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EDITOR'S CHANGE OF ADDRESS

('Brighton--Earthquake--Swallow-Up-Alive')

Hopefully it won't be as bad as that, especially since I am moving in the opposite direction; but lacking 'a huge transparency' and the 'golden letters' of Charles Lamb's splendid story I can only use this space and the back cover of this and future issues to advertise the fact that my early retirement to rejoin 'the old familiar faces' (who in my case are thankfully *not* gone) is imminent. Material for the *Bulletin* sent to Manchester will doubtless be sent on by the devoted and ever-patient secretaries of the English Department, but from now on the official editor's address is

9 Dale View Gardens, Crawcrook, Ryton, Tyne and Wear, NE40 4ED

The Lambs moved frequently and lost none of their friends. I trust this constitutes a precedent for my once-only migration. And nothing remotely resembling the New River runs anywhere near my garden. The Tyne is a mile or more to the North!

## BEREAVEMENT INTO ART: LAMB'S 'DREAM CHILDREN' AND KIPLING'S 'THEY'

John Coates

*Hull University*

At first sight, a comparison between Lamb's 'Dream Children; A Reverie' and Kipling's 'They' may seem an odd one. The personalities of the two writers, or more correctly, the popularly perceived images of their personalities are very unlike each other. The works belong to periods and to cultural and intellectual atmospheres which, ostensibly, have little in common. 'Dream Children' appeared in the *London Magazine* in January 1822, before being reprinted in the *Essays of Elia* a year later. It is prose written in the zenith of the Romantic Movement, by the contemporary of some of the greatest masters of the medium, then being explored with a new ambition and originality; of Hazlitt, De Quincey and Leigh Hunt, whose work many would judge Lamb, at his best, to have surpassed. 'They' belongs to that preoccupation with the psychic and supernatural which made the Edwardian period, rather than the Victorian, as one might have imagined, a golden age of the ghost story. It was a preoccupation illustrated in fiction, at one level by Arthur Machen and, at another by Henry James, and, in fact, by the interest shown in such experiences as 'The Ghosts of Versailles'. It is surely reasonable to doubt whether two works so remote in ambience and 'feel' and, seemingly, in immediate occasion, can throw any light on each other. However, it is a doubt which a little thought will dispel.

'Dream Children' and 'They' are both highly-wrought complex, carefully-structured works. In each the art is elaborate, multi-faceted, delicate and rich in sub-text and suggestion. Secondly, both the essay and the short story are emotionally *disciplined*. Each represents a *tour-de-force* of the metamorphosis into finished art of acutely personal feelings. 'Dream Children' and 'They' are both high-risk ventures. Such self-exposure may touch a source of power in a writer or it may bring about a loss of control and artistic distancing. In Kipling's case, the feelings drawn upon are those of bereavement, and mourning, of longing for a much loved, recently dead child, of the speculation that the child may live on, in another life, and, consequent on that speculation, of a yearning for and fear of psychic experience. Lamb's 'Dream Children' is rooted in the sense of life's might-have-beens, of the marriage and the children one might have had, and of the memory of a woman lost and probably yearned for for many years. These long-standing sadnesses have been sharpened by the recent death of the writer's brother and the realisation that, without children, the unique past is untransferable since one's memories cannot be handed on.

Neither of these sets of feelings is illegitimate. English people are, or were, a little too ready to refuse even valid occasions of grief or tenderness and to condemn the feelings of others (more rarely their own) as 'self-indulgent'. However, an emotion may be understandable and still hard to handle in artistic terms. The problem with these two works is to analyse the reasons for their success. How is the difficulty surmounted in each case? What is done to the raw material? What wider meanings are inherent in the themes, the structures and the patterns of allusion of the essay and the short story.

One preliminary point worth making is that it was Lamb's work, the particular emotional key he struck, which ultimately set the tone for Kipling's 'They', among much else. If such a claim seems eccentric, it is worth paying attention to Geoffrey Tillotson's remark:

For anyone working in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century field Lamb is as important as Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, Jane Austen and Scott. His essays were of the very mind of his successors.<sup>1</sup>

Even more telling, perhaps, is Walter Pater's view, in his important essay *Charles Lamb* (1878) that Lamb's writings are a 'transition' from the spirit of the eighteenth century to

the deeper subjectivity, the intenser and closer living with itself<sup>2</sup>

characteristic of its own generation.

The ramifications of this 'Lamb influence' are as hard to sum up as they are important. 'Elia' represents a crucial variant of these new perceptions which characterised the Age of Sensibility. Undeniably if there had been no Lamb, or more precisely, if there had been only 'Lamb before Elia', there would still have been the new awareness, evident in the Sterne or Mackenzie whom the young Charles Lamb had admired and imitated, that new tenderness, that awareness of the pathos of children, and of the value of humble domestic life. However, where *Rosamund Gray* added little that was new to this mood, 'Elia' certainly did. 'Elia', determined to live a constricted life with artistry, supplied a century with another, and crucial, image of the heroic. Even more important, was the style of the essays. Their style, extraordinarily variegated and even contradictory, offered a way in which emotion, while remaining strong, could escape the 'puritanical obtuseness, the infantile goodness, the hypocritical meekness'<sup>3</sup>, the pressures towards the over-explicit and the moralistic characteristic of Lamb's age and that which followed. The 'nimble, forgetive and evasive'<sup>4</sup> manner Lamb praised and imitated, offered the model of a certain delicacy, allusiveness, subtlety and art in the handling of the acutely personal, a realisation that the darting and tentative, the sharp phrase or instant of detail were more effective than paragraphs of the unremittingly lachrymose. Two authors learned this lesson well. The more obvious, of course, is Thackeray. The other, at his best, is Kipling.

The material behind 'Dream Children' is painful. It is not merely whimsical or softly pathetic. The technique of the piece works on raw, even bitter experience. Two lines in 'The Old Familiar Faces', Lamb's finest poem, written in January 1798, after his feelings 'were wrought too high' to stay at a friend's party and after he had 'rushed into ye Temple'<sup>5</sup> where he was born, record the essence of the pain:

I loved a love once, fairest among women,  
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her.

(Curiously, even this early poem on what was to be Elia's chief preoccupation, the remembrance of the past, has a touch of the archaism out of which the later persona was to be partly constructed. It is written in unrhymed stanzas derived from Massinger).

The poem probably refers to the events of 1792. During that year Samuel Salt, the Lamb family's patron and benefactor, was dying. While Charles's father and mother attended Salt in his last illness, he was sent on 8th February to console his grandmother Mrs Field who was also dying painfully, of cancer, at Blakesware in Hertfordshire. Blakesware (the Blakesmore of Lamb's essays of reminiscence) was an old mansion belonging to the rich, and largely absentee, Plumer family, to whom Mrs Field had, for many years acted as housekeeper. She was deeply religious, of strong and original views, and very widely respected.

During the spring and early summer of 1792, Lamb appears to have grown close to the young woman named in the *Essays* variously as 'Ann', 'Anna' or as 'Alice W----n'. She has been identified as Ann Simmons, a pretty, yellow-haired girl who lived with her mother at 'Blenheim', a cottage about half-a-mile from the Plumer mansion. He may indeed have known her from the age of fourteen, on earlier visits to his grandmother.

The slight and unsatisfactory plot of *Rosamund Gray* does not detract from its value as a record of this love. It is, needless to say, not 'calf-love' or an 'adolescent crush' but love pure and simple that is recorded, intense, whole-hearted and spontaneous and marked by all the emotional directness which formed the basis of Lamb's character, underlying the subsequent elaboration of his prose and his persona. The account of Allan Clare and Rosamund falling in love while reading Mackenzie's sentimental novel *Julia de Roubigné*, for example, reads like a remembered incident:

Allan guessed the cause of her confusion. Allan trembled too - his colour came and went - his feeling became impetuous - and, flinging both arms round her neck, he kissed his young favourite. Rosamund was vexed and pleased, soothed and frightened, all in a moment - a fit of tears came to her relief.<sup>6</sup>

'Elia' and his style, never judging system-wise but always fastening on particulars, unmethodized, and working obliquely, stand at the furthest remove from the sedulously 'naive' manner of *Rosamund Gray*. Yet the Elian style is not only or mainly a method of disguising emotion. It is another vehicle of awareness, sensibility and discernment, and its subject matter is the same, autobiographical, often deeply personal.

The reasons for the failure of Lamb's love for Ann Simmons are bound to be speculative. It may have been Lamb's poor prospects or the suggestions of mental instability to be read in his sister Mary's serious illness in 1794 or his own breakdown in 1795-6, which led Ann's family to close their doors to him. Evidently the romance was over before the 'day of horrors', September 22nd 1796, rendered such thoughts impossible and laid upon Lamb his life of chosen sacrifice. Writing to Coleridge (November 8th 1796) he spoke of his love for Ann as

a passion of which I retain *nothing*...Thank God, the folly has left me for ever.<sup>7</sup>

In his sufferings, he rejected such love, in Petrarch's words as being 'of the creature rather than the Creator, which is the Death of the Soul'. He seems for a while, in fact, to have deliberately detached himself from 'things of sense' and the 'ignorant present time',<sup>8</sup> all those immediacies and subtle particularities of life which many years later he was to celebrate in the *Essays of Elia*.

Ann Simmons married John Thomas Bartrum or Bartram and by 1799 she had moved to London where her husband was a silversmith and pawnbroker near Leicester Square. The evidence of Lamb's continued feeling about her is slight but suggestive. There is an over-solemn and not very perceptive letter by Southey (16th May 1796) remarking that Lamb told him that he had recently dined with Ann 'and he laughed and said she was a stupid girl'.<sup>9</sup> What Southey called his friend's 'unnatural levity' could obviously have been a disguise for pain which it would have required little penetration or sympathy to have detected.

The description of Allan's feelings in *Rosamund Gray* (if, as it seems reasonable to do, we take this portion of Lamb's novel as autobiographical) does, indeed, suggest doubts about the value of his love, although these are admittedly more qualified than his casual remark to Southey. The novel speaks of the 'mysterious quality' which lovers have 'ever imputed to the object of their affections'. It is a hint that the 'something *angelic, perfect, exceeding nature*'<sup>10</sup> which Allan sees in Rosamund is something he is attributing to her, or projecting on to her, rather than a quality she simply and indisputably possesses. It is not mere self-deception, however, since it is described, somewhat cautiously, as being 'not without foundation in reality and observation'. However, it is clear, whatever doubts Lamb felt or tried to feel about his love for Ann Simmons that love persisted. According to W.C. Hazlitt, the grandson of Lamb's friend

Lamb was seen by Hazlitt, subsequent to his Alice becoming Mrs Bartrum, to wander up and down outside the shop, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the object of his passion.<sup>11</sup>

It is, perhaps, a mistake to contrast the 'naivety' of *Rosamund Gray* with the elaborate art of Elia, which Lamb evolved more than twenty years later. As a recent critic has suggested *Rosamund Gray* has its own kind of art, that of 'rhapsody' which 'returns to writing's supposed origin, speech' and, as such, it is 'one of the most interesting fictional experiments of the Romantic period'.<sup>12</sup> Yet one may feel that this was an art which did not sufficiently distance Lamb from painful personal material, whereas the art of Elia did. Such is the inference to be drawn from the statement in 'New Year's Eve' (published in the *London Magazine*, January 1821) that Elia's fondness for 'retrospection' may be

simply, that being without wife or family, I have not learned to project myself enough out of myself; and having no offspring of my own to dally with, I turn back upon memory.<sup>13</sup>

If these 'speculations' lose the reader's sympathy, then

I retire, impenetrable to ridicule, under the phantom cloud of Elia.

This self-consciousness on Lamb's part, his own awareness of exactly what he was doing is the most striking fact about Elia as a persona.

However, the speed with which Lamb, now 'impenetrable to ridicule' allowed his memories to surface is almost equally significant. After the first Elia essay ('The South Sea House', *London Magazine*, August 1820), the next three years saw the production of almost all the most memorable pieces, the creation, in effect, of the entire Elia world. The reasons for this unlocking of retrospection are bound to be uncertain but, apart from the good fortune of Lamb's association with the *London Magazine*, almost any reader would be bound to notice the refusal (July 20th 1819) by the actress Fanny Kelly of what Lamb himself seems to have regarded as his last proposal of marriage, and his last chance to have children of his own. Since there was to be no future of that kind, it was a time to celebrate the past.

It is the changes *within* Elia, during his speedy creation, which are particularly worth attending to. The world did not give Lamb time to reflect calmly on his past. Many of the changing lights and darting variations of tone between, and even within, the Elia essays are the product of external events. Among the most important, and saddest of these was the death (October 26th 1821) of Lamb's elder brother John. John's death followed very shortly after the publication of

two essays, 'My Relations' (*London Magazine*, June 1821) and 'Mackery End, In Hertfordshire' (*London Magazine*, July 1821), both of which anticipate some of the themes of 'Dream Children'. However, these anticipations differ in tone from the handling of the same material in the later essay.

'My Relations' begins with a solemn quotation on the passing of time drawn from Browne's *Christian Morals*. This strikes the opening note of a grave, older time of religious certainty, of an assurance which might make the 'close apprehension of what it is to be forgotten' (358) bearable. This note continues to sound in the portrait of Lamb's Aunt Hetty (died 1797). He delights in the inconsistencies of her character. 'Dear and good' (358) and loving him alone of all things in the world, she was yet 'soured' (358) by 'single blessedness'. Poring over 'good books' and 'devotional exercises' from 'morning till night', her religious interests followed some eclectic, or eccentric line of their own, ranging Thomas à Kempis and Roman Catholic Prayer Books to attendance at the Unitarian chapel in Essex Street 'in the infancy of that heresy'. Yet the sentence which ends with the emphatic phrase 'a fine *old Christian*' resolves the contradictions. Her faith did, indeed, give her somewhat unhappy and limited life meaning and value. She remains in Elia's memory in the 'odour of those tender vegetables' (358), French beans, still 'redolent of soothing recollections', since it was her only 'secular employment' to split them. Above all, however, her lost individuality is retained in the memory of the living who still remember her and whose own idiosyncrasy testifies to a still living human richness. Affirming this, 'My Relations' moves to a celebration of the uniqueness, the oddities and inconsistency of cousin James Elia (John Lamb). This jet of mingled appreciation and irony is one of Lamb's finest bravura pieces in the field that provided him the essence of his writing. His whole career was a deliberate rejection of the structural and conceptual inquiry practised by friends as varied as Godwin and Coleridge and an insistence, instead, on the 'once for allness' and consequently the inestimable value of particular people and places. (It is this insistence, so successful in its execution, which delights the majority of his readers but which infuriates the small minority (often academics) who believe generalisation in abstraction and 'theory' to be far higher manifestations of intellect). The James Elia celebration reaches a climax in the proud claim that this wonderful being has 'made no compromise with that inevitable spoiler' (359) Time. 'Fiery, glowing and tempestuous' in his youth, he has not cooled with age. He is still the same mixture of emotional inconsistencies and contradictory traits and 'while he lives, J.E. will take his swing' (359).

'Mackery End, In Hertfordshire', of a month later is, likewise, an affirmation. Rejoicing in 'Bridget Elia's' (Mary Lamb's) *lack* of eccentricity her 'native disrelish' (361) for anything that is 'quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy', the essay moves to record just such an instance of 'common sympathy'. The 'cousins' make an 'excursion' to Mackery End, which Elia 'can just remember' (362), having been there on holiday as a child, in Bridget's charge. Bridget, like James Elia, can almost defy time. 'In some things... behind her years', she recognises the house with child-like joy and with a 'love, stronger than scruple' makes herself known to her 'out-of-date kinsfolk' (363). The 'slender ties' which are 'slight as gossamer' in the 'rending atmosphere' of London 'bind faster' in Hertfordshire and the visitors receive a warm welcome.

Both 'Mackery End' and 'My Relations' affirm the possibility of *connection* with the past. This may be through memory as of the 'dear and good aunt', through resumed relationships, as with the 'cousins' at Mackery End, but above all, through the continued existence of witnesses, whose own individualities may be celebrated, both for their own sake and as a kind of 'proof' of the individuality which the 'inevitable spoiler' time has taken. Such was the function Lamb's sonnet to his brother assigned to John Lamb:

'Tis man's worst deed  
 To let the "things that have been" run to waste  
 And in unmeaning present sink the past;  
 In whose dim glass even now I faintly read  
 Old buried forms, and faces long ago  
 Which you, and I, and one more really know. (604)

John's death, however, forced Lamb to consider, with particular sharpness, his lack of the most obvious of all human connections, the handing on of memory from parent to child. 'A certain deadness to everything' of which he complained in a letter to Wordsworth enhanced the value he placed on human uniqueness ('Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals').<sup>14</sup>

'Dream Children' starting from a self-evident premise that 'children love to listen to stories about their elders' (377) and to imagine times and relations they never saw, slides naturally and inevitably into the description of just such a situation, among the most homely and enjoyable of situations; 'It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening' (377). The children's story-book style of the opening with its house 'a hundred times bigger than that in which they and Papa lived' and its 'foolish rich person' who pulled down the carved chimney piece, approaches the past through a ceremony of wonder. It is, perhaps, the way it should be approached. Simplified and purified for the childish audience, the past appeared as it essentially was, a fairy-tale. It was besides, a place of uniqueness, and rich particularity. What child, for instance, would not be interested in a house whose 'part of the country' was the setting of the Babes-in-the-Wood. What parent would not be delighted to be able to claim to have stayed there? The telling of that story would, besides, re-establish the connection of past and present, even though the physical evidence, the 'chimney-piece in the great hall' had been destroyed.

It is worth noting, of course, that 'Dream Children' commemorates or celebrates a place as well as individuals. 'Blakesmoor in H---Shire' (*London Magazine*, September 1824) written after the destruction of Blakesware by its owner confirms its significance in the formation of Lamb's sensibility in that 'solitude of childhood' (414) which is 'the feeder of love and silence, and admiration'. In this later essay, the house ('my Eden' (414)) is a vanished paradise. ('For this, or what sin of mine has the plough passed over your pleasant places?' (415)). 'Dream Children', by contrast, deals with the passing on of sights and traditions. What the imaginary father has to offer is the image of a stately and good old time, incarnated in the 'great grandmother' who is the guardian of the house and who 'kept up' its dignity 'in a sort while she lived'. The repetition of the phrase 'good and religious' defines the atmosphere of the place, and the condition on which that atmosphere was maintained. What Elia-Lamb is handing on to his Dream Children is the source of his own imaginative life, of the tastes and sympathies which ripened at Blakesware and which inspired all his major work, from *John Woodvil* and *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* to the Elia essays. 'Poor Elia' as he wrote in a letter of July 30th 1821, might not pretend to 'very clear revelations of a future state' but his 'animus...hath always been cum Christianis'.<sup>15</sup> In 'Dream Children', the father's gentle suppression of Alice's high-spirited movement of her 'little right foot' (377) or John's attempt to divide a bunch of grapes with his sister (378) suggests that the decorum of the good old time would be passed on too. These children would have a very specific upbringing with certain particular emphases. At the heart of these lies the connection between a certain kind of moral goodness and the possibility of a paradisaical vision. The

huge mansion with its vast empty rooms, with their worn out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels (377)

of which he could 'never be tired' was an Eden whose 'forbidden fruit', the 'peaches and nectarines' the child Elia never plucked 'unless now and then' (378). Not enough, presumably, to forfeit the vision. In this peaceable kingdom, great good place or House Beautiful the "sulky pike" (378) hangs midway in the fish-pond 'as if it mocked' at the 'impertinent friskings' of the dace whom it does not devour. Elia can almost fancy himself, like Marvell in 'The Garden' to which an allusion is probably intended 'lying about upon the fresh grass' or 'ripening too along with the oranges'. The house, too, includes that other property of the mythic *illo tempore*, an easy communication with the supernatural. Although the child Elia never sees them 'great grandmother Field' believes that an apparition of the Children in the Wood may be seen 'gliding up and down the great staircase where she slept' (377). She does not fear them, however, confident, since she is so good and religious, that 'those innocents would do her no harm'. Elia can, for a moment, persuade his imaginary children and can recall himself, a spiritual state where the 'common baits of children', peaches (378), nectarines and oranges are relinquished as 'irrelevant'.

'Dream Children' continues, in a somewhat heightened tone, as an elegy for 'uncle John L---'. The conversation it appears is deliberate and serious and its formal occasion is a death in the family. Curiously the mention of Lamb's brother under his own name, marks a sliding from fiction into reality. Lamb drops what critics have called his 'lying mode' represented by the substitution of 'cousins' for brother and sister, of Oxford for Cambridge and many other fictionalisations in the essays. The elegy passage of 'Dream Children' includes a memory of John Lamb's youthful glory ('so handsome and spirited a youth and king to the rest of us' (378)) but, more significantly, has at its centre the love and pain of an actual relationship, all the friction inevitable between those of very different temperaments:

I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished  
him alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled  
sometimes) (378)

(Lamb's letters with all their ample testimony to his essential goodness, self-sacrifice and his conviviality are always frank about the irritations inevitable in the warmest relationships).

'Dream Children' edges too close here to that direct expression of emotion which will threaten the dream and the children beg Elia 'not to go on about their uncle' (378) but to tell them instead about their mother.

The 'seven long years' of courtship of the 'fair Alice W----n' hint at a world of myth or fairy-tale where such ordeals inevitably bring about a happy ending. What 'suddenly' (328) causes the fading of the Dream Children is not a realisation that the story did not end happily and that they did not exist. It is, crucially, the moment when 'the soul of the first Alice' looks out of the child's eyes

with such a reality of re-resentation that I became in doubt  
which of them stood there before me (378)

It is a confession, all the more moving because oblique, that love for the Dream-Children's mother had itself never faded and her image had never left the mind. With a touch of the Orpheus-Eurydice myth and a hint of 'we are such stuff as dreams are made on' the children recede. At the end of the essay Elia, who does not claim the certitude about a future state possessed by the 'good and religious' Mrs Field whose life and house helped to form his mind, offers only the possibility that what 'might have been' (378) may one day 'have existence and a name'. Meanwhile, there is fiction or art, such as in 'Dream Children' briefly reconstituted the



good old time. In a touching last sentence, Lamb suggests the interdependence of life and art, real identities and fictionalised ones. The dreamer wakes

the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side - but John L. (or  
James Elia) was gone forever (378)

Kipling's 'They' offers intriguing parallels and dissimilarities to themes Lamb had explored in 'Dream Children'. The background of the story as is well-known, was the loss of Kipling's much loved daughter Josephine. She was a little girl of unusual beauty and promise:

Even as a tiny child she had a remarkable and endearing personality, with a charm and quickness of mind far in advance of her years. Rudyard was entirely devoted to her and spent much time every day playing with her and telling her stories.<sup>16</sup>

She provided original audience and first critic of the *Just So Stories*, in the words of his cousin Angela Mackail

a poor thing in print compared with the fun of hearing them  
told in Cousin Ruddy's deep unhesitating voice.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between father and daughter was based not only on love but on that 'right touch' with young children to which so many of Kipling's writings testify. The humour, the subversion, the rejection of the solemn, sentimental and edifying nonsense children often had to listen to or the moralistic rigour to which they were subjected in the later nineteenth century, evident in 'The Flag of their County' or 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep', made him a peculiarly affectionate and understanding parent.

Josephine's death from pneumonia on March 6th 1899 came about as the result of an ill-judged and unfortunate winter journey to New York. Delayed for two hours in a draughty customs house and hounded by newspaper reporters, both Kipling and his daughter became seriously ill and while he hung deliriously between life and death, in the bleak words of Carrie Kipling's diary, 'Josephine left us at 6.30 this morning'. Since in his condition the shock would probably have killed him, Carrie kept the news of the child's death from her husband for as long as she could:

How and when she broke the news to him was their own secret. Months passed before he recovered from his illness; from the shock of his daughter's death he never recovered.<sup>18</sup>

The misery of bereavement and the yearnings to which almost inevitably gives rise, for some kind of spiritual reassurance, were complicated in Kipling's case by another misfortune which had happened shortly before. At the end of 1898, his sister 'Trix', the companion of his childhood and the sharer of the sufferings recorded in 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' returned from India. Outwardly a charming and successful member of Simla society, she had been involved for some time in psychic and Spiritualist experiences, which both expressed and probably enhanced her extreme sensitivity and nervousness. In December 1898 the balance of her mind gave way. Rightly or wrongly Kipling blamed her Spiritualist interest for this tragedy. It left him with a desire for supernatural or spiritual experience and, simultaneously, a fear and suspicion of their effects. The later poem 'En-Dor' (1915) written after the death of his son John in war, and against the background of widespread recourse to Spiritualism at the time, reads very much like the rejection of a temptation. 'Marrow Down' (1902) nearer in date to 'They', a curious

deceptively simple meditation on the processes of time, records at once an intimation that nothing is lost, even the love of a bereaved father in the New Stone Age, and, sadly, that his grief too remains.

The opening of 'They' is a dream-like or absent-minded journey through rural Sussex. ('I left the country flow under my wheels'<sup>19</sup>) 'Miraculous brooks', 'eighty foot lindens', 'tithe barns higher than their churches', 'a smithy that cries aloud' that it was once a Templar Hall are noted, but without enthusiasm, almost without interest. With characteristic later Kipling economy, the opening of 'They' does not state that the narrator is saddened or depressed. It demonstrates his emotional condition by his lack-lustre response to what would interest or arouse almost any observer.

Most readers of the story would be bound to notice its structure built around three visits to the 'House Beautiful'. This structure necessarily means that the revelation and its effect on the narrator's own mind must be *gradual*. He must go away and think about, and, it is implied, must be drawn back by it.

The first visit recalls the 'being lost in the wood' motif of fairy story. The 'confusing veils of the woods' (304), the cutting 'brim-full of liquid sunshine', followed by the move 'next into a gloomy tunnel' has a hint of those almost ritualised, *stages* encountered by the heroes of fairy-story quests. Without being too overt, the mood is kept up by another detail typical of such narratives, the house surrounded by overgrown vegetation, hazels uncut for 'a couple of generations back'. The fact that the 'moss-cankered oak' has been untouched by the axe has another, somewhat deeper, implication, echoed at the end of the tale when the narrator sees 'through tears' that there is 'no impassable iron' (333) on or near the blind lady's hearth. (Iron, as one remembers from the Puck stories, is both the barrier against spirits and badge of mortal bondage).

The 'House Beautiful' itself with its 'horsemen ten feet high (304-5), monstrous peacocks' and maids of honour frozen into topiary work 'all of clipped yew' carries on the delicate suggestion of a fairy story, the castle of Sleeping Beauty, perhaps. At the same time, like Lamb's Blakesware, it is a place of 'exceeding beauty' (305) and an entrance into a noble past. Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth might come out of the 'half-open garden door' (305) and ask the narrator to tea. Physical details, the 'heavy oak door of the garden sunk deep in the thickness of the wall' (305-6) or the 'hollowed stone step' (306) suggest somewhere lost, ancient, hidden, perhaps enchanted.

At the same time, another nuance is introduced. The first glimpse of the children, ('I thought the little thing waved...' 'I caught the utterly happy chuckle...(305)') suggests that they are indeed there, but just out of reach. Indeed the frustration and sadness inherent in the blind lady's relation to her visitors is constantly and touchingly suggested. She tries, on her first meeting with the narrator, as on other occasions, to 'lure' them closer to her. This time the 'bait' is his car. ('Children, oh, children! Look and see what's going to happen' (307)). Her 'yearning' voice would have 'drawn lost souls from the pit'. However, though nearby, the children will not come and (as before one suspects) her effort is ineffective ('"Oh, unkind!" she said wearily' (308)).

After this early hint readers, especially those knowing of Kipling's attitude to his sister's tragedy, might naturally assume that the wretchedness involved in any attempt to reach the dead, any taking of the road to En-Dor, by Spiritualism or other means, would be the dominant element in 'They' and the clue to its meaning. This expectation would not be correct. 'They' is altogether more complicated. The sadness of En-Dor is only one factor within the tale. The prefatory poem 'The Return of the Children', which in typical Kipling fashion is placed in *Traffics and*

*Discoveries* to set the tone of what is to follow emphasises that the return of the dead children to those that loved them is blessed by Christ and His Mother. It is not, in itself, an evil thing. More to the purpose, the lady's house is the 'House Beautiful' (319), recalling Bunyan's place of spiritual refreshment and knowledge. (Kipling's admiration of Bunyan is obvious from his poem 'The Holy War' (1917)). As if to rule out any possible misapprehension the narrator explicitly calls the house 'a place of good influence and great peace' (325) and comments that

Men and women may sometimes, after great effort achieve a creditable lie; but the house, which is their temple, cannot say anything save the truth of those who lived in it.

Even more decisive, perhaps, is the narrator's assurance to the blind lady that for *her* to contact the dead children is not 'wrong' (334) while it would be for him.

It is this which is the crux of the story. Why is such a spiritual or supernatural experience right for some people but not for others? How legitimate is Angus Wilson's complaint that Kipling 'fudges the excellent story' by deliberate mystification and preferring to 'remain gnomic'?<sup>20</sup> One clue must be the contrast, established early on between the lonely and vulnerable blind woman, isolated, unmarried, childless and strangely gifted who calls the dead children to her as the only comfort she will ever know ('It's the only thing that makes life worth living, when they're fond of you, isn't it?' (308)) and the different misery of the narrator who has had and lost a child. Among much else 'They' is about the interaction, the mutual learning, of two sorrowing individuals. The contrast between their griefs, established on the first of the three visits, is supplemented by the first crucial exchanges of information, the first steps to understanding and helping each other. In answer to the blind woman's question, 'You're fond of children?', the narrator replies in the deliberately off-hand, or stiff-upper-lip manner approved by upper-class gentlemen of the period.

I gave her one or two reasons why I did not altogether hate them.

The lady's response is equally in the typically English mode of that time:

'Of course, of course', she said.

Nevertheless, we are to assume, he has told her of his bereavement, as she has told him of her longing and loneliness. The whole basis of the story which follows lies in the reaction between the two.

At the end of his first visit, the narrator, in characteristic mythic mode, must be 'set on his road' (310) since he has 'utterly lost' himself. The butler's refusal of his 'silver' offered as a tip is the first recognition that he is one of the bereaved who come to the 'House Beautiful'. ('It isn't our custom not with ----' (311)). Not that is, with those who as the butler has just checked, can see the children in the gardens or the house.

Both Lamb and Kipling place at the centre of their texts of bereavement a 'House Beautiful', an enchanted realm, peculiar in its relationship to, or perhaps simply outside, time. Both houses have some special effect on the spirit and each suggests an ethos important in the imagination of its author. Blakesware needs no further explanation. The 'House Beautiful' in 'They' anticipates the settings and atmosphere of meditations on Sussex, the English countryside and the ordeals and virtues of nobler earlier times found in the Puck stories, or other tales of the middle period, involving a return to roots in the English past, such as 'An Habitation Enforced'. The

'most beautiful place' (308) the narrator has ever seen, the house 'accepts' the end of the day 'as it had accepted a thousand gone' (309). He celebrates its beauty with a delicate and deliberately placed touch of seventeenth-century pastiche:

So round to the high front of the house which in beauty and  
statelyness as much excelled the back as that all others I had  
seen (310)

If Lamb's Blakesware was guarded and maintained as a kind of Eden by the moral standards imposed by its 'good and religious' housekeeper, the 'House Beautiful' in 'They' is guarded by secrecy. It cannot easily be found in the Survey, the name of the family who own it 'conveyed no meaning' (312) to the narrator. When he had tried to learn its name from her he is rudely rebuffed by the fat woman who keeps the sweetshop and comments 'They were not a pleasant mannered community' (312). On his third visit, the same woman welcomes him with 'hospitable tears' (324), a mark of his acceptance, after initial suspicion, by the villagers as a sharer in their secret knowledge.

The first visit establishes the emotional situation of the blind woman and the narrator and offers the invitation to the latter of communication with the dead ('Have you ever wanted to?' (309)... 'If you are fond of them you will come again' (311).) The second visit defines more exactly the psychic experience offered at the 'House Beautiful' and its relation to the narrator's own supernatural intimations or religious understanding. When, as the blind lady had prophesied ('a month or so later' (312)) he makes the journey back, he begins, as she does, to 'lure' the dead children, spreading out his repair kit, as she says, 'like playing shop' (314). He is being drawn to practise her techniques. Their conversation (315-16) reveals her vulnerability ('we blindies have only one skin' (315)), but it is a vulnerability based on more than blindness. It is rather from what the narrator calls the carefully taught 'brutality of the Christian peoples' (316) the readiness to deride spiritual knowledge or traditions not their own, that the 'House Beautiful' must be protected. What Kipling had in mind may be clarified by recalling the fictional misery inflicted by Aunt Rosa in the name of her 'Lord' in 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep', the real pain imposed her Calvinist original at Southsea, as recorded in *Something of Myself* or the disastrous effect prophesied for the 'bull-headed, self-advertising Englishmen'<sup>21</sup> if they accepted a belief in reincarnation, as suggested in 'The Finest Story in the World'. Kipling's sense of English or European man's spiritual arrogance and limitations needs little demonstration.

In 'They' there is a suggestion of some particular personal bitterness on this subject, analogous to Kipling's own, in the narrator ('It led me a long distance into myself') (316). As his mood darkens the blind woman is distressed by the 'purple and black' colour she sees. The significant point is that what she knows by experience, the narrator knows from Masonic teachings about 'the Egg which is given to very few of us to see' (317). (Free-masonry undeniably was the major vehicle of spiritual experience in Kipling's own life). Once she has realised he will not laugh at her or her visitors (317), since he has some knowledge of, and accepts, her perception, from his own Masonic angle, or perhaps because, like Kipling, she sees the 'colours' as an artist the lady is ready to offer him the contact he seeks not as 'a matter of favour but of right' (319). The second visit ends with the impending death of the girl Jenny's child of cerebral meningitis, in spite of the narrator's efforts, in his car, to get medical help. At this point he is on the verge of acceptance by the community who live around the 'House Beautiful'. He overhears the fat owner of the sweetshop say 'cheerily' (320) that it will be 'Jenny's turn to walk in de wood' next week, that is to have the consolation of seeing her dead child. The fat woman had almost accepted him, symptomatically taking him for 'a chauffeur' (321). The dream-like sequence with which the second visit ends (322) suggests that it is now the 'ordinary' world of 'the county' (322) which is unreal, not the psychic intimations of the 'House Beautiful':

Cross sections of remote and incomprehensible lives through  
which we raced at right angles.

With the third visit, the narrator's quest is complete. It is autumn, yet around the 'House Beautiful' the late flowers show 'gay in the mist' (324). The fat woman of the sweet-shop, throws aside all caution, telling the narrator to expect to see his child. Hers and Jenny's are used to bad weather and appear in the wood, but 'You'll finde yours indoors, I reckon' (325). The effect of a firm assurance of survival and reunion after death is registered. The loss of loved ones through death is accepted as something that 'opens de 'eart' (324). This 'wisdom of old wives' (324) sets the narrator 'thinking so extendedly' (325) that he nearly runs over a woman and child. It is what, in his condition, he most needs to realise. The blind lady's song strikes the same note of resignation and peace:

But may God bless all our losses  
Better suits with our degree (326)

Yet we see her again, notwithstanding the peace her powers bring to others, herself frustrated, 'mocked' by the 'quarry' (328) among the 'maze of passages'. For her, since she has neither borne nor lost, the children are always just out of reach: ('Children, oh, children! Where are you?'). Her search is interrupted by the tenant Turpin, a 'greedy, ignorant man' (330), who tries with laborious and transparent villainy to cheat the owner of the 'House Beautiful'. The shrewd way she deals with him suggests that in 'ordinary' life she is no helpless visionary. She can be as practical as anyone else. More significantly, Turpin is presumably offered as a reminder of the quality of much 'ordinary' life in the world outside, and a reason why the blind woman and her community must keep themselves and their knowledge unspotted from that world.

Turpin is typical of the 'learned brutality' which would either reject or coarsen what the 'House Beautiful' had to give. As he listens to Turpin, the narrator's mind relaxes and, as often seems to be the case in reports of psychic experiences, at the moment he ceases to try too hard, he obtains what he has been seeking. The palm of his hand is kissed, a fragment of a mute code 'devised very long ago' (332) and, therefore, a proof that this is his dead child. He 'understands' now and thanks the blind lady for what she has given him. Each offers sympathy to the other for the different griefs that each must bear. She leaves him to 'sit a little longer by the screen' (335), knowing, as he does, that he must never come again.

It is, perhaps, a little difficult to see why critics such as Angus Wilson have found 'They' a confused story because *several* motives are offered for the narrator's determination not to revisit the 'House Beautiful'. There are indeed several suggestions in the story; the notion that occult experience might unfit one for active life; that for the blind lady such experience is 'right' because she has nothing else, and will have nothing else in her life, while for those who have borne and lost, it stirs up too much; that the narrator is a writer or an artist and such experience will destroy his gift. Possibly more conclusive than these is the sense that, after his three visits, the narrator's quest was complete. There was no *need* for him to come again. He had the assurance he sought, and, in the meantime, must go on living his life in the 'ordinary' world until the reunion, which he now knows will happen. In general terms 'They' obviously partakes of that intuition which underlay several of Kipling's stories ('The Finest Story in the World', 'Marklake Witches' and 'The Eye of Allah' are obvious examples) that certain sorts of knowledge at certain times should not be revealed to the world. The world is unworthy of the knowledge or would be damaged by it.

Acting from several motives, rather than one clear cut one, may be less neat but does not, in itself, imply confusion. In fact, people do often reach conviction (as Newman believed they reached religious faith) more satisfactorily from the *convergence* of several sorts of evidence, both emotional and intellectual. The point in 'They' is that all the possible reasons direct the narrator to the same end and he could well be motivated by all of them.

Delicate and searching in what they suggest about the relation of life and art, in their handling of loss and bereavement, and of those mysterious intimations many feel but would be ashamed to discuss, 'Dream Children' and 'They' are minor masterpieces in a difficult genre. The fact that it has been so rarely attempted by major writers is a testimony to the problems which, in their different ways, Lamb and Kipling triumphantly surmounted.

NOTES:

1. Geoffrey Tillotson, 'The Historical Importance of Certain "Essays of Elia"', (1966), quoted in Winifred F. Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802*, London 1984, p. XVIII
2. Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, (1889; rpt. London, 1910), p. 106.
3. Charles Lamb, *The Examiner*, 5th September 1819.
4. *Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 1935, Vol. I, p. 180.
5. Quoted by Courtney, p. 163.
6. *The Works of Charles Lamb*, Ed. Sir T.N. Talfourd, (London, 1867), p. 497.
7. Quoted by Courtney, p. 76.
8. Letter to Coleridge October 3rd 1796, *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, (London, 1926), Vol. I, p. 35.
9. Quoted by Courtney, p. 77.
10. *The Works of Charles Lamb*, p. 498.
11. Quoted by Courtney, p. 76.
12. G. Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, (London, 1989), p. 68.
13. *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. Talfourd, p. 332.  
Subsequent references, in parenthesis, to Lamb's essays are to this edition.
14. Letter to Wordsworth, March 20th 1822, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 17.
15. Letter to John Taylor, July 30th 1821, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 7.
16. Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling His Life and Works*, (1955; rpt. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1970), p. 270.

17. Quoted by Carrington, p. 344.
18. Carrington, p. 350.
19. Rudyard Kipling, 'They', in *Traffics and Discoveries*, (London, 1904), p. 303. Subsequent references to 'They' in parenthesis are to this edition.
20. Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*, (London, 1977), p. 266.
21. Rudyard Kipling, 'The Finest Story in the World', in *Many Inventions*, (1893; rpt. London, 1964), p. 16.

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## THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORDSWORTH'S RECLUSE

Duncan Wu

*St Catherine's College, Oxford*

It was a scene dazzling, enchanting, and that stamped the long-cherished dreams of the imagination upon the senses. Between those four crystal peaks stood the ancient monastery ... hid from the sight, revealed to thought, half-way between earth and heaven, enshrined in its cerulean atmosphere, lifting the soul to its native home.

Hazlitt, *Notes of a Journey Through France and Italy* (1825)

'I have written 1300 lines of a poem in which I contrive to convey most of the knowledge of which I am possessed', Wordsworth wrote to James Webbe Tobin on 6 March 1798, 'My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man, and Society'<sup>1</sup> So begins the long-running saga of Wordsworth's never-to-be-completed poem, *The Recluse*. The idea came from Coleridge who, having failed to begin his own projected epic on 1797, *The Brook*, convinced Wordsworth that he could compose, during 1798, a poem that would help precipitate the millennium. It would alert its readers to the divine properties of Nature which would, in turn, inspire universal brotherhood. When this occurred, the millennium would be realised, and *The Recluse* would have fulfilled its divinely-ordained purpose.

The idea may seem crazy to us now, but *The Recluse* shaped Wordsworth's career. He was writing isolated fragments of it as late as 1826,<sup>2</sup> and ultimately incorporated into its grand scheme nearly everything he published. Even that did not compensate for his failure to write what Coleridge projected in 1798: the philosophical epic that would bring about the millennium. The

word 'failure' is, of course, loaded. Wordsworth's three sustained attempts to continue the poem produced an impressive volume of poetry. In addition to the 1300 lines he had composed by March 1798 (which must have included *The Ruined Cottage* and *The Pedlar*, he completed Book I of *The Recluse, Home at Grasmere*, in 1800, running to over 1000 lines; while Book II, *The Tuft of Primroses*, was begun in spring 1808 and ran to nearly 600 lines before composition was abandoned. Neither of the last two poems were published during Wordsworth's lifetime, but now that Cornell Wordsworth editions of both are available, we may view the ruins of *The Recluse* in their true glory -- as two of the most ambitious works by any poet in the language.<sup>3</sup>

Jonathan Wordsworth has given the most comprehensive account of *The Recluse* in the Epilogue to *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford, 1982); in this short article I wish to concentrate on one aspect of its development. Just before composition of *A Tuft of Primroses* broke down, Wordsworth turned to an event of which he had written fifteen years before in *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) -- the sacking of the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse:

'Alas for what I see, the flash of arms,  
O sorrow! and yon military glare,  
And hark those voices! let us hide in gloom  
Profoundest of St. Bruno's wood, these sighs,  
These whispers that pursue, or meet me, whence  
[ ] are they but a common [ ]  
From the two Sister Streams of Life and Death;  
Or are they by the parting Genius sent,  
Unheard till now, and to be heard no more?'  
(11.517-25)

The stilted, exclamatory opening serves to remind us that the situation is entirely fictional -- Wordsworth was not present at the sacking of the monastery; he was living in Orléans at the time. And yet the poetry describes a mystic encounter that may well have been part of Wordsworth's actual experience of the place, as he descends into 'gloom / Profoundest', and 'meets' the 'whispers' that rise off the 'Sister Streams of Life and Death'. In 1808 Wordsworth is attempting to relate the Grande Chartreuse to what have come to be seen as the central concerns of *The Recluse*. These are distinct from those agreed in 1798 with Coleridge, but before defining them, I would like first to examine what the Chartreuse itself meant to Wordsworth.<sup>4</sup>

Wordsworth first encountered the Chartreuse in books. While a schoolboy at Hawkshead Grammar School he must have read Gray's account of his 1739 visit, published in 1775.<sup>5</sup> 'Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry', wrote Gray. 'There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument' (Mason 66). For the next 50 years, this was to be its dominant image -- a sublime landscape, capable of raising the human spirit to a divine level of aspiration. As Gray wrote in his *Alcaic Ode* to the Chartreuse (which Wordsworth admired):<sup>6</sup>

Praesentio rem et conspicimus Deum  
Per invias rupes, fera per iuga,  
Clivosque praeruptos, sonantes  
Inter aquas, nemorumque noctem ...

('We perceive God closer to us among pathless rocks, wild ridges and precipitous ravines, and in the thundering of waters and the darkness of the woods...')<sup>7</sup>



There is no positive evidence as to whether Wordsworth ever read William Beckford's account of his 1778 visit, which was to have been published by Joseph Johnson in *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (1783). Although Beckford withdrew the book shortly before publication, Wordsworth could have seen a copy had Johnson retained one.<sup>8</sup> Like Gray, Beckford had felt the presence of God in the Chartreuse, and describes himself led by the sight of crosses placed on the tops of alpine rocks, to a prospect which

no voice need have declared ... holy ground, for every part of it is stamped with such a sublimity of character, as would alone be sufficient to impress the idea.<sup>9</sup>

All the evidence confirms that Wordsworth saw the Chartreuse in similarly Burkean terms. The letter he wrote from there in early August 1790 has not survived, but in September he recalled 'contemplating, with increased pleasure its wonderful scenery', and praised 'the almost uninterrupted succession of sublime and beautiful objects which have passed before my eyes during ... the last month' (*EY*, 32-3). 'I do not think that any one spot which he visited during his youthful Travels with Robert Jones made so great an impression on his mind', Dorothy once remarked -- a point underlined by Jones' letter to his old friend on hearing of the continental tour of 1820: 'Did you revisit the Grand Chartreuse? I hope you did'.<sup>10</sup>

But he did not. In fact Wordsworth refused his travelling companions permission to see it 'with the irrevocable decree that no Female is to tread on that sacred ground'<sup>11</sup> -- and denied himself the pleasure of returning, presumably to safeguard his memory of the 1790 visit. So not only did Wordsworth never see the monastery ruins, but he almost certainly did not, as Kenneth Johnston has claimed, see a 'revolutionary phalanx' on either visit.<sup>12</sup>

Soldiers were, however, present when Joshua Lucock Wilkinson visited the Chartreuse a year after Wordsworth's original tour, in 1791. In *The Wanderer* (2 vols., London, 1795) he records that 'a guard of a serjeant, and twelve men' had been called in to protect the monks against 'some ungodly peasants, who seditiously presumed that men were equal':

On one side of the holy building, the monk was offering up his fervent, and incessant prayers to heaven, with many a pious and devout ejaculation against the obstinate perverseness and irreligion of the times; on the other side the soldiers were playing at cards, cursing and swearing, by *Sacré Dieu!* at the holy fathers, who, passing from their prayers, condescended to utter *comment vous en vat?* upon the reprobate copartners of the sacred mansion.

(Wilkinson, *The Wanderer*, I, 154)

Whether Wordsworth heard this from Wilkinson himself, or read it in Wilkinson's journals, he surely had it in mind when, in *Descriptive Sketches*, he described the shock of the monastery at the onset of revolution:

The cloister startles at the gleam of arms,  
And Blasphemy the shuddering fane alarms...  
(11.60-1)<sup>13</sup>

*The Wanderer* was not published until 1795, but Wordsworth met -- and probably lodged with Wilkinson -- in late 1792 - early 1793, while preparing *Descriptive Sketches* for publication. The two men were born in Cockermonth at roughly the same time -- in fact, Wilkinson's paternal grandfather built the house in Cockermonth in which the Wordsworth children grew up. During the early 1790's, as he pursued a legal career, Wilkinson shared lodgings with Wordsworth's

brother, Richard, and it was there that Wordsworth headed on his return from France in late 1792.<sup>14</sup> In September, he wrote to Richard:

I look forward to the time of seeing you Wilkinson and my other friends with pleasure. I am very happy you have got into Chambers, as I shall perhaps be obliged to stay a few weeks in town about my publication you will I hope with Wilkinson's permission find me a place for a bed. Give Wilkinson my best Complts I have apologies to make for not having written to him, as also to almost all my other friends.

(EY, 81)

Wilkinson had returned from his continental tour in November 1791, and since his itinerary had been at many points identical to that followed by Wordsworth in the summer of 1790, the two men would surely have compared notes. In particular, they would have discussed recent events at the place that, as Dorothy noted, 'made so great an impression on [Wordsworth's] mind'. Wilkinson probably showed Wordsworth the journals of his 1791 tour, and Wordsworth may well have allowed Wilkinson to see the manuscript of *Descriptive Sketches*. We know, at any rate, that Wilkinson was familiar with the published text, because he alludes to it in *The Wanderer*<sup>15</sup>

In later years, in the light of its decline and eventual desecration, the sublimity of Wordsworth's earlier experiences at the Chartreuse turned it into a symbol of all he had lost: 'O leave in quiet this embodied dream', he was to write in 1808. This response almost certainly has its roots in earlier poetry. The sacking occurred two years after Wordsworth's visit, in May 1792, when the monastery was invaded by the revolutionary army; the building was destroyed in October, and its inmates arrested. Wordsworth, then living in Orléans, responded by composing 26 lines of poetry deploring the event, for insertion into the early part of the largely complete *Descriptive Sketches*. In order to blend this current but imagined scene into his narrative of the walking tour that had taken place 2 years previously, he was obliged to describe it in the first person -- as if he had been an eyewitness. He begins with a question:

Where now is fled that Power whose frown severe  
 Tam'd 'sober Reason' till she crouch'd in fear?  
 That breath'd a death-like peace these woods around ...  
 (11.55-7)

The 'Power' is that of the religious sublime which, as Burke wrote, 'anticipates our reasonings' when we progress towards the 'state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended'.<sup>16</sup> Reason is superceded or 'Tam'd' at the visionary moment, while the woods' 'death-like peace' reflect the soul's suspension.

Able to recall the monastery only in its intact state, Wordsworth uses the alpine cross to symbolise the desecration:

The cross with hideous laughter Demons mock,  
 By angels planted on the aëreal rock.  
 (11.70-71)

These lines, adds the young poet in a footnote, 'Allud[e] to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of the Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible'. Like the crosses, the Chartreuse owes its spiritual power to the inaccessibility of the sublime landscape in which

it is situated. Wordsworth may be developing the implications of the 'Inscription over the Chartreux', which Coleridge copied from him into his notebook:

C'est ici que la Mort et que la Verité  
Elevant leur flambeux terribles;  
C'est de cette demeure au monde inaccessible  
Que l'on passe à l'Eternité.

('Here it is that Death and Truth raise their awful torches. It is from this retreat inaccessible to the world that one passes to Eternal Life.')

But the poetry is too optimistic to accept the full implications of the sacking, and reintroduces the religious 'Power' for the alpine peasant's mystic vision at the centre of the poem. 'An unknown power connects him with the dead', writes Wordsworth,

For images of other worlds are there,  
Awful is the light, and holy is the air.  
Uncertain thro' his fierce uncultur'd soul  
Like lighted tempests troubled transports roll;  
To viewless realms his Spirit towers amain,  
Beyond the senses and their little reign.  
(11.543-9)

The peasant's envisaging of 'other worlds' strongly foreshadows the Pedlar's journey 'through the worlds' 6 years later (*Pedlar*, 181-4),<sup>18</sup> while his union with the dead anticipates the pantheist conclusion to *The Ruined Cottage* of March 1798.<sup>19</sup> In 1792, of course, the episode carries a distinctive political weight, for it encourages the peasant to care for his grandfather, 'helpless as the babe he rocks' (1.575). Wordsworth's faith in the beneficial power of Nature is explicit in his republican *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* written within the year, in which his ideal is 'the herdsman with a staff in one hand and the book in the other', willing to 'care for the interests of himself and of his fellow citizens' (*Prose Works*, I, 38-9). *The Recluse*, on the other hand, had wider ambitions: it was to have shown how people would be educated through their perception of the pantheist One Life, and finally redeemed by it.<sup>20</sup> Like the natural education of 1792, this process was to be universal, covering 'different ages of the World ... in different states -- Savage -- Barbarous -- Civilized -- the lonely Cot, or Borderer's Wigwam -- the Village -- the Manufacturing Town -- Sea-port -- City -- Universities'.<sup>21</sup> As Wordsworth put it in a *Recluse* fragment in March 1798: 'No naked hearts, / No naked minds, shall then be left to mourn / The burthen of existence' (*Not useless do I deem*, 36-43).<sup>22</sup>

There is no mention of the Chartreuse in the poetry written for *The Recluse* during 1798-9; Wordsworth's belief in the redemptive process, as contrived in collaboration with Coleridge, helped create a purely philosophical poetry seen in such fragments as *Not useless do I deem*, *There is an active principle* and *There are who tell us*.<sup>23</sup> The optimism of his arrival in Grasmere in late 1799, encouraged him to see the 'little unsuspecting paradise' in terms of the redeemed society to come, and this was the hope that *Home at Grasmere*, Book I of *The Recluse*, was to have expressed. Its failure was due to an inability to affirm the principle whereby love of Nature would lead to love of mankind;<sup>24</sup> towards the end of composition, the poet reassures himself:

Possessions have I, wholly, solely mind,  
Something within, which yet is shared by none --  
Not even the nearest to me and most dear --

Something which power and effort may impart.  
 I would impart it; I would spread it wide,  
 Immortal in the world which is to come.  
 (11.897-902)

In 1798, the millennium had depended on a philosophical system; it now relies entirely on his ability to communicate the contents of his mind. But the confidence is deceptive. With Wordsworth's abandonment of the philosophical system that had inspired the 1798 poetry has come a corresponding inwardness, encouraged by the celebration of his mind in the two-Part *Prelude*. The effect is to emphasize the poet's isolation, even from 'the nearest to me and most dear'.

Earlier in the poem he had criticized a shepherd whose voice was 'Debased and under prophanation ... An organ for the sounds articulate / Of ribaldry and blasphemy and wrath' (11.424-6). The fear of rejecting those with whom the poet of *The Recluse* should have felt most sympathy must have haunted Wordsworth when, in autumn 1804, he again tried to illustrate the principle whereby love of Nature leads to love of mankind, in Book VIII of *The Prelude*. He is recalling his boyhood encounter with a Lake District shepherd:

At other times,  
 When round some shady promontory turning,  
 His form hath flashed upon me glorified  
 By the deep radiance of the setting sun;  
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,  
 A solitary object and sublime,  
 Above all height, like an aerial cross,  
 As it is stationed on some spiry rock  
 Of the Chartreuse, for worship.  
 (1805, VIII, 406-10)<sup>25</sup>

As it 'flashes' out of the mist, the shepherd's form takes on the possession of the Pedlar's eyes, 'Flashing poetic fire' (*Pedlar* 319), which in turn derives from the 'flashing eyes' of the poet figure of *Kubla Khan* (1.50). It also endows the shepherd with the numinous spirituality attributed to Dorothy in *Home at Grasmere*: 'The thought of her was like a flash of light' (1.110). Once again, however, the passage fails to illustrate the principles of *The Recluse*. This is due in part to the distancing of the shepherd, who possesses the lone majesty of 'the setting sun' and the inaccessibility of an alpine cross.<sup>26</sup> Wordsworth has evaded union by using the Chartreuse imagery to internalize him, transforming him into a symbol of imaginative power, a 'possession ... wholly, solely mine'.

It was not long before Coleridge saw Wordsworth's increasing inwardness as a threat to *The Recluse*. In October 1803, he wrote to Thomas Poole, complaining of Wordsworth's lack of concern during his recent illnesses:

I owe it to Truth & Justice as well as to myself to say, that the concern, which I have felt in this instance ... of Self-involution in Wordsworth, has been almost wholly a Feeling of friendly Regret, & disinterested Apprehension -- I saw him ... having every the minutest Thing, almost his very Eating & Drinking, done for him by his Sister, or Wife, & I trembled, lest a Film should rise, and thicken on his moral Eye.  
 (Griggs, II, 1013)

In 1800, Wordsworth had celebrated the village as a 'true community', the forerunner of the millennial society (*Home at Grasmere*, 819). But his increasingly confined domesticity is seen by Coleridge as opposed to the more gregarious impulse that should envisage 'different ages of the World, and in different states'. This anxiety is fully revealed as he proceeds to assure Poole that Wordsworth 'has at length yielded to my urgent & repeated -- almost unremitting -- requests & remonstrances -- & will go on with the Recluse exclusively'.

Coleridge had departed for Malta by the time Wordsworth's recollection of 'A host of Dancing Daffodils', seen through 'that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude' (*Daffodils*, 15-16), inaugurated a distinctive poetry of loss and consolation. In summer 1808, when Wordsworth composed Book II of *The Recluse, The Tuft of Primroses*, the need for consolation was greater than ever; the destruction of the 'true community' of 1800 prompted a further self-involution. *The Tuft of Primroses* restates the *Recluse* concept of a millennial society in terms of St Basil's monastery at Pontus, but the 'rock / Aerial' shows that Wordsworth is really contemplating the Grande Chartreuse:

What other yearning was the master tie  
Of the monastic brotherhood, upon rock  
Aerial or in green secluded vale  
An undissolving fellowship? What but this,  
The universal instinct of repose,  
The longing for confirmed tranquillity,  
Inward and outward, humble and sublime,  
The life where hope and memory are as one,  
Earth quiet and unchanged, the human soul  
Consistent in self-rule, and heaven revealed  
To meditation in that quietness.

(11.293-308)

In 1798 the visionary poet of *The Recluse* had placed his millenarian hopes in 'fleeting moods / Of shadowy exaltation';<sup>27</sup> ten years later that longing for spiritual transcendence has been displaced by an ideal of purely physical permanence -- 'Earth quiet and unchanged'. Only when that is realised will the soul achieve the necessary 'self-rule' to perceive 'heaven revealed / To meditation'.

The complacency of this sentiment is underlined by an echo of the ironic praise of Godwin in *Prelude* Book X, where Wordsworth's 'young ingenuous mind' had looked 'through all the frailties of the world' in 'self-knowledge and *self-rule*' (11.818-29). If his support of Godwin had been delusive, it had at least provided a self-rule that was socially and politically directed. That of 1808 is an inward and comparatively selfish response without any external interest at all.

At the end of *The Tuft of Primroses*, Wordsworth rewrote the *Descriptive Sketches* account of his 1790 visit to the Chartreuse with which this paper began. He retained the fiction that he was an eyewitness to the sacking in order to confirm himself as a witness of physical and spiritual loss, and the passage ends with a speech by Nature against the sacking, in which Wordsworth invokes the language of the visionary poetry of former years:

'O leave in quiet this embodied dream,  
This substance by which mortal men have clothed,  
Humanly cloth'd the ghostliness of things,

In silence visible and perpetual calm,  
 Let this one Temple last -- be this one spot  
 Of earth devoted to Eternity.'  
 (11.538-43)

Like the Grasmere of 1800, the monastery embodies the ideal of a millennial society in which man, Nature and God are at one, its ghostliness recalling the Berkleyanism of the *Recluse* fragment of 1798, in which the Pedlar had sat 'Beneath some rock listening to sounds that are / The *ghostly* language of the antient earth' (Butler 118-19), imbibing 'visionary power'. Ten years later, the ideal is of physical permanence; the Chartreuse itself is 'embodied', 'visible', earthly. Nature's speech continues with a plea that the monastery be left alone for the sake of:

'These shining cliffs, pure as their home, the sky;  
 These forests unapproachable by death,  
 That shall endure as long as Man endures  
 To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel;  
 To struggle, -- to be lost within himself  
 In trepidation, -- from the dim abyss  
 To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled.'  
 (11.538-67)

Wordsworth's final consolation is that, if the Chartreuse must fall, Nature will always form a kind of natural temple in which man can 'struggle'. The poetry is overshadowed again, this time by the celebration of imagination in the Simplon Pass episode of *Prelude* Book VI:

I was lost as in a cloud,  
 Halted without a struggle to break through,  
 And now, recovering, to my soul I say  
 'I recognise thy glory'.  
 (1805 vi 529-32)

The 'struggle' towards a recovery of imaginative and spiritual vision is presented in *The Prelude* as recurrent and available to all, 'whether we be young or old'. This is no longer possible for the poet of *The Tuft of Primroses*: he accepts 'struggle' only for its own sake, and must take consolation from the 'dim abyss' he beholds with 'bodily eyes'. By comparison, as he rewrote the two-Part *Prelude* in 1804, Wordsworth had celebrated the ability to forget 'That I had bodily eyes', in favour of 'something in myself, a dream, / A prospect in my mind' (1805, II, 367-71). By 1808, bodily vision -- and its correlative, the physical world -- is all that is left.

In 1816 / 19, Wordsworth revised the passage for Book VI of the 1850 *Prelude*. His first consistent draft survives in *Prelude MSA* as a fragment beginning *Yes, for no other*. Here, Nature's 'vain injunction' -- heard through the poet's 'inward ear' -- remains; preceding it, Wordsworth inserts an account of the aerial crosses inspired by the couplet in *Descriptive Sketches*:

Vallombre's groves  
 Entering we fed the Soul with darkness, thence  
 Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld  
 In every quarter of the bending sky  
 The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if

By angels planted on the aerial rock,  
 And by the storm full surely revered, yet  
 From desperate blasphemers insecure,  
 And too obnoxious to the sweeping rage  
 Of rash destroyers.

(Yes, for no other 14-23)<sup>28</sup>

The 'Demons' that had mocked the crosses in *Descriptive Sketches* are swept away, and the 'dim abyss' of 1808 is bridged symbolically by a Virgilian descent into darkness. Filled with crosses, the sky 'bends' down, and, in a moment of reverence before the desecration, the travellers are united with Nature and God. This final statement of faith in the sacred 'spot of earth' on which earth meets eternity is a revision entirely appropriate to a Book that echoes the pattern of loss and retrieval in the Mont Blanc and Simplon Pass episodes that follow.

As the years passed, Wordsworth became more reliant on the Christian symbolism of the cross, and at the same time came to see consolation as an end in itself. In 1845, in response to Christopher North's attack on *The Excursion* for its 'utter absence of Revealed Religion',<sup>29</sup> he rewrote the Pedlar's instruction to 'Be wise and chearful, and no longer read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye':

Nor more would she have craved as due to One  
 Who, in her worst distress, had oftentimes felt  
 The unbounded might of prayer; and learned, with soul  
 Fixed on the Cross, that consolation springs  
 From sources deeper far than deepest pain  
 For the meek Sufferer. Why then should we read  
 The forms of things with an unworthy eye?

(Excursion, I, 934-40)<sup>30</sup>

The alpine cross in all its manifestations had been a symbol of the aspiration to unify and idealise; the purely Christian symbol of 1845 replaces the millennial unity of Margaret and the natural forms around her with a pious act of sympathy in which nothing more than consolation can be the ultimate reward.

#### NOTES

1. Ernest de Selincourt ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Early Years: 1787-1805*, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), hereafter *EY*, p. 212.
2. As late as 1826, Wordsworth was to compose a *Recluse* fragment of 202 lines entitled *Composed when a probability existed of our being obliged to quit Rydal Mount as a Residence*, also known as *To the Nab Well*. Its significance among the *Recluse* poetry is discussed in Joseph Kishel ed., *William Wordsworth: 'The Tuft of Primroses', with other late poems for 'The Recluse'* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), hereafter Kishel, pp. 28-9. All quotations from *The Tuft of Primroses* are from this edition.
3. Beth Darlington ed., *William Wordsworth: Home at Grasmere* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).

4. Joseph Kishel, 'Wordsworth and the Grande Chartreuse'. *The Wordsworth Circle* XII, 1 (Winter 1981), discusses the Chartreuse poetry, but does not explore its significance to *The Recluse*. I am indebted to James Butler's sound analysis of *The Tuft of Primroses* in 'Wordsworth's *Tuft of Primroses*: "An Unrelenting Doom"', *SIR* XIV (summer 1975), 237-48, and to Jonathan Wordsworth's informed analysis of the poem in *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford, 1982), hereafter *Borders of Vision*, pp. 366-72.
5. Wordsworth almost certainly read William Mason's edition of Gray's *Works* (1775), hereafter Mason, as a boy. Mason published, for the first time, letters describing the continental and lake tours.
6. 'In a noble strain also does the Poet Gray address, in a Latin Ode, the *Religio loci* at the Grande Chartreuse' (W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser eds., *Prose Works of William Wordsworth* [3 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974], hereafter *Prose Works*; III, 342).
7. The *Alcaic Ode* was first published by Mason. The translation is from Roger Lonsdale ed., *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith* (London: Longman Annotated Poets, 1969), p. 317.
8. *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* was bound and ready for publication when, on 15 April 1783, Beckford wrote to his solicitor, Thomas Wildman, requesting that production of the book cease, and that all copies be sent to him. Although 500 were removed from the publisher's hands, some were presented as gifts to Beckford's bookseller, his solicitor, Richard Samuel White, and Madame de Staël. Others may have been presented to John Lettice, Samuel Henley and Alexander Cozens, and the book was read by Thomas Moore, Samuel Rogers, and John Mitford, among others. The chances of Joseph Johnson having owned a copy, whose soirées Wordsworth must have been attending in 1792-3 (and possibly in 1791), must be fairly high.
9. Robert Gemmett ed., *William Beckford: Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (New Jersey: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 1971), p. 267.
10. Letter from Robert Jones to Wordsworth, dated 23 February 1821, now at the Wordsworth Library, Grasmere; I am grateful to the Chairman and Trustees of the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, for permission to quote from it. All students of *Descriptive Sketches* and the 1790 tour should consult this valuable document, in which Jones recalls that 'We were early risers in 1790 and generally walked 12 or 15 miles before breakfast and after feasting on the morning Landscape how we afterwards feasted on our Dejeune of whatever the house might afford'.
11. Ernest de Selincourt ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years* (i) 1821-28 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, hereafter *LY*, I; p. 176.
12. Discussing *The Tuft of Primroses*, 517-25, quoted above, Johnston writes that Wordsworth 'was literally mistaken about the intentions of the revolutionary phalanx whose flashing arms he glimpsed' (*Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984], p. 255). There is no evidence that the revolutionary army was patrolling the area in August 1790.



13. All quotations from *Descriptive Sketches* are from Eric Birdsall ed., *William Wordsworth: Descriptive Sketches* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).
14. For more about Wilkinson himself, and his influence on the Vaudracour and Julia story in *The Prelude*, see Chester L. Shaver, 'Wordsworth's Vaudracour and Wilkinson's Wanderer', *Review of English Studies* xii (1961), 55-7, hereafter Shaver.
15. Shaver points to Wilkinson's description of Como:

Upon this luxurious lake, the memory dwells with enraptured  
pleasure, and paints to my eye its mountain beauties.  
'Bosomed deep in chestnut groves', the glittering palaces  
Oeverywhere reflect the sun, and hang over the lake.

Wilkinson is alluding, appropriately, to Wordsworth's description of Como:

More pleas'd, my foot the hidden margin roves  
Of Como bosom'd deep in chestnut groves.  
(*Descriptive Sketches*, 80-1)

16. J.T. Boulton ed., *Edmund Burke: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 57.
17. Kathleen Coburn ed., *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (6 vols., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957-73), II, 2431, f7, hereafter *Notebooks*. The Inscription appears as quoted by Coleridge; the translation is Coburn's.
18. Quotations from *The Pedlar* are from Jonathan Wordsworth ed., *The Pedlar, Tintern Abbey and the two-Part Prelude* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
19. Ll. 493-525 of the text published by Jonathan Wordsworth ed., *The Ruined Cottage, The Brothers, Michael* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
20. This is explained in some depth by Jonathan Wordsworth in *The Borders of Vision*.
21. E.L. Griggs ed., *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (6 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956-71), hereafter Griggs; IV, 575.
22. Quotations from *Not Useless do I deem*, the most important of the texts written in 1798 for *The Recluse*, are from Stephen Gill ed., *William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), hereafter Gill; pp. 678-80.
23. *There is an active principle*, composed spring 1798, is published in Gill, 676-8. *There are who tell us*, composed c. January 1799, can be found in Ernest De Selincourt ed., *William Wordsworth: The Prelude* 2nd ed., rev. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), hereafter *Oxford Prelude*, pp. 545-6.
24. A full account of the failure of *Home at Grasmere* can be found in Chapter 4 of *Borders of Vision*, 'Visions of Paradise: Spring 1800'.

25. Quotations from the 1805 *Prelude* are from Jonathan Wordsworth, Stephen Gill, M.H. Abrams eds., *William Wordsworth, 'The Prelude', 1799, 1805, 1850* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979).
26. A difference of social class partly underlies the poet's inability to sympathise with the shepherd:

But blessèd be the God  
Of Nature and of man that this was so,  
That men did at the first present themselves  
Before my untaught eyes thus purified,  
Removed, and *at a distance that was fit.*  
(1805, VIII, 436-40)

It is often forgotten that the Pedlar, like Michael and the characters in *The Brothers*, is a man 'of respectable education' (*EY*, 314) and that in his Fenwick Note to *The Excursion*, Wordsworth quotes Robert Heron's statement that 'It is not more than twenty or thirty years, since a young man going ... to carry the pack, was considered, as going to lead the life, and acquire the Fortune, *of a Gentleman*' (my italics; James Butler ed., *William Wordsworth: 'The Ruined Cottage' and 'The Pedlar'* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979], hereafter Butler; p. 480). Social class was important to Wordsworth.

27. Quoted from a draft fragment composed for *The Pedlar* in the Alfoxden Notebook; see Butler, 118-19.
28. *Yes, for no other will*, I hope, appear in the forthcoming Cornell Wordsworth edition of the 1805 *Prelude*; in the meantime it can be found in the Oxford *Prelude*, p. 198.
29. *The Recreations of Christopher North* (3 vols., 1842), ii 348.
30. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire eds., *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (5 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940-9); V, 39.

#### LAMB, ELTON AND COLERIDGE'S 'ENIGMA ABOUT CUPID'

John Beer

*Peterhouse, Cambridge*

In 1825, at a time when he was sporadically in touch with Lamb, Coleridge published his *Aids to Reflection* -- a work, largely theological in nature, which was based partly on the writings of the seventeenth-century Archbishop Robert Leighton. Of Lamb's reactions to this volume we know rather little, unfortunately, except that when he heard about the enterprise he remarked that he hoped there would be more of Bishop Coleridge than of Leighton -- 'for what', he asked, 'is Leighton?'<sup>1</sup> And when it came out he reported to Coleridge himself the reaction of his friend Elton (Charles Abraham Elton, one must presume, the same Elton who in 1807 sent to his sister Julia a version of 'The Barberry-Tree', a pastiche of Wordsworth which has caused much discussion as to its possible authorship,<sup>2</sup> and about whom Duncan Wu wrote recently in this journal<sup>3</sup>): Elton, Lamb wrote,

borrowed the "Aids" from Hessey (by the way, what is your enigma about Cupid? I am Cytherea's son, if I understand a tittle of it) and returned it next day saying that 20 years ago, when he was pure, he *thought* as you do now, but that he now thinks as you did 20 years ago.

'But,' he continued -- with a twinkle of irony that we can interpret for ourselves -- 'E. seems a very honest fellow.'<sup>4</sup>

The most interesting section in the passage just quoted is the parenthesis, which shows Lamb responding for a brief moment to *Aids to Reflection* itself. To what in Coleridge's volume could he have been referring? Cytherea was of course Aphrodite, Cupid's mother, but that does not help us to read the riddle, at least immediately. Lamb's editors have duly read through Coleridge's volume and, finding that there is indeed a reference there to Cupid and Psyche, which Coleridge describes as a pagan myth corresponding to the Christian idea of the Fall of Man, have understandably concluded that this must be the enigma referred to. It is a fair inference in the circumstances, yet it is not altogether clear why Lamb should have been puzzled, since Psyche's disobedience to the injunction that she must not look at Cupid in the light might be thought to bear a rather obvious resemblance to Eve's disobedience in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree.

In spite of that, nevertheless, one would be inclined to accept the editors' explanation were it not for a further piece of evidence, not available to those who have read the volume simply as it appeared in 1825. Coleridge did not merely write books, he annotated them; and he was never so happy as when he was annotating books that he himself had written. As editor of *Aids to Reflection* for the *Collected Coleridge*, it has accordingly been a part of my duty to look at and record the various annotations he made in the copies that he gave to his friends. In one of these there is a long note in which he writes, of the nature of a fine soul,

As the Flowers of an Orange tree in its time of blossoming, that burgeon forth, expand, fall and are momentarily replaced, such is the sequence of hourly and momentarily Charities in a good and gracious soul. The modern Fiction which depicts the Son of Cytherea with a bandage round his eyes, is not without a spiritual meaning. There is a sweet and holy blindness in *Christian Love even as there is a blindness of Life, yea and of Genius too in the moment of productive Energy.*

Lamb, who knew that Coleridge's annotations were often the most interesting things he wrote, would have attended immediately to such a note if it had been present in the copy he was reading and I now think that he must have seen this one.<sup>5</sup> One can also see why he might have been puzzled. Coleridge's point, which would have come very naturally to so self-conscious a man, was that the finest kind of Christian charity was also exercised unselfconsciously, rather like the best kind of inspiration; Lamb, who was less self-conscious in his affections, might well have found this a strange riddle. Human love between the sexes was often blind, but how could that be true of *Christian* love? Although one of the most charitable of men he was shrewd enough to keep his eyes very wide open when he was exercising his charity -- never more, indeed, than he was expressing his affection for Coleridge himself.

Viewed in this way, the incident serves to illustrate further something that is very evident in Lamb's own character and indeed in many of his wittiest observations -- his ability to blend a talent for sympathy with a hardheaded grasp of human conduct and life as it is actually lived. It was as natural for him to love with his eyes wide open as it was for his friend Coleridge to associate Christian love with the blind workings of genius.

## NOTES

1. *Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas (1935) II 416.
2. See the contributions by J.C.C. Mays, Jonathan Wordsworth and myself to the *Review of English Studies* (1986) XXXVII 348-83.
3. N.S. no. 68, (Oct 1989) pp. 129-31.
4. *Letters* (Lucas) III 8.
5. The note appears on p. -ii in a copy, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, which Coleridge gave to his nephew Edward in July 1825. It is possible that Lamb saw it before it was sent, or that the note appeared in another copy as well. A lightly revised version was incorporated into the second edition of *Aids to Reflection* (1831), where it appears on p. 85.

## NEVIS, WEST INDIES, AND THE ENGLISH ROMANTIC WRITERS

Winifred F. Courtney

One of the reasons my husband and I went to Nevis to begin with -- first in 1984 from St. Kitts -- was the fascination to me, as a writer on English Romantic literary figures, of 'Pinney's Beach', and the knowledge that the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge had once briefly thought of establishing his 'democratick' Utopia in Nevis, courtesy of his wealthy young friends John Frederick and Azariah Pinney.

These friends had lent the poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy the first house in which they were able to live together (1795-97) after separation in an orphaned childhood -- 'Racedown' in Dorset, a Pinney family house then not much used. The two young Pinneys visited the Wordsworths there often, and with them sometimes came their friend James Webbe Tobin, even then gradually going blind, and his brother John Tobin, a playwright whose *Honeymoon* endured on the English stage long after his own early death in 1804.

James Tobin ('Jem'), besides being he to whom Wordsworth first addressed his poem 'We are Seven' (as 'dear brother Jem' -- words later deleted) was a close friend of Charles Lamb in London, and comes into two of his essays. I had published *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802*, in the U.S. and U.K. in 1982, so was especially interested in the fact that Jem Tobin, eldest son of another Nevis planter, James Tobin Sr., went back to Nevis in his blindness to manage the Tobin sugar plantation -- and died there. His father and the Pinneys' father, John Pretor Pinney -- chief developer of the Pinney estates in their heyday -- were long close friends and business partners on the island and in Bristol, England.

In 1986 my husband and I walked to the ruins of the Pinneys' great Georgian house, Montravers, on the side of Nevis Peak above Pinney's Beach, a mile or so from the main road. It is now smothered in acacia thorn, its sugar plantations abandoned in the late 1800's for coconuts, and the house itself in the 1930's. We are told it had been exquisitely furnished. We first came, in the forest, on its great copper for sugar reduction, and then upon J.P. Pinney's camel barn -- recently altered to become a guest house, then abandoned again. The trade winds blew, and in

knocking the branches against the stable's corrugated iron roof made an eerie sound as of people present and moving about. We soon discovered there were none, only ghosts, but the camel feeding-baskets still remained high up on the wall within: John Pretor Pinney had imported five camels from the Barbary Coast, for use perhaps in hauling cane or manure. We had difficulty in finding the Great House in the encroaching wilderness, though many paths suggested that visitors still came to the site, but at length we came upon it -- an L-shaped two-storey stone shell, roofless and floorless, and a basement surrounded by a 'moat', with a little bridge across it from the main floor. (We soon realised this could not have been a moat, since doors from the basement led into it: it was probably a device for letting light and air into the basement). The former kitchen, also in ruins, formed the 'L' wing.

But the Great House was unmistakeably *there*, some thirty feet high and fairly empty of vegetation within. Its front door stood four feet or so above the ground (had there been wooden steps, or steps of stone since plundered?), and one could picture the pause of a carriage, arriving by the straight, gently uphill route by which we had come -- now so overgrown -- for family or visitors to alight: Tom Wedgwood, travelling son of the potter, had alighted there in 1800, as we shall see.

In 1987 I had at last the opportunity, with the help of David and Joan Robinson, Curators for the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society, to explore in Nevis archives and elsewhere what is known of Pinneys, Tobins, and others on the island -- and learned far more than I can tell here, all of it fascinating.

The Pinneys had had sugar plantations on Nevis since the seventeenth century, but it was not until the time of John Pretor Pinney, inheriting the estates from absentee-owner relatives in England (who were owners of large Dorset and Somerset estates as well) that their Nevis plantations were developed and consolidated -- from Pinney's Beach clear to the top of Nevis Peak! -- though sugar-growing was limited to the lower slopes. J.P. Pinney went out in 1764, returning to England in 1783 some £35,000 the richer. James Tobin Sr., Pinney's business associate, was after 1783 occasionally proxy supervisor of his plantations -- until the unhappy day in 1808 when Tobin in Nevis and Pinney in England each 'sold' the Montravers estate to different people. John Pinney was furious and dissolved the partnership (though he is said to have been reconciled with Tobin before the latter's death). Pinney had sold the estate to one Edward Huggins, born on the island of English stock, who had made his way from humble beginnings to slave-overseer, then owner. Huggins, after litigation, won the Montravers ownership.

Edward Huggins, though like Pinney a successful planter, was known for his severity to slaves: Pinney was firm but humane by contrast. Tobin was also humane but considered a poor planter and often went into debt. His life was a struggle to support his large family, whose boys he sent to England to fend for themselves. The second Tobin generation mostly *succeeded* on their own -- among them were the playwright John, a general, and an admiral; even blind Jem was to play an important role in Nevis. ('The Pinneys had the money and the Tobins had the careers', says Richard Pares).

John Pinney also sent *his* sons to England, for education (John Frederick) and business experience (Azariah), though a much younger son, Charles, was to prove his most canny successor, Aza dying young. In England the young Pinneys and Tobins we have met all became friends with the (then) 'radical' young Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Lamb -- and among the young radicals slavery was anathema. Coleridge had devoted a good many pages of his 1796 *Watchman* weekly to excoriating slavery, and Wordsworth was the lifetime friend of Thomas Clarkson, who, with William Wilberforce MP, was chiefly responsible for the freeing of all slaves in British possessions in 1834.

To which Edward Huggins and Jem Tobin mightly contributed. Owing in part to managerial slackness between 1783, when the elder Pinney returned to England to found, with Tobin, his Bristol West Indian trading company, and 1808, when he sold his main estate to Huggins, his slaves were not happy under a new, stern master -- in this case Huggins's son Peter Thomas. They objected to manuring night duty -- which indeed had been prohibited under the islands' recent Melioration Act. They also wanted to 'try' young Huggins, as slaves sold *en masse* to a new master often did.

By this time, his brother John having died, blind Jem had come out from England to manage for his father: he probably had no other recourse, whatever his abolitionist views. And for a brief moment the poet Coleridge, having failed to get to America to set up 'Pantisocracy', had written in 1801 to his friend Robert Southey (future Poet Laureate of England):

Now mark my scheme! -- ...Nevis is the most lovely as well as the most healthy Island in the W. Indies -- Pinny's (*sic*) Estate is there -- and he has a country House situated in a most heavenly way, a very large mansion. Now between you & me I have reason to believe that not only this House is at my service, but many advantages in a family way that would go one half to lessen the expences of living there -- & perhaps Pinny would appoint us sinecure Negro-drivers at a hundred a year each, or some other snug & reputable office... Now I & my family, & you & Edith, & Wordsworth & his Sister might all go there -- & make the Island more illustrious than Cos or Lesbos... Do now think of this! But say nothing about it -- on account of old Pinny...

(Coleridge the antislavery agitator! -- hoping for Paradise). But this scheme failed too: hardheaded "old Pinny" would scarcely have allowed it. He did, however, allow the ailing Tom Wedgwood -- admiring donor to Coleridge of a Wedgwood annuity and alleged to favour Wilberforce -- to stay at Montravers in 1800, writing from England to his manager,

Do not suffer a negro to be corrected in his presence, or so near for him to hear the whip -- and if you could allowance the gang at the lower work, during his residence in the house, it would be advisable -- point out the comforts the negroes enjoy beyond the poor in this country, drawing a comparison between the climates -- show him the property they possess in goats, hogs, and poultry, and their negro-ground. By this means he will leave the island possessed of favourable sentiments.

One doubts that young Tom, who died soon after, changed his opinions.

But to return to our story: When the recalcitrant ex-Pinney slaves encountered the Huggins discipline after impertinences, they ran away, straight to the next plantation -- Jem Tobin's! -- for help. He could only return them, which straightway he did, and Edward Huggins now acted. The infamous story is known in Nevis still. In the Charlestown marketplace, in full view of several magistrates, doctors, and clergymen, he disciplined some twenty of the worst offenders with lashes far beyond the 'allowable' 39 -- a convention unfortunately not established in law. The greatest number applied to a man was 365, to a woman 291. No slave was proved to have died of the lashes, though one probably did, the affair hushed up. The island divided into pro- and anti-Huggins rather sharply thereafter, and the Huggins forces won: Edward was brought to trial and acquitted by a packed jury (fear of a slave revolt was certainly a factor too).

Now Jem Tobin got busy -- and sent the true facts of the case abroad via Governor Elliot, a decent man, to Lord Liverpool, Secretary of State, and to all the important liberal periodicals in England. England, including its government, recoiled in horror, though there was little it could do to change a jury acquittal at that distance.

On the island of Tortola, almost simultaneously, a planter, Arthur Hodge, was easily proved to have caused the death of slaves. He was hanged in 1811, Governor Elliot being on hand with troops to keep order. These two celebrated cases certainly hastened the end of British slavery and were long remembered. The *Edinburgh Review* wrote in January 1825:

Huggins was acquitted! ... Some members of the House of Assembly lost their seats in the next election for taking part against him. A printer of the neighbouring island was convicted of a libel, merely for publishing an official report of the evidence, transmitted to him by authority. In a word, he [Huggins] was considered a martyr to the common cause, and grew in influence and popularity; while a most respectable planter, an enlightened and accomplished gentleman, Mr. Tobin, who, nobly despising the prejudices of his class, had called the attention of the government to these diabolical outrages, was menaced with prosecutions, assailed with slanders, and preserved only by his blindness from challenges [to a duel] ... The people of Nevis suffers [sic] seriously by the crime of Huggins. They have adopted the guilt and they must share in the infamy ...

(The author was James Stephen, great-grandfather of Virginia Woolf).

But before emancipation became law, yet another champion of the humane cause was Henry Nelson Coleridge, the poet's nephew, who travelled with his cousin William Hart Coleridge, the first Bishop of Barbados, in 1825. They visited many islands, Nevis included, and the new Bishop was the first to consecrate the many Anglican churches in the British islands. H.N. Coleridge, soon to marry the poet's daughter, his cousin Sara, came home and wrote a charming book with a serious note on slavery at its end: *Six Months in the West Indies in 1825* (recently reprinted). Charles Lamb particularly admired this last chapter.

The cry for humanity had yet another effect in the building of the Cottle slave chapel in Nevis in the 1820's. Thomas John Cottle, long President of the Nevis Assembly, was also Huggins's son-in-law and (therefore?) often his defender against Jem Tobin, though said to be himself humane. And for a while Huggins's son Peter Thomas also had a slave chapel -- allowing services to curtail slave work hours -- at Montravers!

The Romantics soon lost touch with the Pinneys, but Charles Lamb always remembered Jem Tobin and paid sly tribute to him in his 1820 essay "Christ's Hospital [Lamb's school] Five and Thirty Years Ago":

There was one H---- [a bully], who, I learned, in after days, was seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks. (Do I flatter myself that this might be the planter of that name, who suffered at Nevis, I think, or St. Kits, (*sic*) some few years since? My friend Tobin was the benevolent instrument of bringing him to the gallows).

Of course Lamb has his facts all mixed (perhaps intentionally, for he had a mischievous wit) -- and his key shows 'Hodges' for 'H----'. Neither Hodge nor Huggins was ever in 'the hulks' (prison ships) in England, nor was any Huggins ever hanged that we know of. Hodge was hanged in Tortola, but was never pursued by Tobin -- who married in Nevis and fathered three children before his death in 1814: a brave and productive life for a blind man in any age. (Huggins was again accused of cruelty and acquitted in 1817).

Hugginses and Nisbetts, Maynards and Moores (also active in those days), as well as 'Pinney's Beach' are still names on the island, where it is easy to see the past come alive. What seemed to young poets a distant Paradise, if sometimes a shadowed one, is still Paradise enow. And the great Pinney house still stood in 1986 on the slope of Nevis Peak, forlorn relic of the days when Nevis's Charlestown rivalled New York as a busy port. The old glory has passed, but with it the evils of slavery and foreign domination. The young Romantics would be glad to know that Nevisians are now the masters of their own, happier fate.

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W.R.

## SOCIETY NEWS AND NOTES FROM MEMBERS

### *AN AFTERNOON WITH JOHN KEATS*

On Saturday, 7 April 1990, a very small and extremely select group of Elians met at Keats' House in Hampstead for a guided tour led by the Curator.

Here was a lady who enjoyed her work so we were given not only the standard stuff (Keats was a mere 61 inches tall and very conscious of it; Fanny Brawne's family lived in *that* half of the house; The house was a pair of well-concealed semis with delusions of villa-like grandeur; *Ode to a Nightingale* was written under a plum tree and *not* under a mulberry as *some* books say) and the gushy stuff ('It is arterial blood! Goodbye, Fanny!!'), but also the pleasantly astringent (Keats was short, stocky, and belligerent; he coated his mouth and throat with cayenne pepper, the better to appreciate the cool draughts of claret he frequently drank; the former Fanny Brawne told her husband as much about Keats as she thought he needed to know; and *this* room was added by the actress Eliza Chester who was known as 'Prinny's last fling') and even what I liked to recognise as those special anecdotes which no guide tells to everyone (Don't miss the flowers drawn in the margin of his medical note-book, Modern copies of Regency wallpaper cost £90 a roll though it was specifically cheap wallpaper and not the kind that would have been hung in Belgrave Square - at which two Elians started quoting W.S. Gilbert at each other). I particularly liked the anecdote about Keats' friend who commissioned his son to buy 'a building plot on the boulevard' in New Zealand and died of chagrin when he found that New Zealand in 1840 was like America in 1640.

We saw some of the books from Keats' library, his first editions, a letter from Keats to Shelley, and publishers' letters and reviews virtually all wishing that they had never risked their reputations by helping to bring such awful so-called verse before an incredulous public.

We learned that the house was built for a 99-year lease and so was facing demolition c. 1920 when the American Amy Lowell raised two-thirds of the sum required to preserve it in America and the rest, very grudgingly, in Britain: which an American friend assured me was the only way for the CLS to deal with Lamb's Duncan Terrace and Edmonton houses when they were last on the market. Keats' House is now run by the Borough Council and its continued opening, let alone its continued free opening, may not be considered essential by a 'capped' local authority.

We were privileged to cross to the 1930's Branch Library built in the garden. There were the usual acres of bare parquet but with a fine Keats Memorial Room at one end, its contents since partitioned into 40% of its original space so that the rest could be given over to a Children's Library. Suitably impressed that children in Hampstead are expected to be able to read, we squeezed between the pictures removed from the Brawne Rooms during their current redecoration, admired the Keats library, hankered after the Lamb library, saw the Kate Greenaway drawings, discussed book conservation, and joined the Curator in wondering what happened to Edmund Blunden's gift to the collection of a thousand books on Charles Lamb.

In short, it was a most genteel occasion with much intellectual curiosity but very few participants. Selina will stare when she hears of it.

D.E. Wickham

#### CROWSLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE

March 3rd 1990

Our tribute to the memory of Ernest Crowsley took the form this year of a reading by one of our Vice Presidents, Professor James B. Misenheimer Jr., of a selection from Lamb's work. Some extracts from early essays and poems were followed by passages from the *Essays of Elia* and the complete 'Dream Children'; then in a final section Coleridge's poem 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' with its unforgettable portrayal of Charles Lamb and the Wordsworths in the wonderful Somersetshire period was followed by 'The Old Familiar Faces' and Lamb's elegaic 'The Death of Coleridge'. We all knew we were in for a treat, having experienced Professor Misenheimer's magical way with Lamb quotations in the course of previous lectures, and we were not disappointed. It was an afternoon to remember and one that I am sure Mr Crowsley would have delighted in.

Mary Wedd

#### CHARLES AND MARY LAMB EN AFRIQUE?

During a month's visit to the Université de Bourgogne at Dijon in March, I attended an extremely interesting seminar given to the university's students of Commonwealth Literature by the Nigerian playwright, novelist and critic Wole Soyinka. At one point Mr Soyinka was trying to highlight the different cultural traditions of French and British colonialism and he declared that whereas the French imposed high Parisian literary taste on their colonies, the British would allow their territories to explore literature more freely, though generally tending to make the greatest writers available in adaptations or cut-down versions: 'Tales from Shakespeare rather than the plays themselves' was his example.

One cannot imagine the Lambs lending themselves to a system of cultural imperialism willingly, but they might have been rather pleased to think of their Shakespeare versions being read on African soil. Which leads me to ask if any of our readers have longer memories which embrace the former Colonies or the Commonwealth some years since, and whether they came across the *Tales from Shakespeare* (or indeed *Elia*) in use as a schoolroom text? I would be fascinated to know.

Bill Ruddick

#### A NOTE FOR ELIANS WHO ALSO LOVE VICTORIAN LITERATURE

Professor M.D. Allen of 'Penn State' (The Pennsylvania State University) has kindly written to draw our attention to two articles which he has published in *The Gissing Newsletter*. The first 'claims that the form of a key event in *Born to Exile*, an important novel in the Gissing canon, was suggested by a reading of Lamb's *Essays* [*The Gissing Newsletter*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, October 1988] and the second that one important character in the same novel is a fictional version of

Lamb himself [*The Gissing Newsletter*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, July 1980].. Professor Allen enclosed xeroxes of his articles, which are well worth adding to one's Lamb bibliography. Their titles are, respectively, 'Charles Lamb and *Born in Exile*' and 'A New Source for *Born in Exile*'

### PROMISES, PROMISES...

Space being at a premium in this quarter's *Charles Lamb Bulletin* (when is it not? But do not let this remark deter you from sending contributions, large or small, dear reader ...) the review of Bunty Smith's interesting *Portrait of Widford* and details of the Widford Christmas Card must be held back till next time. So must a very erudite, spirited and delightful response to our Chairman's remarks on the game of fives by Dr Stanley Jones. And speaking of 'our sharp-eyed Chairman' (*Charles Lamb Bulletin*, April 1990), does he have a twin, a Doppelgänger, or can this figure, glimpsed in the pages of *The Artful Reporter* ('The Arts Magazine for the North West') for May 1990 represent the Simon Pure, the man himself? The context is a lively account of the recent Book Collectors' Weekend at Dove Cottage, Grasmere:

...A country doctor is seen for what he really is, an astute collector of books by Charles and Mary Lamb, Leigh Hunt and William Hazlitt...What is it about books that inspires such passion?

.....

The October *Charles Lamb Bulletin* will include a report on the May Annual General Meeting of the Society, and the biennial Index.

### WALTER JERROLD AND SOME THINGS WORTH NOTING

D.E. Wickham

A recent reading of Walter Jerrold's book *The Autolycus of the Bookstalls*, 1902, dedicated to Bertram Dobell, 'the complete bookman' produced the following Elianish quotations:

From *The Moralist at the Breakfast Table*

'Other things are magnetic besides iron; the man of wealth is oftenest the recipient of a legacy and the man whose instinct it is to accumulate books finds Circumstance ever ready to aid him in that emprise'.

From *The Moralist at the Breakfast Table*

'Taking the *Guardian* [from the collection of *British Essayists*] next, I open on a paper by Eustace Budgell, a relative of Addison's by the way, in which the first few lines were a reproach to the readers of the day, "the prevailing humour of crying up authors that have writ in the days of our forefathers, and of passing slightly over the merit of our contemporaries, is a grievance that men of a free and unprejudiced thought have complained of through all ages in their writings". [And, indeed, he does not resist including the obvious quotation, give or take a word:] ("Hang the age", exclaimed Elia, "I'll write for antiquity".)'

From "S. T. C." on *Criticism*

'Suffice it that Autolycus had to pay more than his accustomed few pence for this treasure trove [the first edition of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, 1817, in calf] - how much more he has refrained from saying, lest Mrs Autolycus, looking over his shoulder, remind him of the uses to which such sums should more legitimately be put. What are a few shillings more or less to treasure such as this?'

[To comment on this last quotation, one need only say that in *A Penn'orth of Cobbett* he laments that the days of the first edition of Fitz-Gerald's *Rubaiyat* at a penny have long since gone, yet in *How doth the* --- he tells how he found Goldsmith's works with Hazlitt's bookplates in them in a zinc bath full of old books].

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