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The 2006 Elian Birthday Toast

By DICK WATSON

The 2006 Elian Birthday Toast was held on Saturday, 18 February at the Royal College of General Practitioners, Kensington, London.

THOSE OF YOU WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE LUNCH LAST YEAR will remember that we remembered – one can hardly say ‘celebrated’ – the death of Wordsworth’s brother in February 1805, and Lamb’s part in the investigations that followed. Today I want to return to the sea, and to another death, that of Nelson. Last year, we were reminded, again and again, that this was the 200th anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar. In 2006 we passed, a month ago, the anniversary of Nelson’s funeral, which may have something to tell us about Lamb.

He wrote to Hazlitt on 10 November 1805, in the middle of a number of other things: ‘Wasn’t you sorry for Lord Nelson? I have followed him in fancy ever since I saw him walking in Pall Mall (I was prejudiced against him before) looking just as a Hero should look: and I have been very much cut about it indeed. He was the only pretence of a Great Man we had. Nobody is left of any name at all’.

We must make some allowance for the fact that he was writing to Hazlitt, with whom he often adopts a sharp tone about current affairs. But we can recognise in this Lamb’s consistent distaste for any kind of militarism, together with a comic reflection on Nelson. He changed his mind about the great man because he looked like a hero. How seriously we can take this is not clear, any more than it is from a letter of 1797, when Lamb wrote to Coleridge about the Polish leader Kosciusko, who had fired the imagination of Europe: ‘Did you seize the grand opportunity of seeing Kosciusko when he was at Bristol? I never saw a hero; I wonder how they look’.

Let us suppose, though, that Lamb was impressed by the sight of Nelson in Pall Mall, and shocked at his death at Trafalgar. The funeral was quite a different matter. Again, Lamb was writing to Hazlitt, this time in January 1806: ‘You know Lord Nelson is dead. He is also to be buried. And the whole town is in a fever. Seats erecting, seats to be let, sold, lent, &c-. Customers crowding in to every Shop between Whitehall and St Pauls, and the tradesman & the customer changing parts... “A favor to beg of you Mr Tape. – to let my young Ladies come and see the funeral procession on Thursday – my girls are come home from school, and young folks love sights.” Mr. Tape very grave “how many, Maam?” – “O! there’ll only be me, and my three daughters, and perhaps their cousin Betty, and two young men to escort them, unless my Cousin Elbow-Room happens to come to town, then there’ll be nine of us”. ...Exit Customer with thanks, & returns on Thursday with fourteen more than the number first begg’d for’.

The passage continues in this vein, as Lamb squeezes every drop of comic pleasure out of the occasion. And of course it was an occasion, the like of which has never been seen since. I have here a photocopy of the bill for it, which came to the then vast sum of £1808-18-6. I was supplied by this copy by my guest today, Tom Elliott, who is a descendant of the firm of Charles Elliott, which played a major part in the furnishing of the catafalque and other materials and which was paid £486-3-0 for it. Here we have items such as multiple hat bands, black gloves, the ‘Use of six Plumes of best Ostrich feathers for two days’, and ‘A Magnificent Funeral Car built on a new strong carriage with Iron work and 3 Platforms decorated with baize black velvet, ornamented with trophies and Escutcheons ... the end of

the car carved to represent the Victory with a figure emblematical of victory carved at the head, the dome finished to represent an Antique Sarcophagus supported by Palm Trees...’, and so on and so on.

I do not know of any evidence that Charles or Mary went to see the procession, although it would have passed quite near Mitre Court Buildings, and the India Office would have been closed for the day. What there is evidence of is his interest in the whole business, an interest bordering on impatience, yet intensely curious and relishing the comedy on the margins of the great event: ‘The whole town as unsettled as a young Lady the day before being married. St Paul’s vergers making their hundred pounds a day in sixpences for letting people see the scaffolding inside, & the hole where he is to be let down; which money they under the Rose share with the Dean and the Praeceptors at night.’ People saying ‘I for my part am indifferent about it, only it looks foolish not to see it.’ And finally there is the Squeeze family: ‘I for my part have no relish for spectacles, but my Husband is going to take the young Miss Squeezes out of the country, that are come up 100 miles to see it, & he don’t like to disappoint them’. And then the eldest Miss Squeeze declares she don’t know whether she shall like to see it or no, for she is afraid it will be too affecting. She is sure she shall turn her head away from the window as it goes by. O the immortal Man! – but when the time comes it is odds but the pressing & thrusting don’t constrain her to turn her eyes into the street against her will, & who can help it?’ It is a little like the gravedigger scene in *Hamlet*: full of human interest, with the main protagonist elsewhere.

Lamb lived through great events, and saw great people. He remained stubbornly resistant to both. And Nelson’s funeral may also have touched something very deep within him: so much fuss being made over a death might well have come hard to a man who had suffered as Lamb had done ten years earlier. And so much attention to heroism may have been hard to bear for a man who had steadfastly set himself to the grim task of going on with life after 21 September 1796. His account of the funeral is comic, partly because he can see the funny side of things, even on a day of great national mourning; but it may also have been an unconscious defence against his own anger. His view of Nelson’s funeral may have been to do with a sensitivity to his own contrasting place in life, to the way in which his own heroism was unassuming and unsung. It is fitting that his admirers should remember him as a modest and self-deprecating hero, even as this year we remember the funeral of a spectacular one. I therefore invite you to rise and drink to THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF CHARLES LAMB.

Elia the Academic

By MARY WEDD

AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS ESSAY 'OXFORD IN THE VACATION', first published in *The London Magazine* in October 1820 and the second in *Essays of Elia*, Lamb imagines the reader, like a connoisseur of engravings looking for the signature, asking 'Who is Elia?' To the materialist the value in money of a painting depends on its provenance. Is Elia like the great artist whose signature is worthy to render his works authentic? On the answer to this depends his future relationship with his readers. So he does not beat about the bush. Because of the subject of his first essay, 'some old clerks defunct, in an old house of business', the South Sea House, Elia says, 'doubtless you have already set me down in your mind as one of the self-same college – a votary of the desk – a notched and cropt scrivener – one that sucks his sustenance, as certain sick people are said to do, through a quill'. Using imagery that is to run through the essay, Lamb is at pains to emphasize the humble occupation by which, like an invalid, he 'sucks his sustenance', that is 'earns his living'. The only 'college' he belongs to is the brotherhood of clerks, who wore black and had their hair cut short and unevenly, like a mutilated feather. He has to admit it, he says, 'Well, I do agnize something of the sort'.

'I do agnize' is a quotation from *Othello* (Act I, Scene III, l. 232) but, not having met the word agnize anywhere else, I looked it up in my pocket edition of *Dr. Johnson's Dictionary* and there it was, right enough, then a perfectly ordinary word meaning 'to confess, to acknowledge'. Afterwards, out of curiosity, I looked in my modern *Chambers Dictionary*, which to my surprise does contain the word, with the same meaning but with, in brackets, (archaic). The sense of it in Elia's context is, of course, perfectly clear as part of an unwilling acceptance that he is just a clerk, not a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, which learned institutions he seems to use interchangeably, so that Oxford in this essay, though appropriately and nostalgically described, also stands in for Cambridge, which is where Lamb would really have found Dyer in a College Library and 'longed to recoat him in Russia and assign him his place'.

So, if Lamb stresses his lowly station, undignified by a university degree, why did I call this article 'Elia the Academic'? Well, Michael O'Neill ends his wonderful examination of 'Dream Children' with the phrase 'an interplay between artistic awareness and the stubborn power of illusions'.¹ Indeed, this essay too is constructed on a series of creative contrasts, or, as Fred V. Randel calls it, of 'linked internal contradictions'.² So let us see how Elia elaborates on the touchy subject of his mundane occupation. Lo and behold! It becomes, as if by magic, after all no more than the quirky free choice of a born intellectual.

'I confess that it is my humour, my fancy – in the forepart of the day, when the mind of your man of letters requires some relaxation – (and none better than such as at first sight seems most abhorrent from his beloved studies) – to while away some good hours

¹ Michael O'Neill, 'Only What Might Have Been: 'Lamb and Illusion', *Charles Lamb Bulletin* N. S. 128 (2004): p. 96.

² Fred V. Randel, *The World of Elia – Charles Lamb's Essayistic Romanticism* (Kennikat Press, 1975) p. 94.

of my time in the contemplation of indigos, cottons, raw silks, piece-goods, flowered or otherwise'. Not for the first or last time in history, the office stationery comes in useful ... 'your outside sheets, and waste wrappers of foolscap, do receive into them, most kindly and naturally, the impression of sonnets, epigrams, essays – so that the very parings of a counting-house are, in some sort, the settings up of an author. The enfranchised quill, that has plodded all the morning among the cart-rucks of figures and ciphers, frisks and curvets so at its ease over the flowery carpet-ground of a midnight dissertation. – It feels its promotion ...' The delightful image of that quill-pen, again, exchanging the muddy walk of a cart-horse for the free dance of a spirited steed serves to point up the superiority of the man of letters, while acknowledging the necessity for everyday down-to-earth activity. 'So that you see, upon the whole, the literary dignity of Elia is very little, if at all, compromised in the condescension'.

Admitting that a little bit more free time would liberate the creative spirit, Lamb allows himself a brief digression to lament the passing of saint's days as public holidays. What would he think of us today, when Sunday is no longer a universal day of rest? He beautifully makes the transition straight back to Oxford by disclaiming any right for himself to criticize the function of saints' days, which are ecclesiastical matters. 'I am plain Elia – no Selden, nor Archbishop Usher – though at present in the thick of their books, here in the heart of learning, under the shadow of the mighty Bodley'. We notice that it is above all the libraries that epitomize universities for Elia, libraries and Antiquity. There is a degree of snobbery implicit in the words Oxford and Cambridge and Lamb is not afraid of it. 'I can here play the gentleman, enact the student'. In 'Poor Relations' Lamb shows the other side of this, the tragic fate of his friend Favell, who could not reconcile his own role as a scholar and gentleman with his father's vulgarity. Continuing his imagery of physical sustenance Elia goes on, 'To such a one as myself, who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution, nowhere is so pleasant, to while away a few idle weeks at, as one or other of the Universities'.

Mary agreed with this. After their three-day visit to Cambridge in 1815, she wrote to Sara Hutchinson on August 20th, 'I never spent so many pleasant hours together as I did at Cambridge'. She tells of Lamb's earlier visit to his friend Franklin's rooms, 'and how he then first felt himself commencing gentleman & had eggs for his breakfast'. To which she comments scornfully, 'Charles Lamb commencing gentleman!'³

It is not that Lamb was not clever enough to take a degree. Leigh Hunt says in his *Autobiography* that he left Christ's Hospital at fifteen. 'I was then first Deputy Grecian, and I had the honour of going out of the school in the same rank, at the same age, and for the same reason, as my friend Charles Lamb. The reason was that I hesitated in my speech ... it was understood that a Grecian was bound to deliver a public speech before he left school, and to go into the Church afterwards; and as I could do neither of these things, a Grecian I could not be'.⁴

So Elia was not an academic, any more than he was a father, but, wandering about one or other of the Universities, 'Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted ad eundem'. This stands for 'ad eundem gradum', 'admitted, without examination, to the same degree' which was then 'a

³ *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marris Jr., 3 vols. (Cornell, 1978) p. 193.

⁴ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (Cresset Press, 1948) p. 107.

privilege mutually granted by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge'.⁵ Elia goes on, 'I fetch up past opportunities'. What a touching expression that is! Those opportunities were lost but it is as though they have been resurrected and fulfilled. 'I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for me. In moods of humility I can be a Sizar, or a Servitor'. These were poor students at Cambridge and Oxford respectively, who had once had to wait at table but no longer did so. Wordsworth was a Sizar at St. John's College, Cambridge and Dyer at Emmanuel. But Elia did not confine himself to such humble dreams. It is the great advantage of fantasy over real life that it has no limits. He equally could be a rich student who, by paying higher fees, had special privileges such as dining at High Table with the Fellows. 'When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner'. What a wonderful picture of self-importance is conveyed by 'peacock' and 'strut'! 'In graver moments, I proceed Master of Arts. Indeed I do not think I am much unlike that respectable character. I have seen your dim-eyed vergers, and bed-makers in spectacles, drop a bow or curtsy, as I pass, wisely mistaking me for something of the sort. I go about in black, which favours the notion'. Observe the ironic fun at his own expense. It is only the half-blind who can see him as a scholar – but note that they do so 'wisely'. 'Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle, I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor'. The quad of Christ Church, generally known as 'the House' from 'aedes Christi', is 'reverend', of course, because its Chapel is also the Cathedral.

Lamb went on his visits to Oxford and Cambridge in the Long Vac., when 'Their vacation, too, at this time of the year, falls in so pat with ours'. That is in August. But on one occasion a few years ago I discovered that my 'garden helper' (in inverted commas) had pruned my shrubs so that all the shoots that should have borne buds were destroyed. I was not going to have any flowers on them that year. It was May-time and I couldn't bear it. So I thought, where can I be sure of abundant lilac and laburnum and, like a flash, came the answer, North Oxford. So I took off for a hotel in the town and spent a few days walking my old haunts, including along the tow-path where the cuckoos were caroling and where, to my astonishment, a male eight was being coached from a bicycle – by a woman! Such things did not happen in my day. Still less in Lamb's. But, though he went at the wrong time of year for blossom, he made the most of it and it had its advantages.

'The walks at these times are so much one's own, – the tall trees of Christ's, the groves of Magdalen!' Of that 1815 visit to Cambridge Mary says, 'We were walking the whole time – out of one College into another,' and tells 'With what pleasure (Charles) shewed me Jesus College where Coleridge was, the barber's shop where Manning was – the house where Lloyd lived – Franklin's rooms a young schoolfellow with whom Charles was the first time he went to Cambridge'.⁶ No wonder Charles had to construct for himself imaginary rooms in College among so many of his friends.

Naturally, in those days, it would not have occurred to anyone that Mary might go to university. She was certainly able enough, though her illness would, of course, have prevented her. In middle age she learnt Latin 'merely to assist her in acquiring a correct style'⁷ and later taught it to others.⁸ But it took a hundred years before Oxford admitted

⁵ Lamb, *Essays of Elia*, Edited with Introduction and Notes by N. L. Hallward and S. C. Hill (Macmillan, 1897) p. 221.

⁶ Marris III. p. 194.

⁷ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 3rd. ed., 2 vols. (Macmillan, 1872) I. p. 242 (11 Dec. 1814).

women to full membership of the University in 1920, while Cambridge did not do so until 1947-48.⁹ I look back with astonishment at my own audacity in the 1930s in having a burning ambition to go to Oxford. My family had no money, there were no state grants then, and I showed no sign of brilliance, while the competition of female entry was so acute. There were five men to one woman at Oxford, ten at Cambridge.¹⁰ Aspiration to follow the example of my wonderful English teacher was combined with exactly Lamb's reasons for idolizing Oxford, Books and Antiquity. In addition to its early history in pioneering education and beautiful buildings, Oxford had been alma mater more recently to some of my greatest heroes at that time. It is curious now to look back at who they were. Students to-day doing A-Level English, which is the stage I was then at when I conceived this overwhelming ambition, would probably never even have heard of most of them. Imagine, I thought, these venerable buildings had been haunted by Pusey, Newman, Keble, Matthew Arnold, Robert Bridges and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Lamb's first thought was of Chaucer and his two delightful bawdy tales 'The Miller's Tale' and 'The Reeve's Tale', the first located in Oxford and the second at Trumpington, where Wordsworth said that, when at Cambridge, he 'laughed at Chaucer'. In the Long Vac. another advantage for Elia was that he could explore the interiors of Colleges. 'The halls deserted, and with open doors, inviting one to slip in unperceived, and pay devoir to some Founder, or noble or royal Benefactress (that should have been ours) whose portrait seems to smile upon their over-looked beadsman, and to adopt me for their own'. Moreover, he is no longer 'one that sucks his sustenance ... through a quill'. What luxury is suggested by 'the butteries, and sculleries, redolent of antique hospitality: the immense caves of kitchens, kitchen fire-places, cordial recesses;' (Note the double meaning in 'cordial') 'ovens whose first pies were baked four centuries ago; and spits which have cooked for Chaucer'. Not literally perhaps but certainly in feeding his imagination, through which the dishes are 'hallowed' to Elia, so that 'the Cook goes forth a Manciple'. Just as Elia is elevated to the role of an academic, so the Cook gets promotion too. There is no doubt that much of the magic of Oxford and Cambridge is the sense that learning has gone on there for many centuries – as well, of course, as less elevated pursuits of youthful liberation – and that present-day youth and aspiration walk there attended by spiritual presences from the past.

Yet Elia pauses to ask 'Antiquity! Thus wondrous charm, what are thou? That being nothing, art everything!' To people in the past they seemed 'modern' and looked back to 'a remoter antiquity', 'with blind veneration'. Elia is so right. It is striking how ancient peoples in 'remoter antiquity' revered their ancestors and built monuments in their honour and how in our turn relics of earlier ages can still cast a spell and even inspire fear. I remember, in my younger days when I often explored on my own, pushing my bike up the hill between Penzance and Zennor to see the Men-an-Tol. I found it, but so strong was its atmosphere that I never cycled so fast downhill before or since. Similarly, walking up a hill behind Boot in the Lake District, in an isolated and marshy place I came upon a stone circle so potent that it sent me scurrying back to base, abandoning my project.

⁸ E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Methuen, 1921) II. p. 727.

⁹ Vera Brittain, *The Women at Oxford* (Harrap, 1960) pp. 152, 154.

¹⁰ Brittain p. 182.

Just so, but in an entirely benign way does the atmosphere of antiquity cling to Oxford and Cambridge. Elia asks, 'What mystery lurks in this retroversion? or what half Januses are we that we cannot look forward with the same idolatry with which we forever revert?' Janus, the Roman god, had two faces, one looking forward and the other back, and Milton, describing the Cherubim says that they 'Four faces each / Had, like a double Janus'.¹¹ Lamb divides where Milton multiplies and, following Sir Thomas Browne, credits us with only one.¹² 'The mighty future is as nothing, being everything! The past is everything, being nothing!' Elia does not believe that the so-called Dark Ages were really so dark and recent discoveries in our own time have shown the surprising technical ingenuity and hard physical effort which went into life in what we have thought of as primitive periods, which he says we conceive wrongly 'as though as a palpable obscure had dimmed the face of things and that our ancestors wandered to and fro groping!' Here he quotes one of Milton's most inspired phrases, 'the palpable obscure',¹³ embroidering his theme of creative contradictions.

Certainly this view of the past is not the way the antique atmosphere of the old universities impresses us. It is no surprise when Elia asserts, using Chaucer's version of the town's name, 'Above all they rarities, old Oxenford, what do most arride and solace me, are thy repositories of mouldering learning, thy shelves –'. Incidentally, the word 'arride' is not in *Johnson's Dictionary* but is in the modern one, with 'Lamb' in brackets. But its meaning is clear enough. Perhaps this is the place to weep a few tears for a world where computers are ousting books, even in some schools. Elia goes on, 'What a place to be in is an old library! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labours to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state'. Lamb's favourite, Sir Thomas Browne, in *Religio Medici* calls cemeteries and churches 'the dormitories of the dead'. What a pity the study of prose style seems to have been completely abandoned! I well remember at school in the sixth form being entranced when first introduced to seventeenth century prose, which was such a treasure and influence for Elia.

For the moment, he rejects the physical contact with the old books in favour of the spiritual. 'I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding-sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those scintial apples which grew amid the happy orchard'.

What a marvelous paragraph! Using 'leaves' in both its senses, the image runs through the passage. He begins by linking the idea of 'dormitories of the dead' with the leaves of books being their grave-clothes, which he would not wish to disturb. His flowing prose is brought up short for a moment by the brief downright sentence, 'I could as soon dislodge a shade', 'shade' also having both its meanings, a shadow and the ghost of a dead person. No, learning comes from them like the scent of forest leaves. 'I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those scintial apples which grew amid the happy orchard'. With the words 'moth-scented' comes a strong whiff, not of the moths themselves but of the camphor moth-balls commonly used to keep the insects away from people's clothes and

¹¹ *Paradise Lost* XI, ll. 128-29.

¹² Sir Thomas Browne, *Christian Morals* (1716; 1756): 'Januses of one face'.

¹³ *Paradise Lost* II, l. 406.

associated with garments that have perhaps been kept in the wardrobe a very long time! But these 'moth-scented coverings' smell sweet, like the blossom on the apple-tree which stood in the happy Garden of Eden before the Fall and held the secret of knowledge. What Elia values has been clear from the beginning when he hinted at the inadequacy of the pecuniary interest in the provenance of a work of art or intellect. It is the spiritual aspect that touches him. He acknowledged the place in life both of the cart-horse and of the 'frisks and curvets' of the liberated writer and joker but the essence comes in those moments when we 'inhale' messages from another world, particularly the world of the past.

Elia confesses now that he is not, after all, a whole-hearted academic. 'Still less have I curiosity to disturb the elder repost of MSS. Those variae lectiones, so tempting to the more erudite palates, do but disturb and unsettle my faith'. He does not like alternative readings. They make him feel insecure. And why did those archaeologists want to dig up what Vesuvius had seen fit to bury? 'I am no Herculanean raker'. Why can't people leave things alone? Looking at governments to-day, one must say he has a point! He goes on, 'The credit of the three witnesses might have slept unimpeached for me'. This refers to a verse in the First Epistle of John at Chapter V, verse 7, which says, 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one'. This was obviously an important authority for the doctrine of the Trinity. But Richard Porson, Professor of Greek at Cambridge, proved the verse to be a spurious addition. It was in the King James Bible but not in subsequent versions. Though Lamb was a Unitarian, Elia says, 'I leave these curiosities to Porson and to G.D,' a neat transition to the second part of the essay and the character of George Dyer. At first this may be thought to be an irrelevance, too great a break in the train of thought. Obviously Lamb delights in the affectionate humour of his portrait, as he does in *Amicus Redivivus*, but we soon see how it is appropriate to the whole plan of the essay. Elia has just admitted that he is not, after all, a whole-hearted academic and now for contrast he turns to a man who really is, even if he carries things to extremes! Incidentally, Dyer does not seem to have taken any offence at the way he is described and only roused to protest in order to defend his former employer, whom Elia had criticized in the first version of this essay, a passage which, as Lucas tells us, was 'afterwards suppressed'.¹⁴

The careful reader will have picked up the clue in the earlier sentence when Elia addresses 'old Oxenford' and praises its collection of ancient books. We are back to Chaucer and of his character studies that might have been written with Dyer in mind.

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde long ygo.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and thereto sobrelly.¹⁵

Do you remember how Dyer accidentally starved himself and the Lambs had to take him in and feed him back to health? His wardrobe, too, sometimes left much to be desired. Here, 'busy as a moth' recalls those mothballs associated with old clothes. In December

¹⁴ Lucas, *Life* I. 175-78.

¹⁵ *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, l. 285 ff.

1800 Lamb wrote to Manning of Dyer's mental state as evidenced by 'a pair of nankeen pantaloons four times too big for him', which Dyer insisted were new. 'They were absolutely ingrained with the dirt of ages; but he affirmed them to be clean'. His mind was on other matters, of more importance to him.

Full thredbare was his overeste courtepy;¹⁶
 For he hade getn hym yet no benefice,
 Ne was so worldly for to have office.
 For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
 Twenty bookes clad in blak or reed,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
 Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.¹⁷

Elia tells how he found G.D. 'busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press, in a nook in Oriel. With long poring he has grown almost into a book. He stood as passive as one beside the old shelves. I longed to new-coat him in Russia, and assign him his place. He might have mustered for a tall Scapula'. Jonathan Bate explains that this means passed muster for 'a tall copy of Johannes Scapula's sixteenth century *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum*'. Elia carries through his images of the clothes-moth and of D's urgent need of a new outfit – Russian leather must have been an improvement on his threadbare 'overeste courtepy' – as well as emphasizing his overriding passion for books. This true academic, like Elia, loves the University for its libraries but, unlike that mere amateur, has gone further until he almost becomes himself a book. In his secular life, lodging in Clifford's Inn, 'like a dove on the asp's nest', he is uncontaminated by 'vermin of the law', among whom he sits 'in calm and sinless peace'. This quotation is from *Paradise Regained* Book IV (ll. 420-25), a passage describing Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness.

Infernal Ghosts, and Hellish Furies, round
 Environed thee, some howled, some yell'd, some shriek'd,
 Some bent at thee their fiery darts, while thou
 Sat'st unappall'd in calm and sinless peace.

Lawyers, I am glad to say, do not appear to Elia as Ghosts or Furies! But such terrors as they can summon up do not trouble D. 'The fangs of the law pierce him not – the winds of litigation blow over his humble chambers – the hard sheriff's officer moves his hat as he passes – legal nor illegal discourtesy touches him – none thinks of offering violence or injustice to him – you would as soon "strike an abstract idea"'. I think, though it is in inverted commas, that the phrase is not strictly a quotation. Lucas suggest that 'Lamb may be slyly remembering' the occasion when John Lamb knocked Hazlitt down and Hazlitt 'refrained from striking back, remarking that he was a metaphysician and dealt not in blows but ideas'.¹⁸ It is a delightful image and sums up the fact that D's real life is

¹⁶ upper short coat.

¹⁷ fiddle, psaltery

¹⁸ *The Essays of Elia*, ed. E. V. Lucas (Methuen, 1912), vol. 2 of 6 vols., *Works*, p. 347.

not in Clifford's Inn but in the world of books which exists par excellence in such homes as 'the mighty Bodley'.

What, then, would be more appropriate than the subject of D's present research, 'an investigation into all curious matter connected with the two Universities'? He 'has lately lit upon a MS. collection of charters, relative to C – (Cambridge), by which he hopes to settle some disputed points – particularly that long controversy between them as to priority of foundation'. One of the subsidiary joys of membership of Oxford or Cambridge is the pretended rivalry and enmity between them. By this convention I should be at daggers drawn with some of my dearest friends, even with some highly distinguished members of this audience. I hope I am not – but it must be admitted that I never fail to watch the Boat Race! So how very suitable both to his character and to the subject of this essay is Dyer's field of study, the history of the two universities, including which of them was founded first! In real life, his study was of only one. In 1814 he published his *History of the University and Colleges of Cambridge*. Elia goes on to indicate that D's labour has 'not met with all the encouragement it deserved, either here or at C- (Cambridge)'. This may well have been, as is hinted at, because the book was not much good, but not necessarily. We are back at the beginning of the essay with the relationship between performer and audience. The reader too has his part to play and needs to be sensitive to more than merely material values. The governing bodies and 'heads of colleges', Elia says, are not receptive to that powerful spirit emanating from the past which to Dyer and Lamb is of the essence of a university. So long as they have the pecuniary advantages of their present privileged position, they are not interested in the ancient origins of their institutions. Not all academics are a credit to their profession. Elia carries forward his imagery of food and nourishment. These persons do not suck their sustenance through a quill. They are 'Contented to suck the milky fountains of their Alma Maters' – Alma meaning 'nourishing' as well as 'kindly' – not just from those vast kitchen quarters that Elia explored with such delight but from the wells of learning represented by Bodley, only without the gift of unquenchable curiosity about origins and the sensitivity to 'inhale learning' which should be the pre-requisites of an academic. Unlike them, Dyer is so much a part of that inner world that he beautifully mismanages everyday matters, which do not impinge upon him or stay in his memory. There are other examples elsewhere, such as his walking into the New River, but here Elia gives the example of D., inspired by the vision of Mrs. Montagu like a household goddess, Queen Lar of Lares and Penates fame, and her daughter pretty Ann Skepper, repeating within a few hours the same routine of signing his absent friend Montagu's visitors book. Old people will find nothing remarkable in this. We go to switch something off only to find that we have already done it! In Dyer's case, his eyes may have been damaged by his 'late studies', but old age is not what has made him 'the most absent of men'. He is of that honourable band who have given proverbial status to the expression 'an absent-minded professor'. If anything was needed to prove him a true academic, in contrast to Elia, it was this. Elia says 'D. made many a good resolution against any such lapses in future. I hope he will not keep them too rigorously'.

If D's repeated signature 'looks out upon him like another Sosia', who confronted his apparent double in Plautus's *Amphitryon* and Dryden's version of the story, his reaction to unexpectedly seeing Elia was to start 'like an unbroke heifer'. It is a deft touch, then, to use a term from Logic with which to show that it was reasonable for D. to be

surprised. ‘A priori it was not very probable that we should have met in Oriel’, because, of course, Logic and reason have nothing to do with it. D. does not work like that. ‘D would have done the same, had I accosted him on the sudden in his own walks in Clifford’s-inn, or in the Temple’. For he is an inhabitant of that other immaterial world, of the scholar and the sage. ‘For with G.D. – to be absent from the body, is sometimes (not to speak it profanely) to be present with the Lord’. Here Lamb is directly quoting from the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Chapter V, verses 6 and 8. ‘Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from Lord: ... We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with Lord’. Lamb may be denigrating his own scholarship in this essay but in every paragraph his allusive style gives him the lie. As naturally as breathing he incorporates into his writing echoes from his wide and deep reading. Here, ‘not to speak it profanely’ is an expression used by Hamlet in his famous instruction to the players (Act III, Scene II, l. 31) and in the next sentence ‘starts like a thing surprised’ again takes us to *Hamlet* (Act I, Scene I, l. 153), a memory also drawn upon by Wordsworth in the ‘Immortality Ode’, ‘like a guilty thing surprised’, which doubtless Lamb was remembering.

Old people are notoriously renowned for asserting that the world has gone to the dogs since they were young. ‘Jesus, the days that we have seen!’¹⁹ Certainly I am an anachronism, being, as Lamb would say, ‘a whole encyclopaedia behind the rest of the world’ where technology is concerned. Encyclopaedia? Who now uses an encyclopaedia who has the Internet? But I do worry that many of the present generation of young people are being denied the cultural heritage which used to be commonplace. I’m sure it is not true at all: I can only go on my observation and no doubt it is partly due to well-meaning reframing of syllabuses to meet the needs of modern society that time-honoured sources of enrichment seem to be neglected. It would appear that schoolchildren do not know the stories that come from Greek and Roman legends and the Bible. They cannot recognize or name the commonest wildflowers, indeed seem not even to see their natural surroundings. History for them appears to begin with the First World War, during which I first saw the light of day. Was there then no history before I was born? I must be a more important person that I knew! Without this background how can English literature be understood? The dumbing down process seems to have been creeping up on us for some time. In addition to Jonathan Bate’s admirable *World’s Classics Edition*, I consulted an edition of *Essays of Elia* from 1897 which was intended not only for English but also for Indian students, who it was assumed would read Lamb. It is not surprising that Elia, still a most popular writer in my youth, is now so little read if none of his allusions are recognized. Certainly some are recondite but most are not. Perhaps Wordsworth will disappear with the countryside he loved. I am grieved if future generations, living in a dehumanized, technical world, will never have the enriching experience I was fortunate enough to be given as a matter of course at school. But enough of whingeing, and back to dear George Dyer.

In describing what is going on in D’s inner life, Elia demonstrates his friend’s benevolent and loving nature at the same time as he lists, and understands, his otherworldly learned concerns. ‘At the very time when, personally encountering thee, he passes on with no recognition – or, being stopped, starts like a thing surprised – at that

¹⁹ 2 *Henry IV*, Part II, Act. 3, Scene 2, l. 225.

moment, reader, he is on Mount Tabor' (wrongly supposed to have been the site of the Transfiguration of Christ) 'or Parnassus –' (home of Apollo and the Muses) 'or co-sphered with Plato'. This is another echo of Milton who in 'Il Penseroso' wishes to 'unsphere / The spirit of Plato' and explore his philosophy. Or, Elia goes on, 'with Harrington, framing "immortal commonwealths"'. James Harrington (1611-77), as in Plato's *Republic* or Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, created in *Oceana* an ideal state which he believed, once established, would last for ever. It was Dyer's nature to wish to do good to others, so one of his concerns is 'devising some plan of amelioration to thy country, or thy species – peradventure meditating some individual kindness or courtesy, to be done to thee thyself, the returning consciousness of which made him start so guiltily at thy obtruded personal presence'. Don't you love that word 'obtruded' when the reality of D's friend disturbs his dream of the favours he means to do for him, another example of the creative contrasts on which the essay is built.

So, in spite of the malfunctioning of his practical side, which gives Elia so much amusement, 'D. is delightful anywhere, but he is at the best in such places as these' – the homelands of academia. He cares not much for Bath. He is out of his element at Buxton, at Scarborough, or Harrogate'. As we run through the popular holiday spas, we are reminded of the opening of "the Old Margate Hoy" published in the *London Magazine* in 1823. 'I am fond of passing my vacations (I believe I have said so before) at one or other of the Universities... We have been dull at Worthing one summer, duller at Brighton another, dullest at Eastbourn a third, and are at this moment doing dreary penance at – Hastings!' Elia, like D., knows where he is at home. 'The Cam and Isis are to him better than all the waters of Damascus'. This reference to the *Second Book of Kings*, Chapter V, carries with it all the power of the story of Naaman, the leper who, being told by Elisha to 'Go and wash in Jordan seven times', scornfully said that his own Syrian rivers were good enough for him, thank you! 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' Partly because of its sonorous names, this is one of the verses from the Bible which stick in the memory. Elia is using the Cam and Isis in place of the Jordan, which did prove to be 'better than all the waters of Damascus' in curing Naaman of his leprosy. So, rather than 'taking the waters' at a fashionable spa, both D. and Elia find the fountains of life in the rivers of the two Universities. The seats of learning stand in for Parnassus, though one wonders where in the vicinity of Cambridge could be found a sufficient eminence! 'On the Muses' hill he is happy, and good, as one of the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains;' who in *Pilgrim's Progress* greeted the pilgrims after their escape from Lamb's demon, the Giant Despair, and told them "These mountains are Immanuel's Land, and they are within sight of his City..."²⁰

Then Elia brings the reader back to the beginning again with exploration of those Groves of Academe which might have been his, but he is now under the wing of an habitué who is not only a scholar but who has an extra dimension, a spiritual quality that, as he has already shown, should but does not always accompany learning. '...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'. Lamb is amalgamating the House of the Interpreter, which was what Blake's admirers called his house, you remember, and the House Beautiful, or at least imagining that the Interpreter could equally well be present there.

²⁰ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Penguin, 1965) p. 158. Following refs. to pp. 78, 59, 78, 41, 69-70.

What a pity few readers now would recognize reference to *Pilgrim's Progress*. I read it at an early age, perhaps in an abridged edition, and clearly saw the magic wicket-gate as a replica of the little gate we would go through every Sunday to walk across the fields to church. The great joy and release when the burden fell from Christian's back stayed in my memory and, when I returned to the book as an adult, I was astonished to find how early it comes in the story. I had thought of it as the final climax. Anyway, the Delectable Mountains, the House of the Interpreter and the House Beautiful are all places of rest and encouragement at intervals along the difficult way. How appropriate then that the essay should end with Elia visiting the Colleges again and, walking beside him, D. who combines the qualities of absent-minded professor and of one like the child in Wordsworth's poem who 'liest in Abraham's bosom all the year, ... God being with thee when we know it not'. As he takes Elia on a tour of the University buildings, without knowing it he sanctifies them.

Of course, if you want to get on in the academic faculty of English Literature, what do you do? You discover a previously unknown manuscript and write a dissertation on it. With the help of another of his learned friends, Thomas Manning, Elia does exactly that in his most hilarious and much-loved essay, 'A dissertation on Roast Pig'. Manning secured my fealty once and for all when he affirmed in a letter to Lamb from Toulouse of October 1802 that the 'scenery in Switzerland' was 'clumsy and graceless' compared with the English Lake District, which his friend had just visited. Never mind China, the home of Roast Pig. But that's another story.

Let me end with part of the poem Lamb wrote a year before 'Oxford in the Vacation', 'Written at Cambridge' (August 15.1819).

I was not train'd in Academic bowers,
 And to those learned streams I nothing owe
 Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow;
 Mine have been any thing but studious hours.
 Yet I can fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
 Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap;
 My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap,
 And I walk gowned...

Sevenoaks, Kent

John Clare, Charles Lamb and the *London Magazine*: '*Sylvanus et Urban*'

By SIMON KÖVESI

A version of this paper was delivered at a *Charles Lamb Society* meeting,
London, May 10th 2003. I would like to thank the audience
for its invaluable suggestions.

JOHN CLARE AND CHARLES LAMB MET IN LONDON IN 1822 through the editor and proprietor of the *London Magazine*, John Taylor. Largely due to the publishing faith of Taylor and his publishing partner James Hessey, Clare's public poetic career was at its height in the years that the *London Magazine* was run by Taylor, from 1821 to 1825. During this period the publication also featured some of the most important essays of Elia. It is no exaggeration to say that Lamb and Clare were two of the stars of the magazine when it could claim to be a hub of literary culture. Lamb was already an established writer when he started contributing to the *London* under Taylor's new ownership; Clare, some eighteen years Lamb's junior, was a new poet on the block. In 1822, Clare was in his prime at 29; Lamb at 47 was one of the senior writers of the magazine, perhaps its main attraction.

There is apparently no account of Clare written by Lamb and only one of Lamb's letters to Clare remains. But much of interest was penned by Clare about Lamb, and even more by others concerning the two of them together, so perhaps we can manage to draw a rough sketch of their personal and literary relationship. In the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 95, Scott McEathron studied the development of the relationship between these two, from the one remaining letter of Lamb to Clare, the two sonnets Clare wrote to Lamb, through to Clare's seeming disenchantment with the old London scene by the late 1820s.¹ This essay is much indebted to McEathron's essay and to some degree it will follow the same trajectory, only here the focus will be on the accounts of the two writers' encounters. The essay will also propose a contextual reading of one of the sonnets Clare wrote in praise of Elia, and show how Clare might have been informed – and to some degree formed – as a poet, by Lamb's attempted revival of seventeenth-century writers.

The stories of Clare's four visits to London in 1820, 1822, 1824 and 1828 have often been told, so I won't reiterate them here.² It is too tempting to think of Clare as a parochial, rural bumpkin; as a naïve, green man humbled by the company of his new London acquaintances, dazzled by the bright wits, like a rabbit caught in headlights. Part of the reason for this prejudicial version of the visits being dominant in critical accounts is that Clare himself is always full of humility when discussing his own life. As we shall see, his prose accounts of his visits to London position him as a quiet and somewhat detached observer, and he carefully omits any

¹ Scott McEathron, 'John Clare and Charles Lamb: Friends in the Past', *Charles Lamb Bulletin* N.S. 95 (1996): pp. 98–109.

² An enriching discussion of the London contexts for Clare's literary life can be found in Roger Sales's *John Clare: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002). See also Jonathan Bate's *John Clare: A Biography* (London: Picador, 2003).

accounts of confrontation or argument. If other witnesses are to be believed, Clare was volubly passionate, critical and even argumentative in the company of his literary peers: this country poet was not the shrinking violet he sometimes constructs for himself as a public image. It is also somewhat facile to regard Clare essentially as an outsider at these gatherings, as a silent observer, as being intimidated and stung by the brash punning of the metropolitan wits. This version of Clare's sociability is only sustainable if the accounts of a couple of other members of the *London* coterie are ignored. Nevertheless, we should start with Clare's own words. The following extract from his prose shows how repulsed he is by the egotism and exclusivity of this literary élite:

One of my greatest amusements while in London was reading the booksellers windows I was always fond of this from a boy and my next greatest amusement was the curiosity of seeing litterary men of these all I have seen I shall give a few pictures just as they struck me at the time some of them I went purposely to see others I met in litterary partys that is the confind contributors dinners at Taylors and Hesseys I had no means of meeting the constellation of Genius in one mass they were mingld partys some few were fixd stars in the worlds hemisphere others glimmerd every month in the Magazine some were little vapours that were content to shine by the light of others I mean dabling critics that cut monthly morsels from genius whose works are on the waters free for all to catch at that chuses these bye and bye I coud observe had a self satisfaction about them that magnified molehills to mountains I mean that little self was in its own eye a giant and that every other object was mere nothings I shall not mention names here but it is evident I do not alude to friends³

The first put-down is perhaps the most comic: Clare admits to enjoying the rich pickings of London's window-shopping more than its literary gatherings. This is deliberate deflation on Clare's part and through it he constructs for his own identity a complete lack of pretension, just before he implicitly condemns it in others. This passage also misspells 'litterary' twice, perhaps deliberately so. By the end of this passage it is clear that Clare either regards himself as a literary genius, or wants out of the literary scene if it involves exclusivity and pretentiousness. We might interpret the two pairs of 't's in the repeated 'litterary' as being the equivalent of two fingers raised aloft to a crowd and culture towards which he always exhibited ambivalent responses. The spelling might also indicate that Clare feels confident enough to construct an antithetical 'litterature' of his own, in which non-standard spelling and grammar were to be its defining characteristics. Indeed as we shall see, his stance over spelling and grammar even at this early stage of his career, memorably and crucially marked him out in contrast to everyone else in attendance. To call Taylor's bashes 'confind contributors dinners' is to render them with an oppressive, exclusive atmosphere; perhaps at these parties Clare, like the protagonist of his favourite play, felt 'cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in / To saucy doubts and fears'.⁴ Clare was perhaps oppressed by the sycophancy, opportunism and lack of talent that undermined any awe he might have felt. If he did have any doubts, perhaps it was about his own trajectory: did he want to end up as 'self-satisfied' as some of the other writers he encountered? Was it necessary

³ *John Clare: By Himself*, eds. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Ashington and Manchester: MidNAG/Carcenet, 1996), p. 139.

⁴ *Macbeth*, III.iv.24-5.

for him to act the way they did to get along, to maintain his status? Was he a giant, or a nothing? A star, or a vapour? Was he a nascent literary genius or merely a dabbling hack? To be so critical of others suggests how special, how different, Clare must have felt himself to be; but the criticism also reveals some anxiety about the poet's relationship both to the literary scene and to authorship itself.

We can turn now to Clare's account of Lamb. Regardless of the generation gap of eighteen years that separated them, and perhaps because of the way Clare felt about other *London* writers he met, the two of them seem to have hit it off. In his ambivalent run through the *London Magazine* circle, which was never published in his lifetime, Clare's sketch of Lamb is conspicuous for its warmth, vitality and length:

...then there is Charles Lamb a long remove from his friend hazlett in ways and manners he is very fond of snuff which seems to sharpen his wit every time he dips his plentiful finger into his large bronze colored box and then he sharpens up his head thro[w]s himself backward in his chair and stammers at a joke or a pun with an inward sort of utterance ere he can give it speech till his tongue becomes a sort of Packmans strop turning it over and over till at last it comes out wetted as keen as a razor and expectation when she knows him wakens into a sort of danger as bad as cutting your throat but he is a good sort of fellow and if he offends it is innoently done who is not acquainted with Elia and who would believe him otherwise as soon as the cloath is drawn the wine and he's become comfortable his talk now doubles and threbles into a combination of repetitions urging the same thing over and over again until at last he—leans off with scarcely 'good night' in his mouth and dissapears leaving his memory like a pleasant ghost hanging about his vacant chair and there is his sister Bridget a good sort of woman tho her kind cautions and tender admonitions are nearly lost upon Charles who like an undermined river bank leans carlessly over his jollity and recieves the gentle lappings of the waves of womans tongue unheedingly till it ebbs and then in the same carless posture sits and recieves it again tho all is lost on Charles she is a good woman and her cautions are very commendable for the new river runs very near his house and the path for a dark night is but very precar[i]ous to make the best of it and he jeanty fellow is not always blind to dangers so I hope the advice of his Sister Bridget will be often taken in time to retire with the cloth and see home by daylight...⁵

Many of the features of this passage are supported by the two other accounts I will discuss in a moment. Clare's Lamb is probably quite familiar to readers of this journal: here he is indulgent in snuff, drink and banter; he stammers, is repetitive and attention-seeking; he is a sharply witty 'good sort of fellow'; his comedy is free of any malice; there is affection from Clare here but also suggestions of danger threatening to engulf Lamb and his audience. The razor metaphor is well extended, all the way to a cut throat; when Lamb leaves the table an oxymoronic 'pleasant ghost' is left behind. There is the threat of danger not just from Lamb's sharpening wit but also from the threat of his absence; there is likewise a threat to him because of his cavalier attitude, his free and easy talk, which Clare warns might serve to undermine Lamb's own foundations, the secure footing of his identity. Lamb is a risk-taker. Somehow the wit might pun himself out of

⁵ *By Himself*, op. cit., pp. 142-43.

existence, suggesting that Clare saw something hollow, even horrifying, in relentless word-games. Words and death, textuality and mortality, all seem somehow linked for Clare. As we shall consider in a moment, Elia indeed died a grand performative textual death in 1823.

What is most interesting in this account of Lamb is that Clare is in some ways reflecting the more experienced essayist's style: he is kind and delicate yet gently satirical; he develops and extends the 'razor' metaphor into the material product of the strop (George Packwood was a famous maker and advertiser of leather razor sharpeners – strops).⁶ The social scene presented smacks of Lamb's delight in company and his generous and gregarious sociability. Clare's sketch of Lamb appears after a less warm one of Hazlitt who is regarded as an unfathomable 'silent picture of severity'.⁷

His evident affection for Lamb finally leads Clare to worry. Lamb is threatened by the waterway that runs in front of his house, meaning that the house in question must be Colebrook Cottage in Islington. The New River Clare refers to is the man-made waterway some forty miles long, built in the early seventeenth century to bring water to the capital.⁸ His anxiety about its winding presence reveals as much about Clare's own acutely-sensitised mortality, as it does about his concern for Lamb. But a notorious event of 1823 might serve to justify Clare's concern for the proximity of the river, as Lamb explained in a letter to Sarah Hazlitt:

Yesterday week George Dyer called upon us, at one o'clock (*bright noon day*) on his way to dine with Mrs. Barbauld at Newington. He sat with Mary about half an hour, and took leave. The maid saw him go out from her kitchen window; but suddenly losing sight of him, ran up in fright to Mary. G. D., instead of keeping the slip that leads to the gate, had deliberately, staff in hand, in broad open day, marched into the New River. He had not his spectacles on...⁹

Lamb embellished this incident for the *London* not only as if he were a witness, but also positioning himself as the hero of the piece, lifting Dyer out bodily. In his Elia essay, *Amicus Redivivus*, Lamb condemns the 'mockery of a river—liquid artifice' and then worries his way through a discussion of mortality: 'I have nothing but water in my head o' nights since this frightful incident',¹⁰ he writes. No poem by Clare appears in this particular issue of the *London*, nor does Clare mention this issue or Lamb's essay in his journal or letters. But the poet almost certainly read the account because at this time Taylor and Hessey were posting him every issue of the magazine. The Lambs had moved into the Islington house in August 1823, after Clare's visit of that year. Dyer fell in the New River in late October or early November 1823, Lamb's essay following hard upon it in December 1823. Clare next visited London in June 1824, for a stay of ten weeks. Therefore it is almost certain that Clare would have known about Dyer turning

⁶ The editors of *By Himself* ignore this reference to Packman / Packwood. See Neil McKendrick, 'George Packwood and the Commercialization of Shaving: The Art of Eighteenth-century Advertising or "The Way to Get Money and Be Happy"', *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, eds. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982), pp. 146–94.

⁷ *By Himself*, op. cit., p. 141.

⁸ See Robert Ward, *London's New River* (West Sussex: Phillimore, 2003). My thanks to the audience of the *Lamb Society* meeting who guided me away from a fall into a turbid river of error at this point.

⁹ Lucas, E. V., ed., *Works of Charles Lamb*, Vol. IV: *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb, 1821–1842*. Letter 334, p. 673, Lamb to Sarah Hazlitt. Lucas suggests 'early November 1823' as a date.

¹⁰ 'Amicus Redivivus', *London Magazine*, December 1823, pp. 613–17. Quotations from p. 615.

'dipper' when he wrote his sketch about the Lambs at Colebrook Cottage, though he makes no mention of it. To further locate the truth of this incident, we might turn to the account of Brian Waller Procter, the *London's* Barry Cornwall, who claims to have been at the Lamb's while Dyer was recovering:

I went upstairs, aghast, and found that the involuntary diver had been placed in bed, and that Miss Lamb had administered brandy and water, as a well established preventive against cold. Dyer, unaccustomed to anything stronger than the 'crystal spring', was sitting upright in the bed, perfectly delirious. His hair had been rubbed up, and stood out like so many needles of iron grey.¹¹

Like Dyer and Procter and so many others, Clare became a welcome guest of the Lambs, as we will see Thomas Hood substantiating below. Visiting the Lambs' cottage must have been an exciting social whirl for Clare. Of the extended *London* coterie, Clare also met De Quincey; Thomas Griffiths Wainwright; Thomas Hood; Henry Cary; John Hamilton Reynolds; the Coleridges, Samuel Taylor and son Hartley; Octavius Gilchrist; William Hilton; Peter De Wint and Allan Cunningham. While Brian Waller Procter says that he met Clare, perhaps significantly, Clare never mentions Procter. Procter's recollection of Clare might stand to typify the more characteristic patronizing feelings of the *London* writers about their new colleague and competitor on the literary scene:

John Clare, a peasant from Northamptonshire, and a better poet than Bloomfield, was one of the visitors [at the *London* dinners]. He was thoroughly rustic; dressed in conspicuously country fashion, and was as simple as a daisy. His delight at the wonders of London formed the staple of his talk.¹²

To those he does mention, Clare is more generous than Procter was to him. Most of the *London* literati come off quite well in Clare's sketches, though the elder Coleridge is condemned for having 'learnt what he intended to say before he came'.¹³ Perhaps we can assume that those he really did not like were the ones he did not write about: he damns by omission and Procter might be a case in point. Nevertheless, in print in the *London*, and at parties in London, Clare was a constituent part of a hub of literary life, and for all his diffidence, the labouring-class Northamptonshire poet must surely have been excited to some degree. If he was nervous at all, he seems to have relaxed particularly quickly with Lamb. This much is clear in Thomas Hood's account of the *London Magazine* scene, written around 1839, in his 'Literary Reminiscences':

How I used to look forward to Elia! and backward for Hazlitt, and all round for Edward Herbert, and how I used to look up to Allan Cunningham! for at that time the *London* had a goodly list of writers—a rare company. It is now defunct, and perhaps no ex-periodical might so appropriately be apostrophised with the Irish funereal question—'Arrah, honey, why did you die?' Had you not an editor, and elegant prose writers, and beautiful poets, and broths of boys for criticism and classics, and wits and humorists.—Elia, Cary, Procter,

¹¹ Barry Cornwall, *Charles Lamb: A Memoir* (London: Edward Moxon & Co., 1866), p. 186.

¹² *Charles Lamb: A Memoir*, op. cit., p. 160.

¹³ *By Himself*, op. cit., p. 144.

Cunningham, Bowring, Barton, Hazlitt, Elton, Hartley Coleridge, Talfourd, Soane, Horace Smith, Reynolds, Poole, Clare, and Thomas Benyon, with a power besides. Hadn't you Lions' Head with Traditional Tales? Hadn't you an Opium Eater, and a Dwarf, and a Giant, and a Learned Lamb, and a Green Man? Had you not a regular Drama, and a Musical Report, and a Report of Agriculture, and an Obituary and a Price Current, and a current price, of only half-a-crown? Arrah, why did you die? Why, somehow the contributors fell away—worst of all, a new editor tried to put the Belles Lettres in Utilitarian envelopes; whereupon, the circulation of the miscellany, like that of poor Le Fevre, got slower, slower, slower,— and slower still—and then stopped for ever! It was a sorry scattering of those old Londoners! Some went out of the country: one (Clare) went into it. Lamb retreated to Colebrook...¹⁴

This is a narrative of the loss of great times. The comic nostalgia is reminiscent of much of the style of the *London*: the in-jokes, the name-dropping, the alliterative playfulness, the aliases and colloquial interjections. There are many names in Hood's account, but only a select few are referred to more than once. Elia is at the head; he is the 'learned Lamb'. Clare is the 'Green Man', and the post-*London Magazine* fates of the two are juxtaposed at the end of this extract – the rural poet contrasted with the urban essayist. In this passage Lamb is the only writer referred to four times, while Clare is referred to thrice. Hood goes on to put these two writers together yet more, and very closely, at Colebrook Cottage. Perhaps this is the same party to which Clare refers, though Edmund Blunden thought Hood was conflating a few different parties¹⁵. Hood's recollection continues:

On the right hand then of the editor sits Elia, of the pleasant smile, and the quick eyes... and a wit as quick as his eyes, and sure, as Hazlitt described, to stammer out the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. Next to him, shining verdantly out from the grave-coloured suits of the literati, like a patch of turnips amidst stubble and fallow, behold our Jack i' the Green—John Clare! In his bright, grass-coloured coat, and yellow waistcoat (there are greenish stalks too, under the table), he looks a very cowslip, and blooms amongst us as Goldsmith must have done in his peach-blossom. No wonder the door-keeper of the Soho Bazaar, seeing that *very countrified* suit, linked arm-in-arm with the editorial sables, made a boggle at admitting them into his repository, having seen, perchance, such a made-up peasant 'playing at playing' at thimble-rig about the Square. No wonder the gentleman's gentleman, in the drab-coat and sealing wax smalls, at W——'s, was for cutting off our Green Man, who was modestly the last in ascending the stairs as an interloper, though he made amends afterwards by waiting almost exclusively on the peasant, perfectly convinced that he was some noble eccentric notable of the Corinthian order, disguised in rustic. Little wonder either, that in wending homewards on the same occasion through the Strand, the peasant and Elia, Sylvanus et Urban, linked comfortably together; there arose the frequent cry of 'Look at Tom and Jerry—there goes

¹⁴ *Thomas Hood and Charles Lamb: the Story of a Friendship. Being The Literary Reminiscences of Thomas Hood*, ed. Walter Jerrold (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), p. 100. Together with Jerrold's editorial commentaries, this contains all of the 'Literary Reminiscences' published in *Hood's Own: or, Laughter from Year to Year* (London: A. H. Baily, 1839).

¹⁵ Edmund Blunden, *Charles Lamb and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 140.

Tom and Jerry!' for truly, Clare in his square-cut green coat, and Lamb in his black, were not a little suggestive of Hawthorn and Logic, in the plates to *Life in London*.

But to return to the table. Elia—much more of house Lamb than of grass Lamb—avowedly caring little or nothing for pastoral; cottons, nevertheless, very kindly to the Northamptonshire poet, and still more to his ale, pledging him again and again as 'Clarissimus,' and 'Princely Clare,' and sometimes so lustily as to make the latter cast an anxious glance into his tankard. By his bright happy look, the Helpstone visitor is inwardly contrasting the unlettered country company of Clod, and Hodge and Podge, with the delights of 'London' society—Elia, and Barry, and Herbert, and Mr Table Talk, *cum multis altis*—*i.e.* a multiplicity of all. But besides the tankard, the two 'drouthie neebors' discuss poetry in general... Anon, the humorist begins to banter the peasant on certain 'Clare-obscurities' in his own verses, originating in a contempt for the rules of Prscian, whereupon the accused, thinking with Burns,

'What ser'es their grammars?
They'd better ta'en up spades and shools,
Or knappin hammers,'

vehemently denounces all philology as nothing but a sort of man-trap for authors, and heartily dals Lindley Murray for 'inventing it!'¹⁶

Clare stands out. The green suit, bought by Taylor, was designed to represent his rural background. For all his witty denigration of Clare in likening him to a 'patch of turnips', Hood is actually excited by Clare's stark oddness, by what Roger Sales calls this 'camp, kitsch creation'.¹⁷ Is it Clare who seems ridiculous or the grave colours of the 'serious' writers around him? Central to this account is the edginess of the relationship between the labourer 'peasant' Clare and the serving classes. The first time Clare travels to London he talks of his identity being severely challenged even by his riding, for the first time, in a coach; he feels that 'some stranger soul had jumpd into my skin'.¹⁸ What must it have been like then for him to be waited on for the very first time by people roughly of his own class, while surrounded by predominantly middle-class Londoners? The 'gentleman's gentleman' makes it awkward for Clare; he resists him at first, then in recompense deferentially pays him a flattering amount of attention. As Clare was greatly troubled at having to be deferential himself, one can only speculate as to how he felt about being treated like a peer. Clare's 'disguise in rustic' does not hide him at all: quite the opposite. Hood is jocularly insensitive here to what it must have been like for Clare, and his account of Lamb and Clare as 'Sylvanus et Urban' is relevant and comically exact. Furthermore the reference to the pair as Tom and Jerry serves to add to that contrast between rustic and city-dweller, a central conceit of Pierce Egan's 1822 *Life in London*. In Egan's comic work, 'Corinthian', Tom is the quintessential man about town, a swell who lives a luxurious and decadent life in London. Tom brings his cousin Jerry up from a country pile in Somerset for his first taste of London. So Lamb is Tom, and Clare is Jerry. Egan writes of Jerry that there 'was no *sophistry* attached to his character; he came to *London* with an impatient ardour to join in the *fun*

¹⁶ *The Literary Reminiscences of Thomas Hood*, op. cit., pp. 111–14.

¹⁷ Roger Sales, *John Clare: A Literary Life*, op. cit., pp. 48–49.

¹⁸ *By Himself*, op. cit., p. 134.

– to enjoy the *lark* – to laugh at the *sprees*, and to be alive in all his RAMBLES'.¹⁹ 'Spree' is a fascinating and fashionable slang word which all of the *London*-ers would have known: it means both a 'lively boisterous frolic', 'noisy enjoyment', a 'prolonged bout of drinking' and a 'rough amusement'. *Life in London* is full of all these kinds of 'sprees'. Implicit in Hood's account then is that for Lamb and Clare, the brief periods of London life spent together were also characterised by 'sprees'. As Hood refers to Cruikshank's beautiful colour plates explicitly, it is worth noting that like Clare the rural Jerry is always in a green coat. The illustrations suggest what a 'spree' in one of these Soho clubs might have been like: classes mix to drink, fight, frolic and fornicate; Tom and Jerry visit all manner of places, and we can imagine that Lamb and Clare might have done so too. It is certain that Clare did enjoy a mixed variety of entertainments in London with other friends. With a mind to the possible publication of his prose, and with his literary reputation a constant preoccupation, Clare is careful not to reveal exactly what sort of London nightspots he visited. But like Lamb, and like Tom and Jerry, he enjoyed a drink.

But the similarity to Tom and Jerry has its limitations; in the frontispiece plate to *Life in London*, the pair are economically secure in their decadent fun, safe in the fat belly of the middle classes, in an illustration showing the rigorously policed social strata of 1820s society. The text is likewise clear that both Tom and Jerry are from very wealthy families. Perhaps Clare and Lamb were arm in arm, were brought together, because unlike Tom and Jerry, they both had to work to pay bills. They would have been situated more towards the rickety base of Cruikshank's illustration than in its corpulent centre. Perhaps I am taking Hood's reference too seriously, when in fact the tone of *Hood's Own*, where the 'Literary Reminiscences' were first published, is relentlessly comic. But the source of many of Hood's jokes about Clare is class. Clare scholars generally resent such comedy about social class when they come from a position of cultural power. But after his first taste of the literary social whirl of London, Clare himself often remarks on the absence of literate and varied company when back in Helpston. Perhaps Hood was right to note that Clare's social context was more usually 'unlettered country company', even if it sounds distasteful to us now. It is possible, indeed common, to have conflicted feelings about the place you were born, and Clare is a classic case in point. Poet with a refined sense of place he certainly is, but he is never blinkered to the limitations of village life, and after a taste of the expansive *sprees* he had in London, the return to Helpston effected a bitter narrowing of opportunity. Writing to John Taylor in 1822, Clare laments:

I wish I livd nearer you at least I wish London w[oud] creep within 20 miles of helpstone
I don't wish helpstone to shift its station I live here among the ignorant like a lost man in
fact like one whom the rest seems careless of having anything to do with—they hardly dare
talk in my company for fear I shoud mention them in my writings & I find more pleasure in
wandering the fields then in musing among my silent neighbours who are insensible to
every thing but toiling & talking of it...²⁰

If Hood is right about Clare's attraction to the diversity of company available in London, he is also spot on about the conflict between Lamb and Clare over grammar. In the one extant letter to

¹⁹ Pierce Egan, *Life in London; or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, Accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian in Their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis* (London: Sherwood, Nelly, and Jones, 1822), p. 127.

²⁰ *Letters of John Clare*, ed. Mark Storey (Oxford, 1985), p. 230.

Clare of August 1822, Lamb takes an authoritative position and is quite didactic about the poet's vernacular rusticisms, though he is enthusiastic about the poems overall. Lamb writes:

In some of your story-telling Ballads the provincial phrases sometimes startle me. I think you are too profuse with them. In poetry slang of every kind is to be avoided. Transplant Arcadia to Helpstone... Now and then a home rusticism is fresh and startling, but where nothing is gained in expression, it is out of tenor. It may make folks smile and stare, but the ungenial coalition of barbarous with refined phrases will prevent you in the end from being so generally tasted, as you deserve to be. Excuse my freedom...²¹

Clare did not altogether heed Lamb's advice, and stuck as much as he could to his vernacular guns. The poet repeatedly attacked what he called the 'the pomposity of grammarians'²² and the infringements of linguistically-centralising standard bearers, dictionary makers and classically-trained grammar-book writers into the rights of free, localised and autodidact expression. Hood provides vital evidence that Clare's politicisation of language is potent and explicit from the very start of his career. The current debate about how Clare would have wanted his work edited has not yet taken heed of how contemporaries like Lamb, Hood and Wainewright understood Clare's position over language. Actually their accounts, exaggerated and comical perhaps, make Clare seem much more resistant to standard language practice and much more confident about his position than some current editors would have him.²³ Hood also shows that Lamb and Clare can be arm in arm even while arguing with each other, which says a lot for them both.

When discussing Lamb and Clare in 1839, Hood's memory may have been a bit patchy. The evidence suggests that he had recourse to the account of Elia's faked death in the *London Magazine* in 1823 to recoup or even steal some of the details he relates. 'Elia is dead!' announced John Taylor's editorial column 'The Lion's Head' in the January 1823 edition of the magazine. Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the magazine's art critic (who eventually was shipped to Tasmania for frauds and poisoning), provided a long fraudulent account of Elia's death under his pseudonym Janus Weathercock. Lamb, writing as 'Phil-Elia' also contributed 'A Character of the Late Elia, by a Friend'. As Nick Groom has shown recently, literary games of pretence and forgery were common, indeed essential, to the Romantic period.²⁴ Two writers Groom does not refer to in much detail, are the infrequent forgers Lamb and Clare. Clare's second sonnet to Lamb, published first in the *British Magazine* in 1830, has the subtitle 'On Reading "John Woodville", A Tragedy';²⁵ if as is likely Clare had access to the original 1802 edition of the play, he would have read the fake 'Fragments of [Robert] Burton' that Lamb included at the back of the little volume. It was Coleridge who had suggested this forgery, as Lamb called it in a letter to

²¹ Letter to John Clare, August 31, 1822 in *Charles Lamb: Selected Prose*, ed. Adam Phillips (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 346–347.

²² *Letters of John Clare*, op. cit., p. 505.

²³ For two contrasting accounts of Clare's thoughts about his own language and the editing of his work and of what editors should do with his complex legacy, see Jonathan Bate, ed., *John Clare: Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), pp. xxx–xxxiv and Eric Robinson, Geoffrey Summerfield and David Powell, eds., *John Clare: The Shepherd's Calendar*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. xxii–xxv. See also my essay, "'if I knew that any other use was made of my desires I should be mad": Competing Narratives of the Politics of John Clare's Language', *The Drouth*, 19 (Spring 2006), pp. 35–41.

²⁴ Nick Groom, *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature* (London: Picador, 2002).

²⁵ *British Magazine*, 1830, Vol. IV, p. 92.

Thomas Manning, though initially the idea was to submit it to a newspaper.²⁶ A slightly different version of Clare's sonnet to Lamb was also published as an 'Original' in 1832 in William Hone's *Year Book*.²⁷ The opening lines of the sonnet to Lamb become fascinating in the light of what Clare did with his own enthusiasm for another seventeenth-century writer. He writes:

Friend Lamb, thou choosest well to love the lore
Of our old bye-gone bards...

In 1825 Clare forged poems by the seventeenth-century poets Andrew Marvell and Henry Wotton and, writing under an assumed name, managed to convince William Hone that the Marvell poem at least was good enough for him to include it in his *Every-day Book*.²⁸ Clearly something Lamb and Clare shared, and maybe that Lamb increased in Clare, was a deep understanding and appreciation of seventeenth-century literature, together with a forger's playfulness. In 'bye-gone bards' Clare might also be referring to Lamb's substantial contributions to Hone's *Every-day Book* of 1827 which took the form of extracts from dramatic texts of the Renaissance and formed a continuation of the project he initiated in 1808 with the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*.²⁹

Drama continued to characterise Lamb's public persona. If we return to Wainwright's essay on the faked death of Elia in 1823, entitled 'A Grave Epistle', we find that in discussing his own development and lucky breaks as a writer, he voices a debt of gratitude to the late Elia, whose praise helped him get published. So even with his tongue in his cheek, Wainwright is full of passion for Lamb: 'Elia', he writes 'the whimsical, the pregnant, the 'abundant joke-giving' Elia, and our Mr. Drama, the real, old, *original* Mr. Drama!'³⁰ Then Wainwright/Weathercock turns to discuss the other celebrated contributors to the *Magazine*, and he begins with Clare:

And first, then, for John Clare... 'Princely Clare,' as Elia would call thee, some three hours after the cloth was drawn—Alas! Good Clare, never again shall thou and he engage in those high combats, those wit-fights! Never shall his companionable draught cause thee an after-look of anxiety into the tankard!—no more shall he, pleasantly-malicious, make thy ears tingle, and thy cheeks glow, with the sound of that perplexing constraint! that conventional gagging-bill!—that Grammar!! till in the bitterness of thy heart thou cursedst Lindley Murray by all the stars.—Not once again shall thy sweetly simple Doric phrase and accent beget the odious *pūn*. Thou mayest imbibe thy ale in peace, and defy Priscian unchecked,—for Priscian's champion is gone!—Elia is gone!—Little didst thou think that evening would be the last, when thou and I, and two or three more ... parted with the

²⁶ Letter to Thomas Manning, March 17, 1800, *Charles Lamb & Elia*, ed. J. E. Morpugo (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993), p. 110.

²⁷ The sonnet is entitled 'TO CHARLES LAMB, ESQ.' and subtitled 'Original'. William Hone, *The Year Book of Daily Recreation and Information, concerning Remarkable Men and Manners, Times and Seasons, Solemnities and Merry-Makings, Antiquities and Novelties on the Plan of the Every-Day Book and Table Book* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1832), entry for November 18, pp. 1375–76.

²⁸ See *Letters of John Clare*, op. cit., p. 341 and p. 417.

²⁹ The 1827 *Every-Day Book* was also published as *The Every-Day Book and Table Book*, 3 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1831). For the opening letter of Lamb to Hone, announcing his intentions, see Vol. 3, 'The Table Book', p. 111.

³⁰ *London Magazine*, Vol. 7, January 1823, p. 46.

humanity-loving Elia beneath the chaste beams of the watery moon, warmed with his hearty cheer—the fragrant steam of his 'great plant,'—his savoury conversation, and the genuine good-nature of his cousin Bridget gilding all. There was something solemn in the manner of our clasping palms,—it was first 'hands round,' then 'hands across'.—That same party shall never meet again!—But pardon, gracious Spirit! that I thus, but parenthetically, memorize thee—yet a few more lines shall flow to thy most embalmed remembrance. Rest then awhile!

One word at parting, John Clare! and if a strange one, as a stranger give it welcome. I have known jovial nights—felt deeply the virtues of the grape and barleycorn—I have co-operated in 'the sweet wicked catches' 'bout the chimes at twelve, yet I say to thee—visit London seldom—shutting close thy ears in the abounding company of empty scoffers,—ever holding it in thy inmost soul, that love and perfect trust, not doubt is the germ of *true* poetry. Thy hand, friend Clare! others may speak thee fairer, but none wish thee soldier welfare than Janus...

The similarities between this account and Hood's lead us to deduce that either they were both at the party when Lamb and Clare argued about grammar, or that the incident was so well-known that it became *London Magazine* folklore, or that Hood re-wrote the account some sixteen years later in 1839 (the mention of Clare's glance into the tankard on being attacked by Lamb's wit; the Roman grammarian Priscian; Lindley's grammar: all are features that make this account so close to Hood's that I think it was pilfered by the later writer). Wainwright concurs with Clare in placing the party at the Lambs', Mary Lamb being mentioned in both. But he cannot resist telling Clare to stay away, to keep himself innocent of the temptations of London life, those sprees and rambles, the 'grape and the barleycorn'. Around the same time, John Taylor was telling Clare to resist the temptations of drink (as were patrons like Lord Radstock and Eliza Emmerson) which Clare found immensely irritating and, of course, patronising. Perhaps Taylor asked Wainwright to lend public weight to his moralising project to curb Clare's habits; or perhaps Wainwright was so shocked at Clare's drinking that he took it upon himself to administer some blunt advice. If Clare liked a drink, Lamb likewise had his fair share of minor addictions. Weathercock's version of his death suggests that Elia was notorious for being quite indulgent in both late-night parties and all manner of stimulants:

His death was somewhat sudden; yet he was not without wormy forebodings. Some of these he expressed, Dear Proprietor! at your hospitable table, the——of last——. I accompanied him home at rather an early hour in the morning, and being benignantly invited to enter, I entered. His smoking materials were ready on the table,—I cannot smoke, and therefore, during the exhaustion of a pipe, I soothed my nerves with a single tumbler of *** and water. He recurred several times to his sensation of approaching death—not gloomily—but as of a retirement from business,—a pleasant journey to a sunnier climate. The serene solemnity of his voice overcame me; the tears poured thick from their well-heads—I tried to rally myself and him:—but my throat swelled—and stopped my words.

His pipe had gone out—he held it to the flame of the candle—but in vain.³¹

³¹ *London Magazine*, Vol. 7, January 1823, p. 52.

The author of this passage is so a-grieved by its relation, that he expires. So Weathercock and Elia die in the same edition. By March's edition of the London Magazine, the editor is delighted to announce that 'Elia is *not* dead! —We thought as much...' ³²

By way of a closure, I will finish with Clare's reaction to the news that Elia was dead. Taylor's partner James Hessey sent Clare the *London Magazine* for January 1823 and in the same parcel he passed on a signed copy of the new edition of the collected *London Magazine* essays of Elia, for which the staged death was designed to generate publicity. As every star posthumously reveals, there is no surer way of increasing your cultural currency than by dying in the public eye. Clare enjoyed the joke, and in his letter to Taylor's partner Hessey, did not engage with Wainewright's advice, but sang the praises of Lamb instead, appropriately, if dreadfully, punning on his 'Elysian' name:

My dear Hessey

Give my hearty thanks to Elia for his valuable present — efeth tis beautifully printed & it deserves to be so—what is all this dying about Elia dead & Weathercock dead if this dying comes in fashion with the contribs: why the magazine must follow — but Elias ghost will perhaps contribute something still — the Elisan fields have plenty for subjects no doubt... ³³

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³² *London Magazine*, Vol. 7, March 1823, 'The Lion's Head', p. 243.

³³ *Letters of John Clare*, op. cit., pp. 255-256.

ROBERT MORRISON HAS CONTRIBUTED THE FOLLOWING RECOLLECTION OF JONATHAN WORDSWORTH

When, as editor of the *Bulletin*, I was reflecting upon who might provide an appropriate tribute to Jonathan Wordsworth, who died last month, I contacted one of his former students, Dr. Robert Morrison, with whom I spoke at some length and with whom, though we had not met, I found I shared remarkably similar recollections about Jonathan, as both an exceptional scholar and teacher. Dr. Morrison's observations follow:

Jonathan Wordsworth's recent death has had a profound effect on many of us. A highly distinguished editor and critic of his great-great-great uncle, William Wordsworth, Jonathan was also an exceptionally gifted scholar of English Romanticism more generally. He was a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, from 1958 until 1980, and then of St. Catherine's College, Oxford, from 1980 until his retirement in 2000. For thirty years he was one of the cornerstones of the Wordsworth Trust, where he served as Chairman and then President. As a teacher, Jonathan inspired a host of younger scholars with his searching knowledge and high standards. He was passionately committed to the legacy of Wordsworth and the discipline of English literature.

Jonathan's first book, *The Music of Humanity* (1969), opens with the kind of pithiness and argumentative edge that characterizes his scholarship: 'On the whole poets are known by the best versions of their works: Wordsworth is almost exclusively known by the worst'. To a considerable extent, over a period of thirty-five years, Jonathan changed that. He had a thorough knowledge of the Dove Cottage manuscript collection, and of what Wordsworth had gained and lost as he expanded and revised his poetry. With M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Hartman, he was an Advisory Editor on the Cornell Wordsworth project, a massive scholarly endeavour in which many of his editorial preferences were put into practice. His own detailed and imaginative editions of 'The Ruined Cottage', 'The Pedlar', and 'The Two-Part Prelude' illustrated, often for the first time, the significance of these poems. All three now play a crucial role in our thinking about the growth of the poet's mind.

Jonathan was also a superb critic of Wordsworth. In his most important book, *The Borders of Vision* (1982), he charted the deep congruencies in the major works. It was not that he came simply to praise. 'None of it convinces, or at least none of it appears necessary in terms of the poetry that has come before', he writes of the closing lines of Book VII of the *Prelude*. He had a penetrating knowledge of Wordsworth's poetry, and he revealed it in all its complicated and moving simplicity. In Book XI of the *Prelude*, the young Wordsworth observes the Woman on the Hill, who is 'the most purely imaginative of Wordsworth's solitaires', as Jonathan puts it, before clinching the point with a distressing alternative and a telling comparison. 'It is unthinkable, for instance, that she should befriend the child, put her pitcher down to give him a drink. Even the Leech-Gatherer, part stone, part sea-beast as he is, may be approached; but not this dream-like presence'.

Jonathan could make Wordsworth's poetry come alive for others because it was so vividly alive for him. I remember telling him about a personal disappointment. I said that I couldn't 'look back over eighteen months and not have something to show for it'. He looked at me with great kindness and said, 'Rob, Michael had to look back over forty years'. He was referring of course to Wordsworth's 'Michael', who worked hard for four decades to unburden his land, only to lose everything in the end. Jonathan's reply put my own situation in perspective. More than

that, it demonstrated to me the ways in which poetry could inform thought, and shape experience, and change lives.

Jonathan devoted much of his career to Wordsworth, but he was intimately familiar with the Romantic age as a whole. His many introductions to the *Woodstock Facsimile Series* of books from the Romantic age – collected in *Ancestral Voices* (1991), *Visionary Gleam* (1993), and *The Bright Work Grows* (1997) – show him moving with great clarity and insight among over one hundred and eighty different books by major, minor, and almost forgotten writers, and invariably coming forward with the telling detail and the memorable phrase. Jonathan chose all the books in the series, and brought us as close to the contemporary reading experience as we are likely to come. He reminded us of the aesthetic pleasure to be derived from format and typography, and gave us a keener awareness of the imaginative impact of individual volumes. To consider the *Woodstock Series* in its entirety is often to reconsider the circumstances, achievements, and breakdowns that define the Romantic movement.

As a tutor, Jonathan was charismatic and demanding. I remember discussing Hazlitt with him. He said that the effect of reading Hazlitt was always to make one wonder, ‘Why can’t I write like that?’ I remember how impressive it was that he was dissatisfied with his own writing. That, I thought, makes a good teacher. That is why he gets the best out of his students. He pushes himself. I should do the same. At one point he was particularly unhappy with my writing, and banned the use of adjectives, though he agreed to make a concession if I needed to use a colour. Like many of his former students, even now I feel I write at some level in dialogue with him. Is this sentence ‘crisp’? (one of his favourite terms). Does it push forward a meaningful idea, or is it ‘intellectually lazy’ (another one of his favourite terms). You wanted always to produce the best you could for him. He made that kind of impression.

Jonathan continued to work until the end of his life, and in recent years had published a Four-Text edition of *The Prelude*, and the fine *New Penguin Book of Romantic Poetry*, which he edited with his wife Jessica. Jonathan died in Oxford on 21 June. He was 73.

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PAMELA WOOF DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS FOR ROBERT WOOF ON 28 MARCH 2006 AT THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Sir Nicholas Pearson, friends, my thanks go to the Trustees of the Wordsworth Trust for their generosity in hosting this evening gathering for Robert. And my thanks to Sandy Nairne, Directory of this Gallery, for welcoming us.

It was on 17 October, five months ago, that I was last here at the National Portrait Gallery. Robert was with me in London at our daughter, Emily's, but clearly that evening to ill to come himself, and taking no denial in his insistence that I come to the Art/AXA ceremony. He had a feeling that the Trust might receive an award. I rang him from this Gallery to give him the good news about the *Paradise Lost* catalogue, to tell him now the crowded room applauded. His death came so soon, on 7 November, and since then some 750 people have written to me. Many of the writers are here tonight in these rooms, far more crowded now with friends than Robert could ever have thought. His thought, as on 17 October, was always for the Trust, on that evening for the catalogue, and not for how he himself was regarded. I now acknowledge for him the warmth that is in those letters and cards. For me they have conjured recollections, brought up half-forgotten facets of Robert, boyhood episodes unknown to me, and evoked such affection for the Robert who held his spectacles together with a paperclip, never tied his shoes, and whose old grey coat and odd hats could not quench the sparkle of his intellect and person. Letters were and still are a comfort; I move them in their three now four baskets from Grasmere to Newcastle and back, and I will slowly move through the re-reading and replying.

Robert's father was a farmer. 'I have been wanting a hut for such a long time and Dad . . . told me to go and look at the pig huts. I went . . . but I did not like them. In the after-noon I went again and chose a small hut from my-self. But there was an awful lot of "buts" and I nearly decided not to have it'. So Robert, at twelve, in his diary. Next day, 'found a dead cat and climbed some quite nice trees. I thought of putting my hoped forthcoming hut there. . . . In the afternoon the hut came . . . cleaned it out with stirrup pump. Dad and Mum came and had a peep at it . . . Ron [elder brother] and Gracie [cousin] pushed hut round to the diary. I put rug in. Every-body is inquisitive; I am not telling them what it is for'. Next day, Good Friday 1944, 'I had my hut moved into the Padcock, a very nice place. Mum came and looked at it. I put some maps up. OK. It is very comfy. In the after-noon I read a book'. Saturday, 'I went to the library. I got three books. Stayed until 10 past 12. Had a bad dinner. In the after-noon I went to my hut and read. It was quite pleasant. I came back and had my tea. Ron wanted to go to the hut. We went'. Easter Monday, 'It was a lovely day. I fixed up curtain in my hut'. Next day 'me and Philip decide to put wallpaper up in hut. Peter came to the window'. Wednesday, 'pushed hut to top of field. Had to push it down again. Quiet day. Philip came at night with wallpaper. . . . I went to the library'. Next morning 'we put wall paper up. In after-noon we went to the Odeon to see 'And the Angels Sing'. It was quite good. Saw it through twice'. Friday, 'Quiet morning. We decided to moddle an aerodrome'. Saturday, 'We prepared a bit of the hut for the modle . . . I read . . . I had a good read'. Robert's 'good reads' were *Biggles in Borneo*, *The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, *William and the Evacuees*, *Biggles – Secret Agent*, *Light over Lundy*, *Bunty of the Flying Squad*, and for such books, he was quick with his critical 'symbols in order of merit': 'very excellent, very good, nearly very good, good, quite good, fairly good, moderate, poor, awful, Rubbish'.

Sixty years on, that hut, wanted for so long, has become the monumental Jerwood Centre, its site difficulties of paddock, dairy top of field then bottom, reflect the long, often discouraging,

planning for the building – its possible site shifting from Restaurant to How Foot, to an underground lecture theatre and finally to the arrow-shaped space where the handsome building now rests. The ‘good reads’ of the hut are the Jerwood’s Romantic Poets and the works of their contemporaries; the hut’s maps and wallpaper are these same books as they line the Reading Room walls, as well the oils, watercolours, drawings and prints that hand in the Museum; the model aerodrome is a 3^o West installation by today’s artists; the curtain is the Jerwood’s high clere-storey windows that protect from direct light, the rug on the hut floor is the luxurious carpet that Robert, despite all arguments of expense, insisted upon, and the boy Peter, coming to the window, indeed everybody ‘inquisitive’, is the interest shown today by scholars, architects, students, visitors alike. Wordsworth has his hut, and Robert saw it finished. And I see now, finding his boyhood diary, that he had known hut essentials all along, yet he had not known that he knew, and nor had I; we had not motive for thus looking back, for pursuing our former selves through diaries, poems, letters. I only know that paths that Robert came upon he always took. There were no roads not taken.

A new father, singing to his first child in 1961, he concluded that she was musical (she was); we went with the baby, Madeleine, to buy a washing machine and a blue garden chair: ‘this’, I wrote, ‘the second day we have shopped all together . . . it is quite exotic to us’. It remained exotic, and rare, to have Robert with me in that way. I loved it that ‘R mended pram in yard, drilled holes in handle’ (1 June 1963), or, again, ‘R putting curtain rails up all afternoon’. Robert’s intellectual concerns then, beyond lectures and seminars, were to get Oxford to publish the Wordsworth *Notebooks* as notebooks, to ensure that James Losh’s diaries were in print, to agree with Routledge on the *Wordsworth Critical Heritage* volume, to edit and to Thompson’s *Wordsworth’s Hawkshead*, to complete a study of Wordsworth, Coleridge and their newspaper contributions. And there was always Grasmere, Robert, if alone, staying at Miss Borwick’s lodging house, No. 1 Lake Terrace, getting to know the manuscripts, and soon acquiring the funding for their conservation.

It was stimulating, active, and not without anxiety. So there was a happiness when I could record that R. spent two hours mending punctures (31 March 1973), ‘painted another wall in dining room afternoon and evening’, or put back into the bird box a tiny blue tit that fell out due to the excitement of our little children watching it so that he rang Hancock Museum for advice, or ‘put up two shelves’ (28 March 1966) – and I had soon to note, ‘Thomas hung on the new shelf that R put in the kitchen and pulled it down’. Or, how he went for me one Christmas Eve (1973) to buy a 10-11 lb. turkey and came back with one of 18½ lbs., pleased that the butcher had said that, since he was such a good sport, he’d let him have the sausage-meat free. Family jaunts were not now for kitchen goods; we went to bookshops in Alnwick, Darlington, Hexham; we wandered about graveyards for inscriptions; we went to country house sales hoping for engravings, books and bookshelves.

Work, we discussed in the study. In the study we read poetry; Robert wrote it, needing that solitude that was the other side of his public energy. Poems became for him a sporadic diary. He helped poets, talking, urging, moving hard committee-men in Durham and Newcastle Universities to find a living wage for Basil Bunting, banished from Persia. He engineered that first literary fellowship. He ‘saw Tom Picard,’ I recorded, ‘and thought about his finances’. He thought also about the finances of the young Tony Harrison and of Jon Silkin, and he always thought to some effect. His generous feeling for poets and artists would flower in Grasmere.

But four children, a miscarriage, a widowed mother, a dog, cats, puppies and kittens, limited our shared working. I would then drive Robert to the outskirts of Newcastle, reluctantly

leave him on the West road at 8:20 a.m. so that he might hitch a lift and get a good day at the small Wordsworth library – heated by a one-bar radiator – in Grasmere. Once, I record, he reached home in the morning, having been all night on the road from London. Later, he would take the train, but never did Robert refuse a commitment, whether to Northern Arts, to the Literature and Drama panels of the Arts Council in London, to English Touring Theatre, of which he was founder and Chairman, to Dove Cottage and its need for structural attention, to the Trust's manuscripts and their need for conservation, to his students at Newcastle, even to the Parents' Association of our children's junior school, an association which he started, and then edited a magazine and organised a poetry competition. He began to be the busy man he became, a busy man who always had time for somebody with a creative idea, or for a creative idea of his own. Yet, where did our time go, we sometimes felt? 'R, all morning and afternoon reading scripts for North East Arts Association Poetry Competition with Sid Chaplin' (12 February 1966); or his getting the 5:30 a.m. train to London, returning on the sleeper to Carlisle in order to be at his morning Romantics lecture in Newcastle. And still somehow he could find time one 25 April to ring me and tell me that he had 'heard a cuckoo today at the University'. Away or at home we always talked, but Robert was much away, and as the children went to school I, too, became busy – a lectureship in the extra-mural department of the University (he in the English department). I was also busy with and alongside Robert, helping in the writing, talking, teaching, furthering the hopes he so passionately held for the learning, poetry, and beauty of Wordsworth's Grasmere. He enjoyed people and what they could tell him, so we had Grasmere picnics with Peter and Mari Bicknell, talking of water-colours and the discovery of the Lake District, Robert soon able to shoot back and forth from literature to the visual arts, quickly becoming a frequent and, it appeared to me, a not unwelcome figure, hungry to borrow, not seldom to buy, in the London, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh galleries, salerooms and print shops. In 1966 we saw civil engineer Professor Peter Isaac's collection of Bulmer printed books and gasped at the magnificent Boydell Shakespeare, now, hopefully, to join our own collection. With visiting poet and critic, William Empson, we found ourselves in a discussion, indeed a demonstration, not of poetry but of chopsticks. In 1988, we ate lettuce dropped onto the floor and picked up from it with Mary Moorman and John, her Bishop husband, while crumbs showered down, tea slopped, as we turned over the fragile pages of the charming *Fox How* boyhood magazines of Matthew Arnold and his siblings, treasures that the Trust now has.

People who had nothing special to give were equally sharers in Robert's attention. The children had long ceased to complain that their father did not take them camping, – though they might be reminded that our single attempt, though only for one night, was not an entire failure: 'we were off about 11:30' I wrote. 'It rained. Emily (nine months old) feverish and always dropping asleep. We had to drive in bits, the van having to stop and cool down; worried about Emily. Tea at Wallington, and then we found a place by a river with a broken gate saying 'Keep Out'. R and Madeleine got the tents up, I holding Emily. Chilly. But the wading in the river a great success – Lawrie and Thomas fell in and they saw fish'. Next day, 'home just in time before the rain' (7 to 9 July 1968).

We came home to activity. And how lucky we were as a family that Robert was able from 1992 to be so fully himself in Grasmere at the Wordsworth Trust. Walks and hills everywhere. And now, poetry, old and new, could be at the heart; so could history (and we forget that Robert went to Oxford with an open scholarship in history); so could landscape and the images of landscape; so could people, both visitors and friends, who through Robert experienced a joy in the imagination, and the new young staff and volunteers whom Robert taught over the

years with profound affection. It had always seemed to me that Robert knew everything, yet he, too, grew in knowledge as he constantly enriched the collection, and at the same time, he, and I with him, had find forward-looking chances to meet new people, confront new thoughts, new words, new art. I both wanted him to do less and I loved him for doing more. I still recorded as rare, 'R stayed at home or the first time for a long time' or that 'we two went by ourselves round the lake', or it might be up Far Easedale or by the river path or, briefly, in August 1980 'two of us only in the house. R and I enjoying each other as of old', as we were to do again in the too short time, alas, of Robert's illness.

Though University, Arts Council and theatre commitments lessened, Robert never did less. In his constant promotion of the Trust, catalogue essays and exhibitions were created one after another, all of them – great thanks, too, to Stephen and Jeff – as beautiful as the striped Buren sails, that astonishingly chased their colours over Grasmere Lake one green and golden afternoon only last July. The essays are scholarly, for Robert's attention was always to detail and his precision in academic matters was equalled by his care, for example, over the choice of chairs for the Jerwood, so recently opened by Seamus Heaney, or his insistence that invitation cards should be of an appropriate weight and quality, the print font exactly right. Nothing was too minor: fearing, that there would not be enough cakes for tea after the July Regatta, he had us buy two dozen boxes of Lyons' Bakewell tarts – two for the price of one – on our way back to Grasmere from a hospital appointment in Newcastle. His energy seemed undiminished, and he continued to send most rich letters to his friends – the Treasures of the Museum and Jerwood, continued to communicate enthusiasm on radio and television, continued even as the wonderful Turner of Ullswater was secured, to strive for future delights for the Trust. Time had to be held back. 'Only a little walk', I would write, 'R thinking about D. C. problems'; or, 'R very low these two days . . . funding . . . working now, I am'. Latterly, twice, Robert quoted to me that terrible line toward the end of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*: '*O lente, lente currite nectis equi!*' – drive slowly, slowly, horses of the night. Yet the deep tiredness, the mortal illness even, gave a shining to his vitality.

In less extreme forms, both that vitality and an exhaustion had always been with him: he would take, if, by rare chance, he came back from his office in time, a fifteen-minute sleep during the 7:00 p.m. television news; he would likewise snatch a short sleep in the first acts of even great plays with great actors, sleep in opera, in films, in cars, in telephone conversations, in poetry readings, in other people's lectures – once in his own – and then he would wake and spring into vibrant life. Never a husband, father or director who would settle into cultivating his garden, Robert, with his wit and jokes, his warm voice and alive eyes, was a quicksilver man who caught life on the wing, and flew high; loving he did his best not to leave us, his family, or the Trust, his larger family, without strength, and we must each respond creatively as he would wish.

Centre for British Romanticism
Dove Cottage, Grasmere

Society Notes and News from Members

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Members of the Council of the Society assembled at Lamb's Cottage in Church Street Edmonton on Sunday 2nd April for another delightful visit and lunch, courtesy of Sandra Knott and George Wilcox. The occasion was the presentation of a portrait in oil of John Lamb, senior, Charles's father. The portrait has been in the Moxon family since Lamb's day and will now hang at Lamb's Cottage by arrangement with the Society.

An engraving after the portrait appears as the frontispiece to E.V. Lucas's *The Life of Charles Lamb*. Seen below with the picture at Lamb's Cottage, an enlarged illustration of which appears on the following page, are the donors of the portrait, John Moxon and Anne Powell, the great, great grandchildren of Edward Moxon and Emma Isola. The Society is most grateful to the family for their generosity.





Portrait in oil of John Lamb, senior, Charles's father, is represented above.

The AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies

This year's AGM was held in Bath over the weekend of the 13/14 May and was jointly hosted by the Jane Austen Society and the Burney Society:

Business began at 10.30 on Saturday morning with the Alliance's AGM. Attendance was somewhat down on last year, with around fifty delegates present, including the usual stalwarts from Dublin. Although members of the host societies were glad to fly the flag for Regency England, your regular CLS delegate was again disappointed at the inadequate representation of Romanticism.

Business was soon completed. In the absence of the ALS Chairman, art historian and NADFAS lecturer Nicholas Reed (Edith Nesbit Society), who was lecturing on Ancient Greece on a Mediterranean cruise ship somewhere, former *Chapter One* editor Kenneth Oultram (Daresbury Lewis Carroll Society) took over his duties. Our hardworking Secretary, Rosemary Culley (Graham Greene Birthplace Trust), announced that with 110 societies affiliated, membership of the ALS was growing steadily. Recent recruits included the Jorge Luis Borges Worldwide Society and the Wyndham Lewis Society. Over the last year the ALS had been called on to intervene in various campaigns, but had been unsuccessful in one high profile cause—the fight led by the Richard Jefferies Society to ward off development proposed by Bath University at Coate water, the lake south of Swindon celebrated by the Wiltshire-born nature-writer. Better news was that Alliance funds were healthy, according to the ALS Treasurer, June Shorland (Jane Austen Society). This news was well received by yours truly and by Linda Curry (John Clare Society), who are presently gathering material for an ambitious new venture—a yearbook which each year will explore one or more literary themes of interest to ALS members. The chosen themes for the 2006/2007 yearbook, due out in autumn, are 'Censorship and Copyright', and this co-editor welcomes contributions of around 1,000-2,000 words on these issues as they have affected authors of the Romantic period. Please contact him on robheal@aol.com

The ALS committee was re-elected *nem con* and formal business ended at noon. In the interval before luncheon delegates were treated to a delightful double-hander in which Maggie Lane, who has written on Austen in Bath, introduced extracts from the letters of Miss Austen and Miss Burney read beautifully by the fragrant Angela Barlow, a dead ringer for the lovely Fanny. Delegates re-assembled at 2.30 pm for a choice of three walks organised around the experiences in Bath of the authors of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Evelina*. It was generally noticed that Bath being hilly the longer and more challenging tour proved less popular among the older and more rotund delegates.

Robin Healey

Hazlitt Society Annual Lecture

The second Hazlitt Society annual lecture will be given this year by its Chairman elect, Duncan Wu, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, on 9 September 2006 at 2.30pm. Admission is free and members of the Charles Lamb Society are especially welcome. Professor Wu is working on a biography of Hazlitt, and will soon publish a collection of 205 hitherto undiscovered writings of the essayist. His theme for the lecture will be 'Hazlitt as Journalist'.

Duncan Wu

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

A Fictionalized Happening

One spring or summer afternoon in the year 1823 Charles Lamb, having arrived at the office late, was hanging about just inside the portico of East India House, waiting until a moment late enough for him to leave early without causing more comment than was usual.

His eye was caught by a boy approaching along Leadenhall Street, an odd child, gazing around him like a child in a dream. The boy looked about eleven or twelve, short, rather effeminate. He wore fine white cord breeches, a green coat with bright buttons, and a white hat. He went up to another boy and asked a question. This second boy made faces and pulled his hair before telling him that this was the India House. Some other boys appeared, drew attention to his rig-out, jostled him and pushed him quite savagely, then one took out a stub of pencil and wrote something on the white hat.

At last the boys rushed on and Charles Lamb, not so large as the largest of them, felt it safe to emerge onto the steps between the great columns. The boy was still there.

‘Is all well, boy?’ asked Charles Lamb.

‘Yes, thank you, sir’, said the boy.

There was a pause.

‘My name is Charles Lamb’, said Charles Lamb, more in a spirit of friendship and identification with the small and easily bullied than from any expectation of being recognized.

The boy did not react at once. Another pause.

‘If you please, sir’, said the boy at last, ‘My name is Charles Dickens.’

* * *

The Charles Dickens side of this story occurred more or less as shared and was written up by him as ‘Gone Astray’ in ‘Household Words’ in August 1853. It is quoted at length in the second chapter of Christopher Hibbert’s *The Making of Charles Dickens*. The young Dickens finished the school term in Chatham at Christmas 1823, then traveled alone by coach to join his family, who had recently moved to Bayham Street, Camden Town. He spent much time exploring the City of London, where an open window in the Mansion House kitchen suggests warmer weather, a working weekday and, by inference, a school holiday. Asking the identity of the East India House, as he writes that he did, suggests that he was not yet well-informed.

We do not know that Charles Lamb met him, of course—but nor do we know that he did not. Moreover, the first *Sketches by Boz* did not appear until 1834. Charles Lamb died that Christmas, long before later numbers of *The Pickwick Papers*, specifically by Charles Dickens, became a wild success, so Charles Lamb would have had no reason to record the incident.

Towards a History of Lamb’s Cottage in Edmonton (and not intended to upset any more recent owners)

I recently acquired a press cutting for an unidentified newspaper annotated 1 November 1954. It states that the cottage in which ‘Charles Lamb, the essayist, died in 1834’ had been sold privately by the estate offices of William Whiteley Ltd. ‘Neither the name of the purchaser nor the price paid is disclosed. When the property was put on the market £4,500 was asked for the freehold’.