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MORE ABOUT THE ROMANTIC ART OF CHARLES LAMB

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Reviewing Lamb criticism in 1957 and again in 1966, Stuart Tave cited the need for giving Lamb's essays the same kind of close reading we have given Romantic poems in recent years; he noted, too, the need to substantiate the occasional claim that Lamb is a pioneer Romantic whose innovations in prose are comparable to the innovations of Wordsworth and Coleridge in poetry (see the chapter on Lamb in *English Romantic Poets and Essayists*, ed. C W and L H Houtchens). Several scholars, as we might expect, have since attempted to satisfy one or both of these needs, with the result that we now have a handful of essays - two by lecturers at this conference - that demonstrate the art of the Romantic art of Charles Lamb. Richard Haven's analysis of "Old China," for example, in an article entitled "The Romantic Art of Charles Lamb" (*ELH*, 1963), not only points up the formal parallel between Lamb's circling essay and Coleridge's coiling conversation poems, thereby pointing up the organic form that characterizes both essay and poems, but also suggests the structural parallel between Lamb's antique china and Keats's Grecian urn, thereby suggesting that the china, like the urn, becomes the symbol of the literary art in which it has its existence. Agreeing with Haven that "the Elia Essays /are Lamb's/ own 'Conversation Poems' in prose," John R Nabholtz, for another example, concludes his fine article on "Drama and Rhetoric in Lamb's Essays of the Imagination" with the attractive idea that Lamb's essays "offer further proof that those days in Somerset were the 'fair seed-time' of English Romanticism" (*SEL*, 1972). And Donald H Reiman, for one last example, has discussed "Thematic Unity in Lamb's Familiar Essays" in order to show that Lamb created a symbol-world through which he explored universal human problems in an imaginative way; like the best Romantic poems, he concludes, Lamb's best essays teach but never preach (*JEGP*, 1965).

Remembering Lamb's comparison, in "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," of the man who reads a fine poem for the purpose of reviewing it with the man who reads it simply for the pleasure of doing so, we may feel a bit uneasy about dissecting too minutely Lamb's essays, whether in article or lecture. "The accursed critical habit," he says "- the being called upon to judge and pronounce, must make /the poem/ quite a different thing to the /reviewer/." (All quotations from Lamb's essays and letters are taken from the editions of E V Lucas.) But for all their careful analysis the articles stimulated by Professor Tave's comments are, it seems to me, very much in the spirit of Lamb - that is to say, they are (in the phrase from "Imperfect Sympathies") "suggestive rather than comprehensive." Time and time again, as I read them, I am reminded of other parallels to be drawn, other examples to be cited, other directions to be pursued. And I, too, would like to examine some of Lamb's essays, in order to add a mite to our understanding and appreciation of them as essentially Romantic in kind, without appearing to be too much either the man who reads to review - the man with "the accursed critical habit" - or the Caledonian who, according to Lamb in

"Imperfect Sympathies,""never hints or suggests anything, but unlades his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness."

The essay "Imperfect Sympathies" is frequently used as a point of departure for discussing the mind of Charles Lamb. And with reason, for it helps us immensely to particularize the mind that created the essays we take such pleasure in reading. Lamb commences the essay by distinguishing between the mind of the author of *Religio Medici* and his own. Browne, he would demonstrate by quoting him, is a man of perfect sympathies: "I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things, I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncracy in any thing. Those national repugnancies do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch." Lamb, on the other hand, "cannot," he says, "feel towards all equally. The more purely-English word that expresses sympathy will better explain my meaning. I can be a friend to a worthy man, who upon another account cannot be my mate or *fellow*. I cannot *like* all people alike." "Fellow" appears to be the "more purely-English word," for along with the word "like" it is italicized. But the statement, if it clarifies Lamb's meaning, blurs for us, I think, the image of Lamb's artistic mind, which transcends, I hope to show, the prejudices we associate with the man. It may be that we would do better, therefore, if we wish to take an accurate measure of Lamb's mind, especially his artistic mind, his Romantic mind, to go instead to the famous and often funny letter to Wordsworth of January 30th, 1801. You will remember that, as Lamb compares his local attachments with Wordsworth's, he waxes sympathetic to the verge of pity: "Have I not enough, without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know, that the Mind will make friends of any thing."

The statement - made by one Romantic writer to another - that "the Mind will make friends of any thing" is Lamb's figurative way of expressing the theory of the sympathetic imagination, that view of man's moral and aesthetic faculty so basic to the writers we now label Romantic; his figure for it - the mind as friendly - is almost as common among them as the theory itself. By taking this statement as our text, rather than the more problematic sentences in "Imperfect Sympathies," we can, I think, both witness and witness to Lamb's essentially Romantic art, for it is my belief that Lamb's essays are rooted in the aesthetic of the sympathetic imagination. No doubt he had his prejudices, as did his fellow Romantics. Unlike them, however, he sometimes called our attention to his imperfect sympathies, perhaps thereby misleading us by causing us to think of him as somehow basically different from the others. I would argue, rather, that by writing essay after essay in which the mind is revealed not only to have made friends of seemingly unfriendly things but also to have befriended them so completely that it realized to perfection Coleridge's theory of organic form and Hazlitt's idea of gusto in art, Lamb is in no essential way non-Romantic. Indeed, for Lamb's essays, as for Wordsworth's and Coleridge's conversation poems or for Keats's odes, Hazlitt's explanation of organic art, in "on Genius and Common Sense," seems exactly right:

> Raphael, in muffling up the figure of Elymas the Sorcerer in his garments, appears to have extended the idea of blindness even to his clothes. Was this design? Probably not; but merely the feeling of analogy thoughtlessly suggesting this device, which being so suggested was retained and carried on because it flattered or fell in with the original feeling. Invention (of the best kind) I therefore do not think

> so distinct a thing from feeling, as some are apt to imagine. The springs of pure feeling will rise and fill the moulds of fancy that are fit to receive it. There are some striking coincidences of colour in well-composed pictures, as in a straggling weed in the foreground streaked with blue or red to answer to a blue or red drapery, to the tone of the flesh or an opening in the sky; - not that this was intended, or done by rule (for then it would presently become affected and ridiculous), but the eye being imbued with a certain colour,repeats and varies it from a natural sense of harmony, a secret craving and appetite for beauty, which in the same manner soothes and gratifies the eye of taste, though the cause is not understood.

I have chosen to quote Hazlitt, in part because of the water image he uses, deriving I suspect from Wordsworth's definition of poetry in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* - to which I will shortly return, but also in part because of the gustatory image so characteristic of both Hazlitt and Lamb when writing about art. Lamb's essay on the "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art" is, in fact, very similar in theme as well as in language to the passage from Hazlitt just quoted. The sentences and phrases from Lamb's work assembled by Fred V Randel in his study of "Eating and Drinking in Lamb's Elia Essays" provide general evidence of Lamb's fondness for such words as "gusto" and "relish," to name but two (*ELH*, 1970). My own favorite example comes from "Distant Correspondents": "But if I sent you word to Bath or the Devises," writes Elia to B F, "that I was expecting the aforesaid *treat* this evening, though at the moment you received the intelligence my full *feast* of fun would be over, yet there would be for a day or two after, as you would well know, a *smack*, a *relish* left upon my mental *palate*, which would give rational encouragement for you to foster a *portion* at least of the disagreeable passion, which it was in my part my intention to produce" (the verbal italics are mine). With the phrase "my mental palate," especially, we think of Hazlitt's greatest disciple Keats's "palate fine" in the Melancholy ode, or, even closer, his "the palate of my mind" in "I Cry Your Mercy." Lamb's sympathetic mind, then, his Romantic imagination is mainstream; the affinities with his contemporaries in aesthetic theory and vocabulary are to be seen for the looking. Indeed, his definition of imagination in the essay "On the Genius and Character of Hogarth" echoes the best definitions we have: imagination, he says, is "that power which draws all things to one, - which makes thing animate and inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects and their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect." For Lamb, imagination is both sympathetic and synthetic; it results in both harmony and unity. And it is active, resulting in creation, in healthy dreams. "Herein the great and the little wits are differenced," he writes in "Sanity of True Genius"; that if the latter wander ever so little from nature or actual existence, they lose themselves, and their readers. Their phantoms are lawless; their visions nightmares. They do not create, which implies shaping and consistency. Their imaginations are not active - for to be active is to call something into act and form - but passive, as men in sick dreams."

There is no need surely to go into the subject of the sympathetic imagination; it has been much explored. Nor is there need to elaborate on the friend image by which the sympathetic imagination or the artistic work in which it may result is so often identified. Years ago Edmund Blunden made the point simply but adequately by describing the characters in the Elia essays as "friends of man" (*Charles Lamb and His Contemporaries*, 1933).

Instead, let me remind you of the frequency with which the words "sympathy" and "friend" occur in Lamb's essays and letters alike, often in conjunction, and let me remind you as well of the early relationships, personal and literary - if indeed those two can be distinguished, of Coleridge and Lamb, best symbolized perhaps by their sonnets or effusions, those embodied theories of poetry as the natural expression of sympathy and friendship. Blunden has anticipated me here, too, writing learnedly of the sonnet as symptomatic of the new poetry bottomed on the principles of the French Revolution. As for Coleridge's company at the Salutation and Cat, Lamb wrote on December 10th, 1796: "I love Mrs Coleridge for her excuses an hundredfold more dearly than if she heaped 'line upon line,' out-Hannah-ing Hannah More, and had rather hear you sing 'Did a very little baby' by your family fire-side, than listen to you when you were repeating one of Bowles's sweetest sonnets in your sweet manner, while we two were indulging sympathy, a solitary luxury, by the fireside at the Salutation. Yet have I no higher ideas of heaven." (Please note, in passing, Lamb's description of sympathy as "a solitary luxury.") Let me, besides, call attention to Lamb's emphasis on the necessity of sympathetic imagination on the reader's part, for it was on this subject, with regard to Scott and Wordsworth, that I lectured here three years ago. It is in the Hogarth essay that Lamb says it best: "This /Shakespeare/ well calls *imaginary work*, where the spectator must meet the artist in his conceptions half way; and it is peculiar to the confidence of high genius alone to trust so much to spectators or readers. Lesser artists shew every thing distinct and full, as they require an object to be made out to themselves before they can comprehend it." Arnold Henderson has identified the principle of sympathetic reading as one of the constants of Lamb's criticism, claiming that Lamb characteristically showed more interest in the effects of art on its audience than he did in the mind of the artist (see *SIR*, 1968). In any case, it behooves us, with Lamb as with his contemporary Romantics, as we turn to specific essays illustrative of "the Mind /that/ will make a friend of any thing," to try and meet his conceptions half way; to do anything else is to deny him the "confidence of high genius," to classify him with the lesser artists, the little wits.

It will not surprise you that I wish to look first at "Amicus Redivivus," where Lamb celebrates his friendship of long standing with the historian of Cambridge and Oxford and classical scholar George Dyer, or G D, as he usually appears in the essays. You will recall, I hope, the anecdote that is the genesis of Lamb's narrative essay - G D's walking one afternoon, after visiting Lamb's cottage at Islington, straight into the New River, from which he was fortunately rescued - in the essay, by Elia. Dyer's character is affectionately summed up at the conclusion of "Oxford in the Vacation," in which essay Lamb has sketched him at length:

> D is delightful any where, but he is at his best in such places as /Oxford and Cambridge/. He cares not much for Bath. He is out of his element at Buxton, at Scarborough, or Harrowgate. The Cam and the Isis are to him "better than all the waters of Damascus." On the Muses' hill he is happy, and good, as one of the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains; and when he goes about with you to show you the halls and colleges, you think you have with you the Interpreter at the House Beautiful.

It is Milton rather than Bunyan, however, who is the key reference in "Amicus Redivivus." Two lines from "Lycidas" serve as motto to the essay: "Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep / Clos'd o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?" In *John Milton: A Reader's Guide to His Poetry* (1963),

Marjorie Hope Nicholson has insisted on the importance of the water imagery in the elegy; it is, she argues, a "water-poem." By analogy "Amicus Redivivus" might be called, for much the same reason, a "water-essay" - a new form, perhaps, but then that may be one sign of its Romantic character.

Earlier I emphasized the water imagery in Hazlitt's explanation of the process whereby art achieves organic form, suggesting a source in Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry. It can be no mystery to any student of *The Prelude* why Wordsworth would fall back upon water imagery in the 1800 Preface when attempting to say what poetry is, how it comes, for the River Derwent was embedded deep in his mind, from infancy:

> Was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
> To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
> And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
> And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
> That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
> O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
> Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
> Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
> A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
>
> (Bk. I, 269-81: 1850)

Just how deeply embedded is suggested by the unobtrusive river metaphor in one of the lyrical ballads themselves, "Lines Written in Early Spring": "To her fair words did Nature link / The human soul that through me ran." So, too, the New River in Lamb's mind, or so it would appear from the many allusions to it scattered through his writings. In "Newspapers Thirty-Five Years Ago" he tells of the childhood expedition to find the source of this stream, this little boy's Nile, but it is in "Amicus Redivivus" that the river, like the blindness in Raphael's painting or like the sea in Milton's elegy or like the river in *The Prelude*, has been extended until water becomes the "one colour," the "one effect" to which everything tends, whereby we recognize the sympathetic imagination resulting in organic form.

After recounting the near-drowning and rescue of Dyer, Lamb turns to the aftermath and first to the passers-by, who shortly "in philanthropic shoals came thronging" (our "water-essay" takes a piscatory turn). While they debated prescriptions for reviving Dyer, his life "was ebbing fast away." Fortunately, one sane voice prescribed a doctor, and Lamb ushers in "Monoculus - for so, in default of catching his true name, I choose to designate the medical gentleman who now appeared..." His portrait is unified by water imagery; indeed, is virtually constructed of water imagery. I'll quote just a small part by way of example:

> He omitteth no occasion of obtruding his services, from a case of common surfeit-suffocation to the ignobler obstructions, sometimes induced by a too wilful application of the plant *Cannabis* outwardly. But though he declineth not altogether these *drier* extinctions, his occupation tendeth for the most part to *water-practice*; for the convenience of which, he hath judiciously fixed his quarters near the grand repository of the *stream* mentioned, where, day and night, from his little *watch-tower*, at the Middleton's Head, he listeneth to detect

> the *wrecks* of *drowned* mortality - partly, as he saith, to be upon the spot - and partly, because the *liquids* which he useth to prescribe to himself and his patients, on these distressing occasions, are ordinarily more conveniently to be found at these common hostleries, than in the shops and *phials* of the apothecaries. (All italics but the first are mine.)

Water in "Amicus Redivivus," it would appear, as in "Lycidas," is both destroyer and preserver.

Once revived, Dyer commences to remember the various "providential deliverances," the "marvellous escapes" in his career, sometimes bursting into fragments of "deliverance-hymns." The paragraph concludes, naturally enough, with an allusion to the exiled children of Israel, singing their melancholy Hebrew melodies of longing for deliverance from captivity by the waters of Babylon.

There follows, here at midpoint in the essay, an apostrophe to the New River - "Waters of Sir Hugh Middleton." Again, I cannot resist quoting a little:

> Waters of Sir Hugh Middleton - what a spark you were like to have extinguished for ever! Your salubrious streams to this City, for now near two centuries, would hardly have atoned for what you were in a moment washing away. Mockery of a river - liquid artifice - wretched conduit! henceforth rank with canals, and sluggish aqueducts. Was it for this, that, smit in boyhood with the explorations of the Abyssinian traveller, I paced the vales of Amwell to explore your tributary springs, to trace your salutary waters sparkling through green Hertfordshire, and cultured Enfield parks? - Ye have no swans - no Naiads - no river God - or did the benevolent hoary aspect of my friend tempt ye to suck him in, that ye also might have the tutelary genius of your waters?

We'll return later to the implications of tone in this passage. For now, just the conclusion, in which Lamb has ceased to admonish the river and commenced to chide Dyer: "Fie, man, to turn dipper at your years, after your many tracts in favour of sprinkling only!"

From the immediate effects of the episode we move, via the apostrophe which has served as transition, to the lingering effects. "I have nothing but *water* in my head o'nights since this frightful accident," Lamb declares (my italics). And he proceeds to recount his dreams of drowning characters in literature whom he is too late to save (shades of De Quincey), of would-be suicides by drowning saved against their will, and finally of the half-drowned on earth who are made to complete the job in "streams of Lethe," "by wharfs where Ophelia twice acts her muddy death."

Lamb completes the essay by imagining the disappointment of various "Elysian shades" who are preparing for Dyer's good company only to be deprived of it by Elia's interference. Chief and last among them is "mild Askew," patron of the gentle Christ's boy," "whose tender scions in the boy he himself upon earth had so prophetically fed and *watered*" (my italics) - with which word the essay ends. Surely it can be said that Lamb's mind has made friends with the as-it-turns-out amusing episode, has imaginatively sympathized with it, resulting in a first-rate example of organic form in prose, to which the water-imagery is our main clue.

As for meeting his conceptions half way, that's easy, for Lamb's essay is not finally so much a "water-essay" as it is a "comic water-elegy in prose."

The lines from "Lycidas" not only signal the pervasive water imagery by which the essay is organized and unified; in addition, they hint of the literary design according to which the essay is built. The comic inversion of the classical pattern is quickly revealed when we perceive that in Lamb's story the nymphs' whereabouts were known; moreover, in the singular form of Elia they did not neglect to do their duty.

Perhaps a glance at Wordsworth is relevant at this point, for like "The Idiot Boy," "Amicus Redivivus" was clearly written with "much glee." I choose this poem rather than another lyrical ballad because, although we might see Lamb in the essay giving "the charm of novelty to things of every day" and exciting "a feeling analogous to the supernatural" by adding "The light that never was, on sea or land," he does so with a difference, the same difference that we see, I think, in "The Idiot Boy," where we have not a ballad-romance but a mock ballad-romance, not a straight lyrical ballad but a burlesque one. Johnny is in the end neither a sadder nor wiser man. It is, of course, Lamb's title which in retrospect if not initially sets the fun going. He continues the mock classical-hence-serious tone implied by the Latin phrase by alluding to heroic figures ("In a moment...he was on my shoulders, and I - freighted with a load more precious than his who bore Anchises.") and by employing classical literary formulas and phrases, one of which "Was it for this?", the question asked by Wordsworth's poet-hero in the lines from *The Prelude* quoted earlier tonight, has recently fascinated Jonathan Wordsworth (see *TLS*, 18 April 1975). Principally, however, it is the elaborate mythmaking with the one-eyed doctor Monoculus and with the couch on which Dyer rests and reminisces (now to "be honoured with costly valance, at some price, and hencefore /to/ be a state-bed at Colebrook"), not to mention the degrading punishment to be visited on the river itself ("henceforth rank with canals, and sluggish aqueducts."), that sustains the mockery. Long before the river is cursed, however, Lamb has established an atmosphere of the supernatural by which to glorify the anecdote that is his subject. With the opening sentence, he introduces a mood of strangeness, a sense of the unreal. Shortly after, he suggests that he was moved to rescue Dyer by supernatural agency; he even questions "if time was in that time." The advice from a passer-by that someone fetch a doctor "was to me as if an Angel had spoken." The doctor is, as I have indicated already, Lamb's most fanciful foolery. Perhaps the most efficient way to describe the effect of his portrait is to compare it with De Quincey's picture, in "The Pleasures of Opium," of the apothecary who "first laid open to me the paradise of opium-eaters" - "the unconscious minister of celestial pleasures!" - "the beatific vision of an immortal druggist, sent down to earth on a special mission to myself." Similarly, Lamb elevates the mundane to the sublime, supernaturalizes the natural, and with the same result: we smile then chuckle as he goes about the job of creating the doctor.

Later, in questioning the river, Lamb, echoing "Lycidas," asks if the water might have been in quest of a "tutelary genius." And in his dreams the well drowned, the foiled drowned, and the half drowned figures follow one another in "a mournful procession" - again, the Miltonic echo. The closing vision of heaven, or more properly and appropriately of the Elysian Fields, with Askew as a version of the patron saint with prophetic powers even while alive, merely underscores what is by now, I hope, the obvious - that "Lycidas" is not only the source of Lamb's imagery but also the model, turned inside out, for his narrative.

To speak in the aesthetic language of both Lamb and Hazlitt, the comic water-elegy in prose is, once we sample it, delicious in the extreme; it is nearly

impossible, once we perceive its gusto, not to relish it. For Lamb as author is in one respect much like Monoculus. Just as the doctor encourages his drenched patients to sample his standard remedy of "the purest Cognac, with water" (of course!) by first tasting it himself, so Lamb has clearly delighted in tasting ahead of us the delectable humor of his friend Dyer's fond absent-mindedness and the amazing dilemma to which it brought him.

From Lamb's revived friend Dyer to The Society of Friends, or the Quakers, as he usually called them, those calm, clean people who so often revived Lamb's own mind and spirit, if not his body, is no long step. Although Quakers were ultimately evidence, along with Caledonians and Jews, of Lamb's imperfect sympathies, so that they were not perhaps "fellows," only friends, they were among his favorite people:

> I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the sight, or quiet voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the bosom.

The Quakers figure in a number of the essays, in varying degrees of prominence, but it is in "A Quaker's Meeting" where Lamb waxes most expansive about them. Accordingly, it is this essay which I wish to look at now in some detail.

Like "Amicus Redivivus," it commences with lines of poetry that anticipate themes, forms, and images to come, much as do the verses by which Scott typically introduced the chapters of the Waverley novels. Lamb's lines, too, like many of Soctt's, are from the seventeenth century, specifically, from a collection entitled *Poems of all Sorts*, by Richard Fleckno. Here they are:

> Still-born Silence! thou that art
> Flood-gate of the deeper heart!
> Offspring of a heavenly kind!
> Frost o' the mouth, and thaw o' the mind!
> Secrecy's confident, and he
> Who makes religion mystery!
> Admiration's speaking'st tongue!
> Leave, thy desert shades among,
> Reverend hermits' hallow'd cells,
> Where retired devotion dwells!
> With the enthusiasms come,
> Seize our tongues, and strike us dumb!

It is important, first of all, to notice that the poet, after invoking Silence by citing his attributes and so identifying him, is issuing him an invitation to leave one setting for another, for the essay that follows also takes the form of an invitation, reminding us not only of the many lyrical and meditative poems of the Renaissance in this form but also perhaps of the numerous Romantic poems of invitation, among them some of the lyrical ballads and several of Shelley's lyrics. In the essay Lamb issues the invitation three times, a binding number - once at the end of the opening paragraph, again at the end of the second paragraph, and once more late in the essay after he has taken us in imagination with him to a Quaker's meeting. Here is the first invitation:

> READER, would'st thou know what true peace and quiet mean; would'st thou find a refuge from the noises and clamours of the multitude; would'st thou enjoy at once solitude and society; would'st thou possess the

> depth of thy own spirit in stillness, without being shut out from the consolatory faces of thy species; would'st thou be alone, and yet accompanied; solitary, yet not desolate; singular, yet not without some to keep thee in countenance; a unit in aggregate; a simple in composite: - come with me into a Quaker's Meeting.

Here is the second:

> Dost thou love silence deep as that "before the winds were made?" go not out into the wilderness, descend not into the profundities of the earth; shut not up thy casements; nor pour wax into the little cells of thy ears, with little-faith'd self-mistrusting Ulysses. - Retire with me into a Quaker's Meeting.

And here, the third and last:

> - O when the spirit is sore fretted, even tired to sickness of the janglings, and nonsense-noises of the world, what a balm and a solace it is, to go and seat yourself, for a quiet half hour, upon some undisputed corner of a bench, among the gentle Quakers!

Functioning somewhat like a refrain, the multiple invitations contribute not only design but also rhythm to the essay, the more so that the part of the phrase which echoes the title - "a Quaker's Meeting" is, in addition, used several other times and then at the ends of sentences. The last invitation quoted is significantly varied - not just the substitution of "retire" for "come." Fuller, more expansive in emotion and thought, it represents the evolution of the essay from its beginnings to its maturity and suggests the author's confidence, acquired in the process, that his audience is now securely bound to his point of view, quietly and subtly argued throughout, that there are real benefits to be gained from attending a Quaker's meeting.

This last invitation, one to no specific meeting at no specific time or place, is not, as it might appear to be, the concluding sentence of the essay. Lamb adds two brief paragraphs, providing something resembling a coda. In the sentences from "Imperfect Sympathies" he has credited, as we have heard, the very sight of a Quaker with the power to lighten his spirit. Accordingly, he turns at the end of "A Quaker's Meeting" from the inner to the outer Quaker, giving us a visual image of unity, cleanliness, purity, whiteness, and light irresistible in imaginative appeal:

> Their garb and stillness conjoined, present an uniformity, tranquil and herd-like - as in the pasture - "forty feeding like one."
>
> The very garments of a Quaker seem incapable of receiving a soil; and cleanliness in them to be something more than the absence of its contrary. Every Quakeress is a lily; and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun-conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like troops of the Shining Ones.

Notice that *a* Quaker's meeting has expanded to "conferences." the members of a meeting to "bands" and "troops," so that the essay has been, as we say, universalized. The people are coming "from all parts of the United Kingdom" (dare we detect a pun?). The Bunyan allusion pays high compliment to the Quakers, for you will remember that Lamb concluded "Oxford in the Vacation," the portrait of Dyer, with a similar reference. More important, of course, it intimates to our imagination states and conditions of spiritual beauty and harmony that no one can sincerely affect to despise.

But the coda does not merely add the half that makes the whole - the unified

picture of the Quaker, nor does it function principally to expand the essay from the particular to the general, important as these things are; rather it carries through to triumph the paradoxical theme which Lamb has been developing from the beginning. Hence it, not the third invitation, is the true conclusion of the essay and, properly speaking, not a coda at all. The lines of poetry, you will remember, ask Silence to leave the sites of "retired devotion" - "desert shades" and "hermits' hallow'd cells." The opening paragraph, with its catalog of "temptations" to solitude, stresses the paradox that perfect solitude, true peace and quiet, are to be had in company, in crowds, in cities - in short, in a Quaker's meeting. Silence "is multiplied and rendered more intense by numbers and by sympathy," much as Shelly claims in "Epipsychidion" that love thrives when divided and multiplied. "Give me," Lamb says to the author of a treatise *On Solitude* (1715), "a sympathetic solitude." It is hard not to think of still another Romantic writer at this point, one who also suggested, especially when viewing for the first time either a natural or a man-made work of great beauty - the Pacific Ocean or the Elgin Marbles, that silence is "Admiration's speaking'st tongue!" Indeed, Lamb's injunctions in the second invitation to go not to solitary spots for perfect solitude but rather to a Quaker's meeting inevitably suggest the "Ode on Melancholy." So, too, Lamb's later statement that pacing alone "in the cloisters, or side aisles of some cathedral...is but a vulgar *luxury*, compared with that which those enjoy, who come together for the purposes of more complete, abstracted solitude. This is the loneliness 'to be *felt*'" (my italics).

When we associate Romantic writers and Quakers, we usually think first of Wordsworth, who was thought by some contemporaries, including Lamb (see his review of *The Excursion*) and Keats (see the letter to Sarah Jeffrey, 31 May 1819), to be Quakerish. But Lamb, in the luxury and sensuousness of his solitude (remember, please, the letter to Coleridge, with its description of sympathy as "a solitary luxury"), is far more reminiscent of the Keats, who in the sonnet "On Solitude" - the same poem in which he borrows an image from Wordsworth's "Nuns fret not" - concludes that the pleasure of solitude is considerably improved "When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee." It is true, though, that Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, speaks of London with its multitudes as an effective foil to his visions of ideal man and nature:

> The effect was, still more elevated views
> Of human nature.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Lo! everything that was indeed divine
> Retained its purity inviolate,
> Nay brighter shone, by this portentious gloom
> Set off;
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Add also, that among the multitudes
> of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
> Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
> One spirit over ignorance and vice
> Predominant, in good and evil hearts
> One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
> For the sun's light.
>
> (Bk. VIII, 644-5, 655-8, 666-72: 1850)

Similarly, Lamb images purity, unity, and the ideal - gives his paradox its ultimate expression - by setting the Quakers off against the backdrop of "the metropolis," which is the very anthithesis of "desert shades" and "hermits' hallow'd cells." Coming "up in bands," "whitening the easterly streets," showing "like troops," these Quakers constitute the greatest imaginable contrary to "retired devotion." And thus the essay circles incrementally, evolving the images whereby Lamb's idea of true solitude - "sympathetic solitude" - becomes a felt thing.

As of yet, I have done no more than hint of the middle of the essay. Having persuaded us with rhythm, design, and paradox to come with him, Lamb takes us to a Quaker's meeting, or perhaps to a composite of many such meetings, where with him, "sitting among you in deepest peace," we meditate, our minds reverting "to the times of your beginnings, and the sowings of the seed by Fox and Dewesbury." I have not altered the personal pronouns in these phrases, as I would ordinarily do when adapting Lamb's words for a lecture such as this, because the "you" is the very symbol of our community and identity in the essay with the Quakers - the very sign of "sympathetic solitude" which we are in imagination sharing with them.

Lamb's meditating - and so ours - takes the form of remembering names and events from his reading in the chronicles of the Quakers, gradually working his way forward from the past to the present, comparing the primitive spirit with the modern and comparing the Quaker movement in general with the Wesleyan movement, to the detriment of the latter. As in the beginning we were invited to come to the meeting, so in the middle, having come, we are invited to read Sewel's *History of the Quakers* and to get "the writings of John Woolman by heart" - all of which "is far more edifying and affecting than any thing you will read of Wesley and his colleagues." The result, Lamb implies, is that we will come to "love the early Quakers" as he does - a gentle reminder of his assertion in the letter to Wordsworth that "the Mind will make friends of any thing."

Because the "sympathetic solitude" of a Quaker's meeting is occasionally broken by speech, Lamb prepares us for such an event should it occur by describing a typical speaker of the female sex, who is, he claims, the more frequent speaker. The portrait is good:

> Only now and then a trembling, female, generally *ancient*, voice is heard - you cannot guess from what part of the meeting it proceeds - with a low, buzzing, musical sound, laying out a few words which "she thought might suit the condition of some present," with a quaking diffidence, which leave no possibility of supposing that any thing of female vanity was mixed up, where the tones were so full of tenderness, and a restraining modesty.

Not so much a woman as a voice, really - like those musical,disembodied voices of the ideal world heard by Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, singing *ancient* (Lamb italicizes the word) songs of tender joy.

"Only once, and it was some years ago" did Lamb witness "a sample of the old Foxian orgasm," and he proceeds to join to the portrait of the woman one of a giant man, with frame of iron, who confessed "with expressions of sober remorse," that he "'had been a WIT in his youth'." Such spectacles are, however, rare among Quakers if common among Wesleyans and other enthusiasts. "More frequently," Lamb informs us, "the Meeting is broken up without a word having been spoken. But the mind has been fed. You go away with a sermon, not made with hands. You have been in the milder caverns of Trophonius; or as in some den, where that fiercest and savagest of all wild creatures, the TONGUE, that unruly member, has strangely lain tied up and

captive. You have bathed with stillness." And with these words we have arrived at the third and last invitation quoted much earlier in this lecture. The metaphor of the organic mind - one being fed - reinforces Lamb's essential kinship with his fellow Romantics, recalling what is perhaps the locus classicus of this image, the stanza from "Expostulation and Reply":

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness."

The image "bathed with stillness" prepares us for the upcoming shift, in the coda, to the garments of the Quakers, symbols of the "cleanliness in them /which seems/ to be something more than the absence of its contrary."

I have not spoken, as I did speak with "Amicus Redivivus," about imagistic organization and unity in this essay, but not because it is less impressive. For, I would remind you, the first four lines of the motto-poem develop a water-image. I'll repeat them for you:

Still-born Silence! thou that art
Flood-gate of the *deep*er heart!
Off*spring* of a heavingly kind!
Frost o' the mouth, and *thaw* o' the mind! (My italics.)

It effectively contrasts with the desert image of 1.8, thereby helping to establish the paradox of "sympathetic solitude" which is Lamb's distinctive theme. Silence is not usually imaged as a "flood-gate." In point of fact, the double or balanced imagery of deeps and deserts, waves and wildernesses, storms and silences (unheard melodies are sweeter) is important to the essay. I'll forego elaborating upon the sustained water imagery, letting it pass with the suggestions that Lamb carries it through with much the same finesse he exhibits in "Amicus Redivivus." But I will point out briefly the evolving desert-cell imagery, which originates in the last lines of the motto-poem and receives its first development in the second invitation, both already read to you. About a third of the way into the essay, Lamb, stressing the principle of "sympathetic solitude," proposes to banish "this inhuman, shy, single, shade-and-cavern-haunting solitariness." He returns to caverns and dens - "the milder caverns of Trophonius" - when near the end of the essay he describes the conclusion of a typical meeting. The very next sentence uses the water image of bathing. We have, then, not two single images sustained separately but rather two joined, contrasting images sustained together. It seems appropriate, given Lamb's theme, for sympathetic solitude feeds our minds, uplifts and cleanses our spirits, much as water does our body; it may even result in growth, possibly a flower: "Every Quakeress is a lily."

Perhaps it is going a bit far, but we began our consideration of the essay by noticing the resemblance of Lamb's essay to the Renaissance poems of invitation, to which flower symbolism is generic. Possibly Lamb, who would have us love the Quakers as he does, entices us with the lily, radiant in its white purity. And if the pastoral image of "tranquil and herdlike" Quakers, "as in the pasture - 'forty feeding like one'," causes us to regret a paradise lost, the pastoral image of the whitening easterly streets of London at Whitsuntide - the spreading of pastoral peace and beauty through the metropolis, like so many streams of cleansing, shining water - may cause us to hope for a paradise regained:

And now the time returns again:
  Our souls exult & London's towers,
Receive the Lamb of God to dwell
  In Englands green & pleasant bowers.

(*Jerusalem: To The Christians*)

Like Blake, whose "Water paintings" (as he called them) Lamb so admired (see the letter to Bernard Barton, 15 May 1824), Lamb loved "the greenness of /England's/ fields" ("New Year's Eve'). "I am in love," he said again in "New Year's Eve," "with this green earth." "How astonishingly," Keats wrote to James Rice in the winter of 1820, "does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties on us. Like poor Falstaff, though I do not babble, I think of green fields." And England's, Wordsworth tells us in "I Travelled Among Unknown Men," "is the last green field / That Lucy's eyes surveyed."

The astonishing thing to me is the striking resemblance among the Romantics when we compare their art rather than their biography. Lamb the man preferred convivial conversation to Quaker silence; city streets to green fields; and the waking-world of everyday experience to the dream-world of transcendental vision. But Lamb the Romantic artist could love Quakers and commend Quaker meetings without reservation; relish green fields as the very symbol of all that is beautiful and valuable in this world of nature; and envision the transformation of London from polluted city to pastoral paradise, shining clean and white like the kingdom of God itself. This is the phenomenon explained by Daniel Mulcahy as Lamb's "antithetical manner" (see *SEL*, 1963). I prefer to find the explanation in his sympathetic imagination - his Romantic mind that could and often did make friends and subsequently art of any thing - friends even of those things which the man could not like well enough "(as Desdemona would say) 'to live with them'" ("Imperfect Sympathies").

The substance of this article was given at a lecture at the Wordsworth/ Coleridge Summer School at Ambleside in July 1975.

BOOK REVIEWS

Mark Storey: The Poetry of John Clare; *A Critical Introduction*. Macmillan, 1974 £5.95

Before the 1920s, when editors began to quarry the rich vein of Clare's 2000 or so unpublished manuscripts collected in Peterborough, Northampton and elsewhere, the Northampton Peasant Poet (how that label has stuck to him) was virtually unknown to the general public, although in what may perhaps be considered a companion piece to the present book, the Clare volume in the *Critical Heritage* series, Mr Storey, as editor, has assembled a surprisingly large number of critical opinions. Within the last 50 years or so, stimulated in part by the centenary of his death in 1964, interest in Clare has been steadily mounting; but although the various editions of his work have produced an equal number of interesting and informative introductions, and the learned journals have received their share of comment, this is the first full length survey in depth of Clare's poetry to emerge from recent studies. It has been worth doing.

Mr Storey refused to take sides in the debate on Clare as a "major" or "minor" poet, but concludes that he is, at his best, "a very good poet indeed". In this book, prompted in part by the needs of students for some

critical help with the poetry, the author wisely leaves most of the biographical aspects of Clare to the excellent *Life* by J W and Anne Tibble, and fills in only what is essential for consideration of a writer in whom, more than most, life and poetry were so closely integrated.

Born in 1793, Clare lived for 39 years in the small village of Helpston, growing up in poverty and ill health, struggling after his shotgun marriage to "Patty" (Martha Turner) to provide for a growing family. Transference to Northborough, no more than three miles away from the loved territory of his boyhood proved a shattering experience, and contributed to the mental breakdown which caused his removal after five years first to a private asylum in Epping Forest, and a few months after his escape from there, to the Northampton County Lunatic Asylum for the remaining 24 years of his life.

This summary takes no account of the inner life reflected in his poems; his complete absorption in his native countryside and every aspect of nature revealed in it; his love for his childhood sweetheart Mary Joyce; the profound effect on him of the changes to the landscape and way of life of the local community brought about by the application of the Enclosure Act to Helpston and its neighbouring villages. Mary Joyce, though they were parted while both were very young, was to haunt him all his life as a complicated symbol of idealised love and female frailty, standing also for lost innocence and "loss of Eden", and was also to figure in the delusions of his madness, even after her death, as the first of two living wives. His sudden rise to fame with his first book, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* in 1820, and his subsequent introduction to Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge and others of the literary world of London, left him in a half world where he had gone beyond the life of a village labourer, cut off by his own interest in poetry and literature from the majority of his neighbours, who viewed this new public figure with distrust. He was scarcely able to support his family by his writing alone, as he wished to do, even with the help of the funds doled out to him by aristocratic and other patrons who only half understood his situation. These circumstances, together with later disappointments and wrangles with his publishers, Taylor and Hessey, and their dilatoriness in bringing out his later books, all had their place in bringing about the state of mind revealed in his later poems, where he is seen wrestling with problems of self-identity - or "sad non-identity". These aspects of Clare are thoroughly covered in this book, with well documented references to letters and prose writings - indeed one begins to wonder whether the man is not a more fascinating subject than the poet, whom Mr Storey sees as a solitary, perpetually searching out memory, to restore some sort of permanence to offset the changes of different kinds which weighed him down.

Clare wrote in his autobiography, "I knew nothing of poetry it was felt not uttered"; in this study Mr Storey traces in meticulous detail the development of Clare, from his first essays in verse to his maturity, in his struggle to utter what he felt. The subject on which he felt most strongly all his life was nature - landscape, weather, trees, flowers, birds, animals, insects, closely, accurately and beautifully observed, with many an evocative and original image, yet, as Mr Storey says, with no sentimentality over what is often harsh and cruel. Mr Storey's examination of the traditions of nature poetry and descriptive writing, from Gavin Douglas down to Clare's contemporaries, and his references to the poets, such as Collins, whose influence on Clare can be directly observed, clearly establishes Clare's superiority in some respects over these predecessors. Clare, though he

sometimes used them as models, was most at ease when he had learned to avoid the conventions of much of that kind of verse - personification, for example: although he admired Keats, for instance, he objected that he looked behind every rosebush for a Venus and under every laurel for a thrumming Apollo.

Mr Storey is concerned to show the great variety of form and style in Clare - lyrics, lovesongs, ballads, satire, imitations of Elizabethan poets, or Burns and other "peasant" poets, narrative - and discusses particularly the evolution of Clare's own version of the sonnet, by no means a conventional one, from its tentative beginning to a highly flexible and expressive instrument. The longest chapter in his book is devoted to the genesis of *The Shepherd's Calendar* and to a study of Clare's descriptive technique. He regards it as his first mature poem and among its particular strengths values truth to nature, seen in clarity and variety of detail, economy of style, directness of language and vigour of description. In his analysis of how Clare's poems "work" he makes the point, here and elsewhere, that it is the presence of man in the landscape - ploughman, driving boy, shepherd - and the effect of the seasons on him, the relationship between man and nature, that distinguishes Clare's work from mere descriptive poetry of a similar kind, and points out that where, in his narrative poems, Clare is describing life in the community, he is doing so not as an outside observer, as Crabbe does, but from the inside, as one of the underprivileged.

He also attaches much importance to Clare's use of dialect - discouraged by his publishers, editors and friends, including Lamb - in creating landscape from the countryman's point of view. Undeniably there is a charm for the modern reader in the use of such expressions as "painted pooties" for "coloured snails", and "croodled" for "huddled", but is a ploughman really put "into a closer relationship with the soil he ploughs" because he is described as standing on "elting soil" rather than on "soft ridges of freshly ploughed land"? Mr Storey seems to be among those critics inclined to overstress the "localness" of Clare's writing. However, this is a matter in which the reader must judge for himself, and this is only one of the matters to which Mr Storey's book forces the reader to give close attention.

But Clare not only celebrates nature and the joys of boyhood's discovery of it - during the years of increasing melancholy and "blue devils" and illness following the *Shepherd's Calendar*, his poetry reflects more and more the sense of loss and desolation following the destruction of his old loved landscape by enclosure, loss of joy, exile from Eden, disillusion: until, paradoxically, he rediscovers faith in the power of "poesy" to preserve the memory of what was good and true in nature. Mr Storey deals in some detail with the poems of this period, but without overpraising: he is not afraid to comment adversely on Clare's less happy inspiration.

General opinions of the poetry written during and between incarceration in the two asylums vary, and these poems are indeed of differing quality. Mr Storey does not overestimate their value, but gives the best poems their due, and is sympathetic towards the obvious "mad" poems, *Don Juan* and *Child Harold*. Many of the later poems are lyrics addressed to "Mary" and other girls, set in an ideal, love-filled landscape, and if one did not know the circumstances in which they were written, many would pass for the stock in trade of the conventional lyric poet bred in the ballad tradition. Among them, however, are a number of almost metaphysical poems concerned with the themes that had long preoccupied Clare - solitude, innocence, contemplation of the past, love and eternity, among them the handful of poems which entitle Clare to a place among not mere "peasant" poets, but poets.

This book contains a great deal of closely packed exposition and detailed analysis of Clare's methods and techniques, and Clare, who took little account of grammar, might well have been astonished at the attention given to the scrutiny of his syntax. If the reader does not always agree with a particular interpretation, that does not matter: what is important is that the quotations and the comment send one again and again back to the source, and compel one to examine Clare's poems with a more piercing eye - and ear - than one might otherwise have brought to them. This book is certainly to be recommended to anyone who wishes for an introduction to Clare.

Stella Pigrome

Charles Lamb: A Dissertation upon Roast Pig *Whitstable: The Shoestring Press of Ben Sands, 1975* £4.20

It seems an excellent idea to take one of Lamb's Essays of Elia and publish it as a Bi-Centenary tribute to its author. When the essay is "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" and the book is issued by the Shoestring Press of Ben Sands, and called "a frolic", enjoyment of both the reading matter and its presentation is ensured. All that a printer can do for an author is to be found in this publication.

As a book it is a delight, beautifully printed in clear 14 pt type with wide spaces between each line, on John Dickinson's handmade paper with five skilful and amusing lino prints in colour and "thread laced in the Japanese manner, the boards are covered with original paste-grained paper, a narrow band of red cloth is hinged at the spine edge".

Lamb enthusiasts will find much pleasure at the sight of the author listening entranced to Thomas Manning reading the Chinese manuscript, which heads the essay, and all the lino prints are worth careful study for they are full of humour and enhance one's enjoyment of the work.

The book has one drawback. Only 70 signed and numbered copies have been printed.

F S Reeves

Michael Kelly: Reminiscences, ed. Roger Fiske (Oxford English Memoirs and Travels) *OUP, 1975* pp 396, 12 illustrations £7.50

This is a delightful (and indispensable) book both for the student of the theatre and for the general reader interested in the cultural life of the period. In these Reminiscences (ghosted by Theodore Hook), Michael Kelly (1762-1826), singer, composer and theatrical producer gives us a fascinating insight into the musical and theatrical life of his times. Of particular interest to Lamb students is the fact that he was Uncle to Fanny Kelly and Lamb's proposal to her is referred to in a note. She figures in these pages, along with Mozart, Haydn, Stephen and Nancy Storace, Mrs Siddons, Edmund Kean, Elliston, Sheridan, Coleridge and a host of others. Kelly produced Coleridge's play *Remorse* at Drury Lane although Coleridge did not appear to share Kelly's satisfaction with the production and the music is dismissed by the editor as "infantile". Kelly wrote more than sixty "operas" although Tom Moore described him as more an *im*poser than a composer.

He had the invaluable talent of being in the right place at the right time - in Paris he sees Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette (in "a black bonnet covered with dust") brought back after the flight to Varennes; he auditions

the 5-year old Edmund Kean for his first stage part (as Cupid); he appears in the first performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*; he witnesses the attempt to assassinate George III at Drury Lane and later the fire which destroyed that theatre; he observes Napoleon and Josephine in a box at the Paris Opera.

He brings an infectious (if sometimes indiscriminate) enthusiasm to every experience, and it is a pleasure to be carried along in the company of this observant, witty, generous, compassionate man. He is rarely (if ever) malicious and displays a rather endearing satisfaction in his contacts with royalty and the aristocracy. Afflicted by poverty and ill-health in his later years, he is uncomplaining. Food, drink, clothes, visits to great houses, encounters with the famous, travels at home and abroad, conversations with casual acquaintances all entranced him and 150 years later we can share this vivid enjoyment.

The volume is excellently produced, with adequate notes although rather fuller biographical details of the less well-known dramatis personae would have been welcome.

M R H

CHARLES LAMB IN PRINT

One of our American members has sent me a photocopy of the LAM-LAN page of the newly-published 1975 volume of the American *Books in Print*. Compared with the entries in the English counterpart the US is rich in Lamb print: here we have only one or two versions of *Elia* and *Tales From Shakespeare* along with such jeux d'esprit as the limited edition of *Roast Pig* which is reviewed in this issue. The US list is impressive, due mainly to the reprint publishers: you can get E V Lucas's *Life* and three volume edition of the *Letters*, Professor Barnett's *Charles Lamb: the Evolution of Elia*, several volumes by Edmund Blunden, Barry Cornwall's *Memoir*, George Daniel's *Recollections*, W C Hazlitt's *The Lambs; their Lives, their Friends and their Correspondence*, Reginald Hine's *Charles Lamb and His Hertfordshire*, F V Morley's *Lamb Before Elia*, and so on. A glance at the prices makes one wonder, however, whether this lavish availability is necessarily a good thing: Blunden's *Charles Lamb; His Life Recorded by His Contemporaries* costs $30.00 from Gordon Press (but only $11.75 from R West), the Barry Cornwall $30.00 from R West, Lucas's *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* $20.00, and the Reginald Hine $16.00 from Greenwood. English members will know that with a little persistence secondhand copies of the original editions can be bought for less than that. There is an encouraging aspect to the list, however, in the new titles announced for publication. As well as Volume I of Professor Marrs' edition of the *Letters*, two titles are scheduled for 1975: CLS member Fred V Randel's *The World of Elia; Lamb's Essayistic Romanticism* from Kennicat Press, and Robert Frank's *Don't Call Me Gentle Charles; Discourses on Charles Lamb's Essays of Elia* from Oregon State University Press. We shall hope to review these new volumes in due course. It is good to know that the Elian cause is so much alive.

B S

GENERAL NEWS

Professor John Nabholtz writes:

> In recognition of the Lamb bicentenary and the current vigorous state of Lamb scholarship, a seminar on Charles Lamb will be held on December 29 in connection with the Convention of the Modern Language Association in San Francisco. The speakers and titles of their papers are: Professor John I Ades (Southern Illinois University), "Friendly Persuasion: Lamb as Critic of Wordsworth"; Professor Peter Brier (California State University), "Charles Lamb and the Stage of the Mind: A Principle of Form"; Professor Ralph M Wardle (University of Nebraska), "Lamb's Little White Lies." The sponsor of the seminar and discussion leader: Professor John R Nabholtz (Loyola University of Chicago).

Mrs Winifred Courtney writes:

> As to Professor Coburn's inquiry about William Dollin, there just might be a fruitful line of research in the references to Mary Dollin in the letters of Charles Lamb and of Charles Lloyd. The name is certainly an unusual one. CL writes, in a letter to Southey of Dec. 27, 1798: "I suppose you have somewhere heard that poor Mary Dollin has poisoned herself, after some interviews with John Reid, the ci-devant Alphonso of her days of hope."
>
> Then, as E V Lucas points out (Lamb *Letters* 1935, Vol. I, p. 145), there is a letter of Charles Lloyd (which may be read in full in *The Lloyd-Manning Letters*, ed. Frederick L Beaty, Bloomington, Indiana 1957, pp. 19-20) of Jan. 6, 1799, which says, "I find now, alas too late! that he /Robert Southey/ had 'day dreams' of marrying me to Miss Dollin - & why forsooth? - because the poor girl had passions & fell on Lambs knees..." Lloyd is writing from Leicester, whither he has ridden from Birmingham to explain something to the mother of John Reid, to whom there is a cryptic reference. The whole episode is intriguing, and I shall be interested to know if other, more informed, readers, know whether William Dollin was not a relative of Mary Dollin's (a brother?) with whom Lamb kept in touch after the tragedy. I think Miss Coburn's dating (March 1800) lends force to this possibility. It would be interesting to know more of Lamb's association with Mary Dollin as well.

Mrs Courtney also tells us that the Lambs Club in New York has been dispossed of its premises, about which she wrote in the Bulletin for April 1974. They carry on under the shelter of the Lotos Club, 5 East 66th Street but their drama book collection has been sold to the University of Texas.

We are indebted to Mr B Y McPeake for the presentation to the library of a number of booksellers' and sale catalogues containing Lamb items. May we make an appeal for any published item about Lamb, however slight? We shall do our best to catalogue such material and to see that it is properly kept.

Members who have not yet booked their places for the Charles Lamb Memorial Luncheon on Saturday 14 February are asked to do so without delay, since it is usually difficult to fit them in at the last moment. The cost of £5.00 exclusive of wine should be paid to Florence Reeves.

1976 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

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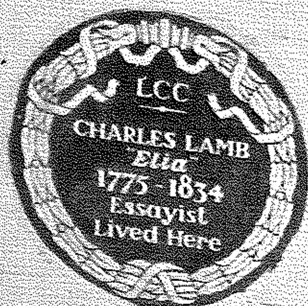

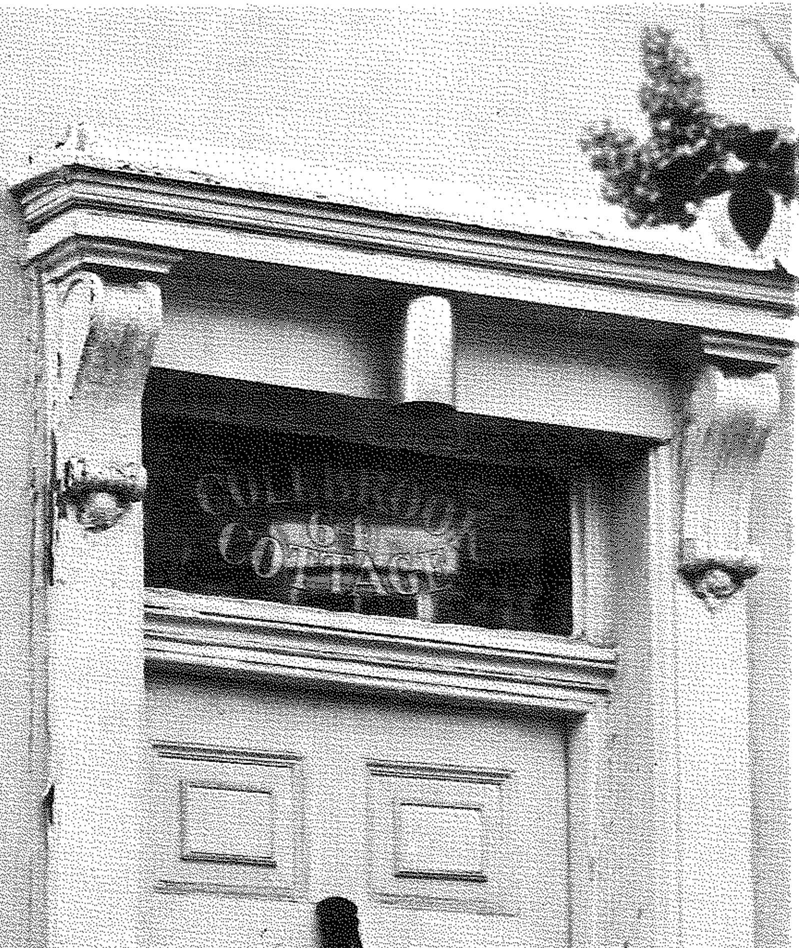

Two photographs by Keith Ellis A.R.P.S., which are reproduced with his very kind permission: (above) the blue plaque on Colebrook Cottage, now our Hon. Secretary's house; and (overleaf) the bust of Lamb erected on the site of the old Christ's Hospital

ELIA
TO THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF
LAMB
PERHAPS THE MOST LOVED NAME
IN ENGLISH LITERATURE WHO
WAS A BLUECOAT BOY HERE FOR
7 YEARS
B·1775
D·1834