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TURNER'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE POETS

Cecilia Powell

A lecture delivered at a joint meeting of the Turner Society and the Charles Lamb Society on 11th February 1989.

In 1830 Lamb and Turner both reached the age of 55; but whereas Lamb had only four more years to live, Turner, already very successful as a painter of both oils and watercolours, was about to succeed in yet another sphere: the illustration of volumes of poetry. The year 1830 saw the publication of the new edition of Samuel Rogers's *Italy*, a sequence of short poems based on Rogers's experiences during his tour of Italy in 1814-15 and first published in the 1820s. It was now reissued at Rogers's own expense (he was a member of a highly successful banking family and had a considerable private fortune); and the poems were accompanied by a series of new illustrations of which 25 were after designs by Turner, 19 after Thomas Stothard, and a handful after works by other artists. (1)

The 1830 publication of Rogers's *Italy* brings Lamb and Turner together in several ways. The first relates to one of the publishers of the book, Edward Moxon, whom Rogers himself had recently set up in business. Lamb's letter of 28th June 1830 to Bernard Barton refers to Moxon as 'the young poet of Xmas [Moxon's poem of that title had come out in 1829], whom the Author of the Pleasures of Memory [i.e. Rogers] has set up in the bookvending business with a volunteer'd loan of £500 - such munifence is rare to an almost stranger. But Rogers, I am told, has done many goodnatured things of this nature'. (2) Moxon had previously worked for Longman's and on 30 July 1833 he was to marry Charles and Mary Lamb's ward Emma Isola. On being set up as an independent publisher in 1830, Moxon's first two volumes were Rogers's *Italy*, with its vignettes after Turner and Stothard, and Lamb's *Album Verses*. Lamb was one of the people to whom Rogers sent a complimentary copy of *Italy* as soon as it was available in the summer and Lamb's letter of thanks has fortunately been preserved. It is notable for its effusions over Rogers's verses (as a writer himself, Lamb knew only too well the author's craving for what J.I.M. Stewart

has referred to in more recent times as 'the psychotherapy of warm praise'); but it is also notable for its lack of interest in the book's illustrations. He writes, on 5 October 1830: (3)

Dear Sir, - I know not what hath bewitch'd me that I have delayed acknowledging your beautiful present. But I have been very unwell and nervous of late. The poem was not new to me, tho' I have renewed acquaintance with it. Its metre is none of the least of its excellencies. 'Tis so far from the stiffness of blank verse - it gallops like a traveller, as it should do ...Dare I pick out what most pleases me? It is the middle paragraph in page thirty-four. It is most tasty.

Lamb then moves on into a nice piece of punning on the subject of the engravings which would have been the only aspect of his comments that Turner might have enjoyed:

Though I look on every impression as a *proof* of your kindness, I am jealous of the ornaments, and should have prized the verses naked on whity-brown paper.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

C. LAMB.

Rogers must have been particularly pleased with these remarks, because many purchasers of his volume were so enchanted by its 'ornaments' that they neglected to pay proper respect to the verses themselves. One famous anecdote about such a reaction concerns Ruskin, who was given a copy of *Italy* by his father's partner Henry Telford for his 13th birthday on 8 February 1832: he later attributed to the gift 'the entire direction of [his] life's energies'. (4) In *Praeterita* he recalls that 'I had no sooner cast eyes on the Rogers vignettes than I took them for my only masters, and set myself to imitate them as far as I possibly could by fine pen shading'. (5) Four years later, in 1836, Ruskin was not only studying and copying Turner's art, but had also - at the age of seventeen - begun defending it in writing, an activity that was to occupy him for the rest of his days. The disastrous visit which Ruskin paid to Samuel Rogers is described, but not dated, in *Praeterita*; but I would imagine that it took place in the 1830s when the budding art critic was still in his teens and the irascible poet in his 70s. The visit came about through the good offices of Thomas Pringle, a Scottish missionary, minor poet and editor of one of those annuals that Lamb disliked so much, *Friendship's Offering*. Ruskin's cousin Charles worked for the publishers of *Friendship's Offering*, Messrs Smith & Elder, and had introduced Pringle to the Ruskin household at Herne Hill, where the passions and talents of the only son were probably, one feels, forced upon, rather than drawn to, his patient attention. Ruskin's account of his visit to Rogers runs as follows: (6)

The old man, previously warned of my admissible claims, in Mr. Pringle's sight, to the beatitude of such introduction, was sufficiently gracious to me, though the cultivation of germinating genius was never held by Mr. Rogers to be an industry altogether delectable to genius in its zenith. Moreover, I was unfortunate in the line of observations by which, in return for his notice, I endeavoured to show myself worthy of it. I congratulated him with enthusiasm on the beauty of the engravings by which his poems were illustrated, - but betrayed, I fear me, at the same time some lack of an equally vivid interest in the composition of the poems themselves. At all events, Mr. Pringle - I thought at the time,

somewhat abruptly - diverted the conversation to subjects connected with Africa. These were doubtless more calculated to interest the polished minstrel of St. James's Place; but again I fell into misdemeanours by allowing my own attention, as my wandering eyes too frankly confessed, to determine itself on the pictures glowing from the crimson-silken walls; and accordingly, after we had taken leave, Mr. Pringle took occasion to advise me that, in future, when I was in the company of distinguished men, I should listen more attentively to their conversation.

If we date this meeting to c.1835, the vignettes and poems in question would have been not just those in the 1830 *Italy* but those in the companion volume published by Cadell and Moxon in the same format in 1834. This volume reprinted all or most of Rogers's works other than *Italy*, including the long poem which had made his reputation in the 1790s, 'The Pleasures of Memory', and the poems were again accompanied by vignettes engraved after drawings by Turner and Stothard. Copies of this book were available towards the end of 1833, and Rogers again sent Lamb a complimentary copy. Lamb's letter of thanks bears no date but Lucas dates it to 21 December 1833. Like that of October 1830, it was nicely calculated to please its recipient and once again Lamb makes no mention of Turner: (7)

My dear Sir, - Your book, by the unremitting punctuality of your publisher, has reached me thus early. I have not opened it, nor will till to-morrow, when I promise myself a thorough reading of it. 'The Pleasures of Memory' was the first school present I made to Mrs. Moxon, it had those nice wood-cuts; and I believe she keeps it still.

Possibly Lamb is being a trifle sentimental here, in recalling Emma's schooldays a few months after her marriage, but we need not doubt the accuracy of his recollection, and his gift of Rogers's 'Pleasures of Memory' to the young Emma forms a pleasing counterpart to Henry Telford's gift of Rogers's *Italy* to the young Ruskin.

The 'nice wood-cuts' Lamb refers to were by Luke Clennell after designs by Stothard. They show classically-clad maidens and naked cherubs or cupids, who appear in various groupings in pastoral settings: embracing, gathering flowers, holding musical instruments such as pipes or harps. The wood-cuts are decorations, not illustrations; they serve in part to amuse the reader, in part to fill up blank pages and other empty spaces.

Lamb published two sonnets in December 1833 to celebrate the publication of the new edition of Rogers's *Poems*. The first was printed in *The Times* on 13 December and was dedicated to Rogers; the second was addressed to Stothard and was printed in the *Athenaeum* on 21 December. (8) Lamb feared that his praise of Rogers in the first sonnet 'might not be equally agreeable to your artist'; and he apologised to Rogers for the fact that in the sonnet to Stothard 'he is as everything and you as nothing'. He continues: 'He is no lawyer who cannot take two sides. But I am jealous of the combination of the sister arts. Let them sparkle apart'. (9) Meanwhile - unbelievably, to some of us - Lamb seems completely blind to the gems that really do sparkle on the pages of the two Rogers volumes - the 58 vignettes after Turner.

It may seem rather perverse to have begun this lecture by concentrating on

Lamb's indifference to Turner's illustrations to poetry. However, Turner scholars in the past have been so enthusiastic about his vignettes that they have paid minimal attention to adverse reactions such as that displayed by Lamb, and this lecture provides an opportunity to redress the balance. One of the anomalies in the story of the illustrated editions of Rogers published by Cadell and Moxon in 1830 and 1834 is that, although they were enormously successful (by 1847, sales of the two books had reached over 50,000 copies), Moxon nevertheless continued to issue Rogers's works in cheaper editions with the original wood-cut decorations. His decision to do so may have been governed partly by his knowledge of the book market, but I suspect that he may also have been influenced by Lamb's views. While Turner reputedly claimed that he would ensure that no lady's boudoir would be complete without a copy of Samuel Rogers, Lamb's sonnet to the poet expressed precisely the opposite view:

When thy gay book hath paid its proud devoirs,
 Poetic friend, and fed with luxury
 The eye of pampered aristocracy
 In glittering drawing-rooms and gilt boudoirs,
 O'erlaid with comments of pictorial art,
 However rich and rare, yet nothing leaving
 Of healthful action to the soul-conceiving
 Of the true reader - yet a nobler part
 Awaits thy work, already classic styled.
 Cheap-clad, accessible, in homeliest show
 The modest beauty through the land shall go
 From year to year, and render life more mild;
 Refinement to the poor man's hearth shall give,
 And in the moral heart of England live.

What Lamb would like to see published would be an edition *without* representational illustrations, so that the 'true reader' can have the 'healthful action' of conceiving and imagining the scenes in any way that he chose; he enlarges on his dislike of representations in his letter to Rogers of 21 December 1833, adducing as an example the series of large paintings and engravings of Shakespearian subjects initiated by the printseller Boydell in the late 1780s: (10)

What injury (short of the theatres) did not Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery do me with Shakespeare? - to have Opie's Shakespeare, Northcote's Shakespeare, light-headed Fuseli's Shakespeare, heavy-headed Romney's Shakespeare, wooden-headed West's Shakespeare (though he did the best in 'Lear'), deaf-headed Reynold's Shakespeare, instead of my, and everybody's Shakespeare. To be tied down to an authentic face of Juliet! To have Imogen's portrait! To confine the illimitable!

Let us now move away from what Lamb thought of Turner and think about Turner's illustrations to poetry in their own right. In considering the watercolours that Turner produced in the 1830s, beginning with the two series for Samuel Rogers, it is important to bear in mind several factors. The first is that Turner was extremely interested in poetry, so that the 1830s commissions would have been very congenial to him. He owned copies of a number of poetical works, including Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, a 1797 edition of Ossian and an 1802 edition of Burns. However, his extensive poetry library did not consist of single volumes by individual poets; it resided chiefly in a mammoth compendium, the thirteen volumes of Robert

Anderson's *The Works of the British Poets with Prefaces Biographical and Critical* which was published in 1795 and the years following. This includes not only a colossal number of works by British poets, but a great many translations into English of the Greek and Latin poets, whether dramatic, epic or lyrical. (11)

The second important point is that Turner himself wrote poetry, probably throughout his life. Some of it was published in 1966 in Jack Lindsay's book *The Sunset Ship*; some of it remains untranscribed in his sketchbooks and notebooks, and much of it is difficult to read and to comprehend. However, we shall reach a much better understanding of Turner's poetry through the exhibition devoted to this subject which is planned for the summer of 1990 at the Clore Gallery.

The third factor which is relevant to Turner's commissions for poetry illustrations in the 1830s is that, in some senses, he had already been illustrating poetry for over thirty years. On 20 January 1798 the Council of the Royal Academy decided to make a change in the catalogues of its exhibitions, and it resolved 'that every artist may give in writing such descriptions of his Performance, as he thinks proper for insertion in the catalogue'. (12) The literature on Turner always refers to this development in the Academy regulations as an innovation, so it is perhaps worth mentioning that it was only an innovation for painters of Turner's generation. The Academy itself was merely returning to the situation of its earliest exhibitions, when quotations and explanations had been abundant. In 1773, for instance, James Barry, Angelica Kauffman, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Alexander Runciman provided sources and quotations from Homer, Ossian, Dante and Milton respectively. Over the years, however, the number of exhibits rose dramatically and the size of the catalogues increased accordingly; and by the time that Turner was first exhibiting, in 1790, quotations were no longer printed, probably for reasons of economy. In 1798, one may note not only that the catalogue included quotations, but that it was no longer available free of charge; it now cost 6d. (13) At all events, Turner was quick off the mark to take advantage of the new dispensation. In 1798, he accompanied five of his ten Academy exhibits with long quotations - one from *Paradise Lost* and four from James Thomson; and over the next 51 years there were only 15 in which he did not accompany his exhibits with poetical quotations. His sources ranged widely - from Homer to Gray, from Callimachus to Gisborne - but chief amongst them were Byron, Thomson, Milton and Rogers. However, the Academy catalogues in which visitors could read Turner's poetical quotations reveal an interesting statistic: balancing the 30 or so occasions on which Turner quoted from or adapted or referred to works by other poets, there were an equal number of occasions when he himself wrote the quotation. He began doing this in 1800; by 1812, when he exhibited *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps*, he had evidently decided that fragmentary quotations have more stature if the reader believes that they come from a *magnum opus*: in 1812 and regularly, though not exclusively, thereafter, Turner gives as his source the manuscript *Fallacies of Hope*. This manuscript is not extant and it seems likely that it never in fact existed as a whole. Perhaps the *Fallacies of Hope* was for Turner what *The Recluse* was for Wordsworth: a larger poem than he could manage, that was always eluding him; but I fancy that Turner was deliberately misleading his readers, just as his title makes mockery of all that eighteenth-century optimism: Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, Rogers's *Pleasures of Memory*, and Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* - these last two, incidentally, dating from the 1790s when, as we've seen, Turner began his pairing of paintings and quotations.

The paintings for which Turner wrote these fragments were invariably concerned with the themes of death and war, corruption, blighted hope, the decline or overthrow of great empires, and personal betrayal. (14)

During the 1830s Turner's involvement with poetry reached a high point. Following the success of Rogers's *Italy*, he received commissions from a number of publishers to illustrate the works of other poets. In the first half of the 1830s Robert Cadell engaged him to produce 64 watercolours illustrating Scott (24 for the *Poetical Works* and 40 for the *Prose Works*, both published after Scott's death); John Murray commissioned 17 illustrations for his 17-volume edition of Byron (this, again, was published after the poet's death); John Macrone commissioned seven illustrations for a new edition of Milton's *Poetical Works*. In 1835 Edward Moxon commissioned 20 drawings to illustrate the poems of Thomas Campbell and he published a volume that exactly matched the two Rogers volumes. John Macrone, too, approached Turner with a second commission, this time to illustrate a living poet, Tom Moore. However, the resulting volume contains a prose work by Moore, *The Epicurean*, with four illustrations after Turner, rather than the poetry which had originally been envisaged.

The different publishers had different recipes for the best way to combine text and illustrations. For the Rogers and Campbell volumes, Moxon favoured headpieces and tailpieces on the same pages as the poems themselves, and scattered throughout the book, and the illustrations have no borders. (Plate 1) As one Victorian critic, P.G. Hamerton, remarked, 'If you examine a vignette by Turner round its edges, if you can call them edges, you will perceive how exquisitely the objects come out of nothingness into being'. (15) It was quite a novelty and extremely expensive to produce pages combining relief-printed text and engraved illustrations because every such page had to pass through the press twice: for the letterpress, the raised letters carried the ink to the paper; whereas in the case of the steel plate bearing the illustration, the ink was transferred to the paper from the incised lines (i.e. the printing process was exactly the opposite for the two ingredients on the page).

The publishers of the other volumes illustrated by Turner did not distribute the illustrations through the text but used them as frontispieces and as title-page ornaments. For the 17-volume edition of Byron several artists were employed beside Turner, including J.D. Harding, Clarkson Stanfield and William Westall. The volumes also made use of the work of artists who were not directly involved in the project. For example, Turner's illustrations depicting Greece (which he had never visited) are based on the sketches made there by a minor topographical artist William Page. For neither of the two Rogers commissions nor the Byron one did Turner make special journeys in order to execute his drawings. He based them on the data already in his sketchbooks, accumulated during his exploration of Italy, the Alps, the Rhineland and England. However, the case was rather different when it came to illustrating Scott, and in order to produce those illustrations Turner spent several weeks in Scotland in the summer of 1831. He stayed with Scott at Abbotsford and made an extensive tour of the country, going as far as Staffa and Inverness. Throughout this tour he made numerous sketches on the spot from which he later produced watercolour designs when he was back in London.

All twenty of Turner's illustrations to Thomas Campbell have recently passed to the National Gallery of Scotland where they are only brought out for exhibition during the month of January, but they can be seen at other

times as well by arrangement. They are notable for the brilliant colour which is found in all Turner's watercolours of this period (regardless of the fact that they were executed solely in order to be transformed into black and white engravings) and they also show the range of Turner's skills as he depicts now a scene of pastoral serenity, now the roar of battle, now the perils of the sea. For example, in 'Lochiel's Warning' a seer forewarns Donald Cameron, 'the gentle Lochiel', of the bloodshed at Culloden; 'The Andes Coast' appeared in the 1837 edition immediately below lines in 'The Pleasures of Hope' referring to the exploration of 'Earth's loneliest bounds, and Ocean's wildest shore'; 'The Beech Tree's Petition' accompanied verses in which a threatened tree begs the woodman to spare its life so that it may continue giving shade and pleasure to children and young lovers; and the illustration to 'Lines on the Camp Hill, near Hastings' accompanied musings on the Norman Conquest of England.

Turner's series for Byron, Scott, Milton and Moore are now all dispersed in collections around the world, but his series illustrating the two Rogers volumes are almost entirely in the Turner Bequest in the Clore Gallery, together with some preparatory studies of them. 'A Tempest' is the concluding vignette to 'The Voyage of Columbus' in Rogers's *Poems*; the watercolour measures less than 5 inches in each direction and when it was engraved it was even smaller still, about 3 inches each way. The lower half is packed with detail based on Turner's lifelong study of the sea and of weather; while the upper half is decidedly shadowy, which is not surprising given the fact that it shows a Visionary Angel and ancient warriors.

To understand its subject matter, we have to turn to Rogers's synopsis of 'The Voyage of Columbus' in which he explains that after Columbus has survived many perils and reached the New World, an angel appears to him in a dream and addresses him thus: (16)

Return to Europe; though your Adversaries, such is the will of Heaven, shall let loose the hurricane against you. A little while shall they triumph; insinuating themselves into the hearts of your followers, and making the World, which you came to bless, a scene of blood and slaughter. Yet is there cause for rejoicing. Your work is done. The cross of Christ is planted here; and in due time, all things shall be made perfect!

Turner's vignette accompanies the closing words of the angel's speech itself which occupies Canto XII of 'The Voyage of Columbus', while the quotation from the synopsis is decorated - and I use that word deliberately - with a Stothard vignette of cherubs trying their little hands at boating. (This, incidentally, is a repetition in steel engraving of one of the 'nice woodcuts' which Lamb so admired, and it reappears again and again in the different editions of Rogers's work. In an 1810 edition, for instance, it embellished the poem 'A Sailor'; while in 1856 it was used to adorn the poem 'Naples' in the *Italy* cycle.) The 1834 volume contains many such incongruities which serve to weaken the impact which it has on modern viewers and render it rather less powerful than many of its ingredients deserve.

Turner's vignette of 'The Tempest' is somewhat unusual in that it is partly a seascape and partly a figure subject, for by and large the figure subjects were allocated to Stothard (in addition to the space-filling cherubs, that is) while Turner produced the landscapes and seascapes. For instance, in the *Italy* volume, Stothard produced the headpiece vignette for the story of Jorasse, the gentle and fearless young huntsman of the Alps who kept the

village girls spell-bound with his accounts of his narrow escapes, and won the hand of the shy Madelaine, but soon afterwards met his death (Rogers tells us) 'on a Glacier - half-way up to Heaven'.

Rogers had doubtless heard this tale during his own visit to Switzerland, when he also heard first-hand accounts of Napoleon's crossing of the Alps, the subject of the vignette by Turner two pages earlier. Napoleon is seen in a pose copied straight from the portrait by David which Turner had seen in Paris in 1802, and in the poem Rogers describes how his mountain guide had told him of his meeting with Napoleon, 'wrapt in his cloak', who asked him 'how far 'twas to St Remy'.

Another historical landscape in the *Italy* volume is 'Hannibal crossing the Alps' in which Turner showed the troops of Napoleon's great predecessor, complete with ~~and~~ a negro archer and an elephant. (Platel) When Turner had painted his large oil painting of this subject in 1812, he had concentrated on the snowstorm which is given first place in its title, but the vignette is primarily concerned with the battle on the ground and the physical feat involved in conquering the terrifying barrier of the Alps.

A very different Alpine landscape is portrayed in 'The Alps at Daybreak', Turner's headpiece to a short poem in the second Rogers volume which celebrates Alpine huntsmen like the youth Jorasse. This page is one of the most successful in the two volumes, with the text and vignette in perfect accord with one another. The rising sun, the dawn light on the freezing snow, the sea of treacherous icy peaks and the dark forms of the darting roebuck are exquisitely rendered by Turner; one's eye is so completely beguiled by them that - like Ruskin - one can easily overlook the poem entirely. But what a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous occurs on the very next page, where the space beneath Rogers's lines about the 'frozen mass' and 'craggy steeps' is occupied by a typical Stothard 'ornament': a gambolling infant. Somehow I don't think he's going to last very long in the snow.

Another Turner vignette from the *Italy* volume shows that the path to Rome was beset by yet further dangers than precipitous roads and perilous footbridges and the constant threat of snowstorm and avalanche: on the left of the scene Italian bandits lounge by the wayside, awaiting the arrival of the next rich foreigner from the north.

When one looks at this vignette one cannot help thinking back to the very large watercolours which Turner exhibited soon after his first experience of crossing the Alps, such as the 1804 *Passage of the St Gotthard*, now in the Abbot Hall Art Gallery, which measures nearly 39 by 27 inches. The comparable scene in the *Italy* volume measures less than 4 inches each way, but it manages to suggest the perils of the Alps with equal vividness.

Another lonely but less threatening scene is 'The Campagna of Rome' which shows an ancient ruined tomb and the gap-toothed remains of an aqueduct in the deserted countryside near Rome. (Plate 2) The sun sinks into the clouds over the distant hills while goats butt each other in the foreground. The scene evokes the feelings of so many travellers to Italy besides Rogers and Turner, feelings which were memorably expressed by Byron in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: awe and amazement at the relics of the past grandeur of Rome, enchantment mingled with sadness at the sight of so much devastation and ruin amid scenes of such overwhelming natural beauty. In order to express these powerful sentiments with sufficient forcefulness Turner painted a very large oil painting inspired by the 'Italy' canto of

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage at the very same time that he was engaged in producing small watercolour illustrations for the John Murray edition of Byron's works (Plate 3). This painting proves to viewers today, as it must have done to Turner's contemporaries, that he could match even the greatest of poets at every level: he could not only illustrate an individual line or verse of poetry with unrivalled skill and delicacy; he could also match an epic poem with an epic painting of equal power and passion.

When Turner exhibited this work at the Royal Academy in 1832, he accompanied it with seven lines from verse 26 of Canto IV in which Byron saluted modern Italy as a whole:

and now, fair Italy!
Thou art the garden of the world.
Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility:
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.

This was not the only large oil painting of Turner's to be inspired by the poetry which he was currently illustrating in tiny watercolours. At the same Academy exhibition he showed *Staffa: Fingal's Cave*, celebrating a famous and remote spot which he had managed to include in his tour of Scotland the year before and he accompanied it with four lines from Scott's *Lord of the Isles*:

nor of a theme less solemn tells
That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
And still, between each awful pause,
From the high vault an answer draws.

In 1838, a year after the publication of Campbell's *Poetical Works*, Turner saw the 'Temeraire', the great sailing ship which had played a distinguished part at the Battle of Trafalgar, being towed up the Thames to the shipbreakers' yard at Rotherhithe; and when, a year later, he exhibited *The Fighting 'Temeraire' tugged to her last berth to be broken up*, he accompanied it with a two-line paraphrase from Campbell's 'Ye Mariners of England':

The flag which braved the battle and the breeze
No longer owns her.

At the start of this talk, we noticed how silent Lamb was on the subject of Turner's illustrations to Samuel Rogers, despite the opportunity he had of studying them, through the presentation copies of the two volumes sent to him by their author. There is a marked contrast between this silence and the fulness with which Lamb criticises a painting he found disappointing - a painting which editors from E.V. Lucas to Jonathan Bate have associated with one of Turner's very large early mythological works, *The Goddess of Discord choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides*. (Plate 4). This painting is now in the Clore Gallery; it is closely related to the 'Ode to Discord' written by Turner in one of his notebooks, and it will be featured in the forthcoming exhibition about Turner's poetry. I'd like to end this talk by considering Lamb's remarks in some detail because - if they really do concern Turner's painting - they are extremely interesting to lovers of both Lamb and Turner alike and it is strange that no mention is made of them in the catalogue raisonné of Turner's oils.

Let me just remind you of the passage, which occurs in the essay 'Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art' in the *Last Essays of Elia*. (17) Lamb begins with a delightful piece of irony disguised by blandness: 'We have seen a landscape of a justly admired neoteric'. Through the archaism the reader senses immediately that Lamb (unlike Ruskin) doesn't think much of modern painters!

We have seen a landscape of a justly admired neoteric, in which he aimed at delineating a fiction, one of the most severely beautiful in antiquity - the gardens of the Hesperides. To do Mr. ----- justice, he had painted a laudable orchard, with fitting seclusion, and a veritable dragon (of which a Polypheme by Poussin is somehow a facsimile for the situation), looking over into the world shut out backwards, so that none but a 'still-climbing Hercules' could hope to catch a peep at the admired Ternary of Recluses. No conventional porter could keep his keys better than this custos with the 'lidless eyes'. He not only sees that none *do* intrude into that privacy, but, as clear as daylight, that none but *Hercules aut Diabolus* by any manner of means *can*. So far all is well. We have absolute solitude here or nowhere. *Ab extra* the damsels are snug enough. But here the artist's courage seems to have failed him. He began to pity his pretty charge, and, to comfort the irksomeness, has peopled their solitude with a bevy of fair attendants, maids of honour, or ladies of the bed-chamber, according to the approved etiquette at a court of the nineteenth century; giving to the whole scene the air of a *fête champêtre* if we will but excuse the absence of the gentlemen. This is well, and Watteauish. But what is become of the solitary mystery - the

Daughters three,
That sing around the golden tree?

This is not the way in which Poussin would have treated this subject.

For the most part, this description fits Turner's painting admirably on a visual level - and modern art historians have successfully tracked down Turner's sources in both Poussin and Watteau. However, on the right of the picture Turner has clearly depicted not three Hesperides but five, so we should not take Lamb's reference to the 'Ternary of Recluses' (from *Love's Labour's Lost*) simply at face value. Rather it would seem that he deliberately introduces an inappropriate quotation in order to reveal that Mr Blank is really the reclusive Mr Turner.

When, we must ask ourselves, did Lamb see Turner's painting and, furthermore, when did he compose his description of it? We may tackle the second question first, since it is easily resolved. The essay was written in the autumn of 1831 for the November issue of Moxon's periodical *The Englishman's Magazine* which, however, ceased publication before that issue could appear. The essay therefore was not published until later: part of it appeared in December 1832 in the *Reflector*, also published by Moxon, and the whole piece was published in four instalments in the *Athenaeum* in January and February 1833, under the title 'On the Total Defect of the Quality of Imagination, observable in the Works of Modern British Artists'. There can be little doubt that the particular passage just quoted was itself written in the autumn of 1831 since it is almost certainly the passage referred to in Lamb's letter to Moxon of 24 October, thanking him for a communication which had effectively put paid to his day's labours. He wrote: (18)

when your Parcel came I damned it, for my pen was warming in my hand at a ludicrous description of a Landscape of an R.A., which I calculated upon sending you to morrow ... Now any one calling in, or a letter coming, puts an end to my writing for the day. Little did I think that the mandate had gone out, so destructive to my occupation, so relieving to the apprehensions of the whole body of R.A.'s.

There were two occasions - and only two - on which Lamb could have seen Turner's *Garden of the Hesperides* in a public exhibition and they both occurred a quarter of a century earlier. The first was when Turner showed it at the British Institution's very first exhibition of works by living artists, which opened in February 1806 (in the same building in Pall Mall, incidentally, that had housed the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery). The second occasion was when Turner exhibited it in his own gallery, attached to his house in Harley Street, from April to about June 1808. There is no evidence in Lamb's letters that he visited either of these exhibitions, but in February and March 1806 he devoted a great deal of time to studying paintings, particularly those in famous collections of the Old Masters. (19) On 12 March he visited the collection of John Julius Angerstein in Pall Mall where he admired the paintings by Claude to which Turner was so passionately attached that he later bequeathed two of his own paintings to hang between them in the National Gallery. Lamb wrote, 'One of these was perfectly miraculous. What colours short of bona fide sunbeams it could be painted in, I am not earthly colourman enough to say. But I did not think it had been in the possibility of things.' (20) Did he, one wonders, pop into the adjacent British Institution exhibition on 12 March as well? I would suggest that he may well have done; that the essay he wrote in the autumn of 1831 is a mixture of newly composed passages and ones that he had written long ago, in 1806; and that on 24 October the interrupted 'ludicrous description' was being copied out rather than composed. For the essay, which begins by talking about the supposed conflation of time in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, itself contains a number of contradictory time references. For example, whereas Lamb talks of *Bacchus and Ariadne* as being 'in the National Gallery', he talks of Sebastiano del Piombo's *Raising of Lazarus* as being 'at Angerstein's'. *The Raising of Lazarus* had actually been in the National Gallery since its first opening in 1824, being one of its founding pictures and No. 1 in the very first catalogue. But Lamb must have seen it 'at Angerstein's' on 12 March 1806. Another anachronism occurs in the opening sentence of the essay: 'Hogarth excepted, can we produce any one painter within the last fifty years, ... that has treated a story *imaginatively*?' Such a question works well enough in the early 1800s, but by the 1830s, a whole century after *The Harlot's Progress* and *The Rake's Progress*, it doesn't work at all.

It is easy to sympathise with Lamb's view that Turner's *Garden of the Hesperides* is overpopulated and insufficiently bleak, but the belated publication of his criticisms renders the passage as a whole something of a curiosity. By the 1830s, most writers on Turner's art had very different concerns and were busy denigrating his recent works for their unnatural colours and their vagueness (it was *Staffa: Fingal's Cave* that was criticised, a little later, for its 'indistinctness', leading to Turner's famous reply that 'indistinctness is my fault') (21) However, one cannot help feeling that ultimately Lamb's criticism are not just about the precise number of classical maidens in a particular painting by Turner. What he is really attacking yet again is 'the combination of the Sister Arts' and the attempt 'to confine the illimitable'. Lamb would much rather have read Turner's story in a book than seen it enacted upon a canvas.

NOTES

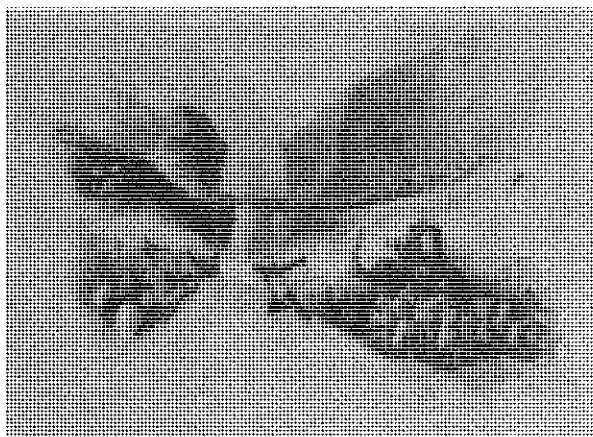
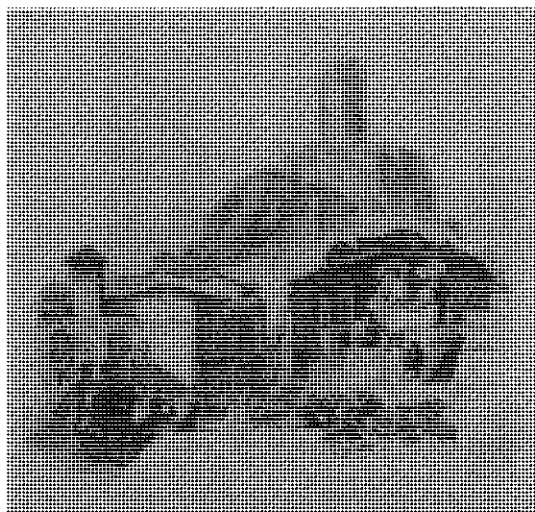
1. For a full account of the 1830 edition of Rogers's *Italy*, see the present author's article, 'Turner's vignettes and the making of Rogers' *Italy*', *Turner Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, summer 1983, pp.2-13.
2. *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, vol.7, 1905, p. 857.
3. *Ibid.* p. 860.
4. John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. Kenneth Clark, 1949, p.20.
5. *Ibid.*, p.69.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.
7. Lucas, ed., *op.cit.*, p.923.
8. See *ibid.*, pp.924-5.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 923.
10. *Ibid.*
11. The most recent listing of the books in Turner's library is to be found in Andrew Wilton, *Turner in his Time*, 1987, pp. 246-7.
12. Quoted from the minutes of the Royal Academy Council meeting by Jerrold Ziff, 'Turner's first poetic quotations: an examination of intentions', *Turner Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, summer 1982, p. 2.
13. One may also note that the minutes for 20 January 1798 continue with the words 'but it is expected that such descriptions shall be confined to as few Words as are absolutely necessary'.
14. One may note here that Turner's first use of the title 'Fallacies of Hope' predates by over two years Wordsworth's lines in the dedication of 'The Excursion' (29 July 1814):

but Life is insecure,
And Hope full of fallacious as a dream.
15. P.G. Hamerton, *The Life of J.M.W. Turner, R.A.*, 1879, p. 228.
16. Samuel Rogers, *Poems*, 1834, p. 226.
17. Charles Lamb, *Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*, ed. Jonathan Bate, 1987, p. 258.
18. Lucas, ed., *op.cit.*, p. 881.
19. See *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.W. Marris, Jr, vol. 2, 1976, pp. 208, 223-4.
20. *Ibid.*, p.223.
21. This remark has often been misquoted as 'Indistinctness is my forte', but recent researches have confirmed that Turner actually said 'fault'. See Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner*, 1987, under no. 347.

1. Samuel Rogers, *Italy*, 1830 edition, pp. 28-9, showing Turner's vignettes *Martigny*, engraved by W. Cooke and *Hannibal crossing the Alps*, engraved by W.R. Smith.

28

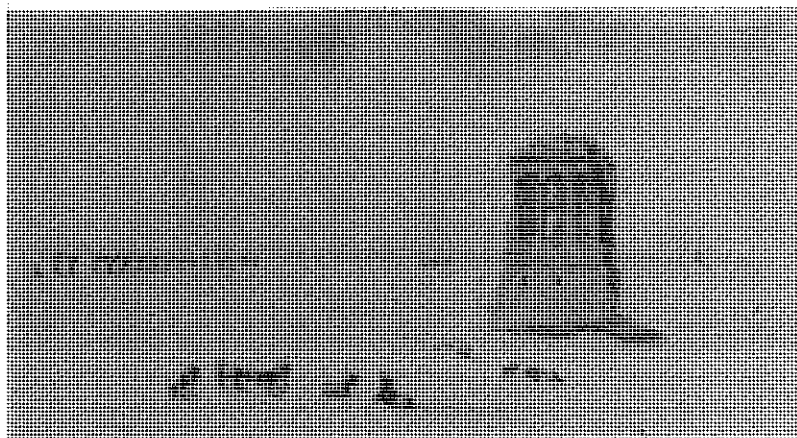
Was strong within her; and right on she went,
 Fearing no ill. May all good Angels guard her!
 And should I once again, as once I may,
 Visit MARTIGNY, I will not forget
 Thy hospitable roof, MARGUERITE DE TOURS;
 Thy sign the silver swan. Heaven prosper Thee!



THE ALPS.

Who first beholds those everlasting clouds,
 Seed-time and harvest, morning noon and night,
 Still where they were, steadfast, immovable;
 Those mighty hills, so shadowy, so sublime,
 As rather to belong to Heaven than Earth—
 But instantly receives into his soul
 A sense, a feeling that he loses not,

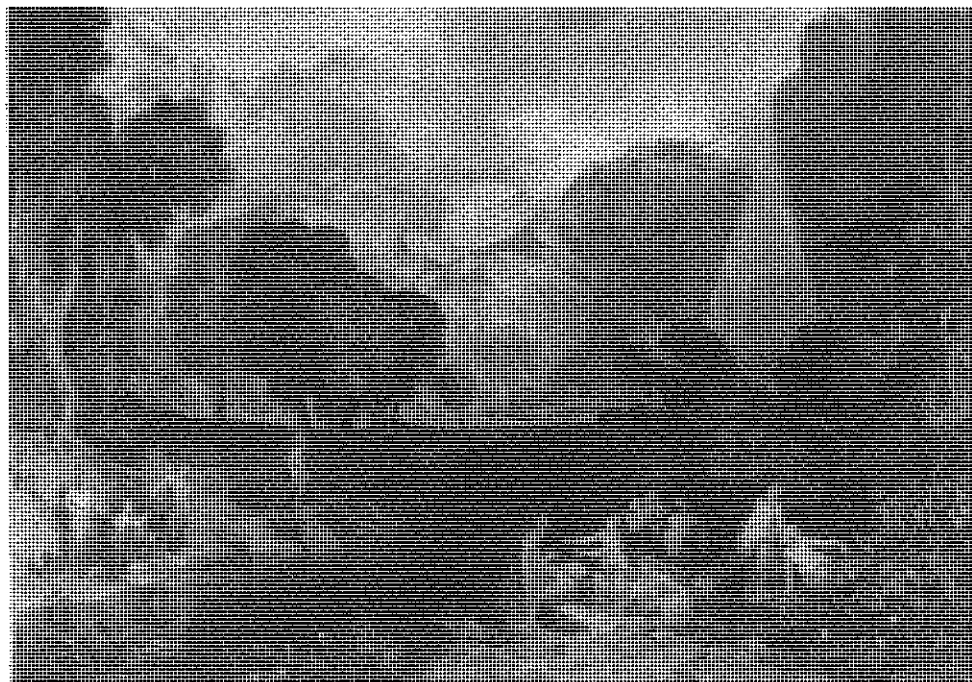
2. J.M.W. Turner, *The Campagna of Rome*, c. 1827 (TB CCLXXX-161), pencil and watercolour, 2¾ x 7¼ in. Engraved by E. Goodall, 1829, for Samuel Rogers, *Italy*, 1830 edition, p. 153.



3. J.M.W. Turner, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage - Italy*, 1832, oil on canvas, 56 x 98 in., Tate Gallery, London.



4. J.M.W. Turner, *The Goddess of Discord choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides*, 1806, oil on canvas, c. 61 x 86 in., Tate Gallery, London.



THE CROWNING ART OF ELIA

Molly Lefebure

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Elians,

When our chairman, Dr Wilson, wrote to me in the Lake District to inform me that the Charles Lamb Society wished to give me the honour of proposing the toast at this year's birthday luncheon he proffered the advice that the subject matter of my brief speech would, of course, be of my own choosing, but should be serious yet not solemn. With this he left me to my own devices. I roamed around the Newlands fells, brooding discursively upon Charles Lamb. Occasionally I glanced towards Keswick, and thought of Coleridge, and Southey, and Greta Hall, and of how Lamb once stayed there. Occasionally my glance fell upon an early daffodil, and I thought of Wordsworth, and the strange ambiguity of his relationship with Lamb. But however much I wandered, physically and imaginatively, I always came back to this business of solemnity as opposed to the serious- this somewhat more than a mere semantic nicety, set within an Elian context, and introduced at a celebrative birthday luncheon.

Solemnity! Perhaps Robert Southey best encapsulated it on the occasion when he invited Wordsworth to lunch and served him *stuffed owl*. There can be no dish more solemn than stuffed owl. And Wordsworth treated the owl *with* solemnity; he inclined his head towards it, but refused to partake. Mrs Wordsworth, however, risked trying a small slice; she ventured the opinion that the bird would have been improved by roasting with onions: the owl had been boiled -- and quite properly, too; boiled stuffed owl is a degree more solemn than roast stuffed owl.

There seems to have been little mirth at the table; Wordsworth enquired, with a shade of severity, how the bird had come to the Greta Hall kitchen in the first place and Southey replied that it had been accidentally shot by a neighbour. The luncheon, originally intended by Southey to be lighthearted, quickly became transposed into a funereal key.

Nobody would ever have felt tempted to serve Charles Lamb stuffed owl. But had he found himself at a stuffed owl luncheon we may be sure that he would instantly have grasped the message and would have risen to it buoyantly -- which, judging by what Southey tells us, Wordsworth wholly failed to do.

Even plain everyday victuals (let alone stuffed owl) conveyed profundities to Lamb, as they did, also, to his friend Coleridge.

'Coleridge', said Lamb, 'holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumplings'. Lamb himself, in propounding as fallacy the saying that 'enough is as good as a feast', condemned this as 'a vile cold-scrag-of-mutton sophism'. Elsewhere he speaks of 'a full leg of mutton in its quiddity' -- a splendid phrase -- and suggests that a tub of butter may be a 'Platonic idea'. With such an eye, such an understanding, the import of Southey's dish of stuffed owl would have stimulated Lamb into splendid response: he would surely have sampled the dish with appropriately serious judgement of its qualities and witty reflection and would have followed this up by enriching posterity with a brilliant and lightly handled dissertation upon stuffed owl.

Lamb would certainly have agreed with Southey that when it came to pulling Wordsworth's leg, or having a joke at his expense, the merry jest simply could not be laid on too thick- and indeed, when literally plastered on, as

it were, the desired effect often still fell flat. Yet Wordsworth was not incapable of laughter; far from it. In his youth he had possessed a delightful, if somewhat quirky, sense of humour: we have only to think of *The Idiot Boy* or *The Waggoner*. However if we remind ourselves that *The Waggoner* was inspired by, and was intended to outshine, *Tam o'Shanter*, then we shake our heads. And we recall poor Walter Scott, when guest at Dove Cottage, surreptitiously climbing out of the back window to slip along to the Swan for a quick dram, and praying that he mightn't be spotted by his host, the water-drinking Bard. One trembles to think what would have happened if time and circumstance had permitted Burns to be invited to Dove Cottage!

Lamb, as we know, resolutely turned down all Wordsworth's invitations. 'I ought', reads one such (celebrated) refusal, 'I ought before this to have replied to your very kind invitation to Cumberland. With you and your sister I could gang anywhere; but I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey. Separate from your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments, as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead nature . . . have I not enough, without your mountains? I do not envy you, I should pity you, did I not know that the mind will make friends with anything . . .'

This, to the very Bard of mountains, lakes and streams himself, was outrageous; calculated to be so: even, one suspects, to the point of deliberately mistaking Westmorland for Cumberland -- a desperate error with which to affront a native, and nicely calculated to demonstrate sublime Cockney contempt for everything beyond the reach of Bow bells. Yet, the following year, Lamb and his sister *did* go to Cumberland, to stay with the Coleridges at Greta Hall, Keswick; this in August 1802, when, we should note, there was no possible prospect of meeting the Wordsworths, who were in France.

Wordsworth never knew what to make of Lamb. In the deeply felt effusion wrenched from Wordsworth's heart following the deaths of Coleridge, Lamb and Hogg (which occurred closely enough together to give Wordsworth a desolating sense of isolation as a poet of his generation) he touchingly referred to 'Lamb, the frolic and the gentle'. Moving as this is, I think most Elians would agree that it reveals a total misconception of Charles Lamb.

Wordsworth spent his life surrounded by the shepherds and flocks of the Lake Country, and like all who inhabit that region which since time immemorial has owed its prosperity to wool, Wordsworth shared the native obsession with the pre-eminence of sheep and their unrivalled importance in the system of the universe. And one suspects that, resultantly, Wordsworth subconsciously always associated, and confused, Lamb the man with lamb a frisking juvenile of the flock.

... the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!

Hop, skip and jump; how could anyone believe a lamb ever to be serious?

Charles was forever pulling Wordsworth's leg, or worse: much of what he gaily wrote, and said, to Wordsworth would have been devastating to any other man, but Wordsworth put it all down to Lamb's instinctively frolicsome nature.

Moreover lambs, besides being frisky and frolicsome are essentially gentle.

they have no malice in them: Charles too, must therefore be gentle, without malice, without bite.

For these reasons Wordsworth, apparently, treated as deliciously sportive the wicked letters which Lamb sent to Grasmere from time to time: letters which we read with gasps of near incredulity; they swerve, Cresta-Run like, so desperately close to the brink of the unthinkable, let alone the commit-to-paperable. They range from a screed blithely teasing poor Dorothy about her unhappy experiences with false teeth (a painful subject for her, in double sense) to the diabolically impish letter of later years in which Lamb recounted to Rydal Mount how London buzzed with gossip concerning the alleged flagrant love affair between Coleridge and Mrs Gillman; this tittle-tattle originating from an Old Blue, highly susceptible to moral outrage -- one Reverend Frederick William Franklin, presently a master as Christ's Hospital in Hertford and as a schoolboy himself the contemporary of STC and Lamb. Franklin had read frightful things into the habit Coleridge and Mrs Gillman had of taking an annual holiday together at Ramsgate -- without Dr Gillman, who in the usual manner of general practitioners was tied to his practice. Coleridge and Mrs Gillman were invariably accompanied by one, other or both of the Gillman sons, not to mention friends (including the family of another Old Blue, Thomas Houghton Steel) and never can there have been a more transparently innocent pair. However they were obviously devoted to each other (albeit in the nicest possible way) and there were many people, the good Dr Franklin amongst them, who could never resist any opportunity to take a swipe at Coleridge.

On November 25 1824 Charles Lamb wrote to Miss Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's sister-in-law, who for many years now had resided as an integral part of the Wordsworth family unit, and so was acquainted with the Lambs. Miss Hutchinson, as Lamb was perfectly aware, prided herself (or more correctly deluded herself -- certainly in Lamb's opinion) upon having been 'the love of Coleridge's life. Lamb, who knew a good deal more about Coleridge's life than did Miss Hutchinson, could have named others who had also been 'the love of Coleridge's life' inasmuch as, like Miss Hutchinson, they had stood as a symbol of that highly romanticized, idealized sympathy which Coleridge esteemed as perfect love between two kindred souls. For the past eight years it was Mrs Gillman who had been Coleridge's 'guardian angel'; totally 'reverenced' by him; 'a full-hearted Friend'; 'a being', as he put it, 'inexpressibly dear and valuable in my eyes'; 'incomparable.'

There had been a distant time when Miss Hutchinson had been all these things to Coleridge. Mary and Dorothy Wordsworth, like Miss Hutchinson herself securely convinced of the essential 'innocence' of Coleridge's infatuation, had shared a reflected gratification at her being the object of such Romantically hopeless passion; it had been a poetical situation designed to appeal to the sensibility of the Age. Distance from London (and consideration on the part of friends) had shielded the ladies from knowledge of the damaging things said about Miss Hutchinson in some quarters, though inklings of this gossip had finally given the Wordsworths some concern.

In writing to Miss Hutchinson now to acquaint her with the latest scurrilous talk, in which her name was supplanted by that of Mrs Gillman, Lamb was undoubtedly being exceptionally mischievous. He knew it would sorely provoke Miss Hutchinson, and irritate Wordsworth beyond measure.

Why did Lamb do it? For a variety of reasons. Firstly because he made it

a rule in life to puncture pomposity, to explode solemnity, wherever he found it, and he found it increasingly amongst the Rydalian laurels. Secondly, he had always rather dislike Miss Hutchinson for the role she had played, however naively and unwittingly, in furthering the disharmony of the Coleridge marriage (the Lambs had always been rather fond of Mrs Coleridge). Thirdly, Lamb had certain things he could never forgive Wordsworth. Generously and disinterestedly as Lamb played the role of attempted mediator in the Wordsworth-Coleridge quarrel of 1810, Lamb never truly forgave Wordsworth for what he, Lamb, in common with not a few of Coleridge's old friends, saw as the disparagement of Coleridge's poetry and achievements, by Wordsworth, in order that the latter might thereby enhance his own reputation.

Above all Lamb never forgave Wordsworth for his denigration of *The Ancient Mariner* in the notorious note to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, pointing out the poem's 'great defects', particularly that 'the principal person' (the Mariner) had 'no distinct character, either in his profession of mariner or as a human being'. Lamb, whose discernment from the first had told him that here was one of the great poems of all time, had taken up his pen in white-hot indignation to refute Wordsworth. 'I totally differ from your idea that the Marinere should have had a character and profession . . . [he] undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality and memory of what he was, like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is: that all consciousness of personality is gone'. Lamb had not pulled his punches. 'I was never so affected by any human tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days'. He was 'hurt and vexed' by Wordsworth's unworthy criticisms. Wordsworth, hurt and indignant in his turn, had scrawled a long letter back.

The pomposity of Wordsworth's strictures upon the Mariner, the fatuity of the complaints about lack of character, of recognisable profession, and so forth, soon struck Lamb (when he had cooled down) as marvellously comical. But he never forgot them, and I would suggest never forgave them either, either on behalf of the poem itself, or of Coleridge.

Thereafter much as Lamb on many counts respected Wordsworth, he nonetheless saw him as a deserving butt for unmerciful leg-pulls, quips and ironies. Although we know that their era enjoyed a much more robust sense of humour than ours, it surely required on Wordsworth's part the hide of a rhinoceros to continue to insist upon the gentle nature of these brisk buffetings and the essential spirit of frolic which inspired them. The epithet of 'gentle' particularly seems a curious one for Wordsworth to have applied to Charles Lamb.

But perhaps Wordsworth was simply paraphrasing Coleridge's 'gentle-hearted Charles', borrowed from the Lime-Tree Bower of golden memory? If so, there was confusion in Wordsworth's mind. To be gentle is not synonymous with being gentle-hearted. The truly gentle person is loathe to damage a fly. The *gentle-hearted* person, in his, or her, righteous indignation on behalf of a friend, or cherished cause, will deliver shrewd and doughty blows without a qualm. Such a one was Lamb. When he felt in his inner being that he should strike, he struck.

Lamb, writing of himself in the third person in the preface to the last essays of Elia, pretending that their author was deceased and the essays a post-humous collection, reflected that 'Few understood him -- and I am not

certain that at all times he understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure -- irony . . . He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it . . . He would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless perhaps if rightly taken) which stamped his character for the evening . . . His conceptions rose kindlier than his utterance'.

What Lamb is telling us about himself is that, fundamentally, despite his veneer of frivolity and fun, he is a very serious person indeed; a person who will make sense to those with sufficient sense to understand the nonsense.

Lamb in his letters was always Lamb pure and unvarnished; sometimes very funny and witty indeed, with great seriousness and not a little savagery behind the fun and wit. But as Elia his motives, and intentions, were almost invariably *wholly* serious, with a keen point to make which he considered important enough to spend valuable time and effort upon. He may have liked to pretend, as he put it in the above-quoted preface, that it was 'hit or miss' with him, and his delightful comic sense, his impeccable timing (not for nothing did he spend hours in the theatre) and his apparently effortless, informal style combined to conceal his superb professional artistry. But in truth he spent years learning and perfecting his art; he had steeped himself in all the great literary technicians and stylists; Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Spenser, Milton, Defoe: to name at random but a few of the Masters to whom he apprenticed himself. Lamb devoted hard years to learning how to put humour across lightly on the printed page: no mean feat, especially when done as superlatively well as he could do it.

He tells us how he acquired this incomparable accomplishment: in his essay 'Newspapers Thirty-Five Years Ago' he describes how he wrote, for *The Morning Post*, witty paragraphs, jokes, at sixpence a joke; a rate of pay 'that was thought pretty high too', he adds, continuing, 'The length of no paragraph was to exceed seven lines. Shorter they might be, but they must be poignant'.

And, still continuing: 'Somebody has said, that to swallow six cross-buns daily, consecutively for a fortnight, would surfeit the stoutest digestion. But to have to furnish as many jokes daily, and that not for a fortnight, but for a long twelvemonth, as we were constrained to do, was a little harder exaction . . . No Egyptian taskmaster ever devised a slavery like to that, our slavery . . . Half a dozen jests in a day (bating Sundays too), why, it seems nothing! We make twice the number every day in our lives as a matter of course, and claim no Sabbatical exemptions. But then they come into our head. But when the head has to go out to them -- when the mountain must go to Mahomet -- Reader, try it for once, only for one short twelvemonth'.

Again and again in Elia comedy, irony, honest indignation, deserved contempt, pity, generous compassion, tender sympathy and consummate understanding are blended to produce essays which are quite unlike any others in the language. Elia, among his other wonderful qualities, had the genius, has the genius, to make the written page living reality; to stir us, two hundred years after he put pen to page, to set us laughing aloud -- or dabbing furtive tears from our eyes. He requires no full-length novel, or weighty disquisition, to do what he wants to do. With exquisite simplicity

he can, if need be, sum it all up in one short, one incomparable line.

There are many incomparable Elian lines, but the one which lingers most with me is: 'Do take another slice, Mr Billet, for you do not get pudding every day'.

Elia is ruminating on poor relations: how unpleasant an imposition they are for their families, and how unpleasant these families are, in turn, to them. They contrive, though uninvited, to turn up whenever there is a dinner party; they are squeezed in at a corner of the table in intense discomfort and served miserable portions of this and that, given the dregs of the worst of the wine, and in every way made to feel unwelcome and despicable. In retaliation, they tell tales of episodes in the family's history preferably to be forgotten; make comments revealing that various items which it had been hoped would pass with the guests as heirlooms are in fact only recently acquired and are bran-new; snidely remark on every little defect, spot and blemish which it had been hoped would not be noticed; expose, gratuitously, long buried nick-names and childhood soubriquets: are brash, vulgar, nay downright dirt-common, simply for the sake of being a boorish embarrassment,

All this Elia draws with an inspired acridity, a perfectly barbed irony.

Then, abruptly, he switches to write of a welcome and dignified guest, an old gentleman in respectable black who is invited to dine at regular intervals, has a special chair reserved for him, and a special pudding made for him. The little Charles Lamb (for he is drawing upon his own childhood memory) hears that the old man works, or has worked, or resides, at the Mint, and accordingly the little boy invests the old man with immense wealth, and looks upon him in awe, as a Croesus.

Conversation is always maintained on a key which will keep the obviously distinguished and highly respected visitor happy. 'Once only' says Elia, in his concluding paragraph of the essay, 'Once only I saw the old gentleman really ruffled, and I remembered with anguish the thought that came over me: "Perhaps he will never come here again!". He had been pressed to take another plate of the viand, which I have already mentioned as the indispensable concomitant of his visits. He had refused with a resistance amounting to rigour -- when my aunt . . . [who] would sometimes press civility out of season -- uttered the following memorable application -- "Do take another slice, Mr Billet, for you do not get pudding every day". The old gentleman said nothing at the time -- but he took occasion in the course of the evening, when some argument had intervened between them, to utter with an emphasis which chilled the company, and which chills me now as I write it -- "Woman, you are superannuated!" John Billet did not survive long, after the digesting of this affront; but he survived long enough to assure me that peace was actually restored! and, if I remember alright, another pudding was discreetly substituted in the place of that which had occasioned the offence. He died at the Mint (anno 1781), where he had long held, what he accounted, a comfortable independence; and with five pounds, fourteen shillings, and a penny, which were found in his escrutoire after his decease, left the world, blessing God that he had enough to bury him, and that he had never been obliged to any man for a sixpence. This was -- a Poor Relation',

To be serious, yet never solemn; the crowning art of Elia.

I am sure that most of you know that essay, and all the other essays, by heart, but their magic is such that however often we read them, they are always fresh. Like the man who wrote them, they will never die. They are blessed with unwearied and unwearying eternal life.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose the toast, 'The Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb'.

Molly Lefebure as Guest-of-Honour proposed this toast at the Birthday Luncheon on 8th April, 1989.

WORDSWORTH/LAMB/ELTON: A NEW LITERARY CONNECTION

Duncan Wu

St. Catherine's College, Oxford.

With the recent discovery of a published text of Wordsworth's *The Barberry-Tree*, the controversy over its authorship has been revived; the poem was previously known only through a manuscript version of the poem in a letter from Charles Abraham Elton to his sister.⁽¹⁾ Though I have no light to shed directly upon that conundrum, I have found another, equally remarkable connection between Wordsworth and Elton.

In about 1786, while he was at Hawkshead Grammar School, Wordsworth translated Callistratus' *Harmodiou Melos*, the original of which appears both in Athenaeus' *The Learned Banquet* and *The Greek Anthology*. The earliest surviving draft of W's translation comes down to us in a copy, probably made in 1794, in the Windy Brow Notebook at the Wordsworth Library, Grasmere (Wordsworth Library, MS.10); it begins:

And I will bear my vengeful blade
With the myrtle's boughs arrayed
As Harmodius before
As Aristogiton bore
When the tyrant's breast they gored
With the myrtle-braided sword ...

(11.1-6)

The translation in this form remained unknown until William Knight published a later copy of it, made by Wordsworth in 1799, as 'A Lost Wordsworth Fragment', *The Classical Review* xv (1901) p.82; it was printed by Ernest De Selincourt, from the earlier copy in the Windy Brow Notebook, in his edition of the *Poetical Works* (i 299-300).

However, in 1798 Wordsworth gave Coleridge access to his juvenile notebooks to find material to send to Daniel Stuart, the editor of the *Morning Post*. One of the poems that Coleridge revised and sent was this translation, which appeared in its revised form in the *Morning Post*, 13 Feb 1798, and was not republished until it appeared in Robert Woof's article, 'Wordsworth and Stuart's Newspapers: 1797-1803', *Studies in Bibliography* xv (1962) 165-6. The *Morning Post* version begins:

I will bear my vengeful blade
With the myrtle boughs array'd
As Harmodius before,
As Aristogiton bore:

When the tyrants breast they gor'd
With the myrtle-braided sword ...

(11.1-6)

A comparison shows that Coleridge left the first six lines of the translation substantially unchanged; they remain largely Wordsworth's work.

Until now, it has been assumed that only Stuart and a few others in the Wordsworth/Coleridge circle can have known of the authorship of the translation, published in the *Morning Post* under the title, *Translation of a Celebrated Greek Song*, and with the pseudonym, 'Publicosa'. But the poem seems to have had a life longer than that of most periodical poetry. In 1814, Sir Charles Abraham Elton (the same who, seven years before, had sent his sister a copy of Wordsworth's then-unpublished *The Barberry-Tree*) published his own translation of Callistratus' Harmodius' Song in his *Specimens of the Classical Poets* (1814), clearly echoing Wordsworth's distinctive diction:

In myrtles veil'd I will the falchion wear;
For thus the patriot sword
Harmodius and Aristogeiton bare,
When they the tyrant's bosom gored...

(11.1-4; my italics)

C.M. Bowra's literal translation of the original reads: 'In a myrtle-bough I shall carry my sword, like Harmodius and Aristogeiton, when they killed the tyrant and gave equal laws to Athens' (*Greek Lyric Poetry* [Oxford, 1936] 416-17). There is nothing in the Greek original to licence the bloodthirsty image favoured by the young Wordsworth (and by Elton): 'When the tyrant's breast they gored'. Nor was Wordsworth's line borrowed by any other subsequent translator: Elton was quite specifically, borrowing from 'Publicosa'.

This raises the question of how and why Elton should have borrowed from this obscure, and little-known translation, published 16 years before his own.

He must have composed his translation of Callistratus some years after the publication of 'Publicosa's'. He might have copied the *Morning Post* text into a commonplace book, or preserved a cutting in an album, but apart from a general interest in classical poetry, there is no particular reason why he should have done so. After all, translations of *Harmodiou Melos* appeared frequently in newspapers and journals of the period, and that published by Publicosa is not especially remarkable.

It is more likely that, at a distance of ten to fifteen years after its appearance, Elton was directed to it by someone close to Wordsworth or Coleridge -- and was aware of its true authorship. What is known about his literary connections is summarised by J.C.C. Mays in his article, 'The Authorship of *The Barberry-Tree*' (2); Elton, he writes:

had access to Wordsworth materials and knowledge about Dove Cottage through Oldfield Bowles and the Beaumonts Elton had a certain sympathy for writers of the new school, and later published verses connected with Coleridge, Lamb, and Clare in the *London Magazine*.

(p. 366).

In fact, the most likely person to have shown Elton 'Publicosa's' translation of Callistratus was Lamb. This is indicated by the fact that in August 1821, Elton sent Lamb his *Specimens of the Classical Poets*. Lamb responded by sending him a profuse letter of thanks, which begins by pointing out that 'We have been up to the ear in the classics ever since it came', and praising Elton's translations of Hesiod, Apollonius Rhodius and Virgil. (3) Unfortunately not all of the letter survives, so that there can be no final proof of whether Lamb provided Elton with the *Morning Post* translation of *Harmodiou Melos*.

But he remains the most likely candidate: the letter proves that he was the only person close to either Wordsworth or Coleridge who encouraged Elton's fascination with Classical poetry. Lamb probably knew of 'Publicosa's' true identity, since it was through Coleridge's influence that he had attempted to contribute to the *Morning Post* in March 1800; on 17 March, Lamb told Manning that Coleridge:

has lugg'd me to the brink of engaging to a Newspaper, & has suggested to me for a 1st plan the forgery of a supposed Manuscript of Burton the Anatomist of Melancholy -- I have even written the introductory letter -- and if I can pick up a few guineas this way, I feel they will be most *refreshing* -- bread being so dear --.(4)

Daniel Stuart, the *Post's* editor, ultimately rejected Lamb's contributions, and the relationship soured fairly quickly (see Lamb's amusing letter to Rickman of February 1802, Marrs ii 51-2). But the evidence confirms that Lamb was aware of Coleridge's connection with the *Post*, and it is likely that, in encouraging Lamb to submit work to Stuart, Coleridge showed him some of his own past contributions. In particular, Coleridge would have known that Lamb, as a Classicist, would have been interested in 'Publicosa's' translation from Callistratus.

NOTES

1. See *The Review of English Studies* New Series XXXVII 147 (Aug 1986), pp. 346-77.
2. J.C.C. Mays, 'The Authorship of "The Barberry-Tree".' *RES* xxxvii (1986) pp. 360-70.
3. See *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935); iii 303-5.
4. See *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, N.Y., 1975), hereafter Marrs; i.190.

WORDSWORTH, HORACE, AND THE PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS

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The study of the relationship of Wordsworth to Horace is especially interesting because of much excellent scholarship. Particularly valuable is the 1916 study by Mary Thayer, *The Influence of Horace on the Chief English Poets of the Nineteenth Century*. Her treatment of Wordsworth reveals some 31 unquestioned traces or references to Horace, and some 11 probable

references. She notes that Wordsworth quotes or directly refers to the *Ars Poetica* three times, the most important instance being his use of the *Ars Poetica* for a motto for his pamphlet on *The Convention of Cintra* (53-64)

John Pritchard's 'Aristotle, Horace and Wordsworth' builds carefully on the work of Thayer. Pritchard shows through extensive analyses of allusions and echoes how several basic concepts like Wordsworth's ideas on the prophetic character of the poet, the requisite sincerity of the poet, the education of the poet, 'labor limae', and the purpose of poetry are practically the same as key principles of Horace (pp. 82-91). Even in classical scholarship, Wordsworth's relation to Horace has been carefully considered on the major question of poetic diction by J.F. D'Alton (pp. 387-88). One of the most helpful and thorough recent studies is Bruce Graver's examination of Wordsworth as translator. Graver demonstrates Wordsworth's considerable abilities as a Latinist and his intimate knowledge of and profound respect for Horace as an artist. He was so sensitive to Horace's art that in his translations Wordsworth captures not only an exactness of thought but also such structural features as concreteness of diction, alliteration, and cadence (pp. 170-73).

The most important critical study which relates Wordsworth's Preface to the *Ars Poetica* is Meyer Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Abrams traces eighteenth-century rhetoric and general critical theory back to classical rhetoric and critical doctrine. In his fourth chapter, 'The Development of the Expressive Theory of Poetry and Art', the first subsection is entitled *Si vis me flere* (71-72). This famous expression comes from line 102 of the *Ars Poetica*. The full context is so familiar because it contains some of the most famous lines in western literature. (1)

Non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunt et quocumque
volent animum auditoris agunt. ut ridentibus arident, ita
flentibus adsunt humani voltus: si vis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi: tunc tua me infortunia laedent, Telephe vel
Peleu; male si mundata loqueris, aut dormitabo aut ridebo.
(pp. 99-105)

Fairclough translates: 'Not enough is it for poems to have beauty: they must have charm, and lead the hearer's soul where they will. As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to those who weep. If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself: then, O Telephus or Peleus, will your misfortunes hurt me: if the words you utter are ill suited, I shall laugh or fall asleep'. (p. 459)

In relating the *si vis me flere* to Wordsworth's theory that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling, Abrams begins by reminding us that the ethical proof is one of the most important components of classical rhetoric. This is the means whereby the orator convinces us of his knowledge, good will, and honesty. Particularly, the ethical proof is the means whereby the emotions and heart of the orator are to be seen as one with the issue to be argued and the client to be defended (pp. 71-72).

After demonstrating the importance of the ethical proof in rhetoric, Abrams then shows how the expression *si vis me flere* became a Horatian tag used to express the importance of this proof not only for orators but also for authors generally, reminding them - especially poets - of their duty

to identify with the emotions of their characters and lyric personae. By the eighteenth century the ethical proof and authorial identification are so closely entwined that it is not much of a step to Wordsworth's definition that poetry is the overflow of feelings. Abrams gives a number of examples; one of the most interesting is from Samuel Johnson's comment on Cowley's poem on the death of Lord Hervey: 'There is much praise [in this poem] but little passion . . . When he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself . . .' (p. 72).

Given the important context of the expression *si vis me flere*, a student of Wordsworth finds the ancestry of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* handsomely enobled. However, if one examines this expression and its full context with the eye of a strict Latinist, one can argue that the speaker in the *Ars Poetica*, the persona of Horace, actually addresses *only* the characters Telephus and Peleus. If these characters show properly characteristic emotion, then, says the speaker, he will weep with them. Horace does not directly speak to the tyro poets, the addressees of the poem. (2)

The full context in which the *si vis me flere* is found runs from lines 73-119. It begins with the famous dictum that it was Homer who showed us the proper verse form for the great deeds of kings and generals and the grief caused by war:

Res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella quo scribi possent
numero, monstravit Homerus. (73-74)

Horace goes on to detail the history of the various poetic genres and the appropriate content, structure, and tone of each. He then discusses tragedy and comedy rather fully, their appropriate diction and requisite characterization. However, through this entire section Horace also gives us an emphatic and richly illustrated discussion of his concept of poetic decorum. Decorum for Horace means authenticity. Having laid out a vivid catalogue of the major genres and the nature, specific purpose, and attendant appropriate structure of each, Horace insists that each genre must be used authentically; each must be used as its nature requires. (3)

He also insists that characterization be authentic. The dialogue in general and the speeches of all the dramatic agents must be consistent with the real personalities and the actual human context which they are called upon to realize dramatically. Each age group, each social class, each national type must truly speak in character or the drama will fail. Because each character in a play must convince us of his authenticity, Horace directly calls upon two well-known characters in Roman drama, Telephus and Peleus, and challenges them to speak authentically in order that their speech and their tragedy may be genuinely moving.

The point of this close consideration of the *si vis me flere*, however, is not to question the application of this Horatian tag to the ethical proof and to Wordsworth's theory of poetry. Abrams has given abundant evidence that such an application is absolutely valid. (4) But in looking thus sharply at Horace's text, one is challenged by the possibility of closer ties between Wordsworth's Preface and the *Ars Poetica*; ties which a detailed examination of the Latin text would sustain.

I should like to suggest that a close study of this very Horatian context actually does lead us to a key Wordsworthian analogue. 'In our context

Horace has elaborately argued his theory of dramatic decorum. In lines 108-11, Horace lays down the principle upon which his theory is based, a theory which Brink calls "the psychology of style" *The "Ars Poetica"*, (p.188):

format enim Natura prius nos intus ad omnem fortunarum habitum;
juvat aut impellit ad iram, aut ad humum maerore gravi deducit et
angit; post effert animi motus interprete lingua.

Fairclough translates: "Nature first shapes us within to meet every change of fortune: she brings joy or impels to anger, or bows us to the ground and tortures us under a load of grief; then, with the tongue for interpreter, she proclaims the emotions of the soul". (p.459)

There are four important Latin expressions in this text which remind us vividly of Wordsworth. The first is *Natura*. It is she who disciplines and shapes us through human experience, and it is she who teaches us *fortunarum habitum*, as Brink translates, 'with regard to every condition that may befall' human nature, 'every case of good or ill luck' *The "Ars Poetica"*, (p.189). Our second term is *intus*, not merely 'within', but 'inwardly', 'in the mind or soul', 'within one's self'. Our third term is *animi motus*, 'emotions'. It is nature who shapes us to know and feel and express from deep within ourselves emotions which are the proper embodiment of the full range of human experience. This intimate unity of nature, total human experience, and profound emotion, I would suggest, is most reminiscent of Wordsworth's apotheosis of nature and his definition of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

The fourth term in our context is *interprete lingua*. An ablative absolute, this expression reminds us of one more primary element in Wordsworth's poetic theory. As an absolute expression, it modifies the entire sentence, and yet it enjoys an important grammatical independence. Nature has shaped us to meet both blows and blessings; nature has endowed us with the emotional capacity for total experience and authentic expression. But -- *interprete lingua* -- it is the tongue of the poet which translates nature's work and our experience into words. *Interpres* is a wonderful Wordsworthian word in this context. It means 'agent', 'broker', 'negotiator', 'interpreter', 'translator'. In the two instances in the Preface where Wordsworth defines poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, he explicitly differentiates between poetry's source in emotion and the work of the poet (*Prose 1*, pp. 127, 149). It is nature who works in us, but -- *interprete lingua* -- it is the poet who speaks for us.

There is another section of the *Ars Poetica* where, I would suggest, we find a powerful analogue, a passage possibly directly echoed by Wordsworth. In lines 309-22 Horace gives explicit instructions on the education of the poet. The first three lines of this section lay down a famous Horatian precept:

Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons. rem tibi
Socraticae poterunt ostendere chartae, verbaque provisam rem non
invita sequentur. (309-11).

First Horace insists that wisdom is the source, the principle, the true spring of writing well. In the next line Horace cites the pages of Socrates as the preeminent source for the moral wisdom and the proper subject matter of the poet, and in the last line Horace insists that once such wisdom has

been acquired, the proper language of poetry will rise naturally (Brink, *The "Ars Poetica"* pp. 340-42). Horace next proceeds to give the young poet further instruction on the necessity of mastering the art of authentic characterization; he must learn the meaning of filial love, friendship, patriotism, the duties of senators, generals, judges, etc. (312-16). Next follows a striking passage most reminiscent of Wordsworth:

respicere exemplar vitae morumque jubebo doctum imitatorem
et vivas hinc ducere voces. (317-18)

Horace urges the young poet, having learned the imitative art of poetry, *doctum imitatorem*, now to consider carefully as his model life as it is actually lived, *respicere exemplar vitae morumque*, and from life, from the living world, draw the living voices, the authentic speech of human beings, *et vivas hinc ducere voces*. Here, I would suggest, we have in Horace's precepts two of Wordsworth's prominent ideals: the poet's eye ever to be on his subject, *exemplar vitae* and poetry as the language of men, *vivas voces*.

With this consideration of the *vivas voces*, let us turn to an apparently disturbing passage in Book 6 of *The Prelude*. Here Wordsworth seems to deny that there is any practical advantage in the study of the classics for the aspiring poet:

In fine,
I was a better judge of thoughts than words;
Misled, in estimating words, not only
By common inexperience of youth,
But by the trade in classic niceties,
The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase
From languages that want the living voice
To carry meaning to the natural heart;
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense. (VI. 105-14)

As Professor Owen shows in his notes, Wordsworth refers here to students' mechanical practice culling words and phrases from handbooks such as the *Gradus Ad Parnassum* as an ordinary means of learning Latin verse composition (*Prelude*, p. 114). Such a practice would obviously violate Horace's emphatic mandate that the young poet master the *vivas voces* of humanity.

Setting aside what might have been Wordsworth's attitude on the training of young poets, let us concentrate on his indictment of this practice. Not only do such culled words and expressions lack the 'living voice', but the procedure violates every rule laid down by Horace in the context we have just considered. Wordsworth's terms, 'living voice . . . passion, truth, simplicity and sense' are all substantially if not explicitly mentioned by Horace. Wordsworth's expression 'living voice' would seem to be very significant.

I would suggest that Wordsworth possibly had this section of the *Ars Poetica* in mind when he wrote this passage in *The Prelude* and that his expression 'living voice' in his equivalent of Horace's *vivas voces*. I have not found any commentary on *The Prelude* citing this possible echo, but I would suggest that it constitutes a wonderful piece of Wordsworthian irony that he

who cared so much for the language of men as the proper language of poetry would criticize bad instruction in the composition of Latin verse by echoing in his censure the great principle of *Vivas voces* laid down by Horace himself.

So far we have concentrated on the general relation of the *Ars Poetica* to the Preface; now let us consider the Preface itself. Here too I would suggest we have a direct echo of Horace. Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry comes in the second of two lengthy paragraphs dealing with the object proposed for *Lyrical Ballads* and its distinguishing characteristic that each poem has a purpose. In this process Wordsworth discusses rustic life, language, and emotion. Without rehearsing what so many critics have already discussed so well, I would suggest only that possibly in this section Wordsworth had Horace's *Ars Poetica* in mind.

In these paragraphs Wordsworth seems to struggle to explain exactly in what way poetry is emotion. After a detailed treatment of the relationship between rustic life and its characteristic language, Wordsworth argues an organic relationship between the language of men and the fundamental movements of human emotion. He then discusses purpose in his poetry and describes the intricate process whereby poetic creation begins in the excitement of feelings. However, his feelings are disciplined by his thoughts; but his thoughts 'are indeed the representatives' of his 'past feelings'. From considering this reciprocal process, Wordsworth concludes: 'habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose* [emphasis his]' (Prose 1: p.127).

Wordsworth's next sentence is particularly interesting: 'If this opinion be erroneous', he writes, 'I can have little right to the name of a Poet'. I would suggest that this sentence is an echo of lines 86-87 in the *Ars Poetica*. These lines are from the rather extended discussion of poetic decorum which we considered above, lines 73-118 where up to line 86 Horace discusses specific features fundamental to the genres of epic, elegiac, iambic, and lyric verse. He concludes this section in lines 86-87 with the following pronouncement:

descriptas servare vices operumque colores
cur ego si nequeo ignoroque poeta salutor?

Fairclough translates, 'If I fail to keep and do not understand these well-marked shifts and shades of poetic forms, why am I hailed as poet?' (pp. 457, 459).

'I can have little right to the name of a Poet', and 'why am I hailed as poet', *cur . . . poeta salutor*: both expressions say the same thing. Though I have found no commentary which cites this as a possible echo of Horace, I would suggest that both the expression of Wordsworth and its context recall Horace's passage. In fact, I would urge that the special force of the Horatian echo in Wordsworth is to emphasize sharply a crucial difference between the critical theories of the two poets.

The context of both Wordsworth and Horace are practically the same: each poet has laid out an elaborate process-structure or schema and then declares that he is to be considered a poet to the degree he has mastered this schema. As Brink argues, Horace may simply be 'deprecating and mock-modest',

seemingly directing 'against himself what he is censuring in others' (*The "Ars Poetica"* P. 173). His task is clearly easier than Wordsworth's; it is the objective mastery of the basic poetic genres.

Wordsworth's task is onerous; it is elusive and interior. He has challenged himself with the responsibility of giving an accurate account of the emotive forces involved in poetic inspiration and the method whereby such inspiration becomes fruitful. He can be called a poet only if the complex train of emotion, thought, memory, meditation, and description -- as he understands it -- actually results in purposeful, worthy poetry.

Possibly Wordsworth wrote, 'If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet', without thinking of Horace at all. But his challenge and its context remind us of Horace and also remind us of one of the constant and trying quests in Wordsworth's life as a poet: to search back into himself for the origins and operations of his poetic inspiration, to nurture that inspiration into verse that would live.

Horace never quibbled about inspiration; it is a given, and of equal importance with the art of poetic composition as his famous declaration in lines 408-11 clearly shows:

Natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte, quaesitum est: ego nec
studium sine divite vena, nec rude quid prosit video ingenium:
alterius sic altera poscit opem res et conjurat amice.

Fairclough translates: 'Often it is asked whether a praise-worthy poem be due to Nature or to art. For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by Nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league' (p. 485).

As we have seen in our consideration of *Natura, intus, animi motus*, and *interprete lingua*, the dependence of art on nature is fundamental for Horace. But the *Ars Poetica* is precisely that, a treatise elaborately devoted to the art of poetry. Wordsworth is no less a conscious artist than is Horace, but Wordsworth is also and especially a poet of the *intus*, the *animi motus*. It is significant that Wordsworth should echo Horace in the sentence which comes immediately before his famous definition of poetry. The force of that echo reminds us of Horace's challenge that the poet be the master of his art, but Wordsworth taxes himself more profoundly. He is to master the opaque intricacies of inspiration as it embodies itself in emotion and thought and thence into language and poetry. Here we see a great difference between Wordsworth and Horace. The one is the poet of his art; the other, the poet of the mystery of poetic creation.

NOTES

1. All quotations from the *Ars Poetica* are from the Loeb edition. References to the Latin text are to lines; references to the translation are to pages of the Fairclough translation. Unless a translator is specifically named, translations and paraphrases are mine.
2. For a detailed commentary on the *Ars Poetica*, see C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The "Ars Poetica"*. For a specific discussion of the Telephus and Peleus passage, see pp. 179 and 187. I am

indebted to my Latinist colleague Prof. D.A. Poduska for demonstrating the importance of a strict reading of this passage and for his tutelage in a very close reading of Horace.

3. See Gordon Williams, pp. 746-50, especially p. 747, for a discussion of decorum in Horace.
4. See also C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The Prolegomena to the Literary Epistles* for an extensive consideration of the rhetorical background of the *Ars Poetica*. See his volume on the *Ars Poetica*, p. 187, for a consideration of the presence of the poet in this passage, and p. 188, for his consideration of Horace and poetic sincerity.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Arabian Nights in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of The Thousand and One Nights into British Culture.

Edited by PETER L. CARACCIOLO. Pp xxx+330. Houndmills, Basingstoke, and London: Macmillan Press, 1988. £27.50.

The enchantment of British readers and writers by the *Arabian Nights* goes back to the early eighteenth century when English versions of Galland's

translation into French first appeared. The tales themselves with their exotic settings, wonderful adventures, and mixture of the everyday and magical; their intricate narrative structures of framing and framed stories, of inserted stories, of repetitions with a difference, of series obliquely linked; the puzzles and riddles and surprises with which they tantalize the reader; all these have not only fascinated and entertained, but have inspired writers and artists over the last two and a half centuries. This study which charts the effects of that inspiration on English Literature is itself a sort of *Arabian Nights* in which critics examine the work of poets and novelists to find within them influences and reverberations arising from these stories, settings, and narrative methods. Thus critics frame writers who frame the *Nights* in a manner which teases us into thought.

Peter Caracciolo provides the outer frame with a learned survey of the translations, reception, and literary and artistic influence of the *Arabian Nights* in Europe, and more particularly in Britain, from Galland, through the scholarly editions of the nineteenth century, down to the paperback publications of the 1950s and 60s. He comments interestingly on how successive editions, and sometimes new illustrations, often reawakened childhood memories and led to creative reinterpretations of the tales in novels and poems, children's stories and detective novels, and also affected drama and ballet. The elliptical, allusive, style of this introduction with its copious notes makes it more useful for reference than general reading. I could have wished it were longer in order to substantiate its conclusions.

Readers of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* will be particularly interested in Caracciolo's discussion of the interest aroused in the Romantics by the *Arabian Nights*. He shows how the learned commentaries of the late eighteenth century on the *Nights* and other Eastern tales, together with the discovery of further stories, led to an increased enthusiasm for them; an enthusiasm which was shared by Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth. He goes on to examine the links between the *Nights* and parts of the *Prelude*, especially the dream of the Arabian Knight in Book V. He deals more briefly with Keats and Byron, but finds particular significance in Scott's use of the *Nights* in the Waverley novels. As Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser had conveyed to previous generations the flavour of those stories that had earlier seeped into Europe, so Scott's formative influence on Victorian writers is shown to be linked to his own indebtedness to the *Nights* collection.

Allan Grant's essay 'The Genie and the Albatross: Coleridge and the *Arabian Nights*' is the only one that directly mentions Lamb. In it he explores the connections between imaginary works such as the *Nights*, fairy tales, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and 'The Ancient Mariner'. 'Wild tales' in Lamb's approving phrase, are related to childhood, and to dreams, and, as both Lamb and Coleridge testified, nourish the imagination. Grant takes as his starting point Coleridge's comment on the story of the merchant who, in eating dates and casting the stones aside, unwittingly hits a genie's son in the eye and so kills him. The genie appears and demands the merchant's life. The logic of this story as Coleridge points out is not that of the ordinary world and Grant suggests that its interest for Coleridge lies in the presentation of an imaginary universe beyond the knowledge conveyed by the senses. Grant asks if 'The Ancient Mariner' is Coleridge's own *Arabian Nights* tale, and suggests that its miraculous part points, like the story of the genie, to an order greater than our

senses perceive, one which encompasses all worlds, and which can only be imagined in terms of fantasy. Full and interesting notes compiled by Deirdre Toomey provide a running commentary on Grant's discussion.

Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud takes up the exotic appeal of the collection in her essay 'English Travellers and the *Arabian Nights*'. She shows how English travellers to the Near East from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Richard Burton both used the *Arabian Nights* as a guide to Eastern culture, and, conversely, verified the authenticity of the *Nights* by what they saw. Their letters, travel books, fictional works, and scholarly annotations, were as much inspired by the Eastern tales as by their actual experience.

The *Arabian Nights* has always fascinated children. Brian Alderson in 'Scheherazade in the Nursery' examines the popularity of their stories as a source for children's publications from the eighteenth century to the present day and comes to the conclusion that, for a variety of reasons - commercial considerations, moralistic intrusions, omission or cavalier handling of the frame story, poor selection, inadequate regard to the eastern nature of the tales and the oral traditions from which they spring - editions for children have done justice neither to the stories nor to the ability of child readers. He also discusses the illustrations which, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, assumed major importance. A good selection from the most famous of the *Nights*' illustrators is included in the book.

Among the many writers whose childhood experience of the *Nights* made a lasting impression was Dickens. His delight in them is shown by Michael Slater in 'Dickens in Wonderland' to be closely associated with his sense of the importance of developing wonder in the child in order to nurture sympathy in the adult. Eastern tales for him are usually a means of investing the ordinary with the marvellous, be it beautiful, mysterious, or terrifying, but he may also employ them to satirise social or political institutions. In other Victorian writers we find a similar fascination with the exotic and interest in the narrative framework together with the indebtedness to particular tales and motifs. Thus Caracciolo in an essay on Collins finds the group of stories drawn together by the Porter, the three Calendars, and the Ladies of Baghdad to have a bearing upon events in *The Moonstone*, and Leonée Ormond notices both Thackeray's references to 'Alnaschar's visions', the 'Barmecide feast', and the story of Amina the witch who has a Ghoul for lover, and Stevenson's darkening of such motifs as the complex task and the double, while Cornelia Cook sees Cranford society as a harem without a sultan, and traces Meredith's echoes of 'Aladdin' and the story of 'Prince Ahmed and Peri Banou'.

Twentieth century novelists and poets, while paying attention to individual stories, seem to have found particular inspiration in the intricacies of the framing devices. Robert G. Hampson points out their presence in the work of Conrad, Wells, and Joyce, and Warwick Gould, in an essay addressed to Yeatsian scholars, traces the effects of the *Nights*' structural methods and riddles of narrative enclosure on the two versions of Yeats's *A Vision*. On a different tack there is a short and fascinating article by John Heath-Stubbs comparing the tale of the 'Young King of the Black Islands' with the Holy Grail legends and the myth of the Waste Land.

The text begins and ends gracefully with poems by Grevel Lindop and R.G. Hampson, the first 'To Scheherazade' and the second on 'The False Caliph'. There is an appendix with Kirby's comparative table of tales in the principal

editions. Not all that could be said on the *Nights* has been said. Apart from Caracciolo's reference to detective stories and a note by Hampson on the tales as material for pantomime, there is nothing on popular literature. Like the tales themselves, more studies are waiting to open out of this one, and that is as it should be.

Rachel Bennett

University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

OBITUARY

MRS. CONNIE HALE, whose death was announced recently, will be very much missed. She was the sister of Dr. Sidney Rich, one of our Vice Presidents for many years, and daughter of Mr. S.M. Rich.

A lively and convivial person, she was a pleasant companion and we have much enjoyed the meetings we had with her at her home and at her synagogue. She was a regular attender at the Birthday luncheons.

Her funeral service at the South London Crematorium was taken by the Rabbi of her local Synagogue assisted by Rabbi Julia Neuberger, of the Streatham Synagogue founded by her father. In paying tribute to her life the Rabbi included a selection of poems she had written which revealed her deep spiritual qualities.

Connie had been a member of the Charles Lamb Society for forty years and is our last link with Mr. Samuel Rich who was the first Editor of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*. The words which concluded the obituary to Samuel Rich in the *Bulletin* would seem appropriate to repeat for his daughter - 'Farewell genial spirit, your high friendship, your dry humour, your twinkling eyes will be greatly missed'. We send our sympathy to Connie's family.

Florence Reeves
Joan Mead

CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON, 1990

Members will have noticed from the Programme of Events for 1989-90 which was enclosed with the July *Bulletin* that the Birthday Luncheon, 1990, will take place on Charles Lamb's *actual* birthday, instead of an 'official' one, as usually has to be the case for practical reasons. At the time of writing the details have still to be confirmed, but Madeline Huxstep urges us all to 'book' the date firmly in our diaries. 'A rare event', she said to me on the telephone 'DO NOT MISS IT!' An understandable and natural feeling, which we will all share!

LIST OF SPEAKERS

Madeline Huxstep also points out that from time to time she receives requests for speakers on Charles Lamb and his circle. The Society would obviously like to return a positive answer to such requests, which offer a good opportunity to spread the knowledge of our own activities as well as erudition and goodwill. If any members are willing to respond to such requests, the General Secretary would be glad to hear from them. An indication of whether afternoon or evening times suit best would also be appreciated.

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

News of future conferences and courses in late 1989 and beyond is now coming in. The information which follows may be of interest to our members and readers.

THE WORDSWORTH TRUST

Information concerning a number of forthcoming events at Grasmere is now to hand.

A Byron Weekend: 17 - 19 November 1989 To coincide with its excellent display Byron - A Dangerous Romantic? at the Wordsworth Museum (much of the material comes from the archives of Byron's publisher, Messrs. John Murray) the Trust is organising a Byron Weekend 'of both study and celebration' at the Prince of Wales Hotel, Grasmere, from 17 - 19 November 1989. Among the speakers will be the Rt. Hon Michael Foot, the leading Byronist Drummond Bone of Glasgow University, and other Byron specialists.

The Wordsworth Winter School, 25 February - 2 March 1990 Arrangements for the annual Wordsworth Winter School at the Prince of Wales Hotel, Grasmere, are now complete. The theme for 1990 is *The Prelude*, and one may, perhaps, be forgiven a moment's exultation on noticing that among the lecturers are a number of members of The Charles Lamb Society, wearing, so to speak, their other hats. The lecture titles do, in addition, suggest that like cheerfulness, Charles Lamb will keep breaking in. As well as the full lecture and seminar programme there will be daily excursions, and if the weather is clement some hardier spirits will doubtless rediscover Charles and Mary Lamb's delight in Lakeland Walks.

Book Collectors' Weekend Details for the annual Book Collectors' Weekend have yet to be announced, but the dates have been fixed as from 23 - 25 March 1990.

Wordsworth Summer Conference, 1990 Again, the programme remains to be fixed, but the dates of the annual Wordsworth Summer Conference are from 28th July to 11th August, 1990.

Further information concerning all Wordsworth Trust activities can be obtained from The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria LA 22 9SH. Telephone Grasmere (09665) 544/547 (651 for residential courses).

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW The Centre for Romantic Studies is holding an international conference on 'European Romanticism and Scotland' from March 19 - 22, 1990. It is described as 'an international inter-disciplinary comparative conference' so its scope will be wide. Further details from Drummond Bone, English Literature Department, Glasgow University, Glasgow G 12 8QQ.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA The Southeastern Nineteenth Century Studies Association of America is to hold a conference on 'Myth, Mythology and Mythmaking in the Nineteenth Century' at Charleston from 19 - 21 April 1990. Further information from Dr. Jack Rhodes, Department of English, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409, U.S.A.

SCOTTISH BOOKCOLLECTOR Judging from the copy (issus II), which has been sent to the *Bulletin*, a wider readership than Scots bibliophiles will find much of interest in the relatively new journal *Scottish Book Collector*, since its contents range from nineteenth-century gardening books and regional literature to two very good articles on De Quincey's dealings with Edinburgh publishers and the discovery of some of his long-forgotten minor fiction. Charles Lamb would have been amused (and probably rather pleased) to find himself quoted in 'A Bookseller's Scrapbook' as a prime authority on those who borrow and do not return favourite volumes. He would be even more amused to learn that a prime culprit in this respect was his contemporary the aesthete and moral philosopher, Professor Dugald Stewart, of whom a friend said, when Stewart confessed to being deficient in arithmetic, 'That, tho', very improbable, might be true; but he certainly excelled in book-keeping'.

Further information from Jennie Renton, IIa Forth Street, Edinburgh EH1 3LE.

'REVIEWING ROMANTICISM'

There seems a very good chance that a selection of papers from the 'Reviewing Romanticism' conference, which was held at King Alfred's College, Winchester, in April this year, and at which Jane Aaron spoke on 'A Modern Electra: matricide and the writings of Mary and Charles Lamb' and Bill Ruddick on recent developments in Lamb criticism, will be published. Further information on this, and on the second conference proposed by the new British Association for Romantic Studies (BARS for short: surely Charles Lamb would have been amused by that, too) in 1991 will be included in the *Bulletin* at a future date.

A PAGE OF POSTSCRIPTS WITHIN WHICH AN EDITOR'S PREFACE LURKS.

Finding myself, for a wonder, with some space left at the end of this Bulletin allows me the luxury of a few paragraphs in which to catch up on Society news and to say something about the present state of the Bulletin's arrangements and affairs.

THE A.G.M. AND AFTER

This year's A.G.M. showed our Society to be in good shape as well as in good heart. The protracted negotiations with the Charity Commissioners to obtain the charitable status which will save us money to devote to cataloguing, book repairing, the sponsoring of scholarly endeavours and most other things than 'stimulating the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour' (the Commissioners will only allow us to do that if we spend no money on it, it appears: they seem to imagine that 'Elian spirit' is something which comes out of a bottle!) do now seem to many of us to have become the modern equivalent of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce, or the lawsuit which drove Poor Peter Peebles mad, but doubtless our aims will be realised one of these days.

Meanwhile, there have been various changes among the officers of the Society. Our President, Professor John Stevens, decided that with his imminent retirement from Cambridge likely to mean frequent requests to travel overseas, he ought to resign his Presidency. With great regret the Society bowed to his wishes, deeply appreciative of his helpfulness and kindness during the years of his connection with the Charles Lamb Society. We have been pleased to learn very lately (whence the correction of the statement at the foot of p.141) that Professor Stevens has agreed to be the Guest of Honour at the Birthday Luncheon on February 10, 1990.

The Society has been fortunate in its Officers, and its Officers enjoy their duties and are happy to serve for lengthy periods of time. But when they attempt to step down, pleading anno domini or some such reason, they discover that their fellows are by no means willing to listen to them. 'Oh no, not yet!' is the gist of the usual response. Latterly of course some Officers have managed to find themselves replacements: Florence Reeve handed over the office of Hon. Membership Secretary to Audrey Moore, Mr Houston Wallace gave place as Hon. Treasurer to Nick Powell, and Mary Wedd passed over the Editorship of the Bulletin to myself. Three more friendly, and quietly efficient Elian Officers it would have been impossible to think of, and the same has been true of all our other Officers that I have known. But of course retiring from office is one thing, disentangling oneself from the friendly requests to tell things, do little jobs, advise and generally help out is quite another matter. Impeccable files and crystal-clear instructions we may receive, but we also want the people who know everything to be near at hand. And here, of course, the joy of the thing resides, for they are Not Gone, the Old Familiar Faces, but very much in our midst: and so the delicate comedy of elegant, courteous minuets in which the retired officers try not to be in the way, and the new generation tries to make sure they do not get away continues from meeting to meeting!

OUR NEW PRESIDENT

A piece of good news, to console us on John Stevens's retirement, is the Cambridge connection will continue. Professor John Beer, who has been a very good friend to the Charles Lamb Society in the past, has done us another good turn by agreeing to become our new President. Our pleasure at this news is augmented by the thought that we may hope to see another of our good friends, his wife, Professor Gillian Beer at some of our future meetings.

THE STATE OF THE BULLETIN.

In one respect the Bulletin may be said to be in a sorry state, for not even Mary Wedd's meticulous training and inspiring example over the last decade can provide a new Editor with sharp eyes for typing errors and so forth. To my shame, I opened the July number and saw at once, horribly conspicuous in the middle of the very first page, that a misplaced apostrophe S in the title of Carolyn Misenheimer's Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture had robbed one of the Lambs of his or her authorship of part of the Tales from Shakespeare! Oh the disgrace of it! With burning cheeks I offer my apologies to Professor Misenheimer and, I rather think, Mary Lamb.

But at least the material is coming in, and there are several excellent articles on file, with the prospect of others being added once this year's programme of lectures begins. The Editor's chief concern is to try to ensure that there is at least one article squarely devoted to Charles Lamb or Mary in every issue of the Bulletin. They reach me in a trickle, and more would certainly be welcome. I follow Mary Wedd's advice and encourage likely people who I meet at Conferences to write on Lamb for us, and I am glad to recollect that several of our own members are also planning to write pieces for the Bulletin. Let me use this opportunity to utter yet another cry of encouragement to them.

I have several good essays on Wordsworth to hand, and tremble slightly at the thought that if others which I have had word of turn up I may have to feed them into the Bulletin rather slowly and over some time. The thing to be aimed for is balance, and one would like to be able to offer a range of material concerning the Lambs' fellow writers. I have one or two good essays on Coleridge by me, and the prospect of publishing two interesting pieces on Hazlitt in due course, but Hazlitt material has been thin on the ground until very recently, and work on Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, Hood or the lesser figures does not seem to have come my way.

On the whole, though, the Bulletin's affairs are in a healthy condition. It is read and respected at home and overseas, and we seem to be answering a real need for younger scholars: a point which gives me particular pleasure.

WORD PROCESSING Any minute now the age of the word processor is about to break upon us, and the editorial correcting fluid and ball point will be a thing of the past. One awaits this development with a lively eagerness tinged with dread, consoling oneself with a pun bad enough for Thomas Hood on an off day; the thought that at least in the future all one's errors will be justified.

Bill Ruddick