

THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN
The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

NEW SERIES NO. 39

July 1982

LAMB'S BIAS IN SPECIMENS OF THE ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS

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Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (1808) was clearly intended to be more than a collection of beautiful passages. Lamb had a set of preferences, which he made clear enough. He was concerned with

not so much passages of wit and humour though the old plays are rich in such, as scenes of passion, interesting situations, serious descriptions. ...My leading design has been to illustrate what might be called the moral sense of our ancestors.¹

The idea of a collection of *Specimens* is perhaps somewhat unfashionable now but Lamb was, of course, well within his rights in a book of that title, in presenting what seemed to him important about the Elizabethans and Jacobeans. It would be unfair to criticise him for failing to give a complete account of the plays from which he took his extracts. His declared intention was simply to provide his readers with passages interesting in themselves and suggesting a view of the time which produced them.

This does not exhaust the subject, however. The object of this paper will be to examine the moral preoccupations of the *Specimens* more closely, showing the way in which Lamb created a kind of "conduct book". It will look secondly at the way in which Lamb emended, altered the punctuation and in fact "doctored" the quotations themselves to fit in with these moral preoccupations. The subject is interesting because of the very great reputation and influence Lamb's book had throughout the nineteenth century. (The 1893 editor of *Specimens*, for example, spoke of

the sacred texts of Lamb's most precious comments².)

Lamb's work was regarded as the indispensable guide to English drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Swinburne spoke of

this widest and most fruitful province in the poetic empire of English. ... Charles Lamb opened its gates to all corners.³

That there was a bias in the collection was realised by at least some of its earliest readers. *The Monthly Review* in 1809, for example, remarked;

From several of his opinions we entirely dissent; and we perceive with regret a disposition to cavil with the taste of the present age, in a tone of much asperity, which we should have expected in a disappointed candidate for theatrical favour rather than in a mild and sober critic.⁴

This was touching on a sensitive area and suggests inside knowledge of the failure of Lamb's play *Mr H* (1806), shortly before the production of *Specimens*. Perhaps, however, the reviewer merely noted Lamb's interest in the manly independence he felt the Old Dramatists showed towards public

favour and inferred that Lamb had failed to obtain it. Certainly Lamb does single out by quotation and comment prefaces in which this virtue is displayed:

Heywood's preface to this play is interesting, as it shows the heroic indifference about posterity which some of these great writers seem to have felt.⁵

He praises John Webster's attitude

The Author's Dedication to this play is so modest, yet so conscious of self-merit withall, he speaks so frankly of the deservings of others and by implication insinuates his own deserts so ingenuously, that I cannot forbear inserting it as a specimen of how a man may praise himself gracefully.⁶

Perhaps it is significant that the play Webster defended in his preface, *The White Devil*, had, like Lamb's, not succeeded with the public. Lamb may have echoed Webster's view that

since that time I have noted, most of the people that come to that play-house resemble those ignorant asses...⁷

The suspicion that he still remembered the failure of *Mr H* is strengthened by his quoting Fletcher's Preface to *The Faithful Shepherdess* with the comment that,

We can almost not be sorry for the ill dramatic success of this Play, which brought out such spirited apologies.⁸

Whether or not part of the impulse behind *Specimens* was Lamb's reaction to the failure of his play, he certainly seems to have responded to the dignified generosity of the preface to Marston's *The Fawn*, which he quoted,

For my own interest for once let this be printed, that, of the men of my own addition, I love most, pity some, hate none: for let me truly say it, I once only loved myself for loving them; and surely I shall ever rest so constant to my first affection, that, let their ungentle combinings, discourteous whispering, never so treacherously labour to undermine my unfenced reputation, I shall, (as long as I have being) love the least of their graces and only pity the greatest of their vices.⁹

The *Specimens* were very much concerned to exalt certain qualities, especially magnanimity and panache. Lamb appears to have been concerned to a marked extent with a right way to do things, a gentlemanlike way, emphasising these qualities. From the notes and the extracts themselves in *Specimens*, rules of conduct both positive and negative can be derived. Lamb is especially interested in the "noble quarrel", the stately and decorous collision between two young men, generally the prelude to a duel. He footnotes such a passage of honour, in this case from Webster's *Devil's Law Case*, where Contarino and Ercole compliment each other and embrace before going off to fight,

I have selected this scene as the model of a well managed and gentlemanlike difference.¹⁰

A fuller account of his attitude is found in his comments on Middleton's *The Fair Quarrel*. He praises the quarrel between Captain Ager and his friend the Colonel, where the former refused to fight at first in what he considers a bad cause, until being called a coward, gives him again a "fair

quarrel". This extract stirs Lamb to a denunciation of the stage conventions of his own time:

The insipid levelling morality to which the modern stage is tied down would not admit of such admirable passions as these scenes are filled with.¹¹

He complains of the "hypocritical meekness"¹², the "stupid infantile goodness"¹³ of contemporary moral conventions. Any reconciliation-scene however "absurd or unnatural is sure of applause"¹⁴. Lamb feels that the moral ideas of his own time are hackneyed and unintelligent. He admires the dignity, ceremony and grand gestures of an aristocratic civilisation. ("Levelling" would have at the time, social implications and would suggest nostalgia for an aristocratic code of ethics.) Not merely passion but passion coupled with intelligence is what Lamb seeks,

to know the boundaries of honour, to be judiciously valiant, to have a temperance which shall beget a smoothness in the angry swellings of youth.¹⁵

The closely-written note on *The Fair Quarrel* is an important one for the view of the *Specimens* as a "conduct book", since it brings together the themes Lamb raises elsewhere. Passion "the all in all in poetry"¹⁶, as Lamb calls it in his note on Chapman, is the all in all in life. The blending of strong feeling with courtesy and subtle intelligence is for Lamb the height of civilised conduct.

He admires in the old writers a capacity they have for making fine distinctions among the passions they did not hesitate to portray:

Those noble and liberal casuists could discern in the differences, the quarrels, the animosities of man a beauty and truth of moral feeling no less than in the iterately inculcated duties of forgiveness and atonement.¹⁷

Lamb returns several times in *Specimens* to the way in which a complex code of manners works. Calantha's dance in Ford's *The Broken Heart* receives intense praise for its combination of stateliness and anguish.¹⁸ The Queen dances on as disaster after disaster is announced; a triumph of stoical dignity. Lamb's less well-known comment on Ben Jonson's *The Poetaster* shows his interest in the way in which pride in rank and the realities of power and domination are covered by manners:

Nothing can be imagined more elegant, refined and court-like than the scenes between this Lewis the Fourteenth of Antiquity and his Literati. The whole essence and secret of that kind of intercourse is contained therein. The economical liberality by which greatness seeming to waive some part of its prerogative, takes care to lose none of its essentials; the prudential liberties of an inferior which flatter by commanded boldness and sooth with a complimentary sincerity.¹⁹

At times like these Lamb has the florid relish of an old-fashioned book of etiquette. His comment on the dialogue in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* is another case of his interest in the form of social relationships. Here, too, there is dignity but this time Lamb feels it is founded on "sweetness and goodnaturedness":

Nothing can be finer more gentlemanlike and noble than the conversation and compliments of these young men.²⁰

The "sweetness and goodnatureddness" Lamb notes here as essentially Shakesperian seems as important to the code of manners he is attempting to suggest, as noble anger. Perhaps the best elaboration of this quality is found in his note on Heywood:

Generosity, courtesy, temperance in the depths of passion; sweetness in a word, and gentleness; Christianism, and true hearty Anglicism of feelings shaping that Christianism.²¹

It is worth remarking that Lamb is not merely celebrating good-natureddness. The "temperance in the depth of passion" which he praised in Heywood is akin to the combination of passion and restraint he admired in *The Fair Quarrel* or *The Broken Heart*. When one considers the extracts in *Specimens* themselves, it is easy to see a unity of tone in many of them. The theme of passion and restraint runs through very many of the extracts. It is as well to remember that *Specimens*, as published in 1808, is a fairly short book.

This quality of strong feeling held in check, or expressed in a reticent or oblique way, or with the dignity of a formal code of manners, does seem to be the main quality singled out in *Specimens*, if they are seen as a "conduct book". It is noticeable in the first extract from *Gorbuduc*:

The chief beauty in the extract is of a secret nature. Marcella obscurely intimates that the murdered prince Porrex and she had been lovers.²²

The comment on Fulke Greville seems to imply an interest in a quality of outward reserve and inner feeling,

as if a being of pure intellect should take upon him to express the emotions of our sensitive natures.²³

Lamb's remark on writers who fail to come up to Webster's standard in *The Duchess of Malfi*, that

their terrors want dignity, their affrightments want decorum,²⁴

suggests again the quality of strong feeling restrained. A similar note is sounded when he describes the Prologue to Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* as sounding a note of

passionate earnestness [like] one of those old tales of Thebes or Pelop's line which Milton so highly commended as free from the common error of poets in his days of "intermixing common stuff with tragic sadness and gravity"²⁵.

Lamb's extracts from *Antonio's Revenge* follow his conception of a grave and decorous tragedy. He emphasises the curious frisson of Julio's death, the murderer declaring that he loves the child's soul even while he hates his body. Examples might be multiplied. Sometimes these are whole scenes,²⁶ like that between Geraldine and Wincott's wife in *The English Traveller*, or Luke's stern and dignified (as Lamb prints it) denunciation of luxurious citizens' wives who wear clothes above their rank, from Massinger's *The City Madam*²⁷. Sometimes they are the recurrence of certain phrases, the "chastised feeling"²⁸ of a dialogue from Massinger's *The Picture* for example. Another instance might be the "three little words" "And yet farewell" to which Lamb attaches so much importance in his extracts from Heywood's *The Brazen Age*:

I cannot take leave of this Drama without noticing a touch of the truest

pathos, which the writer has put into the mouth of Meleager, as he is wasting away by the operation of a fatal brand administered to him by his wretched Mother,

My flame increaseth - O Father Oeneus:
And you, Althea, whom I would call mother,
But that my genius prompts me thou'rt unkind:
And yet farewell²⁹.

Lamb's preoccupation with manners, with a noble and dignified style of behaviour is seen in the material he chooses in *Specimens*, in the authors' prefaces, the stately quarrels, and those many scenes of feeling concealed, whether well-known like Calantha's dance or not so familiar, like Shirley's *The Gentleman of Venice*³⁰. Everywhere this aspect of Lamb's personality appears and one sees his face in *Specimens*, the serious and dignified Lamb described by Mrs Mathews,

his face the gravest I ever saw, but indicating great intellect and resembling very much the portraits of King Charles I³¹.

The aspect of Lamb's concern with conduct which stresses restrained feeling, though predominant, is not the only one to be seen in *Specimens*. There is the concern for warm sentiment, "hearty Anglicism of feelings"³² which declares itself in the passages from *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, or in the choice and modification of Samuel Daniel's story of the nymph Isulia from *Hymen's Triumph*³³.

There is, too, Lamb's interest in a stratified society and its effect on human life and manners. Some attention is given in *Specimens* to appropriate forms of dress for various ranks of society. This concern is shown in Lamb's quotation, already mentioned, from *The City Madam*, but perhaps best of all in the extract from Marston's *What You Will*, describing the extravagant and colourful dress of a Venetian merchant. His dress, notes Lamb, would have caused consternation in the days when merchants were recognised by their "flat round caps and cloth stockings"³⁴. He continues:

the blank uniformity to which all professional distinctions in apparel have been long hastening, is one instance of the Decay of Symbols among us³⁵.

Because of this decay we are a "less imaginative"³⁶ people.

The accepted view of *Specimens* in the nineteenth century was that it opened Elizabethan and Jacobean drama to all-comers. This view leaves one with the difficulty of explaining selections from Middleton which omit *The Changeling*, from Massinger which omit *The Roman Actor* and from Marston which include only two small quotations from *The Malcontent*. Lamb, of course, had every right to his own emphasis but it would not, perhaps, be unfair to feel that his stress on manners makes *Specimens* something of a "conduct book".

In examining how Lamb's preoccupations made him modify the texts of the Elizabethan and Jacobean plays from which he worked, certain points need to be observed. Firstly, which texts did Lamb use? In the preface to *Specimens* he mentions as his main sources Dodsley and the Garrick collection of plays at the British Museum. Gollancz believes that Lamb used the 1744 edition of Dodsley's *A Select Collection of Old Plays*³⁷. The contents of the collection of old plays Garrick left to the British Museum may be checked in the list compiled by Capell, probably in 1778³⁸. It is possible, therefore, to be reasonably sure that when comparison is made

between *Specimens* and an earlier edition of a play, it is with the one Lamb actually used. (The third source, Thomas Hawkins's *The Origins of English Drama*, Oxford 1773, is unimportant, containing none of the plays whose emendation by Lamb is here discussed.)

A second point to be raised is the distinction between quotations out of context and actual textual modification. The title of Lamb's book *Specimens* adequately explains and justifies most of the quotation out of context. In several cases the extracts sound very different in their context within the play, or give a misleading impression of the play from which they are taken. This throws a certain light on the way Lamb's preoccupations work, though it is unwise to build too much upon them because of the declared scope and purpose of Lamb's book. A second, and more interesting area is that of the omission of lines or phrases within the extract as Lamb quotes it. Here, much more than in quotation out of context, it is possible to see the working of his system of preferences. Of course, to say this is not to condemn Lamb. The results of his emendations are often as creative as they are misleading.

Quotations out of context do, however, indicate in a general sense, Lamb's treatment of his sources, and prepare one for his more drastic alterations. It is therefore, worth noting some of them. In Middleton's *The Fair Quarrel* Captain Ager and the Colonel had quarreled in the first scene because a third party had declared they were equal in worth. They strut about each other like a pair of turkey-cocks,

Col: You are a boy, sir!
Cap: And you have a beard, sir!³⁹

"Judiciously valiant"⁴⁰, Lamb's comment, is praise hardly applicable to these two samurai.

The case of Heywood is a good example of Lamb's tendency to dignify and simplify the materials from which he drew his *Specimens*. The selections from *The English Traveller* begin with the scene between the young man Geraldine and Wincott's wife when they find themselves alone for the first time. It appears, as Lamb prints it, to be a fine exercise in fortitude and self-denial. Though they have known each other before, have been almost engaged and parted only because of circumstances, they agree not to "wrong the old gentleman"⁴¹ who has become her husband. Lamb omits the promise Geraldine is forced to give, not to marry until the old man dies, so that he may become her second husband. By itself this is a hint of the wife's rapacity and that all is not well on the surface. This is indeed the case, since the wife is having an affair with Geraldine's best friend at the time. When he discovers this the perfect gentleman turns on the wife, enraged at the oath he has sworn,

Sworn, to be made a stale
For term of life, and all this for my goodness
Die and die soon, acquit me of my oath
But prithee die repentant.⁴²

The English Traveller is a good deal more primitive than Lamb's extracts imply. His treatment of the reconciliation scene of *A Woman Killed With Kindness* is another instance of the removal of matter which conflicts with the view of the period he is seeking to give. He omits the servant Nicholas's interjection from the following:

Frank: I pardon thee: I will shed tears for thee
 And in mere pity of thy weak estate
 I'll wish to die with thee

All: So do we all.

Nicholas: So will not I
 I'll sigh and sob, but by my faith not die.⁴³

Lamb cuts out this speech of Nicholas and moves straight into Frankford's next speech. This is a pity because Nicholas, l'homme moyen sensuel, holds the scene closer to reality and the result contains even greater pity, a wry view of the irreducibility of human egotism even at the most solemn moments.

Lamb's extracts from Marston follow a similar process, tending to spiritualise and ennoble the original. In the case of Julio's murder from *Antonio's Revenge*, it is interesting to note the way in which he ends his extract on an abstract note rather than one of real physical horror,

Mayst thou be twined with the soft embrace
 Of clear eternity, but thy father's blood
 I thus make incense of to vengeance.⁴⁴

Lamb breaks off at this point, avoiding the barbaric ritual of blood sacrifice the killer enacts.

I sprinkle round his gore,
 Lo, thus I heave my blood-dyed hands to heaven
 Even like insatiate hell still crying more.⁴⁵

His footnote to "mayst thou be twined with the soft embrace of clear eternity"⁴⁶ directs attention to the use of a similar expression, "to lie immortal in the arms of fire"⁴⁷ in Browne's *Religio Medici*. This carries the process further, inviting the reader to consider the whole murder from the aesthetic and abstract point of view.

One might mention the small passage Lamb entitles *Day Breaking* which suggests a delicate lyricism, and which sounds very different in the mouth of the murderer Piero and which concludes one of his most characteristic rants.

Poison the father, butcher the son and marry the mother ha!⁴⁸

The extract entitled *Wherein Fools are happy*, in itself, sounds a note of whimsical scepticism:

Even in that, note a fool's beatitude
 He is not capable of passion
 Wanting the power of distinction,
 He bears an unturn'd sail to every wind:
 Blow east, blow west, he steers his course alike.⁴⁹

It is another example of Lamb's striving towards dignity and grace, since in its context the passage is closer to coarse cynicism. It follows Antonio's declaration that

By the genius of the Florentine
 Deep, deep observing sound-brained Machiavel⁵⁰
 He is not wise that strives not to seem fool.

The extracts entitled *Great Mens' Looks* and *Lover's Chidings*⁵¹ from

Middleton's *Women Beware Women* are good examples of quoting out of context. The tender lines *Lover's Chidings* are spoken by a girl deceived into having an incestuous affair with her uncle. *Great Mens' Looks* sounds a note of high-minded nobility, fitting well with the aristocratic society Lamb seems to have valued. Lamb extracts Biancha's question "Did the Duke look up?" and the reply,

Thats everyone's conceit that sees a Duke
If he looks steadfastly, he looks straight at them
When he perhaps, good careful gentleman
Never minds any; but the look he casts
Is at his own intentions and his object
Only the public good.⁵²

The Duke is in fact a lecher, looking up at Biancha and planning to seduce her.

The "out of context" passages are helpful as guides to Lamb's intentions and do indicate the mood he was trying to establish. They cannot be said to do more than this. Indeed, in some cases, the whole out of context argument breaks down. In Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, for example there is the difficulty in forming a stable interpretation of the meaning and tone of the plays. Since nobody thought the plays comic until recently it would be unwise to insist that Lamb had distorted their tone.

It is time to pass from passages "out of context" to the more solid evidence of Lamb's alteration of his originals, his actual emendations. The first of these is a small but important one to *The Story of Isulia* from Samuel Daniel's *Hymen's Triumph*. This passage is probably the one singled out for praise by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* as this

fine and almost faultless Extract, eminent as for other beauties so for its perfection in this species of diction,⁵³

that is to say, a style half-way between prose and verse. It is the story of Isulia, an Arcadian nymph who loves Sirthis, a shepherd, rather than the rich man her father had designed for her. Brooding on her love by the sea-shore one day, she is carried off by pirates. Desperate and fearful she pleads with the Captain's wife that her chastity may be preserved. Her tears and eloquence move even the hard hearts of the pirates and after several adventures she is able to return to Sirthis, "a chaste, and spotless maid"⁵⁴. It is a touching story expressed in limpid verse.

In Lamb's version the story opens as follows:

There was sometime a nymph,
Isulia named, and an Arcadian born
Whose mother dying left her very young.⁵⁵

In the 1615 edition of *Hymen's Triumph*, as in the edition of 1623, listed by Capell, and that of 1718 which Lamb owned, the story opens,

There was sometime a nymph,
Isulia nam'd and an Arcadian borne
Faire can I not avouch she was, but chaste
And honest sure as the event will prove
Whose mother dying left...⁵⁶

It is a small omission but does alter the tone of Isulia's story, by

removing an undertone of mild irony from all her subsequent adventures.

Another of these textual modifications occurs in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* which Lamb singles out as especially fine gentlemanlike and noble. In Lamb's version Jerningham denies, with a gentle dignity, that he has any plan to wed his friend Mouchensey's sweetheart:

But thou knowest
That Essex hath the saint that I adore.⁵⁷

If one compares Lamb's version with the one in Dodsley or with the 1658 version in the Capell list, one notes that three speeches are missing between Jerningham's denial

If I thee understand I am a villain
What does thou speak in parables to thy friend?⁵⁸

and Peter Fabel's explanation

You are the man, sir, must have Millisent.⁵⁹

The three speeches of Clare, Fabel and Jerningham consist of crude joking on the theme of love and marriage. Jerningham's laughing denial runs

Who I zblood, what should all you see in me
That I should look like a married man? Ha?
Am I bald? Are my legs too little for my hose?
If I feel anything in my forehead I am a villain
Do I wear a night cap? Do I bend in the hams?
What dost thou see in me, that I should be towards marriage. Ha!⁶⁰

Lamb omits this, making his subsequent comment

Nothing can be finer, more gentlemanlike and noble, than the conversation and compliments of these young men,⁶¹

more acceptable than it otherwise would have been.

His emendations to Massinger's *The City Madam* are interesting. Lamb quotes Luke's denunciation of citizens' wives getting above themselves with the comment,

This bitter satire against the city women for aping the fashions of the court ladies must have been peculiarly gratifying to the females of the Herbert family and the rest of Massinger's noble patrons and patronesses.⁶²

This certainly keeps up the tone and testifies to Lamb's general interest in a stratified society. If one compares the extract he prints with the version in Dodsley, however, it does seem that he has made Luke much more a dignified moralist than a man paying off old scores. In this exchange Lamb removes the lines I have italicised:

Lady: Is this spoken
In scorn.

Luke: Fie, no; with judgement. I make good
My promise, and now shew you like yourselves
In your own natural shapes, and stand resolved
You shall continue so

Lady: *It is confessed sir*

Luke: *Sir! Sirrah Use your old phrase; I can bear it*

Lady: *That, if you please forgotten.* We acknowledge
We have deserved ill from you.⁶³

A little later the lady begs him not to make her ridiculous by forcing her to appear in plain garb and Luke answers,

Admir'd rather
As fair examples for our proud city dames
And their proud brood to imitate. *Do not frown
If you do I laugh, and glory that I have
The power in you to scourge a general vice
And rise up a new satirist.* But hear gently.⁶⁴

One might also note the later omission of Luke's interjection to Millicent

Peace chattering magpie,⁶⁵
I'll treat of you anon.

and of Holdfast's comment

Nay you have reason
To blubber, all of you.⁶⁶

Lamb's emendations have the effect of raising the dignity of the extract and removing from it Luke's malice and enjoyment of power over the rich relations who have snubbed him.

Lamb's alteration of the punctuation in the extract *Preparations for Second Nuptials* from Marston's *What You Will* is another interesting example of his textual modification. Lamb may have used the 1633 edition of Marston's plays or the 1607 edition of *What You Will*. Both are listed among the Garrick plays in Capell's list. In the 1633 edition as in that of 1607, Albano is stuttering and exclaiming in a rage,

The tailors, starchers, sempsters, butchers, poulterers
mercurs - all, all, all, now, now, now, - none think
O' me - the F-F-F French is the F-F-F fine man de
p-p-p pock man de.⁶⁷

Lamb's version tidies this up to make the effect forlorn rather than comic.

The tailors, starchers, sempsters, butchers, poulterers
Mercurs, all, all - none think on me.⁶⁸

Lamb's alterations to Heywood's *The Brazen Age* are another example of his tendency to dignify the passages he quotes. In Lamb's extract from Heywood's treatment of the story of Hercules and Omphale, Hercules, who has been enchanted and is sitting in woman's clothes among Omphale's maids, comes to himself with a polite aside to the lady of the house,

hence with this distaff
And base effeminate chares; hence womanish tires
And let me once more, be myself again
Your pardon, Omphale!⁶⁹

In the edition of 1613 which is included in the Capell list and which Lamb presumably used, there is much more crude violence and struggle;

Hercules: Hence with this distaffe
And base effeminate chares

Omphale: How slave? Submit and to thy taske again
Darest thou rebell

Hercules: Pardon great Omphale.⁷⁰

Iason again urges Deianeira's name on Hercules who only then breaks free with a speech which ends with the lines as Lamb quotes them,

hence womanish tires
And let me once more be myself again.

"Pardon Omphale" in the original is a cry of fear or submission, not a polite phrase.

In his edition of *Specimens* Gollancz quotes from this play another instance of Lamb's emendations. Meleager's three little words "And yet farewell" do not, it appears have the force that he attributes to them in the original. Gollancz quotes the passage and comments

Surely the "yet" marks the climax of enumeration and implies
"furthermore, lastly" and not nevertheless as Lamb would have it.⁷¹

That Lamb was aware of what he was doing seems clear. He was, in fact, interested in accuracy where he had no other motive. This is illustrated by his comment to Hone in 1827 on the *Garrick Plays*

"Restrained liberty attained is sweet" should have a full stop 'Tis the end of an old man's speech. These little blemishes kill such delicate things,⁷² prose feeds on grosser punctualities.

Lamb's *Specimens*, with its great influence in the nineteenth century, emphasised a very courtly version of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans. The result Lamb wishes to achieve was managed not merely by selective quotations but by actual modification of the text. Critics like Hallam⁷³ or the author of the *Quarterly Review*⁷⁴ article on Weber's edition of Ford, may have disputed its verdicts in particular instances but the curious charm and persuasiveness of *Specimens* were too much for them. The brilliance of Lamb's style and the unity of tone he achieved in the extracts perhaps explain this.

The search after dignity and passion restrained in *Specimens*, the "conduct book" quality of the work may have had their effect in forming nineteenth century attitudes to the Elizabethans. They certainly prevented Lamb himself, despite his great knowledge of the period, from writing an Elizabethan drama. His play *The Wife's Trial* (1827) forms a comic coda to the attitudes displayed in *Specimens*.

Lamb chose as the source of his plot *The Confidant* from Crabbe's *Tales*, a story of blackmail with strong dramatic possibilities. In the original the tone is one of down-to-earth moral realism. Anna is employed as a lady's companion.

Her duties there were of the usual kind
And some the body harassed, some the mind.⁷⁵

This is her final refuge from a series of attempts to seduce her by the sons and husbands of the families with whom she stays.

Anna is rescued from this position by a yeoman farmer who has come into some money and who feels that a wife like her, refined in her habits, but with no reason to pride herself on her position would be ideal for him. At first all goes well in the marriage, until Anna hears from Eliza, her girlhood friend, the only person who knows Anna's secret, her seduction by an Irish captain and the birth of a child who died soon afterwards.

Lamb changes the illegitimate birth to a form of marriage, never consummated, to a childhood sweetheart. Crabbe's yeoman farmer becomes a landed gentleman of Wiltshire and he and his wife speak in the language appropriate to stately concepts of honour and duty. Crabbe's yeoman reacted to his wife's guilty secret with a homely rationality and kindness.

Give me thy grief and I will fairly proye
Mine is no selfish, no ungenerous love.⁷⁶

Lamb's gentleman farmer has a splendid neo-Jacobean tantrum:

At her request
I left her on her knees
The fittest posture
For great has been her fault to Heaven and me.⁷⁷

Here, as sometimes in *Specimens*, the "noble passions" miss the really pitiable in human experience.

Footnotes

- 1 Charles Lamb *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare*. Ed Israel Gollancz. London 1893, Vol.I, p.xx
- 2 *Ibid*, p.viii
- 3 Thomas Middleton *The Best Plays of Thomas Middleton*. Mermaid 1887. Vol.1, p.viii
- 4 *The Monthly Review*. London 1809. Vol.L viii, p.354
- 5 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.232
- 6 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.17-18
- 7 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.18
- 8 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.107
- 9 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.187
- 10 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.49
- 11 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.284
- 12 *Ibid*
- 13 *Ibid*
- 14 *Ibid*
- 15 *Ibid*
- 16 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.170
- 17 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.284
- 18 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.199
- 19 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.123
- 20 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.104
- 21 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.243
- 22 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.5
- 23 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.29
- 24 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.42
- 25 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.181-182
- 26 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.227-229
- 27 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.161-163
- 28 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.159
- 29 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.225
- 30 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.II, p.226-228
- 31 Quoted in *Letters of Charles Lamb*. Everyman 1945. Vol.II, p.21
- 32 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.243

- 33 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 108-111
 34 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 189
 35 Ibid
 36 Ibid
 37 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 302
 38 M.S. Catalogues and Indexes of the Collection of Plays made by Garrick and bequeathed to the British Museum. Compiled by E Capell. 2 Volumes 1778(?). British Museum 643.1.30
 39 Thomas Middleton *The Best Plays of Thomas Middleton*. Mermaid London 1887. Vol. II, p. 204
 40 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 284
 41 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 227
 42 Thomas Heywood *The Best Plays of Thomas Heywood*. Mermaid London 1888, p. 245
 43 *The Best Plays of Thomas Heywood*, p. 72. Compare *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 273
 44 John Marston *The Works of John Marston*. Ed A H Bullen. London 1887. Vol. I, p. 151
 45 Ibid
 46 Ibid
 47 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 184
 48 *The Works of Marston*, Vol. I, p. 107
 49 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 185
 50 *The Works of Marston*, Vol. I, 158
 51 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 261
 52 Ibid
 53 Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Biographia Literaria*. Everyman 1971, p. 216
 54 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 111
 55 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 108
 56 Samuel Daniel *Hymen's Triumph*. London 1615, p. 55; *The Whole Worke of Samuel Daniel Esquire in Poetrie*. London 1623, Vol. II, p. 308; *The Poetical Works of Mr Samuel Daniel*. London 1718, Vol. I, p. 134
 57 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 104
 58 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 102
 59 Ibid
 60 *A Select Collection of Old Plays*. London 1744. Printed for R Dodsley. Vol. II, p. 136
 61 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 104
 62 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. II, p. 163
 63 Dodsley *Old Plays*, Vol. VIII, p. 64
 64 Ibid
 65 Dodsley *Old Plays*, Vol. VIII, p. 65
 66 Dodsley *Old Plays*, Vol. VIII, p. 66
 67 John Marston *What You Will*, London 1607. Act III Scene I
The Works of Mr John Marston being Tragedies and Comedies Collected into One Volume. London 1633 (no pages or line numbers given in these editions)
 68 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 190
 69 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol. I, p. 225
 70 Thomas Heywood *The Brazen Age*. London 1613 (no pages or line numbers given in this edition)

- 71 Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.308
 72 Quoted Lamb *Specimens*, Vol.I, p.viii
 73 Henry Hallam *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Seventeenth Century*. London 1837-1839
 74 *The Quarterly Review*. London 1811. Vol.VI, p.466
 75 Crabbe *Poems of 1812*. Ed E H Mills. Cambridge 1967, p.298 lines 21-22

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CHARLES LAMB'S *MRS. LEICESTER'S SCHOOL* STORIES AND ELIA: THE FEARFUL IMAGINATION

Joseph E Riehl

Reading one of Lamb's Elia essays is like taking a walk in a garden with Lamb, pausing to remark on this or that interesting feature, digressing for a moment to contemplate some new point of view. But reading all of Lamb's works is like contemplating a map of that garden, observing the paths as they twist, intersect and converge. Reading a single Elia essay gives one cause to believe that Elia is discovering his ideas as he goes along, rambling, not sure which direction he will take at the next intersection. But reading all of Lamb's works makes the reader aware that Lamb's Elia essays were the final or fullest statements of opinions he had been hoarding for years, that what might have seemed an impromptu walk in the garden had been more carefully planned for than we had realized. Often what appear to be new ideas in the Elia essays are really ideas which Lamb has been working over in one form or another for perhaps ten or more years. In fact, the very rapidity with which the essays of the first series were written, between 1820 and 1823, suggests that the Elia persona released a kind of intellectual pressure which had been building from the time Lamb first began to write.

In more prosaic terms, this means that the Elia essays, though they give the impression of loose structures, rambling discourse, sudden intuitions, as though Lamb were discovering his own ideas as he went along are yet Lamb's clearest statements of important ideas which had been forming for a number of years, and whose progress or development can be traced in his earlier writings. Probably the most fertile ground for examining those developments is in the parallels between Lamb's early contributions to the joint work *Mrs. Leicester's School* and the essays of Elia. I would like to examine in particular the most obvious of these connections, that between the children's story "Maria Howe" subtitled "The Witch Aunt" in *Mrs. Leicester's School* and the Elia essay "Witches and Other Night Fears," to show that in one case at least the apparent discovery of the later essay is very concretely anticipated by an earlier work.

Mrs. Leicester's School is an amiable group of children's stories patterned after *The Governess* of Sarah Fielding, Henry's sister. In it, a group of young girls at a small school tell the stories of their young lives. The stories are sweetly-sad tales of little orphans, or neglected (though not badly mistreated) children of the middle class. They are not stories of dire poverty, but they all are little pleas of help from ignored and unloved children. Mary Lamb wrote most, but Charles was responsible for three, about a third of the total. In "The Witch Aunt," a young girl

who describes herself as being "weak and tender-spirited," tells the story of how she became terrified of her own aunt by reading in some books too advanced or too fearsome for her age. (1) Her favorite, she tells us, is the illustrated "Stackhouse's History of the Bible." In it, among other pictures, was one she describes in this way: "It was the picture of the raising up of Samuel, which I used to call the Witch of Endor picture." Out of her own fears, that picture, and some hints from a work she calls "Glanville on Witches," little Maria conceived the notion that her own aunt was a witch. But by the intercession of a relative Maria was soon sent into the country where she recovered from her misconception and advanced to a new maturity.

This little tale for children is admittedly not of great interest as belles-lettres, but it shows that Lamb pays very close attention to the ways in which the minds of children operate, and it shows his respect for those minds. He thought that the fears of children were more or less natural stages in their growth, something to be overcome in reaching maturity, but not an experience so terrible that it scars us for life. Its rhetorical stance is effective too. Instead of admonishing its young readers to put away childish fears, it permits that lesson to be expressed by a sympathetic young narrator who explains how she was able to overcome her own groundless fears.

Beyond all that, however, the details of the story are an indication that Lamb was interested in the subject of children's fears from a very early age, and that he apparently mulled over the subject for at least twelve years before writing his Elia essay, "Witches and other Night Fears." In that essay, Lamb writes that he was in his youth subject to night fears and nervous terrors. What seems to have crystallized those terrors in his mind was the same picture from Stackhouse's History of the Bible, which had terrified the fictional Maria Howe in *Mrs. Leicester's School*. In the Elia essay, however, Lamb goes well beyond *Mrs. Leicester's School* in discussing the meaning and possible function of these "night-fears."

In sum, his argument runs like this. His fears were an unavoidable part of growing up, and we cannot blame Stackhouse's picture of the witch raising up Samuel for them. If he had not seen the picture, his fears would only have taken another form. He writes "It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children. They can at most but give them a direction."

When Lamb was writing his Elia essays, he felt the need to turn almost every experience to account, even unpleasant and horrifying ones. For example, he tells us in "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" that his education mostly consisted of simple neglect, and yet he asserts that the early neglect of his studies was somehow better than the harsh attention that others at his school got. In this essay, Lamb seems to feel that his own night fears had great value, little though he might have thought so at the time. Night-fears, he claims, are evidence of the healthy imagination.

They are transcripts, types - the archetypes are in us, and eternal... These terrors are of older standing. They date beyond the body - or, without the body, they would have been the same... That the kind of fear here treated of is purely spiritual - that it is strong in proportion as it is objectless upon earth - that it predominates in the period of sinless infancy - are difficulties, the solution of which might afford

some probable insight into our antemundane condition, and a peep at least into the shadow-land of pre-existence.

If Wordsworth believes that we come into this life "trailing clouds of glory," and that the joy of childhood is evidence of pre-existence, Lamb finds evidence for pre-existence in his own early fears and night terrors. And if Wordsworth regrets the loss of the glory and joy of childhood, Lamb is also sorry to have lost his nightmares. "I am almost ashamed to say how prosaic my dreams have grown."

Lamb has apparently been thinking about witches for quite some time. If we take the Elia essay as autobiographical, we can assume that Lamb's fears took place, as he says between his fourth and seventh years, between 1779 and 1780. The story about Maria Howe was written in 1808, when he was about thirty-three, and the Elia essay in 1821 when he was about forty-six. These night fears and their connection with the healthy imagination has thus occupied Lamb desultorily for most of his life.

It is my contention that Lamb had concluded that night-fears were a more or less normal phase in the development of the imagination as early as 1808, the time of the Maria Howe story. This contention then logically implies that the persona of Elia freed Lamb dramatically to speak his mind and permitted him to say what he had been thinking in private for ten or more years. That Lamb had early formulated his ideas about the possible healthy use of the childlike imagination is also amply supported by Lamb's other writings of 1808 and by his correspondence.

At the time Lamb was writing "Maria Howe: The Witch Aunt" he was also at work on another story in the *Mrs. Leicester's School* series called "Susan Yates: First Going to Church." The young heroine of this story tells of her delight in being taken to church for the first time. She remarked on the gothic ornaments of St Mary's church in Lincolnshire.

Over the door there was stonework, representing saints and bishops, and here and there, along the sides of the church, there were figures of men's heads made in a strange grotesque way: I have since seen the same sort of figures in the round tower of the Temple church in London. My father said they were very improper ornaments for such a place, and so now I think them; but it seems the people who built these great churches in old times, gave themselves more liberties than they do now; and I remember that when I first saw them, and before my father had made his observation, though they were so ugly and out of shape, and some of them seemed to be grinning and distorting their features with pain or laughter, yet being placed upon a church, to which I had come with such serious thoughts, I could not help thinking they had some serious meaning; and I looked at them with wonder, but without any temptation to laugh. I somehow fancied they were the representation of wicked people set up as a warning.

In this passage, Lamb implies several things about the childlike imagination (Susan is just five at the time). First, her perception of the church, uncolored by her father's puritanism, is more correct than that of the adults. She realizes that the grotesque is not frivolous, but instructive and important. Second, Lamb implies that in the process of growing older, as Susan has done since the time the events of her story took place, we come no longer to trust our original perceptions but instead give in to community wisdom or the pressures of authority. Her father

thought the ornaments were improper, "and so I now think them." Third, and central to the point I wish to make here, Lamb shows how the childhood imagination comes to grips with the grotesque, turning the outwardly ugly and frightening into a positive and instructive force.

The contention that Lamb thought that fearful or frightening things might have some good effect on children at this time, 1808, is supported by a look at his other works for children written about the same time, and by his letters. One bit of evidence is the poem which he wrote in *Poetry for Children* titled "To a River in Which a Child was Drowned." In it, Lamb addresses a "smiling" but deceitful river whose waves wash the bones of "young Edward." In this poem of 1809, Lamb deals with the subject of death head-on, and in what might be taken as a grotesque and frightening way. It is a poem which would have sent shivers of rage through the vigilant critics of Lamb's day who worked mightily to strip children's literature of any harsh or potentially frightening content. In this poem, Lamb confidently deals with a subject which other children's writers would shun, because he feels that no harm and possibly much good can come from dealing honestly with children about the things that frighten them.

Another incident from Lamb's correspondence shows how strongly he felt that children should not be spared images which might frighten them, and how much he was aware his opinions put him in a very small minority. In 1808 Lamb had entered into an agreement with William Godwin to produce a children's version of *The Odyssey* called *The Adventures of Ulysses*. In it he had included a number of passages which Godwin considered shocking, for example a scene in which the Cyclopes vomited up the remains of some of Odysseus' crew whom he had eaten. Or this scene of Carybdis, eating six of his crew:

... she darted out her six long necks, and swoopt up as many of his friends: whose cries Ulysses heard, and saw them too late, with their heels turned up, and their hands thrown out to him for succour, ... and he heard them shriek out, as she tore them, and to the last they continued to throw their hands out to him for sweet life.

When Godwin objected that such scenes were too strong for "the female sex," Lamb replied that they were indeed "lively images of shocking things," but then, "If you want a book which is not occasionally to *shock* you should not have thought of a Tale which was so full of Anthropophagi & monsters". In short, Lamb says, take the book as it is, "dont plague yourself or me with nonsensical objections. I assure you I will not alter one more word." (2) The book was printed as Lamb wished. Lamb felt strongly, as this exchange with Godwin indicates that the frightening scenes were an essential part of *The Odyssey*, and many other books as well; to excise those parts would deprive children of their right to enjoy literature in its fullest sense.

Just as "Maria Howe: The Witch Aunt" and "Susan Yates: First Going to Church" are related by their time of composition and their theme, so are "Witches and Other Night Fears" and "Old Benchers of the Inner Temple." Only a month before the appearance of the "Witches" essay (discussing the same incident as "The Witch Aunt") the London magazine printed in its preceding number "Old Benchers" which deals with the judgement of children and their reaction to the grotesque. Susan Yates, in the 1808 *Mrs. Leicester's School* had marvelled at the architecture of her local church, and mentioned that later in her life she had seen "the same sort of figures

in the round tower of the Temple church in London." So these four works form a sort of group dealing with children's imaginations. The two earlier stories, "The Witch Aunt" and "First Going to Church" deal with witches and the grotesque in much the same way as the two later essays. In "Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," Lamb speculates on the harm we might do to young people by trying to spare them night fears or by trying to tidy up their lives so that they never encounter such things as the grotesque. In the end, of course Lamb concludes, we can do no such sparing or tidying. "Old Benchers of the Inner Temple" is as much about architecture as it is a reminiscence of the old lawyers of that law court. Lamb begins with a lament of the changes which modern times have wrought, particularly the loss of city fountains:

The fashion, they tell me, is gone by, and these things are esteemed childish. Why not then gratify children, by letting them stand? Lawyers, I suppose, were children once. They were awakening images to them at least. Why must every thing smack of man, and mannish? Is the world all grown up? Is childhood dead? Or is there not in the bosoms of the wisest and the best some of the child's heart left, to respond to its earliest enchantments.

After discussing the old inhabitants of the Temple, Lamb takes the argument further. The gothic is not merely childish and harmless, but an indication of the eternal strength of the imagination.

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.

If Lamb seemed in "Witches and other Night Fears" to be echoing Wordsworth "Intimations of Immortality," here he echoes Coleridge's image of the fountain as a symbol of imagination in *Biographia Literaria*. In each case, he uses motifs from those authors to help clinch his arguments, but as we have seen, Lamb came to these conclusions on his own, out of his own experience; the evidence is in his early children's literature.

It is impossible for me to resist concluding with a passage from the modern psychoanalytic movement to demonstrate the importance of Lamb's discussions of the childlike imagination to modern understanding of myth and myth-creation. The passage is from C G Jung's *Symbols of Transformation*:

Has mankind ever really got away from myths? Everyone who has eyes and wits about him can see that the world is dead, cold and unending. Never yet has he beheld a God, or been compelled to require the existence of such a god from the evidence of his senses. On the contrary, it needed the strongest inner compulsion, which can only be explained by the irrational force of instinct, for man to invent those religious beliefs whose absurdity was long since pointed out by Tertullian. In the same way one can withhold the material content of primitive myths from a child but not take from him the need for mythology and the whole history of religion would start over again with the next generation. (3)

Though their interest in arcana and in musty old books would have made them congenial, it is not known whether Jung ever read Lamb, but nevertheless Jung owes a debt to a little four-year-old boy who shivered with fear in the night in 1780, Charles Lamb.

Footnotes

- 1 *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed by Thomas Hutchinson, I (London: Oxford University Press, 1908). All references to Lamb's works are from this edition.
- 2 Letter of March 10, 1808, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed by Edwin W Marrs, Jr, vol.II, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), p.279.
- 3 C G Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, trans. by R F C Hull, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.25.

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BOOK REVIEW

William Wordsworth: *Benjamin the Waggoner*. Edited by Paul F Betz. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. 1981. \$39.50

Members of the Charles Lamb Society will be particularly interested in the latest volume of the Cornell Edition of Wordsworth's poetry, which deals with *Benjamin the Waggoner*. As Professor Hill said in his Crowsley Lecture (*Bulletin* no.37), "That Lamb could respond to it so wholeheartedly is surely in itself the strongest recommendation that we should reconsider our own response to the poem". There is still a popular misconception about Wordsworth, despite all that some of us can do to counter it (for example, my own article in *Bulletin* no.19), that he had no sense of humour. Despite his occasional jests about Wordsworth's solemn response to criticism, Lamb's testimony is against such a prejudice, not least in his appreciation of *The Waggoner* quoted by Paul Betz in his Introduction to this volume. Lamb loved the poem for the "spirit of beautiful tolerance in it" and felt that the dedication to him of Benjamin's tipsy journey had a certain relevance. "Methinks there is a shadowy affinity between the subject of the narrative and the subject of the dedication..." Henry Crabb Robinson put it more kindly.

I read early Wordsworth's *Waggoner* in bed with great pleasure... It did not used to be a favourite with me, but I discovered in it to-day a benignity and gentle humour, with a view of human life and a felicity of diction which rendered the dedication of it to Charles Lamb peculiarly appropriate...

For readers who know the Lake District, there is an added pleasure in recognizing Benjamin's pub-sprinkled way, though the particular hostelry that proved his undoing has vanished, as one of the useful footnotes in this edition informs us. Lamb would have traversed the route in 1802 when travelling from Coleridge's home at Greta Hall in Keswick to Dove Cottage to visit the Clarksons there, the Wordsworths being at the time in Calais to see Annette. (Incidentally doesn't one take one's hat off to Mary, who climbed Skiddaw during this stay in the Lakes "most manfully"?)

Paul Betz ends his Introduction with Crabb Robinson's praise, quoted above, and the sentence, "I hope that this edition of *Benjamin the Waggoner* will help these qualities to shine forth". It does indeed. For this Cornell *Wordsworth* is a noble undertaking. While the college student will still find the - alas! rapidly disappearing - standard De Selincourt/Darbishire edition more convenient, for scholars or any reader with a really deep, meticulous interest in Wordsworth the Cornell editions are incomparable. The only problem seems to be to live long enough to see them all published.

The trouble with Wordsworth was that he was an inveterate reviser. Sometimes this led to improvements and occasionally even to inspired additions such as the lines in the later *Prelude*, "Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern", or, of Newton's statue,

The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

But sometimes the revisions can be completely out of keeping with the spirit of the poem as it was first conceived; for example in *The Ruined Cottage* the final text, which is now usually printed, speaks of repose "Upon the breast of Faith" and of Margaret as

one
Who, in her most distress, had ofttimes felt
The unbounded might of prayer: and learned, with soul
Fixed on the Cross, that consolation springs,
From sources deeper far than deepest pain,
For the meek Sufferer.

Well, of course, the rest of the poem is devoted to showing that she did nothing of the sort. If she had, as Jonathan Wordsworth has pointed out in *The Music of Humanity*, "there could have been no tragedy". In the case of the *Salisbury Plain* poems the development, though less disastrous, radically changes the tone of the poem as Wordsworth's own ideas change, from hopeful humanitarianism through savage social criticism to a softened view that attempts reconciliation. As Enid Welsford says,

As we compare the different versions of our poem it becomes increasingly clear that it is hardly possible to dissociate the development of Wordsworth's technique from the evolution of his thought.

The reader who is interested in this evolution will want to have access to the poem in all its stages. This is what the Cornell edition provides - in the case of these two poems in volumes already published, edited by James Butler and Stephen Gill respectively. Not only is one provided with reading texts of early versions "from which all layers of later revision have been stripped away", but also with photographs of relevant manuscripts and a record of all variants.

The development of *The Waggoner* is also very complicated. As so often with Wordsworth, fragments written before the poem as a whole was fully conceived were incorporated in it, several "fair copies", themselves revised, precede the printed versions, which also underwent numerous changes. Readers of the *Bulletin* will enjoy seeing the reproduction of Wordsworth's insertion in his own hand of the lines to Lamb

Accept, O Friend, for praise or blame,
The gift of this adventurous Song..."

The fate of the "Rock of Names" passage is also interesting, being

relegated to the margin of Sara Hutchinson's fair copy Ms.3 in response to Wordsworth's note, "Checks I think the interest and stops the progress therefore better out, do as you think best, Let the lines however be put in the Margin".

A comparatively small but, as one grows older, most important feature of the Cornell *Wordsworth* is the beautiful paper and clear print, in general the quality of the production. There is no pain or effort in reading it. The same cannot be said of the handwriting of Wordsworth and his circle. No wonder De Selincourt sometimes misread a word or two. One cannot praise too highly the dedicated work of these editors who have created for us a treasure of scholarship. Lovers of Lamb will surely want to see the evolution of the poem he so much delighted in. Wordsworth's dedication at the beginning pays tribute to his equal joy in Lamb's work. Of *The Waggoner* Wordsworth ends by saying to Lamb,

Being therefore in some measure the cause of its present appearance,
you must allow me the gratification of inscribing it to you; in
acknowledgment of the pleasure I have derived from your writings, and
of the high esteem with which I am

Very truly yours,

William Wordsworth.

No wonder Lamb wrote to his friend that "*The Waggoner* is very ill put up in boards, at least it seems to me always to open at the dedication - but that is a mechanical fault".

Mary Wedd

OBITUARY

We mourn the death, in May, of Phyllis Mann, a member since 1945. Of recent years, since her move to Malvern (appropriately to Lamb Bank) we have missed her presence at our meetings, although she maintained many links with members of the Society. Miss Mann was a devoted scholar of the Lamb period and contributed much to our knowledge and appreciation of Lamb and his circle.

We extend our sincere sympathy to her sister.

From Mr D E Wickham: TWO UNPUBLISHED ELIAN ANECDOTES

There cannot be many opportunities these days to add to the main stream of Eliana. Mr R E Ayrton of Crouch End, whose family papers so enriched my lecture on Thomas Massa Alsager, printed in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, New Series No.35 of July 1981, has kindly allowed me to communicate the following anecdotes which are believed to be unpublished. They appear in the notebook in his possession entitled 'Family and other Records collected and arranged by Edward Ayrton'. This was the grandson of Charles Lamb's friend William Ayrton, the son of William Scrope Ayrton, and the grandfather of my correspondent, who does not know whether the originals survive with some other branch of his family.

1 *From the Diary of William Ayrton*

[We know from Lucas' *Life of Charles Lamb* (chapter XX - 1803) and *The Dictionary of National Biography* that William Ayrton's father-in-law was Samuel Arnold (1740-1802) the composer. Speaking ambiguously, either of the

composer or of his son, S J Arnold of the English Opera House, Lucas says that 'Arnold' married Miss Pye, the daughter of Henry James Pye, the Poet Laureate, described in the *DNB* as 'the constant butt of contemporary ridicule'. Ayrton says here that Mrs Samuel Arnold was the daughter of Major Walter Pye. I have insufficient details to solve the puzzle or to say whether the son married a close relation of his mother's, and the explanation already threatens to outweigh the anecdote.]

10th January 1824 Major Walter Pye died. He was the father of Mrs Samuel Arnold - At home when Pye and Lamb and others were present there was a large beefsteak pie opposite Lamb, who said "This is Major Pye".

2 From the Note Book of William Scrope Ayrton

[This is better value. 'Mr Phillips (of the House of Commons)' was Ned Phillips, a celebrated whist player, who succeeded John Rickman as Speaker's Secretary in 1814 and held the post until at least 1833: see Orlo Williams' *Life and Letters of John Rickman*, 1911, pp.111-2. The anecdote is undated.]

Charles Lamb. I distinctly remember Lamb's eccentric behaviour at one of the Wednesday evenings at my father's house. Lamb and Mr Phillips (of the House of Commons) were together at the Whist Table, when a request was made for two glasses of brandy and water. One of the Whist Club privately suggested that one glass should be made quite strong for Mr Phillips, and the other very weak for Lamb, whose head was easily affected, the two glasses were prepared accordingly, but the servant blundered, and gave the strong glass to Lamb, whose spirits were soon unduly excited. When the supper was put on the table, he amused himself by carrying the dishes off the table, and putting them outside the room, on the stairs, lastly he seized a decanter of wine and began drinking it off, and when the others interposed to take it from him, he resisted and seized the neck of the decanter so firmly with his teeth, that a great piece was broken off, making his mouth bleed, that decanter was long preserved as a relic and called "Lamb's decanter".

NOTES

MURIEL CHEYNE. We are sorry that a bad fall has deprived us of the company of Mrs Cheyne at recent meetings. We wish her a speedy and complete recovery.

VISIT TO "LILIES", WEEDON, NEAR AYLESBURY, BUCKS (see *Bulletin* no.38)

This has been arranged for SATURDAY 18th SEPTEMBER 1982. Mrs Eaton has kindly suggested that, if the day is fine, members may like to arrive around midday and picnic in the grounds (a literary Glyndebourne!). During the afternoon, there will be the opportunity to look round the house and see the remarkable collection of books, documents etc. before tea at about 4 pm.

Members are welcome to bring friends but I should like to know approximate numbers by 4th September. Madeline Huxstep (01-940 3837)

THE CROWSLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE, and our first meeting in the new Mary Ward Centre at 42 Queen Square, WC1 is on Saturday 2nd October at 2.45 pm.

If any members would like additional copies of the 1982/3 PROGRAMME for friends, local libraries etc. please ask the Secretary.

THE NEW MARY WARD CENTRE

Four members attended the Principal's "At Home" on 4th April when, after a crowded programme at the old buildings in Tavistock Place, we processed to 42 Queen Square to celebrate the impending move with a glass of wine. We were very impressed with the spacious accommodation, and in particular with the elegant room, with plasterwork ceiling, overlooking the Square, which has been allocated to us for our meetings.

LIBRARY

Mr Padwick, the Deputy Librarian at Guildhall, has now been able to examine the state of the books in the CLS Library. Of the writings of Lamb himself there are about 100 books which require various forms of treatment from complete rebinding to re-labelling and minor repairs. From a sample volume which has been re-sewn and re-backed into the original boards, he estimates that the cost of repairing these 100 volumes will be between £700 and £800 at an average cost of £7.36 per volume.

At the Society's AGM in May it was agreed to make up to £1,000 available from the Crowsley Memorial Fund immediately. It is also felt that members may wish to make individual donations towards the cost of restoring one or more of these books. Contributions may be sent to the Hon. General Secretary (payable to the Charles Lamb Society).

Books were very precious to Lamb and the Society has a duty to ensure that our Library is kept in good order for the pleasure and profit of future generations.

FAREWELL

Our good wishes go with Joel Haefner and Cynthia Huff who returned to the USA in June after nine months' intensive work on their respective research projects.

HAIL

Robert Durden, a long-standing member from San Francisco, has been here on a visit during April/May and renewed Elian friendships in the intervals of a full programme of theatre visits.

FORTHCOMING BOOKS ON LAMB

Two of our Members, who have also been regular contributors to the *Bulletin*, are to have books on Lamb published very shortly.

Mrs Winifred Courtney's *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802* is expected in July, published by Macmillan in London and the New York University Press in America.

Mr Claude A Prance's *Companion to Lamb* (provisional title) is expected from Mansells of London in the autumn.

We look forward to reviewing them in due course.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Members will be interested to know that *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* has been selected for the permanent collection of The Library of Congress in Washington.

CITY OF LONDON FESTIVAL

Our member, Mr D E Wickham, is to give a talk entitled "Charles Lamb and his London" in St Margaret Pattens Church, Eastcheap, London EC3, at 1.10 pm on Friday 9 July 1982. It is to be one of the events of this year's Festival of the City of London.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 8 May 1982 at the Mary Ward Centre, London WC1.

After the reading of the Minutes and the passing of the Annual Report and Accounts, reports on the year were given by officers of the Society and Officers and Council were elected for the coming year. There was some discussion on the proper use of the Crowsley Memorial Fund as a lasting memorial to Ernest Crowsley and it was agreed, as reported above, that the use of at least part of the fund for the restoration of books in the Library, with an appropriate label in each, would be a suitable purpose and one that Mr Crowsley would have approved.

The Hon. Secretary presented the proposed programme for the coming year and we hope to include it in this Bulletin. Arrangements for the Birthday Luncheon were also discussed and suggestions made for a possible new venue.

The Chairman warmly thanked officers and members for all their generous help to the Society.

After the business was completed, we had the pleasure of a short talk from Joel Haefner about his research on *The London Magazine*.

BOOK MARKET

From: D E Wickham, 116 Parsonage Manorway, Belvedere, Kent.

E V Lucas: *At the Shrine of St. Charles*, 1934. Sixteen of his (unpublished?) essays on Elia, collected for the centenary. Very good copy. £2.00 plus postage, or collect at a meeting. To be sold because I have bought a dust-wrapped copy.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs M Canter, 59a Selborne Road, Southgate, N14 7DE

Dr R Grivil, 12 St Lawrence Lane, Ashburton, Devon

Mr J R Nabholz, Dept of English, Loyola University, 6525 N Sheridan Road, Chicago, Illinois 60626, USA

Miss L Newlyn, 92 Abingdon Road, Oxford

Mr J Wordsworth, St Catherine's College, Oxford