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

The Society holds a series of events each year in London, including lectures, study days, and a Charles Lamb Birthday Luncheon. The Society also publishes the biannual peer-review journal, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*. For further information please contact the Chairman, Nick Powell (nrdpowell@gmail.com).

Postal Address: BM-ELIA, London, WC1N 3XX

Printed by the Stanhope Press, 14 Montague Avenue, South Croydon, CR2 9NH.

Registered Charity Number 803222: a company limited by guarantee.
ISSN 0308-0951

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

Autumn 2015

New Series No. 162

SPECIAL ISSUE: MARY LAMB

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

PUBLISHED BY
THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY

Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-work' (1815)

To the Editor of The British Lady's Magazine

MR. EDITOR, -- In early life I passed eleven years in the exercise of my needle for a livelihood. Will you allow me to address your readers, among whom might be found some of the kind patronesses of my former humble labours, on a subject widely connected with female life – the state of needlework in this country.

To lighten the heavy burthen which many ladies impose upon themselves is one object which I have in view: but, I confess, my strongest motive is to excite attention towards the industrious sisterhood to which I once belonged.

From books I have been informed of the fact, upon which "The British Lady's Magazine" chiefly founds its pretensions, namely, that women have of late been rapidly advancing in intellectual improvement [...] Among the present circle of my acquaintance I am proud to rank many that may truly be called respectable; nor do the female part of them, in their mental attainments, at all disprove the prevailing opinion which you have taken as the basis of your work; yet I affirm that I know not a single family where there is not some essential drawback to its comfort which may be traced to needle-work *done at home*, as the phrase is for all needle-work performed in a family by some of its members, and for which no remuneration is received or expected [...]

Is it too bold an attempt to persuade your readers that it would prove an incalculable addition to general happiness, and the domestic comfort of both sexes, if needle-work were never practised but for a remuneration in money? As nearly, however, as this desirable thing can be effected, so much more nearly will women be upon an equality with men, as far as respects the mere enjoyment of life [...]

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

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Foreword: Mary Lamb

Felicity James

'To know the history of embroidery is to know the history of women,' writes Roszika Parker in her foreword to *The Subversive Stitch*, which shows how embroidery has at once been the measure of a feminine ideal 'and a weapon of resistance to the constraints of femininity'.[1] Mary Lamb's ferocious attack, 'On Needle-work' (1815), clearly registers her awareness of the ways in which the history of embroidery and the condition of women are inextricably bound together. It is a remarkable essay, revealing a politically articulate and angry Mary Lamb, engaged with questions of gender, class, social and economic power. The bicentenary of its composition in late 1814 was marked by stimulating and lively discussion at a day conference in November last year held by the Charles Lamb Society: this issue of the *Bulletin* includes a selection of papers from that day. They seek to contextualise the essay in strikingly different ways. Jane Aaron re-reads the essay in relation to Mary Lamb's life and works, helping us to place it historically and culturally, and to see it as integral to her creative identity; Rosanne Waine's analysis of female needlework culture in the period contextualises the essay from another angle, and shows how Parker's insights into women's work and craft are being revisited by a new generation of critics. Samantha Matthews, tracing the figure of the needle-worker, spinner or tailor through the work both of Charles and Mary, allows us to see the essay in the context of Charles Lamb's critique of work, as both siblings probe the nature of labour, while Tom Lockwood gives a different account of relationship mediated through text, showing how the careful physical preservation of Mary's essay itself by Charles, and its inclusion in his book collection, might yield its own insights, bibliographical and biographical. Jocelynne Scutt also explores the relationship of the siblings as articulated through the figure of the tailor – but suggests a darker reading of household tension, rivalry and disrespect. As part of this special issue of the Bulletin dedicated to Mary Lamb's work, we are also pleased to include an essay by a long-standing contributor and scholar of the Lambs, the late Margareta Eugenius Rydbeck, tracing the allusions to 'cousin Bridget' in the Elia essays and demonstrating the crucial importance of Mary to the work of her brother. Taken together, these articles reflect a very welcome recent rise of interest in Mary Lamb and her works, and show how, two hundred years after its publication, 'On Needle-work' continues to yield surprising critical insights.

University of Leicester

[1] Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London & New York, 2010).

'Positive Leisure': Time and Play in Mary Lamb's Writings

Jane Aaron

According to Henry Crabb Robinson in his diary entry for 11 December 1814, the writing of the essay 'On Needle-work' cost Mary Lamb dear. In his account of the visit he had paid to her that day he records that 'she had undergone great fatigue from writing an article about needlework for the new *Ladies' British Magazine*. She spoke of writing as a most painful occupation, which only necessity could make her attempt.'[1] By 1814, the Lambs were no longer in quite such straitened circumstances as they had been a decade earlier when Mary wrote her books for children, so financial necessity was not by now so strong a driver. Why, then, did Mary Lamb feel it so imperative that she write this essay?

First and foremost, of course, she did so to draw attention to the worsening labour conditions of those forced by economic necessity – and the dearth of other respectable employment opportunities for women – to make a living through sewing, women to whose overstocked ranks she had herself once belonged. She opens her essay with the frank statement that 'In early life I passed eleven years in the exercise of my needle for a livelihood'.[2] Her correspondence reveals that since then she had become increasingly concerned about the dire situation of needlewomen in the early nineteenth century, a period during which, according to another contemporary commentator, 'thousands of young females of respectable parents' were 'necessitated by the pecuniary misfortunes of their parents to earn a livelihood by needlework,' only to find their employment so precarious and their profit by it so small that they were driven through 'sheer want' to resort 'to prostitution and its concomitants, misery, disease and death.'[3] In the autumn of 1812 Mary wrote begging letters to her friends asking them if they could find work for one 'very deserving' but insufficiently employed mantua-maker of her acquaintance, identified by Edwin W. Marrs in his notes to her correspondence as Martha Fricker, her friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge's sister-in-law.[4]

Now, with this 1815 essay, Mary writes to propose to the presumably more affluent readers of the *British Lady's Magazine and Monthly Miscellany* that they help to alleviate the crisis in the needlework market by limiting the hours they themselves devote to sewing and instead pay self-supporting workers for all their

[1] Henry Crabb Robinson's diaries, 11 December 1814, quoted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed., E.V. Lucas, 7 vols (London, 1903), I, 452-3.

[2] Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-work', *British Lady's Magazine and Monthly Miscellany*, 1 April, 1815; *Works*, I, 176.

[3] J. R. Pickmore, 'An Address to the Public on the propriety of Midwives, instead of Surgeons, practising Midwifery', *Pamphleteer*, 28 (1827), 115-16; quoted in Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (London, 1981), 315.

[4] Mary Lamb to Mrs John Dyer Collier, Autumn 1812, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, 3 vols (Ithaca and London, 1978), III, 86-7.

families' sewing needs. The central argument of 'On Needle-work' is that through doing so the British lady would not only ease the situation of struggling needlewomen like Martha Fricker but also at the same time improve their own quality of life. What women of all classes need for 'the mere enjoyment of life', Mary argues, is time, time they can call their own. Were those women 'who do not depend on themselves for a subsistence' to employ seamstresses rather than ply their own needles, they would be buying time, both for themselves and for the working needlewoman enabled by the resulting improvement in the market to charge more and therefore work less desperately long hours. 'On Needle-work' attempts to persuade its readers that what every woman needs is not so much 'a room of her own' as 'an hour of her own'.

Initially the essay's central aim is presented with some trepidation. Addressing the magazine's editor, Mary Lamb asks, 'Is it too bold an attempt to persuade your readers that it would prove an incalculable addition to general happiness [...] if needle-work were never practised but for a remuneration in money?' Then with increasing confidence she proceeds to make her case, arguing that 'as nearly [...] as this desirable thing can be effected, so much more will women be upon an equality with men'. For 'as far as respects the mere enjoyment of life':

> I believe it is every woman's opinion that the condition of men is far superior to her own. 'They can do what they like,' we say. Do not these words generally mean, they have time to seek out whatever amusements suit their tastes? We dare not tell them we have no time to do this; for, if they should ask in what manner we dispose of our time, we should blush to enter upon a detail of the minutiæ which compose the sum of a woman's daily employment. Nay, many a lady who allows not herself one quarter of an hour's positive leisure during her waking hours, considers her own husband as the most industrious of men, if he steadily pursue his occupation till the hour of dinner, and will be perpetually lamenting her own idleness.
>
> *Real business* and *real leisure* make up the portions of men's time – two sources of happiness which we certainly partake of in a very inferior degree.[5]

Needlework is the opium of the female masses, according to Mary Lamb, an occupational entrapment which keeps women enchained, caught up in minutiae, whether they are moneyed or not. Some of its more ornamental branches, such as 'knotting, netting, carpet working, and the like ingenious pursuits' are 'so long in the operation, that purchasing the labour has seldom been thought good economy,' and yet for generations they have still 'been found to chain down the great to a self-imposed slavery, from which they considerately, or haughtily, excuse the needy.' At the close of her essay she accepts that there may well be certain female members of the moneyed classes who do positively enjoy sewing; she has no wish to take a treasured pastime from them, but suggests that if such be the case, and '*saving* be no object', 'it might be a laudable scruple of conscience [...] if such a lady [...] 'were to

[5] Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-work', *Works*, I, 177.

give the money so saved to poor needle-women [...] from whom she has borrowed these shares of pleasurable labour.'[6] The main thrust of her argument, however, is to enlighten her readers as to the manner in which needlework operates within a socially constructed gender-role system. Women of all classes have been taught to fill their time with the domestic cult of the needle, and consequently denied the opportunity to cultivate their minds. Though there are certain activities, such as listening or talking, in which one can participate while still at the same time sewing, reading is not one of them. 'Needlework and intellectual improvement are naturally in a state of warfare,' Mary Lamb says.[7]

Her use of the term 'warfare' here is arresting. Needlework is represented as a site of struggle between the mind and the body, both seeking to grow and nourish themselves. Through her needlework a woman with no other means earned her daily bread, and Mary had herself been in that position. But through reading she feeds her brain, and according to her brother's correspondence, even when Mary was sewing for economic gain, books were always her necessary mental sustenance. After Mary had been placed in a private nursing home in Islington following her mother's death, Lamb wrote to Coleridge in 1796 that 'The people of the house [...] love her and she loves them, and makes herself very useful to them.' That is, she was sewing for them, and they were charging him less for her keep because she was doing so. But he is concerned to supply Mary's own needs: 'I am rather at a loss sometimes for books for her, our reading is somewhat confined, and we have nearly exhausted our London library. She has her hands too full of work [i.e. needlework] to read much, but a little she must read; for reading was her daily bread.'[8]

A reference in one of the Elia essays would also appear to refer to his recollection of that there had been a struggle between needlework and books in Mary's earlier life:

> How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn out appearance [...] of an old 'Circulating Library' Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight! – of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents![9]

Such hours were indeed 'ill spared from sleep' as far as Mary Lamb was concerned: sleep deprivation has recently been categorized as a particularly dangerous condition for those like Mary, most probably afflicted with a bipolar or manic depressive disorder.[10] Francis Mark Mondimore, in his recent comprehensive study *Bipolar Disorder* warns that 'Periods of sleep deprivation precipitate hypomanic and

[6] Ibid., 180.
[7] Ibid., 176.
[8] Charles Lamb to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 28 October 1796, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed., Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., 3 vols (Ithaca and London, 1975), I, 56-7.
[9] Charles Lamb, 'Detached thoughts on books and reading', *London Magazine*, July 1822, *Works*, II, 173.
[10] See, for example, Winifred F. Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb: 1775-1802* (London and Basingstoke, 1982), 236 and 370 n3.

manic symptoms [...] staying up late for the bipolar individual is downright dangerous.'[11] Of course in September 1796, when she suffered the violent hypomanic episode which resulted in the death of her mother, the fact that she was at the time caring day and night for the needs of the bed-ridden Mrs Lamb was, ironically enough, the main cause of Mary's sleep deprivation. In one of his early grief-stricken letters to Coleridge describing the incident, Charles tells his friend of Mary's devoted care of their mother, attributing her breakdown in part to the fact that 'every act of duty & of love she could pay, every kindness (& I speak true, when I say to the hurting of her health, & most probably in great part to the derangement of her senses) thro' a long course of infirmities & sickness, she could shew her, she ever did.'[12] But the perpetual war for time between Mary's need to read and the requirement that she should through her needle contribute to the family's upkeep must also during those years have habitually taken its toll of hours needed for sleep.

Mary still read, however, as of necessity. For both the Lambs, reading was a route of escape from the pressures of their daily lives: 'I love to lose myself in other men's minds', Charles says in 'Detached thoughts on books and reading'.[13] The manner in which reading provided for both brother and sister an opportunity to step out from their own difficult existences into the alternative world of 'other men's minds' was in itself a release and an enhancement, in addition to the intellectual improvement acquired from the book. Another similar source of mental sustenance and psychological release for both of them was the theatre; attending a play also allowed them to think and feel outside the confinement of their daily struggles. Charles was soon to protest about the fact that contemporary theatre-goers did not, in his opinion, pay sufficient heed to this therapeutic aspect of theatre-going. His essay, 'On the artificial comedy of the last century', includes a complaint against the manner in which the sparkling genre of late eighteenth-century theatrical satire has suffered a lapse in popularity by the 1820s; audiences appear to have lost the capacity to enter into the life of the play as a necessary escape from the stresses of the diurnal round:

> We carry our firesides concerns to the theatre with us. We do not go thither, like our ancestors, to escape from the pressure of reality, so much as to confirm our experience of it [...] I confess for myself that [...] I am glad [...] now and then, for a dreamwhile or so, to imagine a world with no meddling restrictions [...] I come back to my cage and my restraint the fresher and more healthy for it. I wear my shackles more contentedly for having respired the breath of an imaginary freedom.[14]

And we know, of course, that Mary shared her brother's passion for the theatre. 'There is nothing in the world so charming as going to a play,' says one of her child narrators in *Mrs Leicester's School*.[15] Gratifying a taste for the theatre requires time

[11] Francis Mark Mondimore, *Bipolar Disorder* (Baltimore, 1999; new edn. 2014), 224.
[12] Charles Lamb to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 17 October 1796; *Letters*, ed Marrs, I, 52.
[13] *Works*, II, 173.
[14] Charles Lamb, 'On the artificial comedy of the last century', *London Magazine*, April 1822, *Works*, II, 141 and 142.
[15] Mary Lamb, 'Emily Barton', *Mrs Leicester's School* (1809), *Works*, III, 317.

and money, however, both of which were in short supply for the needle-woman. But the opportunity the theatre offered for 'breathing an imaginary freedom' was as necessary for Mary as for her brother, not only for the sake of the experience itself and the immediate release it provided from the 'shackles' of her stressful life, but also for the central idea bodied forth on the theatrical stage, the idea of life as imaginative play.

In her correspondence Mary Lamb reveals she that she used dramatic devices of imaginative play in order to relieve her own psychological stress. In one letter of March 1806 to her friend Sarah Stoddart, for example, she presents such play as the happy antidote to the mental trap into which she and her brother sometimes fell, when the despondent anxious state of one of them pulled the other down, and then vice versa. 'I have no power over Charles' she says:

> he will do – what he will do. But I ought to have some little influence over myself. And therefore I am most manfully resolving to turn over a new leaf with my own mind. Your visit to us [...] has been of great use to me; I set you up in my fancy, as a kind of thing that takes an interest in my concerns, and I hear you talking to me, and arguing the matter very learnedly when I give way to despondency. You shall hear a good account of me, and of the progress I make in altering my fretful temper to a calm & quiet one. [...] all my whole thoughts shall be to change myself into just such a chearful soul as you would be.[16]

The imagined voice of her friend has an important role to play in this psychological drama; Sarah Stoddart, or rather the imagined Sarah Stoddart, is here acting the role of the good counsellor or psychotherapist, asking the right questions, and analysing the responses pertinently. A century before Freud, Mary had stumbled upon a 'talking cure' through which she was able to re-create an imaginary therapeutic dialogue. Her considerable success in this respect meant that she was soon in a position to start helping others, not least Sarah herself. In December 1807, as Sarah starts to get anxious about her forthcoming marriage to William Hazlitt, Mary is advising her to 'Endeavour to keep your mind as easy as you can. You ought to begin the world with a good stock of health & spirits; it is quite as necessary as ready money for setting out.'[17]

What I want to draw attention to here is Mary's acute awareness of the importance and difficulty, yet also the possibility, of achieving personal mood control through the conscious exercise of mental faculties. In order to do so effectively, though, the immediate necessity is not so much money itself as what money can buy – time, time to think through and balance the state of the mind. Mary's own mental health, her capacity for living outside an asylum to the extent which she managed to do, depended on that process. Again, today's psychiatrists are in accord with her on the importance of mental exercise as a means of achieving mood control: Dr Mondimore emphasizes the extent to which cognitive behaviour therapy can aid the bipolar individual, because it can control underlying stress

[16] Mary Lamb to Sarah Stoddart, March 14, 1806, *Letters*, II, 220-21.
[17] Mary Lamb to Sarah Stoddart, 21 December 1807, ibid, 264.

which might trigger an attack.[18] But to husband this stock of good mental health one also needs free time, and the spacious mental capacity within which the mind can play. 'Positive leisure' is a primary necessity if one is to nurture a mind at ease, released from its customary shackles and capable of healing its wounds.

In her published writings, Mary strove to pass on to her readers, as she did to her friends in her correspondence, the hard lessons her life had taught her as to the importance of endeavouring to ease psychological stress and build up a 'good stock' of mental health. Her one work of fiction, *Mrs Leicester's School* (1809), depicts numerous examples of young females struggling with psychological pain, and finding or being shown ways in which to regain their mental balance. Therapeutic processes embedded within social relations are repeatedly represented within this collection of young life stories, narrated by a group of girls who encounter one another as new inmates of Mrs Leicester's boarding school, to which they have been sent for various reasons, many of them unhappy ones. The narrative frame of the book in itself depicts therapy at work: its opening 'Dedication to the Young Ladies at Amwell School' is written by the school's assistant teacher who, tasked with helping the girls to settle into their new environment, hits upon the happy idea of setting up what today we would call a therapeutic group, with herself acting as its amanuensis. Addressing the girls, she recalls to them their first arrival at the new school, when '*during our first solemn silence, which, you may remember, was only broken by my repeated requests that you would make a smaller, and still smaller circle,*' the notion came to her that each member of the circle might ease her own and her fellows' transition into this new communal way of life by relating to one another '*some little anecdote of your own lives*' so that '*you will not then look so unsociably upon each other*'.[19]

Through the use of the 'talking cure' conducted in small group therapeutic sessions, the teacher socializes her pupils by guiding them towards sharing their stories with one another. What follows in the body of the book is a series of the boarders' '*biographical conversations*', inscribed by their amanuensis, who in the 'Dedication' hopes that '*you will find I have executed the office with a tolerably faithful pen, as you know I took notes each day during those conversations.*'[20] In many of the individual cases, as the stories unfold, it also becomes clear that the girls have previously, before they arrived at the school, been helped to endure personal traumas by sympathetic encounters with other guides – doctors, relatives or friends – who encouraged them to tell their tales, entered into their afflictions, and acted as healers. These healers frequently function through helping the young girl to recognize, and accommodate herself to, the role in which the circumstances of her life has placed her.

In the first narrative, 'Elizabeth Villiers: The Sailor Uncle', for example, Elizabeth describes her difficulty in relinquishing a living tie with her dead mother: she is one of two motherless girls at Mrs Leicester's school – Mary Lamb is clearly using this fictional framework in part to tell her own story too. Elizabeth takes all her concerns to her mother's grave and virtually lives her life in the cemetery. But

[18] Mondimore, *Bipolar Disorder*, 143.
[19] Mary Lamb, 'Dedication to the Young Ladies at Amwell School', *Mrs Leicester's School* (1809), *Works*, III, 274; the text italicises.
[20] Ibid., 273.

she's rescued from this entrapment in the past by her mother's brother, the sailor uncle who teaches her how to be more sociable with the living, and how to become a woman:

> If ever in my life I shall have any proper sense of what is excellent or becoming in the womanly character, I owe it to these lessons of my rough unpolished uncle; for in telling me what my mother would have made me, he taught me what to wish to be [...] he would explain to me the meaning of all the words he used, such as grace and elegance, modest diffidence and affectation, pointing out instances of what he meant by those words, in the manners of the ladies and their young daughters who came to our church.[21]

Mary Lamb is commenting on the formation of gender identity here, and interestingly she is presenting it as performative and intentional, not instinctive; it is a taught act, anticipating the ideas of late twentieth-century gender theorists such as Judith Butler. Gendered behaviour, according to Butler, is '*a corporeal style*, an "act"'; it is 'an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.'[22] Through copying the behaviour of the females she encounters, under the instructions of her uncle, the motherless Elizabeth learns how to 'act' a woman's part.

Furthermore, in the tales of *Mrs Leicester's School*, social rank is also presented as very much performative, a matter of a stylized repetition of acts. Charlotte Wilmot was born into privilege and initially behaved accordingly: in her tale 'The Merchant's Daughter' she describes how 'I looked down on all my young companions as my inferiors; but I chiefly assumed airs of superiority over Maria Hartley, whose father was a clerk in my father's counting-house.' But her father's business ran into such difficulties that soon he 'was on the brink of ruin [...] and all my grandeur was at an end.' At this juncture, out of the kindness of his heart, the former clerk, Mr Hartley, 'took me home to his own house'. Charlotte is convinced that she will now in her penniless state be treated by others with the scorn with which she once treated them, and is amazed when Maria still responds to her 'in the most respectful manner' and of her own volition acts the lady's maid to the hapless former rich girl, helping her to dress and asking her ' "Is this the way you like to wear this, miss Wilmot?" [...] as she gave me every fresh article to put on.' Maria's behaviour is a revelation to Charlotte, and an education into the barbarities of her own former behaviour: 'The slights I expected to receive from Maria, would not have distressed me more, than the delicacy of her behaviour did. I hung down my head with shame and anguish.'[23] Charlotte learns that social rank is arbitrary and in effect a play – a matter of performing superiority and inferiority; it is circumstantial, merely, not an essential identity.

In a further tale, Ann Withers is a changeling, changed by her mother in infancy from a servant's child to an aristocrat's; her biological mother, when she was

[21] 'Elizabeth Villiers: The Sailor Uncle', ibid, 281.
[22] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London:, 1990), 139 and 140; the text italicises.
[23] 'Charlotte Wilmot: The Merchant's Daughter', *Works*, III, 325 and 326.

wet-nursing her mistress's child, 'wept over me to think she was obliged to leave me in the charge of a careless girl, debarred from my own natural food, while she was nursing another person's child.' In order to maintain her natural bond with her own infant, Ann's mother simply switched the babies' clothing, dressing her own child in 'the laced cap and the fine cambric robe of the little Harriot', her employer's daughter, before hastily dressing Harriet 'in my coarse raiment'. The change once made, the rest of the household notice no difference: 'The servants still continued to pay their compliments to the baby in the same form as usual, saying, How like it is to its papa!' Rank here is not a matter of blood or essential identity but purely a matter of dress, of dressing up in the various differentiated roles of the social hierarchies. Once accepted in her new role, Ann is taught by the behaviour towards her of her domestic circle how to play her privileged role in the charade, until suddenly, through another play, the charade is exposed. Having learnt of her own history through her friendship with the nurse's supposed daughter, that is, the real Miss Harriot, Ann unthinkingly creates a drama out of it, to entertain the aristocratic parents. The nurse is so shocked to see her daughter acting the nurse's part and swapping the babies' clothes that she breaks down and confesses all to her employers. Consequently, Ann loses her former identity, 'and all my rank and consequence in the world fled from me for ever.[24] It is because she has much difficulty, understandably, in accepting the transition that she arrives as a boarder in Mrs Leicester's school.

These interpretations of gender and rank as play were, I suggest, fundamental to Mary's thinking. They are central to her fiction and also feature large in her correspondence. In her two letters to Sarah Stoddart, for example, the arbitrariness of rank is mockingly referred to as theatre, as play-acting. In 1805 Sarah's older brother decided his sister was insufficiently ladylike, and charged Mary with the task of amending her friend's manners. She tells Sarah:

> Your brother gave me most unlimited orders to direct, & govern you [...] I am making all the proper enquiries against the time of the newest & most approved modes (being myself mainly ignorant in these points) of etiquette & nicely correct maidenly manners. But to speak seriously I mean when we meet that we will lay our heads together & consult & contrive the best way of making the best girl in the world the fine Lady her brother wishes to see her, & believe me Sarah it is not so difficult a matter as one is sometimes apt to imagine. I have observed many a demure Lady who passes muster admirably well who I think we could easily learn to imitate in a week or two.[25]

Rank and gender roles are here once again presented as theatre, a game or play. But in order to play that game of life, participants again need time, time to study behaviour patterns – at least 'a week or two' – and time to practice and perfect their imitative acts.

This emphasis on time returns us once again to 'On Needlework'. 'Real leisure', 'positive leisure' is necessary to fulfil the work of understanding the

[24] 'Ann Withers: The Changeling', ibid, 290-1 and 294.
[25] Mary Lamb to Sarah Stoddart, November 1805, *Letters*, II, 184.

conditions under which one lives, adapting oneself as far as possible to them. Absorption in needlework, as required of the nineteenth-century 'proper lady' as well as the sweated seamstress, prevents that kind of time-consuming study. It is also in many cases a self-enclosing act, which does not allow that type of social interchange so necessary to psychological health, according to the repeated thematic patterns of *Mrs Leicester's School*.

In one other tale from that collection, needlework is roundly blamed for one child's breakdown, and its effects are presented as entirely negative. Before arriving at the school, Margaret Green had suffered what would today be termed a nervous breakdown, and it was an obsession with needlework – not her own obsession but that of those who should have been her carers – which was the original cause of her stress and alienation. When Margaret's mother, in straitened circumstances, found work as a housekeeper, her employer, Mrs Beresford, permitted her to keep her child with her in the new household. The new mistress allowed the mother little time, however, to care for that child: 'Mrs Beresford [...] had been remarkably fond of needle-work, and her conversation with my mother was generally the history of some pieces of work she had formerly done [...] All day long my mother used to sit at the frame, talking of the shades of the worsted.' Obsessed by needlework, the employer ignored her housekeeper's child, and in order to satisfy her new job's requirements, the mother similarly neglected her offspring:

> My mother, following the example of her patroness, had almost wholly discontinued talking to me. I scarcely ever heard a word addressed to me from morning to night. If it were not for the old servants saying 'Good morning to you, miss Margaret,' as they passed me in the long passages, I should have been the greatest part of the day in as perfect a solitude as Robinson Crusoe. It must have been because I was never spoken to at all, that I forgot what was right and what was wrong.[26]

Left to her own devices, Margaret manages to find her way to a neglected library, where she discovers books on Mahometanism. Her perusal of them persuades her that she must herself be a Mahometan, and she becomes anxious to evangelize her new-found creed: 'I awoke my mother out of a sound sleep, and begged she would be so kind as to become a Mahometan. She was very much alarmed, for she thought I was delirious.' Judging her child to be mad, the mother, without inquiring further into the sources of this strange affliction, sends for a doctor, and it is he, the stranger, who discovers 'by several questions that he put to me, that I had read myself into a fever.' Having diagnosed, in effect, through the 'talking cure' the cause of her strange symptoms, the doctor then turns to his wife: 'I heard him very formally ask her advice what was good for a Mahometan fever [...] She studied a little while, and then she said, A ride to Harlow fair would not be amiss.' Doctor and wife together thus gently and with humour ease Margaret out of her alienated state through social interaction and conversation; during the ride 'in answer to their questions I was relating to them the solitary manner in which I had passed my time'. Then the fair itself completes her re-conversion: 'O what a cheerful

[26] 'Margaret Green: The Young Mahometan', *Works*, III, 306 and 308.

sight it was to me, to see so many happy faces assembled together [...] Ishmael, Mahomet, and the narrow bridge, vanished out of my head in an instant.'[27] The doctor affects the cure through returning the child to human sociability, to life at large.

But that shared obsession with needlework had enclosed both Mrs Beresford, the upper-class lady, and her servant, Margaret's mother, away in a private entrapment, out of the public world, out of the world of language and learning, and even out of the world of natural feeling. Like the women Mary Lamb addressed in her essay 'On Needle-work', there was no material necessity for their self-imprisonment, or not in Mrs Beresford's case, at any rate. She had swallowed the opium of the female masses and become addicted to it. To focus all day long on the shades of threads is, from Mary Lamb's point of view, to squander human energies and capacities urgently needed in order to arrive at that 'mere enjoyment of life' which she herself, with much effort, succeeded, against the odds at times, in achieving. In order to live fully each and every individual must have 'positive leisure', the time to read, to observe the behaviours of others, and share with them his or her more alienating experiences. This freedom for full reflection and communication Mary found in later life in her relationship with her brother, after his care had ensured her partial release from needlework and 'the minutiæ which compose the sum of a woman's daily employment'. It is to that escape that we are indebted for her writings, writings in which she strove to persuade others, and other women and girls in particular, of the necessity of nurturing and protecting their intellectual life and mental balance through ensuring for themselves at least some hours of 'positive leisure' – a message as relevant today as it was in the Lambs' era.

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[27] Ibid., 309 and 310.

'On Needle-work': Reassessing the Culture of Schoolgirl Samplers

Rosanne Waine

Mary Lamb spent the majority of her early adult life as a home seamstress and mantua maker, in order to support her impoverished family and dependent parents. Mary's position was by no means a unique one. At this point in history, the metropolitan centres of Europe witnessed an influx of lower class women struggling to eek out a living through disparate categories of 'home work', with needlework and textile trades forming a dominant part of female home industry. Competition was rife in the major cities; working conditions were poor, and wages often insubstantial.[1]

Understandably, Mary's unhappy relationship with the needle intensified during this period of subsistence work, influencing her criticism of British needlework culture in her essay for *The British Lady's Magazine*, 'On Needle-work' (1815).[2] It is an essay that speaks from hard-lived experience and Mary's tone strays often into the world-weary, 'a curious amalgam of extreme sincerity and dismissive sarcasm'.[3] As has been argued by Rozsika Parker, Lamb's poor opinion of needlework culture fell within a well-established contemporary discourse that saw needlework alternatively as 'the major cause of women's unhappiness' or 'their sole solace' in life.[4] For Mary, the former significantly outweighed the latter, and she maintained in her essay that 'Needlework and intellectual improvement are naturally in a state of warfare.'[5] According to Lamb biographer Sarah Burton, 'On Needle-work' suggests that Mary Lamb believed needlework to be 'an instrument of oppression' for middle and upper class women, a group who were culturally compelled to 'work' despite a distinct lack of financial remuneration for their efforts.[6]

'On Needle-work' places considerable emphasis upon the self-supporting nature of needlework within the lives of lower class women, while simultaneously stating that 'Workwomen of every description were never in so much distress for want of employment.'[7] Mary Lamb's argument throughout 'On Needle-work' is that one of the crucial underlying causes of this 'distress' lay with the working fingers of middle and upper class ladies, whose plying of the needle as a matter of feminine duty and 'good economy' sapped at the livelihoods of the needle's true

[1] Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman* (London, 2002), 187-91.
[2] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 8 vols (London, 1912), I, 204-10.
[3] Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London & New York, 2010), 149.
[4] Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 148.
[5] Lucas, *Works* I, 205.
[6] Sarah Burton, *A Double Life: A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London, 2003), 40.
[7] Lucas, *Works*, I, 205.

dependents.[8] Such dependents were those women living lower down Britain's social ladder, who practiced needlework for financial gain rather than for leisure or thrift. These women were 'the corset-maker, the milliner, the dress-maker, the plain-worker, the embroidress, and all the numerous classifications of females supporting themselves by *needle-work*...'[9] They were the 'industrious sisterhood' to whom Mary had once belonged, and whom she wished in later years to defend.[10]

Within this contextual discussion of women's needlework culture, Mary Lamb's essay shall be viewed in relation to the needlework education delivered to girls of various class backgrounds across the long eighteenth century. Needlework was an important aspect of early modern female education, as the ability to sew with the needle, or spin with the distaff, enabled women to gain not only a degree of financial independence, but also a reputation for virtuous industry.[11] The type of needlework she would learn and the place in which she would learn it would be affected by her position in the social hierarchy, dictating how her needlework skills would be utilised later in life.[12]

The following discussion shall focus upon one aspect of needlework education in particular: the schoolgirl sampler. The first section of this paper shall give an overview of the economic and social functions which propagated sampler-making in schools, and how such functions altered depending upon the class of the pupil. The second section shall make a case study of two samplers that go against the typical aesthetic mode of traditional sampler design, with a discussion of the academic interests or personal motivations of their makers. The aim of this concluding section shall be to highlight the discursive potential inherent within the practice of sampler-making.[13]

This last point stems from my assertion that while Mary Lamb's antipathy regarding British needlework culture is well justified within its context, her criticism of the craft does not take into account its discursive nuances. The result is a general under appreciation of how the craft could be manipulated by an individual to communicate or enhance a particular worldview.

~ The Sampler in Female Education ~

The word 'sampler' is derived from the Latin *exemplum*, meaning 'anything selected as a model for imitation- a pattern- an example', and was defined by Dr. Samuel Johnson in the 1799 edition of *A Dictionary of the English Language* as 'A pattern of work; a piece worked by young girls for improvement.'[14] In physical terms, by the

[8] Lucas, *Works*, I, 209-10.
[9] Lucas, *Works*, I, 207.
[10] Lucas, *Works*, I, 205.
[11] Stacey Shimizu, ' The Pattern of Perfect Womanhood: Feminine Virtue, Pattern Books and the Fiction of the Clothworking Woman' in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500-1800*, ed. Barbara J. Whitehead (London, 1999), 75-100 (77).
[12] Catherine Amoroso Leslie, *Needlework Through History: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, 2007), 30.
[13] A direct response to: Maureen Daly Goggin, 'An "Essamplaire Essai" on the Rhetoricity of Needlework Sampler-Making: A Contribution to Theorizing and Historicizing Rhetorical Praxis', *Rhetoric Review*, 21:4 (2002), 309-338 (310).
[14] Averil Colby, *Samplers* (London, 1964), 17; Qtd. in Glee F. Krueger, *A Gallery of American Samplers: The Theodore H. Kapnek Collection* (New York, 1984), 8.

turn of the nineteenth century a typical sampler consisted of a square or rectangular piece of linen, cotton or wool, worked in silk, cotton or woolen embroidery. The design was often a combination of textual and pictorial elements, and bore the name of the maker, the place it was made, and the date it was completed. Though samplers were produced in both the home and the schoolhouse, many samplers indicate a particular school, religious or charitable institution as their place of origin. The functional nature of samplers made them a versatile teaching tool, employed by young women across the class spectrum for the acquisition of plain-stitch as well as fancywork techniques. By combining these two elements of stitchery, the sampler proved to have a dual purpose for young needlewomen of both high and low birth. It was at once decorative and functional, aesthetically pleasing and practical. In other words, the sampler could be seen as something of a class leveler in terms of functionality and visual literacy, as it encompassed needlework skills applicable to disparate forms of household napery, dress, and subsistence work.

Samplers were mainly created by girls of the middle and upper classes, their greater access to various educational environments making them natural recipients of the craft. Samplers worked by the poor do not appear in comparable numbers until the systematic establishment of basic schooling for the lower classes at the turn of the eighteenth century. Unsurprisingly, the samplers of the leisured and the samplers of the poor heavily reflect the pupils' intended functions within society. Throughout much of the period under discussion, a significant proportion of lower class women gained an informal education in housewifery and plain-work from their access to a close 'network' of female relations within the domestic environment.[15] Formal education for lower class girls did not become widespread until the advent of the charity school movement from the late seventeenth century onwards, a process spearheaded by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (est. 1698).[16] While reading, writing and religious instruction were key components within the charity school curriculums, there was also a concerted effort to train pupils in a trade appropriate to their class. For lower class women this might be a cottage industry or skills applicable to domestic service. Needlework was therefore an integral component of the charity school curriculum, as with the orphanages, asylums, and hospital schools established throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century.[17]

The emphasis on practical skills for useful employment included tasks such as spinning, knitting, plaiting and exercises in repair and fancywork. The production of marking, darning and white work samplers was subsequently common, these being the skills most likely to be needed throughout a woman's role as textile worker, domestic or wife. To ensure a decent work ethic, some schools offered monetary or material incentives to students who achieved the highest standards. A school in early eighteenth-century Oswestry, for example, offered the following: 'A

[15] Deborah Simonton, *A History Of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (London & New York, 1998), 64.
[16] For overview see M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge, 1938).
[17] For an overview of samplers created in lower class institutions see: Rebecca Scott, *Samplers* (Oxford, 2009), 73-91; Witney Antiques, *Stitched in Adversity: Samplers of the Poor* (Witney, 2006).

Shift is hung up in the School for the best Spinner, a Head-Dress for the best Sewer, a Pair of Stockings for the best Knitter, a Bible for the best reader, and a Copy-Book for the best Writer...'[18] Additionally, it was encouraged that girls bring in work from home to complete during school hours, so as not to financially disadvantage a household through a child's absence.[19]

By the early nineteenth century, needlework exercises had been officially integrated into the teaching manuals and specimen books of the National Society (est. 1812) and the British and Foreign School Society (est. 1814), the modern successors of the dwindling SPCK charity school movement.[20] The centrality of needlework exercises within the curriculums of these new institutions is highlighted by an appraisal of the guidelines drawn up for BFSS schoolrooms, in which 'the seat board should be 5 or 6 inches from the inner edge of the deskboard, to allow girls freedom to work.'[21]

Clearly, instilling skills of subsistence and removing potential financial burdens from a community were abiding themes within the administration of lower class schools across the early modern period. In contrast, the daughters of the middle and upper classes were being formally trained to produce needlework for reasons of polite, feminine accomplishment. In 'On Needle-work', Mary Lamb openly criticizes the mentality that formed the basis of middle and upper class female learning during this period. Lamb focuses in particular upon the gendered double standard inherent within leisured needlework tuition: that a middle or upper class schoolgirl should be required to 'learn a trade, from which she can never expect to reap any profit', in order to satisfy a patriarchal social convention and embody 'the condition of a happy English wife'.[22] It is certainly the case that alongside practical skills such as needlework, middle and upper class female education was overwhelmingly geared towards the development of a domestic rather than intellectual character. As stated by Roy Porter, 'Polite society did not take girls' minds very seriously.' [23]

It was not unusual for girls of the leisured classes to be instructed in the family home or in the homes of wealthier relatives, rather than in the schoolhouse.[24] According to historian Anthony Fletcher, the more aristocratic a family the less likely it was 'to entrust their female offspring to a public establishment, with the uncertainties of tuition by a schoolmistress.' However, Fletcher also observes that across the middle and upper classes, parents trained their girls 'through a great

[18] *An Account of the Workhouses in Great Britain in the Year 1732* (1786, 3rd edit.), 48. Qtd in Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women's Education Through Twelve Centuries* (London, 1929), 311.
[19] Sarah Trimmer, *Reflections Upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools* (London, 1792), 21-2.
[20] For an example of a 'specimen book' see: National Model Female School, *Simple Directions in Needle-work and Cutting Out Intended for the Use of the National Female Schools of Ireland to Which Are Added Specimens of Work Executed by the Pupils of the National Model Female School* (Dublin, 1835).
[21] British and Foreign School Society, *Manual of the System of the British and Foreign School Society of London, for the Teaching of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needle-work, in the Elementary Schools* (London, 1816), 35.
[22] Lucas, *Works*, I, 208.
[23] Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1991), 165.
[24] Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760: A Social History* (London, 1994), 167.

mixture of strategies, from hiring a governess, or calling in visiting masters, to using available local schooling and sending girls away for short periods to boarding schools.'[25] As a result, the education on offer to middle and upper class girls was highly variable across the early modern period, both in terms of rigor and academic content. How seriously a woman's intellectual development was taken depended very much upon her individual circumstances.

In regards to needlework tuition, however, the approach was generally uniform across various educational environments. Within middle and upper class schools in particular, the sampler acted as the first in a long line of needlework exercises, undertaken to teach pupils the rudiments of feminine duty and household economy. Typically, these needlework exercises would grow progressively more difficult as the pupil advanced in age and skill, beginning perhaps with a simple band sampler of coloured silks, moving to a finer lace, cutwork or white work sampler, to an embroidered cabinet, casket, or jewellery box, and lastly to a decorative panel, embroidered picture, or section of tapestry.[26] The emphasis of their tuition was upon domestic beautification, though practical stitchery applicable to household management was also attained as a result of this method.

With the introduction of textual and numerical elements at the start of the long eighteenth century, such as alphabets, calendars, and multiplication tables, samplers developed into a method of reinforcing standards of basic literacy and mental arithmetic among their makers. Given that middle and upper class women were generally put in charge of the household accounts by their husbands upon marriage, the ability to read, write, and understand basic mathematics would be beneficial for a leisured woman in her new 'managerial' role.[27] Meanwhile, the inclusion of an alphabetical element within lower class marking samplers taught a prospective domestic how to neatly stitch initials into her employer's household linen.[28]

Another aspect of the new textual element was the heavy incorporation of religious and moralistic verses within sampler design. This type of textual element commonly put emphasis upon traditional feminine virtues of obedience and love of family, such as: 'Virtue's the chiefest beauty of the mind / The noblest ornament of human-kind / Virtue's our safeguard and our guiding star / That stirs up reason when our senses err'.[29] Or else, 'Dear mother I am young and cannot show / such work as I unto your goodness owe / Be pleased to smile on this my small endeavour / I'll strive to learn and be obedient ever'.[30] By incorporating such verses

[25] Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* (New Haven & London, 2010), 244.
[26] Colby, *Samplers*, 116.
[27] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven & London), 8-9; 127-160.
[28] Dorothy Bromiley Phelan, *The Point of the Needle: Five Centuries of Samplers and Embroideries* (Dorchester, 2001), 72.
[29] Sarah Grace, *Sampler*, 1827, embroidered wool with silk, 31.7 × 30.5, Victoria & Albert Museum, London <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70504/sampler-sarah-grace/> [accessed 10 July 2015].
[30] Mary Ann Body, *Sampler*, 1789, wool sampler embroidered with silk, 35.6 × 31.75, Victoria & Albert Museum, London <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70384/sampler-body-mary-ann/> [accessed 10 July 2015].

into sampler design and by displaying the finished product within the family home, it was hoped that pupils would be inspired to goodness, piety and domestic industry, as well as to the care of their future family.[31]

Lower class samplers also incorporated moralistic and religious verses during this period, though arguably to a different purpose than their middle and upper class counterparts. Whereas textual elements included within middle and upper class samplers bordered upon mere decorative piety, their inclusion in lower class sampler design was often used to illustrate a pupil's apparent commitment to a life of industry and social deference. The overwhelming majority of lower class samplers hailed from schools established through systems of subscription and endowment. Subsequently, the text selected for lower class samplers tended to express varying degrees of gratitude and obedience towards a school's benefactors: 'Oh smile on those whose liberal care / Provides for our instruction here / And let our conduct ever prove / We're grateful for their generous love.'[32]

By Mary Lamb's period, the textual element had become so thoroughly central to sampler design that it resulted in the shedding of many practical functions once typical of the craft. Creativity of pattern, stitch type and composition were all diminished. Varieties in sampler design saw a marked decrease, as 'the complex stitchery of the past gave way to the ubiquitous cross stitch.'[33] Despite this aesthetic malaise, the very use of text within sampler design presupposes that a discursive element was present within needlework culture at this time. Also, a lack of variety within sampler design did not necessarily translate to uniformity across the craft. There are several examples of unusual sampler designs dating from Lamb's period, including the two examples discussed in the second section of this paper. As shall be explored in more detail below, the sampler maintained significant ideological and discursive potential both through the combination of text and imagery and an individual's choice of subject matter. By manipulating these elements of sampler design, it was possible for women to display considerable intellectual and emotional agency through the medium of stitch. The two examples detailed below represent two strands of this discursive mode: the academic and the personal.

~ Samplers Outside the Traditional Mode ~

In this second section, attention shall be drawn to two unusual examples of sampler design, dating from the first half of the nineteenth century: an anonymous sampler mapping the orbital trajectory of a comet around the solar system, and an autobiographical sampler produced by former domestic servant, Elizabeth Parker, in the aftermath of a traumatic event.[34]

[31] Text in sampler design was often copied from popular conduct, educational or religious publications. For example: Isaac Watts, *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* (London, 1720).
[32] Mary Eirwen Jones, *British Samplers* (Oxford, 1948), 41.
[33] Carol Humphrey, *Samplers* (Cambridge, 1997), 9.
[34] Anonymous, *The Solar System*, wool embroidered with silk in running and cross stitch, 1811, 35.5 × 31.8, Victoria & Albert Museum, London < http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70501/the-solar-system-sampler-unknown/> [accessed 11 July 2015]; Elizabeth Parker, *Sampler*, linen embroidered with red silk cross stich, c.1830, 85.8 × 74.4, Victoria & Albert Museum, London <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70506/sampler-parker-elizabeth/> [accessed 25 July 2015].

Stored in the collection of the V&A Museum of Childhood (London), the anonymous solar system sampler is exceedingly rare. Dating from approximately 1811, it is worked in black and red silk on a woolen ground in a combination of running and cross stitch. The design depicts the positions of the planets of the solar system with their temporal and spatial relationships to the sun calculated, alongside the 'Orbit of the Comet'.[35] Included above this stitched solar diagram is a section of embroidered text praising God for his creation of the universe, an amalgam typical of a society attempting to reconcile the religious with the early scientific. This reverential textual portion, the Grecian pattern that contains the design, and the red and black-bordered plaque that shows the date of creation, all conform to the typical aesthetic of traditional sampler design. It is the unusual subject matter which drastically divides it from other contemporary examples.

As the eighteenth century progressed, some sampler designs altered so as to highlight changing views of what young women should take from their years of tuition. Academic subjects such as history, geography and astronomy were gradually becoming more acceptable topics for middle and upper class schoolgirls. This is demonstrated by the appearance of samplers designed specifically for use as visual references in the teaching of these subjects.[36] Map and globe samplers became particularly fashionable from the 1770s onwards, with publishing companies producing maps printed onto linen or silk backgrounds for the use of schoolgirls' over the course of their needlework tuitions.[37]

It is possible that the anonymous solar system sampler was produced as a direct response to this shift in academic interests occurring within some middle and upper class schools at the turn of the century. If this was indeed the case, the sampler may have been created to serve as a visual reference for teachers and students within the classroom. However, its existence could just as easily indicate an individual interest developed outside of a formal curriculum of study.

The anonymous solar system sampler provides convincing evidence of a distinctly feminine intellectual engagement with what was traditionally a male-dominated branch of natural philosophy. The fact that the embroiderer chose to express her interest in the heavens via the needle rather than the pen, tells us that Mary Lamb's assertion that '[n]eedlework and intellectual improvement are naturally in a state of warfare' did have some significant exceptions.[38] Unfortunately, given that the sampler is anonymous, we can only speculate upon the intellectual character and social background of its maker. However, there is a substantial historical context within which to trace an outline of her possible identity.

By the final decades of the eighteenth century, astronomy had become a popular interest for leisured women both in the domestic environment and within

[35] Clare Browne and Jennifer Warden (eds.), *Samplers From the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 2010), 10; Plate 78, 105.
[36] Humphrey, *Samplers*, 66-7; 110-11: Two examples of 'commemorative' samplers, used in the study of history.
[37] Witney Antiques, *Samplers: Mapped and Charted* (Witney, 2005), 1; Humphrey, *Samplers*, 104-7; Scott, *Samplers*, 54-60.
[38] Lucas, *Works*, I, 205.

certain schools, as evidenced by publications such as schoolmistress and philosopher Margaret Bryan's lecture series *A Compendious System of Astronomy* (1797), written as a direct result of her teaching at a girls' school in Margate.[39] While the field of professional astronomy was virtually closed to women for much of the nineteenth century, the late eighteenth century was more receptive to their intellectual and material contributions. During this period, astronomy was the arena of the independent gentleman amateur, carried out in his own home and at his own expense. Subsequently, it was not uncommon for female family members to rally around as helpers and contributors, 'especially wives, sisters, and unmarried daughters' who had no option but to live at home and who might desire an outlet for their time and interests.[40] The siblings William and Caroline Herschel represent one example of this familial teamwork. Caroline assisted her brother in observing the heavens and in the later part of her life gained the reputation for having been the first woman to discover a comet.[41] Meanwhile, novelist and poet Mary Pilkington's conduct book *The Female Preceptor* (1813) provides a biography of the short life of Mary Mallitt (1780-1804), praising her extensive study of languages and geography, and her aptitude for astronomy. In reference to the latter, Mallitt was said to have 'well understood the motions of the heavenly bodies' and, 'seemed to take great delight in regarding the wonders of the starry firmament'.[42]

Given this context of like-minded women and the physical characteristics of the sampler itself, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the sampler's maker came from an upper class social background, perhaps with a close male relative actively engaged in the fashionable study of astronomy. The scientific details of the sampler design were probably drawn from printed materials, bought or lent to her for the purpose of private study. The fact that the sampler does not bear a name and that the use of red silk is minimal in comparison to the use of black might suggest that the sampler is unfinished. If we adhere to this interpretation of the maker's character, it is likely that the sampler was in fact the product of leisure as opposed to a formal needlework exercise produced within a school. This would lead us to the conclusion that such a sampler was undertaken for personal pleasure, in order to indulge an individual interest. That there is a distinct lack of surviving astronomy samplers is further evidence that this was not a formal needlework exercise, suggesting that the practice was uncommon within a structured school environment.

Despite the uncertainty regarding the maker's motivations or the sampler's provenance, as a piece of primary source material the anonymous solar system sampler provides historians with a new insight into the state of middle and upper class female education during Lamb's period. It reinforces, however minutely, the fact that a category of young women existed with both the access and ability to engage mentally and materially with the study of natural philosophy.

[39] Margaret Bryan, *A Compendious System of Astronomy* (London, 1797).
[40] Mary Brück, *Women in Early British and Irish Astronomy: Stars and Satellites* (London & New York, 2009), xv.
[41] John Lankford (ed.), *History of Astronomy: An Encyclopedia* (New York & Abingdon, 2011), 565.
[42] Mary Pilkington, *The Female Preceptor* (London, 1813), 291.

Elizabeth Parker's autobiographical sampler, on the other hand, points towards a far less aspirational story. Parker's sampler departs completely from the typical aesthetic mode of traditional sampler design, almost defying classification. Created *c.*1830, and wrought in red silk cross stitch on a rectangular ground of white linen, Parker's creation consists of forty-six lines of continuous, embroidered text. The text is centered, regularly spaced, and there are no decorative or pictorial elements. The opening line of the sampler indicates a diary entry, confession, or prayer, as opposed to an exercise in textual stitchery: 'As I cannot write I put this down simply and freely as I might speak to a person to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully intrust myself and who I know will bear with all my weaknesses…'[43] Based on these physical features it is tremendously unlikely that Parker's sampler was produced in a school environment, but rather created by an individual in a private, introspective moment of emotional upheaval.

The remainder of the text describes Parker's childhood in Ashburnham (Sussex), her familial circumstances, her employment as a domestic servant, the sexual assault at the hands of her employer 'Leuit G' of 'Fairlight' house, her nervous breakdown and period of convalescence with 'Dr W', and the many times she contemplated suicide. She talks extensively of her sense of shame and of her inability to communicate the details of her attack with family and friends. At approximately the twenty-sixth line, Parker's text disintegrates into a dialogue of religious torment. Defining her desire for death as a sin, she continually begs God for forgiveness. The last line of her sampler is speculatively unfinished, with the final question 'what will become of my soul [?]' left unanswered. The tone of this broken sentence is one of complete despair.

Both as a textile object and as a primary source for the study of life writing, Parker's autobiographical sampler is utterly unique. [44] If genuine, it gives scholars a rare glimpse into the emotional state of a lower class woman during one of the most testing periods of her life. Many questions arise regarding the sampler's design: what motivated Parker to impart her story using the needle, rather than the pen? In what physical environment was it created, and were others privy to its production? Was this unusual discursive exercise sufficiently cathartic, or did it fail to ease Parker's emotional distress? How can the sampler's authenticity be judged?

In terms of historical context, the story told by Parker's autobiographical sampler certainly correlates with the difficulties experienced by female servantry during this period. Female domestics were often subjected to sexual exploitation during their terms of employment, with incidents of sexual violence against housemaids regularly perpetrated by masters, masters' sons, and other male servants within a household.[45] This was due to a combination of factors regarding a single woman's social vulnerability, such as her age, her lonely position away from friends and relations, and the 'total lack of privacy they experienced in their

[43] For a full transcript of Parker's sampler see under 'Marks and Inscriptions' in the catalogue entry: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70506/sampler-parker-elizabeth/> [accessed 25 July 2015].
[44] 'Letter samplers' exist in very small numbers, but none compare to the size or content of Parker's autobiographical piece. For an example of a 'letter sampler' see: Scott, *Samplers*, 86-7.
[45] Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1996), 44.

working lives.'[46] At the beginning of the eighteenth century the barrier between the servantry and the employer had grown noticeably pronounced, with architectural provisions such as separate 'servants' halls' and the conversion of attic spaces into servants' sleeping garrets becoming commonplace.[47] However, the physical realities of living in close quarters meant that a segregated household was not always possible, and undesirable interactions occurred. Parker's claim that 'for trying to avoid the wicked designs of my master I was thrown down stairs' is therefore entirely plausible.[48]

While the details of Parker's story are in keeping with their historical context, issues such as production and authorship are harder to gauge with certainty. Art historian Nigel Llewellyn's study of Elizabeth Parker's sampler pays close attention to the ambiguities of the sampler's authorship, and how such an ambiguity might change our interpretation of the object. It is Llewellyn's assertion that while Parker may have indeed been the primary stitcher of the sampler, the 'guiding hand' behind its creation 'must surely have been that of Mrs Welham, the doctor's wife', with whom Parker was recovering in the aftermath of her nervous breakdown.[49] Llewellyn's assertion raises questions of intentionality as well as interpretation, as he suggests that Parker created the sampler under direction. If Mrs Welham aided Parker in her creation of the sampler, then our understanding of the object's purpose, production and context significantly alters. Llewellyn's assertion effectively removes the private nature of the sampler, and questions Parker's alleged silence in the aftermath of her attack. Instead, Llewellyn's scenario supposes that the two women collaborated in the sampler's production, and therefore shared its authorship. This would indicate that Parker felt able to confide her troubles in the older woman, potentially easing her distress and aiding in her recovery.

As with the anonymous solar system sampler discussed above, Parker's motivations and the sampler's provenance are two things we will never truly understand. We can only speculate upon why the sampler was made and in precisely what circumstances. However, by examining parish records it is possible to verify that Parker herself was not an invention.[50] We can also verify what became of Parker in later years.

Research recently conducted by American scholar Maureen Daly Goggin, reveals that Parker did not succumb to the desire for suicide so ardently expressed within her sampler. Rather, she returned to her hometown of Ashburnham to take up a teaching position at the local charity school. Though she never married, she took on the responsibility of raising her sister Louisa's youngest daughter, Elizabeth French. According to her death certificate, she died of a 'Haemorrrhage' in the Ashburnham Almshouse on April 10, 1889, at the age of 76. She left behind no other

[46] Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe. Volume One: 1500-1800* (London, 1995), 266.
[47] Jeremy Musson, *Up and Down Stairs: The History of the Country House Servant* (London, 2010), 52.
[48] View lines 8-12 of the Parker sampler.
[49] Nigel Llewellyn, 'Elizabeth Parker's 'Sampler': Memory, Suicide and the Presence of the Artist' in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, eds. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford & New York, 1999), 59-74 (67).
[50] Llewellyn, *Material Memories*, 59-74 (64-5).

personal documents.[51] Had her autobiographical sampler not survived she would certainly not have been remembered, and her tragic story would not have been told. Its survival suggests, perhaps, that Parker made a considerable effort to keep her sampler safe.[52]

~ Conclusion ~

By actively reassessing the culture of the schoolgirl sampler, it has become quite self-evident that the craft was not used only as a means of imparting needlework skills to generations of seamstresses and wives-to-be. Neither was it practiced merely to reinforce standards of good household economy or methods of subsistence. Inherent within this gendered craft was a strong, discursive potential, which could be creatively manipulated to communicate a woman's personal interest or emotional narrative. In this subtle display of women's agency, what was generally considered a mundane or indoctrinating task became a method of maintaining individuality and stimulating intellectual improvement. To conclude, it must be more broadly recognised that while women such as Mary Lamb found an expressive outlet for themselves in the workings of the pen, so others clearly found it by plying the needle.

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[51] Maureen Daly Goggin, 'Stitching a Life in "Pen of Steele and Silken Inke": Elizabeth Parker's *circa* 1830 Sampler' in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham & Burlington, 2009), 31-50 (42).
[52] The V&A purchased Parker's sampler in January 1956 for £5.00, from Mrs Lily Griffiths. How Griffiths acquired the sampler and in what way she was related to Parker is unclear.

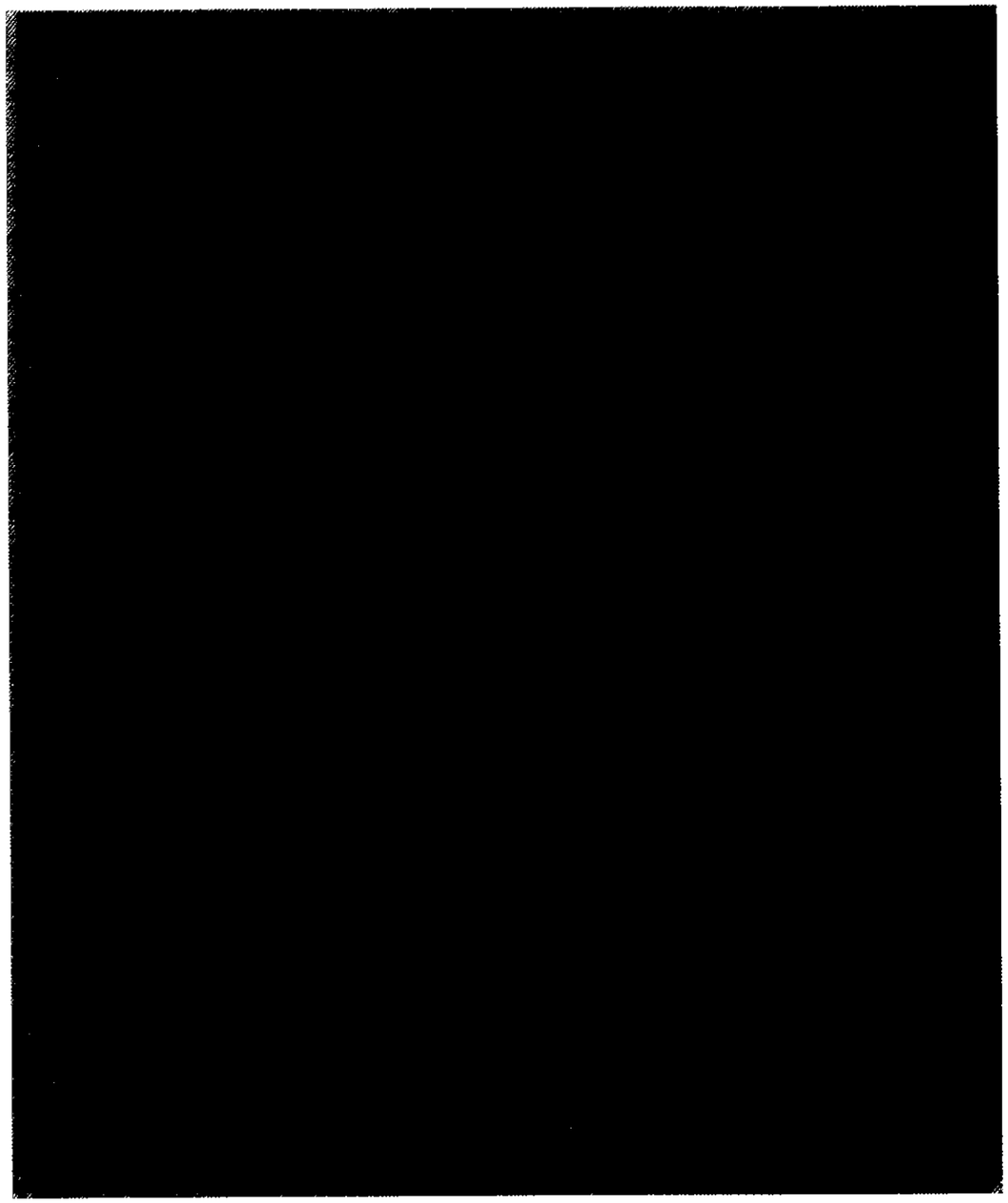

Fig. 1: Jacob Götzenberger (1802-1866), [Angels assisting a poor family]. Pen drawing heightened with gold (not dated [February 1827?]), Elizabeth Aders Autograph Album, MS Eng 1094, fol. 21. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

'Spinning at poor bodies' wheels': Charles and Mary Lamb, Work, and 'Angel Help'

Samantha Matthews

On a visit to the house of their friends the arts patrons Charles and Elizabeth Aders in spring 1827, Charles and Mary Lamb saw a drawing that made a striking impression upon them, though their responses were very different (Fig. 1). Executed in black ink on grey-washed paper, the scene is a domestic interior by night. In the foreground, a young woman with long, waving hair, the household keys fastened at her waist, has fallen asleep in a chair in front of a spinning wheel; an older woman, probably her mother, is asleep in a curtained bed. The older woman's drawn expression, the rosary clutched in her hand, and nearby medicine bottle and spoon suggest that she is ill or dying; an empty chair by the bed and nearby book imply that the young woman had been sitting with the invalid before returning to her work. At the centre of the composition an oil lamp burns. This light-source, and the scene's naturalistic features, are put in the shade by supernatural elements which the artist has highlighted in gold: heavenly rays emitted from a crucifix on the wall are reflected on the heads of three angels assisting the pious household: one turns the spinning wheel, another twists the yarn on the distaff, and on the far left a third waters a lily, emblem of virginal innocence – the innocence of the young woman, whose hair and cross are also touched by heavenly light.

The drawing is by German artist, Jacob Götzenberger (1802-1866), who as a 25-year-old student presented it to the Aders in thanks for their hospitality in early February 1827. Stylistically indebted to the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century German and Netherlandish art that dominated the Aders' collection, the sacred scene proposes a transcendent reward for virtue and duty.[1] Yet the concreteness of the depiction, from the heavy folds of the figures' drapery and woodgrain detail in the floor and furniture, to the wall-mounted clock and Saxony-style spinning wheel, also articulates a concern with everyday human experience, with time and work, life and death, and contemporary social relevance. The Lambs' responses survive in the shape of two ekphrastic poems composed shortly after: Charles's sentimental yet affecting paean to virtuous poverty, first published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in June 1827 as 'Angel Help'; and Mary's shorter skit first published by E. V. Lucas in 1903 as 'Nonsense Verses' misattributed to Charles.[2] Elizabeth Aders preserved the fair copies of both poems in Charles's hand, together with two short letters concerning them, and Götzenberger's drawing, in her album, now at Harvard University.[3]

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[1] See Morton D. Paley, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Fine Arts* (Oxford, 2008), 83-92.

[2] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 7 vols (London, 1903), V, 48-9, 109.

[3] Elizabeth Aders Autograph Album, MS Eng 1094, fols. 20-23, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Elizabeth Aders' album also includes a fair copy of Lamb's poem 'To C. Aders Esq., on his Collection of Paintings by the old German Masters' (fol. 30), and three other Götzenberger drawings (fols. 10, 18, 50).

In a 1974 article, James T. Wills transcribed the manuscript poems from the album, made minor corrections to Lucas in reconstructing their composition and publication histories, and provided brief interpretations of the poems as responses to the drawing and each other.[4] This article reconsiders the poems in relation to the well-known topic of Charles Lamb's critique of work, the less discussed significance of needleworkers, spinners and tailors in his writings, and his familiarity with the textile trade and needleworking industry. Lamb's contact with the latter derived from two main sources: his daily work on the East India Company accounts, and his sister's early life. From her mid-teens, Mary worked long, poorly paid hours as a mantua-maker (dressmaker), and during her twenties also carried an increasingly stressful burden of housework and nursing responsibilities in the family home. While the 'day of horrors' in September 1796, when Mary killed their mother Elizabeth Lamb during a fit of insanity, is the most obvious cause of Charles's ambivalence about women's domestic work, my interest is not biographical per se. It is rather that for Lamb, the material symbols of women's monotonous work – whether the basic materials of textile, thread and yarn, or the enabling tools of needles, scissors and spinning wheels – become subtly ambivalent analogies for an oppressive culture of incessant work, whereby the worker's time is never truly her or his own, whether outside or inside the home. The grinding routine of work experienced as extending into an endless futurity, or terminated only by incapacity or death, became associated for Lamb with humanity's fallen condition, presided over by the figure of Satan, 'like a wheel', in the words of the sonnet 'Work', discussed below.[5] As an organising metaphor for the punishing role of work in human life, the ever-turning wheel brings into association the ancient wheel of fortune, the Catherine wheel of medieval torture, the contemporary mills and factories of industrial Britain, and William Cubitt's prison tread-wheel – as well as the domestic spinning-wheel. Lamb saw that needlework could be an oppressive instrument for women, but the wheel became for him a symbol that transcends gender. The wheel represented the increasingly powerful machine of industry and business in early nineteenth-century society; the simple spinning-wheel, an anachronism in the age of the northern cotton-mills' water-powered multi-spindle spinning mules, also encoded the experience of the individual worker.[6] Lamb encountered Götzenberger's study two years after the end of his thirty-three year 'slavery' in the Accountant-General's Office at East India House. The consolations of retirement were not unmixed with a sense that long habituation to work routine had left him unfitted to make the most of his freedom. Yet in the figure of the sleeping spinster, he saw also a way to re-imagine the pressure of domestic and paid work that had shaped his and Mary's lives together.

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Lamb's working life centred geographically on the City of London, in an area where many workers and livery companies associated with the textile, needlework and clothing trades were located. In 1791-2 his first post was in the office for Pacific

[4] James T. Wills, 'New Lamb Material in the Aders Album: Jacob Götzenberger and Two Versions of "Angel Help"', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 22 (1974), 406-13.
[5] 'Work', l. 11, in Lucas, *Works*, V, 55.
[6] See Richard Marsden, *Cotton Spinning: Its Development, Principles and Practice* (1884; London, 1903).

Trade at the South Sea House in Threadneedle Street; he then moved a short distance south down Bishopsgate Street to the East India House in Leadenhall Street, the eastern continuation of Cornhill, where he remained until taking his pension in spring 1825. Local small businesses included tailors, milliners and needleworkers. Several textile-related livery companies had prominent halls in the area, such as the Merchant Taylors' Hall at 30 Threadneedle Street (South Sea House was at 38). The very name of Threadneedle Street derives 'either from the three needles which appear in the arms of the Needlemakers' Company or the thread and needle employed by the Merchant Taylors'.[7]

The textile trade was not only a defining feature of the City streetscape, but the subject of much of Lamb's daily accounting work. Entries listing imported textile products, including cotton, silk, and calico, and fabric dyes such as indigo, appear repeatedly in East India Company account ledgers. The market's volatility had a direct impact on Lamb's workload. Winifred Courtney notes that 'Sales of indigo by the East India Company multiplied fivefold between 1792 and 1795, but no additional staff was taken on by the Accountant's Office'.[8] Writing to Wordsworth in September 1814, Charles explains that due to staff absences and 'the deficient state of payments at E. I. H. owing to bad peace (sic) speculations in the Calico market', he has been working at home as well – 'evening work, generally at the rate of nine hours a day' – with resulting low spirits and anxious dreams.[9] In the persona of Elia, his involuntary and impressionistic acquaintance with the textile trade is recast as a joke against the speaker's poor credentials for business. In 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster', on his evening commute home by coach, Elia finds himself in a dreaded tête-à-tête with 'a sensible, well-informed' stranger (the 'new schoolmaster'):

> We were now approaching Norton Falgate, when the sight of some shop-goods *ticketed* freshened him up into a dissertation upon the cheapness of cottons this spring. I was now a little in heart, as the nature of my morning avocations had brought me into some sort of familiarity with the raw material; and I was surprised to find how eloquent I was becoming on the state of the India market—when, presently, he dashed my incipient vanity to the earth at once, by inquiring whether I had ever made any calculation as to the value of the rental of all the retail shops in London.[10]

The speaker's 'morning avocations' should guarantee that he can discourse with authority on the cotton market. However, even in his supposed area of expertise, he cannot keep up with the schoolmaster's automaton-like quest for factual information: 'some sort of familiarity with the raw material' is actually a disqualification. Lamb simultaneously conveys Elia's unease at being found wanting, and the unnerving quality of the stranger's ability only to trade in 'speculations reducible to calculation', like the 'Caledonian' of 'Imperfect Sympathies'. When in the early essay 'Oxford in the Vacation' Elia tries to explain

[7] *The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. Ben Weinreb et al, 3rd edn. (London, 2008), 916.
[8] Winifred Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802* (London, 1982), 100.
[9] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. E. W. Marrs, 3 vols (Ithaca, NY, 1975-8), III, 111-112.
[10] Lucas, *Works*, II, 50.

the relation between his identity as an author and his professional life as 'a votary of the desk', he transforms the East India Company's textile commodities into objects of meditation:

> I confess that it is my humour, my fancy—in the forepart of the day, when the mind of your man of letters requires some relaxation[...]—to while away some good hours of my time in the contemplation of indigos, cottons, raw silks, piece-goods, flowered or otherwise. [...] The enfranchised quill, that has plodded all the morning among the cart-rucks of figures and cyphers, frisks and curvets so at its ease over the flowery carpet-ground of a midnight dissertation.—It feels its promotion. * * * * So that you see, upon the whole, the literary dignity of *Elia* is very little, if at all, compromised in the condescension.[11]

Reversing his own identity as full-time employee and part-time author, Charles proposes that Elia is a 'man of letters' for whom office work is a whim and positive relaxation in preparation for evening's literary work. The labour of book-keeping is reinvented as an aesthetic 'contemplation' which selects only textiles from the East India Company's broad portfolio of commodities, and whereby a morning meditation on tradable standardized units of fabric 'piece-goods, flowered or otherwise' enables the quill-pen's evening dance across 'the flowery carpet-ground'. Still, the comic conceit by which the labour of the 'notched and cropt scrivener' masquerades as a leisure pursuit and spiritual exercise leads to a less consoling implication: to 'while away some good hours of my time' is also to waste time. Similarly, by a poetic suggestion, the raw materials are woven into the dissertation, since a mass of flowers is evoked via a similative 'carpet'; however, Elia goes on to note 'certain flaws, which a cunning carper might be able to pick in this Joseph's vest' of 'the many commodities incidental to the life of a public office'. Just as in Genesis 37:23 Joseph's 'coat of many colours' changes its symbolic value from token of the elderly father's love, to sign of fraternal jealousy and hatred, the speaker himself turns 'cunning carper' to regret the loss of 'those consolatory interstices, and sprinklings of freedom, through the four seasons,--the *red-letter days*, now become, to all intents and purposes, *dead-letter days*'.[12] The flaw in the fabric of Joseph's 'vest' is the effect of commercial interest and the profit motive on the lives of individual workers. This is suggested by 'commodities', used in its older sense of 'benefits', while punning on the primary modern meaning of material goods traded for profit. It is implied that businesses, such as the East India Company, which have outlawed the celebration of saints' days on the grounds that the practice is 'papistical', are hypocritically using religion to mask the exploitation of workers and to boost profit.

In her fine chapter on work and time in *A Double Singleness* (1991), Jane Aaron notes in Lamb's writings 'The association of work, and in particular of the East India Company, with the hosts of Satan'.[13] I would extend this observation to include the connection between Satan, as author of the Fall, and the needleworking, textile and clothing industries. In 'On the Melancholy of Tailors', published in *The Champion* in

[11] Lucas, *Works*, II, 7-8.
[12] Lucas, *Works*, II, 8.
[13] Jane Aaron, *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford, 1991), 92.

December 1814, the speaker's primary explanation for his claim about the tailor's 'professional melancholy' is the fall of mankind:

> [M]ay it not be, that the custom of wearing apparel being derived to us from the fall, and one of the most mortifying products of that unhappy event, a certain *seriousness* (to say no more of it) may in the order of things have been intended to be impressed upon the minds of that race of men to whom in all ages the care of contriving the human apparel has been entrusted,— to keep up the memory of the first institution of clothes, and serve as a standing remonstrance against those vanities, which the absurd conversion of a memorial of our shame into an ornament of our persons was destined to produce?[14]

Lamb's later demotion of Joseph's 'coat of many colours' to a flawed 'vest' in 'Oxford in the Vacation' may be better understood in the light of this view of tailors as living reminders of humanity's fallen susceptibility to vanity. In making the connection with the moment in Genesis 3:8 where the eyes of Adam and Eve 'both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons', Lamb may also recall the coat of arms of the Worshipful Company of Needlemakers. The shield bearing three needles and crowns is supported by a post-lapsarian Adam and Eve, their loins garlanded; the tree of knowledge rises up, encircled by the serpent, its treacherous head turned towards Eve. [15] As in an 1805 letter to the Wordsworths, in which Lamb speculates that 'business [is] the invention of the Old Teazer who persuaded Adam's Master to give him an apron & set him a houghing—', the 'apron' doubles as sign of shame and of uniform of labour.[16]

Although the speaker's attitude to the tailors is more of anthropological curiosity than sympathy, his tone suggests more fellow-feeling when treating the 'sedentary habits' enforced by the tailor's work: 'this sitting for fourteen hours continuously [...] the tailor, in the ordinary pursuance of his art, submits to daily (Sundays excepted) throughout the year, shall we wonder to find the brain affected?'[17] The cross-legged tailor, whose productivity and livelihood depends on a craft that can only be practised when seated, has something in common with the East India House clerk—as well as with the part-time author.

The manual and mental actions of the tailor, needleworker and clerk engaged in daily labour are minute, repetitive and monotonous, but they do not account for Lamb's marked association of work with the wheel, and the action of rotation, in the late 1810s and early 1820s. As I argue, this link helps to explain the intensity of Lamb's subjective response to the spinning wheel in Götzenberger's 1827 drawing. The complex of ideas and images is most fully realised in the sonnet 'Work', first published in *The Examiner*, 20 June 1819:

[14] Lucas, *Works*, I, 174.
[15] Blazon of the Worshipful Company of Needlemakers, <http://www.ngw.nl/heraldrywiki/index.php?title=Worshipful_Company_of_Needlemakers>. The guild's motto is 'They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons'.
[16] Marrs, *Letters*, II, 177. Quoted in Aaron, 92.
[17] Lucas, *Works*, I, 175.

Who first invented work, and bound the free
And holyday-rejoicing spirit down
To the ever-haunting importunity
Of business in the green fields, and the town—
To plough, loom, anvil, spade—and oh! most sad
To that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood?
Who but the Being unblest, alien from good,
Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
Task ever plies 'mid rotatory burnings,
That round and round incalculably reel—
For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel—
In that red realm from which are no returnings;
Where toiling, and turmoiling, ever and aye
He, and his thoughts, keep pensive working-day.[18]

Discussing the sonnet as part of Lamb's 'attack upon the prevailing dissociation of leisure from godliness', Aaron observes that 'The repetitive rotation of mechanical tasks and the Sisyphean control they exert over their human operators are seen, as in Blake's "dark Satanic mills", as ungodly wheels of torture'.[19] The link to Blake's anti-industrial stance is apt, though in fact there are no wheels of torture or rotation in Blake's 'Jerusalem'; a comparison of the two poems suggests rather how much less hope Lamb has of recovering spiritual innocence and freedom 'In England's green and pleasant land'.[20] This longed-for condition is briefly invoked at the opening – 'the free / And holyday-rejoicing spirit' (ll.1-2) – only for its impossibility to be relentlessly enacted through vivid evocations of the 'ever-haunting importunity / Of business' for fallen humanity, and the eternal affliction of Satan who, condemned to endless labour and suffering in hell, takes his revenge by perpetuating suffering among humankind.

Lamb's representative instruments of tormenting labour range from archetypal to personal – plough, loom, anvil, spade and desk – but the description of Satan's sufferings turns on a series of metaphorical and existential wheels and mills by which Satan's condition is also an analogy for humanity's eternal 'pensive working-day' in contemporary Britain. While Satan is clearly imagined as occupying hell's 'red realm', the overdetermined and barely controlled 'rotatory' language suggests both that the mental consequences of endless labour are worse than the physical, and that 'Sabbathless Satan' is a cipher for the worker's psychological condition. Satan works "'mid rotatory burnings, / That round and round incalculably reel', less because the fires are turning, than because *he* is: God's punishment is to make him 'like a wheel' condemned never to rest. The torment of endless rotation in space is intensified through repetition of the banal word 'ever' connoting endless time – 'ever-haunting', 'his unglad / Task ever plies', 'ever and aye' (ll. 3, 9, 13). However, by the closing couplet, the description could equally apply to the modern worker 'bound' in an eternal state of unrewarding labour,

[18] Lucas, *Works*, V, 55-6.
[19] Aaron, *A Double Singleness*, 92, 93.
[20] William Blake, 'And did these feet', Preface to *Milton* in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. David Fuller, rev. ed. (Harlow, 2008), 295-6, ll.8, 16.

where physical 'toiling' produces 'turmoiling'—literally, milling or grinding, but here suggestive of interior turmoil—and 'He, and his thoughts'.

Satan's condition recalls classical myths of eternal punishment (Ixion bound on the ever-spinning fiery wheel) and medieval instruments of torture (the Catherine or 'Breaking' Wheel). However, Lamb could look to contemporary penal practices for an allusion that his readers would immediately recognise in the 'rotatory' imagery of 'Work'. Through the 1810s the engineer William Cubitt had been working on inventing a machine to make use of prisoners' labour. The resulting 'tread-wheel' (more commonly termed a 'treadmill') was first used in a British prison in 1818, initially to create power to grind corn and pump water, but was swiftly adopted in a number of prisons solely as an instrument of punishment.[21] By the time of an 1824 parliamentary 'Statement Respecting Tread Mills', 39 gaols or houses of correction (including 3 for women only) had between them 53 treadmills, with wheels that could hold on average between 18 to 24 prisoners at one time.[22] The treadmill was widely discussed in the press and debated in parliament; opponents condemned its cruelty and pointlessness, and its damaging effect on prisoners' health.[23]

Lamb's awareness of the treadmill, and its resonance with his view of modern working practices, is documented in his 'Pindaric Ode to the Tread Mill' published in *The New Times*, 24 October 1825. An imaginative response to Daniel Defoe's experience of being pilloried in 1703, the ode ironically celebrates 'the mighty Tread Mill' as a sign of social progress in order to expose the fallacy of attempting moral reform through punishing physical labour alone:

Incompetent my song to raise
To its just height thy praise,
Great Mill!
That by thy motion proper
(No thanks to wind, or sail, or working rill)
Grinding that stubborn corn, the Human will,
Turn'st out men's consciences,
That were begrimed before, as clean and sweet
As flower from purest wheat,
Into thy hopper.
All reformation short of thee but nonsense is,
Or human, or divine.[24]

Pretending to judge the treadmill by its supporters' estimation, the speaker adopts a reductive materialist approach to the problem of moral renovation, and so casts as

[21] See *Description of the Tread Mill invented by Mr. William Cubitt of Ipswich, for the Employment of Prisoners* (London, 1822).
[22] 'Statement Respecting Tread Mills', 15 April 1824, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.882004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:rec:1824-009119>
[23] See J. I. Briscoe, *A Letter on the Nature and Effects of the Tread-Wheel, as an instrument of prison labour and punishment, addressed to the Right Hon. Robert Peel* (London, 1824).
[24] 'Pindaric Ode to the Tread Mill', V, in Lucas, *Works*, V, 73-4.

unrealistic the idea that the process of grinding could transform 'begrimed' and 'stubborn corn' into the 'purest wheat'.

The satirical manner of 'Pindaric Ode to the Tread Mill' seems remote from Götzenberger's angels helping the sleeping spinner, but turning wheels and mills figure repeatedly in Lamb's writings in 1825, the significant year of his retirement from the East India Company on the grounds of certified ill-health. Writing to Bernard Barton on 23 March 1825, he describes the suspense of waiting eight weeks to see if the directors will accept his resignation: 'I am sick of hope deferred. The grand wheel is in agitation that is to turn up my Fortune, but round it rolls and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of Freedom, of becoming a Gentleman at large, but I am put off from day to day'.[25] The blind goddess Fortuna presides over the wheel of vicissitude, but Lamb's condition of restless stasis cruelly mimics the cycle of the worker's affliction. At last, on 29 March, his resignation was accepted. The first fruits of his retirement, 'The Superannuated Man', written in April and published in the *London Magazine*, May 1825, meditates on the strangeness of leisure after long years of 'sometimes ten hours' a-day attendance at a counting-house'.[26] In the original periodical version, the essay's concluding paragraph quotes in full the 1819 sonnet 'Work', framed by the familiar motif of the mill:

> It is a Lucretian pleasure to behold the poor drudges, whom I have left behind in the world, carking and caring; like horses in a mill, drudging on in the same eternal round—and what is it all for?
> [...]
> ['Work']
> [...]
> A man can never have too much Time to himself, nor too little to do. [...] Man, I verily believe, is out of his element as long as he is operative. I am altogether for the life contemplative. Will no kindly earthquake come and swallow up those accursed cotton mills? Take me that lumber of a desk there, and bowl it down
> As low as to the fiends.[27]

Just as the speaker attempts to understand his changed condition by revisiting ex-colleagues, Lamb reprints 'Work' in order to revisit his past identity as a 'poor drudge', and to put some distance between then and now. The poem becomes proof that occasionally miraculous 'returnings' from the hell of work are possible. However, the reversion to images of clerks 'like horses in a mill [...] in the same eternal round', and the desire to consign the 'accursed cotton mills' and desk to a fiery destruction indicates that the speaker is not yet free of anger at the waste ('and what is it all for?'). Behind both the 23 March letter and Elia's fraught relish of liberation from mills and drudgery is a Shakespearean intertext. At Hamlet's prompting, the First Player recites Aeneas' account of Pyrrhus' murder of Priam:

[25] *The Letters of Charles Lamb to whim are added those of his sister Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 3 vols. (London, 1935), II, 463.
[26] Lucas, *Works*, II, 193.
[27] Lucas, *Works*, II, 198; see 427-8 for the full extract.

> '[...] Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
> In general synod, take away her power;
> Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
> And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
> As low as to the fiends.' (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 487-491)

While still in bondage, the Player's speech articulated Lamb's frustration at the Directors' godlike power over his destiny, displaced through the personified 'strumpet'; as a 'Gentleman at large', Elia exacts vicarious revenge on the world of work through the exercise of mordant allusive wit. As Aeneas begs the gods to destroy Fortune's overdetermined power by breaking her wooden wheel's 'spokes and fellies' (rims), so the newly empowered Elia would 'Take me' the symbol of clerks' oppression, the desk, reduce it to useless junk, and 'bowl' it down to the flames of hell. Elia's fleeting adoption of the role of hero takes the sting out of his self-protective alienation from the 'poor drudges' who were so recently his brothers in ink, by offering in words if not deeds to liberate 'Man' from the mill and the desk.

By May, Lamb's work imagery begins to shift away from the industrial mill. Writing to Wordsworth, he reflects 'How I look down on the Slaves and drudges of the world! Its inhabitants are a vast cotton-web of spin spin spinners'. The language of slavish drudgery persists, the sense of scale and number still evokes mass production, and the riff on 'spin' mimics a dizzy whirling. Yet these workers are also related to nature's web-spinners – spiders and silkworms. When visitors interrupt Lamb's letter-writing, his thoughts continue in this more creative vein: ''Tis these suitors of Penelope that make it necessary to authorise a little for gin and mutton'.[28] The contrast of Homeric allusion and gin is designed to amuse, but the shift from spinning to weaving imagery proposes a more constructive model of work: if 'Leadenhall' is the home of the cotton trade's lowly spiders, Lamb is as Penelope in the *Odyssey* weaving her tapestry to keep off unwanted suitors. Penelope may unravel her work by night, but it is craft with a higher purpose.

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Of the Elia essays, 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', first published in the *London Magazine* in July 1822, contains Lamb's most overtly autobiographical allusion to Mary's time as a dressmaker, also the passage most relevant to Götzenberger's scenario:

> How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn out appearance [...] of an old 'Circulating Library' Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents![29]

Urging a reappraisal of much-read, soiled copies of classic novels, the speaker offers a non-standard model of the 'genuine lover of reading'. In this subjective view, the

[28] Lucas, *Letters*, III, 5.
[29] Lucas, *Works*, II, 173.

unpromising book evokes vivid images of a needlewoman who uses the imaginative recreation of reading to seek temporary relief from anxiety, and who privileges reading above the oblivion of sleep (even if, as 'spelling out' implies, her level of literacy means this is effortful). Here 'rotatory' imagery is subtly recuperated as the circulation of cheer and enchantment and immersion in a 'Lethean cup'. The speaker focuses on the pathetic figure of the 'lone sempstress', but also makes a moral discrimination between the milliner's relatively light work, and the dressmaker's demanding labour. When Lamb was writing this essay in 1822, it was seven years since the publication of 'On Needle-work'. However, the source of Lamb's sentimental picture of the seamstress reading in the watches of the night 'to steep her cares', lies at least twenty-five years earlier. In the protective, empathetic description of a 'harder-working mantua-maker', Lamb recalls the wording and tone of the 26 September 1796 *Morning Chronicle* report on the Coroner's hearing regarding Mary stabbing their mother: 'It seems the young Lady had been once before, in her earlier years, deranged, from the harassing fatigues of too much business.—As her carriage towards her mother was ever affectionate in the extreme, it is believed that to the increased attentiveness, which her parents' infirmities called for by day and night, is to be attributed the present insanity of this ill-fated young woman.'[30] As Marrs notes, the Whitehall *Evening Post* adds that 'The above unfortunate young person is a Miss Lamb, a mantua-maker, in Little Queen-Street, Lincoln's-inn-fields'.[31] The sympathetic style of the newspaper narratives – Mary is 'ill-fated' and 'unfortunate', more victim than perpetrator – as well as the specific details of Mary's experience of mental illness and affectionate care for her parents suggests family testimony; most likely from Charles (the brother in quest of Dr Pitcairn at the moment of the 'fatal catastrophe'). There are marked similarities between this description and Lamb's account of Mary's state of mind in a letter to Coleridge on 17 October 1796: '[I]t is my Sister's gratifying recollection, that every act of duty & of love she could pay, every kindness (& I speak true, when I say to the hurting of her health, & most probably in great part to the derangement of her senses) thro' a long course of infirmities & sickness, she could shew her [mother], she ever did'.[32] As Aaron shows, Lamb's early years working for the East India Company added to Mary's pressures: he was out of the house for long hours, and his income was only £30 per year: 'After Salt's death in 1792 much of the daughter's energies must have been consumed in the unremitting requirement not only to earn enough through the mantua-maker's trade to support the family, but also to attend, daily and nightly, to the nursing needs of the invalid mother and senile father'.[33] Mary's dress-making work was mostly done in the family home, and there were few opportunities for exercise or varied routine. As Lamb wrote to Coleridge on 1 July 1796, 'My mother is grown so entirely helpless (not having any use of her limbs) that Mary is necessarily confined from ever sleeping out, she being her bed fellow'.[34] The link between the 'lone sempstress' of 'Detached Thoughts' and Götzenberger's sleeping spinner and nurse is strengthened by Lamb's concern to find reading-

[30] Extract from *Morning Chronicle*, 26 September 1796, quoted in Marrs, *Letters*, I, 45.
[31] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 46.
[32] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 52.
[33] Aaron, *A Double Singleness*, 121.
[34] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 34.

matter for Mary during her stay at the Islington madhouse. On 28 October he writes, again to Coleridge, that 'I am rather at a loss sometimes for books for her, —our reading is somewhat confined, and we have nearly exhausted our London library. She has her hands too full of work to read much, but a little she must read; for reading was her daily bread'.[35] Lamb does not specify the nature of Mary's 'work', but this is common shorthand for women's sewing, as the association with full hands supports. If so, it is striking that Mary continued with her dressmaking while recovering at Islington, whether to complete outstanding orders, to earn money, or simply as an occupation: significantly, however, reading not paid work is 'her daily bread'.

There are no mantua-makers elsewhere in Charles's published writings, but there are several depictions of women engaged in sewing and spinning. I focus here on two scenes: one from the early romantic novel *Rosamund Gray* (1798), the other from the late dramatic poem, *The Wife's Trial; or, the Intruding Widow* (1831). The distinguishing features of these scenes are: two women are at work; one is dominant, the other subordinate; sewing is associated with hostility or destructiveness; the subordinate woman's self-denial demonstrates her moral superiority. The eponymous heroine of *Rosamund Gray* is usually identified with Ann Simmons, but the first two chapters suggest a curious re-writing of Mary's relationship with their mother. Rosamund devotedly serves her loving, if severe, grandmother, Margaret: 'An old gentlewoman sat spinning in a little arbour at the door of her cottage. She was blind; and her granddaughter was reading the Bible to her. The old lady had just left her work, to attend to the story of Ruth'.[36] Despite her age and disability, Margaret is productive, and interrupts her work only to concentrate on a biblical narrative that applies to its reader: in reading aloud of a young woman's loving duty to her mother-in-law, Rosamund demonstrates her self-subjugation. These dynamics are then dramatised by an episode focused on Rosamund's potential not as a needlewoman, but as artist. For 'three or four months' she has painstakingly worked on an ambitious landscape study; its destruction constitutes a moral test:

> One day she went out on a short errand, and left her landscape on the table. When she returned she found it gone.
>
> Rosamund from the first suspected some mischief, but held her tongue. At length she made the fatal discovery. Margaret, in her absence, had laid violent hands on it; not knowing what it was, but taking it for some waste paper, had torn it in half, and with one half of this elaborate composition had twisted herself up — a thread-paper!
>
> Rosamund spread out her hands at sight of the disaster, gave her grandmother a roguish smile, but said not a word. She knew the poor soul would only fret, if she told her of it, — and when once Margaret was set a fretting for other people's misfortunes, the fit held her pretty long.[37]

[35] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 57.
[36] Lucas, *Works*, I, 1.
[37] Lucas, *Works*, I, 6.

Considered as a fictive re-casting of Mary Lamb's relation to her mother, written under the long shadow of Mary's matricide, the episode stages the dutiful daughter's mild, self-repressive response to the thwarting of her desire for creative expression. The mother-figure's aggression is unintentional, but the narrator's extreme language suggests how Rosamund experiences it: as a 'fatal discovery' and 'disaster', where the sight of her artwork destroyed simply to store sewing thread evokes the image of her grandmother 'la[ying] violent hands' upon it. In Lamb's recuperative fantasy, old Margaret spins the thread of life like the first of the three Fates, Clotho, and is blind like Fortune with her wheel, but is herself at the mercy of chance. Instead of Mary being driven beyond endurance and sanity, a 'roguish smile' is the only fleeting sign of Rosamund's frustration; not only does she spare her grandmother knowledge of 'the mischief she had unconsciously done', but with patience, forgiveness and determination, Rosamund immediately 'began another piece of the same size and subject'.

Composed at the other end of Lamb's writing life, several years after 'Angel Help', *The Wife's Trial* presents the trial of happily married, timid Katherine Selby, forced to suffer the tyrannical behaviour of her ex-school-fellow, the blackmailing house-guest Mrs. Frampton. Mrs. Frampton exercises her power over Katherine, most obviously by reversing their roles and behaving as though she is mistress and Katherine maidservant. In one scene, the ostensibly harmoniously domestic activity of two women sewing is a cover for bullying. The scene is set in '*Mrs. Selby's Chamber*', with the direction 'MRS. FRAMPTON, KATHERINE, *working*'.[38] It is understood that for genteel women, this can only mean needlework, but here the work is not to benefit the household at large, but to feed Mrs. Frampton's vanity and damaged pride. (In a previous scene she declares 'I must go trim myself: this humbled garb would shame a wedding feast'.) In this she recalls the stock figure of 'the vain late eighteenth-century aristocrat, who, it was presumed, sewed only to adorn herself for a life of parties and dissipation'.[39] If old Margaret evokes Clotho, Mrs. Frampton resembles Lachesis, who measures the thread of life. Indeed, Mrs. Frampton consciously invokes the Fates:

> MRS. FRAMPTON
> I am thinking, child, how contrary our fates
> Have traced our lots through life. Another needle,
> This works untowardly. An heiress born
> To splendid prospects, at our common school
> I was as one above you all, not of you;
> [...]
> —Not that needle, simple one,
> With the great staring eye fit for a Cyclops!
> Mine own are not so blinded with their griefs
> But I could make a shift to thread a smaller.
> A cable or a camel might go through this,

[38] Lucas, *Works*, V, 252.

[39] Carol Shiner Wilson, 'Lost Needles, Tangled Threads: Stitchery, Domesticity, and the Artistic Enterprise in Barbauld, Edgeworth, Taylor, and Lamb', in *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia, 1994), 166-190 (168).

> And never strain for the passage.
>
> KATHERINE I will fit you.—
> Intolerable tyranny! [*Aside.*
>
> MRS. FRAMPTON Quick, quick;
> You were not once so slack.—[40]

The request for 'Another needle' is rudely peremptory, as though to a 'child', as she terms her host, or to the 'separate maid' who served her at school. The intruding widow's rude dissatisfaction with Katherine's 'housewife' or sewing box is designed to humiliate. Katherine offers the wrong needle and responds slowly because she is pained and upset. Mrs Frampton's allusions to the fates, Cyclops, cables and camels show her to be an educated woman who uses her knowledge in barbed wit. She alludes to the words of Jesus in Matthew, 19.21-24: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God'; the incongruous pairing of camel and needle has long been explained as a mistranscription of the Greek *kamilos*, meaning rope or cable, as *kamêlos*, camel.[41] However, Mrs Frampton is so keen to show off her sharp wit and sharp eyes that she misses the moral applicability to her own boasting about her past, and the plot to regain wealth through blackmail. For Lamb, the needle, like the spinning wheel with its spindle, does indeed 'work untowardly'.

***

Drawing on these varied contexts, I now turn to Lamb's poem responding to the drawing of a sleeping spinner assisted by angels:

> This rare Tablet doth include
> Poverty with Sanctitude.-
> Past midnight this Poor Maid hath spun,
> And yet the Work not half is done,
> Which must supply from earnings scant
> A feeble bed-rid Parent's want.
> Her sleep-charg'd eyes exemption ask,
> And Holy Hands take up the task;
> Unseen the Rock and Spindle ply,
> And do her earthly drudgery.
>
> Saintly Poor One, sleep, sleep on,
> And waking find thy labours done.
>
> Perchance she knows it by her dreams;
> Her eye hath caught the golden gleams,
> Angelic Presence testifying,
> Which round her everywhere are flying:
> Ostents, from which she may presume,
> That much of Heaven is in the room.

[40] Lucas, *Works*, V, 252.

[41] *OED Online*, s.v., 'cable', 1.d.

Skirting her own bright hair they run,
And to the Sunny add more Sun:
Now on that Aged Face they fix,
Streaming from the Crucifix,
The flesh-clogg'd Spirit disabusing,
Death-disarming sleeps infusing,
Prelibations, foretastes high—
And equal thoughts to Live or Die.
Gardener bright from Eden's Bower,
Tend with care that Lily Flower:
To its roots and leaves infuse
Heaven's sunshine, Heaven's dews.
'Tis a Type, and 'tis a Pledge,
Of a Crowning Privilege.
Careful as that Lilly Flower,
This Maid must keep her precious Dower;
Live a Sainted Maid, or die
Martyr to Virginity.

Virtuous Poor Ones, sleep, sleep on,
And waking find your labours done.
Charles Lamb.—[42]

James T. Wills accepts Lamb's view of the priority of 'sanctitude' in the picture, but sees visual evidence for 'humble circumstances' rather than actual want, and argues that 'Lamb's emphasis on poverty not only provides an added appreciation for the devotion of the Maid and the poignancy of the scene, but also serves to create a firm justification for the angelic visitation'.[43] Despite the word's prominent position, Lamb does not explicitly characterise the scene in relation to 'Work' (l. 4). According to his reading of the scenario, despite working late into the night, the young woman still has most of her work to finish. Seeing no evidence of other family to contribute to household income, he infers that the maid's 'earnings scant' must keep them both – though only the 'feeble bed-rid Parent's want' is acknowledged. This implies the maid's self-denying character, as does the fact that 'Her sleep-charg'd *eyes* exemption ask' (l. 7; my emphasis) only when she is overcome by exhaustion: she would not complain or ask to be spared. By the end of the first verse paragraph, 'Holy Hands' have relieved her of 'her earthly drudgery' (ll. 8, 10), and the refrain directly reassures the maid that a miracle *is* happening: she can sleep safe in the knowledge that her work will be finished when she wakes up. For the worker who even when not engaged in toil is troubled by 'turmoiling' thoughts of endless tasks, this is an impossible dream. The picture's status as a potent wish-fulfilment fantasy is acknowledged by the refrains (ll. 11-12, 37-8), which anticipate the worker's disbelief.

The fantasy is enabled in part by the conventions and style of the sixteenth-century German or Northern Netherlandish religious art recalled in the drawing,

[42] Charles Lamb, '[Angel Help]', MS Eng 1094, fol. 20.
[43] Wills, 'New Lamb Material', 411.

which displace the figure of the exhausted worker to an idiom and time in which miracles are more plausible. This is emphasised in the short note that Lamb attached to all published versions of 'Angel Help': 'Suggested by a drawing in the possession of Charles Aders, Esq., in which is represented the Legend of a poor female Saint; who, having spun past midnight, to maintain a bed-rid mother, has fallen asleep from fatigue, and Angels are finishing her work. In another part of the chamber, an Angel is tending a lily, the emblem of purity.'[44] The sacred subject affirms the possibility of supernatural intervention in the lives of 'Virtuous Poor Ones' (l. 37) through the 'Angelic Presence' and the 'golden gleams' (ll. 14-15) streaming from the wall-mounted crucified Christ, and from the hand of the angel on the left. Similarly, the chronological displacement suggested by the heavy carved furniture, and anachronistic style of objects such as the oil lamp, bottle and simple spinning wheel locates the scene several centuries in the past. Lamb honours this by using verbal archaisms: a 'Tablet' as a stiff paper or wood surface for writing or drawing; the antique hand-held 'Rock and Spindle' to denote the spinning wheel; 'Ostents' meaning 'portents'; 'Prelibations' is glossed in the poem as 'foretastes' (ll. 1, 9, 17, 25). However, the supernatural elements are also treated with comparative realism. The angels' divine status is not signalled by a stylised halo, the wings of the pair engaged in spinning are soberly folded, and they are presented as practical, corporeal beings capable of 'earthly drudgery'. As befits its duty tending the abstraction virginity, the angel on the left is more ethereal: it hovers rather than stands, wings raised in flight – but the miraculous has been domesticated, familiarised.

Lamb's investment in the fantasy of liberation from work is reinforced by the opening eight lines of the second verse paragraph, where the speaker speculates that the sleeper 'knows it by her dreams' (l. 13). This is partly prompted by the 'Poor Maid's' peaceful expression. Lamb also seeks to show the reader through prolepsis the spinner's delight on waking –'expanding the visual suggestions', as Wills has it, of what Lamb called the 'Complex Scene given to the eye at once'.[45] However, the idea that the worker is not only relieved of 'earthly drudgery', but also is actively aware of the 'Angelic Presence' doing good while she sleeps, furthers the wish-fulfilment. The simple rest of unconsciousness is not enough to prove her credentials as 'a Sainted Maid' (l. 35): the spinner must have visionary awareness 'That Much of Heaven is in the room', and that her waking duty and care are rewarded.

The poem's preoccupation with a worker's dream of being free to 'sleep, sleep on, / And waking find your labours done' (ll. 11-12, 37-8) is more explicable when considered in the light of the symbolism of the wheel, and Mary's relationship with her mother. The word 'wheel' does not appear in the poem, but was in Lamb's mind: he considered replacing 'Rock and Spindle' with 'wheel and distaff'. He kept the more poetic formula because it 'sounds best', but the drawing offers iconographic wheels to trigger Lamb's association of work with the 'rotatory'. [46]

[44] Lucas, *Works*, V, 48.
[45] Charles Lamb to Charles Aders, April 1827, MS Eng 1094, fol. 23; quoted in Wills, 'New Lamb Material', 410.
[46] *Letters*, Lucas, III, 86.

Most obvious in the centre foreground is the darkly shadowed Saxony spinning wheel, symbol of endless labour and the vicissitudes of fate, the shape of the winding wheel echoed in the smaller reel. There is also a circular screen on the table, which shields the face of the sleeping parent, but also frames the light from the lamp. The spokes of the spinning wheel are similarly recalled in the face of the modern clock that shows the late night hour (five minutes to one o'clock), its swinging pendulum signalling time passing. Strikingly, in the left-hand part of the scene presided over by the angel tending the Maid's purity, is another machine necessary for the Maid's work: half-hidden behind the chest of drawers is a 'spinner's weasel' or clock-wheel, a yarn-winding tool used for measuring yarn into skeins.[47] The clock-wheel is not mentioned in the poem, but in conjunction with the other wheels that compositionally frame or hem in the sleeping figure, it helps to form an iconography of incessant work that stimulates Lamb's investment in the fantasy of divine intervention to relieve the worker.

To return to the picture as an analogy for Mary Lamb's relationship with their mother Elizabeth, the poem registers the 'Poor Maid's' duty towards the 'feeble bed-rid Parent' in the practical terms of working to earn money, eliding the care-giver role suggested by the medicine bottle, cup and spoon. The speaker's interest is in the effect that the heavenly 'golden gleams' have on the two figures' interiority: they brighten the 'Maid's' dreams and prospects, while removing the Parent's fear of death. The final passage concerning the angel and the lily fixates on the Maid's virginity or 'precious Dower' as a pledge of her chaste marriage with Christ. The angel is a 'Gardener bright from Eden's Bower' – a visitor from a prelapserian Eden, unlike her earthbound sisters working at the wheel. In Lamb's reading, the price of angelic ministration is that the young woman remain a spinster, in the dual sense of the designation of her occupation as a spinner, and the legal designation of an unmarried woman: 'Live a Sainted Maid, or die / Martyr to Virginity' (ll. 35-6).[48] While this destiny is congruent with 'the Legend of a poor female Saint', it may also be understood in relation to the Lambs' family history. The setting of the nocturnal bed-chamber, the human family reduced to the psychodrama's essential participants – archetypes of the hard-working daughter and bed-ridden mother – allows the picture to be read as an idealisation of Mary and Elizabeth Lamb imagined before Mary's matricide, but with a different outcome. Whereas in the weeks and months that culminated in the events of 22 September 1796 Lamb had been able to do little to relieve Mary of her physical and psychological burdens as primary carer, needlewoman and earner, the figures of the three angels make it possible to imagine a peaceful death for the parent, and devoted spinsterhood – and liberty from labour – for the surviving daughter. The consoling fiction of the poem published under the title 'Angel Help' is possible only at a distance of more than thirty years, encoded in a poetic response to a drawing, in which the historically-specific Miss Lamb, mantua-maker, of Little Queen-Street, is disguised as the fair young spinner, an aestheticized archetype of the woman-worker.

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[47] Eileen Chadwick, *The Craft of Hand Spinning* (New York, 1980), 78-80.
[48] *OED Online*, s.v. 'spinster', 1.a, 2.a.

When Lamb sent Mary's poem to Elizabeth Aders, his covering note stated, with dry understatement, that 'my sister has tried her hand upon the same subject, but with a slight shade of difference in the handling of it'.[49] Where Lamb stages a fantasy of divine intervention to relieve a female homeworker of monotonous, mechanical, manual labour, Mary's poem 'takes a satirical look both at the drawing and Charles's reading of it':[50]

Another version of the Same

Lazy-bones, Lazy-bones, wake up, and peep:
The Cat's in the Cup-board, your Mother's asleep:
There you sit snoring, forgetting her ills:
Who is to give her her bolus & pills?
Twenty fine Angels must come into town,
All for to help you to make your new gown;
Dainty aerial Spinsters & Singers:
Aren't you asham'd to employ such white fingers—
Delicate hands, unaccustom'd to reels,
To set 'em a spinning at poor bodies' wheels?
Why they came down is to me all a riddle,
And left Hallelujah broke off in the middle;
Jove's Court, and the Presence Angelical, cut,
To eke out the work of a lazy young Slut.

Angel-duck, Angel-duck, winged, and silly,
Pouring a watering pot over a Lily;
Gardener gratuitous, careless of pelf;
Leave her to water her Lilly herself;
Or to neglect it to death, if she chuse it:
Remember, the loss is her own if she lose it.
Mary Lamb.[51]

Charles's poem is voiced predominantly in the third-person, with occasional deictic gestures ('This rare Tablet', 'this Poor Maid') to bring the 'legend' closer to home, and use of the vivid present tense for immediacy, but direct address is restricted to the two refrains and invocation to the 'Gardener' (ll. 11-12, 37-8 and 27-30). By contrast, Mary uses direct address throughout, with the first fourteen lines dedicated to reproaching the young woman for neglect, selfishness, and vanity (the speaker queries why the angels bother coming down from heaven at all), then the last five lines to admonishing the angel with the bathetic 'watering pot' that her care is misguided: care for virginity must be the young woman's responsibility. Where Charles's maid did not ask 'exemption' from incessant labour, 'Lazy-bones' is barracked for lacking self-reliance. If Mary saw any correspondence to her own history either in the drawing, or in Charles's sober, intensely tender response, there is little trace. The omission may be interpreted as repression and denial, or as indirect evidence of her own good conscience, 'that every act of duty & of love [...]

[49] MS Eng 1094, fol. 23.
[50] Wills, 411.
[51] MS Eng 1094, fol. 22.

every kindness [...] she could shew her, she ever did'.[52] The young woman should do her duty tirelessly, as she, Mary, had done – the dire consequences for her mother and for her own mental health are entirely repressed.

'Another version' acknowledges that the human subjects are 'poor bodies' (l. 10), but also evinces Mary's trenchant scepticism about either the appropriateness of divine intervention for their circumstances, or the likelihood of relieving a woman worker from her duties. She uses a series of techniques to undermine 'Angel Help': nonsense reversals (Charles says 'sleep on', she says 'wake up'); parody (Charles's 'Angelic Presence' in the room becomes the 'Presence Angelical' abandoned at 'Jove's Court'); bathos (the 'Poor Maid's' dream-filled sleep becomes 'sit[ting] snoring'); and comic exaggeration (twenty angels for Charles's three), which successfully satirise their subject, while also deterring the reader from taking her poem too seriously. However, she also makes a positive assertion of the imperative nature of earthly tasks: Charles's cherished reprieve from endless work is recast as laziness, thoughtlessness, vanity, selfishness, and poor housekeeping. Instead Mary presents moral and domestic responsibility as a positive form of female agency: the sleeping daughter should be taking care of her mother, making her own clothes, protecting her own virginity – else deserve name-calling. The verse paragraph addressed to the sleeping spinner begins 'Lazy-bones' and ends 'lazy young Slut' – though of course the 'Angel-duck' does not escape this treatment. Mary may be resistant to male artists' and writers' tendency to idealise and aestheticize young women and angels, but her resistance to one objectionable stereotype of femininity does not prevent her from perpetuating another. Mary exploits the inherent incongruity of Götzenberger's subject – divine intervention in a domestic difficulty – but also implicitly scorns the likelihood of assistance for the lower-class working woman, whether from heaven or closer at hand. The woman must take responsibility for herself and her household because if she does not, who will? Strikingly, the differentiation of the working woman from the 'Twenty fine Angels' recalls the class-awareness of 'On Needlework'. The 'Dainty aerial Spinsters' with their 'white fingers' and 'Delicate hands' (ll. 7-9) resemble the middle- and upper-middle class readers of the *British Lady's Magazine*, who should direct their energies to wiser ends than occupying the time with fancy work and plain sewing, and instead give employment to the 'industrious sisterhood' of professional needleworkers.[53] Here, the spinning wheel is almost proudly defined as belonging to the working woman: angels should not be set 'spinning at *poor bodies'* wheels' (my emphasis). The speaker of 'Another version' proposes that the drawing and 'Angel Help' romanticise women's lot, that female labour should be defined in terms of dignity rather than monotony, and its abrasive manner pours scorn on the fantasy of sleeping on the job, 'And waking [to] find your labours done'. It is, however, a touch of irony that Mary's spirited defence of female industry ends up in an art patron's album, status symbol of elite leisure.

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[52] Marrs, *Letters*, I, 52.
[53] Sempronia [Mary Lamb], 'On Needle-work', *British Lady's Magazine*, 4 (April 1815), 257-260 (257).

Charles Lamb's Copy of 'On Needle-work'

Tom Lockwood

On 9 September 1827, Bernard Barton wrote to Charles Lamb in search of a literary career – Lamb's. What had Lamb written, and what had he kept, Barton asked. In an age of publication in magazines by alias, or under initials that might (or not might not) disclose an author's identity, and in which ungathered works might never reach the fixity of a gathered *Works*, these were serious questions – but asked by Barton in that unserious, bantering mode that he, like many others, learned from, and imitated back to, Lamb:

> I had a glimmering of thy Ulysses story the other day, but not enough to render either A.K. or myself perfectly sure whether such a book be now extant. A Reader of the Indicator told us there was an article in that entertaining Miscellany in which there was a famous Essay or Criticism on Lamb's works and a reference to certain Adventures of Ulysses; but his recollections were dim and conjectural – enlighten our darkness, I pray thee.[1]

Later in the month, Lamb's reply, written from Enfield, the latest landing in his domestic odyssey across London with Mary, apologised for its own delay, and for his solitariness: 'You will understand my silence when I tell you that my sister, on the very eve of entering into a new house we have taken at Enfield, was surprised with an attack of one of her sad long illnesses, for eight or nine weeks together.' His books were with him, though, and allowed him to answer the question put to him by Barton, and his friend, Anne Knight:

> On emptying my bookshelves I found an Ulysses, which I will send to A.K. when I go to town, for her acceptance – unless the Book be out of print. One likes to have one copy of every thing one does. I neglected to keep one of 'Poetry for Children,' the joint production of Mary and me, and it is not to be had for love or money. It had in the title-page 'by the author of Mrs. Lester's School.' Know you any one that has it, and would exchange it?[2]

In such an exchange as this correspondence, or in such an exchange of books as it imagines, the bonds of family, of friendship and of authorship reinforce one another, and are at the same time tested. For if, in Lamb's numerically punning aphorism, 'One likes to have one copy of every thing one does', so too does one recognise that what one does one may also lose, as those one lives with may also be lost. And in circumstances such as the Lambs', where brother and sister not only

[1] Bernard Barton-Charles Lamb, 9 September 1827: E.V. Lucas, ed., *The Complete Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 3 vols (London, 1935), III, 129.
[2] Charles-Lamb-Bernard Barton, [mid-September 1827]: Lucas, ed., *Letters*, III, 127-28.

lived but wrote together, both life and text may well be understood, as Lamb himself understood it, as 'the joint production of Mary and me'.

The survival in the Robert H. Taylor collection of the Firestone Library at Princeton University of Charles Lamb's copy of Mary Lamb's essay, 'On Needle-work', allows us to ask again what producing, having and keeping texts may have meant for the Lambs' domestic, intellectual and imaginative economy. Outwardly, at least, the book that is now Robert H. Taylor Collection 19th-305, is not glamorous, and might seem initially to do little to unsettle the received opinion of Lamb's library, established so firmly so long ago by Crabb Robinson's famous description in 1824: 'the finest collection of shabby books I ever saw'.[3] It is half-bound in dark brownish-red leather over now scuffed marbled paper boards in precisely that style that Elia told his readers that he most favoured: 'The dishabille, or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume'.[4] And the twelve separate printed items contained within those half-bound boards – some of them incomplete and damaged fragments of other books, some of them independent pamphlets, and some very clearly extracted from periodicals – in their mismatched sizes, dates and printing styles might seem to constitute another kind of defiantly miscellaneous challenge to the pose of Crabb Robinson's class-bound bibliographical sensitivities ('filthy copies, which a delicate man would really hesitate touching').[5] But recent scholarship on the meaning of *Sammelbände* or compilation-books, and more particularly a close re-inspection of the dispersed but still surviving archive of books owned or annotated by Lamb, may allow us today to revisit and to revalue the apparent shabbiness of those artefacts.[6] The example of volumes such as RTC 19th-305 allows us to think, that is, not about Lamb's lack of care for, or carelessness with, books, but instead the care he took with them, of them, and for them. This is a Lamb who used books in particular, personal ways; who had them bound in such a way as to bind together some of the central continuities of his life and his identity, his family and his network of friends; and whose books repay – touchingly – the kind of tactful handling we might today give them.

The list of contents that Lamb inscribed on the front endpaper of RTC 19th-305 is both an account of the company kept by his copy of 'On Needle-work' and the first instance of the care with which he preserved it. In the following transcription, Lamb's own deletions are represented with ~~strikethrough~~ and later additions in his hand within \obliques/:

> Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures by Wm. Blake. \Curious/
> Poems by Lord Rochester, Castigated Edition.
> Chrononhotonthologos
> Poems by Lady Winchelsea
> Artaxerxes

[3] Edith J. Morley, ed., *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, 3 vols (London, 1938), I, 301.
[4] Charles Lamb, 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', *London Magazine* (July 1822), quoted from Adam Phillips, ed., *Selected Prose* (Harmondsworth, 1985, repr. 2013), 148.
[5] Morley, ed., *Books and Their Writers*, I, 301.
[6] See, for example, Alexandra Gillespie, 'Poets, Printers, and the Early English Sammelbandë', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), 189-214 and Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia, 2013).

> ~~On Need~~
> On Needle-work
> Wat Tyler, by R. Southey, twopenny Edition.
> Confessions of a Drunkard.
> Force of Religion, by Edwd. Young.
> Spartan Dame, by Southerne.
> The Briton, by Ambrose Philips.
> The Witness, ~~Author Unknown~~ \by – Galt/

Some of the contents of RTC 19th-305 have been noticed in scholarship before, particularly its first item: Lamb's copy of Blake's (very rare) *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), annotated by Blake, and with Lamb's perhaps characteristically unconcerned instructions to the binder at the head of its title-page, 'half bound | (not letterd)'.[7] 'Curious' this book may have been to Lamb, as his note in the manuscript contents might suggest, but it does not seem to have mattered to him that this was a book with Blake's hand in and on it: Blake's note on the title-page, 'At N23 Corner of Broad Street Golden Square', and his correction to text on p.64, are not further annotated, or remarked on, by Lamb. So too might the physical condition of the second item in the compilation volume, an incomplete example, lacking its title page and all of signature A, of what is probably Henry Hills' 1710 edition of Rochester's *Poems on Several Occasions* (ESTC T095236), suggest that Lamb's curiosity and intentions in the collection took time to evolve. This book, whose pages are c.10mm shorter than the other elements in the bound-up collection, has its own instructions to the binder written onto its first surviving leaf in Lamb's hand, 'Half Bound', now a little cropped at the head. This might suggest that the Rochester was once intended to be the first item in a different and unrealised compilation of smaller items, preserving that uncancelled but not completed intention in its new position and context.

This apparent absence of chronological or thematic connection between the separate printed items bound for Lamb together in RTC 19th-305 is indeed one marker of the volume's miscellaneity, and one of the challenges that it presents for description and analysis. What, for instance, is the third item – a 1753 edition of *Chrononhotonthologos: The Most Tragical Tragedy, That Ever Was Tragedized by Any Company of Tragedians* – doing here, sandwiched between the Rochester and the fourth item, a 1714 edition of *Poems on Several Occasions* by Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea? The two elements seem to have no temporal relationship one to another, and the absence of manuscript annotation by Lamb to *Chrononhotonthologos* and the relative density and care of his annotation to Finch seem to suggest very different relationships of interest and attention, too. In annotating the title-page of *Poems on Several Occasions* to declare Finch's poem, 'A Nocturnal Reverie', 'the best poem in the collection', Lamb was expressing an opinion much more famously attributed to Wordsworth in this period, who singled out the same poem for praise in his 1815 *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface to Lyrical Ballads*.[8] But whether Lamb

[7] G.E. Bentley, Jr, *Blake Books* (Oxford, 1977), 951-53, correcting his earlier description at 141.
[8] W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser eds, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974), III, 73; and for Wordsworth as the starting point for recent commentary on the poem see

anticipated or followed Wordsworth in this judgement the volume will not quite confirm: it cannot have been bound together any earlier than 1817, the date at which its seventh item was printed – the text of Southey's *Wat Tyler*, brandished to his embarrassment by the fifth number of *The Republican* on Saturday 29 March 1817 – but Lamb might of course have acquired his second-hand copy of *Poems on Several Occasions* at any point before that date, and begun to annotate it at any point after that as well.

The later items bound into RTC 19th-305 in different ways challenge readers today to perceive, or perhaps to half create, connections of kind or meaning. The ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth items in the compilation are all literary, for sure, and three of the four are plays, each of which declares itself a tragedy. The ninth item is a copy of Edward Young's poem, *The Force of Religion; or, Vanquish'd Love* (1714); and it is followed by three playtexts: Southerne's *The Spartan Dame* (1719), Philips' *The Briton* (1722), and *The Witness* (1814), another tragedy, attributed to John Galt, and extracted from the first volume of a short-lived periodical, *The Rejected Theatre; or, a Collection of Dramas, which have been offered for representation but declined by the Managers of the Playhouses*. But there is no substantive annotation by Lamb to suggest how (if at all) he saw the relationships between them, beyond the two large, page-wide crosses with which he struck through the character-list and first page of text in the text that followed *The Witness*, an anonymous two-act farce called *The Watchhouse*. Such cancellings and crossings out emphasise, perhaps, the literary unity of a text (*The Witness*) over the bibliographical unity of the artefact from which it had been taken (*The Rejected Theatre*), but may not, perhaps, ever have been intended to do or suggest more than this.

It is tempting, though, to see something more in the heart of the compilation that Lamb created in RTC 19th-305, and in its centre something central to him, and his relationship with Mary. For in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth items in the compilation we might see, I think, something both of the embrace and the embarrassment of being the Lambs, and the full force of their 'joint productions'. The printed text of an 1813 copy of *Artaxerxes* that is the fifth item in RTC 19th-305 is itself unremarkable: it must have been for Lamb a second-hand copy of a 'new edition' of the play, which its first owner – a 'C Ryle 1813', who wrote his name and his year of purchase at the head of its title-page – noted had been revived at Covent Garden in the autumn of that year, annotating the printed *Dramatis Personae* with the dates '6 Oct & 16 Dec 1813'. But in a way it must also have been more than this, for the conjunction of this play and this theatre constituted for Elia (and for Lamb) that most remarkable of events: '*my first play*'. Lamb's *London Magazine* essay of 1821, 'My First Play', which remembers precisely the play in the theatre, enacts again the complicated chronological relationship with the bound-up book that we saw with the Finch *Poems*: memories of a performance, probably in December 1780, are mixed with, and overlaid by, other possible revivals on the play on the stage, and the mediating texts (such as this one) of the play on the page.[9]

Christopher R. Miller, 'Staying Out Late: Anne Finch's Poetics of Evening', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 45 (2005), 603-23.

[9] 'My First Play' was first published in *The London Magazine* (December 1821); Lamb's manuscript is now also in the Robert H. Taylor collection at Princeton, where it is RTC01 no.69, partially described as LmC 257 in Barbara Rosenbaum, *Index of English Literature Manuscripts, Volume 4: 1800-1900, Part 2: Hardy-Lamb* (London, 1990).

In this context, Charles Lamb's copy of 'On Needle-work', the sixth item in RTC 19th-305, has its meaning. Lamb's copy is physically pp.257-64, or a single gathering (sigs 2L1-4), extracted from *The British Lady's Magazine* (1 April 1815), where Mary Lamb's essay first pseudonymously appeared. As he did in the case of *The Witness*, Lamb struck through with a large inked cross the text of other contributions to *The British Lady's Magazine* that were bibliographically inseparable from Mary Lamb's letter-article, deleting in this way the '*Original Letters, descriptive of the Island of Madeira*', promised by the running-title from p.260 onwards. But he did not otherwise annotate or attribute 'On Needle-work', and so it may be that we should look to his other writing for a possible commentary on what and how it might have meant to him. 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading' again provides a lead, where directly after his hymn to the 'dishabille, or half-binding', Elia thinks of the aesthetics of readership and bibliographical consumption to which this contributes:

> Thomson's Seasons, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn, and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old 'Circulating Library' Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight! – of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or hard-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill-spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?[10]

The move in Lamb's prose from the indistinct and unidentifiable 'thousand thumbs' of earlier readers to the vivid portrait of 'lone sempstress', reading after her 'long day's needle-toil', has been much remarked; and to encounter his copy of 'On Needle-work', or perhaps rather his *and* Mary's copy of 'On Needle-work', in this bound-up compilation is to see in one way the very best 'condition' in which one might desire to see the piece. For following *Artaxerxes*, with its central place in Lamb's identity and ambitions, 'On Needle-work' stitches together Mary's profession with his own.

It is in this sense of connection that the seventh and eighth items in RTC 19th-305 are bound into its structures of meaning. For the 1817 text of Southey's much earlier revolutionary drama, *Wat Tyler*, and Lamb's essay, 'Confessions of a Drunkard', extracted from its second publication in Basil Montagu's book, *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Fermented Liquors* (1814), serve as a reminder of all the awkwardness and discontinuity that any identity must over the passage of a life and a career struggle to contain or to accommodate. Again in the case of *Wat Tyler*, Lamb has deleted the bibliographically necessary pages that do not contain part of

[10] Lamb, 'Detached Thoughts' in Phillips, ed., *Selected Prose*, 148.

Southey's text; but in the text of his 'Confessions' a different order of care is visible. Here Lamb has intervened in the text four times to correct in manuscript errors that Montagu had introduced into his essay in reprinting it from its first publication in *The Philanthropist* (January 1813), corrections that were made again with only one exception, perhaps independently, or perhaps even from this marked-up copy, when the essay was reprinted for a third time in *The London Magazine* (August 1822). We might see Lamb's annotations today as a marker of proprietorial and authorial pride, and his personal collection and awkward ownership of the essay through his placement of it in this volume: together the gestures serve as another quiet but forceful recognition that 'every thing one does' might have a place and a meaning in a life. For as Lamb's letter to Barton with which I began made clear, the extent to which Charles and Mary's writing must always have been in possible connection to the conditions and experience of their lives together, and their lives apart, is something that the physical make-up of RTC 19th-305 embodies and enacts. The book is a reminder of all that might fit together in a life, and all that might not: of what Mary Lamb called in 'On Needle-work' the 'knitting, knotting, netting' that bind together life and writing and reading.[11]

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[11] For their comments on earlier drafts of this essay I am grateful to Stephen Burley, Felicity James and Georgia Tindale, and to its first audience at the Charles Lamb Society Study Day.

The Fishmonger, the Mantua Maker and the Madness of Mary Lamb

Jocelynne A. Scutt

In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf invented Shakespeare's sister.[1] 'Judith', the imaginary sibling conjured-up to illustrate women's disadvantage in arts, culture and the polity, would not, said Woolf, have been able to perform as did Shakespeare, because sixteenth and early seventeenth-century English cultural realities, social expectations, economics and male-female relations militated against it. This fictional sister, brave and gifted, yet denied learning in grammar and logic or the reading of Horace and Virgil, would have run from the restrictions of village life, travelled to London, made it to a playhouse Bankside, been shunned or harassed by actors, stagehands and others of the masculine kind, ending up pregnant to an actor-manager and, shamed at the prospect of bearing a bastard, dead by her own hand at an early age. An alternative, though not advanced by Woolf, would be exhaustion through marriage and mothering ten children (half of them dead at birth) – and, again, for her, too, death (most likely in childbirth) at the end of it.

Once having introduced this sleight-of-hand invention, Woolf's socio-political observations turn to include laudatory reference to Charles Lamb. Here, Woolf omits any reference to Mary Lamb, Charles' sister, whom for Woolf seems not to exist. Like Charles, Mary Lamb lived more than a century after the famed Elizabethan playwright. Yet she was principal author of *Tales from Shakespear*, a volume published initially in Charles' name alone. She gained author contracts in her own right, wrote more books and essays, and was high-selling leader in the field of children's literature and poetry. At the same time, she made a not insignificant contribution to many works published and recognised as authored by Charles.[2]

Why, then, an invented sister for Shakespeare to make Woolf's point, and a wholesale avoidance of the existence of Lamb's sister, a sibling who did precisely what the fictional sister was represented as being unable to do, when Shakespeare lived? This puzzle harbours the question whether, in reclaiming women's history, dominant cultural perspectives are so firmly fixed in human brains that women embarked on the project may subvert or at least distort it. Women's colonisation may be so substantial that, although not totally overwhelming, it interferes endemically with women's thought processes. This patriarchal infusion lies as an obstacle in the minds of all women, however orientated to feminism and feminist principles a woman may be. Hence, although determinedly focused on recovering herstory and the women who should rightly constitute history, women who ought to be named and valorised nonetheless may be overlooked.

[1] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London, 2004), 54-6, 63, 131-32.
[2] Susan Tyler Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb – Lunacy and Murder in Literary London* (New York, NY, 2005).

Along with Mary Lamb – whose existence within the literary world has had limited telling because of her brother's existence and the pre-eminence conventionally of his place in that world – there may well be other 'real' sisters. Indeed, this is far more likely than not, as Germaine Greer has shown for the world of art – sisters, daughters, nieces, mothers, aunts …[3] That such women should exist in painting and not in other fields of cultural expression is unlikely, particularly so with writing, which was – as it remains - far less expensive to maintain. Nor is the problem limited to the far distant past.

This rendering invisible of some women, in the very instant of recovering others, demands analysis. The analysis demands a revisiting of Shakespeare's imaginary sibling alongside Charles Lamb's very real sister. The excavation of a forgotten past means recovering or, better yet, uncovering Mary Lamb's standing as writer in her own right and as writer and collaborator in her brother's cause.

Who are the unseen women and what creates their invisibility?

~ Reclaiming Mary Lamb ~

On 22 September 1796, four years after London saw Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published,[4] in that same city Mary Lamb is recorded as having stabbed her own mother. This she did with a carving knife in the kitchen located above a wig shop at 7 Little Queen Street. That it labeled her forever is confirmed in the title given by its writer to Mary Lamb's biography – *Mad Mary Lamb*.[5] The book's subtitle speaks to this same classification – 'Lunacy and Murder in Literary London'. The volume entitled *The Devil Kissed Her*, albeit affirming Mary Lamb's writing skill and carrying the neutral subtitle 'The Story of Mary Lamb', also adverts to her as 'Murderess, madwoman, and co-author with her brother Charles of the children's classic Tales from Shakespeare' – placing authorship last.[6] So history and herstory alike remember her, a figure of sadness and madness alongside her literary brother. A sharpened blade, a swift, sure thrust, and Charles Lamb's sister stands denied definition beyond this one act,[7] its aftermath, and subsequent periods spent, at what is said to be her own instigation, in rest-homes and secluded hostels housing the mentally unstable, the temperamentally infirm, or the just plain mad.

Matricide in anyone's history is no small item. Yet Mary Lamb is far more than mother-slaughter and madness. In today's terms, her condition would be termed bi-polar – an ailment not preventing sufferers from functioning well, sometimes exceptionally, for lengthy periods. Indeed, a not insubstantial number of artists, playwrights, poets, actors, writers and other literary and cultural icons are classed as having suffered similarly, as do many of this cohort today. Why, then, should Mary Lamb be dismissed as a nonentity, or at least inferior to her brother (who suffered an early mental breakdown, too) because of a mental condition she

[3] Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (London, 1979).
[4] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London, 2004).
[5] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb …* (2005).
[6] Kathy Watson, *The Devil Kissed Her – The Story of Mary Lamb* (London, 2004).
[7] Which was not murder, in any event: the inquest found Mary to have killed whilst insane which led not to a trial or conviction but to confinement in a place for those classed 'mad'.

was motivated and well-primed to manage by taking herself off to rest when alerted by the onset of an unsettling and unsettled phase? Was it this cloak of madness surrounding her and known to literary circles, at least, that made Virginia Woolf leave her out? Or did Woolf omit her from contention because Mary Lamb transgressed Woolf's argument as to women writers and their lack? Did the very fact that Charles depended upon Mary for his domestic life and at minimum relied on her as a sounding board for his work, and that her work was appropriated by him or appropriated for him, sit ill with the points Woolf sought to make? Was the fact that Mary Lamb lacked £500 a year and 'a room of her own' yet made a substantial literary contribution – in essays and children's fiction at that - a diversion from Woolf's political stand for the right of women to write, and to claim space and money to do so? Or was Mary Lamb's invisibility in Woolf's writing a consequence of her being unseen due to the dazzle of the works attributed solely to her brother?

What were the realities of Mary Lamb's writing life?

Committed to bringing her subject back into the light, biographer Susan Tyler Hitchcock observes Mary Lamb 'lurk[ing] in the footnotes for more than a century':

> If discussed at all by those who study English literature of the early nineteenth century, Mary Lamb plays the part of an albatross to her younger brother, Charles Lamb, who is considered one of the finest essayists in the English language. Never placed in the highest empyrean with Shakespeare and Milton, still Charles Lamb and his nimble wit stand for style and sensibility – utterly English, cunningly idiosyncratic, universally amusing. Contemporary essayist Phillip Lopate calls Lamb's *Essays of Elia* his best-known work, 'not only an essential text, but a near-buried treasure, an all-but-lost masterpiece'.[8]

Upon Mary Lamb's escape from trial by reason of 'insanity', Charles was designated his sister's legal guardian. Yet from the time of his birth, she being ten years older and their mother becoming more and more indisposed, Mary had become his principal carer. When she returned from her enforced seclusion after her mother's death, Mary resumed her daily chores in caring for Charles and her father. She had spent the time immediately before the matricide caring for them as well as her mother (who progressively lost the use of her limbs until, by 1796, she required assistance with every aspect of living, including carrying to and from bed). For a time, too, an aunt took up residence with the family – responsibility again devolving to Mary Lamb. For the years following their father's death (which came not long after that of their mother), Mary and Charles lived together, she taking responsibility for the running of the joint household.

The dominant record depicts this living arrangement as one depriving Charles Lamb of any chance at matrimony. The times Mary Lamb spent away, when she submitted herself to confinement in anticipation of a bi-polar spell, are seen in that same record as confirming her as Charles' burden. Yet he, too, was a depressive – he spent time in a mental institution the year before the event that sent Mary into

[8] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb …* (2005), 17-18.

care[9] – and if he were cramped by Mary, she was surely just as cramped by him: she never married, living on and dying single almost thirteen years after Charles. Further, if he were so 'cramped' by her presence – yet at the same time she was absent so often, why did he not employ the time in pursuit of a partner?

Depression inflicted Charles throughout his life. His condition he described as involving 'frenzy', accepting there was a family disposition towards it: this is indicative of a bi-polar prognosis, too. As well, from an early age Lamb suffered from alcoholism, lasting all his adult life. Hence, the contention that care was all one way – directed from Charles to Mary, falls away. As to his being prevented from marrying, on one occasion Fanny Kelly, an actress to whom he was attracted, effectively rejected him ostensibly because of his living arrangements.[10] However, Charles seems to have suffered from unrequited love on a serial scale: in his youth he formed a passion for a young woman to whom he dedicated poetry; later he 'fell in love' with a woman seen only from afar – whom he never met. As Ainger reports, Lamb wrote to Coleridge of his six-weeks' 'away', saying they were 'spent agreeably in a madhouse at Hoxton'. The letter added that Coleridge might be convinced of Lamb's regard for him: '... when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.'[11] This 'other person', Ainger reflects, was Lamb's lost love Alice whom he called his 'fair-haired maid' in poems then and later.

An alternative reading to that of Mary-as-millstone sees Mary's presence as positively enhancing Charles' literary output, whilst her absence interfered with it. What may well have hampered Charles' writing was not that Mary Lamb was a burden, her absences draining him with distress on her behalf, but that she was a profound benefit to his literary efforts. Her disappearances from the domestic hearth meant he lost an essential contributor to them. Taking into account her own known and now acknowledged literary output, the possibility that Charles was at least in somewise dependent upon Mary not only domestically but also in his writing must have some weight. On more than one occasion Charles Lamb himself made oblique or more direct reference to the impact of her critical faculties on his writing. He acknowledged this much in relation to one serious disruption caused by a lapse in writing skills.

The contretemps involving Robert Southey revolved around Southey's article published in the *Quarterly Review* and, more, Charles Lamb's response to it, this appearing in *London Magazine*. Southey referred in passing to an essay of Elia, mentioning in that passing, but clearly identifiable, 'TH', Leigh Hunt's young son. It was Lamb's contribution which enforced the rift between the two writers: indeed, until it appeared, having intended no slur or insult, Southey was unaware of anything amiss. In relating the break in Lamb and Southey's relations, Ainger[12] refers to this essay as 'not one of Lamb's happiest efforts': in part its 'fun' is made

[9] Alfred Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (London, 1882), 25-27.
[10] Watson, *The Devil Kissed Her* ... (2004), 171-84.
[11] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 59-62.
[12] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 129-43.

'laborious' and some parts 'come in rather flatly as a peroration ...'[13] This echoes Lamb's own sense of the essay's lack of literary merit, his later writing to Southey that he:

> ... was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw in a few obnoxious words a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both Magazine and Review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time ...[14]

This cannot be dismissed as an outcry against the absence of domestic care through Mary Lamb's taking herself away so that she was unable to provide it, for Lamb made no secret elsewhere of his poor opinion of his sister's homemaker role: bluntly, for him, not only did she lack homely skills, she had no capacity to ensure a smooth-running household.

Very likely, Mary Lamb contributed to her brother's literary efforts in more significant ways than merely standing by, as 'angelically guarding' Lamb's words may imply. Support is ready to hand.

In late 1814, Charles Lamb was invited, by the editor John Scott, to contribute regularly to *The Champion*, a London-based journal. Charles accepted – then found himself unable to fulfill the assignment. He advised Scott of his withdrawal from the agreement.[15] On another occasion, the summer holiday of 1822, he and Mary travelled to France together, leaving London in mid-June. Expectations were he would use this trip for literary purposes, writing essays upon his observations of Paris and environs.[16] Nothing was written by him at this time, or at least there was no publishable output, evidence that his pen emitted nothing but silence over the period. Not only did he actively seek publication whenever he wrote: Lamb needed the money.[17] As Ainger says, an essay from Elia: '... embodying even the surface impression of a month's stay in Paris would have been a welcome addition to the number. Lamb was usually prompt to seize on the latest incident in his life and turn it to this purpose ...'[18] Lamb's literary silence at this time is even more stark when the record shows the first volume of *Essays of Elia*, published by Taylor and Hessey, appearing at the beginning of 1823.[19]

On both unproductive occasions, Mary was absent. On the Paris trip, finding herself going into a decline, was off to a clinic, leaving Charles alone to return to London, there to await her recovery and independent return. On the occasion of his inability to meet the weekly essay output Scott required, she was again absent. This time, Mary Lamb had gone to a familiar rest home on London's outskirts when anticipating a breakdown.

[13] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 136.
[14] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb* ... (2005), 128-29
[15] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb* ... (2005), 128-29.
[16] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 126-27.
[17] He once contributed jokes to the *Post* and the *Chronicle* at 1d a joke, 6d a day: Jack Russell, *Nelson and the Hamiltons* (London, 1969), 284.
[18] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 126-27.
[19] Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia* (London, 1823).

These episodes can be read in various ways. Of her remaining some two months while Lamb returned home from Paris, Ainger says this was 'a sad story, only too likely to be true', with Mary not wishing to travel back to England by sea at that time or in that condition. He attributes the Paris trip's absence of output to Lamb's sensitivity in not wishing to cause Mary Lamb 'embarrassment'.[20] Yet why his writing about Paris should cause any embarrassment to his sister is difficult to see: what need for him to remark upon her condition or otherwise touch upon the circumstances of her mental care in that city? What relevance to his writing about the French metropolis? The entire trip was not undertaken with Mary at the brink of an 'episode'. Besides, the money would have helped her as well as him. That 'sensitivity' could stand in the way of money, so badly needed by the household, is difficult to accept, particularly as Lamb's stringent wit was a signature of his essays and repartee. He did not shield Mary from it – more than once she was its target.

The Southey episode is not the only time Lamb admitted the importance of his sister to his writing. He wrote on an earlier occasion to Dorothy Wordsworth acknowledging Mary as 'a prop', so that in her leaving him 'all his strength was gone', he 'like a fool, bereft of her co-operation ...'[21] Simply a recognition of her domestic presence and running of the household? As before, unlikely! 'Prop' and 'co-operation' denote far more. It is not without relevance that *Mr H*, Lamb's play written alone by him in a separate lodging, failed miserably, Mary then being able to devote her own time to writing. As it proved, despite the period's leading actor, Elliston, in the title role, it was a one-night-only event at Drury Lane. Ainger, with Hitchcock in agreement,[22] concludes it was 'not much better in reading than it was found in the acting': 'Its humour, consisting largely of puns and other verbal pleasantries, exhibits little or nothing of Lamb's native vein, and the dialogue is too often laboriously imitated from the conventional comedy-dialogue then in vogue ...'[23] Watson reports Mary as 'delighted but cautious' upon acceptance of the play for production, acknowledgement of Mary's apprehensive recognition of its possible failure.[24]

An affirmation of Mary Lamb's importance to and direct involvement in Lamb's writing seems more attuned to what was, than to what conventionally has been, projected as so. That she has so readily been written off as 'mad' adds further to the claim. The frequency with which women, particularly unconventional women, are classed 'insane' or at least mentally unbalanced, disturbed or unstable is well-confirmed.[25]

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[20] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 126-27.
[21] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb* ... (2005), 149.
[22] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb* ... (2005), 158-59.
[23] Ainger, *Charles Lamb* (1882), 64-66.
[24] Watson, *The Devil Kissed Her* ... (2004), 147-48.
[25] Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York, NY, 1972, 2005); Janette Hartz-Karp, 'Women in Constraints' in *Women and Crime*, Satyanshu K. Mukherjee and Jocelynne A. Scutt (eds) (Sydney, Australia, 1981); Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women – The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney, Australia, 1984).

Mary Lamb and Charles were passionate about children's books. Visiting a London bookshop specialising in the genre, they expressed horror at the state of children's literature and its decline at the turn of the century.[26] In 1805 came the opportunity to remedy the defect, through William Godwin and his alliance with Mrs Clairmont. Despite a view that she would be 'bad' for him, Godwin married her and together they established a thriving publishing enterprise: 'The Juvenile Library' of children's books was at its centre, with Mary Lamb and her brother caught up in it. Yet here, too, Mary Lamb is too little acknowledged in deference to her brother's work and what is seen as his.

The King and Queen of Hearts appeared under Charles Lamb's name alone. Yet in 1806, the year after its publication, the Godwins contracted with Mary Lamb to write *Tales From Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. The work appeared in 1807, published in two volumes. Charles Lamb's name is on the flyleaf as author. This was no subterfuge in deference to any proposition that 'ladies' did not acknowledge authorship. Poetry appeared in *The Times* and other publications under named female authorship, including Harriet Walker and others.[27] When *Mrs Leicester's School* was published in 1809, seven stories written by Mary, three by Charles, the author was 'Anonymous' but soon recognised as Mary Lamb and brother Charles, and published thenceforth in that manner (*Mrs Leicester's School*, 'Introductory Essay').

In correspondence Mary acknowledges Charles' contribution to *Tales From Shakespear*: the comedies were chosen by her, the tragedies by him, making up twenty stories – more than two-thirds (at least fourteen) written by her.[28] Watson confirms her writing as superior to Charles' in style, wit and confidence. It was a best-seller and has been selling well ever since.[29]

~ Mary Lamb, Her Brother Charles, and Shakespeare's Sister ~

In late 1814, Mary Lamb described herself as debilitated through writing, taking herself once more to a place of seclusion pending her recovery. She had recently completed work on a piece for the new journal, *British Lady's Magazine*, scheduled to be published early the following year. The intellectual effort this entailed was the ostensible cause of her mental exhaustion. That the real cause may have been her brother's carping and making fun of her effort seems more likely. After all, Mary Lamb had written for many years, with a highly productive output, and had become a best-selling author with *Shakespear* 'for young ladies' being re-issued time and again. Why should writing send her into a decline this time?

Charles Lamb was no feminist. He distanced himself from the Preface to *Shakespear* in its emphasis upon the volume's being directed specifically towards an audience of young women. Similarly, his hand is absent in the claims for *Mrs Leicester's School* as affirmation of girls' education rights, along with the existence and importance of girls' intellect. In letters he wrote scathingly of the feminist advocacy. For his sister, it was otherwise. However much she may have deferred to

[26] Hitchcock (2005), 131-43.
[27] Russell, *Nelson* ... (1969), 336.
[28] Hitchcock (2005), 159-62.
[29] Watson (2004), 122-26.

Charles – although there is much to indicate that she worked at their arrangement as one of 'equals' - Mary Lamb clearly did not join him in this hostility. Although on occasion couched in less firm language than she usually employed, 'On Needle-work' unashamedly favoured economic and paidwork rights for women.[30] Without hesitation or prevarication, it was equally blunt in its assertion of women's intellectual capabilities. The thrust of the piece was that working women need paid employment to sustain themselves. Mantua making – including various forms of dressmaking, the stitching of clothing and garments – had been a source of income for her, and was a major field of employment for vast numbers of women. Women in the rising middleclass, despite having in their husbands an alternative source of support, had taken to sewing, so depriving the economically necessitous of their income. It was the women who sewed without selling what they made whom Mary opined should give up the needle. Instead, they should concentrate on matters intellectual, adding to their existing contribution to stimulating discussion in the household, particularly with their husbands. That she overlooked the possibility that middle-class women sewed because husbands did not provide adequate housekeeping monies or declined to pay for their wives to dress or dress well, does not detract from the strength of Mary Lamb's argument for the rights of women in need of paidwork to survive, nor her affirmation of the depth of women's intellect. That wives engaged in equal discourse with husbands she acknowledged. Leaving aside sewing would mean further opportunities for even greater stretches of intellect, a field in which they did and would continue to excel. Whilst working women could, she said, easily take over the work of law clerks, if the field of stitching were returned to them as a money-making field of production, they would have no need of pushing men out of their offices.

Charles' response was to write 'On the Melancholy of Tailors'. His effort beat his sister's into print, *The Champion* publishing first, at the end of 1814.[31] Poking further fun, he followed this up with an answering riposte, under the initials JD. This purported to be a tailor's response to Charles' essay.[32] Style and sentence structure, with the same sense of hilarity infecting the two, indicates that they may even have been written together, the later planned along with the earlier. Or completion of the first may have prompted Lamb to gain further currency from the joke. Mary's going into decline at this point is no mystery. That she anticipated a lack of sympathy could be a reason for the several more tentative lines and at times a drawing-back from its feminist elements, of what is essentially a strong piece. Similarly as to her choice of a nom de plume (although Charles regularly published under pen names, the most famous, of course, being 'Elia'). Being a target of 'fun' in her foray into feminist analysis-in-print, that 'fun' coming from the brother she so

[30] Mary Lamb ('Sempronia), 'On Needle-work', *British Lady's Magazine, and Monthly Miscellany*, 1 (4) (April, 1815), 257-60

[31] Sarah Burton, *A Double Life: A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London, 2003); Charles Lamb ('Burton, *Junior*'), 'On the Melancholy of Tailors', *The Champion*, 4 December 1814; reprinted *Works*, I, 172-75 and 449-51; Charles Lamb ('JD'), 'On the Melancholy of Tailors', *The Champion*, 11 December 1814; reprinted in Edwin W. Marrs, Jr, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, Vol. III (1809-1817) (London, 1978), fn 1, Letter 283, [121]-[122].

[32] John M. Turnbull, 'Notes and Observations: A Retort to *Elia*,' *Review of English Studies*, 3 (January 1927), 68-70.

supported in his own work, would be a blow. The household tension generated by Charles' dissent from her stand for the cause of women's rights could have been overwhelming.

That 'On the Melancholy of Tailors' in its original and follow-up were ridicule directed at Mary's work is tentatively suggested by Hitchcock.[33] Yet she swiftly pulls back. Watson calls Mary's essay 'cogent' and 'bold', but says nothing of Charles' reaction.[34] And here, perhaps, lies the heart of the conundrum insofar as the downplaying of Mary Lamb as a significant authorial figure, and as to Woolf's ignoring her utterly. Just as Hitchcock resiles from confrontation with Charles Lamb's culturally accepted character, helpmeet to his sister, never hindrance, Woolf (albeit with an initially light nod to condescension) lionises him: *A Room of One's Own* contains no fewer than ten references to Charles Lamb.[35] Although quizzically noting Thackeray's adulation of Lamb ('Saint Charles, said Thackeray, putting a letter of Lamb's to his forehead'),[36] Woolf nonetheless accepts his pre-eminence as essayist: after all, the perfect antidote to this is Mary Lamb's existence and her contribution to the Lamb oeuvre. So it is that the traditional female obeisance to the male authority figure, the male who has for so long been assumed and asserted to be 'the' (in this case) author, affects and infects feminist (re)assessment of his sister. Ironically, Ainger (1882) seems in many ways to accept Mary's authorial importance more.

Woolf was restricted in her access to the University of Cambridge Library as she was not a student nor a don, and by reason of her sex/gender could not be one, as neither a Fellow or accompanied by one, nor with letter of introduction from one fast in hand.[37] Might this be said to excuse her lack of reference to Mary Lamb: how could Woolf research her? Yet there was always the British Museum (now the British Library) and it was not as if nothing had been written about Mary Lamb.[38] Marienne Kirlew even titles her work *Famous Sisters of Great Men*, with Mary Lamb's name appearing in the subtitle. In any event, Woolf was at the centre of London's literary world, in a prime position to acquaint herself not only with Mary's existence, but with her role. That Woolf overlooks Dorothy Wordsworth, too, tends to confirm this dilemma of feminism: it can hardly be asserted that Woolf knew nothing of Dorothy Wordsworth and her importance to her brother's work as well as her own. Two biographies were published shortly after *A Room of One's Own*.[39] In the small literary world that was London, and particularly in the created and creative world of Bloomsbury, it cannot have gone unnoticed that these works were in the making. Nor can it be suggested that as she spoke of 'fiction' it was within the boundaries of the work to omit these two women: Mary's work was both fiction and

[33] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb* … (2005), 222-29.

[34] Watson, *The Devil Kissed Her* … (2004), 162-65.

[35] Woolf, *A Room* … (1928), 7-8, 71, 88, 108, 120.

[36] Woolf, *A Room* … (1928), 7.

[37] Woolf, *A Room* … (1928), 8.

[38] Anne Burrows Gilchrist, *Mary Lamb by Mrs Gilchrist* (London, 1883); Marienne Kirlew, *Famous Sisters of Great Men – Henriette Renan, Caroline Herschel, Mary Lamb, Dorothy Wordsworth, Fanny Mendelssohn* (London, 1906).

[39] Catherine Macdonald MacLean, *Dorothy Wordsworth, the Early Years* (New York, NY, 1932); Ernest De Selencourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth – a Biography* (Oxford, 1933).

non-fiction and, in any event, Lamb was principally an essayist. Shakespeare's sister was an invention to prove a point. Mary Lamb was the reality of a point that ought to have been made.

The treatise on 'Tailors' might just as well have been a treatise on 'Fishmongers' ... Charles Lamb must surely be recognised for his disrespect of his sister's commitment to recognising the value of women's work or, perhaps, envy of her capacity to recognise the position of women in a world where disrespect applied to women and 'women's work'. Just as the story of Mary Lamb may be more able, now, to be unpicked and unpacked, more free of the constraints her brother's adulation gained him in exclusion to her, so it may be now that other sisters may come to the fore as women recognised for their work value, their commitment and their talent. At least for Mary Lamb, the time has come for ousting patriarchal colonisation of the brain.

University of Buckingham

Mackery End, in Hertfordshire

Margareta Eurenius Rydbeck

Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend. (1795)

In my poor mind it is most sweet to muse
Upon the days gone by; to act in thought
Past seasons o'er, and be again a child. (1796)

The essay, published in *The London Magazine* in July 1821, must be regarded as a sequel to *My Relations*, whose last lines contain a promise of 'an account of my cousin Bridget' and of an excursion 'in search of more cousins'. The very last word of the former essay, Hertfordshire, is also the key-word for the next one. When the name appears for the first time in the present essay, it also marks a change of emphasis: while the first part is a portrait of Mary Lamb in the easily penetrated disguise of 'cousin Bridget', the second part, which recalls a particular visit to Hertfordshire, is a eulogy of childhood and kinship, epitomized in the old farmhouse, Mackery End.

Though the essay must be seen as a counterpart to that about John Lamb, 'cousin James Elia', it is altogether different. Probably Lamb found it even more difficult to write about the delicate relationship between him and his sister. It is obvious that he tries to be honest, neither glossing over the dissonances and minimizing his sister's peculiarities, nor forgetting to express how he admired her and how deeply indebted he felt towards her, though, to the world, it would seem to be the other way around.

The essay contains many biographical facts about Mary Lamb, corroborated by letters or observations recorded by visitors to the Lambs' household. It is a beautiful and tender portrait, not without 'occasional bickerings' (Lucas, II, 75), but very far from the half-mocking tone of 'My Relations'. The allusions are few and unevenly distributed.

'Mackery End' opens with a declaration of Bridget's status in Elia's household: she is his housekeeper and as inveterate an old maid as he is a bachelor. 'We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness; with such tolerable comfort, upon the whole, that I, for one, find in myself no disposition to go out upon the mountains, with the rash king's offspring, to bewail my celibacy.' In the very beginning one finds a phrase that has become a quotation in itself, referring to the Lambs' marriage-like life together, 'a sort of double singleness'. *Singleness* means (OED 2) 'the state or condition of being unmarried [...], celibacy'. It should be compared with the 'single blessedness' in 'My Relations' ('She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world'), according to OED used (by Shakespeare) to express 'divine blessing accorded to a life of celibacy'. At the same time it plays on the paradox double-single.

Elia declares himself happy with the state of things – 'upon the whole'. To emphasise this statement, he alludes to the episode of Jephta and his daughter, told in the *Book of Judges*. Somewhat inaccurately he calls Jephta king, though he was only a 'mighty man of valour' (*Judges*, 11, 1), who had been summoned to captain the Gileadites in the war against the Ammonites. During this campaign he had vowed 'that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering' (*ib.* 11, 30-31). The Lord kept his part of the agreement, but when the victorious Jephta returned home, it was his daughter, an only child, who was the first to encounter him. And when she heard of her father's promise, she asked for two months' respite:

> And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. (ib. 11:37-38)

The meaning is not quite clear. Why did Jephta's daughter bewail her virginity, and what does Lamb mean when he says that he is unlike her in that respect? Did the young girl bewail her virginity because she was going to *die*, and her life *and* her virginity were coming to an end? Or did she mourn because she was going to die *unmarried*? The following verse has: 'And [...] her father [...] did with her according to his vow [...]: *and she knew no man*' (my italics). Later 'Jephta's daughter(s)' became a proverbial expression for 'modest virgins'.[1] But while the modern notion was that young maidens were – or ought to be – bashful unto tears at the prospect of approaching marriage, the ancients thought it was disastrous to die unmarried and without issue. And one must not forget that to the superfluous woman it often meant a social stigma to become an old maid; spinsterhood thus could be something to bewail. It is probable that Lamb did not give much thought to such considerations. The general connotation of unwept-for celibacy was what mattered: *he* was not going to spill any tears because he had to live – and eventually die – unmarried. The comparison between the young and noble girl and the middle-aged accountant is, anyhow, more than slightly absurd and contributes to the humorous effect.

'We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits – yet so, as 'with a difference''. (75, 11, 19-20). The words set off with quotation marks are a reference to Ophelia's words in the lunacy scene; 'O, you must wear your rue with a difference'. (*Hamlet* IV, v, 183) Lucas' caution in the attribution ('Lamb may have been thinking of Ophelia's words to Hamlet')[2] is, perhaps, due to his finding the connection rather vague. But when seen in their context, the words 'with a difference' become meaningful. 'There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, here's some for me. We may call it herb of grace o' Sundays. O, you must wear your rue

[1] *Cf* Richardson's *Pamela*: 'Mr Andrews, we must leave something to these Jephta's daughters, in these cases. I suppose, the little bashful folly, which, in the happiest circumstances, may give a kind of regret to a thoughtful mind, on quitting the maiden state, is a reason with Pamela; and so she shall name her day.'
[2] Perhaps the words were addressed rather to the Queen – a matter of interpretation.

with a difference.' The thing to be worn 'with a difference' was the rue, Ruta graveolens, a perennial herb or shrub with bitter-tasting leaves. It was commonly associated with 'rue' meaning 'sorrow' and 'repentance', and herein lays the link, subconscious, perhaps, from the unbewailed celibacy, which Lamb did *not* 'repent'. One must not forget, however, another meaning of the word 'difference', namely that of 'disagreement of opinion'. This meaning seems to be rather close at hand here, as Lamb now proceeds to talk about the differences that exist even in their mostly harmonious relationship.

One thing that Charles and Mary *did* differ in was literary tastes. To express his sister's preference for literature which was not 'quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy', qualities that belonged to a Burton or a Margaret Newcastle, his own favourites, Lamb quotes Gay's "Epitaph of Byewords": she 'holds Nature more clever.' I am entirely indebted to Lucas for this attribution, and as I have not been able to see the original text, there is, at the moment, nothing that I can add as far as context and significance are concerned.

Lamb touches with a light hand on other potential causes of discord which were always a silent threat to their apparent harmony. One was the company that Lamb kept: 'free-thinkers – leaders, and disciples, of novel philosophies and systems'; another was a certain stubbornness in the two companions, exquisitely put as being both 'inclined to be a little too positive'. The very lightness of tone shows that it was a difficult subject: 'I much touch upon the foibles of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults.' As far as I have observed, Lamb does not, in this context, resort to allusions but once, and then his subconscious seems to play an awkward trick on him. This is when he talks about Bridget's presence of mind that supports her in crisis – 'the most pressing trials of life' –, but deserts her 'upon trifling occasions.'

'When the purpose requires it, and is a thing of moment, she can speak to it greatly; but in matters which are not stuff of the conscience, she has been known sometimes to let slip a word less seasonably' (76, 11 30-33). Without further comment, Lucas refers the words 'stuff of the conscience' which are not marked as a quotation by Lamb, to *Othello*, I.ii.2. They ought, however, be seen in their context.

> Jago: Though in the trade of war I have slain men,
> Yet do I hold it very stuff o' th' conscience
> To do not contriv'd murder.

When seen next to the ominous 'murder', the words 'stuff of the conscience' achieve a rather sinister flavour, particularly as they are mouthed by the notoriously untrustworthy Jago. One cannot help remembering that Mary Lamb, in what must have been the 'most pressing trial of her life' *did* 'do murder', however not 'contriv'd'. As nothing could have been farther from Lamb's intentions than to recall the memory of the domestic catastrophe when his sister killed their mother, it must be called a Freudian slip of the quill when he borrows words from such a dire context, and it might be regarded as a proof of Lamb's difficulty in handling the matter.

This constraint is absent from the account of Bridget's education, informal as that was. The happy phrase 'that fair and wholesome pasturage', whose prosody is

suggestive of a poetic allusion, is in all probability of Lamb's own making and signifies the library which belonged to Lamb senior's employer, Samuel Salt of the Temple, and which was, until Salt's death in 1792, at Charles' and Mary's disposal.

The portrait proper concludes with another reflection on Bridget's/Mary's behaviour in different situations. The pros and cons are delicately balanced, and the paragraph concludes with a complimentary reference to his sister as companion in play-going and, above all, in travelling, thus leading over to their joint visit to Mackery End. But it is not so much a geographical excursion as a visit to childhood's memories and an exploration of the mysteries of kinship, all crystallized in an old farmhouse.

The first paragraph, which deals with Mackery End and the distant relatives living there, is broken off by a curious contemplation of the difference between Charles and Mary. 'Bridget, who, as I have said, is older than myself by some ten years. I wish that I could throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences, that we might share them in equal division. But that is impossible.' (79, 11. 14-17) The lines strike the reader as odd and out of tune with the context, as an inner monologue on a difficult subject always present in Lamb's mind: what would happen to the surviving party when one of them died, and especially, what would happen to Mary if he died first? How much better it would be if they could divide the remaining years evenly between them and die at the same time,[3] 'but that is impossible'. The words 'I wish [...] heap' were, according to Lucas, in italics in the *London Magazine*, but I have not been able to establish the expression as an allusion.

From now on, the difficult matter got out of the way, the tone of the essay becomes easier and happier. The old farmhouse and its inhabitants were embodiments of what Lamb's thought delighted to dwell on, childhood and kinship. If his statement that a prior visit to the place had occurred 'more than forty years ago' is to be taken literally, he must have been about five and Mary seventeen at that time. Now, the account of the excursion that took place 'a few summers since' is interwoven with reminiscences of the former visit, and the time that lay between, during which Mackery End had often been talked about, is also activated. All kinds of happy memories cling to Mackery End, and when Lamb describes it, the commemoration brings forth a cluster of poetic associations: half a line from Ben Jonson; four lines from a long poem by Wordsworth; and a recollection from Comus, all within six lines!

> Still the air breathed balmily about it; the season was in the
> "heart of June", and I could say with the poet,
> But thou, that didst appear so fair
> To fond imagination
> Dost rival in the light of day
> Her delicate creation! (77, 11, 38-45)

[3] A thought that seems to be common among children when contemplating the death of parents and other near relatives: all should go at the same time, so as not to leave the child bereft and mourning. – Both Mary and Charles agreed that it would be difficult for Mary to live without him, and there is recorded a curious episode when Lamb said, "You must die first, Mary", and she answered "with her little quiet nod, and sweet smile, 'Yes, I must die first, Charles' " (*Life*, 641). Mary, however, was to survive Charles for more than ten years.

'[...] Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily rememberd her old acquaintance again [...]'. But all this is more than just an effusion of poetic quotations. The 'heart of June' is, as Lucas mentions, from Jonson's "Epithalamion; or song: celebrating the nuptials of [...] Mr Hierome Weston [...] with the Lady Frances Stuart [...]", which paints, in the opening stanzas, the glorious procession.

> See, the Procession! what a Holy day
> (Bearing the promise of some better fate)
> Hath filed, with Caroches, all the way,
> From Greenwich, hither to Row-hampton gate!
> When look'd the yeare, at best,
> So like a feast?
> Or were Affaires in tune,
> By all the Spheares consent, so in the heart of June?[4]

The context underlines that the time for the Lambs' visit was well chosen; 'a Holy day', 'promise of some better fate', 'Affairs in tune/ By all the Spheares consent', all these phrases combine to show that the expression 'heart of June' was not chosen at random, just to ornate. Another connection lies in the parallel between the lordly procession and the lower-middle-class excursion; however, unlike each other in other respects, they were undertaken under the best auspices, a humorous paradox. More than one link connects the quoted Wordsworthian lines with the present essay. Lucas mentions that Lamb, in a letter to Wordsworth in 1815, praised the stanza, of which the quoted four lines make up the first half, as the loveliest 'in the world of poetry'. But this is not his only reason for quoting it here. As Wordsworth had dreamed of and imagined the 'unvisited' Yarrow, so had Lamb dreamed of Mackery End, once seen, that is true, but almost forgotten. The rest of the stanza (11, 45-48) and the next but one (11, 57, 60-64) seem equally applicable.

> Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
> A softness still and holy;
> The grace of forest charms decayed,
> And pastoral melancholy. (11, 45-48)

> Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
> [...]
> Yon cottage seems a bower of bliss,
> A covert for protection
> Of tender thoughts, that nestle there
> The brood of chaste affection (11, 57, 60-64)

In Mackery End, re-visited in Bridget's company, past and present unite as they do in Wordsworth's poem. But it is Bridget who is the important, connective factor, because without her Elia would not have had any memory of Mackery End. It is she who has kept the memory alive, and who has, with words borrowed from the opening lines of 'Yarrow Visited', 'cherished/ So faithfully, a waking dream'. Though almost a household word, 'a waking dream' might be said to form another

[4] *Poems of Ben Jonson*, ed. George Burke Johnston (London, 1962), 219.

verbal link with the following ('a waking bliss'), again subconscious perhaps, but it seems likely that certain words, when appearing in the context of words or a phrase alluded to, became 'activated' in Lamb's mind and were re-produced, as for instance, 'waking' in 1.3 and 'bliss' in 1.61 combine to 'provoke' the Comus allusion: 'Bridget's was more a waking bliss than mine, for she easily remembered her old acquaintance again [...]' (77, 11. 44-45). Lucas gives the reference to *Comus*, 11. 263-264, but line 262 is relevant, too: 'But such a sacred and home-felt delight, / Such sober certainty of waking bliss, / I never heard till now.' 'Waking bliss' refers to the Lady, observed for the first time by Comus. The words are loaded with positive connotations, and the phrases 'sacred and home-felt delight' and 'sober certainty' suggest, though not explicitly but evoked by the signal 'waking bliss', Bridget's 'certainty' when moving around Mackery End as if she were at home there.

The last paragraph is a long apotheosis to kinship and Bridget's natural gift of establishing sympathetic contact with her relatives, however distant. Bridget assumes an almost angelical appearance: 'love, stronger than scruple, winged my cousin in without me'. The language takes on a strongly Biblical tone, which does not prevent Lamb from punning on the word 'Christian'. '[We] were familiar, even to the calling each other by our Christian names. So Christians should call one another.' (78, 11, 27-28) As Bridget's 'true' Christian name was Mary, there is but a very short step from here to the Biblical allusion to Elizabeth's and Mary's meeting as told in *St. Luke*. 'To have seen Bridget, and her – it was like the meeting of the two scriptural cousins.' (78, 11, 28-30)

'And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country *with haste* (my italics), into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zackarias, and saluted Elizabeth.' (*Cf. St. Luke* 1, 39-40)

Lucas gives the NT reference, but the very warmth of the meeting does not become evident until one reads the text. One must not forget that the word 'salute', used by the evangelist but not by Lamb, implies embracing and kissing, and this is conveyed by the allusion, easily recognized by Lamb's contemporaries, at least. It is almost impossible not to think, at the same time, of pictorial representations of the 'scriptural cousins' saluting each other, a topic favoured by painters, who depicted Elizabeth and Mary falling in each other's arms.[5]

It is only fitting and in keeping with the 'Biblical' atmosphere that the London cousins' visit is put on a par with the homecoming of the prodigal son, through an allusion to St. Luke again. 'The fatted calf was made ready, or rather was already so, as if in anticipation of our coming.' (78, 11, 36-38)

> And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.
> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.
> And they began to be merry. (*Cf.* St. Luke, 15:23-24)

The words 'or was rather already so, as if in anticipation of our coming' give the allusion a humorous turn through their deprecatory tone: the 'calf' was already prepared and they were 'only' asked to share it. It is the visitors' long 'absence', stretching over many years, that constitutes the parallel between their 'homecoming'

[5] The Lambs manifested their interest in works of art in many ways; there are, e.g., several "lines" by Charles and Mary inspired by paintings (*cf.* V:26, 36-39, 51-52, 85).

and that of the prodigal son. Again one notices that a Lambian allusion, though the expression may be worn, almost proverbial, has a less trite significance.

The meal is rounded off with a glass of wine, 'native', of course, and the three visitors (here Lamb mentions a third party in their company, a B(arron) F(ield), who is, in spite of his name,[6] no relative of theirs) 'proceed to Wheathampstead' to meet other cousins. In a concluding, long sentence, Lamb, with the felicitous simile of the effect of 'friendly warmth' on invisible words written in lemon, describes how the friendliness of their reception there brings forth – from the subconscious, obviously, because Bridget is as astonished as her companions – a host of memories.

> [...] how Bridget's memory, exalted by the occasion, *warmed* into a thousand half-obliterated recollections of things and persons, to my utter astonishment and her own – and to the astoundment of B.F. who sat by, almost the only thing that was not a cousin there, - old effaced images of more than half-forgotten names and circumstances still crowding back upon her, as words written in lemon come out upon exposure to a *friendly warmth* [...] (My italics). (78, 1. 44 – 79, 1.6)

The very last lines of the last sentence serve to connect, once more, past and present; they also express Elia's indebtedness to Bridget, whose charge and care he has been as a child and still is, 'in foolish manhood', and they stress the importance of Bridget's and Elia's visits to the old farmhouse as a frame for this awareness of complexity in seeming simplicity, the latter symbolized by 'those pastoral walks, long ago, about Mackery End, in Hertfordshire.' There is also a verbal frame: the same name which concluded the previous essay about James Elia and which is part of the title of the present essay, Hertfordshire, is also the final word here.

All through the essay Lamb operates on two time levels, past and present. The same structure is achieved through the allusions. In the same way as he tries to evoke the past, he also calls to life 'half-obliterated things and persons' in literature. If Lamb's present time equates that of his own text, the surface text, the past that he is in search of parallels the infrastructure of text activated by the allusions, in this case the Bible, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson. They are always there in his mind, as potentials, and when he wants to call forth his own personal memories, the texts alluded to are both means and ends in this operation. A network of fine threads holds the two planes together. And unlike the personal recollections, those of literature are shared by his readers.

All this is particularly applicable to essays such as 'Oxford in the Vacation', 'The Two Races of Men', 'Christ's Hospital', and 'A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars'. It adds structural depth to the seemingly simple and artless. Exposed to the friendly warmth of the reader's recollection operating in and along the allusions, the infrastructure comes out and enriches the reader's experience.

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[6] 'My grandmother was a Bruton, married to a Field'. (Lucas, II, 77)

Reviews

KATIE WALDEGRAVE, *The Poets' Daughters: Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge.* (London: Hutchinson, 2013). £25.00 hardback. 978 0 091931 12 4.

Katie Waldegrave's dual biography of Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge is an arresting, troubling account of personal and professional struggle. The governing thesis of the book can be simply summarized: both of these women, as adults, were enclosed and even entrapped by their fathers' dependencies and demands. In the case of Dora Wordsworth, the enclosure was literal, ongoing, and pretty clearly destructive, as her aging father exercised all manner of emotional manipulation in order to assure that she stayed at home and served his needs. For Sara Coleridge, childhood separation from her absentee father morphed, in adulthood, into a prolonged quest for long-distance reconciliation and intellectual union. Yet even as Sara made the recovery of her father's intellectual legacy the focus of her own strong literary drive, she found herself recapitulating the opium addiction and attendant physical suffering that had so badly damaged him. In detailing the two women's travails, Waldegrave draws from several important manuscript sources, including Sara Coleridge's diary and the letters of Edward Quillinan, whom Dora first met in 1821 and finally married, after much angst, twenty years later.

It is clear early on that Waldegrave intends her book to be a popular history, fully available to non-academics. She opens with a brief, broad-brush history of the friendship between the poets Wordsworth and Coleridge, and then begins her main narrative in the year 1808, embedding a catalogue of names, dates, children, and relations within an account of the arrival of STC and his five-year-old daughter Sara at the Wordsworths' home of Allan Bank in Grasmere. Picturing the household and its residents through the eyes of the young Sara, Waldegrave quickly unfolds various backstories – including that of STC's opium addiction and idealization of 'Aunt Sara' Hutchinson, and the connections of the Frickers to the Southeys. The writing moves quickly, with a focus on narrative hook and an as-needed approach to context, but there are challenges in encapsulating these relationships for non-specialist readers in a way that is at once comprehensible, thorough, and briskly efficient.

For specialist readers – who may, in fact, represent a large portion of the book's actual audience – the book may initially seem to offer little in the way of new information. Indeed, such readers might be exasperated at some of the generalizations Waldegrave employs in characterizing Romantic-era poetry and history. But about a third of the way through the volume, as the surviving manuscript material becomes more voluminous, things start to become very interesting indeed, offering even specialists a raft of interesting details and ample food for thought. And even if we are used to thinking of male solipsism as a troubling feature of the Romantic ethos, Waldegrave's focus extends our sense of its negative ramifications. William and STC are, to a large extent, kept off-stage here: we see instead the daughters who have to pick up after them.

Waldegrave suggests that as far as William was concerned, Dora's essential purpose in life ought to have been helping him finish *The Recluse* – and more broadly, Waldegrave says, William sought to inculcate Dora with a metaphorical understanding of herself as a shy, 'self-contented wren' ('The Contrast', line 30). Mary and Dorothy Wordsworth are portrayed as complicitous in this way of thinking, similarly inclined to have Dora assume indefinitely the duties of household management, especially the care and feeding of William. Dora was disposed to accept these responsibilities and this paradigm for her life – except for the complication of her romantic interest in Edward Quillinan, a poet and writer who had come into the family's orbit because of his ardent admiration for Wordsworth's verse.

Quillinan, born in Portugal to Irish parents, is a central figure in Waldegrave's account. Neither Dora, nor William (nor Waldegrave) seems quite certain of the make-up of his character, nor of the extent of his literary ability. Money, in any case, was a problem, and a legal action regarding a dubious real-estate deal hung over him for years. Yet Quillinan was energetic and emotionally indispensable – not only to Dora, but also to Wordsworth, who in later life fell into a state of perpetual gloom about his career, his failing eyesight, and the state of the world. Quillinan's frequent visits to Portugal offered a tantalizing glimpse of a brighter world outside the dark north of England, but after he finally declared his love for Dora, Wordsworth stubbornly opposed the union, ostensibly because of Quillinan's financial insecurity. The struggle between the two men for Dora's affection emerges as one of the two dominant themes of her adulthood: Waldegrave writes that Dora 'saw she would have, at some point, to betray the love of one of the two men who mattered most to her' (p. 222). After the marriage, Dora and Edward did manage a trip abroad which occasioned her *Journal of a Few Months' Residence in Portugal* (1847); Waldegrave's observations on this volume comprise the most interesting literary analysis in *The Poets' Daughters.*

The other dominant theme is Dora's terrible, steadily-declining health. For much of her adult life she was dangerously thin – to the agony of her family, who begged her to eat but instead watched as she withered away. The psychological roots of this behavior are not clear, and Waldegrave does not quite come out and say that Wordsworth's controlling nature prompted in Dora a backlash of tragic self-assertion in the form of an eating disorder. But Waldegrave implies that anorexia, or complications thereof, caused her death, which occurred just before her forty-third birthday. This is an unexplored, or at least under-explored, theory: the prevailing view, following from her death certificate, has been the one articulated by Pamela and Robert Woof in their Oxford DNB entry on Dora, where they straightforwardly ascribe her death to tuberculosis, mentioning anorexia not at all. Waldegrave pursues the tuberculosis theory and several possible permutations, but stops short of endorsing it. We are left with the ringing and yet somehow still tacit claim that an eating disorder was the cause of Dora's death.

Sara Coleridge's life and literary work have been better documented than Dora's, and recent years have seen important critical discussions by Bradford Mudge, Alan Vardy, Peter Swaab, and others. Waldegrave describes Sara's literary ambition as a crucially defining aspect of her identity, and in narrating the dramatic

peaks and troughs of Sara's married and then widowed life, she makes the case that literature, especially the shaping of her father's legacy, gave Sara a sense of purpose that saved her from catastrophe more than once. Waldegrave is unsparing in citing passages from Sara's letters and diary that focus on her many bodily complaints, including the spread of cancer in her breast. If Sara seems to be following from her father in the recording of her physical misery, she equally resembles him in evincing a split personality – she had a competent, ambitious persona that Waldegrave, following from Sara's essay 'On Nervousness', renders as the 'Good Genius', and a sickly, opium-addicted self who is called the 'Invalid'. More than once Sara entered into states of depression, illness, and immobility that were as extreme as anything we know of STC. These descents are in jarring contrast to the image of idealized female beauty she projected as a young woman, when she sat for the artist William Collins in a famous painting he called *The Highland Girl*.

Sara's opium addiction echoed that of her father in several striking ways, and Waldegrave explicitly notes the many parallels they experienced in their physical symptoms. What she does not do is offer the reader much interpretive reflection on the complexity of Sara's psychological situation in battling, from the inside, the very sort of addiction that had crashed into her childhood and defined her early family life. So while Waldegrave says directly, 'Sara found herself utterly trapped, like her father before her, in a cycle of opium', that sense of imprisonment is rendered mainly through physical details, and it is at least worth wondering about the ways in which Sara's psychic torment differed from that of her father, given the added history and perspectival layers of experience she ruefully possessed.

Both Sara and Dora emerge from Waldegrave's study as determined, even heroic figures. Still, a huge amount of unhappiness pervades the volume, and there is, implicitly, a lot of blame to go around. Waldegrave's rhetorical strategy is to imply judgement – often harshly – without definitively assigning it. She is understandably reluctant to blame either woman for missteps or bad decisions. But given the totality of the wreckage, one cannot but wish, at moments, for some greater sense of accounting, especially since Waldegrave has so successfully created a sense of narrative momentum and emotional resonance for the two women's life stories.

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MONIKA CLASS, *Coleridge and the Kantian Ideas in England.* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). £18.99 paperback. 978 1 47 253239 8.

Class' book examines Coleridge's use of Kantian philosophical concepts, in the light of extant evidence of the interpretations and understandings of Kant to which Coleridge was probably exposed through his social circle in the 1790s.

Class quickly demonstrates (Chapters 1 and 2) that Coleridge almost certainly had general knowledge of Kant's 'ideas' through his connections to dissenting circles, and that this considerably predated his first recorded comments on Kant. In particular, he would have been exposed to this material by Beddoes, with whom he had a close relationship, and possibly also by Nitsch, one of Kant's students who

lectured and wrote on critical philosophy in England. This locates Coleridge's exposure to Kant within a more politically and theologically charged atmosphere than many have contemplated, due to the traditional reliance on Coleridge's claim that his turn to critical philosophy marked a break with his earlier philosophical rambunctiousness.

Using this springboard, Class argues Coleridge's engagement with Kant's moral theory was more central to his understanding of Kant than has been realised (Chapter 3); that Kant's writing on international relations had a discernable impact on *France: An Ode* (Chapter 4); and that Coleridge's public avoidance of Kantian themes between his return from Germany and *Biographia* had its roots, not only in the public turn against German philosophy, but interrelatedly, in the negative press that he himself was receiving (Chapter 5). Class then finishes by applying all of this to the business of interpreting two cruces in Coleridgean scholarship: the philosophical chapters of *Biographia* (Chapter 6) and the distinction between reason and understanding (Chapter 7).

All of this is well conceived and executed. Class has succeeded in her aim of exposing the social milieu which was grinding the lenses through which Coleridge viewed Kant. And there are further happy consequences, because this forces a reconsideration of Coleridge's understanding of Kant, which inevitably emerges as conflicted and complex. She has also quite deliberately helped disrupt the narrow focus on the first critique and Schelling's *System des tranzendentalen Idealismus*, by demonstrating the relevance of Kant's moral and political thought.

Class also considers Reinhold, who was important because he introduced the idea of unifying the transcendental self with the empirical self through self-consciousness, and variations of this move became commonplace in the post-Kantian milieu. She further justifies his importance for Coleridge indirectly as an influence on Nitsch. But there is some uncertainty about this last part: as Class admits there are no known comments by Coleridge on Nitsch (p. 186), and she provides little evidence of Reinhold's direct impact on Coleridge.

By contrast, there is evidence of Coleridge's engagements with Jacobi, Mendelssohn, and Schelling which Class does not canvass. Instead, she relies on some older influence studies as having settled questions about the German context. McFarland and Shaffer are often cited, but these commentators are not always reliable on philosophical issues, and specifically not on this one. McFarland misread Jacobi as a 'radical rationalist' with Spinozist sympathies, when Jacobi actually argued for the complete dismissal of reason in favour of faith, on the basis that this was the only way to avoid Spinozism.[1] Likewise Shaffer conflates the pantheism controversy with the controversy over the *Wolfenbüttel Fragmente*, and winds up describing Lessing as a "major actor" in the pantheism controversy despite the fact that he was already dead. She also tries to imply that the arguments about the status of reason were a mere extension of 'higher criticism', which was a theory of Biblical interpretation.[2] Of course Class must delimit her field of analysis in some way, but I think that in putting these particular issues to one side, she has missed an opportunity.

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[1] McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Clarendon, 1969), p. 130.
[2] Shaffer, 'Review of *Coleridge and the Crisis of Reason*' *Coleridge Bulletin* NS 35 (Summer 2010), pp. 115-118.

Class seeks to understand the forces shaping Coleridge's understanding of Kantian 'ideas'. The field has been dominated in the past by 'source and influence' studies. But the concept of 'influence' (more or less 'starlight') is problematic because it has no real cognitive content and so it supplies no specific mechanism for analysis. This vagary in turn leaves the floodgates open for speculations about the subjects' mental processes, or unstructured listings of supposed 'echoes'. Despite substantial insights and incalculable labours, such studies can sometimes seem adrift, because there is nothing concrete to justify the prominence given to their listings of detail.

When it comes to methodology, and how to deal with 'influence', Class also relies on Shaffer. In her 1975 book on Coleridge, Shaffer had little to say on 'influence', except that influence can be both public and private and that it should not be limited to 'encounters' between 'literary men'.[3] Subsequently she has turned to the idea of 'reception', perhaps to avoid the pitfalls of 'influence'.[4] However, it is difficult to see how reception differs from influence, except in attempting to expunge the assumption of agency in the influencer by reversing the direction. But even if we do take the star out of the starlight (so to speak), we still have little cognitive content to structure analysis.

Class finds surer footing in Foucault's concept of 'généalogie' and Gadamer's concept of 'Wirkungsgeschichte' or 'effective history', although unfortunately she does not discuss either in depth, and arguably does not stick to the frameworks implied by them. Foucault's method was to demonstrate that seemingly universal concepts (body, health, sexuality) can be demonstrated to have varied over time, which in turn forces a reconsideration of their universality, and a potential recovery of suppressed perspectives.[5] Indeed that was Nietzsche's point in the first place, although he was focussed much more specifically on exposing the historicity of morals.[6] But this raises a problem, since interpretations of Kant do not seem likely candidates for hidden universalising claims or suppressed perspectives. This is where the concept of 'Wirkungsgeschichte' comes into its own, because it does not rely on 'ideas' that are being 'transmitted', but on understandings (of texts, ideas, or anything).[7] Thus the same 'idea' will likely play a different role for the interpreter than the creator, and various different roles over time. The question becomes not one of influences or sources, but of how the interpreter is using the text.

One of Coleridge's marginal notes demonstrates the point:

> And what is Jacobi's Mystery? Is it not the Organ of spiritual Truth? And what is this but the *real* Ich, that shines thro' the *empiri<c>al* Ich- the coincidence of which with the former is categorically demanded./

[3] Shaffer, *'Kubla Khan' and the Fall of Jerusalem* (Cambridge UP, 1975), pp. 6, 13.
[4] See the Introduction to Shaffer and Zuccato (eds), *The Reception of S. T. Coleridge in Europe* (Continuum, 2007).
[5] Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire' in Bachelard (ed), *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 145-72.
[6] Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Insel Verlag, 1991 (1887)).
[7] See especially Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Mohr Siebeck, 2010 (1960)), 305-12.

> Kant's sublime Mystery is one and the same with Jacobi's unintelligible revealed mystery, the very revelation of which is most mysterious.[8]

This suggests that Coleridge's understanding of Kant was inextricable from his understanding of Jacobi, and that his ideas about the transcendental and empirical self derive from this, rather than from Reinhold, as Class argues. From this passage, we might say Coleridge was using Kant's transcendental idealism (with its scepticism about accessing the transcendental self), and Jacobi's anti-rationalism (with its scepticism about accessing the empirical self) to interrogate each other. Accordingly, the notion of 'influence' is inadequate here.

In the final two chapters Class cashes out her contextual analysis in relation to two interpretive cruces in Coleridge studies. In Chapter 6 she argues that Coleridge's philosophical articulations in *Biographia* are marked both by his experiences of being bullied in the press, and by Kant's theory of genius (especially the idea that geniuses are unable explain what they can do). The picture that convincingly emerges is that Kant's theory actually required Coleridge's philosophical account to fail and simultaneously made that failure into the perfect defence against criticism.

In Chapter 7, Class argues that Coleridge was primed in his use of the distinction between reason and understanding by Nitsch. This is more problematic for two reasons: firstly because, as Class herself says, there are no recorded comments on Nitsch by Coleridge (p. 186). Secondly because, as Vigus has pointed out, Coleridge would have encountered similar distinctions in Jacobi.[9] Actually the issue is even broader, because there were countless articulations of the same distinction in the German context, so the issue is not the 'source' of 'the' distinction, but the motivation of each participant in generating related distinctions.

I have suggested that Class' book misses two opportunities: to explore the relationship between the German and English contexts, and to capitalise more fully on the concept of effective history. But this is not to distract from what the book achieves. This book has many excellent features: its analysis of the historical interactions around the Kantian circle in London, its arguments about Coleridge's use of some central Kantian concepts (especially in morals and politics), and its thought-provoking approach to two long-standing cruces in Coleridge scholarship. In short, it achieves what a book ought to, in that it changed my understanding of the subject and will therefore 'influence' my further research.

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CHARLES LAMB, *Eine Abhandlung über Schweinebraten: Essays*, ed. and tr. Joachim Kalka (Berlin: Berenberg, 2014). €20 hardback. 978 3 937834 68 9.

Colourful illustrations of meat dishes – beef, pork, veal, and mutton – adorn the front cover of this German volume. Vegetarian admirers of Charles Lamb might be alienated instantly; otherwise like-minded carnivores may

[8] Coleridge, *Marginalia* in Coburn (ed), *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Routledge, 1971-2002), V, III, 96.
[9] Vigus, 'Review of *Coleridge and the Kantian Ideas in England*' *Romanticism* 20.3 (2014), 340-42.

still find this singular. Yet these images, taken from the Prussian Cultural Heritage Archive and each accompanied by its English caption, insinuate historically what the book aims to encourage presently: German appreciation of English taste, with Lamb as its epitome.

On surveying the volume's table of contents, its structure and subject matter appear hardly less curious than its cover. The book contains eleven of Lamb's best-known essays, rendering its content, to use the editor's own term, rather 'scarce' (p. 14). On top of this, the essays are arranged according to no discernible principle, and do not encompass explanatory footnotes. The aim of this editorial practice, Kalka says, is to convey the delicate (*das Leichte*), the slender (*das Schmale*), the dreamy, and the unexpected in the writings of Elia (p. 14). Appending Norbert Miller's extensive scholarly assessment of Lamb's epistolary *Bildungsroman* – his correspondence with Coleridge – to the translated essays does little to rectify this first impression of disjointedness and brevity. One *Frankfurter Allgemeine* critic therefore sees in Miller's sixty-three-page treatise a threat to the balance of the entire volume, and laments the 'piecemeal' manner (pun intended, I should think) to which the transmission of Lamb's 'gentle elegance' is reduced.[10] Right as this critic may be about the character of Lamb's work, a good deal more needs to be said about the edition at hand.

There is considerably more method than meets the eye in Kalka's purported haphazardness. The volume may have no linear or conventional structure that imposes itself on the reader, but instead, through subtle editing, offers a microcosm of inner ramifications and cross-references alongside which Lamb's foreign readers can explore a plethora of Elian facets, always according to their own taste and at their own pace. This creates plenty of incentive to read and re-read Lamb's essays; to move back and forth between them and the extracts from his correspondence in Miller's discussion; to think and re-think Lamb's thoughts; and to feel and feel anew what Lamb felt. Such is this edition's self-contained, methodical haphazardness that it sustains Lamb's originality in a different cultural realm some two hundred years after its first publication, never letting go of, nor patronising, his foreign readers, and thereby immersing them in a delightful spiral of exploration and discovery. Kalka thus kindles an appetite for Lamb, and each bite taken to satisfy it only leads on to a greater craving.

Kalka's translation of Lamb's 1827 'Autobiographical Sketch', the characteristically modest and humorous retrospect of his own life, comes first. It not only sets the tone for what follows, but also provides referential cornerstones for many recurring topics in the subsequent essays – for instance in the very next one, 'Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago' (1820). Here, Elia qua interlocutor of Lamb himself points out the many privations and hardships that Bluecoat life once entailed. Between flagellation and exclusion, food, and especially the absence and arbitrary withholding of it, plays a key role, and prepares Lamb's readers for his poignant excursion on the topic in the closing lines of the sixth essay, 'Grace Before Meat' (p. 66). This essay's initial passage on the beauty and truthfulness of a poor man saying grace (p. 59) also develops further Lamb's distinction between 'gown and town', elaborated in the fourth essay, 'Poor Relations' (p. 47). And, to return to

[10] Hannes Hintermeier, 'Lamb, Charles, *Eine Abhandlung über Schweinebraten*', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 March 2014, L19.

'Christ's Hospital', the 'midnight torture to the spirits' inflicted on a boy's 'weak nerves' and 'superstition' (p. 25) in the solitary confinement at Christ's Hospital foreshadows the theme of 'Witches, and Other Night-Fears' (1821), essay number three. This nightly world abides only by its own rules, rules detached from those of waking experience and, at the same time, similar to the 'enchantment' and 'dream' of the stage (p. 55), as can thereafter be found in 'My First Play' (1821). Christ's Hospital, those 'six short twelve-months' amounting to 'many centuries', have turned Lamb the young enthusiast into a rationalist – albeit only momentarily, until Mrs. Siddons salvages his 'genuine emotions' for the stage (pp. 56–57).

'Modern Gallantry' (1822), the seventh piece, then attacks etiquette where it is no more than the shallow interplay of vanities and self-interest (p. 68), a game in which men purposefully play their privileged hand to the disadvantage of women. In 'A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People' (1811), essay ten, etiquette is then portrayed as separable from good manners, and as a possible means to gloss over a lessened esteem for one's company (pp. 94–95). But Lamb ultimately threatening his entire 'married acquaintance' with the exposure of their names, should they not improve their manners towards him, is, of course, tongue-in-cheek: the gourmet Lamb's accusation of 'vicarious gluttony' for removing a bowl of fine Morellas from the great appetite of his 'unwedded palate' constitutes a prime example of Lamb's fine, humorous gallantry (p. 95). It turns his series of 'Complaint[s]' into self-depreciation and, finally, an understanding of the 'offending' wife's love for her husband – Lamb's own beloved friend.

'The Old and the New Schoolmaster' (1821), essay eight, evinces nostalgia for the beauty of grammatical intricacies, likening them to scripture (p. 78). Learning, too, like art, has its intrinsic beauties that go beyond pure utility (pp. 82–83), a point of the utmost relevance, then as much as now. Consequently, in 'A Character' (1825), Lamb picks up on the importance of grammatical universality, censuring colleague EGOMET's obliteration of all pronomina but those of the first person (p. 85). The eponymous 'Dissertation upon Roast Pig' then rounds off Kalka's share in the volume, teasingly placing the pleasures of the palate above friendship and the ethical treatment of animals (pp. 103–104). But Lamb would not be Lamb, his once unfamiliar readers will have worked out at this point, if he were indeed advocating egotism and the slow slaughter of piglets by flagellation – especially after his unequivocal allusion to the 'disciplinary measures' at Christ's Hospital (p. 104). Lamb's recollection of Coleridge's first philosophical ventures (p. 32) at this school and his admiration of Coleridge's imaginative powers (p. 41) have all along been generating curiosity about Miller's concluding article, which hereafter elucidates the warmth as well as the friction between the two friends, revealing how Lamb emerged from their relationship as the unique essayist we have encountered in Kalka's collection. And so we return to Lamb's essays once more.

So could these inner structures not merely be accidents – or even figments, projections of a reader's mind? Even if they were, it would not make them less Elian. Kalka, in his introduction, cites Lamb's notion of a 'coxcombical moral sense' (p. 9), taken from 'The Old Actors' (1822), that impedes our artistic appreciation. Art, likes dreams, follows its own rules, and it invites our minds to engage with it in a manner not bound by accustomed earthly standards. Art hence inhabits a self-contained

realm, and Kalka's editorial practice lives up to this Elian idea. He exhibits faith in Lamb's modernity – in the possibility of enjoying his work in its own right – as he accepts the risk of losing his readers in Lamb's historical digressions and allusions. Kalka trusts his readers to bridge this hermeneutical gap themselves. And it works, not least since Kalka translates with remarkable accuracy but also – and this is the infinitely greater achievement – with a sensitivity that does Lamb justice. Only from time to time do Latinisms whose German usage feels more stilted than it does in English (for instance '*ambiguös*', p. 65) obstruct the reading a little – but perhaps this, too, is a matter of taste.

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Society News

Members should have already received by a separate mailing the Programme of Society events for 2015–16. I am immensely grateful to Felicity James for organising this programme. The first of the year's events will have taken place by the time you read this Bulletin, namely the day symposium at Highgate organised jointly with The Friends of Coleridge, with Richard Holmes as keynote speaker. A report on the day will appear in a future Bulletin. My own early memories of the Society include another excellent day conference at the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution when, among other speakers, the remarkable Rachel Trickett intrigued us with an account of Lamb's use of the rhetorical device known as *occupatio*, a term which was unknown to a good many of her audience and which I shall not trouble the reader by describing here! (Incidentally, I shall be interested to see whether the computer, editor and printer of this piece succeed in avoiding the addition of 'n' to the word.)

I hope members will manage to attend as many as possible of the Society's events. Your support is needed. You will see that we have for the first time included on our Programme the Lamb Festival to be held in Edmonton from 18 to 24 June 2016. It will be the third time that the people of Edmonton have mounted this most enjoyable Festival centred on the Lambs, and the Society has given its enthusiastic support to what looks like becoming an annual fixture. It is a very good way of making the Lambs and their works known to a wider audience.

At the Annual General Meeting in May the Society resolved to increase subscription rates with effect from 1 January 2016. This will be the first increase for seven years and I hope you will appreciate the need for it, especially given the inexorable increase in the cost of producing and mailing the Charles Lamb Bulletin. Members – a substantial number nowadays – who help the Society by paying their subscription by standing order have already been notified and have been sent a revised form of standing order to complete. Many members have already returned the form to me. The forms need to be processed in good time ahead of 1 January and if your 'yellow form' is still in a pile awaiting your attention, I shall be grateful if you will complete and return it soon. If on the other hand you are in the habit of paying by cheque, I urge you to ensure that you do this in a timely fashion, i.e. as soon as possible after 1 January 2016. The Society has generally taken a very liberal approach about subscription arrears, but we may no longer be able to do so in the future, so I should be glad if this little matter could receive your attention. If any member has a query about his or her subscription please don't hesitate to contact me.

During the early summer I was contacted by the daughter of the late Sam Botes, a book-seller, Lamb devotee and regular attender of our events for many years. His house was to be sold and the family offered the Society as a donation, some 120 copies of Claude Prance's *Companion to Charles Lamb* in more or less mint condition, subject to their being collected (from Sussex) almost immediately. Thanks to the co-operation of our good friend Tony Reavell, this was achieved. If

any member would now like to have a copy of Prance, paying just the cost of packing and postage, please let me know.

Nick Powell

The AGM of the ALS, held at York, 30-31 May 2015

This year the Alliance of Literary Societies' weekend, which incorporated the Alliance's AGM, was hosted at the King's Manor, University of York, by the Trollope Society.

Before the business of Saturday morning began, this delegate surveyed those who had made the effort to get to York and was disappointed to find that apart from the veteran Mr Leigh- Hunt, who represented Keats and Shelley, and perhaps a lone figure from the John Clare Society, Romanticism was poorly represented compared with, for instance, Victorian fiction. Those who promote Wordsworth, Coleridge and Hazlitt, for example, were, as usual, conspicuous by their absence, which is a great pity.

Proceedings began with an introduction from Trollope Society chairman, Malcolm G Williamson, who then gave a short paper entitled 'Time and Mr Trollope'. This was followed by an instructive and amusing talk by Howard Gregg, convener of the York Trollope Society, in which he revealed the connection between the novelist and Yorkshire. Members of the Trollope Society then gave some often hilarious readings from the novels, which judging from the whoops of laughter that rang out from the audience, demonstrated how deft a satirist of upper middle class manners Trollope could be.

A buffet luncheon, taken at 12.30, gave delegates a chance to view the many stalls erected to promote the authors represented in the hall, and this delegate was encouraged by the attention given to the various leaflets and bulletins on display at the Charles Lamb stall. As usual, one particular display of material outshone all the others—and this year that distinction went to the stall manned by one very enthusiastic member of the Romany Society, which celebrated in a colourful display of promotional pamphlets and first editions, the work of George Bramwell Evens, the radio broadcaster and naturalist of the thirties and forties better known as 'Romany'. Less imaginative delegates could learn a lot from this particular fan of a comparatively obscure writer.

The ALS AGM began directly after luncheon. In the absence through serious illness of Linda Hart, who combines the roles of Chairwoman and Editor, the Alliance's business was conducted by its Secretary, Anita Fernandez Young, formerly of the University of Nottingham, who represented the Dickens Fellowship. In her report it was revealed that the President of the past few years, Jenny Uglow, wished to stand down, but in the absence of a successor, who is in the process of being chosen by the committee, has agreed to stay on. Your delegate is in favour of either John Sutherland or Sir Michael Holroyd.

In her report, the Secretary announced that the ALS is anxious to add to its archives and asked for anecdotes relating to the workings of member societies to be sent to her. The Treasurer's detailed report showed that at present the Alliance is in a healthy financial state, with a steadily growing membership of around 110 societies and assets of over £6,000. The latest societies to join include the University of London Extra-Mural Association and the International John Bunyan Society. A full list of members is available on the ALS website.

In the Editor's report it was announced that from now on the Alliance's yearbook, *ALSo*, will be issued online only, via the website. This will not only save the Alliance money, but make the publication available to all constituent members, who currently number over 50,000. However, a limited number of 'hard' copies will still be printed for those who have no access to the Net or who prefer a printed version for their library. The next theme for *ALSo* will be 'literary scandals', which will offer a good deal of scope for potential contributors Submissions should be sent directly to Ms Curry by March 2016.

The Publicity Officer, Ms Marty Smith (Johnson Society of Lichfield), announced that bookmarks advertising the ALS are still available from her for insertion into library books or perhaps into books in bookshops. Ms Smith also made it known that she is open to ideas from members that will raise the profile of the ALS in the UK and abroad.

The Committee, including your own delegate, was re-elected *nem con*, but it was announced that a new committee member was now required to replace Ms Thelma Thompson, who was obliged to resign as a result of the demise of her own society in Shropshire. The meeting closed with a request that a candidate to host the 2018 AGM was needed. Members were also urged to investigate the activities of Lithouses, an organisation devoted to the cause of literary houses in need of care and attention. Your own delegate announced that he was in negotiation with a number of possible sponsors of a National Parody Competition, which will be open to everyone in the UK. Also, the parodies entered will not necessarily be limited to those writers represented by the ALS. Full details will be posted on the ALS website in due course.

In the latter part of the afternoon Mr Simon Grennan and Mr David Skilton of Leuven University in Belgium gave a fascinating illustrated talk on the latest literary craze -- the graphic novel, with particular reference to their own collaboration on a version of Trollope's 1879 novel, *John Caldigate*, which for some reason was rechristened *Dispossession*.

The evening ended with a formal meal at King's Manor in which your delegate was unavoidably trapped into sharing conversation with two members of the Tolkien Society.

R. M. Healey

Reference to *Universal History* in Lamb's essay 'My First Play'

In Lamb's Essays of Elia published under Macmillan's English Classics (London, 1962), edited by N.L. Hallward and S.C. Hill, the editors explain the reference to Universal History refers to Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*. But I think this explanation is not correct: the exact wording and the specific context of the essay in which the expression 'Universal History -- ancient part' is used persuade us that it is quite capable of another interpretation. Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the*

World in five parts was written by the English explorer during the long period of his imprisonment in the Tower of London from 1603 to 1616. Closer to his own time and century, a multi-volume book of identical name *Universal History from the ancient accounts to modern time* was published from 1747 to 1768 by C. Bathurst & Co. It is mainly divided into two parts: ancient and modern. It is to be noted carefully that Lamb uses the same title in capital letters and the expression 'ancient part' in connection with his first experience of witnessing a play in Drury Lane Theatre based on the historical theme of ancient kingdom of Persia and King Darius. The identical verbal expression give us strong reason to believe that in all probability he is referring to the near contemporary *Universal History* rather than Raleigh's *History of the World*, as explained by the Macmillan editors in their notes and annotations mentioned above.

Tapan Kumar Mukherjee

Wendy Craik

Wendy Craik, who died on 15 May, aged 81, was a strong supporter of the Society. She wrote an essay in the *Bulletin* on Lamb's successors in the essay genre; and she was a frequent attender at the Charles Lamb Birthday lunches, where she was a distinguished and welcome presence. The details that follow are written in consultation with Tom Craik, to whom I am most grateful.

She was brought up in Kingston upon Thames, apart from a period during the Second World War when she was evacuated to live with her grandparents in the Midlands. From Tiffin Girls' School she went on to the University of Leicester, where she was taught, like Bill Ruddick, by the redoubtable Monica Jones. She married Tom, who was then a lecturer in the English Department. They had one son, Roger, now a lecturer at Kent State University, Ohio.

Wendy Craik with her son, Roger

In 1958-59 Tom and Wendy Craik went on an exchange to America, where Tom taught at Queens College, City University of New York. Wendy used the New York Public Library to begin work on what later became her book, *Jane Austen: the Six Novels* (1965). They also visited Williamsburg, Virginia: there they bought a traditionally bound book in hand-made paper. They used it to prepare a delightful copy of Robert Browning's 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' for Roger. Tom wrote out the poem and did the outline drawings; Wendy did the colouring. The result was an extraordinary treasure, a brilliant recapturing of the poem. More than fifty years later, in 2013, it has been published in America by BlazeVOX books ('publisher of weird little books', blazevox.org). It would make a wonderful present for a child, and an even more wonderful one for a grown-up (ISBN 978-1-60964-158-0).

Back in Britain, she continued her work for a PhD, supervised by Monica Jones. She was awarded it in 1962, teaching for three years at Kibworth Beauchamp Comprehensive School, and also teaching extra-mural evening classes in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. She and Tom moved to academic posts at the University of Aberdeen in 1965. I remember that I first met her there when she was registering at what was the rather traditional University Teachers of English Conference: behind the desk she looked beautiful, ministering to the delegates with great charm and an apparently serene competence. In the end, however, Aberdeen did not suit her, although she became a Reader in English; partly for this reason, Tom and Wendy agreed to separate when Tom went to Dundee as Professor in 1973, although they remained good friends.

Wendy later took up a post as Professor of English at the Middle East Technical University of Ankara from 1989 to 1991. She returned to Britain frequently in the early 1990s, and eventually retired to Nottingham, where she had friends, returning to the East Midlands that she had known as a small child. She was a member of the Nottingham branches of the Shakespeare Society and the Dickens Fellowship, and served at various times as Chairperson of both groups.

Her attendance at the Birthday Lunches was indicative of her loyalty to a certain kind of literature. She valued the wisdom and humanity of Charles Lamb, as well as appreciating his humour. She brought the same qualities to her reading of her favourite topic, in which she became an expert, the Victorian novel. *Jane Austen: the Six Novels* was succeeded by *The Brontë Novels* (1968). Both became standard reading for undergraduates in English Departments throughout the country: many an examiner of the nineteenth-century paper had to encounter the ideas of Wendy Craik, often simplified and garbled, as the great majority of candidates, fired by her work, homed in at once on those authors. After that came *Jane Austen in her time* (1969); and *Elizabeth Gaskell and the English Provincial Novel* (1975), a wide-ranging study of a number of Victorian authors. These confirmed her reputation as one of the leading authorities on the period.

Her literary criticism was that of an age before theory. It treated the classic novels of nineteenth-century fiction as subjects for straightforward comment and appreciation. Reading Wendy's books today is like looking at the illustrations to the Craik copy of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin'. Those pictures are full of literary understanding in every line and every choice of colour. They bring out the salient features of the poem with grace and charm: they are what Pope called 'the better half of Criticism, namely the pointing out an Author's excellencies.' That was undoubtedly Wendy's aim in all that she wrote and taught. It made her an inspiring teacher: the word that I would use to describe it is 'engagement'. Wendy *engaged* with the books that she loved, and caused others to do so. There can be few better tributes.

J.R. Watson

Margareta Eurenius Rydbeck

Margareta passed away on 13 June with her husband, Lars, and her two daughters, Ulla and Märta, at her side. Some readers will remember Margareta's essays on Christ's Hospital, printed in the Bulletin for July and October 2002 and it's with great pleasure that I've been able to print more of her work on the essays of Elia in recent issues.

Margareta's interest in the Lambs can be traced back to 1953, when she received a copy of the *Essays of Elia* as a birthday present from her father (a selective translation, *Essayer av Charles Lamb i översättning och med inledning av Sigfrid Lindström,* 1952). At that time she was studying Classics and took an M.A. in Latin, Greek, Ancient History and Classical Archaeology. She then taught Latin and Greek at different grammar schools in the south of Sweden. In the late 1960s she added English to her M.A. by writing an essay on the allusive technique of Dorothy L. Sayers in *Busman's Honeymoon*. In 1975 she was awarded a scholarship for writing a doctoral thesis in English Literature. Her old interest in Lamb presented itself as a natural choice of subject. Her teacher at Lund University, Professor Claes Schaar, accepted willingly Lamb's essays as subject for her thesis. The title of her thesis had also been chosen, with an appropriate quotation from Lamb: '*"Books Think For Me"*. Lines of Argument and Allusive Technique in Charles Lamb´s *Essays of Elia*'. Changed circumstances and, eventually, illness prevented Margareta from presenting her work to the Faculty of Arts at Lund University. The depth and acuity of Margareta's scholarship on Lamb has been appreciated by readers of the Bulletin for more than a decade. She will be sorely missed by Elians though our consolation is that her remarkably erudite and important work will continue to be printed in future issues of the Bulletin.

Margareta, aged 47, when she began work on Lamb's *Essays of Elia*

Steve Burley

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

www.charleslambsociety.com/bulletin.html

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

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

Essays submitted to the journal should be in typescript, and be between 4000 and 7000 words in length. Preferably, submissions should be sent to the Editor as an email attachment in MS Word. Submissions should be double-spaced throughout, including quotations, and should follow MHRA style, with a couple of minor alterations. A full style-sheet is available online at the Society's website.

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