The Charles Lamb Bulletin

Winter 2020

New Series No. 172

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

PUBLISHED BY
THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY

Upcoming Events

19 December 2020, 2pm: Zoom meeting, Professor Gregory Dart will discuss the next phase of the Lamb edition;

16 January 2021, 2pm: Zoom Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture with Professor Rohan McWilliam on 'The West End of London in the Age of Charles Lamb';

13 February: Charles Lamb birthday lunch.
Contact fj21@le.ac.uk for details of each Zoom event. For other Society events please check our website: www.charleslambsociety.com.

An Elian Bicentenary

Charles Lamb first published 'Oxford in the Vacation in the *London Magazine*, in October 1820.

From 'Oxford in the Vacation'

I can here play the gentleman, enact the student. To such a one as myself, who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution, nowhere is so pleasant, to while away a few idle weeks at, as one or other of the Universities. Their vacation, too, at this time of the year, falls in so pat with *ours*. Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted *ad eundem*. I fetch up past opportunities. I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for *me*. In moods of humility I can be a Sizar, or a Servitor. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner. In graver moments, I proceed Master of Arts. Indeed I do not think I am much unlike that respectable character. I have seen your dim-eyed vergers, and bed-makers in spectacles, drop a bow or curtsy, as I pass, wisely mistaking me for something of the sort. I go about in black, which favours the notion. Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle, I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor.

Front cover images of Mary and Charles Lamb are taken from the William MacDonald edition of the *Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London: Dent, 1903-1908)

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

New Series, No. 172, Winter 2020

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FELI CITY JAMES and JOHN STRACHAN

Elian greetings!

We are delighted to present the first issue of the *Bulletin* under our new editor, John Gardner. John is Professor of English Literature at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge; readers will know his work on Hazlitt, Egan, Bamford, and Hone as well as Wordsworth and the Lambs. He is currently a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellow, and his project *'Turning the Screw,'* explores the convergence of literary and engineering cultures in the first half of the nineteenth century. We are very pleased to welcome this new phase in the history of the *Bulletin*.

Alas, we are still unable to plan any Society activities in person for 2020/21 given the continuing pandemic. However, we would love to invite readers to our online Christmas meeting, 19th December at 2pm, at which Professor Gregory Dart will present on the progress of the new edition of the Lambs to be published by Oxford University Press. Bring your own mulled wine. We are very happy to announce the revival of the Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture. Professor Rohan McWilliam will speak on 'The West End of London in the Age of Charles Lamb'.

We will also hold the Birthday Lunch as an online celebration on the 13 February 2021. Our guest of honour will be Professor Jane Moore of Cardiff University, and we look forward to continuing the tradition unbroken. Please let Felicity (fj21@le.ac.uk) know if you would like to attend the events, so that we can send you a zoom invitation and password.

If anyone would like to become involved with the Bulletin, or with the work of the Charles Lamb Society, we would be delighted to hear from you. We would be particularly keen to hear from any early career scholars who would like the opportunity to develop their reviewing or publishing experience.

Felicity James, University of Leicester.
John Strachan, Bath Spa University.

Editorial Note

I am delighted to join the *Bulletin* as editor, having been a member of the Society since I gave the Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture in 1999. Back then the editor was Duncan Wu, who incidentally introduced me to the Lambs when I was an undergraduate student. I have been fortunate to have his help and advice as well as that of subsequent editors including Stephen Burley, Pete Newbon and Felicity James. Meetings with fellow Lamb Society members have also benefitted me greatly.

This publication has long been more of a journal than a 'Bulletin' due to the high quality of the essays that appear in it. Looking back over the early editions, edited from 1935 by the brilliant S. M. Rich, it is apparent that the first *Bulletins*, although wonderful and varied, were only a few pages long and had few scholarly essays. The *Bulletin* began with ten stencilled editions a year carrying 'particulars of the Society's activities and interests, reports of addresses on subjects associated with Lamb given by eminent men of letters, and items of Eliana not previously recorded' (*The C.L.S. Bulletin*, November 1948). In recent years the *Bulletin* could, like this issue, contain over 100 pages.

The Lamb Society have always celebrated the work of Mary as well as Charles. That is important, as Mary's name has been uncredited far too often, despite Charles writing that they possessed a 'double singleness'. At Mary Wedd's terrific programme of talks at Albemarle Street in 2008 to celebrate the bicentenary of *Mrs Leicester's School*, I became much more aware and convinced of the joint importance of Mary and Charles Lamb. Mary wrote seven of the ten stories in *Mrs Leicester's School*, and also the same proportion in *Tales from Shakespeare* where she penned fourteen of twenty. *Tales from Shakespeare* had Charles's name on the book, 'against his wish'. Circumspection prevented Mary from wanting her name on these books, although Charles desired it. Nonetheless, Charles made sure that friends, such as Bernard Barton, were aware that Mary had a greater hand in their best-known works: 'My Sister's part in the Leicester School (about two thirds) was purely her own'. As with the scholarly editions by MacDonald, Lucas, and the forthcoming ones by Dart, James and Matthews, the *Bulletin* features the work of Charles and Mary Lamb. This publication has long been, in everything but name, a Charles and Mary Lamb Journal. The *Bulletin* has also, from the outset, found space to analyse the work of the Lambs' circle. As Edmund Blunden wrote in the 4 hundredth edition of the *Bulletin* in March 1951, this journal has been 'the chronicle of a Society which honours Lamb well by not being tyrannically insistent on *him*

all the time though ever illustrating his circle'. This edition, which features the work of emerging and established scholars, examines that circle.

To promote membership of the Society and to further 'cultivate the Elian spirit of friendliness and good humour' we have instigated an introductory membership fee of only £5 for early career scholars and students at any stage of their studies. This gives membership of the Society and print editions of the *Bulletin* twice a year. You can find out more about membership on the website and from our membership secretary Helen Goodman, whose details are given on the back cover of the *Bulletin*. I hope you enjoy this issue.

John Gardner
Anglia Ruskin University

'"The men of letters, whose shadows walk the London streets with us"': The influence of Charles Lamb on John Hollingshead's Journalism'

EILIDH INNES

When researching the life of Charles Lamb, the journalist Benjamin Ellis Martin wrote of a common preoccupation in the metropolis: 'the men of letters, whose shadows walk the London streets with us'.[1] The shadow of Charles Lamb accompanied one particular aspiring journalist, John Hollingshead (1827-1904) as he set out to forge a career in London in the late 1850s. Indeed, Hollingshead himself wrote of the 'phantoms that had been the companions of my childhood' and it was these ghosts of the metropolis that he would bring to life in his journalism.[2] Hollingshead, who grew up in poverty in Hoxton, went on to become part of the bohemian community centred around Dickens and Thackeray. Their haunts were the coffee shops of London and, one in particular, Saunders's in Warwick Street, was not far from Wellington Street where Dickens sited his headquarters for both *Household Words* and *All the Year Round.* Through these networks, Hollingshead obtained a post at both publications, producing a great many articles that were later published in anthologies with titles such as *Under Bow Bells: A City Book for All Readers* and *Underground London* before going on to work for Thackeray at *The Cornhill Magazine.* The work for which he is most famous, *Ragged London in 1861,* was originally published as a series of articles for the *Morning Post* detailing the living conditions of the London poor. After becoming drama critic at the *Daily News* he took the role of stage manager of the Alhambra Theatre (an upmarket music hall) before moving on to manage the Gaiety Theatre in London's West End, where he oversaw many successful productions, including the first performance of an Ibsen play in London.

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[1] Benjamin Ellis Martin, *In the Footprints of Charles Lamb* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), Preface.

[2] John Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, 2 vols (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Company, 1895), I, 56.

Hollingshead was related to Lamb by virtue of being the great nephew of Sarah James, Mary Lamb's nurse. In his autobiography, written at the end of his life, he revealed his family connections with the Lambs, and shared some of his reminiscences and stories passed down through the Hollingshead family with his readers. These provide a fascinating insight into the private world of the Lambs. This article will examine Hollingshead's memoirs and assess what we can learn from his sketches of them. I will also explore the influence of Charles and Mary Lamb upon Hollingshead's writing throughout his career.

Charles and Mary Lamb: how far did their portrayal of the metropolis influence Hollingshead's work?

Hollingshead made his first steps into journalism when he entered the bohemian space of the London coffee house. Henri Lefebvre argues that social space 'contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information'.[3] Aspiring writers attended particular coffee shops to discuss ideas and exchange gossip. It was those networks that allowed writers, journalists and theatrical profession to mix and create new works, both for the printed page and the theatre. This was also the space where the Bohemians were to be found. Richard Schoch's definition of Victorian bohemianism as 'not a place with a precise geographical referent but a symbolic space' is a useful way of thinking about this.[4] His description of Bohemia as 'the cultural space for the experiences of unconventional artists, writers and performers' helps us to understand what drew Hollingshead to these spaces.[5] However, it could be argued that it was the influence of the Lambs that first set Hollingshead on the road to becoming a writer. Hollingshead had become part of a literary network early in life: familial connections meant that he spent time with both Charles and Mary Lamb as a child. He was allowed access to their library, which included Wordsworth, Keats, Hazlitt and Coleridge, and was present when many of their literary friends visited.[6] The atmosphere of 'sociability, sophistication and confidence' that he encountered in the home of the Lambs was likely to

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[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* transl. Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991),77.
[4] Richard Schoch, 'Performing Bohemia', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 30/2 (2003) 1-13 (1).
[5] Schoch, 'Performing Bohemia', 1.
[6] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime,* I, 41.

have shaped not only his identity as a writer but his way of viewing the city.[7] Certainly the impact of these early literary connections was immense: Hollingshead's writing was heavily influenced by Charles Lamb's descriptions of London and its people. He also shared the Lambs' love of the city, and the theatrical scenes being played out in the streets around him. As Sukdev Sandu observes, 'cities have always been imaginative as well as physical places. We mythologize and fantasize about them'.[8] Hollingshead added to the mythology of the metropolis by telling the stories of the Lambs and the city in his journalism, and later, his popular histories. Charles Lamb's fondness for 'bye-ways to highways' is also evident in Hollingshead's work.[9] Indeed, he liked nothing better than 'repeopling faded, half-deserted streets with the great and little celebrities of the past'.[10]

Like Charles Lamb before him, Hollingshead came from the Cockney tradition of journalists who wished to challenge 'the artistic establishment'.[11] Meaghan Hanrahan Dobson argues that Mary Lamb, too, was challenging it by being a 'creative, intelligent and self-assertive woman in a society thoroughly opposed to all of those qualities'.[12] The fact that Hollingshead spoke of Mary Lamb with some awe and as having 'many visions that were beyond my limited intelligence' suggests that he viewed her as a writer of no ordinary genius.[13] Indeed, it appears he saw her as having insights into the lives of others that he could not possibly hope to emulate. The late Toni Morrison described writers as 'among the most sensitive, the most intellectually anarchic, most representative, most probing of artists'.[14] This applies to both Hollingshead's and the Lambs'

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[7] Simon P. Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), 180.
[8] Sukdev Sandu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City* (London: Harper, 2004), xxv.
[9] *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,* ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1930), 11, 178-9.
[10] John Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', in *According to My Lights* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1900), 80-102; (87-88). Originally published in the *Cornhill Magazine.*
[11] Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 67.
[12] Meaghan Hanrahan Dobson, 'Reconsidering Mary Lamb: Imagination and Memory in Mrs Leicester's School', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin,* Series 93, January 1996; 12-21 (14).
[13] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 41.
[14] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15.

writings, as although often intended for the popular press, they frequently examined the deeper problems of the metropolis. Like the Lambs, Hollingshead discussed the issues of the day with his journalist friends, William Moy Thomas, George Augustus Sala and Edmund Yates, and they often shared their work, sometimes even writing articles on each other's behalf.[15] It could be argued that this had its roots in the 'Cockney sociability' that Hollingshead first encountered in the sitting room of the Lambs and that it was this that led him to the coffee houses with their atmosphere of conviviality.[16] The presence of the ghosts of Charles and Mary Lamb is evident throughout Hollingshead's writing, both in the anecdotes and stories he shared with his readers and the way he associated the different districts of London with their lives. Their qualities of 'patience, warm-hearted friendship, and the humour distilled from suffering' also shaped much of Hollingshead's work.[17] Furthermore, Lamb's tendency to '*épater les bourgeoisie*' (shock ordinary people), also rubbed off on Hollingshead.[18] He seems to have delighted in this, both in his writing and his productions at the Gaiety Theatre, where he became famous for promoting burlesque, a form of musical entertainment that sent up popular works and involved many ad libs and topical jokes.

Hollingshead had a similar background to the Lambs and claimed that his education came 'from the streets', largely because his father was in a debtor's prison for part of his childhood.[19] This may well have contributed to his love of telling the stories of London's inhabitants and his tendency to associate people, especially celebrities, with different spaces in London.[20] It may also have been because of the Lambs' fascination with the spectacle of the street, and the stories of the metropolis that he would have listened to in their company.[21] He would

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[15] Edmund Yates, *Memoirs of a Man of the World, Part I* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1884), 53.
[16] Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 87.
[17] Anonymous, 'A Tiresome Old Buffoon', An Appreciation of Charles Lamb from New Zealand', *Charles Lamb Society Bulletin,* No.115, November 1953, no page numbers.
[18] Joseph Riehl, *That Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics* (Columbia: Camden House, 1998),167.
[19] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 161.
[20] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 161.
[21] Vic Gatrell, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (London: Penguin, 2014), 312.

have also been exposed to the drama of life played out on the streets from an early age and it is likely that many of the characters he wrote about were those he had encountered whilst walking in the metropolis. This, combined with his intimate knowledge of London, meant that he was able to successfully depict the spectacle of the capital's street life but with the sympathy of a fellow human being for those struggling to survive in the modern metropolis, something that very much characterises Charles Lamb's work.

The narrative of the city portrayed by Hollingshead is bound up with the stories told by previous writers and artists through their work, and the stories that were passed on to him by the Lambs, their visitors and various members of Hollingshead's extended family. These stories were intertwined with his memories of the city and, as Andrew Wood suggests in an early modern context, 'memory, like custom, was therefore about the repetition of the known, the everyday'.[22] There is also a sense that 'stories tied people together, providing a stock of shared experience'.[23] What Hollingshead was doing was effectively creating a 'shared experience' of the city as, by speaking to his readers as a friend, he was inviting them not only to be part of his London, but also Charles and Mary Lambs' London. In addition, Wood argues that 'memory gives meaning to history'.[24] This is a fruitful way of interrogating the past as Hollingshead's willingness to share his stories and remembrances of London means that we are able, for example, to see glimpses of the Lambs' sitting room that would otherwise be in darkness. However, it must be stressed that we are 'not seeing the past, but particular representations of it'.[25] With this in mind, the stories Hollingshead told of the Lambs will be examined in greater detail below.

'I am a London man, London born and London bred – a genuine Cockney, I hope, of the school of Dr Johnson and Charles Lamb'

Hollingshead gave a sense of how he saw himself in an essay called 'Ideal Houses' (1862), written while working for Thackeray at *The Cornhill Magazine*. He wrote: 'I am a London man, London born and London bred – a genuine Cockney, I hope, of the school of Dr Johnson and Charles

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[22] Andrew Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 282.
[23] Wood, *The Memory of the People,* 282.
[24] Wood, *The Memory of the People,* 17.
[25] Wood, *The Memory of the People,* 17.

Lamb'.[26] Whether he intended it or not, this sums up Hollingshead's identity as a writer. His work for the *Cornhill* illustrates not only the influence of the Lambs' depictions of London but also their love of the city:

> I cannot tear myself away from old taverns, old courts and alleys, old suburbs, old print-shops, old mansions, and archways, and old churches. I must hear the London chimes at midnight or life would not be worth a jot.[27]

This extract brings to mind Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth on 30 January 1801, in which he wrote of his love for the city and described why he felt at home there, even at night:

> I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead Nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street; the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, wagons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the very women of the Town; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print shops, the old bookstalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes - London itself a pantomime and a masquerade - all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. [28]

In the same spirit, Hollingshead made extensive use of 'word painting' to enable the reader to conjure up a picture of the metropolis. Catherine

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[26] John Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', in *According to My Lights*, 86.
[27] Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', 86.
[28] Charles Lamb, Letter to William Wordsworth, Letter LXXXV, 30 January 1801 in *The Letters of Charles Lamb: With A Sketch of His Life By Thomas Noon Talfourd in Two Parts: Part I* (London: Edward Moxon, 1841), 56.

Waters defines 'word-painting' as 'employing techniques that emulate pictorial methods to dramatise the visual and render faithfully the perspective of an eye-witness to the scene described'.[29] This device is a very theatrical one, often used by playwrights to set the scene at the beginning of play. Waters argues that the writers at *Household Words* were being trained by Dickens in the art of 'word-painting', as George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates, William Moy Thomas, Hollingshead and others employed this technique in their journalism.[30] The theatricality of this approach would have appealed to Hollingshead as he reported that from a young age he was fascinated by the theatre and the 'Penny Gaffs'. However, it seems likely that Hollingshead was also influenced by Charles Lamb's way of writing about London, with its extensive use of 'word painting', before he worked for Dickens, and this is perhaps why Dickens thought he would be a useful addition to the staff.

A contemporary review described 'Ideal Houses' as 'a pleasant dreamy sort of paper'.[31] Certainly Hollingshead seemed to be channelling the spirit of Lamb (or Elia) in this particular essay, which was filled with vivid images of the city and occasional flights of fancy:

> What luxury would there be, almost equal to anything we read of in the 'Arabian Nights', in turning on one side from the busy crowd, unlocking a dingy door that promised to lead to nothing but a miserable court, and passing at once into a secret, secluded garden! What pleasures would be equal to those of hearing the splash of cool fountains, the sighing of the wind through lofty elms and broad beeches, of standing amongst the scent and colours of a hundred growing flowers, of sitting in an oaken room with a tiled fireplace…and looking out over a lawn of grass into a winding vista of trees, so contrived as to shut out all signs of city life, while the mellow hum of traffic came in at the open window, or through the walls, and you felt that you were within a stone's-throw of Temple Bar![32]

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[29] Catherine Waters, *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press in Victorian Print Culture, 1850-1886* (London: Palgrave, 2019), 18.
[30] Waters, *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press*, 16.
[31] 'The *Cornhill Magazine* No. IV (April)', *Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham, England), Wednesday March 28, 1860, 3.
[32] Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', 91-2.

This extract owes a good deal to Lamb's 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple':

> Indeed, it is the most elegant spot in the metropolis. What a transition for a countryman visiting London for the first time – the passing from the crowded Strand or Fleet Street, by unexpected avenues, into its magnificent ample squares, its classic green recesses? What a cheerful, liberal look hath that portion of it, which, from three sides, overlooks the greater garden.[33]

In both essays, there is a distinct emphasis on finding nature within the city and the sense that the bustling metropolis is not far away, almost as if this provides a form of comfort to those who may feel lost without it nearby. There is also the feeling that both writers are confiding the details of the secret squares and alleys that only Londoners are aware of to their readers.

'Ideal Houses' also provides some insights into the life of the Lambs, which are interspersed with the descriptions of the city. It is unclear whether Hollingshead included these as a nod to the similarities between this essay and Lamb's but he clearly revered him. He referred to Charles Lamb as 'our dear old friend' and claimed that 'every day is bringing him nearer the crown that belongs only to the Prince of British Essayists', which is perhaps the most direct admission of Lamb's influence on his work.[34] While he painted a picture of the changing metropolis for his readers, he mused that Lamb 'would still have drawn nourishment in the Temple and in Covent Garden; but he must surely have perished if transplanted to New Tyburnia [Paddington]'.[35] Here Hollingshead expressed his disdain for the modern London suburbs as faceless, characterless places, perhaps because they had yet to have stories associated with them. As Patrick Joyce argues, 'places are brought into being by the encounters of life and hence are constituted in terms of life histories'.[36] One could argue that the 'encounters of life' are what drove

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[33] Charles Lamb, 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple', in *The Essays of Elia, with an Introduction by E.V. Lucas* (London: Methuen, 1902), 172-187 (172).
[34]Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', 91-2.
[35] Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', 93.
[36] Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003), 211.

both Hollingshead's and Lamb's writing, and is perhaps why Hollingshead disliked the growing, modern metropolis.

Hollingshead's in-depth knowledge of the metropolis, coupled with his ability to link the parts of the city he was writing about with figures such as Lamb means that we see London through the eyes of a man who knew many stories about the city and was able to share those with his readers. In fact, it is almost as though he is passing them on from one generation to the next by telling the stories of 'the men of letters, who walk the London streets with us'.[37] We see Lamb's cottage through his eyes and find ourselves in his sitting room, being greeted as a friend:

> the door was so constructed that it opened into the chief sitting room; and this, though promising much annoyance, was really a source of fun and enjoyment to our dear old friend. He was never so delighted as when he stood on the hearthrug receiving many congenial visitors, as they came to him on the muddiest-boot and the wettest-of-umbrella days.[38]

In this extract, Hollingshead invited the reader into Lamb's sitting room, certain of a positive reception. The use of 'our dear old friend' suggests that Lamb is a friend to all. The metropolis is no longer seen as a large, sprawling creature, spilling out into the countryside surrounding it, but a place where friendship and conviviality may be found. The 'pleasant dreamy sort of paper' then took rather a darker turn as Hollingshead explained:

> His immediate neighbourhood was also peculiar. It was there that weary wanderers came to seek the waters of oblivion. Suicide could pitch upon no spot so favourable for its sacrifices as the gateway leading to into the river enclosure before Charles Lamb's cottage. Waterloo Bridge had not long been built, and was not then a fashionable theatre for self-destruction. The drags were always kept ready in Colebrook Row, and are still so kept at a small tavern a few doors from the cottage.[39]

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[37] Martin, *In the Footprints of Charles Lamb*, preface.
[38] Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', 94.
[39] Hollingshead, 'Ideal Houses', 95.

Here Hollingshead wrote sympathetically of those 'weary wanderers' who had come to find peace 'in the waters of oblivion'. He seems to have understood that trying to survive in the metropolis was difficult and often led people to the depths of despair. His exposure to the Lambs and their mental health problems as a child may well have given him an understanding that many found the struggle too much to bear. Hollingshead's reference to the fact that 'the drags', used for recovering bodies of the deceased from the river, were kept close reflects the fact that suicide was a common occurrence. Certainly, Hollingshead gave this as the reason the Lambs chose to leave the cottage at Islington and reside elsewhere. As with much of his work, Hollingshead provided only fleeting glimpses into the lives of the Lambs, often with little explanation, so that the overall effect is one of a patchwork of memories rather than a whole picture. Perhaps, like Elia, Hollingshead was seeking to examine 'the deep and difficult problems of human life which we have been reluctant to face'.[40] Or it may be because he was 'a bohemian, whose sympathies drew him to the damaged refuse of society' and he wished to tell the stories of those ordinary people who might otherwise have gone unnoticed in the rapidly expanding metropolis.[41] This article also shows his humanitarianism as he wrote of suffering as a universal human condition.[42]

The bohemian nature of Hollingshead meant he took pleasure in night-walks around the city. The night walker was 'romanticized and idealized' by many bohemians, and became a figure who was seen as counter-cultural.[43] It is not clear who came up with the idea that Hollingshead should spend the night of 31 December 1857 on top of the monument to the great fire of London but this exploit produced an article called 'All Night on the Monument' (1858) for *Household Words* and owed a great deal to Charles Lamb's essay 'New Year's Eve'. Hollingshead claimed in his autobiography that his knowledge of London 'north, south, east and west – was acquired by daily walks, not to say wanderings, which often covered twenty miles a day', which may explain why so

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[40] Riehl, *That Dangerous Figure,* 1.
[41] Riehl, *That Dangerous Figure,* 38.
[42] Toni Morrison, 'Toni Morrison on Primo Levi's defiant humanism', *The Guardian,* Saturday 5 September 2015.
[43] Matthew Beaumont, *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London* (London: Verso, 2016), 10.

much of his writing focused on the city and its streets and the people in them.[44] Hollingshead described the city at night from the monument as:

> The great city, silent as death – save for the occasional rattle of a stray cab or omnibus – within its treasures, its precious metals and its costly fabrics, is like one vast empty workshop left in charge of a few policeman….its dreamers and its workers are at rest – far away from its walls – preparing for that never-ceasing, ever-recurring struggle of to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow.[45]

The inclusion of tiny details in order to paint a picture of the city echoed 'New Year's Eve' as did the meditation on the human condition. Here Hollingshead went beyond simply describing the city and mused on matters common to all. Later in the essay he borrowed further dreamlike imagery from Lamb:

> The moon has now increased in power, and acting on the mist, brings out the churches, one by one, there they stand in the soft light, a noble army of temples thickly sprinkled amongst the money-changers […] They stand like giant, spectral watchmen guarding the silent city; whose beating heart still murmurs in its sleep.[46]

This is very similar in tone to Lamb's exploration of human psychology in 'New Year's Eve':

> The blast that nips and shrinks me puts me in thoughts of death. All things allied to the insubstantial wait upon the master-feeling – cold, numbness, dreams, perplexity; moonlight itself, with its shadowy and spectral appearances.[47]

As in Lamb's letter to Wordsworth, there is a certain amount of emotion in this essay: Hollingshead wrote of the city's 'dreamers and its workers'. He also established a relationship between himself and his

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[44] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 40.
[45] John Hollingshead, 'All Night on the Monument', in *Under Bow Bells: A City Book for All Readers* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1860), 44-57 (45).
[46] Hollingshead, 'All Night on the Monument', 52.
[47] Charles Lamb, 'New Year's Eve', in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb: Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* 8 vols ed. E.V. Lucas (London: Methuen, 1903), II, 27-31 (30).

readers, as Lamb did, by referring to the 'never-ceasing, ever-recurring struggle of tomorrow', a feeling with which most, if not all of his readers, would have been likely to empathise. Marilyn Butler notes that everyday life is central to Lamb's work, and Hollingshead appears to have been very much influenced by this.[48] The article 'All Night' not only paints a picture of London at night but is also an essay on the financial crisis of 1857. In it, Hollingshead seems to be suggesting that London as a space was effectively a prison without walls for its inhabitants, who were 'chained within the hateful bounds, by imaginary wants and artificial desires'.[49]

'I have sketched him just as he lives for me - the lines and wrinkles of his aspect, the shine and the shadow of his soul'

Hollingshead's memoirs are a rich source for the Lamb scholar as many memories and stories of the Lambs are to be found within them. Though he admitted that his memories of them were filtered through the eyes of a child, they still give us valuable information. *My Lifetime* was published at the end of his long career as a journalist and manager of the Gaiety Theatre in London's fashionable West End. It largely a collection of anecdotes, centred mainly on London. Indeed, Hollingshead himself referred to his writing as 'bad or good, I had a blunt plain style of my own'.[50] This 'blunt plain style' is evident throughout his memoirs. By contrast, there is an almost childlike feel to the stories he tells of the Lambs, as if he had become a small boy again, once more enthralled by the Lambs and their illustrious visitors. He described Lamb as 'a little Bob Cratchitt of a man, who might have been a tutor at a school, with a neat frail body carrying a large head that looked somewhat top-heavy'.[51] Hollingshead elaborated on his connections with the Lambs at the beginning of his autobiography, referring to 'the curse of lunacy' that brought the families together.[52] In contrast to much of his writing, which is often 'blunt', he describes Charles and Mary Lamb almost as if they are fairies or spirits; to him they were 'airy and spiritual phantoms whose frail bodies carried minds of great delicacy and power, weakened only by

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[48] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760 – 1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 177.
[49] Hollingshead, 'All Night on the Monument', 45.
[50] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 96.
[51] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 11.
[52] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime,* I, 10.

hereditary madness'.[53] There is a great deal of emphasis on madness at the beginning of his memoirs and he records that the house in which he lived as a boy was overlooked by 'the mad-house at Hoxton', where Charles Lamb stayed for a time.[54] He concedes that his recollections are heavily reliant on 'family hearsay', before going on to tell several stories illustrating Lamb's 'eccentric and peculiar' habits.[55] One of these tales, of the Lambs' visit to Paris, gives the reader an insight into Charles Lamb's existence:

> he led his own independent life – disappearing sometimes all day, having lived mostly on the river quays on the Odéon side of the Seine, rummaging the bookstalls and print-shops for old books and old prints, returning late at night to the hotel, and skating up the waxed stairs to bed, thoroughly satisfied with his day's work. My father had the same tastes, and thought we ought not to hunger after supper if we could look upon Sayer's mezzotints, just bought, of Dr Johnson when he was a young man struggling with blindness, and Goldsmith as the companion engraving.[56]

From this account, it seems evident that Hollingshead's father also accompanied the Lambs upon their visit to Paris. Unfortunately, Hollingshead tells us no more of this intriguing story and we are left with nothing but a brief insight into their lives. Perhaps this was a deliberate ploy on Hollingshead's part; certainly he liked to tempt his readers with hints of untold stories and regularly resorted to humour to distract them from the fact that he was telling an unfinished story. In the case of the visit to Paris, he related a particular incident that arose when Lamb and his friends wished to attend the theatre. Talma (a well-known comedian) attempted to allow them entry by circumventing the crowd of people outside and Hollingshead recorded that this 'almost produced a riot' as the English and French were not on good terms at the time.[57] Sadly, he does not give us any further details about this fascinating story and we are left wondering whether the Lambs did indeed gain entrance to the theatre. However, what is most interesting about this anecdote is the fact that Charles Lamb was portrayed as someone who lived 'a mostly

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[53] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 10.
[54] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 10.
[55] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 11.
[56] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 11.
[57] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 11.

independent life' whilst in Paris. From this story we also gain a valuable insight into Charles Lamb's life, and his desire to avoid being bound by convention. Although undated, the fact that he spent time in Paris is suggestive.

Sometimes there is a distinctly mischievous streak to Hollingshead's recollections of Lamb, almost as if he were conjuring up Lamb's 'childish enthusiasm' as he wrote them.[58] According to Hollingshead, Sarah James was often sent to fetch Lamb: he was 'piloted home like an unruly child; and his sense of humour sometimes found vent in picking up stones or brickbats and pretending to throw them at passers-by. No-one resented this; he looked such a harmless mannekin'.[59] Benjamin Ellis Martin noted that, when writing about Lamb, 'I have sketched him just as he lives for me - the lines and wrinkles of his aspect, the shine and the shadow of his soul'.[60] Hollingshead was doing something similar here and, interestingly, refrained from giving any criticism of Lamb. It is almost as if Lamb's life was too delicate a thing to trample upon with the 'blunt, plain' prose he reserved for others.[61] The influence of Victorian sentimentality can also be seen in Hollingshead's depictions of the Lambs. One of the definitions that Philip Davis gives of Victorian sentimentality is 'a childish holding-on to emotions' and Hollingshead is certainly affected to an extent here.[62] It could also be due to the influence of Lamb himself. As Geoffrey Tillotson observes, Lamb's essays 'represent life as it is', and here Hollingshead recalls Lamb just as he was.[63] Perhaps Hollingshead was also aware of what Butler describes as Lamb's 'ordinariness'.[64] Because of this, he may have felt that describing Lamb as he remembered would garner the reader's sympathy rather than censure.[65] This is certainly the case in another of his recollections of life with the Lambs: he revealed that a second aunt of his, Mrs Parsons, also acted as companion to Mary Lamb. Hollingshead described his childhood impression of Mary Lamb as 'the dreamy old lady, who looked

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[58] John Gardner, 'The Case of Byron's *Marino Faliero*',in *The Oxford Handbook to the Georgian Theatre, 1737 – 1832* eds. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 479-498 (479).
[59] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 12.
[60] Martin, *In the Footprints of Charles Lamb,* Preface.
[61]Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 96.
[62] Philip Davis, 'Victorian Realist Prose and Sentimentality', in *Rereading Victorian Fiction,* ed. A. Jenkins and J. John (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999),13-28 (23).
[63] Geoffrey Tillotson quoted in Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 132.
[64] Marilyn Butler quoted in Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 133.
[65] Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 133.

over me rather than at me, and seemed to see many visions that were beyond my limited intelligence'.[66] She apparently spent her time in 'a comfortable library sitting room' with an orchard adjoining, and Hollingshead painted a dreamlike picture of an afternoon with Mary Lamb:

> Sometimes we played at cards – her favourite pastime – such games as I had any knowledge of, and sometimes when she was tired or liked to roam about the garden, I was allowed to browse upon the books which walled in the apartment….The books that I fastened upon most were William Hazlitt's works, many of them full of notes by authors who confirmed or disputed the great critic's statements. Coleridge fell foul of Wordsworth, or Wordsworth of Coleridge, while John Keats often disagreed with them both. Visitors sometimes came in, and I was allowed to watch them from a corner….In the cool of the evening, when the bats were flying about, I was allowed a pinch of snuff out of the historic silver box, marked 'M.L.', which almost every man and woman of the period of any importance had dipped into; and then I started off for my four-mile walk to Hoxton.[67]

Hollingshead used a similar technique to the Lambs here by 'framing memories and dreams in tableau form'.[68] There is also a wistful quality to this anecdote that is rarely present in Hollingshead's writing. It is almost as if the world of the Lambs is 'still alive, still smiles before us.'[69] Butler notes that 'Lamb's many sketches of his own life are consistent, intimate and believable' and Hollingshead was following a similar path as his reminiscences were expressed in a similar manner.[70] Perhaps Hollingshead was thinking of Mary Lamb's story of Louisa Manners in *Mrs Leicester's School* in which she recounted the child's delight of being allowed to stay up late: 'My sister and I were permitted to sit up until it

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[66] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 41.
[67] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 41.
[68] Peter A. Brier, 'Lamb, Dickens and the Theatrical Vision', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin,* April/July 1975, New Series Number 10/11, 65-70 (66).
[69] J. B. Priestley, 'Charles Lamb, the English Humourist', *The Charles Lamb Society Bulletin,* Oct 1970, No. 208, 670 (670).
[70] Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries,* 177.

was almost dark, to see the company at supper'.[71] It is also possible that he was recalling Lamb's essay 'Dream Children' and addressing his readers in the same vein as Lamb would have done:

> Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when they were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle or granddame whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother.[72]

Hollingshead appears to be employing a similar device and drawing his readers round the fire to tell them of the time he spent with the Lambs. It is clear that Hollingshead held Mary Lamb in high esteem: there is ample evidence of the 'patience, warm-hearted friendship, and the humour distilled from suffering' that is so characteristic of the Lambs' work.[73] In addition, he wrote very much in the tradition of the Lambs by addressing the reader as he would a friend.[74]

'All those who knew him felt the better for knowing him'.

In one of the last articles written before his death in 1904, Hollingshead delved into the failed relationship between Charles Lamb and the actress Fanny Kelly. The article, entitled 'Charles Lamb's One Romance', was published in *Harper's Magazine* in September 1903. It seems likely that the article was the result of his difficult financial situation at the end of his life as Hollingshead sold the letter from Lamb proposing marriage to Fanny Kelly to the magazine. He introduced the readers of *Harper's Magazine* to Charles and Mary Lamb as 'more like some of the most delicate creations of Charles Dickens or Thackeray than real workaday people' and wrote sympathetically about the difficult position both Lamb and

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[71] Mary Lamb, 'Mrs Leicester's School: The History of Several Young Ladies, related by themselves', in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb,* ed. E. V. Lucas, 8 vols (New York: Putnam's, 1903), III, 273 - 331 (284).
[72] Charles Lamb, 'Dream Children: A Reverie', *The Chandos Classics: Poems and Essays of Charles Lamb* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., undated) 237-240 (237).
[73] Anonymous, 'A Tiresome Old Buffoon', An Appreciation of Charles Lamb from New Zealand', *Charles Lamb Society Bulletin,* No.115, November 1953, no page numbers.
[74] Jane Aaron, *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 5.

Kelly found themselves in.[75] It is clear that he liked and respected them both. Charles Lamb's relationship with, and subsequent refusal by, Fanny Kelly is described elsewhere as 'a deeply felt experience' and Hollingshead seems to have been aware of this.[76] J.B. Priestley said of Lamb, 'all those who knew him felt the better for knowing him, and those of us…who feel that we, too, know him, in spite of the mists of time, find ourselves ensnared by the same sweet influence'.[77] It may be this 'sweet influence' that affected Hollingshead and made the article for *Harper's* so very different from his other works. In addition, Lamb's 'sympathy with his fellow men and his kindly nature would not allow him to indulge in […] mordant, satirical humor', and he was perhaps affecting Hollingshead's writing here, as in the latter part of his career, both his articles and his letters to the press were of a rather more waspish nature.[78] This is also definite evidence of the influence of the Romantic poets on Hollingshead, as, in this article, the focus was very much on 'the importance of emotion rather than rational thought in arousing the reader's sympathy'.[79] The metropolis was one of the main characters in the article and Hollingshead described the Lambs and London as intertwined: 'they belong to London and London life'.[80] He listed many of the places with which they had an association: the ''Cat and Mutton Fields', over which they walked, hand in hand, from Hackney to Hoxton when they felt the mental curse was coming upon them'.[81] Here Hollingshead echoed Mary Lamb's stories in *Mrs Leicester's School* as he painted the Lambs as two children, alone and adrift, in the great metropolis but then went on to say that they later 'found themselves in the congenial neighbourhood of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, amongst their friends'.[82] Once again, there is the sense that friendship and conviviality can be found in certain spaces in the metropolis.

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[75] John Hollingshead, 'Charles Lamb's One Romance', *Harper's Magazine,* September 1903, 517-519 (517).
[76] R. Meadows White, '1806 and Mr H.', *The Charles Lamb Society Bulletin,* No.139, Nov 1957, 178-179 (178).
[77] Priestley, 'Charles Lamb', 670.
[78] W. L. MacDonald, 'Charles Lamb, the Greatest of the Essayists', *PMLA,* Vol.32, No.4 (1917), 547-572 (563).
[79] Samar Altar, *Borrowed Imagination: The British Romantic Poets and Their Arab-Islamic Sources* (Lexington Books, 2014), 19.
[80] Hollingshead, 'Charles Lamb's One Romance', 517.
[81] Hollingshead, 'Charles Lamb's One Romance', 517.
[82] John Gardner, 'A Touch of Tombatism': Mary Lamb, Charles Dickens and Learning to Read from Tombstones', unpublished, 7. Hollingshead, 'Charles Lamb's One Romance', 517.

Though Hollingshead viewed the Lambs as interwoven with the streets of London in this article and elsewhere, they are portrayed as unconventional. Jane Aaron notes that 'the damned soul, marked with a sense of personal guilt, and wandering an outcast on the Borderlands of society' is one of the themes of English Romantic poets.[83] Certainly Hollingshead emphasised the fact that Charles Lamb favoured the 'wild freedom' of the sort of life he had chosen, and only occasionally attended literary parties.[84] Again, this strongly suggests that Lamb did not subscribe the mores of middle-class society and preferred the more unconventional company of various friends, rather than those from the middle and upper-classes. Lamb was described by one Victorian commentator as someone who was 'from home with formal and conventional people. The friends he most cherished were men who had some individuality of character'.[85] This almost certainly rubbed off on Hollingshead who later sought out an informal space in which he could discuss life in the changing metropolis. Lamb's 'famed personal sociability' can be seen as very much paving the way for the sociability that would later be found in the coffee houses of the metropolis, and which would go on to influence the popular culture of the Victorian period.[86]

The fact that the Lamb household was unusual is also illustrated by the acrostic which Charles Lamb wrote for Sarah James. It would have been an unconventional thing to do for a member of the household who would have been regarded as a servant by fashionable society but, as previously discussed, the Lambs did not care for convention. As Mary Lamb required a nurse, they were reliant on other citizens of the metropolis and seemed to have inspired a great loyalty in those they employed. Though the Hollingshead family were in possession of a number of letters regarding the Lambs, these were destroyed by Sarah James, and only the acrostic remains. It was written especially for her because, as Hollingshead explains, her father was rector of Beguildy parish.[87]

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[83] Jane Aaron quoted in Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 157.
[84] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 12.
[85] Charles Lamb, *The Complete Correspondence and Works of Charles Lamb: with an essay on his life and genius by Thomas Purnell* 3 vols (E. Moxon and Son, 1870), I, xxiv.
[86] Hull, *Charles Lamb,* 181.
[87] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 42.

Acrostic

Sleep hath treasures worth retracing,
Are you not in slumbers pacing
Round your native spot at times,
And seem to hear Beguildy's chimes?
Held the airy vision fast;
Joy is but a dream at last:
And what was so fugitive
Memory only makes to live.
Even from troubles past we borrow
Some thoughts that may lighten sorrow,
Onwards as we pace through life,
Fainting under care or strife,
By the magic of a thought
Every object is brought
Gayer than it was when real,
Under influence ideal.
In remembrance as a glass,
Let your happy childhood pass;
Dreaming so in fancy's spells,
You still shall hear those old church bells.[88]

Hollingshead described the acrostic as a 'somewhat laboured form of verse-writing'.[89] However, this acrostic does illustrate some of the common themes of Charles Lamb's work, in particular 'the ways in which the imagination may mitigate human problems'.[90] Lamb's acrostic encouraged the reader to use 'the magic of a thought' to recall a pleasant childhood memory in the face of life's hardships. What Riehl refers to as his 'humane intimacy' is also evident in this poem.[91] Though this form of verse might be unfamiliar to the twenty-first century reader, the quality of 'humane intimacy' is what is most striking about it. What is also evident from this acrostic is the sympathy of a fellow human being for others struggling to survive in the modern metropolis.

Charles Lamb 'resolutely saw the world in personal terms' and this is perhaps his biggest influence on Hollingshead: he presented the world through his own eyes.92 This meant that his feeling of being outside fashionable society, and his love of the 'wild freedom' of the life

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[88] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 43.
[89] Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, I, 42.
[90] Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 131.
[91] Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 61.

he had chosen very much influenced Hollingshead. As a small child, whose father was sent to a debtor's prison, Hollingshead must have found sanctuary in the sitting-room at the Lambs, and been enthralled by the stories they told of the people in the metropolis. Hollingshead did occasionally allow his readers to see London through the eyes of the virtually abandoned child he once was and when he did so, his writing became altogether more humane and relatable. When he allowed the reader to glimpse his childhood memories of the Lambs, the impression was one very much in the Elian tradition: 'truthful, sympathetic, humorous, unsatirical enjoyment' that allows us to piece together fragments of their lives.[93] As J.B. Priestley wrote, Lamb's essays 'are no more than little peepholes into his life, letting us see the fountain of humour forever playing there'.[94] Hollingshead's memories of the Lambs serve a similar purpose: they are often humorous and sometimes superficial, perhaps because Hollingshead wished to ensure that their reputation remained one of friend to their readers.

Jerrold Seigel takes the view that bohemians existed 'simultaneously within ordinary society and outside it'.[95] Certainly, Bohemia was a space that appealed to those who wished to criticise middle-class or bourgeois society and it was the atmosphere of the coffee houses that seemed to draw like-minded people together and provide a space to express their views.[96] Arthur Ransome describes Hollingshead's situation perfectly. He suggested that a man does not decide to be a bohemian but 'trudges along, whispering to himself, 'I am going to be a poet, or an artist, or some other kind of great man', and finds Bohemia like a tavern by the wayside'.[97] There is also an element of rebellion in choosing to occupy the space known as Bohemia. The sociologist Ephraim Mizruchi argues that 'escape from the coercion of the bourgeois lifestyle' is one of the key reasons given by bohemians for their choice.[98] Hollingshead, who had already attempted to live the life proscribed for him by his family and, by extension, Victorian society, took an enormous risk when he decided to

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[92] Riehl, *Charles Lamb,* 167.

[93] W. A. Craik, 'The Sons of Elia: Essayists of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* New Series No.119, July 2002, 70-84 (75).

[94] Priestley, 'Charles Lamb', 670.

[95] Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830 -1930* (London: Penguin, 1987), 11.

[96] Marigay Graña, 'Preface', in *On Bohemia: The Code of the Self-Exiled* ed. César Graña and Marigay Graña,(London: Routledge, 2017), xv-xviii (xv).

[97] Arthur Ransome, 'Looking for Bohemia in London', in *On Bohemia,* 473-476 (476).

[98] Ephraim Mizruchi, 'Bohemia as a Means of Social Regulation', in On

become a writer. He had a family to support and was familiar with what would happen if he could not. For Hollingshead, freedom to write was clearly more important than financial security and his decision to enter Bohemia was a brave one. That said, he was not doing anything that could be considered radical. Charles and Mary Lamb, too, lived their lives outside fashionable society and preferred the company of their close friends. The 'wild freedom' of this lifestyle seems to have been their way of surviving in the metropolis. For Mizruchi, Bohemia is 'a tolerable life-style rather than one to be encouraged'.[99] This means that Hollingshead was occupying a space for those who wished to challenge middle-class society but were also often part of that very same group. This can also be applied to Charles and Mary Lamb's lives: they preferred to occupy a space in the city that was not where the fashionable set were to be found. Paul Ableman's view of Bohemia as 'a way of life and even more an attitude towards society' is useful here as, though Hollingshead grew rich during his career, his view of society did not change and he continued to challenge any state incursion into his life.[100] Charles Lamb's avoidance of literary parties and the literary set also suggests that this was an alternative means of navigating life and society. Patrick Joyce makes sense of it in this way – he argues that ''doing' in the social world only makes sense in terms of what doing is pitted against'.[101] Thus, Hollingshead's and Lamb's penchant for shocking the man in the street was often behind their actions. There was also a certain amount of theatricality about both men. The description of Bohemia as 'a philosophy comprised of one part idealism, one part eccentricity and one part opera bouffe heroics' applies to Hollingshead's situation, and Lamb himself was described as 'odd in his ways, odd in his opinions, odd in his conversation, he would not adopt himself to the usages and observances of fashionable life'.[102] It seems that this was the crux of things for both men: they did not wish to concern themselves with middle-class mores. Both Hollingshead and the Lambs paid no heed to societal conventions and trod their own paths.

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[99] Mizruchi, 'Bohemia as a Means of Social Regulation', in *On Bohemia,* 37.
[100] Paul Ableman, 'What Happened to Bohemia?' in *On Bohemia*, 734-5 (734).
[101] Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom,* 185. Charles Lamb, *Complete Correspondence,* I, xxiv.
[102] George S. Snyderman and William Josephs, 'Bohemia: The Underworld of Art', in *On Bohemia,* 86-101 (87).

An 'Ungentle' Punk: Revisiting Charles Lamb's Bookishness

MICHAEL ROBINSON

The materiality of the literary has become synonymous with Lamb. One of his Victorian editors, J. E. Babson, deliberately did not trace allusions in order to protect the ornamental beauty of Lamb's prose – or, as Babson memorably says in the preface to *Eliana* (1864), to preserve the 'blossoms of learning and observation' there.[1] In *Don't Call Me Gentle Charles!* (1976), Robert Frank similarly paints Lamb as an aesthete who intentionally eschewed depth: '[Lamb] wanted the essays to be treated as art objects'.[2] Such views evacuate Lamb's works of deep meaning and implicitly tie this lack to labour and matter. Lamb emerges as an artisan who crafted mere 'trifles', a word Lamb himself embraced for his work.[3] Such views also invoke notions of Lamb's social inferiority, echoing a discriminatory refrain from his own time. Lamb's contemporary Alaric C. Watts, for example, said that the allegedly workmanlike ethos of the Elia essays hinted at something feminine, if not queer, about their creator. Rather than transmit ethereal beauty, he took pains to deliver empty vessels: 'Charles Lamb delivers himself with infinite pain and labour of a silly piece of trifling every month in this magazine [*Blackwood's*] under the signature of Elia', Watts wrote to William Blackwood.[4] Thus positioned on axes of gender and class, Lamb, while skilful, is not quite Romantic, not quite literary, and not quite a man. Materiality emerges here as a stake in the construction of Lamb's gendered and classed difference: his stuff is just stuff.

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[1] J. E. Babson, *Eliana: Being the Hitherto Uncollected Writings of Charles Lamb* (Boston, 1864), ix.

[2] Robert J. Frank, *Don't Call Me Gentle Charles!: An Essay on Lamb's* Essays of Elia (Corvallis, 1976), 13.

[3] Charles Lamb, 'Preface', in *The Adventures of Ulysses* (London, 1819), iii-v (v).

[4] Margaret Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons, their Magazine and Friends* (New York, 1897), I, 501.

Others have found Elia's alleged materialism and materiality attractive. Walter Pater, for example, approved of Elia's attentive gaze on the world of things, saying in *Appreciations* that Lamb, like Keats, '[works] ever close to the concrete, to the details, great or small, of actual things, books, persons, and with no part of them blurred to his vision'.[5] Similarly, for some of today's critics, the association of Lamb/Elia with the world of objects has served arguments suggesting that his essays do not lie at the margins of Romantic culture but rather contribute to its central themes. Felicity James, attending to the role of physical environments in Lamb's works, has found Wordsworthian meditations in Lamb's urban reverie. Ina Ferris has argued that Lamb and other Romantic essayists contributed a new discourse to the culture – an embodied mode of book-love and a related reimagining of the public sphere.[6]

Deidre Shauna Lynch has positioned Lamb/Elia firmly in this new class of producer, grouping Lamb with William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincey to claim that these writers' material dependence on literary culture led them to found the modern affective relationship with literature, making them 'in effect the first professional lovers of literature'. Theirs was a novel form of materialism that reflected the new form their cultural capital took, and their attitudes towards literature reflected this form. Lamb and his peers '[relocated] library culture […] within the psychic territory of people's intimate lives'. This intimate relationship with the literary field was ultimately strategic, Lynch implies, because it allowed these consumers, rendered self-conscious about their practices by their liminal position, to distinguish their stock from the 'real capital' of aristocratic collectors.[7] Such collectors and their practices loomed large. As Philip Connell has argued, they were widely viewed as deviant parasites whose materialism threatened the health of the still-embryonic public culture.[8]

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[5] Walter Pater, *The Works of Walter Pater in Eight Volumes* (London, 1901), V, 109, in *Google Books*.

[6] Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Basingstoke, 2008); Ina Ferris, 'Book-love and the Remaking of Literary Culture in the Romantic Periodical', in *Bookish Histories: Books, Literature, and Commercial Modernity, 1700-1900*, ed. Ferris and Paul Keen (Basingstoke, 2009), 111-25.

[7] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago, 2015), 8-10.

[8] Philip Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', *Representations* 71 (2000), 24-47, in *JSTOR*.

In this recuperative view of Lamb's relationship to literary materiality, he joined a select group of middle-class consumers seeking a form of conspicuous consumption free of associations with aristocratic practices. A prominent thread running through the essays, consumption does seem to drive Lamb's discourse. The theme preoccupies Lamb/Elia whether the subject is antiquarianism ('The South-Sea House'), eating ('Dissertation on Roast Pig'), play-going ('My First Play'), or drinking ('Edax on Appetite'). The essays represent a mode of consumption different from aristocratic practices, but Lamb's complex relationship with the world of objects simultaneously deviated from mainstream tastes. The complexities of Lamb's taste are the focus of what follows. I argue that one can identify in Lamb's expressive consumerism a rebellion against conventionally middle-class tastes. Through symbolic detachment from a social position he held only precariously, Lamb/Elia's style anticipated that of later middle-class dissidents whose gendered and classed nonconformity also took consumerist form – namely, punks.

In presenting this argument I will first briefly discuss some of the limitations of attempting to understand Lamb's relations with literature by relying on his history with the magazines. Next, the argument turns to Lamb's camp and ironic style of bookishness as this manifested itself in his book collecting, which informed and reflected his tastes as a reader. Then, the analysis turns to Elia's antiquarianism on the level of voice in order to demonstrate how the Elian persona both rebels against and conforms to middle-class forms of bookishness. Finally, the essay explores the manifestation of Lamb's prototypically punk sensibility in a well-known Elia essay, 'My First Play'.

The view of Lamb as being among the new literature lovers binds him to the middle class through his association with the periodical press. The magazines did offer a venue for Lamb to express his eccentric sensibility, and he found fame through them. As is well known, during Lamb's lifetime a legend made him the 'hero' of the *London*, one of the five periodicals where the Elia essays appeared.[9] The legend has had staying power: scholars have continued to identify him closely with the medium,

[9] Edith Christina Johnson, *Lamb always Elia* (London, 1935), 141.

with the rise in popularity of periodicals more generally, and with the professionalization of the literary field, with which the popularity of magazines was connected. Needless to say, Lamb's work for the periodicals of his day was but one facet of his identity and output. As sources of information about him, the essays and Lamb's general association with the periodical press have limited utility.

As glimpsed through biography, correspondence by and about Lamb, and the essays, Lamb's own sense of his place in the literary field seems more complicated than a straightforward identification with the magazines – despite the success of Elia. The expressions of reticence about writing for the magazines in his correspondence speak to this. In a letter to Edward Moxon he laments that the 'serious business of life' has drawn him away from poetry to work for the magazines.[10] Later, when the weight of financial pressures lessened with the success of Elia, he returned to drama rather than fully exploit Elia's profitability. Despite the negative reception of *Mr H.*, he followed it with *The Pawnbroker's Daughter* and *The Wife's Trial*.[11]

A seemingly insignificant biographical detail about Lamb in Thomas Hood's *Works* hints at how closely Lamb probably held the notion that he was not of the magazines and that being such would have compromised his sense of self. Hood uses a highly evocative phrase to describe the modest footprint of Colebrooke Cottage, which Lamb rented: 'cottage of Ungentility'.[12] Although small, this nugget potentially sheds light on Lamb's personal style. Fittingly for a dissident 'ungentleman', his professional choices towards the end of his career present an image of hard-won commitment to the particular form he wished for his art and, conjointly, a rebellion against the expectations for a periodical writer – suggesting an uncannily hard-core posture of middle-class artistic independence. Specifically, Lamb avoided professionalization when it was most profitable and preferred to depend on his East India House pay checks and, subsequently, pension, in the face of increasing demand and a lucrative rate for his pages.

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[10] *The Letters of Charles Lamb: To which are added those of his Sister, Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 3 vols (London, 1935), III, 339.
[11] George L. Barnett, *Charles Lamb and the Evolution of Elia* (Bloomington, 1964).
[12] Thomas Hood, *The Works of Thomas Hood: Comic and Serious, in Prose and Verse, with all the Illustrations* (London, 1882-4), II, 369n, in *Google Books*.

As Lucas's *Life* reveals, these choices came at a cost. Lamb's retirement was comfortable but not luxurious: at two-thirds his salary, Lamb's pension from India House brought in £450, a portion of which, £9, went to supporting Mary. Lamb complained about the economizing the pension required, telling Bernard Barton in a letter that in 'cropping off wine, old books, &c. and in short all that can be called pocket money, I hope to be able to go on at the cottage'. He suggests in a letter to Hood that the Lambs' moves to Islington and then Enfield, progressively farther away from their beloved London, had similar motivations. Despite financial pressures, Lamb was increasingly selective about the periodical commissions he undertook. He had written 'Stage Illusion', his last contribution to the *London*, in 1825, the year he retired, and he attributed the break in a letter to Southey not to illness, significantly, but to the declining quality of the magazine.[13] The year 1826 saw only the 'Popular Fallacies' series in the *New Monthly Magazine*.[14] In 1827 he refused a commission from Barron Field to write a piece on the theatre.[15] Although illness and alcoholism probably contributed to the decrease in productivity at the end of his life, a reluctance to capitalise on Elia also seemingly led Lamb to turn down magazine work. He continued to write, but he focused on the less profitable arena of book publication.

This preference is noteworthy considering the high rate he could command. As Lucas notes, Bryan Waller Procter claimed that Lamb was the highest paid contributor to the *London*, at the rate of twenty guineas per sheet, or sixteen pages, by a factor of two or three. After leaving the *London*, while continuing to write for periodicals on a smaller scale, Lamb turned his energies in an impractical, bookish direction, completing *Album Verses, with a Few Others* (1830) and the unprofitable *The Last Essays of Elia* (1833). At nine shillings the latter was an expensive, collectible object. Given the disappointing sales of the first collection of Elia essays (*Elia* [1823, out of print by 1834]), few expected *The Last Essays* to sell, yet Lamb went ahead. He continued to nurse dreams of success as a book author, remarking ironically to a friend that he wished for fame in the East as a book author and at another point expressing satisfaction about the success of a pirated Elia collection published in the US (*Elia. Second Series* [1828]).[16]

[13] E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols (London, 1905), II, 167.
[14] Claude A. Prance, *Companion to Charles Lamb: A Guide to the People and Places, 1760-1847* (London, 1983), 370.
[15] Lucas, *Life*.
[16] Lucas, *Life*.

In light of such choices towards the end of his life, Lamb seems to have harboured a conflicted desire for a more traditional form of literary fame along with a resistance to the commercial motives and professional identity associated with the magazines. Tellingly, in writing about Lamb, Hazlitt saw Lamb's distaste for the profession as a symptom of a lack of qualification – a deficient professional identity. In a *Table Talk* piece from 1825 ('Elia – Geoffrey Crayon'), Hazlitt describes Lamb as an amateur who has merely lucked into popularity.[17] Hazlitt's attack suggests that a peer recognized that Lamb, while finding success in the periodicals, was in them but not of them. Hazlitt was likely projecting a fault where aspiration was dubious. Clear enough is the significance of Elia's description of himself in 'Oxford in the Vacation' as having perversely inverted a writer's relations with print. Rather than an autonomous creator, he is a dependent consumer whose posture towards his medium resembles an addict's. Like an alcoholic, he 'sucks his sustenance, as certain sick people are said to do, through a quill'. Writing for hire by 'certain […] people' appears here as a nasty habit.[18]

Elia's disgust at his compromised identity registers the extent to which the aspiring book author saw himself as standing apart from the periodicals and viewed professionalization in terms of a choice between autonomy and compromise. Together with the terms of this choice, the darkness and perversion in this negative self-image anticipate the rhetoric, posturing, and general ethos of punk, a subculture organized around a posture of opposition to the commercial sphere, or, in the words of one critic, around an 'anti-corporate stance'.[19] This analogy makes particular sense in light of the Romantic origins of this emphasis on artistic autonomy, which Bethany Klein has traced in *Selling Out: Culture, Commerce, and Popular Music*: 'The notion of autonomy as critical to genuine artistic expression has its roots in the Romantic movement, and was imported alongside related ideas of authorship and authenticity into popular music culture and other areas of mass cultural production'.[20] In other words, Romantic conceptions of genius served a cleaving of the authentic punk artist from commercial entities and interests. Like

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[17] Joseph E. Riehl, *That Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics* (Rochester, 1998).
[18] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 8 vols (London, 1912), II, 8.
[19] Bethany Klein, *Selling Out: Culture, Commerce, and Popular Music* (New York, 2020), 15, in *Google Books*.
[20] Klein, *Selling Out*, 62.

Lamb/Elia, punk has a vexed and contradictory relationship with commerce that exists in tension with its anti-commercial ethos, however. For example, as Klein says, leading groups in the movement such as the Sex Pistols did not spurn large record labels but rather courted them, despite the centrality of opposition to selling out to the movement this group ostensibly led. Helping to explain this contradiction, hostility to the hippies and the 1960s counter-culture in general animated the punks' hostility to commercialism: the counter-culture was anti-corporate, and punks saw the counter-culture as fundamentally hypocritical. In fact, some punks deliberately embraced corporatism as a matter of principle because doing so flew in the face of counter-cultural values. For other punks, corporate affiliation or opposition was a matter of practicality, not principle, and, even though relations with corporate labels could be tense, commercial ties and investments materially supported the subculture's expressions of hostility to selling out and its posture of autonomy.[21] A similarly complex and contradictory relation to cultural production lay behind Elia's dark image of writing in 'Oxford'. Lamb's sacrificial dedication to the book format – a purer form of literary art 'within bourgeois limits' – struck a prototypically punk note of resistance considering the contradictions evident in Lamb's posture towards his art, attended as it was by a commitment with moral weight and real stakes to some commercial forms (the book and drama) rather than another (the periodical), which he resented, and a contradictory structuring of this hard-core commitment in terms of material autonomy.[22]

As I will attempt to show in what follows, the pregnant image of fetishistic sucking in 'Oxford', which shades Lamb's vexed relationship to print with the suggestion of sexual dissidence, belongs to a pattern across the Elia essays. In using an image of consumption to index the dramatic extent to which Elia has compromised himself, the image of him and the quill relates consumption to identity, anticipating punk style in another way. An influential work on the history of modern style has identified in punk and other subcultures a gendered and classed mode of non-conformity in not production but consumption practices. In the classic *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige reads the counter-cultural styles of the teds, punks, and mods of 1960s and 1970s Britain as social salvos aimed at the symbolic order of the majority that, however subversive, were nonetheless restricted to 'the profoundly superficial

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[21] Klein, *Selling Out*.

[22] Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Revolution, 1931-39* (New York, 1973), 312, in *Google Books*.

level of appearances'. The contradiction between dominant culture and marginal culture displayed by these groups found expression through the consumption of certain commodities in deliberate, novel ways. Consequently, Hebdige sees the subversive practices of such factions as a doubly reified form of 'spectacular' *bricolage*, the fashioning of a new, oppositional system of signs out of readily available consumer goods. Among punks, the buying and repurposing of safety pins served rebellious self-expressions, including using the pins to adorn flesh, but the expressions' restriction to the sphere of signs and consumerism blunted this rebelliousness. Nonetheless, punks' repurposing of consumer goods represented one way that they posed challenges to the seeming naturalness of the dominant faction's aesthetic norms. Such unexpected adaptations posed challenges because, as Hebdige says, 'Any elision, truncation, or convergence of prevailing linguistic and ideological categories can have profoundly disorienting effects. These deviations briefly expose the arbitrary nature of the codes which underlie and shape all forms of discourse'. These codes included gender styles, which the youth subcultures initially questioned with the help of David Bowie's ambiguous personae and, subsequently, the punk styles that derived from these while taking cues from the stylistic vocabulary of bondage and S&M.[23] Other scholars have found a more direct connection between punk style and queerness. Kevin Dunn, for example, has observed that punk scenes have historically made space for queer folks.[24] Tavia Nyong'o has identified in the different histories of African American and white versions of punk evidence of a dynamic in which homophobia and hyper-sexualization haunt occluded representations of queer and Black sexuality.[25] This work suggests that queerness has long been elemental to the representation and self-identification of the subculture's members.

Elia's Secondhand Style

'What a careless, even deportment hath your borrower!': Elia's signature voice offers textual evidence of Lamb's own dissident and consumerist play with signifiers.[26] Ironically, Elia's vintage diction calls into question the uniquity and originality of authorial voice itself – a writer's allegedly

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[23] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979), 17, 102-04, 91.
[24] Kevin Dunn, *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life* (New York, 2015), in *Google Books*.
[25] Tavia Nyong'o, 'Punk'd Theory', *Social Text*, 23 (2005), 19-34, in *Lyrasis HELIN Library Consortium*.
[26] Lucas, *Works*, II, 26.

personal property – and, in this way, poses a challenge to the very notion of private intellectual property, the basis of Lamb's unprecedented profitability as an artist. The source of this challenge lies in the voice's bookish and antiquarian dimension, which is the material evidence and product of Lamb's compulsive consumption. In their form, the essays amount to the vocal equivalent of a bibliophile's blackletter collection, taking this shape because antiques, in the form of antiqued diction, are Lamb/Elia's stylistic calling card: 'What rosy gills! What a beautiful reliance on Providence doth he manifest!'[27] Similarly, the opening apostrophe in 'Valentine's Day' insists on being read as if in quotation marks:

> Hail to thy returning festival, old Bishop Valentine! Great is thy name in the rubric, thou venerable Arch-flamen of Hymen! Immortal Go-between! Who and what manner of person art thou? Art thou but a name, typifying the restless principle which impels poor humans to seek perfection in union? Or wert thou indeed a mortal prelate, with thy tippet and thy rochet, thy apron on, and decent lawn sleeves?[28]

Such passages are sets of antiquarian objects packaged as such for the reader – old stuff that Elia has repurposed.

Hazlitt bristled at the artifice. In *Table Talk*, he writes, 'The style of the *Essays of Elia* is liable to the charge of a certain mannerism. His sentences are cast in the mould of old authors'.[29] Hazlitt's 'charge' reads more like a description than the passive-aggressive critique he probably intended. Lamb's style draws attention to its antiquarian elements, likely irritating Hazlitt and some others because its archaism – inconsistent and overt – coexists with the contemporary vernacular, rendering the archaism as heightened 'form'. By contrast, Pater expressed great affection for this 'aroma of old English' in the Elia essays, along with the 'noticeable echoes, in chance turn and phrase, of the great masters of style, the old masters'.[30] These echoes make Elia's antiquarian style old-*fashioned* rather than simply old, hyper-materializing the fruits of Lamb/Elia's prior consumption of 'old authors'. Hazlitt's critique registers this hyper-

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[27] Lucas, *Works*, II, 26.
[28] Lucas, *Works*, II, 63.
[29] William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age: or, Contemporary Portraits*, 2nd ed. (London, 1825), 403, in *Google Books*.
[30] Pater, *Works*, V, 113.

materiality with the metaphor of casting ('cast in the mould'). In paradoxically making the secondhandedness that Hazlitt disparaged a stylistic signature, the style exposes the discursiveness of private intellectual property, just as punks' reuse of safety pins revealed the workings of beauty and gender norms.

A passage in 'That We should Lie Down with the Lamb' is self-conscious about its secondhand lyricism: 'Marry, daylight', Elia says, '[D]aylight might furnish the images, the crude material; but for the fine shapings, the true turning and filing (as mine author hath it), they must be content to hold their inspiration of the candle'.[31] Here, not only does the style objectify itself through self-consciously deployed, old-fashioned diction, but, as if to emphasize this gesture, diction in the passage makes the use and transformation of materials ('crude material', 'turning', 'filing') the theme of a hierarchy of beauty subordinating nature ('daylight') to culture ('the candle'). Ultimately, Elia's voice, like that of a self-conscious and bookish collector, makes an ironic and playful showcase of consumption, rather than, like a self-conscious labourer, draw attention to labour. This is so because the originality of this work consists partly in its knowing play with its lack of originality, and this material secondhandedness is consistent with the essays' pervasive retrospection, uniting style and substance with a collector's preoccupations. This antiquarianism in the Elian persona exposes a punk flair creditable to its challenge to the intellectual supports of originality as such, a challenge implicit in the secondhandedness of Elia's signature. The basis of an authorial persona in consumerism should be seen as a challenge to the ideology of singular authorship and the 'author-reader dyad', key to which has been the invisibility of the medium.[32] The irony of the challenge is comparable to the one implicit in modern subcultural styles, however: far from assaulting the structure of consumer capitalism, the challenge exemplifies its logic and fully belongs to it. In this case, a non-conforming style serves as the basis of an eccentric and powerful, not to say 'original', authorial voice.

Noting stylistic parallels between Elia and aristocratic bookmen of the Roxburghe Club ilk, Ina Ferris has glimpsed Elia's hyper-material style through the illuminating notion of 'book fancy' – a self-conscious reflection of bookishness on the level of figuration that registered Lamb's

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[31] Lucas, *Works*, II, 308.

[32] Ina Ferris, *Book-Men, Book Clubs, and the Romantic Literary Sphere* (Basingstoke, 2015), 47.

liminal status in the literary sphere. With bibliomaniacs, Lamb shared an 'outlier', as opposed to outsider, status and, reflecting this, a materialist view on the literary contrasting with the dominant idealism that defined the literary for mainstream producers. Lamb's materialist outlook took the form of play with the materiality of the medium – a softer version of Thomas Frognall Dibdin's ecstatic typographical rapture in highly ornamented works such as the *Bibliographical Decameron* (London, 1817). For Ferris, Elia's play with form reflected not a dissident collector's posture toward the literary but an anti-collector's: 'Lamb contested the bibliomania's model of exclusive collection and literary possession, translating the bibliomaniac's fine library of expensive rarities into a bohemian domestic space – the site of a *reader* – where book collection marked personal attachments rather than material value'.[33]

When one considers Elian style as an extension of Lamb's own collecting practice, the subject of the next section of this article, a different perspective on the clear links, as well as tensions, between Elia and more conventional antiquarians becomes visible. In Lamb's collecting, I will claim, books remained fetish objects despite being read and lacking material value. Likewise, in Elia's voice, words remain things and Elia a consumer, despite his differences from a Dibdinesque materialist. As Lynch says of Romantic periodical writers' 'edgy' relationship to bibliomania in *Loving Literature*, 'Their mimicry is […] double-edged – adopted to call into question the gentleman's social entitlements, and adopted to mark off the distinctiveness of their own styles of bookish consumption and literary love'.[34] Like a modern-day middle-class dissident, Elia uses things to express dissidence. Elia's voice can be seen provocatively to make camp artifice the foundation of his personality – appropriating the practice of conspicuous antiquarian materialism and rendering this as an excess of old-fashioned signifiers. The style's parody of antiquarianism and book collecting is notable in itself for a provocative aspect when one considers the notoriety of auction culture and wealthy collectors during the period (despite the broadening popularity of the habit and antiquarianism in general).[35] In the style's conversion of possession into a mode of expression one sees an example of oppositional

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[33] Ferris, *Book-Men,* 7, 5, 38 (emphasis in original).

[34] Lynch, *Loving Literature*, 130.

[35] Judith Pascoe, in *The Hummingbird Cabinet: A Rare and Curious History of Romantic Collectors* (Ithaca, 2006), discusses the popularization of antiquarianism during the period. Lynch, in *Loving Literature*, addresses the notoriety of traditional and aristocratic collectors.

consumerism not fundamentally different from the heightened stylistic language of punk or its glam and glitter antecedents. As in those subcultures, queerness also surfaces in Elia that is hard to pin down, evoking something of the courtly pose with arm akimbo – a style that reads as queer due simply to its ornamentation and excess.[36]

Lamb's Library

The dissidently antiquarian quality of Elia's voice parallels what is known of Lamb's eccentric style of collecting. Lamb's consumption of books was arguably just as cultivated, oppositional, and self-conscious as Elia's voice. Given that the voice is a repurposed collection, the fact that, in life, Lamb preferred the secondary market for book-objects is fitting. In the abstract, his collecting resembled the general style of Thomas De Quincey, who, as Nigel Leask has said of the opium-fuelled, nocturnal wandering described in *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*, enjoyed 'slumming it' in the marketplaces of working-class London.[37] Lamb tended to 'slum it' in London's used book shops. The books he sought there were not simply bargains, significantly, but the ragged detritus of the retail market. In acting on this preference he, like traditional bibliophiles drawn strictly to certain features of incunabula (such as vellum pages and blackletter script) and conditions, allowed certain standards to rule him. These made his collection unusual compared to the library of a bibliomaniac or a different kind of innovator such as De Quincey, who took pains to catalogue his purchases of new fiction, but nonetheless still that of a collector, even if he read his books.[38] Lamb's rules were shabbiness, affordability, and irregularity. Elia winks at this in 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading' when he self-consciously describes a collecting practice with reference to his 'ragged veterans'' being in such poor condition that they 'shiver' on his shelves.[39] Lamb's contemporaries' descriptions of his library seem to register the existence of a degree of uniform stylistic choice behind the collection. Crabb Robinson called Lamb's books the 'finest collection of shabby books' he had ever seen.[40]

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[36] Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750*, 2 vols (Madison, 2004), II.
[37] Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge, 2004), 205.
[38] Thomas De Quincey, *A Diary of Thomas De Quincey 1803*, ed. Horace Eaton (New York, 1927).
[39] Lucas, *Works*, II, 196.
[40] Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Thomas Sadler (London, 1872), I, 403.

Leigh Hunt noted the collection's ironically 'handsome contempt for appearance'.[41] Thomas Westwood, repeating an allusion of Lamb's to *Henry IV, Part I* in 'Character of the Late Elia', describes Lamb's library as a 'ragged *regiment* of book-tatterdemalions' that were 'curious' (a term, synonymous with 'desirable', favoured by collectors) and 'cheap'. Quoting Lamb himself on his library, Westwood says, 'He had, he said, a curious library of old poetry, etc., which he had bought at book stalls, cheap'.[42] Cheapness likely served as a criterion of material (non-)value shaping his bookish consumerism, this being reflected in the spectacular form taken by this value in the display of the collection. A certain Mrs FitzGerald recalled that his books ostentatiously retained their price tags.[43] In building this eccentric library, Lamb literalized Susan Sontag's notion of the aristocracy of taste, which she uses in 'Notes on Camp' to describe the consumerist dissidence of queer subcultures: Lamb made collecting into a self-conscious expression of difference – a medium for a consumerist expression of self that relied on the appropriation and modification of existing, aristocratic consumption practices.[44] In the process, in an uncanny anticipation of punk's camp aspects, such as carefully torn clothing, Lamb also appropriated the market's 'ragged', trash-like detritus as an ironic badge of self and status.

More specifically, the price tags left on Lamb's books crystallize the expressive and ironic dynamics of his collecting style. In this library, signifiers of the marketplace and, by extension, the social joined 'ragged' signs of wear. Consequently, one could call Lamb's take on the collectible book the inverse of the authentic art object, the authenticity of which, as described by Walter Benjamin in 'The Work of Art in the Age of mechanical Reproduction', derives historically from objects used in religious ritual.[45] The criteria of value operative in privileged collecting circles, in the Romantic period and currently, show the circulation of what Benjamin calls 'cult value'. This value has stemmed from art's occult lineage – the mystified 'ritualistic basis' of art and foundation of the antique art object's aura of authenticity, a unique existence in space and

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[41] Leigh Hunt, *Essays and Miscellanies* (Philadelphia, 1856), 139, in *Google Books*.
[42] Lucas, *Life*, II, 191, 271 (emphasis added).
[43] Lucas, *Letters*, III.
[44] Susan Sontag, 'Notes on Camp', in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York, 1969), 105-20.
[45] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1968), 217-52.

time reflecting the art object's origins in religious practice. This lineage explains the high value to bibliomaniacs of not only the unique edition but also the perfect one. As Benjamin's theory suggests, the value of the auratic book, like the cult object from which it derives, reflects its distance from human hands and collectives such as mass movements and systems of exchange. Benjamin cites prehistoric cave paintings, whose intended audiences were 'spirits' rather than humans, and modern religious practices involving images of the Madonna: 'Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden'.[46] Benjamin's theory of the aura helps explain the high auction prices won by books unmarked by human hands – 'pristine' uncut copies free of 'rubbing' and 'bumped corners', all of which indicate human handling, exchange and use. In this light, a punk irony in Lamb's collecting style becomes visible: he adopted a traditionally exclusive, aristocratic habit and replaced the signifiers of its rarefied, cultic origins with price tags, marginalia, tears, and soil. Within Benjamin's historical narrative, the wide circulation of art made possible by its reproduction undermined the exclusivity surrounding the art object's originally sacred function. This trajectory reveals another irony: Lamb's transformation of price tags into ironic signifiers does not puncture but rather parodies the traditional aura. The tag conveys a different kind of distinction in parodying exclusivity by fetishizing imaginary masses. Hence, it marks the populist collection's own distance from the social.

Elia describes such a populist aura in 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading' when he conjures a 'lone sempstress' whose evidently well-read books represent the beauty of ragged volumes. Elia relates how appealing he finds the fact that this worker's spending of rare leisure time with a volume of Fielding or Goldsmith leaves behind traces 'beautiful to a genuine lover of reading'. These beloved marks include 'sullied leaves', a 'worn-out appearance', and even a unique 'odour'. This record of circulation left by 'the thousand thumbs' of mass readership 'confers […] distinction', 'sweet emotions', and a 'tickling sense of property' beyond any pleasure afforded by 'magnificent' bindings. Such 'gay apparel' on books Elia, sounding here like the inverse of a stereotypical book collector, allows only in the rarest cases. A lavishly bound copy of Milton or Shakespeare 'confers no distinction' on the owner (first editions of these aside), Elia says, but a 'dog's-eared' copy of James Thomson's *The Seasons* has an aura. It 'looks best (I maintain it) a little torn' – but not too torn. Elia, describing a library like Lamb's own, is describing a fetishistic

[46] Benjamin, 'Work of Art', 224-25.

('tickling sense') as well as punk and camp co-optation of luxury consumerism in which a highly cultivated and assertively alternative kind of status is the goal. Elia seeks a badge of status (tellingly, a 'distinction') conferred by an embrace of the kind of object conventionally devalued and abject in collecting circles – a widely available, well-worn copy of a book most people love. Significantly, this cultivated consumption practice serves a hard-core ethos of authenticity ('genuine lover of reading') opposed by implication to a false and compromised sort of bookishness. Like a punk's safety pin, Lamb/Elia's 'dog's-eared' volume serves expressive and dissident aims.

Different from a collection of the new, readily available 'cheap books', as the publisher Charles Knight described them, Lamb's library ultimately resulted from a practice on the margins of privilege that was nonetheless cultivated and rarefied and that invoked and distinguished itself from exclusive practices and normative aesthetic standards.[47] Lamb appropriated and parodied traditional practices in other ways as a book collector, and biography adds helpful context to the perspective offered by the essays. Elia invokes the figure of the discriminating collector in 'Oxford in the Vacation', where the 'wary connoisseur' of prints appears as one whose eye cares for nothing except provenance (because it 'never fails to consult the *quis sculpsit* in the corner' of a print) and, hence, whose reading should not properly be called this (his eye 'seems as though it reads not'). In the same essay, Elia describes his own bookishness similarly. In reflecting on a tour of Oxford's libraries, Elia, embodying a stereotype of the book collector, celebrates his disregard for the contents of books:

> What a place to be in is an old library! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labours to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding-sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those sciential apples which grew amid the happy orchard.[48]

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[47] Charles Knight, *The Old Printer and the Modern Press* (London, 1854), 246.
[48] Lucas, *Works*, II, 11.

This description of a collector's fetishism of materiality is strikingly author- and 'content'-centred. Elia has preferred not to read out of respect for authors' 'shades', whose books are akin to graves. Therefore, in deference to immaterial authorial property, Elia would rather behave like a bibliomaniac. The irony of this embourgeoisement of traditional book fetishism parallels another aspect of Lamb's own collecting. In life, Lamb embraced a stereotype about collectors, making a common slight against them into an ironic boast. As J. Fuller Russell recalled in the 1870s, Lamb's collection's lack of utility made him proud. About his collection, Lamb reportedly told Russell, 'I have *nothing useful*'.[49] While recalling, perhaps deliberately and ironically, the traditional collector's fetishistic style of consumption, this statement implies an attitude towards collecting that subordinates value (in use and exchange) to the aim of self-expression. In this style, book-objects, not texts, are media. At the risk of over-burdening an isolated comment, the statement sounds like one from someone for whom bookishness was less a value proposition, as for collectors, or a professional necessity, as for scholars, than the reflection of an ironic appropriation of a stigmatized identity serving a dissident self-image – an outward embrace of fetishism in the spirit of a provocative rejection of expectations associated with literary professions.

In 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', Elia meditates on a similarly unprofessional, unproductive style of bookishness: 'At the hazard of losing some credit […], I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me'. In the same essay, Elia admits that the price of this substitution of means for ends is 'originality'.[50] This confession renders Elia's fetishism as a potential professional liability and vulnerability. He acknowledges that his fetishism, if known, would weaken his professional standing (cost him 'some credit'). This winking confession to use of a secondhand style suggests an awareness of the paradoxical basis of Elia's distinctiveness. As visible in Elia's old-fashioned style, Elia's originality paradoxically tweaks the ideology of literary property as such.

Self-conscious irony about his bookishness extended to Lamb's representation of his general literary taste. About this, Lamb writes in the same essay, 'I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me,

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[49] Lucas, *Life*, II, 271 (emphasis in original).
[50] Lucas, *Works*, II, 195.

nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a *book*. […] I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding'.[51] Affirming this catholic taste, Hunt recalls seeing on Lamb's shelves Chaucer, Montaigne, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Spinoza, Sidney, Southey, Jeremy Collier, Dryden, Martin Luther, Sewell, and Charles Grandison.[52] W. Carew Hazlitt lists, in addition to some of these, anthologies of Restoration drama along with Burton ('a very poor, cropped copy'), Milton, Spenser, Talfourd, William Warner (*Syrinx*, 1597), Euripides, Pope, Bacon, and Ben Johnson. Hazlitt's descriptions of the books mention marginalia by both Coleridge and Lamb. Hazlitt notes about a copy of Thomas Holcroft's *Travels from Hamburgh, through Westphalia and the Netherlands, to Paris* that 'Lamb has made these volumes, flyleaves, margins and every other imaginable space, a receptacle for a variety of observations – has, in fact, turned them into a commonplace book'. He also notes some folios: Samuel Daniel (with 'important notes' by Coleridge), Taylor, and Spenser.[53]

In this light, Lamb's self-conscious cultivation of an eccentric reading as well as collecting style mirrored Elia's description of himself in 'Mackery End, Hertfordshire': 'Out-of-the-way humours and opinions – heads with some diverting twist in them – the oddities of authorship please me most'.[54] A kind of rarity reigned in Lamb's library, as it long had for traditional book collectors, but in this collection rarity reflected a mode of self-expression and a self-reflexive process for the evaluation of authors and meaning. Books were not simply mute objects meaningful insofar as their value reflected a collector's wealth. Instead, books lacked meaning apart from their ownership by an eccentric personality who made them expressive – and, in this way, akin to media. In other words, Lamb's collection appears to have been a form of playful, ironic, and self-conscious consumerism that channelled bibliomaniacal desire through a middle-class lens – that of private property.

'My First Play'

The essay 'My First Play' illustrates how Lamb/Elia's oppositional and self-conscious style manifested itself in Lamb's writing for the magazines

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[51] Lucas, *Works*, II, 195.
[52] W. D. Howe, *Charles Lamb and his Friends* (Indianapolis, 1944), 114.
[53] W. Carew Hazlitt, *The Lambs: Their Lives, their Friends, and their Correspondence* (London, 1897), 62-65, in *Google Books*.
[54] Lucas, *Works*, II, 86.

about subjects indirectly related to books. Elia implicitly offers a punk critical theory in this essay according to which a consumer's relationship to culture appears inevitably defined by questions of materiality and ownership, but what gives a culture consumer the right of possession – meaning in this case an appropriate, qualifying sensibility – is a matter of distinction from the qualities that make one a fit owner of real property, or land. In a way consistent with the tensions informing Lamb's collecting practices, the essay presents cultural consumption in terms of relations with objects while deprecating Elia's capacities as an owner of objects in the typical sense.

Elia relates how he temporarily came into possession of a small estate in Hertfordshire, which his godfather, 'F.', who, as Elia notes, was an implausibly cultured 'oilman' who had known Sheridan, had willed to him. This anecdote's larger context relates another 'testamentary beneficence' of the godfather: Elia's love of the theatre. F. had sent him to the first play of the title, *Artaxerxes* (probably Thomas Arne's adaptation of Metastasio's *Artaserse*). The maturation of Elia's appreciation of the theatre serves as the essay's focus. This aesthetic development the essay presents in terms of maturation occurring along multiple axes, one being geographical. Elia's initial, youthful exposure to the theatre he renders in Orientalist terms (a choice in keeping with the Persian setting of the play). Initially, as a youthful theatre-goer, his perception was compromised by decadent materialism: a 'devotee' worshipping at a 'temple', young Elia had the tastes of a blinkered sensualist. He imagined that the theatre's shiny columns were made of 'candy', and this delusion spoke to a broader naivety reflected in his appreciation of the plays he attended. In his immaturity, Elia says, he did not mistake signs for signifieds so much as mistakenly imagine things to be signs – to fabricate an 'emblem' or 'reference' where there was none. (This delusion was later exposed in maturity by the realization that '[t]he green curtain was no longer a veil, drawn between two worlds, the unfolding of which was to bring back past ages'). Mature Elia, by contrast, is a 'rationalist' who understands that actors are signifiers – 'men and women painted' – and that the turning on of the orchestra lights is not magic but 'a clumsy machinery' operated by people. In this way, the essay maps maturation, along with the mind-body dichotomy, along an East-West axis, with superstition, naivety, sensuality, and immaturity clustered in the 'East' of Elia's past.[55] Gerald Monsman, drawing parallels between 'My First Play' and an earlier *Reflector* essay, 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare', has claimed that

[55] Lucas, *Works*, II, 111-14.

the former essay's nostalgia idealizes the childhood experience in a more straightforward way: '[H]is main thrust centres on the loss of the child's innocent credulity and the ensuing impoverishment of the original dream'.[56] While the essay does not simply favour the 'rationalist' perspective, neither does it seem to idealize young Elia's representational naivety.

The essay's concluding sentences reveal that the taste of ostensibly mature, 'rationalist' Elia represents only a temporary stop on the way to a fully mature taste. In closing, Elia describes a moment in his theatre-going in which cynical disillusionment yielded to a more sophisticated posture: the suspension of disbelief. Elia says,

> Perhaps it was fortunate for me that the play of the evening was but an indifferent comedy, as it gave me time to crop some unreasonable expectations, which might have interfered with the genuine emotions with which I was soon after enabled to enter upon […] Comparison and retrospection soon yielded to the present attraction of the scene; and the theatre became to me, upon a new stock, the most delightful of recreations.[57]

Considered in light of this passage, the relevance of the seemingly digressive anecdote about having received property from F. becomes clear. Upon receiving the bequest, Elia took himself for 'an English freeholder' when, in fact, he had merely been playing the part:

> When I journeyed down to take possession, and planted foot on my own ground, the stately habits of the donor descended upon me, and I strode (shall I confess the vanity?) with larger paces over my allotment […] with the feeling of an English freeholder […] The estate has passed into more prudent hands, and nothing but an agrarian can restore it.[58]

Elia's own example suggests that social status dictates whether or not one is entitled to the bounty of England's material patrimony – only an 'agrarian' could play the part Elia was mistakenly given, that of the

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[56] Gerald Monsman, *Confessions of a Prosaic Dreamer: Charles Lamb's Art of Autobiography* (Durham, 1984), 122.
[57] Lucas, *Works*, II, 114.
[58] Lucas, *Works*, II, 112.

'freeholder'. Considered alongside the descriptions of Elia's theatre-going (a parallel invited by the diction 'crop'), this notion of ownership applies to both culture and land. (Lamb played with this notion of cultural inheritance as property elsewhere, inscribing a copy of *The Last Essays of Elia* to his friend John Forster with the phrase 'a legacy from Elia').[59] Mature Elia has realized when to 'crop' his expectations regarding theatrical signifiers – that some fields are appropriate for 'recreation' and some not. In other words, the wasteful consumption practices of a youthful sensualist have matured into a worldly, hard-boiled mode.

Elia's self-identification as a lord of the theatre who has failed as a landlord suggests his notions of theatre-going derive their sense from economics and, specifically, a punk take on the logic of capitalist accumulation: cultural consumption is profitable, meaning appropriately pleasurable and efficient, when the consumer can manage her desire and the distribution, as it were, of her disbelief. Developing an awareness of the gap between sign and signified is a crucible of maturity, but this gap is uncannily like the one between the products of factory production and their producers – anonymous bodies reduced (or, here, elevated) to the form of commodities ('men and women painted'). Hence, mature taste appears as a more enlightened fetishism – the profit from 'a new stock' of emotion yielded by the gap between labourer and product. In this view, one form of fetishism (cultic worship) has given way to another (commodification), and different forms of pleasure and alienation share a horizon defined by objects, property, and ownership. Elia ultimately suggests that a mature consumer is akin to a cultural capitalist whose style reflects a loss of innocence – a harder and truer but also disillusioned worldliness – that is actually a gain on an economistic ledger. This view of consumption seems cynical but, partly for this reason, uncannily punk: Elia's achievement of independent, mature selfhood is bound up with his consumption practices, and materialism is both the hazard of growth and horizon of possibility. At the same time, the freer person and his enlightened tastes belong to a world apart, and the question of this style's superiority compared to a more conventional, or at least more conventionally privileged, way of life is a preoccupying theme.

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[59] South Kensington Museum, *Forster Collection: A Catalogue of the Printed Books Bequeathed by John Forster, Esq., LL.D.* (London, 1888), 277.

‘A clue to unravel my plot’: Mistresses and Impossibility in Charles Dibdin’s *Henry Hooka* (1807)

DAVID CHANDLER

If song lyrics count as poems, singer-songwriter Charles Dibdin (1745–1814) was almost certainly the most popular poet in Britain in 1800. This fact tends to astonish professional Romanticists, many of whom have not read even one of Dibdin’s hundreds of published lyrics, let alone one of his librettos or more extended publications. In so far as there is any consensus about Dibdin, it is that he belongs in a world of popular culture traditionally understood as ‘below’ the attention of English departments; but ignorance of his work can only excuse this so far. Dibdin, though better known as a composer in his own time and since, took his writing increasingly seriously from the early 1770s onwards, and came to regard himself, with reason, as a consequential man of letters. His comparatively late turn to novel writing, with *The Younger Brother* (1793), *Hannah Hewit; or, The Female Crusoe* (1796), and *Henry Hooka* (1807), is, at least by modern standards, the most compelling evidence of his wish to compete with the more purely ‘literary’ writers of his time.[1] It is intriguing to speculate how much Charles Lamb may have known of Dibdin’s novels and other works given his later friendship with Dibdin’s grandson, John Bates Dibdin (1798–1828).

Of the novels, *Hannah Hewit* has attracted a good deal of critical attention because of its subject.[2] By contrast, the others have been almost wholly

[1] Like so many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers, Dibdin wrote widely across types of writing that the twentieth century would divide into ‘Literature’ and non-literature, with no suggestion that he himself saw merit in such a distinction. He considered his most impressive work to be the two large quarto volumes of *Observations on a Tour Through Almost the Whole of England, and a Considerable Part of Scotland* (London, 1801–02). I intend to examine the literary and artistic pretensions of *Observations* in a subsequent essay.

[2] For recent discussions of *Hannah Hewit*, see Carl Thompson, ‘The *Grosvenor* Shipwreck and the Figure of the Female Crusoe: *Hannah Hewit*, *Mary Jane*

ignored, yet in 1938, in what is still the only overall study of Dibdin as a writer, Edward Rimbault Dibdin (1853–1941) judged *Henry Hooka* superior:

> It [*Henry Hooka*] is the best of the three [novels], being simpler in plan and not, like its precursors, overloaded with far-fetched improbabilities. … the story is quite interesting, and the attention is kept alive by ingenious and amusing incidents. The style is distinctly good, showing perhaps the beneficial effect of more leisure.[3]

I agree with much of this. *Henry Hooka*, Dibdin's last significant publication, is not wildly imaginative in the manner of *Hannah Hewit*, but it is better written, with characters more convincingly drawn. The central story is 'simple in plan', detailing how the charming, goodhearted scapegrace Henry Hooka lived some time with his mistress, Clara Lovegrove, before marrying Camilla Debenture, an innocent, virtuous girl with whom he has a cousinly relationship. *Henry Hooka* is clearly a descendent of such classic mid-eighteenth-century novels as Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751): a tale of the misadventures of a young man on his way to matrimony, respectability, and prosperity. Compared to such novels, though, Dibdin's hero is rather thinly characterised and often absent from the scenes described. Much more interest shifts to the women around him, and it is argued here that Dibdin came to realise, perhaps unconsciously, that his central theme was the difference between a good and bad mistress. This led him to make a few adjustments to his story, and these led in turn to a certain amount of incoherence and one clear impossibility, read here as a sort of 'blind spot' that unlocks, or in Dibdin's own term 'unravels', the novel's moral preoccupations. A spoiler

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Meadows, and Romantic-era Feminist and Anti-feminist Debate', *English Studies in Africa* 51 (2008), 9-20; Andrea Haslanger, 'From Man-Machine to Woman-Machine: Automata, Fiction, and Femininity in Dibdin's *Hannah Hewit* and Burney's *Camilla*', *Modern Philology* 111 (2014), 788-817; and Maximillian E. Novak, 'Ideological Tendencies in Three Crusoe Narratives by British Novelists during the Period Following the French Revolution: Charles Dibdin's *Hannah Hewit*, *The Female Crusoe*, Maria Edgeworth's *Forester*, and Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*', *The Eighteenth-Century Novel* 9 (2012), 261-80.

[3] Edward Rimbault Dibdin, 'Charles Dibdin as a Writer', *Music and Letters* 19 (1938), 149-70 (168-70).

alert: almost every significant plot detail in *Henry Hooka* is revealed in the pages that follow.

The Suspense Plot

Although the main story of *Henry Hooka* is 'simple in plan', Dibdin created an elaborate backstory for Camilla that is, *pace* Edward Rimbault Dibdin, 'overloaded with far-fetched improbabilities'. Though taking up only a few pages in the telling, it provides most of what the novel offers in terms of suspense and bears heavily on the awkward adjustments Dibdin seems to have made in his plotting. It is set in motion straight away. The first chapter describes an afternoon tea party at Mr and Mrs Wimble's house in London, where the guests are gossiping about two things: the arrest for debt of a young man who had 'astonished the world [of London society] like a sky-rocket' (I, 2) – this turns out to be Henry; and a 'widow in the country that lost one child and found another' (I, 4-5) – the first mention of the Camilla plot.[4] Various pieces of contradictory information are bandied around, but finally a poet called Climax speaks up, seeming to possess genuine knowledge of the two cases. In the second chapter, Climax then lays the foundation of the novel. He describes how, many years earlier, Sir Henry Hooka and his friend and business partner Mr Debenture had gone to India together, leaving their two wives and two children in England: Sir Henry had a boy called Henry, Mr Debenture a girl called Camilla. After about eighteen months, both Lady Hooka and Mr Debenture died. Sir Henry then stayed in India (continuing there until the period at which the novel begins), while Mrs Debenture took care of both children, with Henry then six and Camilla two. Mrs Debenture decided to retire into the country, and while she tidied up her affairs in London, the children 'were sent into the country under the care of her butler and housekeeper, who were to prepare Mrs Debenture's retreat against her arrival' (I, 17). Climax digresses slightly on the inadvisability of putting so much trust in servants, and this prompts a fierce quarrel between Mr and Mrs Wimble as to whether their own servants can be trusted. While this is continuing, a bailiff arrives and arrests Climax for debt, thus suspending the story of Henry and Camilla.

[4] *Henry Hooka. A Novel*, 3 vols (London, 1807), I, 2, 3. Subsequent references to *Henry Hooka* are included in the main text.

In Book II, Dibdin picks up the story of Henry and Camilla 'at the place where he [Climax] left off his story' (I, 115). The butler and housekeeper in question had stayed at an inn (later identified as the Red Lion [III, 244]) with the children, and left them 'in the care of the chamber-maid' (I, 115). She, in turn, let them wander out of the garden, and little Camilla became separated from Henry and hopelessly lost. Soon afterwards, Mrs Debenture arrived at the inn to hear the shocking story. All searches for Camilla were unsuccessful, and Mrs Debenture 'instantly discharged her servants' (I, 119).

Years later, Mrs Debenture meets a young girl called Flametta, who is 'about fifteen' (I, 138); they develop a strong bond, and Mrs Debenture takes her into her house as a 'companion' (I, 214), but soon starts treating her like a daughter. In the denouement, it is revealed that 'Flametta' *is* Camilla. As Edward Rimbault Dibdin wrote with gentle understatement, 'The shock of surprise does not disconcert the reader, for he has guessed as much long before the revelation'.[5] Throughout the novel it seems almost certain that Camilla will be found, and Dibdin presents the reader with no other young female with plausible claims to be the long-lost girl. In short, unless he introduced a completely new character late in his story, 'Flametta' must be Camilla.

The actual mechanism through which the lost Camilla reappears thirteen years later as Flametta, before finally being identified as Camilla, can be summarised here. I emphasise the stated time periods between the different events, as they will prove important:

1. Years earlier, Mrs Hilaria Spondee, a married authoress and adventurer, whose husband had gone to India, was making an extended tour in Wales with a gentleman, her lover. At the time, she was looking after two small girls, her own daughter, also Hilaria, and her niece, Flametta, an orphan. To facilitate her journey to Wales, she left the two girls with Mrs Gage, who ran a nursery in Suffolk.
2. 'About eight or ten months afterwards' (III, 271), Mrs Gage quarrelled with her husband. He threw a knife at her; she ducked, but the knife killed Flametta. Horrified at what he had done, Mr Gage buried the dead girl and went out promising to find another child to replace her. He returned with Camilla, who 'seemed to be

[5] Edward Rimbault Dibdin, 'Charles Dibdin', 170.

almost famished' (III, 277). With some difficulty, they convinced young Hilaria that Camilla is, in fact, her cousin.

3. '[A]bout a year afterwards' (III, 280), Mrs Spondee picked up the two children, not realising that one had been substituted. Camilla thus grew up as Flametta, believing herself an orphan and Mrs Spondee her aunt.
4. The Gages moved to Ireland, to escape some trouble Mr Gage had got into.
5. Mrs Spondee became a widow.
6. When Camilla is 'about fifteen', Mrs Spondee becomes acquainted with Mrs Debenture. The latter sees that 'Flametta' is treated badly by her aunt, and thus asks Mrs Spondee if the girl can live with her as a companion.
7. When Camilla – still known as Flametta – is seventeen or eighteen, and about to marry Henry, Mrs Gage returns from Ireland and reveals information making it clear that 'Flametta' is Camilla.

This strand of the plot, then, certainly has 'far-fetched improbabilities', and is much more complex than anything directly touching Henry, the hero. On a first reading of the novel, the complexity is rather baffling, because the reward is so slight. As Edward Rimbault Dibdin suggested, the revelation is anticlimactic; moreover, it doesn't really change anything. Mrs Debenture already loves 'Flametta' like a daughter, and Henry is intent on marrying this young woman, whoever she is.

The Impossible Wimbles

A more careful reading of Dibdin's novel suggests, though, that the suspense plot is not primarily designed to surprise the reader with revelations about Camilla, but rather to hold back crucial information pertaining to other characters. In this respect, Mr and Mrs Wimble turn out to be unexpectedly important. As noted above, the story begins in their house, a fact that for most of the novel seems purely accidental. Not until Book V does Dibdin mention the Wimbles again, explaining that he broke off Climax's story very deliberately:

> I have a grand objection to anticipation, and if Mr Fungus [the bailiff] had not so opportunely arrived, I certainly should have broke the thread of his [Climax's] discourse in some other way, lest it should prove a clue to unravel my plot; at a time, too, when a reader, instead of ascertaining any thing, ought to be kept in ignorance of every thing. (III, 10)

Finally, near the end of the novel, it is revealed that Wimble and his wife were the very butler and housekeeper responsible for the loss of Camilla, so the suggestion is that they deliberately interrupted Climax's story (III, 231). As examples of bad servants, they imaginatively expand Dibdin's extended attack on servants in *Observations on a Tour Through Almost the Whole of England, and a Considerable Part of Scotland* of 1801–02.[6]

The most unexpected plot twist in *Henry Hooka* is not the revelation that 'Flametta' is Camilla, but the double revelation that Mr Wimble was the butler involved in the loss of the little girl, and that, his first wife having died, he has just married Mrs Spondee:

> One evening, at a rout, a lady came up to Mrs Debenture, whom she did not immediately know, but who announced herself as Mrs Wimble. Some confused idea came across Mrs Debenture's mind, and, looking at her again, [she] said, 'Why, Madam, is not your name Spondee?' – 'It was, Madam,' said the lady, 'but it is now Wimble;' adding, 'here, Madam, is my husband!'
>
> The mention of Wimble had thrown a sort of suspicion over the mind of Mrs Debenture, which the sight of the man confirmed. 'Wretched woman,' said she, 'what have you done? This is the villain who lost my child.' (III, 227-28)

This surprise really does 'disconcert the reader', and Dibdin can with reason plume himself 'that the reader had no suspicion of the truth' (III, 231). Looking back, though, it seems that Climax had been directing his story specifically at the Wimbles, so Dibdin perhaps intended to suggest that he, at least, knew of the Wimbles' connection with Mrs Debenture all along. And in retrospect it becomes clear that Henry's servant, O'Nouse, had been referring to Mr Wimble when he wrote of how Mrs Spondee was likely to 'ruin herself' in Book V: 'the fellow, who had become a widower, and talked of marrying her as soon as he decently could, was a beggar, and had laid his eye upon her five hundred a-year, to liquidate debts already incurred' (III, 111). And later, in Book VI, it is Mr Wimble who is referred to as Mrs Spondee's 'Little Chelsea gallant, whose wife had been dead two months' (III, 209).

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[6] Dibdin, *Observations*, I, 177-85.

This is where we get to *Henry Hooka*'s impossibility, or blind spot, for it is now announced that Mr Wimble and Mrs Spondee have actually known each other for fifteen years or more:

> Wimble and his wife had not made a bad thing of it when they left Mrs Debenture, but they afterwards worked in a much more profitable vineyard, for their master … had his intrigues abroad, which were conducted by Mr Wimble, while his lady entertained lovers at home, under the conduct of Mrs Wimble.
>
> To come to the point: this was the very gentleman who took the excursion with Mrs Spondee to Wales, whose fondness for him was the cause of her not accompanying her husband to India. Wimble attended him upon this occasion, and as this lady was never very nice, partook of the pleasures of his master, without any of the expense. (III, 232-33)

In a novel where names are generally significant, Dibdin's choice of the name Wimble gains resonance here, for as a verb the word can mean 'To bore *into* … to penetrate or insinuate oneself *into*' (*OED*). A wimble is a gimlet, and *OED*'s examples show that it could be used as metaphorical slang for a penis. The problem, of course, is that Dibdin's plot requires Mrs Spondee to be in Wales 'eight or ten months' *before* Camilla's disappearance, and consequently before Mr Wimble has left Mrs Debenture's employ. It is as though Mr Wimble is in one of those Medieval paintings where he can be simultaneously in two places at different times. The only way to rationalise the problem is to assume that Mrs Spondee's lover originally set out to tour Wales with another butler, for some reason needed to replace him, and, some time after Camilla is lost, learned that over in Suffolk there was an unemployed butler conveniently ready to hurry over to Wales to take his place. But this becomes an impossible tangle, which even then does not explain how Mrs Wimble also came to be Mrs Spondee's lover's housekeeper – and Dibdin, of course, does not attempt to explain it. It makes much more sense to think that he simply made a revealing mistake in his plotting.

It is worth noting that Dibdin's favourite means of telling a story took the form of a polyvocal oral performance accompanied with music, in the course of his one-man shows, or (as he liked to call them) 'Table Entertainments'. In these, the general gusto of the performance was far

more important than neat, coherent plots.[7] Not surprisingly, the conversation in *Henry Hooka*, and the characterisation through conversation, are the most impressive aspects of the novel, as they are of all his novels. Recognising his weakness, Dibdin represents himself, as the first-person narrator, comically struggling to tell his story in the best possible way, as in the 'I have a grand objection to anticipation' passage quoted above.

The Fall of Hilaria Spondee

On the principle of Occam's razor, the most likely explanation for Dibdin's impossibility is that he originally had no intention of connecting the Wimbles with the gentleman who took Mrs Spondee to Wales. Mr Wimble was simply the butler whose irresponsibility led to the loss of Camilla, and his and his wife's tactical disruption of Climax's story at the beginning conveniently allowed Dibdin to delay his full account of the events surrounding the toddler's disappearance, while also giving him a secret to reveal, such as most novelists of the period liked to have in reserve. Even in Book V, it is far from clear that 'the fellow, who had become a widower' was originally imagined as Mr Wimble, and it is never explained how a man so cunning and rapacious as Mr Wimble could have ended up 'a beggar'. In other words, Dibdin's seemingly late decision to forge a sexual and romantic relationship between Mr Wimble and Mrs Spondee was not worked in seamlessly. The idea that Mrs Debenture has difficulty recognising Mrs Spondee/Wimble also seems odd, given that the two women had spent several weeks together less than two years before the meeting at the rout.

It is not clear how much revision *Henry Hooka* was subject to, but there are distinct suggestions that Mrs Spondee was originally conceived of simply as a rather ridiculous literary woman – hence her name. She is introduced into the novel on the grounds that her financial affairs had become

[7] For discussion of Dibdin's Table Entertainments, see Robert Fahrner, *The Theatre Career of Charles Dibdin the Elder (1745-1814)* (New York, 1989), 119 ff. and David Kennerley, 'Loyalism, Celebrity, and the Politics of Personality: Dibdin in the 1790s', in *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture*, ed. Oskar Cox Jensen, David Kennerley, and Ian Newman (Oxford, 2018), 78-93. This form of entertainment has recently been recreated in Retrospect Opera's 2017 recording of *Christmas Gambols*, Dibdin's seasonal Table Entertainment from 1795.

entangled with those of Henry's father, Sir Henry Hooka, and the latter writes to Mrs Debenture

> that he wished to recommend this widow [Mrs Spondee] to her protection; for that, though she was a singularly romantic character, she had something valuable in her conduct; and, as to the money, she had very honourably, and indeed with scrupulous honesty, met him half way in the investigation of her affairs. (I, 134)

Mr Playfair, Sir Henry's lawyer, who has worked on the case, describes Mrs Spondee as 'a strange eccentric creature' (I, 143), and Mrs Debenture herself, 'though she discerned something weak, whimsical, and even ridiculous in the widow, thought, or perhaps fancied, that there could not be a more harmless being' (I, 137). Later, she describes her as 'a wrong-headed foolish woman' with a 'flighty and eccentric mind' (I, 185). Mrs Spondee has faced financial difficulties since becoming a widow, and thus 'determined to get her bread by writing', a project in which 'she had been encouraged by a publisher of novels' (I, 143). Mrs Debenture undertakes to oppose 'this literary propensity' (I, 143), and it seems that Dibdin is making fun of literary women, though he disclaims this, and says he is simply making fun of bad writing (I, 156-57).[8] He gives a long, satirical account of Mrs Spondee's novelistic memoirs, and these include the first mention of the extended stay in Wales that will later prove so significant:

> being of a weak and delicate constitution, she [Mrs Spondee] took a tour into Wales to drink goats' milk, in company with a gentleman who had long been an intimate friend in the family. This tour is described at great length, the matter of which she had at one time an idea of publishing in a work by itself … (I, 154)

Quite quickly, though, the novel's picture of Mrs Spondee changes. Her failures as a parent are emphasised, and after a brief account of her poetry at the start of Book III (II, 30-31) nothing more is said of her 'literary propensity'. Early in the second volume she is described as both promiscuous and manipulative:

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[8] Dibdin writes: 'there are a plentiful number of pretenders to literature of both sexes' (I, 157). Dibdin's previous novel, *Hannah Hewit*, purports to be written by a woman, and champions women's creativity.

> She [Mrs Spondee] had generally some kind friend whom she pillaged, to eke out her fortune; for five hundred a year was nothing to the style in which she lived. As to the poor gentleman who had accompanied her to Wales, she had so impaired his fortune, that he first deserted her, and afterwards died; but as her house, as I have already noticed, was at no great distance from Cambridge, she had plenty of lovers; for getting a little ancient, she was fond of boys, who on their part were delighted at the idea of an amour, and thus the battlings,[9] and every other supply they could rap and rend, were converted into presents, and other occasions, which were rapaciously exacted by this Venus of fifty … (II, 17-18)

This is bad enough, no doubt, but the reader's opinion of Mrs Spondee sinks yet further, indeed hits rock bottom, when her long involvement with Mr Wimble is eventually revealed. Living parasitically off a gentleman was one thing, and it was frequently done in both fiction and real life, but simultaneously conducting an affair with said gentleman's married butler, with a view to getting that butler to assist in the 'pillaging' of the master, suggests extraordinary moral turpitude. Having originally, it seems, wanted to present Mrs Spondee as a woman to be laughed at, Dibdin clearly decided, in the end, that she should be strongly condemned. Her story is echoed, in miniature, in the subplot involving Sir Gilbert Gamble; his (unnamed) mistress 'took what she called her own, that is to say, all the valuables she could lay her hands on' and 'ran away' with Pentagraph, a satirical poet in Sir Gilbert's employ (III, 49).

Intriguingly, however, Dibdin presents Mr Wimble as even more villainous than Mrs Spondee, effectively making him the novel's villain-in-chief. Although 'a beggar', he is able to persuade her that he is a wealthy man, with the help of another 'swindler' (III, 237). After the marriage, the various honourable characters in the novel make some attempt to protect Mrs Spondee from her second husband's rapacity and meanness. It might be concluded, then, that Mrs Spondee is punished for her promiscuity and greed by being married to a man capable of even baser conduct. It was some such notion, I suggest, which led Dibdin into his impossibility. He decided to complete Mrs Spondee's narrative trajectory by marrying her to a villain, and the only villains he had available, in a novel largely devoid of serious villainy, were Sir Gilbert

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[9] 'Battlings' is public school slang for a weekly allowance of money. See John S. Farmer, *Slang and its Analogues Past and Present*, I (London, 1890), 144.

Gamble, Pentagraph, and Mr Wimble. Sir Gilbert, who is involved in a plot to elope with the younger Hilaria, is an unfeeling seducer, but he is also wealthy and a Member of Parliament, so had Mrs Spondee been married to him, it may have appeared she had done rather well for herself. This left a choice between Pentagraph, the satirical poet, and Mr Wimble, the ex-butler. The former's literary bile could have been a good match for Mrs Spondee's affected 'literary propensity', and perhaps at some point Dibdin did plan to bring them together, but Mr Wimble offered the possibility of a more demeaning marriage, and in the end this was, revealingly, preferred. Mr Wimble offered, too, a certain thematic symmetry, for the irresponsible attitudes of both him and Mrs Spondee to looking after children made the Camilla-Flametta plotline possible. But the Wimble-Spondee union required the rather contrived death of the first Mrs Wimble, announced late in *Henry Hooka*, but clearly occurring shortly after the period at which the story begins. Only the most attentive reader would remember that she had incidentally been described as a 'poor sick wife' by sympathetic 'ladies' at the start of the novel (I, 21) – probably a small, revisionary touch added quite late in the writing process, for Mrs Wimble otherwise appears to be in robust health in the opening chapters.

As Dibdin attempted to make the Spondee-Wimble union appear an organic part of his story, he decided to give them a relationship of many years' standing, and to have them become secret lovers in Wales – forgetting, of course, that Mr Wimble could not have been there at the right time. This would have meant revisiting his earlier account of the Wimbles' relationship with their master. In the third chapter of the novel, we are told:

> this lady and gentleman [the Wimbles] had been neither more nor less than a butler and housekeeper themselves; and having pretty well feathered their nests, and seen their master first in prison, and afterwards in his coffin, they had gathered the odds and ends together, which, like the shillings and pence in a long bill, amounted to a pretty warm sum, became [*sic*] housekeepers, and hired servants in their turn … They had been accustomed to finger the plate and jewels of their master, and *an extravagant woman he kept* … (I, 24; my emphasis)

Much of this tallies with Dibdin's attack on servants in *Observations on a Tour*, where he writes of how:

> a consultation is had [by servants], as to whether the fortune [in the family where they are employed] is likely to last out their time, or whether, and at what time, they shall turn rats and leave the sinking ship. The virtues and perfections of those who compose the family are never dreamt of, indeed they are neither felt nor understood, but the vices and failings are magnified with a malignant pleasure, because, by working upon those, they are to make their fortunes.[10]

But my assumption is that the 'master' referred to here was not, initially, imagined as having any connection with Mrs Spondee. Only later, when Dibdin had a more developed idea of how to join his various threads, did he introduce the reference to 'an extravagant woman he [the master] kept' to serve as a first, cryptic reference to Mrs Spondee. Later in the paragraph he refers to the Wimbles handling 'presents from the lady's gallants' (I, 25), suggesting that the 'extravagant woman'/Mrs Spondee was not faithful to the man who kept her. This picture was presumably meant to match the much later passage in Book VI, quoted above, referring to how the Wimbles' master 'had his intrigues abroad, which were conducted by Mr Wimble, while his lady entertained lovers at home, under the conduct of Mrs Wimble.' Yet Dibdin's adjustments are awkward at best. The suggestion that the Wimbles defrauded both their master *and* the 'extravagant woman'/Mrs Spondee hardly tallies with what we are told later: that Mrs Spondee was conducting an affair with Mr Wimble, so as to obtain his assistance in the defrauding of his master. In short, Dibdin's efforts to create an economical, tightly-plotted novel were causing difficulties: difficulties easily avoided had he simply introduced more characters.

Changes in the characterisation of Mrs Spondee created the impossibility in the novel, I suggest. Looking at all the evidence pertaining to her in *Henry Hooka*, it seems that her character evolved in three distinct phases, with traces of the earlier conceptions still there in the published text:

1. A silly, 'romantic', literary woman whose extra-marital affair with a 'gentleman' was primarily a plot device allowing Camilla to be substituted for Flametta.
2. A long-term 'kept' mistress whose extravagance destroyed her lover and allowed the Wimbles scope for plunder.

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[10] Dibdin, *Observations*, I, 180.

3. An extremely promiscuous woman prepared not just to betray her husband with a lover, but at the same time to betray her lover with his butler.

The impossibility developed because of Dibdin's vacillating between (2) and (3). (2) made possible a three-way connection between Mrs Spondee, her lover, and Mr Wimble on the assumption that Mrs Spondee's relationship with her lover continued after their Welsh sojourn, that they both lived subsequently in Suffolk (where much of the novel is set), and that the Wimbles entered his employ there, having lost their previous jobs with Mrs Debenture. Had Mrs Spondee and Mr Wimble become lovers after this return to Suffolk, the novel would contain no logical impossibility. On the other hand, Dibdin may have come to realise that if the relationship between Mrs Spondee and her lover could be carried on in Suffolk, where she at least was known, there was no pretext for the Welsh tour and her separation from the children in the first place. In trying to resolve such problems, and to further blacken Mrs Spondee's character, in (3) Dibdin introduced his blind spot. If Mrs Spondee is imagined regularly changing and ruining her lovers, and the Welsh tour was a particularly flagrant act of infidelity, then there is no reason to suppose her relationship with this particular man continued after their time in Wales, and hence the Welsh tour itself is justified. But having now decided to link Mrs Spondee and Mr Wimble through the gentleman who accompanied her to Wales, Dibdin had to move their relationship back into the Welsh period, forgetting this was impossible.

It is worth pausing to consider just what role Wales plays in *Henry Hooka*. Why do two people from Suffolk, wishing to have an illicit affair, travel so far – literally to the other side of Britain – to have one? Dibdin himself had little interest in Wales, which he never explored, despite travelling very widely in England and Scotland. He recalled 'asking a Welch waiter at MONMOUTH, whether we were not then in WALES? [to which] he replied, "Why, to be sure it is WAALES, but it is not Welch WAALES"'.[11] In this sense, Dibdin appears to have had no first-hand acquaintance with 'Welch WAALES', and can only have known it from books and artworks. But he would have known that it had become a popular location for picturesque tours: John Davies has traced some 'eighty books describing tours in Wales' published between 1770 and 1815,[12] and Dibdin had a professional interest in such literature. Thomas Pennant, a tour writer

[11] Dibdin, *Observations*, II, 322.
[12] John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1993), 347.

Dibdin admired, had influentially recorded how, in the mountainous parts of Wales, 'During summer, the men pass their time either in harvest work, or in tending their herds: the women in milking, or making butter and cheese. For their own use, they milk both ewes and goats …'.[13] It can be inferred, then, that Mrs Spondee had read such accounts of Wales, and set out to have her own picturesque experience of the country, with a view to turning it into literary capital. But there is a sharp, satirical edge to Dibdin's account of Mrs Spondee, and it is noteworthy that the female goat had often been used as a symbol 'of nurturing motherhood':[14] thus Mrs Spondee drinking goats' milk becomes a contradiction in terms. Moreover, we must suppose that Mrs Spondee would have been inclined to produce what Davies calls 'Rousseauesque rhapsodies' rather than the sort of solidly factual tours Dibdin admired.[15] I suspect that the emphasis originally fell more on the Welsh tour, as a means of highlighting Mrs Spondee's literary affectations and determination to be conventionally fashionable; but later it fell more on her gentleman companion, as Dibdin sought to bring out her promiscuity. When Mrs Gage tells her story, she reports that Mrs Spondee said 'she was going a long journey into Wales, or some outlandish place' (III, 271). Dr. Johnson had defined 'outlandish' as simply 'Not native; foreign', but it also had a more general sense of strange or unfamiliar. There is a clear suggestion that Mrs Gage considered Wales an unsuitable destination for a young mother: it may be that Dibdin was feeling his way from older depictions of Wales as a place of rural innocence to later accounts of it as a wild place where the women indulged in wanton behaviour.[16]

A Tale of Two Mistresses

Dibdin's darkening of Mrs Spondee's character advanced in tandem, I suggest, with his sanctification of Mrs Lovegrove, Henry's mistress. In

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[13] Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Wales*, 2 vols (London, 1784), II, 170.

[14] *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. Helene E. Roberts (Chicago, 1998), 19.

[15] Davies, *History*, 347.

[16] For the idea of Wales as a place of rural innocence in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novels, see Jane Aaron, 'Seduction and Betrayal: Wales in women's fiction, 1785-1810', *Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 1 (1994), 65-76. For the later idea, thoroughly established by the 1840s, that Welsh women were particularly promiscuous, and an 'other' against which English women's virtue could be measured, see Aaron, 'The Hoydens of Wild Wales: Representations of Welsh Women in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction', *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays* 1 (1995), 23-39.

terms of morality, and its representation in imaginative literature, this is much the most interesting thing about *Henry Hooka*, and a good reason for anyone interested in Romantic period fiction to read Dibdin's novel today. Dibdin undoubtedly saw himself as a moralist, and in 1801 he denounced the immorality of much contemporary fiction, especially *The Monk* (1796), in a surprisingly fierce attack.[17]

When Mrs Lovegrove, then using the name Vansweeten (her former lover), first appears in the second volume, she is a distinctly equivocal figure. She is an acquaintance of Mrs Spondee, for a start, and therefore immediately assumed to be 'a woman of no very regular conduct' (II, 22). She sees that Henry is trying to win the affections of Mrs Spondee and her daughter (purely so that he can punish them for their treatment of Flametta), and resolves to use her own 'arts' to 'take him away from them both' (II, 23). Dibdin goes into some detail as to how she attracts Henry first intellectually, with 'modest and unassuming deference' (II, 40), and then physically.

When Dibdin gets round to detailing Mrs Lovegrove's history, he explains that 'She was the daughter of a cheesemonger, in the Borough' (II, 56), lost her mother early, and was sent away to boarding school in Yorkshire by her stepmother. She subsequently fell in love with 'a half-pay officer' called Lovegrove (II, 62), eloped, and married him. He 'treat[ed] her like a brute' (II, 64), but fortunately died less than ten months after the wedding. Following a period of reflection, she decided to set herself up as a mistress to some wealthy man, and a distinct note of admiration enters Dibdin's account here:

> The regulation of her conduct was admirable. She would be maintained, and splendidly maintained if she could, but she was determined to effect no man's ruin, to disturb the peace of no family, nor, above all, to have a connection with a married man. … In short, she was determined never to be a wife, but a sort of honorable concubine … (II, 65-66)

[17] Dibdin, *Observations*, I, 135-43. Dibdin does not mention *The Monk* by name, but it appears to be the work he describes at 138-39: 'so full of broad wickedness, so fraught with profligate impudence; such a violation of all law human and divine, such a system of irreligion, such a wanton mockery of every thing good and virtuous, written in terms fit only for an atheist in a stew'.

On this basis, she has 'many' 'amours', but she is always faithful to her present lover (II, 67). Henry sets up an establishment for her in London, believing that 'though I may enjoy all the delicious sweets of matrimony, I shall be in no danger of being hampered with its fetters' (II, 81).

In London, Mrs Lovegrove is the perfect mistress; she knows the dangers of the city much better than Henry, and is able to direct and regulate his conduct, while at the same time being very deferential to him, never spending money without his permission. She is accepted by fashionable society, and actually admired for her moral excellence, 'the truest model of female propriety, tender and constant to him [Henry], the emulation of good women, and the terror of bad' (II, 93). After living with Henry for over a year, she gently breaks off the connection, realising that Sir Henry is angry about his son's lifestyle and that he and Mrs Debenture want Henry to wed. At this juncture, she resolves to end her career as a mistress. All the honourable characters in the novel eventually take turns praising her. Sir Henry, though initially furious at his son's keeping a mistress, is soon telling her 'You have taught my son the true principles of honour; and … I am ready to reward you for the obligation … in any way within my ability' (III, 3-4). Later, 'He discovered, or fancied so, qualities in her [Mrs Lovegrove] which he imagined had never adorned any woman but her' (III, 154). Mrs Debenture, after one meeting with her, decides 'not only that she [Mrs Lovegrove] was the most prepossessing woman she had ever seen, but that her mind was an assemblage of that sweetness and virtue which cannot be assumed' (III, 173). Even Camilla/Flametta quickly begins 'to think of Mrs Lovegrove in the light every body else had pointed her out' and feels a 'perfect ease' on the subject of Henry's relationship with the older woman (III, 198-99). Dibdin notes at the end that 'some [readers] will be apt to consider her [Mrs Lovegrove] as the heroine [of the novel]' (III, 299). She is set up as the headmistress of a girls' boarding school, and her advanced educational plans there are considered 'a national benefit'. On this basis, 'She published a treatise upon female education, which was in every body's possession' (III, 301).

Edward Rimbault Dibdin recognised that *Henry Hooka* treats Mrs Lovegrove very generously, but he does not explain or contextualise this. Clearly, though, the novel is recommending the keeping of mistresses. It is noteworthy that Dibdin himself had lived for several years with at least one mistress, possibly two, before he married: a fact well known in London's theatrical and literary circles, and presumably known to his

legitimate family.[18] In this sense, *Henry Hooka* may represent Dibdin, the self-appointed moralist, trying to come to terms, in his comparatively old age, with his own past. It is not as though Henry, in the novel, must work through a sexual infatuation with Mrs Lovegrove before taking the prudent route of propriety with Camilla, as a Tom Jones or Peregrine Pickle might have done; rather, his involvement with Mrs Lovegrove is understood to be equipping him as a good husband for the younger woman. Mrs Lovegrove offers a sort of 'school for husbands', allowing young men to explore their sexuality in a devoted, monogamous context. But in advocating the keeping of mistresses, Dibdin felt it imperative to insist on the importance of the right kind of mistress, and hence the growing moral gulf he establishes between Mrs Lovegrove and Mrs Spondee, despite their initially seeming rather similar characters. The latter's tawdry episode with the butler is designed to emphasise, by force of contrast, Mrs Lovegrove's very virtuous and principled monogamous behaviour.

It is worth taking a side-glance at Jane Austen here, given that her canonical novels are so often read as a sort of normative representation of the values of the middle and upper classes in early nineteenth-century England. Austen was certainly a great admirer of Dibdin's songs,[19] and the probability of her encountering his novels must be quite high. In her novels, there is no one remotely like Mrs Lovegrove, and one assumes she would have found the concept of an 'honourable concubine' heavily oxymoronic. In Austen, unmarried women only elect to live with men if they presume this will lead to marriage. This is true even of the widowed Penelope Clay in *Persuasion*, who, of all Austen's women, comes closest to embracing the life of a kept mistress. William Elliot offers her the chance to be 'established under his protection in London', so as to get her away from Sir Walter Elliot, whom she had hoped to marry, but Austen makes it clear that marriage is still her goal, and one in which she is likely to succeed:

> Mrs Clay's affections had overpowered her interest, and she had sacrificed, for the young man's sake, the possibility of scheming longer for Sir Walter. She has abilities, however, as well as

[18] Fahrner, *Theatre Career*, 18-19.

[19] Austen owned the scores of eight Dibdin songs, making him the best-represented composer in her music collection. For discussion, see Nicola Pritchard-Pink, 'Dibdin and Jane Austen: Musical Cultures of Gentry Women', in *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture*, 108-12.

> affections; and it is now a doubtful point whether his cunning, or hers, may finally carry the day; whether, after preventing her from being the wife of Sir Walter, he may not be wheedled and caressed at last into making her the wife of Sir William.[20]

It is of course impossible to imagine Mrs Clay being embraced as the 'truest model of female propriety', or dignified by being made the author of a popular book on female education. Dibdin's moral concerns, mostly focussed on young men, and Austen's, mostly focussed on young women, hardly overlap, though both authors – Austen with far greater art – are concerned with establishing moral identity through the principle of contrast. If Mrs Clay is everything Anne Elliot is not, so Mrs Spondee becomes everything Mrs Lovegrove is not.

The moral drift of *Henry Hooka*, then, is that good mistresses teach young men to be good husbands, while bad mistresses plunder and destroy them. The gradual realisation that this was his theme led Dibdin to revise Mrs Spondee's backstory, and to darken her moral character he finally introduced the idea that she had conducted an affair with a villainous butler at the same time she was having an affair with his master. But in this belated effort to connect Mrs Spondee with the worthless Mr Wimble, Dibdin created a blind spot, for he forgot that Wimble could not, at that juncture, have worked for Mrs Spondee's gentleman lover, for he was also central to the simultaneous disappearance-of-Camilla storyline. Thus the subsidiary strands in a novel, in its main essentials 'simple in plan', became impossibly, but revealingly, tangled: moral clarity and superficial tidiness triumphing over logical possibility and coherent plotting.

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[20] Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Janet Todd and Antje Blank (Cambridge, 2006), 273.

'"My Only Admirer"'; Thomas Talfourd and Charles Lamb

CHRISTOPHER BUTCHER

On 30 December 1835 a little boy died at Brighton. Taken there by his parents in the hope that the sea air might revive him, he had seemed to improve, but then relapsed and died. He had been christened Charles Lamb, and his surname was Talfourd. He had embodied the intense admiration, almost devotion, which his father, Thomas Noon Talfourd, had felt for Charles Lamb himself and which was to be further demonstrated by Talfourd's contributions to Lamb's reputation, in particular in his compilation of *The Letters of Charles Lamb* and *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb*.

Early admiration

Talfourd had been an admirer of Lamb before he had met him. He had moved to London from his native Reading in early 1813 when he was 17. His family had not been affluent enough to allow him to fulfil his ambition of going to Cambridge and so he had to pursue another path.[1] There was at this point a tension between him and his parents which made him strike out on his own, namely that he had recently abandoned the strict and orthodox Congregationalism of his family in favour of Unitarianism, causing 'alienation and dissatisfaction'.[2] It also meant that, from the very outset of his life in London, Talfourd had strong connexions with Unitarian circles. In February 1813 he had presented a letter of introduction from the Unitarian writer, John Towill Rutt, to the urbane and literary Unitarian lawyer, and shortly to be barrister, Henry Crabb Robinson.[3]

[1] Essex Record Office, D/DU/754/7.
[2] 'Obituary of Talfourd', *Christian Reformer*, 10 (1854), 254.
[3] *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 3 vols (London: Dent, 1938), I, 119.

Talfourd was engaged as a pupil to a well-known Special Pleader of the day, Joseph Chitty, who had chambers in the Temple.[4] He thus became one of the group of young men famously described by Lamb as 'chittylings'.[5] This circle overlapped with his Unitarian connexions, and with other young lawyers he met who were studying and practising in the Temple. One of these was a man, some eight years older than himself, who was called to the Bar in the year after Talfourd's arrival in London, Barron Field. Field had been at school at Christ's Hospital at the same time as Leigh Hunt. He knew Charles Lamb well and was also a friend of Henry Crabb Robinson. Like Robinson, he was also a very early admirer of Wordsworth, having been impressed by 'We are Seven' as early as 1800.[6]

Field had introduced Talfourd to Wordsworth's poetry in 1813 or early 1814.[7] The effect was immediate and profound. Talfourd was converted. His enthusiasm for the Lake Poet, which began now, remained to the end of his life, and at times amounted to something like idolatry. Field also aroused in Talfourd an interest in a group of writers he knew, all of whom had been at Christ's Hospital, namely Coleridge, Lamb and Leigh Hunt. In an article published in August 1814, Talfourd described this trio, none of whom he had yet met, as 'three of the master spirits of the present time'.[8] He had been particularly fascinated by Lamb. Field had been able to lend him a copy of 'John Woodvil', but he had had no copy of *Rosamund Gray*. Talfourd had searched for it and ultimately found it in 'a little circulating library near Holborn'.[9] In the August 1814 article already mentioned, Talfourd breathlessly gave his reaction: the tale was 'Clarissa Harlowe in the loveliest miniature – more sweetly simple, more true to nature, more scriptural and more enchanting, than any other composition of its length that I ever had the happiness to peruse.'[10] As Talfourd was to write many years later, as he had read it, his 'curiosity to see its author rose almost to the height of pain'[11]

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[4] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX/1410/2/3/2, fo 25.

[5] *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 3 vols (London: Dent, 1935), III, 353.

[6] *Barron Field's Memoirs of Wordsworth*, ed. Geoffrey Little (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975), 12.

[7] T.N. Talfourd, 'Preface to the Fourth Published Edition of *Ion*', in *Tragedies* (10th. ed.) (London: Moxon, 1850), 12.

[8] T.N. Talfourd, 'A Reply to the Most Popular Objections to Public Schools', *The Pamphleteer*, 4, 7 (August 1814), 113-14.

[9] T.N. Talfourd, *The Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life*, 2 vols (London: Moxon, 1837), I, 2.

[10] Talfourd, 'A Reply', 115.

[11] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 2.

Introduction to Lamb and his Friends

Why neither Field nor Robinson introduced Talfourd to Lamb is unknown. Talfourd was also perhaps rather unlucky not to have bumped into him, given that Lamb lived on the staircase next to Chitty's chambers in Inner Temple Lane, and Talfourd was himself living in the Lane. But in early 1815 they did meet, an event which Talfourd was later lovingly to describe in Chapter X of the *Letters of Lamb*. It occurred at the home of William Evans. As well as having an office in the India House, and knowing Lamb through that, Evans was one of the owners of *The Pamphleteer*, a quarterly publication edited by Abraham John Valpy, who was the son of Dr Richard Valpy, Talfourd's headmaster at Reading Grammar School, to which Talfourd had contributed a number of articles since his arrival in London. The meeting lived up to Talfourd's expectations. He had been detained at work and had arrived at Evans's at ten o'clock, and had met Lamb who was preparing to depart. Talfourd was to recall that '[Lamb] stayed half an hour in kindness to me and then accompanied me to our common home – the Temple'. There, Talfourd relates, Lamb 'detained me with an urgency which would not be denied', and they went together to Lamb's apartment where they remained talking until two in the morning. Their conversation was long remembered (and doubtless, with the passage of time, idealized) by Talfourd 'it was more solemn, and in higher mood, than any I ever after had with Lamb through the whole of our friendship.' On parting, Lamb invited Talfourd to come again, but two or three months were to elapse before their next meeting.[12]

During that interval, Talfourd published in *The Pamphleteer* a long article entitled 'An Attempt to Estimate the Poetical Talent of the Present Age, including a Sketch of the History of Poetry'.[13] This was the most important single piece of prose which Talfourd ever wrote. The article is notable for its criticism of the most popular of contemporary poets, and in particular of Byron, and its mounting crescendo of enthusiasm as it considered Coleridge, Lamb, and finally and most ardently the 'sublimities' of Wordsworth. Lamb was praised as 'of all living poets …

[12] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 2-5.

[13] T.N. Talfourd, 'An Attempt to Estimate the Poetical Talent of the Present Age', *The Pamphleteer*, (1815), 413-71.

[possessing] most the faculty of delighting'; as being one 'whose sole aim seems to render us better by making us happier'; and whose works were filled with the 'music of humanity'.[14] The application of Wordsworth's words to Lamb was high praise indeed on Talfourd's part.

Talfourd's *Pamphleteer* article must have done much to cement his friendship with Lamb, and to pave the way to what Talfourd was to describe as 'what I should have chosen as the greatest of all possible honours and delights – an introduction to Wordsworth'.[15] This must have occurred in May 1815. Talfourd later described how one day he learned from Lamb, 'with palpitating heart', that Wordsworth was 'at the next door'.

> I hurried out with my kind conductor, and a minute after was presented by Lamb to the person whom in all the world I venerated most, with this preface: 'Wordsworth, give me leave to introduce to you my only admirer'.[16]

It may well have been later on the same day that Robinson went to Lamb's for tea and found Wordsworth 'very chatty on poetry' in the company of Talfourd and Field amongst others.[17]

Other introductions followed. By 17 June 1815, at the latest, Talfourd had met Hazlitt at Lamb's.[18] For a couple of months after June, however, Talfourd did not see Lamb. In August he took steps to ensure he was not forgotten. Characteristically, Lamb was amused by the young man's enthusiasm, writing to Wordsworth:

> Our Panegyrist I thought had forgotten one of the objects of his youthful admiration, but I was agreeably removed from that scruple by the laundress knocking at my door this morning almost before I was up, with a present of fruit from my young friend, &c – There is something inexpressibly pleasant to me in these *presents*. Be it fruit, or fowl, or brawn, or *what not* … Therefore did the basket of fruit from the juvenile Talfourd not displease me. Not that I have any

[14] Talfourd, 'An Attempt', 461.
[15] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 6.
[16] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 6.
[17] *Robinson: Books and Writers,* I, 167 (23 May 1815).
[18] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 170.

> thoughts of bartering or reciprocating these things. To send him any thing in return would be to reflect suspicion of mercinariness upon what I know he meant as a freewill offering. Let him overcome me in bounty. In this strife a generous nature loves to be overcome.[19]

Lamb did in fact reciprocate bountifully, not necessarily in kind, although soon after becoming acquainted with Talfourd he gave him a copy of Jem White's *Letters of Sir John Falstaff*,[20] but by making Talfourd a part of his circle of friends, regularly inviting him to the apartments he shared with Mary, both in the Temple, and after 1817 in Great Russell Street. Here Talfourd met writers he already admired. These included William Godwin, about whose *Fleetwood* and *Caleb Williams* Talfourd had written an admiring footnote in 1814, well before they were introduced.[21] They included also George Dyer, Leigh Hunt, and Thomas Barnes. Most memorable for Talfourd – after his first encounters with Lamb and Wordsworth – was his first meeting with Coleridge. This was probably in March 1816, when Coleridge had come from Calne to London to submit a new dramatic poem to the management of Covent Garden.[22] They met at Lamb's and, as Talfourd was to write some 20 years later:

> we quitted the party together between one and two in the morning; Coleridge took my arm, and led me nothing loath, at a very gentle pace, to his lodgings at the Gloucester Coffee-house, pouring into my ear the whole way an argument by which he sought to reconcile the doctrines of Necessity and Free-will, winding on through a golden maze of exquisite illustration; but finding no end, except with the termination of that (to me) enchanted walk.[23]

New entrants to the Lamb circle, such as Bryan Procter who came to know Lamb in 1817 or 1818,[24] and William Charles Macready who was

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[19] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, II, 168-70.
[20] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I, 13.
[21] Talfourd, 'A Reply', 115-16.
[22] Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 423-24. Perhaps it was the occasion of 'drinking at Lamb's' which had, according to Robinson, made Coleridge ill soon after his arrival: *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 182.
[23] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 29.
[24] 'Barry Cornwall' [Bryan Procter], *Charles Lamb: A Memoir* (London: Moxon, 1866), 116.

introduced to Lamb by Charles Lloyd in about 1819,[25] became close friends. Above all, Talfourd enjoyed the society of the Lambs themselves. A great deal of whist was played; a considerable amount of alcohol was drunk; there was constant talk of books and drama, much of it the 'small talk of literature';[26] and the swapping of jokes and puns.

Lamb's circle overlapped, in personnel and attitude, with the Unitarian circles in which Talfourd also moved. Robinson, like Talfourd, was a member of both. Although Talfourd was to write that, during the time he had known him, Lamb had not displayed any particular sympathy with Unitarians,[27] Bryan Procter, writing about thirty years later and with less concern to avoid giving material for criticism of Lamb, put the matter rather differently:

> By education and habit, he [Lamb] was a Unitarian…. All the three men, Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hunt, were throughout their lives Unitarians, as was also George Dyer; Coleridge was a Unitarian preacher in his youth … George Dyer once sent a pamphlet to convert Charles to Unitarianism. 'Dear blundering soul' (Lamb said), 'why, I am as old a One Goddite as himself'[28]

In Elia's famous letter to Southey published in the October 1823 issue of the *London Magazine*, Lamb identified himself as a Dissenter, and the last sect to which he had adhered were the Unitarians.[29] What can at least be said with confidence is that Talfourd's 'taint of Socinianism', as Lamb wryly referred to it in the same letter,[30] was not regarded by him as unusual or a matter for criticism.

Talfourd, Lamb and Periodicals

One old friend of Lamb that Talfourd got to know was the veteran radical and hero of the 1794 treason trials, John Thelwall. When Thelwall, with the fruits of his successful practice as speech therapist and rhetoric teacher, purchased a weekly journal, *The Champion*, he soon recruited

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[25] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 63-64.
[26] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Journal, 6 May 1826.
[27] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I, 21.
[28] Procter, *Lamb: A Memoir*, 10, 112.
[29] Talfourd included the letter in *Letters of Lamb*, II, 112-35.
[30] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 119.

Talfourd (and Lamb) to write for it. During 1819 and early 1820 Talfourd contributed a number of pieces of dramatic and literary criticism, as well as at least one sonnet, to this publication. The most significant article was his review of *The Works of Charles Lamb*, recently published by Ollier. This appeared in *The Champion* in two parts in 1818.[31] It was the most extensive treatment of Lamb which Talfourd would produce until the *Letters of Lamb*, and one which he was to rework slightly and re-publish in *New Monthly Magazine* in August 1820.[32] As such it deserves some attention.

Talfourd's characterization of Lamb as a writer and thinker focused on three interrelated points. In the first place he saw Lamb as an original: highly distinctive, notwithstanding the apparent ordinariness of his subject matter, which for the most part were encountered on 'the beaten paths of existence', and his avoidance of 'untried or startling themes'.[33] Secondly, that Lamb celebrates common humanity, and in particular those facets of behaviour and attitude which bind people together.

> Every thing which belongs to genuine humanity is grasped by him with cordial love. He seems to 'live along' the golden fibres of affection by which the brotherhood of man is mysteriously bound together, and to rejoice in the little delicacies of feeling and dear immunities of heart that cluster about them. … His wit … is full of the warmth of humanity; ever scattering its soft and delicate gleams on some lurking tenderness of the soul, some train of old and genial recollection, or some little knot of pure and delightful sympathies.[34]

Thirdly, Talfourd commends Lamb for the genuineness of all his writing, critical and fictional. There is real feeling and real thought, and 'no exotic metaphors – no rhetorical flourishes – no mere pomp of language'.[35]
This view of Lamb had much in common with Talfourd's writing on Wordsworth. For Talfourd, though operating at different levels – Wordsworth philosophical, Lamb more practical – and in different settings – Wordsworth in remote Lake scenery, Lamb metropolitan – each

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[31] *The Champion*, (16 May 1819), 313; (23 May 1819), 328-30.
[32] *New Monthly Magazine*, 14: 79 (August 1820), 129-33.
[33] *New Monthly Magazine*, (August 1820), 129.
[34] *New Monthly Magazine*, (August 1820), 129.
[35] *New Monthly Magazine*, (August 1820), 132.

was a writer of great moral power, because each reminded his reader that we all have 'one human heart', and allowed us to appreciate what we have in common rather than what separates us.

Talfourd's review drew attention[36] to two essays which had appeared in *The Reflector*, namely 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare' and 'On the Character and Genius of Hogarth', which, as Procter was to say had been 'almost unnoticed (undiscovered, except by literary friends)' until the publication of the *Works*. Talfourd's review helped the process by which they came to be regarded as being 'as fine as anything of a similar nature in English criticism'.[37] Talfourd's article as a whole was regarded by Robinson as 'an eloquent eulogy, but too full of indiscriminating praise, or, rather, all kinds of praise are heaped in equal degree on every part of the work'.[38] Lamb, however, was pleased with it. He mentioned the 'most kind review' which Talfourd had written in a letter to Wordsworth of 7 June 1819, adding that Talfourd was Wordsworth's 'most zealous admirer, in solitude and in crowds'.[39]

During the course of the next couple of years Talfourd wrote very extensively for periodicals, as he sought to add to his income as a Special Pleader with a view to allowing him to marry. Lamb, as well as Wordsworth, was the subject of repeated and favourable references. In an article 'On the Female Literature of the Present Age' which appeared in *New Monthly Magazine* for March 1820, there was praise for the author of *Mrs Leicester's School*, and Mary Lamb was characterized as 'sister in every way' to Charles Lamb, who was said to have 'revived the antique beauty of a nobler age'.[40] Lamb was also the subject of admiring reference in two articles which Talfourd submitted to the *Retrospective Review* in 1820.[41] As already mentioned, the review which had appeared first in *The Champion* re-appeared, substantially the same, in *New Monthly Magazine* in August 1820. Lamb in his turn sought to help Talfourd. On 18 September 1820 he wrote to the editor of the *London Magazine*, John Scott:

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[36] *New Monthly Magazine*, (August 1820), 132.
[37] Procter, *Lamb: A Memoir*, 106.
[38] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 231.
[39] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, II, 251.
[40] *New Monthly Magazine*, 13:74 (March 1820), 271-75.
[41] 'Rymer on Tragedy' in *Retrospective Review*, I:1, 1-16, 15; 'Wallace's Prospects of Mankind' in *Retrospective Review*, II:1, 185-206, 199.

> My friend, T.N. Talfourd, of the Inner Temple, writes much and well … He is ambitious of doing something for the Lond[on] Mag[azine]. Is your Critic Department full? I suspect overfull. But if not will you let me tell him so? Do not suspect me of wanting to thrust a writer upon you, particularly as I suspect him to have written an over puffing acc[oun]t of your h[um]ble Serv[ant] in the *New Monthly*.[42]

Scott had proved receptive to this charming approach, and by 9 December 1820 was writing to Talfourd that he would be 'most happy to secure you as a Contributor'. The rate would be the generous one of 15 guineas a sheet.[43] There was flexibility as to what Talfourd might contribute: he had offered to write a piece on Godwin, and there was a plan that he should write a monthly 'political summary', but neither came to anything. Later in December 1820 Talfourd apparently told Robinson that he would be succeeding Hazlitt as dramatic critic of the *London Magazine*.[44] Talfourd did indeed contribute a few articles to the magazine, but this was cut short by Scott's death after his duel in February 1821, an event which Lamb felt deeply. After it, there was some possibility that Talfourd might apply to succeed Scott as editor, but Lamb, with Robinson, discouraged this on the basis that it would be incompatible with his profession.[45] This is consistent with Lamb's own perseverance in a desk job rather than seeking to live wholly by his pen, and with his advice to Bernard Barton in his letter of January 1823: 'If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them rather than turn slave to the booksellers.'[46]

Intimacy

During this period, there grew up a real intimacy and confidence between Lamb and Talfourd. Talfourd had introduced his fiancée, Rachael Rutt, to Lamb's works.[47] By 1820 the Lambs had been introduced to Rachael's

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[42] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, II, 283-84.
[43] Robert S. Newdick, 'Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd DCL', typescript in Reading Central Library, 51-52, transcribing a letter seen in the collection of Major S. Butterworth.
[44] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 260.
[45] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 262.
[46] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, II, 363.
[47] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 9 (16 July 1818).

family.[48] We know that shortly after Talfourd and Rachael were married in 1822, the newly-weds entertained the Lambs to dinner, with Rachael's sister and her husband, as well as with Robinson and Macready.[49] When in September 1823 Charles Lamb was considering making his will he intended Talfourd, by now was a barrister, to be an executor along with Thomas Allsop and Bryan Procter.[50] Talfourd introduced the Lambs to his literary friend from Reading, Mary Russell Mitford, and took her to their house in Islington during the period in which they lived there.[51] After the Lambs had moved to Enfield, there would be occasions on which Talfourd would be invited to come out there, and the Lambs would on occasion be entertained by the Talfourds, with Mary sleeping at the Talfourds' house and Charles having a bed in Robinson's chambers.[52]

The extent of the mutual regard is demonstrated by the Talfourds' invitation to Charles Lamb to become a godfather of the boy to whom Rachael gave birth on 2 February 1830, and their naming their son after him. This produced the celebrated and charming letter from Lamb to Talfourd rejoicing in the prospect of his name living on in the child:

> I have now a motive to be good. I shall not *omnis moriar*; my name borne down the black gulf to oblivion. I shall survive in eleven letters, five more than Caesar. Possibly I shall come to be knighted, or more! Sir C. L. Talfourd, Bart.![53]

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[48] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo. 13 (16 June 1820).
[49] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 287.
[50] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, II, 397-98.
[51] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 315-16.
[52] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 165, 291; D. B. Green, 'Three New Letters of Charles Lamb', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 27:1 (November 1963), 86.
[53] First published in T.N. Talfourd, *Tragedies* (London: Moxon, 1844), 254-55; reprinted in Talfourd, *Final Memorials*, II, 51-52; and *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 184-85. This letter has been regularly (and variously) misdated, including by Talfourd himself. It must date from the first half of 1830. There appears to be no doubt that the Talfourds' children were born on the following dates: Francis on 15 May 1827 (Reading Central Library, qR/TU/TAL, fos 32 (15 May 1827), 33 (13 June 1827), *Morning Chronicle*, 19 May 1827; Mary on 8 November 1828 (*Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 12 November 1828, 3, *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 15 November 1828, 4); Charles Lamb on 2 February 1830 (John Ryland Library, GB 133 ENG MS 667, fo 47 (2 February 1830), *Morning Chronicle*, 4 February 1830; William Wordsworth on 29 May 1831 (*Staffordshire Advertiser*, 4 June 1831, Green, 'Three New Letters', 86; Katherine on 24 February 1833 (*Letters*, ed. Lucas, II., 358;

Talfourd, Mary Lamb and Madness

What there is little record of, from these years, is discussion of the matricide, of Mary's illness or of the arrangements which were made to deal with its recurrence. A close member of the circle such as Talfourd was well aware of the facts. To the extent that the Lambs themselves shrank from discussing the details, he was told them by Charles Lloyd.[54] And in Talfourd's case there was a particular reason why he should have taken an interest in Mary's condition, and why Lamb should discuss it with him. This is that, since 1813, Talfourd's parents had owned and run a home for insane females in Fulham, called Normand House.[55] Exactly what had caused Talfourd's father to give up his occupations in Reading as linen draper and brewer and take up the running of a madhouse is not clear. What is clear is that he and his wife, Anne, made a success of it. In the 'Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider of Provision being made for the better regulation of Houses for the reception of insane persons' of 1815, this institution was very highly spoken of. The inspector stated:

> I think it difficult to speak too highly of Norman (sic) House, generally; there was no man in the house, except the Husband of Mrs Talfourd who kept it, and there was the greatest kindness towards the patients.[56]

It was still well run at the time of the reports of the Metropolitan Lunacy Commissioners for 1829 – 1831, which survive. In July 1829 it was described as 'in excellent order', in November 1830 as being 'in a very creditable state', and in March 1831 as being 'in very good order'.[57]
Mary Lamb was to be an inmate of Normand House at least twice, in 1829 and 1830. She was admitted on 20 May 1829, and discharged, officially 'cured', on 12 August 1829. She was admitted again on 6 July 1830 and discharged, 'well', on 13 October 1830.[58] We can only speculate as to her precise experiences while there, but she certainly retained a favourable

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Harvard, MS Eng 1339, II. 226); and Thomas Noon on 19 October 1835 (*The Examiner*, 1447 (25 October 1835), 685.
[54] *Final Memorials*, I, 84.
[55] Hammersmith and Fulham Archives, DD/154/1-2.
[56] *Reading Mercury*, (16 August 1815).
[57] PRO, Metropolitan Lunacy Commission papers, HO44/51, 1829-30, 1830-31.
[58] PRO, Metropolitan Lunacy Commission papers, HO44/51, 1829-30, 1830-31.

opinion of Talfourd's father, Edward Talfourd. In 1835 she told Robinson that Edward Talfourd, who had died in 1833, had been 'a much cleverer man than his son … he saw everything and directed everything and was as quiet in the house as if he was not there'.[59]

We can see from the events of October 1830 the linkage between Talfourd's position as a friend, as a lawyer, and as one who was intimately aware of Mary's condition, treatment and how she needed to be provided for. Until 13th of that month, Mary was in Normand House, but seriously unwell. Lamb wrote that he regarded 'her state of mind [as] deplorable beyond any example'.[60] Yet he was of the view, which he must have discussed with Talfourd and his parents, that she had no hope of recovery 'in London', in which he included Normand House.[61] He had therefore decided that she should be moved back to Enfield. At much the same time, and doubtless reminded of his own mortality by Hazlitt's recent death, Lamb came to make his will. There were to be two executors: Charles Ryle of the East India House, and Talfourd. The will was in draft on 8 October, and Lamb wanted to talk to Talfourd about it, inviting him to call at Southampton Buildings on his way home.[62] It was executed on 9 October. It provided that all Lamb's property was to pass to Talfourd and Ryle on trust for Mary, and upon her death either to any purposes which, if of sound mind, she might have appointed, or failing that to Emma Isola and her children.[63] It is not difficult to see how frank and full must have been the discussions between Lamb and Talfourd on these matters.

Talfourd clearly observed Mary's episodes of insanity with care. In *Final Memorials* he was to write this:

> Lamb, in his letter to a female friend, announcing his determination to be entirely with her, speaks of her pouring out memories of all the events and persons of her younger days; - but he does not mention, what I am able from repeated experiences to add, that her ramblings often sparkled with brilliant descriptions and shattered beauty.

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[59] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 455.
[60] *Letters,* ed. Lucas, III, 293.
[61] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 293.
[62] Robert S. Newdick, *The First Life and Letters of Charles Lamb* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1935), 26-27; *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 290-91.
[63] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 228-29.

> She would fancy herself in the days of Queen Anne or George the First; and describe the brocaded dames and courtly manners, as though she had been bred among them, in the best style of the old comedy. It was all broken and disjointed, so that the hearer could remember little of her discourse; but the fragments were like the jewelled speeches of Congreve, only shaken from their setting. There was sometimes even a vein of crazy logic running through them, associating things essentially most dissimilar, but connecting them by a verbal association in strange order. As a mere physical instance of deranged intellect, her condition was, I believe, extraordinary; it was as if the finest elements of mind had been shaken into fantastic combinations like those of a kaleidoscope …[64]

This is a remarkable depiction of a psychotic mental illness, including an apparent description of clang-association. It seems likely that the care and accuracy of this depiction owed much to the discussions which he had had with his parents of her case and probably other cases.

The significance of the fact that Talfourd was related to the owners of Normand House was correctly highlighted by Jennifer Harris in her article in *Charles Lamb Bulletin* in October 2010. It is impossible, however, to follow that article in its characterization of Talfourd, his relationship with his parents, or his attitude to their occupation. The thesis articulated is that Talfourd, having high social aspirations, was ashamed of the fact that his parents ran a home for insane women; that he 'downplayed the role and even existence of his less illustrious family members in his writing and in all probability in his social interactions as well'; that he suppressed his parents' profession for most of his adult life; was at pains to minimize his father's financial success; and that Talfourd may have withheld or even destroyed 'materials relating to Lamb that illuminated his own life in a way he did not wish it illuminated' particularly if they 'might compromise his own status'.[65]

There is very little support for this uncharitable depiction of Talfourd. In particular there is no sound basis for the suggestion that he was ashamed

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[64] Talfourd, *Final Memorials*, II, 228-29.

[65] Jennifer Harris, 'Managing Madness: Charles and Mary Lamb, Thomas Noon Talfourd, and Normand House', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 152 (2010), 94-104 (96-98, 100, 104).

of his parents' occupation or 'downplayed' the existence of less illustrious members of his family in his social interactions. It is the case that there had been a tension between him and his parents which commenced in his adolescence, but as already stated this was owing to his abandonment of the Congregationalism in which he had been brought up and his conversion to Unitarianism, which they regarded with intense hostility as did many orthodox Christians. When, in the late 1820s, Talfourd ultimately abandoned Unitarianism, he gave as one of his reasons for doing so, the 'repugnance and horror' which his parents had to his adherence to it.[66] In addition, his parents had objected to the theatre and, when he was a child, had shielded him from any exposure to plays.[67] Given that, from the time he was at Reading School and owing to the influence of Dr Valpy, Talfourd was obsessed by the drama, this was another reason why their views to some extent diverged.

Though there were these points of difference between him and his parents, there is no good evidence for saying that he disowned, or shunned his family. In his surviving letters and diaries, which are only partially preserved for reasons quite unconnected with Lamb or his sister and which preferentially survive from his later years, we find: that he is sympathetic about his sister Jane and her husband after the difficult birth of a son[68]; that he has been preoccupied by his sister Elizabeth's wedding[69]; that he is solicitous about his sister Anne[70]; that he is visited by his father[71]; that he was named and acted as his father's executor[72]; that Rachael stayed at Fulham while he was on Circuit on a number of occasions[73]; that in 1828 he was complaining that he had not been able, because of Rachael's confinement, to visit Fulham or to see his mother[74];

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[66] John Ryland Library, Eng. MSS. 667, fo 42 (letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 4 December 1829).
[67] T.N. Talfourd, 'Preface to the Fourth Published Edition' of *Ion* (London: Moxon, 1837), x.
[68] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 19 (letter to Rachael, 8 January 1822).
[69] Reading Central Library, qR/TU/TAL, fo. 23 (letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 15 May 1822).
[70] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 26 (letter to Rachael, 19 March 1823).
[71] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 4 (letter to Rachael, n.d.).
[72] PRO, Prob 11/1816 (will of 2 August 1828).
[73] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fos 32 (letter to Rachael, 23 March 1826), 41 (letter to Rachael, 5 August 1829).
[74] Reading Central Library, qR/TU/TAL, fo 49 (letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 13 September (?) 1828).

that in 1839 the Talfourd children stayed at Fulham in the holidays[75]; that in 1848 the Talfourds spent several days at Fulham and had a really pleasant Christmas day there[76]; that he records a dinner with his mother in Fulham in 1849[77]; that he corresponded affectionately with his mother on his birthday in 1850[78]; that he invited his mother and sister Anne and brother Field to a presentation by the people of Reading in June 1850[79]; that he and his family were painted by his artist brother Field , and at least one of the resulting portraits was exhibited[80]; and that he spent considerable time helping his mother perfect her will.[81] The overall picture of his relations with his family appears an unexceptionable one. It is also clearly not correct that he hid his parents' occupation. His friends were well aware of it. Robinson refers to it[82]; Mrs Collier mentions it[83]; clearly the Lambs knew about it. It would have been absurd to try to keep it a secret. When Normand House was burgled in 1837 the newspapers reported that it was the residence of Mrs Talfourd, 'the mother of the Learned Sergeant Talfourd'.[84] What is surely of more significance is that it was clearly Talfourd who recommended that Mary Lamb should go to Normand House when she was ill. In so doing he was not seeking to keep separate his parents' occupation from the literary circles in which he moved. He was instead seeking to make use of his connexion to help his close, and enormously valued, friends. He must have done so because he had a high regard not only for them but also for the care and attention that his parents could provide.

Lamb's Last Years

In the years between Mary's discharge from Normand House at the end of 1830 to Charles Lamb's death at the end of 1834, they did not lose contact with Talfourd and his family, though meetings became difficult. In June 1831 Charles wrote congratulating Rachael on the birth of her

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[75] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 54 (letter to Mary Talfourd, 4 August 1839).
[76] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/4, fos 222, 270.
[77] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/5, fo 249.
[78] J.J. Cooper, *Some Worthies of Reading* (London: Swarthmore, 1923), 19.
[79] Field Talfourd, *Notebooks* (transcribed by J.S. Davey) (1993), in Reading Central Library, 8 (13 March 1850).
[80] Field Talfourd, *Notebooks*, 8-9.
[81] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/6, fos 10, 13-14.
[82] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 455.
[83] Newdick, 'Talfourd', 80a.
[84] *Evening Chronicle*, 18 January 1837, 4.

latest son (who was to be christened William Wordsworth Talfourd), and asking that 'as soon as Mrs Talfourd can spare you', Talfourd should come to Enfield because 'there are one or two in the world, whom I still desire to see, and of *that* one or two you are not the least'.[85] In May 1832, Robinson records that he had 'unwisely consented to dine' at Talfourd's house with Lamb. 'L was very soon as he always is – tipsy – and thoroughly uncomfortable – so that the visit was as little agreeable as possible'. On that visit Lamb slept at Talfourd's 'with his clothes on' for two nights in a row, as Robinson recorded, and yet 'in the midst of this half crazy irregularity, he was so full of sensibility that speaking of his sister he had tears in his eyes'.[86]

The private irregularity did not prevent Talfourd from continuing to speak well of Lamb in public. In late 1832 Talfourd wrote a memorial piece about William Hazlitt, published in *The Examiner* in three parts. It is full of well-judged praise of Hazlitt. But even here, Hazlitt's criticism on Shakespeare is said not even to approach the insightfulness of Lamb's. It was also emphasized that it had only been at 'that chosen home of genius and kindness', the Lambs' apartments, that Hazlitt had been first able to express himself properly.[87]

At the beginning of February 1833 Lamb wrote the charming and well-known letter commemorating Talfourd's appointment as a Serjeant-at-Law, and referring to the early days of their acquaintance when Talfourd had been Joseph Chitty's pupil in the Temple.

> Now cannot I call him *Serjeant*; what is there in a coif? Those canvas-sleeves protective from ink, when he was a law-chit – a *Chitty*ling (let the leathern apron be apocryphal) do more 'specially plead to the Jury Court of old memory. The costume (will he agnize it?) was as of a desk-fellow or Socius Plutei. Methought I spied a brother!
> That familiarity is extinct for ever. Curse me if I can call him Mr Serjeant – except, mark me, in *company*. Honour where honour is due; but should he ever visit us, (do you think he ever will, Mary?) what a distinction should I keep up between him and our less fortunate friend, H[enry] C[rabb]

[85] Green, 'Three New Letters', 86.
[86] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 407.
[87] *The Examiner*, 1289 (14 October 1832), 661; 1292 (4 November 1832), 708.

> R[obinson]! Decent respect shall always be the Crabb's – but, somehow, short of reverence.[88]

The receipt of such a letter must have gone some way to mitigating the disappointment which Talfourd must have been feeling – he had applied unsuccessfully to be a King's Counsel at the end of the previous year, and the coif was as it were a consolation prize for the denial of a silk gown.
Soon Lamb was applying to Talfourd for 'some legal crums that drop from the Serjeants' Table', when he sought Talfourd's advice about the threat of an injunction made by John Taylor, who had taken over the publishing of the *London Magazine* in 1821. Taylor was contending that the imminent publication by Moxon of *The Last Essays of Elia* would infringe a copyright which he owned, because, though he had made no bargain with Lamb himself, he contended that he had purchased the rights of Baldwin, Craddock & Joy, his predecessors as publishers of the *London*. Lamb was clearly worried that Taylor (that 'son of a bitch in a manger') might have a case. In his letter to Talfourd of 6 March 1833, which he asked Moxon to ensure should be despatched to Talfourd on Circuit, he pointed out that there were only 52 fresh articles in the volume ('alas!').[89] Regrettably Talfourd's response is not known, but it does not seem to have removed Lamb's anxiety. On 1 April Lamb wrote to Bryan Procter asking him to settle with Taylor, using what was doubtless in part a pretext namely that Mary was concerned that Moxon should not be involved in any litigation. Lamb wrote that he had £30 which 'is literally rotting in my desk for want of use'.[90] It appears that there was no settlement at this stage, however, as a law suit seems to have been begun and was proceeding in September 1833, though it did not apparently result in an injunction or in any reported judgment.[91]

In May 1833 Charles Lamb wrote to Talfourd to convey the news of his and Mary's move to Edmonton. As he said in the letter, the move was to the house of the Waldens, who had nursed Mary during her last bout of insanity.[92] Talfourd would doubtless have wanted to know this, not just from solicitude for his friends, but probably also because he will have known of the Waldens from his parents. In the same letter Lamb asked

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[88] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 353-54.
[89] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 358-59.
[90] Bryan Waller Procter, *An Autobiographical Fragment and Biographical Notes* (London, 1877), 281-82; *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 363.
[91] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 384.
[92] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 368.

Talfourd whether, in about a fortnight, he could 'come to sup with you, and take a bed – not dine certainly.' Similarly, in January 1834, Lamb wrote to Talfourd saying that Barron Field was in London, and asked whether he might meet him at Talfourd's house 'at SUPPER (pray, pray, not at dinner)'.[93] Talfourd did indeed hold a supper for him with Price, Forster, the Fields, Edward Moxon and Macready on 9 January 1834.[94] A last glimpse of their social interactions comes from the *Letters of Lamb*, where Talfourd records that shortly before Lamb's last illness, 'he yielded to my urgent importunity, and met a small party of his friends at dinner in my house'. The guests included Field, Procter and John Forster.

> we had provided for him some of the few articles of food which now seemed to hit his fancy, and among them the hare, which had supplanted pig in his just esteem, with the hope of exciting his very delicate appetite. We were not disappointed; he ate with a relish not usual with him of late years, and passed the evening in his happiest mood.[95]

Talfourd's role at the time of Lamb's death is well-known from his letters to Robinson and entries in Robinson's diary.[96] The death came at a very important turning point in Talfourd's life and one at which he had another urgent concern, though this does not appear to have prevented his playing a full role in mourning Lamb and making suitable arrangements. This other preoccupation is hinted at in the postscript to the letter which he wrote to Wordsworth on 29 December 1834 informing him of Lamb's death. In it Talfourd encouraged the poet to apply to the government 'to effect the arrangements you desire as to your office', because 'I think the continuance of the ministry very uncertain'.[97] This reminds us that William IV had dismissed Melbourne and the Whigs in November 1834 and that in December Peel had formed a government but had called a general election. Talfourd who, unlike Wordsworth, was a Whig / liberal supporter, was at just this moment poised to stand for Parliament. On 3rd January 1835, having attended Lamb's funeral in the morning, he received a delegation from Reading asking him to stand for

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[93] *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 397.
[94] *The Diaries of William Charles Macready*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols (London: Chapman & Hall, 1912), I, 92.
[95] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 309-10.
[96] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Correspondence, 79 (letter from Talfourd, 31 December 1834).
[97] Dove Cottage, Wordsworth Collection, WLMS A/Talfourd/3.

the Borough, and he travelled down overnight.[98] In the ensuing election, concluded on 8 January 1835, he was returned head of the poll, with a large majority.

The *Letters of Lamb*

It was resolved by Lamb's friends, and in particular the Moxons, soon after the death, that there should be a life and letters. Lamb had been supplying Edward Moxon with materials for a biography for some time. Two obvious issues arose, however. Could this be done while Mary was still alive? And, who should be the author or editor? Barron Field writing to Robinson in February 1835 said:

> Their [Charles and Mary's] lives should be written together; and I understand Moxon means to wait. I shall send him my letters …. Southey would make the best editor. I should make the next best. But I think Moxon will do very well. … Talfourd has too much to do, and would write too fine. But heaven preserve us from a monster of the name of Forster![99]

By October 1835, however, it had been resolved that it should be Talfourd.[100] This decision must have been principally Edward Moxon's. It was one made notwithstanding the other calls on Talfourd's time, which included his very successful practice at the Bar and his representation of Reading in Parliament, not to mention the time he spent on his own dramatic composition, *Ion*, which he circulated among a wide circle of friends during 1835. Why was Talfourd chosen? His was a 'name', although of course not one as well-known as Southey's, or indeed as famous as his own was to become during the next eighteen months which saw the triumphant success of *Ion* in print and on the stage. It seems likely that the choice of Talfourd was connected with Moxon's decision to proceed to an early publication of a life of Lamb, even while Mary lived. Though in October 1835 Field still envisaged that the publication would have to await Mary's death, it appears that the understanding between Talfourd and Moxon was always that there

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[98] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 46 (pages from notebook).
[99] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Correspondence, 86 (16 February 1835).
[100] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Correspondence, 131 (letter from Field, 17 October 1835).

should be an early publication.[101] Talfourd was probably chosen because, of Lamb's long-standing friends, he was one who had a complete knowledge of Mary's past and her present position, and, as an eminently reliable and practical man, he could be trusted to produce a fulsome but tactful book. From the outset he was clear that nothing would be published which would cause Mary any pain.[102] Moxon also probably thought that the difficulty of Talfourd's having too much else to do could be addressed by his doing most of the leg work of collecting letters himself. He had been compiling materials for some time. He seems to have mentioned his interest in Lamb's letters to Southey when he wrote to the Poet Laureate to inform him of Lamb's death.[103] He certainly asked Wordsworth about his letters from Lamb when he wrote to Wordsworth shortly after the funeral. At this stage Wordsworth gave a guarded reply.[104] In November 1835, however, Wordsworth sent to Moxon 'such a selection of Lamb's letters, to myself and this family, as appear to us not unfit for immediate publication', though there are 'some parts which had better be kept back'.[105] Wordsworth was nevertheless still uneasy about any publication, writing to Moxon in December 1835 that Lamb had destroyed the letters he had himself received, which at least indicated that 'he would not have been sorry if his own had met the same fate'.[106]

Moxon had also corresponded with Bernard Barton about his letters from Lamb. By October 1835 Barton had sent Moxon a number of letters, with which the publisher was very pleased. Barton himself was keen that, with appropriate redactions, the letters should be published. He expressed particular preferences in relation to the letter to him of 25 July 1829. He thought it 'too good to be laid by till the interest recently and now excited by the author, shall have run the risque of cooling', and suggested that some parts might be omitted and the sense preserved.[107] Those wishes were doubtless passed on by Moxon to Talfourd, and in the

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[101] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 510.
[102] RJ Dingley and CE Lawson, 'Bernard Barton, Edward Moxon, and the Publication of Lamb's Letters', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 97 (January 1997), 37 (letter from Bernard Barton, 5 October 1835).
[103] Southey's reply of 31 December 1834 mentions that 'Lamb's letters will form a most delightful collection': *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. J.W. Warter, 4 vols. (London: Longman, 1856), IV, 335.
[104] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. and ed. Alan G. Hill, (2nd ed.) 8 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press), VI, 7.
[105] *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, VI, 113-14.
[106] *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, VI, 133-35; also 143-45.
[107] Dingley and Lawson, 'Bernard Barton', 37.

Letters of Lamb the letter appeared omitting the two sections which make direct reference to Mary. Moxon had also contacted Walter Wilson, and received some reminiscences of Lamb.[108]

Talfourd was also assisted by the genuinely helpful Robinson. On 20 December 1835 he dined with Talfourd and Moxon and they looked at Lamb's letters to Manning, 'which are the very best but they require a sedulous sifting'.[109] The three will undoubtedly have discussed whether some further letters might be extracted from Wordsworth, and when Robinson went to Rydal for that Christmas and New Year he did indeed spend a considerable amount of time looking through the Lamb letters which Wordsworth had not sent to Moxon, 'pick[ing] out passages to be copied'.[110] Yet, despite the help he was given, Talfourd's work progressed slowly. The death of Charles Lamb Talfourd at the end of December 1835 delayed him.[111] Though in April 1836 he thought he might be able to have finished most of the work in the summer vacation,[112] it was not to be. Field's warning appeared to be proving true. Quite apart from his profession and the House of Commons, the triumphant success of *Ion* in May 1836, and a visit in the autumn of 1836 to Scotland, distracted him.

Robinson nevertheless wrote in his diary in October 1836 that he no longer regretted the delay as much as he had at first. He now considered that there were 'compensating advantages'.[113] One of these was that Charles Valentine Le Grice, who had been at school with Lamb, responded to a request for information with interesting reminiscences, which were apparently sent by him in April or May 1836,[114] and of which Talfourd made considerable use in Chapter I. Another was that some further letters had been obtained: Robinson had himself found the letter about the coal scoop.[115] Robinson had also attempted to obtain letters

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[108] H.G. Merriam, *Edward Moxon Publisher of Poets* (New York: Columbia UP, 1939), 69.
[109] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 469.
[110] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 471-72, 477
[111] Dove Cottage, WLMS A/Talfourd/8 (misdated).
[112] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Correspondence, 121 (letter to Wordsworth, 4 April 1836); Dove Cottage, WLMS A/Talfourd/6.
[113] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Correspondence, 160 (letter to Wordsworth, 27 October 1836).
[114] Newdick, *First Life and Letters*, 26-27; cf Newdick, 'Talfourd', 152a.
[115] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 488. The letter is that of 27 February 1829, Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 229-31.

from Joseph Cottle. This process continued. Dora Wordsworth found an 'invaluable letter', which was forwarded to Robinson on 1 November 1836.[116] In January 1837 Talfourd was corresponding with George Dyer about the contents of the forthcoming volume,[117] and experiencing some of Dyer's 'delicate feelings' which would lead to a painstaking footnote in the *Letters of Lamb*.[118] Later in the same month, Talfourd breakfasted with Southey at Robinson's to discuss the publication of the letters. Somewhat surprisingly, these two men had not previously met.[119] The meeting was of significance for Talfourd's treatment of Elia's Letter to Southey, as will be seen.

Robinson and Wordsworth were on a tour of the Continent between March and August 1837. While they were abroad, Talfourd completed *The Letters of Charles Lamb with A Sketch of His Life*. The volumes were dedicated to Mary Lamb, as memorials 'of the sorrows and the joys she shared'. In the Preface, which is dated 26 June 1837, Talfourd referred, accurately, to its being through the 'interest and zeal' of Moxon that the letters had been chiefly collected; and he stated that his own role 'can scarcely be regarded too slightly', as he had supplied little other than 'such thread of narrative as might connect [the letters] together, and such explanations as might render their allusions generally understood'. He referred to the fact that portions of some letters were omitted because of 'the recentness of the period of time' from which they dated, and stated, without further explanation, that 'many letters yet remain unpublished, … but which must be reserved for a future time.'[120]

The collection avoided any reference to the matricide or Mary's incidents of insanity. Charles's lifetime of care for his sister was explained simply thus:

> On the death of his parents he felt himself called upon by duty to repay to his sister the solicitude with which she had watched over his infancy; and well indeed he performed it! To her, from the age of twenty-one, he devoted his existence[121]

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[116] *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, VI, 313-14.
[117] Reading Central Library, R/TU/TAL, fo 52 (5 January 1837).
[118] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 283.
[119] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 510.
[120] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I, v-ix.
[121] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I., 24-25.

By and large, Talfourd's own contributions to the text of the volumes were limited in the way he described in the Preface. His comments were largely unobtrusive. He added some generally laudatory criticism of Lamb's writings, some praise for his literary heroes especially Wordsworth, Coleridge and Hazlitt, and some commentary on the quality of the letters particularly calling attention to the 'prodigal and reckless humour' of those to Manning. He included an unusually extended explanation of the origins of Elia's Letter to Southey, which was printed in Chapter XIII. Part of the account gave Southey's own explanation of the phrase in his article 'Progress of Infidelity' in the *Quarterly Review* which had so offended Lamb.[122] Talfourd also prefaced the text of Elia's Letter itself by saying that he included it in the volume 'as I have reason to know that its publication will cause no painful feelings in the mind of Mr Southey'.[123] These passages were clearly the product of the breakfast at Robinson's in January.

Talfourd may be said to have displayed a touch of vanity in setting out in full, albeit without attribution, an article which he had himself written for *The Champion* in 1819 on 'The Character of Mr Munden as an Actor', giving as 'excuse' that Lamb had enclosed a copy of it with his letter to the Editor of *The Athenaeum* on the actor's death.[124] But Talfourd's account of how he had himself become known to and friendly with Lamb is a success. It is not unduly lengthy, and gives a personal reaction to Lamb from which the volumes benefit.[125] The same can be said about the evocation of 'Wednesday evenings' at Lamb's rooms in Inner Temple Lane in Chapter X. It is much shorter, less studied and less intended for effect than the corresponding description which was to appear in the last Chapter of *Final Memorials*. As Talfourd himself noted, it echoes Hazlitt's 'On the Conversation of Authors'.[126] Yet the evocation of a gathering of 'those who had thought most deeply; felt most keenly; and were destined to produce the most lasting influences on the literature and the manners of the age' is effective and memorable.[127]

Most significant of Talfourd's contributions was, however, his attempt to describe the character of Lamb himself. Lamb was praised for 'the most

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[122] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 104-05.
[123] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 111.
[124] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 292-94.
[125] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 1-6.
[126] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 30.
[127] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 26.

exquisite sweetness of disposition', and 'unwearied kindness'.[128] It was said that he had shown 'the most unobtrusive proofs of self-denying love', and had persevered in a 'life of noble self-sacrifice', though the reasons for this were not explained.[129] He was, said Talfourd, 'one of the most remarkable and amiable men who have ever lived';[130] and Talfourd sought to describe the combinations of profundity with whimsicality, and of affection with teasing irony. Talfourd described the effect of Lamb's conversation, but was at pains to say that it could not be recreated by quotation. He himself could not remember any saying of Lamb which had not been collected by others. As Talfourd put it, his 'choicest puns and humorous expressions could not be recollected … [t]hey were born of the evanescent feeling, and died with it'.[131] He did include an extensive footnote setting out examples of Lamb's verbal humour which had been supplied to him by Mary Matilda Betham, the miniaturist. Many of these are embarrassingly lame, and Talfourd clearly felt this, saying that he almost hesitated to repeat them, 'so vapid is their effect when printed compared to that they produced when, stammered out, they gave to the moment its victory.'[132]

Talfourd directly addressed the issue of Lamb's drinking. He does not seem to have known that a version of 'Confessions of a Drunkard' had originally been published in *The Philanthropist* in 1813. Certainly he treats it as if it had been composed for Basil Montagu's collection of temperance tracts *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Fermented Liquors* of 1814, and as a favour to Montagu, citing it as an example of Lamb's selflessness, given that 'no one was less disposed than he to Montague's theory or practice of abstinence'. In dealing with the 'Confessions', Talfourd stated that it was a 'terrible picture of the extreme effects of intemperance, of which [Lamb's] own occasional deviations from the right line of sobriety had given him hints and glimpses'; but that it was far from 'actual truth', as was shown by the sophistication of his subsequent writing. [133] In other words, Talfourd was making the case that Lamb's use of alcohol had not had any lasting effect on his abilities; there had been no question of reduction to the 'imbecility and decay' referred to in the 'Confessions'. But Talfourd made no attempt to deny Lamb's difficulties with alcohol, to

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[128] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I, 23, 282.
[129] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I, 23, 120.
[130] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 314.
[131] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 318-20.
[132] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 320-23.
[133] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 101-02.

which he returned in the final chapter of the *Letters of Lamb*. This was his 'single frailty', to which he was led by a 'physical peculiarity of constitution', by his desire to overcome his shyness and speech impediment, and by a need to forget his 'sorrows' and his dull job. Talfourd stated clearly that Lamb 'had rarely the power to overcome the temptation when presented', but that he had made efforts to avoid that temptation, including by leaving London, and even by denying himself the pleasure of meeting Wordsworth or Southey. Talfourd reflected that his drinking, 'perhaps by requiring for him some portion of that allowance which he extended to all human frailties, endeared him the more to those who so often received, and were delighted to bestow it.'[134]

Talfourd's sympathetic attitude had a number of sources. There was here, in part, a plea in mitigation by a first rate defence barrister, which Talfourd was (in 1836, while *Letters of Lamb* was being prepared he had, for example, appeared as one of Lord Melbourne's counsel in his prosecution by George Norton for *crim. con.*). There was also genuine sympathy and affection for Lamb, and a disposition, like Lamb, to tolerate human weakness. But in addition Talfourd undoubtedly felt particularly strongly the need for tolerance as to the effects of alcohol. For most of his adult life he was highly convivial, and alcohol regularly played a part in his socializing. In November 1816 Robinson complained to his diary about Talfourd's having drunk a bottle of wine and been as a result 'loud, confident, dictatorial and puerilely florid in his style'.[135] In April 1818 Robinson described Talfourd as 'injudiciously loquatious'.[136] Macready refers to Talfourd as 'very tipsy' in May 1839, and as 'so tipsy that he quite impeded conversation' in September 1840.[137] Charles Sumner recounts Talfourd as saying of Basil Montagu, doubtless affectionately but revealingly: 'He is a humbug; he drinks no wine'.[138] Talfourd's *Vacation Rambles* describe not only his ideological aversion to teetotalism ('as unchristian as it is unkindly'), especially in his treatment of Veronese's *The Marriage of Cana* in The Louvre, but also the regular

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[134] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, II, 320-26.
[135] Dr Williams's Library, Henry Crabb Robinson Journal, 13 November 1816.
[136] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, I, 221.
[137] *Macready Diaries*, II, 1 (7 May 1839), 79 (11 September 1840).
[138] E.L. Pierce, *Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner*, 4 vols. (Boston, Roberts Bros., 1877), II, 45.

consumption of wines of all descriptions from breakfast to supper.[139] Most revealing are Talfourd's own journals, which are replete with self-reproaches as to the amount he has drunk, descriptions of its after-effects, and resolutions for partial or total abstinence.[140] As a result, Talfourd probably found it particularly easy to forgive Lamb's 'frailty'. Perhaps, indeed, Moxon's awareness that this would be the case contributed to the choice of Talfourd as biographer.

The Reception of the *Letters of Lamb*

The *Letters of Lamb* was generally well-received by Lamb's friends. Robinson, who read it immediately upon his return from the Continent, considered that Talfourd had shown 'great judgment' in what he had revealed and not revealed.[141] Even Wordsworth was apparently satisfied. Robinson said that the poet considered it 'the only book of the kind he knows, executed with delicacy and judgment'.[142] Reviews in the periodicals were also generally favourable. Talfourd's own additions, and in particular his account of his first meeting with Lamb, were praised. The *Edinburgh Review* considered that the volumes had been 'compiled with as much judgment as affection'.[143] *The Gentleman's Magazine* said how lucky Lamb had been in his biographer.[144] *Tait's Edinburgh Review* noticed the 'modesty of the editor', and suggested that this had been carried too far in that Talfourd through, as it surmised, 'overstrained delicacy' had not included more of his own correspondence and interactions with Lamb.[145] Edward Bulwer in the *London and Westminster Review* was unusual in going beyond praising Talfourd for the 'generosity

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[139] T.N. Talfourd, *Vacation Rambles and Thoughts: comprising the recollections of three continental tours, in the vacations of 1841, 1842 and 1843*, 2 vols (London: Moxon, 1845), I, 41 and, for example, 48-49.

[140] E.g. Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/2, fo 3 (4 and 5 January 1840); D/EX 1410/2/1/4, fos 158-59 (July 1848); D/EX 1410/2/1/5, fos 95-98 (April 1849).

[141] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 533-34.

[142] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, III, 853 (Robinson to William Pattisson, 27 August 1837).

[143] *Edinburgh Review*, 66:133 (October 1837), 1.

[144] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (May 1838), 451.

[145] *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 4:45 (September 1837), 575.

of his motives' by suggesting that the work would redound more to his good reputation than to Lamb's.[146]

One aspect of Talfourd's additions to the volumes was met, at least in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, with dissent. This was Talfourd's palliation of the severity of the criticism which had appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1803 of Lamb's *John Woodvil*.[147] Talfourd, while referring to what had been said as having been written by 'self-constituted judges', with 'the gay recklessness of power, at once usurped and irresponsible', had nevertheless emphasised that 'there was certainly no malice or desire to give pain in all this; it was merely the result of the thoughtless adoption, by lads of gayety and talents, of the old critical canons of the monthly reviews'. Talfourd had said that 'these critics' had grown wiser as they had grown older.[148] As *Tait's* said, this excuse was rather difficult to accept as, by the time the review had been written, 'the chief of those "gay, reckless lads," Mr Jeffrey was … veering on the wrong side of thirty'.[149] Talfourd's attitude was the more surprising given that some of his earliest and most heart-felt writing had been directed at repudiating and reproving the *Edinburgh Review*'s treatment of Wordsworth, and of young poets. One of his very first articles, published in 1813, had been called 'Defence of Young Writers of Poetry against the Denunciations of the *Edinburgh Review*'.[150] What had caused Talfourd's emollient tone? In part, as suggested in the relevant passage in the *Letters of Lamb*, he saw the *Edinburgh Review* as having mellowed towards Wordsworth over the years which, for Talfourd, was the touchstone of redemption. In part, however, it is to be explained by the fact that Talfourd had fallen under the spell of Francis Jeffrey, whom he had visited in 1836, and of whom he was to become a great admirer. After Jeffrey's death, Talfourd was to write that visits to Edinburgh could never be the same, now that 'the spirit which gave its finest impulse to the enjoyments of its society' had gone for ever.[151] In the *Letters of Lamb* Talfourd was trying to balance his old friendship for Lamb with this one of more recent date.

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[146] *London and Westminster Review*, 5:2 (July 1837), 243.
[147] *Edinburgh Review*, 1:3 (April 1803), 90-96.
[148] Talfourd, *Letters of Lamb*, I, 205-08.
[149] *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, (September 1837), 580.
[150] In *New Review or Monthly Analysis of General Literature*, 3 (1814), 345-50.
[151] 'A Glimpse of the Cairngorn Mountains', *Household Words* 4, 80 (4 October 1851), 41.

Between the *Letters of Lamb* and *Final Memorials*

After the publication of the *Letters of Lamb* Talfourd did not forget about the Lambs. He wanted to tell the full story in print. In the meantime, he clearly spoke with considerable freedom about Charles and Mary Lamb on social occasions. The young American visitor, Charles Sumner, records that at a dinner in January 1839:

> Talfourd told some good stories of Charles Lamb. It seems that Lamb was a confirmed drunkard, who got drunk in the morning, and on beer. Talfourd and he once started for a morning walk. The first pot-house they came to was a new one, and Lamb would stop in order to make acquaintance with its landlord; the next was an old one, and here he stopped to greet his old friend Boniface: and so he had an excuse for stopping at all they passed, until finally the author of "Elia" was soundly drunk. But his heroic devotion to his sister is above all praise. All about that, and much else concerning Charles Lamb, can only be revealed after her death. She was insane, and killed her mother. Lamb would not abandon her to the mad-house, but made himself her keeper, and lived with her, and retired from the world.[152]

That Talfourd was telling strangers about these matters might seem somewhat disrespectful of Mary, but both the Talfourds remained solicitous towards her. They entertained her, including at dinner, and by Rachael taking her for drives in her carriage, or driving Robinson to see her.[153] Moreover, Talfourd continued to ponder Lamb's best qualities. This is nowhere better exemplified than by the verses which he wrote about the death of Charles Lamb's namesake, the boy mentioned at the outset of this article. After the child's death in 1835, Talfourd felt too strongly about it and did not at the time have the heart to write verses about it; and for the same reason had not included in the *Letters of Lamb* the letter which Lamb had written on being made aware that he would have a godson named after him. By 1844, however, Talfourd had composed some moving lines 'To the Memory of a Child Named after Charles Lamb', and appended these, with Lamb's letter, to an edition of

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[152] Pierce, *Sumner*, II, 38.
[153] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 611 (27 January 1842), 635 (31 October 1843); *Letters*, ed. Lucas, III, 424.

his *Tragedies* published in that year.[154] Referring to his son's face at death, Talfourd wrote:

> Though the soft spirit of those eyes
> Might ne'er with Lamb's compete-
> Ne'er sparkle with a wit as wise,
> Or melt in tears, as sweet,
>
> That calm and unforgotten look
> A kindred love reveals,
> With his who never friend forsook,
> Or hurt a thing that feels.
>
> In thought profound, in wildest glee,
> In sorrow's lengthening range,
> His guileless soul of infancy
> Endur'd no spot or change.

The poem generally avoids mawkishness and embodies the extent of Talfourd's affection and admiration for Lamb. It also provides an answer to the criticism of his 'overstrained delicacy' in *Tait's Edinburgh Review* that he had revealed too little of his personal interactions with Lamb. In fact, as we can see, there were deep seams of emotional involvement between Talfourd and Lamb's memory which had made discussion of their relationship difficult.

Final Memorials

When Mary's death came in May 1847, Talfourd was at the funeral, as were Moxon and Robinson. At the lunch afterwards there was a discussion, and, as Robinson put it, 'it is understood' that Talfourd would 'now relate the whole history of the death of her mother'.[155] Shortly after Mary's death, Talfourd was having to advise Moxon as to an issue which had arisen as to Charles Lamb's will. What this was has not been identified, but it is apparent from Talfourd's journals that it was a matter

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[154] Talfourd, *Tragedies* (1844 edition), 254-58.
[155] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 666.

which caused him some anxiety.[156] He was also troubled by the prospect of producing a new volume of Lamb's letters, fearing in particular criticism from *The Times* and many others, on the basis that he would be pandering to a 'vulgar appetite for personality', which he joined in detesting.[157]

Notwithstanding these misgivings, he set to work on looking through the material which he had not published in the *Letters of Lamb*. In October 1847 he was discussing with Robinson some of the letters which dealt directly with the matricide and that revealed that Charles himself had been in an asylum. These were the letters to Coleridge which were to appear in Chapters I and II of *Final Memorials*. Robinson expressed the clear view that they should be published, 'both for his and her sakes'.[158] Robinson also made himself useful by requesting information about the Plumers,[159] and obtaining, while on the sad visit he paid at Christmas 1847 to Rydal Mount where the Wordsworths were mourning for the loss of their daughter, some more of Lamb's letters to the poet.[160] Talfourd was working on the new volumes in January 1848, and was depressed about the amount still to do;[161] but Robinson was reassured in February 1848 and wrote that he believed that Talfourd would complete the work 'with the love with which he began it.'[162]

In May 1848 there appeared, in the *British Quarterly Review*, a lengthy review of the volumes which Moxon had recently published entitled *The Works of Charles Lamb, including his Life and Letters*.[163] It was a lengthy article, which in large part drew on the contents of the *Letters of Lamb*. Significantly, however, it also gave an explicit account of the matricide, based on the reports which had appeared in the press at the time of the incident.[164] Talfourd was to write in the Preface to *Final Memorials* that until the publication of this article he had been in doubt as to the propriety of publishing letters revealing exactly what had happened, but

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[156] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/4, fos 72 (13 August 1847), 80 (30 August 1847).
[157] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/4, fo 80.
[158] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 668-69.
[159] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 669.
[160] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 673-74.
[161] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1420/2/1/4, fo 124 (17 January 1848).
[162] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 674.
[163] 'Art. II', *British Quarterly Review*, 14 (May 1848), 292-311.
[164] 'Art. II', 306-07.

'after this publication, no doubt could remain'.[165] He certainly applied himself in the early summer of 1848, and by 2 July had finished the final chapter.[166] He mentioned in his journal that he had 'sacrificed' his rights in relation to the book for £200 to Moxon, 'or so it seems', indicating that he thought that Moxon would have the better of the bargain, as well as a mild disappointment that this is what the publisher had proposed. But he was, on the whole, satisfied by what he had done in *Final Memorials*, and thought that there was at least one 'glittering passage' in relation to Coleridge.[167]

Final Memorials was published in mid-July. The volumes bore an inscription to Wordsworth, 'by one whose pride it is to have been in old time his earnest admirer'. In the Preface, he explained that he now considered it right to publish the letters which directly revealed the matricide; but also adverted to the great success of the *Letters of Lamb*, both in England and especially in America, and said that that had persuaded him that some letters which he had before thought unworthy of publication should now be included. He also accounted for the awkwardness of these volumes being additional to, and not integrated with, the earlier letters, by saying that it would have been unjust to those who had bought the earlier volumes simply to supersede them with a combined edition.[168] This looks like unconscious self-justification for his having acquiesced in what had been considered most advantageous and profitable to Moxon. The volumes then plunged immediately into the letters to Coleridge which revealed Lamb's own period in an asylum in Hoxton, and the death of the Lambs' mother. This was very different from the *Letters of Lamb*, which was widely perceived as having started tamely and as having only quickened with the letters to Manning. Here the interest was intense from the first pages.

Final Memorials is different from the *Letters of Lamb* in another way. Talfourd is much more in evidence. His additions to the letters are more noticeable and distinctive. This may be, as various critics were to say, because these volumes needed 'padding'. He was presenting only 102 letters, 82 of them being new and 20 being parts of letters which he had

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[165] *Final Memorials*, I, x-xi.
[166] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410 2/1/4, fo 157.
[167] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410 2/1/4, fos 162, 167.
[168] *Final Memorials*, I, ix-xi.

omitted from some of those published in *Letters of Lamb*.[169] The quirkiest of his contributions is the 21 pages devoted to the story of Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. Prompted by the fact that Wainwright, as 'Janus Weathercock', had been a contributor to the *London Magazine* and been liked by Lamb, Talfourd proceeded to a detailed and forensic account of Wainwright's subsequent career as poisoner and fraudster, together with a long footnoted quotation from one of Wainwright's articles in the *London Magazine* in 1820.[170] Unsurprisingly Robinson, whose judgment was generally sound, when he wrote to Talfourd to compliment him on *Final Memorials* on 3 August 1848 made an exception of the passage on Wainwright, which he described as a 'mere blot and excrescence'.[171] He made the same point to Moxon when he saw him at this time, saying that it was a 'blotch and stain on the book'.[172] In subsequent editions of *Final Memorials* the reference to Wainwright, which had doubtless been included by Talfourd in order to add colour to the volumes and as a result of his becoming engrossed with the remarkable facts of the case, was curtailed to little more than a mention.

Talfourd was also more forthcoming in *Final Memorials* about the personal relations of himself and his family with Lamb. He now included the two charming letters which Lamb had written to him, the one on Lamb's being made a godfather and the other on Talfourd's being made a Serjeant.[173] Further, and to point the deeply personal link, Talfourd included as a footnote to the first the verses on the death of Charles Lamb Talfourd.[174] Robinson thought that that all this was well done: 'not a word that in a reproachful sense could be called Egotism'.[175]

Talfourd also used the volumes to call attention to what he regarded as one of the proudest achievements of his life: his contribution to the establishment of Wordsworth's reputation. The Dedication set the tone. It is apparent again in Chapter VI, where he refers to the delight of the admirers of Wordsworth, 'few, but energetic and hopeful', on the appearance of *The Excursion* in 1814 and the *Poems* of 1815.[176] It re-

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[169] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. E.W. Marrs, 3 vols (Ithaca, NY, 1975-8), I, lxvi.
[170] *Final Memorials*, II, 7-27.
[171] Newdick, *First Life and Letters*, 41.
[172] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 679.
[173] *Final Memorials*, II, 51-52, 90-92.
[174] *Final Memorials*, II, 52-55.
[175] Newdick, *First Life and Letters*, 41.
[176] *Final Memorials*, I, 183.

emerges in the final chapter, where Talfourd speaks of his delight in meeting Wordsworth at Lamb's as that of a 'young disciple of the then desperate now triumphant cause of Wordsworth's genius … whom he had worshipped the more devoutly for the world's scorn; for whom he felt the future in the instant'.[177] Given these passages and how strongly he felt on this subject, it is perhaps unsurprising that Talfourd was somewhat offended at the absence of an acknowledgement of the Dedication by Wordsworth.[178]

More generally, *Final Memorials* must be seen as in part Talfourd's own memoirs. He was thinking about writing his own life story at the time. The disjointed notes which he left for an autobiography, 'Gleams of Long past life' date from 1847.[179] At the beginning of that year he had written in his journal: 'My life seems so vast I cannot grasp it; and I would fain, before my memory fails, preserve such fragments as I can secure'.[180] Because Lamb and his circle had been such an important part of Talfourd's own, *Final Memorials* was in part a securing of some of those fragments. His account of the *London Magazine* under Scott, and his bringing in, somewhat gratuitously, of a comparison with Thomas Campbell as the (hopelessly unsuitable) editor of the *New Monthly Magazine* were parts of his own history.[181] The portraits of the Lamb circle in the final chapter are tributes to old friends of his own, as well as Lamb's: Dyer, Godwin, Thelwall, Hazlitt, Barnes, Haydon and Coleridge. This aspect is also to the fore in the 'Social Comparison', which Talfourd made between evenings at the Lambs' and at Holland House.[182] It allowed Talfourd to reflect on another aspect of his life - his activities as a Member of Parliament and participation in the grand world of Whig politics. The two circles had been almost entirely distinct. As Talfourd himself put it, there were 'few survivors who have enjoyed both'.[183] It was an exercise which certainly carried the risk of Talfourd appearing to be socially ostentatious, displaying his illustrious associations. That is probably what Robinson had in mind in calling it a 'hazardous undertaking'.[184] But Robinson considered that Talfourd had succeeded in

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[177] *Final Memorials*, II, 124.
[178] *Robinson: Books and Writers*, II, 682.
[179] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/3/2.
[180] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410/2/1/4, fo 8.
[181] *Final Memorials*, II, 2-3.
[182] *Final Memorials*, II, 116-35.
[183] *Final Memorials*, II, 116.
[184] Newdick, *First Life and Letters*, 41.

this undertaking, and he was justified in thinking that. This is perhaps because it is the Lamb circle which emerges from the comparison as so much the more interesting and alive, but also perhaps because in his description of Lady Holland – which in fact was a reuse of material which had been included in Talfourd's obituary of her in the *Morning Chronicle* – a real personal regard was evident.[185]

The most significant feature of Talfourd's contribution to *Final Memorials* was, however, his completion of the depiction of Charles Lamb as a striking moral example. Now, his self-sacrificing devotion to caring for Mary was not only said to have been the predominant feature of his life but was explained and shown to be demanding not just of admiration for the man, but of a sympathetic, and not merely comprehending, attitude to his faults. This was 'Lamb Fully Known'.[186]

> The sweetness of his character, breathed through his writings, was felt even by strangers; but its heroic aspect was unguessed, even by many of his friends. Let them now consider it, and ask if the annals of self-sacrifice can show anything in human action and endurance, more lively than its self-devotion exhibits![187]

The nature of the tragedies which had befallen him and the extent of his self-devotion excused and explained any excesses in Lamb's drinking and also, Talfourd argued, the 'apparent indifference' which he was wont to display to religion. The latter, Talfourd wrote, was not because Lamb had become an unbeliever or even a sceptic, but had become someone who could not bear to look into the future.[188] Insofar as these were faults, they were, given the nature of the man and his circumstances, to be loved. Just as Lamb had loved his friends, not in spite of their errors, but 'errors and all', so the reader was to love Lamb himself.[189]

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[185] Talfourd's obituary appeared in *Morning Chronicle* for 25 November 1845. It was reprinted in *Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of T. Noon Talfourd* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846), 131-32.
[186] *Final Memorials*, II, 207-24.
[187] *Final Memorials*, II, 208.
[188] *Final Memorials*, II, 213-24, 221-24.
[189] Cf *Letters of Lamb*, II, 326.

The Reception of *Final Memorials*

The reception in the press got off to a very bad start. On 29 July 1848 *The Athenaeum* described the work as 'small in compass, eked out with superfluous matter, and defaced by fopperies of style such as good-nature's self must reprehend.'[190] But far worse was published on the same day in the *Birmingham Journal*. This was a sneering and intentionally insulting attack. The writer's attitude appears in part to have been due to his opposition to Lord John Russell's government. Talfourd is castigated as an 'apostate' to radical causes in having opposed Joseph Hume's National Representation Bill earlier that month, and mocked for his hope of obtaining office, and how long he was having to wait for it. But the author then turned to *Final Memorials*, and begun by doubting the value of more about Lamb, who had been overrated. What could have been said about Lamb in twenty pages had been spun into two volumes, by including 'the most trivial domestic matter'. To exemplify this point the review struck where it must have been appreciated it would cause most hurt. Lamb's letter on being made a godfather was dismissed as studded with 'dreary jocularity', and then Talfourd's verses on his son's death were dismissed as 'the merest drivel under any possible circumstances', and even more blameworthy because they had already been published by Moxon. The author reserved his most intemperate criticism, however, for the portrait of Hazlitt in the final chapter. This was 'one of the very few readable passages in these catchpenny volumes', but its inclusion constituted 'one of the most disreputable frauds in the annals of modern literary rascality'. The complaint was that most of the portrait was a reuse of Talfourd's 'Thoughts upon the Intellectual Character of the late William Hazlitt', which had been one of the prefatory essays in William Hazlitt Jr.'s *Literary Remains of William Hazlitt* published in 1836.[191] The reviewer's scorn would presumably have been unbounded had he known that that essay had itself already appeared in *The Examiner* in October and November 1832.[192] As it was the reviewer, commenting that this 'fraud' had been perpetrated for Talfourd's financial gain, condemned him as a 'veteran practitioner in all the small articles of literary trickery'. This review certainly stung Talfourd. He commented in his journal on the 'long libel'

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[190] *The Athenaeum*, 1083 (29 July 1848), 741-43, 741.
[191] W. Hazlitt, *Literary Remains of the late William Hazlitt*, 2 vols (London: Saunders & Otley, 1836), I, lxxxviii-cxxxiv.
[192] *The Examiner*, 1289 (14 October 1832), 661-62; 1290 (21 October 1832), 678; 1292 (4 November 1832), 708-09.

upon him, mentioning his particular displeasure in being accused of fraud in having used his own earlier work.[193]

The majority of reviews in other periodicals, which appeared over the next year or so, were considerably more favourable. It is true that amongst them were some fair, and telling, criticisms of Talfourd as an editor, and of the inconvenience to the reader of the way in which the story of Lamb had been told. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* pointed out that the worthwhile new material could have been contained in one volume; that the fact that Lamb's story was now divided between the *Letters of Lamb* and *Final Memorials* was 'the most provoking and irritating to the reader that could have been devised'; and that 'in the mere and humble task of editing, the Serjeant has been by no means fortunate'.[194] There were also further criticisms of his style of writing ('hard and laboured'[195], over-profuse[196], faded and rhetorical[197]). He was also said to be over-generous and not sufficiently discriminating about those he described, and in particular about the heroes of his youth, whose intrinsic grandeur he overrated.[198] But elsewhere, and although there was not generally the same amount of deference to him as there had been in 1837 when he had been in the first flush of the success of *Ion* and was still a potential force to be reckoned with in politics, he did meet with praise for his 'courage and good faith' and with thanks for his labours.[199]

Talfourd may perhaps have been rather disappointed by the reaction to his own contributions to the volumes, and may have seen the force of some of the criticisms made. In his journal for January 1849, in looking back at the previous year, he recorded the completion of *Final Memorials*, and said that it was 'not so good as I could wish'. He recorded, however, that apart from the *Athenaeum* and the *Birmingham Journal* pieces it had 'awakened no echo' and had done him 'no mischief'. What he meant by these remarks must be that the publication had done his prospects of promotion - either to the Attorney-Generalship or to the judiciary – no

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[193] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1420/2/1/4, fo 187.
[194] *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 66, 406 (August 1849), 133-50, 134. Also *Gentleman's Magazine*, (November 1848), 451-66, 451-52.
[195] *Eclectic Review*, 24 (October 1848), 465-78, 478.
[196] *Literary Gazette*, 1645 (29 July 1848)
[197] *Blackwood's*, 143.
[198] *North British Review,* 10, 19 (November 1848), 179-214, 191.
[199] *The Examiner,* 2114 (5 August 1848), 499-501, 499; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 465; *Literary Gazette*, 498; *British Quarterly*, 16 (November 1848), 381-95, 387.

harm, and had not caused political waves.[200] But while Talfourd's assessment of the effects of the publication on his own reputation was thus that it had not been detrimental, he must have been gratified by what it had done for Charles Lamb's. For in this regard *Final Memorials* had served the end that Talfourd had had for it. There was very widespread agreement that the revelation of the matricide and Mary's insanity cast Lamb in a different, and immensely admirable light. Lamb was now described as one of the world's truest heroes, and the more admirable because he had had no ambition to pass for such.[201] The *Christian Remembrancer*, while regretting his irreligion, described his conduct in a phrase pregnant for the future: 'It was a love and a sacrifice to have shone in the records of saints'.[202] The drinking was pardoned. Perhaps more than enough had already been said on such habits of intemperance, said *Blackwood's*.[203]

Retrospect

The afterlife of Talfourd's life and letters of Lamb has been told not only in Newdick's important work of the 1930s, but with meticulous scholarship by Edwin W Marrs Jr. These have traced the increase in the number of letters published, from the roughly 262 which Talfourd used in total, to more than 1150. They have recorded the almost unanimous, and obviously correct, view that Talfourd had major shortcomings in the 'mere and humble task of editing', and the criticisms of him for dividing letters, changing the text to alter or omit expletives and other phrases which he had considered objectionable, and his lackadaisical attitude to dates.[204] William Carew Hazlitt, who produced what Marrs calls the 'sixth edition' of the letters, castigated Talfourd for his indiscriminate praise of people and his euphuisms, condescended towards his 'benevolent, yet rather lamentable *cameraderie*', while resolutely displaying neither benevolence nor camaraderie in writing that Talfourd's 'inaccuracy and slovenliness are little less than miraculous'.[205]

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[200] Berkshire Record Office, D/EX 1410 2/1/5, fos 4-5.
[201] *Eclectic Review*, 466.
[202] *Christian Remembrancer*, 16, 62 (October 1848), 424-55, 436.
[203] *Blackwood's*, 138. Also, *Christian Remembrancer*, 425
[204] *Letters*, ed. Marrs, I, lxix-lxxiv.
[205] *Letters of Charles* Lamb, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, 2 vols. (London: `Bell, 1886, I, vii. W.C. Hazlitt seems himself to have fallen below the standards of accuracy he chastised Talfourd for failing in accusing him of having prided himself on a

All these criticisms stem from the simple fact that Talfourd had not approached his task in editing the letters as a critic or a scholar or even an impartial observer, but as a friend. He had wanted to convey to the reader, and make her share, his love of Lamb, as he had known him and taking him in the round. This was in keeping with all that he had written about Lamb in the three decades which preceded *Final Memorials*. He had not been penetrating or questioning as to the nature and extent of Lamb's significance as a writer, and his florid style had been very distant from Lamb's. But he had achieved his principal objects. None of Lamb's contemporaries played a greater part in establishing his reputation and an abiding affection for him. The 'only admirer' created many others.

Christopher Butcher,
London

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university education and having pitied Lamb on this account: *Letters of Lamb*, ed. Hazlitt, I, xvi, by reference to Talfourd's *Letters of Lamb*, I, 8-9. In fact Talfourd had not been to university, never suggested that he had, and in articulating a sense of deprivation at the lack of a university education was expressing sympathy with and not condescension towards Lamb.

Notes from Members and Friends

Walter Savage Landor's 245th Birthday at King's High Warwick.
HOLLY SIMMS

Charles Lamb and Walter Savage Landor were great admirers of each other's work as they were almost exact contemporaries with less than a month separating their births. The two poets only met once as Landor made a long trip to England in 1832. It was during this time that the two men met for what is acknowledged to have been no more than an hour but John Forster's account of the occasion claims that 'before they parted they were old friends,' and that Landor viewed the hour they spent together as 'one of unalloyed enjoyment.'[1] It was Landor's *Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare* in which Lamb invested most pleasure despite it only being published very close to Lamb's death in 1834. Lamb took such delight in this work that he is even said to have made comments comparing Landor to Shakespeare himself, saying to John Forster that 'only two men could have written the Examination of Shakespeare—he who wrote it, and the man it was written on; and that is exactly what I think.'[2] Lamb's admiration of Landor was most definitely reciprocated. Following his death, Landor commemorated Lamb in poetry and, when discussing Lamb's *Essays of Elia* in a letter to Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*, he said that, 'The Essays of Elia will afford a greater portion of pure delight to the intellectual and the virtuous, to all who look into the human heart for what is good and graceful in it, whether near the surface or below, than any other two prose volumes, modern or ancient.'[3]

As an A Level student with a passion for literature, I have a sense of great pride that so much of the history of my school - King's High in Warwick -

[1] John Forster, *Walter Savage Landor: A Biography* (London, 1869), I, 459.
[2] Forster, *Walter Savage Landor*, I, 477.
[3] E V Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols (London, 1905), II, 47.

is centred around Walter Savage Landor, a poet who is widely regarded as a hugely important literary figure of his time. This sense of pride has certainly been shared through the whole school community since King's High moved into what was originally known as Eastgate House in 1879, Landor's birthplace and childhood home. When discussing Eastgate, Landor only ever spoke of it with affection, saying that 'Never without a pang do I leave the house where I was born.'[4] Landor's colourful character is immortalised within the literature that we keep in the school library. Margaret Forster, who cared for him in his old age, describes a cantankerous and difficult old man in her novel *Lady's Maid* - a different figure to the young man expelled from Rugby School for writing scurrilous verse about his Latin master! Charles Dickens, a great fan of Landor's, named his second son after him and made him a character in *Bleak House*, Sir Leicester Dedlock's nemesis, Lawrence Boythorn. Dickens fondly wrote of Landor that 'Talking, laughing or snoring, Landor's lungs made the beams of the house shake.'[5] It is this same fondness for Landor's work that informs the spirit of King's High, which, ever since the School's founding, has continued to place emphasis on the role that Landor has played within our history.

The celebration of Walter Savage Landor's birthday on 30 January is always a momentous occasion within the school. Landor was born in 1775, in the room that, for the next 140 years, was known as Landor Library at the King's High on Smith Street. This room was used to unveil the blue plaque that hangs at school in Landor's memory, commissioned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of his death. Landor's birthday is often marked by a whole community assembly discussing his life and work and the lasting influence his legacy has over our school. This year marked Landor's 245th birthday and our celebration was a little different from others I can remember during my time at King's High. For the first time in our School's history, we were no longer in the corridors of Landor's childhood home in the centre of Warwick on Smith Street. In September 2019 King's High left the Smith Street site and moved to our new campus adjacent to Warwick School on Banbury Road. Despite this move away from the centre of town, we were determined to carry a strong sense of Landor's heritage with us down to our new site.

As you walked through the blue door of the old School on Smith Street, one of the first things that caught your eye was the bust of Landor used

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[4] Forster, *Walter Savage Landor*, II, 143

[5] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London, 2006), 173.

by the school to signify his importance within our community. The same bust of Landor still sits proudly in the entrance hall of King's High's new buildings. This year, Landor's stern, commanding expression was central to our celebrations as a group of Literature students, including myself, gathered around it to discuss Landor's legacy as a poet and we read aloud his poem 'Lines to a Dragonfly'. This gathering of literary enthusiasts to mark Landor's importance is similar to the annual birthday celebrations of his close friend and contemporary, Charles Lamb. Although we haven't yet progressed to an annual luncheon in London, we are nonetheless equally keen to mark the occasion.

To illustrate Landor's significance further, from 1911 until 2014 the school magazine *Ilex* was published in reference to the Holm Oak tree that stood within the grounds of Landor's home. He is said to have gained much of his inspiration sat under this tree. This legacy was carried forward by the creation of wooden artefacts that were then sold to the girls of King's High, following the tree falling at an estimated 600 years old. The name of 'ilex' now enjoys a rebirth as the magazine of the School's Landor Association. This was established in 2017 in order to highlight Landor's lasting legacy in Warwick. Although the Landor Association does not directly celebrate the literature of Landor, it brings the King's High community together for varied events, whilst also acknowledging how important Landor is as part of the founding narrative of the school. This association was set up with the aim to 'enhance the work of our current Parents' Associations and the Old Girls' Association (OGA) of King's High, providing opportunities for former parents, staff and Governors and our many friends in the wider community, to be more actively involved in the life of King's High School and Warwick Preparatory School.' In addition, the school is host to the Landor Dining Society, a group that is run by sixth formers. The purpose of these society gatherings is to bring in many highly decorated speakers to the school in order to share their knowledge into a variety of specialisms that may be of interest. Guest speakers have included top surgeons and lawyers, as well as writers, directly reflecting the spirit of Landor, as well as providing academic enrichment and success in wider learning. These two organisations, similarly to the Charles Lamb Society, highlight Landor's daily impact on the school and show that his work and legacy are not only appreciated on his birthday but at all times by the King's High community.

The pride that has been fostered by the King's High community over the last 140 years in championing his legacy is celebrated every year on his

birthday. Despite the move of the school site, King's High has always felt very strongly that the history of the school, and the heritage of Landor, has been successfully transferred with us. Just as it always has been, the bust of Landor remains one of the first things that catches your eye as you enter the new King's High buildings.[6]

Holly Simms,
King's High, Warwick

[6] For more on Landor and Lamb see David Chandler, 'Lamb, *Falstaff's Letters*, and Landor's *Citation and Examination of William Shakspeare*,' *Charles Lamb Bulletin* NS 131 (July 2005), 76-85. This is available online at The Charles Lamb Society website.

Book Review

***Christ's Hospital: Tradition with Vision* (Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd., 2020), ed. David Taplin & Lizzie Ballagher. ISBN: 978-1839750168. Paperback, £11.99.**

Christ's Hospital: Tradition with Vision is aptly named, because, just as the phrase implies, this is a hybrid work combining prose accounts of the school's storied past with 'visionary' poetry written by Old Blue Lizzie Ballagher. Ballagher is a published novelist who has recently turned her efforts to exploring broad themes of "the landscape of Britain, what it means to be human, and the spiritual journey" in verse.[7] Her poems in this volume comprise some one-hundred-fifty plus pages, a major selection which shows the school's dedication to showcasing a talented Old Blue. Ballagher in turn has crafted a sequence of chronological sections (that is, the sections are grouped by theme, but the poems in each section are ordered in time) dealing with love, learning, struggle, art and artistic vision, the contrast of indoors and outdoors, and the perennial themes of time and change.

Ballagher's included work deals with the past and future of Christ's Hospital, bookended and framed by the lime trees of Hertford and Horsham. Fittingly her opening theme is that of searching for something fixed in the midst of chaos:

threads tangled
ravelled in twists and Gordian knots
unfollowable
unworkable
when wool's line snags
when soft twine snaps

so tell me

[7] Info taken from Ms. Ballagher's personal blog, lizzieballagherpoetry.wordpress.com, accessed 25 September 2020.

how to find the beginning or the end
that single strand—

("Beginnings and Endings: At the Hertford Art School, *1964*" ln. 1-9)

But the sequence in fact begins in 1780, suddenly panning into the reading habits and private world of the eight-year-old Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whom Ballagher ventriloquizes at length (shaped into her own stanzas) "[creeping] to a corner / and [losing] myself / in … stories of woe and wonder / Arabian Nights, fairy tales, *Robinson Crusoe*" ("Devon Boy: The Reader, *1780*" ln. 10-13). "Devon Boy" becomes "London Boy" as we move forward in time to the famous episode which unlocked the golden gates of what Ballagher calls 'learning & loving-kindness' for STC: in 1785 he was given a ticket to a lending-library by an old gentleman who originally took him for a pickpocket.

We learned Greek legends:
love that branded men
that seared the souls of women in Greek stories.

…

There, bathed in my imagination, swimming my way
along the street
I was arrested by a gentleman
who vowed I'd tried to pick his pocket.

("London Boy: Coleridge The Swimmer, *1785*" ln. 1-3; 14-17)

According to Coleridgean legend, the gentleman, at first wholly suspicious of the boy, was so taken aback by his candour that he decided to give him the gift rather than report him to the authorities. While Ballagher's poem lacks a bit of the "glittering-eyed" quality imagined by Richard Holmes,[8] her version of Coleridge, who appears in several places, comes across as far more honest and direct than the Holmesian/Frumanian 'Esteesi', describing the difficulties of "what it means to be human" in a way quietly impassioned by his interpreter's sophisticated sense of the line:

Luminous the light

[8] See Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions*, (London: Hodder, 1989)

it pierces eye and heart,
yet joy assails me now,
seeing in my mind's eye, too,
the sunset filtered by these linden leaves,
the dappled shadows overhead.

("Coleridge in the Limes, *1797*" ln. 11-16)

Coleridge does not so much haunt the book—his dedicatory sonnet on mathematics acts as a literary emblem for equal parts curiosity and erudition, as well as a tacit link to the engineer Sir Barnes Neville Wallis—as appear as a kind of *genius loci* in the company of Old Blues such as Saint Edmund Campion, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Middleton (who was partly responsible for STC's matriculation to Cambridge), Lilian Bostock, Violet Green, and many more (xv). The Lambean moniker "inspired charity-boy" applies equally to all; in their own way each Old Blue (and Taplin points out that there are approximately 65,000 in the school's almost 500-year history, with 10,000 currently living worldwide) becomes or gives rise to the concept of truth as divine ventriloquist. The common animating factor is Christ's itself, and a shared dedication to what Taplin calls the school's "ancient charitable mission" (xix). The Old Blues' stories and anecdotes about valuable experiences at school, and, perhaps even more crucially, relating the professional, academic, emotional and fraternal help they received from the "Old Blue network" after graduating, create a 230-year-old echo of Coleridgean 'Pantisocracy' where all are most friendly among friends.

I particularly enjoyed Taplin's chapters on "The World in a Grain of Sand" and his "Quincentenary Questions" (part of the vision of this work is that it is looking forward to the year 2052 and the school's 500th birthday). Taplin writes that

> Universities … tend to specialise and find competitive niches so that a new university might aim to become world-leading in a particular realm … What performance outcomes might be the specialty of Christ's Hospital? … Christ's Hospital must look to its past accomplishments and create a new, imaginative strategy within the framework of its charitable mission. (99)

The purpose of this chapter is to show that CH is well aware of how the world has changed. "The World in a Grain of Sand"—that means both Blake and Eliot and this potted overview of how specialization has become the name of the game in education. Taplin suggests "a new Royal Science, Technology, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Materials & Mathematics School (STEEMM)" (99). Such multifaceted specialization would not only ensure that the school would continue its millennial tradition of adding to the quota of human excellence via a self-reinforcing network of charitable Old Blue experts, but would likewise ensure that CH be poised to answer "the great questions" (100)—climate change, social inequality, and of course deeper questions of our human *telos*—throughout the 21st century and beyond.

In Taplin's "Quincentenary Questions" more options for the future of Christ's Hospital are considered. Should Christ's become an international (i.e. global) school? Should Christ's become greener and more sustainable? Should Christ's develop a new programme of self-assessment for long-term learning and impact outcomes? Taplin's questions and answers reveal that the school is ready to adapt to a new, more sustainable, more pluralistic world, or to meet changes in our sense of what constitutes pedagogical success. All, of course, is considered in the name of improving "contribution"; the sense of charitable ethos remains.

In conclusion, this book stands as a worthy testament to a school that is, as of this writing, not only venerable but, indeed, older than modernity itself. Yet this publication reveals that just as Christ's Hospital stretches back into the pre-modern past, it likewise has the wherewithal to gaze forward into a post-modern, (post-work? post-climate?) future. My review can hardly do justice to the trove of human and institutional memory to be found within these pages. My one regret is that I could only scratch the surface of Lizzie Ballagher's poetic contributions—these deserve a literary and critical response in their own right; and my one criticism is that it is not at all apparent that there is even poetry on offer in this volume, situated as it is some one hundred pages in, suddenly appearing like a light out of the past. Of course, one might expect that such genial figures as Coleridge and Lamb should be not far off here, declaiming the mysteries of Iamblichus in the cloisters.

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The Charles Lamb Bulletin

www.charleslambsociety.com/bulletin.html

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

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

Essays submitted to the journal should preferably be in 11-point Book Antiqua typescript and between 4000 and 8000 words in length. Preferably, submissions should be sent to the Editor as an email attachment in MS Word. Submissions should be double-spaced throughout, including quotations, and should follow MHRA style, with a couple of minor alterations. A full style-sheet is available online at the Society's website.

For further information contact the Editor, John Gardner, School of Humanities, Anglia Ruskin University, East Road, Cambridge, CB1 1PT (john.gardner@aru.ac.uk).

The Charles Lamb Society

www.charleslambsociety.com

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

The Society holds a series of events each year in London, including lectures, study days, and a Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon. The Society also publishes the biannual peer-review journal, The Charles Lamb Bulletin.

For further information please contact either the Membership Secretary, Helen Goodman, h.goodman@bathspa.ac.uk, or the Chairs, Felicity James, fj21@le.ac.uk and John Strachan, j.strachan@bathspa.ac.uk

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