

## THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN

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### LAMB, GILLRAY AND THE GHOST OF EDMUND BURKE

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Most students of Charles Lamb are familiar with the verses by George Canning, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, (later Prime Minister), and the cartoon by James Gillray with which they appear in the first (July 1798)\* issue of the pro-government *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, whose prospectus reads in part:

The existence of a Jacobin faction, in the bosom of our country, can no longer be denied. Its members are vigilant, persevering, indefatigable; desperate in their plans and daring in their language. The torrent of licentiousness, incessantly roaring forth from their numerous presses, exceeds, in violence and duration, all former examples...

And so on. "Jacobins" were, of course, sympathisers with the Revolution in France, with which England was then at war.

The cartoon was an enormous fold-out, some 12 by 30 inches. Under it is the excerpt from Canning's verses, previously published, here entitled: "NEW MORALITY; - or - The promis'd Installment of the High Priest of the THEOPHILANTHROPES, with the Homage of Leviathan and his Suite". The French "philosopher" La Reveillere Lepaux was a convenient cord on which to hang English Jacobins, though he has hardly come down in history and was little known to most of those attacked. The poem named names and pointed a finger rather prominently at "Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd and Lamb and Co." Certain letters of these names were omitted according to the conventions of the time, and it is clear that Charles Lloyd and Lamb had by now achieved sufficient fame for easy recognition. They are shown as a toad and a frog, clutching their recently published *Blank Verse* (Wordsworth, as yet little known, was absent).

Two others soon to be known to Lamb, and long his friends, were John Thelwall and William Godwin, author of *Political Justice*, the bible of all young radicals not long before though Lamb disliked his atheism. Godwin was now, in the recent fear of French invasion and present threat of government persecution, rapidly losing his following, becoming indeed a sort of Public Enemy No.1. Public Enemy No.2, now that Tom Paine and Joseph Priestley had left the country, would in many eyes be John Thelwall, the courageous lecturer for Parliamentary and other reforms, who had with eleven others narrowly escaped hanging for treason in the State Trials of 1794 from which he had been rescued by the superb defence of Thomas Erskine and a brilliant pamphlet by Godwin. Erskine and Godwin may have prevented an uprising, if G M Trevelyan is correct in saying of the 1794 acquittals: "This timely

\*It was the July number, though it may not have been published, as Lucas says, until August 1, the day when England's fortunes turned as Nelson enjoyed the first victory over Buonaparte in the Battle of the Nile.

check saved England from a reign of terror and perhaps ultimately from a retributive revolution".

There is not space to describe the history of the others under attack, but they are remembered today as staunch defenders of English liberty and the English poor in a dark and perilous time. Among them were Gilbert, Wakefield, Helen Maria Williams, Thomas Holcroft, Charles James Fox, and the late Mary Woolstonecraft Godwin. Paine, Priestley, Erskine and other Foxite Parliamentarians are among those represented - some by books or pamphlets, some caricatured as red-capped *sans-culottes*, many as reptiles, asses, fish, birds. All were non-violent; none thought of engineering a bloody revolution.

The poem ends with Leviathan, leader of them all, the fifth Duke of Bedford:

And thou, LEVIATHAN! on Ocean's brim,  
Hugest of living things that sleep & swim;  
Thou in whose nose by BURKE'S gigantic hand  
The hook was fix'd to drag thee to the land..  
Still as ye sport, and puff, and spout, and blow,  
In puffing and in spouting, praise LEPAUX!

Why the Duke of Bedford, one may ask? A cursory survey of literary discussions of the cartoon suggests that this question has received little, if any, attention in recent years, though the reason must have been clear enough to the readers of *The Anti-Jacobin Review*.

The clue lies in Edmund Burke's hook, firmly stuck in the whale's nose - for Gillray has drawn his inspiration from Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* of 1796. Burke himself was dead by 1797. Bedford's crime and the occasion of the *Letter* (addressed to Lord Grenville) was the fact that he, together with the Earl of Lauderdale, had publicly questioned Burke's right to the State pensions granted to him on his retirement from Parliament. The debt-ridden Burke had desperately needed this assistance, which the two noble Lords declared was not in line with Burke's own initiation of economies in such pensions, nor with his wavering support of government policies.

Bedford, after an undistinguished youth, had become a major debater for the Foxite Whigs. He was also, like so many of his contemporaries, aflame with the new possibilities of improving man's lot through "natural science" and passionately interested in the scientific improvement of farming. He had instituted a model farm at Woburn Abbey, and himself conducted important experiments in sheep breeding. Bedford had also changed the face of Bloomsbury by taking down his Inigo Jones ancestral residence, its gardens becoming Tavistock and Russell Squares. His sally at Burke's pension had been picayune, no doubt, and Burke replied in kind, but with the larger purposes of whipping up the French danger to England and of crushing radical Reformism. Burke defended his own past policies, attacked his opponent's FAMILY throughout history, and set out to convince his readers that Bedford was a mere tool of Godwin and his ilk (not mentioned by name but clearly in his mind), who would use the Duke pitilessly, he said, when they took over the country. After a suitable introduction, he continues:

...I have to thank the Bedfords and the Lauderdale's for having so faithfully and so fully acquitted towards me whatever arrear of debt was left undischarged by the Priestleys and the Paines.

The *Letter* is somewhat digressive, but Burke's prose has lost none of its magic as he launches into his main theme, playing on his present defeated

state (he had lost his last battle in the acquittal of Warren Hastings; he had lost his adored only son). Very soon he introduces the menagery concept of the "revolutionaries" all around Bedford on which Gillray was to draw with such effect:

Why will they not let me remain in obscurity and inaction? Are they apprehensive that, if an atom of me remains, the sect has something to fear?...In my wretched condition, though hardly to be classed with the living, I am not safe from them. They have tigers to fall upon animated strength; they have hyenas to prey upon carcasses...They pursue even such as me into the obscurest retreats, and haul them before their revolutionary tribunals...

There is a startling echo here in the carcasses sentence - in fact it is Charles Lamb's own echo of Burke in the poem Lamb had sent to Southey in June - "Living Without God in the World", his own attack on Godwinian atheism, Lamb's reminiscent line occurs on the subject of Death, whose sway Godwin hoped to end - until Death would, said Lamb, "Relent, and leave to prey on carcasses". ("Leave" here means "Cease": so it appeared in the version Lamb gave to Lloyd.) Had not Lamb recently read Burke - and the phrase stuck in his mind? (We know that he was familiar with the *Letter to a Noble Lord* from a specific reference, and footnote, in his 1811 essay "Guy Faux" - E V Lucas *Works*, Vol.I, New York and London 1903, p 241)

One of Burke's deepest fears had first been aroused by the 1780 Gordon Riots in London. There had been disturbances on a smaller scale since, when (says Burke)

Wild and savage insurrection quitted the woods, and prowled about our streets in the name of Reform. Such was the distemper of the public mind, that there was no madman, in his maddest ideas and maddest projects, who might not count upon numbers to support his principles and execute his designs.

Thelwall, now Coleridge's close friend - who had begged Coleridge to tone down *his* incitements to violence - is one of the three English Jacobin commoners mentioned by name:

But the times, the morals, the masters, the scholars, have all undergone a thorough revolution. It is a vile, illiberal school, this new French academy of the *sans-culottes*. There is nothing in it that is fit for a gentleman to learn. Whatever its vogue may be, I still flatter myself that the parents of the growing generation will be satisfied with what is to be taught to their children in Westminster, in Eton, or in Winchester; I still indulge the hope that no *grown* gentleman or nobleman of our time will think of finishing at Mr Thelwall's lecture whatever may have been left incomplete at the old universities of his country.

If the Duke complains that Burke's pensions are "excessive and out of all bounds" (Burke's paraphrase), the

grants to the house of Russell were so enormous as not only to outrage economy but to stagger credibility. The Duke of Bedford is the Leviathan among all the creatures of the crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk, he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst "he lies floating many a rood", he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin, and covers me all over with the spray, everything of him and about him is from the throne. Is

it for *him* to question the dispensation of the royal favour?

Here is the whale at full blow. In another passage Burke surpasses himself, with the aid of Virgil - and leads Gillray to portray some flying things:

The Revolution harpies of France, sprung from Night and Hell, or from that chaotic Anarchy which generates equivocally "all monstrous, all prodigious things", cuckoo-like, adulterously lay their eggs, and brood over, and hatch them in the nest of every neighbouring state. These obscene harpies, who deck themselves in I know not what divine attributes ...but who in reality are foul and ravenous birds of prey...flutter over our heads, and souse down upon our tables, and leave nothing unrent, unrifled, unravaged or unpolluted with the slime of their filthy offal.

There is much more. Burke rises to another crescendo in pointing out to Bedford that,

as long as the British monarchy...shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers, as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land - so long the mounds and dikes of the low, fat Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pick-axes of all the levellers in France.

But -

If a great storm blow on our coast, it will cast the whales on the strand, as well as the periwinkles. His Grace will not survive the poor grantee he despises - no, not for a twelvemonth.

Burke asks:

Am I to blame, if I attempt to pay his Grace's hostile reproaches to me with a friendly admonition to himself? Can I be blamed for pointing out to him in what manner he is likely to be affected, if the sect of the cannibal philosophers of France should proselitize any considerable part of this people...should conquer that government to which his Grace does not seem to me to give all the support his security demands?

As to the French,

Never before this time was a set of literary men converted into a gang of robbers and assassins; never before did a band of bravoos and banditti assume the garb and tone of an academy of philosophers...The persons who have suffered from the cannibal philosophy of France are so like the Duke of Bedford, that nothing but his Grace's probably not speaking quite so good French could enable us to find out any difference.

England is threatened with the same - even his Grace in his farming experiments, and by none other than his "geometricians and chemists", who will experiment with anything:

These philosophers consider men in their experiments no more than they do mice in an air-pump or in a recipient of mephitic gas. Whatever his Grace may think of himself, they look upon him, and every thing that belongs to him, with no more regard than they do upon the whiskers of that little long-tailed animal that has been long the game of the grave, demure, insidious, spring-nailed, velvet-pawed, green-eyed philosophers, whether going upon two legs or upon four.

Again the menagerie, and one senses the presence of Godwin among the malefactors. Burke points to Bedford's great wealth:

His Grace's landed possessions are irresistibly inviting to an agrarian experiment. They are a downright insult upon the rights of Man. They are more extensive than the territory of many of the Grecian republics...

The revolutionaries his Grace employs on those vast estates know how to make gunpowder from the "matter convertible into nitre"

to be found in Bedford House, in Woburn Abbey, and in what his Grace and his trustees have still suffered to stand of that foolish royalist, Inigo Jones, in Covent Garden. Churches, play-houses, coffee-houses, all alike, are destined to be mingled, and equalized, and blended into one common rubbish - and, well-sifted...to crystallize into true, democratic, explosive, insurrectionary nitre.

The crowning image is his Grace's imminent conversion into whale steaks:

Is it not a singular phenomenon, that, whilst the *sans-culotte* carcass - butchers and philosophers of the shambles are pricking their dotted lines upon his hide, and, like the print of the poor ox that we see in the shop-windows at Charing Cross, alive as he is and thinking no harm in the world, he is divided into rumps, and sirloins, and briskets, and into all sorts of pieces for roasting, boiling, and stewing, that, all the while they are measuring *him*, his Grace is measuring *me*, - is invidiously comparing the bounty of the crown with the deserts of the defender of his order, and in the same moment fawning on those who have the knife half out of the sheath? Poor innocent!

"Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,  
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood."

That the modest, inoffensive Charles Lamb should be ushered into this brotherhood of iniquity by so prominent a member of the government as George Canning and so biting a pen as Gillray's seems, in the light of Burke's eloquence, almost an apotheosis. Did he belong there? I think he did. Although he had then written nothing himself of a political nature, he had *published* several times with Lloyd and Coleridge; he was one of the group. Lloyd, in *Blank Verse*, had expressed "democratick" sentiments and enthusiasm for Pantisocracy, Mary Woolstonecraft, and the necessarianism of Godwin and Priestley. Lamb had "sinned in almost adoring" Priestley and expressed eagerness to meet the "Patriot" Thelwall, to whom Coleridge had addressed an admiring sonnet. Coleridge and Southey were widely known as raging radicals from their Bristol lectures of 1795 and as authors of the first edition of *Joan of Arc*, Southey's widely popular radical poem to which Coleridge had contributed lines acknowledged by Southey. Coleridge had published many others.

Lamb would never forget Canning, and wrote, as taskwork for newspapers, various political verses no gentler than Canning's. One of his several attacks on his assailant was "The Unbeloved" printed in John Thelwall's *Champion* in 1820. I give the first and last of its twenty lines:

Not a woman, child or man in  
All this isle, that loves thee, C----ng,  
.....  
But thou unamiable object -  
Dear to neither prince, nor subject; -  
Veriest, meanest scab, for pelf  
Fast'ning on the skin of Guelph,

Place-and-heiress-hunting elf,  
Thou, thou must surely, *loathe thyself*.

Lamb, too, could give as good as he got. While some of his friends chose future roles as humanitarian Tories, he remained at heart a radical Whig.

NOTE: I am indebted for the penultimate paragraph to two very interesting discussions bearing on the Gillray cartoon: Burton R Pollin's "Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd as Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins" *Studies in Romanticism* 1973, 633-647; and William Haller's *The Early Life of Robert Southey*, New York, 1917 and 1966 - see Anti-Jacobin in index. E V Lucas's standard *Life of Lamb*, two-volume edition, contains the cartoon and a discussion. None mentions Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*, however.

#### CHARLES LAMB'S "FREE THOUGHTS"

Claude A Prance

Charles Lamb writing to William Ayrton, the music critic, on 20 May 1830 stated that he composed his verses "Free Thoughts on Several Eminent Composers" at the instigation of Vincent Novello and he includes them in his letter. In a letter of 24 May 1830 to Sarah Hazlitt he tells her that William Ayrton was their inspirer and again includes them in his letter.

E V Lucas called Lamb's statements "matter-of-lie" dispositions and adds that Lamb thought Ayrton's name was more likely to impress Mrs Hazlitt and Novello's name to appeal to William Ayrton. The verses were also inscribed in Vincent Novello's Album, where Mary Lamb added a postscript beginning "The reason why my brother's so severe."

The poem was first printed in *The Monthly Repository* in 1835 and the postscript in *The Life & Labours of Vincent Novello* by Mary Cowden Clarke in 1862. Lamb's verses are reprinted in most editions of his works and Mary Lamb's addition by Lucas and Hutchinson. The latter also prints some variations in the two versions of the poem.

Novello's Album with this poem and the addition was sold at Sotheby's for £350 in 1950. It contained autographs of contemporary musicians and other celebrities and verses and snatches of music by many of his literary and musical friends. It was bought by the famous music publishers, Novello & Co., Ltd, successors to the firm originally founded by Vincent Novello.

Lamb says in his letter to Sarah Hazlitt that he was able to talk to Ayrton on music because he had recently read Hawkins and Burney, and was able to hoax his listener into believing he possessed more musical knowledge than he really had. "Hawkins" would be Sir John Hawkins, who wrote *A General History of the Science & Practice of Music* 1776, and "Burney" was Charles Burney, senior, the father of Lamb's friend, Admiral Burney, who published his *General History of Music* 1776-89. One would think these two most unlikely books to have attracted Lamb's attention, unless he was persuaded to browse on them by Vincent Novello or James Burney.

That Lamb was capable of plagiarism is well known and for these verses he may have recollected two poems of the eighteenth century. About 1762 William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, and friend of Horace Walpole, wrote a poem "Strawberry Hill" (reprinted in John Drinkwater's *A Pageant of England's Life* 1934), the first verse of which is:

Some cry up Gunnersbury!  
 For Sion some declare!  
 Some say, with Chiswick House  
 No Villa can compare!  
 But ask the Beaus of Middlesex,  
 Who know the country well,  
 If Strawberry Hill, if Strawberry Hill  
 Don't bear away the bell?

The beginning of Lamb's poem reads:

Some cry up Haydn, Some Mozart,  
 Just as the whim bites; for my part,  
 I do not care a farthing candle  
 For either of them, or for Handel.-  
 Cannot a man live free and easy,  
 Without admiring Pergolesi?  
 Or thro' the world with comfort go,  
 That never heard of Doctor Blow?

Another source of Lamb's verses may be found in an epigram by John Byrom, a writer best known for a pastoral poem printed in *The Spectator*. His *Miscellaneous Poems* 1773 contains an epigram on the rivalry between Handel and Giovanni Bononcini, who were both resident composers at the Royal Academy of Music.

The epigram reads:

Some say, compar'd to Bononcini,  
 That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny:  
 Others aver, that he to Handel  
 Is scarcely fit to hold a Candle:  
 Strange all this Difference should be  
 'Twix Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

Byrom's volume was reprinted in 1814 and may well have come to Lamb's notice at that time. The epigram is reprinted in Daniel Nalbach's *The King's Theatre 1704-1867*, 1972.

HAYWARD GALLERY, LONDON: *The Georgian Playhouse; Actors, Artists, Audiences and Architecture 1730-1830* 21 August to 12 October 1975

But for the fact that it will be over before you read this, such are the complexities of reproducing in print, I should have said you really must go: this exhibition is of immense interest to those concerned with the Romantic period and the times out of which it grew; and it is almost obligatory for those who think the theatre "the most delightful of recreations".

You stroll through the "rooms" into which the Hayward Gallery is cunningly divided, starting with Hogarth's view of the stage in the 1730s and taking in on the way the times of Garrick (three rooms including a section on the Great Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769) and Samuel Foote. You halt time and again to admire Zoffany's art; you smile at a series of six delightful prints by Jean Louis Fesch depicting Garrick in various roles; you smile even more broadly when you read in your catalogue, apropos a picture depicting the Garrick Memorial Concert which took place in 1779, an anachronistic quotation from Elia deploring "the introduction of theatrical airs and gestures into a place set apart to remind us of the saddest realities"; but

In the Upper Galleries of the **HAYWARD GALLERY** London, at the south end of WATERLOO BRIDGE, opposite the NEW NATIONAL THEATRE on *Thursday* the 21st of *August* and on every day until *Sunday* the 12th of *October*, 1975 will be presented by the Arts Council of Great Britain an EXHIBITION, call'd

# The GEORGIAN PLAYHOUSE

*Part One*

## **The Actor and the Artist**

with

Mr. GARRICK, Mr. KEMBLE,  
Mrs. SIDDONS, Mr. KEAN and Company

in character painted by

Mr. HOGARTH, Mr. ZOFFANY, Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS,  
Mr. HOPPNER, Mr. HARLOW, Sir THOMAS LAWRENCE,  
Mr. DE WILDE, and Others, together with Portraits, Engravings, China, Satires *etc.*

to which will be added as afterpiece

*Part Two*

## **Audiences & Architecture**

the Pit, Boxes and Gallery drawn by

Messrs. ROWLANDSON, CAPON, PUGIN, SCHNEBBELIE  
within the Theatres Royal of

Mr. ADAM, Mr. WYATT,  
Mr. HOLLAND, Mr. SMIRKE

and before the Scenes of Mr. DE LOUTHERBOURG, Mr. ROOKER and Mr. RICHARDS together with an account of the Strolling Player's Life in Booth Theatres and in the 279 Playhouses recorded throughout the Kingdom by Mr. WINSTON in 1805.

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*The exhibition devised by Mr. MACKINTOSH assisted by Mr. ASHTON*

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The doors open at 10 o'clock in the morning and close at 8 o'clock in the evening, Mondays to Fridays.  
10 o'clock until 6 o'clock on Saturdays and 12 noon to 6 o'clock on Sundays.

The price of admission will be 50 pence, or 25 pence for Students, Schoolchildren and Pensioners.  
School Parties 10 pence, per head. There will be a special price of 10 pence for everyone on Mondays  
and from 6 to 8 o'clock on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

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*Tickets also admit to the Lower Galleries for the exhibition of Architectural  
Works by Sr. Andrea PALLADIO.*



your eyes kindle as you note that the fifth room is devoted to Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kemble whom Lamb assuredly did see. As well as the grander scenes and portraits you welcome Samuel De Wilde's studies of Dicky Suett, John Bannister, Charles Matthews and others, and a special room devoted to thirty-three watercolours by De Wilde of almost everybody. There is another room containing Toby jugs bearing John Liston's face - Hazlitt said of his performance as Sir Peter Bigwiggin in *Pigeons and Crows*: "His jaws seem to ache with laughter, his eyes look out of his head with wonder, his face is unctuous all over, and bathed with jests". In this room you will see also a display of playbills of Drury Lane during the period 1812-25 on which the name of our own Fanny Kelly appears once or twice, but only as playing roles in supporting pieces in the earlier years.

You travel on through Bettymania, where you see a wistful portrait of the fourteen year old boy wonder (Samuel De Wilde again) to the advent of Edmund Kean of whom Coleridge said that experiencing his performance was "Like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning". The end of an era truly, and you may take that as the end of your survey of the plays and players of the theatre of that time.

But you are not yet finished: The Arts Council has laid out for your interest five sections on the theatres and their audiences. Especially interesting is the demonstration of the development by rebuilding of the two patent theatres, turning them, as the catalogue says, from "playhouses for hearers" (when the audience was close to the stage and well-nigh surrounded it) into "theatres for spectators.". Helped by models, plans and pictures you get a very good idea of the nature of the revolution and what it must have meant to playgoers; and these same playgoers are delineated in caricatures by Rowlandson and the two Cruickshanks in a way to give us the feel of being there (but in what class shall we have been in if we had been alive then: it is abundantly clear the first class passengers were in the boxes, second class in the pit and third class in the gallery - or in the notorious Pigeon Hole at Covent Garden).

A survey of the provincial theatres and we are at the end, with plates from three topographical surveys of British theatre in the early 19th century: the theatrical plates by Pugin and Rowlandson to Ackermann's *Microcosm of London*; R B Schnebbelie's *London's Minor Theatres* (only partly published) and Winston's *Theatrical Tourist*. Did you know that in 1804 there was a theatre at Edmonton - Winston depicts it? Did it survive until Lamb arrived in 1833 to spend his last days there: would he, in any case, have been of a mind to attend?

All in all, you reflect as you wander exhausted to the nearest place of refreshment, excellent value for ten pence (since you were wily enough to go on a Monday or in the evening after 6 pm) and although the catalogue does cost £2.50 - and is still obtainable from the Arts Council - it is a beautiful production, informative and altogether worthy of a place in anyone's Lamb collection. Looking at its list of lenders one is struck at once both by the wide area from which exhibits were collected (ranging from the royal collection through Harvard University Theatre Collection to St George's Guildhall, King's Lynn) and by the apparent richness of the three principal contributors, the Mander and Mitchenson Collection, the Garrick Club and the Theatre Museum. After some vicissitudes it has now been announced that the last is to be established on a permanent basis on the old Floral Hall in Covent Garden: a far cry from Shaftesbury Avenue, but what more appropriate place than Covent Garden for an institution concerned with the history and tradition of the British Theatre?

## BOOK REVIEWS

## Coleridgean Conversation

*Coleridge's Variety: Bicentenary Studies*, edited by John Beer (Macmillan 1974)

"Great in his writings, he was greatest in his conversation...He would talk from morn to dewy eve, nor cease till far midnight, yet who ever would interrupt him, - who would obstruct that continuous flow of converse, fetched from Helicon or Zion?" Fortunately the Coleridgean conversation goes on: the great Transatlantic endeavour of publishing the Notebooks, the Marginalia, all the prodigal fragments Charles Lamb feared might be lost, has meant that today we can perhaps catch more clearly the tones of Coleridge's voice than at any time since Lamb wrote his elegy in Mr Keymer's Album. Lamb might be pleased, too, that talk *about* Coleridge goes on. Some of it is collected here, and it is good talk. The book consists of lectures given variously to celebrate the 1972 Bicentenary, when, as the editor points out, the lack of one geographical focal point led to commemorations at Cambridge, Christ's Hospital, the Royal Institution, the British Museum, as well as in Highgate and the West Country. Such multiplicity was appropriate; like Coleridge talking to Keats on Hampstead Heath it covers a wide field: Coleridge's Poetic Sensibility, Coleridge and Science, Coleridge and the Romantic View of the World, Coleridge and Kant, and much more. Yet, again one suspects like Coleridge talking to Keats, there is a coherent underpattern, the book is more than "an immense heap of little things".

A short review can merely dip here or there in the stream, hoping, thereby, to show its general flow. But, perhaps, the whole book is illuminated by George Whalley's essay, *Coleridge's Poetic Sensibility*. Here Professor Whalley suggests that before the great year of 1798, Coleridge's exceptional sensibility is to be found rather in his notebooks than in his verse; the instances quoted show moments of rare beauty, themselves like Japanese poems sometimes:

"Sabbath-day - from the Miller's mossy wheel  
the waterdrops dripp'd leisurely."

The essay meditates upon the mysterious relationship between Coleridge's perceptions and their expression in poetry "with the words and rhythms that body forth the acts themselves of perceiving". Professor Whalley's close knowledge of the fragments enables him to trace, for example, an image of lichen on stone first met in the Gutch Memorandum Book and met again in the Harz mountains in 1799 to a passage in the 1817 *Biographia* and this later wry use in a letter on the conflict between the Mind and Nature in youth and age:

"For a while the Mind seems to have the better in the contest, and makes of Nature what it likes; takes her Lichens and Weatherstains for Types and Printer's Ink and prints Maps and FacSimiles of Arabic and Sanscrit Mss on her rocks..."

The whole essay helps to convey something of the quality of Coleridge's working mind, just as Lamb had found it in the tone of his voice.

Kathleen Coburn's address to the Royal Institution on *Coleridge: A Bridge between Science and Poetry* sketches in a relationship which her edition of the Notebooks had already suggested, a relationship that hinged upon the friendship and mutual respect of STC and that other "marvellous boy", Humphry Davy. "Every subject in Davy's mind has the principle of vitality,"

wrote Coleridge. "Living things spring up like turf under his feet." STC's interest in the new chemistry and its use of electrical polarities went beyond his avowed purpose of increasing his stock of metaphors. It led him to Davy's lectures as it had led him to Tom Poole's tannery at Stowey or the Wedgwoods' Etruria. There was a vital importance for Coleridge in Davy's theories of dynamism which seemed to contravert the position of eighteenth century materialists and offer collateral proof for the universe as the living organism STC felt it to be. The shock when Davy turned to accept Dalton's atomistic theories in about 1812 was registered in Coleridge's note in a margin: "Alas! Humphry Davy has become Sir Humphry Davy and an Atomist!:" Perhaps, in the end, they agreed no more and no less than one might expect of a Cornishman and a Devonian, but the intellectual union, though short, was not unblest: amongst other things, Davy saw the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* through the Bristol press, and, if his famous air-bag produced no masterpiece, at least it helped STC to recognise basic forces of life experientially. As Miss Coburn suggests, "Coleridge mostly knew what he was talking about from knowing it on the skin, from experience ...". He led the way to Keats's more celebrated feeling on the pulse. And such awareness helped him see afresh truths we are still stumbling over - as when he noticed of his infant son: "Hartley seemed to learn to talk by touching his mother."

Thus, again, Miss Coburn's essay helps a reader get closer to the move of Coleridge's mind. In two essays, on Coleridge and his Schooldays and Coleridge's Later Imagination, the editor, John Beer gives similar guidance. In the essay on STC at Christ's Hospital, for instance, he provides a brilliant gloss on an obscure passage of Victorian reminiscence of STC and Bowyer, his schoolmaster, which suggest strongly that Coleridge, the young *Mirandula*, really was reading NeoPlatonists at this early age, as he and Lamb always said he was and as the sceptical modern, Mr Fruman, says he wasn't! Dr Beer suggests that Coleridge's "continual low fever" at school combining for him "hunger and fancy" helped to foster that unique poetic sensibility we find at work in *Frost at Midnight* and *The Ancient Mariner*. He also shows how, in Coleridge's time, attention came to be drawn to a fact we now accept unthinkingly - that ice actually preserves the life of things. This ambiguity, ice as preserver as well as destroyer, he relates suggestively to Coleridge's imagery, particularly in *The Ancient Mariner* and in the excited note that helped lead to *Kubla Khan*:

"In the cave in the mountains of Cashmere an Image of ice, which makes its appearance thus..."

In the last essay of the book John Beer appropriately quotes a late Coleridge letter. In doing so he offers an image of the absorbed, inquiring Coleridge his collection of essays consistently reveals:

"A late Physiologist represents the nervous system as a Plant, of which the spinal Cord is the Stem and the Brain the compound Flower - and if you have ever watched a Humble-bee at a Fox-glove or a Monkshood, visiting one Bell after another, and bustling and humming in each, you will have no bad likeness of the dips and dives I have been making into the several cells and campanulae of my Brain."

And so, quietly, despite motorways and Concord, the talk goes on, and beyond the talk -

"Yet still, the solitary humble-bee  
Sings in the bean-flower!

- much as Lamb himself heard it.

Reginald Watters

Kenneth Curry: *SOUTHEY* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, pp xii, 178 £4.95

Professor Curry has produced the latest of the Routledge Author Guides, *Southey*, and a good guide it is. The compact volume steers the non-specialist reader through Robert Southey's life (1774-1843), the times, and his works in a well-organised, clearly signposted way. Bonuses are a good bibliography, an index, and the critical comments of Professor Curry who knows Southey, his strengths and his shortcomings.

To the 20th century reader, Southey's strength as a writer must surely lie in his prose which is alive, lucid, and personal. Coleridge once said, "In the very best styles, as Southey's, you read page after page, understanding the author perfectly, without once taking notice of the medium of communication; - it is as if he has been speaking to you all the while."

Curry sorts out the prolific prose according to: (1) works of social and political criticism, as the *Letters from England* and his articles for the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1810-13; (2) the biographies such as the *Life of Nelson*, the *Life of Wesley*, and the life of William Cowper in the 15-volume edition of Cowper's works; (3) the autobiographies, especially the letters (Curry edited *New Letters*, 1965 in 2 vols.), the journals kept during travels, the *Common-Place Book* in four series, and *The Doctor* which includes "The Three Bears". From *The Doctor* Curry recommends a chapter on shaving, one on women, another on pockets. Underlying much of this occasional writing is an irrepressible humour, if not wit. Parts of the original seven-volume *Doctor* would not interest readers today, but Curry rightly suggests that a good abridgement would. (4) The histories, greatest in bulk of Southey's writing, are discussed under *The History of the Peninsular War*, the *History of Brazil*, and *The Book of the Church*. Of these, his *Brazil* survives as the best in English and a history that is still treasured by Brazilians. One has only to go to Crosthwaite Church in Keswick to see that it was the Brazilian government that restored Southey's grave. The *Church* is full of the controversies and interests of the time, but Curry recommends certain chapters such as the one on Henry and Becket. He notes that social historians, unprejudiced by the Hazlitt-Byron-Hunt judgements against Southey, find his historical works valuable. (5) By reviewing, especially for the *Quarterly*, Southey received his most regular income to support his large family; in reviewing, he dug out several ideas for his own books. His translations and editions ran into thousands of pages. Added to all this, he assisted the uneducated poets, ladies with literary talent, and families of young writers who died too early. One problem for the critic, and for Southey himself, was that "he wrote too much in prose as well as in poetry," Curry concludes.

The reader can thank Professor Curry for cutting through the long narrative poems. He summarises the plots and 'lessons' of faith, fortitude and right living. Most of the laureate verses are, he admits, disasters. But he sees the poetry as having 'high competence' and recommends the ballads and metrical tales among the short poems and *Roderick* from the long ones. He attributes Southey's poetic failures to his rigid control of his own intense feelings. Whatever it was, human pain and paradox were not transmuted into poetry of truth and imagination.

This book will not resurrect Southey as a poet, but it serves a useful purpose in calling our attention to selections of his excellent prose as well as re-emphasising Southey's place as a professional man of letters in an age of literary giants.

M E Priestley