

# The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

January 1994

New Series No. 85

## Contents

### Articles

JOSEPH RIEHL: The Last Days of Charles Lamb: Emma Isola	2
PAMELA CLEMIT: Lamb and Godwin's <i>Antonio</i>	13
GEORGE SOULE: Spots of Earth in <i>The Excursion</i>	19
BERTA LAWRENCE: Wordsworth's Last Visit to Somerset	25
D. E. WICKHAM: Lamb's Cottage in Edmonton in 1933	28

### Reviews

MARY WEDD on <i>A Literary Guide to the Lake District</i> by Grevel Lindop	31
JANE STABLER on <i>The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse</i> ed. Jerome J. McGann	34
DUNCAN WU on <i>The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: A Supplement of New Letters, Volume VIII</i> ed. Alan G. Hill	38
Society News and Notes from Members	39

## Editorial

### *Richard Wordsworth (1915-1993)*

Richard Wordsworth, a direct descendant of the poet, and, latterly, with his wife Sylvia, resident in Wordsworth's own beloved Grasmere Vale, died on 21 November 1993, aged 78 years.

Richard's main career in the theatre lasted for almost 50 years. From first to last he was a Shakespearean, but he possessed a very wide range, and was to master the kindred media of radio, cinema, and finally television with total confidence.

In 1969 Richard devised the one-man programme 'The Bliss of Solitude', which set him travelling widely, particularly in America. It told the story of the Wordsworths through their own words and those of their friends and contemporaries; in doing so, it gave a new currency to the writing of Charles and Mary Lamb. The importance for Elians of the Wordsworth Summer School (later Conferences) which Richard inaugurated in 1970 is explained in Basil Savage's article, 'How It All Began' (*CLB NS* 81 [1993] 2-4).

Richard was a generous spokesman for the Charles Lamb Society, his repertoire including a programme of Lamb's writing entitled 'My Gentle-Hearted Charles'. His mastery of the Elian style will be vividly remembered from Winter Schools and Summer Conferences by all who heard it.

The future of Richard Wordsworth's two great institutions - the Wordsworth Summer Conference and Winter School - is guaranteed by the Wordsworth Trust, with Jonathan Wordsworth as Director and Sylvia Wordsworth as Organizer.

Everyone who knew Richard Wordsworth will remember him with pride and affection. As Mary Wedd remarks: 'Knowing him greatly enriched my life.'

## The Last Days of Charles Lamb: Emma Isola

By JOSEPH R. RIEHL

LAMB'S DEATH was a sad accident. In December 1834, he slipped in the street 'grazing his face'.<sup>1</sup> An infection ensued. Five days later he died, aged 59. He fell on the 22nd, lingered through Christmas, and died on the 27th, mumbling the names of his friends Moxon and Proctor. An accident, but not really unexpected. His friends had remarked on his stumbling gait, his 'heated face', his lack of appetite. Coleridge was dead, and Lamb was drinking 'a *leetle* drop' too much as always, in contravention of his sister's rules. His house seemed gloomy. A more cynical and tactless century than his own would speculate on whether he was drunk when he fell, face first into a septic sewer of a street, whether his 'immune system' was too weakened with drink (and grief) to stave off what should have been a minor infection. Perhaps he was simply too negligent of his own health to care properly for himself. The end came surprisingly soon, though. His high drafts of hope, anticipating retirement and release from the drudgery of the East India Company nine years before, long damped by loss after loss, were stilled by a stumble in the street.

The artifacts of the last days of Lamb are still painful to read. His letters too clearly mark the stages which led him to that street in Edmonton where his final fatal wound was delivered. Lamb is the most artful of prose writers, yet his art struggles in the presence of death; his letters are unable to shield us, at the end, from his terrible decline.

The autobiographical self, which under most circumstances is carefully consistent, is sometimes refracted in letters. Presentations of self waver and mutate. Changing audiences evoke different responses; occasions change our purposes. With the exception of his last days, however, Charles Lamb's letters present a remarkably consistent self: introspective, irreverent, self-mocking, witty, always humorous. So Lamb's biographers are nearly tyrannized by the letters, and Lamb writes not only his autobiography in the letters, but his biography as well. His greatest artistic creation is this literary self. Lucas quotes Bulwer-Lytton, perhaps partially in justification of his own liberal use of quotations from Lamb's letters in his biography: 'All that he knows or observes in the world of books or men becomes absorbed in the single life of his own mind, and is reproduced as part and parcel of Charles Lamb. [He] leaves to the admiration of all time a character which, as a personification of humour, is a higher being than even Scott has imagined, viz. that of Charles Lamb himself.'<sup>2</sup> This valuing of the character of the writer over the writing itself is part of the fiction created by Lamb's remarkably consistent and subtle letters. In his last letters, however, under the pressure of loss and the slow erosion of friends and their comforts, as his sister's condition worsened and his own isolation became more total, Lamb's protective cover, his autobiographical self, slowly began to disintegrate and the reader of the collected letters feels keenly the tragedy of his life.

Perhaps no letters show this erosion better than those concerning his adopted daughter, Emma Isola, and, in the process of apprehending the disintegration of Lamb's daily life caring for his sister, and, by contrast, the enormous energy of Lamb's autobiographical self as it existed in better times. These letters indicate that Emma's marriage was as great a blow to Lamb, as his lifelong friend Coleridge's death in July 1834, though not for the same causes.

<sup>1</sup> E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb* (4th ed., London, 1907) (hereafter *Life*), p. 674.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 409.

Coleridge's death had caused him grief, though, as biographers have noticed, they had not seen one another much in recent years. Coleridge's death also signalled Lamb's own age and approaching death; they were equals, contemporaries, and Coleridge's passing summoned from Lamb a touching literary epitaph. On the other hand, the loss of Emma, one year before, though outwardly joyous, had created conditions in Lamb's daily life which Lamb seemingly could not survive. He no longer could look forward, in any sense, with hope or expectation. Emma now lived apart in London; there may have been some strain in the relationship, and at any rate he could no longer expect from her the simple comfort brought by the companionship of a lively and optimistic young person. He could see ahead only gloom, and he began to drink too much.

The recent re-publication of Ernest Carson Ross' pamphlet 'Charles Lamb and Emma Isola' by the Charles Lamb Society<sup>3</sup> serves as a useful caution to anyone wishing to read romantic interest into the relationship between Charles and his ward Emma. Charles was not, 'in love' with Emma, by anyone's stretch of imagination. But she brought youth and optimism to the household. Her presence gave him purpose, motivated his interest in new projects, energized Mary, and her loss threatened them both with tedium and loneliness. In the discussion of Lamb's correspondence which follows, I hope to present more than Lamb's autobiography, I wish instead to show how Lamb's literary persona is affected by his relationship with Emma in an attempt to indicate both the strength of Lamb's literary persona, and the loss occasioned by Emma's marriage.

In the early stages of their relationship, Lamb's correspondence concerning her prospects for employment show how flexibly Lamb would vary his correspondence style to suit the situation, disguising his real concerns about her future life under the mask of jocularity. In a letter to the mother of one of Emma's schoolfriends, Charles assumes his best recommendation-letter style. He was seldom even slightly dishonest in his letters, but here he is trying to find his ward some honest work, and he exaggerates slightly Emma's proficiency in Latin in a letter of 24 July 1827 to Mrs. Dillon:

We are both very thankful to you for your thinking about Emma, whom for the last seven weeks I have been teaching Latin, & she is already qualified to impart the rudiments to a child.

Indeed, Emma's prospects at this time seemed to entirely depend upon her abilities as a teacher or governess, and no thought occurs in the letters of the possibility of marriage. (In April 1830, Lamb wrote to the doctor who had mislabelled medicines for 'Miss ISOLA LAMB': 'She has never changed her name and rather mournfully adds that she has no prospect at present of doing so'.<sup>4</sup> Considering the importance of her reputation as a scholar to her prospects, Lamb was careful to assume this formal and bloodless stance in recommending her. But another letter, two days later displays Lamb's more usual humour, jesting about his charge affectionately to a friend. On 26 July 1827, he wrote to Mary Shelley:

I am teaching Emma Latin to qualify her for a superior governess-ship; which we see no prospect of her getting. 'Tis like feeding a child with chopped hay from a spoon. Sisyphus and his labours are nothing to it.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Carson Ross, *Charles Lamb and Emma Isola: A Survey of the Evidence Relevant to their Personal Relationship* (London, 1991) (hereafter Ross).

<sup>4</sup> *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935) (hereafter *Letters*), iii. 264

Actives and passives jostle in her nonsense, till a deponent enters, like Chaos, to embroil the fray. Her prepositions are suppositions; her conjunctions copulative have no connection in them; her concords disagree; her interjections are purely English 'Ah!' and 'Oh!' with a yawn and a gape in the same tongue; and she herself is a lazy block-headly supine. As I say to her, ass *in praesenti* rarely makes a wise man *in futuro*.<sup>5</sup>

This vein of amiable railery is one of Lamb's typical ways of dealing with dear friends, to turn them into charming caricatures. We recognize in this letter a persona more like Elia (with a bite), and Lamb remains, at this time, easily capable of shifting from the necessary 'bureaucratic' tone of recommendation to his more customary 'Elian' playfulness. A month or so later, in a letter to Robert Jameson, Lamb shifts again into a formal, almost priggish, commendatory mode:

It is the desire of her friends to obtain a situation for their sister, our young friend, as Private Teacher, for which she is not ill qualified in French, Italian, Music, Drawing &c. But I have been indefatigable for the four last months in teaching her Latin, and hope in a twelvemonth, or less, that she will be able to undertake the instruction of young Ladies, or very young Boys, in more than the rudiments of that tongue. Her progress, for the time, has been very hopeful.<sup>6</sup>

The radical shifts in the character of these letters indicate a good deal of his feeling for Emma, for whom he is willing to adjust his tone to the workman-businesslike for the sake of her future employment. Lamb often wrote that he was ill-fitted to such business, yet he was most willing to do so for Emma.

But these letters do not indicate anything of the depth of caring which Lamb felt for Emma. They are the sort of style shifts of which almost anyone is capable. Emma's serious illness of March 1830 indicates how his distress concerning her could begin to dissolve his jocular persona completely. That month, Lamb wrote to William Ayrton to refuse (or at least postpone) a proposal concerning the publication of *Dramatic Specimens*. Lamb cites Emma's illness (identified by Ross as cerebrospinal meningitis),<sup>7</sup> as a reason, and Lamb's tone shifts noticeably when he discusses Emma. He had begun with a cheery Elian reminiscence, and invitation:

The roof of a coach whirls you down [to Enfield in under an hour or two. We have a sure hot joint on Sunday . . . Come and find us, and seal our judicious change with your approbation, whenever the whim bites, or the sun prompts, no need of pronouncement, for we are sure to be at home.<sup>8</sup>

In the next line, though, Lamb acknowledges the artifice of his *bonhomie*, a quick dodge into a serious matter; 'I keep putting off the subject of my answer' announces a turn for the worse. The mask is abruptly lowered:

In truth I am not in spirits at present to see Mr. Murray on such a business . . . But we are both in trouble at present. A very dear young friend of ours, who spent her

<sup>5</sup> *Letters* iii. 110.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters* iii. 123.

<sup>7</sup> Ross 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters* iii. 254.

Christmas holydays here, was taken very dangerously ill with a fever, from which she is very precariously recovering, and I expect a summons to fetch her when she is well enough to bear the journey from Bury. It is Emma Isola whom we first got acquainted with at our first acquaintance with your sister at Cambridge, and she has been partially an inmate with us - and of late years much more extensively - ever since. While she is in this danger, and till she is out of it, and here in a probable way to recovery, I feel I have no spirits for an engagement of any kind. It has been a terrible shock to us; therefore I beg that you make my handsomest excuses to Mr. Murray.<sup>9</sup>

That revealing and heartfelt announcement accomplished, Lamb abruptly returns to the jovial tone of the early part of the letter: 'Our very kindest loves to Mrs. Ayrton and the Ayrtonets'.<sup>10</sup> The letter illustrates a well-marked pattern in Lamb's behaviour, that is, his tendency to withdraw from business and social life when there is illness in his household. As he had done in the case of Mary's depressive episodes, he now finds Emma's illness a reason for avoiding work on his writing.

But the letter also illustrates that Lamb cannot maintain his usual jocular style under the steady pressure of worry about Emma's condition. Another example will serve to further illustrate the point. In late January 1830, Lamb had written to Wordsworth about their move the previous October to reside with the Westwoods. As usual, Lamb tried to put the best face on things, but he sorely missed London, and *almost* light-heartedly rues his country surroundings with a glancing Miltonic allusion: 'A garden was the primitive prison till man with promethean felicity and boldness luckily sinn'd himself out of it'.<sup>11</sup> But Lamb was unable to use theological allusions to turn Emma's departure to work as a governess into a fortunate fall:

She was our inmate for a twelvemonth, grew natural to us, and then they told us it was best for her to go out as a Governess, and so she went out, and we were only two of us, and our pleasant house-mate is changed to an occasional visitor. If they want my sister to go out (as they call it) there will be only one of us. Heaven keep us all from this acceding to Unity!<sup>12</sup>

Even at this stage, before Emma's illness, with Emma merely 'gone out', Lamb is hard-put to maintain his Elian style. Thinly disguised behind a Unitarian allusion to the Trinity, the reader is not spared Lamb's fear of being left alone, and his resentment of the unnamed 'they' who seem to control his life.

Her illness in March, then, comes almost as a physical blow. Perhaps for the first time we see that Lamb associates his fears about Emma with an inability to write: 'I am so shaken with your sad news that I can scarce write.' And indeed his letter is almost incoherent with fear and grief. 'Can I go to her aunt, or do anything? I do not know what to offer. We are in great distress. Pray relieve us, if you can by somehow letting us know. I will fetch her here, or anything.' He ends his short letter as he had begun: 'I hardly know what to write'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Letters* iii. 255.

<sup>10</sup> *Letters* iii. 255.

<sup>11</sup> 22 January 1830, *Letters* iii. 242.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters* iii. 245.

<sup>13</sup> 26 February, to Mrs. Williams, *Letters* iii. 246.

Later, on hearing of Emma's partial recovery, Lamb is almost equally incoherent, which he acknowledges in his letter to Mrs. Williams 'Madam, I trouble you with my nonsense . . .'<sup>14</sup> Just how damaged Lamb had been by Emma's illness is indicated in a letter a few days later to Sarah Hazlitt 'We are both very unwell, and under affliction for poor Emma . . . At present I am weak, and could hardly bring my legs home yesterday after a much shorter stroll than to Northaw'.<sup>15</sup> Even allowing for some self-dramatization, there is an irreducible truth in Lamb's physical suffering brought on by mental affliction, and for the first time we can see the fatigue, the faltering hand and the stumbling leg, which would within four years, bring on his death.

Soon, however, Lamb was somewhat recovered, enough to write a bantering, gallows-humorous letter to James Gillman suggesting that a madhouse cell might be available for Coleridge at St. Luke's Hospital. Perhaps Lamb did not wish to indicate to Coleridge (through his friend and protector Gillman) how badly he had been affected, but a letter to Charles Ryle and the letter quoted above, to William Ayrton, suggest again the strength of the blow which Lamb had taken. Lamb, never much at a loss for words, uses the same phrase in both letters to describe his situation 'We have been in trouble . . .' he writes to Ryle;<sup>16</sup> 'We are both in trouble at present', to Ayrton.<sup>17</sup> During this troubling month, Lamb was able to return to his normal light style in several letters, yet any mention of Emma brought with it a confession of inability, both physical and mental.

Later, with Emma safely out of danger, Lamb resumes a more Elian persona. (Though perhaps he was not yet fully recovered from the strain: Lucas dates a letter to Emma's doctor apologizing for his behaviour from about this time. It seems that Lamb had been drunk so much at one of Dr. Asbury's parties that he had to be carried home 'upon a man's shoulders.') On 2 April 1830 he writes to Mrs Williams describing Emma's journey home:

. . . a rather talkative Gentleman, but very civil . . . engaged me in a discourse for full twenty miles on the probable advantages of Steam Carriages, which being merely problematical, I bore my part in with some credit, in spite of my totally un-engineer-like faculties. But when somewhere about Stanstead he put an unfortunate question to me as to the 'probability of its turning out a good turnip season' and when I, who am still less of an agriculturist than a steam-philosopher, not knowing a turnip from a potato ground, innocently made answer that I believed it depended very much upon boiled legs of mutton, my unlucky reply set Miss Isola a laughing to a degree that disturbed her tranquillity for the only moment in our journey.<sup>18</sup>

Here is Lamb at his most complex, the butt of his own joke, but regarding himself through Emma's eyes. Likewise, Lamb the literary man, since this incident seems a close reenactment of Lamb's 1821 'The Old and The New Schoolmaster'. Major elements are the same in both the 1821 essay and the 1830 letter, a journey by coach, a polite, good-natured, but obtuse 'gentleman', and questions about rival modes of transportation; Lamb holds his own for a while, but then a startlingly mundane question on the subject of agriculture unsettles him. In the letter, though, Lamb has an immediate audience, Emma, who seems to embolden him and who is then set to laughing by his replies. There is enough resemblance between the two

<sup>14</sup> 1 March 1830, *Letters* iii. 249.

<sup>15</sup> 4 March 1830, *Letters* iii. 250.

<sup>16</sup> 9 March 1830, *Letters* iii. 254.

<sup>17</sup> 14 March 1830, *Letters* iii. 255.

<sup>18</sup> *Letters* iii. 257-8.

accounts to give the reader some cause to suspect more than a little of Lamb's account. Did Lamb habitually bait 'civil gentlemen' in coach rides? Did he recognize in the questioning of the gentleman in the coach an opportunity for a clowning, having already gotten some mileage out of the same situation in his earlier essay? There is manifestly a special motive for the clowning, now that Emma is watching and her crisis passed, and the laughter is more self-conscious and perhaps a bit forced as Lamb seems to feel that he must, through the sheer strength of his literary personality, set Emma aright even at the expense of repeating an old joke. Moreover, the letter indicates something of the strength of the literary personality which Lamb seemed always to exhibit in good times.

Lamb thought so much of the anecdote that he repeated it, with a few embellishments, in another letter, to Sarah Hazlitt. By May he had recovered enough to resume his old walking habits, and in that letter we may catch the first hint of Emma's ambivalence to Charles. Perhaps fearful of his behaviour in front of her employer and benefactor, she cautions him: 'Now, pray, don't *drink* - do check yourself after dinner for my sake; and when we get home to Enfield you shall drink as much as ever you please, and I won't say a word about it'.<sup>19</sup> Emma had struggled to find a good position (with Charles' and Mary's help), and she was afraid that he would spoil her relationship with Mrs. Williams by getting tipsy. Lamb, of course, had no such intention, but he had a well-known tendency to become uproarious and satirical in company after drink. And perhaps his fun with the 'civil gentleman' was his recompense for good behaviour in front of Mrs. Williams.

The next group of letters is occasioned by the Lambs' move to Edmonton, in late April or early May, into the Walden's house for mental patients; written also about the time of Emma's engagement to Edward Moxon. Lamb was at one stroke losing his independence and his young companion, who was undoubtedly not eager to visit what some might call a madhouse. 'End of May nearly' he wrote to Wordsworth, 1833:

Mary is ill again. Her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months, followed by two of depression most dreadful. I look back on her earlier attacks with longing. Nice little durations of six weeks or so, followed by complete restoration - shocking as they were to me then. In short, half her life she is dead to me, and the other half is made anxious with fears and lookings forward to the next shock. . . . To lay a little more load on it, a circumstance has happen'd, *cujus pars magna fui*, and which at another crisis I should have more rejoiced in. I am about to lose my old and only walk-companion, whose mirthful spirits were the 'youth of our house', Emma Isola. I have her here for a little while, but she is too nervous properly to be under such a roof, so she will make short visits, be no more an inmate. With my perfect approval, and more than concurrence, she is to be wedded to Moxon at the end of Aug'. So 'perish the roses and the flowers' - how is it?<sup>20</sup>

Here Lamb stoically confesses his sorry situation to an old friend, not concealing his distress, but somewhat distancing himself from it, with a literary allusion. But, for Lamb, the double deprivation of Mary's company and of Emma, 'too nervous' to stay in a house for the mentally disturbed, was in fact the dreaded 'Unity' which he had dreaded in his letter to Wordsworth three years earlier, and he must surely have felt himself to be in the last stages

<sup>19</sup> 24 May 1830, *Letters* iii. 279.

<sup>20</sup> *Letters* iii. 370-1.

of his life; but his tone is sombre, accepting and resigned, showing little of the despair which other evidence indicates he was feeling.

In the following extracts, recorded within a week of the letter to Wordsworth, Lamb gives evidence that his difficulties were badly affecting him, more than he had let on to Wordsworth. The letters indicate that he was probably drinking a great deal, and as before, his mental distress, over Mary's condition and his loss of Emma, led to physical debilitation. Crabb Robinson records that Lamb was sorely disturbed. Lucas records that on 26 May Robinson had dined at Talfourd's to meet Charles and Emma. On the next day, Robinson writes 'Before I arose C. Lamb was thundering at my door. He had slept with his clothes on all night and came out not knowing what to do with himself.' Next day, Lamb again showed up at Robinson's having slept in his clothes at Talfourd's.<sup>21</sup> By the following week he had begun to show physical signs of distress again, this time a tremor that affected his hands: he writes on 31 May 1833 to Sarah Hazlitt: "'Tis late, and my hand unsteady'. Again, three days later, he is still afflicted with a tremor, 2 June 1833 to John Forster:

I used a curt style because my amanuensis is no great scribe. I made use of him because my hand shook so. My hand shook, because I had been trying to write very neatly an Album Acrostic, in which the Initial letters require unusual Fair Writing.<sup>22</sup>

This attempt to cover his symptoms with a joke also contains a sort of veiled reference to Emma, for whom he solicited album verses from his friends. Finally, another three days, and still his hand is shaking, 5 June 1833 to Matilda Betham: 'My hand shakes so I can hardly write.' This bad spell for Lamb seems to have cleared by mid-July, but evidently moving to Edmonton and losing Emma, with Mary ill, were severe blows. Paradoxically, these letters show precisely how strong and decent Lamb's character was. While he felt free to complain to his old friends about his condition, he revealed the cause to none but Wordsworth. To his ward, Emma, and her future husband he gave, in his letters, no clue of his distress. He was his usual jocular self, helping to arrange Emma's finances, and settling on them the gift of his prized portrait of John Milton.

On the eve of her marriage, Lamb had apparently regained his steadiness enough to try humor to dispel his own evident fear of being left alone with Mary, who had not been well since April. On 24 July 1833 he told Moxon:

For god's sake, give Emma no more watches. *One* has turn'd her head. She is arrogant, and insulting. She said something very unpleasant to our old Clock in the passage, as if he did not keep time, and yet he made her no appointment. She takes it out every instant to look at the moment-hand. She lugs us out into the fields, because there the bird-boys ask you 'Pray, Sir, can you tell what's a Clock', and she answers them punctually. She loses all her time looking 'what the time is.' I overheard her whispering, 'Just so many hours, minutes, &c. to Tuesday - I think St. George's goes too slow' - This little present of Time, why, tis Eternity to her -<sup>23</sup>

Lamb had once turned to a similar playful poetic figure of time to soothe the pain of separation from his friend Manning; here again, as with the incidence with Emma and the 'Gentleman' in the coach, Lamb returns to past writing and old metaphors to narratize his

<sup>21</sup> *Life* 643.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters* iii. 373.

<sup>23</sup> *Letters* iii. 378.



own fear of loss. And if one wishes to read Lamb's humour literally, the letter seems to express some resentment of Emma, who is making Lamb miserable by joyfully anticipating her separation from their household. Nevertheless, the joking mood dissolves any sense of loss. Lamb, I think, nearly always wrote humorously of Emma, depicting her as somewhat childish and a little ridiculous, as he almost always did with those people who were most valuable to him. He seems, from the evidence of this letter to Moxon, to be perfectly reconciled to the wedding, as indeed he consciously was.

Nevertheless, just before the wedding, he is too ill to help a friend. In late July 1833 he wrote to Matilda Betham: 'I cannot interfere. I am too ill. [torn] much in my spirits at home to look into the world for misery. . . . I am very poorly; too much so to read M [torn] with any judgement'.<sup>24</sup> On 28 July 1833 he wrote to Moxon about the Betham letter above, which was a reply to a plea for help for Martin Burney. In this letter, he reveals something of the misery he is facing: 'I am nothing but a trouble to my friends.' He asks Moxon's help with Burney's brother Payne and his partner Foss in Pall Mall: 'Payne & Foss, Pall Mall - it shakes me to pieces'.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless Lamb's 'public' reactions to the wedding display his usual resilience and good nature. In his letter of 30 July 1833 to Emma and Moxon immediately after the wedding he congratulates them generously, then reassures them as though he knew they would worry about his condition, 'I am calm, sober, happy. . . . I got home from Dover St., by Evens, *half as sober as a judge*. I am turning over a new leaf, as I hope you will know'.<sup>26</sup> For Emma, this must have been intended as a generous joking reassurance the loss of her company has not turned him to drink. On 20 August 1833 he wittily described the ceremony and his behaviour:

I was at church as a the grave Father, and behaved tolerably well, except at first entrance, when Emma in a whisper repressed a nascent giggle. I am not fit for weddings or burials. Both incite a chuckle. Emma look'd as pretty as Pamela, and made her responses delicately and firmly. I tripped a little at the altar, was engaged in admiring the altar-piece; but recalled by a Parsonic rebuke, 'Who gives this woman?' was in time resolutely to reply, 'I do.' upon the whole the thing went off decently & devoutly.<sup>27</sup>

He jokingly equates weddings and funerals, and discusses his unconscious attempts to disrupt the ceremony by tripping, chuckling, wool-gathering, all harmless enough behaviour, but Lamb selectively remembers detail and chooses to describe his own actions in such a way that a perceptive reader will detect his distress over the loss of his young companion, 'pretty as Pamela.'

After the wedding, Mary recovered rather startlingly, within a few minutes of the news. In September Lamb complained to Henry Francis Cary that he and Mary had abandoned their project of translating Dante because Emma has left.<sup>28</sup> But the letters for a while mention possible visits and dinners with Emma. Lamb advises her on how to deal with her meddling aunt. Then comes a letter to Moxon indicating some of Lamb's fears. Perhaps, the letter

<sup>24</sup> Letters iii. 379.

<sup>25</sup> Letters iii. 379.

<sup>26</sup> Letters iii. 380.

<sup>27</sup> Letters iii. 381.

<sup>28</sup> Letters iii. 384.

implies, the aunt is demanding much of Emma's time; at any rate, she is visiting the aunt regularly. But the newlyweds cannot come to Edmonton, (perhaps not wishing to be associated with a madhouse), and Lamb cannot leave Mary to visit them in London. He hints that they should consider visiting. This is perhaps the first letter in which Lamb expresses himself so bluntly to Moxon:

We are lonely. . . . Without disturbance to yourselves, or upsetting the economy of the dear new mistress of a family, come and see us as often as ever you can. We are so out of the world, that a letter from either of you now and then, detailing any thing, Book or Town news, is as good as a newspaper. I have desperate colds, cramps, megrims &c., but do not despond. My fingers are numb'd, as you see by my writing. Tell E. I am *very good* also. But we are poor devils, and that's the truth of it.<sup>29</sup>

All the themes of the earlier letters coalesce in this passage: the tone of near desperation, mental distress leading to physical illness, that is, the shaky fingers (which gives physical evidence in the handwriting on the page), and the reassurance to Emma that he is 'very good', that is that he is not drinking heavily. During this period Lamb apparently writes only to Moxon, not directly to Emma. In fact, if there were any letters at all by Charles to Emma during the course of their relationship, they were not preserved. (Though letters to Harriet Isola were.) Lamb mentions Emma frequently in his letters through the rest of the year.

About 1 January 1834 Mary became ill again. Lamb predicted an illness of '14 or 15 weeks'.<sup>30</sup> He was correct; in April he remarked that Mary had indeed been 'violent' for fifteen weeks.<sup>31</sup> A dinner had been planned for the ninth. Now, he wrote to Thomas Noon Talfourd, either to change the time of the dinner, or its place.<sup>32</sup> On 9 January, Lamb went down to London to have dinner with Talfourd and spend the night, either with Talfourd or John Forster. Lucas provides the following note on that dinner:

[William Charles] Macready says in his diary for the 9th January that he went to Talfourd's to supper to meet Charles Lamb. 'Met there Price, Forster, Mr. and Mrs. [Barron] Field, . . . Moxon, the publisher, and *not* Mrs. Moxon, whose absence was noted by those present as a most ungrateful omission of respect and duty. . . . I noted one odd saying of Charles Lamb's that 'the last breath he drew in he wished to be through a pipe and exhaled in a pun.'<sup>33</sup>

Emma's absence at the dinner was surely significant, as Macready's emphasis on the word 'not' indicates. The week before Mary had been taken ill, and now Charles was wholly alone, and in need of what family and friends were left to him. Was Emma afraid of that Charles would drink excessively in her presence? Did she want to put social distance between herself and the Walden's asylum? No reason or excuse is forthcoming from the letters, but soon after Lamb has the shakes again: 24 January 1834 to Mary Betham (his last to Moxon): 'You shall excuse a short letter, for my hand is unsteady. Indeed the situation I am in with her (Mary) shakes me sadly'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Letters* iii. 388.

<sup>30</sup> *Letters* iii. 398.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters* iii. 404.

<sup>32</sup> *Letters* iii. 397.

<sup>33</sup> *Letters* iii. 389n.

<sup>34</sup> *Letters* iii. 398.

Charles writes in February to Maria Fryer that he has been to see Emma, but 'I know you will bear with me, talking of these things. It seems to ease me; for I have nobody to tell these things to now. Emma, I see, has got a harp! . . . Pardon my blots'.<sup>35</sup> Again, his shaking hand. The distance between Charles and Emma is measured by the trivial detail of the harp. 'I have nobody' seems to be a complaint against Emma, a possibility made stronger by the realization that Maria Fryer was Emma's friend and schoolmate. Soon after, in March, Crabb Robinson mentions meeting Lamb and implies that he is killing himself with drink: 'To have so excellent a creature with all his infirmities in one's room is delightful, but mixed with pain on account of the destruction he is rapidly bringing on himself'.<sup>36</sup> The reader must imagine the pain and embarrassment that such a judgement would have brought to Emma. Sometime in April, Lamb again gets so drunk at H. F. Cary's that he passes out and must be carried upstairs to bed. He recovers quickly however, and writes another amusing letter of apology to Cary.<sup>37</sup> On 10 May 1834 Lamb writes to Manning who had reopened a long lapsed correspondence. Its tone is similar to his letters to Wordsworth, writing stoically to an equal, but his own sorrow somewhat muted by literary allusions, as though his life were but a play:

I have had a scurvy nine years of it, and am now in the sorry fifth act. Twenty weeks nigh [Mary] she has been violent. . .

Lamb has been keeping a close count; on 14 April he had noted that she had been ill for fifteen weeks. She had been ill, in fact, since early January, about the time Emma failed to show up at supper. In this letter, Lamb's despair leads him nearly to incoherence.

I struggle up to town rarely, and then to see London with little other motive, for what is left there hardly! The streets and shops entertaining ever, else I feel as in a desert, & get me home to my cave. Save that once a month I pass a day, a gleam in my life, with Cary at the Museum.<sup>38</sup>

Nine years before, Manning, perhaps his best friend, had dropped out of his life, just as Lamb had retired. Now he was returned, but the renewal of the relationship would come to nothing. Lamb's death would thwart any further exchange of letters. If Lamb's grief seems a reproach to Manning for his neglect of the friendship, it is also to some degree a reproach of Emma.

Lamb writes that Emma and Mary had been reading Dante together the previous year. 'We were beginning the Purgatory, but got on less rapidly, our great authority for Grammar, Emma, being fled, but should have proceeded but for this misfortune.' This compliment, indicating that Emma had conquered her language difficulties of 1827, was Lamb's last recorded mention of her, noting, not that she had married, or, as he had written to Wordsworth, merely 'gone out', but that she had 'fled'.<sup>39</sup> Mary's illness, it seems, followed. Now apparently, his most attentive friend was the painter, H. F. Cary, who had offered a standing invitation to Wednesday supper, just at the time Emma had left the house in Edmonton. At the time, Mary had remarked on Cary's invitation 'Did I not say something

<sup>35</sup> *Letters* iii. 401.

<sup>36</sup> *Life* 662.

<sup>37</sup> *Letters* iii. 406.

<sup>38</sup> *Letters* iii. 409.

<sup>39</sup> *Letters* iii. 409.

or other would turn up?'<sup>40</sup> But Cary's hospitality, like the renewal of the correspondence with Manning, did little to console him.

In July Coleridge died. It was the final blow to Lamb's weakened spirit. Lamb's letters, now brief and infrequent, became more so. Mary recovered, perhaps by midsummer, by September at the latest. Charles did some scrupulous editing of a friend's poems. But the literary persona of the joking Lamb no longer existed and Lamb was now defenceless against his situation. His letters after Coleridge's death are short, and mostly businesslike. His life was only lingering now. By the end of December, Charles was dead.

*University of Southwestern Louisiana*

<sup>40</sup> *Letters* iii. 410.

## Lamb and Godwin's *Antonio*

By PAMELA CLEMIT

WHEN CHARLES LAMB AND WILLIAM GODWIN met at Coleridge's on 8 February 1800, Lamb had too much to drink and began to bait the philosopher whose views he had formerly criticized.<sup>1</sup> In response Godwin is said to have quietly asked: 'Pray Mr. Lamb, are you toad or frog?'<sup>2</sup> The question was a disarming one, since it alluded to the famous 'New Morality' cartoon by James Gillray in the *Anti-Jacobin* of July 1798, where Lamb and Charles Lloyd had been portrayed as toad and frog for their joint authorship of a collection of poems entitled *Blank Verse* (1798). (Godwin himself was depicted as an ass braying aloud from *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* [1793], his celebrated work of philosophical anarchism.) Lamb asked Godwin to dine on the following day and wrote to his friend Thomas Manning with mock trepidation: 'Philosopher Godwin! dines with me on your Turkey this day. = I expect the roof to fall and crush the Atheist.'<sup>3</sup> In fact the two got on well. Godwin went home to read Lamb's short novel, *A Tale of Rosamund Grey and Old Blind Margaret* (1798), and on 18 February Lamb wrote again to Manning: 'Godwin I am a good deal pleased with - . He is a well behaved decent man, nothing very brilliant about him or imposing as you may suppose; quite another Guess sort of Gentleman from what your Anti Jacobins Christians imagine him - . I was well pleased to find he has neither horns nor claws, quite a tame creature I assure you'.<sup>4</sup> They began to see each other frequently, and at the end of the year Lamb became interested in Godwin's blank verse play, *Antonio; or, The Soldier's Return*, which was performed for a single night on 13 December 1800 and published as *Antonio: A Tragedy* later that month.

Readers may be familiar with Lamb's brilliantly funny account of the play's disastrous performance in 'The Old Actors', an essay for the *London Magazine* in April 1822.<sup>5</sup> However, the extent of Lamb's involvement in the production of *Antonio* is not so well-known. In 1800 he was a good deal more sympathetic to Godwin's project than his later essay suggests. As well as attending the performance, he wrote the epilogue and produced three sets of critical comments: one listing revisions to the manuscript, another proposing changes while the work was at press, and a third suggesting revisions to the published text for a planned second edition.

The ambition to write for the stage was by no means all on Godwin's side. In 1798, the same year that Godwin included in a memorandum of planned works, 'five or six tragedies', Lamb had already begun writing a play on the theme of friendship entitled 'Pride's Cure', later *John Woodvil: A Tragedy* (1802), which was to be rejected by John Kemble, the

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lamb, 'Living Without God', printed as a 'satire on the Godwinian jargon' in Charles Lloyd, *Lines suggested by The Fast, appointed on Wednesday, February 27, 1799* (Birmingham, 1799), p. 3n; see also Burton R. Pollin, 'Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd as Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins', *Studies in Romanticism*, 12 (1973) 642-4.

<sup>2</sup> Southey to Edward Moxon, 2 February 1836, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey* ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (6 vols., London, 1849-50), vi. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Lamb to Thomas Manning, [8 February 1800], *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin J. Marris Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter *Letters*), i. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters* i. 185-6.

<sup>5</sup> This section was cut when Lamb rearranged the article for *Essays of Elia* (1823), and is reprinted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (7 vols., London, 1903-5) (hereafter *Works*), ii. 291-4.

manager of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and derided by the reviews.<sup>6</sup> In their attempts at verse tragedy, both Lamb and Godwin were inspired by their discovery of the Elizabethan dramatists. Lamb later wrote that he had modelled the antique style of *John Woodvil* on 'our elder dramatists, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger', which 'were then a *first love*'; while Godwin, having already started work on *Antonio* under the title of 'Alonzo' in June 1797, was inspired to begin extensive revisions after he read the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher in 1799. 'A new world was opened to me', he later recalled: 'It was if a mighty river had changed its course to water the garden of my mind.'<sup>7</sup>

Godwin's expectation of theatrical success was no improbable fantasy. The rational philosopher had already produced a thrilling suspense novel, *Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), famous for its dramatic confrontations and trial scenes, which had been the source of two successful plays: George Colman's *The Iron Chest* (1796), and Jean Louis Laya's *Falkland; ou, la Conscience* (1798).<sup>8</sup> An episode in his second novel, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), completed while he was revising *Antonio*, was to provide the basis for another play, *Bethlem Gabor, Lord of Transylvania; or, The Man Hating Palatine* (1807), by the American dramatist John Daly Burk.<sup>9</sup> A widower with two small children to support,<sup>10</sup> Godwin was undoubtedly attracted by the large sums to be made by writing for the stage, the most lucrative of all literary occupations. After the play had been performed, he wrote: 'If it had succeeded, it would have produced me £500. I employed as much time upon it as upon the novel of *St. Leon*, which I sold for £420.'<sup>11</sup>

Yet while Godwin turned to the stage primarily to make money, he also sought to convey his political and philosophical beliefs to a new audience. His experiment with the drama proved to be the least successful part of the new reform programme set out in his collection of essays, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (1797), where he announced a significant redirection of political energy designed to appeal to those who, like himself, were committed to individual reform rather than collective action. Convinced that 'the cause of political reform, and the cause of intellectual and literary refinement, are inseparably connected',<sup>12</sup> he advocated literary writing as the best means of forwarding progress of mind. Elsewhere he wrote that drama is 'eminently subservient to the discovery & propagation of truth', and like sermons formed 'the link between the literary class of mankind & the uneducated'.<sup>13</sup>

In the event *Antonio* pleased neither the literary class nor the uneducated. Even Godwin's friends expressed misgivings. The playwright Thomas Holcroft read it in a half-finished state and wrote from Germany in late 1799 that he was 'irritably anxious' about its progress,

<sup>6</sup> Godwin, unpublished memorandum of works projected in 1798, quoted in C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (2 vols., London, 1876) (hereafter Kegan Paul), i. 296; Winifred F. Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802* (London, 1983), pp. 215-24.

<sup>7</sup> Lamb, Dedication to Coleridge, *The Works of Charles Lamb* (2 vols., London, 1818), i. pp. viii-ix; Parks C. Hunter Jr., 'William Godwin's Lengthy Preoccupation with *Antonio*', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 23 (1974) 21-3; Godwin, undated autobiographical note, Kegan Paul i. 357.

<sup>8</sup> B. Sprague Allen, 'William Godwin and the Stage', *PMLA* 35 (1920) 373-4.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* 360-2.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft (d. 1797) left a new-born baby from her marriage with Godwin and a three-year old daughter from her previous liaison with Gilbert Imlay.

<sup>11</sup> Undated letter, Abinger MSS, Bodleian Library, quoted in Hunter, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Godwin, *The Enquirer*, in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, Gen. Ed. Mark Philp (7 vols., London, 1993), v. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Abinger MSS, quoted in Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (London, 1984) (hereafter Marshall), p. 243.

unaware that it had already been rejected by Colman, the manager at the Haymarket Theatre, after Godwin submitted it anonymously in June 1799.<sup>14</sup> Godwin revised it and approached Sheridan, a longstanding acquaintance, who referred him to Kemble at the Theatre Royal. Kemble did not think the play would succeed, but, pressurized by Godwin, he reluctantly agreed to perform it. Although Kemble objected to the character of Antonio, he cast himself in the title role, with Sarah Siddons in the leading female part.<sup>15</sup> Godwin, still at the height of his unpopularity with the conservative press, insisted on remaining anonymous, and his friend John Tobin attended rehearsals as if he were the author.

A week before the performance, Lamb spent the evening at Godwin's discussing the play and undertook to provide an epilogue. (The prologue was by Charlotte Smith.)<sup>16</sup> But as he admitted to Manning on the very day of the performance: '*The Names I took from a little outline: G: gave me -. I have not read the Play!*'<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly most of the epilogue is irrelevant to the play, though it may be intended as a facetious comment on its author: it tells the story of a tradesman who nearly goes bankrupt because he spends all his time at the theatre.

On Lamb's account, *Antonio* is concerned with promise-breaking:

Ladies, ye've seen how Guzman's [*sic*] consort died,  
 Poor victim of a Spaniard brother's pride . . .  
 In that romantic, unenlighten'd time,  
 A *breach of promise* was a sort of crime.<sup>18</sup>

The play is set in fifteenth-century Saragossa, where Helena has been betrothed by her father on his death-bed to Roderigo, the friend of her brother Antonio. While the two men are away fighting in Italy for three years, she falls in love with Don Gusman. Her guardian the king dissolves the original contract and the lovers marry. When Antonio returns without Roderigo, who languishes in a foreign jail, he is outraged at Helena's supposedly dishonourable action. He insists that the marriage be annulled, but the king reaffirms its validity. Antonio abducts his sister and has her put in a monastery; Gusman rescues her and brings her to the palace for safety, and the king again judges in favour of Gusman. Hearing of this, Antonio hastens to the palace, bursts through the king's guards, and stabs his sister to death.

Godwin may have been thinking of his own work when he later contrasted the drama unfavourably with the novel: 'Whatever is offered there [in the drama], must be expected to be sketches scarcely half made up, and human passions and character distorted, to fit a plot, and chime in with an abrupt and violent catastrophe.'<sup>19</sup> Yet *Antonio* contains some characteristic Godwinian themes. The dialogues between the two central characters show a clash of opposing value-systems reminiscent of *St. Leon*, in which Godwin set out his revised ethical view that feeling, not reason, provided the basis for moral judgements.<sup>20</sup> Like the

<sup>14</sup> Holcroft to Godwin, 22 November 1799, Kegan Paul i. 347; my account is indebted to Kegan Paul ii. 40-7, and Marshall 242.

<sup>15</sup> Kegan Paul ii. 49.

<sup>16</sup> William St. Clair, *The Godwins and The Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London, 1989), p. 232.

<sup>17</sup> *Letters* i. 253.

<sup>18</sup> *Works* v. 121.

<sup>19</sup> Godwin, preface to *Cloudesley: A Tale* (1830), *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, Gen. Ed. Mark Philp (8 vols., London, 1992), vii. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 73-4, 90-1.

aristocratic St. Leon, Antonio upholds an outmoded code of military honour which is set in opposition to the affective values of Helena, a simplified version of St. Leon's wife Marguerite. Valuing his bond of comradeship with Roderigo above familial affection, Antonio asserts that Helena's earlier promise involves 'Honour and truth, my father and my race', denying the existence of the marriage with Gusman, which is based on 'commingling minds' and 'sacred, mutual, living love'.<sup>21</sup> This polarization of values is amplified as the play proceeds: while Helena, an embodiment of the domestic affections, gathers round her the sympathetic community of the court, Antonio, a soldier steeled against human feelings, becomes progressively alienated from civilized society.

Although the play has some interest for readers, it remains fundamentally unsuited for the stage. According to Lamb in 'The Old Actors', Kemble disliked modern attempts to write tragedy and was determined to put a 'deadly extinguisher' on *Antonio* in performance.<sup>22</sup> But Kemble exploited deficiencies that were already there. The first half comprises lengthy recapitulations of past events, Helena's promise and Roderigo's captivity. The fourth act contains a promise of action when Antonio provokes Gusman into challenging him to fight. But Antonio turns the tables on his peace-loving opponent, spurning his challenge in favour of 'A principle in every Spanish bosom / More powerful than a thousand knights in arms'.<sup>23</sup> Lamb recalled the audience's confusion:

The audience were here fairly caught - their courage was up, and on the alert - a few blows, *ding dong* . . . might have done the business - when their most exquisite moral sense was suddenly called in to assist in the mortifying negation of their own pleasure. They could not applaud, for disappointment; they would not condemn, for morality's sake. The interest stood stone still.<sup>24</sup>

Although the action quickens in the following scenes, dramatic tension is reduced by a series of ponderous speeches, made even more monotonous in the performance by Kemble's 'even tenor of stately declamation'.<sup>25</sup> Thus the catastrophe caught everyone unawares:

The procession of verbiage stalked on through four and five acts . . . when towards the winding up of the latter, Antonio, with an irrelevancy that seemed to stagger Elvira [*sic*] herself - for she had been coolly arguing the point of honour with him - suddenly whips out a poniard, and stabs his sister to the heart. The effect was, as if a murder had been committed in cold blood. The whole house rose up in clamorous indignation demanding justice. The feeling rose far above hisses. I believe at that instant, if they could have got him, they would have torn the unfortunate author to pieces.<sup>26</sup>

On the following Monday, the *Morning Post* pronounced the play a total failure, condemning both the 'odious and disgusting' behaviour of Antonio, and the overall lack of dramatic interest: 'The dialogue is carried on through a dull series of *tête-à-têtes*, without incident, or variety in sentiment, or scene.'<sup>27</sup> Nor did the epilogue escape censure: the *Morning Chronicle* described it as 'trite and not humourous', while the *Morning Post* found both

<sup>21</sup> Godwin, *Antonio: A Tragedy in Five Acts* (London, 1800), Act III, pp. 32, 35.

<sup>22</sup> *Works* ii. 291.

<sup>23</sup> *Antonio*, Act IV, p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> *Works* ii. 292-3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 293.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Courtney, p. 375 n.



prologue and epilogue 'well suited to the piece, too bad to pass without censure except when they pass without observation'.<sup>28</sup> As Lamb wrote gloomily on his playbill, *Antonio* was 'Damned with Universal Consent!'<sup>29</sup>

Godwin received letters of condolence from Coleridge and Holcroft,<sup>30</sup> but it was Lamb above all who realized what the defeat meant to his friend. In a letter to Manning of 15 December, he facetiously described how he had found in Godwin's study 'four Tokens . . . which indicated thy [Godwin's] violent and Satanical Pride of heart':<sup>31</sup> a list of six persons to be invited to a celebratory dinner; a list of morning papers to be written to giving a sketch of the play; a list of rare books to be bought with the imagined proceeds; and a copy of *Blank Verse*, in which, Lamb assumed, Godwin had been checking up on the poetic talent of his assistant. But at the end of the letter, Lamb's affection for Godwin comes through:

Manning, all these Things come over my mind, all the gratulations that would have thickend upon him, & even some have glanced aside upon his humble friend, the vanity - and the fame - and the profits . . . and now to muse upon thy [Godwin's] altered physiognomy, thy pale and squalid appearance (a kind of *blue sickness* about the eye lids) & thy crest fallen . . . the *Professor* has won my heart by this *his* mournful catastrophe.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to sympathy, Lamb offered practical advice. When Godwin had supper with Lamb after the performance, it was settled that the play would be published once Lamb had read and criticized it. Lamb held on to the manuscript, and on the next day he sent Godwin two and a half pages of notes suggesting cuts: 'Do not be frighten'd at the Bulk of my remarks', he wrote, 'They are almost all upon *single Lines*, which put together do not amount to an hundred, and many of them merely verbal - I had but one object in view, abridgement for *compression sake*'.<sup>33</sup> He also advised Godwin to omit the prologue and epilogue, since '*it can only serve* to remind your readers of its fate'. Then while the play was at press, Lamb sent Godwin another sheet of comments entitled 'Queries', and asked him to hold up the printing so that he had time to consider these points. This time Lamb suggested replacing the present violent catastrophe with 'a solemn judicial pleading, appointed by the king, before himself in person, of Antonio as proxy for Roderigo, and Guzman [*sic*] for himself - the forms and ordering of it to be highly solemn and grand'.<sup>34</sup> This scene would create dramatic tension through 'short speeches - replies, taunts, and bitter recriminations by Antonio, in his rough style', and would be interrupted by a messenger bringing news of Roderigo's death. In Lamb's version the play would end not with the brutal killing of Helena, but with 'an affecting and awful invocation of Antonio upon Roderigo's spirit', and a '*very affecting*' declaration that Helena was free. The final outcome should be left to the reader's imagination. To relieve the earlier part of the play, Lamb suggested introducing visual

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> *Shelley and his Circle: 1773-1822* ed. K. N. Cameron and D. H. Reiman (8 vols. to date, Cambridge, Mass., 1961-), i. 243 and Plate xv.

<sup>30</sup> Coleridge to Godwin, 17 December 1800, *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71), i. 656-7; Holcroft to Godwin, 26 December 1800, Kegan Paul ii. 26-7.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters* i. 258.

<sup>32</sup> *Letters*, i. 259.

<sup>33</sup> *Letters* i. 255.

<sup>34</sup> Quotations are from the abridged transcript in *Letters* i. 256-7; Marrs states 'MS: unrecovered', but the original manuscript is in Pierpont Morgan Library.

images, such as portraits of Antonio's ancestors to remind Helena of her noble past. Finally he insisted, 'with the present want of action, the Play must not extend above four Acts, unless it is quite new modell'd', adding by way of encouragement: 'Solemn judicial pleadings always go off well, as in Henry the 8th, Merchant of Venice, and perhaps Othello.' He might have mentioned *Caleb Williams* as well.

Impatient for publication, Godwin ignored this advice, but he sent Lamb a copy of the printed play as soon as it appeared on 22 December. Nothing daunted, Lamb annotated his copy and sent it back. (This copy can now be found in the Pierpont Morgan Library.) These notes, which cover about half of the pages in the volume, are nearly all concerned with rephrasing individual lines and simplifying the vocabulary, though at several points Lamb restores passages he had earlier deleted. As he wrote to Godwin on the first leaf, his object in his former remarks was compression, but he was now concerned with restoration for a second edition.

By now, however, Godwin was thoroughly discouraged by the disparaging reviews of the published text,<sup>35</sup> and he abandoned all thought of a second edition. Instead, following Coleridge's advice, he began another play.<sup>36</sup> Coleridge recommended the exotic subject of the death of Mirza, son of the king of Persia, and on 27 December Lamb duly recorded that Godwin was foraging in old travel books for a story, 'to form a new drama for the sweet tooth of this fastidious age. If I can guess at the wicked Pride of the Professor's heart', he wrote in mock despair, 'I would take a shrewd wager that he disdains ever again to dip his pen in *Prose*. - Adieu ye splendid theories! farewell dreams of Political Justice!'<sup>37</sup> But Lamb's fears were groundless: Godwin's verse drama *Abbas, An Historical Tragedy*, completed in September 1801, was rejected by both Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and never published.<sup>38</sup>

Although Godwin's and Lamb's collaboration over *Antonio* did not lead to public success, it marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship and literary association. When in late 1801 Godwin began work on a third play, *Faulkener: A Tragedy* (1807), based on an incident in Defoe's *Roxana*, he again sought Lamb's approval.<sup>39</sup> In 1806, when the play was accepted by Drury Lane, Lamb was on hand to write a prologue and to share in its modest success. (It was performed on 16 January 1807 and ran for several nights.) After 1805 Lamb, along with his sister Mary, became a leading contributor to Godwin's Juvenile Library, and it was Godwin's turn to act as adviser, critic, and arbiter of public taste.

*University of Durham*

<sup>35</sup> See Marshall 244-5.

<sup>36</sup> Coleridge to Godwin, 17 December 1800, see note 30.

<sup>37</sup> *Letters* i. 263.

<sup>38</sup> The manuscript, with Coleridge's annotations, is in Abinger MSS; Marshall 245-6, St. Clair 234-6.

<sup>39</sup> See Lamb to Godwin, [16 and 18 September 1801], *Letters* ii. 17-19, 23-4.

## 'Spots of Earth' in *The Excursion*

By GEORGE SOULE

*THE EXCURSION* is a complex poem even when it seems most straightforward, as in the stories of Books Six and Seven. Though often slighted by commentators, these stories form an important part of one web of what Kenneth Johnston calls the poem's 'buried assumptions.'<sup>1</sup> Earlier, the Wanderer, the Poet, and the Solitary have a long and serious discussion at Blea Tarn, about the Solitary's unhappiness (he has been brought to despair by the death of his wife and children and by the failure of the French Revolution to live up to his ideals). Afterwards, they go to Grasmere churchyard, where the Pastor tells stories of those buried here. The implication for most readers is clear: these stories are supposed to cure the Solitary of his despair. Some critics find the cure is to be achieved by adopting a simple uplifting piety or by attaining 'universal commiseration'; although to Harold Bloom the stories reveal Wordsworth's personal inability to adjust to his children's recent deaths, Geoffrey Hartman has said they teach how to face death.<sup>2</sup> Such messages are often thought typical of the older Wordsworth, but I would argue that the stories represent some of the poet's continuing concerns and that they speak to the Solitary's problems - important problems of Wordsworth's generation - in different ways than have been described.

The transcendental side of Wordsworth is what we usually discuss: his famous 'spots of time', moments when his mind apprehends forces beyond everyday experience; when remembered, they allow him to feel those forces again.<sup>3</sup> We remember these moments too: his splashing in the Derwent, the sublime terror of 'black drizzling crags', the 'visionary dreariness' of a girl walking against the wind.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in 'Tintern Abbey' a spirit resides in 'the light of setting suns' and 'in the mind of man', the product of both the creating mind and what is beyond it.

But from the beginning of his career Wordsworth also writes of a world alive in a non-transcendental, less overwhelming way. Even as the mind sends out forces in 'Tintern Abbey', so Wordsworth reminds us that every day we perform other acts to give significance to the world about us. His poems often *describe inscribing* (but seldom the speech-act itself). He tells of naming John's Grove, Emma's Dell, Point Rash-Judgement, and Glow-worm Rock, and of writing many inscriptions on stones; over and over again, he recalls the classical formula in which travellers and strangers are asked by inscriptions to look, stop, read, pause, or rest.<sup>5</sup> Note that a usual speech act like 'I dub thee', implies that 'I' have the right to dub and that 'thee' is a legitimate recipient. Terry Eagleton admits he can't baptize a badger,<sup>6</sup> but Wordsworth is egalitarian: almost anyone can name almost any place.

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven, 1984), p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Ferguson, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit* (New Haven, 1977) p. 160; Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company* (New York, 1963) p. 205; Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven, 1971) pp. 299-301.

<sup>3</sup> *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* xi 257. Quotations from the Norton Critical Edition, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850* ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York, 1979). For other poems by Wordsworth, I cite volume and page from *The Poems* ed. John O. Hayden (2 vols., New Haven, 1981), except in the case of *The Excursion*, which I cite by book and line number.

<sup>4</sup> *The Prelude*, i 291-96; vi 563; xi 310.

<sup>5</sup> See Hartman, *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven, 1970), p. 211ff.

<sup>6</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Oxford, 1983), p. 118.

Although we *give* non-transcendental significance to the world by inscribing it, the world also speaks *to* us because of other people's acts. They inscribe monuments, like the Countess and her Pillar near Penrith.<sup>7</sup> (The inscription tells us that each year money is given to the poor at the pillar.) In addition, Wordsworth often hears the world speak through a spirit of a place (or *genius loci*) created by anonymous persons ages ago at places like Furness Abbey and Kilchurn Castle.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the poet is always interested in hearing stories about particular people connected to particular places. He explains why in a sonnet from *Yarrow Revisited* (1833):

XXIII FANCY AND TRADITION

The Lovers took within this ancient grove  
 Their last embrace; besides those crystal springs  
 The Hermit saw the Angel spread his wings  
 For instant flight; the Sage in yon alcove  
 Sate musing; on that hill the Bard would rove,  
 Not mute, where now the linnet only sings:  
 Thus everywhere to truth Tradition clings,  
 Or Fancy localizes Powers we love.  
 Were only History licensed to take note  
 Of things gone by, her meagre monuments  
 Would ill suffice for persons and events:  
 There is an ampler page for man to quote,  
 A readier book of manifold contents,  
 Studied alike in place and in cot.<sup>9</sup>

Official 'meagre' history does not record where lovers loved and sages mused. But *we* have 'a readier book', the world itself, its groves and alcoves. Although part of what we read results from localizing 'Powers we love' - that is, from our inscribing upon the world - the book of the world mainly tells us stories of those who have done particular things at particular places. We remember all the other stories Wordsworth connects to various spots: Margaret and her cottage, Benjamin the Waggoner travelling past the Dove and Olive-Bough and 'the famous Swan', the Brownie's Cell, the wren at Rydal.<sup>10</sup>

Let us talk now of graves and epitaphs, for her communication goes in both directions. In one way, a grave, even without a monument, speaks to us of a person's life. In another, we can inscribe a monument ourselves, we can draw attention to it, and we can tell stories about the dead person. A grave reaches out to *us* ('Stay!'), and *we* point at *it*. As 'Tintern's' sunset is made alive by what we create and what perceive, so here we can receive from graves and give to them.

It is important to place *The Excursion's* graves in the context of the rest of Wordsworth's poetry. He knew that graves could speak. Early on, he gives us two contrasting instances: in 'We are Seven' the cottage girl communes perfectly with her graves, though the speaker

<sup>7</sup> *The Poems* ii. 724.

<sup>8</sup> *The Poems* ii. 894; i. 592.

<sup>9</sup> *The Poems* ii. 723-4.

<sup>10</sup> *The Poems* ii. 40-67; i. 670; ii. 292, 778.

/ stranger cannot understand.<sup>11</sup> 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal' shows the opposite: Lucy has neither force nor speech. We see her from a chilling cosmic perspective and hear nothing as she silently rolls round with rocks and stones and trees. But most graves fall somewhere in between, and in Wordsworth's poetry they speak to us over and over again. In the cloister at Worcester Cathedral, a stone says only 'Miserrimus!' and Wordsworth admonishes, 'Stranger, pass / Softly.' In 'The Brothers', Leonard's hopes are dashed when James's grave is pointed to. Perhaps the most terrifying graves are the one in 'The Thorn' that shakes when threatened and those at Waterloo in 1820, where the poet senses 'the horror breathing from the silent ground.'<sup>12</sup>

For a particularly fine example of how the world can speak to us, let us look at the happy time when Wordsworth and Dorothy found their 'Home at Grasmere'. The poet then assured his sister that they were 'not alone' or 'desolate' in their new abode:<sup>13</sup>

Look where we will, some human hand has been  
 Before us with its offering; not a tree  
 Sprinkles these little pastures but the same  
 Hath furnished matter for a thought; perchance  
 For someone serves as a familiar friend.  
 Joy spreads and sorrow spread; and this whole Vale,  
 Home of untutored Shepherds as it is,  
 Swarms with sensation, as with gleams of sunshine,  
 Shadows or breezes, scents or sounds.

The vale 'swarms' with the joys and sorrows that men and women have felt at particular trees or in particular pastures. The Wordsworths are happy to live in such a place.

We must read *The Excursion* in the light of Wordsworth's insistence that the world's surface is alive with stories and messages. It may be significant that this poem has comparatively little naming, for naming may simply create a self-centered world. Instead it focuses almost exclusively upon the messages which can be left by others. In Book 6, the Pastor exclaims:

Ah! what a warning for a thoughtless man,  
 Could field or grove, could any *spot of earth*,  
 Show to his eye an image of the pangs  
 Which it hath witnessed; render back an echo  
 Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod! (vi 806-10; my italics)

'Spots of earth' are to *The Excursion* what 'spots of time' are to *The Prelude*. 'Spots of time' exist in the mind as memories clustered about a personal experience; 'spots of earth' are in one sense places related to specific stories, not necessarily their own. In another sense, 'spots of earth' are mental events in which stories concerning our fellow men and women are called back to our mind by seeing particular places. In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth asks us to see each spot (or *nook* or *niche*) as pregnant with the past, alive with stories of everything that

<sup>11</sup> In real life, particularly for adults, such perfect communion can be unbearable: the Wordsworths moved from the vicarage at Grasmere because they could not bear to live so close to the new graves of two of their children. See Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography* (2 vols., Oxford, 1957-65), ii. 228.

<sup>12</sup> *The Poems* ii. 672; i. 412, 311; ii. 421.

<sup>13</sup> *The Poems* i. 709.

has been enjoyed or suffered there. These are not still sad strains heard from a hillside, but messages from spots of earth we sit beside and walk upon.

In Books VI and VII, The Pastor draws sixteen stories from the Grasmere churchyard. We are to visualize the graves, for they are referred to vividly (*mould, sod, turf, grassy heap, hillock*), and the Pastor's pointing is implied by clusters of adverbs and demonstrative pronouns (*this, there, here, that, yon*). Perhaps pointing - some kind of assistance - may be necessary for unmarked graves to speak.

When graves speak, what do they say? In *The Excursion* they speak different messages (some frightening, some pathetic). Despite many theories that have been advanced, I don't think they make a consistent moral or devotional point. What they do communicate is made clear when we note what the Wanderer asks the Pastor to do in relating them:

May I entreat  
Your further help? The mine of real life  
Dig for us; and present us, in the shape  
Of virgin ore, that gold which we . . .  
Seek from the torturing crucible.  
. . . As we stand on hold earth,  
And have the dead around us, take from them  
Your instances. . . pronounce, you can,  
Authentic epitaphs on some of these  
Who, from their lowly mansions hither brought,  
Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet:  
So, by your records, may our doubts be solved;  
And so, not searching hither, we may learn  
*To prize the breath we share with human kind;*  
*And look upon the dust of man with awe.* (v 630-57)

The Wanderer asks: dig gold for us - words of great value - not from far away, but from the graves of lowly people buried here in Grasmere churchyard. We will be helped by these stories, for they teach us to prize mankind's common breath and to revere what remains. But what qualities exactly do we prize?

*The Excursion* asks us to revere those qualities that the group in the graveyard shares. All lived simple lives in Grasmere or nearby, and by and large were country people of no very high class. Many were lowly indeed: landless agricultural laborers, uneducated and even degenerate. Most were as lonely in life as they are solitary in the grave. They worked hard; they showed great energy, sometimes a pathetic energy based on hope, sometimes sheer dogged persistence. These energies could also be expressed - and this is very important - in nastiness, folly, obsessions, and destructiveness: The Parson knows that 'the native grandeur of the human soul' can show itself even in 'the perverseness of a selfish course' (vi 665-68). (We see now why this poem describes few inscriptions; inscriptions require some idealization, and *The Excursion* does not idealize.) Their energies, morally admirable or not, persisted till death approached, when most accepted their fate, some with better grace than others. Often they showed a kind of generosity, for they left something behind, a sundial or just a worn path.

The poem expresses its values in negatives as well, and most negatives are associated with The Solitary. We are not surprised that he dislikes telling stories and is glad when his one long tale is over (ii 896-7). (The Wanderer, on the other hand collects stories from every place he visits; ii 3-37.) Graves do not speak to The Solitary: those of his own family cause

only 'an uncomplaining apathy' (ii 206). His opinion is that if graves could speak (and they can't) we would only 'recoil' at how corrupt, deluded, and perverse mankind is. To him, the graveyard is 'a subterraneous magazine of bones, / In whose dark vaults my own shall soon be laid' - that and no more (v 254, 344-46).

The Solitary is also a negative force because he always searches for stability, peace, and permanence. But *The Excursion* as a whole insists on mutability, on the impermanence even of deeds memorialized by local legends or by poets. Margaret's cottage decays, the remembrance of the Wonderful may last only a century, clouds dislimn, Sir Alfred's house disappears.<sup>14</sup> The Wanderer summarizes the poem's insistence on mutability in marvellous lines beginning: 'So fails, so languishes, grows dim, and dies . . . All that this world is proud of' (vii 976-8). We must conclude that the Solitary's craving for permanence will only be cured if he can open himself to messages from the world about him. He must be content, not with the theodicy he demands (and envisions in Book III), but with an ordinary world made modestly alive by stories of those who once walked on spots of earth and now are buried under them.

The Wanderer summarizes in Book IX. Every form of life has an 'active principle' that communicates good, or good 'with evil mixed.' In humans, this active principle shows itself in the way we hopefully plan for action, without which 'we have no life.' This kind of hope is the energy, the persistence which the graves communicate. Hopeful energy knows no class: it is equally at home by a 'cottage-hearth' and in 'the haughtiest palace.'<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps *The Excursion's* comparative classlessness is one reason why some early reviewers disliked it so much. In a recent book, Northrop Frye suggests that myths of descents into various underworlds often reveal what particular societies try to repress. In the nineteenth century, two such descents were Marx and Engels' into the urban worker's jungle and Freud's into the unconscious.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the move from Blea Tarn into the Vale of Grasmere is similar. It has some of the traditional trappings: as noted above, the underworld of the churchyard will be mined for golden and virgin ore. The 'gold' to be mined is the pathetic force of stories the efforts and yearnings of ordinary people, often the lowest of the low. In 1814, it must have been hard for a gentleman to *feel*, to *know* that such persons yearn and suffer the way he does. And Wordsworth must have seen that his age repressed this knowledge. Note the evidence that followed publication of *The Excursion*: Hazlitt's intemperate outburst against country folk in his review ('All country people hate each other'), Jeffrey's 'ridicule' of presumptuous pedlars and 'disgust' with them.<sup>17</sup>

Something of what is true of the dead in Grasmere churchyard, *The Excursion* finds true of the living. Just as each body in the churchyard once had an individual, a distinct active principle, the interplay of individual differences among the living is part of the point of Book IX (though now we can sense a hint of transcendence). The poem's ending is inconclusive (the Solitary leaves, probably to return another day), but its last major action is significant in showing this interplay. The group at the Vicarage - The Wanderer, The Poet, The Solitary, The Parson, The Parson's Lady, and their three children - walk, not together, but singly or in pairs along the Rothay to Grasmere's edge. There follows a vivid illustration of how two

<sup>14</sup> i. 30; vi. 352-55; ix. 759-60; vii. 957-66.

<sup>15</sup> ix 3-12, 26, 245-47.

<sup>16</sup> Northrop Frye, *Words With Power* (New York, 1990), pp. 238-43.

<sup>17</sup> William Hazlitt, *Complete Works* ed. P. P. Howe (22 vols., London, 1933), xix. 21-4; Frances Jeffrey, review of *The Excursion*, *Edinburgh Review* 24 (1814-15) 30.

people can interpret the same sight differently. The Poet and the Lady see a snow-white ram outlined against the sky and reflected in a pool. Although The Poet responds with enthusiasm to the Miltonic magnificence of the creature's 'wreathèd horns superb', the Lady sadly observes that just as the ram's reflection will quickly disappear, the Wanderer's ideas will fade in her mind.<sup>18</sup> Although their reactions differ widely, neither is false; moreover, between them they do not begin to exhaust the suggestions of the ram's image.

The group rows to Grasmere island, where they build a fire and eat a 'choice repast'; this is the first communal festivity in *The Excursion*, and suggests harmonies to come.<sup>19</sup> But then they amuse themselves in many quite different ways - skipping stones, singing, gathering flowers - and row across the lake to climb part-way up Loughrigg Fell. In the fading light, they see various sights across the vale: the church, fields, and 'habitations' (presumably the Red Lion Inn itself).<sup>20</sup> Each person has his or her own vision, his or her own separate joyous discovery to communicate to others, motivated by 'a wish / To impart a joy, imperfect while unshared.' The Poet then exclaims:

That rapturous moment never shall I forget  
When these particular interests were effaced  
From every mind! (ix 586-90)

The divisiveness of individual discoveries is effaced when they are shared. Like the dead, these living men and women are very different from each other. Unlike the lonely dead, the living can commune, even though they do not necessarily agree.

The sunset and its 'multitudes' of separate 'floating clouds' then becomes an emblem both of how energy is received from an unseen, perhaps ultimately transcendent source and also of the harmonious, intense, continuing, generous, and reciprocal way this energy is exchanged by separate individuals:

rays of light -  
Now suddenly diverging from the orb  
Retired behind the mountain-tops or veiled  
By the dense air - shot upward to the crown  
Of the blue firmament - aloft and wide:  
And multitudes of little floating clouds,  
Through their ethereal texture pierced ...  
                                  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. (ix 592-606)

*Carleton College*

<sup>18</sup> ix. 444, 459-73.

<sup>19</sup> ix. 530.

<sup>20</sup> ix. 572-7.



## Wordsworth's Last Visit to Somerset

By BERTA LAWRENCE

IN 1839 WORDSWORTH, his wife Mary, their son Willy and their little maid Jenny, came to Bath with their friend Isabella Fenwick, and stayed at a house in George Street. They all took the waters, paying 2s.6d. per week each for drinking, 1s. each for the Bath, servants could get 'a draft' free. 'Not dear' Mary wrote. Willy hoped to cure his 'deranged stomach and bowels' but the waters did not agree with him. However he was able to enjoy various social functions such as the theatre, and a ball at the Assembly Rooms. Miss Fenwick found Bath colder than Ambleside, her usual home. Wordsworth attended a service at Bath Abbey and disapproved of the 'sad inefficient sermon'. They all made various excursions, Miss Fenwick's brother-in-law Mr. Popham kindly lending his carriage. They walked to the very pretty village of Widcombe to visit the grave of their friend Crabb Robinson's mother. 'A beautiful situation' Mary wrote on 9th April, going on to praise the lovely spring season, as Dorothy had done in 1799: 'the greenness is beyond anything I ever saw, all the trees bursting into life and beauty'.

The vexed problem of Dora Wordsworth's proposed marriage to the Roman Catholic widower Mr. Quillinan was still unresolved. Two years later the wedding date was fixed for Tuesday 11 May.

*The Bath Chronicle* of 22 April 1841 listed the arrival of Miss Fenwick. Just a week later it announced: 'The distinguished poet Wordsworth is at present residing in Bath where we understand he will remain until the middle of June'. Again the Wordsworths and Willy stayed with Miss Fenwick who had taken one of the handsome houses in North Parade. It is now the Grosvenor Hotel and even contains a 'Wordsworth Bar'! It was conveniently situated for the Abbey church, the Pump Room and Baths and various amenities, but the main occasion of this visit was the marriage of Dora to Edward Quillinan to which her father had at last consented. Rather like Dorothy at his own wedding Wordsworth was too overcome by emotion at the last minute to attend the ceremony although he gave the couple an affectionate blessing. The wedding took place in St. James's Church, not in the Roman Catholic Chapel as is sometimes stated. This church, which stood on the site of the present Woolworth store, was totally gutted during the bombing of Bath in 1942. On 20 May 1841, the *Bath Chronicle* announced the marriage:

May 11th, at St. James's Church in this city, by the Rev. John Wordsworth M.A., Vicar of Brigham Cumberland, Edward Quillinan Esq. of Canterbury, to Dora, only daughter of Wm. Wordsworth Esq. of Rydal Mount, Westmorland.

The marriage certificate confirms these particulars, describing Edward Quillinan as Widower and Gentleman, resident in Stall Street and Dora's father as William Wordsworth Gentleman. It states that they were married 'by me John Wordsworth according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England'. One of the witnesses was Wm. Wordsworth Jr.

After staying in Wells for the night, Wordsworth, Mary, their son Willy and Miss Fenwick travelled to the Somerset village of Ashcott where Dora and Mr. Quillinan were spending two days of their honeymoon at Piper's Inn. Ashcott is situated on the peat-moors, Piper's Inn at one end of the ridge of the Polden Hills above it. This historic coaching inn frequently mentioned in travellers' letters and diaries, stands at a crossroads from which one road leads to Glastonbury, another to Taunton, another to Bridgwater, Nether Stowey and Minehead. This last, the modern A39, made part of the London-Ilfracombe coach route, instituted in

1835. In recent years Piper's Inn has been up-graded and renamed The Pipers Hotel, which many of us regret as much as we regret the loss of the homely old village inn (in spite of additional comfort and necessary re-building) often frequented by peat-cutters and local inhabitants. Its signboard still carries a picture of a piper with his bagpipes. Parson Woodforde used to break his journeys to and from Ansford at Piper's Inn. Charles James Fox stayed there with his mistress Mrs. Armistead (later his wife) and left her there when visiting his friend John Chubb, the prosperous Bridgwater merchant and amateur watercolour artist at whose hospitable table De Quincey met Coleridge in 1807.

At Piper's Inn the Wordsworth party breakfasted with the Quillinans before driving on through Bridgwater, where the Quillinans left them, and Nether Stowey to Holford to visit Alfoxden.<sup>1</sup> At that time Alfoxden made part of the parish of Stringston, a tiny village where memorial tablets to St. Albyns, owners of Alfoxden, can be found in the church although Langley St. Albyn whom the Wordsworths knew is buried in the crypt of the church at St. Audries.

After leaving the Quillinans, the Wordsworths and Miss Fenwick drove another twelve miles through landscape where orchards and meadows lay in the flowery springtime glory that in 1798 had enchanted Dorothy, William and their visitors. Their carriage turned in at the gates near the dog-pound, part of which still exists, and the once-familiar 'combes' described in Dorothy's Journal. They reached the house by way of the long drive through the park where the oaks stood arrayed in spring foliage, and which enclosed the hollyhock so beloved of Dorothy, the setting of Wordsworth's *Whirblest* poem, the place where Coleridge heard the nightingale. Wordsworth wrote 'I had the pleasure of seeing with dear friends this Grove in unimpaired beauty 41 years after'.

Mr. Langley St Albyn, a boy of eight during Wordsworth's tenancy, received them politely although poets and poetry meant nothing to him. In his valuable Diary (ill-named *Paupers and Pig-Killers*) the rector of Over Stowey, the Rev. William Holland, tells us that 'young St Albyn' was pleasant and agreeable, that he had married a wife who inherited more than £20,000 and became pompous and ostentatious, driving to Over Stowey 'in pomp and state' in a fine 'chariot' with two horses and two manservants. Very flattered at being invited with his wife to dine at Alfoxden, Mr. Holland comments on the rich furnishings, pictures, plate, etc., and also on Mr. St Albyn's snobbish character. He reminds us that Mr. St Albyn was born a Gravenor and assumed his mother's name St Albyn when he inherited the estate. Cornelia Crosse, wife of the Broomfield squire Andrew Crosse, a pioneer electrical scientist, wrote about him ten years later declaring that he was as ignorant of poetry and painting as George II. However he was good-natured enough to allow Wordsworth to show his companions various objects and places remembered over forty years.

With Mr. St Albyn they walked in the 'dell' of Dorothy's Journal and Coleridge's *This Lime Tree Bower*. It is now called Holford Glen and was the setting of Wordsworth's *Lines Written in Early Spring*. Periwinkles and primroses grow in profusion.

Wordsworth told his host that he wished he would make 'a narrow path for people who loved such places to creep along'. The fallen ash-tree with etiolated foliage that formerly spanned the stream like a bridge was gone. Ten years later some of the trees in the glen were felled and cottages built, reducing its size. The larch tree by the main door of Alfoxden had

<sup>1</sup> Alfoxden is now a charming hotel with beautiful gardens, called Alfoxton Park Hotel. Sometimes the owners organise weekend literary gatherings for the enjoyment of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry and the many associated walks in the hills and along the coast.

not grown as much as Wordsworth expected. The gnarled 'Christabel' oak still stood. But near Alfoxden gates, not far from the waterfall Wordsworth saw only a few remnants of the rude cottage once occupied by Christopher Tricky, his old Huntsman, Simon Lee. Ten years later Cornelia Crosse was sad to find it vanished without trace. Today for various reasons the 'roaring waterfall' mentioned by the two poets is much reduced; not at all impressive, although the glen, with the ruined dye-house of the old silk-mill, is still a pretty place.

A late nineteenth-century photograph shows the stream in the 'dell' spanned by a very flimsy, pretty trelliswork bridge. Was it similar to the bridge Dorothy often crossed with her letters?

From Holford the party drove over the hills to Bagborough, a village now long associated with the stag-hunting fraternity. Their 'harbourer' lived there in recent years and the Quantock Staghounds are still kennelled there. The badge of the Popham family is a stag; in 1875 Mr. Bissett, a Popham descendant, was Master of Staghounds. Wordsworth, his wife Mary and Miss Fenwick had been invited to stay a few days at Bagborough House, home of Isabella Fenwick's sister Susan and her husband. Today the family name is Brooke-Popham. The Popham family is one of the oldest in Somerset.

The little village, built mainly of the local red sandstone, sits high in the Quantock Hills of which Will's Neck, the highest, lies inside its parish. Fields and lanes slope steeply. A path runs alongside the park, which in spring is sheeted with snowdrops, towards the little church that is built of red sandstone now faded to pink and patterned with lichen. We do not know whether the Wordsworths walked up to it.

Palladian Bagborough House, built in 1730 and later enlarged, is fronted by a porch with Ionic columns. It has an imposing stable-block, a walled kitchen-garden, and a large, beautiful garden with a neo-classical sundial. Red deer sometimes raid the gardens and orchards in this parish.

It is disappointing that there are no recorded details of the Wordsworths' visit. Mary wrote to Susan Wordsworth that they would remain 'perhaps one week'. The letter is dated 15 May 1841.

## Lamb's Cottage in Edmonton in 1933

By D. E. WICKHAM

THIS MINOR QUADRIPARTITE treasure came to light when I was sorting our Society's Archives at Putney. It dates from 1933, before the foundation of the Society, and is part of the Archives of The Elian (Society), our precursor founded in 1925, of which F. A. ('Browne') Downing was the first Secretary. Mrs Maud Downing was his wife, and J. P. Collins was a later Secretary of The Elian. Mrs Downing's original typescript is apparently the top copy, not a carbon, so it is unlikely that her work has ever been published. Enough years have surely passed for it to be publishable now in its entirety, together with the 'top' and 'tail', which were attached to the front and back of the original. The eminence of the authors involved makes me hope that I am not infringing copyright.

The house in question is what is now called Lamb's Cottage, in Church Street, Edmonton, where Mr and Mrs Walden ran the discreet private asylum in which Mary Lamb was confined, where Charles Lamb moved in with her, and where he died. 'Mary's cupboard', which is mentioned as having been altered, is presumably the recess where, 30 years ago, I was assured that Mary Lamb had been shut up. The new owners of Lamb's Cottage were present at the Putney 'Open Day' on 3 April 1993 and were able to confirm that the *canard* has been handed down to them by their predecessors.

1. From an autograph letter by Edmund Blunden, 19 Woodstock Close, Oxford, 14 January 1934, to Mrs Maud Downing and her husband, 'Browne':

My dear M (and B.)

It should be possible to publish that capital sketch (done to the Life) of our discomfiture at Edmonton, with some changes of name &c! I say let those be rewarded who deserve it! and this is a good £5.5s worth ('Punch'?) The other version remained at Yalding & I will destroy it later when I put this perfected copy in the Files. Perhaps if Browne or I called on Miss Smith wearing Road to Ruin links we could placate, mollify & ultimately captivate that scorner of Elians. I am very proud of the present but Sylva [Mrs Blunden] prohibits the use of the Links this Sunday night among the learned . . . .

Love from Edmund . . . .

2. This article, by Mrs Maud Downing, follows:

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL  
An Angel Rushes in Where Fools Might Fear to Tread  
or  
Was E.V.L. Debunked?

On 16 December 1933, a party consisting of E. V. Lucas, E. Blunden, J. P. Collins, F. A. Downing and I met at Gray's Inn, for the purpose of visiting Lamb's house at Edmonton.

After a few contretemps, such as members arriving late, whiskey, etc., I was suddenly addressed by E.V.L. thus: 'Mrs Downing, put on your ta-ta and come a ta-ta with us'. As I had anticipated being left behind, to console myself with my own company, I was naturally bucked.

We then proceeded by car to Edmonton, losing our way several times. We all felt intensely intimidated by E.V.L. and each reacted according to his particular complex. During the course of the ride, E.V.L. informed us that he had been in communication with the owner of Lamb's house, who was alleged by a member of the Edmonton Borough Council to contemplate leaving the house to the nation. He had made an appointment with the owner, Miss Smith, writing on his own headed notepaper but not mentioning his purpose. He had received a reply on a postcard, saying she would see him but that he must pay sixpence. He had accordingly prepared his sixpence.

On arrival at Edmonton, E.B., J.P.C. and F.A.D. went to see Lamb's grave, E.V.L. and I going straight to the house, the others to follow on. E.V.L. rang several times, there being two bells and a knocker. Nothing happened for some minutes: we both again hung on to these appendages. Still silence. E.V.L. then remarked, 'The lady doesn't seem to want to see us!' I then hastily banged and rang again. (Upon subsequent reflection, I realise that this wait upon the doorstep was to 'learn' us).

The door opened and a middle-aged lady surveyed us in silence. E.V.L. then said he had written to her. 'Lots of people write to me', was her brief comment, her manner strongly indicating that she intended to stand no larkin' about. A slight pause. E.V.L. then introduced me as the wife of the secretary of the Elian Society. No recognition of me of the slightest description. 'That's the front room' (this being quite evident) with a jerk of the head. We inspected the front room during which the lady frostily told us that she'd spent £400 on 'improvements'.

We were then shown to a side room containing a gas fire. E.V.L. sat near the fire and the lady, thawing somewhat, kindly saw that *my* seat was comfortable, addressing me as 'madam'. (Nary a 'sir' did E.V. get!)

E.V.L. then fixed her with a batrachian gaze, and began: 'I have been informed that you intend presenting this house to the nation'.

Miss Smith at this became highly vocal, her super-Cockney voice shrill with indignation. 'Why, not likely! Wot d'ye take me for! Think I bin workin' 'ard all these years to give the 'ouse away! I went for ten years to the city every day and worked 'ard for every penny. I comes from one of the best Edmonton families and people think becous I ain't eddicated they can be sarcastic with me. I 'ad two brothers, one pore chap was killed in the war, and I buried t'other one two or three weeks ago. People all want this 'ouse - why some time ago some Americans wanted it for to make it into a club - offered me a good price too! But I don't 'old with them Americans buying English things, not I! Of course, at my disease, I might leave it to the nation'. (Her 'disease' seemed so very remote that she didn't pursue this).

During this tirade not a muscle of E.V.L.'s face moved, save for a slight movement of an eyelid in my direction. I kept silent, struggling hard with suppressed hysteria.

E.V.L. then rose, and Miss Smith pointed to Mary's cupboard, which she said she had had altered because it smelt 'musty-like'. After inspecting the kitchen, E.V.L. asked to see the garden. Miss Smith shut us both out in the garden, and disappeared.

On our return, she reappeared with the three other members, and seemed very much more genial (E.V.L. and I being evidently the suspicious characters). We went over the whole house, Miss Smith's lodgers having left yesterday.

E.V.L. put half-a-crown under the Visitors Book, which we were *not* asked to sign. It was quite obvious that Miss Smith had not the faintest idea who E.V.L. was, and that if she had recognized him, she would neither have feared him nor possibly God himself.

E.V.L. said very little during the return journey but his dry comments in incredibly few words were much to the point - and delicious. His suggestion that Miss Smith would make a suitable bride for Thomas Wright of Olney put the cap upon an afternoon of supreme humour.

Edmund Blunden in a letter a few days after remarked:

M. Arnold said of Keats, He is with Shakespeare -  
Of Lamb we may now say, He is with  
MISS SMITH.

3. The visit had occurred on 16 December 1933. On 13 February 1934, E. V. Lucas wrote to the Hon. Secretary of The Elian, *inter alia*, 'Enclosed is a rather disturbing document that needs very close attention'. The undated typed carbon copy attached to it reads:

Lamb's Cottage  
Edmonton N9.

E. V. Lucas, Esq.

Dear Sir,

Having decided to sell the above cottage I now give you and your literary friends the first offer to avail yourselves of this well-preserved historical last home of the gentle Elia.

Yours faithfully,  
Jessie Smith

4. From a typed letter dated 12 June 1934 and signed by E. V. Lucas, on the office paper of the publisher Methuen, whose Chairman he was:

Dear Downing,

I have read Mrs. Downing's lively article with much amusement. She has an eye. But I don't see what can be done with it until Miss Smith goes over. By the way, Miss Smith wrote to me a little later to acknowledge the *Life of Lamb* which I sent her, saying that she would take £4,000 for the freehold of 'the gentle Elia's house' . . . .

Yours sincerely,  
E. V. Lucas

*London*

## Reviews

GREVEL LINDOP, *A Literary Guide to the Lake District*. Chatto and Windus: London, 1993. Pp. 424. £16 hardback.

A SENSE OF PLACE is a strong element in much of British writing, and study of the topographical background to literary works is a fascinating and illuminating pursuit. It is not that a reader is unable to appreciate Hardy, say, or Wordsworth, without visiting Dorset or the Lake District, but familiarity with what is left of the countryside that helped to form the writer's mind does add another dimension. It does not really matter exactly which way Wordsworth went on the dedication walk of *Prelude* Book IV, for example, but to walk over Claife Heights from the Windermere side to Colthouse, and to open oneself to the view from the top undoubtedly enables one to feel with the poet and empathize with his experience. As A. C. Bradley wrote in 1909, 'the reader whom Wordsworth's greatest poetry baffles could have no better advice offered him than to do what he has probably never done in his life - to be on a mountain alone'.

Reading the guidebooks of the eighteenth century, which Wordsworth knew, also reveals another source from which his art formed great poetry, while in themselves they are enormously entertaining and often funny, revealing some attitudes of the time which in the 1990s seem endearingly absurd (Thomas West's *Guide to the Lakes* [1784] is now available in facsimile reprint from Woodstock Books). Modern literary guides, though varying in quality, can be rewarding, such as Margaret Drabble's beautifully illustrated *A Writer's Britain* (1979) or Ian Ousby's *Blue Guide to Literary Britain and Ireland* (1984). Followers in the path of Wordsworth in the Lake District are not wanting either - a selective list ranges from William Knight (1891), Eric Robertson (1911), Gordon Wordsworth (1920), Norman Nicholson (1955) and T. W. Thompson (ed. Woof, 1970). More recently David McCracken's admirable *Wordsworth and the Lake District* (1984) even provides walks; for, to get close to any countryside, it is necessary to abandon one's car and take to one's feet. As William Green wrote in his guide, published in 1819, 'What enjoyment can be experienced by those who, lolling in their chariots, confine themselves to the glimpses to be obtained from their windows?'

After all that, Grevel Lindop has taken on a daunting task. How does he match up? Well, to start with, he writes from down-to-earth experience: 'I have driven every road mentioned here; I have walked every path; I have (almost) climbed every mountain. Except where I indicate otherwise, I have myself seen the things listed.' No chaise-bound tourist he! He draws on previous travellers from the earliest to the latest with ample and vivid quotation. He is wonderfully well-read, not only in this sphere but also in the whole of English Literature. For though he has chosen to take only one area of Britain, albeit a sizeable one, he has not limited writers either by their genre, period or eminence. In this, I think, the book is unique and it adds enormously to the scope and interest of the survey. Lindop leads us into the Lake District via Morecambe Bay by the route which travellers would have taken before the coming of the railway in 1857, across the sand of the Leven and Kent estuaries. It was here that Wordsworth heard the news of Robespierre's death as recounted in *Prelude* Book X. An old man I met in the neighbourhood some twenty years ago earnestly dissuaded me from taking the dangerous walk. When I gave Wordsworth as my precedent he said, 'Oh him! He'd go anywhere!' Lindop quotes, from Wordsworth's *Guide*, his description of this 'magical beginning to a Lakeland tour'. Then we hear from Ann Radcliffe (1794), *The Lonsdale Magazine* (1821), Turner (1816 and 1825), Elizabeth Gaskell (c. 1850) and Melvyn

Bragg (1987), before the 'footnote' story of the guide who when asked 'if his colleagues "were never lost on the sand", replied "I never knew any lost . . . there's one or two drowned now and then but they're generally found somewhere i' the bed when th' tide goes out"'. This is characteristic of Lindop's method throughout the book, drawing on very varied sources both old and new to provide first-hand vivid experience, enlivened with humour and practical tips. In case we do not wish to follow the guide, always known as 'Carter', on the hazardous route across the sands, we are given clear directions on which modern roads to follow. We are led to points of interest on the way with details of opening times for great houses such as Levens Hall, which Mrs. Humphrey Ward used as model for her Bannisdale Hall.

From Hest Bank we are led by degrees deeper and deeper into what Eric Robertson (1911) called *Wordsworthshire*, in Part I to Ambleside, Rydal, Grasmere, and in Part II over Dunmail Raise to Penrith, Keswick and Cockermouth. In among the wonderful riches of passages from Gray, Wordsworth and the Coleridge notebooks, and many other writers less obvious but no less interesting, are some real surprises: John Betjeman's 'Shattered Image', recalling a night on Dollywaggon Pike, quotations from 'Easter on Thrang End', a poem by 'an almost forgotten writer of the 1920's, Margot Adamson', and others by 'Margaret Cropper (1886-1980), the most underrated Cumbrian poet of the twentieth century'. Lindop speaks of Fleur Adcock's elegy for Dove Cottage librarian Pete Laver ('The Kepesake'), but is too modest to mention his own ('On White Moss' in his collection *Tourists*, 1987). For, to add to his varied talents (for example as biographer and editor of De Quincey and now as literary guide), he is a very considerable poet. Some lines from that poem of his seem somehow to chime with the feeling of this book:

Everyone's a stranger. In the end  
we live in one another's  
thoughts; and though you move  
again, I think, somewhere in the maze  
of being, I can only  
read you here, written into the book  
of the landscape; which perhaps  
is how you wanted it.

Over the surface of the Lake District swarm people from all periods of history as though the past exists in the present, conjured up by the mountains and the lakes. The same old man who did not want me to cross the sands and spoke of Wordsworth as though he were still walking 'anywhere' was bitterly angry about the destruction, as he saw it, of Thirlmere by converting it into a reservoir for Manchester, a process described, with 'before and after' scenes, by Lindop. 'The water supply began to flow' he tells us 'on October 12, 1894' but it might have been yesterday to that old man I met in 1974. 'I would pour castor oil into it' he said 'if it were not that everybody would know who had done it!'

Part II, which deals with the coast from Allonby to Barrow, is full of interesting and sometimes unexpected facts about this rather neglected area. How to choose examples among so many riches? Shall we picture Lewis Carroll enjoying a ride on 'L'le ratty' or remember the poet Thomas Blackburn's horrendous father at Hensingham as portrayed in *A Clip of Steel* (1969)? The western lakes are included in this section and the central massif of the Scafells and Great Gable, as well as lovely Eskdale. It is pleasant to think of I. A. Richards, the bane of many a student struggling over Practical Criticism papers, staying at the Wasdale Head Inn alongside the ghost of Will Ritson, its famous liar host, and climbing with Dorothy Pilley, Richards' mountaineer wife. Lindop writes, 'The important thing now about Millom is



Norman Nicholson (1914-87)', and goes on to pay a well-deserved tribute to him as poet and Cumbrian. At Barrow we meet D. H. Lawrence in 1914 hearing that war had been declared.

Part III, 'Ulverston-Bowness-Ullswater', takes us to Swarthmore Hall and Meeting House in quest of George Fox and then to Lowick, haunt of 'Arthur Ransome and his friends, the poets Edward Thomas, Gordon Bottomley and Lascelles Abercrombie'. This beautifully illustrates the variety and charm of Lindop's method. Windermere and Ullswater, likewise, have the expected Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter references similarly diversified. Concerning the stolen boat episode in *The Prelude*, a passage from Sir Edward Baines' *Companion to the Lakes*, which I had not seen before, must make me reconsider my preference for the site of this episode.<sup>1</sup> Though the phenomenon could be observed in any place where a boat comes out from under the lea of a lower eminence which had previously hidden a higher one behind, the fact that Stybarrow was a showplace for this in 1829 does suggest, as Lindop says, that 'The spot can be identified with confidence'. May I get my own back? Near Helm Crag, Lindop looks for Joanna's rock and concludes, rightly, that 'other details in the poem cannot be factual'. Can it be that I have discovered a book *he* has not read? It is hard to believe. Nevertheless, in a little volume called *The English Lake District Interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth* (2nd ed., London, 1891), p. 58, William Knight writes that when asked to identify the rock in *To Joanna*, as they were passing Butterlip How, Wordsworth replied, 'Any place that will suit; that as well as any other' - which is a lesson to us all!

The last section, 'Langdale-Coniston-Sawrey', naturally refers in some detail to Wordsworth's schooldays, to Beatrix Potter and to Ruskin. We are given a journey down the Duddon and shown how it relates closely to the Sonnets. Eliza Lynn Linton and, of course, Arthur Ransome, make their appearances and the book ends at Far Sawrey where you may choose to 'cancel your engagements and decide where to go next'. Such indeed may well be one's inclination.

The book is as easy and entertaining to read from cover to cover as any novel but is at the same time full of information, familiar and unfamiliar. It has useful maps, excellent references and is illustrated by delightful miniature reproductions of appropriate originals. Exiled addicts of the Lake District will come to from an exquisite orgy of homesickness and determine to go back there and fill in the gaps which Lindop has revealed to exist in their knowledge. Readers of the *Bulletin* will note his tribute to two people who might have written this book: Robert Woof, and our Editor, Bill Ruddick.

Despite an engaging leaven of 'laconic wit' the book never descends to destructive debunking because one can sense the author's delight in the place itself and in the idiosyncratic characters who have explored it over the ages. Among all these travellers it is pleasant to picture Lindop on his solitary journeying. I have done some of this myself but never on this scale. He surely deserves a medal for enterprise and for the joy that he has given us.

*Sevenoaks*

MARY WEDD

<sup>1</sup> See 'Wordsworth's Stolen Boat', *The Wordsworth Circle* 11 (1980) 243-8.

*The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse* ed. Jerome J. McGann. Oxford University Press: London, 1993. Pp. xxvi + 832. £25.00 hardback.

THE AIM, in short, is to print the texts that had been made available to the poets' original audiences. (*New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse*, p. xxv)

Jerome J. McGann's introduction to the *New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse* foregrounds the significance of the poems' 'original context and circumstances'. In the context of the introduction, this desire for the original might itself be seen as a romantic tendency. McGann argues that the anthology format 'opens the doors of one's perception' and his anthology is designed to be ground-breaking and revolutionary much as he describes the 'project' of *Lyrical Ballads* as romantic in its 'openly revisionist ideas about the nature of poetry and its public functions'. An extract from Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1805) is included as an appendix.

McGann negotiates the first hurdle of defining romantic verse or the romantic period by dismissing not just the question, but questions in general: 'Concepts and ideas - those mental constructions Wordsworth deplored because they are the tools by which we "murder to dissect" - will never seize the romantic experience'. Instead, we are advised that 'in face of the romantic experience, the brain works best when it is supple . . . or . . . passionate and unguarded'. This is all somewhat surprising from the author of *The Romantic Ideology*, but out-facing revisionary theorists, McGann asserts that 'to be romantic is to exist under the sign of longing' and that 'some of the most interesting forms of romanticism . . . are most successful when the writers . . . reveal and explore the fatal gifts of romantic beauty'.

Under these circumstances, the reader might turn to a chronological definition of romanticism but here we are met with McGann's discovery of 'this crucial historical fact: that the romantic period and its correspondent breeze, the romantic movement, are not the same thing'. McGann uses this discovery to explain the 'fact' that 'much of the writing during the period - including some of the best work - is not properly speaking "romantic"' (he refers us to Austen and Crabbe). Any lingering doubts or thoughts of dissection are waved away with the confident declaration that 'we call the period "romantic" because the ideological movement of romanticism came to dominance in that epoch'.

This introduction may possess novelty, but it is not, properly speaking, new. The newness of the collection is manifest mainly in McGann's organization of the material: poems are gathered by year of first publication rather than grouped by author. This presentation extends a principle established by Roger Lonsdale in *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse* (1984) when he divided Pope's earlier and later writing so that the anthology's approximate chronological progression through the eighteenth century could be sustained. 'On balance', Lonsdale explained in his introduction, 'the chronological advantage seems to outweigh the inconvenience of this division'.

Far from viewing the dispersal of a body of work as an inconvenience, McGann seizes on it as an advantage in his campaign against 'the extreme domination of an author-centred perception' of poetry. The conventional grouping of poems by author, he claims, has obscured 'the general scene and context in which the writers and their work interact'. If we pass over the question of exactly what the 'general scene' in 1785-1832 might have been other than various groups of individual authors, we can ask to what extent a recreation of literary contexts year by year advances our understanding of the period. McGann's theory is that his organization will better enable the reader to discover the contradictions of the period:

Hazlitt's *The Spirit of the Age* is a far truer and more comprehensive account of the romantic period than (say) Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* precisely because it allows the period's many counter-spirits to appear on something like their own terms.

McGann's anthology is therefore designed to maximize the diversity of the romantic period. Eclectic new contexts are offered in the first year of the volume in the shapes of Sir William Jones's translation of and prefatory note to 'A Hymn to Na'ra'yena'; Della Crusca's 'Madness'; a translation from Ariosto by William Parsons and 'Soliloquy' by Ann Yearsley. These extracts amply display varied tone and typography (in McGann's sense), and a shared fascination with caves. But 1785 also saw the publication of Cowper's *The Task*, a not inconsiderable poem for writers as different as Byron and Charlotte Smith. Cowper is represented later in the anthology by 'The Castaway' (in 1803) but Robert Bloomfield (one of the most popular poets of the day) is excluded altogether. Such ostentatious omissions remind us that this is a selective view of 48 successive years.

McGann does at times construct for the reader stimulating juxtapositions: in 1791 Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter' and Radcliffe's 'Night' effectively perform a dialogue on the 'thrilling horrors' that can be located in the woods at night. It is easier to appreciate Gifford's keen pursuit of detail when an extract of *The Baviad* closely follows an extract of Della Crusca's *The Laurel of Liberty*. Similarly, the juxtaposition of Southey's 'The Widow' and sapphics from the *Anti-Jacobin* works well (though this comparison was achieved before by Lonsdale's anthology). It is pleasing to find that where possible, McGann has reproduced the authors' footnotes, not only to satire, but also to poems like *The Loves of the Plants* and *The Giaour* where prose footnotes work to challenge the genre of each poem.

The 'compare and contrast' invitation of the volume offers the reader some instances where male and female writers address the same theme. The call for 'sweet abandonment' in Thomas Moore's 'The Kiss' acquires an unexpected twist through being followed by Mary Lamb's 'Helen'. Just afterwards, we find Mary Robinson's openness to the 'mingled voices' of social exchange in 'The Camp' giving place to Coleridge's 'Dejection'. Although the differences between such works afford a literary *frisson*, there is a sense in which the encounters are contrived. Just because a context was (and is) available doesn't mean it was read. Certain poems acquire popularity years after they were first published (for example, Thomas Chatterton's work) and others may be discussed well before they are published (for example, *The Prelude*).

In McGann's anthology, 1805 without *The Prelude* is consciously feminized. After eight stanzas of Lancashire dialect poetry by Joseph Lees, Charlotte Dacre's lyrics and an extract from *Psyche* by Mary Tighe represent the poetic context for the year (Southey's *Madoc* and Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* are not selected by McGann). *Psyche* is fascinating (and readily anticipates Keats's writing) but its appearance at this point in the anthology is slightly misleading: McGann's note informs us that *Psyche* was privately printed in 1805, and that it was the 1811 edition which established Tighe's reputation. McGann reproduces the 1811 text, but allots it to 1805.

The inclusion of women romantic poets is surprisingly limited in this anthology. The introduction laments the 'failure of taste' and 'great failure of sensibility' whereby 'we unlearned how to read their work', but the selection of 52 extracts of writing by women out of 260 entries altogether hardly threatens to overturn the extreme domination of a male author-centred perception of romantic poetry. Blake is given 24 entries which possibly outweighs the number of readers he had. The relative shortage of poetry by women here is all the more surprising because their work may be anthologised so easily (unlike *Manfred*

which is included in full). As Anne Mellor has pointed out, women in the early 1800s excelled in collectable 'lesser' forms like sonnets, songs and romances (see *Romanticism and Gender* [London, 1993], pp. 10-11).

The achievement of Felicia Hemans is an outstanding case of misrepresentation in this volume. She was publishing as early as 1808 and was popular enough to rattle Byron in 1820 but McGann's first extract of her work comes in 1825 with 'The Lost Pleiad', her elegy for Byron. The fact that Hemans was a close competitor during Byron's lifetime for the attention of the reading public is completely lost. Likewise, McGann closes his anthology with the start of Tennyson's career ('Mariana' in 1830; 'The Lady of Shalott', 'To - . With the Following Poem', and 'The Palace of Art' in 1832), but Elizabeth Barrett's first published poems from 1826 are omitted. Walter Savage Landor's career, by contrast, effectively spans the volume; catching the reader unawares in 1798, then 1806 and 1831.

What McGann advertised as his 'mild apostasies from conventional academic rules of earlier collections' succeed in jolting our perspectives. This is sometimes, however, less of a challenge and more of a chore for the reader. As illustrated by the positioning of Mary Tighe's *Psyche*, McGann does not always reproduce the text of the first year of publication under the year of first publication. Having announced the principle of providing the original literary context, he often deviates from it. 'The Eolian Harp', for example, which appears in 1796, should in this year bear the title 'Effusion XXXV'. McGann includes this information in the notes but asserts 'this is the 1796 text'. It isn't. The paragraphing and use of upper and lower cases bear little resemblance to Coleridge's text in *Poems on Various Subjects* (April 1796). Also, after 'Such a soft floating witchery of sound' (l. 20), McGann omits the five lines on twilight Elfin, Faery Land and birds of Paradise and replaces them with the four line passage, 'Methinks, it should have been impossible . . .' which was Coleridge's 1803 revision. Conjunctions between lines 34 and 35 are muddled (McGann has 'swell and flutter . . . / Or what if all of animated nature' instead of 'swell or flutter . . . / And what if all . . .'). This is not what was available to the original audience.

In 1789, William Lisle Bowles's 'Sonnet V' should be 'Sonnet VI' and 'pensive fancy's eye' (l. 9) should read 'musing fancy's eye'. There is a problem with Southey's 'The Widow' which appears under 1797 but not in its original 1797 form, likewise the extract from *Thalaba the Destroyer* in 1801. McGann's note introduces an extraordinary distortion to 'Frost at Midnight' whereby we are led to believe that Coleridge's footnote originally advised 'In all parts of the animal kingdom these films are called *strangers*, and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend'. The paragraphing of 'Kubla Khan' is unhelpfully altered. A draft of line 15 of 'Lamia' is unexpectedly restored and incorporated in the 1820 version of the poem, so that we lose the whiteness of the nymph's feet. 'Julian and Maddalo' varies not only from the 1824 text, but also from the 1839 edition - 'Even the instinctive worm . . . / Sinks in the dusk' (*sic* McGann). What McGann has done with 'Julian and Maddalo' and 'The Triumph of Life' is to incorporate MS readings as restored by Donald Reiman. Surely, though, it would have been more fitting for the 1824 context to use Mary Shelley's readings and her note on the 'chasm' in the MS?

The principle of presenting the 'specific context' of certain poems has its illuminations like any other mode of selection, but it is unaccountable then to produce later revisions under the heading of the first year of publication. Part of the specific context of the publication of *Manfred* is that, following Gifford's advice, Murray removed the line, 'Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die', from the first edition. In this anthology, under the year heading 1817, it has

been restored and McGann has once again supplied a text that was not available to the original audience.

The anthology is seriously weakened, therefore, by its failure to follow consistently its own stated criteria. It becomes like McGann's vision of Sir William Jones's translations: 'part of an effort to recover or fabricate some alternative or lost world'. McGann observes at the beginning of his anthology: 'Deceptive apparitions haunt romantic writing'. His anthology bears him out, but not, perhaps, in the way the editor intended.

*University of Glasgow*

JANE STABLER

*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: A Supplement of New Letters, Volume VIII*  
ed. Alan G. Hill. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1993. Pp. xx + 308. £40 hardback.

The discovery of the love letters of William Wordsworth will turn out to have been one of the most important literary finds of the century. Though published first in 1982, it is our good fortune that they have given Alan G. Hill cause to produce this supplement to the standard edition of the letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, completed in 1988. Most of the texts here are re-edited and corrected versions of the love letters, but the volume contains, in addition, a considerable number of letters from between 1795 and 1848, which have turned up since publication of the relevant volumes in the series.

Elians will be pleased to find that one of the most entertaining items, showing the poet in uncharacteristically waggish form, was sent to Lamb in November 1816. He begins by describing his brother's reaction to Hazlitt's portrait of him:

My brother Richard happened to come into the room where his work was suspended, saw, stopt, I believe recoiled, and exclaimed *God Zounds!* a criticism as emphatic as it was concise. He was literally *struck* with the strength of the sign-board likeness; but never, till that moment, had he conceived that so much of the diabolical lurked under the innocent features of his quondam playmate, and respected Friend and dear Brother.

He goes on to remark that Hazlitt's portrait of Coleridge 'is not producible for fear of fatal consequences to married Ladies, but is kept in a private room, as a special treat to those who may wish to sup upon horrors'. As Wordsworth was not always such a lively correspondent, it is good to have some evidence that he was capable of writing an amusing letter once in a while - especially since it was Lamb who drew this quality out of him.

Although the love letters give this book a kind of coherence, it seems at times to have the character of an anthology - and in a way it is, if you regard the selector as chance. What each of these letters have in common is that they missed publication first time round, and sheer accident has determined their appearance here. Thanks partly to that welcome quality of randomness, the contents are extremely wide-ranging: here the reader will find new information about Wordsworth's relations with James Watt, Tom Wedgwood, Annette and Caroline Vallon, Byron and Lady Byron (Wordsworth seems to have dined alone with the latter in 1812), Godwin, Basil Montagu, Francis Wrangham, De Quincey, the Beaumonts, Coleridge, and many other contemporaries. Thanks in large part to the love letters, this volume is highly browsable, full of observations that bring Wordsworth's middle years to life: John Wilson, Wordsworth told his wife in 1810, was 'a strange irregular creature'; William Sotheby is 'that indefatigable Scribbler in Verse'; Humphry Davy's wife is 'any thing but handsome - and full of affectation'; Coleridge in 1812 'looks well, though considerably too fat'; Anna Laetitia Barbauld is 'an old snake'.

In addition, the editor publishes valuable texts of two newspaper articles recently attributed to Wordsworth, a letter from Annette Vallon to Dorothy, and additional letters of Mary Wordsworth concerning publication of Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (1851). This volume is, of course, essential for anyone who has assembled the other volumes in the series, especially as it carries the standard texts of the important love letters. My only regret is that Professor Hill decided not to include corrected texts of letters previously known only from earlier printed versions. For instance, the letters written to Joseph Cottle in 1798-1800 concerning *Lyrical Ballads* were published by Chester L. Shaver in the *Early Years* volume of the letters from Knight's edition. Since then, the manuscripts have turned up at the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia; texts of these (different in a number of crucial respects from those presented by Shaver) ought really to have been included here. Rather than correct earlier texts, the editor prefers merely to list letters which have recently been discovered in the 'Addenda and Corrigenda'. This is, I think, a mistake - although it might have the happy effect of making necessary yet another supplement to this edition in the not too distant future.

It hardly need be added that the editorial work here is well up to the exemplary standard of the series as a whole, and I have little doubt that this book will prove to have been one of the most important - and useful - published by Clarendon Press in 1993.

*St Catherine's College, Oxford*

DUNCAN WU

## Society News and Notes from Members

### NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

#### *C L S Meeting at Edmonton*

As mentioned in the October Bulletin, our 9 April 1994 meeting will be at All Saints' Church Hall, Edmonton, thus giving members the opportunity to see the Lambs' graves in the churchyard as well as hear Carolyn Misenheimer's talk on 'Southey's Letters to Children'.

Our member, Sandra Knott, has very kindly offered to entertain members to a buffet lunch at Lamb's Cottage, Church Street, Edmonton from 12.30 pm. Please let the Secretary (081 940 3837) know not later than 2 April if you will be at lunch - a wonderful opportunity to see inside Lamb's last home.

Using your 'Lamb's London' as a vade-mecum, you should have no difficulty in locating both Lamb's Cottage and All Saints' Church (the Church Hall is to the left of the driveway).

#### *Transport*

1. Parking is fairly easy in the vicinity of the church.
2. British Rail from Liverpool Street to Edmonton Green (formerly Lower Edmonton). Train from Liverpool Street at 02, 17, 32 and 47 past each hour. Journey time 20 minutes.
3. Victoria line to Seven Sisters Station, thence either British Rail as above, or bus to Edmonton Green.

#### *Dr Prabhat Mathur*

During a tour of North India it was a great pleasure to meet Dr Mathur in person - after many years' correspondence - in Delhi on 23 November 1993, in the exotic surroundings of the Maurya Sheraton Hotel.

#### *Annual General Meeting*

Members are reminded that the 1994 AGM will be held on Thursday 12 May at 5 pm at the Guidhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ.

*People, Places and Plaques compiled by Roy Hidson* (pp. 48, 45 illustrations)

This attractive guide to famous Islington residents, places of note and the wall plaques which commemorate them, includes a page on Charles Lamb and Colebrooke Cottage. (Published by Islington Libraries - by post £3.25+45p p&p - cheques payable to the London Borough of Islington.)

Madeline Huxstep

The Editor regrets that a severe illness over Christmas, followed by an attack of eye trouble (both now on the mend) has delayed the appearance of the January *Bulletin*. He also regrets the absence of much that is customary in the present section and will try to set everything to rights in the April issue.

Bill Ruddick

*Thomas Manning - and Friend?*

Thomas Manning, the Lambs' friend who went to China and even reached Tibet disguised as a Tartar doctor, seems to have been known until now by only two representations. Most Elians will have seen photographs of a bust, formerly owned by a Manning and later by a learned society, and a portrait of him in middle age.

I was recently lucky (and/or extravagant) enough to acquire a scrapbook put together by Major Butterworth and containing numerous letters from Mrs Gertrude Anderson. These two great Lamb scholars and collectors are mentioned at length in France's *Companion*.

The scrapbook also contains a small brown envelope annotated in Mrs Anderson's handwriting 'Photos from Miniatures of Thomas Manning [as a young man - added later] & a Chinese lady.' In one corner is Mrs Anderson's address. No source is stated for either the two sepia photographs in the envelope or the miniatures.

Thus we seem to have a probably genuine third representation of Thomas Manning, as a young man and so at about the time he went to China.

I do not say that the Chinese lady is a portrait of a girl friend, indeed Manning probably brought back many treasures of this kind. However, I find it interesting that the photograph of only one such miniature is placed with his portrait in the envelope and that two celebrated Elian scholars and collectors were prepared to leave it so.

D. E. Wickham

*An Unpublished Westwood Relic*

The Major Butterworth scrapbook which I acquired in mid-1993 includes this photograph, undated but perhaps taken in the 1920s. On the back are the pencilled words 'The Westwoods' Dining Table' and presumably the photographer's rubber stamp: E. Vincent Ward, 249 Oxford Road, Manchester.

With it is an undated manuscript note, written on the plain back sheet of what was once a folded piece of black-edged mourning paper: 'The above is a photograph of a mahogany table, now in the possession of my daughter, which used to stand in the dining-room of Mrs Westwood at Enfield when she lived there with her son. He, Thomas Westwood, married my sister Rosalie, Emilia Deby. L. Jeanne Halet.'

D. E. Wickham

*Colebrooke Cottage - The Truth at Last?*

Miss Mary Cosh, the Islington historian, recently gave me several pages of notes with permission to 'fillet' a brief article out of them. However, now that she has published the research in her new book *The Squares of Islington, Part II: Islington Parish* (Islington Archaeology and History Society, 1993), £7.50, it seemed best to quote the relevant two paragraphs from page 62 while 'plugging' the whole book. I believe that the details in her second paragraph are entirely fresh.

In those days Lamb's house was still detached, its entrance a storey above the river-bank, approached by a flight of steps then at right angles to the house. It has been so altered as to be almost unrecognisable, and it is difficult to see how the drawing-room could ever have accommodated three windows. Indeed, doubt has been raised over whether it was even the same house, or at least more than a gutted and refronted replacement over the base storey.

The Rate Books might have revealed whether there was an unoccupied period for the building in, say, the late 1870s, when major works might have been carried on, but unfortunately Rate Books have not been kept from 1860 onwards except for the decanal years [1870, 1880, etc.] The last dated drawing of the house as Lamb knew it appears to be in the *Lady's Newspaper* of 1851 [Cost, page 61], and subsequent accounts seem to be based on earlier descriptions and reveal nothing new. It is a small mystery with no foreseeable solution.

D. E. Wickham

*For the record*

From *Pontiff* by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts, a factual account of the year of the three popes, Paul VI, John Paul I, and John Paul II (London, 1984), p. 403 (The totally unexpected death of Pope John Paul I in 1978, after a pontificate lasting only 33 days, leads Cardinal Felici to persuade the cardinal archivist, Antonio Samore, to help search the Secret Archives of the Vatican for reference to an autopsy which, he believes, was carried out on Pope Pius VII in 1823):

Nobody is better at finding their way round the obstacles to this plunge into the past than the two Monsignori Samore has called upon to assist: the prefect of the archives, the gentle and erudite Martino Giusti, and the senior archivist, Charles Lamb, who, after 20 years in Rome, still retains his Scottish burr.

D. E. Wickham

*Green For Danger*

The 1946 British 'classic comedy-thriller' film *Green for Danger* is marked in my cinema reference book with four stars. This puts it in the same category as *Les Enfants du Paradis*, *Citizen Kane*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *The Third Man* (which, on consideration, may be overdoing it).

The film was shown on BBC-1 on 26 May 1992. It takes place in a wartime emergency hospital, and suddenly, out of a clear sky, Megs Jenkins, playing a nurse, prompts Leo Genn, as a surgeon who has left the fleshpots of Harley Street, with the words, 'All, all are gone, the old familiar faces'.

D. E. Wickham