strained. Shelley was spending a good deal of time in Bracknell, with the Boinville family, and, it has been said, was in love with Mrs Boinville's daughter Cornelia. On 22 March, however, Shelley and Godwin visited Doctor's Commons in London to obtain a marriage licence, and Shelley and Harriet remarried at St George's Hanover Square on 24 March. If this was intended to improve relations, it seems not to have worked: Shelley was back in Bracknell by the end of the month, and Harriet moved to the West Country with their daughter Ianthe in April, remaining in Bath till July.

On 5 May, Shelley dined with the Godwins in Skinner Street. This was probably the first occasion on which he met 16 year-old Mary, who had returned from Scotland a month earlier. He called again, with increasing frequency, throughout May and June, dining there every day between 19 and 29 June. He was deep in financial negotiations, arranging a loan to Godwin, but he was also developing a relationship with Mary, who declared her love to him in St Pancras churchyard - where he, Claire and Mary walked almost daily to visit Mary's mother's grave - on 26 June. The next day, Shelley told Godwin, who was appalled, and asked Shelley to visit less often. He would, perhaps, have told him not to visit at all, except for the fact that the loan was not yet agreed. The financial transactions were completed on 6 July, and only then did Godwin tell Shelley that he was not welcome at the house.

On 9 July, Shelley attempted suicide, apparently by taking a large quantity of opium. On 13 July, Harriet arrived in London from Bath for meetings with Godwin. During the following days, Godwin met with Shelley, and brought Mrs Boinville up from Bracknell to reason with Shelley. Harriet (pregnant with her second child) wrote to Mary asking her to subdue her passion for Shelley, and Mary and Claire were confined to the house. Letters flew back and forth between Godwin and Harriet, and between Godwin and Shelley. Then, at about 4 a.m. on the morning of 28 July, Mary woke Claire, and suggested they go out for a walk as it was such a beautiful morning. When they got to the end of Skinner Street, Shelley was waiting with a hired carriage, having been watching 'until the lightening and the stars

<sup>9</sup> Mary Shelley, *The Letters* ed. Betty T. Bennett (3 vols., Baltimore, 1980), i. 40.

grew pale'.<sup>10</sup> Claire, who was also 16, was told that they were eloping, and that she must come with them - either (depending on which account you believe) 'to save herself from her mother's anger' or 'as she spoke French, which they could not'.<sup>11</sup> The three then departed for Dover, and crossed to Calais in a hired boat, closely followed by Mrs Godwin, who caught up with them in Calais the following day. Claire spent the night with her mother, who succeeded in persuading her to come home with her, but the next day Claire visited Mary and Shelley and then told her mother she had changed her mind and would stay. Mrs Godwin returned to England in a fury, and the three elopers set off for Paris.

All these facts are clear, and are supported by Mary and Shelley's account in their shared journal, and by Claire's journal of the same period. It is Mrs Godwin's actions immediately afterwards which are in question here. This is where the evidence becomes confusing and puzzling. Everything hinges on a series of letters - six in all - which Mrs Godwin wrote to Margaret, Lady Mount Cashell between 7 (or perhaps 14) August 1814 and 7 April 1815. Lady Mount Cashell was the elder daughter of Lord and Lady Kingsborough. Mary Wollstonecraft had been her governess in Ireland in the 1780s, and had based her educational book, *Original Stories from Real Life* (1789) on her experiences of teaching Margaret and her sister. She had married the Earl of Mount Cashell in 1791. Godwin had met and befriended her in Dublin in the early 1800s, and she had later contributed several books to the Juvenile Library. In 1805, she had left the Earl and lived in Italy for the rest of her life with an Irishman, George William Tighe. In this (irregular) union she called herself Mrs Mason, the name of the governess in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories*, thereby presumably acknowledging a debt to her former teacher as well as aligning herself with Wollstonecraft's free-thinking on the subject of marriage.<sup>12</sup> It is peculiarly ironic, under the circumstances, that the second Mrs Godwin should have chosen her for a confidant to whom she wrote to unburden herself of the events of the elopement.

Mrs Godwin's letters are known to have existed. According to William St Clair, they were at one time in the possession of Maurice Buxton Forman (St Clair 549) where they were seen by Rosalie Glynn Grylls, who quoted from them in her biography of Claire Clairmont.<sup>13</sup> But their present whereabouts is unknown. The fullest version of the letters can be found in Appendix B of Edward Dowden's *Life of Shelley* (ii. 541-51); but Dowden never saw the originals. What he published were abstracts of copies of the letters, made by Claire Clairmont in the 1870s. Claire, however, made at least two copies of all but one of the letters (Grylls says she made 'several copies', Grylls 276), and it is clear that Claire altered and edited the letters as she copied them, to suit her own purposes. Grylls published passages from the letters which had been either omitted or paraphrased by Dowden in her Appendix D (pp. 276-80). Finally, in the Shelley MSS collection at the Bodleian Library, there is a batch of miscellaneous manuscripts containing abstracts of the letters made by Richard Garnett in 1872, which add to, or in a few cases vary from, the abstracts published by Dowden.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Shelley, *The Journals* ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott Kilvert (2 vols., Oxford, 1987) (hereafter Shelley (1987)), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Dowden, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (2 vols., London, 1886) (hereafter Dowden), ii. 547.

<sup>12</sup> See E. C. McAleer, *The Sensitive Plant: A Life of Lady Mount Cashell* (Chapel Hill, 1958).

<sup>13</sup> Rosalie Glynn Grylls, *Claire Clairmont* (London, 1939) (hereafter Grylls). I am not entirely convinced that it was the originals which were in Forman's possession. Grylls is a little ambiguous on the subject (p. 276), and I believe she may only have seen Claire's copies.

Dowden's biography of Shelley shows him to be in no doubt that the letters demonstrated 'deliberate dishonesty of statement in several important matters' by Mrs Godwin (Dowden 541). His friend and correspondent Richard Garnett, writing privately to William Rossetti, was extremely harsh. He spoke of her 'wilful falsehoods', her 'unscrupulous malignity', her 'wickedness'.<sup>14</sup> Rossetti was more moderate, writing in reply that he was unable to 'discern in [the letters] any conscious spite against Shelley' and that, although he could see evidence of some untruthfulness, there was 'a good deal in the letters wh. seems to me to bear the impress of truth'.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, then, the letters are important for several reasons. They provide information which is not available elsewhere about the elopement and the events which followed it. But the question of their veracity affects both our assessment of Mrs Godwin's character and that of Claire's, since, according to Dowden, Claire 'composed or recomposed . . . the text', leaving it 'a tangle of cancelled words and phrases, alterations, interlineations', so that:

The later copy varies in a good many passages from the earlier, yet in general agrees with it. The evidence leads one to believe that where the transcriber desired to omit or alter any statement, or any word or phrase, or to insert anything, she did not hesitate to do so; but that in general no ground or motive existed for such an alteration; so that her transcript may be accepted as representing the original in essentials. Still it is very far from possessing the authority of an original document.

(Dowden 541)

The problem with this mud-slinging is the fact that it must all be read in the light of the efforts made by the Shelley family - of Jane, Lady Shelley, the wife of Shelley and Mary's only surviving son, the plump and dull Sir Percy, to be precise - to sanitize the name and character of Shelley. Jane Shelley had originally asked Garnett to write the 'official' biography; but Garnett, although an ardent admirer and amateur scholar of Shelley (he worked at the British Museum, and had written monographs on Shelley's life and poetry) had declined - although he assisted the Shelley family in their destruction of manuscript material which they thought would reflect badly on Shelley (Garnett 36) - and suggested Professor Edward Dowden, of Trinity College, Dublin, as a substitute. Dowden was a fine and careful scholar, and his biography is as accurate and factual as he could make it - unlike Charles Kegan Paul's *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* of 20 or so years earlier, which contains a mass of inaccuracies. But much of Dowden's information came, perforce, from Jane Shelley and from Garnett, and both of them were deeply prejudiced against Mrs Godwin and against Claire.

Cautiously, then, and with all kinds of provisos, one may embark upon an examination of Mrs Godwin's letters, and Mrs Godwin's lies. Letter I seems to have been simply a note. The copy Dowden saw was dated 7 August 1814, nine days after the elopement: but he points out that her second letter (written either on 16 August, 20 August or 2 September, according to which of Claire's substitutions seems most credible) refers to back to it as having been written on the 14th, and assumes that '7th' was a copying error (Dowden 542). Alternatively, it could have been an error of memory on Mrs Godwin's part; certainly she

<sup>14</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fols. 539, 551, 552. The author wishes to thank the Bodleian Library, Oxford, for permission to quote.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Garnett, ed., *Letters about Shelley, interchanged by Three Friends* (London, 1917) (hereafter Garnett), pp. 44, 49.

and Godwin were in an extremely disturbed state at the time. In any case, Letter I briefly informs Lady Mount Cashell of the elopement, and says that 'We have reason to think they have fled to Italy', and requests that, should they visit Lady Mount Cashell, she will do her utmost 'to get Claire<sup>16</sup> into your possession and to persuade her to leave Shelley and Mary' (Dowden 542). The elopers did not, in fact, go to Italy: they travelled through France to Switzerland, and then back through Holland, returning to England on 13 September. It is not clear why the Godwins thought they might have gone to Italy, although Letter II suggests that they may have indicated an intention of doing so when they were in Calais. But perhaps the Godwins were clutching at straws, or trying to cover all possibilities.

Letter II is much longer - the longest, by far, of the collection. Having given Lady Mount Cashell the bare bones of the affair in her preliminary note, Mary Jane obviously felt it incumbent upon her to fill in the details. It recounts the whole story from the beginning of the Godwins' first meeting with the Shelleys. In fact Lady Mount Cashell had been passing through London at the time, and had met Shelley at the Godwin's on 7 October 1812 (St Clair 337), and, according to Letter II, Mary Jane had written to her at the end of 1813 to tell her that: 'our prospects had brightened, for that Mr Shelley, a young man who will one day have a large fortune and who is a great admirer of Mr Godwin, had given us assistance to pay off part of our debts and had promised more' (Dowden 542). She describes the beginning of the friendship and close and harmonious: 'they came when they liked, and made themselves quite at home, and we all loved them extremely' (ibid.). Mary, as we know, was in Scotland at this period, and Claire was also away, at school in Walham Green. But then (presumably in early 1813, although the dating of the account is confused), the letter goes on, Harriet began to spend more and more time at home in Bracknell (Windsor, in fact) and Shelley began to pay 'immense attentions' to Fanny:

Mrs Godwin after a time saw things, though she could hardly say what - glances, sighing, gazing. Frances, from being cheerful, grew dull and heavy. The indications were too slight to justify Mrs Godwin in supposing Shelley to be in love with Frances - he, with such a lovely wife and living on such affectionate terms with her - but she feared that Frances might, unconsciously to herself, receive a deep impression in his favour. Accordingly, she sent Frances on a visit to her aunts [Wollstonecraft's sisters] in Dublin. (ibid.)

This is the beginning of the 'tissue of falsehoods'<sup>17</sup> of which Garnett and Dowden convict Mary Jane. Dowden points out that between January and May, when Fanny departed for a visit to Wales (not Ireland, as Mrs Godwin says) Shelley visited Skinner Street only seven times: three in March and four in May. 'These facts', says Dowden, 'may help us to judge of the truth of Mrs Godwin's story' (Dowden 543). This was, in fact, the period during which Shelley was said to have been in love with Cornelia Boinville, and some entries in a notebook which Shelley later gave to Claire to use for her first journal appear to support this (Clairmont 60-3). But there is no doubt that both the Godwins sincerely believed, and continued to believe, that 'all three girls were equally in love with [Shelley]', as Godwin told Maria Gisborne in July 1820.<sup>18</sup> And, in fact, according to Rossetti, Claire also expressly

<sup>16</sup> Mrs Godwin never referred to her daughter as anything but Jane, although she started calling herself Claire shortly after the elopement. But Claire always calls herself Claire in the copies of the letters.

<sup>17</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fol. 546.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London, 1974) (hereafter Holmes), p. 760.

asserted 'that Shelley addressed F[anny] before Mary, and that F[anny] declined him' although, Rossetti believes, she 'was none the less deeply in love with him' (Garnett 43). Rossetti is not convinced of Mrs Godwin's (or Claire's) falsehood in this matter, and argues that even if Shelley did not visit the house very often, Shelley could have made love by letter, and points out that Fanny being the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft would obviously have been of importance to Shelley (Garnett 49).

My own instinct is to agree with Rossetti, who seems, throughout the correspondence, to have shown himself to be impartial, moderate, and clear-thinking. Dowden, influenced by Garnett, was more concerned with making Shelley appear to be as free from blame as could be consistent with the facts - not, it must be said, an easy task - and in order for this to be done, Mrs Godwin had to be made to look as untruthful as possible. Accordingly, Dowden makes much of the inaccuracy of Mrs Godwin's dates. Certainly these are muddled and confused, though how much of the confusion comes from Claire's copying is hard to say. But Mrs Godwin is remembering events which took place many months earlier, and which of us might not be confused in September as to whether something happened in late March or early May?

The most serious falsehood in Letter II, and one which cannot be easily explained away, concerns the immediate aftermath of the elopement. Here is Dowden's abstract of Mrs Godwin's account. At first, she says, 'it was supposed that [the girls] had been delayed in their morning walk', but by one o'clock the Godwins had ascertained that 'they had driven off with Shelley for Dover':

In the evening, Mr Marshall started by the mail, arrived at Dover next morning, learned that the fugitives had crossed the Channel in an open boat, and crossed himself in pursuit. He found them at Dessein's Hotel, a carriage and horses at the door. He saw Shelley; implored him to allow the girls to return, which Shelley refused. 'You cannot,' said Marshall, 'be in love with Claire'. 'No,' replied Shelley, 'I am not in the least in love with her; but she is a nice little girl, and her mother is such a vulgar, commonplace woman, without an idea of philosophy, I do not think she is a proper person to form the mind of a young girl.' Shelley looked very scornful. The interview lasted only five minutes. Marshall asked to see Claire, but Shelley positively refused to permit this. Marshall then went to the English Consul, but he was out, and an hour or more was lost. When Marshall and the Consul returned to the hotel, the fugitives were gone. Marshall had to wait for money from London; he then followed Shelley to Paris, and found that, after one night at a hotel, he and the girls with a donkey had started, it was supposed, for Italy.

(Dowden 545)

'The whole story', Dowden comments, 'shows Mrs Godwin's fine inventive faculty' (ibid.). And, indeed, if Shelley and Mary's journal is consulted, it becomes clear that Mary Jane is being extremely economical with the truth. According to Shelley:

In the evening [of 29 July] Captain Davison came & told us that a fat lady had arrived who said that I had run away with her daughter. Jane spent the night with her mother.

Saturday 30

Jane informs us that she is unable to withstand the pathos of Mrs Godwin's appeal . . . . I counselled her to take at least half an hour for deliberation. She returned to Mrs G & informed her that she resolved to continue with us. Mrs G departed without

answering a word. I met Mrs G in the street apparently proceeding to embark for Dover. (Shelley (1987) 7-8)

This is certainly a very great discrepancy. Why did Mary Jane not want to tell Lady Mount Cashell that it was she who followed the party to France? Dowden suggests that she did not wish her friend to know that Claire had 'disregarded her mother's entreaties' and had gone to Paris of her own free will (Dowden 545), and perhaps this is true. Certainly Mrs Godwin was concerned, in this letter and in later ones, to stress Claire's youth and innocence: in the passage from the same letter which Grylls quotes, Mrs Godwin wrote of Claire that 'she is only sixteen - and as childlike in her manners and thoughts as if she were only twelve - no young man would feel much interest in her at present' (Grylls 276). Obviously her mother was anxiously anticipating what soon became a fact, that Claire would be seen as having run away to form part of a *ménage à trois* with Shelley and Mary.

There is, however, one puzzling aspect of Mary Jane's account which Dowden does not comment on. At the end of the story, she represents Marshall as having followed the Shelleys to Paris, and as finding out there that 'after one night at a hotel, [Shelley] and the girls with a donkey had started, it was supposed, for Italy' (Dowden 545). Referring again to Shelley's own account, it is clear that the timing of this is completely wrong. The party left Calais on 30 July and, travelling via Boulogne and Abbeville, arrived in Paris on 2 August. They stayed there, not for one night, but for six. It was not until Monday 8 August that:

Jane & Shelley go to the ass merchant. We buy an ass. The day spent in preparations for departure . . . . We set out for Charenton in the evening carrying the ass who was weak and unfit for labour . . . (Shelley (1987) 11)

The problem is, of course, that if Mrs Godwin returned to England (as she clearly did) after her defeat in Calais, there is no way she could have known that the fugitives had bought a donkey in Paris. There are two possible explanations. One is that Claire added this detail from her own first-hand knowledge of the events, although it is difficult to see why she would have wished to do so. The other is that the Godwins must have had some other source for this information. It is not impossible, although I have not been able as yet to check this, that James Marshall (a trusted friend of Godwin since they had both been students at Andrew Kippis' dissenting academy at Hoxton) may have been dispatched on a separate errand to Paris to try to track down the runaways. This would certainly explain why Mrs Godwin attributed the earlier trip to him, and might, perhaps, explain the very full detail of the conversation which he is reported in the letter as having had with Shelley - except, of course, that if he had really caught up with the party in Paris and had a five-minute conversation with Shelley, Shelley would surely have mentioned it in the journal. Perhaps it is more likely that the Godwins were informed of the movements of the party by someone in Paris. They had several meetings with a banker or moneylender called Tavernier, who was certainly known to Godwin by early the following year (Shelley (1987) 9), so possibly Tavernier wrote to the Godwins with news of the departure with the donkey.

Even if it is accepted that the whole story of Marshall going to France is a fabrication, the conversation which he is reported as having with Shelley has a ring of authenticity which it is difficult to ignore. Shelley's attack on Mary Jane, in particular, in which he describes her as 'a vulgar, commonplace woman, without an idea of philosophy' and says that she is not 'a proper person to form the mind of a young girl' (Dowden 545), seems unlikely to have been a complete invention. Perhaps Claire told her mother, during the night they spent together in Calais, that this was how Shelley had described her. Or perhaps, although Shelley

does not say so, Mary Jane and Shelley had a brief altercation when they met in the street after she left Claire, although Godwin wrote to a friend (John Taylor of Norwich) on 27 August 1814 that he had made Mrs Godwin promise not to see Shelley, in case he became violent.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, the whole incident, and Mrs Godwin's account of it, is puzzling in the extreme. In the final analysis, it seems evident that here and elsewhere where she has not told the whole truth to Lady Mount Cashell, the reason has been that she wishes to make her relations with her own daughter appear as good as possible, and to free Claire as far as she can from any blame in the affair. Claire's position was, of course, a peculiar one since she was both less blameworthy - not having, at least at this stage, a sexual relationship with Shelley - and more blameworthy, since she did not have the excuse for running away that Mary had. Her only reason, indeed, for going appeared to be that she had made a deliberate choice not to live in her parental home: a most unusual, and highly questionable, choice for a sixteen-year-old girl to make at that time. This must have been obvious from the beginning to Mary Jane, and would provide an explanation of her peculiar tampering with the facts.

This is supported by the next instance of falsehood, at least by omission, which comes in the following letter, Letter III, dated 15 November 1814. By this time, the three fugitives had been back in London for two months. The purpose of the letter seems mainly to be to complain about the sad state of the household in the absence of the girls, who, she says, she misses deeply: 'No Mary to help Mrs Godwin, with her great talents, her sagacity, her steady industry - as steady as a man of 40. No Claire with her cheerful temper and obliging disposition'.<sup>20</sup> But the implication of all that Mrs Godwin says is that they have no idea where Shelley and the girls are living: she tells, for example, that Harriet has called to say she has had a letter from Shelley with 'no date, and only the London postmark' (Dowden 546). However, the Godwins knew very well where Mary and Shelley were living at this time. Shelley had written to Godwin with their address as soon as they had found lodgings in London, and the next day (16 September), Mary wrote in her journal that 'Mrs G and Fanny pay a visit to the window but refuse to speak to PBS when he goes out to them (Shelley (1987) 26).

Perhaps more significantly, Mrs Godwin omits, in Letter III, to say that on 13 November (two days before the letter was written), Fanny had been sent with a message to Claire asking her to come to Skinner Street 'to see Mrs G who they say is dying' (op. cit. 44). Claire had agreed to go, and had written to Shelley and Mary the same evening to say she was very happy, but two days later she was back in the lodgings, having told 'Papa that she will not return' (op. cit. 45). It can only be supposed that Mrs Godwin thought that this information would diminish her, as a mother, in the eyes of Lady Mount Cashell, especially since Claire had apparently proclaimed, upon it being suggested that she leave London and stay - either as a governess or as a paying guest - with Godwin's friend Taylor in Norwich, that:

she should in all situations openly proclaim and earnestly support, a total contempt for the laws and institutions of society, and that no restraint should be imposed upon her correspondence and intercourse with those from whom she was separated.

(quoted Holmes 270)

<sup>19</sup> H. Buxton Forman, ed., *The Elopement of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin as Narrated by William Godwin* (privately printed for William R. Bixby, 1911), pp. 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fol. 556.

In Letter IV, written three months later (7 February, according to Dowden, 15 February in the Shelley MSS version), Mrs Godwin is still pretending that she does not know of the whereabouts of the Shelley household. She says she has communicated with them through Shelley's solicitor Longdill, and has 'implored [Shelley] to let her see Claire' (Dowden 547), as:

let a woman be as poor or ignorant as possible . . . her maternal feelings [are] as worthy of as much care, consideration and respect as those of the most refined and educated lady. (Grylls 277-8)

Dowden is scathing about the 'alleged difficulty which Mrs Godwin had in seeing Claire' (p. 547), and draws attention to the three days Claire had spent in Skinner Street at the time of the previous letter. But that was in November, and it had ended badly, so it is not unreasonable to suppose that Shelley had subsequently imposed an embargo on meetings between Claire and her mother. Certainly there is no indication they saw each other between that time and the meeting 'in Temple Gardens' which, Mrs Godwin says, Shelley sanctioned on condition that she promised not to urge her daughter to return home (*ibid.*). They may indeed, as Dowden says, have communicated through letters, and visits from Charles and Fanny, but there seems no reason to doubt Mary Jane's veracity on this point.

Letter V, apparently written on 7 April 1815, existed in only one copy. According to Dowden, it is 'unfinished, and is throughout cancelled by Miss Clairmont' (Dowden 548). Mary Jane says she has not written to Lady Mount Cashell for some months because she hoped to discover the whereabouts of the Shelley household: 'Some slight indications led us to believe that they had returned to England and were not far from London . . . . We are still in as much ignorance of their abode as ever' (*ibid.*). In fact, although they had moved twice - to Hans Place on 8 February and to Arabella Road, Pimlico, on 2 March (Shelley (1987) 64, 67) - the three had been in constant contact with Skinner Street throughout the period, through Charles and Fanny. Furthermore, on 22 February, Mary had given birth to a baby girl which was two months premature, and Mrs Godwin had sent a gift of linen the following day (*op. cit.* 65-6). The child was not expected to live, but had survived for three weeks before dying during the night of 5-6 March. Nothing is said about this in Letter V, but in Letter VI, dated 28 July 1815, Mrs Godwin says that since the last letter (since April, that is) 'Mary has given birth to a child who lived only an hour' (Dowden 548).

The only reason that she might have concealed the true date of the child's birth would presumably have been that she wanted to remove all possible suggestions of the child having been conceived before the elopement. It would not, of course, have been any less respectable if it had, but perhaps Mary Jane felt it would reflect badly on her step-parental vigilance. In fact, if the child was indeed, as Shelley noted in the journal after her birth, 'not quite seven months' (Shelley (1987) 65), she must have been conceived while they were in France in August.

Letter VI goes on to relate that Claire had wanted to return to Skinner Street - we know from the journal that Mary was anxious to have her out of the household by this time - but that Fanny's aunt Mrs Bishop had opposed this, as she 'would not allow Fanny to associate with her'.<sup>21</sup> Mrs Godwin, 'in the bitterness of [her] heart' had written to Shelley, reproaching him for depriving Claire of a home, and he had written back saying that 'he should never regret having rescued one victim from the tyranny of prejudice and then a long

<sup>21</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fol. 559.

discourse on the evils of society, very fine, very eloquent . . .' (Grylls 278-9) - which certainly has the ring of Shelleyan authenticity about it. We also know her next statement to be true: that Shelley has resolved to leave Claire 'an independence' in his will. Claire did indeed inherit £12,000 from Shelley, although she had to wait for it for over twenty years after Shelley's death, until his father died, in 1844.

This act of Shelley's seems to have had some effect on thawing Mary Jane's implacable dislike of him. It has, she says, calmed her anxieties about Claire's future welfare, and she feels 'grateful, most grateful, to him . . . I never could have believed that such a harum-scarum man could be so thoughtful' (ibid.). He has some fine and attractive qualities in his character, she says, including his 'unbounded generosity', and also - something which seems not to have come to her attention before - 'everybody says he has a wonderful genius of his own'.<sup>22</sup>

None of this prevents her, however, from fudging the truth in this, the last of the series of letters. Apart from the question of the date of the baby's birth, she also seems to have deliberately misled Lady Mount Cashell over the matter of Claire's recent (May 13) removal to Lynmouth. According to Mrs Godwin, she had visited her sister there three years before and had 'made acquaintance with Mrs Bicknell the widow of an Indian Officer'<sup>23</sup> (Grylls 279), and had subsequently arranged for Claire to go and stay there to get her out of Shelley's clutches. Shelley was 'vexed' at her going, and 'charged her not to let her mind get corrupted by the world, and above all not to eat meat'.<sup>24</sup> This certainly sounds like Shelley, but, as far as one can judge, Mary Jane had nothing to do with the arrangement, which seems to have been made by Shelley himself. In fact a letter from Claire to Fanny, written on 28 May, two weeks after her arrival in Lynmouth, indicates that, far from having been sent there by her mother, she had gone without the knowledge of the Godwin household:

Mary writes me that you thought me unkind in not letting you know before my departure; indeed I meant no unkindness, but I was afraid if I told you that it might prevent my putting [the] plan into execution . . . (quoted Grylls 50)

Was Mary Jane Godwin a compulsive liar, as William St Clair has suggested ('Sometimes she told lies for trivial reasons, sometimes for no discoverable reason at all' (p. 245))? Henry Crabb Robinson wrote that Lamb 'always called [her] the Liar' (Robinson i 441), and that he himself always 'doubted her integrity and truthfulness' (i. 235) although, he says, she 'certainly became towards [Godwin] a meritorious wife' (ibid.).

The problem with all these questions is, as I indicated at the beginning, that so much of the crucial evidence is contained in these six letters, and that the originals of the letters have disappeared. Knowing, as we do, that Claire rewrote and edited the materials, it is very hard to judge how much of the 'falsehood' of which Mary Jane is accused is her own, and how much a result of Claire's editing. Until recently Claire's reputation was, if anything, worse even than her mother's. Kegan Paul, with little attention to the facts, presented her as an older woman who exerted a bad influence on Mary and encouraged the elopement,<sup>25</sup> and Garnett believed that she had 'throughout her life been the evil genius of everybody

<sup>22</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fol. 559.

<sup>23</sup> William St Clair says that Mary Jane claims Mrs Bicknell to be her sister, and thinks she is a 'fabrication' (p. 251). But she does not claim this at all: she says she met Mrs Bicknell while she was visiting her sister in Lynmouth. Mrs Bicknell was not a fabrication, as Claire's letter to Fanny from Lynmouth makes clear.

<sup>24</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fol. 559.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries* (2 vols., London, 1876), ii. 214.

intimately connected with her'.<sup>26</sup> Her treatment by the Shelley family (Sir Percy and Lady Jane) was abysmal: Lady Shelley excluded her entirely from her *Shelley Memorials from Authentic Sources* (1859) and Percy - whom she had nursed as a child, and always adored - refused to buy her Shelley letters on the ground that she was 'no relation of mine' (Gittings 224, St Clair 474). It was rumoured, quite without foundation, that she was 'mad and in an asylum' (Garnett 25) - a rumour which, it is sad to find, William St Clair continues to repeat (p. 493). But, as Glynn Grylls' pioneering study suggested in 1939, and as the publication of Claire's journal reinforces, Claire remained a clear headed, independent and lively thinker for the whole of her very long life (she died in 1879 at the age of 81). Whatever her reasons for altering the letters - and another whole paper might be written on this - it seems unlikely that she would have invented them entirely.

Clearly, more questions have been raised here than it is possible to answer. But I hope to go on with this research, and perhaps even to rescue Mary Jane Godwin from the dismal reputation which has dogged her for nearly 200 years.

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<sup>26</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Shelley c. 1, fol. 549.

## Intimations By Moonlight: The Drive Towards Immortality in Wordsworth's 'Great Ode'

By SUSAN C. W. ABBOTSON

WORDSWORTH'S INTENTION within *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* is an issue which has been in continuous debate since the poem's creation. Criticism is, at heart, largely a matter of choice. Where many critics have failed in their attempts to conclusively interpret *Ode* is in the nature of their 'choice' - they have made certain choices which have either excluded sections of the poem, or put them in antagonism to one another.<sup>1</sup> In the case of *Ode* we truly do 'murder to dissect'. When we make the critical decision to split the poem, we obfuscate the existing deeper unity which is to be found in the pervasive imagery of maturation within it. What is needed is a reading of the poem which excludes nothing, but instead chooses to reconcile rather than juxtapose the elements of the piece. It is this type of integration which Wordsworth himself is doing within the poem, only his subject is the integration of a person's perception to achieve a truly 'philosophic mind' (*Ode* 187). In this perception, the visions of both an 'inner child' and 'mature adult' are blended to provide a united vision so powerful it can transcend its moral roots.<sup>2</sup>

Lionel Trilling's 1950 analysis has led to numerous disputes over whether the poem is about *mortality* rather than *immortality*; the tendency has been to see it in the light of the former option. A consideration of immortality and mortality is worthwhile, but creates difficulties if confined to either; the truth being, the poem encompasses both. The 'Immortality' of the title is integral to the poem and should not be lightly dismissed. Commenting on this poem, Wordsworth states: 'Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being'.<sup>3</sup> This difficulty continued into his adulthood. During the poem, Wordsworth comes to terms with

<sup>1</sup> There was a tendency amongst nineteenth-century critics to analyse isolated references within the poem trying to assess influences on Wordsworth's style and philosophy. Since Alfred Austin's 1882 suggestion that the poem could be biographical, that approach has also been very popular; but such responses necessarily have to ignore much of the text. Cleanth Brooks' formalistic approach is marred by a prior critical decision that this will be a poem about loss alone, and thus the text can only seem paradoxical. Lionel Trilling questions the idea of loss but still views the poem divisively. The three sections he sees existing cannot, in his assessment, be reconciled. Even Gene Ruoff's more recent development of the transitions in the poem is unable to link his insightful readings of the final stanzas to the first eight. Ruoff himself admits his interpretation of those final stanzas is a virtual dismissal of all that has gone before. See Alfred Austin, review of *Poems of Words* ed. Arnold, *Poetry of Byron* ed. Arnold, and *Wordsworth et La Poésie Moderne de l'Angleterre* by Scherer, *Quarterly Review* 154 (1882) 53-82; Cleanth Brooks, 'Wordsworth and the Paradox of the Imagination', *Wordsworth: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. M. H. Abrams (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), pp. 170-87; Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York, 1950); and Gene W. Ruoff, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Making of the Major Lyrics 1802-1804* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989), p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> David Lindley's 'archetypal child' is similar on the surface to what I refer to as the 'inner child', but there are important differences. Lindley believes Wordsworth's 'loss and recovery' refer to the same construct of 'child' whereas I see the loss and recovery as referring to separate (though related) constructs. Also, Lindley denies the importance of the 'mature adult' and insists that the poem is about 'mortality' alone; see David A. Lindley, 'Dreams of Past Existence: The Archetypal Child', *Wordsworth Circle* 20 (1989) 56-60.

<sup>3</sup> *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature: Romantic Poetry and Prose* ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (Oxford, 1973) (hereafter *Oxford Anthology*), p. 175.

his own physical mortality, but then proceeds to envisage the possibility of a spiritual immortality. *Ode* accepts that we all physically die, but it also uncovers a path to immortality Wordsworth has found within himself, through the integration of his perception. This perceptual integration is the heart of what we refer to as Wordsworth's 'poetic vision'. The immortality will come from the verse itself, which is able to contain and convey such a vision; clearly related to that Classical notion, whereby, the written word, in living on, will immortalize its writer. Wordsworth believed: 'Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge - it is as immortal as the heart of man',<sup>4</sup> and he is now 'immortalized' through his verse and the timelessness of its message. It is that understanding which makes this a poem of triumph rather than one of despair, and the exaltation of the original epigraphy 'Paulò majora canamus' (Let us sing of somewhat more exalted things), betrays Wordsworth's feeling from the start as one of triumph.

*Ode* is, as the subtitle insists, an exploration of the 'intimations' or 'signs' of immortality that can be uncovered at that moment of inspiration when all of life's 'worthwhile' experiences, from early childhood to adult maturity, are assimilated. At this point, Man is brought to an awareness of the full potential of his 'philosophic mind'. The writer himself, tutored by his experiences, brings the 'adult maturity' to the verse, but to provide the whole picture he needs to be joined by the surviving 'inner child', who can only be invoked through a discriminating recollection.

The 'inner child' is an epitome of the joys and vigour of childhood maintained beyond the restricting innocence and idealism of psychological and philosophical immaturity. The inner child defies exact definition, being a mysterious force allied to darkness rather than light. It embodies that 'mystery of life' which needs to be maintained in some degree within the truly visionary mind. Wordsworth seems to suggest that, to see clearly, one should reflect in shade rather than light. This will allow the vision to be concentrated rather than dazzled. From the 'Shades of the prison-house' (l. 67) it is still possible to behold 'the light, and whence it flows. / He sees it in his joy' (ll. 70-1), but it is the 'joy' of the inner child which assists this vision. As a person grows up he may be 'by the vision splendid - on his way attended' (ll. 74-5), but the danger is that the inner child, whose vigor and joy can assist in perceiving this vision, will be dismissed or forgotten. It is then that the 'Man' *alone* 'perceives it die away. / And fade into the light of common day' (ll. 76-7). Common daylight distributed by the sun is insufficient to illuminate the 'vision splendid'. The Man needs the contributing insight of that inner child. In this way the Child truly is the father of the Man, as a source of natural energy and connection. If we accept the role of father to be that of a guide and nurturer, the poem's epigraph: 'The Child is father of the Man; / And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety', has been purposefully chosen to illustrate how the inner child's role is a necessary one to ensure the philosophical and psychological growth of the Man. What should be recognized is that Wordsworth portrays two different concepts of children in his verse, and we must differentiate the two. I will describe them as 'physical' and 'spiritual' in their intrinsic nature; the former represents the mortal aspects of childhood and the later the immortal (which is the same construct I have called the inner child). The tense which Wordsworth associates with each is a useful aid in our recognition.

*Ode* begins firmly in the past: 'There was a time . . .'. Ruoff reconstructs the 1802 draft (ll. 21-3) and shows how line 9 originally read: "The things which I have seen I see them now

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford Anthology* 604.

no more'. The final 1807 draft reads: 'The things which I have seen I now can see no more'. This places heavier emphasis on the 'now'. Likewise, line 57 changes from: 'Where is it gone the glory and the dream?' to: 'Where is it now, the glory and the dream?' The 'now' is again given heavy emphasis. Wordsworth wanted to be clear that this opening description of physical childhood was to be a thing of the past on which he is looking back. The 'celestial light' (l. 4) the child sees at this time is only 'seeming', and, as Cleanth Brooks points out, such 'apparel' can be removed.<sup>5</sup> Once the dazzling light is removed, the child will hopefully see more clearly and realize the innocence of childhood has only been a 'dream' (l. 5). This association of the physical child to a world which is merely an innocent dream rather than reality is repeated in stanza 4 (l. 57). Thus, Wordsworth insists that such childish visions are merely wishful fabrications and, however splendid, not truths. As Trilling suggests: 'Wordsworth is talking about something common to us all, the development of the sense of reality'.<sup>6</sup> 'It is not now as it hath been of yore' (l. 6) is in this light, a positive progression, as it is the 'now' of his adult realizations which Wordsworth sees as having more importance.

In a sense it is not entirely 'childhood' perceptions being lost so much as the immature perceptions which come from inexperience, whatever age. In this way, the 'physical child' is a construct for a particular way of thinking, rather than flesh and blood. What Wordsworth is in the process of losing are those innocent idealizations which have led him away from achieving his potential earlier in life; experiences which in his immature state he allowed to distract him, but from which he can now learn (so long as he places them behind him and preferably views them from the shade). One major experience here would have been his earlier idealization of the French Revolution which he has *now* come to see as a betrayal of humanity. Marjorie Levinson shows how the 'Tree' and 'field' of stanza 4 are symbols of the French Revolution<sup>7</sup> and Wordsworth shows how these too must go if he is to continue to 'hear, with joy' (l. 50) the inner child who cannot be perverted by such events.

In the second stanza, Wordsworth moves into the present as he describes how physical childhood passes. However, he is also suggesting you should take a spiritual knowledge of that period forward (i.e. the inner child). Where the 'freshness' (l. 5) of the first stanza suggests springtime, it is already summer by the second - a summer of roses and sunshine. The consequent development of seasonal decay and inevitable mortality of the physical child is thus early established. This child is linked from birth to a sunshine (l. 16) we know cannot last. The nature of sunlight holds connotations of a light which dries things out and dazzles rather than vitalizes and illuminates; certainly not a positive image. Brooks suggests the sun operates as 'The symbol for the prosaic and the common and the mortal'.<sup>8</sup> What Wordsworth is seeking is something beyond such mundanities. Childish experiences may have 'beauty' and 'glory', but they will be of a transitory and, therefore, mortal nature.

If the sun is an emblem of mortality, therefore, its counterpart the moon becomes an emblem of immortality. It is sunlight to which the physical child is drawn, but the moonlight which assists the spiritual inner child. The moon's presence in the poem (independent of seasonal changes) straight away suggests more lasting alternatives to those offered by sunlight. They are alternatives closely allied to darkness and mystery, which I suggested

<sup>5</sup> Brooks 171.

<sup>6</sup> Trilling 147-8.

<sup>7</sup> *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> Brooks 174.

above were attributes of the inner child. Mythically, the moon has had an affinity with mystery in its connections to madness. It is also a creature born of darkness, and mystery is necessarily dark. The moon has also been the symbol for Artemis and Diana, both attributed with great power and wisdom. In *Ode*, 'The Moon doth with delight / Look around her when the heavens are bare' (ll. 12-13). Brooks suggests:

The moon is treated as if she were the speaker himself in childhood, seeing the visionary gleam as she looks around her with joy . . . she lights up and thus creates her world. This seems to me a hint which Wordsworth is to develop later more explicitly, that it is the child, looking around him with joy, who is at once both the source and recipient of the vision.<sup>9</sup>

Such analysis highlights this strong link between the child and moon. The link is an important one, and we should remember that *both* moon and child are representations. The child has become the perceptive inner child, who is the source of the imagination necessary in understanding such visions when they occur. The moon becomes the heart of the child's power, that element of mystery which is integral to an effective imagination. It is the moon's image which provokes the poet into realising that however attractive the physical child and his world are, like the rainbow, they can only be transitory. There is an undeniable loss at this point, but of those childhood traits of innocence and idealism, which though attractive in one light, are also essentially restricting, and not attributes one should wish to hold on to forever. If one did, then the joyous 'Now' of stanza 3 might never be attained.

By stanza 3 we reach the 'Now' and immediate present with a re-evocation of a more spiritual childish joy; 'spiritual' since the speaker is no longer a physical child. 'Now while the birds thus sing a joyous song, / And while the young lambs bound . . .' (ll. 19-20). Here, Wordsworth shows he has managed to maintain the inner child, though he has yet to unite it to his adulthood. He is surrounded by children but is not as yet one of the crowd. The elusive 'timely utterance' (l. 23) (usually accredited to a variety of Wordsworth's earlier lyrics) in this context, becomes the whispering of the inner child within Wordsworth. It reminds him of its continuing presence, giving him strength to face the future where he can find a way to integrate this Child with the Man and accept what losses such progression demands. 'No more shall grief of mine the season wrong' (l. 26), indicates Wordsworth's realization that he no longer needs to mourn the loss of the physical child as he still has sight of this 'inner child'. The 'season' is that of spring, an emblem of the child in its youthful freshness; it is a season which can now be upheld and relished throughout the poem. The most noticeable point comes in stanza 10, where the scene in stanza 3 is virtually repeated; however, this time Wordsworth has found the spiritual way to join the children and is now fully integrated: 'We in thought will join your throng' (l. 172). The intervening stanzas have been forging this important link between Child and Man to achieve the full mature unity of a 'philosophic mind'.

The image of the dependent Child in stanza 7 who mistakenly pursues a life of 'endless imitation' (l. 108), undergoes an intrinsic change by stanza 8. As Thomas McFarland points out, the 'little actor' of stanza 7 is heavily patronised but this image of childhood shifts 'to the perspective of equality' by stanza 8.<sup>10</sup> Here the child is placed on a par to the adult intellect and its 'Soul's immensity' (l. 110) is acknowledged. As Trilling suggests, 'the

<sup>9</sup> Brooks 173.

<sup>10</sup> 'Wordsworth's Best Philosopher', *Wordsworth Circle* 13 (1982) 59-68, p. 67.

child's way of apprehension was but a stage which, in the course of nature, would give way to another'.<sup>11</sup> Ruoff sees how Wordsworth 'binds together childhood and adulthood' in stanza 9, but he sees the two as entirely divided earlier in the poem, and recognizes only a 'destructive power' in the 'human development and aging' of stanzas 5-8.<sup>12</sup> In this he misses the point of the *necessity* of such a stage. He sees it as a time the poet has now 'suspended' and shut away, rather than something he has fed on to grow.

Wordsworth loses his *naïveté* and this loss is important, but he is rewarded by a better understanding of the world. The 'inner child' is not lost, but integrated into the Man, and this successful integration is cause for triumph. The loss is important as *all* experience is important to the integrated man. Wordsworth's development in *Ode* is only possible if he actively confronts all experience and comes to terms with it. He must learn through experience how to recognize and interpret both the light and the dark; only then can he proceed along the stages of his development. As Lucy Newlyn tells us: 'The bafflement of early childhood becomes a source of adult power; moments of loss are transformed by a process uniquely his own into an "abundant recompense"'.<sup>13</sup> Though all experience has some value, this 'process', instigated by the mature intellect, is able to determine which experiences are more worthwhile than others. Helen Vendler, at odds with Trilling's division of *Ode*, sees the poem as a powerfully plotted succession of 'wounds and cures' and 'the feelings of despair are a waystation on the path to his ultimate powers of adulthood'.<sup>14</sup> Vendler also states: 'Wordsworth implies . . . that the acquisition of the philosophic mind depends upon our participation [in the social rituals of adult life] . . . the poem affirms (by its own schema of Child, Boy, Youth and Man) that those stages are inescapable'.<sup>15</sup> So far, I would agree; but even Vendler eventually succumbs to the temptation to divide and, as Jeffrey Robinson suggests, ultimately sees *Ode* as depicting 'the triumph of imagination *over* reality, or over other ways of apprehending reality' (my italics).<sup>16</sup> Wordsworth's message is surely that imagination and reality must exist symbiotically. Imagination is represented by the inner child and reality by mature experience and understanding. Alone, either one achieves little, for it is only in their union that the poet will find his vision.

The fully integrated vision finally occurs in stanza 9:

Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the Children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

(ll. 163-8)

It is a moment of vision towards which the previous eight stanzas have been building; it is born from them and not at odds with them. By linking the sea with the origins of life, which suggests our 'aqueous' rather than 'Divine' ancestry, Edward Proffitt suggests this may have led Wordsworth to link 'the growth and continuity of the individual life to the growth and

<sup>11</sup> Trilling 144-5.

<sup>12</sup> Ruoff 260-2.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Little Actor and his Mock Apparel', *Wordsworth Circle* 14 (1983) 30-9, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> 'Lionel Trilling and the Immortality Ode', *Salmagundi* 41 (1978) 66-86, pp. 79-80.

<sup>15</sup> Vendler 78.

<sup>16</sup> 'Lionel Trilling and Helen Vendler', *Wordsworth Circle* 12 (1981) 64-70, p. 68.

continuity of life itself. The record written in memory binds the individual life into a unity: though inland and past meridian, the individual can through memory "see the Children sport upon the shore" and see itself as one of those children'.<sup>17</sup> Though Proffitt shows how Wordsworth achieves a unity of vision, he also gets bound up in his own theories of 'natural history'. He allows Wordsworth his poetic integration, while denying him the consequent transcendent implications of godlike immortality. As the poem states, the 'mighty waters' will be 'rolling evermore', and Wordsworth's vision and name *have* lived on even after his physical demise. Many would deny this triumphant declaration of vision in *Ode*; however, if we consider the way in which the terms of this vision are echoed in the Mount Snowdon episode of *The Prelude*, is it possible to *continue* to deny the visionary implications of that *same* imagery in *Ode*? Indeed, for those who may yet be unconvinced by the 'intimations' I have extracted from within the *Ode*, my entire argument appears to be emphasized, reiterated, and confirmed by *The Prelude*.

*The Prelude* is, by Wordsworth's own admission, a record of 'the origin and progress of his own powers'. Ruoff points out that 'the relationship between Wordsworth's work on the *Ode* in 1804 and his progress on *The Prelude* is both rich and relatively unexplored'.<sup>18</sup> *Ode* has been linked to *The Prelude* before, but nearly always to the earlier books, mainly the childhood moments in Book 2 and the consideration of types of knowledge in Book 5. These links clearly exist, but I find the most important one, to the Snowdon episode of Book 14, has so far been overlooked. What makes this even more interesting is the close proximity of when these two episodes were written. According to Raymond Havens' estimations, though most of Book 14 was composed in May 1805, the first 150 lines were composed earlier, possibly in December 1804.<sup>19</sup>

Interpretation of this particular section of *The Prelude* has not been nearly as controversial as that of *Ode*, and yet the parallelisms of imagery and symbol are so strong as to indicate they could be dealing with the same topic - that moment of poetic vision which occurs at a point when the Man has been fully integrated through experience with his mysterious inner child. Havens insists that Book 14 of *The Prelude* is 'the philosophical conclusion of the whole matter', and talks of 'the importance of the book for the understanding of *The Prelude* as a whole and for the light it throws on Wordsworth's thought'.<sup>20</sup> Mary Jacobus suggests that the Snowdon episode therein 'provides a metaphorical representation of the entire narrative of *The Prelude*'. She tells us that this episode is 'the most visionary . . . the most charged with symbolic significance . . . it serves as the ground for Wordsworth's most sustained account of his theory of imagination'.<sup>21</sup>

There is no substantive difference between the 1805 and 1850 versions of this section (which suggests that Wordsworth was fairly certain of the ideas he conveys at this point), but my references will pertain to the earlier version as being the text closest to *Ode*. Just as *Ode* begins with the description of an innocent child who knows no better than to bask in a distorting celestial light, here Wordsworth begins his climb with the wrong desires as he goes 'to see the sun / Rise from the top of Snowdon' (ll. 5-6). As yet untutored by experience, as is the early 'physical' child of *Ode*, he has the wrong goals. His goals will not serve to

<sup>17</sup> "Though Inland far we be": Intimations of Evolution in the Great Ode', *Wordsworth Circle* 13 (1982) 88-90, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> Ruoff 40.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond D. Havens, *Mind of a Poet* (Baltimore, Md., 1940), p. 605.

<sup>20</sup> Havens 606.

<sup>21</sup> *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference* (Oxford, 1989), p. 267.

enlighten, despite the deceptive brightness of the sun. It is the moon as a symbol of night and its mysterious darkness, rather than the dazzling sun, that will shed the truer light. In the same way the more shadowy 'inner child' referred to in 'Those shadowy recollections, / Which, be they what they may, / Are yet the fountain light of all our day' (*Ode* 150-3) will enlighten more than the physical child born in 'sunshine'.

As Wordsworth begins the climb he is clearly confined in 'a close warm night' with 'A dripping mist / Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky' (ll. 10-12). It is unsurprising that he now declares: 'Little could we see / Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp' (l. 5). The 'prison walls' which 'begin to close / Upon the growing boy' (*Ode* 67-8) are constructed of such a restricting fog and they are the necessary walls of reality which give social life its structure; walls that have to be faced and transcended rather than be ignored or allowed to dominate. The metaphorical journey continues and we see the poet clearly in a state of cogitation: 'Each into commerce with his private thoughts' (l. 19). Some progress is made as he finds 'nothing either seen or heard the while / Which took me from my musings' (ll. 21-2). It is helpful that he is walking at night without the sunlight to distract. The poet must also, it is indicated, learn the lessons of his own experience for himself and this is best achieved in such solitude. Remember that Wordsworth initially observes apart in *Ode* and only surrenders this solitude when he perceives how he can unite the disparate parts of his life and allow himself to join the 'throng' (*Ode* 173) confident in his own potential. Both pieces appear so far to be following the same pattern and rules of development.

In *The Prelude* there is next a momentary diversion as the dog unearths the hedgehog and makes its 'barking turbulent' (l. 25). 'This small adventure' (l. 26) might at a creative stretch recall the 'dog' of France which returned to its own vomit and awoke Wordsworth to the reality behind his childish idealistic support of the French Revolution. The turbulent barking has certainly distracted him from his musings, and it is clear from his writing in earlier sections of *The Prelude* that he now saw the Revolution as fruitless as the barking of a dog and yet as potentially turbulent and destructive. A similar admission of the time-wasting distraction of the Revolution is depicted in *Intimations* by the 'Tree' and 'field' as discussed above. It is also clear that Wordsworth is eager to put such misleading ideals behind him as he has only so many mortal years to attain that wider vision he seeks: 'As if in opposition set / Against an enemy, I panted up / With eager pace' (ll. 30-2). Time is the enemy and it is not every man who can attain immortality in his allotted span on earth; it takes both concentration and exertion. The barking dog is put behind them just as the French Revolutionary experience has been assimilated and firmly moved on from.

It is Wordsworth who leads the band and first has the life-changing vision of the moon and the expanding horizon from the summit. 'The Moon stood naked in the heavens, at height / Immense above my head, and on the shore / I found myself of a huge sea of mist, / Which, meek and silent, rested at my feet' (ll. 41-4). He has risen above those distracting 'clouds of glory,' the experiences of his immature years, and now from his pinnacle can look at the scene the moon symbolically displays. Jacobus declares: 'The view from Mount Snowdon images the source of all signification, all images'.<sup>22</sup> Havens believes: 'The scene he had beheld from Snowdon possessed a unity such that, although different elements could be distinguished, they could not be separated from one another'.<sup>23</sup> The wide ranging vision into infinity is the same both here and in *Intimations*. Here it brings to view a vast landscape

<sup>22</sup> Jacobus 271.

<sup>23</sup> Havens 613.

and 'the real sea, that seemed / to dwindle, and give up its majesty' (ll. 49-50). The 'real sea' is in contrast to the obstructing sea of mist he has left behind and it is the same 'immortal sea' of which 'Our souls have sight' though 'inland far we be' (*Ode* 163-4).

Havens describes Wordsworth's moment of vision in *The Prelude* effectively:

A mind reaches out through the mental world as the vision from Snowdon had spread out over the physical, and that its depth, its height, its breadth were typified in the extent of the scene in all directions and its union of active thought with receptive sensitivity was imaged in the fellowship of the silent moonlight with the oracular voices issuing from the dark chasm . . . the principle of the reconciliation of opposites.<sup>24</sup>

The same reconciliation of opposites has occurred in *Ode* as the child and man become one and poetic vision is achieved; the poet views the 'Children' sport 'upon the shore' (*Ode* 167) and is brought to within hearing distance of 'the mighty waters which rolls evermore' (*Ode* 168). The dark 'blue chasm' (l. 56) of *The Prelude* represents that same element of mystery we must accept when we allow the inner child admittance. Havens continues:

In the final text Wordsworth goes on to say that such a mind is sustained by the evidences it finds in both the physical and spiritual worlds of transcendental power. In the world of the senses this power leads the majestic intellect to conceive ideal form; in the spiritual it brings conviction of immortality.<sup>25</sup>

Wordsworth has, in both pieces, meshed together imagination and reality to arrive at what he feels to be an immortalizing poetic vision.

It is important that it is the moon which lights the vision at Snowdon and not the sun. The sun and moon have taken on the same symbolic significance they do in *Ode*. The daytime sun representing misdirection and mortality, the night-time moon representing mystery, power and wisdom. Havens points out how in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, 'darkness is used as a symbol or source of wisdom and power'<sup>26</sup> and shows how Wordsworth is attuned to his 'mighty mind' (l. 69) only by a consideration of such mysterious darkness: 'Whatso'er is dim / Or vast in its own being' (ll. 72-3). It is, therefore, unsurprising that it is this representation of mystery and darkness, the moon, which shows this symbolically expanded scene to Wordsworth. In the same way it is the moon, in its association with the inner child which allows Wordsworth his vision in *Ode*. At Snowdon we see 'The Moon' which looks 'down upon this show / In single glory, and we stood, the mist / Touching our very feet' (ll. 53-5). The same sense of community with the moon we saw in *Ode*, we see here in the use of 'we' and 'our'. Both moons clearly help to illumine a vision beyond the ordinary and that vision is Wordsworth's. It is a vision which is complete and involves *all* sensory perceptions, the poet of course including the fully operational imagination amongst these senses.

Wordsworth can now comprehend the universal mind 'roaring with one voice' (l. 59), which tells him of 'The soul, the imagination of the whole' (l. 65) beyond the simple 'universal spectacle of life' (l. 60). Extending his senses thus he can 'hear the mighty waters rolling evermore' (*Ode* 168) in which the 'evermore' is just another aspect of the 'imagination of the whole'. Similarly he feels 'Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears' (*Ode* 204)

<sup>24</sup> Havens 612.

<sup>25</sup> Havens 613.

<sup>26</sup> Havens 612.

with its profound suggestion that joy is ultimately deeper than sorrow. The inner child with its mysteries will allow Wordsworth to transcend the mundane setbacks of reality and the 'thoughts' he can then bring forth will be in tune with an imaginatively created 'evermore'. His experience is complete and transcending, both at Snowdon and within the verse of *Ode*.

Wordsworth's *Ode* is not a poem about *endings* but *beginnings*; it depicts the embracing of a principle of immortality in art and life rather than an elaborate farewell to either. The poem has formerly been interpreted as depicting Wordsworth's ongoing struggle with a mass of problems; I envisage a far stronger sense of solution than has so far been acknowledged. *Ode* exudes resolution rather than the commonly believed open-endedness. *Ode* is no philosophical nadir as some might suggest, but a zenith; a point at which all things finally flow together as Wordsworth unites and solves them in his consciousness.

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## Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard' in Context<sup>1</sup>

By BONNIE WOODBERY

WE KNOW from the records kept by the ancient wine firm of Messrs Berry Brothers and Co. on the weight of their distinguished customers that in 1814, when Charles Lamb was 39, he weighed in at a mere 9 stone 3½ lbs., or approximately 129½ lbs. 'in boots'.<sup>2</sup> Other descriptions of Lamb's size include Thomas Hood's observation that Lamb had almost 'immaterial legs' and Carlyle's less than flattering depiction of Lamb as the 'leanest of mankind', in 'tiny blackbreeches buttoned to the knee cap and no further, surmounting spindle legs also in black'.<sup>3</sup> His size then could well have contributed to an intoxication that more than one of his acquaintances recalled. De Quincey relates that 'the most noticeable feature of [Lamb's] intoxication was the suddenness with which it ascended to its meridian'.<sup>4</sup> It was De Quincey's belief that six glasses of wine during dinner plus one or two after sufficed to complete Lamb's 'inebriation to the crisis of sleep'.<sup>5</sup>

Lamb's private observations on drinking range from rejoicing in his midnight revels to lamenting his frequent trials of abstinence. In 1802, we find Lamb enticing Thomas Manning to visit London on the promise of beverages to be served: 'Rum, Brandy, Gin, Aquavitæ, Usquebaugh, or Whiskey a nights - & for the after-dinner-Trick I have 8 Bottles of genuine Port which inathematically divided gives 1 1/7 for every day you stay, provided you stay a week'.<sup>6</sup> On a more sober note, Lamb writes to the Wordsworth's in 1810: 'She [Mary] has told you how she has taken to water, like a hungry otter. I too limp after her in lame imitation, but it goes against me a little *at first*. I have been aquavorous now for full four days and it seems a moon. Must I then leave you, Gin, Rum, Brandy, Aqua Vitæ -- pleasant jolly fellows--. Damn temperance & them that first invented it, some *Ante-Noahite*'.<sup>7</sup>

Lamb's ambivalent feelings about his drinking become apparent in his essay 'Confessions of a Drunkard' where he presents a dark picture of a drunkard whose constitutional tendency towards drinking ruins him intellectually and physically. The drunkard's life before and after his first drink is rendered in language that is overwrought and painfully real. Lamb's commentators have felt a need to defend him against the suggestion that the 'Confessions' present a true picture of its author. After Crabb Robinson read the essay, he concluded that 'it will hardly be thought [to be] so near a correct representation of fact as it really is. It is sometimes painfully eloquent'.<sup>8</sup> Lucas defends Lamb, saying that Robinson lacked the imagination to know Lamb really well, but Lucas goes on to explain why he too finds the essay to be a truthful representation.<sup>9</sup> Others like Thomas Hutchinson believe the

<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper was presented at the Wordsworth Summer Conference, 1993, where I had the privilege to meet Bill Ruddick. I dedicate this essay to his memory.

<sup>2</sup> E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb* (2 vols., London, 1905) (hereafter *Life*), i. 429.

<sup>3</sup> *Life* ii. 606, 790.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey* ed. David Masson rpt. of 1889-90 ed. (AMS Press, 1968), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> De Quincey, *Works*, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marris Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975) (hereafter Marris), i. 223.

<sup>7</sup> Marris iii. 62.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted *Life* i 407.

<sup>9</sup> See Lucas' notes to the 'Confessions' in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (7 vols., London, 1903-5) (hereafter *Works*), i. 431-3.

'Confessions' render a satiric portrait of a drinker. What Lamb intended is further complicated by the different contexts in which the essay appeared. Besides becoming part of the second edition of *The Last Essays of Elia* in 1835, the essay was published in four popular contexts, including the philanthropic journal *The Philanthropist* in 1813, Basil Montagu's temperance compilation *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Spiritous Liquors* in 1814 (and in the subsequent 1818 and 1839 editions of this compilation), the urbane *London Magazine* in 1822, and in William Tweedie's teetotaler tract *Beacon Lights* in 1854.<sup>10</sup> Each context mediates the meaning so that each version is different merely because its context is different.

The 'Confessions' were written sometime between 1811 and 1813 when economic discourse was dominated by Bentham's principles of self-interest. Bentham's moral code emphasized four virtues: prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice.<sup>11</sup> In this code, temperance was defined as the power of resisting pleasure toward the future happiness of the agent. So the acceptance of the 'Confessions' by the editors of *The Philanthropist*, James Mill and William Allen, must have been prompted by the belief that the 'Confessions' were a factual account of the downward progress of a drunkard, and therefore could be used as an example of an 'evil that remained to be removed from society'. As Mill explains in a typical article articulating the beliefs of Jeremy Bentham, his mentor, 'the purpose of *The Philanthropist* is to give publicity to . . . facts'.

We hope we shall succeed in persuading our countrymen of how much importance it is to make known the facts which concern humanity in all its modifications. It is only from the knowledge of facts, that a knowledge can spring either of benefits that remain to be attained, or of evils that remain to be removed.<sup>12</sup>

The articles that characterize the journal include ideas for the management of workhouses, arguments for educational reform, and concerns about the civilization of Indians in North America. While Mill advocated the ideas of Bentham, William Allen, the journal's owner and a devoted Quaker, tried to interest readers in his philanthropic concerns. Any attempt to parody utilitarian discourse is lost in this factual context. In the January 1813 issue, the 'Confessions' appear between an article on the alarming growth of the pauper population in 1812 and a remarkable institution of education in Berne. The faithful readers of *The Philanthropist* must have been surprised to go from an abstract mathematical analysis to the drunkard's graphic explanation of what a confirmed sot goes through to quit drinking for one evening. Its inclusion here would be as surprising as its inclusion in *The Economist* today.

From the very beginning of the essay, the drunkard never resorts to euphemism. Immediately, he explains to the gentle reader how the first steps in a drunkard's reformation are 'Dreadful, the first steps not like climbing a mountain, but going through fire' when 'the whole system must undergo a change, violent as that which we conceive of the mutation of

<sup>10</sup> My collation of the various versions of the 'Confessions' reveals that the *Philanthropist* version in 1813 (and also the earliest existing version) is substantially different from any version that comes after, from its publication in Montagu's 1814 compilation to its appearance in 1835 in the second edition of *The Last Essays of Elia* (Moxon). The text is fairly stable from 1814 to 1835. However, the *Philanthropist* version lacks four substantial passages found in the other versions; in addition, the *Philanthropist* text has several phrases, words, and punctuation variants.

<sup>11</sup> Elie Halevy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (London, 1928), p. 474.

<sup>12</sup> *The Philanthropist* 2 (1812) 129.

form in some insects'.<sup>13</sup> He says it is a process comparable to being flayed alive. However, in the factual context of the journal, these hyperbolic images of a drunkard's suffering are offset by the drunkard's use of economic language. He describes his condition with words like 'auditors', 'paid', 'mortgage', 'wages', 'perpetuity', 'gains', and 'profits'. The economic language gives the 'Confessions' the patina of factual analysis. For example, in one section the drunkard explains the danger of drinking to provide others with convivial conversation.

. . . to give pleasure, and to be paid with squinting malice; to swallow draughts of life-destroying wine which are to be distilled into airy breath to tickle vain auditors; to mortgage miserable morrows for nights of madness; to waste whole seas of time upon those who pay it back in little inconsiderable drops of grudging applause, -- are the wages of buffoonery.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the Benthamite pleasure principle is reversed in the drunkard. For here is a man who does not seek pleasure and avoid pain but instead finds his pleasure in pain. For him, the principle of loss replaces acquisition. The drunkard repeatedly gives of himself, but every gift becomes a loss. And yet the drunkard confesses he simply cannot abstain. He admits that he has reached the point where 'reason shall only visit him through intoxication'.<sup>15</sup> Bataille points out that when excessive loss cannot be compensated for, death unconsciously becomes an object that cannot be avoided.<sup>16</sup> Thus, toward the end of the essay, the reader not surprisingly learns that one of the gains or profits from the drunkard's midnight cup is, contradictorily, a secret wish that he never awake.

In the early 1800s public morals and dominant social codes dictated that drunkenness was an evil to be eradicated or at least hidden away. The Proclamation of George III in 1787 condemning 'excessive drinking, blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, profanation of the Lord's day, and other dissolute, immoral or disorderly practices' ushered in a new code of behaviour: self control and the repression of a hedonism hitherto characteristic of the eighteenth-century mob.<sup>17</sup> From the burgeoning industrialist's point of view these new laws were necessary to discipline a rural and barely urbanized workforce. In 1801 and 1802, William Wilberforce's and John Bowdler's Society for the Suppression of Vice and Encouragement of Religion prosecuted 623 Sabbath-breakers as part of their campaign to purify and manage their less fortunate brethren.<sup>18</sup> Lamb felt the brunt of this code of behavior when he found himself in the stocks at Barnet for breaking the peace of the Sabbath in 1809 or as he terms it in a pseudonymous essay for 'timing my Saturnalia amiss'.<sup>19</sup> The evangelical moralists helped enforce the new regulations. They advocated chastizement and denunciation of the drunkard who they believed had failed to exert his willpower to conquer the evil alcohol. The reformers favored prosecution of drunkards and praised the tactics of

<sup>13</sup> *The Philanthropist* 3 (1813) 48.

<sup>14</sup> 'and death' follows in all other versions of the essay. *The Philanthropist* 3 (1813) 50.

<sup>15</sup> *The Philanthropist* 3 (1813) 53.

<sup>16</sup> Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess* (Minneapolis, 1985), p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 666, in Jane Aaron's *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford, 1991) (hereafter Aaron), p. 21. Aaron provides an excellent discussion of Lamb's violation of the code of behaviour and his time in the stocks. She uses the incident as illustrative of Lamb's refusal to internalize the new mores and to indicate the equivocal nature of his social position.

<sup>18</sup> Aaron 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Works* i. 210. See also Lucas' discussion of this incident in *Life* ii. 144.

the Vice Society which showed a 'zeal for prosecution, a concern with purely public vices, and an inability to concentrate on any one of them'.<sup>20</sup> Their moral disapprobation of drunkenness was also shared by many late eighteenth-century doctors who championed sobriety. Dr Trotter's 1804 *Essay on Drunkenness* stresses the physical and mental effects of drunkenness, but he was unable to describe the condition in terms that were free from moral overtones.<sup>21</sup> However, Trotter was one of the first doctors to ascribe drunkenness to a constitutional predisposition as opposed to a weakness of the will. Lamb's drunkard, too, claims a constitutional predisposition. He points out that the difference between his vice and other evils such as stealing or lying is that they have no 'constitutional tendency'. He testifies:

at the first instance of the reformed will, they [stealing and lying] can be bought off without a murmur. The itching finger is but a figure in speech, and the tongue of the liar can with the same natural delight give forth useful truths, with which it has been accustomed to scatter their pernicious contraries. But when a man has commenced sot . . .<sup>22</sup>

Along with Lamb's powerful 'Confessions', Basil Montagu (1770-1851) included both evangelical and medical evidence on the benefits of abstinence in his 1814 compilation *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Spiritous Liquors*. Excerpts from the writings of Dr Trotter, Dr Rush - an American doctor and avid teetotaler, Erasmus Darwin, Samuel Johnson, Ben Franklin, influential clergymen and other worthies all emphasize the deleterious affects of alcohol on the body and mind. Montagu's compilation is an example of an early temperance document in that it relies chiefly on scientific evidence to confirm the ill effects of alcohol on the body. Later tracts often used emotional testimony to convey their messages.

Montagu divides his text among queries, the first being 'Does the drinking fermented liquors promote health?' Rush testifies here to the various sicknesses caused from drinking, including a 'sickness in the stomach and vomiting in the morning, obstruction of the liver, palsy, and madness'.<sup>23</sup> Dr Trotter adds to this list descriptions of gout, palpitations, impotency, change of temperament that results in a perpetual nervousness, and insanity. He emphatically states that the 'habit of drunkenness will bring on madness and idiotism'.<sup>24</sup>

In the medical context of Montagu's treatise, the symptoms the drunkard experiences provide a case study for the scientific opinions advanced under this first Query. The drunkard confirms Dr Trotter's suspicion that his nights of drinking are indeed 'nights of madness' and confesses that his departing energies depend more and more heavily on the 'returning periods of the fatal madness to which they owe their devastation'.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, he describes always having 'uneasy sensations in his head and stomach' and his constant nervousness gives his life much of the 'obscure perplexity, of an ill dream'.<sup>26</sup>

The 'Confessions' appear under the Query 'Does the drinking fermented liquors contribute to moral excellence?' Dr Rush's remarks precede Lamb's essay. Rush invites his audience

<sup>20</sup> Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (Pittsburgh, 1971) (hereafter Harrison), p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison 21-2.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Lamb, 'Confessions of a Drunkard' in Basil Montagu's *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Spiritous Liquors* (London, 1814) (hereafter Montagu), p. 201.

<sup>23</sup> Montagu 13-14.

<sup>24</sup> Montagu 39.

<sup>25</sup> 'Confessions of a Drunkard', Montagu 212.

<sup>26</sup> 'Confessions', Montagu 213.

to now turn their eyes 'from the effects of spirits upon health and life to their effects upon property'. Among farmers as a group, Rush notes that 'spirits produce idleness with its usual consequences, such as houses without windows, barns without roofs, gardens without enclosures . . . hogs without yokes, sheep without wool . . . and half-clad dirty children, without principles, morals, or manners'.<sup>27</sup> Framed in the context of this moral disapprobation, Lamb's 'Confessions' closely resemble evangelical tracts of conversion in which the prodigal who has found salvation retells his experience to help others. While the drunkard does emphasize his downward progress, he clearly differs from the men of these early tracts in that he never repents and recommends abstinence only for others. In any case, these satiric subtleties would not have been noticed in this early and very lengthy temperance document.

The satiric tone of the drunkard's message can best be seen in the context which it next appeared - the *London Magazine* for August 1822. In the Editor's preface to the monthly, known as the 'Lion's Head', under 'Re-prints of ELIA', Lamb, who was vacationing in France for the month of August, offers his readers an explanation of his reprint. Lamb complains that the reviewers for the *Quarterly* had quoted extensively from the 'Confessions' as they appeared in Montagu's compilation. The quotes appeared in an article on Dr Reid's book *Essays on Hypochondriasis and other Nervous Affections*. The reviewer says the 'Confessions' provide a 'fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance', a picture the reviewer claims he happens to know is a true tale.<sup>28</sup> Lamb defends himself by explaining that the 'Confessions' is a compound extracted 'out of his long observations of the effects of drinking upon all the world about him' and although a portion of his own experiences certainly went into the paper, 'how heightened!! how exaggerated! the whole portrait is'.<sup>29</sup>

Lamb goes on to explain that the 'Confessions' are complementary to his *Reflector* essay on the inordinate appetite of Edax, the great Eater. He says that it 'struck him that a better paper of deeper interest, and wider usefulness - might be made out of the imagined experiences of a *Great Drinker*'.<sup>30</sup> And the essay does share certain thematic affinities with 'Edax'. Both satirize Utilitarian philosophy by ironically employing the Benthamite jargon 'motive', 'main spring', and 'springs of action' while presenting protagonists who do not seek pleasure and avoid pain but instead are constitutionally predisposed to find their pleasure in pain.

In addition to the 'Lion's Head', the 'Confessions' must be read in the context of the August issue where such comic pieces as 'Why Candles Burn Blue in the Presence of a Ghost' detract from any stern reformist message. Plus, the essay is signed 'Elia', Lamb's familiar pen name. Readers accustomed to the whimsical personal essays of Elia would immediately view the 'Confessions' in light of its author's previous work, like the essay for May 'The Praise of Chimney Sweepers' or June's contribution 'A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis'. In that essay, Elia laments the absence of beggars on the streets of London, apparently chased away by zealous members of the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity.

Read through these contextual layers, the 'Confessions' become a satiric portrait of a drunkard that parodies both Utilitarian ideas and evangelical tracts of conversion. Lamb's

<sup>27</sup> Montagu 153

<sup>28</sup> *Quarterly Review*, 'Reid's *Essays on Hypochondriasis and other Nervous Affections*', (April 1822) 120.

<sup>29</sup> 'Lion's Head', *London Magazine* 4 (1822) 99 (hereafter 'Lion's Head').

<sup>30</sup> 'Lion's Head' 99.

drunkard never forfeits the pleasure of the moment for future happiness (one of Bentham's four moral virtues); instead he mortgages his 'miserable morrows, for nights of madness'.<sup>31</sup> The utilitarian 'moral springs of action' are broken in him, claims the drunkard. Making fun of the mechanical origins of the Benthamite jargon, he confesses that the 'springs of [his] will [are] gone down like a broken clock'.<sup>32</sup> Even so the stern voice of the sober moralist interrupts the drunkard's self-pitying revelations:

Yea, but . . . if sobriety be that fine thing you would have us to understand, if the comforts of a cool brain are to be preferred to that state of heated excitement which you describe and deplore, what hinders in your own instance that you do not return to those habits from which you would induce others never to swerve?<sup>33</sup>

The drunkard avoids answering the question directly and instead launches into recollections of those innocent days of youth when pure water could slake his thirst: 'how gladly would I return to thee, pure element, the drink of children, and of child-like holy hermit. In my dreams I can sometimes fancy thy cool refreshment purling over my burning tongue'.<sup>34</sup> The narrator's apostrophe to water is undermined by his mocking tone and his pun on 'purling'. His audience would be well acquainted with purl, an inexpensive bitters, and a drink described by Dr Trotter as having the same dangerous narcotic properties of opium.

Finally, the 'Confessions' were reprinted in 1854 in William Tweedie's *Beacon Lights*, a wonderful example of a teetotaler tract. Unlike the early temperance tracts that made use of scientific evidence to support their message, the teetotaler tract couched its moral message in the emotionally wrenching testimonials of confirmed drunkards that often provoked lachrymose readers to tears. William Tweedie, an evangelical Scotsman and established temperance reformer, gave lectures on the value of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and published several temperance tracts. Tweedie's pirated version of the 'Confessions' relieve us of any doubt as to whether they present a true portrait of their author since he chooses to title them 'Confessions of Charles Lamb'. In *Beacon Lights* the 'Confessions' follow a biographic sketch of William Mainwaring, an upstanding citizen of a small New England town and moderate drinker, who quickly becomes the slave and victim of drink. Mainwaring progressively destroys himself with alcohol as he goes from a little drunk to senselessly drunk, at which point he staggers to and falls on his bed where unluckily his infant son is sleeping. The child dies immediately; Mainwaring shoots himself; and his wife ends up delirious.<sup>35</sup> In this context of this horrific cautionary tale, the drunkard's emotional outbursts become even more heightened. Passages where he cries 'with feebleness and feebleness outcry to be delivered' or dashes 'the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation' or clasps 'his teeth', to not 'undo 'em / To suffer WET DAMNATION to run thro' 'em' would surely have brought a tear to many readers' eyes.<sup>36</sup>

Tweedie's preface to the 'Confessions' helps emphasize his teetotaler message. He says 'The history of literary men, and even of religious men, is replete with instances that serve to point the same sad moral. Of these, one of the most affecting was supplied in the 'Confessions of a Drunkard', published anonymously many years ago, but now known to have

<sup>31</sup> *London Magazine* 4 (1822) 119.

<sup>32</sup> *London Magazine* 4 (1822) 119.

<sup>33</sup> *London Magazine* 4 (1822) 119.

<sup>34</sup> *London Magazine* 4 (1822) 119-20.

<sup>35</sup> William Tweedie, *Beacon Lights* (London, 1854) pp. 1-9.

<sup>36</sup> 'Confessions of a Drunkard', *Beacon Lights* 13.

been indicted, as a record of his own experience, by the celebrated Charles Lamb'.<sup>37</sup> Tweedie adds nothing to the text of the essay except a note that underscores the terrible power of alcohol: 'In alcohol itself resides the terrible power of creating that appetite which ravens and ruins its miserable subject'.<sup>38</sup> This note of course effectively squashes the drunkard's point that his need for alcohol is due to a constitutional defect.

Although Tweedie makes no additions, he does make several cuts when the material fails to support his argument for total abstinence. For example, he cuts the passage in which the narrator asks 'the sturdy moralist' to have some compassion for his condition. Not surprisingly, Tweedie also cuts the passage that claims there are people with strong constitutions who can hold their liquor and should therefore drink with impunity. Tweedie twists Lamb's text to make it appear to be a real life example of what intemperance can do to even those (as he says) in the most favourable social circumstances and with the rarest mental faculties.<sup>39</sup> The inclusion of Lamb's 'Confessions' in Tweedie's tract raised some protest in the press, and was subsequently withdrawn, only to be replaced with an equally offensive portrait of Hartley Coleridge.

Part of the strength of Lamb's 'Confessions' comes from a complexity of meaning that is mediated by the context that it enters. During his life, Lamb never resolved his ambivalent feelings about drinking, but a candid comment he makes to Manning in a letter in 1802 serves as both a reminder of his frequent attempts to quit drinking and of the circumstances that led him to drink.

My habits are changing, I think; i.e. from drunk to sober: whether I shall be happier or no, remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning, but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat & the marrow & the kidneys, i.e. the Night, the glor[iou]s, care-drowning, night, that heals all our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent & flat to bright & brilliant-. O Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution, by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spiritous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shame worthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying.- The truth is that my liquors bring a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me.<sup>40</sup>

*Florida State University*

<sup>37</sup> Tweedie's observations directly precede 'The Confessions', *Beacon Lights* 9.

<sup>38</sup> Tweedie's footnote is at the bottom of the first page of the 'Confessions', *Beacon Lights* 10.

<sup>39</sup> Tweedie's observations follow the 'Confessions', *Beacon Lights* 15.

<sup>40</sup> Marrs ii. 70.

## Miss Jessie Smith of Lamb's Cottage, Edmonton: A Reassessment

By D. E. WICKHAM

Unfurnished. - Charles Lamb's picturesque RESIDENCE until his demise in 1834, with large old-world garden, in North London, recently restored and renovated; ideal abode for rest and quiet though within a few minutes of trams, 'buses, and trains. Lady owner, occupying part, would LET remainder to two ladies or elderly married couple. Spacious rooms; separate kitchen; electric light throughout; bath; perfect sanitation; references of first order required - Write Box 2238, Harrison's, 47 St Martin's-lane, W.C.2.  
From *The Times* of 8 October 1925<sup>1</sup>

WE ALL LAUGHED LIKE DRAINS at Mrs Maud Downing's paper about Miss Jessie Smith and the visit to Lamb's Cottage with E. V. Lucas in December 1933, published in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* NS 85 (1994) 28-30. None laughed louder than I did. However, subsequent research in the Society's Samuel Morris Rich collection of press cuttings (now at the Guildhall Library) has suggested that Miss Smith did not receive a fair crack of the whip and deserves better of us.

We know that Mrs Downing was flattered to be asked to go on the visit. We know that she greatly admired Lucas. Miss Smith was clearly difficult. I wonder if later, rather brittle, conversation over drinks in the Downings' living room at Gray's Inn - or did they call it cocktails in the drawing room? - ran along the lines of 'Darling, she was a regular Sairy Gamp. Wasn't she comically vulgar? Wasn't she deliciously low? Do have another gin and French. And did you ever see the *Times*? She takes in lodgers! "Young men taken in and done for." Isn't it too, too screaming!'

While preparing Mrs Downing's paper for publication I grew to like her very much. I hope that the above paragraph misrepresents her as much as what she said about Miss Jessie Smith.

What did we know of Miss Smith? Was she perhaps the daughter of a small tradesman of 'Lower Edmonton', though needing to earn her own living? She was apparently working class. Was she self-educated, with all the problems of behaviour that that might entail, or had she tried to rise a little above what the 1930s would have seen as her proper station in life? In either case she seems to have been brought up to mind her manners but to be prickly with a sharp self-respect and a fierce patriotism. Her being difficult seems to have been based on her particular dislike of visitors calling without an appointment, and who shall blame her, or, as may have happened in Lucas' case, whose letter she had overlooked. Perhaps she was shy. Perhaps her character was not entirely perfect. Perhaps she was embarrassed by people she did not recognize - as Mrs Downing thought that Lucas should be recognized - and might have thought of as 'superior' or 'putting on airs'. I think, finally, we can be sure that Miss Smith would have hated an article like the present one, 'talking about me so personally and about my private business, without so much as a by-your-leave!'

No. 11, Church Street, Lower Edmonton, variously called Bay Cottage, Lamb Cottage, and Lamb's Cottage, was the property of John Harman Judd who died at the age of 77 years

<sup>1</sup> Rich ii. 2.

on 28 December 1924. As a result the house came up for auction on 24 February 1925 and, according to a cutting from the next day's *Westminster Gazette*,<sup>2</sup> it was sold to Miss J. Smith of Lower Edmonton, for £800, a figure printed twice.

On 21 July 1928 Lamb's Cottage was visited by a group from the Bookman Circle making a tour of Charles Lamb's Middlesex houses. In *The Bookman* for September 1928 E. J. Finch, who later became a valuable member of the Charles Lamb Society, recorded that Circle members 'will not soon forget its present amiable owner Miss Smith, who personally conducted visitors in relays over Charles Lamb's last home and through the fragrant garden in which the house lies embedded'.

Mr G. Locke, Senior English master at Middlesex County Secondary School in Edmonton, lived in the house for four years, presumably as one of Miss Smith's lodgers. Three photographs which he gave to Rich in May 1932 survive,<sup>3</sup> showing the back elevation of the house, annotated 'Mary's bedroom window, top left'; the garden from an upstairs room; and the chief first floor room with an upright piano, a wall lined with half-height bookshelves beneath a large picture, numerous other pictures, and a central table.

In the *Children's Newspaper* for 17 August 1935,<sup>4</sup> F. W. Aitken reported of 'Lamb Cottage' that 'Some years ago Mr E. V. Lucas wrote of it that "a gloomier house can hardly be imagined"; today it is charming within and has beautiful flower-beds in front, with a lovely garden at the back'.

To anticipate for a moment. Miss Smith was ready to sell the freehold for £4,000 in June 1934 and had left the Cottage at an unknown date, whereupon things had changed and not for the better. During August 1947 Mr Joseph J. E. Potter wrote an admittedly helpful and welcoming letter, which survives in the Society's archives, but on a small octavo sheet of paper bearing a large printed vignette of the house and the words:

Visit 'Charles Lamb's Cottage'  
Historical Residence  
Also  
Exhibition of Egyptian & Oriental Art  
Admission 1/-  
(Antiques & Works of Art Bought & Sold)

In May 1948 Edmonton Borough Council confirmed to the Society that Mr Potter had been understood to have acquired the house (after 21 February 1948!?) for residential purposes only. The Council had recently had occasion to require him to cease the sale of antiques from the premises and to remove an advertisement board from the front garden. Mr Potter had done so and the Council understood that the premises were about to be sold. Mr Potter apparently asked £6,500 for the house and the Society took no action, but learned that, by early July 1948, Mr E. C. Brooker of Maidenhead had bought the house for his own occupation and also that it was about to be listed as a historical building to be preserved under Section 30 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947.

It is unnecessary to say that Miss Smith would not have behaved in such a way. Let us return to the summer of 1934, as the Lamb Centenary commemorations reached their height.

<sup>2</sup> Rich i. 176-7.

<sup>3</sup> Rich iii. 202-3.

<sup>4</sup> Rich viii. 225.

Joan Temple was a dramatist and a professional actress. She had written the play *Charles and Mary* about the Lambs and acted the part of Mary Lamb in both the first run, in 1930, and in at least the first revival, in 1938. She visited Lamb's Cottage during the summer of 1934 and the article on *The Charles Lamb Centenary* which she contributed to *The Sphere* of 28 July 1934<sup>5</sup> includes her impressions of the house and its owner. Did the dramatist, the professional actress, have greater insight than some others and a more sympathetic attitude to people like Miss Smith? Her remarks are still occasionally patronising and Miss Smith may have regretted one or two of her confidences, but Joan Temple gives us a much more rounded and appealing picture of her subject, one which, I suggest, engenders not laughter but admiration and plain respect:

The door was opened by a grey-haired woman who, being caught at an untidy moment, was justly resentful. People ought to write first, she said, and when it was convenient to let them in she charged sixpence. I intimated my eagerness to pay this small fee, but even then received no invitation to enter. When, however, I offered my credentials as a pilgrim she opened her door and her confidence. It seemed that, living in the neighbourhood, she had become interested in Charles Lamb and his works, and a desire grew in her to possess this particular house. There was little expectation that her desire would be fulfilled, for she had to work early and late to earn her own living, but she scraped and saved. A legacy being left her about the time the property came into the market, she was able to put up the purchase-price - £900. A further £400 then had to be spent on putting it into very necessary repair, for, as the title deeds show, the house dates back to the 1600s.

She was careful to employ an architect, who would treat the place with reverence as well as expert knowledge, and her sensitiveness is also shown in the care with which she has chosen its furnishings - there are coloured prints round the walls of good repute though of small value, Mary Lamb's cupboard holds a coffee-service that belonged to Nelson's Lady Hamilton, while upstairs there is Mary's own washstand. The house looks as though the Lambs might have lived there lately, given a few years' licence on the early Victorian furniture; there is no attempt at striving after a museum effect. But desire fulfilled often brings its own difficulties, and now all her money has gone, so that she has had to take in lodgers to keep the longed-for roof over her head.

I suggested that she must have had many offers to sell the house. 'Well, yes, I have', was her reply. 'The last was from some Americans who wanted to turn it into a Lamb Club. They offered me £6,000. For a moment I *did* think what an easy life that would give me, and then I said, 'I'm sorry', I said. 'I *like* Americans, but only English people ought to have Charles Lamb's house.'

We are used to the paid caretaker of the houses of great men who can retail, with a lack of hesitation which carries with it small evidence of love, all the incidents associated with this room and that; but Miss Jessie Smith knows her 'Elia' intimately, and treats him with a salty wit that he undoubtedly would have appreciated as a tribute.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Rich vi. 43-50.

<sup>6</sup> Later Miss Temple writes 'I looked at her intelligent face, then round at the house which shone with her reverent care.'

Out in the garden she showed me the bushes from which she intends to gather leaves for her own centenary wreath, and finally her last confidence came out: 'People think I'm smart, charging sixpence to see the place - though after all it's my own, when all's said and done! I don't tell them I keep their sixpences to buy flowers for his grave - nobody ever seems to think of it but *me*.'

*Belvedere, Kent*

The photograph below shows Miss Smith at the door of Lamb's Cottage in 1934. It is reproduced from the *Sphere*, 28 July 1934 (Rich vi. 48).



## On Being a Writer

By FRANK LEDWITH

OUR EDITOR, Dr Duncan Wu, referred in a letter to 'your career as a writer'. I thought, 'What, me? I'm not a writer. I'm a businessman.' Then I began to wonder. Could it be that he was right? Had he managed to unveil something - a secret double life?

It was true that at the age of 17 I had dived into that maelstrom of multitudinous activities which makes up the City of London, and remained there for half a century. But Charles Lamb did something like that in his time.

A few years after starting in business, I met a schoolfellow who told me he was compiling the diary column signed 'Peterborough' in the *Daily Telegraph*. He invited me to send in any items which might be of interest. I did send in two paragraphs, and was paid 7 shillings and sixpence for each. But that hardly represents a career.

Forty-odd years later, urged by others, I wrote a book of reminiscences called *Ships that go bump in the night*. I asked to see the twelfth publisher to refuse it, and we got on so well he accepted it. His people also produced a chance for me to be interviewed on the *PM* programme of BBC Radio Four. The interviewer asked 'What else have you written?' In a panic-stricken second I was silent, and then blurted out, 'Two insurance policies and a bill of lading.' For those who do not know, a bill of lading is the contract made to carry goods by sea. They vary in form and may have 40 detailed clauses to cover all possible happenings *en route*. To draft a new form of bill of lading or insurance policy compares in complexity with the work done by a musician in composing a symphony, or at least a sonata.

But I was wrong in my reply. A more honest one would have been 'At least 20,000 business letters.' Lamb would say that his true works were in the account books of the East India Company, where he worked. I suppose my position was the same, though I can in no way compare myself with Lamb.

What I can see, looking back, is that I seem to have seized eagerly any opportunity to get something down in words. For example, my employers published annually a pamphlet of maybe 20 pages summarising the year's work and events. To the top management it was a tiresome job. I tried my hand at doing it one year, and made a sufficiently good attempt to be left with the task for the next 20 years. On one occasion, I succumbed to temptation over an item in a list of incidents during the year. This incident happened in Limerick. A certain type of poem bears the same name. It came out like this:

In Limerick some cattle broke free  
From the shipowners' pens near the sea,  
One beast as it ran  
Badly savaged a man,  
Who now claims a large cash decree.

I had not, however, the courage to mention where the young bull was eventually rounded up and removed. He was in a china shop.

The more senior and experienced I got in my work, the more often I might be asked to write something for technical papers. Not very often, though. I do not remember refusing any requests, whether or not any fee was offered.

I have already admitted to writing memoirs after I retired. In fact there were three volumes, and a variety of other bits and pieces on a wide range of subjects.

I think, too, that a full confession of my writing activities must include also an absurd hope that my efforts may by some means help affairs to move in the right direction. They may spread a little truth, or a little knowledge, or even make people laugh. Some of the items in the *Bulletin* I remember most are the very human details recorded, including Mary Wedd's account of how Lamb suggested changes in Wordsworth's poems, and how that strong character (no pushover) usually adapted the changes in later editions. And there was Tim Wilson's research on how Lamb, claiming to be a total townsman, sometimes leaked and revealed his real love for the English countryside. Our Society is supposed to study Lamb and his circle. Does not that study force upon us a consciousness that the writers in that circle shared in different ways a common characteristic? Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Southey and the rest all in some way strove for a better world. Is that the real meaning of that label 'The Romanticks'? Could we not claim a little of that same quality?

My purpose in writing this is, I hope, clear. I long for more members of our Society to have a go at being writers, and Romanticks too. One need not be highly educated, as long as one sincerely tries and is willing to learn. Small doses may be valued as highly as large ones.

I do hope, too, that laughter is not excluded. After all, if you asked any six English people what they know or think about Charles Lamb, five of them would think hard and then say, 'Roast Pig'. The keystone of Charles' bequest to us all was a rather weak joke, deftly presented by someone who understood how most of us really prize a joke, however slight a one.

*London*

#### DEPARTING MUSIC

*By George Darley*

Its sweetness fell away  
 Into the calm of night, like the last wave  
 That, as the rustling wind blows smoothly o'er,  
 Spreads wide and wider, - till it lose itself  
 Upon the heaveless bosom of the sea.  
 I listened - it was gone! And yet methought  
 Its echoes, by the ether still undrowned,  
 Made some far ocean-music in mine ear:  
 But no! - 'twas Memory, so fond to raise  
 Vain semblances of joys now supulchred  
 In the great gloomy Past, the gorge of Time -  
 Then came one sound, one lost, forgotten sound,  
 That vanished by me, as a midnight bird  
 Fleeting upon its dark wing fast away!

## Reviews

PATRICK J. KEANE, *Coleridge's Submerged Politics - The Ancient Mariner and Robinson Crusoe*. University of Missouri Press: Columbia and London, 1994. Pp. xiii + 419. ISBN 0 8262 0942 4. £35.95.

'I AM SORRY you are so sparing of praise to the "Ancient Marinere";- so far from calling it, as you do, with some wit, but more severity, "A Dutch Attempt" &c., I call it a right English attempt, and a successful one, to dethrone German sublimity.' Thus Charles Lamb to Southey. And again: 'I totally differ from your idea that the Marinere should have had a character and profession. - This is a Beauty in Gulliver's Travels, where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the *Ancient Marinere* undergoes such *Trials*, as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was.- Like the state of a man in a *Bad dream*, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone.' Thus Charles Lamb to Wordsworth. Patrick J. Keane announces in his introduction that he sees himself as an embattled mediator: 'Negotiating Common Ground in the Culture Wars.' Perhaps Lamb saw himself 200 years ago in much the same way. Like Lamb, Keane is concerned to find a middle way between 'reactionaries' and 'radicals'. But, of course, times have changed. Lamb's criticism brilliantly sought out the very heart of the poem, and affirmed it even against Coleridge's friendly detractors. In so doing, it seems to me, he set a bench-mark for all future critics. Keane, on the other hand, acknowledges that throughout his criticism he has been driven 'literally, to the marginal'. He sees himself, in a telling image for criticism in our times, as Wallace Stevens' listener in the snow: 'perceiving "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is".' His book might fairly be described as *Much Ado about Nothing*, provided we see that title as nonpejorative and allow the original Shakespearean undermeaning of *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Professor Keane's understandable concern with current Transatlantic cultural anxieties leads him to nail his own radical humanist colours to the mast at the start of his journey. The 'classic texts' behind his work are C. L. R. James' *The Black Jacobins* and E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. The first half of his book is really a protracted secular meditation, from this honourable position, on Coleridge's late marginalia to *Robinson Crusoe*, now accessible in George Whalley's opening volume to the definitive Bollingen Edition. Starting from where he does, it is hardly surprising that Professor Keane's focus is on what S.T.C. did not write. 'Coleridge's failure to say a word about Crusoe's involvement in slavery and the slave trade' puzzles him, particularly when placed beside S.T.C.'s emphasis in the notes on 'Crusoe as Everyman'. Professor Keane's meditation on this Coleridgean lacuna fills out some 165 pages, and carries the reader over a wide, wide sea. An entertaining journey for the most part, since he is keen of mind as of name. His academic habit of all-inclusiveness may lead him to lard his arguments with allusive asides and parentheses, and his own marginalia may sometimes pile Ossa on Pelion so that footnotes spill across the pages. A stylistic trick of italicizing words, or even parts of words, to catch a speech emphasis adds to the sense that this writer simply cannot leave his text alone. But then, neither could Coleridge! And Professor Keane looks like a good classroom teacher, the inflections of whose voice are worth hearing.

His meditation reminds us, in passing, of familiar and less familiar ironies: how Coleridge and Wordsworth probably first met in the town house of a West Indian slave-owning family, the Pinneys, or how, by 1801, Coleridge even hoped to emigrate with Wordsworth and Southey to the family's estates on St Nevis, where the three might become

'sinecure Negro-drivers at a hundred a year each.'<sup>7</sup> But its main thrust is to pursue the perception that both *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Ancient Mariner* were fictions of 'pure imagination' - works certainly moral, but irreducible to a simple moral. What, for Keane, unites these works is 'their depiction of existential loneliness'. And there, surely, *mutatis mutandis*, Lamb would have agreed.

However, Professor Keane also seeks to show that both works contain a layer of covert political meaning. In pursuing this theme he sometimes indulges in overheated political gesturings by which at least one reader found himself distracted: "*Robinson Crusoe* gathered together in one man the history of all mankind." Thus spake Adolf Hitler.' ('Oh, really? And who would you rather be - Man Friday on Crusoe's island or a Jew in Hitler's Germany?'); or this extraordinarily wild effusion (even by Coleridgean standards) when poor Chatterton's church of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, suddenly becomes a slave-ship: 'Often, while the members of the prosperous merchant congregation, many of them engaged in the English sugar slave trade, listened piously to the sermon in the upper church, in the basement down below groaning slaves were writhing in chains.' (One of the very few assertions in the book not supported by a footnote. But where did the Professor get it from?)

Keane is at his best when, for example, his academic thoroughness leads him to quote a little-known manuscript version of the beautiful 1828 gloss to Part Three of the *Mariner*: 'No twilight within the courts of the Sun.' He cites from the copy of *Sibylline Leaves* now at Harvard and inscribed 'Highgate, 29 July 1820' STC's note:

Within the tropics there is no twilight. At the moment, the second, that the Sun sinks, the Stars appear all at once *as if at the word of a command announced by the evening Gun, in our W. India Islands.*

But his own gloss on this curious detail reads it as evidence for linking the poem's image of the 'bloody Sun' with Eurocentric colonialism.

The second half of the book takes as its epigraph a statement of René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*: 'To examine a work of art . . . [is] to discover what the work *omits* as much as - if not more than - what it includes. This is surely the first step in any critical venture.' Keane, having dealt with an absence from S.T.C.'s expected marginalia on *Crusoe*, now turns to read *The Ancient Mariner* for what in the modern cliché might be called a hidden agenda. He finds three 'signposts to what the poem was ostensibly *omitting*.' The first of these is the underwater 'rumbling' which precedes the sinking of the Mariner's ship in Part VII. The second is the encounter with the hulk bearing Death and Life-in-Death in Part III, and, more specifically, the moment of horror when the Mariner sights the spectre-bark's bare masts through which the setting sun peers 'As if thro' a dungeon grate'. The third is the climactic moment in Part IV when the Mariner blesses the water-snakes 'unaware'. Keane claims that in all three moments submerged, unconscious political motifs are at work. His reading is certainly subtle and supple enough to help us all towards a fuller awareness of Coleridge's poem as a living, evolving text, much as the poet himself came to see it in later life - an organism full of intransigent yet suggestive depths.

The critical treatment of the chosen 'signposts', however, seems uneven. The rumbling underwater is examined in relation to images of whirlpool, earthquake and volcano in early S.T.C., where they are frequently equated with political upheaval. It is certainly shrewd to relate *The Mariner* to its near contemporary *The Raven*, that oddly cryptic political parable

<sup>7</sup> *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71), ii 747-8.

which appeared in *The Morning Post* for 10 March 1798. But it seems far-fetched to infer from this that the sinking of the Mariner's ship might, in any sense, suggest: 'the counter-revolutionary Ship of State steered by a prime minister who set his nation against that force of nature, the French Revolution.'

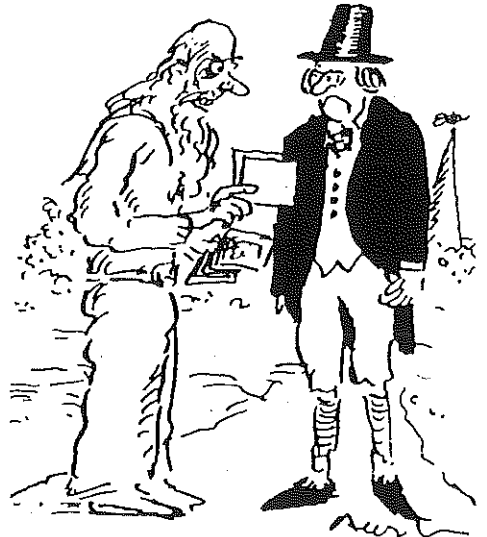
Keane's treatment of the 'dungeon gate' image calls attention to a real fear Coleridge and Wordsworth may have had of imprisonment in the 1797/8 period. But in concentrating on the political, he perhaps does less than justice to the earlier Christ's Hospital undertones of the image to which John Beer drew attention 20 years ago in his fine Bicentenary lecture, *Ice and Spring: Coleridge's Imaginative Education*. (Curiously, in his understandable preoccupation with current literary critical and political conflicts, Professor Keane sometimes fails to focus sharply enough on suggestive local details. If there is little sense of the Christ's Hospital past - surely a permanent present for S.T.C.? - and a rather crudely gesturing awareness of the Bristol scene - all those slaves groaning in the crypt at St. Mary Redcliffe! - there is also a distinct confusion over the geography of West Somerset, which slightly undermines at least a West Country reader's confidence in the picture given of the Stowey period. It is really not very important, but it would be impossible for any stream to flow, as Keane suggests, 'from Holford through Butterfly Combe and Holford Glen', since one lies upstream and the other down. Similarly, Coleridge and Wordsworth were unlikely in 1797 to have asked local people if 'the Parrett River . . . was navigable to the Sea'. A short walk into Bridgwater would have reminded them that it was.)

Keane's awareness of the problems inherent in the crucial blessing of the water-snakes seems closer to the kind of alert re-reading Charles Lamb encouraged. The blessing is first simply received 'unaware', but the attribution of this impulse to a 'kind saint', claims Keane, introduces: 'a religious sanction extending (most overtly in the "moral" and subsequent prose gloss) to the whole of the poem's otherwise uncanny and inexplicable universe.' Keane neatly sums up the later prose glosses as 'the first prose attempt to tame and order the poem', and his own observations wisely refuse to do just that.

So, at least Two Cheers for Patrick J. Keane! One for his sturdy and well-armed defence of a literary humanist position amid the gunfire of the contemporary Wild West saloon. A second for his intelligent insistence that we relate the great Coleridge poems to things we may already know but too often ignore. Bromides about the *annus mirabilis* take insufficient account of the real political and psychological pressures of the Stowey period. We may agree with Professor Keane in his belief that: 'a man haunted by . . . the French revolution and its . . . repercussions in England in the 1790s . . . could not simply turn off the current of political ideas and images.' We may disagree about precisely how that particular current runs through his great poems. But we must surely join with him in acknowledging 'the endlessly dialectical, or serpentine, nature of Coleridgean unity-within-diversity, which every reader of Coleridge recognizes . . .' Every reader, that is, since Charles Lamb.

*Nether Stowey*

REGGIE WATERS



'Here's some of the crew and here's yours truly with the albatross.'

MAURICE CRANSTON. *The Romantic Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994. ISBN 0 631 19471 1. Pp. 170. Hardback £24; paperback £11.99.

THE STRUCTURAL PREMISE of Professor Cranston's book is much the same as held sway in the early nineteenth century, through what George Henry Lewes described as the 'European reputation' of August Wilhelm Schlegel. His *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* proposed a division of art along classic-romantic (and, at a secondary level, pagan-Christian) lines. Like Schlegel's, Cranston's dualism is of the frankly 'given' sort: we all know what we mean, and there is no need to interrogate that 'pesky word', Romanticism, as M. H. Abrams calls it. Occasionally, this makes for loose usage - as in the notion that Napoleon had 'classical' tastes, but a 'romantic' personality. On the whole, though, the dichotomy is perfectly workable, and works best where the apple of discord is there for the picking, as with Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, or the Great Musical Debate between Rousseau and Rameau in pre-Revolutionary France. This last provides Cranston with a very interesting and - to me, at least - unexpected opening gambit: Rousseau is the first Romantic, on the grounds, not of his *Discourse on Inequality* or *Nouvelle Héloïse*, but his still earlier career as a composer and musicologist. His dispute with Jean-Philippe Rameau, the doyen of the musical Right, developed out of the *querelle des Bouffons*, which had flared between the adherents of the mathematically theorized harmonies of neo-classical French opera, and the champions of the new melodic freedoms of Italian *opera buffa*.

It is Cranston's expertise in Political Science, the field in which he officially practised, that yields the real discoveries. He demonstrates two important determinations of Romanticism: firstly, that it is a movement of the right as well as of the left, and sometimes, as in the legitimist Restoration of post-1815 France, of both at once; secondly, that, though a world-movement, it has strongly provincial and nationalist instincts, driven by the statelessness of nineteenth-century 'Germany' and 'Italy'. The role of Romanticism in the formation of national cultures is a vivid and rivetting story. In the case of Italy, betrayed by her French masters into Austrian rule and censorship, the story includes the formation of the national language itself.

Cranston's 'Movement', then, is less monolithic than his title might suggest. Apart from its assumed opposition to Classicism and Reason, his Romanticism is a healthily contested term. Although the concept is pan-European, individual chapters are allocated national boundaries - German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, placed in rough order of chronological precedence, and framed, at either end, by 'The First Romantics' and 'Late Romanticism' (Russian, Eastern European, and American). This arrangement allows for considerable flexibility, both internationally and internally. The latest born of Cranston's Romanticisms, the Spanish, turns out also to have been the earliest, since its ancestral spirit is found in the Moorish poets and Provençal troubadours of the ninth to the twelfth centuries.

Within chapters, the volume breaks down into a series of thumb-nail sketches, of one or two pages each, and of nearly every significant figure in late eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century Europe. At times one is tempted to cry out with Blake, 'Enough - or too much', mostly where the attempt to combine literary practice with potted biography has a *Reader's Digest* effect. That said, *The Romantic Movement* covers an immense area of literature in the lucid and easy manner gathered from a lifetime's learning and experience. It also manages an occasional glance at other disciplines: there are interesting pages on the influence of Walter Scott on the historiographers of Bourbon France, for instance; as well as snippets on the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, and the neo-classical portraits of Napoleon by David and Ingres.

Odd facts stand out: Diderot and Herder reading Burke's *Inquiry into the Sublime*; Napoleon's edict forbidding the Italian churches to bury their dead; his suppression of *De l'Allemagne*; Mazzini's getting Foscolo by heart; Gladstone's love of Leopardi. Cranston is fertile in such connections, and makes the most of the historical links provided by the German schools, of *Sturm und Drang*, the *Jenaer Kreis* and *Jungere Romantik*, and by the Italian *Risorgimento*. The French, too, have their *Muse française*, though here we are rightly more aware of the ideological breaks and about-turns set in train by the Revolution. There is a *mater familias*, in the person of Mme de Staël, and a recurrent theme, in the genealogy of the *roman de l'individu*, which Cranston ingeniously traces from its origin in *La nouvelle Héloïse*, to Goethe's *Werther*, and thence, through various permutations in style and politics, to the novels of Friedrich Schlegel, Chateaubriand, Mme de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Emily Brontë, and Ugo Foscolo.

As one might expect from the biographer of Rousseau, Cranston is at home on the Continent, and especially among the clubbable or controversial elements of German, French and Italian romanticism, where the writers are theoretically-minded and there is often a philosopher on hand to do the explaining. Cranston is good at making swift, intelligible links between the German poets and their philosopher-kings, Kant and Fichte; or between the successive waves of French romantics and their dramatically shifting political scene. He is less happy with the heterogenous and untheoretical components of 'English' Romanticism (which somehow contrives to derive itself from the Irish Burke). Although Cranston starts from the promising idea that English Romanticism grew out of right- and left-wing interpretations of Burke, the links do not prove strong enough to hold. To a native reader, this is the least satisfactory section, the survey facile where it is not actually erroneous. That our motley crew seems to rock the European boat is indicative in itself, perhaps. We are all Europeans now, of course, but Cranston might have done better to leave the English out of it, and name his book 'The European Romantic Movement'.

Sadly, this is a posthumous publication; hence, presumably, the very 'select' bibliography, and the total absence of primary sources. For readability, and an informed and informing general study, however, *The Romantic Movement* can hardly be bettered.

*St Catherine's College, Oxford*

NICOLA TROTT

## Society News and Notes from Members

### *Florence Reeves*

Having read the comments on Florence Reeves by Madeline Huxstep and Winifred Courtney I would like to add a little from another point of view. I knew Florence because I was trained as a teacher with her at Avery Hill College. In June 1940 trains were again taking London children to 'safe areas' and as a teacher I travelled to Penzance with hundreds of children, helpers and other teachers. Florence was on the same train and we met in Ludgvan with our charges the next day at the local school. She was billeted at a farm nearby and stayed there all her time in Cornwall. In later years she would often return there for her holidays. She and a headmaster from London had the Juniors and Seniors in a disused school and I was established with the Infants in a small wooden hut a little way down the hill. The view of Marazion, St Michael's Mount, and the bay was always breathtaking, and the children watched the convoys - counting the ships and waiting for the invasion. It was a big change for Florence, who, like Charles Lamb, was a true Londoner, and though she adapted well, was glad after several years to return there.

As we taught the same children all day and every day, my let-out was that when I was about to lose my temper, I could always say, 'Go to Miss Reeves, I don't want you here.' In half an hour or so the child would return and we could start again. Occasionally Miss Reeves would do the same - 'You can go down to the babies' - but I was the younger and less experienced. We did a lot together, took the children onto the hills or to the small area of undefended beach, visited the foster homes, sorted out problems and clothes. She knitted a scarf for my naval friend, who was in the Indian Ocean. (I've been married to him now for 50 years.)

She introduced me to the Charles Lamb Society. I had 'done' his essays at school and one of the masters had made them come alive. He is now over 90, but I pass the *Bulletin* on to him. When we returned to London, she provided the cot for our first baby. It has since been used for many other babies. I was able to go with her to the occasional dinner and some of the meetings of the Society. When we moved away we kept in touch, our shared Christian faith adding to our firm and long friendship. She was certainly ready to go 'home'.

Gene John

#### FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

*Book Sale* and buffet lunch on Saturday 8 April 1995 from 11.30am to 3pm at Putney United Reformed Church, Upper Richmond Road, Putney (see January *Bulletin*).

*Annual General Meeting* on Saturday 29 April 1995 at 2.30pm at the Mary Ward Centre, Queen Square, WC1 (please note *change of date* as advised in the January *Bulletin*). Nominations for Officers and members of Council should reach the Hon. Secretary by 22 April.

#### *Alliance of Literary Societies*

Vexingly, this AGM also takes place on 29 April at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. The Forum will be hosted by the Friends of Keats House to mark Keats' bicentenary year. Any members who would prefer this AGM to our own (no way of putting this tactfully!) are asked to contact Madeline Huxstep (081 940 3837) - the Society will refund delegates' fees, travelling expenses, and cost of buffet lunch.

#### *Wordsworth Winter School, 5-10 February 1995*

Grasmere was at its most serene, with mild temperatures and picturesque snow on the hilltops. The more energetic could enjoy fell walking in the afternoons, while the less active had tours of the lakes, Rydal Mount (carpets of snowdrops but no daffodils yet), Hawkshead and Carlisle. Of course, the majority of the time was fully occupied with lectures, poetry readings, and seminars, with the bookstall an ever-present temptation. The theme for 1995 was *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). Lectures by Mary Wedd, Gordon Thomas, Nicola Trott, Seamus Perry, Molly Lefebure, Duncan Wu and Richard Clancey were all memorable and will, it is hoped, appear in future issues of the *Bulletin*. Jonathan Wordsworth's after-dinner readings of the poems to be enjoyed next day were a delight.

A stirring speech from Duncan Wu alerted his hearers (about 60) to the fact that half of the participants in the Winter School were already members of the Charles Lamb Society - 'You are probably sitting next to one!' Even so, our Membership Secretary, Audrey Moore, succeeded in enfolded several new members to whom we give a warm welcome. All present joined with Tim Wilson on the eve of Lamb's birthday in drinking the traditional toast to 'The Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb'. Your Hon. Secretary was especially pleased on her first visit to secure three outstanding speakers for our 1995/6 programme. This was a

wonderful opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones (very Elian!). Our grateful thanks are due to Sylvia Wordsworth for the flawless organization of these five days.

Lamb's approval of the event is indicated by a newly discovered, and hitherto unpublished fragment of a letter by him. Internal evidence suggests that it was addressed to Wordsworth, possibly dating from the autumn of 1802:

Mary and I were sorry that during our visit to the Lakes in August you were not at Dove Cottage [*tear in the manuscript at this point*] we understood that family matters necessitated your presence in Calais. I have already written to my friend Manning giving my impressions of the Lakes. Could it be that in nearly 200 years' time friends yet unborn will gather at Grasmere to celebrate the Lyrical Ballads of 1800? I fear I continue an unrepentant Londoner but I shall certainly be in spirit at Grasmere to celebrate the eve of my 220th birthday among such a company of friends. C. Lamb

#### FROM THE EDITOR

##### *Testament of a Twentieth-Century Capitalist*

I am grateful to Frank Ledwith, who has many friends within the Society, for sending me an offprint of his 'Testament of a Twentieth-Century Capitalist', published in *Sino American Relations*, an international quarterly published by the Chinese Culture University of Taiwan. It is heartening that, despite recent calamities, Frank's career as a commentator on current affairs and history continues apace. This is, he tells me, his sixth article to have appeared in that journal; others have concerned the Japanese economic miracle, science fiction, democracy in NATO, and the armed forces. His career as a writer on matters Elian also continues, I am pleased to say, with the publication, in this number of the *Bulletin*, of 'On Being a Writer'.

##### *Rebekah Owens: An Elian Shakespearian*

An Elian in Stratford, Rebekah Owens, would like to meet other admirers of Lamb in the area; she writes: 'I am studying for my MA at the Shakespearian Institute - so I guess that makes me an Elian Shakespearian! If any other Elians would like to get in touch, I can be contacted at The Shakespearian Institute, Mason Croft, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warks CV37 6HP.'

##### *The Arden Shakespeare*

The first three titles in the third edition of the Arden Shakespeare were published on 16 March. This was a noteworthy occasion for us as, of the three titles published, two were edited by Elians: *Titus Andronicus*, edited by Jonathan Bate; and *Henry V*, edited by T. W. Craik. The third title is *Antony and Cleopatra*, edited by John Wilders. Each is distinguished by new texts and helpful footnotes at the bottom of each page. As a compulsive indexer myself, I am pleased also to find that each volume, unlike those in previous series, has a comprehensive index. Congratulations to Tom and Jonathan on their work - a review of which will appear in these pages, probably in July.

##### *The Kilve Court Study Weekend, 8-10 September 1995*

The Friends of Coleridge announce that their excellent study weekend, held annually at Kilve Court, will this year take place on 8-10 September. The topic will be *The Ancient Mariner* (or should it be *The Ancyent Marinere?*), and speakers will include David Jesson-Dibley, Peter Kitson, Peter Larkin, Tom Mayberry, Seamus Perry and Mary Wedd. There will also be readings and Quantock walks, and a special 'Ancient Mariner walk' sketch-map will be

provided, with suggested bed and breakfast accommodation, for those who wish to prolong the weekend by exploring the West Somerset and North Devon coast. This event is strongly recommended for anyone interested in discovering more about one of the greatest poems in the language in the locale in which it was first composed. Further details may be obtained from Mrs Shirley Watters, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN.

#### *News from Japan*

I am grateful to Professor Yasuhiko Ozawa of Shizuoka University, one of our most distinguished Elian bibliographers, for sending to the Society collection at the Guildhall library an offprint of his latest 'Bibliography of Reviews of the Works of Charles Lamb in the British and American Periodicals (2) 1935-1993', which appeared in *Studies in the Humanities* No. 45-2, for January 1995, published by the Department of Language and Literature at Shizuoka University. In his introduction, Professor Ozawa writes: 'It is my pleasure if this Bibliography would be of some use to those who are and will be interested in the works and personality of this British essayist and in the responses of the past readers for two hundred years to their literary companion in life.' This catalogue of critical writings on Lamb, grouped by year, published between 1935 and 1993, has to be one of the most important scholarly publications in the field of Elian studies this year, and I am sure that critics and scholars will regard it as a standard reference for years to come. Professor Ozawa is to be congratulated on an impressive, and eminently useful, work of scholarship.

#### *John Keats 1795-1995*

This year being Keats' 200th birthday, there are a number of commemorative events throughout the country. The Friends of Keats House, Hampstead, have produced a detailed calendar. Events of interest to Elians include the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM, featuring our own Edward Preston, among others, at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, on 29 April, 10am-4pm; the Hampstead Keats Festival, 11-25 June; and exhibitions at Grasmere and New Haven, among other places.

#### *News Flash*

Shortly before this *Bulletin* went to press I received an urgent news flash from the Society's Chairman, D. E. Wickham: 'Arrangements are being made for the Chairman to give a talk as part of the 1995 Edmonton People's Arts Festival. Provisional details are that it will be called "Charles Lamb - Local Hero", and that it will be held at Edmonton Green Library, which is in the shopping complex near Lamb's Cottage, at about 7.30pm on Tuesday 27 June 1995. Probably free entry.' Members are strongly urged to attend.

#### *Turner in Germany*

The exhibition, *Turner in Germany*, organized by Cecilia Powell, will be on show at the Clore Gallery for the Turner Collection at the Tate Gallery, London, 23 May-10 September 1995, and members of the Charles Lamb Society are encouraged to visit it. Although Lamb never visited Germany, many of his friends, including Wordsworth and Coleridge, did so. Britain and Germany enjoyed an exceptionally close relationship during Turner's lifetime. In the decades following their joint victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 he travelled extensively throughout the country, recording it in marvellous sketches in both pencil and watercolours. The exhibition contains nearly 150 works covering the whole period of Turner's interest in Germany, from 1817 to the mid-1840s: sketchbooks, watercolours, oil paintings and engravings, not to mention Turner's own books relating to Germany with comments in their margins. The show includes many lovely works newly identified as German scenes and now exhibited for the first time. The accompanying catalogue describes

and illustrates all Turner's German tours including some whose very existence (let alone their dates and details) has hitherto scarcely been recognized. If you're unlucky enough to miss the exhibition in London, it can also be seen in Mannheim (30 September-10 January 1996) and in Hamburg (19 January 1996-25 March 1996). The Tate Gallery is open from 10 to 5.50 from Monday to Saturday, and from 2 to 5.50 on Sunday. Admission is free.

#### *Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon*

Lamb's birthday was celebrated this year on Saturday 18 February at the Royal College of General Practitioners, London SW7. Professor John Beer presided over the 46 members and guests who attended, along with the four Grecians - Kira Cochrane, Sadie Maddocks, Zia Zareem, and Lee Zimmer - all of whom gave up part of their half-term in order to share in the celebrations. The Guest of Honour was Irene Gilchrist, Principal Reference Librarian at the Guildhall Library, who delivered a talk on the Charles Lamb Collection. It was good to see, among the guests, Deborah Hedgecock, the author of the handlist issued with the January *Bulletin*. It was a happy and appropriate way to celebrate not just the 60th birthday of the Society as a whole, but the final installation and cataloguing of the collection.

#### SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

##### *The Lambs' Dwelling in Covent Garden: A Footnote*

As a footnote to D. E. Wickham's 'The Lambs' Dwelling in Covent Garden - An Old Controversy Settled', in *CLB NS* 89 (1995) 53, I find that Lamb himself was uncharacteristically explicit on the subject when writing to Benjamin Robert Haydon: '20 Russell Court, Covent Garden, East. Half-way up, near the corner, Left-hand side' (Everyman edition of *The Letters of Elia*, vol. 1, p. 371). On p. 369 of this edition there is a lively drawing by Herbert Railton of the two buildings. Patrick O'Leary

##### *Coleridge's Speechifying - A Possible Source*

You may recall the anecdote, repeated in Chapter 50 of E. V. Lucas' *Life of Charles Lamb*, of how Coleridge took Lamb by the coat-button while speaking, closed his eyes, did not notice that the button had been cut off the coat, and was still speaking to it five hours later. Lucas says that the story is untrue but gives an excellent sidelight on Coleridge's later conversational manner.

The Samuel Morris Rich Collection contains a cutting from *T.P.'s Weekly* for 13 October 1905 which suggests that Charles Lamb's 'delicious flam' may have been borrowed from Lord Liverpool's experience of an orator in the House of Commons. In the 1783 Parliament David Hartley was the member for Hull and his rising to speak was an invariable signal for the House to disperse: he was a regular dinner-bell.

'The unimpeachable Wraxall' declares, and the *Dictionary of National Biography* implies, that the story would have come from Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's *Posthumous Memoirs*, that one summer evening Mr Jenkinson, as Lord Liverpool then was, decided that, as Hartley was speaking, there was plenty of time to:

1. Walk from the House of Commons to his residence in Parliament Street.
2. Order his horse.
3. Ride down to his country residence, which at that time might have been as close as, say, Ealing or Richmond or Putney.
4. Dine there.
5. Stroll leisurely about the grounds for an hour or two.
6. Return to London.

7. Send his servant to the House to ask if there was any chance of an immediate division, i.e. a vote at which he would have to be present.
8. Learn that the member for Hull was still speaking.
9. Re-enter the House five hours after quitting it and find Hartley still speaking, without interruption and in precisely the same place and attitude.

D. E. Wickham

### New Members

The Society warmly welcomes the following new members:

Antonia Hart	Miss Helen Osborne	Miss M. Williams
Hadan Dong University	Ms Unity Spencer	Mr Michael Laplace-Sinatra
Miss Ruth Mead	Mr Frank McManus	Miss Mollie Platt
Miss Adele Mitchell	Mr Basil De Mel	Professor Y. Mitani

### 50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No. 66 (Tenth Year) April 1945

The Charles Lamb Society's Tenth Birthday celebrations took place on 10 February 1945 in the Lounge of the YWCA, Gt. Russell Street, followed by tea. Inclusive charge: 2s. Lord David Cecil presided. A presentation was made to E. G. Crowsley, during which was read the following poem composed for the occasion by Edmund Blunden.

#### *On C. Lamb's Birthday, 1945*

Speak, ELIA, from afar, with eyes still bent  
 Upon this world, upon this London most,  
 And, say, though Fame's a dream, you are content  
 That many still so love your gentle ghost.

We have your blessing whom your genius here  
 Assembles; honour springs beneath your name,  
 And one in special finds it year by year,  
 Who called for numbers, and the numbers came.

One who has thought no drudgery too much  
 So he might spread the light which shone in you;  
 Among your oldest friends we find some such,  
 TALFOURD, HOOD, MOXON; add we CROWSLEY too.

What singing troops and sweet societies  
 Surround you now we know not, we may guess  
 You steal away from them to smile on his,  
 And charmed by him might even agree to address

The Meeting! But even now he waits to win  
 New members to the fold, and rally old;  
 You shall peruse his list - but you begin  
 By penning CROWSLEY there in characters of gold.