

# The Charles Lamb Bulletin

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## Editorial

THIS ISSUE OF the *Bulletin* features a talk on the state of Elian studies, recently discovered among the papers of my late, and much-missed, predecessor as editor, Bill Ruddick. Bill himself would not, I suspect, have chosen to publish this, but it is of considerable value for the way in which it summarises the central threads of Lamb criticism since the War. My only hesitation in deciding whether or not to publish lay in the fact that it dates from 1989. But it seems to me that the talk has dated remarkably little, and those points where it is most obviously superseded are easily brought up to date in editorial footnotes, which I have not scrupled to add. I hope readers will find it as helpful and informative as I have done.

It is fitting, I think, that the other academic articles in this number are concerned with two subjects close to Bill's heart: Wordsworth, and a little-known poet of the eighteenth century, John Brown.

It is my sad duty to report that, since publication of the January *Bulletin*, our Membership Secretary, Audrey Moore, has died. This is a grievous loss; most recent members of the Society will have had some contact with her, and will be aware of her energy and enthusiasm in promoting its interests. She was of course an enthusiastic attender of the Wordsworth Winter School and Summer Conference, and I cherish my recollections of her striding forth across the fells in all weathers. An obituary appears on pages 73-4, by the Hon. Secretary; I should welcome any reminiscences or written tributes for the July issue (deadline: 25 May 1997).

## Recent Approaches to Charles Lamb<sup>1</sup>

By WILLIAM RUDDICK

TAKING ON THE EDITORSHIP of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* has led me to review the current situation in Lamb studies. The availability of most of the required tools for research in the form of accurate texts, of letters and a much increased biographical knowledge of Lamb's closest literary friends (in particular Coleridge) has stimulated historical investigation of Lamb's work and its connection with that of other members of the group. At the same time study of the Elia persona and Lamb's use of masks has shown his subtleties as a practitioner of ambiguity, paradox, the avoidance of resolution and closure, and other features which have been much emphasized by recent criticism generally. Close readings of the Elia essays which also explore their use of myth and literary allusion are also now appearing. And recent critics have demonstrated the power with which Lamb developed features of imagination which are now thought to be centrally Romantic. At the same time there is room for much new thought and investigation. I will try to suggest where, in my view, some of these areas lie.

Lamb criticism takes the form of trickles rather than a broad stream. *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* is published four times a year, and one of the editor's tasks is to ensure that of the three articles which it contains each time, *one* will be about Charles or Mary Lamb (or, of course, both of them). We are offered articles on Wordsworth and Coleridge very steadily. The Lamb pieces are harder to find, and sometimes have to be coaxed or commissioned. But what is notable nowadays is the *variety* of approach taken by writers on the Lambs. The articles may be few, but their writers are well aware of current trends in biographical and critical procedure.

Lamb scholarship is in a healthy state, and the would-be researcher has most of what is needed to hand, with two troublesome exceptions which I'll mention in a moment. Textually, E. V. Lucas' *Works* of Lamb has stood the test of time, and in finding one's way around it, and for many other purposes too, Claude A. Prance's *Companion to Charles Lamb: A Guide to People and Places 1760-1847*, which came out in 1983, is a godsend. Even before the War, anyone who had cared to make a case for Lamb as a serious critic had the essential material for assessing Lamb's view of literature conveniently assembled in E. M. W. Tillyard's *Lamb's Criticism* (1923), but Roy Park's *Lamb as Critic*, of 1980, is even better because it has marvellous notes, and includes more material connected with the theatre and the art of acting, as well as Lamb's few but invaluable essays on painting and the visual arts. And *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* are now readily available once more in World's Classics, very well edited by Jonathan Bate.<sup>2</sup> And Jonathan Bate's and Roy Park's Prefaces are essential reading for anyone who is trying to form a modern understanding of Lamb.

E. V. Lucas' edition of Lamb's *Letters* was faulty, so it is good to have the first three volumes of Edwin W. Marris' replacement edition, which do everything that modern scholarship should do for Lamb's letters up to 1817. What is worrying, however, is the fact that no further volumes have been added to Marris' edition since 1978. Worrying too is the fact that Winifred Courtney's *Young Charles Lamb 1775-1802* (1983) leaves the story of Lamb's life just at the point where his publishing career is beginning, and private report is that Winifred Courtney, who is now

<sup>1</sup> This article is transcribed from a manuscript in Bill Ruddick's hand, found among his papers relating to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*. It is dated 3 April 1989, and is reprinted here by kind permission of his literary executors, T. W. Craik and W. Hutchings. Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Since this was written, Professor Bate's edition has, alas, gone out of print. Ed.

rather elderly, may not complete the assembling of the second volume.<sup>3</sup> This is a serious setback, as the researcher is left with Lucas' *Life* - an agreeable account, but one which softens the outlines, and leaves, in particular, the *political* interest and activity of Lamb largely unexplored.

However, things could be a lot worse, and as I've said already, some interesting new thinking about the Lambs has been going on - though only *very* recently in Mary Lamb's case, I think. Jane Aaron, of course, has played a prominent part here, and in moving on to consider the *double* relationship of Charles and Mary Lamb as people and as writers, she brings a fresh mind to bear in an area which had been conspicuously lacking in modern consideration.

We know more about Charles Lamb than we used to do, nowadays, but not perhaps a *lot* more. But we do know far more about Coleridge than was once the case: to take a couple of obvious points, Molly Lefebure's *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium* (1974) lets us see how early he became an addict, and appreciate more fully both the charity and the tact which the Lambs exercised in their friendship with him. And better editions of the letters show how well Lamb held his own in critical and theoretical dialogue with Coleridge during the crucial years of the mid and late 1790s. Naturally enough, the relationship between key texts is now studied. Already, in 1963, Richard Havens' essay 'The Romantic Art of Charles Lamb'<sup>4</sup> was comparing Lamb's 'Old China' essay and Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight' as exercises in the art of reverie. More lately, critics have explored the inter-relationship of the lesser and the greater talents of the Lamb-Wordsworth-Coleridge group. To give a single instance of this, Lucy Newlyn in 1984 traced William Cowper's attitude to the city through correspondence and verse by his admirers Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth in the 1790s and the turn of the century, finding a major place in this debate for a forgotten poem called 'London' by the younger member of the group, Charles Lloyd.<sup>5</sup> Lloyd's poem, once seen, looks like the missing piece of the jigsaw. I think that in this area of following the development of ideas and related treatments of them in the writings of Lamb's group of friends there is still more to be done, and from the point of view of a Lamb scholar it's worth doing, as Lamb was clearly a considerable originator of attitudes and critical debate. I myself tried this a year or two back with Lamb as the starter-off of a new way of interpreting Hogarth, as a pictorial moralist, a truth-teller, and a poet.<sup>6</sup> The obvious next step was to consider Hazlitt, who wrote with Lamb's essay in mind and narrowed down Hogarth's art into that of the pictorial *novelist*, a view which persisted almost to the present day, and which was repeated by Thackeray, who wrote a very good early piece on Hogarth with Lamb's and Hazlitt's essays very clearly at his side. I think there are many, many more such connections to be made, particularly with the Lamb and Hazlitt and Lamb and Leigh Hunt materials.<sup>7</sup> And the literature of the 1830s is still so under-explored, and even the major writers' relationship with the preceding generations so little considered, that plenty of spadework still needs doing. Kathryn Sutherland's 'The Coming of Age of the Man of Feeling: Sentiment in Lamb and Dickens' offers

<sup>3</sup> Bill's remarks here have been superseded by Winifred Courtney's sad death in September 1994; she was remembered by Mary Wedd and Nicholas Roe, *CLB* NS 89 (1995) 43-5. Ed.

<sup>4</sup> *English Literary History* 30 (1963).

<sup>5</sup> 'Lamb, Lloyd, London: A Perspective on Book Seven of *The Prelude*', *CLB* NS 47-8 (1984) 169-87.

<sup>6</sup> 'Artist or Novelist? Lamb, Hazlitt and the Nineteenth-Century Response to Hogarth', *CLB* NS 61 (1988) 145-55.

<sup>7</sup> This suggestion has recently been vindicated by David Chandler's 'A Sign's Progress: Lamb on Hogarth', *CLB* NS 94 (1996) 50-63, and Frederick Burwick's lecture, delivered at the 1996 Wordsworth Summer Conference, 'Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey on Hogarth'. Work on Lamb and Leigh Hunt has yet to be undertaken. Ed.

a good example of the rewards of this kind of historical scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Again, a line of influence, in which Lamb stands in a key position between the late eighteenth-century sentimentalism of Henry Mackenzie and Dickens' early fiction, is established.

One more word about how learning more about Coleridge can alter our understanding of Lamb before I leave this area. In his 1987 book *Romantic Cruxes: The English Essayists and the Spirit of the Age*, Thomas McFarland applies the current theory of spaces or absences in the text to Lamb, finding that the great absence in the *Elia* essays is, in fact, Coleridge, despite Lamb's clothing himself in the schoolboy Coleridge's experiences in 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago'. McFarland considers the impact of Coleridge on Lamb to have been so overwhelming, his comparative withdrawal of friendship so hurtful, that Lamb had to cope not only by seeking alternative relationships, such as those with Manning and (at various times) with Charles Lloyd, Southey, and (unrelentingly) Wordsworth, but by constructing a literary persona for himself which could stand without any evident relationship with Coleridge's mind or personality.

The early 1960s saw several profitable lines of development laid down. For example, Donald Reiman's 'Thematic Unity in Lamb's Familiar Essays'<sup>9</sup> stressed the extent to which Lamb's material and his manner of treating it links him to the great modern myth-makers. He says, for instance, of the essay 'Old China':

Bridget bemoans the loss of human youth and novelty and joy against the backdrop of a world where Beauty *can* keep her lustrous eyes and where youth does *not* grow pale and specter-thin, and die. Like Keats's Grecian urn, Yeats's lapis lazuli sculpture, or T. S. Eliot's Chinese jar, *Elia's* china tea-cups present a still point amid a world of flux and, at the same time, a stimulus for the human imagination, both of him who creates and him who contemplates them.<sup>10</sup>

Reiman's essay was a stimulus for two particularly rewarding approaches to *Elia*: first that which searches for the archetypal in materials and situations, as James Scoggins did in his essay, 'Images of Eden in the Essays of *Elia*' of 1972. He offers a view of *Elia* the childhood-lover which is a valuable corrective to older pictures of *Elia* as *childish*:

Vestiges of the past remain in all of us, but most of all in those to whom childhood virtues still have the predominant influence. . . . [for Lamb the figure of Adam dis-Paradised is] a quiet, mock-apologetic man, finding whatever happiness he can in his time and place, while longing for a more comforting home that seems locked in the past.<sup>11</sup>

The second way in which Reiman's 1965 essay stimulated criticism was in directing attention towards the *literary* relations of the images and situations in the essays. A good example of the rewards which careful examination of these can produce is Mary Wedd's article on 'All Fools' Day', published in 1979.<sup>12</sup> She unravels a web of literary allusions in the essay, links it to Roman and later ideas of the fool and folly, and stresses the fact that the essay, like Lamb's view of life, gives folly its head for a time, only to reassert the controlling limits of duty and everyday reality,

<sup>8</sup> *CLB* NS 55 (1986) 196-210.

<sup>9</sup> *JEGP* 64 (1965) 470-8; reprinted *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Missouri, 1987), pp. 251-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Romantic Texts and Contexts* 258.

<sup>11</sup> *JEGP* 71 (1972) 204, 199.

<sup>12</sup> *CLB* NS 28 (1979) 61-81.

linking mirth and melancholy in ways that look backward to Burton and forward to *I Pagliacci* and its sad, self-pitying clown.

Writing in 1987, Jane Aaron noted how Roy Park and other critics of the seventies had concentrated on Lamb's characteristics and importance as one of the great Romantic critics.<sup>13</sup> She thought that they had still felt shy of trying to re-establish Lamb's imaginative fictions in the canon. But she also found present-day American critics increasingly willing to tackle the *Elia* essays head-on, sensing that their ambiguities and the scope which their use of persona gave Lamb for self-concealment foreshadowed many of the features of language and irresolvable paradox which contemporary French theoreticians emphasize: the *Elia* essays 'avoid definitive closure' and are 'inherently plural, a weave of varied meanings rather than a single message'. And Jane Aaron felt that such an approach, according to current lines of thought, might do much to re-establish Lamb's fictions in critical respectability. She instanced, and I would certainly agree with her view, that Gerald Monsman's *Confessions of a Prosaic Dreamer and Charles Lamb's Art of Autobiography* of 1984, opens valuable areas of future exploration with its view of Lamb's fictions as *redemptive* imagination, compensating for the losses inherent in the human condition: products of a Romantic mind, but compatible in their structures with modern theories of literature as expression of alienation and unsettledness.

I hope this survey of mine, touching on what seem interesting points here and there, without trying to discuss everything of merit that has appeared of recent years, may have served to suggest why I found Lamb criticism in both a healthy state and one which allows for development in a good many worthwhile directions at present. Facts are still turning up. Jonathan Bate, for example, notices in his edition of *Elia* that the first essay in the collection, 'The South-Sea House', not only immortalises Lamb's brief spell of employment there but also marks the centenary of the South Sea Bubble of 1720, which turned a once-prosperous concern into the commercial ghost which Lamb describes. And Jonathan Bate's assertion that a reprinting of the *London Magazine* for the 1820s would reveal how much cross-reference there was among the contributions reminds us that there *is* still spadework to be done.<sup>14</sup> Lamb and Hazlitt, Lamb and Leigh Hunt . . . Already the work of Grevel Lindop and others is establishing De Quincey connections.<sup>15</sup> There's still so much that we don't know and that is worth finding out.

And enough detailed criticism of several of the *Elia* essays now exists to show how much close readings of various kinds—historical, thematic, imagistic, mythic, and so on—can reveal. And old issues could do with a fresh airing—for example, Lamb on the 'world of the imagination' in Restoration comedy, which Macaulay took such exception to. Now that *Elia* is being explored as a series of constructs, I think his views on the theatre and stage illusion ought to have half a century's dust blown off them. Unless someone *has* looked at them from a different standpoint since L. C. Knights that is, and I haven't noticed. But I think I've said enough now—and I hope I've whetted your appetite. Read Lamb again and discover how intelligent he is. Write on Lamb, and you won't be up against all the other toilers of this or that publishing industry. Send your article to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* and I promise you my careful attention, and the hope of relatively speedy publication!

<sup>13</sup> 'Charles and Mary Lamb: The Critical Heritage', *CLB NS* 59 (1987) 73-85.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Joel Haefner, 'The Two Faces of the *London Magazine*', *CLB NS* 44 (1983) 69-81.

<sup>15</sup> Grevel Lindop is the general editor of a forthcoming edition of the works of De Quincey, to be published by Pickering and Chatto.

## Wordsworth's Fisher King

By DUNCAN WU

WRITING TO Wordsworth in 1803, Coleridge told him how 'Lady Beaumont told me, that the night before last as she was reading your Poem on Cape RASH JUDGEMENT, had you entered the room, she believes she should have fallen at your feet'.<sup>1</sup> From anyone else such a gesture might have seemed exaggerated, even comic—but Lady Beaumont was one of the sharpest of Wordsworth's early readers, and her remark testifies both to her sensitivity and to the freshness of her response. Among his works, few poems speak more powerfully than *Point Rash-Judgement* of the reading process itself:

Through a thin veil of glittering haze, we saw  
Before us on a Point of jutting land  
The tall and upright figure of a Man  
Attir'd in peasant's garb, who stood alone  
Angling beside the margin of a lake.<sup>2</sup>

This picturesque scene is precisely the kind of 'text' of which Wordsworth was, by 1800, highly sceptical. The 'thin veil' of glittering haze, repeated throughout the loco-descriptive poetry of the late eighteenth century, from Thomson to Wordsworth's own *An Evening Walk* (1793), might at first seem as stale as the response it is designed to elicit. In this case the interpreting poet and his friends bring to bear a socio-politico analytic calculated to superimpose their moral judgements on the 'text':

nor was it long  
Ere making ready comments on the sight  
Which then we saw, with one and the same voice  
We all cried out, that he must be indeed  
An idle man, who thus could lose a day  
Of the mid-harvest, when the labourer's hire  
Is ample, and some little might be stor'd  
Wherewith to cheer him in the winter time.

Throughout his work Wordsworth warns us against the dangers of confusing the act of reading with that of interpretation. So it is that, having exercised his critical judgement on the scene before him, the poet is compelled to look again, and, this time, to see. He receives a kind of vision—a strangely un-Wordsworthian one, in that it reveals nature to be dead and unfeeling, and reveals a similar quality within the poet himself.

Thus talking of that Peasant we approach'd  
Close to the spot where with his rod and line  
He stood alone; whereat he turn'd his head

<sup>1</sup> *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) (hereafter Griggs), i. 957.

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from this poem are taken from William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800* ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY, 1992) (hereafter Cornell *Lyrical Ballads*). Quotations from other Wordsworth poems are from *Wordsworth: A Selection of his Finest Poems* ed. Stephen Gill and Duncan Wu (Oxford, 1994).

To greet us—and we saw a Man worn down  
 By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks  
 And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean  
 That for my single self I look'd at them,  
 Forgetful of the body they sustained.—  
 The man was using his best skill to gain  
 A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake  
 That knew not of his wants.

In few works does Wordsworth speak so convincingly of the pain of being human. The peasant turns to greet the voices he hears, perhaps with a smile; that greeting, given in the face of his plight—one all the more desperate not just because of his own physical state but because of his family's needs—is one of those poetic images that does a good deal more than fulfil a function in an unfolding drama. 'Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door', Blake had written nearly ten years previously. That line resonates because it expresses an instantly recognizable fact of life—that we all lack the imagination that could enable us to perceive the world and its inhabitants as they really are. This was an intuition Wordsworth shared, and it is reassuring to find that, on being read some of Blake's *Songs* by Henry Crabb Robinson in 1812, he is reported to have been 'pleased with some of them, and considered Blake as having the elements of poetry a thousand times more than either Byron or Scott'.<sup>3</sup>

If, for Blake, the failure to recognize the angel at one's door reminds us of our fallen state, in Wordsworth's case it has a more personal application. For one thing, angels in Wordsworth take peculiar forms, and appear where least expected: there is the blind beggar of *Prelude* Book VII, whose 'fixèd face and sightless eyes' emerge out of the anonymous London crowds to admonish the poet as if 'from another world'; or the leech-gatherer, manifested 'by peculiar grace, / A leading from above, a something given', and whose body

did seem

Like one whom I had met with in a dream;  
 Or like a Man from some far region sent  
 To give me human strength, and strong admonishment.

Each encounter assumes the vivid clarity of a dream, and, as in reverie, the characters deliver their admonitions with an uncanny and uncomfortable knowledge of the dreamer's preoccupations. The angler's closest relative is probably the discharged soldier, of whom Wordsworth first wrote in 1798. Like the other angels, he is encountered unexpectedly, revealed by 'a sudden turning of the road':

There was in his form  
 A meagre stiffness. You might almost think  
 That his bones wounded him. His legs were long,  
 So long and shapeless that I looked at them  
 Forgetful of the body they sustained.

'Forgetful of the body they sustained': that line, repeated in *Point Rash-Judgement*, emphasizes the odd way in which the lone angler and discharged soldier are truncated in the poet's mind by the manner in which they are perceived. It is as if their physical shape is constantly subject to

<sup>3</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers ed. Edith J. Morley (3 vols., London, 1938), i. 85.

modification, even dissolution. The most impressive example of this facility occurs in *Resolution and Independence*, where the leech-gatherer seems to turn first into a stone and then into a sea-beast. This has led some critics to suggest that Wordsworth's sense of their humanity is less than real; but that argument cannot be made for *Point Rash-Judgement*, where the angler's desperation is registered with such painful clarity. At that moment a shift occurs within the poet's mind, by which the 'idle man' is transformed, transfigured even, by the shock of recognition, and the poet's assumptions exposed for what they are. And we, who have traced his thoughts and judgements, are similarly changed. No wonder Lady Beaumont was so struck by the poem: it is revelatory, almost in a sacred sense, leading to an apprehension beyond words.

What astonishes me is that none of this is actually described. All that happens is that one man turns round to look at another; in so doing, he turns round the narrative, throwing up a number of implications for poet and reader. But Wordsworth says virtually nothing about that either, refusing to describe his response: 'I will not say / What thoughts immediately were ours'. In other words, there is a silence behind this poem—one in which we partake, and which guarantees the truth of what it describes: that the words guide us so unerringly into its midst is a kind of miracle.

Everything depends on the moment of recognition—one of the simplest and oldest of narrative devices, a commonplace of ancient myth and legend. Wordsworth and Coleridge were brought up on such tales, as Coleridge recalled when he wrote to Thomas Poole in October 1797: 'For from my early reading of Faery Tales, & Genii &c &c—my mind had been habituated to the *Vast*—& I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. . . . Should children be permitted to read Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii? . . . I know no other way of giving the mind a love of "the Great", & "the Whole"'.<sup>4</sup> Educated by the literature of giants and magicians, the young Coleridge's beliefs outweighed the evidence of his senses. It is almost a definition of romanticism—that state in which our imagination displaces sublunary reality. At first sight the world of myth may seem far from that of *Point Rash-Judgement*, but the poem is remarkable for the way in which it draws on one of the most important events in Medieval romance, so subtly that we may not realize it. Wordsworth offers a presage of what is to come in the description of the walk round the lake, in those marvellous lines where the verse's rhythms mimic those of the eye as it passes excitedly from one plant to another, finally settling on the strangely exotic sight of the *Osmunda regalis*, a fern common in Wordsworth's time, but now no longer to be found on those shores:

And often, trifling with a privilege  
 Alike indulg'd to all, we paus'd, one now  
 And now the other, to point out, perchance  
 To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair  
 Either to be divided from the place  
 On which it grew, or to be left alone  
 To its own beauty. Many such there are,  
 Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall plant  
 So stately, of the Queen *Osmunda* nam'd,  
 Plant lovelier in its own retir'd abode  
 On Grasmere's beach, than Naiad by the side  
 Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere  
 Sole-sitting by the shores of old Romance.

<sup>4</sup> Griggs i. 354.



The very name of the *Osmunda regalis* carries a magic—it is a queen turned into a plant, like a character out of Ovid. Its tall, stately appearance does not merely remind us of a monarch, but foreshadows the human shape that is about to appear, 'The tall and upright figure of a Man / Attir'd in peasant's garb'. Everything is about to change—and the Greek naiad and King Arthur's Lady of the Lake, introduced into the poem with their supernatural associations, confirm that these 'tendencies to shape' are about to take over. The queen is about to become a peasant. For a moment, we may even be pardoned for believing the 'shores of old Romance' those of Grasmere, as the Lady of the Lake returns—a kind of presiding genius over the transformation in which we are to be involved.

Another kind of transformation is going on in the fields which provide a background to the drama. The 'busy mirth / Of Reapers, Men and Women, Boys and Girls' may remind us once more of the Arthurian legends, which are intertwined with the rite and ritual of harvest-time. It might even raise suspicions that the theme of death and rejuvenation invoked by that season, and echoed in popular myth, is being reworked, albeit in an unusual way. The angler seems to materialize only with reluctance, 'Through a thin veil of glittering haze', as if distilled out of a potent mixture of inherited myth and the inscrutable forces indicated by the implied presence of the Lady of the Lake. With his 'tall and upright figure', echoing that of the *Osmunda regalis*, he seems at first less like a peasant than a noble; he may even remind us of the Fisher King.

In Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century poem, *The Story of the Grail*, one of Arthur's knights, Sir Perceval, seeks vainly for somewhere to cross a large river, when he meets an old man fishing. The old man, whom he afterwards learns to be the Fisher King, invites him to his castle for the night, where he is dined. At dinner he sees a number of strange things, including a lance that sheds blood, and a bowl. He fails to question the old man about his identity, or to ask about the lance or the bowl. He is told later that the bowl was the holy grail, and is reprimanded for not enquiring after it:

Had you asked, the wealthy king, so sorely afflicted, would have been cured of his wound and would have held his land in peace, land he will never hold again. And do you know what will befall the king if he is not cured of his wounds, and does not hold his land? Ladies will lose their husbands; hapless maidens will be orphans; many knights will die; and lands will be laid waste. All these ills will result because of you.<sup>5</sup>

Perceval's crimes are compounded by the fact that, as he is told, 'This has happened, know well, because of your sin against your mother, for she died of grief for you.'<sup>6</sup> He is guilty of a kind of betrayal—one that emanates from his complicity in his mother's death to the failure to question the Fisher King. Like so many legends, Perceval's has its roots in a traumatic past—one in which we may be surprised to find ourselves implicated. Wordsworth's encounter with the Fisher King is more succinct than Perceval's because, as elsewhere in the *Lyrical Ballads*, he has abandoned traditional narrative structures, and telescoped his story, here concentrating it into an act of recognition. But that should not prevent us from seeing that its consequences are no less devastating for him than for his twelfth-century counterpart.

<sup>5</sup> *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* tr. David Staines (Bloomington, 1993), pp. 396-7. I find no evidence that Wordsworth ever read Chrétien, though it is an intriguing coincidence that he was reading Malory just before the composition of *Point Rash-Judgement*; see my *Wordsworth's reading 1800-1815* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 384.

The Russian film director, Andrey Tarkovsky, wrote of his film, *Mirror*, that it 'was about my feelings towards people dear to me; about my relationships with them; my perpetual pity for them and my own inadequacy—my feeling of duty left unfulfilled.'<sup>7</sup> For Tarkovsky, art serves partly to heal the scars left by obligations left undischarged—even, to put it more strongly, by the sense of having failed, or even betrayed, the hopes and expectations of those dear to us. You hardly need to have seen his films to recognize these as the sentiments of a Romantic, for they bring into range the same psychic forces that compel Wordsworth. The impact of *Point Rash-Judgement* in particular derives partly from the fact that the encounter at its heart leads to a sudden, and rather horrible, insight the poet could have done without. The rash judgement is more than a momentary failing (just as Perceval's failure to ask the right question at the right time is more than a mere oversight); it is evidence of the capacity to betray—one rooted in our feelings of inadequacy, of duty left unfulfilled. Hence Perceval's crimes can be traced to unacknowledged guilt at his mother's death. Closer to home, Wordsworth's only dramatic work, *The Borderers*, reveals an intense preoccupation with the psychology of betrayal:

Action is transitory, a step, a blow—  
 The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
 'Tis done—and in the after vacancy  
 We wonder at ourselves like men betray'd.  
 Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
 And has the nature of infinity.<sup>8</sup>

Where for earlier writers betrayal was the strategy of the calculating Machiavel, Wordsworth reveals it to be a universal, a reflex arising out of what, since Freud, we have called the id. When those permanent, obscure, and dark elements of our nature come to life, Harry Gill's teeth begin to chatter, and the protagonist of *The Prelude* hears

Low breathings coming after me, and sounds  
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps  
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.<sup>9</sup>

Steps, blows, the motion of a muscle this way or that, indicate not just the absence of wisdom, any more than black is the mere absence of colour. What Wordsworth is trying to say is that only when those elements have impelled us to act do we realize their existence. Romanticism fostered the liberal belief that human nature is naturally good but corrupted by the world. Man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains. Wordsworth's insight was that evil and good are neither separable nor distinguishable: both are integral to our psychological constitution. In fact, they *are* our constitution. To deny this in favour of moral absolutism breeds tyrants, Wordsworth realized—those like Robespierre and intellectual ones such as Godwin. No wonder that, recalling his early radicalism in the *Prelude*—in particular, his infatuation with Godwinian Reason—Wordsworth describes his 'young ingenuous mind' as 'Pleased with extremes'.<sup>10</sup> For the mature poet, glib moral judgements are inadequate. That *Point Rash-Judgement* so eloquently articulates its scepticism at such formulaic responses reveals as much about his disillusionment at the failure

<sup>7</sup> Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* tr. Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, 1986), p. 134

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from *The Borderers* ed. Robert Osborn (Ithaca, NY, 1982), p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> *Two-Part Prelude* i 47-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Thirteen-Book Prelude* x 815-16

of French revolutionary promises as about his rejection of the English radical circles of which he was once part. Hence his criticism of Godwin's *Political Justice* in 1798 on the grounds that it could have no constructive effect on morality: 'these bald & naked reasonings are impotent over our habits, they cannot form them; from the same cause they are equally powerless in regulating our judgments concerning the value of men & things. They contain no picture of human life; they describe nothing.'<sup>11</sup> The developing drama of Wordsworth's art during the first decade of the nineteenth century, and especially in the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, unfolds from his efforts to create a literature with its taproot fixed deeply in his experience of human life, the workings of the human mind, 'men & things'—in short, the materials of the moralist. This is the light in which one reads both of the part played by Perceval in his mother's death, and of Wordsworth's fateful encounter with his own Fisher King. 'I think publications in which we formally & systematically lay down rules for the actions of Men cannot be too long delayed', Wordsworth wrote in 1798. If the modern reader bridles at the moralitas with which *Point Rash-Judgement* concludes, it is worth recalling that when *Lyrical Ballads* went to press, he wrote to the printer to ensure that those lines were correctly set, insisting that they 'are absolutely necessary to render the po[em] intelligible.'<sup>12</sup> Rather than confining it, they bridge the gap between the poet's experience and our own, extending its application into the present:

Nor did we fail to see within ourselves  
 What need there is to be reserv'd in speech,  
 And temper all our thoughts with charity.  
 —Therefore, unwilling to forget that day,  
 My Friend, Myself, and She who then receiv'd  
 The same admonishment, have called the place  
 By a memorial name, uncouth indeed  
 As e'er by Mariner was giv'n to Bay  
 Or Foreland on a new-discover'd coast,  
 And POINT RASH-JUDGMENT is the name it bears.

In 1843 Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick that 'The character of the eastern shore of Grasmere Lake is quite changed since these verses were written, by the public road being carried along its side'.<sup>13</sup> That fact, though poignant to the literary pilgrim, and painful to Wordsworth himself, is peculiarly irrelevant to the poems on the naming of places, because the psychic map they plot is impervious to the ravages of time. No matter that the road's course is altered, nor that we may only speculate as to the precise location of the point of 'jutting land' on which the angler stood: what counts is process. Absorbed into the imagination, the shores of Grasmere lake are forever established as one of those 'permanent and beautiful forms of nature' with which the poet's passions are incorporated. Why should this move us so deeply? Partly, no doubt, because the space of art is the ideal one of fiction. In it, things never decay; one cannot walk into the world of a poem as one walks the shores of the real Grasmere lake. Poetry is incorruptible. Its component parts are the rudiments of Paradise, the building blocks of a system that has no relationship at all to our bodies, except through the ocular perception of the printed word. They

<sup>11</sup> *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (3 vols., Oxford, 1974), i, 103.

<sup>12</sup> *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth I The Early Years 1787-1805* ed. Ernest de Selincourt revised by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967) (hereafter *EY*), p. 311.

<sup>13</sup> *Cornell Lyrical Ballads* 399.

serve to map out an imaginary topography—not just in the poems on the naming of places, but in nearly all the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* volume 2—a topography that bears into times more disturbed and alienated than those known to the poet a crucial warning of what it is to lose sight, even for a moment, of our shared humanity. All of which is distinctly Wordsworthian. Indeed, it could hardly be further from the kind of exemplum delivered by fables of the kind read by Wordsworth at Hawkshead Grammar School during the 1780s. And if we cannot resist the feeling that we are complicit with the poet and his companions at the moment of recognition—that, reliant on direct observation, he has given to the anxieties awakened by the encounter the density of objects—it must also be that this most morally undeceived of poems possesses all the depth and ambiguity of real life. It might almost be argued that *Point Rash-Judgement* confronts us with a mystery to which there is no solution, refusing to gloss its author's serious musing and self-reproach, and backing away from any comment on the act of recognition at its centre. Such is the nature of the poem and its author: analysis is antithetical to Wordsworth.

All the same, there are two points to be made about the poem, both of which relate, however tangentially, to these questions. *Point Rash-Judgement* has a particularly intriguing history, even for a Wordsworth poem. Its beginnings lie in the hot summer of 1800, the Wordsworths' first at Dove Cottage. As Dorothy wrote in her journal, 'The house was a hot oven but yet we could not bake the pies'.<sup>14</sup> That entry dates from late June or July 1800, the period at which, one 'sweet morning', she accompanied her brother and Coleridge on a walk round the lake. We do not know on what date their encounter with the angler took place, but we can be sure that it occurred at around this time. In later years Wordsworth insisted on the poem's veracity; as late as 1843 he told Isabella Fenwick that '[The facts spoken of] occurred strictly as recorded.'<sup>15</sup>

Surprisingly, the first mention of it appears not in a letter or journal by either of the Wordsworths, but in one of Coleridge's notebooks: 'Poor fellow at a distance idle? in this hay-time when wages are so high? Come near—thin, pale, can scarce speak—or throw out his fishing rod.'<sup>16</sup> The jotting is brief, but brings into sharp focus the conceit on which the poem is based. 'Poor fellow at a distance idle? in this haytime when wages are so high?' Coleridge's question makes the same points later to be raised in the poem, both about the angler's indolence and the higher wages during harvest-time. It is resolved by a sight that fundamentally alters the context in which it is raised. 'Come near—thin, pale, can scarce speak—or throw out his fishing rod.' The resolution is complete. Transformed into one of the poor, the idler on the lakeside provides the onlookers with a kind of answer.

The presence of this jotting in Coleridge's notebook is intriguing, not least because it must have preceded the composition of Wordsworth's poem by several months. Coleridge does not usually note down the details of incidents later to appear in his friend's poems. Perhaps Wordsworth asked him to make a note on his behalf, as a kind of *aide-mémoire*—but that would be unusual, to say the least—and why did Wordsworth not make the note himself? A more likely explanation might be that, in the wake of the lakeside encounter, it was decided that Coleridge, rather than Wordsworth—would compose *Point Rash-Judgement*. In fact, the evidence supports the contention that *Point Rash-Judgement* was originally to have been Coleridge's poem.

At first, it had been decided that *Lyrical Ballads* volume 2 would contain *Christabel*, and Wordsworth specifically attributes it to 'a Friend' in an early draft of the Preface posted to the

<sup>14</sup> *The Grasmere Journals* ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford, 1990) (hereafter Woof), p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Cornell *Lyrical Ballads* 399.

<sup>16</sup> *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton and London, 1957 onwards) (hereafter *Notebooks*), i. 761.

printer on 30 September. However, on 6 October, Wordsworth decided to cancel *Christabel* from the volume, and instead to include other poems by Coleridge. On that day, or the day after, he wrote to the printer again to make an alteration to the Preface. Instead of the sentence mentioning *Christabel*, he substituted the following remark: 'It is proper to inform the Reader that the Poems entitled the ancient Mariner, the Foster Mother's Tale, the Nightingale, the Dungeon, and Love, are written by a friend, who has also furnished me with a few of those Poems in the second volume, which are classed under the title of "Poems on the Naming of Places."' <sup>17</sup> By this time Wordsworth had already composed *To M.H.* and *To Joanna*; those of the *Poems on the Naming of Places* yet to be written included *Point Rash-Judgement*. It, and perhaps one or two others, were to have been contributed by Coleridge.

It was not to be. Coleridge was pouring his energies into essays for the *Morning Post*, and felt unable to write serious poetry. He had given up all hope of contributing to *Lyrical Ballads* by 17 October, when Dorothy recorded in her journal, 'Coleridge had done nothing for the LB'. <sup>18</sup> She was not the only one who noticed. In a painfully self-aware notebook entry dated 30 October, Coleridge wrote: 'He knew not what to do—something, he felt, must be done—he rose, drew his writing-desk suddenly before him—sate down, took the pen—& found that he knew not what to do'. <sup>19</sup> No doubt Wordsworth was partly to blame. Stimulated by Longman's interest in *Lyrical Ballads*, he enjoyed an uncharacteristically fruitful summer and autumn—a period during which he composed *Michael*, *Hart-Leap Well*, *The Pet Lamb*, and the Preface, among other things. Such productivity can only have exacerbated Coleridge's sense of creative stagnation. But Coleridge's confidence was further undermined by the cancellation of *Christabel*; on 9 October, still reeling from the shock, he told Davy that 'I think very differently of CHRISTABEL.—I would rather have written Ruth, and Nature's Lady <sup>20</sup> than a million such poems'. <sup>21</sup> In this demoralised state, it is hardly surprising that Coleridge failed to compose the remaining poems on the naming of places; instead, he was reduced to the role of copyist, providing fair copy for the printer of *Lyrical Ballads*, volume 2, from which his work was excluded. If at first Coleridge accepted Wordsworth's low valuation of his talents, it later left him embittered, leading him to comment in 1818 of the Wordsworths' 'cold praise and effective discouragement of every attempt of mine to roll onward in a distinct current of my own—who admitted that the Ancient Mariner [and] the Christabel . . . were not without merit, but were abundantly anxious to acquit their judgements of any blindness to the very numerous defects'. <sup>22</sup>

At all events, Wordsworth realised within days of dropping *Christabel* from *Lyrical Ballads* that Coleridge would not produce the two or three poems on the naming of places which he had promised, and wrote them himself. On 10 October, only four days after the cancellation of *Christabel*, Dorothy recorded, 'William sat up after me writing Point Rash judgment', <sup>23</sup> and on 13 October, she wrote: 'I copied poems on the naming of places', suggesting that they were by then complete. They were in fair copy by 17 October, when Coleridge wrote to the printer with instructions for the half-title that would introduce them—another humiliation. <sup>24</sup> *Point Rash-*

<sup>17</sup> EY 304-5.

<sup>18</sup> Woof 27.

<sup>19</sup> Notebooks i. 834.

<sup>20</sup> *Three years she grew in sun and shower.*

<sup>21</sup> Griggs i. 631-2.

<sup>22</sup> Griggs i. 631n2.

<sup>23</sup> Woof 26.

<sup>24</sup> Griggs i. 637.

*Judgement*, the poem originally assigned to Coleridge, was thus written by Wordsworth, probably over a brief three-day period in early October 1800.

The context is suggestive. In Arthurian legend, the Fisher King is in search of the regenerative principle; his lands are barren, and he is in continual pain from his wounds. Similarly, Coleridge was unable to write verse, and was certainly wounded by the cancellation of *Christabel* from *Lyrical Ballads*. Physically, too, he was ailing; among other things, on 28 November Dorothy mentioned in her journal the 'Great Boils upon his neck'<sup>25</sup> that obliged him to take to bed rather than return to Keswick. Coleridge and the Fisher King shared the same hopeless plight—and as Wordsworth composed the poem foisted on him by his friend's inertia, the 'idle man' at its centre might well have seemed eerily familiar.

Whether it be thus or no, an even more troubled figure lurks behind that of the Fisher King. It is almost impossible for us to imagine Wordsworth's insecurity at the time he composed this poem; but it is salutary to recall that in 1800 he was without paid work at a time when there was no welfare support. Unlike Coleridge, he did not write essays for newspapers or periodicals. Although we know what was to come, he could not have been certain of success: the path he had chosen was a gamble based on the promise of his past writing, and the faith of his sister. Like all writers, he lived with the constant prospect of failure: not just artistic failure—that was the least of it—but poverty, destitution, and all the social ills that went with it. Only someone as well-insulated from such anxieties as Byron could have cast him as a ideological traitor for accepting the job of distributor of stamps for Westmorland—an idiocy still current among those who write of Wordsworth's later dessication. Even in 1800 the risk of failure was high. As far as the literary world was concerned, Wordsworth was known, if at all, as one of the two anonymous authors of a small volume of poems greeted with a mixed crop of reviews a year or two earlier. Were he to forget the consequences of failure, he might be reminded by the broken lives of those who had preceded him—not least Chatterton and Burns, both of whom died before their time, and who were to inspire the famous sententia of *Resolution and Independence*:

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.

If the figure at the centre of *Point Rash-Judgement* echoes that of Coleridge, it has other resonances closer to home. The act of recognition is reflexive: the man 'worn down / By sickness', 'using his best skill to gain / A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake / that knew not of his wants', exemplifies precisely the anxiety that must have preoccupied Wordsworth as he completed work on the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads*. And in that light, his tactless treatment of Coleridge is understandable. The proximity of failure can engender desperation: confronted by an impending deadline, and the evident strangeness of *Christabel*, Wordsworth feared that the reviewers who had used *The Ancient Mariner* to attack *Lyrical Ballads* volume 1 might use the new poem to criticize volume 2. As he explained to Longman: 'A Poem of Mr Coleridge's was to have concluded the Volumes; but upon mature deliberation I found that the Style of this Poem was so discordant from my own that it could not be printed along with my poems with any propriety.'<sup>26</sup> It was pusillanimous, as was the note he inserted apologizing for the 'defects' of *The Ancient Mariner*,<sup>27</sup> but it was also the product of an all too human fallibility, especially when

<sup>25</sup> Woolf 33.

<sup>26</sup> EY 309.

<sup>27</sup> Cornell *Lyrical Ballads* 791.

seen in the light of the intense fear generated by the possibility of failure—that spectre into whose eyes Wordsworth gazes at the culmination of *Point Rash-Judgement*.

In the face of such demons, there is a kind of heroism in Wordsworth's determination to write so beautifully of the rambler's carefree mood at the outset. After all, if the poem incriminates them, it also commemorates them. It is less an expression of fear than a celebration of the importance of being fallible, and of knowing how to learn from our mistakes. Why else would Wordsworth have written so affectionately of the dandelion seed that, with its sportive wanderings, evokes their carelessness and irresponsibility—the very qualities that allow us to take such risks as choosing to write for a living, or of trusting to the good judgement of our friends?

And in our vacant mood,  
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft  
Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,  
Which, seeming lifeless half, and half impell'd  
By some internal feeling, skimm'd along  
Close to the surface of the lake that lay  
Asleep in a dead calm, ran closely on  
Along the dead calm lake, now here, now there,  
In all its sportive wanderings all the while  
Making report of an invisible breeze  
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,  
Its very playmate and its moving soul.

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‘A Dawn of Imaginative Feeling’<sup>1</sup>:  
Wordsworth’s Debt to John Brown (1715-66)

By BILL ROBERTS

Now sunk the Sun, now Twilight sunk, and Night  
Rode in her zenith; nor a passing breeze  
Sighed to the groves, which in the midnight air  
Stood motionless, and in the peaceful floods  
Inverted hung: For now the billow slept  
Along the shore, nor heav’d the deep, but spread  
A shining mirror to the Moon’s pale orb,  
Which, dim and waning, o’er the shadowy cliffs,  
The solemn woods and spiry mountain-tops  
Her glimmering faintness threw: Now every eye,  
Oppress’d with toil, was drown’d in deep repose;  
Save that the unseen shepherd in his watch,  
Propt on his crook, stood list’ning by the fold,  
And gaz’d the starry vault and pendant moon;  
Nor voice nor sound broke on the deep serene,  
But the soft murmur of swift-gushing rills,  
Forth-issuing from the mountain’s distant steep,  
(Unheard till now, and now scarce heard) proclaim’d  
All things at rest, and imag’d the still voice  
Of quiet whispering to the ear of Night.

THIS POEM, one of those attractive minor works that Professor Lonsdale has rescued for posterity in his *New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*, is the only work by John Brown currently in print. One reason for its survival is that the poem has an importance beyond its intrinsic worth: it is arguably the first poem to look at mountain scenery with modern eyes. Wordsworth spoke of owing a debt to Brown<sup>2</sup> and printed this poem in full in his *Guide through the District of the Lakes* in 1835, with the commendation that it shows ‘a dawn of imaginative feeling’.<sup>3</sup> It is strange, therefore, that Brown himself, as will be shown below, apparently re-

<sup>1</sup> I have used this phrase, *A Dawn of Imaginative Feeling*, as the title of a recent book on Brown (Carlisle, 1996). Some of the ground covered here is also mentioned in that book; there was not, however, space there to deal with the problem in the way that I wanted.

<sup>2</sup> ‘I have been indebted to the North far more than I shall ever be able to acknowledge. . . . The list of English Border poets is not so distinguished, but Langhorne was a native of Westmorland, and Browne, the Author of the *Estimate of Manners and Principles*, etc.,—a poet, as his letter on the vale of Keswick, with the accompanying verses, shows—was born in Cumberland’—from a letter by Wordsworth to Allan Cunningham quoted in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (3 vols., Oxford, 1974) (hereafter *Prose Works*), ii. 401. Besides the debt acknowledged here and the admiration expressed in the *Guide through the District of the Lakes*, Wordsworth also appears to have copied Brown, consciously or unconsciously, in the skating episode in the *Prelude* (1805 i 425ff.); this has echoes of a passage in Brown’s minor poem, *Scating* (published in *Dodsley’s Museum* in 1746). I have dealt with these resemblances in a paper in *The British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19, 2 (autumn 1996).

<sup>3</sup> *Prose Works* ii. 193.



garded the poem as unworthy of publication. One of the problems with which this paper will concern itself will be trying to locate those qualities which the twentieth-century anthologist (presumably) could see that the eighteenth-century poet himself could not. In seeking those qualities, the paper will also explore Wordsworth's uses of the poem and his wider debt to Brown.

John Brown is not now as well known as he deserves to be or as he once was. In his lifetime, thousands were stirred by his criticism of the moral state of England in his *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757) and full houses at Drury Lane applauded his play *Barbarossa* (1755). His *An Essay on Satire* (1745) is estimated to have been available in one form or another in over 35,000 copies during his lifetime, a circulation figure which few other eighteenth-century poems could match. After his death, his *Description of the Lake at Keswick* (1766) moved first Gray and then a steadily increasing host of tourists to visit the Lake District. His political writings show a strong belief in social order based on an educated consensus, which he saw as guaranteed by a Protestant church linked to a constitutional (Hanoverian) monarchy. He feared social chaos and was prey to fits of depression; indeed, he ended his life at the age of 50 by cutting his throat with a razor. This passionate character may not appear to be at work in this quiet, reflective poem but it may be a factor in its inspiration and in its rejection: that is to say, it may have been inspired by a suppressed 'romanticism' and rejected by a conscious classicism. Brown's problems appear to originate in the stresses produced by tension between a Jacobite upbringing and the Hanoverianism he later overtly espoused. One only has to look at Scott's *Waverley* to see that the two causes produced cultural and psychological differences as well as political ones: Hanoverianism involved disciplined rationality while Jacobitism allowed spontaneity and passion. Brown's suppressed Jacobitism is arguably at work in this poem—a highly speculative notion but not without evidence and parallel.<sup>4</sup>

The above presents a truncated account of Brown's achievement and personality and indeed not a great deal is known of the detail of his life. Some significant facts are, however, known about the provenance of this poem. It was unpublished in Brown's lifetime, being first printed by Richard Cumberland in 1776 in his *Odes* (pp. 4-6). Cumberland gave the following explanation of how he had come by the poem. 'I have been favoured with a Manuscript of the late ingenious Dr. Browne, which I had the privilege of inserting in this publication, and should so have done, but that I found that it had already got forth into the world and was in print: It is touched with great spirit, and in a glowing stile, which gradually kindles till it breaks forth into the following rhapsody, which I believe hath hitherto escaped publication'. Cumberland then prints the poem and closes his explanation with the remark that, 'What I have here inserted is taken from a letter to a friend, and is a valuable specimen of the author'. The poem was given a wider circulation by being included as a footnote in William Cockin's (second) edition of West's *Guide to the Lakes* in 1780 (pp. 115-16); and reprinted in William Hutchinson's *History of Cumberland* in 1794 (i. 444) and in Robert Anderson's *The Works of the British Poets* in 1795

<sup>4</sup> A footnote may not suffice to make this notion intellectually respectable. However, there is evidence that Brown's father was a Jacobite, if a covert one, since he was ordained by a non-juring bishop and employed as curate by a known Jacobite (Rev. Dr John Thomlinson of Rothbury). Brown's espousal of the Hanoverian cause was undoubtedly sincere as is apparent from his steadfast behaviour during the siege of Carlisle (he acted as ADC to the commander of the castle). His rationalism can be seen displayed in his severely Augustan *Essay on Criticism*; his 'romanticism' can be seen in his *Dissertation upon Poetry and Music* with its attack on 'the dead Uniformity of modern verse' with its 'cold Style, so far removed from Nature'. Stresses between conscious levels of behaviour and subconscious levels of feeling can surely produce contradictions and neuroses.

(x. 887). As mentioned earlier, Wordsworth printed the poem in his *Guide through the District of the Lakes* in 1835.<sup>5</sup>

The reference to the 'letter to a friend' places the poem as originally a part of what was published in April 1766 in the *London Chronicle* as 'a letter from a gentleman to a friend in London' and which was later published after Brown's death as *A Description of the Lake at Keswick* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1767), a seminal document in the discovery of the Lake District and indeed in the development of that new sensitivity that became known as Romanticism. This letter describes the view over Derwentwater down towards Borrowdale, apparently from Walla Crag, just south of Keswick. It distinguishes three qualities in the landscape—'Beauty, Horror, and Immensity'—and it set the aesthetic standards by which the early tourists judged wild scenery. The poem appears to have been included originally towards the end of the prose *Description* and to have been introduced by a sentence suggesting that a would-be visitor should take 'a walk by still moonlight (at which time the distant waterfalls are heard in all their variety of sound)'. The 'letter' published in the *London Chronicle* was certainly by Brown (we have the testimony of Richard Cumberland for this) and must have been printed with his approval, though he appears to have been sufficiently uncertain of its reception to have published it anonymously. He must have been additionally unsure of the poem, for he must personally have excluded it. All the evidence of his other works is that he exercised close and detailed supervision of their printing.

We do need first to have more knowledge of the 'letter' of which the poem seemingly formed an original part. The conventional explanation of the provenance of the 'letter' is that it was written to George, Lord Lyttleton after a visit to the latter's country house at Hagley in 1752, and that it then circulated privately for a number of years within Lyttleton's circle, before Brown was persuaded at Lyttleton's instigation to publish it. This explanation is based on a reference to Hagley in the first line of the letter and on a confident claim by Rose Mary Davis in her book, *The Good Lord Lyttleton* (Bethlehem, Penn., 1939). Owing to the dispersal of some Lyttleton papers since the writing of that book, it is not now possible to verify the claim. The explanation remains possible but it is now mainly supposition and there is no hard evidence to support it. An alternative explanation, and the one I would propose, is that the 'letter' was a fictitious letter written as a journalistic exercise; Brown did use this literary device elsewhere in his works. Apart from its opening words, it has none of the language or style of a letter and it would have been most unlikely and out of character for Brown to have written so extensively to someone so far above him in social station as Lord Lyttleton.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it is hard to find a suitable possible recipient for such a letter from Brown's limited number of friends and known correspondents. As for its date, we do know from a letter to Garrick that Brown was in Keswick in September 1765 and it seems more likely that both 'letter' and poem were written after that visit.<sup>7</sup> This

<sup>5</sup> Cumberland's printing of the poem is clearly closest to the author's intentions, though he does not capitalize all nouns, as Brown would have done. Cockin, West, and Anderson follow Cumberland, with some varied loosening of the punctuation. Wordsworth introduces changes which alter the the sense of the poem and which will be discussed later. Professor Lonsdale informs me that he used Cumberland's version as his copytext, though he does also introduce changes to conform with the standard practice of his anthology (*op. cit.*).

<sup>6</sup> In a letter to Lord Royston, the patron of his living at Great Horkesley, Brown speaks of 'a Fear which I am subject to, with respect to my Superiors in Station, the Fear of intruding and being troublesome' (BL Add. MSS 335606, f.339).

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Garrick dated 4 September 1765 in *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick* (2 vols., London, 1831), i. 199.

would give us a firm date, 1765, for both letter and poem. It may not be very strong confirmation of this later date but it is interesting that a little known letter from a Bristol merchant written in 1759 describes a visit to Keswick—'one of the most enchanting scenes this island produces'—and to Wigton, mentioning 'the famous Dr Brown' but clearly not aware of any letter connecting the two subjects.<sup>8</sup>

One further problem concerning the poem is the fact that, as a result of its curious origins, it is in need of a title, since neither Brown nor Cumberland gave it one. Professor Lonsdale in his *New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* prints the poem with an unhelpful and inaccurate title: [*A Rhapsody, Written in the Lakes in Westmorland*].<sup>9</sup> Melvyn Bragg includes the poem in his *Cumbria in Verse* under another unsatisfactory title: *THE VALE OF KESWICK: The Same Scene by Moonlight*.<sup>10</sup> The reference to Westmorland is inaccurate, since Keswick is in what was Cumberland, while the words, 'The Same Scene', only make sense if the prose description of the 'letter' is there for comparison. While the word 'Rhapsody' is certainly suggested by Richard Cumberland, it is inappropriate in its eighteenth-century meaning<sup>11</sup> and patronising in its twentieth-century sense: it now suggests a sentimental, spontaneous effusion, of limited seriousness. The poem is worthy of a better title. *Night Scene in the Vale of Keswick* may be wordy but it clearly indicates its subject and is, therefore, the title by which I would suggest that it should be known.

At first sight, the poem is conventional in diction and imitative of well-known traditions in topographical and 'evening' poetry. As John Barrell points out, 'Grove' is a keyword in 'the specialized vocabulary which conveyed the original attitudes to nature that underlay their [i.e. the eighteenth century poets'] attitude to landscape'.<sup>12</sup> Brown uses the word 'groves' in a thoroughly eighteenth-century way to transform the wild woods round Derwentwater into suitably civilized plantations in an Italian-style landscape—or so it would seem at the beginning of the poem. The impression is confirmed by other phrases in the same stylised, artificial manner frequently used (as the EPD<sup>13</sup> will confirm) by other poets of the time: 'the billow' . . . 'passing breeze' . . . 'the stary vault' . . . 'swift-gushing rills' . . . 'the Moon's pale orb'. Brown may well have borrowed 'glimmering' from Gray's *Elegy*, since he was a deliberately derivative poet who liked to quote from his models by way of literary compliment. However, this word too was a favourite at the time (with 283 'hits' in the EPD). Possibly Brown is doing something similar when he concocts the compound epithet 'swift-gushing',<sup>14</sup> since it looks similar to Pope's 'swift-gliding' (*Iliad* ii 16), but again the compound epithet is a well-known feature of the stock diction of the time: 'forth-issuing' is another example of the same formation. The unusual phrase, 'the

<sup>8</sup> B. G. Hutton, 'A Lakeland Journey 1759', in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 61 (1961) 288-93.

<sup>9</sup> *New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford, 1989) poem 302, p. 462. Professor Lonsdale appears to have obtained his title from Robert Anderson's printing of the poem in his *Works of the British Poets* Vol.10 (1795).

<sup>10</sup> *Cumbria In Verse* (London, 1984), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> 'Any number of parts joined together, without necessary dependence or natural connection', Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (3rd ed., 2 vols., London, 1765).

<sup>12</sup> *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* (Cambridge, 1972), p.42.

<sup>13</sup> The English Poetry Database on CD-rom is, of course, a most useful way of checking on the frequency of word usages and on author identities.

<sup>14</sup> Curiously, Wordsworth thought fit, in early editions of the *Guide*, to change this word 'swift-gushing' to 'soft-gushing'; he also altered 'billow' to 'billows'. Neither seems to be an improvement!

deep serene', from the same source in Pope (*Iliad* viii 689), may also be meant as a deliberate echo. Another image possibly from Pope is the picture of the woods reflected upside down on the still lake's surface but this too is a conventional reference, common in other eighteenth-century poets.<sup>15</sup> As is common in the topographical tradition, the poem is static, views the landscape from above, and is studiously impersonal. The misanthropic melancholy, which is a strong element in eighteenth century 'evening' poems, comes out clearly in the weight of the diction—'dim', 'solemn', 'oppress'd', 'quiet'—and in the implied solitude, though it is not accompanied with the usual didacticism. Brown would surely have been happy to have acknowledged most of this.

There is, however, another current flowing. The overall effect is not one of remoteness, as one might expect from secondhand, stylized language. Brown is original in his description of the lake as a 'shining mirror'. The 'shadowy cliffs' have the same menace as the 'shadowy banks' and 'solitary cliffs' in the skating incident in Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1805 i 453, 458). The 'solemn woods' suggest religious awe and the 'spiry mountain tops' suggest a natural cathedral as well as mere height: the word may be an exaggeration after the fashion of landscape painting of the time but it does neatly indicate the way in which Brown is regarding them, both as fearsomely steep and as religiously awe-inspiring. The 'unseen shepherd', with its Biblical reference, suggests an immanent caring presence, a precursor of the leech-gatherer, perhaps, in his timeless watchfulness. And the silence, in which sounds not usually heard become audible, takes on the aura of an almost supernatural phenomenon. The moonlight has already transformed the world into something strange; the silence adds something which is uncanny. The effect of what Brown is doing is to create the kind of experience that Wordsworth creates in the *Prelude*, also using darkness and solitude. Brown builds up his poem to a climax by means of a repeated main clause (opening with 'Now') within a single multiple sentence (not so obvious in the punctuation of the Oxford anthology). When Wordsworth printed the poem in his *Guide through the District of the Lakes* he inserted a comma between the adjective 'quiet' and its noun 'whispering'. He may have been quoting from Hutchinson (who introduces such a comma into his version) rather than from West or Cumberland, but the effect is to change the idea into something more like his own early conception of a pantheistic voice of the universe. Brown undoubtedly meant simply to compare the sound of the streams to a quiet whispering, but the personification of the 'ear of Night' is not so far from Wordsworth's numinous experience. The literary world was certainly not ready for this in 1766 and Brown might well have felt that his London acquaintances would sneer at it.

One person who certainly did not sneer was Thomas Gray. Somehow or other he must have obtained access to Brown's poem when it was still in manuscript, since he makes references to it in his 1769 journal-cum-letter describing his visit to Keswick and Borrowdale.<sup>16</sup> It requires little imagination or stretching of the argument to deduce that Gray was deliberately trying to replicate Brown's experience, as he describes his visit to Derwentwater in the evening.

In the evening I walked down to the lake, by the side of Crow Park, after sun-set, and saw the solemn colouring of the night draw on, the last gleam of sunshine fading away on the hill tops, the deep serene of the waters, and the long shadows of the mountains thrown across them, till they nearly touched the hithermost shore. At a distance were heard the

<sup>15</sup> Pope uses the image in *Windsor Forest* 211-12: 'Oft in her glass the musing shepherd spies / The headlong mountains and the downward skies'.

<sup>16</sup> Such access would be quite possible, given that Gray and Brown shared mutual friends and acquaintances (e.g. William Mason) and given the way in which writing often circulated informally.

murmurs of many waterfalls, not audible in the day time; I wished for the moon, but she was dark to me, and silent.<sup>17</sup>

The verbal resemblances to Brown's poem are clear, notably in the references to 'the deep serene' and to 'the murmurs of many waterfalls, not audible in the day time'. He clearly went wishing for the full moon that had shone on Brown but was not so lucky in his choice of day. Somebody must have told him that Crow Park was the place to which Brown had descended after describing the view from Walla Crag and this became a place of pilgrimage, as Friar's Crag (a little further along the bay) is now. Earlier in his description Gray describes Derwentwater's 'shining purity' and the 'inverted tops of the hills'. Bill Ruddick certainly saw Brown's influence on Gray later on in the Keswick passage. 'It is not difficult to see how memories of Brown's prose [referring, of course, to the 'Letter' rather than to the poem], working upon a sensibility eager to re-experience a vividly remembered Alpine sublimity, and an imagination ready to embody it, launched Gray into the often-derided description of Borrowdale.'<sup>18</sup> Gray's description is beautifully done, of course, and does not deserve the patronising comment it usually receives. Eleven years later William Cockin made use of the passage by transferring it from Mason's *Memoir of Gray*<sup>19</sup> to his anthology of Lake District literature, included as an appendix to the 1780 and later editions of West's *Guide* (along with Brown's 'Letter').

Of course, I am aware of the teleological fallacy of regarding a work, Brown's or Gray's, simply as the precursor of an allegedly greater later one, as may seem to be implied here by seeing them as predecessors of Wordsworth. The problem at issue here, however, is that one is not always able to see a work in its own right because of its very originality. In these circumstances it is inevitable that one has to speak of a piece as 'being before its time', as Brown's poem and Gray's *Journal* certainly seem to be. The phrase does have some legitimate uses and there are situations in which lesser works precede greater works and no harm is done by a little reflected glory.

We have already seen that Wordsworth also admired this poem to the extent of quoting it in full with approval as showing 'a dawn of imaginative feeling'. It is worth adding that this admiration stretched to imitation. In *An Evening Walk* (ll. 423-36) there is a clear attempt, as with Gray, to recreate Brown's experience.

But now the clear-bright Moon her zenith gains,  
And rimy without speck extend the plains;  
The deepest dell the mountain's breast displays,  
Scarce hides a shadow from her searching rays;  
From the dark blue 'faint silvery threads' divide  
The hills, while gleams below the azure tide;  
The scene is waken'd, yet its peace unbroke,  
By silver'd wreaths of quiet charcoal smoke,  
That o'er the ruins of the fallen wood,  
Steal down the hills, and spread along the flood.  
The song of mountain streams unheard by day,

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from [Thomas West], *A Guide to the Lakes* (2nd ed., London, 1780), p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> 'Thomas Gray's Travel Writing' in *Thomas Gray: Contemporary Essays* ed. W. B. Hutchings and William Ruddick (Liverpool, 1993), p. 139.

<sup>19</sup> William Mason, *The Poems of Mr Gray: To which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings* (York, 1775), p. 359.

Now hardly heard, beguiles my homeward way.  
 All air is, as the sleeping water, still,  
 List'ning the aerial music of the hill . . .

The phrase 'unheard by day / Now hardly heard' is far too close to Brown's to be an accident.<sup>20</sup> It is further testimony to the company in which Brown's poem belongs.

Without a doubt Wordsworth was right to see 'a dawn of imaginative feeling' in these verses (*Illustrated Guide* p. 92). R. D. Havens declared that, 'For conveying a sense of the hushed awe and magic of a moonlight night, this fragment is unsurpassed in the unrhymed verse of the century; indeed, as a rendering of a mood of nature it stands quite by itself'.<sup>21</sup> This praise loses much of its force with the inclusion of the word 'unrhymed', since it considerably limits the competition, but the second half rebuilds it somewhat. In selecting the poem for his anthology, Melvyn Bragg speaks of Brown's 'appreciation of the awesome and emotionally perturbing power of the district' (*op. cit.*, p. xi). Richard Cumberland, in including the poem in his volume of *Odes* in 1776, followed it with Brown's own comment: *In fine, this accumulation of beauty and immensity tends not only to excite rapture but reverence; for my part I make an annual voyage to Keswick, not only as an innocent amusement, but as a religious act.* This attitude goes beyond a taste for the picturesque to a pre-vision of the Wordsworthian sublime. It is surely the first eighteenth-century poem in which one can find that quality.

It is indeed ironic that the one poem Brown chose *not* to print should be the one item in his works which has survived in print to the end of the twentieth century. The irony demands an explanation. Why should a poet choose not to print what now seems to be his best poem? Presumably because it did not seem so to him; presumably because it was not the kind of formal, serious, rational verse that he saw as his normal *métier*; presumably because he did not see his own originality in writing what is essentially an imaginative, romantic lyric. One wonders what else he might have written: that is, both what he might have written and destroyed and what he might have written if he had fully realised his own lyric talent. As a hill-walker I admire Brown's courage and initiative in setting out from Keswick into a relatively hostile, unmapped, unlit landscape. As a researcher with a problem to explain, I imagine Brown, back in his London lodgings after his trip to Keswick, with his manuscript about his experience ready for the press, reluctantly deleting the poem. For the reasons, direct and indirect, that I have described, he must have said to himself, 'It will never do. They will laugh at me if I print that'.

### Carlisle

<sup>20</sup> Wordsworth found fault in his *Guide* with the Shepherd 'listening by the fold' (l. 14) on the grounds that 'the practice of folding sheep by night is unknown among these mountains'. Wordsworth was right to say that 'folding' of sheep at night is unknown, because it is unnecessary, the sheep having a homing instinct which keeps them to their native heaf. However, he seems to be misunderstanding what is going on. One does not have to assume from Brown's words that the sheep have been brought down off the fell. It was still common for shepherds to live out on the fells with their flocks in the middle of the eighteenth century and to 'fold' sheep at some seasons of the year (*vide* Susan Denyer, *Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District* (London, 1991), pp. 83-4). In fact, the remains of a shepherd's cottage (in regular use till the 1950s) are still to be seen, beside a sheepfold, near to the summit of Walla Crag, where, as mentioned earlier, Brown may have envisaged the scene of his poem as being set. Brown was almost certainly describing what he actually found, not inserting an imaginary, conventional figure.

<sup>21</sup> R. D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), pp. 242-3.

## Reviews

PAUL F. BETZ, *Romantic Archaeologies*. Baltimore, Maryland: University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and Wordsworth Trust America, 1995. Pp. 32

IN THIS CATALOGUE INTRODUCTION to an exhibition mounted in connection with the 'Cultural Legacies of Romanticism' Conference, Paul F. Betz (editor of the Cornell Wordsworth *Benjamin the Waggoner*, dedicated in 1819 to Charles Lamb) has mined his own collection to produce two series of treasures. The first, 'Some Images of the Age', comprises twenty-four pictures in various media 'of the Romantic Period expansively viewed'. The second, 'Selected Women Writers', is a diverse collection of prose, dramatic, and poetical works, portraits, autograph manuscripts, and letters. A distinct Wordsworthian flavour runs through this second series; many of these 'writers' (letter-writers, transcribers and album-compilers among them, as Betz rightly insists) were members or friends of the Wordsworth family: Mary (the poet's wife), Dorothy (his sister), Dora (his daughter), Emmeline Fisher (his first-cousin-once-removed, and a poetic prodigy), Sara Hutchinson (his sister-in-law), Sara Coleridge (Coleridge's daughter), Caroline Southey (Robert Southey's second wife), Maria Jane Jewsbury (Dora's close friend), and Margaret De Quincey (Thomas De Quincey's wife). Others—Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Joanna Baillie, for example—influenced Wordsworth. All are fascinating in their own right.

And the pearls of great price? In 'Some Images of the Age', these include the Wordsworth/Hutchinson and Southey family silhouettes (the Southey clan much the better-looking in profile); Sir George Beaumont's illustrations for Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* (none, alas, reproduced here); and Blake's handsome engraving of 'The Horse' from Hayley's *Ballads*. A letter by the portrait and miniature-painter Margaret Gillies suggests a good Wordsworthian excuse, and establishes an august precedent, for procrastination or failure to meet those deadlines: 'About Chaucer Mr. Wordsworth will himself write but when depends on various chances but I think it will be soon for he has talked for 3 days of the impossibility [of] finding a good pen.'

Betz's description of William Gilpin's full colour aquatint, 'Sublime Night Scene'—'A man on horseback descends into a valley (apparently the vale of Keswick as Saddleback can be seen in the background) in a lightning storm, with hanged man on gibbet to the left'—makes the absence of a catalogue reproduction tantalising. Gillray's complex 1798 caricature 'New Morality', in which radical Lamb appears as a toad, will certainly be of interest to Elians; Betz's suggestion here that Helen Maria Williams might also be represented in the devastating lampoon—a female intellectual among a tribe of motley 1790s males—is, however, not accurate: the 'Williams' present is not Helen Maria, but another male, the political philosopher David Williams.

She does appear, however, in the all-female preserve of the second series as the translator of *Paul and Virginia*, completed behind bars in Paris. The gems here include a slip of paper signed by the prophetess Joanna Southcott which announces its bearer as 'The sealed of the Lord, the Elect, Precious/Man's Redemption to inherit the/Tree of Life . . .', described by Betz as 'a ticket to heaven . . . surely a valuable item if Southcott's credit is good there'. It is interesting to see Sidney Gilpin, editor of *The Songs and Ballads of Cumberland* (1866) which includes poems by Susanna Blamire (whose poetical archives Betz successfully acquired in 1995) and Catherine Gilpin, comparing the poetesses' collaboration with that of Beaumont and Fletcher and Wordsworth and Coleridge. The most affecting document in the exhibition is a later copy of Caroline Southey's letter of 1843 on the death of her husband:

I prayed earnestly for his release—I thanked God when the last breath passed forth—& I closed his eyes for the long sleep—But when all was done, God seemed to desert me, & my very heart & life (the essence of it) is buried in his grave. . . . To the last, he never looked at me but with a smile & his eyes never lost their bright intelligence except in seasons of peculiar distress—But this agony is my just punishment—It was not fitting to love created being as I loved him. . . . Think of the end being at last by malignant Typhus fever! Not the organic disease.

Two autograph manuscripts of poems by Dorothy Wordsworth; Margaret De Quincey's dignified letter addressed (not surprisingly) to a creditor's solicitor; Maria Jane Jewsbury's enjoyable newspaper skit announcing the arrival—'incog.'—in the resort of Kent's Bank of 'the young Queen our beloved Dora the 1ST following her two (sic.) great attention to the cares of government'; one of two tiny manuscripts of poems written by Wordsworth to be placed in the arms of Dora Wordsworth's and Edith Southey's dolls (a fascinating piece of ventriloquism); Fanny Kemble's impressive poem on autumn in an autograph letter: all these are fine things. Material relating to Hannah More, Jane Bowdler, Charlotte Smith, Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, Mary Robinson (mistress of the Prince of Wales), Joanna Baillie (Sir Walter Scott's 'immortal Joanna'), Felicia Hemans, Isabella Lickbarrow, and Harriet Martineau is also included.

I fell in love, however, with the engraving of Maclise's portrait of beautiful Letitia Elizabeth Landon (a 'creature of another sphere', who was also to be flamboyantly portrayed by Pickersgill), together with an entertaining autograph letter of hers beginning:

Were it not that you have received weekly evidence to the contrary, I should think from my long silence you would have imagined I was dead and buried, or blind or that my right hand had forgotten its cunning . . .

It is melancholy to think that the stunningly pretty young woman of the engraving was to be found dead in West Africa in 1838, that 'right hand' clutching a bottle of prussic acid. A tragic image of the age.

*Balliol College, Oxford*

DAMIAN WALFORD DAVIES

KEITH HANLEY, assisted by DAVID BARRON, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of William Wordsworth*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf / Prentice Hall, 1995. ISBN 0 13 355348 5. £65 hardback. Pp. xiii + 329.

TO COMPILE A COMPREHENSIVE bibliography devoted entirely to Wordsworth and intended for students 'at all levels' is no small task. To make it also systematic and 'user-friendly' takes even more care. Keith Hanley has divided his book into four sections, Editions and Manuscripts, Aids to Research (Bibliographies etc.) with a small sub-section on Topography and local associations of the poems, Biographies and Memoirs, and Criticism from 1798 to 1993. References in each section are prefixed by a letter: I is E for Editions, II is A for Aids, III is B for Biography, IV is C for Criticism. Once one has got rid of the ingrained expectation of alphabetical order all is perfectly logical. Subdivisions within the categories, according to genre, period, etc., are clearly set out in the Table of Contents. There are three Indexes, 'Works by Wordsworth', 'Subjects and Persons', and 'Authors and Editors'. These must have been a labour of Hercules to compile. For example, what is Onorato doing under Subjects and Persons? I thought he was a critic. So he is—



but critics can become the subject for criticism, as in the three references to him in this Index. The more one struggles to master the book as a mere reader, the more one's admiration for Keith Hanley grows.

Similarly the cross-referencing in the text itself is very useful. To take another example at random, under E126 Stephen Gill's edition of 'William Wordsworth, The Oxford Authors', we are referred to two entries in the Criticism section which discuss the principles underlying Gill's editing of it. I would also have related this to C680 'Wu, Duncan, Editing Intentions EC 41.1', which puts the thing in a nutshell—but that only points up the difficult task the editor had in making his decisions. As he modestly states in his introduction, 'no section claims to be exhaustive'. The book has miraculously been kept to a size that could almost go into a capacious pocket and would certainly not weigh one down unduly in a bag.

The snag about this, of course, is the problem of trying to put an important and complicated work into a few words. In general this attempt at summarizing is a hard job well done. The account of Geoffrey Hartman's *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (C124) is a case in point, though some much-needed extra words have been allowed for this one. But occasionally it is difficult to recognize the book one has read or to get any sense of its quality, for example either of the John Beer books (C156 and 157). We hear, in a very brief statement, of Coleridge's 'ideas' or 'speculations', in relation to Wordsworth, but not which. This is hardly adequate. It is not very helpful to have a list of books unless one also can learn enough about each one to enable the reader to know whether he wishes to read it. Sometimes information has been sacrificed to brevity.

Nevertheless, in the main this bibliography will be a useful tool for Wordsworthians and does represent an admirable work of scholarship on the part of its editors.

Sevenoaks

MARY WEDD

## Society Notes and News from Members

### OBITUARY

#### *Audrey Moore*

Audrey Moore, who died in January 1997, was elected Membership Secretary of the Charles Lamb Society on 10 May 1986, in succession to Florence Reeves, who had filled this office for 39 years. This may have appeared a daunting task, but Audrey applied all her energy, enthusiasm, and skills to maintaining our membership records and to recruiting new members. She inherited a hand-written system of records (with which Charles Lamb would have felt quite at home), and, thanks to her, our records were transferred to computer, with greatly increased efficiency. This, however, did not detract from the very personal welcome that enquirers and new members received.

Audrey was a regular attender at our lectures and at Council meetings. She also enjoyed the company of Elians and others at the Wordsworth Winter School and Summer Conference, and at the Friends of Coleridge Weekends at Kilve in Somerset.

We marvelled that she could fit so much into her busy life as a County Councillor for Buckinghamshire, as School Governor and Editor of her Church Magazine. She was also an enthusiastic Bridge player, and, between lectures, could be seen puzzling over the *Times* crossword. Visits to the Lake District and to the Quantocks provided a challenge for the arduous walks she so much enjoyed.

Writing to her home in Shelley's former house in Marlow cast a romantic glow over our association.

I treasure the memory of shared car journeys to Coleridge weekends in Somerset—Audrey full of enthusiasm for the literary feasts in store—and especially one final afternoon at Kilve—after a soaking wet walk in the Quantocks, Audrey emerging elegant and refreshed for the journey home.

We share with her family our sadness at Audrey's death. Her best memorial is to continue and enhance the work she so fruitfully undertook.

Madeline Huxstep

FROM THE HON. SECRETARY

*Reference Found*

In *Bulletin* NS 96 (October 1996) Professor Stanley Wells appealed for a reference for a half-remembered (or attributed) quotation from Lamb by C. E. Montague, who wrote that Charles Lamb said that it was worthwhile have been cheated of a legacy so as not to miss 'the idea of the rogue who did it. Professor Wells reports that Claude Prance has traced the allusion to Lamb's essay 'New Year's Eve'.

*Anniversaries*

1997 will be a vintage year for notable anniversaries.

2 March 1797: Horace Walpole died. There will be a series of events at Strawberry Hill. Details from Vice-Principal's Office (DJS), St Mary's University College, Waldegrave Road, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham TW1 4SX.

20 May 1847: Mary Lamb died.

24 June 1747: John O'Keefe (dramatist) born.

29 August 1797: Joseph Wright of Derby (artist) born.

30 August 1797: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley born.

10 September 1797: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin died.

16 September 1797: Sir Anthony Panizzi (British Museum librarian) born.

24 October 1897: Francis Turner Palgrave died.

10 November 1697: William Hogarth born.

*Recognizing One's Own* (see *CLB* 96)

Mr John Wardroper writes: 'I noticed in your October 1996 issue a reproduction of a scene entitled "Holiday in the Public Offices". I can tell you that the original of that is a plate (June) in George Cruikshank's *Comic Almanack* for 1836'.

*Lamb and Birmingham*

Mr Brian Gould of 43 Music House Lane, Norwich NR1 1QL, a member of the Horatio Nelson Society, is writing a booklet on Nelson and Lady Hamilton's visit to Birmingham in 1802. In the course of his researches he came upon Lamb's short story, 'Juke Judkin's Courtship', which started another train of enquiry. Mr Gould would be interested to know more of Lamb's visit to Birmingham (see letter to Charles and James Ollier of 18 June 1818: 'I am going off to Birmingham. . . I shall be away a month!'). Lucas comments: 'Of Lamb's visit to Birmingham we know nothing'. Can any reader shed any light?

*Charles Lamb's Birthday Celebration Luncheon*

This year the luncheon was held at the Royal College of General Practitioners, Kensington, Saturday 15 February 1997, with Professor John Beer presiding. The Guest of Honour was Professor Tom Craik. It was an especial pleasure to welcome a contingent of Old Blues, including Frank Ledwith, a former Auditor to the Society. Grecians Lucy Palmer and Catherine Carter said the C. H. Graces, and were presented with copies of J. E. Morpurgo's *Charles Lamb and Elia*. Since then, the Society has been gratified to receive the following letter:

Dear Mrs Huxstep,

Thank you for the lovely luncheon which we were invited to on Saturday 15 February. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and are both very grateful for the opportunity to meet the Society. The luncheon itself was very interesting and informative; we are now very much aware of the strong links which the school has with Charles Lamb.

Please accept our thanks for the wonderful books that were given to us. We both hope that the ties with the school will continue for years to come.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Palmer (Senior Grecian); Catherine Carter (House Captain)

*George Eliot Fellowship*

I have copies of leaflets, 'Guided Tours of the George Eliot Country' (April-September 1997) to distribute to CLS members (a SAE would be appreciated).

*Annual General Meeting*

This will take place on Saturday 10 May 1997 at the Mary Ward Centre, Queen Square, London, WC1, at 2.30pm. Nominations for officers and members of the Council should reach the General Secretary by 30 April.

*Alliance of Literary Societies*

The AGM and Seminar will be held on Saturday 19 April at the New Unitarian Hall, Ryland Street, Birmingham, and will be hosted by the Mary Webb Society. Members wishing to attend should contact our ALS representative, Robin Healey, 80 Hall Lane, Great Chishill, Royston SG8 8SM (tel.: 01763 837058). Travelling expenses can be refunded.

FROM THE EDITOR

*Kilve Court Weekend, 5-7 September 1997*

This is one of the high points of the year for all those who enjoy good poetry and good company. The flavour of the event is conveyed by Mary Wedd in her reprinted account of the 1996 weekend (see page 77). Run by the Friends of Coleridge, its theme this year will be Coleridge and Women Writers; speakers will include Mary Wedd, Seamus Perry, and the editor of the *Bulletin*. Full details may be obtained from Shirley Watters, 11 Castle Street, Nether Stowey, Somerset TA5 1LN (tel.: 01278 733338).

*Lamb's Poems Back in Print*

A good, reliable, scholarly edition of Lamb's poems is long overdue, and so far as I know it has yet to be undertaken. In the meantime, however, it is a tremendous boon to Elian studies that Woodstock Books has just reprinted a facsimile edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd's *Poems 1797*. This fascinating and compulsive volume has been

unavailable since the time of its first appearance, and all true Elians will want to own it. Besides valuable early texts of Coleridge poems, it contains some of the best of Lamb's early sonnets (including 'We were two pretty babes'). It is priced at £42 in hardback (a good deal cheaper than a copy of the actual first edition), and will be reviewed in a future *Bulletin*.

#### SOCIETY NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

##### *No Cheers for Elia and Co.*

As committed Elians steeped in the traditions of friendship and goodwill, we cannot fail to be surprised that agreement is not unanimous on the subject of Charles Lamb's work and personality. Thackeray praised him to the skies, even, it is rumoured, to the point of removing his hat and canonising him as St Charles. It is notorious that Elian charm did not register with Thomas Carlyle, and a later critic emerges in the name of Ford Madox Ford, born in 1873 and bearing the name of Ford Madox Hueffer. He was grandson to the Pre-Raphaelite painter Ford Madox Brown and nephew by marriage to W. M. Rossetti. He did not change his name until after World War I. A prolific writer, he left his name attached to no less than 70 books and it is in one of his autobiographical works, 'It was the Nightingale', that occurs the passage that now interests us. He is addressing E. V. Lucas, no less, whose two-volume *Life of Charles Lamb* is still considered the outstanding work on the subject.

Under the heading 'Not Really English', Ford Madox Ford leads off by saying:

Years and years ago I was talking to Mr E. V. Lucas. Mr Lucas was publishing his edition of Charles Lamb and I was abusing Lamb and De Quincey and Hazlitt and all the tribe of English essayists. I was saying it was their works—and particularly those of Charles Lamb—that the English people anodyned what passed for their brains so that Pure Thought was a thing unknown in all that green country. But apparently Mr Lucas was not put out and listened for a long time quite amiably. I said: Damn it all, Lucas. How can you read this buttered-toast-clean-fire-clear-hearth-spirit-of-the-game-beery-gin-sodden sentimentalism? What can you see in it? Mr Lucas let ten puffs of his pipe eddy away towards the great, green-grey vale below us. . . . I kept on with invectives. Between the tenth or eleventh of his next set of puffs he said 'because you would not understand'. I said Damn it all. Why would I not understand? Why can't I stand Lamb and Hazlitt and the whole boiling?

In pushing matters to such lengths Fordie, as his friends called him, was also pushing his luck. EVL gently reminded him of Thackeray and St Charles. Ford plunged recklessly on recalling with lamentable lack of delicacy that Lamb was a drunkard and his poor sister a murderess. He then sees fit to embark on a remarkable rigmarole of self-praise to emphasize his essential Englishness. Insistently he reiterates his query, 'Why cannot I appreciate Charles Lamb?!' At this point all Elians will rub their hands with glee. Fordie had been riding for a fall, as the phrase goes, and E. V. Lucas, described here as the gentlest of human beings, does not hesitate to slip the dagger in with a deadly thrust. 'Because you are not English', was the soft spoken reply. It would be difficult to improve on Fordie's own words to describe the effect of this devastating riposte: 'That hit me in the face like the discharge from a fireman's hose.'

Elians will have further cause for rejoicing as Ford staggers on, but ever failing to convince, and the dispute is finally concluded by an accusation that Ford does not appreciate *Punch*. In addition he is reminded forcibly that his father was a German professor named Hueffer. He has sadly overplayed his hand but concludes philosophically that possibly the diagnosis was correct.

All true Elians will rejoice at his discomforture.

Charles Branchini

*Kilve Court Study Weekend, 6-8 September 1996*

[This report on the Kilve Court Weekend appeared in the last *Bulletin* in abbreviated form, due to production restrictions. I take this opportunity of reprinting it in full. Ed.]

The Friends of Coleridge chose 'The Romantic Child' as a subject for their fourth study weekend at Kilve Court, and a rich topic it proved to be. In the opening lecture on Friday evening, David Fairer vividly painted in the background to Blake's 'Holy Thursday' from his own research into the circumstances of Charity children in the eighteenth century. After this combination of detailed information and lively presentation someone was heard to say, 'Now follow that!' Well, the next morning Roy Kennedy, editor of Collins' *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, triumphantly did. David Fairer's talk pointed up the contrast between the genuine altruistic emotion of some of those present at the annual service in St Paul's, of whom Blake was probably one, who were reduced to tears at the children's singing, and the assumption that paupers should not be educated above their station but put to work at once and prepared for a life of drudgery. Roy Kennedy's talk picked up this contrast and explored the subject of innocence, and how far the *Songs of Innocence*, without their counterparts in *Experience*, should be read with irony. Can Innocence and Experience co-exist?

This theme, in varying forms, seemed to run through the whole programme. Reginald Watters on 'Coleridge and the Child', and John Powell Ward on 'Children and Wordsworth', illustrated the two poets' conviction of the importance of childhood, for good or ill, both in their own lives and in observation of and concern for their children. The question of the difficult transition to adulthood and the consequences of childhood experiences on subsequent careers followed through into the examination of the lives of Coleridge's sons. Roger Robinson gave a most wise and discerning account of Hartley Coleridge, his achievements as well as his failings, and stressed the effect of the crushing weight of adult expectations on him. Raymonde Hainton, whose book *The Unknown Coleridge* was shortly due out, eloquently filled in for us the story of the useful career of Derwent Coleridge, which was of particular interest to those members of the audience who had close links with the College of St Mark and St John.

On the last morning Graham Davidson made sure that the programme ended with a bang and not a whimper. Despite the reported interruptions to composition by his own children, he managed a tour de force for the final lecture, in which he examined the idea of transcendence in relation to Wordsworth's concept of childhood and Coleridge's contrasting view, based on their own experience of it. He also referred us to some poetic predecessors and successors in this tradition.

We were lucky with dry weather and some sunshine for our walks, though the distant views were hazy. Before breakfast on successive mornings we visited Kilve Beach and East Quantoxhead, beautiful in the early light, and on Saturday afternoon went up on to the Quantocks to the Great Track and looked down through the woods to Alfoxden, before taking to the heather, then down past the house to our minibus. No wonder the poets found inspiration in this countryside.

Everything conspired to give us a superb weekend and our thanks are due to Shirley and Reggie Watters, their helpers, and the staff of Kilve Court for all their work to make such a gem of an experience. Any of you who thought of coming and did not should kick yourselves—hard!

Mary Wedd

FROM D. E. WICKHAM

*Geoffrey Dearmer: A Note*

The death of Geoffrey Dearmer on 18 August 1996, aged 103, closed a number of chapters.

He was the last survivor of the World War I poets. He was the last survivor of the presenter-Uncles of the BBC's *Children's Hour*. He was the last survivor of an earlier period of celebrating Charles Lamb.

Geoffrey Dearmer was a friend of our member Helen Stutfield but joined the Charles Lamb Society in 1981 apparently at the recommendation of Florence Reeves. His membership seems to have lapsed in or about 1986. Thus he was not a member of the Society, though he definitely believed himself to be one and the oldest at that, when he entertained me to lunch in his flat at Birchington in Kent in September 1994.

His connection with Charles Lamb went back to the 1920s. Even before he became one of the earliest members of The Elia, the male dining club which preceded the Charles Lamb Society, he attended the Emancipation Dinner, held in Inner Temple Hall on the evening of Monday, 30 March 1925. This was one hundred years and a day since Charles Lamb's superannuation and retirement from the East India House. Augustine Birrell was in the chair, Cecil Harmsworth spoke in place of Sir Edmund Gosse, who was ill, and other speeches were made by G. K. Chesterton, J. C. Squire and Lord Winterton.

Geoffrey Dearmer wrote an article on the dinner for the *Saturday Review* of 4 April 1925 but was unable to share any special memories when I showed him an offprint of it nearly 70 years later.

In 1925 he had described the occasion as 'a good dinner, if a little unimaginative'. It lacked many 'of those dishes which Elia tells us he prefers'. There were no 'unctuous morsels of deer's flesh', no 'hare roasted hard and brown', no apple dumplings. (In 1994 his friends served me with home-cooked baked apples done with ginger.) There was mutton, he wrote, but no roast pig, creamed chicken but no asparagus. 'And how un-Lamb-like was the "peach Melba" of the menu when Lamb devoted a paragraph to the praise of pineapple! . . . Still, it was a good dinner, long and wholesome, and the place, in spite of the necessary largeness (207 people paid a guinea each to attend)—for Lamb's lovers are many and include, as Mr Birrell observed "a large number of intelligent ladies"—ideal.'

May it be recorded that I learned of Geoffrey Dearmer's death in Berlin, from a two day-old copy of the international edition of *The Guardian*, which I was reading in the foyer of the Prussian State Library. There is romance in such details.

*Charles Lamb, U and non-U*

I was in the Senior Common Room at St Hilda's College, Oxford, in August (beat that!), and after glancing at their copies of *The Times* and *The Daily Express*, but avoiding their copies of *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mirror*, I happened to pick up their issue of *The Spectator* for 10 August 1996 and turned by chance to Dot Wordsworth's (sic.) *Mind Your Language* column on page 15.

This was chiefly about the revival of U and non-U speech with reference to Anthony Trollope's use of the word 'notepaper' in chapter 9 of *The Claverings*, on page 87 in the World's Classics edition.

There was also a reference to Charles Lamb's writing in 1824 about a 'notelet'. This is his remark to Bernard Barton (Lucas' Letter no. 507, Vol. 2, p. 419, dated to 'early spring 1824', which begins 'I am sure I cannot fill a letter, though I should disfurnish my scull (sic.) to fill it. But you expect something, and shall have a Note-let'.

It would presumably have been particularly non-U if it had had, say, squirrels or, indeed, lambs on it.

*Elian Publicity—Horses for Courses*

When representatives of the Private Libraries Association and the London Topographical Society asked me (coincidentally within a few days of each other) for several hundred words on the Charles Lamb Society, to which they would give free editorial publicity, I felt sure that the same article could be used. At least, the same basic statements would allow a few small personalised tweakings, bibliophilic, literary, or topographical. It was not to be.

An offprint of PLA version was circulated with our *Bulletin* No. 85 for January 1994 and afterwards used as alternative publicity material.

A misunderstanding about the form of issue meant that I did not see the TopSoc version until a year after that, though it was issued in their *Newsletter* No. 36 in May 1993. It was not in a suitable form for offprinting, but those who like subtleties may appreciate a chance to see what it said.

**The Charles Lamb Society**

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) is perhaps most roundly disliked from childhood memories of *Tales from Shakespeare* and school-time recollections of the more whimsical and hackneyed of his *Essays of Elia*. Adults rarely take the opportunity to savour the wisdom and poignancy of such essays as *The South Sea House* or *Dream Children* or to enjoy the humour of *Mrs Battle's Opinions on Whist*, the topographical interest of *Mackery End, in Hertfordshire*, his rhapsodies on London, or the social history of *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago* and *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*.

Many do not care that Lamb was the friend and correspondent of literary men of the calibre of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Southey and Thomas De Quincey, that he was a poet, a first-rate critic, and a pioneering scholar of Elizabethan drama. They do not appreciate why his wit and sparkle rank him as one of the greatest English letter-writers.

Charles Lamb was born and bred in the lawyers' enclave of the Inner Temple and educated at Christ's Hospital, which was then at Greyfriars. In 1792 he began his lifetime career as a clerk in the accountant's office at East India House in Fenchurch Street. Four years later, at twenty-one, he returned home one evening to the family lodging at the north end of Kingsway to find that a streak of madness lying dormant in the Lambs had caused his beloved elder sister Mary Anne to stab their mother to death. Unable to bear the thought of her being confined in an asylum, he promised to care for her for the rest of his life. This he did faithfully, even heroically, foregoing marriage and the hope of a separate establishment, sharing rooms and houses with her until his death.

They lived in Chapel Street, Pentonville; in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane; at several addresses in the Inner Temple; in Russell Street, Covent Garden; in Colebrook Row, Islington; beside the New River; and in two different houses in Chase Side, Enfield. Mary Lamb's periods of mental illness encroached ever further until she was finally placed in a private asylum in Church Street, Edmonton. In 1833 Charles Lamb found it easier to move in with her than to live alone. He died after a fall at Christmas 1834. Mary lived until 1847. She and her brother lie in the same grave in Edmonton churchyard.

The Charles Lamb Society was founded in 1935, following the centenary of Lamb's death in December 1934. The purposes were to study the life, works, and times of Charles Lamb and his circle; to stimulate the Elian spirit of friendliness and humour; and to form a collection of Eliana. Elia, the name that seems to worry so many people, is only a pen-name, a disguise, an anagram

of 'a lie', as Charles Lamb pointed out. The Society was granted charitable status in 1990. Now we intend to advance public knowledge of the Lambs, to collect Eliana, to publish the members' quarterly *Bulletin*, which is of a high academic standard, and to sponsor research, education and publications; a booklet, *Charles Lamb's London*, was published in 1993. The Society's library and collection are split between the Guildhall Library and a west London store; catalogues are in hand. Members meet regularly in central London and there is an annual luncheon.

[Here follow membership details, since partly outdated].

### *Mrs Battle's Stake at Whist*

I once knew her to forfeit a rubber (a five-dollar stake), because she would not take advantage of the turn-up knave . . .

Certain famous cruxes (or cruces) in English Literature are discussed avidly by successive generations of critics. One of the most extraordinary and obvious Elian questions of this kind is apparently ignored by all the editors—though not, perhaps, because the answer is obvious.

In short, what was Mrs Battle doing with a stake expressed in *dollars*?

My attempts to gather evidence have led me on a long trairpse through that amiable rabbit warren called *Notes and Queries*. The matter of British dollars has often been discussed there but apparently without result, indeed the closer the respondent approaches Mrs Battle, the vaguer he or she becomes. The replies are often contradictory, while some must be incorrect. At last and even with the help of Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* all I can offer are a number of brightly glittering facts which do not actually answer the question. The pattern I suggest may encourage others to try rearrangement.

Before I became confused with information, guesswork implied several possible answers. Was Mrs Battle using card-players' counters which were known as 'dollars', just as there are Elian and/or theatrical references to 'bones' and 'fishes' which are inexplicable to the un-nlightened? Had real dollar coins been demonetised and become souvenirs for use as counters? Was there a similarity with the objects looking like gold-pieces made in 1837 when Queen Victoria was not allowed to succeed to the Hanoverian throne, which were indeed of gilt-brass and used for gambling? Might there be a connection with the large Maria Theresa dollars of solid silver employed as trusted currency in Arab countries, French colonies in tropical Africa, and Ethiopia at least as late as 1929 and possibly today, still always minted with the date 1780? From another point of view, until the 1950s or later it was customary for Londoners and perhaps people elsewhere in Britain to refer to the sum of five shillings (25p) as 'a dollar' and to half-a-crown (2s.6d., now 12½p) as 'half a dollar'. This was perfectly ordinary slang if one were seeking change or giving a birthday present to a child: 'Have you got half a dollar?' or 'Give the kid half a dollar'. I always supposed that it was a hangover from the World War II or some period when there were four American dollars to the pound sterling.

Dollars go back to the early sixteenth century, when the German counts of Schlick extracted silver from a mine in Joachim's Thal (Joachim's valley) in Bohemia and, from 1519, coined it into ounce pieces of such high repute that Joachimsthalers became a standard coin. Other coins were made like them and were called simply thalers. Spanish silver piastres or pesos or pieces of eight were worth eight reales and so were of the same value as a dollar. They were much used in the Spanish American colonies and in the British North American colonies at the time of their revolt. The coins bore the figure 8, whence came, it is suggested, the dollar sign (\$).

The word is thought to have reached the English language through the Low German *daler* or the Dutch *daalder*. Shakespeare mentions dollars in *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*,



and *The Tempest*. It is apparently unclear whether he had in mind the German thaler, then likely to be current at the Hanseatic Steelyard in the City of London, or the Spanish coin. There are references dated 1693, 1696, 1706 (Phillips' *New World of Words*, 6th edition, recording Dollar as a foreign coin worth between 3s. and 5s.), 1737, and 1745 (Bailey's *English Dictionary*). The dollar was adopted as the monetary unit of the USA in 1785 but the Mint was not set up until 1792 nor the coin circulated before 1794 (and I cannot resist adding that the value of a standard deerskin to a backwoods trapper is said to have been one dollar, hence 'a buck'). *Mrs Battle's Opinions on Whist* was first published in the *London Magazine* in February 1821.

Early in 1797, because of a deficiency of British silver coinage and/or because the Bank of England suspended cash payments, Spanish dollars and half-dollars (and possibly also quarter dollars and one-eighth dollars) were issued for use in Britain, countermarked with the head of King George III on the neck of the original bust of Charles III or Charles IV of Spain on the obverse. The countermark was the small oval used by The Goldsmiths' Company for stamping London-assayed plate during hallmarking. It is not clear whether the coins were purchased, captured from a Spanish treasure-ship, or connected with the British naval victory off Cape St Vincent on 14 February 1797. Their bullion value was 4s.8d. and they were circulated as worth 4s.9d.

Parson Woodforde's *Diary* mentions the coins at 24 March 1797. Robert Southey's letter of 26 April 1797, printed in Joseph Cottle's *Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey* (1847), page 210, quotes a squib of the time:

To make Spanish dollars with Englishmen pass,  
Stamp the head of a fool on the tail of an ass.

Another squib had it that:

The times are out of joint we all must own  
When two kings' heads combined aren't worth a crown.

That is, they are worth 4s.9d., not 5s.

Prodigious quantities of Spanish dollars were imported into Britain and given counterfeit marks, so the circulation was stopped on 31 October 1797.

A second issue was made by the Royal Mint in 1804, the countermark being larger and octagonal, the head used for stamping the silver Maundy penny. These coins were current for 4s.9d. They too were soon counterfeited. In the same year the Bank of Ireland received permission to issue silver tokens to pass current for 6s. These were struck by Boulton at the Soho Mint and were made from Spanish pillar dollars, i.e. apparently pieces of eight.

Boulton also issued at the Soho Mint a five-shilling dollar, a beautiful coin inscribed 'Five Shillings Dollar'—'Bank of England, 1804'. The price of silver rose and, on 18 March 1811, the Bank of England gave notice that they would pay for and issue them at 5s.6d. The first issue of proper crowns from the Royal Mint in George III's reign did not take place until the great recoinage of 1816. The countermarked dollars were discontinued as currency, because of extensive imitation by forgers, in 1817.

Thus, although one might expect such coins to be called in by the Bank of England, it seems possible that some at least were kept, either as souvenirs or as gambling counters. It is hard to believe that even so dedicated a card-player as Mrs Battle was prepared to hazard as much as 25s. on a hand. One of the correspondents asked why Mrs Battle did not use a guinea stake since she was thoroughly English, with Plumer ancestors. He added a suggestion that the dollars crept in to the essay as a result of Charles Lamb's commercial work at the South Sea House, which he

left in 1792, unless this was a mistake for the more-likely East India House. It may certainly be thought an incongruous detail that Elia refers to 'her maternal uncle (Old Walter Plumer, whom I have elsewhere celebrated)'—for example, in his essay on *The South-Sea House*, published in August 1820, perhaps about the time when he was composing the essay on Mrs Battle.

Memories of Barron Field and even of Mr Micawber will encourage a place for the following anecdote printed in *Notes and Queries* in 1942. It tells how a boy who 'souvenired' a Spanish dollar from the bank where he worked, was caught, transported to Australia on a seven years' sentence, married a free woman where and never returned to Britain. His grandchildren are (in 1942) in good positions and well-respected citizens of Sydney—the source of the letter, perhaps being a descendant.

The chief references in *Notes and Queries* are:

3rd Ser. Vol. 9, p. 368 (5.5.1866)

3rd Ser. Vol. 10, p. 38 (14.7.1866)

6th Ser. Vol. 11, p. 467-8 (13.6.1885)

6th Ser. Vol. 12, p. 14 (4.7.1885), in which Andrew W. Tuer enquires about George Augustus Sala's reference to 2s.6d. as 'half a dollar', and is told the basic details, as well as the possibility that it may now represent the betting man's 'x' or unknown quantity.

7th Ser., Vol. 2, p. 509 (25.12.1886: sic!)

7th Ser., Vol. 3, p. 118 (5.2.1887)

7th Ser., Vol. 3, p. 233-4 (19.3.1887)

7th Ser., Vol. 4, p. 53 (16.7.1887)

7th Ser., Vol. 4, p. 213 (10.9.1887)

7th Ser., Vol. 6, p. 268 (6.10.1888): first Mrs Battle question

7th Ser., Vol. 6, p. 338 (27.10.1888): a detailed answer by John E. T. Loveday

7th Ser., Vol. 181, p. 331 (13.12.1941): Parson Woodforde's *Diary*

7th Ser., Vol. 181, pp. 363-3 (27.12.1941)

7th Ser., Vol. 182, p. 24 (10.1.1942): a detailed answer

7th Ser., Vol. 183, p. 83 (1.8.1942): the Australian anecdote

7th Ser., Vol. 183, p. 315 (21.11.1942): the Mrs Battle question again and the source of this paper, since it was found among the Rich press cuttings (Rich xiv 211)

7th Ser., Vol. 184, p. 112 (13.2.1943): an unsatisfactory reply

There may be other references since 1947, but no cumulative indexes are available in the British Library or the Guildhall Library—if at all.

## New Members

The Society extends the warmest of Elian welcomes to new members who have joined in recent months: the English Faculty Library (University of Oxford), Mrs Dorothy Stansfield, Ms Louise Heite, Mr and Mrs P. Cheslyn, Mrs Caroline Cochrane, Ms Kathy Prosser, and Ms Lily Nolmes.

## 50 Years Ago: from *CLS Bulletin* No.76 (Thirteenth Year) March 1947

AGM, 20 January 1947: The death last year of Mr E. F. Lewis, the Hon. Treasurer for many years, had engendered a desire for some memorial in recognition of his services, and this had taken the form of a bookcase to house the Society's literature, to be loaned to members on demand. To the office of Treasurer, said the Chairman, Mr Lewis had devoted untiring efforts, at the same time furthering the Elian principles of friendship, good humour and the desire for good literature; in his personal outlook and actions Mr Lewis fulfilled these principles, and these

are fittingly included in the inscription on the bookcase: 'This bookcase is a tribute to Ernest Frederick Lewis, Treasurer 1938-1946. Modest, Tranquil, Studious, Gentle and Kind.'

#### Membership

... the evidence of undiminished activity and continuous progress revealed by the addition of 109 members during 1946, bringing the total to 432.

from *CLS Bulletin* No.77 (Thirteenth Year) May 1947

*The Fate of Lamb's London In The Lost Treasures of London* (Phoenix House, Limited, 12/6), Mr W. Kent has given us a detailed record of the effect of the German raids on London, that will never be superseded. Londoners of the future will find here a full and trustworthy assessment of the extent of that widespread destruction, recorded soberly and interestingly by a great and discerning lover of London. Members of the CLS will turn first to the record of those places associated with Lamb. His birthplace, No. 2 Crown Office Row, was badly damaged, and what remained was demolished; but although the memorial tablet was broken, it was not destroyed. The Lamb Memorial in the Temple Gardens is safe, as it had been removed. Though the Temple Church suffered badly, the stone heads mentioned by Elia in *My First Play* are intact. On the other hand there is nothing left of the Inner Temple Library of which Lamb wrote in *The Old Benchers*. The lost 'winged horse', rediscovered and installed on the Library staircase some ten years ago, sustained some damage. Further east, Christ Church, Newgate, attended by Lamb during his seven years as a Bluecoat boy, has been reduced to a shell. James Boyer's tombstone remains, though cracked in several places. The bust of Lamb, unveiled by Lord Plender on behalf of the Elian Club in 1935, was unhurt and removed to Christ's Hospital at Horsham. This Society's meeting place at the Gatehouse Restaurant was destroyed, as was Essex Hall, the scene of its inauguration in February 1935. Mr Kent's book will add to his fame as a recorder of London, and should be in the hands of all its lovers. That is, if they can get it; for though it was published as recently as 3 April [1947], three large impressions totalling 15,000 have already been called for. We offer hearty congratulations to Mr Kent.

S. M. Rich

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CONTENTS: Abbreviations. Introduction. Selected Bibliography. Acknowledgements. Chronology. *Five-Book Prelude* Annotated Text. Recent Critical Commentary. Appendix I: The Analogy Passage. Appendix II: The Schedule of Manuscripts. Index.

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## A Quest for Home *Reading Robert Southey*

by

CHRISTOPHER J. P. SMITH

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