

# THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN

*The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*

NEW SERIES NO. 78

April 1992

CONTENTS		Page
How Green was My Elia?	D G Wilson	185
The Romantic Rhine: Turner, Wordsworth and their Contemporaries	Cecilia Powell	192
<i>Elia</i> : An Introduction	Jonathan Wordsworth	202
Guildhall Library and the Charles Lamb Society's Library	D E Wickham	206
Book Reviews		210
<i>Society News and Notes from Members</i>		217

.....  
*'Let us stimulate the Elian Spirit of friendliness and humour.'*  
.....

## HOW GREEN WAS MY ELIA?

D G Wilson

I want to share with you some ideas about Lamb's character relating to his experience of nature and natural things, and the ways in which he wrote about them.

A love of the country is taken, I know not why, to indicate the presence of all the cardinal virtues. It is one of those outlying qualities which are not exactly meritorious, but which, for that very reason, are the more provocative of a pleasing self-complacency. People pride themselves upon it as upon early rising, or upon answering letters by return of post . . . To say that we love the country is to make a claim to a similar excellence. We assert a taste for sweet and innocent pleasures, and an indifference to the feverish excitements of artificial society. I, too, love the country . . . but I confess . . . that I love it best in books. In real life I have remarked that it is frequently damp and rheumatic, and most hated by those who know it best . . . [we] can share the worthy Johnson's remark when enticed into the Highlands by his bear-leader that it is easy 'to sit at home and conceive rocks, heaths and waterfalls'. Some slight basis of experience must doubtless be provided on which to rear any imaginary fabric.

Such were the views of Leslie Stephen and his essay is an extended reverie on the authors whom he considers to be the 'most potent weavers of that delightful magic'. If I now leap a century, we come to Jonathan Bate and his recent marvellous '*Romantic Ecology*', which I was sorely tempted simply to re-review for the Society. He quotes Hazlitt on *The Excursion*, but limits himself to 5 lines from a 13 page essay (admittedly this includes extensive quotations from Wordsworth!). Hazlitt says that *The Excursion* is 'not so much a description of natural objects as of the feelings associated with them' [we find here, obviously, a resonance with Hazlitt's remarks on Turner - 'representations not so properly of the objects of nature as of the medium through which they are seen'. As you will all know, Hazlitt ended that comment with the immortal phrase 'Pictures of nothing, and very like'.] Bate ends his few sentences on this essay with 'the image is lost in the sentiment'. Hazlitt's marvellous critique of that poem, printed in *The Examiner* in 1814, and reprinted by him in *The Round Table* three years later, could also easily be the main material and substance of this lecture - it is sufficient to note the general statement - and to compare it with Leslie Stephen's sentiments already mentioned. It seems rather obvious that whatever the quality of anyone's experience of nature, that experience could only be passed on to one's contemporaries and to posterity through the medium of words and still (that is, drawn and painted) images - until the invention of cine-photography and television, that is!

How then should we examine Lamb's experience of the countryside and 'natural objects', and the ways in which he chose to give expression to that experience? Everyone knows that he chose to present the public image of a city man, averse to mountains. For example: 'Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see another mountain in my life' - this to Wordsworth in 1801. And to Manning a year later 'I was born . . . bred, and have past most of my time in a crowd. This has begot in me an entire affection for that way of life, amounting to an almost insurmountable aversion from solitude and rural scenes. . . . A mob of happy faces . . . give me ten thousand[d] finer pleasures than I ever received from all the flocks of silly sheep . . . Nursed amid [London's] noise, her crowds, her beloved smoke, what have I been doing all my life, if I have not lent out my heart with usury to such scenes'.

Received ideas are not always correct, nor do they always stand the tests of time - as an erstwhile medical practitioner, I should know! As I said, I had wanted, for a long time, to share with you some of the fruits ripening from repeated readings of Lamb's works, fertilised by the hypothesis that 'a close examination of Lamb's writings would reveal that his use of language reflected a townsman's perceptions, not those of a man schooled in the observation of natural phenomena'.

You will have noticed that I have, in the preceding sentence, employed what I will call a 'green' metaphor based on the idea of verbal fruits. As I closely read all Lamb's work, using for convenience, Lucas' edition - 5 volumes 1905 for the main works [ref. ME, *Misc. Essays*; E *Elia*; PCh, *Poetry for Children*; PP *Poems and Plays*; DS *Dramatic Specimens*] but his 1935 3 volume edition for the *Letters* [ref. L I-III], I noted all the language, from single words to extended passages, which include imagery related to natural objects and natural scenes. You will appreciate that this is rather a rough and ready approach; it is subjective, it is fallible, nor is it linked with comparable studies of other authors, nor with studies of different imagery in Lamb. This methodology has one very great advantage - it makes it impossible for me to indulge in the stupidity of statistics, and so you here and now are spared the labour of attempting scientifically to assess the significance of what I am presenting. Furthermore, since I shall have to try to illustrate the results of my researches by examples, you will have the comfortable pleasures of hearing some familiar

and also, I hope, some unfamiliar lines from the man without whom our Society would be nothing!

Let us start with an example of Lamb both closely observing and exactly remembering; 'When a child I was once let loose . . . into his Lordship's magnificent garden . . . can I forget the hot feel of the brickwork? In an evil hour, I reached out my hand and plucked [the last peach]. Some few rain drops just then fell; the sky from a bright day became overcast . . . the downy fruit, whose sight rather than savour had tempted me, dropt from my hand, never to be tasted'. At this point he cannot, of course, resist the temptation of elaborating those simple observations, and he goes on 'All the commentators in the world cannot persuade me but that the Hebrew word in the second chapter of Genesis, translated apple, should be rendered peach. Only in that way can I reconcile that mysterious story'.

Then he can get into a correspondence about 'cages [containing] climbing squirrels and bells, formerly the indispensable appendage to the outside of a Tinman's shop'; the crux is the colour of the squirrels' teeth; whether they are brown. Lamb thinks the observer may have meant more 'the colour of the Maltese orange, which is rather more obfuscated than your fruit of Seville, or St Michael's' - is this the first literary reference to Marks and Spencers? He returns to this exact topic in an essay [strangely prefiguring Mr Pooter with his useless complimentary theatre tickets] in 'Reminiscences of Jude Judkins . . .' where his simulated persona is rather mean in haggling too much over the provision of oranges for his fictive partner Cleora. The officious cousin 'laid out a matter of two shillings in some of the best St Michael's, I think, I ever tasted'. Such oranges were 'esteemed for their cooling property' at the theatre, and Lamb, that proto-Pooter, carefully computes that surely his Cleora would not have jilted him for that 'paltry sum of two shillings' when she knew that he had already 'incurred an expense of more than four times that amount' on the tickets. Lamb can show a nice discrimination - nicer than he would admit in such passages of disclaimer as 'I am a stranger to the shapes and texture of the commonest trees, herbs, flowers'? Many of his recollections are mere signposts, it is true; indicators of a rich past; but to the attentive reader rich with colour, shape, scent and sound. He can recall the 'wood-house, the orchard, the place where the pigeon-house had stood . . . [amongst] the pretty, pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End'. Or what about the garden of the Inner Temple, with its 'stately stream, which washes the garden-foot with her yet scarcely trade-polluted waters'. Of course, being Lamb, when he reaches the sun-dial, his musings on its 'moral uses' rapidly fly off into realms of past poetic fantasy, the sun-dial's 'measures [being] appropriate for sweet plants and flowers to spring by, for the birds to apportion their warblings by, for flocks to pasture and be led to fold by'. This chimes with an unidentified quotation in an earlier letter 'When time drives flocks from field to fold'. There are, too, times [during his own retirement] when he is 'to be met with in trim gardens' that is, he is influenced by the trimness or otherwise of his surroundings; or when a schoolboy, he notices the 'flowery spots, and verdant lanes, skirting Hornsey' on the way to the 'meadows by fair Amwell'.

You can also recognise your man by his easy progression into culinary reminiscence. Starting from a 'dash of mild sage' he is soon abjuring the 'whole onion tribe . . . [including] the rank and guilty garlic' and a few pages later, regretting that his hostess 'sent away [from him] a dish of fine Morellas . . . [recommending] a plate of less extraordinary gooseberries . . . in their stead'. He does not neglect the 'sprigs of garnishing parsley', and in a less direct way, can pretend to be a vegetarian refusing to eat until the dishes have 'undergone the operation of fire [to remove] those numberless little living creatures . . . in every fibre of the plant or root'. We do not often think of Lamb as a sanitary hygienist! But he is serious about food - his housekeepers must have needed to be wary of his tastes; thus 'cabbage is reprehensible with roast beef, laudable with bacon . . . the French bean

sympathizes with the flesh of deer . . . salt fish points to parsnip . . . cats prefer valerian to heart's-ease, old ladies vice-versa . . . the sour mango and the sweet yam court and are accepted by the compliable mutton hash'.

Metaphorically, and keeping to eating and drinking, Lamb can talk of 'graduating in nuts and oranges'; 'superannuated chaff and dry husks of repentance'. Perhaps best of all, is his extravagant punnetful of puns from a letter to Bernard Barton 'There - a fuller plumper juiceier date never dropt from Idumean palm [Virgil, Georgics]. Am I in the dateive case now? if not, a fig for dates, which is more than a date is worth'. The date, in case you wondered, was Saturday 25 July A.D. 1829, - 11 a.m.

Lamb clearly enjoyed his own patch when such a private spot was available [perhaps the Lake District was simply too open, too much no-one's territory - don't we all feel that sometimes when the rain and mist loom around and seep in?] He certainly went back to first origins when writing to Bernard Barton as I will show later, but his pride in his Colebrook Cottage garden was particular to a fault; 'the most original thing of the sort you ever saw, with a garden larger than yours, a genuine pot-herb garden . . . cabbages, leeks, parsnips, carrots etc. . . . I am Lord of . . . a dunghill, with wasps, cats, spiders and ten thousand little creatures . . . Arachne weaves her fine silks from gooseberry tree to currant . . . vines and little grapes, and six fine garden glasses for cauliflowers'. Pride goeth they say, as Lamb must have found (don't we all in the garden?) and to Barton quite soon he admits 'My garden thrives (I am told) tho' I have yet reaped nothing but some tiny sallad, and withered carrots'. Reality has indeed crept in, but he still maintains 'But a garden's a garden anywhere, and twice a garden in London'.

You begin to see my problem; I want to show you the variety of Lamb's response to the natural world, and yet at the same time, get so easily seduced into the presentation of select bouquets of his cultivation - this green imagery is itself very addictive! Although as you can see from my handout, the range of authors from whom Lamb quotes is remarkably eclectic, I will restrict my selection now to some of those from Wordsworth. In the famous review of *The Excursion*, I count 25 direct quotations, some part of a line, some lengthy passages of 50 lines or so. In addition, there are paraphrases and many indirect, allusive bendings of his own language in Wordsworth's direction. Of this large mass of his subject's writing, Lamb has chosen 13 quotations with an expressly 'green' use of words and imagery [I cannot say what proportion of Wordsworth's own language is green-related; very high one would assume]; Lamb can himself choose a metaphor 'a branch . . . prematurely plucked from the parent tree' in this essay, and immediately note Wordsworth's 'devotedness to nature' before picking lines which remark the notes which 'the wind draws forth from rocks, woods, caverns, heaths and dashing shores'. He lets himself comment that to Wordsworth 'nothing in Nature is dead. Motion is synonymous with life', suggesting that to Lamb there are indeed dead, dull lumps of matter - mountains, perhaps? And yet, I cannot resist the feeling that to Lamb, Wordsworth's attraction as a poet was not his observation of, and transmission of love for nature and natural objects, but rather that Wordsworth 'thinks and feels deeply'. The whole publishing history of this review, Lamb's initial reluctance down to his anger with 'Shoemaker Gifford', though not directly relevant to my tale, certainly reveals Lamb as one who, if not 'in love' with nature, found it hard to resist its charms in literature - as Leslie Stephen put it, it is less 'damp and rheumatic' that way.

Lamb's total oeuvre in Lucas' edition amounts to 3,000 pp+; I do not pretend to have counted exactly, but that excludes Lucas' own notes, and about 500 pp of direct quotation in the various Specimens and Extracts. So if I now try to present to you an assessment of Lamb's use of 'green' language in his word-play, metaphor, simile, pun etc. you must

yourselves try to put that into the total context - I shall leave it to 'real' scholars to identify and classify his use of other areas of language. I start with *Rosamund Gray*, and here Lamb has quite a flight of fancy with 'shall the good housewife take such pains in pickling and preserving her worthless fruits, her apricots and quinces and is there not much *spiritual housewifery* in treasuring up our minds best fruits . . . ?' The table also includes such common phrases as 'cut up, root and branch', which Lamb surprisingly uses in an erudite discussion of painting [probably pinched from Reynolds in fact]. He does not wish to drop 'like mellow fruit' into the grave - this in a passage wherein he asserts that he is 'in love with this green earth . . . the unspeakable rural solitudes'. And always something to pause and to consider in Lamb - his household Gods 'plant a terrible fixed foot . . . and do not willingly seek Lavinian shores' [Aeneas after the sack of Troy settled in Italy 'the Lavinian land'; Lucas]

Then, damning 'instrumental music' which is like 'reading a book, *all stops*, being obliged to supply the verbal matter' Lamb also compares it to being stretched 'upon a rack of roses'. But he forgets that painful aspect of his roses when he writes to George Dyer in 1831 'You mistake your heart if you think you can write a lampoon. Your whips are rods of roses - spare me from such whips, I say'. He is fond of the metaphor of the hot-bed for forcing growth - I noted three instances. He does, too, use some rather odd ideas, for instance 'the flat swamp of convalescence', 'that stubborn corn the human will' and 'they lime-twig up my soul and body'.

Or he can say, of the Old Schoolmasters, 'those fine old Pedagogues . . . always in their first garden, reaping harvests of their golden time, among their *Flori* and their *Spici-legia*'. In passing, I note that these two titles quoted by Lamb are themselves 'green' metaphors. The sources of Lamb's ideas, and the shape into which he put them, have generated plenty of 'on-going' literary matter; my object today is, at least in part, to get you to consider this question 'When Lamb uses a phrase such as "a child tearing herself from the parental stock, and committing herself to strange graftings" is this his own pattern of thought, or is it mediated only through the writings of others?'

I would like to suggest, and I shall now advance some passages which I believe support my thesis, that in some areas of observation and comment on natural topics, Lamb's stock of knowledge and experience was more than sufficient to furnish the matter of his writings - it is his own crop, not the gleanings from others' sowings.

We could all accept the reality, I think, of some recollections disguised as fiction, taken from both poetry and prose, and exemplified by the following. 'Many a lonely glade' and the 'fancied wanderings'; 'vast out-stretching branches high of some old wood' even if we see that standing 'wet and chilly on thy deck [gazing] upon the flood' resolves itself into an extended metaphor of danger, loss and loneliness. Lamb knew of weeping willows, wide-branching trees 'with dark green leaf rich clad' [even if only within the gardens of the Inner Temple!] and when suitably involved emotionally, could weave such images into dreams and visions, whether of repentance, of loss or of consolation. He knew of 'thick shadows of oak and beech', and prototypically perhaps, 'the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire'. This must greatly have pleased him, and he quotes himself in this phrase more than once.

There are, of course, many less ambiguous recollections, chiefly to be found in the letters; in 1823 he is telling Hazlitt's niece about his new 'large garden, having pears, gooseberries, grapes (these latter ripen once in three years) cabbages (they are always bearing and good for nothing) carrots etc'. This all sounds like the agent's sales-spiel, but a month or so later, the idea has become reality, and in the process taken wings; the garden is 'spacious,

with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous'. He immediately, however, 'enters without passage into a cheerful dining room, all studded over and rough with old books'. He then asserts that he is 'taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation for me . . . I contemplate the growth of vegetable nature . . . and watch my tulips'. This paradise is slightly marred, he says when his neighbour 'talked of the Law' after a 'drunken gardener' had lopped off a sheltering bough! As he says, 'What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy "garden-state"'. He had indeed compared himself with Adam, and his language cannot evade the Biblical - possibly the recipient [Bernard Barton] was partly responsible for this train of thought. It is interesting that Lamb, even at his most practical, is still thinking of his books, and turning that experience into something specially manufactured and purposeful. Five years later, to the Cowden Clarkes, Lamb enthused at length on the walks around Enfield. He notes the 'unfrequentedest blackberry paths . . . the fine back woods . . . the willow and lavender plantations . . . clumps of finest moss . . . the knee-deep clover . . . the clump meadows'. Yet he still weaves into this idyll a 'ruined convent . . . where some of the painted glass is yet whole and fresh', a disquisition on St Claridge and the Black Book of St Albans - as well as telling us that he hurt his leg by 'skipping a skipping-rope at 53 - heu mihi non sum qualis'.

I would suppose that it is in 'throw-away lines' that the inner cast of a man's mind would most easily be recognised; more or less at random, here are some examples of the phrases that Lamb uses - 'flos rarus - such weeds . . . kill flowers - sports of nature - under the rose - that wretched reed, her lover - those arid beech nuts - ever-blooming elysium of delight - sad worldly thorns - the very flower of her citizens - shoots of generosity - martyrs' palms and saintly garlands - in the flower of his popularity - natural sprouts of his own wit - every Quakeress is a lily - roses still bloomed . . . in those withered and yellow cheeks - what flesh, like loving grass (? meaning) - the burrs stuck to him, but they were good and loving burrs for all that [he was also addicted to this image of the sticky burr, or bur!] - Actæon in mid-sprout - orchard pranks, and snapping twigs - covered with flowers of so cunning a periphrasis [the cover was to conceal the lurking snakes!] - patience, it's c-cumin'. Then of Captain Starkey 'he lived, and died, a broken bulrush'. This, surely, is a highly original remark - ambiguously suggestive, but obviously Lamb had seen plenty of broken bulrushes in his walks by 'sweet Amwell'.

Of course, Lamb is always well aware of what he is doing, and after referring to gift-horses he is then careful 'not to ride a metaphor to death' but cannot resist 'the flower and bran of modern poetry'; he drifts into grouse and woodcock, brawn [naturally!], hare and eventually 'indigestible trifles'. All these kinds of things are, he says, 'the seeds of harmony'. The last act, as we know, was rather sad; in May 1834, to Manning 'I walk 9 or 10 miles a day away up the road, dear London-wards. Fields, flowers, birds and green lanes I have no heart for'. But note that he had already told Manning in that same letter 'I have had a scurvy nine years of it, and am now in the sorry fifth act. Twenty weeks nigh she has been now violent . . .' I hope that I have suggested to you, even if not fully demonstrated, that Lamb *was* capable of observing and appreciating natural beauty, natural objects. The conditions are clear, I believe - only when duty and self-constraint does not overwhelm and override his 'normal' capacity to reach out and to react. In other words, before his life-long responsibility to Mary had weighed him down, during the alternating intervals of hope and disappointment in his other personal relationships, I see evidence of a sensibility about nature equal to that of many of the other 'Romantics'.

This sensibility, shown by some of the 'green' language I have shared with you, is, I submit, a reflection of the 'real' Lamb, not merely Lamb reflecting that other world of books. True, he *does* get carried away by the intoxication of the words and the associations

which they evoke; what about this final bravura passage 'We are at Cowes, the whole flock, Sheep and Lambs - and in good pasturage'.

To me, then, the message is clear. In his 'natural and healthy state' [as he said himself of Hazlitt], he did 'have a heart for' these green things, and it was only the steady drip of anguish and helplessness that took him to 'The Red Lion, and the Ware Road, almost as good as a street'. Perhaps the crowds, the busy Strand, the shop windows were a drug, an anodyne for that inner loneliness, that gap in his heart, no less than the demon drink served that same purpose. Moreover, Lamb understood his own nature as well and as clearly as we can now analyse it nearly two hundred years later, and as sadly and as steadfastly and as unselfishly as any hero in more public worlds of battle and strife. I believe that if Lamb had found those human fulfilments which Wordsworth found, his legacy would have proved equally compelling as a fore-runner and emotional touchstone for our own anxieties and insights about the world around us, our responsibilities to it and the manifold delights which it offers to the human soul. I propose to you 'The Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb, lover of nature, the countryside and of all that therein is'. One of the first members of the Green Party, worthy colleague of Wordsworth et al!

---

The text of Dr D G (Tim) Wilson's address, given after the Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon at the Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Prince's Gate, SW7, on Saturday 1st February 1992

---

### NOTES

Direct Quotations from Lucas's edition of the *Works* (5 vols, 1905) and *Letters* (3 vols, 1935)

[context: ME = misc. essays; E = Elia; PP = poems & plays; L = letters]

Bible [PP 1]; Beaumont/Fletcher [L 2]; Bowles [L 2]; Burton [ME 1]; [from the Classics ME 1, E 1, L 1]; Coleridge [1 5]; Cotton [L 1]; Daniel [Ros, Gray 1]; Dodd [E 1] Field, Barron [E 1]; Fields [ME 4]; Fuller [ME 2]; Goldsmith [ME 1]; Hamilton [L 1]; Hazlitt [L 1]; Homer [L 1]; Hone [L 1]; Hood [ME 1]; Keats [ME 5]; [C.L. himself - E 1, L 10]; Liston [ME 2]; Mandeville [ME 1]; Marlowe [L 1]; Marvell [E 2, L 1]; Massinger [L 1]; Middleton [E 1]; Milton [ME 2, E 2, L 1]; More [ME 1]; Moxon [ME 1]; Priestley [L 1]; Prior [ME 3]; Ritson [PP 1]; Shakespeare [ME 3, E 2, L 1]; Southey [L 1]; Spenser [ME 1, E 1]; Taylor (Jeremy) [ME 2]; Temple [E 1]; Thomson [ME 2]; Vanburgh [E 1]; Webster [ME 1, E 1]; Wilks [ME 1]; Woolly [ME 2]; Wordsworth [ME 13, L 1]; [unidentified - L 5]

### Indirect Quotations

In misc. essays 11; Elia 4; Letters 19; Mrs Leicester's School 1; dram. spec. (notes) 2; poems 6; plays 1; Tales 24 & Adventures of Ulysses 25.

### Recollections

In misc. essays 16 (2 extended); Elia 19 (4 extended); Letters 6; Mrs L's School 5; poems 6 & plays 2.

Direct Observations

In misc. essays 4; Elia 10; Letters 49 (7 extended); Mrs L's School 3; poems 10 & plays 1.

Fictional Observations

In misc. essays 14; Elia 10; Letters 37 (2 extended); Mrs L's School 8; poems 11; plays 28 (2 extended); Tales 2; Prince Dorus & Beauty and Beast 8.

Metaphors

In misc. essays 21; Elia 15 (1 extended); Letters 43 (2 extended); Mrs L's School 2; dram. spec. 3; poems 20 (8 extended); plays 5; Tales/Adv. Ulysses 5.

Other classifications

Similes 1 [ME]; 1 [MLS]; 1 [DS]; 9 [L].

Puns 1 [ME]; 2 [E]; 1 [L].

Cliché/sayings 3 [E]; 3 [L].

Apostrophes 1 [P]; 1 [P1]; 3[L].

Paraphrases 2 [ME]; 2 [E].

Translations (by STC) 3 [P]; name 1 [P1]; comment 2 [E]; belief 1 [P]; speculation 1 [L] & nonsense 1 [L].

## THE ROMANTIC RHINE; TURNER, WORDSWORTH AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

Cecilia Powell

Of the three rivers discussed in 'Turner's Rivers of Europe' the Rhine has always been the most important, though the Meuse and the Mosel became increasingly visited by the British during the lifetimes of Turner and Wordsworth. The quintessentially 'Romantic' stretch of the Rhine is the 120 or so miles between Mainz and Cologne, also known as the 'Middle Rhine' to distinguish it from other portions of the river's 800-mile course from the Alps to the North Sea. The Mosel joins the Rhine at Coblenz, almost the mid-point of the Middle Rhine; and - not surprisingly in view of the terrain through which they both carve their way - it is almost a miniature version of the grander river. The Meuse lies slightly further to the west, its waters not merging with those of the Rhine until immediately before they reach the North Sea.

The Rhine is *the* great river highway of Europe and, since time immemorial, has played a vital role in its economic, social and political history. It has probably been more fought over than any other European river, and to this day its banks are studded with the ruins of medieval castles, fortresses, strongholds and toll castles. For centuries, the British used it as a convenient highway whenever they could (most notably for returning from the Grand Tour of Italy) but they took no notice whatever of the magnificent scenery through which they were passing. It was not until the 1780s - when Turner and Wordsworth were highly impressionable teenagers - that the generation of writers that included the Rev. William Gilpin and Mrs Ann Radcliffe discovered the aesthetic face of the Middle Rhine. The 'discovery' of the Rhine's picturesqueness and sublimity in the 1780s is part and parcel of the same movement which 'discovered' the Lake District, North Wales, Scotland and the Alps (1786 saw the first ascent of Mont Blanc, hitherto regarded as a terrifying monster);



and in a sense the Middle Rhine had all the desirable qualities of picturesque landscape rolled into one – it had soaring cliffs; dangerous rocks and whirlpools; a succession of bends, providing ever-changing views; ancient towns and villages; and a superabundance of ruined medieval castles, thrillingly situated on vertiginous heights, both dwarfing and threatening those who passed beneath.

The Middle Rhine thus provided an ideal destination for an ambitious young poet or painter, and a worthy theme. But the French Revolution and the ensuing wars throughout Europe made exploration of the continent very difficult for over twenty years. Both Wordsworth and Turner managed quite long excursions during this period, in 1790 and 1802 respectively (when each spent several months away from England and crossed the Alps for the first time); but it was not until Napoleon's armies had been finally defeated on the Field of Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington and Marshall Blücher, on 18 June 1815, that European travel became once more a regular feature of British life and – in Turner's case – an almost annual fixture.

Naturally, the Field of Waterloo attracted an enormous number of visitors from almost immediately after the victory, and since it lies only a few miles south of Brussels, a visit there could very easily be combined with ones to the Meuse and the Rhine. One of the earliest visitors was Walter Scott who was there by 9 August but he in fact then headed for Paris; the Poet Laureate Robert Southey was there in October and then explored other parts of Belgium including the Meuse; in May 1816 Lord Byron visited Waterloo on his way to the Rhine; in 1817 Turner followed a similar itinerary; in 1820 and again in 1828 Wordsworth combined Waterloo with both the Meuse and the Middle Rhine. Other writers who visited the Rhine, Meuse and Mosel during the period of Turner's fascination with them included William Hazlitt, Henry Crabb Robinson, Shelley and Mary Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Campbell; the artists included Samuel Prout, David Roberts and Clarkson Stanfield, to name just a few of the most famous ones. Sadly, Lamb himself never visited the Rhine, but both Wordsworth and Coleridge stayed with him immediately after their 1828 tour (on which see below), so he would certainly have been well informed about it.

Turner himself set off for his first continental tour since peace had returned to Europe on Sunday 10 August 1817. His tour was to last five weeks, of which one entire day was devoted to the Field of Waterloo and twelve days were spent exploring the Middle Rhine. Throughout his tour he sketched avidly, so that the three sketchbooks used in Belgium and Germany provide a minute-by-minute record – usually just in hasty, pencil outlines – of where he went and what he looked at. When he returned to England, he developed his sketches and memories into outstanding works of art: a huge oil painting of *The Field of Waterloo* exhibited in 1818; and a series of fifty-one small views of the Rhine, painted in watercolour and gouache, which he sold in the autumn of 1817 to his great friend and patron Walter Fawkes of Farnley Hall in Yorkshire.

There's an obvious parallel here with Byron, on a variety of levels. Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* had been published in November 1816. In this Turner could – and almost certainly *did* – read how Byron's hero stood on the battlefield, 'this place of skulls/the grave of France' before contemplating the mingled sweetness and sublimity of the Middle Rhine. There was nothing accidental about Turner visiting Waterloo on his way to Cologne; and when he exhibited his oil painting at the Royal Academy he chose to accompany it by one of Byron's verses on the battlefield (iii, 28). The verse begins by looking back at the Duchess of Richmond's sumptuous ball, held in Brussels, which was interrupted by the sudden call to arms; the day-long battle is then dealt with in a single

weighty line; and the last four lines of Byron's verse focus tellingly on the cost of the battle in human terms:

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,  
 Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,  
 The midnight brought the signal sound of strife,  
 The morn the marshalling in arms, - the day  
 Battle's magnificently stern array!  
 The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent  
 The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,  
 Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,  
 Rider and horse, - friend, foe, - in one red burial blent!

This extraordinarily powerful verse must surely be one of those that led Stephen Coote in *Byron: the Making of a Myth* (1988) to describe Byron as the greatest war poet in English literature between Shakespeare and Wilfred Owen; and my only quibble with Stephen Coote would be over his mistaken interpretation of Turner's foreground as a scene of plunder and pillage. This it is *not*! What we have here are women and children, desperately searching for their menfolk, hoping against hope to find them alive but, alas, finding them 'in one red burial blent'.

Byron writes here so movingly about Waterloo that it comes as quite a shock, when one reads his letters of May 1816 to John Cam Hobhouse and Augusta Leigh, to learn that he had not planned to visit Waterloo at all.<sup>1</sup> He only did so because repeated break-downs to the wheels and springs of his carriage forced him to head for Brussels and a really reliable carriage-mender. (He had in fact set off for the continent in a bit of a rush, the moment his separation from his wife was signed and sealed, and he did so in a monstrously large Napoleonic travelling carriage, ordered from the firm of Baxter at a cost of £500 - a bill which, characteristically, he did not pay.) Byron had really been intending to make for *Antwerp* and the *lower Rhine*, and had not intended to visit Brussels at all, but he made the best of things as usual, by seizing the opportunity to visit Waterloo when it presented itself. Byron records in one letter that he 'had a gallop over the field on a Cossack horse', that he 'purchased a quantity of helmets sabres etc', and that the plain of Waterloo was 'not much' in comparison to Marathon, Troy, Chaeronea and Plataea. All this - and this is in fact all that Byron *does* say, at the time, about Waterloo - would have been quite alien to Turner, who spent a whole day plodding over the battlefield, sombrely recording '4,000 killed here', '1,500 killed here'; who would certainly not have collected arms as souvenirs; and - having failed to travel to Greece with Lord Elgin in the 1790s - was not in a position to make comparisons between Waterloo and the great battlesites of the ancient world.

Turner's experience of the Middle Rhine was also quite different from Byron's. Byron shot up the Rhine at breakneck speed in his travelling carriage, tossing off platitudes in his letters about 'much surpassing my expectations . . . nothing can exceed the prospects at every point . . . the Rhine is the perfection of *mixed Beauty*'. The whole of the third canto of *Childe Harold* was complete less than two months later, so it's hardly surprising that it contains practically nothing of originality about the Rhine; indeed, only two places are actually mentioned by name - Coblenz (with its great fortress of Ehrenbreitstein) and 'the castled crag of Drachenfels'.

Turner, on the other hand, devoted twelve whole days to the Rhine, walking upstream on the west bank along the new road created by the French under the Napoleonic occupation, and travelling downstream partly by boat and partly on foot. He studied and sketched everything minutely and one can match up all the Fawkes watercolours with their

preparatory pencil sketches (which proves, incidentally, that they cannot have been painted on the spot, as has sometimes been suggested).

At this point we may turn to Wordsworth's experiences of the Rhine in 1790 and 1820. In 1790 Wordsworth - then an undergraduate at Cambridge, aged 20 - saw many fine stretches of the upper Rhine in Switzerland, including the celebrated falls of Schaffhausen near Basle, and frequently performed walks of nearly forty miles a day, which is very comparable to what Turner sometimes achieved along the Middle Rhine in 1817. During the latter stages of Wordsworth's 1790 tour, he and his companion Robert Jones travelled down the Rhine to Cologne by boat. For many years this episode seems to have gone largely unremarked in Wordsworth's verse (though there are clear metaphorical references to it in the penultimate section of Book VI of *The Prelude*):

Finally, whate'er  
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream  
That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,  
Confederate with the current of the soul,  
To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,  
In its degree of power, administered  
To grandeur or to tenderness, - to the one  
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means  
Less often instantaneous in effect;  
Led me to these by paths that, in the main,  
Were more circuitous, but not less sure  
Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven.  
(1850 version, VI, 742-53)

(This may appear an archetypal piece of metaphorical summing-up, but its location in Wordsworth's account of his tour - between leaving Switzerland and reaching Belgium, a period when he is known to have spent several days descending the Rhine - leaves one in no doubt about the source of his inspiration).

In 1820, Wordsworth, together with his wife Mary and sister Dorothy, made a second visit to the Middle Rhine. It is obvious from Dorothy's journal of her tour that she and Mary stimulated William to recall and describe to them many of his earlier experiences, and he at last encapsulated them in verse. Scholars must have drawn this analogy before, but having spent so much time recently in matching up Turner's sketches with his finished works, I was very struck by the parallel found in the Wordsworths' writings: the private undercurrents of experience glimpsed in the letters and journals of William, Mary and Dorothy on this tour of 1820 and the formal public statements caught on the printed page by the poet himself. Dorothy writes:<sup>2</sup>

Our journey through the narrower and most romantic passages of the Vale of the Rhine was especially endeared to Mary and me by recollections connected with times long past, when my brother and his friend (it is thirty years ago) floated down the stream in their little Bark. Often did my fancy place them with a freight of happiness in the centre of some bending reach overlooked by tower or castle or (when expectation would be most eager) at the turning of a promontory, which had concealed from their view some delicious winding . . . - but no more of my own feelings; a record of his will be more interesting.

She then inserts the poem which Wordsworth was to include in his *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent (1820)* published in 1822, under the title 'Author's Voyage down the Rhine (Thirty Years Ago)' (and never republished by Wordsworth because in 1827 many of its phrases and sentiments were recycled into one of his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (Part III, no. XII)). Here again, of course, there's a Turnerian parallel, since he, too, often re-used or adapted his own material, and his 1817 Rhine sketches and memories were pressed into service for watercolour commissions right through into the late 1830s. In its original form, Wordsworth's poem ran as follows:

The confidence of Youth our only Art,  
 And Hope gay Pilot of the bold design,  
 We saw the living Landscapes of the Rhine,  
 Reach after reach, salute us and depart;  
 Slow sink the Spires, - and up again they start!  
 But who shall count the Towers as they recline  
 O'er the dark steeps, or on the horizon line  
 Striding, with shattered crests, the eye athwart?  
 More touching still, more perfect was the pleasure,  
 When hurrying forward till the slack'ning stream  
 Spread like a spacious Mere, we there could measure  
 A smooth free course along the watery gleam,  
 Think calmly on the past, and mark at leisure  
 Features which else had vanished like a dream.

The Fawkes watercolours provide numerous visual parallels to these lines, a particularly striking one being that between *The Binger Loch* and Wordsworth's 'slack'ning stream Spread like a spacious Mere . . . A smooth free course along the watery gleam'.

In the first edition of the *Memorials*, this poem faced one entitled 'In a Carriage, upon the Banks of the Rhine' where one can sense that Wordsworth (now aged 50) is somewhat frustrated by being confined in a travelling carriage but looks forward to future occasions when he will again enjoy 'pedestrian liberty'. Another of Turner's Rhine views for Walter Fawkes, showing the Bautsburg and the Clemenskapelle and some resting pedestrians, provides an almost perfect illustration. (Turner, of course, now aged 42, was not encumbered with female travelling companions):

Amid this dance of objects sadness steals  
 O'er the defrauded heart - while sweeping by.  
 As in a fit of Thespian jollity,  
 Beneath her vine-leaf crown the green Earth reels:  
 Backward, in rapid evanescence, wheels  
 The venerable pageantry of Time,  
 Each beetling rampart - and each tower sublime,  
 And what the Dell unwillingly reveals  
 Of lurking cloistral arch, through trees espied  
 Near the bright River's edge. Yet why repine?  
 Pedestrian liberty shall yet be mine  
 To muse, to creep, to halt at will, to gaze:  
 Freedom which youth with copious hand supplied,  
 May in fit measure bless my later days.

(1822 version)

Wordsworth, Turner, Coleridge, Southey - all were phenomenally energetic walkers by the standards of 1992; and it is somewhat unnerving to reflect that one of Turner's most gruelling tours - the second Meuse-Mosel tour of 1839 - was achieved when he was 64. His experiences on this tour inspired the later painting of over a hundred tiny gouache studies on blue paper, each measuring a mere  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Many of these have parallels in the writings of Turner's contemporaries. For example, *The Confluence at Namur: Moonlight* has affinities with Wordsworth's sentiments expressed in his sonnet 'Scenery between Namur and Liege' included in the *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent (1820)*, though Wordsworth is talking of early morning and Turner depicts early evening, with the moon rising over the silvery Meuse and the sun setting behind the fortress and the bridge over the Sambre.

Wordsworth begins:

What lovelier home could gentle Fancy chuse?  
Is this the Stream, whose cities, heights, and plains,  
War's favorite play-ground, are with crimson stains  
Familiar, as the Morn with Pearly dews?

and he continues:

As mine eyes  
Turn from the fortified and threatening hill,  
How sweet the prospect of yon watery glade,  
With its grey rocks, clustering in pensive shade -  
That, shaped like old monastic turrets, rise  
From the smooth meadow-ground, serene and still!

Both Namur and Liege have played famous roles in English literature. It was during the 1695 siege of Namur that the incomparable Uncle Toby in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* suffered his mysterious war-wound (though we never discover precisely *where* - in any sense of that word - he actually received it); and some of the most exciting passages in Scott's *Quentin Durward* (1823) take place in Liege. But what concerns me here is the interest of both Turner and Wordsworth with the Meuse between Namur and Liege, with its mixture of threatening fortresses and silvery glades - the same 'mixed beauty' which Byron had commented upon along the Rhine. I don't believe that anyone of Turner and Wordsworth's generation - anyone who had lived through the twenty-six years from the French Revolution to the Battle of Waterloo - could journey through 'war's favourite playground' (the phrase suits the Rhine even better, in fact, than the Meuse) with the disengaged emotions of earlier travellers in search of the Picturesque. In 1800 Wordsworth's friend, the journalist Henry Crabb Robinson, journeying in the Rhineland, remarked upon the different emotions aroused in him by modern ruins - still black with smoke - and old castles like those seen in England and Wales. The ancient ruins were 'objects only of a sort of poetical interest, blended in our Minds with Romance' and resembling the impressions of a stage tragedy; but his first 'new ruin' awakened feelings of 'real and actual Misery which saddens the Mind' and really made him pause for thought.<sup>3</sup> One may fairly say that the cult of the Picturesque was killed off by the long years of uncertainty, turmoil and war; that subsequent Romantic travellers used their own eyes, ears and other senses far more keenly than their eighteenth-century predecessors; and that Wordsworth and Turner demonstrate this new sensitivity at its most perceptive.

Wordsworth returned to the Meuse in 1825, on the six-week tour of the Rhineland and the Low Countries which he, his daughter Dora (then aged twenty-three) and Coleridge

undertook very much on the spur of the moment. Wordsworth borrowed a 'Carpet Bag' from Henry Crabb Robinson as his luggage and the entire tour cost just over £91. They planned to travel from Namur to Luxembourg and then to descend the Mosel from Trier to Coblenz, which is exactly what Turner did in both 1824 and 1839; but for some reason they did not do so and contented themselves with travelling on the Meuse as far as Dinant, besides spending several days at Bad Godesberg near Bonn and driving up and floating down the Middle Rhine.<sup>4</sup> It was Coleridge's experiences on this tour that led him to compose his famous poem on Cologne, which cries out for comparison with Turner's *Cologne*, engraved in 1824. Turner's splashing bathers are blissfully unaware of the risks they run by swimming in such a sink of pollution:

*Cologne*

In Kohln, a town of monks and bones,  
And pavements fang'd with murderous stones,  
And rags, and hags, and hideous wenches;  
I counted two and seventy stenches,  
All well defined, and several stinks!  
Ye Nymphs that reign o'er sewers and sinks,  
The river Rhine, it is well known,  
Doth wash your city of Cologne;  
But tell me, Nymphs! what power divine  
Shall henceforth wash the river Rhine?

In the nineteenth century British tourists seem to have been obsessed with the dirtiness of foreigners, especially the Germans. When Shelley and his wife Mary spent six weeks on the continent in the summer of 1814, they travelled down the Middle Rhine in a public passenger boat similar to that shown at the centre of Turner's view of Bacharach - an illustration in the 1830s *Life and Works of Lord Byron* in 17 volumes. She was delighted that most of the other passengers chose to remain inside the cabin, 'since nothing could be more horribly disgusting than the lower order of smoking, drinking Germans . . .; they swaggered and talked, and what was hideous to English eyes, *kissed* one another'.<sup>5</sup> When she returned to Germany in 1840, Mary Shelley - by now a widow - complained that all meals in the hotels had to be consumed 'in the common room, where Germans smoke, and consider fresh air unhealthy'.<sup>6</sup> We all know how unpleasant that can be, but standing outside on board a boat like the one Turner shows, she'd have had plenty of healthy fresh air.

Bacharach has always been famous for its wine - indeed its name derives from 'Bacchi ara' (the altar of Bacchus, god of wine). In 1828 Coleridge didn't get on very well with Rhenish wines and a story is recorded of how he refused to drink Hock Heimer, swearing he would just as soon take vinegar. In the end his thirst overcame him and he begged for a draught.<sup>7</sup> 'He had no sooner rinsed his mouth with the obnoxious fluid, than he spat it out, and vented his disgust in the following impromptu: -

In Spain, that land of monks and apes,  
The thing called wine doth come from *grapes*,  
But, on the noble river Rhine,  
The thing called *gripes* doth come from wine'.

I'm sure that Lamb would have enjoyed the joke!

Wordsworth, Coleridge and Dora also visited Spa - the site of far cleaner and more therapeutic waters than those of Cologne - which lies just south-east of Liege in the Belgian Ardennes. This town had been a highly fashionable spot in the eighteenth century, though it suffered greatly in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. When Southey visited it, after his inspection of Waterloo in 1815, he found it 'a little quiet place, in that respect resembling Tunbridge Wells'.<sup>8</sup> Turner in 1839 responded enthusiastically to its gentle charms, later painting no less than six gouache studies of the town.

Turner's watercolours often throw light on - or enjoy shared nuances with - the works of his literary contemporaries, whether in prose or verse. Equally, their descriptions can illuminate Turner's own tours of which day-to-day details are sometimes only partially known. It is thus particularly satisfying to consider Turner's sequence of gouaches depicting the Mosel from Trier down to Coblenz alongside an account of a contemporary voyage: that taken by Mary Shelley in 1840 and published in her *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844).<sup>9</sup> In this connection it is worth remembering that Mary Shelley and Turner were certainly aware of each other's work (they contributed to the same annuals and in 1828, for instance, Mary Shelley wrote a short story, 'The Sisters of Albano', to be placed next to Turner's *Lake Albano* in the *Keepsake for 1829*); and (more importantly) that Turner's gouaches may well have been painted to be engraved in a publication following the pattern of his earlier annual volumes devoted to the Loire and the Seine. Had this happened, they would definitely have been accompanied by a tour narrative similar to Mary Shelley's.

We join our two travellers at Trier (which both Mary Shelley and Turner called by its French name 'Trèves' - a leftover from the twenty years of French occupation - just as they both always used the French 'Moselle' rather than the German 'Mosel').

The inn (l'Hotel de Trèves) is the best we have yet met with; the civility and alacrity with which we are served is quite comforting, - as well as the cleanliness of the house, and the ultimate moderation of the charges. Our first care on arriving has been to arrange for descending the Moselle. There is no steamer; one is promised for next year; but, for the present, there is only a passage-boat twice a-week, Thursday and Saturday, and this is Monday. Upon inquiry, we learn that we can hire a tolerably commodious boat, with three men to work her, at no extravagant price . . . By early rising and late arriving, we might accomplish the descent in two days; we prefer a more easy style of proceeding. We are to sleep two nights on shore, and occupy the better part of three days going down the river.

We left Trèves soon after noon; our boat was rude enough, but tolerably large. A queer-looking old man steered her, and the oars were held by two young fellows, one with an aspect of intelligence and good humour, the son of the old man; the other, belonging to a grade beneath him in the human scale. Our luggage was piled aft, and we had an awning. Thus, on a fine, but not hot, June day, we pushed off from Trèves; and, full of curiosity and expectation of pleasure, dropped down the swift stream between verdant banks that rose into hills - not striking in their outline, but agreeable to the eye, while frequent villages, each with its church and pointed spire, either nestled in the foldings of the hills, or graced some promontory that formed a bend in this much-winding river. Peace seemed to brood over and lull us - a deeper peace, as at evening the green shadows of the mountains gathered on the quiet river; and now and then a ruined castle crowned a height, and with that peculiar impression of stately

tranquillity which a time-honoured ruin imparts, added the touch of romantic dignity, which otherwise had been wanting, to the scene.

Mary Shelley's first evening on the Mosel was not a huge success, but was probably typical of the experiences of many British tourists in Germany who strayed off the beaten track. They stayed at:

a miserable village, with a miserable inn, and it was a matter of difficulty to procure beds for so large a party; the rooms looked dirty and disconsolate - but there was no help; we ordered supper, coffee and eggs, and, our great staple of consumption throughout Germany, fried potatoes.

Things were not much better first thing next day, but they soon improved:

We left Piesport at five in the morning; the mists gathered chill, white, and dank around us. We met many barges towed up the stream by horses up to their middles in the cold foggy river. The hills grew higher and steeper - broken into precipice and peak - crowned by ruined towers and castles. To a certain degree, it might be called a miniature Rhine; yet it had a peculiar character of its own, more still, more secluded than the nobler river. There were no country seats; no large towns nor cities; but the villages, each with its spire, and overlooked by a ruined tower on a neighbouring height, succeeded to each other frequently. At eight o'clock we arrived at Berncastel; by the windings of the river, it was fifteen miles to Trarbach; across the hills, it was but three. Our boatmen advised us to cross the hill, as the boat thus lightened would make speedier way; accordingly, with the morning before us, we left the boat at Berncastel, and ordered breakfast. My companions scrambled up a steep hill to a ruined castle that overhung the village. We had a good breakfast, and then began our walk. The hill was very steep; the day very warm; I never remember finding the crossing of a mountain so fatiguing. The path was good, not broken into zigzags, but for that reason steeper; and after the fatigue of the ascent, the descent became absolutely painful. At length we reached Trarbach. It was market-day, and the high-street was thronged. One plenteous article of merchandise was cherries: we gave a few groschen, and in return bore off many pounds; the woman who sold them seemed never tired of heaping up our basket. The boat arrived soon after, and repose was delightful after our laborious walk.

The finest scenery of the Moselle occurs after leaving Trarbach; but words are vain; and in description there must ever be at once a vagueness and a sameness that conveys no distinct ideas, unless it should awaken the imagination: unless you can be placed beside us in our rough-hewn boat, and glide down between the vine-covered hills, with bare craggy heights towering above; now catching with glad curiosity the first glimpse of a more beautiful bend of the river, a higher mountain peak, a more romantic ruin; now looking back to gaze as long as possible on some picturesque point of view, of which, as the boat floated down but slightly assisted by the rowers, we lost sight for ever - unless you can imagine and sympathise in the cheerful elasticity of the setting out at morning, sharpened into hunger at noon, and the pleasure that attended the rustic fare we could command, especially accompanied as it was by bright pure Moselle wine; then, the quiet enjoyment of golden evening, succeeded by still and gray



twilight; and last, the lassitude, the fatigue, which made us look eagerly out for the place where we were to stop and repose: – there is a zest in all this, especially on a voyage unhacknied by others, and therefore accompanied by a dash of uncertainty and a great sense of novelty, which is lost in mere words: – you must do your part, and feel and imagine, or all description proves tame and useless.

Mary Shelley's second night on the Mosel was better than her first. It was spent at Cochem, shown by Turner in numerous pencil sketches and no less than seven gouaches. The Shelley party found 'a comfortable inn', where she conversed – in English! – with 'a respectable-looking man, apparently some sort of merchant'. She raised with him the question of whether the inhabitants of all the picturesque villages were exploited by their landlords, the owners of the profitable vineyards she'd been seeing; but he told her firmly that this was not the case: 'the peasants . . . had no wishes beyond their present style of life. They had enough and were content'.

On Mary Shelley's final day on the Mosel – 1 July – her party travelled from Cochem to Coblenz, and would thus have begun the day by looking back on a view similar to Turner's last gouache of Cochem, with its thin vaporous washes of pure colour.

We left Kochheim at eight. The day grew warm; but a breeze sprung up, which helped us on our way. The vine-clad hills still sheltered the river; still villages with their spires occurred frequently; and still the landscape was distinguished and ennobled by the ruins of feudal towers and castles.

Like most other travellers on the Mosel and the Rhine – except, of course, Turner – Mary Shelley was unable, by now, to keep up with its endless succession of castles, so her commentary ceases to parallel his experiences. However, she gives a vivid account of the end of her voyage:

At about four o'clock, we reached the mouth of the Moselle as it joins the Rhine. Our boatman wished to land us on the bank of the Moselle itself. We naturally desired to enter the Rhine and land close to an hotel. They declared it was impossible, – the stream was too swift.

After a short argument, two of Mary Shelley's party seized the oars and successfully manoeuvred the boat round the corner into the Rhine, where they duly landed and betook themselves to the Hotel Bellevue. Mary Shelley described it as 'one of three first-rate hotels at Coblenz' and the view it commanded is, of course, one of the finest of all Rhine views, looking across at the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein.

Turner depicted that very view on countless occasions between 1817 and the 1840s – in pencil, watercolour, gouache and oils. Some of these depictions were engraved and published and reached a very wide audience, others are private works, of an intense and ethereal beauty. But all sprang from his own experiences, of which we can never discover too much. The travel writings of Turner's great literary contemporaries, whether on the Rhine, Meuse and Mosel or elsewhere in Europe, will thus never cease to be valuable.

---

A lecture delivered to the Charles Lamb Society on December 7th, 1991

---

## NOTES

- 1 For Byron's travels in 1816 see 'So Late into the Night'. *Byron's Letters and Journals* ed. L.A. Marchand, vol. 5, pp 69. et seq.
- 2 *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* ed. E. de Selincourt, 1941, vol. 2, p.57.
- 3 *Henry Crabb Robinson in Germany 1800-1805* ed. E.J. Morley, 1929, p.40.
- 4 On this tour see *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E.L. Griggs, 1971, vol. VI, pp.747 et seq; *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* ed. A.G. Hill, vol. III part 1, 1978, pp.613-34.
- 5 Mary and P.B. Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, 1817, pp.67-8.
- 6 Mary Shelley, *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, 1844, vol. 1, p.26.
- 7 J.C. Young, *A Memoir of Charles Mayne Young*, 1871, p.122.
- 8 R. Southey, *Journal of a Tour in the Netherlands in the Autumn of 1815* ed. W.R. Nicoll, 1903, p.141.
- 9 See vol. 1, pp.18-26.

## ELIA: AN INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Wordsworth

*St Catherine's College, Oxford*

Then there is Charles Lamb, a long way from his friend Hazlitt in ways and manners; he is very fond of snuff, which seems to sharpen up his wit every time he dips his plentiful fingers into his large bronze-coloured box, and then he .... throws himself backwards on his chair and stammers at a joke or pun with an inward sort of utterance ere he can give it speech.....

Back in Helpstone after his 1824 visit to London, John Clare is recalling the literary scene. Hazlitt 'sits a silent picture of severity', now and then intervening 'with a sneer that cuts a bad pun or a young author's maiden table-talk to atoms'. Lamb, by contrast, is 'a good sort of fellow, and if he offends it is innocently done'. 'Who is not acquainted with Elia?', Clare continues, giving to his question almost a Miltonic ring ('Who would not sing for Lycidas?'),

as soon as the cloth is drawn, the wine and he become comfortable. His talk now doubles and threbles into a combination, a repetition, urging the same thing over and over again, till at last he leaves off, with scarcely a 'goodnight' in his mouth, and disappears, leaving his memory like a pleasant ghost hanging above his vacant chair.

Clare's impressions of London were entered in a private journal (here punctuated, and at times respelt). Lamb did not see them, but would have been delighted by their imaginative quality. Especially sensitive is the account of Lamb's relationship to Mary, the elder sister on whom he totally depended, and who (in her sad recurrent madness) totally depended on him:

his sister Bridget [is] a good sort of woman, though her kind cautions and tender admonitions are nearly lost upon Charles, who, like an undermined river bank, leans carelessly over his jollity and receives the gentle waves of the lappings of woman's tongue unheedingly till it ebbs, and then in the same careless posture sits and receives it again.

Clare's observation of the snuff-taking and the 'inward sort of utterance', his images of the 'pleasant ghost' and the precarious river-bank, catch for us as no one else has done the sense of what Lamb was like. They also blur any distinction that might be perceived between Lamb and Elia (or Mary and Bridget).

Twentieth-century criticism has been unwilling to accept Elia as merely a pseudonym. Lamb, we are told, created, on the basis of his own personality, a separate fictional character. The truth is simpler and more elegant. Lamb marketed himself as a fiction.

The personality to which Clare responded with such affection in 1824 was offered to the public (first in articles for the *London Magazine*, 1820-22, then in the collected *Essays of Elia*), to be enjoyed as a literary creation. Wordsworth, Coleridge, De Quincey, as writers of Romantic autobiography, claimed reliance on fact, but tended to fictionalize; Lamb did the opposite, presenting as fiction experiences and opinions that in no important way deviate from his own.

This did not of course prevent Lamb's playing games with his public and his double self. In January 1823, as a prelude to collecting the essays, he published Elia's obituary: *A Character of the Later Elia. By a Friend*. Having printed in 1818 his *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, he amused himself in the third of the *Elia* essays (*Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*) by having one self comment on the other. 'I remember L. at school', Elia writes, 'and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not'. To sustain the joke a certain distancing was needed between the two selves. Elia's early history became, for the purposes of this single essay, a composite, the country upbringing of Coleridge being grafted onto Lamb's own London experience. The process, however (like that by which Lamb's siblings, John and Mary, became the cousins, James and Bridget Elia) involved no borrowing, or fictionalizing, of personality. As regards all but a few unimportant details of 'biography', Elia is Lamb. He has Lamb's age (45 in 1820), Lamb's school, Lamb's lifetime experience of the Inner Temple, Lamb's friends, Lamb's lack of wife and family, Lamb's love of books and the past, Lamb's habits, tendencies and opinions, of every kind. Even the uneasy self-deprecations are there. At one point Elia refers to himself as a 'stammering buffoon'.

It might seem logical to associate Elia with a particular phase in Lamb's development, a creative and nostalgic moment reached in the early 1820s, partly as a result of writing the *Essays*. Both letters and publications, however, show Elia to be fully formed at a very early stage. In January 1801, Lamb (aged 25) writes to Wordsworth:

My attachments are all local, purely local . . . The rooms where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book case which has followed me about (like a faithful dog, only exceeding him in knowledge) wherever I have moved -- old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school -- these are my mistresses . . .

Among the *Essays* published in 1823, *A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People* ('the display of married happiness . . . is throughout pure, unrecompensed, unqualified insult') is surely the funniest, the most indignantly and unmistakably Elia. So far from being an inspired product of the Elia period, however, it was first printed in the *Reflector* in 1811, nine years before Lamb started to use his famous pseudonym:

what I have spoken hitherto is nothing to the airs which these creatures [married people] give themselves when they come, as they generally do, to have children. When I consider how little of a rarity children are -- that

every street and blind alley swarms with them -- that the poorest people commonly have them in most abundance -- that there are few marriages that are not blest with at least one of these bargains -- how often they turn out ill, and defeat the fond hopes of their parents, taking to vicious courses, which end in poverty, disgrace, the gallows, &c -- I cannot for the life of me tell what cause for pride there can possibly be in having them.

To some extent Elia, like other pseudonyms, is a form of self-protection:

If these speculations seem fantastical to thee, reader (a busy man, perchance), if I tread out of the way of thy sympathy . . . I retire, impenetrable to ridicule, under the phantom cloud of Elia. (*New Year's Eve*)

Though the essay is signed by Elia, Lamb, as writer, uses the first person, informing the reader confidentially that his pseudonym is a 'phantom cloud'. At the same time he makes clear that it is a useful cover. Less ingenuously, a recent editor permits himself to ascribe to Elia (rather than Lamb) the racism of *Imperfect Sympathies*:

I am . . . a bundle of prejudices -- made up of likings and dislikings -- the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies. In a certain sense, I hope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel for all indifferently, but I cannot feel towards all equally . . . I cannot *like* all people alike.

I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair.

Lamb, we are to assume, has imagined himself into the position of one who can't stand Caledonian decisiveness: the Scotsman 'has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his vocabulary'.

The Scots can take care of themselves. Lamb is after all describing a particular temperament, which we recognize, and like or dislike, but do not attach firmly to a particular race. The problems arise as we turn the page:

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids. But I should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation . . . Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side -- of cloaked revenge, dissimulation, and hate, on the other -- between our, and their fathers, must, and ought to, affect the blood of the children. I cannot believe it can run clear and kindly yet . . .

Worse is to come. Lamb is determined to have prejudice -- not Elia's prejudice, but his own, and therefore perhaps the reader's -- out into the open:

In the Negro countenance you will often meet with strong traits of benignity. I have felt yearnings of tenderness towards some of these faces . . . that have looked out kindly upon one in casual encounters in the streets and highways. I love what Fuller beautifully calls -- these 'images of God

cut in ebony'. But I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good-nights with them -- because they are black.

The last four words are typical of Lamb's emotional honesty. He doesn't think he is in the right, either as a Christian or as a compassionate human-being, but he is not going to stay silent or prevaricate. We are at once shocked and impressed. Even in this extreme case, where his opinions fill us with dismay, Lamb is to be trusted. There is no humbug. To use his own criterion of liking, he stands with Keats, and less certainly with Scott, as truly likeable among the great Romantics. Hazlitt and Byron we admire, but they are uncomfortably clever; Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, De Quincey, belong (though in differing degrees) to worlds that are not ours. Conversation would not be easy -- though there would be the odd harangue. With Lamb and Keats (more especially Keats the letter-writer) we could share our meals and our good-nights.

To read the *Essays of Elia* is to be part of a conversation that never ceases to delight. Writing gives to Lamb the fluency that his stammer denied in speech. With each new theme -- grave or gay, ruminative or boisterous -- we sense the moment noted by Clare, as 'the cloth is drawn' and the wine and Lamb 'become comfortable'. The talk 'doubles and threbles', urging upon us Lamb's preoccupation of the moment. Phrases too good to let pass halt us as we read: 'the quick pulse of gain' (*South Sea House*), 'those indispensable side intelligencers' (*A Chapter on Ears*), 'We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness' (*Mackery End*), 'He was a grand fragment; as good as an Elgin marble' (*Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*), 'I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks -- poor blots -- innocent blacknesses' (*Praise of Chimney-Sweepers*). In every phrase, in every detail, we respond to the love of life. Heaven for Lamb will be dull unless the ghosts can share his jokes and his books are there to hug:

Sun, and sky, and breezes, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fire-side conversations, and innocent vanities, and *irony itself* -- do these things go out with life?

Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him?

And you, my midnight darlings, my Folios! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces? (*New Year's Eve*)

Even in Lamb's more satirical moods there is an imaginative sympathy. 'Why are we never quite at ease', he asks, 'in the presence of a schoolmaster? Answer:

because we are conscious that he is not quite at ease in ours. He is awkward, and out of place in the society of his equals. He comes like Gulliver from among his little people, and he cannot fit the stature of his understanding to yours. (*New and Old Schoolmasters*)

The observations are sharp, yet leave the schoolmaster -- ponderous as he is, and prone to talk down to us -- with his dignity intact. He has been understood, not undermined. It is the same witty, compassionate, often affectionate, vision that we see in Lamb's portraits -- Thomas Coventry, 'whose person was quadrate, his step massy and elephantine, his face

square as the lion's' (*Old Benchers*); George Dyer, 'busy as a moth over some rotten archive' (*Oxford in the Vacation*); Aunt Hetty, 'a steadfast, friendly being, and a fine *old Christian*:

The only secular employment I remember to have seen her engaged in, was the splitting of French beans, and dropping them into a China basin of fair water. The odour of those tender vegetables to this day comes back upon my sense, redolent of soothing recollections. (*My Relations*)

Aunt Hetty, it seems, tended to read her bible while others did the housework. Seated with her beans, and her 'basin of fair water', she is a 'spot of time', a precious moment of the past, revisited by memory, with power to 'live and serve the future hour'. 'Soothing recollections' may seem unWordsworthian (as does the associative power of smell), but, like the poet, Lamb, through his 'spot', re-enters the world of the child's imagination, and in doing so finds a renewal of strength. It is in his lament for the once-magical *Old Benchers* that we see most impressively his awareness of change and continuity:

Fantastic forms, whither are ye fled? Or, if the like of you exist, why exist they no more for me? Ye inexplicable, half-understood appearances, why comes in reason to tear away the preternatural mist, bright or gloomy, that enshrouded you? . . . Let the dreams of classic idolatry perish -- extinct be the fairies and fairy trumpery of legendary fabling -- in the heart of childhood, there will, for ever, spring up a well of innocent or wholesome superstition -- the seeds of exaggeration will be busy there, and vital -- from every-day forms educing the unknown and the uncommon.

'While childhood', Lamb concludes, 'and while dreams, reducing childhood, shall be left, imagination shall not have spread her holy wings totally to fly the earth'.

---

The text of the Introduction to the recently-published Woodstock Facsimiles edition of *Elia* (1823) is reproduced here by permission of Jonathan Wordsworth

---

## GUILDHALL LIBRARY AND THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY'S LIBRARY: A Progress Report

D E Wickham

*Chairman, The Charles Lamb Society*

How do you visualise the Charles Lamb Society's Library in its current home in Aldermanbury in the City of London? A light airy room with Georgian sash windows on the side overlooking the garden and more than a hint of Gothick, or even Gothic, in the fenestration next to Guildhall itself? Bright Persian rugs scattered on the highly-polished floor and deep leather armchairs next to work-tables which combine all the exuberance of Pugin with the chastity of Empire and the electronic comforts of the modern office? Custom-made Late Georgian and Early Victorian bookcases housing the collections of innumerable past Elians, all members of the Society, most of them with little money but each willing to spend a long lifetime grubbing in bookshops which contained every Lamb treasure ever dreamed of and when you could still get change from a shilling? A crackling log fire flanked by Sarah Battle's poker and Mary Lamb's fireside companion, the firelight glinting off the oak panelling and the cherry-red leather spines of the majority of the

books, each lovingly polished by devoted old retainers paid a sufficient pittance by the honest burghers of the City of London, who are delighted to know that dear old Elia's books are housed in their very midst? Would that it were so!

The Guildhall Library is a great working library and we are grateful that the Society's Library is stored there, as a very small part of the whole. On 8 November 1991 I called by invitation on a second visit to the Library since being appointed Liaison Officer.

Many CLS members will already know of Mr Jo Wisdom who has dealt with our problems and enquiries for some years. Members will also come to know Ms Irene Gilchrist who, as the Senior Reference Librarian, has overall responsibility for our Library. This time I also met Miss Ruth Dodds, one of Wordsworth's countrywomen, who, for five weeks in October and November 1991, between full-time Guildhall Library appointments, was actually and directly employed by the Charles Lamb Society to bring some order into the chaos of our collection.

A previous attempt to have our Library catalogued, by Guildhall staff in their spare time, failed because no-one knew what the spare time was. Only members of Guildhall staff may work in the storage stacks. Can the Society's possessions be brought in bulk to the Reading Room to be worked on? During this visit I kept my head and counted. Escorted by a member of the Library Staff or, in my case, by two, like prisoner and escort, one is let out of the Reading Room through a half-hidden locked door. One passes through two more doors and down a flight of stone steps into the mediaeval crypt of Guildhall. Crossing the crypt, sometimes closed for security reasons or for a function, one passes through two more doors and reaches a Dantesque Gothic portal labelled Stokehole. 'That is what it used to be', said one of my companions reassuringly. One passes through three more doors, and I have not remarked that virtually every door must be unlocked, nor on the length of the corridors between them, nor on the twists and turns of the corridors. After a final neck-breaking step, one is faced by a wall of grey-enamelled steel: these are the mobile shelves in which our Library and collection reside, with maximum storage in minimum space.

That is the basic effort which has to be accomplished whenever anyone calls for a CLS book and, because they are not yet properly catalogued, any such request usually has to be fetched by a member of the Library Staff rather than by one of the Book Collecting Staff. Multiply that for the idea of cataloguing our possessions in the Reading Room.

Miss Dodds managed to finish listing all the monographs, i.e. the books, making a full bibliographical entry for each one together with a handwritten summary showing author, short title, and publication date. The series of alphabetical groupings corresponds to the present shelf arrangement. Her single numerical sequence reached No. 1462. By the time you read this another fifty or so volumes sent to us from various sources will have been added to our collection and the list sent to the contractors who are computerising the Guildhall Library records. This will allow books to be arranged automatically by author and/or by title. We will receive such lists in a form which will be printed or printable for circulation to members. The publication of a catalogue of the contents of the CLS Library, or better still of the whole collection, is a long-cherished wish of our Council.

During her listing, Miss Dodds set aside  $8\frac{1}{2}$  shelves of secondary duplicates. This amounts to about 30 feet of books which, gritting our teeth, we must probably agree that we do not want. I can foresee a lot of emotive discussion about this but the facts are these.

Let us take as an example *The Book of the Ranks and Dignities of British Society* published in 1924 by Clement Shorter who identified it as an anonymous work by Charles Lamb. It is not scarce and I have two copies myself, one with dustwrapper, one without, both with inscriptions by 'the finder', as he usually inscribed himself. Going by what Miss Dodds told me and what I saw for myself, the Society's main (and now listed) library may well contain a copy autographed by 'the finder' to Ernest Crowsley, 'the founder'; S.M. Rich's copy (to which she always gave priority); and a third copy with relevant press-cuttings and ephemera pasted in. Those are the three standard reasons she used for regarding multiple versions as all fit for the primary collection: autograph, Rich, ephemera. I did not see those three (or more) putative copies but I did see no less than five copies among the secondary duplicates. One was from the Walter Farrow Collection: he was CLS Chairman 1935-64. Let us suppose that another was from the Turnbull Collection, one was signed to an unknown third party by 'the finder' but lacked its dustwrapper, and the other two were unsigned but in fine condition with dustwrappers. I cannot see that the Society devoted to the fame and works of Charles Lamb can defend keeping eight copies of a minor book which may or may not be by him in a hole in the ground where space is at a very particular premium.

Similar problems will doubtless arise, for example, over Reginald Hine's *Charles Lamb and his Hertfordshire*, 1949. All Elians whose collections went to the Society and so via Edmonton Library to Guildhall Library are likely to have had a copy of Hine, just as most interested members will have a copy today, and he frequently inscribed his books. Ordinary copies were recently offered in the *Bulletin*. There were hardly any enquiries. Generally speaking, therefore, apart from the occasional nugget of gold, everyone will have given the same run-of-the-mill books and it might well be that the Crowsley, Farrow and Turnbull copies are all among the secondary duplicates. Subject to discussion within the Society, these volumes may perhaps be offered to members and then put back on the market.

I asked if the Guildhall Library might want any of them for their 'Main Collection' as a gift for housing the Society's Library but was told that they are very well stocked with the Romantic Period. There is little likelihood of finding individual public libraries lacking ordinary single titles and these are not really the sort of books to send to damaged foreign libraries, quite apart from all the labour involved in correspondence and packing.

Please appreciate that I am referring to multiple copies of ordinary books and that the problem will doubtless be kicked all round the Council, the members, and a couple of Annual General Meetings. I am not writing of any cornerstone first editions which we may own nor, for example, of such an item as a copy of Barry Cornwall's *Charles Lamb* which I happened to see, marvellously extra-illustrated and enlarged and extended from a single octavo to two quarto volumes. This has not yet even been catalogued because the Guildhall people regard the volumes at present as part of the Society's Ephemera and Pamphlet collection, a point I have taken up with Ms Gilchrist. For the record, the Society's Archives, the Minute Books and so on, have not yet been catalogued either and some of them are now among the items that need priority re-binding.

At present no-one knows what is in the collection, let alone what is in what might be called our out-stations. There are at least three members of the CLS housing Society possessions on our behalf for no reward and little thanks. There is a storage depot with another collection housed in decent though hardly ideal conditions, recently roughly sorted but uncatalogued and with minimal access. Several members own objects which they might ultimately expect to add to a cherished, accessible, and catalogued library and collection.



A single central accessible storage place would be ideal. Naturally a place in or near central London is preferable but all attempts to find one have so far failed. The Guildhall Library authorities have very generously allowed the term 'Library' to include ephemera and a few small pictures and objects, but they are unenthusiastic about housing more ephemera, press-cuttings and oil-paintings. Few libraries are willing to consider housing a loan collection, however long-term the loan, and the Society's Council is unwilling to give the collection away. Most libraries have their own problems of storage space and catalogue-labour. Suggestions from knowledgeable members that have been at least partly followed up will be welcomed by the Council, more so than remarks such as 'Surely X ought to be interested?' We have probably already asked X - and Y and Z. We can forget the idea of setting up a Lamb Museum.

A catalogue or detailed inventory is both essential and almost impossible to engineer at present. Since an autograph note from Sara Coleridge was found in the back of a modern speaker's compilation, it seems at least possible that the odd Lamb letter is lying uncatalogued in the Society's collection. Moreover, there are numerous items which need informed individual decisions. Take four things which I glimpsed, uncatalogued, on a single Guildhall Library shelf. (1) A box of glass lantern slides of Elian places, some broken, which probably link up with various lists of such slides written out by Ernest Crowsley and handed to me by Florence Reeves. (2) A poorly framed photograph of the young Edmund Blunden, Elian and CLS Vice President, signed and dated by him in what seems to be indelible pencil, but not inscribed to the Society. (3) An amateurishly over-framed news-print engraving, probably from Walford's late Victorian *Old and New London*, of the Walden house at Edmonton, labelled as coming from the Turnbull Collection. (4) A well-framed black-and-white photograph of the Hazlitt portrait of Charles Lamb in the dress of a Venetian Senator, labelled as coming from the Walter Farrow Collection.

What are we to do with them? I really do not know. Keep the Blunden, perhaps, or put it with the letters he wrote to members of the Society on topics not obviously Elian and sell the whole lot? Blunden letters are valuable nowadays but the Society does not really need the money. Otherwise? We could do nothing, a comforting alternative often overlooked by new brooms, but that would entail abandoning unknown possessions in a hole in the ground, without space for calling in other items. Besides, one of our stated Objects as a registered charity is 'preserving *and making available to the public for study* books, manuscripts, pictures and other materials relating to this field' [the life, works and times of Charles Lamb and his circle].

What else could we do with the lesser objects mentioned above? Destroy them? Sell them? But who, frankly, these days, is going to buy, or hang on the wall, a black-and-white photograph of the Hazlitt portrait because it was once owned by Walter Farrow?

I admit to being unable to see the way ahead quite clearly at present. May I take this opportunity of saying gratefully that the attempts made over so many years by Basil Savage and then over a shorter period by Charles Branchini, as my two predecessors in Library Liaison, to breathe life into the Society's Library and collection, particularly with regard to binding, preservation, and some cataloguing, are now bearing a little fruit. The body in a far corner beyond the Guildhall crypt is beginning to twitch. Mrs Shelley could have written a book about it.

This paper was written to share with fellow-members of the Charles Lamb Society some of the problems we all face in bringing order to our treasures and, let it not be misunderstood, some of the objects owned by the Society *are* treasures. We ought at least

to know what they are and where they are and that they are being reasonably well looked after, and not being confused with the large amount of dross with which they are mixed. No decisions have been taken. No jobs are being hawked around. For once, no volunteers are being sought. We thank the authorities at Guildhall Library for their generosity and support. Please do not go there and ask to see the collection at present but be ready to support a forthcoming visit. Ms Gilchrist hopes that we shall be able to hold an Annual General Meeting there, probably the one in May 1993.

Ideally, however, an Elian sympathiser will now come forward with the offer of two or three large light warmed rooms full of empty shelves and cupboards, perhaps in a university building in a Bloomsbury square, at a peppercorn rent and with a devoted staff of underworked librarians from next-door who can easily look after our modest needs in addition to their own. If that happens, then I am Queen Marie of Roumania.

This paper was also written because I wanted to cry 'Woe! Woe! Woe!' and weep on a few shoulders. It was not intended to provoke apoplexy among fellow-members. Have a nice day!

#### BOOK REVIEWS

John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism*. Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 235

This book is clever, bold and illuminating. Ultimately, though, it is misleading. Like J Hillis Miller in his chapter on De Quincey from *The Disappearance of God*, John Barrell takes as his starting point De Quincey's account in *Suspiria de Profundis* of when, as a six year old boy, he crept into the bedchamber of his dead sister Elizabeth in order to see her face once more before she was buried. As De Quincey's account of this scene proceeds, however, the dead girl's 'angel face' becomes just one strand in a skein of images that includes tropical sunlight, Biblical sceneries, a kiss, a footstep, a Memnonian wind, frost and a chasm. De Quincey calls this tangle of images an 'involute', and believes it reveals 'the important truth - that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations . . . than ever reach us *directly*, and in their own abstract shapes'. Miller's interpretation of the bedchamber scene is essentially theological. He sees Elizabeth's death as marking the moment when De Quincey is banished from the Paradise of childhood, and he views De Quincey as toiling all his life to regain this Paradise, first through an indulgence in opium, and later through imaginative reworkings of the scene in which he attempts to come to terms with human suffering and with a God that allows it. Barrell's interpretation of the scene, on the other hand, is psychological - as his title suggests. He argues that, primarily through the agencies of 'tropical sunlight' and 'Biblical sceneries', images of the Orient and then of the British empire have become closely associated with the Elizabeth involute. Childhood anxiety and imperial guilt are thus part of one 'core' involute that produces not only several different versions of the bedchamber scene but savage abuse of Orientals as cunning, bloodthirsty reptiles eager to harm both blameless female victims and the British empire as a whole. Introspection and denunciation, imperialism and innocence, femininity and retribution, guilt and grandeur are thus inextricably bound up in one complex, imagistic knot. 'It seems best', Barrell writes in his 'Introduction', '... to think of the relation between childhood and the oriental in De Quincey's writings as a relation between two forms of guilt, personal and political, in which each can be a displaced version of the other, and in which each aggravates the other in an ascending spiral of fear and violence'.

Barrell marshals a substantial body of evidence to support his claim that De Quincey is both terrified and entrapped by the East. He notes that opium 'was associated in the English imagination with every Asian country from Turkey, through Persia and India, to China'. He points out that Oriental imagery pervades De Quincey's descriptions of Ann of Oxford Street, Fanny of the Bath Road, the Daughter of Lebanon and Agnes from 'The Household Wreck'. Pariahs, crocodiles and tigers are discussed at length, as is De Quincey's fascination with the colossal bust of the 'Younger Memnon' housed in the British Museum. The murderer John Williams is seen roaming 'in a most chaotic quarter of eastern or nautical London', where 'Lascars, Chinese, Moors, Negroes, [are] met at every step'. Maximilian's mother in 'The Avenger' is a 'lady of sunny Oriental complexion'. In the dream sequence from *Confessions* De Quincey is transported every night 'into Asiatic scenery' where he is 'stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos'.

Barrell couples these and several other fictional and autobiographical references to the East with De Quincey's ferocious denunciations of Orientals in his political essays. In his 1843 article on 'Ceylon', for example, De Quincey refers to the Kandyan people as snakes, monkeys, hyenas, leopards, bantams and 'ferocious little bloody coward[s]'. He also finds occasion to call them 'little monsters' who for 'centuries' have 'crowed and flapped' their 'wings' on a 'dunghill'. Equally unedifying examples of De Quincey's vindictiveness are to be found in most of his essays which champion the British empire. He was, as Barrell rightly states, 'a furious jingoist' who both feared and hated the East. By gathering together personal and public references from a number of different essays, Barrell highlights a significant and critically neglected aspect of De Quincey's character.

It is, however, just one aspect of De Quincey's character, and this is where the book runs into trouble. *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* creates the impression that in De Quincey's writings there are crocodiles in every corner and Malays under the bed. This is well beyond the truth. De Quincey had recurrent bouts of the Asiatic flu, but not a debilitating and incurable Eastern disease. Barrell does not give due weight to the fact that De Quincey is just one of a throng of mid nineteenth-century authors churning out a truculent rhetoric of imperialism, nor to the fact that De Quincey was capable of denouncing the French and the Germans with the same kind of scorn that he heaped upon the Asians. Barrell's suggestion that at some level De Quincey sees Elizabeth as a source, rather than as a victim of horror, and that this engendered within him a wish to punish women 'for the fact of their sex', sits awkwardly beside the deep and enduring affection De Quincey felt for his wife and three daughters.

What is more, Barrell does not take account of the fact that De Quincey always wrote with one eye fixed steadily on the attitudes and opinions of his various readerships. It is significant, for example, that while De Quincey wrote a large number of autobiographical and political essays for both *Blackwood's* and *Tait's*, Barrell's argument relies heavily on those essays from *Blackwood's* and almost ignores those from *Tait's*. This is because De Quincey strove to give the magazines what they wanted and while *Blackwood's* favoured intense introspection and fierce imperialism, *Tait's* preferred meandering reminiscences and a more balanced form of political commentary. Barrell seeks to portray De Quincey as brutal and terrorised so he is forced to concentrate to a considerable extent on *Blackwood's* essays. Yet the tittle-tattle and erudition of De Quincey's *Tait's* essays are equally characteristic and of these essays we hear little. The East undoubtedly evoked strong emotions in De Quincey and on numerous occasions he exploited these emotions to accord with the pages of *Blackwood's*. But on dozens of other occasions he discarded or circumvented these emotions to write articles suitable for *Tait's*. De Quincey's hatred of

the East was real, but he was before all else a cagey magazinist trying to sell essays: he knew when to rail and when to keep quiet.

In fact, De Quincey kept quiet a lot. He wrote a great number of essays - including many for *Blackwood's* - which do not contain even remote references to the Orient. On all these essays Barrell is silent. Thus his book makes no mention of De Quincey as populariser, as critic, as biographer, as rhetorician, nor does it take into account the influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Barrell extols the variety of De Quincey's writings but he then goes on to state that 'perhaps the most remarkable thing . . . about these various texts is that, in whatever direction they seem to travel, towards whatever different goal, they arrive, time and again, in the very same place . . . an upper chamber' or 'some other bedroom' or "a chamber of the brain". This is simply untrue. Scores of De Quincey essays on a wide variety of subjects do not begin, visit or end in a chamber of any description, physical or otherwise. Barrell's book draws attention to the fact that De Quincey's relationship with the East has greater centrality and complexity than previous critical opinion has suggested. But De Quincey's fear of the Orient is nowhere near as pervasive or important as he suggests.

*The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* is written with flair. Its arguments and speculations, supported with considerable resourcefulness, are invariably striking. Barrell succeeds in bringing to the fore new information and several novel ideas about De Quincey's imperialism. As a whole, however, the book has the effect of reducing a writer of remarkable learning, diversity and perceptiveness to a man with only one thing on his mind. As a novelist, De Quincey impressed Coleridge; as a critic he impressed Wordsworth; as a prose stylist he impressed Baudelaire; as an autobiographer he impressed Dickens; as an economist he impressed Marx. There is a good deal more to such a writer than the fact that he did not like the East.

Robert Morrison  
University of Manchester

**SPIRITS OF FIRE: English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods.** Edited by G A Rosso and Daniel P Watkins. London and Toronto, Associated University Presses, 1990. 293 pp. £29.95 hardback.

*Spirits of Fire* comprises a debate on 'Romanticism as a Historical Phenomenon' by Robert Sayre, Michael Löwy and Michael Ferber, and critical essays on Romantic prose and verse. As the book's subtitle indicates, the contributors adopt a broadly historicist approach to Romantic literature and criticism; individual essays, however, reflect the variety of current historical perspectives including Marxism, feminism, 'new' and 'old' histories.

Part One of the book is a debate which seeks to present the history of Romanticism in terms of 'anticapitalism'. Sayre and Löwy open this dialogue by defining Romanticism as a response to the rise of capitalism, and the commodification and reification of life associated with that development. The authors identify six dominant figures of Romantic anticapitalism - 'Restitutionist', Conservative, Fascist, 'Resigned', Liberal and, lastly, Revolutionary or Utopian Romanticisms. This is useful and thought-provoking although, as the authors acknowledge, these categories overlap and are in some respects unsatisfactory. I found Sayre's and Löwy's argument rather earnest and self-conscious. Michael Ferber's reply to them is comparatively lively, emphasising the religious dimensions of Romantic experience (ignored by Sayre and Löwy) and the currency of the Romantic spirit in the contemporary peace, ecology and women's movements. In the final

section of this debate, Sayre and Löwy respond briefly to Michael Ferber, asserting that 'romantic protest' is fundamental to 'the anticapitalist struggle'. All interesting stuff, but the debate needs firing-up a bit more if it is to succeed.

Oddly enough, there is little discussion of Romantic anticapitalism in the critical essays which follow the initial debate. Stuart Curran's 'The Political Prometheus' documents the 'intensity of popular interest' in Aeschylus as a context for the Romantics' (and especially Shelley's) liberal, political interpretation of Prometheus. This is a strong, well-documented essay that illuminates *Prometheus Unbound*, and Romantic classicism more generally. Marilyn Butler contributes an essay on 'Satire and Images of the Self in the Romantic Period: The Long Tradition of Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*.' She argues that some well-known Romantic self-portraits are satirical, and frequently a source of satire in others. This point is qualified more precisely, however, in the readings of *The Excursion*, *Alastor*, *Endymion*, De Quincey's *Confessions* and Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* that follow; here, Butler's concern appears more clearly in 'satirical counterportraits' that question, or refuse, the ideal image of Romantic self-sufficiency. I found Curran's and Butler's essays the most informative and stimulating aspects of the book as a whole, and not least because of the clarity of their writing and arguments.

Two essays in *Spirits of Fire* focus on William Blake: G A Rosso's 'History and Apocalypse in Blake's *The Four Zoas*' enters the 'mighty maze' of the final two nights of Blake's poem, to reveal 'a great poet . . . struggling to extricate himself from the individualist net that critics recently have deemed the "Romantic Ideology"'. A rewarding essay by Catherine L McClenahan, 'No Face like the Human Divine?: Women and Gender in Blake's Pickering Manuscript', approaches Blake's attitude to 'gender, women, the body, and sexuality', through the poems in the Pickering Manuscript. In particular she discusses allusions to Mary Wollstonecraft in the poems 'Mary' and 'William Bond', and concludes that 'Blake sometimes depicts what women suffer under the constraints they must live with, [and] he also demonstrates how he found reason to honor and imitate women's example'. Daniel P Watkins contributes a 'materialist feminist critique' in 'Historical Amnesia and Patriarchal Morality in Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*', revealing a patriarchal morality in the poem. He concludes that we need a full-scale feminist reevaluation of Keats's goddesses and his portrayal of gender relations.

In 'The Meaning of The Ancient Mariner' Jerome McGann rereads the poem as a series of interpretative frames of 'an original mariner's tale'. McGann argues that we should read the poem not as an 'object of faith' (Romantic or Christian), but with the 'fullest possible [critical] consciousness of its poetically organised "historical layerings"'. David Sebberson's 'Practical Reasoning, Rhetoric, and Wordsworth's "Preface"' is an arid exposition of Enlightenment ideology in Wordsworth, which concludes that 'enlightenment thought assimilates the [Wordsworthian] reaction against it'. Lastly, Michael Scrivener's 'The Rhetoric and Context of John Thelwall's "Memoir"' treats Thelwall's varied career as poet, politician, elocutionist and journalist with reference to the 'Prefatory Memoir' in *Poems Chiefly Written in Retirement* (recently reprinted as a Woodstock facsimile). Thelwall's writings and experiences are contrasted, to good effect, with the post-revolutionary activities of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and others.

*Spirits of Fire* is a useful and interesting collection. The essays offer a variety of critical and theoretical approaches to Romantic historicism, although I must say that I found the quality of individual essays uneven.

Nicholas Roe  
University of St Andrews

Thomas Dabbs. REFORMING MARLOWE. THE NINETEEN-CENTURY CANONIZATION OF A RENAISSANCE DRAMATIST. Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg. Associated University Presses, London and Toronto, 1991. pp. 170. £22.00.

'What is an Author?' said Foucault, *not* jesting, and answered his own question in his own way. Certain works, he decided, have an 'author function', which affects their critical interpretation; the author's name 'seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being'. In other words, as readers we find what we expect to find, given what we know (or suppose we know) about how an author wrote and how he lived. Readers of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* will be aware of the influence that the known facts of Lamb's life have had on the interpretation of his works – an influence good or bad according to the interpreter's own qualities. Common sense urges that criticism should avail itself of all the information it can get, provided that intelligence and discrimination are brought to bear on it. At the same time, we can none of us escape so completely from our own surroundings and our own selves as to aspire to objective critical judgement, no matter how well-informed we are. These ideas have always been familiar, though never more portentously contemplated than in the present age.

Thomas Dabbs's theme is clearly announced in the title of his book. Marlowe would seem to have been an unpromising candidate for canonization. For many years his violent death in a tavern brawl was the most widely known fact about him, and the publication in 1782 of a memorandum written within a few days of his death and charging him with dangerous and heretical opinions was likely to compromise his reputation further. His works, all out of print for over a century till *Edward II* was included in Dodsley's twelve-volume collection of old plays, were not collected till 1826: Lamb had to go to the British Museum for the extract from *Tamburlaine* that he gave in *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century saw him promoted with meteoric speed to a station second only to Shakespeare's.

Dabbs charts the Marlowe revival through four chapters, 'The Discovery of Marlowe in the Early Nineteenth Century', 'The Foundations of Marlowe Scholarship', 'The Institutionalization of Marlowe', and 'Marlowe among the Aesthetes': that is, from Lamb and Hazlitt, by way of Broughton, Collier, and Dyce, to the authors of instructive histories of literature culminating in Dowden and Taine, and finally to Swinburne, John Addington Symonds, and Havelock Ellis. His purpose is 'to demonstrate how the biography and artistic motives of a Renaissance playwright were essentially invented by nineteenth-century critics', whose motives, conscious or subconscious, he analyses. His book is very much a book of its time, like Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1989), to which he refers in his concluding chapter. In this chapter he commends the 'exciting political directness' that characterizes what is known as New Historicism, while allowing (rather to my gratified surprise) that New Historicism itself may be 'only projecting a current anguish' of our own times, and therefore, despite its freedom from 'hidden agendas', open to the same objections as nineteenth-century subjective criticism.

T W Craik  
University of Durham

Jonathan Wordsworth. *ANCESTRAL VOICES: FIFTY BOOKS FROM THE ROMANTIC PERIOD*, London and New York, Woodstock Books, 1991. pp. xii+221, £30.

Since 1988, Woodstock facsimiles have brought out a succession of handsomely-produced volumes under the general heading *Revolution and Romanticism, 1789-1834*. Part of the thinking behind the series is the very challenging idea that modern reprints, collected editions and so on simply do not give us what Mary Wollstonecraft's or Wordsworth's or George Dyer's or the Lambs' original readers saw and reacted to. Modern spelling and punctuation are imposed nowadays, lavish capitalization, long 'esses' and old-style hyphenation disappear, the layout on the page alters, and (perhaps most significantly of all with writing of the revolutionary decade) the original grouping of works in small collections can be lost (as now happens with Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight', which certainly does look rather different when seen alongside its first companions, the political poems 'Fears in Solitude' and 'France: an Ode', in the *Fears in Solitude* pamphlet of 1798, which is included among the Woodstock facsimiles).

So original significances can disappear or be forgotten as we read older works in the usual modern collections and anthologies. Though at the same time, of course, it would be idle to pretend that the original reading experience can be wholly retrieved. A reprint series related to the economics of the present-day market cannot quite reproduce the physical character of the original objects. Rag paper and hand binding would be prohibitively expensive now, and plates produced by a photographic process, though they copy the original with fair accuracy, cannot give us such things as the familiar bumpiness caused by pressure of type on the other side of the paper which is so common with work produced on wooden hand presses. The old books feel different. And even if the copying was absolute, we are not the same readers as those who first devoured West's *Guide to the Lakes* in a post chaise or read Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* by the light of a pair of candles. Inevitably, we live in a different world.

Nevertheless, a return to something closer to the original book than what we are accustomed to can prove valuable as well as stimulating, and in addition the Woodstock series has already brought back into circulation many rarities, including several which are of particular interest to students of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle. George Dyer's *The Complaint of the Poor People of England* (1793), Southey's *Poems* (1797), Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798), Leigh Hunt's *The Feast of the Poets* (1814), the original version of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822) are among works which catch the eye. Other rarities will continue to appear, and it is a minor source of regret in the present context that Charles Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* came out too late for its introduction to be included in the present volume, which brings together the first fifty Woodstock prefaces, revised and in some cases amplified under the title *Ancestral Voices: Fifty Books from the Romantic Period*.

The ancestral voices are interpreted for us by Jonathan Wordsworth, general editor of the Woodstock series. His fifty prefaces, even after revision, are invariably short; often three and rarely more than four sides in length. But their terseness and economy of style allow for several striking historical points and at least one or two valuable suggestions concerning interpretation or the distinctive flavour and quality of the work under discussion to be made in each essay. Invariably the reader's appetite is whetted: one yearns for more.

Jonathan Wordsworth says that his fifty prefaces 'have been revised, and in many cases considerably lengthened, to present a chronological survey of the Romantic period through a discussion of fifty outstanding books'. He adds, however, that the collection may be read either from cover to cover as a time sequence, or used thematically with the help of the

index, or simply browsed in wherever a particular title happens to catch the reader's eye. His book's flexibility of format does, indeed, allow for a diversity of approach. The magpie-minded (as we all are at times) can dip and skim with profit, the searcher after (say) political insights or some sense of the metrical variety of the age's best and second-best poetry can indeed use the index to good effect, and almost invariably we will all find ourselves reading happily on. It is only the reader who looks for 'a chronological survey' who may feel in the end that the book's flexibility (or perhaps rather the inevitable element of selectivity involved in trying to represent the spirit of the age through a mere fifty works) has its drawbacks. True, Jonathan Wordsworth's new introduction does a certain amount of weaving together of significant threads, but the sense of a full pattern can scarcely be hoped for in a book which is clearly so selective in its coverage, however praiseworthy its intentions.

To some extent the writer's own very understandable personal interest in the development of Romantic poetry in the hands of William Wordsworth and (to a lesser degree here, though still quite extensively) Coleridge also has a restricting effect on his treatment of the earlier figures. There are a number of occasions when Jonathan Wordsworth's desire to show how this feature or that of a lesser work impressed the greater writer and shows through in greater poetry rather robs the minor author of space which could usefully have been devoted to a fuller discussion of his own achievement and its inherent quality. Space is, after all, limited in these introductions, and when in the case of a figure such as William Crowe (*Lewesdon Hill*) or William Gilbert (*The Hurricane*), who is unlikely to get a look in anywhere else in modern works of criticism, the influence is really rather slight, one wishes for a little more about the obscure author and his work, and a little less about the phrase that stuck in a great poet's mind to be adapted by him on a single occasion.

There is, too, a minor frustration for the present reviewer in finding that the Unitarian element in the literature of the 1790s and the turn of the century is noted by Jonathan Wordsworth on quite a number of occasions, without ever being dwelt upon or developed. Clearly Jonathan Wordsworth is deeply interested in the very great importance of Unitarianism for so many significant writers of the day (Coleridge and Charles Lamb among them) as his fine essay 'Lamb and Coleridge as One-Goddites' (*Charles Lamb Bulletin*, New Series, No. 58, April 1987) so ably demonstrates. So one wishes he had chosen to say more on the present occasion. But the fact is, of course, that one cannot hope for everything in a single volume; noting what isn't there is perhaps simply a way of asking the writer to give his mind to certain things concerning which he possesses valuable insights on some future day.

Lord Byron seems to be jinxed in *Ancestral Voices* for some unknowable reason. He dies a year posthumously on page three and *Cain* and *Sardanapalus* come into the world somewhat prematurely on page ten. But otherwise chronology is treated with proper respect.

The short, appreciative literary essay rooted in a concern with literary history has fallen out of fashion somewhat in recent decades, but many of us still love it, so it is good to find that in Jonathan Wordsworth's capable hands the eminently readable format employed by Austin Dobson, Augustine Birrell, Edmund Blunden, Geoffrey Tillotson (in his marvellous collection *Essays in Criticism and Research*) and so many others shows itself to be still full of vitality as well as an unmatched capacity for imparting information economically and very pleasantly besides. One looks forward to a second volume of *Ancestral Voices* in due course, including the recent introduction to *Rosamund Gray* as well as (dare one suggest?) some other works by Charles and Mary Lamb, illuminatingly detached from their



customary presence in our familiar collected editions. The present book, like all the Woodstock volumes, is strongly bound and very handsomely printed.

Bill Ruddick

## SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

### CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

Once again, the Birthday Luncheon, held on Saturday 1st February amid the elegant surroundings of the Royal College of General Practitioners, was the happiest of occasions, with Elian friendliness and humour prevalent throughout. Our President, Professor John Beer, with Professor Gillian Beer at his side, radiated good feeling which extended even into the further recesses of the second room where those of us who arrived latest were finding all manner of shared friendships and interests with our nearest neighbours at table: Madeline Huxstep's and David Wickham's indefatigable toing and froing to make sure that all was well (which it invariably was) also helped unify the twin scenes. And an added pleasure was the unexpected arrival at the coffee stage of Mr and Mrs Frank Ledwith and their granddaughter, to join us all in listening to the Birthday Address-cum-lecture, now delivered in graceful Adam-period surroundings upstairs, which this year marked the very appropriate transformation of our past-Chairman, Dr D G (Tim) Wilson into our Guest of Honour.

Tim Wilson's talk on the 'Greenness' of Charles Lamb opens the present number of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*. In preparing it, Tim made a very full annotated list of references to nature and natural objects in Lamb's works which could not be given in the *Bulletin* for reasons of space, but which he is very willing to send to any reader who applies to him directly at 9 Banham's Close, Cambridge CB4 1HX. References are to Lucas's editions.

### BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

After Tim Wilson's address, he was presented, as a mark of gratitude for his lengthy and most successful and innovatory Chairmanship, with an engraved goblet, crafted by Annabel Rathbone, an Associate Fellow of the Guild of Glass Engravers, who lives and works in Richmond, Surrey.

Though momentarily declaring himself speechless on the day, Tim recovered later to send the following message of thanks for inclusion in the *Bulletin*:

The happy occasion of our Annual Luncheon on February 1st 1992 became doubly, nay thrice memorable for me when our President conveyed your lovely engraved goblet into my possession. Its 'presents' will now always refresh our memory of those Elian 'companions' who are temporarily 'absents' -- I have said 'our memory' to show how much Judith too has appreciated your generosity and thoughtfulness. My long Chairmanship of the Society (can it really have been seventeen years?) was a joy to us both, and to have this beautiful 'token' of those times is richness indeed. From both of us to all of you -- a very sincere and hearty thank you.

It is hoped that a photograph of the goblet and a more detailed account of Annabel Rathbone's engraving methods may be included in the July *Bulletin*.

CLAUDE PRANCE'S *COMPANION TO CHARLES LAMB* AND SOME NEWS FROM ITS AUTHOR

The Charles Lamb Society has some copies of Claude A Prance's invaluable *Companion to Charles Lamb* now in stock, available at £5 per copy from either Audrey Moore or Madeline Huxstep (addresses on the back cover of this and every *Bulletin*). The Editor can testify from constant (nay everyday) experience that to call the volume 'invaluable' is a considerable understatement!

Claude Prance himself continues to be hard at work. A recent letter brings the welcome news that his new book on Thomas Love Peacock will be published by The Edwin Mellen Press of Lampeter, Wales, later this Spring. We send Claude Prance our congratulations and look forward to seeing his study of Charles Lamb's contemporary, who shared so much of his impish sense of humour and delight in unconscious displays of rich, zany nonsense by the leading literary and cultural figures of the Romantic Age.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL FORTY YEARS SINCE

A welcome letter from another Lamb scholar, Winifred Courtney, enclosed, under the above annotation, part of an article entitled 'Personal History: A Lasting Impression' by Ved Mehta, from a recent edition of *The New Yorker*, which gives a detailed account of the education at Christ's Hospital of the Classics Don Jasper Griffin between 1948 and 1956. Some things still chime in with Charles Lamb's experiences over a hundred and fifty years earlier:

I asked Jasper what his life at Christ's Hospital was like?  
'It was a very Spartan existence', he said.

But later he was to become a Grecian, and he found it 'very grand'!

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL: AN INTRODUCTORY HISTORY, 1991

David Wickham has informed me that an illustrated booklet of 54 pages with a bibliography, entitled *Christ's Hospital: An Introductory History* by J E Morpurgo, an Old Blue, was published by Christ's Hospital in October 1991.

Copies are available from The Counting House, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 7YP, for £7.50 hardback or £5.00 paperback. Please mark the Envelope History.

.....

David Wickham adds that 'There was a second purpose for the above free plug. It enables me to quote from the advertising sheet:

... but (other than the few who wrote specifically on the Girls' School) most previous historians either ignored or elided the fact that through all the centuries the Foundation has taken in girls as well as boys, that Christ's Hospital is one of the oldest schools for girls anywhere in the world . . . In all that they wrote about C.H. not once did any of the three greatest chroniclers -- Coleridge, Lamb and Leigh Hunt, -- so much as mention a C.H. girl.

## ELIAN CONSOLATIONS

Cecilia Powell draws my attention to the fact that Charles Lamb (whose essays, like Canon Chasuble's sermon, seem adaptable to any occasion, joyful or sorrowful by contemporary anthologists: though who ever doubted it?) features in a very interesting-sounding new volume, *A Book of Consolations*, edited by P J Kavanagh (Harper Collins, £16.99). 'Hopkins on weeds and Coleridge on mountains' as sources of consolation are, in the words of one reviewer, 'swiftly countered by Charles Lamb's frank reply that he prefers the "bustle and wickedness round and about Covent Garden . . . I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life"'.

## NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

## 1. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Saturday 9th May at 2.45

Chairman's Report and the Accounts are circulated with the April *Bulletin*. Nominations for Officers and up to ten Council members should reach the Hon. Secretary in writing by 30th April 1992, the consent of the nominees having been gained beforehand. A full Council of the Charles Lamb Society normally meets three times a year.

## 2. HAZLITT'S GRAVESTONE

The Soho Society has not yet contacted me over our offer to be involved in the restoration of Hazlitt's memorial stone. I will try to stir them into a response.

## 3. THE BELL AT WIDFORD

A sharp-eyed Herts member has sent me a cutting about the Bell from a local paper, the *Mercury* of December 13 1991, which makes fascinating reading for a variety of reasons. A portrait of a somewhat portly Charles Lamb, (author of that well-known poem 'Confessions of a Drunkard') with the Venetian Senator's head apparently superimposed on the body of an incipient Falstaff, has been living up to its reputation for supernatural powers and causing poltergeist-like disturbances. 'Already bayonet plugs in the ceiling have mysteriously unplugged themselves' say the new licensees, but they remain unperturbed, indeed enthusiastic. 'They think it adds to the atmosphere of the pub and restaurant, and are hoping the ghostly goings-on will attract rather than deter punters' reports the interviewer! The telephone number for reservations is 0279 842594 and the certainty of ample car parking without doors is promised in addition to the possibility of flying bayonet plugs within.

## 4. POSTGRADUATE BURSARY

The Bursary of £500, to assist a postgraduate student of Romantic Literature in attending the Wordsworth Summer Conference at Grasmere, which was approved by Council last year, has now been advertised widely by Duncan Wu, on behalf of the sub-committee in charge of arrangements (Mary Wedd, Bill Ruddick and himself).

## 5. DR PRABHAT MATHUR

Members of the Society will share my pleasure on hearing from Prabhat Mathur, a Lecturer in English at MMH College Campus, Ghaziabad, India, that his thesis on 'Dramatization

of "Self" in the Works of Charles Lamb' has been approved of by the examiners. We send Dr Mathur our very warmest congratulations.

6. ALMOST THERE (or, 'A Miss is as Good as Mile' - Ed)

'You know I never criticise but

New Series 77 p.172, latter part of inscription should read

"With continued Regards" (not "Regrets!") . . .'

[I retyped Madeline's original so as to incorporate some second thoughts added in pen and ink, and I seem to have turned a straightforward dedication into what I imagined must have been a private joke. Apologies for my over-ingenuousness of mind - Ed.]

7. CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY LIBRARY

A telephone call from Peter Brown of the (now closed) Edmonton Library alerted us to the fact that a large number of items from the Society's Library were still at Edmonton - apparently missed in the transfer of the Library to Guildhall in 1979. As the building is 'For Sale', it was urgent that we retrieve these straying 'Lamb's' and consign them to our main Library at Guildhall, or dispose appropriately of duplicates etc.

Accordingly, on 4th February, Charles Branchini and myself braved the North Circular Road and were warmly welcomed by Peter Brown - a real bibliophile whom we hope to include as one of our lecturers in 1992/3. Traversing the detritus of a dying library, we were shown the former Lamb Room, now bereft of books, but still handsomely fitted with shelves given in memory of E T Carpenter and E F Lewis (Treasurer 1938-46).

We brought away with us:

1. The exceedingly rare John Lamb's *Poetical Pieces on Several Occasions*.
2. Scrapbook of the Lamb Dinners at Cambridge 1909-14 (from the George Wherry Collection of Eliana).
3. *Tales from Shakespeare*, 1844 (vol.1) 'By Mr and Miss Lamb'
4. From the John M Turnbull Collection:  
*Authors of England*, 1838.  
Scrapbook - cuttings 1907-64, plus two other scrapbooks
5. From the R G Townsend Collection:  
*The Portfolio*, 5 vols., 1825-26.
6. From the Major N. Brett-Jones Collection:  
Three files of material on Sir T N Talfourd
7. Also various book catalogues etc.

It has been arranged that all the remaining books (perhaps between three and four hundred in number) shall be conveyed to our depository at Putney United Reformed Church until we can sort out at our leisure:

- (a) Books which should be consigned to the Guildhall Library
- (b) Books (duplicates) which can be offered to CLS members at reasonable prices
- (c) Material which should join the archive at Putney URC (contact Madeline Huxstep on 081 940 3837 about access).

Meanwhile, there are yards of very good shelving which members may be interested in purchasing, including an intriguing walnut corner fitment. Time is short, however, as the building may be sold at any time. About the shelving, please contact Peter Brown on 081 807 3618 (office) or 081 886 4605 (home). Or in case of difficulty contact me on 081 940 3837.

(And since the above report was written, Peter Brown has transferred the books to Putney URC).

## 8. A PAT ON THE BACK

The General Secretary was cheered to receive the following letter (by return of post) in response to her despatch of details of the Society's activities to an enquirer:

I am fascinated by the range of activities provided by the Society and the obvious dedication, on so many levels, to the memory of Charles Lamb and the spirit of his creation, Elia. To this end, I enclose the membership fee of £8 and look forward to sharing in the events and opportunities offered by a society so sympathetic to my own tastes.

Welcome, Tim Probart, to our membership, and thank you very much!

MADELINE HUXSTEP

SOUTHEY AND SOUTHEY

D E Wickham

By way of a footnote to my quotation from *The Doctor* on page 182 of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* for January 1992 (New Series, No. 77) I think I should point out that when Robert Southey referred to 'a saying of Dr Southey's' about the perfectly-furnished house needing to include a small child and a kitten, he was not necessarily trying to put people off the scent about his own authorship. He may well have been referring to his younger brother Herbert Henry Southey (1783-1865).

ISLINGTON - IANA

D E Wickham

I spent part of a recent November Saturday walking the streets of Lamb's Outer London for the improvement of a forthcoming Elian Booklet, to be entitled *Lamb's London*. Much of what struck me will be incorporated into the booklet but there were a few points which some fellow-Elians might like to know ahead of publication. The others know them already.

At Enfield the New River still flows in front of Clarendon Cottage, where Charles and Mary Lamb stayed in 1825 and 1827. It is probably somewhat further from the front door here than it was when George Dyer walked into it at Islington, but the municipal meadow

through which it runs at Enfield must give a very fair approximation to what one might expect to have been the pretty rurality of early 19th century Islington.

At Edmonton I found the Walden's house astonishingly easy to miss. I must have walked past it four times before suddenly finding it materialised before me. For anyone else who wishes to find it, it is on the north side of Church Street, next to the little car park on the west corner of Lion Road, which is very close to Lower Edmonton railway station. The Lambs' gravestone is one of the few in the churchyard with a large blank space anywhere upon it. It is therefore one of the few, perhaps the only one, vandalised – to the extent of having a nickname colourwashed across the back. The inscription also looked rather tired. By the time you read this I shall have been in touch with the incumbent to see about the fund which is understood to exist for maintaining the grave. I was cheered up, however, by the Charles Lamb Institute which stands opposite the church, on the other side of Church Street. It was opened in 1908 though I never noticed it before. For various reasons, I was expecting a cottagey little building, perhaps resembling one of those Gothic Revival church halls which look like overgrown henhouses. In fact, its appearance from the east is distinctly baronial, its appearance from the south is like a 1930s Hollywood stage-set, and its appearance from the west is one of the best architectural jokes I know, a piece of real Edwardian villa-ny.

And so to Islington. I had not realised before how Duncan Terrace and Colebrook Row merge, in a way quite unlike that shown by my *London A-Z*, and how the Lambs' Colebrook Cottage, numbered 64 Duncan Terrace, is very clearly the last house on the west side. The next building, a garage, is jammed against it but totally separated from it and numbered 85 Colebrook Row. I walked round into Essex Road and beyond, to 87 Upper Street, Hampton's the estate agents. They had some Elian houses for sale on the east side of Colebrook Row, which is the whole point of this paper.

A three-bedroom ground-floor and lower ground-floor [= basement] maisonette with a 100-ft. long garden was available at (?) No. 34 ('?' because the number had been carefully whited out, but not quite carefully enough), leasehold, for £275,000 plus £100 annual ground rent and two-fifths of the outgoings. Perhaps more attractive was the freehold of No. 35 (not whited out at all), end of terrace, five bedrooms, £386,000.

The November evening had drawn in but this was too good to miss and I returned to Colebrook Row which, with its yellow lights and waving trees, was positively Dickensian rather than Elian. The modern in-fills merged with the flat-fronted 1790s houses and one could easily believe that one was in the Temple or a cathedral close, perhaps in a scene from *Great Expectations* with Tiny Tom pressing his nose against Mr Murdstone's window and asking Mr Pickwick for more. No. 35 is directly opposite Charlton Place, so one can see straight through to the bright lights of the gin palaces on the far side of Upper Street. It also has a kind of shelf outside the front window for dustbins and the present owners keep a bicycle in the tiny front room. There is an alley beside the front door, far too dark and sinister to inspect at that time of day.

It was also a surprise to find that the Regent's Canal runs in the open air up to Colebrook Row and then I suddenly saw the nameplate of Noel Road. We all know about *that*, don't we, except possibly Aunt Edna, so down the road I went to No. 26 and found that the whole area has been refurbished and seems to be full of bijou apartment-ettes. I came home to look up a cutting in the Archives which shows that *the* flat at No. 26 was sold to a writer in 1987 for £58,500. It seems to have had a special appeal to a rather limited market. If anyone is still not with me, it is the flat where in 1967 Kenneth Halliwell murdered the playwright Joe Orton and then killed himself.

But that is another story and I decided to try to trace Chapel Street, where there were formerly two houses in which the Lambs lived, near the home of the Quakeress Hester Savory, the Witch of End-door. The houses do not survive and the thoroughfare has been renamed Chapel Market but the street-market itself is an extraordinary place to visit at about 4 or 4.30 pm just before Christmas. The life, the lights, the stalls, the bustle, the shadows and the brilliance are all very much in the line of Elia's enjoyment of London.

JEROME KERN - ELIAN

D E Wickham

Jerome Kern, the song-writer, the composer of *Show Boat*, invested his royalties in the finest antiquarian books. Bitten by the mania of the rising stock market and wanting to put still more money into shares, he sold his collection at the Anderson Galleries in New York in January 1929. The auction was a landmark for fantastically inflated prices, with a learned two-volume catalogue, 'its superlatives like raisins in a fruitcake', which is still of use and interest. Thirty-one lots were connected with Charles or Mary Lamb.

Lot 798 was 'The only copy known to us in the original wrappers dated 1805 of one of the rarest of Lamb's books for children', *The King and Queen of Hearts*. It was given a double-length entry and two illustrations. According to my copy of the catalogue it fetched \$4,500, then probably the equivalent of about £900.

Sotheby's *Market Report on Printed Books, Autographs, Letters and Manuscripts in London and Europe 1990*, an illustrated pamphlet not much longer than its title, recorded that they had just sold the same Jerome Kern copy for £3,300. I suspect that, allowing for inflation, etc., that figure is hardly higher than the price it fetched in 1929. [It strikes me that, in selflessly recording this interesting piece of Eliana, I have provided ammunition for those who think that all we Elian bookbuyers are wasting our money, and mad anyway! But how high is up?]

FOR THE RECORD

D E Wickham

I was recently reading Daniele Vare's *Ghosts of the Spanish Steps*, John Murray, 1955, on auto-pilot, when I was woken up by the following paragraph on pages 68-69:

'I used to go to Elia for tuition when I was "cramming" for an examination and he invariably pulled me through. Not only did the solution of abstruse mathematical problems come easily to him, but he possessed the gift of simplification and could make things clear to the most unpromising disciple'.

Re-reading the preceding paragraph made things clear to me too:

'... my cousin Elia Milosevich (a Dalmatian name) was the teacher who first succeeded in making me assimilate some rudiments of mathematics. In the science of quantity the initial stages are the most difficult (unless you have a knack for that sort of thing). But when you reach the higher altitudes, mathematics, even as music, can give you the keys of heaven'.  
Then, as above.

There is always material on which to start a talk about China and Charles Lamb: Thomas Manning, *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, etc., etc. [The repetition of 'etc.', of course, implies that I know more than I am saying or that my ignorance is shrouded now and will not be revealed even when a dozen more references are scornfully published - and that 'of course' adds something to the brew.]

My newly-recognised reference shows how important it is to re-read even the most well-known texts. If they are rich enough, they will often give new pleasure. In his British Council booklet on Charles Lamb, Edmund Blunden quotes from *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*: 'The Upper and Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room; and an imaginary line only divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees'.

What is the phrase for the ultra-modern convention of separateness, whereby different parts of a business are honour-bound not to reveal details to colleagues if they offer an unfair advantage over outsiders? Chinese walls.

## FOR THE RECORD

D E Wickham

Item 212 in Catalogue 129 from Waterfield's of Oxford, November 1990, read:

*A Novelist's Schoolgirl Notes*

MURDOCH (Iris) LAMB (Charles) *The Essays of Elia*. Everyman's Library No. 14. (Reprinted). (1932). D.w. £80.00

Ownership signature of Iris Murdoch, dated 1934, on front free endpaper and title-page, with her extensive MS notes on recto and half of verso of preliminary blank leaf and throughout text. Iris Murdoch was 14-15 years old in 1934: probably some of these notes were taken down during lessons and do not necessarily reflect her own judgment of Lamb.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY remain as follows:

Personal:	UK	Single	£8.00
		Double	£12.00
	Overseas		US\$14.00
Corporate:	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, 28 Grove Lane, London SE5 8ST.