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Contents

The Irrepressible and the Inimitable, or, A Tale of Two Charlies

By PETER ROWLAND

Part I

'WE ARE WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE', wrote Elia in 1826 or thereabouts, pondering the mixed blessings of presents, 'that in some gifts there is sense. A duplicate out of a friend's library (where he has more than one copy of a rare author) is intelligible'.[1] His thoughts about coals to Newcastle are unknown, but he would doubtless have approved of Lambs to York. For Dr Henry Belcombe, a physician from that city, received an unexpected package early in 1838 as his London visit drew to a close. He had evidently encountered the author of *Village Coquettes* and *Is She His Wife?* at a social gathering and had discussed with him the difficulties which established authors sometimes experienced when they tried their hand at writing for the stage. On the eve of his return home, he was pleasantly surprised to receive a small parcel from his new acquaintance. 'I find', ran the covering letter,

> I have two copies of Charles Lamb's papers among my books; and although they are both cut and both soiled I am induced to inclose one to you, and to beg you to make it a postchaise companion. I fancy I observed so many pleasant evidences of a kindred spirit in you that I have been anxious ever since we conversed upon the subject to introduce you - not to John Woodville [sic] or Mr H. but to the original, kind-hearted, veritable Elia.
>
> You will not (I hope) think the worse of Charles Lamb for coming off the shelves of Charles Dickens. He has grown somewhat dingy in that worthy's keeping, but the best minds rust in inferior company, and I confidently hope that your chaise may restore him.[2]

The sender was obviously someone whose knowledge of Elia was reasonably comprehensive. Just *how* comprehensive, and just how great an influence it was destined to have upon his own works, is a subject that has not yet been fully explored. The reflections that follow are an attempt to repair that omission.

Lamb and Dickens never actually met but it was, all things considered, a close-run thing. Elia took his quiet departure stage left just as Boz was preparing to make his grand entrance stage right. The rest of the cast (if we may so classify, in broad terms, the English literary establishment of the day) remained unchanged, so that those who gazed sadly after Charles the First found themselves delightedly swivelling their heads, a short time later, to celebrate the arrival of Charles the Second.

To be strictly pedantic about these matters, there was a slight overlap. Dickens's earliest sketch, 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk', was published (unsigned) in *The Monthly Magazine* in December 1833

[1] 'Popular Fallacies, No. XI – That We must not look a Gift-horse in the Mouth', *New Monthly Magazine*, April 1826, included in *Last Essays of Elia* (1833), hereinafter cited as *Last Essays* (as reprinted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford, 1908), Vol. I, p. 798, hereinafter cited as *Works*).

[2] CD to Dr Henry Belcombe, 8 Feb. 1838, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House, Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and others (Oxford, 1965 – ongoing), Vol. 7, p. 789, hereinafter cited as *Pilgrim*.

and that periodical featured six more of his tales during 1834 - the last of them, in October, bearing the name 'Boz' for the first time. *The Athenaeum*, during the first half of 1834, had meanwhile been publishing some 'Table-Talk by the late Elia'—fragmentary pieces, admittedly—and *The New Monthly Magazine* would carry, in February 1835, the tribute which he had penned to Coleridge on 21 November 1834, a month before his own death. Quite apart from Dickens being familiar with the works of Charles Lamb, in short, there is just a chance that Lamb, whiling away his final months in that cottage at Edmonton, would have cast a casual eye over the very earliest works of Charles Dickens. (But whether he would have found anything of particular interest in those items must remain a matter for conjecture.)

To a quite remarkable extent, therefore, did the friends and contemporaries of Charles Lamb became the friends and contemporaries of Charles Dickens. There was Thomas Noon Talfourd, Lamb's first biographer, to whom *Pickwick* would be dedicated (and upon whom, seemingly, Sergeant Buzfuz would be based). There was Bryan Waller Procter ('Barry Cornwall'), another of Lamb's close friends (and another of his future biographers). There was his wife Anne (née Skepper), remembered by Lamb as 'pretty A.S'.[3] There was Fanny Kelly ('Barbara S –'), the great love of Lamb's life, who would make her theatre available to Dickens for private theatricals. There were also, to take them in alphabetical sequence, Harrison Ainsworth, Thomas Carlyle, the Cowden Clarkes, Crabb Robinson, William Hone, Thomas Hood, Leigh Hunt, Walter Savage Landor, Daniel Maclise, William Macready, Edward Moxon, James Perry, Crabb Robinson, and Samuel Rogers.

And, above all, there was John Forster.

It comes, indeed, as something of a shock to realise that Forster, the man who loomed so large in the life of Charles Dickens as friend, adviser and—ultimately—biographer, had also loomed large in the later life of Charles Lamb. Only two months younger than Dickens, Forster had elbowed his way to the forefront of the English literary scene in a remarkably short space of time. An immensely ambitious, precocious teenager, he arrived in London in 1828 from Newcastle-upon-Tyne –in theory to study for the bar, but in practice to carve out a career for himself as critic, essayist, editor and biographer. He appears to have become acquainted with Lamb soon after his arrival, although it is only from late 1831 onwards that he began saving the affectionate (and sometimes impatient) stream of notes which Elia despatched to his young lieutenant.[4] 'Swallow your damn'd dinner and your brandy and water fast', runs one such missive, dating from 1833, ' - & come immediately'.[5] It was apparently mooted in certain quarters, early in 1835, that Forster should be appointed as Lamb's official biographer but speedily recognised that both Moxon and Talfourd had prior claims.[6]

[3] 'Oxford in the Vacation', *The London Magazine*, Oct. 1820, included in *Essays of Elia* (1823), hereinafter cited as *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 485).

[4] See *John Forster and His Friendships* by Richard Renton (London, 1912), p. 20. In December 1832 Moxon launched a new journal called *The Reflector*, under Forster's editorship and with Lamb as one of its contributors, but it folded after three issues. 'It was something', Percy Fitzgerald later recalled, 'to talk to one who had once been intimate with Charles Lamb, of whom he once spoke to me with tears running down his cheeks, "Ah! poor dear Charles Lamb!" The next day he had summoned his faithful clerk, instructing him to look out among his papers – such was his way – for all the Lamb letters, which were then lent to me. And most interesting they were. In one Elia calls him "Foorster", I fancy taking off Carlyle's pronunciation' (Percy Fitzgerald, *Memories of Charles Dickens* (Bristol, 1913), pp. 86-7.

[5] CL to Forster, [April 1833?], *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E.V. Lucas (London, 1935), Vol. III, p. 364.

[6] See *The Life of Charles Lamb* by E.V. Lucas (7th edition, London, 1921), p. 439, for Barron Field's horrified letter of 16 Feb.1835 to Crabb Robinson—'Heavens preserve us from a monster of the name of Forster!'

If Lamb's life had been prolonged for another ten or fifteen years, then in all probability he too would have got on famously with the author of *Sketches by Boz* and *Pickwick*. For Boz was, in a sense, Elia's direct heir. The two men were kindred spirits and the patterns of their lives had several points in common. Both came from the same strata of English society - that region where the lower middle class melted into the upper lower. Both were only one stage beyond earshot of the servants' quarters, and both were sometimes regarded as 'cockney upstarts'. Both of them experienced appalling traumatic experiences in their earliest years. Both of them were intimately acquainted with the streets of London and its institutions. Both of them loved the theatre—and each of them had momentarily cherished theatrical aspirations. They shared similar outlooks so far as the hardships of the poor were concerned. And, of course, their literary styles (for reasons that will shortly be considered) had much in common. They would live, finally, for approximately the same lengths of time - Lamb dying in his sixtieth year and Dickens in his fifty-ninth.

The basic similarities between these two writers have often been noted - as, for instance, by Winifred F. Courtney, Lamb's most recent biographer, writing in 1982. 'It is striking', she then observed, 'in how many ways Lamb is Dickens's spiritual and literary progenitor, for all that Dickens was self-possessed, dashing and fashionable, Lamb was shy, modest, and drab'.[7] She was echoing sentiments that had been expressed for well over a century. As long ago as 1866, indeed, in *his* book about Lamb, Percy Fitzgerald (one of Dickens's protégés) had drawn some illuminating comparisons between the literary mannerisms and styles of the two men, particularly in their sensitive recollections of childhood.[8] He sent a copy to Dickens and awaited his chief's reactions, but when they failed to materialise he became a little worried and hastened to reassure himself that no offence had been caused in high places. 'I ought to have written to you days and days ago', Dickens thereupon replied,

> to thank you for your charming book on Charles Lamb - to tell you with what interest and pleasure I read it as soon as it came here - and to add that I was honestly affected (far more so than your modesty will readily believe) by your intimate knowledge of those touches of mine concerning childhood.
>
> Let me tell you now that I have not in the least cooled, after all, either as to the graceful sympathetic book, or as to the part in it with which I am honoured. It has become a matter of real feeling with me, and I postponed its expression because I couldn't get it out of myself, and am at last come to the conclusion that it must be left in.[9]

'To a certain extent', commented C.M. Neale in 1910, after surmising that Dickens must surely have been 'well acquainted' with the works of Lamb, 'all great writers, like all other people, can be "explained". A literary Melchizedek would probably be a literary monster.[10] But, after all such explaining, there would remain our great novelist's real originality, his distinct contribution to the literature of his country, sufficient to justify us in calling him at least a "half-Melchizedek". Certainly Dickens was very different from Lamb, far more direct and energetic and business-like.

[7] Winifred F. Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802* (New York, 1982), pp. 353-4.
[8] Percy Fitzgerald, *Charles Lamb: His Friends, His Haunts and His Books* (London, 1866, pp. 221-9).
[9] CD to Percy Fitzgerald, 2 Feb.1866, *Pilgrim*, Vol. 11, p. 149.
[10] Melchizedek, King of Righteousness, is described (Hebrews 7:3) as being without father, without mother, and without genealogy—i.e., a total original.

Yet he must have been attracted by Lamb's pleasant humour and wistful pathos, by his love for dramatic literature and romance and childhood, his Cockneyism, his partiality for queer characters, his sound sense, and his humane view of life'.[11]

His letter to Dr Belcombe confirms that by 1838 Dickens was indeed well-versed in the works of Lamb. By the age of twenty (in 1832) he would almost certainly have been familiar with Elia's *Essays* (1823) and would doubtless have purchased *The Last Essays* (1833) the moment they were published. In addition to this, however, he must also have had in his library the two-volume edition of *The Works of Charles Lamb* (1818), for we have seen that he was also acquainted with the texts of *John Woodvil* and *Mr H - ,* which would not be reprinted until 1840. Finally, he had acquired Talfourd's two-volume *Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life* published by Moxon in 1837. (He would have learned from this, if he had not been aware of it already, that Mary and Charles Lamb had been the joint-authors of *Mrs Leicester's School,* published anonymously in 1808, which had been extremely popular during his own childhood—a book to which we will need to return later.)

Both volumes of the *Essays* had evidently been perused and digested to so great an extent that Dickens had, by the age of thirty, come very close to committing their contents to memory. Elia was, for a time, his loadstar and Bible. 'Remembering Charles Lamb's most happy glances at the same subject', the editor of *Bentley's Miscellany* advised Charles Mackay in 1838, 'I think you have treated it too seriously, and am sure you could do it much better in another vein'. Three years later, commenting on an amusing and *interesting* paper submitted by Andrew Bell, he declared that 'Charles Lamb would have been charmed with it, I am sure' while Washington Irving was informed that an artist called Charles Leslie had 'a kind of Charles Lamb-like humour of the best quality'.[12]

'Cruikshank tells me', Dickens wrote to Maclise in January 1841, 'we are fully expected today, to discuss the promised edgebone'[13]—the word handed down to his cook by 'the omniscient Jackson', when asked for a definitive ruling on the spelling of 'aitchbone'.[14] Then there was the tribute which Elia paid to James White—'He carried away with him half the fun of the world when he died - of my world at least'-[15]--which stood Dickens in good stead when eulogies were required at short notice. Referring in April 1841 to the recently-deceased Thomas Hill, he declares 'I really did love him. He seems to have carried away with him half the pleasant, good-humoured little eccentricities of the world - of *my* world, as Charles Lamb says'.[16] This was pressed into service

[11] *The Dickensian*, Volume 6 (1910), p. 41. The point was reiterated by E.V. Lucas twelve years later. 'I have seen somewhere', he wrote, 'but cannot trace the reference, that among Dickens's childish reading was *Elia*, which had begun in the *London Magazine* when he was eight. The other little Charles could thus have read, at the most impressionable age, the account of Ralph Bigod, the Micawberesque borrower of money, and of Jem White, who had such a glorious Dickensian way at the chimney sweeps' suppers. Even genius often has to be put in the right path'. (E.V. Lucas, *Giving and Receiving: Essays and Fantasies* (New York, 1922), pp. 62-3).

[12] CD to Charles Mackay, 1838, *Pilgrim*, Vol. 1, p. 485, to Andrew Bell, 7 April 1841, *Ibid.* Vol. 2, p. 254, and to Washington Irving, *Ibid*., Vol. 2, p. 395.

[13] CD to Daniel Maclise, 11 January 1841, *Ibid*., Vol. 2, p. 183.

[14] 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple', *The London Magazine*, Sept. 1821, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 583).

[15] 'The Praise of Chimney Sweepers: A May-Day Effusion', *The London Magazine*, May 1822, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 613).

[16] CD to Edward Dubois, 2 April 1841, *Pilgrim*, Vol. 2, p. 250.

again a year later, when he lamented parting company with Cornelius Felton—'Half the pleasure of my world, as Charles Lamb says, has gone with him'.[17]

And another quote from Elia—'My household-gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood'[18]—was also committed (somewhat imperfectly) to memory. 'I am exceedingly sorry to leave home', Dickens declared in December 1841, on the eve of his first trip to America, 'for my household gods, like Charles Lamb's, "take a terrible deep root"'.[19] And it surfaced again, bang on cue, twenty-six years later. 'Little by little', Dickens informed his audience at a farewell banquet in 1867, on the eve of his *second* visit to America, 'this pressure [to return] has become so great that although, as Charles Lamb says, "My household gods strike a terribly deep root", I have torn them from their places, and this day week, at this hour, shall be upon the sea'.[20]

Lamb had also featured in the peroration of a speech delivered by Dickens at a fund-raising dinner in 1858 in aid of the Great Ormond Street Hospital for sick children. 'The most delightful paper', he declared, 'the most charming essay, which the tender imagination of Charles Lamb conceived, represents him as sitting by his fireside on a winter night, telling stories to his own dear children, and delighting in their society, until he suddenly comes to his old, solitary, bachelor self, and finds that they were but dream-children, who might have been, but never were. 'We are nothing', they say to him, 'less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and we must wait upon the tedious shore of Lethe, millions of ages, before we have existence and a name'. And 'immediately awakening', he says, 'I found myself in my arm-chair'.[21] 'The dream-children whom I would now raise, if I could, before every one of you, according to your various circumstances, should be the dear child you love, the dearer child you have lost, the child you might have had, the child you certainly have been' - who would promptly join forces, it transpired, in urging the assembled company to dig deep into their pockets.[22]

These special occasions aside, however, specific references to Lamb disappear from Dickens's correspondence and conversation after the early 1840s, and it is only in response to special promptings - invariably, on finding himself presented with a book relating to Lamb (as in the case of Percy Fitzgerald) that he valiantly summoned up the old enthusiasm and reverence. 'The two volumes [of essays and tales]', he tells Barry Procter in 1854, 'are all delightful, and I have put them on a shelf where you sit down with Charles Lamb again, with Talfourd's vindication of him hard by'.[23] And to Procter yet again, twelve years later— 'I have read your biography of Charles Lamb with inexpressible pleasure and interest. I do not think it possible to tell a pathetic story with a more unaffected and manly tenderness. . . . Let me, my dear friend, most heartily congratulate you on your achievement. It is not an ordinary triumph to do justice to the memory of such a man'.[24]

In strictly chronological and conscious terms, while continuing (when prompted) to refer to him as a wonderful, much-loved figure, Dickens had moved on from Charles Lamb by this time—and, indeed, from his own earlier self. He had left both of them far behind. But in another, unconscious

[17] CD to Charles Sumner, 13 March 1842, *Ibid*., Vol. 3, pp. 127-8.
[18] 'New Year's Eve', *The London Magazine*, Jan. 1821, included in *Elia Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 507-8).
[19] CD to Daniel Moir, 6 Dec. 1841, *Pilgrim*, Vol. 2, p. 440.
[20] Speech at the Freemasons' Hall, 2 Nov. 1867, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. by K.J. Fielding (Oxford, 1960), p. 372.
[21] 'Dream Children; A Reverie', *The London Magazine*, Jan. 1822, included in *Elia Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 597-600).
[22] Speech at the Freemason's Hall, 6 Feb. 1858, *Speeches*, pp. 252-3.
[23] CD to Bryan Procter, 15 April 1854, *Pilgrim*, Vol. 7, p. 314.
[24] CD to Bryan Procter, 13 Aug. 1866, *Ibid*., Vol. II, p. 234.

sense he had carried Lamb with him for more than thirty years, assimilating, refining and maturing all that Elia had taught him, and—as he himself reached that time of life when *The Essays* and *The Last Essays* had been written—began honing to perfection the sensitive and combined arts of the reporter, the philosopher and the reminiscencer. Without Elia, in short, there would still have been *Sketches by Boz*, in much the same form that we have them today, but there would have been no Uncommercial Traveller.

Yet having said all this, an attempt to assess the extent to which the works of Charles Lamb actually influenced the works of Charles Dickens might still be regarded as an attempt to pin down the intangible, as hopeless a quest as trying to catch a sunbeam. And can we really compare the modest works of a gentle scribe writing for a select audience, that discerning handful of appreciative readers, with the coarse, gigantic output of an ambitious family entertainer striving to satisfy the demands of a mass market? Are we not in danger of confusing chalk with cheese, or (more aptly, perhaps) a connoisseur's fine wine with a foaming pint of bitter? Lamb wrote for the few and Dickens for the many. How can the second possibly be indebted to the first? But the exercise is not quite so misguided or daunting a task as might appear at first glance. We should remind ourselves, to begin with, that Charles the First had as many facets as Charles the Second.

Lamb, of course, was not a novelist and as a general rule tended to eschew fiction. He wrote the merest handful of short stories, of which 'Rosamund Gray' is the best known, although he was also the indefatigable author of several plays. Essays were, first and foremost, his métier, but some of the incidents and people depicted therein are so effectively disguised that they do come very close to works of the imagination. In the interests of concealment, he was sometimes inclined, from the best of all possible motives, to let the fancy roam.[25] Many of his presentations, recollections and speculations, conveyed on most occasions with the lightest and whimsiest of touches—and he had a genius for the *bon mot*—carry the impact of an agreeable short story. So humour, sometimes laced with a strong dose of sentimentality, is the primary ingredient of the *Essays*. But it is not the only one. There are the calm, persuasive, reasoned criticisms and celebrations of particular artists. But there are also times when Elia comes across as impatient, tetchy and dogmatic. And at others he can be passionately engaged, carried along on a tide of conviction. Scorn and heavy sarcasm occasionally come to the fore, although he stops just short of positive diatribes. Of so complex and diverse a mixture do the *Essays* prove to be, that a casual dipper into the works of Elia could well be forgiven for concluding that he had encountered the productions of that second Charles rather than the first.

But it is time for demonstration rather than assertion, and—while not pausing to look at *all* of them—to embark upon a brisk chronological survey of the Dickens *oeuvre*, beginning with *Sketches by Boz* and *The Pickwick Papers*.

The collected sketches, consisting partly of tales, partly of vignettes and partly of straightforward reporting of scenes and characters, which Dickens had written over a three-year period, were published in two volumes (1836 and 1837). The diversions and the miseries of the working class loom large in their pages. Turning to the opening page of the very first volume, we find the following passage:

[25] 'Let no one receive the narratives of Elia for true records!' he had warned his readers in 1821. 'They are, in truth, but shadows of fact – verisimilitudes, not verities – or sitting upon the remote edges and outskirts of history'. (Postscript to 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple', *Works*, Vol. I, p. 584.)

> A poor man, with small earnings and a large family, just manages to live on from hand to mouth, and to procure food from day to day; he has barely sufficient to satisfy the present cravings of nature, and can take no heed of the future. His taxes are in arrear . . . His goods are distrained, his children are crying with cold and hunger, and the very bed on which his sick wife is lying, is dragged from beneath her.[26]

Later, a chapter entitled 'Gin-Shops' includes the following sentences in its closing paragraph:

> Gin-drinking is a great vice in England, but wretchedness and dirt are a greater; and until you improve the homes of the poor, or persuade a half-famished wretch not to seek relief in the temporary oblivion of his own misery, with the pittance which, divided among his family, would furnish a morsel of bread for each, gin-shops will increase in number and splendour.[27]

This, certainly, is Dickens the budding Social Reformer at work, and we can warmly applaud him, but much the same ground had been covered by Lamb nine years earlier:

> Homes there are, we are sure, that are no homes [such as] the home of the very poor man. . . . Crowded places of cheap entertainment, and the benches of ale-houses, if they could speak, might bear mournful testimony to [this]. To them the poor man resorts for an image of the home, which he cannot find at home. For a starved grate, and a scanty firing, that is not enough to keep alive the natural heat in the fingers of so many shivering children with their mother, he finds in the depth of winter always a blazing hearth. . . . Instead of the clamours of a wife, made gaunt by famishing, he meets with a cheerful attendance beyond the merits of the trifle which he can afford to spend. . . . At home there is no larder. Here there is at least a show of plenty. . . . All this while he deserts his wife and children. But what wife, and what children? . . . Oh, 'tis a fine thing to speak of the humble meal shared together! But what if there be no bread in the cupboard? . . . The children of the very poor do not prattle. . . . A child exists not for the very poor as any object of dalliance; it is only another mouth to be fed, a pair of little hands to be betimes inured to labour.[28]

Elsewhere we have a chapter headed 'The First of May' echoing many of the sentiments expressed in 'The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers', and we can catch the spirit of Elia—the same lightness of touch, the same felicity of expression—in such essays as 'Shops and their Tenants', 'Doctors' Commons', 'London Recreations', 'Omnibuses' and 'Public Dinners'. Lamb's influence on the *Sketches* can certainly be detected, to put it no higher than this, but it must be acknowledged that Leigh Hunt, Washington Irving and several other contemporary essayists and sketch-writers, particularly John Poole, probably had just as great an influence—even though, as Duane DeVries has pointed out, 'the lengthy philosophical ruminations, elaborate analogies, scholarly allusions, and

[26] 'The Parish', *Evening Chronicle*, 28 Feb. 1835, included in *Sketches by Boz, Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* (1836-7) (The New Illustrated Oxford Dickens' edition, hereinafter cited as *NIOD*, p. 1).
[27] 'Gin Shops', *Evening Chronicle*, 7 Feb. 1835, included in *Sketches* (*NIOD*, p. 187).
[28] 'Popular Fallacies, No. XII – That Home is Home though it is never so Homely', *New Monthly Magazine*, March 1826, included in *Last Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 799-801).

predominantly classical quotations' that had adorned not only *their* essays but also those of their illustrious eighteenth-century predecessors, are strikingly absent from the works of Boz.[29]

In three articles which he contributed to *The Dickensian* in 1910, C.M. Neale, the author of *An Index to Pickwick*, engaged in a rather extraordinary exercise designed to demonstrate the extent to which Dickens was indebted to Lamb when writing *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37).[30] Turning himself into a human computer, he combed through the texts of Lamb's published works (barely exceeding *Pickwick* in quantity, he concluded) and came up with what he described as 181 '*Pickwick* words' - 33 names (starting with 'Alexander' and ending with 'William'), 39 places (starting with 'Bank' and ending with 'Westminster') and 109 'other words' (starting with 'Abbess' and ending with 'Turkey'). He acknowledged 'that a writer, however great, must often use words which had been employed by previous writers' but felt it 'curious' that it had happened so extensively in this particular instance.[31] The material he zealously assembled in support of his contention is far from convincing, but the amount of time and attention he must have devoted to this exercise is breathtaking. However misconceived, it would be churlish not to take note of his labours.

One extract will adequately convey the flavour of the whole:

> Lamb wrote of the Mulberry Gardens, and we know that Mr Trotter wore a 'mulberry-coloured livery', and was always called 'the mulberry man'. The word 'nice' is almost always used by Lamb in its older sense; but in 'Old China' he makes Bridget to speak of 'nice purchasers', and Elinor Clare says to old Margaret, 'Rosamund and I should be nice company'. It is in this latter sense that the word is always used in *Pickwick*. The landlord in *Mr H* – was 'fond of searching parish registers for old ladies' ages - just for curiosity'; reminding us *[Does it?]* of the Pickwick 'old lady who always had about half a dozen cards to pay for'. Barrels of oysters are mentioned in 'Roast Pig', while in 'Table Talk' Lamb wonders 'why oysters in death rise up against the contamination of brown sugar, while they are posthumously amorous of vinegar'. These quotations remind us of Mr Pickwick's 'half a dozen barrels', of Mr Robert Sawyer feeding from 'a barrel of oysters atween his knees', and of the coachman 'who took an impartial pint of vinegar with his oysters'. In 'New Year's Eve' Elia writes: 'I encounter pell mell with past disappointments', and we recall the strong-built countryman in the Fleet Prison, and that 'hosses, dogs and drinks had brought him there pell mell'. In *Mr H* - we have 'in the twinkling of a pig's whisker': but in *Pickwick* the phrase is 'in something less than a pig's whisper'.[32]

On two separate points, however, once we escape from this remorseless parade of words used by Lamb and their alleged recycling by Dickens, the present writer is in strong agreement with his predecessor. First, we undoubtedly have a prototype, Mr Jingle, in the essay 'The Old Margate Hoy'. Mr Pickwick and his companions encounter Jingle on their travels, becoming a spellbound captive audience to his fantastic stories, while Lamb and his fellow-passengers on the old Margate Hoy encounter a young man

[29] Duane DeVries, *Dickens's Apprentice Years: The Making of a Novelist* (New York, 1976), p. 61.
[30] *The Dickensian*, Volume 6 (1910), pp. 41-44, 76-78, 125-128.
[31] Ibid., p. 42.
[32] Ibid., p. 126.

> with an officer-like assurance, and an insuppressible volubility of assertion. He was, in fact, the greatest liar I had met with then, or since. . . . I cannot call to mind half his pleasant wonders; but I perfectly remember, that in the course of his travels he had seen a phoenix; and he obligingly undeceived us of the vulgar error, that there is but one of that species at a time, assuring us that they were not uncommon in parts of Upper Egypt. Hitherto he had found the most implicit listeners. . . . [But when] he went on to affirm that he had actually sailed through the legs of the Colossus at Rhodes, it really became necessary to make a stand. And here I must do justice to the good sense and intrepidity of one of our party, a youth, that had hitherto been one of his most deferential auditors, who, from his recent reading, made bold to assure the gentleman that there must be some mistake, as 'the Colossus in question had been destroyed long since': to whose opinion, delivered with all modesty, our hero was obliging enough to concede this much, that 'the figure was indeed a little damaged'.[33]

The loquacious fellow-passenger is a Spanish-complexioned young man who had once been married to a Persian princess, one of his many conquests. Mr Jingle, so Mr Tupman would discover, has adventured in Spain and has had 'thousands' of conquests of his own.[34]

Secondly, there is Joe, the fat boy, who—on those rare occasions when he's awake—not only has an insatiable appetite for food but also a disconcerting habit of staring, which Mr Tupman and Miss Rachael discover to their acute discomfiture. Mr Wardle is proud of Joe, regarding him as a 'natural curiosity', and declares that he would not be parted from him on any account.[35] Twenty-five years earlier, however, *Hospita* had lamented the constant presence at their dinner-table of a young man, 'too great a favourite with my husband', whose failing is 'an immoderate indulgence of his palate'. 'You cannot imagine how unpleasant his conduct has become', she had complained to the editor of *The Reflector*. 'His way of staring at the dishes as they are brought in, has absolutely something immodest in it. . . . He makes no scruple of keeping a joint of meat on the table . . . till he has what he calls *done with it*'.[36] The fat boy had, similarly, 'leered horribly' at the food emerging from the Wardles' hamper and is, for a time, wholly unable to part with a tempting capon.[37] Clearly, as Neale suggested, there is a family connection between these two individuals.[38]

The third chapter of *Pickwick* opens on a singularly grim note, with 'The Stroller's Tale'—a story about a dying clown, narrated to the Pickwickians by a depressing character called Jem Hutley (known as Dismal Jemmy). It turns out that the clown in question has been a habitual drunkard for many years, and the greater part of the action takes place at his deathbed. 'The eyes', Mr Hutley informs his listeners, telling of his second and final visit to the bedside,

[33] 'The Old Margate Hoy', *The London Magazine*, July 1823, included in *Last Essays* (Works, Vol. I, pp. 693-5).
[34] *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-7) (*NIOD*, p. 12).
[35] Ibid., pp. 55-6.
[36] '*Hospita* on the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasures of the Palate', *The Reflector* (autumn, 1811), included in *The Works of Charles Lamb* (1818) (*Works*, p. 159).
[37] *Posthumous Papers*, etc (*NIOD*, p. 53).
[38] *The Dickensian*, Volume 6 (1910), p. 128. Percy Fitzgerald surmised that the story of Prince Bladud in chapter xxxvi of *Pickwick* was inspired by 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig'— 'Just as the "crackle" of pork was discovered by an accident . . . so the cure of leprosy by the Bath water was discovered by the swine'—but this seems a rather laboured comparison. (Percy Fitzgerald, *The Life of Charles Dickens, As Revealed in His Writings* (two vols., London, 1905), volume II, p. 12).

> though deeply sunk and heavy, shone with a lustre frightful to behold. The lips were parched, and cracked in many places: the dry hard skin glowed with a burning heat, and there was an almost unearthly air of wild anxiety on the man's face, indicating even more strongly the ravages of the disease. The fever was at its height. . . . I sat for hours, listening to sounds which must strike deep to the heart of the most callous among human beings - the awful ravings of a dying man. . . . I saw the wasted limbs, which a few hours before had been distorted for the amusement of a boisterous gallery, writhing under the tortures of a burning fever - I heard the clown's shrill laugh, blending with the low murmurings of the dying man…. The theatre, and the public-house, were the chief themes of the wretched man's wanderings. . . . He hid his face in his burning hands, and feebly bemoaned his own weakness.[39]

And on and on it goes, in harrowing detail. Not less harrowing, though, than Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard', written in 1812:

> Out of the black depths, could I be heard, I would cry out to all those who have but set a foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth, to whom the flavour of the first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life, or the entering upon some newly discovered paradise, look into my desolation, and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will, to see his destruction, and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself; to perceive all goodness emptied out of him, and yet not be able to forget a time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own self-ruins; - could he see my fevered eyes, feverish with last night's drinking, and feverishly looking for this night's repetition of the folly; could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebler and feebler outcry to be delivered, - it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation. . . . Behold me then, in the robust period of life, reduced to imbecility and decay.[40]

These are, in the words of the fat boy, tales 'to make your flesh creep', and we must hasten on to comparisons of a happier nature.

To be continued …

Wanstead, London

[39] *Posthumous Papers*, etc (*NIOD*, p. 39).
[40] 'Confessions of a Drunkard', *The Philanthropist* (Jan. 1813), included in *The Works of Charles Lamb* (1818) (*Works*, p. 173-5).

We *Plot* Together, Old Bachelor and Maid, in a Sort of Double Singleness

By WINIFRED YIN

'My *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature* (1980), and articles in the *Charles Lamb Bulletin* in the 1980s demonstrated that the themes of the [*sic*] children's literature consistently reappeared in the letters and then in *Elia*, and confirmed that there was a genuine identity between Charles' and Mary's views of children. Jean Marsden extends this theme'.[1] Thus Joseph E. Riehl points out his influence on Jean I. Marsden in *The Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics* (1998) while assessing the contribution that he has made to the literary criticism of the Lambs' writings for children. However, this does not actually represent Marsden's overview on the collaborative works of Charles and Mary Lamb: 'despite my efforts, I [have][2] found that it was impossible to draw a clear line between Charles' and Mary's contributions' (Marsden, p. 62).[3] This quotation comes from 'Shakespeare for Girls' published in *Children's Literature* in 1989, probably one of the most frequently cited articles in the study of the Lambs' children's literature in recent years. What is really stated in 'Shakespeare for Girls' is that 'no significant distinctions exist in the finished product of collaboration' (Marsden, p. 51), referring to Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* only,[4] because 'unlike the later *Mrs. Leicester's School* where the tales were written separately, the brother and sister collaborated closely on *Tales from Shakespeare*' (Marsden, p. 50). Subsequently in 'Letters on a Tombstone' in *Children's Literature* (1995), Marsden continues to elaborate on this theme: 'Charles Lamb's three tales [included in *Mrs. Leicester's School*] do not depict an intimate connection between mothering and reading or writing and in general lack the darker quality of many of Mary's tales, where daughters struggle with maternal absence or neglect.'[5]

It is true that, as indicated by both Riehl[6] and Marsden, the twenty tales adapted from Shakespeare's plays by the Lambs possess certain characteristics of single authorship. Nevertheless, Marsden's absolute denial that 'any attempt to draw such a line' between Charles's and Mary's contributions to *Tales from Shakespear* 'would create a distinction where none exists' (Marsden, p. 62), is rather problematic, for there are in fact many tell-tale traces scattered in Lambs' *Tales*, awaiting to give away the true identities of the story-tellers, if a reader cares to

[1] Joseph E. Riehl, *The Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics* (Drawer, Columbia: Camden House, 1998), p. 150.

[2] Riehl's quotation differs slightly from the original, where Marsden uses a past tense 'I found' instead of 'I have found'; furthermore, later in the same quotation, Riehl also omits the last alphabet 's' in the word 'Charles's'. See also the previous footnote.

[3] Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespeare*', *Children's Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association*, 17 (1989), 47-63 (p. 62, n.9). Hereafter, all references to this particular article are in abbreviated form.

[4] All references to Lambs' *Tales* are standardized to the first edition: Charles [and Mary] Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807).

[5] Jean I. Marsden, 'Letters on a Tombstone: Mothers and Literacy in Mary Lamb's *Mrs. Leicester's School*', *Children's Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association*, 23 (1995), 31-44 (p. 38).

[6] See also Joseph E. Riehl, *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature* (Salzburg: Univ. of Salzburg, 1980), p. 84.

scrutinize the tales and find these clues. In this paper, I intend to focus on the various ways in which Mary and Charles selected and rearranged the incidents from Shakespeare's tragedies, comedies and romances in Lambs' *Tales*. It is hoped that some delicate, yet definite, differences between their tales can be demonstrated, and a glimpse of the manner in which the siblings worked on the project of *Tales from Shakespear* 'in a sort of double singleness'[7] can also be revealed.

In a letter completed on June 2, 1806, Mary Lamb informed Sarah Stoddart of the Godwins' original plan for publishing the twenty prose tales adapted from Shakespeare's plays: 'My Tales are to be published [as] separate story books, I mean in single stories like the children[']s little shilling books' (*Letters*, II, 228).[8] Although the tales were in two collected volumes when they came out for the first time in December 1806, from 1807 to 1808 eight tales were subsequently brought out by the Godwins in chapbook form as eight individual booklets, and priced at six pence each.[9] The existence of these chapbook editions of Lambs' tales gives us a fairly good idea concerning the restriction imposed on the length of each prose tale from the start, which both Charles and Mary had to take into account while abridging the stories from the plays. The eight tales issued as chapbooks were *The Winter's Tale*,[10] *Othello*,[11] *The* [sic] *Midsummer Night's Dream*,[12] *Cymbeline*,[13] *Romeo and Juliet*,[14] *Timon of Athens*,[15] *King Lear*,[16] and *The Merchant of Venice*.[17] The longest among them is *Othello*, which occupies thirty-eight pages; the shortest, *The Winter's Tale*, thirty-two pages. More than half of these single-tale volumes uniformly take up thirty-six pages. It was a considerable challenge for the Lambs to reduce a play-text, which usually takes two to three hours to perform in the theatre, to the size of approximately thirty-six tiny pages of a short story. Extensive omissions were certainly required.

In 'Shakespeare for Girls', Marsden argues that 'the cuts follow a specific pattern' (Marsden, p. 52), and the pattern was determined by Mary Lamb during a 'communal' writing process (p. 50):

[7] 'Double singleness' is a unique phrase invented by Charles Lamb himself, to register the happy and contented life that he shared with his elder sister, Mary. It means that the siblings 'agree[d] pretty well in [their] tastes and habits—yet so, as "with a difference"'; see Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, In Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E.V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-9 (p. 75).

[8] Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 202; May 30-June 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 227-30 (p. 228). Hereafter, all references to Lambs' *Letters* are in abbreviated form.

[9] See the publishers' advertisements attached respectively to Edward Baldwin (pseud.), *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (London: Hodgkins, 1807) and Charles Lamb, *The Adventures of Ulysses* (London: [Godwin], 1808).

[10] No copy of the 1807 issue has survived; the earliest traceable copy is that of the second. See [Mary Lamb], *The Winter's Tale* (London: Godwin, 1809).

[11] [Charles Lamb], *Othello, Moor of Venice* (London: Hodgkins, 1807).

[12] No copy of the 1807 issue has survived; the earliest traceable copy is that of the second. See [Mary Lamb], *The Midsummer Night's Dream* (London: Godwin, 1811).

[13] [Mary Lamb], *Cymbeline* (London: Godwin, 1811). See also the previous footnote.

[14] [Charles Lamb], [*Romeo and Juliet*] ([London]: [Hodgkins], [1807]).

[15] [Charles Lamb], *Timon of Athens* (London: Hodgkins, 1807).

[16] [Charles Lamb], *King Lear* (London: [Godwin], 1808).

[17] [Mary Lamb], *The Merchant of Venice* (London: [Godwin], 1808).

> They may have worked initially on separate sheets, but they then passed these sheets across a shared table. As a result it is difficult (if not impossible) to distinguish precisely where Mary's work stops and Charles's begins [. . .] I would argue that Mary was the informing presence [. . . , and] his [Charles Lamb's] tales reveal the same patterns of feminization as Mary's. (Marsden, pp. 50-1)

Marsden then takes the argument further and suggests that, because Mary 'deliberately directed this project toward a female audience' (p. 47), there are 'no Roman plays and no histories' (p. 51) and 'all examples of low comedy and most subplots' are 'eliminated' from the entire collection of *Tales from Shakespear* (p. 52). But Marsden's hypotheses are to be considered with caution.

The writing process as pictured in 'Shakespeare for Girls', though it is termed 'the actual composition process' in that article (Marsden, p. 50), is truly a one-sided interpretation based on what Marsden read in Mary's letter to Stoddart:

> you would like to see us as we often sit writing on one table (but not on one cushion sitting) like Hermia & Helena in the Midsummer's Nights Dream or rather like an old literary Darby and Joan. I taking snuff & he groaning all the while & saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished and then he finds out he has made something of it. (*Letters*, II, 228-9)[18]

Nothing in the above quoted passage supplies a slightest hint that either of the Lambs was taking control of the whole situation and setting up rules for the other to follow. Nor does it imply that either Charles or Mary did anything other than concentrating on his or her own respective share of the work, at least most of the time, even though some sort of communication between the two writers was going on. Charles clearly experienced no difficulty in informing William Wordsworth on January 29, 1807:

> That I am answerable for Lear, Macbeth, Timon, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, for occasionally a tail piece or correction of grammar, for none of the cuts and all of the spelling. The rest is my Sister's—. (*Letters*, II, 256).

At an early stage during the process of collaboration, it was agreed that Charles would 'do all the Tragedies' (*Letters*, II, 225) mentioned in this letter to Wordsworth. He 'picked out' the six tragedies from a list of twenty of Shakespeare's plays (*Letters*, II, 235), yet the list was probably not prepared by Mary, the primary author of Lambs' *Tales*. Charles wrote in another letter dated May 10, 1806 to Thomas Manning:

> She [Mary Lamb] is doing for Godwins Bookseller 20 of Shakespears plays to be made into Childrens tales. (*Letters*, II, 225)

Contrary to one of Marsden's hypotheses, Charles's letter to Manning underlines that the publishers, rather than either of the authors, were responsible for compiling the list of twenty

[18] This letter is also quoted with grammatical corrections in 'Shakespeare for Girls' (see Marsden, p. 50).

plays. Moreover, as Marsden was fully aware in 1989, 'Charles's version of *Macbeth* and *Timon of Athens* [. . .] portray a more public, "masculine" realm,' dealing with a similar 'subject matter' to that of the others omitted, *i.e.* Shakespeare's Roman and English history plays (Marsden, p. 52):

> standard fare for boys and young men with their vivid battle scenes and emphasis on politics[.] (*Ibid*.)

In particular, the prose version of *Timon of Athens* as handled by Charles, has completely nothing to do with either 'the ideal of romantic love' (Marsden, p. 52), 'the happy resolution of marriage' or 'family issues (as in *King Lear* and *Hamlet*)', those 'categories' defined by Marsden as belonging to 'the private sphere' or 'the "proper" feminine sphere' (p. 52).

Most subplots are indeed omitted from *Tales from Shakespear*, and many scenes of the so-called 'low comedy' are gone with them, as already noted in 'Shakespeare for Girls' (p. 52). Whether all these omissions were done to conform to Mary's supposed intent to blunt 'All harsh edges—comic or tragic— [. . .] to protect' (p. 53) 'the proposed female audience' (p. 52) is, however, a matter calling for further examinations. As can be deduced from the internal evidence gathered from Charles's six tales of Shakespearean tragedies, such as his version of *King Lear*, it shows that he simply discovered the title of a play an immensely useful guide in terms of plot selection. As soon as Charles's 'King Lear'[19] has begun, his narration plunges straight into the center of Lear plot:

> Lear, king of Britain, had three daughters [. . .] (*Tales*, I, 188)

The Gloucester family is not even mentioned until the fates of Lear and his three daughters are to be determined through their diverse connections to 'Edmund, a natural son of the late earl of Gloucester' (*Tales*, I, 212),

> who by his treacheries had succeeded in disinheriting his brother Edgar the lawful heir from his earldom, and by his wicked practices was now earl himself[.] (*Ibid*.)

This is all that has been said about the Gloucester subplot. Charles Lamb finally comes to justify such a drastic omission in the concluding paragraph:

> How the judgment of Heaven overtook the bad earl of Gloucester, whose treasons were discovered, and himself slain in single combat with his brother, the lawful earl [. . .] is needless here to narrate; Lear and his Three Daughters being dead, whose adventures alone concern our story. (*Tales*, I, 214)

The narration, however, has not been as neatly tied up as promised.

[19] To distinguish between Lambs' tales and Shakespeare's plays, the title of each prose tale is given in inverted commas.

Charles has devoted a long description to illustrate the appalling living conditions of 'a poor Bedlam-beggar' (*Tales*, I, 208), when it comes to depict the meeting of the king with the nameless beggar, who is no longer Edgar in disguise, in 'King Lear':

> But upon examination this spirit proved to be nothing more than a poor Bedlam-beggar, who had crept into this deserted hovel for shelter and with his talk about devils frighted the fool, one of those poor lunatics who are either mad, or feign to be so, the better to extort charity from the compassionate country-people; who go about the country, calling themselves poor Tom and poor Turlygood, saying, "Who gives any thing to poor Tom?" sticking pins and nails and sprigs of rosemary into their arms to make them bleed; and with such horrible actions, partly by prayers, and partly with lunatic curses, they move or terrify the ignorant country-folks into giving them alms. This poor fellow was such a one; and the king seeing him in so wretched a plight, with nothing but a blanket about his loins to cover his nakedness, could not be persuaded but that the fellow was some father who had given all away to his daughters[.] (*Tales*, I, 208)

Recognizably, the delineation of masochistic behaviour of the Bedlam-beggar as a means to earn his living, so vividly recaptured in the tale, is paraphrased from certain speeches uttered by Edgar in the original play (*KL*, II.iii.12-9 and III.iv.50-62).[20] Apparently, Charles allows his narrative to be diverted for a time, since to itemize the beggar's misery contributes very little to the development of the Lear plot. But through retaining this reference to the harshness of the real world, Charles daringly raises the social issue of poverty.

It is not in the least unusual for anyone accustomed to his writings to find Charles Lamb for Lamb to frequently interrupt the process of story-telling and temporarily change the subject to something but loosely connected to the on-going narration, and yet judged to be of great interest in its own right. In one of his semi-autobiographical stories, 'The Witch Aunt', included in *Mrs. Leicester's School* (1809), Charles has confessed that, when he was but a child, 'a great Book of Martyrs' was among the titles that 'I chiefly admired':[21]

> There it was written all about those good men who chose to be burnt alive, rather than forsake their religion, and become naughty papists [. . .] and I used to think I was so courageous I could be burnt too, and I would put my hands upon the flames which were pictured in the pretty pictures which the book had, and feel them[.] (*Works*, III, 319)

This observation proves that Charles understood well what kind of sensation the masochism of martyrs, similar to that of Bedlam-beggars in some measure, would bring to the imagination of a child. But without stories like these acutely recording the genuine sufferings of human beings, he protests in 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' (1822), there is no way for children to learn about the true worth and meaning of charity, and their minds would be otherwise filled with 'the vanity of self-denial' and 'out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness' (*Works*, II, 125). Therefore, the part

[20] All references to Shakespeare's dramatic works are standardized to *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Richard Proudfoot, etc. (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1998).

[21] Unless otherwise stated, all references to the Lambs' *Works* are standardized to the Lucas edition: Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E.V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5).

portraying the life and adventures of a Bedlam-beggar in *King Lear* is recounted in Charles's 'King Lear' at the expense of momentarily distracting the reader's attention from the main course of action; namely, the adventures of Lear and his three daughters.

Examples of this kind of deviation are abundant in Charles's six tales retold from Shakespeare's tragedies. Again in 'The Witch Aunt', he admits that 'Glanvil on Witches' was such another book among 'my treasure', for 'I was always very fond of picking up stories about witches' (*Works*, III, 321). Although the terrors of witches and witch-stories had put his childish nerve through several ordeals before, Charles still insisted in the essay on 'Witches and Other Night Fears' (1821) that children should be permitted to read witch-stories. Otherwise, 'the soul's creativeness', the 'poetical faculty' of a soul, would be so starved that it becomes 'tame and prosaic' (*Works*, II, 69). The plot of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for example, is based on a witch story as much as ghost story. Not only the ghost of Banquo reappears in the prose version of the play, but also in most of the references to witches and witchcraft. At one point, the narration of 'Macbeth' comes to a conspicuous halt and is turned into an obsessive listing of the 'horrid ingredients' (*Tales*, I, 227), the 'dreadful charms,' by which the three witches 'conjured up infernal spirits to reveal to them futurity' (*Tales*, I, 226-7). Those few omitted references to Shakespeare's witches are the two scenes of Singing Witches (*MAC*, III.v.1-36 and IV.i.39-43) and some of the ingredients thrown into the cauldron, *e.g.* 'toe of frog, / Wool of bat' (IV.i.14-5). They were omitted from the tale for the sake of emphasizing, not mitigating, 'the most serious and appalling' effect (*Works*, I, 109), which Charles expected the appearance of the three witches to conjure up for young readers. 'The Weird Sisters are serious things', he once explained in his essay on the 'Characters of Dramatic Writers, Contemporary With Shakspeare' (1808), 'Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth' (*Works*, I, 47). The singing witches and the few ingredients, which 'savour of the grotesque' rather than the 'spell-bound' (*Works*, I, 109), are the sort of 'properties, which [Thomas Middleton] has given to his hags [in *The Witch*]' and 'excite' nothing but 'smiles' (*Works*, I, 47).

Mary Lamb, on the contrary, shows hardly any intention to preserve instances of horror or violence in her fourteen tales adapted from Shakespeare's comedies and romances. For example, the raucous and savage escape of Antipholus of Ephesus and his Dromio from their confinement (*ERR*, V.i.168-77 and 248-51) is glossed over in 'The Comedy of Errors':

> While she [Adriana] was speaking, her real husband and his servant Dromio, who had got loose, came before the duke to demand justice [. . .] telling in what manner he had broken his bands, and eluded the vigilance of his keepers. (*Tales*, II, 65-66)

In 'The Winter's Tale', Mamillius is about to begin 'one of his best stories to amuse his mother' (*Tales*, I, 45), not 'one / Of sprites and goblins' (*WT*, II.i.25-6) 'To fright' her (*WT*, II.i.28), when Leontes entered 'the queen's apartment' and 'taking the child away, sent Hermione to prison' (*Tales*, I, 45). Mary's different attitude toward horror and violence from her brother's has also decided what course 'Twelfth Night' should take in *Tales from Shakespear*.

The title of the comedy *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will* says next to nothing about its plot. It is not always obvious for a reader of the play to determine, judging simply from its title, where the main action lies. More often than not, the plot against Malvolio is regarded by actors and critics, including Charles Lamb, as the primary interest of the comedy. Charles once commented

on the theatrical interpretation of *Twelfth Night* in one of his *Elia* essays, 'On Some of the Old Actors', in these terms:

> The part of Malvolio, in the Twelfth Night, was performed by Bensley, with a richness and a dignity [. . .] when Bensley was occasionally absent from the theatre, John Kemble thought it no derogation to succeed to the part. (*Works*, II, 134)

It sounds as if Charles would have chosen the Malvolio story to be the main plot of 'Twelfth Night', if he were the teller of the tale, and which is exactly what Ian Serraillier did with his prose version of *Twelfth Night* in *The Enchanted Island: Stories from Shakespeare* (1964), a modern children's book modeled on Lambs' *Tales*.[22] Mary, however, chose to omit the gulling of Malvolio and its sequel, and the drunken trio—Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste—simply do not exist in her tale. Her 'Twelfth Night' begins with:

> Sebastian and his sister Viola, a young gentleman and lady of Messaline, were twins [. . .] They were both born in one hour, and in one hour they were both in danger of perishing, for they were shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria [. . .] (*Tales*, II, 97)

The first sentence of the tale, which identifies the social status of Sebastian and Viola, also hints at Mary's design to deliberately focus her story-telling on the lives and adventures of those youthful characters who belong to the same social class and, presumably, would share a similar prospect in life with her envisaged readers, nineteenth-century children of the middle and upper classes whose parents could afford to buy them copies of *Tales from Shakespear*.[23] Like Mary's 'As You Like It', which becomes a prose narrative about Rosalind, Celia, Orlando and Oliver and how they find true love and obtain eternal happiness, the narration of 'Twelfth Night' is unambiguously and steadfastly fixed upon the romantic plot of *Twelfth Night* from beginning to end:

> Thus the twin brother and sister were both 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. Viola was the wife of Orsino, the duke of Illyria, and Sebastian the husband of the rich and noble countess, the lady Olivia. (*Tales*, II, 120)

Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will and *As You Like It* are not typical examples among the chosen plays that Mary was to convert into prose tales. Many of the comedies and romances bear titles fittingly summing up the major events or the most prominent features of the diverse dramatic works. Under the usual circumstances, like her brother, Mary also discovered that these titles could be very useful in terms of choosing the focus for a prose narrative. For example, the taming plot is chosen to be the focus in her prose version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Not only the Sly Induction and its sequels are cut, but the subplot of the wooing of Bianca is also omitted.

[22] See the publisher's advertisement printed on the book covers, and the story of 'Twelfth-Night: The Love-Letter' in Ian Serraillier, *The Enchanted Island: Stories from Shakespeare* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), 78-91.

[23] The two-volume edition of *Tales from Shakespear* was sold at the price of eight shillings in 1807. Considering it as a book for children in the early nineteenth century, it was rather expensive. The chapbook editions were also far more expensive than ordinary chapbooks, priced at one penny or just half a penny per volume.

The lute scene and the head-breaking of Act II, scene i are retained, but it is Katherine's 'music-master' (*Tales*, II, 26), not Hortensio in disguise, who is made a victim of Kate's violent temper. Altogether, Bianca makes only two appearances. At the beginning, she is to contrast with Katherine as the 'gentle sister' (*Tales*, II, 24). Near the end, she turns out to be one of the 'head-strong women' (*Tales*, II, 42), who are destined to lose the contest of wifely obedience to Katherine. Throughout the tale, the narration focuses firmly on how Petruchio transforms Katherine into 'the most obedient and duteous wife in Padua' (*Tales*, II, 43). Meanwhile, further reduction is made within the taming plot, such as when the bawdy repartee (*SHR*, II.i.201-61) is removed from Petruchio's wooing of Katherine.

The loss of sexual context, which exists in its original play, is not unique in the case of 'The Taming of the Shrew'. Similarly, in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona', Proteus does not attempt to rape Silvia. After rescuing Silvia 'from the hands of the robber', he merely 'began to distress her afresh with his love suit', 'rudely pressing her to consent to marry him' (*Tales*, I, 135). In 'Pericles', the incestuous nature of 'a shocking deed[,] which the emperor [Antiochus] had done in secret' simply does not figure, because the tale does not begin until Pericles goes into his 'voluntary exile' (*Tales*, II, 231). Subsequently, the brothel scenes in *Pericles* are entirely omitted, and Marina is 'sold' to be 'a slave', not a prostitute (*Tales*, II, 248). The list can go on much longer. The fact that those incidents of sexual connotation are removed, obscured or altered in Mary's prose tales makes manifest her eagerness to purge sex or improprieties from a book designed for young readers, a proposition not shared by Charles.

Nonetheless, sex did not appear to be a theme particularly attractive to Charles Lamb. In telling the stories from the six tragedies of Shakespeare, he made no special effort to maintain any references to sex or sexuality. The two whores, Phrynia and Timandra, accompanying Alcibiades to war against Athens in Act IV, scene iii in *Timon of Athens* are omitted, along with extensive excision to the Alcibiades subplot. On the other hand, in 'King Lear', the illegitimate birth of Edmund is announced (*Tales*, I, 212), and the incestuous nature of Gertrude's second marriage is plainly discussed in 'Hamlet':

> she had married again, married his uncle, her dead husband's brother, in itself a highly improper and unlawful marriage, from the nearness of relationship [. . .] (*Tales*, II, 179)

Evidently, the narrator puts forward the case simply as it stands within the plot selected without exaggeration or emphasis. But since Mary was the primary author and wrote more than two thirds of the book, her designs for textual purification prevail and form a general impression on some readers of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, including Jean I. Marsden.

Research on the Lambs' choices of plot-selection from Shakespeare's plays has been carried out in the past, though not always as adequately and thoroughly as one could wish,[24] but no

[24] Apart from Riehl's *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature* and Marsden's article, there are other important publications in this field of study being brought out in the last two decades but not mentioned in *The Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics*. For examples, see T.W. Craik, 'Charles and Mary Lamb: *Tales from Shakespear*', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 49 (1985), 2-14; Jonathan Bate, 'Lamb on Shakespeare', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 51 (1985), 76-85; Susan J. Wolfsen, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-visions of Shakespeare on the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by

attempt has ever been made to observe and compare the methods applied by Charles and Mary respectively, to arrange these selected incidents and model them into new stories.

Charles Lamb, who once declared that 'I have little concern in the progress of events' (*Works*, II, 75), usually makes no special arrangement to relocate the rather episodic and disjointed incidents, after being taken out of a play. Consequently in 'Othello', he offers no explanation for when and where Desdemona has lost her husband's first gift, the magical handkerchief. This episode is a turning point in this tale of marital jealousy and eventually leads to the final catastrophe. But Charles Lamb merely tells his readers that 'the wicked Iago, whose spirits never slept in contrivance of villainy, had made his wife (a good, but a weak woman) steal this handkerchief from Desdemona, under pretence of getting the work copied' (*Tales*, II, 224), as if it were not part of the development of the plot. In fact 'The fluctuations of fortune in fiction [. . .] have ceased to interest, or operate' so 'dully upon' Charles Lamb (*Works*, II, 75) that he overlooked most of the textual inconsistencies in the original tragedies. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the timing for Juliet to take the sleeping potion (*ROM*, IV.i.90-4 and IV.iii.58) and the duration for the effect to wear off (IV.i.105 and V.iii.147), for example, remain exactly the same in 'Romeo and Juliet', where the effect of the potion still lasts for 'two-and-forty hours' (*Tales*, II, 165) and, after Juliet has drunk it off 'the night before the marriage' (II, 164), she wakes up long past midnight or near dawn (II, 169 and 171), a much later hour than the one appointed.

But the opposite is true in Mary's case. Mary Lamb was so careful in weaving up a story-line that she even refused to take for granted the original sequence as arranged by Shakespeare in any of the comedies or romances. She often ventured to reorganize it as long as she considered its original structure problematic or inconsistent. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, for example, opens with music conveniently provided in the theatre, 'If music be the food of love, play on, / Give me excess of it' (*TN*, I.i.1-2). Neither time nor place is specified in this opening scene. Illyria is the setting of the comedy, which is not mentioned until Act I, scene ii:

> *Viola*. What country, friends, is this?
> *Captain*. This is Illyria, lady. (*TN*, I.ii.1-2)

Before the second scene comes to an end, Viola asks the Captain to 'present me as an eunuch' to Duke Orsino (*TN*, I.ii.56); 'for I can sing', she assures the Captain, 'And speak to him in many sorts of music, / That will allow me very worth his service' (I.ii.57-9). However, in the disguise of Cesario, Viola does not perform the service of a eunuch but that of a page. After she has paid Olivia two visits as Orsino's love emissary, Cesario concludes the second visit by swearing to Olivia, 'never more / Will I my master's tears to you deplore' (III.i.162-3). Contrary to her previous declaration, Cesario calls on Olivia once more and, during this third visit, Olivia gives Cesario/Viola a miniature portrait of herself (III.iv.207). To tidy up the inconsistent details and make sense of the whole story for young readers, Mary Lamb has made some new arrangements in her tale. 'Twelfth Night' begins with Act I, scene ii of the original play, where the shipwreck that separates Viola from Sebastian takes place (*Tales*, II, 97). After being rescued by the Captain, Viola comes to serve Orsino 'as a page' (II, 99) and, 'in a man's habit' (II, 99), Viola pays altogether two visits to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf. The first visit takes place after she

Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), 16-40; and Julia Brigg's 'Introduction' to the most recent Everyman Library edition of *Tales from Shakespeare*, ed. by Julia Briggs (London: Dent, 1993).

has told Orsino the story of a supposed sister's unrequited love (II, 102-3), and the second one occurs after she has elusively confessed to Orsino her own secret love for him (II, 110). The news about Olivia's determination to stay in mourning for seven years for her brother's death (*TN*, I.i.24-32) does not reach Orsino until he has already heard Cesario's story about the sister's pining away for love (*TN*, II.iv.111-9). It is this piece of news from Olivia's house that distracts Orsino from his absorption in Viola's story and revives his nearly extinguished ambition to obtain Olivia's love (*Tales*, II, 103). In this manner, Mary Lamb also provides her tale with an extra dimension of psychological subtlety.

In *Twelfth Night*, the development of the romantic comedy comes to a slightly awkward moment at II.iv.123. When all of Viola's intention is to dissuade Orsino from sighing vainly for Olivia, and her contrivance has obviously been rewarded with the desired effect, it can seem odd that Cesario voluntarily reminds Orsino of her mission as his love envoy to Olivia:

> *Duke*. But died thy sister of her love, my boy?
> *Viola*. I am all the daughters of my father's house,
> And all the brothers too; and yet I know not.
> Sir, shall I to this lady?
> *Duke*. Ay, that's the theme. (II.iv.120-3)

In the theatre, this moment is often highly charged with physicality. For example, in Ian Judge's 1994 production of *Twelfth Night* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, Clive Wood's Orsino was so engrossed in Viola that he actually kissed Emma Fielding's Cesario. Whatever Orsino's response, it generally makes the moment awkward for Cesario; therefore, Cesario/Viola is forced to find a way out of the difficulty by asking the question: 'Sir, shall I to this lady?' (*TN*, II.iv.123).

Viola moreover, comes to plead for her cause in a more intelligent and progressive manner in the prose tale, owing to Mary Lamb's portrayal. Each time Viola tells Orsino a love story in 'Twelfth Night', she draws the allusion one step closer to home. At last, in the denouement, Viola's true identity as a woman and the genuine cause for her devotion to Orsino's affairs come to the surface, as punctuated by Mary Lamb's italics:

> And then he [Orsino] remember how often she [Cesario/Viola] had said *she loved him*[,] (*Tales*, II, 119)

Through shifting scenes of the play, Mary Lamb presents to her readers a finely structured and nicely balanced story.

The aim and ability of Mary Lamb to work out a clear and consistent plot for each tale persists throughout her fourteen tales and characterizes them with clarity and lucidity. More important in scrutinizing the structure of a comedy or a romance through its prose counterpart, Mary made another noteworthy contribution to the study of Shakespearean drama which has not yet been realized. Through story-telling, Mary made some subtle points about the meaning and the artistic value of certain plotting techniques used by Shakespeare, which had been so far overlooked in the study of Shakespeare's plays.

Cymbeline, for example, was in Lamb's day probably the most condemned of Shakespearean romances for its inconsistent and complex plots. During the Age of Reason, *Cymbeline* was

absolutely dismissed as a thing of absurdity. In 1753, Charlotte Lennox rejected 'the whole Conduct of the Play' in her *Shakespear Illustrated* as 'absurd and ridiculous to the last Degree.'[25] In 1765, Samuel Johnson considered it too incongruous to be worthy of any literary criticism:

> To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.[26]

However in 1806, when Mary Lamb came to tell the story from the play, she formed a very different opinion. She noticed the technical brilliance of the last scene and integrated her appreciation into the process of her story-telling.

Cymbeline, the king who gives his name to the title of the play, is a shadowy figure and is kept apart from the main action. Not until the final scene does the king become the center of the action, where all the other characters are bound, as indicated in Mary's narration:

> Therefore there were now standing in the king's presence (but with very different hopes and fears) Posthumus, and Imogen, with her new master the Roman general; the faithful servant Pisanio, and the false friend Iachimo; and likewise the two lost sons of Cymbeline, with Bellarius who had stolen them away. (*Tales*, I, 182)

The king is in a position of authority and has the power to either reward or punish any of these characters, and each of them, in one way or another, is associated with the king and his future happiness, though the king is not in the least aware of the situation. It is Iachimo's answer to Imogen's question, 'Of whom he had this [diamond] ring' (*CYM*, V.v.136), which is to bring all the secrets to light and determine how Cymbeline shall decide on the fates of the others. Consequently, Mary Lamb highlights the request of Imogen by way of describing the intense expectation from all directions:

> They all were attentive to hear what thing the page would ask for [. . .] Imogen then fixing her eye on Iachimo, demanded no other boon than this, that Iachimo should be made to confess whence he had the ring he wore on his finger. (*Tales*, I, 184-5)

After Iachimo has 'made a full acknowledgment of all his villainy' (*Tales*, I, 185), one revelation triggers off another, and one reconciliation swiftly follows the next. Finally,

> All were made happy, who were deserving; and even the treacherous Iachimo, in consideration of his villainy having missed its final aim was dismissed without punishment. (*Tales*, I, 187)

[25] Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespear Illustrated: Or the Novels and Histories, On Which the Plays of Shakespear Are Founded*, 3 vols. (London: Millar, 1753-4), I, 166.
[26] Samuel Johnson's editorial notes in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VII, 403.

But Mary Lamb has never been given any credit for discovering and illustrating the skill of the final scene in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Approximately ten years later, in 1817, William Hazlitt was to expound the technicality involved in the concluding scene of this 'dramatic romance'[27]

> The business of the plot evidently thickens in the last act: the story moves forward with increasing rapidity at every step; its various ramifications are drawn from the most distant points to the same center; the principal characters are brought together, and placed in very critical situations; and the fate of almost every person in the drama is made to depend on the solution of a single circumstance—the answer of Iachimo to the question of Imogen respecting the obtaining of the ring from Posthumus. Dr. Johnson is of opinion that Shakespear was generally inattentive to the winding up of his plots. We think the contrary is true[.][28]

It is William Hazlitt, one of the three great Romantic critics, who gets full credit for this finding, since Mary Lamb had never attempted to make her tale a piece of literary criticism as Hazlitt certainly did. Is it not high time to reassess the value of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*, treat the tales as what they really are without prejudice, and attribute Charles and Mary Lamb whatever contributions justly belong to either of them?

Tunghai University, Taiwan

[27] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (London: Hunter, 1817), p. 1.
[28] *Ibid*, p. 2.

Coleridge, Cologne and the Cathedral – or: Why St. Geryon?

By HANS WERNER BREUNIG

IT IS STRIKING THAT Coleridge, writing his two satirical poems on Cologne, does not mention, nay even distracts attention from, that city's renowned cathedral by praising another church—St. Geryon. His fellow traveller (and then almost reconciled former friend) William Wordsworth had indeed praised the cathedral in his poem 'In the Cathedral of Cologne', written on the occasion of a previous visit to Cologne in 1820. In those verses the angels were called upon to aid completion of the still unfinished towers.[1]

Not so Coleridge. In the first of the two short poems ('Cologne') he distinguishes the stinks and stenches of Cologne[2] of which he claims to count seventy-two and reflects on the lavatory power of the river Rhine. In the second ('On my Joyful Departure from the Same City') he is decidedly more positive, praising the two things he finds worthwhile in Cologne: 'Mr. Mum's Rudesheimer' (i.e. a particular wine from the Rheingau) and, instead of the cathedral, the 'church of St. Geryon'.

Perhaps this latter praise has indeed to do with the first. For Coleridge may consider himself, and perhaps even the typical English tourist in general, to some degree intoxicated. The word 'now' in the second verse of the poem ('As I am a[3] rhymer, / And now at least a merry one,) may suggest that Coleridge pretends—probably with no effort to disguise himself—to be under the influence when writing these lines. For he continues: 'Mr Mum's Rudesheimer / And the church of St. Geryon / Are the two things alone / That deserve to be known / In the body and soul-stinking town of Cologne').

If Coleridge wishes to give the impression of being tipsy, his praise of St. Geryon may have further implications. Coleridge does not tell us whether he is enthused about the interior or the exterior of St. Geryon. Given the state in which the cathedral (whose patron saint is Peter) was in 1828, i.e. still a partially finished building, it is striking that St. Geryon must have given a rather similar prospect: an adjacent church by the name of St. Christoph was in the process of being

[1] Of course there were others, such as Robert Gray, who thought so little of Cologne cathedral that they did not even mention it (Robert Gray, *Letters during the course of a Tour through Germany, Switzerland and Italy . . . with Reflections on the Manners, Literature, and Religion of those Countries.* London: 1794.) One year later Ann Radcliffe, on the other hand, at least confesses that 'the cathedral, with its huge, unfinished mass, has a striking appearance'. (Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: To Which Are Added, Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland*, Dublin: William Porter 1795, p. 100.) – Cf. also Gisela Dischner, *Urspruenge der Rheinromantik in England. Zur Geschichte der romantischen Aesthetik.* Frankfurt/Main 1972, p. 210.

[2] George Meredith in *Farina, A Legend of Cologne* (1857) mentions the same point with irony, as many others had done long before him.

[3] William Keach, ed, of the Penguin edition of *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems* (1997), points out (ibid., p. 600f) that Coleridge inserted 'a' before 'rhymer' in two copies of the poem's first publication.

taken down. Deconstruction work was begun in 1806 but was not finished before 1841.[4] Thus Coleridge and Wordsworth should, among many other very impressive churches in Cologne (the city boasts a dozen Romanesque churches, many of European reputation), have seen two outstanding ones at which some sort of (de-)construction work was going on. And if the English tourist is under the influence of Mr. Mum's Rhine wine, why indeed should he not confuse the two?

Now St. Geryon is a fine Romanesque basilica, and in 1828 certainly worth Coleridge's praise. He may after all have been quite serious, and his merriment may not have been satirical, nor may his praise have had much to do with the wine (of whose quality he complains on other occasions). The remains of St. Christopher, not mentioned by Coleridge, would indeed have made for a fine romantic setting, as can be seen on a contemporary etching. On the other hand, the cathedral, too, was praised by others for exactly this sort of setting, so there would not have been any need for Coleridge to prefer St. Geryon on this account. Either, then, Coleridge is really impressed by St. Geryon's interior and seriously thinks it superior to the cathedral's gothic naves. Or he just goes for any non-gothic substitute out of the 80 churches Ann Radcliffe counts in Cologne. Or, again, he plays on the idea of a confusion between the two, thus parodying himself.

This hypothesis may be worth contemplating, even if it needs to be abandoned later on: in praising St. Geryon's church instead of the generally acclaimed cathedral, Coleridge may have wished to ridicule the English tourists' blindness in moving about the Continent.[5] The object of admiration may be interchangeable and may indeed be confused when more liquid charms offer themselves.

At any rate, in the light of this evidence, another feasible hypothesis may now be ruled out; for one will not be tempted to conjecture that Coleridge in Cologne simply did not wish to be reminded of his own state of affairs and that, in substituting St. Geryon for the cathedral, he only wished to withdraw from the cathedral as an edifice as fragmentary as his own philosophical system.

University of Magdeburg, Germany

[4] I am much indebted to Dr. Verscharen of the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Koeln for evidence going far beyond St. Gereon's homepage (http://www.stgereon.de/Basilika/allgemein/Stiftsgeschichte.html of October 2001). The scholarly work to consult in the matter is by Karl Josef Bollenbeck, *Der Koelner Stadtbaumeister Johann Peter Weyer* (doctoral thesis) Bonn 1969, p. 52ff. Pictorial evidence can be found in *Stadtspuren: Denkmaeler in Koeln*, ed. by Stadt Koeln 1984, vol. 3: *Koeln: Die romanischen Kirchen im Bild*, p. 155.

[5] Of this there is evidence given later by Richard Doyle, *The Foreign Tour of Messrs Brown, Jones and Robinson. Being the History of What They Saw, And Did, in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy*. London: Bradbury Evans 1854. In one of this volume's cartoons, the English tourists, before 'They "do" the cathedral' (ibid., p. 8), are depicted holding their noses, and the commentary runs: 'The real Eau de Cologne, and its effect upon the noses of three illustrious individuals' (ibid., p. 7).

Reviews

RICHARD GRAVIL, ED. *Master Narratives: Tellers and Telling in the English Novel*. Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2001. ISBN 0-7546-0128-5.

This collection commemorates Bill Ruddick, a well-loved colleague who is remembered affectionately by members of the Charles Lamb Society. Such collections can be assembled in honour either of the living or of the recently dead; Richard Gravil is a past master of both kinds, as exhibited in his part in the compilation of *Coleridge's Imagination*, in memory of Pete Laver, and *The Coleridge Connection*, celebrating the achievements of Thomas McFarland. The present one, however, is assembled not around an author but a theme—one of the most complex in literary studies. For some years now writers on the novel have come to see that one of the most crucial elements in what they are doing relates to the general question of narration. It turns out here to be an excellent topic, attracting a range of contributions from people with a variety of talents and viewpoints.

The central issues have shifted with the years. In the eighteenth century, the narrator usually presented a strong identity with predictable views. But even with Fielding, problems began to arise. W.B. Hutchings produces his own answer to the problem of discovering his actual point of view by inviting the reader to begin by isolating the chapters of authorial comment in *Tom Jones* and to read them as if they were all written by an essayist of the time. In his view the role of the narrator who then emerges corresponds to that of the judge in a courtroom who can exercise his judgment but will be bound to take account of the views of an independent jury, whose views may, if numerically strong enough, prevail against his. This allows for a suitable degree of audience participation. By the next century, things are still more complicated. Mary Wedd, writing on *Old Mortality*, demonstrates how difficult it can be to decide at times in such a novel exactly who is meant to be narrating, given Scott's penchant for assuming different personae—particularly in his footnotes. Other issues again, explored in discussions of *Wuthering Heights* and *Bleak House*, are raised by the presence of at least two firmly indicated narrators. The former novel allows for the creation of what Frederick Burwick terms a 'bifurcated novel', the latter, in Richard Gravil's eyes, encourages Dickens to explore the androgyny of his own creating consciousness.

As time goes by, the possible complexities proliferate, until in Conrad, where, as Gerald Barrett points out, 'the narration of *Lord Jim* is dispersed among a number of narrators, some . . . of doubtful reliability', the reader can also be 'disorientated' by its 'chronological displacements'. In such a textual setting the path becomes open for ingenious readings of the imagery. When, for example, we read that the *Patna* 'unrolled a black ribbon of smoke across the sky' and 'left behind her on the water a white ribbon of foam that vanished at once, like the phantom of a track drawn upon a lifeless sea by the phantom of steamer', Barrett invites us to see not only the figure of a black typewriter ribbon appearing and disappearing but the 'unrolling' of the typewritten paper that is fed through it, so that the scene becomes an allegory of 'the ephemeral and futile nature of all textual production'. Whether Conrad himself had this significance in mind is not considered, or probably thought worth considering: we are now in a country where the reader is king, as his or her own narrator. But of course the implication of what is being said in such an analysis concerning the lack of significance in the universe portends the end of meaningful narrative altogether.

In any case, how far has the author ever been in control of what is about to be narrated, even at a very basic level? Burwick shows how Mary Shelley's *Mathilde* did not see the light of day for many years owing to William Godwin's disapproval of the father-daughter relationship that was being described by his own daughter, while Gravil himself inquires into the degree to which Elizabeth Gaskell's professions of innocence concerning commercial questions should be interpreted as ironically intended on her part. There is also the question of what narrative can properly be said to include. Alan Shelston, looking at some of the illustrations to Dickens and Carroll, shows how carefully these were sometimes placed so that the reader's experience of reading the text would merge with that of looking at what was actually on the page, with correspondingly enhanced effect.

The matter of inclusion can range very widely indeed. Nicola Trott shows how it may extend almost into different dimensions, so that *Middlemarch*, labelled first on its title page as 'A Study of Provincial Life', can equally be characterized by its author in the 'Finale' in terms of the 'home epic'; both of which modes intertwine throughout the narrative. Nor is it confined even there. The range is such that the locally English can merge effortlessly into a panorama of classical references, with the Anglo-classical meshing focused in such linguistic questions as: what exactly do heroism and the heroic mean in a provincial town of nineteenth century England?

Such questions of language can also become even more local and precise. Jane Stabler's 'Perswasion in *Persuasion*' shows how delicately Jane Austen poises herself across the twin meanings involved in distinguishing between a persuasion that involves the power-politics of bending another person to one's will and one that affirms the conviction of sticking by one's own principles. It is one of her most delicate ambiguities: one notes how the double negative of her 'I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals' is further modified by the minimal conviction of being 'at least persuaded that they who are so from Reason & Feeling, must be happiest & safest'. When St Paul said, 'I am persuaded that nothing can separate us . . . ' he was not claiming to have been influenced by another human being: it was a good example of what Coleridge called his 'gentlemanliness'—and certainly in another dimension from his 'we persuade men. . . .' Jane Austen, too, wanted to convey the difference between Anne Elliot's kindly concessions to others and her firmness with herself.

In the end, the most intricate questions of narration merge like these into questions about the organizing consciousness of the original authors, the clues by which access to it may be discovered, and the success or otherwise of the games they may play with their audiences. In another successful essay, Jayne Lewis at once details the pioneering word-games into which Sterne leads the reader of *Tristram Shandy*, yet also insists that his faithfulness to 'the sentimental practices of [his own] historical moment' roots it in the 'inescapably historical space of its own reception'. The double quality raises issues that lurk below many of the discussions in the collection, to surface memorably, so far as more recent novels are concerned, in the last, Michael O'Neill's 'Liking or Disliking: Woolf, Conrad, Lawrence'. This too is a piece about consciousness, where the nature of the modern predicament has demanded more radical treatment since the time when Sterne wrote. The statements of Conrad's narrator, Marlow, must thus be read ironically—though which way the irony is directed provides a part of the problem. The main thrust of O'Neill's essay is concerned with what is left for a narrative consciousness once Conrad's dissection has explicated the loss of value now evident in Western society. Similarly reoriented, Virginia Woolf can work through a marvellously sensitive account of what

goes on in human consciousness in its quest for significance, Lawrence through a view of human characters from which the ‘old stable ego’ has vanished. But in both cases, the attempt to give some kind of substance to such pioneering characters—to Lily Briscoe’s essentially detached and observant persona, or to Ursula Brangwen’s knowledge that she is ‘new and unbegotten’, for example—cannot live easily in the full range of the novel form, so that at the end it is Mr Ramsay or Gerald Crich that stay in the memory, if only because they are hosts to more complex tensions. In this respect the potentialities of the novels in which they appear have carried them well beyond any intentions that their authors may have entertained in creating them.

All in all, the issues raised by this collection are so many that it calls in return for another volume of discussion rather than a brief review. Equally, it could serve well as the core text for a seminar on all these issues in the novel, such as Bill Ruddick enjoyed running. Indeed, it is hard to think of a memorial volume that he himself would have found more fitting.

John Beer