

THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

NEW SERIES NO. 79

July 1992

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

'NO EQUAL MIND': MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND THE YOUNG ROMANTICS

Harriet Jump

Edge Hill College of Higher Education

Although in 1797 Robert Southey was a political radical, and far removed in his left-wing tendencies from the conservative poet-laureate of 1813 and afterwards, he is not, I think it is fair to say, usually associated with feminism. This is the man, after all, who in 1837 wrote to Charlotte Brontë, in response to her request for advice on beginning a literary career:

I, who have made literature my profession and devoted my life to it....think myself, nevertheless, bound to caution every young man who applies as an aspirant to me for encouragement and advice against taking so perilous a course. You will say a woman has no need of such caution; there can be no peril in it for her. In a certain sense this is true, but there is a danger of which I would, with all kindness and earnestness, warn you. The day-dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind and, in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a

woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure she will have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation.¹

It is surprising, therefore, to find in his *Poems* (1797) a sonnet addressed to Mary Wollstonecraft, a woman for whom literature was very much the business of life. The poem ('To Mary Wollstonecraft': *Poems* (1797) p.3) is not, however, in any significant way a tribute to Wollstonecraft's radical feminism, although that has clearly had some influence on Southey's thinking. It is an apology, made necessary by the subject matter of the long poem which it prefaces, *The Triumph of Woman*. This work is based on a story, taken from the first book of Esdras (from the Apochrypha), which tells 'how Woman's praise/Avail'd again Jerusalem to raise' (p.7). The narrative describes three enslaved Judean princes competing before the Persian ruler Darius to see who can compose the finest poem. The first sings the praise of wine; the second of Darius himself; but the third, Zorobabel, wins the competition with a song dedicated to Darius' beautiful consort Apame. Darius, delighted with the tribute to Apame's 'angel feature[s]', her 'faultless form, her lovely face' (p.24), grants Zorobabel's request that his race may be restored to Jerusalem and be permitted to rebuild their temple. Thus, despite its promising title, this poem shows that the triumph of woman resides solely in her beauty and charm.

Clearly, sometime between the writing of this poem and its publication in *Poems* (1797), which despite the date on the title page actually appeared in December 1796, Southey had become sufficiently conscious of Mary Wollstonecraft and her arguments about the status of women to feel some embarrassment about perpetrating such a conventional view of the relations between the sexes. Whether Southey had met Wollstonecraft by this time is uncertain, although perhaps it is a little unlikely, as he appears to have been living in Bristol between his return from Lisbon in May 1796 and his move to London in early 1797.²

Wollstonecraft had become a celebrity after the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, when Southey was eighteen. What he (or indeed the nineteen-year-old Coleridge, twenty-one-year-old Wordsworth or sixteen-year-old Lamb) thought of this work at the time of its publication -- or, indeed, whether they read it at all -- is not recorded. As might be expected, George Dyer, who was not only twenty or so years older than the other members of this circle but was always in the vanguard of radical ideas, included a reference to Wollstonecraft in his *Poems* (1792). In Ode vii in this volume, he addresses Liberty:

Or dost thou, sweet enthusiast, choose to warm
 With more than manly fire the female breast?
 And urge thy Wollstonecraft to break the charm,
 Where beauty lies in durance vile opprest?

In the note to these lines, Dyer explains why, in his opinion, 'the most sensible females, when they turn their minds to political subjects, are more uniformly on the side of liberty than the other sex':

The truth is, the modes of education and the customs of society are degrading to the female character; and the tyranny of custom is sometimes worse than the tyranny of government. When a sensible woman rises above the tyranny of custom, she feels a generous indignation; which, when turned against the exclusive claims of the other sex, is favourable to female pretensions; when turned against the tyranny of government, it is

commonly favourable to the rights of both sexes. Most governments are partial, and more injurious to women than to men.³

The terminology of this note, which closely echoes passages from the *Rights of Woman*, make it clear that Dyer had been impressed by Wollstonecraft's arguments.⁴

By 1796, however, Southey was not alone, in his circle, in developing an interest in Wollstonecraft. Coleridge, who again is not normally associated with feminist thought, evidently read *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* early in the same year (the book had been borrowed from Bristol Library by Robert Lovell)⁵ and adapted a quotation from it in *The Watchman* of 17 March 1796.⁶ At some time in 1796 he also noted a projected (though never, apparently, accomplished) 'Epistle to Mrs Wolstonecraft [sic] urging her to Religion'.⁷ Coleridge was still expressing a deep interest in Mary Wollstonecraft in January 1798, according to Hazlitt's account of their first meeting.⁸ In an animated conversation over dinner, Hazlitt says, Coleridge 'dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft [sic] and Mackintosh' (Hazlitt p.111), and, later the same evening:

He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied that 'this was only one instance of the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect'. He did not rate Godwin very high....but he had a great idea of Mrs Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation; none at all of her talent for book-making.

(Hazlitt pp. 111-112)

Coleridge's comment, in this extract, provides an insight into his own, and presumably Southey's, reasons for admiring Wollstonecraft: he recognised in her the possession of that quality which he valued so highly, the imagination. Despite the low opinion which he apparently expressed on this occasion of Wollstonecraft's 'talent for book-making', there is some evidence to suggest that his admiration for her imagination originated, in part at least, in his reading of one of her books: *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*.

Although *Letters Written....in Sweden* (which was published by Joseph Johnson in January 1796) is not as well-known today as the *Rights of Woman*, it was greatly admired at the time of its publication. Godwin wrote of the work in his *Memoirs of the Author of 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'* (1798) that:

perhaps a book of travels that so irresistibly seizes on the heart, never, in any other instance, found its way from the press....If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book.⁹

In fact, to call *Letters Written....in Sweden* a 'book of travels' is at once accurate and diminishing. Wollstonecraft believed that 'the art of travelling is only a branch of the art of thinking', and held that travel writers should have 'some decided point of view, a grand object of pursuit to concentrate their thoughts and connect their reflections'.¹⁰ But these comments, which she made in reviews written in 1790 and 1788, go only a short way towards encompassing what is so striking in her own book, which combines observation and reflection with passages of confessional autobiography. To understand fully the reasons why Southey and Coleridge appear to have taken so great an interest in

Wollstonecraft after the publication of this work, the circumstances of its composition as well as its subject matter must be placed in context.

Following the success of the *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft had decided to visit Paris to observe the progress of the French Revolution, the principles of which she ardently supported at this time. While she was there she not only composed a new book, *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution (1794)*, she also fell in love with the American Gilbert Imlay and, in May 1794, gave birth to their daughter Fanny. Throughout the year that followed, Imlay was increasingly absent, and when Wollstonecraft returned to England in April 1795 she found that he was involved with another woman and no longer willing to live with her. In June, after seven painful weeks, she 'formed a desperate purpose to die', as Godwin put it (Holmes p.248). Prevented in this, her first suicide attempt, by Imlay's intervention, she set out about a week later on the expedition which formed the basis of her *Letters Written....in Sweden*.

Although clearly it must have been convenient for Imlay to find something to occupy her as well as to keep her at a distance, the venture was an important and serious one, the details of which have emerged only comparatively recently. Briefly, Imlay had been involved in the purchase and fitting out of a ship, the *Maria and Margaretha*, which although registered as a Norwegian cargo ship was in fact carrying silver and plate valued at £3,500 -- presumably the property of dispossessed aristocrats -- out of France to Gothenberg in Sweden. This was a highly risky and illegal enterprise, as it involved breaking the British blockade which was in force to prevent trade between France and Scandinavia. The ship failed to arrive, and initially Imlay was informed that it had sunk. However it later transpired that the captain, Peder Ellefsen, had returned to his home at Risør in Norway, having apparently appropriated the treasure for his own use. The Danish Royal Commission undertook to investigate the disappearance, but Imlay clearly felt that personal enquiries should also be made, and this was the extraordinarily delicate and difficult task with which Mary Wollstonecraft was entrusted.¹¹

Owing to the highly-confidential nature of this enterprise, none of these facts are revealed in the *Letters Written....in Sweden*. This in itself lends an intriguing aura of mystery to the work, which Wollstonecraft completed soon after her return. She does make it clear that she was on business; but contemporary readers must have wondered what kind of business would take a woman into the wilds of Scandinavia, accompanied for the first part of the journey by a nursemaid and a small child and later travelling quite alone. In addition, although the recipient of the letters of which the book is composed is never named, their content indicates a deeply unhappy emotional situation: several times in the work Wollstonecraft refers to her own 'disappointed affection' (letter xii, *Works* vi p.298), 'the cruellest of disappointments last spring' (Letter xxii, *Works* vi p.339) and so on.

Although the personal reflections are so intrinsic to the fabric of the work that, as Wollstonecraft acknowledges in her Advertisement, 'I could not avoid being continually the little hero of each tale' (*Works* vi p.241), there is much of more purely documentary interest in *Letters Written....in Sweden*. Wollstonecraft travels with an eye continually upon the political and social conditions prevailing in the countries which she visits. As in all her writings, however, her own strongly-held opinions are seldom, if ever, absent from her observations. Obviously, these include (though they are by no means confined to) her feelings about the position of women. The *Letters Written....in Sweden* is not an explicitly feminist work, but feminism is implicit in the very fabric of the text, by virtue of the fact that the narrator is a woman travelling on business without a male escort.

One thing which emerges clearly from a reading of *Letters Written....in Sweden* is the fact that Wollstonecraft has not abandoned the political radicalism which had led to her composition and publication of one of the first responses to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). In *Letters Written....in Sweden*, as elsewhere in her writings, her political views are frequently expressed in terms which sail dangerously close to the wind of literary cliché -- 'Despotism, as is usually the case, I found had here [Sweden] cramped the industry of man' (*Works* vi p.243); 'Here [Christiania] I saw the cloven foot of despotism' (*Works* vi p.305); 'under whatever point of view I consider society, it appears, to me, that an adoration of property is the root of all evil' (*Works* vi p.325).

I have argued elsewhere that a process of revision had begun to take place in Wollstonecraft's thinking about the French Revolution while she was in France.¹² Many passages in the *Letters Written....in Sweden* confirm the fact that her faith in Revolution principles never entirely recovered from the shock of despair which was her initial reaction when she was in a position to witness events at first hand. The final paragraph of the work indicates a new willingness to admit the fact that violent upheavals never produce desirable results:

An ardent affection for the human race makes enthusiastic characters eager to produce alteration in laws and governments prematurely. To render them useful and permanent, they must be the growth of each particular soil, and the gradual fruit of the ripening understanding of the nation, matured by time, not forced by an unnatural fermentation.

(*Works* vi p.346)

Such a change of view -- from wholehearted support to condemnation of violent revolution -- was forced on many of MW's contemporaries, and is well documented in contemporary literature.¹³ Wordsworth's change of mind is perhaps the best known of all, and is described in Book Ten of the 1805 version of *The Prelude*.

It is not only in her changing attitude to the French Revolution that Wollstonecraft's thinking in the *Letters Written....in Sweden* invites comparison with that of Wordsworth and the other emerging poets of his generation. The work contains a number of passages in which she describes an imaginative response to the natural world which seems in many respects to anticipate that which is found in the writings of the young Romantics. A recurring theme in the work is that of the beneficent effect of nature on the human heart. She describes, for example, her longing to find time to visit the far north of Norway, where, she has been told, the simple and honest inhabitants breathe pure air and enjoy 'independence and virtue; affluence without vice; cultivation of the mind without depravity of the heart' (*Works* vi p.308). She asserts that time spent in a solitary country location is essential for developing knowledge, whether of ourselves or of others:

in the country, growing intimate with nature, a thousand little circumstances...give birth to sentiments dear to the imagination, and inquiries which expand the soul...

(*Works* vi p.256)

This theme, indeed, is the other important aspect of the *Letters Written....in Sweden*. By letting her own imagination have free rein in her response to the world around her, Wollstonecraft was able to write some of the most interesting and successful passages in this, or any other of her works.

One of the most striking things about these passages in which natural description elides into rapturous response is the way in which they are connected, either explicitly or implicitly, with the autobiographical material which runs through the work. As a narrator, Wollstonecraft establishes her position right from the first letter. On one level, she presents herself as a deserted or ill-treated wife, by referring obliquely to her relationship with Imlay ('a cruel remembrance suffused my eyes'; 'the tears of disappointed affection' (*Works* vi p.247)), but she simultaneously, here as elsewhere, writes from the standpoint of a woman of strength and sensitivity for whom the beauties and sublimities of nature can mitigate the emotional pain she is suffering:

How silent and peaceful was the scene. I gazed around with rapture, and felt more of that spontaneous pleasure which gives credibility to our expectations of happiness, than I had for a long, long time before.... I was alone, till some involuntary sympathetic emotion, like the attraction of adhesion, made me feel that I was still a part of a mighty whole, from which I could not sever myself...

(*Works* vi pp.247, 249)

Nature in the *Letters Written....in Sweden*, as in the poetry of the Romantics, is seldom if ever enjoyed for its own sake. Again and again Wollstonecraft makes it clear that she values it for the therapeutic, imaginative or spiritual effects which it produces. She places a high value on the imagination, which, she suggests, is enlivened by an appreciation of the natural world: 'Now all my nerves keep time with the melody of nature....I must fly from thought, and find refuge from sorrow in a strong imagination....' (*Works* vi p.294). Passing through a pine grove, she is 'struck with a mystic kind of reverence', so much so that she feels that the very shadows seem to be inhabited:

I could scarcely conceive that they were without some consciousness of existence....How often do my feelings remind me of the origin of many poetical fictions. In solitude, the imagination bodies forth its conceptions unrestrained, and stops enraptured to adore the beings of its own creation. These are moments of bliss; and the memory recalls them with delight.

(*Works* vi p.286)

Whatever soothes the senses of man, she argues, increases his devotion to his creator: even when we are unhappy, the beauties of nature are capable of reminding us of the blessings of existence which are in themselves a reminder of the creative role of God (*Works* vi p.307). Certainly this seems frequently to have been her experience on this expedition. Even on her homeward journey, when she is noticeably more tired and depressed than she had been on setting out, she is remarkably affected by visual stimuli. Walking through a pine grove on her way to view a waterfall, she is struck by the 'grey cobweb-like appearance of the aged pines':

the fibres whitening as they lose their moisture, imprisoned life seems to be stealing away. I cannot tell why -- but death, under every form, appears to me like something getting free -- to expand in I know not what element.

(*Works* vi p.311)

The violence of the waterfall -- '[t]he impetuous dashing of the rebounding torrent from the dark cavities' -- produces a change to more 'tumultuous emotions', and she wonders briefly why she is 'chained to life and misery'. Even these reflections, however, are capable of being converted to pleasure, as, she says, they lead her to thoughts of

immortality and eternity (ibid). Later in the same letter, her optimism seems to increase, and, she writes, not only can she not bear to think of death even though life may be excessively painful:

nay, it appears to me impossible that I should cease to exist, or that this active, restless spirit, equally alive to joy and sorrow, should only be organized dust...

(*Works* vi p.281)

Visiting an ancient church, she is disgusted at the sight of embalmed bodies, but finds herself immediately led into a retrospective contemplation of 'the exertions of man', the positive changes brought about by the passage of time and the eventual destination of the human spirit: 'Our very soul expands, and we forget our littleness' (*Works* vi p.279).

Thoughts of death must presumably have had particular relevance for her at this time: she was, in fact, to attempt suicide for a second time soon after her return to England. What is striking, however, is the fact that she almost invariably associates them with a heightened imaginative response, so that the death of the body becomes secondary to the liberation of the spirit. A sceptic might argue that this is simply a regurgitation of Christian orthodoxy; there seems, however, to be an element of apparently genuine response in these moments which gives them a particular appeal.

It seems clear that it was this aspect of the *Letters Written....in Sweden* which made it so appealing to Southey and to Coleridge. Indeed, John Livingston Lowes noticed verbal echoes of Wollstonecraft's book in *Kubla Khan*. Her description of the falls at Frederikstad in Letter xv ('the impetuous dashing of the rebounding torrent from the dark cavities' (*Works* vi p.311)) and that, in Letter xvii, of the spectacle at Trolhaette:

the various cataracts, rushing from different falls, struggling with the huge masses of rock, and rebounding from the profound cavities...was indeed a grand object...one half appearing to issue from a dark cavern, that fancy might easily imagine a vast fountain, throwing up its waters from the very centre of the earth.

(*Works* vi p.316)

seems almost certain to have made some contribution to Coleridge's lines:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth with fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail...

(17-21)¹⁴

Further influences have been suggested by Richard Holmes, who has recently edited Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written....in Sweden*, and who thinks that Coleridge may 'have Mary Wollstonecraft in mind' (Holmes p.41) when he described the 'deep romantic chasm' as:

A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover.

(14-16)

These lines have not, I think it is true to say, ever been satisfactorily explained and Gilbert Imlay seems a not wholly unreasonable choice for the role of 'demon lover'. Richard Holmes also points out a more conclusive parallel between the *Letters Written....in Sweden* and another of Coleridge's poems, however. Wollstonecraft's description, in Letter xvii, of how she was affected by a peaceful scene in the seaside town of Tonsberg in Norway:

Everything seemed to harmonize into tranquillity....With what ineffable pleasure have I not gazed -- and gazed again, losing my breath through my eyes -- my very soul diffused itself in the scene -- and seeming to become all senses, glided in the scarcely agitated waves, melted in the freshening breeze....I bowed before the awful throne of my Creator, whilst I rested on its footstool.

(*Works* vi p.280)

seems likely, as he suggests (Holmes p.39), to have contributed to the passage in *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison* (written in 1797) in which Coleridge imagines Charles Lamb standing:

Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily, a living thing
Which acts upon the mind and with such hues
As cloathe the Almighty Spirit, when he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.¹⁵

The correspondences are obvious, but one particularly interesting phrase which Wollstonecraft uses -- 'losing my breath through my eyes' -- has no place in Coleridge's poem. It does, however, suggest comparable rhapsodic moments in the poetry of Wordsworth, the most famous of which is, of course, the 'blessed mood' which is described in *Tintern Abbey*, in which:

the breath of this corporeal frame...
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

(44-49)

There is no record of Wordsworth's having read the *Letters Written....in Sweden*, but it may not be too fanciful to suggest that a reading of the work may have had some influence which initiated the proliferation of deserted women who appear in his poetry from 1797 onwards -- Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage*, Martha Ray (*The Thorn*), the Forsaken Indian Woman and, perhaps most interestingly, the Mad Mother. Mary Moorman pointed out the similarities between the language of this last poem and that of the letters which Annette Vallon sent to Wordsworth after his own enforced departure from France.¹⁶ However it seems likely that if Wordsworth did read the *Letters Written....in Sweden*, and also Godwin's posthumous edition of Wollstonecraft's *Works* (published in January 1798, the year in which he composed *The Mad Mother*), he would undoubtedly have been struck by the parallels between her situation and that in which he had placed Annette.

The private letters written by Wollstonecraft to Imlay -- published by Godwin in volumes iii and iv of the *Posthumous Works* -- must have seemed particularly relevant. They show

Wollstonecraft's confidence in the possibility of Imlay's continuing to live with herself and their daughter gradually diminishing; and as it does so, she describes herself as clinging more and more closely to the child: 'When I have been hurt at your stay, I have embraced her as my only comfort'; 'My soul is weary -- I am sick at heart; and, but for this little darling, I would cease to care about a life, which is now stripped of every charm'; 'I have looked at the sea, and at my child, hardly daring to own to myself the secret wish, that it might become our tomb; and that the heart, still so alive to anguish, might be quieted by death'.¹⁷ There are obvious parallels between these, and other similar passages, and the laments of the Mad Mother:

Thy lips I feel them baby, they
 Draw from my heart the pain away.
 Oh! press me with thy little hand;
 It loosens something at my chest;
 (33-36)

The babe I carry on my arm,
 He saves for me my precious soul;
 (47-48)

Thy father cares not for my breast,
 'Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest:
 'Tis all thine own...
 (61-63)

Richard Holmes also suggests that Wordsworth had the story of Imlay's desertion of Wollstonecraft in mind when he wrote *Ruth*, in Germany in 1799 (Holmes p.39). Although, of course, many elements of *Ruth*'s story are far removed from Wollstonecraft's, the moral deterioration which Wordsworth ascribes to the 'Youth from Georgia's shore' seems to resemble in many respects that attributed to Imlay in Wollstonecraft's letters:

His genius and his moral frame
 Were thus impair'd, and he became
 The slave of low desires;
 A man who without self-controul
 Would seek what the degraded soul
 Unworthily admires.
 (145-150)

Like Imlay, the Youth had originally 'woo'd' and loved Ruth 'With no feign'd delight' (151-152); but, like Imlay, he had turned from her to alternative sources of pleasure:

But now the pleasant dream had gone,
 No hope, no wish remain'd, not one,
 They stirr'd him now no more,
 New objects did new pleasure give...
 (157-160)

And, finally, the deserted and vagrant Ruth is depicted as continuing to take pleasure in the 'rocks and pools/ And airs that gently stir/ The vernal leaves...' (194-196), a solace in nature which inevitably suggests that which Wollstonecraft describes herself as taking in the *Letters Written....in Sweden*.

All these suggestions of literary echoes and allusions are impossible to prove, especially since, in Wordsworth's case, no references exist to show that he actually read either of the relevant works of Wollstonecraft. The case of Southey is rather different. Not only did he address Wollstonecraft directly in the sonnet in *Poems* (1797), but he also referred to her in a number of letters, and wrote about her in another, better, and more significant, poem. It is arguable, I think, that his admiration went beyond that of her literary talents. He would not have been alone in this -- the combination of the success of her recent, and revealing book, her reputation as a sexually experienced (and, as far as Southey was concerned, considerably older) woman, and her evident personal charm and grace ensured that she had many admirers at this period. The terms, indeed of his first reference to her, in a letter to Joseph Cottle of 2 May 1797, are particularly significant:

We dine with Mary Wollstonecraft (now Godwin) tomorrow. Oh he has a
foul nose! and I never see it without longing to cut it off.
(Curry i p.127)

Southey's obsession with Godwin's nose (a large one, incidentally, as his portraits show) seems suggestive: he referred to it again four years later ('I could in right vexation root up his nose'.)¹⁸ It surely indicates a rather adolescent jealousy which, if one chose to labour the point, could certainly be seen as having a sexual content.

Whether or not this was the case, Southey evidently was warmly interested in Wollstonecraft for a number of reasons. On 24 December 1797, a few months after her death, he wrote indignantly to Charles Biddlecombe about a 'foolish and false assertion' concerning Wollstonecraft which Richard Warner (1763-1857), the clergyman and author, had made in a sermon in Bath (Curry i p.156). On 27 May 1798, in a letter to Grosvenor Bedford from Yarmouth, he wrote:

As for the society here, it was a remark of Mary Wollstonecraft that
the inhabitants of a seaport were less cultivated than the inland dwellers,
and like most of that Woman's remarks, it was a wise and a true one.
(Curry i p.166)

As late as 1800, indeed, he was still quoting her opinions about the French Revolution to support his own,¹⁹ and, in August 1801, speaking more warmly of Godwin than he had been able to do on previous occasions as 'a good creature -- brimfull of benevolence -- as kind-hearted as a child would wish', on the grounds that 'to his credit he is a father to Imlay's child'.²⁰

Perhaps the most interesting result of his admiration for Wollstonecraft is, however, a little known poem which he wrote shortly after her death in 1797. The poem was published as an introduction to a volume called *Icelandic Poetry, or the Edda of Saemund Translated into English Verse by A.S. Cottle, of Magdalen College, Cambridge* (Bristol, 1797). The translator was Amos Cottle (1768?-1800), brother of Joseph. His own prose introduction to the work (pp. iii-xxx) is dated Bristol, Nov. 1. 1797. Southey's lines, which refer to Wollstonecraft's death, must have been written fairly soon after it occurred, on 10 September. His poem, which is called 'Epistle from Robert Southey' in the contents list, and headed 'To A.S. Cottle from Robert Southey', consists of 188 lines of attractive blank verse (pp. xxxi-xlii). Coleridge evidently admired the poem, as he wrote in a letter to Joseph Cottle that 'Southey's poem is very pleasing', although the lines which he singled out as 'exquisite' do not, in fact, include those which concern Wollstonecraft.²¹

The connection between Mary Wollstonecraft and a translation of Icelandic poetry may not be immediately apparent. Southey manages to make it with a fair degree of conviction by asserting that the 'Scald's strong verse/Partook the savage wildness' of his native Scandinavian scenery (pp. xxxv-xxxvi). It is worth quoting the following lines in full:

And methinks

Amid such scenes as these, the Poet's soul
 Might best attain full growth; pine-cover'd rocks,
 And mountain forests of eternal shade,
 And glens and vales, on whose green quietness [5]
 The lingering eye reposes, and fair lakes
 That image the light foliage of the beech,
 Or the grey glitter of the aspen leaves
 On the still bough thin trembling. Scenes like these
 Have almost lived before me, when I gazed [10]
 Upon their fair resemblance....
to the eye of Fancy held by her,
 Who among women left no equal mind
 When from this world she pass'd; and I could weep,
 To think that *She* is to the grave gone down! [15]
 Were I, my friend, a solitary man,
 Without one tie in life to anchor me,
 I think that I would wander far to view
 Such scenes as these, for they would fill a heart
 That loathes the commerce of this wretched world, [20]
 And sickens at its hollow gaieties.
 And sure it were most pleasant when the day
 Was young, to roam along the mountain path,
 And mark the upmost pines, or grey with age,
 Or blue in their first foliage, richly tinged [25]
 With the slant sun-beam, then at fits to pause
 And gaze into the glen, a deep abyss
 Of vapour, whence the unseen torrents roar
 Up-thunder'd. Sweet to walk abroad at night
 When as the summer moon was high in heaven [30]
 And shed a calm clear lustre, such as gave
 The encircling mountains to the eye, distinct,
 Disrobed of all their bright day-borrow'd hues,
 The rocks' huge shadows darker, the glen stream
 Sparkling along its course, and the cool air [35]
 Fill'd with the firs' faint odour.

Quite apart from the overt tribute to Wollstonecraft (who is named in a footnote), 'Who among women left no equal mind/When from this world she pass'd' ([13-14]), and the emotional, personal comment ('and I could weep/To think that *She* is to the grave gone down' ([14-15])), the whole passage shows a clear debt to the natural descriptions included by Wollstonecraft in *Letters Written....in Sweden*. I have already quoted the passage from that work in which she wrote that, passing through a pine grove, she was reminded of 'the origin of many poetical fictions' (*Works* vi p.286): Southey was surely thinking of this when he wrote that 'Amid such scenes as these, the Poet's soul/Might best attain full growth' ([2-3]). Almost every detail, indeed, of his imagined description can be traced to its probable source in Wollstonecraft's work: the pines 'grey with age' ([24]), for example, are surely those of Letter xvi, which had elicited from Wollstonecraft her reflections on death

as 'something getting free -- to expand in I know not what element' (*Works* vi p.311) and the 'deep abyss/ Of vapour, whence the unseen torrents roar/Up-thunder'd' ([27-29]) seems to conflate the descriptions of the falls at Frederikstad and Trolhaette which appear to have contributed to *Kubla Khan*. The final lines:

Sweet to walk abroad at night
 When as the summer moon was high in heaven [30]
 And shed a calm clear lustre, such as gave
 The encircling mountains to the eye, distinct,
 Disrobed of all their bright day-borrow'd hues,
 The rocks' huge shadows darker, the glen stream
 Sparkling along its course, and the cool air [35]
 Fill'd with the firs' faint odour.

seem to owe a clear debt to Wollstonecraft's description of a solitary night walk in Letter v;

Midnight was coming on; yet it might with such propriety have been termed the noon of night, that had Young ever travelled towards the north, I should not have wondered at his becoming enamoured of the moon....The huge shadows of the rocks, fringed with firs, concentrating the views, without darkening them, excited the tender melancholy which...exalts, rather than depresses the mind...The very air was balmy, as it freshened into morn...

(*Works* v p.267)

Finally, Southey's description of his own heart as one which 'loathes the commerce of this wretched world,/And sickens at its hollow gaities' ([20-21]) is suggestive of a source in *Letters Written....in Sweden*, where Wollstonecraft exclaims a number of times against the commerce in which Imlay had become increasingly engaged: in Letter xxiii, for example, she reflects that:

men entirely devoted to commerce never acquire, or lose, all taste and greatness of mind. An ostentatious display of wealth without elegance, and a greedy enjoyment of pleasure without sentiment, embrutes...

(*Works* vi p.340)

It is surely significant, too, that Southey's reflection of the possibilities of travel and imaginative expansion which would be open to him, 'were I...a solitary man,/Without one tie in life to anchor me' ([16-17]) come immediately after his expressions of regret and personal grief at Wollstonecraft's death.

These parallels, echoes and references, especially given the unmistakable element of personal feeling involved, appear to demonstrate that Southey's admiration for Wollstonecraft went beyond a simple appreciation of her qualities as a writer. What Wollstonecraft thought of Southey is not recorded, but as she was pregnant and happily involved with Godwin at the time it would be absurd to suggest that Southey's feelings, if indeed they existed, were in any way reciprocated.

One final point of interest, however, is the fact that both Wollstonecraft and Southey contributed to the same issue of the *Monthly Magazine* in the spring of 1797. Southey had, in fact, been responsible for a series of articles on Spanish and Portuguese literature, four of which had appeared in July, October, November and December of 1796. The last of the series, on E.M. Villegas, was published in the issue of April 1797.²² In the same issue

appeared Wollstonecraft's only contribution to this magazine, and her only venture into literary theory, her essay 'On Poetry and Our Relish for the Beauties of Nature'. Wollstonecraft argues that a first-hand experience of the beauties of nature is essential to the creation of poetry: in such ideal circumstances:

the sublimed spirits combine...images, which, bursting on him spontaneously, it is not necessary coldly to rack the understanding or memory, till the laborious efforts of judgement exclude present sensations and damp the fire of enthusiasm.²³

The essay is an extremely interesting one in a number of ways, and could form the subject of another discussion in itself. It does seem possible, however, that her decision to publish in the *Monthly* may possibly have been influenced by her meeting with Southey -- or, alternatively, that her meeting with Southey may have been the result of their contributions to the same issue.

It is impossible to do more than speculate on what work Wollstonecraft may have gone on to do had she survived the birth of her daughter. It seems not unreasonable, however, to suggest on the basis of the last part of her output that she might have become an important contributor to the growing theories of what we now know as Romanticism, for which her innovative imaginative responses seem to have been at least in part responsible.

A lecture delivered to the Charles Lamb Society on Saturday March 7, 1992

NOTES

1. T.J. Wise and J.A. Symington, *The Brontës, their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence*, 4 vols, Oxford, 1932, i p.156. Charlotte Brontë's reply is on pp.157-8; she defends herself with an account of the difficulties and privations of her life, and her own attempts to fulfil her duty and suppress her imagination, but she wrote back to Southey that 'your advice shall not be wasted, however sorrowfully and reluctantly it may at first be followed', and she put his letter away endorsed 'Southey's advice to be kept forever. My twenty-first birthday. Roe Head. April 21, 1837'.
2. Jack Simmons, *Southey*, Yale, 1948, p.66. He did dine with her and Godwin on 2 May 1797 (Kenneth Curry (ed.), *New Letters of Robert Southey*, 2 vols, New York and London 1965, (hereafter cited as Curry) i p.127) but, according to his later account, this, together with 'half a dozen morning calls' made up the whole of his acquaintance with her (To John Rickman, July, 1805. Curry i p.386).
3. George Dyer, *Poems*, 1792, p.36.
4. Dyer was still willing to pay tribute to her after her death, when her reputation had suffered a considerable set-back following Godwin's well-meaning but revealing biography, *Memoirs of the Author of 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'* (1798), as his cancelled preface to *Poems* (1800-1801) makes clear:

on reading Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's Rights of Woman, I was disposed, and still am, to admire female talents...In that work, perhaps, a great principle is

somewhat strained, but still we behold the production of a great mind, and of one who wrote from principle.

(p. lxvi)

See Harriet Jump, "Snatch'd out of the fire": Lamb, Coleridge, and George Dyer's Cancelled Preface', *Charles Lamb Bulletin* New Series No 58 (April 1987) pp. 54-67.

5. Ralph J. Coffman (ed.), *Coleridge's Library: A Bibliography of Books Owned or Read by Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Boston, Mass., 1987, pp.235-6.
6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Watchman*, ed. Lewis Patton, *Bollingen Series LXXV* No. 2, Princeton and London, 1970, p.91.
7. K. Coburn (ed.), *Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Volume I 1794-1804 *Bollingen Series L*, New York, 1957, Note 261, Kathleen Coburn suggests that the favourable review of *Letters Written....in Sweden* in the *Critical Review* of February 1796 (vol vii pp.602-610) may have been written by Coleridge.
8. 'My First Acquaintance with Poets', *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols, London and Toronto, 1933, vol xvii, pp.106-122 (hereafter cited as Hazlitt).
9. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, and William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman'*, ed. Richard Holmes, Penguin, 1987 (hereafter cited as Holmes), p.249.
10. *Analytical Review* vii (1790), v (1798), reprinted in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols., London, 1990, (hereafter cited as *Works*) vii p.277, p.161.
11. The account is given in full in Per Nyström, *Mary Wollstonecraft's Scandinavian Journey*, RSAS Gothenburg, *Humaniora* No. 17, 1980. See also Holmes pp.19-26.
12. "The cool eye of observation": Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution', *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Kelvin Everest, Open University Press, 1991, pp.101-120.
13. Compare Arthur Young's *Travels During the Year 1787, 1788 and 1789* (1792) pp.539-40 with the opposite view expressed in his next work, *The Example of France a Warning to Britain* (1793) pp.13-14, 35, 36; and Helen Maria Williams *Letters Written in France* (1790) pp.16-17, 81-82 with vol. iii p.[17], vol. iv p.269.
14. See John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu*, Boston, Mass., 1927; revised edn. 1930, p.593 n. 27.
15. Lines 39-44, quoted from the version which appeared in the *Annual Anthology of 1800*.
16. Mary Moorman *William Wordsworth: A Biography*, I, *The Early Years, 1770-1803*, Oxford, 1957, p.385.
17. Letters xxviii, xxxv, xlv, reprinted in *Works* vi pp.393, 400, 408.
18. To Charles Biddlecombe, 17 August 1801, Curry i p.246.
19. To Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 16 January 1800, Curry i p.215.
20. To Charles Biddlecombe, 17 August 1801, Curry i p.245.
21. C. 20 November 1797, E.L. Griggs, ed., *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols. Oxford, 1956-71, i, pp.356-7.
22. Southey's contributions, signed TY (Robert Southey) appeared in vol. ii pp.451-453; pp.697-700; pp.787-789; pp.859-862 and vol. iii pp.270-272.
23. Wollstonecraft's essay was published in the *Monthly Magazine* vol. iii pp.279-282. The passage here quoted appears on p.279. It is reproduced in *Works* vii pp.7-11 in the version which Godwin published in his edition of Wollstonecraft's *Posthumous Works* (vol. iv pp.159-175), which contained a number of changes made to the original, presumably by Godwin himself.

THE EXCURSION: TYPES AND SYMBOLS OF ETERNITY

Nicola Trott

St Catherine's College, Oxford

In 1889, Oscar Wilde published a dialogue entitled *The Decay of Lying*. With a characteristic blend of outrageousness and charm, he used the Platonic style to defend the 'lying' arts against his age's 'monstrous worship of facts'.¹ Art, declares Wilde's Socratic persona, produces 'the great archetypes of which things that have existence are but unfinished copies'. Realism, the established form of fact-worship, is reduced to a shadowy half-life. And, in the new aesthetic, the order of classical mimesis is reversed:

A great artist invents a type, and Life tries to copy it, to reproduce it in a popular form, like an enterprising publisher. (p.982)

Such irreverent and artificial wit is a long way from Wordsworth, let alone that 'drowsy frowzy poem, call'd the "Excursion"', as Byron so rudely christened it.² Yet the sense of complying with a pre-existent model is felt in much of Wordsworth in his middle years. Increasingly, the symbolic terms in which the poetry is cast demand a typological interpretation. In the following pages, I shall be exploring the types and symbols of *The Excursion*, and the kind of exegesis they seem to require.³

To start with, there is a sense in which *The Excursion* itself 'tries to copy' the types that art has already established. This derivative aspect surfaces most obviously in the character of the Solitary, whose response to the French Revolution darkly re-enacts *The Prelude's* account of Wordsworth's own. Local correspondences are still more explicit. By way of illustration, let us take the climactic episodes of Book II of *The Excursion* and Book XIII of *The Prelude*, the Solitary's cloud-city and its textual model in the 1805 poem, the Climbing of Snowdon.

The Ascent of Snowdon stages a great and revelatory encounter between poet, moon and mist, followed crucially by a 'fracture in the vapour' that discloses 'A deep and gloomy breathing-place', or 'dark deep thoroughfare'. The inner revelation is of the abysmal centre of inspiration, the place where 'Nature lodg'd/The Soul, the Imagination of the whole'. In the following paragraph, we are told of the poet's meditation on the scene, of how it afterwards 'appear'd' to him

The perfect image of a mighty Mind,
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an under-presence,
The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim
Or vast in its own being ... (1805 XIII, 56-73)⁴

The poet becomes the interpreter of his own experience, but he knows the great value of tautology. Meaning is sought only in terms that uphold the undetermined and, in a modern sense, unconscious, quality of the original. The images of the 'mighty Mind' replicate, instead of resolving, the indecipherability of the source.

On turning to *The Excursion*, we find a vision of precisely similar components -- namely, mist, a miraculous opening into a scene of splendour, and the revelation of an ultimate reality. This time, the vision is given to the character of the Solitary, and forms the ending

of Book II. As he descends the fell from which the old pensioner has been rescued after a night of storm, the Solitary is suddenly 'freed ... from the skirts/Of the blind vapour' that surrounds him. This is what he sees:

The Appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty City -- boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,
Far sinking into splendor -- without end!
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires;
And blazing terrace upon terrace high
Uplifted ... (II, p.90 [ll.830-42])⁵

Thoughts of death have given way to a vision of the afterlife: 'That which I *saw* was the revealed abode/Of Spirits in beatitude' (p.92). The effects of sun and cloud lift the Solitary out of the 'blind vapour' of his habitual scepticism (the allegory is unmistakable), and into a Christian apocalypse. His cloud-city is an unambiguous type of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City which, as the Book of Revelation prescribes, is built of 'pure gold, like unto clear glass', and 'garnished with all manner of precious stones' (21.18-19).

Wordsworth is still clinging to the natural -- his city is made of clouds -- but the spectacular conversion of the Solitary, so counter to his usual frame of mind, is suggested by the way the forms of nature take on a lapidary artifice in his eyes:

O, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapp'd.
(p.91 [ll.852-60])

The clouds may appear in sheep's clothing, 'In fleecy folds voluminous', but nature is verging on supernature.⁶ 'Mutually inflamed [and] molten together', the erotic fusion anticipates the final, heavenly consummation. Where the Snowdon vision had sensed a 'dark deep thoroughfare', the Solitary finds that:

Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
Of open court, an object like a throne
Beneath a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld
In vision -- forms uncouth of mightiest power,
For admiration and mysterious awe.⁷
(p.91 [ll.861-9])

The ambiguous 'chasm' seen from Mount Snowdon has been replaced by a supernatural order, the 'open court' and 'throne' of God. Here, the cloud formations stay put; the types, in Wordsworth's emphatic repetition, are 'fixed'. But the 'object like a throne' can be referred to either the New or the Old Testament -- to Revelation (4.2) or the Book of Ezekiel (1.26) -- and is followed by objects 'of ordinary use', 'Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld'.

Unexpectedly, the vision of the New Jerusalem is being amplified by Old Testament visionaries. The Christian promise is translated through Hebrew prophecy, as if the Solitary's imagination were more whimsical and more remote than that of John of Patmos. Yet the types of the Old Testament are apparently valued for their transfiguration of human and humdrum artefacts into 'forms' of 'power', capable of evoking 'admiration and mysterious awe'. What the poetry has seized on is a raw energy of 'vision', rather than a Christian dispensation seen through a glass, darkly.

Christian exegesis, of course, understands the New Testament as fulfilling what is foreshadowed in the Old. The antitype bodies forth the shadowy type. In looking forward to the ministry of Christ, a typological interpretation reads the Old Testament through the superior text of the Gospels. Wordsworth's Solitary reverses the interpretative hierarchy. He also risks bringing his typology abruptly and even risibly down to earth. His 'implements of ordinary use' are not named, but on reading *The Excursion* in August 1814, Lamb wrote excitedly to identify several Old Testament correspondences, in the Psalms, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Isaiah:

those symbols of common things glorified, such as the prophets saw them ... the wheel -- the potter's clay -- the washpot -- the winepress -- the almond tree rod -- the baskets of figs -- the fourfold visaged foor -- the throne & him that sat thereon⁸

Were it not for his reverence, this litany of Lamb's might seem quietly mischievous. One could imagine him saying, in the manner of Hamlet to Polonius, 'Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a washpot?', and drawing the solemn reply, 'By th' mass and 'tis, like a washpot indeed.' In point of fact, Lamb's enthusiastic praise reveals a significant omission in Wordsworth's text; despite the express sanction of the Bible for a 'throne & him that sat thereon', God Himself does not put in an 'appearance'.

In *The Prelude*, the poet of Snowdon admitted the 'sense of God' by merging it with that of self. But his meditation on his own afflatus took place only when 'the scene / Had pass'd away'. In *The Excursion*, the unstatedness of discovery has developed into an authorized version. Snowdon gave the experience first, then the allegory. The typology of the 'mighty Mind' was an afterthought, not an origin. For the Solitary, sceptical blindness becomes religious insight, and the type is *in* the tale, rather than deduced from it. The poetry is grand, self-consciously so; but its grandeur has more to do with its meaning than its making. Like Duke Senior in *As You Like It*, the Wordsworth of *The Excursion* 'Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in every thing' (II i 16-17). Or, in the ambiguous twist given by Wilde, 'Wordsworth went to the lakes, but he was never a lake poet. He found in stones the sermons he had already hidden there' (*op.cit.*, pp.977-8).

Comparisons are odious as well as useful, and to read *The Excursion* in relation to its models in *The Prelude* almost inevitably turns it into a poor relation.⁹ A nearer model, perhaps, is the analogy Wordsworth himself offers, in the Preface, for the epic *Recluse* as

a whole -- namely, the 'gothic Church' (p.ix). The *Excursion* landscapes are not composed of the mind revealing itself in natural forms; they are more like architecture -- deliberately lofty in structure, recognisably doctrinal, definite of purpose. This is not to say that Wordsworth is by 1814 identifiably a member of the Church of England. Far from it. Henry Crabb Robinson, while musing on the charges of pantheism that have been brought against *The Excursion*, recollects Wordsworth bluntly telling him, 'I have no need of a Redeemer'.¹⁰ He did, though, have need of identifiably religious attitudes and responses. *The Excursion's* theology, such as it is,¹¹ combines Stoic fortitude, the earliest and least orthodox phase of Coleridge's Christianity, and an approach to his later, Kantian idealism -- an amalgam that says much about its divided allegiances and syncretic technique.

I mention the early theology of Coleridge, and one of the more fascinating conundrums is that his thinking makes its way into *The Excursion* long after he has himself disowned it. It is worth reminding ourselves how much of the figure and philosophy of the Wanderer, in Books I, IV and IX, derive from drafts written for *The Recluse* as it was first envisaged in 1798.¹² Coleridgean ideas continue to infiltrate much later sections of *The Excursion*, however, most prominently the culminating vision of the work, which belongs probably to 1813-14.¹³ The sunset-vision of Book IX is a deliberate counter to the Solitary's cloud-city in Book II, not least because it is witnessed by the poem's entire cast of characters. Set at Grasmere, above the Lake on Loughrigg Terrace, the event is recorded as a 'spot of time' by the figure of the Poet -- 'That rapturous moment ne'er shall I forget':

Already had the sun,
Sinking with less than ordinary state,
Attained his western bound; but rays of light --
Now suddenly diverging from the orb
Retired behind the mountain tops or veiled
By the dense air -- shot upwards to the crown
Of the blue firmament -- aloft -- and wide ...
(pp.413-14 [ll.588-96])

The Solitary ended his vision in despair at having again to face reality ('Oh! wherefore do I live?' [p.92]). The final vision begins in 'less than ordinary state'. But here, bathos is followed by an unexpected recovery. The setting sun and 'suddenly diverging' light immediately suggest themselves as types of death and resurrection. This allegorical strain is carried into the central tableau, where the spectators watch while a transformation occurs like that promised by St. Paul, when 'we shall all be changed':

And multitudes of little floating clouds,
~~Pierced~~ through their thin ethereal mould, ere we,
Who saw, of change were conscious, had become
Vivid as fire -- clouds separately poised,
Innumerable multitude of Forms
Scattered through half the circle of the sky;
And giving back, and shedding each on each,
With prodigal communion, the bright hues
Which from the unapparent Fount of glory
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
That which the heavens displayed, the liquid deep
Repeated; but with unity sublime!
(p.414 [ll.597-608])

The 'etherial' clouds, charged by the hidden sun, are implicitly symbolic of human souls, returning to their heavenly origin.¹⁵ Despite the insistent harmoniousness, there is a pathos in the presence of the earthly audience, unconsciously witnessing the image of its own transfiguration. And yet the 'communion' is more Platonic than Christian, more natural than miraculous, and more formal than sentimental: the 'multitude of Forms' become as one in the reflected glory of the single 'Fount';¹⁶ by 'giving back' the light they receive, the clouds act out a 'unity' that transcends their individual aspects, and is represented by the completion of their semi-circular form in the lake below. The repetitions and reciprocities multiply indefinitely. The *Prelude* 'spots of time', with their primitive ego and savage isolation, have been cast aside for a moment of total 'communion'.

This moment is recounted by the Poet, but he has been 'led' to it by the Pastor. For the first time in *The Excursion*, full expression is given to the religious 'sublime', as the Priest gains command over its typology and interpretation. Gathered together in a natural temple, the party hears his elaborate thanksgiving for what lies behind the visible scene:

Eternal Spirit! universal God!
 Power inaccessible to human thought
 Save by degrees and steps which Thou hast deigned
 To furnish; for this Image of Thyself,
 To the infirmity of mortal sense
 Vouchsafed; this local, transitory type
 Of thy paternal splendors ... accept the thanks
 Which we, thy humble Creatures, here convened,
 Presume to offer; we, who from the breast
 Of the frail earth, permitted to behold
 The faint reflections only of thy face,
 Are yet exalted, and in Soul adore!
 (p.415 [ll.614-27])

The Pastor's sermon on the sunset ostensibly removes all taint of nature-worship -- the hidden sun with its 'etherial' clouds is now understood to be the 'local, transitory type' of a still more hidden archetype. There is a conscious retreat from immanent to transcendent Deity, aided and abetted by Milton's images of a God who is 'Throned inaccessible' in a 'Fountain of light', or 'dimly seen' in the works of nature.¹⁷

The Pastor speaks for what remains of Wordsworth's millennialism. As the child of the revolutionary age, the Solitary had dazzlingly conflated 'heaven and earth' (p.128). The Pastor opposes the failed visions of Books II-III, the political millennium and the heavenly beatitude, by relying on natural, rather than biblical, revelation, and pleading for, not presuming, the apocalypse.¹⁸ The 'Hebrew Scriptures' (so prominent in the cloud-city) deceived the Solitary with their 'promises' of instantaneous redemption (p.129). Nature, on the other hand, is trusted for its typology of a 'consummation that will come by stealth' (p.415).

Despite the Pastor's rather craven talk of 'infirmity' and frailty, his Anglican petitioning contains a distinctly less orthodox theology of the natural sign. At this, the high point of *The Excursion's* devotional journey, Wordsworth returns to the language and procedures of a youthful Coleridge, whose attempts at Unitarian epic had first inspired *The Recluse*. The Pastor's ability to interpret the sunset as an 'Image' of God depends on the idea that, just as we are made in His image, so He is discernibly present in the things He has made. In Christian thought, an authority is found in Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ...

(Romans 1.20)

Within the Pastor's dutiful address of thanks for the 'degrees and steps which Thou has deigned/To furnish', there lurks Coleridge's more radical interpretation of St. Paul, in which the things that reveal God become a means of ascent to Godhead, and the Creation a spur to human creativity. The Pastor's words have a subtext in Coleridge's *Religious Musings*, whose spiritual aspirants are found

Treading beneath their feet all visible things
As steps, that upward to their Father's Throne
Lead gradual ... (ll.57-9)¹⁹

These lines are written in 1794-5. Not long afterwards, they are followed by a Berkeleyan exegesis of the Creation as the manifest sign of God's Word. In a passage Coleridge published as part of Southey's *Joan of Arc*, natural objects are said to develop our imaginative capacity of discerning God's presence in the world. It is our highest power of mind,

him First, him Last to view
Thro' meaner powers and secondary things
Effulgent, as thro' clouds that veil his blaze.
For all that meets the bodily sense I deem
Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
For infant minds; and we in this low world
Placed with our backs to bright Reality,
That we may learn with young unwounded ken
Things from their shadows.²⁰

Coleridge's metaphors of 'clouds that veil' an 'Effulgent' Deity are ingeniously realized in the hidden sun and cloudy glory of *The Excursion*, where symbolic value is expressed at a deeper level than resemblance. In that it refers to a divine authority and origin, the sunset differs from the great *Prelude* landscapes, whose 'types and symbols' are opened to the world of the poet's own indeterminate meanings.²¹ In *The Prelude*, the oppositions of neo-Platonic typology are blurred, 'Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all/Commingle' (VIII, 719-20). In *The Excursion*, shadows indicate higher substances. The philosophy that *The Prelude* so brilliantly mangled is now adhered to as a way of reading in nature its Christian symbolism.

Wordsworth is reproducing Coleridgean theology with a faithfulness he has not shown since drafting *The Recluse* in 1798, and these drafts are largely incorporated in the speeches of the Wanderer. Curiously, then, *The Excursion* is representative of both a later, pietistic Wordsworth, and an early, heterodox one. This odd coupling draws from Francis Jeffrey one of his shrewder insults, that the poem consists of

a puerile ambition of singularity engrafted on an unlucky
predilection for truisms ...²²

Jeffrey apparently felt that reading *The Excursion* amounted to what the American Constitution calls 'cruel and unusual punishment'. His infamous review for the *Edinburgh* divides the work in two, making it a damning combination of the 'fantastic' and the

'commonplace'. Interestingly, this division broadly tallies with the history of its composition. First we have the poetry of 1798, weaving a 'tissue of moral and devotional ravings', in Jeffrey's abusive phrase; then the poetry of 1809-13, peddling the 'old familiar' doctrine, 'that a firm belief in the providence of a wise and beneficent Being must be our great stay and support under all afflictions and perplexities'.²³

In a sense *The Excursion* is a poem of irreconcilably different periods and visions, but since they are both voiced by the Wanderer, it is also a work of cunning fusion. In the spirit of 1798, the Wanderer speaks of an 'active principle' in things, and an 'excursive Power' in the mind.²⁴ He announces the law of matter as motion and what Jeffrey calls the 'mystical morality', which seeks out the 'theological expression' of nature.²⁵ In the spirit of 1804 and after, the Wanderer speaks of 'Powers' that 'depart', 'raptures' that 'are for ever flown', and of the 'struggle' that remains, 'to aspire/Heavenward' and find in Kantian 'Duty' the 'forms,/Which an abstract Intelligence supplies' for 'our support'.²⁶

The Wanderer is not, as might seem, the infallibly buoyant antithesis of the Solitary. He has suffered his own process of loss, that lessening of imaginative ardour which Wordsworth has been detecting in himself since the *Immortality Ode* of 1802-4. The Wanderer is, however, the 'corrector' of despondency and, what is more, mediates between the poem's spiritual extremes of Solitary and Pastor. He thus adopts a 'middle point' between a humanist and Christian imagination, and between the apocalyptic vision and death-wish of the Solitary (IV, p.153).

In Book IV, 'Despondency Corrected', the Wanderer begins by defining a Providence whose 'purposes embrace/All accidents, converting them to Good' (p.142). Towards the end of the Book, he describes a faculty of mind that imitates this divine process:

Within the soul a Faculty abides,
That with interpositions, which would hide
And darken, so can deal, that they become
Contingences of pomp; and serve to exalt
Her native brightness.

(IV, p.188 [ll.1058-62])

The simplicity of idea -- that potential darkness is enlightened by the mind -- is offset by an exact terminology. The faculty enables the suffering which might otherwise interpose, or come between, the soul and its God-given light, to be transformed into a related aspect of the 'brightness' itself. In the extended simile that follows, the Wanderer offers a type that precisely mirrors this spiritualizing process, and shows it as something marvellous:

As the ample Moon,
In the deep stillness of a summer even
Rising behind a thick and lofty Grove,
Burns like an unconsuming fire of light,
In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
Into a substance glorious as her own,
Yea with her own incorporated, by power
Capacious and serene.

(p.188 [ll.1062-70])

The moon-fire is given a miraculous ability to transfigure without destroying. Wordsworth has subtly transmuted the Burning Bush, out of which the Lord God spoke to Moses

(Exodus 3.2-4), into a natural marvel. The biblical type has been acted upon in a manner that suggests the transformation described. And the new, natural type is in turn analagous to imaginative process. For perhaps the only time in *The Excursion*, shadow becomes 'substance'. In the kindling of 'leafy umbrage' and 'dusky veil', the special language of neo-Platonic typology is used to assert that the material and mortal may be 'incorporated' into the spiritual, as if by a paradoxical soul-digestion. 'Like power abides/In Man's celestial Spirit', the Wanderer continues,

Virtue thus
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,
From the incumbrances of mortal life,
From error, disappointment, -- nay from guilt;
And sometimes, so relenting Justice wills,
From palpable oppressions of Despair.

(pp.188-9 [ll.1070-7])

This power reaches back to the Wanderer's own experience, in the ecstatic, pantheist dawn of Book I (pp.13-14), and familiarly recalls a Romantic imagination. Yet its association with moral strength and the 'inner light',²⁷ its fuel of darkness and despair, belong rather to a providential imagination.²⁸ Here, presumably, is the redeemer that made Christ unnecessary to Wordsworth. It was this passage, among others, that led Lamb finely to characterize *The Excursion's* 'internal principle of lofty consciousness' as 'an expanded and generous Quakerism'.²⁹

All the visions I have been considering - the Wanderer's sunrise and faculty of soul, the Solitary's cloud-city, the Poet and the Pastor's sunset -- have a pressing need to bring light out of darkness. They figure an overriding wish to subdue mortality. Wordsworth has always been obsessed by loss, that form of dying that leaves one alive but with less of oneself; but it is the deaths of his brother John, in 1805, and his much loved children, Catharine and Thomas, in 1812, that are the compelling traumas. The morbidity will out. The experience of death is most literally at the centre of the poem in the Books given to the Pastor and churchyard, V-VII. At times, *The Excursion* reads as though a charnel-house were being developed as a centre for moral training.

The Wanderer is given the course of Wordsworth's mind since 1804, its logic of retreat, and its peculiar tragedy. He is the voice of sound hopes, but these are subdued by a poet who is knowingly travelling further from the sources by which he has imagined most intensely, and measured his vitality. In this aged figure, Wordsworth stoically acknowledges the fact of decay, the fact that imagination, as he has once defined it, is 'for ever flown'. Nature has betrayed the heart that loved her, and the poet's own wilful and aberrant nature, its intuitive effects and unsteady pleasures, has become a terrible mirror of that mutable universe. Wordsworth is not just incapable of his earlier idiosyncratic power; he actively wishes to transcend its individualistic basis. Hence the need for what may be called a 'transferred imagination'. In a conscious transference of authority, 'natural piety' is replaced by 'philosophic discipline',³⁰ and desire passed onto objects which are adequate, not because they are more orthodox, but because they are seen as unfailling.

The Wanderer's flight from his early nature-rapture is at once pitiful and courageous. On hearing the Pastor's moving histories of a deaf and a blind man, he takes them as evidence that

proof abounds
 Upon the earth that faculties, which seem
 Extinguished, do not, *therefore*, cease to be.
 And to the mind among her powers of sense
 This transfer is permitted; not alone
 That the bereft may win their recompense;
 But for remoter purposes of love
 And charity; nor last nor least for this,
 That to the imagination may be given
 A type and shadow of an awful truth,
 How, likewise, under sufferance divine,
 Darkness is banished from the realm of Death,
 By man's imperishable spirit quelled.

(VII, p.333 [ll.518-30])

As in Book IV, so here in Book VII, 'Darkness is banished'; but it is so via 'A type and shadow', a dark image, of 'truth'.³¹ The mind's power to overcome sensory loss is presumed to foreshadow the vanquishing of death by God-in-man.

Geoffrey Hartman perceives in *The Excursion* Wordsworth's 'removing himself as much as possible from the immediacy of his senses'.³² In fact, the senses have removed themselves from him, but the Wanderer strives to maintain that 'We are not so removed for utter loss'. He counters the traditional typology of the 'VALE of years' with one of 'Age' as 'a final EMINENCE'. At such a height, 'the gross and visible frame of things/Relinquishes its hold upon the sense', in order 'that we thereby should gain/Fresh power to commune with the invisible world'.³³ There is nowhere else to go, perhaps, but it is a thin and cheerless air that he ascends towards.

As Hartman wryly observes, 'The defect of *The Excursion* ... is to show us death and to word hope'.³⁴ Though expertly pieced together, it is divided between a youthful apprehension and its sober aftermath. We cannot but read the poem through the earlier Wordsworth incorporated within it, and feel the extent of the change. The Wanderer urges on the Solitary a natural animism he can no longer directly experience. Wordsworth upholds a nature-philosophy that has long since passed him by. Hope is taught, but from a position that is comparatively joyless, diminished, uneuphoric.

Yet to say that the poem shows only death, is to miss what it shows of a life beyond it -- to miss, in other words, its types and symbols of eternity. Wordsworth's early 'intimations of immortality' hovered on the brink of 'the faith that looks through death' (*ode*, 188). *The Excursion* insists, often quite unobtrusively, that they typify the workings of Providence and the hope of an afterlife. Lamb, in his review, contends that

the visible and audible things of creation present, not dim symbols, or curious emblems,³⁵ which they have done at all times to those who have been gifted with the poetical faculty; but revelations and quick insights into the life within us, the pledge of immortality ...

(Hayden, pp.55-6)

The Elia in Lamb cannot resist the word-play between 'quick insights' and the 'life' they symbolize. He has however intuited the heart of the poem's methodology, and its link with an egotistical imagination; it is 'the life within us' that is both 'the pledge of immortality', and the true focus of the 'revelations' taken from nature. The Pastor may cautiously tone

down the sunset to a 'dim reflection' and 'transitory type', but for all that the analogies of *The Excursion* harken back to a poetry in which the immediate presence of the divine is taken as evidence of the mind's own divinity.

Wordsworth's more pious critics dwell anxiously upon just this unorthodox preference for glowing visions over 'dim symbols'. When John Wilson censures an 'utter absence of Revealed Religion' in the work,³⁶ he means that its revelations are of the natural, and not the biblical, variety. Wordsworth for his part stoutly defends

the innumerable analogies and types of infinity ... the countless awakenings to noble aspiration, which I have transfused into that Poem from the Bible of the Universe as it speaks to the ear of the intelligent, as it lies open to the eyes of the humble-minded.³⁷

Over the course of *The Excursion*, the ears and eyes encounter four discrete 'types of infinity': the lamb, the raven, the shell, and the ram. Significantly, three of these natural revelations are given by the Wanderer in Book IV, while the fourth typifies his way of thinking, and is seen by the whole group in premonition of the sunset-vision. But what they show is not so much the life in nature as a life beyond it. The analogies refer beyond themselves, as if tentatively seeking a supernatural realm.

The description of the raven may be said to be representative. In a powerful and sombre passage, the bird is imagined in a vast solitude, flying at nightfall, and implicitly towards death, but with a final and unlooked-for recovery:

often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale Stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this Fabric huge,
One Voice -- the solitary Raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark-blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above the power of sight --
An iron knell! with echoes from afar,
Faint -- and still fainter -- as the cry, with which
The wanderer accompanies her flight
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,
Diminishing by distance till it seemed
To expire, yet from the Abyss is caught again,
And yet again recovered!

(1V, pp. 193-4 [ll.1175-87])

The scene of death and resurrection is kept entirely within natural bounds. The raven's croak appears to have been lost, but is at the last moment rescued from the 'Abyss', and eagerly seized on by the listener. By a strange reversal, the ominous and 'iron knell' is sent back as an echo of the mind's most ardent wishes for 'recovered' life. The imagination looks beyond the type, to the unknown region the bird has flown to.

This is not the 'Redoubled ... mirth' of *There was a Boy*, where the echoes outlandishly multiply the owls' hootings. And yet, as so often in later Wordsworth, the echoic quality is a reassurance of poetic survival. At various points in *The Excursion*, the Wanderer resurrects himself in snatches of past strength;³⁸ and the Fenwick Note suggests that a childhood memory would have been the source of the Solitary's eventual recovery.³⁹ In the Wanderer's famous analogy of the shell, a 'curious Child' is taken back to the eternity from

which he has only recently come. To the child the shell speaks murmuringly of its 'Mysterious union with its native Sea'. To the Wanderer it typifies rather 'the Universe itself', but within it the 'ear of Faith' can, like the child, hear

Authentic tidings of invisible things
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. (pp. 191-2 [ll.1132-47])

Through the pun on 'tidings', a ceaseless sea-movement and oceanic constancy hauntingly return. This time, however, they manifest the essential nature of a world within whose endless flux a 'mighty heart is lying still' (*Upon Westminster Bridge*).

The last discrete type of *The Excursion* is found in Book IX, in a scene that is beheld by all, rather than taken from memory:

In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw
A two-fold Image; on a grassy bank
A snow-white Ram, and in the crystal flood
Another and the same! Most beautiful,
On the green turf, with his imperial front
Shaggy and bold, and wreathed horns superb,
The breathing Creature stood; as beautiful,
Beneath him, shewed his shadowy Counterpart.
Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
And each seemed centre of his own fair world:
Antipodes unconscious of each other,
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight!
(IX, P. 407 [ll.439-51])

The 'shadowy Counterpart' precisely mirrors the ram itself, the marvellously 'breathing Creature'. The type and archetype are 'the same' in the sense of being equally 'beautiful' (as the repetition suggests), yet opposed in that they form a 'two-fold image', each one existing in its 'own fair world', 'Antipodes unconscious of each other'. The consciousness of unity towards which the passage is yearning is suspended until the very last line, when the two halves, held 'in partition', suddenly become whole, 'their several spheres,/Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight'. It is the function of the spectators' minds to bring them together, in imitation of their mutual experience, and in anticipation of the hour when type and archetype will be truly unified.

In another respect, however, the ram offers our 'two-fold' nature: mortal and immortal, material and immaterial, real and ideal. These are the implacable divisions that *The Excursion* has traversed, if not surmounted. For the Pastor's wife, the reflected ram typifies both the Wanderer's ways of bringing things together, and the fact that 'combinations so serene and bright ... Cannot be lasting in a world like ours' (p.408). The passage on the ram was originally written for *The Prelude* in 1804, and at that time ended with the poet's own 'temptation ... to dissolve/The vision' by throwing a stone (*Prelude*, p.581). The initial impulse was to assert the self, over and against the immaculate harmony in which it should, in a higher sense, be absorbed.

Rebellious feeling is subject to correction in *The Excursion*, and the mind does not throw stones at its images of social and spiritual unity. In its own way, however, *The Excursion*

stages the last great conflict in Wordsworth between his early, desirous imaginings, and his later, corrective will. It is no coincidence that it also represents his last sustained return to the theology that had inspired the epic plan of *The Recluse*, and the poetry written for it, in 1798. With great skill and considerable inconsistency, *The Excursion* seeks to voice this Coleridge-derived and ecstatic vision through a speaker whom age has chastened into stolid philosophy and stubborn courage. Under Coleridge's tutelage, Wordsworth had once accepted that all things were one; now he looks forward, often through darkness and despair, to the time when all shall be made so.

Five months after *The Excursion* is published, Wordsworth writes the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface* (1815). In considering the 'affinity between religion and poetry', the essay seems deliberately to be reflecting on the methods and motives of the earlier work:

Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be inclined to settle upon those of eternity; -- the elevation of his nature, which this habit produces on earth, being to him a presumptive evidence of a future state of existence ... The religious man values what he sees chiefly as an 'imperfect shadowing forth' of what he is incapable of seeing. The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burthen upon words and symbols.⁴⁰

This passage confirms what Lamb perceived, that the 'evidence' of Wordsworthian immortality rests in 'the elevation of [human] nature'. *The Excursion* has demanded that the focus of vision shift 'heavenward', but alongside a language of transferred desire, it has created the nature and the poetry of a newly defined, or typological, imagination.

A lecture delivered at the Wordsworth Winter School, Grasmere, on April 28th, 1992.

NOTES

1. *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London and Glasgow, 1966), p.973.
2. *Don Juan* Canto III, st.94.
3. For Romantic distinctions between the type and symbol, see Stephen Prickett, *Words and 'The Word': Language, poetics and biblical interpretation* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.14-16, 127,31,139.
4. *The Prelude*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd ed., rev. H. Darbishire (Oxford, 1959).
5. *The Excursion* (London, 1814; Woodstock Books Facsimile, 1991); references are to page numbers in the 1st ed., followed by equivalent line numbers in *The Poetical Works* vol. V, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd ed., rev. H Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1940-9).
6. The relations between the two are exhaustively unfolded in M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York, 1971). For a corrective reading of Abrams and the secular Wordsworth he proposes, see Prickett *op. cit.*, pp.96-104.
7. A solemnizing of the Snowdon scene, 'shaped for admiration and delight' (1805 XIII, 61).

8. *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (Ithaca and London, 1975-), III, p.95.
9. The odious comparison starts with Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1956-71), IV, pp.572-3.
10. 3 January 1815, *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, ed. Edith J Morley, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1927), I, p.158.
11. See Judson Stanley Lyon, *The Excursion: A Study* (New Haven, 1950), pp. 64-7, 108-19.
12. Apart from the 'Pedlar' and 'Ruined Cottage', in Book I, there are key philosophical passages in Books IV (pp.183-4 and 195-8 [ll.957-68, 1207-75]) and IX (pp.387-8 [ll.1-26]).
13. Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Middle Years 1800-1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), II, p.25.
14. See 1 Corinthians 15.43-53.
15. To the Pastor, they are types of the 'radiant Cherubim' (p.415). For the *Prelude* model of beatitude on which both the sunset and the Solitary's cloud-city rely, see 1805 X, 475-89.
16. Wordsworth's language remains tantalisingly similar, though the register has changed. The Platonic 'Fount' recalls the 'fountain' of the 'spot of time' (1805 XI, 385), while the pre-existence implied by a return to an origin draws on the *Immortality Ode*, where

Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ... (ll.199-201)

(Text from *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill [Oxford, 1984])

17. *Paradise Lost* (ed. Alastair Fowler [1968]) III, 375-7; V, 157 (*Tintern Abbey*, by contrast, finds 'A motion and a spirit' whose 'dwelling is the light of setting suns'; ll.98-101). The Pastor ends with an explicit allusion to the Morning Hymn of Adam and Eve in Book V (p.421), though his is a 'Vesper Service', and opens a passage through death to eternal life, where Milton imagines the dawning of mankind. For the whole sequence of Miltonic allusions in the sunset-vision, see *Poetical Works* V, p.474.
18. Contrast *Excursion* III, pp.127-30 [ll.706-67] and IX, pp.415-17 [ll.628-78].
19. *Poems on Various Subjects* (London, 1796).
20. *Joan of Arc* (Bristol, 1796) II, 16-24.
21. 1805 VI, 571.
22. *Romantic Bards and British Reviewers*, ed. John O. Hayden (London, 1971), p.52; hereafter Hayden. In May 1815, Wordsworth tells Coleridge his wish was to 'put the commonplace truths ... in an interesting point of view' (*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt, *The Middle Years*, Part II, 1812-1820, Rev. M. Moorman and A.G. Hill [Oxford, 1970], p.238).
23. Hayden, pp.42-4.
24. IX, p.387; IV, p.197. For the remarkable, and to Wordsworth no doubt attractive, similarity between his early panentheism and the stoicism he later embraced, see Jane Worthington, *Wordsworth's Reading of Roman Prose* (New Haven, 1946), pp.46-9.
25. Hayden, pp.43-4. Lamb's review uniquely understands the theology: 'In his poetry nothing in Nature is dead. Motion is synonymous with life' (Hayden, p.55).
26. *Excursion* IV, pp.144-7 (ll.66-127).

27. Compare Milton's *Comus*, 372-3: 'Virtue could see to do what Virtue would/By her own radiant light ...' (*Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey [1968]).
28. See John Jones on 'The Baptized Imagination', *The Egotistical Sublime* (London, 1960), and Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'* (New Haven and London, 1984), pp.273-4.
29. Hayden, p.57. As Lamb anticipates, other critics 'object to the appearance of a kind of Natural Methodism' in *The Excursion*. He keeps his own scruples private, but in a letter of September 1814 is bold enough to ask Wordsworth: 'are you a Xian? or is it the Pedlar & the Priest that are?' (*Letters* III, p.112); for Wordsworth's evasive reply, see Lyon, *op. cit.*, pp.114-15.
30. III, p.107 (ll.266-7).
31. Wordsworth probably draws on Coleridge's more lively typing of the blind man in question, in *Omniana* (1812): 'Why his face sees all over! It is all one eye! ... it is the mere stamp, the undisturbed *ectypon* of his own soul!' (*Poetical Works* V, p.465).
32. Wordsworth 'reverts to lecturing on a venerable discipline, that of the Platonic-Christian journey from visible to invisible' (*Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* [New Haven and London, 1964], p.294).
33. IX, pp.389-91 (ll.48-92).
34. *Op. cit.*, p.295.
35. It is the Solitary who goes in for the Quarles-like emblems and *memento mori* (*Excursion* IX, p.412 [ll.550-8]).
36. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* xxiv no.146 (Dec 1828), pp.917-38.
37. Letter to Catherine Clarkson, January 1815 (*Middle Years* II, p.188), which makes an important but charmless riposte to a charge of Spinozism.
38. IV, pp.146,164-5 (ll.109-22,506-49).
39. *Poetical Works* V, pp.474-5.
40. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1974), III, p.65.

LAMB'S DREAM-CHILDREN: THE MANUSCRIPT TEXT

Duncan Wu

St Catherine's College, Oxford

Now that the latest instalment of the *Index to English Literary Manuscripts*¹ is published, providing a comprehensive account of Lamb's extant manuscripts, it is to be hoped that a new edition of Lamb's poetry and prose will shortly be forthcoming. The most important question facing the editor of such a project will be the choice of copy-text. The most likely candidates for those of Elia's essays will probably be the first published versions in the *London Magazine*, but alongside them the editor will need to consider manuscript sources. As a first step towards that enviable undertaking, I here present my transcription of a facsimile of the manuscript of Elia's *Dream-children*, retained in the Bodleian Library (MS.Facs,b.7,fol.2), given to the Bodleian in 1944 by F.D. Mackinnon. Its closeness to the first printed text of the essay, which appeared in the *London Magazine*, January 1822 (v 21-3), helps confirm the accepted view that Lamb saw his essays through the press himself. There are no striking divergencies from that text, most of which consist of minor variations in punctuation. But readers may be interested to note that Lamb's spellings and usages, 'Abby', 'aukward', 'neighborhood', and 'shew', were normalized by the copy-editor of the *London Magazine* (from which subsequent texts have been derived).

The manuscript is in fair copy, and consists of a single folio sheet in Lamb's hand. It does not contain the essay in its entirety, but does provide us with the pleasure of reading over half of the published essay with Lamb's orthography and punctuation, rather than that of any of his editors. It appears here by kind permission of the Bodleian Library, and is hitherto unpublished.

Dream-children; a reverie

Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great uncle, or grandame whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred
 5 times bigger than that in which they and Papa lived) which had been the scene - so at least it was genuinely believed in that part of the country - of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the Children and their cruel Uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin
 10 Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say, how religious and how good their great grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by every body, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet
 15 in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments
 20 stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as aukward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately from¹ the Abby, and stick them up in Lady C's tawdry gilt drawing room. Here John smiled as much as to say 'that would be foolish indeed'. And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the
 25 neighborhood for many miles round, to shew their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the psaltery by heart, aye, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall upright graceful person their great grandmother Field once was; - and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer - here Alice's little right foot
 30 played an involuntary movement, till upon my looking grave it desisted - the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease called a cancer came, and bowed her down with pain, but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition
 35 of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said 'those innocents would do her no harm'; and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she - and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows, and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her
 40 grandchildren, having us to the great house in the holydays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself in gazing upon the old busts of the Twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be

¹from] 'at' in the *London Magazine* text. This is the only significant variant in the MS.

45 turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge
 mansion with its vast empty rooms with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and
 carved oaken pannels with the gilding almost rubbed out - sometimes in the spacious old
 fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary
 gardening man would cross me - and how the nectarines & peaches hung upon the walls
 50 without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden fruit, unless now &
 then, and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking
 yew trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir apples, which were good
 for nothing but to look at - or in lying about upon the fresh grass with all the fine garden
 smells about me - or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too
 along with the oranges & the limes in that grateful warmth - or [The manuscript ends
 here.]

NOTES

1. Barbara Rosenbaum, *The Index to English Literary Manuscripts Volume IV 1800-1900 Part 2 Hardy-Lamb* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1990).

THE HISTORICITY OF THE TRIAL SCENE IN SOUTHEY'S *JOAN OF ARC*: A NOTE.

Michael Bauman

Hillsdale College, Michigan

In Robert Southey's *Joan of Arc*, the heroine is called before 'Prelates and Priests/and Doctors' (Bk.III,285-6) in order to examine (and, if genuine, to ratify) her claim to be the 'missioned Maid,' sent from God to deliver France from English tyranny. In his broader strokes, Southey paints a historically accurate and, at times, even moving portrait of the inquisitorial proceedings concerning Joan. Such accuracy was an important consideration for Southey. In the first collected edition of his poetical works, for example, his 190 page poem is accompanied by 110 pages of explanatory footnotes, which are comprised almost entirely of supporting quotations drawn from earlier French and English historians.

Southey, however, is not averse to altering the historical data in order to suit his own poetic ends. His account of Joan's trial contains at least two such notable alterations.

First, Southey's account of that ecclesiastical proceeding, an account into which Southey insinuates both his own anti-Catholicism and his own Romantic worldview, is actually a conflation of the two major trials Joan faced. While a band of French theologians did approve her claim to a divine commission, as Southey's poem depicts, a subsequent church court convicted her of heresy for believing that she was responsible directly to God rather than to the Roman Catholic Church. This second trial is likely what stands behind Southey's account -- at this trial -- of Joan's marked preference for the religion of divine adoration taught her by nature rather than the religion of servile fear she believes is inculcated by Roman ritualism (Bk.III, 4112-514). Furthermore, though history did not, Southey extricates Joan from the clutches of her judges and their fire (Bk. III, 522ff), despite her recalcitrance.

Second, Southey also takes liberty with the naming of the theologians sent to question Joan. These 'Doctors,' he tells us, are 'teachers grave,' and they carry 'great names./Seraphic, Subtile, or Irrefragable' (Bk.III, 286-7). These appellations are appellations of actual medieval theologians, none of whom, of course, could possibly have been present at Joan's

interrogation. The 'Doctor Seraphicus' is John of Fidenza (1217-1274), better known as St. Bonaventure, the eminent Franciscan theologian and mystic. The 'Doctor Subtilis' is John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), the noted Franciscan semi-realist. The Doctor Southey labels as 'irrefragable' is presumably William of Ockham (1285?-1349?), the Franciscan nominalist most commonly known as 'Doctor Invincibilis.' William, the latest of the three, died nearly 65 years before Joan's birth in 1412. If these three thinkers were present at Joan's trial at all, of course, it was only by their books. Southey alludes to them, I presume, because they are among the most notable theologians of the age, not because he actually believes them present.

BOOK REVIEWS

Barbara Rosenbaum, *The Index to English Literary Manuscripts, Volume IV, 1800-1900, Part 2 Hardy - Lamb* Mansell, 1990, pp.xxxii + 736, £225.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that to read a book before reviewing it confuses the reviewer's mind dreadfully. Thus, when the Society's Editor invited me to write about what I vaguely understood to be a picture book of literary autographs, I collected cuttings on various earlier works (Desmond Flower and A.N.L. Munby, *English Poetical Autographs*, 1938, 46 facsimiles; Charles Hamilton, *Collecting Autographs and Manuscripts*, 1961, over 800 facsimiles; P.J.Croft, *Autograph Poetry in the English Language: Facsimiles*, 1973, 197 facsimiles) and worked up a fine expostulatory head of steam and half a draft review decrying repetition before even seeing the volume. This turned out to be rather larger than one of the old London telephone directories, to contain a meagre twelve facsimiles, four of them showing the front and back of two items, and to begin with Thomas Hardy. Then I re-read the title and the penny dropped. More importantly for us, therefore, the lists end with Charles Lamb - and include (only) Hardy, Hazlitt, Hopkins, Keats, Kipling, and Lamb.

One feels that nobody but a curmudgeon could pick holes in this book because it deserves alpha for effort and is always so disarmingly frank, indeed, self-deprecating. Its purpose is specifically stated as an attempt 'to list the extant literary manuscripts of six English authors who flourished during the nineteenth century.' The book tries to list all the manuscript versions, i.e. originals, revises, proofs, inspirational essays, extracts, transcripts, and to give a brief publishing history, for the verse, prose, dramatic works, diaries, notebooks, edited works, and the marginalia even if in printed books, for each of the selected authors, together with a long and detailed bio-bibliographical introduction and a note of the current whereabouts of each manuscript. Since a definitive listing is understood to be impossible, the book is 'offered as a kind of working paper', which readers are 'eagerly invited' to amend.

Back in 1974, we read, it had been intended to include all the authors listed in the *Concise Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. Volume IV, Part 1 (contents unstated) proved that there were too many papers surviving from too many authors for this to be practicable. When Part 2 was begun in 1982, therefore, nine of the sixteen authors were omitted (Hmm!): Hogg, Hood (!), Henry James (!!), Henry Arthur Jones, Keble, Kinglake, and Henry Kingsley. Housman, Leigh Hunt and Charles Kingsley were dropped 'following the theft of the working drafts for much of Part 2 in 1986; in the case of those authors, the loss was fatal'. Hmm! again and possibly Pshaw! One is reminded of a certain perambulator found to contain the manuscript of a three-volume novel, and a baby found in a handbag. Since the epigraph page states that the book was 'Typeset from [the?] author's disk' I think we are entitled to speak sniffily of back-ups but perhaps that is being wise after the event. *The Times Atlas of the*

World which cost £50 in 1985 contains a loose double-sided half-sheet of index and an apology for having omitted it by a computer error; but as usual, I digress.

So what do we get for our £225? Or, rather, from someone else's £225 since the book is presumably aimed at university libraries and those of extremely learned institutions. Would a mad Elian buy it for the seventy-five pages on Charles Lamb and the disarming Preface and the ten and a half lines deleted from the first version of *Oxford in the Vacation*? If it could be re-issued in bits like the new *Grove*, would the mad Elian pay a proportional (?) £25? Or am I someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing? Oh, get on with it, I hear you cry.

The Introduction to the Lamb entries is written in perfectly clear English but is so detailed that I skipped shamelessly, not one of my usual habits, and so closely argued that it is difficult to find a fact again without re-reading large chunks. A few stimulating statements jump out at the reader. Charles Lamb owned a copy of *The Spectator*, 1724, a point which unfortunately sheds no light on my note in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, New Series, No. 73, January 1991, about earlier issues which he may have presented to Edward Moxon. The Huntington has c.200 Lamb letters, the University of Kentucky has c.100, the British Library, Dr Williams's Library, and the V. & A. only have 'ten or more letters each', though it is also recorded that the British Library's collection includes forty-nine to Bernard Barton alone. There is a usefully detailed list of Lamb letters dated between 1817 and 1834 discovered since Lucas' day and not yet edited by Marrs. Lamb's letter to Coleridge about the death of his mother has turned up in the Pierpont Morgan Library. Of the twenty-four known letters that Lamb wrote to Southey, eighteen have been located (one in facsimile only) and are described as widely scattered, though all but one are in American collections. 'Americans look after our things better than we do - Discuss.'

The information contained in the individual entries in this book is probably very difficult to find elsewhere. That encapsulates the book and its utility. Take the full entry for *Dream-children*: 'First pub. *London Magazine*, January 1822; collected *Elia* (1823); Lucas, II, 100-3. LmC 234 [the book's standard reference for 'Lamb, Charles' and the entry among 359 items] Fair copy revised, here originally entitled 'My Children', first publications version, signed 'Elia', 2 pages. Facsimile in British Library (MS Facs.Suppl. VII (y), ff. 84-5 and MS Facs. Suppl. XIII (14)), Bodleian (MS Facs.B.7, F.2 and in the Newton sale catalogue, pp. 187 and 189; sold in the John Taylor Sale, Sotheby's, 10 March 1865, Lot 441. Parke Bernet, 14-16 May 1941 (A.E. Newton Sale), Lot 583, sold to Rosenbach.' If you need to know any of that, here it is, apparently exhaustive and presumably accurate. Unhappily the entry does not say where you can find the manuscript. *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig* is Pierpont Morgan, MA 966. *Dog Days* from Hone's *Every-Day Book*, is Huntington HM 7972. Something is Berg, something else is Yale or Texas or Harvard or even Harvard, Widener Collection. The manuscript of *Mackery End, in Hertfordshire* (and I was pleased to note the correct comma) is specifically in the Rosenbach Foundation collection. I would have liked to have known what, if anything, happened to such an important manuscript as *Dream-children* since it was sold to Rosenbach in 1941.

There are no obvious errors of printing nor of Elian detail, which is praise indeed these days, but there are two possibilities of minor improvement which will be brought to Ms Rosenbaum's notice in due course. The Society owns a volume which is always known (let us hope, correctly) as Mary Saywell's Album and it is said to contain a poem in Charles Lamb's handwriting, title unspecified: our further research may show it to be *To M-- S--* ("of all the names, at the baptismal font"), recorded by Ms Rosenbaum as LmC 170 with numerous allusions to Mary Saywell, the Society and the *Bulletin* but as 'Unlocated'. Similarly Edward Moxon's *Sonnet / Goff's Oak* written out by Charles Lamb for Emma Isola's Album

is recorded (p.611) as 'untraced': those who attended the Society's Emma Isola symposium on 2 November 1991 will remember that it was displayed there and is in my collection.

I have tried to like this book. I have tried to say that it fills a gap, if you perceive that the gap is there. I can admire it. It is not intended to be fun. It is a reference book, first, last and always, but then so is *Whitaker's Almanac* which it is certainly possible to read for entertainment. This copy of Rosenbaum will ultimately reach the Society's collection at Guildhall Library. I do not honestly expect to call for it or buy it or take it off the open shelves in some other great library. You probably know about the man who said that, when he was not curled up in front of the fire with his favourite Trollope, he liked nothing better than a really good bibliography. I did not understand this until I bought, yes, bought, the two large volumes of the Colbeck/Bose/Fredeman *A Bookman's Catalogue - The Norman Colbeck Collection of Nineteenth-Century and Edwardian Poetry and Belles Lettres*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1987. It is also a very serious book and it is doing a different job, but, if the choice were between Colbeck and Rosenbaum, I have to say that Colbeck would be on my lap and Rosenbaum would be propping up the wonky coffee table.

D. E. Wickham

Janet Ruth Heller. *Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama*. Columbia, Missouri and London: The University of Missouri Press, 1990. ix + 224 pp., eight illustrations.

Janet Ruth Heller is no stranger to the readers of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*. In 1983, the *Bulletin* published her essay on Hazlitt's appeal to readers in his dramatic criticism. This interesting piece was nicely complemented in 1987, when the *Bulletin* published a further essay on Lamb considered within the complex area of reader response. These two early essays attracted respectful attention, even from senior specialists, as Heller dexterously engaged with some sophisticated and timely issues.

Based on her University of Chicago Ph.D. dissertation, Heller's first book, *Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama*, capably tracks the historical traditions of nineteenth-century bias against stage spectacle and staged plays, especially Shakespearean tragedy. It also brings attention to the value of language and the printed page in the theoretical writings of Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt, whose dramatic criticism clearly anticipated modern interest in 'reader response.' Briefly, it was the belief of these theorists that the 'experience of reading drama, especially tragedy, stimulates the imagination more than witnessing a performance, regardless of the quality of the representation' (p.1). With persuasive documentation, Heller shows that nineteenth-century bias against staged plays and especially against stage spectacle was neither 'eccentric' nor anomalous, but supported by authoritative Classical and neo-Classical texts. As stated in her introduction, this book is a 'reevaluation of romantic dramatic criticism that puts the writings of [Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt] and other nineteenth-century English critics and theatre-goers in the context of a literary history of ideas' (p.1).

Heller presents her case in six economic chapters, supported by 38 pages of informative endnotes and an eight-page bibliography of selected primary and secondary sources. Her book is handsomely produced by the University of Missouri Press, which has been building its list in early-modern British literature. Heller's premier publication is graced by an attractive jacket, generous page layouts, elegant typography, and eight black and white photographs of portraits of Kean, Siddons, and Kemble, and of paintings of selected theatre interiors.

Heller's book begins with a strong theoretical chapter. Her immediate goal is to establish the long history of the bias against stage spectacle in Classical sources. Drawing upon Aristotle, Horace, and Plato, she shows that Romantic dramatic theory against stage spectacle had several authoritative precedents. This chapter also identifies arguments against spectacle and for the primacy of the playwright's language and the reader's response in such Renaissance, Restoration, and Eighteenth-Century writers as Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Jeremy Collier, Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Sheridan, and others.

In Chapter 2, Heller offers a detailed reconstruction of the romantics' assault on the senses and their bias against spectacle in staged drama. She tracks the development of this tradition from Classical dramatic commentators down to Bacon, Addison, Kant and Schiller. She goes on to illustrate how Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt promoted the view that great literature enables readers to transcend the senses, as it more fully engages the mental, critical, and imaginative capacities. Especially useful is Heller's view of the romantics as 'teachers and fathers of the reading public,' who hoped to liberate their contemporaries from an 'addiction to the senses,' and to enable them 'to think more dynamically.'

In her book's middle chapters, Heller gives dedicated attention to the criticism of Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt, who portray the reader as an active and responsible participant in the process of literary interpretation. The experience of witnessing staged drama demeaned the text, these theorists argued; it also stupefied spectators, rendering them thoroughly passive. Coleridge, for example, casting himself in the role of educator in his essays on education and in his Shakespeare Lectures (Chapter 3), insists that learning is more effectively achieved through abstract thought, not concrete objects. Coleridge emphasizes the power of language as the conduit to a fuller and more sympathetic education. Heller examines Coleridge's analysis of Shakespeare, with special attention to Coleridge's preoccupation with Shakespeare's opening scenes. For Coleridge, the initial scenes were critical because they transported readers from the material world of the senses to the dramatic illusion of the play-world. Heller is especially effective in this chapter when she shows how Coleridge sets up his own writings with various techniques and rhetorical devices aimed at stimulating and holding the reader's attention.

In Chapter 4, Heller examines Hazlitt's commentary on Shakespeare's tragedies, especially *Hamlet* and *Othello*. Here, Heller shows that Hazlitt uses his 'personal responses to drama' as well as a 'special rhetorical structure' to help readers identify with tragic heroes, and also to stimulate readers' sympathetic imagination. When Shakespearean tragedy is staged, however, the plays' imagery and characterization cannot be faithfully transmitted, Hazlitt believed. Staged drama of such grand stature was reduced to the inanities of a dumb show.

Chapter 5, the most interesting section of the book, discusses the dynamic of reader response, that 'unwritten contract between author and reader,' as Lamb appropriately put it. At this point in her analysis, Heller wisely positions Lamb within the context of popular twentieth-century views on reader response, popularized by Stanley Fish, Walter Slatoff, and Wolfgang Iser. Heller emphasizes that most modern commentators see drama exclusively as performance art; whereas Lamb examines the reactions of readers to plays. Heller's reading of Lamb's 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare...' gains additional dimension when she shows how this essay anticipates film criticism by Siegfried Kracauer and Seymour Chatman.

In her final chapter, Heller broadens her thesis by identifying pro-spectacle and pro-performance criticism in writings by Shelley, Lewes, James, Arnold, Ruskin, Shaw, Wilde, and Yeats. She shows that these later commentators directly challenged the bias against spectacle and the belief that Shakespeare's best work (the tragedies) is compromised by stage production. For these writers, only acted drama achieved total audience engagement. These

commentators encouraged well-designed scenery and properties for their ability to stimulate the audience's receptivity to drama.

Heller's concise conclusion introduces some exciting new extensions of her thesis. She mentions, for example, Neil Postman's observation that the ever-expanding modern media, with its exploitation of the pictorial, is progressively displacing the power of language. Postman believes that sensory overload is supplanting individual interpretation of words. Heller sensibly hopes that theatre directors will consider Lamb and Hazlitt for the beneficial perceptions their work offers on stage production, spectacle and the critical process of spectator response. Similarly, Coleridge's prose writings should be more appreciated today, Heller maintains, for their emphases on the value of literature to 'educate and illumine the mind.'

Heller closes with a statement admirable in its concision and confidence:

Because the opposition to spectacle has such a long history, stretching back at least to Horace, one must take the romantics' position seriously. To blame their bias on bad contemporary productions, on eccentricity, or on ignorance of the theater is an act of critical amnesia. It is more helpful to see the romantics as crusaders against the timeless problems of idolatry of actors, the tendency to compensate for bad scripts with spectacle, and the elevation of the senses over the imagination (p.167).

The first fruits of Heller's investigations are impressive, both as a corrective to many long-held misconceptions and as a starting point for further probes. Flaws in the overall execution of this study are few and minor. Certainly, a list of illustrations should have been included to properly direct readers' attention to the integral pictorial material in her book. More important, she might have taken up a suggestion she raises in her conclusion, by favouring us with a discussion of modern productions of Shakespeare's tragedies, beginning with two individuals who were a mighty force in the theatre world for several decades -- Sir Tyrone Guthrie and Joseph Papp. Overall, however, Heller's *Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and the Reader of Drama* is a good read and an essential read, for specialists and generalists alike.

Maureen E. Mulvihill
The Princeton Research Forum

SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

THE GLOSSY LEAFLET: INFORMATION AND AN APPEAL FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

With this copy of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* you should find enclosed two examples of the Society's new glossy leaflet. It is intended for recruitment and quantities will be available at Society meetings and functions. They are a little heavy to send in bulk by post, but that could probably be done in emergencies. Please use at least one of the enclosed examples to enthruse a prospective new member and/or pin it on your Library notice board. The other copy is also to be used, or kept if you cannot bear to part with it. [Which would be quite understandable, seeing how handsome as well as informative it is: but I shall do my duty with copy number two and then pick up a further copy at our October meeting: W.R.]

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 9 MAY 1992

A dull occasion? Not a bit of it! CLS AGMs are always lively, well-informed and enjoyable. We regretted the absence of Bill Ruddick, marooned on Tyneside by the inability of British Rail to cope with a rival influx of Sunderland supporters, 'doon for the Cup' (which they lost), Helen Irwin, who is sadly housebound at present, and others. The Chairman paid tribute (echoed later by Nick Powell) to R. Houston Wallace FCA (Treasurer 1976-87) who died recently. A special welcome was accorded to Bob Durden from San Francisco, a member since 1953.

After acceptance of the Chairman's Report, the Treasurer's Report showed an encouraging surplus of over £5,800 for the year ended 31st March 1991. In pursuance of our Objects we were spending £1200 on Library cataloguing; £250 on storage; £500 on the Bursary to the Wordsworth Summer Conference; £2,700 on the endowment of a prize at Christ's Hospital; plus a stock of the *Companion to Charles Lamb* for future sale to members. Our current assets totalled over £76,000.

The Membership Secretary's Report showed a modest increase in subscribers. The reports of the Editor of the *Bulletin* and of the Society's representative on the Alliance of Literary Societies were received. The report on the Society's Library was contained in the article by Mr D.E. Wickham in the April 1992 *Bulletin*. Dr Duncan Wu reported on the extensive advertising of the £500 Bursary offered for the 1992 Wordsworth Summer Conference. This had produced some excellent candidates and it had been decided that the Bursary should be offered to Michael Newton, a PhD student at University College, London.

The existing Officers were confirmed in their posts, as were the members of the Council, with the addition of Dr Nicola Trott (St Catherine's College, Oxford), who was warmly welcomed as a Council member.

The Hon. Secretary reported that the 1992/93 programme was taking shape, with some venues/speakers yet to be confirmed. She hopes that these will be resolved in time for the Programme to go out, as usual, with the July *Bulletin*.

'A PARLOUS BOY: GO TO, YOU ARE TOO SHREWD'

The month before our AGM, Helen Irwin, as one of Shakespeare's less loveable children - Richard Duke of York, in *Richard III* - delighted us with her reading at our meeting on 11th April. Planned as a continuation of our celebration of Fanny Kelly in 1991, we started with Fanny's first part (aged seven) as 'a bloody child' in *Macbeth*.

Before the meeting, members basked in the sunshine on the terrace of the Royal College of General Practitioners in Kensington, then reluctantly adjourned indoors, to have reluctance speedily give way to delight as we read through some of Fanny's most successful roles. These included Ophelia, Mistress Ford and Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*. We were especially grateful for Miss Helen Stutfield's account of Fanny's establishment of the first Drama School, as well as her reminiscences of her own life in the theatre.

Charles Lamb would have enjoyed this afternoon. Can one say more?

ELIA AND THE LAST ESSAYS OF ELIA

We are very concerned to learn that Oxford University Press intend to allow Jonathan Bate's excellent edition of Lamb's essays, published in their World's Classic Series at a modest £4.95, to go out of print when current stocks are exhausted. This is an essential book for all Lamb lovers, and we urge members to write to O.U.P., Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, asking them to reconsider their decision. We should also hasten to our local bookshops to snap up remaining copies and create the impression of continuing brisk sales (ISBN 0-19-281764-7).

OBITUARY: R. HOUSTON WALLACE, FCA

Houston was introduced to the Charles Lamb Society by our late General Secretary, Angus Cheyne, and succeeded Freda Parsons as our treasurer in 1976. We are grateful for his careful husbanding of our resources at a time when we had to watch every penny. He continued as Treasurer until 1987, when he became joint Treasurer for a short time with Nick Powell. He was a regular attender at our meetings and at our Annual Luncheons, and we shall miss his friendly presence and calm, reassuring manner. He was typical of those who, over the years since the foundation of the Society in 1935, have cheerfully given of their time and talents to foster the Elian spirit of friendliness and goodwill.

JIM AND CAROLYN MISENHEIMER

Several Elians at the Johnson Society's March meeting were sorry to find that Carolyn Misenheimer was unable to give her lecture in person because of Jim's sudden hospitalisation just as they were about to leave for London. We are glad to learn that Jim is doing well, but sadly he does not feel that he can commit himself to giving a paper to the Society in 1993, as was hoped. The Misenheimers do, however, plan to be in London for about a week in September, when Carolyn will be on retirement leave and Jim on a sabbatical.

DR. PRAHBAT MATHUR

Dr. Mathur, of MMH College Campus, Ghaziabad, India, whose gaining of a Doctorate on the subject of 'Dramatization of "Self" in the Works of Charles Lamb' was reported in the April *Bulletin* hopes to be able to send a copy of his thesis to the Editor of the *Bulletin*, who will report further at a later date. Dr. Mathur sends his best wishes to all members and hopes that any who may venture to India (and we are, after all, an enterprising Society) will make contact. His letter concludes:

'I loved working on Lamb. He gave me immense insight and understanding.
As a man he was superb and rare'.

DR. ROBERT MORRISON

Congratulations to Dr. Morrison on taking up a Lectureship in English at Acadia University, Nova Scotia. We wish him and his family every happiness in Canada and trust that his work on the forthcoming De Quincey edition will continue to flourish there.

NOW THE EDITOR STICKS HIS OAR IN

The reason being to congratulate Claude Prance on the appearance of his new book *The Characters in the Novels of Thomas Love Peacock* (The Edwin Mellen Press) and Nicholas Roe on his *William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry* (The Penguin Poetry Library). Reviews soon.

THE WORDSWORTH SUMMER CONFERENCE BURSARY

At a Council meeting on 2 November 1991, the Society agreed to set aside £500 as a Bursary to assist a postgraduate student from a British University to attend the Wordsworth Summer Conference in Grasmere, August 1992. Bill Ruddick, Mary Wedd and I volunteered to serve on a sub-committee charged with the task of finding a suitable recipient. I began by printing a flyer advertising the Bursary, and had mailed it to every University and Polytechnic in the Kingdom by Christmas 1991. By 6 March 1992 we had received applications from postgraduate students in Edinburgh, Bangor, Cambridge, Oxford and London. After much deliberation the sub-committee agreed in April to award the Bursary to Michael Newton, an exceptionally gifted PhD student from University College, London. His thesis title is *The child and the wilderness: castaway, runaway, and abandoned children as 'savages' in English and American Literature 1775-1925*, and he will read one of its chapters, on Wordsworth, as an academic paper at the Conference.

The Society should be permitted a feeling of some pride that it will be enabling an outstanding young academic not only to attend the Conference, but to participate in it as well. It is gratifying too that the Bursary has the active support and co-operation of the Wordsworth Trust. Richard and Sylvia Wordsworth, who organise the Conference on the Trust's behalf, helped me in various ways during the administration of the Bursary, and they will include a printed acknowledgement of the Society's generosity on the Conference programme.

The need for such a Bursary is immense, and I hope the Society will continue to award it in future years.

Duncan Wu

A.G.M. AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES, HELD AT THE MIDLAND INSTITUTE, BIRMINGHAM, 2ND MAY 1992

The Annual Meeting of the ALS, which this year received rather better support than in 1991, began with an unremarkable AGM. Chairman Hunt, together with the Society's Treasurer and Editor, were re-elected unopposed, but Secretary Woodward was obliged to step down in favour of his deputy, Mr Philip Fisher. Kenneth Oultram was once again congratulated on bringing out another issue of the Society's 'fanzine', despite a slow response from potential advertisers, a paucity of news from other societies and a display of something approaching bad manners from The Tennyson Society and (for shame!) The Wordsworth Trust. Mr Oultram particularly stressed the importance of member societies *voluntarily* sending him news of developments - however seemingly trivial - and future events. He suggested that perhaps each society might appoint a Press and Publicity Officer to undertake such a task.

Points raised in the discussion included three from your delegate, viz:

1. Whether the ALS had applied, or intended to apply, for an Arts Council grant? Answer 'No' in both cases, but funding was available from another source, and the matter was being pursued.
2. Whether the ALS was considering an approach to a TV producer with a view to a programme being made on the Society and its members? 'No comment!'
3. Whether the Annual Meeting might be extended over a weekend? 'Yes, and possibly in 1995, when the City of Swansea is to become, for one year, a City of Literature'.

With the excellent news that the ALS was £700 in the black the meeting closed.

The rest of Saturday was taken up by the ALS' Annual Conference, which this year was hosted by the George Eliot Society. Among the papers delivered by leading lights in the Society were ones dealing with its early history, its activities today and, most entertainingly, its financial administration - the latter having the effect of almost convincing your delegate that 'accountancy is not boring'. The Conference ended with a short but brilliant performance by the ALS President, Gabriel Woolf, who gave a reading from a lesser-known George Eliot work, *Brother Jacob*.

As usual, throughout the day, stalls publicising the aims of a number of literary societies (including, of course, the Charles Lamb Society) were set up, and much discussion among delegates took place as a result. Next year's meeting is to take place on 24th April.

R.M. Healey

WILLIAM GODWIN: A NEW EDITION

Members who know the worst of 'Philosopher Godwin' through Lamb's account of the first (and last) performance of Godwin's play *Antonio* on 13th December 1800 in *Essays of Elia*, may be interested to know that the best is now available in *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philip, Pamela Clemit and Maurice Hindle (8 vols., Pickering and Chatto, 1992). This is the first instalment of a two-part edition: a further seven volumes, *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philip et.al (7 vols., Pickering and Chatto) will appear in February 1993. Prices, alas, are steep: £395 for the first set; £345 for the second, if ordered before 31st December 1992 (£395 on publication).

I hope that Pamela Clemit, to whom I am indebted for the above information, will be able to provide an article on the Lamb-Godwin friendship as it was at the time of the play's actual production, rather than as reshaped in the interests of a good story in *Elia*, for the January 1993 *Bulletin*.

'COLERIDGE BOOKS'

Coleridge Books, Nether Stowey (Reggie and Shirley Watters), 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN, will be preparing for the Third International Coleridge Conference (July 24-29) a special collection of antiquarian books of the Romantic period, as well as a display of the Woodstock Books facsimile series 'Revolution and Romanticism' and associated critical books. The new Summer Catalogue will be available from July 24th, and Reggie and Shirley say that they will be happy to look for books by or about Lamb, Coleridge, or others of their circle at any time. They are also pleased when members of the Charles Lamb Society look in and make themselves known.

BRITISH SOCIETY FOR ROMANTIC STUDIES' ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

The Society so grandly-named above, but known as BARS to its members, will be holding a one-day conference on 'Romanticism and Popular Culture' at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, on Saturday 5 September 1992. There may also be an opportunity to tour the house, which is, of course, Horace Walpole's pioneering essay in eighteenth-century Gothicism.

Details from Dr David Worrall, Department of English, St Mary's College, Waldegrave Road, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham TW1 4SX.

THINGS ONE WISHED ONE HAD KNOWN AT THE TIME
No. 2774 - 'My First Play'

D E Wickham

At the Society's play-reading in honour of Fanny Kelly, held at the Royal College of General Practitioners on 11 April 1992, someone mentioned *My First Play* and identified it as *Artaxerxes*. There was then an embarrassed pause while everyone tried to remember all they could about *Artaxerxes*, which turned out to be nothing - except for suggestions of authorship by Dryden and Handel, later both shown to be incorrect.

To score any points, you would have had to have known that (1) it was in fact an opera, by (2) Thomas Arne, the (3) English composer, that it was based on (4) *Artaxerxes* by (5) Metastasio, in (6) a very poor English translation by (7) the composer, and that it was first performed (8) at Covent Garden in (9) 1762.

In April 1992 Howes Bookshop in Hastings offered a copy of a New Edition (1821) of the libretto, as performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane with Madame Vestris in the title role: Catalogue 254, Item 410, £25.00.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY remain as follows:

<i>Personal:</i>	UK	Single	£8.00
		Double	£12.00
	Overseas		US\$14.00
<i>Corporate:</i>	U.K.		£12.00
		Overseas	US\$21.00

Cheques should be made payable to the Charles Lamb Society and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Nicholas Powell, 28 Grove Lane, London SE5 8ST. Existing subscriptions should be renewed in January.