

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

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Editorial

TWO RECENT LECTURES open this number of the *Bulletin*. Carolyn Misenheimer is no stranger to these pages, and the present article on Southey extends her preoccupation with children's writing, in this case of an informal nature, during the Romantic period. Tom Craik's lecture on Jem White and *Falstaff's Letters* was originally suggested as a subject by my predecessor, Bill Ruddick, and its virtues are appropriately Ruddickian - combining insight and wit in just proportion. I am pleased also to welcome Nicholas Reid to the *Bulletin*; his article returns to the endlessly teasing subject of Coleridge's conversation poems.

Congratulations to Cecilia Powell, whose exhibition, *Turner in Germany*, opened to widespread acclaim on 23 May at the Tate Gallery, London. It will remain there until 10 September, and Elians are strongly urged to see it while they can; it moves on to Mannheim and Hamburg later in the year. The Tate is open from 10am to 5.50pm, Monday to Saturday, and from 2 to 5.50pm on Sunday. Admission is free.

And a reminder that the Kilve Court Weekend, which this year fixes its gaze on *The Ancient Mariner*, runs from 8 to 10 September. Speakers include Mary Wedd, Seamus Perry, Tom Mayberry, Peter Larkin, and David Jesson-Dibley. The event is essential for all Romanticists; further details may be obtained from Mrs Shirley Watters, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN.

The Membership Secretary asks me to remind members to ensure they keep her informed of new addresses. A recent check of the membership list revealed at least five changes of which she was unaware. All changes of address, please, to Mrs Audrey Moore, Shelley Cottage, 108 West Street, Marlow, Bucks SL7 2BP. Having said that, I should inform readers that, as from September, I myself will be relocated at the Department of English, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12, Scotland. As always, I shall be pleased to receive contributions, little or small, of any kind, from Elians everywhere.

Jem White and *Falstaff's Letters*

By T. W. CRAIK

Golden lads and lasses must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust -

JAMES WHITE is extinct, and with him these suppers have long ceased. He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died - of my world at least. His old clients look for him among the pens; and, missing him, reproach the altered feast of St. Bartholomew, and the glory of Smithfield departed for ever.¹

THE CLOSING PARAGRAPH of 'The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers' is Charles Lamb's elegy on his 'pleasant friend JEM WHITE',² as he calls him in the previous paragraph (too long to quote but too familiar to Elians to need quoting), in which he describes White presiding over the three tables of fried sausages that he provided annually at Bartholomew Fair for the young sweeps. This essay was first published in May 1822. In 'Distant Correspondents' (March 1822), an essay in the form of a letter to Barron Field at Sydney, New South Wales, Lamb urges his friend to come back before age has made the essayist hardly recognizable and forced his sister to walk on crutches:

Folks, whom you knew, die off every year. Formerly, I thought that death was wearing out. - I stood ramparted about with so many healthy friends. The departure of J.W., two springs back corrected my delusion. Since then the old divorcer has been busy.³

'Two springs back' has the exactitude of poignant regret: James White had died on 13 March 1820, just short of his 45th birthday and a month after Lamb's. The two had been school-fellows at Christ's Hospital, and White had remained in London, where he founded an advertising agency at 33 Fleet Street, still in existence at the end of the nineteenth century when the *Dictionary of National Biography* recorded his career - and, as R. F. White and Sons Ltd, at 72-8 Fleet Street in 1975.⁴ But it is as 'JAMES WHITE (1775-1820), author of "Falstaff's Letters"' that the *DNB* identifies him.

The original title-page of 1796 bears no author's name, for reasons that will appear when it is quoted: 'Original Letters, &c., of Sir John Falstaff and his friends; now first made public by a gentleman, a descendant of Dame Quickly, from genuine manuscripts which have been in the possession of the Quickly family near four hundred years.'

In 1796 an ironical reference to genuine manuscripts was highly topical, for the title of another volume dated in that year (though published in December 1795) had been 'Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments under the hand and seal of William Shakespeare: including the tragedy of King Lear, and a small fragment of Hamlet, from the original mss. in the possession of Samuel Ireland, of Norfolk Street.' Samuel Ireland was an engraver who also collected antiques and dealt in them. His son, William Henry Ireland, who like Lamb and White was born in 1775 though he never met either of them as far as I know, was put to study law in a conveyancer's office at the age of 17. With time on his hands, a

¹ Charles Lamb, *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford, 1987) (hereafter *Elia*), p. 130.

² *Elia* 128.

³ *Elia* 123.

⁴ *The Letters of Charles and Mary-Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marris Jr. (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8) (hereafter Marris), i. xxxv-vi.

plentiful supply of old paper from old deeds, and an inclination both to impress his father and to gratify his own creative urges, William Henry within a couple of years began to bring home Shakespearean manuscripts, including, besides those already named, a letter and verses to Ann Hathaway, familiar letters from the Earl of Southampton and Queen Elizabeth, and, most extraordinary of all, Shakespeare's deed of gift dated 1604 bestowing five manuscript plays upon one William Henry Ireland in gratitude for his saving him from drowning in the Thames. In spite of the oddity of these documents and his son's secrecy as to their provenance (he said they had come from a gentleman who desired to remain anonymous), Samuel Ireland exhibited them at his house, and remained convinced of their authenticity even after William Henry later admitted forging them. In the meantime public opinion was divided until the Shakespearean scholar Edmond Malone decisively showed from graphology, orthography, and historical fact that the documents could not be genuine. Malone's book appeared on 31 March 1796, by which time William Henry Ireland had a new Shakespeare play called *Vortigern* ready to appear at Drury Lane. Its first night, originally scheduled for 1 April but diplomatically postponed till the following day, was greeted with mounting hostility, and there was no second performance. I do not know that Lamb and White attended this first night, but I should be surprised if they did not.

Falstaff's Letters (to give it its short title) begins with a dedication to Samuel Ireland printed in black letter, and there are a few playful allusions to *Vortigern* in the text and notes, as I shall show in due course, but though Lamb's first reference to White's forthcoming book, in a letter to Coleridge, states that White 'took the hint from *Vortigern*', its connection with the Ireland controversy is slight. It was written not in response to Ireland's forgeries but in response to Shakespeare's plays. Lamb declares as much in a review, written more than twenty years later, for *The Examiner* (5 September 1819):

Not in authorship, or the spirit of authorship, but from the fullness of a young soul, newly kindling at the Shakspearian flame and bursting to be delivered of a rich exuberance of conceits, - I had almost said *kindred with those of the full Shakspearian genius itself*, - were these letters dictated. We remember when the inspiration came upon him; when the plays of Henry the Fourth were first put into his hands. We think at our recommendation he read them, rather late in life, though still he was but a youth.⁵

Lamb goes on to recall how, in their local tavern, which they called for the nonce the Boar's Head, 'over our pottle of Sherris he would talk you nothing but pure *Falstaff* the long evenings through.'⁶

It is now fully time to sample the letters themselves. They draw on the whole group of Falstaff plays, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry V* as well as the two Parts of *Henry IV*. One of the excellent things about the plays is the way Shakespeare adds more and more figures to their Falstaff scenes. In *I Henry IV* he already has Falstaff, red-faced Bardolph, nondescript Peto, and the highwayman Gadshill; these latter two disappear before the end of the play. The Hostess of the Boar's Head tavern also makes her first appearance. In *Part 2* he adds Pistol and Doll Tearsheet and Falstaff's page, and also, when Falstaff is recruiting for the royal army, Master Robert Shallow the Gloucestershire Justice of the Peace, his cousin

⁵ *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb* ed. Thomas Hutchinson (2 vols., Oxford, 1908) (hereafter *Works*), i. 247.

⁶ *Works* i. 248.

and fellow-JP Silence, and his servant Davy, as well as the recruits themselves, Mouldy, Bulcalf, Feeble and the rest. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* he adds the laconic Nym ('that's the humour of it') to Falstaff's entourage, brings in Justice Shallow again and with him a new character, his vacuous nephew Abraham Slender, and includes among the inhabitants of Windsor the Welsh parson Sir Hugh Evans and the French doctor Caius (Mistress Quickly being transplanted from the Boar's Head to become the Frenchman's housekeeper), and the rumbustious Host of the Garter Inn. Finally, when Falstaff dies (offstage) in *Henry V*, Shakespeare sends his followers to France, where they meet another Welshman, Captain Fluellen. In *Falstaff's Letters* most of these eccentrics either directly or indirectly appear. To begin at the end, the last letter is from Fluellen to Mistress Quickly, offering to pay Falstaff's funeral expenses even though Falstaff died owing him three pounds. I quote it in full, to show White's power of sustaining the verbal and mental habits of the character he is impersonating. Fluellen, you will recall from *Henry V*, is somewhat pedantic in his conversation: he interrupts Pistol, who is urging him to intercede when Bardolph has been sentenced to be hanged for stealing and who had mentioned Fortune, 'that goddess blind', with an elaborate description of Fortune's allegorical attributes to show that she 'is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation', and he compares Harry of Monmouth with Alexander of Macedon ('Alexander the Pig') because the one killed his friend Clytus while drunk and the other discharged the fat knight ('I have forgot his name') while of sound mind. He enjoys accumulating synonyms, he is fond of long words like 'athversary', 'peradventure', 'universal', and 'affability', and he muddles the parts of speech, using nouns as if they were verbs.

XXXV - Captain Fluellin to Mrs. Quickly

Got pless my heart! Captain Falstaff dead! Mistress 'Ickly, I hope he departed with the fear of his Majesty in poth his eyes, marry, and of Got too? His Majesty, to pe sure, was repukings and gallings to him, when his Majesty, look'e, was King upon the death of his fater; but that is nought - If he used his goot pleasures in the matter, look'e, Mistress 'Ickly, he might degrade, and create a trummer, or a fifer, or what is 'orse, the sutlers paggage-pearer o' the camp, of me, or of any captain. Sir John was old, most certain, and his preed might pe a matter pigger than I can recollection to have seen; put that, look'e, should not kill him a whit the more sudden. - 'hy, I did have letters from him, - when was the messenger arrive? Aye, yesterday is the week, 'tis in my pocket, advising of a kind of intention, marry, to empark for the enemy's coast with me and Captain Gower - 'tis a gypish and jokish, and as primful of the altogether Knight, o' my conscience, as one graff'd pippin might favour of another. - Put Death is fery ill and moody in his 'haviour and manners. - He is not the Gentleman, peradventure, in his intercourses, that I might observe of other his relatifes. - There was Ulysses the Greek had occasions and matters to discuss with Pluto - 'hy, he was received, look'e, pelow, as his rank merited - O, Death had a goot pattern in Pluto! - I have had readings apout Death - you shall hear -

And when he 'ould pe merry, he doth chuse
 The gaudy champer of a dying King -
 O' then he doth ope wide his poney chaws,
 And with rude laughter and fantastic tricks,
 He claps his rattling fingers to his side;
 And when this solemn mockery -

Put I will end with this solemn mockery. - You see, Mistress 'Ickly, that Death hath his vlouts, and his freaks, and his merriments, maugre what all the antient writers may afer; tho' o' my conscience, I cannot say, I did ever in any my pattles and skirmishes see him, look'e, so much as on a proad grin. - I am forget the lineage and family of the author; put it pe *Irish*.

Hath Captain Falstaff left any creat matters in the way of estate? Put that's no matter at all - send me the pill of his funeral charges, and I will pe three crowns in his debt to puy him a pound of lead to lay in. - So Got me 'udge, I affection'd the man, as a man, peradventure, might estimate of a prother, where there was only one in the family, look'e, peside the father and his ownself. - He was the fery person of all the 'orld to keep th' universal army in goot glee, when the athversary, o' my conscience, approach'd with his pike as far off as the jerk of half a stone. - Hath he left sons and daughters to represent and typify him in the 'orld? Let me pe advised o' this matter, Mistress 'Ickly. - I will promotion and make them as pig men under King Harry, as he that peget them of 'oman; that is, Mistress 'Ickly, upon the well fouchment, and pelief, and credit too, that they pe honest and goot subjects, and pe not given to porrowings and sackings. - O' my credit, there is three pounds Sir John did get advance of me py way of possets, which is no petter than dross - Put that look'e, is a matter of affapility between us, that I 'ould not discuss to an own prother. - He is dead, and I am three crowns in his debt, and there's the finish.

Got bless you, Mistress Quickly!⁷

The half-dozen lines of blank verse that Fluellen quotes in this letter are not, of course, to be found in Shakespeare, since the fiction behind these authentic letters is that their authors are authentic too and not fictions of Shakespeare's. The lines, however, are a genuine quotation - from Ireland's *Vortigern*, and hence the comment 'I am forget the lineage and family of the author; but it be *Irish*.' The last line of his quotation, 'And when this solemn mockery is ended', which he breaks off with the comment 'But I will end with this solemn mockery', is particularly apt because it was this line that provoked a storm of derision at the first night of *Vortigern*. This is the only direct quotation from *Vortigern* in *Falstaff's Letters*, but in those letters ascribed to Pistol there is a Pistolian imprecation which White annotates as follows:

The editor most respectfully appeals to Mr. Malone for the sense of this word so frequently in the Antient's mouth - Having in vain ransacked *Chaucer*, *Ben Jonson*, *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, *Middleton* and *Rowley*, &c, &c, &c, he is at length compelled to print it *literatim* from the MS. for the comments of more learned men than himself.⁸

Before I quote the passage I shall preface it with a little of the right Shakespearean Pistol (2 *Henry IV*, II iv):

These be good humours indeed! Shall pack-horses
And hollow pamper'd jades of Asia,
Which cannot go but thirty mile a day,

⁷ *The Falstaff Letters* by James White ed. Israel Gollancz (London, 1904) (hereafter *Falstaff Letters*), pp. 97-9. I am grateful to Geoffrey Bindman for kindly checking quotations against his copy of the first edition of 1796.

⁸ *Falstaff Letters* 103.

Compare with Caesars, and with Cannibals,
 And Trojan Greeks? nay, rather damn them with
 King Cerberus; and let the welkin roar.
 Shall we fall foul for toys?

White catches the insane bombastic swagger, the rhetorical questions, and the exotic allusions:

Shall paucity of phrase and impotence also,
 Curb manhood with the rein?
 And shall it chew the bit?
 Shall mutes and Asian dogs controul the tongue
 And shall not man speak free?
 Why then Avernus roar!
 Then Rhadamanth' his yawning floodgates ope,
 And Rowen' brim her chalice!
*Why then let icy death seize all,
 Yea, upward from the foot unto the lungs,
 And then the heart, perdy!*⁹

The last three lines are printed in italics because they again refer to *Vortigern*, not this time as a quotation but as a parody: the passage previously quoted had proceeded

And when this solemn mockery is ended,
 With icy hand thou tak'st him by the feet,
 And upward so, till thou dost reach the heart,
 And wrap him in the cloak of lasting night.¹⁰

(It will not have escaped you that Ireland was here, in his villain-hero's climactic scene, echoing Mistress Quickly's account of Falstaff's dying from the feet upwards.) The phrase 'And Rowen' brim her chalice!', which White appeals to the commentators to expound, alludes to Rowena in Ireland's play. She is the daughter of Hengist, the Saxon prince whom the usurping Vortigern has called in as his ally against the supporters of the rightful king whom he has deposed. I think I must quote their first meeting, where she presents Vortigern with wine at a banquet:

Ye heavenly powers! what lovely maid is this,
 Whose form might raise the blush in Dian's cheek?
Hengist. Rowena, sir; my daughter, and your slave.
Rowena (kneeling). All hail, great king!
Vortigern. O! thou most lovely maiden!
 Here let me pledge thee in this golden cup.
 On its smooth brim, I pray thee, print a kiss,
 That so I may inhale the roseate sweets,
 And taste the nectar of those vermeil lips. (*Takes the cup and drinks.*)
 This seat is empty; fair Rowena, take it:
 Would it were that Jove's haughty wife doth grace!¹¹

⁹ *Falstaff Letters* 35.

¹⁰ William Henry Ireland, *Vortigern* (London, 1832) (hereafter *Vortigern*), p. 52.

¹¹ *Vortigern* 40.

Vortigern makes her his queen (he has a queen already, Edmunda by name, but he divorces her); but in due course retribution strikes her as well as him (Ireland is now writing in the Macbeth, not in the Quickly, vein):

Enter an Officer.

Officer. My lord! my lord!

Vortigern. Wherefore dost tremble thus, paper-faced knave?

What news should make thee break thus rudely in?

Officer. Indeed, indeed, I fear to tell you, sir.

Vortigern. Speak, vassal, speak! my soul defies thy tongue.

Officer. Your newly married Queen -

Vortigern. Speak, what of her?

Officer. My lord, she hath ta'en poison, and is dead.

Vortigern. Nay, shrink not from me now; be not afraid.

There lie, my sword! and with it all my hopes.¹²

When White's Pistol invokes 'Rowen' and her chalice' he probably has her suicide draught in mind as well as the golden cup she presented to Vortigern, and no doubt a learned note could be written to that effect, pointing out that Macbeth's lines 'This even-handed justice - Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice / To our own lips' must have inspired White's phrase.

You may have wondered what on earth Pistol was writing to Falstaff about when he asked

Shall mutes and Asian dogs controul the tongue
And shall not man speak free?

He was replying to a letter in which Falstaff reported Nym's determination not to go robbing with Pistol any longer because Pistol's verbal mannerisms will give him away and get them both hanged. The sequence is typical of the way White invents occasions of correspondence. Falstaff ends his letter by proposing to steal venison in Shallow's park and then to get back into King Henry's favour by presenting him with it at Windsor. This is just sufficient to cover White's changing the scene from *2 Henry IV* to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The next document is not a letter but 'Deposition taken before Master Robert Shallow, and Master Slender, at Windsor', nor is it not a deposition neither, but a dialogue.

Shallow. Now, good man, what is your business? What is the matter that you would desire to disclose? Marry, I am of the Commission in the county of Gloucester; but if you have anything to depose, that is salutary, and beneficial, and for the welfare and good of his most gracious Majesty, I care not: - Robert Shallow, esquire, will take cognizance of it, though in the county of Berks.

Fellow. May it please your Worship, I'se a goatherd; and I'se a great matter to break. - Marry, your Worship, marry, when his Majesty's life's in danger from a caitiff-monster, an't it the duty of every honest subject to stand up and defend? An't that law? I would know that of your Worship.

Shallow. 'Tis among the statutes. - 'Tis the duty of every tall fellow, or he's liable to be 'peach'd upon the act as an abettor. - Proceed, good man - 'tis just, very just - marry, proceed. Trust me, a comprehensive fellow, Cousin Abram. - Marry, proceed.¹³

¹² *Vortigern* 51.

¹³ *Falstaff Letters* 36-7.

The goatherd, by the sort of by-paths and indirect crook'd ways that are usual with Shakespeare's numbskulls, finally reaches the apparition of the monster:

What does I hear, but a great roaring an it had been any large bull a neighing; not a horse, your Worship - and the river bulg'd up and swell'd like any - I humbly beseech your Worship that our Nel have a pension -

[here another page of digression]

Oh! good your Worship, I've almost done - When the water swell'd and swell'd, I perceived about a hundred paces a-head, a large creature rise up, mainly big, your Worship, about the belly, and it came slowly to the bank, an if it would land; and just then it roll'd over, and over, and over, of all the world like a huge tub, and then it so beat about and roar'd in the throttle! An' your Worship will give me leave, I'll try to -

Shallow. Marry, go on - proceed circumstantially - go on - what saw you more? - Depose briefly.

Fellow. When 'a had floundered, and flounc'd about some five minutes under water, 'a got on the land, and stood on its legs, and drew a great dagger and lifted in the air, and so shook its weapon at the castle, and roar'd! Good your Worship, I'm certain it hath a foul design against the King's life - that I'll be sworn of upon the book.¹⁴

Of course this was none other than Falstaff being tipped out of the buck-basket into the Thames; but Shallow, his head full of state affairs, jumps to quite other conclusions:

'Tis the Welchman Glendower, by my hopes of salvation through the pious and holy Virgin Mary! - The Privy Council must know it. - Here is a great conspiracy - I'll to the Council.

Fellow. Marry, your Worship, sure 'a was not a salamander! - The water smoak'd and smoak'd, that, body o'me, you might ha' poach'd an egg!

Shallow. 'Tis Owen the Welchman, a very doughty rebel - Fellow, be in readiness - you must depose at the Council - By the mass, a great traitor. - Be at hand.

Fellow. I humbly beseech your Worship that our Nel -

Shallow. Aye, aye - be in readiness - she shall be look'd to.¹⁵

From now until Fluellen's letter about Falstaff's death, all the rest of the letters - as many as have gone before - are devoted to the characters and situations of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In his review in *The Examiner* Lamb quotes at length one of the finest, Davy's letter to Shallow relating the death of Slender, who has pined away through disappointment at not marrying 'sweet Anne Page'. In the last few years we have been told so often that this or that novel or play is both funny and moving that we have probably all built up a resistance to the phrase, but it is genuinely applicable to Davy's letter, which I forbear to quote because most of it is readily available in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford, 1908). For the same reason I shall not quote three choice extracts which Lamb gives from Falstaff's letters to the Prince, one of them comparing Shallow's irascible facial expression to that of Moses, 'the lunatic Jew', about to break the Tables of the Law.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Falstaff Letters* 38-40.

¹⁵ *Falstaff Letters* 41.

¹⁶ *Works* i. 244-7.

Instead I turn again to Lamb's letters to Coleridge about White's book. In the first (27 May 1796), the one in which he says 'he took the hint from Vortigern', he adds that he will send Coleridge a copy upon publication: 'They are without exception the best imitations I ever saw.'¹⁷ On 5 July the book is still not out:

White's 'letters' are near publication. Could you review 'em or get 'em reviewed? are you not connected with the Crit: Rev:? His frontispiece is a good conceit, Sir John learning to dance, to please Madam Page,¹⁸ in dress of doublet &c from the upper half & modern pantaloons with shoes &c of the 18th Century from the lower half. - & the whole work is full of goodly quips & rare fancies, 'all deftly masqued like hoar antiquity' - much superior to Dr Kenrick's 'Falstaff's Wedding,' which you may have seen.¹⁹

On 28 October Lamb writes again, with some urgency:

What Review are you connected with? If with any, why do you delay to notice White's book? You are justly offended at its profaneness; but surely you have undervalued its wit, or you would have been more loud in its praises. Do not you think that in *Slender's* death and madness there is most exquisite humour, mingled with tenderness, that is irresistible, truly Shakspearian? Be more full in your mention of it. Poor fellow, he has (very undeservedly) lost by it; nor do I see that it is likely ever to reimburse him the charge of printing, etc. Give it a lift, if you can.²⁰

This letter seems to have had the desired effect, at any rate in extracting a review from Coleridge (*Critical Review*, June 1797; duplicated in *Monthly Review*, November 1797):

The humorous characters of Shakespeare have seldom been successfully imitated. Dr. Kenrick wrote a play called *Falstaff's Wedding*, in which he introduced the merry knight and his companions; but the peculiar quaintness of the character was lost by being sunk in modern wit. The author of the little work before us has, we think, been somewhat more successful, and must have given his days and nights to the study of the language of Falstaff, Dame Quickly, Slender, etc. His object, indeed, seems to be, to ridicule the late gross imposture of Norfolk Street; and certain it is, that, had these letters been introduced into the world, prepared in the manner of the Ireland MSS., the internal evidence would have spoken more loudly in their favour. But in whatever esteem they may be held as imitations, they argue no small portion of humour in the writer, who, we understand, is a young man, and this his first attempt. Our extract shall be confined to the Dedication.

In the same year the publishers made a second attempt on the market by reissuing the unsold copies as a 'second edition' with a new title-page bearing the additional sentence 'Dedicated to *Master Samuel Irelande*', which may have been intended to connect the book with Coleridge's favourable review.

Before turning to the Dedication it might be as well to say a little about *Falstaff's Wedding*, to which Lamb refers in his second letter to Coleridge, and to which Coleridge

¹⁷ Marris i. 4.

¹⁸ This should be Ford, not Page.

¹⁹ Marris i. 40.

²⁰ Marris i. 57.

refers in his review of *Falstaff's Letters*. William Kenrick (c. 1725-79) is described in the *DNB* as a miscellaneous writer who 'libelled almost every successful author and actor', including Goldsmith, Garrick, Fielding, Johnson, and Colman, and who received an honorary LLD from St Andrews for his translation of Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse*. In 1760 he published his historical comedy *Falstaff's Wedding* with a generous dedication to the great Falstaff of the age, James Quin, 'as an imperfect tribute to perfect merit'. In his preface Kenrick says that the piece, which was never staged and never meant for the stage, was written nine years earlier, in 1751 (the year of Quin's retirement), 'when the author was young and giddy enough to amuse himself, in a stuffed doublet, before a private audience, with an attempt at a personal representation of the humours of Sir John Falstaff.'²¹ Whether the 26-year-old Kenrick performed his own Falstaff or Shakespeare's Falstaff is not clear. Curiously enough, White followed Kenrick's example in physically impersonating Falstaff. John Mathew Gutch (1776-1861), another contemporary of Lamb and White at Christ's Hospital who later became a journalist and also commissioned the late Cary portrait of Lamb, wrote a memoir of White in which he states that his impersonations earned him the nickname of Sir John: he adds,

so successful was his imitating the character at a masquerade that he excited the jealousy of some of the company present, supposed to be hired actors for the occasion; who, with much ill-will, procured a rope and held it across the room (at the Pantheon in Oxford Street), and White was obliged to take a leap over the rope to escape being thrown down.²²

There is plenty in Kenrick's play besides Falstaff, whose wedding - to the 'old Mistress Ursula' mentioned in *2 Henry IV*, I ii - takes place off stage and is not even described like that of Petruchio and Katherine. The main plot links Falstaff to the Earl of Cambridge, Lord Scroop, and Sir Thomas Grey, who are conspiring to assassinate Henry V on the eve of his French campaign (as in *Henry V*). They incite him to kill the King because he has banished him the royal presence on coming to the throne, but honest Jack spills the beans and the grateful King reinstates him. This encounter, with Falstaff speaking prose and the King verse, bears out what Lamb and Coleridge say about this Falstaff's un-Shakespearean language:

Falstaff. My business is, my liege, principally to make your majesty an unworthy present.

King. A present! needed there so much formality;

This intercession for thyself in person,

To be the bearer of a paltry present?

And to what end? think not on any terms

But those of thy repentance and amendment,

King Henry's favour ever can be purchas'd.

Falstaff. Nay, my liege, this present is not properly my own, nor indeed made with a view to my particular emolument. I am employ'd herein by certain great personages of your majesty's court; who, I imagine, were afraid, or asham'd, to present so improper an offering in their own persons.

King. Trifler! What is't?

²¹ *Falstaff's Wedding. A Comedy. Being a sequel to the Second Part of the Play of King Henry the Fourth. Written in Imitation of Shakespeare, By Mr. Kenrick* (London, 1760) (hereafter *Falstaff's Wedding*), p. iv.

²² Quoted in *Falstaff's Letters* xi.

Falstaff. A - dagger, my liege.

King. Ha!

Falstaff (kneeling). See, here it is. (*Presents it to the King, and rises.*) Your majesty will doubtless pardon me, that I fail in so material a part of my commission, as that of lodging it deep in your left breast.²³

Even when he is speaking to Bardolph, and drawing a truly Falstaffian comparison, this Falstaff's idiom is not quite secure:

God forgive me - but when thou rann'st behind the hedge, in fear of the officer, I could not help comparing him and thee to Moses and the burning-bush. But thou wilt in time be consumed: thy fire must out.²⁴

'I could not help comparing him and thee to Moses and the burning-bush'; I imagine that White would have written 'methought he and thou showed like Moses and the burning-bush.'

Yet White may have owed something to Kenrick. In *Falstaff's Wedding* Falstaff comes to Mistress Quickly's tavern and tells her how he was crushed and abused in the crowd at Henry V's coronation, and presently Peto brings in Pistol who has also been roughly handled. In *Falstaff's Letters* all this is quite transmuted. Falstaff describes to Pistol how he was not only pushed over but people stood on him to get a better view of the procession:

Thou knowest I was trodden down like sugars for an export - yea, I was made a convenience - I was shap'd into a Promontory, which spectators of a subaltern height did flock to for a sight of passing Majesty - They did ascend and course o'er my belly like pismires, ants on a mole-hill, save that the compression was greater. - But 'twas ever the nature of Man to trample on fallen greatness - 'tis no marvel.²⁵

As for Pistol, he and his fellows had been filching in the coronation crowd. Falstaff again is White's mouthpiece:

Here is Bardolph doth protest, 'twas thou who didst slight him from foot to foot throughout the croud at the Installation: thou hadst robbed with him in the purlieus of the town, and the knaves did recognise thy quaintness of phrase; thy Shibboleth, Antient, thy Shibboleth. - Oh! 'tis most damn'd to be mark'd like a tupp'd ewe. - A slenderness of heel was indeed friendly to thy own retreat; but the Corporal, Heaven protect his parts! was compell'd to borrow expedition, marry, without pledge, and retire into himself like a hedgehog, that so he might travel with the better ease on the toes of the town - Ha! ha! ha! O' my conscience, I marvel he blaz'd not like the Phoenix - he had fire and faggot on his side - his nose for a kindle, and his carcase for a fuel; and both in close league.²⁶

To return to the Dedication, and the Preface that follows it: they can be found reprinted in the editorial notes at the back of Volume 1 of the Oxford edition of the *Works*. As the editor says, there is good reason for thinking that Lamb himself wrote them to give a boost to his friend's collection of imaginary letters. The Dedication is printed in black letter, as I have mentioned, and it is also written in archaic diction with antique spelling - not so

²³ *Falstaff's Wedding* (V. xi.).

²⁴ *Falstaff's Wedding* (III. vi.).

²⁵ *Falstaff Letters* 30.

²⁶ *Falstaff Letters* 32-3.

unremittingly and extravagantly false-antique as the all-but-unreadable spelling of the Ireland forgeries, however, in which the *DNB* remarks 'a reckless duplication of consonants'. Its tone is playfully ironic, complimenting Ireland on the treasures he has dug from the mines of antiquity, comparing them with the Rowley Poems brought forth at Bristol 20 years before ('Tho' there be, who stycke notte to affyrme that the antique Rowley was noe oder thanne the stryplinge Chatterton, therein erring'), and foretelling the time 'when the overcharged cloudes of scepticysme muste incontinentlye vanish before convictione's serener Welkin, and Edmonde [Malone, that is] shall in vayne resume hys laboures.' Finally Ireland's attention is called to the frontispiece:

Arreste thyne eyne - looke backe atte the goodlye figure of the auntient Knighte - naye, looke notte cursorye, it is the impresse of a ryghte venerable picture traunsmitted downewardes throughe our house forre foure hondredde yeares. - Seest thou notte the antique characteres ygraved onne the Belte? Doubtlesse they doe reflecte a lighte collaterale uponne thy clerkish manuscriptes; ande doubtlesse by a two-folde operatyone doe they confyrme unto the worlde by theyre evidence the truth of the Falstaffe Letteres. To conclude; the matter of facte (as soe it sholde seeme) muste be pleasaut and gratefull untoe thee, Master Irelaunde, to know thatte in the dayes of the Fifth Henry an ancestor of thyne was a maker of Trunke Hose, or as it is spoken of in these moderne tymes, a maker of Pantaloones.²⁷

To inscribe 'Ireland' as the maker's name on Falstaff's belt, when the lower half of the knight's costume is modern though the upper half is antique, is a deft touch of satire, and 'maker of Pantaloones' may imply a maker of fools as well as a trouser-maker.

The Preface is addressed not to Ireland but to the reader of the book. The possessor of the manuscripts tells how Mistress Quickly found them in a secret drawer in Falstaff's writing-table after his death, and how after her own death, 'which happened in August, 1419' (see Pistol's last speech, *Henry V*, V i), they passed to her unmarried sister, who regrettably destroyed some of them by using them as the equivalent of modern baking-foil while cooking roast pig. He has a friend who could have supplied him with old paper, but he knows that Falstaff is inimitable, and so has forborne trying to repair the losses. As for the modern spelling of the letters that survive, he has adopted it out of consideration for his readers, 'three-fourths of whom are too far advanced in life, to commence their studies in the most noble science of antient orthography'.

Far be it from me to shrink from the investigation of the scholar, or the critic. - Gentlemen, my closet is open to you - I very respectfully entreat your entrance.²⁸

The remainder of his Preface is an expostulation with Master Quickly, the present proprietor of the Boar's Head, who although of a collateral branch of the family has no knowledge of the tavern's illustrious past: he is exhorted to revive it - and to promote the sale of the book, instead of persisting in his present indifference:

Thou hast misused me damnably, Master Quickly. - Not Zeno with all his stoics about him - not Job with all his oxen about him, would bear my wrongs patiently.²⁹

²⁷ *Falstaff Letters* xxvi; *Works* i. 832-3.

²⁸ *Falstaff Letters* xxxi; *Works* i. 834.

²⁹ *Falstaff Letters* xxxv; *Works* i. 835.

Who but Lamb could have thought of those two parallel phrases? To suggest that James White would not have been capable of them is not to disparage his own creative gifts, which, as I have tried to show, were considerable. It was not just Lamb's friendship for their author that made him delight in *Falstaff's Letters*.

Durham

'I must dance, caper in the Air': the engraving from the first edition of *Falstaff's Letters*, below, shows Falstaff doing just that.



Southey's Letters to Children

By CAROLYN MISENHEIMER

THE LITERATURE OF BRITAIN is replete with authors who brilliantly and generously contributed to it during the course of their lives. Among these, invariably in each literary period, there are several writers whose claim to immortal fame would have been established if they had given the world only one particular work. In the Middle Ages, for example, *The Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer would have assured the security of his singular place. Later, to choose only one play, *Romeo and Juliet* would have done the same thing for Shakespeare. For Milton, unquestionably, it would have been *Paradise Lost*; and for Samuel Johnson, it might have been either *The Dictionary of the English Language* or *The Lives of the Poets*. The possibilities are inexhaustible. Fortunately for the world, each of these renowned authors wrote prolifically; their legacy to us is inestimable.

Among the so-called lesser authors - those who stand in the second or third row when the entire cast bows - Robert Southey is an illustrious representative. His immortal children's story 'The Three Bears', which appears as only a small part of his longer work entitled *The Doctor*, would have claimed for him a place unique and eternal, notwithstanding the poems of his laureateship, his biographical masterpiece *The Life of Nelson*, and a host of other writings of consequence. Like Charles and Mary Lamb, Southey possessed a creative genius that would endear him uniquely as integral to the literature composed specifically for children.

In virtually all stages of his life, Southey's love for children was gently and indelibly felt. Evidently his love for children was nurtured in part by the peculiar circumstances of his own childhood. In 1797, Southey recalls his early experiences in this letter to his closest friend Grosvenor Bedford:

My feelings were very acute. They used to amuse themselves by making me cry at sad songs and dismal stories . . . I cannot now hear a melancholy tale in silence, but I have learnt to whistle.¹

In *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, his youngest child Cuthbert, its editor, observes that in September 1802 the Southey's first child was born. Always Southey had longed for children, and he greeted this child with joy and thanksgiving, naming her Margaret for his mother.²

Sadly, less than a year later, this daughter 'of whom he was "foolishly fond" beyond the common love of fathers for mere infants' sickened and died.³

Slightly over a month after Edith May's birth in 1804, Southey writes to Coleridge, mentioning Coleridge's family, the boys by two of Southey's nicknames for them, and Mrs Southey and the new baby. He says, 'All are well - Sara and Sariola, Moses (Hartley) and Justiculus (Derwent), Edith and the Edithling.'⁴ In this one sentence, Southey reveals his sense of humor which is in perfect accord with children's humor.

¹ *New Letters of Robert Southey* ed. Kenneth Curry (2 vols., New York, 1965) (hereafter *New Letters*), i 149-150.

² *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey* ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (6 vols., London, 1850) (hereafter *Life and Correspondence*), ii 102-3.

³ *Life and Correspondence* ii 225.

⁴ *Life and Correspondence* ii 290.

At Greta Hall, the two people primarily responsible for maintaining an air of jollity were Southey and Sara Coleridge. Edith Southey managed the needful household affairs in a quiet, efficient, unassuming manner so that everyone else was free to pursue his or her own particular preferences and responsibilities; but she was plagued with depression which deepened with each new sorrow. Sara Coleridge, though always inwardly heavily burdened by the peculiar circumstances of her life, was a natural comedienne. According to Molly Lefebure in *The Bondage of Love*, Sara and Southey understood each other well enough to know that the ceaseless pranks, hoaxes, puns, and jokes they constantly instigated were essentially their way of filling the house with laughter and love that the children might grow up in happiness. Also, however, it was for each his form of personal gallantry.⁵

Not only was Southey able to relate well to children, but he also possessed the rare ability to become a part of their world. This endearing part of his private life is chronicled most enduringly in his children's classic 'The Three Bears.' Southey also reveals his unique understanding of children in a poem which is frequently chosen as a part of poetic anthologies for children. 'The Cataract of Lodore' is a particularly clever example of rhyming:⁶

Dividing and gliding and sliding,
 And falling and brawling and sprawling
 And driving and riving and striving,
 And sprinkling and twinkling and wrinkling . . .
 All at once and all o'er, with a mighty uproar
 And this way the Water comes down at Lodore.

Even in his most famous short historical poem 'The Battle of Blenheim' Southey reveals through young Wilhelmine and Peterkin's penetrating questions to their grandfather and their rejoinders to his responses both the perspective which Southey wishes his readers to embrace and the revelation of his acceptance of the Wordsworthian precept that 'children have insights which their elders do not.'⁷ Thus, Wilhelmine and Peterkin are closely allied to the entirety of Wordsworth's perceptive children.

'Now tell us what 'twas all about,
 Young Peterkin, he cries;
 And little Wilhelmine looks up
 With wonder-waiting eyes;
 'Now tell us all about the war,
 And what they fought each other for.'

Grandfather Kasper, however, cannot really explain. All that he can do is assure them repeatedly that 'It was a famous victory.' This answer, of course, underscores Southey's conviction that disputes cannot be settled by war and that military glory is at best transitory.

As Kenneth Curry tells us, Southey's letters provide the best picture of Southey as a person, for it is in his letters that he is most nearly completely himself.⁸ In particular, Curry states, his letters to his children and to his nephew, Hartley Coleridge, although few in number, are delightful.⁹

⁵ Molly Lefebure, *The Bondage of Love: A Life of Mrs Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1986), pp. 218-22.

⁶ Kenneth Curry, *Southey* (London and Boston, 1973), p. 154.

⁷ *Ibid.* 156.

⁸ *Ibid.* 103.

⁹ *Ibid.* 104.

The first of these letters is to Hartley Coleridge and is dated 13 June 1807. Cuthbert refers to it as 'playful effusion.'¹⁰

Nephew Job,

First I have to thank you for your letter and your poem; and, secondly, to explain why I have not done this sooner. We were a long time without knowing where you were, and, when news came from Miss Barker that you were in London, by the time a letter could have reached you you were gone; and, lastly, Mr. Jackson wrote to you to Bristol. I will now compose an epistle which will follow you farther west.

Bona Marietta hath had kittens; they were remarkably ugly, all taking after their father Thomas, who there is reason to believe was either uncle or grandsire to Bona herself, the prohibited degrees of consanguinity which you will find at the end of the Bible not being regarded by cats. As I have never been able to persuade this family that catlings, fed for the purpose and smothered in onions, would be rabbits to all eatable purposes, Bona Marietta's ugly progeny no sooner came into the world than they were sent out of it; the river nymph Greta conveyed them to the river god Derwent, and if neither the eels nor the ladies of the lake have taken a fancy to them on their way, Derwent hath consigned them to the Nereids. You may imagine them converted into sea-cats by favour of Neptune, and write an episode to be inserted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Bona bore the loss patiently, and is in good health and spirits. I fear that if you meet with any of the race of Mrs. Rowe's cat at Ottery, you will forget poor Marietta. Don't bite your arm, Job.

We have been out one evening in the boat, - Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Wilson, and the children, - and kindled our fire upon the same place where you drank tea with us last autumn. The boat has been painted, and there is to be a boat-house built for it. Alterations are going on here upon a great scale. The parlour has been transmogrified. That, Hartley, was one of my mother's words; your mother will explain it to you. The masons are at work in my study; the garden is enclosed with a hedge; some trees planted behind it, a few shrubs, and abundance of currant trees. We must, however, wait till the autumn before all can be done that is intended in the garden. Mr. White, the Belligerent, is settled in the General's house. Find out why I give him that appellation.

There has been a misfortune in the family. We had a hen with five chickens, and a gleed has carried off four. I have declared war against the gleed, and borrowed a gun; but since the gun has been in the house, he has never made his appearance. Who can have told him of it? Another hen is sitting, and I hope the next brood will be luckier. Mr. Jackson has bought a cow, but he has had no calf since *you* left him. Edith has taken your place in his house, and talks to Mrs. Wilson by the hour about *her* Hartley. She grows like a young giantess, and has a disposition to bite her arm, which, you know, is a very foolish trick. Herbert is a fine fellow; I call him the Boy of Basan, because he roars like a young bull when he is pleased; indeed, he promises to inherit his father's vocal powers.

The weather has been very bad; nothing but easterly winds, which have kept every thing back. We have one day hotter than had been remembered for fourteen years: the glass was at 85° in the shade, in the sun in Mr. Calvert's garden at 118°. The horses of

¹⁰ *Life and Correspondence* iii 99.

the mail died at Carlisle. I never remember to have felt such heat in England, except one day fourteen years ago, when I chanced to be in the mail-coach, and it was necessary to bleed the horses, or they would have died then. In the course of three days the glass fell forty degrees, and the wind was so cold and so violent that persons who attempted to cross the Fells beyond Penrith were forced to turn back.

Your friend Dapper, who is, I believe, your god-dog, is in good health, though he grows every summer graver than the last. This is the natural effect of time, which, as you know, has made me the serious man that I am. I hope it will have the same effect upon you and your mother, and that, when she returns, she will have left off that evil habit of quizzing me and calling me names: it is not decorous in a woman of her years.

Remember me to Mr. Poole, and tell him I shall be glad when he turns laker. He will find tolerable lodgings at the Hill; a boat for fine weather, good stores of books for a rainy day, and as hearty a shake by the hand on his arrival as he is likely to meet with between Stowey and Keswick. Some books of mine will soon be ready for your father. Will he have them sent anywhere? or will he pick them up himself when he passes through London on his way northward? Tell him that I am advancing well in South America, and shall have finished a volume by the end of the year. The Chronicle of the Cid is to go to press as soon as I receive some books from Lisbon, which must first be examined. This intelligence is for him also.

I am desired to send you as much love as can be enclosed in a letter: I hope it will not be charged double on that account at the post-office: but there is Mrs. Wilson's love, Mr. Jackson's, your Aunt Southey's, your Aunt Lovell's, and Edith's; with a purr from Bona Marietta, an open-mouthed kiss from Herbert, and three wags of the tail from Dapper. I trust they will all arrive safe, and remain,

Dear Nephew Job,
Your dutiful Uncle,
Robert Southey.¹¹

Simmons remarks that Hartley, a most remarkable boy, quickly won a place in his uncle Southey's heart, which through all the vicissitudes of his career he was never to lose.¹² This long letter filled with news that Southey clearly knew would captivate a highly intelligent boy of eleven, presents Southey's understanding of and depth of feeling for Hartley. Simmons also observes that Southey always treated Coleridge's children in every way as if they were his own.¹³

In 1815 Southey travelled with Mrs Southey and Edith May on the continent. To commemorate the tour, Southey composed 'The Poet's Pilgrimage,' but by Simmons' assessment, the saving grace of this composition is its Poem in which Southey describes the joy of homecoming and the children's happiness as Southey presents them with toys from Belgium:

Bring forth the treasures now, - a proud display, -
For rich as Eastern merchants we return!
Behold the black Beguine, the Sister grey,
The Friars whose heads with sober motion turn,

¹¹ Ibid. 100-3.

¹² Jack Simmons, *Southey* (New Haven, 1948) (hereafter Simmons), pp. 106-7.

¹³ Ibid. 133.

The ark well-fill'd with all its numerous hives,
Noah and Shem and Ham and Japhet, and their wives.¹⁴

On 13 May 1820, Southey writes to his youngest daughter, eight-year-old Isabel:

My dear Isabel

I have just received Bertha's letter and begin this to you while I am waiting for Mr Westall (to whom one of your shoulders belongs), with whom I am going this morning to Mr. Longman's upon his business. And I have laid aside a great volume of Portuguese manuscripts, upon which I am very busy, to write to you, meaning to buy Cuthbert's book this morning, and get Mr. Rickman to frank it at dinner time.

Tho your cousin Robert here is three years old, he is not so heavy as Cuthbert, and Cuthbert while he was called Og was bigger than Charles is now. But both Robert and Charles are very nice children, and they are very good friends with me, tho I do not see much of them. Your Welsh uncle Alfred is very much improved. When I was last in town he had a sad cast of the eye, which he has almost recovered from: he is still odd-looking and very shy, but he continues to improve, and is quick at his book. Little Georgiana is a fine, healthy, handsome girl, with beautiful eyes like her grandmother; and little Southey, as he is always called, is also a noble child. I have not yet seen the Duke and the Marquess and the Earl (Southey's nicknames for his brother Herbert's older sons), but on Monday next I shall go from Richmond to see them at their school.

On Wednesday last I was at court. O Isabel, if you had seen how grand I was that day, when I went to visit the King! I had no powder in my hair, that being no longer required at a levee, but I had a bag, and lace at my shirt, and lace ruffles, and gold buckles on my shoes, and at my knees, and a cocked hat in my hand. Think, Isabel, how grand I must have been. The Palace was so full that the crowd was as great as it was when your Mamma and I went to see the illumination at M. Otto's house; and tho everybody kissed the King's hand this was done so rapidly, that there were sixteen presentations in a minute. If the crowd had not been so great, the sight would have been very fine, as fine, or finer, than Bluebeard or Timour the Tartar.

I am busy from morning till night, and very much tired with visiting every day, walking about so much, and seeing so many people. So you must not wonder if I should not have time to finish this sheet, nor if I cannot write so nice a letter as that from Streatham, where I had time and leisure. Tell your Aunt Coleridge that of all people in the world Joey Lock called upon me yesterday to claim acquaintance as an old friend. Catharine Senhouse is getting well very fast, and will not be marked. The other children show no symptoms of having the complaint, nor is it expected that they will.

Here is Mr. Westall.

I have bought a book for Cuthbert. Tell him Pappa sends it because he is a good boy and that Pappa will come home and bring pretty things for him. Aunt Lovell must ask Mrs. Crothers to raise the seeds in a hot bed and give her a couple of plants which will be enough for our use.

Now I must dress for dinner, that I may be in time to get this franked. Love to all. God bless you. Your affectionate father

Robert Southey.

¹⁴ Ibid. 148.

I must send off this letter without the book and the seeds for fear of being too late, and of making it too heavy. Tell your Mamma that I sent the rent to Morrison on Monday the 8th. You may be sure that I shall not forget the prayer books and the pickle, and every thing else that I promised. I saw Mr. Townsend the other day: he is going to Keswick this year as a Cathedral and so is Mr Noel.

Ah cruel term but gentle long vacation

That sends all the men again for our consolation!

I know who will sing that song. Mr Nash is coming down with me. Be sure you take care of his shoulder and of Mr. Westall's.¹⁵

From Shrewsbury on 25 April 1820, Southey writes to Edith May, his oldest living child, a girl of 16:

Having nothing else to do for a dismal hour or two, I sit down to write to you, in such rhymes as may ensue, be they many be they few, according to the cue which I happen to pursue. I was obliged to stay at Llangedwin till to-day; though I wished to come away, Wynn would make me delay my departure yesterday, in order that he and I might go to see a place whereof he once sent a drawing to me.

And now I'll tell you why it was proper that I should go thither to espy the place with mine own eye. 'Tis a church in a vale, whereby hangs a tale, how a hare being pressed by the dogs and much distressed, the hunters coming nigh and the dogs in full cry, looked about for some one to defend her, and saw just in time, as it now comes pat in rhyme, a saint of the feminine gender.

The saint was buried there, and a figure carved with care, in the churchyard is shown, as being her own; but 'tis used for a whetstone (like the stone at our back door), till the pity is the more, (I should say the more's the pity, if it suited with my ditty), it is whetted half away, - lack-a-day, lack-a-day!

They show a mammoth's rib (was there ever such a fib?) as belonging to the saint Melangel. It was no use to wrangle, and tell the simple people, that if this had been her bone, she must certainly have grown, to be three times as tall as the steeple.

Moreover there is shown a monumental stone, as being the tomb of Yorwerth Drwndwn (*w*, as you must know, serves in Welsh for long *o*). In the portfolio there are drawings of their tombs, and of the church also. This Yorwerth was killed six hundred years ago. Nevertheless, as perhaps you may guess, he happened to be an acquaintance of mine, and therefore I always have had a design to pay him a visit whenever I could, and now the intention is at last made good.

God bless you!

R.S.¹⁶

Southey's next letter is one in which he creates a riotous entertainment for his daughters out of the pomp and circumstance of ceremony with which Oxford conferred upon him an honorary doctorate:

June 26, 1820

Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, you have been very good girls, and have written me very nice letters, with which I was much pleased. This is the last letter which I can write in

¹⁵ *New Letters* ii 212-13.

¹⁶ *Life and Correspondence* v 36-7.

return; and as I happen to have a quiet hour to myself, here at Streatham, on Monday noon, I will employ that hour in relating to you the whole history and manner of my being ell-ell-deed at Oxford by the Vice-Chancellor.

You must know, then, that because I had written a great many good books, and more especially the *Life of Wesley*, it was made known to me by the Vice-Chancellor, through Mr. Heber, that the University of Oxford were desirous of showing me the only mark of honour in their power to bestow, which was that of making me an LL.D., that is to say, a doctor of laws.

Now, you are to know that some persons are ell-ell-deed every year at Oxford, at the great annual meeting which is called Commemoration. There are two reasons for this; first, that the university may do itself honour, by bringing persons of distinction to receive the degree publicly as a mark of honour; and, secondly, that certain persons in inferior offices may share in the fees paid by those upon whom the ceremony of ell-ell-deeing is performed. For the first of these reasons the Emperor Alexander was made a Doctor of Laws at Oxford, the King of Prussia, and old Blucher, and Platoff. And for the second, the same degree is conferred upon noblemen, and persons of fortune and consideration who are any ways connected with the university, or city, or county of Oxford.

The ceremony of ell-ell-deeing is performed in a large circular building called the theatre, of which I will show you a print when I return, and this theatre is filled with people. The undergraduates (that is the young men who are called Cathedrals at Keswick) entirely fill the gallery. Under the gallery there are seats, which are filled with ladies in full dress, separated from the gentlemen. Between these two divisions of the ladies are seats for the heads of houses, and the doctors of law, physic, and divinity. In the middle of these seats is the Vice-Chancellor, opposite the entrance which is under the orchestra. On the right and left are two kind of pulpits, from which the prize essays and poems are recited. The area, or middle of the theatre, is filled with bachelors and masters of arts, and with as many strangers as can obtain admission. Before the steps which lead up to the seats of the doctors, and directly in front of the Vice-Chancellor, a wooden bar is let down, covered with red cloth, and on each side of this the beadles stand in their robes.

When the theatre is full, the Vice-Chancellor, and the heads of houses, and the doctors enter: those persons who are to be ell-ell-deed remain without in the divinity schools, in their robes, till the convocation have signified their assent to the ell-ell-deeing, and then they are led into the theatre, one after another in a line, into the middle of the area, the people just making a lane for them. The professor of civil law, Dr. Phillimore, went before, and made a long speech in Latin, telling the Vice-Chancellor and the dignissimi doctores what excellent persons we were who were now to be ell-ell-deed. Then he took us one by one by the hand, and presented each in his turn, pronouncing his name aloud, saying who and what he was, and calling him many laudatory names ending in *issimus*. The audience then cheered loudly to show their approbation of the person; the Vice-Chancellor stood up, and repeating the first words in *issime*, ell-ell-deed him; the beadles lifted up the bar of separation, and the new-made doctor went up the steps and took his seat among the dignissimi doctores.

Oh Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, if you had seen me that day! I was like other *issimis*, dressed in a great robe of the finest scarlet cloth, with sleeves of rose-coloured silk, and I had in my hand a black velvet cap like a beef-eater, for the use of which dress I paid one guinea for that day. Dr. Phillimore, who was an old school-fellow of mine, and a

very good man, took me by the hand in my turn, and presented me; upon which there was a great clapping of hands and huzzaing at my name. When that was over, the Vice-Chancellor stood up, and said . . . words whereby I was ell-ell-deed . . . and then the bar was lifted up, and I seated myself among the doctors.

Little girls, you know it might be proper for me, now, to wear a large wig, and to be called Doctor Southey, and to become very severe, and leave off being a comical papa. And if you should find that ell-ell-deeing has made this difference in me you will not be surprised. However, I shall not come down in a wig, neither shall I wear my robes at home.

God bless you all!
 Your affectionate Father,
 R. Southey.¹⁷

It is easy to imagine with what joy and delight his three daughters, Bertha age eleven, Kate age ten, and Isabel age eight, greeted this account of a very august ceremony pictured for their young, active minds. This letter illustrates perfectly the way in which Southey is able to adjust his writing to the age-range and to the interests of his readers.

From Streatham on 24 December 1823, Southey writes a long letter to his wife, the final paragraph of which he devotes to seasonal greetings to his family:

A merry Xmas and a happy new year to you all! To you first and foremost my true and lawful Governess and Lady Mare; next to the great Bertha whom I love not with a B alone, but thro the whole alphabet, stopping only at the letter X because it is not possible to love any thing that is cross. Next to the very grave and sober Kate, . . . then to my Isabel who live as long as she will is to be a Belle still: and the last and least, yet neither least nor last in my love to Charles Cuthbert Southey, Archbishop *in nubibus*, Rural Dean by courtesy, and in reality a good boy and my very worthy son. And a merry Xmas and happy new year to Sara also, and the Most Venerable her mother, and to Aunt Lovell -¹⁸

Six days later from London Southey writes to his eldest daughter, Edith May Southey:

My dear Daughter,
 I have sent you a Bible for a New Year's gift, in the hope that with the New Year you will begin the custom of reading, morning and night, the Psalms and Lessons for the day May God bless the book to the purpose for which it is intended! and take you with it, my dear dear child, the blessing of
 Your affectionate father,
 Robert Southey.¹⁹

From Crediton on 11 January 1824, Southey writes Edith May who is in London:

Very magnificent and most dissipated Daughter . . .
 I have not told you that my god daughter and your god sister is a very sweet girl, and so are her sisters Kate and Bridget, and Nico is a fine honest boy, and Mrs. Lightfoot a thoroughly friendly open hearted woman, very much to my liking.

¹⁷ Ibid. 38-41.

¹⁸ *New Letters* ii 260.

¹⁹ *Life and Correspondence* v 157-8.

I send you love and kind remembrances, and simple remembrances, to be distributed according to your discretion, trusting that you will not misbestow my love - any more than your own, and so farewell - very magnificent and most dissipated daughter,

Yo el Pa.

Mrs. Lightfoot has given me something for you in a little box - a ring or broche I suppose it to be.²⁰

On 2 July 1825, Southey writes to Cuthbert from Leyden:

My dear Cuthbert,

I have a present for you from Lodovijk Willem Bilderdijk, a very nice good boy, who is of the age of your sister Isabel. It is a book of Dutch verses, which you and I will read together when I come home He is a very gentle good boy; and I hope that one of these days somewhere or other he and you may meet

I hope you have been a good boy and done every thing that you ought to do, while I am away. When I come home you shall begin to read Jacob Cats with me. My love to your sisters and to every body else. I hope Rumpelstilzchen has recovered his health, and that Miss Cat is well, and I should like to know whether Miss Fitzrumpel has been given away, and if there is another kitten. The Dutch cats do not speak exactly the same language as the English ones. I will tell you how they talk when I come home.

God bless you, my dear Cuthbert!

Your dutiful Father,
Robert Southey.²¹

From Amsterdam. Southey writes to his daughter Katherine on 16 July 1825:

My dear Kate,²²

There follows a rather detailed account of his activities in Holland together with great praise of his host and hostess. Of their son he tells Kate:

Lodovijk, too, is a very engaging boy, and attached himself greatly to me; . . .

God bless you, my dear child!

Your affectionate father,
R.S.²³

Just slightly over a year later, on 19 July 1826, Southey writes a beautiful but unutterably sad letter to Edith May, Bertha, and Katherine:

My dear Daughters,

I write rather than speak to you on this occasion, because I can better bear to do it, and because what is written will remain, and may serve hereafter for consolation and admonishment, of which the happiest and best of us stand but too often in need

You know how I loved your dear sister, my sweet Isabel, who is now gathered to that part of my family and household (a large one now!) which is in Heaven. I can truly say that my desire has ever been to make your childhood happy, as I would fain make your

²⁰ *New Letters* ii 263.

²¹ *Life and Correspondence* v 220-1, 223.

²² *Ibid.* 231.

²³ *Ibid.* 233.

youth, and pray that God would make the remainder of your days. And for the dear child who is departed, God knows that I never heard her name mentioned, nor spoke, nor thought of her, without affection and delight

I copy this letter for each of you with my own hand. . . . Take it, then, with the blessing of

Your afflicted and affectionate Father,
Robert Southey.²⁴

In January 1834, Southey's eldest living child, Edith May, was married to John Warter, who became vicar of West Tarring in Sussex. Professor Curry stresses the congeniality of Southey and Warter, citing in particular their shared interest in Denmark and the Danish civilization.²⁵ It is reassuring to note that even after his children were grown, Southey continued to write lovingly to them. The subtle but telling difference between his letters to them as children and the ones to them as adults illustrates the fact that Southey had a marvellous facility for adjusting his writing to make it appropriate for the ages of his readers, even those of his own grown children.

On 3 April 1834, Southey addresses his daughter as: 'My dear E. May.'²⁶ In addition to giving Edith May a thorough account of Mrs Southey's health, he gives her news about mutual acquaintances and about various aspects of his own work. He also advises her about ways to preserve her health and sends his love to Warter. He ends with what is for Southey his customary close; he writes, 'God bless you my dear E. May RS.'²⁷

In February 1835, Southey took Cuthbert to West Tarring in Sussex so that his son-in-law John Warter could provide Cuthbert with a final two years of academic polish prior to his matriculation at Christ Church, Oxford. Southey then went on to York where his wife was undergoing treatment for her insanity. By that time, the doctors in York had determined that they could not improve Mrs Southey's condition; hence, Southey had decided to take her to Keswick where he, Bertha, and Kate could care for her in her own home.²⁸

On 16 December 1835, Southey writes this loving letter to his son:

My dear Cuthbert,

Twice I wished for you yesterday; first, at breakfast, because it was a beautiful morning, and my feet itched for a ten miles' walk. But you are in Sussex, Davies is in Shropshire, and I have not even a dog for a companion.

Secondly, you were wished for two hours afterwards, when I had settled to my work, for then came the box of books from Ulverston. You would have enjoyed the unpacking. It is the best batch they ever sent home: thirty-six volumes, beside three for Bertha and five of Kate's.

I should like, if it were possible, always to communicate my pleasures, and keep my troubles to myself. Here was no one to admire the books with us. . . .

About six weeks hence I hope to rejoice both over Cowper and the Admirals, though not to take my leave of them then. But I hope to have a volume of each completed, and am now keeping on *pari passu* with both. The Evangelical Magazine has out-done its usual outdoings in abusing the first volume. They say I shall be known to posterity as

²⁴ Ibid. 255, 257, 259.

²⁵ *New Letters* ii 505.

²⁶ Ibid. 405.

²⁷ Ibid. 405-7.

²⁸ *Life and Correspondence* vi 261.

embalmed in Lord Byron's verse for an incarnate lie. The whole article is in this strain, and it has roused Cradock's indignation as much as it has amused me; for it is written just as I should wish an enemy to write. God bless you, my dear boy!

R.S.²⁹

When she was 26, Katharine received a letter from her father from Wells. In it, Southey describes to her the parsonage, its garden, the church, and the household pets. He also tells Katharine about his host's eccentricities. He closes by saying:

Tell your dear mother that I earnestly wish to be at home again, and shall spend no time on the way that can be spared.

Love to all. So good night: and God bless you!

R.S.³⁰

From Stockleigh Pomeroy on 5 December 1836, Southey writes to Bertha, now twenty-seven. He describes his journey, concentrating especially on the people whom he has met. At one point, he relates his contact with and impressions of his hostess, Mrs Lightfoot:

Mrs. Lightfoot receivd me silently but shook hands and asked me next morning if I had slept well. In her look and manner she bears so much affecting resemblance to your poor mother, and the character of her malady is in many respects precisely the same; but she employs herself with work of some kind or other, and will give advice, or directions when she is asked.³¹

Later in the same letter he regales his daughter with an account of Cuthbert's interest in the Misses Lightfoot:

Karl (one of Southey's names for Cuthbert, the Germanic form of Charles) when he speaks of Lightfoots daughters is like Pharaoh King of Egypt.³²

In *The Life*, Cuthbert indicates that the letter Southey writes from Stockleigh Pomeroy on 1 January 1837, is due to be Katharine's. Southey says:

My dear Daughter,

Whichever it be to whom this letter is due, (for I keep ill account of such things) I begin with such wishes to both, and to all others at home, and all friends round Skiddaw or elsewhere, as the first day of the year calls forth . . . It was some comfort to hear that your dearest mother listened to my letters, and asked some questions.³³

In the rest of the letter, Southey gives his family much information about his journey and about his interaction with the people he encounters.³⁴ He ends in his typical fashion:

And now God bless you all! Heartily indeed do I wish myself at home; but I am far from repenting of my journey.

Your dutiful father,

²⁹ Ibid. 280-1.

³⁰ Ibid. 314-16.

³¹ *New Letters* ii 457-60.

³² Ibid. 461.

³³ *Life and Correspondence* vi 321.

³⁴ Ibid. 321-4.

R.S.³⁵

Southey visited Edith May, Warter, and Cuthbert at West Tarring. From there on 8 February 1837, he writes to Katharine:

My dear Kate, . . .

Yesterday I and Karl had a walk of some fourteen or fifteen miles, to the Roman encampments of Sisbury and Chankbury. . . . I shall come home hungry for work, for sleeping after dinner, and for walking with a book in my hand. . . .

And now, God bless you all! Rejoice, Baron Chinchilla, for I am coming again to ask of you whether you have everything that a cat's heart can desire! . . . Rejoice, Ben Wilson, for sample clogs are to be sent into the west country, for the good of the Devonshire men!

R.S.³⁶

On 7 February 1838, Southey writes to Cuthbert from Keswick. The thrust of this letter is to give Cuthbert a clear understanding of the financial frugality he must exercise as a student at Oxford, to reassure him of Southey's confidence in him, and to apprise him of all of Southey's assets, not least of which is Southey's library of some 14,000 volumes.³⁷ In summation, Southey says:

It is fitting that you should bear all this in mind; but not for discouragement. Your prospects, God be thanked, are better than if you were heir to a large estate, - far better for your moral and intellectual nature, your real welfare, your happiness here and hereafter.

God bless you, my dear Cuthbert!

Your affectionate Father,

Robert Southey.³⁸

The last extant letter from Southey to any of his children is one to Bertha from Buckland near Lymington on 15 October 1838. Having given her assurances of money for necessities such as rent,³⁹ Southey turns to two forthcoming events which he looks upon with hope and pleasure. The first he mentions is Bertha's impending marriage to Herbert Hill, Jr.⁴⁰ Of that event Southey writes, 'Your engagement with Herbert has been highly satisfactory to me.'⁴¹ He then speaks of his own approaching marriage to Caroline Bowles on June 4, 1839. He is obviously anticipating a smooth incorporation of Caroline into the family circle,⁴² and he closes his letter in his customary style, writing, 'God bless you my dear children. Robert Southey.'⁴³

As Simmons emphasizes, the tribute that the adult Hartley paid Southey is probably more striking than any other he ever received:

³⁵ Ibid. 324.

³⁶ Ibid. 325-6.

³⁷ Curry, *Southey*, p. 45.

³⁸ *Life and Correspondence* vi. 363-5.

³⁹ *New Letters* ii. 477.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 478.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. 479-80.

⁴³ Ibid. 480.

'Sometimes,' he [Hartley] confessed to his mother in 1836, 'I may have said things about dear Uncle to you, which I should have [been] very angry if anyone else had said, but then - it was when you used his name as a reproach to me, or advanced his conduct or opinion as a rule. Now if you want to make a man hated, hold him up as an example. It is an extraordinary proof of the loveliness of Southey's character, that though his name was rife in every objurgation and every admonition I received, I never could help but love him.'⁴⁴

As Simmons so aptly observes, 'There could hardly be higher praise than that.'⁴⁵

Through his letters, and in particular his letters to children, Southey permits his humor, his careful attention to detail, his deep respect for children as intelligent individuals, and above all, his enormous capacity to love to shine in full splendor. A careful perusal of his comments about and his letters to children allows us to know that innermost part of him which focused on his family and on his circle of friends and which derived infinite comfort and delight from the children whom he knew. Though we can come to know Southey the writer from his published works, to know Southey the human being, we must go to his letters. Those to children help us to realize that he was much more directly and constantly involved in his children's lives than were most men of his era. Hence, one must of necessity make a close study of his letters to children in order to comprehend Southey as a complete person and to appreciate with some degree of accuracy the forces which united to create Robert Southey, Poet Laureate, historian, linguist, reviewer, biographer, and author of an enduring literary classic for children. Considering the joy that Southey derived from children, it seems quite proper that one of his works should give joy to children in perpetuity around the world.

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⁴⁴ Simmons 133.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Coleridge: The Conversation Poems

By NICHOLAS REID

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY THEORY has made us more aware of silence and the struggle to articulate - of the strategies by which a poet seeks to get a poem off the ground, the strategies by which she or he seeks to generate discourse. I wish to turn then to an unduly neglected article, Barbara Harman's 'Herbert, Coleridge, and the Vexed Work of Narration'. In a reading of the conversation poems which is phenomenologically the most acute to date¹ - though deconstructive, and therefore antipathetic to Coleridge's metaphysics - Harman claims that

'Lime-Tree Bower' and 'Frost at Midnight' identify the beginnings of lyric with deprivation and imprisonment. In particular, they demonstrate the power of discourse to generate interest where there was none, to create setting and sequence where both were inaccessible, to reconstitute the landscape by marking its distinctive features. Lyric discourse is valued, then, because it articulates the world in face of the world's failure to be articulate.²

I wish to explore this pattern of absence and presence, though in terms which differ a little from Harman's. For by 'presence' I do not refer to Derrida but to a Platonic context, or to what in the *Opus Maximum* Coleridge called the 'actual'.³ And my broader purposes are to explore a phenomenology of vision (the correlative of form).

1. *This Lime-tree Bower*

We can see the essence of Harman's position in the way in which she deals with 'This Lime-tree Bower My Prison'. Harman paints a picture of a (literally) disabled narrator, a narrator who is visited by 'some long-expected friends' but who 'met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay'.⁴ The narrator's task, then, is to reconstitute the self as a source of narration in a world of deprivation or absence and a world which threatens to deprive lyric narrative of its foundations. Thus Harman notes that 'This Lime-tree Bower' 'begins with a word that has no content - "Well" - . . . because it is not his

¹ I have not in this paper referred to recent (and in certain terms more major) commentators other than Harman, although I am aware that I shall be criticized for it. My response, however, is that much recent commentary has rejected Coleridge's thought as the necessary site for a reading of his poems. This may be a defensible form of reading but it is a kind of reading so at odds with my purposes as to leave no points of intersection. Other commentators have (more dubiously) published readings based on an inadequate understanding of Coleridge's metaphysics and have thus purported to show (whether ironically or not) that Coleridge's thought is in fact consonant with their (generally post-structuralist) purposes. Again, debate in such circumstances is unlikely to be productive.

I should however mention Paul Magnuson's recent book, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue* (Princeton, NJ, 1988). That, again, I do not think that Magnuson understands Coleridge's metaphysics does not detract in general from the value of a method of reading which in all cases seems promising and which, in the case of 'Christabel' pushes far beyond anything else written to date. I do not refer to Magnuson at length because that would take me beyond the bounds of this particular article - but I hope to do so in another place.

² Barbara Harman, 'Herbert, Coleridge, and the Vexed Work of Narration', *Modern Language Notes* 93 (1978) 888-911, pp. 903-4.

³ Huntington Library Manuscript, HM 8195 ('On the Divine Ideas'), p. 49. See my 'Coleridge and Schelling: The Missing Transcendental Deduction', *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (1994) 451-79, esp. p. 473.

⁴ Quoted by Harman, p. 891.

intention to launch a defined project, but to launch, however tentatively, the solitary, speaking self'.⁵ She goes on to argue that '[t]he business of the man who says "Well" is the business of beginning, of demonstrating the continuity of self and the continuity of speech in the absence of a community of speakers.'⁶ The speaker, unable to accompany his friends, begins with thoughts of his loss, ('I have lost / Beauties and feelings . . .')⁷ but soon the fancy which follows about the sights and scenes which meet the friends on their walk gives way to a renewed involvement in the landscape. By line 43 Coleridge declares

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! (ll. 43-5)⁸

On Harman's view,

in grammar that discriminates between being there and being glad 'as' he were there, the speaker makes clear that the recovery of lost experience is no longer at the heart of his project. If the elaboration of the ground is restorative, this is not because it produces the experience whose absence threatened life at the start, but because it corrects the erroneous view that the world can be empty or the self without means.⁹

We are to understand, then, that the poem's concern is to 're-enable' the narrator. In the midst of deprivation discourse reconstitutes itself; and once reconstituted it has no concern but to allow the play of its elaboration.¹⁰

In this account the emphasis on absence and reconstitution seem to me valuable, for the poem sets up a pattern which I shall argue is repeated in 'Frost at Midnight', and 'Dejection'. These poems contain a lament for the absence of an experience, combined with the construction of a fiction about how another character will react to its presence. It is with Harman's view that the point of this experience is wholly elaborative, that I disagree. For Harman reads the lines

So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily . . . (ll. 37-41)

as a return to the theme of discourse, and sees in the prayer for 'silence' a partial deconstruction of the elaborative project. The 'gaze till all doth seem / Less gross than bodily' she interprets as a prayer 'that the landscape *vanish*'.¹¹ In the 'unsettled relationship between lyric discourse and God's diffusing language'¹² both kinds of discourse, and the

⁵ Harman, p. 891.

⁶ Harman, p. 892.

⁷ Quoted by Harman, p. 891.

⁸ Texts of Coleridge's poems are from *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. H. Coleridge (2 vols., Oxford, 1912).

⁹ Harman, p. 893.

¹⁰ Harman claims that '[i]n the first two verse paragraphs narration produces consciousness and in the last, consciousness produces narration' (p. 894).

¹¹ Harman's emphasis, p. 906.

¹² Harman, p. 905.

thematic concern with discourse, are to be 'overwhelmed by meaning' - a kind of 'metonymical sublime' which 'produces a semiotic discontinuity, a "lapsing out of discourse"'.¹³ The problem with this is that while Harman is right that in a literal sense the reconstitution of a lost experience is impossible, she does not consider that Coleridge wishes to recover what I shall loosely call the *significance* of the experience rather than the experience itself. If this is the case, the initial plausibility of the view that the poem's concern can only be with discourse fades. Since (as I hope to argue elsewhere) language for Coleridge has an extra-verbal point of anchorage in the 'Idea', 'silence' is in any case no threat to 'meaning'. And when Coleridge prays for a vision 'less gross than bodily' we need to be clear about what he is saying. He is not saying that the 'bodily' world is gross: he seeks, rather, a vision of the Natural world less *as* gross than *as embodying*. For 'This Lime-tree Bower's' concerns are not with discourse but with the world as the *embodiment* of the divine *mythos*. It suggests a phenomenology of vision, identifying absence as the condition of the construction of a fiction (how Charles will respond to Nature) which becomes real. As we shall see in 'Frost at Midnight', this fictive process emerges (*contra* the early Wordsworth) as the heart of the response to Nature, the divine language. The *recovery* of a lost experience gives way to a new kind of experience - one where

'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share. (l. 65)

For if 'This Lime-tree Bower' is a poem of light, its mood is set by sunset, not as tragedy but as a lesser affirmation, a calm recognition of a belatedness not of voice but of spirit. If 'joy' here, as in 'Dejection', plays a central part in the reading of the divine text, absence (as we shall see) is its condition.

2. *Frost at Midnight*

We should turn then to 'Frost at Midnight', both for a clarification of the process exhibited in 'This Lime-tree Bower' and to consider further Harman's view that Coleridge's subject is discourse. Harman points out that 'the world described in the last two stanzas of "Frost at Midnight" needs no created setting, no articulation . . .'.¹⁴ In such a world there is no role for the fiction. Hartley is to 'wander like a breeze / By lakes and sandy shores', in direct contact with 'the eternal language', and will therefore have no need to write poetry. The *aporia* which was the condition of the poem will not exist for the boy. Harman thus finds in Nature a counter discourse which threatens to overwhelm the poetic - again, an 'unsettled relationship between lyric discourse and God's diffusing language persists'.¹⁵ For Harman the poem is, then, about the struggle to generate discourse in the fact of the void: the poem begins with that void and concerns the construction of a viable poetic voice within it.

This reading points to something important in stanzas III and IV, and yet as a reading it does not seem right. That Hartley will have access to an unmediated 'eternal language', a language which seems to lie outside the processes of the poem, Harman takes as an unsettling

¹³ Harman, p. 906, quotes Thomas Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* here.

¹⁴ Harman, p. 904.

¹⁵ Harman, p. 905.

presence - a presence which threatens to deconstruct the project of narrative elaboration.¹⁶ But this view, it seems to me, is contemporary criticism reading as deconstruction what can (and on occasions can better) be read as irony. For where 'Frost at Midnight' purports to uphold the Wordsworthian credo (Hartley is to be given a thoroughly Wordsworthian upbringing, exposed directly to the forms of Nature) it complexifies and questions that vision. Coleridge does not reject the idea that God is immanent in Nature, his questioning does not accuse the Wordsworthian vision of mere subjectivism, but if the early Wordsworth may be likened to a New Critic thinking that the qualities of the realized reading are to be found in a serenely autonomous text, Coleridge stands as a conservative corrective. The text can only live in its dialectic with the (constrained) reader; joy (the divine presence) is the benediction of the inspired interpreter. Thus stanzas III and IV (the wandering boy) do not deconstruct the poem; they show rather that its ironic purpose is a dialogue with Wordsworth.

To see this we need to step back, to examine the logic of the poem and how it moves from absence to affirmation. The idea of displacement in the poem will be familiar - the way (as in 'This Lime-tree Bower My Prison') the poem begins by lamenting the lack of an experience, and then imagines the experience taking place within the person of another (his son Hartley or friend Charles). We should also have noticed the epithet 'unhelped by any wind', reading this (as in 'Dejection') as a lament for a lack of inspiration (literally 'breath'). The central question, however, is how the poet moves from lack of inspiration to inspiration. How does Coleridge move *away* from the questionable notion that 'that film, which fluttered on the grate' exhibits 'dim sympathies with me who live'?

Kelvin Everest describes it, I think, rather well: 'growth into connective consciousness begins in Coleridge's awareness of constraint';¹⁷ in other words, in his awareness of something lacking, his sense of alienation from 'Sea, and hill, and wood / With all the numberless goings-on of life'.¹⁸ Given the realisation that the creative process begins with a sense of constraint, however, many critics make the progress to the final vision, of

The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters . . . (ll. 59-61)

sound far too easy. For Everest, again, the 'toy of Thought' (l. 23) indicates a lightness of tone in the language,¹⁹ a gaiety which speeds the poem on to a conclusion just as inevitable as that of 'This Lime-tree Bower My Prison': this reading ignores the grave questioning of the vision, and the search for the point of division between subjectivity and what I shall call the divinely licensed or Secondary Idealism, in the lines which speak of the film,

Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought. (ll. 20-3)

¹⁶ Harman notes that, unlike Herbert, Coleridge does not himself abandon this to the piety of silence.

¹⁷ Kelvin Everest, *Coleridge's Secret Ministry* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1979), p. 261.

¹⁸ Like a number of recent critics, Anthony John Harding usefully questions the tendency in some modern criticism (one thinks of Harold Bloom) to identify Romanticism with extreme individualism. Harding posits a social context in terms of which individuality is realised: 'the origin of self-consciousness . . . [lies] in the individual's sense of otherness'. See *Coleridge and the Idea of Love* (Cambridge, 1974), 'Introduction', pp. 1-6.

¹⁹ Everest, p. 262.

Fairly clearly, then, I think that the poem does more than merely collapse in the rush to get to the conclusion. The sense of constraint does lead to the vision of the one life, of Joy in the sense of God's creation; but conventional readings take the poem's conclusions too much at face value, failing to see their critical edge. To my mind displacement becomes a motif, and the *construction* of the vision is rendered self-conscious in a way which accords peculiarly with Coleridge's epistemology. It is this motif of *construction*, what I wish to call the poem's fictive consciousness, which reveals that the true debate in the poem is not about the existence of God in nature, but a more technical debate with Wordsworth (pre 'Tintern Abbey') over the origin of joy-in-God, the sense of divine love.

To be clear, I don't think Coleridge capable of doubting the immanent presence of God but, as Bloom and Trilling say of 'Dejection', I would say of 'Frost at Midnight', the issue is to locate the experience of *divine* love 'in the human viewer and not in the external scene'.²⁰ And in the Wesleyan context, as Stephen Prickett tells us, this location is a reflection of the immanence of God within humanity,²¹ - specifically in the exercise of humanity's imaginative faculty. Such a location is fictional in a very special sense. The experience of love is constructed in the mind, but as such it is the product of an idealism rather than of mere subjectivity, being 'a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM' - or rather, the echo of this which occurs in the Secondary Imagination. The theme of repetition, as its central place within *Biographia* reveals, holds the key to Coleridge's theory of knowledge, and to the process Coleridge exhibits in the poem.

The clue to Coleridge's method can be found by looking at the structure of the poem; for Coleridge doesn't present the vision directly, describing rather the process by which it is generated. Coleridge means to expose that process, as much as the vision itself, showing the fulfilling of a need for *explanation* by the construction of a fiction - how the experience will appear to son Hartley or friend Charles.

The poem opens not merely with the lack of feeling but with an image of the questing Imagination - an image which seeks to expose the operation of that Imagination. The idea of a 'silent ministry' creates an atmosphere of pristine receptivity, of uttermost consciousness, of alertness to the external and the eternal, and of a silence pregnant with the need for significance. This atmosphere is conveyed in the slow and controlled pace of the metre and in a complexity of tense, in the movement from the past ('the owlet's cry / Came loud') to the present ('and hark, again! loud as before') which creates the sense of time. As M. H. Abrams has observed, the metre has become imbued with the life of the sleeping infant's breathing.²² Thus the opening stanza is characterized by a negative quality, an extreme and vital consciousness, but consciousness of nothing but consciousness: in the first stanza we see the rendering of the connective consciousness self-conscious; a point which explains the stress on the 'idling Spirit' and the 'toy of thought', and which in an early draft of the poem Coleridge described as the operation of 'the self-watching subtilizing mind'.²³

The consciousness exposed is thus a 'connective consciousness', but a consciousness driven to connect by absence; and its predominant mode is that of creation by displacement or by

²⁰ *Romantic Poetry and Prose* ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (New York, 1973), p. 275.

²¹ Stephen Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, pp. 103-4.

²² Everest, p. 261. See M. H. Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York, 1984), p. 81.

²³ *Coleridge's Poems*, p. 241.

the creation of fictional experiences in others. We see the process repeated in the boyhood experience of the church bells, again symbols of ministry, that

. . . stirred and haunted me
 With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
 Most like articulate sounds of things to come! (ll. 31-3)

Once more we notice that the bells don't bring the experience itself, but merely the promise of the experience; and that the primary quality of the passage lies in its analysis of this displacement. Visionary experience, we might conclude, is the product of absence, and is a constructed fiction but a fiction whose reality is self-subsistent and points (as the Mariner's conclusion does) in the direction of truth. As Coleridge puts it,

the Idea contains its necessity in its actual presence. The *so it must be* is involved in the *so it is*.²⁴

The divine ministry takes place through the immanence within the Imagination; through not a realism but an idealism in the reading of natural symbols. This reveals the limits and scope of the Imagination's autonomy as it works with the material which lies at the core of its being, the internalisation and reconstruction of symbols - its supremely committed fictions. The displaced fiction becomes an imaginative reality.

3. Dejection

I have tried to picture in 'This Lime-tree Bower' and 'Frost at Midnight' a pattern of movement from the image of absence in the first stanza to the point in the last where the promised vision has become real. A similar pattern emerges in 'Dejection', from the terse lament for the lack of present inspiration (with its bitter prophecy of what is to come) to the gentle benediction of Sara in stanza VIII:

May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
 Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
 With light heart may she rise,
 Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
 Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
 To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
 Their life the eddying of her living soul! (ll. 130-6)

However, there are important senses (to which I shall turn below) in which this pattern differs from 'Frost at Midnight', for 'Dejection' is concerned more centrally with inspiration than the former poem, and the benediction with which it ends is one which excludes the Coleridgean persona: it is perhaps best described as a product of what the later Coleridge was to call the Speculative rather than the Practical Reason. These are not, however, differences which would serve to deconstruct the Coleridgean view: they rather present it in what I shall call an antithetic mode.

I begin, then, by considering the ways in which 'Dejection' clarifies the implicit relation in 'Frost at Midnight' between the reader and the *divine* text. In 'Frost at Midnight' it is in the act of constructing a fiction (how Hartley will see Nature) that Coleridge's own response

²⁴ Quoted by Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion*, p. 56, from unpublished notebooks 1828-9, No.37 (BM Add MS 47,532), p. 84.

is enlivened: the writing of poetry and myth is thus central to the reading of the divine text, and 'Dejection's twin themes of inspiration and response to Nature are more intimately linked than appears at first sight. If inspiration is the condition of response; if response is itself not passive but a construction; if writing is not an epiphenomenon, a *sign* rather than a mode of response, then we have a clear recognition of the role of the Coleridgean reader in the response to Nature. It is this recognition which underlies the famous declaration in Stanza IV:

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live (ll. 47-8)

We should not read this as a declaration of the pure subjectivity of reading, that reading is neither constrained nor called forth by a text, for the poem as a whole defines the context and conditions of reading. If Coleridge says:

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within (ll. 45-6)

it is outward form, form *ab extra*, that he rejects and not form *ab intra* or that which lies 'within'. For the poem asserts a Christian context, and the forms of Nature *are* there to be read. As Coleridge says, 'Ours is her wedding garment'; and just as Wordsworth in the 'Westminster Bridge' sonnet presents London as the 'new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband',²⁵ so Coleridge thinks of Nature as the bride, and reading as the process of that necessarily diadic relation whereby the wedding becomes a communion - becomes, as every church wedding reminds us, a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church. Reading is a marriage, and not a process of imposition. And if ours is also Nature's 'shroud' this is because Coleridge shared in the late eighteenth-century religious revival with its emphasis on the New Testament demand for a faith based not on signs or evidences but on the perception of 'the light which lighteth every man'.²⁶ Such a faith only lives through the 'shaping spirit of Imagination' (l. 86), and its absence, both in Coleridge's later metaphysics and in Christian tradition, is the form of death.

To respond to Nature, or rather to that which is immanent within Nature, is thus to engage in an act of readership which has, for Coleridge, a Christian context: its 'fountains are within' (l. 46). And we are told more about this process of reading. 'Joy' is the central term here, and it again asserts a Christian context, for as we have seen, the term was established in the late eighteenth century as a description of the sense of the presence of Christ to the believer, particularly in the tradition of Wesley and his followers. Joy then is that which 'from the soul itself must issue forth': it is 'A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud' and it comes from the soul:

And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (ll. 56-8)

For it is joy

²⁵ *Revelation* 21:2. Wordsworth's lines are:

This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning . . . (ll. 4-5)

²⁶ *John* 1:9. See Leslie Brisman, 'Coleridge and the Supernatural', *Studies in Romanticism* 21 (1982) 123-59.

Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud (ll. 68-70)

Joy is the condition of the shaping spirit of Imagination, the condition of the millinarian moment in which the world of the senses and the Coleridgean Understanding is swept away in a vision of 'A new earth and new Heaven'. It is then that we 'feel, how beautiful they are',²⁷ just as for the Mariner love was the condition of the redemptive vision of the sea snakes: 'A spring of love gushed from my heart, / And I blessed them unaware' (ll. 284-5).

However, whilst 'Dejection' clarifies the constructive role of the reader, and read in the light of 'Frost at Midnight' we can see the same movement from absence to benediction, 'Dejection' is marked by crucial differences. For taken at face value, 'Dejection' is most obviously a love poem - if such may be so called - a poem about divine love, or its mundane image, as the condition of inspiration. The poem is addressed to the 'Lady' of lines 25, 47, and 64 (Sara Hutchinson) and is held together by the intimate tone of the Coleridgean persona's confession of spiritual destitution. It is what we have learnt to call a conversation poem, though it lacks the lightness of response of, say, 'The Eolian Harp'; and it is to 'The Eolian Harp' I wish to turn briefly now. For 'The Eolian Harp' exists wholly in the tension between Coleridge's speculations and his sense of Sara (Fricker)'s orthodoxy, and Sara Fricker is there much more strongly implied as an active participant than is the case in 'Dejection'. The Coleridgean persona in 'The Eolian Harp' ventures his heresies under the indulgent eye of his beloved, gently testing the limits of her tolerance before coming back to heel under the 'mild reproof' of her 'more serious eye' (l. 49). He engages in a mock teasing which is only meant to be salaciously shocking: he offers in the presence of the slightly prim Miss Fricker the image of the lute

by the desultory breeze caressed
 Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover (ll. 14-15)

and if we have a sense of the inappropriateness of the simile in the circumstances, we have caught the tonal edge which is given to Coleridge's theological speculations in the following lines, and anticipate the recantation in the final stanza. If Sara (Fricker) is as inappropriate a reader as the received view of the Coleridge marriage would suggest,²⁸ she is nonetheless strongly present within the poem as the implied listener, and has an active role in the unwinding narrative. The problem with the poem is that the discovered conversational mode or mood is at times forgotten as the verse tends back to the kind of eighteenth-century philosophical poetry Coleridge was just outgrowing.²⁹ The poem's theological speculations are not sufficiently grounded in the experience of the addressee, for though it might be said

²⁷ 'Dejection' 38.

²⁸ See Molly Lefebure's *The Bondage of Love: A Life of Mrs Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1986) for a partial corrective to the received view. Lefebure does not, however (nor would she wish to), portray a woman possessed of real sympathy for Coleridge's thought - though she does persuade one that there was much to admire in Mrs Coleridge.

²⁹ See for instance:

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
 That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
 Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze
 At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (ll. 44-8)

that the poem's retreat from vision to piety finds its correlative in Sara, it can hardly be said that vision has retreated in this fashion from any other motive than grace in the face of a loved but more limited imagination. Vision does not lie vanquished: there has been no moment of kenosis, and if the poem is important as the first conversation poem it is not one in which the visionary impulse is satisfactorily resolved.

To return to our point, however, if 'Dejection' is on the surface held together by its confessional tone, the implied listener does not seem to intervene in the poem in the way that occurs in 'The Eolian Harp'. On this level the poem reads not as a narrative development, but as a series of discrete *cri de coeurs* spoken into the unresponsive space defined by its addressee. The poem declares the poet's hopeless love, explains that this is the cause of the spiritual disability which prevents all joy and response to Nature, and ends with a noble prayer for the well-being of the beloved. But in a sense the poem does not end, for the final stanza is just as discrete as any other, and does not grow out of the preceding narrative. It is, rather, an opportunity to impose an ending on the poem, and if it repeats the pattern of the earlier poems (in producing a vision of Nature as seen by another) it does so antithetically, since nothing has changed since the persona's earlier declaration on the forms of Nature: 'I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!' (l. 38). Coleridge here anticipates the later distinction between the Speculative and the Practical Reason, for the persona has 'seen' the form which the divine vision must take without experiencing it. For the later Coleridge, Reason in humanity was capable of transcending the limits of the Understanding (the Reason/Understanding distinction is itself a product of Reason) without necessarily involving the unity of Idea, Love and Will which is the mark of the Trinity: where such a unity is present, it is the mark of the Practical Reason; where it is absent, there Reason emerges in its merely Speculative guise. And since Speculative Reason does not involve the Will, its products do not partake of the immediate and self-instantiating qualities which define for Coleridge genuine religious commitments.³⁰ If that commitment emerges at the end of 'Frost at Midnight', it is only a pale shadow of it which appears in 'Dejection'.

At the primary level 'Dejection' is, then, a series of beginnings merely held together tonally: it is a series of stanzas marked not by a process of growth but by discourse essaying a series of beginnings - a series of failures to achieve the grounds for growth into an incorporating vision - and thus a series of stanzas marked by a closure which reflects the closure of the poet's own spirit. To speak here of discourse attempting to elaborate itself perhaps, in view of my earlier remarks on Barbara Harman, needs some explanation. The distinction is that whereas on Harman's view there can only be elaboration of language since there are no meanings to which language is indexed, on Coleridge's view the kind of decentered elaborative strategies to which I point are quite specifically evidence of the failure of meaning in a case where meaning might otherwise have been achieved.

At the very beginning of the poem we find evidence for this, for as Barbara Harman says of the use of the word 'Well!' at the opening of 'This Lime-tree Bower' so in its appearance in 'Dejection' do we find 'a word that has no content'.³¹ And the process continues thereafter, for this too is a reflection of the negative mode - so much more problematic in

³⁰ See S. T. Coleridge, *Logic* ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton, NJ, 1981), pp. 236-7. On the constitutive role of Practical Reason in faith, see *Aids to Reflection* in *The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. W. G. T. Shedd (7 vols., New York, 1884), i. 207ff., 241, and *passim*. See also *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. Kathleen Coburn et al (New York and London, 1957-), iv. 5210.

³¹ Harman, p. 891. Harman is of course not quite right, for in both poems 'Well' has a tonal content - indeed, and much to the point, different tonal contents.

'Dejection' - whereby the poet seeks to create meaning. The first stanza deals with lack of inspiration: its very subject is a strategy for elaboration. And this is reflected formally, for where the other conversation poems are written in unrhymed lines which reflect tonally if not a constancy then a development of mood, 'Dejection' is singular in its use of rhyme: if its basic structure is iambic, read in a certain way the first eight lines bear their stress so lightly that by the fourth line they are in danger of falling back into prose and it is only the couplet structure which maintains the poem's momentum. Or rather, there is a struggle in the lines between the desire for an incantatory or metrical elevation (reading right through, for instance, the caesura in line 4) and the awareness that such incantation is at the expense of meaning, that the initial simile has not been rounded in on its centre, but stretched by a series of syntactically decentring strategies that threaten to take the poem ever further sideways. We can see this deferring strategy in the narrative, for we are not (here) told of the winds to come later in the night. Rather, we are told that these winds ply a busier trade than certain other winds, and that these other winds in turn 'mould . . . lazy flakes' or yet again rake 'Upon the strings' of an Aeolian lute. When the subject of the sentence passes onto the lute ('Which better far were mute') we are in some danger of losing sight of the poem's purposes altogether (though of course the movement is held together by the common subject of inspiration) but the spell is now wound up and the voice can return to its subject with a new assurance: 'For lo! the new moon winter bright . . .'

The preceding lines were built on a tension - whether to read them metrically in the light of the stanza as a whole, or whether to pay attention to the syntactical problems and observe the way the lines tend to sag in the middle, dependant on the rhyme for the recovery of their poise. But in line 9 the voice ceases to be divided in this fashion, secure (at least temporarily) in the power of the antithetic muse which the rest of the poem delineates. Now it can play with a more assured voice, and even for a limited space with the idea of incantation or of language elaborating itself in the absence of any real subject:

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
 And overspread with phantom light,
 (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
 But rimmed and circled by a silver thread) (ll. 9-12)

Here the second couplet merely expands upon the content of the first. This brief essay is no more than a flexing of the voice, for the poem quickly returns to its subject - 'I see the old Moon in her lap, fortelling . . .' - but in a poem where the limits of such elaboration are themselves an issue, where the poem's own tonality is the constant subject, elaboration will emerge as a necessarily limited form. It nonetheless is central to 'Dejection', for it is part of the process by which the poem creates a viable poetic voice. For the poem has three distinct modes: a blank and negative voice which threatens to collapse back into prose; its antithesis in an incantatory voice which seeks to elaborate language in the void; and their resolution in what I shall call the integrated voice of dejection, the new voice which the poem announces. In the poem's movement from absence to voice, the incantatory or elaborative elements are what first save the poem from internal collapse: it is they who first 'their wonted impulse give' and 'startle this dull pain, and make it live!' (ll. 19-20). To read 'Dejection' is to be aware of the interplay of these tonalities, for instance in the following lines where once again it is an incantatory awareness of the possibilities of rhyme which in the second lines evade a threatened closure where a leaden language has come full circle from 'grief' to 'grief':

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear (ll. 21-4)

Or again in stanza III, where the first line comes to a complete stop with the same heavy emphasis on a final single-syllable word as occurred in the first stanza. Out of this comes the tentative, explorative, but metrically alive voice of the following quatrain, before these lines too subside into the final couplet.

My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain endeavour,
 Though I should gaze for ever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are within. (ll. 39-46)

In terms of voice this proves to be the final collapse of the poem: out of it grows the new and consistent voice, the voice I have referred to as integrated or organic, which has been the object of the poem. This is the voice of dejection, a voice which despite the negativity of its subject, is to instantiate itself as a viable mode.

'Dejection' is of course more than simply a play of voices, for to say that it is a series of beginnings, a series of discrete stanzas held together tonally, is to say that (in being held together tonally) the poem is a poem. Since its subject is dejection it cannot formally aspire to the kind of integration and growth of voice we find in 'Frost at Midnight', but though its stanzas, like its voices, are to some extent discrete, they too are tonally related. For 'Dejection' is not simply a poem about lack of inspiration, nor is it a poem which delights in a sense of being a poem about not being able to write. 'Dejection' is fundamentally a meditation on form, and its purpose is to announce a new mode, for Coleridge, of poetry. As a poem addressed to the beloved, it identifies the role of love in inspiration, but this is an emotion denied to the Coleridgean persona: he must suppress the love he feels for Sara Hutchinson (to whom the poem was originally written)

For not to think of what I needs must feel . . .
 This was my sole resource, my only plan (ll. 87, 91)

The poem heralds for Coleridge, then, a mode of poetry defined by its relation to the *absence* of love. This is the mode not of high tragedy but of pathos, the mode found in Wordsworth's 'Lucy Gray' but exemplified in Coleridge's own poem.

We should turn then to stanza VII in which the presence of the storm, whose absence was lamented earlier, is now recognized:

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. (ll. 96-7)

The wind plays on the strings of the Aeolian lute first mentioned in line 6, but the sound which emerges is not the harmony of music. It is a howl 'Of agony by torture lengthened out' (l. 98), and the persona is moved to what has been called a Lear-like apostrophe:³²

Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! (ll. 99-104)

The natural world comes to seem the fittest instrument for tragic vision: as for Lear so here for Coleridge tragedy implicates Nature. But if the suggestion is that tragedy forms the new kind of poetry, Coleridge calls this into question with his further apostrophe:

Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about? (ll. 108-10)

Here there is irony verging on contempt. Tragedy, as a new visionary form, is diagnosed as the easy option. And yet, even so, the antithetical status of tragedy is emphasized, for these tragic sounds are 'worse than *wintry* song' (l. 106, my emphasis): they are a subversion of the promise of Spring. As Northrop Frye argues, the mythos of winter is satire and presents a world which is and always has been dead and without hope. Coleridge images here not winter but a tragic inversion of the spring myth:

Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among. (ll. 104-7)

If yule is Christmas, and an image of hope and rebirth, then 'Devils' yule' has been made of these hopes: Chaucer's 'April with his showres soote' has been turned into a premature Autumn.³³ Like Frye, Coleridge identifies the mutual implication of Autumn and Spring, and in particular that the implicitly Autumnal vision can only exist in antithesis to the comic vision it implies.

Yet if Autumn provides the tone of the aesthetic Coleridge seeks, it is not high tragedy as a visionary mode, not the 'Poet, e'en to frenzy bold', that 'Dejection' endorses but the mode of pathos. After his derisory remarks on the tragic 'Actor', the tone once again changes: 'But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!' Within this silence (and reading from the manuscript version 'William' for 'Otway') emerges

A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As William's self had framed the tender lay, -
'Tis of a little child

³² Ruth Barcan, 'Coleridge's Philosophy and Poetics, and Their Importance in "Dejection: An Ode"' (unpublished paper).

³³ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, 'General Prologue' l.

Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way. (ll. 118-23)

As Bloom and Trilling point out, the reference is to Wordsworth's 'Lucy Gray'.³⁴ The new mode of writing is to be one not of high tragedy but of pathos or dejection, the mode found in Wordsworth's, but exemplified in Coleridge's, poem.

'Dejection', then, repeats at a number of levels the pattern of creation by negation that we found in 'Frost at Midnight'. Abstractly, the poem proceeds from the initial absence to the closing benediction; through the interplay of tones it creates by the end of the poem a voice consistent with the announced aesthetic; and, once again, the inversion of the spring myth makes explicit the dependence of the new aesthetic on that whose absence is presupposed. And Coleridge describes schematically the process by which the pattern worked in the earlier poems:

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness (ll. 76-9)

However, if the abstract pattern is clear, its form in 'Dejection' is very different. For where 'Frost at Midnight' opens with an achieved image of receptivity, the promise of a 'connective consciousness', 'Dejection' can boast no parallel; if it is about inspiration it is about an inspiration in a perpetually minor key. For there is here no experienced image of absence, the carefully constructed atmosphere of the frost and the midnight air out of which grows the divine vision. The benediction in 'Dejection' is a vision which excludes Coleridge and if there is a productive 'silence' (l. 114) within the poem, it is productive of the less inclusive voice of pathos. The choice then of 'Lucy Gray' as the Coleridgean exemplum speaks of this mode of pathos, but there is here, I think, more. Wordsworth's is a poem about liminality, for Lucy's returning footsteps cease in the middle of the bridge which divides the world from home:

They track'd them on, nor ever lost,
And to the Bridge they came.

They follow'd from the snowy bank
Those foot-marks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank
- And further there were none.³⁵ (ll. 51-6)

Pathos, or dejection, as a positive and visionary poetic mode is confined to the nether world, but since it is defined antithetically it defines the borders of a more positive vision: it is in 'Dejection's' terms

A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight (ll. 118-19)

Though confined to the nether world, the poem suggests a presence on the borders with this:

³⁴ Bloom and Trilling, p. 278.

³⁵ Text from *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800* ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY, 1992).

Yet some maintain that to this day
 She is a living Child,
 That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
 Upon the lonesome Wild. (ll. 57-60)

But to turn to the figure which most interests me in 'Dejection' - in its relation to 'The Ancient Mariner' - Lucy must mean 'light'. The poem's title ('Lucy Gray'), with its questioning of the light which is the unnoticed presence that distinguishes gray from black, captures the poem's liminal consciousness.

If, then, 'Dejection' is a response to the bordering qualities of vision in 'Lucy Gray', it is around these qualities that its central image, the moon, operates. Where 'Frost at Midnight' opens with an achieved image of absence, 'Dejection' opens with an image in which absence figures quite differently - the image of 'the new moon / With the old Moon in her arms', as the 'Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence' puts it. This is an image not of the light of the Creation filling the void, but of a thin and belated light serving to define a lacuna. In this image we find a space marked by the death of the old and thus the poem's lament for time and passing. If the moon is Coleridge's standard image for the Imagination, we also find, in the thin sliver of light which marks the new moon, Imagination's complement, a pale reflection of its former glory which can but point to the absent power. And if, by putting the old moon not in the arms of the new but 'in her lap' Coleridge has consciously or unconsciously introduced a sexual innuendo, he has presented a psychological image of the kind of absence he endures.

We may conclude, then, that where 'This Lime-tree Bower' and 'Frost at Midnight' present an image of the questing Imagination finding its vision, and are as much concerned with revealing the process by which the vision is born as with the vision itself, in 'Dejection' the asserted vision excludes Coleridge and the poem is structured quite differently. For while 'Dejection' repeats the pattern of a creation by negation we find it here in an antithetical mode. The emotional energy of the poem goes into the circumstance of Coleridge's alienation, and the positive vision is a vision *not* experienced. If, then, displacement in 'Frost at Midnight' is the *method*, it becomes in 'Dejection' more overtly the *subject*: it is laid open as an abstract form, and if the idea is thus presented merely Speculatively (as Coleridge's later metaphysics would have it), or if Coleridge is locked permanently in the world of antithesis, this in no sense detracts from the reality, for Coleridge, of that which he is denied. It speaks rather of his spiritual state.

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Kilve by the Green Sea

By BERTA LAWRENCE

'KILVE BY THE green sea' is the next village to Holford, on The Minehead side. In his poem *Anecdote for Fathers* Wordsworth offers a little boy the choice between Liswen Farm¹ and a house at Kilve. Actually the sea here is rarely brighter than a greenish grey and its coastline is bounded by dangerously crumbling cliffs composed of several strata of various-coloured rock. The 'smooth shore' that Wordsworth put into *Anecdote for Fathers* is a shingle consisting of big stones that the sea has planed smooth. The place-name Kilve means 'cliff'.

The coast at Kilve was an area on which in 1797 and 1798 local inhabitants concentrated their fear of a French invasion after Mr Pitt had warned 'Expect the French one dark night'. Soon their suspicions focused on the newcomers, Coleridge and the Wordsworths, particularly the latter who frequently roamed the shore and looked out to sea through a 'spy-glass'. Coleridge said that he saw Walsh, the government agent, watching them from behind a rock at Kilve. However a walk from Holford to Kilve remained a favoured short excursion for the three friends, sometimes singly, sometimes together.

Two combes (valleys) run up to the Quantock Hills from Holford: narrow, winding tree-shaded Butterfly Combe, sometimes called Tannery Combe (the old Tannery wheel is still there) referred to by Dorothy as 'the lesser combe' and wider, more open Holford Combe, 'the greater combe', opposite Alfoxden gates. Down Butterfly Combe meanders a little stream that at Holford winds over fields to flow into the sea at Kilve. This was the stream that attracted Coleridge into 'making studies' and asking local inhabitants questions about its course. He intended writing a long poem called 'The Brook', a project he abandoned. At Kilve the stream flows down a leafy lane on which, in recent years, housing has encroached - past Kilve Mill, which it used to work, past Kilve's lonely little church and finally over the fields of Priory Farm before tumbling into the sea. Some years ago kingfishers could be seen flitting from willows overhanging the stream in the lane and wagtails on its stones. In Coleridge's time the lane must have been very pretty, very quiet, remote even from village life - except on some dark nights when smugglers dragged kegs of brandy up the stream to supply willing villagers. This portion of the Bristol Channel coast, which on one side reaches Hinkley Point Nuclear Power Station (Coleridge wrote *Shurton Bars* not far from the site) and on the other to Watchet, also well-known to him, was a hive of smuggling activity. A local boat would slip out to meet a French boat, or the French boat would venture up to the shore and drop kegs of brandy into the creek called Kilve Pill. Sometimes the Kilve smugglers stored these supplies in the deserted ruins of so-called Kilve Priory that stood - as they still do - in a field near 13th-century Kilve church. The basin-like hollow in a field is the site of the fishponds made by the half-dozen brothers who served a little chantry that became forsaken and semi-ruined long before the Reformation. Twenty years after the Wordsworths' stay, Kilve smugglers, on the verge of discovery by excisemen, set fire one night to the supplies stored in the deserted chantry, destroying their booty and much of the ruined buildings. Roped thickly with ivy their remains stand near Priory Farm which you pass when

¹ Although Wordsworth apparently meant Liswyn Farm to be a fictitious name for a farm near Alfoxden, it was in fact a real place - the farm owned by John Thelwall in Wales which the Wordsworths visited in August 1798.

following the field-path to the sea. A big field - it is generally a cornfield - with crumbling edges overhangs the boulder-strewn beach.

Within living memory a peculiar sport was practised on this shore between Kilve and Watchet; it was known as 'glatting'. Men armed with sticks and accompanied by terriers called 'fishdogs' went to the shore at low tide and poked out the conger-eels that lurked in pools beneath the boulders. Suppers of conger-eel pie were eaten at the village inn (now the *Hood Arms*) which owns old photographs of this sport and of men holding their huge fish-trophies. Did the Wordsworths ever hear of this?

Another small ruin wreathed in ivy stands near Priory Farm. This is comparatively modern in origin. It is the engine-house that represents the failed enterprise of a scientist who tried to extract oil from the lumps of shale.

Part of Kilve - a very small village even when enlarged by new houses - situated along the main road, is called Putsham and is reached from Alfoxden by a steep secluded lane called Pardlestone Lane. This was the path used by the Wordsworths when walking to the sea. They would climb first to the top of a hill above Alfoxden of which the chief feature (often sketched) is a line of gnarled beeches deformed and twisted by the winds, grey and nearly leafless because of the saltiness of the wind. Their exposed roots writhe along a bank of red soil. From here the lane drops to Putsham between banks starred with primroses. This lane is often made very muddy by Quantock streamlets as Dorothy recorded in her *Journal* saying that she turned back because of the muddy state of the lane.

2 February 1798. Went to the hilltop, sat overlooking country towards the sea. Sea spotted and white, of a bluish grey.

7 February. Turned towards Potsham,² but finding the way dirty, changed our course.

Cottage gardens the object of our walk.³

Travelling later in Scotland she wrote that she 'remembered the cottage gardens of Somerset . . . with pain from contrast.'

4 April. Walked to the sea-side in the afternoon. A great commotion in the air, but the sea neither grand nor beautiful. A violent shower in returning. Sheltered under some fir trees at Potsham.

Alfoxton Farm is situated at the top of Pardlestone Lane; it was the 'home farm' of the Wordsworths' time, farmed by the St Albyns' bailiff John Bartholomew who signed the tenancy agreement for Alfoxden House at £23 per annum, with Wordsworth. In later years Bartholomews lived at the Castle of Comfort, a pretty house between Holford and Stowey. In Wordsworth's time it was an inn mentioned several times by Dorothy as the finishing point of a walk.

Bridgwater, Somerset

² Dorothy was very careless about place-names.

³ Quotations from Dorothy's journals are from *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* ed. Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1971).

Lamb and Southey: Further Comments

Editor's Note: The January *Bulletin* NS 89 opened with C. J. P. Smith's article, 'Lamb and the Politics of Literary Fashion in Southey's Female Wanderers', pp. 2-8. In the ensuing weeks I received a footnote from David Chandler, to which Dr Smith replies, below. Further, Dr Smith takes this opportunity to annotate himself.

Lamb as Touchstone: An Allusion to *As You Like It* By David Chandler

IN THE *CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN* for January 1995 (NS 89), C. J. P. Smith discussed Lamb's reaction to Southey's poem 'The Soldier's Wife'.¹ Briefly: on 1 July 1796 Lamb sent Coleridge (who had supplied one of the poem's four stanzas) an eight-line parody of the poem's dactylic measure. Coleridge apparently expressed some annoyance at what he regarded as implied criticism, and Lamb subsequently sent him a playful 'apology'.

Smith takes a very serious view of the whole incident, and firmly aligns his critical sympathies with Lamb: the 'infallible honesty' of Lamb's parody being said to have produced applaudable 'corrective laughter'. Smith even speculates that Southey's poem struck 'a very deep personal chord' with Lamb, who may have 'felt something of his own situation' reflected in the poem's 'marooned and isolated' central figure - and that this conditioned his response. Finally, Lamb's subsequent puckish 'apology' is glossed as 'a kindly rebuke on Coleridge's involvement in a project which fails to respond seriously to its subject matter' (pp. 4-5). This biographical fantasy, although necessary for the overall argument of Smith's article, unfortunately deprives Lamb's response of most of its sparkling wit. Had Smith noticed a crucial allusion to *As You Like It* in Lamb's 'apology', this could have been preserved, even at the cost of some weakening in the article's argument.

Lamb wrote:

For your Dactyls I am sorry you are so sore about 'em - a very Sir Fretful -. In good troth *the Dactyls are good Dactyls, but their measure is naught*. Be not yourself 'half anger half agony' if I pronounce your darling lines not to be the best you ever wrote in all your life, - you have written much. [*italics mine*]²

The italicized portion is a clear allusion to two passages in *As you Like It*, both spoken by Touchstone, the fool. The first is where Touchstone speaks:

Of a certain knight, that swore by his honour they were good pancakes, and swore by his honour the mustard was naught. Now I'll stand to it, the pancakes were naught and the mustard was good, and yet was not the knight forsworn.³

Touchstone uses this story to defend his own use of the oath 'by mine honour' (I ii 57), the point being, of course, that if one has no honour (like the knight), one is 'not forsworn' (I ii 71). He uses a similar verbal formulation later in the play, when Corin asks him his opinion of the 'shepherd's life' (III ii 11): 'Truly shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but

¹ 'Lamb and the Politics of Literary Fashion in Southey's Female Wanderers', pp. 2-8.

² *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb* ed. Edwin W. Marris Jr (3 vols., Ithaca, NY, 1975-8), i. 41. Quoted by Smith, p. 5.

³ I ii 59ff. All references are to the Arden Edition, ed. Agnes Latham.

in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught . . .' (III ii 13ff). Moreover, and surely significantly, it is in this later scene that Orlando's poems are discussed and their metre condemned. Touchstone himself damns Orlando's rhythms as a 'right butter-women's rank to market' (III ii 96), and a 'very false gallop of verses' (III ii 111). Rosalind adds, even more pertinently from Lamb's point of view: 'some of them [the verses] had in them more feet than the verses would bear' (III ii 161ff), and 'the feet were lame . . . and therefore stood lamely in the verse' (III ii 165ff). Lamb's allusion was thus wickedly clever, brilliantly appropriate, and, surely, completely disarming. Moving from an apparent apology for his implied criticism, *via* this allusion, Lamb felt able to return immediately to further sly criticism. By using Touchstone's distinctive turn of phrase, and surely assuming that Coleridge would 'get' the joke, he was able to suggest that he too had the fool's license to criticize freely and make judgments, even if he had no 'honour' (note the wry preceding 'In good troth') to support them. Critically reducing this passage to 'a kindly rebuke', misses the fact that it is the allusion - the *joke* - that is the 'point'.⁴

Elinor Shaffer, in a recent article, has pointed out how much Lamb's later 'critical terminology . . . is taken from Shakespeare.' She suggests this is evidence 'of the incorporation of Shakespeare into the very texture of the English language', during the Romantic period.⁵ Certainly in the early letter just discussed we can see how apparently natural it was, even then, for Lamb to express himself, as it were, *through* Shakespeare.

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Lamb and Southey: More Footnotes

By C. J. P. Smith

Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I: when I was at home, I was in a better place: but travellers must be content. (*As You Like It*, II iv 16ff)

I HAVE READ WITH INTEREST Mr Chandler's brief note. He has restored to the debate part of Lamb's own wit spoken through the guise of Shakespeare's Fool Touchstone, and criticized my article for attempting to use Lamb as touchstone (rather than Touchstone) in a debate centering around Southey and Coleridge's poetic honesty in the face of *Anti-Jacobin* wit. Are their poems just 'free standing vignettes'¹ close to the ballad tradition, or something more?

Mr Chandler must forgive me for taking 'a very serious view' of this exchange between friends, but it remains part of the scant written evidence of the contemporary reception of the poetry in question, and I am (still) in the process of attempting to assess the authorial involvement in, or commitment to, the production of such poems. I realize the danger of invoking authors as the 'ultimate explanation'² of their writings, but in the case of Southey, Coleridge and Lamb I am not ashamed of the occasional subjunctive, *perhaps* or *maybe*, as long as they remain openly stated, which in my article they do.

⁴ In this connection - Lamb as Shakespearean fool - it is interesting to note a recent comment by Jonathan Bate in his edition of *Elia & The Last Essays of Elia* (Oxford, 1987): 'Lamb . . . might be seen as a Yorick, jester to the arch-Romantic Coleridge and Hazlitt who self-consciously identified themselves as Hamlet-figures.'

⁵ 'Illusion and Imagination: Derrida's Parergon and Coleridge's Aid to Reflection. Revisionary readings of Kantian formalist aesthetics' in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin, 1990), pp. 144-5 and note.

¹ A. D. Harvey, *English Poetry in a Changing Society* (London, 1980), p. 62.

² See Catherine Belsey, *John Milton: Language, Gender, Power* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 5-10, 23-4.

And on the subject of 'biographical fantasy', there is overwhelming evidence of the uncongenial nature of Lamb's work-bound existence. Lamb presents himself, and is presented by others, as a chained individual, one who 'creepest round a dear-lov'd Sister's bed'³ or one who

hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity!⁴

His sonnet *Work* complains about 'that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood' and his poem *Lines Addressed from London, to SARA and S.T.C. at Bristol, in the Summer of 1796*, which appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* for January 1797, is a lament upon the thwarted desire for a much-needed holiday. Lamb's situation in London needs to be included in any discussion of his humour. It is one of the reasons why he in particular always needs a good laugh, but his laughter *includes* the backdrop of profound tragedy, hence its poignancy. Lamb's laughter is not merely wit in space, but catharsis, escape, freedom, even fantasy, with duty and tragedy on the other end of the balance. This is, as I have tried to suggest, the reason I used him as a kind of arbiter in my article. I chose not to regard him as a 'shallow man' but to 'Learn of the wise, and perpend' (*As You Like It*, II ii 68ff).

If Lamb dresses up as the Shakespearean Fool, why? In his relationship with Coleridge, certainly, he listened whilst the Sage talked, in a role which he came to dislike (however wittily he disguised that dislike) as the letter to Southey of 28 July 1798, containing 'Theses Quaedam Theologicae', indicates.

But I wanted to try to resist reducing the debate, as the *Anti-Jacobin* did, and as Mr Chandler appears to want, to a show of wit. He will notice that I did not refer to Lamb's enjoyment of laughter merely as wit. Wit tends to function at someone else's expense without really engaging (as in the exchange between the *Anti-Jacobin* and the humanitarian poems) social contexts and their particular problems - but that is not its function anyway. The wit of the *Anti-Jacobin* was designed to deride and of course to skim over social problems with an appeal to a patriotism which blamed French sympathizers for those very problems. Lamb's wit is indeed sparkling, but it is not the same as *Anti-Jacobin* wit. I was not concerned with hunting 'the joke' or to preserve Lamb's excellent wit *per se* but to try to explore the subtextual stresses, the environments (social and personal) into which poems like *The Soldier's Wife* were thrust in order to make some judgement upon them.

The Chariot in Southey's 'The Widow'

By C. J. P. SMITH

Possess ye therefore, ye who borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, - possess ye still
Your element; there only can ye shine,
There only minds like yours can do no harm. (Cowper, *Task* i 754-9)

³ Coleridge's *Poetical Works* ed. E. H. Coleridge (Oxford, 1969), p. 78.

⁴ *Ibid.* 179.

SOUTHEY'S DESPERATE WIDOW is passed by a 'chariot':

Fast o'er the bleak heath rattling drove a chariot,
 'Pity me!' feebly cried the poor night wanderer.
 'Pity me Strangers! lest with cold and hunger
 Here I should perish.

I had a home once - I had a husband -
 'I am a Widow poor and broken-hearted!'
 Loud blew the wind, unheard was her complaining,
 On drove the chariot.¹

The inclusion of the 'chariot' is of some cultural and political interest to Southey's theme because it constitutes a thinly-veiled swipe at those people who could afford the (jolting) comfort of wheels, the aristocrats. The 'Travelling Charriot' was a type of post-chaise privately owned by the nobility or by high-ranking officers, and was often used for touring the Continent, on the first and last stages of the journey. It typically carried an heraldic crest on the doors, and a sword-case at the rear. It was the sort of carriage that democratic pedestrians like Southey and Coleridge said they abhorred. Their ostentatious pedestrianism was in the 1790s both something of a political act and at times something of a necessity. Coleridge versified his disgust in a poem called *Perspiration: A Travelling Eclogue*, 1794:

The dust flies smothering, as on clatt'ring wheel
 Loath'd Aristocracy careers along . . .²

The 'chariot' underlines the depiction of the aristocrat or officer as uncaring, unseeing - speeding through a landscape, but never pausing to communicate with that landscape, or with its widows - the essentially slow walking pace of Wordsworth's *Ruined Cottage* might also be brought to mind here. It was this class-born blindness to poverty that Coleridge deplored in his companion Joseph Hucks during their walk through Wales in 1794. Coleridge (burlesquing Hucks) shows how Aristocratic manners impede reforms:

It is *wrong* Southey! for a little Girl with a half-famished sickly Baby in her arms to put her head in at the window of an Inn - 'Pray give me a bit of Bread and Meat'! from a Party dining on Lamb, Green Pease and Sallad - Why?? Because it is *impertinent & obtrusive* - I am a Gentleman! - and wherefore should the clamorous Voice of Woe *intrude* upon mine Ear!? My companion is a Man of cultivated, tho' not vigorous, understanding - his feelings are all on the side of humanity - yet such are the unfeeling remarks, which the lingering Remains of Aristocracy occasionally prompt.³

Perhaps Southey and Coleridge's humanitarian poetry formed part of a gentler and longer-term English revolution continuing after the failures of the French revolution, which gradually embedded its discourses within and beyond manners, or other enclosing social barriers, imaged by the 'chariot' of indifference.

Sheffield

¹ *Poems* (Bristol, 1797), p. 148.

² *Coleridge's Poetical Works*, p. 56.

³ Joseph Hucks, *A Pedestrian Tour Through North Wales, in a Series of Letters* ed. Alun Jones and William Tydeman (Cardiff, 1979), p. 92. See Coleridge's letter to Southey, 6 July 1794.

Reviews

JOSEPHINE MCDONAGH, *De Quincey's Disciplines*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. Pp. 209. £27.50 hardback. ISBN 0 19 811285 8.

THIS BOOK IS THE LATEST in a series of recent studies that seek to explore and define the achievement of Thomas De Quincey. It sets itself up in opposition to the school of De Quincey criticism exemplified in books such as V. A. De Luca's *Thomas De Quincey: The Prose of Vision*, where *Suspiria de Profundis* and the two versions of *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* are seen as the heart of De Quincey's accomplishment, and most of his other writings filed under 'muddled', 'digressive', 'derivative', and so on. McDonagh, on the other hand, agrees with studies like Robert Maniquis's *Lonely Empires: Personal and Public Visions of Thomas De Quincey* and John Barrell's *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, which see De Quincey's importance as much more broadly based. Her aim is 'to understand as connected and integrated projects De Quincey's political works and his dream visions and impassioned prose.' In this enterprise she draws on unpublished manuscript material, important but often overlooked De Quincey essays, an extensive knowledge of past and current De Quincey scholarship, and the critical approaches of Michel Foucault and others. Though some of its arguments are unconvincing, *De Quincey's Disciplines* is resourceful and often revealing.

McDonagh's introduction usefully identifies three of the most recent versions of De Quincey: 'the Opium Eater' of the 1960s, the 'proto-deconstructionist' of the late 1970s and 1980s, and a new De Quincey she is particularly interested in, 'one more sensitive to the social and political context of his life and work.' McDonagh divides her book into epigrammatic sections like 'Kant for Businessmen', 'Reader's Digestion' and 'Style Slaves', and within these sections she pauses often to remark on the central ironies of De Quincey's career, for instance that his editorship of his own *Collected Works* should have produced 'such an organizational disaster given that he intensely admired intellectual systems.' Familiar essays are examined, such as 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', as well as lesser-known works like 'Sortilege and Astrology' and the *Blackwood's* political diatribes of the early 1830s.

The central argument of the book is that De Quincey's writings 'chart a flagging but intransigent High Tory response' to a wide range of contemporary events, and that this response is discernible in virtually all his works, however different they may otherwise be. Against the view that De Quincey is notable mainly for his 'literature of power', which appeals to the reader's sense of the sublime, McDonagh argues that De Quincey was always politically engaged. She is able to show that he manipulated everything from the Whiggish economics of Ricardo to the history of the English language in order to promote various versions of patriarchy and nationalism. Taking opium becomes less a merely personal issue and more a reaction to enormous social change, and De Quincey's addiction is seen as mirroring Britain's economic dependence on the opium trade with China. The gothic fictions, the tracts on Kant, the 'Letters to a Young Man', and the essays 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts' are similarly shown to have significant economic and political dimensions.

Yet while the book is illuminating, there are shortcomings. Dates or facts are occasionally incorrect: De Quincey, for example, did not die 'at Mavis Bush Cottage, Lasswade' but in his lodgings at 42 Lothian Street, Edinburgh; and his grief was excessive, not at the death of Wordsworth's son Thomas, but at that of his daughter Catherine. More seriously, McDonagh

sometimes fails to convince because she tries to make texts support a political view of De Quincey that they cannot substantiate. The *Lake Reminiscences* are one example: McDonagh wishes to see these essays as further evidence of De Quincey's relentless Toryism so she argues that in them De Quincey 'erase[s]' the 'political radicalism of the initiating moment of Romanticism . . . and instead evokes an imagined feudal past.' Yet in the *Reminiscences* De Quincey refers on several occasions to Romanticism's political origins, the 'convulsing . . . effects' of the French Revolution 'upon Wordsworth's heart and soul', the 'great revolution' in 'Southey's political creed', and the long and complicated character of Coleridge's 'political connections'; it is also in these essays that De Quincey makes the provocative assertion that he was not 'old enough, at the first outbreak of the French Revolution, to participate . . . in the golden hopes of its early dawn', or else 'undoubtedly, [he] should have done.'

Similarly, McDonagh repeatedly claims that De Quincey 'despised' or 'deplored' the magazines, that he wrote 'monotonously of the iniquities of the press', that for him 'a politically informed public was as irredeemable as a venereally infected, disease-ridden people.' Yet De Quincey very often praises the press, applauding its 'energy, vigilance, sagacity, perseverance' in 1835 and later declaring it a 'mere impossibility . . . that any but men of honour and sensibilities and conspicuous talent, and men brilliantly accomplished in point of education, should become writers or editors of a *leading* journal, or indeed of any daily journal.' A year before his death he observes that over the past 'fifty and odd years' a vast expansion in the ability of the press to communicate information has enabled it to bind together all of Europe. 'So travels the press to victory', he states. In her anxiousness to see all of De Quincey's activity as enshrining a kind of feudalism, McDonagh sometimes simplifies the range of his opinions.

Despite these drawbacks, the book is valuable for the new ground it breaks, and the new connections it establishes. De Quincey is shown as a High Tory in the Victorian age constantly grappling with questions like slavery, industrialization, the opium wars and democratization, even in essays where these seem not to be central concerns. The mapping in of his accomplishment continues at a brisk pace and *De Quincey's Disciplines*, with its breadth and insight, is a significant contribution to that process.

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ROBERT MORRISON

DUNCAN WU, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xviii + 220. ISBN 0 521 41600 0. £40 hardback.

NEARLY A CENTURY AGO, Lane Cooper asserted that, for most readers,

the poet of Rydal is a great non-reading son of nature, uninfluenced by books and neglectful of bookish lore, a genius who in a peculiar sense may be contemplated apart and fully understood without recourse to conventional and irksome scholarly helps.¹

Cooper went on to demonstrate the limitations of this view, and in so doing charted an important course for twentieth-century Wordsworthian scholarship: to discover and explore the wealth of 'bookish lore' that informed his poetic achievement. Yet, despite the efforts of many scholars, the impression persists that Wordsworth 'love[d] the brooks/ Far better than the sages' books', that if his poetry reflects deep learning, it was gained second-hand, usually

¹ 'A Glance at Wordsworth's Reading', *Modern Language Notes* 22 (1907) 83.

from Coleridge, that Wordsworth strove for a vision of elemental nature unmediated by poetic or philosophical traditions and therefore more sublime and comprehensive. Attempts to correct this impression are impeded at every turn by the poet's habitual reticence: he did not, like Coleridge, keep and preserve extensive personal notebooks, he did not extensively discuss his reading in his correspondence, nor did he leave many annotations in the books known to be his. He wanted to disguise his learning, to keep his literary opinions to himself, for the most part, and, especially in the case of classical poetry, to transform his allusions so thoroughly that their source can scarcely be recovered.

Thus students of Wordsworth will welcome Duncan Wu's *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*. His book, as a flyleaf announces, 'is the most complete study of Wordsworth's reading to date', and hence is the fullest record we possess of Wordsworth's intellectual activity during his formative years and early manhood. The breadth of Wu's research is impressive: besides an exhaustive study of the secondary literature (including some rather obscure dissertations), he has consulted an astonishing range of archival materials, including account books, examination books, college lecture notes, and library catalogues and registers. In fact, only a few scholars have ever seen all of these materials, and to my knowledge none are of Wu's generation. The results of this research are equally impressive: every page fairly bristles with useful information, much of it new, and what is not new has here been collected for the first time. Wu has reconstructed, as far as possible, the Wordsworth family library, the library of Hawkshead school in Wordsworth's day, and he has consulted library catalogues (some unpublished) of the Pinney family at Racedown, of Francis Wrangham, and of Anthony Souby, a Penrith bookseller. He has tracked down records of book purchases for the Wordsworth boys, of library borrowings by Coleridge and Joseph Cottle, and of book clubs and societies to which Wordsworth may have had access, and he has attempted, as far as he could, to describe the curricula of Hawkshead school and St John's College, Cambridge in the 1780s and 1790s. Finally, he has combed Wordsworth's published writings and early manuscripts for allusions, quotations, and references, and has checked the books Wordsworth is known to have owned for evidence of his reading. To quote the flyleaf once again, *Wordsworth's Reading* is 'an essential reference tool for for all scholars and students of [Wordsworth's] work.' We will all want to own it.

Wu has organized this mass of material with admirable clarity. His book is a heavily annotated catalogue or list, in which the individual entries are arranged alphabetically by author (or by title, in the case of anonymous works or periodicals). Each main entry is given a sequential Arabic number (from Joseph Addison, #1, to Edward Young, #272), and within each entry, Wu supplies the titles of individual works that Wordsworth read (including the edition he read, if that information is available), references (either to primary or secondary sources) which support his reading of those works, and discussions, sometimes lengthy, of the available evidence. In addition, in each entry he supplies 'suggested dates of reading', arranged chronologically and numbered in lower-case Roman numerals. Thus his entry for Torquato Tasso (#239, pp. 134-5) isolates three separate readings of the *Jerusalem Delivered*: (i) a reading of the Italian in 1788-9, while Wordsworth was under Agostino Isola's tutelage at Cambridge, (ii) a simultaneous reading of Hoole's English translation, and (iii) a further reading of the Italian in 1794, when William was apparently teaching Italian to his sister, Dorothy. Evidence for these readings is gleaned from allusions to Tasso in manuscript fragments and *An Evening Walk*, from the fact that Wordsworth donated Hoole's translation to the Hawkshead Library in 1789, from correspondence with his brother Richard in 1793, and from the 1859 sale catalogue of his library, in which a copy of Isola's 1786 edition of Tasso, with 'MS. Notes by Mr. Wordsworth', is listed. This kind of information is invaluable

to students of Wordsworth, and we owe Wu a great debt for collecting it and making it so easily available.

It should be noted that Wu is very careful to define what he means by a 'reading': 'My claim', he remarks in his preface, 'is not that Wordsworth read each of the books listed from cover to cover, but that he had access to them for a time, and sample their contents' (p. ix). Moreover, he is well aware that 'Allusions are not . . . a consistently reliable form of evidence for readings. It does not follow that because Wordsworth alludes to a poem in a particular year, he also read it in that year', especially given the poet's 'extremely retentive memory.' Nevertheless, Wu sees 'little option but to record the borrowing or reference, so that this knowledge is at least made generally available' (p. ix). And thus each 'borrowing or reference' is recorded as a separate reading, assigned a lower-case Roman numeral, and evidence for it is given a separate discussion. It is on this point that Wu's procedures are most open to question, as he himself admits in a prefatory note about 'Dates of readings'. 'For some entries', such as those of Tasso cited above, 'a particular date is demanded by the evidence, but the majority are difficult to place with certainty and the datings offered here should be regarded only as a general guide' (p. xvii). In other words, the 'suggested date of reading' is often the date of an allusion or a reference, and not really a reading at all. Everyone using this volume must keep this disclaimer in mind. A 'reading' is not necessarily a reading: it is something rather different. The limitations of Wu's procedure are most evident in the entry on the Bible (#27, pp. 15-16): he lists just five readings of a book Wordsworth must have read or heard read thousands of times, and the evidence for four of those readings is an allusion. In such cases (and I would include *The Book of Common Prayer* and favourite authors like Milton, Pope, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Ovid in this category) one wishes that Wu had created a general entry describing the earliest date Wordsworth may have read (or heard read) a given work, and then listed the allusions, or the dates of the works containing the allusions. At the very least, he ought to distinguish allusions from readings throughout the volume, if only to avoid confusion. If future volumes of *Wordsworth's Reading* are planned, one hopes that such problems will be addressed.

There are two other general problems in Wu's book which should also be noted. The first has been created by the publisher, Cambridge University Press. Since the volume went to press, Wu has published a spate of articles, many of which must have been intended for *Wordsworth's Reading*. Most of these are easily available in *Notes and Queries*; others appear in the *Bodleian Library Record*, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, *Classical Quarterly*, *The Library*, and even *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*. Now it is safe to say that, in my country at least, very few libraries subscribe to all of these journals. Yet Wu frequently refers us to these articles for proof of readings or further discussions of the evidence. In short, unless one possesses photocopies or offprints of 20 other articles, some of which are difficult to come by, one does not really possess Wu's full study. And since his study is likely to remain a standard reference work for decades to come, this circumstance is frustrating and regrettable. One hopes that Cambridge will relent and allow Wu to include all his work in future volumes; otherwise the usefulness of his study is diminished.

The second problem has to do with standards of evidence, especially regarding allusions. Allusions carry heavy weight with Wu, as well they should: if Wordsworth echoes or alludes to a work, the echo is taken as convincing evidence that Wordsworth read it. But Wu never defines what he means by an allusion, and for several entries his standards seem decidedly weak. For instance, in entry #37.ii (p. 19) the phrase 'scarce heard' in a 1789 sonnet and *An*

Evening Walk is supposed to echo Dr John Brown's poem, *Now Sunk the Sun*, which contains the same phrase. If this is an echo, I don't hear it. Nor do I believe that 'I lie me down and sleep' (in entry #42.i, p. 23) echoes Burns' *Despondency: An Ode*, 'I set me down and sigh'. Similar problems exist in entries on David Mallet's *Edwin and Emma* (#166, p. 93) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence* (#267.ii, pp. 152-3). These are, of course, matters that scholars will debate, but unless Wu clearly states his criteria, it is difficult to know what one is debating. Questions about evidence also arise when several entries in his general catalogue are compared with Appendix I, entitled 'Possible readings'. Wu explains:

A list of possible readings could go on forever. I include such a list because, during the course of my researches, a number of scholars and critics have answered my requests for information on the subject of W's reading, some with extremely likely but thus far unproved titles. This list is appended to draw attention to some of those readings regarded by those in the field as likely, in the hope that evidence might one day be found for their inclusion in the above list. (p. 156)

So far, so good. But it is difficult to see how the evidence for several entries in this appendix is weaker than that for some of the entries in the main list. For instance, is there really more hard evidence for Wordsworth's having read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (#267.i in the main list, p. 152) than Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (#A10 in the appendix, p. 158)? Wu's discussion gives precisely the opposite impression. And surely Wordsworth knew Mrs Barbauld's poetry from early on: he mentions her and her works far more often than he does, say, William Frend. Yet Frend's *Peace and Union* is confidently included in the main list (#108, p. 60) on tenuous circumstantial evidence, while Barbauld is relegated to the appendix (#A3, p. 157). Perhaps further clarification as to what constitutes proof of reading is needed, or perhaps a standard set of vocabulary to indicate shades of probability ought to be adhered to.

In making these criticisms, I do not intend in any way to diminish Wu's splendid achievement. *Wordsworth's Reading* is, without question, the most important reference work on Wordsworth to appear in almost 20 years. It is one of the few truly indispensable books on Wordsworth, and it will remain so well into the next century. We look forward eagerly to the publication of future volumes.

Providence College

BRUCE GRAVER

Romantic Revisions. Ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. xv + 368. ISBN 0 521 38074 X. £25 hardback.

UNDER THE RUBRIC of 'revision', this volume contains essays on editorial practice, the canon, personae, the evolution of particular works (Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography*), intentionality, and influence. Such thematic diversity is all to the good. The blurb claims coherence for the volume on the grounds that it 'responds to the recent radical overhaul in the editing of Romantic texts', although its range in doing so is far from inclusive. The volume is quite strongly weighted towards the Lake poets - out of 17 essays in all, six are concerned with the Wordsworths (three of these with *The Prelude*), and two with Coleridge. It is good to find new work here on Leigh Hunt and John Clare, but readers may be surprised to find nothing specifically concerned either with Blake or with any of the major prose writers of the period. This is curious, if only because the late 1980s and 1990s

has turned out to be the age of romantic prose scholarship. Pickering and Chatto have already published the collected prose works of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, and those of De Quincey are in the pipeline. (An interesting area for discussion might be how a publisher in a time of recession can find the backing for ambitious scholarly projects of this kind - but that is by the by.)

Textual critics and theorists will be intrigued by another prejudice of the volume - namely, that the principle of final authorial intention is a thing of the past, or, as the introduction puts it:

The Greg-Bowers principles (the New Bibliography) established the notion of a definitive copy-text which respects final authorial intentions or original demonstrable wishes, but the definitiveness of this notion comes into question as critics repond to the complexity of determinants involved in textual production.

Given that the Greg-Bowers principles were set out by scholars working on American and Renaissance writers, one might expect them to be universally applicable. But the concepts of finality, definitiveness, and even that of the 'author', break down when confronted with evidence of how literary works get written and published. The 16 versions of *The Prelude* which Jonathan Wordsworth has detected among the manuscripts at the Wordsworth Library in Grasmere in themselves constitute a rebuttal of the notion that critics and students should only read one single text of the poem.

The effect of this line of thought is to shift power away from the writer to the editor. Since final, definitive texts no longer exist, there can only be different versions produced *ad infinitum* by different editors. The editor has become recognized (as, in fact, he or she has always been) as a partner in the act of composition and transmission. But this situation, if indeed it is the one we have now reached, begs another important issue, hinted at here by Jonathan Wordsworth, and stated explicitly by Stephen Gill, which remains unresolved. As Gill remarks,

what about the ordinary reader? All of the scholarly endeavours of the last twenty years have brought us no nearer agreement on what kind of edition we would want to be in the hands of schoolchildren, undergraduates, and other readers discovering the poetry for the first time.

This question is too big for a volume such as this to answer, and it would be unfair to expect it to do so. But its resolution would appear to refer us back to some revised notion of authorial intention. It is particularly interesting, in this light, that Donald H. Reiman is the only contributor here who remains attached to intention as a principle governing editorial practice. His memorable essay advances the notion that in a close study of Shelley's manuscripts 'the poet escapes our nets, exhibiting an elusive genius that proves at last what Shelley claimed in *A Defence of Poetry* - the superiority of the creative, synthesizing faculty to the process of analysis.' Stillinger's essay on Keats emphasizes the collaborative nature of Keats' work, but agrees with Reiman in suggesting that form and meaning are discovered by the author as he proceeds. It is, perhaps, paradoxical that Stillinger and Reiman reassert the notion of authorial intention by finding the creative process to be, in part at least, indeterminate.

That element is explored in two of the strongest studies in the volume - those contributed by its editors, Keith Hanley and Robert Brinkley. Both are concerned with the movement from what Hanley describes as 'a language of indeterminacy, of gestures towards something unsayable, to an attempted language of permanence and its pretence to finality of statement'.

The process of articulation is documented with immense subtlety - Brinkley as he demonstrates how an image in *Mont Blanc* 'only emerges in the pause between words, in the writing that no longer occurs or at least does not occur just yet'; Hanley as he traces the gaps and stumblings in Wordsworth's manuscripts to 'an embarrassment with language itself', an 'inhibiting fear of linguistic castration'. These essays have important implications for the manner in which textual critics approach manuscript and printed sources, not least insofar as they argue for drastic revision of the concept of intentionality.

But it could hardly be said that this unites the component parts of this book: the fine contributions by Pamela Woof, Betty T. Bennett, Timothy Webb, J. C. C. Mays, Jerome McGann, Norman Fruman, Jonathan Bate, John Lucas, Nicholas Roe, Kenneth Johnston and Jonathan Barron discuss a wide range of issues connected with romantic studies. This is a strength, but I would suggest that what holds the volume together is not so much its response to the 'recent radical overhaul' in romantic editing as its account of 'revision' - however each contributor chooses to define that term. If a unified response to recent scholarship is to be detected, it probably lies in the implied need for accuracy and precision in all matters to do with textual criticism - a virtue to be found throughout.

Acton, London

DUNCAN WU

Society News and Notes from Members

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

Annual General Meeting, 29 April 1995

A rather sparsely attended AGM (thanks, perhaps, to the change of date) received the Chairman's report for 1994, circulated with the April *Bulletin*. The meeting warmly congratulated Drs Wu and Trott on the appointments as Reader and Lecturer respectively at the University of Glasgow. An application was being made to English Heritage for a blue plaque on Lamb's cottage at Edmonton.

The accounts for 1994 were adopted. Although there had been a deficit of over £6000, as well as a similar deficit the previous year, much of this was accounted for by work on the Archives, the printing of the handlist to the Society's collection at the Guildhall library, and the bursary to the Wordsworth Summer Conference. It was hoped that this deficit would not be repeated now that work on the Archives was finished and new subscription rates had been introduced. Members were moved to learn of the bequest to the Society of £1584 under the will of Florence Reeves 'in gratitude for the friendship of the CLS'. In presenting his 8th annual accounts, Mr Powell said he was looking to hand over the Treasurership in the not too distant future. Offers please!

Mrs Moore reported that membership stood at 376, 12 new members having joined this year.

The existing Officers and Council were re-elected for 1995-6.

It was agreed that the Society should become Corporate Members of the Royal Society of Literature.

Coleridge Cottage, Nether Stowey

In its first six months the Coleridge Cottage Appeal has already gone more than a third of the way to its target of £20,000. An exciting number of unsuspected relics have come to light which should help to enrich the new museum room. Donations may be sent to the Appeal Secretary, Coleridge Cottage, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1NQ, cheques made payable to the National Trust Coleridge Cottage Appeal.

An art auction in aid of this appeal is being held on Friday 20 October 1995 at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Centre, Nether Stowey. Offers to John Wilcox, The Court Gallery, 18 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN.

A further reminder that the Friends of Coleridge are holding a study weekend, 'Exploring the Ancient Mariner' at Kilve Court, from 8 to 10 September. Lecturers include several CLS members! The full residential fee is £105 (or £95 for Friends of Coleridge). Details from Mrs Shirley Watters, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN (tel.: 01278 733338).

Book Sale/Buffer Lunch: Saturday 8 April

23 members and friends bought books/ate/drank/conversed at our last gathering at Putney United Reformed Church (the site is to be redeveloped). We were especially glad to welcome the Moxon family from Southampton. We have now disposed of most of our duplicate books. A net profit of £98.19 was realized.

Blue Plaques

The Times (17 March 1995) contained this tribute to Charles Lamb from Margot Norman:

Blue plaques appear to exert a fascination even over the most plaque-worthy themselves. Apparently Sylvia Plath picked her house in Primrose Hill partly because it had a plaque to Yeats, and it may be that J. B. Priestley chose his house in Highgate because Coleridge had lived there. . . . however I prefer the attitude of the essayist Charles Lamb, whose shade, I am sure, wastes no time haunting the house behind Lamb's blue plaque in Dunstan [sic.] Terrace, Islington.

Some cry up Haydn, some Mozart
Just as the whim bites. For my part
I do not care a farthing candle
For either of them, or for Handel.

Incidentally, the plaque in Duncan Terrace is surely a *brown* one, put up by the former L.C.C.

Alliance of Literary Societies

So members *do* read the *Bulletin* - or at least the Secretary's notes. A plea in the April *Bulletin* for our representation at the ALS AGM brought a response from Judy Edwards (who will be representing the Hopkins Society). Fortunately Robin Healey was able to represent us, and his report appears on the next page.

Greta Hall, Keswick

Those concerned about the fate of this house (up for sale at £250,000) may like to know that a group of writers and historians around Keswick are hoping to find support to save the house, possibly as a Coleridge-Southey museum.

A Footnote on Saloop/Salep

Under the heading, 'Dessert Orchid' (a nice Elian pun), in the *Times Magazine* of 25 March 1995, Professor Barry A. Thomas of the National Museum of Wales wrote deploring the advice in an article to readers to buy salep and bring it home: 'Salep is made from the ground-up tubers of wild orchids and millions of them are collected each year for consumption, a trade which is threatening the very existence of them in many areas. . . . The export of salep is forbidden by Turkish law, although the rather obvious trade in many European countries shows that the regulations are often flouted. The facts therefore are quite simple. Drink salep or eat salep-flavoured ice-cream and you are helping to destroy orchids.'

NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

Report on the Annual General Meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies

This year, thanks to a double booking at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, the AGM of the ALS was held at the Unitarian Hall, Fiveways (just behind Tesco's) on 29 April. I eventually located the venue, having been sent in the wrong direction by various locals who from the puzzled looks on their faces at the mention of 'Unitarian' clearly regarded the creed of Coleridge and Lamb as the latest cult to emerge from Missouri. The actual proceedings of the AGM came as rather an anti-climax after all this excitement. Three of the senior officers were re-elected, but Philip Fisher begged to be relieved of his duties as Secretary on the grounds that his recent appointment as BMI Administrator left little time for extra work. However, there was no stampede to take over from him, and for the time being he remains Secretary. Some good points were made in debate. Gabriel Woolf observed that unaffiliated literary societies, notably the Trollope Society, enjoyed a high profile (and thus a large membership) through the support of leading political figures, some of whom were Vice Presidents. He suggested that the ALS might adopt a similar approach as a way of raising its own profile among the reading population. Of course, by Trollope Mr W. was clearly referring to Anthony rather than Joanna, though it occurs to me that problems might arise even amongst those Cabinet ministers and Tory back-benchers who actually read books - particularly if writers such as George Herbert, Sir Richard Steele, and Henry James were mistaken by them for contemporary masters like James, Danielle, and P.D. Notwithstanding the possible obstacles, the ALS committee will look into the matter soon and decide on whether it is necessary to appoint a publicity officer to make the aims of the Alliance better known.

Lunch gave those present an opportunity to set up their stalls and this year it was the turn of the fledgling Thomas Lovell Beddoes Society to win the most promising newcomer award. Last year membership consisted of an enthusiastic descendant from Belper. This year the ranks had swollen to over 30. The society also produced the best display. After lunch the Keats Society played hosts. Mr Edward Preston - well known to the CLS - gave a short talk on the mutual friends of Keats and Dickens in which Lamb figured prominently as a pal of B. W. Procter and Leigh Hunt. Then, to the astonishment of all, Mr Preston launched into a rendition of Adelaide Procter's song, 'The Lost Chord', which caused many ladies in the audience to swoon with delight. Dr Edward Lowbury, a celebrated physician-poet, then spoke on the connections between medicine and poetry. He was followed by a fellow Keatsian who told the story of the young poet's friendship with the Cowden Clarkes, who of course were great friends of the Lambs. The meeting ended with a scintillating performance by Gabriel Woolf in the role of John Clarke, Keats' schoolmaster at Enfield, who left behind valuable impressions of the poet's school career.

Next year the AGM will return to the Birmingham and Midland Institute and it is hoped that the CLS will host the affair, which for the first time will be part of a literary weekend. Leading figures from the world of politics are not likely to attend. R. M. Healey

Charles Lamb and Jacobean Drama

May I add a footnote to Sandra Clark's paper (which I much enjoyed reading) and take the opportunity of giving Lamb his due as a corrector of textual error? When I was editing Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* for *The Revels Plays* (Manchester U.P., 1988) I found that though many textual errors in the early editions had been spotted by previous editors, a number of others had been overlooked. One of these was in the scene of Evadne's repentance, where she kneels to her husband and says

I do not fall here
 To shadow by dissembling with my tears
 (As all say women can) or to make less
 What my hot will hath done . . . (IV i 220-3)

It gradually became apparent to me that 'by dissembling' should have been 'my dissembling', and in my edition I took the credit for the emendation. It was not until I acquired a copy of *Specimens* last year that I found that I had been anticipated by Lamb. T. W. Craik

Elia Among the Hazlitts: A Late Review

W. CAREW HAZLITT, *Four Generations of a Literary Family: the Hazlitts 1725-1896*. 2 vols. 1897.

This unusual book, little-known and almost certainly never reprinted, was published almost one hundred years ago. It is in two volumes, bound in green cloth, and bears, in gilt and facsimile, the words, 'Your most affectionate son William Hazlitt'. W. Carew Hazlitt rather overplays his hand in his choice of title. Only one generation of the family can be considered by his attainments to justify the description 'literary', and that is the great William Hazlitt himself. As Elians we are concerned only with the part that Charles Lamb plays in the pages of these books.

We may well commence with a unique role reserved for Hazlitt in Lamb's life, that of portraitist, commemorating a brief stage when Hazlitt was hesitating between the careers of painter and writer. The author aptly speaks of this work as 'Charles Lamb (in the National Portrait Gallery) in the bizarre costume of a Venetian senator'. No one would feel inclined to query his choice of adjective where the costume is concerned but the portrait itself is well executed and gives proof of real talent for a profession subsequently abandoned.

As an indication that the two essayists were well-acquainted, it is recorded that Charles Lamb attended Hazlitt's first wedding ceremony and subsequently made the well-remembered comment, 'anything awful always makes me laugh'. However, W. Carew Hazlitt expresses warm commendation of the relationship when he writes that he is 'disposed to place the Reynells and the Lambs in the first rank as sources of consolation and encouragement on the one hand, and of intellectual pleasure on the other'. After stressing their loyalty to Hazlitt from first to last the writer proceeds: 'Lamb and his sister were living witnesses to the rise of four successions of our name and blood, from the first hour of their friendship to the sad moment when he beheld the committal of his remains to the earth'.

Apart from these moving words the references to Charles Lamb are somewhat brief and spasmodic but indicative that the link, though suspended from time to time by circumstances, was never severed. Such breaches as there were, no doubt occasioned by Hazlitt's combative temperament, were never of long duration. There is a brief mention of the two gentlemen making a 'famous visit' to Oxford and to Blenheim, where they discovered too late that they had not seen the Titian room. Also to be found is the briefest mention of Lamb's *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets*, which served to revive interest in the works of lesser-known Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists.

Further on Charles Lamb appears in a most favourable light as the largest contributor to a fund being raised to save William Godwin from utter ruin as the result of his business enterprises. We are furnished with a few details concerning Hazlitt's artist brother John, a man of talent about whom we know little, and who died five years after his famous brother. There is also a dry comment on Wordsworth as being rather grudging in the praise of others, such as Lamb, Coleridge, and Southey.

It was well on towards the end of Hazlitt's life that he embarked upon his most ambitious single work, described by the author as the 'ill-fated life of Napoleon'. In a letter to Charles Cowden Clarke, Lamb refers to 'speculative episodes' as being 'capital', but adds with acute perception that he 'skips the battles'. As Napoleon's successful career was based almost entirely on battles and their outcome the comment does Lamb great credit. There are no wars without battles and no battles without suffering and death. All honour therefore to Elia for his humanity and insight.

As time marches on and we move to the fourth generation of the Hazlitts it is only natural that Elian references should appear less and less, but we cannot conclude without some mention of Charles Lamb's extensive correspondence, to which he owes his immortality almost as much as to his other works. W. Carew Hazlitt is far from being the first and only person to pass judgement on the labour of others in the same field and both Talfourd and Canon Ainger do not escape the rod. The subject presents a minefield into which it would be ill-advised to wander, and it would be better by far simply to express our gratitude that so much Elian correspondence has survived for our unending enjoyment. C. J. Branchini

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

Cradle with a History

The following details were alluded to in the feature 'Fifty Years Ago' in *CLB NS 65* (1989) 33, based on a Columbia Pictures publicity magazine. My recent discovery of an original cutting contributed under the above heading by the New York reporter of the *Daily Sketch*, 12 September 1938 (Rich xi 141) suggested that it deserved fuller exposure.

The cradle in which generations ago Charles Lamb was rocked to sleep is to be use in a film, because one of his descendants, Edith Fellows, is now a leading screen actress.

Edith, who told me, 'I always wanted to use the cradle in one of my pictures,' offered it to the studio when a scene in her new picture *Thoroughbred* [which is not listed in two comprehensive film guides], called for a cradle.

The cradle is nearly 4ft long and made of hand-carved oak. Charles Lamb's Aunt Martha used it for her family and left it to her son, William, who came to America 40 years ago, bringing the cradle with him.

After his death it went to his sister, Mrs Elizabeth Lamb Fellows, who is Edith's grandmother.

What's that American phrase - shooting fish in a barrel? Beachcomber made quite a thing out of the missing fourth Brontë sister, Doreen, but before we start suggesting that the cradle story must involve Charles' celebrated American Aunt Martha Washington Lamb, whose son William Hazlitt Lamb married Emmy-Lou Leigh Hunt, 'the Emily Dickinson of Cheyne Walk', and had three sons named Samuel, Taylor, and Coleridge, we might remember that (1) an ancestral Charles Lamb need not be 'our' Charles Lamb; (2) the word 'descendant' is used far too loosely in terms of the second half of the anecdote; (3) John Lamb Jr, our man's elder brother, had step-children and a strong possibility of at least one irregular liaison; (4) legends are usually attached to a more famous person rather than to a less famous one, which implies that a 300-year-old cradle, as the Columbia Pictures magazine described it, would be more likely to attract a connection with, say, Elizabeth I or Charles I than with a relatively obscure Limey journo unless there was an honest family belief in the truth of the story as stated, and (5) as the historian E. A. Freeman (1823-92) said of the Glastonbury Legends, 'We need not believe that . . . legends are records of facts; but the existence of those legends is a very great fact'.

The Elian Style

The Samuel Morris Rich Collection contains a letter from the *News Chronicle* of 16 April 1936 in which A. R. Dryhurst of Hampstead, London NW3, refers to the writing style of the young Maupassant not finding favour with his superiors at the Ministry of Marine and compares this with Charles Lamb who, as a young East Indian Company clerk, he says, produced a report on the year's supply of (Surat?) cotton: 'Lamb applied himself with zeal to the task, which resulted in his having an interview with one of the directors. Said the great man holding up the document, 'Your report, Mr. Lamb, may have literary merits, but it is written in a style the Board do not expect. The style they prefer is the *humdrum*'.

Charles Lamb and Jewish Extraction: For the Record

Elians will recall that there are occasional references to Charles Lamb's Jewish cast of features.

In *Notes and Queries* 10th ser., 7 (1907) 121-2, there is a two-column paper by M. L. R. Breslar entitled *Charles Lamb: Was he of Jewish extraction*. He concludes that there is nothing in Lamb's writings which is *a priori* compatible with the hypothesis.

The Last to Know Charles Lamb?

A couple of chance discoveries in the Samuel Morris Rich volumes of press cuttings in the Society's collection at Guildhall Library and a few minutes with Prance's *Companion* were what set me off on the trail of the last living person to have known Charles Lamb.

Fanny Kelly, who was born in 1790, died in 1882. Derwent Coleridge, who was born in 1800, died in 1883. Charles Edward Mudie, founder of Mudie's Circulating Library, was born in 1919 and remembered being patted on the head by Lamb while in his father's bookshop, sitting on the Elian knee, and being questioned about the Shakespeare play he was reading *c.* 1825 (Rich xiv 204): he died in 1890. Lucy Fitzgerald, Bernard Barton's daughter, the wife of Edward Fitzgerald the poet, was born in 1808 and lived until 1898. Emuna Isola, Mrs Edward Moxon, was born in 1809 and died in 1891. In 1902 E. V. Lucas met Mrs Coe, then 83 and so born about 1819, who, as Lizzie Hunt, had been one of the pupils at the school kept by the Misses Norris at Goddard House in Widford and recalled Charles Lamb's visiting them between 1827 and 1832 and the half-holidays which resulted; she died in 1903.

All this gives a special importance to a cutting in the Rich Collection (viii 48), undated and without a source recorded but obviously from a local Enfield or Edmonton paper of about 1914.

Miss Louisa Vale, who had recently died, was described as 'the last of Charles Lamb's neighbours in Enfield'. She was born in London in 1807 and came to Enfield as a child. She had a distinct recollection of the rejoicings which celebrated the victory of Waterloo in 1815 and often spoke of Charles Lamb, whom she remembered very well. She lived in a house in Chase Side, which adjoined Elia's, for 83 years and carried on a private school until she was about 80. Among her pupils were the children of the Weston [*sic.*, for Westwood] family, with whom the Lambs resided. She had died at the age of 97 [hence the date of *c.* 1914] and was buried in Edmonton [*sic.*] churchyard.

Miss Vale was thus about 26 when the Lambs moved from Enfield to Edmonton and about 27 when Charles Lamb died. She is mentioned briefly in Lucas' *Life* (ii. 729-30) as having died early in 1904 and as having once been called upon by Charles Lamb, whom she regarded as 'pleasant though odd'.

The trail did not stop there. The George Wherry album, presented to the Society in 1951 by Mrs Beatrix Oldfield, the compiler's daughter, contains a letter dated 5 June 1912 from

Mr A. Denholm Brash of Cape Town about a Canon Jessop 'whom I believe is still alive and he is the only living man, to my knowledge, who knew Charles Lamb and refers to seeing him in 1834, the year before Lamb's death'.

The Revd. Augustus Jessopp [*sic.*] DD, was born in Cheshunt in Hertfordshire on 20 December 1823 and died on 12 February 1914, aged 90. A curate, headmaster, and then rector of Scarning in Norfolk from 1879 to 1911, Canon Jessopp was described in a *Times* obituary, printed the day after his death, as 'a remarkable example of the lettered cleric with interests extending widely outside his own profession'. He was a famously emphatic and colourful contributor to *The Nineteenth Century* as well as a prolific essayist, historian, and author of books. The obituary does not mention a meeting with Charles Lamb but such an event is clearly possible, during the child's eleventh year, and the fact was presumably dropped into one of his writings.

It may be that one or more others outlived the Canon. It is theoretically possible for someone several years younger to have distinct memories of Charles Lamb and to have survived well into the 1920s. Mr Bening Arnold, who died in August 1930 aged 106 and was then believed to be the oldest man in England, acknowledged that he had no personal knowledge of the Lambs, though his grandfather's paper-mill had been adjacent to the Hoxton madhouse.

In the circumstances it seems that Canon Augustus Jessopp, DD (1823-1914) was the last identified person known to have his own personal memories of Charles Lamb. Or can anyone suggest a later survivor? How about a younger Widford schoolgirl?

Lucas's 'Life' and Major Butterworth

Major Samuel Butterworth, who died in about 1934, was one of the great Charles Lamb scholars. It must have been terrifying to receive or to read in print one of his critical letters, written from a position of unassailable knowledge and signed either just as 'S. Butterworth' or with the full 'S. Butterworth, Major, R.A.M. Corps'.

The Samuel Morris Rich Collection contains a cutting from *The Bookman* for July 1921 in which Major Butterworth criticizes E. V. Lucas' *Life of Charles Lamb* and records that most of the errors in the original 1905 first edition were corrected in the one-volume fourth edition of 1907 or 1910 (not yet traced and perhaps a reprint) but that they all reappeared later. The date of the reference suggests that he was having a go at the 'Fifth Edition Revised' of 1921. Lucas was inclined to add useful new discoveries to later editions, but - you have been warned!

Hazlittiana

Only three men have ever won a second Victoria Cross, i.e. VC *and bar*. The family of Captain Charles Upham, the New Zealander who won VCs in 1941 and 1942, was related to the family of Captain N. G. Chavasse, who won VCs in 1916 and 1917.

The Upham obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* for 23 November 1994 pointed out that his full name was Charles Hazlitt Upham and that he was a great-great-nephew of William Hazlitt the essayist.

Kenneth Tynan and Charles Lamb

'The compulsively readable letters of Kenneth Peacock Tynan, the outstanding attention-seeker of his generation', were edited by his widow and published late in 1994. According to the review in *The Times*, C. S. Lewis, who was his tutor at Magdalen College, Oxford, thought Tynan had the makings of a good First or an interesting Third and told him that, if

Lamb and Gibbon had been the same person, his were the kind of essays they would have produced at prep school.

A Doubtful Photograph of the Lambs!?

John O'London's Weekly for 28 November 1931 published a letter from a correspondent who had a friend who owned a photograph of Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb 'taken together'. Very early. Is it rare? Has anyone else seen one of this description?

Such a lovely idea! What about all those putative photographs of Charlotte Brontë (died 1855) popping up all over Yorkshire? Alas, photographs started about 1839 and I doubt that the Lambs would have been first in the queue for previews in the last weeks of 1834, though that was the year that Fox Talbot began his experiments. No doubt it was a photograph of an unidentified elderly couple or of the famous 1834 double portrait by F. S. Cary now in the National Portrait Gallery, combined with a little shortsight, wistfulness and ignorance. But if anyone else *has* seen a genuine photograph 'of this description', I am sure we would like to publish it in the *Bulletin*.

50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No. 67 (Tenth Year) July 1945

An Answer to a Question: a letter to the editor from Joan Temple [who, in 1930, had written *Charles and Mary - a play on the life of Charles Lamb* and acted the part of Mary in it.]

Your question - 'What did it feel like to play Mary Lamb?' - shows surprising insight, the assumption that the acting of such a character cannot be catalogued with other representations . . . Judging from my own experience, an actor (the word must suffice for both sexes) has a triple consciousness during a performance. There is the consciousness of his part, which must be so intimate that, as St John Ervine once said, he must know even what the character had for breakfast; there is the consciousness of the audience, and there is his own personal consciousness running between the audience and his performance like a shuttle weaving cross threads into the complete pattern. But with Mary I was often aware of a fourth consciousness not at all personal to myself. I want to affirm that I am no 'spiritualist', and to disclaim any mediumistic tendencies, though I am forced to admit that my whole experience in connection with this play would seem to be connected with something of the nature of psychic phenomena. . . . I spoke of the dramatic treatment to a literary friend. 'You can't do it!' he declared. 'Those who know nothing of Lamb wouldn't be interested, while those who do would resent it passionately. As for E. V. [Lucas], he'd cut your head off!'

Prior to the address [on 14 April] Mr Walter Farrow [Chairman] asked the members to join him in an expression of deepest sympathy with the American members of the Society on the death of President Roosevelt and their sense of his great services to his fellow citizens and to all mankind. Those present stood in silence as a mark of respect to the late President.

Questions from Worthing

The Treasurer does *not* know who sent him a British Money order for 5/-, early this year from USA; will he please reveal himself. The Treasurer *does* know who have not yet sent him their 1945 Subscriptions. Will they please remit to Mr E. F. Lewis, 13 Shakespeare Road, Worthing.

Future Meetings: An Experiment [N.B. in 1945 NOT 1995]

The Council has decided to have *alternate* meeting places for the remainder of 1945. The July, September and November meetings will be held on Saturday afternoons (2.45pm), at the Central Club, YWCA, Gt. Russell Street, while the October and December meetings will take place at the Society's pre-war home, University Hall, Gordon Square, WC, on Monday evenings (7.30pm).