

The Charles Lamb Society

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The Charles Lamb Society was founded on 1 February 1935 at a meeting at Essex Hall in The Strand. Its first President was Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Today, the Society aims to advance the study of the life, works, and times of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle; to preserve for the public a collection of Eliana (currently held at Guildhall Library, London); and to stimulate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour.

The Society holds a series of events each year in London, including lectures, study days, and a Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon. The Society also publishes the biannual peer-review journal, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*. For further information please contact the Chairman, Nick Powell (nrdpowell@gmail.com).

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The Charles Lamb Bulletin

Autumn 2012

New Series No. 156

'Let us cultivate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour'

SPECIAL ISSUE:

Charles Lamb and The Reflector: A Bicentenary Celebration

The Charles Lamb Birthday Toast, 2012
J. R. WATSON

The Birthday Luncheon Lecture: Lamb's Edition of 1818
GREGORY DART

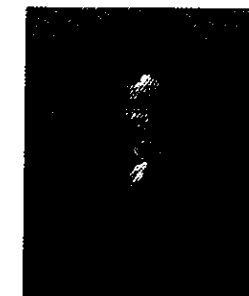
Lamb's Essays in *The Reflector*: A Bicentenary Celebration
FELICITY JAMES

'The attractive form of a paradox': Lamb, Hunt and *The Reflector*
DAVID STEWART

Snipe, Roast Pig and Boiled Babies: Lamb's Consuming Passion
SIMON P. HULL

Leigh Hunt in March 1812: *The Examiner*, *The Reflector*, and 'A Day by the Fire'
JOHN STRACHAN

Lamb's *John Woodvil*: A Shakespearean Medley
HILARY NEWMAN



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THE CHARLES LAMB
SOCIETY

The Charles Lamb Society Website

www.charleslambociety.com

Elians will be pleased to hear that we have launched a new website for the Society which is now live online.

The new site includes:

- The complete digitized series of the *Charles Lamb Society Bulletin* from 1935 to 1972
- Detailed biographical articles on Charles and Mary Lamb written by Duncan Wu and Jane Aaron
- Information about the history of the Society and the earlier dining-club, The Elian
- Information about the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, including notes for contributors and our style sheet
- Details about the Lamb Society archive at Guildhall, including an online edition of Deborah Hedgecock's *Handlist* (1995)
- A list of useful links for further study on the Lambs and their circle
- Information about how to become a member.

Please visit the site to learn more about the work of the Society, its history, journal, and forthcoming events.

CHARLES LAMB: READINGS AND READERS

CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY DAY CONFERENCE

Swedenborg Hall, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London, WC1A 2TH
Saturday 17 November 2012

10.30-11	Coffee
	Elian Reading and Welcome by Chair
11-1	First Panel: Lamb's Readings
	Lamb's Reading Habits [draft title] Dr. Tom Lockwood, University of Birmingham
	Lamb and Horace Professor Richard Gaskin, University of Liverpool
1-2.30	Lunch at local restaurant at participants' own expense
2.30-4.15	Second Panel: Lamb's Readers
	'Beyond whist sobriety: the Lambs, Crabb Robinson, and their discourse on literature' Philipp Hunnekuhl, Queen Mary, University of London
	'Charles Lamb's letter-readers and the <i>Essays of Elia</i>' Heather Stone, Brasenose College, Oxford.
4.15-4.45	Tea
4.45-5.30	Round Table Discussion

ALL WELCOME

ATTENDANCE IS FREE OF CHARGE

If possible, we would appreciate knowing in advance if you intend to come; please contact Felicity James (fj21@le.ac.uk), School of English, University of Leicester, LE1 7RH.

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

New Series, No. 156, Autumn 2012

SPECIAL ISSUE

CHARLES LAMB AND THE REFLECTOR: A BICENTENARY CELEBRATION

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The Charles Lamb Birthday Toast, 2012

J. R. Watson

The Charles Lamb Birthday Celebration took place at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, Pall Mall, on Saturday 4 February. This is the text of the President's toast, followed by the lecture of the Guest of Honour, Dr Gregory Dart:

Some of you who are regular attenders at this birthday lunch will remember that my predecessor, Professor John Beer, in one of his graceful and scholarly proposals of the toast, compared Charles Lamb to another Charles, one who is much in our minds this year, Charles Dickens. Today I want to connect Charles Lamb with another Victorian novelist, a friend of Dickens unless he was exasperated with her, Elizabeth Gaskell. He called her his 'Scheherezade' because of her bewitching skill in telling stories, but everyone remembers Dickens's outburst when she wouldn't do exactly what he wanted for one of his periodicals: 'Mrs Gaskell, fearful - fearful. If I were Mr G. O. Heaven how I would beat her!'

Elizabeth Gaskell was made of sterner stuff than some of Dickens's other writers. She had a strength that came from her success as the author of *Mary Barton*, although that was a secret for a time, but also from her Unitarianism, and her position as the wife of William Gaskell, minister of Cross Street Chapel in Manchester for over fifty years. The practical morality of Unitarian belief and conduct was something that she shared with Lamb. You will remember his rebuke to Southey after his review of *Essays of Elia* in 1823, in which Southey had brashly and carelessly said that it was a book 'which wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original.' In the letter-essay that follows, the reader can sense Lamb's indignation: which essay, he asks, was it that provoked such a comment? It is one of Lamb's most serious essays, one in which his beliefs are expressed with a kind of fervent integrity. At one point he remembers that Southey had invited him to what he calls 'a compliance with the wholesome forms and doctrines of the Church of England', to which Lamb responds: 'The last sect, with which you can remember me to have made common profession, were the Unitarians.'

Elizabeth Gaskell was still a young woman when Charles Lamb died. But Professor John Chapple's *Elizabeth Gaskell, The Early Years* shows that she read Lamb, and she almost certainly owned a copy of *Essays of Elia*. The biography of her by Jenny Uglow records a moment when the unconventional Geraldine Jewsbury is lying on the floor of the Gaskells' drawing room in Upper Rumford Street in Manchester sometime in the 1840s reading it: she could have brought her own copy with her, but I think that unlikely. Elizabeth Gaskell would almost

certainly have responded to certain things in the essays, and especially to the declaration of Unitarian sympathy.

One place where we can, I believe, detect the presence of Lamb is in her novella, *My Lady Ludlow*, published in Dickens's periodical, *Household Words*, from June to September 1858. The central character, Lady Ludlow, is a benevolent but dictatorial figure in the village of Hanbury, who believes that teaching the lower orders such as servants to read is dangerous. She quarrels with the new vicar, Mr Gray, because he wants to set up a village school. One of the characters in her parish is Job Gregson, a notorious ne'er-do-well and poacher, who turns gamekeeper at the end of the book. He has a son, a bright boy called Harry, who is taught to read and write, and do simple arithmetic by the estate steward, much to Lady Ludlow's disapproval when she finds out. He has an accident, which incapacitates him from manual labour; but at the end of the book, thanks to the efforts of Mr Gray, he goes to a charity school, where, as we are told in the final letter from one of the gossipy characters of Hanbury, 'they do talk of his being captain of his school, or Grecian, or something, and going to college after all! Harry Gregson the poacher's son! Well! To be sure, we are living in strange times!'

Where did Elizabeth Gaskell, the minister's wife from Manchester, get her information about a Grecian from? I suspect that she chose Christ's Hospital as a school where people could rise through their own hard work and merit because she had been reading Lamb's essays. Those essays speak, delightfully and memorably, about his schooldays, more than once, as if he felt that he had to return to those early years, and the miracle of his own education. The benign intervention that allowed Harry Gregson to go to Christ's Hospital is the same that induced Samuel Salt to notice the son of his factotum, John Lamb, and arrange for him to go to school there. And although Lamb did not go to college, his sense of gratitude for his early experience there is ever present in those essays that deal with his schooldays.

We can see what Elizabeth Gaskell was getting at. In the face of the intractable conservatism of Lady Ludlow, she sets the possibility of change. Harry Gregson goes to college, and ends up as vicar of the parish, the Rev Henry Gregson. It is the triumph of the scholarship boy. Elizabeth Gaskell's Unitarianism led her instinctively to welcome what she knew was progress, a march towards a fairer society, although in the person of Lady Ludlow she recognises an older order which had its own kindness and courtesy, a kindness that was limited but very real.

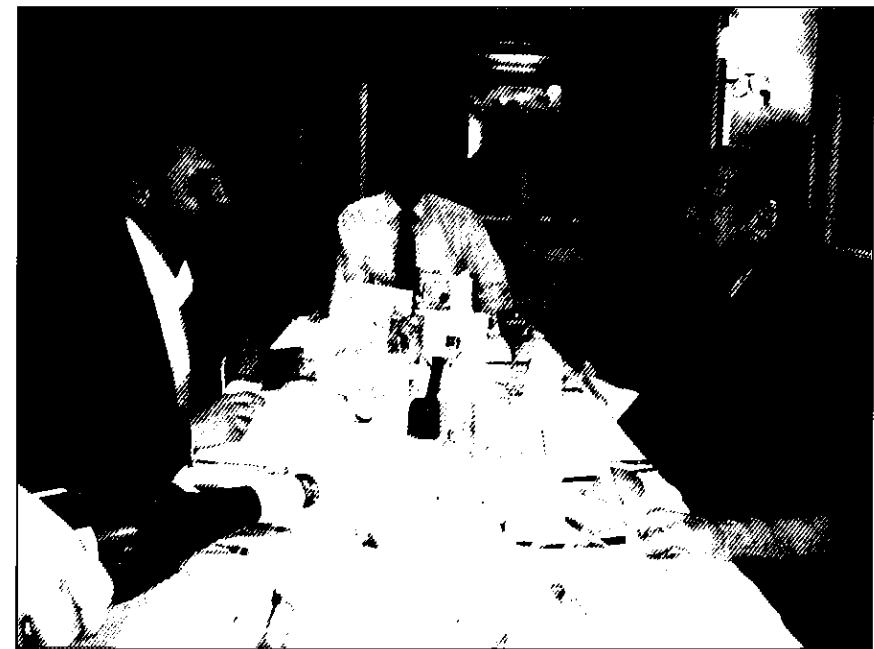
Harry Gregson, the scholarship boy, is the successor to Charles Lamb and the forerunner of all those who in their own generations were transformed by the opportunities of education. I speak feelingly and personally at this point because I was what used to be called a scholarship boy, who went to what was called a 'direct grant' school, and who was a beneficiary of the Education Act of 1944. That system has now gone, and with it the old 11+, which was the bad side of it, making thousands of children feel that they had failed at that tender age. But to thousands of others, it gave the chance to be something different from

their parents. None of my family, or my wife's family, had ever been to a university; neither of us lived in a house with a book-lined study; to both of us the system was a benevolent miracle. I look back upon everything that has happened to me, including being the President of this Society for the last ten years, as somehow providential, and deserving of my deepest gratitude; and I think that Lamb felt the same way.

We think of the essays on Christ's Hospital as genial and urbane tributes. But, as with almost all of the essays, the seriousness is powerful and effective. In 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital' he described the school as 'an Institution to keep those who have yet held up their heads in the world from sinking; to keep alive the spirit of a decent household, when poverty was in danger of crushing it; to assist those who are the most willing, but not the most able, to assist themselves; to separate a child from his family for a season, in order to render him back hereafter, with feelings and habits more congenial to it, than he could ever have attained by remaining at home in the bosom of it.'

It is an ideal picture of a boarding school education, to be sure; but behind it one can sense Lamb's profound thankfulness. Thankfulness is one of the loveliest of human emotions; and this is the thankfulness of the boy who always regretted that he did not go on to Oxford or Cambridge, but who was conscious of how much he had benefited from the chances that he had had at school. I should like us today to remember Lamb the scholarship boy, as I invite you to rise and drink the toast to THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF CHARLES LAMB.

University of Durham



John Gardner, Gregory Dart, Catherine Payling, and Dick Watson at the Lamb Luncheon 2012.

Lamb's Edition of 1818

Gregory Dart

Famously, lectures were not much to Charles Lamb's taste, regardless of who was lecturing. As he said in a letter to Mary Wordsworth in February 1818, 'If read, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works which you could read so much better at leisure yourself; if delivered extempore, I am always in pain lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honor of me at the London Tavern. 'Gentlemen' said I, and there I stoppt, - the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying'.¹

The problem of how to perform oneself in public may have been especially on Lamb's mind at this time, because by the spring of 1818 there were already moves afoot to produce a selected edition of his writings. According to some sources it was Leigh Hunt who first proposed the project; according to others it was the eventual publishers of the two-volume *Works of Charles Lamb*, Charles and James Ollier.² Either way, the task fell upon Lamb not simply to introduce the collection but to present himself to the world and offer an overview of his production to date. Lamb's solution to this challenge was typically playful. The first volume, which is mostly poetry and verse drama, he dedicated to Coleridge - in prose; the second volume, which carries his essays and critical prose, he devoted to Martin Burney - in verse. The opening dedication to Coleridge is telling, I think, not only because it shows the character that Lamb chose to adopt as a public author, but also because it gives us certain hints as to how we might read the edition as a whole.

Lamb opens by making fun of the slightness of his book: 'My dear Coleridge', he says, 'you will smile to see the slender labours of your friend designated by the title of *Works*: but such was the wish of the gentlemen who have kindly undertaken the trouble of collecting them, and from their judgement could be no appeal'.³ To us this modesty might seem excessive - characteristic, but excessive - and yet Lamb must have been well aware that in the years leading up to 1818 there had appeared several rather imposing collections from his former Laker colleagues - Wordsworth's *Poems* had been

¹ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 7 vols., (London: Methuen, 1903), VI, 512.

² See Thomas Noon Talfourd's *Letters of Charles Lamb* (London, 1840), 106; 'Leigh Hunt and Charles Ollier', *St. James's Magazine* (October 1974), 392-3; For more information on the Olliers, see John Barnard, 'First Fruits or 'First Blights': A New Account of the Publishing History of Keats's *Poems* (1817)', *Romanticism*, 12.2 (2006), 71-101; 'A Literary Publisher', *Temple Bar* (February 1880), 243-52;

³ *Lamb, Works*, 2 vols., (London, 1818), I, v. Hereafter references will be reproduced after quotations in the text.

published in 1815; Southey's *Minor Poems* in 1815 and Coleridge's *Sybilline Leaves* in 1817.

With these publications in mind, we can see that Lamb was probably only too conscious of how much he owed to this poetic triumvirate, and of how lightweight his output might seem in comparison. It is for this reason, perhaps, that he makes a point of remarking that 'it would have been a kind of disloyalty' to dedicate his early pieces, which were first published among Coleridge's poems, to anybody but him, not least because they were 'fairly derivatives' from him and them (I, v-vi). Such acknowledgements were later taken up by some of the lazier reviewers of the 1818 edition, who quickly jumped on the idea that many of Lamb's early poems were in fact nothing but pale imitations of the *Lyrical Ballads*.⁴

So Lamb felt he had every reason to be modest when confronted with the more sizeable 'collected works' recently issued by his friends - Coleridge's volume, although somewhat miscellaneous, had still managed to gather together for the first time the 'Ancient Mariner', 'Christabel', and all of the odes and conversation poems of the 1790s. Wordsworth's 1815 collection was even more elaborate and imposing, drawing together many of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807) and rearranging them according to a complex generic and experiential schema. One of the underlying ideas behind Wordsworth's collection - but only one of them - was the notion that the poems would chart a kind of progress from the cradle to the grave, and that they would contain a kind of developmental narrative not completely dissimilar to that of the unpublished *Prelude*. Wordsworth's first volume began with poems referring to the period of childhood, and then juvenile pieces, before moving on to 'Poems of the Fancy', 'Poems of the Imagination' and 'Poems of Sentiment and Reflection'. The political sonnets straddled the first and second volumes and were then succeeded by poems relating to old age, elegies and epitaphs. The final poem in the collection was the 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality', a poem that had already become a kind of touchstone among first and second generation Romantics alike, provoking responses as diverse as Coleridge's 'Dejection' Ode of 1802 and Shelley's 1816 blank verse narrative, *Alastor*.

Nothing could have been more inimical to Lamb's character or the nature of his *oeuvre* than Wordsworth's grand plan of 1815, not least because it was so thick with classifications and distinctions. Nevertheless, I think it would be surprising if some elements of Wordsworth's self-conscious re-ordering of his works had not been playing through Lamb's mind when he came to lay out his own. What evidence is there for this? Well, the very manner in which Lamb describes his movement away from writing poetry (under Coleridge's tutelage) into other forms of literary composition. 'How this association, which shall

⁴ See 'The Works of Charles Lamb', *The British Critic*, (February 1819), 141, 147. *Blackwood's* might have been expected to follow suit, but rather unexpectedly insisted that whatever else Lamb was, he was *not* one of the Lake School; 'Works of Charles Lamb', *Blackwood's Magazine*, (August 1818), 601. Adopting a different line again, the *Monthly Review* considered Lamb to be an 'ex-member' of the Lake School', (November 1819), 253.

always be a dear and proud recollection to me, came to be broken,' Lamb says, 'who snapped the three-fold cord, — [...] I cannot tell; — but wanting the support of your friendly elm [...] my vine has, since that time, put forth few or no fruits; the sap (if ever it had any) has become in a manner, dried up and extinct; and you will find your old associate, in his second volume, dwindled into prose and criticism' (I, vi). Significantly, however, no sooner has Lamb described his literary career as a painful falling-off, than he gradually begins to generalise this process a little, and offer it as an inevitable result of growing up and growing old. 'Is it that, as years come upon us, Life itself loses much of its Poetry for us? We transcribe but what we read in the great volume of Nature; and, as the characters grow dim, we turn off, and look another way' (I, vii). Lamb then concludes with one of those sudden, scalding bursts of truth that Hazlitt was to find so characteristic of him, when he turns, with devastating candour, to the parallel history of his dedicatee. 'You yourself write no Christabels, nor Ancient Mariners now' (I, vii).

So it is not simply that Lamb's Dedication is invoking that characteristically Wordsworthian drift, encapsulated in the Immortality Ode and elsewhere, in which the visionary intensity of childhood gradually fades into the light of common day. He is also partly suggesting that his 1818 edition can be read as a kind of progress through youth and into maturity — with all of its concomitant losses and gains. This suggestion is compounded by the manner in which he talks about his early poems. The value of these poems to him, he suggests, lies less in their objective poetic achievement than in their ability to conjure up the period of their composition — 'when life was fresh and topics exhaustless' (I, vii). So too he defends himself against Coleridge's charge that there was a certain over-imitation of the antique in the style of his tragedy *John Woodvil* by arguing that the play was written at a time when the elder dramatists — Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger — were then a *first love* and so it should not be surprising if his language 'imperceptibly took a tinge' (I, viii-ix).

There is an echo, here, of an old argument that Lamb had had with Coleridge in the 1790s, although the treatment of it is very different from Coleridge's own contemporaneous score-settling with Wordsworth in the second half of the *Biographia Literaria*. This old argument, which has been brilliantly discussed by David Fairer and Felicity James,⁵ was about the drastic revision of some of Lamb's sonnets as they were prepared for inclusion in the first edition of Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects* of 1796. In a letter to Coleridge of 8-10 June 1796 Lamb comments: 'in my 12th effusion I had rather have seen what I wrote myself, tho' they bear no comparison with your exquisite line, 'On rose-leaf'd beds amid your faery bowers' &c.— I love my sonnets because they are the reflected images of my own feelings at different times'.⁶ He then goes on to complain in similar terms about Coleridge's

⁵ David Fairer, *Organising Poetry. The Coleridge Circle 1790-1798* (Oxford, 2009); Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Basingstoke, 2008).

⁶ *Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edwin Marris, 3 vols (Cornell, 1975), I, 20. Further references are after quotations in the text.

alteration of two lines from another sonnet, 'O! I could laugh to hear the midnight wind'. 'To instance,' Lamb continues, 'in the 13th 'How reason reeld' &c. —, are good lines, but must spoil the whole with me, who know it is only a fiction of yours & that the rude dashings did in fact not rock me to repose. I grant the same objection applies not to the former sonnet [...] but still I love my own feelings. They are dear to memory, tho' they now and then wake a sigh or a tear' (I, 20).

Coleridge took the point, and many of Lamb's original thoughts were restored for the second edition of 1797. Even more significantly for us perhaps, these sentiments do seem to sum up Lamb's habitual resistance to revision, a resistance, that is, towards revising his own works as well as others revising them for him. Of the works appearing in the 1818 edition, a high proportion had already seen the light of day in some form or other, appearing in a number of newspapers, books and magazines, such as the *Morning Post*, the *Gentleman's Magazine* and Leigh Hunt's *Reflector*. But in spite of this diversity of origins, Lamb was remarkably averse to adjusting or amending them. Perhaps there was no time: the *Works* does seem to have been rushed through relatively briskly. Perhaps the priority was always to gather together in the same place a number of scattered works which friends of Lamb had already found valuable and enjoyable — the essays on Shakespeare and Hogarth in particular.⁷ Whatever the reason, Lamb showed no enthusiasm for revision. His approach — most especially with respect of his early poems — seems always to have been that his works represented a true history of his former feelings and that it was therefore a species of disloyalty, almost a kind of betrayal, to interfere too much with them.

So the suggestion behind Lamb's Dedication is not simply that Volume I is about poetry and Volume II criticism, but that Volume I represents youth and II maturity, as if Lamb's little 1818 edition, small as it was, could still be seen to follow something of the same contour as Wordsworth's 1815 *Poems*, building slowly into a complete picture of 'the growth of a poet's mind'. There is something in this idea. The first volume, while not being in any way strictly chronological, does clearly reflect the leading priorities of Lamb's early poetry, and even the poems for children that he and Mary first published in 1809 do seem all of a piece with his Coleridge and Lloyd collaborations, and with his early fictions *John Woodvil* and *Rosamund Gray*. Several of these pieces touch on the pleasures and pains of intense friendship in a manner that tallies closely with the fraught intimacy that Lamb had shared with his poetic collaborators, and to a lesser degree with Southey and his sister Mary. 'The Three Friends', though written much later (in 1809), looks very much like a record of those times, telling of a triangle of friendships so intense that it is gradually overcome by jealousy and paranoia. In this short narrative poem, it is only slowly and

⁷ Both essays had originally appeared in Hunt's *Reflector* of 1811-2. The essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' was then subsequently reproduced in Volume III, the supplementary volume, of Nichols and Stevens' *Works of Hogarth*, 1817.

retrospectively that Margaret and Martha realise how much they have wronged their former friend Mary:

Then, O then, how did reflection
Come on them with recollection!
All that she had done for them,
How it did their fault condemn! (I, 12-3)

Here as on other occasions in Lamb 'reflection' suggests both retrospective meditation and the hall-of-mirrors effect that takes place between like-minded friends. In this case, of course, what mirroring exposes, in the end, is a painful lack of moral reciprocity. In the previous poem, by contrast, 'To Charles Lloyd, an unexpected visitor', which is very much about the first flush of amical enthusiasm, it is much more symmetrical and sustaining, Lloyd's unexpected visit to the lonely Lamb presenting him with a wonderful mnemonic charm against future loneliness:

Long, long, within my aching heart
The grateful sense shall cherish'd be;
I'll think less meanly of myself,
That Lloyd will sometimes think on me. (I, 4)

Intense friendships and their relationship to romantic love connections are the subject of both *John Woodvil*, Lamb's seventeenth-century tragedy, and *Rosamund Gray*, his rather beautiful romance in prose. It might seem strange to insist upon these themes. Isn't all literature about friendship and/or love? But Lamb's interest in these matters has a special kind of focus and intensity. Perhaps it is the resolutely domestic nature of his approach that makes it distinctive. What he said of the Jacobean playwright Thomas Heywood was also true of him, that 'he was a sort of 'prose Shakespeare', full of 'noble modesty' (II, 47-8). *John Woodvil* in particular reads like an indoor version of Wordsworth's *Borderers*, social and personal where the latter is political and philosophical, but fundamentally concerned with the same themes. The key event in the plot is when an intense, confidential friendship explodes suddenly and without warning into enmity and betrayal. First there is John Woodvil's yearning for a true fraternal intimacy:

O for some friend now,
To conceal nothing from, to have no secrets.
How fine and noble a thing is confidence,
How reasonable too, and almost godlike!
Fast cement of fast friends, band of society,
Old natural go-between in the world's business,
Where civil life and order, wanting this cement,
Would presently rush back
Into the pristine state of singularity,
And each man stand alone. (I, 132-3)

This is an intriguingly Rousseauist account of the attempt to superimpose a candid and transparent friendship upon the original, solitary state of nature, and reminds us of the buried post-revolutionary context of Lamb's play. Of course, the secret that Woodvil wants to confide is that his father, who was a Parliamentarian during the Civil War, has not fled the country after the Restoration, but has holed himself up in Sherwood Forest, like a kind of latter day Robin Hood. But no sooner does Woodvil impart this secret to Lovell, a loyal friend of his, while sentimentally drunk at a party, than he goes on to poison the secret bond they have established together, through a toxic mix of pride and paranoia.

In Lamb's play it is the loyalty of Woodvil's abandoned lover Margaret that eventually redeems him from his drunken double betrayal, that is, his initial betrayal of his father's secret, and then of his friendship to Lovell. In *Rosamund Gray* the situation is reversed, with the return of a long-lost friend providing Allan Clare with some kind of subdued consolation for the loss of his young love Rosamund Gray and his sister Elinor. In both works Lamb is playing fictional variations on the circumstances of his unhappy rural love affair with Alice Simmons, and his troubled intimacies with Lloyd, Coleridge and other former schoolfellows. *John Woodvil* was written, as Lamb confesses in his Dedication, in more or less conscious imitation of the ancient dramatists, and has an antiquarian feeling not present in *Rosamund Gray*, but both dramas are deliberately quaint to a degree that was remarked upon by contemporary reviewers. Opinion was divided about the viability of *Woodvil*, but to many of the critics *Rosamund Gray* exhibited a simplicity and delicacy of feeling that effectively silenced all criticism – as if any kind of critical engagement with this butterfly would be somehow churlish.⁸ Both *Rosamund* and *Woodvil* are, in a sense, stories of innocence lost and restored, with the studied quaintness of the language providing a kind of sympathetic amber for preserving that innocence from the slings and arrows of the late 1790s.

Lamb makes only a few really dramatic chronological rearrangements in the 1818 edition, but they are interesting on that account. His 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital', as a product of 1813, should by rights have come somewhere in the second volume, but in fact it is placed after *John Woodvil* and *Rosamund Gray* and closes the first. Positioned thus, this idealized picture of his former school presents itself almost as Lamb's last Song of Innocence, a final tribute and farewell to youth. And it is perhaps for this reason, as much as any other, that Lamb did actually make a couple of telling revisions to this essay. In its first incarnation it had begun with a polemical defence of the school against a charge that it was no longer prioritizing the poorer children of the City, as its Charter demanded. Lamb had begun his riposte by arguing for the important role a sprinkling of respectability had in liberalizing the whole mass; he had even gone

⁸ See, for example, the comments of the *British Critic*: 'The volume closes with 'Rosamund Gray', a tale in prose, and written in a style of such excessive tenderness, that it would seem almost unfeeling to make it in any way the subject of animadversion' (February 1819), 144. So too the *New British Lady's Magazine* found *Rosamund* 'extremely simple, but exquisitely wrought', (June 1819), 263.

on to suggest that, in the brave new world of the parochial school system, it was no longer Christ's priority to rescue the children of the very poor, but rather those whose parents were of 'liberal views but time-straitened circumstances', like his own.⁹ He had compared the edifying spectacle of Christ's boys with 'the abject countenances, the squalid mirth, the broken-down spirit, and crouching, or else fierce and brutal deportment to strangers, of the very different set of beings who round the precincts of common orphan schools and places of charity' (541). But all such strange contentiousness and crass class feeling was wisely dropped in 1818.

Notably, in its 1818 version, Christ's Hospital is depicted as an institution which rescues its pupils, not so much from poverty or ignorance, as from youthful vanity. The typical Christ's boy comes to the school a 'pert, young coxcomb', Lamb says, but quickly learning to move in the 'common mass of that unpretentious assemblage of boys' changes in no time at all from being a little unfeeling mortal to a creature who can 'feel and reflect' (I, 275-6). Reflection, moral reflection, is *it seems* a habit that can be caught from learning to reflect others, in manners as in dress. It is possible that Lamb is seeking to express a similar idea in the first of Volume I's sonnets when he concludes his praise of the actress Fanny Kelly with a reference to her 'thoughtful eye' and 'reflecting brow' (I, 58). It is not just that Kelly's acting expresses her own thoughtfulness, I take it, it also reflects, or mirrors, our own.

If Volume I is often about the volatile pleasures and perils of such intimate reflections between people then one way of reading the difference between the first and second volumes is in terms of an increased emphasis upon the role of art in mediating such emotions – its ability to function not as a transparent conduit of personal feelings but as a new and different kind of 'reflective image', objectifying the passion in question and making possible a new kind of detached engagement, or *critical* sympathy. This is what Lamb sees in Hogarth, declaring that his mind was eminently 'reflective' (II, 106) and that his paintings have this difference from conventional graphic satire that 'we do not merely laugh at' but are 'led into long trains of reflection by them' (II, 105). 'This reflection of the artist's own intellect from the faces of his characters,' he continues, 'is one reason why the works of Hogarth, so much more than those of any other artist are objects of meditation. Our intellectual natures love the mirror which gives them back their own likenesses' (II, 107). This is what Hogarth does – his faces provide mirrors of reflection; but this may also help explain why, for Lamb at least, seeing Shakespeare acted does not work in the same way. Shakespeare on stage, by contrast, seems to produce a kind of reflection that inhibits reflection – with the person of the actor effectively interposing itself between playwright and playgoer, blocking out the text. For Lamb it seems that actors distract in exactly the same way that improvising lecturers do – with one's sympathy for their physical presence (or plight) always

⁹ 'On Christ's Hospital and the Character of the Christ's Hospital Boys', *Gentleman's Magazine* (June 1813), 541.

being in danger of drowning out other, more valuable forms of reflection.

The other major rearrangement of the 1818 edition, apart from the 'Christ's Hospital' essay, is Lamb's resituating of his 'Londoner' essay, which was first published in the *Morning Post* in 1802, in amongst the *Reflector* essays of 1811. In its original newspaper incarnation the article – which was published as 'The Londoner No. 1' – was clearly intended as the manifesto for a new series – a series that never came to pass. In 1818, however, it carries the status of a mature profession of faith.

This passion for crowds is nowhere feasted so full as in London. The man must have a rare recipe for melancholy, who can be dull in Fleet street. I am naturally inclined to hypochondria, but in London it vanishes, like all other ills. Often when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humour, till tears have wetted my cheek for inutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture, which she never fails to present at all hours, like the shifting scenes of a skilful Pantomime. (II, 141)

Perhaps significantly, after the intense proximities of the first volume 'The Londoner' celebrates the spectacular nature of London life as a cure for self-absorption and melancholia. The Strand works a curious kind of magic in the narrator's mind. It takes his melancholy humour and 'feeds' it with vivid images of human striving and suffering, so that everyday social observation takes on a theatrical form. Sympathy, here, is not primarily a prelude to communication or philanthropy; it is an unashamedly voyeuristic and self-consoling experience. It moves from pain at someone else's suffering to a pleasure in one's own capacity to sympathise with that suffering. It is a kind of emotional alchemy. Lamb's metropolitan aesthetic sees the relationship between the Londoner and his surroundings as a form of transaction in which the urban stroller 'lends out' his heart to the streets around him in the hope of a rich return.

I love the very smoke of London, because it has been the medium most familiar to my vision. I see grand principles of honour at work in the dirty ring which encompasses two combatants with fists, and principles of no less eternal justice in the tumultuous detectors of a pickpocket [...] Thus an art of extracting morality, from the commonest incidents of a town life, is attained by the same well natured alchemy, with which the Foresters of Arden in a beautiful country

*Found tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.*

Where has spleen her food but in London? Humour, Interest, Curiosity, suck at her measureless breasts without a possibility of being satiated. Nursed amid her noise, her crowds, her beloved smoke what have I been doing all my life, if I have not lent out my heart with usury to such scenes? (II, 142).

One invests one's heart in the grubby spectacle of the city, but precisely in order to receive it back again, like a usurer, with interest. This is sympathetic engagement with the common details of urban life as canny economic investment. This is misanthropic Jaques, who was so adept at 'sucking melancholy' out of rural life, finding a new kind of sustenance in the 'measureless breasts' of the metropolitan picturesque.

Placed artificially late, 'The Londoner' ushers in a series of urbane essays written in literary personae. These are not yet Elian in tone, but rather seem to evoke the 'ruling passion' essays occasionally indulged in by Samuel Johnson in his *Rambler* and *Idler* series: Hospita, Edax on Appetite, Pensilis on the Inconveniences of being Hanged. In all these performances, as in 'The Londoner', sympathy seems content to take up a more amused - and amusing - distance in relation to its subjects; it projects itself into a series of Hogarthian portraits. Instead of the tragic proximity of Woodvil we have something rather more mediated - and theatrical. This may be why the second volume ends with *Mr. H-*, Lamb's farce from 1806, because it offers a kind of comic answer to the problems of solitariness and secrecy that had bedevilled the end of the first.

Is there a consistent logic behind those works that get excluded from the 1818 edition? Well, up to a point. Some of what Lamb may have considered to be the less successful *Reflector* essays were left out - 'On the Custom of Hissing in the Theatre' and 'On the Ambiguities arising from Proper Names', so too the essay on the Gunpowder Plot. But broadly it is the more spiritually, personally and politically probing pieces that don't get reprinted. 'Living without God in the World', the piece written for Southey's 1799 Annual Anthology, is omitted; so too the important political squib on the Prince Regent, 'The Triumph of the Whale'. The 'Confessions of a Drunkard' is another casualty, far too frank and Rousseauvian, perhaps, for the more oblique and differently reflective air of Volume II. But the most telling omission of all, perhaps, is of all the poems, and references within poems, that dealt with his mother's death in the *Blank Verse* volume he co-produced with Charles Lloyd in 1798. Primarily, and practically, of course, there would have been no good reason to him to revisit and republicise that most painful episode of his and Mary's early life, the consequences of which they were still having to handle on a daily basis. But there is also a strong sense in which these poems had no place in his mature aesthetic. The youthful effusions given to Coleridge, many of which were about his young love Ann Simmons, were much easier to redeem, not least because, although they were often brimful of sincere youthful feeling, they were never, in fact, truly confessional. In the terms of Wordsworth's *Prelude* they 'remembered how the soul had felt, but what she had felt, they had remembered not,' being

almost completely devoid of concrete biographical detail. With the *Blank Verse* poems of 1798, though, and with the first version of 'The Old Familiar Faces' in particular, Lamb had achieved a confessional transparency that was so stark as to be self-lacerating: sometimes the reflection in the mirror can be too close.

In November 1796, only a few short weeks after his mother's death, Lamb had praised Coleridge's poems saying that they were as dear to him as 'Rousseau's Confessions, and for the same reason 'the same frankness, the same openness of heart, the same disclosure of all the most hidden and delicate affections of the mind'¹⁰ - a strong indication of the value placed on unmediated transparency, on stark sincerity, during those years. But this was precisely the kind of innocence that he had outgrown in 1818. In 1796 Lamb had referred proudly to his poems as 'reflected images of my own feelings at different times', all but collapsing the distinction, as Rousseau had done before him, between self and text. But the Lamb of later years had come to see a value in refraction - in the capacity of writing to reorganize and generalize the writer's intense ray of self.

One way of construing Lamb's development as a writer, then, is that he had gradually come to an understanding of how writing - and I mean letter-writing as well as writing for the papers - could provide a means of tempering and controlling those passions that were closest to him - most obviously, the pleasures and pains of friendship. Or, to put it another way, one thing that he had begun to realize, as time went on, was that his published writings might do well to resemble his letters. Hilariously, in the very same letter to Mary Wordsworth in which he mentions his great non-speech at a dinner, Lamb was to embark upon a long tirade about how his London friends never seemed able to leave him alone, a tirade that was later reworked into one of his 'Lepus' papers in the mid-1820s. Here is an extract from the letter:

Plato's double-animal parted never longed more to be reciprocally re-united in the system of its first creation than I sometimes do to be but for a moment single and separate. O the pleasure of eating alone! - eating my dinner alone! Let me think of it. But in they come, and make it absolutely necessary that I should open a bottle of orange; for my meat turns into stone when any one dines with me, if I have not wine. [...] Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, choking and deadening, but worse is the deader dry sand they leave me on, if they go before bed-time. [...] Evening company I should always like had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth!) and voices all the golden morning [...] I am never C. L. but always C. L. and Co. He who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself!¹¹

¹⁰ *Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Marrs, I, 59.

¹¹ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 7 vols., (London, 1903), VI, 510-511.

It was Diderot, of course, who had declared that 'only the wicked man is alone'¹² and it was Rousseau that he had had in mind – the self-same Rousseau whose very drive for transparency in personal relationships was later to result in complete isolation from everyone. Nobody remained more porous to friendship than Charles Lamb, or was better at celebrating it in his writing, but that may have been precisely because he knew how to sustain it within the forgiving medium of irony. Rousseau, famously, had wanted to introduce an irony mark into punctuation, essentially because he mistrusted anything that wanted to keep a foot in two camps, saying one thing while meaning another.¹³ In Lamb, however, irony is the saving double perspective, the view from both inside and outside the frame, the great art of everyday life.

This may be one of the reasons why the 'Confessions of a Drunkard', first published in *The Philanthropist* in 1813, was not included in the *Works* of 1818. Not simply, and straightforwardly that it didn't fit with the way Lamb wanted to present himself in public, but that he actually felt rather equivocal about presenting himself at all – the mask of irony was for him, in the end, a guarantee of greater reflectiveness – it meant that the narrator could become a text to be entered into and discussed, not an insistent personality that was always seeking for its double.

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¹² In Act IV of *Le Fils Naturel* (1757).

¹³ In his *Essay sur l'Origine des Langues* (1781).

Lamb's Essays in the *Reflector*: A Bicentenary Celebration

Felicity James

1811 marked a remarkable flowering of Lamb's voice. This was the year which called out his essay-writing voice and skill in new ways and encouraged him to explore the mode of the familiar essay at length under a range of pseudonyms. This special issue of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, based on talks given at our study day in November 2011, is designed as a bicentenary celebration of the circle associated with the *Reflector* in 1811 and 1812, and, more broadly, the ways in which the periodical encouraged experiment and conversation. Like the *London Magazine*, the periodical was imbued with a strong sense of sociability, perhaps even more pronounced since, as the Prospectus announced, it was largely 'the production of a set of Persons, educated in one School, and valuable to each other for their friendship and congenial tastes' – as John Strachan notes, the *Reflector* had 'something of the air of a school magazine about it'.¹ The essays here reflect the ways in which contributions to the periodical enacted this congenial sociability and friendship by answering and provoking one another. Recent scholarship has, of course, been emphasising the importance of understanding collaborative practice in the long nineteenth century: rediscovering Leigh Hunt, for example, as a key figure of Romanticism; exploring the Cockney School; or, in a related move, restoring the Romantic periodical itself to view. Excellent work by Simon Hull and Denise Gigante, in particular, has begun to remind us of the *Reflector* years for Lamb.² Yet Lamb critics have traditionally tended not really to dwell on his contributions to the *Reflector* as a series, with the exception of Kenneth Kendall's 1971 work on the journal itself. This series of articles therefore sets out to consider the creative exchange of writers associated with the *Reflector*, and enable a re-reading of Lamb's work in this context.

David Stewart's essay traces the 'stylistic affinity between Lamb and Hunt', a rich creative exchange which, he suggests, began in the pages of *The Reflector*. Although the connection between the writers' styles has not recently been the subject of much sustained critical interest, the association between the two was noted by their contemporaries. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, to take a key example, was notoriously reluctant to connect Lamb with Hunt: yet it was also ready to draw on the shared creative experiments of the pair. It is, as Stewart shows, a love of the suggestive, the 'apprehensive', the paradoxical

¹ 'Prospectus', *The Reflector*, 2 vols. (London, 1811), I, ii.

² Simon Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia, and The London Magazine: Metropolitan Muse* (London, 2010); Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, 2005).

which brings Hunt and Lamb together: he calls attention to Hunt's evocation of 'chequer'd', twilight spaces in his poetry and prose, which allow him, as in 'A Day by the Fire', to combine 'conscious intention and associative fancy'. Poems such as Lamb's little-read 'A Farewell to Tobacco' show a similar interest in associative, border-line states. Its odd rhymes, contortions, and difficult, half-facetious tone work together, Stewart suggests, to 'create a state in which conclusive thinking is suspended'. This suspended, apprehensive state of mind looks forward to Elia's fascination with 'surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations'; the first gleams of those 'partial illuminations' appear in the *Reflector*, where we might see the familiar essay being formed.³ It is here, of course, that 'A Day by the Fire' is published, 'an epochal work in terms of Hunt's familiar essay', as John Strachan reminds us. Hunt's meditation on 'the raptures of in-door sociality' is informed by his friendship with Lamb and the companionable ethos of the *Reflector* – but it also exists, as Strachan shows, in relation to the lacerating satirical verse which appeared in the periodical. This may be 'in-door sociality' but it is by no means cloistered, since the familiarity of the periodical has a sharp political edge. It also has far-reaching effects, and Strachan concludes by suggesting the longer Romantic legacies of the periodical and its style.

Simon Hull discusses Lamb's essay-writing strategies in relation to the possibilities afforded – but also the anxieties prompted – by the new breed of metropolitan periodical. Drawing attention to Lamb's repeated emphasis on gastronomic metaphors and his deliberately over-worked descriptions of eating and food, Hull analyses the way in which Lamb aims 'to censure as well as celebrate consumerism'. Repeatedly, something dark surfaces in these accounts of eating – a 'brazen, carnivorous tendency', Hull calls it, a gluttony which often spills over into callousness. The greediness of the hapless Edax in the *Reflector* (answered by the 'zealous, self-righteous vegetarianism' of his counterpart Hospita), anticipates the 'carnivorous feasting' celebrated by Elia, in the form of the sausages devoured by the dirty young sweeps of 'In Praise of Chimney-Sweepers', and, especially, the 'adhesive, oleaginous' crackling of 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig'. Indeed, the 'salivating, maniacally m-dashed account' of eating the child-pig, as Hull puts it, 'appears so pointedly, provokingly callous as to be explained only by satire': a satire which takes aim both at the dietary Puritanism of the era, and new modes of consumerism. It also shows us something of the difficulty in analysing the satire deployed by Lamb's essayist personae. As Hull points out, the provocative, spiky, aggressive aspects of his humour often pose problems for critics, and the *Reflector* essays allow us a good opportunity to see this strand of his writing develop.

My own essay begins by providing an overview of Lamb's contributions to the *Reflector*. Reading the essays chronologically allows us to see the slow development of his characteristic, allusive voice, woven through with references to his favourite authors and autobiographical suggestions, with a darker

³ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 7 vols (London, 1912), II, 69.

undercurrent of reflection on mortality, prejudice, and cruelty. I then focus on one of the best known pieces, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', first published in the last issue of the *Reflector*, number IV (1811), under the title of 'Theatralia. No. I. – On Garrick, and Acting; and the Plays of Shakspeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation'. This essay, so often debated, takes on a slightly different aspect when fully considered in its original context, and allowed to enter into dialogue with the other pieces Lamb contributed to the periodical.⁴

The *Reflector* was a lively, confidently written quarterly magazine, with a clear agenda, mirroring Hunt's other periodical, the *Examiner*, in 'speaking freely of all parties without exception' and showing itself to be 'most anxious for Reform'. 'Politics, in times like these, should naturally take the lead in periodical discussion,' claimed its 'Prospectus'; moreover, it went on, political and artistic expression are intertwined, acting upon and reacting to one another. The state of the nation may be glimpsed in different art-forms, including theatrical performances, which – properly performed – should 'exhibit our virtues in social action'.⁵ Theatrical and literary criticism is interlinked with the *Reflector's* intention to prompt serious consideration of politics amongst its readers. Hunt's own *Feast of the Poets* – printed immediately following Lamb's essay on Shakespeare – swipes at the pretensions of a vast range of contemporary authors, who, Hunt adds pointedly, after mentioning Coleridge and Wordsworth, 'have lost the bloom of their political character'.⁶

The way in which literature and politics are entwined may be seen in the first issue of 1810. It opens, appropriately, with serious reflection on 'The English considered as a thinking People', and 'The Reformers; or, Wrongs of Intellect: A fragment of a Political Dialogue', both pieces by Hunt. Yet the tone is not entirely serious, since these are followed by a teasing piece by Lamb's friend Barron Field, 'Shakspeare sermons'. In a lengthy disquisition on the mention of an ass in 'Much Ado about Nothing', the piece mocks both the excesses of Shakespeare worship and antiquarian pedantry, and the 'cant of methodist preachers'.⁷ It is no coincidence that this is followed by a letter 'On the Pernicious Effects of Methodism in our Foreign Possessions', condemning 'missionary mania'; the target of both pieces is intolerance and 'the rage for proselytism'.⁸ The main thrust of the *Reflector* is to provoke free thought and to encourage a questioning attitude amongst its readers, and its articles very often mock extremism, cliché, and different types of fixed views and prejudices.

Lamb did not contribute to this first issue, but his articles in the second follow this general line, exploring how first impressions and outward appearances may generate prejudice, and repeatedly returning to the deceptive

⁴ I first began to explore these issues in my essay 'Charles Lamb', in *Great Shakespearians*, 18 vols. (London, 2010), Volume 4: *Lamb, Hazlitt, Keats*, ed., Adrian Poole.

⁵ *Reflector*, I, iv-vi.

⁶ *Reflector*, II, 322.

⁷ *Reflector*, I, 30.

⁸ *Reflector*, I, 35-43.

power of the visual – often with a sharp personal edge. His first contribution, 'On the Inconveniences resulting from being hanged', is narrated by 'Pensilis', a figure of 'stigmatised innocence' who has been hanged and then, at the last moment, cut down; he laments that he will never be free of the fatal mark. The essay is comic, presented as a mock-dialogue which reminds us how events such as executions are staged. Quoting Thomas Brown's *A Comical View of London and Westminster*, and its mock play-bill for a hanging – 'Doleful Procession up Holborn-hill about Eleven [...] Show over by One' – alongside *Measure for Measure*, the essay reinforces the way in which a public execution is performed, for the benefit of an eager audience.⁹ Yet the message of the piece is a tragic one. 'Pensilis' carries upon him the 'fatal mark' of his abortive hanging, visible to all, yet neither understood nor sympathised with by the idle spectators: 'My griefs have nothing in them that is felt as sacred by the bystanders'.¹⁰ He is shunned by friends, rejected as a lover, subject to a 'life-long persecution'. Moreover, the reference to the 'fatal mark' recalls Lamb's own complaints that 'poor Mary's disorder, so frequently recurring, has made us a sort of marked people'.¹¹ Thanks to the jury's verdict of 'lunacy', Mary escaped hanging for the death of her mother, but she and her brother are still 'in a manner marked -', and constantly subject to the prejudice of onlookers.¹²

This is typical of the ways in which personal allusion and association sharpens the edge of the *Reflector* essays, and shows Lamb honing his familiar style through a series of these semi-autobiographical figures – not Elia as yet, but instead, Pensilis, Crito, Edax. As in *Essays of Elia*, autobiographical allusions are woven into the essays: the great piece on Hogarth, for instance, opens with the evocation of the child Lamb wandering 'in the contemplation of those capital prints by Hogarth, the *Harlot's* and *Rake's Progresses*, which, along with some others, hung upon the walls of a great hall in an old-fashioned house in --shire, and seemed the solitary tenants (with myself) of that antiquated and life-deserted apartment'.¹³ Here is the early experience of Blakesware which will be developed into 'Blakesmoor in Hertfordshire'; other glimpsed moments of self-reflection include 'On the Custom of Hissing at the Theatres', where Lamb's painful experience with Mr H- is refracted, slightly altered, 'I was found guilty of constructing an afterpiece, and was damned'.¹⁴ Lamb's final piece, 'The Good Clerk, a Character', is also a skewed piece of life-writing, which draws on and sharply satirises expectations of the ideal worker through its ironic reading of Defoe's 'The Complete English Tradesman'. The essay begins with a portrait of the ideal employee, staid, modest, regular, plainly dressed, shunning oaths and jests, which seems to function like Coleridge's 'gentle-hearted Charles', an

⁹ Thomas Brown, *Legacy for the Ladies* (London, 1705), 116.

¹⁰ *Reflector*, I, 381.

¹¹ *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marris, 3 vols. (Ithaca and London, 1975-8), I, 207. Hereafter cited as Marris.

¹² Marris, I, 202.

¹³ *Reflector*, I, 61.

¹⁴ *Reflector*, II, 122.

inverted image of the true feelings of Charles Lamb of the India House. These sidelong, sly reflections on the personal should be set in the context of more formal explorations of autobiography elsewhere in the *Reflector*, for instance John Aikin's essay 'Letters on Biography', which turns out to be a reflection on 'those who are their own historians – or, if the word be sufficiently naturalized, the class of *autobiographers*'.¹⁵ Aikin's preamble reminds us that the word has the awkwardness of novelty, and indeed the OED lists the first usage of it as 1797, by William Taylor in the *Monthly Review*, and then gives Southey's use of the term in 1809; this is fairly new territory for Aikin, who urges skepticism about such 'self-biographies', which he says should be read with enjoyment but with 'limited and suspended confidence', an apt warning when approaching Lamb's writing in search of autobiography.

If Pensilis with his fatal mark seems to invite a tentative parallel with the Lamb's own sense of persecution, he also has a deeper function. His obsession with the death he has been so nearly snatched away from anticipates the emphasis on mortality shared by many of the subsequent *Reflector* essays – the meditation on Burial Societies, for instance. This begins with an advertisement thrust into the essayist's hand for an insurance society which will guarantee, on the payment of one shilling entrance and tuppence a week, a respectable funeral, featuring 'A strong elm coffin, covered with superfine black, and finished with two rows, all round, close drove, best black japanned nails, and adorned with ornamental drops, a handsome plate of inscription, Angel above, and Flower beneath, and four pair of handsome handles, with wrought gripes'. 'What sting is there in death,' comments our essayist Moriturus, 'which the handles with wrought gripes are not calculated to pluck away?' and the inscription plate particularly pleases him, 'Many a poor fellow, I dare swear, has that Angel and Flower kept from the *Angel* and *Punchbowl*, while, to provide himself a bier, he has curtailed himself of *beer*'.¹⁶ That particular homophone reminds us that the sensual enjoyment of Lamb's essays is always underscored by darker reflections, just as in 'New Year's Eve', where the piquancy of today's enjoyment can only be appreciated through reflection on the long blank years of death. To take another *Reflector* example, when Lamb in the persona of 'Y' selects specimens from Thomas Fuller's *The Church History of Britain* (1655), it is 'thoughts of mortality' which he seems to relish most, as in the quotation 'To smell to a turf of fresh earth is wholesome for the body, no less are thoughts of mortality cordial to the soul'.¹⁷ Hogarth is best appreciated through his grave-side images; even the Shakespeare essay is prompted, we might remember, by reflection on Garrick's tomb.

The ways in which Pensilis is so hastily condemned is also typical of a recurrent theme of the *Reflector* essays. Again and again, the public readiness to pass judgment on the basis of outward show and first impressions is condemned, in pieces such as the second contribution, 'On the Danger of

¹⁵ *Reflector*, II, 244.

¹⁶ *Reflector*, II, 140-141.

¹⁷ *Reflector*, II, 344.

confounding Moral with Personal Deformity; with a Hint to those who have the framing of Advertisements for apprehending Offenders'. Here Lamb emphasises that 'in every species of *reading*, so much depends upon the eyes of the reader': we yearn to read morality from outward appearance, but continually 'mistake [...] grossly concerning things so exterior and palpable'.¹⁸ The swift, 'senseless' misjudgement of the public is again attacked in 'On the Custom of Hissing at the Theatres', where, as so often, Lamb takes the part of those being judged, such as the stigmatised 'Pensilis', or even Guy Fawkes.¹⁹ His essay 'On the probable Effects of the Gunpowder Treason in this country if the Conspirators had accomplished their Object' knowingly quotes Edmund Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* as it sympathises with 'Guy Faux' and blows social hierarchies sky-high, creating a comic, violent, imaginative 'dream of universal restitution'.²⁰ To some extent, the sociable performance of the periodical format interrogates the nature of other performances, social, political, and theatrical. It provides a place for those who are misjudged, from the hanged man and Guy Fawkes to, as we will see, the villainous characters of Shakespeare, to find their voices. Above all, these essays are about sympathy – a sympathy created through learning how to read properly.

This does not mean that Lamb is against visual representation; rather, he urges it to be taken seriously. The prime example of this comes in his essay on Hogarth, where, again, the emphasis is placed on the importance of *reading* his images, alert to their deeper meanings and importance: 'Other pictures we look at, – his prints we read.' The print of the *Harlot's Funeral* can 'on a superficial inspection, provoke to laughter', but as we keep looking more closely, past those untrustworthy first impressions, we learn how to read beyond our prejudice: 'I am as much moved to sympathy [...] as I should be by the finest representation of a virtuous death-bed surrounded by real mourners, pious children, weeping friends, – perhaps more by the very contrast.'²¹ The movement from laughter to sympathy, prompted through close reading or viewing, is an important one. Like the plea of hanged Pensilis, or the essay on 'confounding Moral with Personal Deformity', 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' similarly circles around issues of representation and audience, and probes the way in which the imaginative sympathy – the 'meditative tenderness' – of the spectator can be aroused.²² Hogarth's pictures appeal not only to the visual sense: they 'have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of *words*'.²³ Specifically, it is Shakespeare's words they recall, and Lamb develops a comparison – 'moral' and poetic – between *Timon of Athens* and the *Rake's Progress*. Both, he says, mingle 'the ludicrous with the terrible': both use satire as a means to a moral end, which

¹⁸ *Reflector*, I, 424–427.

¹⁹ *Reflector*, II, 124.

²⁰ *Reflector*, I, 434.

²¹ *Reflector*, II, 62, 63.

²² *Reflector*, II, 73.

²³ *Reflector*, II, 62.

might lead on 'to some more salutary feeling than laughter'.²⁴ Most importantly, both Hogarth and Shakespeare practise a type of 'imaginary work' – Lamb has borrowed the phrase from *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), to which he refers as *Tarquin and Lucrece* – which encourages reader response. Here 'the spectator must meet the artist in his conceptions half way; [...] it is peculiar to the confidence of high genius alone to trust so much to spectators or readers'.²⁵ If the popular prints of Hogarth can prompt this relationship between spectator/reader and artist, so too can actors, in special circumstances; indeed, this will become a running theme of Lamb's later essays. Elia associates Hogarth's talent, for example, with Joseph Munden (1758–1832), whose multiple facial expressions work on the reader's imagination with the visionary, fantastical power of opium.²⁶ Equally powerful artists are those skilful comedians who can keep up 'a tacit understanding' with the audience, making them 'unconsciously to themselves, a party in the scene', as Elia explores in relation to Jack Bannister (1760–1836).²⁷

All this has a special significance for our understanding of Lamb's essay on Shakespeare: its apparent 'anti-theatricality' must be read in this wider context of reflections on misreading, prejudice, and visual confusion. 'On Garrick, and Acting; and the Plays of Shakspeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation' begins with an image of the essayist as spectator, looking at the statue of Garrick in Westminster Abbey. As essayist and actor stare at one another, the battle-lines are being drawn over theatrical territory. Lamb – or, rather, his essayist persona – invites us to consider the confusion between outward appearance and inner content, between actor and author. Like his previous *Reflector* essays, this piece again raises the question of how to form accurate visual judgements. It seeks to emphasise how misleading the 'instantaneous nature of the impressions which we take in at the eye and the ear at a playhouse' can be, and how 'contagious the counterfeit appearance of any emotion is'.²⁸

This is partly a problem caused by the very nature of the theatre: early nineteenth-century audiences, especially after the expansion of Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres, had to endure poor lighting and bad acoustics, meaning that performers were forced to rely on broad strokes of enunciation and gesture which could not convey nuances of character.²⁹ Another problem was the audience's fondness for spectacle and elaborate costume, leading to Lamb's bitter complaints about the 'elaborate and anxious provision of scenery, which the luxury of the age demands', particularly in plays such as *The Tempest*. But the specific problems of staging are not Lamb's main focus in the *Reflector*

²⁴ *Reflector*, II, 62, 64.

²⁵ *Reflector*, II, 65.

²⁶ 'The Old Actors', *London Magazine*, 34 (October 1822), 351; reprinted in *Essays of Elia* as 'On the Acting of Munden'.

²⁷ 'Imperfect Dramatic Illusion', *London Magazine*, NS 8, (August 1825), 599; reprinted in *The Last Essays of Elia* as 'Stage Illusion'.

²⁸ *Reflector*, II, 299, 303.

²⁹ See Wayne McKenna, *Charles Lamb in the Theatre* (Gerrards Cross, 1978), 19–36.

essay, since he primarily wants the reader to reflect on the particular qualities of Shakespeare, what makes his plays 'essentially so different from all others'.³⁰ He is not necessarily making the claim that Shakespeare should *never* be performed, but he is making a much larger claim for a reflective reading of the plays, and calling for an awareness of the relationship between actor, author, and reader: 'how much Hamlet is made another thing by being acted'.

The main problem with Hamlet on the stage is, Lamb feels, that full sympathetic identification with the character, and an appreciation of the part he occupies in the play as a whole, are lost. He gives an acute character description of Hamlet's 'soreness of mind' and asperity in dealing with Polonius and Ophelia; these are 'temporary deformities in the character' the purposes of which become clear as the play progresses, 'we forgive afterwards, and explain by the whole of his character'.³¹ Full sympathy with Hamlet can only emerge, suggests Lamb, through the consideration of the whole afforded by reading. He uses the same argument in discussing Lear. The appearance of an 'old man tottering about the stage' arouses pity, he argues, whereas 'while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear': Shakespeare's sympathetic understanding of the character transfers itself to the reader. Similarly, he describes the way in which spectators might feel prejudiced towards the appearance of Othello, 'a blackamoor [who] in a fit of jealousy kills his innocent white wife': 'For of the texture of Othello's mind, the inward construction marvellously laid open with all its strengths and weaknesses, its heroic confidences and its human misgivings, its agonies of hate springing from the depths of love, they see no more than the spectators at a cheaper rate, who pay their pennies a-piece to look through the man's telescope in Leicester-fields, see into the inward plot and topography of the moon'.³² This sets up parallels with Wordsworth's 1807 lyric, 'Star Gazers', which depicts the same queue of spectators in 'Leicester's busy Square', eager to see the heavens through a showman's telescope. When they have done so, however, they 'seem less happy than before'; they 'slackly go away, as if dissatisfied', and the poem becomes an exploration of expectation and disappointment which can be read as a reflection on the relationship between author and audience.³³ The crowd of spectators seems to summon up, too, Wordsworth's fear of an anonymous, rapidly expanding urban readership. 'Star Gazers' may be seen, as Lucy Newlyn has analysed, as an 'exemplary expression' of Romantic anxieties of reception, 'anxieties that centre not just on the writer's subjection to the invasive gaze of anonymous readers, but on the nature of reception itself, as it became divorced from oral culture'.³⁴

Lamb's use of the same image points to the ways in which the essay is in dialogue with Wordsworth; both men are struggling with anxieties over the commodification of culture, the ways in which mass culture might constrain and

³⁰ *Reflector*, II, 312, 305.

³¹ *Reflector*, II, 302, 304-5.

³² *Reflector*, II, 304.

³³ *Poems, in Two Volumes* (London, 1807), II, 87-9.

³⁴ Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford, 2000), 16.

limit imaginative involvement with a star-like poetic genius like Shakespeare. However, in its very form and publication context, Lamb's essay may suggest a more optimistic solution. If performance forestalls sympathetic interchange between audience and author, then perhaps reading – particularly sociable reading, amongst friends, family, or even in the periodical format – can restore a sense of mutual relationship. Lamb had been developing this sense of the potential of sociable reading since the 1790s, and his viewpoint had crystallised in an exchange with Wordsworth in 1801 following the publication of the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads*. Lamb had objected to the 'diminishing' effect of the 1800 'Preface', which he thought tried to impose a particular interpretation upon its readers, instead of encouraging a shared, democratic response, allowing for the 'unwritten compact between Author and reader'.³⁵ Lamb 'noticed without approval a will to power in the work of his contemporaries', in Jane Aaron's words, repeatedly complaining about shows of egotism and attempts to limit and direct meaning.³⁶ His complaints about actors who impose a particular interpretation by 'eye, tone, or gesture', allowing no room for the audience's own imaginative response, may therefore be seen not simply in terms of 'anti-theatricality', but also in the wider context of his ongoing attempts to negotiate questions of reception and sympathy.

What emerges most strongly from reading the series of Lamb's *Reflector* essays is their repeated return to the ways in which a sympathetic relationship can be established between author and reader, artist and viewer, actor and audience. Indeed, Lamb himself, in the development of the essay form, is attempting something similar. The *Reflector* essays, with their elaborate narrative voices – 'Pensilis' and 'Edax' – and self-conscious references to their periodical context are calling attention to themselves as performances, and inviting the complicit reader to respond. Yet this isn't an easy complicity; it's a sympathy which must be worked for and valued. As with Leigh Hunt and his suggestive metaphors and associations, Lamb delights in challenging the reader: 'the peculiarities both employ,' says Stewart, 'invite us to puzzle along with them'. The puzzling, suggestive quality which Stewart identifies in Lamb's verse is related, I think, to the ways in which 'On Garrick, and Acting; and the Plays of Shakspeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation' analyses the relationship between reader and author – and the way in which it advances a deliberately paradoxical (and still puzzling) viewpoint, that Shakespeare's plays should not be acted. It's also related to the difficulty which we still experience in working through the aims and targets of Lamb's satire, since his humour, as Hull reminds us, often carries an undercurrent of mockery and manipulation. The reader must always remain active and alert: the *Reflector* may give back an image which is uncomfortably close to home.

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³⁵ Marrs, I, 266.

³⁶ Jane Aaron, *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford, 1991), 145.

'The attractive form of a paradox': Lamb, Hunt and the *Reflector*

David Stewart

~ 1 ~

Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt had much in common. Both were liberals who parodied the Prince Regent. They were both Londoners and notable theatre critics. They were both schooled at Christ's Hospital and might have entered, like Coleridge, the upper 'Grecian' form (and from there progressed to University); but both stammered.¹ Hunt knew Lamb by sight while at Christ's Hospital, though Lamb left the school two years before Hunt started.² It is not clear when they formed a closer companionship, but their school connection was the basis of their first creative collaboration on the *Reflector*, a periodical that Hunt populated principally with contributions by school-friends. Yet their critics have not always been keen to suggest they shared much as writers. E. V. Lucas doubts whether they were ever 'very intimate', and he like many seems wary of suggesting Lamb's proximity to the Cockney Hunt.³ More recently, Hunt's 'Cockney' identity has been reclaimed. Cockneyism is celebrated for its liberal politics and its unusually innovative forms of creativity.⁴ In her recent book on Lamb, Felicity James considers a possibility that seems now welcome rather than unpalatable: that Lamb might be a Cockney. As James argues, this 'identity still needs to be fully explored [...] there are fascinating overlaps between Lamb's formulation of a sociable reading and writing model, and those of Leigh Hunt and Keats'.⁵ Nicholas Roe is Hunt's most generous and attentive critic, and he celebrates Hunt's *Reflector* essays for their capacity to evoke the 'quick of experience', an impressionism Roe also discovers in poems like *The Story of Rimini*.⁶ I wish to follow James's lead by exploring a stylistic affinity between Lamb and Hunt that depended upon effects such as those Roe has described. It was an affinity, I will argue, that began in the pages of the *Reflector*.

¹ Nicholas Roe, *Fiery Heart: The First Life of Leigh Hunt* (London, 2005), 46; E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols (London, 1921), I, 68.

² Lucas, *Life*, I, 60, 93.

³ Lucas, *Life*, I, 405.

⁴ See, for example, Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge, 1998) and Nicholas Roe, ed., *Leigh Hunt: Life, Poetics, Politics* (London, 2007).

⁵ Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Basingstoke, 2007), 211.

⁶ Roe, *Fiery Heart*, 131.

One hint of this creative companionship can be discovered in an unlikely source: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. In 1817 *Blackwood's*, famously, launched a series of attacks on a new phenomenon that it labelled 'Cockneyism' and that it associated most particularly with Hunt. On one notable occasion the magazine slipped, labelling Elia a Cockney.⁷ John Scott, editor of the *London Magazine*, pounced on the error: 'This gentleman, in his capacity as acknowledged author, they have never mentioned but to eulogize'.⁸ It was especially embarrassing for *Maga* because *Blackwood's* was (as Scott had remarked at length in the previous two issues of the *London*) keen on toying with readers by playing with the distinction between author and signature. But Scott was right to note their habit of eulogizing Lamb. A good example is a thoughtful review of Lamb's *Works* published in August 1818. It is attributed by Alan Lang Strout to John Wilson.⁹ He finds that Lamb's qualities resist easy summary:

Mr Lamb is without doubt a man of genius, and of very peculiar genius too; so that we scarcely know of any class of literature to which it could with propriety be said that he belongs.¹⁰

Peculiarity, however, is a quality that intrigues rather than offends him. The article spends some time disputing Lamb's account of the fitness of the plays of Shakespeare for stage representation (printed first in the *Reflector*). Lamb, Wilson argues, places too much emphasis on the 'imagination' which 'is not that fastidious - that solitary power which Mr Lamb seems to believe. It can work in crowds, almost with the same free energy as in solitude, - in the pit of Covent-Garden Theatre as among the ruins of Tadmor' (607). The point is remarkable chiefly for sounding like something Lamb would say, and Wilson seems to know it. In some detail he follows Lamb through his argument only to conclude that Lamb has been 'embodying truth in the attractive form of a paradox' (608). It is a clever formulation, and it is especially appropriate that it was inspired by a *Reflector* essay. In his *Reflector* poems and essays Lamb developed a teasing, suggestive method that encourages his readers, as he put it later in a description of music, 'to thrud the maze; like an unskilled eye painfully poring upon hieroglyphics'.¹¹ We follow Lamb, not always sure of where we are going, but carried forward nonetheless to try to solve the puzzle. Truth formed as a paradox is 'attractive', in Wilson's terms, exactly because a paradoxical truth is so hard to grasp securely.

It is a quality, I wish to claim, that Lamb shares with Leigh Hunt. It seems unlikely, however, that Wilson or his *Blackwood's* colleagues would agree. Wilson's review seeks deliberately to separate Lamb from Hunt. Lamb's *Reflector* essays, he tells us, transcend the context of an 'unfortunate periodical

⁷ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 8 (November 1820), 208.

⁸ *London Magazine*, 3 (January 1821), 69.

⁹ Strout, *A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine, 1817-1825* (Lubbock, Texas, 1959), 44.

¹⁰ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 3 (August 1818), 599.

¹¹ 'A Chapter on Ears', *London Magazine*, 3 (March 1821), 264.

publication' which 'Hazlitt and Hunt very speedily damned, not by criticising it, but contributing to it'.¹² A religious allusion in Lamb's commentary on drama cuts too close for Wilson. But again this is less an opportunity to attack Lamb than it is one to assert Lamb's distance from the Cockneys: 'Let him leave open blasphemy [...] to such reckless unbelievers as Hazlitt and Hunt' (605). The same desire features frequently in *Blackwood's*. 'Dr Olinthus Petre' had called Elia a 'Cockney scribbler' but he insists on Lamb's difference from the Cockneys. Yet the whole article worries about 'the symptoms of assimilation' brought on by Lamb's being 'bound up in the same cover' (of the *London Magazine*) with Hazlitt and others of 'that pestilent school'.¹³ In another piece 'Christopher North' is disappointed that Lamb ('Our dearly-beloved friend') should 'wax sour, sulky and vituperative' at Southey and declare his friendship with Cockneys like Hazlitt.¹⁴

All of these articles suggest an uncertainty on *Blackwood's* part about quite where to place Lamb in relation to Hunt. This ambiguity affects the review of the *Works* too. There Lamb is characterised in this way:

His mind is original even in its errors; and though his ideas flow on in a somewhat fantastic course [...] yet at all times they bubble freshly from the fountain of his own mind, and almost always lead to truth.¹⁵

The phrase 'bubble freshly' suggests the imaginative fertility that a poetics of paradox might produce: a meandering 'flow' bubbles up surprisingly. But it is a curious phrase to find in a *Blackwood's* article because it is taken from a poem by Hunt, *The Nymphs*.¹⁶ Three months earlier in a continuation of the Cockney School articles the same phrase had been quoted (less approvingly) from Hunt's poem.¹⁷ I have argued elsewhere that *Blackwood's* draws on the innovations that Hunt and Lamb pioneered in periodicals like the *Examiner* and the *Reflector*, and this allusion (or perhaps unconscious quotation) suggests how closely attentive

¹² *Blackwood's Magazine*, 3 (August 1818), 602. Hazlitt did not in fact write for *The Reflector*, a fact of which Wilson was likely aware.

¹³ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 9 (May 1821), 141, 140.

¹⁴ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 14 (Oct 1823), 504, 505. The article comments on Lamb's public letter to Southey published in the *London*. It concludes with a playful suggestion that Lamb should become a contributor to *Blackwood's*, a request he would not accede to for another six years.

¹⁵ *Blackwood's Magazine*, 3 (August 1818), 599.

¹⁶ *The Nymphs*, II, 143. The phrase is in fact 'bubbling freshness'. The poem was first published in Hunt's *Foliage* in January 1818. References to Hunt's poetry (except, where indicated, poems from *The Reflector*) are to John Strachan's edition, volumes 5 and 6 of *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, gen. eds. Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle-Sinatra, 6 vols (London, 2003).

¹⁷ In 'Letter from Z. to Leigh Hunt, King of the Cockneys', *Blackwood's Magazine* 3 (May 1818), 200. This essay is attributed very tentatively by Alan Lang Strout to John Gibson Lockhart (*A Bibliography of Articles in Blackwood's Magazine*, 40) because Lockhart wrote the majority of the Cockney School series. The repeated use of this phrase, allied to a rather more sprightly style in the article than is common in the series, may suggest Wilson as the more likely author. Both, though, knew Hunt's work in detail, and *Foliage* (published earlier in 1818) may have come freshly to mind.

the magazine's chief writers were to Hunt's writing.¹⁸ It is a surprising occurrence. But I would suggest that it is wholly appropriate that *Blackwood's* should characterise Lamb using a phrase from Hunt, and that it is more appropriate that their proximity should be revealed in such an unlikely manner. Unexpected 'bubbling freshness' is one aspect of the style the two developed together.

It is not just curiosities like this that link Lamb and Hunt. Lamb praised Hunt's *Indicator* with a sonnet, and Hunt took it as an opportunity to reflect on 'the good-natured countenance, which men of genius, in all ages, have for the most part shown to contemporary writers'.¹⁹ Hunt, in turn, missed no opportunity to praise his friend in his writing. There are genial compliments to and quotations from Lamb scattered throughout the *Examiner* and other publications.²⁰ Hunt is also one of Lamb's most perceptive critics, most especially in his review of Lamb's 1818 *Works*.²¹ He notes that Lamb's poetry is often dismissed as lightweight. An 'orthodox review', he tells us, 'mistook the exquisite simplicity and apprehensiveness of Mr Lamb's genius for want of power; and went vainly brushing away at some of the solidest things in his work, under the notion of its being chaff'. The word 'apprehensiveness' is a favourite. He uses it again to explain why the second, prose, volume of the *Works* is more striking than the first volume which contains poetry: 'criticism inevitably explains itself more to the reader; whereas poetry, especially such as Mr Lamb's, often gives him too much credit for the apprehensiveness in which it deals itself'.²² Lamb used the word in 'Imperfect Sympathies'. With the Caledonian mind, 'you never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian - you never see the first dawn, the early streaks'.²³ Apprehension might suggest grasping a meaning but both use it more loosely to suggest awaiting something which has not quite arrived. Lamb, for Hunt, requires a lot of his readers who must follow him and attempt to construct a poem while Lamb himself darts forward, suggesting, indicating, but never quite explaining. His writing is suggestive rather than conclusive. *Blackwood's* appreciated in Lamb a manner that discovers truth by framing it as a paradox, a description that shares a great deal with Hunt's. In making the claim Wilson struggles to separate Lamb from Hunt. The struggle articulates, it might be, a recognition that Lamb shared with Hunt more than Wilson liked to admit, a fact suggested by his surprising quotation from Hunt. But it is an appropriately unlikely coincidence because the quality that is described in Lamb by both Hunt and Wilson depends precisely on an uncertain 'apprehension' of

¹⁸ See *Romantic Magazines and Metropolitan Literary Culture* (Basingstoke, 2011), 14-51.

¹⁹ *Indicator* 51 (27 September 1820), 402.

²⁰ For example: in a review of Keats, *The Examiner*, (1 June 1817), 345; on Elia's letter to Southey, *The Examiner*, (5 October 1823), 819; 'Wishing-Cap, No. II: A Walk in Covent Garden', *The Examiner*, (4 April 1824), 210-11 and in the preface to *Foliage* (London, 1818), 11.

²¹ Published in two parts in *The Examiner*, 21 and 28 March 1819.

²² *Examiner*, (21 March 1819), 187.

²³ *London Magazine* 4 (August 1821), 153.

an idea. This quality was developed first in that 'unfortunate periodical publication', the *Reflector*.

~ 2 ~

The *Reflector* lasted only four issues but it stands as one of the most important experiments in Romantic-period magazine writing. Edmund Blunden describes the magazine's 'restless liberties' in a periodical 'at once learned, animated and diverse'.²⁴ Any magazine offers mixture, but from its first article the *Reflector* promised a markedly free combination of styles and topics. Mark L. Greenberg argues that 'Hunt perceives an intimate connection between politics and literature as social institutions'.²⁵ The point is supported by the very first article which complains that a government which seems happy to pour money into military expeditions discovers a 'tenderness for the public burdens' when the issue of state funding for the arts is raised.²⁶ A tendency to view politics in literary terms and to see the political applications of literary history is prominent throughout.²⁷ Indeed Lamb's contributions occasionally allude covertly to political discussions treated more directly in the *Examiner*.²⁸ But the desire for diversity was more pervasive than this. In 'A Day by the Fire - poetically and practically considered' Hunt remarks that 'It is part of my business, as a *Reflector*, to look about for helps to reflection'.²⁹ Writers for the magazine followed Hunt in taking material for reflection as easily from a hot-air balloon as William Cobbett.³⁰ The magazine's liberal ground proved remarkably fertile for a range of writers including John and Lucy Aikin, Thomas Barnes and George Dyer. But it was especially productive for Hunt and Lamb who took a particular pleasure in mingling the 'poetical' and the 'practical'.

The second number contains Hunt's poem 'Politics and Poetics: Or the desperate Situation of a Journalist unhappily smitten with the Love of Rhyme'. The poem begins unable to effect any distance from political realities (the Attorney-General in the form of a goblin 'bites [his] back' and the printer's devil

²⁴ Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* (London, 1930), 60, 59.

²⁵ Mark L. Greenberg, 'The *Reflector*', in *British Literary Magazines*, ed. Alvin Sullivan, 4 vols (London, 1983), II, 368-76.

²⁶ *Reflector*, 1 (1 January 1811), 11. References to *The Reflector* are to issue number, with the actual (rather than the intended) date of publication.

²⁷ See also, for example, 'On the Connection and the Mutual Assistance of the Arts and Sciences, and the Relation of Poetry to them all', 2 (27 July 1811), 346-60 or 'Athens and England', 4 (23 March 1812), 419-28. It was a key-note of *The Examiner's* commentary in these years that politics and literature were intertwined. See for example an account of an 'Application to Parliament for a Third Theatre': *Examiner* (17 March 1811), 161.

²⁸ In 'On the Inconveniences Resulting From Being Hanged', Lamb refers to 'whipping to death, as is sometimes practiced now' (*Reflector*, 2 (27 July 1811), 388). The allusion is to the Hunts' third prosecution for libel which was raised against them for reprinting an article from *Drakard's Stamford News* titled '1000 Lashes!!' about military flogging. The article first appeared in *The Examiner* on 2 September 1810, 557. The paper commented upon the issue frequently throughout 1811 and there are numerous allusions to it in *The Reflector*. See for example *Reflector* 3 (25 October 1811), 1.

²⁹ *Reflector* 4 (23 March 1812), 401.

³⁰ *Reflector* 3 (25 October 1811), 216; *Reflector* 3 (25 October 1811), 159.

'comes for copy').³¹ He desires, and the poem suggests he might achieve, a day solely 'for the Muse and dancing pleasure' (363). He longs for a 'poetic nook', but one that is 'Just hid with trees' which admits the 'arrowy diamonds' of sunlight, creating a bower 'with checquer'd shadows strown' and a 'mellow twilight of it's [sic] own' (363). The poem ends by yielding to immediate concerns. The smoother verse that describes the nook gives way to 'Doubts, hazards, crosses, cloud-compelling vapours, / With dire necessity to read the papers' (364). The uneven metre and the bathetic clunk of the rhyme suggest the painful return to earthly reality. Yet Hunt does not quite claim that politics and poetics are contradictory spheres. The imaginative bower is only 'just hid' with trees. Rather than a space of pure seclusion it admits the light of the outside world creating an in-between state, a 'checquer'd' 'twilight'. The poem is one of Hunt's most important statements about the interconnection of literature and politics. It is also a continuation of a frequent desire in the *Reflector* to discover twilight states between dreams and necessity.

The idea was a feature of both writers' prose as well as their poetry. Indeed both tended to suggest the differences between the two might be suspended. An example is 'A Day by the Fire - poetically and practically considered'. The 'poetical' refers principally to Hunt's discussion in the article of fireside-loving poets like Milton, Horace and Cowper, but it might equally be taken to refer to a prose style which aspires to capture, in Nicholas Roe's phrase, 'the quick of experience'.³² The essay takes particular pleasure in twilight as a time that permits activity of the mind which combines conscious intention and associative fancy. In gazing at the fire he lets his eye form fiery Alps, walled towns, coaches and camels: 'During these creations of the eye, the thought roves about into a hundred abstractions, some of them suggested by the fire, - some of them suggested by that suggestion, - some of them arising from the general sensation of comfort and composure'.³³ Hunt does not just describe the state. He attempts to produce it in his readers too. His prose engages in a deliberate looseness that evokes the suggestive quality he prizes. He searches for a simile:

Let me consider a moment: - it is very odd; - I was always reckoned a lively hand at a simile; - but language and combination absolutely fail me here. If it is like anything, it must be something beyond every thing in beauty and life. Oh - I have it now: - think, Reader [...]' (400-1).

Just as he had characterised Lamb's poetry as dealing in 'apprehensiveness', here too he finds as much pleasure in searching for an expression as finding one. Later, he finds two similes for an overcast day: '[I] feel a heavy sky go over me like a feather-bed, or rather like a huge brush which rubs all my nap the wrong way' (401). Similes are important to Hunt because they permit the combination

³¹ *Reflector*, 2 (27 July 1811), 362.

³² Roe, *Fiery Heart*, 131.

³³ *Reflector* 4 (23 March 1812), 411.

in a single thought of diverse things. He poses the possibility that the two ideas can be combined while incorporating a reminder that it is only a possibility: the heavy sky is only 'like' a feather-bed, even if his image proposes that they can be conflated. 'Think, Reader', he asks, but the reader of Hunt's essay is more likely to be baffled, caught between the grey sky and the feather-bed. Puzzling rather than lucid thought seems to be the type of activity he has in mind.

A similar essay in the third number, 'Ψυχῆς Ιατρειον; or an Analogical Essay on the Treatment of Intellectual Disorders, together with an Account of a surprising Cure performed therein by the Writer when asleep', comments on the interconnectedness of mind and body, and does so via a reverie in 'that still and delightful hour, when it is just too dark to read but too light to have candles'.³⁴ The article begins by noting 'We are always pushing our analogies too far', especially as concerns the mind and the body:

in speaking of these dissimilar, but at the same time inseparable and sympathizing moieties of our nature, we borrow from each of them, and apply to both indiscriminately, a set of phrases and epithets, which if we reflected upon what we talked, would be of infinite service to us in the treatment of ourselves. (144-5)

Hunt's account is especially characteristic for the interest it takes in the way that analogies connect disparate things yet also remind readers of the necessity of stretching to make that connection. In the same issue John Aikin remarks on James Thomson's use of compound epithets: 'The effect of this compression is often truly poetical, - a striking idea being excited by a single word'. 'It is, however', he continues, 'a licence in language, and when arbitrarily framed, with no regard to grammatical propriety, is apt to give offence to a correct taste. This is the case when the two parts of the compound have no natural connection'.³⁵ The technique, as Aikin may have known, was a favourite of his editor's. In a verse letter in the *Examiner*, for example, Hunt describes Lamb as 'Home-lover, thought-feeder, abundant-joke-giving'.³⁶ There is no 'natural connection' between a grey sky and a huge brush, or between a fading coal and a camel, but Hunt's manner at once takes humorous pleasure in the contrast and permits, for a poised moment, the possibility of some such '[creation] of the eye'. It is a method characteristic of the *Reflector* which allows readers to entertain the possibility that two ideas compressed into one may have a connection. Analogies, like similes, allow Hunt to draw readers into his suggestive 'twilight'.

Readers find themselves rather like the narrator of Lamb's 'On the Inconveniences Resulting from Being Hanged' (published in the second number

³⁴ *Reflector* 3 (25 October 1811), 150.

³⁵ *Reflector* 3 (25 October 1811), 46.

³⁶ 'Harry Brown's Letters to his Friends. Letter VII. To C. L.', l. 2. In 1815 when Hunt was revising *The Story of Rimini* Byron commented on the technique: see *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols (London, 1973-82), IV, 49, 320.

of the *Reflector*) who is the victim of a kind of suspended judgment. He has, yet has not quite, been hanged. Instead he finds himself in a position akin to one still hanging. He is judged by those who read too much into the mark on his neck. It is an 'inconvenience' because he cannot quite articulate what is wrong with their negative judgments. The mark should in fact confirm his innocence (he would be dead were he not innocent) yet the misreading of the sign does not seem wholly misguided. Lamb allows us to see that there might, in some ways, or under some circumstances, be something 'ignominious [in] an accident' (384). 'A disagreeable association of ideas' (385), like that between a scarred neck and crime, may be no less disagreeable even when one accepts their contingency. Even 'Pensilis', after all (Lamb's pseudonym here), thinks the hangman a 'rascal' (388) simply because of the associations of his job. In 'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity' Lamb remarks that with 'every species of *reading*, so much depends upon the eyes of the reader; if they are bleary, or apt to dazzle, or inattentive, or strained with too much attention, the optic power will infallibly bring home false reports of what it reads'.³⁷ The possibility of discovering 'false reports' in reading is also for Lamb, as for Hunt, a pleasure and an active aim of writing which delights in the twilight borderland between reality and falsehood.

Elsewhere in the *Reflector* Hunt entertained in a dream the spirit of Nightmare called up by 'what are vulgarly called veal-cutlets'.³⁸ The article describes a dream, but it nonetheless allows him to make teasing reference to real figures like the Ministers (95) and the *Edinburgh Reviewers* (98). Lamb picked up the thread in his paired essays signed by 'Edax' and 'Hospita', the juxtaposition of which (they follow each other in the fourth number of the *Reflector*) permits the combination of a statement of the importance of a sensual appetite with criticism of that position. Hunt may have had these essays in mind in 1816 when he wrote in a verse letter to Lamb a description of Sir Thomas Browne, 'Who delighted (so happy were all his digestions) / In puzzling his head with impossible questions'.³⁹ Lamb, like Hunt, finds in the *Reflector* an opportunity to experiment, and to take 'restless liberties' that have power to perplex by offering an invitation to entertain 'impossible questions'.

The relation between questions and digestions was a frequent consideration for two writers concerned to trace the ground between the poetic and the practical. In the *Reflector's* final number Lamb's 'A Farewell to Tobacco' appeared. It was a particular favourite of Hunt's.⁴⁰ Hunt's review of Lamb's *Works* takes issue with Lamb for changing a couplet in the poem. Lamb had

³⁷ *Reflector*, 2 (27 July 1811), 424.

³⁸ *Reflector*, 1 (1 January 1811), 89-90.

³⁹ 'Harry Brown's Letters to his Friends. Letter VII. To C. L.', ll. 36-8. It was printed in *The Examiner*, 25 August 1816, and reprinted in *Foliage* in 1818.

⁴⁰ It seems also to have been a favourite of the *Blackwood's* writers. In the guise of the Welsh doctor Peter Morris, John Gibson Lockhart refers to 'my friend Charles Lamb' and quotes from the poem (although he accidentally attributes it to Charles Lloyd): *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1819), II, 142, 81. *Blackwood's* reprinted 'A Farewell to Tobacco' in 'Horae Nicotianae', April 1819, 47-51.

revised the poem so that he wishes not to be able to 'fit expression find/ Or a language to my mind, / (Still the phrase is wide or scant) / To take leave of thee GREAT PLANT'.⁴¹ Hunt remarks that 'we still prefer the old straightforward carelessness of "Still the phrase is wide an acre / To take leave of thee, Tobacco". There was', says Hunt, 'a royal disdain of the rhyme in it, befitting a vegetable superior to all considerations'.⁴² Hunt appreciates instinctively how apposite Lamb's bad rhyme is. Hunt was often himself mocked for his 'Cockney' rhymes. But one of the marks of Hunt and Lamb's literary kinship was their recognition that these types of oddities could produce suggestive effects. In his *Feast of the Poets* (published in the same number) Hunt imagines Apollo judging the living poets. By taking Apollo to the pub he put the idea 'in its most common-place light, with a studious degradation of the God into a mere critic or chairman'.⁴³ Hunt's studious commonness affects a similar contortion to Lamb's rhyme. The 'acre/Tobacco' rhyme is, Hunt sees, not only or simply comic. It produces a charming yet careful carelessness while also prompting a state of mind that is appropriate to his peculiar subject matter.

'A Farewell to Tobacco' begins by desiring inarticulacy. He declares that he wishes not to be able to express 'Half my love; or half my hate' (388) for this noble weed. It is a contrary passion. Tobacco inspires love and hate not so much in equal measure (that implies two separate feelings) as a kind of compound passion in which they are intertwined and inseparable. As the poem proceeds, further twists and turns are required of Lamb's readers. The poem expresses a desire not to be able to express anything, not to find a 'fit expression', and not because the subject is insignificant (a weed) but because it is so significant that the plain truth about it will seem wildly excessive:

For I hate yet love thee so,
That, whichever thing I shew,
The plain truth will seem to be
A constrain'd hyperbole (388).

Hyperbole is not typically constrained. But the phrase works so well as an expression of Lamb's passionate contrariness because it becomes necessary for his readers to inhabit a similar position to try to read the poem. Lamb requires a state of mind in which hate and love are aspects of the same passion, and in which expressing one or the other would seem at once constrained (he only says half of what he feels) and hyperbolic because it seems so extreme a state.

The poem then puts this hyperbole into action. The smoker seems like Aetna, with the wit and fancy produced by smoking akin to the 'Sicilian fruitfulness' (388) that is occasioned by volcanic soil. The link he makes with unexpected creativity is exactly in line with the pleasures of a poem which becomes so creatively fertile, so ready, to use Hunt's phrase, to 'bubble freshly'.

⁴¹ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 7 vols (London, 1903), V, 32.

⁴² *Examiner*, (21 March 1819), 187.

⁴³ *Reflector* 4 (23 March 1812), 313.

By the end he seems to come clean. The poem in praise of tobacco that calls it 'stinking' is 'Irony all, and feign'd abuse, / Such as perplexed lovers use' (390). Just as a lover might 'borrow language of Dislike' and call his mistress 'Witch, Hyaena, Mermaid, Devil' (390), so he has attacked tobacco. And yet it is not quite as simple as this. The abuse is not simply ironic; the apparent meaning cannot simply be inverted to get the real meaning (not devil, but angel, not stinking, but aromatic). There is another twist. Of lovers who use such antipathetic language he says:

Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know
A contentment to express,
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not. (390)

In December 1817, Hunt, mid-way through a short article dismissing a political enemy in the *Examiner*, could not resist dropping in a quotation from Lamb's notes to *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*: 'So near are the boundaries of panegyric and invective, that a worn-out sinner is sometimes found to be the best declaimer against sin'.⁴⁴ The idea that opposite things have affinity in their very opposition is characteristic of Lamb, but it is equally so of Hunt to put his finger precisely on the type of idea Lamb was drawn to. It is a lesson we also learn from this poem which contorts itself so brilliantly to create a state in which conclusive thinking is suspended. Lamb wants it both ways. In life that may not be possible. But in the space of the poem Lamb creates, it is.

Hunt in his contributions to the *Reflector* values so much the 'still and delightful hour, when it is just too dark to read but too light to have candles' which permits his 'usual reveries'.⁴⁵ Lamb ends by pledging to give up tobacco, a feat with which in life he struggled. But even here he hopes like a divorced Queen to retain his title: he will remain among the 'Tobacco Boys' in the 'by-places', the 'suburbs', the 'borders' of tobacco's graces (391). He celebrates the way tobacco becomes a cloak which allows the smoker to become a kind of mythical being. Smokers' friends think them 'fell chimeras' like Cerberus, Geryon or he 'who first loved a cloud, Ixion' (388). The notion that tobacco (or writing about tobacco) involves the writer in a cloud that obscures his identity is obviously appropriate to Lamb who would later retire behind the 'phantom-cloud of Elia'.⁴⁶ But it is especially so as the poem is followed in the fourth issue of the *Reflector* by 'Edax on Appetite' and its companion by Hospita. It also shares space in the *Reflector* with essays and poems by Hunt concerned to effect the same kind of wandering, paradoxical, suggestive method. Throughout the *Reflector* both writers found the opportunity, as Simon Hull remarks of Lamb, to

⁴⁴ *Examiner*, (14 December 1817), 794.

⁴⁵ *Reflector* 3 (25 October 1811), 150.

⁴⁶ *London Magazine*, 3 (January 1821), 6.

'[essay] at once confessional and satirical, or sincere and duplicitous positions'.⁴⁷ It is a quality both shared, but it might also be seen as one of the grounds of the way they draw in their readers. The peculiarities both employ invite us to puzzle along with them. They ask readers to follow them as they indicate new ideas that are yet being formed. We 'witness their first apprehension of a thing [...] the first dawn, the early streaks'.

~ 3 ~

The manner Lamb and Hunt developed indicates where truth may 'bubble freshly' from unlikely sources. Four years after the *Reflector* ended its run, Hunt continued the companionship in *The Examiner* in a poem titled 'Harry Brown's Letters to his Friends. Letter VII. To C. L.'.⁴⁸ It celebrates Charles and Mary for coming to visit him during his two years in prison for libelling the Prince Regent. It is no surprise that Hunt praised Lamb for visiting during the prison years. According to Nicholas Roe, the winter of 1813-1814 was the harshest in living memory.⁴⁹ The Lambs' steadfast friendship was also something of a political risk that they seem to have taken a certain pride in taking. But Hunt expresses this friendliness in a curious way. Bad weather did not prevent the Lambs visiting. On the contrary, the worse the weather the more likely they were to come. They take the principle so far that now the weather is fine they do not visit. For all that the poem is a plea for companionship it is also itself a form of companionship. It is a joke that Hunt imagines that the Lambs will enjoy when they receive their copy of the newspaper. It is also a continuation of the methods that the two developed together at the *Reflector*.

The poem positions itself by the fire, as Hunt had done in the *Reflector*, and indulges in an associative dreaming state (the imaginative account of Polyphemus and Galatea with which the poem concludes is prompted by Hunt seeing lanterns bobbing through the darkness from his window). Hunt valued Lamb for his 'social sentiment', and the poem's 'sociality' is created by adopting what Hunt described (referring to 'Politics and Poetics') as a 'mixture of fancy and familiarity'.⁵⁰ The poem's informality is announced by anapaests, commonplaces and feminine rhymes:

And there, sure as fate, came the knock of you two,
Then the lantern, the laugh, and the "well, how d'ye do?" (ll. 19-20).

He also rhymes on 'digestions' and 'questions' and 'Thomson' and 'come soon'. Such rhymes put one at one's ease; they're an act of friendliness, a sort of welcome. If the poetry is loose, that looseness serves a purpose. It invites us in, settles us down, and prepares us for the dream-like musing that Hunt engages

⁴⁷ Simon P. Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine: Metropolitan Muse* (London, 2010), 79.

⁴⁸ Printed in *The Examiner*, 25 August 1816.

⁴⁹ Roe, *Fiery Heart*, 205.

⁵⁰ Hunt, *Foliage*, 11; 'Politics and Poetics' in Strachan, ed., *Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, V, 9.

in at the end of the poem. Other phrases seem more awkward than loose, such as these lines:

The roads were so bad, there was really some danger.
At least where I live; for the nights were so groping,
The rains made such wet, and the paths are so sloping (ll. 54-6).

It jars because 'groping' is not a quality of a night, but an effect of the night (one must grope one's way forward). We might be tempted to call this bad 'Cockney' poetry because no one, I suppose, wants particularly to be reminded of a grope. Yet one works out what Hunt means eventually. And that process is what he is describing: feeling awkward, trying to find one's way forward in the dark. Hunt's unusual word is suggestive rather than descriptive: it guides its readers but does not give them the answer. It is a very Huntian contortion, and it is appropriately placed in a poem to Lamb because it was contortions like these that they appreciated in each other. Lamb was touched when he received his copy of the *Examiner*, perhaps in part because it reminded him of the writing they created together at the *Reflector*.⁵¹ The poem, like so much of their writing in that periodical, depends upon the 'apprehensive' quality they shared.

I have not attempted to settle the question of Lamb's 'Cockneyism'. But if Hunt and Lamb were linked by the pleasure they took in paradox then it is not perhaps inappropriate that the hint can be found in the magazine that both called into being and demonised the Cockney School. In the *Noctes Ambrosianae* in 1822 Lamb is described as a 'well-bred, ill-trained pointer':

You see him snuffing and smoking and brandishing his tail with the most impassioned enthusiasm, and then drawn round into a semicircle he stands beautifully – dead set. You expect a burst of partridges, or a towering cock-pheasant, when lo, and behold, away flits a lark, or you discover a mouse's nest, or there is absolutely nothing at all.⁵²

Lamb, like Hunt, offers us writing that seems to puzzle us with 'impossible questions' and to leave us perplexed. Yet it is on account of chases like this that go nowhere that they make their friendly appeal to readers. In *Blackwood's* Christopher North ends by saying that, for all this, 'if Elia were mine, I would not part with him'. But, as the *Blackwood's* writers may have realised, one of the most beguiling features of both Hunt and Lamb is that, however closely we follow them, we never can quite pin them down.

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⁵¹ Lamb wrote on 7 December 1816 to thank Hunt for 'Your kindness expressed towards me in so public & yet so private a way – and VERSES too': *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to which are added those of his sister Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 3 vols (London, 1935), II, 203.

⁵² *Blackwood's Magazine*, 11 (April 1822), 487.

Snipe, Roast Pig and Boiled Babies: Lamb's Consuming Passion

Simon P. Hull

~ CONSUMPTION AND THE FAMILIAR ESSAY ~

The term '*consumption*' tends to connote to a passive and uncreative role, posited as it often is at the other end of a process beginning with the activity of 'production'. Consumption suggests the meeting – or better for stimulating desire, the tantalizingly partial meeting – of a need that has been created and controlled by the producer, and not necessitated by any benefit for the consumer beyond the (temporary) fulfilment of desire for the consumable item. The pleasure of fulfilment, of course, creates only further desire, hence the psycho-economy of '*consumer-ism*', in which the cycle of created, sated, and recreated desire is maintained on a wide scale, for a mass market.

Because consumption also involves physical, oral ingestion, the act of purchasing clothes, framed pictures, household gadgets, magazines, books – hence literature – as well as food itself, is connected to the act of eating and drinking by this term. To 'consume' is therefore to take something wholly or entirely into one's possession – and often, most clearly in the case of addiction, to become in a sense possessed *by* the consumed item – whether through a commercial transaction, the act of physical ingestion, or the combined physical and mental act of reading. The figurative and literal meanings are equally common and usually barely distinguished, one as much an unthinking part of everyday language as the other. This dual usage is in itself sufficient to warrant the historicising of a highly pronounced gastronomic motif, such as we find in Lamb's essays, not only in the closely contiguous context of Romantic-era dietetics or food-politics, but in regard to a nascent consumerism in the early nineteenth century and its attendant socio-cultural anxieties.

Emerging from the industrial revolution and the ensuing eighteenth-century growth of consumerism, by the Romantic period, according to Tim Morton, 'it became possible to be, or [...] to act, the role of *consumerist*' (my italics): Morton proposes that consumerism provides a 'curiously reflexive mode of consumption,' in which people tend to be concerned with how they appear as 'a certain type of consumer to others. One doesn't just eat carrots, one styles oneself as a carrot eater'.¹ This stylized, reflexive consumer, or consumerist, is embodied in two confessional personae, De Quincey's opium-eater and Lamb's drunkard.² The consuming passion constitutes the named identity of both

¹ 'Food Studies in the Romantic Period: (S)mashing History', *Romanticism*, 12.1 (2006), 1-14 (3).

² In Chapter Two of my book, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine: Metropolitan Muse* (London, 2010), I contend that Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard' represents a parody of, among other

personae, and, moreover, the formal, discursive and narrative contours of the two texts are shaped by the consumed substance, thus making a literal art of consumption. Opium, the opium-eater tells us, expands the mind, creates an over whelming sense of human kinship and causes restlessness or wanderlust: the opium-eater's narrative and prose style is commensurately fragmented, rambling and erratic, with substantial digression (both in the main body of the text and through footnotes), shifting tense, and veering tone between anguish and irony, poetic reverie and prosaic observation. Similarly, Lamb's drunkard informs us that the effects of drink are a dulled imagination, the inability to sustain thought, and a 'harassing conceit of incapacity';³ hence Lamb's exploitation of the essay's archetypally diminutive and desultory form, plus the dubious cultural esteem with which the essay is traditionally held⁴ – as a highly *consumable* mode of writing, the primary vehicle of which is the periodical – is entirely appropriate. In both cases the text written *about* consumption is reciprocally written *by* consumption.

The consumer culture in the Romantic period included spectacular acts and excessive figures of consumption among high society, in the evermore lavish royal banquets in which no expense was spared to create dishes of sculptural and architectural grandeur, in the figure of the tasselled and gilded voluptuary, the 'Prince of Whales', who was notoriously satirised for his corpulence by Lamb, and in the converse embodiment of refined taste, the dandy *par excellence*, Beau Brummell.⁵ In literature, the brazen carnivorous tendency in Lamb's gastronomy (more on which later), chimes in provocative clarity with Canto II of Byron's *Don Juan*, when the shipwrecked crew in the open boat fail to ration their provisions and are forced to commit the ultimate food-taboo, cannibalism. To mitigate the crew's initial gluttony and ensuing cannibalism, Byron associates meat-eating with unsophisticated working-class values, which are deemed closer to man's natural state than those of an implicitly aristocratic, degenerate vegetarian brigade:

But man is a carnivorous production,
And must have meals, at least one meal a day;

targets, the confessional genre in general and De Quincey's text in particular. De Quincey's confessions had appeared originally in the *London* in September and October 1821, the latter instalment coinciding with Elia's 'Witches, and Other Night-Fears', which includes, as I argue, a disingenuous, deceptive lament over Elia's own 'prosaic' imagination in apparent deference to the fantastic visions of Coleridge. Highly suggestive parallels are implicit also in this essay with the text of De Quincey's *Confessions*. Furthermore, the very timing of the essay's re-appearance under Elia's name in the *London* (after two previous appearances in, respectively, a utilitarian and a temperance journal) to coincide with the eventual publication of De Quincey's text in book form, in August 1822, even more compellingly casts Lamb's mundane, mind-enfeebled drunkard in the role of parodic figure to De Quincey's conversely sublime, mind-expanded dreamer, the opium-eater.

³ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 8 vols (London, 1903-5), I, 139.

⁴ Claire De Obaldia, *The Essayistic Spirit: Literature, Modern Criticism and the Essay* (Oxford, 1995), 19-20.

⁵ For a vividly detailed account of the various excesses of consumption in this period, see Venetia Murray, *High Society: A Social History of the Regency Period, 1788-1830* (London, 1998).

He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,
 But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey,
 Although his anatomical construction
 Bears vegetables in a grumbling way,
 Your labouring people think beyond all question,
 Beef, veal, and mutton, better for digestion. (ll. 529-36)⁶

Byron's friend and fellow-poet, the upper-class vegetarian Shelley, provides an immediate target in this prime example of the poem's paradoxically defining use of the satirical digression. Such asides are characterised by a blasé tone of materialism, with which to offset the affective 'romance' narrative of Juan's adventures. Similarly belying ostensibly more serious, affective narrative content, the importance of food and drink in Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* is such that its conspicuous absence precipitates tragic denouement. The fate of the haughty, Byronic aristocrat Ravenswood hinges more or less on his inability to enlist fidelity and placate potential foes with sumptuous, customary hospitality (despite the wily resourcefulness of his comical servant Caleb). Certainly, Ravenswood makes a proleptic enemy of the fiery Bucklaw, who perceives a snub at being refused a repast at the Laird's doorstep. Scott's text is appropriately framed by the narrative construct of a story-telling landlord – the archetype of the genial, commercial host, who, like the concurrent, albeit more literary image of the Table-Talker, combines loquacity with gourmanderie, or oral, sensual gratification with the linguistically-administered, abstract satisfaction of the mind.

Consumption is, of course, closely related to 'taste', both as a biological, sensory faculty necessary to the maintenance of appetite, and the cultural signifier of a refined, selective, and fashion-conscious consumer. Regarding the biological mode, Denise Gigante observes the moral suspicion with which taste has tended to have been treated: 'Not only is taste bound up with the unruly flesh; traditionally, it is associated with *too* intense bodily pleasure and the consequent dangers of excess. While the exertion of the higher senses theoretically leads to more mind, the exercise of the lower senses of taste and smell can result in too much body and its various forms of sensuousness: to indulge the most basic human appetites is to risk becoming a glutton, a drunkard, or a voluptuary.'⁷ The expression of this tradition as a Romantic aesthetic appears in Hegel's 1807 study, *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Hegel claims that:

the sensuous aspect of art only refers to *theoretical* senses of *sight* and *hearing*, while smell, taste, and feeling remain excluded from being sources of artistic enjoyment. For smell, taste and feeling have to do with matter as such, and with its immediate sensuous

⁶ *The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford, 2000), 450.

⁷ *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, 2005), 3. Gigante claims of the cannibalism scene in *Don Juan* that Byron uses it 'to critique the vampiric forces of nineteenth-century capitalism' (18).

qualities; smell with material volatilization in air, taste with the material dissolution of substance, and feeling with warmth, coldness, smoothness, etc. On this account these senses cannot have to do with the objects of art, which are destined to maintain themselves in their actual independent existence, and admit of no purely sensuous relation.⁸

If activation of the sensuous faculty of taste precludes from 'high' art the act of eating, then literature in which food features prominently – and, by extension, any mode of material consumption – must be, if not precluded, then deemed improper, hence inferior, as art. This is why Fielding's extended use of a culinary metaphor with which to introduce his licentious romp, *Tom Jones* (1749), a comic novel liberally sprinkled with 'low' scenes of gratified sensual desire, is entirely apt. Romantic aesthetics therefore, and for many years the criticism which unconsciously absorbed it, in Jerome McGann's terms,⁹ implicitly shuns the periodical-occasioned, familiar essay as a genre predisposed to the world that *is*, in all its immediate, material reality. And yet – akin to Byron's deft shifting between the sublime and the mundane, romance and satire in *Don Juan* – essentially 'Romantic' effusions about the transcendental imagination, appeals to see beyond the 'darkness of sense and materiality' (*Works*, II, 90), the impassioned defence of individual liberty, and the valorisation of a state of child-like credulity, are as apparent in Lamb's essays as is the motif of consumption.

This juxtaposition of high aesthetic, philosophic and social values with low materialistic ones emerges as a defining feature of the Romantic-era essay. The idea of consumption is integral to the essay's informality or generic 'familiarity', creating thus a balanced, broadly middle-brow and middle-class appeal. Indeed, the very concept of 'the reader as consumer' can be traced to the Romantic essay, due to the growth of periodical literature as the principle vehicle for the essay. 'This was a reader who shopped and selected, whose sensibilities had been sharpened by exposure to an increasingly wide range of materials [- especially in miscellaneous magazines such as *Blackwood's* or the *London*, in which most of the Elia essays first appeared -], for which she or he had slowly begun to have more time because of advances in working conditions, domestic conditions and print technology.'¹⁰ An example of the specific gourmand-figure or gastronomic motif in the Romantic essay, appears in Leigh Hunt's 1811 essay for the *Reflector*, 'Account of a Familiar Spirit, who visited and Conversed with the Author ...,' in which great men, potentates and eminent literati alike, are reduced to gluttons and punished for excessive eating by the 'spirit' of indigestion. Gastronomy occurs to similar, demystifying effect in Hazlitt's essay, 'My First Acquaintance with Poets', in which the depiction of

⁸ Quoted in Gigante, 12. Further references to *Taste* will be made in the parenthesis in the text.

⁹ *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago and London, 1985).

¹⁰ Stephen Behrendt, 'The Romantic Reader', in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford, 1999), 92-100 (99).

Wordsworth improbably combines the physiognomy of genius, an overall resemblance to Don Quixote, and a curiously rolling, lounging gait evocative of the poet's own rustic Peter Bell character. Hazlitt has Wordsworth greedily devour a hunk of Cheshire cheese whilst bluffly claiming in his northern burr that, unlike Mr Southey, he knew how to appreciate the simple, material pleasures of life. The cheese-eating high priest of spiritual nourishment is here symbolically presented as both consumer and consumable entity for the magazine-reading public, the reader-as-consumer.

As the cannibalism episode from *Don Juan* implies, consumption of food and text alike is best served by a degree of emotional detachment, just as strong or intense feeling often accompanies a loss of appetite (and, conversely, 'retail therapy' is recommended to assuage emotional trauma). The calculated maintenance of an ostensibly inappropriate tone of callousness¹¹ over the archetypically emotive subject, murder, in De Quincey's 1827 essay, 'On Murder, Considered as One of the Fine Arts', articulates a high-cultured or refined, *avant garde* consumer. De Quincey expresses a pre-Wildean preference for the intellectual, aesthetic over the emotive, moral approach: like a framed print or painting, murder can be an expression of 'good *taste*', in which 'Design [...] grouping, light and shade, poetry, sentiment' are deemed necessary to the most affective rendition.¹² The reading of Lamb's gourmand-motif which follows identifies a similar callousness, a provocative, inversely affective imposture which itself, I shall argue, bespeaks the discourse of consumption.

~ LAMB'S GASTRONOMIC MOTIF ~

In her study of popular theatrical culture in the Romantic period, Jane Moody discusses Joseph Grimaldi's development of Clown into the central figure of British pantomime. Grimaldi's hedonistic Clown is a thief and a glutton, stealing anything from letters, to statues to bread, and gorging himself not just on gargantuan quantities of food, but on the buildings and famous landmarks of London. For Clown, says Moody, 'London simply provided a glorious, inexhaustible miscellany of objects, both from nature and from culture, to be consumed or re-imagined through acts of comic reconstruction'.¹³ As London was the epicentre of a relatively new consumer culture, therefore, Grimaldi's Clown enacts a satire not just on the follies and foibles of Londoners but more broadly on the new consumerism itself. Clown pokes fun at this social phenomenon by physically consuming improbable or impossible items which are, nonetheless, consumable in an abstract sense, by a metropolitanised society that has reduced the significance of everything to that of food, or a transient, unimaginative, and grossly sensual pleasure.

¹¹ 'Magazine callousness' is proposed by Richard Cronin as a nascent expression in the 1820s of the modern urban condition, in 'Magazines and Romantic Modernity', *The British Periodical Text, 1797-1835*, ed. Simon Hull (Tirril, 2008), 69-91.

¹² *The Complete Works*, ed. Grevel Lindop, 21 vols (London, 2003), VI, 114.

¹³ *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), 219-20.

Clown's pantomimic example suggests that the bodily act of consumption can serve as a literal metaphor for the abstract, figurative notion. As I hope to demonstrate, Grimaldi's contemporary, Lamb - himself an inveterate player of the fool in life as in writing, and much of whose literary foolery involves Clown-like acts of sometimes gleeful, other times guilt-ridden gluttony - ambivalently satirises both the new consumerism of the period and the anxious reaction to it from Lamb's poetic peers and other high-minded naysayers.

Lamb's 'consuming passion' is integral to his love of the city. In what has been described as the prototype for Elia, his 1802 essay for the *Morning Post*, 'The Londoner', Lamb's attachment to London is repeatedly expressed in gustatory terms. A portent of the Londoner's gastronomic relish for the metropolis in adulthood is suggested by his claim to have been born on the day of London's 'great annual feast', or Lord Mayor's Day. Commensurately, his innate 'passion for crowds is nowhere *feasted* so full as in London'; those who find Fleet Street boring 'must have a rare *recipe* for melancholy'; a '*distaste*' at home has often driven him out into the crowded Strand, where he has '*fed* his humour' until sated (my italics. *Works*, I, 39-40). Then, most suggestively of all, a gastronomic metaphor is deployed to champion the consumer spirit itself of London:

The very deformities of London, which give *distaste* to others, from habit do not displease me. The endless succession of shops, where *Fancy, miscalled Folly*, is supplied with perpetual gauds and toys, excite in me no puritanical aversion. I gladly behold *every appetite supplied with its proper food*. The obliging customer and the obliged tradesman - things which live by bowing and things which exist but for homage - do not affect me with *disgust* [...] (39)

Prizefighting, pickpocketing, public hangings and the 'very smoke' of London are circumscribed within its consumerism as the rejected objects of a refined or cultured '*distaste*', items conversely beloved by the egalitarian, *consummate* Londoner. This is not simply a poke at the ruralist, anti-metropolitan poetics of Wordsworth, therefore, but equally at another kind of consumer to that presented by the Londoner himself: the fastidiously fashion-conscious and acquisitive figure of the epicurean snob, one whose ultra-refined mode of consumption is motivated by self-aggrandisement and social aspiration rather than unalloyed, innocent pleasure. The Londoner's favourite aspects of London life symbolise the generic city's classical principles of egalitarianism, sociability and justice, as well as the visual attractiveness of endless spectacle and a Turner-esque, painterly level of air pollution. And finally, with climactic expansion, the defining traits of humanity itself are nourished by the metropolis - etymologically, of course, the mother city: 'Where has spleen her *food* but in London? Humour, Interest, Curiosity, *suck at her measureless breasts without a possibility of being satiated*' (40). Therefore, it is not simply the hurly-burly or orderly-motley of London itself which erases social and cultural distinctions. From the artificiality of commercial transactions to the innate humanity of

spleen, humour and curiosity, all human activity within the purlieu of the metropolis is democratically assimilated by and to the Londoner's gastronomic, consumeristic vision.

However, Lamb uses the gastronomic metaphor to censure as well as to celebrate consumerism. Through the persona of 'Lepus', Lamb configures the inherent consumerism of writing for the periodical press in terms of uncontrollable appetite, unwholesome food and gluttonous feeding. In a *New Times* essay of January 1825, 'Readers Against the Grain', Lepus despondingly opines: 'If I hate one day before another, it is the accursed first day of the month, when a load of periodicals is ushered in and distributed to feed the reluctant monster. How it gapes and takes in its prescribed diet, as little savoury as that which Daniel administered to that Apocryphal dragon, and not more wholesome!' (274). Lepus ends by claiming he would rather perform any kind of demeaning wage-labour than contribute via his own writing to the 'insatiable monster of modern reading' (274), as a manifestation of consumerism. But, typically with Lamb, he leaves us uncertain as to how seriously we should take him, especially when he appears, as he does here, to be at his most trenchantly opinionated. Apart from the tendency, noted by Jane Aaron, for Lamb to engage the reader's sympathy with a certain polemical type – the self-pitying convalescent, the opinionated anti-Caledonian and the uncharitable resenter of poor relations – as a means to inculcate greater self-awareness and tolerance,¹⁴ there is always the slipperiness of the pseudonymous persona to account for. 'Lepus' is Latin for 'hare', mythologized as a melancholy creature, the flesh of which when eaten is purported to bring about a similar state of mind in the consumer. The suggestion therefore lingers that, far from credibly identifying a cultural malaise, Lepus's argument against his own *raison d'être* bespeaks the pathological mindset of the self-loathing melancholic. Nevertheless, what we can be certain of is that Lepus, along with the Londoner from twenty-three years earlier, illustrates Lamb's abiding fascination with consumption of all kinds, to the extent that it represents a primary constituent of his discourse. Gastronomy appears as an incidental, instinctive metaphor in Lamb's writing, as in Elia's claim in 'Oxford in the Vacation' to have been denied 'the sweet food of academic institution' (*Works*, II, 9). Given the above examples, therefore, it seems a valid approach to associate Lamb's numerous specific references to food and eating – indeed, to read as significant this ubiquity itself – with a broader interest in consumption.

There are, of course, different kinds of consumer and degrees of consumption, and Lamb appears to argue for some over others. The connoisseur, as mentioned earlier, is for Lamb a wrong kind of consumer. As a mode of epicurean snob, this figure is briefly and variously mocked in the Elia essays 'Oxford in the Vacation' and 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago'. At the start of the former essay, Elia unflatteringly likens the identity-fixed, unimaginative type of reader who is taken in by the illusion of

¹⁴ Jane Aaron, *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford, 1991).

autobiographical sincerity established in the first essay, 'Recollections of the South-Sea House',¹⁵ to the superficial 'wary connoisseur in prints, with cursory eye' (which, while it reads, seems as though it reads not)' (7). Such a reader values literature only in terms of its prestige, and collects books for their pecuniary value or any social kudos their possession might bestow. Elia plays with this reader-type's assumptions about literary commodity and frustrates his reductive attempt at exposing the 'real' Elia as a common trading-house clerk merely masquerading as a professional writer, albeit for the much-maligned periodical press. In the Christ's Hospital essay, written ostensibly as an alternative, more factual account of Lamb's old school than the encomiastic, earlier essay by the same author, Elia sneeringly supposes that the more privileged Mr Lamb has 'grown connoisseur since' (15), due to his selective recollection of the portraits in the Great Hall of previous governors, and omission of the barbaric acts of flogging committed in the same place.

Most noticeably, however, the connoisseur-figure is satirised in the *Reflector* essay Lamb wrote under the persona of 'Hospita', on 'the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasures of the Palate'. This essay differs from the first-person, confessional format of Edax, the drunkard and Suspenserus – the latter in whom, like Clown, gluttony and kleptomania are combined – to represent the helpless, gluttonous consumer from the outside. Laughter emerges less at the indecorous and masculine meat-eating excesses of the immoderate male subject, as he is made to appear by the appalled, genteel female correspondent, than the intolerance of Hospita herself, as a parody of that ultra-refined political consumer, the vegetarian. The extremism of Hospita's dietetic stance becomes apparent in the self-righteous claim to her addressee, Mr Reflector, that: 'even vegetables we refuse to eat until they have undergone the operation of fire, in consideration of those numberless little living creatures which the glass helps us to detect in every fibre of the plant or root before it be dressed. On the same theory we boil our water, which is our only drink, before we suffer it to come to table. Our children are perfect little Pythagoreans: it would do you good to see them in their nursery, stuffing their dried fruits, figs, raisins, and milk, which is the only approach to animal food which is allowed' (I, 125-6). Hinted at by his inability to make a humanitarian contribution in 1824 to James Montgomery's campaigning collection, *The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend and Climbing-Boy's Album*, self-righteousness was a trait from which the preternaturally self-deprecating Lamb instinctively recoiled. Lamb's alternative statement on the topic of child sweeps is the markedly unsentimental Elia essay 'In Praise of Chimney-Sweepers'. It is significant, here, that the practical sustenance and palliative pleasure offered by food, in the form of the donated bowl of 'saloop' and the

¹⁵ 'My Reader My Fellow Labourer': *A Study of English Romantic Prose*, (Columbia, 1986). Nabholz sees this kind of reader as one 'primarily interested in the external identity and reputation of the artist, not in the imaginative values of the product before him'. The figure of 'G.D' (George Dyer) in 'Oxford in the Vacation' engineers, according to Nabholz, a radical 'redirection and transformation' of this reader-type by pointing the way to 'secular salvation, [and] the expansion of one's humanity that the imaginative response to the past through literature provides' (21, 27).

carnavalesque sweep's feast at Smithfield Market, on the annual, unruly occasion of St Bartholemew's Fair, takes the place of remote institutional reform as a more intimate or personal means to relieve human suffering.¹⁶

Two very different types of consumer are therefore comically opposed in the Hospita essay, the ultra-refined connoisseur and the vulgar gourmand, or glutton. Hospita's citation of 'Mr Malthus's Thoughts on the Ratio of Food to Population', to censure the greed of one man consuming the 'sustenance of many' (*Works*, I, 126), especially during the time of a chronically overburdened Poor Relief system,¹⁷ raises a serious and valid concern about individual responsibility and the economic requirement for moderation. However, the pervading fascination in Lamb's writing with figures of immoderate consumption aligns him with the vulgar gourmand, an affinity integral both to an essentially egalitarian love of the fool, and, according to Denise Gigante, to Lamb's rejection of the rarefied Romantic dietetics of the Lake-school. Gigante traces the impetus for Lamb's bluff 'gustatory' motif to his angry perception of an attitude of 'condescension', in Coleridge's repeated, mawkish reference to him as 'gentle-hearted' in the poem, 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison' (90-1). In the aftermath of Lamb's two exasperated letters to Coleridge lamenting his pitying portrayal in the poem, Lamb gleefully replies to a mischievous letter from his friend and colleague at the East India Company, Thomas Manning, inviting him to a dinner of snipe, with: '*Hills, woods, Lakes and mountains, to the Eternal Devil. I will eat snipes with thee, Thomas Manning*'.¹⁸ The snipe is a breed of wild bird found primarily in the Lake District, a surely non-coincidental fact that lends piquancy both to Manning's invitation and Lamb's acceptance of it, an invitation Lamb accepts, moreover, in place of the prior commitment he had made to spend his vacation in the Lakes with Wordsworth and Coleridge. As Gigante proposes, 'Lamb latches on to the digestible snipes to assert a more vigorous because carnivorous identity as an urban gastronome' (93).

This provoking, anti-Romantic relish for carnivorous feasting continues in Lamb, and at times entails a callousness of shocking or offensive intensity with which the author isn't normally associated. In the discourse of consumption, this is bad taste, or the taste-less. In the Elia essay, 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig', after a relatively innocuous mock-Chinese tale of the boy who discovered crackling by accidentally burning alive his father's stock of young pigs, the tone suddenly shifts towards bad taste, as Elia airily discusses the possibility that whipping a pig to death improves the flavour of the flesh, and whether such

¹⁶ For a more comprehensive reading of the conspicuous absence of pity and refusal to indulge in a highly topical humanitarian discourse in this essay, as Lamb's indirect, quintessentially metropolitan means of arguing for individual agency over state control, see Chapter Four of *Metropolitan Muse*.

¹⁷ J.D. Marshall, *The Old Poor Law, 1795-1834* (London and Basingstoke, 1977), 23. Allowing for the possible inaccuracy of contemporary statistics, Marshall affirms that 'between about 1784 and the years immediately following the termination of the French wars, expenditure on the poor rose between two and three times; from about two million pounds in 1784 to just short of six million in 1815.'

¹⁸ *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 3 vols (London, 1935), I, 247-8.

intense suffering by the pig can be justified on the grounds of a 'superadded pleasure upon the palate' (*Works*, II, 126). 'Yes' would appear to be the cold-hearted, consummate consumerist's answer, as Elia concludes with a culinary tip for the correct sauce to be served: 'a few bread crumbs [sic], done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage' (126). An even more concerted attempt at offensiveness occurs earlier in the essay. Enacting in the process a sort of linguistic gluttony, Elia indulges in periphrasis and hyperbole (much like he does in the descriptions of the poor relation and the Caledonian character), as the Romantic tenets of innocence and sensibility come under attack through a salivating, maniacally m-dashed account of the formation and consumption of crackling:

the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance—with the adhesive oleaginous—O call it not fat—but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it—the tender blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud—taken in the shoot—in the first innocence—the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food [...] How equably he twirleth round the string!—Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes—radiant jellies—shooting stars— (124).

The extreme, conspicuous *absence* of 'sensibility' here, in the heavily ironic association of the all-too-visceral image of the 'tender' young pig's eyes melting in the flames, with the preservation of childlike innocence and the evocation of an intensely sympathetic response, appears so pointedly and provokingly callous as to be explained only by satire. This satire, at the expense of contemporary notions of high literary 'taste', simultaneously celebrates the consumer culture which such a high-minded aesthetic implicitly disdains. Furthermore, because Elia is a far more rounded, sophisticated persona than the satirical, one-dimensional consumer-types, Hospita, Edax and the drunkard, this unexpected appearance of a pathological mind-set, that of a sadistically carnivorous gourmand, is all the more shocking. The shock-effect - an utterly appropriate tactic for unhinging assumed superiority - facilitates or enables the satire.

Lamb's salivating devourer of roast pig, accompanied by his 'great eater', Edax, and 'great drinker', the Drunkard, is seemingly designed to give maximum offense to the supporters of an early-nineteenth century campaign against flesh-eating, which was linked to another consumption-regulating body, the temperance movement (Gigante, 96). Lamb thus offends against both the 'natural' dietetics of Romantic aesthetics - Coleridge's sense of 'gaz[ing upon nature] till all doth seem / Less gross than bodily' (95) - and the competitive and acquisitive middle-class ideology of taste, embodied in the connoisseur. Shelley's famed dietary puritanism, in which flesh-eating and drinking anything but distilled water is a violation of the natural diet of humans, doubtless contributed to the archetype of the Romantic poet as a frail, consumptive being,

imaginatively re-conceiving the world but finding reality indigestible (96). In this light, the satire of Hospita's zealous, self-righteous vegetarianism - like Byron's earthy hurrah for carnivorous man and his shocking scene of cannibalism in Canto II of *Don Juan* - also opposes Shelleyan food politics and poetics.

Therefore, fittingly for a period in which the concept of the reader as consumer is first adumbrated, reading replaces eating for Lamb's attack on 'bad' consumers, modern-day stoics and epicureans alike who deny their natural appetites and politicise the innocent, egalitarian pleasures of eating and shopping. Hard, unfeeling, or *unpalatable* words are the appropriate weapons for Lamb against what he sees as a soft-minded, over-refined, fastidious type, or people overly concerned about what they ought or ought not to consume, or rather perhaps, what they are *seen* to consume. These improper consumers are deemed too squeamish to eat meat, so they are punished with offensive, inedible text. Conversely, in 'A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis', Lamb uses the term 'hard words' to *oppose* callousness and advocate sympathy or feeling, in commanding the reader to ignore the possible 'imposture' of counterfeit beggars and their purported 'imposition' upon an exploited public, and thus to '*give and ask no questions*' (*Works*, II, 120). Whether attacking blithe institutional callousness by invoking compassion, or a trend in over-refined sensibility by callously provoking both laughter and disgust, Lamb is a master at manipulating the reader's sympathies.

I conclude with a probably apocryphal but highly illuminating anecdote on Lamb by the later nineteenth-century American humourist, Charles Farrar Browne, writing under the pseudonym 'Artemus Ward'. Ward claims that: 'When Charles Lamb, in answer to the doting mother's question as to how he liked babies, replied, "b-b-boiled, madam, *boiled*" that mother loved him no more.'¹⁹ Like the doting mother's mistaken expectation of sentimentality from 'gentle-hearted Charles', the deliberately crass, provocative strand of Lamb's humour has been overlooked.²⁰ Markedly tasteless acts and gluttonous, grotesque figures of consumption, so neatly encapsulated in his purported boiled-babies riposte, comprise the brutal and socially revealing mainstay of Lamb's humour.

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¹⁹ 'A Biographical Sketch', in *The Complete Works of Artemus Ward* (New York, 1877), 25.

²⁰ Since Riehl's prognosis, in spite of the aforementioned chapter on Lamb in Denise Gigante's book on literature and taste and my own study of Elia and the *London Magazine*, the provocative element which I have here proposed, as part of Lamb's complex humour, has still not been fully explored.

Leigh Hunt in March 1812: The *Examiner*, The *Reflector* and 'A Day by the Fire'

John Strachan

~I~

On Sunday 8 March 1812, Leigh Hunt's radical weekly newspaper the *Examiner* carried an anonymous satirical squib, a 'Letter from --- to ---' in which a satirical version of the Prince Regent, writing to a satirical version of his brother the Duke of York, defends, even celebrates, his decision to maintain the Tory administration of Spencer Perceval in power and to disappoint the expectations of his former friends among the Whigs (Robert Waithman, I should say, was a radical linen-draper and City of London politician):

A new era's arriv'd though you'd hardly believe it
And all things, of course, must be new to receive it.
New villas, new fêtes (which ev'n Waithman attends)
New saddles, new helmets, and why not *new friends*?
I repeat it, 'New Friends' for I cannot describe
The delight I am in with this P-rc-v-l tribe.
Such capering! - Such vapouring! - Such rigour! - Such vigour!
North, South, East, and West, they have cut such a figure,
That soon they will bring the whole world round our ears,
And leave us no friends but Old Nick and Algiers.¹

The 'ANON.' responsible for these verses, it soon became common knowledge in London political circles, was the Irish poet and Whig satirist Thomas Moore. As Jane Moore writes, Moore had 'attempted to persuade his friend James Perry, editor of the Whig *Morning Chronicle* to publish it in his newspaper. Perry refused, possibly out of fear of prosecution'.² James Henry Leigh Hunt, the editor of the *Examiner*, had no such qualms and published the squib in his own journal. This was the first salvo in a campaign against the prince of March 1812, one of the most remarkable periods in the author's life, in which Hunt, Thomas Moore and Charles Lamb would participate, and which would eventually lead Hunt to the Surrey Gaol.

These were certainly interesting times politically, and the circumstances are well known among Romanticists. The prince's tergiversation caused fury

¹ *The Satires of Thomas Moore*, ed. Jane Moore, in *British Satire 1785-1840*, 5 vols, gen. ed. John Strachan (London, 2003), V, 61.

² *British Satire 1785-1840*, V, 57.

among his former friends. Since his newspaper's foundation in 1808, the editor of the *Examiner*, like many of the Whigs and radicals of the day, had clung to the pleasing thought that despite the renewed Tory hegemony after the collapse of the 1807 coalition, the 'Ministry of all the Talents', the Prince of Wales was still identified with the opposition's interest and would doubtless bring in his friends should the King die or become, once again, mentally incapacitated by the porphyria which had afflicted him in the 1780s. In 1811 the great moment seemed to have arrived. King George III finally lapsed into an insanity from which he never returned and his eldest son was pronounced Regent. However, in early 1812, when he finally became Regent 'without restriction' (that is, assumed full kingly powers), Prince George, to the horror of the Whigs, maintained in power the Tory government of the ill-fated, soon-to-be-assassinated, Prime Minister Spencer Perceval. Overnight the prince was transformed in liberal opinion from a friend of the people to an untrustworthy renegade and scornfully dismissed as a corpulent, drunken, womanising scoundrel.

Hunt's *Examiner* led the attack, most notably in printing (anonymously) the two most famous oppositionist satires on the subject. Moore's 'Letter from --- to ---' (reprinted thereafter as the 'Parody of a Celebrated Letter') was published, as we have seen, on 8 March 1812. On the following Sunday, 15 March, Hunt's paper contained another satirical poem on the subject of the prince's treachery, an *ad hominem* attack on the prince's moral character. It is probably well known to most of us, and it begins like this:

Io! Pæan! Io! sing
 To the finny people's King.
 Not a mightier whale than this
 In the vast Atlantic is;
 Not a fatter fish than he
 Flounders round the polar sea.
 See his blubber - at his gills
 What a world of drink he swills,
 From his trunk, as from a spout,
 Which next moment he pours out.
 Such his person - next declare,
 Muse, who his companions are.
 Every fish of generous kind
 Scuds aside, or slinks behind;
 But about his presence keep
 All the Monsters of the Deep;
 Mermaids, with their tails and singing
 His delighted fancy stinging;
 Crooked Dolphins, they surround him,

Dog-like Seals, they fawn around him.³

'ANON.' this time, of course, was Charles Lamb, and his verses, 'The Triumph of the Whale', were admired by those in political sympathy and by some less so ('I think them very witty, although very abominable',⁴ writes M. G. Lewis wryly in 1812). This is Lamb's finest hour as an occasional verse satirist. As Nicholas Mason writes, 'Lamb's poem is essentially an extended pun on George's official title, the Prince of Wales, along the way providing a detailed record of his vices and misdeeds'.⁵ The sharp-elbowed *Examiner* satirists Moore and Lamb targeted what they saw as the prince's treacherous tergiversation and, at the same time - particularly in Lamb's poem - mocked his physical characteristics, especially his huge girth, his boozing, and his proclivity for extra-marital liaisons with aristocratic mistresses.

A week after he had published Lamb's brilliant and lacerating verse satire, Leigh Hunt returned to the attack, this time making the same points in prose, in the famously outspoken leading article for Sunday 22 March, 'The Prince on St Patrick's Day'. This was a direct response to what Hunt saw as the royal toadies at the Tory *Morning Post*, who had afforded this 'corpulent gentleman of fifty' the unlikely description of an 'Adonis in loveliness' in its report of a St Patrick's Day dinner which the prince had attended and at which some present had hissed him for withdrawing his support for Catholic Emancipation. Hunt branded the philandering heir presumptive as a man devoid of principles, a keeper of low company and as someone unfit to govern, alongside rather more in the same mordant vein. This 'delightful, blissful, wise, pleasurable, honourable, virtuous, true, and immortal prince' (the *Post*'s fawning words) was actually nothing of the kind: '[A] violator of his word, a libertine, over head and ears in debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity!'⁶ 'This article, no doubt', wrote Hunt in his *Autobiography* of 1850, 'was very bitter and contemptuous; therefore, in the legal sense of the term, very libellous; the more so, inasmuch as it was very true'.⁷

Satire such as Lamb and Moore's, which used a measure of obliquity, however vestigial, was notoriously difficult to prosecute in the late Georgian period (as the three Regency-period trials of William Hone demonstrate), but the kind of free speaking evident in 'The Prince on St Patrick's Day' was not, and swiftly led to prosecution. Hunt and his brother John, the publisher of the *Examiner*, were fined £500 each and imprisoned for seditious libel for two years (when offered remission of sentences on condition of future silence on the

³ *British Satire 1785-1840*, I, 132.

⁴ Quoted in Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* (London, 1930), 70.

⁵ *British Satire 1785-1840*, I, 130.

⁶ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, 6 vols, gen. eds Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle-Sinatra (London, 2003), I, 221.

⁷ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, 3 vols (London, 1850), I, 280.

subject both refused, and Leigh Hunt continued to edit the journal from gaol).

The campaign of March 1812 which led Hunt to Horsemonger Lane was the culmination of events which had begun with the founding of the *Examiner*, that controversial and successful radical newspaper which had first appeared in January 1808. Though the journal was to linger on until the early 1880s, the *Examiner's* first two decades, when it became an important voice of opposition to a series of Tory ministries, were by far its most notable. The paper systematically espoused a series of reformist causes, attacking corruption in high places, the abuses of the military and the pitiless cruelties of the judicial system, the evils of slavery, and the penal laws imposed upon Roman Catholics. Hunt contributed editorials, much of the paper's journalism, theatrical notices and poetry (both satirical and non-satirical), and the author - a remarkable literary talent spotter - also patronised and published P. B. Shelley, John Keats and others in the pages of the *Examiner*, as well as printing important writings by Lamb and William Hazlitt. Hunt wrote that his aim in the *Examiner* was 'to gain a difficult reputation - that of the honest Editor of a Journal'.⁸ The paper, though reformist, was independent-minded and initially described itself as above party factionalism. However, from early on in Hunt's tenure it began to assume a staunch anti-Tory position (though it also occasionally criticised the Whigs) and it became closely associated with the Radical interest; it 'began with being of no party, but Reform soon gave it one'⁹ as Hunt wrote in his *Autobiography*. And it was Reform, and the Prince Regent's shattering blow of that cause which led to the freedom of the press heroics of 1812, in which Hunt, Moore - and Charles Lamb - took important parts.

~ II ~

Though Hunt's most famous article of the Romantic period was the 'bitter and contemptuous' attack on the Prince Regent, his prose was simultaneously capable of a different temper. Indeed, Hunt's finest essay in the *Reflector*, 'A Day by the Fire', was published the very day after 'The Prince on St Patrick's Day', on Monday 23 March 1812. Alongside the polemical brio, moral fury and wit of the political prose is the polished ease and sociability of his familiar essays, a genre in which Hunt wrote for nearly fifty years from the 1810s onwards. As Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox point out, 'A Day by the Fire' 'gives one a sense of the subjective, familiar style Hunt would use in the *Indicator* and that Lamb would adapt in his 'Elia' essays'.¹⁰ The essay is a founding document in the development of Hunt's familiar style; as well as a hugely significant period in Hunt's political life, March 1812 was also a pivotal moment in the development of his familiar essay.

Though the *Examiner* itself contains work in the 'conversational manner',

⁸ *Leigh Hunt's Political and Occasional Essays*, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York, 1962), 83.

⁹ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, I, 214.

¹⁰ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, I, 222.

most significantly the 'Round Table' essays co-written with William Hazlitt from 1815-16, it was in the *Reflector* that Hunt first fully developed this style, in which he cultivates an air of familiarity and friendship with his 'benevolent reader' (a phrase he first used in 'A Day by the Fire'), often with the air of conversation about his words, as if the reader was sitting by him at the kitchen hearth or in his book-lined study. Here bonds of 'sociality', intimacy, and friendship are assumed between the author and his audience. Indeed, the essay begins by explicitly raising that concept of 'sociality', in Hunt's opening rebuke of the false companionship of the cat, an animal frequently lambasted in Hunt's prose for its delight in tormenting mice, its cupboard love and the meretriciousness of its affections: 'I am one of those that delight in a fireside, and can enjoy it without even the help of a cat or a tea-kettle. To cats, indeed, I have an aversion, as animals that only affect a sociality, without caring a jot for any thing but their own luxury; and my tea-kettle - I frankly confess - has long been displaced, or rather dismissed, by a bronze-coloured and graceful urn; though, between ourselves, I am not sure that I have gained any thing by the exchange.'¹¹

The *Reflector*, the first of a number of memorable, if generally short-lived, late Georgian literary magazines which Hunt edited, famously the *Indicator* (1819-21), but also including the diverting *Companion* (1828), the *Tatler* (1830-2) and *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* (1834-5), can be said to be fashioned by this sociality. Hunt's the *Reflector*, indeed, had something of the air of a school magazine about it, with the Christ's Hospital editor recruiting several fellow alumni as contributors: Charles Lamb, Thomas Barnes (later a longstanding editor of the *Times*), and the poet, radical and antiquarian George Dyer among them. Indeed, in the first number of the *Reflector*, Hunt writes that the journal was to be conducted by 'a set of Persons, educated in one School, and valuable to each other for their friendship and congenial tastes'.¹²

'A Day by the Fire', an epochal work in terms of Hunt's familiar essay, is a meditation on 'the raptures of in-door sociality'. Hunt's aim in such writing, as he put it as early as his December 1807 farewell to *The News*, was to 'express my most familiar thoughts', and to a particular readership, namely 'men of a habitual sociality'.¹³ Certainly the implied reader of 'A Day by the Fire' is one with whom Hunt shares 'friendship and congenial tastes', his 'benevolent reader'. Indeed, the air of companionability is extended to the very fire of the hearth itself. 'I am one of those that delight in a fireside', the *Reflector* piece begins, as the essayist imagines himself 'as he enters the breakfast-room, sees his old companion glowing through the bars - the life of the apartment - and wanting only his friendly hand to be lightened a little, and enabled to shoot up into dancing brilliancy' ('A Day by the Fire', 224). One is reminded of the 'companionable form' of the 'low-burnt fire' in Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight' (1798), which, that poet maintained, possessed 'sympathies with me who live'.

¹¹ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, I, 222. Further references to 'A Day by the Fire' are cited parenthetically in the text.

¹² *The Reflector*, I (October 1810-March 1811), ii.

¹³ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, I, 21.

Just as contemplation of the 'thin blue flame' prompts Coleridge to imaginative reverie, so, staring at the blaze, Hunt's imagination also becomes charged with a fiery incandescence: 'for imagination's sake [...] the fancy roams [and] the fairies of the fireside, the salamanders, lob-lie-by-the-fires, lars, lemures, larvæ, come flitting between the fancy's eyes, and the dying coals' ('A Day by the Fire', 238).

These visions, says Hunt, would be 'incomprehensible to minds clogged with every-day earthliness'. The essayist is here transported into an imaginative state which is, to borrow another phrase of Coleridge's, this time from 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison' (1797), 'less gross than bodily'. 'Idle fancies these' might seem to some, Hunt admits, but to him - in a rather Wordsworthian litotes - they are 'not useless', 'either as an exercise of the invention, or even as adding consciousness to the range and destiny of the soul' ('A Day by the Fire', 239). The fire is to Hunt here what the nightingale was to John Keats or laudanum to Thomas De Quincey. The fancies of the flames light up both imagination and spirit:

They will occupy us too, and steal us away from ourselves, when other recollections fail us or grow painful, - when friends are found selfish, or better friends can but commiserate, or when the world has nothing in it to compare with what we have missed out of it. They may even lead us to higher and more solemn meditation, till we work up our way beyond the clinging and heavy atmosphere of this earthly sojourn, and look abroad upon the light that knows neither blemish nor bound. ('A Day by the Fire', 239)

In Hunt's poetical prose, the everyday action of 'poking the fire' can provoke a 'sudden, empyreal enthusiasm':

Think, benevolent Reader, - think of the pride and pleasure of having in your hand that awful, but at the same time artless, weapon, a poker, - of putting it into the proper bar, gently levering up the coals, and seeing the instant and bustling flame above! To what can I compare that moment? that sudden, empyreal enthusiasm? that fiery expression of vivification? ('A Day by the Fire', 223)

Hunt's fiery metaphors anticipate the volcanic imaginative metaphors of Byron and, indeed the Promethean visions of both Percy and Mary Shelley. From the hearth flies up a spark of creative life: 'that fiery expression of vivification'.

When Charles Lamb, writing in the *London Magazine* in 1823 in support of Leigh Hunt, in his Elian epistle to Robert Southey, summoned high praise for the author, he did not defend Hunt's most famous and notorious poem: he specifically writes 'in spite of *Rimini*'. 'Nonetheless', declares Lamb, 'I must look upon its author as a man of taste and a poet'.¹⁴ To my mind, Lamb's praise

¹⁴ *London Magazine*, 8 (October 1823), 404.

directly evokes the *Reflector's* essay of March 1812. Hunt, says Elia was 'one of the most cordial-minded men I ever knew and matchless as a fireside companion'.¹⁵ Companionship and sociability were important parts of his life and his art, and his poetry and prose were possessed of both imaginative and political resonance. 'A Day at the Fire' explicitly links 'habitual sociality' with the British liberties which Hunt saw as being under threat from early nineteenth-century Toryism in its twofold salute to what Hunt calls, in a brilliant phrase in that essay, 'our blazing fire and our freedom of speech' ('A Day by the Fire', 227). This is an early manifestation of the ideological resonance of Hunt's concept of sociality, something which has been extensively discussed by recent critics of the author's post-Napoleonic work, such as Nicholas Roe and Jeffrey Cox. To Roe, for instance, the author's sociality is both poetically and politically charged, both repudiating the lake poets' unhealthy solipsism and the lack of compassion and fellow feeling evident among the governing party of the time: 'a healthy antidote to Wordsworth's rural solitude, and - by implication - to the Tory politics Wordsworth had so emphatically announced'.¹⁶

~ III ~

The *Reflector*, alongside its literary and political essays, also included the first and second important poems of Hunt's maturity, 'Politics and Poetics' and the earliest version of his satirico-didactic poem *The Feast of the Poets* (both 1811). 'Politics and Poetics', or as its subtitle has it, 'the desperate situation of a journalist unhappily smitten with the love of rhyme' is an autobiographical meditation upon poetry's capacity to offer a refuge from the pressing worlds of politics and journalism. It makes explicit reference to the three unsuccessful prosecutions which the *Examiner* had already faced in its first few years, to the threat of a fourth, and to the predatorial lawyers and shades of the prison house which had begun to close around Hunt:

behind me stands
Pale, peevish, periwigg'd, with itching hands,
A goblin, double-tailed, and cloak'd in black,
Who while I'm gravely thinking, bites my back.
Around his head flits many a harpy shape
With jaws of parchment and long hairs of tape,
Threat'ning to pounce, and turn whate'er I write,
With their own venom, into foul despoight.
Let me but name the court, they swear and curse,
And din me with hard names; and what is worse,
'Tis now three times that I have miss'd my purse.¹⁷

¹⁵ *London Magazine*, 8 (October 1823), 404.

¹⁶ Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford, 1997), 118.

¹⁷ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, V, 11.

When the poem was reprinted in 1815 after Hunt's release from gaol, the poet added a note which confirmed this as a prophecy of prison: these lines 'involve [...] the anticipation of an event in the writer's life, which afterwards took place, and which he can look back upon thank Heaven, without blushing for the manner in which he anticipated it'.¹⁸

'Politics and Poetics' is also a verse satire, offering antipathetic handling of several contemporary writers who were explicitly associated with Tory party politics: George Canning, William Gifford, even Walter Scott. But its most remarkable aspect is its visionary account of poetical reverie:

Away, ye clouds! - dull politics, give place!
Off, cares, and wants, and threats, and all the race
Of foes to freedom, and to laurelled leisure!
To day is for the Muse — and dancing Pleasure!
Oh for a seat in some poetic nook.
Just hid with trees, and sparkling with a brook.
Where through the quivering boughs the sun-beams shoot
Their arrowy diamonds upon flower and fruit.
While stealing airs come fuming o'er the stream.
And lull the fancy to a waking dream!¹⁹

One might perhaps suggest an anticipation of Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' in the last line here. Either way, Hunt, who saw 'the fairies of the fireside' dancing in the flames in his 'A Day by the Fire', sees a similar visionary strangeness when he is lost in *poetic reverie* in 'Politics and Poetics':

Anon strange music breathes; - the fairies show
Their pranksome crowd; and in grave order go
Beside the water, singing, small and clear,
New harmonies unknown to mortal ear.
Caught upon moonlight nights from some nigh-wand'ring sphere,
I turn to thee, and listen with fix'd eyes.
And feel my spirits mount on winged extasies.²⁰

Just as the poet is lost to the realms of gold, he, like Keats in his great 'Ode' is dragged back to earth, in this case by his political enemies. 'My foes return', writes Hunt, and 'And lo, My Bower of Bliss is turn'd into a jail!'

Though it contained some excellent poetry and prose by Hunt (and the renowned essays by Lamb which Felicity James discusses so insightfully in her essay in this issue), the *Reflector*, which was published quarterly and was expensive, costing six shillings (compared to the *Examiner's* sixpence), did not last for long. 'It was rising in sale in every quarter', wrote Hunt in his

¹⁸ Leigh Hunt, *The Feast of the Poets; with Other Pieces in Verse* (London, 1815), 163.

¹⁹ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, V, 12.

²⁰ *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, V, 13.

Autobiography, 'when it stopped at the close of the fourth number for want of funds [...] the radical reformers in those days [being] not sufficiently rich or numerous to support such a publication'.²¹ However, though Leigh Hunt's first venture at a literary magazine had quickly stalled, its editor was right in believing that there was an appetite for such periodicals, and I would argue that Hunt's *Reflector* played an important role in the rise of the literary magazine. Soon after Hunt's journal's demise, in 1814, the hard-headed publisher Henry Colburn (who certainly did not share Hunt's self-declared 'ignorance of business') established the *New Monthly Magazine*, which was to develop into the most successful literary miscellany of the Romantic period, its contributors including Leigh Hunt himself (sometimes under the alias 'Harry Honeycomb'), sharing the *Reflector's* recipe of poetry, tale and essay.

In 1819, Hunt tried his hand once again, in perhaps the most important of his Romantic-era magazines, the weekly *Indicator* (1819-21), and it is worth, in conclusion, drawing a thematic parallel between this periodical and the *Reflector*. The *Indicator* featured the editor's familiar essays, original poetry by the same and by some of his gifted acquaintance (including the earliest version of Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'), and translations, frequently by Hunt himself, from foreign poetry. The journal, which was, in the main, literary and non-political ('a retreat from public cares' its editor called it), was well received; Lamb said of it in his sonnet 'To my Friend the Indicator': 'Wit, poet, prose-man, party-man, translator - / H-, your best title yet is INDICATOR'.²²

William Hazlitt particularly admired the *Indicator's* familiar essays, which developed the manner of the *Reflector*, and declared that their style reflected the renowned conversationalist himself in full flow: 'The reader may, if he pleases, get a very good idea of L. H-'s conversation from a very agreeable paper he has lately published, called the *Indicator*'.²³ Keats also admired Hunt's prose here. In his *Autobiography*, Hunt recalled that the poet's favourite *Indicator* paper was 'A "Now"', Descriptive of a Hot Day', an essay published in June 1820 in which every sentence in the first few pages begins with that adverb:

Now the mower begins to make his sweeping cuts more slowly, and resorts oftener to the beer. Now the carter sleeps a-top of his load of hay [...] looking out with eyes winking under his shading hat, and with a hitch upward of one side of his mouth. Now the little girl at her grandmother's cottage-door watches the coaches that go by, with her hand held up over her sunny forehead. Now labourers look well resting in their white shirts at the doors of rural alehouses. Now an elm is fine there, with a seat under it; and horses drink out of the trough, stretching their yearning necks with loosened collars [...] Now cattle stand in water, and ducks are envied [...] Now the bee, as he hums along, seems to be talking heavily of the heat. [...] Now a

²¹ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, I, 252.

²² *The Indicator* (27 September 1820), 402.

²³ *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London, 1930-4), XII, 39.

green lane [...] thickset with hedge-row elms, and having the noise of a brook 'rumbling in pebble-stone', is one of the pleasantest things in the world.²⁴

It is perhaps small wonder that the author of 'To Autumn' should enjoy Hunt's well-crafted pastoral (Hunt's familiar style might give the impression of casual conversation or extemporised rhapsody, but his prose was actually carefully fashioned). The essay, with its foray into an English Eden, well captures the nostalgia so frequently evident in Hunt's prose - and Charles Lamb's it might be added - for a lost golden age.

The notion of paradise, lost in political terms perhaps, but regained in such seemingly small but imaginatively potent events as looking at English pastoral scenes, walking in the countryside, or sitting by the fire, is a frequent concern in Leigh Hunt's prose. In his 1833 essay 'A Year of Honey-Moons', he writes of the 'paradisiacal scenes which are within the power of almost every one to enjoy who can walk',²⁵ and twenty years earlier, in the *Reflector*, in 'A Day by the Fire', he had described the 'perfect paradise' to be had from simply contemplating a roaring fire. I'll conclude with that passage:

The thought roves about into a hundred abstractions, some of them suggested by the fire, - some of them suggested by that suggestion, - some of them arising from the general sensation of comfort and composure, contrasted with whatever the world affords of evil, or dignified by high wrought meditation on whatsoever gives hope to benevolence and inspiration to wisdom. The philosopher at such moments plans his Utopian schemes, and dreams of happy certainties which he cannot prove; - the lover, happier and more certain, fancies his mistress with him, unobserved and confiding, his arm round her waist, her head upon his shoulder, and earth and heaven contained in that sweet possession; - the Poet, thoughtful as the one, and ardent as the other, springs off at once above the world, treads every turn of the harmonious spheres, darts up with gleaming-wings through the sunshine of a thousand systems, and stops not till he has found a perfect paradise, whose fields are of young roses, and whose air is music, - whose waters are the liquid diamond, - whose light is as radiance through chrystal, - whose dwellings are laurel bowers, - whose language is poetry, - whose inhabitants are congenial souls, - and to enter the very verge of whose atmosphere strikes beauty on the face, and felicity on the heart.
(*'A Day by the Fire'*, 232-3)

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²⁴ *The Indicator*, (28 June 1820), 300.

²⁵ *The Court Magazine*, II (June 1833), 308.

Lamb's *John Woodvil*: A Shakespearean Medley

Hilary Newman

Charles Lamb was engaged in writing his one and only tragic drama, *John Woodvil*, from August 1798 to May 1799.¹ It was published by Lamb, who lost money on it, in January 1802. It was not commercially produced on the stage. This is surprising when we consider that Lamb should have been in a good position to produce a successful play since it followed a long association with the theatre and actors, many of whom were friends. He claimed to have been reading Shakespeare since he was six-years-old and when he saw his first Shakespeare play at the age of sixteen, it made a lasting impression. His engagement with Shakespeare's plays grew as he matured. He kept a scrapbook of chosen quotations from the playwright and listed unusual words. He and Mary frequently read the plays together at home, as well as attending performances at Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres. Being so steeped in Shakespeare, it is unsurprising that when he came to write *John Woodvil*, he quite consciously imitated the Warwickshire bard, as he freely admitted: 'I go upon the model of Shakspeare in my play, and endeavour after a colloquial ease and spirit something like him.'²

Lamb himself made it clear that he would not be writing a tragic drama according to the observations of Aristotle on classical tragedy, but would be basing it on Shakespeare's plays which had much more flexible ingredients. Lamb explained in a letter to Robert Southey on 28 November 1798, 'My tragedy will be a medley.'³ Thus Lamb, like Shakespeare, included a wide variety of different elements in his tragedy *John Woodvil*. This short essay will examine these with particular reference to the plot devices and characterisation that Lamb borrowed from two of Shakespeare's plays, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*.

John Woodvil has five acts and is set 'soon after the Restoration' of Charles II in 1660. The action of the play occurs in England and is divided between the two locations of Woodvil Hall in Devon and Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire. Thus it is set in a real time and at real places. The play opens with a scene among the sort of 'low' characters that Shakespeare delighted in creating in some of his plays. The servants of Woodvil Hall are drunk and disorderly. The inebriated Daniel is singing a song about the restoration of Charles II as the play opens. There are several drinking scenes (which feature

¹ *John Woodvil* has been considered as Charles Lamb's first play, but Stephen Burley has made a case for 'A opera without title, in three acts, by Charles Lamb' being written before. See Stephen Burley, 'Lamb's First Play: An Editorial Enigma' in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 142 (2008), 48-60.

² *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas (New York, 1903), V, 352.

³ Lucas, *Works*, V, 135.

characters from different social classes), and several of them are reminiscent of the subplot and characters of *Twelfth Night*. The quick-witted servant Daniel exercises his wit on the slow-witted Martin, just as Sir Toby Belch makes Sir Andrew Aguecheek his dupe. The steward of Woodvil Hall, Mr Sandford, breaks up the servants' noisy drunken revelry as Malvolio disperses the inebriated merry-makers at Olivia's house in *Twelfth Night*. Sandford reproaches them with:

You well-fed and unprofitable grooms,
Maintained for state, not use;
You lazy feasters at another's cost,
That eat like maggots into an estate,
And do as little work,
Being indeed but foul excrescences,
And no just parts in a well-ordered family.⁴

Malvolio, however, is dressing down his social superiors, but his reproaches are equally direct: 'My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an ale-house of my lady's house that you squeak out your cosiers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?' (*Twelfth Night*, II, iii, ll.89-93) Unlike Malvolio, though, Mr Sandford has no personal ambitions. This makes him more of a stock character: 'the good steward'. But in both passages the images of drinking and noise function as a way of representing the over-turning of social order. These are important to the broader themes of both plays. As *John Woodvil* is a tragedy, the drinking to excess is constantly associated with the outlawed Sir Walter Woodvil and the danger that someone in their cups will betray his whereabouts. So it is not merely an amusing temporary breakdown in social order that will be righted at the end of the play as it is in the romantic comedy of *Twelfth Night*. The drunken scenes in *John Woodvil* also prepare the audience for the eponymous hero of Lamb's play revealing the secret location of his father and brother in his drunkenness. This leads directly to Sir Walter's death.

The servants at Woodvil Hall are, overall, loyal to the newly restored Charles II and prefer the management of the estate by John rather than his father. But the drunkenness of the servants symbolises a breakdown in order which appears to make even these menials uneasy. Daniel observes: 'I hope there is none in this company would be mean enough to betray [Sir Walter]' (136). As Sandford compels the servants to disperse, there is a stage direction that introduces the only female character in the play: 'Enter Margaret, as in a fright, pursued by a Gentleman, who, seeing Sandford, retires muttering a curse' (137). Although Sandford tries to excuse John's behaviour as being led astray by the courtiers, Margaret will not tolerate it and determines to leave Woodvil Hall and search out Sir Walter and Simon Woodvil in the forest of Sherwood. Margaret has long been recognised as a most attractive character and Hazlitt

⁴ Lucas, *Works*, V, 136.

went as far as to comment that 'the character of his heroine Margaret is perhaps the finest and most genuine female character after Shakespeare'.⁵ In an echo of *As You Like It*, where the father of Orlando and Oliver is called Sir Rowland De Boys, Margaret's father is also a Sir Rowland.

Like Shakespeare's Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Margaret decides to disguise herself as a man so that she can make her journey more safely. Rosalind has been banished from the court of her usurping uncle, Duke Frederick. By contrast, Margaret goes into voluntary exile, thus demonstrating that she can anticipate events and act on her own initiative. Sandford provides Margaret with the garments of a deceased younger son of the Woodvil family. Both Rosalind and Margaret expect to find a better life elsewhere. In Lamb's Shakespearean medley, the eponymous hero's view of Margaret's flight is reminiscent of Duke Orsino's discussion about marriage with Viola, who is disguised as a boy. In *Twelfth Night* the Duke gives the following advice to 'Cesario':

Let still the woman take
An elder than herself; so wears she to him:
For boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, soon lost and worn
Than women's are.
Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affections cannot hold the bent:
For women are as roses, whose fair flower
Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour. (II, iv, ll.36-39)

John Woodvil cynically expresses the same sort of attitude towards his former favourite Margaret. However, when questioned about his attitude towards Margaret and her flight from Woodvil Hall, John expresses himself differently. To his supposed friend, Lovel, John admits: 'Spite of my levity, with tears I confess it, she was a lady of most confirmed honour, of an unmatched spirit, and determinate in all virtuous resolutions; not hasty to anticipate an affront, nor slow to feel, where just provocation was given.' (I, i, 143) It is necessary for John to express and reveal this viewpoint. If he did not we would not think that he deserved Margaret. She will prove herself to resemble Viola/Cesario's imaginary sister who sat 'like Patience on a monument'. However, she will not die, but live to return and claim her penitent lover's love. In rather a bewildering change John Woodvil now turns away from the subject of Margaret and his love. In blank verse, he now expresses his political ambitions. They are a serious replay of the ambitions of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. He is determined 'to govern' and not 'to be govern'd'. However, not much is made of this; John soliloquises quite frequently, but is rarely shown in action.

⁵ Lucas, *Works*, V, 367.

It may seem strange that when Lamb set out to write a tragedy, it contained so many echoes of Shakespearean comedies. There are further echoes of *As You Like It* in *John Woodvil*. In Shakespeare's play, Duke Senior and his followers are outlaws. In Lamb's play, Sir Walter's political views have forced him to seek sanctuary in Sherwood Forest. Presumably he was a supporter of Oliver Cromwell's government and opposed to the newly restored Charles II. Both plays involve two brothers: Orlando and Oliver in *As You Like It* and John and Simon in *John Woodvil*. It is interesting that in the Arden edition of *As You Like It*, the editor Agnes Latham quotes Peter Alexander as saying that the Duke 'introduces a Sherwood Forest note of independence and natural justice that protects, as it were, the pastoral peace of the shepherds.' (lxix)

The scene moves to Sherwood Forest to the outlawed Sir Walter Woodvil and his younger son, Simon. Their lives are very different from those now lived at Woodvil Hall and they also lack the political ambitions of the eponymous hero. Sir Walter quaintly describes how they live: 'How quietly we live here, / Unread in the world's business, / And take no note of all its slippery changes.' (II, ii, 148) In response to Margaret's question, 'What sport do you use in the forest?' Simon replies at length in an idyllic passage:

Not many; some few, as thus: -
 To see the sun to bed, and to arise,
 Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes,
 Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him.
 With all his fires and travelling glories round him.
 Sometimes the moon on soft night clouds to rest,
 Like beauty nestling in a young man's breast,
 And all the winking stars, her handmaids, keep
 Admiring silence, while those lovers sleep.
 Sometimes outstretcht, in very idleness,
 Nought doing, saying little, thinking less,
 To view the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
 Go eddying round; and small birds, how they fare,
 When mother Autumn fills their beaks with corn,
 Filch'd from the careless Amalthea's horn;
 And how the woods, berries and worms provide
 Without their pains, when earth has nought beside
 To answer their small wants. (II, ii, 153)

These speeches are again to be paralleled by a speech by the Duke Senior in *As You Like It*. The Duke is reflecting among his companions about their lives in the Forest of Arden:

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
 Hath not old custom made the life more sweet
 Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
 More free from peril than the envious court?

Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
 The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
 Which when it bites and blows upon my body
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say;
 'This is no flattery. These are counsellors
 That feelingly persuade me what I am. (II, I, II.1-11)

Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines are successfully disguised. They reveal their true identities only when they wish to. By contrast, Margaret's disguise is seen through straightaway by Sir Walter and his son Simon. Exposed, Margaret asks, and is granted, 'Free liberty of Sherwood, / And leave to take her lot with you in the forest' (II, ii, 151). Sir Walter advises Simon and Margaret to go and seek their fortunes elsewhere and in a life apart from his. He compares himself and them to 'Green clinging tendrils round a trunk decay'd / Which needs must bring on your timeless decay' (151). Orlando in *As You Like It* expressed himself in exactly the same sort of imagery. When the faithful old retainer Adam gave Orlando his savings and asked to accompany him into exile, Orlando replied: 'But, poor old man, thou prun'st a rotten tree, / That cannot so much as a blossom yield / In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry.' (II, iii, II. 63-65) Lamb's play concludes more like one of Shakespeare's romantic comedies than a tragedy. John and Margaret go to church to pray and soon, the reader guesses, they will return to this church to exchange their wedding vows. As Nevill Coghill writes: 'Marriage is an image of happiness that ends [Shakespeare's] comedies almost invariably, as death ends a tragedy.'⁶ The play even ends with what could be viewed as an in-joke: John's native village is St Mary Ottery, 'in the sweet shire of Devon'. This was Samuel Taylor Coleridge's native village.

This was the only tragedy that Lamb wrote. F.V. Morley suggests that after the play's failure, Lamb gave up seriousness in writing, going on to produce three farces and album-verses.⁷ A modern critic, however, puts this change down to the fact that farce was 'potentially more marketable to a London audience seeking escape in troubled times.'⁸ It does seem to me that Charles Lamb temperament was better suited to lighter productions, despite his great love for Shakespearean tragedy and those of other Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. In conclusion, Charles Lamb's *John Woodvil* is a medley of echoes from *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*.

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⁶ Nevill Coghill, 'Comic Form in *Measure for Measure*, *Shakespeare Survey*, 8 (1955), 8.

⁷ F.V. Morley, *Lamb Before Elia* (London, 1932), 233.

⁸ Susan Tyler Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb Lunacy and Murder in Literary London* (London, 2005), 144.

Reviews

DAVID SIMPSON, *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). £50 hardback. 978 0 521 89877 5

This intelligent, erudite and lyrical monograph is the third extensive study dedicated to Wordsworth by David Simpson in the course of a critical career that has been both influential and defining for Wordsworthian and Romantic studies in their broadest terms. Despite a somewhat chagrined apology for writing yet another book on Wordsworth, this new work is a remarkable synthesis of dynamics inherent in his earlier *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real* (1982) and *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination* (1987). The former demonstrated Simpson as a highly competent analyst of the proximities of Lake School Romanticism with High German aesthetics, united by theoretical questions of mimesis, realism and politics. The latter illustrated remarkably tenacious close textual and political readings of Wordsworth's poetry of social injustice. A stalwart of Left criticism, Simpson's approach has always been carefully differentiated from the central tenets of the New Historicism within Romantic studies. For Simpson, 'displacement,' rather than being a *mauvaise foi* aesthetic strategy for political evasion, is approached instead as a tool for illuminating narrative tensions; tensions which might be seen as inherent in poetry that endeavoured to explore the limits of art's embodiments of inequality and social transformation.

Simpson sites his new study in the structuring political dynamics of the aftermath of such seismic events as the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the 9/11 attacks on New York. The writings of Karl Marx are combined with Jacques Derrida's response to the neo-Liberal triumph in the fall of communism in his *Spectres of Marx* (1993), in addition to Guy Debord's critique of commodification in *Society of the Spectacle* (1967). These form the study's core genealogy of political theory. Similarly the author deploys a host of post-Marxist thinkers to form subtle parallels to enduring questions posed by Wordsworthian poetics, with a confidence that is at times breathtaking (if not disorientating). For Simpson, Wordsworth's manifold critiques of capitalist exchange, commodity reification, and the rendering of the human subject as an automaton, place him as a precursor (albeit an enigmatic one) to much later materialist political philosophy. The dominant motif of this work is the 'spectre', which can be used to bring political, poetical, psychological and metaphysical considerations into relationship. Simpson draws upon Derrida's fecund term 'Hauntology'. This he uses to interpret Marx's notions of capitalist modernity. Indeed, he sees in Wordsworth a prophetic resistance to the rise of modern capitalist alienation. Such ideological confrontation is to be found in his figures of life-in-death, his ambivalence to the 'idolatrours' currents in anthropomorphism, the sometimes

necessary dehumanising representations of the human, and the 'spectrality' of his representations of circulation and exchange. At times the reader might feel that the book's somewhat cumbrous title betrays the struggle between its capacious critical ambitions and the difficulty of framing these under one discreet category. They might indeed feel that a title like *Spectres of Wordsworth* could come closer to the central aesthetic and theoretical heart of Simpson's original undertaking. As he observes, Wordsworth comes to see his spectres in a far more benign light than Marx or Derrida, often welcoming them as ancestral and originary friends rather than just harbingers of doom.

Simpson's interest in Wordsworth's radical and idiosyncratic ontology is shared with Paul Fry, although Simpson tenaciously refuses to divorce metaphysical and ideological questions. His attunement to the curious perspicacity of Wordsworth's penetrative ethical questioning is reminiscent of David Bromwich's accounts of Wordsworth's deep and at times darkly tender meditations. Simpson is also placed in close proximity to Simon Jarvis's recent philosophical readings by their shared sensitivity to Wordsworth's unravelling of the functioning of ideology epitomised by his approach to reification, and his potential alignment with prominent critics of late capitalism.

Chapter 1 continues strands of Simpson's earlier explorations of Wordsworth's attitudes to sympathy, and the limits of its ethical imperatives. He begins by examining Wordsworth's encounter in Book X of *The Prelude* with a starving girl leading a heifer. Simpson demonstrates how the verse seems, initially, merely to use the girl's suffering for the purposes of sentimental reformism and political utopianism. Yet in Simpson's reading, Wordsworth critiques these aspirations where they traduce deeper political and ontological complexities in social relationships. By situating Wordsworth within the nexus of civic humanist and sentimental traditions, Simpson points to the unique difficulty of categorising many of his canonical works, which directly address charitable impulses. Wordsworth refuses to puncture the uncomfortable sense of distance and dissimilitude between donor and recipient in such encounters. In contrast to Smithian theories of imaginative sympathy, Wordsworthian interlocutors fail to manifest an 'appropriate' display of feeling. These characters suggest that no easy sense of self-identification is possible between spectator and sufferer. Moving to a close reading of *The Ruined Cottage* and the spiritual economics of 'The Pedlar', Simpson sees a tensions between such emotional self-sufficiency, and the fear that emotive response becomes a mere mechanical reflex. Simpson's Wordsworth sees the role of the poet as one who mediates social alienation through poetry. Such literature exposes us to extreme situations of penury, yet its consciously detached status as meditation can render such emotional charge bearable for the reader.

A sense of historical urgency informs Simpson's analogy between Wordsworth's figures of homelessness and the twentieth-century writings of diaspora by a variety of modern theoreticians. The second chapter of his book is orientated around the controversial and oft discussed 'Old Cumberland Beggar.' His approach to Wordsworth's peripatetic poetry reveals a far edgier sentiment

than the detached tourism concocted by various influential readings. Simpson's sensitivity to Wordsworth's ontologically rigorous attitude towards the beggar replaces the New Historicist suspicion that such characters exist outside history. Instead Simpson suggests that Wordsworth is reminding his reader of avenues of historical thought and feeling which remain unexhausted. Indeed, we might see in this something of a return to the phenomenological heritage in Wordsworthian studies inculcated by Geoffrey Hartman. Simpson historicises the beggar's 'dance of death' in relation both to Enlightenment mechanical materialism, and to contemporary questions of stem-cell research. Refusing to lose sight of questions of political economy, Simpson disturbs a neat binary between the naturalised beggar and the Benthamite mechanisation of workhouse labour, as his repetitious rounds and the habitual practice of charity can come to look like the functions of a machine. Money becomes a problem for Wordsworth where it threatens to impinge upon his interlocutor's capacity for mutual comprehension.

Chapter 3, perhaps the most diffuse section of the book, broaches the question that Wordsworth might pre-empt Marx's delineation of the rise of an unrecognised class: the *lumpenproletariat*. Simpson's hauntological pursuit of such figures orientates itself around two key examples. The first is 'Poor Susan' from *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), approaching her liminal identity as streetwalker and factory worker in a sublimated scene of plebeian print culture. The second is the so-called 'Discharged Soldier' from *The Prelude* IV, associated with imperial conflict, colonial disease and slavery. The unifying motif for Simpson's analysis of these poems is the spectral fog: a nebulous cohering principle, curiously fitting for a chapter which strains to encompass such an array of socio-historical issues. In Marxist and Derridean terms, such Wordsworthian ghosts are terrifying in part because their relevance is not solely consigned to the past world-order, and their haunting refuses to be contained by their historical specificity.

Simpson's fourth chapter approaches the celebrated 'Spots of Time' from book eleven of *The Prelude*. These unique poetic compressions of space and time are connected with Wordsworthian anxiety about the limitations of memory, conceived within the lexis and parameters of a market economy. Simpson aligns Wordsworth's fear of the deflationary banality of early capitalist replication with the lyrical, despairing disenchantment of the Frankfurt School's excoriation of late capitalist commodification. Similarly, both critics rely upon Benjamin's influential analysis of Baudelaire epitomising the *flâneur*, in order to understand Wordsworth's resistance to the hypnotic hollowness of the 'spectacle.' Simpson argues for an ingrained Burkean ethic in Wordsworth's introjection that in some limited aspects surpasses the kind ascribed to him by James Chandler. Simpson invigorates Hartman's definition of the 'Spots of Time' as internalisations of existential phenomenality. These Simpson describes as gestures of resistance against an age of mass transformation. As such, this contextualises much of the Victorian estimation of Wordsworth's intransigence to modernity. The 'Spots of Time' seem to refuse both the capitalist underpinnings of much eighteenth-

century Lockean and Humean philosophy of personal identity, and more modern visions of commodity fetishism. And yet they often seem to enact elements of credit economy through their endeavour to preserve emotional investment, and to accumulate power and knowledge.

Simpson turns in chapter five to a consideration of Wordsworth's representation of the ghostliness of anthropomorphised objects. This begins with an analysis of ambivalent figurations of the desecrated monastery at Chartreuse. Through these verses, Simpson examines Wordsworth's equivocal thought concerning the impulse to animate the inanimate inherent within religion. The ghostliness of Marx's readings of the circulation of cash currency renders capitalism as a vampiric entity that drains the vitality from both independent subjects and objects. For Simpson, as for Wordsworth, capitalism strips from the quotidian the potentiality of anthropomorphic visions. Wordsworth's liminality between enchantment and disenchantment restores animation to the inanimate in the case of 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.' Simpson reads this oft derided lyric not as a poster-poem for the Romantic ideology but rather as an unravelling of commodity illusions.

Continuing this theme in chapter six, Simpson challenges Langan's assertion that Wordsworth inculcates the birth of the modern liberal Smithian subject. He explores these through Wordsworth's depictions of free capital circulation. In contrast to this vital circulation, 'Resolution and Independence' is read as an example of a Marxian dance-of-death. The poem's underlining Proteus myth encapsulates the capitalist idiom of eternal transformation, while simultaneously gesturing outwards to some form of tantalising escapist salvation. The leech-gatherer's bent and decrepit body become both his curse and his facilitating tool in his occupation: bent almost double he approaches a symbol of eternity. Simpson discusses at length Wordsworth's treatment of reified forms: either of objects almost on the point of humanity, or humans on the verge of objectification. In this Simpson is keen to demonstrate that these processes of reification never amount to conclusive fetishism. The latter stages of this chapter move towards a critique of the Wanderer's false vision of resurrection in the second book of the *Excursion*, and to the designation of an unnamed 'Spot of Time' in book ten of *The Prelude* at the crossing of the Leven Sands, which resists the reification of the historical moment in the aftermath of the death of Robespierre.

Simpson's final chapter addresses the symbolic mutability of floods in book five of *The Prelude*. As motifs with a tragic Shakespearean resonance, Wordsworth's watery metaphors represent circulation, industrial hydraulics, and the advance of modern civilisation: yet for Simpson they also signpost a definite threshold in human progress. As a book from the poem of his life, that advertises its subject-matter as that of 'Books' themselves, Book V moves paradoxically towards almost every other relevant mode of educative discourse rather than address the ontology of books in themselves. Book V is therefore implicitly anxious about print culture and cultural dissemination. The treasures of the Bedouin 'semi-Quixote' (himself a concatenation of literary treasures) and

the 'real race of children' nurtured on folktales eschewed by the life-in-death dust of the child as 'Dwarf Man,' are shrines of human values, but frail shrines in the face of watery destruction.

Simpson's *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity* is intelligent, penetrating and at times haunting in its prophetic Janus-faced vision. Unapologetically challenging, this work uses the motifs of irrevocable deathliness to bring Wordsworth to life for a new political age.

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DAISY HAY, *Young Romantics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010). £20.00 hardback. 978 07475 8627 2

Napoleon said that to understand the man you have to know what was happening in the world when he was twenty. The shadow of Napoleon's own defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 is cast over the intellectual landscape of Daisy Hay's biography of young Romantics. Hay neatly encapsulates the political backdrop which fuelled and influenced these writers. She is probably correct: *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Even genius is not born in a vacuum, though what elements of nature and nurture create, enable and sustain it remains a mystery. Hay is nevertheless right to explode the myth of the poetic genius as some kind of eremite. These men and women were spurred by intellectual wrangling between themselves, by scientific and political renovations, and other less definable aeriels of the *zeitgeist*.

'The web of our Life is of mingled Yarn' stands as this book's epigraph. Hay appositely cites Keats rather than Shakespeare as the author of this line, since Keats is a colourful thread in the midst of the mingled yarn she is unravelling and interweaving. The line is cited from a letter to Benjamin Bailey on 8 October 1817, and Hay uses it fittingly to denote not only the weft and warp of individual existence itself but also the particular slant of her composite biography: these lives, she argues, are inextricably woven together by mutual influence and consequence and bound by their contemporary social history. I was riveted to this biographical tale, as I was to *The Friendship* by Adam Sisman, which telescoped in on the collaborative acquaintance of Wordsworth and Coleridge. I read this book not as an expert who discriminates between accounts of their lives and yearns for the pearl of some new discovery, but as one who knows and loves the Romantics by their poetry, which is, after all, how they intended themselves to be known. Hay is to be praised for the patterns she finds in, or imposes upon, the random motley of criss-crossing existences whom she clearly regards with empathy, though she remains sharply objective. To say that she makes them alive, almost visceral, is to pay the biographer a high compliment. The lives and loves enmesh in complex and enriching configurations, and the drama of their story is interspersed (as it should be) with illuminating sprinklings of their poetry.

Hay brings out the creative interplay of the group, demonstrating, for example, how Leigh Hunt impressed upon Keats the practice of composing verse which was 'occasional, spontaneous and celebratory and in which simultaneous composition was a tool for literary experimentation' (Hay, 94). One remembers Keats having said that if poetry does not come as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. There may well have been something Mozartian or Shakespearian in his genius for composition - indeed, he fancied himself animated by the spirit of Shakespeare - but it was also fostered by the influence of a wider group of writers. If Hay brings out the celebratory aspects of these poets, she also shows the bitter and biased ripostes to their work. Byron ridiculed the Cockney Keats as 'Johnny Piss-a-bed', saying that his poetry was no more than 'mental masturbation' produced by 'a diet of raw pork and opium', and Thomas Love Peacock denounced the contemporary poet as 'a semi-barbarian in a civilised community [...]'. The march of his intellect is like that of the crab, backward' (Hay, 207). This denunciation, of course, provoked a riposte from Shelley, culminating in his famous claim that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'.

Hay, too, shows how the lives behind the literature were dramatic to the hilt. To take one example, she vividly details the death of Shelley, which has passed into legend: the 'extravagant fits of good spirits' as Shelley set out, the days-long storm, and then the ensuing silence, which Mary would later recall as 'a universe of pain' (Hay, 248-9). The recovery of the corpses, partially devoured by fish, was followed by the strange ceremony of Shelley's cremation, which took place on the shore of Lake Geneva, permeated by the ammonia of incinerating flesh. Leigh Hunt, overwhelmed with emotion, remained seated in his carriage. Byron, unable to watch, swam out to the solace of his yacht. Only the wild sea-faring Trelawney, who had attached himself fervently to Shelley during the last year of his life, remained to perform rituals of his own invention, recording in detail the burning of the body, as the 'brains literally seethed, bubbled, and boiled as in a cauldron, for a very long time' (Hay, 250).

The plight of Claire Clairmont, also related in an unforgettably graphic way, is perhaps the saddest of all. Forced to surrender her daughter to Byron, she always regarded the separation as temporary: 'I have sent you my child because I love her too well to keep her,' she wrote resignedly to Byron. 'I love her with a passion that almost destroys my being' (Hay, 147). Yet after a long and acrimonious dispute with Byron over the siring and custody of their daughter, she was refused any chance to see her. She finally made a headstrong resolve to visit the child before leaving Italy, but before she could do so Allegra contracted typhus and died, aged five. Claire, aged twenty-four, having spent most of her adult life in Italy, recorded: 'how hopelessly I had lingered on the Italian soil for five years, waiting ever for a favourable change instead of which I was now leaving it, having buried there everything I loved' (Hay, 256). When those who remained alive reassembled they were conscious of the rupture between reality and memory. Pain and loss echoes through the accounts of the later years of these young Romantics, as when Mary confides to her diary: 'What

do I do here? Why am I doomed to live on seeing all expire before me? [...] A new race is springing about me – At the age of twenty-six I am in the condition of an aged person – all my old friends are gone' (Hay, 282).

This biography is thoroughly absorbing, full of dramatic tensions, premature deaths, suicides, exotic excursions, artistic vigour and campaigns for political reform. The author is something of a young romantic herself, in the amorous if not the artistic sense, since in her introduction she tells how her long-suffering but sympathetic groom accompanied her on their honeymoon (not, mercifully, what Byron acerbically referred to as his 'treaclemoon') around the libraries and museums of England and Italy, hunting for sinters and shards of evidence for her material. In the Pforzheimer Collection, now held in the New York Public Library, she discovered a hitherto unpublished fragment of a memoir left by the enraged Claire Clairmont. In it Clairmont speaks of 'what evil passion free love assured, what tenderness it dissolves; how it abused affections that should be the solace and balm of life [...] how the worshippers of free love not only preyed upon one another, but preyed equally upon their own individual selves [...]'. Never before have we heard quite this note of frank accusation from Clairmont, an integral character in this story and who suffered as severely as anyone from the consequences of what was intended as a creed of liberty: 'Under the influence of the doctrine and belief of free love I saw the two first poets of England [...] become monsters of lying, meanness, cruelty and treachery'. Byron, she wrote, became a 'human tyger slaking his thirst for inflicting pain upon defenceless women' (Hay, 308).

It was not old age that wasted John Keats's generation but a medley of calamities. Daisy Hay's book gives a characterful account of what successes alighted upon and what tragedies befell this coterie of ambitious literary companions. Such presences, brought potently back to life in these engaging pages, can at times seem to make the living appear mere ghosts by comparison.

JIM NEWCOMBE

ALFRED AINGER, *Charles Lamb* (London: Macmillan, 1882. Reprint Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). £14.99 paperback. 978 1 108 03458 6

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Macmillan publishers offered to the book-buying public a series of volumes titled *English Men of Letters* – biographies of important figures mainly from literature but also from philosophy and history. Envisioned and then superintended by John Morley, editor of the *Fortnightly Review* and later an important Liberal MP, the series aimed to enlighten and instruct the busy late-Victorian citizenry, and to do so efficiently. The advertisement to the series noted:

These Short Books are addressed to the general public with a view both to stirring and satisfying an interest in literature and its great

topics in the minds of those who have to run as they read. An immense class is growing up, and must every year increase, whose education will have made them alive to the importance of the masters of our literature, and capable of intelligent curiosity as to their performances. The Series is intended to give the means of nourishing this curiosity, to an extent that shall be copious enough to be profitable for knowledge and life, and yet be brief enough to serve those whose leisure is scanty.

Morley was a complex figure – an aggressive free-thinker who was also aware of the need for social respectability in the marketplace. He was no literary aesthete, but a pragmatic disseminator of ideas who viewed education as the route to broad-based social improvement.

One of the key conceits of the series was that individual biographies would be authored by figures who were themselves prominent men of letters. The thirty-nine numbers of the original series (1878-1892) thus included volumes by Anthony Trollope (on Thackeray), Edmund Gosse (on Gray), Margaret Oliphant (on Sheridan), James Anthony Froude (on Bunyan), and Henry James (on Hawthorne, the only American represented). The first issued, and one of the most admired, was Leslie Stephen's *Samuel Johnson*. Stephen would go on to author volumes on Pope and Swift and then, when *English Men of Letters* went to a New Series in 1902, volumes on George Eliot and Hobbes. Gosse, meanwhile followed his *Gray* with *New Series* volumes on Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne. Other multiple-volume authors included Augustine Birrell (on Marvell and Hazlitt), Sidney Colvin (on Keats and Landor), Austin Dobson, G. K. Chesterton, and A.C. Benson. The series was tremendously successful for Macmillan, spawning related enterprises including the *English Men of Action* and *Twelve English Statesmen* biographies, and it went through multiple editions in both England and America.

Now Cambridge University Press is reprinting the original series under the imprint of the Cambridge Library Collection, employing high-quality digital scans of the original volumes so as to issue the volumes without the necessity of re-setting the type. If the print is perhaps smaller than one would wish, especially for aging devotees of Charles Lamb, the resultant volumes are nonetheless pleasing, clear, and compact, and superior to typical facsimile editions.

Charles Lamb, by Alfred Ainger (1837-1904), was first published in 1882, and its popularity led directly to further Ainger productions for Macmillan: editions of Lamb's essays, then his poems and plays, and finally his letters. Despite a general aversion to scholarly minutiae, Ainger ended up serving as an important historical bridge, linking the early Lamb scholarship of Talfourd to the major work of E. V. Lucas in the early twentieth century. Often referred to as 'Canon Ainger,' Alfred Ainger had entered into the Church after leaving Cambridge, and in 1865 took the post that would define much of his professional life, Reader at the Temple Church, London. His responsibilities included a Sunday afternoon sermon and other regular duties that, over the

course of twenty-seven years, eventually began to frustrate him. But the position also immersed him in the urban milieu of law and literature that had been so important to Charles Lamb.

Ainger's *Charles Lamb* is a highly sympathetic and perceptive account of Lamb's life, writings, and literary sensibility. It proceeds chronologically and touches all of the important elements of Lamb's development, including, as an ongoing theme, the centrality of his relationship with his sister Mary. But Ainger's main mission isn't a daily or even yearly account of Elia's comings and goings. Rather – and in ways according both with his own preferences and with the page constraints of the *Men of Letters* series – the volume prioritizes two issues: the complex, sometimes painful humanity of Lamb's character and the idiosyncratic magic of his literary style. In order to illustrate both, Ainger includes lengthy quotations of hallmark passages from the essays and letters. He doesn't cross-examine these passages, but points to the main directions of their stylistic and philosophical currents, and then lets them unwind. In doing so, he was implementing critical convictions that he had expressed in an early essay called 'Books and Their Uses' [*Macmillan's Magazine*, 2 (1859) 110-113]. In that short work, which was itself clearly influenced by Lamb's 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading,' Ainger worried about the problem of murdering-to-dissect: 'Almost all criticism is too minute and too partial. Hence it fails to exhibit any but a most imperfect view of its subject. It takes a full-blown rose, and after examination presents to the reader a heap of petals without form or perfume. The critic has used his eye-glass, and sometimes to the injury of his eyes.' He goes on to assert that 'To understand a great writer, as to understand Nature, we must lose our prepossessions.' Under such a view, Lamb was ultimately the best guide to Lamb – at least if revealed through his best and most representative passages.

This is not to say that Ainger denies himself the right to critical intervention or the occasional reproach. He is very good on the importance of the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, and offers interesting views on the strengths and weaknesses of Lamb's early dramas. He relishes the opportunity to muse on the operations of the Elia essays: 'The marked peculiarities of Lamb's style give so unique a colouring to all these essays that one is apt to overlook to what a variety of themes it is found suitable. There is no mood, from that of almost reckless merriment to that of pathetic sweetness or religious awe, to which the style is not able to modulate with no felt sense of incongruity' (Ainger, 106).

The lasting influence of Coleridge's friendship is underscored, but there is surprisingly little about the large role of Emma Isola in Lamb's later life. And Lamb's tenacious friendship with Hazlitt, though clearly acknowledged, receives little elaboration. Ainger does take considerable time, however, to explore the 'Controversy with Southey,' a conflict instigated by Southey's stray published remark about the supposed irreligiosity of the essays. It seems clear from reading these pages that Ainger sees it as his duty to make peace – to show how randomly the dispute arose, and how it was at once understandable and

unnecessary. Though he finds some fault with Lamb's mode of defensiveness, his feeling for Lamb is too high to impose a religious test on him. This is entirely in keeping with other things we know about Ainger – his desire to avoid High- and Low-Church factionalism, and his impulse to use humour and common-sense as guides to navigating the world. Perhaps not accidentally, then, Ainger gives Southey the last word in this humane and engaging volume: 'There are some reputations which will not keep, but Lamb's is not of that kind. His memory will retain its fragrance as long as the best spice that ever was expended upon one of the Pharaohs' (Ainger, 186).

SCOTT McEATHRON

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KIRBY EVANS, *Humble Men in Company: the unlikely friendship of Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Sydney, Nova Scotia: Cape Breton University Press, 2011). \$24.95 CDN. 978 1897 00951 2

In the foreword to *Humble Men in Company*, Bradford Mudge asks what it was 'about the Romantic period, about its political events, its changing aesthetic sensibilities, its shifting cultural climate, that fostered such strong, such unusual friendships between writers?' (Evans, xi). It's a good question, and has come to the fore in recent criticism, as we move away from the myth of the solitary Romantic to try to explore, instead, the sociable connections of the era, as in Daisy Hay's *Young Romantics*, for example, reviewed above. But some Romantic pairings – Byron and Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge – have received more attention than others. The enduring, creative friendship between Coleridge and Lamb deserves full consideration in its own right, and Kirby Evans's new book gives a biographical account of the ways in which it developed, emphasising its deep importance to their writing.

These two Christ's Hospital boys, from quite different backgrounds, provide us with an excellent example of the strength and complexity of Romantic collaboration across many years. Coleridge was a provocative inspiration for his friend's early poetry, spurring him into print even as he aroused his irritation through heavy-handed editing; in return, Lamb was a shrewd and valued reader of Coleridge's writing, which he shaped in ways which remain under-acknowledged. The creative energy of the friendship springs out from the letters of the 1790s: the rapturous shared reading of Bowles and Cowper, the evocations of ebullient nights at the Salutation and Cat, fuelled by Oronooko and egg-hot, the struggles toward a workable language of poetic feeling. The correspondence remains sadly one-sided, although Coleridge's letter after the day of horrors in 1796 was preserved by Lamb as 'an inestimable treasure', which then feeds into that great Romantic poem of friendship and consolation, 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison'. Their closeness in the 1790s would come to an awkward halt in the Lloyd years, in the wake of the bruised feelings caused by the Nehemiah Higginbottom sonnets, and a silence of almost two years ensued. But by March 1800, Lamb would joyfully write to Manning

that Coleridge was 'a *very good man*, and all those foolish impressions to the contrary fly off like morning slumbers'; their renewed friendship, while it went through different stages, would last until Coleridge's death. 'Lamb,' as Evans points out, 'would be one of the only friends from Coleridge's youth who would stand by him and accept him for his strengths as well as his weaknesses' (Evans, 152). And Evans is quite right to suggest that this acceptance has its roots in deep sympathy born of emotional turmoil: both writers are skilled in exploring what he nicely terms, 'the fallow, difficult region where we are alone and alienated from the vicinity of our most comfortable feelings' (Evans, 8).

Humble Men in Company adopts a personal style reminiscent of the appreciative, intimate writing of an earlier era – it's appropriate to review it alongside Ainger's humane account of Lamb, because Evans in some ways shares Ainger's distrust of over-worked criticism. 'In an age of "experts" it is perhaps useful to remember,' he cautions, 'that we don't necessarily need specialized knowledge to appreciate literature' (Evans, 10). It is not coincidental that the preface quotes Joseph Edward Babson's comment from the 1870s, calling for a work on the 'Friendships of Literary Men' which would recognise the special bond between Coleridge and Lamb, and celebrate the 'golden thread which tied their hearts together' (Evans, 3). This celebration of literary friendship is what Evans aims to supply, and the book gives some wonderful quotations from the primary texts. It shows a wealth of reading in the essays and letters of the pair, and of contemporaries such as Hunt, even though it sometimes shies away from analysis of the works themselves in favour of a looser, more ruminative approach to the topic of friendship and literature in general. The book as a whole takes its cue from E. V. Lucas's description of Lamb as 'the most lovable character in English literature' (Evans, 14). If this makes it at times a little wilful in its readings of more modern criticism, it compensates by its refreshing insistence on deep personal affection for the writer and his work.

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Society News

CHAIRMAN'S AND TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2011

The following report for calendar year 2011 was given to the Society's AGM on 12 May 2012:

A trend in the nature of the Society and its membership has been discernible for some time and became very clear during 2011. I refer to the decline in the number of members whose interest Lamb had its genesis during their schooldays and who developed into true amateurs of the writer and his works. Elians with this kind of personal history are mostly now getting old or are very old and, sadly, more and more of these traditional members have been finding themselves unable to participate in our activities. It is not surprising that there is a gradual falling off of their number either by resignation or by death. On the other hand there is a gratifying upsurge in academic interest in Charles and Mary Lamb with the result that our numbers are being steadily boosted by applications from within the universities. In the last few years these changes have more or less balanced each other out in terms of membership numbers, though in 2011 itself we lost a few more than we gained. We need to think carefully about the repercussions on the Society of this long-term trend, which is unlikely to be halted, let alone reversed.

During 2011 we repeated the pattern of activities set the previous year, notably with a Lamb Study Day taking place at Swedenborg Hall in November, its theme being a Bicentenary Celebration of *The Reflector*. Once again this was organised entirely by the Vice-Chairman, Felicity James, and I want to pay tribute to her for giving the time and energy to this second Lamb Study Day. I know she shared my concern that there might be a lack of enthusiasm for a second such conference just one year after our first Study Day, but the event proved our fears unfounded: there does seem to be an appetite for these events and we are hoping to hold a third this coming November. We are also looking into the possibility of collaborating with the Hazlitt Society in the organization of similar study days in the future. Our other events during 2011 consisted of the Birthday Luncheon in February when Professor Michael O'Neill was guest of honour (and our venue moved to The Oxford and Cambridge Club in Pall Mall, which proved to be very popular); a lecture by Professor Jeremy Tambling in April on Lamb, Hogarth and Dickens; and a lecture by our President, Professor Dick Watson on Lamb and Virginia Woolf following the AGM. A number of Elians attended the Friends of Coleridge Study Weekend in September, where the theme for the year was *Biographia Literaria*, though sadly Cecilia and I were unable to be present at this, the last such event to be held in the traditional venue of Kilve Court.

A year ago I welcomed Steve Burley as the new Editor of *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* and I am delighted that he has continued to publish articles of the highest quality, ably assisted by Felicity as Reviews Editor. The new-style *Bulletin*, for the design of which we owe a great debt to Alice Burley, is very impressive, not least in the sheer size of the two issues that now appear each year. The reputation of the Society rests very largely on the *Bulletin* and I think we would all agree that it is in very safe hands.

Our lecture programme and our *Bulletin* are necessarily chiefly focused on our academic audience and readership – and it is noteworthy that among the subscribers to the *Bulletin* we number approximately 100 academic libraries worldwide. We are therefore already catering, and I like to think doing so well, for that element of our membership. I have had no complaint that the amateurs among us feel neglected and it is my clear impression that they (or rather we, for I count myself among their number) rather enjoy being “stretched”!

We have good relations with various bodies and societies with relevant interests. I have already alluded to the Friends of Coleridge, we have long had a useful association with the Wordsworth Trust and the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, and as I have said, we hope to develop closer links with the Hazlitt Society, whose new chairman is Dr Greg Dart, our member and the general editor of the forthcoming new Oxford edition of *Lamb's Works*. Sustaining all these links has been part of our endeavours during 2011 and we shall continue with this.

My main concern for the Society's future relates to its routine running. I have been enormously assisted over the last decade by the other officers: the two vice-chairmen, Duncan Wu and Felicity James; Veronica Finch as minutes secretary; Cecilia Powell as membership secretary; Tony Beardwell, the registrar; Robin Healey, our representative on the Alliance of Literary Societies; and, of course, Steve Burley, our editor; as well as by members of the Council among whom I should pick out David Wickham for his wise advice and work in relation to our library. But the time is coming – perhaps a year or two hence – when it will be necessary for Cecilia and me to relinquish our roles and we cannot assume that all those I have just mentioned will be able and willing to go on serving indefinitely. Therefore, I want the Society – and in particular its Council – to be giving thought during the next twelve months to the way in which we make provision for the Society's running in the future. With this in mind, I am proposing to convene a special meeting of the Council to discuss this issue sometime in the autumn.

I must now turn to the part of my report which I must give as Treasurer. The accounts before you follow the usual pattern and disclose a deficit for 2011 amounting to £1,845.72, significantly more than in 2010 (though actually not very different from the figure for 2009). One third of this apparent year on year decline is due to our having made some exceptional sales of *Bulletins* and books during 2010; another third is attributable to higher printing charges, and postal charges also soared (as indeed they have, of course, recently done again). As the accounts show, our total financial assets on 31 December 2011 were £67,145.25, a

figure which reflects the decline in stock markets during the year. Markets, of course, remain very volatile, but we are to some extent protected from this by the fact that some 35% of our reserves are held in cash on deposit. Given the level of reserves, there is no immediate need to act, but the time is probably coming when we should contemplate an increase in subscription rates. I have it in mind that new rates might be considered this time next year and, if approved by the Society then, would take effect on 1 January 2014, that is five years after the previous increase on 1 January 2009.

Nick Powell

A LAMB LETTER ACQUIRED

I am pleased and proud to record that the autograph communication from Charles Lamb, printed by E. V. Lucas as Letter No. 1016, the undated ‘last-but-one’, entered the Wickham Collection in April 2007. There it joined the ‘last-letter-of-all’, No. 1017. It came from a London dealer and is annotated as having been with the British dealer Robinson in 1939 and as being at the Grolier Club in New York in the early 1950s. My new acquisition immediately raised – and answered – an Elian conundrum.

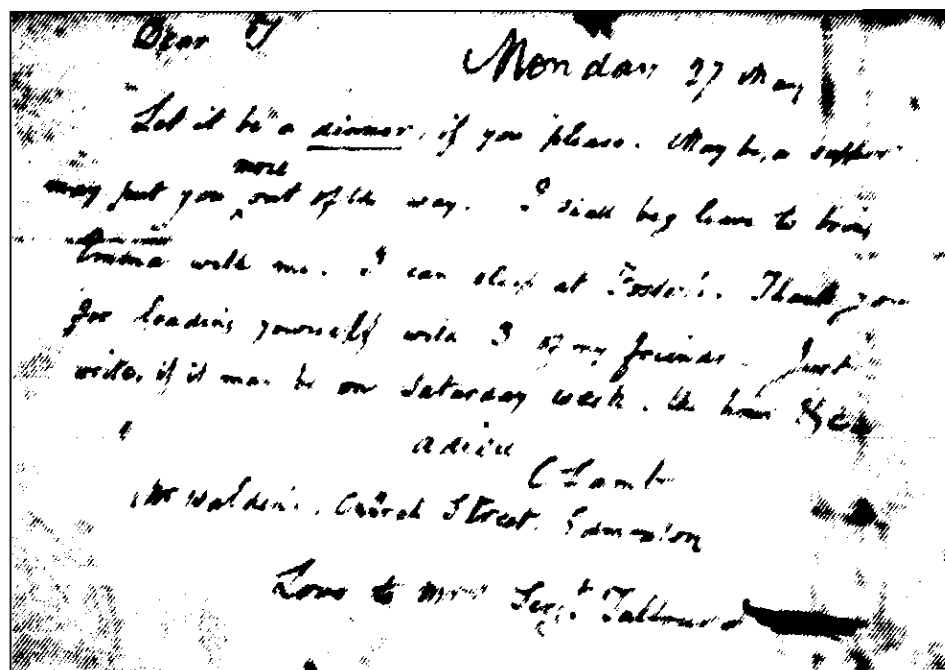
Question. Why does Lucas introduce the item as ‘(From the Author)’?

Answer. Charles Lamb has scribbled, and I mean scribbled, it on to the front free end-paper of a copy of his *John Woovil, A Tragedy* (1802) which he is presenting to John Childs of Bungay, the recipient of Letter No. 1015. It actually begins ‘From the Author’ and is reasonably well transcribed, apart from ‘chirp’d & sang “Heigh! Bessy Bungay” in honor [sic] to the Sender ... line ... Keep the 1st volume ...’ It ends without salutation or signature but is followed by a pencilled group of words not by Lamb and too faint to decipher. Lucas does not print the useful words on the front paste-down, presumably in Childs’s handwriting, ‘Rec’d Sep 26 - 1834’, which puts the letter firmly between No. 1011 and No. 1012. Below this date, an early group of words in ink (perhaps a possessor’s name and address) has been scratched into intelligibility.

The book is not in the best of health, being in its original grey boards but with the paper spine badly damaged and the front board separated. It lives in a wrapper of brown watered silk and what I think is called a clam-shell box, brown morocco, gilt, by Rivière.

D. E. Wickham

ANOTHER LAMB LETTER ACQUIRED



I take pleasure in communicating to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* the latest addition to my collection of unpublished Lamb correspondence. It is dated from 'Mr. Walden's Church Street, Edmonton.' The Lambs left the Westwoods at Enfield between 27 April and 7 May 1833: the letters listed as Lucas Nos. 946 and 947 show this. My letter to Talfourd ('Dear T' and 'Love to Mrs. Serg. Talfourd' does rather give that away; see also the letter of early February 1833, listed as Lucas No. 924) is dated only 'Monday 27 May'. Perpetual calendars show this to mean 1833. Thus it probably falls between Lucas No. 952 and Lucas No. 953. This makes it the last-but-one communication known from Lamb to Talfourd, surpassed only by a brief undated note of about 2 January 1834 (Lucas No. 986) but omitted from Lucas's Index under 'Talfourd'.

D. E. Wickham

THE REES-IRELAND ARCHIVES: ADDITIONS

Deborah Hedgecock's listing of the Society's Collection at Guildhall Library (a supplement to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, No. 89, January 1995) refers four times (pp. 12, 14, 23, and 25) to J. Rogers Rees and items from his collection. J. Rogers Rees (1884-1913) was an author and a collector of Eliana. Claude Prance's *Companion* says that information about him is difficult to find and that Mrs Gertrude Anderson, the Lamb scholar, was seeking it without success in 1924.

Rees's friend Alexander Ireland (1810-1894) is recorded in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and was the compiler of that old warhorse, *The Book-Lover's Enchiridion* (1882). He collected Lamb, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, producing bibliographies of the last two.

A while ago the Society was offered, and in mid-2004 bought, an archive of the two men. It may be summarised as follows:

- Two (successively?) corrected proof copies of Rees's book *With Elia and his Friends in Books and Dreams* (1903)
- About two-hundred pages of autograph notes, drafts, etc., concerning Charles Lamb and the book
- About fifteen reviews dealing with Lamb and his circle, with other newspaper cuttings and clippings from booksellers' catalogues
- Forty-one letters, 1886-1894, from Ireland to Rees on books, authors, and Charles Lamb.

Whether the Charles Lamb Society now owns all the surviving Rees-Ireland Archive is a puzzle that we seem to have no way of solving, at least in the foreseeable future. Prance's *Companion* (p. 165) says that Ireland's Lamb papers are in the Manchester Free Library.

ELIANA

For many years now I have kept a note of passing references to 'Elia' and similar forms used unexpectedly, for example, as names. It is difficult to specify how this works but perhaps one day we shall discover, say, that Eliana is a popular forename in some distant part of Eastern Europe.

An article in *The Daily Telegraph* of 12 March 2005 mentioned (Lady) Eliana Houstoun-Boswell, the daughter of Polish parents, and the founder and headmistress of Hampton Court House School, an establishment opened in 2001 in Richmond, Surrey.

The 'Seven' section of *The Sunday Telegraph* of 17 September 2006 recorded the twentieth anniversary of British Youth Opera which was marked by a staging of *Don Giovanni*. Most of the young singers were highly praised and there was mention of the 'polished Zerlina of Eliana Pretorian.'

ROAST FIG

In Case the Charles Lamb Society should ever need such details, I recorded the following from the side of a white Peugeot van (oh dear!) parked outside Balliol College, Oxford in the summer of 2007:

Warners
Butchers to the Catering Trade
Pig Roast Specialist
01993 881 465
Witney.

D. E. Wickham

THE 11TH HAZLITT DAY SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, 9
JUNE 2012

The Hazlitt Day-School has traditionally been held annually in Oxford, either at St. Catherine's College or at Hertford College. This year, however, it moved to UCL's English Department in Bloomsbury, only a stone's throw from Hazlitt's old haunts on Southampton Row. Here an array of distinguished speakers explored topics including pugilism, print culture, dissent, semantics and horology. The lectures were interspersed with lively discussion, cups of tea, some fine chocolate biscuits, and, at the end of the day, an excellent wine reception.

The opening panel began with Fiona Robertson's paper on the transatlantic contexts of Hazlitt's essay 'On Depth and Superficiality'. The lecture explored the ambivalence of Hazlitt's response to American culture: at once sympathetic to the political possibilities of the new republic, he nonetheless emphasized the aesthetic and imaginative limitations of the country in which he had spent some of his childhood years. David Stewart spoke on 'Hazlitt, Print and Ephemerality', examining the troubled relationship between Hazlitt's work and its printed incarnation in the periodicals of the day. James Grande explored the theme of 'dissenting legacies', offering a telling contrast between Hazlitt's Whiggish account of the Protestant Reformation in his *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* and Cobbett's popular elegy for England's Catholic past in *A History of the Protestant Reformation*. This was followed by Philip Hunnekuhl's analysis of the similarities between the metaphysical thought of Hazlitt and Henry Crabb Robinson, particularly in their sustained faith in the disinterestedness of the human mind.

The plenary papers were delivered by John Strachan and Marcus Tomalin. Strachan's paper was a particular highlight – a lively, engaging and timely account of early nineteenth-century boxing, presented in the context of the historic first women's boxing competition at the Olympic Games. Using a range of helpful visual materials, Strachan situated Hazlitt's essay 'The Fight' within a broader culture of pugilistic literature by Pierce Egan, John Wilson, and J.H. Reynolds, carefully demonstrating the ways in which the mock-heroic register of Reynolds' 1820 'Sonnet to Jack Randall' works as an important precursor to Hazlitt's essay. Elians would have been particularly interested by Marcus Tomalin's analysis of Hazlitt's 'On a Sun-Dial', a late, elegiac essay that draws heavily upon Lamb's celebration of the sun-dial in 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple'. Those who missed the event can, however, look forward to the publication of some of the papers in next year's issue of the *Hazlitt Review*.

Overall, the event was a great success, combining some excellent scholarship with engaging discussion in a warm and friendly environment. Organized by Gregory Dart and Uttara Natarajan, the day-school provides a rare opportunity for Hazlittians to meet together and exchange ideas. After a year's hiatus, it's fantastic to see this important event thriving once again.

Stephen Burley

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

www.charleslambociety.com/bulletin.html

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The Charles Lamb Society Bulletin was published in quarterly issues from 1935 to 1972. Its first editor was the Elian scholar and poet S. M. Rich. The new series began in January 1973 as *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* under the editorship of Basil Savage.

The *Bulletin* is a peer-reviewed journal devoted to the study of Charles and Mary Lamb and their circle. It aims to promote Lamb scholarship and welcomes submissions in the form of essays, reviews, and notes and queries from established academics, new entrants to the field, and those who simply admire the Lambs' writings.

Essays submitted to the journal should be in typescript, and be between 4000 and 7000 words in length. Preferably, submissions should be sent to the Editor as an email attachment in MS Word. Submissions should be double-spaced throughout, including quotations, and should follow MHRA style, with a couple of minor alterations. A full style-sheet is available online at the Society's website.

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