The Charles Lamb Bulletin

Winter 2021

New Series No. 174

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

PUBLISHED BY
THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY

An Elian Bicentenary

Charles Lamb first published ‘My First Play' in the *London Magazine*, in December 1821.

From ‘My First Play'

AT the north end of Cross-court there yet stands a portal, of some architectural pretensions, though reduced to humble use, serving at present for an entrance to a printing-office. This old doorway, if you are young, reader, you may not know was the identical pit entrance to Old Drury -- Garrick's Drury -- all of it that is left. I never pass it without shaking some forty years from off my shoulders, recurring to the evening when I passed through it to see my first play. The afternoon had been wet, and the condition of our going (the elder folks and myself) was, that the rain should cease. With what a beating heart did I watch from the window the puddles, from the stillness of which I was taught to prognosticate the desired cessation! I seem to remember the last spurt, and the glee with which I ran to announce it.

We went with orders, which my godfather F. had sent us. He kept the oil shop (now Davies's) at the corner of Featherstone- building, in Holborn. F. was a tall grave person, lofty in speech, and had pretensions above his rank. He associated in those days with John Palmer, the comedian, whose gait and bearing he seemed to copy; if John (which is quite as likely) did not rather borrow somewhat of his manner from my godfather. He was also known to, and visited by, Sheridan. It was to his house in Holborn that young Brinsley brought his first wife on her elopement with him from a boarding-school at Bath -- the beautiful Maria Linley. My parents were present (over a quadrille table) when he arrived in the evening with his harmonious charge. -- From either of these connexions it may be inferred that my godfather could command an order for the then Drury-lane theatre at pleasure -- and, indeed, a pretty liberal issue of those cheap billets, in Brinsley's easy autograph, I have heard him say was the sole remuneration which he had received for many years' nightly illumination of the orchestra and various avenues of that theatre -- and he was content it should be so. The honour of Sheridan's familiarity -- or supposed familiarity -- was better to my godfather than money.

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. 174, Winter 2021

Editor: John Gardner
Reviews Editor: John Gilroy

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Notes from the Chairs
FELICITY JAMES and JOHN STRACHAN

Elian greetings!

We have been very heartened by the success of the Society's online seminars in 2021, despite missing the special conviviality of our in-person meetings. Zoom has allowed us the chance to hear speakers from the US and Canada and to attract delegates from across the globe, from Europe, India, and Australia.

Our 2021-22 season began with news of two exciting biographies. We opened with an excellent talk from Professor Eric Wilson from Wake Forest University, North Carolina. His biography, *Dream-Child: A Life of Charles Lamb* is forthcoming from Yale University Press in January 2022. It builds not only on Wilson's previous work on Romanticism from Coleridge to Emerson, but also his creative non-fiction, including *Everyone Loves a Good Train Wreck* (2012) and *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy* (2008). As the article in this issue shows, Eric Wilson gives us a Lamb for the twenty-first century, daring, dark, and experimental, speaking to post-modern essayists in surprising ways. This biography, so long awaited, will bring Lamb – and a profoundly literary, allusive, witty and lively Lamb – to a new audience.

In October, we held a joint online meeting with the Thelwall Society. "In the Theatre of Romantic Eccentricity: John Thelwall's Covent Garden Childhood" was a first glimpse of Judith Thompson's new biography of John Thelwall - Romantic radical, poet, friend, polymath, and linguist. Judith's groundbreaking work on Thelwall – her discovery of forgotten Thelwallain sites and the lost Derby manuscripts, her books and editions, articles and chapters – has foregrounded this 'silenced partner' of the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle in Romantic studies. 'I was looking out for John Thelwall all the way from Bridgewater,' Lamb tells Coleridge, travelling back from Nether Stowey in the summer of 1797, 'and had I met him, I think it would have moved almost me to tears.' This talk beautifully brought out why Lamb was so affected by 'the Patriot'. Recordings of all the lectures are available on the CLS website.

Our lectures continue online through 2021/22; a common theme of this year's talks is the evocation of London in the time of the Lambs, from

different perspectives. With Eric Wilson, we were taken through the portal of the Inner Temple; Judith Thompson brought raucous Covent Garden to life. In November, we will venture into the world of Pierce Egan, journalist, sportswriter, author of *Life in London* (1821). This comic 'Portraiture of High & Low Life' gives a vital context for the literature of the 1820s: our guide is Dr David Stewart, Associate Professor of Romantic Literature at Northumbria University. This will be followed in January by 'Billy Waters and nineteenth-century popular culture', 22 Jan, 2pm, by Dr Mary L. Shannon (Roehampton University); the Charles Lamb Birthday Lecture will again this year take place online, on 12 Feb at 2pm, with our Guest of Honour: Professor Duncan Wu (Georgetown University). However, if we have the chance to meet in person during 2021/22, we will try to organise a London event: please let fj21@le.ac.uk know if you wish to join the online mailing list.

This year, for the first time, we have appointed two communications officers, Adam Neikirk and Rose Hilton, to help run the online seminars and promote the Society on social media. Both are final year PhD students with a keen interest in the Lambs. Adam is completing a creative dissertation on the life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (a verse biography); Rose is writing a doctorate on the topic of eighteenth-century British female dramatists and the constructions and depictions of selfhood present in their plays. We are delighted to welcome them to the Society and to see the Lambs move into the age of Twitter and Instagram.

We are delighted to announce the Lamb Society Essay Prize for 2022 - full details are included in this issue. This is a new prize, open to all, and the winning essay will be published in the *Bulletin.*

Finally, members of The Charles Lamb Society will be sorry to learn of the death of Dorothy McMillan, a good friend of the Society and a member of our editorial panel. Dorothy was a stalwart of Glasgow University and of the study of Scottish and English literature. She will be greatly missed.

Felicity James and John Strachan, Chairs.

Lamb Programme, 2022

All meetings will take place through Zoom in 2022. We will issue tickets, free for members, through Eventbrite: please check the events page at www.charleslambsociety.com for details in the summer.

22 Jan. 2022, 2pm: 'Billy Waters and Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture', Dr Mary L. Shannon (Roehampton University).

12 Feb. 2022, 2pm: **'**Charles Lamb Birthday Lecture', Guest of Honour: Professor Duncan Wu (Georgetown University)

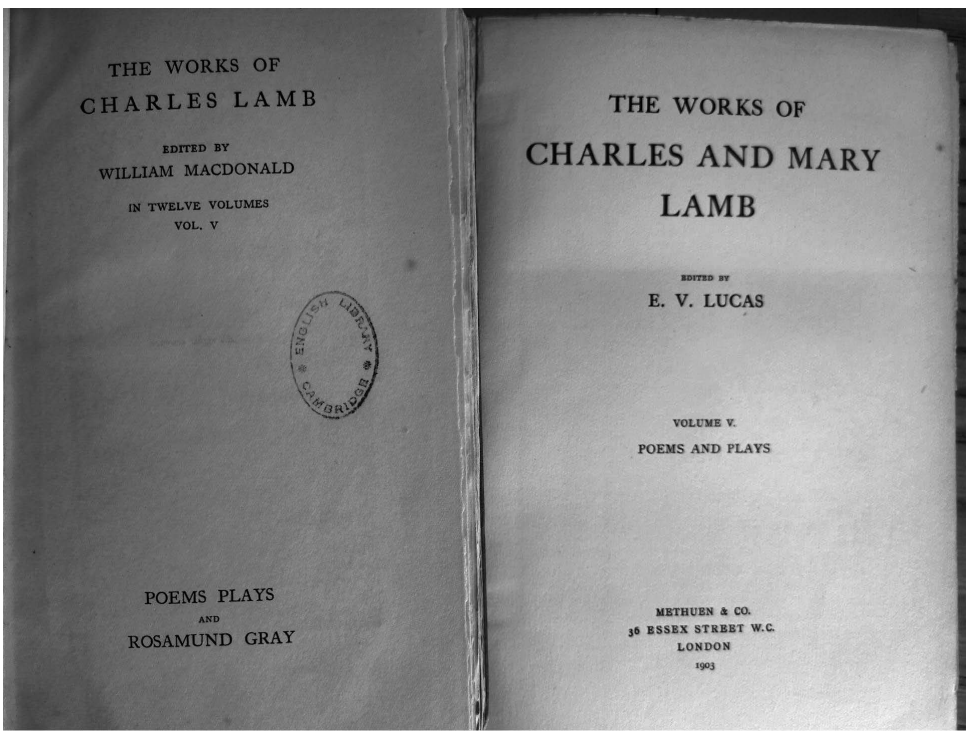
19 Mar. 2022, 2pm: '"Blot Out Gentle-Hearted": Charles Lamb, S T Coleridge, and the Ridiculous', Dr Andrew McInnes (Edgehill University)

23 April 2022, 2pm: '"Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the Tarpeian Rock": Writing as a Career in the Romantic Period', Dr Matthew Sangster (University of Glasgow)

22 May, 2022, 2pm: 'From chapbooks to classics: the children's literature of Charles and Mary Lamb', Dr Felicity James (University of Leicester). Followed by the CLS AGM.

Editor's Note

The turn of the twentieth century saw Lamb editions by William MacDonald (Dent) and E.V. Lucas (Methuen). I have long wondered what the relationship was between these editions, which resemble each other closely and came out at the same time. The Herbert G. Smith archive recently placed in the Guildhall collection of the Lamb Society reveals the answer.[1]


THE WORKS OF
CHARLES LAMB
EDITED BY
WILLIAM MACDONALD
IN TWELVE VOLUMES
VOL. V
ENGLISH LIBRARY * CAMBRIDGE *
POEMS PLAYS
AND
ROSAMUND GRAY
THE WORKS OF
CHARLES AND MARY
LAMB
EDITED BY
E. V. LUCAS
VOLUME V.
POEMS AND PLAYS
METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON
1903

Clement Shorter, writing in *The Sphere* in March 1903 asks why there should be 'dual editions of the same work when one would surely be sufficient'. Shorter notes that both J.M Dent and E.V. Lucas had been advertising for letters of the Lambs, with Lucas pipping Dent at the post by advertising for them 'in the same journal a week or two earlier'. The Lucas edition of the *Works* is usually the standard one used by Lamb scholars--there will be more on this at the end. Nonetheless some libraries,

[1] Herbert Grant Smith (1883-1973) was editor of the *Charles Lamb Society Bulletin* between 1948 and 1972. Details of the purchase of the H. G. Smith collection are in *CLB* N.S. 168, Autumn 2018.

including the English Faculty Library at Cambridge University, have both the Lucas and MacDonald editions available together on their shelves. Visually, they appear almost the same, excepting differences in the notes and letters, and that the MacDonald edition has illustrations, principally by Charles Brock and Herbert Railton. Any other similarities are coincidental as it appears that the editors, despite working at the same time, did not correspond with each other.

In an address delivered to the Lamb Society on 14 October 1944, entitled 'William MacDonald: Brave and Buoyant Spirit', Frank Swinnerton relates how MacDonald, likely born around 1860 in Aberdeenshire, had sent his last letter to the speaker in January 1915. After that 'I never heard from him, or of him again', writes Swinnerton. The last time Swinnerton met MacDonald he was only nineteen. He describes the editor in detail:

> I have never seen a man so crippled. He could only move without crutches. His tiny body was appallingly twisted. His face was so affected by what appeared to be the partial loss of one jaw that the smiling mouth, with its strong, prominent teeth, was twisted to one side under the scanty ginger moustache. [...] Only the fine, bony head, and the large and, according to my memory, brightly shining bluish-grey eyes, prevented one from regarding him as a miracle of survival. What pain he endured I cannot say. He didn't speak of it. He was sometimes too ill to work;

Visiting him in his tiny Maida Vale flat, Swinnerton recounts how he would often find MacDonald unwell on a couch, but uncomplaining and 'full of merry enthusiasm.' Swinnerton met MacDonald through his work, as from the age of sixteen he was employed at J. M. Dent's office in Covent Garden. This was during the launch of the 'Everyman's library' and Swinnerton recounts with pride that the first book ever published by Dent was *The Essays of Elia*, edited by Augustine Birrell for the Temple Library in 1888.

'Heat, fury,war'

Dent, then the possessor of illustrations for his editions of *The Essays of Elia* and *Mrs Leicester's School*, employed MacDonald to produce a twelve volume edition of the works of the Lambs complete with illustrations. The publisher and the editor soon fell out. Dent wanted 'an illustrated set, probably with a minimum of annotation' whereas MacDonald wanted to produce an edition that 'would surpass all previous editions in completeness, scholarship, and accuracy.' Unknown to both, E.V. Lucas

was also engaged on producing a definitive edition and, as Swinnerton writes, 'They became rival editions. Their rivalry caused heat, fury, war.' The existing Alfred Ainger edition certainly needed to be replaced as the clergyman had bowdlerized letters and suppressed the more human aspects of Charles Lamb. As MacDonald writes, Canon Ainger worked 'under the difficulties that belong to a position of great social and moral importance, and [...] consequently, sacrificed Lamb to considerations that are, to say the least, a little special and personal.'[2] Although he produced an edition that has 589 letters compared to 417 in the Eversley edition and 449 in the Fitzgerald, MacDonald knew that his was by no means the final or 'the ideal edition' of the works.

Swinnerton points out that 'friends of E.V. Lucas, who was an unforgiving man' attacked the 'upstart' MacDonald 'who dared to produce an edition which rivalled Lucas's own in its discoveries and inclusions and textual accuracy.' J.M. Dent's son Hugh gives another perspective on E.V. Lucas in *The House of Dent* where he pays tribute to Lucas's work on Lamb, writing, 'In point of scholarship and understanding of his author no one excelled him'.[3] There is also a 'Memoir' in the H. G. Smith collection where J. M. Dent writes that William MacDonald, was 'perhaps the strangest personality it has been my lot to meet in this strange world.' But 'what a triumph over the physical miseries imposed upon him! He had the full and intense joy of the lover of great literature, with a power of fine appreciation and analytical criticism such as few possess.' Coincidently Emma Isola's eldest son also worked for Dent. I know of no rival to the forthcoming edition of the Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, edited by Gregory Dart, Felicity James, Samantha Matthews and Gillian Russell. May it be free of 'heat, fury, war'.

Editorial Policy of this Journal

I'll finish this with a reminder of the editorial policy of this journal. Contributors are free to use the Lucas or MacDonald editions when writing essays. Nonetheless, if Covid has taught academics anything, it is how precious an open library is, and it brings to the surface the issue that very few people who love literature have access to university and copyright libraries. Accurate reproductions of the primary works of Charles and Mary Lamb, as well as their circle, exist in a variety of editions from free scanned magazine and nineteenth-century texts available online, to old

[2] *The Works of Charles Lamb* ed. by William MacDonald. 12 vols (London: Dent, 1903), I, xxiv.
[3] Hugh Dent, *The house of Dent 1888-1938* (London: Dent, 1938), 295.

school and paperback versions. All accurate editions of the primary texts are acceptable for this journal, if you find access to the Lucas or MacDonald ones difficult. Samantha Matthews helpfully points out that it is possible to assemble a complete free eBook version of the Lucas edition through combining digitised volumes on the Internet Archive and the Hathi Trust websites. I hope that this encourages members of the Lamb Society to send in notes and articles without worrying that their editions will not be accepted. I hope you enjoy the essays and reviews here.

John Gardner

Articles

Who's Who? Charles Lamb in Conversation with William Wordsworth

JOHN WILLIAMS

`The Two Races of Men`

The relationship between Charles Lamb and William Wordsworth was anything but straight forward, yet throughout their lives the two men maintained a friendship that proved to be as sympathetic and enduring as it was fragile and edgy; it was a relationship that exposed cultural tensions subsequently incorporated within the term `Romantic` as a description of the period in which they lived. Lamb, as he was always ready to remind people, rejoiced in the fact that he was born and bred in London. The letter he wrote to Thomas Manning in 1800 in which he celebrates the `Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens` amongst which he lived, concludes with the defiant exclamation, `These are thy pleasures, O London! … for these may Keswick and her great brood go hang!`.[1] By way of contrast, Wordsworth's aversion to the dehumanising influence of the city, `A prison where he hath been long immured`, became a central motif for the way he chose to define himself and his poetry:

> To her fair works did nature link
> The human soul that through me ran;
> And much it griev'd my heart to think
> What man has made of man. [2]

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[1] Letter to Manning, Nov 28, 1800. *The Works of Charles Lamb* ed. by William MacDonald. 12 vols (London: Dent, 1907), XI, 180.

[2] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, edit. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (London & New York, 1979), 28 l.8 (Hereafter *Prelude*).

William Wordsworth, ``Lines written in early Spring`, in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797-1800*, edit. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca & London, 1992), 76 ll.5-8 (Hereafter *Lyrical Ballads*).

For Wordsworth, however, London was also a welcome destination where he could bask in the admiration of enthusiastic readers, while Lamb, in his essay `Poor Relations` has Elia complain of having to live in the `streets of this sneering prying metropolis`[3]. In a letter of 1816 to Henry Dodwell, a fellow clerk at India House, he confessed that returning to London after time spent among the `shepherds - & herdesses & dairies & creampots` of Wiltshire was to be compared to being snatched away from heaven and cast back into Hell: `I know my hour is come, Faustus must give up his soul, O Lucifer, O Mephistopheles!`[4] `Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my Friend!` wrote Wordsworth at the time of Lamb's death, `But more in show than truth.`[5] Summarising the beliefs of the theologian Friedrich von Hügel, George Tyrell wrote, `All life consists in a patient struggle with irreconcilables … [it is] a progressive unifying of parts that will never fit perfectly`[6]. Tyrell could equally have been describing the circumstances under which Lamb and Wordsworth managed to maintain their improbable friendship.

The inconsistency of both Lamb's and Wordsworth's views on the relative merits of the country and the city directs us towards an aspect of their writing which the two men shared; both were inclined to assume a variety of personae to deliver their narrative voice, and having done so, to call into question the trustworthiness of that narrator. At the end of his Essay `The South Sea House`, Lamb/Elia writes, `Reader, what if I have been playing with thee all this while`(I, 12), implying that not only the names of the people he has been writing about, but their very existence might all have been a fiction, and in `New Year's Eve` he goes on to explain that no one `can have a less respect for his present identity, than I have for the man Elia` (I, 56). Elia's `I` remains enigmatic, a shape-shifting presence who in `Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago` slides between the identities of several narrators. In `The Producers of Modern Art` we are told that the `great masters` achieved their effects by `a wise falsification`; in other words, `by not showing the actual appearances` of what they were depicting. (II, 157) In `Amicus Redivivus` `the actual appearance` of the state of George Dyer's mind, disturbing for a man who spends his time watching hourly for signs of his sister's insanity, is concealed for much of

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[3] *The Works of Charles Lamb* ed. by William MacDonald. 12 vols (London: Dent, 1907), II, 20.

[4] Letter to Henry Dodwell, July 1816 in *The Letters of Charles Lamb,* ed. by Alfred Ainger, 2 Vols (London: Macmillan, 1888), I, 309. [The letter is not in the MacDonald or Lucas editions.]

[5] `To a good Man of most dear memory`, in *The Poems of William Wordsworth*, edit. Jared Curtis, 3 Vols (Penrith, 2014), III: 721 ll.50-1.

[6] George Tyrell, `Mysticism and Religion`, in *The Hibbert Journal*, 7 (1909), 687-9.

the essay beneath a comic form of theatrically ornate prose, but not before Elia has confessed in plain English that `A spectacle like this at dusk would have been appalling enough; but, in the broad open daylight, to witness such an unreserved motion towards self-destruction in a valued friend, took from me all power of speculation`:

> How I found my feet, I know not. Consciousness was quite gone. Some spirit, not my own, whirled me to the spot. I remember nothing but the silvery apparition of a good white head emerging; nigh which a staff (the hand unseen that wielded it) pointed upwards, as feeling for the skies. In a moment (if time was in that time) he was on my shoulders, and I – freighted with a load more precious than his who bore Anchises. (II, 119-120).

Had the essay remained in the gift of this narrator, it might well have ended there; but the story is now taken up by a second voice that progressively assumes an exaggerated, parodic form of biblical/Shakespearian language culminating in the appearance of a drunken, Dionysian quack doctor, summoned (as he might have been to a `delicious scene` in one of Elia's beloved artificial comedies of the last century) to restore his friend to life (II, 288). This is emphatically a different narrator from the one who wrote the opening paragraphs:

> He omitteth no occasion of obtruding his services, from a case of common surfeit-suffocation to the ignobler obstructions, sometimes induced by a too wilful application of the plant *Cannabis* outwardly. But though he declineth not altogether these drier extinctions, his occupation tendeth for the most part to water practice; for the convenience of which, he hath judiciously fixed his quarters near the grand repository of the stream mentioned, where, day and night, he listeneth to detect the wrecks of drowned mortality – partly as he saith, to be upon the spot – and partly, because the liquids he useth to prescribe to himself and his patients, on these distressing occasions, are ordinarily more conveniently to be found at these common hostelries than in the shops and phials of the apothecaries…. His remedy – after a sufficient application of warm blankets, friction, &c., is a simple tumbler, or more, of the purest Cognac, with water, made as hot as the convalescent can bear it. Where he findeth, as in the case of my friend, a squeamish subject, he condescendeth to be the taster; and showeth, by his own example, the innocuous nature of the prescription. (II, 121-122)

In his `Preface` to *The Last Essays of Elia* (`By a Friend of the Late Elia`) Lamb reflects on his habit of `making himself many, or reducing many unto himself`, confessing `that what he [Elia] tells us, as of himself, was often true only (historically) of another` (II, 1).

How the reader should respond to the variety of voices that narrate Wordsworth's poems has long been the subject of critical conjecture; nowhere more does Wordsworth reveal the insecurity that accompanied his sense of vocation to be a poet than in *Peter Bell*, where from the outset his chosen narrator confesses himself inadequate for the task he has undertaken:

> O, would that some more skilful voice,
> My further labour might prevent!
> Kind listeners, that around me sit,
> I feel that I am all unfit
> For such high argument. [7]

While Wordsworth was entertaining the Alfoxden coterie with this light-hearted confession of his sense of authorial inadequacy, he was also impersonating the young, insensitive poet prone to rash judgement in *Poems on the Naming of Places*, the similarly obtuse narrator of `Simon Lee`, the self-opinionated adult narrators of `Anecdote for Fathers` and `We are Seven`, and the prurient narrator of `The Thorn`. Each poem exposed Wordsworth's awareness of his fractured identity, the disturbing awareness of which he openly addressed in 1798 in the autobiographical narrative of *Tintern Abbey*, `I cannot paint / What then I was`.[8] The identity crisis that both Wordsworth and Lamb experienced and were driven to explore in their work was arguably one of the few things they held in common, and I suggest it might well have contributed subconsciously to the relationship that developed between them; their backgrounds, however, could scarcely have been more different.

Charles Lamb's forbears seem for the most part to have been agricultural labourers or in service. His father worked for over fifty years as a general assistant to Samuel Salt, a barrister at the Inner Temple. Salt sponsored Lamb for a place at Christ's Hospital School, and when he left in 1789, he took up a post in the Counting House of Joseph Paice, although he also harboured pretensions to authorship. In 1792 he became a clerk in

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[7] William Wordsworth, *Peter Bell*, edit. John E. Jordan (Ithaca & London, 1985), 123 ll.836-40 (hereafter *Peter Bell*).
[8] *Lyrical Ballads*, 118 ll.76-7.

Accountant's Office at East India House. Four years later he returned home from work to find that his sister Mary had stabbed their mother to death and wounded their father. Lamb, who had himself recently spent a brief period of time in the Hoxton Madhouse, was determined to take responsibility for the care of his sister, a decision that demanded the economic security provided by his post at the East India Company. It was at this time that he first came to know of Wordsworth through Coleridge, his friend from their time together at Christ's Hospital. Lamb will have soon realised that Wordsworth's devotion to his sister Dorothy and to his ambition to write poetry existed in a world fundamentally different from his own, but until he made his way down to Somerset in 1797, he can scarcely have imagined what it was like to belong to a literary coterie that had Coleridge and Wordsworth at its centre, or, for that matter, to be exposed to the scenic wildness of the Quantock Hills, let alone be expected to climb them.

Wordsworth was the son of Sir James Lowther's `Law-Agent`, and spent his early childhood in the comfort and security of the family's Cockermouth home. This fostered a lasting sense of entitlement which arguably became all the more insistent when Lowther's response to his father's death precipitated their impoverishment and the disintegration of the family unit. Poor as his immediate family had become, Wordsworth enjoyed a degree of liberty that Lamb was never to know. Supported by his uncles Christopher Cookson and Richard Wordsworth, he went from Hawkshead Grammar School to Cambridge. Lowther's treatment of his family fuelled his political radicalism, and he refused to follow the career path mapped out for him by his uncles, travelling instead to France where he could expect to find allies in his campaign against the tyranny of `arbitrary distinctions [that] exist among mankind…. I allude to titles, to stars, ribbons, and garters, and other badges of fictitious superiority`.[9]

By comparison, the shifting moods and voices of Elia/Lamb in the essays and letters suggest that his political radicalism was at best an equivocal point of reference for him as he sought to establish a distinct literary voice. Felicity James has described Lamb as `an Urban Dissenter with radical sympathies`, and those `sympathies` (rather than inviolable convictions) did prompt him on a number of occasions to assume the

[9] William Wordsworth, `A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff`, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, edit. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 Vols. (Oxford, 1974), I: 44 ll.479-81.

persona of a politically dissident poet and essayist.[10] He lampooned the Prince of Wales in verse in `The Triumph of the Whale`, while in his essay `My Relations` he reports an observation by his brother that arguably continues to resonate through to the present day:

> It was he who said, upon seeing the Eton boys at play in their grounds – *What a pity to think, that these fine ingenuous lads in a few years will all be changed into frivolous Members of Parliament.* (I, 143)

There can be no doubting the genuineness of Lamb's `radical sympathies` when they are in evidence (but we should also note the thoughtful way that Felicity James has contextualised his epigram, `To Sir James Mackintosh' published in *The Albion, and Evening Advertiser* in 1801[11]), and we might also reflect on Charles Lloyd's indignant response to the *Anti-Jacobin's* mocking reference to him as an `Anarchist`. Lamb, he wrote, was `a man too much occupied with real and painful duties - duties of high personal self-denial - to trouble himself about speculative matters`.[12] In the `Preface` to the `Last Essays` by `A Friend of Elia` the verdict given there by Lamb on Elia's religious beliefs might equally be applied to his political convictions:

> With the severe religionist he would pass for a free-thinker; while the other faction set him down for a bigot, or persuaded themselves that he belied his sentiments. Few understood him; and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. (II, 2)

Against the evidence of a politically radical strain in Lamb's writing should be set his two essays, `The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers` and `The Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis`. Here Lamb/Elia succeeds in offending every principle dear to the hearts of contemporary opponents of slavery in all its forms. The sweeping boys are:

> tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek – such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin

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[10] Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Basingstoke, 2008), 163 (Hereafter James).
[11] James, 179-80.
[12] Quoted in *Charles Lamb: Selected Prose*, edit. Adam Phillips (Harmondsworth, 1985), 13 (Hereafter *Selected Prose*).

> lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise?
> I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks – poor blots – innocent blacknesses –
> I reverence these young Africans of our own growth – these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys) in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a letter of patience to mankind. (I, 217)

Lamb effectively depoliticises the controversial issue of the sweeping boys by presenting them in the form of a sentimentally contrived tableau; they become part of the kind of theatrical performance he describes with approval in `Some Old Actors`, where what would otherwise be `revolting` in `real life` is rendered `warm-hearted' (I, 279). In `The Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis` Elia/Lamb adheres closely to the argument made by Wordsworth in `The Old Cumberland Beggar`, and Scott in *The Antiquary*, defending public begging on the grounds that the demand to give brings out the best in the rest of us; or as Elia puts it: `Much good might be sucked from these Beggars`. His description of the London beggar is, to say the least, problematic: `There was a dignity springing from the very depth of their desolation; as to be naked is to be so much nearer to the being man, than to go in livery. ` (I, 228)

`I am terribly shy in making myself known to strangers` (`Mackery End` I, 152)

If, as was possible, Lamb met Wordsworth in London in 1795, there was no reason why Wordsworth should have taken particular note of him; Wordsworth's priority was to cultivate the network of his acquaintances among already established friends. The first meeting between Lamb and Wordsworth that we can be sure of took place in 1796. Coleridge had been in London, and Wordsworth (now living in Dorset) was due there for a visit after he had left; he therefore gave Lamb the job of returning his manuscript copy of Wordsworth's new poem, `Salisbury Plain`, to the author. Coleridge no doubt shared his enthusiasm for Wordsworth's poetry with his old school friend, but Lamb's function at this point was essentially that of a go-between. The correspondence of future years bears out the fact that, whatever else Lamb became to Wordsworth, his function as a convenient contact for acquiring books, or handing books back, or on to others, was taken for granted. In 1806, writing to Catherine Clarkson about a book Wordsworth wanted bought and sent to him from London, Dorothy explained `William intends to impose the task on Charles Lamb`; and in 1811, referring to a book he intended to collect while in London,

Wordsworth wrote somewhat imperiously to Godwin, `Let it be sent to Lamb's for my use`.[13] Lamb surely had Wordsworth in mind when, in `The Two Races of Men` he wrote:

> What a careless, even deportment hath your borrower! what rosy gills! what a beautiful reliance on Providence doth he manifest, - taking no more thought than lilies! What contempt for money, - accounting it (yours and mine especially) no better than dross! (I, 46)

`I have not forgot your commissions` Lamb reassured Wordsworth in 1800, `But the truth is … I am not plethorically abounding in cash at present`.[14]

In 1796 Wordsworth had done no more than meet one of Coleridge's friends, and from Coleridge he will no doubt have learnt that the diminutive man with the stutter who returned his manuscript was an old school friend, a clerk at the East India House who had poems currently going to press along with himself and Charles Lloyd. None of them could have foreseen the circumstances of their next meeting. It was within a short time of this encounter that Mary Lamb stabbed her mother to death, and Coleridge at once urged Lamb to travel down to Somerset in order to help him recover. It is clear that, nervous as he was at the prospect of travelling to Nether Stowey, he was keen to go for companionship's sake: `I see nobody` he wrote to Coleridge, `I sit and read, or walk alone, and hear nothing`, adding miserably, ` … if I come to Stowey, what conversation can I furnish for those stores of Knowledge and of fancy; those delightful treasures of wisdom which I know he [Coleridge] will open to me?`[15] Though exposure to the heady creative atmosphere of Stowey clearly left the young, bereaved Londoner reeling under the impact, he was by no means convinced of its benefits, as he was to confess to Coleridge shortly afterwards: `I reason myself into the belief that those few and pleasant holidays shall not have been spent in vain`.[16]

Coleridge, he knew, passionately believed that the key to his friend's recovery lay in his exposure to nature. This proved to be the case, but not at-all in the way Coleridge had imagined. Lamb's return to London from what will have been a profoundly alien way of life among utterly

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[13] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, Part I 1806-11, edit. Ernest De Selincourt, revised Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1969), 62; 470 (Hereafter *Middle Years*).
[14] C. L. to William Wordsworth 13 October 1800. *Letters*, I, 142.
[15] C. L. to S.T. Coleridge, 24 June 1797, *Letters*, I, 79.
[16] C. L. to S.T. Coleridge, July 1797, *Letters*, I, 79.

unfamiliar surroundings, triggered his reengagement with the cultural life of the metropolis. Once back in London he had no need to `reason himself` into any `belief` about what was needed as a means of coping with his situation, and he set about creating a shape-shifting identity calculated to make the life of a grafting East India Company clerk bearable. Writing, the theatre, alcohol, tobacco, snuff, companionship, and crowds, became additional indispensable props for his survival. His description of the pleasures of the theatre in Elia's essay `On Some of the Old Actors` describes what he sought at this time: ` … a delicious confusedness of the head, and a veering undirected goodness of purpose` (I, 279). This was anything but the `hungering after Nature` that Coleridge, in `This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison`, claimed he knew Lamb had been craving.[17]

Lamb had left his great-coat behind him in Somerset, and regardless of how he expressed his request for its return, the image of that coat emerges as a metaphor for the danger its owner is in of losing control over his destiny within the suffocating web of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's tightly knit circle. He was tactfully insistent that he must have the coat back: `Is it not ridiculous that I sometimes envy that great-coat lingering so cunningly behind!'[18] Later, writing more candidly as Elia in `The Old and the New Schoolmaster`, there is more than a hint of the harmful nature of the stifling relationship he had witnessed between Coleridge and Wordsworth while in Nether Stowey:

> I would not be domesticated all my days with a person of very superior capacity to my own – not, if I know myself at all, from any considerations of jealousy or self-comparison, for the occasional communion with such minds has constituted the fortune and felicity of my life – but the habit of too constant intercourse with spirits above you, instead of raising you, keeps you down. Too frequent doses of original thinking from others, restrain what lesser portion of that faculty you may possess of your own. You get entangled in another man's mind.… your way of thinking, the mould in which your thoughts are cast, must be your own. Intellect may be imparted, but not each man's intellectual frame. (I, 104)

Lamb's `way of thinking`, and the `mould` in which his thoughts were cast, could hardly have been more different from those manufactured for him by Coleridge, as his reaction to the `gentle-hearted Charles` described in `This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison` makes clear: `please to blot

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[17] *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poems*, edit. John Beer (London 1993), 149 l.29.
[18] C. L. to S.T. Coleridge, July 1797, *Letters*, I, 79.

out *gentle-hearted*, and substitute drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaved, odd-ey'd, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the Gentleman in question`[19]. Lamb was beginning to define himself as the product of city life and culture, a complex urban persona that embodied a critique of Wordsworth's perception of modernity rooted in the `fair works` of `nature`. Both men were grappling with the need to establish an identity in the wake of their earlier traumatic experiences, and in the process Lamb was developing an increasingly clear understanding of how he differed from Wordsworth. The `borrowers`, he writes, in `The Two Races of Men`, `I choose to designate as the *great race* … discernible in their figure, port, and a certain instinctive sovereignty`. So much for the Wordsworths of this world; now we come to the Lambs, the `lenders`, they `are born degraded. "He shall serve his brethren." There is something in the air of one of this cast, lean and suspicious` (I, 46), to which Elia might well have added `drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaved, odd-ey'd, stuttering`.

Four years after his visit to Somerset Wordsworth invited Lamb to stay with him at Grasmere, and Lamb's response signals the coming of age of the friendship that this unlikely couple were to maintain until Lamb's death in 1834. `With you and your sister I could gang anywhere`, Lamb begins, but then adds, with a characteristic shift of tone, `I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey`. The word `desperate` marks an ironic turn, prompted, perhaps, by a lingering memory of the time he not only first saw the Quantocks, but discovered that he was expected to walk over them: `Separate from the pleasure of your company, 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`.[20]

`Distant Correspondents`

When in receipt of Wordsworth's poetry, Lamb never hesitated to assume the role of an independent, objective literary critic. In the case of *Lyrical Ballads*, the nature of his response was of a piece with the forthright manner in which he refused Wordsworth's offer of hospitality at Grasmere. He was far from comfortable with the way Wordsworth was beginning to be idolised, as a letter he wrote to Thomas Manning in 1800 indicates:

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[19] C. L. to S.T. Coleridge, 14 August 1800, *Letters*, I, 129.
[20] C.L. to Wordsworth, January 1801, *Letters* I, 164.

> I have received a very kind invitation from Lloyd and Sophia to go and spend a month with them at the Lakes. Now it fortunately happens (which is so seldom the case) that I have spare cash by me, enough to answer the expenses of so long a journey; and I am determined to get away from the office by some means…. I need not describe to you the expectations which such an one as myself, pent up all my life in a dirty city, have formed of a tour of the Lakes. Consider Grasmere! Ambleside! Wordsworth! Coleridge! I hope you will. Hills, woods, lakes, and mountains, to the devil. I will eat snipes with thee, Thomas Manning.[21]

His letter of 1801 to Wordsworth possesses the same characteristic quality of a voice that shifted between genuine appreciation, `your very kind invitation to Cumberland`, a theatrically assumed, performative voice, `With you and your sister I could gang anywhere`, and passages which by implication mock what he knows is Wordsworth's disapproval of city life and the assumed degradation of those who, like him, eagerly embrace its pleasures of drink, tobacco, and the theatre, not to mention the women. He knew Wordsworth well enough by this time to know how to induce a sharp intake of breath and a patronisingly sad shake of the bardic head:

> the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, waggons, 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.[22]

But there was another Charles Lamb who read and admired much of Wordsworth's poetry. When, therefore, as Elia, he came to reflect on the welcome escapism he experienced in the reading of plays from an earlier age, it was Wordsworth's invocation of `that blessed mood` described in *Tintern Abbey* that came into his mind. Lamb appealed to `that happy breathing-place from the burthen of perpetual moral questioning` that `now and then, for a dream-like while or so` enabled him `to imagine a world with no meddling restrictions` ('On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century', I, 282). Wordsworth described:

> […] that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight

[21] C.L. to Manning 28 November 1800. *Letters* I, 148.
[22] C.L. to Wordsworth 30 January 1801. *Letters*, I, 165.

> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lighten'd [23]

While Lamb was happy to praise those Lyrical Ballads he enjoyed (albeit with a cavalier carelessness when giving them their titles), he showed himself very ready to express his dislike for those he found less than satisfactory, and from a subsequent letter to Manning we hear of the reception that Lamb's literary criticism got from Dove Cottage - and not only from Dove Cottage. `All the North of England are in turmoil`, he wrote, `Cumberland and Westmorland have already declared a state of war`. Wordsworth, Lamb's erstwhile `Reluctant Letter-Writer` has produced `four sweating pages` which (given the unspoken notion that Lamb as a Londoner begins at a disadvantage) declare that he is (Lamb is claiming to quote from Wordsworth's letter), `"compelled to wish that my range of sensibility was more extended, being obliged to believe that I should receive large influxes of happiness and happy Thoughts" (I suppose from the L. B. ) – with a deal of stuff about a certain Union of Tenderness and Imagination`. Coleridge has also written to him, he tells Manning: `four long pages, equally sweaty and more tedious … assuring me that, when the works of true genius such as W. undoubtedly was, do not please me at first sight, I should suspect the fault to lie "in me and not in them," etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. What am I to do with such people? `[24]

Lamb's temerity in taking Wordsworth to task on the shortcomings of his poetry would in normal circumstances have abruptly terminated their relationship; but it was not to be so. The reason for this may well have been partly that Lamb continued to be valued as a friend of Coleridge who deserved support and encouragement on account of his domestic circumstances; but equally it may have been because Wordsworth genuinely considered Lamb's attempts at literary criticism to be the work of an inferior intellect, and therefore beneath contempt. Writing to Coleridge after Lamb had criticised a manuscript draft of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, he pronounced:

> Let Lamb learn to be ashamed of himself in not taking some pleasure in the contemplation of this picture, which supposing it to be even but a sketch, is yet sufficiently made out for any man of true power to finish it for himself. […] of one thing be assured, that Lamb has not a reasoning mind, and least of all, has he an imaginative one.

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[23] *Lyrical Ballads*, 114 ll.38-42.
[24] C. L. to Manning 14 February 1801 *Letters*, I, 328.

Yet on other occasions, as in a letter to Robert Southey of 1815, we find Wordsworth referring to Lamb as an `exquisite writer`; again later, when lamenting to John Scott about the fact that the age had produced no great prose writers, he made one exception: `Charles Lamb, my friend, writes prose exquisitely`.[25]

Another reason for Wordsworth's toleration of Lamb doubtless arose from the fact that in January 1805 the devastating news came through that Wordsworth's brother John had been drowned when his ship went down off Portland Bill. All thoughts of literary issues were laid aside, and Lamb, who was not well himself at this time, worked tirelessly to help the Wordsworths in whatever way he could. It is safe to assume that this event, which must have renewed Charles and Mary's sense of their own loss, cemented the bond of friendship between the two families.

In 1814 Wordsworth, despite his conviction that Lamb had neither a `reasoning` nor an `imaginative` mind, was persuaded by Robert Southey to engage him to review *The Excursion* for the *Quarterly Review*. This set in train a revealing exchange of letters between the two men. We find Lamb searching among his various personae for a means of performing this act of friendship; his letters veer between gossipy companionship and a subtly provocative, ironic questioning of Wordsworth's text. Commenting on Lamb's claim to Wordsworth that reading *The Excursion* with Mary had given him `A day in Heaven`, Richard Gravil suggests that:

> One has only to imagine Catherine Earnshaw making that remark to realise that it is susceptible of irony. One would not put it *quite* past Lamb to be implying that Wordsworth's attempt at `something of a dramatic form` has all the cut and thrust of exchanges between God and Christ, or Adam and the Archangel in *Paradise Lost*: his exchanges bear quite as little relation to any conversation ever heard on earth. [26]

Lamb was clearly keen to reassure Wordsworth, having goaded him many times before with his love of city life, that he would, after a struggle, be able to engage with the places and the people described in the poem: `There is a great deal of noble matter about mountain scenery`, he wrote, `yet not so much as to overpower and discountenance a poor Londoner or South-countryman entirely`.[27] In the event the project came to a disastrous

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[25] *Middle Years*, 101-2; 186; 284.
[26] Richard Gravil, *Wordsworth's Bardic Vocation, 1787-1842* (Penrith, 2003), 303.
[27] C.L. to Wordsworth, 14 August 1814. *Letters*, I, 272.

conclusion when William Gifford proceeded to edit Lamb's original review out of sight. Wordsworth's response on this occasion was to show great concern for the effect this treatment had on Lamb; his letters are full of gratitude, sympathy, and understanding.

In the following year Lamb wrote at length to Wordsworth on the first Collected Edition of his poems. The long letters show how carefully and thoughtfully Lamb and Mary were reading them, and that the response reported is shared one. Though expressing fulsome appreciation and gratitude for the gift, he continues to insist on his authority to criticise the collection in a way that will not have made easy reading for Wordsworth:

> I am almost sorry that you printed extracts from those first poems…. they have diminished the value of the original, which I possess as a curiosity. I have hitherto kept them distinct in my mind as referring to a particular period of your life. All the rest of your poems are so much of a piece, they might have been written in the same week; these decidedly speak of an earlier period. They tell more of what you had been reading.[28]

Lamb describes a situation where he seems to be repeatedly diverted from an uninterrupted reading of Wordsworth's new volumes; Wordsworth himself has been the cause of his decision to return to a study of the original *Lyrical Ballads*, then there is the fact that, as he never tired of reminding Wordsworth, he is Londoner who – unlike his fortunate friend in Cumberland – is obliged to work for a living:

> I should have written before, but am cruelly engaged, and like to be. On Friday I was at office from ten in the morning (two hours dinner except) to eleven at night; last night till nine, I do not keep a holiday now once in ten times, where I used to keep all red-letter days, and some five days besides, which I used to dub Nature's holidays…. This is Sunday, and the headache I have is part late hours at work the two preceding nights, and part late hours over a consoling pipe afterwards.[29]

In a second letter he confesses to having been distracted by reading the poems of Vincent Bourne, when he had meant to comment on the beauties of `Yarrow Visited`, `(by the way, I must look out V. B. for you)`.

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[28] C.L. to Wordsworth, 1815. *Letters*, I, 284-5.
[29] Ibid. p. 285.

Having praised a stanza from `Yarrow Visited`, however, he confesses himself not entirely satisfied with the poem `on the whole`, and of `Poor Susan`, he advises `the last verse … was to be got rid of, at all events`.[30] Vincent Bourne, an early eighteenth century author of Latin poems, quoted enthusiastically by Elia in `The Decay of Beggars`, might well have been considered by the inhabitants of Rydal Mount a less than worthy distraction from Wordsworth's first Collected Edition, although the poem Elia uses in his essay is very much of a piece with Wordsworth's writing on both the moral virtues to be found in vagrancy, and on the art of the epitaph. 1815 was also the year of publication of *The White Doe of Rylstone*. We can only guess what Wordsworth's reaction will have been to the way Lamb chose to describe his enthusiasm at the prospect of seeing *The White Doe* in print, given that he well knew how highly Wordsworth valued both *The White Doe* and *Peter Bell*:

> No alderman ever longed after a haunch of buck venison more than for a spiritual taste of that `White Doe` you promise. I am sure it is superlative, or will be when *drest*, *i.e.* printed. All things read raw to me in MS.… The only one which I think would not very much win upon me in print is `Peter Bell. ` But I am not certain.[31]

Two years later on December 28th 1817, we are given an intriguing insight into where the relationship between the two men stood when they both attended what became known as the `Immortal Dinner` given by Benjamin Robert Haydon. The major participants were Lamb, Wordsworth, Keats, Monkhouse, Joseph Ritchie, and an unnamed civil servant who felt he had a claim on Wordsworth's attention as a fellow Comptroller of Stamps. Haydon's account was written up long after the event, but it retains a ring of truth where Lamb and (to some extent) Wordsworth were concerned. `"Now", said Lamb, "you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?"`. In the anarchic exchanges that followed, Lamb, by now very drunk, pointed to the bemused civil servant and demanded of his host, `Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs. ` Haydon assures us `It was delightful to see the good-humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation and laughing as heartily as the best of us`.[32]

Two years after this, Lamb's copy of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* was set down upon his desk; he had already read Reynold's anticipatory

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[30] C.L. to Wordsworth, 1815. *Letters*, I, 287.
[31] C.L. to Wordsworth, 1815. *Letters*, I, 288.
[32] In *Selected Prose*, 392-4.

parody. The moment Wordsworth opened Lamb's letter acknowledging the arrival of his copy, he will have known that he was to be greeted by a predictably eccentric response, if for no other reason than that it was penned in alternate lines of red and black ink; glancing at the final paragraph, he will have seen that the colour changed with each word, and by the time he got to the end, what Wordsworth read would have most likely prompted a resigned shake of the head: `How do you like my way of writing with two inks? … Suppose Mrs. W. adopts it, the next time she holds the pen for you. `[33] A remark that, as Richard Gravil has it is, without doubt, `susceptible of irony`. The letter begins: 'Dear Wordsworth, I received a copy of Peter Bell a week ago, and I hope the author will not be offended if I say I do not much relish it. The humour, if it is meant for humour, is forced, and then the price. Sixpence would have been dear for it'.[34] As Wordsworth read on, however, he will have discovered that Lamb was referring to Reynolds's parody and not his own poem, and that he had therefore already been well and truly wrong footed. After going on to inveigh against Wordsworth's detractors and those sycophants who try to hitch a lift on the great poet's coat-tails, Lamb states, `Peter Bell (not the mock one) is excellent.` We seem to be back on course; but no. The next sentence reads, `For its matter, I mean'. Lamb was having the same problems with *Peter Bell* that readers have had ever since:

> I cannot say that the style of it quite satisfies me. It is too lyrical. The auditors to whom it is feigned to be told, do not *arride me*. I had rather it had been told me, the reader, at once. Heartleap (sic) Well is the tale for me, in matter as good as this, in manner infinitely before it, in my poor judgment. Why did you not add the Waggoner? Have I thanked you, though, yet, for Peter Bell? I would not *not have it* for a good deal of money.[35]

It becomes increasingly clear that Lamb genuinely dislikes the poem, and that in fact his opening gambit is applicable to Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* every bit as much as it is to the parody. By `lyrical` I assume he means a dislike of the doggerel rhythms; his preference is for a simpler narrative style (`manner`). Introducing listeners within the poem that stand between the poet and the reader, not to mention a narrator who, unlike the two narrators of `Hart-Leap Well`, confesses to his own ineptitude, leave the traditionalist Lamb dissatisfied. Nothing could be more revealing than the double negative with which he thanks Wordsworth for the gift: `I would

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[33] C.L. to Wordsworth, 28 September 1805. *Letters*, I, 218.
[34] C.L. to Wordsworth, May 1819. *Letters*, II, 20.
[35] Ibid.

not *not have it*`. According to Crabb Robinson, who had shown Lamb a manuscript copy of *Peter Bell* in 1812, he had disliked the poem from the outset, and in 1819 confided to Robinson that he still thought it `one of the worst of Wordsworth's works`.[36]

The strategy Lamb used to deal with the problem of writing a thankyou note to his friend for a poem he disliked so much is ingenious. There are two distinct voices simultaneously at work here; the seriousness of the criticism is interleaved with a theatrical buffoonery that purports to chastise the author of the parody; but when Lamb defiantly insists that the parodist has in fact encouraged him to read more, not less, poetry by Wordsworth, he does so by way of parodying a key moment in *Peter Bell*:

> But why waste a wish on him? I do not believe that paddling about with a stick in a pond and fishing up a dead author whom *his* intolerable wrongs had driven to that deed of desperation, would turn the heart of one of these obtuse literary Bells…. I am glad this aspiration came upon the red ink line. It is more of a bloody curse.[37]

The latter part of the letter is taken up with a lengthy account of the delivery of two other copies of the poem to friends, one of whom is George Dyer. Dyer, he explains, has a habit of collecting books he has no intention of reading; Lamb then apologises for this digression seeming to dismiss it as a `laborious curiosity`. Reading between the lines, however, it is clear that the phrase more properly belongs, via the unread copy of *Peter Bell* now sitting on Dyer's shelves, to the poem itself. He then concludes with the apparently encouraging observation that Wordsworth ought not to be disheartened by the inadequate critical judgements of `poetasters`, implying not only Reynolds, but – given his mention of `inks` in the plural - also his own credentials as a critic. The scantily camouflaged purpose of what he writes here, however, is to dismiss *Peter Bell* as an unreadable `laborious curiosity` which has no more poetic merit than the productions of `miserable poetasters` like Reynolds and himself; this is surely the conclusion that must be drawn from Lamb's use of the patronisingly arch phrase, `whatsoever you write` in his final sentence. Pushing his copy of *Peter Bell* to one side along with his letter, he explains, `My dinner waits`:

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[36] From Edwin Marrs's notes to this letter we can gauge what Coleridge`s impression of the relationship between Lamb and Wordsworth was at this time. He refers to Coleridge's stated belief `that Lamb was the objectionable parodist` (*The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., 3 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975-81), III, 521.

[37] C.L. to William Wordsworth, May 1819, *Letters*, II, 21.

> I have no time to indulge any longer in these laborious curiosities. God bless you and cause to thrive and to burgeon whatsoever you write, and fear no inks of miserable poetasters. Mary's love. Yours truly, Charles Lamb.[38]

Wordsworth's response was to dedicate *The Waggoner* to his friend, and send him a copy of it when it was published in the month following his gift of *Peter Bell.*

`A spirit of beautiful tolerance`
(Lamb to Wordsworth on receipt of *The Waggoner*, June 1819)

The relationship between Lamb and Wordsworth is indicative of the volatile, post enlightenment culture we have come to think of as Romanticism. In 1924, Arthur Lovejoy insisted that what he termed `diversitarianism` constituted `the most significant and distinctive feature of the Romantic revolution`, and M. H. Abrams subsequently described the period in which Wordsworth and Lamb were writing as grounded in a `preference for maximum diversity, for the fullness of individuality, and for particularity`.[39] It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Lamb and Wordsworth were contradictory individuals representing in themselves, or through the voices of their fictional narrators, fundamentally different ways of seeing, indicative of a tension which became a commonplace point of reference in subsequent attempts to define Romanticism. For Nietzsche, writing in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the key to this discussion lay in what he called an `*Appollinian* and *Dionysian* duality` which had originated in the evolution of Hellenic art, and remained fundamental to an understanding of nineteenth century culture:

> These two different tendencies [*Appollinian* and *Dionysian*] run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially reconciled by the common term `art'. [40]

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[38] Ibid. 22.
[39] For Arthur Lovejoy, `On the Discrimination of Romanticism`, 1924, reprinted in *Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York, 1971), 228-53, see also Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative* (Cambridge Massacusetts, 2003), 6-9.
M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York, 1971), 185.
[40] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York, 1967), 33 (Hereafter *Nietzsche*).

Wordsworth was understating the case when, in *The Prelude* he wrote that, in the course of reflecting on his past, `I see / Two consciousnesses – conscious of my self, / And of some other being.`[41] This is the poet who, having invoked the single, authoritarian presence of John Milton for his muse in *The Excursion*, proceeded to distribute the narrative voice for that poem between four contending protagonists. After Nine Books and 9,068 lines of poetry, the great moral questions that have been posed remain unresolved. In this he was being no more than consistent with a recurring feature of his earlier writing, and in *Peter Bell*, when the Squire complains of the narrator's inability to begin his epic story in the correct place the long shadow of *Paradise Lost* is once more in evidence:

> The Squire cried "Sure as Paradise
> Was lost to us by Adam's sinning
> We all are wandering in a wood,
> And therefore, Sir, I wish you would
> Begin at the beginning."[42]

Beneath the seemingly off-hand doggerel of *Peter Bell* lurks the high seriousness and sobriety of Wordsworth's Appollinian `tendency`, to use Nietzsche's term; and intriguingly Keats chose to refer to Wordsworth's `remote and sublime muse` as derived from Apollo when comparing *Peter Bell* to J. H. A. Reynold's parodic version of the poem in 1819.[43] Over against this we should set Lamb's Dionysian description of the figure of the `drunken dog` he cut at Nether Stowey in 1797, not to mention Carlyle's estimate of him thirty-four years later as `a confirmed, shameless drunkard`.[44] *The Waggoner*, which Wordsworth dedicated to Dionysian Lamb, is, among other things, a treatise on the evils of the demon drink in which its Appollinian author portrays himself as `A simple water-drinking Bard`, and tells the sorry tale of a would-be reformed drunkard. In 1886 Nietzsche's critique of contemporary culture suggests in its turn an intriguing critique of Wordsworth's `water drinking bard`:

> The satyr, like the idyllic shepherd of more recent times, is the offspring of a longing for the primitive and the natural; but how firmly and fearlessly the Greek embraced the man of the woods, and

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[41] *Prelude*, 14, ll.29-31.
[42] *Peter Bell*, 60, ll.166-70.
[43] *The Letters of John Keats*, edit. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 Vols (London, 2001), II: 94.
[44] *Selected Prose*, 11.

> how timorously and mawkishly modern man dallied with the flattering image of a sentimental, flute-playing, tender shepherd!
>
> The contrast between this real truth of nature and the lie of culture that poses as if it were the only reality is similar to that between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the whole world of appearances: just as tragedy, with its metaphysical comfort, points to the eternal life of this core of existence which abides through the perpetual destruction of appearances, the symbolism of the satyr chorus proclaims this primordial relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearance. The idyllic shepherd of modern man is merely a counterfeit of the sum of cultural illusions that are allegedly nature; the Dionysian Greek wants truth and nature in their most forceful form – and sees himself changed, as if by magic, into a satyr.[45]

On the evidence of what Lamb wrote on the subject of Wordsworth's poetry in his letters, those flute-playing `tender shepherds` were never going to make a particularly profound impression on him, any more than were the mountains amongst which he lived: `O London! With thy many sins…. For these may Keswick and her great brood go hang! `.[46]

In her recent book, *Modernity's Mist: British Romanticism and the Poetics of Anticipation*, Emily Rohrbach explores the way in which Romanticism may be understood as ushering in a wholly new era of fragmentation and uncertainty that persists through to the present day. When she argues that the fault-line may be broadly identified as one where `poetic experience comes into tension with – or even exceeds – referential meaning`, the tensions that emerge repeatedly in Wordsworth's poetry come to mind, along with the struggles which many writers at this time were having to understand their world through an appeal to historical precedents that proved increasingly inadequate to explain an alarmingly unpredictable present.[47] `A multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind` was how Wordsworth put it in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800, and Rohrbach's commentary points up the way in which the political and cultural upheavals that lie at the heart of Romanticism offer us a window that opens onto our contemporary condition:

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[45] *Nietzsche*, 61-2.
[46] C.L. to Manning 28 November 1800, *Letters*, I, 149.
[47] Emily Rohrbach, *Modernity's Mist: British Romanticism and the Poetics of Anticipation* (New York, 2016), 7 (Hereafter *Rohrbach*).

> these literary works offer access to peculiarly modern temporalities – to an experience of shifting grounds of knowing, a paradoxical anticipation of the unpredictable, and an encounter with the not fully knowable present.[48]

Time is fluid, the self can never be fixed. This is about life experienced through Elian eyes as theatre, as dream, as make-believe, inducing an interplay of dream and reality through time. In Paul Ricour's words, the contemporaneity of Romanticism establishes for us a world where there is `Inexorable plurality on the one side, impenetrable solitude on the other`[49]. It is to Ricour's `inexorable plurality` and Rohrbach's `not fully knowable present` that Charles Lamb/Elia appeals when contemplating `the poetic talent` in his essay `Sanity of True Genius`.

Nowhere more than in this essay do we observe Lamb discovering the unpremeditated complexities of his subject matter as a direct consequence of attempting to set down his ideas in writing. Initially his exploration of the world of dreams and of `waking reality` is safely contained within a literary context; but these are issues which had a profound effect on his life, and the essay gradually expands to become an existential, extemporary exploration of the twilight realm within which lies the illusive border between what the world perceives as sanity, and what it designates madness. At the beginning Lamb argues that `great wit` (`or genius, in our modern way of speaking`) is the property of sanity, it does not have a `necessary alliance with insanity, the greatest wits, on the contrary, will ever be found to be the sanest writers…. The true poet dreams being awake. He is not possessed by his subject, but has dominion over it`. So far, so Wordsworthian (so `Appollinian`), we might well say. But this is now followed by a subtle (potentially `Dionysian`) shift in his position, as he goes on to suggest that the great poets are gifted with a `hidden sanity` which enables them to reconcile `the shifting mutations of the most rambling dream` with `the sobrieties of everyday occurrences`. `It is not enough`, he insists, to claim that a great poet produces simply `a copy of the mind's conception in sleep`; but then we see him pause and draw back as he applies a semi-colon, because producing a copy of the dream is after all what the poet does `in some sort`, and then comes a dash, during which I hear an intake of breath, to be followed by the whispered afterthought: ` – but what a copy!` He concludes:

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[48] *Lyrical Ballads*, 746. *Rohrbach*, 17-18.
[49] Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections of the Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago & London, 2007), 18.

> Let the most romantic of us, that has been entertained all night with the spectacle of some wild and magnificent vision, recombine it in the morning, and try it by his waking judgment. That which appeared so shifting, and yet so coherent, while that faculty was passive, when it comes under cool examination, shall appear so reasonless and so unlinked, that we are ashamed to have been so deluded; and to have taken though but in sleep, a monster for a God. *But* the transitions in this episode are every whit as violent as in the most extravagant dream, and yet the waking judgment ratifies them. (My emphasis)[50]

That is a huge `But`, and with it Lamb effectively forgoes the option of an easy resolution concerning the relative merits of the `extravagant dream` and the `waking judgement`.

Nietzsche's duality of Apollo and Dionysius is woven into the fabric of this remarkable essay in everything but name. The Dionysian `wild and magnificent vision` of the night is subjected to an Appollinian `cool examination` in the morning light, leaving us to reflect on how successful Lamb has been in the compulsion he feels to be able to reconcile the Dionysian `monster` with the Appollinian `God`; for surely this is what he is striving for. When we consider that two men as different as Charles Lamb and William Wordsworth were capable of sustaining a genuinely caring friendship throughout their lives, the conclusion must be that such a reconciliation is indeed possible.

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[50] 'Sanity of True Genius', II, 77.

‘by contraries joined’: Wordsworth’s Friendship with Burns

JAKE PHIPPS

William Wordsworth’s life-long admiration for Robert Burns is well documented; but it is not necessarily well-known. Wordsworth praised Burns regularly. Stephen Gill notes in his essay ‘Wordsworth and Burns’ that, ‘[...] a survey of Wordsworth’s writing life reveals that there is not a decade of it in which Burns is not a substantial presence’.[1] Wordsworth liked to stress his close, personal attachment to Burns, and when mourning his death wrote:

> I mourned with thousands, but as one
> More deeply grieved, for He was gone
> Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
> And showed my youth
> How Verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth.[2] (31-36)

Here, Wordsworth acknowledges that he was an early admirer of Burns, who had a formative influence on his verse making. Wordsworth claimed, as late as 1842, that geographic proximity to Burns also helped foster this sense of closeness:

> With the Poems of Burns I became acquainted almost immediately upon their first appearance in the volume printed at Kilmarnock in 1786. […] Familiarity with the dialect of the border counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland made it easy for me not only to understand but to feel them.[3]

Gill’s essay points to the sense of ‘kinship’ that Wordsworth fostered in his own mind with Burns, and it is the productive effects of this imagined kinship, or friendship, that are the concern of this article, specifically the theme of friendship as it relates to Burns’s influence on Wordsworth.[4] I

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[1] Stephen Gill, ‘Wordsworth and Burns’, in *Burns and other Poets*, ed. Fiona Stafford and David Sergeant (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 156-167 (156).
[2] *Wordsworth’s Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 volumes (London: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1946), III, 66.
[3] *WPW,* III, 441-42.
[4] Gill, ‘Wordsworth and Burns’, 159.

begin by looking at one of Wordsworth's 1803 Scottish Tour poems, 'At the Grave of Burns', a poem with a complicated composition history that traverses several decades and a poem which explicitly imagines what it would have been like to be friends with Burns. I then turn to *The Ruined Cottage*, where Burns's verse epistles to poet-friends inform the bonds of friendship and communal suffering between the poet-traveller and the Pedlar.

Wordsworth's imagined kinship with Burns is fitting. Friendship, especially friendship between poets, is a constant subject of Burns's poetry. There are eight poems addressed to friends in *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786), all of them warm, convivial, and witty celebrations of creative mirth, and many are also more earnest and sombre reflections on the virtues of poetic creation and the meaningful connections made between friends. A number of Burns's verse epistles, such as the ones to John Lapraik, William Simson, and David Sillar are epistles to poet-friends and are deeply concerned with the act of writing poetry, as well as fostering a local community of poets.

It is worth quoting a few stanzas representative of Burns's tone and subject in addressing his friends:

> I've scarce heard ought descib'd sae weel,
> What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
> Thought I, 'Can this be *Pope*, or *Steele*,
> Or *Beattie's* wark;'
> They tald me 'twas an odd kind chiel
> About *Muirkirk*[5]

These lines, from Burns's 'Epistle to J. L*****K, an Old Scotch Bard, April 1st, 1785' praise the poetic virtues of an older poet he hoped to build a friendship with, while the following lines praise his friend and 'rhyme composing' brither' William Simson, in his epistle 'To W. S*****n, Ochiltree, May– 1785':

> Fareweel, 'my rhyme-composing' brither!
> We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
> Now let us lay our heads tegither,
> In love fraternal:

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[5] *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. by James Kinsley, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), I, lines 19-24, 85. All Subsequent references to Burns's verse are taken from this edition and appear as 'Burns, *Poems and Songs*'.

May *Envy* wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal![6] (97-102)

Burns's energetic addresses, not unlike Byron's *ottova rima*, are forceful and seemingly authentic rhetorical manoeuvres, filled with compact rhymes and colloquial language that give the impression of improvisation, or of natural speech. Both of these epistles were well-known to Wordsworth and, as will be shown, he either alluded to them or referenced them directly in his own poetry.

Wordsworth toured Burns's country in 1803, though several of the poems inspired by that tour were not fully developed until decades later. 'At the Grave of Burns' announces itself as being from 1803, 'Seven Years After his Death' although most of it was written in 1835, and the poem was not published until 1842.[7] 'At the Grave of Burns', like two of Wordsworth's other tour poems are composed in the Standard Habbie stanza that Burns himself revitalized and was well-known for (this stanza is sometimes referred to as the 'Burns Stanza').

Wordsworth's poem evokes Burns's lines from 'To A Mountain Daisy'. His imitation of Burns is motivated by the occasion of the poem itself, with a stanza form that openly acknowledges Burns, while it facilitates the conversational, friendly approach that the poem imagines. In order to properly celebrate or remember his would-be friend, Wordsworth meets Burns both literally and poetically on home turf. Wordsworth spends four out of fourteen stanzas musing on a prosperous friendship with Burns. Not only does he imagine being seen atop Skiddaw from Criffel, he considers what it would have meant to have sat and talked with Burns in his native land:

Might we together
Have sate and talked where gowans blow,
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?

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[6] Burns, *Poems and Songs*, I, 96.

[7] Gill's essay traces the complicated yet significant textual history of this poem, where despite the poem's sub-title '[…] it is *not* a poem of 1803. Three-quarters of "At the Grave of Burns" was written in 1835'. 163.

> Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
> His grave grass-grown.[8] (52-60)

While Wordsworth's wish to sit and talk with Burns is common to many mourning an absence, the missed connection is wished for in the service of poetic inspiration. The poem's desire to connect with Burns through casual conversation in nature is reminiscent of Burns's own celebrations of friendship in his 'Epistle to Davie, a brother poet', for his friend, David Sillar:

> What tho', like Commoners of air,
> We wander out, we know not where,
> But either house or hal'?
> Yet *Nature's* charms, the hills and woods,
> The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
> Are free alike to all.
> In days when Daisies deck the ground,
> And Blackbirds whistle clear,
> With honest joy, our hearts will bound,
> To see the *coming* year:
> On braes when we please then,
> We'll sit and *sowth* a tune;
> Syne *rhyme* till't, we'll time till't
> And sing't when we hae done.[9] (43-56)

Burns has no trouble imagining aimless wandering with a poet-friend with whom he often took long walks.[10] More to the point, Burns's depiction of friendship centres on '*Nature's* charms' and '*rhyme*'. Burns's word 'sowth' is glossed – by Burns – as 'to try over a tune with a low whistle', which Robert Crawford notes as offering 'an account of the compositional technique [he and Sillar] shared'.[11] Wordsworth had likewise found Burns instructive, claiming in his poem that Burns had shown 'how verse may build a princely throne / On humble truth' (35-36). However, Wordsworth, in his lines commemorating his time at Burns's grave is not content simply to lament death or to praise Burns's virtues as a poet. Wordsworth's proximity to Burns is initially portrayed as haunting and more traditionally

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[8] *WPW,* III, 66.
[9] Burns, *Poems and Songs*, I, 66.
[10] Robert Crawford, *The Bard: Robert Burns, A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 87.
[11] *The Bard,* 87-88.

elegiac, in its recognition of the poet's own mortality, where in the second stanza, Wordsworth asks:

> And have I then thy bones so near,
> And thou forbidden to appear?
> As if it were thyself that's here
> I shrink with pain;
> And both my wishes and my fear
> Alike are vain.[12] (6-12)

And yet, Wordsworth forces himself to shift away from this mournful tone, in the third stanza forcefully pushing 'away / Dark thoughts!' (14-15) as the poem moves towards a more cheerful reminiscence of the poet he admired, which also signals Wordsworth's handful of allusions to various Burns poems. He compares Burns to the flower of 'To a Mountain Daisy' where his genius 'glinted' forth (20).[13] Perhaps the lines where Wordsworth might 'have sate and talked where gowans blow' gently recall the lines from Burns's epistle to David Sillar. 'Gowans', a Scots word for daisies, echoes Burns and Davy who 'sit and *sowth* a tune' (54) 'in days when Daisies deck the ground' (49). Daisies covering the grass would have been a powerful image for Wordsworth in a familiar poem, and in his own poem composed during such self-conscious indulgences in Burns's verse. Burns's social ebullience and passion for the twin powers of poetry and nature draws Wordsworth in close where he begins to echo Burns more clearly than at almost any other point. Like Sillar, Wordsworth knew there was much to be learned from Burns and that Burns would have willingly shared what he knew:

> What treasures would have then been placed
> Within my reach; of knowledge graced
> By fancy what a rich repast!
> But why go on?[14] (55-58)

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[12] *WPW,* III, 65.
[13] Compare with Burns's stanza:
Cauld blew the bitter-biting *North*
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet chearfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scare rear'd above the *Parent-earth*
Thy tender form. (Burns, *Poems and Songs,* I, 228).
[14] *WPW*, III, 66.

Wordsworth's wish is to take part in what friendship with Burns would have meant. To be in proximity with Burns would have meant a proximity to 'treasures' of poetic inspiration. Curiously, Wordsworth suggests that knowing Burns would have 'placed' the treasures 'within my reach', which is not quite the same as apprehending these treasures. The past participles 'placed' and 'graced' as well as 'repast' with the word 'past' built into it, continues to keep the fullness of what Burns had to offer at a distance.

The wish to have known Burns was intimately connected with a desire for poetic inspiration, though Wordsworth's was fully aware of the practical differences of character between himself and his Scottish counterpart. Elsewhere, Wordsworth had detailed his irritation at the biographical miasma that occluded so much of Burns's virtues as a poet.[15] Wordsworth acknowledges these differences, though he does so with great charitability:

> Alas! Where'er the current tends,
> Regret pursues and with it blends,—
> Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
> By Skiddaw seen,—
> Neighbours we were, and loving friends
> We might have been;
>
> True friends though diversely inclined;
> But heart with heart and mind with mind,
> Where the main fibres are entwined,
> Through Nature's skill,
> May even by contraries be joined
> More closely still.[16] (37-48)

Wordsworth again forces his closeness to Burns by claiming that they '*were* neighbours' – as if it were something that could not be taken from him – thus making their un-met friendship more likely, more personal, and perhaps more tragic for not transpiring. Wordsworth acknowledges his differences to Burns but is quick to suggest that where it really counts, 'the main fibres are entwined' and that their differences will serve instead as a strengthening bond.

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[15] Wordsworth gives a vigorous defence of Burns in his 'A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns', which is more than a mere stalking horse for his personal quarrel with Francis Jeffrey. *William Wordsworth: The Major Works, Including The Prelude*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 663-675.
[16] *WPW*, 66.

Although Wordsworth's often solemn temperament is in some ways anathema to the popular image of Burns (both then and now), Wordsworth freely admitted his love of the boisterousness of Burns's poetry, particularly of Tam O'Shanter, remarking in 1816 'Who but some impenetrable dunce or narrow-minded puritan in works of art, ever read without delight the picture which he has drawn of the convivial exaltation of the rustic adventurer, Tam O'Shanter'.[17] Who indeed? Wordsworth admired the varied and dramatic poetic depictions of Burns and refused to take them literally. But Wordsworth also found in Burns what he described as 'energetic, solemn and sublime'; a side of Burns's poetry he found as appealing as 'convivial exaltation'.[18]

Wordsworth's unusual attribution of Burns as 'solemn' reveals Wordsworth as a perceptive reader of Burns's poetic range, and a poet acutely capable of incorporating what he understood from Burns into his own sombre lyrics. It is worth considering one of Wordsworth's most solemn lyrics, *The Ruined Cottage*, in this light, to give some understanding as to why the brief allusion to Burns's verse epistles matters to a poem so distinctly Wordsworthian.

A 1798 manuscript of *The Ruined Cottage* (MS B) begins with an epigraph that misquotes Burns's 'Epistle to J. Lapraik':

> Give me a spark of nature's fire,
> Tis the best learning I desire.
> . . . . .
> My Muse though homely in attire
> May touch the heart.
> Burns.[19]

Wordsworth has changed a few of the words while also flattening out the dialect of a poem he knew well and quoted often:[20]

> Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,

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[17] Wordsworth, *Major Works*, 670.
[18] *Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Donald A Low (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 131.
[19] *William Wordsworth: The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar,* ed. James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 42.
[20] One critic has suggested Wordsworth 'bungled' Burns's lines, but it is unlikely that he misquoted these lines by accident. Kurt Fosso, 'Community and Mourning in William Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage, 1797-1798', Studies in Philology,* 92 (1995), 329-45, (339).

> That's a' the learning I desire;
> Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
> At pleugh or cart,
> My Muse, tho' hamely in attire,
> May touch the heart.[21] (73-78)

MS B of *The Ruined Cottage* also gives the pedlar, who tells Margaret's tale, a more developed background that aligns him with Burns:

> [...] His eye
> Flashing poetic fire, he would repeat
> The songs of Burns, and as we trudged along
> Together did we make the hollow grove
> Ring with our transports. Though he was untaught,
> In the dead lore of schools undisciplined,
> Why should he grieve? He was a chosen son[22] (70-76)

These lines echo Wordsworth's epigraph where 'flashing poetic fire' recalls 'a spark of nature's fire'. The image of the poet and wanderer who 'trudged' along with an 'untaught' pedlar also recall the lines Wordsworth omits, where Burns's claims 'tho I drudge thro dub and mire […] My Muse […] May still touch the heart'. Wordsworth's epigraph provided a series of useful images and rustic poses that helped flesh out the figure of the pedlar which invokes Burns explicitly, 'he would repeat the songs of Burns', as well as developing a rustic and untutored bard of 'dead lore of schools' that echoes the Preface of Burns's Kilmarnock poems:

> The following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or Virgil. To the Author of this, these and other celebrated names their countrymen are, in their original languages, 'A fountain shut up and a book sealed'.[23]

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[21] Burns, *Poems and Songs,* I, 87. Burns's lines are themselves a reworking of both Pope and Sterne (*Poems and Songs*, vol 3, 1059).
[22] *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, 46.
[23] *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Robert Burns*, ed. Nigel Leask, Murray Pittock, and Kirsteen McCue, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), I, Leask, (2014), 72.

The figure of the Pedlar in MS B is both one who can remember and pass along Burns's songs, while also having numerous traits that resemble the Scottish poet himself.

Wordsworth's decision to quote from such a fast-paced and swaggering Burns verse epistle feels at odds with the solemn and distressful tale of Margaret and her children. Burns's poem is a celebration of Scottish poetry and a wish for friendship, written as a response to hearing 'another Ayrshire poet', John Lapraik sing a heartfelt song at a farmhouse gathering on Shrove Tuesday in 1785.[24] Lapraik, who was nearly sixty, sang a song on married love 'entirely in decorous English'.[25] Burns's poem extends the hand of friendship to Lapraik, a fellow poet who shared an appreciation for 'Scots locutions' as well as the English verse of Pope, Steele, or Beattie. Burns praises Lapraik by pretending to confuse the older poet's poems for the verses of English poets. [26] Perhaps Wordsworth recognised something valuable in a poem where a young, robust poet who could reel off verses, seemingly at will, wished for kinship with an older poet who sang moving songs that could describe what 'gen'rous, manly bosoms feel' (20).[27] Social relationships or friendships are a central concern of *The Ruined Cottage,* and the bonds that serve to unite or fracture these relationships are symbolised potently in the Pedlar's tale.

Although *The Ruined Cottage* as it appears in modern editions does not include any specific references to Burns's 'Epistle to J. Lapraik' it was, along with the rest of Burns's Kilmarnock volume, very much in Wordsworth's head during the years of the poem's composition. It is probable that Burns's wish for shared kindness that warms the heart resonated with Wordsworth, who was composing a tale of 'silent suffering' that depended on reciprocal acts of friendship. The only direct invocation of Burns that remains in published versions of *The Ruined Cottage* is Burns's 'Epistle to William Simson', a poem that directly follows Burns's two verse epistles to Lapraik in the Kilmarnock edition. Wordsworth alerts his readers to Burns with quotation marks for 'trotting brooks' during the Pedlar's tale, 'and now the "trotting brooks" and whispering trees/ And now the music of my own sad steps' (295-96).[28] Christopher Ricks distinguishes between allusion and plagiarism, where 'the alluder hopes that the reader will recognise something, the plagiarist that the reader will

[24] *The Bard,* 186-87.
[25] *The Bard,* 187.
[26] *The Bard,* 187.
[27] Burns, *Poems and Songs,* I, 85.
[28] Wordsworth, *Major Works*, 38.

not'.[29] Wordsworth's use of quotation marks clearly indicates a wish for something to be recognised, serving as a coded reference to another poet who can enrich the scene of his own thinking through an allusion that is both subtle and obvious: subtle, as it gives very little away, yet obvious in its desire to be recognised. Unsurprisingly, Wordsworth has altered Burns's lines again, substituting 'brooks' for 'burns':

> The *Muse,* nae *Poet* ever fand her,
> Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
> Adown some trottin burn's meander,
> An' no think lang;
> O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
> A heart-felt sang![30] (85-90)

Wordsworth's subtle allusion which aligns the Pedlar explicitly with a solitary poet seeking the Muse among nature and his own pensive heart suggests a greater commitment to the bonds of poetic brotherhood. Both 'Epistle to J. Lapraik' and 'To W. Simson' call to fellow poets and hope to inspire a greater community. What Burns's verse epistles offered Wordsworth in *The Ruined Cottage* was a mode for exploring the dialectic of the solitary poet who must wander out in nature – alone – to court the Muse, yet still requires the bonds of social kinship to communicate and maintain what is won through an obedience 'to the strong creative power / Of human passion'.

Wordsworth knew he lived a very different life to Burns but saw those differences in temperament and circumstance as a cause for a stronger bond. The site of Burns's grave and thoughts of his decline pose the problem of paying a just tribute through mourning, grief, and memory, against the dangers of the 'weight' of 'dark thoughts'. Wordsworth's elegy for Burns concludes with a departure and a recognition of the limits of mourning that recall the ending of *The Ruined Cottage:*

> Sighing I turned away; but ere
> Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
> Music that sorrow comes not near,
> A ritual hymn,
> Chanted in love that casts out fear

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[29] Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1.

[30] Burns, *Poems and Songs*, I, 95.

By Seraphim.[31] (79-84)

Wordsworth must turn away so as not to be overcome with grief, and displays the same wisdom of the Pedlar that juxtaposes holding 'vain dalliance with the misery / Even of the dead' (223-24) against a knowledge that:

> [...] there is often found
> In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,
> A power to virtue friendly[32] (227-29)

The Pedlar of *The Ruined Cottage* balances the grief and the possibilities encountered at Margaret's grave in much the same way as Wordsworth at the Grave of Burns:

> Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
> That what we feel of sorrow and despair
> From ruin and from change, and all the grief
> The passing shews of being leave behind,
> Appeared an idle dream that could not live
> Where meditation was. I turned away
> And walked along my road in happiness.[33] (512-25)

The Pedlar, like Wordsworth at Burns's grave, chooses to turn away, and to not meditate too long on ruin and despair, and to walk away in either love or happiness. Burns's verse epistles appealed to Wordsworth in moments where friendship existed alongside darker tensions of grief and death, yet where, in either instance the act of remembering or of poetic communion triumphed over sorrow.

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[31] *WPW*, III, 67.
[32] Wordsworth, *Major Works,* 37.
[33] Wordsworth, *Major Works*, 44.

'A Pantomime and a Masquerade': The West End of London in the Age of Charles Lamb

ROHAN MCWILLIAM

The Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture, 2021

> I am naturally inclined to hypochondria, but in London it vanishes, like all other ills. Often, when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humour, till tears have wetted my cheek for unutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture, which she never fails to present at all hours, like the scenes of a shifting pantomime.[1]

Thus Charles Lamb in his letter 'The Londoner' in 1802. Lamb's writings always have a strong sense of place, and that place was the metropolis.[2] The previous year he wrote to Wordsworth:

> 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 crowds, 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.'[3]

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[1] Charles Lamb, 'The Londoner' in Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), 1, 51-2. I am grateful to John Gardner and the board of the Charles Lamb Society for inviting me to deliver the Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture and to the members of the Society who attended and who made such thoughtful contributions in the discussion.

[2] Lamb's identity as a writer about London was an important part of his legacy to the next generation. See Eilidh Innes, '"The Men of Letters, Whose Shadows Walk on the London Streets With Us": The Influence of Charles Lamb on John Hollingshead's Journalism', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 172 (2020), 5-25.

[3] Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth, 30 January 1801, in Guy Pocock (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb* (London: J.M. Dent, 1945), 1, 179.

The urban scene could be as much an inspiration as things bucolic in the age of Romanticism. One might even see Lamb as turning Romanticism upside down: the pace of street life preferred to the inspiration of nature. London for Lamb is to be represented in theatrical (or we might anachronistically say, proto-cinematic) terms.[4] The Strand resembles 'the scenes of a shifting pantomime' and 'a multitudinous moving picture'. London itself is 'a pantomime and a masquerade'. Yet the use of both theatrical imagery and a carnivalesque idiom masks a deeper truth. Lamb shows a relish for interacting with a society based on strangers: one of the themes of urban history in recent years. He would not have known all of the 'tradesmen, and customers' (certainly not the customers) he encountered but is unperturbed because street life is recuperated as a source of joy rather than fear. A society of strangers had its repertoires of gesture and impression management.[5] Urban historians show that, in the modern cityscape, middle-class strangers become players with their own forms of performative behaviour and gestures, wearing clothes intended to convey status, pausing before shop windows, engaging in the behaviour associated with a lady or a gentleman. The street scene was inevitably theatrical. Lamb captures this.

Lamb scholars know that he loved the theatre, but we need to place his play-going in a wider context and think about the multiples services and larger entertainment eco-system that London provided, satisfying multiple appetites. We live in the age of the so-called 'spatial turn' in the Humanities where 'place' and 'space' are retrieved as vital factors in ideas, art, consciousness and identity formation.[6] This is my starting point. We get a stronger sense of Charles Lamb's art if we think not only of where he lived but the haunts he was drawn to. We associate Lamb with the world of the City, Fleet Street and the Inns of Court where he mainly resided. But he was also drawn to Drury Lane, the Strand and Covent Garden and in his writing helped equip them with meaning. I would like to explore some of these spaces to put Lamb into context. My point is not that Lamb spent time in all of the locations that I will describe (we often do not have

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[4] On London's popular culture, see Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).

[5] The rhetoric of the street seller or costermonger would be a working-class equivalent of this. On urban society as one based on interacting with strangers, see Peter K. Andersson, *Streetlife in Late Victorian London: The Constable and the Crowd* **(**Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); James Vernon, *Distant Strangers: How Britain Became Modern* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

[6] Beat Kumin and Cornelie Usborne, 'At Home and in the Workplace: A Historical Introduction to the "Spatial Turn"', *History and Theory*, 52 (2013), 305-318.

evidence about this) but it pays to explore the spaces around him. In the early nineteenth century they were becoming the world's first great pleasure district: the West End.

In my recent history of the area I argue that historians need to take pleasure districts seriously and consider the forms of identity that they helped construct through images of luxury, status, sexuality, curiosity and spectacle.[7] In the eighteenth century, the dynamic spaces of the Strand and Covent Garden spawned figures who were what the historian Vic Gatrell describes as 'the first bohemians'.[8] They also helped produce versions of the *flâneur* or man about town who could cross cultural boundaries and engage with low life. Charles Lamb was at ease with at least some of the pleasures of the city though he was not a rake. I want to talk about the pleasure district roughly between 1790 and 1827, the years when the Lambs lived close to the West End. I use 1827 as the end-date as that was when the Lambs moved further away to Enfield, though Lamb told Thomas Hood that they did not intend to 'abandon Regent Street & West End perambulations'.[9]

What do I mean by the West End? I usually define it as Bond Street on the west, Oxford Street on the north, the Strand on the South and what becomes Kingsway on the east. But that definition, I suspect, would not have made sense to Lamb himself at the time. The phrase employed in the eighteenth century was the 'west end of the town'. London at that point extended up to Hyde Park on the west and the term the 'West End' really related to the aristocratic world of Mayfair and St James. The modern meaning of the West End as the pleasure district of theatres, concert halls, restaurants, grand hotels and department stores did not emerge until after about 1850, in part because the railway age made the area easier to access. Can we use the term to describe this area in the early nineteenth century? We can if we understand that the pleasure district was spatially more limited than it subsequently became. In the early nineteenth century it existed essentially along a line that ran from the Strand and Covent Garden over to the Haymarket.

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[7] Rohan McWilliam, *London's West End: Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). I deal at greater length in this book with some of the aspects of the West End described here.

[8] Vic Gatrell, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).

[9] Lamb to Thomas Hood, 18 September 1827, in Pocock (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, 2, 222.

I want to give you a tour of the West End in the age of Lamb--pointing out some sights. We see an increasing clustering of cultural enterprises: theatres, entertainment-centres and prestige shops. I would like, first, to discuss the peculiarities of the Strand and Covent Garden area which clearly influenced Lamb given his evocations of them. I will then talk about the shops of the West End and show that Lamb was living in an age where the theatrical world was changing. If Lamb talked about the city as a pantomime and a masquerade, he was living near a place that spawned pantomimes and masquerades.

The Strand and Covent Garden area

Lamb wrote to Wordsworth in 1801 'I often shed tears in the Motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much Life'.[10] This was a common theme when people spoke about the area: George Cruikshank would exclaim: 'What a picture of life was there! It was all life'.[11] The mythology of the West End is that it became a place which you went to in order to see 'life'.

Since the twelfth century, the Strand had been a liminal area linking the world of the City and the corridors of power in Westminster. The street reeked of the Quality and was formerly the site of gorgeous palaces. One of the first ever guidebooks to London (in the seventeenth century) described its 'perfection of Buildings'.[12] The aristocrats who made the Strand their home employed it as a base for working with the Crown.[13] Immediately adjacent, the piazza of Covent Garden was laid out by Inigo Jones for the earl of Bedford in the 1630s, offering homes for the best circles.

But by the early seventeenth century it was already becoming London's pleasure district. The Strand was, for example, the site of the New Exchange which offered galleries of fancy goods, an early anticipation of the department store. It was opened in 1609 and demolished in 1737. There were two galleries with drapers' shops complete with shop girls and male apprentices ready to serve discerning customers. People could admire and purchase the latest fashions from France or curios from faraway lands. Thomas Twining set up his tea business in the New

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[10] Lamb to William Wordsworth, 30 January 1801, in Pocock (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, 1, 179.
[11] Gatrell, *The First Bohemians*, 5.
[12] James Howell, *Londinopolis: An Historical Discourse or Perlustration of the City of London* (London: J. Streater, 1657), 346.
[13] Patricia Croot, 'A Place in Town in Medieval and Early Modern Westminster: The Origins and History of the Palaces in the Strand', *London Journal*, 39 (2014), 85-101.

Exchange in 1706. On the Strand itself, booksellers and art auctions became common sights in the eighteenth century.[14] The Fleet Street end of the Strand was also overrun with coffee shops, taverns, chop houses and prostitutes.

Just before the Restoration, Samuel Pepys met some friends in the Half Moon tavern on the Strand (a favourite haunt). He recorded that 'we were very merry and had the young man that plays so well on the Welch harp'.[15] Here, then, were the beginnings of the West End of London, defined by the curious juxtapositions of aristocratic grandeur and low life pleasures (the Half Moon tavern). The early modern Strand became the talk of the town, a place that shaped the public sphere, where that vital force in the modern world, public opinion, could emerge from print culture, shows, taverns, coffee houses and spectacles that became the district's abiding characteristic.[16]

Royal and aristocratic patronage shaped its atmosphere. Right up to 1832, the death of Charles I was commemorated by the closure of theatres.[17] After the Restoration in 1660, the aristocracy began to move further west into Mayfair and St James's, but the Strand and Covent Garden remained important places. The culture of the early modern court was relatively weak when it came to generating its own entertainments. The upper classes, starting with the monarch, needed to go out to see shows and this is what drew them to Drury Lane and Covent Garden and the King's Theatre on the Haymarket which offered opera. Fashionable society made the most of the variety of pleasures that the area has to offer.[18] The West End came to offer entertainments that could be enjoyed both by the Quality and by the common people. It is this atmosphere that, I think, helped (at least in part) to form Lamb, given his romanticism about the Strand.

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[14] Clemens Zimmermann, 'The Productivity of the City in the Early Modern Era: The Book and Art Trade in Venice and London', in Martina Hessler and Clemens Zimmermann (eds.), *Creative Urban Milieus: Historical Perspectives on Culture, Economy and the City* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2008), 59.
[15] *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews) (London: Bell and Hyman, 1970), 1, 15 (12 January 1660).
[16] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
[17] Tracy C. Davis, *The Economics of the British stage, 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 65.
[18] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 199-200.

And what of Covent Garden itself? A temporary market in Covent Garden began as early as 1656 and its piazza became known for its ribald entertainments that were often associated with markets. Pepys saw his first Punch and Judy show in the Covent Garden piazza in 1662.[19] Drury Lane, close by, commenced its journey down market at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was known for low quality housing and, worse, narrow alleys and courtyards that became associated with poverty and crime. In 1725, men about town could find 107 'pleasure houses'.[20] 'Drury Lane ague' was a term for syphilis.[21] Peopled by courtiers, overworked servants, actors, property speculators, hacks, harlots, rakes and pickpockets, the West End was Vanity Fair.

The Lambs lived briefly in the West End as I define it. In 1817 they took up residence at no.20 Russell Street in Covent Garden where they could become observers of this particular urban scene. The house backed onto Covent Garden Theatre (as it then was) with the Theatre Royal diagonally across. Barker's, the second-hand bookseller at no.19 Russell Street, sold Lamb a folio Beaumont and Fletcher. In November 1817, Lamb wrote to Dorothy Wordsworth:

> We are in the individual spot I like best in all this great city. The theatres with all their noises; Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus; Bow Street, where the thieves are examined, within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here four-and-twenty hours before she saw a Thief. She sits at the window working; and, casually throwing out her eyes, she sees a concourse of people coming this way, with a constable to conduct the ceremony. These little incidents agreeably diversify a female life.[22]

Mary Lamb wrote about how they loved living about a brazier's shop which she described as:

> a place all alive with noise and bustle; Drury Lane Theatre in sight from our front, and Covent Garden from our back windows. The hubbub of the carriages returning from the play doesn't annoy me in the least—strange that it doesn't, for it is quite tremendous. I quite

[19] Gatrell, *The First Bohemians*, 46.
[20] Gatrell, *The First Bohemians*, 40-2.
[21] Ian McIntyre, *Garrick* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), 1.
[22] Lamb to Dorothy Wordsworth, 21 November 1817, in Pocock (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, 1, 396.

> enjoy looking out of the window, and listening to the calling up of the carriages, and the squabbles of the coachmen and link-boys.[23]

The Strand and Covent Garden area would become a laboratory in which new forms of art and popular culture would be born. Certainly it was a world of petty thieves: a gentleman needed to hang on to his watch and chain. But it was also a world of jobbing writers and artists struggling with little money. William Blake lived the last few years of his life in penury on Fountain Court off the Strand. William Cobbett had rooms on Newcastle Street, also off the Strand.

What attractions did the area offer? For Lamb, Covent Garden was his preferred kind of landscape, as enumerated in an 1800 letter to Thomas Manning: 'street, streets, streets, markets theatres, churches, Covent Garden, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat sempstresses, ladies cheapening, gentlemen behind counters lying'.[24]

Yet we know there was more to the area than Lamb's portrait of urban bustle. It could be a site of intellectual discussion and political agitation. The Crown and Anchor Tavern on Arundel Street, just off the Strand was notorious for its radical discussions but also loyalist associations during the 1790s as well. The London Corresponding Society had met there in 1793-4, which gave the pub a reputation for political dissent and the cause of parliamentary reform. The Hampden Club chaired by Sir Francis Burdett, used the Crown and Anchor; so did Hazlitt and Coleridge who gave talks there in 1818. But the Crown and Anchor was not the only political location. The London Corresponding Society was founded at the Bell pub on Exeter Street, whilst, in 1797, a government spy provided evidence of members of the organisation meeting with a group of United Irishmen at Furnival's Inn Cellar on the Strand.[25] There was a radical West End hidden just below the surface.

The Strand and Covent Garden developed spaces that were associated with music, song and early forms of bohemianism. There was the Coal Hole pub on Fountain Court, just off the Strand, founded in 1815, which was famous for its music and theatrical associations, including the

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[23] Mrs.Gilchrist, *Mary Lamb* (London: W.H. Allen, 1883), 209.
[24] Lamb to Thomas Manning, 28 November 1800 in Pocock (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, 1, p. 166.
[25] David Worrall, 'Artisan Melodrama and the Plebeian Public Sphere: The Political Culture of Drury Lane and its Environs, 1797-1830', *Studies in Romanticism*, 39 (2000), 214.

actor Edmund Keen who was a regular. Its name lives on in the pub of the same name on the Strand although the original Coal Hole came to an end in 1887. Maiden Lane, just off Covent Garden, offered a remarkable nightlife for young bucks out on the town: in other words, the kind that were celebrated by Lamb's contemporary Pierce Egan. There one could find Rule's, the first ever restaurant in Britain (founded in 1798), and, almost opposite, the Cyder Cellars. Dating back to the 1730s, this was one of the earliest song and supper rooms. It offered an opportunity for young men to smoke and sing along to bawdy songs. In retrospect, it was a prototype for what became Victorian music hall. The Strand and Covent Garden therefore offered a world of masculine pleasures based on alcohol, bawdiness, prostitution and music.

Shopping

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the West End had supplanted the City as the site of elite shopping.[26] High Society required places where the finest goods could be consumed.[27] The West End came to stand for a lifestyle based on the acquisition of things. It became a force in the development of consumer society, shaping the presentation and display of goods. The elite prided itself on its cosmopolitanism, buying the finest produce from the continent but also oriental luxuries. Gifts, baubles, luxuries: these were not trivia but a world of goods that shaped the self-presentation of the upper and middle classes. This was epitomised in the early nineteenth century by the shops of the Strand and Covent Garden, the construction of Regent Street and of a variety of arcades (including the Burlington Arcade) as locations for prestige shopping.[28] There were new kinds of shops. The Soho Bazaar was established in 1816 with stalls run by the widows or daughters of soldiers who had died in the Napoleonic Wars. High Society descended on it to purchase clothes, gloves, trinkets and items that could be given as gifts. This set off a craze for bazaars which benefited from their orientalist associations with the Arab world: shopping for the age of Romanticism.[29] Lamb recognised retail as part of the urban scene:

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[26] Kathryn A. Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping: An Architectural History* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 43.
[27] Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[28] Rohan McWilliam, 'Fancy Repositories: The Arcades of London's West End in the Nineteenth Century', *London Journal*, 44 (2019), 93-112.
[29] Rohan McWilliam, 'The Bazaars of London's West End in the Nineteenth Century' in Helen Kingstone and Kate Lister (eds.), *Paraphernalia! Victorian Objects* (London: Routledge, 2019), 17-36.

> The endless succession of shops where *Fancy miscalled Folly* is supplied with perpetual gauds and toys, excite in me no puritanical aversion. I gladly behold every appetite supplied with its proper food.[30]

Part of the appeal of pleasure districts is their promise to satisfy every appetite with shopping changed from a functional into a leisure activity.

In the second half of the eighteenth century there was a shift towards increasingly stylish shops which had a theatrical dimension: they were intended to flatter the visitor and to confer status. In 1768, Josiah Wedgwood established his first showrooms at Great Newport Street in Covent Garden, generating a desire for Staffordshire pottery. In the western part of the West End, Bond Street and St James's Street served the needs of the aristocracy. By the late eighteenth century, Oxford Street had increasingly become home to shops and places of amusement that served the West London public.

But the genesis of this world can be found, as with so many things in the West End, on the Strand. Exeter Change (roughly where the Strand Palace Hotel is today) was built in 1676. It came in the later eighteenth century to be made up of shops and offices including an early version of an arcade. From 1773 to 1829, it was site of toyshops, milliners, offices and billiard halls. Did it supply the 'perpetual gauds' that Lamb speaks of? Anticipating the modern shopping mall, it offered a variety of ornaments, toys and forms of entertainment.

The poet Robert Southey in 1807 records a visit to Exeter Change in which he purchased a 'travelling caissette', a useful collection of shaving and writing material for a gentleman geared up to travel. He was fascinated as the Exeter Change also contained a zoo upstairs.[31] This was owned between 1773 and 1829 by Edward Cross. Lamb in his correspondence records going to see the wild beasts at Exeter Change.[32] The menagerie featured a range of animals including lions, a Bengal tiger and a hippopotamus.[33] A fake yeoman of the guard was stationed outside,

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[30] Lamb, 'The Londoner', 52.
[31] [Robert Southey], *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1807], 1, 82.
[32] Lamb and Emma Isola [joint letter] to Miss Humphreys, 9 January 1821 in Pocock (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, 2, 17.
[33] Poster in St. Martin's Scrapbook Series: Leicester Square, 2 part 2, 85 (City of Westminster Archive).

employing his colourful costume to draw people in to see the attractions and it seems to have done particularly well with people from out of town. The roar of the lions inside could be heard on the street and were known to frighten passing horses. Byron claimed that the hippopotamus bore a striking resemblance to Lord Liverpool.[34]

One of the leading attractions was the enormous Indian elephant Chunee who had previously been exhibited at Covent Garden Theatre in *Bluebeard*. In 1826, the five ton elephant, who had killed a keeper the previous year, threatened to break out of his cage. The owners were forced to call upon soldiers from Somerset House to kill the poor animal but, despite using 152 bullets, their shots were unable to subdue it and they called for a cannon. Before this could be deployed a keeper used a harpoon to finally the dispatch the poor, wounded creature, a casualty of the early exhibitionary urge. The exploitation of the animal was not over; his skeleton was then placed on display.[35] Exeter Change was demolished in 1829 and the animals transferred to the Surrey Zoological Gardens (part of Vauxhall Gardens), but it confirms how Lamb's 'crowded Strand' offered sites that could divert but also instruct.

Exeter Change was part of an expanding visual culture that characterised the pleasure district. The West End offered sites of curiosity, abounding in panoramas, dioramas, cosmoramas, automata, magic lantern shows and shadow plays. In 1785 a learned pig was exhibited at 55 Charing Cross which allegedly solved problems of arithmetic.[36] Globalisation created increased interest in the wonders of the world, luxury goods from the east but also wonders and strange creatures. Places of natural beauty were re-created at the Panorama in Leicester Square. The curious and the monstrous became objects of exhibition. New forms of display were developed which provided distinctive ways of accessing art and science, but also the natural world. Brooke's menagerie on the Haymarket at the beginning of the century offered crocodiles and kangaroos as well as a 'fascinating Albiness'.[37] These shows were often shaped by the imperial and orientalist gaze that structured the nineteenth century imagination. Waxworks made their appearance in the eighteenth century. As early as 1729, anatomical models from Paris were displayed in a chemists shop in

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[34] Ben Weinreb, Christopher Hibbert, Julia Keay and John Keay (eds.), *The London Encyclopedia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Reference, 2010 [1983]), 282.
[35] Walter Thornbury and Edward Walford, *Old and New London* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1879-1885), 3, 116.
[36] Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1978), 39-42.
[37] *The British Press*, 14 April 1806, 1.

the Haymarket. Two years later, waxworks were displayed in Berwick Street, Soho.[38] Town life meant exposure to spectacle and endless novelty. This is why Lamb's West End felt like a 'moving picture'.

Theatres

Lamb, of course, was briefly a playwright. His farce *Mr. H*. was put on (disastrously) at Drury Lane in 1806. For that reason, we might even reappropriate Lamb as one who played a (very small) part in the making of the West End. In other writings, he is conscious of the West End theatre audience and how they are part of the spectacle. Thus in 'The Londoner' he writes:

> I have no hesitation in declaring, that a mob of happy faces crowding up at the pit-door of Drury Lane Theatre, just at the hour of six, gives me ten thousand sincerer pleasures, than I could ever receive from all the flocks of silly sheep that ever whitened the plains of Arcadia or Epsom Downs.[39]

The significance of the 'hour of six' was that pre-booking for the theatre was restricted to the elite in the boxes and the dress circle. Most people would turn up at six for the chance to stand in the pit (the predecessor of the stalls) or sit in the balcony. This was the audience Lamb most appreciated.

Lamb was a playgoer and much of this was in the West End. In his youth he recalled how, despite having little money, he was 'a frequenter of the upper gallery of the old Theatres'.[40] He knew actors such as Robert Elliston and evoked the folk memory of great performances in the past: 'all of us have heard our fathers tell of Quin, and Garrick... and some faint traditional notices are left us of their manner in particular scenes, and their stile [sic] of delivering certain emphatic sentences'. He considers it 'a delightful artifice, by which we connect the recreations of the past with those of the present generation, what pleased our fathers with what pleases us'.[41] Pleasure districts allow for this 'artifice', creating a shared (if, to some extent, constructed) memory of previous performances. To sit down in the

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[38] Altick, *The Shows of London*, 53, 54.
[39] Lamb, 'The Londoner', 51.
[40] Charles Lamb, 'Play-House Memoranda' in Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London: Oxford University Press, 1908) 1, 201.
[41] Charles Lamb, 'G.F. Cooke in "Richard the Third"', in Hutchinson (ed.), *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 1, 45, 46.

theatres in Drury Lane and Covent Garden is to be aware of the generations of actors who had performed there previously. Lamb's drama criticism showed an awareness of the tradition associated with performing certain parts in Shakespeare although he is notable for believing that 'the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for performance on a stage, than those of almost any other dramatist whatever'.[42]

His godfather Francis Fielde, the Holborn oil dealer, knew Sheridan and was a friend of the comedian John Palmer so theatrical connections were never very far away. Lamb was marked by seeing Thomas Arne's opera *Artaxerxes* at Drury Lane when he was six years old, describing it as 'all enchantment and a dream'. What marks out Lamb's essay 'My First Play' is that he has a feel for the venue as much as for what was on stage. He thus writes about the women selling fruit outside ('Chase some oranges, chase some numparels, chase a bill of the play'). He remembers Drury Lane's green curtain, the boxes 'full of well-dressed women of quality', the glittering pilasters, the orchestra lights and even the bell announcing that the performance was about to commence.[43] Implicit in this is a recognition that the rituals of playgoing, including purchasing sweet apples ('numparels'), and the built environment of the theatre are integral to the experience of the theatre. He was also a good observer of the audience, noting the attentiveness of the upper galleries compared with the 'frigid indifference' of the spectators in the boxes whom he describes as being '*in the house* and yet not *of it*'.[44]

Theatre in London was in theory meant to be confined to the four stages that enjoyed the royal patent to perform. Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, could stage the written word whilst the King's Theatre (now Her Majesty's Theatre) was devoted to opera. The monopoly that the patent theatres enjoyed, dating back to the Restoration, shaped the London stage. Theatre was heavily regulated by the Lord Chamberlain who made sure that radical or seditious messages were silenced, making theatre (with some exceptions) a far more conservative medium in contrast to what was happening in poetry and journalism in the early nineteenth century. But Lamb's West End was in flux with the emergence of so-called minor theatres which challenged the monopoly of the patent theatres over the spoken word. The theatrical West

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[42] Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare' in Hutchinson (ed.), *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 1, 127.
[43] Lamb, 'My First Play' in Hutchinson (ed.), *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 1, 592-596.
[44] Lamb, 'Play-House Memoranda', 201-2 (italics in original).

End that Lamb knew was one that was shaped by the emergence of these 'illegitimate' theatres but also of the genres of burlesque, burletta and melodrama that became associated with them.[45]

Significantly, this theatrical revolution took place around the Strand in the form of new theatres: the Lyceum, the Adelphi, and the Olympic (there were other unlicensed theatres elsewhere such as Sadler's Wells, the Surrey and the Coburg). In the West End the minor theatres represented middle-class money creating new forms of entertainment whilst hoping to appeal to the aristocracy and Lamb was clearly familiar with them. The Lyceum began life in 1772 on a site adjacent to where it is now on Wellington Street and with an entrance on the Strand. Crucially, it was not built as a theatre which would have flouted the law. Instead, it was intended as the exhibition room of the Royal Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain. For a while, it was taken over by Madame Tussaud for her waxworks in 1802 (the first presentation of her waxworks). Ironically, the Lyceum only became a theatre because, when the Theatre Royal Drury Lane burned down in 1809, its company needed a replacement venue quickly. It occupied the Lyceum from 1809 to 1812, confirming that the venue was suitable for theatrical entertainments. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, for example, took in a performance of The *Maid and the Magpie* in 1816, which we might view as further bestowing elite patronage on a non-patent theatre.[46] Thus, when Lamb reviewed the performances of Fanny Kelly at the Lyceum in the *Examiner* in 1819 (whilst also unsuccessfully proposing marriage to her), he was talking about what was in effect a new addition to London's theatre scene.[47]

The Olympic on Wych Street (later torn down for the Aldwych development) was launched in 1806 by the circus owner Philip Astley and was intended for equestrian entertainments but was later developed into a theatre for fashionable society by Robert Elliston. This was surprising as the neighbourhood was noted as a hotbed of crime, prostitution and radical booksellers. The White Lion on Wych Street had been the haunt of some of the Cato Street conspirators and was infiltrated by government spies in 1819-20 to keep them under observation.[48] The Olympic was rebuilt in 1818 and opened with a production of the burlesque *Don Giovanni in*

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[45] Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) remains the classic work on this subject.
[46] *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 11 August 1816, 1
[47] Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 414.
[48] Worrall, 'Artisan Melodrama and the Plebeian Public Sphere', 221-2; Victor Emeljanow, 'The Theatrical Life and Death of Wych Street', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, vol. 45 (2018), 160-172.

London which was reviewed by Lamb who admired the sight-lines and size of the house which made it easier to hear.[49]

The Adelphi opened on the Strand the same year as the Olympic and was the most important of the new theatres. It became the home of melodrama and of the spectacular hit *Tom and Jerry* (1821) by William Thomas Moncrieff. It was associated from 1825-42 with the actors Frederick and Elizabeth Yates who enjoyed a huge popular following. The Olympic, Lyceum and Adelphi thus created forms of popular theatre that rivalled the patent theatres. Nor were they alone in the West End. In the 1820s, there was the French Theatre on Tottenham Street, Fitzroy Square (just north of the West End). It was a small theatre that performed French plays on Monday and Thursday evenings. It was reportedly 'the resort of the first fashionables in town'. No money was taken on the door, but tickets were obtainable from a variety of West End locations including the Café Français in the Haymarket.[50]

The patent theatres were meant to be the home of the legitimate stage but in order to fill up their huge auditoria they had to resort to populist fare and were not so different from the minor theatres. Thus Joseph Grimaldi's appearance in *Mother Goose* at the Covent Garden Theatre made his reputation as the great comic actor of the age and ran for ninety two performances. According to Jeffrey Richards, it 'defined the nature of the Regency pantomime', incorporating the use of the harlequinade, a form of slap stick.[51]

Theatre and opera, though dominant, were not the only form of entertainment. Masquerades and masked balls were still a part of aristocratic life. The Pantheon on Oxford Street was used for this purpose on occasion. To give another example, in 1821, it was possible to attend a masked fete at the New Museodeum Rooms on St. Martin's Lane, the price of one guinea keeping out undesirables.[52] But, as I show in *London's West End*, this kind of louche, carnivalesque world (where sexual boundaries were up for grabs and cross-dressing was all part of the show) started to give way in the early Victorian decades to more commercial forms of

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[49] Charles Lamb, 'Mrs Gould (Miss Burrell) in *Don Giovanni in London*'' in Hutchinson (ed.), *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 1. 233-5.
[50] *Every Night Book: Or, Life after Dark* (London: T. Richardson, 1827), 108.
[51] Jeffrey Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime: Slapstick, Spectacle and Subversion in Victorian England* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 2.
[52] Advertisement in St. Martin's Scrapbook Series: General, 2, 19 (City of Westminster Archive).

entertainment that were safe for the respectable middle classes to enjoy. The Pantheon ended up becoming an early version of the department store.

What I have tried to show here is the way Charles Lamb came of age at a time when the West End was emerging as a pleasure district--one that did not simply service the needs of the aristocracy but the multitude as well. We see this in the distinctive atmosphere of the Strand and Covent Garden areas, in the world of shops, in the expanding visual culture of London entertainments and the emergence of new theatres. Rules's restaurant, the Olympic, Exeter Change--these all represented new forces shaping the popular culture of the Romantic age.

Lamb's rhetoric turns the urban scene into a space of fascination and theatricality. Even the 'wickedness' of Covent Garden has its place. It becomes a location where, as we have seen, Mary Lamb can observe a street robbery from the safety of her window (which thus becomes a kind of auditorium). We are told of a constable conducting the 'ceremony' of the street scene. Who needs melodrama when the street offered its own performances? Truly, Charles Lamb got it right--London was a pantomime and a masquerade.

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Towards a Biography of Elia

ERIC G. WILSON

No. 17 Fleet

The Lamb I love most originates on No. 17 Fleet St.[1] This is the gate leading from the most rambunctious street in London—infamous for its noise, crowds, smells, taverns, swindlers, prostitutes, unscrupulous journalists, hawkers of news, museum (Rackstrow's) of oddities, riots—to the city's most serene region, the Inner Temple, a paradise of gardens, fountains, sun dials, stately architecture, and studiousness. Until the age of seventeen, Charles lived within the Temple, where his father served as a factotum for a barrister, but he crossed almost daily into Fleet's chaos. This crossing quickened him:

> 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 [the Temple's] magnificent ample squares, its classic green recesses![2]

If anyone ever needed openings through which to rush *elsewhere,* be it bustle or calm, Charles Lamb did. If you at twenty-one witnessed your beloved sister, knife in hand, looming over your dead mother, and now bent on killing your father, and if you saved your dad and beloved aunt by wresting the blade from this sister's hand, and then watched her awaken from her fit of madness into crushing remorse, and if you saved her from life in a horrific mental institution by agreeing to care for her the rest of your days, and if this obligation required you to chain yourself for the next decades to an accounting job you loathed, and if you knew that this career would exclude you from the intellectual and artistic freedom enjoyed by your closest friend Coleridge, then you would search desperately for escapes.

Lamb was addicted to openings: portals, doors, holes, windows, grates, cracks, gates, brinks, chinks, gaps, fissures, fractures, breaches,

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[1] This essay is based upon my forthcoming biography of Lamb, *Dream-Child: A Life of Charles Lamb* (New Haven and London, 2022).

[2] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 8 vols (London, 1912), II, 83.

interstices, rifts. More than most, that feeling of 'this can't be all there is', and 'there must be something else' haunted him. This is why he was such a prodigious walker, sometimes covering up to twenty miles a day in his hallowed London, even into his fifties. Stepping at night among the shop lights, the fruit wagons, the bookstalls, the theaters, the decaying buildings and the forgotten alleyways, Lamb sought a sensation so strong it could tear time, and through the rip he would slip, in reverie, to fountains now bricked over, or lost literary conversations in an oaken pub or, preferably, his childhood, when he thrilled to a garden in the Inner Temple or a witch in a book or a man with an iron hook for a hand or the green velvet curtain going up, and there is the play.

One reason Lamb was so popular during the Victorian Age was his love of childhood. But Lamb knew his immaturity could encumber. He suspected that he was 'was too much of the boy-man', and this immaturity weakened his character.[3] Lamb's youth was simply one place among several to which he might figuratively flee. Nostalgia grows boring, though, or painful, and the present calls, with its adult pleasures, such as philosophy or sophisticated prose. But lucubrating, too, becomes tiring, and so again the quest for the portal to yore.

Child/man, Temple/Fleet: these are but two of the many polarities energizing Lamb's work, in which each pole invites temporary liberation from the other. Seriousness is a prelude to silliness, and vice versa, and so mirth and spleen fringe each other, as do tragedy and fancy. Neither side signifies alone; each inspirits the other. The adult of sorrow and the dream's child, self-opposing Lamb thus lived what he loved, irony, the 'dangerous figure' that says yes and no at the same time. Lamb confessed that on his day of death, he would most lament losing this engine of infinite reversal.[4]

Lamb's very body figured his dispositional doubleness. He was irony's allegory. While with his mature mind he could span all of London, he stood only five feet in his shoes. Walking the city, because of a peculiar footfall (slapping the ground, one friend noted, like a turkey), he wobbled as much as progressed. His legs were spindly, as was his whole body; his head, however, was outsized, especially his forehead, over which fell luxuriant hair. One eye was hazel, the other gray flecked with red. They flitted between melancholia and restlessness. As did his face, baroque

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[3] Lucas, *Works*, II, 153.
[4] Lucas, *Works*, II, 59.

humor contorting into pain, and back again.[5] No wonder Lamb's comedy was made of 'ambiguities', 'whim-whams', 'hints and glimpses', 'fragments and scattered pieces of Truth'.[6]

Why a New Biography?

There are many reasons to write a new biography of a writer whose life is already quite well known (just as there are many reasons not to), but the primary one, I believe, is that the biographer wants to be close to the writer for a long time and share that closeness with the world. This is the main reason I wrote this biography of Elia: because I admired his doubleness, his perpetual ability to evade the stasis that his damaged psyche constantly threatened him with. And he didn't simply avoid the limbo—he did so with generously comic aplomb. If trauma to Lamb was 'it's all been said and done', then health was punning, hyperbole, paradox—the freeing of words from themselves to be something else.

But my affection for Lamb's style and substance wasn't the only reason I decided to write his biography. After being relatively neglected, at least compared to his friends Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lamb has in the past thirty years received voluminous and intelligent attention. The result is a new Lamb, who needs, biographically speaking, a new life. Because of the state of scholarship at the time of their writing—not flaws in their vision—older biographies were not able to situate Lamb's existence within important social, historical, political, philosophical, theological, and psychological contexts.[7] In my biography, I was able to describe Lamb's

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[5] We are fortunate to enjoy many portraits of Lamb from his contemporaries. The details above are based on several different accounts: John Forster, 'Charles Lamb', *New Monthly Magazine* 43 (1835), 205; Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of His Life* (London, 1837), 3-4; Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt, with Reminisces of Friends and Contemporaries*, 3 vols. (London, 1850), I, 175; P.G. Patmore, *My Friends and Acquaintance: Being Memorials, Mind-Portraits, and Personal Recollections of Deceased Celebrities of the Nineteenth-Century*, 3 vols. (London, 1854), I, 14; Thomas Hood, *Hood's Own: or, Laughter from Year to Year* (London, 1855), 551; Samuel Chester Hall, *Book of Memories of Great Men and Women of the Age: From Personal Acquaintance* (London, 1877), 57.

[6] Lucas, *Works*, II, 59.

[7] E.V. Lucas's impeccable *The Life of Charles Lamb* (London, 1905) remains pertinent, but it is dated by now. Much new information has emerged, especially letters, and Lucas's hagiographical method is out of favor. Hagiography was de rigueur for the man whom Thackeray called 'St. Charles'. Thomas Noon Talfourd, Lamb's friend and first book-length biographer, praised Lamb's generosity, wit, sweetness, or character on almost every page, overlooking

participation in the British Empire, his position in the East India House, his Unitarian political radicalism, his interest in the philosophy of Joseph Priestley, his walking and psychogeography, his connection to Cockney literature, his work as a magazine writer, his children's books, his bending of gender roles, and his late poems for women's albums and highly particular occasions. Incorporating this fresh material—which also includes novel perspectives on Lamb's drinking, melancholy, and sexuality—we are in a position to enjoy a more accurate, nuanced, and robust portrait of Lamb.[8]

Scholarship aside, the time feels right for Charles Lamb. More than any other Romantic, he speaks to our age. Whereas Wordsworth idealizes a natural world inaccessible to most and quickly (and sadly) dwindling, Lamb celebrates the grit and speed and diversity of the urban. Likewise, in place of Wordsworth's 'egotistical sublime' is Lamb's more fluid, collaborative vision of identity, much closer to our own postmodern ideas of selfhood. Most of all, Lamb's gentle irony, his ability to doubt without denouncing, to undercut while still holding aloft, addresses our epistemological moment, when social media, conspiracy theories, and paranoid invocations of fake news have fomented such extreme cynicism that the very notion of the real seems at risk.

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entirely Lamb's darker parts. This was in his 1837 *Letters of Charles Lamb*, which he followed in 1848 with *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb: Consistently Chiefly of His Letters Not Before Published, with Sketches of Some of His Companions*, 2 vols. (London, 1848). Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, several biographies were published, most providing important new information on Lamb, all spinning Elia more or less positively.

[8]Among more recent biographies, Winifred Courtney's *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802* (New York, 1982) is excellent, though it covers only the first half of Lamb's life. Other insightful biographical studies of Lamb during the last forty years are either accounts of his life with Mary or Mary proper. Jane Aaron's *A Double Singleness: Gender in the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford, 1991) considers the lives and letters of the siblings in light of class and gender. Sarah Burton's *A Double Life: A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (New York, 2003) convincingly reveals the darker sides of Lamb. In *Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder in Literary England*, (New York, 2005), Susan Hitchcock also unearths the more sordid details of Lamb. In *The Devil Kissed Her: The Story of Mary Lamb* (London, 2004), Kathy Watson's descriptions of Mary's madness shed light on Charles's mental illness. Finally, Felicity James's *Charles Lamb, Coleridge, and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (New York, 2008) demonstrates the importance of friendship, sentiment, and Joseph Priestley in Lamb's earliest days as a poet.

Below I describe how selected recent trends in Lamb studies, in addition to some of my own discoveries, reveal a man whose odd blend of despair and affirmation, irony and sentimentality, urbanism and pastoralism, radical politics and domestic comfort, fixation on the messy present and nostalgia for an ideal past, make for a flexible, edgy, charming, generous, petulant, and, above all, riveting character who speaks to us now as compellingly as he did to his contemporaries.

Trauma and Time

Trauma to Lamb was 'no way out', a one-way path, a vicious circle: the killing of possibility, emotional and psychological stasis. The great tragedies of his life, one brief (his mother's murder) and one chronic (his sister's madness), threatened to suck Lamb into the same dull round, feel the same pain over and over. But these weren't the only difficulties that entrapped Lamb. His life was also plagued by his own debilitating mental illness and his alcoholism.

Lamb generally left these deepest pains unspoken. Aside from a few intimate confessions in letters to friends, he remained mostly mute. But one can sense an anguished undertow in even the most comically charming essays, such as 'New Year's Eve', whose gentle nostalgia barely hides a bitterness over what's been lost, and 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig', a silly send-up of exotic travel writing nonetheless vexed by allusions to child abuse. For the most part, readers have not found this richness in Lamb's earliest published works, such as his sonnets to Anna, generally viewed as imitations of the nostalgic sentimentalism of William Bowles. It turns out, however, that the Anna sonnets are startling explorations of how a traumatic event can annihilate time. They explore the same spooky terrain as Wordsworth's eldritch Lucy poems and predate Keats's psychology of limbo in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

The first two Anna sonnets appear in Coleridge's 1796 volume *Poems upon Various Subjects*. They are two of the four Lamb poems that Coleridge included. Almost certainly the sonnets are autobiographical, Lamb's laments over the breaking of his relationship with Ann Simmons, whom he had wooed in Hertfordshire while tending his ill maternal grandmother. But what ultimately saddens Lamb is not abandonment but his inability to stop thinking about the loss.

Lamb's first sonnet in the volume, 'Effusion XI', begins:

Was it some sweet device of Faery
That mock'd my steps with many a lonely glade
And fancied wand'rings with a fair-haired maid?[9]

'Device' suggests that fairies have created an artifice to trick the speaker, let's call him 'Lamb', into despair. But Lamb really doesn't know who mockingly compelled him to walk lonely through glades while fancying a blond-haired woman. He speculates a supernatural cause—fairies—but the very outlandishness of the theory implies confusion or exasperation. He is lost and lonely and pining for a girl. The forlornness has clouded his sense of the real. Has he really lost her or not? If not, he asks, again, what supernatural agent—maybe witches in this case—impregnated 'with delights the charmed air' and 'enlightened up the semblance of a smile / In those fine eyes'?[10] (*W,* 5:3). Lamb imagines sex—the impregnation of air—but he is not sure what's doing the inseminating. Nor is he clear on the result of the act: is it a smile or a semblance of one? Regardless, the smile comes from the eyes—a bizarre confusion of categories.

Extending the odd metaphor, Lamb claims that these eyes in the past spoke 'soft soothing things', so comforting they:

might enforce despair
To drop the murdering knife
And let go his foul resolve.[11]

This odd statement applies to Lamb himself, who is despairing and, it seems now, murderous. Toward whom is unclear, though he likely wants to kill the source of his pain, whether it be fairies, witches, or the maiden herself. Lamb wonders if the maiden is still around. Do the 'gales' of summer still 'sigh' through her 'locks'? Wherever the maid is, Lamb continues to 'forlorn' 'wander reckless where, / And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there'.[12] (*W,* 5:3). Lamb uses an adjectival form of the adverb 'forlornly'; this grammatical idiosyncrasy makes the verb it modifies, 'wander', static, not a motion but a state. The effect is hallucinatory: movement without progression. Lamb isn't wandering anywhere particular, just to the 'where' that contains 'no Anna'.

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[9] Lucas, *Works*, V, 3.
[10] Lucas, *Works*, V, 3.
[11] Lucas, *Works,* V, 3.
[12] Lucas, *Works*, V, 3.

The poem begins and ends with Lamb walking alone toward a woman he will never reach. It is about a romantic quest that is not really a quest, steps that seem different but are the same. The reason for stasis is that the speaker is fixated on his anguish and can't stop brooding over it. Far from a conventional sonnet of lovelorn youth, the poem dramatizes the repetition compulsion of deep grief, and the solipsism.

The dark undercurrent of this sonnet—which flows beneath the other Anna sonnets—makes it not so different from the overt grimness of *Blank Verse*, from 1798. Though the poems in that volume—such as 'Written on the Day of My Aunt's Funeral', 'Written a Year after Events', and 'Written Soon after the Preceding Poem'—express a psychological realism more akin to Hopkins's Terrible Sonnets than Wordsworth's strange fits of passion, they share the early sonnets' vision of extreme grief: it destroys time.

Parataxis

What saved Lamb from grief's limbo was getting out into the city, whose motion and variety exhilarated him.[13] But this urban victory over despair wasn't easy. Even when he wasn't pining for youth's lost love, Lamb struggled with other troubles: Mary's madness, his grinding job, his heavy drinking. And Lamb's London was especially hellish: tiny boys indentured into chimney sweeping, girls barely in their teens forced into prostitution, indigent widows and children of soldiers killed in the Napoleonic Wars, maimed soldiers desperate for civilian work, fear of a French invasion, government paranoia, suspension of habeas corpus, imprisonment for slight complaints. To walk through this city's worst,

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[13] In *Charles Lamb*, James connects Lamb to the tradition of the *flâneur*, the urban walker who transforms as he moves streets and blocks and buildings into reflections of his shifting moods. In *The Familiar Essay, Romantic Affect and Metropolitan Culture: The Sweet Security of Streets* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2018) and *Charles Lamb, Elia and the 'London Magazine': Metropolitan Muse* (London, 2010), Simon Hull emphasizes Lamb as an urban writer as well, in particular as a member of the Cockney literary school and a writer for *The London Magazine*. For other studies of Lamb as city walker, see Saree Makdisi, 'William Blake, Charles Lamb, and Urban Antimodernity', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 56 (2016), 737–56; Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810–1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge, 2012); Susan Oliver, 'Walking and Imagining the City: The Transatlanticity of Charles Lamb's Essays for the *London Magazine*', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 154 (2011), 115–30; and David Stewart, 'Lamb's London, Magazines and Nostalgia in the Present Tense', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 144 (2008), 102–13.

depressed or hungover, and still say to its denizens, emphatically, *yes*—Lamb not only did this daily, but viewed his treks as therapeutic (they made his sufferings seem less) and inspiring (his best writing is as dynamic, unpredictable, and eccentric as a crowded street).

Lamb's emotional and artistic embrace of London distinguished him from his nature-loving friends Coleridge and Wordsworth and advanced him to the fore of a ground-breaking new literary movement: urban romanticism. The hero of this sort of writing became known as the *flâneur*, the city stroller enamored of the street's quick enigmas, its rush of randomness and variety, its crazed 'et cetera'.

Lamb developed the style and substance of his city habits in opposition to Wordsworth. In his famous 1800 letter to the poet of fens and fells—in which he criticizes Wordsworth's tendency toward dogmatism—Lamb praises his London over Wordsworth's Lake District. For Lamb, London is exuberant:

> 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 & mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-shops, the **old Book** stalls, parsons cheap'ning books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes, London itself, a pantomime and a masquerade.[14]

These things, Lamb continues, '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 fulness of joy at so much **Life**'.[15]

Lamb's style in this passage is appropriate to his subject matter: paratactically loose and wandering, as different from Wordsworth's arguments as the women of the town from Lucy Gray. Lamb exhibits this style in two other pieces from around the same time, a letter to Thomas

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[14] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr., 3 vols. (Ithaca, 1975–78), I, 266-67.
[15] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 266-67.

Manning mocking the nature worship of Wordsworth and Coleridge and an essay published in *The Morning Post*, in February of 1802. In the essay, Lamb writes as the Londoner, an early and sober version of the comic Elia. The melancholy Londoner rushes into the mass to forget his dark moods; there among the suffering of others he can take pleasure in 'unutterable sympathies'.[16] The more abnormal the object of sympathy, the better. Since the Londoner's sorrow is ponderous sameness—variety reduced to monotony, motion to stasis—therapy is difference, emotional contact, however fleeting, with pickpockets and prostitutes and boxers.

Lamb's mature essays are idiosyncratic maps of his idiosyncratic walks. Whether they describe his London peregrinations—like his essays on beggars and chimney sweeps—or the meanderings of his mind—such as 'New Year's Eve' and 'Two Races of Men'—Lamb's Elia essays are most notable for their movement. The white spaces between paragraphs, sentences, words, and punctuation are not connectors so much as invisible markers of unpredictable swerves, digressions, lurches, leaps, rests, and stops. To read an Elia essay is to get jostled among the hubbub, but the motion is the excitement, fresh even though you read the essay hundreds of times, of 'what's next'?

The Reflector

A major enabler of Lamb's great city literature was Leigh Hunt, especially in his role as editor of *The Reflector*, a quarterly running from 1810 to 1811. Hunt imagined the magazine as a literary and philosophical complement his other periodical, *The Examiner*, devoted to radical politics. A former student at Christ's Hospital, Hunt invited distinguished alumnae to contribute to his new venture, including Charles Lamb.

Hunt's politics irked John Gibson Lockhart, a conversative firebrand for *Blackwood's*. In a series of articles starting in October of 1817, Lockwood condemned Hunt and his "Cockney" school of poetry, which included John Keats. Ironically, the qualities that Lockhart derided were the virtues of a powerful new literary movement that proved a compelling alternative to the Lake school of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. Where these older poets valued the individual over the collective, the country over the city, and the highbrow over the populist, Hunt and his circle affirmed their origins in London's lower-middle class and expressed the urban concerns of this group: collaboration, the aesthetics of the city, and middle-brow entertainment, including, most notably, magazines like

[16] Lucas, I, 140.

the *Reflector*, the *Examiner,* and, soon enough, the *London.* Aside from Hunt, the leading lights of these urban Romantics were Hazlitt, whose 'frenzy and wrath' Lockhart attacked, and Lamb, who proclaimed himself a 'pure' Cockney.[17]

Aptly, Lamb's essays in Hunt's *Reflector* are the first sparks of his most luminous prose works, those Cockney masterpieces in the *London Magazine* of the early 1820s. As a recent number of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* suggests, Lamb's *Reflector* essays are finally getting their due as significant events in the development of his mature style.[18]

Of the four essays Lamb contributed to the second number of the *Reflector*, released in July 1811, he reprinted two in his 1818 *Works*, 'On the Inconveniences Resulting from Being Hanged' and 'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity'. Both exhibit a technique Lamb will perfect in his Elia essays: the creation of an authorial persona. One 'Pensilis' composed the article on hanging; 'Crito' penned the second. Like the name 'Elia'—which suggests 'A Liar', among other meanings—these names are comically ironic. Pensilis is Latin for 'hanging', but suggests 'penis'. Crito recalls Plato's famous dialogue on justice while hinting at 'critic'.

That the pseudonyms are self-contradictory is apt. Both essays explore phenomena that appear to have only one meaning, but in reality possess others. 'On the Inconveniences Resulting from Being Hanged' is about a man hanged for a crime he didn't commit, only to be cut down just before he expired. This 'rebirth' has not been successful. He is embarrassed by what has happened, and so wears a cravat to hide his scar. He moves to the city to lose himself in the crowd. But his cover is blown when he runs into a countryman who publicizes his unfortunate past. His urban friends desert him. Even though he is innocent, they imagine only his guilt, and they are disturbed by the freakishness of his near-death experience.

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[17] For Lamb as a Cockney, see Tim Fulford, 'Talking, Walking, and Working: The Cockney Clerk, the Suburban Ramble, and the Invention of Leisure', *Essays in Romanticism* 18 (2011), 75–95; Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature*, 137–62; and Hull, *The Familiar Essay, Romantic Affect and Metropolitan Culture* and *Charles Lamb, Elia and the 'London Magazine'*.

[18] Number 156 (2012) featured Felicity James's 'Lamb's Essays in the *Reflector*: A Bicentenary Celebration', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 117–58; John Strachan, 'Leigh Hunt in March 1812: The *Examiner*, the *Reflector*, and '"A Day by the Fire'", 149–58' and Simon Hull, 'Snipe, Roast Pig and Boiled Babies: Lamb's Consuming Passion', 138–48.

Pensilis then falls in love, but when his beloved discovers his secret, she breaks off the engagement.

'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity' likewise hinges on situational irony. Crito claims we erroneously attribute physical ugliness to those we suspect of immorality. Look at a 'wanted' poster. When someone has committed a crime against us, we paint him demonically, projecting our negative opinion onto his features. Ironically, this attribution hinders our ability to apprehend the criminal, since the face we paint is not the actual face. A man who has borrowed money of you and fled is really handsome and honest-looking. Otherwise, you wouldn't have lent him money.

As with the essay on hanging, this piece weighs the difficulty of discerning between our psychological projections and the objects we hope to understand. This gap between appearance and reality generates the reversals. Pensilis, though raised, is still viewed as hanged, and so is dead and alive at once. Crito believes that physiognomy is a legitimate form of detecting criminals, but that projecting ugliness onto faces is not. But aren't both modes efforts to discover the invisible through the visible? How is one better than the other?

These essays lack the play and subtlety of Elia's forays, where irony isn't simply reversal but proliferation, and the persona is not double but multiple. Still, both pieces present the ideas Elia will dramatize: there is an unbridgeable gap between interpretation and reality; what we want in life, we get the opposite of; and we are all flawed—guilty, criminal, punished—in ways we barely understand.

Moreover, both essays illuminate the themes Lamb explores in his most famous *Reflector* pieces, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' (October 1811) and 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare' (March 1812). In these essays, Lamb extols art that is radically concrete, attuned to the theory-evading messiness of life. For Lamb, this quality equals clarity, an alertness to life's 'is-ness', instead of its 'ought'. But the clarity is ambiguous, as life is. Never simply comedy or tragedy, reality is 'merriment and infelicity, ponderous crime and feather-light vanity, like twi-formed births, disagreeing complexions of one intertexture, perpetually unit[ing] to shew forth motley spectacles to the world'.[19]

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[19] Lucas, *Works*, I, 177.

London Magazine

Ironically, what got Lamb closest to Shakespeare's and Hogarth's chiaroscuro of the concrete wasn't an aspiration toward highbrow art but monthly magazine writing. As recent scholarship has shown, there are significant differences between Lamb's *London Magazine* essays and the forms the essays took when Lamb collected them into books.[20] Where the bound essays gaze toward permanence, the periodical ones ask, 'what's new'? since a magazine's success depends upon how well it brightens the current of its times. If your magazine is devoted to a city, as *London Magazine* was, then the writing needs to be as dynamic and compelling as the streets, this minute.

When John Scott recruited Lamb to write for the magazine in 1820, he knew what he wanted from his writers (which included Hazlitt and De Quincey): the gumption and ability to write about the 'now' of beastly gorgeous London. Only by being provocatively au courant could the *London Magazine* compete with the other popular magazines of the time: *Blackwood's,* the *Quarterly Review,* the *Examiner*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. To go toe-to-toe with pugnacious writers like *Blackwood*'s Lockhart, *London* writers could not aspire to immortal prose, near perfect sentences to be encased in gilt covers. They had to produce transient sentences about what's hot, what's not.

Lamb seems wrong for this sort of writing. He adored books *because* they described eccentric worlds of yore. He was antiquarian through and through, with his old-fashioned black suit, aged fountains and sundials, affection for odd forgotten pasts. But according to Hazlitt, Lamb's contrariness to the present actually makes him an especially powerful contemporary voice, since his taste for the past inspires love for the London spots that informed his childhood. His lack of interest in the ruckus of the present frees his consciousness to delve into the city's abiding peculiarity and touch its deepest heart.[21]

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[20] For the culture of London magazine writing in Lamb's time, see Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature*; Oliver, 'Walking and Imagining the City;' Hull, *Charles Lamb*; Mark Parker, *London Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge, 2004); Heather B. Stone, 'William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and the London Magazine', *Wordsworth Circle* 44: 1 (Winter 2013), 41–44; and Stewart, 'Lamb's London'.

[21] William Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 9 vols (London, 1998), VII, 232-33.

The *London Magazine* in fact would not have been the *London Magazine* without Lamb. Scott praised 'our Elia' as 'the pride of our magazine' and backed his appreciation by making Lamb his highest-paid writer.[22] But without the *London Magazine*, Lamb would not have been Lamb. His greatest and most lasting literary creation, the character of Elia, he fashioned specifically for his *London Magazine* essays. And the *London*'s primary charge—to capture, in Scott's words, the 'image, form, and pressure' of the city's 'mighty heart'[23]—inspired Lamb to attend to his beloved environs more imaginatively than before, with heightened alertness.

Lamb's first *London Magazine* essay, in the August 1820 number, assumes a reader who shares Elia's city and his experiences: 'Reader, in thy passage from the Bank—where thou hast been receiving thy half-yearly dividends (supposing thou art a lean annuitant like myself) to the Flower Pot, to secure a place for Dalston, or Shacklewell, or some other thy suburban retreat northerly,—didst thou never observe a melancholy looking handsome, brick and stone edifice, to the left—where Threadneedle-street abuts upon Bishopsgate'?[24] So begins 'Recollections of the South Sea-House'. Writer and reader walk the same out-of-the way streets and, most likely, relish the same sights.

This kind of intimacy, grounded on a shared locale, pervades the *London Magazine* essays, as does a sense that readers know the same people as the author. Lamb frequently references these people, though usually in a facetious fashion. For instance, he footnotes a mention of John Tipp's rooms on Threadneedle Street thus: 'I have since been informed, that the present tenant of them is a Mr. Lamb, a gentleman who is happy in the possession of some choice pictures, and among them a rare portrait of Milton, which I mean to do myself the pleasure of going to see, and at the same time to refresh my memory with the sight of old scenes. Mr. Lamb has the character of a right courteous and communicative collector'.[25] The Mr. Lamb here is Charles's brother John, who did indeed own a fine old picture of Milton, which he purchased in 1815.

In October, Lamb followed 'Recollections of the South Sea-House' with 'Oxford in the Vacation'. If the former essay joins the reader in an intimate journey into odd London, the latter, following a typical Lamb

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[22] Parker, *London Magazines*, 44.
[23] John Scott, 'Prospectus,' *London Magazine*, January–June (1820), vii–viii.
[24] Lucas, *Works*, II, 1.
[25] Lucas, *Works*, II, 307.

rhythm, takes the reader to a pastoral realm opposed to the city's bustle: in this case, Oxford University. Again, though, Elia assumes the reader is a fellow Londoner, and so that this reader regularly peruses periodicals as such materials are designed to be read, 'with cursory eye (which, while it reads, seems as though it reads not)'.[26] Scanning this article—not studying it, as one might a book—the reader has no doubt glanced to the bottom, noted the author, and is asking, who is this Elia? Surely, Elia answers, based on 'Recollections of the South Sea-House', you assume I am a clerk. You are correct, and in this life, I spend my days laboring over indigos and silks, while at night I compose sonnets and epigrams. No wonder Elia cherishes holidays, which free him from his urban grind.

The Londoners reading this essay, Elia assumes, understand; they all need an escape from the tumult from time to time, and now is their chance to join him on his vacation to Oxford. And when he happens upon a fellow Londoner there, one G.D., certainly readers will know him as George Dyer, who lives in Clifford's Inn, between Fetter Lane and Chancery Street. Might readers also know Elia's very local allusion in describing this man? You would as soon 'strike an abstract idea' as assault this innocent.[27] Those in the serious know would recognize this as a portion of Hazlitt's retort to John Lamb after the elder Lamb socked him during an argument over coloring in Hans Holbein the Younger. Hazlitt exclaimed that an actual blow would not harm him, only an abstract idea.

Lamb connects Elia even more closely to his London circle in providing a lengthy footnote on Dyer's notorious naïveté, known only to those familiar with him. The footnote, which we learn is 'not by Elia', chastises 'Lamb' for playing jokes on poor Dyer. The anonymous glosser—certainly Lamb himself—knocks Lamb for 'gravely' assuring D. that Lord Castlereagh 'had acknowledged himself to be the author of Waverly'. D. went around repeating this falsehood—Scott, of course, was the author, though he published anonymously—with just as much gravity, making a fool of himself.[28]

When Lamb published essays like 'South-Sea House' and 'Oxford in the Vacation' in *Essays Which Have Appeared Under That Signature in the London Magazine,* in 1823, he cut localized footnotes. He also excised lengthy passages devoted to the London scene. Most significantly, though,

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[26] Lucas, *Works*, II, 7.
[27] Lucas, *Works*, II, 210.
[28] Lucas, *Works*, II, 313.

he rearranged the essays, lifting them from the rush of London's week-to-week randomness into a literary work's design, the dance, seemingly inevitable, of unity and diversity.

The first cluster of essays in *Elia*, which includes 'South-Sea House' and 'New Year's Eve', explores Lamb's obsession: the possibility of finding portals (old buildings, vacations, childhood, borrowing, card playing, and such) through which one can pass into a realm—physical or emotional—outside instrumental time. Sadly, these realms exist in the past or in fancy, so they are fleeting and tenuous, if accessible at all. The next grouping, which features 'Imperfect Sympathies' and 'Witches, and Other Night Fears', and is about failure to connect. The next assemblage, bracketed by 'My First Play' and 'Distant Correspondents', grieves over loss: of childhood plays, of friends now worlds away. Social problems, unify the next grouping. In his essays on chimney sweeps and beggars, for instance, Elia mocks abstract visions of reform that ignore the particularities of the needy.

The first twenty-five essays of Lamb's book fall on the darker side of a continuum running between alienation and communion. But none of these pieces is depressing. Elia finds comedy in the gap between aspiration and reality. Our high hopes, doomed to remain unfulfilled, are laughable. We are like blind men who behave as if they are sighted. We bang into things, run into walls, stumble, fall, barely miss getting run over, all the while believing we are noble animals progressing toward higher states of being. It would be easy to be bitter over this disproportion between fantasy and fact, like Swift is. It would also be easy to view the rift with deadpan indifference, as Camus does. But Elia is too generous, or too innocent, for either move. His attitude is: the world is so painful and stupid and random, why not relieve the agony for a little by laughing at how silly we are?

Lamb fittingly ends *Elia* with three essays celebrating comedic acting. Just as the comedian stumbles to get laughs, so we all can torque terror into wit. Life is terrible. Sisters kill mothers. It is also funny, slapstick funny. Gravity knocks you about, but since you know how to go down, nothing hurts as much as it should. Lamb trips, Elia breaks the fall.

Imperialist Lamb

In his workplace, East India Company, Lamb was the office clown, notorious for his shenanigans. His comedy pushed against the harsh rules of his job and made him feel, for a minute, free. But though Lamb mocked his employer—and though he was intimate with the most powerful

radicals of his day, including Hazlitt and Hunt, and though he himself wrote a verse satire of the Regent in Hunt's *Examiner*—he at the end of the day earned his bread from England's primary vehicle of imperialism. Recent scholars have explored Lamb's participation in Britain's exploitation of other countries, especially in 'Old China', the Elia essay where Lamb appears to engage in overt orientalism: commodifying China for his own sensual pleasure.[29]

In this essay from 1823, Elia praises china teacups. What charms him most is the surrealism of the scenes painted onto the porcelain. Characters float 'up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet [remain] on *terra firma* still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, has made to spring up beneath their sandals'. If Elia enjoys violations of the laws of space—the figures defy while depending upon gravity—he also relishes transgressions of time: men who have somehow developed women's faces, and women who have evolved into more 'womanish' women.[30]

In light of the magic of this cup, the lecturing of his cousin Bridget—a fictional stand-in for Mary—is tedious. While she complains that her and Elia's newfound financial comfort has rendered them unable to appreciate the value of their purchases, Elia hovers among charming little figures who can transcend clocks and maps. Compared to Bridget's causal world—if I struggle to buy a book, then it is of higher worth—Elia's a-causal one is exhilarating.

The china's violations of logic imply an aesthetic, an aesthetic, it turns out, of the essay. Elia begins the essay as an appreciation of the spatiotemporal baroqueness of china; Bridget breaks in with a long speech on struggle and value; Elia returns to gazing at his china as if she had never spoken. Elia's china reverie does not seem a legitimate 'cause' for Bridget's speech, which in turn does not cause in Elia the reaction she wants. Instead

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[29] For Lamb and the British Empire, see Karen Fang, 'Empire, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb's Consumer Imagination', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 43:4 (2003), 815–43; and Felicity James, "Thomas Manning, Charles Lamb, and Oriental Encounters', *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies,* 76 (2011), 21–35. Other pertinent work on Lamb and the East India Company are Vahé Baladouni, 'Charles Lamb: A Man of Letters and a Clerk in the Accountant's Department of the East India Company', *Accounting Historians Journal* 17:2 (December 1990), 21–36; and Frank Ledwith, 'The East India Company', *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 31 (1980), 129–35.

[30] Lucas, *Works*, II, 248.

of linear development, we experience two different visions pressed awkwardly together. That the essay is two opposing things once should not surprise us, when we remember the first sentence of the piece: 'I have an almost feminine partiality for old china'.[31] Elia is male and female, as double as his essay is, as the china figures are.

Is there something politically suspect behind this whimsy?

Lamb acquired his china because of the British Empire's exploitation of the country where the dining ware was produced. In dreaming over the exotic Chinese images, is Elia benefiting from his country's injustice? He's certainly complicit in the empire's own violations of time and space. The imperialist imposes his narratives and objects onto the colonized region, trying to turn other into same. He also imports the myths and artifacts of his colony into his own markets, transforming same into other.

If Elia plays the imperialist, Lamb does not—at least here. Bridget's emphasis on labor counters Elia politically irresponsible idleness. Value arises only by earning one's own keep, not relying on the labor of others. The best work is locally directed, toward *this* book in *this* shop on *this* corner. The book is most valuable when its purchase creates shortage, not the surplus that empire desires. 'Old China' dramatizes Lamb's own struggle between decadence and rigor, 'as if' and 'is'. The tension generates his abiding ironic aesthetic: pleasure is danger; joyful is the grind.

Occasional Lamb

Lamb's attunement to the bizarre fluctuations of unfettered particulars not only informed his masterful prose of the Elia essays, but also his mature poetry. While the Lamb of the first half of 1820s grew into a prose star, he never forsook poetry. His verse often appeared in the same *London Magazine* numbers that featured his major prose. In September 1820, for instance, he published 'To R.[J.]S. Knowles, Esq: On His Tragedy of Virginius', celebrating the new play of his friend James Sheridan Knowles, the Irish playwright and actor. The play reaches Lamb's highest standard; so emotionally vivid is its action, it barely requires words. In the same *London* number, Lamb included a sonnet, 'Commendatory Verses to the Author of Poems, Published under the Name of Barry Cornwall', in which he tells his friend Cornwell (whose real name was Bryan Procter) that he need not hide behind a nom de plume; his verse is exquisite, and he should joy openly in its power.

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[31] Lucas, *Works*, II, 247.

Lamb was also publishing in the *Champion*, John Scott's old magazine, now owned by the still radical John Thelwall. Lamb's lines were appropriately political. In May 1820, Lamb published 'Sonnet to Matthew Wood, Esq, Alderman and M.P.' 'Heroic Wood', the lord mayor of London from 1815 to 1817 and now the city's representative in Parliament, challenged the verdict of the so-called Cato Conspiracy, a plot, hatched in early 1820, to murder the British cabinet and the prime minister. The plan failed, and thirteen were arrested, five of whom were executed. Like many radicals, Wood believed that the plot was instigated by the government to justify the Six Acts, laws recently passed to hinder meetings in the name of reform. In Parliament, Wood argued that one of the supposed plotters, George Edwards, a police spy, was in fact the primary instigator of the plan.[32]

Lamb published other occasional poems like these—often political—throughout 1820, both in *The Champion* and other periodicals.[33] This kind of verse increasingly became Lamb's poetic medium. This poetry seems eminently less ambitious than his earlier verse. While poems like 'The Old Familiar Faces' aspired to universality and permanence, lines such as those to Hunt or Wood highlight their specificity and evanescence. This poem is for the here and now. It has an expiration date. But this temporality need not weaken the verse. As Lamb's *London Magazine* articles show, a commitment to the desultory can cut to the quick. Nowhere is this poetics of the immediate more prominent than in the last significant verse Lamb published, his verses for the albums of friends and acquaintances.[34]

Collecting items for personal albums was an increasingly popular pastime of young women. She might include drawings, portraits of friends or public figures, pressed flowers, favorite quotes and poems. Special prizes were poems by others, usually family and friends, written in their own hands. But the most cherished entry of all was a handwritten poem from a famous author, preferably addressed to the album's owner.

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[32] For more on the Cato Conspiracy, see John Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest: Peterloo, Cato Street and the Queen Caroline Controversy* (London, 2011), 105-119.
[33] For Lamb's occasional verse, see John Stewart, 'Fleeting, Shadowy Reflections: Lamb's Occasional Verse, 1820–1834', *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 154 (October 2011), 131–42.
[34] For Lamb's album verses, see Samantha Matthews, 'From Autograph to Print: Charles Lamb's *Album Verses, with a Few Others* (1830)', *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 154 (October 2011), 143–54.

Male writers chafed at this 'feminine' practice, believing it a degradation of serious literature, which should properly address universal subjects in the form of print, not particular people in personal scrawls. More prominent writers, such as Southey the poet laureate, grew irritated at frequent requests for their autographs. Perhaps worse, the purchase of such albums threatened the sales of poetry books.

Lamb appears to have shared Southey's low estimation of album poetry. That didn't stop him, however, from publishing a collection of this type of verse in 1830. Ostensibly he published *Album Verses, with a Few Others* to help along his young friend Edward Moxon, who would later marry his adopted daughter Emma Isola. Lamb's collection was Moxon's first publication. The young man needed a famous name to launch his house, and Lamb generously, if reluctantly, agreed to lend his. If we take Lamb's dedication of the volume seriously, he didn't much value the work. He calls the poems 'Trifles' and claims that Moxon is publishing them not for their merit but so he can demonstrate his skills as a publisher.[35]

Are we to take the ever-ironical Lamb literally here? Certainly, the poems in this volume are not Lamb's best. Literary quality aside, however, the book, like Lamb's occasional verses from the early 1820s (some of which appear in the volume), is a meditation on the nature and function of poetry itself.

In the book's first poem, 'In the Album of a Clergyman's Lady' (likely Mrs. Williams, for whom Emma worked as governess), Lamb claims that an 'Album is a Garden, not for show / Planted, but use'. Unlike a traditional poetry book, which aspires to rise above the cycle of growth and decay, the album ripens and rots. It is moreover practical, as opposed to the conventional volume's more fanciful atmosphere. Entries in the album are indeed precious, like family porcelain or religious icons, objects whose value depends on their usefulness, be it emotional or spiritual. Ultimately, the album is 'a list of living friends' who will continue to bloom, because they are rooted in the album, when 'cold laws' destroy their bodies. Such should a 'tender' album be, and Lamb wishes such a book for this lady.[36] This seemingly simple verse is contradictory. The album is both ephemeral, like a garden, and stable, like porcelain. It is useful in the present moment, since it reminds one of close friends; but it is also oriented toward the future, because it holds memories that will bloom after the friends die.

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[35] Lucas, *Works*, V, 304.
[36] Lucas, Works, V, 43.

Lamb's sensitivity to the complex temporality of the album verse makes his volume far from a trifle. His twilight poetics suggest that attention to the 'now', the more particular the better, gives poems their power. Ironically, the more intensely the lines speak to the present, the more likely their permanence. The poem properly is an ongoing garden whose fresh produce recalls past growths, or a china cabinet preserving plates whose current use memorializes those who once cherished them. Lamb's acknowledgment of the potency of the autograph reveals, once more, his admirable lack of gender prejudice. For him, the 'feminine' habit of fashioning albums, far from degrading Poetry, proves a vibrant model for poetics of the ordinary.

Lamb's own anonymous review of the volume, published in Moxon's *Englishmen's Review* in August 1831, confirms the poetics his volume implies: 'This may be said even of [the poems], that they are not vague verses—to the Moon, or to the Nightingale—that will fit any place—but strictly appropriate to the person that they were intended to gratify; or to the species of chronicle which they were destined to be recorded in. The Verses to a "Clergyman's Lady"—to the "Wife of a learned Serjeant"—to a "Young Quaker"—could have appeared only in an Album, and only in that particular person's Album they were composed for'.[37]

Here once again is Lamb's empathy toward beings outside his own head. This open-hearted attention to objects is precisely what Lamb admired in Vincent Bourne's Latin poems: 'They fix upon *something*; they ally themselves to common life and objects; their good nature is a Catholicon, sanative of coxcombry, of heartlessness, and of fastidiousness'.[38]

Turmoil and Whim-Whams

In his mock obituary of 1827, Lamb admits he has done little worth noting, save he 'once caught a swallow flying'.[39] An absurdly funny line like this is typical of Lamb, but it also points, perhaps inadvertently, to what saved Lamb again and again from despondency: pursuit of speeds he might slow, for a moment, with words only slightly less rapid. Such sudden tensions between motion and calm take us back to the earliest structure of Lamb's feelings, No. 17 Fleet, between garden and wildness.

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[37] Lucas, *Works*, I, 340.
[38] Lucas, *Works*, I, 341.
[39] Lucas, *Works*, I, 320.

Lamb died in 1834 of erysipelas. If he had been able to write his obituary posthumously, he might have replaced swallow-flight with another kind of soaring: his passage through the portal he had searched for his whole life, to a place beyond the western sun, where no madness is, or fear. One imagines him tiring quickly, though, of the nectarous tranquility. He hankers to press back through the gate, to the turmoil and the whim-whams. He would suffer life's stings all over again for those evenings of whist and gin, or the long London walks with Mary.

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Book Reviews

Charlotte May on *Henry Crabb Robinson, Romantic Comparatist, 1790-1811* by Philipp Hunnekuhl

PHILIPP HUNNEKUHL, *Henry Crabb Robinson, Romantic Comparatist, 1790-1811* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020) £90. ISBN 978-1789621785.

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Few authors of the Romantic period were either not known to, or not read by, Henry Crabb Robinson. Hunnekuhl's addition to 'Romantic Reconfigurations: Studies in Literature and Culture, 1780-1850' brings Robinson's contribution to the period to life. Robinson is represented not as an isolated individual, but as an author who saw bringing literature and people together as an intrinsic part of his professional identity. Furthermore, Robinson is not just situated within the context and networks of his day, but Hunnekuhl also situates him within the context of contemporary criticism of both the Romantic period and comparative literature studies. This monograph uses Robinson's extensive published works to unpick the influence he had on his contemporaries and further into the nineteenth century. Through the study of an author whose interests bridged languages, this is also an exceptional case study of comparative literature. Hunnekuhl acknowledges, and expands, the extensive corpus of work by Robinson to achieve this outcome, including journals, correspondence, and previously unpublished manuscript ephemera in his analyses.

Hunnekuhl establishes Robinson's early authorship in Chapter 1 and moves on to explore his relationship with - and critiques of - William Godwin's philosophies in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 3 centralises Robinson as 'the most lucid and accurate English transmitter of Immanuel Kant's philosophy during the early Romantic period' (p.71). Chapter 4 looks at Robinson's serial essays on Kant for the *Monthly Register* and argues that Robinson's letters on German Literature must 'be read in the light of the

Kantian cataclysm involving aesthetic autonomy and art's moral relevance' (p.102). This 'cataclysm' is continually explored throughout the book and represents Robinson's conviction that literature can influence morals and, in turn, societal structure (as Hunnekuhl explores in the Conclusion). Audience awareness was crucial for Robinson to achieve this recognition of literature's ability to inspire change. With resistant readers in mind, Robinson acknowledged that an English reader's likely reaction might be to 'shrug off the new German philosophy as quackery' (p.109) and used his writing, editing and translating to advocate for a shift in cultural thought for the betterment of society.

In Chapter 5 Hunnekuhl explores how 'Being a comparatist – or, to use Robinson's term, a 'literator', a critical disseminator of literature, philosophy, and science – involved informal personal exchanges at least as much as it did formal publication' (p.129). This argument is a cornerstone of this study. By acknowledging literary transactions taking place in private space, including the written spaces of letters, Robinson's extensive network placed him in a perfect position to share and disseminate literature between writers and, indeed, countries. Both Robinson and William Hazlitt can be considered comparativists or 'literators'. Familial connections through Dissenting networks meant that both writers knew each other as early as 1799, and even with strongly opposing views on Napoleon Bonaparte, Robinson kept his view of Hazlitt's works detached from his personal sentiments. As Hunnekuhl points out, Hazlitt introduced Robinson to the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and Robinson disseminated their work in Europe, including to Herder and Schlegel (p.129).

Chapter 6 explores this role of Robinson as literary intermediary further, including Robinson introducing Wordsworth to the poetry of William Blake in 1812, and discussing Blake in letters to Dorothy Wordsworth in 1826. Figures like Dorothy Wordsworth were not peripheral to the development of Romantic thought, but instead contributed to key dialogues within their coteries, however regionally-centred their careers and writing may seem. Ultimately, by mapping Robinson's relationships and reading, we can connect the canonical figures of the Romantic canon and also understand how the canon misrepresents the realities of reading and writing in the Romantic period. With Robinson providing such an important bridge to so many key figures of Romanticism, it is undeniable that the literary landscape would have been significantly different without his pivotal role.

Returning to published space, with potentially more public appeal, Chapter 7 details Christian Leberecht Heynes's *Amathone*, convincingly arguing that this obscure work could be included in scholarly discussions through the lens of Robinson's translation. Robinson's advertisement of this translation 'testifies to the uniqueness of Robinson's critical principle of Free Moral Discourse' (p.211). But even when Robinson is engaging in his original arguments for the ethical impact of literature, he continues to acknowledge and develop points of other authors like Schlegel, demonstrating his holistic role as creator and responder of literary theorem. Robinson used his voice to translate, acknowledge, and respond to discussions of critical theory.

Ultimately, this book is not just a contribution to much-needed scholarship on Henry Crabb Robinson, but it is a case study in comparative literature. As Hunnekuhl concludes, in the Romantic period there was a continual 'cross-pollination between the social and the literary' (p.214), which Robinson used to create, cultivate and disseminate his theories on literary ethics across languages, particularly Free Moral Discourse. For Robinson, to be a 'literator' was an implicit part of his professional identity. With much anonymous and unattributed work of Robinson's yet to be identified, this monograph leaves us excitedly awaiting future opportunities to continue exploring the complexities of not just Robinson's critical role as literary intermediary and disseminator in the Romantic period, but also comparative literature studies.

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John Williams on *The Presence of God in the Works of William Wordsworth*, and *The Absent God in the Works of William Wordsworth* by Eliza Borkowska.

Eliza Borkowska, *The Presence of God in the Works of William Wordsworth* (London: Routledge, 2020). £120 hardback. ISBN 978-0-367-60812-5.

Eliza Borkowska, *The Absent God in the Works of William Wordsworth* (London: Routledge, 2020) £120 hardback. ISBN 978-0-367-60813-2.

Eliza Borkowska has written an ambitious, comprehensive analysis of Wordsworth's poetry and prose by way of investigating the consequences of what she perceives to be the poet's persistent reluctance to incorporate `the presence of God` in his work. She suggests that each of her two books may be read as a stand-alone composition (both volumes cover Wordsworth's entire output); but when read together, she explains, they may be considered as adopting the sonnet form. *The Presence of God* has eight chapters `offering an ironically positive reading of Wordsworth's religious discourse` together with a section entitled `Retrospect – Or the Turn`.[1] *The Absent God* has six chapters `offering a reading which is positively negative`. (I: 1) While a wealth of creative and illuminating cross-referencing takes place between the two volumes, Borkowska avoids any undue repetition in the course of displaying her encyclopaedic knowledge of Wordsworth's output in both poetry and prose. Her use of the word `ironic` in relation to Volume One should not be taken to imply a negative response to Wordsworth's spirituality, nor should her use of the term `absence` in Volume Two. What concerns her are the consequences of his persistent refusal throughout his work to align himself with (or be co-opted on to) any group claiming to represent a specific Christian theological position.

Central to Borkowska's thesis is the contention that Wordsworth lived and wrote on a cultural fault-line which separated an earlier eighteenth century tradition of implicit belief in a Christian God (epitomised for her by Pope and Johnson), from a `Romantic` position

[1] *The Absent God*, 1. Hereafter references in the text refer to *The Presence of God* as I, and *The Absent God* as II.

which increasingly questioned the assumptions of earlier generations. The consequent complexity of Wordsworth's circumstances (his longevity being a significant factor) is minutely tracked through the course of his literary output, not least in relation to the revisions he made to *The Prelude* after 1805. Borkowska supports the view (referring specifically to the work of Jonathan Wordsworth) that the orthodox God of Christianity is no more a genuinely moulding presence in the later `Christian *Prelude*` than it is in the text of 1805: `Instead of resolving the tensions within the text, the decades of revision introduced into it further tensions, uncertainties and inconsistencies`. (II: 143)

Borkowska goes to great lengths to illustrate what she refers to as the `allusive` nature of Wordsworth's references to `Christianity in particular and religion in general`. (I: 47) Writing on the *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* she draws attention to structural features which recur throughout Wordsworth's poetry at moments where he offers to engage with `unambiguously Christian elements`: ` … they are very often just elements, motifs rather than self-contained and sustained topics. This explains, for instance, why so many works from the "Wordsworthian pantheistic phase" – or, according to some Wordsworthians, his pantheistic *moment* – are able to include Christian references`. Christianity, she insists, `is not turned into *the* theme`. (I: 45-7)

Tim Fulford has recently written at length on Wordsworth's later poetry, arguing that this work is still too often unjustly dismissed as anti-climactic.[2] Borkowska's two volumes combine to offer an equally revisionist interpretation of the later (post *Excursion*) poetry, exploring the stylistic and ideological shifts that were taking place, not least through Wordsworth's mastery of the sonnet form. She argues that the religious content of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* remains essentially `allusive`, a conclusion exemplified by her reading of the sestet of Sonnet XXIII, `Confirmation`:

> […]what is offered at the end is a rather unexpected and yet, I claim, typically Wordsworthian shift of focus: a distraction – a nostalgic detour – through which what is really accentuated in this sonnet is the passing of childhood rather than the essence of the rite which the poem takes up as its subject. (I: 50)

Borkowska's discussion of `The Sun, that seemed so mildly to retire` from *Evening Voluntaries*, concludes that:

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[2] Tim Fulford, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1815-1845* (Philadelphia, 2019).

> This is an important composition, because it demonstrates that there is no reason to believe that Wordsworth regarded personal prayer as too private a thing to be committed to verse. Nonetheless, he had never written in this way and in this mode before, and never would again. (I: 116)

Before being tempted to dismiss this claim as far too sweeping, it should be made clear that Borkowska's thesis rests heavily on a very specific, narrowly focused definition of `God`, and hence of religion.

In *The Presence of God* she refers primarily to `religion` rather than `God`; in *The Absent God* she refers primarily to `God`. The God which she is looking for in Wordsworth's writing is the orthodox Christian God associated with the religion of the Established Church of the poet's day. Her analysis of the poetry and prose therefore throws into relief the nature of Wordsworth's personal religious convictions, he possessed a profound spirituality that informed everything he wrote, but which equally rendered him unwilling to align himself with any specific Christian group or sect, although as Borkowska notes, he was never short of enthusiastic readers keen to sign him up for anything on the spectrum that ran from Quakerism through to the Oxford Movement as it began to emerge in the late 1830s. (I: 4-5) To illustrate the point further she quotes Aubrey de Vere's account of how a good friend referred to Wordsworth's `expression quite of heavenly peace and contemplative delight, as the May breeze came over him from the woods while he was slowly walking out of church …. A flippant person present inquired, "Did you ever chance … to observe that heavenly expression on his countenance, as he was walking into church, on a fine May morning?" A laugh was the reply`. `De Vere`, she writes, `was a perceptive critic and an insightful observer` (I: 15), but it should also be added that like Wordsworth's religiously enthusiastic readership (and we should not forget here to include Francis Jeffrey, who had Wordsworth marked down as an inveterate pagan), de Vere also had his agenda.

Viewed through Borkowska's lens, the persistent `allusiveness` of God and religion in Wordsworth's poetry gives rise to an `I` in his work that is profoundly divided and deeply wary of the language of anything like Christian orthodoxy; and when such language does seem to appear (as in *Resolution and Independence*), it registers as little more than an afterthought: `"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure; / I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor."` (II: 94-6) In the course of her two books Borkowska claims to be able to show that for the most part Wordsworth's references to God are rarely heart-felt:

> Sometimes they sound perfunctory, as if they came mechanically rather than instinctively…. Regardless of how they come, however, and regardless of what they actually are – a mental or a verbal habit, or both, or more than that: a wish to say what is expected, what custom requires or, in his later years, what his reputation obliges him to say; or, maybe, a genuine desire to express a sentiment that may bring comfort to the addressee, or to himself – regardless of what these religious references in such contexts are, Wordsworth offers no sustained reflection on the subject. Although he approaches this topic, he refuses to take it up.

Borkowska then proceeds to quote from a letter written by Wordsworth to Lord Beaumont shortly after his brother John's death in 1805 where he is drawn into a uniquely sustained engagement with religious belief, in the process revealing a degree of insecurity sufficient to explain his subsequent recourse to `allusiveness`:

> [...] there is no answer which can satisfy and lay the mind to rest [...] Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme governor? Why should our notion of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be His notion and rule, if everything were to end here? Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being destroyed by death, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have *more of love* in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of *another* and a *better world*, I do not see.

`Nothing like this', writes Borkowska, `was ever produced by Wordsworth's "poetic mind"`. (I: 73-4) While I think it must be the case that the jury is still out on this particular conclusion, Borkowska's two volumes remain an original, stimulating, and invaluable addition to the canon of Wordsworth scholarship.

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Sophie Phelps on *The Boy-man, Masculinity and Immaturity in the Long Nineteenth Century*, by Pete Newbon

PETE NEWBON, *The Boy-man, Masculinity and Immaturity in the Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). £95 hardback. ISBN 978-1137408136.

Sir David Wilkie's painting *The Blind Fidler* (in which Hartley Coleridge makes an appearance) adorns the front cover of Pete Newbon's ambitious publication. Newbon applies a broadly chronological approach in his book, with his first three chapters dedicated to contextualising ideas surrounding childhood and immaturity in the Enlightenment and Romantic period, as well as taking the time to position his argument carefully amongst those of other scholars who have also been fascinated by the seemingly perpetual male childhoods of key English Romantic writers. The remaining eight chapters focus on figures of the Romantic era who can be categorised as boy-men.

Chapter One is successful in introducing the concept of the boy-man to readers who may not be familiar with it, defining that concept as male writers belonging to the long nineteenth century who are characterised by their immaturity. However, it is in Chapter Two where Newbon's investigation into the concept of boy-men truly begins. Discussed in detail in Chapter Two, and central to Newbon's argument concerning boy-men, is the Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jaques Rousseau, and his influential publication *Emile; Ou, De L'Education.* Newbon heralds Rousseau as a 'powerful precursor and model for Romantic-era boy-men', and throughout his book provides convincing examples for why the philosopher can be understood as providing the blueprint for Romantic boy-men attributes.

Newbon identifies notable works which have considered boy-men, such as Catherine Robson's *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman,* and Adrienne Gavin's *Childhood in Edwardian Fiction: Worlds Enough and Time*. He is careful to stress that 'The figure of the "boy-man" is by no means an unknown entity' in literary scholarship but argues that as the titles of the aforementioned publications indicate, more focus has been given to the boy-men and perpetual children of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, leaving the Romantic era comparatively neglected.

Chapter Three identifies the key traits unique to Romantic-boy-men, highlighting how they differ from their Victorian and Edwardian counterparts; surmising that the Romantic boy-man was 'a product of Sternian comic sentiment, Rousseauian confessional autobiography, Chattertonian neglected genius, and the Wordsworthian idealisation of childhood'. Newbon also advises his readers not to forget the impact of the French Revolution, suggesting it can be understood as a 'crucial catalyst' in the formation of the Romantic era boy-man. Newbon argues that, disgusted by the cruelties of the French Revolution, as well as the casualties of the Napoleonic Wars and the harsh realities of rapid industrialisation, 'boy-men actively drew upon their childlikeness as a form of political, countercultural subversion'.

In Chapter Four, Newbon employs Henry Carey's term 'Namby-Pamby' to address Wordsworth's seemingly childish poetry, arguing that despite the criticism Wordsworth received for his childish verse, he himself cannot be categorised as a boy-man. Newbon's distinction is that while Wordsworth was fascinated by the concept of childhood, he did not consider himself a perpetual child, or one who has struggled to advance through boyhood into manhood. This is important, as it signals to the reader a trait of Romantic boy-men, namely a shared awareness that they were more childlike than others. Newbon's study focusses predominantly on six Romantic writers: John Keats, Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb, Hartley Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey and Thomas Hood. The remaining chapters of Newbon's book reveal meticulously the extent to which these writers can be understood as the embodiment of Romantic boy-men. As Newbon is careful to explain, the immaturity of these writers manifested itself in a self-conscious awareness that they 'were not children, but adults who identified to an abnormal degree with the seeming virtues of their childhoods'.

Newbon discusses in some detail, the physical attributes of the boy-men, suggesting that smallness in stature and 'physical maladies' contributed to the immaturity of these writers. When discussing Keats in particular, Newbon argues that Keats's self-consciousness regarding his petite frame always plagued the poet; and suggests this self-consciousness hindered Keats from transitioning into manhood. As Newbon explains, after reading Keats's sonnet, 'Had I a Man's Fair Form' Richard Woodhouse, a friend of Keats's, commented: 'the author has an idea that the diminutiveness of his size makes him contemptible and that no woman can like a man of small stature'. Furthermore, Hartley Coleridge and De Quincey, both of whom were little over five feet tall, are also described by Newbon as being aware that their physical attributes were not

representative of innate manliness. Instead, Newbon argues that these boy-men were 'caught somewhere in stature between boyhood and normative manhood' and that 'the boy-men's lived experience of littleness was integral to their literary attempts to express an amphibious identity, between child and adult'. Newbon contrasts the small statures of these men with Wordsworth's almost six feet, a 'giant' for those days. However, as Newbon is careful to stress, it was not just a smallness in stature which hindered the boy-men in their transition to manhood, other physical factors were also at play. For example, childhood illness meant De Quincey was the perpetual baby of the family, Hartley's lack of co-ordination meant he was unsuited to sports, Hood was partially deaf from childhood and Lamb and Hunt both suffered from childhood stutters. Newbon explains that whilst Lamb was known to use his stutter for comic timing, he was also 'afflicted by infantile poliomyelitis, which left him lame in one leg'. The trauma of this childhood illness remained with him always, and his essays are 'populated with lame figures, and the inability to roam anchors the childlike Elia ever more firmly within the feminine domestic sphere'. These physical limitations meant the boy-men were routinely barred from 'many spheres of manly fellowship' which in turn forced the writers to reflect on their unique sensitivity and social peculiarity, which they considered fell 'beneath the standards of normative masculinity'.

Compared with Wordsworth's robust manly stature and his inclination for exertive exercise like hiking and mountaineering, these boy-men recognised they were themselves more akin to children in their delicate dispositions. In addition to his discussion of the boy-man's physical shortcomings, Newbon also recognises the importance of psychological health in the formation of the boy-man as a contributing factor. Referencing Keats's mental disturbance as a child, Hunt's anxiety attacks and Lamb's bouts of manic depression, Newbon reveals the psychological challenges these boy-men faced as they attempted to pass into adulthood. He suggests that the self-consciousness they harboured regarding their mental difficulties further alienated them from what they recognised as the accepted form of masculinity, resulting he argues, in a regressive, inward turning towards perpetual immaturity.

Having discussed the shared physical and mental characteristics of the boy-men, Newbon adjusts his focus, concentrating on the childlike whimsies of these writers, such as an appreciation for jokes, puns and pantomime. These childish outlets, he argues, formed the basis of the Romantic boy-men's playful literary identities, and cemented their position outside of adulthood and maturity. Newbon is careful throughout his book, not to over-simplify the nature of the Romantic boy-man. Instead, he

presents his readers with a series of shared characteristics, which can be recognised as contributing factors. Newbon's book is engaging throughout, and if his objective was to educate the reader on the shared attributes of the Romantic boy-man, he has certainly achieved this.

Sophie Phelps
Reigate College

Nora Crook on *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture: Poetry, Manuscript, Print, 1780–1850*, by Samantha Matthews

SAMANTHA MATTHEWS, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture: Poetry, Manuscript, Print, 1780–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). £60 hardback. ISBN 978 0 19 885794 5.

We all have some idea of 'Album verse': short poetry, usually of no great merit, written primarily for a female readership, probably during the years 1810 to 1830, inscribed in a scrap book or published in a luxurious gift annual bound in rose-coloured moiré silk. We associate it with Thomas Moore and Byron, poets who brought a degree of distinction to the genre. Nor, according to Samantha Matthews, are these notions exactly wrong. However, she argues, they do not do justice to the significance of the album as a cultural phenomenon during the period 1780–1850, nor to the importance of 'album verse' in fashioning Romantic poetics.

In this scrupulously researched book, which impresses by its assiduous mining of new archival material, Matthews documents the origins, progress, and decline of a very specific vehicle for the circulation of poetry: the manuscript album of inscriptions, emerging in the late eighteenth-century as a hybrid of the commonplace book, the *liber amicorum,* and the visitors' book, jealously guarded during the making and keeping, handed down as a family heirloom, or dispersed for autographs. There have been studies of other individual manuscript albums of this period, such as Patrizia Di Bello's case-study of 'Mrs Birkbeck's Album', a treasure of Birkbeck College, University of London. There have been general and particular studies of the printed literary annual (such as Katherine Harris on the *Forget-Me-Not*). But this is the first study I know of its kind. It covers the beginnings of manuscript album culture in the late 1780s, its transition from male control to becoming almost exclusively the prerogative of a female elite, a second transition into becoming a middle-class phenomenon and its decline and metamorphosis into other forms.

Chapters 1 and 2 recreate vanished albums. Matthews locates the vogue for the album inscription as originating in the prestige of Thomas Gray's Latin Alcaics in the album of the Grande Chartreuse. A 'paean to silence and peace', in Matthews' words, Gray's poem ironically became the inspiration for a noisy collaborative marketing enterprise, led by the

publisher John Bell, to publish a subscription miscellany volume containing copies of poems inscribed in the famous album, involving poems from the Della Cruscan circle. The row that ensued, with publishing partners splitting, each claiming to have the more elegant and authentic production, is a complicated one, well recounted by Matthews. Chapter 2 retrieves the 'Cossey [Costessey] Hall' album, kept by Sir William and Lady Frances Jerningham beginning in 1785. This typifies the country house album-cum-visitors' book. The Jerninghams, Norfolk gentry, Catholics who became patrons of emigré royalists fleeing revolutionary France, also welcomed Amelia Opie and ambitious young men such as John Polidori (Matthews observes slyly that Lady J. 'does seem predisposed to clever young men') who stayed at Costessey Hall after splitting with Byron, inscribed passionate panegyrics, which he then published in an effort to further his literary career. Chapter 3, on Lady Jersey and her circle, maps the role of her numerous albums in furthering Whig alliances and in successful lionizing (Byron and Moore were both contributors). Chapter 4 sees 'albo-mania' in full spate in the 1820s and a corresponding 'albo-phobia', centred around fears that published album verse by female amateurs was corrupting the quality of English poetry; the anxiety manifests itself in a stream of satirical verse satirizing the keeping of albums.

Readers of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* will make a beeline to Chapter 5, and rightly, for it is at the heart of Matthews's argument. I was surprised to learn that Lamb 'wrote more poems, acrostics, and inscriptions for albums than any other Romantic author'– despite the fact that he is generally regarded as a famous despiser of albums. It seems, rather, that it was the editors of the annuals that he despised. He kept an unusual sort of album–not a blank book, but a repurposed copy of Holcroft's *Travels,* writing extracts and his own album poetry in blank spaces, and inserted interleaves. Lamb wrote for strangers' albums as much as to his acquaintances, notably to an 'abecedarium of girls and women,' often playing on the meaning of their names. He encouraged his adopted daughter, Emma Isola, to keep an album. The longest portion of the chapter concerns the publication of Lamb's *Album Verses, With a Few Others* (1830), an unprecedented title for a single-authored book by a serious author, Matthews points out, and a misnomer, since the 'few others' far outnumber the album verses. Why did he do this? Matthews persuasively argues that album verse was a perfect vehicle for Lamb's characteristic mingling of the playful with the deeply serious and a means to convey his sympathies with the world of women and children. In a quasi reprise of the 1816–19 attacks on Cockney poetics in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* review, *Album Verses* was attacked by numerous periodicals. Lamb's defence, 'On the Latin

Poetry of Vincent Bourne' constitutes, Matthews maintains, 'the most detailed aesthetic rationale for and defence of the minor and feminized genre of album verses published during the Romantic period.'

Chapter 6 takes us to daughters of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. Their fathers were actively hostile to albums, while their daughters had unique opportunities to collect autographs and inscriptions from their distinguished friends and visitors. The albums kept and co-curated by them reflect the tensions of the situation. (Edith Southey, with apparently no ambitions to become a poetess, suffered a spate of poems addressing her as a cygnet to her father's 'swan', for which her father teased her, while Wordsworth vetted who should write in his daughter's album, only geniuses being allowed in.) A coda on 'Albumean Afterlives' ends with a beautiful metaphor for the creative possibilities of album poetry, taken from the aged Joanna Baillie: the album is like the miraculous draught of fishes; 'not even the oddest fish will be thrown back.'

Throughout her study, Matthews documents the surprising interactions between manuscript and print culture, often involving competitiveness, guile and conspiracy theories. The original Grande Chartreuse album had disappeared by 1817—some said, destroyed by a revolutionary mob; others said, hidden by the monks from ill-mannered English visitors, who had written irreverent squibs in the venerable volume. (Shelley's declarations of atheism inscribed in various hotel albums during his visit to Mont Blanc of 1816 may be seen as a piece of insolence in the same tradition.) Contributors to magazines would artfully offer a printed poem as though the contributor had actually copied it on a visit to some noble country seat. Byron was mystified to find extracts from his privately printed 'Curse of Minerva' turning up in Lady Jersey's album (probably surreptitiously released by Samuel Rogers). Whenever the close reading of the verse and decoding of the semiotics of the album threaten to become a bit wire-drawn, as sometimes occurs, they are immediately enlivened by an interesting narrative twist of this sort.

In a review of a book that so meticulously describes the binding, paper, and 'metal furniture' (the brass clasps, locks, and keys that protected albums from unauthorized copying), a few words on the materiality of *Album Verses* itself may be allowed. It is an example of the academic book in transition, with a hardback and an online version for university libraries, and this has been a determinant of the format. The online version has a singular advantage over the hardback. Many images of MSS in the hardback are murky, grey and often unreadable, even with a magnifying glass. Matthews's transcriptions and vivid descriptions of their contents

compensate for this, but the reader then wonders whether these illustrations have much point. The online version creates a very different impression; many are in colour, and new details show up with enlargement. The print version shows the effect of preparation for online chapter-by-chapter downloading from the online version, so that each chapter begins with a copyright statement and DOI at the foot of the page, which may account for the thesis-like recapitulations ('In this chapter I argue that . . .'), intended to remind those readers who can see only one chapter at a time on their screens that *Album Verses* is a book with a sustained theme. On the plus side, the hardback has convenient footnotes rather than endnotes—a very welcome feature.

Matthews has written a fascinating book, happily combining a chronological and a thematic structure. Those working in the field will be grateful for her scrupulous documentation and the stimulating hints at the wealth of material that remains to be discovered. Non-specialists will be entertained and instructed by the many curious facts that she has brought to light and will never again look on a poem titled 'Written in the Album of X' as they did before. Her zest for the subject is everywhere apparent, as may be seen in her empathetic explanation of the variety of sizes, colours and embossings of Lady Jersey's albums. Lady Jersey 'could have chosen a uniform binding–but what would have been the fun in that?'

Nora Crook
Anglia Ruskin
University

Sir Jonathan Bate on *Oxford Shakespeare Topics: Shakespeare and the Romantics* by David Fuller

DAVID FULLER, *Oxford Shakespeare Topics: Shakespeare and the Romantics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). £16.99. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-19-967912-6.

'Oxford Shakespeare Topics' is a series of more than thirty volumes, each of which seeks to provide students with an introductory overview of some key aspect of Shakespeare's work and 'afterlife'. Subjects range from his reading and his dramatic genres to his influence around the world, to the staging of his plays and the history of screen adaptations, to particular analytical approaches—feminist, postcolonial, ecological, and so forth. Given Shakespeare's enormous influence on the Romantic movement, David Fuller's book is an essential contribution to the series. This is a field where there has been a great deal of scholarship—including four books by your reviewer—so Fuller considers it his task to survey the ground as thoroughly as possible rather than to stake out a new argument.

He begins with Coleridge because, he writes, 'English Romantic criticism of Shakespeare begins with Coleridge.' The claim is immediately modified: of course, Coleridge had forebears. Fuller cites Dr Johnson and Maurice Morgann's warm-hearted *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*, but Johnson was more of an antagonist than an anticipator and it might have been more profitable to single out Elizabeth Montagu's pioneering *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* (which receives a passing mention later in the book). Coleridge's accounts of Shakespeare's language and characters are briskly and lucidly described; the vexed question of his debt to the German Schlegel brothers on the idea of Shakespeare's 'organic' as opposed to 'mechanical' form is, perhaps mercifully, confined to a footnote directing readers to some of the relevant scholarship (though not to Norman Fruman's apoplectic *Damaged Archangel*).

From Coleridge, Fuller turns to Hazlitt. He rightly focuses on the theatrical criticism, most notably the ecstatic reviews of Edmund Kean, as well as *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (the title of which is misspelt). Due attention is given to the crucial essay on *Coriolanus*, in which Hazlitt begins by suggesting that one may dispense with Burke's arguments against the

French Revolution and Paine's in favour of it, because Shakespeare gives both sides of the question, but then goes on to adumbrate a position at odds with his own political radicalism: 'The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power … Poetry is right-royal. It puts the individual for the species, the one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep or a herd of wild asses is a more poetical object than they'. I would have welcomed some account of the different social contexts of Coleridge's and Hazlitt's lectures, the former hosted by the Royal Institution, the latter by the Dissenting and far less elite Surrey Institution.

Fuller then takes us to Germany, where Bardolatry had its origins. Most of the key figures are here: Herder on Shakespearean history as a model for a new national German literature, Goethe's Birthday Lecture and his analysis of *Hamlet* in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the Schlegels and Hegel, then finally Heinrich Heine's moving and prescient defence of Shylock in the chilling context of German anti-Semitism. It would have been good to have been offered some passages from the famous Schlegel-Tieck translation and a discussion of the challenges of translating Shakespeare when his language is at its most knotted.

The chapter on France proceeds from Voltaire's denigration of Shakespeare to the Romantic enthusiasm of Stendhal, Hector Berlioz and Victor Hugo. Fuller rightly extols the excellence of the now little-known criticism of the historian, orator and statesman François Guizot. From France, I hoped that we would move to Russia, charting the course from Pushkin and Lermontov to Turgenev's *A Lear of the Steppes* and maybe even Tolstoy blowing a raspberry at Romantic Bardolatry. But instead of this, we get a survey of the eighteenth-century editorial tradition, which really belongs in another book.

Readers of this journal, however, will primarily want to know what Fuller makes of Charles and Mary Lamb on Shakespeare. Though he does not avail himself of, or guide his readers towards, Roy Park's invaluable *Charles Lamb as Critic* or Joan Coldwell's collection *Charles Lamb on Shakespeare*, he does at least mention most of the key sources, such as the scintillating review of the deficiencies of G. F. Cooke as Richard III and the essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation'. With regard to the latter, he rightly argues that Lamb's scepticism about the possibility of doing justice to the plays in performance (surprising from such a theatre-lover) issued from a combination of contingent circumstances (over-acting, cavernous theatres and butchered texts) and a sincere belief that the inner torment of a Hamlet

or a Lear can only be shared in the private act of reading, not the public forum of the theatre. This was without doubt partly due to Charles's own battles with depression and of course the trauma of Mary's mental illness. In this respect, Fuller really should have given some consideration to the great essay 'Sanity of True Genius', which includes Lamb's richest comment on Shakespeare:

> So far from the position holding true, that great wit (or genius, in our modern way of speaking), has a necessary alliance with insanity, the greatest wits, on the contrary, will ever be found to be the sanest writers. It is impossible for the mind to conceive of a mad Shakespeare. The greatness of wit, by which the poetic talent is here chiefly to be understood, manifests itself in the admirable balance of all the faculties. Madness is the disproportionate straining or excess of any one of them … The ground of the mistake is, that men, finding in the raptures of the higher poetry a condition of exaltation, to which they have no parallel in their own experience, besides the spurious resemblance of it in dreams and fevers, impute a state of dreaminess and fever to the poet. But the true poet dreams being awake. He is not possessed by his subject, but has dominion over it … Or if, abandoning himself to that severer chaos of a 'human mind untuned,' he is content awhile to be mad with Lear, or to hate mankind (a sort of madness) with Timon, neither is that madness, nor this misanthropy, so unchecked, but that,—never letting the reins of reason wholly go, while most he seems to do so,—he has his better genius still whispering at his ear, with the good servant Kent suggesting saner counsels, or with the honest steward Flavius recommending kindlier resolutions.[1]

As for the *Tales from Shakspeare designed for the Use of Young Persons*, Fuller makes the dubious claim that Mary's name was excluded from the title-page, despite the fact that she wrote more than twice as many of them as her brother, because she 'was best known for having, in a bout of insanity, stabbed to death her mother. Her name on a title page would scarcely have been a recommendation to parent purchasers.' I was not aware that what Charles called the 'terrible calamity' of September 1796 was well known beyond the confines of the Lambs' tightly-knit literary circle. After all, the report in the London *Times* of the coroner's inquest into their mother's death did not give any names.

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[1] Charles Lamb, 'Sanity of True Genius', *Essays of Elia.*

Though Fuller's account of the *Tales* acknowledges their vast global influence throughout the nineteenth century, his treatment of them is somewhat begrudging. He describes them as 'now all but unreadable by children' and (predictably) emphasizes that 'sex and violence had to be as far as possible avoided'. Well, yes, though not to the extremes that the other brother and sister team of the period, Thomas and Henrietta Bowdler, went to in their 1818 *Family Shakspeare*, unmentioned here. Fuller passes over such interesting details as Mary's very pointed foregrounding of the separation and reunion of Viola and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*. In her telling, the bond between sister and brother matters more than the marriage plot: 'wedded on the same day, the storm and shipwreck, which had separated them, being the means of bringing to pass their high and mighty fortunes.' A play about the bond between brother and sister, it pierced to the heart of the Lambs.

Sir Jonathan Bate
Arizona State University

Obituary: Dorothy McMillan 1943-2021

Dorothy McMillan, a member of the Editorial Board of the *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, was the first woman President of the Association of Scottish Literary Studies, a post she held between 1998 and 2002. A highly esteemed and much loved editor, teacher and critic, who mentored countless scholars, Dorothy was also the first woman to be Head of the School of English and Scottish Language and Literature at the University of Glasgow.

Dorothy edited a number of acclaimed scholarly editions including George Douglas Brown's *The House with Green Shutters* (1985); *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (with Douglas Gifford, 1997); *The Scotswoman at Home and Abroad: non-fictional Writing 1700-1900* (1999); *Queen of Science: Personal Recollections of Mary Somerville* (2001); *Modern Scottish Women Poets* (2003); Jane Austen's *Emma* (with Richard Cronin, 2005); *Robert Browning* (with Richard Cronin, 2015); and most recently Susan Ferrier's *Marriage*: *a Novel* (2020). Amongst Dorothy's extensive critical work there are articles and chapters on figures including Helen Adams, Joanna Baillie, Lord Byron, Veronica Forrest-Thomson, Janice Galloway, James Kelman, Liz Lochhead, Hope Mirrlees, Ann Radcliffe, William Shakespeare and Muriel Spark.

The eldest of two daughters, Dorothy was educated at Marr College in Troon, where she was Dux of her year before going up to Glasgow University in 1961. Dorothy was awarded a First Class Honours degree from Glasgow at a time when the English department often went from one year to the next without awarding any Firsts. Dorothy was later appointed Lecturer in English and taught at Glasgow until her retirement in 2008. However, Dorothy continued to support and inspire students, colleagues and writers in the wider community, generously critiquing their work and discussing ideas, until the very end of her life. Many scholars of English and Scottish literature and history owe their degrees and books to Dorothy whose mixture of fun, conviviality, humour, straightforwardness and profoundly humane wisdom will be missed by all who knew her. Dorothy is survived by her husband Richard Cronin, their son John, John's siblings, Arun and Maya, and five grandchildren.

Dorothy McMillan, critic, teacher and editor. Born, Troon, 17 April 1943; died, Glasgow, 21 August 2021.

Notes: A Newly Identified Picture of Emma Isola

This note was sent by John Moxon, great great grandson of Edward Moxon, the Lamb's friend and publisher, and Emma Isola, the Lamb's 'adopted' daughter:

(Image courtesy of John Moxon)

John Moxon writes:

Recently I set out to copy a small Victorian glass plate portrait, which has been a mystery floating around in the background of inherited family pictures and documents. The glass plate is cracked from top to bottom in two places, but I thought, I could tidy it up quite easily.

I had no expectation of identifying the grieving lady, (she's wearing "widow's weeds") and although I'd long wished it to be my great, great grandmother, I had never really viewed it closely. It was assumed to be one of Edward or Emma's elderly relatives, but it wasn't until I had the image on my computer screen, I could see her features clearly. She wasn't elderly but middle aged. Exposure times of Victorian photographs tend to make the sitter seem older than their years, sterner and more glaring...no smiling or blinking please. The drab "widow's weeds" and the tight bow under the chin do nothing but to disguise.

The process of identification was easy. It's a Collodion Positive photograph and reasonably easy to date. The wet plate Collodion process was invented in 1852 and was popular through the 1850s but lost its popularity with the studio photographer by the 1860s. This put Emma's bereavement well into the frame, as Edward had died in June 1858.

(Guildhall Lamb archive)

Comparing the picture with the only image known of Emma Isola, a poor picture of the elderly Emma, the new discovery had convinced myself and friend, Emma Isola expert Eric Walker, we have now found a second image of Lamb's "nut-brown maid". The picture can now be titled, Emma Isola Moxon – 1858.

From the Archives

The Lamb Society's visit to 'Button Snap' 3 September 1949. (H. G. Smith Collection)

The Lamb Society's visit to Mackery End, 8 May 1954. (H. G. Smith Collection)

> '[Lamb gives] charm and glamour to commonplace life. It is worth remembering today and tomorrow when we feel anxious about the private life [...] Lamb reveals that it is possible to cultivate such a spirit in oneself not by blind optimism but by humour and sympathy and tender attachment, the gospel of day to day living. Successful life cannot be obtained by grandiose measures but rather by making the most of what we have and adjusting ourselves to circumstances. Books and walking and friends! Lamb was a master of this unpretentious art of daily living'. David Cecil, Annual Birthday Celebration of the Lamb Society, 10 February 1945. (H. G. Smith collection, Guildhall)

The archive can be viewed at the Guildhall Library by Lamb Society members.

Lamb Society Essay Prize 2022

Deadline for submissions: 1 September 2022

The Charles Lamb Society welcomes submissions for a new essay prize. The competition is open to all. The winning essay will be published in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* (with revisions if appropriate) and the author will receive £200 and a one-year subscription to the Charles Lamb Society, including two issues of the journal. They will also receive 5 additional copies of the issue in which their essay is published.

Essays should be 3000-7000 words, and not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Entries must offer an original contribution on either, or both, Mary and Charles Lamb and their circle. All shortlisted submissions will be considered for potential publication in the *CLB,* and the winner will be chosen by the *Bulletin* Editorial Board. Please see the Lamb Society website for the style guide: www.charleslambsociety.com. Entries should be sent to the Editor, John.gardner@aru.ac.uk.

The *Charles Lamb Bulletin* is a highly regarded peer-review journal and a lively forum for discussion of all things Elian. It was founded in 1935 and since then has printed over four hundred issues containing essays, letters, reviews, poems, notes and queries relating to the Lambs and their circle. Its contributors have included an array of distinguished scholars including Jonathan Bate, Edmund Blunden, Gillian Beer, John Beer, Helen Darbishire, Earl Leslie Griggs, Nicholas Roe and Duncan Wu.

The *Bulletin* is now produced twice a year, in the summer and winter. It aims to promote and develop scholarship on the Lambs' circle and the editor 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.

Past issues of the *Bulletin* can be found at: www.charleslambsociety.com.

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If you have any issues accessing these options or if you have any queries then please contact the membership secretary Helen Goodman at h.goodman@bathspa.ac.uk, or the Chairs, Felicity James, fj21@le.ac.uk and John Strachan, j.strachan@bathspa.ac.uk, or the editor, john.gardner@aru.ac.uk.

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

www.charleslambsociety.com/bulletin.html

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

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

Essays submitted to the journal should be in 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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