

# The Charles Lamb Bulletin

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## Editorial

It is with great sadness that I record the death of my colleague, Bill Ruddick, the Editor of this *Bulletin*. A brief obituary appears on page 71, below. The shape of the present *Bulletin* is substantially that planned by him shortly before he died.

Those who attended Charles Lamb's Birthday Luncheon in February will remember John Bayley's address with great pleasure. 'The Art of Occasion' introduces to our pages the concept of 'Birrelling' (the ability to perform 'on any occasion and on any topic'), a quality which Lamb would have regarded highly, and which certainly has its uses - not just in our discussions of his work, but in that of his successors. Lamb's kinship with such modernist luminaries as Joyce, Woolf, and Beckett, though seldom observed, is properly acknowledged here.

In a valuable piece of research, Joseph Rosenblum's 'Lost Lambs; or, The Dispersal of Charles Lamb's Library: An Essay in Reconstruction' traces those volumes once belonging to Lamb which have since travelled to America. Future scholars in this area will be indebted to Professor Rosenblum for this important contribution to the study of Lamb's reading.

Roger Robinson frankly admits that the connections between Lamb and Beattie are tenuous, but those which he has unearthed are nonetheless intriguing. James Beattie's popular poem, *The Minstrel*, was a strong influence on all the romantic writers, and Professor Robinson makes a powerful case for his relevance to Elian studies.

It is hoped that the July number of the *Bulletin* will celebrate Bill Ruddick's life and work by reprinting some of his essays on art, design, and literature.

## The Art of Occasion

By JOHN BAYLEY

The text of Professor Bayley's address, given at the Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration Luncheon at the Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Prince's Gate, SW7, on Saturday 19 February 1994.

*ELIA IS NOT QUITE* an anagram of liar, but it is not so far off either. The art of the occasional essay - as I'm sure our dear Charles Lamb would be the first to admit - more than admit, even to boast - is often concerned with lying, albeit in a special and, on the whole, a harmless sense. Did not Elia's famous contemporary, Hazlitt, pen a little *divertissement* - and with a sting in its tail - on the art of lying itself? But what this kind of art needs is the not-quite lie which will embellish and reinforce the appropriate occasion. A cunning ploy of the most feather-headed occasional artist is to suggest that the little finger of his own common sense is thicker than the thigh of any man of authority - historian, theologian or scientist - and nowadays the list would include sociologists and literary theorists - who, for a variety of reasons, and with many suspect axes to grind, are themselves really *making things up*. The occasional essayist is not unlike the narrator of Julian Barnes's novel, *Flaubert's Parrot*, who had fun speculating that there really was *no* parrot at the back of Flaubert's famous story, or perhaps there were really *two* parrots, but neither with a really valid claim to be the genuine article.

It was in this spirit that E. M. Forster, in one of the many occasional pieces he used to write in the '20s and '30s for the *New Statesman and Nation* (then, however unbelievably today, the premier periodical for thoughtful and serious essays and reviewing) once took the opportunity of debunking the legend of St George. St George was the Patron Saint of England; and Forster was not noted either for his patriotism or for the fervour of his religious belief. Moreover Britain had lately been involved in a long and disgraceful war. The point to be made, in this connection, was that there of course existed no saint, no martyr, no dragon, no damsel in distress. All these tales had been concocted by a perennially nefarious establishment, for their own nefarious purposes. In fact the real St George, as it appears, was a Cappadocian grocer who had made a good thing out of selling indifferent bacon to the troops. Note the apparent artlessness of that 'As it appears', the choice detail of the adjective for the bacon, the touches that, as Pooh-Bah said in *The Mikado*, add verisimilitude to what might otherwise have been a bald and unconvincing piece of routine Bloomsburian debunking. That the old tale is not true (or is it?) is of course less important than that the story has now been 'humanized', made more acceptable for ordinary people, who are assumed to prefer grocers to saints. And ordinary people are as much the target of the occasional essayist's techniques as they are the cherished audience of politicians today.

It is the occasion that matters. Forster knows quite well that his reader is not going to say to himself: I must really go down to the British Museum and check whether that bacon sold by young George to the army commissary really *was* of poor quality. No, no, he was on safe ground there. And in the same way he had his audience with him in implying it was high time that old monstrosities, prejudices, obfuscations were swept away, or rather, laughed gently out of existence. They were all on the side of enlightenment, like the notorious Lytton Strachey himself, who was of course both begetter and model for this same technique. In *Eminent Victorians* he tells us that Matthew Arnold's father Thomas, the great Rugby headmaster, the august and distant hero of that still immensely popular book, *Tom Brown's*

*Schooldays*, had rather short legs. That 'fact', if it is one, almost literally cuts the great man down to size. In *actual* fact Thomas Arnold's legs may have been short, or they may have been longer than other mens'. They may even have been of average length. It matters not. No-one is now going to forget that this great man had rather short legs. The assertion, and its occasion, have triumphed.

Or that General Gordon of Khartoum had bright blue eyes. And that, as it happens, is certainly true. But by so often mentioning the fact ('the vultures circling above the town at which those blue eyes had so often gazed'), Strachey contrives to suggest that the eyes themselves were part of an act and a pose, even a symptom of obsession and madness (Hitler and T. E. Lawrence had, as it happened, eyes of the same blue, though Strachey was not able to make use of that perhaps significant fact). What matters is that the skilful assaying can use true equally well as false facts to secure memorability, the point and moment of occasion.

Investigative journalists today are highly conscientious men. But no-one who investigates can forbear to lose the quarry of his investigation. Like the occasional essayist, even the soberest journalist is still really concerned with immediate effect. And in the world of assertion a day is a long time. Paul Foot is an essayist as brilliant as his uncle Michael, the Hazlitt scholar; and for him an expert authority is always an establishment man, as no doubt he often is. It follows that an expert must always be wrong; and therefore that any plaintiff, for example, accused of any crime by establishment procedures, must *ipso facto* be innocent. No doubt he sometimes is: but the method of argument employed to make us feel he is so, sometimes owes more, disconcertingly more, to the art of the occasional essay than to the laborious processes of evidence and the law.

I have been speaking of the occasion that has, as it were, an axe to grind. But the true charm of the occasional essay is, and should be, in its lack of purpose. So there is a certain irony, even injustice, in the undoubted fact that the form was discredited not by its inherent disingenuousness, but by overdoing the lighthearted frivolity, by wandering off in insouciant fashion into all sorts of highways and byways. The art even sunk to the level at which it was known scornfully as 'Birrelling', after that veteran occasional performer Augustine Birrell, who would, and did, perform on any occasion and on any topic. You can hardly find a *Times* third or fourth leader from the first decades of the century without an airy trifle of anything or nothing by this engaging man. Birrell never made anything up for the occasion: he invented nothing, either with forethought or on the spur of the moment: he simply hopped on from branch to branch, like the lighthearted goldfinch or robin, or whatever cheerful little avian phenomena seemed suitable to fly over the page of the daily paper and encourage the reader. (I am making this up by the way - I have no idea whether birds figured in his pieces or not - but the occasional essayist worth his salt never misses out on such a possibility: the art of Birrelling depends upon it.)

A. C. Benson, a son of a once-famous Archbishop of Canterbury, was if possible an even better Birreller than Birrell himself. He can hardly be parodied. He can only be gently imitated. And that is what Max Beerbohm did in *A Christmas Garland*.

In boyhood Percy had felt always a little sad at the approach of autumn. The yellowing leaves of the lime trees, the creeper that flushed to so deep a crimson against the old grey walls, the chrysanthemums that shed so prodigally their petals on the smooth green lawn - all these things, beautiful and wonderful though they were, were somehow a little melancholy also, as being signs of the year's decay. Once, when he was 14 or 15 years old, he had overheard a 'friend of the family' say to his father: 'How the days are drawing in!' - a remark which set him thinking deeply, with an almost abandonment to

gloom, for quite a long time. He had not then grasped the truth that in exactly the proportion the days draw in, they will, in the fullness of time, draw out. This was a lesson that he mastered in later years.

Beerbohm caught perfectly the essence of occasion as it was practised by a Benson (and Benson, let us not forget, was enormously popular and quite a master of the genre). It was always wholly, comfortingly, predictable. His very many readers could be happily certain that they knew already what would happen next; and in this kind of writing anticipation is a much more soothing device than surprise. Yet the end of the parody shows Beerbohm acknowledging that his model can achieve a genuine pathos, an *almost* unexpected little strangeness.

At the end of the festive day (Christmas, that is), with the curtains drawn and the candles lit, Percy would turn to his bookshelves, and choose from among them some old book that he knew and loved, or maybe some quite new book by that writer whose words were most dear to him, because in them he seemed always to know so precisely what the author would say next; and because he found in their finespun repetitions a singular repose, a sense of security, an earnest of calm and continuity, as though he were reading over again one of those wise copy-books that he had so loved in boyhood, or were listening to the sounds made on a piano by some modest, very conscientious young girl with a pale red pigtail, practising her scales, very gently, hour after hour, next door.

As in all the best parodies, the victim has, as it were, the last word. The image of the good little girl with the pale red pigtail is unforgettable, and may have cheered up poor Benson, when he read what might have seemed - so persuasive is Beerbohm's art - his very *own* modest contribution to *A Christmas Garland*. 'That writer' referred to is of course Benson himself: and yet it might after all have been Henry James, in whose finespun repetitions there is also, as one admits and appreciates, a similar kind of 'singular repose'?

Could the form, well-Birrelled or over-Birrelled as it had undoubtedly become, ever be capable of regeneration, of something fresh and new? Well, it could. Among others the great Beachcomber showed that, and James Thurber, and nearer at hand Oliver Pritchett, son of V. S. Pritchett, who has a column in the *Sunday Telegraph* I read to my wife every Sunday morning. Unlike Queen Victoria we are always amused, and more than amused - charmed: which is or should be, the occasionalist's true achievement. Often he begins demurely with one of those exquisitely boring little items that are asked on 'Any Questions' or mulled over by the announcer of 'The World at One'. The technique of constructing such radio programmes, as we all well know, is to send a commentator with a hand-held microphone to find out what ordinary people are thinking about the latest guidelines on the Eleven Plus, or the Back to Basics campaign. Oliver Pritchett's reporter finds himself interviewing Wordsworth's daffodils, a whole crowd or host of them, fluttering and dancing in the breeze. He reports this back to Broadcasting House, where the announcer's policy is to get through the time allocated somehow by repeating a number of simple queries. Just how many are fluttering and dancing? - all, or only some? - and are the local authorities doing anything about it? 'We'll come back to you on this, Jim', promises the BBC man, when he has to switch to unmarried mothers, or juvenile crime; and when he finally gets back, Jim is able to reassure listeners that those flowers are *still* fluttering and dancing. A brisk dialogue follows, which takes up the time nicely until the signature tune of 'The Archers' comes chiming in.

The odd thing is that though occasion art seems so light and frivolous it may well have inspired some of the most radical literary experiments and departures of our own time. Indeed such inspiration may come from further back still. I feel confident myself that Elia's enjoyment of Shakespeare came in part from the glorious insouciance of the Bard's imagery - in fact from his infinitely inspirational and high-level Birrelling. Here indeed is not so much a stream as a positive coruscation of consciousness. Charles Lamb may even conceivably have come across a very obscure essay by a country parson, Walter Whiter, who in 1780 or thereabouts was struck by the remarkable associative process seemingly at work in Shakespeare's most eloquent speeches, and was moved to try to analyse the way in which it worked. His essay had no great success, and fell into total obscurity until recently. Even today it is not well known. But it is the kind of thing that a Lamb or a Hazlitt were themselves also instinctively finding, and perhaps making use of, in Shakespeare. Coleridge too, of course. And later on, by some natural or perhaps obscurely influenced process, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf . . . and Samuel Beckett. The two tramps in *Waiting for Godot* are natural occasionalists if ever there were such, using words to pass the time, which, as one of them points out, would have passed anyway.

Beckett's dog, or - come to that - Virginia Woolf's in *Mrs Dalloway*, would surely have recognised the canine salutation that Walter Whiter detected in one of Antony's speeches to Cleopatra, complaining of his downfall, and of his followers' desertion. 'Those hearts that spaniel'd me at heels, Do now discandy, melt their sweets on blossoming Caesar, and this pine is bark't That overtopped them all'. Dogs, chocolates, flowers and forest trees . . . and in the midst of them that unmistakable 'bark', that seems to echo through the passage and call its intentions together. It is a pun of course. And for Shakespeare a pun was as suggestive of further occasions for wit and art as roast pork was for Charles Lamb. A dog barks and a tree is 'barked' - stripped of its outer covering, as Antony of his glory. Walter Whiter was surely correct to see and to suggest that all occasions do inform together in Shakespeare's erratic but inspired use of language. The stream of consciousness itself depends on a rapid turnover of the linguistic bric-à-brac in the mind. Coleridge, most incorrigibly natural of performers on the occasional flute, testifies as much: flitting, in the words of John Keats who accompanied him on one of his 'alderman-after-dinner' walks on Hampstead Heath, from topic to topic to topic and dream to dream. Elegant as always, but surely in the same style, Virginia Woolf, that most accomplished of occasional essayists, treats the death of her moth in the appropriate flitting moth-like fashion.

It was, oddly enough, a near contemporary of our dear Charles Lamb, that now all but forgotten poet George Darley, who returns us to the point of this talk - if it has a point. He comments on connection; and gives a particularly charming example, on the subject of virgins. He has been reading Gibbon's account of the inflexible law enforcement under the Mongol Empire, admiringly contrasted by Gibbon with the anarchy and danger to citizen and traveller that prevailed in the last days of the Roman imperium. It was recorded in one of Gibbon's sources that a virgin with a pot of gold on her head could walk from Samarkhand to distant Karakorum, the Mongol capital, without the smallest risk of being robbed or molested. How did Gibbon verify this? wonders Darley. Did he have an extensive acquaintance among Mongolian virgins? And how long did the journey take the young lady? What did she have to eat on her journey? Did any suitor accost her - however respectfully? Might she perhaps get married on the way, employing her pot of gold as a dowry, and becoming a respectable married woman in Khorasan or Kashgar? One speculation, one possibility, leads on to another.

But now comes the poet's little *jeu d'esprit*, his jump of connection. He finds it impossible, he tells us, to read Horace's sublime Ode about the duration of his verses - will they endure *dum Capitolium / Scandet cum tacita virgine Pontifex* so long as High Priest and silent maid shall climb the Capitol? He cannot read about them without muddling up in his mind Gibbon's virgin and Horace's. He has a vision of the former, still with her pot of gold, forever climbing to the festival by the side of the Roman Pontifex.

Very well: let us be Darleyan, or Coleridgean, Woolfian, or Birrell-like too. Whether or not Gibbon was historically incorrect about his virgin, Horace was totally beside the mark where his own silent figure was concerned. It is quite a while since she went up to the temple at Rome, and yet Horace's Ode is still being read in every country. As Professor Edward Fraenkel remarked, Horace's apparently grandiose claim has turned out to be one of the biggest understatements in all poetry. And the occasional essayist could hardly resist a final point here. Virgins, or indeed non-virgins, are now no longer silent when they assist at religious ceremonies. In the Church of England at least they are to be found, I am happy to say, wearing surplices and reciting the language of the liturgy - usually, I'm sorry to say, in the modern version. And of course wishing us all a nice day by the church door at the end of the service.

*St Catherine's College, Oxford*

## Lost Lambs; or, The Dispersal of Charles Lamb's Library An Essay in Reconstruction

By JOSEPH ROSENBLUM

Habent sua fata libelli

IN 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', Lamb wrote, 'I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading. I cannot sit and think. Books think for me'. Lamb was what he read. His books provide a key to his mind, and the dispersal of his library may be regarded as a literary as well as a bibliophilic tragedy. These were the volumes that he kissed in his old age, that provoked his writing and shaped his style - indeed, his very thoughts. This essay in reconstruction thus serves not only as an act of Elian piety but also as a form of literary criticism. Moreover, in following the fate of Lamb's books one learns something about the antiquarian book trade of the nineteenth century.

Catholic in his tastes - 'I have no repugnances' - Lamb wished for volumes 'strong-backed and neat bound. . . Magnificence comes after'. Yet the condition of his books was more in keeping with Touchstone's description of Audrey in *As You Like It*; in the words Lamb is echoing in the just quoted passage, 'Well, praised be the gods for thy foulness! Sluttishness may come hereafter' (III iii 40-1). As Henry Crabb Robinson, a close friend of the Lambs, wrote in his diary for 10 January 1824, 'I looked over Lamb's library in part. He has the finest collection of shabby books I ever saw. Such a number of first-rate works of genius, but filthy copies, which a delicate man would really hesitate touching, is, I think, nowhere to be found'. Other entries in Robinson's diary indicate that he was not himself too delicate to refrain from handling Lamb's books.

The egregious condition of the volumes resulted from a number of factors. Never rich, Lamb could not afford to buy handsome copies or to rebind in state those he purchased, often from the barrows outside bookshops, where they had lain exposed to the elements and coarse handling. He lamented the expense lavished on the exteriors of some 'well-arranged assortment of block-headed Encyclopaedias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) . . . when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios'. At the same time - at least in the same essay - he reflected that 'in some respects the better the book is, the less it demands from binding'. Some volumes in Lamb's library were composites that he had bound together. The most humorous example of this tendency is the union he created between the Puritan Jonathan Edwards' essay on free will and the deist Joseph Priestley's on necessity. In 'My Books', Leigh Hunt reported that Lamb's shelves revealed this love of paradoxical juxtaposition: 'There Jeremy Collier is at peace with Dryden: there the lion, Martin Luther, lies down with the Quaker lamb, Sewell: there Guzman d'Alfarache thinks himself fit company for Sir Charles Grandison, and has his claims admitted'. The appearance of Lamb's nonce collections was almost certain to offend the fastidious, for Lamb did not resort to the best of craftsmen. Carl Woodring notes that one of Lamb's poor relations, his cousin Charles Lovekin, was a binder, and he may have been responsible for some of the unattractive work on Lamb's shelves.<sup>1</sup> Generally, though, Lamb relied on a cobbler.

<sup>1</sup> 'Charles Lamb in the Harvard Library', *Harvard Library Bulletin* 10 (1956) 367.

According to Thomas Westwood, Lamb believed that 'the rougher the restoration, the greater the success'.<sup>2</sup> Nor was Lamb himself gentle and kind with his volumes. He claimed that when he moved from Colebrook to Enfield he toppled his library out of the cart. His guests could be even less delicate. Gerald D. McDonald quotes Robert Southey's remark, 'To introduce Wordsworth into one's library is like letting a bear into a tulip garden'.<sup>3</sup> Wordsworth was a frequent visitor to Lamb's house and, no doubt, to his books.

No catalogue of Lamb's library exists, though one gathers from his letters and essays that its contents constantly changed. In 'The Two Races of Men' Lamb complained of 'borrowers of books - those mutilators of collections, spoilers of the symmetry of shelves, and creators of odd volumes'. Commenting in that piece about the vacancies in a bookcase, he noted, 'Here stood the Anatomy of Melancholy, in sober state. There loitered the Compleat Angler, quiet as in life, by some stream side. In yonder nook, John Buncler, a widower-volume, with "eyes closed", mourns his ravished mate'. In an undated letter to James Kenney (the 'K.' of 'The Two Races of Men') Lamb writes to remind him of volumes unreturned.

New books, which Lamb received as presentation copies - he would not spend money on modern literature - quickly passed through the front door to the rear window. Thomas Westwood, Lamb's neighbor at Enfield in the late 1820s, recalled Lamb's eccentric mode of disposing of these unwanted volumes:

A Leigh Hunt, for instance, would come skimming to my feet through the branches of the apple-trees (our gardens were contiguous); or a Bernard Barton would be rolled downstairs after me, from the library door. *Marcian Colonna* I remember finding on my window-sill, damp with the night's fog; and the *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* I picked out of the strawberry-bed. It was not that Lamb was indifferent to the literary doings of his friends; but their books, as books, were unharmonious on his shelves. They clashed, both in outer and inner entity, with the Marlows and Miltons that were his household gods.<sup>4</sup>

He also gave away books in more conventional ways. For example, Yale owns a copy of volume 2 of *The Fables of Aesop* (London, 1675) with an autograph presentation from Lamb to John May, a close friend of Robert Southey. Somewhat counteracting this borrowing, discarding, and giving away, was the appearance of the occasional stray volume. 'These proselytes of the gate', Lamb wrote in 'The Two Races of Men', 'are welcome as the true Hebrews. There they stand in conjunction, natives and naturalised'.

In 'New Year's Eve' Lamb wrote of what he would miss most after death. Along with jokes and green fields and good food he included his library. 'And you, my midnight darlings, my Folios! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces?' When he died indeed, he left his midnight darlings to the publisher Edward Moxon, who had married Emma Isola, a girl the Lambs had virtually adopted. Moxon did not hasten to claim his legacy, perhaps out of respect for Mary Lamb, who survived her brother by some thirteen years, perhaps because he had no interest in the books. During this interval many of Lamb's volumes became keepsakes of friends and admirers while the rest suffered neglect. By the time Moxon took possession of the library, he decided that most of

<sup>2</sup> E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb* (3rd ed., New York, 1917), ii. 264.

<sup>3</sup> 'Charles Lamb as a Collector: Memorabilia in the New York Public Library', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 38 (1934) 707.

<sup>4</sup> William Carew Hazlitt, *Mary and Charles Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains* (London, 1874), p. 211.



its contents were not worth saving. The generally accepted story, given in the *Literary World* (New York) for 5 February 1848, is that Moxon retained 60 volumes that he thought might have some value and destroyed the rest. This article states that Charles Welford asked Moxon, who was a friend, for permission to take the books to America to sell. If the idea of the American sale was Welford's rather than Moxon's, the Englishman needed little persuading, since book prices in England were depressed, and Lamb was much admired on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>5</sup>

Moxon's actions angered Lamb's friends. Henry Crabb Robinson noted in his diary for 27 April 1848,

I had a chat with [Thomas Noon] Talfourd about Moxon, who has sold Lamb's books to some American. Talfourd is displeased with this, and reasonably. [Moxon] tells him that he got only £10 by them. This cannot be true, and if true so much the worse. Moxon told me at first that he would give the books to the university College; but afterwards said they were not worth their accepting.

Thomas Westwood was equally chagrined:

I have been told that [Lamb's] books were sold to the Yankees. Oh, pity! Oh, shame! They should have been held in honour and charge by some Londoner who was a London-lover - a haunter of the old streets and the old book-stalls. There are some libraries the dispersion of which we feel as a positive pain, almost a disgrace - and Lamb's was of them. His books were his household gods. . . . Must he not have shuddered at that cruel disruption? - he, a thin ghost, on the other side Styx, pacing, with hungry heart, those Elysian fields, where there are *no* book-stalls?<sup>6</sup>

If Welford actually paid Moxon only £10 for Lamb's books, the American secured a bargain. The books were displayed at Nos. 2 and 4 Barclay Street, in Astor House, New York City. Bartlett and Welford issued a catalogue, and the volumes sold quickly, bringing in \$479.75, or £107.18s.11d. at the contemporary rate of exchange. Most went to local collectors, though a folio *Duchess of Newcastle* containing her *Nature's Pictures* together with the *Comical Tales* in verse and prose (London, 1656) went to a Mr. Cassidy in Louisville, Kentucky, as did a stray volume (IX) of the *Spectator* (London, 1724). James T. Annan of Cincinnati secured almost a third of the lots. Supposedly, as soon as Annan learned of the sale he telegraphed New York for every remaining item, thereby securing eighteen titles for \$141.25. Annan's buying could not have been as indiscriminate as this story, first told by the Brooklyn collector Robert Balmanno, indicates, because when Bartlett and Welford replied on 12 February 1848, to Charles Eliot Norton's query, eight titles were still available. Among the treasures Annan obtained were a 1598 black-letter Chaucer (first Thomas Speght edition), the only black-letter volume Lamb owned - Annan paid \$25 for the volume that had, according to Leigh Hunt ('My Books'), cost Lamb 9s 2d - and Michael Drayton's *Works* in folio (London, 1748), at \$32 the second most expensive item in the Welford catalogue.

Robert Balmanno, who had known Lamb, spent \$26.50 to buy six items. These purchases included two volumes of John Cleveland's *Poems* (London, 1662 and 1668). Both are now in the Berg collection of the New York Public Library. The 1662 edition belonged to Ogden

<sup>5</sup> See Wallace Nethery, *Charles Lamb in America to 1848* (Worcester, Mass., 1963).

<sup>6</sup> Lucas ii. 426. Westwood was certainly wrong about the absence of bookstalls in the Elysian fields.

Goelet and T. H. Howe, former president of the American Book Company. Howe also owned the 1668 edition and Balmanno's copy of *The Second Part of Mr. Waller's Poems* (London, 1690) that once had been Lamb's. It also resides in the New York Public Library. Balmanno's other purchases were Matthew Prior's *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1740), Shakespeare's *Poems* (London, 1714), and volume 5 of Swift's *Works* (Dublin, 1759). Balmanno paid \$6 each for the Prior and Shakespeare, \$3.50 for the stray volume of Swift.

George T. Strong of New York, whose collection was rich in history, literature, and manuscript material, spent the most money for Lamb's books, \$151.50. His purchases included Ben Jonson's *Works* in folio (London, 1692), \$25, and Henry More's *Philosophical Poems* (Cambridge, 1647), \$8. He also acquired a miscellany, created by Lamb, that contained five works, which Lamb had listed on the inside of the front cover. The first of these is *Antonio* (London, 1800) by William Godwin, a tragedy that enjoyed a one-night run. Lamb wrote the epilogue, which at Lamb's request was not published. Lamb provided the prologue to the next item in the collection, the third edition of Coleridge's *Remorse* (London, 1813). Barron Field's farce *Antiquity* (London, 1808), a speech by William Windham, and Lamb's brother John's reply make up the rest of the book, though it once also included 'Confessions of a Drunkard' and 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital'. These two items are noted in Lamb's handwritten table of contents but later crossed out. On the outside of the volume Lamb had written, 'Return the volume when done with. C.L. For L. Hunt, Esq'. The book cost Strong \$10. Strong's chief acquisition was a set of five books bearing Coleridge's annotations. Lamb had excepted Coleridge from his general warning against book borrowers. These volumes confirm Lamb's statement that Coleridge would 'return them (generally anticipating the time appointed) with usury; enriched with annotations tripling their value' ('The Two Races of Men'). First among these was the widower volume of *The Life of John Bunclie, Esq.* (London, 1756), which Lamb had recommended to Coleridge in a letter of 24 June 1797:

I have been reading a most curious romance-like work called the 'Life of John Bunclie, Esq.' 'Tis very interesting, and an extraordinary compound of all manner of subjects, from the depths of the ludicrous to the heights of sublime religious truth. There is much abstruse science in it above my wit, and an infinite fund of pleasantry. John Bunclie is a famous fine man, formed in Nature's most eccentric hour.

The annotations show that Coleridge accepted Lamb's recommendation.

The most expensive item on the Bartlett and Welford list was John Donne's *Poems* (London, 1669), for which Strong paid \$40. According to the *Literary World* for 5 February 1848, which carried the entire list,

The blanks and margins [are] full of curious and valuable critical and illustrative notes, written while reading the poems, most characteristic of Coleridge, including an original Epigrammatic Poem by him &c., &c., at the end is 'I shall die soon, my dear Charles Lamb, and then you will not be vexed that I have scribbled your book. S.T.C. 2d May, 1811.

Coleridge offered this excuse in at least one other volume he annotated, though Lamb's comments indicate agreement with the line in Donne's 'Elegy 2: To His Mistress Going to Bed', first printed in the 1669 edition of the poems, 'Here is no penance due to innocence'. The Donne, now at Yale, is typical of Lamb's books: the title page and second preliminary leaf are mutilated. The other three volumes in this group of books annotated by Coleridge,

all among the most expensive in the sale, were John Reynolds' *God's Revenge agaynst the Cryinge, & Execrable Sinne of. . . Murther* (London, 1657), \$30, *The History of Philip de Commines* (London, 1674), \$10, and the Reverend John Petwin's *Letters Concerning the Mind* (London, 1750), \$20, which Coleridge read at Oxford in October 1820.

George Folsom of New York paid \$5 for a mismatched set of *The Guardian*. The first volume (London, 1750) had belonged to Lamb's father, who had acquired the book in 1756. The second (London, 1734) was added by Lamb. Folsom also paid \$3.50 for Francis Osborne's *Works* (London, 1689).

Bostonians, too, acquired a number of Lamb's books. George Livermore secured the Jonathan Edwards/Joseph Priestley composite for \$3.50 and an octavo 1729 *Dunciad* for the same price. Charles Deane bought a 1712 edition of the philosophical works of Henry More (\$8). Charles Eliot Norton secured three of the eight items quoted to him by Welford: *Euripides tragoediarum interpretation Latina* (Oxford, 1821), presented to Lamb by H. F. Cary (\$2.50); Thomas Tryon's *The Knowledge of a Man's Self* (London, 1703), \$3; and a nonce collection including the first edition of Matthew Green's *The Spleen* (London, 1737) for \$3.50. In addition to the Green piece the volume contains *Inlets of Human Knowledge* by 'Philaletes' (London, 1739), *Letters Concerning Poetical Translations, and Virgil's and Milton's Arts of Verse* by William Benson (London, 1739), *Of the Sister Arts, an Essay* by Hildebrand Jacob (London, 1734), and *The Uncertainty of Physick* by E. D. (London, 1739). All three of Norton's purchases are now at Harvard; not surprisingly, the Houghton Library catalogue describes the Tryon volume as 'Imperfect: first two prelim. leaves, incl. t.p., pp. 193-208, 257-272 wanting'. Deane's acquisition is at Harvard, which also owns a presentation copy of Bernard Barton's *Poetical Vigils* (London, 1824) and a copy of William Mason's *The Believer's Pocket Companion* (London, 1821) with Lamb's annotations on the fly-leaves. How long the Barton remained in Lamb's possession is unclear. Since it bears none of Lamb's characteristic marginalia, it may well have shared the fate common to modern books that Lamb received.

Woodman of Boston secured three items: the 1629 edition of Bacon's *Works* (\$4), Abraham Cowley's *Works* (London, 1693), \$10, and *Certain Learned and Elegant Works by Fulke Greville* (London, 1633), \$7.50. The Bacon, now at the Huntington, once belonged to the American bibliophile Beverly Chew. The Huntington also owns a copy of Chandos Leigh's *Epistles to a Friend in Town . . . and Other Poems* (London, 1826). Adrian Joline, a former owner, wrote of the volume in his *Meditations of an Autograph Collector* (New York, 1902), p. 193. The Leigh book was not included in the Welford sale, probably because it did not long remain in Lamb's possession.

The Bartlett and Welford sale proved only the first chapter in the story of the dispersal of Lamb's library. Late in 1848 James T. Annan sold his library to buy a partnership in the firm for which he had been clerking. Seventeen of the eighteen volumes that had belonged to Lamb returned to New York to be sold by the auction house of Cooley, Keese, and Hill of 191 Broadway. Lucian's *Pharsalia* (London, 1635), translated by Thomas May, was the one Lamb book bought by Annan that did not reappear in the sale, its place taken by John Dennis' *Original Letters* (London, 1726) that had been acquired by one Jones for \$3. The prices realized at this second sale generally were lower than those Annan had paid, and most of the buyers were new. Norton added *Poetical Tracts* to his earlier purchases. Annan had paid \$6 for the book; Norton paid \$6.50. Included in this composite were first editions of Lamb's friend Charles Lloyd (*Poems on Various Subjects* [Carlisle, 1795]; *Lines Suggested by the Fast* [London, 1799]), Coleridge's 'Fears in Solitude', 'France', and 'Frost at

Midnight', published together in a quarto pamphlet edition of 200 copies, and William Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk* (both published in London in 1793). Like Norton's other Lamb purchases, this volume is now at Harvard. George Livermore also secured another Lamb volume, paying \$28 for Michael Drayton's *Works*; Annan had paid four dollars more. The actor and Shakespeare collector William Burton paid \$25 for the 1598 Chaucer, the same amount the book had cost Annan. The Chaucer later became the property of the Boston collector Edward A. Crowninshield. After Crowninshield died in 1858, Henry Stevens, the Vermont bookseller who had moved to London, acquired the Crowninshield library *en bloc* and sold the Chaucer to Charles W. Frederickson. Burton also acquired Dennis's *Original Letters* for the same \$3 that Jones had paid. John Austin Stevens of New York secured a collection of twelve seventeenth-century plays. Annan had paid \$10 for the volume; Stevens secured it for \$5.50. George Henry Moore, also of New York, bought a similar collection for \$6; Annan again had paid \$10. This anthology, now at Yale, contains the following works, all published in London: Aphra Behn, *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679); John Crowne, *The Destruction of Jerusalem* by Titus Vespasian (1677), and his *City Politiques* (1688); Thomas D'Urfey's *A Fool's Preferment* (1688), and his adaptation of *Cymbeline*, which he called *The Injured Princess* (1682); Nathaniel Lee, *Theodosius* (1680), and *The Massacre of Paris* (1690); Edward Ravenscroft, *The London Cuckolds* (1688); Elkanah Settle, *The Female Prelate* (1680); and Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* (1676).

George L. Duyckinck, who reported on the sale in the lead article of the *Literary World* for 4 November 1848, secured Nathaniel Bacon's *A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira* (London, 1681) in quintessential Elian condition: binding worn, title page missing, some pages lacking. The book had appealed to Lamb probably because Robert Burton mentions it in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Lamb paid 4s.4d. for it, Annan \$1.50, Duyckinck \$2. The volume is now housed in the New York Public Library. (The library's Berg collection contains a number of other items with a Lamb connection. These include Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* [3rd ed., London, 1658], bound with *Religio Medici* [London, 1650]. Lamb purchased the volume for Coleridge in 1804. Another Lamb volume in the Berg collection is an English translation of Alfonso de Villegas' *The Lives of the Saints* [3rd ed., St. Omer, 1630], formerly the property of William Harris Arnold, and New York Public also owns William Wycherley's *Plays* [London, 1735], given by Lamb to Leigh Hunt.) A collection of seventeenth-century plays and another of seventeenth-century poems were secured by Joseph Green Cogswell for the Astor House Library, which later became part of the New York Public Library. These two volumes have, however, disappeared.

This second sale yielded \$116.75. Only four of the eighteen volumes brought more at auction than they had earlier in the year, while twelve fetched less.

A number of Lamb's books reappeared at auction on 24-5 May 1897, at the sale of Charles W. Frederickson's library, which was rich in early nineteenth-century British material. Lamb's black-letter Chaucer was secured by Charles Scribner's Sons, the successor of Bartlett and Welford, for \$340. Scribner's also paid \$375 for the Jonson folio, \$210 for Shakespeare's *Poems* that had cost Balmanno \$6 fifty years earlier, \$110 for Reynolds' *God's Revenge*, and \$180 for the Philip de Commines. Harry B. Smith added Lamb's copy of Michael Drayton to his 'Sentimental Library', paying \$250. For \$170 he purchased the 1647 edition of Henry More's *Philosophical Poems*. The collection of five tracts went to Dodd, Mead for \$300; it quickly resold the volume for \$450. The same firm bought Sir John Suckling's *Fragmenta Aurea* (London, 1646) for \$270 and resold it for \$400 with the offer

of replacing the missing portrait and the defective title page of 'The Goblins'. Surely, though, the purchaser would have agreed with the comment in the Dodd, Mead catalogue and 'thought it best to leave the book in the condition it was in when Lamb owned it'. A third item the company offered in that catalogue was the solitary *John Buncl*e, which cost \$55 at the Frederickson sale and which Dodd, Mead sold for \$90. The firm bought John Donne's *Poems* for \$150 but did not offer it for sale with the other three items.

In addition to these veterans of the Moxon, Welford, and Cooley, Keese and Hill sales, another Lamb item surfaced in the Frederickson auction, a presentation set of John Payne Collier's *The Poetical Decameron* (2 vols., London, 1820). Thanking Collier for the gift Lamb wrote on 16 May 1820, 'I have not such a gentleman's book in my collection: it was a great treat to me, and I got it just as I was wanting something of the sort'. Since the set did not come to America in 1848 one suspects that it may have found its way into Thomas Westwood's library. Lamb apparently did read the work, though; E. V. Lucas notes in his edition of Lamb's *Letters* (London, 1935), ii. 276, that Lamb probably drew on it for an article in William Hone's *Every-Day Book* in 1825, but he did not meet Westwood until later in the decade. Henry Saltonstall Howe paid \$22.50 for the set and gave it to Harvard. A Lamb book that definitely survived thanks to its transferral to Westwood is Edward Moxon's own *Christmas: A Poem* (London, 1829), once the property of the American composer and collector Jerome Kern and now at Harvard. Woodring humorously suggests that the volume's broken spine 'may have resulted from Lamb's method of presentation'.<sup>7</sup> *The Poetical Works of Mr. Samuel Daniel* (London, 1718), which leads Lamb's list of books borrowed and enriched by Coleridge ('The Two Races of Men'), also resides at Harvard. It, too, did not make up part of the 1848 sale. Mary Lamb presented it to the son of William Hazlitt, and his son, William Carew Hazlitt (who wrote much and well about the Lambs), received it from him. How the volume came to Harvard is a mystery.

There are certain books for which one would gladly sacrifice whole libraries of what Lamb called 'Books which are no books - biblia a-biblia'. Such a one is the copy of Keats that Shelley was reading when he was drowned in the Gulf of Spezia. Another is the folio Frankfurt Bible (*Biblia Graeca Septuaginta* [1594]) with which Samuel Johnson reportedly knocked down the insolent bookseller Thomas Osborne, and a third in this precious category is the folio Beaumont and Fletcher (London, 1679) that Lamb secured 'late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden' for 15 or 16 shillings. In 'Old China' Bridget reminds Elia of this purchase:

Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late - and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures - and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome - and when you presented it to me - and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (collating, you called it) - and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak - was there no pleasure in being a poor man?

Lamb's joy at procuring the volume resulted not only from his love of the old dramatists and old folios but also from the book's scarcity. In 1804 Wordsworth sent Lamb a list of books

<sup>7</sup> Woodring 378.

to buy for him. In response Lamb wrote back on 13 October 1804, 'Beaumont & Fletcher in folio, the right folio, [is] not now to be met with; the octavos are about £3'. Twenty years later Thomas Frognall Dibdin observed in his *Library Companion* (London, 1824) that the ten octavo volumes of the elder George Coleman's edition of 1778 was worth about £3 13s.6d. Dibdin recommended the 14-volume octavo edition prepared by Henry William Weber (1812), for which 'the Young Man must not scruple to go as far as £5.5s . . . at a public sale' (p. 821). To Lamb, though, only the folio Beaumont and Fletcher was acceptable: 'the Octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them' ('Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading'). This marvellous folio, which passed through the annotating hand of Coleridge, did not participate in the 1848 trans-Atlantic migration and remains safe in the British Library. Keeping it company are the two volumes of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* (London, 1751), once the property of either Lamb's father or brother - the set bears the name of John Lamb. The Victoria and Albert Museum owns William Warner's *Syrinx; or a Sevenfold History* (London, 1597), given to Lamb by Harrison Ainsworth in 1823, and a book Lamb called *Tag, Rag, and Bob-Tail, a Volume of Modern Miscellanies*. This Lamb creation contains Lamb's 'Wife's Trial' from *Blackwood's*, six of his *Reflector* essays, Wordsworth's 1816 'Letter on Burns', Coleridge's 'Lay Sermon to Higher and Middle Classes', 1817, and his 1816 *Statesman's Manual*.<sup>8</sup> Of almost equal interest with the Beaumont and Fletcher folio is *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (London, 1820) bearing the inscription 'To Charles Lamb Esqre with the author's respectful compts - '. The volume is at Harvard.

In *The Lambs: Their Lives, Their Friends, and Their Correspondents: New Particulars and New Material* (London, 1897) William Carew Hazlitt lists 16 other survivors from Lamb's library (pp. 62-4). Among these is a quarto *Anatomy of Melancholy* confirming Leigh Hunt's observation that Lamb's library demonstrated 'a handsome contempt for appearances' ('My Books'). Hazlitt describes it as 'a very poor, ragged copy'. It is, of course, a first edition (London, 1621), for, as Lamb wrote in 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading',

I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the Anatomy of Melancholy. What need there was of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure? . . . The wretched [Edmond] Malone could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford Church to let him whitewash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare, which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eyebrow, hair, the very dress he used to wear.

A number of other volumes that Hunt mentions as belonging to Lamb or that Lamb himself refers to are included in Hazlitt's list of survivors. Among these is Jeremy Taylor's *A Course of Sermons for All the Sundays of the Year* (London, 1678), now at Yale; Lamb purchased the book in 1798. Hazlitt also lists Sir Thomas Browne's *Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors* (London, 1658) and George Wither's *Poems* (Bristol, 1820). The Wither was edited by Lamb's friend John Matthew Gutch. The book later belonged to Swinburne, who wrote of it in his *Essays and Reviews* (1886); later still it became the property of the American collector John A. Spoor; at the sale of his library in 1939 it brought \$650.

That great collector of eighteenth-century books, A. Edward Newton, cherished Lamb; his manuscript of 'Dream Children' was among his most valued possessions. Newton owned

<sup>8</sup> Lucas ii. 454.

Lamb's copy of Thomas Fuller's *The Holy (and Profane) State* (3rd ed., London, 1652). This item fetched \$250 at the 1941 sale of Newton's library. The catalogue description shows it was truly Lamb's: 'Some of the lower margins are ragged, and the titles and Index have been added from another copy'. Newton also owned Reynolds' *The Triumph of God's Revenge Against the Cryinge, & Execrable Sinne of . . . Murther*, with Coleridge's annotation. This volume, sold for \$30 in 1848 and \$110 in 1897, brought \$325 in 1941.

In *Old and Rare* (New York, 1974), Madeleine B. Stern reports on the discovery of Lamb's copy of Tobias Smollett's *Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (London, 1819) in upstate New York. The volume bears Lamb's note 'Bloomsbury / Ch. Lamb / Hart Street / Oct 1834'. Stern observes that in October 1834, Lamb wrote to H. F. Cary, assistant librarian of the British Museum, of a visit to the Elgin Marbles. He had also gone to Bloomsbury to sit for his portrait at the studio of Cary's son, which was located in Hart Street, near the Museum. Since Lamb died on 27 December 1834, the Smollett would have been among the last books he bought. Stern sold the book to another dealer, Walter Schatzki, in 1965, and efforts to trace it farther have been unavailing.

But where are 'the sweetest names which carry a perfume in the mention', Christopher Marlowe and William Drummond of Hawthornden? Where are the Paracelsus and Raymond Lully in need of renovation? What has become of Sir Charles Grandison, or the Montaigne for which, according to Hunt, Lamb gave two shillings? What has become of the folio Chapman that Hunt reported seeing Lamb kiss? In Appendix III of his *Life of Charles Lamb* E. V. Lucas lists over two hundred authors that were likely to have been represented on Lamb's shelves, and the figure excludes Lamb's beloved Elizabethan dramatists. Woodring reports on the sale of the effects of Richard Charles Jackson. Goddard and Smith conducted the auction on 23-5 July 1923, at 185 Camberwell Grove. According to *The Times* for 23 July 1923, 'Some articles of the furniture are stated to have belonged to Charles Lamb, Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, and William Blake, and to other celebrities' (p. 10). Lots 920-5 contained the purported 'Lamb's Collection of Books', 116 volumes that the bookseller Thomas Thorp bought for £4.4s. Woodring doubts the legitimacy of the purported Elian association.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, as the Stern discovery indicates, other Lamb books probably have survived. The author would appreciate hearing from institutions, collectors, and booksellers who own or have dealt with books from Lamb's library. Perhaps someday it will be possible to reassemble the volumes on paper if not on shelves and so at least in part repair the ravages of Mutability.

<sup>9</sup> Woodring 378-80.

## The Progress of Genius? James Beattie and *The Minstrel*

By ROGER ROBINSON

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JAMES WHO? is the usual response when I tell my friends that I have developed a deep interest in James Beattie. But it isn't a question which any literate person would have asked in the years between the birth of Charles Lamb in 1775 and the death of Wordsworth in 1850, when Beattie and *The Minstrel* enjoyed an immense reputation.

It was Wordsworth who first interested me in Beattie. I had read how deeply affected the young Wordsworth was by Beattie's *Minstrel*, and how Dorothy wrote that William at 17 was exactly like Edwin - the young Minstrel in Beattie's poem.<sup>1</sup> Beattie's influence on Wordsworth's early poetry is generally acknowledged, but there's a strong case that *The Minstrel* also influenced *The Prelude*, and, even more strikingly, *The Excursion*. The boyhood and youth of the pedlar in *The Excursion* is so like that of Edwin in *The Minstrel* that it is hard to believe one is not reading about the same person.<sup>2</sup> Beattie was admired and imitated by three generations of poets including Cowper, Burns, Bowles, Scott, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Clare, and Tennyson. The best account of the influence of *The Minstrel* is in an unpublished Harvard Ph.D. thesis of 1927 by Earl Aldrich. He didn't actually like *The Minstrel*, and he wanted to strangle Edwin, but he made the staggering claim - and backed it up - that it was the most influential poem published between *Paradise Lost* and *Lyrical Ballads*.<sup>3</sup>

But this afternoon I am going to talk primarily about Beattie himself and his poem, rather than about his influence. I'm going to tell you about his life and *The Minstrel*, to ask how he came to write it, and how, having come so near the ideas of Wordsworth and the Romantics, he didn't get any further. And I shall say a bit about Charles Lamb on the way.

### *Beattie's Life*<sup>4</sup>

James Beattie was born in 1735 at Laurencekirk, a village 30 miles south of Aberdeen. He was the youngest child of a farming family. He went to the parish school, and at 14 he won

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Jane Pollard, 10 and 12 July 1793, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805* ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967) (hereafter *EY*), pp. 100-1.

<sup>2</sup> Many critics have shown this, starting with John Wilson in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 44 (1838) 508-23.

<sup>3</sup> Earl A. Aldrich, 'James Beattie's Minstrel: Its Sources and Influence', Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1927, p. 286.

<sup>4</sup> The main biographical sources are Alexander Bower, *An account of the life of James Beattie* (London, 1804); W. Forbes, *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie* (2nd ed., 3 vols., Edinburgh, 1807) (hereafter *W. Forbes*); M. Forbes, *Beattie and His Friends* (Altrincham, 1990) (hereafter *M. Forbes*); R. S. Walker, *James Beattie's London Diary 1773* (Aberdeen, 1946); R. S. Walker, *James Beattie's Day-Book 1773-1798* (Aberdeen, 1948). Aberdeen University Library has a large collection of letters to and from Beattie, mostly unpublished, as well as a copy of Bower's life with annotations written in 1804 by William Robertson, who was a pupil in Beattie's school at Fordoun. I am grateful to Aberdeen University Library for permission to study and quote from the Beattie material in the Department of Special Collections and Archives, and particularly to Colin McLaren, Head of Special Collections and University Archivist, and to Mrs M. I. Anderson-Smith and Ms Jane Pirie, for their kind help.



a bursary to Marischal College, one of the two separate colleges of the University of Aberdeen. He graduated MA at 17, and became village schoolmaster at Fordoun, where he stayed five years. Fordoun is only six miles from his original home, but whereas Laurencekirk is in the flat area called the Howe of the Mearns, Fordoun is in a landscape of hills and wooded glens. It was there he developed his love of hills, nature and solitary places, and he began to get poetry published in the *Scots Magazine*.

In 1758 he was appointed master at Aberdeen Grammar School, and so he went from an isolated village school to a city with a most flourishing intellectual life at the height of the Scottish Enlightenment. In 1760 he had a remarkable academic promotion, and just before his 25th birthday became Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at Marischal College, which post he held for the next 40 years. He was a gifted teacher, and what he taught was good. The final year students for whom Beattie was responsible were only 17, and he had a real pastoral concern for them. Moral philosophy had a very wide brief - indeed Thomas de Quincey once said, 'Moral Philosophy, in the large use of that term by the Scotch, offers so immeasurable an expanse that two people might wander there for a whole lifetime and never happen to meet.'<sup>5</sup> So Beattie was able to set his own agenda, and increasingly his priorities were to give his students a love of literature and learning, a trust in the Christian faith, and a spirit of universal benevolence.<sup>6</sup> For example, from the 1760s his lectures included a passionate attack on the slave trade.

What first made Beattie famous was his *Essay on Truth* (Edinburgh, 1770). He believed the ideas of Hume and the sceptical philosophers were wrong in logic and reasoning, and bad for religion and morals, and that is what he set out to show. His ideas weren't original, but he presented them in a more direct and combative way.<sup>7</sup> The essay was a huge success, though not an expected one to Beattie or to his publisher, Kincaid. When Kincaid was shown a 600 page manuscript entitled 'An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism', he understandably wasn't sure that it would sell. He was wrong, and the *Essay* was a triumph - especially in London, and among those who saw it as a defence of religion. So Beattie was warmly received on a visit to London in 1771, where he met Dr Johnson and practically everyone else in literature, the arts and the Church. His fame rose even higher when it became known that he was the author of a new anonymous quarto poem - the first book of *The Minstrel*.

In 1773, Beattie had an even more successful visit to London. He was honoured everywhere. He received an honorary degree at Oxford. Reynolds painted an allegorical portrait of him called 'The Triumph of Truth', and King George III met him at Kew, and granted him a pension of £200 a year.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by R. B. Sher, *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment* ed M. A. Stewart (Oxford, 1990), p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> Beattie's lectures were summarized in *Elements of Moral Science* (2 vols., Edinburgh 1790, 1793). See also M. J. Wagner, 'An Analysis of the Critical and Philosophical Writings of James Beattie', Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, Illinois, 1956; J. J. Carter and J. H. Pittock, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987), p. 5; P. B. Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment* (Aberdeen 1993).

<sup>7</sup> In 1701 Beattie became a member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (the 'Wise Club'), consisting of Professors from the two Aberdeen Colleges, and other men in the city of literary interests. They met every fortnight at an inn; one of them read an essay which was discussed at length, and they then had a 'simple supper'. This gave the young Beattie the chance to meet men of fame and intellectual distinction, like Reid, Campbell, Gregory and Gerard. Much of Beattie's prose work, on philosophy and literature, had its first airing there, and was no doubt sharpened by the discussions.

The rest of Beattie's life can be fairly quickly told. His reputation progressively rose both in Britain and abroad. He was offered lucrative posts in the Church of England, but refused them for very virtuous reasons, and remained dedicated to his teaching duties in Aberdeen. But his remaining life there was sorrowful. His wife developed a serious mental illness. He had two gifted sons, both of whom died in early manhood, and after that Beattie himself went into a final decline, and died in 1803.

I want to make two comments about this story before we move on to *The Minstrel*. There's been a tendency to romanticize the ruggedness and poverty of Beattie's early life, in contrast to his later celebrity. They were a fairly humble family, but they were far from destitute. His father was a tenant farmer and kept a village shop. Farming life was tough in Scotland in the eighteenth century, but the Howe of the Mearns was not a barren highland - it was reasonably fertile, though inclined to be boggy. And the childhood of this boy who lost his father at seven was neither emotionally nor intellectually deprived. He had his mother, and five touchingly affectionate elder siblings. Intellectually, learning was valued in the family, who made sure he had the chance to go to the University. His father had been highly literate, the parish school had a high classical reputation, and the minister of the kirk lent James books.

That brings me to a theme which I have increasingly felt runs right through this story - and which I've felt very strongly in my pursuit of Beattie - the very high regard in which education and learning were - and are - held at all levels in Scotland.

The Parish Schools in Scotland in the eighteenth century were open to all, and children of all social classes went to them. The education was good, because the teachers were often bright young Masters of Arts, who would move on to other posts. At Marischal College, professorships were all crown appointments, in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellions, and they were made by a process of political canvassing and jobbing, which fundamentally was highly disreputable.<sup>8</sup> What redeemed it was that the noblemen with the political power in Scotland minded very much about the academic excellence of the Universities. The men who engineered the appointment of the young James Beattie had absolutely nothing to gain from it except to bring an unusually gifted teacher and writer to Marischal College. That was why Aberdeen at that time had men of outstanding talent in the two colleges, also including Alexander Gerard and Thomas Reid.

So the young Beattie was a beneficiary of this Scottish love of learning, and in later life he was a great contributor, for in north-east Scotland in the eighteenth century the powerhouse of this tradition of learning was Marischal College, and for the last 40 years of the century it was epitomized there by James Beattie.

### *The Minstrel*

Our real interest in Beattie is that he wrote *The Minstrel*, which was published in two separate books in 1771 and 1774. It's in Spenserian stanzas and each book was originally of 62 stanzas, so the final poem has 1100 lines.

Beattie explained in the Preface that 'the design was, to trace the progress of a Poetic genius, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as A MINSTREL, that is, an itinerant poet and musician'.

<sup>8</sup> R. L. Emerson, *Professors, Patronage and Politics: the Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1993).

Edwin is the only child of a simple pious shepherd family in Scotland. From his earliest days he is thoughtful, he loves solitude, mountain scenery and all aspects of nature, and he has a vivid imagination. First, we hear about Edwin and his gentle, strange, rather solitary character:

Deep thought oft seem'd to fix his infant eye . . .  
Silent when glad; affectionate, though shy;  
And now his look was most demurely sad;  
And now he laugh'd aloud, yet none knew why.  
The neighbours stared and sigh'd, yet bless'd the lad:  
Some deem'd him wondrous wise, and some believed him mad.

[He] roam'd at large the lonely mountain's head;  
Or, where the maze of some bewilder'd stream  
To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led,<sup>9</sup>

His heart, from cruel sport estranged, would bleed  
To work the wo of any living thing,<sup>10</sup>

Moorman believed those lines dissuaded Wordsworth from blood sports in adolescence.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Edwin prefers to savour the mountain scene:

Lo! where the stripling, wrapt in wonder, roves  
Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;  
And sees, on high, amidst th' encircling groves,  
From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine:  
While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join,  
And Echo swells the chorus to the skies.  
Would Edwin this majestic scene resign  
For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies?  
Ah! no: he better knows great Nature's charms to prize.<sup>12</sup>

There is a remarkable description of sunrise seen from a hill, which foreshadows Wordsworth's Hawkshead dedication walk in *Prelude* Book IV:<sup>13</sup>

And oft he traced the uplands, to survey,  
When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,  
The crimson cloud, blue main, and mountain grey,  
And lake, dim-gleaming on the smoky lawn;  
Far to the west the long long vale withdrawn,  
Where twilight loves to linger for a while;  
And now he faintly kens the bounding fawn,

<sup>9</sup> *Minstrel* i 16, 17. Quotations from *The Minstrel* are from the 1784 printed text.

<sup>10</sup> *Minstrel* i 18.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: The Early Years 1770-1803* (Oxford, 1957) (hereafter Moorman), p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> *Minstrel* i 19.

<sup>13</sup> *Thirteen-Book Prelude* iv 330-9.

And villager abroad at early toil.

But, lo! the sun appears! and heaven, earth, ocean, smile.<sup>14</sup>

Here Beattie was certainly describing his own experience of seeing the sun rise over the North sea from Strathfinella Hill near Fordoun. The next stanza is even more remarkable, because, as Jonathan Wordsworth has shown,<sup>15</sup> it was substantially borrowed by Wordsworth for the description of the sea of mist in the Climbing of Snowdon episode of *The Prelude*.<sup>16</sup>

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,  
When all in mist the world below was lost.  
What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,  
Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast,  
And view th' enormous waste of vapour, tost  
In billows, lengthening to th' horizon round,  
Now scooped in gulfs, with mountains now emboss'd!<sup>17</sup>

Then the stanza which Dorothy Wordsworth told Jane Pollard exactly described William as she remembered him at age 17:<sup>18</sup>

In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,  
Fond of each gentle, and each dreadful scene.  
In darkness, and in storm, he found delight:  
Nor less, than when on ocean-wave serene  
The southern sun diffused his dazzling shene.<sup>19</sup>

We also hear of Edwin's Gothic imaginings and dreams, and when he is awakened from his dream he enjoys the sounds of the morning:

But who the melodies of morn can tell?  
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side;  
The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;  
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried  
In the lone valley; echoing far and wide  
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above;  
The hollow murmur of the ocean-tide;  
The hum of bees, and linnet's lay of love,  
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.

The cottage-curs at early pilgrim bark;  
Crown'd with her pail the tripping milkmaid sings;  
The whistling plowman stalks afield; and, hark!  
Down the rough slope the ponderous waggon rings;  
Through rustling corn the hare astonish'd springs;

<sup>14</sup> *Minstrel* i 20.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: the Borders of Vision* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 310-12.

<sup>16</sup> *Thirteen-Book Prelude* xiii 40-59.

<sup>17</sup> *Minstrel* i 21.

<sup>18</sup> *EY* 97-8

<sup>19</sup> *Minstrel* i 22.

Slow tolls the village-clock the drowsy hour;  
The partridge bursts away on whirring wings;<sup>20</sup>

The ponderous waggon and the astonished hare in the corn made their way into Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk*.<sup>21</sup> In bad weather

. . . when against the winter's drenching rain,  
And driving snow, the cottage shut the door<sup>22</sup>

Edwin listens to stories from the Beldame. He's particularly moved by the story of *The Children in the Wood*, and I shall come back to that. But he doesn't stay indoors long, and,

Oft, when the winter-storm had ceased to rave,  
He roam'd the snowy waste at even, to view  
The cloud stupendous, from th' Atlantic wave  
High-towering, sail along th' horizon blue . . .

Thence musing onward to the sounding shore  
The lone enthusiast oft would take his way,  
Listening with pleasing dread to the deep roar  
Of the wide-weltering waves.<sup>23</sup>

That was the passage that Wordsworth recalled as he walked on the hills near Lyme in 1795.<sup>24</sup> Very near the end of Book One there is a stanza which sums up Edwin's poetic growth in a way that would do for Wordsworth:

Meanwhile, whate'er of beautiful, or new,  
Sublime, or dreadful, in earth, sea, or sky,  
By chance, or search, was offer'd to his view,  
He scan'd with curious and romantic eye.<sup>25</sup>

In Book Two the poet warns us that he will change his lay 'And smite the Gothic lyre with harsher hand',<sup>26</sup> for Edwin must learn some of the harsh realities of life. He is now an adolescent, and he wanders further afield. In the last piece of romantic description of mountain scenery, we find him exploring a remote valley set among mountains, where he hears the voice of a hermit lamenting his past life, and the insincerity and corruption of those involved in worldly affairs. Edwin goes home deeply disturbed, but returns to meet the Hermit, who becomes his tutor. Edwin is attracted by science and philosophy, which the Hermit presents in millennial (and, I must admit, at times slightly comic) terms:

'What cannot Art and Industry perform,  
When Science plans the progress of their toil!'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Minstrel* i 38-9.

<sup>21</sup> Printed text of 1793, ll. 116 (borrowing from Beattie acknowledged by Wordsworth in a footnote) and 442.

<sup>22</sup> *Minstrel* i 43.

<sup>23</sup> *Minstrel* i 53-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Moorman* 287.

<sup>25</sup> *Minstrel* i 58.

<sup>26</sup> *Minstrel* ii 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Minstrel* ii 54.

Edwin seems to be achieving a balance between the world of imagination which had moved him as a child, and the world of reason presented by the Hermit, always remaining devoted to poetry:

But She, who set on fire his infant heart,  
And all his dreams, and all his wanderings shared  
And bless'd, the Muse, and her celestial art,  
Still claim th' Enthusiast's fond and first regard.<sup>28</sup>

However, we are left in some doubt about the outcome for Edwin, because the poem ends abruptly with a lament for the death in 1773 of one of Beattie's friends. Indeed, *The Minstrel* has been regarded as an unfinished poem, but I think this is at the most a half-truth. At different times Beattie said different things about his plans for the poem, but he probably never meant to take Edwin beyond the stage of *qualifying* to be a poet and minstrel. It was Beattie's friends such as Thomas Gray<sup>29</sup> who wanted Edwin to perform great deeds, or stir his fellow countrymen to slaughter the enemies of Scotland. Some extraordinary nineteenth-century continuations of *The Minstrel* had Edwin doing just this.<sup>30</sup> But the idea is totally incongruous, because what Beattie gave us was the childhood and development of a gentle, tender-hearted, introspective poet of nature and the imagination.

It would also be incorrect to suggest that the poet's own comments and meditations interfere with the continuity of the poem. Actually, they are of central importance, because, in one sense, the poem is a dialogue between the older poet and his young self. His younger self is represented by Edwin, and half the stanzas are directly about him. The older poet is represented both by his own comments and by those of the Hermit, who sounds suspiciously like a Professor of Moral Philosophy. And the theme of the dialogue, as of so much pastoral poetry, is loss. It's about the loss of childhood, youth, innocence, and simplicity. Seen in this way, there is no question of incompleteness, or a failure to bring Edwin to maturity, because the mature poet is there from the very first stanza.

What was it that so touched Wordsworth and the Romantics about this poem? The descriptions of natural scenery are fresher, and closer to real mountains and sounds and weather and light than a lot of eighteenth-century nature poetry. But did Beattie really have the same idea as Wordsworth of the moral power of nature? *The Minstrel* indicates that he did:

O how canst thou renounce the boundless store  
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!  
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore . . .

All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even . . .

<sup>28</sup> *Minstrel* ii 58.

<sup>29</sup> And Mrs. Montagu; see letter to Dr Gregory, 13 March 1771 (W. Forbes i. 251).

<sup>30</sup> Three continuations were published: (i) William Cameron, *Poems on Several Occasions* (Edinburgh, 1813), p. 45; (ii) R. Polwhele, *The Minstrel: A Poem in Five Books. The First Two Books by Dr Beattie; The Last Three by the Revd. R. Polwhele. The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry* (London, 1814), pp. 48-86; (iii) James Merivale, *Poems Original and Translated* (London, 1838), Vol. 1, pp. 3-34.

These charms shall work thy soul's eternal health,  
And love, and gentleness, and joy, impart.<sup>31</sup>

Whether or not that really articulates Wordsworth's idea of an active moral force in nature, there is a passage in Beattie's *Essay on Poetry* which does. I haven't time to say more about how closely Beattie's literary criticism anticipates Wordsworth's, but here is Beattie:

This happy sensibility to the beauties of Nature . . . purifies and harmonizes the soul, and prepares it for moral and intellectual discipline . . . and, as a strict analogy subsists between material and moral beauty, it leads the heart by an easy transition from the one to the other; and thus recommends virtue for its transcendent loveliness.<sup>32</sup>

That is a striking statement, and sounds very like the Wanderer in Book IV of *The Excursion*.

The Romantics were also moved by the figure of Edwin, by his innocence and simplicity, and by his response to Nature. Everard King<sup>33</sup> believes that they saw *The Minstrel* as a Romantic autobiography - an exploration of the growth of a poet's mind and imagination. But Earl Aldrich made a more startling claim: that the Romantics actually modelled themselves on Edwin: 'Edwin [was] . . . the ideal youthful poet, and as such was to exert a tremendous influence upon poets who were to follow him. He was to become their pattern . . . and in the pre-eminent case of Wordsworth to shape their conceptions of themselves and even their own lives'.<sup>34</sup>

It wasn't only poets who were moved by Edwin. One of the great eighteenth-century painters was inspired to paint his portrait. Two letters made me laugh aloud when I came across them in Aberdeen University Library. In 1778 Beattie received this letter:

As I have always found Men of Genius easy of access, and ready to assist in any work of Art, I shall without ceremony ask your advice - I have read your poem called the Minstrel . . . wh. I much admire, and have painted a picture from it, wh. as I intend to exhibit at the Royal Academy . . . I wish to have it as perfect in every respect as I can make it; therefore have taken ye Liberty to consult you about it.

It will be necessary first to describe the picture . . . I have made him a beautiful youth of about 16 or 17 . . . sitting under a rock on elevated ground wch. cuts upon a Mountainous Distance. He holds a small [musical] pipe in his right hand and reclines his cheek on his left, he looks Contemplative & penetrating . . . his hair in waving locks flows about his shoulders. The pipe alone will not characterise it sufficiently. Would there be any impropriety in engraving upon a large face of the Rock wch. is behind him two or four verses, supposing them to be *his own composing* . . . if so I wish you would think of such . . . I would suppose this rock a favourite Retreat of his, then no wonder if he wrote upon it, but of this you are the best judge. . . . Any observations that you will be kind enough to make will much oblige your very

Humble Servt

Josh. Wright . . . painter in Derby<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Minstrel* i 9-10.

<sup>32</sup> *Essays on Poetry and Music as They Affect the Mind* (3rd ed., London, 1779), p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> James Beattie's 'The Minstrel' and the Origins of Romantic Autobiography (Lampeter, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Aldrich 278.

<sup>35</sup> Aberdeen University Library MS 30/2/300. This correspondence was quoted by Hugh Honour, 'Two Letters from Joseph Wright of Derby', *Connoisseur* (November 1956), p. 188.

We don't have Beattie's reply, but a month later Joseph Wright again wrote to Beattie:<sup>36</sup>

I have now finished the young Minstrel, and sorry I am the thought of consulting you did not occur to me sooner, that I might implicitly have followed your ingenious observations. As far as I could, consistent with the situation of the picture (for it was far advanced), I have made alterations agreeable to your remarks, have introduced a Gothick Spire, terminated the distance with the sea, and made a bright streaky light in the horizon - but for the Harp . . . I cannot find room . . . indeed I have been hard set to bring in the scrolls of manuscripts without hurting the composition . . .

What charms me about this correspondence is that each man had innocently asked something quite outrageous - Wright that Beattie should compose a new poem, and Beattie that Wright should paint a new picture, and that neither seems to have been the least put out. The final picture had the Gothic spire, the scrolls and the graffiti, but no harp.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Lamb Connection*

But I hear you say, 'This is all very well, but where does Charles Lamb come into it?' I have to admit that the connection between him and Beattie isn't strong, though I could have spent an enjoyable hour telling you about the leads I pursued. The upshot was that Lamb was certainly well aware of Beattie's writing, that he had some aversion to Beattie's prose, and that he liked *The Minstrel*. His references to the prose are hilarious, and a bit derisive. In 1797 he gleefully wrote to Coleridge that he was reading 'Priestley's examinat of the Scotch Drs: how the rogue strings 'em up! three together!'<sup>38</sup> The three 'Scotch Drs' whom Priestley had attacked included Beattie and his *Essay on Truth*.<sup>39</sup> In the essay, 'Detached thoughts on books and reading',<sup>40</sup> Lamb classified the works of Beattie among books which are no books, which also include 'Court Calendars and Draught boards bound and lettered at the back . . . and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without".'

Why should Lamb have disliked Beattie's prose writings? I have one possible clue. In 1794, a Mr Chalmers in London wrote this to his brother in Aberdeen:

Present my kindest regards to Dr Beattie, and inform him of this testimony to his merit. When a youth goes to the University from Christ's Hospital he is presented with books to the value of five pounds. These are generally chosen by the headmaster, and Dr Beattie's 'Evidences of Christianity' are always part of the list. The young man may choose any other he likes, but that is never excepted. Dr Bowyer is headmaster.<sup>41</sup>

Beattie's *Evidences of the Christian Religion: briefly and plainly stated* was first published in 1786. If it was forced on the boys at Christ's Hospital by Bowyer, whom Lamb and

<sup>36</sup> Aberdeen University Library MS 30/2/302.

<sup>37</sup> The picture is now owned by Hambro's Bank, to whom I am grateful for the opportunity to see it. A colour reproduction appears in Judy Egerton, *Wright of Derby* (London, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Letter to S. T. Coleridge, 2 January 1797; *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (3 vols., London, 1935) (hereafter Lucas), i. 78.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Priestley, *An Examination of Dr Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, Dr Beattie's Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, and Dr Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense on Behalf of Religion* (London, 1774).

<sup>40</sup> *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. E. V. Lucas (5 vols., London, 1903) (hereafter *Works*), v. 172.

<sup>41</sup> M. Forbes 285. Aberdeen University Library MS 30/2/706.



Coleridge so much respected and feared,<sup>42</sup> and who once flogged Coleridge for being an infidel,<sup>43</sup> it might explain Lamb's dislike of Beattie's prose.

However, a more interesting connection than any of these is a sonnet to Mrs Siddons, written by Lamb and Coleridge in 1794. It refers clearly and directly to Edwin listening in winter to the stories told by the Beldame. In *The Minstrel*, Edwin hears with amazement and horror stories of hags who ply their trade among fiends at midnight, and the Beldame then soothes him with the story of the Children in the Wood, at which he sheds a tender tear. Now listen to the Lamb-Coleridge sonnet:

As when a child on some long winter's night  
Affrighted clinging to its Grandam's knees  
With eager wond'ring and perturb'd delight  
Listens strange tales of fearful dark decrees  
Or of those hags, who at the witching time  
Of murky midnight ride the air sublime  
And mingle foul embrace with fiends of Hell:  
Cold horror drinks its blood! Anon the tear  
More gentle starts, to hear the Beldame tell  
Of pretty Babes, that loved each other dear,  
Murder'd by cruel Uncle's mandate fell.  
Ev'n such the shiv'ring joys thy tones impart,  
Ev'n so thou, SIDDONS! meltest my sad heart!<sup>44</sup>

Every image in the first twelve lines of the sonnet, and many of the actual words, are from *The Minstrel*, and in 1794 the poetry-reading public would have recognized it. In fact, that is the point of the poem: that seeing Mrs Siddons acting is like the experience Edwin had listening to the Beldame. It's a tribute to *The Minstrel* as well as to Mrs Siddons. Lamb originally wrote the sonnet,<sup>45</sup> and it leaves no doubt that he knew *The Minstrel*.<sup>46</sup>

### *The Origins of The Minstrel*

I now want to explore the origins of *The Minstrel* - how Beattie made the imaginative leap into romantic, or at least pre-romantic poetry, and to ask why he then didn't take it any further.

Of the many poets who influenced him, I've time to mention only Virgil.<sup>47</sup> Beattie once remarked that his first introduction to English verse, before he was 10, was Ogilby's translation of Virgil. He remained deeply attached to Virgil throughout his life, and if one tried to summarise Beattie's own ethos, as seen in his poetry, his writing and his teaching, it would amount to something very like that of Virgil's *Georgics* - a deep personal piety and acceptance of God's will, a love of nature, and an attachment to hard work and the values of rural life.

<sup>42</sup> Lamb, 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital', *Works* i 145; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter 1.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London, 1989), p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Works* v. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Note by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, *Coleridge: Poems* ed. John Beer (London, 1986), p. 38.

<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, both Beattie and Lamb saw Mrs Siddons act (Lamb, 'My first play'; Beattie in Edinburgh, 1784).

<sup>47</sup> 'If I have any true relish for the beauties of nature . . . it was from Virgil and from Thomson that I caught it' (W. Forbes ii. 169).

Beattie's early poems have generally been dismissed as not worth bothering about, but they show early hints of his love of nature and landscape. A very Wordsworthian feature is his joy in the changes of light and sound that go with sunrise and sunset. Here is an evening scene at the end of 'The Hares', written before 1760.

Now from the western mountain's brow,  
Compact with clouds of various glow  
The sun a broader orb displays . . .  
The lawn assumes a yellower green . . .  
And falling waters murmur round.

That final line has a poetic idea which we particularly associate with Wordsworth,<sup>48</sup> but which Beattie used more frequently<sup>49</sup> - that mountain streams are better heard at night. I had an insight about this when I found the house where Beattie was born and lived as a child, because just outside it is a fast-running and quite noisy stream. Just as for the infant Wordsworth, the Derwent at Cockermouth 'sent a voice that flowed along my dreams',<sup>50</sup> Beattie throughout his childhood must always have heard a running stream at night.

I now want to jump to 1765, when I believe several events set the course of Beattie's subsequent poetry. In August, he heard that the poet Thomas Gray, was in Scotland. He introduced himself, they spent two days together at Glamis Castle,<sup>51</sup> and they talked in considerable depth about their poetry. All the poetry which Beattie subsequently wrote in Gray's lifetime was sent to him for comment and criticism. I think this very warm and searching meeting helped Beattie to decide what sort of poet he should be.

Also in 1765 Thomas Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. What excited Beattie was Percy's 'Essay on the Ancient English Minstrels', praising the ancient minstrel as a cultured and civilising figure, composing poems and music, and highly esteemed.<sup>52</sup> Beattie was inspired by this picture to create Edwin. He wrote to Gray, 'There is something in the character of the Minstrel there described, which struck me and pleased me'.<sup>53</sup>

But there was something else going on around 1765, and a clue to it is to be found in Beattie's poem 'Retirement'. In fact, these lines are the most frequently quoted Beattie lines of any work besides *The Minstrel*:

Thy shades, thy silence, now be mine,  
Thy charms my only theme;

<sup>48</sup> *An Evening Walk* (1793), ll. 434-5; *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), l. 4; *The White Doe of Rylstone* 964-5; *The Excursion* iv 1173-5.

<sup>49</sup> Beattie used the idea in his translation of Virgil's Ninth Pastoral (*Original Poems and Translations* [London, 1760]), *The Hermit* (1766), and *The Minstrel* ii 23. A note on this will appear in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* (forthcoming).

<sup>50</sup> *Thirteen-Book Prelude* i 275.

<sup>51</sup> M. Forbes 27.

<sup>52</sup> Later there was an acrimonious dispute between Percy and Joseph Ritson about this elevated view of the ancient minstrels; see K. Sutherland, 'The Native Poet: The Influence of Percy's Minstrel from Beattie to Wordsworth', *RES* 33 (1982) 414-33.

<sup>53</sup> *Correspondence of Thomas Gray* ed. P. Toynbee and L. Whibley (3 vols., Oxford, 1935) (hereafter Toynbee and Whibley), iii. 1084. I accept Beattie's often repeated statement that Percy's essay gave him the original idea for the poem, though Edwin's character owes little to Percy, and much more to Beattie's own early life, to Thomas Blackwell's *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, and to Rousseau's *Emile*.

My haunt the hollow cliff, whose pine  
Waves o'er the gloomy stream,  
Whence the scared owl on pinions grey  
Breaks from the rustling boughs,  
And down the lone vale sails away  
To more profound repose.

Wordsworth loved this owl stanza.<sup>54</sup> A myth has grown up that 'Retirement' and the owl stanza were written in 1758, when Beattie was the lonely young schoolmaster at Fordoun, and that it describes the glen there, of which he was very fond. I have seen the glen, and I do think the poem refers to it. But what has not been noticed is that the owl stanza and three others were not in the 1760 version but were added to the poem for the collection of 1766.<sup>55</sup> They deal with memories of former times and places, and with wishing to be back there, and they were written when Beattie was revising the poem about 1765 - not by the lonely schoolmaster in the glen at Fordoun, but rather by the busy Professor in Aberdeen. So Beattie was doing something Wordsworth would have understood - he was recollecting the scenes that had moved him several years earlier, and what he had felt there, and putting it into verse. And that is the final strand in the origin of *The Minstrel*. For in the picture of Edwin, he was recalling his own earlier days. In 1772 he wrote, 'I have made [Edwin] take pleasure in the scenes in which I took pleasure. . . . The scenery of a mountainous country, the ocean, the sky, thoughtfulness and retirement. . . .'<sup>56</sup> Soon after revising 'Retirement', he started *The Minstrel*.

#### *The Failure to Progress*

These are the influences which I believe led to *The Minstrel*. But now we come to the greatest puzzle about Beattie: why did he not progress further, from the germ of romanticism which we hear in *The Minstrel*, to true romantic poetry? Why indeed did he write almost no poetry at all after *The Minstrel*?

There is one possible clue in the published texts. The original books each had a Latin epigraph. That to the first book was from the *Georgics*:

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musae,  
Quarum sacra fero, ingenti percussus amore,  
Accipiant.

('Truly and first and before all things, may the sweet Muses, whose holy things I carry, struck with great love, take me to themselves.')

<sup>54</sup> It was in the album of verses he gave Lady Mary Lowther, published as *Poems and Extracts chosen by William Wordsworth for an album presented to Lady Mary Lowther Christmas 1819* (London, 1905). He also included it in a 'cento' in 1835; see *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (5 vols., Oxford, 1940-9) (hereafter *PW*), iv. 396.

<sup>55</sup> The well-known version of the owl stanza, quoted above, actually dates from *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1776).

<sup>56</sup> W. Forbes i. 267.

<sup>57</sup> Virgil, *Georgics* ii 475.

This is a strong dedication to the muses, to poetry. It refers to Edwin, but it is also Beattie's own dedication, and the continuation of the Virgil passage makes it a dedication to be a poet of nature.<sup>58</sup> I believe that was how Beattie saw himself in 1771.

In the edition of 1779 these Latin epigraphs disappeared. Beattie was no longer able to claim the powerful dedication to the Muses and to the poetry of nature. And the removal of the epigraphs was certainly no oversight, because in preparing the 1784 edition for the press, he said he had thought of using a motto from Virgil's ninth *Eclogue*, which translates, 'Time robs us of all, even of memory; oft as a boy I recall that with song I would lay the long summer days to rest. Now I have forgotten all my songs. Even voice itself now fails [me]'.<sup>59</sup> So he was thinking of replacing the original Virgil epigraph with its powerful dedication to the muse by another Virgil passage lamenting that the muse had left him.

Why had the muse deserted Beattie? I don't think it was because he couldn't finish *The Minstrel*, and though we could speculate about loss of romantic vision, I think the reason was something much more ordinary and depressing - the burden of illness, illness both in himself and in his family. The Beatties were a medical disaster. Beattie himself was hardly ever well, his wife developed some form of severe mental illness which made it impossible for them to go on living together, and both his children died, at the ages of 22 and 17, of tuberculosis.

The deaths of those two gifted and attractive boys, Jamie and Montagu, are a deeply poignant story, but they happened long after Beattie had ceased to be a poet. It was Beattie's and his wife's illnesses that were so important, though I find it tantalizingly difficult to make medical sense of their stories. Throughout life Beattie suffered from headaches and vertigo, and his letters from 1770 onwards are a constant story of being unable to work because of illness. He certainly suffered at times from depression. I am afraid his medical treatment was likely to have done him more harm than good.

If Beattie's own illness is enigmatic, his wife's was even more puzzling and far more devastating in its effect on the family. The story as generally given was that she suffered from some form of hereditary insanity, which she had inherited from her own mother, that this became apparent within a very few years of their marriage in 1767, that she became paranoid and aggressive, and that finally after 1781 they had to live apart, with her being cared for by special nurses. Two things worry me about this. What was the mental illness, and did Beattie treat her kindly or not? One difficulty here is that his main biographers have had reasons of friendship or family connection to think and say the best of him. Sir William Forbes, who, though an interested party, was also an honest and truthful one, insisted that Beattie always acted with the utmost sympathy and kindness to Mary Beattie in an agonizingly difficult situation. I have also wanted to think the best of Beattie, and, having read his unpublished letters around the period of the final breakdown, accept what Forbes said. They show Beattie riven by anguish, despair, and plain bewilderment at what was happening. But I remain puzzled as to what was the matter with Mary Beattie. There are strong suggestions of paranoid schizophrenia, but her total mental and physical disintegration seem to have occurred after the birth of their second child in 1778, so there may also have been an element of postnatal depression or psychosis.

<sup>58</sup> Beattie was not wholly original in choosing his dedication. It is quoted at greater length in Thomson's prefaces to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th editions of *The Seasons: Winter*. Gray also described Beattie as 'ingenti percussus amore' (Gray to Beattie, 2 October 1765, Toynbee and Whibley ii. 896).

<sup>59</sup> Virgil, *Eclogue* ix. 51, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), p. 69.

Lamb would surely have sympathized with Beattie in having what he called 'the sorest malady of all'<sup>60</sup> in the closest member of his family. But whereas with Beattie we have to view the story in the context of the attitudes to and understanding of mental illness in his time, Lamb's superb care of his sister Mary transcends any such special pleading. I don't believe Beattie was a Charles Lamb, but Mary Beattie's illness was a deep and lasting wound, and though we cannot date its onset for certain, it must have been the early 1770s - just the time that Beattie stopped writing poetry. I believe that, and, to a lesser extent, his own illness, were the main reasons.

### *Conclusion*

I have been exploring why Beattie's poetry flowered from promising but fairly ordinary beginnings to *The Minstrel* - a beautiful, and, for its time, rather extraordinary poem of nature and the imagination - and why it didn't flower further, into anything truly of the kind that Wordsworth and Coleridge would be writing 30 years later.

Beattie's subtitle to *The Minstrel* was 'The progress of genius', referring to Edwin. To Beattie,<sup>61</sup> Coleridge,<sup>62</sup> and Wordsworth,<sup>63</sup> genius meant originality, and Beattie himself didn't claim to be original. He once said his relish for the beauties of nature was caught from Virgil and Thomson<sup>64</sup> - very different from Wordsworth's belief from the age of 14 that no poet had ever looked at nature as he did.<sup>65</sup> You may feel I have used Wordsworth too much as a point of reference in this talk, and of course I am not suggesting that Beattie approached the same stature as a poet.

Nevertheless, I love *The Minstrel*, and I am fond of Beattie. He has helped my appreciation both looking forward from him and looking back. Looking forward, I appreciate and enjoy the achievement of Wordsworth and Coleridge more. But there is also the pleasure of looking back to the poets whom Beattie admired of a generation or so before him - like Akenside, Armstrong, Gray, and Thomson. They may be overshadowed by the romantics, but the poetic observation of nature was developing in their work throughout the century.<sup>66</sup> The reading of Beattie is friendly to the poetry which came before as well as after him. Friendliness is a quality valued in this society, and, on that note, it seems appropriate to give Beattie the final word. In 1757, when he was 21, he wrote 'An Epitaph' intended for himself. Here is the final stanza:

Forget my frailties, thou art also frail;  
Forgive my lapses, for thyself mayst fall;

<sup>60</sup> 'Poem to the Poet Cowper', *Works* v. 14. Lamb wrote to Coleridge, 15 April 1797, 'God bless us all, and shield us from insanity, which is "the sorest malady of all"' (Lucas i. 107).

<sup>61</sup> *Dissertations, Moral and Critical* (London, 1783), p. 146.

<sup>62</sup> 18 April 1830, Coleridge, *Table Talk* (Oxford, 1917), p. 80.

<sup>63</sup> 'Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe', 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface', *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (3 vols., Oxford, 1974), i. 95; iii. 82. Owen and Smyser 104 quote Duff and Gerard in a similar vein.

<sup>64</sup> W. Forbes ii. 169.

<sup>65</sup> Wordsworth's Fenwick note to *An Evening Walk*: 'I recollect distinctly the very spot where this first struck me. . . . The moment was important in my poetic history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country . . . and I made a resolution to supply . . . the deficiency. I could not have been at that time above 14 years of age' (*PW* i. 319).

<sup>66</sup> Myra Reynolds, *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry* (Chicago, Ill., 1909).

Nor read unmov'd my artless tender tale,  
I was a friend, O man, to thee, to all.<sup>67</sup>

London

<sup>67</sup> First published *Scots Magazine* 19 (1757) 238; revised for *Original Poems and Translations* (1760).

## Review

MICHELINE CADILHAC, *Quelques Aspects de la Conception Romantique de l'Enfance*. Aix-en-Provence: The University of Provence, 1993. Pp. 20.

IT IS RARE INDEED that the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* should be called on to review a book which, except for a wide selection of quotations, is written entirely in French. Bearing the above title, the essay in question forms part of a longer study, 'L'Enfance dans la Littérature et la Civilisation Anglaise', published by L'Université de Provence. Mme. Cadilhac makes clear at the outset that these brief pages are limited to the works of William Wordsworth, William Blake, and Charles Lamb, and points out, justifiably, that, until the close of the eighteenth century, children, both in life and literature, were either ignored altogether or regarded as 'un élément accessoire dans un monde d'adultes'. Such famous figures as Little Nell, Paul Dombey and Little Lord Fauntleroy were the creations of Victorian sentimentality.

It is immediately apparent that Mme. Cadilhac has delved deep and enjoys a wide knowledge of the works of the three writers in question, as proved by the variety and appropriateness of her choice of quotations. However, it is not easy to avoid the conclusion today that we are justified in viewing with some doubt the 'innocence' and ecstasies of that period of our lives when we were most vulnerable and unable to cope for ourselves. Wordsworth considers that 'shades of the prisonhouse begin to close around the growing boy'. True enough, but may we not well ask if there were no 'prisonhouse' earlier? 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy'. Does it indeed? And elsewhere he speaks of 'delight and liberty, the simple creed of childhood' - a further rash assumption. Blake, in a poem that can hardly be included among his best, tells us of 'Pretty joy, sweet joy but two days old', which we may well think a little naïve. Apparently he had never heard the grim query, 'What crimes have these children committed that they should be born?' Freud comments perceptively on the 'innocence' of childhood, and we would do well to note what he says. Behind all such talk of 'joy' lay the social conditions of the times, when many of the population were permanently hungry, if not starving, or maintaining themselves with long hours of work under appalling conditions. Lamb even manages to treat with characteristic whimsicality that sad figure, 'le petit ramoneur', the pathetic child chimney-sweep, covered in dirt and soot after being driven to perform the dangerous task of climbing inside domestic chimneys.

Conditions of living both for young and old have improved since those days and we may rejoice accordingly. A further cause for satisfaction is the close interest in the Romantics from across the Channel. French literature abounds in distinguished writers of both poetry and prose, but one to compare in personality and style with our own 'Charles Agneau' does not readily come to mind. We must hope that firmer links with Europe will include those concerning literature and the arts. In the meanwhile we must express our gratitude and appreciation to the 'Université de Provence' in general and Mme. Micheline Cadilhac in particular for their most praiseworthy efforts.

London

C. J. BRANCHINI

## Society News and Notes from Members

*Bill Ruddick (1939-1994)*

My friend and colleague, Bill Ruddick, had been ill for over two years, but his death, which came in the middle of the Wordsworth Winter School, on 8 February, nevertheless came as a shock. He was busy and active to the end. Shortly after last summer's Wordsworth Conference he wrote to me of how 'I did join Nick [Roe] on the Grisedale Hawse slog from Ullswater back to Grasmere . . . and despite rain, wind, much mud underfoot and all the rest of it I seemed to keep up'. In recent months, besides his editorship of this journal, he published numerous articles, including a major piece on Lamb and Godwin (*CLB NS 84* [1993] 136-42), a contribution to *Reflections on Revolution* ed. Kelvin Everest and Alison Yarrington, and an entire volume on Gray, co-edited with his colleague, Bill Hutchings. He wrote Richard Wordsworth's obituary, and I finalized the text of the belated January *Bulletin* with him, only days before his own death.

Bill took over from Mary Wedd as editor of the *Bulletin* in January 1989. He was the ideal choice for the job, having a wide range of scholarly expertise within Romantic studies which, in the best Elian tradition, he combined with a shrewdness of judgement and an elegant and lively manner. He established his editorial style rapidly, and steered the *Bulletin* smoothly and confidently into the era of desktop publishing, maintaining a vigorous mix of articles from established Elians and those new in the field.

Although he downplayed his accomplishments, he was a distinguished scholar - not just in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, but in the field of art and design throughout the ages. In particular, he collaborated with Mark Turner on numerous projects arising from the Silver Studio, part of the present Middlesex University. Some of their work will appear in the July *Bulletin*.

Bill was loved by many, and he will be sorely missed.

Duncan Wu

*The Charles Lamb Society Bursary: Wordsworth Summer Conference at Dove Cottage 1994*

This is a final reminder that the closing date for applications for the Charles Lamb Society Bursary to attend the Wordsworth Summer Conference at Dove Cottage, 30 July-13 August 1994, is Saturday 30 April. Applicants for the Bursary (which this year amounts to £995) will be expected to be reading for a higher degree in the area of British Romanticism at an educational establishment in the United Kingdom. Candidates should send an account of their current work, and a curriculum vitae (including the names of two referees), to Duncan Wu, St Catherine's College, Oxford OX1 3UJ. We regret that applications received after 30 April cannot be considered.

### NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

*Annual General Meeting: Thursday 12 May, at 5 p.m. at the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury EC2P 2EJ* (nearest tube stations: Bank or St Paul's)

We are delighted to be holding our 1994 AGM at the Guildhall Library. Members please note the *day, time and place*.

Nominations for Officers and up to ten Council members should reach the General Secretary in writing by 4 May 1994, the consent of nominees having been obtained beforehand. The Council of the Society normally meets three times a year.

The Chairman's Report for 1993 is circulated with this *Bulletin*.

*Charles Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon* held on Saturday 19 February 1994 at the Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Prince's Gate, Kensington. Forty-nine members and guests met for the annual luncheon with the Society's President, Professor John Beer, in the Chair. The company included one Dame (Iris Murdoch), four Professors, six Doctors, as well as members from France, Germany, and Italy, and a new recruit to our faithful contingent of Old Blues.

Before luncheon, all stood in silent tribute to Bill Ruddick who had died two weeks before.

Graces 'before and after meat' were said by Grecians from Christ's Hospital. After the Loyal Toast and the Toast to 'The Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb', we adjourned upstairs where copies of Claude Prance's *Companion to Charles Lamb* were presented to Grecians Tiffany Day, Tamsin Barnbrook, Anthony Wilson, and Edward Hedger. Our Guest of Honour, Professor John Bayley, responded to the 'Immortal Memory' toast with a delightful talk on 'The Art of Occasion' (see pp. 42-6, above). The proceedings concluded with thanks to the President and to Professor Bayley by the Society's Chairman, Mr. D. E. Wickham.

#### *1994-5 Programme*

1995 will be our Diamond Jubilee year, so I shall be especially glad of suggestions for speakers, activities, and visits, as I embark on preparing our Programme. As the Symposium (on Bernard Barton) which opened our 1993/4 season was so enjoyable, members may wish to propose ideas for another meeting on similar lines. Notable bicentenaries will include T. G. Wainwright (born 1794), John Keats, and Thomas Allsop (both born 1795).

#### *A Travelling Secretary*

Having met Dr Prabhat Mathur in Delhi in 1993, I am looking forward to meeting our member Robert Durden in San Francisco in April. Alas - this will mean missing the Society's April meeting in Edmonton which I am sure will be a memorable occasion.

CLS members will have the opportunity of hearing the other half of the Misenheimer team when Jim speaks on 'Dr Johnson: The Ascent of Immortality' on 16 April at 3 p.m. at the Johnson Society of London's meeting at the Church of St Edmund the King, Lombard Street EC3 9EA.

#### *And Finally . . .*

From 'Endpiece', by Roy Hattersley (*The Guardian* 21.2.94):

This spring, the bookshops will be awash with anthologies. . . . A rag-bag may seem easier to defend than a collection which claims to exhibit special virtues or important characteristics, but it is, in truth, impossible to justify.

I cannot, for example, imagine how Faber defends the omission, from their *Book of Food*, of English Literature's most celebrated explanation of the popularity of pork - unless their editors mistakenly searched the reference libraries for Pig on Roast Lamb rather than Lamb on Roast Pig.

#### *Christ's Hospital Grecians at the Birthday Luncheon*

This may not be recorded elsewhere and is printed for the record. While sorting some of the Society's archives I found a letter dated 26 January 1946 from E. G. Crowsley to 'My dear Blunden' on the subject of arrangements for 9 February, the Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon for 1946:



A few days ago Mr. Edwards enquired if he could bring a C.H. boy with him so that the lad could recite a prayer, etc. You can imagine my reply. We should have a most interesting afternoon somewhat different from the usual Celebration.

D. E. Wickham

#### *Mary Saywell and her Album*

I regard Claude Prance's indispensable *Companion to Charles Lamb* as exhaustive, which means that I am always on the lookout for omissions. After ten years I have found one. Members may recall that the Charles Lamb Society owns Mary Saywell's Album, which contains an autograph poem contributed by Charles Lamb and was exhibited at the recent Archive's 'Open Day'.

While sorting some of the Archives I found a small bundle of correspondence dated April-September 1972 between a Mrs. Josephine Merrett of Bath and Angus Cheyne who was then our Honorary Secretary. Assuming that Claude Prance investigated the *Bulletins* fairly thoroughly, I doubt that these details have ever been published before.

Mrs. Merrett owned the Album and was willing to give it to the Society. A.C. hurried down to Bath to collect it and must have written later to ask for family details.

Mrs. Merrett had guessed that Mary Saywell was a schoolfriend of Emma Isola's. She now wrote that Richard Hill, who was a farmer at Kings Gate in Kent (i.e. the Isle of Thanet), had two daughters: Elizabeth, who married Richard Merrett, and Mary, who married Richard Saywell. Both families remained very close in later years, but the Lamb friendship was on the Saywell side, perhaps because of Richard, who was 'something in the City'. 'Charles must have visited the Saywell home, as he met Mary and wrote in her Album, it was passed with another Album . . .' and the rest of the letter is missing!!!

D. E. Wickham

#### *The Lambs' Grandfather - How to Catch up With a Source*

Members may recall that I asked in a recent *Bulletin* if anyone could identify the source of a remark by Charles Lamb on the lines that 'Miss's cousin is a lord'. No-one could help. It has since turned up as a press-cutting in my own Charles Lamb collection.

A letter entitled 'Lamb's Grandfather', contributed to the *Times Literary Supplement* of 7 March 1968 by E. E. Duncan-Jones of the Department of English at the University of Birmingham, quotes from an unpublished journal in his possession. It was written by the Revd William Harness, who, in the autumn of 1852, was staying at Swallowfield with his old friend, the elderly and infirm Mary Russell Mitford. On Wednesday, 8 September 1852, they 'talked a great deal about Charles Lamb, whom she did not think so highly of in his conversation and manners, as many others of my friends do. She gave as an example, her happening to reply to an enquiry of his, about Mr. Mitford the Historian, to say that he was a brother of Lord Redesdale the Irish Chancellor, when Lamb cried out to his sister, "La! Miss is cousin to a Lord! Our grandfather was a Cob[b]ler"'.

The contributor adds that 'This detail of Lamb's family history seems elsewhere unrecorded' and he wonders whether Miss Mitford realized that Lamb was adapting the remark of Miss Branghton in *Evelina* that so much delighted Dr. Johnson. 'Lord, Polly, only think! Miss has danced with a lord'. He then concludes that 'If she had recognized the allusion she might have admitted that Lamb was speaking with conscious vulgarity: but no doubt his remark would still have offended her as hinting that she was exulting in the glorious connexions of her family'.

D. E. Wickham

*Ecstasy and Panic: Episode in a French Bookshop*

August 1992. Colmar in Alsace. Almost unbearable picturesqueness. Half-timbering with a vengeance. Coloured plasterwork. Swiss-style carving and all with knobs on. Sunday lunch-time. There am I, in the only antiquarian bookshop, actually to buy postcards. From row upon row of gilt leather spines, one volume jumps out and hits me in the eye. *EXERCICES DE LAMB*. Said to be printed in Londres. Ah, ecstasy! In 1765. Oh, panic! Check title. Ah, again! Re-check spine. Oh again! Badly tooled and gilding now worn. Title-page confirms title as *Exercices de l'ame*<sup>1</sup> (of the soul). Ecstasy and panic subside. Buy postcards. Am mildly grumbled at because I pay with slightly too large a note. Leave shop.

D. E. Wickham

*An Unpublished Lamb Letter*

The photograph on page 75 reproduces a letter by Charles Lamb in my collection, dated 29 May [18]23, from East India House, and apparently unpublished. It would come between Nos. 474 and 475 in the second Lucas volume.

The correspondent addressed as 'Bifronted Sir' was identified by the dealer who sold me the letter as Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (1794-1847), 'Janus Weathercock'. Pressed for chapter and verse, he could only go back to the auctioneer's catalogue entry and suggest that it might be based on the original source of the letter, which was not stated.

Finding no other reference to such a mode of address, I wrote to our Vice-President, Professor Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., who had not met it elsewhere.

Then, for a final check on the spelling of Wainewright, I looked again in Jonathan Curling's biography, *Janus Weathercock* (London, 1938), which I had tried before when I had concentrated on the index. This time I noticed the author's introductory quotation from *The Merchant of Venice*:

Now by two-headed Janus,  
Nature hath fram'd such strange fellows in her time.

Two-headed, two-faced, bi-fronted. It helps, but there still does not seem to be any other contemporary internal evidence. Then the penny dropped. Assume that Charles Lamb is addressing Wainewright as Janus, the god with two faces. He says that he cannot bring his single face to the bifronted's Temple this week. I think that settles it.

D. E. Wickham

*For the Record - 'Recent' Westwoods*

Raleigh Trevelyan's book *A Hermit Disclosed* was first published in 1960. He was probably doing his main research during the 1950s, and he records on page 258 that 'Lists of addresses from the electoral rolls of Edmonton, Tottenham, Chigwell, Chingford and Epping Urban District Councils were sent to me . . . I found Westwoods who were descended from . . . a close friend [sic] of Charles Lamb'.

D. E. Wickham

<sup>1</sup> A French title but it is a French book. Compare and contrast with Charles Lamb's last-known letter, and remember to whom he sent it, because the fact might be useful to you one day in a somewhat bizarre concatenation of circumstances.

Bifronted Sir. It is not in my  
 power to bring my single face to your  
 Temple this week. I am calculating  
 deeply, & the programme of the ~~meeting~~  
 our hour, day, words, and means, and  
 such Presidents: but some day in the  
 next, say Tuesday, I perhaps will get you  
 to transfer your our meeting to Refectory?  
 I shall ask Greenham; that is Pringle,  
 and you. I am going to Meeting  
 immediately after.

Yours Truly

CL

B. J. 76.

29 May 23

*To See Themselves as Others See Them*

After six weeks of hammering away at William St Clair's *The Godwins and the Shelleys* (1989), I simultaneously reached the end of page 101, the eighth chapter, and my tether. I could not face the rest of the 572 pages of close-printed detail. Despite the praises heaped upon the work, I decided to turn to Gibbon, Proust, and other light classics.

However, before returning the book to the public library, I read what he had to say about Charles Lamb. It was a revelation. St Clair sees him from such a fresh viewpoint that, after quelling an urge to pepper the quoted text with exclamation marks to indicate editorial shrieks of surprise, it was like seeing an old portrait cleaned and re-varnished.

The only substantial reference is on pages 223-4. The author tells how Godwin discovered poetry but that, since many of the older authors had never been reprinted, he was forced to read early editions in the British Museum and noblemen's libraries. The [Napoleonic] wartime shortages which caused thousands of books to be broken up and used for wrapping paper made him and others who shared in this renaissance feel that they were in a race against time and so they tended to spend more money than they could afford. Then:

Charles Lamb, a noted book-collector, was soon to become one of Godwin's firmest friends . . . . Although a considerable writer and scholar in his own right, Lamb was unusual in having a salaried job at the East India Office which kept him more in touch with the affairs of the world - and more immunized from disasters - than those whose income depended solely on their pens. His habit of deflating a conversation by a well-placed pun made him the wittiest member of a circle more distinguished for earnestness than for fun. *The Essays of Elia* were later to be packed in Victorian suitcases and kitbags by exiles and travellers in search of English gentleness, but the examples of his conversation which contemporaries admiringly recorded for posterity only confirm that humour is a relative concept. [Here follows the 'Man as he is not to be' story].

That is that, more or less, though there is an anecdote worth repeating on page 226, where Hazlitt tells 'of a friend who quoted some lines which Godwin to his annoyance could not place. After searching in vain through the works of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson and other likely candidates, he asked Lamb for his help, only to find that Lamb had written them himself in his tragedy *John Woodvil*':

To see the sun to bed and to arise  
Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes,  
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him,  
With all his fires and travelling glories round him.

There is also an anecdote on page 246 about John Elwes, the meanest man in England who, while MP for Berkshire, and worth £100,000, is said to have eaten half a dead moorhen which he found at the side of his lake. It is irrelevant but one knows the feeling.

D. E. Wickham

*'Twas Ever Thus Indeed*

The synod made an ass of itself; - as synods always do. It is necessary to get a lot of men [and now women] together, for the show of the thing, - otherwise the world will not believe. That is the meaning of committees. But the real work must always be done by one or two men . . . [or perhaps we might now say fewer than a dozen men and women]

(Anthony Trollope, *The Claverings* [Oxford], p. 338)

D. E. Wickham