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	CONTENTS	Page
The Education of Elia	John Stevens	257
Falstaff in Miniature: James White's <i>Original Letters of Sir John Falstaff</i>	Reginald Watters	265
'Genius of the Sacred Fountain of Tears': A Bicentenary Tribute to the Sonnets of William Lisle Bowles	Bill Ruddick	276
Hazlitt and the Game of Fives	Stanley Jones	284
Book Reviews		285
'Fifty Years Ago'		288
Society News and Notes from Members		289
Index to New Series Volume 9 (Nos. 66-72)		295

THE EDUCATION OF ELIA

John Stevens

Magdalene College, Cambridge

The title of this address - the 'education' of Elia - attracted me not only because of its euphony but also because it will license me, as I hope, to introduce several related topics without total incoherence -- Lamb's childhood and boyhood reading, his education at Christ's Hospital, and his experience of music ...

Charles began his formal education, as had his sister, Mary, at the Academy of Mr William Bird, off Fetter Lane; Bird advertised himself as 'the eminent writer and teacher of languages and mathematics'.¹ Lamb was about six years old. Some 44 years later he wrote:

Heaven knows what "languages" were taught in it then; I am sure that out of it, but a little of our native English. By mathematics, [reader,] must be understood 'ciphering'. It was in fact a humble day school... To make himself look more formidable - if a pedagogue had need of these heightenings - Bird wore one of those flowered Indian gowns, formerly in use with schoolmasters; the strange figures upon which we used to interpret into hieroglyphics of pain and suffering.

William Bird did not have long to put his impress on Lamb, who at the tender age of seven-and-a-half entered Christ's Hospital. Coleridge, aged ten, was a new boy at the same date, October 1782, having previously been in the school at Hertford. Someone as young as Lamb would normally have gone to Hertford 'preparatory' school, as it were - a much more humane institution, at least by the standards of two hundred years ago (I suppose Lamb was admitted to the Senior School because his home was so near). But the intellectual demands even at Hertford were not soft. Thomas Gordon Hake recorded:² 'I was at once put into Greek and Latin grammar with *delectuses* [anthologies] and then into Aesop'. The author was then, in 1816, eight years old. Hake obviously found Aesop's Fables, in whatever language, more fun than grammar. And this brings me to one of the by-ways into which the boys in the 'grammar school' might be allowed to stray. On the borders of the standard classical authors there were evidently others - some even in English - which had the seal of approval.

At Hertford, this 'lighter' reading consisted of such texts as Goldsmith's *Histories of Greece, Rome and England*, the doubtless edifying *Conversations of a Missionary with an Indian*, and (for junior classes) the *Selections of Mrs Trimmer from the Old and New Testaments*.³

There must also have been a lot of memorizing to do, since the same Old Blue who gives this reading list claims (aged 11?), besides having mastered Latin grammar, to have known The Psalms of David by heart and to have been intimately acquainted with the inimitable performances of Messrs Sternhold and Hopkins.

At Newgate St, site of the main school until early this century, Coleridge described how the parallel English reading was conducted by the famous ('very sensible...very severe') master, the Reverend James Bowyer (Boyer)⁴

At the same time that we were studying the Greek tragic poets he made us read Shakespeare and Milton *as lessons*: and they were the lessons too, which required most trouble to bring up, so as to escape his censure. I learned from him that poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle and more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word.

Teaching - of English texts - of such a quality that it made a permanent impression on such a mind as Coleridge's must have been a rarity. Lamb spent more of his time under instruction, if that is the word, from the Reverend Matthew Field and regarded himself as lucky.⁵

We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. There was now and again the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. The remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers.

One of the most illuminating sentences in this Elian essay, 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years ago', describes what the boys actually enjoyed reading - or hints, rather, at the type. It was not the great texts of antiquity:

We had classics of our own, without being beholden to 'insolent Greece or haughty Rome', that passed current among us - *Peter Wilkins, The Adventures of the Hon. Capt. Robert Boyle, The Fortunate Blue Coat Boy - and the like.*

The standard scholarly monograph on *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature* (1980) contains the statement that 'these works have not been recovered, if indeed they ever existed'.⁶ Their 'recovery' does not, in fact prove too difficult. *The Fortunate Blue Coat Boy* has recently been republished; I shall return to this amusing romance shortly. *Peter Wilkins* seems to have appeared first in 1750 and became extremely popular. The copy I have used is just such a volume as Lamb and his friends might have got hold of - though they are more likely to have had paperbound single copies. The volume is called *Popular Romances: consisting of Imaginary Voyages and Travels* (Edinburgh 1812)⁷ The editor, Henry Weber, says that:

a modern poet of the first rank, has pronounced the winged people of [*Peter Wilkins*] to be the most beautiful creatures of imagination that ever were devised... The agreeable serenity of the fiction, and the pure morality inculcated throughout, render it a work peculiarly proper for the perusal of youth.

The titles of these 'romances' are enticing enough in themselves. The third one I mentioned is called *The voyages and adventures of Captain Robert Boyle, in several parts of the world. Intermix'd with the story of Mrs Villars, an English lady with whom he made his surprizing escape from Barbary* (Wolverhampton 1744). And this is not the end of the picaresque events it relates. The book had an international vogue. In addition to numerous editions in Britain from 1726 onwards, a New York edition of 1852 and translations into French, German and Italian are known. Favourites in this genre - or, rather, appropriated to as imaginative archetypes - were *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*. But whether Lamb and his schoolfellows read these 'works of wit / With the same spirit as the author writ' may be doubted.

'Romance' in this rich and spicy form was not something the Christ's Hospital boy discovered only in his 'teens. A slightly later entrant than Lamb recalled that, in the Hertford School,⁸

At the extremity of the [dormitory] was a single lantern fixed against the wall; the boy sleeping nearest which usually read aloud to us at night some choice fairy-tale or romantic story, the more improbable the better. Often, during the recital of these products of the imagination, have I crept near my bedfellow, and as the horrors of some ghost story increased, aroused him...

Another former boy wrote of the Newgate St School⁹

After we reached our beds at night the boys were wont to 'coze' in literary cliques round some favourite tale-teller, who would relate marvellous stories of knights and ladies, with much about genii, fairies and witches...

He suggested that Coleridge's 'Christabel' was unconsciously an outcome of these romantic entertainments.

Lamb himself speaks of¹⁰

the peculiar avidity with which such books as the Arabian Nights Entertainments, and others of a still wilder cast, are... sought for by the boys. I remember when some half-dozen of them set off from school, without map, card or compass, on a serious expedition to find out Philip Quarll's Island.

The imaginative needs of Lamb and his school-fellows were not obviously to be met from the shelves of the School library¹¹ However, as Hake (CH 1816-) observed:¹²

Many of the boys were great readers of forbidden story and smuggled books into the school, the penalty of which, on being found out, was a flogging. The books in question were romances of enchanted castles; of beautiful young women, the prisoners of tyrants; of subterraneous passages and solitary cells.....

From his description this smuggled material sounds like the 'gothick' novel - *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and the like - not the picaresque romance of manly adventure.

There seems to be a contradiction here, however. Were the books smuggled or not? Leigh Hunt writes of the 1790s¹³

[Christ's Hospital] did not hinder my mind from making what excursions it pleased into the wide and healthy regions of general literature. I might buy as much Collins and Gray as I pleased, and get novels to my heart's content from the circulating libraries. There was nothing prohibited but what would have been prohibited by all good fathers.

The 'romantic' side of Lamb's early reading had also a wider and, at least potentially, a more scarifying dimension. One of his own contributions to the children's book, *Mrs Leicester's School*,¹⁴ which he and Mary wrote jointly, was the story of 'Maria Howe'. On wet days young Maria would shut herself up in the book-closet and indulge her romantic imagination with such books as 'a great Book of Martyrs' (presumably Foxe's, with gruesome deaths of the Protestant martyrs under Mary Tudor), *Culpepper's Herbal* (at least it had pictures!), *Salmon's Modern History* (she was strangely haunted by Chinese gods and 'a great hooded serpent') and ('above all what I relished') Thomas Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. She was delighted by Noah's Ark, though puzzled by certain practical difficulties; impressed, most especially, by the raising of Samuel and the Witch of Endor picture. She filled out her imagination by reading Glanvil on Witches (no pictures, but she made them up!):¹⁵

These stories of witches so terrified me, that my sleeps were broken, and in my dreams I always had a fantasy of a witch being in the room with me.

Eventually she comes to think that her much beloved aunt, mumbling prayers in her armchair doze, is actually a witch. And so on. I would not suggest any positive connection between this tale and Lamb himself, were it not that he reverts vividly to this same experience of Stackhouse's Bible in one of the best of the *Essays of Elia*... 'On Witches and Other Night-Fears'.

I mentioned earlier a third book - one of the 'we-had-classics-of-our-own' named by Lamb. It was enticingly called *The Fortunate Blue-coat Boy: or Memoirs of the Life and*

Happy Adventures of Mr Benjamin Templeman. Briefly told, by an Orphanotropeian
(1770)¹⁶

Ben obtains [on the death of his father] a presentation to Christ's Hospital, where his high-spirited pranks bring him to the notice of the Steward, Mr Henchman. Such a lively mischievous boy is clearly fit only for a life at sea, so he becomes a member of the King's Ward, the redoubtable Royal Mathematical School made up of boys destined for the Royal or Merchant Navies - the terrors of the school. Ben is spotted by a rich young city widow on a visit to the school. She falls rapidly in love with him, offers him her hand in marriage and translates him into the life of a gentleman.

Benjamin has been called 'a male Cinderella'. Such permanent interest as the book retains is somewhat other: it lies in the depiction of London, and of Christ's Hospital, in the early part of the eighteenth century. Several of the most important school characters (porter and teachers) are taken and named from life. But the nature of the 'fantasy' behind the tale is peculiarly suited to the middle-class, neither patrician nor plebeian, population of the school. As Lamb described it in 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital':¹⁷

Here neither, on the one hand, are the youth lifted up above their family... nor, on the other hand, are they liable to be depressed below its level by the mean habits and sentiments which a common charity school generates...

This highly readable tale of 'the Fortunate Blue-Coat Boy' brings me to my musical epilogue. Music played a significant part in the attachment between Ben Templeman and the Rich Widow:

One Sunday when an anthem was sung at the Church before the Lord-mayor and governors of the hospital, in which Ben had a solo part, a lady who happened to be at the church took so much notice of our hero's voice and person, that she was desirous of hearing a repetition of the anthem, and of making an acquaintance with the singer. (p.21)

When she got home the widow carried on continuously about young Ben - who was presumably about seventeen years old - to her maid, who rejoiced in the name of Mrs Pinup. So, eventually -

Well, Pinup, I have been trying my harpsichord, and have endeavoured to play that sweet anthem I heard on Sunday, but cannot remember a single note of it... Fetch me pen and ink; I must have the boy to sing it over to me again. (p.25)

The sequel, in the short, middle and long terms, I leave to your imaginations. I only cannot resist one of Mrs Pinup's choicer observations on Bluecoat boys: "How can any thing of a man be either handsome or genteel in those frightful petticoats? To me they look like great outlandish girls without stays."

There has always been a good tradition of music at Christ's Hospital, and Charles Lamb must have shared in it. His 'Recollections' essay mentions 'the solemn processions through the City at Easter with the Lord Mayor's largess of buns, wine and a shilling'.¹⁸ And he asks 'leave to remember our hymns and anthems, and well-toned organ' (there was one in

the Dining Hall in those days), 'the doleful tune of the burial anthem chanted in the cloisters', and 'the carol sung by night [at Christmas]' which

when a young boy, I have so often lain awake to hear from seven (the hour of going to bed) till ten, when it was sung by the older boys and monitors, and have listened to it, in their rude chanting, till I have been transported in fancy to the fields at Bethlehem, and the song at that season by angels' voices to the shepherds.

This somewhat sentimentalized, though evidently genuine, memory seems to indicate a not uncommon response to the Christmas occasion - a response both less, and more, than musical.

Music survives in the University Library, Cambridge, for some of the ceremonial anthems of Christ's Hospital, belonging to a generation after Lamb's.¹⁹

NOTES

1. E.V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb* (1905) i.40; *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed Thomas Hutchinson, [?1908] i.380, from the essay, 'Captain Starkey' (Starkey was an usher at the school).
2. Hake (died 1895) was at Hertford in 1816. The passage is printed in *The Christ's Hospital Book*, ('published for a Committee of Old Blues', rev.ed. 1953) p.84, from Hake's *Memoirs* (1892).
3. *The C.H. Book* p.93, from George Wickham, *A Bluecoat Boy's Recollections*.
4. *Ibid.*, p.125, from *Biographia Literaria*... The passage goes on to describe Bowyer's attitude to their original compositions and his preference for plain words. 'Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your nurse's daughter, you mean!'
5. *Works* i.493-4, from 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago'
6. Joseph E. Riehl, *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature (Salzburg 1980), p.52.
7. I am particularly grateful to Professor Gillian Beer for lending me her personal copy of this book. The quotations which follow are from pp.xxxi and xxxii of the Introduction. The 'modern poet' is Robert Southey.
8. *The C.H. Book*, p.82, George Wickham [note 3 above].
9. *Ibid.*, p.155, from T.G. Hake, [note 2 above].
10. 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital' (*Works*, i.180). Lamb is referring to *The Hermit* (1727), a derivative of *Crusoe*.
11. The lightest literature in a catalogue of 1874 (late it must be granted) was probably Bell's multi-volume edition of *The English Poets* (1777-92).
12. *The C.H. Book*, p.155, [see note 2].

13. Ibid., p.76, from Hunt's *Autobiography*.
14. *Works* ii.393. Based on Sarah Fielding's *The Female Academy*.
15. *Works* ii.397.
16. Ed. with an introduction and additional notes by Reginal Watters (*The Christ's Hospital Papers*, III, 1987). I borrow the summary of the story from the editor's introduction, p.viii.
17. *Works* i.177.
18. Ibid. i.188.
19. University Library, shelfmark Hunter a.83.1. On spine: *London Hospitals*. The contents are printed documents relating to the four Hospitals of Bridewell, Bethlem, St Thomas and St Bartholomew. Item 8 consists of four broadsheets of annual Thanksgiving Songs, with music, for the Royal Hospitals; dated 1829, 1831, 1832, 1834. The earliest of these is entitled: *A Psalm of Thanksgiving to be sung by the Children of Christ's Hospital on Monday and Tuesday in Easter Week, according to ancient Custom for their Founders and Benefactors*. The address concluded with the melody only of The Psalm of Thanksgiving for 1829, 'What shouts tumultuous rend the skies' (words by the Reverend John Greenwood, D.D.; music by R. Glenn), sung by the speaker. The original is for choir and organ.

A revised text of the address given at the Birthday Luncheon on 10th February 1990 by Professor Stevens, as Guest-of-Honour following his resignation from the Presidency of the Society.

A PSALM of THANKSGIVING to be sung by the CHILDREN of CHRIST'S HOSPITAL, on MONDAY and TUESDAY
in EASTER WEEK, according to ancient Custom, for their FOUNDERS and BENEFACTORS.

The Words by the Reverend JOHN GREENWOOD, M.A.

The Music by R. GLENN.

Thorn. What shouldst thou - and thou rend the skies, Where Sa - lan's bal - low'd co - lumns rise He comes: 'tis Zi - on's lov - ly King With joy the loud Ho - san - na - s

Pha. He comes: 'tis Zi - on's lov - ly King With joy the loud Ho - san - na - s ring Be - fore him not the proud ar - ray That

hounds be - neath the mo - narch's sway But grate - ful thou - sands at his feet Their neck he - dien - cr's pre - sence greet.

I.
What shouts tumultuous rend the skies,
Where Salom's hollow'd columns rise?
He comes: 'tis Zion's Lowly King;
With joy the loud Hosannas ring,
Before Him not the proud array,
That bends beneath the Monarch's sway;
But grateful thousands at His feet
Their Meek Redeemer's presence greet.

II.
Again He comes: His bleeding brow
Not the sharp thorn enriche's now;
But rays celestial from His head
Around their brilliant radiance shed.
The trumpet sounds: anthon'd on high,
Kob'd in ethereal majesty,
He calls the tenants of the tomb,
Judge of the world, to hear their doom.

III.
Then round His throne, a faithful band,
Shall Virtue's sons expectant stand;
Whose generous hearts have felt the glow
Of sympathy for human woe:
Their pious sacrifice of love
His welcome sentence shall approve:
'To Heaven's bright realms, your blissful home,'
"Ye blessed of my Father, come."

FALSTAFF IN MINIATURE: JAMES WHITE'S ORIGINAL LETTERS OF SIR JOHN
FALSTAFF...1796

Reginald Watters

Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan

His frontispiece is a good conceit, Sir John learning to dance, to please Madam Page, in dress of doublet etc. from the upper half, and modern pantaloons with shoes etc. of the 18th Century from the lower half - and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare fancies, 'all deftly masqued like hoar antiquity'...¹

(i)

There is a moment in Charles Lamb's celebrated essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare' when he pauses from his main theme to consider a path not taken: 'It would be no very difficult task to extend the inquiry to his comedies, and to show why Falstaff, Shallow, Sir Hugh Evans and the rest are equally incompatible with stage representation.' That statement and the essay as a whole have been generally seen as the work of a 'closet critic', and T.S. Eliot once claimed that Lamb's contributions to the reading of the Elizabethan dramatists: 'encouraged the formation of a distinction which is, I believe, the ruin of modern drama - the distinction between drama and literature.'² Eliot's remark, characteristically, was concerned to point readers in a direction which suited his own creative purposes, and, as J.W. Donohue has pointed out, it is probably more accurate to see Lamb's contributions as 'a flowering, rather than an initiation, of a tradition.'³ What is more, even a cursory reading of Lamb's full range of theatrical references would show that no barren separation of study from stage existed in a mind so sensitively capable of responding to, and capturing for future generations, the living nuances of stage performance. This whole subject is a complex one and needs reevaluation.⁴ We might examine a neglected work which throws some light upon it: James White's *Falstaff Letters*.⁵

Charles Lamb's estimate of both James White and his book was always high. In May 1796 he wrote to Coleridge: 'White is on the eve of publishing (he took the hint from Vortigern) Original Letters of Falstaff, Shallow, etc., a copy you shall have when it comes out. They are without exception the best imitations I ever saw'.⁶ Although Lamb did what he could to boost it, the book had small success. Lamb's first biographer Talfourd noted: 'even when he could little afford to disburse sixpence, he made a point of buying a copy of the book whenever he discovered one amidst the refuse of a bookseller's stall, and would present it to a friend in the hope of making a convert'.⁷ Near the end of his life Lamb was visited by his old friend C.V. Le Grice, whom he had not seen for some forty years. Valentine Le Grice wrote: 'he talked of nothing but Jemmy White. Oh! there was none like him! We shall never see his like or such days again'.⁸ If there is a hint of Justice Shallow about this perhaps it is appropriate. Such praise may seem excessive when set against what Lamb's latest biographer has to say about 'the second-class brains of James White'.⁹ However, it might be prudent to look closely at White's only published work before we award him his class.

C.V. Le Grice, White, Lamb and Coleridge were all ex-pupils of Christ's Hospital, the London Bluecoat School in Newgate Street. Through a strange combination of social and genetic accidents, several members of this school played a significant role on the literary scene of the Romantic era. They were sent out into the world tolerable classicists with

some taste for English literature and some sense of English style, and their uncertain middle-class status prompted them to find employment one way or another in the expanding world of English literary journalism. For our purposes here it is enough to note that, of the most influential dramatic critics of the period, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, only Hazlitt was not a Christ's Hospital boy. From the second rank of contemporary dramatic critics another Old Blue stands out - Thomas Barnes, future editor of the *Times*.

On the fringe of such a talented group stood both Valentine Le Grice and James White. Their personal careers contrast nicely. C.V. Le Grice was probably the more naturally gifted. He held his own with the mighty Coleridge while the two were senior scholars or 'Grecians', and the lightweight neatness and wit of his contributions to their formidable schoolmaster James Boyer's Copy Book, the *Liber Aureus*, suggest the accuracy of Charles Lamb's well-known comparison of the two boys in their battles of wit: 'which two I beheld like a Spanish great gallion, and an English man of war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C.V.L., with the English man of war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention'.¹⁰ Yet soon after leaving Cambridge, where he had produced a number of promising literary works, Valentine Le Grice went as tutor to a landowning widow's son in Cornwall. He married the widow, and settled to the life of a country gentleman and cleric, allowing his literary output to wither to a trickle of short articles and verses for *The Gentleman's Magazine* and lesser journals.¹¹ James White, like Lamb, never became a Grecian or went to university. Instead he found employment in the Treasurer's Office at Christ's Hospital, becoming Assistant Clerk by 1815, while at the same time acting as an agent for provincial newspapers and founding an advertising agency which exists in Fleet Street to this day.¹²

Circumstances threw Lamb and White together as young men working in London offices but with a need to create an imaginative world for themselves beyond that dictated by those twin giants BREAD AND CHEESE. Many comments in Lamb's letters and essays suggest the lively, practical-joking sense of fun and good-nature which White brought to their friendship. It is difficult to select just one episode to serve as our 'representative anecdote'.¹³ However, an important facet of White's nature seems to be caught in the footnote Lamb added to the Elian essay 'On Some of the Old Actors' (a note Valentine Le Grice refers to in his account of the 1833 reunion with Lamb). What may help to make the story revealing is the fact that its conscious focus is not upon White himself but upon the comedian, James William Dodd:

'Dodd was a man of reading, and left at his death a choice collection of old English literature. I should judge him to have been a man of wit. I know one instance of an impromptu which no length of study could have bettered. My merry friend, Jem White, had seen him one evening in Aguecheek, and recognising Dodd the next day in Fleet Street, was irresistibly impelled to take off his hat and salute him as the identical Knight of the preceding evening with a "Save you, *Sir Andrew*". Dodd, not at all disconcerted at this unusual address from a stranger, with a courteous half-rebuking wave of the hand, put him off with an "Away, *Fool*".'¹⁴

The moment helps to suggest exactly how White's habit of 'merry' imitation must have appealed to Lamb. It shows, however lightly, the experience of literature being used as a challenge to everyday life. It shows also how far White and Lamb were from rejecting the living enjoyment of the theatre, for here it seems as though the drama of Drury Lane has spilled over into the contemporary street. But White's salutation was also a challenge to the actor's identity as Sir Andrew. And it is a challenge which one might claim Dodd failed.

For his dismissive reply is in the voice of Malvolio rather than Sir Andrew! This whole question of what Feste called 'Vox' is something to which we shall return in our reading of the *Falstaff Letters*.

Lamb's comment to Coleridge before their publication, claiming the idea came from *Vortigern*, at once places the letters in a contemporary literary context. The second half of the English eighteenth century was a time rich in literary forgeries and deceptions. The most celebrated were *Ossian* and Thomas Chatterton's *Rowley Poems*, a work which held particular significance for Coleridge and others of his group. Shakespeare, also, had attracted his fair share of forgeries. The most daring of these were the Ireland forgeries of 1795-6, a whole flood of documents (wills, deeds, letters and the like) supposedly by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. These had culminated in the appearance of dramatic fragments and finally whole plays, one of which, *Vortigern and Rowena*, was accepted by Sheridan for performance at Drury Lane. The play, like the preceding documents, was the work of a seventeen or eighteen year old conveyancer's apprentice, William-Henry Ireland, who later claimed he had begun the forgeries simply to satisfy his father Samuel Ireland's enthusiasm for old literary manuscripts. From February 1795 his father mounted an exhibition of the documents at his house in Norfolk Street, and in that month a group of literary men including James Boswell and the Poet Laureate, Henry Pye, signed a statement testifying to their belief that the central papers of the exhibition were genuine. Nevertheless, doubt, fostered by the Shakespearian scholar Edmond Malone grew, and by the time of *Vortigern's* performance on April 2, 1796, sandwich men with handbills were parading in Drury Lane on behalf of both sides in the dispute. The performance itself, which John Kemble, who played Vortigern, had suggested should take place on April Fool's Day, was described at second hand in Coleridge's *Watchman*: 'The two first Acts of the Play were heard with much patience and long-suffering; the three last Acts were received with loud laughter, intermingled with cries of indignation at the palpable and gross forgery. In theatrical phrase, it was completely DAMNED!!'¹⁵ *The School for Scandal* was announced as a replacement for the following night.

White's *Dedication* is addressed to 'Samuel Irelaunde' from 'Thy fellow-labourer in the mynes of antiquitie', and its tone is ironic. Printed in Gothic black letter and larded with the unreal artifice of grammar and spelling which mark the forgeries of this period, its opening establishes both context and content: 'Knowen unto you it is whatte maner of menne there be in thys age, who deeme they doe mankynde mochel servyce, whan in theyre leud sorte they make mocke of trew scyence, whych consisteth for the most parte, it sholde seeme, in the notices we have lefte us of antiquitie'. This hybrid prose, part-Chaucer, part-King James Bible, part-Chatterton, seems to assert that 'trew scyence' lies in language games, and that in such matters modern man is 'leud' in comparison with 'antiquitie'. Later in the *Dedication* the writer expresses distaste for 'the mincyng mouth of after tymes', praising instead such past voices as Virgil, Chaucer and Spenser. He also claims: 'the pryme phansies of conceipts of connyng menne are fallen into contempte in these the worldis last dayes'. Such words recall the recurrent debates of past ages about the end of the world, and the tone seems close to that early seventeenth-century debate between Bishop Goodman and George Hakewill upon which the young Milton had been required to compose an undergraduate exercise. But the echoes carry their own irony. The world goes on, and ours is not the first threatened age. In the decade of the French Revolution, perhaps it was best not to take such matters too seriously. Riots about *Vortigern* may have seemed preferable to Riots about Equality! If literary antiquarianism is an opiate, perhaps there are times when such Folly speaks the only true Wisdom? The teasing, ironic tone here may reflect a mood not unlike that of E.M. Forster at the time of *What I Believe*. But the words are not easy to penetrate: the passage is, after all, a pastiche of pastiche. White's readers will appreciate him best, it warns us, if they can discriminate.

The Preface which succeeds this Dedication shows an interesting prose shift: 'Of all the valuable remains of antiquity, the world has ever especially patronised those, which any ways tended to develop the characters of men eminent in their day'. After the hybrid Gothic fooling, a seventeenth-century essayists's voice of reasonableness speaks forth. The writer, however, seems menaced by the ways of the world in which we live. He explains circumstantially how, at the death of Falstaff, letters in his possession passed to Mistress Quickly and thence to her descendants. An impediment, however, appeared in the shape of 'an elderly maiden sister: who, unfortunately for all the world, and to my individual eternal sorrow and regret, of all the dishes in the culinary system, was fond of roast pig'. This artfully comic prose, based on the traditional play of Romance polysyllables against Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, shows a command worthy of Lamb himself, and, of course, all Elians will recognise echoes in substance as well as in style while the passage moves to its carefully weighted crisis: 'This maiden-sister, conceive with what pathos I relate it, absolutely made use of several, no doubt invaluable letters, to shade the jutting protruberances of that animal from disproportionate excoriation in its circuitous approaches to the fire'. If this is not quite as masterly as the mature Elia it is, surely, moving in his direction: the choice of elderly maiden lady as troublemaker seems characteristic, quite apart from the roast pig! Both Southey and Le Grice thought Lamb joint author of the *Falstaff Letters*.¹⁶ Whether they were right or not is unlikely to be proved now: Lamb himself never claimed the book. But the Preface shows much that he was later to make his own. One last quotation may illustrate the links between the Preface and the Letters which follow. In his prosaic account of how the papers were found, the writer tells us: 'They were found by Mrs. Quickly, Landlady of the Boar Tavern in Eastcheap, in a private drawer, at the lefhand corner of a walnut-tree escrutoire, the property of Sir John Falstaff, after the good knight's death'. Hovering behind this scrupulously mean registering of fact is something richer and stranger, the breathless voice of Quickly herself: 'Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire...'¹⁷ It is such echoes that the prose of the letters themselves will recall more closely.

The *Original Letters* consist of thirty-five complete items, plus one fragment, and cover an indeterminate timespan, stretching from shortly after the battle of Shrewsbury (*1 Henry IV*) to shortly after the death of Falstaff (*Henry V*). Through the first thirteen letters, of which six are by Falstaff himself, the world of *2 Henry IV* predominates. Then, as item fourteen, there is a dialogue scene in which a Windsor goatherd gives evidence to Justice Shallow and Slender about the sudden emergence of Falstaff from the Thames at Datchet, a sequel to Act Three, Scene Three of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. From this point onwards, the letters link loosely with the background of the Windsor play, until, after a teasingly enigmatic fragment from a Falstaff letter to Hal, we hear the elegiac tones of Captain Fluellen: 'Got pless my heart! Captain Falstaff dead! Mistress 'Ickly, I hope he departed with the fear of his Majesty in poth his eyes, marry, and of Got too?' As the whole sequence unfolds, it becomes clear that these items are not quite so random as they at first seem: there is a conscious artistry and even a certain drama in their arrangement.

Three opening letters by Falstaff, all addressed to Hal, established the first mood - one of complacent celebration and knavery after the defeat of Hotspur and before the meeting with the rebels at Gualtree Forest. Falstaff's predatory shadow hangs over the Shallow estate in Gloucestershire. As in *2 Henry IV* the old Justice is mocked: 'With Aarons rod in his hand, he hath the white beard of Moses on his chin'. The language here is characteristically Biblical. White adds a number of such allusions at telling moments, and they provide a comic underburden to this opening part of the book. For with letter four

comes a denunciation of the riotous behaviour of Falstaff and his followers at a communion service on their way from Shrewsbury. The writer is a non-Shakespearian White creation, the Bishop of Worcester. This dignitary proclaims to Prince Hal with all the dogmatic certainty of one perennial kind of religious fanatic: 'He is excommunicate; nor can aught, save the toe of the Almighty's vice-regent, save him from everlasting perdition'. If this sounds more like the anti-Papal sequences in Marlowe's *Faustus* than like Shakespeare, there are perhaps slightly shrewder echoes behind Worcester's closing flourish: '...my lord, when Judas betrayed his master, the tumult of his followers was but a cloak for the - All Hail!' What seems interesting here, surely, is that, although White's original idea of Falstaff and his gang drinking the communion wine and making a general riot in church, under cover of which they steal some silver candlesticks, clearly derives from the pax-stealing incident in *Henry V*, the biblical allusion in Worcester's rhetoric is White's own invention and blends wittily with a half-echo of *Macbeth*.

There is a certain creative assurance about this which is nicely borne out by the next letter, when Hal tells Falstaff of the Bishop's anger: 'Well, Jack, thou art excommunicate; and whether the bosom of the church ever receives thee again, no matter - There's nobody, I believe, cares less than thyself'. Hal's statement, on its surface, is an honest, robust response to religious anathema, delivered with the kind of directness which seems to show an author's approval. But beneath that level lie subtler Shakespearian echoes. First, 'the bosom of the church' recalls Mistress Quickly's confused affirmation after Falstaff's death: 'Nay sure, he's not in Hell: he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom'.¹⁸ And this note is emphasised again by the way the whole structure and rhythm of White's lines can be felt as a variant upon Doll Tearsheet's equally celebrated words: 'Come, I'll be friends with thee, Jack, though art going to the wars, and whether I shall ever see thee again or no there is nobody cares'.¹⁹ A recognition of such nuances helps explain the book's appeal to Lamb and his insistence that its reader should: 'dig, dig, dig, dig...'²⁰ We are becoming accustomed to critical claims for the importance of Shakespearian allusion in any adequate reading of Romantic poetry. Such a claim can also be made as strongly for the comic prose.²¹

This first part of the book may be seen to close with Falstaff's reply to Hal. Like his second letter, its opening is clumsy to modern eyes: 'Ha! ha! ha!' - a trick that is employed for Falstaff no less than eight times in three letters hereabouts. What are we to make of such plonking methods? White's other subtleties might suggest a method behind such awkwardness. We cannot be sure, of course, but I suspect these 'Ha! ha! ha!'s were a contemporary allusion to the London comic theatre which Lamb and White frequented. Lamb's later celebration of the comedian Dicky Suett in *On Some of the Old Actors* may give us the clue: 'He was known, like Puck, by his note - Ha! Ha! Ha!'²² Did White's Falstaff read his lines in the voice of Dicky Suett? At least the writing suggests, again, the importance of 'Vox', and certainly does not look like the work of a closet critic. Two further theatrical references occur in the same letter. First, White makes Falstaff recall the battle scene at the close of *1 Henry IV*: 'Didst though not mark how I did leer upon thee from beneath my buckler?' Apart from an ironic verbal echo here of the *2 Henry IV* Rejection scene, a well-known picture of James Quin as Falstaff comes to mind. The great stage Falstaff of the century had been dead for years when White was born, but nevertheless his performance had not yet been superseded nor his stage properties changed. Falstaff leering from under his round shield must have been a familiar stage picture of the time.²³ The letter closes with a cadence which blends the words of pastiche into some half-remembered moment in the action of *2 Henry IV*: 'I come, Master Shallow, I come. I am bidden to supper, Hal'. We are back on stage at the close of Act Five, Scene One, and this particular trick has some of the audacity of Fielding's *Shamela*.²⁴ We are left wondering whether White's letter was actually written on stage during the scene itself!

With the second group of letters, we move past the end of *2 Henry IV*. Letter nine is from Antient Pistol to Sir John, dated it seems, from Windsor, and proclaims: 'Sir Knight, lament - be tristful, rue - for Bawcockhood is dead ... The King his memories hath grasped by the heel, and dipp'd in Lethe'. (We hardly need Pistol's famous question to Shallow here: 'which King, Besonian?') There is a touch of allusive/elusive humour here if we recall Pistol's later comic meeting with King Henry incognito before Agincourt, and his brash 'The King's a Bawcock, and a Heart of Gold...'²⁵ White's Pistol is given a moment of insight which Shakespeare's Pistol lacks: 'Bawcockhood is dead!' Yet, caught between the dictates of two plays, Pistol will no more be able to act upon this insight than can Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: all are pawns in a predetermined literary game.

By writing Falstaff's reply to Pistol, White attempts what is surely his most audacious moment of the book, for he allows Sir John to describe the great Rejection Scene. The letter opens with suitable flourishes to show that the old ruffian has not been put down by the disaster quite as completely as sentimentalists assume. From a Shakespearian hint (Harry's 'Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds') White creates Falstaff's Lamb-like pun: 'There be more Deys in the court, than there be seconds in the day'. He returns to the idea later: 'That Hal is become a very Ottoman - but be not thou discomfited - We must rally, we must rally, lads - We have been twice trodden down in open attack, and now to the sap-work'. White's picture is of a totally unregenerate Sir John, elbowing his linguistic way towards *Henry V*, and there is again an undertow in our awareness that he will die before he gets there. The later part of the letter contains a set-piece description of the Coronation Day, delivered with panache:

'Thou knowest I was trodden down like sugars for an export - yea, I was made a convenience - I was shap'd like a promontory, which spectators of a subaltern height did flock to for a sight of passing Majesty - They did ascend and course o'er my belly like pismires, ants on a mole-hill, save that the compression was greater. - But 'twas ever the nature of Man to trample on fallen greatness - 'tis no marvel.'

In the only recent critical reference to James White's *Letters* I have read, Neil Rhodes quotes this passage and comments shrewdly: 'The grammatical formulae are right, but the Gulliverian experience is not. This is pleasing bizarrerie - fantasy rather than grotesque - and the play of wit is not linked closely to the sense of gross physical reality which the grotesque demands'.²⁶ This is well said, but Mr Rhodes' purpose was to distinguish White's pastiche from the Elizabethan originals rather than to do it full justice as a piece of literary invention. Of course, White looks at Falstaff from an eighteenth-century perspective, and the echo of Gulliver may be part of the fun, just as a twentieth-century novelist, Robert Nye, chose to draw his Falstaff with touches of Archie Rice about him. Yet here White's closing candences, surely, bring us back to Falstaff with their mock stoicism? Elsewhere in the book there are certainly a few anachronisms, as when Shallow, writing to Davy about his Gloucestershire estate, recommends 'improvements': 'We must have a good *prospect*, Davy - We don't look far enough'; or as when Davy replying mentions a misdemeanour of that Clement Perkes whom he could never away with and asks: 'whether he shall be hang'd or *transported*'. Such moments are likely to have been unconsciously anachronistic - like Shakespearian clocks. But some effects were clearly intentional. For example, Pistol is given the habit of reiterating a strange oath not found in Shakespeare: 'by Rowen' and her chalice'. When this oath appears for the third time White adds a worried footnote: 'The editor most respectfully appeals to Mr Malone for the sense of this word so frequently in the Antient's mouth'. A modern reader may need a further note to tell him the play Pistol refers to here is Ireland's *Vortigern and Rowena*, so effectively denounced by Malone. An Elian might find White's note the more entertaining in the light of Lamb's scathing

comment in 'Detached Thoughts on Books': 'The wretched Malone could do no worse...'²⁷ But White's best joke here, surely, is not at Malone. There is something splendidly congruous in making Shakespeare's Thespian quote tags from a 1796 Shakespeare forgery in this 1796 Shakespeare pastiche.

The book's fourteenth item is a 'Deposition taken before Master Robert Shallow, and Master Slender at Windsor'. A local goatherd has seen Falstaff emerge from his ducking in the Thames at Datchet (after Act Three Scene Three of *The Merry Wives*) and gives a suitably bloated account of the apparition's odd behaviour, whereupon Justice Shallow concludes it is the Welshman Glendower and that 'the Privy Council must know it'. This is the nearest we come to a full dramatic scene in the book, and it sits neatly in an area of subtext between two plays, *1 Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives*. This leads into a sequence based loosely on the latter play which runs through the remaining letters until their coda. Again, White's literary judgement seems sound. Falstaff's time of greatness is passed: all we can deal in now are petty plots and afterechoes, and *The Merry Wives* itself is closest among the Falstaff plays to White's mood and talents. If we judge his scene against Shakespearian models, however, it falls short. The goatherd is no more than a few penny-coloured verbal gestures: 'mine host Thacker... Does your Worship know him? A' sells trotters and Jews' - harps opposite Gil. Sneke, the weaver's'. This sounds to me more like the world of Lamb or Dickens than of Shakespeare. And the treatment of the goatherd's poverty is thinly comic: 'What a mite a groat and a half a day is for seven souls... and your Worship knows, that quinces are very windy and griping to the belly'. (Jokes about flatulence associate with the working class throughout the letters, and seem to be a way of distancing them from reality. Such comfortable methods can be contrasted, perhaps, with more searching experiments in the *Lyrical Ballads*).

Shallow's zany identification of Falstaff with the 'magician' Glendower, although it has a touch of Sir Politick Would-Be about it, is not developed dramatically within the scene itself. Instead, we get a pedantic footnote:

'Shrewdly conceived, and profoundly, by Master Robert Shallow. For a man, of whom Hollingshed and other writers relate such wonders, to travel a score or two leagues fish-fashion, were the most easy and consistent thing in the world. Take water at Radnor, pass Brecknock and Monmouthshires, land and cut across the country; wet his fins again at Cirencester, by Oxford, Wallingford, etc., bait at Marlow, and thus to Datchet!'

This whole mad process, which by indirections works directions out, gives a good impression of James White's sense of humour - as well as reflecting an interest in Wales which led him to make a walking tour there in 1805. But it shows, also, his limitations as a writer. He was not a dramatist by nature. Nor, although it was shrewd to cast these Shakesperian fragments in an eighteenth-century form, was he an epistolary novelist. The earlier comparison with Fielding's *Shamela* flatters him. His verbal shadows never grow into full dramatic action or full novelistic absurdity. They remain word-products, gentle flights of fancy, dream children.

With letter sixteen the slighter thematic range of *The Merry Wives* is reached: we hear Mistress Ford telling Falstaff of her own flights of fancy ('such a sweet portly boar-pig, so plump and so sweet!') Falstaff is tricked into going to Windsor Forest as Herne the hunter and writes complacently to 'Master Brook' of his plans; Mistress Quickly pursues him, hopelessly, for money; Master Slender pursues sweet Ann Page, hopelessly, for love; minor characters, Sir Hugh Evans and the innkeepers of Windsor, pass across the stage... As the letters move on, past another humiliation, Sir John talks of 'retiring from the world',

while simultaneously trying to persuade Pistol and Bardolph to wreak his revenge on Ford. The overall impression is of a world whose well-worn fabric is collapsing. For Falstaff, at least, these seem 'the world's last days'. But White shows some skill in manipulating this mood by avoiding any lachrymose or bombastic Last Will and Testament sequence from the Knight, and instead allows letters thirty two to thirty five to drift off into his subplot, the hopeless love of Abraham Slender for Ann Page. Letter thirty two opens with a new note of urgency from Davy to Justice Shallow: 'I beseech you good Worship to come quick. Here is Master Abram very ill'. Shallow's reply is verbally lively: 'Let my Cousin Slender be tended, Davy, closely, Davy - a crook in love should be in the hand of a good shepherd...' This unexpected pun, with its Biblical echoes, has a strange beauty, and Shallow's estimate of Ann Page seems sharp: 'A fair sprag maiden of good conditions and endowments, but come of the first woman, yea, more fig-leaves to conceal her tendencies than Eve, Davy - marry a *Budget*'. But immediately his attention wanders and he goes on: 'Let John Coomb widen the stocks - Hath he sent his bill, Davy?' It is as though Time has finally overtaken Master Robert Shallow, Esquire, and sunk him in a bubbling mire of inconsequent senilities. There is no surprise when Davy's next letter begins: 'Master Abram is dead, gone, your Worship - dead! Master Abram!' White is playing a minor variation on Quickly's great lament for Falstaff, but he achieves an attenuated power of his own: 'a' would go to the Stroud side under the large beech tree, and sing, till 'twas quite pity of our lives to mark him; for his chin grew as long as a muscle...' By thus focusing attention on Slender's plight, of course, White can sentimentalise his ending without merely following Shakespeare. The focus on Slender is entirely appropriate for a book set in a minor key.

However, the nominal hero remains Falstaff, and it is to him we must return. Again, White shows skill here. After Davy's letter, there is an abrupt editorial interruption:

'The following fragment appears among Sir John's papers. - It evidently formed part of a Letter to the Prince; but being very mutilated, the Editor was for some time irresolute as to granting it admission among his more perfect MS.'

This use of the pedantic voice adroitly refocuses attention on the world of *Vortigern* with which we began. Indeed, this technique of consciously arranged voice changes really seems one of White's most original inventions in the book. The voices of the dramatic characters themselves achieve variety within the story's action. The outer voices of editorial Dedication, Preface, and Notes frame the whole and add an extra dimension of time. To measure great by small, could White's comic invention have suggested to his old Grecian ways of enriching the text of *The Ancient Mariner*?

It was another touch of inventiveness for the final letter to announce a new voice from a new play: 'Captain Fluellin to Mrs Quickly'. It is a new voice, and it is not a new voice. White's version of Shakespeare's version of stage Welshman's English may not perhaps cause great gales of mirth to rise west of the Severn. However, at least he achieves a variation within the type. Here are the last words of Sir Hugh Evans in the book:

'Peseech you, Sir John, look among your service for my toaster. - I have a present of seese from Monmouth. Well! Got's comfort go with you! -his Angels piddle down pleasings on you knaggin!'

In contrast, here are Captain Fluellin's last words:

'O' my credit, there is three pounds Sir John did get advance of me py way of possets, which is no petter than dross - Put that look'e, is a matter of affapility between us, that I 'ould not discuss to an own prother. - He is dead, and I am three crowns in his debt, and there's a finish. Got bless you, Mistress Quickly!

Both passages focus on that petty traffic in deceit which has marked Falstaff's dealings with the world in general, and England's dealings with the Welsh in particular. But there is a generosity about Fluellin's words which enhances the ending, and an earlier comment from the body of his letter may help illustrate the humour of White's *Henry V* character. For Fluellin asserts that Falstaff:

'was the fery person of all the 'orld to keep th 'universal army in goot glee, when the athversary, o' my conscience approach'd with his pike as far off as the jerk of half a stone'.

The praise, again, is best seen in its eighteenth century context.

As is well known, from the time of Maurice Morgann's *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777), there had been critical controversy about the character of Sir John. In his essay Morgann had declared that, contrary to the general opinion, Falstaff was not intended to be seen as a Coward, thus starting, in William Empson's words, 'the whole snowball of modern Shakespearian criticism...[it was] the first time a psychological paradox was dug out of a Shakespeare text'.²⁸ Charles Lamb's perceptive comments in the Elia essay, 'Stage Illusion', may give the solution to this closet critic's problem as he and White viewed it:

'To see a coward *done to the life* upon a stage would produce anything but mirth. Yet we most of us remember Jack Bannister's cowards. Could anything be more agreeable, more pleasant? We loved the rogues. How was this effected but by the exquisite art of the actor in a perpetual sub-insinuation to us, the spectators, even in the extremity of the shaking fit, that he was not half such a coward as we took him for?'²⁹

Lamb's answer, pace Eliot, is to see a literary text robustly in terms of stage performance. The comment of White's Fluellin, however, makes a nice footnote here. Falstaff's life-enhancing strength lies in creating 'goot glee' - even in the cannon's mouth!

'He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died - of my world at least'.³⁰ Like Falstaff, White himself was an imitator, a borrower, and Lamb had respect for such men: 'Observe who have been the greatest borrowers of all ages - Alcibiades - Falstaff - Sir Richard Steele - our late incomparable Brinsley...'³¹ Among his own friends perhaps the two finest examples of the breed were White and Coleridge. Lamb's links with Coleridge have often been closely examined. Those with White could, perhaps, be studied more closely. For, on the evidence of the *Falstaff Letters*, there were many tricks both of phrase and of thought which Elia shared with his lesser-known friend: theirs was a conjunction of - 'the mind, the mind, Master Shallow'.³²

It is worth reiterating for the last time that Lamb shared with White a sense of the dramatic. White's *Falstaff Letters* are not arid, dusty, antiquarian oddities. They are pieces to be delivered, dramatic monologues, to be given life by 'Vox'. They seem more akin to a modern actor's improvisations of 'subtext' in rehearsal than they do to the library

musings of Maurice Morgann. Written in a difficult decade, they may be seen as a form of escape from social, political, and personal realities. This escapism becomes clearer when we recall the political uses to which Falstaff and Hal were being put, at this very time, by political cartoonists.³³ Nevertheless, White's act of escape was one which Lamb found congenial. And such gestures were, they felt, made in good company. A quotation from another of Lamb's great borrowers, Richard Steel, will make that plain: from *Isaac Bickerstaff's Funeral Arrangements from The Tatler, No. 7, Tuesday, April 26, 1709*:

"To make my Funeral... a very Farce; and since all Mourners are meer Actors on these Occasions, I shall desire those who are professedly such to attend me. I humbly therefore beseech Mrs. Barry to act once more, and be my Widow. When she swoons away at the Church-Porch, I appoint the Merry Sir John Falstaffe, and the Gay Sir Harry Wildair, to support her".

That was a piece of theatre which both White and Lamb would have understood.

NOTES

1. *Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E W Marris (New York, 1975) i, p.40.
2. T. S. Eliot, 'Four Elizabethan Dramatists' in *Selected Essays*, (New York, 1950) p.92.
3. J.W. Donohue, Jr. *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age* (Princeton, 1970) p.282.
4. See Gillian Russell, *Lamb's Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets; The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, N.S.65. (Jan 1989) pp8-26.
5. *The Falstaff Letters* by James White (London 1796). All references in this paper are to the King's Classics, De La More Press, London, 1904 reprint.
6. *Lamb Letters*, ed. Marris, i, p.4.
7. T.N. Talfourd *Letters of Charles Lamb with a Sketch of his Life*, (London, 1837) i, p.12.
8. Unpublished Notebook of C.V. Le Grice's visit to Lamb and Coleridge in 1834, now in the possession of the Le Grice family at Trereife, Cornwall.
9. Winifred F. Courtney *Young Charles Lamb*, (London, 1984) p. 104.
10. 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty years Ago', in *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford, 1987) p.25.
11. A short account of C.V. Le Grice is given in *Coleridge's Fellow-Grecian* by Edmund Blunden (Hong Kong, 1956).
12. See Claude A. Prance *A Companion to Charles Lamb*, (London, 1983) pp. 344-5.

13. See Thomas McFarland, following Kenneth Burke, in *Romantic Cruxes*, (Oxford, 1987). The problem of selection seems to arise from the Romantics' highly self-conscious use of personal anecdotes to illustrate 'spots of time' in their own development.
14. 'On Some of the Old Actors' in *Elia*, ed. Bate (Oxford, 1987) p.157.
15. S.T. Coleridge, *The Watchman*, (Number Six), edited Lewis Patton (Princeton, 1970) p. 218.
On the Ireland forgeries see Derk Bodde *Shakspeare and the Ireland Forgeries*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1930).
16. See E. Blunden, *Charles Lamb: His Life recorded by his Contemporaries*, (Folcroft, Pa., 1975) p.24.
17. *Henry IV, Part Two*, Act 2, Scene 1.
18. *Henry V*, Act 2, Scene 3.
19. *Henry IV, Part Two*, Act 2, Scene 4.
20. Letter to Manning in *Lamb Letters*, ed. Marrs, i, p.187.
21. See J. Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, (Oxford, 1986).
22. 'On Some of the Old Actors', *Elia*, ed. Bate (Oxford, 1987) p.158.
23. For example, see illustrations 11 and 12 in *Henry IV, Part One*, edited D. Bevington (Oxford Clarendon Shakespeare, 1987) p.72.
24. 'Mrs Jervis and I are just in Bed, and the Door unlocked; if my Master should come - Odsbobs! I hear him just coming in at the Door....' *Shamela* (Letter VI), Henry Fielding.
25. *Henry V*, Act 4, Scene 1.
26. Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque*, (London, 1980) p.128.
27. *Elia and Last Essays*, ed. Bate (Oxford, 1987) p.198.
28. William Empson, *Essays on Shakespeare*, edited D. Pirie, (Cambridge, 1986) p.38.
29. *Elia and Last Essays*, ed. Bate (Oxford, 1987) p.185.
30. 'The Praise of Chimney Sweepers' in *Elia*, ed. Bate, p.130.
31. 'The Two Races of Men' in *Elia*, ed. Bate, p.26.
32. 'Captain Jackson' in *Elia*, ed. Bate, p.216.
Lamb follows White's example of pastiche here: as Bate notes, the phrase is not an exact Shakesperian quotation.

33. See *Hal and the Regent*, Jonathan Bate, in *Shakespeare Survey* 38, (Cambridge, 1986).

'GENIUS OF THE SACRED FOUNTAIN OF TEARS': A BICENTENARY TRIBUTE TO THE SONNETS OF WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES.

Bill Ruddick

Early in the summer of 1789, a young poet named William Lisle Bowles published, at Bath, a slim pamphlet entitled *Fourteen Sonnets written chiefly on Picturesque Spots during a Journey*. Bowles was a cultivated writer, whose education in poetry and its techniques had been given him by two of the leading authorities of the age of Dr Johnson, now coming to an end: Joseph Warton, his master at Winchester School, and his brother Thomas, professor of poetry at Oxford (and, in due course, Poet Laureate), at Trinity College. Bowles's subjects, derived from incidents on a recent tour of Northumberland and the Border, were of the kind then fashionable in lyric verse. Nevertheless, he can scarcely have been prepared for the instant and widespread success of his brochure. A second, enlarged edition was speedily called for, and the rising generation of Romantic writers, then mostly schoolboys about to become undergraduates, commenced a chorus of praise which was to last for most of the 1790s. At Christ's Hospital, Coleridge rejoiced at the restoration of a natural school of poetry. Wordsworth, already at Cambridge in 1789, was moved to attempt two sonnets in Bowles's manner before a year was out, as Duncan Wu has recently shown¹. He makes a fair shot at capturing Bowles's way of using a static scene description to evoke a mood of pensiveness and gentle melancholy:

When slow from twilight's latest gleams
 'O'er the dark mountain top descends the ray'
 That stains with crimson tinge the water grey
 And still, I listen while the dells and streams
 And vanish'd woods a lulling murmur make...
 ...Sooth'd by the stilly scene with many a sigh
 Heav's the full heart nor knows for whom, nor why.

Duncan Wu also shows that the phrase 'Sooth'd by the stilly scene' in Wordsworth's penultimate line is a close echo of the opening of Bowles's 'Sonnet Written at Tinemouth': such borrowings and close adaptations were normal in eighteenth-century poetry, and they were to feature prominently in the attempts of all the first-generation Romantic poets to relate their experiences and emotions to those which they most admired in Bowles's poems.

Bowles published frequently during the 1790s and his volumes of verse were greeted with rapture until almost the end of the decade by Wordsworth's and Coleridge's generation. On February 13 1792, Coleridge promised Mary Evans that 'in my next letter I will send you some delicious poetry lately published by the exquisite Bowles'² and nearly three years later his enthusiasm remained unabated. Meaning to pay him a high compliment, he wrote to Southey on December 11 1794, 'Your Poems and Bowles are my only morning Companions', and he assured the no-doubt-gratified Southey that the poems in his new volume 'are all divine and fully equal to *Bowles*'.³ Southey would appreciate the strength of Coleridge's comparison, for at that time he was regularly singing Bowles's praises and urging his friend Grosvenor Bedford to read him. On December 12 1794, the day after Coleridge wrote comparing him to Bowles, Southey asked Bedford once again 'Have you read Bowles's Sonnets? They are most beautiful. I know no poems that ever went so much to my heart. Dilly sells them'.⁴

Nor was Charles Lamb remiss in praising the poetry of Bowles in the 1790s, as we shall shortly see. It does, therefore, seem appropriate that the Charles Lamb Society should have marked the bicentenary of *Fourteen Sonnets* with a commemorative lecture on Bowles and his influence on his younger contemporaries. But it seems likely that ours is the only literary society or academic gathering that did anything of the kind in 1989. For, in spite of his high reputation in the 1790s, Bowles, his sonnets, and the other verses which so impressed the young writers of that day have now sunk almost completely out of sight. A mention in literary histories, a footnote or two in critical studies, the fact that his critical strictures on the poetry of Pope (in a now-forgotten edition) incurred the wrath of Byron and set his pen to work in the older poet's defence...little really survives beyond a ghostly presence in our memories; a feeling that Bowles's sonnets, like Charlotte Smith's mattered once upon a time; though we would be hard pushed to say why.

Yet Bowles's sonnets are worth investigating still, for in spite of their generally thin poetic texture and tendency to fall away at the close into rather inconclusive, faint self-questionings, they can make us feel, however tenuously and momentarily, that directness of emotional statement and lack of verbal artifice which was so novel, and so attractive, for Charles Lamb's generation. 'Sonnet XX', entitled 'November 1792' is a fair sample of Bowles's quietly-plangent style.⁵

There is strange musick in the stirring wind,
 When low'rs th'autumnal eve, and all alone
 To the dark wood's cold covert thou art gone,
 Where ancient trees on the rough slope reclin'd
 Rock, and at times scatter their tresses sear.
 If in such shades, beneath their murmuring,
 Thou late hast pass'd the happier hours of spring,
 With sadness thou wilt mark the fading year;
 Chiefly if one, with whom such sweets at morn
 Or eve thou'st shar'd, to distant scenes shall stray.
 O spring, return! return, auspicious May
 But sad will be thy coming, and forlorn,
 If she return not with the cheering ray,
 Who from these shades is gone, gone far away.

It was verse such as this which inspired Coleridge to write to John Thelwall, on December 17 1796, of 'Bowles, the most tender, and, with the exception of Burns, the only *always natural* poet in our language'. In the previous month, when Bowles's fever was once again at its height, Charles Lamb had been moved to attempt a prose poem when seeking to express for Coleridge, in a letter of November 14 1796, the impact which Bowles's poetry had on his imagination and feelings:

Genius of the sacred fountain of tears, it was he who led you [Coleridge] gently by the hand through all this valley of weeping, showed you the dark green yew trees and the willow shades where, by the fall of waters, you might indulge an uncomplaining melancholy, a delicious regret for the past, weave fine visions of that awful future

Where all the vanities of life's brief day
 Oblivion's hurrying hand hath swept away
 And all its sorrows, at the awful blast
 Of the archangel's trump, are but as shadows past.

(Marrs, I, 56-7)

A passage such as this, in which Charles Lamb is clearly charting his own responsive imaginative processes at least as much as he is attempting to interpret Coleridge's, may surprise those who think of him largely in terms of *Elia* and the sophisticated devices for emotional control which those essays display. But the Charles Lamb who read Bowles with such intensity was, of course, the young man still searching for his voice and personality as a writer; very serious, very religious, often very unhappy, and, by the time he wrote the letter just quoted, having to come to terms with the terrible family tragedy which was to dominate the rest of his life. Bowles mattered to the writer of *Rosamund Gray* and the early poetry, as he mattered to Wordsworth (briefly), to Coleridge and to Southey in their immaturity. Of them all, Charles Lamb was almost certainly the truest and the most discriminating disciple, and his admiration for Bowles probably lasted longest.

Bowles's sonnets show a fondness for rivers and river scenery, inspiring melancholic recollections and a reflectiveness which often culminates in tears. The Wansbeck sends both the poet and feminine affection into characteristic attitudes:

remov'd
From life's vain coil, I listen to the wind,
And think I hear meek sorrow's plaint, reclin'd
O'er the forsaken tomb of one she loved!

The Tweed's

Waving branches that romantick bend
O'er thy tall banks, a soothing charm bestow,

making him feel that

Here with pensive peace could I abide.

The 'crumbling margin' of the Itchin, in what was perhaps Bowles's most celebrated sonnet, reminds him that

many a summer's day has past
Since, in life's morn, I carroll'd on thy side

with the result that he ends up weeping for a long-lost friend, whose memory yet inspires a melancholy pleasure, offering 'solace at my heart'.

Coleridge essayed the Bowlesian mode in a 'Sonnet: to the River Otter' in about 1793, but his enthusiasm for his 'dear native Brook! wild Streamlet of the West' was rather too lively to conform with the ideal limpidity of the format. Coleridge's reflections begin in the correct fashion:

How many various-fated years have past,
What happy and what mournful hours, since last
I skimm'd the smooth thin stone along thy breast...

But already the animating pleasure of this memory, and that marvellous capacity for specificity which illuminates Coleridge's early poetry and the *Notebooks* are at work, destroying the languid metre which distinguishes true Bowles:

...I skimm'd the smooth thin stone along thy breast
 Numbering its light leaps!

Correctly gentle melancholy does reestablish itself for a time, but the ending of the sonnet is once more out of character for a piece by, or in imitation of, Bowles:

Ah! that once more I were a careless Child!

cries Coleridge enthusiastically. The true note of indeterminate feeling is wanting.

Coleridge remained a Bowles lover for three or four more years. A moment of doubt, expressed in a letter to Henry Martin on 22nd July 1794 ('I sent for Bowles's Works, while at Oxford -- how was I shocked -- Every Omission and every alteration disgusts Taste and mangles Sensibility') was soon blamed on the baleful influence of interfering Oxonians ('Surely some Oxford Toad has been squatting at the Poet's Ear, and spitting into it the cold Venom of Dullness') and Bowles's latest poems were praised as still 'descriptive, dignified, tender, sublime'. At about this time he addressed another sonnet of his own 'To the Rev. W.L. Bowles', expressing gratitude for the way

When the *darker* day of life began,
 And I did roam, a thought-bewilder'd man!
 Thy kindred Lays an healing solace lent.

But once again, Coleridge's final assertion, that Bowles's poems gave him a sense of pleasure

Like the great Spirit, who with plastic sweep
 Mov'd on the darkness of the formless Deep.

though fine poetry, is altogether too positive, too religiously sublime (Bowles's muse not much resembling the Holy Ghost) to suggest a sympathy sufficiently close to provide the basis for lasting discipleship. Bowles's river sonnets may have given Coleridge the germ of an idea leading to his great project for a poem uniting all philosophic systems, to be called 'The Brook', but one cannot do more than suggest the possibility: nothing more can be made of it. And in his handling of some early poems by Charles Lamb, the limits of Coleridge's understanding of Bowles's verse show up all the more clearly.

In 1794, Lamb began to experiment with the sonnet form, and the poems which he produced show obvious affinities with those of Bowles. Sonnet III (to give it its numbering in the text of Coleridge's *Poems*, 1796, in which it was first printed) opens with an unmistakable flourish:

Methinks how dainty sweet it were, reclin'd
 Beneath the vast out-stretching branches high
 Of some old wood, in careless sort to lie,
 Nor of the busier scenes we left behind
 Aught envying...⁶

But the sonnet's concluding vision, of greenwood shade and tales of true love shared with an idealised Anna was fated to be heavily rewritten by Coleridge. Regrets that wooing of 'the sterner Muse' has been neglected in these 'dreamy hours' replace Lamb's plangent lines. In Sonnet IV ('O! I could laugh to hear the midnight wind') a wilder vision, partly

inspired by Bowles's 'Sonnet written at Tinemouth, Northumberland' and his 'Sonnet at Bamborough Castle' works itself up quite effectively towards a concluding wish

To be resolv'd into th'elemental wave,
Or take my portion with the winds that rave.

This is quite outside the emotional range of Bowles's own sonnets, but Lamb's poem does have a legitimate structure and development of ideas, growing out of an initial Bowles-like situation. Coleridge, however, clearly felt that Lamb's 'Lear on the Heath' sentiments needed toning down. But his alteration of the ending can scarcely be called Bowlesian: Fuseli (if anybody) seems to have stepped in as the revised poem charts

How Reason reel'd! What gloomy transports rose!
Till the rude dashings rock'd them to repose.

Coleridge's poetic gift, approaching its height in the mid 1790s, was altogether too vital to be constrained within the gentle formulae of Bowles's sonnets. Even if he had not met Wordsworth at this time, it seems doubtful whether a reaction would not have set in: indeed the wonder is that Coleridge's enthusiasm lasted as long as it did. As late as December 1796 he was still speaking of Bowles to Mrs John Thelwall as having 'given me more pleasure, and done my heart more good, than any other books I ever read, excepting my Bible.'⁷ After completing *Osorio* in August 1797 he actually went to stay with Bowles, and the two poets got on well. But the friendship with Wordsworth and the expanding poetical horizons represented by *Lyrical Ballads* marked the end of Coleridge's idealization of Bowles. Southey, too, was becoming disenchanted. His own verse of the 1790s was too politically-slanted and, in due course, too epic in its aspirations to derive much from Bowles. But he had admired the older poet's lyricism and emotional purity for a time. A letter from Coleridge to Sotheby of August 1802, however, records a common sense of disillusionment among the whole group:

I well remember, that after reading your Welch tour, Southey observed to me, that you, I, and himself had all done ourselves harm by suffering our admiration of Bowles to bubble up too often on the surface of our poems.⁸

Wordsworth had long since moved beyond Bowles's range in the year of *Lyrical Ballads*: Coleridge, too, rapidly lost interest. Charles Lamb, who had admired Bowles as keenly as anyone, falls silent on Bowles's verse in his letters of 1797. Burns and Cowper show more strongly as influences on the few poems which he composed at this time. 'To Charles Lloyd; An Unexpected Guest', written in January 1797, begins with a distant reminiscence of Cowper's poem on Alexander Selkirk:

Alone, obscure, without a friend,
A cheerless, solitary thing...

It then echoes *The Task* in its second stanza and eventually works round to a final verse unmistakably in the manner of Burns:

Long, long, within my aching heart
The grateful sense shall cherish'd be;
I'll think less meanly of myself,
That Lloyd will sometimes think on me.

Bowles, however, was never directly rejected by Charles Lamb. He was merely outgrown, along with the style and subject matter of Lamb's early attempts at poetry as he discovered that prose was his true medium. And before Lamb turned from verse to prose, and before the lyric impulse left his attempts at metrical composition, he composed, quite spontaneously, after an evening party in January 1798, his finest poem, in which the spirit of Bowles's sonnets found their finest embodiment in stanzas not of imitation or adaptation but of profound and original assimilation.

Bowles's sonnets frequently give voice to a sense of loss; of passing time bringing to mind former friendships now terminated by death. The elegiac mood finds him at his best:

Languid, and sad, and slow, from day to day
 I journey on, yet pensive turn to view
 (Where the rich landscape gleams with softer hue)
 The streams, and vales, and hills, that steal away.
 So fares it with the children of the earth...
 (Sonnet XV)

Perhaps the best of these elegiac sonnets, and apparently the best-known of them in the 1790s, is Sonnet VI 'To the River Itchin, near Winton':

Itchin, when I behold thy banks again,
 Thy crumbling margin, and thy silver breast,
 On which the self-same tints still seem'd to rest
 Why feels my heart the shiv'ring sense of pain?
 Is it--that many a summer's day has past
 Since, in life's morn, I caroll'd on thy side?
 Is it--that oft, since then, my heart has sighed?
 As Youth, and Hope's delusive gleams, flew fast?
 Is it--that those, who circled on thy shore,
 Companions of my youth, now meet no more?
 Whate'er the cause, upon thy banks I bend,
 Sorrowing, yet feel such solace at my heart,
 As at the meeting of some long-lost friend,
 From whom, in happier hours, we wept to part.

It would be no easy task to chart the number of variations on established poetical conventions that Bowles effects in this highly-characteristic piece. But for the 1790s it struck home with all the freshness of direct utterance and Lamb and his friends opened their hearts to it. When Charles Lamb escaped from an evening party in January 1798 to pour out the fullness of his feelings for the lost love and companionship of his childhood and early manhood, he found a verse form unlike that of Bowles, but the tone of voice and the manner of Bowles's elegies surely fed into his heartbreaking lament 'The Old Familiar Faces'. Bowles's use of a refrain ('Is it...Is it...'), his sighings of the heart 'As Youth, and Hope's delusive gleams, flew fast', his loneliness in a familiar setting, associated with the loves and fellowships of the past:

Is it--that those, who circled on thy shore,
 Companions of my youth, now meet no more?

all feed into, and find more powerful expression, in Lamb's lines

Ghost-like, I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
 Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
 Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Bowles's very phrases are amplified by Lamb in places. For example, his backward glance at Gray's *Eton College* ode

Is it--that those who circled on thy shore,
 Companions of my youth, now meet no more?

already quoted, can also be found, surely at the back of

I have had playmates, I have had companions,
 In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days,
 All, all are gone...

Passages from other Bowles sonnets also appear to be nourishing Lamb's creativity. Sonnet XXI ('April 1793'), a poem about anticipated happy companionship ('of truth, of friendship, of affection meek') is blasted by a somewhat Gothic vision of death:

Ah me! the prospect sadden'd as she sung;
 Loud on my start!d ear the death-bell rung;
 Chill darkness wrapt the pleasurable bow'rs,
 Whilst Horror, pointing to yon breathless clay,
 "No peace be thine," exclaim'd, "away, away!"

The lines seem to merge, in their similarity of situation and feeling, into Lamb's own recapitulation of the 'horrors' of September 1796, omitted after the first printing of his poem:

I had a mother, but she died, and left me,
 Died prematurely in a day of horrors--
 All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

Sonnet XXVIII, 'Written at Malvern, July 11 1793' shows how the poet

the while
 Escap'd the crowd, thoughts full of heaviness
 May visit, as life's bitter losses press
 Hard on my bosom.

Very much Charles Lamb's situation when he composed 'The Old Familiar Faces'. And other Bowles sonnets offer passing resemblances of situation, mood and phrasing.

Recapturing the freshness and direct emotional appeal which Bowles's sonnets held for several of the young men of 1790-96 or thereabouts who were to become leading figures in the first generation of English Romantic writers is almost impossible now; but reading the poems along with their ardent and impulsive appreciations can awaken some sense of Bowles's limpid charm even today. For Coleridge, Southey, Lamb and others the eager enthusiasm could not last: their own achievements destroyed Bowles's appearance of originality and power. By 1814 Southey was seeing their Bowles phase in what was probably the right perspective. Writing to Grosvenor Bedford about the preferences of his youth he comments:

My favourite poet was Spenser, but at the age of what might be termed poetical puberty when the voice of song began to be fixed, I had Bowles by heart.⁹

Meeting the poet some four years later, Thomas Moore marvelled

What an odd fellow he is! and how narrowly, by being a genius, he escaped being set down for a *fool!*... but he is an excellent creature notwithstanding.¹⁰

By the end of Bowles's long, blameless and useful life the memory of his principal claim to 'genius', his sonnets of 1789 and the years immediately following, had faded almost out of public consciousness. A very old clergyman, an antiquarian and local historian, and an amiably mild eccentric, Bowles died in 1850, aged eighty eight, having outlived all the young writers who sang his praises in the 1790s. The reputation of his poetry had virtually predeceased him, and in spite of an occasional gracious side-glance, such as Edmund Blunden's in the 1930s¹¹ the solemn judgement of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, that he had 'neither depth of thought nor vigour of imagination' has generally prevailed. But for a few years in the 1790s Bowles was a famous poet, and before his reputation faded he had played his part in inspiring one of the greatest laments (and one of the truest compliments of one poet to another) in the English Language, Charles Lamb's 'The Old Familiar Faces'.

NOTES

1. Duncan Wu, 'Wordsworth's Reading of Bowles', in *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 36, No. 2, June 1989, pp 166-67.
2. Coleridge, *Letters*, ed. E.H. Griggs, Vol.I, p.29.
3. *Letters*, ed. Griggs, Vol.I, p.133.
4. Southey, *New Letters*, ed. Kenneth Curry, Vol.I, p.72.
5. Bowles altered and rearranged his sonnets in various editions. Present quotations are from the four-volume *Sonnets and Other Poems* published by R. Cruttwell of Bath in 1805. To help identification Bowles's titles or (in their absence) first lines are quoted in each case.
6. Lamb's indebtedness to Bowles's sonnet beginning 'There is strange musick in the stirring wind' quoted earlier in this paper will be evident. At times he comes close to paraphrase. It makes clear the way he had made Bowles's poetry part of his own thinking and feeling at this period.
7. *Letters*, ed. Griggs, Vol.I, p.287.
8. *Letters*, ed. Griggs, Vol.2, p.855.
9. *New Letters*, ed. Curry, Vol.2, p.105.
10. *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, ed. W.S. Dowden, Vol.I, p.442.

11. *Charles Lamb and His Contemporaries*, 1933, pp39-43 in the context of Blunden's chapter 'The New Poetry' of which they form part.
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The revised text of a lecture given to the Charles Lamb Society on 7th October 1989.

Our Chairman's POSTSCRIPT to the review of Stanley Jones's Hazlitt: A Life (Charles Lamb Bulletin, April 1990, pp 209-10) stimulated the following erudite and entertaining response from Dr Jones, which, with his permission, is printed now as what, in effect, it is: a learned article in miniature.

HAZLITT AND THE GAME OF FIVES

Dear Editor,

Dr Wilson's observations on Hazlitt at the Fives-court ('Postcript', *CLB*, April 1990, 211) raise a most interesting question. Hazlitt's throwing his racket up to the roof after winning, on p. 251 of my biography, was not of course my hyperbolic speculation but William Bewick's plain statement of fact, as was indicated by my omnibus note 3, 'Bewick, i.136-40'. His is the only extended eye-witness account we have - and a very fine one it is - of Hazlitt's style of play. In a book like *Hazlitt: A Life*, already bristling with more footnotes than the fretful porcupine has quills, there was little room for a discussion of the niceties of the game, but Dr Wilson is right in one thing: there *is* an anomaly in Bewick's description, and it is that he calls the game tennis. This may have been owing to ignorance, as seems to be intimated at mid page 139. Bewick had recently come up, an innocent abroad, from Darlington. That it was not tennis but fives is apparent from the following: 'When a difficult ball was driven to such a distance from him, and so skilfully *dropped close to the wall* that it seemed an impossibility to come near it...' (p.138), and from Hazlitt's remarking on the way to the court that it was a pity John Cavanagh (the 'famous hand fives-player' of 'The Indian Jugglers') would not be there (p.136). There is plenty of room for confusion in the history of a game which seems ultimately to derive, like rackets, and then squash, from the *jeu de paume*, known in England as hand-tennis, and of which the wavering, orally-transmitted rules were not definitively standardized until 1913. In Hazlitt's time there was a tennis-court at the upper end of the Haymarket, but the 'celebrated place of amusement' (*Times*, 3 Oct. 1823) was the Fives-court in St Martin's Street, Leicester Fields, frequented by, among Hazlitt's friends, John Payne Collier (BL Add. MS 38899, f.386), T.G. Wainewright (J. Curling, *Janus Weathercock*, 1938, p.220), Martin Burney (Howe, 1922, p.236), and Procter (Hazlitt, *Letters*, p.177). The qualification, otherwise pleonastic, in the phrase 'hand fives-player' obviously implies that another form of the game existed. Such an alternative is mentioned in the earliest account I can find, in a Victorian compilation, *Cassell's Complete Book of Sports and Pastimes* (London, n.d., c.1880), which I now quote (p.43):

'The aim of each player is to strike the ball with his hand so that etc. some players use a padded glove... Bat-fives is played in the same way, only substituting a wooden bat for the hand. It is a game which deserves to be more popular than it is, for it makes a capital introduction to racquets, while it may be played in a common fives-court, without the great expense that is usually inseparable from the bigger game'.

John Cavanagh it seems favoured the bare hand, yet not exclusively, for, according to Bewick (p.136), Hazlitt claimed that 'no one could stand against so extraordinary a racket as his'. There is no reason why he, and Hazlitt also, should not have played fives in both ways. As to Hazlitt's use of a racket, we need not rely on Bewick alone, for we have the authority of the player himself: '...I crawl about the Fives-Court like a cripple till I get the racket in my hand, when I start up as if I was possessed with a devil'. ('A Farewell to Essay-Writing'). We should add that Proctor does not lessen the uncertainty by saying fifty years later that Hazlitt played 'at racquets with Martin Burney and others ... in the old Fives Court (now pulled down) in St Martin's Street'. A racket-court was much bigger (50 to 80 feet long) than a fives-court. That the *games* were already in Hazlitt's day quite distinct is again shown by 'The Indian Jugglers', where we find a player adept in all three: 'John Davies, the racket-player ... was also a first-rate tennis-player, and an excellent fives-player'. Howe, who, it is true, may not have been a player, accepted without question (p.275) that Hazlitt played fives with a racket.

'The Indian Jugglers' presents another puzzle which I am sure our sharp-eyed Chairman will have noticed also. It is this: one day Cavanagh was challenged by a stranger unaware of his reputation, whom he promptly whitewashed. "And yet, I give you my word," said Cavanagh, telling the story with some triumph, "I played all the while with my clenched fist." For my part, Mr Editor, I never saw anyone play in that fashion. In my day bats were unknown; even a glove would have been reckoned sissyfied, as well as inefficient; but no one went to the other, and even less efficient extreme, and struck the ball with the phalanges: it would be bound to become rapidly very painful. The only possible explanation is that Cavanagh was indulgently, if not disdainfully, 'playing pat-ball', 'going through the motions', with someone who was nowhere near his class.

However, I am delighted to find in our Chairman a fellow-player, or more probably a fellow ex-player, and if he will hire a court (without a pepper-box - the Rugby game, please, not the Eton), and provide a ball, and if I can find a day off from my arthritis (as you see, I am trying to make things as difficult as I can for fear he should take it into his head to accept), I shall be happy to meet him at any time, senior citizen as I am, to decide the best of five, or more realistically the best of three. Handicap according to age. But not with a racket. And he'll have to be quick.

Yours sincerely

Stanley Jones
Glasgow, 13 May 1990

BOOK REVIEWS

ROMANTICISM AND REVOLUTION

Woodstock Books of Spelbury, Oxford, are the publishers of an interesting selection of facsimiles under the heading ROMANTICISM AND REVOLUTION 1789-1843. Twenty-five titles appeared in the first series last year, and another twenty-five are promised for 1990. The editor, Jonathan Wordsworth, has cast his net wide within these dates, his choice emphasising one of the aims of the series: to remind readers of the impact of these books at the time of their first publication.

Robert Southey was a literary pioneer in many genres, experimenting in rhyme, metre and subject matter: his reputation made - and lost - as a poet before those of Wordsworth and

Coleridge, who both owed much to his personal and literary friendship. Southey is represented in the first series of *ROMANTICISM AND REVOLUTION* by two volumes, *Poems 1797* and *Wat Tyler*, a verse drama written with republican fervour in 1793, lying forgotten for twenty-three years, then pirated in 1817 by Southey's political opponents.

In context, *Wat Tyler* is typical of Southey's earliest writing in its extreme political sentiments and the stirrings of that humanitarianism which was to pervade all his work. Today this dramatic account of the Peasants' Revolt strikes a strangely contemporary note - 'Liberty! Liberty! No Poll Tax!'

The play is republished here in Hone's 'New Edition' of 1817, with an abusive preface which conveys far more of the atmosphere of political controversy in those post-Napoleonic years than Southey's conciliatory introduction in his *Poetical Works* of 1837 chooses to do ('It may not be supposed that I think it any reproach to have written it, or that I am more ashamed of having been a republican, than of having been a boy'.) In 1817 the drama appeared on the heels of Southey's *Quarterly Review* article denouncing journalists of 'free opinions' and 'venomous breath' whose writing 'carries with it a poison to the unsuspecting reader'. *Hansard* records how William Smith, MP for Norwich, rose in the House to read some inflammatory lines from the play alongside extracts from that article, to accuse Southey of 'tergiversation of principle', and to describe *Wat Tyler* as 'the most seditious book ever written'.

Unwisely, Southey attempted to obtain an injunction to restrain publication, and to be awarded damages for copies already in print. Lord Justice Eldon pronounced that 'a person cannot recover in damages for a work which is, in its nature, calculated to do an injury to the public'. So every publisher who wished was free to turn out editions of the play (which brought Southey not a penny) and to increase the Poet Laureate's notoriety. Jonathan Wordsworth's Introduction ends with the wry comment that 'Amid all the fuss, what nobody seems to have noticed is that political indignation had inspired the Poet Laureate in his youth to write a very passable play'. It still makes good reading.

The humanitarian concern that underlay Southey's enthusiastic treatment of the Peasants' Revolt is apparent in his *Poems 1797*, printed here with his rather petulant Preface, about 'shaking off the shackles of rhyme' and 'never again attempting the ode form' (how the shades of all those later Laureate Odes rise up to haunt the reader!) Jonathan Wordsworth's Introduction deals with the attacks on these poems by the *Anti-Jacobin*, with its famous parody of Southey's 'Inscription for the apartment in Chepstow Castle where Henry Marten the Regicide was imprisoned for Thirty Years', and with Jeffrey's remarks on 'the Lake School' in the *Edinburgh Review*. 'Southey' writes Jonathan Wordsworth 'is given prominence among his contemporaries because to the literary establishment both his political views and his way of writing seemed a threat'. The political threat is clear in his poems on the Slave Trade, on paupers, and on the Convict Settlements at Botany Bay. Few critics have dwelt on the stylistic threat; yet, continues Jonathan Wordsworth,

Two years before the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* he [Southey] had developed a plain style that was quite as 'experimental' as anything in Wordsworth and Coleridge, and quite as affronting in its social implication...at the time of *Poems 1797* it was he who was making the running.

Southey was overtaken and outstripped by his greater contemporaries, but it is good to be reminded of the pioneering nature of his early writing and to find him standing in this series in the company of Coleridge and Wordsworth, of Chatterton and Mary

Wollstonecraft, of 'Monk' Lewis, Hazlitt, Keats, Shelley and - yes - even of Byron. The two Southey volumes illustrate how this valuable series lives up to its claim to 'remind us how publication was seen at the time reputations were made ... to capture the cross-fertilization of ideas ... and to provide an insight ... into the origins of modern literature'.
Chrystal Tilney

(Robert Southey: *Wat Tyler*, £18, and *Poems 1797*, £21, Woodstock Books).

Bunty Smith, *PORTRAIT OF WIDFORD*. Available from Mrs B. Smith, Chestnut Tree Cottage, Widford, near Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 8ST. £6.50 plus 80 pence post and packaging.

For Elians the name of Widford conjures up visions of Blakesware and Charles Lamb's beloved 'Grandame' Mary Field.

Sure enough, this little book also recalls Charles Lamb's associations with Widford, and its opening inscription quotes

On the Green Hill top,
Hard by the House of Prayer, a modest roof,
And not distinguished from its neighbour-barn
Save by a slender tapering length of spire,
The Grandame sleeps.

Portrait of Widford is a collection of photographs, newspaper cuttings and stories of a village from its early history to the present day - a Widford only lightly touched by 'progress', whose population in 1801 was 361, and a hundred and eighty years later was only 511.

Mayer's portrait of Charles Lamb graces the second page, followed by an old map of Blakesware. There is also a drawing of Blakesware House, circa 1780, and, beneath it, sadly, another showing the demolition of the house in 1822. Several spots in the village are named after Charles Lamb, but the 'Bell Inn', which he knew so well, looked a sorry sight - closed and boarded up - when I visited Widford recently.

After the demise of Blakesware, a more modern squirearchy came into the village in 1880 in the shape of the Pawle family. George Pawle moved into Walnut Tree House (now an old people's home) in that year, and from then on the life of the village seems to have been bound up with the Pawles. The book illustrates various activities involving the family - Mr Pawle's son with the beagles, the maids at the Pawle house, the coachman to the Pawles, and a number of others. Mr Pawle gave the village its Drill Hall (later the Village Hall) in 1910, and Mrs Pawle inaugurated the Widford Savings Bank. For a boy, 'ability to play cricket' was important if he wished to be employed by Mr Pawle.

The First World War saw soldiers billeted in the village and guns and searchlights in the fields nearby; but when the Second World War came, Widford organised a 'Widford Invasion Committee', the headquarters of which would only be divulged if an emergency arose! No such emergency happened, but Widford did get its share of bombs and a landmine. The village's phlegmatic attitude to danger can be summed up in a newspaper cutting of the time, headlined '41 Bombs Fall Harmlessly - Harvest Workers Unperturbed'.

Altogether this book represents a delightfully evocative glimpse of an England where there is certainly 'honey still for tea'; and a village which I am sure Charles Lamb would have

little difficulty in recognising. This is well worth while reading for anyone interested in Charles Lamb's Hertfordshire.
Audrey S. Moore

'FIFTY YEARS AGO'

CLS Bulletin No. 51 (Seventh Year)
Four printed pages with Supplement

July 1941

A Little Foreword

Since May 1935, the C.L.S. has issued a stencilled *Bulletin* as a regular means of communication with members. Until the outbreak of war there were ten issues yearly, but since September 1939, we have become a quarterly. Our appearance at this time in a printed form is an act of faith, faith in the ability of the Society, not only to survive the War, but to grow in numbers and influence in the meantime. From the beginning Supplements have accompanied nearly every issue. There have been 53 altogether - 33 printed and 20 duplicated. Through the kindness of Mr H. G. Smith we are still able to continue this method of giving our readers more than the *Bulletin* will hold.

[This issue also contains *Maugham v. Elia: A Brief for the Defence*; sympathy for 'Mr William Kent, who has similarly lost his unique collection of books on London'; and an obituary of Charles Walter Berry (1873-1941).]

CLS Bulletin No. 52 (Seventh Year)
Four printed pages with Supplement

October 1941

On September 14th, at 10.53 p.m., was to be heard 'The Party at Haydon's', a reconstruction of a famous occasion. Charles Lamb was played by Harold Scott.

[Presumably the word 'radio' was originally intended. Harold Scott will be remembered by most people today as playing a tramp-like character in many episodes of the early television series 'Dixon of Dock Green' but he had been a considerable actor in his earlier life and is still celebrated for his learned history of the music-hall, 'The Early Doors'.]

[There is also an article stating that Samoans knew Shakespeare's plays 'only through Lamb's (= the Lambs'?) "Tales from Shakespeare", one of the few books translated into their own language'. No examples are quoted.]

[The Chairman's Annual At Home] was celebrated with "maimed rites" - Mrs Farrow and 'Falaise' were both absent. [It is not clear whether the meeting was held in another place or whether 'Falaise', the Chairman's house, had been bombed. He is mentioned as being at 'Falaise' in 1946 but that might be another house with the same name.]

CLS Bulletin No. 53 (Seventh Year)
Four printed pages with Supplement

January 1942

Reports of Recent Meetings

On Saturday, October 11th [1941], the Society met for the first time at the Blue Moon Restaurant, Villiers Street, WC2. The Chairman [Mr Walter Farrow], before introducing the speaker, read a short passage from the writings of Charles Lamb, thereby carrying out a suggestion made by a member at a recent meeting.

[The November 1941 meeting consisted of a symposium with the general title 'If'. Three papers were read, on the subjects (1) If Elia had not been born, (2) If dirt were trumps,

which was apparently a completely irrelevant but very entertaining anecdote about a sea-captain the speaker had recently met, and (3) If Mary Lamb had not been the death of her mother.]

CLS Bulletin No. 54 (Seventh Year)
Four printed pages

April 1942

An Editorial Confession

With this issue we complete the first year of the BULLETIN in printed form. The Editor is painfully aware of its many editorial imperfections. There have been a number of inexcusable misprints, such as "visomy" for "visnomy" in the January issue. It is the fashion nowadays to blame the War for everything that in peace time was obviously due to neglect or carelessness; but we are not so brazen-faced as to advance this plea, so popular with those who "serve" in the shops. "Don't you know there's a war on?" covers a multitude of transgressions, but not ours. We can only confess our shortcomings, and promise to amend. Who knows? We may one day produce an issue entirely free from misprints - or almost!
S. M. R.[ich]

Charles Lamb's Grave

Mr Charles Walter Berry, of Chalcot, near Reading, a member of this Society who died last year, has left £200 to the Council of Almoners of Christ's Hospital for keeping in good repair the grave and monument of Charles Lamb.

CLS Bulletin No. 55 (Eighth Year)
With Supplement

July 1942

Eine Hütte der Unvornehmheit [A Cottage of Ungentility]

Through the kindness of Mr H.G. Smith we are enabled to include as a Supplement to this issue of the BULLETIN, a translation by Mrs Anni Woyda of a contribution by Hermynia Zur Mühlen to the London "*Die Zeitung*" of April 17th last. Members will be grateful for the opportunity of reading such a fine imaginative paper on Charles and Mary. We have not ourselves encountered a German version of "*Elia*"; perhaps it is significant that the first appreciation of the Lambs to be met with in that tongue should appear in a weekly conducted by exiles hostile to the present régime.

SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

Christmas Cards

The colour photograph of Widford Church used on the cover of Bunty Smith's *Portrait of Widford*, reviewed in the present number, has also been used on a very attractive Christmas card, which is likely to be of interest to members of the Charles Lamb Society. The cards are available at £2.50 for packs of ten (postage included) if ordered from Mrs Bunty Smith at Chestnut Tree Cottage, Widford, near Ware, Herts, SG12 8ST. Bunty Smith has, however, very generously indicated her willingness to supply sets of the card to the Society

directly at something under the retail price, in which case profits on sales would come to the Society itself. The offer is as generous as the card is attractive. Orders for *Portrait of Widford* received by Mrs Smith with a mention of the Society's name will also earn us a contribution. Other publishers please note!

ELIAN GRATULATIONS

Our congratulations to Jonathan Bate on his appointment to the King Alfred Chair of English Literature at the University of Liverpool. He takes up the appointment in January 1991 to the delight of all his friends.

INFORMATION REQUESTED (I)

Miss Fatma Taner, a Turkish student at Ege University, Izmir, writes as follows:

I am a doctoral student trying to write a dissertation on Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. Because material on the Lambs and on children's literature is very scarce in Turkey, I look forward to receiving any advice, bibliography, or material concerning the Lambs and the *Tales*. Thank you.

I am sending Miss Taner copies of material from earlier *Bulletins* (New Series). If any reader thinks of other relevant articles or chapters in books, I am very willing to pass on information. Otherwise please write directly to Fatma Taner at Mithatpasa Cadd. No: 180/8, Karatas-Izmir 35260, Turkey.

INFORMATION REQUESTED (II)

Jonathan Levy of Harvard University Graduate School of Education is also interested in children's literature of the early nineteenth century; in this case plays for children written before 1850. He writes as follows:

I write in hopes that you might be able to shed light on a question - a hunch, really - I have. The question or hunch is this. It seems to me that there is considerable reason to believe that Lamb might have tried writing a children's play at some time in his career. The hunch is, admittedly, speculative. But Lamb did, after all, (a) write plays, (b) write the *Tales from Shakespeare* [well, some of them - editor's intervention: but Mr Levy's meaning is clear enough] (c) knew the Godwins, and (d) presented a copy, with an inscription, of Mme. de Genlis's collection of plays for children, *Le Théâtre d'Education*, which is now at the Rosenbach Library in Philadelphia. However, I would think that his particular gifts, as well as his interests, might have led him to try his hand at a children's play of his own.

Does this seem possible to you? If it does, do you have any idea of where the manuscript of such a play might be? Anything that Lamb wrote in the genre would be bound to be worth having and savouring.

Yes indeed, must be one's feeling. Information or hunches, please, to Jonathan Levy, Harvard University School of Education, Longfellow Hall, Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138-3752, U.S.A. For use in a bibliography.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (COMPLETE)

With characteristic kindness, Claude Prance has responded to my regretting the absence of information on the original places and dates of appearance of the articles reprinted in *Essays of a Book Collector* (reviewed in April) by sending the following complete list.

The Explorer	<i>Private Library,</i>	Winter 1979
Edmund Blunden and Cricket	Do.	Winter 1978
Warde Fowler	Do.	Spring 1980
On Austen Dobson	Do.	Autumn 1981
Dorothy Osborne	Do.	Winter 1982
Southey's <i>The Doctor</i>	Do.	Summer 1981
<i>The Complete Angler</i>	Do.	Autumn 1976
Edward Thomas's <i>Horae</i>	Do.	Autumn 1977
Odd Volumes	Do.	Summer 1983
Elliott Stock	Do.	Summer 1979
The Book Lover's Library	Do.	Autumn 1983
John Drinkwater	Do.	Summer 1986
Charles Lamb's Golden Year	<i>C.L. Bulletin</i>	October 1978
Charles Lamb and the <i>Retrospective Review</i>	Do.	January 1975
Charles Lamb and John Linnell	Do.	October 1980
Charles Lamb's Free Thoughts	Do.	October 1975
<i>The Englishman's Magazine</i>	Do.	January 1982
Some Books of the Bibliophile	<i>Biblionews</i>	December 1983

Mr Prance explains that his interest in the relationship between Charles Lamb and John Linnell may partly be explained by the fact that his own wife is a great-granddaughter of the painter, who was also, of course, a friend and benefactor of William Blake.

IMPORTANT CORRECTION

Slightly marring the pleasure of the editor in the foregoing is the discovery that he has cast the publishers of *Essays of a Book Collector* on the shores of quite the wrong continent. Oh dear, oh dear! The real home of the Locust Hill Press is P.O. Box 260, West Cornwall, CT 06796, U.S.A. Repeat, U.S.A., *not* Australia as printed on p.213 of the April *Bulletin*. 'I hope the Australian post office will redirect any letters ordering the book to the right country' is Mr Prance's sternest comment. For his magnanimity much thanks: from my own muddle-headedness I take refuge in silence and a rapid change of subject.

Bill Ruddick

CHARITABLE STATUS

As forecast in the April *Bulletin*, the new company received Inland Revenue approval and was consequently entered on the official register of charities on 24th April 1990. Its charity number is 803222. For the reasons explained in April, this will have no immediate impact on members of the Society, who are requested (if they have not already done so) to pay their membership subscriptions for 1990 in the usual way.

Arrangements for the payment of subscriptions in future years, for covenanted payments and for tax-free bequests to the Society, will appear in a future issue.

Nick Powell, Hon. Treasurer

Details of subscription rates are printed at the end of this *Bulletin*.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The main change to be recorded at this year's A.G.M. was the retirement of Professor John Stevens, CBE, as our President (his final kindness, the excellent Birthday Luncheon address printed in this number) and the inauguration of the Presidency of Professor John Beer. Our Chairman noted the fact that several of the speakers for 1989-90 came from among the ranks of our members. Our talented members have also set a cracking pace in the publication of books and articles in the last year.

Basil Savage has retired after long and by no means easy service in liaising with the Guildhall Library and attempting to keep the repairing and cataloguing of our books under way. Hopefully, Charles Branchini's service in Basil's stead does appear to be beginning under brighter auspices if a recent communication from the Librarian at Guildhall really can lead to a new burst of activity amid the Library's current difficulties. As recorded above, the hopes expressed at the A.G.M. that Charitable Status might soon be achieved have now been realised.

Membership of the Society remains at a healthy level, but new Members are always most welcome, and members resident within travelling distance of the Mary Ward Centre who can attend the monthly meetings are to be sought with particular vigour in a forthcoming drive to recruit new friends for this friendliest of societies.

Bill Ruddick

ERNEST CROWSLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE - *Saturday 1st December 1990*

Annually we gratefully recall the first Secretary of the Society, whose initiative brought it into being in 1935. For our fifty-fifth year, in 1990, the lecturer will be Dr. David Fairer of Leeds University. His subject is 'Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd: the early poems in context'. Dr. Fairer writes:

I hope it will turn out to be an engaging and intriguing look at the early verse of these two friends... I hope to put it in some kind of context alongside the work of other poets who make William Lisle Bowles appear a major figure: Edward Gardner, Thomas Park, Henry Kett, Thomas Russell, Robert Lovell, etc. etc. I hope to come up with something that will amuse.

Note well the date.

Madeline Huxstep

ANNUAL LUNCHEON - 9th February 1991

At its meeting on 12th June, the Council decided to move with the times and have a buffet luncheon with the usual toasts, followed by Carolyn Misenheimer's Lecture on the Lamb/Southey relationship. Carolyn and Jim are our joint Guests of Honour on this occasion. It was felt that a buffet would be not only less expensive but also give more opportunity for members and guests to mingle.

Information concerning venue, price and booking arrangements will, as last year, be supplied on an insert with the *Bulletin*.

Madeline Huxstep

GOODS AND CHATTELS

Apart from our Library, housed at the Guildhall Library of the City of London, the Society owns a quantity of pictures, prints, furniture and archive material, presently distributed among members' houses. We seek a home for them. Ideally, a room connected with a college, library or similar institution; failing this, any 200 square feet of lockable space, reasonably accessible to London. Please contact Veronica Finch (who is compiling our Inventory), 3 Toorack Road, Wealdstone, London HA3 5HR (081-427-0167) if you can help or have any ideas concerning those who might be able to.

Madeline Huxstep

FANNY KELLY

The bicentenary of Fanny Kelly's birth falls in October 1990. A little late, we celebrate this anniversary at our meeting on 2nd March 1991. Apart from readings and a talk, members will be able to see contemporary prints (kindly donated by Basil Savage) and holograph letters by George Barnard (challenging Fanny to a duel!) as well as by Fanny, complaining about the state of the roof of her theatre.

Madeline Huxstep

THE WORDSWORTH WINTER SCHOOL

The Wordsworth Winter School is now very much an established event, eagerly anticipated by those who have already participated and very welcoming to new faces. The Lamb-Wordsworth friendship remains a very active one on this occasion. Not only do several members of the Charles Lamb Society regularly attend the Winter School, but in 1991 the whole of its distinguished roster of lecturers happens to come from our ranks: a matter for quiet pride, surely!

The Wordsworth Winter School runs from Sunday 17th February 1991 to Friday 22nd. Every evening after dinner the poet's great-great grandson, Richard Wordsworth, will read poetry and prose that will be treated in the following day's lectures and discussions. Among the lecturers, Nicholas Roe will speak on 'Keats and Wordsworth', Robert Woof on *Peter Bell*, Mary Wedd on 'Wordsworth's Poems on Old Age', Grevel Lindop on the 'Duddon Sonnets', Duncan Wu on 'Wordsworth's Metamorphosis' (this year's mystery title! Very great care is taken that there should be one each year!), Jonathan Bate on 'Ruskin's Excursion', Molly Lefebure on 'The Other Coleridge' and Jonathan Wordsworth on 'The Immortality Ode'. Accommodation and lectures at the Prince of Wales Hotel, opposite Dove Cottage, and there will be daily excursions - this time to Brantwood and Nunnery Walks, the beautiful valley near Penrith, laid out with paths and grottoes in the eighteenth century, as well as a cruise on Windermere and local visits to Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount. There will be an alternative programme of afternoon walks, weather permitting - which it usually does.

Further details may be obtained from The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria, LA22 9SH. Telephone 09665-544, or (evenings and weekends) 09665-651.

The Wordsworth Trust is also organising a study weekend to coincide with the exhibition 'Wordsworth and the Alps' now showing at the Grasmere and Wordsworth Museum. This Alps Study Weekend runs from 16th-18th November 1990.

The sixth annual *Book Collectors' Weekend* will take place between 1-3 March 1990. The dates for the Wordsworth Summer Conference will be from 27th July to 10th August 1991. Information concerning all of these events may be had from Dove Cottage, at the address printed above.

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES, BIRMINGHAM, 28TH APRIL 1990

A disappointing turn out, alas, and the majority of the delegates absent. Nevertheless, most of those attending had furnished their stalls with magazines, leaflets and other promotional material, together with early (sometimes even valuable first editions) material of all kinds, including their heroes'/heroines' actual books. Perhaps next time the Charles Lamb Society might allow certain items from the Guildhall Library to be displayed along with the usual *Bulletins* and programmes of meetings?

A good deal of interest was shown in the Charles Lamb Society by other delegates throughout the day. At lunch I was informed by at least three other delegates that Lamb's essays had formed a significant part of the school English Literature syllabus in their day (i.e. in the 1930s!) Most of those who remembered studying him could recall (accurately) passages from his essays.

Kenneth Oultram, the editor of *Chapter One*, the Alliance's newsletter and publicity journal, brought copies of the excellent second issue along with him for distribution. Sadly he had to stress the difficulty he had met with in securing sufficient advertising revenue to cover his printing cost of £350. His aim was to break even, but it had proved necessary to accept a contribution from the Alliance of Literary Societies' funds in order to finance the magazine's publication. Ideally, he wanted one single sponsor to incur all the expenses incurred in bringing out each issue, but despite approaches to a number of publishers he had failed in his mission. Author members of the Charles Lamb Society (including myself) could have warned him beforehand of the stinginess of publishers! Mr Oultram promised to approach a few more booksellers and suggests that A.L.S. members might interest local firms in the possibility of placing advertisements in the magazine. On the positive side, he was pleased to report that Mr Auberon Waugh had granted the A.L.S. free advertising in his *Literary Review* for six months running!

All Officers will remain in their posts for the coming year and the Committee will also continue unchanged.

One or two delegates gave talks. The most amusing of these dwelt on 'Sherlock Holmes and Birmingham'. The Alliance's president gave another brilliant performance, concentrating this time on Literary Talks as observed by the sardonic Stephen Leacock.

The next A.G.M. will be at the same venue on April 20 1991.

R.M. Healey

INDEX TO NEW SERIES VOLUME IX: Nos. 66-72		Page
BEER, John:	Lamb, Elton and Coleridge's 'Enigma about Cupid'.	246
CLANCEY, Richard W:	Wordsworth, Horace, and the Preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> .	131
COATES, John:	Bereavement into Art: Lamb's 'Dream Children' and Kipling's 'They'.	222
COURTNEY, Winifred F:	Nevis, West Indies, and the English Romantic Writers	248
FIFTY YEARS AGO:	Pages 33, 65, 215, 288	
FISHER, Benjamin Franklin IV:	Charles Lamb and Supernaturalism	145
GARNETT, Mark:	The Napoleonist	185
JONES, Stanley:	Hazlitt and the Games of Fives	284
LAWRENCE, Berta:	Mary Lamb and Alice King	33
	A Tragedy Remembered	99
	Kate Ward's Century	206
LEFEBURE, Molly:	A Mystic Peregrination: <i>The Ancient Mariner</i>	8
	The Crowning Art of Elia	123
MALIK, G.R.:	The Cultural Foundation of Wordsworth's Literary Criticism	94
MISENHEIMER, Carolyn:	The Pleasures of Early Enlightenment: The Lambs' <i>Tales from Shakespeare</i>	69
	A Slight Enigma: <i>Timon of Athens</i> in Lambs' <i>Tales from Shakespeare</i> .	203
MULVIHILL, James:	The Anatomy of Idolatry:	195
	Hazlitt's <i>Liber Amoris</i> .	
NABHOLZ, John R:	Joseph Munden, Elia and Charles Lamb in Performance.	37
PIGROME, Stella:	Mary Russell Mitford	53
POWELL, Cecilia:	Turner's Illustrations to the Poets	109
REEVES, Florence:	Charles Cowden Clarke	26
RUDDICK, Bill:	'Genius of the Sacred Fountain of Tears': A Bicentenary Tribute to the Sonnets of William Lisle Bowles	276
SOCIETY NEWS & NOTES:	Pages 35, 67, 105, 141, 183, 216, 253 and 289	
STEVENS, John:	The Education of Elia	257
THOMAS, Gordon K:	'And when America was Free': Thomas Paine and the English Romantics	164
WATTERS, Reginald:	'Therefore you love it best': a reading of Coleridge's <i>Lines Written at Shurton Bars</i> .	153
	Falstaff in Miniature: James White's <i>Original Letters of Sir John Falstaff, 1796</i> .	265
WOOF, Pamela:	Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary Lamb, Writers	41 and 82
WU, Duncan:	Wordsworth/Lamb/Elton: A New Literary Connection	129
	The Grande Chartreuse and the Development of Wordsworth's <i>Recluse</i>	235

BOOK REVIEWS		Page
BARTH, J. Robert:	Coleridge and the Power of Love (Reviewed by Richard Gravil)	212
CARRACCILO, Peter L:	The <i>Arabian Nights</i> in English Literature: Studies in the Reception of <i>The Thousand and One Nights</i> into British Culture (Reviewed by Rachel Bennett)	138
COLEMAN, Deirdre:	Coleridge and <i>The Friend</i> (Reviewed by Nicholas Roe)	177
DE PAOLO, Charles:	Coleridge's Philosophy of Social Reform (Reviewed by Nicholas Roe)	62
FOOT, Michael:	The Politics of Paradise: A Vindication of Byron (Reviewed by Nicholas Roe)	181
JONES, Stanley:	Hazlitt: A Life, from Winterslow to Frith Street (Reviewed by Mark Garnett)	209
MELLOR, Anne K (ed):	Romanticism and Feminism (Reviewed by Gillian Russell)	64
O'LEARY, Patrick:	Sir James Mackintosh: The Whig Cicero (Reviewed by Bill Ruddick)	179
PRANCE, Claude:	E.V. Lucas and His Books (Reviewed by Mary Wedd)	103
	Essays of a Book Collector: Reminiscences on Some Old Books and Their Authors (Reviewed by Bill Ruddick)	213
REIMAN, Donald H:	Romantic Texts and Contexts (Reviewed by Nicola Trott)	29
	'Romanticism and Revolution series }	
SOUTHEY, Robert:	Wat Tyler and Poems 1797 }	285
	(Reviewed by Chrystal Tilney)	
SMITH, Bunty:	Portrait of Widford (Reviewed by Audrey Moore)	287

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY remain as follows:

<i>Personal:</i>	U.K.	(single)	£8.00
		(double)	£12.00
	Overseas		US\$14.00
<i>Corporate:</i>	U.K.		£12.00
	Overseas		US\$21.00

Cheques should be made payable to the Charles Lamb Society and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Nicholas Powell, 30 Camberwell Grove, London SE5 8RE. Existing subscriptions should be renewed in January.