

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

Oct 2007

New Series No. 140

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Correcting the Lambs' *Tales*: A Printer's Records

By DUNCAN WU

This year marks the bicentenary of Charles and Mary Lamb's most enduringly popular publication, *Tales from Shakespear*, which was published by M. J. Godwin and company,¹ and has not been out of print since. At one point the *Tales* were to have been published anonymously but William Godwin persuaded Charles to place his name on the title-page. Mary, who wrote most of the stories, did not appear on the title-page for many years. As Charles told Wordsworth, 'I am answerable for Lear, Macbeth, Timon, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, for occasionally a tail piece or correction of grammar, for none of the cuts and all of the spelling. The rest is my Sister's.'² The *Tales* are evidence of their great love of children, something reflected throughout their lives. Posing for Hazlitt's great Venetian senator portrait in John Hazlitt's studio in 1806, Lamb became very attached to Harriet Hazlitt, John Hazlitt's young daughter. She became so fond of him as to approach complete strangers in the streets with the words, 'Mr Lamb is coming to see me!'³

This short note takes the opportunity of the bicentenary of this great work to reveal, for the first time, the records of Richard Taylor. The typesetting was undertaken by Thomas Davison in Whitefriars, as indicated on page 264 of the first edition, but proof corrections were transferred to Taylor and his printers. Taylor is a fascinating figure. The modern-day publishing house of Taylor and Francis takes its name from him, and his 'check-books' are now at the St. Bride Printing Library. They show he was heavily involved in dissenting culture in Georgian and Regency London. Originally from Norwich, Taylor remained a practising Unitarian throughout his life. Apprenticed to fellow-Unitarian Jonas Davis in 1797, he had his own printing business in Shoe Lane in the City by 1803. Though he did not solely accept Unitarian commissions, it is worth noting that he printed, among other things, the sixth edition of the Essex Street Chapel liturgy, as well as works by Thomas Belsham, Amelia Opie, and Theophilus Lindsey. In this, he benefited from a cordial relationship with Joseph Johnson. As this indicated, he would have been known to the Lambs by reputation. In 1806 he printed Hazlitt's *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs*, and he was well known to Godwin, at whose house he was a frequent guest.

The illustrations below reveal two pages from Taylor's records. The first shows his entry for the final set of corrections to the volume immediately prior to its appearance in June 1807, the month in which Lamb sent a copy to Wordsworth. It shows that no less than four printers were involved in corrections, spanning six of the tales.

The second illustration is in some ways more interesting, and gives us specific information about the book which has not hitherto been available. It shows that further corrections were made to the text on 5 and 12 December 1807 by two setters, Barnfield

¹ Though it should be noted that Godwin's name does not appear on the title-page. The book was published by 'Thomas Hodgkins' – the agent under whose name the house of Godwin published its books for some time after it first went into business in 1805.

² *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marris (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marris), ii 256.

³ Marris ii 149.

and Heath. Barnfield was involved in further corrections entered on 9 January 1808. These entries presumably refer to a second printing of the first edition, as a second edition did not appear until 1809.

Both entries are deleted in the check-book, indication that the costs relating them were paid by Godwin.

Shakespear's Tales

Sm. Pica Crown 18^{mo} N^o 1000

A. B. C.	Heath	Barnfield	Correc ^d	Press	At £1.1.0 per sheet
12	12	2, 10	1807 Dec. 5	0 0	Merchant of Venice Wrapper Title to Ditto (proof) 1/3
12	4, 8	12	Dec 12	2 6	0 0 King Lear Wrapper 2.6 Profs 4.0
—	—	36	1808 Jan 9	0 0	Merchant of Venice Title 2 pages . . . 1/3
18	proof standing	10	Jan 9	0 0	King Lear

Tales from Shakespear

At £1.1.0

A. B. C.	David	Went	Proof	Letter	Correc ^d	Profs	June 1807
36							Midsummer Night's Dream
1-11, 12	12	one page got in			7	0 0	Cymbeline
8	17	11, 2			6	0 0	Romeo and Juliet
12, 6	6, 12					0 0	Simon of Athens
	13					0 0	Winter's Tale
						2.6	Wrapper Simon Athos
						4.0	Profs Letter

Teach yourself guides to the literary life, 1817-1825: Coleridge, De Quincey, and Lamb¹

By JAMES VIGUS

WHEN T. E. HULME DEFINED ROMANTICISM as ‘spilt religion’, he meant this disparagingly, but it can instead be taken as a neutral description of a certain strand of English Romanticism. I am thinking of the fact that although many of the canonical Romantics, including Coleridge, Wordsworth and De Quincey, received an education that in theory equipped them for ordination, they did not enter the church, but put their potentially priestly accomplishments to a somewhat different use. Coleridge wrote ‘Lay Sermons’; Wordsworth became ‘Nature’s priest’; De Quincey, more subversively, called himself the only member of the true church of opium. Until Oxford and Cambridge began to reform in the 1820s, and the University of London was established in 1827,² the intellectual barrenness of the established Church meant that the priesthood was no longer a serious option for the majority of intelligent young men; yet Coleridge and his peers still retained a sense of vocation as teachers, in a more or less religious sense. Wordsworth famously declared: ‘Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing’.³ And when Coleridge asked Lamb, ‘Have you ever heard me preach, Charles?’ Lamb replied tellingly: ‘N-n-never heard you d-d-do anything else, C-c-coleridge’.⁴

The gradual cheapening of mechanical printing in the eighteenth century had provided an outlet for the spilt or displaced impulse to give religious instruction. This outlet was to write for the new literary marketplace: ‘literature’ being defined very loosely at that time to mean any form of writing. Phrases such as ‘an author by profession’ first became common in the mid-eighteenth century; so Boswell, for instance, described Johnson as ‘a man whose profession was literature’.⁵ The growth in literacy and book production helped to generate what E. P. Thompson has called the ‘autodidact culture’ in the Romantic period among the middle and working classes, especially, according to Thompson, after around 1816.⁶ Although it was this autodidact culture that sustained the new profession of letters, its anonymity caused writers great anxiety. Whereas a priest or university lecturer addresses a visible and knowable congregation, the professional writer is addressing an audience whose taste and level of knowledge are unknown. Romantic writers were themselves autodidacts

¹ This lecture was given to the Charles Lamb Society on 8 April 2006. I would like to thank Graham Davidson for his helpful comments on a draft of the lecture.

² See Charles De Paolo, ‘Coleridge and the Idea of a University’, *Romanticism Past and Present*, 8:1 (Winter 1984), 17-34.

³ Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, January or February 1808, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt et al., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), I, 170.

⁴ Quoted in Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. xxxv.

⁵ See A. S. Collins, *The Profession of Letters: a study of the relation of author to patron and publisher, and public, 1780-1832* (London: Routledge, 1928), pp. 21-2.

⁶ *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1980; first published 1963), pp. 806, 811. Building on Thompson’s work, Alan Richardson has written of ‘the Romantic cult of autodidacticism’ – a phrase that conveys the religious urgency self-teaching could take on: *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 247.

in the sense that they were learning the rules of their profession ad hoc, with little precedent to guide them.⁷ As many critics have recently explored, a widespread anxiety of reception resulted from the new anonymity of the relationship between writer and reader.⁸ In this lecture, I wish to consider a related but distinct problem: the uncertainty about how the autodidactic writer of literature should study and live. What kind of life was appropriate to the new vocation of teaching through literature?

One medium through which the Romantic literary priesthood could both assert its fitness to teach and at the same time explore its doubts about the way of life suitable for such a teacher was autobiography. Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, and De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* are all narratives that invite comparison with traditional religious autobiography in the mould of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. Each autobiographer describes and interprets the path along which he has travelled to his present authoritative station: his own life functions as a kind of model that justifies his addressing the reader in the first place.⁹ And Coleridge's in particular is a *Biographia Literaria*, a meditation on the *literary* life, what it has been for him, and what it should ideally be. This is particularly significant, in that a later generation of writers, beginning with De Quincey, were to react so strongly to Coleridge's advice about the literary life.

In the *Biographia*, Coleridge sets himself up consciously as a guider of youth. The epigraph to the book is a quotation from Goethe, which concludes: 'He wishes to spare the young those circuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way'.¹⁰ I think it is interesting to compare this ambition with another comment Coleridge made about teaching and learning:

In all processes of the understanding the shortest way will be discovered the last; and this, perhaps, while it constitutes the great advantage of having a teacher to put us on the shortest road at the first, yet sometimes occasions difficulty in the comprehension, inasmuch as the longest way is more near to the existing state of the mind, nearer to what, if left to myself, on starting the thought, I should have thought next. The shortest way gives me the *knowledge* best, but the longest makes me more *knowing*.¹¹

The convoluted sentence-structure of the preceding passage, as can often be the case with Coleridge, actually mimics his thought. As always, he is insisting that a teacher-student relationship should be active rather than passive. The teacher should stimulate the student's mental process, rather than fill his or her mind with pre-digested

⁷ As Marilyn Gaul notes: *English Romanticism: The Human Context* (New York and London: Norton, 1988), p. 15.

⁸ See esp. Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 39-90; Cian Duffy, "'His Canaille of an Audience": Thomas De Quincey and the Revolution in Reading', in *Thomas De Quincey: Essays Upon the Occasion of a New Edition*, ed. Robert M. Maniquis, *Studies in Romanticism*, 44:1 (Spring 2005), 7-22.

⁹ 'This is the doctrine of the true church on the subject of opium: of which church I acknowledge myself to be the only member – the alpha and the omega: but then it is to be recollected that I speak from the ground of a large and profound personal experience'. De Quincey, 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater' (1819), in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. Grevel Lindop et al., 21 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000-2003), II, 45. Henceforth, cited parenthetically in the text under the abbreviation De Q.

¹⁰ *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), I, 3. Henceforth cited parenthetically in the text under the abbreviation *BL*.

¹¹ *Anima Poetae*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1895), p. 173.

knowledge. Although opinions differed as to how well he fulfilled it, Coleridge's didactic aim is fairly clear. He hopes to *show* the young reader the circuitous intellectual paths along which he has travelled, with the aim that the reader can then find out the strait and narrow path for himself. We are invited to think that the digressive manner of the *Biographia* has a pedagogical purpose: that is to say, the book is disorderly because it is designed to provoke the reader into active thought.¹²

One apparently digressive chapter is chapter 11, entitled 'An affectionate exhortation to those who in early life feel themselves disposed to become authors'. The offer of advice to young authors might seem to have little to do with the opinions in religion and politics which were the topic of the preceding chapter. However, Coleridge begins chapter 11 by explaining why it is not in fact digressive: because

an interest in the welfare of those, who at the present time may be in circumstances not dissimilar to my own at first entrance into life, has been the constant accompaniment, and (as it were) the under-song of all my feelings.
(BL I, 223)

This echoes the epigraph I have just quoted, 'He wishes to spare the young those circuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way'. In his letters, Coleridge drew attention to this chapter on the literary life,¹³ and if we think of the *Biographia* as a guide to the literary life which uses Coleridge's own literary life as an exemplar, we might even see it as central to the whole work. But Coleridge presents himself to some extent as a negative exemplar. His advice in chapter 11 is very clearly of the kind, 'do as I say not as I do'. For he announces his advice to 'the youthful literati' unequivocally, in capital letters: 'NEVER PURSUE LITERATURE AS A TRADE' (BL I, 223); in other words, Coleridge's readers should *not* follow the kind of career he followed.

There are, according to Coleridge, two problems with writing for a living. First, literature cannot be made a '*regular* employment' since it depends 'on the will of the moment'. Everyone needs to have some relatively mechanical work which can be continued even when health and genial spirits are lacking. Second, writing for money is an evil. Coleridge explains:

Money, and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labour. The *hope* of increasing them by any given exertion will often prove a stimulant to industry; but the *necessity* of acquiring them will in all works of genius convert the stimulant into a *narcotic*. (BL I, 224)

This is one of the several poignantly personal passages in the chapter. It reflects twenty years of struggle to earn a living by literary labour; while the stimulant-narcotic polarity inevitably recalls Coleridge's opium addiction.

¹² For a stimulating defence of the *Biographia* along these lines, see Kathleen M. Wheeler, *Sources, Process and Methods in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

¹³ See the letter to a Mr. Pryce (14 April 1816): 'There is one chapter of Advice to young men of Genius and Literature in my Literary Life which I should be happy to shew you—as it is bought from my own dear-bought experience—'; and to C. A. Tulk (26 January 1818): 'O how often do I feel the wisdom of the advice which I have myself given in the eleventh Chapter of my Literary Life!': *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956-71), IV, 633, 816.

There is in Coleridge's view a third problem with the literary life, which emerges a few pages later when he contrasts the life of the clergyman. 'The clergyman', says Coleridge,

is with his parishioners and among them; he is neither in the cloistered cell, or in the wilderness, but a neighbour and a family-man, whose education and rank admit him to the mansion of the rich land-holder, while his duties make him the frequent visitor of the farm-house and cottage. (*BL I*, 227)

In other words, whereas the clergyman has direct contact with the people he teaches, the writer of literature feels (as Coleridge later says) 'the anxiety of authorship' in relation to the 'unknown reader' (*BL I*, 233), always uncertain who is – or is not – consuming his work.

Coleridge does say that *any* profession is adequate for a writer to pursue during the day, leaving the evenings free for writing; and he paints a sentimental picture of the domestic bliss of the professional man who returns to his family in the evening and contentedly settles down to study with a quiet conscience. But it is clear that Coleridge is recommending one profession in particular, that of the clergyman. He argues that

the church presents to every man of learning and genius a profession, in which he may cherish a rational hope of being able to unite the widest schemes of literary utility with the strictest performance of professional duties. (*BL I*, 226)

This is surprising given the condition of the Church at that time. Indeed, the fact there that there is more nostalgia for a past way of life than realism in Coleridge's recommendation appears when he lists a number of advantages of the clerical life, only some of which apply to other professions too. First, it is *regular* (and it may even be possible to hear a trace of the old monastic meaning of the word 'regular' as Coleridge uses it here). Second, the clergyman interacts directly with his parishioners. Third, this profession is an essential part of a healthy national economy, since, as Coleridge explains, church property is the only kind of property which continually circulates, passing from family to family according to who happens to take orders. Fourth, it encourages learning, especially Biblical learning, which will help in literary work. Fifth, this profession imposes 'decorum' – and 'decorum' tends to counteract the most frequent 'defects' of 'genius'. This is a curious self-commentary, typical in being at once self-aggrandising and self-abnegating: Coleridge is implicitly confessing that his own career has exhibited a lack of discipline, but suggesting that this lack is simply incidental to genius. Sixth, whereas the literary man has to be intellectually self-sufficient, the clergyman stands within a tradition, with shining examples from the past to guide him. Although Coleridge makes this point briefly, it seems to be one of the most important in his argument. He is implicitly contrasting the *trade* of the literary man with the *tradition* of the clergyman. The literary man has to sell his work, whereas the clergyman hands his down as a gift. Elsewhere, in fact, Coleridge seems to present his own lack of commercial success in writing as a kind of qualification for acting as a teacher: he wants to present himself as a kind of Socrates who freely and self-sacrificingly gives to others the tools for acquiring wisdom, as

opposed to a Sophist who sells pre-packaged arguments.¹⁴ Finally, the most nostalgic of all Coleridge's points in favour of the clergyman: he is likely to be socially more respected and happier than the mere literary man.

Coleridge throws out the names of several eminent figures throughout history who have combined literature with another profession: Cicero, Xenophon, Sir Thomas More, Bacon, Richard Baxter, Erasmus Darwin and William Roscoe (*BL I*, 225), and at the end of the chapter he adds another name to this 'illustrious list': Johann Gottfried Herder. The chapter concludes with a quotation from Herder, warning young scholars not to rush too soon into print. As Coleridge translates part of the quotation:

A person who reads only to print, in all probability reads amiss; and he, who sends away through the pen and the press every thought, the moment it occurs to him, will in a short time have sent all away, and will become a mere journeyman of the printing office, a *compositor*. (*BL I*, 231)

It is significant that Coleridge takes this quotation from Herder's work *Letters Concerning the Study of Theology*, in which the literary work in question is specifically Biblical criticism.¹⁵ There can be little doubt that Coleridge's ideal vision of a young literary man is first and foremost of a Biblical scholar.

Admittedly Coleridge's advice to avoid pursuing literature as a trade is far from unique in this period. We might compare Lamb's playful but hardly less urgent exhortation to his friend Bernard Barton, who in 1823 was contemplating giving up his banking job for a full-time career as a poet:

Oh, you know not, may you never know! the miseries of subsisting by authorship. 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine, but a slavery worse than all slavery to be a bookseller's dependent, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious TASK WORK. [...] Keep to your Bank, and your Bank will keep you. Trust not to the Public, you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy *Personage* cares. I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the Banking-office; what, is there not from six to Eleven P.M. 6 days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts,

¹⁴ See e.g. *The Friend* (1818), ed. Barbara Rooke (London and Princeton: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), I, 436-447.

¹⁵ See *BL I*, 231 n.2 and p. 226 n.1. Coleridge altered the quotation; Herder wrote: 'Am sorgfältigsten, mein Freund, meiden Sie die Autoschaft darüber [i.e. about contentious points in the Bible]. Zu früh oder unmäßig gebraucht, macht sie den Kopf wüßte und das Herz leer, wenn sie auch sonst keine üblen Folgen gäbe. Ein Mensch, der die Bibel nur lieset, um sie zu erläutern, lieset sie wahrscheinlich übel, und wer jeden Gedanken, der ihm aufstößt, durch Feder und Presse versendet, hat sie in kurzer Zeit alle versandt, und wird bald ein bloßer Diener der Druckerey, ein Buchstabensetzer werden. Fliehen Sie's, wie eine Pest, über Religion zu streiten; denn über das, was eigentlich Religion ist, läßt sich nicht streiten.' *Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1790), no. 23 (I, 371). It is curious that Coleridge cites Herder so approvingly here, given that his usual opinion was that 'Herder is a paltry Juggler, a tricky gaudy Sophist, a rain-bow in the Steam of a Dunghill—' (*CN IV*, 5334, 13 March 1826).

quiet thoughts. O the corroding torturing tormenting thoughts, that disturb the Brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance!¹⁶

In this passage Lamb, like Coleridge, is suggesting that a fulltime job allows plenty of time to write, and moreover, freedom to write what one wants. A difference, however, is that Lamb lacks Coleridge's investment in the ideal of the clergyman's life. Also unique to Coleridge is the degree of influence he exerted over the young men whom he befriended. In particular, it was as a disciple of Coleridge that the restless young writer John Sterling took the decision to enter the church.¹⁷ Sterling had complained in Coleridgean style of 'the wretched technicalities of trade literature',¹⁸ but his decision to ordain caused him agonies of conscience, since he seems not to have been fully convinced by the 39 Articles when he signed them. In chapter 11 of the *Biographia*, though, Coleridge warns precisely against *too much* scruple of conscience. He says that it would be happy for a young doubter if he were to meet with an elder contemporary who had once shared the same scruples. The older man would act as a negative exemplar, as someone who had once 'quarrelled with received opinions only to embrace errors' and 'left the high road of honourable exertion, only to deviate into a labyrinth, where [...] he had wandered, till his head was giddy' (*BL I*, 230). This seems to be exactly the role Coleridge saw himself as playing when he became a mentor to Sterling. Coleridge would have believed that, in showing Sterling the wandering paths on which he himself had once lost his intellectual way, he was setting the young man on the proper career path of a clergyman who fills his spare time with literary work.

So there was one type of young man who effectively accepted Coleridge's advice. Some of the key figures in what is usually known as the Broad Church movement, including Sterling and F. D. Maurice, were inspired by Coleridge's later theological writings, and subordinated their literary work to their work within the Church. However, there was at the same time an almost opposite response to Coleridge's ideas, in the essays of Thomas De Quincey. Compared with Sterling, De Quincey was both a closer imitator of and a greater rebel towards Coleridge. De Quincey, that is to say, spills Coleridgean religion in a very different direction from Sterling. As a teenager, De Quincey had viewed the literary life of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Lake District as a high ideal, and he befriended Coleridge, lent him money, and supported his and Wordsworth's literary exertions with the zeal of a disciple.¹⁹ But like most of Coleridge's disciples, he became disenchanted by Coleridge's erratic behaviour, and to some extent disappointed by the literary paradise that life in the Coleridge-Wordsworth circle had promised to be. In 1819, running out of money, he threw himself fully into the life of letters just at the time when Coleridge was renouncing it. His first major work, the autobiography *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, mirrors the *Biographia Literaria* in many respects, and has even been

¹⁶ Lamb to Barton, January 9 1823, in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), VII, 594-5. Cf. E. V. Lucas, *Bernard Barton and his Friends* (London: Hicks, 1893), pp. 84-5.

¹⁷ John Sterling, *Essays and Tales*, ed. Julius Charles Hare, 2 vols. (London: Parker, 1848), I, xlv-xlvi; Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 90, 129, 195.

¹⁸ *Essays and Tales*, I, xxxvi.

¹⁹ He reminisced that 'my admiration for Coleridge (as in, perhaps, a still greater degree, for Wordsworth) was literally in no respect short of a religious feeling' (De Q X, 239).

read as ‘parasitic’ or deconstructive of Coleridge’s work.²⁰ However, as Jonathan Bate has convincingly argued, De Quincey’s *critical* development of Coleridge was made not so much in the *Confessions* as in the series of articles he published in the *London Magazine* in 1823, entitled ‘Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected’.²¹ I now want to consider these ‘Letters to a Young Man’ in some detail.

The ‘Letters to a Young Man’ constitute, much more explicitly than the *Biographia*, a self-help guide to the literary life. De Quincey supposes himself to be addressing a thirty-two year old man who was poorly educated as a child, now feels depressed by his ignorance, and wants to dedicate himself to study (De Q III, 40-41). De Quincey sets up the Letters in direct opposition to chapter 11 of Coleridge’s *Biographia*. He begins with the question the fictional young man is supposed to have asked him, whether or not he should follow Coleridge’s advice to subordinate literary pursuits and take up a profession. De Quincey replies decisively that for someone in the young man’s situation, Coleridge’s advice is ‘as bad as can well be given’ (Ibid, 42). To begin with, De Quincey rightly points out that Coleridge mixes two arguments that are essentially distinct: first, that writing for a living is too precarious; and second, that literary pursuits fail to give ‘due and *regular* excitement to the mind and the spirits’ and therefore need to be supplemented with more mechanical tasks. The latter, emotional problem is in De Quincey’s opinion far more important than the former, financial one, which he avoids discussing through the expedient of making his young man financially self-sufficient. This is clearly a weakness in the case De Quincey is trying to make, and reflects the disastrous lack of financial sense he displayed throughout his career. But he nevertheless advances some sharp arguments on the question he *does* discuss. He frames this question as follows: ‘By what means shall a man best support the activity of his own mind in solitude?’ (ibid, 43). De Quincey declares that no-one could answer this question better than himself, since he has had such great experience of autodidactic literary work, and moreover that this has made him happy (ibid, 43-4).²² Whereas Coleridge uses his own unhappy life as a negative exemplar, then, De Quincey uses his happy life as a positive exemplar.

In what follows, De Quincey thoroughly recommends a life devoted to literature. In doing so, he refines and tries to correct a number of Coleridge’s arguments. He asks the rhetorical question: ‘what is it that I offer as the result of my experience? and how far does it coincide with the doctrine of Mr. Coleridge?’ The first part of his answer is:

Briefly this: I wholly agree with him that literature, in the proper acceptation of the term, as denoting what is otherwise called the *Belles Lettres*, &c. i.e. the

²⁰ Nigel Leask, “‘Murdering One’s Double’: De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and S. T. Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*”, in Peter J. Kitson and Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *Coleridge and the Armoury of the Human Mind: Essays on his Prose Writings* (London, 1991), pp. 78-98 (p. 89).

²¹ Jonathan Bate, ‘The Literature of Power: Coleridge and De Quincey’, in Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (ed.), *Coleridge’s Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), pp. 137-150 (p. 138): henceforth – Bate. ‘Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected’ was first published in five instalments in the *London Magazine*, VII (January 1823, 84-90; February 1823, 189-94; March 1823, 325-35; May 1823, 556, 553-8 (error in pagination)); and VIII (July 1823, 87-95). There is a facsimile reprint of these issues of the *London Magazine* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 1994). However, I quote the ‘Letters’ from De Quincey, *Works* III, 39-97.

²² Referring, ironically, to the period *before* he began writing for money. He later related that around 1821-3, ‘I began to view my unhappy London life – a life of literary toils, odious to my heart – as a permanent state of exile from my Westmoreland home’ (De Q X, 262).

most eminent of the fine arts, and so understood therefore as to exclude all *science* whatsoever, – is not, to use a Greek word, ἀυταρχης – is not self-sufficing: no, not even when the mind is so far advanced that it can bring what have hitherto passed for merely literary or *aesthetic* questions, under the light of philosophic principles: when problems of taste have expanded to problems of human nature. (Ibid, 43-4)

As Jonathan Bate has pointed out, ‘The really important move here is the sharpening of the definition of literature’.²³ Rejecting the common and imprecise usage of the word ‘literature’ to mean books in general, De Quincey introduces the modern notion that ‘literature’ denotes forms of writing which foreground their *aesthetic* qualities. The word ‘aesthetic’, too, was new in English at this time. It was in fact Coleridge who was mainly responsible for establishing the word ‘aesthetic’. He does not use the word in the *Biographia*, but does so in some ‘Literary Correspondence’ that appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine* shortly before De Quincey published his ‘Letters to a Young Man’. There, Coleridge recommends the word ‘aesthetic’ to fill a gap in the language:

[...] to express that coincidence of form, feeling, and intellect, that something, which, confirming the inner and outer senses, becomes a new sense in itself, to be tried by laws of its own, and acknowledging the laws of the understanding so far only as not to contradict them; that faculty which, when possessed in a high degree, the Greeks termed φιλοκαλία, but when spoken of generally, or in kind only, το αισθητικον; [...] there is reason to hope, that the term *aesthetic*, will be brought into common use [...].²⁴

This is much more convoluted than De Quincey’s relatively lucid definition, but nevertheless it may be that De Quincey was thinking directly of this passage. Both Coleridge and De Quincey make an appeal to Greek terms, and both suggest that there exists a higher than normal form of aesthetic sense which De Quincey calls philosophic and Coleridge philokalic (loving the beautiful). In any case, De Quincey is certainly thinking of Coleridge when he distinguishes literature from science. This distinction recalls Coleridge’s definition of poetry in the *Biographia* as ‘that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth’, and which contains a perfect balance between parts and whole (*BL* II, 13). As Bate points out, De Quincey is transferring to *literature* Coleridge’s definition of *poetry*.²⁵ In a later letter, De Quincey reinforces this definition of literature. Again rejecting the popular sense of the word ‘literature’ as books in general, he now suggests that works of literature are best defined as the antithesis of works of knowledge. Here he seems to be using the word ‘knowledge’ synonymously with what he had earlier called ‘science’. A dictionary, for example, is a work of knowledge (or science), whereas *Paradise Lost* is a work of literature. It is in this context that De Quincey first formulates his most famous critical distinction:

²³ Bate, p. 139.

²⁴ ‘Selections from Mr Coleridge’s Literary Correspondence with Friends, and Men of Letters’, *Blackwood’s*, 10 (1821), 243-62; reprinted in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), II, 915-53 (p. 938). According to *OED*, this is the first instance of the word ‘aesthetic’ in the meaning ‘Of or pertaining to the appreciation or criticism of the beautiful’.

²⁵ Bate, p. 140.

‘All, that is literature, seeks to communicate power; all, that is not literature, to communicate knowledge’ (De Q III, 71).²⁶

We might now ask what De Quincey means by ‘power’. To quote him again:

Now, if it be asked what is meant by communicating power, I in my turn would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting, and which had previously lain unawakened, and hardly within the dawn of consciousness – as myriads of modes of feeling are at this moment in every human mind for want of a poet to organize them?²⁷ – I say, when these inert and sleeping forms *are* organized – when these possibilities *are* actualized, is this conscious and living possession of mine *power*, or what is it? When in *King Lear*, the height, and depth, and breadth of human passion is revealed to us – and for the purposes of a sublime antagonism is revealed in the weakness of an old man’s nature, and in one night two worlds of storm are brought face to face – the human world, the world of physical nature – mirrors of each other, semichoral antiphonies, strophe and antistrophe heaving with rival convulsions, and with the double darkness of night and madness, – when I am thus suddenly startled into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me, is this power? or what may I call it? (De Q III, 71)

The key phrase here is at the end of the passage – true literature startles me into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me. This is quite a standard definition of the sublime. So De Quincey associates literature with power, and power with the sublime – and the De Quinceyan sublime is clearly a solitary phenomenon. These are the ideas of the dreamer, the solitary priest of the Church of opium: in this way, De Quincey is breaking away from Coleridge’s explicit advice to live a healthy, social, non-solipsistic life. But in doing so, he is using Coleridge against himself, since the vocabulary of this passage and the example of *Lear* are themselves Coleridgean. In an early lecture on Shakespeare, Coleridge spoke of Shakespeare’s

Imagination or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, & by a sort of *fusion to force many into one*—that which afterward shewed itself in such might & energy in *Lear*, where the deep anguish of a Father spreads the feeling of Ingratitude & Cruelty over the very Elements of Heaven.²⁸

Both Coleridge and De Quincey see Shakespeare in this play as sublimely glancing from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.

Returning now to the above-quoted passage on literature and the aesthetic, De Quincey here concurs with Coleridge that literature, defined as work that appeals to

²⁶ In later works, such as ‘Alexander Pope’ (1848; De Q XVI, 336), ‘De Quincey blurs the sharpness of this formulation’ (Bate, 149), distinguishing instead between ‘the literature of knowledge and the literature of power’. Modern critics tend to quote the latter phrase. As Bate reminds us, however, this is not the form in which the distinction was initially made.

²⁷ Frederick Burwick explores the notion of the *subconscious* intrinsic to De Quinceyan ‘power’ in *Thomas De Quincey: Knowledge and Power* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²⁸ Coleridge, *Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), I, 81.

an aesthetic sense, is not sufficient to occupy the mind all day, every day. He explains the reason for this to be that when reading or composing literature our mind has to make voluntary leaps from point to point: there is, in other words, no necessary progression in a literary work as there is in a mathematical proof (De Q III, 44). This means, just as Coleridge said, that to pursue literature full-time demands more sustained effort of will and good health than anyone can be expected to possess. But De Quincey does not agree with Coleridge's deduction that a person with literary aspirations should therefore subordinate them to a profession. Instead, De Quincey thinks that all that is needed is to balance literary studies with what he calls 'severe' studies, which exercise and invigorate the understanding. It is not true, in De Quincey's opinion, that we sometimes need to take a break from study and go out into the world. This is an illusion generated by the fact that few people manage to cultivate the proper balance of studies. In his words: if the student of literature

(as too often it happens) has not cultivated those studies (mathematics, e.g.) which present such difficulties as will bend to a resolute effort of the mind, and which have the additional recommendation that they are apt to stimulate and irritate the mind to make that effort; he is often thrown by the very cravings of an unsatisfied intellect, and not by passion or inclination, upon some vulgar excitement of business or pleasure, which becomes constantly more necessary to him. (De Q III, 44)

Much of the rest of the 'Letters to a Young Man' consists of recommendations as to how to achieve this kind of balance: De Quincey suggests that his young man should, for example, minimise the learning of languages, because again the rules of languages are arbitrary, and too much arbitrariness tends to soften the mind. Instead, one should learn languages in a strictly utilitarian way, solely for the purpose of reading particular books which would be otherwise inaccessible (ibid, 60-63). De Quincey warns against a kind of madness from which he confesses to have suffered, that of desperately trying to consume all available books. He makes a very modern-sounding diagnosis of the madness of a consumer society:

Under our present enormous accumulation of books, I do affirm, that a miserable distraction of choice [...] must be very generally incident to the times; that the symptoms of it are, in fact, very prevalent; and that one of the chief symptoms is an enormous 'gluttonism'²⁹ for books, and for adding language to language: and in this way it is that literature becomes much more a source of torment than of pleasure. (Ibid, 65)

We can escape this *miserable distraction of choice* by studying logic, in which link follows link with an inevitability which both consoles the mind and strengthens it with steadily expanding truth.³⁰

De Quincey cites Leibniz as an example of someone who did achieve the requisite polymathic balance of studies. He offers as a counter-example of someone who failed in this respect 'an eminent living Englishman', whom he does not name directly. This Englishman is, says De Quincey, 'almost a voluptuary in his studies' (ibid, 45),

²⁹ This is the only instance of the word 'gluttonism' recorded by *OED*.

³⁰ No commentary on this aspect of De Quincey has yet surpassed J. Hillis Miller's essay 'Thomas De Quincey', in *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1975; first edition 1963), pp. 17-80, esp. pp. 49-52.

always seeking pleasure, and reading randomly rather than following any plan. Lacking any real intellectual exertion, he inevitably suffers from ennui and a persecution complex, becoming bitter and acrimonious against his peers (ibid, 46). This is the sad consequence of failing to integrate mathematics and logic into his studies. But who is this Englishman? De Quincey hints the answer by quoting from him in a footnote. The quotation is from the *Biographia*, so the Englishman can only be Coleridge.³¹ There is a double sting in De Quincey's portrayal of Coleridge's bitterness, since in the *Biographia* Coleridge argues precisely that men of genius are *never irritable* (*BL I*, 30-47).

Having made this covert snipe, De Quincey now turns to attack Coleridge's advice in the *Biographia* directly. With sarcasm, he ridicules Coleridge's hopelessly sentimental evocation of the domestic bliss enjoyed by the man who goes out to work during the day, and returns to his family and his books in the evening. How is this man to find time for conversation with his wife? Coleridge imagines a pleasant condition of 'social silence' prevailing in the family home, so that the husband can sit with the wife while he reads and writes; but Coleridge is forgetting that a wife usually has children, and children are noisy. 'What's to be done then? Here's a worshipful audience for a philosopher; here's a promising company for "undisturbing voices" and "social silence"' (ibid, 47-8). Also, De Quincey asks why Coleridge thinks the husband and wife should be any less likely to quarrel if the husband works away from home during the day? This was a question especially likely to provoke Coleridge, whose own marital unhappiness was notorious.

Sarcastic though these criticisms of Coleridge are, De Quincey believes that a very important point is at stake: 'that literature must decay, unless we have a class *wholly* dedicated to that service, not pursuing it as an amusement only with wearied and pre-occupied minds' (ibid, 48). In the strongest possible terms, De Quincey refuses Coleridge's ideal of making literary pursuits a mere appendage to the job of a clergyman. He concludes the first Letter by issuing a provocative challenge to Coleridge 'to sally out of his hiding-place in a philosophic passion and attack me with the same freedom', predicting that such a contest would make for an amusing public spectacle. As De Quincey says, 'I conceive that two transcendentalists, who are also two ———s, can hardly ever before have stripped in any ring'. Since the article was advertised as 'by the author of the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater', we are undoubtedly expected to read 'opium eaters' in the blank space. According to Bate, the point of De Quincey's challenge was that Coleridge 'was perceived as having gone to ground in Highgate – he had published nothing since the 1818 *Friend*'.³² This is not quite true, though – just eighteen months previously the article in Blackwood's appeared (from which I have already quoted), 'Selection from Mr Coleridge's Literary Correspondence'.³³ I suspect De Quincey is attacking this correspondence at the same time as he is attacking the *Biographia*, and this is all the more likely as there was a violent rivalry between the *London Magazine* for which De Quincey wrote and *Blackwood's* for which Coleridge wrote.³⁴ Coleridge is at his worst in this article – he

³¹ As Bate notes, p. 141.

³² Bate, p. 141.

³³ He also published a peculiar article entitled 'The *Historie and Gestes* of Maxilian' in *Blackwood's*, 11 (1822), 3-13; reprinted in Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments II*, 963-985.

³⁴ See Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments II*, 917 n.1.

offers complicated but truncated³⁵ definitions of philosophical terms, and never actually gets round to discussing his stated topic at all. When De Quincey says, ‘I wish [Coleridge] would leave transcendentalism to me and other young men’ (ibid, 49), he might well be thinking in particular of the confusion of ‘Mr Coleridge’s Literary Correspondence’. Also, when he torments Coleridge for his ‘indisposition to mathematics’ (ibid, 95), he could have been prompted by Coleridge’s own plaintive confession: ‘often, and bitterly, do I regret the stupid prejudice that made me neglect my mathematical studies, at Jesus [College, Cambridge]’.³⁶ And finally, whereas Coleridge undertakes a laborious defence of the need for technical terms in philosophy,³⁷ De Quincey makes a similar defence in a far more lively way (ibid, 91-94).

De Quincey continues his baiting of Coleridge at various points in the ‘Letters to a Young Man’ – for example he accuses him of ‘Delphic obscurity’ in his attempts to explain the philosophy of Kant to English readers (ibid, 95). In a separate essay, De Quincey even subverts Coleridge’s appeal to Herder.³⁸ This essay is called ‘Death of a German Great Man’, and although it is not formally part of the ‘Letters to a Young Man’ series, it appeared in the midst of these, and actually continues the theme of the literary life quite aptly. Whereas Coleridge had implicitly contrasted himself with Herder, De Quincey sees great similarities between the two writers. He says that

Upon the whole, the best notion I can give of Herder to the English reader, is to say that he is the German Coleridge; having the same all-grasping erudition, the same spirit of universal research, the same occasional superficiality and inaccuracy, the same indeterminateness of object, the same obscure and fanciful mysticism (*schwärmerey*), the same plethoric fulness of thought, the same fine sense of the beautiful – and (I think) the same incapacity for dealing with simple and austere grandeur. (Ibid, 115)

In this rather double-edged comparison of Herder with Coleridge,³⁹ readers of the ‘Letters to a Young Man’ would have recognised a familiar topic: De Quincey is yet again overturning chapter 11 of the *Biographia*. Coleridge had idealised Herder’s life as perfectly combining professional and literary activities, but De Quincey produces evidence to show that Herder suffered from just the same sort of problems as Coleridge did. De Quincey notes that Herder relied heavily on an ‘angelic wife’, but that even she could not cure his fatal Coleridgean shortcoming: a ‘sensitive delicacy’ of the nervous system. Herder’s delicate nerves resulted in ‘[t]hat worst and most widely spread of all diseases, weariness of daily life’ (ibid, 117). De Quincey describes how ‘He fought with this soul-consuming evil, he wrestled with it as a maniac’. The only thing that could stir him out of this miserable state was the great

³⁵ ‘But I forget myself. My pledge and purpose was to help you over the threshold into the outer court; and here I stand, spelling the dim characters inwoven in the veil of Isis, in the recesses of the temple’, *Shorter Works and Fragments* II, 936.

³⁶ *Shorter Works and Fragments* II, 940.

³⁷ *Shorter Works and Fragments* II, 919-23.

³⁸ De Quincey quotes some otherwise uncollected Coleridgean marginalia to both Kant and Herder. For transcriptions and commentary see Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, *Revisionary Gleam: De Quincey, Coleridge, and the High Romantic Argument* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 269-281. I am indebted to Roberts’s larger argument that, although critics have traditionally treated Wordsworth as the major influence on De Quincey, Coleridge was at least equally so.

³⁹ Joachim Michael Moore, *Herder und Coleridge* (Bern: Bitterli, 1951) quotes De Quincey (p. 6) and pursues the comparison, especially between the literary critical ideas of Coleridge and Herder.

library at Dresden. But when he returned home, he ‘soon began to droop again’ (ibid, 118). De Quincey’s subtext in describing Herder’s problems is not only that Coleridge was wrong to regard Herder’s life as a model for an aspiring young author in the first place, but also that Herder’s suffering did not stem from his literary work. On the contrary, when he shut himself up in the library for a long period, his mind was at rest. This point becomes explicit when De Quincey remarks in a footnote that Coleridge failed to appreciate how frustrated Herder was that professional business drastically restricted the amount of time he was able to spend on literature. De Quincey comments that from the memoirs of Herder’s wife:

It may be judged [...] how straitened in point of time Herder must have found himself: so delusive is the impression which Mr. Coleridge has sought to convey in his *Biographia Literaria*, that Herder had found his various duties, as a man of business, reconcileable with his higher duties as an intellectual being, working for his own age and posterity! Indeed, of no man who ever lived is this more emphatically untrue. (ibid, 120)

I think the vehemence of De Quincey’s language here reflects the strong investment he had in denying Coleridge’s claim that it is always bad to pursue a purely literary life. De Quincey would have felt the need to throw out this claim for two reasons: first because it directly opposed the way of life he had by now firmly chosen; and second because this claim was made by Coleridge, the very same Coleridge who had not long ago contributed to inspire De Quincey’s literary life.

So, I have been suggesting that Coleridge did indeed have the kind of strong influence over young writers that he hoped for when he said he wanted to spare them the winding paths on which he himself had lost his way. But Coleridge’s influence split into two different directions. There were some writers, such as Sterling, who followed Coleridge’s *advice* – they entered the church, and subordinated their literary pursuits to their religious vocation. On the other hand, De Quincey followed Coleridge’s *example* in defiance of his advice, and both recommended and pursued a life entirely dedicated to literature. Whereas Sterling was, so to speak, a religious Coleridgean, De Quincey in his ‘Letters to a Young Man’ appears to separate literature, albeit defined in Coleridgean terms, entirely from religion. It is notable that of all the languages he recommends studying, he does not suggest Hebrew, and completely omits to mention Biblical studies, even when discussing Herder. Another contrast is that whereas the clergyman-writer is sociable, actively teaching his parishioners and readers, the literary man imagined by De Quincey is solitary, pursuing what he calls ‘power’ – a kind of sublime which can only truly be attained in solitary silence. But I would question whether the dichotomy between religious and secular responses to Coleridge’s ideas is as firm as that implies. At the beginning of this paper I mentioned T. E. Hulme’s definition of Romanticism as ‘spilt religion’, and the fact that De Quincey’s *Confessions* no less than Coleridge’s *Biographia* and Wordsworth’s *Prelude* resembles a religious conversion narrative. And is there not something monastic in De Quincey’s vision of a ‘class’ of autodidacts devoted entirely to literature, spending all their time alone in their study, regularly swapping from mathematics to poetry in order to cultivate the maximum possible sublime ‘power’?⁴⁰ Certainly, by the twentieth century, De Quincey’s response to Coleridge in

⁴⁰ Horace Ainsworth Eaton felt that although in terms of his formal professions ‘De Quincey was conservative in religion as in politics, clinging with affection and conviction to the established church’, he showed a strong tendency to mysticism: *Thomas De Quincey: A Biography* (London: Oxford

terms of literature had triumphed over the Broad Church response to him in terms of religion. In a sense, De Quincey's vision fulfilled itself in the form of university academics devoted to literature in exactly the way he defined it, as first and foremost an aesthetic pursuit. But like De Quincey himself, the modern discipline of English Literature has always continued to struggle with the religious inheritance of foundational figures such as Coleridge. De Quincey is currently unfashionable among literary academics, and yet he remains hardly less vital a figure than Coleridge for thinking about the foundations of English Literature as a discipline.

There is plenty more to say about autodidacticism and the idea of the literary in Coleridge and De Quincey, but I would like to conclude with something slightly lighter. Just as De Quincey satirised Coleridge's pronouncements on the literary life, so De Quincey's 'Letters to a Young Man' were satirised in their turn in a wonderful contribution of Lamb's to the *London Magazine*, entitled 'Letter to an Old Gentleman whose Education has been Neglected'. Lamb's 'Old Gentleman' is sixty-three, double the age of De Quincey's young man. Lamb's essay wittily parodies De Quincey's portentous manner and his long, Coleridgean sentences. He supposes the old gentleman to have asked whether someone of his advanced years, knowing no more than the English alphabet, can possibly aspire to become 'a *learned man*'. De Quincey's young man had wondered whether to try entering university, but De Quincey had advised against it on the ground that a thirty-two year old would not gain much from studying alongside teenagers. In Lamb's parody, the old gentleman is thinking of enrolling in an infant school. Lamb writes:

I can scarcely approve of [your] intention [...] of entering yourself at a common seminary, and working your way up from the lower to the higher forms with the children. I see more to admire in the modesty, than in the expediency, of such a resolution. I own I cannot reconcile myself to the spectacle of a gentleman at your time of life seated, as must be your case at first, below a Tyro of four or five—for at that early age the rudiments of education usually commence in this country. I doubt whether more might not be lost in the point of fitness, than would be gained in the advantages which you propose to yourself by this scheme.

You say, you stand in need of emulation; that this incitement is no where to be had but at a public school; that you should be more sensible of your progress by comparing it with the daily progress of those around you. But have you considered the nature of emulation; and how it is sustained at those tender years, which you would have to come in competition with? I am afraid you are dreaming of academic prizes and distinctions. Alas! in the university, for which you are preparing, the highest medal would be a silver penny, and you must graduate in nuts and oranges.⁴¹

And so Lamb goes on, asking whether the old gentleman would not do better to attempt solitary study under an enlightened teacher, than to submit to the common discipline of school. 'Could you bear to be corrected for your faults? Or how would it look to see you put to stand, as must be the case sometimes, in a corner?'⁴²

University Press, 1936), pp. 446, 448. Grevel Lindop gives a fine account of the influence of his mother's Evangelicalism throughout De Quincey's life in 'Pursuing the Throne of God: De Quincey and the Evangelical Revival', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n. s. 52 (October 1985), 97-111.

⁴¹ Lamb, *Works*, I, 215.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

Apparently De Quincey saw the joke, as he agreed beforehand to Lamb's publishing the letter.⁴³ And maybe he even changed his mind in time, since when he reached the age of Lamb's old gentleman, he wrote an appreciation of Lamb in which he said that the latter's regular hours as a clerk were beneficial to his literary work, and that hardly anyone can support intellectual toil for more than six hours per day in any case (De Q XVI, 376). Whereas all the other writers I have discussed speculated on the possibility of combining a profession with literary work, Lamb actually did so.

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⁴³ According to Lamb's letter to Sara Hutchinson, January 1825, cited in Lamb, *Works* I, 474. In 'Recollections of Charles Lamb' (1838), De Quincey writes that he got to know Lamb 'thoroughly' in 1821 and 1823, and that the Lambs' friendship was a great support at a time of depression (De Q X, 261, 266).

Coleridge and Charles Augustus Tulk

By RICHARD LINES

The Meeting at Littlehampton

COLERIDGE WAS NOTORIOUS FOR FALLING OUT WITH CLOSE FRIENDS. Wordsworth and Southey were the most famous of these. Yet there were a few friends, Charles Lamb being the best known and the best loved, who, as Professor H. J. Jackson put it in a recent essay,¹ ‘survived the flames’ and remained his admiring and admired, and faithful, friends. Charles Augustus Tulk was one of these in Coleridge’s later years. Coleridge met Tulk in September 1817 in Littlehampton where both were staying. Littlehampton, a small Sussex harbour town and seaside resort to the west of the more fashionable Brighton and Worthing and not far from the fishing village of Felpham where William Blake had spent three years at the beginning of the century, was within easy reach of London. The Gillmans took Coleridge there in September that year to lodgings on the promenade and he remained until the end of November, working on his introduction to the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*.² Charles Augustus Tulk with his wife Susanna and their children were also in Littlehampton that September following the birth of their eighth child, Marmaduke, earlier that year.

Tulk was in the habit of going to the library every day to read the newspaper. One day he found that the newspaper he wanted to look at was being read by a gentleman sitting at a table in the middle of the room. Having finished reading, the gentleman passed it to Tulk and gradually the two of them fell into a conversation that was so interesting that several others gathered in a circle to listen to them. Eventually Tulk got up and proposed to his companion that they should continue their conversation in the open air walking up and down the Steyne. After some time the conversation came to a close and the gentleman, having said how much the talk had interested him, asked Tulk for his name. Tulk handed him his card and added, ‘I need not ask your name, for you must be either Coleridge, or –’ and he pointed at the floor.³ Coleridge apparently returned to his lodgings and sat down to write a voluminous letter to Tulk expounding the philosophy which had attracted his attention that afternoon. He explained in a letter from Highgate a few months later:

It was, in fact, written for the greater part on the evening before you left Littlehampton, and intended to have been delivered to you *there*; but I was an hour too late, and (however flattered by your kind attention in sending me your Card of Address) I did not hold myself justified in troubling you with such a packet by the General Post, and found no opportunity afterwards of transmitting it by a less expensive Channel.⁴

¹ H. J. Jackson, “‘Swedenborg’s *Meaning* is the truth”: Coleridge, Tulk, and Swedenborg’, *In Search of the Absolute: Essays on Swedenborg and Literature*, ed. Stephen McNeilly (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2004), 1, 11.

² Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Flamingo, 1999), 458.

³ This account is taken from the recollections of Tulk’s youngest daughter Sophia, born in 1823: ‘Sophia Cottrell’s Recollections’, ed. Scott Lewis, *Browning Society Notes*, Vol. 24 (London, 1997), 17, 28.

⁴ Coleridge, *Letters*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71), IV, 787. This letter was written more than twenty years before the introduction of the penny post by Sir Rowland Hill.

Thus began a close friendship which was to affect both men. Tulk was to introduce Coleridge to a number of works by the eighteenth century scientist, philosopher and seer, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Coleridge's comments and marginalia on Swedenborg and his philosophy are of great interest. He was evidently charmed by the younger man, Tulk being thirty-one when they met and Coleridge nearly forty-five. 'If I had met a friend and brother in the Desert of Arabia', he wrote in his first letter, 'I could scarcely have been more delighted than I was in finding a fellow-labourer and in the only Country in which a man dare exercise his *reason* without being thought to have lost his Wits, & be out of his senses'.⁵ Tulk in turn was deeply influenced by his new friend. Their exchange of views, carried on in conversation and letters over a number of years, probably influenced Tulk in the development of an idiosyncratic 'Idealist' interpretation of Swedenborg's religious writings which led to a serious falling out with his colleagues in the Swedenborg Society, of which he was a founder member and chairman for many years and, eventually, to his exclusion from the Society's committee for a number of years.

Tulk's Background and Early Life

Who was this man with whom Coleridge was so taken?⁶ Charles Augustus Tulk was born in Richmond, Surrey on 2nd June 1786. He came of Dorset yeoman stock, but his grandfather, James Stuart Tulk, became a London merchant and a freeman of the Coopers' Company. He died at Tottenham, Middlesex in 1775 and was buried in the church of St Martin's-in-the-Fields. Tulk's father, John Augustus Tulk, was James's sixth child, but his eldest surviving son. John Augustus's oldest brother, James Stewart Tulk, had married Charlotte Yonge, daughter of Sir William Yonge, Bt, MP for Tiverton and granddaughter of the last Earl of Leicester. They died childless and John Augustus inherited from them property in Leicester Square which brought him great wealth. John Augustus was born in 1756. A member of the Inner Temple, he married Elizabeth Cary in 1781 and they had ten children, of whom Charles Augustus was the eldest surviving son.

John Augustus, a man of independent fortune even before the accession of the Leicester Square properties, was one of a group of men who in the early 1780s gathered at the house of Robert Hindmarsh, Printer Extraordinary to the Prince of Wales, and then at the London Coffee House on Ludgate Hill, to read the religious works of Swedenborg. Swedenborg had died in London in 1772 and a decade or so later there was a group, established in the Middle Temple in 1784 as the 'Theosophical Society instituted for the Purpose of promoting the New Jerusalem, by translating, printing, and publishing the Theological Writings of the Honourable Emanuel Swedenborg' (all written in Latin), which numbered among its members the sculptor John Flaxman and the musician and composer F. H. Barthélemon. This body was a publishing concern, a predecessor of the Swedenborg Society, and not a religious denomination, although some of its members, including John Augustus Tulk, did go on to found the New Jerusalem Church in Great East Cheap in the City of London in 1787. The fledgling church held its first conference in April 1789 and this was attended by William Blake and his wife Catherine, although Blake was to criticise Swedenborg savagely in his prose work, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), a work which should be seen at

⁵ Coleridge, *Letters*, IV, 775.

⁶ For a general account of Tulk's life and career see Richard Lines, 'Charles Augustus Tulk: Swedenborgian Extraordinary' in *Arcana*, Vol. III, No.4 (Charleston, S. C., 1997), 5-32.

least in part as a satire on Swedenborg (and perhaps reflects Blake's experience of a sectarian Swedenborgian church) and does not necessarily represent his final view of Swedenborg.

Despite his involvement in the setting up of a dissenting congregation, John Augustus Tulk seems to have given his eldest son a conventional education. He was sent to Westminster, where he was elected a King's Scholar in 1801 and became captain of the school. He was also an Abbey chorister, being noted for the excellence of his voice. From Westminster he proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge as a scholar. On leaving the university he became a member of Lincoln's Inn, but never practised at the Bar since 'his father's large fortune rendered his application to a profession unnecessary from a pecuniary point of view', as his friend and biographer Mary Catherine Hume puts it.⁷ In September 1807, exactly ten years before his meeting with Coleridge, Tulk married Susanna Hart, the twenty-year old only child of Marmaduke Hart, a London merchant, at Broadwater Church, Worthing. The marriage was an exceptionally happy one and produced twelve children, eight of whom were to survive into adult life and seven of them to survive their father. Coleridge was clearly charmed by Susanna. He described her, by then in her early thirties and the mother of a large family, as 'the *loveliest* woman in countenance, manners and nature that I have ever seen'.⁸ Susanna may have been a model for her husband's good friend and fellow-Swedenborgian John Flaxman for some of his sculptures (notably for the monument to Harriet Susan, Viscountess Fitzharris in Christchurch Priory).⁹ A number of Flaxman drawings of the Tulk family are extant, including ones of Charles and Susanna done in 1816 which were given recently to University College, London by Tulk's descendants. Susanna died in October 1824 in Cuckfield, Sussex while their youngest child Sophia was still an infant. She was buried in the Foundling Church in London. Tulk, under forty when his wife died and with a large young family to support, never remarried, believing, in accordance with Swedenborg's teaching in a work called *Conjugal Love* (1768), that he and Susanna would be reunited in the spiritual world.

The Swedenborg Society

In the early years of his marriage, Tulk began to busy himself with the affairs of a new society, The Society for Printing and Publishing the Writings of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg, established in London, at Essex Street off The Strand, on 26th February 1810. Its name was later shortened to The Swedenborg Society and it is known by that name to this day. John Augustus Tulk was the Chairman of the new society in its first year and Charles was a member of the committee. He became Chairman for the first time in 1814 and thereafter held that office for most years until 1826. From its inception the Society was never a sectarian organisation and its members included those who were members of the New Jerusalem, or New Church and those who were not. Among the former were ordained New Church ministers, including Samuel Noble whose Appeal (a defence of Swedenborg's religious doctrines) was to be commented on by Coleridge many years later. But the Society also included 'non-separatists',

⁷ Mary Catherine Hume, *A Brief Sketch of the Life of C. A. Tulk*, 2nd ed. (London: James Speirs, 1890), 8.

⁸ Coleridge, *Letters*, IV, 913.

⁹ David Irwin, *John Flaxman 1755-1826: Sculptor, Illustrator, Designer* (London: Studio Vista/Christie's, 1979), 145. Irwin notes similarities both in mood and general arrangement of the grouping of mother and children between the Fitzharris Monument and drawings Flaxman made of Susanna Tulk and some of her children in the same year (1816-17).

notably the Revd John Clowes, a Church of England clergyman in Manchester, and John Flaxman, already famous and elected that year as the first Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy. Flaxman, who was to be a life-long member of the Society and a committee member in 1811, 1815 and 1817, had been a member of a New Church congregation for a short while, but withdrew because of what he considered to be sectarian squabbling and thereafter worshipped in the established church. Nevertheless, he remained a convinced Swedenborgian and when he died in 1826 an appreciation published in 'The Times', believed to have been written by Tulk, stated that, 'His religious sentiments had for many years been framed entirely on the doctrines of Swedenborg'.¹⁰

The Revd John Clowes

Charles Tulk was particularly close to John Clowes. Born in 1743, like Tulk he was a Trinity man and became a Fellow of the College in 1766. In 1769 he became Rector of the newly-consecrated St John's Church in his native Manchester and remained Rector until his death at the age of eighty-seven in 1831. Much influenced by the works of William Law in his younger days, he first read Swedenborg's *Vera Christiana Religio* (i.e., *The True Christian Religion*, his last published work) in 1773 and immediately became a devotee of the new Christian teachings he found there. He went on to translate that work into English and also the immense *Arcana Caelestia* and *Conjugal Love*, a record that has never been surpassed by later translators. But Clowes never left the Church of England and preferred to preach the new doctrines from his pulpit in St John's. He was very much opposed to the establishment of a separate New Jerusalem Church in the late 1780s, but his arguments were ignored. Nevertheless, he co-operated fully with the 'separatists' both in the Swedenborg Society and in the 'Hawkstone Meeting', an annual gathering of sectarian and non-sectarian receivers of Swedenborg's teachings held every July from 1806 in an inn standing at the entrance to the picturesque Hawkstone Park in Shropshire. Tulk was an active participant in the Hawkstone Meeting, taking the chair for the first time in 1814. Clowes was very much a mentor to his much younger friend in those days and they agreed closely on doctrine. In later years, as Tulk began (perhaps under Coleridge's influence) to develop his 'Idealist' approach to Swedenborg, there were sharp differences between the two men, although they remained close friends and corresponded with one another until the end of Clowes's life.

Despite his roots in both the Church of England and the New Jerusalem Church, in adult life Tulk did not frequent any regular place of worship. He preferred private, family worship which he prepared and led himself, even administering personally the sacrament of Holy Communion.¹¹ He was a frequent contributor to a New Church journal, *The Intellectual Repository*, established in 1812. Also in 1812, Tulk and his family moved to the beautiful Marble Hill House on the banks of the Thames at Twickenham. They were to stay there until 1817. Flaxman was a visitor there, as was Clowes. During a visit in 1816 the latter commented:

¹⁰ 'The Times', 15th December 1826.

¹¹ Elizabeth Barrett, who knew Tulk and his family from about the mid-1830s, remarked on this in a letter to her friend Mary Russell Mitford dated October 31st 1842: Philip Kelley and Ronald Hudson, ed., *The Brownings' Correspondence*, Vol. 6 (Winfield, KS: The Wedgestone Press, 1988), 128.

Marble Hall, as you may perhaps know, is a small palace on the Thames, as elegant and commodious as the art of man can make it, and only to be rivalled by the virtues of its inhabitants.¹²

The Tulks were to move later to St John's Lodge in Regent's Park, actually built for Charles by John Raffield, although the house today is as extended by Decimus Burton and then Sir Charles Barry for later owners. By the mid-1820s (perhaps following his wife's death) Tulk moved to 19 Duke Street, Westminster where he lived for nearly twenty years.

Coleridge on Blake

One of the first fruits of the new friendship with Coleridge was that Tulk lent him his copy of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. These then existed only as prints (with text and marginal illustrations) struck off from the copper upon which Blake had engraved them. It appears that Flaxman had persuaded Tulk in about 1816 to patronise Blake.¹³ Coleridge returned the poems with an enthusiastic commentary:

I begin with my Dyspathies that I may forget them; and have uninterrupted space for Loves and Sympathies.¹⁴

He liked particularly 'The Tyger', 'London', 'The Sick Rose', 'The Lamb' and 'The Divine Image'. Tulk is responsible for the legend that Blake had written the last of these poems in the New Jerusalem Church at Hatton Garden.¹⁵ This seems mistaken, as the Hatton Garden Church was only opened in 1797 and the poem was written in 1789, but, as Tulk claimed his source was Blake himself, the poet *may* have confused that church with the one in Great East Cheap which he certainly did visit in 1789. Flaxman was a member of the Hatton Garden church between 1797 and 1799 and it is possible that Blake may have attended with him on occasion. Tulk's father was deeply involved in the Great East Cheap church and with the organisation of the 1789 conference and may well have met Blake, although there is no documentary evidence of this. Before returning the poems to Tulk, Coleridge wrote about them and their author to another new friend he had met at Littlehampton, Henry Francis Cary, the translator of Dante. Of Blake he wrote:

He is a man of Genius – and I apprehend, a Swedenborgian – certainly, a mystic emphatically. You perhaps smile at my calling another Poet, a Mystic; but verily I am in the every mire of common place common sense compared to Mr Blake, apo- or rather ana-calyptic Poet, and Painter!¹⁶

¹² Theodore Compton, *The Life and Correspondence of the Reverend John Clowes, MA* (London: James Speirs, 1898), 157.

¹³ Raymond Deck, 'New Light on C. A. Tulk, Blake's 19th Century Patron' in *Studies in Romanticism* 16, no.2 (Boston, MA: 1977), 217-36.

¹⁴ Coleridge, *Letters*, IV, 836-7. The letter is dated 12th February 1818.

¹⁵ James Spilling, 'Blake, Artist and Poet', *New Church Magazine*, (London, 1887), 253, 254. Spilling's informant was James John Garth Wilkinson who had heard from Tulk that Blake had told him he had written it in the Hatton Garden Church.

¹⁶ Coleridge, *Letters*, IV, 833-4. The letter is dated 6th February 1818.

The Children's Relief Bill and Tulk as a Politician

In March and April 1818 Coleridge and Tulk campaigned together by writing newspaper articles in support of the Children's Relief Bill, a limited measure of social reform confined to children working in the cotton factories, introduced into the House of Commons by the wealthy Lancashire cotton mill owner Sir Robert Peel the elder, father of the future Prime Minister who, as Irish Secretary, supported his father's Bill. It also had the support of John Clowes, another Lancastrian, and Peel told the Commons:

The signature of the venerable John Clowes is of itself enough to call upon the House to give the Bill a most serious consideration.¹⁷

The Bill passed the Commons, but was rejected by the Lords. The younger Peel resigned from the Government, to return in 1822 as a reforming Home Secretary. The Bill was re-introduced in 1819 and passed into law in a weakened form, fixing eleven hours a day (exclusive of mealtimes) as the maximum for children between the ages of nine and sixteen. It forbade the employment of children under nine years old. Even with its inadequacies, the Children's Relief Act was a measure of great importance. It recognised for the first time that Parliament had the right to interfere with the discretion of parents and employers in these matters.¹⁸ Tulk himself was to enter Parliament in March 1820 as Member for Sudbury (later satirised by Dickens as Eatanswill in *The Pickwick Papers*). He did not join the Peels on the Tory benches, but was an independent radical and became a close friend and associate of Joseph Hume the radical leader. It was Hume's daughter Mary Catherine who was to become his biographer. Tulk retained his seat until 1826. He later sat in the reformed House of Commons, being returned for Poole in 1835 and retiring on health grounds at the dissolution caused by the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. In the Commons he supported Roman Catholic emancipation (as did Coleridge from outside Parliament), the reform of Parliament and of the penal system. While Hume supported these causes, he was a bitter opponent of factory legislation, opposing the bills promoted by Ashley (later Lord Shaftesbury) during the 1840s. We can assume that Tulk did not agree with his friend on this issue.

Coleridge and Swedenborg

The Coleridge/Tulk correspondence, however, was chiefly about philosophy and religion, not social reform. As well as Blake's poems, Tulk sent Coleridge a work by Schelling (Coleridge having already drawn deeply on Schelling for chapter ix of *Biographia Literaria* published in 1817), notes on Spinoza and an Indian poem.¹⁹ Soon he was introducing him to works by Swedenborg. He made marginal notes on a copy of *Divine Love and Wisdom*. A first Latin edition of *Oeconomia Regni Animalium* (1740), now in the ownership of the Swedenborg Society, has manuscript comments signed by Coleridge. The names of C. A. Tulk and one of his sons, Edward Hart-Hart, are inscribed inside the front cover. In a letter dated 17th July 1820 addressed to 'CA Tulk, Esq., MP, Regent's Park', Coleridge wrote:

¹⁷ Compton, *ibid.*, 179.

¹⁸ E. L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 11-12.

¹⁹ Coleridge, *Letters*, IV, 835-8, 883-4.

...Of the too limited time which my ill health and the exigencies of today leave in my power, I have given the larger portion to the works of Swedenborg, particularly to the *Universal Theology of the New Church* [i.e., *True Christian Religion*]. I find very few and even those but doubtful instances or tenets, in which I am conscious of any substantial differences of opinion with the enlightened author...²⁰

Coleridge's prose is not always easy to understand. He is elaborate, prolix, and fond of breaking into other languages, especially ancient Greek. The character Mr. Flosky in Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) is a caricature of Coleridge, but it conveys a vivid picture. Tulk sent one of Coleridge's letters to John Clowes. The learned Rector read it out aloud at a meeting of his little circle of receivers of Swedenborg's teachings. They could not understand it at all and asked Clowes to read it again. He did so, but they still could not understand it!²¹ Coleridge's eloquence was legendary. In fact, he was quite unstoppable when he got going. Sophia Cottrell records an incident remembered by her elder sister Caroline (born in 1815) of a visit by Coleridge to the Tulk home. She was present when Coleridge began discoursing and stood spell-bound with open eyes listening and listening for so long that eventually she fainted away.²²

Coleridge suggested to Tulk an 'introductory Essay to the Science of Correspondences' as a way of introducing new readers to Swedenborg's teachings on this subject.²³ Tulk mentioned the suggestion to Clowes who agreed with Coleridge that it would be desirable to reduce the science 'into a more definite, correct, and well-grounded form by tracing it to its first principles', but, ever the pastor mindful of the needs of his flock, felt that such a work would be of little help to simple people.²⁴ Coleridge never wrote such an essay, but Tulk did publish a book on this subject in 1832 shortly after Clowes's death, having postponed its publication in deference to the views of his friend. It was called *A Record of Family Instruction*, but a second edition edited by Charles Pooley and published in 1889, long after Tulk's death, has the more suggestive title *The Science of Correspondency*.

Another suggestion made by Coleridge was to write a 'Life of the Mind of Swedenborg' if the sum of £200, a great deal of money in those days, could be raised for him. This was shortly before the publication of *Aids to Reflection* in 1825. The suggestion was conveyed by Tulk to the London Coffee Meeting, a select body of twenty four Swedenborgians of which Tulk was a member, but not the committee of the Swedenborg Society. One of the members, James Arbouin, having doubts about Coleridge's doctrinal fitness for such a task, made his way to the Gillmans at Highgate to interview Coleridge. He arrived just before the dinner hour and he was invited to stay. After the meal he engaged Coleridge in conversation and pointedly asked his opinion of Swedenborg. The reply given was guarded and to Arbouin's mind

²⁰ Charles Higham, 'Coleridge and Swedenborg' in *New Church Magazine* (London, 1897), 106-112, where this letter is printed in full. See also Caroline Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 31.

²¹ Compton, *ibid.*, 110.

²² Lewis, *ibid.*, 28.

²³ The doctrine of 'correspondences', that is, that everything in the natural world has a spiritual counterpart, has had considerable appeal to poets. Elizabeth Barrett Browning refers to it specifically in her monumental 'novel in verse' *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and it probably inspired Baudelaire's famous sonnet 'Correspondances' in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857).

²⁴ Compton, *ibid.*, 202-3, quoting from a letter from Clowes to Tulk dated 9th February 1824.

unfavourable. He reported back to the Coffee Meeting and that was the end of the proposal. The mortified Tulk asked his friend for an explanation. Coleridge replied that, as he thought he was being rudely questioned in mixed company, he was not prepared to give an unreserved opinion.²⁵ One can only speculate about such a book and what effect it might have had on the wider reception of Swedenborg in the English-speaking world. A nineteenth century biographer of Swedenborg commented that Tulk's friends 'had neither the sense nor the courage to accept [the proposal]'.²⁶ It remains an intriguing 'might have been', a lost opportunity that would not occur again.

Tulk the Swedenborgian 'Heretic'

But it was not only Coleridge who was considered doctrinally unfit for such a task. For some years Tulk's Swedenborgian colleagues had been increasingly concerned about the direction in which his interpretation of Swedenborg was leading. Clowes shared these concerns, but, unlike many of the London Swedenborgians, he never became personally hostile to Tulk and the two men remained close friends. Tulk's critics had no doubt about his inspiration. They believed that he had fallen under Coleridge's spell:

With rapture did he use to tell us, that the discourse of Mr Coleridge was as if it flowed from inspiration.... It very soon became abundantly evident, that Mr Coleridge had succeeded to all, and more than, the influence on his mind, which Mr Clowes had been supposed previously to possess: and the result has been, that if he is still to be considered as a receiver of Swedenborg, it is much after the manner of his tutor.²⁷

He was said to favour Malebranche, Berkeley, Kant, and even Spinoza, over Swedenborg. The acrimony grew and Tulk was described as a 'Fantasist, an Idealist, a Pantheist, an Atheist' and a 'wilful corrupter of the new doctrines'. Tulk's reply was robust, but he was deeply hurt by the ill-will stirred up against him personally:

I may be branded as a wilful corrupter of the new doctrines, by making Swedenborg speak the sentiments of German and English Pantheists and Idealists; I may be told that my admiration for Malebranche, Kant, and Berkeley, and as it is insinuated, even Spinoza, is greater than for Swedenborg himself; and while I have a conscience clear of the deep offence with which I am charged, the accusation falls as harmless, and is as little heeded, as the rain which beats against my windows. But when I consider its more than probable effect upon others, I must own I am not so indifferent. These stigmas are calculated to estrange those whose esteem and friendship have been prized as among the choicest blessings of my life, and the most ungenerous means have been resorted to in order to sow the seeds of dissension between us.²⁸

²⁵ 'Coleridge and Swedenborg', letter from E. Austin, *Morning Light*, (London, 1883), 517-8. This account appears earlier in an obituary of the Rev. William Mason (1790-1863), Secretary of the Swedenborg Society and of the London Coffee Meeting from 1820 to 1825: *Intellectual Repository* (ES) (London, 1863), 318, 320.

²⁶ William White, *Emanuel Swedenborg: His Life and Writings*, 2 vols. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1867), II, 698.

²⁷ *Intellectual Repository* (1828), 189-90.

²⁸ *New Jerusalem Magazine* (London, 1828), 160-1.

A Digression on Idealism

What was all the fuss about? Coleridge certainly had a magnetic personality and was able to attract spell-bound listeners, but in Tulk's case I think it is evident that there was a genuine intellectual engagement and a sharing of ideas, whether these came from Spinoza, from Malebranche (whom Swedenborg had certainly read), from Berkeley, or from Kant, or more recent German Idealists such as Fichte and Schelling. At this point I turn to a most enlightening article published in this journal for July 2003 (NS No. 123), 'The Religious Opinions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge' (at page 91) by the Revd Peter Mullen. The first part of the article concerns Coleridge's social religion, drawing particularly on his work, *On the Constitution of Church and State*, but it is the second part, dealing with Coleridge's personal religious response, which is of interest here. Introducing Coleridge's reading of and response to Kant's philosophy, Mullen quotes from Bryan Magee's book *Confessions of a Philosopher*:

No philosophy that equates reality with actual or possible experience can be right. Because all the ways in which we can apprehend material objects, whether sensorily or mentally, are directly or indirectly experience-dependent, and therefore subject-dependent, such objects cannot exist independently of us and of our experience *in any of the ways in which we can apprehend them.*²⁹

As Mullen points out, this is a succinct statement of an important principle of Kant's philosophy. Now note this:

The objects of the senses have no existence separate from the human mind, or otherwise an effect could exist separate from the cause of its existence. The world of space, and its successive changes, are outbirths of our worlds of affection and of thought, and they are so intimately connected, that the former could neither have existed before the latter, nor without it; and therefore Swedenborg most truly says, that all things are created through man, the percipient being.³⁰

The second quotation is from Tulk's *The Science of Correspondency*. Both quotations are lucid statements of the Idealist position drawn from Kant and, in Tulk's case, I think also from Berkeley and from his reading of Swedenborg in the light of those two thinkers. The notion that our minds 'create' the world as we apprehend it is counter-intuitive and contrary to everyday common sense, as Dr Johnson thought when he attempted to refute Berkeley by kicking a large stone.³¹ It is perhaps not surprising that Tulk's Swedenborgian colleagues reacted so sharply to his Idealist interpretation of Swedenborg, although the personal venom, which was to drive him from the committee of the Swedenborg Society in 1829 and eventually to deny him an obituary in *The Intellectual Repository*, is harder to understand. The reason may be that they felt that his Idealism attacked the central belief in the Incarnation, that the Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. For Tulk the divinity of Christ was something that could only be apprehended by the human mind and was perceived subjectively. But if this is

²⁹ Bryan Magee, *Confessions of a Philosopher* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997), 462.

³⁰ Charles Augustus Tulk, *The Science of Correspondency*, ed. Charles Pooley (London: James Speirs, 1889), 64.

³¹ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol.1 (London: Dent, Everyman's Library 1949), 297.

understood in the light of the philosophy of Berkeley and Kant (both of them Christians) and of the way in which (according to Idealist philosophy) we apprehend anything at all, the difficulties disappear.

Idealism seems to fit well with twentieth century physics. Eddington declared that what Rutherford had left of Dr Johnson's large stone was scarcely worth kicking,³² and Schrödinger in his 1958 lecture 'Mind and Matter' wrote:

The world is a construct of our sensations, perceptions, memories. It is convenient to regard it as existing objectively on its own. But it certainly does not become manifest by its mere existence...³³

Tulk was concerned to combat the growing materialism of his age and found what he believed to be surer defences in a deeper understanding of Swedenborg's religious writings. In an age like ours when materialism seems triumphant, particularly through the dominance of a reductionist Darwinism with its assertion that the 'mind' is co-extensive with the physical brain, the Idealism of Berkeley, Swedenborg and Kant, of Coleridge and Tulk is needed, it seems to me, more than ever.

The Later Years of the Friendship

In late 1825 or early 1826 Tulk introduced Coleridge to Blake. This meeting, scarcely noted in either Blake or Coleridge scholarship, is mentioned by the Swedenborgian writer James Spilling in an 1887 article on Blake:

We are informed [and it is clear from the context that his informant was James John Garth Wilkinson, a friend of Tulk from the late 1830s onwards] that Charles Augustus Tulk took Coleridge to see Blake's picture of 'The Last Judgment', and that the author of 'Christabel' poured forth concerning it a flood of eloquent commentary and enlargement.³⁴

There is no mention of such a meeting in Coleridge's letters, but Henry Crabb Robinson, a friend of Tulk as well as of Blake and Coleridge, wrote to Dorothy Wordsworth on 19th February 1826: 'Coleridge has visited B. & I am told talks finely about him'.³⁵ Further evidence that the two poets did meet is provided by Tulk's footnote at the end of his 1830 *London University Magazine* essay, 'The Inventions of William Blake, Painter and Poet':³⁶

Blake and Coleridge when in company seemed like beings of another sphere, breathing for a while on our earth, which may easily be perceived from the similarity of thought pervading their works.

³² Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 327.

³³ Quoted in Walter Moore, *A Life of Erwin Schrödinger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 330.

³⁴ Spilling, *ibid.*, 253.

³⁵ G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 325.

³⁶ The article, which is actually anonymous, is reprinted in full in Margaret Bottrall, ed. *William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience, A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 45-9. For arguments that Tulk is the author of the article see Deck, 'New Light on CA Tulk, Blake's 19th Century Patron', *ibid.*, and Richard Lines, "'The Inventions of William Blake, Painter and Poet': An early Appreciation of Blake's Genius' in *The Journal of the Blake Society*, No. 4 (London, 1999), 56-65.

Tulk may be referring here to that visit, but it is possible that Blake, Coleridge and Tulk were all in company together on occasion at the house of Charles and Elizabeth Aders in Euston Square.³⁷

Tulk and Crabb Robinson knew each other through the new University of London (now University College, London) in whose establishment both had a hand. While Tulk was not a member of the governing council of the university, he was a 'Proprietor', i.e.: one of those who had put up money for the scheme. He played an active part in meetings of the Proprietors and his eldest son Augustus Henry was one of the earliest students at the university. Crabb Robinson recorded that he travelled to the burial ground of St Giles-in-the-Fields for Flaxman's funeral on 15th December 1826 in the same carriage as Tulk, Marmaduke Hart (Tulk's father-in-law), and Sir Thomas Lawrence the portrait painter.³⁸ Crabb Robinson's diaries contain several references to Tulk. In particular, the entry for 5th June 1838 mentions a party at Maria Denman's (Flaxman's sister-in-law) at which Tulk was present. Tulk told Crabb Robinson that Coleridge had told him 'not many years ago' that Wordsworth was not a Christian.³⁹

Another interest Coleridge and Tulk had in common was Mesmerism or 'animal magnetism'. One summer evening at Highgate, while Gillman was ill with a fever, Coleridge, acting on the physician's behalf, visited a distraught young mother whose new-born baby had died. 'I felt a vehement impulse to try Zoo-magnetism', he wrote, 'ie to try my hand at resurrection. I felt or fancied a power in me to concentrate my will that I have never felt or fancied before'. He then wrote a long letter to Tulk about recent research papers on the subject.⁴⁰ Tulk actually practised Mesmerism, apparently with some success. His daughter Sophia recorded that he was once able to throw his friend Dr Pemberton, physician extraordinary to the Prince Regent, later King George IV, into a calm and refreshing sleep of some hours duration.⁴¹ He was a friend of John Elliotson, first Professor of Physiology at University College and well-known as a practitioner of Mesmerist techniques.⁴² Like Elliotson, he was also interested in phrenology, considered very much a science in those days, and was President of the London Phrenological Society in 1827.⁴³ He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on 14th November 1822.

Coleridge's friendship with such a leading Swedenborgian must have been noticed by other friends of the poet. He began one letter to Tulk with the words:

³⁷ Alexander Gilchrist, the early biographer of Blake, thought that he and Coleridge may have become acquainted at the Aders: *Life of William Blake*, (London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1945), 330. Gilchrist's biography was first published in 1863. I have no evidence that Tulk was ever invited to the Aders' house, but as a friend of Flaxman and Crabb Robinson, as well as of Coleridge and Blake, it is likely that he was a guest there.

³⁸ Arthur Carter, 'John Flaxman', *New Church Life* (Bryn Athyn, PA, 1928), 427, 433. Crabb Robinson was later to be instrumental in the establishment of the Flaxman Gallery at University College, London in 1847, Flaxman's casts and drawings having been left to his sister-in-law Maria Denman.

³⁹ Ed. Edith J Morley, *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers* (London: Dent, 1938), 550.

⁴⁰ Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, *ibid.* 543. Coleridge, *Letters*, V, 352.

⁴¹ Lewis *ibid.*, 27. Tulk's belief in and practice of mesmerism is corroborated by Elizabeth Barrett Browning: letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 4th November 1842: Kelley and Hudson, *ibid.*, vol.6, 137.

⁴² Jonathan Miller, 'A Gower Street Scandal', *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, Vol. 17. No. 4 (London, October 1983), 181-191. For a detailed study of mesmerism or animal magnetism in nineteenth century Britain, see Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1998). While there is a good deal about Elliotson in her book, Winter (surprisingly) makes no reference at all to Tulk.

⁴³ *The Lancet*, 21st April 1827.

‘They say, Coleridge! That you are a Swedenborgian!’ Would to God, I replied fervently, that *they* were *anything*.⁴⁴

H. J. Jackson⁴⁵ takes this as the report of a rumour that Coleridge had experienced a religious conversion, presumably to the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church, but to the non-sectarian Tulk it might have referred to a way of thinking and living rather than to the adoption of the tenets of a church he had not joined and with some of whose members he was in contention. Swedenborg himself, I believe, meant by the term ‘New Church’ a new spirit within Christianity and not yet another organised denomination. Coleridge was sometimes critical of what he read in Swedenborg, but he did rank him, along with Giordano Bruno, Jacob Boehme and Benedict Spinoza, as a great man unjustly branded and had often considered writing a vindication of these four. That statement appears in a marginal note (dated April 1827) on a copy of *Noble’s Appeal*, a somewhat forensic defence of the New Jerusalem Church by one of its ministers, the Revd Samuel Noble, who was one of those who had taken against Tulk. Coleridge ends his marginal note with what may be considered his strongest affirmation of Swedenborg:

So much even from a very partial acquaintance with the works of Swedenborg I can venture to assert – that as a *moralist*, Swedenborg is above all praise; and that as a Naturalist, Psychologist, and theologian he has strong and varied claims on the gratitude and admiration of the professional and philosophical Faculties.⁴⁶

Tulk’s Later Life and Conclusion

Here we must leave Coleridge. Tulk was to survive his older friend by almost fifteen years, dying in London on 16th January 1849. After leaving Parliament in 1837 he served for many years as a magistrate in Middlesex, becoming Chairman of the Board of Management of the famous Hanwell Pauper Lunatic Asylum in 1839. One of the first acts of the Board under his chairmanship was the appointment of Dr John Conolly as superintendent physician. It was under Conolly’s regime that Hanwell became a model for other asylums in the practice of progressive methods, including the abolition of forcible restraint and the introduction of what we would now call occupational therapy. Tulk was also interested in the reform of prisons and was an opponent of capital punishment. His later years brought him new literary friendships, first with Elizabeth Barrett, from whose letters we learn much about Tulk and his family, and in 1848, much of which year he spent visiting his daughter Sophia and her husband in Florence, with her husband Robert Browning also. At the very end of his life he gave his name, as the successful plaintiff in an action brought to enforce a covenant not to build on garden land in Leicester Square, to the landmark case of *Tulk v. Moxhay* (1848), which established the doctrine of restrictive covenants in English land law.

He returned to the committee of the Swedenborg Society in 1837 and was chairman once more in 1843. He spent much time writing his book, *Spiritual Christianity*, which was unfinished at his death, a vindication of his ‘Idealist’ interpretation of Swedenborg.

⁴⁴ Coleridge, *Letters*, V, 136.

⁴⁵ Jackson, ‘Coleridge, Tulk, and Swedenborg’, *ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁶ Coleridge, *A Book I Value: Selected Marginalia*, ed. H. J. Jackson (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 191-3.

While this book did not meet with the approval of ‘orthodox’ Swedenborgians in the New Church, it did win praise in the *Massachusetts Quarterly Review*, of which Ralph Waldo Emerson was joint editor, as the only ‘rational reproduction’ of Swedenborg’s theology.⁴⁷ At the end of his introduction to his earlier work *The Science of Correspondency* he drew from Swedenborg’s teaching about the Second Coming of Christ as an opening of the ‘inner’ or ‘spiritual’ sense of the Bible an idealistic and optimistic message:

If this be true, then is a brighter day about to dawn upon the world. Though possibly not in this age, the living Christianity, which consists in pure intentions, disinterested kindness, and preference of others to ourselves both in thought and action, we feel assured must eventually prevail, and restore man, spiritually as well as naturally, to the paradise of his primeval state.⁴⁸

But from his own experience, he warned against the imposition of dogmatic religion without charity:

All instruction, and especially religious instruction, we should ever remember, ought to minister to the cultivation of mutual kindness and good-will. Without these, speculations, however elevated their character, and worthy of rational beings, present, not the light of true wisdom, but only a false glare, serving no other purpose than to hide our true condition from ourselves. Experience teaches us how easy it is to talk about charity, and humility, and mutual forbearance, and how apt we are to fancy ourselves in possession of these virtues when we are no more than intellectually impressed with their value and importance.⁴⁹

Let Tulk’s epitaph be some words of Coleridge, written to a man whom he had recommended as a tutor for two of his sons:

A Gentleman of Fortune, a man of more than ordinary talent, and more than gentlemanly Erudition, and what is best, a thoroughly good man and serious Christian.⁵⁰

Swedenborg House, London

⁴⁷ Biographical note on Tulk, *In Search of the Absolute*, *ibid.*, 94 and Richard McCully, ‘Mr Tulk on the Divine Humanity’ in *New Church Magazine* (London, 1890), 202, 203.

⁴⁸ Tulk, *The Science of Correspondency*, *ibid.*, Author’s Preface, xxxvii.

⁴⁹ Tulk, *The Science of Correspondency*, *ibid.*, Author’s Preface, xxxvii-xxxviii.

⁵⁰ Coleridge, *Letters*, IV, 913.

‘published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity’:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*
and the 1816 *Edinburgh Review*

By EDMUND GARRATT

For Alf Sinfield

THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF *KUBLA KHAN*, or a *Vision in a Dream. A Fragment* is one of many meandering streams that spring from this mysterious poem. Despite the narrative of the preface, where Coleridge recounts his retirement in summer 1797 ‘to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton’, the exact date of *Kubla Khan* has never been confirmed. It was composed either in the autumn of 1797, May 1798 or perhaps October 1799, but did not appear in print until 1816.¹

‘The following fragment’, wrote Coleridge in his preface to *Kubla Khan*, ‘is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity’. The poet in question was Lord Byron, who admired *Kubla Khan* upon hearing its recital by Coleridge.² He encouraged him to include it in a slim volume published by John Murray on 25 May 1816.³

The involvement of Byron here led me to the following thought: was *Kubla Khan* viewed by its contemporary audience primarily as a product of Byron’s circle, or were they directed by the preface to read *Kubla Khan* as a fragment of poetry recovered from the year 1797 and ‘the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire’? This thought, in turn, led me to consult the 1816 *Edinburgh Review*, which produced a definitive contemporary review of Coleridge’s volume.⁴

II

In September 1816 the *Edinburgh Review* presented a splenetic essay on the *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan* and *The Pains of Sleep* volume. It argued that it is ‘destitute of value’, and looked upon it as ‘one of the boldest experiments that has yet been made on the patience or understanding of the public’.⁵ Coleridge also incurred its reprehension for gaining the support of Lord Byron to appear in print.

The *Edinburgh Review* did not consider that the *Christabel* volume deserved to be published, and therefore questioned Byron’s judgement on ‘what ought to meet the public eye’.⁶ Worse still, it alleged that his circle ‘puffed’ its poetry for profit:

It seems now-a-days to be the practice of that once irritable race to laud each other without bounds; and can hardly avoid suspecting, that what is thus lavishly advanced may be laid out with a view to being repaid with interest.⁷

¹ See *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), volume 16: Poetical Works: Part 1. Poems (Reading Text), ed. J.C.C. Mays, p. 509. Hereafter *Coleridge*.

² Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1930), pp. 93-94.

³ Murray ended his professional relationship with Coleridge later in the summer after the poor reception of the volume. He did not allow the *Quarterly Review* – a publication he controlled – to review (and therefore defend) it.

⁴ The author of the review is commonly supposed to be Thomas Moore, although this attribution is uncertain.

⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, XXVII (September 1816), 58-67, p. 66. Hereafter *Edinburgh Review*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58. The advertisement to the first volume of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802 said it would confine its attention to ‘works that either have attained, or deserve, a certain portion of celebrity’.

The *Edinburgh Review* termed them 'the wild and lawless poets', a paraphrase of Byron's praise of *Christabel*,⁸ because of the inflationary harm that they had apparently done to intellectual standards in Britain. It complained of the 'ease and rapidity with which one exceeded another in the unmeaning or infantine, until not an idea was left in the rhyme'.⁹

Christabel attracted sustained criticism. For instance, Coleridge's innovation in this poem of a metre founded on the principle of accents rather than syllables:

We say nothing of the monstrous assurance of any man coming forward coolly at this time of day, and telling readers of English poetry, whose ear has been tuned to the lays of Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope, that he makes his metre 'on a new principle!' but we utterly deny the truth of this assertion, and defy him to show us *any* principle upon which his lines can be conceived to tally. We give two or three specimens, to confound at once this miserable piece of coxcombry and shuffling.¹⁰

The *Edinburgh Review* was also hostile towards *The Pains of Sleep*, composed in 1803 during Coleridge's summer tour of Scotland: 'mere raving, without any thing more affecting than a number of incoherent words, expressive of extravagance and incongruity'.¹¹

Kubla Khan's treatment at the hands of the Edinburgh reviewer is no less severe.¹² Coleridge's announcement that his fragment is published as a 'psychological curiosity' is presented as evidence of his complacency. The preface, it is reported, smells strongly of the 'anodyne' that Coleridge had taken to ease his indisposition, and is scarcely worthy of the reader's attention. The verse itself would sedate even the most 'irritable critic', a compliment of sorts, and there is praise for 'a fine description of a wood'. But few merits in the poem are recognised. The fact that Coleridge offered 'unfinished' work to the public only compounded the image of a poet who had become negligent in his art.

III

The *Edinburgh Review* aimed to hit a system of patronage that enabled Coleridge to publish, in its view, poor and incomplete work. 'Must we then be doomed to hear such a mixture of raving and driv'ling, extolled as the work of a "*wild and original*" genius, simply because Mr Coleridge has now and then written fine verses, and a brother poet chooses, in his milder mood, to laud him from courtesy or from interest?'¹³ Further:

Are such panegyrics to be echoed by the mean tools of a political faction, because they relate to one whose daily prose is understood to be dedicated to the support of all that courtiers think should be supported? If it be true that the author has thus earned the patronage of those liberal

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁸ Byron had noted in Canto XIX of *The Siege of Corinth* (1816) that *Christabel* is a 'wild and singularly original and beautiful poem'. His words were quoted in the *Morning Chronicle* on 25 May 1816, when it advertised the publication of the *Christabel* volume.

⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, p. 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64. Coleridge wrote in his preface: 'I have only to add that the metre of *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless, this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion'.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹² It surmised that Byron was behind its publication, or perhaps the poet laureate Robert Southey, 'the praiser of Princes'. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

dispensers of bounty, we can have no objection that they should give him proper proofs of their gratitude; but we cannot help wishing, for his sake, as well as our own, that they would pay in solid pudding instead of empty praise; and adhere, at least in this instance, to the good old system of rewarding their champions with places and pensions, instead of puffing their bad poetry, and endeavouring to cram their nonsense down the throats of all the loyal and well affected.¹⁴

The vocabulary of 'courtiers' and 'patronage' emphasises the point that Coleridge's volume was not received as poetry from the era of *Lyrical Ballads*. It was received as a product of the 'new school', which, supposedly, profited inequitably from patrician favour. The *Edinburgh Review* complained that – through Byron's influence – such favour had spread from 'places and pensions' into the republic of letters.

The sense of constitutional balance in the *Edinburgh Review*, as well as its impulse to stricture corruption, was inherited from the Whig leader Charles James Fox. Fox's ideal role in politics was to act, in the House of Commons, as an aristocratic guardian of the multitude, defending their interests against Tories, lower-class Radicals and designing kings.¹⁵ This did not mean that the *Edinburgh Review* supported aristocracy unconditionally. It attacked, for example, the exploitation of privilege for literary advantage, as can be seen in Henry Brougham's review of Byron's first collection of poems, *Hours of Idleness*:

He takes care to remember us of Dr Johnson's saying, that when a nobleman appears as an author, his merit should be handsomely acknowledged. In truth, it is this consideration only, that induces us to give Lord Byron's poems a place in our review, beside our desire to counsel him, that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account.¹⁶

Coleridge's own relation to Foxite constitutional balance is complex. In *Lyrical Ballads* he attempted to explore with Wordsworth 'how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure'.¹⁷ This inclusive literary experiment had the potential to undermine both the cultural and political hegemony of aristocratic Whig society, and so was scorned by the *Edinburgh Review*: 'The Lake School have generally exhibited talents thrown away upon subjects so mean, that no power of genius could ennoble them; or perverted and rendered useless by a false theory of poetical composition'.¹⁸ However, in 1816 he published poetry that, we are told, appealed exclusively to the taste of an aristocracy of poets, rather than the wider reading community. To use the words of *Lyrical Ballads* against him, it appeared that Coleridge now furnished 'food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation'.¹⁹

The subject matter of *Kubla Khan* also risked being interpreted pejoratively. It was common in Whig literature to uphold the East as an example of the most heartless despotism: the name *Kubla Khan*, as J.C.C. Mays reminds us, was a 'byword for cruelty and oppression'.²⁰ However, there is no clear indication that Coleridge wished to conform to this

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁵ See Leslie Mitchell, *Holland House* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1980), p. 37, p. 64, p. 74.

¹⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, XXII (1808), 285-289, pp. 285-286. Byron replied with his satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

¹⁷ See *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* (Bristol: Biggs and Cottle, 1798), 'Advertisement'.

¹⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, p. 66.

¹⁹ *Lyrical Ballads*, 2 volumes (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1800), I, p. xii.

²⁰ Coleridge, p. 510. Following Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, the Eastern world was often upheld in Whig literature as despotic. For instance, in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790) Edmund Burke exclaims indignantly: 'To hear some men speak of the late monarchy in France, you would imagine that they were [...] describing the barbarous anarchic despotism of Turkey' (p. 189).

tradition, as the poem describes Oriental grandeur not tyranny. Thankfully for him the 1816 *Edinburgh Review* did not explore this line, perhaps because it could see little depth to the Exmoor opium dream. The *Christabel* volume, in its opinion, had attained, but did not deserve, any portion of celebrity.

University of Cambridge

REVIEWS

SUSAN TYLER HITCHCOCK, *Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder in Literary London*. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2005. pp. 333. ISBN: 0 393 32753 1. £20.

OFTENER A LISTENER THAN A TALKER, just out of sight in those descriptions of the sociable ‘lively skirmishes’ evoked by Hazlitt, and yet necessary to their success, Mary Lamb has, in recent years, been placed under the critical spotlight, as sister, friend, and writer – as well as matricide. ‘Good ... sensible ... exemplary’, she was the sole woman excused from Hazlitt’s bracing strictures on her sex. He ‘never met with a woman who could reason,’ he said, ‘and had met with one only thoroughly reasonable – the sole exception being Mary Lamb’.¹ And yet it is still her *lack* of reason which is often emphasised, as in Peter Ackroyd’s fictionalisation *The Lambs of London* (2004), where her madness, rather than her writing, becomes her defining feature. A first encounter with Susan Tyler Hitchcock’s *Mad Mary Lamb*, beginning with the title itself, suggests that we are dealing with a similar portrait. Hitchcock begins with a recreation of the day of horrors: we open with a scene of Gothic gloom, lowering clouds and ‘gray chill’, before chaos breaks out in the room at Little Queen Street, ‘the air...electric with the smell of blood and held breath’ (15-17).

But once the horrors are out of the way, Hitchcock’s assessment of Mary proves to be a lucid and engaging portrait of her creative role, shaped but not necessarily bounded by her mental illness. As with Kathy Watson’s *The Devil Kissed Her* (2004), with its sensational subtitle drawing attention to Mary in the first instance as ‘murderess, madwoman’, the mentions of ‘lunacy and murder’ prove not to be the main focus of the study, which offers a sensitive evocation of Mary as an individual and, importantly, as a writer. Hitchcock does not refer to Watson’s account, probably having just missed its publication; nevertheless, the two studies have some striking overlaps, not least in the way in which they both pinpoint Mary’s matricide as an empowering act, ‘as horrifyingly wrong as it was, [it] freed her to explore the rights of women yet to come’ (20). In setting herself outside social limits, Mary opened up a new field for herself – reading and writing rather than mantua-making – which allowed her a certain independence, although always bounded by the threat of confinement.

We begin with an absorbing study of Georgian attitudes to mental illness and imprisonment. The background to the insanity plea is examined, including the case of Margaret Nicholson, a housemaid and seamstress, who in 1786 attempted to attack George III with a butter-knife. ‘Take care of the woman’, George III is reported to have said, ‘do not hurt her, for she is mad’. Two years later, the king himself would similarly be in need of sympathy; Hitchcock shows how his publicly recognized episodes of mental illness (now believed to have been porphyria, made worse by manic-depressive disorder) shaped contemporary perceptions of insanity. The concept of madness in the period, she suggests, was therefore classless, ‘a condition into which both high and low could fall’: a condition, moreover, which was ‘reversible’ (39). Charles, Hitchcock suggests, capitalised on this prevailing mood of compassion toward the lunatic in organising private care for Mary and trying to negotiate ‘a system open to manipulation’ (39). Like Kathy Watson’s excellent account of contemporary madhouses, Hitchcock brings a thorough eye to the care of the mentally

¹ Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb* (London: Moxon, 1848) vol. 2, p. 227. Quoted in *Mad Mary Lamb*, p. 188.

disturbed, noting the maltreatment, neglect, and violence rife in many asylums but arguing that Mary's experience, at least in Fisher House, was a largely positive one by the standards of the time. Unlike Sarah Burton, who in *A Double Life* emphasised the possibility of Mary's abuse and punishment, Hitchcock's view is that Mary 'thrived, too, in Fisher House ... she came back into her own as a productive and worthwhile individual, connecting, human to human, with those around her' (59). This characterises her balanced discussions of the various types of care Mary experienced through her lifetime, up to her experiences in Normand House and with the Waldens.

She also sensitively explores Charles's emotions during Mary's periods of illness, giving a close reading of his letters to Coleridge in the 1790s, for example, and nicely pointing up what she terms the mixture of 'devotion and naivete' in his early care for her. His early work, too, is fully discussed: the poignant poems he contributed to Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects*, his collaborative work with Charles Lloyd, and his letters to Coleridge. He moves, during this period, between an awkward manipulation of the conventions of sensibility, haltingly articulating his love for his sister through his sonnets and *Blank Verse*, and a vigorous self-mockery and irony which emerges in the letters. These different coping tactics are captured well, and it is very good to see Lloyd's work quoted and discussed, and to be reminded of the attentions of the *Anti-Jacobin* to the group. Perhaps the savagery of some of Charles's comments in the letters, and the bitterness of his self-accusations here, are underplayed. His relationship with Coleridge at this time, for instance, comes across as a somewhat idealised portrait of consolatory friendship, overlooking the reproaches, complaints, tensions and alienation of the late 1790s. Similarly, Hitchcock's claim that the Lambs were not 'particularly religious' at this time is true to an extent, but she does not explore what kind of religion is invoked in the exchange between Coleridge and Charles Lamb immediately after his mother's death, or, in her mention that Coleridge 'had considered a career in the pulpit', suggest what kind of pulpit this might have been.

On the other hand, the friendships with Manning, Dyer and Martin Burney are brought out very well, and Mary is shown to have taken a full role in their social occasions. She is seen conversing, sharing cheese and oysters, and taking snuff liberally, her 'small, white, and delicately-formed hand', according to Mary Cowden Clarke, hovering over the powder-box (123). Against this successful sociability is set the sorrow and dejection of the intermittent spells of illness: as Hitchcock evokes, her life with Charles was 'a balancing act of mutual care and alternating excesses' (124). A deep source of consolation and support was found by both in reading, and, very gradually for Mary, in writing too. Taking as her cue Charles's comment, searching for books to take to her in Fisher House, that 'a little she must read; for reading was her daily bread', Hitchcock explores the kind of reading Mary would have been enjoying. Outlining for the general reader the narrative representation of women during the period, she emphasises the ambiguous attitude toward the female reader, a figure 'charged with moral and political ambiguity' (67). The influence of her reading, and her slow move toward written expression of her own, is traced through her playful letters to Sarah Stoddart and her poem of consolation to Dorothy Wordsworth after the death of John, culminating in her employment by the Godwins to write the *Tales from Shakespear* (1807) and *Mrs. Leicester's School* (1809).

Hitchcock's study, like the recent work of Watson, Mary Wedd, and Adriana Craciun, continues the welcome reassessment of Mary Lamb as a significant female author of the period. Mary's writing is very fully and seriously discussed, and Hitchcock sets her deceptively simple poetry, the *Tales from Shakespear*, and the

haunting stories of *Mrs. Leicester's School* in the context both of contemporary children's literature and of possible biographical readings. Particularly useful in the discussion of her reading and writing practices is Hitchcock's speculation about how Mary would have seen her own profession unflatteringly reflected in contemporary literature. The flirtatious or corrupt dress-maker was a standard fictional type, as seen, for example, by Eliza Haywood's mantua-maker Mrs. Modely in *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* – tropes which might have helped shape Mary Lamb's representation of the profession and her plea for its worth in 'On Needle-work'. This essay, published in the *British Lady's Magazine* of April 1815, is discussed in detail; 'at once adamant and conciliatory', it appears to look toward a feminist consciousness in its argument for a recognition of women's professional identity, and yet falls short of mounting a direct challenge to class and gender inequalities.

Perhaps, comments Hitchcock, this might be a sign of Mary Lamb's self-censorship. While she asserted herself as a writer, she also strove to set 'limits to the reach of her intellect' (227). She concludes by returning to this complex mixture of assertiveness and diffidence: Mary Lamb 'pushed beyond the boundaries set for women of her time but hovered just on the other side, choosing mild individuality rather than audacity or brilliance' (280). It is up to the reader, she suggests, to learn how to hear that distinctive individual voice. This very interesting study makes it accessible to a much wider audience – cause for celebration in this bicentenary year of the publication of the *Tales from Shakespear*.

Felicity James

Society Notes and News from Members

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The 2007-8 season of events opened as usual with the Coleridge Study Weekend at Kilve organised by the Friends of Coleridge and strongly supported by Society members. This year's theme was Coleridge's *Notebooks* and a fascinating series of papers was read. It was generally agreed that the conference was one of the best ever.

Unfortunately, Professor George Soule was unable, because of illness, to travel from Minnesota to give the Ernest Crowsley Memorial lecture on 6 October. We hope to hear from him on a future occasion. Our Vice-chairman, Professor Duncan Wu, kindly stepped into the breach with a superb lecture on *Hazlitt as Journalist*, which may in due course appear in the *Bulletin*.

Members may have been interested to notice a large picture of Lamb's Cottage at Edmonton, which has been on the market, forming an unusually attractive front cover of the magazine *Time Out* during the summer.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has confirmed the Society's booking for the Birthday Celebration Luncheon on 9 February 2008, as the College does not expect to move out of the premises before then. Accordingly, the Luncheon should take place at Prince's Gate as usual. The guest speaker will be Professor Jon Cook, Professor of Literature and Director of the Centre for Creative and Performing Arts at the University of East Anglia. Application forms for tickets accompany this Bulletin. In recent years the numbers attending have risen so that the dining room is close to full capacity. Members are therefore advised that ticket applications should be submitted as early as possible.



On 5 September 2007, Mary Wedd was made an Honorary Fellow of Goldsmiths University of London. The photograph, courtesy of Laurie Wedd, shows her receiving the title on the day. In his address on the occasion of Mary's award, Professor Alan Downie, College Orator, paid fulsome tribute to her: 'When people speak or write about Mary — and her work — they refer to her enthusiasm and her personal appreciation of the literature she writes about, but above all to her acute sensitivity to the nuances of great poetry. It is this combination of "the academic and the personal", allied to a rigorous historicism, which stands out...'