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CHARLES LAMB - FRIEND AND CRITIC

*A lecture given by Mrs Mary R Wedd at Christ's Hospital on 29 November 1984 as part of the school's commemoration of the sesquicentennial of Lamb and Coleridge and the bicentenary of Leigh Hunt.*

Partly because of their peculiar circumstances and partly because of what Coleridge called 'their kind and open nature', Charles and Mary Lamb found that friends played an exceptionally large part in their lives. At their Wednesday, later Thursday, evenings could be found at one time or another many of the most eminent figures in the culture of the day. But theirs was not an exclusive gathering for lions only. Hazlitt reports that

When a stranger came in, it was not asked, 'Has he written anything?' - we were above that pedantry... If a person liked anything, if he took snuff heartily, it was sufficient.

When it was suggested to Lamb that, out of the past, he might like to meet Sir Isaac Newton and Mr Locke as the greatest names in English Literature,

Every one burst out a-laughing at the expression of Lamb's face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. 'Yes, the greatest names,' he stammered out hastily, 'but they were not persons - not persons...not characters, you know.'

What he delighted in, as he says himself, was idiosyncrasy.

His *intimados* to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He found them floating on the surface of society; and the colour, or something else, in the weed pleased him. The burrs stuck to him - but they were good and loving burrs for all that. He never greatly cared for the society of what are called good people.

The individuality and oddity of human beings, including his own, are the making of the *Essays of Elia*. Lamb had a great deal to put up with from his friends and there were rifts, but after a certain period he learnt to look with tolerant irony on what, to many of us, would have proved inexcusable behaviour. Of Hazlitt, who managed to quarrel with everybody, even with Lamb, he said, 'No, he is not a bad man, but he commits bad actions'. When Crabb Robinson cut Hazlitt for a while because of his attacks on Wordsworth, Mary Lamb said, 'You are rich in friends. We cannot afford to cast off ours because they are not all we wish.' In the essay on 'New Year's Eve' Elia's 'intolerable disinclination to dying' is intensified by the doubt,

Shall I enjoy friendships there, wanting the smiling indications which point me to them here - the recognizable face - the 'sweet assurance of a look' -?

When 'man as he ought to be' was mentioned, he said, 'Give me man as he ought not to be', and it may have been such remarks that led to the false impression that De Quincey was anxious to correct.

There was a notion prevalent about Lamb, which I can affirm to have been

a most erroneous one; it was - that any flagrant act of wickedness formed a recommendation to his favour. 'Ah!' said one man to me, when asking a letter of introduction from him, 'ah! that I could but recommend you as a man that had robbed the mail, or the King's exchequer - which would be better. In that case I need not add a word; you would take rank instantly amongst the privileged friends of Lamb, without a word from me'.

What *was* true, De Quincey goes on, was that to people who, because of their political or moral principles, were unjustly 'tabooed - that is consecrated to public hatred and scorn... Lamb threw his heart and his doors wide open'. A formidable list of such persons includes Thelwall, Holcroft, Godwin, Mrs Wolstonecraft, Dr Priestly, Hazlitt. These happened to be people of note but they did not *have* to be clever or interesting. De Quincey adds,

he bore with numerous dull people, stupid people, asinine people, for no other reason upon earth than because he knew them, or believed them, to have been ill-used or oppressed by some clever but dissolute man. That was enough.

It was natural, then, that Lamb should sometimes have found himself, as he put it, 'a little over companied'. 'He who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself.'

Lamb's friends were sure of his practical help too. His old schoolmistress, Mrs Reynolds, received an annual sum from him from her retirement till her death, only a couple of years before his own. He and Southey also gave John Morgan an annual sum from 1819 onwards. Repeatedly he gets up subscriptions for friends in distress - for example, Godwin, Hone, Coleridge - and heads the list with his own donation. He works hard to get a pension for Mrs Randal Norris from the Middle Temple Benchers and for Coleridge from the Chancellor when the death of George IV brought the allowance from him to an end. He and Mary looked after, and fed, George Dyer when he had inadvertently almost starved himself. In 1796, when Mary, in a fit of madness, killed their mother, Lamb wrote to Coleridge,

if my father, an old servant maid, and I can't live and live comfortably on £130 or £120 a year we ought to burn by slow fires, and I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital.

He supported her for the rest of his life and put aside an annual sum to provide for her after his death. It is interesting, in passing, to note that in the following year the Wedgwoods made Coleridge an allowance of £150 a year, which, far from topping up by his own exertions, he was always drawing upon in advance.

An even rarer form of generosity was Lamb's careful reading and acute criticism of the work of his literary friends. George Whalley examined 'Coleridge's Debt to Charles Lamb' in the period 1796-7 and concluded,

One thing is sure: that Coleridge was launched forth on his marvellous year with vision clarified and energies redirected by his fruitful nine-months' correspondence with Charles Lamb.

George L Barnett says that 'Lamb improved Wordsworth' and 'refined and guided Coleridge'.

In Lamb's essay, in his own name, of 1813, 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital', he writes 'The Christ's Hospital boy's friends at school are

commonly his intimates through life' and so it certainly proved with him. They were bound together by memories of shared privilege and suffering, privilege in the admirable education they were given, suffering in the physical conditions in which they lived and the severity of the Upper Grammar Master, Boyer. This first essay of Lamb's on his old school, which was written to rebut newspaper criticism of the governors current at that time, is almost a panegyric. Even of Boyer he says,

now the terrors of the rod, and of a temper a little too hasty to leave the more nervous of us quite at our ease to do justice to his merits in those days, are long since over, ungrateful were we if we should refuse our testimony to that unwearied assiduity with which he attended to the particular improvement of each of us.

Contrary to the impression left by Lamb's other essay on Christ's Hospital under the Elia pseudonym, he himself was undoubtedly taught by Boyer and not left for ever to the careless ministrations of Field. In this second essay 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', he redresses the balance. Writing in the first part as if he were Coleridge, he points out that Lamb had special privileges, his family living so near by that he could visit them and his food being supplemented by extras from home. For Coleridge it was very different.

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; and, one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged years! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the west) come back, with its church, and trees, and faces! How I would wake weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire!

For Calne in Wiltshire, which is a typical piece of Elian mystification, read Ottery St Mary in Devon. In a series of autobiographical letters to Tom Poole, Coleridge gave his own account of his childhood. Despite persecution by his brother Frank because Sam was 'the favorite', he seems, as the youngest of ten children, to have been spoilt by his parents. 'My father was very fond of me, and I was my mother's darling.' When he was found safe after being missing overnight,

I remember, and never shall forget, my father's face as he looked upon me while I lay in the servant's arms - so calm, and the tears stealing down his face: for I was the child of his old age.

One carries away from Coleridge's account, though he does not stress it, a sense of shock at his translation, after his father's death, from this loving environment in beautiful countryside to Christ's Hospital in London, where he was tyrannized over by the Monitors and, 'excepting on Wednesdays I never had a belly full'. He was, first, for six weeks, at the Junior School at Hertford, where 'I was very happy on the whole; for I had plenty to eat and drink, pudding and vegetables almost every day'. But the London school was not at all the same thing. Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude* (VI 274-284)

Of rivers, fields,  
 And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee,  
 Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths  
 Of the huge city, on the leaded roof  
 Of that wide edifice, thy home and school,  
 Wast used to lie and gaze upon the clouds  
 Moving in heaven; or haply, tired of this,  
 To shut thine eyes, and by internal light  
 See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,  
 Far distant, thus beheld from year to year  
 Of thy long exile.

and Coleridge himself in 'Frost at Midnight',

For I was reared  
 In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
 And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.

Lamb, continuing his Elia essay, tells of the barbaric punishments still extant then.

I was a hypochondriac lad; and the sight of a boy in fetters, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terrors of initiation... I was told he had *run away*.

If he did it again he was locked up in a 'dungeon' cell and left there,

by himself *of nights* out of reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to the time of life, might subject him to.

Lamb in a footnote reports that 'One or two instances of lunacy, or attempted suicide' persuaded the authorities to discontinue this 'midnight torture'. If he ran away a third time he was expelled after public humiliation.

I can remember at my own boarding school, where one had in winter to break the ice on top of the ewer before one could wash, lying awake many a night, too cold to dare to stretch my legs down to the bottom of the bed, plotting how I could run away. One insuperable obstacle always prevented me. I had no money. One girl, who lived nearer to the school, did run away. She was brought straight back by her parents. I could not imagine a worse inhumanity.

Lamb speaks of 'the severity of masters or worse tyranny of the monitors'. Leigh Hunt, born on 19 October 1784 two hundred years ago, gives an example. This Monitor 'had a trick of entertaining himself by pelting lesser boys' heads with a hard ball'. Hunt, his indignation overcoming his fear, went boldly up to the big boy, 'to the astonishment of all present', and said, 'You have no right to do this'. One has to admire Hunt, whose early answer to injustice guided his actions throughout life.

I became convinced, that if I did not put moral courage in the place of personal, or, in other words, undergo any stubborn amount of pain and wretchedness, rather than submit to what I thought wrong, there was an end for ever, as far as I was concerned, of all those fine things that had been taught me, in vindication of right and justice.

Boyer, whose eye, Hunt says, 'was close and cruel',

was indeed a proper tyrant, passionate and capricious; would take violent likes and dislikes to the same boys; fondle some without any apparent

reason... and would persecute others in a manner truly frightful. I have seen him beat a sickly-looking, melancholy boy (C/hesly/n) about the head and ears, till the poor fellow, hot, dry-eyed, and confused, seemed lost in bewilderment. C - n, not long after he took orders, died, out of his senses.

No wonder Lamb's and Hunt's stammers did not disappear. Boyer made 'a habit of contemptuously crumpling' Hunt's essays 'up in his hand and calling out, "Here, children, there is something to amuse you".' Lamb speaks of the prognosis to be gained from Boyer's headgear.

He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of differing omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discoloured, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution.

Of such a flogger, Lamb says,

Perhaps we cannot dismiss him better than with the pious ejaculation of C(oleridge) - when he heard that his old master was on his death-bed - 'Poor J.B.! - may all his faults be forgiven; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities'.

In spite of his cruelty, Boyer was remembered with gratitude by Lamb and Coleridge and even Hunt gave him his due. The hardships of the school did not make them love it the less. 'I am grateful to Christ's Hospital,' says Hunt,

for its making me acquainted with the languages of Homer and Ovid, and for its having secured to me, on the whole, a well-trained and cheerful boyhood.

Edmund Blunden, himself an Old Blue, remarks, 'It is not common among journalists to have Apollonius Rhodius or Strabo at their elbow as he had'. Lamb says that under Boyer 'were many good and sound scholars bred'. Coleridge goes into more detail.

He early moulded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid. He habituated me to compare Lucretius, (in such extracts as I then read,) Terence and above all the chaster poems of Catullus, not only with the Roman poets of the, so called, silver and brazen ages; but with even those of the Augustan aera: and on grounds of plain sense and universal logic to see and assert the superiority of the former in truth and nativeness both of their thoughts and diction. At the same time as we were studying the Greek tragic poets, he made us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons: and they were lessons too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to escape his censure. I learned from him that poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word...

In *Table Talk*, under 1 July 1833, Coleridge is reported as saying,

When I was a boy, I was fondest of Aeschylus; in youth and middle age I preferred Euripides; now in my declining years I admire Sophocles.

These were the 'the tragic poets' he had read alongside Shakespeare and Milton at Christ's Hospital forty years before. In training the boys' own writing of English, if we are to believe the *Biographia Literaria*, Boyer was merciless of jargon or affectation, leading Coleridge to formulate the maxim: 'Whatever is translatable in other and simpler words of the same language, without loss of sense or dignity, is bad'. It was Lamb's task to remind him of these excellent precepts in relation to his poetry. What a pity he so often forgot them again in his prose writing in later life, to say nothing of some modern literary critics I could, but won't, name!

Hunt affirms,

If I had reaped no other benefit from Christ Hospital, the school would ever be dear to me from the recollection of the friendships I formed in it, and of the first heavenly taste it gave me of that most spiritual of the affections.

Lamb and Coleridge had left before Hunt came, but

Lamb's visits to the school... I remember well, with his fine intelligent face. Little did I think I should have the pleasure of sitting with it in after-times as an old friend, and seeing it care-worn and still finer.

Later in his *Autobiography*, he writes that 'Charles Lamb had a head worthy of Aristotle, with as fine a heart as ever beat in human bosom'. When Hunt's principles, evidenced in the incident with the Monitor, were applied to the Prince Regent and landed him in prison, Charles and Mary Lamb were his most frequent visitors. Charles may well have thought, 'There but for the grace of God...', since his poem about the 'Prince of Whales' was printed in *The Examiner* a week before Hunt's article for which he was prosecuted. But there is little doubt that the Lambs would have gone anyway, neither fog nor snow deterring them.

Hunt says,

When I entered the school, I was shown three gigantic boys, young men, rather...who, I was told, were going to the University. These were Grecians. They were the three head boys of the Grammar School, and were understood to have their destiny fixed for the Church. The next class to these, like a College of Cardinals to those three Popes...were the Deputy Grecians.

Lamb and Hunt both left school as Deputy Grecians because they both stammered and so could not deliver a public speech on leaving or go into the Church. A number of those Grecians that Lamb lists in his essay remained his permanent friends. George Dyer was another who had been a Grecian at Christ's Hospital long before Lamb's time there. But his dearest lifelong friend was, of course, Coleridge.

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee - the dark pillar not yet turned - Samuel Taylor Coleridge - Logician, Metaphysician, Bard! - How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, intranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young *Mirandula*), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblicus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar -

while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy!*

After Coleridge's death, Lamb wrote of him,

He was a Grecian..., where I was Deputy-Grecian; and the same subordination and deference to him I have preserved through a life-long acquaintance. Great in his writings, he was greatest in his conversation.

Coleridge's friends had to forgive him almost unforgivable things but, though they might be hurt and alienated for a time, they were always won back and they excused him on account of his genius - and his conversation.

Oh for a tape-recording or two or it! His nephew and son-in-law, Henry Nelson Coleridge, despite his devoted attempts to capture it in *Table Talk*, does not really convey its fascination. (Talfourd disarmingly says its hearers often did not understand it.) I think perhaps the nearest we get to a feeling of it is in Keats's journal letter to George and Georgiana Keats of April 1819.

Last Sunday I took a walk towards Highgate and in the lane that winds by the side of Lord Mansfield's park I met Mr. Green our Demonstrator at Guy's in conversation with Coleridge - I joined them, after enquiring by a look whether it would be agreeable - [a look, of course, because he could not get a word in edgeways!] I walked with him a(t) his alderman-after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose - In those two miles he broached a thousand things - let me see if I can give you a list - Nightingales, Poetry - on Poetical Sensation - Metaphysics - Different genera and species of Dreams - Nightmare - a dream accompanied by a sense of touch - single and double touch - A dream related - First and second consciousness - the difference explained between will and Volition - so m(an)y metaphysicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness - Monsters - the Kraken - Mermaids - Southey believes in them - Southey's belief too much diluted - A Ghost story - Good morning - I heard his voice as he came towards me - I heard it as he moved away - I had heard it all the interval - if it may be called so. He was civil enough to ask me to call on him at Highgate. Good night! (16 April)

The 'Ode to a Nightingale' was written very soon after this. Wouldn't you have loved to hear such a monologue? But not too often perhaps. Crabb Robinson says on one occasion (23 January 1811), 'Coleridge in bad form. Very wordy.' On another, he says Coleridge's unceasing conversation has driven Mary Lamb back to the madhouse. Lamb is reputed to have told an apocryphal story that one day on his way to work he met Coleridge

brimful of some new idea, and in spite of my assuring him that time was precious, he drew me within the door of an unoccupied garden by the roadside, and there, sheltered from observation by a hedge of evergreens, he took me by the button of my coat, and closing his eyes commenced an eloquent discourse, waving his right hand gently, as the musical words flowed in an unbroken stream from his lips. I listened entranced; but the striking of a church-clock recalled me to a sense of duty. I saw it was of no use to attempt to break away, so taking advantage of his absorption in his subject I, with my penknife, quietly severed the button from my coat and decamped. Five hours afterwards, in passing the same garden, on my way home, I heard Coleridge's voice, and on looking in, there he was, with closed eyes, - the button still in his fingers, - and his right hand gracefully waving just as, when I left him. He had never missed me!

But, before we leave Coleridge holding forth in the cloisters of Christ's Hospital, as he was to hold forth wherever he might be for the rest of his life, let us look back over his schooldays. In his later time there, he was obviously full of confidence and very much in his element, yet Lamb's picture of his early separation from home, his grief and loneliness, rings true. That Lamb had deeply entered into his friend's suffering is apparent from his account and this must have been the strong root on which their relationship was built. Though there were quite frequent free days, Leigh Hunt tells us that

It was the custom at our school in those days, to allow us only one set of unbroken holidays during the whole time we were there - I mean, holidays in which we remained away from school by night as well as by day.

At my own boarding-school we had three holidays a year, yet at the end of a long term I had forgotten what my parents' faces looked like and was astonished at the sight of them when they met me on the station platform. Hunt goes on, 'Imagine a schoolboy passionately fond of the green fields, who had never slept out of the heart of the City for years...' He contrasts the ecstasy of that one holiday, 'with a garden and orchard to run in; and fields that I could have rolled in, to have my will of them', with school routine.

Instead of being roused against my will by a bell, I jumped up with the lark, and strolled 'out of bounds'. Instead of bread and water for breakfast, I had coffee, and tea, and buttered toast: for dinner not a hunk of bread and a modicum of hard meat, or a bowl of pretended broth; but fish, and fowl, and noble hot joints,

till, in an ecstasy, he gets carried away into a list of delectable puddings he enjoyed;

and then I had tea; and I sat up to supper like a man, and lived so well, that I might have been very ill, had I not run about all the rest of the day.

Haydon writes of Hunt:

I do not know a purer, a more virtuous character, or a more witty, funny, or enlivening man. We talked of his approaching imprisonment. He said it would be a great pleasure to him if he were certain to be sent to Newgate, because he should be in the midst of his friends (his old school was very near that prison).

- I used to think of my own schooldays as a nine years' prison sentence and imagined that, if like Hunt I were to be shut up for my principles under the oppressive war-time legislation, I should slip into prison routine with all the ease of familiarity. We were not beaten at my school but I wanted to cry out like Jane Eyre to Mrs Read,

You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity.

It was not much consolation to the weeping child Coleridge on his return from that one holiday to be told, 'Boy! the school is your father! Boy! the school is your mother!' by such a man as Boyer. I remember once I and a family friend, who had been at Marlborough, were asked by my teenage children, 'What did you get out of being at a public school?' With one voice and without collusion, we both said, 'Fortitude'. I think we had some idea



that this was a useful quality to have, but the children felt the price was too high. Sara Coleridge, the poet's daughter, wrote (to Professor Henry Reed in November 1850)

It is good for children to be happy and cheerful; early sorrow weakens the mind, if it does not harden it, as premature disproportionate labour injures the body. I know this by experience, and have carefully shielded my children's young minds from the trouble and constraints which so often came upon my own, like frosts and wintry blasts on the 'darlings of spring'.

I suppose it depends on the innate tendencies of the individual whether a child is toughened or broken by suffering.

Coleridge's bitter homesickness can be felt in 'Frost at Midnight'.

But O! how oft,  
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,  
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,  
To watch that fluttering stranger!

...And so I brooded all the following morn,  
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye  
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:  
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched  
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,  
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,  
Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,  
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

But biographical or psychological data, *except* to provide helpful background for the poetry, can be a dangerous weapon and I shall make no conjecture what effect Coleridge's childhood had on his subsequent character and opium addiction. By the end of 1794 he had been in and out of scrapes, at Cambridge, in the army, in love, and a pattern began which was to continue for many years. When he was running away from responsibility, he could always go to London and Charles Lamb. On this occasion he was evading his engagement to Sara Fricker; and Lamb, aged nearly twenty, and Coleridge, twenty-two, spent much time together in the Salutation and Cat pub in Newgate Street close to their old school. Both were writing sonnets. In January 1795, Southey came and routed Coleridge out, leaving Lamb, as he said, with 'a dismal void in my heart', and also one in his pocket - he paid Coleridge's bill at the inn! Another habit, started at this time, was of getting 'my very dear friend Charles Lamb' to do commissions for him, ranging from posting parcels, accepting his letters at the India House to save him postage, to 'making strict scrutiny' for a lost package at Penrith on his way home from Keswick. On 6 August 1800, for instance, Lamb sends Coleridge all his books and papers and 'a dressing-gown (value, fivepence), in which you used to sit and look like a conjuror, when you were translating 'Wallenstein'.'

In 1804, when making arrangements for his post to go to Malta, Coleridge says to Rickman, 'Lamb can tell you, how reluctantly and corn-treading(ly) I ever avail myself of any privilege of a Friend or Acquaintance...' truly comic when we read later of the complicated chain of friends he has dragooned into this service. After some twelve years of uncomplaining slavery, Lamb is rewarded by being called 'a very bad negociator, and an impatient commisary': You will remember that Coleridge failed to send on

the overcoat Lamb left at Nether Stowey.

In the literary sphere, it did not take Coleridge long to forget Boyer's intolerance, as recorded in *Biographia Literaria*, for 'phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense'. 'Religious Musings', written at the end of 1794, has its moments - though not many - but it is full of bombastic personification and bad imitations of Milton. Of the selected passages published in 1796 in *The Watchman*, Lamb says,

There were noble lines in what you inserted in one of your numbers from Religious Musings, but I thought them elaborate. (27 May 1796)

Lamb repeatedly gives his first and, to us, correct assessment of Coleridge's early poems and then goes back on it, as Deputy Grecian to Grecian perhaps. He recants about 'Religious Musings' in his next letter but still says,

If there be anything in it approach(in)g to tumidity (which I meant not to infer in elaborate - I meant simply labord) it is the Gigantic hyperbole by which you describe the Evils of existing Society. Snakes, Lions, hyenas and behemoths is carrying your resentment beyond bounds.

Lamb praises 'The Aeolian Harp' and interestingly singles out for approval the very lines that modern readers tend to feel uneasy with. I am not sure that we are not the ones who are mistaken:

they made my sister and *self* smile, as conveying a pleasing picture of Mrs. C. checquing your wild wandrings, which we were so fond of hearing you indulge when *among* us.

The key, I think, is in the next sentence, 'your own *self-reproof* that follows delighted us'. Lamb is probably well aware that Coleridge is making Sara the mouthpiece for his own misgivings.

Lamb gives detailed suggestions for the improvement of 'Monody on the Death of Chatterton' and other early poems. Unlike Wordsworth, who fulminated first and then quietly implemented almost all Lamb's criticisms, Coleridge often ignored these, but blandly altered some of Lamb's own poems, which were to be published with his.

The Deputy Grecian could be pushed so far but no further.

I charge you Col. *spare my ewe lambs*... I would not wrong your feelings by proposing any improvements... in such personal poems as 'Thou bleedest my poor heart' - *od so* I am catchd I have already *done* it - but that simile I propose abridging would not *change* the feelings or introduce any alien ones... When my blank verse is finished or any long fancy-poems 'propino tibi alter-andum, cut-up-andum, abridg-andum' just what you will with it - but spare my *Ewe lambs*! (Translation: I shall pass it on to you to be altered, cut up, abridged!)

Coleridge's alteration here speaks volumes about the superiority of Lamb's taste at this time, though he was to be in the end so much the lesser poet. The sestet of Lamb's sonnet 'Methinks how dainty sweet it were', as he wrote it was this.

Or we might sit and tell some tender tale  
Of faithful vows repaid by cruel scorn,  
A tale of true love, or of friend forgot;  
And I would teach thee, lady, how to rail  
In gentle sort, on those who practise not  
Or love or pity, though of woman born.

Not very distinguished, perhaps, but it has a simple charm. Now listen to what Coleridge substituted.

But ah! sweet scenes of fancied bliss, adieu!  
 On rose-leaf beds amid your faery bowers  
 I all too long have lost the dreamy hours!  
 Beseems it now the sterner Muse to woo,  
 If haply she her golden meed impart,  
 To realize the vision of the heart.

The simple sincerity of Lamb's lines have been transformed into pretentious conventional poetic diction. Has Coleridge forgotten Boyer's 'Muse, boy, Muse? Your nurse's daughter, you mean!'

Lamb's better judgment is borne out too by his statement to Coleridge,

Burns was the god of my idolatry, as Bowles of yours. I am jealous of your fraternizing with Bowles, when I think you relish him more than Burns or Cowper.

Coleridge, despite repeated lapses into the superior stance of those great gods the Grecians, did acknowledge Lamb's quality. Writing to Cottle, Coleridge says that he wishes to send his 'Joan of Arc' to Wordsworth for criticism 'and to *Lamb* whose *taste* and *judgment* I see reason to think more correct and philosophical than my own...' Lamb did not pull his punches.

You cannot surely mean to degrade the Joan of Arc into a pot girl; you are not going, I hope, to annex to that most splendid ornament of Southey's poem all this cock and bull story...

Southey certainly has no pretensions to vie with you in the sublime of poetry but he tells a plain tale better than you.

Having enumerated 'some woeful blemishes', he goes on,

The loftier walks of Pindus are your proper region. There you have no compeer, in modern times. Leave the lowlands unenvied in the possession of such men as Cowper and Southey. Thus am I pouring balsam in the wounds I may have been inflicting on my poor friend's vanity.

To provide a constructive thought he says,

I have a dim recollection, that when in town you were talking of the *Origin of Evil* as a most prolific subject for a long poem - why not adopt it, Coleridge? there would be room for the imagination.

In another letter from Coleridge to Cottle, of 10 February 1797, it is clear that Lamb's lessons have gone home.

The lines which I added to my lines in 'Joan of Arc' have been so little approved by Charles Lamb, to whom I have sent them, that although I differ from him in opinion, I have not heart to finish the poem.

He speaks too of the 'Ode on the Departing Year' which Lamb had constructively criticized in detail but had not condemned.

So much for an Ode which some people think superior to the 'Bard' of Gray, and which others think a rant of turgid obscurity.

Coleridge came to recognize that much of his early poetry *was* turgid and Lamb's most useful critical service to him was summed up in the words,

Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge, or rather, I should say, banish

elaborateness; for simplicity springs spontaneous from the heart...

Realizing that he had discouraged his friend by his severe comments on 'Joan of Arc', in his next letter he hastens to make amends by providing 'a very handsome recantation' and compares it to that of 'a man whose friend has asked him his opinion of a certain young lady; the deluded wight gives judgment against her *in toto*' until, suspecting something, he gradually reverses his opinions and discovers she is his friend's wife.

On reading 'Reflections upon leaving a place of retirement', Lamb says, 'Write thus, and you most generally have written thus, and I shall never quarrel with you about *simplicity*.' This was the second of Coleridge's Conversation Poems and the one from which the generic name, applied by him later to 'The Nightingale' originated, for he had prefaced the poem with a tag from Horace, 'Sermoni priora', 'more suitable for conversation', which Lamb wickedly translated 'more suitable for a sermon'! Lamb loved these poems for their naturalness, the quality he urged his friend to cultivate, but he also tried to spur him on to further achievements in the 'sublime' mode, where 'you have no compeer'. In 1797 (January) he says, 'I want you to write an Epic poem. Nothing short of it can satisfy the vast capacity of poetic genius'. Coleridge never wrote an Epic and Lamb's mock letter on his pretended death shows why he had learnt no longer to expect it. On Christmas Day, 1815, he writes to Manning,

Poor Col., but two days before he died he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the 'Wanderings of Cain', in twenty-four books. It is said he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism and metaphysics, but few of them in a state of completion.

What Coleridge did write, though, was 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel', which Lamb told Crabb Robinson he thought his best productions in verse. I think we can say that Lamb saw clearly the two strengths which we now recognize in Coleridge's most successful poetry, the skilful and innovative Conversation Poems which provided Wordsworth with the form for 'Tintern Abbey', and the supernatural poems for which Coleridge had a unique gift.

On the personal level, on Lamb's 'day of horrors' Coleridge for once rose triumphantly to the occasion, writing immediately and from the heart.

You bid me write you a religious letter. I am not a man who would attempt to insult the greatness of your anguish by any other consolation.

Though Lamb would have deprecated such a thought, one cannot help but think that Coleridge exactly described Lamb's future when he said,

I look upon you as a man called by sorrow and anguish and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God!

It seems a strange description of the humorist, the convivial smoker and drinker, the occasional victim of dark depression, but on a deep level it was true. It is a striking example of the unpredictable quiddity of human beings, which so much delighted Lamb, that in one of his letters at this time, in the very midst of his agony, he can reproach his friend's words in that wonderful first letter for the unsoundness of their theology as a Unitarian! Perhaps it was a way of taking his mind off his trouble, as he said of his continued literary comments.

In July 1797, came Lamb's famous visit to Nether Stowey. He was still half stunned by the events of the previous autumn.

I could not talk much while I was with you, but my silence was not sullenness, nor I hope from any bad motive; but, in truth, disuse has made me awkward at it.

Yet here he met Wordsworth, who was to prove another lifelong friend and to whom he became a most valuable critic. It was to this visit that we owe 'This Lime-tree Bower my Prison'. In a letter to Southey, Coleridge writes,

Charles Lamb has been with me for a week - he left me Friday morning - / The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot [if you had seen her kitchen you'd know why!], which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay and still prevents me from all *walks* longer than a furlong. - While Wordsworth, his Sister and C. Lamb were out one evening: /sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates with mine, I wrote these lines, with which I am pleased.

Lamb's first reaction, on its publication three years later was, for personal *not* literary reasons, disgust.

For God's sake (I never was more serious) don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses.

But when he had had time to recover, (14 August 1800)

I have sat down to read over again your *Satire* upon *me* in the Anthology - And I think I do begin to spy out something like beauty and design in it.

Notice that Lamb is aware of the design, the shape and structure which give the poem its beauty.

One rupture only marred their friendship. It was caused by the mischief-making Charles Lloyd and is chiefly interesting now for the letter it provoked from Lamb to Coleridge, and for Coleridge's demonstration of a tendency we all share to criticize others for our own faults. 'Lloyd has informed me through Miss Wordsworth that you intend no longer to correspond with me.' Lamb and Lloyd, he says,

clothed my image with a suit of notions and feelings which could belong to nothing human. *You* are restored to comparative saneness and are merely wondering what is become of the Coleridge with whom you were so passionately in love...

There was truth in this. Lamb *had* idolized Coleridge. From now on he had the measure of him. The crowning insult was Coleridge's remark reported to his friend, 'Poor Lamb, if he wants any knowledge he may apply to me'. Lamb's marvellously sarcastic letter went to Coleridge just before he left for Germany and no other followed for nearly two years. I quote only one of Lamb's 'Theses Quaedam Theologicae' (Certain Theological Propositions à la Thomas Aquinas) 'Whether pure intelligences can love.' In his writings Coleridge theorizes about love and in his life longed to *be loved*, but George Whalley asks, 'Was Coleridge capable of loving anybody *as a person*?' Just as he believed in marriage but was incapable of making his marriage work, so too in friendship he hoped for and expected too much of each friend in turn and was always eventually disappointed. His own behaviour to them, of course, was often monstrous, as evidenced for example by his treatment of the Wedgwoods, who made him the annuity and had showed him much generous kindness. When Tom Wedgwood died, Coleridge did not write to his brother, who made allowances while he was in Malta, but when he was known to have

returned and Josiah had tried repeatedly without success to get in touch with him for help with a Life of Tom, he was deeply hurt. In January 1807, he writes to Poole,

I have not heard a word from Coleridge and I do not expect it. I don't doubt he is ill and unhappy, but I cannot continue to esteem him.

When Coleridge had landed in August 1806, he went straight from the ship to, guess where? The Lambs, of course. Mary reports the 'fatigue of Coleridge's conversation' and tries desperately to get him to write to his wife. However, all his friends, including Josiah Wedgwood, forgave him 'unto seventy times seven'.

The list of Coleridge's fallen idols is familiar. At first, Southey and Pantisocracy were everything, till one day we find Lamb writing 'Have you made it up with Southey yet? Surely one of you two must have been a very silly fellow...'

The letters between Coleridge and Poole are like love-letters on both sides. Lamb warns 'Remember you are not in Arcadia when you are in the West of England'. Poole helps Coleridge with money whenever, which is often, he gets into difficulties. On 7 January 1801, for example, Coleridge writes to Poole about his debts.

Besides these I owe about 30£, 17£ of it to you, and the remainder to Lamb - but these are of no pressing nature, whereas the above-mentioned are imperious.

We begin to see which way the wind is blowing when Coleridge says, 'You charge me with prostration in regard to Wordsworth'. Eventually we find Coleridge criticizing Poole because he has 'been born to a patrimony, and ... had, almost from your birth, hourly doings with *money*.' The cheek of it! He goes on to list his other faults, which seem to me very like virtues, '*family and local attachment*' and a '*desire and impatience to produce immediate good*.' Wordsworth is a '*very great man - the only man, to whom at all times and in all modes of excellence I feel myself inferior...*' Yet even this remarkable partnership had a disastrous sequel.

Perhaps just because Coleridge, as Grecian, did not put Lamb, the Deputy Grecian on a pedestal, apart from that minor tiff, their friendship did not falter. There were interruptions and silences. On 10 December 1808, Mary Lamb writes to Mrs Clarkson, 'Do not imagine that I am...*complaining* to you of Coleridge... We expect *too much*, and he gives *too little*...' But, though now Lamb saw Coleridge exactly as he was, 'an archangel a little damaged', yet 'He was my fifty-years old friend without a dissension'. Respect and affection on both sides are repeatedly expressed in their letters. Coleridge writes to Rickman (13 March 1804),

I hope I shall have an opportunity of spending an hour with you tete a tete - or with Lamb, at least - which will be the same Thing unless it be a better one.

He is indignant when Mrs Barbauld reviews *John Woodvil* harshly, 'if I do not cut her to the Heart, openly and with my name, never believe me again'. To Godwin he says, (21 May 1800),

My poor Lamb! - how cruelly afflictions crowd upon him! I am glad that you think of him as I think - he has an affectionate heart, a mind sui generis, his taste acts so as to appear like the unmechanic simplicity of an Instinct - in brief, he is worth an hundred men of *mere* Talents.

Conversation with the latter tribe is like the use of leaden Bells - one warms by exercise - Lamb every now and then *eradiates*, and the beam, tho' single and fine as a hair, yet is rich with colours, and I both see and feel it.

Lamb, when it was his turn to console, begs 'Make it, I entreat you, one of your puny comforts, that I feel for you, and share all your griefs with you.' He says that he loves Coleridge's poems as he does the Confessions of Rousseau,

for the same frankness, the same openness of heart, the same disclosure of the most hidden and delicate affections of the mind: they make me proud to be thus esteemed worthy of the place of friend-confessor, brother-confessor to a man like Coleridge.

Or, 'I love to write to you. I take a pride in it. It makes me think less meanly of myself,' though also, 'Tis the privilege of friendship to talk nonsense, and to have that nonsense respected.' When Wordsworth appended his ill-advised note to *The Ancient Mariner* for the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Lamb wrote indignantly and demolished his argument.

The Lambs' visit to Coleridge at Keswick brought Charles the nearest he ever came to being 'romance-bit about nature'. 'I shall remember your mountains to the last day I live'. For his part, Coleridge felt free to stay with the Lambs in London without notice whenever he felt like it, often vanishing without trace in between. To Wordsworth, (28 December 1814) 'Where is Coleridge?' To Southey, (5/6 May 1815)

Of Coleridge I hear nothing, nor of the Morgans. I hope to have him like a reappearing star standing up before me some time when least expected in London, as has been the case whilear -

Sure enough, about a year later,

Coleridge has been here about a fortnight... A longer letter when C. is gone back into the Country... I am scarce quiet enough while he stays.

At last, Coleridge settles with the Gillmans at Highgate, 'where he plays at leaving off laudanum'.

Coleridge is absent but 4 miles and the neighbourhood of such a man is as exciting as the presence of 50 ordinary Persons. Tis enough to be within the whiff and wind of his genius for us not to possess our souls in quiet.

At first, Lamb found his reception at the Gillmans' so cool that he did not repeat it.

The rogue gives you Love Powders, and then a strong horse drench to bring 'em off your stomach that they mayn't hurt you.

But reciprocal visits, though infrequent, were resumed and in 1832 we find Lamb writing to Coleridge, as Dykes Campbell puts it, 'to remove some mistaken sick man's fancy'.

Not an unkind thought has passed my brain about you... If you ever thought an offence, much more wrote it, against me, it must have been in the times of Noah, and the great waters swept it away. Mary's most kind love,...here she is crying for very love over your letter. I wring out less, but not sincerer showers.

After Coleridge died on 25 July 1834 Lamb wrote

His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations.

Wordsworth said that Coleridge's death hastened Lamb's, which took place on 27 December. He had survived his friend by only five months. They 'were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided'. In the year of his death Coleridge wrote in pencil in his *Poetical Works* beside 'This Lime-tree Bower my Prison', 'Charles and Mary Lamb - dear to my heart, yea as it were my heart. S.T.C. Aet. 63, 1834. 1797-1834 = 37 years.'

Crabb Robinson reports,

I accidentally made use of the expression 'poor Coleridge!' Lamb corrected me, not angrily, but as if really pained. 'He is,' he said, 'a fine fellow, in spite of all his faults and weaknesses. Call him Coleridge; I hate *poor*, as applied to such a man. I can't bear to hear such a man pitied.'

Lucas, in this connection, quotes Augustine Birrel.

One grows sick of the expressions, 'poor Charles Lamb', 'gentle Charles Lamb', as if he were one of those grown-up children of the Leigh Hunt type, who are perpetually begging and borrowing through the round of every man's acquaintance. Charles Lamb earned his own living, paid his own way, was the helper, not the helped; a man who was beholden to no one, who always came with gifts in his hand, a shrewd man, capable of advice, strong in council. Poor Lamb, indeed! Poor Coleridge, robbed of his will; poor Wordsworth, devoured by his own *ego*; poor Southey, writing his tomes and deeming himself a classic; poor Carlyle, with his nine volumes of memoirs, where he

Lies like a hedgehog rolled up the wrong way,  
Tormenting himself with his prickles -

call these men poor, if you feel it decent to do so, but not Lamb, who was rich in all that makes life valuable or memory sweet.

*Developed from a talk given at the Wordsworth Winter School at Grasmere in February 1984*

## LAMB ON SHAKESPEARE

*A paper given at the Charles Lamb Society's Day Conference at Cambridge on 22 September 1984 by Jonathan Bate of St Catharine's College*

William Hazlitt was a professional writer whose published works on Shakespeare run into several volumes of essays, lectures, and theatre reviews. The output of Charles Lamb, a self-confessed 'amateur' who also held down a full-time job, is far more slender: only one substantial essay, his much discussed consideration of the tragedies with reference to their fitness for stage representation; a few brief accounts of actors, and a handful of short magazine pieces, such as an explication in the *London Magazine* of a single problematic line in *The Tempest*. Then there are his contributions to the *Tales from Shakspeare*, those prose versions of the tragedies which, along with the neo-Elizabethan verse drama *John Woodvil*, form a kind of creative commentary that is something very different from what we usually think of as literary criticism. Yet in his *Table Talk*,



Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the most penetrating critic of the age, said that he preferred Lamb's 'exquisite criticisms on Shakspeare' to 'Hazlitt's round and round imitations of them' (6 August 1832). To some extent Coleridge may have had ulterior motives for derogating Hazlitt: the two of them lectured on Shakespeare at the same time in early 1818 and were thought of by their contemporaries as rival authorities on the subject. By dismissing Hazlitt as derivative, Coleridge implicitly asserts his own pre-eminence.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Hazlitt himself acknowledged his debt by dedicating *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* to Lamb.

The esteem in which Lamb was held as a Shakespearean critic far outstrips that warranted by his published essays. It is clear from the reminiscences of Hazlitt, B W Procter, and others that Lamb was valued above all as a conversationalist. We might even go so far as to say that his chief contributions to Shakespearean criticism must have been made verbally - and quite probably under the inspiration of the bottle<sup>2</sup> - at the famous Wednesday evenings. Many of his best remarks about Shakespeare may therefore be lost to us. There is thus a peculiar value in essays such as Hazlitt's 'On the Conversation of Authors' which preserve certain otherwise irrecoverable moments in English critical history. In that essay Hazlitt praises Lamb as 'the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men'; I think Lamb's great strength was his capacity to sow seeds, to provoke ideas in others. Hazlitt says that it was always Lamb who made 'the best remark in the course of the evening'; and, as Coleridge was subsequently to speak of Hazlitt's debt to Lamb, Hazlitt here glances at Coleridge's: Lamb 'has furnished many a text for C— to preach upon'.<sup>3</sup> The figure is a telling one: Lamb provides particular insights (remarks, texts); his friends develop these more fully.

Hazlitt's essay 'Of Persons one would wish to have seen' shows how Shakespeare was to the fore among the deities who presided over many of those Wednesday evenings. Hazlitt remembers how Lamb suggested the subject and the assembled company proceeded to nominate many writers, and a few statesmen and other historical figures, whom they would wish to have seen. Lamb then said provocatively that he would have liked to meet that 'ill-used gentleman' Guy Fawkes and Judas Iscariot. The latter inevitably brought another name to mind. The conversation is continued by Lamb's friend John Rickman. We know that Rickman was an ardent Shakespearean: he 'Reads no Poetry but Shakspeare' said Lamb in a letter to Manning written shortly after he first met Rickman back in 1800 (Marrs, i.244). Rickman's love of Shakespeare and his tact in not actually naming Christ mean that his remark on this occasion can easily be misconstrued:

'There is only one other person I can ever think of after this,' continued R—; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. 'If Shakespear was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!' (*HW* xvii.134)

Rickman says that he can only think of one other name after this; his listeners think he is referring to Christ, but before mentioning 'that person' he speaks of Shakespeare. In Hazlitt's reconstruction, the progression is such that for a moment we are likely to be confused and think that Shakespeare is the 'name that once put on a semblance of mortality'. The juxtaposition has made Shakespeare into a god incarnate. I think that it is for this reason that at least one person seems to have construed the remark as blasphemous, despite the fact that the reference to Christ could

in itself hardly have been more reverential ('we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment'). Hazlitt continues, 'As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go.'

It should be noted in passing how companionable an image of Shakespeare Rickman produces. The later poet will inevitably at some level be intimidated by Shakespeare's achievement, will feel his own insufficiency in the face of it. But Rickman, Lamb, Hazlitt and their circle were primarily readers and critics rather than poets; they can therefore present Shakespeare in a spirit of friendship rather than awe. Indeed, perhaps it was because of the need to accommodate Shakespeare that Hazlitt was content to remain a critic, Lamb to acknowledge that he was not really a poet. Hazlitt comes to the heart of the matter when he writes

We complain that this is a Critical age; and that no great works of Genius appear, because so much is said and written about them; while we ought to reverse the argument, and say, that it is because so many works of genius *have appeared*, that they have left us little or nothing to do, but to think and talk about them—that if we did not do that, we should do nothing so good—and if we do this well, we cannot be said to do amiss! (*HW* xvi.212)

In this sense, the critic is as important as the artist, for it is he who devotes his life to the preservation and dissemination of the great works of the past. Lamb did nothing so good as to think and talk about great literature; in Hazlitt's terms, he did that well and he cannot be said to have done amiss.

But to return to 'Persons one would wish to have seen'. The lady's unease closes the evening and Hazlitt's account of it. He concludes his essay as follows:

The morning broke with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. (*xvii.134*)

(The final reference is to Napoleon's return from Elba and the start of the hundred days.) This passage points to the insoluble problem we are faced with when considering Lamb's evenings. We cannot trust to the literal truth of Hazlitt's account, for it is a literary construct, not an historical record. The image of a small community of friends holding fast to their faith in art, coming together to talk of Shakespeare despite the international chaos around, is an attractive one. But it is only an image: the essay is written twenty years after the event; the distortions effected by Hazlitt's two favourite lenses, the painter's eye and the power of nostalgia, are such that these conversations, so central to the Romantic encounter with Shakespeare, can only be glimpsed at one remove.

Since it is impossible to reconstruct Lamb's actual Wednesday evening disquisitions on Shakespeare, those insights he committed to paper are doubly valuable. For Hazlitt, Lamb's strength as a conversationalist lay in his brilliant remarks and dazzling *aperçus*. He says of Leigh Hunt, 'his hits do not tell like L[amb]'s; you cannot repeat them the next day' (*HW* xii.38). The term 'hits' is especially interesting in that it was for his hits, his momentary lightning-flashes of brilliance, that Hazlitt

praised Edmund Kean as a Shakespearean actor. There are a number of remarks about Shakespeare scattered throughout Lamb's writings. They are perhaps analogous to the lost remarks of his conversation; by bringing them together we may come as near as is possible to the distinctive flavour of Lamb on Shakespeare. As Lamb furnished many a text for Coleridge to preach upon, so these isolated observations provide the basis for fuller discussion.

Lamb's most significant contribution to the history of literary taste was probably his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, who lived about the time of Shakspeare: with notes*. No work did more to revive interest in the lesser Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, to show that Shakespeare was 'one of a race of giants', part of 'a constellation of bright luminaries'. Those metaphors are Hazlitt's (*HW* vi.180-1), in the first of his 1820 lectures on the dramatic literature of the age of Elizabeth, a series that would not have been conceived of had it not been for Lamb's *Specimens*. Lamb's collection was also important because his decision to reprint entire scenes marked a movement away from the eighteenth century tendency to gather 'select beauties' or 'elegant extracts'. The groundwork was thus laid for complete editions of several dramatists; it is to the credit of Hazlitt's old enemy William Gifford that he undertook editions of Massinger, Ben Jonson, James Shirley, and John Ford - the last of whom Lamb thought was second only to Shakespeare (Marrs, ii.147).

Lamb's method in the evaluative notes to his *Specimens* is to judge each dramatist against the ideal of Shakespeare. The lesser dramatists illuminate Shakespeare; Shakespeare illuminates the lesser dramatists. Lamb's comparative judgments are summarized by Procter:

He liked Heywood for his simplicity and pathos; Webster for his deep and gloomy insight into the heart; Ben Jonson for his humour; Marlowe for his 'mighty line'; Fletcher for his wit and flowing sweetness; and Shakspeare for his combination of wonders.<sup>4</sup>

These may now seem to be stock received ideas about each dramatist, but they were not in Lamb's time; if anything, it is from Lamb that we have received them.

It is by means of a constant measuring against Shakespeare that Lamb seeks to give his reader a sense of the merits of the other dramatists. We should remember that the old view of Shakespeare as an isolated genius in a barbaric age was still surprisingly prevalent in the early nineteenth century. For all Dr Johnson's qualifications of rigorous neo-classical strictures against Shakespeare in his 1765 Preface, he could still speak unquestioningly of 'the barbarity of his age'. And to judge from Lamb's ironic remark about George Dyer - 'he calls [Shakespeare] a great but irregular genius, which I think to be an original & just remark' (Marrs, i.229) - the Romantic generation still had to work to stamp out the old prejudices.

Lamb's comparative account of Shakespeare and Marlowe is characteristically astute. The bombast of Tamburlaine is placed against Pistol's parody in *Henry IV Part Two*:

He comes in (in the Second Part) drawn by conquered kings, and reproaches these *pampered jades of Asia* that they can draw but *twenty miles a day*. Till I saw this passage with my own eyes, I never believed that it was any thing more than a pleasant burlesque of Mine Ancient's. But I assure my readers that it is soberly set down in a Play which

their Ancestors took to be serious.<sup>5</sup>

Notice how by calling the Elizabethans ancestors of his readers Lamb establishes kinship and avoids ridiculing them as barbarians from another world. *Edward II*, Marlowe's most finished production, is then praised by means of a comparison with Shakespeare:

The reluctant pangs of abdicating Royalty in Edward furnished hints which Shakspeare scarce improved in his Richard the Second (Park, 115).

This is a double act of praise: when Lamb wrote it, *Richard II* had not been performed on the London stage for seventy years (Kean's revival of the role at Drury Lane in 1815 was the first performance since 1738). Hazlitt remarked in *Characters* that it was 'a play little known compared with *Richard III* (HW iv.272) and even Coleridge felt that it was 'unsuited for the stage'; one suspects that Lamb's readers would have either not known *Richard II* or inherited Dr Johnson's view that it could not 'be said much to affect the passions or enlarge the understanding'.<sup>6</sup> Lamb's high praise of Marlowe carries with it tacit praise of one of Shakespeare's most under-rated plays; his glancing comparison simultaneously demands that the reader acquaint himself with *Edward II* and reacquaint himself with *Richard II*.

*The Jew of Malta* elicits a distinction instead of a comparison.

Marlowe's Jew does not approach so near to Shakspeare's, as his Edward II. does to Richard II. Shylock in the midst of his savage purpose is a man. His motives, feelings, resentments, have something human in them... Barabas is a mere monster brought in to please the rabble. He kills in sport, poisons whole nunneries, invents infernal machines (Park, 115-6).

The distinction interestingly reconstitutes that made with regard to G F Cooke's performances as Richard III back in 1801: 'He gives you the *monster* Richard, but not the *man* Richard' (Park, 105). Lamb's sympathetic reading of Richard III is ahead of its time - the usual late eighteenth century strategy was to view Richard as a monster and contrast him with Macbeth, a man subject to feeling and conscience.<sup>7</sup> The reading of Shylock implied by the notes to *The Jew of Malta* provides another example of Lamb's capacity to see humanity where most find only depravity.

The idea that Shakespeare's greatest quality was to enter into and feel with all his characters, even the evil ones, is usually associated with Hazlitt and Keats. The most famous statement on the subject is that of Keats in his letter to Woodhouse on the poetical character:

it is not itself - it has no self - it is every thing and nothing - It has no character - it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated - It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet.<sup>8</sup>

The word 'gusto', one of Hazlitt's favourite terms, alerts us to the fact that he is the strongest influence on this formulation. Keats probably had at the back of his mind a passage in Hazlitt's lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, which he had attended some months before writing the letter to Woodhouse. It is a wonderful and crucial passage, worth quoting at length:

The striking peculiarity of Shakspeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds - so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar

bias, or exclusive influence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become ... There was no respect of persons with him. His genius shone equally on the evil and on the good... (HW v.47)

The conception of sympathy underlying this, the idea that the ultimate imaginative act is go outside the self and feel with others, is the key to Hazlitt's philosophy and Keats's aesthetics. There are many eighteenth century sources for both the general theory and the specific use of Shakespeare as the ideal sympathetic artist. The image of Shakespeare as a Proteus, transforming himself into each of his creations, was a favourite of Coleridge's, but before him it was used by William Richardson in a book on Shakespeare's characters written in 1774. It was also a metaphor employed in Germany by A W Schlegel.

Thus when Lamb writes in the 1808 *Specimens* of how Shakespeare sympathizes with his villains, making them into something more than merely villains, and when he refers explicitly to Shakespeare's ability 'to go out of himself', to 'shift at pleasure, to inform and animate other existences', he is entering into the mainstream of Romantic Shakespearean criticism. Perhaps less directly than Hazlitt, but no less powerfully, he is prefiguring Keats's account of the poetical character. The remark about Shakespeare informing and animating other existences occurs in the notes to *Byron's Tragedy*; it is part of a distinction between Shakespeare and George Chapman that precisely prefigures that of Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* between Shakespeare's dramatic and Milton's epic genius. Chapman

could not go out of himself, as Shakspeare could shift at his pleasure, to inform and animate other existences, but in himself he had an eye to perceive and a soul to embrace all forms. He would have made a great Epic Poet, if indeed he has not abundantly shewn himself to be one

- in his translation of Homer, that is (Park, 120). Now let me remind you of Coleridge's famous distinction: Shakespeare

darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood; [Milton] attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own IDEAL.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, given the contextual parallel and the similarity in phrasing between Lamb's 'embrace all forms' and Coleridge's 'attracts all forms', I would like to propose this note to *Specimens* as a hitherto unrecognized source for one of Coleridge's most celebrated and characteristic pronouncements. After all, Coleridge expressed considerable admiration for the *Dramatic Specimens*, calling it 'a work of various interest from the nature of the selections themselves' - that - and this is the significant remark - derived

a high additional value from the notes, which are full of just and original criticism, expressed with the all the freshness of originality (*Biographia*, ii.79).

It is important to make the point that it is a characteristically Coleridgean utterance, altogether in harmony with the rest of his criticism, for I am not accusing him of plagiarism from Lamb. In a group as closely knit as the Romantics and when the sharing of ideas in conversation is so

important, questions of priority and influence are unanswerable and ultimately not especially significant. What matter are the shared assumptions, procedures, and critical perspectives; it is those that make English Romanticism into a movement. Having said that, it is nevertheless fascinating to see such a neglected source as Lamb's footnotes to *Specimens* providing texts for Coleridge to sermonize on in subsequent years.

Let me offer one further example. In his notes to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Lamb argues that Shakespeare and Fletcher collaborated on the play. He does so partly by contrasting their styles: Fletcher's versification,

though sweet, is tedious, it stops every moment; he lays line upon line, making up one after the other, adding image to image so deliberately that we see where they join: Shakspeare mingles every thing, he runs line into line, embarrasses sentences and metaphors; before one idea has burst its shell, another is hatched and clamorous for disclosure (Park, 135-6).

I think that this passage is both influenced by and an influence on Coleridge. The image of growth, the idea of the organic form of a Shakespearean drama revealed through a unified structure of metaphors, presupposes a way of reading the plays that Coleridge had been developing in his early notebooks and marginalia; the fundamental distinction between mechanic and organic form was one on which Coleridge had been brooding for many years before he actually formulated it in words borrowed from Schlegel in his lectures on Shakespeare of 1811-12. Here, then, Lamb is thinking in a Coleridgean way; but to make the distinction specifically with respect to Beaumont and Fletcher on the one hand, Shakespeare on the other, is something Coleridge does in a lecture delivered ten years *after* the publication of Lamb's note. The following passage develops Lamb's particular remark in such a way as to make it into a critical generalisation crucial to Romantic poetics: Beaumont and Fletcher

took from the ear and the eye, unchecked by any intuition of an inward impossibility, just as a man might fit together a quarter of an orange, a quarter of an apple, and the like of a lemon and of a pomegranate, and make it look like one round diverse coloured fruit. But nature, who works from within by evolution and assimilation according to a law, cannot do it. Nor could Shakespeare, for he too worked in the spirit of nature, by evolving the germ within by the imaginative power according to an idea.<sup>10</sup>

It would be possible to multiply instances where a reflection on Shakespeare in Lamb's notes to *Specimens* leads us into discussion of the central tenets of Romanticism. But I am running out of time, so I want now to consider one other place where Lamb uses his device of the Shakespearean comparison.

Lamb claims that the parallel was suggested to him by a gentleman

who being asked which book he esteemed most in his library, answered, - 'Shakspeare:' being asked which he esteemed next best, replied, - 'Hogarth' (Park, 316).<sup>11</sup>

In his essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth', Lamb develops a comparison between the two artists. His starting-point is the similarity between *Timon of Athens* and Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*; notice how once again he draws attention to a little-known Shakespeare play (*Timon* was only performed in one season in London between 1800 and 1825), thus making his comparison do additional proselytizing work. The levee in the second plate

of the *Rake* is said to be 'almost a transcript' of Timon's levee in the opening scene of the play. The word 'transcript' is very suggestive: Shakespeare's plays provide great originals - Platonic ideas, one might almost say - which are copied, written out anew, by later artists. But the best imitations are not mere copies or slavish transcriptions; Hogarth writes across Shakespeare, transforming a dramatic scene into a pictorial one. He then goes beyond his original: 'The concluding scene in the *Rake's Progress* is perhaps superior to the last scenes of *Timon*' (Park, 316). If there is anything of kindred excellence in poetry, Lamb continues,

it must be in the scenes of Lear's beginning madness, where the King and the Fool and the Tom-o'-Bedlam conspire to produce such a medley of mirth checked by misery, and misery rebuked by mirth; where the society of those 'strange bed-fellows' which misfortunes have brought Lear acquainted with, so finely sets forth the destitute state of the monarch, while the lunatic bans of the one, and the disjointed sayings and wild but pregnant allusions of the other, so wonderfully sympathize with that confusion, which they seem to assist in the production of, in the senses of that 'child-changed father.' (Park, 317)

That is Lamb's prose at its best, a single sentence, rich and varied in the suggestions it throws out, yet beautifully controlled and absolutely clear in its argument. The comparison constitutes an act of extremely high praise for the *Rake's Progress*, since it implies that Hogarth has succeeded in rendering visually something analogous to the scenes in *Lear* that, according to Lamb's argument in his essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', are too sublime and terrible to be contained on any stage. But it is Lamb's insight into the relationship between mirth and misery, comedy and tragedy, that is most distinctive in this passage. A further comparison later in the Hogarth essay affirms a principle which, it seems to me, underlies all Lamb's writing and shapes his way of seeing the world:

It is the force of these kindly admixtures, which assimilates the scenes of Hogarth and of Shakspeare to the drama of real life, where no such thing as pure tragedy is to be found; but merriment and infelicity, ponderous crime and feather-light vanity, like twi-formed births, disagreeing compexions of one intertexture, perpetually unite to shew forth motley spectacles to the world. (Park, 323)

The examples adduced here are the Fool in *Lear* and the grave-digger in *Hamlet* who 'have a kind of correspondency to, and fall in with, the subjects which they seem to interrupt' - the comic scenes in Otway's *Venice Preserved* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rollio*, on the other hand, are 'irrelevant, impertinent discords'. But the phrases Lamb has used - 'kindly admixtures' of 'merriment and infelicity' (i.e. unhappiness, not inelegance), of the momentous and the feather-light - are equally applicable to his own life and writing. Lamb himself is in the line of Shakespeare and Hogarth because he sees the world through motley spectacles.

Furthermore, Lamb has the capacity to go outside himself, to see from the point of view of others. Significantly, the main verb in the latter part of the long sentence on *King Lear* is that key word 'sympathize': the 'lunatic bans' of Poor Tom and the 'disjointed sayings and wild but pregnant allusions' of the Fool 'so wonderfully sympathize' with the confusion in the senses of Lear as he goes mad. The sympathy, the bond of love, that develops between the group of destitute characters on the heath is so strong that the play is not 'pure tragedy' - there are positive values

amidst the bleakness.

Lamb, however, refuses to take a romanticized or over-simplified view of the play. He slips in a subordinate clause which it is easy to overlook: the language of Edgar and the Fool 'sympathize with that confusion, *which they seem to assist in the production of*, in the senses of that "child-changed father"' (my italics). I cannot think of any other critic of *King Lear* who has considered the possibility that the Fool and Edgar are in some sense responsible for Lear's madness, that he goes mad not simply because of his daughters but because he is surrounded by fools and madmen. The play's moral vision is complicated considerably if certain characters are seen to be unwitting agents of suffering and simultaneously sources of relief and sympathy. In a different way, Cordelia comes into this category too.

Given this complication, a very special place is occupied by the one character who offers unmediated sympathy, Kent. Lamb describes him in the essay on Hogarth as 'the noblest pattern of virtue which even Shakspeare has conceived' (Park, 317-18). The importance of Kent for Lamb is clear from the telling of *King Lear* in *Tales of Shakspeare*. Throughout the narrative, there is undue emphasis on Kent. Consider, for example, the following passage:

And now the loyalty of this worthy Earl of Kent showed itself in more essential services than he had hitherto found opportunity to perform. For with the assistance of some of the King's attendants who remained loyal, he had the person of his royal master removed at daybreak to the castle of Dover, where his own friends and influence, as Earl of Kent, chiefly lay; and himself embarking for France, hastened to the court of Cordelia, and did there in such moving terms represent the pitiful condition of her royal father, and set out in such lively colours the inhumanity of her sisters, that this good and loving child with many tears besought the king her husband that he would give her leave to embark for England with a sufficient power to subdue these cruel daughters and their husbands, and restore the old king her father to his throne. (*Tales from Shakspeare: King Lear*)

In Shakespeare's play, it is Gloucester who has Lear removed to Dover; the castle is not mentioned, nor is the connection between Dover and the Earl of Kent; letters are sent to Cordelia in France - Kent does not go in person. In fact, it has recently been shown that when Shakespeare re-wrote the play to produce what became the Folio version, one of his many changes consisted in considerably reducing the role of Kent in act four: his disguise becomes less important than Edgar's; he becomes less important than Gloucester as an emblem of the suffering servant.<sup>12</sup> But Lamb virtually writes Edgar and Gloucester out of his *Tale*: Poor Tom is described as a 'poor Bedlam beggar', not Edgar in disguise as one, and Gloucester is written out altogether, presumably because, like Dr Johnson, Lamb shied away from the blinding scene.

Why does Lamb place so much emphasis on Kent? Might it have been because he saw himself as a Kent-figure, characterized by loyalty and honesty, a willingness to remain in the shadow of the great souls around him, a preference for plain language, prose to the verse of Wordsworth and Coleridge? *Lear* and *Hamlet* were the two plays that exercised the most influence over the Romantic imagination. If we accept the identification of Lamb with Kent, the two plays may be yoked together. Coleridge said 'I have



a smack of Hamlet myself' (*Table Talk*, 24 June 1827); Lamb plays Kent, the loyal servant, not to Lear but to Coleridge's Hamlet. We are thus given a model for the relationship between the Shakespearean criticism of the two writers, which I have explored in this paper: Kent is a furnisher of common sense remarks and single pithy insights; Hamlet philosophizes on them at length, occasionally wrong-headed or eccentric, always brilliant and enthusiastic. Put together, the two give us Shakespearean criticism at its best.

*Jonathan Bate's book, Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination, will be published by Oxford University Press in March 1986.*

#### NOTES

- 1 In *The Champion* of 10 January 1819, John Thelwall wrote of Coleridge's lecture on *Hamlet* of a year before

In many particulars Mr C. at least accords with, if he has not availed himself of the opinions of Hazlitt, and of another Lecturer, whose disquisitions on the character of *Hamlet*, during the last season, excited very popular attention.

The charge is hard to substantiate; Thelwall has his own ulterior motive, to draw attention to the other lecturer - himself. But the remark shows that the season of 1818 was one of considerable rivalry in matters of Shakespearean criticism.

- 2 Hasn't the influence of opium on the Romantic imagination been over-estimated, that of alcohol under-estimated?
- 3 Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, ed. P P Howe (London, 1930-4), xii.36. Cited hereafter as *HW*.
- 4 'Recollections of Charles Lamb', *Athenaeum*, 24 January 1835, p.72.
- 5 *Lamb as Critic*, ed. Roy Park (London 1980), p.115. For convenience, Lamb is quoted where possible from this ed., cited hereafter as *Park*.
- 6 Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T M Raysor (2nd ed., 2 vols, London, 1960), i.129; *Dr Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. W K Wimsatt (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.116.
- 7 See Thomas Whately, *Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakespeare* (London, 1785); the dramatist Richard Cumberland and the actor John Philip Kemble both published pamphlets replying to Whately's comparison of Richard and Macbeth.
- 8 *Letters of John Keats*, ed. H E Rollins (2 vols, Cambridge, Mass., 1958), i.387.
- 9 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell & W J Bate, Collected Coleridge 7 (2 vols, Princeton, 1983), ii.27.
- 10 *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T M Raysor (London, 1936), 42-3.
- 11 I say 'Lamb claims' because the anecdote seems almost too neat to be true; compare the account in 'Play-house Memoranda' of sitting next to a blind man at a performance of *Richard III*, used by Lamb to demonstrate that Shakespeare is better heard than seen (*Table-Talk* in *The Examiner*, No.X).
- 12 See Michael Warren, 'The Diminution of Kent', in *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of 'King Lear'*, ed. Gary Taylor & Michael Warren (Oxford, 1983).

## ON SETTING A QUIZ FOR THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY

D E Wickham  
*Vice Chairman*

My old maths master used to set monthly tests which were slightly easier than we might have expected because 'I want to find out what you know, not what you don't know'. It was the opposite with the 150th Anniversary Quiz. There were fifty-five questions because they filled the four *Bulletin* pages which were to be used before we decided on a loose insert. And there had to be enough difficult questions to ensure that everyone did not answer every question. It seemed better for four real winners to emerge than for all the entries to be complete and correct and for a tie-breaker to be necessary or for the winners to be picked out of a hat.

There was also an attempt to discover real knowledge rather than an ability to use an index. Promising questions on macaroons and dogs were omitted because those words appear as headings in the index to Lucas' *Life*, an omnium gatherum of noteworthy details. Questions were carefully worded for the same reason. Thus 'Bernard Barton's daughter' (No.40) is not directly traceable from an index and it would be too easy - or too difficult to mark? - to ask how Lamb described Shakespeare's plays (No.3).

It was still possible for the compiler to be caught out. The Otaheite pun was included because it was not indexed under 'Otaheite'. Too late I found that it was indexed under 'Pun'. Similarly I now realize how teachers learn from their pupils or how it was possible for Sir George Sitwell to show the garden to the gardener. Respondents helped me to 'see' the quiz which I had set!

Thus there were three ways in which the Reverend Matthew Field held his cane, not two (No.6); although Barry Cornwall described Mary Lamb's snuff-box as being of tortoise-shell (No.31), every other reference seems to be to silver; Captain Burney made the Otaheite pun, not Martin as I vaguely supposed (No.32); and Cary, not Lamb as I half-remembered, made the 'cumin' pun (No.50). What seemed to me an obvious question, or rather an obvious answer, about 'The Two Races of Men' (No.42) exploded in all directions.

Certain answers were marked less strictly than was first intended. 'New River' was accepted (No.45) though the original answer was 'by my old New River'. Contrariwise, it seemed proper that the address of Charles Lamb's birthplace (No.1) should include 'The Temple' or 'London' for a full mark and that Bridget Elia must be distinguished from Mary Lamb (No.41).

Inexact quotations lost half-marks if they seemed important.

Fortunately the respondents, who were split exactly two-thirds members and one-third non-members, were broadly enough separated to make the odd half-mark of no importance. The marks achieved are recorded simply to show how high a standard was reached - I had expected the winner to score about thirty-five marks out of fifty-five.

We can feel relieved that the overall winner and the overall second were both members of the Charles Lamb Society. A non-member was third and the handicapping, meant to ensure that non-members had a chance of two of the four prizes, brought another non-member up to fourth place.

The winners were:

1 Miss C Sandison of Sheffield, a member. Scored  $53\frac{1}{2}$ /55: she omitted No.25

and I did not quite agree with her answer to No.42. She was the only respondent to answer No.24.

- 2 Mrs A S Moore of High Wycombe, a member. Scored  $49\frac{1}{2}/55$ . She was the only respondent to answer No.25.
- 3 Mrs E Mower White of London NW8, a non-member. Scored  $48\frac{1}{2}/55$ .
- 4 Mr E G Preston of St Leonards-on-Sea, a non-member. Scored 40/55. Had it not been for the handicapping Miss Stella Pigrome, a member, would have been fourth, so she is '*proxime accessit*' (*quantum valeat!*).

A book token for £10 goes to each of the four winners, plus a year's membership for each non-member.

A respondent was kind enough to ask that so interesting a quiz should be made an annual event. This seems unlikely, given the effort involved, but it was a nice thought.

The answers note the easiest source of reference, i.e. usually Lucas' *Life of Charles Lamb*, but of course the quiz had to be set so that it could not be completed just by reading one book. There are also numerous sources other than Lucas, e.g. Charles Lamb's birthplace is also mentioned in Fitzgerald's edition of Talfourd's *Memoirs*, 1895, page 7, for those who like doing things the hard way. The chapter references to Lucas do not alter but the page numbers refer (only?) to the two-volume fifth edition of 1921.

The correct answers are:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 2 Crown Office Row, The (Inner) Temple   | Lucas' <i>Life</i> , ch.1, p.1  |
| 2 Stackhouse's History of the Bible  | Fitzgerald's <i>CL</i> , pp.206-7   |
| 3 The plays of Shakespeare (But 'Works of S.' or 'S' accepted)   | Martin's <i>In the Footprints of CL</i> , p.21                            |
| 4 Christ's Hospital  | Lucas' <i>Life</i> , ch.4, p.46   |
| 5 A meatless day at Christ's Hospital  | Lucas' <i>Life</i> , ch.5, p.59   |
| 6 'Like a dancer' and 'as it were a lily' and (I forgot) 'like an emblem'                                  | Lucas' <i>Life</i> , ch.5, pp.62+64<br>Ditto                              |
| 7 Oronooko   | Lucas' <i>Life</i> , ch.7, p.96   |
| 8 Unitarianism (not Quakerism)   | Lucas, ch. 8/17/48, pp.109/256-7/785;<br>Talfourd's <i>Memoirs</i> , p.17 |
| 9 (1) hazel, (2) specks of grey, etc. or greyish-blue  | Lucas, ch.5, p.74; and ch.46, p.740;<br>Talfourd, p.7                     |
| 10 9 stone $3\frac{1}{2}$ lb.  | Lucas, ch.29, p.429   |
| 11 Eau de vie  | Lucas, ch.39, p.602   |
| 12 'Drunken-dog, ragged-head, seld-shaven, odd eyed, stuttering' (etc.) (Exact quotation for a whole mark) | Lucas, ch.11, p.143   |
| 13 Bonaparte   | Lucas, ch.36, p.564   |

- 14 Randal Norris Lucas, ch.17, p.250; ch.45, p.704
- 15 Louisa M(artin) Verse of 1831; Lucas, ch.22, p.322; letter of 10.11.1805 (Lucas' ed. i.409)
- 16 Boiled legs of mutton Ainger's *Life*, p.196
- 17 Vines, pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages Letter of 2.9.1823 (Lucas' ed. ii.394)
- 18 Three times Lucas, ch.40, p.627
- 19 Antiquity Lucas, ch.47, p.748
- 20 Erysipelas, from a grazed face after stumbling over a stone. Ainger's *Life*, pp.200-01
- 21 H F Cary (*not* Wordsworth) Lucas, ch.50, p.837
- 22 W M Thackeray (letter of 1.12.1824) Lucas, ch.41, pp.658-9
- 23 Thomas Carlyle Lucas' *At the Shrine of St Charles*, p.108
- 24 Edmund Blunden Concluding words (p.206) of his Clark Lectures of 1932, *CL and his Contemporaries*; only one knew
- 25 'As long as the best spice that ever was expended upon one of the Pharaohs'. Ainger's *Life*, p.226; ditto
- 26 Samuel Salt Elia's 'Benchers', EML. ed. p.100
- 27 He walked into the New River near CL's front door. Lucas, ch.14, p.193
- 28 The cottage called Button Snap Lucas, ch.27, pp.398-9; Elia's 'My First Play'
- 29 Martin Burney Lucas, ch.20, p.290
- 30 Talfourd to Wordsworth Talfourd's *Memoirs*, p.77
- 31 Tortoise-shell Martin's *Footprints*, p.93
- 32 Captain James Burney Lucas, ch.20, p.285
- 33 S T Coleridge Letter of 26.4.1816. (Lucas' ed.ii, 190)
- 34 Fanny Kelly's frog-catcher Lucas, ch.50, p.828
- 35 Jem. (James) White Elia's 'Praise of Chimney-Sweepers'
- 36 Thomas Manning Letter of 10.5.1806 (Lucas, ii.8)
- 37 Abigail Ives (of Widford) *Shrine*, p.24
- 38 A strait waistcoat Martin's *Footprints*, p.99
- 39 Thornton Hunt Lucas, ch.28, pp.405-06
- 40 Stroked the blue muslin dress of the Quaker Mrs Fitzgerald, née Lucy Barton. Lucas, ch.51, pp.846-7

- 41 Bridget Elia and the youngest Gladman who had married a Bruton Elia's 'Mackery End, in Herts'
- 42 The Two Races of Men (or, acceptably, the human species) Elia's Essay of that title
- 43 Assiduity Fitzgerald's ed. of Talfourd's *Memoirs*, p.262, note
- 44 Fulsome Letter of 13.4.1803 (Lucas, i.345)
- 45 New River (though, strictly, 'by my old New River') Letter of 10.8.1824 (Lucas' ed.ii.434)
- 46 The Lamb of God Letter of 2.1.1810 (Lucas ii,90)
- 47 'While there is cash at Leadenhall' (Half-mark only for inexact quotation) Ainger's *Life*, p.182, quoting a letter to Barnard Barton
- 48 Hare Lucas, ch.49/50, pp.810-1/830
- 49 Lincoln Elia's Essay 'Poor Relations'
- 50 'It's cumin' Lucas, ch.35, p.539 (Cary)
- 51 Rosamund Gray and her grandmother *Rosamund Gray*, p.2
- 52 Mrs Leicester's School *Mrs Leicester's School*, chapter titles
- 53 Rev. James Boyer Elia's Essay 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago'; he was Upper Master then and there
- 54 Captain Jackson Elia's Essay 'Captain Jackson'
- 55 Thomas Fuller Letter to James Gilman, (?) of early Spring, 1830; (Lucas' ed. iii. 263)

## BOOK REVIEWS

## POET OF HIS NATIVE PLACE

David McCracken *Wordsworth and the Lake District. A Guide to the Poems and their Places*. OUP. £12.50.

*The Illustrated Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes*, ed. Peter Bicknell Webb and Bower. £9.95.

F B Pinion. *A Wordsworth Companion*. Macmillan £20.

When, having left his mountains, to the towers  
Of Cocker-mouth that beauteous river came,  
Behind my father's house he passed, close by,  
Along the margin of our terrace walk.  
He was a playmate whom we dearly loved:  
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,  
A naked boy, in one delightful rill,  
A little mill-race severed from his stream,  
Made one long bathing of a summer's day,  
Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again,  
Alternate, all a summer's day, or coursed  
Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves

Of yellow grunsel; or, when crag and hill,  
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,  
 Were bronzed with a deep radiance, stood alone  
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born  
 On Indian plains ...

(*Prelude*, i. 286-302)

There isn't a single spot of time in *The Prelude* that doesn't recall a specific landscape at a particular moment, transfigured over time by Wordsworth's imagination. Even as 'a five years' child' Wordsworth knew the Lake District: the geography of its landscape, its sights and sounds, qualities of light, the texture of its rocks and soil, its plants, the changes made by man. Its scenes were bonded to his life by the common familiarity of 'a summer's day' and also, from earliest childhood, by the enduring power of emotion:

to the towers  
 Of Cocker-mouth that beauteous river came,  
 Behind my father's house he passed, close by ...

The foundations of Wordsworth's greatest poetry, his characteristic modes of perception and use of landscape, were laid early. So was the groundwork for his *Guide to the Lakes*. David McCracken's *Wordsworth and the Lake District: A Guide to the Poems and their Places* explores the connections between Wordsworth's poetry and its sources in particular places. Peter Bicknell has produced a much-needed, and very finely illustrated, new edition of Wordsworth's own *Guide*. The two books complement each other nicely, establishing Wordsworth's relation to the Lake District as both inhabitant, and as poet of his own native place.

David McCracken's *Wordsworth and the Lake District* is divided into two sections, both well illustrated with engravings and paintings that date from 1805-53. The first, 'Poems and Places' explores the literal connections between the poetry and its physical setting. *Michael* and Greenhead Gill offers a representative example. Besides printing the poem in full, McCracken goes into the background of the poem's composition as recorded in Dorothy's *Journal* and in Wordsworth's conversations with Isabella Fenwick, as well as conjecturing the precise location of the sheepfold. This is all fine and as it should be, but in the end one's left wondering if the approach isn't a little bit limited. McCracken himself comes close to admitting as much when he points out that 'a poem, written or spoken, is different, essentially different, from an image, an experience, or a fact'. And he goes on, 'Wordsworth's notes dictated to Miss Fenwick can have a tendency to lead us into thinking of the poems only in relation to their origins'.

The shortcomings of this very literal interpretation of the poetry appear when McCracken hazards three separate locations on Ullswater for the 'boat stealing' episode in *Prelude*, Book One: Purse Point; Devils Chimney; Stybarrow Crag. Surely, too, anyone sufficiently interested to read the book can survive without McCracken's helpful hint that 'The episode is one of the most famous passages of *The Prelude*'? Within its own limits, though, 'Poems and Places' works very well.

McCracken's second section, 'In the Footsteps of Wordsworth', is essentially a pedestrian's guide to places with Wordsworthian associations, and corresponds to the previous part of the book in relating specific sites and landscapes to the poems. The text is supported by fifteen maps, which detail

suggested routes and walks. Though Wordsworth climbed Helvellyn at seventy, Canon Rawnsley reports several locals who had known him as saying, "he was niver nowt of a mountaineer, allus kep' about t'roads"; "he wozn't a mountaineer, was maistly doon about t'road". They were recollecting Wordsworth as an old man, of course, but their reminiscences also have a bearing upon the younger poet too. Wordsworth habitually composed while walking, 'in these wanderings/ ...busy with the toil of verse', as he puts it in *Prelude* Book Four. The gardener's boy at Rydal Mount recalled how Wordsworth would compose poetry out on the grass terrace in front of the house:

then he would set his head a bit forrad, and put his hands behint his back. And then he would start a bumming, and it was bum, bum, bum, stop; then bum, bum, bum, reet down till t'other end, and then he'd set down and git a bit o'paper out and write a bit; and then he git up, and bum, bum, bum, and goa on bumming for long enough right down and back agean. I suppose, ya kna, the bumming helped him out a bit.

The anecdote is humorous, and it's also very astute. Seamus Heaney has described how the rhythm of Wordsworth's walking infected his blank verse, in his collection of essays *Preoccupations*. Wordsworth's response to landscape and to place was stimulated by personal experience and association, memory, local tradition, and this is the territory covered by McCracken's book. The gardener's boy suggests another, immediate route from place to poetry, in the rhythm that mediates the poet's own physical presence in the landscape, "then bum, bum, bum ... and then he'd set down and git a bit o' paper out and write a bit".

When Wordsworth published his *Guide to the Lakes* in 1810, he was drawing on forty years more or less constant familiarity with the district. As Peter Bicknell points out in his Introduction, though, visitors had been coming to the Lakes ever since the 1750s, 'specifically to enjoy the scenery'. He traces in detail the work of painters and engravers in interpreting the landscape, as well as previous guides and aesthetic handbooks such as Gilpin's *Observations...on...the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland*. This was the Gilpin who thought that Tintern Abbey could do with 'improvements'; for the Lakes he offered a table of 'correct and incorrect mountains', reproduced in this edition of Wordsworth's *Guide*. As Bicknell points out, Gilpin's real interest lay in the principles of the picturesque. The first true guide to the Lakes was by Thomas West (1778) whose work was known to Wordsworth as 'eminently serviceable to the Tourist for nearly fifty years'. Besides going into the eighteenth-century background to Wordsworth's *Guide*, Bicknell's edition is impressively illustrated with the work of contemporary artists and engravers, many reproduced in colour. As such, the book 'runs parallel' to the two recent exhibitions at the Grasmere and Wordsworth Museum at Dove Cottage, 'The Discovery of the Lake District, 1750-1810', and 'The Lake District Discovered, 1810-1850'.

A future exhibition, say one hundred years from now, might well be 'The Lake District Destroyed, 1950-1990'. In the summer, Grasmere village is choked with cars and coaches. The fell-side paths are eroded into scree by climbers to the extent that steps have now been built into the side of Loughrigg and Helm Crag: 'It's like bowdlerising Shakespeare', was Tom McFarland's comment at the Wordsworth Summer Conference this year, but the alternative is the erosion of massive areas of landscape. Of course Wordsworth himself is - more than anyone else - responsible for the contemporary popularity of the

Lakes. His *Guide*, which sold out immediately when first published, went through five editions in the next twenty-five years. It was originally intended, he says 'to furnish a Guide or Companion for the *Minds* of Persons of taste, and feeling for Landscape'. In 1844, though, as is well known, he strenuously opposed the planned Kendal and Windermere Railway, arguing that

the humbler ranks of society are not, and cannot be, in a state to gain material benefit from a more speedy access than they now have to this beautiful region.

He was completely wrong, and perfectly right. The crotchety old Tory might have wished to exclude the 'humbler ranks', but his fears about the potential damage caused by a mass-influx of outsiders have been vindicated - and not just by the effects of the tourist industry. That, at least, is the major industry in the area. The contemporary equivalent of the Kendal and Windermere Railway can be glimpsed to the west from the summit of Coniston Old Man. It's called Windscale - or 'Sellafield' as the present government has renamed it - the nuclear reprocessing plant that has poisoned miles of seashore with radioactivity. Even the sea, the real sea 'dwindles and gives up its majesty'.

F B Pinion's *Wordsworth Companion* is the biographical counterpart of McCracken's *Poems and their Places*. It offers a critical survey of Wordsworth's poetry and prose, chronologically arranged, and conveys an exceptionally wide range of biographical, literary and historical material with great dexterity. One of the virtues of the book is that it doesn't flounder. It provides a ready source of information without losing a sense of balance and critical perspective. A 'Supplementary Section' has three chapters, covering Wordsworth's political opinions, 'Poetic Theory and Practice', and 'Critical Reactions' to his work. An especially useful reference guide is Pinion's second appendix, which links Wordsworth's poetry with corresponding passages in Dorothy's *Journals*; a third appendix offers St Sunday Crag as the 'only' possible landscape in the 'stolen-boat' passage. A *Wordsworth Companion* doesn't offer any radically new insight into Wordsworth's life or his work. It succeeds beautifully as a solid, useful literary biography of the poet.

Nick Roe

*The Queen's University of Belfast*

Hunter Davies: *William Wordsworth*. Hamlyn Paperbacks, 367 pp.

It was for me a surprise and a delight to read Mr Hunter Davies' 'popular' biography of Wordsworth. A surprise, because I knew his *Walk Around the Lakes* (Hamlyn Paperbacks, 1979) with its sweeping generalizations and factual errors about the Lake Poets, and had been horrified to learn that he contemplated a life of Wordsworth. Other students of the period may have had the same reaction. I have not seen any serious literary review of his *Wordsworth*, though both books are on sale at Dove Cottage and throughout the Lake District, and this apparent neglect by Wordsworthian scholars must be my apology for a tardy but appreciative review of a book which has been in print since 1981.

An accomplished journalist, Mr Davies in his first book approached the literary figures of the Lakes with all the limitations of popular journalism, coupled with a naive astonishment that these were men of flesh and blood with all their attendant failings. This produced an unbalanced estimate of Ruskin, and a strangely unsophisticated wonder at the writings



of Bateson (1954) on the relations between William and Dorothy Wordsworth, and at the researches of Legouis (1922) on Annette Vallon. Mr Davies had obviously not encountered either scholar until in 1978-9 he began to write a 'secondary narrative' on Wordsworth to complement his account of his walks around the literary shrines of Lakeland. These critical studies were to him a revelation of the humanity of the poet.

In the preface to his biography, Mr Davies acknowledges that 'Wordsworth scholars tend to be suspicious...of those who might...be seeking sensation' and he states his aim with simply clarity -

I arrived with no preconceptions. I enjoyed his poetry. I had walked by his Lakes and visited his homes. I wanted to know more about him as a man.

At least one reader feared that he might adopt the Sunday Shocker approach. Far from it. Between the publication of his *Walks* and his *Wordsworth* Mr Davies has done his homework, and done it well. His writing and bibliography reveal wisely guided reading in Wordsworth criticism, though perhaps not so much in the works themselves, nor in contemporary writing. He has, however, used to great advantage the recently-discovered correspondence between William and his wife Mary, and his sympathetic treatment of it was something of a scoop for this biography.

The weakest points are his dismissal of Wordsworth's poetic theory and of his politics, neither of which is conveyed at any depth. There are, however, moments of insight, as when he answers those Wordsworth apologists who deny a *volte-face* in his political and social beliefs - 'his letters prove it. This is not necessarily reprehensible. It is a change which is there to be studied, not denied.' In his *Walk Around the Lakes*, Mr Davies had dismissed Wordsworth's reaction to the French Revolution as purely adolescent; here it receives more sympathetic treatment -

as with natural beauty, he got an extra pleasure by realizing *at the time* that he was witnessing something momentous. So often in life, it is only when we look back that we realize what was happening, that we recognize later that we were happy then. Wordsworth knew.

Mr Davies deals lucidly with the 'spots of time', adopting a matter-of-fact tone which eschews the methods of Wordsworthian scholars 'searching for hidden psycholological insights, analysing every word, dissecting every feeling'. This over-simplification leads him to dismiss the famous Prefaces as unfortunate addenda to the poems.

Some of Wordsworth's contemporaries are rather summarily treated, Lamb being introduced merely as 'Coleridge's London friend', though there is an interesting account of his efforts to clear the name of John Wordsworth after the loss of the *Abergavenny*. There is a fairly balanced estimate of Coleridge, and in a memorable phrase Mr Davies describes Greta Hall as 'a powerhouse of literature'. His portrait of Southey is unusually sympathetic though, as with Wordsworth, the political writings are ignored. Like other biographers, he has completely misunderstood the onerous duties of the Laureateship as inherited by Southey, and gives him no credit for the many years he toiled, protesting, at the task odes until at last the custom fell into abeyance. Only on such conditions was the Laureateship acceptable to Wordsworth after Southey's death.

Hunter Davies has produced a biography that will make an excellent introduction to Wordsworth for the beginner and the general reader, and a

refreshing reminder for students who already know Wordsworth well. In the *Walk* his acquaintance with the verse seemed to rest on one poem - 'The Daffodils' - but an interesting feature of this book is the selection of poetry at the close of each chapter, chosen for its biographical significance, but forming a mini-anthology.

New insights emerge from this story, simply told - the 'gentle Wordsworthian irony', the passionate relationship with his wife, the gradual withdrawal of Dorothy from the claustrophobic situation of the early Dove Cottage years. This is not a scholar's biography - but that is not to say that it is unscholarly, and Wordsworth's reputation can only benefit from the freshness and enthusiasm of this most readable book.

Chrystal Tilney

J P Ward: *Wordsworth's Language of Men*. Brighton, Sussex. The Harvester Press, 1984. £22.50

J P Ward has written a stirring and challenging book. Its central thesis is:

Wordsworth did for poetry something like that which Marx did for political science...and Freud did for the unconscious and Darwin for evolution... (p.181)

Wordsworth saved poetry in his time and *for ours*. He made poetry possible in our post-modern, secular age by developing a poetic diction which is truly 'the language really used by men.'

Ward is challenging because he argues this broad thesis so fully and yet so succinctly. He adroitly delineates Wordsworth's place in the whole field of western philosophy.

He gives special emphasis to Wordsworth's relationship to Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Mill, Hegel, and Marx. He shows the strong affinity between Wordsworth's theory of language and that argued by contemporary social theorists such as Mead, Schutz, and Giddens. Ward lays particular emphasis on how Wordsworth anticipated and even now matches some of the most important linguistic theories of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Lacan, Derrida, et al. One is only sorry that Ward had to cover so many intricate relationships so briefly, but he does so with such momentum that the extra effort required to follow is well worth it.

The core of the book is a careful explication of Wordsworth's poetical theory and practice. One of Ward's great achievements is his explanation of how Wordsworth's poetry, which is truly made of 'language really used by men,' has a special meaning, a special linguistic truth for the twentieth century. This explanation is an excellent complement (in terms of recent linguistic critical theory) to the great commentaries of W J B Owen and James Heffernan. It is as though Coleridge and even the whole nineteenth century hardly guessed what Wordsworth had accomplished. It is as though Wordsworth's 'Preface' is now being read fully for the first time, as though his poetry is about to come fully into its own. Modern linguistic criticism and modern sociological scholarship on the nature of language now show wholly new areas of Wordsworth's artistic achievement. But it is contemporary man, having reached a special kind of personal, linguistic need in a seemingly totally secular world, whom Wordsworth's poetic discourse seems best able to enrich.

Ward begins with the very material of Wordsworth's diction. He examines the

prevalence and the importance of such words as contain the nasals 'm', 'n', 'ng', and sibilant 's'. He cites hundreds of examples such as 'mind', 'men', 'mountain', 'meaning', 'imagination'; he shows how powerfully they work in such key phrases as, 'blew mimic hootings to the silent owls.' But these are not mere listings of interesting frequencies in the Wordsworth poetic lexicon. The very matter and intonation of these words so perfectly match the thought and all together so perfectly match the internalized non-slavish, non-mimetic reality of Wordsworth's felt poetic insight that a harmony is achieved among poet, poetry, and listener. For example, Ward cites the power and poignancy of the word 'Wisdom' as used in the famous *Prelude* passage:

Wisdom and spirit of the universe!  
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought.

Ward comments,

And that term embodies the ideas of feeling, knowledge, and experience as they seem most to have interpenetrated one another leaving no further or deeper quality of human apprehension; and it does that simultaneously by means of an aural resonance which now begins to seem inextricable.  
(p.41)

Such close analysis is typical of the entire book. He proceeds from the materials of Wordsworth's language to the stunning panoply of Wordsworth's nouns, his 'Nominals'; Wordsworth's evocative mode of predication, his 'Copula'; Wordsworth's intimate yet open-voice structures, his 'Speech to the Other.'

Ward deals closely with the text, always uncovering a late twentieth-century resonance in Wordsworth's utterances. Ward's treatment, for example, of what he calls 'Wordsworth's Fading Abstractions' is an amazing elucidation of Wordsworth's power to communicate for contemporary readers the spirituality of his experience through general terms, yet terms so unfreighted that we are able to share his vision without our being nagged into any commitment to dogma or ideology.

Ward uses the vocabulary of contemporary critics and language scholars. This may slow the reading at times; however, the advantage is great. Ward thus is able to gain access to contemporary criticism and show in its very terms how Wordsworth has come to command so secure a place in the twentieth century. Here again Ward achieves wondrous results. It is amazing to see how closely Wordsworth anticipated the ideas of so many modern scholars in such diverse fields as psycho-linguistics, ethnomethodology, Marxism, and deconstruction. Several scholars outside literary studies specifically identify Wordsworth as a linguistic prophet. The historian E P Thompson recently devoted his Lord Northcliff Lectures at the University of London to Wordsworth.

John Ward has given us a very special kind of book. It is more than appreciative and informative literary criticism even in the best sense of those terms. Ward has shown us Wordsworth's place in a very broad contemporary intellectual and literary landscape. He has shown us just how well Wordsworth has fulfilled his own mandate that 'Poets do not write for poets alone, but for men.'

Richard W Clancey  
*John Carroll University*

#### OBITUARY

SIDNEY F RICH, OBE, JP. It is sad that, having delighted in Sidney Rich's tribute to his father, S M Rich, in the January *Bulletin*, we should in this *Bulletin* be mourning the passing of the author.

Sidney Rich was elected a member of the Society on 11 March 1935 - one of the select band of Founder Members. His original Index Card is before me as I write - from Lt S F Rich c/o HMS Iron Duke he returns to Streatham to his legal practice and to his office as Mayor of Wandsworth.

For many years he was Honorary Solicitor of the Society - an office which we have found impossible to fill - an especially valuable contribution in dealing with the legal complexities of our ownership of Button Snap and various changes in the leases and Trustees.

We remember with pleasure his proposal of one of the Toasts at our Birthday Celebration Luncheon in 1980. Our sympathy in their loss goes to his family, especially his sister, Connie Hale.

M R H

*From Miss Florence Reeves*

On Sunday 31 March I was privileged to attend a Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Sidney Rich at the South London Liberal Synagogue, and what a revelation it was to me. A vast congregation had gathered together - a meeting of all ages, to pay tribute to their Rabbi.

Members of the Charles Lamb Society remember with gratitude his gift of the Charles Lamb collection of his father, Samuel Morris Rich, which included twelve volumes of cuttings from newspapers and periodicals, all indexed in the final volume, but much more was revealed to me in the Farewell Speech given by Rabbi John Rayner at Sidney's cremation, from which I quote: 'He was a loyal son of his father, and his devotion to his memory was one of the chief motivating forces of his life. He even followed his footsteps into the Charles Lamb Society, which made him a Vice-President. His life was a life of service,' with the South London Liberal Synagogue, as a Justice of the Peace, a Councillor and Alderman of the Borough of Wandsworth, Mayor for Coronation year and later a Freeman of the Borough, and a Member of the Order of the British Empire.

At the Service of Thanksgiving Dr D M A Leggett spoke of his work for the Battersea College of Advanced Technology and as Chairman of Surrey University, which conferred an honorary doctorate on him; and Rabbi Julia Neuberger spoke movingly upon his work as Rabbi and the help he gave to her.

Let Rabbi Rayner conclude: 'He was a man of moral earnestness and spiritual awareness, of sensitive courtesy and constant kindness, patriotically British and deeply loyal to his Jewish heritage and genuinely concerned for the welfare of his fellow human beings generally.'

To his wife, his children and grandchildren and his sister Connie we send our sincere condolences, secure in the knowledge that he will be remembered by the members of the Charles Lamb Society with affection and gratitude.

#### NOTES

1985/6 PROGRAMME. This will accompany your October *Bulletin* - meantime please note that our 1985/6 Programme starts on SATURDAY 5 October at 2.45 pm at the Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, WC1, when we shall welcome as our speaker PROFESSOR IAN JACK who will celebrate with us the bicentenary of Thomas Love Peacock - do re-read *Nightmare Abbey* during your summer holidays!

SUMMER VISITS 1985. 'A blank, my lord... your Secretary finally flaked out after more than twelve months' anniversary events! However, she has compiled a 'Lamb Itinerary' which Elians may follow to Lamb sites in Hertfordshire and North London - copies will be gladly sent on receipt of an s.a.e.

*Reports on the Day Conference on 11 May and the Annual General Meeting will appear in the next Bulletin.*