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CHARLES LAMB AND THE CRITICAL TRADITION

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As a critic Charles Lamb has suffered both in comparison with himself as an essayist, and with those professional critics, Coleridge and Hazlitt, who were his contemporaries and friends. The comparison with Hazlitt, for example, was most damagingly, albeit urbanely and charmingly expressed by Saintsbury when he said that whereas Hazlitt's love was of life and literature, Lamb's was of the book, and the book was too much on the level with the tea-pot. There are a number of points in Saintsbury's wittily turned phrase. First, there is the suggestion of antiquarianism, of a love of out-of-the-way authors, periods, and genres. As Hazlitt said of the 'occult' critic: 'If an author is utterly unreadable, they can read him for ever; his intricacies are their delight, his mysteries are their study ... This is not envy or affectation, but a natural proneness to singularity, a love of what is odd and out of the way.' Secondly, there is in Saintsbury's phrase more than a hint of amateurism, dilettantism, and even of later nineteenth-century aestheticism; that, somehow, for Lamb, there is a disconnection between literature and life. But the most damaging implications are that as a critic, Lamb is what Hazlitt would have termed 'exclusive,' and that lacking a theoretical basis, his critical writings cannot stand comparison with those of Coleridge or Hazlitt. It is primarily because of these two objections, his alleged 'exclusiveness' and an inadequate theoretical framework, that Lamb has been shunted off into a side line of the English critical tradition, and regarded merely as a rather quaint and somewhat irrelevant figure. Anyone wishing to reinstate Lamb to a position in the mainstream of English criticism must meet and satisfy both charges. I want to suggest that the current denial of Lamb's status as one of our greatest critics, although understandable, is unjustified.

More than any other writer of his time, Lamb has suffered from the blanket appropriation of his life and writings by the Victorians and Edwardians. The Victorians, at least in relation to Lamb, appear to have subscribed to Carlyle's view that the writings of a man are important only as a means of providing a greater understanding of the man himself. The revelations of Lewes and Talfourd after Mary's death, coupled with the bias to the personal or biographical heresy, only resulted in the somewhat dubious elevation of Lamb to the status of cultural teddy-bear in the Victorian Establishment. Between 1868 and 1876, five editions of his *Works* were published. Four further editions were printed between 1900 and 1908. And yet the most remarkable feature of this period is less Lamb's popularity as evinced by these successive editions, than the century-long critical vacuum within which they were published. There are one or two exceptions, but they are exceptions. The works were sunk in the man, and the man offered up as a sacrifice to the Victorian ideal of heroic suffering and renunciation.

Paradoxically, however, Lamb's biography is relevant to our assessment of his criticism on a number of counts. As C S Lewis has observed, a critical theory, for good or ill, springs organically from the writer's whole attitude to life, and that if we want to refute it, we must grub up its roots. In Lamb's case, there are a number of biographical facts pertinent to a rebuttal of the charge that as a critic he is exclusive and occult, that he likes the neglected by-ways of literature only because they are neglected, and is hostile to greater writers because of their very popularity. It has even been suggested that his admiration for Wordsworth and Coleridge among his contemporaries was the result only of his personal friendship. A distinction is necessary here. When it is said that he is too exclusive, do we mean that the range of his critical sensibilities is limited; or, do we mean that the range of his critical writings is limited? This is an obvious but crucial distinction too often forgotten by writers of literary history. It cannot be denied that Lamb's critical output is limited in quantity, and that much of what he did write centred upon writers not of the first importance: Wither, Quarles, Fuller, the Duchess of Newcastle, Vincent Bourne, Thomas Amory, Sir Thomas More, Sir William Temple, but not Chaucer or Spenser, Donne or Herbert. But the fact that the range of his critical writings is limited, and many of his essays deal with writers of minor importance, does not entail, as is so often assumed, a corresponding limitation in the range of his critical sensibilities. It is at this point that a knowledge of his life, letters, opinions, conversations and jottings can be of the greatest importance.

Everyone knows that unlike his contemporaries - Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hazlitt and De Quincey - Lamb was not a professional. He did not have the same access to editors, publishers, magazines and reviews. He was, as he himself said, an amateur among professionals, working in an office from about 1789 until his retirement from the East India House thirth-six years later in 1825. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he had no private income; the legacies and annuities so beneficial to the early careers of Wordsworth and Coleridge played no part in Lamb's life. Any writing was executed before he went to the office, after his return in the evening, or during his brief periods of leave. Moreover, after 1809 when his salary was greatly increased, there was not the same incentive to write. 1809 to 1820 are rather lean years. Even his *Works*, published in 1818, were collected and issued at the request of friends. His personal popularity compelled him at times to rent accommodation so that he might write without interruption. These external considerations help to explain the limitation in the range of his writings. He is exclusive in this sense. He does not write for his living; he does not, as Hazlitt would say, have to coin his brain for drachmas. Hazlitt's comprehensiveness is, after all, very largely the result of an empty purse. The difficulty occurs when the term 'exclusive' thus used descriptively, without praise or blame attached, is confused with the normative use of the term, or is made the basis for extending its usage. On the basis of his published criticism there is a *prima facie* case for this conversion. Limitation in the range of a writer's critical work would be consistent with limited critical sympathies. It is at this point that the literary historian in drawing his inferences ignores what everyone knows of Lamb's life. The published criticism of Lamb is not the only extant evidence. His life is relevant; so too are his correspondence, jottings, reported conversations and commonplace books. It becomes clear when we consider these sources of additional evidence that Lamb's

sympathies are not limited to the rather small number of authors he wrote upon. From these sources, we know of his enjoyment of a host of other writers on whom he never wrote: Chaucer, Spenser, Donne, Marvell, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and many others. Not to have written about them is a serious limitation, but the omission cannot be used as evidence for his exclusiveness as a critic. His alleged repugnance to modern literature is without foundation. He admired Wordsworth's poetry, revered Coleridge in his own way, preferred the poetry of Keats to that of Shelley and placed it after Wordsworth's, and was impressed by the poetry of Blake and Clare. He was silent on the poetry of the most popular writers of the period: Rogers, Campbell, Scott and Moore; and among the works of his friends, he was clearly unimpressed by the work of Southey, Leigh Hunt, Bernard Barton and Barry Cornwall. He did not like Byron and alludes only in passing to the novels of Scott. Far from providing evidence of a restricted critical range, these judgments suggest a strong independent mind, contemptuous of critical fashions, and with a penetrating insight into what is of permanent and lasting value in literature.

Although the issue of Lamb's alleged exclusiveness is important, it is far less so than the second of the objections: that his criticism, little more than exclamatory jottings, lacks a theoretical framework. Unlike the earlier criticism, this raises the entire issue of the nature and ultimate value of Lamb's critical effort. But there is little point in establishing this to our own satisfaction only to have it circumscribed immediately by the argument that after all he is far too exclusive. Thus, the question of the restriction of his critical sympathies, though less important, has a logical primacy over the other, and as the arguments for and against operate within fairly well-defined boundaries, and can be dealt with reasonably summarily, it perhaps deserves the chronological priority here given to it. The second issue is much more like 'religion,' which in Lamb's view was a 'debateable land,' 'a border-land' between the negative and affirmative.

Biographers and critics of Lamb have often pointed to the curious anomaly that exists between his early interest of 'sneaking kindness' for abstract speculation in the late 1790's and his subsequent rejection of all theorising, philosophical or theological. His early interest in Necessitarianism and Unitarianism, his allusions to Priestly, Hartley, Reid, Price and Godwin are regarded as discordant with the mature Lamb of the essays. The latter, we are told, is not interested in the serious issues of life, but takes refuge behind a persona, whimsical, playful, paradoxical and extravagant. The intolerable pressure of events in his own life makes such a flight from reality inevitable, if only for his own sanity. That the early Lamb has an adolescent and nascent passion for philosophical theory is undeniable; that the later Lamb makes fun of it, avoids it, criticises it in others, is equally incontrovertible. He has no wish for Minerva in full panoply. Solutions, if there are any, as he says in "The Old and New Schoolmaster," must be wide. There are two points worth making here. In the first place, this radical shift is not just peculiar to Lamb. Wordsworth is the most famous example; and a generation later, Shelley is another. Hazlitt began as a philosopher and ended up as an essayist and critic; Coleridge's greatest phase as a poet, brief though it was, is accompanied by a loss of interest in English empirical philosophy. In every instance, the philosophy in question was an empirical philosophy, a philosophy which, while it provided a platform for liberalism in politics, religion, morals and social theory, ran counter to their

dearest, albeit unformulated beliefs about poetry and the significance of life. There is little real difference between Wordsworth's abandonment of Godwin, Shelley's abandonment of Hume, and Lamb's abandonment of Priestley. Wordsworth and Shelley, of course, were poets, and their main creative endeavour occurred shortly afterwards. In Lamb's case, the medium was prose, and twenty years elapsed before it found expression. Thus, although Lamb's early interest in philosophy is discordant with the work of the later writer, he is far from being unique in this respect. There is scarcely one of his major contemporaries who did not make the same kind of radical *volte face* in the 1790's or in the early nineteenth century.

Secondly, although his early interest in philosophy and theology is discordant with his later work, it is not discordant for the reasons usually put forward, namely, that Lamb is trying to find refuge from reality. It is discordant because in these early letters to Coleridge his sense of life is expressed in terms of abstractions and abstract theories, whereas in his later letters and his more mature work, it is expressed imaginatively and poetically as is the case with all great writers. Coleridge once wrote that every great poet must be, implicitly if not explicitly, a great philosopher. He may not have it, he said 'in logical coherence, in his Brain & Tongue; but he must have it by *Tact!* for all sounds, & forms of human nature he must have the *ear* of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desert, the eye of a North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves that strew the Forest - ; the *Touch* of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child.' The strong philosophical bases of Lamb's writings, as essayist and as critic, are implicated in his work in the manner Coleridge here suggests. We read Lamb to-day for those values which he, as reader, found in the literature of the past. Lamb's desertion of philosophy and theology is the necessary abandonment that every artist, great or small, must attempt, be he poet, dramatist, novelist or essayist. Art is the expression, revelation, or in Lamb's terms, apprehension of what cannot be stated rationally, only expressed imaginatively. The high quality of some recent criticism of Lamb as an essayist is due in large measure to an increasing recognition of this fact. It is this awareness of the nature of art and its inextricable relation to life that is the key to this critical endeavour as well.

The Romantic abandonment of abstraction for poetry - and by poetry I mean the imaginative impulse creative of art generally - this abandonment is so widespread that it is, perhaps, the most important feature of the age. For Hazlitt, the tension between the two constituted what he called 'the spirit of the age.' The tension itself can be expressed in a variety of more familiar ways: reason and imagination, understanding and feeling, mechanism and dynamism. The term 'abstraction,' however, is preferable if only because as readers and critics we are concerned less with the faculty, and more with the work itself. Moreover, reason is such an ambiguous term that we are forced to make distinctions between commonsense, understanding, reason, practical reason, theoretical reason, scientific reason. In any case, reason is hardly responsible as a whole for the sheer inertia of human responsiveness and perception. Abstraction, on the other hand, has two fairly clearly defined aspects, both of which are of the greatest relevance to Lamb. On the one hand, as a process of generalisation, it is obviously related to the formulation of theories, systems, creeds, dogmas, solutions, sects, parties, proverbs, axioms, and answers of various kinds. It is clearly related to what might be called theoretical or scientific abstraction. Lamb's anti-scientific strain is so well known as hardly to

merit documentation: you may omit all the scientific parts of Walton; I haven't many men of science among my friends; scientific treatises should be excluded from libraries; I have an unscientific head; science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men.

The second aspect of abstraction, however, is even more important. This can be called familiar or mundane, as opposed to scientific, abstraction and characterises the process whereby we become so habituated to our daily world. It becomes so familiar, conventional, accustomed, habitual, automatic, that we cease to be aware of the wonder and beauty of living itself. We see things only in general terms; the living relationship between percipient and object has been lost. As Shelley says, we live and in living we lose the sense of life. Lamb describes this state perfectly in a very characteristic letter to Bernard Barton:

Dear B.B. - Do you know what it is to succumb under an insurmountable day mare - a whoreson lethargy, Falstaff calls it - an indisposition to do any thing, or to be any thing - a total deadness and distaste - a suspension of vitality - an indifference to locality - a numb soporifical goodfornothingness - an ossification all over - an oyster-like insensibility to the passing events - a mind-stupor.

Stated in this amusing way, the distinction does not appear worth taking seriously. And yet this depressive note is one of the most striking characteristics of his correspondence, as indeed it is of the letters of Keats. He does not hesitate to borrow from Latin when he wishes to ring the changes on what Terence called 'the weariness of everyday forms.' Familiar or mundane abstraction is a perennial theme in the writings of Lamb and his contemporaries. Herein lies the importance of childhood and of the memories of childhood for him. In his review of *The Excursion* he says of the child 'how apprehensive! how imaginative! how religious!' and of himself as a child in 'My First Play,' 'I knew nothing, understood nothing, discriminated nothing. I felt all, loved all, wondered all.' The very processes of living and growing up involve a progressive loss of wonder and relationship. The condition is endemic in man and part of the toll of being a human being where 'Custom lie/s/ upon /us/ with a weight,/ Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!' Taken together, these two aspects of abstraction become the dominant image for Lamb of the fall of man. It is less the loss of God or of Paradise (the imagery of which runs throughout his writings), as a loss of what Wordsworth in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* called 'relationship and love.' More than the other Romantics, Lamb in his guise of Elia gives the impression that he regrets the loss symbolised by childhood experiences. But as a man he clearly recognised that without the experience of the adult world, no great achievements were possible, that the fall was indeed fortunate. This is why at the end of his letter to Barton he can say: 'O for a vigorous fit of gout, cholic, tooth ache - an earwig in my auditory, a fly in my visual organs - pain is life - the sharper, the more evidence of life.' He asserts at one point that he would not alter the evil events in his life any more than he would those of a novel. He clearly sees the ordinary, dull, familiar, routine world as essential to the achievement of a full life, and of great art. The greatness of his many essays on the theme of childhood and the past derives from the fact that they could only have been written by someone whose eye, in Wordsworth's phrase 'hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.'

In spite, therefore, of the sophisticating medium of maturity as expressed by Lamb in the phrase: 'Thou art sophisticated...From what have I not

fallen, if the child I remember was indeed myself', in spite of his laments for that fall, Lamb is still apprehensive, imaginative, religious. Like Munden, he can 'throw a preternatural interest over the commonest daily-life objects.' Like Munden 'he stands wondering, amid the common-place of life, like primaeval man with the sun and stars about him.' But the religious quality of Lamb's later writings, while it has obvious parallels with the 'religious' quality he attributes to childhood perception, is radically different from his adolescent passion for theological abstraction. His attitude to life is no longer abstract, but poetic and imaginative. His interest in religious abstraction has been transformed and humanised. It is no longer, in any sense, a dogma or creed, but religious in what D H Lawrence called the 'natural' sense of the word, namely a sense of wonder. In short, poetry, or art, has for Lamb become the instrument of man's redemption. This for Lamb is how we save our souls. The abstract or fallen world of adult man is redeemed by establishing a new poetic or affective relationship with it. This ascent is not an escape from the real world for as he points out in his essay on Hogarth, the trouble with the ideal is that it takes away our attention from the ordinary and everyday. He wants the ordinary world of mortality, ruined though it is; he wants the world of experience, however unpalatable the draught of mortality itself might be. Without that world we cannot live; and yet, to live only in that world, is to cease to be human in the fullest sense of the word. Hence his constant complaints about the office, the desk, and his colleagues at the East India House. Hence his gratitude to Coleridge in the late 1790s for 'rescuing' him. For Lamb, the poet lives between divided worlds; a Promethean figure, daily consumed and daily renewed, an Antaeus who rises stronger from his contact with the earth. This violent oscillation between the abstract and poetic, evinced in his correspondence by the manic-depressive swing from one letter to another, is both the power and the impotence, the grandeur and the agony of life and of art. Keats called it a world of half seeing, of half knowledge, a terra semi-incognita, a world of isolated verisimilitudes. It does not have the stability of science, philosophy or religion. It is transient, fleeting, elusive and impalpable, mysterious and unsusceptible of rational explanation. And it is not another ideal, non-natural world superimposed on the ordinary and everyday; but the ordinary and the everyday approached in a different way.

Keats's terminology in his formulation of 'negative capability' is, of course, very familiar, and is usually regarded as its classic expression. But there is, in Lamb, a text which is just as good if not better. Unfortunately, however, its vast theoretical implications have in general been overlooked. The reason is not hard to find. In the passage in question Lamb is not discussing an abstract topic such as the relationship between poetry and life, or art and nature, or reason and imagination. He seldom, if ever, does. Instead, what we have is a desultory and apparently rambling essay. It is personal; it is dramatic; it is charged with his customary irony and is replete with misleading circumstantial detail. Largely because of its specific and personal nature, the aesthetic implications of this essay have never been acknowledged. At first sight, he appears to be discussing two types of men, two different nationalities. But the opposition between the Caledonian and Elian intellects far transcends this relatively minor consideration. We must not be misled by his apologetic, self-mocking humour for what he is, in effect, doing, is tracing not the lines that divide the perfect and imperfect, the Scottish or English intellects, but the far more important lines that separate poetry and

abstraction, between those who reach irritably after fact and reason and those who are content to remain with the uncertainties, mysteries and doubts of existence. This opposition is the central issue in the Romantic critical tradition, and Lamb's the fullest and most potent expression of it. I apologise for the familiarity of the quotation, but as familiarity is one form of abstraction, we have perhaps been blind to the more general significance of the passage:

The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, (i.e. imperfect intellects) have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them...They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. She presents no full front to them - a feature or side-face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to...The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and again waning...They are no systematizers, and would but err more by attempting it.

Lamb then proceeds to contrast the imperfect, or what should be termed the poetic or imaginative mind with the perfect or scientifically rational intellect typified by the nineteenth-century Scotsman. One must observe, however, the way in which Lamb subtly alters the pejorative context within which he had previously considered the poetic intellect. He no longer speaks of 'hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays.' Having considered ironically the poetic from the standpoint of the abstract, he now proceeds to reverse the perspective: 'crude essays' and 'germs' become 'half-intuitions,' 'partial illuminations.'

Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his (i.e. the perfect intellect's) brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him...Between the affirmative and the negative there is no border-land with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument...He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong...He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country...Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions...Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath.

If we compare this portrait of the perfect intellect with that by Keats of his friend and neighbour, Charles Wentworth Dilke, we shall discover that both are the very reverse of the poet who is negatively capable. Dilke, Keats tells us, will never come at a truth because he is a stubborn reasoner and is always trying for it. In 'The Old and New Schoolmaster' Lamb, again in dramatic form, presents us with just such a coach companion. But Lamb's essay 'Imperfect Sympathies' is much more significant than these local comparisons suggest. If we can grasp the implications of the essay, then we have in our hands the theoretical foundation underlying some of his finest critical essays: those on Shakespeare, Hogarth, John Martin, and 'The Sanity of True Genius.' The essay on Shakespeare is not a sport or a piece of special pleading; we do not have to apologise for it, in the face of modish derision, as paradoxical and whimsical. Lamb's view, after all, is shared by Hazlitt and Coleridge.

All of these essays, and some others, operate on the basis of a similar

opposition. In the essay on Shakespeare, this is specifically the experience of reading as opposed to the experience of seeing a play by Shakespeare. In the essay on Hogarth, Lamb's interpretation is set off against the current one exemplified by Barry. In 'The Sanity of True Genius,' Spenser is contrasted with the fashionable late eighteenth-century novelists. In the 'Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art,' he uses Titian as a model against which to measure the paintings of John Martin. Whether the representative be Shakespeare, Hogarth, Spenser or Titian, they exemplify the poetic, imaginative, or 'imperfect' impulse which must not be compromised. This spirit or vision is neither empirical and natural on the one hand, nor ideal and unconnected with ordinary life on the other. It partakes of both. The error of eighteenth-century art criticism for Lamb is the false opposition which it sets up between the ideal and the real. Hogarth clearly does not conform with the aesthetic theories of the ideal, and therefore Barry must classify him as realistic and comic, concerned with the natural world. Lamb criticises both his assessment, and the theory of the ideal that lies behind it. In general terms, however, the criticism is identical with his censure of stage representation of *King Lear*. The vision of the artist or the poet has been materialised. This is why Lamb denies that the plays of Shakespeare are based on 'observation of life,' or that his characters are 'natural.' In this essay, as in the others, he is contending against the conversion of the poetic into the abstract, the imitation into copy, art into reality, Aristotle's probable impossible (which Lamb refers to in his criticism of Cooke's performance as Richard III) into the impossible probable. All art for Lamb, be it poetry, painting, or acting is built on an hypothesis. The great comic actor, in the role of a character who in life would be unpleasant, stresses the unreality of his impersonation by entering into a 'tacit understanding,' 'a secret correspondence' with the audience, by means of 'sub-insinuations,' 'sub-references,' 'bye-intimations.' Likewise, the poet and painter operate only by means of 'a wise falsification,' 'a beautiful compromise.' Shakespeare's characters are not real, natural, the result of observation, or empirical facts. They do not belong to the abstract world of the physical senses. But whether the tendency of the modern actor is to stress the naturalness of the character and to 'avoid every turn which might tend to unrealise' it, or whether the modern novelist depicts everyday life in fashionable circles alternating 'between Bath and Bond-street;' whether a modern painter like Martin attempts to 'confine the illimitable' in the 'grovelling fetters of externality' by the accumulation of minute, realistic detail, or whether he is criticising stage representation of *King Lear* because it materialises a vision; whether the modern audience invokes an 'insipid levelling morality' in its judgment of acted drama, or Lamb condemns a new illustrated edition of Bunyan for its 'visual frippery'; these and many other critical insights are not scattered aperçus related only by the whimsical propensity of their author. They are, all of them, manifestations in different ways of the principle embodied in the essay 'Imperfect Sympathies.' They are to be found in places as widely scattered as letters from the late 1790s to jottings on *King Lear* published in 1834. In a letter of 1801 on the subject of Cooke's performance of Richard III, he praises Shakespeare for making the impossible appear probable, and in a note to the *Garrick Extracts* (1827) he praises the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists for their ability to invest 'their bad characters with notions of good, which could by no possibility have coexisted with their actions. Then he adds: 'It is not Nature's nature,' what might be called the

abstract world, 'but Imagination's substituted nature, which does almost as well in a fiction.' This emphasis is clearly related to the view expressed in 'The Sanity of True Genius' that where the great poet 'seems most to recede from humanity, he will be found the truest to it.' Contrary to most interpretations of his essay on Restoration Comedy, Lamb insists on the closest connection between literature and life. The relationship, however, is not direct; it is not a one to one relationship. Neither literature nor painting must be made subject to the criteria of the abstract world, of the 'poor, unassisted senses.' This is why, in the essay on Shakespeare, the imagery of physical sensation is so overpowering. His enthusiasm for Wordsworth's *Excursion* was partly the result of his awareness that Wordsworth as a poet was conducting the same kind of struggle against the increasing dominance of this single-minded, not to say simple-minded, Benthamite view of literature, and of life. It would be a mistake, however, to see Lamb's creative and critical endeavour as circumscribed by a limited historical period such as the term 'Benthamite' might suggest. The tendency to abstraction, theoretical or familiar, is endemic in human nature. And in all of these essays Lamb is criticising actors, painters, critics and novelists who have failed to achieve or even to be aware of the full redemptive potential of literature and of art in general. His contribution, like those of the other Romantics to this perennial issue, is of permanent value.

I began this lecture by agreeing with C S Lewis's view that a writer's criticism springs organically from his basic attitude to life. It is perhaps significant then that the central text from Lamb's essay, 'Imperfect Sympathies,' is not a piece of literary theorising, or even of literary criticism. The essay is a series of reflections on the differences between kinds of men in ordinary life. Lamb's desire to keep alive the inspired condition of man, to rescue him, as he puts it in a letter to Coleridge, 'from the polluting spirit of the world,' is characteristic both of the man and of the essayist and critic. Herein lies the 'stamina of seriousness' that remains when the vapours of early religious abstraction have evaporated. As in the case of Wordsworth, some of the best examples of this close relationship between life and art in Lamb are to be found in his memories of childhood experiences. In childhood, he finds the inspired condition, untrammelled and unsought for, free of the abstraction in both senses that we have made for ourselves. The very freedom of the child, however, imposes its own limitations, so that while the wonder, mysteriousness, and apprehensiveness of childhood perception is analogous to those modes of seeing and feeling towards which the adult struggles, they are not the same. But whatever their limitations, Lamb constantly strives to rescue them from adult indifference, contempt and complacency. In his review of *The Excursion*, for example, he characterises the poetic mind as one in which 'call it strength or weakness...the visible and audible things of creation present...revelations and quick insights into the life within us.' These, he adds, 'cannot be lasting: it is enough for the purpose of the poet, if they are felt.' But the initial qualification, 'call it strength or weakness,' is a recognition of the tenuous hold that the poetic vision, like childhood perception, has in the esteem of the ordinary world. In analysing the reasons for Wordsworth's unpopularity he places the emphasis on adult contempt for the child: 'If from... a retrospect of his own mind when a child, he has gathered more reverential notions of that state than fall to the lot of ordinary observers, and, escaping from the dissonant wranglings of men, has tuned his lyre...to the

milder utterance of that soft age, - his verses shall be censured as infantile by critics who confound poetry "having children for its subject" with poetry that is "childish".../and/ know not what the soul of a child is.'

One of the functions of Lamb's Elia persona is to ward off and remain impervious to adult criticism of his vision of childhood. As he says in 'New Year's Eve': 'That I am fond of indulging...in such retrospection, may be the symptom of some sickly idiosyncrasy....If these speculations seem fantastical to thee, reader - (a busy man, perchance), if I tread out of the way of thy sympathy, and am singularly-conceited only, I retire, impenetrable to ridicule, under the phantom cloud of Elia.' This is a concrete instance of the conflict between the two intellects: the encroachments of the perfect intellect of the rational adult upon that of the imperfect creative writer, between the abstract and the poetic. The conflict remains the same throughout Lamb whether the subject is literature, painting, or life. In one of Tolstoy's short stories, the principal character and the author's mouthpiece says: 'But children see life healthily, they love and know what men should love, and what gives happiness, but life has so enmeshed and depraved /men/ that /they/ only laugh at the one thing /they/ love.' The response here is little different from that of Lamb at the end of 'The Old Benchers,' where he makes a quite specific connection between life, poetry, and childhood:

Fantastic forms, whither are ye fled? Or, if the like of you exist, why exist they no more for me? Ye inexplicable, half-understood appearances, why comes in reason to tear away the preternatural mist, bright or gloomy, that enshrouded you?...Let the dreams of classic idolatry perish, - extinct be the fairies and fairy trumpery of legendary fabling, - in the heart of childhood, there will, for ever, spring up a well of innocent or wholesome superstition - the seeds of exaggeration will be busy there, and vital - from every-day forms educing the unknown and the uncommon. In that little Goshen there will be light, when the grown world flounders about in the darkness of sense and materiality. While childhood, and while dreams, reducing childhood, shall be left, imagination shall not have spread her holy wings totally to fly the earth.

Yet perhaps the most memorable expression of this perennial tension in Lamb's writing is to be found in 'The Old and New Schoolmaster' when, unable to answer question after question put to him by a type of the perfect intellect, Lamb reflects:

Had he asked of me, what song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, I might, with Sir Thomas Browne, have hazarded a "wide solution."

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SATIRE IN "A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG"

Donald H Reiman

Readers of Lamb's most famous Elia essay, "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," have reacted to the humor and whimsy of the piece in various ways. But most modern scholars have given the essay a wide berth, avoiding any attempt to point up exactly what Lamb's focus is in the "Dissertation." A typical exception to this reticence is Tsutoma Fukuda's *Study of Charles Lamb's ESSAY OF ELIA* (Tokyo, 1964), in which the "Dissertation" is classified as

one of a handful of Elia essays developed from "subjects highly imaginative or fanciful" (p.6). Beginning with the thesis that this essay is "a fine piece of comedy," Fukuda analyzes its comic effects and notes in passing that "the court scene is quite unlike the Chinese court. Lamb writes the story with his Western idea of the judicial authorities, which makes the picture the more ridiculous and fanciful to the Eastern eye. ...To crown the drollery, Lamb brings in the fire insurance company, which did not exist at the time" (pp. 100-101). Inasmuch as Lamb wrote for his own age and countrymen, and since (as we have recently begun to see), Elia usually employed his comic gifts in the service of serious ideas, we ought to examine "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" to ascertain whether or not it has a serious thematic core that turns such incongruities to more than comic purposes.

The first target of Lamb's (good-humored) raillery is pedantic historicism. We moderns tend to forget that only at the end of the eighteenth century did it become a general practice to begin any discussion of a social phenomenon by tracing its history to its dim origins. Whereas earlier students might approach the origin of a custom etymologically, by educating the meaning of the Greek or Latin root of the word describing the practice, by Lamb's day the proper form of the "Dissertation" was to trace a phenomenon to its origins in primitive cultures. (This modern method is employed, for example - with differing tones - in Peacock's "The Four Ages of Poetry" and Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry.") In his opening paragraphs, based on a whimsical anecdote from his friend Thomas Manning, Lamb is making gentle fun of the newly-stereotyped procedure by going to an ancient Chinese manuscript to uncover the genesis of roast pig within the most primitive of societies.

Lamb's fun at the expense of conventional methodology soon shades off into sharper satire directed at both the conservatism and corruption in human society. From the swineherd Ho-ti to the jury and judge, nobody will advocate changes in the society's laws and taboos merely because new facts have altered the majority's opinions. Most condemn the eating of roast pig even after they learn to enjoy it, while the judge - seeing a profit to be made - "went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money." Indeed, the conservative people can not even bring themselves to improve upon the way the first pig was roasted, continuing in "this custom...till in the process of time...a sage arose, like our Locke" who thought of cooking pigs without burning down houses. Locke, we should recall, was in Lamb's England (as in the America of the Founding Fathers) the patron saint of constitutional polity and the venerated sage of rational or moderate political reform.

At this point, Elia expatiates at length upon the glories of roast suckling pig. He transmutes the sense of pleasure he receives from the death of the young pig into a theological quibble about the value of early death to humans while the infant soul is still in the state of innocence. Plainly stated, Lamb develops a sophism paralleling that which he, as a skeptic, finds in Coleridge's quatrain "Epitaph on an Infant" (1794), two lines of which he mockingly quotes. Lamb introduces this theological parallel where he had no need to turn his hyperbole in such a direction, and the comparison gives us another clue to the serious underside of Elia's "Dissertation."

Elia moves from his praise of roast suckling pig to a direct attack on the concept of Christian charity as it was sentimentalized in his day. His

rationalization of the benefits of early death to the pig is followed by an anecdote refuting those who would make him feel guilty for enjoying his favorite sweetmeats: having as a schoolboy given away "the whole cake" his aunt had made for him to an old beggar, Lamb ended the day regretting his own "imperfect spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness." Behind Lamb's anecdote lay his personal hatred of the proto-Victorian cant and hypocrisy about poverty that Blake had earlier underlined in his "Holy Thursday" poems and that Dickens exposed in its heyday in *Oliver Twist* and other writings.

Finally, in the two penultimate paragraphs, Elia moves on to what is, I believe, the chief target of his satire. The East India House had been since its founding a source of corruption in British politics and an engine of favoritism in British society. Lamb himself owed his appointment as clerk in Accomptant-General's office to the influence of his father through the Benchers of the Inner Temple. The attacks on corrupt policies of the East India Company, which had occupied Burke, Fox and Pitt and other parliamentary leaders throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, were renewed and broadened by all shades of reformers after Waterloo. For example, the anonymous *Black Book; or, Corruption Unmasked!* (London: John Fairburn, 1820), contains a chapter on "Influence of the East India Company" (pp. 344-372), which includes half a page on the "very considerable" "sums granted by way of superannuation allowance to officers and servants of the Company" (p. 355). Such assaults on the privileges of the East India Company and its employees became a general subject of public outcry and parliamentary rhetoric. Meanwhile, within the headquarters of the Company itself, as James Mill and his Utilitarian allies began to take command of the office of the Examiner of Indian Correspondence and to spread their influence through other departments, a new emphasis on productivity and efficiency began to press upon the traditional, easy-going ways of the India House employees.

Lamb was personally concerned with the attacks on the Company's traditional policies, because he felt that he was in danger of losing his pension in the course of the reforms. Joseph Hume, a radical Member of Parliament who had himself realized a fortune as an employee of the East India Company, successfully challenged a series of government abuses, in 1822 attacking the high cost of the pensions paid to employees of the East India Company and the government. Lamb, in his famous letter of 20 March 1822 to Wordsworth (whose position as Distributor of Stamps was also threatened by Hume's proposed reforms), laments his darkened prospects:

My theory is to enjoy life, but the practice is against it. I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke...The foul enchanter - letters four do form his name /Hume/ - ...that has curtailed you of some domestic comforts, hath laid a heavier hand on me, not in present infliction, but in taking away the hope of enfranchisement. I dare not whisper to myself a Pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry.

In the two paragraphs of Lamb's "Dissertation" beginning, "Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims," and "I remember an hypothesis, argued by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's" Elia reintroduces, with a difference, the objects of satire that had appeared earlier in the essay. The slavery to tradition described in the Chinese manuscript has been broken: men no longer whip pigs to death

for the greater pleasure of the eater, this abuse having been abolished in the name of the growing humanitarian sensibility of the day - the March of Mind. But the Utilitarians, whom Lamb identifies with the Jesuits of St Omer's, were prepared to use Bentham's "hedonic calculus" to determine "the greatest good for the greatest number" and to argue that it was a step forward toward equality to reduce the tax burden on the mass of the people by depriving a few East India Company employees of their pensions - by destroying Charles Lamb's dreams of "a few years between the grave and the desk!" And, as Lamb makes clear by juxtaposing two opposite justifications for the same species of cruelty, it makes very little difference to the pig whether you beat him to death in the name of "custom" or in the name of "the greatest good for the greatest number." Thus the central theme of the essay, with its strongly humanistic bias, seems to be: religions and philosophies, whether upholding sacred traditions or a "hedonic calculus," are all instruments of mischief unless they take as their goal the welfare of *individual* people.

BROAD STAND - OR SCAFELL CHIMNEY?

A Re-examination of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Descent From Scafell

Molly Lefebure

On the afternoon of August 4, 1802, as all Coleridgeans know, Samuel Taylor Coleridge walked up to Wasdale Head from Strands, Nether Wasdale, in the course of his pedestrian tour of the central hub of the Lake Country. He had planned that the ascent of Scafell should be the crowning episode of this solo tour.

At that time the old couplet,

Skiddaw, Lanvelling, and Casticand
Are the highest hills in all England

was generally accepted as a statement of fact. But S T C had been talking to the Lake Country shepherds and they had informed him that Scafell was the highest. S T C accordingly had decided to climb Scawfell, Scafell, Sca'Fell, Scaur Fell; to give the mountain its many variations of name, which all derive from *scaur*, meaning bare and barren rock.

S T C having arrived at Wasdale Head, spent the night with Thomas Tyson. The tiny hamlet at Wasdale Head has as its nucleus a group of ancient toftsteads, traditionally divided into Row Foot, Middle Row, High Row and Row Head. The Tysons farmed at Row Head.¹ It will be recalled that S T C and Wordsworth had stayed there during the pedestrian tour of 1799.

On the morning of August 5 S T C set off after breakfast to climb Scafell. We need not detail his route; it is too well known. Enough to say that he went up by Green How, reaching this route from the Burn Moor pony-road. When he at last arrived at the top of Scafell he admired the extensive view and then moved forward until he stood above the soaring ramparts of Scafell Crag, with Deep Gill below him and the giant rock masses of Pinnacle and Pisgah (names not yet invented in his day) looming before him. His excitement was intense. He was on "a great mountain of stones" and "enormous & more than perpendicular Precipices & Bull's Brows."² He moved slowly right-handed, clambering over a further multitude of great stones, until he found a small sheltered depression where he sat down and wrote a letter to Sara Hutchinson. As he wrote the storm-clouds began to gather (as

they have a habit of doing on hot summer afternoons when one has sweated up Scafell, or Scafell Pike, and the overwhelming desire is for a prolonged siesta on the top); S T C decided that it would be prudent to make a move. His goal was Tawes House in Upper Eskdale; so he now prowled in an easterly direction over the mountain, skirting the precipices as he went and dropping height a little all the time, searching for a way down into Eskdale; till at last he found himself surveying that obstacle which has confronted, and confounded, many a fell-walker since: "I...found myself cut off from amost sublime Crag Summit /Scafell Pike/ that seemed to rival Sca'Fell Man in height, & to outdo it in fierceness. A Ridge of Hill /Mickledore/ lay low down & divided this crag...& Broad-crag /Scafell Crag/ even as the Hyphen divides the words broad & crag. I was determined to go thither".³ The question was, how?

S T C now did something that Wordsworth would never have done (and rightly so). The essential difference between the two men, on the fells, was that Wordsworth, a native of Cumbria, had been reared from boyhood to regard the mountains with a certain degree of circumspection, while S T C was an "offcome" who bounced over the tops with a zesty bliss born of ignorance. To be honest, he was something of the sort who, today, keeps Mountain Rescue busy. His reaction to the predicament in which he now found himself on Scafell is given in his confession to Sara Hutchinson,

There is one sort of Gambling, to which I am much addicted...It is this. When I find it convenient to descend from a mountain, I am too confident & too indolent to look round about & wind about till I find a track or other symptom of safety; but I wander on, & where it is first *possible* to descend, there I go - relying upon fortune for how far down this possibility will continue.⁴

Thus he made the mistake, which numbers of tyro fell-walkers continue to make, of trying to descend directly off Scafell on to the Mickledore ridge, lying so invitingly below,

The first place I came to, that was not direct Rock, I slipped down, & went on for a while with tolerable ease - but now I came (it was midway down) to a smooth perpendicular Rock about 7 feet high - this was nothing - I put my hands on the Ledge; & dropped down / in a few yards came just such another / I *dropped* that too / and yet another, seemed not higher, - I would not stand for a trifle / so I dropped that too / but the stretching of the muscle of my hands & arms, & the jolt of the Fall on my Feet, put my whole Limbs in a *Tremble*, and I paused, & looking down, saw that I had little else to encounter but a succession of these little Precipices - ...So I began to suspect, that I ought not to go on / but then unfortunately tho' I could with ease drop down a smooth Rock 7 feet high, I could not *climb* it / so go on I must / and on I went / the next 3 drops were not half a Foot, at least not a foot more than my own height / but every Drop increased the Palsy of my Limbs - I shook all over, Heaven knows without the least influence of Fear / and now I had only two more to drop down / to return was impossible - but of these two the first was tremendous / it was twice my own height, & the Ledge at the bottom was exceedingly narrow, that if I dropt down upon it I must of necessity have fallen backwards & of course killed myself...As I was looking...I glanced my eye to my left, & observed that the Rock was rent from top to bottom - I measured the breadth of the Rent, and found there was no danger of my being *wedged* in / so I put my Knap-sack round to my side, & slipped down as between two walls,

without any danger or difficulty - the next Drop brought me down on the Ridge... /Mickledore/.⁵

This descent by S T C is usually regarded as the first recorded descent from Scafell by Broad Stand. Although there can be no doubt that S T C came down a route immediately in the neighbourhood of Broad Stand, it is a matter for debate whether he did in fact come down Broad Stand, or whether he came down Scafell Chimney.

Before the publication of the Coleridge notebook and letters made his descent from Scafell known to the world, it was accepted that Broad Stand was first officially climbed (that is, the climb was authentically recorded) by C A O Baumgartner in 1850. However, according to Dr Richard Pendlebury (one of the foremost British climbers of the early period, and a Senior Wrangler to boot - in short, a man whose word is scarcely to be dismissed lightly!) the subsequently popular climbers' route of Broad Stand came to be preferred to its neighbouring fissure, the Scafell Chimney, only in "recent years" (Pendlebury was writing at the close of the 19-century, nearly half-a-century after his own great climbing days). The Broad Stand, explained Pendlebury, was "somewhat difficult" (climber's understatement) in its lower part until some overhanging rock was removed by artificial means. "It is feared that some minor blasting operations were resorted to".⁶

For those unacquainted with Scafell, it should be explained that Broad Stand (the climbing-fraternity's so-called easy way on to, and off, the summit from Mickledore) is situated on the Eskdale side of the Mickledore *col*, some twenty-two yards down the screes from the top of the *col*. Here will be seen, in the stark and frowning rock-face, a deep cleft, or split; so narrow that Pendlebury named it Fat Man's Gully (hyperbolised by later climbers into Fat Man's Agony). As Wainwright observes, "This cleft is a tight squeeze, well named...and ladies, too, whose statistics are too vital, will have an uncomfortable time in it".⁷

A few yards further down the screes is a second, less dramatic-looking cleft; Scafell Chimney. This, like Broad Stand, is a proper rock-climb, wholly unsuited to mere walkers.

The renowned George Abraham described Broad Stand as "deceptively dangerous and treacherous"⁸ (this, after the resort to blasting). It is considerably more deceptive from above than from below. The ascent of Broad Stand is made by squeezing through the Agony to gain a broad platform; the Broad Stand. Most walkers, as opposed to climbers, then take a look at the rock-face above them and decide that they will climb up it "next time"; Wainwright tells us engagingly that he has been intending to climb it "next time" ever since 1930, but that his "continuing disappointment is amply compensated by the pleasures of going on living".⁹ The hardened climber leaves Broad Stand by a "tricky" corner on the left, over a pitch of "well-scratched indefinite rocks" (George Abraham's description). Above these "indefinite rocks" are two steep "rock steps"; each one, in fact, a nasty little precipice tilted at a most unpleasant angle over a by no means inconsiderable drop. Above these steps come easy rock terraces leading to a delightful grass and rock amphitheatre.

Coming on this, from above, as did S T C, a descent appears to be not only possible, but relatively simple. So down go the unwary, to find themselves crag-fast. Some end up shouting for help from the "indefinite rock", or the steps immediately above it; others, to quote George Abraham again, make the mistake of "getting to the righthand side at the top of Scafell Chimney...

the wanderer quickly arrives above precipitous rocks where the danger is aggressively obvious".¹⁰

S T C's account of his descent fits this. At no point did he encounter any overhang; he continued to drop down ledges until he had only two more to go, but of these "the first was tremendous". His danger, in short, became aggressively obvious! From this point of crag-fast desperation the immediate rent to his left, which caught his eye, would have been Scafell Chimney: the fact that he had no apparent difficulty in reaching it from where he stood on the ledge goes to confirm this. His account of this last part of his descent is that, providentially, he noticed this cleft and so had merely to slip down it, with one last short drop on to Mickledore. Which altogether sounds much more like the Chimney, in straightforward pre-rock-fall days, than Broad Stand, with or without overhang. And if we accept Pendlebury's word that Broad Stand had overhanging rock, then, if we also further accept the accuracy of S T C's account of his route, we must conclude that S T C did indeed *not* go down Broad Stand, but Scafell Chimney.

Whichever route he took, S T C's account of the descent establishes him as a *bona-fida* rock-climber; not simply some over-adventurous fell-walker who had the luck to survive a foolish escapade. S T C had never seen rock of this expanse and calibre in his life before: not only was he seeing it for the first time, but he found himself perched high upon it; cheek-by-jowl with it, embracing it, and simultaneously thrilled and threatened by it. And he was seized by the traditional beginner's palsy. Everyone who climbs succumbs to trembling fits in novice days; partly through nervous tension, but also from sheer awe and excitement. Yet the trembling must be controlled if the climb is to be survived, let alone completed. S T C was climbing solo; he was not accompanied by an experienced comrade, offering him helpful advice and securing him with a rope and a good belay. S T C was entirely on his own, on Scafell Crag, and stuck. Moreover, the Scafell of those days was not a place where someone or the other would turn up in the end and raise a rescue.

In short, S T C's predicament was frightening in the extreme. Yet he kept his head. Sensibly, he lay down on the ledge and rested, and fortified himself with a little philosophical rumination upon the powers of Reason and of Will. Then he rose to his feet and began cautiously peering about him. He noticed the cleft in the rock; Reason suggested that it should be used as a descent route and Will took him safely down it.

With this kind of presence of mind and self-control in situations of danger, together with exceptional gifts of athleticism and powers of endurance, it is obvious that S T C was a natural mountaineer of no mean order. Had he lived a few decades later in time he might well have been one of that select band of Cambridge men who pioneered so many British climbs. Rock-climbing is an addiction.

1. Parish register
- 2, 3, 4, 5. CL 453
- 6, 8, 10. Abraham, George D: *The Complete Mountaineer* Methuen, 1907
- 7, 9. Wainwright, A, *A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*.
(Book Four, *The Southern Fells*). (Westmorland Gazette, Kendal).

ALFOXTON PARK

Mr Frank Ledwith writes:

Alfoxton Park is still alive and well, and living in the West Country - if one can use that phrase of a building. In "Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets" de Quincey writes of visiting Mr Poole at Nether Stowey in the summer of 1807, in the vain hope of seeing Coleridge, and continues:

The first morning of my visit, Mr Poole was so kind as to propose, knowing my admiration of Wordsworth, that we should ride over to Alfoxton, - a place of singular interest to myself, as having been occupied in his unmarried days by that poet. At this delightful spot, the ancient residence of an ancient English family, and surrounded by those ferny Quantock hills which are so beautifully sketched in the poem of *Ruth*, Wordsworth, accompanied by his sister, had passed the whole of the interval between leaving the university, (Cambridge,) and the period of his final settlement amongst his native lakes of Westmoreland, except only one year spent in France, some months in North Germany, and a space, I know not how long, spent at Race Down in Dorsetshire.

Alfoxton is little altered since those days, except for discreet modernization, and moving the main entrance from a point overlooking the Bristol Channel to the middle of the long side, facing into a hollow of the hills. Turning off the main Minehead road at Holford, you wind through the little village, pass two deep combs, and enter the spacious Alfoxton Park, containing only the house and another building which has been made into a Youth Hostel.

The house is now a hotel, a solid rectangular building, painted white, picked out with bright blue, and with a slate roof. It is entirely secluded. Smooth lawns surround it. Cattle and horses graze in the park, between fine timber, and each afternoon the deer come down from the woods, too. Thick woods run up each side of the park, and crown the crest. Above that is the common, and the paths over which the energetic William and Dorothy strode to see Coleridge at Nether Stowey. Hereabouts it was that Coleridge and Wordsworth, rightly suspected by the government of youthful Jacobin opinions, were followed by one of Pitt's spies. Overhearing them discussing Spinoza, he reported to Whitehall that he had been spotted, as he heard the word "spy" and a reference to his conspicuous nose.

The owners of the house are conscious of its history, and the bedroom doors bear small china labels, including William, Dorothy, Lamb (though surely he was never there?), Coleridge, Hazlitt and Thelwall.

It is a comfortable place, and on our two visits in 1975, the cuisine was notably good, the service excellent, and the welcome a warm one.

THE LATE EARL LESLIE GRIGGS

A volume of Coleridge studies in honour of the late Earl Leslie Griggs is being planned by Walter B Crawford, Professor of English, California State University, Long Beach, CA. 90840. Unsolicited manuscripts will be welcomed; they will be reviewed by an editorial board chosen from a small group of invited contributors, well-known Coleridge scholars. Tentative deadline for receipt of manuscripts is 31 December 1976, but inquiries or notices of intention should be sent to Professor Crawford as soon as

possible. Hartley and Sara Coleridge, of whom Professor Griggs published biographies, are also suitable subjects.

A CORRECTION

We were sorry to note one or two editorial errors in the April Bulletin, in Dr John Beer's article "Coleridge and Lamb: the Central Themes", and we shall be grateful if, for the record, readers intending to refer to it again would make the following amendments in their copies:

- page 114, line 2 should read "...he is a quiet and sublime Enthusiast"
- line 9 should read "Think you, my dear Sara!."
- page 116, last line but one, before the word principles insert "lack of reference to first"

Our apologies to Dr Beer - and to you.

In publishing the two photographs by Mr Keith Ellis in the January *Bulletin* we referred to the *blue* plaque on Colebrook Cottage. The Hon. Secretary assures us that it is in fact brown, that being the colour originally chosen by the London County Council in which to commemorate noteworthy buildings. Miss Reeves has amplified the information on the bust pictured in the second photograph by drawing our attention to a christmas card featuring the bust published by the Society some years ago. This said:

"The Bust of Charles Lamb by Sir William Reynolds-Stephens was the outcome of an Appeal by "The Elian" - a company of Elian devotees. The Bust was first erected on the facade of the Tower of Christ Church, Newgate Street, London, and was unveiled by the late Lord Plender on 5th November, 1935. During the last War the Bust was sent to Christ's Hospital, Horsham, for safe keeping.

After the War the Bust came back to London, but owing to war damage sustained by Christ Church it was ultimately installed at the Watch House adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Holborn, London.

With this change of site the inscription on the Bust -

*"Perhaps the most loved name in English
Literature, who was a Blue-Coat Boy
here for seven years" -*

was inaccurate. The Charles Lamb Society therefore decided to arrange for the provision of a bronze plaque which read -

*"This memorial was moved here in
December, 1962 from Christ Church,
Greyfriars in Newgate Street which
stands beside the former site of Charles
Lamb's school Christ's Hospital"*

This plaque was placed in position on 12th February, 1965, and each year a Birthday Garland of laurel leaves is placed on the Bust in the name of the Society."

THE CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

This was held at Simpsons-in-the-Strand on Saturday 14 February, and we were

delighted to know that Professor Jack Morpurgo - for long the Old Blues' representative on the Council of the Society - was well enough to come as guest of honour on this occasion. His address, on Lamb and America, was full of wit and humour, and was enjoyed by a full house of some hundred members and friends. Mr C Harvey proposed the toast of provincial and overseas members and Dr Angus Springer of Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, replied entertainingly. Unfortunately our President, Dr Ian Jack, was unable to be present owing to indisposition, and a message of greeting was sent to him.

Mr Branchini has drawn our attention to the following passage in *Glances Back Through Seventy Years*, the autobiography of Henry Vizetelly the publisher:

It must have been shortly after this time (1832) that my father pointed out to me the small attenuated figure of another great writer walking slowly along near the corner of Chancery-lane - his gait a trifle uncertain, and he himself, spite of the restless movement of his eyes, apparently oblivious of all that was passing around. This was Charles Lamb, whose "Essays", but recently collected and published, was already a well-thumbed book in our household. For this reason I had a good look at him, and distinctly remember being struck by something of a Jewish look in his face, although his dress, an old-fashioned suit of black - swallow-tail, small clothes, and gaiters - gave him very much the appearance of a decayed old-fashioned pedagogue. Once afterwards I had a brief and final glimpse of him in Holborn.

The Society of Theatre Research (14 Woronzow Road, London, N W 8) has recently published as its book for 1975 *Robert William Elliston, Manager: a Theatrical Biography* by Christopher Murray. This is Lamb's Mr Elliston, of course, who agreed that he, too, ate only one dish at dinner "reckoning fish as nothing", and we shall hope to review the book in our next issue. For those who cannot wait, it can be obtained for £3.50 from the Society at the address given above.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 3 April. Two matters of consequence arose out of this: Dr Sidney Rich was appointed a Vice President, and it was decided to raise subscriptions in 1977.

Dr Rich has long been Honorary Solicitor to the Society, and was a founder member. In addition it was he who presented to the Society the "S M Rich Collection of Eliana" which had been assembled by his late father, S M Rich the author of *The Elian Miscellany*. It was left to Dr Rich in his father's will, and the presentation was made at the Birthday Luncheon in 1950, the collection being subsequently installed (in 1955) with the Society's other books at the Edmonton Public Library where it is currently available for consultation by members or scholars. It is indeed a rich collection in more senses than one, and we are glad to mark our sense of gratitude to Dr Rich and his family for the great help and support received over the years.

The subscription is altogether another matter. Inflation has hit us as it has hit others: the cost of paper, print and postage, our major expenses, have bounded up and subscriptions cannot be held indefinitely at their

present relatively low level. The new rates, which do not come into operation until 1 January 1977, are:

London	: Corporate bodies	£3.00
	: Individuals	£2.50 (doubles £3.00)
Provinces:	Corporate bodies	£3.00
	: Individuals	£1.50
Overseas	: Corporate bodies	\$7.50
	: Individuals	\$5.00

The Annual Report and Accounts for 1975 are circulated with this number of the Bulletin.

THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Miss Reeves asks members to note that as from a current date her address has been changed to: Flat 3, 24 Elsworthy Road, London N W 3.

THE ANNUAL CROWSLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

This will be given, as last year, at the Friends' International Centre, Torrington Place, London W C 1 at 2.45 pm. It is not possible at the time of going to press to name the speaker, but London members are asked to note the date.

NEW MEMBERS

The Library, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1

Bierce Library, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio 44325, U S A

Mr Richard Downing, Highways, Glen Road, Whatstandwell, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 5EH

