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JOSEPH MUNDEN, ELIA AND CHARLES LAMB IN PERFORMANCE

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I wish to focus on an Elia essay that, to my knowledge, has received little serious attention, namely, 'On the Acting of Munden'. This briefest of all the essays in Lamb's 1823 volume-- it amounts to only five short paragraphs-- is of considerable interest as an example of the Romantic genre of theatrical criticism. It is of much greater interest as a rich index of Lamb's artistry.

Although it held the final and climactic position in the 1823 collection and was the last published of the 1820-22 *London Magazine* series of essays that became that volume, 'On the Acting of Munden' was, in fact, among the earliest to have been composed and to have appeared in print. It was first published as an unsigned 'Theatrical Examiner' in Leigh Hunt's paper in November 1819. Only two other essays in the 1823 volume preceded it in terms of composition and publication: 'Valentine's Day', which had also appeared in the *Examiner* in 1819, appropriately on 14 February; and 'The Batchelor's Complaint of the Behavior of Married People', which dated back to 1811 and the *Reflector*. The early composition of 'On the Acting of Munden' is worth noting because this genial effort, unlike the other two mentioned which are decidedly lightweight affairs, already contains some of the major artistic patterns and strategies of the great Elia essays to follow. Moreover, 'Munden' enables us to see quite clearly Lamb in the process of artistic discovery and advance. The essay is available to us in three versions: *Examiner*, 1819; *London Magazine*, 1822; *Elia* volume, 1823. With each appearance there were significant revisions. Lamb might have had special pleasure and meaning in presenting as the final masterful essay of the 1823 collection one of the earliest of his works, one that both defined

the special character of his art and provided testimony to the development of that art. Finally, I would suggest that in its great tribute to a comic genius Joseph Munden, the final essay of 1823 might also have constituted an indirect statement of Lamb's own artistic goals and strategies: Munden, as defined in the essay, was a comedian who achieved whatever reality he had as artist-performer by perpetual metamorphosis of identity, like Lamb through Elia; and who in the process both gave comic delight and--by understanding commonplace experience 'to its quiddity'--restored wonder and freshness to life. Not an inappropriate statement of Charles Lamb's art.

In its final 1823 version, (1) 'On the Acting of Munden' falls into two parts: Part I (paragraphs 1-2) records the dramatic personal experience of Elia following a Munden performance. I mean 'dramatic' quite literally; it is a little drama. Part II (paragraphs 3-5), building on this dramatic testimony, represents a progressively more precise and admiring statement of Munden's art. Although the two parts may seem to be divided into drama and discursive exposition, in fact they are closely parallel and connected: parallel in that each begins rather matter-of-factly and ends in celebration of wonder; connected, in that each is but one half of a single movement of evolving perception that begins with the occasional sentence: 'not many nights ago I had come home from seeing this extraordinary performer in Cockletop', and is completed with the final eloquence: 'He stands wondering, amid the commonplace materials of life, like primaeval man with the sun and stars about him'.

Part I (paragraphs 1-2) is the earliest instance of what we find in other, better-known Elia essays, the discussion of a theatrical experience as a performance *by the audience*: either *before* the play itself, in the playgoer's heightened participation and anxiety as in 'My First Play' or 'Old China'; or *during* the performance as in the discussion of *The School for Scandal* in 'Artificial Comedy' where the audience become participants, in on the comic spirit of the plot with some of the players; (2) or here in the Munden essay, in a drama *subsequent* to the performance. In the 1823 version, the drama of Elia abruptly opens with a battle between Munden's comic image and Elia's attempted moral gravity; a battle initiated by Elia's hope of sleep, of resuming his ordinary habits undisturbed by the world of the whimsical, the bewildering and the strange. It is the kind of comic battle that Lamb particularly loved; it was to be found in two of his favorite plays: *The School of Scandal* and *Twelfth Night*. (Coincidentally, he wrote about both these plays in the other essays on actors and the theatre which he had published in scattered numbers of the *London Magazine* in 1822 (3) and then collected as a unified sequence for the conclusion of the 1823 volume, with 'On the Acting of Munden', of course, last). On one side in the battle are Elia's noble and willful efforts: 'I resolved to be serious. I raised up the gravest topics of life: private misery, public calamity'; on the other, ushered in by the quotation of dramatic language itself ('There the antic sate/Mocking our state'), all the anarchic, disturbing comic paraphernalia: 'his queer visnomy--his bewildering costume--all the strange things that he had raked together--his serpentine rod, swagging about in his pocket--Cleopatra's tear, and the rest of his relics', which happily end the first act of the comic drama by providing the relief of sleep that Elia had sought. However, the relief--comic relief, shall we call it--comes only in terms of the whimsical world of Munden, thus setting up the possibility of further conflict and richer drama.

Act II declares at once: 'But I was not to escape so easily'. The battle has

simply grown to larger dimensions and moved to another arena, the world of dreams, where of course the power of whimsy and disordering strangeness can reign more completely; it reaches Elia's natural responsiveness untrammelled by consciousness and the will. 'No sooner did I fall into slumber, than the same image only more perplexing assailed me in the shape of dreams. Not one Munden, but five hundred were dancing before me' Since Elia's own *authentic* responsiveness to the comic world has entered the battle against his *assumed* gravity, it is no surprise that he awakens not to escape those images but with the hope of preserving them: 'O for the power of the pencil to have fixed them!', he declares.

At this point it is profitable to see how the first part, the little comic drama of the liberation of the protagonist-playgoer, had been presented in the earlier versions. The *Examiner* text had not thrust us immediately into comic drama but had offered a tame and lame discursive remark quite suited to the original intention of the essay as a theatrical review in a newspaper. I quote the opening of 1819: 'It is none of the least pleasant features in the improved management of Drury-Lane Theatre, that so many pieces have been brought forward, which give scope to the admirable talents of this performer'. Then the text of the first part (the two paragraphs of comic drama) continued nearly identical to what we have just examined in the 1823 text: 'Not many nights ago', it reads, 'we had come home from seeing this extraordinary performer in Cockletop'. *Nearly* identical, but the use of the editorial 'we' instead of the genuinely personal and dramatic 'I' robs the drama of its immediacy and authenticity. And the editorial 'we' prevails throughout the five paragraphs of the 1819 text. Note the difference between: 'But we were not to escape so easily. No sooner did we fall into slumber', or 'O for the power of the pencil to have fixed them when we awoke!'; and 'But I was not to escape so easily. No sooner did I fall into slumber', and 'O for the power of the pencil to have fixed then when I awoke!'. The difference between 1819 and 1823, in the 'I' for 'we' and the dropping of the discursive first sentence, is the record of Lamb's transforming journalism into art. (The *London Magazine* text of 1822 is the intermediate step; the opening sentence is happily dropped, but the editorial 'we' remains throughout.)

The succeeding three paragraphs which constitute the second part of the essay are, until the very end of the text, virtually unchanged through the three versions except that the 'we' prevails in the first two versions. At the end of the 1819 text, however, as I shall presently show, there is an even more unhappy use of 'public' prose awkwardly tacked on to the imaginative dramatic achievement of the essay. Happily, this disappears in the 1822 and 1823 texts.

The second part (paragraphs 3-5) leaves personal experience and turns into praise of Munden, but it is not in fact discursive. Indeed, it fulfills a pattern of the essay which began with the chatty personal experience of the opening sentence: 'Not many nights ago I had come home from seeing this extraordinary performer in Cockletop'. The entire essay is, of course, meant to be a tribute to the great comedian, but as elsewhere in the Elia essays--one thinks of the treatment of the comic characters in the opening essays 'The South-Sea House' and 'Oxford in the Vacation'--Elia's perception of the character is gradually evolved, beginning in laughter and ending in admiration and respect. This pattern is, to my knowledge, first employed in 'On the Acting of Munden'. With each paragraph, Munden is redefined: in paragraph 1, he is an 'extraordinary performer'; in the second, 'the strangest

of all strange mortals'; in the third, not a shaper of faces (as in the second), but a *maker* of his appearance capable of metamorphosis, a god in terms of constructing his own identity. The point of his originality and godlike uniqueness as comedian is made clear in the contrast of the fourth paragraph. As performer of sentimental old men, he is a 'gifted actor', but must share his distinction in such roles with other actors. As comedian, however, he is 'single and unaccompanied'. Indeed, here as in paragraph 2, Munden the comedian cannot be compared to another actor; his distinction can only be defined by transcending his own genre to the ungeneric world of genius where he is compared to Hogarth. (Similarly, in the 1811 *Reflector* essay, Hogarth had been compared to Shakespeare.) Finally, with the last paragraph, Munden creates not himself, but like the original Creator he gives us a world in its pristine wonder. The mundane world, while remaining mundane, becomes unmundane through Munden. He restores 'supernatural interest' to the commonplace, 'prophetic vision', and most especially wonder: 'he stands wondering amid the common-place materials of life, like primaevial man with the sun and stars about him'.

The best gloss on this final passage--and possibly its source--would be some remarks in the fifth number of Coleridge's *The Friend* (14 September 1809) which Lamb as a subscriber would have known and which Coleridge reproduced prominently in *Biographia Literaria*:

To carry on the feelings of Childhood into the powers of Manhood, to combine the Child's sense of wonder and novelty with the Appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar ... this is the character and privilege of Genius, and one of the marks which distinguish Genius from Talents. And so to represent familiar objects as to awaken the minds of others to a like freshness of sensation concerning them ... this is the prime merit of Genius, and its most unequivocal mode of manifestation. (4)

Lamb concludes the 1822-23 versions:

So the gusto of Munden antiquates and ennobles what it touches. His pots and his ladles are as grand and primal as the seething-pots and hooks seen in old prophetic vision. A tub of butter, contemplated by him, amounts to a Platonic idea. He understands a leg of mutton in its quiddity. He stands wondering, amid the common-place materials of life, like primaevial man with the sun and stars about him.

This is surely one of Lamb's finest moments in prose. Notice the comic touches amid the noble and eloquent praise, the leg of mutton, the tub of butter, the unmundane/mundane in felicitious combination. However, in 1819, it was followed without interruption by the following: 'This faint sketch we beg to be taken as a mere corollary to some admirable strictures on the character of this great performer, in a paper signed T.N.T., which appeared some months back in the *Champion*'. (5) And that's not all; still further departing from and dimming the rich artistic achievement of the essay, there is an additional sentence, and this one is not even Lamb's and not even English. It is a quotation from Lucretius: *Non tam certandi cupidus quam te imitari aeo*. (6)

Thankfully, Lamb decided to be Lamb, not to copy Thomas Noon Talfourd, or to lean on Lucretius. He cast off the ephemeral 'public' cover to achieve the

intimacy of the 'personal', which ironically has won for this essay a permanent 'public' readership far beyond the expectations of its original publication as 'Theatrical Examiner 380', 7 November 1819. Lamb had found for himself a voice and a linguistic costume for his unmundane/mundane performance. (7)

NOTES

1. I cite the text as reprinted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas (London: Methuen and Company, 1903-05), 2:148-49.
2. See the discussion of 'Artificial Comedy' in John R. Nabholz, 'Drama and Rhetoric in Lamb's Essays of the Imagination', *Studies in English Literature*, 12:4 (Autumn 1972), 687-96.
3. In the issues for February, April and October, under the general title 'On Some of the Old Actors'. See *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 2:279-98 for the magazine texts of these essays.
4. *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969--), 4:ii, 73-74. The passage was reproduced in Chapter IV of *Biographia Literaria*. Lamb's subscription to *The Friend* had begun with the fourth number (see 4:ii, 440). For other evidence of Lamb's critical indebtedness to *The Friend*, see 'Drama and Rhetoric in Lamb's Essays of the Imagination', pp. 694n-95n.
5. I have been unable to obtain a complete text of Talfourd's essay. What is described as the 'first portion' of it can be found in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 1:532. It bears only the most general relationship to Lamb's essay.
6. *De Rerum Natura*, III.6. ('Not so much desiring to be thy rival as for love, because I yearn to copy thee').
7. A somewhat different version of this essay was originally delivered at the Charles Lamb Session of the Convention of the College English Association in Charleston, South Carolina, April 4, 1987.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH AND MARY LAMB, WRITERS

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[This is the first part of a lecture delivered to the Society on Saturday, 5th November, 1988. It will be continued in the July *Bulletin*]

Born only seven years apart (Mary in December 1764 and Dorothy in December 1771), these two women were alike: in that few people in their own day knew them to be writers; in that, when they finally met in September 1802, they felt for the rest of their lives the friendliest feelings; in that they lived as loved sisters in the homes of beloved **brothers who were** themselves acknowledged writers.

They were also unlike. Dorothy Wordsworth was born into the gentleman's

class; her father, although he worked for his living as law-agent and attorney for Sir James Lowther, lived in the finest mid-eighteenth century house in Cockermonth, and after his death at the age of forty-two, his boys, when they finished at Hawkshead School, were put in the way of professional occupations: Richard was articled to the law, John trained in navigation for the Merchant Navy, William and Christopher went to Cambridge. Dorothy indeed sensed the nuisance-value that they all were in their grandfather's and uncle's house (with considerable debts to their father still unpaid):

' . . . my Brs can not even get a pair of shoes cleaned without James's telling them they require as much waiting upon as any *Gentleman*, nor can I get a thing done for myself without absolutely entreating it as a *fav'our*' (EY, 4); but nevertheless the claims of their gentlemanly status were not denied. Dorothy, since the even earlier death of their mother, had lived since she was six with a cousin of her mother's at Halifax; on her father's death she was moved from Dr and Mrs Wilkinson's boarding school at Hipperholme near Halifax to Miss Martha and Miss Hannah Mellins' day school in Halifax itself. Her formal education soon ended: she was just over fifteen years old when she was brought back to Cumberland and her grandmother's house in Penrith. Her brothers, after nine years, met her again in their own brief vacation periods at Penrith, and her education continued through reading. Dorothy wrote to her former schoolfriend from Halifax, Jane Pollard,

I ha^{ve} a very pretty little collection of Books from my Brothers [] which they have given me. I will give you a Catalog^{ue}. I have the Iliad, the Odyssey, [?] works, Fielding's works, Hayley's poems, Gil Blas (in French), Gregory's Legacy to his Daughters, and my Brother Ric^{hard} intends sending me Shakespeare's Plays and the Spec^{tator}. I have also Milton's Works, Dr. Goldsmith's poems, [and] other trifling things . . .

(EY, 8)

When her Uncle William married and took her with him to Forncett Rectory in Norfolk, Dorothy had for a few months when she was seventeen, and before the Rectory babies were born, a young lady's conventional home education,

We are to have prayers at nine oclock (you will observe it is *winter*) after breakfast is over we are to read, write, and I am to improve myself in French till twelve oclock, when we are to walk or visit our sick and poor neighbours till three, which is our dining hour; and after tea my Uncle will sit with us and either read to us or not as he and we find ourselves inclined.

(EY, 19)

Women sewed while the men read aloud: these were proper middle-class evenings. One recalls Jane Austen's Fanny Price who had 'extreme pleasure' in good reading. 'To *good* reading, however, she had long been used; her uncle read well - her cousins all - Edmund very well; but in Mr Crawford's reading [*Of Shakespeare*] there was a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever met with' (*Mansfield Park*, ed. R.W. Chapman, Oxford, 337). So Fanny listens while her needlework falls from her hands. A version of this was Dorothy's own dream of winter happiness:

When I think of Winter I hasten to furnish our little Parlour, I close the Shutters, set out the Tea-table, brighten the Fire. When our Refreshment is ended I produce our Work, and William brings his book to our Table and contributes at once to our Instruction and amusement . . .

(EY, 88)

It was a re-iterated dream, 'Think of our mornings, we will work, William shall read to us. Oh my dear friend how happy we shall be!'. (EY, 103). When she wrote this to Jane Pollard, Dorothy was twenty-one. When she came to Dove Cottage, aged twenty-nine, she found the reality a little different, but once at least it was exactly as Dorothy had planned:

After Tea Wm read Spenser now and then a little aloud to us. We were making his waistcoat.

(24 November 1801)

This conventional domestic scene was rare at Dove Cottage. If Wordsworth read aloud, he more often read anxiously a draft of the day's composition. Dorothy was the usual reader: 'After tea I read aloud the 11th Book of Paradise Lost. We were much impressed and also melted into tears' (2 February 1802). Or the reader could be Mary Hutchinson, there on a visit. The women read aloud passages from Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Milton, Campbell and others. Winter evenings they 'sate snugly round the fire' and in summer, one afternoon, Dorothy sat 'in the window reading Milton's Penseroso to William' (3 June 1802). But sometimes too, particularly when Wordsworth had been composing and was 'very nervous', Dorothy shamelessly read poetry to send him to sleep. Jonson kept him awake; Spenser could help him sleep. Silently or aloud, to soothe or to enliven, reading poetry was part of life, and because Jane Pollard marvellously kept Dorothy's letters from her leaving Halifax at fifteen, we can trace something of Dorothy's development in both reading and writing.

Mary Lamb's case is different. We have no early writing by her, and her family were closer to servants than to gentleman. However, Samuel Salt of the Inner Temple let the children of his manservant, John Lamb, into his library, and Lamb has described in his essay, 'Mackery End', the advantages for Mary:

Her education in youth was not much attended to; and she happily missed all that train of female garniture which passeth by the name of accomplishments. She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it, that it makes (if the worst come to the worst) most incomparable old maids.

Before that, Mary had learnt arithmetic and English composition at a humble day school, William Bird's Academy, Fetter Lane. She was soon apprenticed to a dressmaker, and her earnings from needlework done at home were essential, especially after Samuel Salt's death in 1792. When her brother Charles, some ten years younger than herself, learnt Latin at Christ's Hospital, Mary - if the 1809 *Poetry for Children* is any guide - must have felt unjustly abandoned:

Shut these odious books up, brother -
They have made you quite another
Thing from what you us'd to be -
Once you lik'd to play with me -
Now you leave me all alone,

And are so conceited grown
 With your Latin, you'll scarce look
 Upon any English book.
 We had us'd on winter eves
 To con over Shakespeare's leaves,
 Or on Milton's harder sense
 Exercise our diligence - ...

(*The Sister's Expostulation on the Brother's Learning Latin, 1-12*)

The brother's reply is conciliating:

... But if all this anger grow
 From this cause, that you suspect
 By proceedings indirect,
 I would keep (as misers pelf)
 All this learning to myself;
 Sister, to remove this doubt,
 Rather than we will fall out,
 (If our parents will agree)
 You shall Latin learn with me.

And Mary did, though not with Charles, but from him, and when she was well over forty. In 1820 she wrote, 'I employ my time in writing Latin exercises during the whole of the morning; and my brother is so kind as to correct and growl over them in the evening'. She was 'working hard at it in order to make a scholar instead of a scholaress' of the Lambs' actress friend Fanny Kelly (Lucas, II, 270). She taught Latin also to Mary Novello (afterwards Mrs Cowden Clarke), to Hazlitt's son William and to Emma Isola, the Lambs' young ward. Latin made Emma cry: 'Droop not, dear Emma, dry those falling tears', wrote Mary in verse as she attempted to cheer Emma by foreseeing a day when

That most rare Latinist, the Northern Maid -
 The language-loving Sarah of the Lake -
 Shall hail thee Sister Linguist.

Coleridge's brilliant young daughter, the northern Maid, learnt Latin under Southey's roof at Greta Hall, and translated, at Southey's suggestion, the eighteenth-century missionary Dobrizhoffer's Latin *Account of the Abipones*, a tribe of nomad South American Indians (published, 3 vols., 1822). She went far beyond Mary Lamb into the masculine territory of Latin. Dorothy Wordsworth, at home within traditional gender roles, seems not to have considered learning Latin (though she taught herself German and Italian). And no-one taught Mary Lamb Latin in her youth. At that time she was working and sewing hard in narrow circumstances. She caused and suffered, in temporary insanity, the death of her mother in 1796. When we come to her first extant writing in 1802, letters to her new friend Sarah Stoddart, later to be the wife of William Hazlitt, Mary was almost thirty-eight. In the September of that year, 1802, she met Dorothy Wordsworth who had had a long and favoured apprenticeship in writing.

Dorothy began with letters. Here is part of her account to Jane Pollard of her stay with her Uncle William and family at Windsor in the autumn of 1792:

If I was disappointed with London I was charmed with Windsor. The weather was delightful . . . We found the Royal Family here . . . they walked upon the Terrace every Night. When I first set Foot upon the Terrace I could scarcely persuade myself of the Reality of the Scene. I fancied myself treading upon Fairy-Ground, and that the gay company around me was brought there by Enchantment. The King and several of the Princesses were advancing, the Queen's Band was playing most delightfully and all around me I saw only well-dressed, smart People . . . The King stopped to talk with my Uncle and Aunt, and to play with the children, who though not acquainted with the new-fangled Doctrine of Liberty and Equality, thought a King's Stick as fair Game as any other man's, and that princesses were not better than mere Cousin Dollys. I think it is impossible to see the King and his Family at Windsor without loving them. . . I am too much of an aristocrate or what you please to call me, not to reverence him because he is a Monarch more than I should were he a private Gentleman . . . [The King] was quite delighted with Christopher and Mary. Mary he considers as a great Beauty and desired the Duke of York to come from one Side of the Terrace to the other to look at her. The first time she appeared before him she had an unbecoming and rather a shabby hat on. We had, then got her a new one. "Ah" says he, "Mary that's a pretty hat!".

(EY, 82-3)

This is much as many another eighteenth-century young lady would write, even to the enthusiasm of fancying the royal castle fairy-ground, and displaying such monarchical sentiments (so different from Wordsworth's passionate republicanism). The mark that is Dorothy's alone is the tiny anecdote about little Mary's hat. The cherishing of such detail and the delight in direct speech which here bring the king to kindly life is the same that in the later Grasmere Journals will make Dorothy a rare recorder of dialect. Nine years after recording the king, she becomes articulate for the poor. Here, in 1801, Dorothy writes down the words of her neighbour Peggy Ashburner still sorrowing over the fields and livestock her husband had been forced to sell:

'O how pleased I used to be when they fetched them down [the cattle and sheep], and when I had been a bit poorly I would gang out upon a hill and look ower t'fields and see them and it used to do me so much good you cannot think'. Molly said to me when I came in 'poor body. She's very ill but one does not know how long she may last. Many a fair face may gang before her'.

(24 November 1801)

Molly was old Molly Fisher, the Wordsworths' servant, living opposite, and Dorothy, like a realistic novelist, has caught the trick of both their voices. She tells, with almost no indulgence of commentary, the stories of neighbours, travellers on the road or passing beggars. She was undoubtedly encouraged to give these stories place because Wordsworth was particularly interested in 'incidents of common life' as subjects for poems. At the same time, the leechgatherer, the tall beggar woman, the old seaman, the woman who had been married to an officer, the old soldier who had once served the Marquis of Granby, the woman with the little boy and the husband whose leg had been wounded with a slate in a great wind, the abandoned

Cockermouth woman with two children, one half-starved, with slippers 'that had belonged to some gentleman's child, down at heel', the old Ragman - all these derelicts by 1800 were the right subjects for Dorothy's own powers of observation, memory and expression.

The Journal begun at Alfoxden in January 1798 and continued only until May gave Dorothy her first real space for description. Sometimes the 'interesting' scene that challenged her was one that involved stillness:

A deep snow upon the ground . . . we walked through the wood into the Coombe to fetch some eggs. The sun shone bright and clear. A deep stillness in the thickest part of the wood, undisturbed except by the occasional dropping of the snow from the holly boughs . . .

(17 February 1798)

The stillness is known by the small sounds, just as, and written during this same month, February 1798, the minute sounds when 'eavesdrops fall' of Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, direct us to absolute silence, 'silent icicles/ Quietly shining to the quiet moon'. Sometimes the challenge was to capture movement: here slow movement:

A thick fog . . . It cleared away between ten and eleven. The shapes of the mist, slowly moving along, exquisitely beautiful; passing over the sheep they almost seemed to have more of life than those quiet creatures. The unseen birds singing in the mist.

(1 March 1798)

Again, Dorothy involves sound. The birdsong, coming as it were from the mist itself, gives mysterious life to the shapes of moving mist, and oddly, because the birds sing in an unfinished sentence, in a present participle, their singing does not end, and the mist, slowly moving along, seems in perpetual movement. Stillness, slow movement, and very often, wind; from these Journals to the final letters in 1838 there is in Dorothy's writing a responsiveness to winds. On 2 April 1798 there was:

A very high wind. Coleridge came to avoid the smoke; stayed all night. We walked in the wood, and sat under the trees. The half of the wood perfectly still, while the wind was making a loud noise behind us. The still trees only gently bowed their heads, as if listening to the wind. The hollies in the thick wood unshaken by the blast; only, when it came with a greater force, shaken by the rain drops falling from the bare oaks above.

The true writing here is surely the observation of the unshaken hollies with the wind behind them which were yet finally shaken by raindrops falling from the bare oaks above. The more self-conscious, almost coy expression is that of the still trees only gently bowing their heads as if listening. Dorothy listens to the wind but her humanising of the trees, their bowing heads, is left undeveloped and only fanciful; yet it is an anticipation by more than four years of the buoyant humanising in the *Grasmere Journal* of the Ullswater daffodils of April 1802, some of whom 'rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness' while 'the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over

the lake, they looked so gay, ever glancing every changing'. The imagery that humanises the daffodils and turns them into dancing partners of the wind is sustained at length. And twice, in insertions, Dorothy went back over the passage to add the phrases about the wind blowing directly over the lake to the daffodils. There is life, on the earth, in the wind and on the water:

The Bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances
and in the middle of the water like the sea.

This is precise; Dorothy's ear could distinguish the sounds of near and further waves, and in the centre of the lake a sound like the sea. It is this kind of detail that commands belief in the whole celebration of energy. The beginning was the Alfoxden Journal. Here Dorothy had for the first time, in Wordsworth and Coleridge, fellow watchers, fellow writers and appreciative readers. Both poets found Dorothy's perceptions happily suggestive. Wordsworth, in *A Nightpiece*, had it that the moon

. . . sails along
Followed by multitudes of stars, that small,
And bright, and sharp. . .

It was Dorothy who first in writing conferred upon the moon the transferred movement of the clouds in wind below: 'She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp' (25 January 1798). The 'one only leaf upon the top of a tree' that 'danced, round and round like a rag blown by the wind' (7 March 1798) helped Coleridge to

The one red leaf, the last of its clan
That dances as often as dance it can
Hanging so light, and hanging so high
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

It was all encouragement for Dorothy; the impetus to write well must have been strong.

The Grasmere Journals, four small notebooks with entries written, some hastily, some carefully, from 1800 to 1803, are the harvest of Dorothy Wordsworth's education as a writer. She was about thirty years old: her maturity is clear. There is not the same determined concentration now upon description (even taking into account William Knight's omissions in his 1897 edition of the Alfoxden Journal of 'trivial detail'); the hills and plants and weather that make up the setting of the lives of Dorothy and Wordsworth at Town End are mixed up with their ordinary activities. They belong to the daily flux. Here is part of the entry for 24 November 1801:

A rainy morning. We all were well except that my head ached a little and I took my Breakfast in bed. I read a little of Chaucer, prepared the goose for dinner, and then we all walked out. I was obliged to return for my fur tippet and Spenser it was so cold. We had intended going to Easedale but we shaped our course to Mr Gell's cottage. It was very windy and we heard the wind everywhere about us as we went along the Lane but the walls sheltered us. John Green's house looked pretty under Silver How. As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of 50 yards from our

favourite Birch tree. It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs, the sun shone upon it and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape with stem and branches but it was like a Spirit of water. The sun went in and it resumed its purplish appearance the twigs still yielding to the wind but not so visibly to us. The other Birch trees that were near it looked bright and chearful, but it was a creature by its own self among them.

There is an openness here to every occupation that the day brings. To have a headache, read Chaucer, prepare the goose for dinner, walk out - all these are equally to be noted. The birch tree that seems, while the sun is out, to escape from its wooden fixity, and become water, light, movement, 'a flying sunshiny shower', is one birch tree among others seen in an everyday walk. Indeed, when the sun goes in, the tree resumes its ordinary purplish appearance, and Dorothy scrupulously records this change; but for a moment, yielding to the wind, not fancifully bowing its head, it had been a 'Spirit of water', and Dorothy, seeing it as a creature by its own self, has given it something of the numinous. She continues the entry:

We could not get into Mr Gell's grounds - the old tree fallen from its undue exaltation above the Gate. A shower came on when we were at Benson's. We went through the wood - it became fair - there was a rainbow which spanned the lake from the Island house to the foot of Bainriggs. The village looked populous and beautiful. Catkins are coming out palm trees budding - the alder with its plumb coloured buds. We came home over the stepping stones. The Lake was foamy with white waves. I saw a solitary butter flower in the wood. I found it not easy to get over the stepping stones. Reached home at dinner time.

This is not a scene, but the fragments of one: first, the rainbow, simply itself without comment, great image for Romantic writers and painters though it was to become; then the longer vista to the village; then back to the near detail of the solitary 'butter flower', of catkins and the plum-coloured buds on the alder. A whole scene, a formal composition, would be too fixed. The life is in the swift impression: the solitary flower beside the rainbow beside the difficulty of getting over the stepping stones. And beside all this the goose sent to Peggy Ashburner, and Peggy's excessive thanks that led Dorothy to allude to Wordsworth's 'Simon Lee', 'Alas! the gratitude of men has &c &c [oftner left me mourning]'. Dorothy closes this tale of Peggy with Peggy's own words of her pain at the selling of their fields. The entry continues with Wordsworth's reading Spenser aloud while Dorothy and Mary were making his waistcoat and it ends finally with Dorothy's concern for Wordsworth.

William walked to John's Grove. I went to meet him - moonlight but it rained. I met him before I had got as far as John Baty's - he had been surprized and terrified by a sudden rushing of winds which seemed to bring earth sky and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him in - he was glad he was in a high Road.

Thus, Dorothy can sympathetically comprehend Wordsworth's sudden imaginative dread of turbulent wind, and feel for the poet who in a different mood had recently written of finding 'blessing' in a 'gentle breeze', even a

'corresponding mild creative breeze' (*Prelude*, 1805, I, 1, 43). Dorothy's joy, sympathy, anxiety, constantly enrich the particularity of reading, writing, talking, walking, baking, planting, mending. The briefest observation can carry feeling. This is partly because the observation was made for its own sake, and for no palpable effect on any 'gentle Reader', or on any reader beyond Dorothy herself and occasionally Wordsworth ('I shall give Wm Pleasure by it' wrote Dorothy on the Journal's first day). Thus, 'the moonshine [previously thought to be 'the moon shone'] like herrings in the water' (31 October 1800). Fragment as this is, it is a celebration. It isolates, without even a verb, a particular play of light on water, the sublime of the heavens and the domestic of herrings. The extended nightscapes and moonscapes of Alfoxden are distilled; only Dorothy Wordsworth could speak, as she does in August 1800, of the startling beauty of the moon 'as it rose to us over Loughrigg Fell'. 'As it rose to us'; there is nothing special for Dorothy in claiming a personal relationship with the moon - she goes straight on to ordinary supper and their eighth cart of coals from Thomas Ashburner - yet, of course, such intimacy with the universe is indeed special. And we share it when we read the Journal.

And so to September 1802 when Dorothy Wordsworth, returning with her brother, from the visit to Annette Vallon in Calais, met Mary Lamb in London. She had met Charles five years before at Coleridge's cottage at Nether Stowey. In London the Wordsworths dined with the Lambs and Charles certainly escorted them to Bartholomew Fair, but nothing of this is mentioned in Dorothy's brief Journal summary of the period between returning from France and going north for Wordsworth's October marriage. She clearly felt confident about the Lambs, however, and her 'wrote to Miss Lamb' of 9 January 1803 was apparently to ask Miss Lamb to get a dictionary for her which John Wordsworth was to include in a box to be sent north. Dorothy's Journal stops the following week; it has overlapped by a few months Mary Lamb's first extant writing: those two letters of 1802 to her new friend, Sarah Stoddart. Mary was thirty-seven, and although she says in her first letter of July, 'I am always a miserable letter writer, and I feel the want, in writing to a new friend of being able to talk of the days "O lang syne",' she is no novice. Her second letter of September offers a vivid glimpse of Sarah's visit and Mary's mock despair after it; her account of their Saturday night marketing rivals anything in Lamb's first great essay of the previous February, 'The Londoner'. This is Mary:

My poor head is just now full of the memory of our walks together - driving along the Strand so fast (lest the scotch broth should be spoiled in our absence) we were ashamed of shewing of red faces at your friend's in westminster, or bustling down Fleet-Market-in-all-its-glory of a saturday night, admiring the stale peas and co'lly flowers and cheap'ning small bits of mutton and veal for our sunday's dinner's, returning home in all haste, to be scolded for not laying the cloth in time for supper (albeit it being nine o'clock) and then chidden for laughing in an unseemly manner. I have never half liked being at your brothers rooms since you left them: - they sit and preach about learned matters, while I turn over an old book, and when I am weary look in the window in the corner where you and your work-bag used to be, and wish for you to rout them up and make us all alive.

(Marrs, II, 90)

Mary's third extant letter is to 'My dear Miss Wordsworth', written 9 July 1803. It begins in politeness with congratulations to the Wordsworths on the birth of John, but soon moves, in Mary's wont, to anecdote:

We went last week with Southey & Rickman & his sister to Sadlers Wells, the lowest and most London-like of all our London amusements - the entertainments were Goody Two Shoes, Jack the Giant-Killer, and *Mary of Buttermere*! poor Mary was very happily married at the end of the piece, to a sailor her former sweetheart - we had a prodigious fine view of her fathers house in the vale of Buttermere - mountains very like large haycocks, and a lake like nothing at all: if you had been with us, would you have laughed the whole time like Charles & Miss Rickman or gone to sleep as Southey and Rickman did.

(Marrs, II, 117)

Wordsworth must have noted this laughter; the following year he told the story of the Maid of Buttermere in *The Prelude* and was severe at its having become a melodrama at Sadler's Wells:

too holy theme for such a place,
And doubtless treated with irreverence

(VII, 318-9, 1805)

Mary Lamb was serious as well as amusing in her letters. Here, in September 1803, trying to persuade Sarah Stoddart to be more open with her new sister-in-law, Isabella Moncrieff, she declares her own regard for Isabella: 'while she was eating a bit of cold mutton in our kitchen, we had a serious conversation, from the frankness of her manner I am convinced she is a person I could make a friend of why should not you?' And then Mary recollects from her own past the misery of life in the one house for her aunt and mother ('who though you do not know it, is always in my poor head and heart') because of lack of frankness and of 'looking into each others characters at first' (Marrs, II, 124). Indeed, the entire Stoddart family appeared to want, in Mary's view, the 'free communication of letters and opinions, just as they arise' that was the groundwork of Charles' and Mary's friendship. The Lambs, reading all letters in common, could sit and write at the same letter, as Wordsworth and Dorothy could, and Mary Lamb could hardly know as early as 1803 of the domestic harmony in the Wordsworth household when she told Sarah that she thought of herself as 'the only woman in the world, who could live with a brothers wife, and make a real friend of her . . .' (*ibid*)

If through some notion of saving Mary pain, her friends never mentioned the catastrophe of her mother's murder, Mary herself could approach the springs of grief for the sake of others. When the Lambs first heard of the sudden death by drowning of John Wordsworth in February 1805, Lamb wrote at once to Wordsworth 'with difficulty', Mary 'crying by me', but, by May, Mary was able to write to Dorothy to tell her that the memory of the dead would become in time sweet and a 'real and everlasting source of comfort'. She even put this message into verse for Dorothy envisaging Coleridge, absent in Malta, as the bringer of comfort:

He'd tell them that their brother dead
 When years have passed o'er their head,
 Will be remember'd with such holy,
 True, & perfect melancholy,
 That ever this lost brother John
 Will be their hearts companion.
 His voice they'll always hear, his face they'll always see,
 There's nought in life so sweet as such a memory.

The restraint of rhyme was probably valued. Mary seemed generally to withdraw from uninhibited expression. Sarah Stoddart's mother appears to have suffered from breakdown or a bout of insanity, and Mary, in November 1805, very strongly advised tenderness in the treatment of her, a quality 'never' to be found in a hired nurse, though 'they are good kind of people'. On the heels of this advice she wrote again, fearing that she had given offence and asking forgiveness:

. . . but I have entered very deeply into your affliction with regard to your Mother, & while I was writing, the many poor souls in the kind of desponding way she is in whom I have seen, came afresh into my mind, & all the mismanagement with which I have seen them treated was strong in my mind, & I wrote under a forcible impulse which I could not at that time resist, but I have fretted so much about it since, that I think it is the last time I will ever let my pen run away with me.

(Marrs, II, 186)

Her pen continues to run away with her in the very same letter when Mary reveals that, since her last illness,

I have lost all self confidence in my own actions, & one cause of my low spirits is that I never feel satisfied with any think I do - a perception of not being in a sane state perpetually haunts me.

(*ibid*)

Soon after this, in early 1806, Charles and Mary were writing the *Tales from Shakespeare* for Mrs Godwin's Juvenile Library. Mary, unlike Dorothy Wordsworth, was now writing for publication - though her name, no doubt at her own wish, was not attached to Lamb's *Tales* for the first six editions, despite her writing fourteen tales to Lamb's six. The nature of the task meant that her pen could not easily run away with her. The histories were omitted, the tragedies were done by Charles and Mary could offer Sarah Stoddart a comfortable picture of shared literary endeavour:

Charles has written Macbeth & Othello, King Lear & has begun Hamlet. you would like to see us as we often sit writing on one table (but not on one cushion sitting) like Hermia & Helena in the Midsummer's Nights Dream, or rather like an old literary Darby and Joan. I taking snuff & he groaning all the while & saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished and then he finds out he has made something of it.

(Marrs, II, 228-9)

The *Tales* were for children or, more particularly, Mary writes in the *Preface*, for young ladies 'because boys are generally permitted the use of their fathers' libraries at a much earlier age than girls are, they frequently having the best scenes of Shakespear by heart before their sisters are permitted to look into this "manly book".' This readership dictates Mary's alterations: the entire sexual and corrupt underworld of Vienna is omitted from *Measure for Measure*, to be replaced by 'complaints . . . everyday made to the Duke by the parents of young ladies in Vienna, that their daughters had been seduced from their protection, and were living as the companions of single men'. Decadent, impudent Lucio is simply a kindly friend, and the Duke perforce has to throw off his own friar's disguise. Isabella, her attitudes left ambiguous by Shakespear, knows her own mind in Mary's Tale and 'with grateful joy' becomes Duchess of Vienna, while her example works 'a complete reformation among the young ladies of that city'. Plot complexities are omitted if possible: Malvolio, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew have no existence in Olivia's household in *Twelfth Night*, nor Bottom, Peter Quince, or the play, 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; there are no casket scenes in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Dogberry, Verges and the Watch in *Much Ado* become a single efficient magistrate who puts right in half a sentence the course of justice. In *Cymbeline* the mole on Imogen's breast is transferred to her neck and her 'neat cookery' for her unknown brothers in the cave becomes almost a rebuke to the young ladies of the present: 'for though it is not the custom now for young women of high birth to understand cookery, it was then, and Imogen excelled in this useful art'. *The Tempest's* Prince Ferdinand was 'almost dying with fatigue' at the piling of the heavy logs. 'Kings' sons', Mary commented, 'not being used to laborious work'. Ariel almost loses his bright elusiveness in the *Tales*. The isle in which he will have his liberty becomes less a place 'full of noises / Sounds and sweet airs' than a recognisable English park. The mystery of his freedom disappears in Mary's added images, albeit charming: Ariel 'was always longing to enjoy his free liberty, to wander uncontrolled in the air, like a wild bird, under green trees, among pleasant fruits, and sweet-smelling flowers'. He has the virtues of an utterly loyal modern servant and goes with the ship to Naples to ensure a safe voyage. *All's Well* was difficult. Lamb said, in June 1806, that Mary was 'just stuck fast in [it]'. She complains of having to set forth so many female characters in boy's clothes. She begins to think Shakspear must have wanted imagination. - I to encourage her, for she often faints in the prosecution of her great work, flatter her with telling her how well such a play & such a play is done - But she is stuck fast & I have been obliged to promise to assist her' (Marrs, II, 233). Lamb's promised assistance was probably not needed; he must have been thinking of a different play: there are no female characters in *All's Well* who don boy's clothes. But one could easily be stuck in *All's Well*; it was the play, Mary told Sarah in June 1806, 'which teazed me more than all the rest put together. They sometimes plague me as bad as your *Lovers* do you'. (Marrs, II, 235). Mary felt the need to explain Bertram's lack of love for Helena:

Bertram never knew how sensible a lady Helena was, else perhaps he would not have been so regardless of her; and seeing her every day, he had entirely overlooked her beauty, a face we are accustomed to see constantly losing the effect which is caused by the first sight of beauty or of plainness.

Shakespeare more profoundly leaves love, both its lack and its growth, unexplained. Yet the complicated plot, in Mary's words, 'perplexed and unmanageable', is managed and recounted clearly (the Parolles plot is, of course, omitted) and Mary wrote to Sarah Stoddart on 2 July 1806:

I am in good spirits just at this present time for Charles has been reading over the *Tale* I told you plagued me so much and he thinks it one of the very best. It is "All's Well that Ends Well". You must not mind the many wretchedly dull letters I have sent you for indeed I cannot help it, my mind is so *dry* always after poring over my work all day. But it will soon be over.

I am cooking a shoulder of Lamb (Hazlitt dines with us). it will be ready at two O'clock if you can pop in and eat a bit with us.

(Marrs, II, 237)

The *Tales* still sell well; they have a real narrative drive; the twists of drama become chronological story and characters who exist for light and shade and commentary simply disappear. Salerio and Solanio, those twin-like gentleman who begin *The Merchant of Venice* with elaborate and beautiful interpretations of Antonio's melancholy, give way to Mary's stark and grand beginning: 'Shylock, the Jew, lived at Venice: he was an usurer' *Much Ado* starts like a fairy tale, 'There lived at the palace at Messina two ladies, whose names were Hero and Beatrice' Most of all Mary has tried to give young readers a glimpse of what she calls 'the wild poetic garden' of Shakespeare's language. Here is her curious way of both breaking up and retaining the blank verse rhythms:

'If I did love you as my master does', said Viola, 'I would make me a willow cabin at your gates, and call upon your name. I would write complaining sonnets on Olivia, and sing them in the dead of the night; your name should sound among the hills, and I would make Echo, the babbling gossip of the air, cry out *Olivia*. O you should not rest between the elements of earth and air, but you should pity me'. 'You might do much', said Olivia: 'What is your parentage?' Viola replied, 'Above my fortune, yet my state is well. I am a gentleman'. Olivia now reluctantly dismissed Viola, saying 'Go to your master'

To be continued

On Saturday, 3rd October, 1987, the Society's meeting was devoted to informal Bicentenary Tributes, of which the following was the second.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

Stella Pigrome

Mary Russell Mitford was born at Alresford in Hampshire on 16 December 1787. Her father, Dr George Mitford, of Bertram Castle in Northumberland, was, it is said, '... a robust, showy, wasteful profligate, ... a schemer in bubble companies, a gambler in London whist clubs', who quickly disposed of his own fortune, but acquired a second one of £28,000 when in 1785 he married

Mary Russell, a plain lady, ten years his senior, daughter of Dr Richard Russell, Rector of Overton and Ash for 60 years. However, that went the way of the first, and by the time their daughter was 10 years old the family were living within the rules of the King's Bench. But Dr Mitford, being a gambler, took young Mary to buy a lottery ticket. She chose a number whose digits added up to her age and won £20,000, which naturally became the property of her father. He bought an estate at Grasely near Reading, replacing the old manor house by a modern 'Bertram House', and carried on as before. But the debts mounted, and in 1820 Bertram House was given up in favour of a small cottage at Three Mile Cross not far away. But from 1810 when her first collection of poems had been published until his death in 1842 Mary slaved with her pen to the detriment of her health to keep her father in the style to which he was unfortunately accustomed. Her mother died in 1830.

In 1837 Lord Melbourne granted Mary a pension of £100 a year, and after Dr Mitford's death a subscription list, headed by Queen Victoria, was raised to clear his debts and add a little to her pension, so that she was assured of an income above absolute penury.

One benefit accruing to Mary from her lottery prize was a short period at school. A few years earlier Jane Austen and her sister had attended a school in the gateway of Reading Abbey kept by a Mrs Latournelle, English in spite of her name. She seems to have looked after the domestic side, leaving the academic responsibilities to a Miss Pitts, who married a French emigre, Mr St Quintin, and moved the school to 22 Hans Place in London. It was here that Mary went, and did very well, winning prizes and studying Latin.

The St Quintins gave parties for their fellow exiles on Saturday evenings, which amused Mary: 'Wonderful and admirable it was, to see how the Dukes and duchesses, marshals and marquises, chevaliers and bishops bore up under their unparalled reverses! How they laughed and talked and flirted and squabbled, constant to their high heels, their rouge and their furbelows, to their old liaisons, their polished sarcasms and their cherished rivalries'.

In Hans Place a crocodile of young ladies 'graded according to size rather than preference' walked round the square every day, and into the square garden, to which the headmistress had a key. Miss Mitford describes it. 'It was the very prime and flower of May ...The half-hour's liberty was worth an age. The gay blossoms of the lilac, the laburnum, the double peach, and the double cherry, mingled their vivid colours with the tender green of the young leaves. -The morning had been rainy, and the light drops still glittered in the grass, the birds twittered among the branches, the bright sunshine and the balmy air shed their sweet influence around us.'

The next house, No 23, was occupied for a time by Jane Austen's brother Henry, and staying with him in 1813 she visited a young friend at the school. 'She looks very well, and her hair is done up with an elegance to do credit to any education'.

I was shewn upstairs into a drawing-room, where she came to me, and the appearance of the room, so totally unschool-like, amused my very much; it was full of all the modern elegancies - & if it had not been for some naked Cupids over the Mantlepiece, which must be a fine study for Girls, one should never have smelt instruction.

In 1860, Winifred Watson, describing the two houses Nos 22 and 23, says that in spite of alterations an upstairs room at No 22 still has a pretty carved fireplace in the Adam style, besides an old basket grate with two hobs, so perhaps the Cupids are still there.

Mary left school at 15 in 1802 and a few years later was taken by her father to visit their Northumbrian connections, where she had a taste of the gaities of fashionable society.

You would have been greatly amused at my having my hair cut by Lord Charles's *friseur*, who is by occupation a joiner, and actually attended with an apron covered with glue, and a rule in his hand instead of scissors.

Mary was less amused to find that her father had gone off to Reading electioneering, and she had to summon him back to escort her home.

As a schoolgirl, Mary 'was short for her age; and ... in very plain English, decidedly fat. Her face, of which the expression was kind, gentle and intelligent, ought to have been handsome, for the features were all separately good ... but from some almost imperceptible disproportion ... the beauty had evanesced She showed in her countenance and in her mild self-possession that she was no ordinary child. And with her sweet smile, her gentle temper, her animated conversation, her keen enjoyment of life, and her incomparable voice ... there were few of the prettiest children of her age who won so much love and admiration ... And except that her hair became white at an early age, few persons, in passing through so many vicissitudes of life, ever altered so little either in character or appearance'.

Before meeting her friend, Sir William Elford, she wrote: 'you will find me just the same plain, awkward, blushing thing whom you profess to remember ... I must not forget to prepare you for the deplorable increase of my beautiful person. My dear friend, it is really terrible. Papa talks of taking down the doors, and widening the chairs, and new hanging the five barred gates, and plagues me so that any one but myself would grow thin with fretting; but I can't fret. I only laugh, and that makes it worse'.

On moving to the small cottage at Three Mile Cross which was to be her home for 30 years, she said it was 'an excellent lesson in condensation ... I expect we shall be much benefited by this squeeze, though at present it sits upon us as uneasily as tight stays, and is just as awkward-looking. Indeed, my great objection to a small room always was its extreme unbecomingness to one of my enormity. I really seem to fill it - the parlour looks all me'.

In later life, Mrs Acton Tindal said of her: 'Time touched her very tenderly. The features she called hard and coarse always remained womanly, and early became venerable ... There was a very pathetic expression about her mouth, and in her large, slowly moving, sad grey eyes, though they lighted up now and then with a glancing gleam of the drollest humour. She always looked fully at the person she was addressing for a time, but they had an odd trick of drifting aside as if she were gazing far beyond the walls that surrounded her ...'

Charles Kingsley said of her in old age: 'I can never forget the little figure rolled up in two chairs in the little Swallowfield room, packed round

with books up to the ceiling - the little figure with clothes on of no recognized or recognizable pattern; and somewhere, out of the upper end of the heap, gleaming under a great deep globular brow, two such eyes as I never perhaps saw in any other Englishwoman ... the beautiful speech which came out of that ugly (it was that) face, and the glitter and depth too of the eyes, like live coals - perfectly honest the while ...' (One is reminded of Procter's description of Lamb's eyes looking as if they could pick up needles and pins).

Perhaps because she was so irretrievably 'vexatiously "dumpty" ' - 'Sancho Panza in petticoats' Miss Landon called her - Miss Mitford never aspired to be fashionable. Mrs Acton Tindal says of her: 'She was curiously, almost unfortunately, ignorant about all matters of dress, and in general perfectly indifferent on the subject. Yet now and then an occasion would arise which she believed required some headdress more elaborate (than the simple motherly cap, trimmed with grey or white, in which her friends knew her best.) When this sense of social duty oppressed her she found it very difficult to arrive at any successful arrangement. Something would go wrong with the unnatural finery'.

Mrs S.C. Hall tells how she went to an evening party 'most unbecomingly dressed in a striped satin something, neither high nor low, with very short sleeves, for her arms were white and finely formed. She wore a large yellow turban, which added considerably to the size of her head. She had evidently bought the hideous thing *en route*, and put it on in the carriage, for pinned at the back was a somewhat large card on which were written, in somewhat large letters, these astounding words - "Very Chaste. Only Five and Threepence".' When Mrs Hall first met her, she was disappointed '... when a stout little lady, tightened up in a shawl, rolled into the parlour in Newman Street; her short petticoats showing wonderfully strong leather boots, and a little black coalscuttle bonnet adding to the effect of her natural rotundity'.

When Haydon painted her, she was disappointed in the 'cook-maid thing' he made of her, and commissioned Lucas to do another portrait. She took very ill advice from some friends 'and instead of wearing her simple cap, and soft lace cape folded over a dark dress, Miss Mitford was induced to accept the loan of a large black velvet hat with a plume of white ostrich feathers, and a gorgeous cloak of gentianella blue, lined with white satin and trimmed with fur'. The artist produced an excellent likeness of the head and face, but so fretted over these 'sumptuous and unnatural accessories' that he cancelled the portrait, and painted one of her father instead.

She once got her father to send her a pair of gloves from town, but even Miss Mitford could sense there was something wrong about them: 'Pray do people wear their hands prayer fashion in a leather muff, with thumbs and five fingers! It must be so, for you never could mean those machines that you sent me for gloves! You fitted them upon the shopman, did you? I really should have thought you had tried them upon an elephant'.

It seems unusual for a daughter to write to her father in such terms in the early 19th century, but Mary was a precocious and intelligent child, who at the age of three would perch on the breakfast table to read the Whig newspaper to her father's friends, and was very much the equal companion of her parents.

Although Mary never married, she was not without offers. The new owner of Bertram House was a Mr Elliot, of whom she says: 'But for the ill-luck of Mr Elliot's having a wife, I need not move at all, since but for that misfortune, he says he would have had me himself. I wish you had seen him when he made this declaration. Imagine a little, mean-looking Bond Street shopkeeper of sixty-five, with a Methodist face, all bile and wrinkles, and sadness, and a spruce wig in fine curls, shining like a horse-chestnut! I would certainly have married him, though, but for the aforesaid impediment. I would take anybody that would marry me to these walls and trees'.

She once had a letter from a young Scot who had apparently fallen in love with her writing. In a fine flight of fancy he imagined her storm-stead and obliged to seek shelter with him and his mother. 'Oh, delicious! To see you sitting at the fireside, cracking with my mother, while I would be ransacking the presses for everything drinkable and eatable. In such dreams I am for ever indulging. Dear madam excuse my freedom, but I love you with all my soul. It seems that he was writing at Hogmanay and was somewhat elevated in spirit at the time; at any rate, nothing came of it.

Gossipy friends seem to have thought that there was something in her correspondence with her elderly friend Sir William Elford, but she said, 'I shall not marry Sir W. Elford, for which there is a remarkably good reason, the said Sir W. having no sort of desire to marry me; neither shall I marry anybody. I know myself well enough to be sure that if any man were silly enough to wish such a thing, and I silly enough to say *yes*, a timely fit of wisdom would come upon me and I should run away from the church door.' She adds that 'marrying a favourite correspondent would be like killing the goose that laid the golden eggs'. She also tells Sir William that 'Love never flourishes so luxuriantly as when distance and difference of fortune or station give full scope to the imagination. A castle or a cottage; a prince or a peasant; a Swede or an Italian, may all give full play to the poetry of the heart. But to fall in love with a stupid man who lives in the next town in a brick house with a walled garden - whose father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, aunts and brothers you have been tired of all your life - to fall in love with such a man as that is really more than impossible!'

Tiresome as Dr Mitford was, and aware of his faults as Mary was (he distressed her very much by his resentful behaviour over her literary friendships) Mary never wavered in her devotion to him, and drove herself desperately hard to earn money. She contributed copiously to annuals and magazines, including the *London*, and became famous with the sketches of country life which were collected in 5 volumes from 1824 to 1832. Campbell had first rejected them for the *New Monthly Magazine*, as beneath its dignity, but must have been rather sorry when he saw the circulation of the *Ladies' Magazine* rise from 250 to 2000.

Mary, however, saw herself as a dramatist, and wrote a number of plays, some of which did well on the stage. Macready played the lead in *Julian* in 1823, *Foscari* came in 1826, and two years later *Rienzi*, her greatest success. Macready said it was 'a wonderful tragedy - an extraordinary tragedy for a woman to have written'. Her friends kept this comment from her. 'The men always make that reservation', said Mrs Hofland, 'They cramp us, my dear, and then reproach us with our lameness'.

After the success of *Rienzi*, Mary became 'a little grand and stilted ... receiving those who wished to be introduced to her seated *en-reine*'. Just as well, perhaps, because 'the roly-poly figure, when seated, did not appear really short.'

She was lionised and moved in exalted circles. At a dinner her health was drunk with three times three, toasted by Lord Lansdowne, amplified in a stentorian voice by the Duke of Kent, and she was taken in to another dinner by the Duke of Sussex:

Nothing could have exceeded the civility of that royal porpoise. Never surely did man eat, drink, or swear so much, or talk such bad English. He is a fine exemplification of the difference between speaking and talking; for his speeches, except that they are mouthy and wordy and commonplace, and entirely without ideas, are really not much amiss.

Mary met and corresponded with a large part of literary London, Coleridge encouraged her, but when she sent him her poem *Christina* for corrections it was annoying to find he had cut out a reference to Scott - her Mother was very indignant on her behalf.

The St Quintins were assisted in their school by Miss Rowden, who wrote poems admired by Miss Mitford including 'The Pleasures of Friendship'. Mary once took her to hear Coleridge lecture on poets and critics. He had been more than usually brilliant, and Mary had just got Miss Rowden, who was determined to dislike him, to admit that he really was tolerable, when he began: 'There are certain poems - or things called poems - which have obtained considerable fame - or that which is called fame in the world. I mean the Pleasures of Tea-drinking, and the Pleasures of Wine-drinking, and the Pleasures of Love, and the Pleasurers of Nonsense, and the Pleasures of Hope.' To Miss Mitford's relief, he stopped short of the Pleasures of Friendship, since his censure was apparently aimed at Campbell.

Of Campbell she says: 'Oh, he is such a pretty little, delicate finical gentleman! He would look well in a mob cap, hemming a pocket handkerchief, or in a crape turban, flirting a fan'.

At a dinner at Talfourd's she met Wordsworth: 'A venerable old man, delightfully mild and placid, and most kind to me'. She also heard about the Wordsworths from Mrs Hofland, who said they 'never dine. They hate such doings. When they are hungry, they go to the cupboard and eat, and really it is much the best way. There is Mr Wordsworth, who will live for a month on cold beef, and the next on cold bacon - and my husband will insist on a hot dinner every day'.

Crabb Robinson met Miss Mitford at the Talfourds', and at the Lambs'. He calls her 'the dramatist and poet, a squat person but with a benevolent and intelligent smile', and 'pleasing looks but no words'. (December 1824)

The Rev John Mitford, at one time editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and a cousin of Mary's, called at Colebrook Row just after Mary had left, after consulting the Lambs on some dramatic reading for a new play.

John Payne Collier met her at dinner at William Harness's; the Lambs came

in the evening, and when someone described as a white witch the white-clothed Quakeress who had once lived in the same Pentonville Street as Lamb, he said 'No; if a witch at all, as she lived at the *last house* in our street, she must be the Witch of End-door'.

In 1822 Mary wrote to Sir William Elford: 'do you ever see the *London Magazine*? Charles Lamb's articles, signed Elia, are incomparably the finest specimens of English prose in the language. The humour is as delicate as Addison's, and far more piquant'.

To the same correspondent, in 1824, on the publication of *Our Village* she says 'Charles Lamb, (the matchless Elia of the *London Magazine*) says nothing so fresh and characteristic has appeared for a long while. It is not over modest to say this: but who would not be proud of the praise of such a *proser*?'.

She wrote once it was her ambition 'to be tall, pale, thin, have dark eyes, and write *gracefully* in prose'.

Although Nature denied her the first four wishes, she can be said to have achieved the last.

Apart from her literary interests, Mary was devoted to her pets, and to her garden. Gardeners are 'constantly calling plants after me, and sending me one of the first cuttings as presents. There is a dahlia now selling at ten guineas a root under my name ...' She sold one of her own seeding dahlias ('white, of the most exquisite shape and cleanness, tipped with puce colour') for twenty pounds.

One correspondent and great friend whom she met when on an expedition to see the Giraffes and the Diorama was Elizabeth Barrett, to whom she presented her famous spaniel Flush. Mary sent Miss Barrett some flowers, wishing she could see the garden where they grew. 'Nothing can well be imagined more beautiful than this little bit of ground is now. Huge masses of lupins (say fifty or sixty spiral spikes), some white, some lilac; immense clumps of the enamelled Siberian larkspur, glittering like some enormous Chinese jar; the white and asure blossoms of the variegated monkshood; flags of all colours; roses of every shade ... and the oriental poppy, like an orange lamp (for it really seems to have light within it) shining amidst the deeper greens; above all the pyramid of geraniums, beautiful beyond all beauty, rising in front of our garden room, whilst each corner is filled with the same beautiful flower, and the whole air is perfumed by the delicious honeysuckle ...'

Harriet Martineau is one of the few people who are not wholly in favour of Miss Mitford. She writes: 'I must say that personally I did not like her so well as I liked her works. The charming *bonhomie* of her writings appeared at first in her conversation and manners; but there were other things which presently impaired its charm ... her habit of flattery, and the twin habit of disparagement of others. I never knew her respond to any act or course of conduct which was morally lofty. She could not believe in it, nor of course enjoy it'.

Miss Martineau did not know Miss Mitford very well, and her reading of her character may have been unjustified, but for all their liveliness, Miss Mitford's letters do sometimes display a sharpness of tongue. Reviewing

Miss Porden, author of 'Coeur de Lion', to a correspondent, she says: 'She's a very pleasant young woman, and her conversation is easy and natural. She is ugly, of course. All literary ladies are so. I never met one in my life (except Miss Jane Porter, and she is rather *passée*) that might not have served for a scarecrow to keep the birds from the cherries'.

She tells how the candidate at a Reading election, Tyshe Palmer, and her portly father rode side by side through the town to cries of 'Fish and Flesh for ever!' Presumably the voters had got the candidate's name wrong, but you can understand the comparison when you read Mary's description of him: '... like a tall hop-pole, or a long fishing rod, or anything that is all length and no substance: three or four yards of brown thread would be as much like him as anything, if one could contrive to make it stand upright ...'

At first Mary Mitford seems not to have liked Jane Austen's novels very much. But she has been much frowned upon for two comments on Jane which some consider malicious, though in each case, she is merely reporting the opinion of others. Her mother, who had lived many years near Steventon, she says recalls her as 'the prettiest, silliest, most affected, husband-hunting butterfly she ever remembers'. As for the second, 'A friend of mine who visits her now, says that she has stiffened into the most perpendicular, precise, taciturn piece of "single blessedness" that ever existed, and that, till *Pride and Prejudice* showed what a precious gem was hidden in that unbending case, she was no more regarded in Society than a poker or a fire-screen, or any other thin, upright piece of wood or iron that fills the corner in peace and quietness. The case is very different now: she is still a poker - but a poker of whom everyone is afraid ...'

On the first point it is often noted that Miss Mitford moved away from the neighbourhood when Jane was only 7 years old - but she didn't go far, and often returned to visit friends, so she could have known Jane as a girl. On the second point Miss Mitford has the grace to admit that the friend was the sister of a man involved in a lawsuit with Jane's brother, so may have been prejudiced. But though the opinion may have been another's the expression of it sounds remarkably like Miss Mitford's own.

Despite her criticism of Jane Austen personally, Miss Mitford came to admire her work, and said she could never visit Bath 'without the tenderest recollections of her exquisite *Persuasion*'.

Her father's incessant demands for money constantly strained Mary's resources, although she commanded good prices for her work. It is rather sad to think that it has all sunk virtually without trace, apart from *Our Village*, which still seems to be in print. It initiated a genre of descriptive writing which has largely died out today, but it is charming and agreeable to read and preserves a way of life that has almost vanished. The rural occupations and methods she describes have mostly been replaced. Her village shop was the prototype of many that appeared in novels and other books about the country: 'Like other village shops, multifarious as a bazaar; a repository for bread, shoes, tea, cheese, tape, ribands and bacon; for everything in short, except the one particular thing that you happen to want at the moment, and will be sure not to find.' It has been replaced by the chain grocer and the country supermarket.

Many of her hedgerows have disappeared, and no one now dares go nutting, or primrosing or violeting for fear of presecution by conservationists.

Her description of the Hans Place garden and her own cottage garden must stand for the descriptive aspects of *Our Village*, but I can't end without giving some examples of her character drawing.

Among the haymakers Mary describes is 'our respectable neighbour, Aaron Keep, the shoemaker, who came to help us and to watch the weather. He is an excellent person, is Aaron Keep, and he came, as he said, to help us; and I daresay he would have been very sorry if the hay had been quite spoiled; nevertheless, having predicted that it would rain, I cannot help thinking he considered it a little hard that no rain came. The least little shower, just to confirm his prognostics, would have made him happy, and he kept watching the clouds, and hoping and foretelling a thunderstorm; but the clouds were obstinate, and the more he predicted that a storm would come, the more it stayed away'.

One of the outstanding characters of *Our Village* is the carpenter's daughter, Lizzy. When you read of the 'dear little girl' sliding 'her pretty hand into yours', you may fear you are in for a bit of sentiment. But not with Lizzy.

... a child three years old, according to the register, but six in size and strength and intellect, in power and in self-will. She manages everybody in the place, her school-mistresses included; turns the wheeler's children out of their own little cart, and makes them draw her; seduces cakes and lollpops from the very shop window; makes the lazy carry her, the silent talk to her, the grave romp with her: does anything she pleases; is absolutely irresistible ... Another part of her charm is her singular beauty. Together with a good deal of the character of Napoleon, she has something of his square, sturdy upright form, with the finest limbs in the world, a complexion purely English, a round laughing face, sunburnt and rosy, large, merry, blue eyes, curling brown hair, and a wonderful play of countenance. She has the imperial attitudes too, and loves to stand with her hands behind her, or folded over her bosom; and sometimes, when she has a little touch of shyness, she clasps them together on the top of her head, pressing down her shining curls, and looking so exquisitely pretty!'

And Lizzy in action, in quest of cowslips:

Through the farmyard, Lizzy; over the gate; never mind the cows; they are quiet enough. - I don't mind 'em, said Miss Lizzy, boldly and truly and with a proud, affronted air, displeased at being thought to mind anything, and showing by her attitude and manner some design of proving her courage by an attack on the largest of the herd, in the shape of a pull by the tail. I don't mind 'em. - I know you don't, Lizzy; but let them alone, and don't chase the turkey-cock.

When Miss Mitford was making a bid for success as a playwright, she wrote:

I do so love to ride in a pony chaise. If my *Foscari* were to succeed I should be tempted to keep one myself. You know, of everything that I

want or wish to say 'if *Foscari* succeeds'. I said so the other day about a new straw bonnet, and then about a white geranium, and then about a pink sash, and then about a straw workbasket - all in the course of one street.

It is a sad irony that although she did have a pony cart after moving to the neighbouring village of Swallowfield in 1851, Mary was thrown from it, and the serious spinal and other injuries which resulted probably hastened her death four years later. Her lively and entertaining letters were first published in the 1870s, but are hard to come by, like her other works; and she would probably be no more than a name in the reference books if it were not for the perennial attraction of that minor classic, *Our Village*.

BOOK REVIEWS

Charles De Paolo: *Coleridge's Philosophy of Social Reform*
American University Studies, 1987

Charles De Paolo's book argues that Coleridge's political and social thought was consistently 'nonviolent and nonpartisan' (p.71). He identifies this consistency in Coleridge's 'conservative humanism' (p.3), and he explores it from the revolutionary 1790s through to Coleridge's attitudes to major social issues of the early nineteenth century: child labour reform; national education; the emancipation of slaves; the continuing debate about parliamentary reform. Crucial to this development, De Paolo says, was Coleridge's reading of Kant's *Critique of Practical Wisdom*: this offered him an epistemological framework for his Christianity from which he derived the lasting 'humanistic imperative' of his thinking (p.38).

It was Coleridge's response to 'natural rights philosophy' that initiated his career as a social philosopher in the 1790s. The opening pages of the book trace this 'Jacobin tradition', as De Paolo terms it, back through Rousseau to Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*. In broad outline, De Paolo argues that the betrayal of the rights of man during the revolutionary terror of 1793-4 encouraged Coleridge's individual but 'organic development', as a response to changing circumstances: 'The progressive aspects of his thought'. De Paolo says, 'the alterations he thought necessary to meet the exigencies of his times - took the form of a progression ... from a nonpartisan position sympathetic to democracy, to a nonpartisan, conservative position' (p.73). De Paolo is therefore able to maintain that Coleridge's evolving social thought was consistent and, moreover, that he was never an apostate to his early radical opinions: 'Since he was always a nonpartisan, any charge of apostasy would ... be irrelevant, simply because he was never formally committed to any one political affiliation' (p.79).

This is an attractive version of Coleridge's career, and it endorses Coleridge's ideal self-image promoted, for instance, in *Biographia* and also in his essay 'Enthusiasm for an Ideal World' in *The Friend*. But in another sense it leaves Coleridge floating free of any significant commitments, 'insulated' - as Coleridge liked to put it himself - from any formal involvement with contemporary affairs.

The truth, I think, was otherwise. Coleridge may have become De Paolo's exemplary social conservative' (p.9) in later life, but his earlier self

took bearings from radical dissent and the campaign for parliamentary reform in the 1790s - as De Paolo acknowledges (p.244). That change was not a matter of 'nonpartisan' evolution, as De Paolo argues, but an embattled shift of personal, political, and religious allegiances. This point emerges clearly when one considers De Paolo's valuable discussion of Coleridge and education:

Although many Anglicans acknowledged the need for reform, they were provoked, nonetheless, by the proliferation on all levels of secular and of Non-conformist schools. In later life, Coleridge, too, recognised the need for reform and, like many of his contemporaries, was alarmed by non-Anglican innovations in education, especially by those on the university level.

Now this may be true of Coleridge's attitude to 'the worm of Nonconformity' (De Paolo's phrase, p. 128) after 1811. But it presents a contrast to the Coleridge who in January 1798 preached an oppositionist sermon as candidate for the unitarian ministry at Shrewsbury and who, five years earlier, had supported the unitarian fellow of Jesus College, William Frend, at his trial by Cambridge University. For myself, I find it hard to reconcile Coleridge's later attitude to nonconformity with De Paolo's claims for his 'consistency'. Coleridge's hostility to religious dissent, as De Paolo shows, was bound up with the 'perceived relationship between Nonconformist educational activities and the rise of Jacobinism in England' (p.122), a 'relationship' in which Coleridge had once participated as unitarian political lecturer in 1795.

I had better say straightaway that I disagree with De Paolo's account of Coleridge in that year: I find no 'caustic disillusionment with (revolutionary) violence' (pp. 29-30) in Coleridge's statements at this time, nor do I believe that Coleridge ever 'derided' Robespierre's 'bloodthirsty mania' (pp. 30, 85). My own feeling is that Coleridge achieved a human understanding of terrorism, in his political lectures especially, by exploring Robespierre's character and motives. And it is on this point that I suspect De Paolo's ideal analysis neglects Coleridge's genuine feeling for and with the poor and the oppressed.

De Paolo mentions the 'reputed exploitation of the poor' (p.5) as if it were a matter for doubt and, later, 'the so-called Peterloo Massacre' (p.34). In a similar vein De Paolo has Paine 'gushing' to George Washington in *The Rights of Man* (p.61), and he is happy to identify Gerrald, Muir, Palmer and Margarot as 'convicted seditious' (p.92), rather than the committed reformists and democrats who made up Coleridge's 'elect' in 1795. In that Coleridge identified with these men as a reformist himself, his decision to cut his approving reference to them on republishing *Conciones* in *The Friend* certainly 'neutralises' his earlier political opinions (as De Paolo says p.92). But I find it difficult to accept De Paolo's simultaneous claim that this excision reveals 'the underlying consistency of (Coleridge's) ... social thinking'.

'The oppressed feel and are restless', Coleridge warned his listeners at Bristol early in 1795: rather than 'abjuring' natural rights and violent revolution, as De Paolo suggests Coleridge relates genuine, widespread suffering to the threat of violent revolution by way of arguing for peaceful social change and political reform. Instead of adopting a 'nonpartisan' attitude in January 1796, Coleridge's 'prospectus' to

The Watchman announces that his 'chief objects (are) to co-operate'

with the WHIG CLUB in procuring a repeal of Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills, now passed into laws; and ... with the PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES, for obtaining a Right of Suffrage general and frequent.

Coleridge's self-alignment with the whig club and 'patriotic' societies such as the London Corresponding Society was explicitly - and publicly - declared. He may not have wished to own this in later life, but it has an evident bearing on the questionable 'consistency' of his social thinking in a longer perspective.

De Paolo argues that Coleridge's quarrel with 'natural rights philosophy' was rooted in the violent individualism that led to the failure of the French Revolution. It was his fear of 'Jacobin' violence that steered Coleridge towards conservatism and affected his later attitude to universal suffrage (p.195), and the emancipation of slaves: 'a too precipitous manumission could lead to popular riot on the scale of the French Revolution' (p.155). Most telling though, is De Paolo's account of Coleridge's later, ambivalent position on religious dissent and liberty of conscience:

though Coleridge believed in the sacred and inviolable character of man he did not believe that absolute rights could be awarded without Christian, and especially Anglican, enlightenment. (p.78)

- which is to say that Coleridge was no longer prepared to grant the 'sacred and inviolable character of man' that had formally sustained his politics and religious dissent in the 1790s. A disappointing fall off? Coleridge's change of heart is intelligible as a response to political and private circumstances, but for me the later Coleridge is impoverished by it.

All of which is to underline that these comments are only my own interpretation of events for which Charles De Paolo provides a detailed alternative. His book is most valuable for offering to relate Coleridge's later philosophy of social reform to his earlier opinions, and for providing an argument that strikes to the centre of Coleridge's life and complex achievement.

Nicholas Roe

University of St. Andrews

Anne K. Mellor ed., *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), ISBN 02 53204623 \$12.95

This collection of essays, first presented at the 1985 MLA conference in the USA, confirms the fact that far from being a monolithic enterprise, feminist literary criticism has many different identities and approaches. The first part of the book illustrates the themes of gender studies, examining how the creation of poetic identity is related to questions of masculinity and femininity, self-assertion and subjectivity, while the second fulfils more clearly the editor's stated aim of challenging 'the received notion of the Romantic canon as the 'Big Six' (Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats). Stuart Curran, for example, surveys the work of long-neglected poets such as Mary Robinson, Anna Barbauld and Jane Taylor, revealing the latter's

ironic, compassionate social comedy. There are two essays which deal with the relationship between William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Both represent new ways of evaluating Dorothy which avoid the pitfall of negatively assessing her life in terms of her brother's achievement. In 'The Cult of Domesticity: Dorothy and William Wordsworth at Grasmere', Kurt Heinzelman emphasizes the importance of Dorothy's creation of the domestic economy of Grasmere as an ideological underpinning of William Wordsworth's life and work. Susan J. Wolfson, in 'Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William', interprets Dorothy's prose writings and poems as stressing the primacy of the community over the individual, thereby functioning as a commentary upon William's preoccupation with the self. Both essays are significant for their use of non-canonical material such as biography and what are conventionally described as 'occasional' writings such as Dorothy's 'Narrative of George and Sarah Green', written to encourage local support for the survivors of a couple who died tragically on the Lakeside fells. The kind of approach which these essays exemplify offers exciting possibilities for a truly adequate assessment of Dorothy Wordsworth's life and work, and indirectly a model for the study of that other brother and sister of romanticism, Charles and Mary Lamb.

A significant contribution to such a study is represented in *Romanticism and Feminism* by Jane Aaron's "On Needle-Work": Protest and contradiction in Mary Lamb's Essay. The subject is an essay written by Mary Lamb in 1815, a plea to middle-class women to exchange sewing for more intellectual pursuits, thereby leaving such work in the hands of seamstresses who depended upon it for their livelihood. Mary Lamb knew herself what such work meant. She had been a mantua-maker in 1796 when she killed her mother and the 'harassing fatigues' of such employment were said to have contributed to her actions. Aaron indicates the various social and psychological factors which would have made writing for publication, always problematic for women in this period, even more of an obstacle for Mary Lamb. As the daughter of a servant she had been inculcated from an early age with notions of deference to authority, while the writing of the essay involved a confession that she had once been of the 'industrious sisterhood', a brave claim for a middle class woman of the period to make. But above all there was the factor of her madness which, but for Charles Lamb's intervention, would have left her the impoverished victim of late eighteenth-century medical science. In 1815 the act of writing, never mind publication, was still a potential threat to her mental equilibrium. Jane Aaron shows that Mary Lamb was thus more intensely aware that most of the way that women's lives in the early nineteenth century were conditioned by the often precarious identities of gender and class. It is this factor which makes the writing of 'On Needle-Work', in other circumstances a casual essay, an act of singular courage. Jane Aaron's sympathetic reading of the essay, and the range of her research, makes the prospect of her forthcoming book on Charles and Mary Lamb a very interesting one.

Gillian Russell

University of Salzburg

FIFTY YEARS AGO (Continued)

CLS Bulletin No. 38 (Fourth Year) With Supplement February 1939

The Fourth Annual Dinner will be held at the Mostyn Hotel, Portman Square, at

7 p.m. for 7.30. Evening Dress will be worn. Tickets (7/6d. excluding wines) ... Our President, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, M.A., LL.D. will preside.

(The January Meeting was 'On Grangerising Charles Lamb'). Mr. Rich, having arrived earlier with two capacious suitcases, fulfilled expectations by emptying therefrom ten bulky volumes, quarto, red leather, gilt edges, plus an additional index volume. These were his treasures, 'his midnight darlings', on exhibition for the delectation of fellow members ... he grangerised not with 'illustrations' but cuttings from newspapers, magazines and periodical literature ... There was no chronological order to his items, but an index to each volume and a combined index for the ten volumes ... otherwise all fugitive and more permanent records concerning Lamb would inevitably disappear... An amusing example from Cuba was shewn.

CLS Bulletin No. 39 (Fourth Year) With Two Supplements March 1939

(The first extract is from a review, the second from an obituary which immediately follows it.)

One hopes though that the misprints, and one or two slips, will be corrected in future editions.

We offer our sympathy to his relatives.

CLS Bulletin No. 40 (Fourth Year) With Supplement April 1939

There was a record attendance of sixty members and friends at University Hall on Monday, March 13th, when Miss Audrey Lucas gave a Memorial Address on her father, the late E.V. Lucas.

MEMBERSHIP

It will be remembered that at the Annual Dinner our Chairman suggested as an aim for 1939, the achievement of a membership of two hundred. The Council are of opinion that this could be done easily if married members *encouraged* their spouses to join. We strongly recommend this method, and hope to be able to record examples in our next issue.

CLS Bulletin No. 41 (Fifth Year) May 1939

CONVERZATIONE (sic)

It has been tentatively decided to hold a converzatione on a Saturday afternoon towards the end of the year. At that function there will be musical and dramatic items, competitions, displays of fireworks (surely this should be *books* ... Ed. (1939)) and refreshments.

(There is also a reference to an article in the 'Sunday Times' for 2 April 1939 entitled "Restoring Charles Lamb's Books".)

CLS Bulletin No. 42 (Fifth Year) With 5 pp. Supplement June 1939

This issue of our Bulletin should be entitled the "Topsy-Turvy Number", for

the size of the supplement greatly exceeds that of the issue itself. (It gives a detailed description of the unveiling of the Charles Lamb Memorial Plaque at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, which took place on the afternoon of Saturday, 13 May, 1939).

Report of inaugural meeting of Alliance of Literary Societies, Midland Institute, Birmingham, 8 Oct. 1988.

A disappointingly small gathering of around twenty representatives of various literary societies throughout the United Kingdom met to elect officers and committee for the coming year, to discuss Society business and to decide on dates for future committee meetings and for the 1989 seminar.

Mr. Jo Hunt, Director of the Institute, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Society, and two local members will work closely with him as Secretary and Treasurer. It was also resolved that all representatives present who indicated a willingness to stand for the committee were automatically elected to it--together with a small number who for various reasons, were unable to attend.

The choice of a President excited much heat. Five names were put forward and after a vote it was resolved to approach Margaret Drabble. If she declined the invitation Peter Palumbo, the new Arts Council Chairman, would be approached, and after him Gabriel Woolf, Lord Briggs and Earl Stockton. The choice of Miss Drabble was particularly gratifying to your CLS delegate as he had suggested her initially.

It was decided to advertise the new Society's aims in appropriate journals and institutions--such as the British Library and the Record Office at Kew. It was also felt that well-designed headed notepaper would attract new members, and a suggestion for a logo competition among committee members was enthusiastically adopted.

At the next committee meeting on 3 December a constitution would be drafted. Unfortunately, I would be unable to attend (see CLS programme). The 1989 seminar has been arranged for 22 April at the Midland Institute.

R.M. Healey

(On Saturday, 3rd December, 1988, Robin Healey addressed the Society on 'Dining Out in Lamb's London'. We hope to include the text of his lecture in a future *Bulletin*.)

SOCIETY NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND BRITISH CULTURE

A Conference to be held at the University of Leicester from 8-10 July 1989.

This residential course is intended to be broad in scope, with five 'keynote' speakers and a wide range of seminar papers covering several disciplines and various inter-disciplinary issues. There will be four general categories of concern; Race, Gender and Revolution; Theory and

Revolution; British Provincial Culture and the French Revolution; Representations of Revolution. Among speakers known to members of the Charles Lamb Society will be Angus Easson, Nicholas Roe, Jane Aaron and Bill Ruddick. Information about the Conference, and about the lectures and papers planned (which appear to range from Charlotte Corday and the Pantisocrats in Wales to Romantic Phrenology and the political significance of trees: so there should be something for all tastes) can be had from Dr. J. Aaron, Department of English, or Dr. S. West, Department of History of Art, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH.

NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE KNOW THAT!

D.E. Wickham

Bryan Waller Proctor (less one R) is an anagram of his non-de-plume

BARRY CORNWALL, POET.

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?

Simon Houfe's article on the draughtsman Hugh Thomson (1860-1920) in the issue of *Country Life* for 5 January 1989 claims that Austin Dobson called Thomson 'the Charles Lamb of illustration'.

AND A POSTSCRIPT (JUST RECEIVED) FROM D.E. Wickham:

FOR THE RECORD

The detailed Lamb Bibliography in Benjamin Ellis Martin's 'In the Footprints of Charles Lamb', 1891, refers to a four-volume edition of the Complete Correspondence and Works issued by George Augustus Sala in 1868 and spuriously claiming a connection with W.C. Hazlitt.

'A Bibliography of Unfinished Books' by Albert R. Corns and Archibald Sparke, 1915, records (page 128) that only the first volume was published and that the work was then abandoned through lack of success.

The British Library Catalogue indeed states 'No more published' after Volume I, yet one wonders why there was a lack of success (presumably meaning demand) unless lack of authorial time, interest, or inadequacy is really meant. Late nineteenth-century demand for editions of Lamb's Complete Works is surely implied by the very numerous listing in Martin, which, by the way, is far longer than the group of entries in the British Library Catalogue.
