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CHARLES LAMB AND S T COLERIDGE

The first annual Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture, given to the Society by Professor Basil Willey on 7 October 1972

It is a tremendous honour and delight to me to be invited by the Charles Lamb Society to give the first Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture. I probably knew E.C. longer than any of you, for in 1923 (nearly fifty years ago) he was a member of my first W.E.A. Tutorial Class, at Bedford. I was then also giving my first course of lectures at Cambridge, which was on the English Essayists - with Lamb, of course, as its centre and soul. No doubt I discoursed largely of Lamb at Bedford then, and it has always been my fond hope (perhaps delusion) that E.C. may have caught thence some of the impulse which led him later to found the C.L.S. Forgive me then if I sometimes think of myself as your Founding Grandfather. But enough of this! - it is of Ernest that we are all thinking now; of what we have lost, but still more of what he gave us. Blessings upon his memory!

This year 1972, as you know, is the bicentenary of the birth of Coleridge, and in view of the close friendship between him and Lamb I thought it appropriate to discuss today the relationship between these two men. There will be nothing new in what I say; I hope merely to remind you, and myself, of some familiar interchanges between the two friends, so greatly though so variously gifted

That Lamb and S.T.C. were friends at all is chiefly due to the accident of their having been at school together, though they might well have met later in London. The two differed widely in their origins and backgrounds, as well as in character, intellect and acquirements. But they had in common that impassioned love and understanding of literature which made them, in their different ways, the two greatest English critics of their time - perhaps of all time. Many years ago (1923) E M W Tillyard published the first anthology of Lamb's criticism, and in the Introduction he contrasted Lamb and Coleridge as critics. Criticism, he said, may be either theoretical or applied; the theoretical illuminating 'the workings of the poetic process or of the aesthetic sense', and the applied re-creating 'the critic's impression in a separate work of art'. And Tillyard adds: 'Of English masters of theoretical criticism Coleridge is the greatest; of applied, in a sense, Lamb'. Indeed, as we all know, Lamb and Coleridge belonged to different classes of mind: Lamb intuitive, seeing by flashes; Coleridge capable of the inspired flash too, but systematic as well, trying always after an encompassing vision of all things as one. No one has described Lamb's type of mind better than Lamb himself in the Essay *Imperfect Sympathies*. Here he is ironically contrasting his own 'imperfect intellect', not with Coleridge, but with the Caledonian mind, which he represents as irremediably made up in advance

and inflexibly formal. Those of his own class of mind, he says, are 'content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth...Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system is the utmost they pretend to...They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development...Their minds...are suggestive merely'. Though Lamb is not here thinking of Coleridge as antithesis, one cannot help remembering how Keats, another intuitive, accused Coleridge of an 'irritable reaching after facts and reason', and of lacking 'negative capability' or the open mind. Lamb would have understood Coleridge better than this, however. For in fact Keats had here got STC wrong; no man's mind has ever been more exactly what Keats said a poet's should be, 'an open thoroughfare for all thoughts', and in a state of continual enlargement and inner growth. Lamb knew very well that STC could do all that he himself could do, *and* everything else besides.

The younger by over two years, Lamb looked up to Coleridge at school, not only as his senior but as the possessor of those extraordinary gifts which he has celebrated so movingly in the Essay *Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago*. And in fact throughout their lifelong friendship, in spite of transitory clouds, Lamb's attitude to Coleridge retained something of the disciple's reverence as well as the affection of a friend. That this was so is a testimony, I think, not only to Lamb's insight and goodness, but to Coleridge's own immense superiority to everyone else then living in England. Lamb was nothing if not shrewd, and he soon 'saw through' Coleridge - realised, I mean, his many weaknesses and failures, his promises and schemes unfulfilled, his drifting life and all the rest of it. But he recognised true greatness when he saw it, and he never forgot that Coleridge *was* an archangel, even after he had become a little damaged. I said earlier that literature was what linked two such different men for life; yes, but there was something else: love and understanding. Wordsworth once apostrophised Coleridge:

O capacious Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand.

True enough, there was nothing that Coleridge did not understand - including himself. And he had a loving disposition too; benevolence streamed from him upon all creatures great and small. Yet in the Lamb-Coleridge partnership I think Lamb gave more love than he received. There was sometimes a touch of condescension in Coleridge's attitude to Lamb, and I suspect that for long periods he forgot all about him. A grateful disciple can be an embarrassment to a teacher, especially if the teacher finds it hard to live up to the pupil's idea of him. Coleridge's most intense loves were bestowed elsewhere than on Lamb, especially on the Wordsworths and Sara Hutchinson; and here he too gave more than he received. It would be possible to argue that Coleridge, ever pining for love denied, never really loved any individual but himself, and emanations of his own personality. Thus Wordsworth, whom for years he worshipped and called his only superior, would figure as the embodiment of Coleridge's own idea of what a great philosopher-poet should be; and Sara would be the wish-fulfilment of all that his own wife had failed to be. But let us leave aside all this sort of speculation. What emerges clearly from this story is that Lamb, inferior to Coleridge in genius, was his superior in character: in steady fidelity, fortitude and self-abnegation. Indeed, in these qualities he

has few equals outside the ranks of the saints.

One feels that the two men never came closer than in those early years (1794-5) when Coleridge, fresh (and ungraduated) from Cambridge and shrinking from his engagement to Sarah Fricker, used to meet Lamb at "The Salutation and Cat" for long sessions of tobacco, 'egg-hot' and divine discourse. 'O noctes coenaeque Deum!' he writes to Coleridge (January 16 1797); 'Anglice ; Welsh rabbit, punch and poesy.' Often in the early letters to Coleridge he refers wistfully to those white nights, and speaks of his loneliness, his longing for Coleridge's company and the inspiration of his talk. And as late as 1818, in dedicating his first collected works to Coleridge, he writes of 'those old suppers at our old Inn, - when life was fresh, and topics exhaustless, - and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindness'.

Most of Lamb's early letters to Coleridge are about poetry - above all Coleridge's, but also his own and Southey's. They are not all on the highest level as criticism, but they are full of good sense and frankness. He admired Coleridge's *Religious Musings* immensely: 'The noblest poem in the language, next after *Paradise Lost*' (Feb. 5 1797); 'You may safely rest your fame on it', he says. But although he thought it sublime he detects in it a tendency to the elaborate and the tumid. 'Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge', he writes (Nov. 8 1796), 'or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness: for simplicity springs spontaneous from the heart, and carries into daylight its own modest buds, and genuine, sweet, and clear flowers of expression.' When we think of the difference between *Religious Musings* and *The Ancient Mariner* we must admit that Lamb gave Coleridge the right advice. Coleridge may even have heeded it, though Wordsworth's influence overweighed Lamb's soon after this. It is interesting to find Lamb using religious and moral criteria, as well as literary ones, in judging Coleridge's poetry. For instance, he thanks Coleridge for *Religious Musings* 'in the name of a Christian, as well as a lover of good poetry' (10 June 1796). And yet he fears that its conclusion 'will entitle you to the reproof of your beloved woman, who wisely will not suffer your fancy to run riot, but bids you walk humbly with your God'. He is thinking here also, of course, of that passage in the poem later called *The Eolian Harp*, in which Coleridge makes his 'pensive Sara' check the shapings of his unregenerate mind. This has sometimes been regarded as a blemish, but it pleased Lamb and his sister for reasons other than aesthetic: 'as conveying a pleasing picture of Mrs. C. checking your wild wanderings, which we were so fond of hearing you indulge when among us. It has endeared us more than anything to your good lady; and your own self-reproof that follows, delighted us.'

I will not dwell upon the well-known story of the Lamb family tragedy in September 1796, except to comment briefly on Coleridge's reaction to it. It is well known that immediately afterwards Lamb begged Coleridge to 'write as religious a letter as possible'. Coleridge's reply, which Lamb called 'an inestimable treasure', contained the following phrases:

I look upon you as a man called by sorrow and anguish, and a strange desolation of hopes, into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God...You are a temporary sharer in human miseries that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine nature (28 Sept. 1796)

Under the immediate impact of the horror Lamb was ready to accept this view of his destiny, and to enter upon a life of austere renunciation: 'I must be serious, circumspect, and deeply religious through life; and by such means may *both* of us escape madness in future, if it so please the Almighty' (Oct. 3 1796). Religion had never been far from Lamb's way of life, though it was present rather as an ambience - something taken in naturally like daily bread or the air of breathing - than as a discipline or a cult. 'I sometimes wish to introduce a religious turn of mind; but habits are strong things, and my religious fervours are confined, alas! to some fleeting moments of occasional solitary devotion' (10 June 1796). At this time both Lamb and Coleridge were Unitarians and necessitarians of the school of Priestley; this was a further bond between them. But Coleridge had an immense pilgrimage ahead of him, a lifetime of thought, reading and suffering, before he could come to rest in the Trinitarian orthodoxy of his later years. Lamb could never have accompanied him on this theological Odyssey, nor would he have wished to. As life went on, and the impressions of tragedy wore dimmer, the original Lamb re-appeared; he speaks less of religion, but practises it in his daily life. Not for him the heights of speculation scaled by Coleridge; sufficient for Lamb the daily round and common task (not so common, for the care of Mary was his for life) cheerfully fulfilled. He was attracted to Quakerism, but on the whole his religion consisted in loving justice and mercy, and walking humbly with God. To an attentive reader his Essays will appear shot through and through with biblical and Christian allusions, but the allusions are often made ironically or jestingly, as by one who refers to a body of accepted truth which he does not question, but to which he is not personally committed.

Very soon Lamb had recovered his poise enough to be critical of Coleridge, and even of Coleridge's consolatory letter. On October 17, 1796, he writes deploring Coleridge's inability to settle down to a regular scheme of life; and the following week he takes exception to a mystical remark in Coleridge's last letter which he thinks 'more consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy than consistent with the humility of genuine piety.' And again, he is dissatisfied with that phrase in Coleridge's first letter about partaking of the Divine Nature: 'What more than this do those men say who are for exalting the man Christ Jesus into the second person of an unknown Trinity?' 'Be not angry with me, Coleridge: I wish not to cavil; I know I cannot instruct you; I only wish to remind you of that humanity which best becometh the Christian character... Let us learn to think humbly of ourselves... seeking to know no further.' In reply, Coleridge pointed out that to be 'a partaker of the Divine Nature' is a phrase from Scripture. Of course I know that, Lamb rejoins in effect; 'I am only apprehensive, lest we in these latter days, tintured (some of us, perhaps, pretty deeply) with mystical notions and the pride of metaphysics, might be apt to affix to such phrases a meaning, which the primitive users of them... never intended to convey.' But enough of all this! he soon adds: 'Let us attend to the proper business of human life, and talk a little together respecting our domestic concerns.'

Though suffering has given him the right to take this sort of tone with Coleridge, he continually hankers after his companionship and support. He is cut off from congenial company: 'Not a soul loves Bowles here; scarce

one has heard of Burns; few but laugh at me for reading my Testament' (Dec.10 1796). 'I love to write to you...It makes me think less meanly of myself...I am always longing to be with men more excellent than myself'. (Jan.10 1797)

At last in July 1797, Lamb paid his long-hoped-for and long-deferred visit to Coleridge at Nether Stowey; the Wordsworths (William and Dorothy) were there at the same time, and it is a wonder how all three guests were crammed into that small cottage, already containing the Coleridges themselves and little Hartley. One cannot think of the visit with much satisfaction. For months before there had been an unaccountable silence on Coleridge's part and a sense of neglect on Lamb's - all mostly due, no doubt, to the interventions of Charles Lloyd and the jealousy caused by his new influence over Lamb. Then on the actual visit came the scalding of Coleridge's foot, so that he could not walk on the Quantocks with his friends. His poem *This Lime Tree Bower My Prison*, which arose from this accident, was indeed the best outcome of the whole affair. But even this poem, admirable as it is in Coleridge's new conversation-piece style, strikes a false note where Lamb is concerned. Coleridge uses Lamb as a ventriloquist uses his dummy: as a mouthpiece for his own nature-worship, in which Lamb never shared. The hungering after nature, 'many a year in the great city pent', which Coleridge ascribes to Lamb, true enough for Coleridge himself and for Wordsworth, was false for Lamb, and it merely embarrassed him. And he hated being called 'my gentle-hearted Charles'. Lamb's 'Thank you' letter to Coleridge after his return to London lacks his usual spontaneity and sparkle: it is constrained, and shows that he had not mixed happily with the Quantock circle. Not a word about the beauties of Somerset. Instead, like St Paul at the end of 2 Timothy, he asks Coleridge to return the great-coat he had left behind by mistake (Coleridge never did). There is no record of any mention by William or Dorothy Wordsworth of their meeting with Lamb, although they remained lifelong friends. Coleridge fell silent again, perhaps uneasy about Lamb's new intimacy with Lloyd and Southey, with whom Coleridge was not on good terms, but also perhaps because for him the Wordsworths had begun to eclipse all other friendships, and ruled his heart and mind.

Yet on January 28, 1798, Lamb wrote to Coleridge (at Shrewsbury) thanking him for 'many kind letters', and ascribing his own silence to the prostration caused by another relapse of Mary's. Coleridge - all honour to him! but what could his wife have thought? - had actually invited Mary to come and recuperate at Nether Stowey. In gratefully declining this impulsive offer, Lamb reviewed their old friendship thus:

'To you I owe much, under God. In my brief acquaintance with you in London, your conversations won me to the better cause, and rescued me from the polluting spirit of the world. I might have been a worthless character without you; as it is, I do possess a certain improvable portion of devotional feelings, tho' when I view myself in the light of divine truth, and not according to the common measures of human judgment, I am altogether corrupt and sinful...My former calamities produced in me a spirit of humility and a spirit of prayer. I thought they had sufficiently disciplined me; but the event ought to humble me.'

The stage was now set for the only breach in the Lamb-Coleridge friendship, which can be put down chiefly to that estimable neurotic and trouble-maker Charles Lloyd. There is no need to go into the details; Lloyd and Lamb both thought themselves slighted by Coleridge, and Coleridge was furious with Lloyd (with whom Lamb was partly in sympathy) for writing what he regarded as a treacherous libel on him in the novel *Edmund Oliver*. What finally touched off the quarrel was a remark of Coleridge's, repeated to Lamb: 'Poor Lamb, if he wants any knowledge, he may apply to me.' Both this and Lamb's letter of June 1798, written just before Coleridge's departure for Germany, are out of character. It was not like Coleridge to be insolent, and it was not like Lamb to be waspish - as he was in the '*Theses Quaedam Theologicae*' - of which the gist was to ask Coleridge whether it was better to be a deceitful Seraph or an honest man. Coleridge, with his usual insight, put his finger on the root cause of the trouble when he said that both Lloyd and Lamb in their youthful folly had formed an ideal image of him 'which could belong to nothing human'. Now, 'you are restored to comparative sanity, and are merely wondering what has become of the Coleridge with whom you were so passionately in love. Charles Lloyd's mind has only changed its disease, and he is now arraying his ci-devant angel in a flaming Sanbenito' (Letter 243, to C.L., early May 1798). The whole imbroglio afflicted Coleridge more than Lamb or Lloyd, and he even ascribed to it his inability to finish *Christabel*. Fortunately Coleridge did not reply to the *Theses*, and the quarrel blew over. Their correspondence was not renewed till 1800, but the breach was never so serious as that later one between STC and Wordsworth, which had deeper psychological origins. It is reassuring to find Lamb, in November 1798, chiding Southey for calling the *Ancient Mariner* a 'Dutch attempt at German sublimity' - a clever-sounding but stupid phrase unworthy of its author. 'I call it', says Lamb, 'a right English attempt, and a successful one, to dethrone German sublimity.' 'You have selected a passage fertile in un-meaning miracles, but have passed by fifty passages as miraculous as the miracles they celebrate.'

In the spring and summer of 1800 Lamb is writing to Coleridge again, in a relaxed and even sometimes jocular mood, which presages a more stable relationship. On March 17 he tells Manning that Coleridge has been staying with him for three weeks - 'and the more I see of him in the quotidian undress and relaxation of his mind, the more cause I see to love him, and believe him a *very good man*...' The downright teasing of Lamb's letter to Coleridge of 4 August 1800 is a good sign:

'In the next edition of the *Anthology* (which Phoebus avert, and those nine other wandering maids also!) please to blot out "gentle-hearted", and substitute "drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering", or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question. And for Charles read Tom or Bob, or Richard for mere delicacy.'

By August 1800 Coleridge was settled at Keswick, drawn northwards by his pole-star Wordsworth. But the first to invite Lamb to the Lakes were Charles and Sophia Lloyd, and the second (shortly after) was Wordsworth himself. Lamb in the Lakes! - the idea is as preposterous as that of Dr Johnson in the Hebrides, yet both things happened. In a letter to Manning (Nov. 28, 1800) Lamb speaks of the Lloyd invitation, and bursts into

a panegyric on his beloved London:

'...with reference to my friends northward, I must confess that I am not romance-bit about *Nature*...Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches...inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like Cambridge colleges; old book-stalls, *Jeremy Taylors*, *Burtons on Melancholy*, and *Religio Medicis* on every stall. These are thy pleasures, O London! with thy many sins...for these may Keswick and her giant brood go hang!'

His reply to Wordsworth's invitation was in similar style:

'With you and your sister I could gang anywhere /but he is afraid of the expense/...Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead Nature!.../Then, after the usual list of London sights and sounds, he adds/ 'I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me.' (Jan.30, 1801)

What blasphemy this must have seemed at Dove Cottage! *Dead Nature!* Don't care if I never see a mountain! And matters were not improved next month when Lamb ventured some sharp criticisms of *Lyrical Ballads* Vol. 2, and clearly preferred *The Ancient Mariner* to all the rest, including *Tintern Abbey*.

When finally in the late summer of 1802 Lamb did go to Lakeland, it was to Keswick to see Coleridge; and he went unannounced, and accompanied by Mary. He was impressed by the scenery despite himself, or shall we say despite his anti-romantic pose:

'I feel that I shall remember your mountains to the last day I live. They haunt me perpetually. I am like a man who has been falling in love unknown to himself, which he finds out when he leaves the lady. I do not remember any very strong impression while they were present; but, being gone, their mementos are shelved in my brain.'

The fullest account of this visit is in a letter to Manning (24 Sept. 1802). Coleridge, he says, 'received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country.' His house /Greta Hall/ is surrounded by mountains: 'great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep...Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw etc.' They stayed three weeks, visiting Dove Cottage (where in the absence in Calais of the Wordsworths, they stopped a night with the Clarksons). They climbed Helvellyn and Skiddaw ('Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries

so famous in song and ballad!'). But Fleet Street and the Strand are better places than Skiddaw to live in for good and all.

There is little more to relate, and time in any case runs short. As the middle years draw on, Coleridge often disappears from Lamb's world and from correspondence for long spells. Important changes and crises in Coleridge's life come and go without notice in the letters we have: Malta, the separation from his wife, his ill-health and addiction, the direction of his mature studies and efforts. A typical remark is this (to Southey 6 May 1815): 'Of C. I hear nothing...I hope to have him like a re-appearing star, standing up before me some time when least expected in London, as has been the case whilere.' Other correspondents fill the gap, but the tie of special relationship is always there. In 1812 Lamb did for a time play a part in the diplomatic approaches leading to a detente between Wordsworth and Coleridge. One of the very few extant letters from Coleridge to Lamb is on this subject (2 May 1812).

I must hurry to a conclusion. In later years, when Coleridge had at last found a haven at Highgate where he could organise his thinking and living under Gillman's care, the two friends met and wrote but seldom, but always affectionately and with the knowledge of perfect accord. Lamb always disclaimed any power to think connectedly or systematically, so he could not be expected to follow closely Coleridge's efforts, in the *Biographia Literaria*, *Lay Sermons*, *Aids to Reflection*, *Constitution of Church and State* etc. to deliver part of a life-time's accumulation of thought and reading. But Coleridge's very existence and proximity acted upon him like a spell. Writing to Wordsworth (26 April 1816) he says of Coleridge:

'He is, at present, under the medical care of a Mr Gilman /sic/, a Highgate apothecary, where he plays at leaving off laud-m. I think his essentials not touched: he is very bad; but then he wonderfully picks up another day, and his face, when he repeats his verses, hath its ancient glory; an archangel a little damaged ...Coleridge is absent but four miles, and the neighbourhood of such a man is as exciting as the presence of fifty ordinary persons. 'Tis enough to be within the whiff and wind of his genius for us not to possess our souls in quiet.'

Lamb survived Coleridge by only five months (July-Dec. 1834), but as Lucas says he began to die on July 25, when Coleridge died. I conclude, not with the well-known extract from the Essay *Christ's Hospital* but with some sentences from what Lamb wrote in November 1834:

'When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he had long been on the confines of the next world, - that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve. But, since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men and books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations. He was a Grecian...at Christ's Hospital, where I was Deputy-Grecian; and the same subordination and deference to him I have preserved through a

life-long acquaintance...He was my fifty-years-old friend without a dissension. Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again.'

DE QUINCEY AND *THE LONDON MAGAZINE*

Tim Chilcott

In October 1821, the editorial column of the *London Magazine* directed its readers' attention to the second part of a 'deep, eloquent and masterly paper', which had been placed at the head of the contents for that number. The title of the article, the first part of which had been published a month previously, was *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar* - and its appearance marked the introduction of Thomas De Quincey to one of the finest literary periodicals ever to have been brought out in England.

Through the sympathetic researches of several historians, the details of the *London's* hey-day and subsequent decline are now sufficiently well known to obviate the need for an extensive rehearsal of its history. The first number of the magazine had appeared in January 1820, under the proprietorship of Robert Baldwin and the editorship of John Scott - and few journals can ever have promised to contribute so greatly to the cause of English letters. Within less than six months, its policy of political liberalism, combined with Scott's personal magnetism and his unique flair for exacting the best out of contributors, had attracted the genius of both Lamb and Hazlitt, as well as lesser lights such as Reynolds, Talfourd and Wainwright. During the latter months of 1820, indeed, despite the economic difficulties of a small circulation, the magazine promised to equal in literary talent, and even to outshine, both Blackwood's *Maga* and the *Edinburgh Review*. Its concern for literary originality was invigorating, and both Hazlitt's *Table Talk* and Lamb's immortal *Elia* had been created in its pages. It had flair and courage, and its determination to divorce the criticism of literature from the political and religious dogma that so often restricted the freedom of other periodicals, generated an invaluable atmosphere of disinterested comradeship among contributors. Yet within six months, tragedy and uncertainty had left the magazine almost adrift. On 16 February 1821, Scott was critically wounded in a duel at Chalk Farm, the result of a deep antagonism that had for months darkened the pages of *Maga* and the *London*. Although there were some signs at first that he might recover, the promise did not hold. Eleven days later, he was dead.

In Baldwin's own words, Scott's death left a 'chasm'. He had been an editor combining rare qualities, both political liberalism and critical astuteness, both the authority of a perceptive intelligence and personal sympathy for the aspirations of his writers. But with him now dead, and with the restricted circulation of the magazine a continuing financial problem, Baldwin resolved finally to dispose of it. On 26 April 1821, he sold it to the house of Taylor & Hessey, the publishers of Keats, Cary, Hazlitt

and Clare - and in September and October of that year, under Taylor's editorship, De Quincey's *Confessions* first appeared.

Taylor and Hessey had been introduced to De Quincey during the summer of 1821 by Thomas Noon Talfourd, the lawyer friend of Lamb, and it seems likely indeed that Lamb himself had been instrumental in organising their meeting. From the first encounter between De Quincey and his new publishers, it is clear that a firm and open friendship was created - a friendship which, while it was never in future years to attain any great intimacy, yet rested upon a kindness of intention and generosity of spirit that did much to encourage De Quincey in his work. For Taylor especially, the wealth and eclecticism of De Quincey's mind fostered a sense of intellectual kinship that he felt keenly; and during the autumn of 1821, the range and fluency of their many conversations together, as Richard Woodhouse noted, was often miraculous. Over haunches of venison and wine, De Quincey would lead the publisher into abstruse discussions upon contemporary German philosophy and literature, into the question whether God existed in the present, or the past, or was only 'about to be'; and Taylor in his turn would draw the opium-eater into disquisitions upon languages, both ancient and modern, history, Shakespeare and Spenser, Roman roads - all of which De Quincey knew in intimate detail. With Hessey too, although such mental gymnastics were evidently less inviting, a firm sympathy was created. Indeed, during the years 1821-24, the house pursued a general policy of help and encouragement which certainly did much to sustain De Quincey's morale. Considerable sums of money were lent for articles that might or might not get written, lodgings were often provided, clothing lent, letters composed by Hessey in particular to help him in his periodic attempts to abstain from laudanum entirely - and such encouragement was well rewarded in literary terms. In the three years following their first meeting, he completed some twenty-three articles for the *London*.

There can be no doubt that the finest of all De Quincey's contributions to the magazine was his *Confessions*. His later articles, appearing in 1823 and 1824, concentrated too heavily upon remote and laboured analyses of such subjects as political economy, in which the imaginative energy of his mind seemed fatally beleaguered by statistics and abstract theory. But in the *Confessions*, the freedom and flux of his intelligence, the exploration of language, of sound patterns, rhythm and sentence construction - these evoked a labyrinthine world of the conditional and the potential. The ordinary structures of time and place became dislocated, and evolving patterns of memory, dream and music were slowly woven into the articulation of the 'majestic intellect' of man. Yet, although this work justly stands at the centre of his association with the *London*, there exists another contribution to the magazine in the form of a first draft, which was clearly intended for publication and yet which never finally appeared. Its interest lies not only in the fact that it may be interpreted as a firm statement of the specific editorial policy Taylor intended to follow in the magazine, but also in the fact that, during the course of the article, De Quincey attempts a significant analysis of the general influence of periodical literature in Regency England.

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A few selected extracts from the draft 'On the *London Magazine*' were first

quoted some years ago by Richard H Byrns in 'Some Unpublished Works of De Quincey', *PMLA* LXXI, v, December 1956; but as far as I am aware, this is the first time the article has been published in full. The manuscript itself is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, and as might be expected with a first draft, it is in a state of very considerable disorder. Two sets of page numbers appear, the one in De Quincey's hand being relatively easy to follow, the other in an unknown hand making little logical sense in places. The draft is also full of extensive crossings out, especially towards the end; and for the sake of clarity and continuity, it has seemed to me better to reproduce, with a few exceptions, only the 'final' version. Occasionally, De Quincey has struck out passages which are of some interest, and these are included below in italic type; but in general, my aim has been to present only his concluding thoughts on the subject, such as we have them.

From obvious internal evidence, and from the fact that the words 'Jan 1822' are written at the bottom of p.1 in a hand which looks like Taylor's, it is certain that the draft was written in November or December 1821, and it was clearly intended to preface the December edition of the magazine, as a letter addressed to the reading public. Why it was not published, however, remains unclear, though the date 'Jan 1822' on p.1 might well indicate that it was submitted too late to go to press. It seems certain too that the article was proposed by Taylor himself as an advertisement for the firm's future editorial policy; and few statements indeed could better illustrate the collective energy and enthusiasm surrounding the magazine at this time than the list of proposals made by him. The *London* was already good; it would now attempt greatness.

The many specific improvements promised to readers of the magazine may be seen in the draft below; but reading them one senses also some more general desires, some deeper purposes that were certainly to inform the *London* during the first two years of Taylor's editorship. The policy, for instance, to present new translations and interpretations of French, German, Latin and Greek literature reveals, not only an invigorating comprehensiveness of taste, but also a desire to explore the broader traditions of a European civilisation, as opposed to a distinctively English culture. The magazine, indeed, clearly intended to range far more widely over the realm of literature than its title might have initially suggested. In the formulation of this policy, of course, it is only right that De Quincey himself should be seen as a guiding force, rather than as the mere mouthpiece for Taylor's ideas. He believed that all literatures tended 'to superannuation' unless 'crossed by some other of different breed'; and his well-known passion for the intellectual strength and richness of German thought is firmly demonstrated by the detailed proposals in the draft for translations of the *Nibelungen Lied*, and of Richter, Voss and other contemporary German writers. Yet there is little doubt either that these views strongly reflected Taylor's own thinking about the future direction of the magazine. Taylor's mind, like De Quincey's, was eclectic, and ranged widely over seemingly unrelated areas of experience. He was, even more importantly, an accomplished linguist, and deeply interested throughout his whole career in the nature and function of language. In the formulation of this new policy, the two minds met. The *London*, far from concentrating exclusively upon the glories

of English Language and literature, would try in future numbers to promote the cross-fertilisation of a truly European culture.

As important as this catholic attitude towards literature, however, is the emphasis De Quincey also places upon the wider function of the magazine in society as a whole. Towards the end of the draft, he comments perceptively upon the development any literary periodical must follow if it is to attain a lasting power: from an initial conformity with 'the existing taste' of the reading public to a gradually increasing influence upon the directions of 'the national mind'. It must be granted, of course, that in the end, the *London* met with only very limited success in the implementation of this policy. Even during the three years of its most sustained brilliance, its circulation never once reached 2,500 copies, compared with the 17,000 copies of Blackwood's *Maga* or the 14,000 of the *Quarterly*; and it was never to attain the political authority and prestige of either of these two journals. Yet perhaps in this instance, intentions were more important than results, for the broad implications of such a policy clearly encouraged contributors greatly during the first two years of Taylor's editorship. Rather than exist as a static reflector of its age, the magazine would seek to formulate and shape new attitudes of public taste. It would seek a dynamic role of innovation and experiment, rather than act as a mere mouthpiece for political and literary orthodoxy.

Many of these plans for improvement contained in the draft may serve to illustrate something of the creative energy and liberalism that the *London* generated from January 1820 until the autumn of 1823, when it began slowly to decline. Yet for the literary historian, what is arguably of greater importance than these specific proposals is the significant examination De Quincey also makes of the power of periodical literature in general. Many of his criticisms against the great Reviews were not of course original, even in 1821. His attacks upon the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly* for their partiality and caprice, for the frequency with which critics merely used new books as a pretext for lengthy dissertations upon a topic of their own choosing, for the way in which literature was often eclipsed by lectures upon political economy and allied subjects - all these complaints were often voiced by commentators of the age, and were indeed symptomatic of a fundamental estrangement between the creative artist and his public. Yet his general analysis of the firm relationship between literature and politics in the Reviews serves as an invaluable reminder of how deeply interwoven these two fields were in the Regency period. So often as one surveys the writing of this period is it tempting to believe that authors, exploring the nature of dream and imagination, memory and childhood, lived almost entirely in a private world, without a social perspective. But as De Quincey indicates, in the actual dissemination of literature amongst critics and the reading public, that privacy was brought up against the harsher realities of political dogma and critical inflexibility. Books were reviewed, not simply with regard to their intrinsic literary merit, but also with a firm eye upon their political and moral attitudes.

In the face of such pressures, it was perhaps almost inevitable that many writers of the period should seek to elevate their own role above society - and in his attempt to restrict the meaning of the word 'literature' in

the beginning of the article, De Quincey himself indeed reveals a characteristically Romantic attitude. If, as he argues, the word may not legitimately be applied to the total number of books produced by a society, but only to a much narrower range of works, then literature necessarily becomes a special and exalted province of human activity, to be indemnified against the machinations of reviewers and politicians. In the end, of course, the reality was never as easy as this, either for De Quincey or for other contributors to the *London*; for literature cannot survive in a vacuum from which the world of social behaviour is totally excluded. Yet neither can it survive fruitfully when subject to the pressures of political allegiance and critical dogma. And in his final emphasis upon the primacy of creative writing over critical, in the desire to divorce the criticism of literature from the acrimony of political sectarianism, one may without exaggeration see a plea for a new liberalism in contemporary reviewing. It was one of the considerable glories of the *London* that, for some three years, it answered that plea.

'ON THE LONDON MAGAZINE'

(for permission to publish this article, I should like to thank the Trustees of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York)

/1/ On closing their fourth volume, which is the first under their own management, the Conductors of the London Magazine are reminded naturally and agreeably to themselves of the claim, which is connected by old usage with such periodic pauses in the progress of literary labors, for a few words of courteous acknowledgement to the Public and of promises for future exertion. At the same time they cannot but be sensible of the spirit in which such words of course are commonly uttered and received. Ceremonial words are not often sincere: and promises, which respect objects in their very nature indefinite, are seldom precise or accurately meditated. For both reasons, periodic acknowledgements to the public and promises of future improvement are expressed and entertained)

received) with little cordiality on either side: what is offered without sincerity is received without belief: and for the most part the very writers of such promises would complain of being held to too strict an interpretation of their words. Nevertheless, as the close of a volume coinciding with the close of their labors for the year 1821 - brings with it a necessity for saying something, the Conductors of the London Magazine will avail themselves of the occasion thus offered to them for drawing the public attention to their own recent exertions for upholding and advancing the future character of their journal: and, as their exertions have really /2/ been very earnest and extensive, they will take the liberty of giving weight to this rehearsal by connecting with it some notice of the particular relation to the literature of this country which is occupied at this time by Magazines: relying upon the earnestness of their own zeal by the /one word indecipherable/ good letters for communicating to their manner /sic/ an adequate and corresponding impression of sincerity with which they speak.

/3/ The word *literature*, in default of any other sufficiently comprehensive, is sometimes employed as a collective designation for all that communicates with the Public by means of the Press: and in this sense the

Literature of a nation is no more than the total amount of its' books. But in a philosophic use of the word, literature denotes one (and the most important) of the Fine Arts. From the jurisdiction of literature, thus restricted, a great majority of the journals published are at once excluded*: and there remain, for purposes strictly literary, but two classes of journals - viz. Reviews and Magazines.

These are the two organs by which the Literature /4/ expresses its' collective voice amongst the other interests of a nation. How far their provinces coincide, and at what point they diverge, - may be readily brought under the eye by the three following distinctions:

1 *Considered as vehicles of liberal amusement*, - whilst both apply themselves to the survey of literature, Magazines apply themselves further to the delineation of human life.

2 *Considered as themselves part of the literature*, whilst Reviews analyse and criticise but are themselves scarcely parts of the literature; nor in any other sense literary than in virtue of their objects, - Magazines on the other hand unite with these offices of criticism those of original production, and contribute to the joint stock of the literature by examples in *every* department of composition.

3 *Considered as tribunals of criticism*, - whilst the functions of Reviews terminate in Literature, the Magazines extend theirs to all the rest of the Fine Arts. No doubt it is sometimes possible that, - as forensic cases, not otherwise producible before a court of justice, may be shaped for adjudication by legal fictions, - so the privileges of Reviews may be warrantably stretched for the sake of meeting particular questions and bringing them before their bar: thus, if it were desired to notice the Elgin Marbles or other works of Ancient Art, /5/ perhaps this purpose might be legitimately accomplished by treating the case as one part of learned antiquities. But more often these deviations from their proper province have been introduced and colored by fictions purely verbal.

* Perhaps the whole of these may be constructed by the understanding, for its own satisfaction, into the following systematic arrangement:

1. (as one extreme) all journals which draw their materials from knowledge arbitrary and conventional as growing out of human institutions: e.g. the Military, Naval, Commercial, and Political journals: these are local to the business of one nation.
2. (as the other extreme) all which draw their materials from knowledge grounded upon the immutable distinctions of nature: e.g. journals dedicated to the Arts and Sciences: these are cosmopolitical.
3. (as mediating between the two former) all those which, whilst they are in one view cosmopolitical - as referring to principles severely scientific and co-eternal with nature, are yet in another merely national as addressing themselves to the distinct civil interests of a particular nation: e.g. Agricultural journals, and those for the three learned professions.

These three distinctions between Reviews and Magazines leaving a great balance of advantage on the side of the latter, - has this balance been at all disturbed by the departures from ancient plans which have distinguished modern Reviews? That it has *not* been disturbed, or not favourably to the proper functions of a critical journal, will appear from the slightest sketch of their history. - About twenty years ago, the Edinburgh Review established itself upon a new* principle - the principle of selection: by what law was the selection to be governed? Antithetically stated, - upon this - that no books should be noticed except those which 1. not attaining any celebrity, should yet deserve it; or 2. not deserving any celebrity, should yet attain it. This principle, though praised by a most philosophic enemy to the Review, was surely not a philosophic one; if for no other reason than this - that continuous quantities, which are implied in all questions of more or less, cannot be accurately measured except by a scale accurately graduated: but what philosophy can furnish such a scale for measuring the degrees of reputation and of merit?

/6/ Philosophic or not however, the principle was never acted upon: selection indeed there was, but governed by no more dignified law than that of caprice, of party feeling, or of personal regards. Change however is seldom stationary: and this first deviation from established usage paved the way for these others:

1. Criticism and Analysis were abandoned for original discussion: and the title of some book was cited at the head of each article - simply as involving the text on which the Reviewer proposed to lecture.
2. Any case of momentary and pressing public interest, such as are constantly thrown up by the complex constitution of English society, was eagerly caught at as a thesis for an effective article - however little connected with any question of literature. - As in the former instance, existing dissertations were looking out for justifying pretexts and occasions on which to fasten themselves, - so, in this, existing subjects and occasions were looking out for dissertations.
3. A revolution of more determined character was brought about by an accident. Amongst the contributors to the Edinburgh Review for the first 10 years of its' existence were several members of Parliament. The intense *esprit de corps* which /7/ marks /the gentlemen of the House of Commons/ especially in relation to books, could not fail to have been noticed by the conductors of the Review: and it was duly turned to account. To be familiarly talked of - to be quoted in debate - and in part to be written by gentlemen of the House, - were accidents that greatly aided its' popularity in a region of society from which any influence is easily propagated downwards. Countenance of this sort was not thrown away upon the Review, which in its' turn met and supported it almost constantly by articles of disproportionate length on Political Economy, and not seldom by others yet more specifically adapted to Parliamentary occasions, and manifesting a Parliamentary origin in the class of information communicated. - With this increasing popularity of

* This principle however was involved virtually in the practice of most reviews then existing: works of some pretense were discussed at length: insignificant works were dismissed with a summary notice printed in a smaller character.

the Edinburgh review arose a proportionable advantage to that party with which it had connected itself for purposes of reciprocal support; and a call from the adverse party for some balance to its' authority in a journal of the same class /8/ produced the Quarterly Review, which was thus in its' very origin a political much more than a literary journal. The same impulse which at first gave motion to this work has continued to determine its' character and complexion: it has pursued the same general path as the Edinburgh Review, and with all that superiority of effect which belongs to official connections. It is now a great state-engine, a very serviceable expounder of ministerial views and in many cases a substitute for Committees of the House of Commons.

Such is the present condition of the two principal *soi-disant* literary journals: both are the organs of a party - deriving upon the harshness of Politics a collateral grace from Literature, but otherwise having long reduced the concerns of Literature whether Foreign or Domestic to the rank of subordinate interests. No books, it is now generally remarked, are selected for review but such as present subjects /9/ for articles of eminent display: in proportion as they have extended their basis in one direction and for one set of purposes, they have removed it in another: and by a series of unfortunate changes too closely connected with the petty ends of personal ambition to have been easily resisted except by the highest mode of intellectual dignity, they have renounced all extensive influences, beneficial or otherwise, upon the literature of England.

/10/ A jurisdiction, thus waived and renounced by others, becomes the property of any journal with whose previous duties it can at all combine. To this point in the first place it is that the Conductors of the London Magazine would wish to direct their promises for the ensuing year. Without meaning to throw any unusual weight of exertion into the channel of criticism on the current literature, they are satisfied that effects much more beneficial than any which could arise in that way will be produced in another - viz. through the several plans which they have arranged for directing the attention of their contemporaries, by means of analytic sketches - biographical notices - or elaborate translations, to models of various excellence in various languages. *For such a purpose, they will add that singular facilities are /fecund?/ by a mere negative characteristic of the London Magazine, viz. the absense of any one presiding mind studiously impressing its' own stamp upon the whole body of the articles. Such an over-ruling predominance of any individual mind cannot but be an injury with relation to literature, by cramping and distorting the natural movements of energetic thinkers: but this injury, for the sake of consistency in political sentiment, those journals which have courted a political character have been obliged to encounter.* Some of the most interesting among these plans they will here delineate by a rapid outline: and it will not fail to impress the reader that if their engagements seem unusually /11/ splendid, they are also unusually definite and precise.

I. - *English Literature.* It is remarkable that one compartment in the cartoons of our domestic literary history, viz. the period between the close of Johnson's Lives to the rise of our present brilliant aera of Poetry, is but obscurely known amongst ourselves: it is somewhat disgraceful to add that this omission on our own part has been supplied with tolerable accuracy for German students in the History of Literature by

Frederick Bouterweck. This reproach to our liberal curiosity will now be wholly removed: the chain of our literary annals will now be brought down to our own times; and in the most agreeable way - viz. by separate biographical notices, of which two (those of Thomas Warton and of Sir W. Jones) have already appeared. - A service of this nature to our domestic literature must naturally attract some distinction to the journal in which they are published, and furnish matter of just pride to its conductors. Still greater will be their pride in making known as the name of the author the name of one who, in the testimony of hostile critics, has already raised in one memorable work an imperishable monument to the powers of the English language and to the perpetual illustration of his own name.

II. - *Early French Literature*:- for this the Conductors of the Lond. Mag. rely upon

/12/ III. - *German Literature*:- on this head, as the Conductors of the London Mag. are enabled to make large promises, they are also entitled to give their due weight and value to such promises by contrasting them with the extreme poverty of all contemporary efforts in this direction. Neither by way of translation (with one or two illustrious exceptions) nor of critical analysis has the English literature hitherto communicated with the German upon any reasonable scale or for any praiseworthy result. This vast region of literature offers accordingly to this moment not as most other fields of literary research temptations merely to industrious glances but a whole harvest as it were untouched by the sickle. On the encouragement held out by wealth so /redundant?/ neglected so unaccountably, laborers have at length begun to assemble. From one has been received an offer of papers upon the *Nibelungen Lied* and the romantic age of the German literature. With another an engagement has been entered into of the following tenor:- by means of translations executed with elaborate care from the most eminent of the Fine Writers of modern Germany, a Chrestomatheia or Anthology will gradually be naturalised in the English language of the finest passages both in prose and verse and such as are the least dependent for their beauty upon the connexion in which they stand. To these analects will be prefixed a sketch of the style and manner of the particular author from whom they are drawn. In the present number of the Magazine it has been judged advisable to publish, by way of previous specimen, 2 scenes from /13/ J. Paul Richter, although wanting that elaborate burnish which will be given to all the translations in the regular series. - A metrical version of the *Luisa* of Voss will be amongst the earliest specimens. From Paul Richter has been chosen the Prelude or Overture to this undertaking, - 1st. as being the most difficult author in the German Language. 2. as the most original and interesting; 3. as among the oldest now living (having published his earliest work in 1783) 4. and for that very reason as most powerfully confirming the extraordinary neglect with which the German literature has been treated: for not only are his very numerous works untranslated; but it is believed that excepting by D. Reid and another Physician his name has never been mentioned in any English work until it has at length in December 1821 been formally introduced to the English public by the London Magazine.

From these plans of *specific* improvement which they are happy to engage that they will realise in the ensuing year, - the Conductors of the L.M. will pass to a cursory mention of three *general* features of improvement which they have resolved to keep steadily in view from the opening of their next volume: viz. to introduce

1. A greater *variety* of articles:
2. A larger infusion of articles connected with the *classical* remains of antiquity:
3. A more steady provision for the wishes of those who seek for papers of *direct instruction*.

/14/ With respect to the 1st. engagement they need offer no further explanation. As to their means of realising this improvement, it is sufficient to say that besides other brilliant writers with whom they are connected, and whom they have already mentioned, the same connexion as heretofore subsists between the London Mag. and those three most eminent authors - severally moving in the foremost paths of literature - Elia, the author of *Tradit. Lit.* - and the author of *Table Talk*. Upon each author it would be a waste of words to pronounce any panegyric: to name them is to utter a eulogy: and with reference to them, it will be most /sic/ for the interest of the L. Mag. to say that there will be *no* improvement: but that it will go on as heretofore.

In the 2nd. they refer /sic/ chiefly to buy finished translations from the Greek Drama, the Greek Anthologies, and the Lyric Poets both Greek and Latin. For these, as well as for short and highly polished Greek translations from the English Academies?/, they have reason to expect the assistance of scholars from both the English universities. A Paper upon this subject will appear in an early number of the next year.

In connexion with the 3rd. engagement they are enabled to promise two series of letters which will excite an interest by their titles in many minds; viz.

1. Letters to a young man of talents whose education has been neglected:
2. Letters on the Transcendental Philosophy

/15/ Thus far the Conductors of the London Mag. have addressed themselves to the Public: they now turn in conclusion to the scholars and men of talent throughout its Empire, for the purpose of requesting th/e/ir active cooperation in furthering the great interests of lib/e/rating good Taste, /and/ sound thinking which it is the purpose of this journal to cherish and promote. At this moment they can allege with some pride that a larger list of eminent names is connected with this work than have ever at one time /corresponded/ with any periodical journal whatsoever. With these they would /two words indecipherable/ by uniting other men of eminent abil./ities/ and attainments: it is known to the lit. men connected with themselves that they have constantly offered as high remunerations of a pecuniary sort as *any* journal of the highest name and pretension and higher by one half than some of the most popular.

The objects they have in view are great and they would meet them by proportion /six or seven words are indecipherable/ A literary journal must at first conform to the existing taste: as its' influence grows however and with the

support of men of various talent it may gain the power of giving a new direction for many important purposes with activities of the national mind. So great an object as this the Conductors of the London Mag. would gladly accomplish at any sacrifice to themselves, conscious that in this way only and by thus combining the efforts of many brilliant authors they can hope to render their journal worthy of the great /purpose, enterprise?/ to which it is addressed, or of that mighty and august metropolis under the sanction of whose name it issues to the world.

BOOK REVIEWS

John O Hayden: *The Romantic Reviewers 1802-1824*
 John O Hayden (ed.): *Romantic Bards and British Reviewers*

'The story of /Keats's/ Isabella, or the Pot of Basil, from Boccaccio, is the worst part of the volume.' Anon., *Monthly Review*, 1820

'The finest thing in the volume /by Keats/ is the paraphrase of Boccaccio's story of the Pot of Basil.' Charles Lamb, *Examiner*, 1820

These two books will be of immense interest to anyone seriously concerned with the literature - but especially the poetry - of the first quarter of the 19th century in Great Britain. Mr Hayden has written an admirable and useful book, *The Romantic Reviewers, 1802-1824* which fills a large gap in scholarship related to literary criticism of the period; the book is a survey of literary reviewing of the time, along with an account of the critical estimates of the major poets and a few minor writers. Mr Hayden's other book, *Romantic Bards and British Reviewers*, is a gathering of what he judges to be 'the best criticism of the best-known works of the major poets'.

The Rev. Sydney Smith, generally acknowledged to be responsible for the idea of the *Edinburgh Review*, includes the following engaging paragraph in the preface to his *Works*, (1839):

To appreciate the value of the *Edinburgh Review*, the state of England at the period when that Journal began should be had in remembrance. The Catholics were not emancipated--the Corporation and Test Acts were unrepealed--the Game Laws were horribly oppressive--Steel Traps and Spring Guns were set all over the country--Prisoners tried for their Lives could have no Counsel--Lord Eldon and the Court of Chancery pressed heavily upon mankind--Libel was punished by the most cruel and vindictive imprisonments--the principles of Political Economy were little understood--the Law of Debt and Conspiracy were upon the worst possible footing--the enormous wickedness of the Slave Trade was tolerated-- a thousand evils were in existence, which the talents of good and able men have since lessened or removed; and these effects have been not a little assisted by the honest boldness of the *Edinburgh Review*.

It continues to be a truism that the early 19th century saw changes - social, political, economic and literary - unknown in the history of Great Britain. And further, as Sydney Smith suggests, it is apparent that the literary reviews, especially the great ones such as the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, and *Blackwood's*, had significant roles in the advancement and the attempt to retard radical social change. But exactly to what extent a literary review, such as the *Edinburgh Review*, was a cause of social action, generating change, or was instead an effect of the revolutionary spirit of 1802 remains essentially an unanswered question. A social historian has yet to write a book that will consider the explicit relationships of the literary reviews to social developments during the crucial period 1800-1825. Mr Hayden's books do not deal directly with these matters, and yet they seem to present the challenge of pursuing the role of the literary reviews and the reform movement in England.

They are most useful, however, in helping us to reconstruct certain aspects of the spirit of the time. It is important, one may think, to understand that the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge and their contemporaries were often considered on their moral soundness as well as literarily. In a fine little vignette sent to the editor of a newspaper, Sydney Smith began, 'It is of some importance at what period a man is born', and the reviewers quite as much as the poets were products and reflections of an 18th century heritage and 19th century thought.

Clearly Mr Hayden's two books were conceived and published as companion pieces which are functionally complementary to each other. The first book, published in 1969, provides a detailed and useful description of the more important reviews and reviewers, indicating the quality of their reviewing and a sense of the critical milieu. Mr Hayden is cautious about generalisations upon this mass of printed material; what he does, in fact, is to bring together in a coherent and organised form an account of the reviews, reviewers, and their approaches to the literature of the time.

The second book, edited by Mr Hayden, consists of sixty-eight reviews of the five major Romantic poets - Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats. The book brings to life the intellectual and critical spirit of the times in quite a different manner from the first book: in *The Romantic Reviewers* the author discusses the reviews cogently, but the second reconstructs for the reader the historical and critical estimate of the chief Romantic poems; the succinct eleven-page introduction is well worth keeping at hand whenever one wishes to generalise about 'Romantic reviewing', and one is likely to find that certain popular fallacies concerning the reviews of the time are neatly exploded.

The Romantic Reviewers is composed essentially of units with comparatively little relationship between them. Apart from an introduction and a conclusion, there are fourteen parts; the two giants of the reviews, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* are considered first, and then follows a chapter on 'The Lesser British Reviewing Periodicals 1802-1824'. Subsequently there are chapters on The Lake School (Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey); The Satanic School (Scott - yes, Sir Walter! - Byron and Shelley); The Cockney School (Hunt, Keats and Hazlitt); and the last group, somewhat lamely called 'Out of School' (Moore, Lamb and Crabbe). The arrangement calls for a bit of comment - for example, to find Scott part

of the Satanic School would quite likely be an astonishment to Southey, who created the term for Byron. Since the term implies moral considerations, and because Scott's poetry 'occasioned a good deal of moral controversy', the label is applied by Mr Hayden and Scott is included, says the author, to emphasise the problem of his vicious heroes and Scott's mixed critical reception - fairly weak reasons, but they fail to mar much more than the name of the category.

The use of 1802 and 1824 as the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* is also a curiosity; the first date marks the initiation of the *Edinburgh Review*, and the latter date is accounted for by Mr Hayden thus:

The terminal date (1824) was both the year in which William Gifford retired as editor of the *Quarterly Review* and the year of Byron's death. Within the period, all the published works of Byron, Shelley, Keats are included, all the poetry of Scott, and almost all the important works of the remaining writers. By 1824 the astonishing creativity of the Romantic age was at an end.

Mr Hayden begins his book with a section covering the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, two most popular and influential periodicals of the time which met no serious rival until the founding of *Blackwood's* in 1817. The significance of the *idea* of the *Edinburgh* probably cannot be estimated with complete accuracy. Apparently it was unknown for a journal to provide what today we often call review-articles, reviews which go beyond the bounds of reviewing the book but offer original ideas and comments; and the idea of doing more than giving 'an idea of the content and relative worth of recent publications - the merest practical function of reviewing' was apparently equally unknown. The dimension of scope and originality unique to the *Edinburgh Review* was characterised by the radical proposition to review books of quality and, if possible, with reviews which were of high quality themselves. The scope of the review, and of the reviewers' knowledge, was immense; the first number of October 1802 contained twenty-nine reviews of works of economics, politics, science and literature. The popularity of the *Edinburgh* was immediate, and through the continuing leadership of its editor, Francis Jeffrey, it maintained a dominant position for years to come.

The *Quarterly Review* was generated in part by the liberal (though not strictly Whig) position of the *Edinburgh*, more specifically by an article of October 1808 which ironically managed to offend Whigs as much as Tories. Soon the policies of the new rival were established, and in 1809 it began publication. Its stance, Mr Hayden suggests, was to be conservative rather than to represent the government. Perhaps predictably, by the 1820s the *Quarterly* was reactionary, guided carefully by its editor Gifford.

In the next portion of the book Mr Hayden considers the roles of the lesser reviews, focussing chronologically on the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review*, the *British Critic*, the *Anti-jacobin Review and True Churchman's Magazine*, the *Christian Observer*, the *Eclectic Review*, the *London Review*, the *Annual Review*, the *Gentleman's Magazine* (the 'oldest magazine to survive the eighteenth century'), and a host of others, the most notable of which is probably *Blackwood's* (founded in 1817), an 'ultra-Tory' periodical which

was at times most irresponsible in reviewing. The *London Magazine* (1820-1829), which will be a familiar name to those who recall Lamb's famous contributions to it, Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*, John Scott's *Champion*, and a few other magazines were not primarily reviewing periodicals but included such articles from time to time.

In the subsequent sections of the book Mr Hayden considers the twelve authors referred to earlier, dealing first with the Lake School. Wordsworth is dealt with most fully and most satisfactorily in what is a strictly chronological examination of the reviews of his poems. Not only is Mr Hayden able to suggest to us the critical estimate of Wordsworth, but he is also able to give us a hint of the flavour - and the strengths and weaknesses - of the contemporary reviews. He begins with an account of one of Wordsworth's first unfavourable reviews, Southey's review of *Lyrical Ballads* (concerning which, it may be remembered, W. wrote to Joseph Cottle: '...Southey's review I have seen. He knew that I published those poems for money and money alone. He knew that money was of importance to me. If he could not conscientiously have spoken differently of the volume, he ought to have declined the task of reviewing it.'). Mr Hayden indicates clearly the nature of Jeffrey's criticism of Wordsworth; Jeffrey's main point of attack was that the 'Lakists' were involved in a 'formidable conspiracy' which involved diction, subject matter and social attitudes. In many ways Jeffrey's negative response to some of the most original aspects of Wordsworth's thought is provocative, and much of it is echoed years later by one of the best Wordsworthian critics, Coleridge. Mr Hayden gives a very full account of the critical reception dealt out to Wordsworth and one recalls the remark of De Quincey that 'up to 1820 the name of Wordsworth was trampled under foot; from 1820 to 1830 it was militant; from 1830 to 1835 it has been triumphant.' The value of Mr Hayden's book is evident in this section: the fashionable view of the Jeffrey/Wordsworth feud was but a minor footnote to the years of good high-quality contemporary reviewing, and some of the critical observations in the reviews constitute a reading of Wordsworth's poems, an approach to his theories, and a response to his poetic power that have not been superseded in modern criticism. There often existed a liberality and a tolerance in the reviews which we have forgotten about, if we ever knew it was present.

The section on the critical reception of Coleridge is most fascinating. Hazlitt called *Kubla Khan* 'nonsense verses' and stated that it was 'not a poem, but a musical composition', though he allowed that 'we could repeat these lines to ourselves not the less often for not knowing the meaning of them.' The *Biographia Literaria* met with an almost unanimously adverse reception, especially the 'unintelligible' philosophical sections, though the autobiographical portions were admired. Coleridge's criticisms of Wordsworth generally met with approval, for most of them had been uttered by the reviewers themselves years earlier. Coleridge was an enigma for reviewers then, as now, and it was the more comprehensible work *Remorse* that was probably the best received. Mr Hayden writes:

But posterity has not agreed with all of the assessments of the individual works. *Remorse* received the most favourable judgments, and most of them would now seem exaggerated; there were, however, almost equally loud voices of dissent. The *Christabel* volume, on

the other hand, was on the whole rejected; yet given all the problems that the volume presented, this disagreement with posterity is, I think, understandable. The *Biographia Literaria* was, as a total work of literature, quite rightly rejected; and the autobiographical and critical chapters - that is, the ones that have survived for general readers - were accepted.

A Brief word on Southey is in order. Southey, says the author, is not much read today, but in his own time he was most prolific and was read widely and consequently received a great deal of critical attention. *Thalaba*, *The Curse of Kehama*, *Madoc*, as well as his lives of Nelson and Wesley, were some of Southey's more memorable contributions - and if they seem somehow out of spirit with the idea of 'The Lake School', perhaps that is because, as Mr Hayden suggests, such categories are at best artificial, and at any rate it was to Wordsworth alone that most of the Lakist 'heresies' are attributable.

The section called 'The Satanic School' deals with Scott, Byron and Shelley. The portion dealing with Byron is very fine indeed, including an interesting discussion of the reviews of Byron's works, beginning with the reception of *Hours of Idleness* (1807). In my opinion this section is one of the best in the book. Mr Hayden is truly able to bring to life for us the contemporary view of Byron's effect upon an interested reviewing audience, reviewers who were trying not only to read the lines as published, but trying to read between the lines. We now have the advantage of over 150 years of criticism behind us to help us in our approach to Byron - but in the 1820s the enigmatic nature of Byron and his heroes was keenly felt by reviewers. Predictably they received certain works, such as *Beppo*, enthusiastically; and just as predictably, they were not able to retain critical objectivity regarding something topical and controversial as *The Vision of Judgment*. Lockhart (in a letter to *Blackwood's*) takes the periodical to task for calling *Don Juan*, Cantos IX-XI, dull: 'Do you imagine,' asks Lockhart, 'that people will believe three cantos of DON JUAN to be unredeemably and uniformly DULL, merely upon your saying so, without proving what you say by quotation?' Mr Hayden quotes Lockhart further:

I maintain, and have always maintained, the *Don Juan* is, without exception, the first of Lord Byron's works. It is by far the most original in point of *conception*. It is decidedly original in point of *tone*...It contains the finest specimens of serious poetry he has ever written; and it contains the finest specimens of ludicrous poetry that our age has witnessed...No, Sir; *Don Juan*, say the canting world what it will, is destined to hold a permanent rank in the literature of our country. It will always be referred to as furnishing the most powerful picture of that vein of thought, (no matter how false or bad) which distinguishes *a great portion of the thinking people of our time*

I suggest that is is at about this point in Mr Hayden's book that one may begin to realise the tremendous richness of the reviews and the reviewing, as well as of the value of the literature of the day. And to think, as Mr Hayden well points out, that all these years we were often too willing to conceive of 'Romantic reviewing' as consisting of some sort of difference of opinion between Wordsworth and Jeffrey, or as being simply infamous attacks on Keats! The reviewers of Byron were better than we had thought,

and, interestingly, they were immensely more fair than many modern critics, for his contemporaries were less guilty of emphasising biographical detail than the critics of our time.

With Shelley, Mr Hayden sheds the chronological approach and focuses instead upon the best reviews of Shelley, including at length an account of the review by W S Walker in the *Quarterly Review of Prometheus Unbound*. Since reviews of Shelley's work have been collected into a single volume (N I White, *The Unextinguished Hearth*), Mr Hayden focuses upon reviews representing high praise, severe criticism, and judicious approval. The extreme limits of the critical reception of Shelley are poignantly suggested.

The introduction to 'The Cockney School' informs much of the chapter:

The idea of a 'Cockney School of Poetry' was originated by John Gibson Lockhart in *Blackwood's Magazine* in a scurrilous series of articles begun in October, 1817. In the same month, the *Edinburgh Review* recognised a literary group which included the same writers, Leigh Hunt, John Keats, and William Hazlitt. Thus it is evident that the grouping by *Blackwood's* is not ascribable solely to a desire for lumping together offensive writers for ease of attack, as was largely the case with Southey's vaguely descriptive 'Satanic School'.

The Cockney School was, in fact, the nearest approach to a literary school of any so denominated by reviewers. The members lived in London and they were friends. More important, they shared certain attitudes towards life and literature, as well as certain peculiarities of style and sentiment. Ironically, Hazlitt's writings had the least of the vulgarity which the title 'Cockney' was meant to designate, but he was more often than Hunt or Keats attacked as a 'Cockney'.

Much of the abuse discharged at the Cockneys was, of course, political. With Leigh Hunt, who was in many ways the center of the group, editing the radical *Examiner* during most of the period, this should surprise no one. What is remarkable, however, was the extent to which their political affiliations were more an asset than a liability...

Hunt's diction, morality and political bias were all duly noted in the reviews, but so was the richness of his poetry. Familiarity, vulgarity and bad taste were often the real causes, or charges, of critical disapproval. Hazlitt, the only writer included in this study whose works are confined to prose, produced mainly familiar essays and literary criticism. Although he may have a modern reputation for being an erratic and fiery person whose hostility sometimes spilled over into his writing, he fares better, Mr Hayden suggests, than one might have anticipated, and his essays received a Great deal of Praise

The Round Table (1817), the *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818) and *Political Essays* (1819) encountered predominantly unfavourable criticism, but the verdicts were by no means unanimously hostile. *A View of the English Stage* (1818) and *Liber Amoris* (1823), were, however, roundly damned. *The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), the *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*

(1820), *Table Talk* (1821-22), and *Characteristics* (1823), on the other hand, enjoyed generally favorable receptions. The grounds on which these judgments were rendered were...almost as numerous as the works themselves.

Mr Hayden's view of the reception of Keats's 1817 volume, *Poems*, is that the reviews probably were better, altogether, than the volume deserved, considering its weaknesses. *Endymion* (1818) was also well received by most reviewers. But throughout most of the reviews there was an undercurrent of adverse criticism, specified in the *British Critic* as the 'gross slang of voluptuousness', and characterised in *Blackwood's* as 'calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy', which seems clear enough. Croker's review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly* (1818) 'is the most famous review in the history of periodical criticism; it was the one which was held by many then and later to have killed John Keats'. Keats's 1820 volume was also well received, though the modern critic would single out for high praise some poems which largely go unmentioned, such as 'The Eve of St Agnes'.

Mr Hayden's conclusions on Keats may come as a surprise to many readers:

All three of Keats' publications received preponderantly favourable reviews. In fact, at the risk of sounding merely controversial, I should say that the majority of Keats' reviewers, if they sinned at all in their criticism, sinned in the direction of too indulgent, too favourable judgments...Keats, in fact, had little to complain of; he enjoyed the best critical reception accorded to any poet of the period, a much better reception than was given to Wordsworth, who was, I believe, a much greater poet.

The poets in the 'Out of School' section are grouped together not because they had anything in common, but because they commanded some degree of popularity and achieved a considerable reputation with the critics. Mr Hayden devotes a short section to the reviews of Thomas Moore, especially to the attitudes of the reviewers towards Moore's 'voluptuousness'. George Crabbe is included in this section also, apparently because Mr Hayden considers Crabbe today to be 'one of the most neglected poets of the period - one of the poets with the greatest merit and the smallest reputation.' The point of Crabbe's merit - and low reputation - is well taken, but could it perhaps be extended to others of the day, such as Thomas Campbell, Samuel Rogers, James Montgomery - or is the low critical estimate of these poets a final one?

Slightly more than six pages of this book are devoted to the reviews of works by Charles Lamb. Mr Hayden indicates briefly the nature of the reviewing of Lamb's works: *John Woodvil* was not well received; the books for children, written by Mary Lamb, 'fared far better'; the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* produced a 'unanimously favourable' response, and 'some were even enthusiastic about both his plan and his execution as well as his taste and judgment'. *The Works of Charles Lamb* (1818) received high praise from reviewers also, but included perceptive critiques identifying those aspects of Lamb's writing which kept him from being a popular author. Concerning the *Works* Mr Hayden concludes that 'the consensus of the contemporary reviewers was that on the whole Lamb's feelings, humanity,

humor and style deserved approbation'. The familiar essays were praised, his whimsical humour was much approved, but 'Lamb's critical essays...received the most applause', and of these the most popular then, as now I should estimate, was the essay on the tragedies of Shakespeare. Lamb's best known work, *Elia: Essays Which Have Appeared under That Signature in the London Magazine* (1823), was reviewed only three times, according to Mr Hayden 'probably because republished works were usually not reviewed'; of the three reviews, one was unfavourable and two favourable.

In his conclusion to the book, 'Attitudes, Policies and Practices', Mr Hayden is most cautious about attempting any rigid generalisations, but he does perform the useful function of summarising apparent standards of criticism, the general degree of observable impartiality in the reviews, and the kind of moral concern evident in them; in summary, he sees the reviews as presenting a sort of practical criticism: 'applying a set of values, either explicit or assumed, to a literary work and judging that work as it conforms to them'. In total, the book stands basically as an outline of the reviewing of important authors and works, but contains an interesting admixture of analysis and conclusion. Two valuable appendices (of British reviewing periodicals and a listing of the reviews) follow the text, as well as a bibliography of works pertaining to the Romantic Reviews.

Mr Hayden's selection of Romantic reviews, *Romantic Bards and British Reviewers*, is totally different from the first book in point of conception, as well as in the kind of execution that one might expect. The book is limited to sixty-eight reviews of the five major Romantic poets: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats. It is possible that this book does not have quite the value of the earlier one, if only for the fact that other collections of Romantic reviews have been published before, and a massive - but expensive - one is scheduled for the near future. Mr Hayden's earlier work is a valuable contribution to scholarship that will remain in a way that a collection of reprinted essays cannot. Moreover, the first book at £3.50 (330 pages) is quite a good buy compared with the shocking £6.50 (433 pages) of the latter. But if the purpose of reviewing is to tell people whether to buy books, then I should judge that the book does not seem prohibitively expensive after all, for most people do not have access to these reviews. Some arguments could be made for an index in *Romantic Bards*.

But for all this, it is a fascinating book and brings to life the great age of literary reviewing in a way that Mr Hayden's analytical book could not. And if ever we were tempted to oversimplify and to think of the reviews as being characterised by attacks on Wordsworth or other famous vitriol of the period, that temptation is willingly given up after perusing this most interesting volume. Mr Hayden's premise in reprinting the particular reviews which he has selected is that this is good criticism of good literature. The reviews are all printed in full, though usually quotations from the primary works have been deleted and plot summaries sometimes cut; when these deletions occur clear reference is made to the excised material. The numbers game: Wordsworth receives seventeen reviews, Coleridge ten, Byron seventeen, Keats fifteen and Shelley nine.

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the content of the reviews is most rewarding and one can see, for example, through a number of reviews exactly what Francis Jeffrey's objections were to Wordsworth's poetry,

and can feel Brougham responding to Byron's power and art. It is safe to say that through these representative views Mr Hayden allows the reader to achieve for himself a clearer estimate of the historical and critical tradition of the period than could be possible in a series of descriptive essays about the reviews. Some facts interest us, while others astonish us: that Byron should have been such an enigmatic poet for his contemporaries is hardly a surprise, but it may interest us to find that reviews of Keats's volume of 1820 largely ignore the odes and 'The Eve of St Agnes'. And we are not surprised to find conflicting reviewers' statements as to the relative merit of individual poems - hence the headnote to this review.

One of Mr Hayden's objectives, to enable us to give the reviewers themselves a fair reading, has succeeded admirably; and in addition our appetite is whetted to know more of the time and to return where we ought, to the poems themselves, but with further understanding and appreciation. The intellectual milieu and the critical heritage of the Romantic movement are renewed for us in Mr Hayden's two volumes.

Duane Schneider

(both volumes are published by Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd)

John Barrell: The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840; an approach to the poetry of John Clare

To those many people who are disturbed today by the increasing sacrifice of hedges to mechanisation, it can be small consolation to reflect that over large tracts of England, especially of that belt running north-east from Dorset through Northamptonshire to Yorkshire, it was the reverse process that was causing consternation in some quarters only two hundred years ago. At that time, in those areas, what is now the familiar chequerboard pattern of smallish fields bounded by hedgerows or stone walls was only just beginning to emerge, following the wholesale 'enclosure' by Acts of Parliament of the large open fields (or arable lands) and meadows (or hayfields), together with large areas of heath, commonland and open pastures, which so changed the appearance of the English Landscape. To some it represented no more than a nuisance which interfered with the hunting, but to others, like Lord Torrington, enclosures were 'greedy tyrannies of the wealthy few, to oppress the indigent many'. Among those many, and indigent indeed, was John Clare, the 'Northamptonshire peasant' poet, whose observation of nature astonished Charles Lamb; so that, Londoner as he was, while he was reading the poems he seemed 'to be native to them and free of the country' - although he deplored Clare's use of his local dialect.

But it is Clare's refusal to alter his use of local words for local experiences and his insistence on using 'a vocabulary of the names he and his neighbours use for what things are and what they do' that is one of the dominating features of Clare's poetry; that shows so clearly his sense of place, the identity of Helpston, the village near Peterborough where Clare spent his first forty years, the enclosure of which made such an impact on his poetry. So, at least, argues Dr Barrell in this book. He goes on to say: 'It names precisely but as it does so it reminds us that this precision, the rightness of this or that word, is completely dependent on its being used of the things and actions in the place to which that language belongs. This isn't true only of the dialect words but of...the whole unit that is Clare's language'.

Dr Barrell has a concern for language which results in some interesting comments and syntactical analyses not only of Clare's poems in the third part of his book, but in the opening chapter on 'The Idea of Landscape in the 18th Century', in which he offers a detailed discussion of the relationship between the techniques of nature writers such as Thomson and the landscape painters Claude and Poussin. The middle section is concerned with the attitudes towards agricultural landscape of such writers as Arthur Young and the authors of the Agricultural Reports, and their difficulties in reconciling beauty with utility. Their conclusion was that enclosure was necessary and inevitable in the interests of agricultural improvement. Dr Barrell's 'approach' to Clare is thus seen to be something of a knight's move, but he suggests that the attitudes set out, as he says, in rather disparate fashion, represent what Clare understood as a threat to his idea of Helpston's identity. Just exactly what that sense of identity was Dr Barrell labours hard to define, but for me all that emerges is a sense that a place is a place is a place. He seems disappointed at times that Clare doesn't quite live up to what Dr Barrell thinks he ought to be feeling, as in his discussion of the early poems on *Helpstone*, but on the other hand he presses his thesis too hard, as when he says of the shepherd's walk with his dog in *Winter Fields* that the content of the poem is 'a body of knowledge...that Clare has arrived at in this particular place, and not elsewhere...The sense of place that the poem expresses is that "this is how it is here"; and the poem thus contributes to the content that the larger part of Clare's poetry seeks to express, the particular individuality of Helpston.' But Clare himself said 'but Nature is the same here at Helpstone as it is elsewhere'.

But to be unconvinced by some of the arguments of a book is not to undervalue it as a whole. This book, which is scrupulously documented, offers a great deal of interest and, most important, sends one back to Clare with fresh enthusiasm, and a conviction that the true Clare is the poet who discarded his 18th century models and wrote as he perceived things to be.

Stella Pigrome

(Cambridge University Press, £3.60)

Wallace Nethery: *Eliana Americana 1849-1866*

We have from time to time noticed with lively appreciation the small but choice books on Elian subjects issued in limited editions by Mr Nethery, who is a member of the Society (see in particular *Bulletins* No.156 for November 1960 and 176 for March 1964). The present volume traces the history of Lamb's reputation and his publishing history in the United States in the period following the publication of Talfourd's *Final Memorials* up to the publication of Barry Cornwall's *Charles Lamb; A Memoir* in 1866. As with the previous volumes we find the present essay full of interest and information which clearly indicates the persistent interest in Elia in the United States which has continued to the present day - as witness our own membership list. The book is finely produced by The Plantin Press and is a true collector's item, being limited to 350 copies.* A few copies of the previous volume, *Charles Lamb in America in 1848+* (limited to 500 copies) are still available

B.S.

* *The Plantin Press*, 1971 42 pages \$8.50 or £4.00

+ *Massachusetts*, 1963 72 pages (now available only from *The Lime Tree Bower Press* at £3.50)