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AESTHETIC UNIVERSALITY: THE NOSTALGIA OF ELIA 150 YEARS AFTER

A lecture given to the Society on 1st December 1984 by Professor James B. Misenheimer, Jr. *of Indiana State University*

At this approaching December 27, marking the 150th anniversary of Charles Lamb's death, we celebrate and reflect upon his life of almost sixty years, a life replete with a unique combination of *joie de vivre* and the most intense kind of personal tragedy. As Dr. Johnson remarked of David Garrick, so may it be said also of Lamb, one of the most beloved writers in any language, that his death 'eclipsed the gaiety of nations'.

I consider it a very special privilege to be with you, the members of The Charles Lamb Society, in this commemorative month, myself an Elian, though I reside thousands of miles from where Lamb throve, suffered, wrote, sauntered, and mused. In a sense it is profoundly ironic that the banner of Lamb should have been so widely unfurled, given his unassuming, self-effacing nature and the deprecation of self implied in his exhorting of Coleridge not to refer to him as 'gentle-hearted'. I am pleased, therefore, to share with you my thoughts on the aesthetic tenacity of Elian nostalgia in 1984.

Like his friend Wordsworth, Charles Lamb was a man for whom the past had deep and special meaning. The significance of the past, of memory, of experience recalled, was for him incalculable in relation to the quality of a life lived; for the past is ever with us, as it was ever with Lamb. It lives in both the present and the future. It lights what we are and who we are, as well as what and who we are constantly in process of becoming. And it will not be denied.

As Thomas Gray tells us in his renowned *Elegy*,

> On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
> Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
> Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
> Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For Lamb, the 'ashes' of the past blazed brightly until the end of his days, and their brightness came to suggest for him a kind of nostalgic paradox: a wistfulness of regret and sense of loss, on the one hand, and a sense of celebration and glorification on the other. And the result, in part, of these 'wonted fires' is a legacy to us, 150 years after, of a concept of beauty deeply rooted in nostalgic thought and reflection. It is not overstating the matter to say that the nostalgia of Elia is now eternalized, having attained a level of aesthetic universality to which all readers are drawn and by which all are vitalized to a remarkable empathy.

His achievements as the English familiar essayist *par excellence* are in no way compromised by one's thinking of Lamb as a poet in prose, since he regularly produces effects strikingly similar to those of both Wordsworth and Coleridge in their best lyrics. Many of his most prominent essays are an extension in prose of romantic subject matter, treated poetically without being derivative. When pondering Lamb's prose, one is apt to think less of cadence, or rhythm, or figurative construction, than of an essentially poetic treatment of theme deeply rooted in a wisdom dearly bought from personal experience, emanating from a sensitive mind and heart. Thus for Lamb, as for Wordsworth, 'spots of time' are crucial as they chasten, subdue, and enlighten.

Through the character of Elia, adopted as the *persona* of his familiar essays, Lamb has created very nearly the perfect vehicle for the voice of nostalgia. The personal attributes of Elia represent Lamb's creation of a complete personality, an *eidolon*, whose professed limitations of character ironically qualify him as a spectator of life in all its colorations. In his book-length study *Don't Call Me Gentle Charles*, Robert Frank interprets the Elian *persona* by enumerating the characteristics which seem most central to the character. Elia is presented as 'a somewhat eccentric valetudinarian, ... honest and whimsical, with an amiable disposition and a spirit of self-denial'. (1) He is notable for his self-acknowledged personal and intellectual shortcomings. He depreciates himself, professing academic ignorance and inferiority. He appears as an ineffectual presence in daily affairs. He possesses 'a sense of vulnerability and a vague desire for protection'.(2) He defers to the opinions of others.

Further, Frank points out that though significant similarities exist between Lamb and Elia, 'Elia is a deliberate creation, in many ... ways unlike Lamb, if we are to read the essays intelligently'.(3) It is not the purpose of this address to examine the differences between Lamb and his *eidolon*. But it is useful perhaps to note that Elia is regularly portrayed as seeking respite from the cares of the world in memories of childhood, in the contemplation of old books, old china, and old relationships, as did Lamb himself. Before the coinage of the critical term 'aesthetic distance', Lamb conceived the need for precisely this kind of separation of himself, to a degree at least, from his central character. Frank comments that 'Lamb probably saw the possibilities of adapting the character to his talents. The character of Elia gave him freedon in the use of autobiographical materials by dramatizing and distancing them. Through Elia he could be an objectifying dramatist rather than a self-conscious actor',(4) and thereby avoid the awkwardness of 'perpetual self-reference'.(5) Through Elia, the nostalgic aspects of Lamb's own character could gain cogent expression without becoming obtrusive or without seeming personally indulgent. And though admittedly Lamb's writings are acclaimed for a wide variety of strengths, it is perhaps those pieces which are intrinsically nostalgic, self-examining in a posture of unique wistfulness, that have endeared Lamb irretrievably to his most receptive readers.

Elian nostalgia is not easily defined. I know of no one who really believes that he has described it completely, for it is basic to the nature of the nostalgic that it eludes us just when we think we have pinned it down. It is characterized by a healthful evanescence, making itself thereby even more enticing in the rigour of intellectual examination. Often it consists of a blend of illusion and reality in quiet yet brilliant combination, an integration, as it were, of the fantastic (as based in fantasy) and the realistic. The typically Elian point of view in a nostalgic piece reveals a tapestry of illusion juxtaposed to or intermingled with a thread of reality. Through this technique, Elia accomplishes a lightly paradoxical focus, with the wonder and faith of childhood being recaptured and then blended with the awareness of adulthood, producing an effect similar to Wordsworth's in 'We Are Seven'. His presentation of the wonder and faith of childhood, re-viewed through the power of memory, communicates the sense of celebration and glorification, mentioned earlier. The awareness of adulthood, in measured contrast, communicates the reality, rather harsh at times though usually treated delicately, framed by a wistfulness of regret and sense of loss. Thus the nostalgic paradox has taken root in the essays, and its power and its appeal are indubitably identified with the Elian *persona*.

Other qualities as well make Elian nostalgia genuinely distinctive. Among these are clarity of memory, an endearing assertiveness, and a blend of the joyful and the poignant. Perspective, humour, vivification of experience, and open, unapologetic unpretentiousness further certify and distinguish its basic nature. And, as noted, there is the undeniable influence of the past upon the present. Each of these qualities, in its unique style of presentation, blends with the others to contribute to the aesthetic universality of the whole.

Lamb's uses of nostalgia can be approached, of course, in several different ways. Across the years, as my own appreciation of Lamb has deepened, and as the challenge of bringing generations of students to an awareness and an appreciation of Lamb's attainment has annually renewed itself, I have pointed out that when an essay contains a dominant nostalgic motif, the nostalgia will ordinarily fall into one of three major categories--nostalgia of place, nostalgia of person, or nostalgia of condition, if not into a rich combination of these. And it is my impression that this categorization, if admittedly simplistic and incomplete, conduces to my students' understanding of Lamb's humanity and consequently to their ability to empathize with the situations and feelings of Elia. For it is in large measure this ability to empathize or to find something of oneself in the perspective of Elia, that creates an aesthetic response in the reader. The common base from which the appeal of Elia often extends is the nostalgic, emanating from memories of specific geography, of a specific individual, or of a relationship or a condition which, through reminiscence, is again recaptured and made whole.

At this time of sesquicentennial commemoration, it seems appropriate that we consider directly several of the essays of Elia against this backdrop of Lamb's uses of the nostalgic. Virtually every Elian essay that is familiar and informal presents nostalgia in some form. For today's occasion, I have chosen six of the better known pieces which have been a source of eclectic pleasure around the world and which have now attained the status of classics of their kind, partially because of the universality of feeling rooted in nostalgic experience.

One of the keenest loves of Charles and Mary Lamb was the theatre. Indeed, Lamb himself went to the theatre for the first time on 1 December 1780, exactly two hundred and four years ago today. In the essay 'My First Play', Elia gives an account of his earliest theatrical visits when he was between the ages of six and seven, opening with a reference to an old portal that at the time of writing was still standing:

> At the north end of Cross Court there yet stands a portal, of some architectural pretensions, though reduced to humble use, serving at present for an entrance to a printing office. This old door-way, if you are young, reader, you may not know was the identical pit entrance to Old Drury-- Garrick's Drury-- all of it that is left. I never pass it without shaking some forty years from off my shoulders, recurring to the evening when I passed through it to see *my first play*. The afternoon had been wet, and the condition of our going (the elder folks and myself) was, that the rain should cease. With what a beating heart did I watch from the window the puddles, from the stillness of which I was taught to prognosticate the desired cessation! I seem to remember the last spurt, and the glee with which I ran to announce it.(6)

Godfather Francis Field had been the source of the tickets, and the essay examines his character with fond recollection:

> He is dead--and thus much I thought due to his memory, both for my first orders (little wondrous talismans!-- slight keys, and insignificant to outward sight, but opening to me more than Arabian paradises!) and moreover, that by his testamentary beneficence I came into possession of the only landed property which I could ever call my own ...

After these first theatrical visits, seven years elapsed before he saw another play, since attendance at plays was not permitted to the pupils of Christ's Hospital. He remarks that when after that interval he went to the theatre again, much of its former charm had disappeared. The old classical tragedy of *Artaxerxes* and the brilliance of *The Way of the World* failed to satisfy him, but when he first saw Mrs. Siddons the acted drama reasserted its power over him:

> I had left the temple a devotee, and was returned a rationalist. The same things were there materially; but the emblem, the reference, was gone!-- The green curtain was no longer a veil,

> drawn between two worlds, the unfolding of which was to bring back past ages, to present "a royal ghost,"--but a certain quantity of green baize, which was to separate the audience for a given time from certain of their fellow-men who were to come forward and pretend those parts ... The actors were men and women painted. I thought the fault was in them; but it was in myself, and the alteration which those many centuries--of six short twelve months-- had wrought in me.

Thus in 'My First Play', Elia has combined the nostalgia of place and the nostalgia of an individual fondly remembered, with a nostalgia of condition, that of childhood, to show how his devotion to the theatre was developed. His remark that when he sees the remaining portal at the north end of Cross Street, he shakes 'some forty years from off my shoulders' dramatizes the influence of the past upon the present, of childhood upon adulthood, which contributed to making him a devotee to the theatre for life.

In 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', which is an interesting combination of personal reminiscence and social history as well as a blend of matters both comic and tragic, Lamb's technique of presentation is more complex. Elia speaks first as though he were Coleridge and then later assumes his own identity. If one attempts to struggle here with the matter of identity within a single essay of either Lamb or Elia as spokesman, the problem becomes aggravatingly complicated. But the essay as a nostalgic work is richly rewarding and satisfying. Related early in the piece, ostensibly by Coleridge, is an account of L.'s relative comfort at school, living near to family and friends when virtually all the other students had to endure the pangs of homesickness:

> I remember L. at school; and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not. ... He had his tea and hot rolls in a morning, while we were battening upon our quarter of a penny loaf-- our *crug*-- moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of 'extraordinary bread and butter', from the hot-loaf of the Temple.

Coleridge the narrator continues by pointing further contrast between himself and L.:

> 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!

These memories of early boyhood are touched with a special poignancy and filled with Elian empathy. And when Elia assumes his own character, he notes:

> 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 of tender years, barely turned of seven; and had only read of such things in books, or seen them but in dreams.

His remembrance of his schoolmaster, also named Field, is a further example of nostalgic feeling brought to life through a specific individual who has had lasting influence, told in contrast to the headmaster Boyer:

> The remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and innocent idleness, and Elysian exemptions, and life itself a 'playing holiday'.

And there are other specific individuals whose young lives at Christ's Hospital strike a moving chord for Elia through the power of memory not least of them Coleridge:

> Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee--the dark pillar not yet turned--Samuel Taylor Coleridge--Logician, Meta-physician, Bard!

The essay seems to bespeak a depth of painful affection for these formative years, and it contains some very distinct pictures, indelible and unforgettable, that have lodged themselves in the writer's consciousness: the feeding of the little boy by the good old aunt 'squatting down on some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters': the bathing excursions in the New River where the boys stripped and 'under the first warmth of the sun wantoned like young dace in the streams'; the suspected gag-eater as 'the young stork'; and the generous tributes to his friends the 'Grecians'. Elia's imaginative insight into the sufferings and the perplexities of his schoolmates--what has been called 'a Shakespearean transference of sympathies'--warms the nostalgic approach to complex subject matter.

In the far less complex but deeply moving 'Mackery End', Elia's concern is chiefly to offer a portrayal of the character of his cousin Bridget through the nostalgic analysis of a visit paid in later life to other relations near Wheathampstead in Hertfordshire:

> Bridget Elia has been my housekeeper for many a long year. I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the power of memory. We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness; with such tolerable comfort, upon the whole, that I for one, find in myself no sort of dispostion to go out upon the mountains, with the rash king'soffspring, to bewail my celibacy...
>
> We made an excursion together a few summers since, into Hertfordshire, to beat up the quarters of some of our less-known relations in that fine corn country.
>
> The oldest thing I remember is Mackery End; or Mackerel End, as it is spelt, perhaps more properly, in some old maps of

> Hertfordshire; a farm-house,--delightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead. I can just remember having been there, on a visit to a great-aunt, when I was a child, under the care of Bridget, who, as I have said, is older than myself by some ten years. I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible. ... More than forty years had elapsed since the visit I speak of ...
>
> The sight of the old farmhouse, though every trace of it was effaced from my recollection, affected me with a pleasure which I had not experienced for many a year. For though *I* had forgotten it, *we* had never forgotten being there together, and we had been talking about Mackery End all our lives, till memory on my part became mocked with a phantom of itself....
>
> Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily remembered her old acquaintance again ... At first, indeed, she was ready to disbelieve for joy ; but the scene soon reconfirmed itself in her affections--and she traversed every out-post of the old mansion, to the wood-house, the orchard, the place where the pigeon-house had stood (house and birds were alike flown)--with a breathless impatience of recognition, which was more pardonable perhaps than decorous at the age of fifty odd. But Bridget in some things is behind her years.

Elia describes the gracious, friendly hospitality which they received at the hands of their distant relatives:

> The fatted calf was made ready, or rather was already so, as if in anticipation of our coming, and, after an appropriate glass of native wine, never let me forget with what honest pride this hospitable cousin made us proceed to Wheathampstead ...

It is significant that Elia reflects the true poet's appreciation of rural scenery, particularly when his heart is touched by any association of place with human joy or sorrow filtered through a nostalgic perspective. And thus his view of Bridget assumes virtual sanctification as he reflects upon the meaning, to himself, of their return visit together in mid-life to a place where they had years before visited and wandered together, exulting in youth:

> With what corresponding kindness we were received..--how Bridget's memory, exalted by the occasion, warmed into a thousand half-obliterated recollections of things and persons, to my utter astonishment, and her own--...old effaced images of more than half-forgotten names and circumstances still crowding back upon her, as words written in lemon come out upon exposure to a friendly warmth,--when I forget all this, then may my country cousins forget me; and Bridget no more remember, that in the days of weakling infancy I was her tender charge-- as I have been her care in foolish manhood since--in those pretty pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End, in Hertfordshire.

The romantic delight in simple things is in this essay enriched by unobtrusive, dual character analysis, as Elia reveals his own depth of sensitivity and appreciation in concert with his analysis of Bridget's everlasting care and love. 'Mackery End', then, opening with its reference to Elia's obligations to Bridget primarily in an adult framework, comes full circle as it closes in loving acknowledgment of a time when Elia had been his cousin's 'tender charge'. Depth of feeling here is plumbed further through its association with nostalgic geography and with friends and relatives still held dear.

One of the most brilliant of the Elian character studies is that of Mrs. Sarah Battle, in 'Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist'. The power of what seems at least to be specific recollection allows Elia to draw her with great zest and precision:

> I never in my life--and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it--saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play; or snuff a candle in the middle of a game; or ring for a servant, till it was fairly over. She never introduced, or connived at, miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards: and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand; and who, in his excess of candour, declared that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do, --and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards--over a book.

George L. Barnett, in his 1976 study of Lamb, indicates that this essay 'is viewed as a suggestion, analogically, of the value of a game in developing character and purifying soul'.(7) I acknowledge the credibility of this interpretation while feeling more nearly in complete agreement with Robert D. Frank, who says that 'Elia deferentially disagrees with Mrs. Battle's opinions and slyly says that there have been occasions in his life when "playing at cards *for nothing* has even been agreeable".'(8) Elia goes on to say that

> When I am in sickness, or not in the best spirits, I sometimes call for the cards, and play a game at piquet *for love* with my cousin Bridget--Bridget Elia.
>
> ... There is such a thing in nature, I am convinced, as *sick whist.*
>
> I grant it is not the highest style of man--I deprecate the manes of Sarah Battle--she lives not, alas! to whom I should apologize.

Thus Elia is remembering, fondly, the strength of character and conviction of an old friend, now gone, who through the game of whist had discovered a harmless way of acting passionately, playing at reality without brutal consequences. Frank notes that 'the real world and Mrs. Battle's world of illusion are inter-changeable'.(9)

But as in 'Mackery End', Elia's reflections upon persons out of the past inevitably lead him to a further analysis of his relationship with Bridget; and the last paragraph of 'Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist' recalls that last game he had had with his cousin:

> (I capotted her)--(dare I tell thee, how foolish I am?)--I wished it might have lasted forever, though we gained nothing, and lost nothing, though it was a mere shade of play: I would be content to go on in that idle folly forever. The pipkin should be ever boiling, that was to prepare the gentle lenitive to my foot, which Bridget was doomed to apply after the game was over: and, as I do not much relish appliances, there it should ever bubble. Bridget and I should be ever playing.

In the world of Elian imagination, the two would ever play in an attitude of time suspended, a world of liberation 'from the cares and rigors of the will and the moral judgment',(10) in which one must concern himself with winning and losing. The nostalgia of remembering an individual associated with a specific attitude or stance leads Elia to a further recollection and appreciation of matters ever more intensely personal and more deeply felt.

One of the most venerable essays of all is 'Old China', from among the last grouping attributed to Elia. It was greatly admired by Wordsworth, whose appreciation of the enjoyment of pleasant memories (or 'spots of time') found in this piece a sublime expression of values that he himself held dear. Elia's fondness for old china serves as the point of departure for recalling old friends, old books, old scenes, old conditions, which in turn naturally suggest the most tender memories of Elia's association with his cousin Bridget, 'their walks together, buying the folio of Beaumont and Fletcher, going to the theatre and eating strawberries'.(11) This essay appears at the end of the collection published in 1833 and is considered by many critics to be the culmination, the exemplification, of Elian art.

As the cousins sit enjoying their Hyson, admiring the figures painted on a set of old blue china, a recent purchase which they are using for the first time, Bridget expresses a desire to return to the good old days:

> 'I wish the good old times would come again', she said, 'when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state';--so she was pleased to ramble on,--'in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money we paid for it'.

Her nostalgic longing for a condition long passed, never to return, and thus her idealization of the past, is eventually countered by Elia following Bridget's lengthy recitation of examples of their earlier happiness. Following a smile 'at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up', he remarks;

> 'It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened, and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of ... Competence to age is supplementary youth; a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride, where we formerly walked: live better, and lie softer--and shall be wise to do so--than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return--could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a day--could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them--could the good old one-shilling gallery days return--they are dreams, my cousin, now--but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fire-side, sitting on this luxurious sofa--be once more struggling up those inconvenient stair-cases, pushed about, and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers--... I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Croesus had ... to purchase it.'

Those days are gone, though Elia should be glad to purchase them back if doing so were in his power.

What are offered here are reminiscence, nostalgia, and reality as material for meditation.(12) The value of difficulty overcome or of sacrifice made is part of Bridget's argument. For her, as noted by Robert D. Frank, 'the haze of memory hallows their simple activities and common delights. They relished their outings, because they were undertaken in a spirit of adventure, or because they were precarious and evanescent'.(13) Their hardships and difficulties had contributed to their personal relationship and to their youthful pleasures, but the reality is that 'the resilient spirit of youth has passed away'.(14)

The technique of contrast is superlatively employed in 'Old China': the past is contrasted to the present, as are youth to age, poverty to wealth, inconvenience to comfort, sacrifice to sufficiency. And though Elia now interprets their contrast in condition differently from Bridget, his concluding words are filled with wistful longing, as he once again directs their attention to the merry figures adorning their new set of old china.

The last essay of today's six is 'Dream-Children: A Reverie', which Will David Howe calls 'as nearly a perfect piece of prose as anything (Lamb) ever wrote'.(15) Howe notes that the essay has merited the praise of Swinburne, who once wrote: 'There is in his work a sweetness like no other fragrance, a magic like no second spell in all the world of letters'.(16) Earlier than 'Old China', 'Dream Children' represents indubitably one of the greatest attainments of Elia in the realm of the nostalgic. With inexpressible delicacy and tenderness, he paints the persons and incidents of early childhood with rare genius, all in a single paragraph (as Howe notes), using the simple connective *and* to endow the story with unusual fluency. The result is an exquisite poem in prose.

Lamb's elder brother John had only recently died when 'Dream Children' appeared in the *London Magazine* for January 1822. Later, Lamb was to write to Wordsworth of a 'deadness to everything' stemming he thinks from the loss of his brother. John's death serves to bring home to Lamb his essential loneliness, left in the world with only one close relation, and that one, as Ainger has noted, 'too often removed from him for months at a time by the saddest of afflictions'.(17) Thus, in all naturalness, his thoughts turn to his solitude, to what *might* have been, to 'memories' of halycon days now to be shared with his dream children, eager for stories from their father's past.

Once more, to provide distance from the actual reality, the reverie is distilled through the character of Elia, in this case perhaps a thin disguise, with his hoarded memories of sweetness and light, with his tender regrets and sense of loss. The sub-title of the essay is especially apt, given the techniques employed by Elia to share with his readers such intensely personal and revealing details of the inner self.

Elia, in point of fact childless, opens his reverie with a generic reference to children's love of stories of the past, and then refers to his own 'little ones':

> Children love to listen to stories about their elders when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field...

And as the revelation progresses, Elia refers to his children by specific names:

> Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks ...

and

> Here John smiled, as much as to say, 'that would be foolish indeed'.

The personalization of the reverie is thus made complete, having grown out of the general opening reference to children's love of stories.

Thus the recitation about Alice and John's great-grandmother and later their uncle John L.--- proceeds through the extended single paragraph:

> Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grand-children, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L.---, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us ...
>
> and how in after life he became lame-footed too, and I did not

> always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me ...
>
> Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother ...

Ainger has remarked that 'there is something of the magic of genius ... in the revelation with which his dream ends'.(18) For the children, having called for stories of their mother, are told how their father had courted the fair Alice W---n, and Elia is struck by extremity of the resemblance of little Alice to the first Alice, who seems to be looking out from her soul through the child's eyes.

And the crescendo of the conclusion is startling, yet quiet; anguished, yet peaceful:

> ... and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: 'We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name'--and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor armchair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side--but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.

Not only have the children disappeared, but in a sense Elia is too gone. The curtain has dropped, the veil that masked the reality, and here is the truth, which perhaps through reverie has found partial resolution.

Perhaps in this sesquicentennial month, as we remember Charles Lamb's death in December 1834, as we honor his memory, and as we acknowledge the continuing elevation of his stature as a literary artist, it is appropriate, within the context of the theme of the aesthetic universality of Elian nostalgia, to call upon Lamb himself, in what is perhaps his most cherished poem, to speak the valediction:

> Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
> I had a mother, but she died, and left me,
> Died prematurely in a day of horrors--
> All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.
>
> I have had playmates, I have had companions,
> In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays--
> All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies--
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women;
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her--
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man;
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like, I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

It would no doubt seem incongruous to some that I have often thought of Charles Lamb and Robert Browning together. Both men eventually eschewed the writing of plays (we remember how Lamb helped to hiss his own play *Mr. H. or Beware A Bad Name* off the stage at Drury Lane). Each turned to a genre more natural for himself, the essay for Lamb and poetry for Browning. On this special occasion of commemoration, I remind you of Browning's image of the cup in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', through which he implies several questions: What are we to choose from life? What are we to take? What are we to leave behind? How are the cups of our lives to be filled? Our choices define us better than perhaps we know. The cup of Lamb, still full to the brim, holds for us, 150 years after, a legacy rich in human values that is sublime in its beauty and eternal in its truth; and all is enhanced by the uniqueness of his nostalgic vision.

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'JUST ANTIPODES': CHARLES LAMB AND THE IRONIC POOR

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Throughout his life, Charles Lamb was very sympathetic to the impoverished and to the socially down-trodden, for he understood that their condition was caused by rapid industrialization, by enclosure, and by the 1795 Speenhamland Act, a relief measure that was designed to supplement insufficient wages. From 1795 to the passage of the 1834 New Poor Law, the British relief system suffered corruption because of the failure of many land and factory owners to assume their financial responsibilities. Since they were assured that the Poor Law would supplement workers' wages, many industrialists and landowners kept wages low and thereby profited. As a result of this system, a minimal standard of living was forced upon many, which led, not only to the erosion of personal incentive, but also to the problem of pauperism. By the 1820s, pauperism had reached grotesque proportions. Sensitive to the swelling ranks of mendicancy in London, Lamb composed several significant commentaries in defence of the poor. I have focussed on a number of essays in which he uses irony to sympathize with the poor, to castigate the affluent, and to criticize the government.(1)

Lamb deals with the problems of poverty and hunger in his popular, semi-autobiographical essay, 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago' (pub., Nov. 1820, *London Magazine*). Describing the gluttonous matrons of Christ's Hospital as 'Harpies' who descended upon, and who carried away, the students' meagre provisions, he laments how blue-coat boys were left to feed upon the less than appetizing '*gags*, or the fat of fresh beef boiled'; for the young L. (translucently Lamb himself) as for the whole school, 'A *gag-eater* ... was equivalent to a *goule*, and held in equal detestation' (*Works*, II,15).(2) L. relates how one such boy would regularly gather up uneaten scraps, a practice that would evoke his classmates' scorn, for they accused him of either selling or of consuming the scraps. Because of these vile rumours, says Elia, the poor lad was ostracized and subjected to '... every mode of that negative punishment which is more grievous than many stripes' (*Works*, II, 15-16). The crowning irony of this social parable is the revelation of his self-effacing conduct: he endured being a pariah for the sake of an ulterior motive. Elia finally discloses that he had been feeding his own parents who had fallen on bad times. This tale takes a wry twist, for, though his parents were given relief and he himself received a silver medal for a reward, he, too, would join the ranks of the labouring poor, 'carrying a baker's basket', (*Works*, II,16).

In 'Grace Before Meat' (pub., Nov. 1821, *London Magazine)*, Lamb again treats the problems of the poor by contrasting table rituals, both sacred and profane. Of the poor man's table and benediction before meals, Elia relates,

> The indigent man, who hardly knows whether he shall have a meal the next day or not, sits down to his fare with a present sense of the blessing, which can be but feebly acted by the rich, into whose minds the conception of wanting a dinner could never, but by some extreme theory, have entered. The proper end of food--the animal sustenance--is barely contemplated by them. The poor man's bread is his daily bread, literally his bread for the day. Their courses are perennial. *(Works*, II,92)

The contrast between the simple poor and the gluttonous rich is an effective gloss upon the age. Elia continues:

> When I have sate ... at rich men's tables, with the savoury soup and messes steaming up the nostrils, and moistening the lips of the guests with desire and a distracted choice, I have felt the introduction of that ceremony to be unseasonable. With the ravenous orgasm upon you, it seems impertinent to interpose religious sentiment. It is a confusion of purpose to mutter out praises from a mouth that waters. The heats of epicurism put out the gentle flame of devotion. The incense which rises round is pagan, and the belly-god intercepts it for his own. The very excess of the provision beyond the needs, takes away all sense of proportion between the end and means. The giver is veiled by his gifts. You are startled at the injustice of returning thanks--for what?-- for having too much, while so many starve. It is to praise the Gods amiss. (*Works*, II, 92).

Between the poor and the rich man's tables is the place of the clergyman and of the liberal middle classes. Of their benediction, Elia says,

> [I have observed in them a certain awkwardness in praising God for his bounty] --a sort of shame--a sense of the co-presence of circumstances which unhallow the blessing. After a devotional tone put on for a few seconds, how rapidly the speaker will fall into his common voice! helping himself or his neighbour, as if to get rid of some uneasy sensation of hypocrisy. Not that the good man was a hypocrite, or was not most conscientious in the discharge of the duty; but he felt in his inmost mind the incompatibility of the scene and the viands before him with the exercise of a calm and rational gratitude. *(Works*, II,92-3)

Elia's point is that sympathy without action meant little and that a thin line separated the aloof, liberal concern of the middle class (and especially of the dissenting reformer) from actual hypocrisy. Certainly, Lamb's criticism of the middle-class reformer is bland in contrast to his acerbic indictment of the bestial aristocracy who, it was believed, regularly reduced small tenant farmers and factory workers to the rolls of poor relief. As in 'Christ's Hospital', his social criticism depends upon antithesis: the integrity of the labouring poor, the animality (and moral laxity) of the affluent, and the ineffectual social sympathy of the middle class, are effectively contrasted.

'The Praise of Chimney Sweepers' (pub., May 1822, *London Magazine)* was a reaction to the defeat of the relief bill in the Lords. Because children were literally being kidnapped and worked to death, and because the government failed to redress the problem, it is little wonder that social historians, like the Hammonds, have remarked about how appalling it was that 'Parliament should have refused to reform so inhuman a system when virtually the only difficulty was the taste for elaborate chimneys in grand houses'.(3) Horribly, this was no exaggeration; but the failure of the 1819 Bill momentarily thwarted the efforts of men like Henry Grey Bennet or of William Tooke, who, in 1803, had founded the Society for the Suppression of Climbing Boys.(4) A cursory review of the medical and of the non-medical testimonies conveys how utterly deplorable and indefensible this practice was. A reading of the Report from the Committee of the House of Commons on the petitions against the employment of boys in sweeping chimneys (23 June 1817; *EHD.*, XI, 742) explains how children as young as four were forced to ascend flues as narrow as seven inches and 'that pins (were) forced into their feet by the boy(s) that follow(ed) them up the chimney, in order to compel them to ascend it; and that lighted straw has been applied for that purpose' (*EHD.*, XI, 742). Unfed, uncleansed, uneducated, these children were gradually acclimated to their claustrophobic ordeal: 'children are subject to sores and bruises, and wounds and burns on their thighs, knees, and elbows; and ... it will require many months before the extremities of the elbows and knees become sufficiently hard to resist the excoriations to which they are at first subject' *(EHD.*, XI, 742*)*. To the acute dangers of suffocation and immolation were added chronic problems like skeletal deformities, skin cancer, and respiratory disease (Cf. *EHD.*, XI, 742). This compelling and conclusive evidence, and the unconscionable protraction of this controversy, prompted Lamb to compose one of his most biting and ironic essays.

Although it is interlaced with literary allusions, this essay is more than an exercise in pedantry. In fact, this apparent affectation is really part of the critical apparatus. So profoundly horrible was the practice of chimney sweeping that only outright lambast would have seemed appropriate. Instead, Lamb employs mock-heroic diction and conventions as a way of maintaining a degree of critical distance from his reprehensible subject. Thus Elia explains how much he would have liked to have met climbing boys who were being acclimated to their tasks. With a kind of morbid curiosity, he would see them 'blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek' (*Works*, II, 108). This allusion to the priming of newly-enslaved Negroes is here aptly employed. Then Elia compares the sweeps' public crying--which they were enjoined to do regularly to advertise their masters' services--to the '*peep peep* of a young sparrow', and hopes to meet those who were in the priming or 'cartilaginous' phase.(5) The priming-phase was the most painful stage for the children. Lamb realized this acutely; so, through the use of ironic appositives, Elia echoes the commonplace comparison between the poor children and the African slaves, alluding especially to the former's sooty skin, which, through the course of their labours, would become so deeply ingrained as never to come clean: 'These specks--poor blots--

innocent blacknessess--... these young Africans of our own growth--these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of Chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind' (*Works*, II,109).(6) Avoiding invective through apposition, Lamb alludes to their de-humanized and heteronomous states (they are 'spots', 'blots', 'blacknessess') and caricaturizes them as clergymen who, unlike their indolent advocates in actual pulpits, embodied the lesson of man's inhumanity towards man more poignantly than any sermon or pamphlet might. Inveighing at the use of infants in the narrowest chimneys, Elia remembers how as a child he would marvel to see 'a chit no bigger than one's-self, enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the *fauces Averni* [i.e., the jaws of hell]--to pursue him in imagination, as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades!' (*Works*, II,109). Consistent with the mock-heroic is the symbolic hell-harrowing, which is here invoked with terrible realism; despite the hyperbolic diction, the child is seen emerging from a labyrinth of horizontal and vertical flues, doing so with a 'feeble shout of discovered day-light'. Rushing outside, Elia arrives 'just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety', in his hand the brush, mockingly (and absurdly) called a 'flag waved over a conquered citadel'--a simile no less affective than the pulpit metaphor (*Works*, II,109). And he punctuates this episode with the anecdote of a 'bad sweep' who was left in the stack, which was a criminal fact of life in this practice, (*Works*, II,109).

Prior to the first major turn in the essay, Elia asks his reader's generosity with these 'small gentry' (the allusion is to the gentry made unemployed through enclosure), who, in 'starving weather', suffered from 'kibe' or chilblain (*Works*, II,109). Here Lamb makes an ironic statement about the sweeps' favorite beverage, 'saloop'. On the surface, this drink seems innocuous since it consisted of sassafras, milk and sugar. Although 'saloop' was unappetizing to some, it was, says Elia, 'surprisingly gratifying to the palate of a young chimney sweeper--whether the oily particles (sassafras is slightly oleaginous) do attenuate and soften the fuliginous concretions, which are sometimes found (in dissections) to adhere to the roof of the mouth in these unfledged practitioners', and he wonders whether 'saloop' had a naturally 'lenitive' quality since the sweeps, 'Being penniless', would 'hang their black heads over the ascending steam, to gratify one sense if possible...' (*Works*, II,109-110). With the graphic language of a coroner, Lamb suggests, ironically, why 'saloop' was so medicinal: the sassafras vapors were not only lenitives, but, when drunk, this concoction would serve as a natural diaphonetic (by inducing sweat, the 'saloop' would actually cleanse the sweeps' grainy skin), as an emetic, and as an expectorant--all of which, he states, were indicated in autopsies.

Lamb turns to the fact that, too often, aristocratic children were either kidnapped or sold into urban slavery, and he focusses upon this through the symbol of the sweeps' white teeth, which he calls a 'remnant of gentry not quite extinct; a badge of better days; a hint of nobility:--and, doubtless, under the obscuring darkness and double night of their forlorn disguisement, often-times lurketh good blood, and gentle conditions, derived from lost ancestry, and a lapsed pedigree' (*Works*, II,111). But through the bombast, Elia soberly observes that, 'The premature apprenticements of these tender victims give but too much encouragement, I fear, to clandestine and almost infantile abductions'. He dispels the Midsummer-Night's Dream atmosphere, for 'tales of fairy-spiriting may shadow a lamentable verity...'--in other words, a kidnapping ring that specialized in high-born children (*Works*, II,112).

Indeed, Lamb's London was filled with 'lamentable verities'. Yet, in the face of such horrors, he describes an annual convention of sweeps to be held on the Feast of St. Bartholomew. Sponsored and presided over by James 'Jem' White and his friends, Lamb and 'Bigod'Fenwick, this solemn supper in Smithfield was held 'upon the yearly return of the fair of St. Bartholomew'. Lamb's description is reminiscent of Wordsworth's Bartholomew Fair in 'Residence in London', Book VII: 650-96, of the 1805 *Prelude.* (7) E.V. Lucas has noted that in 1802 Lamb had personally taken Wordsworth on a guided tour through the mazes of the Fair (see E.V. Lucas, *Lamb's Works*, II,382n.). Mock-heroically asking the muses for help, Wordsworth describes a literal 'hell/For eyes and ears!'--an inventory of monkeys, children on roundabouts, carnival freaks, musicians, acrobats, chained Negroes, clowns, Albinos, Indians, dwarfs, talking animals, fire-eaters, Giants, Ventriloquists, magicians, puppeteers, beasts, madmen, and assorted perversions--the blank confusion and 'Parliament of Monsters' (1805, VII:692). In keeping with the anti-spirit of the Fair, Lamb also depicts a bizarre feast, a freak show in a 'spot among the pens' (*Works*, II,113). After a bawdy 'inaugural ceremony', the feast began: 'the sable younkers lick in the unctuous meat' while White gave a speech. The consciously elevated style and the festive atmosphere Lamb creates do not obscure the fact that ravenous, soot-caked children were fighting like animals for each crust and morsel (*Works*, II,113). Deprived by their servitude, these children have become mere caricatures--at once, living monsters and martyrs to social corruption and moral laxity. Toasting 'the King' and 'the Cloth', declaring his hope that the brush may supersede the laurel as the heraldic symbol of honour, and obviously execrating the Establishment (in 'the King' and 'the Cloth') for its failure to enact ameliorative legislation--Elia continues his mimicry while the children engorged themselves.

In the June 1822 issue of the *London Magazine*, Lamb published a companion-piece to the Chimney-sweep essay-- 'Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis'--which is, in many ways, a touching commentary on, and a corruscating defamation of, the state of London society when mendicancy had reached epidemic proportions. A prose-lamentation on human misery, the 'Complaint' exemplifies the many tones of Lamb's ironic voice and reveals both his sympathy for the down-trodden and his antipathy for social reformers and ideologues (we might infer by this the Malthusian democrats and the Owenite socialists), who waged theoretical campaigns for the revision of the Poor Laws.(8) As an urban *raconteur*, Lamb was primarily concerned with the victims of industrialization, of enclosure, of foreclosure, and of the poor rates--and with the victims whose suffering was a world removed from the coffee-house debates on the economics of the times.

In the friendly societies that were self-professedly the beggars' advocates--and specifically in the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity (1818) (See Lucas, *Lamb's Works*, II,383n.)-- Lamb had little faith. Through the voice of Elia, he acclaims 'the all-sweeping besom of societarian reformation--young modern Alcides' [Hercules'] club to rid the time of its abuses--is uplift with many-handed sway to extirpate the last fluttering tatters of the bugbear MENDICITY from the metropolis' (*Works*, II,114). Lamb conveys how ineffectual such societies were, for, instead of addressing the socioeconomic roots of pauperism, they chose to mitigate the problem of purging the indigent. So that the streets might be cleared, many of the poor, were, therefore, forcibly detained and interned. This indiscriminate violation of human rights had an even darker side. In an 1805 anti-Malthusian pamphlet, for instance, George Rose, Treasurer of the Navy until 1818, had observed that, in fact, 'The avowed policy of workhouses, in many instances, (was) a mixture of maintenance and punishment by imprisonment' (*EHD.*, XI, 430).

To such de-humanizing and ineffectual methods of social relief, Lamb responded by evoking the tragic pathos of mendicancy. The material divestiture of the individual, paradoxically, revealed his or her underlying humanity: 'Their appeals were to our common nature; less revolting to an ingenuous mind than to be suppliant to the particulr humours or caprice of any fellow-creatures, parochial or societarian' (*Works*, II,114). No longer at the mercy of land - or mill-owners, these people had hit the bottom socially. Yet, from their nakedness, says Elia, sprang a dignity that seemed to transfigure them, even in their desolation: 'to be naked is to be so much nearer to the being a man, than to go in livery' (*Works*, II,114-115).

Drawing upon examples from 'tale or history' in which the 'Beggar is ever the just antipode to your King', both materially and ethically, Elia illustrates the tragic fall and divestiture of his heroic beggars. For Lamb, the beggars' abjectness was a positive despair and a profound humility even though, in the eyes of society, they were anything but heroic ('Pauperism, pauper, poor man, are expressions of pity, but pity alloyed with contempt' [*Works*, II, 115]). 'Pity alloyed with respect' is the most accurate way of describing Lamb's own attitude. Elia exults in how utterly impervious these outcasts were to the social hegemony of all classes. Using the vestment trope, Lamb writes that,

> Rags, which are the reproach of poverty are the Beggars' robes, and graceful *insignia* of his profession, his tenure, his full dress, the suit in which he is expected to show himself in public. he is never out of the fashion, or limpeth awkwardly behind it. He is not required to put on court morning. He weareth all colours, fearing none. His costume has undergone less change than the Quaker's. He is the only man in the universe who is not obliged to study appearances. The ups and downs of the world concern him no longer. He alone continueth in one stay. The price of stock or land affecteth him not. The fluctuations of agricultural or commercial prosperity touch him not, or at worst but change his customers. He is not expected to become bail or surety for any one. No man troubleth him with questioning his religion or politics. He is the only free man in the universe. (*Works*, II, 116).

Ironically, Lamb sees the ultimate expulsion of the mendicant from British society as actually conferring autonomy and as actually freeing him from the complicated straits of the Poor Laws and the workhouses. Freed of social pretences and reduced to bare selfhood, these indigents were fully human. In this commentary can be read Lamb's repudiation of political and of social projects, which he considered largely self-indulgent and artificial substitutes for the commonest human decency.

Lamb's use of the clothing-symbol also suggests how much he enjoyed experimenting with literary conventions. This experimentation is amply evidenced when he considers these mendicants as part of an urban iconography and, therefore, 'as indispensable', culturally, 'as the Ballad Singer' (*Works*, II,116). This is a sad commentary upon the times since the equation of mendicants to balladeers signified that the former transmitted, or rather embodied, an important aspect of British culture. But the incarnate symbolism of the mendicants spoke of a pervasive social and cultural illness, and their silent message, Lamb seems to be saying, was more thought-provoking and tragic than anything set in ballad stanzas. Thus, for Lamb, the mendicants 'were the standing morals, emblems, mementos, dial-mottos, the spital sermons, the books for children, the salutary checks and pauses to the high and rushing tide of greasy citizenry' (*Works*, II, 116). In their naked dignity, and in a very Wordsworthian sense, Lamb saw admonishments--but these warnings had lost their impact upon the dulled consciences of the 'greasy' multitude. The popular conscience, he seems to be saying, had become so hardened through self-indulgence that they were indifferent to the plight of the poor. As a result, these urban outcasts were shuttled off as mere 'mementos' to the workhouses and the prisons. This indifference, or 'modern fastidiousness', was most overtly exemplified by the expulsion of the blind men who lined the walls of Lincoln's Inn Garden: 'immersed between four walls, in what withering poor-house do they endure the penalty of double darkness, where the chink of the dropt halfpenny no more consoles their forlorn bereavement, far from the sound of the cheerful and hope-stirring tread of the passenger' (*Works*, II,117). Dropping any fictive guise, Lamb openly criticizes such expedient, utilitarian modes of social reform.

But Lamb would not cease with the blind of Lincoln's Inn Garden, as he relates the story of the legless sailor--a character based upon one Samuel Horsey, known popularly as the King of Beggars, whose mutilation was attributed either to a piece of falling timber in Bow Lane or to the 1780 Gordon Riots (Lucas, *Lamb's Works*, II, 386n.). Through heroic hyperbole, this invalid becomes a 'grand fragment' and an 'earth-born Antaeus' (*Works*, II, 118). But, irrespective of this infirm dignity, he is forced, says Elia, to 'expiate' his 'contumacy' (i.e., his resistance to poor-house internment), 'in one of those houses (ironically christened) of Correction' (*Works*, II, 119). Lamb's point is that a dubious moral standard was operating in British society, one that required atonement from the victim.

Lamb's perspectives on the sociology of the poor touch upon the interrelated questions of over-population, the deterioration of the family, and the overall erosion of British society. In his 'Popular Fallacy XII: That home is home though it is never so homely', he considers the phenomenon of the alehouse society, which had progressively displaced the domestic hearth. To avoid his destitute family, the impoverished labourer would enjoy another 'blazing hearth, and a hob to warm his pittance of beer by', companionship, and, for what it was worth, 'political conversation'--all this in place of 'so many shivering children with their mother', the clamors of a wife 'made gaunt by famishing', the lack of visitors, and the 'absorbing consideration of food to be obtained for the family' (*Works*, II, 263). As usual, Lamb places in ironic contrast to the labourer's meagre repast the image of 'the substantial joint providing for the landlord and his family'(*Works*, II,263). But, Elia asks rhetorically, should the prodigal husband be chastised for neglecting his family? Depicting the typical pauper-wife as a wretch and his children as burdens though with great compassion also for their sufferings, Elia exonerates the truant husband (*Works*,II,264). Understanding, perhaps as clearly as most of the social thinkers of the period, that socioeconomic deprivation of this kind tended to perpetuate itself, Lamb points to the fact that the erosion of the family and the failure to raise children with the proper attention and care only created a new generation of paupers, both materially and spiritually,

Lamb's social criticism was motivated by sincere sympathy for the poor, for he believed in the dignity of man and condemned whoever or whatever subverted this principle. Indeed, as Mary R. Wedd has correctly observed, Lamb, neither in word nor in deed, lacked a 'social conscience'(9) Throughout his social work, he employed irony to illustrate the material disparity between the upper and lower classes and warned that the causes of such inequities stemmed, fundamentally, from human greed and selfishness. And the continuation of this dire state, he implied, would injure the nation as a whole.

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CHARLES LAMB, BERNARD BARTON AND THE QUAKERS

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Although Charles Lamb's friendship with the Quaker poet Bernard Barton is well-known, the full extent of Lamb's interest in the faith and the background of Barton has been left unexplored.(1) Even before meeting Barton, Lamb had been attracted by Quakerism; his father had once been a Friend (2) and, in

1797, Lamb himself had considered joining too. Although he was impressed with the writings of leading Quaker thinkers of the past, he had reservations about certain aspects of the faith. He claimed to have been dissuaded from becoming a Quaker after seeing a man at a Meeting grotesquely agitated: he wrote to Coleridge 'This cured me of Quakerism; I love it in the books of Penn and Woolman, but I detest the vanity of a man thinking he speaks by the Spirit, when what he says an ordinary man might say without all that quaking and trembling'.(3) Also, while in Pentonville, he later confessed he fell in love, from a distance, with a Quaker girl, Hester Savory, on whose death in 1803 he composed a poem, published in his collected *Works* (1818). The piece contains a stanza further criticising the Quaker way of life:

> Her parents held the Quaker rule,
> Which doth the human feeling cool;
> But she was train'd in Nature's school;
> Nature had blest her. (4)

Nevertheless, Lamb took it upon himself to urge a young Quaker Robert Lloyd in 1799 to conquer his reluctance to attend Meetings with his parents: 'Silent Worship cannot be *Un*lawful - there is no Idolatry, no invocation of saints, no bowing before the consecrated wafer in all this - nothing which a wise man would refuse, or a good man fear to do'.(5)

It was over twenty years later that Lamb published the 'Elia' essay 'A Quaker's Meeting' (1821). The tone of the piece is mixed; 'Elia' uses the Meeting as an exemplum of how to enjoy solitude and society together, and asserts that he has sometimes seen faces there 'upon which the dove sate visibly brooding'.(6) Yet he also includes the comic incident of a powerfully built man confessing to having been a 'wit' in his youth: 'His brow would have scared away the Levities... faster than the Loves fled the face of Dis at Enna'.(7) The event was based on fact; for in a letter to Coleridge in 1797 Lamb even more tellingly points up the incongruity of such a confession: 'I should be as scandalised at a *bon mot* issuing from his oracle-looking mouth, as to see Cato go down a country dance'.(8) The essay, however, ends on a note of praise; for at those Meetings where no one has been moved to speak the individual returns to the world soothed and refreshed, 'with a sermon, not made with hands'.(9) He concludes by admiring the uniformity of quietness and cleanliness which so characterize the Friends, with the hyperbolic observation that their very clothes 'seem incapable of receiving a soil'.(10) (Ironically, Lamb himself, from his neat, sober dress and 'sedate bearing' appeared to Thomas Hood like a '*Quaker* in black'.(11) According to George L. Barnett, however, Lamb's clothes relfected more the wishes of his employers at the East India House(12) than a desire to emulate the Quakers.)

In another 'Elia' essay published later that same year, 1821, 'Imperfect Sympathies', Lamb repeated his admiration for Quaker works and manners, but voiced his opposition for what he saw to be the Philistine and puritanical tendencies among the Friends themselves: 'I must have books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandal, jokes ambiguities...I should starve at their primitive banquet'.(13) In this essay, the reader is persuaded that the Quakers are a different breed from himself. A comic illustration of their alarming composure is given by way of explanation: 'Elia' recounts how he and three Quakers were overcharged for a meal, and how his companions after quietly pointing out the error in vain, offered the correct amount to the landlady (with him following suit). When the woman refused to accept it, the Quakers calmly 'put up their silver', as did Elia, and left ignoring the proprietor's remonstrances, and never referring to the matter again. (In fact, as Lamb told Bernard Barton in 1823, the incident had occurred to Sir Anthony Carlisle who found it an instance of their 'surprising coolness; that they should be capable of committing a good joke, with an utter insensibility to its being any jest at all'.)(14)

Once he became a regular correspondent with Barton in 1822, Lamb vowed he would treat the Quakers with less 'levity' than he had done in his other writings (15), while at the same time pretending to think that Barton's idea of writing a sonnet sequence on 'Quaker Worthies' would mean merely 'a series of Sonnets on "Eminent Bankers".'(16) Lamb here could be considered to be mocking the anomaly between the asceticism of the Quaker way of life and the active encouragement given by the Society to the pursuit of wealth. He could also be seen to be amusing himself at the expense of Barton's banking employers, the Alexanders.

Obviously, Lamb felt an initial sympathy with Barton in that they both had to write part-time, unlike many of their contemporaries; so much so that he wrote to the Quaker-poet in 1822, 'I am, like you, a prisoner to the desk.'(17) The exact nature of Bernard Barton's connection with his employers has never been fully examined. It is well-known that Barton (1784-1849) was originally apprenticed to an Essex shopkeeper, Samuel Jesup, and then moved to Woodbridge, Suffolk, to work for Benjamin, his former employer's brother. Barton married his new employer's daughter Lucy Jesup (1781-1808) and became a partner in the family business. After his wife's death he spent a year as a tutor in Liverpool, to return to Woodbridge in 1809 to take up the post of clerk at Alexanders Bank, a position he retained until just before his death. (18)

It has never as yet been noticed that Bernard Barton's employers at the bank were his wife's relatives. His mother-in-law Martha Jesup (1753-?1839) was born Martha Alexander, and was the sister of Dykes (1763-1849) and Samuel (1749-1824) Alexander who owned the Suffolk bank bearing their name.(19) It was clearly a common practice with the Alexanders to give employment to the husbands of their womenfolk; for Samuel Alexander gave his own son-in-law Thomas Maw (1772-1849) charge of the family bank at Needham Market, Suffolk in 1808.(20) Evidentally, Bernard Barton being a son-in-law of a sister of the Alexander banking brothers received a correspondingly humbler position in the family business.

It was in this post that Lamb urged Barton to remain when he adjured him to 'Keep to your Bank, and the Bank will keep you...Sit down, good B.B., in the Banking Office'.(21) Subsequently, Barton appears to have taken exception to Lamb's editors' assumption that he had been asking Lamb whether he should give up his job, and insisted that he had never entertained 'so idle a dream'. (22) The truth of the Quaker's disclaimer is questionable; for eleven years prior to Lamb's letter he had elicited a similar piece of advice from Byron:'...do not renounce writing, but never trust entirely to Authorship. - If you have a profession, retain it, it will be ... a last and sure resource'.(23) Furthermore, Barton's son-in-law Edward Fitzgerald asserted categorically in the *Memoir* he wrote for the *Poems and Letters* edited by Lucy Barton (Barton's daughter) that the poet had considered relinquishing his position.(24)

Whatever the exact situation was, however, it must be assumed that Barton was at the least unsatisfied with the nature of his employment to have occasioned Lamb to write early in 1823: 'I think I must give up the cause of the Bank - from nine to nine is galley-slavery, but I hope it is but temporary'.(25) That same year another of Barton's contemporaries went to the lengths of airing the case of the poet and his employers in public and in verse - the Rev. John Mitford (1781-1859), rector of Benhall and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In his 'Sonnet' addressed to Barton, the Quaker is compared to Tasso:

> What to thy Broken Spirit can atone,
> Unhappy victim of the Tyrant's fears;
> Or who to thee recal [sic] thy perish'd years,
> Nature's sweet gift destroy'd: when one by one,
> The blossoms of thy vernal years were strown
> Upon that dungeon floor: (26)

Not content with implying that the Alexanders were tyrants, their bank a dungeon and their employee a prisoner, Mitford proceeds to assert that Barton's plight is worse even than Tasso's in that he is 'Prisoner at once, and Slave'(27) (an unconscious echo of Lamb's 'prisoner to the desk' quoted above). Barton, not surprisingly anxious lest the Alexanders should hear of Mitford's extravagant attack on them, received the rather unhelpful assurance from Lamb that he saw little harm in the piece being published, since it had not been written by Barton himself; he held out, however, few hopes for the Alexanders' change of heart towards their employee, as Quakers had as yet shown little patronage of the arts.(28)

As it transpired the following year Barton was offered the sum of £1,200 by a group of Friends on the advice of the philanthropist Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847).(29) It has been discovered by the present author that J.J. Gurney, the brother to Elizabeth Fry, was also a distant connection of the poet through his banking relatives, since he was the child of the first cousin of Samuel Alexander's wife.(30) Once more Lamb interposed with advice, urging him to accept the gift but only to leave the bank if there was a chance to add to the amount raised.(31) (Barton received yearly interest until 1839 when the greater part of the fund was devoted to buying his deceased mother-in-law Martha Jesup's house in Woodbridge).(32)

Lamb continued to concern himself with Barton and his job in 1824 when the scandal of the conviction of a banker for embezzlement led him to speculate ironically on his friend's taking a similarly extreme course of action: 'You are as yet upright. But you are a Banker, at least the next thing to it ... If in an unguarded hour... Consider the scandal it will bring upon those of your persuasion. Thousands would go to see a Quaker hanged, that would be indifferent to the fate of a Presbyterian, or an Anabaptist'.(33) Lamb could jest at the incongruity of the pious clerk turning thief, probably forgetting that two years before there had been a robbery at the Ipswich branch of Alexanders which had upset Barton considerably.(34) Lamb uses the notion of the would-be banking embezzler in his piece 'The Last Peach' (1825), but makes no reference to the man's religion except to note that he was 'bred up in the strictest principles of honesty' and had passed his life in 'punctual adherence' to them.(35) (Also in 1825, however, Lamb in 'Unitarian Protests' could praise Barton's fellow Quakers for their determination and courage in refusing 'to take oaths, for which they were rewarded' with the privilege of 'affirming').(36)

So great was the fascination Alexanders bank held for Lamb that in 1827 by which time he had left his own clerical post at the East India House, he even offered to relieve Barton of his duties for a spell: 'Do your Drummonds /Alexanders/ allow no holydays? I will willingly come and w/ork/ for you a three weeks or so, to let you loose'.(37) Regrettably, there is no evidence of Barton's having taken up the offer.

Despite any reservations he might have entertained about the conditions of his employment, Barton retained the friendship of the daughter of one of the banking brothers whose more fortunate husband, as has been noted, was given charge of the Needham Market Alexanders Bank. This Lucy Maw (1774-1856) was acquainted with him even before he started working for the bank; for in 1808, Barton's wife, as she was dying in childbirth, is said to have asked to see the Maw couple. (38) How far it was through the offices of Lucy Maw, a respected Quaker minister and benefactress, that Bernard Barton obtained his clerkship the next year is open to speculation. He may, however, have been acknowledging past kindnesses when twenty years later he wrote 'Stanzas to an Invalid' for her daughter Louisa (1806-28) a week before the girl died. The poem pays tribute to Milton's 'They also serve who only stand and wait', and Louisa Maw's illness is used to exemplify Christian endurance in lines which are undistinguished in thought, expression or emotion:

> If gentle cheerfulness in pain
> And weakness, silently can teach;
> Believe not thou hast liv'd in vain,
> Nor mourn that thus thy life should preach.(39)

It was included in the *Memoir* Thomas and Lucy Maw compiled after their daughter's death. They were following a common Quaker practice of bringing out a volume to commemorate the life of a loved or revered person whose life could be considered an example to others; a biography was usually provided with attendant moralizing and quotations from the deceased's writings. (The fact that Quaker grave-yards tended to have no tombstones may have contributed to the tradition; Barton himself deplored the lack of commemorative tablets and marked his mother-in-law's grave with a tree.)(40) In the case of the memoir of Louisa Maw, the author's intention was to sustain those similarly afflicted and to instruct 'young Christian friends' (41) With these aims in mind Barton added two further poems, a 'Postscript' to his 'Stanzas to an Invalid' and 'Stanzas Written After the Funeral'. In both pieces the girl's sufferings are shown to be Christlike. The image was not coined exclusively for Louisa Maw; for Barton invariably used it for poems on a similar theme, as Lamb had pointed out sharply to him three years previously: 'It seems as if you were forever losing friends' children by death, and reminding their parents of the Resurrection. Do children die so often, and so good, in your parts?'(42)

If Lamb's attitude both to Quakerism and to Bernard Barton was often one of amused yet critical affection, it was not devoid of a certain seriousness. If Quakerism did not provide all the answers, it did, in his view, have some of them. He admired Quaker writings to such an extent that in 1823, after reading George Fox's *Doctrinals* and *Journal*, he could half-jestingly, half seriously, warn Barton: 'If I get on at this rate, the Society will be in danger of having two Quaker poets to patronise'.(43) While identifying in part with both Barton's faith and professional position, he could still make fun of the poet as an example of the human frailty of the movement: 'I have ever said that the Quakers are the only *Professors* of Christianity...I say *Professors* - marry, as to practice, with their gaudy hot types and poetical vanities - they are much at one with the sinful'.(44)

He did, however, see Barton as the ideal literary exponent of the faith; so much so that in 1829 he went to the length of urging his friend to write 'something on Quakerism - for Quakers to read - but nominally addrest to Non Quakers explaining its 'dogmas - waiting on the Spirit - by the analogy of human calmness and patient waiting on the judgment', in order to make non-Quakers 'reconciled' to the doctrines 'by shewing something like them in mere human operations'.(45) The fact that Lamb should be so concerned that such a work should be written, and by Bernard Barton, surely attests to the high regard in which he ultimately held the Quaker and his beliefs.

NOTES

1 Even in an article concerning the views Lamb held on religion Dudley Wright devotes only a paragraph to his attitude to Quakerism, and fails to trace the influence of Barton or Quakerism on any of Lamb's writings. 'The Religious Opinions of Charles Lamb', *Open Court*, 37 (1923), 644.

2 *Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1975-), I,xxvi. Subsequently referred to as Marrs.

3 Ibid, I, 103.

4 Ibid, II, 108.

5 Ibid, I, 169.

6 *Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchison (Oxford University Press: London,1924),II,530.

7 Ibid, II, 531.

8 Marrs, I, 104.

9 *Works*, II, 531.

10 Ibid.

11 *Hood's Own* (Baily: London, 1839),p.551.

12 *Charles Lamb* (Twayne: Boston, 1976), p.41.

13 *Works*, II, 550

14 *Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas (Dent & Methuen: London, 1935), II, 373. Subsequently referred to as Lucas.

15 Lucas, II, 356.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid, II, 332.

18 *Selections from the Poems and Letters of Bernard Barton*, ed, Lucy Barton (Hall, Virtue: London, 1849),xi-xiv.

19 Comparative genealogical study by present author of entries under 'Alexander' and 'Barton' in unpublished *Quaker Dictionary of Biography* (Friends House, London), and entry for Lucy Barton in J.G. Bevan, *Piety Promoted Tenth Part* (Phillips; London, 1810) where Mrs. Barton's aunt is identified as Mary Alexander (p.281) who in the *Q.D.B.* is said to be a sister of Martha Jesup and Samuel and Dykes Alexander.

20 (Lucy Maw) *A tribute to the Memory of Thomas Maw by his Widow* (Gilpin: London, 1850), p.4.

21 Lucas, II, 364.

22 *Literary Correspondence of Bernard Barton*, ed. J.C. Barcus (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1966), p.110.

23 *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. L.A. Marchand (John Murray: London, 1973), II, 179.

24 *Poems and Letters*, xviii.

25 Lucas, II, 373.

26 *London Magazine* 7 (June 1823), 620.

27 Ibid.

28 Lucas, II, 376.

29 *Poems and Letters*, xx-xxi.

30 Comparative genealogical study of entries under 'Gurney' and 'Alexander' in *Q.D.B.*

31 Lucas, II, 422.

32 *Poems and Letters*, xxi. Barton wrote *A Memorial of Joseph John Gurney* on the latter's death in 1847.

33 Lucas,II, 447.

34 *Literary Correspondence*, p.62; W.H. Bidwell, *Annals of an East Anglian Bank* (Goose:Norwich, 1900), pp 376-9.

35 *Works*, II, 358.

36 Ibid, II, 338.

37 Lucas, III, 122.

38 Bevan, *Piety Promoted*, p.283.

39 T. and L. Maw, *A Memoir of Louisa Maw* (W. Alexander: York, 1828), p.49.

40 *Poems and Letters*, p.40.

41 *A Memoir*, iii.

42 Lucas, III, 10, Lamb was writing from strength, as his poem 'On an Infant Dying as Soon as Born' (composed April 1827: Lucas III, 84) was to show.

43 Lucas, II, 385.

44 Ibid, III, 193.

45 Ibid, III, 225.

BOOK REVIEWS

Friedrich A. Uehlein *Die Manifestation des Selbstbewusstseins im konkreten, Ich bin: Endliches und Unendliches Ich im Denken S.T. Coleridge*
Felix Meiner Verlag, 1982.

This book is a careful and systematic examination of Coleridge's principle of self-consciousness as fundamental to his philosophical lucubrations as well as influential (implicity) for his poetry. Mr. Uehlein first examines Coleridge's statements about the principle of the 'I am' as opposed to the 'It is' of Spinoza, and establishes its intuitive, experiential basis for Coleridge. He then compares Coleridge's concept with that of such philosophers as Schelling, Hume and Husserl in order to establish the exact nature of Coleridge's particular elaboration of self-consciousness. In the fourth chapter, some fascinating anticipations of Heidegger's philosophy emerge, as Uehlein further explores the meaning of the 'I am'. For instance, Coleridge insisted on the interdependence between self awareness and the existence of objects outside of ourselves, that is, self-consciousness is a 'Dasein', not an intuition independent of context. Both Dewey and Heidegger are anticipated when Uehlein shows the importance to Coleridge of the subject-object dichotomy as merely a relative distinction, and not an absolute division, a distinction, moreover, which is dynamically overcome in the very act of self-consciousness as a consciousness of self in the world, self in the context of an environment. Coleridge does not, then, like many other philosophers, dwell upon self-consciousness as a pure, independent intuition. Nor does he see it as a mere conglomeration of perceptions and experiences and memories. Rather, he insists upon an intuitive awareness of a unified self not identical with any perception or conception, but on the other hand not pure or independent of experience and the world either. Man is a being-in-the-world, not just a being or just a world. Uehlien enunciates clearly Coleridge's rejection of any dualistic philosophy, and his independence, for example, from Schelling's polar dualism. Moreover, Uehlein shows convincingly that Coleridge's conception of subjectivity as the unity of the individual 'Ich' and the'great eternal I am' is not a regression to a pre-Kantian ontology, as Wellek maintained, but is rather a successful effort to avoid both solipsism and dualism.

This book is a considerable contribution to research on the Coleridgean philosophy. The first half of the book is a lucid account of Coleridge's founding principle; the second half raises all the usual doubts and uncertainties as to the import of Coleridge's metaphysics. Uehlein offers us one very cogent interpretation, but, doubtless, there will always be argument as to how metaphysically Coleridge's 'metaphysics' are to be taken; that is, how dogmatically as opposed to methodologically (as stimulants to reflection and as open-ended speculation on the mysteries of life, death and existence).

K.M. Wheeler

St. John's College, Cambridge

Derek Colville *The Teaching of Wordsworth.* Peter Lang, New York, Berne, Frankfort, Nancy, sFr. 23.80

In the deliberate ambiguity of his title Derek Colville gives the clue to his intention in the book. He wishes to confront Wordsworth's particular kind of 'philosophy, a way of codifying the meaning of human experience', which 'does not rest on theoretical argument, but ... on personal experience of an imaginative sort'. In doing this Professor Colville hopes to counter the reaction of some students who at first find Wordsworth, by comparison for example with Donne, 'inconsequential, banal, certainly flat, depressing in style, and with a kind of over-obviousness in subject matter'. As he rightly says, 'Wordsworth criticism as a whole has not been particularly helpful in illuminating a central question: what goes on in the text to set up that expansive imaginative discovery so central in reading Wordsworth?' In tackling this most difficult and crucial problem, Professor Colville first looks at the vision on Snowdon in the last book of *The Prelude* as a way in to a broad examination of Wordsworth's ways of seeing, in the attempt to demonstrate to students 'that it is possible to respond to experience in ways very different from the scientific and modern'. In successive chapters, the variety of Wordsworth's poetic voice, irony, tone and structure is illustrated from selected poems.

Professor Colville uses the text of the 'standard edition of 1849-50 in the Clarendon Press edition of *The Poetical Works*' and in his study of Book I of *The Prelude* lays stress on the internal structure of the book in its final form without reference to the chronology of composition and revision. Perhaps this is permissible, taking the poet's approved text as the finished work of art. But in the case of the Lucy poems, while acknowledging that probably 'Wordsworth never printed the Lucy poems as a group' and certainly never regarded them so, and admitting that the customary order of printing them now is merely a recent tradition, Colville does 'assume both group and order' and argues 'for both as crucial to the Lucy poems as a work of art'. One cannot but feel a little uneasy about these assumptions, even though, as all but one of the Lucy poems were written at Goslar, it is natural to find an interweaving and unifying spirit in them.

Again, Professor Colville finds the final 'message' of 'The Fountain' and 'The Two April Mornings' more positive perhaps than the text seems to warrant and indeed seems to suggest a more permanent and invariable optimism in Wordsworth's work as a whole than a chronological study would reveal. Nor, maybe, would many of us share his view of 'The Thorn'- subject of the last chapter - as 'exemplary as one of the two or three artistically most developed examples of the narrative poem in English'. Nevertheless, he is very persuasive and there is much to admire in this book.

First, it is a real pleasure to read a work of Wordsworth criticism with such a lucid style. No pseudo-learned smoke screen here, disguising untenable theses. This is a courageous book which bravely faces the central paradox of Wordsworth's work and honestly tries to grapple with it, often with close criticism that is both illuminating and original. In such a small span there is necessarily much left out and one finds oneself saying, 'Yes, *but* ...' Yet this in itself is stimulating and makes the reader, as the author intended, re-examine his own assumptions. A final chapter summing up and rounding off the conclusions to be drawn from the 'individual essays' which form the sections of the book would have been an advantage. One does rather feel that the book just stops, but there is much interest on the way.

Mary Wedd

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NOTES

MR. E.G. PRESTON REPORTS that his local paper *The Hastings and St. Leonards Observer* quoted Charles Lamb's description of the smuggler as 'the only honest thief'. Mr. Preston in a letter published in the paper was able to confirm the quotation but doubted that the essayist ever 'lived in Rye'. It was greatly to the credit of the Acting Editor that he gracefully denied any 'deliberate attempt to rewrite history' and acknowledged 'an old-fashioned bloomer'!

ADDITION TO THE LIBRARY

From 1818 to 1820 John Thelwall, radical friend of Coleridge, published and edited *The Champion*, a journal previously edited by John Scott, and several contributions by Lamb appeared in it. In 1822 Thelwall published a selection of items from the magazine *(The Poetical Recreations of The Champion)* including thirteen thought to be by Lamb. A copy of the book, recased by the Library's binder, has been presented by Basil Savage to the Society's collection at the Guildhall Library. The Society is most grateful for this generous gift.

VISIT OF PROFESSOR MISENHEIMER

The Society had great pleasure in the company of Professor Misenheimer and in hearing him speak as part of the sesquicentennial celebrations. We regret that members have had to wait until now to read his lecture and we very much wish that we could reproduce not only the matter but the manner of his speech, which charmed us into 'April weather of smiles and tears', as he read from the Essays. We hope that he will soon visit us again.

NEW TEA ARRANGEMENTS

Now that the Mary Ward Centre has refreshments provided by contract, our kind tea-maker, Miss Berry, is relieved of the task. We should like to thank her and Miss Reeves before her for keeping us supplied all these years after meetings with 'the cups that cheer', so welcome a lubricant to the social part of our afternoons.

REQUEST TO CONTRIBUTORS

It would be a very great help to us if prospective contributors to the *Bulletin* would be kind enough to conform as far as possible to our customary style. In particular, titles of books and journals should be underlined, titles of essays and poems in single quotes. Quotations which run on in the text should be within single quotation marks while a quotation within a quotation should have double inverted commas. Long quotations should be indented and blocked. Our usual format for titles of articles or reviews can be seen by reference to current *Bulletins*.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

As reported in the October *Bulletin*, this will be held on Saturday, 8th February, 1986, at the Vitello D'Oro Restaurant, Church House, Great Smith Street, Westminster, S.W.1 (equidistant from Westminster and St. James' Park Tube Stations; free on-street parking is normally available in the vicinity on Saturdays). Ronald Blythe will be the Guest of Honour. Tickets at £12 each are available from the Hon. Secretary.

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Personal:	UK	(single)		£6
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Cheques, due on 1 January, should be made payable to the Charles Lamb Society and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, R. Houston Wallace, Flat 3, 47 Sussex Square, Brighton, Sussex. BN2 1GE, unless they are included when paying for Luncheon tickets.

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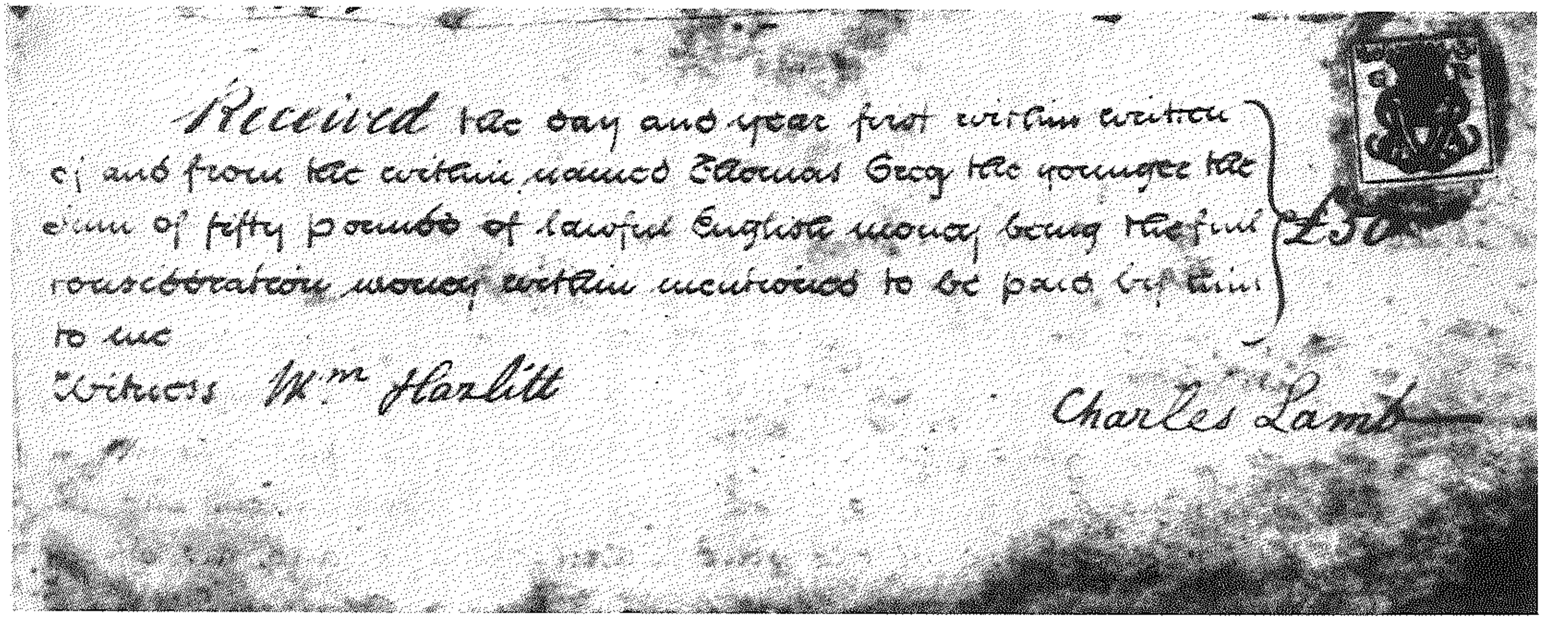

Received the day and year first within written of and from the within named Thomas Greg the younger the sum of fifty pounds of lawful English money being the full consideration money within mentioned to be paid by him to me £50

Witness Wm Hazlitt

Charles Lamb