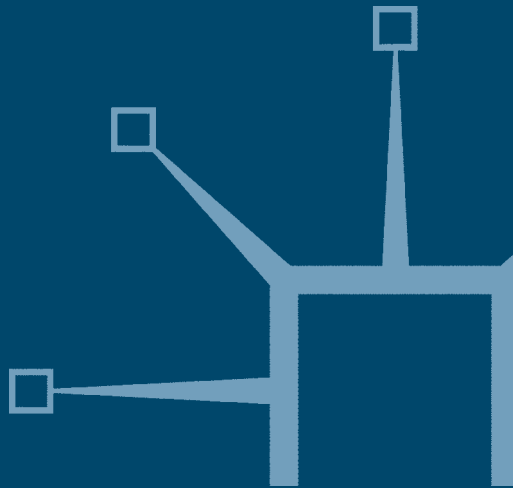


palgrave
macmillan

Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth

Reading Friendship in the 1790s

Felicity James



Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth

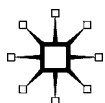
This page intentionally left blank

Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth

Reading Friendship in the 1790s

Felicity James

palgrave
macmillan



© Felicity James 2008

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2008 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN-13: 978-0-230-54524-3 hardback

ISBN-10: 0-230-54524-6 hardback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

Contents

<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Permissions</i>	xiii

Introduction: Placing Lamb	1
-----------------------------------	----------

Part I Idealising Friendship

1 <i>Frendotatoi meta frendous</i>: Constructing Friendship in the 1790s	13
December 1794	13
'Bowles, Priestley, Burke': The <i>Morning Chronicle</i> sonnets	18
New readings of familial and friendly affection	24
Pantisocracy and the 'family of soul'	26
Unitarian readings of friendship	30
Sensibility and benevolence	34
Reading David Hartley	39
Readings of feeling in Coleridge and Lamb	43
Lamb's sensibilities: two early sonnets	47
2 <i>Rewritings of Friendship, 1796–1797</i>	55
Spring 1796	55
Coleridge's rewritings of Lamb	56
Trapped in the Bower: Coleridgean reflections in retirement	62
'Ears of Sympathy': Lamb's sympathetic response	71
Rewritings of Coleridge	74

Part II Doubting Friendship

3 <i>The 'Day of Horrors'</i>	83
September 1796	83
Aftermath	85
Reconstructing the poetry of familial affection	91
Nether Stowey: 'an Elysium upon earth?'	96

4	'Cold, Cold, Cold': Loneliness and Reproach	101
	June 1797	101
	'Gloomy boughs' and sunny leaves: the Wordsworth-Coleridge conversation	103
	Visions of unity: <i>This Lime-tree Bower my Prison</i>	105
	The Overcoat and the Manchineel: Lamb's response	111
	The 'Reft House' of the 'Nehemiah Higginbottom' sonnets	114
5	<i>Blank Verse</i> and Fears in Solitude	120
	February 1798	120
	<i>Blank Verse</i> and <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>	125
	Midnight reproach	130
	'Living without God in the World'	134
	<i>Edmund Oliver</i> : forging a 'common identity'	136
	Coleridge and the 'lying Angel'	139
Part III Reconstructing Friendship		
6	A Text of Friendship: <i>Rosamund Gray</i>	145
	Spring 1798	145
	Anxieties of friendship: letters to Robert Lloyd	146
	'Inscribed in friendship': the sensibility of <i>Rosamund Gray</i>	149
	The novel's family loyalties	152
	<i>Rosamund Gray</i> and <i>The Ruined Cottage</i>	155
	Communities of feeling in <i>Rosamund Gray</i>	163
7	Sympathy, Allusion, and Experiment in <i>John Woodvil</i>	167
	Late 1798	167
	Redemptive family narratives	169
	Elian identifications	173
	Forgeries and medleys: Lamb's imitations of Burton	176
	'Friend Lamb': <i>John Woodvil</i> and its readers	177
	Reading and resistance: 'What is Jacobinism?'	180
8	The Urban Romantic: Lamb's Landscapes of Affection	185
	Early 1801	185
	Reading <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> (1800)	188
	Lamb's Wordsworthian attachments	195
	The voice of the 'Londoner'	200

‘The greatest egotist of all’: some Elian sympathies	203
Wordsworth’s readings of Lamb	210
Lamb’s afterlives	211
<i>Notes</i>	215
<i>Bibliography</i>	240
<i>Index</i>	251

List of Abbreviations

- AA 1799 *Annual Anthology*, vol I, ed. Robert Southey (Bristol, 1799).
- AA 1800 *Annual Anthology*, vol II, ed. Robert Southey (Bristol, 1800).
- BiogLit *Biographia Literaria, or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, eds, Walter Jackson Bate and James Engell, Bollingen Collected Coleridge Series 7, 2 vols (London, 1983).
- Borderers William Wordsworth, *The Borderers*, ed. Robert Osborn (Ithaca, NY, 1982).
- BV Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb *Blank verse, by Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb* (London, 1798).
- CLB *Charles Lamb Bulletin*.
- Curry *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols (New York, 1965).
- Early Poems William Wordsworth, *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785–97*, eds, Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca, NY, 1997).
- EO Charles Lloyd, *Edmund Oliver*, 2 vols (Bristol, 1798).
- EY *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787–1805*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt; 2nd ed. rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967).
- Friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, Bollingen Collected Coleridge Series 4, 2 vols (London, 1969).
- FS Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Fears in solitude, written in 1798, during the alarm of an invasion. To which are added, France, an ode; and Frost at midnight. By S.T. Coleridge.* (London, 1798).
- Griggs *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford, 1956–71).
- Howe *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London, 1930–34).
- JW *John Woodvil: a Tragedy. By C. Lamb. To which are added Fragments of Burton, the author of the Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1802).

- Lectures 1795* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*, eds, Peter Mann and Lewis Patton, Bollingen Collected Coleridge Series 1 (London, 1971).
- Lucas *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 8 vols (London, 1912).
- Lucas, *Letters* *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to which are added those of his sister, Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 3 vols (London, 1935).
- LY *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth; Second Edition, Volume VII, The Later Years, Part IV, 1840–53*, rev. ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1988).
- LyB William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, eds, James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY, 1992).
- Marrs *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, 3 vols (Ithaca, NY, 1975).
- Mays *Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. J. C. C. Mays, Bollingen Collected Coleridge Series 16, 3 (2 part) vols (Princeton, 2001).
- MLN *Modern Language Notes*.
- MLQ *Modern Language Quarterly*.
- MM *The Monthly Magazine*.
- N&Q *Notes and Queries*.
- Notebooks *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, eds, Kathleen Coburn, Merton Christensen and Anthony John Harding, 5 vols (Princeton, 1957–2002).
- Poems 1796* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems on Various Subjects* (Bristol, 1796).
- Poems 1797* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb, Charles Lloyd, *Poems on Various Subjects* (Bristol, 1797).
- Poems 1807* William Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800–1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, NY, 1983).
- PJ William Godwin, *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793), vol. 3 in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp, 5 vols (London, 1993).
- Prelude 1799* William Wordsworth, ‘*The Prelude*’, 1798–1799, ed. Stephen Parrish (Ithaca, NY, 1977).
- Prelude 1805* William Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed, 2 vols (Ithaca, NY, 1991).

PW	<i>The Prose Works of William Wordsworth</i> , eds, W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974).
RC	William Wordsworth, <i>The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar</i> , ed. James Butler (Ithaca, NY, 1979). Following Butler's identification of drafts, I use MS B to refer to the 528 line poem of January-March 1798, and MS D to refer to the 538 line copy of the poem made by Dorothy Wordsworth in a pocket notebook between February – December 1799.
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i> .
RG	Charles Lamb, <i>A Tale of Rosamund Gray and old Blind Margaret</i> (London, 1798).
SEL	<i>Studies in English Literature</i> .
SiR	<i>Studies in Romanticism</i> .
Specimens	Charles Lamb, <i>Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, Who Lived about the Time of Shakspeare</i> (London, 1808).
Watchman	Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>The Watchman</i> , ed. by Lewis Patton, Bollingen Collected Coleridge Series 2 (London, 1970).
WC	<i>The Wordsworth Circle</i> .
Works 1818	<i>The Works of Charles Lamb</i> , 2 vols (London, 1818).
YCL	Winifred Courtney, <i>Young Charles Lamb, 1775–1802</i> (London: 1982).

I have given all references to plays in the format Act: scene: line, and all references to poems by line number (if available); title of edition, page number. Multipart volumes are in the format volume number: volume part: page number.

Acknowledgements

Appropriately enough, this book bears the traces of many friendly readings, much generous help, and plenty of sociable conversation. I enjoyed many fruitful discussions with Romanticists at Oxford throughout my graduate studies, especially at the Romantic Realignments seminar. Thanks to the Friends of Coleridge, including Seamus Perry, Paul Cheshire, Graham Davidson and Nicholas Roe, for their help, including thoughtful comments, grants to attend their conferences, and walks over the Quantocks. And, of course, the book owes an important debt to the Elian friendliness, good humour, and learning of all the members of the Charles Lamb Society, including (among many others) Mary Wedd, D. E. Wickham, Nicholas and Cecilia Powell, and Michel Jolibois who very kindly gave me his E. V. Lucas editions. The society has given me great encouragement, and also financial and practical help. Moreover, it was reading the splendid work of the Charles Lamb Bulletin as an undergraduate which first sparked my interest in Lamb.

I want to express my deep thanks also to the academics who not only first inspired me with their work but have also given me generous and friendly help and advice: Lucy Newlyn, David Fairer, Josephine McDonagh, and Duncan Wu. David Fairer's book, *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle 1790–1798*, will appear too late for me to make use of it as I would have liked to do; however, I have been very grateful for his scholarship, as for his suggestions and conversation. Peter Conrad was an inspirational undergraduate tutor, and I owe a great deal to Angela Trueman's teaching. This book was completed during a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, for which I am very grateful. I held this through the English Faculty at Oxford which also facilitated my research in various ways, and whose assistance I acknowledge with thanks. Thanks too to the staff of various libraries, including the Firestone Library, Princeton, the British Library, the Bodleian, and, especially, the staff of the English Faculty Library, Oxford, who were unfailingly helpful and cheerful. I owe a special debt to Christ Church which as well as academic help and support has provided me with a friendly second home.

I want to thank many friends for reading and commenting on various versions of chapters. Monika Class helped a great deal through seminar discussion and her very useful comments; so too did David

O'Shaughnessy, David Fallon, Karen Junod and Greg Leadbetter. Mina Gorji's helpful readings and sociable library presence helped the book along. David Higgins and Kelly Grovier also discussed their own work generously with me, and thanks too to Gurion Taussig, Tim Milnes, Simon Hull, and Anthony Harding. Stephen Bernard tirelessly read, proof-read, and advised. Any mistakes are entirely down to my negligence, or stubbornness.

Thanks too for the friendship and help of others, including Jim and Joyce Margison, Verity Platt, Beatrice Groves, Geno Maitland Hudson, Elizabeth O'Mahoney, Paul Wiley and Aideen Lee. And of course Aileen Collings for the literary sociability of Crown Street. Those in college also helped a great deal, including Thomas Karshan and Alex Harris, whose friendship was very important and whose suggestions were always helpful and enlivening – and of course the Christ Church custodians and porters, including Henry, Rab, Ferdie, Tony, Wilbert, and Philip Tootill, who all added a great deal to college life.

But the most important debts are to Peter Collings and my family: my parents, and my sisters, Penny and Haoli, who have all had to accept Charles Lamb as a permanent companion in their lives. They are behind this book's faith in the 'home-born Feeling'. Haoli's reassurance and Peter's great support helped get this written, and I could never have embarked on it at all without the help of my long-suffering parents, Margaret and Teddy James, to whom this book is lovingly dedicated.

Permissions

I am grateful to the *Coleridge Bulletin* for allowing me to reprint in Chapters 4 and 5 some material first used in two articles, ‘The Many Conversations of “This Lime-Tree Bower”’, *Coleridge Bulletin* 26 (Winter 2005), and ‘Coleridge and the Fears of Friendship, 1798’ *Coleridge Bulletin* 24 (Winter 2004). I am also grateful to the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* for allowing me to reprint material from the article, ‘Sweet is thy sunny hair: an unpublished poem by Charles Lamb’, *CLB* 127 (2004), 54–6.

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction: Placing Lamb

On 9 July 1798, the 36th and last issue of *The Anti-Jacobin* carried a long poem, *New Morality*, a lively, vehement condemnation of ‘Jacobin’ attitudes and associates, which targeted Whig politicians and radical writers alike. Parodying the ‘Theo-Philanthropic sect’ of revolutionary sympathisers, French and English, it attacked their ‘mawkish’ sensibilities and ‘blasphemous’ sedition, and was illustrated the following month by the ruthless cartoonist James Gillray.¹ To feature in one of his cartoons – albeit distorted and undignified – was to have arrived on the political scene, and his bestiary of revolutionaries, capering around a deconsecrated St. Paul’s, clearly showed who were the main ‘Jacobin’ targets of the government in the late 1790s. The Duke of Bedford dominates the image, a monstrous whale whose inspiration, as the poem shows, comes from Edmund Burke’s *Letter to a Noble Lord*.² Astride him are Charles James Fox and other Whig politicians, while William Godwin, a little donkey, and Thomas Holcroft, a snapping crocodile, scamper around. Before him, like Swift’s image of the tub thrown to a whale, is a cornucopia of seditious literature. Pouring out come pamphlets and Whig newspapers – Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Wrongs of Woman*, the *Enquirer*, the *Monthly Magazine* – pounced on by a donkey-eared Robert Southey, whilst Samuel Taylor Coleridge, also depicted as an ass, waves some *Dactyls* triumphantly. It is a reworking of Spenser’s monster of Error, whose ‘vomit full of bookes and papers was,/With loathly frogs and toades’.³ And indeed, in the very middle of the cartoon, just at the foot of the cornucopia, sit a toad and a frog, croaking in glee as they clutch their own work, *Blank Verse* (1798). Charles Lloyd and Charles Lamb are right at the heart of this panorama of dangerous radicals.

Yet even as the other figures from the cartoon – Godwin, Holcroft, Southey – are restored to the narrative of 1790s Romanticism, Lamb and

Lloyd tend to be excluded. *Blank Verse* remains obscure, unread: we have now forgotten about this other collaborative volume of 1798, whose experimental poetics of radical simplicity pre-empted *Lyrical Ballads*, and whose authors were once regarded as a 'Jacobin' threat. Such overlooked works – which sometimes nestle in close proximity to much better known counterparts – form the central focus of this book, which makes the case for the reconsideration and replacing of Lamb in the literary, cultural, and historical life of the 1790s, one of the most productive periods of his early career.

Part of the reason Lamb has been largely overlooked is the difficulty of placing him in the period. His politics were never overt or easily categorised; even some of his contemporaries were baffled by his inclusion in the *Anti-Jacobin* cartoon. 'I know not what poor Lamb has done to be croaking there,' Southey commented, and his confusion has echoed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴ 'No one could be more innocent than Lamb of political heresy' asserted his Victorian editor and friend Thomas Noon Talfourd.⁵ The great Elian E. V. Lucas – whose 1912 edition of the Lambs is still standard – agreed that the writings of Lamb and Lloyd 'were as far removed from Jacobinism as from bimetallism'.⁶ For Talfourd and Lucas there is something comforting, even noble, about Lamb's apparent apolitical stance, a willed innocence which transcends worldly ties. For others, Lamb's evasiveness has been deeply frustrating. Apparently more interested in roast pig than Peterloo, Lamb's attention to the homely, the domestic and the familiar has been regarded with suspicion. Complacent, self-indulgent, interested in 'drink, gastronomy and smoking,' thundered Denys Thompson, while for Cyril Connolly, Lamb takes after Addison, an 'apologist for the New Bourgeoisie'.⁷ For these critics of the 1930s, alert to the menace of war, Lamb is 'the bourgeois house-holder who lets the firebugs into his attic', who turns away from political threat to admire a tea-cup.⁸

Although this outcry soured Lamb's reputation through the mid-twentieth century, and probably triggered his gradual disappearance from school and university syllabuses, more recently this same evasiveness and resistance to categorisation has prompted some exciting criticism of both Charles and Mary Lamb.⁹ The research of Burton Pollin and Winifred F. Courtney in the 1970s showed us how to read the *Anti-Jacobin* cartoon, demonstrating the ways in which Lamb was deeply – if idiosyncratically – involved with political thought of the period.¹⁰ Jane Aaron's seminal monograph on the Lambs similarly showed the shaping importance of their historical and cultural context, while emphasising

the complexity of their own attitudes, the way in which the 'swerves and slippages of their language' register 'a number of apparently contradictory possibilities'.¹¹ Recent work has furthered our sense of the ambiguities of the Lambs' place in social and literary history. Mary Lamb has begun to receive sustained critical and biographical attention, and Elia's complex political and stylistic negotiations with his *London Magazine* context have been freshly analysed in the last few years.¹² Karen Fang has argued for an imperialist Elia, whose essays offer 'an inclusive, consumer version of the romantic tradition'.¹³ Denise Gigante has similarly emphasised Lamb's consumerist power: re-reading the gluttony of Edax and Lamb's own ready appetite for snipes, plum-cake and brawn, she sees his sensual gustatory pleasures as a knowing 'assertion of low-urban taste' which critiques and challenges Romantic ideals of 'pure aesthetic subjectivity'.¹⁴ Gigante's stimulating readings mark a welcome rediscovery of Lamb's lesser-known work, also evident in Judith Plotz's analysis of the sometimes disturbing imagery of children – child-sweeps, boiled babies, Child-Angels – in his later poetry, essays, conversation and letters.¹⁵ The neglected drama *John Woodvil* (1802) has similarly been discussed very usefully by Anya Taylor as a way into understanding the shifting identities of Lamb's drunken selves.¹⁶ It is an unsettling, disconcerting, provocative Lamb who emerges from these new readings – a belated response to Mary Wedd's 1977 call for us to 'put the guts back into Charles Lamb', and an acknowledgement that the suspicions of the *Anti-Jacobin* might not have been misplaced.¹⁷

I want to continue and expand these exciting new readings of Lamb back into the 1790s: he needs to be fully replaced in the context of these rough politicised exchanges of the revolutionary decade. Not only do Lamb's early works merit rediscovery and re-reading – he is also crucially important as a friend and shrewd reader of others in the period.¹⁸ Exploring the constant negotiations taking place within his 1790s friendships, I show how his complicated political allegiances are interwoven with personal attitudes and arguments. I argue that certain enduring principles and loyalties underpin Lamb's writing – such as his background in religious Dissent – creating what Joseph Nicholes has termed Lamb's 'politics by indirection'.¹⁹ The *Anti-Jacobin* satirists were right to place Lamb in the midst of Unitarians such as Joseph Priestley, whom he deeply admired. Such Unitarian allegiances helped to inform the ideal of friendship and sympathetic feeling which lies at the very centre of Lamb's creative and social identity. Having understood the importance of this ideal, we can then see more clearly the deeper

implications of his persistent focus on the homely and personal – and of his familiar, allusive style.

What looks at first glance like Burkean conservatism might very well be a beleaguered statement of Unitarian radical belief in home and family. A domestic quarrel amongst friends might have much larger ideological implications. An allusion to a friend's poem can open into a fierce political and literary dialogue, where attitudes to friendship, reading and writing, and society are simultaneously negotiated. I want to restore our sense of why that friendly pairing of Lamb and Lloyd – and their apparently innocuous verse of friendship – might have been viewed as dangerous by the *Anti-Jacobin*.

Although this book is about how friendship was read by (and in regard to) Lamb and his circle in the period, it is also about the importance of reading in these friendships. These were relationships forged through shared reading and mutual criticism, expressed through poems dedicated to one another and in dialogue with each other's work. Lamb is especially important as an intermediary, constantly reading and re-writing the works of his friends. Drawing both upon his Unitarian convictions and upon his eclectic and diverse explorations of literature, Lamb produces his own versions of Coleridge poems, and uses Wordsworthian techniques to describe his own urban experiences. In his diverse work of the period – letters, poetry, a novel, a drama and some playful forgeries – he responds on both a literary and an emotional level to his changing friendships with Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lloyd. Phrases and ideas are transformed as they move from one context to another, from a letter by Lamb to a poem by Coleridge, from the private to the public sphere, and back again. While there is an enduring interest in the relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lamb remains the missing link. Reading his little-known works alongside, say, Coleridge's contributions to the *Monthly Magazine*, *Osorio*, *The Borderers*, or *Lyrical Ballads*, allows a much fuller insight into the creative dynamics of early Romanticism, and of Romantic friendship. Meshed together through allusion, quotation, echo, and personal reference, these works create a larger conversation of friendship: coded, deeply allusive, politically inflected.

Tuning into these multiple voices, or exploring the *Anti-Jacobin's* rowdy bestial panorama of radicals, runs counter to a key myth of Romanticism: the concept of solitary inspiration in nature, the lone poet secure in his rural, bardic isolation. It is exemplified by Hazlitt's image of a Wordsworth who 'lives in the busy solitude of his own heart; in the deep silence of thought' (Howe, XIX: 11), or by Benjamin Robert Haydon's classic portrait of Wordsworth alone above the mists of Helvellyn, far