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The Charles Lamb Society was founded on 1 February 1935 at a meeting at Essex Hall in The Strand. Its first President was Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Today, the Society aims to advance the study of the life, works, and times of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle; to preserve for the public a collection of Eliana (currently held at Guildhall Library, London); and to stimulate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour.

The Society holds a series of events each year in London, including lectures, study days, and a Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon. The Society also publishes the biannual peer-review journal, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*. For further information please contact the Chairman, Nick Powell (nrdpowell@gmail.com).

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The Charles Lamb Bulletin

Spring 2014

New Series No. 159

'Let us cultivate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour'

A Disputed Portrait of Charles Lamb by John Watson-Gordon
SCOTT McEATHRON

The Comic Imagination in Lamb and Coleridge
GREGORY LEADBETTER

Apprehending George Dyer in 'Amicus Redivivus': Charles Lamb on Miltonic Visionary Poetics
MATTHEW VICKLESS

Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver*: A Riposte to William Godwin
HILARY NEWMAN

Lines Crossed: Walter Savage Landor and William Wordsworth
DAVID CHANDLER

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'Popular Fallacies'
IX. That the worst puns are the best

... A pun is not bound by the laws which limit nicer wit. It is a pistol let off at the ear; not a feather to tickle the intellect. It is an antic which does not stand upon manners, but comes bounding into the presence, and does not show the less comic for being dragged in sometimes by the head and shoulders. What though it limp a little, or prove defective in one leg - all are better. A pun may easily be too curious and artificial. Who has not at one time or other been at a party of professors (himself perhaps an old offender in that line), where, after ringing a round of the most ingenious conceits, every man contributing his shot, and some there the most expert shooters of the day; after making a poor *word* run the gauntlet till it is ready to drop; after hunting and winding it through all the possible ambages of similar sounds; after squeezing, and hauling, and tugging at it, till the very milk of it will not yield a drop further, - suddenly some obscure, unthought-of fellow in a corner, who was never 'prentice to the trade, whom the company for very pity passed over, as we do a known poor man when a money-subscription is going round, no one calling upon him for his quota - has all at once come out with something so whimsical, yet so pertinent; so brazen in its pretensions, yet so impossible to be denied; so exquisitely good, and so deplorably bad, at the same time, - that is has proved a Robin Hood's shot; any thing ulterior to that is despaired of; and the party breaks up, unanimously voting it to be the very worst (that is best) pun of the evening. This species of wit is better for not being perfect in all its parts ...

Charles Lamb

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

New Series, No. 159, Spring 2014

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SIR JOHN WATSON GORDON, R.A., P.R.S.A.

SCOTTISH: 1788—1864

33. *PORTRAIT OF CHARLES LAMB*

Slender figure of the essayist, painted at half-length within an oval. He looks toward the observer, and wears a black double-breasted jacket revealing a glimpse of a white collar.

Inscribed at upper left, CHARLES LAMB, AETAT 30, 1805

Height, 30 inches; width, 25 inches

Property of the Estate of Joseph Pulitzer and Kate Davis Pulitzer

[See illustration above]

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Reputed portrait of Charles Lamb by John Watson-Gordon, c. 1805. American Art Association, 1929 (courtesy of Sotheby's).

A Disputed Portrait of Charles Lamb by John Watson-Gordon

Scott McEathron

Over the past two years, an early nineteenth-century oil portrait, putatively of Charles Lamb and putatively by John Watson-Gordon, has made two brief but abortive appearances on the London auction market. If the identification of sitter and artist were to be proven accurate, Lamb scholars would be looking at a major new piece of Lamb portraiture - arguably, the single most important piece. Watson-Gordon (1788-1864), the Scottish artist famed for his portraits of Walter Scott, James Hogg, John Wilson, and others, would assuredly be ranked as the most accomplished artist to have painted Lamb, and the work's 1805 date would place it adjacent in time to the most familiar representation of Lamb, the 1804 portrait by William Hazlitt on permanent exhibit at the National Portrait Gallery. With so much of the iconography of Lamb existing in the form of sketches, caricatures, and mediocre paintings, a well-preserved Watson-Gordon oil portrait would be nothing short of a revelation.

There are many reasons to believe, however, that both the identification of the sitter as Charles Lamb and the attribution of the portrait to Watson-Gordon are mistaken. This essay lays out the evidence for this assessment, with reference to the painting's provenance, the career of Watson-Gordon, and the larger history of visual representations of Lamb. I conclude, briefly, by noting a recent change in the painting's designation that has been suggested by Sotheby's, a change that serves as an important acknowledgment of the uncertainties surrounding the work.

The portrait is in oil on canvas, measuring 30 x 25 inches, with the sitter placed within a painted oval. It is reproduced here as it appeared in a 1929 New York sale catalogue.[1] The sitter is a young man with brown hair, turned mostly to the front, with the right side of his face partly shadowed. He bears some superficial resemblance to Hazlitt's Lamb; he is of a comparable age, with hair of roughly the same length and a similar nose. But the overall impression is one of difference rather than similarity: the sitter is distinctly fairer, with lighter, nearly auburn hair and eyes that appear to be blue.

Two primary pieces of evidence underwrite the assertion that this is a Watson-Gordon portrait of the essayist. The first is an inscription on the portrait naming the sitter as Lamb, aged 30. The second is the above-mentioned sale catalogue, recording the portrait's limited but seemingly impeccable provenance: formerly in the hands of 'Joseph Pulitzer and Kate Davis Pulitzer', it was sold at their estate sale on January 10, 1929, at an auction conducted by the American Art

[1] *Oil Paintings. Collection of the Late Joseph & Kate Davis Pulitzer* (New York, 1929), 34. Catalogue image courtesy of Sotheby's. The reputed portrait can also be viewed electronically through the E-Catalogue for Sotheby's Old Master & British Paintings Day Sale, London, 5 July 2012. <www.sothebys.com/es/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/old-master-british-paintings-day-sale-l12034/lot.296.html>.

Association. These elements were significant enough to merit the work's mention in the section of Lamb iconography compiled by Richard Walker for *Regency Portraits* (1985). But Walker's judgment, which he delivers without elaboration, is one of scepticism:

> *Undated*
> Oil by J. Watson Gordon formerly in the Pulitzer collection and sold New York 10 January 1929 (33), H[alf] L[ength] as a young man in an oval, in similar garment to NPG 507 by Hazlitt, inscribed top left: *Charles Lamb / Aetat 30 / 1805*, but identity doubtful.[2]

Walker's doubt was well justified. The first issue is, effectively, the entire history of Lamb scholarship. As far as I can determine, apart from the Pulitzer catalogue there is no mention anywhere of Lamb's having been painted by Watson-Gordon – not in Lamb's letters, nor in any other nineteenth-century account, nor, to put the matter plainly, in any piece of writing ever published. The record is a complete blank, lacking even the slightest off-hand remark or speculation. (I am discounting auto-generated internet postings of the copy from the recent London sale listings.)

Consider just how unlikely such an omission would be. Hazlitt painted Lamb in the autumn of 1804, a fact recorded contemporaneously in a letter from Mary Lamb to Sara Coleridge, and referenced later by Lamb himself and several others.[3] It is not plausible that within a few months Lamb could have again sat for his portrait, this time for the artist who would emerge as the leading portrait painter of Romantic-era Scotland, with this fact never coming to light. From the other side, it is equally unlikely that art historians would celebrate Watson-Gordon's portrait of Thomas De Quincey as one of the great works of his career while never realizing that he also painted his fellow Romantic essayist Charles Lamb. In 1805 Watson-Gordon was just seventeen years old, and still a student; his first exhibition piece did not appear until 1808. And though he would become focused on portraiture in the 1820s, at the beginning of his career he was primarily a history and genre painter. Thus his double-portrait *Baroness Nairne and her Son William Murray Nairne*, dating from c. 1815, is considered an 'early' example of his portraiture.[4] It seems unlikely, to say the least, that he could have painted Lamb fully a decade earlier. This is to say nothing of the question of how these two men were supposedly to have met (in Edinburgh? in London?) and entered into an arrangement for a sitting. It does no good to attempt an end-run around the 1805 date. The sitter is clearly a young man – younger than thirty, in my estimation – so even if by the remotest of chances he is the essayist Charles Lamb, the painting must date from the very earliest years of the nineteenth century.

Given these serious reasons for doubt, why might this identification persist? The answer appears to be the mesmerizing effect of the Pulitzer name. Sotheby's recent account of the painting's provenance lists only the Pulitzer estate sale, with nothing earlier or later. The 1929 catalogue copy for that sale assigns the painting straightforwardly to 'Sir John Watson Gordon, 1788-1864, R.A., P.R.S.A.', and contains none of the hedging language used to cover uncertain cases – no 'Attributed to' or 'Studio of' or 'Scottish School'. The alleged portrait of Lamb is said to depict the 'Slender figure of the essayist, painted at half-length within an oval. He looks toward the observer, and wears a black double-breasted jacket revealing a glimpse of a white collar'.[5] The catalogue does not indicate how the painting had come into the possession of the Pulitzers, though we can presume that they too had been persuaded by the work's inscription.

Yet a closer look at the Pulitzer collection only serves further to undermine the attribution, and in new ways. The collection's major works were named in a *New York Times* report of November 1912 describing the final valuation of Joseph Pulitzer's estate. (Pulitzer had died in October 1911; the net value of the estate, including his interests in two newspapers, *The New York World* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, was estimated at nearly $17,000,000.) The *Times* story concludes with a paragraph about Pulitzer's art holdings that is worth citing in full. It begins by naming three works of disputed authenticity, and concludes with mention of a portrait of Charles Lamb – a portrait attributed not to John Watson-Gordon, but to an earlier Scottish portraitist, Henry Raeburn (1756-1823), who had once been Watson-Gordon's teacher. In reading through this account, it is important to note that the majority of the named works did go on to become part of the Pulitzer estate sale in 1929:[6]

> There was some disagreement about Mr. Pulitzer's collection of paintings. James P. Townsend, editor and publisher of The American Art News, pronounced the Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington in Mr. Pulitzer's collection to be a copy, and appraised it at $300. He also expressed some doubt as to the genuineness of the portrait of Mrs. Siddons, by Hoppner of the Royal Academy. George Ledlie, who was Mr. Pulitzer's art agent, said he himself doubted the genuineness of the portrait of W. Hogarth, by himself, for which Mr. Pulitzer paid $800, and which Mr. Townsend said was "a thoroughly good and strong picture worth $2,000." Mr. Ledlie made affidavit that Mr. Pulitzer had paid $1,500 for the disputed Hoppner and $1,350 for the disputed portrait of Washington.
>
> Mr. Ledlie testified that Mr. Pulitzer had paid $13,000 for Titian's half-length portrait of Antonio Grima[n]i, a Doge of Venice, which Mr.

[2] Richard Walker, *Regency Portraits*, 2 vols. (London, 1985), I, 305.

[3] Mary Lamb's letter dates from October 13, 1804, in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 3 vols. (London, 1935), I, 380. For other mentions from Lamb's immediate circle, see *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, 2 vols., ed. Thomas Sadler (Boston, 1869), I, 236n and *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh, 1890), III, 85. When Leigh Hunt in 1827 asked Lamb to suggest a portrait of himself for use in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, Lamb named only the Hazlitt and a later portrait by Henry Meyer as possibilities.

[4] Jennifer Melville, 'Gordon, Sir John Watson- (1788-1864)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11068, accessed 3 Jan 2014].

[5] *Collection of the Late Joseph & Kate Davis Pulitzer*, 34.

[6] Of the paintings named in the *Times* story, only the following were not part of the 1929 auction: the Stuart portrait of Washington, the Hoppner portrait of Mrs Siddons, and the Lawrence portrait of Canova.

> Keeler said was worth $12,000, and Mr. Townsend valued at $17,000. Other paintings in the collection were thus valued by Mr. Keeler without substantial dispute: Beec[he]y's portrait of Sir John Ros[s], $800; Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Canova, $1,000; Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Sir James Gray, $1,100; Raeburn's "Portrait of a Gentleman," $1,000; Raeburn's portrait of Charles Lamb, $1,500; Copley's portrait of Brooks Watson, $1,800, and Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Sir Nathaniel Dance, $750.[7]

Virtually all collections contain some doubtful works, so the uncertainty about the portraits of Washington and Mrs. Siddons cannot be allowed to cast a taint over the entire group. But the reference to 'Raeburn's portrait of Charles Lamb' begs a pointed question: did the Pulitzers have a portrait of Lamb by Henry Raeburn at the time of Joseph Pulitzer's death in 1911, and also have a different, equally mysterious painting of Lamb by John Watson-Gordon that they acquired in the years between 1911 and 1929? Were there truly two different portraits, or was there actually only one?

There was only one. Decisive evidence is found in the catalogue for an earlier New York auction, the 1903 sale of the collection of Henry Marquand, who had served as President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1889 until his death in 1902.[8] The Marquand sale featured a work described as 'Portrait of Charles Lamb' by 'Sir Henry Raeburn, R.A.', and the accompanying picture shows it to be the same work that, twenty-six years later, would be represented as a portrait of Lamb by John Watson-Gordon in the Pulitzer sale.[9] The Marquand catalogue can be viewed online, and I would invite the reader to compare that image both to the Pulitzer catalogue image printed here and to the online image provided by Sotheby's, which offers the clearest view of the object.[10] There is no doubt that all three catalogues show the same work, though one caveat does need mentioning. The reproduction in the Marquand catalogue is quite dark, and is difficult to see in every detail. This is especially true of the oval surround that is prominently visible in the Pulitzer and Sotheby catalogues but heavily shadowed in Marquand. The difficulty in seeing the oval raises the possibility, however unlikely, that the 1929 Pulitzer object was a copy of the 1903 Marquand object, or vice-versa. But in my judgement the facial details of the sitter correspond so exactly that we can be certain we are looking at the same physical object. This correspondance is confirmed by another, slightly clearer image of the portrait that accompanies an article in a 1903 issue of *The Churchman*.[11]

We now need to sort out the credibility of the attribution to Raeburn,

[7] *New York Times*, November 22, 1912, 3.
[8] *Illustrated Catalogue of the Art and Literary Property Collected by the late Henry G. Marquand*, ed. Thomas E. Kirby (New York, 1903).
[9] The portrait is listed as lot 28; it sold for $1,150. *Athenaeum* 3927 (January 31, 1903), 154.
[10] For the Marquand catalogue, see <https://ia601805.us.archive.org/32/items/illustratedcatal00amer_8/illustratedcatal00amer_8.pdf>. The item is lot 28, with description and picture found on pp. 60-1.
[11] *The Churchman* 87 (March 7, 1903), 322. The page image can be viewed at: <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015084614281;view=1up;seq=448>.

regardless of the uncertain identity of the sitter. Archival evidence from the Metropolitan Museum, which holds the papers of Henry Marquand, reveals that the portrait was purchased for Marquand in the spring of 1892 by G. H. Boughton, the Anglo-American artist living in London at 118 Campden Hill Road.[12] A letter from Boughton to Marquand dated May 31, 1892 indicates that Boughton had the portrait in hand and was preparing to ship it, either singly or together with any one of several other works he was considering for Marquand's collection. After a reference to a different painting under consideration, Boughton turns to the alleged Lamb: 'So if the above modest sum tempts you, I can pack it off with the Chas Lamb, which by the way is called a Sir Henry Raeburn, a good man too'.[13] If this letter hints at some scepticism about the Raeburn attribution, the scare quotes Boughton employs in his next surviving letter lead one to wonder if his scepticism has been shifted to the identity of the sitter: 'Your very delightful letter [...] with its enclosures for the "Lamb" came safely to hand', he writes Marquand, 'and I was indeed glad to hear of your safe arrival in "good form"'.[14] Boughton's letters to Marquand are typically crammed with interesting details about the London art market, and the speculative fever that was gripping it. We can only wish that an earlier letter to Marquand, one in which he must have presented a full initial assessment of the 'Chas Lamb', had survived.

Fortuitously, though, I have discovered something almost as good – perhaps in its way, even better. This is a letter sent a decade later by an anonymous reader[15] to the *New York Evening Post* printed under the title 'Probably Not Lamb'.[16] Writing in anticipation of the Marquand sale, the correspondent describes his longstanding doubts about the identity of the portrait's sitter, and encloses a letter from Boughton himself giving the known history of the Raeburn attribution.

> To the Editor of the Evening Post:
> Sir:
> In the collection of the late Henry G. Marquand now being exhibited at the American Art Galleries I was surprised to find No. 28 labelled "Portrait of Charles Lamb," by Sir Henry Raeburn. As all Lamb's contemporaries who mention the matter, refer to his black eyes, sallow complexion and Jewish type of features, I fear there must be some error

[12] Boughton (1833-1905) travelled frequently between the United States, England, and Europe. A painter of considerable talent who was well-known in British artistic circles, Boughton was elected a Royal Academician in 1896. He was associated with the literary world partly through his illustrations to editions of Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Washington Irving. See Martin Hardie, 'Boughton, George Henry (1833-1905)', rev. Olivia Fitzpatrick, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2013 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31984, accessed 7 Jan 2014].
[13] Boughton to Marquand, May 31, 1892. Metropolitan Museum of Art Digital Collection, through <www.metmuseum.org>. Transcript of letter from: <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15324coll13/id/6847/rec/1>.
[14] Boughton to Marquand, June 25, 1892. Metropolitan Museum of Art Digital Collection, through <www.metmuseum.org>. Transcript of letter from: <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15324coll13/id/6848/rec/106>.
[15] As printed, the newspaper letter ends with the initials 'E.D.N.' printed under Boughton's name. Possibly these are the initials of the otherwise anonymous correspondent; clearly the writer is closely connected to the art world. For further speculation, see footnote 18.
[16] 'Probably Not Lamb', *New York Evening Post*, January 20, 1903, 6.

about this portrait, as it gives him blue eyes, brown hair, and a rather ruddy complexion.

In 1893 this fact was communicated to Mr. Marquand in the form of a query, and the letter was sent to Mr. G. H. Boughton, who had purchased the portrait for him. It elicited the following reply, which certainly throws doubt on the authenticity if not fully settling it. It runs as follows:

> I am more than sorry that apart from its surface value as a work of art, and its internal evidence as being from the hand of Raeburn, I have been unable to authenticate the portrait of Charles Lamb, about which you have written me. I need not add that if its pedigree and history could have been proven in a direct line from Raeburn to the ordinary man from whom I got it, the chances are that it would not have been in the "ordinary man's" possession at all.
>
> He got it from a dealer who bought it at a country sale, and there was no record procurable beyond the fact that the previous owner (deceased) had bought it - when or where, no relative knew or cared. I bought it as an undoubted (by myself) work of Raeburn. The name of Charles Lamb in the left-hand upper corner had not much weight in the matter. ... Mr. Marquand liked this as a picture merely and as I did - took the chances of its being the person whose name is signed in full - with date on it.
>
> Yours faithfully,
> G. H. Boughton

Boughton's letter is a marvel of mingled candour and evasion. First evoking vague 'internal evidence' that the portrait is a Raeburn, he then delivers an almost gleefully sceptical account of the dealer's tale. Finally he punts on the issue of the sitter's identity ("The name of Charles Lamb in the left-hand upper corner had not much weight in the matter'), focusing instead on aesthetic merit: 'Mr. Marquand liked this as a picture merely and as I did'. Related doubts about the portrait surfaced in later reports of the Marquand sale. *The New York Times* accepted the Raeburn attribution, but, echoing Boughton, seemed dubious of the Lamb identification: 'Of Raeburn there is a fine, serious young man with that mouth one finds so often in Sir Thomas Lawrence's faces, said to be the likeness of Charles Lamb'.[17] The *Athenaeum* was more pointed, saying, 'The one Raeburn is said to represent Charles Lamb at the age of thirty; but, unfortunately, there is no pedigree

[17] 'The Marquand Collection', *New York Times*, January 14, 1903, 9.

or history of any sort attached to it'.[18] E.V. Lucas seems to have viewed either the portrait itself or the Marquand catalogue shortly after the sale, noting in the first edition of his *Life* (1905) that he had not seen the rumoured Raeburn,[19] but by the 1906 third edition saying: 'Raeburn's portrait resembles Lamb only in the collar, which to the superficial observer recalls that in the picture of Hazlitt. It certainly is not Lamb'.[20]

However one finally gauges the extent of G. H. Boughton's scepticism - the degree to which he was doubtful about sitter, artist, or both - his narrative of his purchase of the work for Henry Marquand makes clear that the nineteenth-century attribution to Raeburn was, from the start, a matter of tenuous speculation.[21] Indeed, it may well be that it was increasing recognition of the doubtfulness of the Raeburn attribution that led the Pulitzer family, or their agents, to switch the attribution to Watson-Gordon in the 1920s, however arbitrary that switch may have been.

Though the Raeburn attribution was relatively short-lived, it also had the unfortunate collateral effect of encouraging one F. H. Clarke, the owner of an unrelated painting, to make a wild claim in *The Bookman* of 1914 that his unidentified work was a portrait of Lamb by Raeburn. Clarke's printed account of his 'discovery' is laughably thin, a litany of wishful thinking:

> Yes, through dirt and varnish, varnish and grime by superimposition at many a spring cleaning, the gentle visage peered out upon me with charming good humour and acute sensibility written clearly in its lines. The very lips, large and whimsical, seemed in the act of stammering out a pun. By the merest lucky accident I had come across it, and I lost no time in making it my own. A life-long study of pictures, a predilection of mine from childhood, and one in which I am helped by what I take to be a certain gift of intuition, enabled me to identify it and ascribe it to the artist, whose characteristic touch I could not mistake'.[22]

We do not need to spend any further energy interrogating this self-indulgent narrative, however, because the *Bookman* article, which can be viewed online, includes a fine, glossy reproduction of Clarke's painting. It shows a different work altogether, featuring a large-boned man who looks even less like Charles Lamb than

[18] *Athenaeum* 3924 (January 10, 1903), 58. The use of the phrase 'pedigree or history' in both the *Athenaeum* and *New York Evening Post* pieces suggests that the writer might be the same person. Note that the *Athenaeum* piece appeared first.

[19] E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols. (London, 1905), II, 410.

[20] E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols. 3rd Ed. (London, 1906), II, 293.

[21] In the existing scholarship on Henry Raeburn there is only a single stray reference to the possibility of a portrait of Lamb, and this is nothing more than a listing, with an added question mark, of the work auctioned from the 1903 Marquand sale. See James Greig, *Sir Henry Raeburn, R.A., His Life and Works With a Catalogue of His Pictures* (London, 1911), 50.

[22] 'News Notes', *The Bookman* 47 (December 1914), 63. Clarke's account also misleadingly implies that the first edition of Lucas's *Life* gives credence to his claim. Both Claude Prance and Deborah Hedgecock dutifully, if skeptically, record Clarke's claim, but this apparent scholarly thoroughness has had the regrettable effect of extending the half-life of the rumour of a Raeburn portrait. See Claude Prance, *Companion to Charles Lamb* (London, 1983), p. 268 and Deborah K. Hedgecock, *A Handlist to the Charles Lamb Society Collection at Guildhall Library* (London, 1995), 43.

the unknown sitter in the portrait I have been discussing here.[23]

* * * * *

Let me conclude with a return to the present day. Sotheby's first listed the alleged portrait of Lamb by John Watson-Gordon for sale at a London auction of 5 July, 2012. Though the work was given a pre-sale estimate of £20,000-30,000, the bidding failed to meet the reserve price and the work was withdrawn.[24] Nine months later, at the sale of 10 April, 2013, the firm offered the painting again, this time with a changed title. Listed as 'Portrait of Charles Lamb' in July 2012, for the second sale the work was re-titled 'Portrait of a Gentleman, Thought to be Charles Lamb'. This was an important step by Sotheby's, though they continued to assign the attribution to John Watson-Gordon. The pre-sale estimate was also lowered at the time of the second sale to £12,000-18,000, a drop that must suggest some doubt on their part about the painting's market value, even if that doubt did not officially extend to the attribution. Again, however, the portrait failed to sell. At the time of this writing, in early 2014, the portrait has quietly disappeared from public view, though it will likely reappear at auction at some point in the future, either through Sotheby's or through another dealer.

What do we know, finally, about this painting? It is a skilfully executed, well-preserved portrait, apparently dating from around the turn of the nineteenth century. The sitter may well be, as per the work's inscription, a man called Charles Lamb. But it is not credible that he is Charles Lamb the essayist. Further, the attributions sequentially assigned to the work - initially to Henry Raeburn, and then to John Watson-Gordon - are equally unsupported by the evidence. Until someone can produce solid evidence of the early history of this portrait, optimistic identifications will tend to echo the narrative of Lamb's 'Blakesmoor in Hertfordshire' - but without the irony and whimsical self-awareness. There the Elian speaker wanders the halls of a revered and crumbling mansion he had visited many times as a child. As he revives memories of the paintings, busts, and heraldries of the decayed manorial family, he converts nostalgia into self-promotion. He rises up and allows himself to declare that, actual lineages notwithstanding, 'Mine was that gallery of good old family portraits', and he determines to 'giv[e] them in fancy my own family name'. Indulging the fancy still further, Elia imagines that first one portrait, 'and then another', respond instinctually to his claim: they 'seem to smile, reaching forward from the canvas, to recognise the new relationship'.[25]

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[23] See <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101076055787;view=1up;seq=77>. The reproduction is on an unnumbered page following page 64.
[24] Information from private email communication with Sotheby's, dated 9 April, 2013.
[25] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London, 1903), II, 156-57.

The Comic Imagination in Lamb and Coleridge

Gregory Leadbetter

~ I ~

The older Coleridge was not necessarily known for his jokes, but one of his late reflections put a high value on humour: 'Men of Humor,' he uttered, 'are always men of Genius'.[1] Much has been said of Lamb's ready satire and facility for the mischievous aside, but far less of Coleridge's comic turns and *jeux d'esprit*. In his review of John Beer's *Coleridge's Play of Mind*, Christoph Bode observes that 'playfulness' is not something generally associated with Coleridge[2] - and to be sure, if we were to confine our judgement to, say, *The Statesman's Manual*, *Aids to Reflection*, or *On the Constitution of Church and State*, we would have to acknowledge that in such works, it was not his purpose to entertain. With the luxury of his collected writings before us, however, and the many contemporary accounts of the man and his presence, a multifarious playfulness appears fundamental to Coleridge's qualities - even the sedentary Sage of Highgate, as captured by Leigh Hunt: 'a good-natured wizard, very fond of earth, and conscious of reposing with weight enough in his easy chair, but able to conjure his ætherealities about him in the twinkling of an eye'.[3] In that tell-tale 'twinkling' - with its puckish implications - resides (in James Gillman's words) 'one part of Coleridge's character [...] so overlaid by his genius as rarely to be noticed, namely, his love of humour and of wit, of which he possessed so large a share'.[4]

It is no mere coincidence, however, that John Sterling could also recall of Coleridge that, 'with all the kindness and glorious far-seeing intelligence of his eye, there is a glare in it, a light half unearthly, half morbid. It is the glittering eye of the *Ancient Mariner*'.[5] The ability to flip the world, throw out fresh light, or trip latent realities is a virtue shared by the visionary and comic imagination alike. To trigger laughter - that most everyday and mysterious of our spontaneous responses - is akin to the poetic action Coleridge saw in 'the modifying colours of imagination'.[6] The effects of such a conjuring are manifold, and the impulses that feed it as complex as the human organism itself, so in this essay, I confine myself to a limited

[1] *Table Talk, Recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge (and John Taylor Coleridge)*, ed. Carl Woodring, 2 vols (Princeton and London, 1990), I 425. This essay is based on the Charles Lamb Society Annual Lecture, delivered on 13 April 2013 at the Swedenborg Hall, London. I should like to thank the Society for inviting me to deliver that lecture.
[2] Christoph Bode, review of John Beer, *Coleridge's Play of Mind*, *Times Higher Education*, 20 January 2011 <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/414924.article>
[3] Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*, 2 vols (2nd edn; London, 1828), II, 47.
[4] From James Gillman, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1838), quoted in *Table Talk*, II, 488.
[5] John Sterling, quoted in *S.T. Coleridge: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. Seamus Perry (Basingstoke and New York, 2000), 254-5.
[6] S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton, 1983), II, 5.

number of observations, all of which relate to this continuum of mental agility – and hence my title.

For all their genial qualities, the comic imagination in both Lamb and Coleridge exposes their uneasy relations with the world. Humour has a double life, as a way both of establishing social bonds and of differentiating the self from its environment. Besides yielding insight, it serves as a spontaneous form of psychological survival: in the comic distortion of what it finds distorted, the mind frees itself – as if with an injection of sanity. Moreover, as a form of socialising, humour can disarm what might otherwise be moments of tension – something invaluable for 'a mind sui generis', as Coleridge described Lamb (in a phrase which might equally apply to himself).[7] In humour, such minds, with a hint of the alien about them, can hide in the open – with a charm that preserves their inward freedom of action.

The spontaneity of the imagination – comic or otherwise – is fundamental to the intellectual freedom in which both Lamb and Coleridge delighted, and in this sense, coeval with high seriousness. Coleridge's notebooks wonderfully describe the thinker caught off-guard by his own mind: 'Amid the profoundest and most condensed constructions of hardest Thinking, the playfulness of the Boy starts up, like a wild Fig-tree from monumental Marble'.[8] Such spontaneity, developed as freedom, challenges what seems fixed, or certain, or powerful – and in its capacity to see more than one thing at once, can disclose alternative worlds within the world we inhabit. What is more – as I maintain in what follows – the many personae of that freedom are no less authentic for being performative in nature.

~ II ~

'Good poets have a weakness for bad puns', Auden observes, and Lamb and Coleridge were never short of such currency. From their days in 'that nice smoky little room' at the Salutation and Cat Inn, during the winter of 1794, 'with all its associated train of pipes, tobacco, Egghot, welch Rabbits, metaphysics & Poetry',[9] their mutual pleasure in a good (bad) pun was a mark of their friendship. 'The puns which are the most entertaining are those which will least bear an analysis', Lamb declares after a lifetime of devotion – and to prove his point, he gives this example: 'An Oxford scholar, meeting a porter who was carrying a hare through the streets, accosts him with this extraordinary question: "Prithee, friend, is that thy own hair or a wig?" There is no excusing this, and no resisting it.'[10] With an air of fond nostalgia, Lamb characterises the pun as an irresistibly appealing form of intellectual mischief, that artfully overleaps social boundaries: 'It is an antic which does not stand upon manners, but comes bounding into the presence, and does not show the less comic

[7] *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford, 1956-71), I, 588.

[8] *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, eds. Kathleen Coburn, with Merton Christensen (vol IV), and Anthony John Harding (vol V), 5 vols (Princeton and London, 1957-2002), IV, 4777.

[9] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., 3 vols (Ithaca and London, 1975-78), I, 65.

[10] 'Popular Fallacies IX: That the Worst Puns are the Best'; Charles Lamb, *The Essays of Elia and Eliana* (London, 1926), 346.

for being dragged in sometimes by the head and shoulders. What though it limp a little, or prove defective in one leg?—all the better'.[11]

In an Elian echo of their habits, Coleridge would spin the names of Lamb and his sister to tease Godwin: 'The Agnus Dei & the Virgin Mary desire their kind respects to *you*, you sad Atheist—!'[12] Coleridge being Coleridge, he often toyed with working something up on the nature of punning – for example, an 'Ode on Punning' (1803) and an 'Essay in defence of Punning' (1810).[13] These never appeared, but he did leave remarks that carry the implications of punning far beyond its value as amusement. For Coleridge, the multiplicity of meaning upon which puns depend, as instances of the comic imagination, at the same time reveals something fundamental about the way the mind constitutes its reality through language, and hence the way language constitutes reality. In the pun's fusion of spontaneity, searching artfulness, and obliquity, Coleridge saw the plural, self-evolving and self-generating life of language itself: the possibility that 'Language itself is formed upon associations of this kind' – and that 'words are not mere symbols of things & thoughts, but themselves things'.[14] In 'Shakespeare's higher comedy', he observes, wordplay embodies 'exuberant activity of mind':[15] the life-force in language, in which words within words at once disclose and create worlds within worlds. In the mercurial qualities of language lie common roots both of verbal comedy and poetic order – which in turn reveal a connexion to the spontaneous energies of life.

The metaphysics of the pun? The ancients were surely wise to connect communicative intelligence with trickery, in their gods.

~ III ~

It is an endearing feature in both Lamb and Coleridge that they frequently turned their comic conjuring tricks upon themselves. As I have already suggested, this self-checking reflex is nothing less than a form of sanity – a way of bringing castles in air back down to earth – and hence light relief to overworked nerves.

In November 1797, at the height of his most visionary period as a poet, Coleridge published in *The Monthly Magazine* a group of three sonnets 'to expose *risu honesto* ['with honest laughter'] the three sins of poetry, one or the other of which is most likely to beset a young writer'.[16] These were put out under the name of 'Nehemiah Higginbottom', and aimed 'to excite a good-natured laugh at the spirit of *doleful egotism*', 'the pretence of *simplicity*' and 'the indiscriminate use of elaborate and swelling language and imagery'.[17] Coleridge was sending up not only himself, but also Lamb, Charles Lloyd and Southey – prompting Southey, who did not seem to like the joke, to publish four pseudo-Coleridgean sonnets under the name 'Abel Shufflebottom', in revenge.[18]

[11] Ibid., 345.

[12] Coleridge *Letters*, I, 580.

[13] Coleridge Letters, II, 999; *Notebooks*, III, 3762.

[14] *Notebooks*, III, 3762.

[15] *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare: A Selection*, ed. R.A. Foakes (London, 1989), 82.

[16] *Biographia*, I, 26.

[17] Ibid., I, 27.

[18] Ibid., I, 29 n.

In May 1798, Coleridge sent some doggerel verse to Wordsworth in the letter that accompanied one of his finest poems, 'The Nightingale', with a jest about its 'own inglorious harmony / Æolio crepitû, non carmine' ['Aeolian farting, not song'].[19] A little later, he mocks the poets' obsession with the moon ('A Soliloquy of the Full Moon, She Being in a Mad Passion'):

> Now as Heaven is my Lot, they're the Pests of the Nation!
> Wherever they can come
> With clankum and blankum
> 'Tis all Botheration, & Hell & Damnation,
> With fun, jeering
> Conjuring
> Sky-staring,
> Loungering,
> And still to the tune of Transmogrification—
> Those muttering
> Spluttering
> Ventriloquogusty
> Poets[20]

Whatever this poem might be saying about the irreducible quiddity of natural objects, it is also sheer play – in its own word, 'fun' – blazed through its comic neologisms as much as its satirical object. Ten years on and he mocks himself again, in a notebook poem that laughs at the would-be conjurer in himself:

> Cabbalists! Conjurers! great & small
> Johva Mitzoveh Evohāen & all! –
> Had *I* never utter'd your Jaw-breaking Words
> I might now have been sloshing down Junket & Curds
> Like a Devonshire Christian: . . .
> Ye Earthsmen! be warn'd by a Judgement so tragic,
> And wipe yourselves cleanly with all books of Magic.[21]

(That reference to an unlikely, alternative Devonshire Christian self adds a special poignancy to the comedy here.)[22] In 1828, on his final tour of Germany, Coleridge was driven to utter this ticklish but pointed epigram:

> As I am a Rhymer,
> And now at least a merry one,
> Mr Mum's Rudesheimer
> And the church of St Geryon
> Are the two things alone
> That deserve to be known
> In the body-and-soul-stinking town of Cologne.[23]

[19] Coleridge *Letters*, I, 406.
[20] S.T. Coleridge, *Poems*, ed. John Beer (London, 1990), 262.
[21] *Notebooks*, III, 4138.
[22] See Gregory Leadbetter, *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination* (New York, 2011), 93-4.

These are just a few examples of the unbuttoned Coleridge, cheerful enough in self-deprecation, and quite a contrast to the stereotypes of Romantic genius.

Lamb, delightfully, was happy to join in puncturing the Coleridgean air balloon. Upon Coleridge's arrival in London, after the break with Wordsworth in 1810, he gave this knowing portrait of his old friend:

> Coleridge has powdered his head, and looks like Bacchus, Bacchus ever sleek and young. He is going to turn sober, but his Clock has not struck yet, meantime he pours down goblet after goblet, the 2d to see where the 1st is gone, the 3d to see no harm happens to the second, a fourth to say there's another coming, and a 5th to say he's not sure he's the last.[24]

Elian mockery is forgiving in its affection for Coleridge, with all his faults. Henry Crabb Robinson records a famous instance of Coleridgean digression during his London lectures: 'when Coleridge was running from topic to topic, Lamb said, "This is not much amiss. He promised a lecture on the Nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet,' and in its place he has given us one in the *manner* of the Nurse"'.[25] Anne Jackson Mathews, wife of the comic actor Charles Mathews (who apparently had a convincing impression of Coleridge in his repertoire) remembers not only Coleridge's capacity to 'smile against himself', but also Lamb's readiness with a jibe, when the two were together: 'Coleridge turned benignly towards him, and observed – 'Charles Lamb, I believe you never heard me preach?' [...] and with less of his wonted hesitation, Lamb replied, with great emphasis, 'I ne-ever heard you do anything else!''[26] Still, there was preaching and preaching, when it came to the man Lamb once dubbed 'Bishop Coleridge',[27] and he was prepared to grant him special licence: Coleridge 'ought not to have a wife and children; he should have a sort of *diocesan* care of the world, no parish duty'.[28]

Such remarks give us a portrait of Coleridge no less compelling for their comic slant, and readers must be grateful for memorialisation of this kind. Lamb, piqued at being described as the 'gentle-hearted Charles' of 'This Lime-tree Bower my Prison', called it a 'Satire upon me', and asked Coleridge 'to blot out gentle hearted, and substitute drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaven, odd-ey'd, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly belongs to the Gentleman in question'.[29] Coleridge's pen-portrait of himself in a letter to John Thelwall, whom he had not yet met, has similar appeal: 'As to me, my face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great Sloth, & great, indeed almost ideotic, good nature'.[30]

[23] *Poems*, 349.
[24] Marrs *Letters*, III, 61.
[25] *Interviews and Recollections*, 151.
[26] From *The Life and Correspondence of Charles Mathews the Elder, Comedian*, quoted in *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, eds. Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano (New York and London, 2004), 653-4.
[27] *The Letters of Charles Lamb to which are added those of his Sister Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 3 vols (London, 1935), II, 416.
[28] Lamb, quoted in *Henry Crabb Robinson: On Books and their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 3 vols (London, 1938), I, 289.
[29] Marrs *Letters*, I, 224.
[30] Coleridge, *Letters*, I, 259.

When taking his self-representation into the public sphere, however - especially in his later years, when he has had time to become acutely self-conscious of his mixed reputation - Coleridge enters more problematic territory. In Chapter 10 of *Biographia Literaria*, 'a chapter of digressions and anecdotes' from the small matter of 'the nature and genesis of the imagination', Coleridge presents himself as comically hapless - particularly as a young liberal writer, working on *The Watchman*.[31] Moving on to his Nether Stowey days, Coleridge puts these words into the mouth of one of his local detractors: '"As to *Coleridge*, there is not so much harm in *him*, for he is a whirl-brain that talks whatever comes uppermost"'.[32] Then we have his well-known comic anecdote of the government spy, mis-hearing a discussion of Spinoza as '*Spy Nozy*'.[33]

Such tales raise the question of Coleridge's motivation in telling them. Yes, they might be entertaining in their way - and founded on truth. But there is also a disquieting sense of some sleight of hand in play. Why was he so keen, in that context, to appear *harmless*? At such moments, Stephen Potter saw 'the mannerism of character which was the mundane setting to his spirit': that part of himself that could not quite let himself be.[34] Whatever else he is doing in these passages of the *Biographia*, Coleridge is writing himself a mask. As if afraid to reveal himself, he is attempting to make himself safe in the public eye - as if worried that his larger points won't carry unless he establishes a certain public sense of his unthreatening and morally upright character. In this instance, Coleridge's exoteric, comic self-representation might on some level preserve an esoteric freedom of action - at a cost: but as Coleridge's case demonstrates, an ease with the manipulation of reality is necessarily ambivalent.

~ IV ~

During their one falling-out, in the later 1790s - a tangle of hurt feelings and misunderstandings, stoked by Charles Lloyd and Southey - Lamb was quick to highlight Coleridge's readiness to slip from the comic fictionalising of humour, to the *mis*representation of reality. In the first of his barbed 'Theses', sent to Coleridge in May 1798 'to be by you defended, or oppugned, or both', he asks: 'Whether God loves a lying Angel better than a true Man?'[35] It is an apt expression of the mixed feelings Coleridge could arouse (in himself as much as others). Once their relations started to thaw once more, however, Lamb was able to accommodate Coleridge's slipperiness, without any attempt at whitewashing his friend. He writes to Thomas Manning, in early 1800: 'As long as Lloyd or I have known Col. so long have we known him in the daily & hourly habit of quizzing the world by lyes most unaccountable & most disinterested **fictions**'.[36] That is quite a statement, and a suggestive insight into Coleridgean ways - not least because of its diction, which

[31] *Biographia*, I, 168, 179-87.
[32] Ibid., I, 189.
[33] Ibid., I, 194. Coleridge tells a similar tale in a letter of 1801, of a librarian in Durham who understood his request for Leibniz as '*live Nits*': Coleridge *Letters*, II, 747.
[34] Stephen Potter, *Coleridge and S.T.C.* (London and Toronto, 1935), 82.
[35] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 128.
[36] Ibid., I, 183.

contextualises (and therefore qualifies) 'lyes' with 'quizzing' and 'fictions'. 'Quizzing', as the Oxford English Dictionary records, implies 'to make fun of', 'to turn to ridicule', or 'to regard with an air of mockery'. Lamb hints at a peculiar (even 'unaccountable') detachment in Coleridge - a personal atmosphere, as it were, of self-sustaining fiction. When faced by something like wall, Coleridge might simply walk through it.

It says much, too, about Lamb, that he nevertheless does not condemn his friend. He goes on to say, in same letter, that he's 'been drunk two nights running at Coleridge's', and the next month, he writes that 'the more I see of him in the quotidian undress and relaxation of his mind, the more cause I see to love him and believe him a ***very good man***'.[37] It may be that Lamb understood something about where Coleridge's 'quizzing' came from: Crabb Robinson records Wordsworth's suggestion that 'Lamb's, and Coleridge's far more equivocal incorrectness in talk', was 'a *school habit*' (though 'Lamb's veracity was unquestionable on all matters of a serious kind').[38] This chimes with Coleridge's own comments on his school days: during a lecture, he relates how the Christ's Hospital boys 'lived in a state of civil war with their masters. They are disgraced by a lye told to their fellows; it is an honour to impose on the common enemy: thus the mind is prepared [...] for every falsehood and injustice when the interest of the party, when honour requires it'.[39]

Such circumstantial explanations carry us only so far. Coleridge's mimetic impulse, at any given moment, must also originate in the fundament of his mind - common to his furtiveness and fictions, his comic and his poetic imagination - as a characteristic facet of his fascination. Norman Fruman, who did his best and worst with Coleridge, ultimately had to concede that 'Evidence abounds for almost any view one wishes to take of him'.[40] A more productive way to put it might be to use one of Yeats's most suggestive phrases, and to consider Coleridge's genius as 'its own betrayer, its own deliverer'.[41] Coleridge was at home with complexity and paradox, musing that 'whatever a man's excellence is, that will be likewise his fault'.[42] Lamb's accommodating attitude to his friend echoes that insight - as a fellow performer recognises a protean quality in the selfhood of another.

~ V ~

As I have already maintained, there is more to the comic imagination than the ambivalence of its psychological kinship. Coleridge once remarked that 'no mind was thoroughly well organized that was deficient in the sense of humour'[43] - and he was keen to observe how comedy could convey authentic truths:

> How often are not the moralist and the metaphysician obliged for the happiest illustrations of general truths and the subordinate laws of

[37] Ibid., I, 183, 189.
[38] Morley, II, 487.
[39] Morley, I, 105-6.
[40] Norman Fruman, *Coleridge: The Damaged Archangel* (London, 1972), 420.
[41] W.B. Yeats, 'Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*', in *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, Vol V: Later Essays*, ed. William H. O'Donnell (New York, 1994), 198.
[42] Coleridge, *Letters*, I, 279.
[43] *Table Talk*, II, 422.

> human thought and action to quotations not only from the tragic characters but equally from the Jaques, Falstaff, and even from the fools and clowns of Shakespeare, or from the Miser, Hypochondriast, and Hypocrite, of Molière![44]

'Jesters do oft prove prophets'.[45] Coleridge recognises here the humanising, levelling power of comedy – and he is sensitive to 'that pathos which gives the magic charm to genuine humour'.[46]

Moreover, Coleridge implicitly acknowledges that the affective, experiential authority of such moments is essentially performative – and hence, the operation of the comic imagination affirms a more universal psychological insight. To *perform* is to embody and make present – akin to procuring 'that willing suspension of disbelief' that Coleridge identified as 'poetic faith', long enough for 'dramatic truth' to have its effect.[47] Whether comic or otherwise, a performative fluency with the verb *to be* – as we might name what I am getting at – tears through 'the film of familiarity',[48] altering our psychological habitat.

To perform affects not only an audience or readership, of course, but also the performer himself. This lies at the heart of one Coleridge's pithiest epistemological formulations: 'we can only *know* by the act of *becoming*'.[49] As Lamb found with Elia, the possibilities of persona might be enabling. Felicity James observes of Lamb's technique that it 'enabled him to push at the limits of personal feeling': 'Lamb is both finding and losing himself in the text'.[50] The motto of the cover of each *Charles Lamb Bulletin* – 'Let us cultivate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour' – invites its readers to perform the role it describes: not as a pretence, but as a way of proceeding, socially and intellectually (and both at once).

One of Coleridge's most audacious masks goes so far as to replace (or displace) the promised deduction of the imagination in the *Biographia Literaria* with a fictitious letter. With what I can only suspect was a kind of glee, Coleridge assumes the voice of 'a friend, whose practical judgement I have had ample reason to estimate and revere', who writes to advise his double to reserve the chapter on the Imagination '*for your announced treatises on the Logos or communicative intellect in Man and Deity*'.[51] The joke is sublime – not least because its fiction manages to perform a deft and crucial structural role in identifying the idea of the Imagination with the mystery poems of 1797-98, and the poetics that they embody.[52]

If, in their different ways, the writings of both Lamb and Coleridge invite forms of reading adequate to their many planes, then Lamb and Coleridge could also relate to each other on more than one level. Their capacity to see beyond surface

[44] *Biographia*, II, 185.
[45] *King Lear*, V.III.72; quoted from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Peter Alexander (London, 1951), 1109.
[46] S.T. Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols (Princeton, 1969), I 131.
[47] *Biographia*, II, 6
[48] Ibid., II, 7.
[49] Ibid., II, 244.
[50] Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (London, 2008), 207.
[51] *Biographia*, I, 300, 302.
[52] See Leadbetter, *Coleridge and the Daemonic Imagination*, 160-1.

appearances is tied to their capacity for humour, and – as it usually is with old friends – the comic imagination, in all its complexity, was fundamental to their familiarity and intimacy.[53] An anecdote of Leigh Hunt gives an insight into the nature of that relationship. Hunt, somewhat exasperated after one of the older Coleridge's ostensibly more religiose outpourings, posed Lamb a question: '"What makes Coleridge talk in that way about heavenly grace, and the holy church, and that sort of thing?" "Ah," replied Lamb [...] "there is a g-g-great deal of fun in Coleridge!"'[54]

That knowing but elusive remark of Lamb's is an apt place to conclude – demanding, as it does, its own more-than-literal reading (and in every sense, equally applicable to Lamb). It captures something about their intelligence, their psychobiological make-up, *essentially* mercurial: the performative self, provisional, adaptable, never wholly comprised within present circumstances, but always already escaping, somehow on its own terms – making a plaything of the world. There is a wonderful resilience in that – a quality which both Lamb and Coleridge were to require: a spontaneous survival-response, a self-generating joy, a freedom of mind and reason, and an awareness that nothing, perhaps, is ever quite as it seems. The comic imagination, like all forms of imagination, implies that all our modes of conceiving reality are themselves provisional.

It is part of the mystery that brings human beings together – and can banish all mystery in the bonds of social warmth. Let Lamb's benediction come back into memory, nostalgic for Coleridge's humour and company: 'Bless you, old **Sophist**, who next to **Human Nature** taught me all the corruption I was capable of knowing [...] When shall we two smoke again?'[55]

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[53] For a valuable discussion of how well Lamb knew Coleridge, see John Beer, 'Did Lamb Understand Coleridge?', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 56 (October 1986), 232-49.
[54] Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography* (rev. edn.; London, 1870), 253.
[55] Marrs *Letters*, II, 109.

Apprehending George Dyer in 'Amicus Redivivus': Charles Lamb on Miltonic Visionary Poetics

Matthew Vickless

As fields of critical inquiry go, the 'venerable topic' of John Milton's place in the British Romantic imagination has endured its senescence gracefully.[1] For much of the twentieth century, scholars and critics of British Romantic literature cut their teeth explicating and theorizing the Romantics' engagements with Milton, including Northrop Fry, Harold Bloom, and M. H. Abrams. In the 1970s, Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr devised an entire critical paradigm, which he called variously 'visionary poetics' and the Miltonic 'line of vision', to historicize early nineteenth-century revisions of Milton, especially Blake's, in terms of a biblical prophecy tradition that Milton inherited, altered, and then bequeathed to key British Romantics. After a second wave of critics in the 1980s and 1990s subjected Wittreich's paradigm to a variety of materialist and feminist reinterpretations, the topic seemed to reach the apotheosis of its utility: its ideological blind spots were exposed, its critical vocabulary was honed, and its explicative capacity was seemingly exhausted. Although devoted specialists persevered in theorizing poetic intertextuality, Miltonic influence study lost much of its critical vitality.[2]

Still, Milton's presence in many nineteenth-century Romantic texts, particularly recuperated non-canonical texts, continues to reward scholarly attention. The fact that so many Romantics referenced Milton, either directly or allusively, suggests at the very least that some consensus regarding poetry's cultural

[1] I have adapted this phrase from Steven Goldsmith, '"Cracked Across": Blake, Milton, and the Noise of History', *Studies in Romanticism*, 51 (2012), 305–42 (309).

[2] Wittreich's theories are mapped out in the multi-author collection *Milton and the Line of Vision* (Madison, WI, 1975) and the monograph *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino, CA, 1979). An overview of Wittreich's paradigm and its critical reception is found in Timothy Ruppert, '"Is Not the Past All Shadow?": History and Vision in Byron, the Shelleys, and Keats' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Duquesne University, 2008), 11–54. Recent explorations of visionary poetics, theorized beyond a strict Milton paradigm, include Ruppert's 'Waterloo, Napolean, and the Vision of Peace in Louisa Stuart Costello's *Maid of the Cypress Isle*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 51 (2012), 555–78; Daniel P. Watkins, 'History and Vision in Ann Yearsley's *Rural Lyre*', *Age of Johnson*, 20 (2010), 223–95; Watkins, *Anna Letitia Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics* (Baltimore, MD, 2012). The most recent extended treatment of Milton's visionary poetics is the multi-author collection *Visionary Milton: Essays on Prophecy and Violence*, edited by Peter E. Medine, John T. Shawcross, and David V. Urban (Pittsburgh, PA, 2010). As the title of that work suggests, and as Goldsmith's '"Cracked Across": Blake, Milton, and the Noise of History' reiterates (309), the issue of Miltonic vision has, since 2001, been linked with theorizations of religious bloodshed, an idea with provocative implications for the study of the revolutionary 1790s as well. In addition, a case can be made that the issue of Romantic collaboration, as treated in Judith Thompson's recent and cogent '"Thy Power to Declare: Thelwall, Coleridge, and the Politics of Collaboration', *Romanticism*, 16 (2010), 164–83, represents a logical extension of the dialogic rewriting Wittreich has identified as a defining characteristic of the Miltonic visionary mode.

authority did exist in the early nineteenth century and that many Romantics defined that authority in Miltonic terms, even if they desired, as did Blake and later Shelley, to alter the ways such authority was exercised. Although Wittreich's precise conclusions have been challenged, the exercise of investigating Miltonic visionary poetics in nineteenth-century texts is still an effective means of scrutinizing the dominant poetic ethos of the Romantic period, a venerable topic indeed, which is nevertheless far from exhausted. For example, we have not yet sufficiently explored Charles Lamb's satirical treatment—ever the imprimatur of its subject's ubiquity—of the Miltonic ethos.

Lamb's views on Miltonic visionary poetics are most clearly articulated in his writings about George Dyer, the radical polemicist and poet. The richest of those treatments, 'Amicus Redivivus', first published in 1823, opens with an epigraph drawn from Milton's *Lycidas*, employed ostensibly merely to lay the groundwork for the essay's aquatic humor. That the epigraph was employed at all seems to qualify it, to borrow Wittreich's terms, as a 'critical aside' by Lamb on Milton; yet if the essay proper is read back onto its Miltonic epigraph, if 'Amicus Redivivus' is used to gloss *Lycidas*, then Lamb's text emerges as a full-blown 'formal essay' on Milton, one that delimits rather than seeks to advance, in the manner so quixotically pursued by many of Lamb's near contemporaries, especially Dyer, Miltonic visionary poetics.[3] When read in this light, 'Amicus Redivivus' offers a comedic argument *against* theorizing poetics within a predominantly vatic framework.

At the same time, explicating Lamb's criticism of Miltonic visionary poetics serves a recuperative function as well. Dyer, the ostensible subject of 'Amicus Redivius', has gone largely unstudied, except as a radical and eccentric Romantic hanger-on. Dyer's own critical history, not surprisingly, largely begins with 'Amicus Redivius'—and to a lesser extent the early Elia essay 'Oxford in the Vacation', which also features a comical appearance by Dyer. All subsequent criticism of Dyer has more or less parroted the lampoonery, without adequately accounting for the nuances, of Lamb's treatment, resulting in a highly skewed reception of Dyer's poetry and exacerbating its neglect. Fuller explication of Dyer's poetry must wait; for now, it will suffice to clarify the meaning of Lamb's satire.

The anecdote about Dyer related in 'Amicus Redivivus' has obscured the critical ends to which Lamb puts it. Still, it bears rehearsing here. In a single opening sentence, surely one of the grandest English sentences ever written, Lamb relates how Dyer almost drowned in the New River:

> I do not know when I have experienced a stranger sensation, than on seeing my old friend G. D., who had been paying me a morning visit a few Sundays back, at my cottage at Islington, upon taking leave, instead of turning down the right hand path by which he had entered—with staff in hand, and at noon day, deliberately march right forwards into the midst of the stream that runs by us, and totally disappear. (209)

[3] The phrases 'critical aside' and 'formal essay' are adapted from the subtitle of Wittreich's compendious *The Romantics on Milton: Formal Essays and Critical Asides* (Cleveland, OH, 1970).

Lamb's Dyer is the absent-minded professor writ large. Lamb, of course, was an early contributor to Dyer's reputation for eccentricity, as 'Oxford in the Vacation' had already gently lampooned Dyer's scholarship. There, Dyer is discovered in an otherwise empty Oxford library,

> busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press, in a nook at Oriel. With long poring, he is grown almost into a book. He stood as passive as one by the side of the old shelves. I longed to new-coat him in Russia, and assign him his place. He might have mustered for a tall Scapula. (10)

Lamb, adopting the perspective of a bookbinder, shows Dyer in the process of being transfigured, slowly morphing into the primary medium of his trade. Much subsequent criticism, scant though it is, has perpetuated this characterization of Dyer as minor Romantic pedant.[4]

Lamb's keen critical perception has not been adequately carried forward by most of Dyer's subsequent critics. In 'Oxford in the Vacation', Lamb reserves his scorn, and the satirical teeth of the essay, for those who fail to appreciate the inherent value of what Dyer is doing:

> D. has been engaged [...] in an investigation into all curious matters connected with the two Universities [...] the ardor with which he engages in these liberal pursuits, I am afraid, has not met with all the encouragement it deserves, either here, or at C— —. Your caputs, and heads of colleges, care less than any body else about these questions.— Contented to suck the milky fountains of their Alma Maters, without inquiring into the venerable gentlewomen's years, they rather hold such curiosities to be impertinent—unreverend. They have their good glebe lands *in manu*, and care not much to rake into the title-deeds. I gather at least so much from other sources, for D. is not a man to complain. (10–11)

Dyer, first introduced as barely human, emerges from the essay—despite his humorous eccentricities—as an exemplum of humane behavior, the moral compass of the world Lamb's satire is critiquing, quietly enriching the lives of others. 'D. is delightful any where', Lamb concludes, 'but he is at his best in such places as these . . . when he goes about with you to show you the halls and colleges, you think you have with you the Interpreter at the House Beautiful' (11–12). The Bunyanesque congruence with which the essay concludes suggests that Dyer's lifework, far from

[4] Among the recent critics who more or less take Lamb's caricature seriously (by which I mean the sum total of 'Oxford in the Vacation' and 'Amicus Redivivus') and at least partly follow its lead in voicing their own critical statements on Dyer are: Harriet Jump, '"Snatch'd out of the fire": Lamb, Coleridge, and George Dyer's Cancelled Preface', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 58 (1987), 54–67; J. R. Watson, '"My benevolent Friend": George Dyer and His 1800 Preface', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 108 (1999), 170–77; Mary Wedd, 'Charles Lamb, the Friend', *Coleridge Bulletin* ns 15 (2000), 16–26; and Duncan Wu, 'The Lamb Circle and the *Monthly Repository*', *Romanticism*, 12 (2006), 143–49.

valueless, in fact glosses the sullied vanity of a materialistic yet otherwise uninterested social ethics—the real point of Lamb's satire.

The satire voices a highly nuanced critical perspective as well. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, the House Beautiful, among its other functions, is the site where arcane scholarship is valued and practiced. Lamb's allusion recalls the fact that Christian, while resting in the House Beautiful, spends an entire day studying there:

> So, in the morning, they all got up; and, after some more discourse, they told him that he should not depart till they had showed him the rarities of that place. And first they had him to the study, where they showed him records of the greatest antiquity [...] Here also were several other histories of many other famous things, of all which Christian had a view: as of things both ancient and modern: together with prophecies and predictions of things that have their certain accomplishment, both to the dread and amazement of enemies, and the comfort and solace of pilgrims. (59)

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'interpreter' also has a precise allegoric meaning, denoting the Holy Spirit, or the Christian Trinity's third divine person (38). In his characterization of Dyer, Lamb conflates the House of the Interpreter and the House Beautiful, in essence conflating the divine gift of interpretation with scholarly pursuit. The resulting notion of scholarship as a sacred act hardly accords with the stereotype of Dyer that grew at least partly out of 'Oxford in the Vacation'. Instead, Lamb's satire is prophetically critiquing, rather than establishing a model for, subsequent criticism of Dyer, much of which misses the joke entirely (although some scholarship, especially work by Nicholas Roe and Timothy Whelan, has challenged this generalized perception).[5]

Similarly, the Dyerian absentmindedness lampooned in 'Amicus Redivivus', when properly contextualized, points to another of Lamb's highly nuanced critical visions, this one regarding vatic poetry. In the later essay, Dyer is again

[5] Parenthetical page references are to *The Pilgrim's Progress, From This World to That Which Is to Come. Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream . . . By John Bunyan . . . To Which Are Added, Large Explanatory and Practice Notes; With the Life of the Author. By the Rev. George Burder* (London, 1808). It is more than a little ironic that the satire's earliest misinterpreter was E. V. Lucas, in the Dyer chapter of *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols (London, 1905), whose dismissive statement 'Footnotes were a special weakness of Dyer's' (I.157), a comment that precisely misses the point of 'Oxford in the Vacation', sealed Dyer's twentieth-century critical fate. For a differently theorized perspective on Dyer, which also succinctly accounts for subsequent restatements of Lucas's dismissal, see Robin Jarvis, 'Poetry in Motion: George Dyer's Pedestrian Tour', *Wordsworth Circle*, 29 (1998), 142–51. As Jarvis there recounts, an alternate critical narrative of Dyer began to emerge in the 1940s, after M. Ray Adams's seminal *Studies in the Literary Backgrounds of English Radicalism* (rpt. New York, 1968) took seriously Dyer's politics. In the 1980s, Nicholas Roe (and to a lesser extent Jump's '"Snatch'd out of the fire"') expanded Adams's thesis, furthering claims of Dyer's radical significance; see especially Roe's 'Radical George: Dyer in the 1790s', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 49 (1985), 17–26. The most recent and thorough contribution to Dyer criticism, Timothy Whelan's 'George Dyer and Dissenting Culture, 1777–1796', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 155 (2012), 9–30, carries forward Roe's basic thesis, focusing more intently on Dyer's key role in the 'political and religious reform' movement that occurred during the 1780s and 1790s (10). With respect to poetry, however, Adams, Roe, and Whelan still follow Lucas in relegating Dyer to the ranks of the minor Romantics, which Jarvis (and to my knowledge Jarvis alone) tentatively challenges (142).

transfigured, this time into one of the vatic elect, emerging from the essay—as he quite literally emerges from the New River—as something more substantial than, to borrow Duncan Wu's clever turn of phrase, 'the myopic amphibian of Lamb's "Amicus Redivivus."'[6] As in 'Oxford in the Vacation', Lamb's treatment of Dyer in 'Amicus Redivivus' becomes the instrument, rather than the object, of a satire that indicts contemporary and subsequent critical perspectives.

To understand Lamb's nuanced criticism, we must account first for the less flattering picture of Dyer presented in 'Amicus Redivivus'. Unlike 'Oxford in the Vacation', where Dyer's eccentricities indict materialistic collegiality, the humor of the later essay seems to come more directly at Dyer's expense. When the fact of Dyer's near total blindness is recalled (the physical toll taken by Dyer's scholarship was severe), 'Amicus Redivivus' exhibits a cruelty incommensurate with the gentle, even loving, satire of the earlier essay. Even Lamb felt some obligation to defend himself to Dyer in 1831: 'I maintain, and will to the last hour, that I never writ of you but *con amore*. That if any allusion was made to your near-sightedness, it was not for the purpose of mocking an infirmity, but of connecting it with scholar-like habits'.[7] Lamb's apology seems credible, as the nuanced critical perspective driving the satire of 'Oxford in the Vacation' obliges us to look for analogous sophistication in 'Amicus Redivivus'.

The essay's culminating moment hints at Lamb's larger purpose. Having rescued Dyer from drowning in the New River, Lamb experiences a series of troubled dreams, which take the shape of literary analogues:

> I have nothing but water in my head o' nights since this frightful accident. Sometimes I am with Clarence in his dream. At others, I behold Christian beginning to sink, and crying out to his good brother Hopeful (that is to me), 'I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head, all the waves go over me. Selah.' Then I have before me Palinurus, just letting go the steerage. I cry out too late to save. Next follow [...] *suicidal faces*, saved against their will from drowning [...] At their head Arion—or is it G. D.?—in his singing garments marcheth singly, with harp in hand, and votive garland, which Machaon (or Dr. Hawes) snatcheth straight, intending to suspend it to the stern God of Sea. Then follow dismal streams of Lethe, in which the half-drenched on earth are constrained to drown downright, by wharfs where Ophelia twice acts her muddy death. (212)

It is difficult to gauge the tone of this passage. On the one hand, Lamb could be performing a bit of proto-Pythonesque *commoratio*, underscoring the absurdity of Dyer's accident for comedic effect. Even so, this piling on does betray some degree of anxiety, implying as it does the restlessness of troubled sleep. The components of the vision provide little clarification, as Lamb juggles pathos and bathos. References to Shakespeare's Clarence drowned in the butt of malmsey and to Christian's harrowing passage through the River of Death in *Pilgrim's Progress* seem to

[6] Wu, 'The Lamb Circle and the *Monthly Repository*', 146.
[7] Qtd. in E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles* Lamb, 2 vols (New York, 1907), I, 201–02.

communicate some degree of seriousness. Virgil's fated helmsman Palinurus (the 'unum pro multis' of *Aeneid* V.815) intensifies the gravity established by the first two references. Yet the subsequent references are decidedly ridiculous. Dyer is figured as Arion, the kidnapped poet rescued by a dolphin (as recorded by Herodotus), and the Homeric surgeon Machaon becomes William Hawes, the Islington-born physician famous for his theories on the resuscitation of drowning victims. A visionary collage that begins with some degree of existential sublimity—if not outright fear and trembling—morphs into classical and contemporaneous triviality. The culminating reference to Shakespeare's Ophelia brings the vision full circle, back to high English tragedy. The cyclical nature of the collage renders it tonally indeterminate.

Lamb's dream, however, is the essay's second visionary description. It harkens back to an earlier passage, in which Lamb uses vatic imagery to characterize his reaction to Dyer's accident:

> How I found my feet, I know not. Consciousness was quite gone. Some spirit, not my own, whirled me to the spot. I remember nothing but the silvery apparition of a good white head emerging; nigh which a staff (the hand unseen that wielded it) pointing upwards, as feeling for the skies. In a moment (if time was in that time) he was on my shoulders, and I—freighted with my load more precious than his who bore Anchises. (209)

The eternality evoked by the incident, its disruption of conventional perception, and the Virgilian context that frames the whole picture of Lamb carrying Dyer out of the water—all adopt and adapt conventions of visionary poetics, but to what ends? Like the subsequent dream vision it foreshadows, the tone of the rescue passage is ambiguous. Is Lamb ascribing a Miltonic profundity to Dyer's accident? Or is he using the absentminded mundanity of the accident to mock poetic ambitions toward absolute truth—such as Coleridge's assertion 'high upborne, / Yea, mingling with the Choir, I seem to view / The vision of the heavenly multitude' (*Religious Musings*, ll. 3–5) or Mary Robinson's apostrophizing Liberty as a 'godlike pow'r, / Coëval with the skies, to earth new born' (*The Progress of Liberty* I)[8]—the standard fare of Romantic visionaries?

The critical thesis advanced by Lamb's essay—and the precise nature of its satire—hinge on the answer to that question. If we dismiss the notion that Lamb is mocking a blind old man's nearly fatal accident, then the essay's visionary content takes the shape of a mode of criticism still practically, rather than academically, relevant in the early 1830s: whether higher truth was the special providence of poets and whether, as Shelley had claimed, 'Poetry is a sword of lightening, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it' (*Defence of Poetry*). In 'Oxford in the Vacation', Lamb treats Dyer's scholarship as a touchstone of learned British society, with tender—even poignant—results; in 'Amicus Redivivus', where the jokes are made at Dyer's expense, Lamb, albeit obliquely, limits his

[8] *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols (Oxford, 1912), I, 109; *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Mary* Robinson, 3 vols (London, 1806), III, 1.

attention to Dyer's poetry. If we view the densely allusive vatic poetry that Dyer values and practices, rather than Dyer himself, as the object of Lamb's satire, then the two Dyer essays become more commensurate. Lamb's respect for Dyer's quixotic scholarship, underwriting the moving tenderness of 'Oxford in the Vacation', does not extend to Dyer's poetry.[9] Conversely, Dyer's mistaken views on poetry render him no less valuable a scholar.

A clue that 'Amicus Redivivus' parodies Dyer's poetry—and contemporary visionary poetics more broadly—lies in the essay's epigraph, drawn from Milton's *Lycidas.* A keystone of the British vatic tradition, *Lycidas* engaged many of the Romantic poet-prophets, including key figures in Lamb's immediate circle.[10] Although appreciative of *Lycidas*, Lamb seems not to have shared the enthusiasm—and I classify corrective engagements, such as those found, for instance, throughout Blake's major and minor prophecies, as enthusiastic—manifested by some of his contemporaries.

Lamb's relative indifference is displayed in the single reference to *Lycidas* catalogued in Wittreich's chapter on Lamb. Taken from another of Lamb's late Elia essays, the quoted passage describes the revulsion Lamb felt upon viewing the Trinity Manuscript:

> There is something to me repugnant, at any time, in written hand. The text never seems determinate. Print settles it. I had thought of the Lycidas as a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in evil hour, I was shown the original written copy of it, together with the other minor poems of its author, in the Library of Trinity, kept like some treasure to be proud of. I wish they had thrown them into the Cam, or sent them, after the latter Cantos of Spenser, into the Irish channel. (311)[11]

Of course, it is the autograph, not the poem itself, that Lamb wishes drowned; at the same time, however, the critical pronouncement implicit in the phrase 'full-grown beauty' is to a degree tempered by the context in which Lamb articulates it. Lamb's repeated willingness to exploit *Lycidas* for comedic effect, on display here as well as in 'Amicus Redivivus', further undercuts the earnestness of Lamb's more positive criticism—Lamb's was a respectful yet comparatively profane view of Milton.

Dyer, like many of his contemporaries, took a more solemn approach to Milton. Dyer's compendious *The Poet's Fate* (1797; rev. 1800–1801), one of the important early Romantic texts yet to undergo the critical scrutiny it merits—contains several Milton references, all of which exhibit the due reverence we expect our Romantic poets to show Milton. Yet to grapple with the Miltonic significance of *The Poet's Fate*, to explore Milton's place in the complex British poetic network Dyer exhaustively defines through the course of that volume, is beyond the scope of this

[9] Wu, 'The Lamb Circle and the *Monthly Repository*', 146: 'Relations [between Dyer and Lamb] remained cordial until Lamb's death in 1834, but there was little admiration for each other's verse'.
[10] Wittreich, *The Romantics on Milton*, 31n69: 'In *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* and in *Lycidas*, the Romantics found a total pattern of human experience (the worlds of innocence, experience, and higher innocence)'.
[11] See also Wittreich, *The Romantics on Milton*, 298.

essay. Fortunately, Dyer also wrote a smaller-scale treatment of Milton, 'Ode XV. Written on a Blank Leaf of Milton's Paradise Lost, Presented by the Editor Capel Lofft to the Author', published among the other lyrics of *Poems* (1800–1801).[12]

The treatment of Milton in Dyer's ode resembles the familiar poet-prophet figuration, so variously employed in the early Romantic period that it became something of a conceit: recall Wordsworth's 'Such Milton, to the fountain head / of Glory by Urania led!' ('Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian', ll. 81–82) or Ann Yearsley's Miltonic figuration of Hannah More, "tis a task / For angels thus to raise the groveling soul, / And bid it pant for more than earthly bliss' ('Night. To Stella', ll. 139–41). Likewise in Dyer's Ode, Milton is a poet 'whose towering song / Has rov'd the tracks of boundless space, / Upborne, beyond the highest reach of rhyme. (84)[13] Like other self-proclaimed Romantic visionaries, Dyer envisions Milton the prophet, accessing and transmitting hidden knowledge. In keeping with the corrective, renovating function of the prophetic mode, Dyer's Milton, in addition to prophesying, also inspires subsequent prophecy:

> Thee oft when sadness shades his eye,
> Or folly leads his thoughts astray,
> Shall Genius hail, and cheerful taste thy verse:
>
> Then Fancy glow with magic fires,
> Then more than music charm his ear,
> Till hush'd each angry passion sleeps,
> Till Sorrow's self be seen to smile,
> As tho' some angel form warbled 'mid brightest spheres. (86)

Dyer renders the vatic process as consumption: Genius eats *Paradise Lost.* This conventional prophetic motif, which alludes simultaneously to the Book of Revelation as well as to the literary mode derived from Revelation, defines Dyer's Milton as visionary—a characterization that Lamb, by virtue of having assisted Dyer in revising the 1800 volume, would have been familiar with. It follows that Lamb, by using a Miltonic allusion to frame 'Amicus Redivivus', an essay about Dyer, is overtly referencing Dyer's Milton, the vatic bard.

By connoting Dyer's particular brand of Milton interpretation, the epigraph also establishes the perimeters of Lamb's own critical designs. The lines Lamb chose (ll. 50–51), when restored to their proper context, point at a crucial moment in *Lycidas*, when Milton details the crisis that will engender the turn away from classical poetry and to prophecy:

[12] The messy bibliographic history of Dyer's *Poems* is one of the few areas scholars have paid attention to, largely on account of Coleridge's, and to an even greater degree Lamb's, editorial contributions. See especially Harriet Jump, '"Snatch'd out of the fire": Lamb, Coleridge, and George Dyer's Cancelled Preface'. Although it is outside the purview of this discussion, I do want to call attention to the fact that Dyer's 'Ode XV. Written on a Blank Leaf of Milton's Paradise Lost, Presented by the Editor Capel Lofft to the Author', when adequately historicized, demonstrates that Dyer's poetry, despite claims by Adams, Roe, and Whelan to the contrary, *complements* his radical prose and therefore holds up to critical scrutiny.
[13] *Poems, By George Dyer* (London, 1801); page numbers, corresponding to this edition, are given parenthetically in the text.

Where were ye nymphs when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o're the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards the famous drüids lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of *Mona* high,
Nor yet where *Deva* spreds her wisard stream:
Ay me, I fondly dream!
Had ye been there, for what could that have don?
What could the Muse her self that *Orpheus* bore,
The Muse her self for her inchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His goary visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift *Hebrus* to the *Lesbian* shoar. (50–63)[14]

Poetry—specifically ancient British and classical Greek poetry, figured respectively as druidic graves and a dismembered Orpheus—has proven incapable of saving Lycidas. This realization inspires Milton's corrective realignment of poetics with Christian doctrine, undertaken throughout the remaining lines of *Lycidas* and pursued through the later longer works, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*—and then carried forward and revised further by Milton's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetic descendants.[15] By evoking the approximate origin of all Miltonic visionary poetics, the crisis point that facilitates revision—or, to use Lamb's term, 'redivivus' (renovation)—Lamb's epigraph signals the critical purpose of his essay: to engage and challenge the prevalent definition of visionary poetics. To that end, Lamb satirizes Dyer, a self-conscious theorist and practitioner of vatic poetry, who depicts himself, in a poem titled 'A Vision,' as having been tasked by Nature

"To follow fiction through her magic bow'rs;
"To trip with fancy on her airy dance,
"With tiptoe revelries, and wild surprise:
"To mark each pageant in its proud advance
"From shadowy deeps, and visionary skies;
"Sweet are the haunts, wherever genius roves,
"Through fields of vision'd bliss, or academic groves. (lxxxiii)

Lamb's visionary figuration of Dyer unfolds throughout 'Amicus Redivivus', accruing Miltonic overtones as the essay culminates. Dyer, emerging from the New River, is represented as 'the silvery apparition of a good white head' (209). Augmenting (and augmented by) the visionary context surrounding it, Lamb's phrase conveys a sense of the invisible becoming visible through the theologically fraught term *apparition,* which recalls the *epiphania* or *apparitio,* Christ's

[14] Milton's poetry is quoted from *The Complete Poetry of John Milton,* ed. John T. Shawcross (New York, 1971). Line numbers appear parenthetically in the text.
[15] Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics,* 83–84; *Milton and the Line of Vision,* xv–xvi.

manifestation. Similarly, the modifier *silvery,* which signifies the daylight gradually illuminating Dyer's emerging 'good white head', is suggestive of the aureole, or glorifying halo, of Christian iconography. Such imagery thematically aligns Dyer to Milton's major and minor Christian prophecies, including *Lycidas.*

In Lamb's own dream vision, Dyer, leading a procession of nearly-drowned souls, appears as the poet Arion, who 'in his singing garments marcheth singly, with harp in hand and votive garland' (212). Overtly, the line recalls Milton's differentiation of poets from writers of expository prose in *The Reason of Church Government*: 'a Poet soaring in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing robes about him [...]' (Bk II, Introduction). Given that Dyer was better known to his contemporaries as the author of *An Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (1789), *Complaints of the Poor People of England* (1793), and *A Dissertation on the Theory and Practice of Benevolence* (1795), as well an array of hack-journalism, the joke here would have been immediately apparent: like Milton, Dyer wrote vatic poetry and radical polemics. Unlike Milton's, Dyer's poetry failed to garner the respect of his Romantic contemporaries, a judgment subsequent critics have shared and perpetuated.

Excepting the epigraph, the 'singing garments' allusion is the essay's most conspicuous reference to Milton. Yet the whole figuration resonates with another level of Miltonic overtones as well. Lamb yokes the 'singing robes' to Arion, the classical Greek poet saved from drowning by a porpoise. There is general consensus among Milton scholars that the Arion myth is also the source of a prominent allusion in *Lycidas*: 'Look homeward Angel now and melt with ruth / And O ye *Dolphins,* waft the hapless youth' (163–64; italics in original). In a turn of metaphysical wit, Milton likens the drowned Lycidas to the rescued Arion, a paradox resolved only by recalling the dolphin's symbolic meaning within the early Christian church, particularly as a symbol of Christ, who in Milton's poem saves Lycidas eternally, just as the porpoise rescues Arion corporally: 'So *Lycidas* sunk low but mounted high / Through the dear might of him that walkt the waves' (172–73). Lamb's vision, 'At their head Arion—or is it G. D.?' (212), initiates a multivalent allusion, shoring up the Dyer-Milton amalgamation Lamb has been weaving throughout 'Amicus Redivivus.'

Lamb's amalgamation energizes the satire of 'Amicus Redivivus'. Like *Lycidas*—and all works within the visionary tradition Milton's elegy carried forward—'Amicus Redivivus' is a meditation on death, accompanied by salvific guidance. The essay's title announces it as such. Regardless of how else we define the visionary poetics adopted and adapted by Milton and poetical heirs, the prophetic mode first and foremost diagnoses the inescapable reality of death and prescribes a remedial strategy for coping with mortality. Rosemond Tuve's characterization of *Lycidas* as 'the most poignant and controlled statement in English poetry of the acceptance of that in the human condition which seems to man unacceptable' is debatable only with respect to its modifying superlative; the point modified is as true of *Lycidas* as it is explanatory of the purpose behind all poetry

employing the prophetic mode.[16] It is that purpose, the vatic transmission of salvific guidance, designed to abet the mind aware of its own impermanence yet capable of imagining eternity, which motivates Lamb's criticism, masquerading as occasional satire.

Once the Dyer-Milton figuration is established, the terms of the satire fall into place. Dyer is saved, not by visionary poetry, but by the decidedly sublunary efforts (dispensing booze surely counts as sublunary) of a simple country doctor, the expertly rendered MONOCULUS. Like Dyer in 'Oxford in the Vacation', MONOCULUS, introduced for comedic effect, quickly blooms into the moral center of 'Amicus Redivivus':

> MONOCULUS—for so, in default of catching his true name, I choose to designate the medical gentleman who now appeared—is a grave, middle-aged person, who, without having studied at college, or truckled to the pedantry of a diploma, hath employed a great proportion of his valuable time in experimental processes upon the bodies of unfortunate fellow-creatures, in whom the vital spark, to mere vulgar thinking, would seem extinct, and lost for ever . . . In fine, MONOCULUS is a humane, sensible man, who, for a slender pittance, scarce enough to sustain life, is content to wear it out in the endeavour to save the lives of others—his pretensions so moderate, that with difficulty I could press a crown upon him, for the price of restoring the existence of such an invaluable creature to society as G. D. (210–11)

Signaled by Lamb's humorous sobriquet—'He passeth by the name of Doctor, and is remarkable for wanting his left eye' (210)—MONOCULUS serves a critical function: the nickname openly antagonizes the 'visionary' component of prophecy. Lamb is challenging an idea Wittreich would later characterize as the vatic poet's attempt to break through 'the limitations of his medium by devising for literature a new optical system, an intention he accomplishes by spurning the boundaries of any single form'. Rather than the poetically visionary yet nearly blind Dyer, who 'shall not venture out again—no, not by daylight—without a sufficient pair of spectacles' (212), the one-eyed MONOCULUS is the agent of renovation in 'Amicus Redivivus.' The latter quite literally resuscitates the former. As a result, all claims of salvific vocation associated with visionary poetry are exposed, through Lamb's discerning ridicule, as mere pretensions. 'Amicus Redivivus' refutes of the idea that vatic poetry has the capacity to accomplish its theoretical designs.

After MONOCULUS's renovating intervention, Lamb continues to defy the authority of visionary poetics. Poetry, no longer the stuff of prophetic visions, becomes a mere consolatory tool, signaling as well that Dyer's figurative role has changed. And, not coincidentally, some of Lamb's old fondness, displayed throughout 'Oxford in the Vacation', reemerges:

[16] Rosemond Tuve, 'Theme, Pattern, and Imagery in *Lycidas*', in *Milton's Lycidas: The Tradition and the Poem*, ed. C. A. Patrides (New York, 1961), 167; for a perspective situating Tuve's judgment within a broader discussion of *Lycidas* and the prophetic mode, see Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics*, 81–84.

> It was pleasant to observe the effect of the subsiding alarm upon the nerves of the dear absentee. It seemed to have given a shake to memory, calling up notice after notice, of all the providential deliverances he had experienced in the course of his long and innocent life [...] Anon, he would burst out into little fragments of chaunting—of songs long ago—ends of deliverance-hymns, not remembered before since childhood, but coming up now, when his heart was made tender as a child's—for the *tremor chordis*, in the respect of a recent deliverance [...] will produce a self-tenderness, which we should do ill to christen cowardice; and Shakespeare, in the latter crisis, has made his good Sir Hugh to remember the sitting by Babylon, and to mutter of shallow rivers. (211)

Here, Lamb points to a rare instance of verse in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare's only play written exclusively in colloquial prose. Sir Hugh Evans's consolatory turn to verse before his impending dual with Caius (III.i.11–30), like Dyer's own innocent singing, exemplifies for Lamb a more organic poetics, as comedic mundanity supplants the visionary aspirations of the *Lycidas* paradigm.

The degradation of poetry is soon continued in another of the essay's comedic highlights. Lamb's meditation on the New River culminates in speculation that, wanting a proper name, the river tried to claim Dyer's: 'having no name, besides that unmeaning assumption of *eternal novity*, did ye think to get one by the noble prize, and henceforth to be termed the STREAM DYERIAN?' (211–12). Lamb underscores the absurdity of this point with a quotation: 'And could such spacious virtue find a grave / Beneath the imposthumed bubble of a wave?' (212). As Lucas points out in an explanatory note, Lamb has taken the lines from another 'Lycidas'—not Milton's, but John Cleveland's (435). Following the appearance of MONOCULUS, Milton all but disappears from the essay.

Remarkably, 'Amicus Redivius' does not trivialize visionary poetics, even as it irreverently exposes the mode's grandiloquence. Rather, Lamb's essay culminates in a demonstration of how the very source of the visionary pretense, the allusive matrices that allow the prophetic utterance to speak, nevertheless remains intrinsically and inalienably valuable.[17] Exegesis both inaugurates and comprises prophecy, as the poet weaves together in new ways various fragments of the source texts that have inspired re-vision. Put another way, the creative energies of the visionary poet are always critical energies as well, as the visionary poet is first and foremost a scholar. For Lamb, the scholarly component of visionary poetics compensates for its otherwise ridiculous salvific pretensions, the crux of the essay's critical argument.

In that respect, Lamb's handling of Dyer in 'Amicus Redivivus' reiterates his treatment of Dyer in 'Oxford in the Vacation'. Speculating that near-death experiences are perceived in the underworld, Lamb imagines the nature of the company Dyer almost joined in Elysium: 'From their seats of Asphodel arose the

[17] Wittreich, *Milton and the Line of Vision*, xv: "the interconnectedness of the tradition requires that the poet-prophet give to his precursors the same *diligent study* [emphasis added] that Daniel gave to Jeremiah and that John of Patmos gave to Daniel."

gentler and the graver ghosts—poet, or historian—of Grecian or of Roman lore—to crown with unfading chaplets the half-finished love-labours of their unwearied scholiast' (212). A company of Cambridge scholars, rather than a pantheon of great poets, await Dyer; the exception is Thomas Gray, 'the sweet lyrist of Peter House' (212), who by Romantic standards hardly qualified as a poet—'more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction', Wordsworth wrote in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads.*[18] In the essay's closing moment, Dyer's teacher Anthony Askew rises to meet him: 'the mild Askew, with longing aspirations, leaned foremost from his venerable Æsculapian chair, to welcome into that happy company the matured virtues of the man, whose tender scions in the boy he himself upon earth had so prophetically fed and watered' (213). Through its educative benevolence, scholarship demonstrably achieves the eternizing salvation visionary poetics merely purports to deliver.

It remains only to point out, lest Lamb continue to be mistaken as the UR-defamer of Dyer's poetic reputation, that Dyer himself was in on the joke. 'A Vision', which clearly articulates Dyer's vatic designs, takes its own subtle jab at the pretensions of the Milton tradition. Nature, having charged Dyer '"To follow fiction through her magic bow'rs [...] Through fields of vision'd bliss, or academic groves [,]' tells him

> "Thine be the warblings of the humbler lyre,
> "Humble, but not inglorious: thine to sing,
> "The morning's glittering eye, the virgin spring,
> "The power of beauty, Freedom's holy fire;
> "To guide the youthful poet on his way;
> "To rouze the virtues, soothe the soul of pain."
> Enough: if genius may but feel the lay;
> Enough: if friendship but approve the strain;
> And if,—for life's short day-dream soon shall fly,—
> The muse may charm a pang, or check a rising sigh. (lxxxiv)

These, the poem's concluding lines, which demonstrate a self-deprecation that is as charming as it is rare among the Romantic Miltonists, contain Lamb's entire 'Amicus Redivivus' thesis, from which visionary poetics emerges 'Humble, but not inglorious' as well. The 'not inglorious' aspect of visionary poetics is its inherent scholarly value, and Lamb's thesis points current scholars toward a means for renovating Dyer once again, this time as *poeta redivivus.*

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[18] *Lyrical Ballads, 1798,* ed. Harold Littledale (London, 1911), 234.

Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver*: A Riposte to William Godwin

Hilary Newman

Charles Lloyd published his only surviving novel, *Edmund Oliver,* in 1798. It is very much a novel of ideas and explored concepts that were topical at the end of the eighteenth century. These ideas are firmly embodied in Lloyd's varied cast of characters who are more important than the unfolding of the plot or the narration of events. Lloyd prefaced the novel with an 'Advertisement' in which he suggested his main task was to refute Godwin's essay 'Of Cohabitation', first published in *The Enquirer.* The essay is now known as 'Of Domestic or Family Life'. However, there is a note to this effect: 'In the first edition of this work the title of this essay was "Of Cohabitation." It was suggested that there was an unpleasant ambiguity in this word.'[1] While the original title might have suggested that Godwin was only interested in discussing marriage, the later title expressed the wider remit he wished to explore in his essay. Godwin himself makes this point clear: 'no subject is of more importance in the morality of private life than that of domestic or family life'. Lloyd, too, took the meaning of 'cohabitation' in its widest sense. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives the first definition of 'cohabitation' as 'Dwelling or living together; community of life'. *Edmund Oliver* takes this idea of cohabitation as its starting point and includes everybody dwelling in the house, including married couples, children and other relatives. Neither can the second definition of 'cohabitation' as 'living together as man and wife' be assumed to be Godwin's sole meaning, for it is the totality of 'domestic life' he is concerned with. *Edmund Oliver* also includes Godwin's term 'concubinage' which is defined as 'the cohabitating of man and woman who are not legally married'. 'Concubinage' is objected to by Lloyd who takes it as referring to those who engage in sexual relations outside marriage.

In his 'Advertisement' Lloyd launched into this subject immediately:

> I think I can perceive, in the introduction of concubinage, in the rejection of 'cohabitation', and in the character of that indefinite benevolence, which would respect the mass of existence without addressing its operations patiently to parts of that mass, of principles, that would destroy the tranquillity of society, that by means of annihilating all the dear 'charities of father, son and brother', would at last lead to a callousness that spurns at all affections, to a mad spark of

[1] William Godwin *The Enquirer* Reprinted: 2010, General Books, Memphis, Tennessee, USA (1823), 32. All references to this text will be included in brackets in the body of the article.

experiment, that would eradicate all the valuable feelings of man's nature'[2].

Lloyd went on to say that he believed that 'the domestic connections' make marriage necessary to produce rational and benevolent beings. He argues against accepting Godwin's idea that 'cohabitation is an evil; and that it were well, did we receive no bias towards individuals from the institution of marriage, and its consequent relations' (viii-ix).

What are William Godwin's objections to family life? His reiterated criticism is that 'Excessive familiarity is the bane of social happiness' (32): 'All this is the excess of familiarity' (32); and 'that according to a well-known maxim, familiarity breeds contempt' (34). Godwin condemns family life not only for its connubial relations, but also in its treatment of its children. Where a person is unduly familiar, whether it is wife, child or friend, the treatment meted out is undesirable. Godwin complains that: 'The ill humour which is so prevalent through all the different walks of life, is the result of familiarity, and consequently of cohabitation. If we did not see each other too frequently, we should accustom ourselves to act reasonably and with urbanity.' (34) Charles Maurice expressed the exact antithesis of Godwin's view when he wrote to Edmund: 'In fact *frequent or vivid association* may stand for a definition of affection. We love him most by a necessity of our condition, with whom our souls have most often, or more intensely, come in contact' (I, 129). At the conclusion of Godwin's essay, he asks his readers to agree that his arguments 'prove cohabitation fundamentally an erroneous system'. He continues: 'It is then reasonable that they should excite the inquisitive to contemplate and unfold a mode of society, in which it should be superseded. Suppose for a moment that cohabitation is indispensable, or that its benefits outweigh those of an opposite principle. Yet the developing its fundamental evil, is perhaps of all modes of proceeding best calculated to excite us the reduction and abridgement of this evil, if we cannot annihilate it' (34).

Like the novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) by Mary Hays (an acknowledged influence in the creation of Gertrude Sinclair, who actually quotes from this work) *Edmund Oliver* is an epistolary novel. As in a dramatic performance there is no omniscient author, so in Lloyd's epistolary novel there is no all-knowing author. The various letter writers are limited by subjectivity and incomplete knowledge and so we are presented with multiple, often-conflicting accounts of the same events or emotions. The reader must compare and weigh up these variations in an attempt to gain the fullest possible viewpoint. To bewilder the reader further, the novel creates a kaleidoscopic effect by the insertion of letters and other documents inside one another.

So how is the reader to find his or her moral bearings and reach the conclusions that Lloyd spells out in his 'Advertisement'? Lloyd tries to give the reader some guidance before the story begins. He disclaims all responsibility for Edmund's early beliefs: 'I am exclusively answerable for the Being I leave him, and

[2] Charles Lloyd *Edmund Oliver* in two volumes Ecco Print Edition 2010, vii-viii. All future references to this novel will be to this edition with the volume number and page number inserted in brackets in the body of the article.

for the sentiments which are expressed in Charles Maurice's letters, which are one cause of his reformation, and gradual return from the slavery of passion to reason and manly fortitude' (x-xi). This sentence suggests that Maurice has authorial approval and expressed Lloyd's own opinions. Calculating who the most prolific letter writers are in *Edmund Oliver* also influences the weight the reader gives to the characters' judgements. It can be demonstrated that this experiment again turns up Maurice as the soundest judge of character. In the first volume of *Edmund Oliver*, there are six correspondents: Charles Maurice, Edmund Oliver, Gertrude Sinclair, Roger Oliver, Ellen Oliver and Edward D'Oyley. The list has been given in declining order of the number of letters and the number of pages occupied by each writer. Thus Maurice writes sixteen letters which occupy one hundred and twenty-one pages in volume one. At the other end of the scale, Edward D'Oyley's two letters occupy only four pages. He is the villain of the piece and cannot be allowed to justify his actions and win the sympathy of the reader. There are a total of thirty-seven letters in the first volume.

Volume two of *Edmund Oliver* is comprised of letters from the same six correspondents of the first volume, plus two others: Edith Alwynne and Sydney Alleyne. Again Charles Maurice (though the actual number of letters he writes are two fewer than the most prolific correspondent, the eponymous hero) occupies far more pages than Edmund: one hundred and twenty-six to eighty. At the other end of the scale, Roger Oliver, Gertrude Sinclair and Sydney Alleyne, each write only one letter of the length of a single page. The total number of letters is thirty-nine in volume two. Edith Alwynne emerges as a new letter-writer who contributes the third greatest number of letters: nine, which occupy thirty-two pages.

That the eponymous hero of *Edmund Oliver* occupies fewer pages than does Charles Maurice, suggests the great importance Lloyd gave the latter as a moral guide for the reader. Maurice's defence of family life reads as a direct refutation of Godwin's arguments, presented in his essay, against society being organized in families: 'From early association, familiarity of habit, and an affection inseparable from common domestication, we possess an influence over certain persons, which it is impossible for us to transfer to another: the attachment of a sister to a brother, of a father to a son, or of friend to another, is founded on the sympathies of nature' (I, 126-127). This list includes a number of the various kinds of relationship that Lloyd explores in his novel between cohabiting characters.

First, though, let us examine the sexual relationships in *Edmund Oliver* that are not sanctioned by marriage. It would seem that Lloyd disapproved of these as he portrays them as purely destructive. The major relationship of this kind is that between Gertrude Sinclair and Edward D'Oyley, who become lovers. Edmund Oliver turns this relationship into a triangle, though he has no sexual involvement with Gertrude. Indeed he moves from a passionate non-sexual feeling for Gertrude to a happy marriage based on reason. He escapes, if only narrowly, the early and unpleasant deaths which befall both Gertrude and D'Oyley. Gertrude is not an entirely unsympathetic character, as Lloyd suggests in his 'Advertisement': 'In the character of Gertrude I have endeavoured to portray a woman of warm affections, strong passions, and energetic intellect, yielding herself to those loose and declamatory principles, yet at the same time uncorrupted in her intentions,

unfortunate from error and not from deliberate vice' (ix-x). Edmund and Gertrude had exchanged passionate vows some three to four years before the novel opens. Then Gertrude had gone to London with her father, the Earl of Cathcart, while Edmund became an undergraduate at Oxford University. Here he led a debauched life and was too ashamed of himself to maintain contact with Gertrude. Lord Cathcart had forbidden his children to have any contact with their Oliver cousins when Mr Oliver died. When Lord Cathcart himself dies, Edmund decides to renew his relationship with Gertrude. But she has formed another attachment to Edward D'Oyley. They aim at being revolutionary spirits and challenging the traditional institutions and values of their society. Thus we find Gertrude admonishing D'Oyley: 'Let us not be swayed by prejudice!' (I, 35). D'Oyley is afraid of causing his parents suffering, but Gertrude is dismissive: 'Our minds, Edward, are of a common nature; we understand each other, and never do we rise so sublimely superior to vulgar notions, as when our energies combine, and each forgets that there is an individual end in existence' (I, 37). Gertrude also despises the trappings of rank and wealth. Her ambitions are rather different from those of the rest of her family: 'I longed to soar with the truly great, with the champions of truth; the benefactors of mankind' (38). She is only on good terms with one member of her family and that is her soldier brother with whom she is living in London.

Gertrude tries to dismiss Edmund Oliver from her mind when she hears that he has called in her absence. She believes that he became 'a professed libertine' (as indeed his own record of his life at that period suggested) and that now he is either dead or a social outcast. Nevertheless her feelings are ambivalent towards Edmund. She is apprehensive that Edmund might come and try to hold her to the vows they made in Glasgow several years ago. But she dismisses her fears in an exaggerated way: 'But what are vows to me? Promises what are they? Snares! fetters for the mind! [...] We should be decided only by the principles of the present hour! The soul should ever be its own arbitrator and disposer' (I, 47). When the cousins Edmund and Gertrude do meet, she tries to place their relationship on a purely formal footing and refuses to discuss the past. Edmund, however, will not accept this and sends an exaggerated description of her to Charles Maurice. He succumbs to 'the inebriating draughts of rapturous passion' (I, 61). Gertrude and Edmund's declamatory style and the frequent use of exclamation marks, convey their exaggerated feelings. The irregularity of the punctuation suggests that their passions are eccentric and over the top. D'Oyley writes in exactly the same style. He holds the same revolutionary views that Gertrude espouses, both in the public and private spheres of life.

A complicating factor in judging Gertrude and D'Oyley's relationship occurs when she is allowed to quote from one of Charles Lloyd's own poems, 'Written at Burton in Hampshire August 1797' and included in his volume of poetry, *Blank Verse* (1798). She follows up this poem with the conclusion that 'we should proceed boldly onward in the difficult and untried paths of intellectual experiment' (I, 124). This suggests that Charles Lloyd's own views on marriage and politics were evolving as he wrote *Edmund Oliver*, and he concluded by championing more traditional views on these subjects. If there is a certain sympathy for Gertrude on the author's part, however, this is not extended to Edward D'Oyley. Lloyd allows

the character whose viewpoint he supports to sum up D'Oyley's character. Thus Charles Maurice gives a shrewd and accurate assessment of D'Oyley's principles, in a letter to his wife, Rebecca: 'I expect to find him one of your dashing modern democrats. A man who will talk very big of reform, and general principles, but who for the world would not be guilty of a personal privation, or unpraised self-denial. A man who wills not to *do right*, but finds that all is right which he *wills*, who has the happy talent of discovering that all *his desires* nicely adapt themselves to the most approved calculations of moral usefulness' (I, 152-153).

In volume two of *Edmund Oliver*, the love triangle collapses, disastrously for Gertrude and D'Oyley. In a highly complicated narrative structure, with letters and documents inserted one with another, D'Oyley's betrayal of Gertrude is revealed. The structure is mimetic of D'Oyley's convoluted attempt to defend the indefensible. His acquaintance, Claremont, has informed Gertrude that D'Oyley has recently made a secret marriage with an elderly woman of fortune 'impelled to this step by debt, and the known severity of his parents' (II, 73-74). Gertrude bursts out in a passionately disillusioned letter to her betrayer:

> Great God! D'Oyley, and is it for this we spurned at prejudice? - laughed at the forms of men? - is it for this that we have abandoned all institutions, and positive rules, and thrown ourselves into the amazing depths of intellectual calculation, unbiased, save by the character of the passing moment? – Is it for this I rushed into thy arms and exclaimed, 'I am thine forever' – for this that I have sold my *fair name among my sex?* (II, 76).

Gertrude admits that she has been a 'poor misjudging mortal' and now understands his objections to marriage, which she had believed arose from 'the generous impulses of an independent mind' (II, 77). But she still believes that her sacrifices would have been totally acceptable to herself if she had 'enjoyed thy love, thy confidence, the devotion of thy heart, and the exclusive possession of thy mind as a return' (II, 77).

A despicable letter from D'Oyley, attempting a defence of his behaviour, is also included in this long document to Charles Maurice. D'Oyley admits he married for money, hoping that his elderly wife's death would soon release him. He writes that his love for Gertrude is unchangeable and impudently concludes with '- trusting that hearts so united as ours, can never be shaken by adverse fortune (II, 81-82). This suggests that D'Oyley hoped to maintain Gertrude as his mistress. It is significant that they only consummated their relationship on the day Edmund Oliver disappeared. Unsurprisingly, Gertrude received this letter from her lover with all the 'stings and tortures of insult' (II, 82).

Gertrude also learns that D'Oyley fell in a duel with Claremont, who he blamed for exposing his mercenary marriage. Gertrude recognises that their passion has been destructive '- and his passion for me, which ought to have actuated him to some noble effort, only accelerated his destruction' (II, 83). Gertrude herself is left pregnant with her dead lover's child. She can endure the stigma and shame for herself, but is wretched in the contemplation of how the baby of this fated passion

will be treated by the very society she thought she and D'Oyley were rejecting with all the contempt of their revolutionary principles. After the birth of her child at the Maurices' home, Gertrude destroys herself by taking poison. Charles Maurice is once again employed by Lloyd to point the moral: 'You evidently see, in this case, the horrible effect of playing with human passions, and throwing down wantonly the barriers which religion and morality have erected - and of adopting a method of cold and generalising calculation in conduct, which stands aloof from nature and human sympathies'. (II, 86-87) Meanwhile with Gertrude and D'Oyley both dead, Edmund's first passion is now viewed by Charles Maurice merely as a stage in the young man's development:

> I still trust that our friend [Edmund] may be brought back to usefulness, and rational virtue; experience is necessary for all minds, but for those of wild and luxuriant growth like his, no discipline that does not utterly blast, and annihilate, can be too severe; - it converts the passions, to energies of patience, and fortitude; and raises selfish sensibilities (from the hard bought consciousness of what human nature suffers when oppressed by calamity) to general benevolence (II, 190-191).

So the affair between Gertrude and D'Oyley is presented as a destructive relationship, which claims both of their lives. It is their anticipation of sexual passion, which Lloyd had condemned when expressed in William Godwin's essay, 'Of Domestic or Family Life'. But Lloyd is not content merely to show Godwin's 'concubinage' in its actual disastrous effect on human lives in his novel. Lloyd more than balances this portrait with entirely positive examples of family life. The remainder of this article will consider the presentation of these ideas as they are embodied in the characters portrayed in *Edmund Oliver*. The eponymous hero is a link between destructive and constructive love as he moves from one to the other in the course of Lloyd's novel.

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There are several marriages in *Edmund Oliver*. The main one is that between Charles and Rebecca Maurice. They are living in the Lake District and rearing a young family. Sometimes with a skilful juxtaposition of letters, Lloyd emphasises the moral point of view he wishes his reader to adopt. For example, in volume one, Charles Maurice's letter to Edmund describing his joy at being reunited with his family, is juxtaposed against its immediate predecessor, a letter from Gertrude to D'Oyley about their tempestuous and selfish passion.

It is evident from Maurice's letters, especially those written to his wife, Rebecca, and to the eponymous hero, that he has thought deeply on the subject of marriage. While he disapproves of a man who allows any one passion to dominate him, he still considers that 'strong passions, if properly disciplined and directed' are the 'bases of imagination and richness of mind' (I, 86). However, Maurice does not believe that passionate love is a good base on which to build an enduring domestic relationship. He urges Edmund to 'Rouse yourself!' Maurice feels that Edmund has already indulged his passion for Gertrude for too long, and that he would not be

happy as the husband of Gertrude whose 'impetuosity and wildness of disposition' make her wholly unfitted for 'securing domestic comfort' (I, 126). Maurice advises Edmund: 'If you marry, marry from serious and well grounded esteem, and not from love' (I, 90).

Charles sees a happy marriage, with children, as the ultimate achievement in life; 'above all things' he tells Edmund, he wishes to see him as 'the husband of a serious and well disposed woman' and to be able 'To contemplate you in the sacred character of her protector, and the father of blooming and happy children' (I, 94). Once Edmund has made what Maurice calls 'a rational choice of a wife,' they will all live together in a community where there is no individual ownership of property. This is realized at the end of the novel; here it is pictured as an ideal way of living, a view doubtless showing the influence of Coleridge.

Charles Maurice believes that marriage and its duties can be the route to human perfection. Domestication leads to the regular performance of 'good offices and kindnesses' by family members for each other and lead the individual 'to general and enlarged benevolence' (I, 132). He cites the example of 'the humble Nazarene' (I, 133). Religious faith is important in *Edmund Oliver*, and it is significant that D'Oyley sneers at Edmund for professing Christianity.

From his many lengthy letters to Rebecca, the reader of Lloyd's novel perceives that the Maurices' marriage is based on firm foundations. It transpires that both the husband and wife are prepared to accept the 'chastisements of our heavenly Father'. The sympathy that both Maurices feel for Edmund's plight is probably due to the fact that both, when young, met with 'the sad, though beneficial discipline of calamity' (I, 202). According to Charles Maurice this led to both partners in the marriage learning 'a subdued and acquiescing wisdom' (I, 201-202). This has enabled the Maurices to live in a household that is entirely happy, productive and successful.

That marriage does require constant input from the two individuals involved is a point that Lloyd is also anxious to convey. Marriage itself does not automatically result in happiness, as is shown in some of the more minor marriages in *Edmund Oliver*. A couple whose marriage is as destructive as the affair of Gertrude and D'Oyley is briefly presented in volume one. Lewis and Caroline Clare have lost their young son and their baby through the lack of basic necessities, including food. Society has evidently failed to help them and so they make a suicide pact and drown themselves (I, 156-160).

Another unsuccessful marriage presented in volume one of *Edmund Oliver* is that between two criminals who have married for convenience. Margaret (Meg) was the daughter of a Mr McBriar who formerly sold fruit and vegetables to Mr Oliver in Glasgow. In a rewrite of what the reader had been told earlier, and also as a matter of enlightenment to the Oliver family, Meg explains how Mr Oliver's will ended up apparently disinheriting his immediate family. Meg reveals that she was seduced by the Olivers' eldest cousin and was persuaded to provide assistance in his plot against the Olivers by a promise of marriage. Meg became pregnant - like Gertrude - and is forced by the cousin to marry another man. At the same time the cousin wishes to pursue his sexual relationship with Meg. Like D'Oyley, the elder cousin married an older woman for her money. Thwarted in love, Meg, like Edmund and

Gertrude, falls into a long and dangerous illness. For all these characters illness is a physical manifestation of mental distress. When Meg has recovered she makes a loveless marriage with Richard. They disagree on the best way of extorting money from Edmund in return for informing him about his cousin's plot, and Richard flounces out cursing Meg, who looks after him 'with a countenance of ferocious contempt' (I, 231).

A late contributor to the novel's marriage theme is that of Mr Basil. He is a widower with three small children. When he wishes to marry Ellen Oliver, he provides her friends with an account of his first marriage. Resembling Gertrude and D'Oyley and Meg and the elder cousin, Mr Basil had indulged his sexual passion with Susan without marriage. Mr Basil now refers to this as a 'sacrifice' of 'our mutual self esteem for the caresses of a lawless love' (II, 259). However, unlike the other male characters in the same position, Basil accepted the consequences of his actions and married Susan. They went to live in a retired village where Basil had secured a living. Sadly, although Susan was a devoted wife, Basil's 'soul often felt a cruel void', for Susan could not participate in his intellectual interests (II, 260). But Basil buckled down to his new responsibilities and Susan produced another two children before dying. This event had occurred three years previously. Once again Charles Maurice is used as Lloyd's mouthpiece to encourage the reader to look favourably upon Basil.

Like Edmund, Basil has passed through a life-changing disappointment in love; but he will be rewarded and reclaimed by his marriage to Ellen Oliver. Basing his comments on his own experience, Edmund assures Maurice and the reader that Basil is now worthy of his beloved sister: 'the consequences of his former failing have done away the weaknesses of his character; he pines for a rational companion – he seeks for the comforts of an equal intercourse' (II, 271). Ellen herself entertains no doubts about her husband's character and behaviour: 'I feel at this moment proud of being the disciple of a man, who has attained his present character in the school of mortal weakness and mortal suffering' (II, 282).

The final happy marriage of the novel is that of Edmund Oliver and his cousin Edith Alwynne. Edmund candidly informs Edith that he does not 'pretend to act from the sudden sympathies of a romantic passion' (II, 286). Rather, like Basil, he feels 'those craving emotions which pleaded for the blessing of an equal companion' (II, 288). The names of husband and father are now 'endearing names' to Edmund. His summary of the ideal marriage again suggests a deliberate and complete refutation of William Godwin's view of cohabitation in its widest sense:

> When I think of marriage I contemplate a state in which two persons exert themselves for the same end in a constant unanimity of action – it presents the noblest of intellectual aims; it is a relation that affords an everlasting opportunity, nay, even implies the constant duty of making another happy, – it is, perhaps, a necessary scale in the grand process of intellectualisation, and perfection. – It calls each soul out of itself – makes it necessarily extend its compass of hopes, and fears, creates the duties of a parent, and evermore presents objects for the tenderest feelings, and most interesting sympathies (II, 289).

Having passed through a passion that threatened to destroy him, as well as Gertrude and D'Oyley, Edmund is at last rewarded with a happy marriage, into which he enters with a newly acquired maturity and self-knowledge. Charles Maurice presents us with a final vignette of the Olivers' marriage after its first ten weeks: they 'seem possessed of every blessing which mortality can aspire to' (II, 292).

As Charles Lloyd, on the evidence of *Edmund Oliver*, saw children as a natural consequence of marriage, it is unsurprising that another cohabiting type of love, that between parents and children, is also explored in the novel. Again this was at least partly prompted by the views expressed by William Godwin in his essay 'On Domestic and Family Life'. Several ideas about the rearing of children are explored in Lloyd's novel. Biological as well as adopted children are presented in *Edmund Oliver*. Charles and Rebecca are bringing up their – unspecified – number of children throughout the novel. By the conclusion of *Edmund Oliver*, Ellen Basil is helping bring up the three children of her husband's first marriage, and Edmund and Edith Oliver have taken responsibility for the orphaned daughter of Gertrude Sinclair and Edward D'Oyley.

Godwin argued that in educating a child parents frequently use 'a harsh tone and a peremptory manner. The child does amiss, and he is rebuked. If the child overlooks this treatment and makes overtures of kindness' they are rejected. Naturally enough, Godwin's view of children was influenced by the Romantic preoccupation with the nature of the child. Godwin shared this interest with Wordsworth and Coleridge, to name but two other Romantic writers. Godwin made an extravagant defence of the child:

> I do not say that the child is the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with power of reasoning, with sensations of pleasure and pain, and with principles of morality; and that in this description is contained abundant cause for the exercise of reverence and forbearance. By the system of nature he is placed by himself; he has a claim upon his little sphere of empire and discretion; and he is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence ('Of Domestic and Family Life, 33).

Godwin argues that the child raised by its family does not receive due consideration. Instead the child's natural temperament and behaviour is negatively formed and distorted by harsh parental treatment. Children from outside the family area generally treated with more respect than the adult's own offspring. This leads Godwin to conclude that cohabitation is a disaster for children.

Coleridge had expounded his views on child rearing to Charles Lloyd's father. It is likely that Charles Lloyd Jr. read this letter. Evidently he was in sympathy with Coleridge's views on the subject. It is thus of interest to compare Coleridge's letter with *Edmund Oliver*'s treatment of children. Coleridge wrote to Mr Lloyd:

> I am anxious that my children should be bred up from earliest infancy in the simplicity of peasants, their food, dress, and habits completely

> rustic. I never shall, and I never will, have any fortune to leave them: I will leave them therefore hearts that desire little, heads that know how little is to be desired, and hands and arms accustomed to earn that little.[3]

The character with authorial approval in *Edmund Oliver* expresses his desire to share his wealth and property with the novel's eponymous hero. At the same time Charles Maurice explains his ideas about the raising of children:

> Human wants are few, and I deem it criminal, indeed an actual robbery, to devote more to myself or family than would fall to our share, were property equalised. I shall educate my children with these sentiments, I shall accustom them to physical hardships, they shall be preserved in utter ignorance of artificial wants and manners, till the impressions arising from them cannot alter the character of their minds [...] Their independence shall be that of unchangeable nature, which arises from physical robustness, and firmness of mind, rather than from vast possessions (II, 52-53).

Toward the end of volume two of the novel there is a detailed discussion of how children should be reared by their biological or surrogate parents. These ideas are expressed by the reformed Edmund and by his sister Ellen's comments on her husband's rearing of her three stepchildren. Edmund's principles seem to constitute an answer to Godwin's unease about the family's treatment of its children. The following statement is surely a direct challenge to William Godwin:

> [...] let us acknowledge, in the present state of society, the necessity of dividing the human race into houses and families, and that consequently the care of unformed minds devolves upon the person whose juxtaposition and matured judgement fit him for the employment. (II, 275-276).

Edmund believes the 'The principles' of child rearing are 'few and simple' (II, 273). He thinks that 'Education is rather a negative than a positive process'; parents who produce 'useful citizens and upright men' may congratulate themselves (II. 274).

It is now Ellen's turn to write to Edmund about Mr Basil's principles of educating his children. She writes that the Basil children are allowed to do as they please, without being restrained, though their father makes sure they will not come across anything that will lead them into mischief. As a result, Ellen claims that: '- they are all artlessness and innocence – the words right and wrong are almost unknown to them' (II, 280). A further tactic (perhaps a rather more doubtful procedure to the modern mind) was Basil's habit of shutting up his children in an empty room for two hours every day when they were infants and ignoring their cries. This was supposed to teach them to find amusement from within themselves. Ellen certainly did not regard this as any sort of a punishment, for she clearly states that Basil has never punished his children. Instead:

[3] See EV Lucas, *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* (Memphis, 1898), 10.

> if they are fretful, he seems not to notice them. Thus finding that they gain nothing by ill temper, and everything by mildness and good humour, the latter qualities become rather a habit of their mind than the effect of any voluntary exertion (II, 281).

The Basils, Olivers and Maurices take leave of the reader having successfully established a form of communal life, where everything is held in common. They have chosen a beautiful rustic area in which to bring the children up. The adults jointly labour on the farm. The superiority of the country life over that of the city has been stressed throughout the novel. Indeed, it emerges as another major theme of *Edmund Oliver*. The novel's rejection of city life is most clearly and succinctly articulated by Edmund in a letter to Maurice in which he describes cities as 'those graves of all the moral attributes of human nature' (I, 51-52). Their lives appear to be a British incarnation of Coleridge's never realised ambition to form just such a community in Susquehanna.

Lloyd further opposed Godwin's perceived failure of family life for children by showing adult children with their parents. As these are a continuation of a relationship established when they were juveniles, they suggest that their parenting was good. Mother/daughter love is embodied in the relationships between Mrs Oliver and Ellen and more particularly between Mrs Alwynne and Ellen. Both these daughters lose their mothers within the novel: Mrs Oliver dies in volume one and Mrs Alwynne in volume two. Both of these daughters are the major mourners at the deaths of their respective mothers. Edmund is also reported to be grieving for his mother. She had shown a great love for her younger son and his erratic behaviour may have hastened her death. The devout but tolerant Mrs Alwynne also bestows 'a motherly affection' on her nephew, Edmund. He encloses the poem 'The Dead Friend' in a letter in memory of her. Again this poem was actually written by Charles Lloyd in 1797 and included in his *Nugae Canorae* (1819).

Mrs Alwynne is the most fully developed of the older generation of characters in *Edmund Oliver*. It is probable that Mrs Alwynne was based on Lloyd's own mother. Both the fictional and the real woman were devout. There is an attitude which is common to them both, though its idiosyncratic nature suggests a borrowing by Lloyd for his fictional character from his mother. Mrs Lloyd wrote to Robert Lloyd that she did not approve of his brother writing novels. She would rather have seen Charles employed in any humble activity that was compatible with 'Christian simplicity'. She concluded: 'Till I am convinced that the Christian Religion is a Fable, I should never think the imagination can run riot in the delicious luxury of sentiment and warm descriptions of the passions, and the Heart remain pure'.[4]

Mrs Alwynne also has strong feelings about novels, though she is more concerned with the reading than the writing of them. She rejects Edmund's offer to read aloud from Henry MacKenzie's *Julia de Roubigne*. Her objection is that there are enough '*real ills*' in life and that it is 'wrong' to contemplate and imagine them.

[4] Ibid, 22

Although Mrs Lloyd and Mrs Alwynne's objections to novels were not exactly the same, they are both based on moral grounds (II, 134).

Another type of family love which Godwin shows no awareness of in his essay is that between siblings. The opening letter of *Edmund Oliver* is from the eponymous hero to his sister Ellen Oliver (I, 1-3). Ellen is always pleased to see Edmund and willing to forgive his bad behaviour. Charles Maurice writes to his wife that Ellen 'seems almost in an agonised state of mind' over the disappearance of her brother (I, 187). Edmund clearly reciprocates Ellen's love and sent her a poem called 'To A Sister'. Once more this was one of Charles Lloyd's own compositions and was included in his volume of poetry called *Blank Verse* (1798). The poem is a celebration of the brother/sister relationship.

In volume two Edmund expresses his warm appreciation of the sibling relationship:

> how sweet is the connection of a sister - it has all the endearing intimacy of friendship - the sweet softness and delicacy of love, without its turbulent and agitating passions. - It is more tender than the former - less impetuous than the latter - and possesses the charm of thorough confidence which belongs to both (II, 91)

Ellen Oliver plays no small part in the reclamation and recovery of her younger brother. However, as so often in this novel, Lloyd also presents us with an opposite type of character. Roger Oliver is not satisfactory as Edmund and Ellen's older brother. Edmund in fact treats Maurice more as a surrogate-brother than a friend. This is revealed by the fact that Edmund sends to Charles Maurice and not to Roger Oliver, 'Lines to a Brother'. This was a poem also written by Lloyd and included in his *Blank Verse*.

A final sort of family love that Charles Lloyd presents in his defence of family life is that between cousins. There has been a long established intimacy between several of the cousins in *Edmund Oliver*, which has also included these more distant family members living together happily. Edmund and Gertrude's early mutual passion is a love between cousins. Ellen Oliver is described by her brother as being 'exactly the reverse' of Gertrude: 'Nevertheless these cousins entertained the fondest regard for each other' (I, 16). Another cousin mentioned several times in volume one, but not emerging as an important character until volume two of the novel, is Edith Alwynne. Ellen spends a long period at the Alwynne's home with her aunt and her cousin. Charles Maurice quotes from Act III, Scene II of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* to describe the relationship between the cousins Edith and Ellen:

> grow together
> Like to a double cherry seeming parted
> But yet at union in partition (Quoted I, 162)

In more prosaic language, Maurice writes to Rebecca that 'These amiable girls adore each other' (I, 162).

In volume two of *Edmund Oliver* the eponymous hero describes his growing fondness for Edith, as he slowly transfers his affection to her from Gertrude. His two female cousins are very dissimilar. Edith shows tenderness for Edmund, but 'nothing of impetuosity or passion' (II, 141). Edmund actually describes his feelings for Edith, whom he will eventually marry, in much the same terms as he uses to describe his friendship with Charles Maurice. This suggests that Edmund will establish a rational equality and friendship with his wife, as he has with Maurice. At this stage Edmund tells his friend about his feelings for Edith: 'When she is near me I am never highly excited, but in her absence I am restless, and perceive a void' (II, 141). Similarly, Maurice's temporary absence leads Edmund to discover that he had 'perceived not the assistance which I derived from thy presence' (II, 212). The decline of Edmund's passion for his cousin Gertrude is also expressed in the same terms of absence and presence. This occurs early in the novel and prepares the reader for Edmund eventually recovering from his passionate love for Gertrude: 'when she is present, the reality is not equal to the picturings of my imagination. There is something wanting; but I have not discovered what it is'. Nevertheless he is already concluding that his 'delirium' over Gertrude is 'on the wane' (I, 115-116).

As has already been observed, Lloyd usually shows the opposite of what he approves of in his novel as well. Thus on the subject of cousins in *Edmund Oliver* we realise that the Oliver family are deprived of their inheritance by the actions of some of their other cousins. The 'bad' brother, Roger Oliver, is happy to take his revenge on the 'bad' cousins, by enforcing his legitimate claim to his inheritance and dispossessing them. Edmund refused to take this action himself.

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In conclusion, the initial 'Advertisement', placed to be read before coming on to the novel proper, draws attention to William Godwin's essay in *The Enquirer*. In his essay 'Of Domestic and Family Life' (known originally to Godwin's contemporaries as 'Of Cohabitation') Godwin explores family relationships and domestic life. He extended his range far beyond just the marital relationship to consider other family members. Godwin concluded that cohabitation was an evil system for those involved in it and suggested its abolition or, at least, its amelioration. Charles Lloyd sent out to refute the ideas that were expressed in Godwin's essay. Like Godwin, he took 'cohabitation' in the sense of the family as a small community. Lloyd rejected 'concubinage' as an alternative to marriage. Charles Lloyd embodied a discussion of Godwin's essay in the characters he created in *Edmund Oliver*. The illicit passions of Gertrude, D'Oyley and, briefly Edmund, are shown to be destructive. Edmund, as the eponymous hero, links cohabitation and concubinage, by surviving his original passion and marrying a woman whom he loves rationally. Charles Maurice acts as a spokesman for Lloyd's own views (he even gave this character his own forename). Through Maurice the reader takes away the opinion that family life, as experienced in the novel, can be a positive experience. This is extended through its various members: parents, children, siblings and cousins. In so doing, Lloyd was tuning into contemporary discussions on the nature of society, the family and the nature of the child.

Epsom, Surrey

Lines Crossed: Walter Savage Landor and Wordsworth[1]

David Chandler

'Consider', advises T. S. Eliot in his essay 'Shelley and Keats',

> ... one of the very finest poets of the first part of the nineteenth century: Landor. He is an undoubted master of verse and prose; he is the author of at least one long poem which deserves to be much more read than it is [presumably *Gebir*]; but his reputation has never been such as to bring him into comparison with Wordsworth [...] It is not only by reason of a handful of poems or a number of isolated lines expressive of deeper emotion than that of which Landor was capable, that we give Wordsworth his place; there is something integral about such greatness, and something significant in his place in the pattern of history, with which we have to reckon. [...] Wordsworth is an essential part of history; Landor only a magnificent by-product.[2]

Although I contest Eliot's judgment on Walter Savage Landor here, his statement neatly establishes some of the vexed issues surrounding this little-known poet's critical reception. When praised at all, Landor has generally been praised highly – 'a writer as great as Shakespeare, surely?' opined the young George Moore, 'The last heir of a noble family. All that follows Landor is decadent'[3] – yet he has nearly always been treated as a peripheral figure in the Romantic period. Although he responded deeply, and at length, to the history unfolding around him, this has not endeared him to historically-minded critics, perhaps because they judge him to have been saying the wrong things, or the right things in the wrong way, or because (more likely) they have been led to believe that there is no need to read Landor in the first place. In fact, Landor was clearly in a stronger position before the historical and political 'turn' in literary studies that was set in motion in the 1970s, and the industrial-scale promotion of women writers in the last two decades has been very destructive of any remaining reputation he possessed, as it has of the reputation of many lesser-known male poets.[4]

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[1] This essay started life, though in a rather different form, as a lecture for the Wordsworth Winter School, February 2013. I am grateful for the feedback received on that occasion and for the subsequent chance to discuss the subject with my esteemed colleague Mark Richardson.

[2] *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (Cambridge, MA, 1933), 79.

[3] *The Collected Works of George Moore*, 21 vols (New York, 1922-24), IX, 439.

[4] To take a recent guide to the current academic canon as an example: Blackwell's 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature* of 2012 does not include Landor among the 36 poets it features, though it does make room for a whole host of comparatively minor female poets, clearly privileged because they are women. Elizabeth Hands (1746-1815), for instance, who wrote verses for a Coventry newspaper and published a single volume of poetry in 1789, is included. I have nothing against anyone being interested in Hands' poetry, but the inevitable suggestion here, that she is more important than a poet like Landor, who wrote twenty times more, and wrote throughout the Romantic period, earning the praise and admiration of

What does Eliot mean by 'history' here, and how can anyone be said to be a 'by-product' of whatever this history is? As often in his writing, Eliot deliberately blurs or confuses the line between literary history specifically and history more generally (the history of societies, politics, religion, etc.). And it is clear why he does so: he wants to aggrandize the role of the poet, or other writer, in society: to suggest that a poet can be not just an 'essential part' of literary history, but of that larger history going on around us which gets reported in newspapers. Here we come back to a sort of 'spirit of the age' thesis: certain poets such as Wordsworth and (he would like to think) Eliot himself 'embody' their age by somehow feeling and understanding and expressing it more deeply than anyone else; hence they become an 'essential part' and a true 'product' of history (a rather purposeful, Hegelian history). Other poets, though they might read the same newspapers, and hear the same rumblings on the streets, fail to embody the age in the same way, and so end up like Landor, Eliot's rather ignominious-sounding 'by-product' of history. These other poets, because they somehow fall short in their engagements with the larger history (societies, politics, etc.), are condemned to a marginal role in literary history. This sort of argument, it seems to me, has been generally discredited, yet it is still rolled out to explain why allegedly 'minor' male poets (and other writers) are treated as unimportant. Most critics have not actually read their work, at least in any depth, so it is generally easier to dismiss them as historically peripheral than to risk passing judgment on the inferior nature of their writing. And if writers are ignored for a long time, then, needless to say, a sort of argument is ipso facto generated that literary history does not need them.

Yet even if we see some merit in the argument as such, it is difficult to use it to support such a very pat conclusion as Eliot reaches about Wordsworth and Landor. Consider a simple statement of the two Romantic poets' political positions: both as young men enthused about the French Revolution; four decades on, Landor was also very enthusiastic about the 1832 Reform Act, whereas Wordsworth, a fierce opponent, took its successful passage as evidence that his country was going to the dogs. If, then, we look for a sort of progressive sensibility attuned to the movements of a larger history, we would have to say that Landor better represented the 'spirit of the age' than Wordsworth. On the other hand, if we allow the force of Gramsci's sensible warning that as any 'given socio-historical moment [...] is rich in contradictions' perhaps the true 'representative' artist is the 'one who represents the contradiction of the socio-historical whole', we might make a case for Wordsworth being the better embodiment of that contradiction.[5] Yet this in turn hardly explains why literary criticism has consistently favoured the work of the young, radical Wordsworth over the older, conservative Wordsworth. Indeed conventional literary history has tended to part company with Wordsworth at some point in the 1810s to move on to Byron, Shelley and Keats: the older Wordsworth has often been treated as as much a 'by-product' of history as Landor. A further contradiction here is that Eliot himself was, in his political and social attitudes, much closer to the older

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some of his leading contemporaries, as well as later poets, seems to me an absurd editing decision, motivated by a reductive kind of politics.

[5] See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, trans. William Boelhower (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 93-94.

Wordsworth, and a yet further one is that Eliot was a poet much more in the Landor mold than the Wordsworth mold.

With so many complications emerging, it is surely better to simplify matters and insist, against Eliot, on a distinction between literary history and the larger history of the world. It is easy to agree that Wordsworth is an 'essential part' of literary history, and that Landor is not: a visit to any English department library, or a quick look through any issue of any journal dedicated to the Romantic period, furnishes abundant proof. We can argue about whether this is fair or not, but we cannot dispute that Wordsworth has, since Eliot wrote, consolidated his position at the centre of the Romantic canon while Landor has come to seem ever more remote from it. Indeed we have collectively reached a point where many younger scholars of Romanticism will readily admit that they have not even heard of Landor. The purpose of this essay is to open up a Landorian perspective on that result, to look at the way Landor understood himself and Wordsworth in relation to literary history. For Landor was not just a very engaged and historical writer, he was also very much aware of himself in literary history, and there is a profound irony in the contradiction between his commitment to literary tradition and belief in a sort of society of poets and his subsequently being laid to one side (and forgotten) as a 'by-product' of (literary) history. The focus will be on how Landor viewed Wordsworth, and how his response to the Lake poet highlights crucial differences between them. In general terms, Landor changed his position twice, moving from intense admiration of Wordsworth to fierce criticism and finally to a more open, accepting attitude. At each stage issues concerning literary history and tradition loomed large.

Surprisingly little has been written about the Landor-Wordsworth relationship, even though the two poets invite comparison. They were born within five years of each other (Landor in 1775), both sons of successful professional men, and Landor went to Oxford as Wordsworth went to Cambridge. They themselves avoided the professions, relying on inherited money, or monetary gifts, to live lives largely devoted to literature, travel and gardening. Landor's most famous poem, *Gebir*, was published in July 1798, just weeks before *Lyrical Ballads*. But despite the fact that the two poets had much in common, and even knew some of the same people, they did not meet before 1814, when Landor left England first for France and later for Italy. They were aware of each other's work, though, and thought highly of it. In 1818 Landor wrote of Wordsworth's 'stupendous' poetry, 'In thoughts, feeling, and images not one amongst the ancient[s] equals him'.[6] In 1821 Wordsworth declared that Landor had 'written verses of which I would rather have been the Author than of any produced in our time.'[7] They corresponded from 1820, and when Landor briefly returned from Italy in 1832 they met for the first time and spent two very happy days together in the Lake District. Despite their deep political differences, mentioned above, they seem to have liked each other very much. Wordsworth found Landor 'a most warm-hearted man, his conversation very animated, and [with] the heartiest and happiest laugh I ever heard from a man of his

[6] Letter to Southey, late 1818. *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage. Volume I: 1793-1820*, ed. Robert Woof (London and New York, 2001), 826.
[7] Letter to Landor of 3 September 1821. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, *The Later Years, 1821-53*, rev. Alan G. Hill, 4 vols (Oxford, 1978-88), I, 80.

years.'[8] Thereafter, Wordsworth frequently sent affectionate messages and assurances of high regard to Landor through mutual friends. Landor, as we shall see in a moment, went further.

This 1832 meeting consolidated what we can think of as the first stage in Landor's response to Wordsworth: frank and enthusiastic admiration. It was an admiration based on a deep sense of Wordsworth's place in the larger tradition of European poetry, with which Landor was exceptionally well acquainted, for he enjoyed, in the eloquent words of Keith Hanley, 'an unusually enlivening intimacy with the works of his greatest predecessors'.[9] Landor read with as strong a sense of tradition and its importance as Eliot and he felt that Wordsworth could support and extend the tradition. All this is very clear in the tribute poem, 'To Wordsworth', that Landor wrote in the aftermath of the 1832 meeting and published in the *Athenaeum* in 1834. The first part of the poem elaborates the need of poets to apply 'Wisdom' and poetic craft to the making of poetry, and Landor tactfully insinuates that Wordsworth surpasses himself in both areas. The ambitious poet, desirous of leaving a 'monument', is then compared to an architect, and Wordsworth is said to be a good one:

> He who would build his fame up high,
> The rule and plummet must apply,
> Nor say – I'll do what I have plann'd,
> Before he try if loam or sand
> Be still remaining in the place
> Delved for each polish'd pillar's base.
> With skilful eye and fit device,
> Thou raisest every edifice:
> Whether in sheltered vale it stand
> Or overlook the Dardan strand,
> Amid those cypresses that mourn
> Laodamia's love forlorn. (ll. 37-48)[10]

This is high praise, but of a tendentious kind, for it highlights a particular, limited aspect of Wordsworth's genius – the aspect Landor was most enthusiastic about. The 'in sheltered vale' must be understood as doing a lot of work, for it appears to summarise not much less than Wordsworth's Lake poetry. By contrast, three lines are devoted to 'Laodamia', the poem of 1814 that Landor considered Wordsworth's finest achievement. This once celebrated poem is no longer read much, and Landor's preference for it shows how different his response to Wordsworth was from that of most Wordsworthians today. 'Laodamia' was, as Landor has Southey put it in one of his *Imaginary Conversations*, an attempt 'to treat a subject as an ancient poet of equal vigour would have treated it.'[11] It is also the poem of Wordsworth's most obviously akin to a lot of Landor's poetry, and may even have been written in a spirit of emulation. And it was this classical Wordsworth who, in retrospect, allows

[8] Letter to Henry Crabb Robinson of 21 July 1832. Ibid. II, 546.
[9] Keith Hanley (ed.), *Walter Savage Landor: Selected Poetry and Prose* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), xiii.
[10] *The Complete Works of Walter Savage Landor*, ed. T. Earle Welby and Stephen Wheeler, 16 vols (London, 1927-36), XV, 144.
[11] *Complete Works*, V, 161.

what would otherwise be the rather odd representation of his genius in terms of 'polish'd pillars'. Wordsworth himself, of course, famously imagined his collected works as akin to 'a gothic church' with 'the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.'[12]

'Laodamia' thus represents what Landor and Wordsworth shared, and stands for their common connection with classical times; it is the classical, not the 'gothic' Wordsworth who Landor most admires. Having focused on this poem in particular, he then goes on, in the second part of his own poem, to position both himself and Wordsworth in relation to the great tradition of English poetry:

> We both have run o'er half the space
> Bounded for mortals' earthly race;
> We both have crossed life's fervid line,
> And other stars before us shine.
> May they be bright and prosperous
> As those that have been stars for us!
> Our course by Milton's light was sped,
> And Shakespeare shining overhead:
> Chatting on deck was Dryden too,
> The Bacon of the rhyming crew;
> None ever crost our mystic sea,
> More richly stored with thought than he;
> Tho' never tender nor sublime,
> He struggles with and conquers Time.
> To learn my lore on Chaucer's knee,
> I've left much prouder company.
> Thee, gentle Spenser fondly led;
> But me he mostly sent to bed.
>
> I wish them every joy above
> That highly blessed spirits prove,
> Save one—and that too shall be theirs,
> But after many rolling years,
> When 'mid their light, thy light appears. (ll. 49-71)[13]

Things are straightforward on the surface: Landor and Wordsworth have been guided by the great poets of the past, who metaphorically live on as stars. Wordsworth will join that exalted company. But the issues concerned with canon- and tradition-making here are more vexed. Wordsworth would certainly have agreed that Milton and Shakespeare were the supreme English poets, and he would have supported Chaucer being allocated a leading place. The difference between him and Landor on the subject of Spenser is lightly touched on, with rather lame

[12] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974), III, 5-6. The 'gothic Church' announced in 1814 was still far from complete in 1832 and I find myself wondering whether there is a gentle irony in Landor's praise of Wordsworth completing 'every edifice'. If there is, the 'I'll do what I have planned' can be read as referring (in part) to the latter's ambitious manifesto for *The Recluse*, and the whole passage becomes a little subversive.

[13] *Complete Works*, XV, 144.

humour; it was in fact exaggerated, for in a later poem on William Cowper, again cataloging the great poets of the past, Landor was happy to state of his youth: 'Spenser shed over me his sunny dreams'.[14] As with the reference to 'Laodamia' earlier, however, it is the relative length of Landor's references to the earlier poets that points to the agenda only partly concealed in his praise of the Lake poet.

Wordsworth did not much care for Dryden. He had written to Walter Scott, when the latter was working on his monumental edition of Dryden's works, that: 'his is not a poetical Genius: the only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind with an excellent ear. [...] [His] is not language that is in the high sense of the word poetical, being neither of the imagination or the passions; I mean of the amiable, the ennobling or intense passions.'[15] Wordsworth had made his thoughts on Dryden known in his published criticism, describing a passage in *The Indian Emperor* as 'vague, bombastic, and senseless'.[16] Hazlitt later reported: 'It is mortifying to hear him [Wordsworth] speak of Pope and Dryden, whom, because they have been supposed to have all the possible excellences of poetry, he will allow to have none.'[17] It is most unlikely that Landor was unaware of Wordsworth's views; rather, 'To Wordsworth' is gently coercive, offering Wordsworth a high place in the great tradition, while at the same time insisting on Dryden's place in the same tradition. In my reading, this is significant from at least three points of view. First, Dryden, of all the major pre-Romantic English poets, was the most deeply traditional in the sense that he explicitly related his poetry to the poetry that came before him, translating and modernizing the work of earlier poets. He was not so much an original thinker as a mediating influence who absorbed the culture of the past and attempted to renew it for his own time - something Landor found very attractive, and that links to his high estimation of Wordsworth's 'Laodamia'. Second, Landor was protesting at the anti-Augustanism which was so prominent a part of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's view of literary history. Both the Lake poets took a very dim view of the six decades of English poetry subsequent to the death of Milton in 1674. This was the period in which, in their view, true inspiration was lost, and they themselves were part of an ongoing recovery operation. Landor's view of literary history was more continuous and inclusive, and closer to the views of many modern scholars. Third, given that Landor is writing 'To Wordsworth', it is hard not to find some association with Coleridge implied in the way Dryden is evoked. Coleridge was a philosopher-poet 'richly stored with thought' who had very clearly influenced Wordsworth, as the latter had publicly acknowledged. Putting all this together, Landor's message is clear: Dryden's place in the tradition is non-negotiable. To some extent this is clearly a pro-classical, anti-romantic move.[18]

[14] See the untitled poem, 'Tenderest of tender hearts ...', l. 11. *Complete Works*, XV, 176.

[15] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, *The Early Years, 1787-1805*, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967), 641.

[16] *Prose Works*, III, 73.

[17] *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P.Howe, 21 vols (London, 1930-34), XI, 93.

[18] The literary standing of Dryden was much debated in the Romantic period, with strong arguments being made for and against the value of his work. See Upali Amarasinghe, *Dryden and Pope in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1962).

The difference on the subject of Dryden had larger cultural implications that anticipate the second stage of Landor's response to Wordsworth. Here Landor condemned Wordsworth as a bad heir to the past, and a bad trustee, as it were, of the English poetic tradition. Landor was a passionate man, and he believed in a general spirit of generosity: poets should be appreciative heirs of the best poetry of the past, and having added to the tradition, they should pass it on in a spirit of love to their own heirs, the next generation of poets. He said of himself in one of his late *Imaginary Conversations*, written when he was nearing eighty, 'I believe there are few, if any, who enjoy more heartily than I do, the best poetry of my contemporaries, or who have commended them both in private and in public with less parsimony and reserve'.[19] There is plenty of evidence to support this. Wordsworth, by contrast, a much less partisan, impulsive and hearty sort of person, often gave the impression that as he looked around him he found none to praise and very few to love. This great difference of temperament, combined with their radically opposed political views, probably always posed a threat to the two poets' friendship, but the immediate catalyst for the break was the posthumous publication of Byron's 'Observations upon an Article in *Blackwood's*' in 1833. In this Byron quoted Wordsworth as saying 'I would not give five shillings for all that Southey has ever written.'[20] It was some time before this came to the attention of Landor, now back in Italy, but when it did he believed what he read and found it unforgivable. He was a close friend of Southey, and had a very high opinion of Southey's poetry. Moreover Southey, in his correspondence and conversations with Landor, had always been full of praise for Wordsworth, and he was a good friend to the Wordsworth family. Landor may have jumped to conclusions in assuming that the words really had been uttered,[21] but reviewing his own conversations with the Lake poet he now remembered that he himself had abundant evidence that Wordsworth was temperamentally uncharitable, dogmatic and disdainful. Eager to avenge the insult he believed had been paid to his friend Southey, Landor launched a ferocious assault on Wordsworth in *A Satire on Satirists*, published in 1836, which deserves a high place in the canon of anti-Wordsworth literature. This includes a parody of Wordsworth's conversation on literary matters:

"I do assert it boldly, 'tis a shame
"To honor Dryden with a poet's name.
"What in the name of goodness can we hope
"When criticks praise the tinkling tin of Pope?
"They are, no doubt, exceedingly good men,
"Pity, they flirt so flippant with the pen!
"In Scott there is, we must admit, one line
"Far better than the rest, and almost fine.
"Hear what I wrote upon the subject! now!
"This is the way to write, you will allow.

[19] *Complete Works*, VI, 25.
[20] *Critical Heritage*, ed. Woof, 904.
[21] Byron swore he had very good authority for his report. Wordsworth told Southey that he had not said the quoted words. Literary scholars are likely to disagree on this, but in my judgment the general spirit of the supposed statement is believable even if the exact expression is wrong, or exaggerated.

"As for your Germans, petty pismire hosts,
"Nathans, Iphigeneias, Meisters, Fausts,
"Any two stanzas here are worth 'em all ...
"So let your Privy Council give the wall.
"Göethe may be a baron or a graf,
"Call him a poet, and you make me laugh:
"Either my judgement is entirely lost or
"Never was there so cursed an imposter.*" (ll. 254-71)[22]

*"*Imposter*" was the expression.

Landor, incidentally, included a note on Goethe here: 'Two thousand years and more had elapsed, and nothing like the pure Grecian had appeared in the world until the *Iphigeneia* of Goethe, excepting a few verses of Catullus and Horace.' Such praise is clearly related to his great admiration for Wordsworth's 'Laodamia'.[23]

Satirists are allowed to exaggerate, and Landor was taking full advantage of the fact, but there is plenty of documentary evidence to suggest that his account of Wordsworth's literary opinions was correct in its general outlines. And this tendency of Wordsworth to disparage some of his leading precursors in English poetry, to be loftily condescending about his English contemporaries, including a friend like Southey, and ignorantly rude about German poetry, made him, in Landor's revised view, a very bad heir to the great tradition of European poetry. Wordsworth could not be trusted to value properly the treasures of the past he had inherited. Worse, the Lake poet understood the legacy he would bequeath in terms of his own increasing fame rather than a willingness to nurture the talents of younger poets. Landor located the source of the problem in Wordsworth's supposed jealousy of other people's good things, and advised him:

If youth had starts of jealousy, let age
Rest with composure on another's page.
Take by the hand the timid, rear the young,
Shun the malignant, and respect the strong.
Censure's coarse bar, corroded, crusts away,
And the unwasted captive starts on day.
Another date hath Praise's golden key,
With that alone men reach Eternity. (ll. 330-37)[24]

It is likely that Landor had heard of Wordsworth's failure to encourage Keats – the most celebrated or notorious case in the literary record of the Lake poet's choosing not to 'rear the young'.[25] Wordsworth's tendency to censure rather than praise was, in Landor's revised view, the proof of a flawed personality and flawed genius. But Landor's putting Wordsworth in his place like this carries the inevitable subtext that he himself, a great praiser, was a good heir of the tradition in a way that

[22] *Complete Works*, XVI, 224-25.
[23] Ibid. 225.
[24] Ibid. 226.
[25] I refer of course to Wordsworth's reported description of the ode to Pan from *Endymion* as 'a Very pretty piece of Paganism'.

Wordsworth was not. Not a better poet, perhaps, but a better heir and a better trustee. He did not simply lose his faith in Wordsworth's poetry, and the amount of attention he paid Wordsworth in this period of hostility was an oblique tribute to the latter's great importance. But, like many contemporaries, he now found something very unattractive in the Lake poet coexisting with something of great value.

Landor did not relent in his hostility as long as Wordsworth was alive, but after 1850, when the man and his attitudes had departed the historical stage, and there was just the poetry left, there came a great softening. And what seems to have brought this about more than anything else was reading *The Prelude*. While the poem shocked many Victorian readers, who found the image of the young poet it presented very out of keeping with what they knew of the older, conservative, Anglican Wordsworth, to Landor, who had come to deplore the character of that older poet, it was an immense and invigorating breath of fresh air. And he responded, as was his wont, with an enthusiastic poem which soon appeared in the pages of the *Examiner*. The poem was written in the house of Julius Hare, a friend of both Landor and Wordsworth, and entitled 'Written at Hurstmonceaux On Reading a Poem of Wordsworth's':[26]

> Derwent! Winander! sweetest of all sounds
> The British tongue e'er utter'd! lakes that Heaven
> Reposes on, and finds his image there
> In all its purity, in all its peace!
> How are your ripples playing round my heart
> From such a distance? while I gaze upon
> The plain where William and where Cæsar led
> From the same Gaulish coast each conquering host,
> And one the Briton, one the Saxon name,
> Struck out with iron heel. Well may they play,
> Those ripples, round my heart, buoyed up, entranced.
> Derwent! Winander! your twin poets come
> Star-crown'd along with you, nor stand apart.
> Wordsworth comes hither, hither Southey comes,
> His friend and mine, and every man's who lives,
> Or who shall live when days far off have risen.
> Here are they with me yet again [...] (ll. 1-17)[27]

What is so immediately striking about this poem is the emphasis it puts on Southey: an emphasis that can be understood only in the context of the original reason for Landor's disenchantment with Wordsworth. It is a poem of reconciliation, but a coercive kind of reconciliation which seems to say that once again Wordsworth can be warmly hailed if he accepts shared honours with Southey. But despite Landor's insistence on simultaneously praising Southey, and despite the fact that the 'Derwent' evoked is expressly the lake Southey overlooked from his study, the

[26] I follow Stephen Wheeler's suggestion that this poem was probably inspired by *The Prelude* (Landor, *Complete Works*, XV, 428). It is not certain that this was the case.

[27] *Complete Works*, XV, 172.

sentiment of the poem seems to come almost entirely from Wordsworth. In fact, it appears to have grown out of the various evocations of lakes and rivers in *The Prelude*: one is immediately reminded of passages like the early address to the *river* Derwent and its music, and the beautiful conclusion to the 'Boy of Winander' episode. The imagery of invasion, and a threatening France, could also have been inspired by *The Prelude*, but it seems to have been incorporated here mainly to register Landor's resistance to the Wordsworthian 'ripples' he had long hardened his heart against. The references are of course to successful invasions, of the 'plain' succumbing, and Landor was describing Wordsworth's reconquest of his heart.

Landor's letting the ripple of Wordsworth's inspiration play around *his* heart in this way represents the start of a third stage in his responses to the older poet. Now in his mid-seventies, he was hardly going to grow suddenly into a Wordsworthian poet. But Wordsworth, whatever his unfortunate prejudices when alive, was now among the stars, and Landor, as the last major surviving poet of their generation, was ready to honour his legacy by unexpectedly opening himself to certain draughts of Wordsworthian inspiration. This is most clearly evident in 'Written at Hurstmonceaux', but another poem of the period, which Landor published in the *Examiner* just three weeks after the Hurstmonceaux poem, is, in my reading, the most profoundly Wordsworthian of Landor's poems, and one in which the Wordsworthian and the Landorian are almost perfectly blended. Only Landor could have written it, yet he would not have written it had he not recently been reading *The Prelude*, and it is rewarding to read it, or to teach it, alongside Wordsworth's poetry. The poem in question is 'On Swift Joining Avon Near Rugby':

> Silent and modest Brook! who dippest here
> Thy foot in Avon as if childish fear
> Withheld thee for a moment, wend along;
>   Go, followed by my song.
> Sung in such easy numbers as they use
> Who turn in fondness to the Tuscan Muse,
> And such as often have flow'd down on me
>   From my own Fiesole.
> I watch thy placid smile, nor need to say
>   That Tasso wove one looser lay,
> And Milton took it up to dry the tear
>   Dropping on Lycidas's bier.
> In youth how often at thy side I wander'd!
> What golden hours, hours numberless, were squander'd
>   Among thy sedges, while sometimes
>   I meditated native rhymes,
> And sometimes stumbled upon Latian feet;
>   Then, where soft mole-built seat
>   Invited me,[28] I noted down

[28] This odd detail does seem to have had a basis in fact and habit. In 1810 Landor wrote to Southey: 'I do not know what the satirists would say if they knew that most of my verses spring from a gate-post or a mole-hill. Many hundreds ... I have foreborne to write for want of a pencil or a dry seat.' See John Foster, *Walter Savage Landor: A Biography*, 2 vols (London, 1869), I, 265.

What must full surely win the crown,
But first impatiently vain efforts made
On broken pencil with a broken blade.
Anon, of lighter heart, I threw
My hat where circling plover flew,
And once I shouted til [sic], instead of plover,
There sprang up half a damsel, half a lover.
I would not twice be barbarous; on I went ...
And two heads sank amid the pillowing bent.
Pardon me, gentle Stream, if rhyme
Holds up these records in the face of Time:
Among the falling leaves some birds yet sing,
And Autumn hath his butterflies like Spring.
Thou canst not turn thee back, thou canst not see
Reflected what hath ceast to be:
Haply thou little knowest why
I check this levity, and sigh.
Thou never knewest her whose radiant morn
Lighted my path to Love; she bore thy name,
She whom no Grace was tardy to adorn,
Whom one low voice pleas'd more than louder fame:
She now is past my praises: from her urn
To thine, with reverence due, I turn.
O silver-braided Swift! no victim ever
Was sacrificed to thee,
Nor hast thou carried to that sacred River
Vases of myrrh, nor hast thou run to see
A band of Mænads toss their tymbrels high
Mid *io-evohes* to their Deity.
But holy ashes have bestrewn thy stream
Under the mingled gleam
Of swords and torches, and the chaunt of Rome,
When Wiclif's lowly tomb
Thro' its thick briars was burst
By frantic priests accurst;
For he had entered and laid bare the lies
That pave the labyrinth of their mysteries.
We part ... but one more look!
Silent and modest Brook![29]

Though Landor consciously inherits something from Wordsworth here, he was too much his own man to simply emulate the older poet. The subject matter is Wordsworthian: the personal significance of a place, specifically a river, associated with childhood and youth, and ultimately with poetry. Landor had gone to Rugby School. *The Prelude* may loom largest here, in its evocation of school days, but one

[29] *Complete Works*, XVI, 25-26.

can also think of other Wordsworth poems on rivers and memories, including 'Tintern Abbey' and the Duddon sonnets. The treatment of the subject, however, is Landorian. The Swift becomes part of a classical landscape, glowing with sunshine, and I read the poem as in the spirit of Turner's most consciously neoclassical paintings of English landscapes - such as the magnificent *Crossing the Brook* at the Tate, which depicts a scene in the West Country (fig. 1).

Figure 1: J. M. W. Turner, *Crossing the Brook* (1815) in the engraving by William Richardson (1859)

(Turner, it is worth recalling, was an exact contemporary of Landor.) There is no room for the gloomy hills and mists that Wordsworth had evoked as he described his childhood in the Lake District. The Swift is first personified in an age old classical procedure and then Italianized as Landor links it to the 'Tuscan Muse' and the landscape of Fiesole, where he had lived for many years. His defence of his free stanzaic form, justified by Italian precedent, allows him to name two great poets of

the past he much admired, and thus to place his poem, as he often loved to do, in a much longer tradition of verse.

After what is essentially a 12-line introduction, we approach the Wordsworthian with the expressive 'In youth how often at thy side I wander'd!' There follow three attractive vignettes of the young Landor writing poetry while perched on mole hills, throwing his hat into the air, and disturbing the lovers. There is a relaxed happiness about the descriptions, very different from the anxious intensity and euphoria of Wordsworth's most famous accounts of his childhood experiences. Yet the general tone *is* anticipated in *The Prelude* if we think of the passage in Book 4 in which Wordsworth expressly refers to his young self in the act of poetic composition in his first long vacation from Cambridge. There Wordsworth pays his tribute to Ann Tyson's 'rough terrier of the hills':

> ... when first
> The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day
> Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
> The fermentation and the vernal heat
> Of poesy, affecting private shades
> Like a sick lover, then this Dog was used
> To watch me, an attendant and a friend ...
> A hundred times when, roving high and low,
> I have been harassed with the toil of verse,
> Much pains and little progress, and at once
> Some lovely Image in the Song rose up
> Full-formed, like Venus rising from the Sea;
> Then have I darted forwards and let loose
> My hand upon his back, with stormy joy;
> Caressing him again, and yet again. (ll. 100-06, 110-17)[30]

Landor is certain to have liked this passage, and it is easy to see how similar it is to his poem. The charms and frustrations of being a young poet are attractively represented, the 'rough terrier', like the mole hill, is comically quotidian, and a spirit of eroticism is conveyed in both descriptions. This said, Wordsworth's account is notably more eccentric and particularized. Landor aims at something more general and universal, and his recollections seem to stand somewhere between the Wordsworthian individual and the completely generalized imagery of childhood found in a poem like Gray's 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College'. Yet this difference certainly does not mean that Landor was less willing to reveal what is now called 'personal information'. On the contrary, he was much the franker of the two poets, and goes on to mention his early love for Jane Sophia Swift (*c*.1780-1851) with an openness Wordsworth nowhere approaches in his hesitant and cryptic hints at youthful romances. Landor was more generally open; Wordsworth was prepared, selectively, to examine himself more deeply.

As Landor's river poem runs on, its debts to earlier poets and poems accumulate in relaxed yet not undeliberate fashion. After the early references to

[30] *The Fourteen-Book* Prelude, ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca, NY, 1985), 82.

Tasso and Milton, Wordsworth's presence is unmistakably felt, then the evocation of 'that sacred river [the Avon]' brings Shakespeare, the poet Landor considered the greatest of all, into a picture in which he has, perhaps, been a background presence, 'a feeling and a love' all along.[31] The suggestive 'Vases of myrrh' gently associates the Shakespearean with the Christian nativity, then economically opens the historical window onto the pre-Christian world of the Mænads, thus evoking the poetry of classical times. The overall impression is of a poet steeped in the poetry and culture of the European past, with an essentially literary sensibility. As I suggested earlier, Landor as a poet seems much closer to T. S. Eliot than Wordsworth does. Though the biographical evidence shows that Landor could be overwhelmingly egotistical in his personal affairs, it is not something that comes across in the poetry; there is no 'egotistical sublime' there, no pursuit of a lonely selfhood. Rather, there is a spirit of genial sociability, a strong sense of being sustained and accompanied by a tradition.

'On Swift Joining Avon Near Rugby' does not end with a reference to the poets but to a grim episode of religious history connected with the riverscape: in 1429, on the orders of the Pope, John Wycliffe's body was dug up, burnt, and the ashes thrown into the River Swift. The directness with which Landor brings this into his poem contrasts remarkably with the sometimes elusive sense of history in Wordsworth's account of landscapes - the elusiveness which so exercised the thoughts of late twentieth-century critics. This is certainly not to suggest that Wordsworth is never direct in his engagements with history, but Landor was the more naturally historical of the two (witness, in particular, his many *Imaginary Conversations*) just as he was the more naturally traditional. Though the introduction of Wycliffe can seem unprepared and rather startling on a quick reading, a slightly more extended consideration of Landor's purposes reveals its aptness. The 'holy ashes' flow back to the earlier 'sacred River' fusing a sense of Wycliffe's death with Shakespeare's birth. The violation of Wycliffe's remains, though intended to erase him from history, actually made him part of the English landscape, and acted as a benediction on the River Swift, which conveyed his holy Protestant spirit through Stratford-upon-Avon - where, the poem gently hints, it helped give birth to the great genius of Reformation England. History maketh the poet: hence the irony that this same history, in Eliot's account, should ever have left Landor isolated as a 'by-product'.

In concluding my account of this fine poem I find it impossible to resist expressing wonder and dismay that, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first critical treatment it has received. Its quality, and its place outside anthologies and English departments, vividly demonstrates Landor's marginal place in literary history even as the poem itself appears so confidently rooted in a pan-European tradition of poetry read as still vital and vitalizing. It reveals how Landor's writing is not only more consistently attuned to the larger history of the world than Wordsworth's, but more attuned to literary history: and how inefficacious this has been in securing him a place in the Romantic canon.

[31] For a discussion of Landor as a Shakespearean, see my essay, '"Small reverence for station": Walter Savage Landor's Subversive Shakespeare' in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Romanticism* ed. Joseph M. Ortiz (Farnham, 2013), 13-30.

In the days of his original, warm admiration, Landor considered Wordsworth a finer poet than himself. He was surely right to do so, though *pace* Eliot, I think the difference does turn mainly on 'a handful of poems or a number of isolated lines expressive of deeper emotion than that of which Landor was capable'. Wordsworth could, on occasion, probe the human heart and what I will loosely call 'ordinary life' much more deeply than Landor. He also enjoys certain biographical advantages, including his strong association with the Lake District and his presence in England in the crucial years when his reputation was formed. Still, when everything is put in the scales, it is difficult to understand or justify literary history's completely different treatment of the two poets. It may be the case that Romanticism introduced an anti-traditional spirit into English poetry, and that Wordsworth took more advantage of this than Landor, who was, in Keith Hanley's words, 'working in the diminishing neo-classical tradition',[32] but it is all too easy and convenient to exaggerate the difference. What the classicist Landor saw in Wordsworth was really there: Wordsworth, like Dryden, translated Virgil and modernized Chaucer, and his later poetry (admittedly sidelined by critics) demonstrates an 'increasing, ambivalent attraction to classical figures (including personification and prosopopeia)'.[33] Similarly, Landor could be surprisingly Romantic and innovatory; as Tim Fulford says, *Gebir* 'certainly helped develop a genre. After Landor, the Oriental romance became *the* single most popular Romantic form'.[34] The differences between him and Wordsworth are considerable, but certainly no greater than the differences between Byron and Wordsworth, and arguably much smaller than the differences between Blake and Wordsworth. And if the Romantic canon, constructed on the basis of a particular understanding of literary history, can incorporate such very different figures as Wordsworth, Byron and Blake, there seems no reason at all to treat Landor as a 'by-product' of that history, especially if that becomes an excuse not to read him.

In the 1980s Marilyn Butler launched a spectacularly successful project to restore interest in Robert Southey by exploring the relationship between his work and that of other writers around him. That may well prove the best way to restore interest in Landor, too, a poet whom Southey ranked with Wordsworth, and to some extent that is what this essay has attempted. More work on how Landor responded to, influenced, learned from, and differed from the work of his contemporaries may help us understand, belatedly but profitably, how 'one of the very finest poets of the first part of the nineteenth century', a poet so often left out, fitted in.

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[32] Hanley, *Walter Savage Landor*, xiii.

[33] Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (London, 1987), xxvii. For a fascinating general account of the importance of classical literature to Wordsworth see Richard W. Clancey, *Wordsworth's Classical Undersong: Education, Rhetoric and Poetic Truth* (New York, 2000).

[34] 'Poetry, peripheries and empire' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, ed. James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge, 2008), 178-94 (186).

Reviews

JOHN GARDNER, *Politics and Popular Protest: Peterloo, Cato Street and the Queen Caroline Controversy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) £53.00 hardback. 978 0 23 028071 7.

In shedding welcome light into some murky corners of early nineteenth-century social, political and literary history, this study makes some shocking revelations. Gardner's aim is to bring into closer focus the literary response from both major and peripheral figures in the Romantic movement to the great public events of the post Waterloo years. In doing so he reminds us that a broad knowledge of early nineteenth-century political and social history is essential to a full understanding of the work of most of the key writers of Romanticism.

Gardner begins his book by re-assessing the poetical responses of one writer who is not usually associated with Romanticism. Samuel Bamford, though regarded as an amateur by contemporary poets and later critics, was certainly seen as a 'literary' figure among his colleagues in the reform movement. He wrote memorably on his early days as a radical by addressing the carnage of Peterloo in well-crafted verse and went further than any conventional literary writer in registering a particularly fiery brand of indignation that most with liberal credentials would have shared. Indeed, Bamford's attacks on the reactionaries in government, and his connection with Hone and such men of action, as 'Orator' Hunt, make him at least an honorary Romantic, if 'Romantic' is to have any meaning at all.

The central role of Hone himself as publisher is treated at length. His audacity in exposing government duplicity earned him the lifelong enmity of most Tories and the admiration of Lamb, who helped him financially late in his career - something which others in his circle failed to do. If perhaps Lamb's motives have less to do with a strong radical sympathy than with his admiration for Hone's courage in standing up against political bullying, as Gardner and others maintain, Lamb also had reason to support the publisher's campaign to popularise antiquarianism in his *Everyday Book* and similar works—a fact which has not always been fully acknowledged. And if there is little or no evidence that Lamb expressed any strong views on radical parliamentary reform, his anti-establishment views are evident in 'The Three Graves' which is a blistering indictment of the spy-system, and the 'Ode to Matthew Wood', which, on the issue of Queen Caroline, pits the Eton-educated, but ungallant, Canning against the self-made radical Alderman Wood. Had he been a true radical Lamb would have put his own name to these squibs. As it was, he valued his friendship with the reactionary Coleridge and Wordsworth too much to do so.

Gardner's examination of Hone's brilliant career as a radical publisher is revealing. Today the two radicals are widely regarded as brothers-in-arms, which makes Gardner's unearthing of a rumour involving Cobbett, especially shocking. If it is true that a letter sent by Cobbett early in 1820 inviting Hone to a meeting of fellow radicals was a deliberate attempt to implicate the publisher in the Cato Street

Conspiracy, then Cobbett's reputation for integrity must now be in tatters. Had Hone taken the bait he may well have stood trial, along with Thistlewood and his cronies, which today seems unthinkable. As a publisher, Cobbett was Hone's biggest rival, and he stood to gain substantially if Hone was put out of the way. This seems a more likely explanation than a recrudescence of Cobbett's old school Toryism clashing with Hone's modern metropolitan radicalism. It is odd that neither Hone's biographers, Fred Hackwood and Ben Wilson, nor Cobbett's recent biographer, Richard Ingrams, address the issue. The other, equally shocking revelation made by Gardner was that at one time George IV considered having his errant consort executed.

As a non-poet, Hazlitt is perhaps rightly relegated by Gardner to being a bit part player in the drama, but as someone with anti-establishment views, his responses to the sensational events unfolding around him seem remarkably muted. Although we know little or nothing of any remarks that he may have made in private, in print he does appear to have been strangely quiet about both Peterloo and the Cato Street debacle. Modern commentators on Hazlitt have a right to ask why someone who could publish a whole volume of essays that engage passionately with politicians and political issues, seemed to have been less willing to condemn injustice and downright criminality. But then Hazlitt remains a tangle of contradictions. His worship of Bonaparte, long after that generally despised figure had died, may suggest that he saw the former French leader, however degraded, as more worthy of his attention than the rabble who formed the bedrock of the radical movement.

Gardner's theme is the response of poets to political events, and as such his analysis is persuasive. In the age of Hone and Cruikshank he demonstrates that verse was the most powerful and accessible medium for popular protest. And although such radical poetry is an abiding theme, it is a shame that a man who was ridiculed in verse, albeit the verse of reactionaries, is not mentioned at all. In his time Sheriff Joseph Wilfred Parkins was satirised for his often ludicrous conduct in office and afterwards. But like Lamb, Parkins roundly condemned the spy system, supported Queen Caroline and actively opposed the illegal conduct of Hone's Bridge Street Gang, for which he was severely beaten up by one of its thugs.

Gardner might also have brought into greater prominence the power and influence of Jemmy Catnach and other ballad-sellers, whose shops in Seven Dials, were less than a five minute walk from Lamb's home in Covent Garden. It would have been fascinating to learn if our great lover of street culture was also a connoisseur of cheap street literature, including penny squibs. On this theme I think Gardner is wrong to claim that Hone's satires at a shilling each would be beyond the purse of most ordinary working class radicals. At the trial of the Cato Street Conspirators it emerged that at one time the shoemaker Tidd was making over £4 a week, and doubtless other London tradesmen, even at a time of post-war recession, were earning as much.

Altogether though, this is a valuable addition to the debate on poetry and radicalism in the post Waterloo period and Gardner is right to position 1820 as the key year. After all, as he argues, 321 volumes of verse were published in 1820, more than in any other single year between 1814 and 1835. Quite a statistic, and one that perhaps needs to be seriously considered by anyone studying the poetic output of the Romantic era.

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GREGORY DART, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) £55.00 hardback (US$99.00). 978 1 10 702492 2.

Written with lucidity, sensitivity and erudition, and enlivened by a judicious flair for the dramatic statement, this book makes an invaluable contribution to the growing corpus of Romantic studies concerned with the urban environment and metropolitan culture.

The key term of the study, 'Cockney', is in the sub-title. Dart's introduction explains how this previously comedic, relatively innocuous urban figure, took on an additional, sociological significance in the 1810s and 1820s, as the embodiment of a new hence troubling social stratum, the suburbanite. The product of an accelerated expansion of the capital during this period, entailing a relocation and demarcation of the population along class-lines, 'Cockney' became a way of labelling an intermediate group, neither quite urban nor rural, and 'between the polite and the plebeian, or a lower-middle class of shopkeepers and bank clerks' (9). Most disconcerting of all, and what really turned the Cockney from a figure of derision in Jacobean theatre to one of anxiety in Romantic periodicals, was the trait of aspiration - interpreted as presumption, impertinence or, worst of all, brazen ambition - that was associated with social indeterminacy. Art and literature which seemed to appeal to this new suburban demographic, or exhibited in any way its preoccupations and traits, was explicitly or implicitly deemed to be Cockney.

Dart's book therefore ranges far beyond the Cockney 'centre', of Leigh Hunt and the *Blackwood's* attacks on him and his circle, to tour the metaphorical suburbs of the broad socio-cultural phenomenon of Cockney-*ism*. In doing so, Dart justifiably claims to expand significantly on what was previously the most comprehensive and important analysis of Romantic Cockneyism, Jeffery N. Cox's 'School'-centred study of the Hunt coterie, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School* (1998). Dart begins with Hunt's political exploitation of the familiar-essay genre, the liberalist implications of his 'fireside' manner, in which the sharing of mundane activities and pleasures involve the middle-class metropolitan reader in 'a long line of historical inheritance and indirect proximity to the classics' (10). Thus, in the tumultuous post-Waterloo and Peterloo climate of increased censorship, military response to peaceful protest and constitutional instability, the reader is comforted for the hard journey of reform which lay ahead, by a reassuring sense of connection with Britain's culture and history, simply through spending a day by the fire or by the act of shaving. Dart's compelling historicist reading of the familiar-essay genre, evident also in the discussion of Hazlitt, marks a further achievement in this impressive study.

The book proceeds in similarly convincing manner through a catalogue of Cockneyesque conceits (and conceitedness): Nash's pretentious and Soane's fantastical architectural edifaces, Egan's gleeful, slang-laden celebration of urban

role-playing, Lamb's emancipatory beggar and emasculated clerk, and John Martin's modern-historical vision of Babylonian London, before concluding with the conservatism of Dickens's early fiction. This final stage in the evolution of the Cockney as covered by Dart's book, bringing us into the Victorian period, is embodied in the character of Sam Weller, from *Pickwick Papers* (1836), a working-class Londoner who, in neat contrast to Hunt's ambitious, upstart incarnation of the Cockney with which the study begins, knows his place and is quite content with it. The 'Cockney moment', as Dart describes it, begins with the young Hunt and ends with the young Dickens, with the social indeterminacy and aspiration of the lower-middle class turning from a potential source of emancipation and reform, to the salutary or cautionary fiction of a more settled, post-reform age. *En route* we visit one quintessential Cockney enclosure after another, from Hunt's optimistically decorated gaol, to Keats's wishful suburban garden, to Hazlitt's ill-fated boarding house, to the debtors' prison variously depicted by B.R. Haydon and Dickens. Each presents a metropolitan space, or rather stage, for aspirational performance: cold English prison walls are papered over with warm mediterranean scenery, class barriers are transgressed in the reckless pursuit of romance, a liberal-poetic, other world beyond the prosaic suburbs is placed in tantalising proximity, and ne'er-do-well theatrical inmates replicate the democratic and performative processes of the city at large.

Dart's declared approach is to focus as much on the uncertain periphery as on the affirmed centre-ground of what Tory reviewers at the time would have recognised as Cockney literature and art: 'Interesting as it is to look at the characters that magazines such as *Blackwood's* and the *John Bull* convicted, it is even more absorbing, in a way, to look at the figures they clearly worried about but decided to absolve' (108). Hence, Egan, Haydon and Lamb, only tentatively associated with the Cockney School, warrant as much attention in Dart's study as the principle targets, Keats, Hunt and Hazlitt. An essay by the Cockney-stigmatized Hazlitt, for example, draws a rewarding parallel with a painting by the more elusive artist, Hazlitt's friend, Haydon. The latter's painting, *The Mock Election* (1828), presenting a motley crew of 'dandies both high and low, fresh and faded, of political aspirants and of political failures, of metropolitan performers of every kind, all unexpectedly levelled by debt and imprisonment', provides for Dart a pictorial analogue for Hazlitt's notion in 'On Londoners and Country People' (1823) of the redeeming capacity of that intellectually poorest of creatures, the Cockney, for transcending the drab functionality of his surroundings. Haydon's incarcerated metropolitan performers also recall the elaborate and spectacular grotto made of his surroundings by the King of the Cockneys himself, Hunt, whilst in prison for libelling the Prince Regent. Such is Dart's resourcefulness in drawing together diverse texts, sites and media to form a compelling and cohesive, socio-cultural concept of Cockneyism, as a synonym for all that was disconcerting about metropolitan life and modernity in the early nineteenth-century.

Dart's notion of Cockneyism embraces not only different art forms, but criticism and counter-criticism, or the reviewer and the reviewed - sometimes, intriguingly, in the same writer. He thus 'explore[s] the responses of the Cockneys themselves to the Cockney phenomenon', being primarily concerned with 'how they

themselves dealt with issues of urban discrepancy and disproportion in their own work' (27). Hazlitt provides a notable example of this poacher-turned-gamekeeper facet, as does Lamb. The Elia persona signified Cockneyism through his professional identity as a clerk, yet avoided the key criteria of impertinence and ambition through an idiom of self-deprecation and deference: nevertheless, *Blackwood's* failed to grasp the ludic irony of Lamb's persona, in damning Elia but not the admired Lamb as a 'Cockney scribbler'. As is the case for Hazlitt, for Lamb there is an unfortunate surfeit of mundane detail in John Martin's painting, *Belshazzar's Feast* (1821), which tends to make the scene suggestive of contemporary fashion rather than timelessness, the latter being a curious requirement of the history genre. Lamb thus expresses the same distaste for the impertinent juxtaposition of classicism with modernity as had Hunt's detractors. Dart's point about the trans-political nature of Cockneyism, that its tenets can be found equally among liberal writers and artists and Tory reviewers, as an example in turn of culture's capacity to transcend politics, is thus demonstrated. His notion of Cockneyism is indeed based on the argument that a crucial degree of cultural sensitivity belies both the vindictiveness and partizanship of the *Blackwood's* attacks on certain London writers, and their more indulgent attitude to other writers and artists.

The chapter devoted to Hazlitt and *Liber Amoris* (1823) is the most inventive and ambitious, not least of all because Dart associates Hazlitt's at times 'reprehensible', erratic or 'crazed memoir' with some highly illustrious company: Rousseau's confessions, the melancholic idealism of Goethe, Wollstonecraft's travelogue of sensibility (*A Short Residence in Sweden*), and, rather stretching credibility, Shakespearian tragedy, Jacobean drama in general, and the fiction of Stendhal. The enlivening verve of Dart's prose reaches its highest pitch here. He dwells intensely on the bizarre scene in *Liber Amoris* when H. shrieks in a woman-like voice in frustration at his rejection, before smashing to pieces a small bust of Napoleon: an embittered post-Revolution radical, Dart proposes, Hazlitt has been 'unmanned [both] by love and history', before adding with a dramatic flourish, 'This is his personal Waterloo' (p. 102).

Indeed, in what is a wide-ranging but generally even-handed and consistently credible study, the reading of Hazlitt is perhaps strongest. The extent to which Dart has previously written insightfully about Hazlitt, and revisited those writings for the purposes of this book, is evident in a brilliant reading of the essay 'Londoners and Country People.' According to Dart, 'On Londoners' enacts a sort of didactic deconstruction of the inter-periodical, self-implicating hostilities emanating from Cockney disputation: the stages by which Hazlitt reverses his initial stance are traced, beginning with a scornful, *Blackwood's*-like diatribe against the Cockney, before shifting to affectionate portraiture of individual examples, and ending with the essayist identifying himself with the originally disdained Londoner, whose know-it-all impertinence and dizzy, spectacle-corrupted consciousness are reinterpreted into an admirable capacity to embrace libertarian principles. Lamb, however, is treated with less assurance (signalled at one point by the confusion of Lamb's friend, Thomas Manning, with the latter's brother William). A reading of 'The Superannuated Man' (1825) leaves the reader as uncertain over Lamb's relation to Cockneyism as *Blackwood's* had once been. The precise nature of Lamb's 'rich,

controlling irony' (p. 162), identified in the eponymous figure's aimless wandering in gardens, is not explained. More importantly, how this irony might work to undercut Elia's distinctly Cockney-sounding claim to social elevation, as a retired clerk claiming to 'grow into gentility perceptibly' (quoted in Dart, p. 162), is also never ascertained.

Nevertheless, this tentativeness over the notoriously slippery Lamb represents a momentary and relatively minor lapse. Dart's book is hugely impressive in the deft, seemingly effortless way it weaves a web of interconnecting threads between art, architecture and literature. As it does so, it achieves more, and more compellingly, than any other study to fill with substantial scholarship that awkwardly small but historically significant gap between the Romantic and Victorian periods.

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Lamb's Birthday Luncheon, 2014

Duncan Wu, John Gardner and Stephen Burley at the Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon and Study Day, 8 February 2014

Society News

For the first time, the Society's annual Birthday Celebration Luncheon took place in the middle of a Lamb Study Day, which was held at Swedenborg Hall on 8 February 2014. Directed by our vice-chairman, Dr Felicity James, the day's theme was "Home with Lamb: Charles Lamb, the Domestic and Familiar". In the morning session, Miranda Kitchener spoke on "A Storm in a Teacup: Domestic Romanticism and the Familiar Essay" and Dr James gave a paper on "Charles Lamb and the Familiar". The intended guest speaker for the afternoon, Professor Tim Webb, was at the last moment prevented by illness from attending, but his place was ably filled by Dr Gregory Dart with a paper on "Romantic Essayists and the City". Lunch was taken at a nearby Turkish restaurant, TAS, which proved an enjoyable new experience for a number of members! Our President, Professor Duncan Wu, had flown across the Atlantic for the occasion and he presided at lunch, and two Grecians from Christ's Hospital said the traditional Graces before and after meat. On this occasion the meat was indeed Lamb. (Some guests assume that this is our routine fare, but in fact Lamb has not figured in our menu for 7 years.) Some 40 members and guests attended the day, which was generally judged a success.

Last year our former Chairman and Editor of the Bulletin, Mary Wedd, moved from her home at Sevenoaks and needed to part with the majority of her large library of books. Arrangements were made for most of her collection on the Romantics to be donated to the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere, the Wordsworth Conference Foundation or The Friends of Coleridge. The Elian books, however, have been very kindly donated to the Society and we are most grateful for Mary's generosity.

The vicar of Edmonton, Father Stuart Owen, is organising a Lamb Festival there from 31 May to 8 June 2014 to celebrate the lives and legacies of Charles and Mary Lamb and hopes that this will turn into an annual event. There will be a good deal of music, including a performance by choristers from Christ's Hospital, a photographic competition, poetry recitals, a talk on the Lambs and a puppet play about them (which must surely be a first). A service of thanksgiving for the lives of Charles and Mary Lamb will be held on 1 June at All Saints Church in which excerpts from their writings will be interspersed with choral music from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, including a work by Vincent Novello. The Society is keen to support the Festival and it is helping to sponsor an essay competition. I hope that many members may attend one or more of the events. Full details may be found on either of the following:

- www.allsaintsedmonton.org.uk/lamb-festival.html
- www.facebook.com/lambfestival

I can give preliminary notice of the first Society event for next season. We shall be making an outing to view Lamb's Cottage at Edmonton on Saturday 4 October. Details will appear later, but do put the date in your diary now. Places will be limited to 20 and will be allotted on a first come first served basis so please get in

touch with me if you wish to reserve a place by post to me at 28 Grove Lane, London SE5 8ST, or by email to nrdpowell@gmail.com.

Nick Powell

Ian Emberson, 1936-2013

Many of you will no doubt have greatly enjoyed reading Ian's contribution ('Inversnaid') to the last issue of the Bulletin, a remarkably rich and evocative piece comparing Wordsworth and Hopkins's responses to a place resonant in poetic associations. Ian had been a long-standing member of the Society and a regular contributor of late. It was with great sadness that I received the news of his sudden death from his wife, Catherine.

Born in Sussex, Ian lived most of his life in Yorkshire, moving to Todmorden in 1994 after marrying Catherine. Here he was at the very heart of the community, a patron of the Todmorden orchestra and an enthusiastic member of the local Antiquarian Society. He spent time in the 1950s in the National Service stationed in Cyprus, before embarking on a career that spanned both horticulture and librarianship. Following his retirement in 1986 he concentrated on painting and writing, with considerable success. As an artist he is best known for his postcards and book illustrations, whilst, as a writer, he published eight books of poetry and prose-poems. His most recent venture was *Seaport at Sunrise*, an ebook for children based on his experiences of Cyprus in the '50s. In addition to his work in the Bulletin, he contributed poems, articles and illustrations to a remarkable number of local and academic publications. He was also life-member of the Gaskell and Brontë Societies. I end this issue of the Bulletin with a poem by Ian. He will be sorely missed by all at the Lamb Society.

West Riding

Bright sari in a darkened street -
the lilting grey of Yorkshire sky;
rust requiems for demolished mills -
repeating grove of curlew's cry.

And did Jane once sit on this stile
to watch the moon look down on Hay,
and see the dog and hear the horse
send icy clatters through the grey?

Then later – only you to wait
(dogs rush to greet the friends not there)
the bloodstains of the sunset sink -
the red Decembers of despair.

And worlds still pirouette their stars,
while on that stage fresh actors meet,
dim picture in a golden frame -
bright sari in a darkened street.

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

www.charleslambsociety.com/bulletin.html

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The Charles Lamb Society Bulletin was published in quarterly issues from 1935 to 1972. Its first editor was the Elian scholar and poet S. M. Rich. The new series began in January 1973 as *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* under the editorship of Basil Savage.

The *Bulletin* is a peer-reviewed journal devoted to the study of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle. It aims to promote Lamb scholarship and welcomes submissions in the form of essays, reviews, and notes and queries from established academics, new entrants to the field, and those who simply admire the Lambs' writings.

Essays submitted to the journal should be in typescript, and be between 4000 and 7000 words in length. Preferably, submissions should be sent to the Editor as an email attachment in MS Word. Submissions should be double-spaced throughout, including quotations, and should follow MHRA style, with a couple of minor alterations. A full style-sheet is available online at the Society's website.

For further information contact the Editor, Stephen Burley, 2 Mushroom Cottages, Slade Farm, Kirtlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 3JB (stephenburley@hotmail.com); or the Reviews Editor, Felicity James, School of English, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH (fj21@le.ac.uk).