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"WE ARE IN A MANNER MARKED": IMAGES OF DAMNATION IN CHARLES LAMB'S WRITINGS

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The events of 22 September in the household of Charles Lamb are, of course, well known to all readers of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*. I should like in this paper to consider the imaginative consequences in Lamb's literary work of the family tragedy.

After Mary's attack of madness, and the death of Elizabeth Lamb, Charles took upon himself at once and for the rest of his life complete responsibility for his sister's welfare, and did so gladly. But in throwing in his lot so wholeheartedly with hers, he made himself vulnerable not only to the anguish of her recurring relapses, but also to public reaction to the illness. In a letter to Coleridge of 12 May 1800, after giving the sad details of his sister's latest attack, Lamb continues:

> nor is it the least of our Evils, that her case & all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner *marked*. (*LL*, i, 202)

The shadow which bound the two by closer ties than those customary to sibling relationships also estranged them from their fellows. To curious and superstitious observers, both seemed tainted by the guilt of matricide and the horror of insanity, Mary through her actions, and her brother through his having insisted on her release from permanent confinement and having taken upon himself the responsibility of her reinstatement in the normal social world. He too felt himself included in the shrinking distaste, or stronger repugnance, with which she was beheld. To a nature as yearningly convivial as Lamb's own, the knowledge of their outcast position must have been a continual torment. It is not surprising that at this time he became engrossed with images of curious damnation, of men singled out from amongst their fellows to bear solitary disgrace, and exiled from the Eden of normal human companionship to a weary existence of self-dependence and ostracism. Such images are particularly prevalent in Lamb's dramatic works. Let us consider, for example, his ill-fated farce of 1808, *Mr. H-*.

The plot of this farce hinges around the disclosure of the hero's name. The mystery concerning his appellation, along with the agreeable characteristics of the man, prove a great attraction to the ladies of the piece at first, but when the name is revealed to be 'Hogsflesh', they disperse in disgust. Mr. H- is left alone to bemoan his fate:

> Was ever any thing so mortifying? to be refused by old Mother Damnable! - with such parts and address, - and the little squeamish devils, to dislike me for a name, a sound... Farewell the most distant thoughts of marriage... No son of mine shall exist, to bear my ill-fated name. No nurse come chuckling, to tell me it is a boy... (*LW*, v, 204-5)

His monologue proceeds into further fantasies of self-pity; he sees himself

as ostracized for ever from the customary life-style and pursuits of men, by the fatal distinguishing mark set upon him - his name. One of the 'little squeamish devils' whose favour he has lost is Melesinda, the heroine; in the following scene she is chastized by her maid for her over-refined distaste. The maid is ready to respond to the man rather than to the name:

MAID

Lord, Madam! before I'd take on as you do about a foolish - what signifies a name? Hogs - Hogs - what is it - it is just as good as any other for what I see.

MELESINDA

Ignorant creature! yet she is perhaps blest in the absence of those ideas which, while they add a zest to the few pleasures which fall to the lot of superior natures to enjoy, double edge the -

MAID

Superior natures! a fig! If he's hog by name, he's not hog by nature, that don't follow - his name don't make him anything, does it? (*LW*, v, 206)

The farce closes with the timely death of an aged relative who leaves a will bestowing upon Mr. H- not only an estate but also a new name - Bacon. With this removal of the accursed mark, Melesinda is free to follow the original inclination of her heart, and Mr. H-, or rather, Bacon, Esq., achieves the condition of matrimony.

No such fortunate outcome could result from Lamb's own love-making, not so much because he would not rid himself of Mary, as some of his biographers would suggest, as because his life as a whole was bound up with hers and with her insane act of matricide. He was '*marked*' in his inner being by the events of September 1796, and the fact that he demonstrated outwardly the existence of that mark by close domestic association with Mary only clarified the situation. However, he could not resist the temptation to exorcise the stigma through dramatic representation. All Lamb's plays concern themselves with the theme of damnation and disgrace: the central character in each play is isolated through shame, and cannot share in the customary comforts of men.

His first play, the tragedy *John Woodvil*, concerns the death of a father rather than a mother. Woodvil commits indirect patricide, in that his revelation of secret haunts brings about his outlawed father's death. He succumbs to the crime through pride, as Lamb explained in a letter to Thomas Manning of 28 December 1799 in which he defends the play's original intended title, 'Pride's Cure' (*LL*, i, 177). In the pride of his liquor, Woodvil suffers an inflation of the ego, through which he soars above the need for customary ties and bonds. He declaims at the crisis point of the play:

These high and gusty relishes of life, sure,
Have no allayings of mortality in them.
I am too hot now and o'ercapable,
For the tedious processes, and creeping wisdom,
Of human acts, and enterprizes of a man. (*LW*, v, 158)

All such 'great spirits' as himself, he feels

cannot, ought not to be bound by any

> Positive laws or ord'nances extern,
> But may reject all these:
> ....
> As public fame, civil compliances
> Misnamed honor, trust in matter of secrets,
> All vows and promises, the feeble mind's religion,
> ....
> The ties of blood withal, and prejudice of kin. (*LW*, v, 160-1)

Kindled by these convictions, he betrays to a treacherous friend his father's whereabouts; the friend acts upon the information, and the father expires instantly on being apprehended.

The Edwardian critic Arthur Symons considered *John Woodvil* to be rife with references and applications to 'the tragic story which had desolated /Lamb's/ own household'. He sees the play as Lamb's attempt at 'a sort of solace and defence for Mary', in that its moral concerns the redemption of guilt through remorse.[1] However, the sins Woodvil commits are caused by factors which, in fact, relate far more closely to Lamb's life before the death of his mother than to Mary's. It was Lamb who, in the exultation of his early friendship with Coleridge, during the heady winter nights of 1794-5 when they met regularly at the Salutation and Cat, felt himself exalted above the human sphere, and as a consequence temporarily lost his sanity (see *LL*, i, 18). As Symons observed, Lamb often sees fit to place in Woodvil's mouth utterances strangely similar to those he himself expressed at the time of his mother's death. For example, on receiving sympathy in his remorse from his once affianced Margaret, Woodvil exclaims:

> I almost begin
> To understand what kind of creature Hope is.
> ....
> Yet tell me if I over-act my mirth. (*LW*, v, 173)

In nearly so many words Lamb had confided to Coleridge on 3 October 1796 that only Coleridge's sober and religious letter had prevented him from excessive over-acting of his relief at Mary's initial recovery (*LL*, i, 51).

When he returned to try his hand again at play-writing years later, after the composition of the Elia essays, Lamb's plots still concerned themselves with disgrace, and the fear of disclosures of hidden shames. *The Wife's Trial* (1827) is based upon Crabbe's 'The Confidant', from his *Tales* of 1812. It concerns the blackmailing of Katherine Selby by her former school friend, Mrs Frampton. Mrs Frampton was party to Katherine's first marriage, to a sailor. The sailor being lost at sea and presumed dead, Katherine marries a second time, without disclosing to her new husband the history of the first. Even when the sailor is finally known to have perished she cannot bring herself to reveal the details of her past. However, the domestic comforts she has gained by her second marriage are imperilled by the arrival of Mrs Frampton in her home. Armed with the threat of disclosure, Mrs Frampton entails upon Katherine 'an iron slavery of obsequious duty', in response to her least whim (*LW*, v, 244). In Lamb's play, unlike Crabbe's tale, this iron band is finally snapped when Mrs Frampton succumbs to the feigned advances of Selby, the husband, who has resorted to this ploy as a last desperate attempt to spur his wife through jealousy into ridding herself of her burdensome 'confidant'. As soon as

Katherine hears of her friend's weakness, she is freed. As she tells Mrs Frampton:

> You have broke
> The worse than iron band, fretting the soul,
> By which you held me captive. Whether my husband
> *Is* what you gave him out, or your fool'd fancy
> But dreams he is so, either way I am free. (*LW*, v, 265)

Mrs Frampton has shown herself to be at least as erring as Katherine, and the sharing of such a disgrace is its disintegration. It is far from Mrs Frampton's intention, of course, to offer such healing sympathy, but in effect her behaviour provides the mirror which allows Katherine to recognize the pettiness of her own shame, and finally to confess it, without excessive prostration, to her husband.

The Pawnbroker's Daughter, a farce which Lamb composed in 1825, deals yet more explicitly with the healing of an alienated and marked outsider, through sympathy. Miss Flyn wishes to espouse the acquitted felon, Pendulous, who has been cut down from the gallows and lives to bear the mark and disgrace of the rope. Pendulous refuses to conclude his long and honourable suit of Miss Flyn because he wishes to save her from the public shame of connection with 'a - reprieved man!' (*LW*, v, 224). In her attempt to cure him of his mistaken delicacy, Miss Flyn strikes upon the idea of getting herself incriminated with a false charge. As she tells her friend, the pawnbroker's daughter, she will 'try the experiment, by placing myself in the hands of justice for a little while, how far equality in misfortune might breed a sympathy in sentiment' (*LW*, v, 234). The experiment is successful, and Pendulous bids

> False delicacy, adieu! The true sort, which this lady has manifested - by an expedient which at first sight might seem a little unpromising, has cured me of the other. We are now on even terms. (*LW*, v, 242)

Protracted existence after the repeal of a death sentence is a theme which had strong morbid fascination for Lamb. One reason for his obsession lies, perhaps, in the fact that no atonement of a life for a life was made at his mother's death. He and Mary are both 'marked', as with the hangman's rope, in that both were spared the crudest consequence of Mary's act, but both must continue to live on bearing its social and psychological stigma. *The Pawnbroker's Daughter* dramatizes the relief gained by a sharing of such a disgrace, a sharing akin to Lamb's sympathetic identification with Mary's situation. Like Lamb's other plays, it also points to the merits, and need for, a society in which no man is isolated because of superficial oddity, and in which no social barrier prevents the rehabilitation of the guilty and the damned. Sympathy and a loving sense of connection cure all afflictions. Even Mrs Frampton is welcomed to stay and share in the restored Selby marriage at the close of *The Wife's Trial*, whereas in Crabbe's tale the confidant's fate is one of miserable obscurity.

Lamb's early non-critical journalism was also often strongly coloured by the theme of damnation; the situation of his prose personae is generally darker and more forlorn than that granted to his theatrical characters. In *The Pawnbroker's Daughter*, the living death of the marked outsider is exorcised through sympathy, but in the 1810 essay 'On the Inconveniences Resulting from Being Hanged' another man so 'marked' is granted no relief from his loneliness and suffering. Like Mr. H-, 'Pensilis', for so the 1810

essay is signed, deplores the squeamishness of those who respond to 'that fatal mark' rather than to the man (*LW*, i, 56). He endeavours to escape his fate by concealing the mark of the rope that he bears, and taking up residence in the crowded metropolis where 'stigmatized innocence had the best chance of hiding her disgrace'. Very similarily, Lamb had written to Manning in May 1800, of his own and Mary's situation:

> It is a great object to me to live in town, where we shall be much more *private*; and to quit a house & a neighbourhood where poor Mary's disgrace and disorder, so frequently recurring, has made us a sort of marked people. We can be no where private except in London. (*LL*, i, 207)

In the essay, Pensilis' scheme fails, for he is discovered by a chance old acquaintance and cannot subsequently avoid the recognition in his neighbours' eyes of his grotesque abnormality. He pleads for sympathy, but has little remaining hope of ever receiving any. The conclusion he is left to draw from his situation is a melancholy one:

> somehow or other, there is a want of strong virtue in mankind. We have plenty of the softer instincts, but the heroic character is gone. How else can I account for it, that of all my numerous acquaintance, among whom I had the honour of ranking sundry persons of education, talents, and worth, scarcely here and there one or two could be found, who had the courage to associate with a man that had been hanged. (*LW*, i, 58)

Another early essay of Lamb's, 'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity; with a Hint to those who have the Framing of Advertisements for Apprehending Offenders' (1810), presents the obverse side of the effects of such prejudice. According to Lamb, the image of one known to have committed an inhuman crime develops, in the imagination of others, physical deformities and marks bearing apparent testimony to his sin. As a result, the man who represents in truth a danger to society, and who ought to be isolated, escapes notice: no one can believe the criminal to be 'a sleek, smug-looking man, with light hair and eye-brows, - the latter by no means jutting out or like a crag, - and with none of those marks which our fancy had pre-bestowed upon him' (*LW*, i, 68). In this essay, Lamb calls the prejudice which produces the erroneous image 'wise', and its fictions 'blameless', for they construct the 'impassable barriers' which guard 'our innocence ... against the commission of such appalling crimes': to believe that one's appearance would deteriorate so markedly from that of an unexceptionable man by the committing of an inhuman deed establishes a barrier not so much between society and the criminal as between the social man and the realization of his own latent criminal impulses. Yet the prejudice remains unfortunate for it encourages adults to produce, like children, stereotyped and superstitious caricatures of evil, rather than to attempt to recognize and grapple with the reality of human iniquity.

The essay in which Lamb explored most fully the horrors of an existence marked out for 'Death-in-Life' is the 1813 'Confessions of a Drunkard'. It begins with an appeal to the 'sturdy moralist' to pause and consider, and 'ere thy gorge riseth at the *name* which I have written, first learn what the *thing* is; how much of compassion, how much of human allowance, thou may'st virtuously mingle with thy disapprobation' (*LW*, i, 133). Unless such sympathy is procured, the scorn of the conventional moralist further bars the way to reform for the unfortunate Drunkard, who is already reduced to

'the ruins of a man' through his complete loss of self-respect, along with the physical effects of his habits. The essay goes on to explore the psychological state brought about by the enforced abandonment of intentional action, and the collapse of self-control. The Drunkard's lack of self-trust results in a decadent moral consciousness and the atrophy of all purpose and energy. He had once found an image of his state in a print after Corregio, which he describes thus:

> a man ... sits fast bound at the root of a tree. Sensuality is soothing him, Evil Habit is nailing him to a branch, and Repugnance at the same instant of time is applying a snake to his side. In his face is feeble delight, the recollection of past rather than perception of present pleasures, languid enjoyment of evil with utter imbecility to good, a Sybaritic effeminacy, a submission to bondage, the springs of the will gone down like a broken clock, the sin and the suffering co-instantaneous, or the latter forerunning the other, remorse preceding action - all this represented in one point of time. - When I saw this, I admired the wonderful skill of the painter. But when I went away, I wept, because I thought of my own condition. (*LW*, i, 136-7)

An inability to see clearly in what way his own action could order the confused chaos of his life allows Corregio's victim to succumb to complete passivity, though he finds in it little positive pleasure. Just as the print warned the Drunkard of his own condition, so he attempts to imprint upon the mind of his reader the horror of that state as he himself has experienced it. He assures him

> what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will, - to see his destruction, and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself ...

A youth would be invulnerable to the temptation of alcohol 'could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebler and feebler outcry to be delivered' (*LW*, i, 137).

When he read the 'Confessions of a Drunkard', Henry Crabb Robinson considered that the essay succeeded in its aim to do good generally by sobering example, but he added, in connection with the biographical details of Lamb's life, 'it will hardly be thought so near a correct representation of a fact as it really is'.[2] In later years, Lamb himself disparaged as crass and unimaginative such assumptions of autobiographical association between the Drunkard and his author. When republishing the 'Confessions' in the *London Magazine* in 1822 he added to the essay a note, accounting for its publication by 'Elia':

> It is indeed a compound extracted out of his long observations of the effects of drinking upon all the world about him; and this accumulated mass of misery he hath centered (as the custom is with judicious essayists) in a single figure. We deny not that a portion of his own experience may have passed into the picture ... but then how heightened! how exaggerated! (*LW*, i, 432)

Lamb's letters, however, reveal that his account of the miseries of conscious but passive degeneracy was the result of introspection as much as of purely objective comprehension: those facts of his experience which he thus chose to heighten and exaggerate were ones dwelt upon frequently in his

correspondence throughout his life. The Drunkard, for example, cannot maintain in his life a self discipline which would allow him to behave reliably towards others, in work or in friendship:

> I fancy all sorts of discouragements, and am ready to give up an occupation which gives me bread, from a harassing conceit of incapacity. The slightest commission given me by a friend, or any small duty which I have to perform for myself, as giving orders to a tradesman, &c. haunts me as a labour impossible to be got through. So much the springs of action are broken.
>
> The same cowardice attends me in all my intercourse with mankind. I dare not promise that a friend's honour, or his cause, would be safe in my keeping, if I were put to the expense of any manly resolution in defending it. So much the springs of moral action are deadened within me. (*LW*, i, 139)

Similarly, Lamb, in a letter of 1822, attributes to his drinking habits the gross deterioration of his 'connecting organ' and his consequent inability to apply himself methodically to any task.[3]

Furthermore, Lamb himself had personally suffered from the opprobrium in which the Drunkard was regarded by a society unready to mingle compassion and 'human allowance' with their disapprobation of his condition. One Sunday morning in 1809, he and a fellow clerk, Brook Pulham, were placed in the stocks in Barnet for brawling while a religious service was in progress.[4] Lamb attempted to take out the sting of this particular damnation, too, through reliving it in his art. In April 1821, he published in the *London Magazine* 'The Confessions of H.F.V.H. Delamore, Esq.', in which Delamore admits that owing to a 'calendary inadvertence', 'timing my Saturnalia amiss', 'these legs, with Kent in the play, though for far less ennobling considerations, did wear "cruel garters."' (*LW*, i, 210). Another article on a similar theme, 'Reflections in the Pillory', was published by Lamb in the *London Magazine* for March 1825. The essay constituted a dramatic soliloquy delivered by 'one R - d' as he undergoes the process of being in the pillory. Unlike Delamore, 'R - d' negates the shame of his situation, and reverses the roles allotted to himself and to the public, by taking pleasure and pride in the perspective from which he views the scene. His elevation produces in him a sense of superiority to the 'gaping curiosity' of the 'vast miscellaneous rabble in the pit there' (*LW*, i, 281). The theatrical metaphor is appropriate: Lamb had earlier connected the experience of being in a pillory with that of being damned as a playwright. In a letter to Manning of 26 February 1808 and in his 1814 'Epilogue' to James Kenny's farce *Debtor and Creditor*, he compared the two revilements and found them painfully alike (*LL*, ii, 271 and *LW*, v, 127). But the tremendous egotism of 'R - d' has the happy effect of subverting all intended disgrace. He 'sings the Pillory' with mounting enthusiasm as his hour of glory draws to a close and sees himself as raised to an eminence upon a level with that of the city's aristocracy and royalty: 'They, and I, from equal heights, and with equal superciliousness, o'er-look the plodding, money-hunting tribe below' (*LW*, i, 283). Yet the farcical discrepancy between 'R - d's view of his situation and what it is in reality has the effect not so much of dignifying him as of representing the foolishness and self-inflation of all who can take pride in their superiority to the common herd.

Had Lamb in all seriousness continued to portray the damned as in some

way elevated above the masses who would condemn them he would have approximated more nearly to the conventional idea of Romantic attitudes and values. One expected trait of the Romantic poet is his sublime isolation far removed from the rabble, and his scorn of their disapproval of his dangerously anti-social stance. Mario Praz, for example, in his *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction*, would deny full-blooded Romanticism to Lamb because he failed to react to the calamities of his lot with a titanic rebelliousness. Praz finds nothing tumultuously 'ambitious and tormented' in Lamb's writings but only timidity and a yearning for intimacy which is essentially 'bourgeois' and anti-Romantic.[5] But further critical investigations into the nature of Romantic thought, and into the ideas of the early English Romantics in particular, have rendered such assumptions questionable. The theme of the damned soul, marked with a sense of personal guilt, and wandering an outcast on the Borderlands of society, is characteristic of early English Romanticism; in concerning himself with damnation imagery at all Lamb discloses connections with his age. It is true, however, that in many Romantic works the situation of the outsider is glamorized, as it never is in Lamb's work. In Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), the haunted figure of Falkland exerts a terrible fascination over his servant Caleb. Eventually Caleb's ungovernable curiosity leads him to discover evidence of the murder his master had committed. Through eating of the forbidden fruit of this knowledge, Caleb himself, like Falkland, is damned and set apart from more unconscious and innocent men.[6] As Robert Kiely points out in his recent study *The Romantic Novel in England*, Falkland's persecution of Caleb after the discovery of the secret 'is merely the literal extension of a psychological event which cannot be undone'.[7] Caleb has possessed himself of Falkland's mind and shared the burden of its knowledge: consequently he too must wander a marked man on the outskirts of society, attempting to conceal himself and his guilty knowledge. But neither of the two conclusions Godwin planned for his novel ultimately present Caleb's situation in a heroic light. In the first, discarded conclusion, his conviction and continuing isolation from human society through imprisonment leads to insanity; in the second, more interestingly, Caleb, standing trial, discloses the secret, and Falkland, after confessing to its truth, dies. Although technically now proved innocent, Caleb is left with his sense of guilt redoubled; in revealing his knowledge, he has not exonerated the original sin of curiosity, but has lost, in Falkland's death, his one companion in perdition.[8] Society is more severely criticized for its prejudices, and government for its oppressive, crime-inducing measures, in Godwin's work than in any writing of Lamb's, but their stress on the desperation and terror of the isolated damned is the same.

Similarly, the poems Wordsworth composed which were affected by Godwin's influence portray outlaws and criminals who learn in their ostracism the importance of maintaining social ties and bonds. The Sailor in 'Adventures on the Salisbury Plain', for example, through bearing the guilt and horror of his murderous crime, gains appreciation of the value of such 'homely truths' as the sanctity of the 'bond of nature', and he communicates his hard-won knowledge to others.[9] In May 1796, Lamb had read an early version of the Salisbury Plain poem 'not without delight' (*LL*, i, 11). But of all Romantic compositions the work which appears to have appealed to him most strongly was Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere'. Protesting against Wordsworth's 1800 'Note to the Ancient Mariner', Lamb stressed the power the poem had exerted over him. Wordsworth had found the Marinere's

passivity to be a fault in the poem; Lamb considered in an intensely convincing characteristic:

> the Ancient Marinere undergoes such Trials, as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was. - Like the state of a man in a Bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone.

To Wordsworth the Marinere had not appeared to be sufficiently affected by his experiences, but Lamb protested that he '*has* acquired a supernatural and strange cast of *phrase*, eye, appearance &c, which frighten the wedding guest' (*LL*, i, 266). The Marinere's agony in isolation has left him marked and eternally set apart from his kind, for all the moral of the necessity for human affection that he preaches. But there is little of the 'titanic rebel' about the Marinere, and he seems more akin to Lamb's Drunkard in disposition than to Byron's Childe Harold or to Shelley's Prometheus.

For if the Marinere had suffered a 'Trial' like a 'Bad dream', existence itself for the Drunkard has become a nightmare from which he saw no chance of an awakening:

> Life itself, my waking life, has much of the confusion, the trouble, and obscure perplexity of an ill dream. In the daytime I stumble upon dark mountains. (*LW*, i, 138)

Eight years later, in an 1821 letter to John Taylor, Lamb writes similarly of Elia's lack of clear revelations and guide-lines: 'He stumbles about dark mountains at best'.[10] Throughout his adult life, Lamb too, like the Drunkard, appears to have dwelt in a world of doubt and unclarity. His one significant consolation lay in the companionship and support of friends and acquaintance. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the incident in his life which seemed to imperil his chances of gaining and maintaining such sympathy should figure largely in his imaginative themes. But in his actual life Lamb did triumph over this disadvantage, to win the heart-felt affection of many men, amongst them the most notable writers and thinkers of his day. Perhaps his practice of exorcizing the worst of his fears in his prose and his plays helped him to win such a victory. The balance and equanimity he had achieved by his middle years are reflected in many of the Elia essays, in their serenity and their effect of leaving the reader more at home in the human condition. And these essays in their turn have won for their author the assured sympathy and fellow-feeling of generation after generation of readers. For us, Lamb is 'marked' not so much by the damnation which befell his family but by the courage and the imagination through which he transformed the original suffering.

Abbreviations:

LL *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W Marrs, Jr (Vols i - , Ithaca, NY, and London, 1975 -)

LW *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E V Lucas (7 vols, 1903-5)

Notes

1 Arthur Symons, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry* (London, 1909)

2 *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J Morley (3 vols, London, 1938), i, 128. But see also, for a contrary view of

the case, Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, *Recollections of Writers* (London, 1878), p.56: 'Lamb, far from taking much, took very little, but had so weak a stomach that what would have been a mere nothing to an inveterate drinker, acted on him like potations "pottle deep".'

3 *The Letters of Charles Lamb to which are added those of his sister Mary Lamb*, ed. E V Lucas (3 vols, London, 1935), ii, 341.

4 *The Life of Charles Lamb*, ed. E V Lucas (2 vols, London, 1905), ii, 144.

5 Mario Praz, *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction* (London, 1956), pp.66-7.

6 See William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. David McCracken (Oxford, 1970), p.138: 'The ease and light-heartedness of my youth were forever gone ... I was tormented with a secret of which I must never unburden myself; and this consciousness was at my age a source of perpetual melancholy.'

7 Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p.92.

8 Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, pp. 330-4 and 325.

9 *The Salisbury Plain Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Ithaca, NY, 1975), p.149, ll. 658-66.

10 *Letters*, ed. Lucas, ii, 301.

THOMAS MANNING (1772-1840): "An interesting man, but nothing more."

Reginald Watters

The first Englishman to reach the capital of Tibet and a close friend of Charles Lamb, Manning was an early nineteenth-century eccentric whose talents were perhaps underemployed by the East India Company.

On June 10th, 1824, Henry Crabb Robinson walked back from a visit to Coleridge at Highgate with Charles Lamb. "On this same walk Lamb spoke of his friend Manning as the most wonderful man he had ever known, - greater than Coleridge or Wordsworth. Yet he had done nothing, & tho' he travelled in China that produced nothing." To which Crabb Robinson added in 1851: "Him I knew afterwards - an interesting man, but nothing more." Thomas Manning was the first Englishman to reach the capital of Tibet, one of the few Europeans of his time to travel in the interior of China, a man whose rich and unusual personality led him to attempt to penetrate the barriers of distance and disdain which separated China from the West in the early nineteenth century.

Manning, the second son of a Norfolk rectory, had followed his brother, William, to Caius College, Cambridge in 1790. Despite his considerable mathematical talent, Thomas declined to follow his brother's successful path to a Fellowship, through his distaste for the taking of oaths and tests. So, although he remained a College Scholar for five years, published a well-regarded *Introduction to Arithmetic and Algebra* in 1796, and continued to work as a private tutor in Cambridge for some years more, Manning, like Wordsworth and Coleridge - his contemporaries, never took his degree. In this there was evidence of his independence of mind together

with a youthful radicalism, which naturally led him to become part of that talented circle of friends who moved between Cambridge and London, like a foreshadow of the Bloomsbury group, containing men of such various talents as the classicist Porson, the radical William Frend, kindly George Dyer and the young Quaker, Charles Lloyd. It was through his former pupil Lloyd that Manning first met Lamb in 1799. They took to one another at once, drawn by a shared delight in strong drink and bad puns. Inviting Lamb to Cambridge in 1800, Manning wrote: "The very thoughts of your coming makes my keg of Rum *wabble* about like a porpoise - & the liquor (how fine it smells!) goes *Gultch squlluck* against the sides for joy." But their talk ranged widely over the work of their friends, from Godwin's Atheism to the poetry of *The Lyrical Ballads*. (Of the 1800 edition Manning wrote: "I think 'tis utterly absurd..." Lamb replied: "So, you don't think there's a Word's-worth of good poetry in the great L.B.!"). The friendship of these young men thrived on their lively irreverence and the qualities they admired can be seen in Lamb's account to Manning of a new acquaintance, John Rickman, later Clerk to the House of Commons, who "has gone through life laughing at solemn apes; - himself hugely literate...can talk Greek with Porson, politics with Thelwall, conjecture with George Dyer, nonsense with me, and any thing with any body." Manning's similar breadth of interest was soon to lead him into more exotic regions.

By the time he met Lamb, Manning had already acquired an interest in China, which he could hardly satisfy by staying at home. To begin with, this led him to study Chinese in Paris. In a little-known letter (February, 1802), describing his first landing in France, Manning reveals himself as a born traveller:

> The tide having ebbed, we were obliged to come to anchor without entering the inner harbour of Boulogne. Twas night before the sluggish boat that the Boulogne Mariners sent off, could land us all, and a strange landing it seemed to me. The boat rowed towards the nearest shore till it ran aground, which happened in the midst of the breakers - in an instant the boat's head was surrounded by a throng of Women up to their middles and over, who were there to carry us on shore. Not being aware of this manoeuvre, we did not throw ourselves into the arms of these sea-nymphs so instantly as we ought, whereby those who sat at the stern of the boat, were deluged with sea-spray; for myself, I was in front, and very quickly understood the clamour of the mermaids. I flung myself upon the backs of two of them without reserve, and was safely and dryly born on shore. But one poor Gentleman slipped thro their fingers, and fell over head and ears into the sea.

Having come ashore in so adventurous a style, Manning was delighted by the warmth and comfort of his reception at a French Inn:

> A lofty Kitchen, with an ample chimney piece filled with massy antique furniture - shelf above shelf - to the very ceiling, exhibiting an armoury of stew-pans, dishes, and other culinary utensils - a Dresser on which fish flesh bread and vegetables are spred in careless abundance - rosy happy faces under antique caps, and all illuminated by the undulating blaze of a fire that laughs at Count Rumfort and his God-Damned Economy!

The whole passage lives as vividly as better-known pieces of Romantic letter-writing. "Your account", replied Lamb, "...was exactly in that minute style which strong impressions INSPIRE." But after the convivial

excitements of such a landing, Manning reported sadly: "Paris to a stranger is a desert full of Knaves and Whores - like London."

A study of these early letters reveals something of the charm which Manning could exert over others. In the amusing generosity with which he could write to Lamb with a gift of East Anglian birds "The Snipes shall present themselves to you, ready roasted - *you* shall take the *digestible* parts, and *I'll* take the long bills"; in the perceptive encouragement which he gave both Lloyd and Lamb with their writing, as when he wrote to Lamb, about his early essay, *The Londoner*: "If you would write a volume of Essays in the same stile you might be sure of succeeding." Far-sighted advice when the *Essays of Elia* were not to be written until the 1820's. It is easy to see how Charles Lloyd and his young wife came to write to Manning in France: "Why will you go travelling all over the world among people who do not care for you when you have friends most warmly attached to you in England?" The question was soon to be even more relevant.

The resumption of war with France brought Manning home for a while. But he set himself to prepare for China by a spell of medical training at the Westminster Hospital. No less a personage than Sir Joseph Banks supported the request "of this very amiable young man" to proceed to Canton as doctor to the East India Company, "for the purpose of studying the language and customs of China." And in May, 1806, Manning sailed: "The loss of Manning", wrote Mary Lamb, "made Charles very dull." Before they were to meet again, Manning was to have travelled in parts of the Far East where no Englishman had ever been, and brought back stories more remarkable than that with which he inspired the *Dissertation upon Roast Pig*. The link with Lamb and literature is worth bearing in mind, for when Manning set off for Canton it was perhaps a little as though, on Johnson's advice, a Boswell had gone on a visit to the Wall of China! An English literary consciousness was encountering the East.

Of course, when he arrived at Canton, Manning discovered the obstacles that lay in the path of those Europeans set on "studying the language and customs of China." Almost all intercourse with China after 1757 had become restricted to the single trading port of Canton. Here the Chinese permitted the "Fan Kwae" or "foreign demons" to conduct their business under severe restrictions. They must live outside the city wall in their factories or trading posts, to which they were confined during the winter season of September to March. For the rest of the year they must withdraw to the old Portuguese town of Macao, forty miles south. Foreign women were never allowed beyond Macao, and no excursions were permitted on the Chinese mainland, apart from a visit three times a month to the public gardens on Honan Island. To the Chinese their country was "Chong Kuo", literally "The Land at the Middle of the World". By contrast Europe was a group of ill-defined islands far to the west, whose inhabitants spoke different tongues and largely supported themselves by trade with China. The Emperor was "The Son of Heaven", supreme ruler of the world, and all other monarchs, whether Tibetan, Japanese or European, owed him tribute.

The bland superiority of Chinese officialdom met Manning immediately. The East India Company's Select Committee, who ruled their affairs in Canton, approved of Manning's petition to the Emperor, requesting that he be received into the Imperial Court at Peking. The request was based on an imperial edict, directing Chinese officials at Canton to procure for the Imperial Service, Europeans learned in Western Sciences. Unfortunately, all such requests had to go through the Manchu court official whose task

it was to supervise Canton relations with the foreign demons. This dignitary, the "Hai Kwan Pu", (known to the English familiarly as the "Hoppo"), declined to visit the ship on which Manning was waiting. When, subsequently, the petition was presented, Manning was told that his offer of service could not even be communicated to the Emperor. who already had more European advisers than he needed at Peking.

After this rebuff, Manning, in February 1808, made his way into Cochinchina, in the hope that he might, from there, find a way into the interior. By August he was writing to Lamb of his failure:

> I saw a little of the Villages on the coast of Cochinchina, but that was not my object. I lost my time - I can hardly bear even now to think of it with patience...

His letter is surprisingly lack-lustre, as though the frustrations he had suffered were undermining that "minute style which strong impressions INSPIRE". But these checks and inhibitions led directly to his most remarkable achievement, for, in 1810, he was writing with obvious excitement:

> Dear Lamb,
>
> Just going to leave Calcutta for God knows where! Very strange in mind - cannot write...

Following the failure of his Cochinchina journey, he had persuaded the Select Committee at Canton to write to Lord Minto, Governor General of India, asking for permission to explore the possibility of entering China from that quarter. For a time Manning had lived in Bengal, cutting a fine figure in Calcutta society with his Chinese clothes and Chinese servant, his long beard, and his amusing, eccentric manners. But when he realised that Minto had no interest in furthering his schemes, Manning, characteristically, decided to take matters into his own hands. Accompanied only by his Chinese servant, to whom he gave the Hindustani title *munshi* or guide, he set off on an extraordinary expedition into Tibet.

Then, as now, Tibet was the "Forbidden Land". Chinese influence had closed her southern borders to traders and pilgrims, and the Dalai Lama's policies were monitored by the presence of the ubiquitous Chinese officialdom in Lhasa. With disarming insouciance, Manning made his way to the frontier, which he reached in October, 1811. From his journal there is little evidence that he thought he was doing anything at all daunting. He complains repeatedly about his *munshi*, but the physical and political hazards are scarcely mentioned: "I find going up hill does not agree with me," he notes, "perhaps because naturally I am going downhill." Such entries show that he remained the man Charles Lamb had loved. And the minute style of an English Romantic had at last returned: "We cook for ourselves. Dirt, dirt, grease, smoke. Misery, but good mutton." The journal, published by C R Markham in his *Narratives* (London, 1876), deserves to be better known. It is the highly personal record of a Romantic sensibility moving, in an eccentric, English way, among Eastern caverns hitherto measureless to Western Man.

At the frontier Manning fell in with a Chinese General and his troops. He began by giving the General "two bottles of cherry brandy and a wine glass", whereupon "he was very civil and promised to write immediately to the Lhasa Mandarin for permission for me to proceed." The Lhasa Mandarin, or "Amban", was the chief Chinese Official in the country: his favour was essential if Manning's plan was to prosper. It was not merely common

humanity that prompted Manning to set up as temporary field doctor to the Chinese frontier force:

> The soldiers described their complaints, but concealed their origin, supposing perhaps, that I, as a physician, can find that out.

Life, Manning decided, was much pleasanter now that the Chinese were there. The General had suggested that he might care to accompany them towards Gyantse, and they even discussed ideas for opening trade between China and Bengal through Bhutan. "I cannot help exclaiming in my mind (as I often do)", wrote Manning, "what fools the Company are to give me no commission, no authority, no instructions."

Undeterred, he set off with the Chinese into Tibet. He notes with satisfaction how his acquaintance with the General flourished. For instance, "he was greatly taken with my beard, and seemed as if he never could sufficiently admire it." In exchange, the General offered for Manning's admiration, Chinese music. He performed on several instruments himself, and, when two of the soldiers acted a musical scene from a drama, he accompanied them on the Chinese guitar.

> The whole was done in a very good style. The Chinese music, though rather meagre to a European, has its beauties, and has, like most other national music, its natural expression, of which our musical notation, which we vainly imagine so perfect, conveys no idea whatever.

Manning himself had played the flute since Cambridge days, and, when the General insisted on hearing some European music in return, he played a few country dances: "But perceived that that quick kind of music was not very gratifying to their ears." (Manning's own responsiveness and aural tolerance was unusual for a European of his day. When, for instance, the Amherst Embassy of 1816 encountered Chinese music, their official historian noted: "The instrumental music, from its resemblance to the bagpipes, might have been tolerated by Soctchmen, to others it was detestable.")

From Gyantse Manning set out for the capital, Lhasa. He was now entering country no Englishman had seen before. Leaving behind the mountains he recorded the sight as though viewing it in a Claude glass:

> Turning my head back towards the west, I had a noble view of a set of snowy mountains collected into a focus, as it were; their summits empurpled with the evening sun, and their majestic, graceful forms ever varying as I advanced into new positions.

As he crossed the fast-moving Brahmaputra river, his eccentricity got the better of him:

> I could not sit still, but must climb about, seat myself in various postures on the parapet, and lean over. The master of the boat was alarmed and sent a steady hand to hold me tight. I pointed to the ornamental prow of the boat, and assured them that I could sit there with perfect safety, and to prove to them how commodiously I was seated, bent my head and body down outside of the boat to the water's edge; but finding, by their renewed instances for me to desist, that I made them uneasy, I went back to my place and seated myself quietly.

By this time, well into December, Manning was wearing the Chinese clothes he had bought in Gyantse, an ample, coarse red woollen cloth robe with fur cuffs, sheepskin stockings and Chinese boots. An Englishman, he mused in

his journal, scarcely believes it possible to be comfortable in cold weather without a fire, and yet he is comfortable enough in his bed: "A Chinaman's or Tibetan's cold-weather clothing may be considered as a moving bed..." When he reached Lhasa Manning increased the strangeness of his attire by donning Chinese spectacles, for he discovered that the resident *Amban* had previously been a Canton *Hoppo* - and he thought it might be a disadvantage to be recognised! Later, he realised he need not have worried: "The old dog was purblind, and could not see many inches beyond his nose."

Manning's own perceptions sharpened when he came to the capital. He was the first Englishman to reach the holy city, and his account, refreshingly unpompous and personal, is worthy of the occasion. First, the Dalai Lama's Palace, the Potala:

> As we approached I perceived that under the palace at one side lay a considerable extent of marshy land. This brought to mind the Pope, Rome and what I had read of the Pontine Marshes.

But, as he gazed, he found that the Oriental mountain of a building eluded his European mind:

> My eye almost perpetually fixed on the palace, and roving over its parts, the disposition of which being irregular, eluded my attempts at analysis. As a whole, it seemed perfect enough.

Even when puzzled, he shows an alert openness of mind.

Predictably, his response to the town itself was less enthusiastic:

> If the palace had exceeded my expectations the town fell as far short of them. The habitations are begrimed with smut and dirt. The avenues are full of dogs, some growling and gnawing bits of hide which lie about in profusion and emit a charnal house smell; others limping and looking livid; others ulcerated; others starving and dying, and pecked at by the ravens... In short, everything seems mean and gloomy and excited the idea of something unreal - even the mirth and laughter of the inhabitants I thought dreamy and ghostly.

It is a lively, personal, Romantic view he gives us, often touched with the washes of introspection, like the writing of his better-known friends.

His audience with the Dalai Lama at the Potala, on December 17th, 1811, was the high point of Manning's Tibetan journey. Presenting a motley of gifts, (a pair of brass candlesticks, some Nanking tea, English broadcloth, some bright, new dollars, and a bottle of "genuine Smith's lavender water", which the awkward servants contrived to let fall and break), Manning found himself charmed by the presence of the seven-year-old prince.

> His face was, I thought, poetically and affectingly beautiful...his beautiful mouth perpetually unbending into a graceful smile, which illuminated his whole countenance... The Lama put the usual questions of urbanity. He inquired whether I had not met with molestations and difficulties on the road; to which I promptly returned the proper answer. I said I had had troubles, but now that I had the happiness of being in his presence, they were amply compensated... I could see that this answer pleased both the Lama and his household people. They thus found that I was not a mere rustic, but had some tincture of civility in me.

It is typical of Manning's experiences in the East that, despite his obvious liking for the Dalai Lama and his no-less obvious self-satisfaction

at being allowed to exert his charm upon him, the crucial interview in Lhasa was with the purblind *Amban*. Knowing something of the ways of Manning's countrymen, Manning's Chinese servant had assumed he would be unwilling to perform the ceremony of kotow at the audience. But, writes Manning blandly:

> I had no objection whatever...on the contrary, I was always asking when I could *Keretse* or kneel; and if there was an option between one *keretse* and three, I generally chose to give three.

Such amused casualness about protocol well-befitted the friend of Charles Lamb, and might have been imitated with advantage by some of his contemporary diplomats. Certainly, the 1816 Amherst Embassy to Peking, which Manning accompanied, came to grief because it eschewed such flexibility. So, for a time at least, Manning found favour with the Lhasa authorities.

During his stay he set about building up a reputation as a doctor. "As I took no fee, people came with the most trifling complaints, and some invented a complaint, perhaps merely to have a lounge and see me." At times this brought agreeable results, as when two handsome, well-dressed, clean-washed lasses came with their mother to consult him. "I could not find out that there was anything the matter with them, except superabundance of health and spirits. It was so long since I had seen female charms of this order that feeling their pulses rather disordered my own." But his most important patient was a Chinese official whom he called the "Mad Mandarin". This dignitary appeared: "uncombed, unwashed, beslimed with his own spittle and dirt," and Manning calculated that: "If I could make a cure of him, it would be nothing to ask him to get me admitted to Peking." Here he made a crucial mistake.

Through the ravings of his patient Manning gradually learnt something of the Chinese mission on which the mad Mandarin had come to Lhasa to investigate the recent Tibetan riots. Under the strain of corruption and falsification which had ensued this unfortunate official's mind seems to have given way. Manning soon discovered that his outpourings, though instructive, were also dangerous. The suspicions of the *Amban* were roused, and Manning had to visit his patient: "By stealth - stepping into another house first to inquire if any of the Tartar's spies were about the premises." At length, he was stopped from visiting altogether. The patient died, and with him died Manning's hopes of continuing his journey.

By now he was aware that the Chinese were unpopular in Tibet. He was also aware that they were dangerous enemies. "I am before evil-minded men, void of conscience, who proceed according to the forms, and violate the spirit of justice." He confided to his journal his very real fears, under the Romantic title, *Daydream of Terror*. For all his originality and independence of mind, there was little more he could do. On April 19th, he set out to return to Calcutta, leaving the *munshi*, whom he had never much liked, with the Chinese authorities behind him. As he put it in a letter written on his return to Bengal:

> Having lived for some time on terms of good fellowship with the lamas and made arrangements for penetration further into those unknown regions, the Emperor of China sent for my head; but as I preferred to retain it on my shoulders, I had made the best of my way back rather than go on.

For a time Manning remained in the East, returning to Canton rather than England, much to the indignation of Charles Lamb: "Down with idols - Ching-chang-fo and all his foolish priesthood. Come out of Babylon, O my friend!" When, in 1816, Lord Amherst's Embassy to the Chinese Emperor arrived off Macao, Manning was one of the small group of Englishmen, "all more or less acquainted with the Chinese language" who joined the party. Significantly, Lord Amherst disapproved of Manning at first sight. The long beard, of which Manning had grown so proud, struck Amherst as "incongruous". In the end, he agreed he might keep it, provided he gave up his Chinese clothes. After such a note it is hardly surprising that the several accounts of that ill-fated mission contain almost no references to Manning at all. The bulk of the interpreting was done by Robert Morrison, a fine Scholar and a Missionary of rock-like integrity, and the professional diplomats, who were not particularly impressed by the Chinese they met, were not particularly impressed by Manning either. The story of the Amherst Embassy, interesting though it is, is not Manning's story.

However, in later years, one tantalising fragment was written by his friend J F Davis, who accompanied him on the mission. It makes a fitting Epilogue to the curious history of the man who travelled in China and produced nothing. Davis's reminiscence pierces for a moment the gap of cloud in the Chinese picture of what should have been the culmination of Manning's long quest:

> He was seldom serious, and did not often argue any matter gravely, but in a tone of banter in which he humourously maintained the most monstrous paradoxes, his illustrations being often highly laughable. He did everything in his own odd and eccentric way. Being one day roused by a strange shouting, I went out and discovered it was Manning who, wishing to cross the water and finding nobody who would attend to him, commenced a series of howls like a dog, supplemented by execrations derived from the Chinese vernacular. This led our attendant Mandarins very naturally to infer that he was mad and they lost no time in conveying him over the river to the other side, which was all he wanted.

BOOK REVIEWS

Don Locke: A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, 1980. 398 pp. £13.50 net.

William Godwin has not always stood in the wings while the Shelleys, Mary Wollstonecraft and others occupied center stage. He has had his own biographers and investigators, notably - in the 1960's and 70's - Burton R Pollin, to whom Locke pays tribute for his bibliography (*Godwin Criticism*, 1967) and numerous articles. Many of Godwin's letters grace the Pforzheimer Library's monumental *Shelley and His Circle* (1961-). R G Grylls treated him briefly but vividly in 1953 (*William Godwin and His World*) and there have been others: C H Driver, David Fleisher (misspelled in Locke's References), E E and E G Smith, and George Woodcock, not to omit H N Brailsford's brilliant small volume *Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle* (1931), and yet others. But comprehensive biographies, since Charles Kegan Paul's two-volume *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (not always dependable) of 1876, have been few. My own favorites are Paul's and Ford K Brown's thorough *Life* (1926). Now, with Locke, the new student of Godwin has a fine trio from which to branch out.

Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick, Don Locke has not duplicated any of these but treats Godwin in depth as philosopher. Locke has read and analysed the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* and other works in all their versions, for Godwin, in his dogged quest for truth, was a constant reviser. The revisions reveal the progress of his thought quite as much as the works themselves.

Godwin's career was as extraordinary as the man. The stunning success of *Political Justice* in 1793 was nearly matched by his (still readable) novel *Caleb Williams* a year later. Both took a radical look at British institutions and appealed especially to the young. *Political Justice* foresaw the inevitable coming of a day when Reason should rule - with equality and happiness for all - and government wither away without violence: even Death would be overcome.

Then the excesses of the French Revolution (and the French war with England) brought doubt and public revulsion, even on the part of some of Godwin's closest friends, notably James Mackintosh and Dr Samuel Parr. Godwin's skyrocket plummeted when he was just over forty; he retired to near-obscurity though continuing to write (behind other names, to begin with) until his death at eighty. Today, "among the philosophers," says Locke, he is

> remembered not at all... His fault lay in being too much the philosopher, too logical in defiance of common sense, too viciously persuadable by an impressive argument... Godwin was, he once said, the martyr of /*Political Justice*/, though it was Sir James Mackintosh, ironically enough, who recognized the point most clearly... (pp.350-51)

Locke's quotation from Mackintosh ends, "The moment for doing full and exact justice will come." For Mackintosh regretted his 1799 attack and did his best to make up for it in later life. The moment of justice has perhaps come: if Locke does not bring this about, no one can.

> Yet the French Revolution /Lock continues/ was not the only rock on which Godwin foundered. He had his failures, both political and philosophical, both aesthetic and financial, but he also had a positive gift for misjudgment and mistiming.

It had not always been so. His two famous books were aptly timed, and he rescued in the nick of time his radical-but-innocent Parliamentary Reformer friends - and future English reformers - from the hangman in the 1794 Treason Trials by an anonymous pamphlet which turned the tide of public opinion. He loved Mary Wollstonecraft at the right moment for both - then she died untimely, bearing little Mary, and all went wrong. He was rebuffed by the attractive women with whom he sought to replace her as mother to his two little girls (one of them Gilbert Imlay's): he wrote the tragedy *Antonio* and saw it hissed with the unfortunate Charles Lamb, who had written prologue and epilogue and later made literary capital out of the occasion. Godwin married Mary Jane Clairmont, who seems to have been liked only by Godwin's mother and Aaron Burr. She brought him her two children and bore him William. Needing money, the Godwins founded the publishing house which set the Lambs to work writing for children, but its proprietors could never manage their finances. Francis Place, who admired Godwin, tried to unsnarl the accounts but threw up his hands in disgust, for Godwin had become the compulsive borrower, and even Locke cannot determine where the money went when ends should have met and did not.

William's young admirer Shelley, a married man with children, ran away with young Mary, and her stepsister Jane Clairmont went along, eventually bearing Byron's ill-fated child. Godwin's borrowing from Shelley when he still refused to see the poet is well known. Shelley's disillusion with him and early death, the several suicides, the quarrels with old friends, the deaths of William junior and all but one of Mary's children: all comprise a sorry story. Reason, which should make everyone happy, had misfired.

Yet Godwin had been ahead of his time. *Political Justice* helped mold Robert Owen and Leo Tolstoy; *Caleb Williams* provided our first detective story, influencing Poe, Wilkie Collins, and Dickens. Godwin foresaw psychosomatic medicine, modern educational and criminological theories, modern views on property and sexual freedom. He tried desperately to see life without conventional blinkers and was in youth fearless at proclaiming what he saw. He was soon ridiculed for renouncing gratitude, the private affections, God, and the institution of marriage (though he married, to further ridicule). He wed the foremost feminist of his day and wrote an affectionate memoir of her so frank as to alienate those not yet alienated: he was ridiculed again. For he was at once visionary and obtuse, bold and insecure. He craved affection and applause, and found many brilliant friends. Reason was not all: he wrote even in the first *Political Justice*, "No great and honourable deed can be achieved, but from passion." He came to modify his views on gratitude, on telling truth under all circumstances, on atheism, and on the private affections.

Charles Lamb had an eye for extraordinary individuals and soon after meeting him in 1800 accepted Godwin (whom he had formerly despised for his atheism) as a friend. Godwin brought Lamb a wider world than he had known and ultimately writing opportunities. Lamb remained a friend, and a helpful one, except for one misunderstanding. The Lamb *aficionado* will note some small errors in Locke. He prints a Lamb letter on page 227 which he says "appears to have escaped" compilers, but it has not escaped Volume II of Professor Marrs's Lamb *Letters*, published in 1976. On page 215 Locke implies that *Mrs. Leicester's School* is not a "joint effort by both Lambs," which of course it was. More serious, and endemic these days, are the misprints, "Took" for Tooke on page 229, "they" for thy on page 229, and a few too many others, for which the high cost of everything must be responsible. (I *bought* this book early, refusing to translate into dollars the appalling cost, not yet matched across the Atlantic!)

Locke is wisely sympathetic in his approach, while seeing Godwin plain. He expounds Godwin's thought so lucidly that we follow uncomplaining. He even *begins* his book with philosophical exposition, a brave biographer indeed. The writing style is admirable, free of specialist jargon; and the sense of humor which Godwin himself lacked helps in the assessment.

Even Lamb could be cross with Godwin when asked to introduce and revise *Ulysses* once too often. But by and large Lamb knew a fascinating bundle of human contradictions when he saw one. Why Godwin is so fascinating has been conveyed by Professor Locke in a manner deserving of the highest praise.

Winifred F Courtney

Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch: Robert Southey (Twayne's English Author Series) *G K Hall & Co.*, Boston, 1977. 187 pp. including Selected Bibliography

During his lifetime, criticism of Robert Southey's writing was often

motivated by political prejudice. Since then a fairer estimate has emerged, and his biographers have written not only with judgement but with grace; it has seemed as though the lucidity and rhythm of Southey's 'perfect prose' has been transmitted to those who have made an extensive study of his works. The biographies by Edward Dowden and, in our own time, by Professors Simmons and Curry are pleasurable as well as instructive reading. The more provocative monograph on Southey by Dr Carnall and his specialised study of 'A Conservative Mind' are obligatory reading for the modern student and are lucidly written. The same cannot be said of the latest biography by Professor Bernhardt-Kabisch.

His previous writing on Southey was an article in *The Wordsworth Circle* on 'The tale of Paraguay' - the only serious study of the poem since its review in the *Quarterly* at the time of publication. That article gave new guidelines for a consideration of Southey's poetry, as well as providing the thesis for this biography, that

> while an heir of the Enlightenment like his fellow Romantics, Southey was unable to break through to the new consciousness that we call "Romantic", a consciousness frankly introspective, skeptical and symbolistic, but halted in a limbo between reason and imagination.

The article, published in 1974, whetted the appetite for a fuller study of Southey's poetry by this writer, but it is sadly dulled by this biography.

Professor Bernhardt-Kabisch has presented us with a study in length rather than depth, and it is extremely difficult to read because of the turgidity of the style. The first sentence of the *Preface* tells us that one of his aims has been 'to provide an over-view of one of the best known of the unread poets'; after such an introduction, Southey's poetry will remain unread by the undiscriminating.

Possibly the fault of this approach lies in the nature of the biography. One of Twayne's English Author Series, it appears to be an attempt to provide the undergraduate with all the material needed to write a 'model answer' on Southey without preliminary reading - which may account for the length of quotation and paraphrase in the poetry chapters. Unlike other modern critics, Professor Bernhardt-Kabisch brushes aside Southey's prose to concentrate on long synopses of the epics, which may well absolve his readers from opening Southey's poetry for themselves. The allocation of space to Southey's epics is interesting; 'Joan of Arc' and 'Madoc' have whole chapters to themselves and there is a lengthy but pedestrian treatment of 'Thalaba', 'Kehama' and 'Roderick'. Disappointingly, 'The Tale of Paraguay', so skilfully analysed in *The Wordsworth Circle*, is relegated to an aside in his treatment of the versification of 'Thalaba'. By contrast (and here the biographer departs from the trend of modern literary criticism), Southey's prose is grossly undervalued. While this may serve to redress the balance of Professor Curry's biography, it brushes aside much of lasting value in Southey's writing.

The fault may lie in the chapter divisions and in the imbalance, already noted, between the poetry and the prose. In an attempt to capture the reader's interest, Professor Bernhardt-Kabisch has chosen racy titles for his chapters and then experienced some difficulty in relating them to the works under review. Did he perhaps name his chapters before thinking out the implications of his criticism? One has the impression that his tools have taken over and are shaping the material for him. 'Et in Utopia Ego',

the phrase used by Southey after his visit to Robert Owen's model community at New Lanark, is a valid title for the chapter on his early life and on Pantisocracy. 'Arms and the Man' is somewhat banal for 'Joan of Arc'. Thereafter the emblems become more obscure. 'Idols of the Cave' is subtitled 'The Man & the Poet'. 'Lucifer in Spain' is hardly appropriate for 'Roderick' and certainly not for the Laureate verse which shares the same chapter. Least acceptable of these snap judgements is 'Days Among the Dead' for Southey's prose writing. No reader of Southey would deny the influence of his library and his omniverous reading on everything that he wrote; his bookishness is at once an attraction and a drawback. Yet the great body of his prose is taken up by his attempts to tackle contemporary social evils. Admittedly, he saw them at a distance from the sanctuary of his great library at Keswick, and his bookishness often impaired his judgement. But Dr Carnall has been at pains to show that even the Lake District was not remote from the political unrest of the Waterloo decade. Indeed, many reforms advocated by Southey became the commonplace demands of later writers. Professor Bernhardt-Kabisch ignores completely his influence over such diverse reformers as Young England, the Christian Socialists and the early workers' co-operatives.

Clutching again at emblems, he leaves us with the 'telling' portrait from the frontispiece of *The Doctor*.

> It shows a curly-headed Southey seated at his writing-desk, with his back to the viewer, facing a windowless wall lined solidly with books. It sums up not only *The Doctor* but the life and work of its author..

If the reader turns from the frontispiece to the title page of *The Doctor* he will see the opposite view 'from the Author's Study Window', symbolic perhaps of the wide view he took from the security of his library of the concerns of the world beyond. But this is too easy. The complexity of Southey's attitudes defies such facile reasoning and deserves a more measured judgement.

Chrystal Tilney

WITCHES AND OTHER NIGHT FEARS (A.D. 1980)

"My night fancies have ceased to be afflictive".

Lucky Charles Lamb! I regarded with dread My First Luncheon - not "My First Play" nor even Hazlitt's "My first acquaintance with the poets", nor, in a sense, my first luncheon (those I have attended stretch back into infinity) but certainly the first for which I have been responsible.

Paramount anxiety - a new venue. Ivanhoe was a doughty warrior but would he prove an acceptable cook to our trenchermen (and women)? Despondently, I looked at an old Menu which surfaced among my collection of by-gones. It was the Charles Lamb Superannuation Centenary Dinner held in Inner Temple Hall on Monday 30th March 1925 (Help! - I was four years old at the time!). The Menu was

Hors D'Oeuvres
Oxtail Soup   Pea Soup
Creamed Chicken
Saddle of Mutton
Peach Melba   (surely only just invented)
Sherry   Sauterne   Claret
Port, Liquer Brandy
Coffee

The speakers included Augustine Birrell (Chairman), Edmund Gosse, G K Chesterton, J C Squire.

With these thoughts in mind I fell asleep. I was in a splendid hall - to my right stretched a dais with a table covered with a snow-white cloth. Below, at right angles, were similar tables and a sea of expectant faces. On the dais a formidable figure was in full spate - I identified him as the Rev. Moon, founder of the Unification Church. He had a long typescript infront of him. Politely he asked if he could finish his speech. I replied "As long as it does not last more than five minutes". At this stage the Banquetting Manager intervened to say this is only a rehearsal and the scene dissolves to the Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration Luncheon 1980. It is after 1.15 pm and in the reception area 95 guests are milling about expecting something to happen - or at least to be fed. I am aware that I am the focus of their expectations. I also observe that there is only one solitary table laid - surely inadequate for all those who have paid good money to be here? Angrily I summon the Manager - he explains that the Luncheon has been delayed because cracks have appeared in the building. In the far corner of the room I discern a crack in the plaster - fortunately it is a crack in my own psyche. I awake, and continue to make a fair copy of the seating plan...

1980 guests who plan to be still around in 2025 should be starting to organise the Super-Annuation Bi-Centenary Dinner NOW!

Madeline Huxstep

OBITUARY

Members at home and abroad will be saddened by the news of the death of Frieda Parsons. She was found unconscious by a neighbour, and was taken to hospital where she died after eight days, never regaining consciousness. A member of the Society since 1941, she did stalwart work for many years as Treasurer, and kept up a lively correspondence with Overseas Members, who will miss her chatty letters. She was ready always to find information and relay it, and she was knowledgeable in many spheres, and belonged to many other societies, and she kept her interest almost to the end.

We shall miss her.

NOTES FROM MEMBERS

From Miss Hunt

Mr Trotter of Worthing

Thomas Trotter was a barnstormer. He travelled with his own small company, playing as and where he could, until, becoming more prosperous, he decided to build his own theatres. This he did in Southend, Hythe, Gravesend, and in Worthing.

Here, in 1822, he produced Charles Lamb's comedy, 'Mr.H'. In fact, there is a distinct possibility that Lamb got the idea for the plot of his play while staying in Worthing with his sister Mary. There were, at this time, two inns in the town, the one kept by a Mr Hogsflesh and the other by a Mr Bacon. Now the plot of the play deals with a certain young man named Hogsflesh, who was so embarrassed by his name that he preferred to be

known as 'Mr.H'. However, he himself, inadvertantly let slip his real name and was not rehabilitated until he succeeded to the estates and name of Bacon.

In 1824 Mr Trotter decided to retire from personal management, and after a short stay in Bath, he took up permanent residence in a cottage in Worthing, dying there in 1851.

There is, in Worthing museum, a tiny room, saved by local conservationists when Mr Trotter's cottage was demolished. It was evidently used as a library, for the shelves are still there, although now filled with exhibits other than books. Outside this room there is a plaque on the wall, giving details of Mr Trotter of Worthing as he came affectionately to be called, and above the plaque there is a plan of the theatre. Unfortunately these are in such a dark unlighted spot that it is necessary to take a torch to examine them properly.

Members visiting Worthing, and wanting to make an expedition to the museum, will find it near the top of the main street, opposite the Post Office. And, may I say, they will find the attendant at the little shop by the door most helpful and showing almost a proprietory interest in Mr Trotter.

From Mrs Berta Lawrence

John Clare: *The Midsummer Cushion*

It was a pleasure to read in the *Charles Lamb Society Bulletin* Stella Pigrome's admirable article on the collection of John Clare poems *The Midsummer Cushion* edited by Anne Tibble in association with R K Thornton. Pleasure and interest were augmented by the fact that a short time ago I had read Anne Tibble's third volume of autobiography, *Alone*, a brave and candid book that charts the experience of widowhood as well as an indestructible marriage. Years earlier she and her husband had written in partnership the definitive *Life* of John Clare whose poetry was one of the bonds uniting them. Her autobiography conveys her determination to round off their joint enterprise by editing and publishing the manuscript of the poems to which Clare himself had given the title *The Midsummer Cushion*.

Her task was impeded by formidable copyright complications and other obstacles, yet these failed to turn her from her self-appointed course. Lovers of Clare's poetry must be grateful for the tenacity and scholarship that brought her to her goal.

The Midsummer Cushion, Clare tells us, was a cushion of greensward stuck with wild flowers, made by cottagers to adorn their homes. His contemporary Coleridge may have seen a somewhat similar object any time between 1797 and 1807 in the Somerset village of Nether Stowey where he wrote most of his finest poems. This was a cushion of green turf that cottage girls stuck with red roses and white roses, and kept in the house until the petals began to fall. Finding a lover in the following twelve months depended on whether red petals or white were the first to drop. An old resident remembers this custom being practised sixty years ago.

From Mr Ledwith

Alfoxton Park (old name Alfoxden) at Holford in Somerset, is where William and Dorothy Wordsworth lived before moving to Grasmere, and where Coleridge gave the first reading of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. In July 1797

Charles Lamb spent a week with Coleridge at nearby Nether Stowey, where he first met the Wordsworths (Letter to S T Coleridge, probably 19th or 26th July 1797).

The house has recently changed hands again. It is now operated as an hotel by the Villiers family. It is little altered and beautifully kept, combining much of the period atmosphere with modern conveniences and superb cuisine, "as good" (said a member of the CLS after a recent visit) "as anything I have experienced anywhere in the world."

MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY

On 4th October we had the great pleasure of hearing Miss Jane Aaron give the Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture, which is printed in full in this Bulletin. Miss Aaron has been a member of the Society for a number of years and has just completed her D. Phil. thesis on Lamb. She has now been appointed as a Lecturer in the University of Exeter. We much enjoyed having her with us and exploring with her a little known aspect of Lamb's work.

At the time of going to press, we are looking forward to our November meetings and a social gathering in December, so reports of these must await our next Bulletin.

In January, 1981, Madeline Huxstep, a twentieth century magistrate, will look back to "Law and Order in Lamb's day". Members will be particularly pleased to welcome our Hon. General Secretary to the platform in this, to us, new "hat".

Details of the Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration will be found below. Of the remaining meetings Mrs Huxstep reports as follows:

Ms? Mrs? Mr? Esq.? Under the succinct title "Jane", Stella Pigrome will enlighten us on forms of address at the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth century. (March 7th)

For our final lecture we are indebted to Mr John MacInerney, MA of the English Department at Marymount International College. Those who attended the 1980 Luncheon much appreciated his response to the toast of "Provincial and Overseas Members"; we look forward to hearing him on the poetry of Lamb - a subject he has made his particular study.

Our "indoor" programme ends with our Annual General Meeting on 9th May. The Summer programme will be published later. In 1980 we re-instituted our Summer programme with a most enjoyable visit to Buttonsnap. Summer outings are important as they give an opportunity for visitors to London to participate in our activities. However, such visits do require a certain amount of detailed planning, and the Secretary, Madeline Huxstep, would be delighted to hear from any member who would undertake the organisation of ONE summer visit in June, July or September. Current ideas are

a visit to Enfield
a walk around Covent Garden
Old Hampstead

THE ANNUAL BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

Charles Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon takes place at the Ivanhoe Hotel, Bloomsbury Street, WC1, on Saturday 14th February at 12.30 pm for

1.15 pm. We shall have the great pleasure of welcoming Professor John Stevens, CBE, to preside for the first time at our Luncheon. Our distinguished guest of honour is Professor Brian Morris, lately of Sheffield University and recently appointed Principal of St David's University College, Lampeter.

Your officers have carefully considered a number of alternative venues for the Luncheon but it speedily became apparent that elsewhere the cost would have been at least £10 a head. It was felt that this would preclude a number of members and friends from participating in what is the high-spot of the Elian year. We realise that there were a few criticisms about the arrangements last year but we are confident these can be resolved.

Tickets, price £8.00 each, are available now from The Hon. General Secretary, 9 Baronsmead Road, SW13 9RR.

Cheques should be made payable to the Charles Lamb Society and please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1981

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1981 fall due on 1 January. The rates of subscription for 1981 are as follows:

Corporate Members Overseas		$10
Other Corporate Members		£ 5
Individual Members	- London	£ 3 (doubles £4)
	- Provincial	£ 2 (doubles £3)
	- Overseas	$ 7 (doubles $10)

Members will notice that subscriptions have not gone up this year and are modest by to-day's standards. May we again ask that any members who feel they can would generously add some small donation to their normal subscription? We were most grateful for kind help given in this way last year, in this time of perpetually rising prices.

If it is convenient, members ordering tickets for the Luncheon may include in their cheques sent to Mrs Huxstep the amount of their annual subscription, but *not* unless they are ordering tickets please. Otherwise, subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, The Charles Lamb Society, Flat 3, 47 Sussex Square, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 1GE