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Lamb and Dickens: The 2002 Toast

By JOHN BEER

This is the text of John Beer's Elian toast on the occasion of the Society's birthday luncheon, held at Royal College of Medical Practitioners in Kensington on Saturday, 16 February

WHEN I WAS WONDERING what aspect of Lamb's work to talk about this year, it occurred to me that there is one relationship that is rarely considered: that between two of the most important Charleses of the 19th century: Charles Lamb and Charles Dickens. There is one very obvious reason for this, which is that Lamb died in December 1834 and it was not until the following year that Dickens burst on the scene with his first publication, *Sketches by Boz*, followed by *Pickwick*. But although Lamb was no longer around then, he had been an essential constituent figure in the scene in which Dickens grew up. Dickens knew many of his friends, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Hood and so on; he even shared publishers. His various references show that Lamb was certainly a presence for him.

But how much did Lamb matter to him? The best evidence we have lies in his references to the *Essays of Elia*. He was particularly fond of Lamb's account of James White in 'The Praise of Chimney Sweepers': 'He carried away with him half the fun of the world, when he died of my world at least'. He cited that twice in letters of his own to describe someone whom he had enjoyed knowing. He also drew on a phrase from 'New Year's Eve': 'My household Gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood' to describe his attachment to his own home. When I came across the incident in *The Old Curiosity Shop* where Dick Swiveller watches the Marchioness playing cribbage alone and when she shows signs of missing a chance by turning up a knave cannot resist calling out 'Two for his heels!' I found myself wondering whether Dickens was subconsciously remembering Sarah Battle, who could not bring herself to call 'Two for his heels' on such an occasion, so deep-rooted was her gentlewomanliness; though I dare say that his familiarity with cribbage was strong enough to make this no more than a coincidence. E.V. Lucas thought that Captain Jackson, in the essay of that name, had been one of the models on which Dickens had drawn when he conceived of Micawber, with his extraordinary ability to inflate the humdrum objects of everyday into the most magnificent circumstances, but Jackson was by no means the only such figure that he knew: he knew Coleridge for example, whose extraordinary complexity Virginia Woolf one characterized by saying that Coleridge was a Micawber who knew that he was a Micawber.

The chief impression one has in looking at the question is that by the time Dickens began writing, Lamb was an essential element in his landscape, so to speak. Lamb's work, in other words, represented a stage from which any next step must be taken. Indeed, when one looks at *Sketches by Boz*, the writing that Dickens began in 1837, the titles of some of the sketches are in fact close to those of the *Essays of Elia*. 'The New Year', for instance, recalls Lamb's 'New Year's Eve', while the picture of The Schoolmaster in the first sketch makes one think of The Old and the New Schoolmaster. Both writers, of course, have a manifest affection for London: indeed, Lamb does not mention much beyond London, apart from his feeling for the older Universities and for Hertfordshire. Both of them, also, betray a growing interest in London's seaside: in the case of Lamb it is Margate, in Dickens, the fashion for visiting Ramsgate. Even here there is a difference concerning the proper transport to be employed: Lamb is firm that the

only way to go is by sailing vessel--the old Margate Hoy: 'none of the foppery and fresh-water niceness of the modern steam-packet', he asserts, whereas Dickens apparently takes it for granted that when his Tuggs family leaves London for a time and goes to Ramsgate they will avail themselves of the City of London Ramsgate steamer.

That I think indicates a chief difference between the two men: a strong feeling for the past from the one, a firm engagement with the present from the other. Just as Dickens showed little nostalgia for the old sailing boats, once the new steam-packets were available, so his essays in *Sketches by Boz* show him emphasizing less the London of times past than the London of the here and now. Where Lamb shares with his readers his love of the inner Temple where was brought up and of the old Benchers he recalls there, Dickens writes of Doctors Commons as he perceives the place now, with all its outmoded customs, foreshadowing much of what he will have to say about the abuses of the law in his later works. In all such writing, however, he shows a zest and delight in human behaviour and human nature that make him a clear successor to the Lamb who wrote of London as a pantomime and masquerade: 'The wonder of these sights impells me into night-walks about her crowded streets, he added, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much Life'. In that respect he was a great proto-Dickensian, and a man whom we can delight in commemorating once again, and from yet another angle. May I invite you to rise and drink to THE IMMORTAL MEMORY OF CHARLES LAMB.

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

By PETER ROWLAND

Part II

AGREEING, AT SHORT NOTICE, to supply a detailed monthly account of the perambulations of the Pickwick Club, Charles Dickens had hurled himself into the mammoth task with characteristic energy and determination, bringing to bear all the resources at his command. One of those resources was his intimate knowledge of the works of Charles Lamb. As we have seen already, the resulting production was imbued to a quite remarkable extent with the spirit, ideas and, arguably, even the characteristic words of Elia, and there are other comparisons still to be drawn.

We can note, for instance, that Mr Wardle's mother, like Sarah Battle, was an old lady who took her whist very seriously. And Elia, for that matter, took seriously the annual ritual of Valentine's Day, when the postman sank "beneath a load of delicate embarrassments", those charming little missives containing, for the most part, representations of the human heart - "the bestruck and bleeding heart; it is twisted and tortured into more allegories and affectations than an opera hat" - with the God Cupid presiding over the proceedings.¹ He would have approved, surely, of the Valentine which Sam Weller sent to his sweetheart Mary, which bore "a highly coloured representation of a couple of human hearts skewered together with an arrow, cooking before a cheerful fire" while "a decidedly indelicate young gentleman, in a pair of wings and nothing else", superintended the cooking.² Finally, remembering that Elia had devoted a whole essay to the subject of poor relations, we are scarcely surprised to discover a couple of them turning up in *Pickwick*. Arriving at Dingley Dell for the Christmas festivities and the wedding, they sit at the bottom of the table, eat and drink very heartily and laugh at everything. They reappear at the very end of the book, when yet another wedding is imminent.³

The benign spirit of Charles Lamb hovers, in short, over the transactions of the Pickwick Club from start to finish. In no other Dickens novel will we find him quite so prominently in residence, but he still had, nevertheless, some crucial contributions to make to those that followed, not to mention his impact on the Dickensian style, mannerisms and concepts as a whole - which is, arguably, a subject of even greater importance.

¹ 'Valentine's Day', *The Examiner*, 14 Feb. 1819, included in *Essays of Elia* (1823), hereinafter cited as *Essays* (as reprinted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford, 1908), Vol. I, p. 541, hereinafter cited as *Works*).

² *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-7) ('The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens' edition, hereinafter cited as *NOID*, p. 449).

³ On this subject of weddings, Elia had provided in 1825 a celebrated and vivid account of one he was involved in while confessing that he really had no business to be present on such solemn occasions - about to engage in a jest, he had discovered the awful eye of the parson upon him and was instantly struck dumb ('The Wedding', *The London Magazine*, hereinafter cited as *LM*, June 1825, included in *Last Essays of Elia* (1833), hereinafter cited as *Last Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 772). And Boz primly observed, eleven years later, that a wedding was "a licensed subject to joke upon, but there really is no great joke in the matter at all" (*Posthumous Papers*, etc (*NOID*, p. 384)).

After the concentrated white heat which had characterised the production of *Pickwick*, Dickens was able to slow down a bit (although the immediate change in tempo was only minimal) and, as his horizons widened, and his knowledge, experience and expertise increased, so recollections of Lamb's essays steadily receded into the background of his consciousness. But they did not disappear altogether.

It is not proposed to subject his subsequent novels to relentless chapter-by-chapter scrutiny, in the hope of bringing triumphantly to light some passing resemblances to the works of Elia. Style, presentation and subjects for rumination, rather than ideas for plots and personalities, are the primary attributes which the second Charles inherited from his predecessor. But it would be foolish, having set out to pinpoint comparisons, to ignore the most obvious of those instances where Charles Lamb would seem to have had a quite decisive influence in triggering off certain Dickensian trains of thought.

Take, for instance, the following passage:

Nothing tends to keep up, in the imaginations of the poorer sort of people, a generous horror of the workhouse more than the manner in which pauper funerals are conducted in this metropolis. The coffin nothing but a few naked planks, coarsely put together, - the want of a pall (that decent and well-imagined veil, which, hiding the coffin that hides the body, keeps that which would shock us at two removes from us), the coloured coats of the men that are hired, at cheap rates, to carry the body, - altogether gives the notion of the deceased having been some person of an ill-life and conversation, some one who may not claim the entire rites of Christian burial, - one by whom some parts of the sacred ceremony would be desecrated if they should be bestowed upon him.

This is a theme that appears time and time again in Dickens's novels - from the world of *Oliver Twist*, to the unfortunate fate of Captain Hawdon ('Nemo') in *Bleak House* and finally to old Betty Higden in *Our Mutual Friend*, fleeing for all she's worth to escape the ultimate humiliation of a workhouse funeral. It seems a characteristic Dickensian utterance but comes, in fact, from some musings on burial societies penned by Lamb in 1811.⁴

Mention of *Oliver Twist* reminds us of Fagin and of Dickens's attitude towards the Jews, which can be described, at best, as equivocal - although (in response to representations) he made a dutiful attempt to redress the balance when depicting Mr Riah. Lamb's own attitude had also been somewhat contemptuous. Thus, in 1808:

It is curious to see a superstition wearing out. The idea of a Jew, which our pious ancestors contemplated with such horror, has nothing in it now revolting. We have tamed the claws of the beast, and pared its nails, and now we take it to our arms, fondle it, write plays to flatter it; it is visited by our princes, affects a taste, patronizes the arts, and is the only liberal and gentlemanlike thing in Christendom.

And in 1821:

⁴ 'On Burial Societies; and the Character of an Undertaker', *The Reflector*, 1811 (No. III), included in *The Works of Charles Lamb* (1818), hereinafter cited as *The Works* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 120).

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. . . . But I should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerve to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. . . . A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. He is least distasteful on 'Change - for the mercantile spirit levels all distinctions, as all are beauties in the dark. I boldly confess that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become so fashionable.⁵

And so on, in similar vein, while readily acknowledging that his views were old fashioned.

Our next port of call must be *Dombey and Son*. During the first quarter of the book attention is trained on Paul Dombey, the pride and joy of his father's eye, for whom great things are planned. But he is a delicate, sickly child. Convalescing at Brighton, he spends much time gazing at the sea wondering what the waves are saying. Clearly, with all these hefty hints having been dropped, he is not long for this world. But it must be recalled that Lamb, on the old Margate Hoy, had espied "a lad, apparently very poor, very infirm, and very patient [who took no interest in the shipboard chatter]. His eye was ever on the sea, with a smile. . . . The waves to him whispered more pleasant stories."⁶

Lamb's Captain Jackson, resolutely cheerful in the midst of poverty, bears a passing resemblance to Mr Micawber,⁷ and the following passage (penned in 1822) could easily have come from the recollections of an earlier David Copperfield:

My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweetmeat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcombry of charity, school-boy-like, I made him a present of - the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I - I

⁵ 'Characters of Dramatic Writers, Contemporary with Shakespeare' (1808 essay), reprinted in revised form in *The Works* (1818) (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 55) and 'Imperfect Sympathies', *LM*, Aug. 1821, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 548). He confessed, on the latter occasion, that he did not care for negroes either. Some of them indeed were noble in appearance, "but I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good-nights with them - because they are black" (*Ibid.*, p. 549). And Dickens, in 1853, declared that he totally disbelieved in the Noble Savage: "His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense" ('The Noble Savage', *Household Words*, hereinafter cited as *HW*, in *Reprinted Pieces* (1868) (*NOID*, pp. 472-3). Both Lamb and Dickens were typical spokesmen of their time, in short, when it came to pontificating on racial equality. Lamb professed a similar dislike for the Scots, but if Dickens (a close friend of Carlyle) harboured such views then he prudently kept them to himself.

⁶ 'The Old Margate Hoy', *LM*, July 1823, included in *Last Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 695).

⁷ E.V. Lucas considered, indeed, that the resemblance was quite marked, and that Mr Micawber was basically a mixture of both Captain Jackson and Ralph Bigod (alias John Fenwick). His arguments are persuasive, although it is generally accepted that the character was based primarily on John Dickens, the author's father. See *The Life of Charles Lamb* by E.V. Lucas (7th edition, London, 1921), pp. 246-7, and also 'Near Akin - Lamb and Dickens' by F.C. Dance in *The Dickensian*, Vol. 36 (1939), pp. 261-2.

myself, and not another - would eat her nice cake - and what should I say to her the next time I saw her - how naughty I was to part with her pretty present - and the odour of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last - and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing, old grey impostor.⁸

Some of the *Copperfield* material is thinly-disguised autobiography, for Dickens had drawn upon an account of his childhood which he was unable, in the event, to complete. We find, in the surviving fragments of that original text, relating to his employment in a blacking factory, the following reflections:

It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. . . . Our friends, I take it, were tired out. No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. . . . That I suffered in secret, and that I suffered exquisitely, no one ever knew but I.⁹

All of which bears a curious resemblance to the recollections penned by Elia (curious in their own right) in the guise of a fictional contemporary of Charles Lamb at Christ's Hospital:

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice . . . soon grew tired of my holiday visits. . . . and I felt myself alone.¹⁰

The Christ's Hospital recalled in this essay has something in common with *Copperfield's* Salem House, where an impoverished young master called Mr Mell is denounced by Steerforth as being a beggar - for his mother, a poor old woman, lives on charity in an alms-house, where Mr Mell (accompanied by David on one occasion) secretly visits her. This episode calls to mind a youth in Lamb's essay who disgusts his schoolfellows by gathering up the remnants at the end of each meal to apparently devour in private. Curious to learn more, they track him to a miserable paupers' hovel where, on the fourth floor, the door is opened by "an aged woman, meanly clad" - for this is the home of his parents, "an honest couple come to decay", whom he has been sustaining.¹¹

Wooring Dora Spenlow, the adult David is slightly disconcerted by her little dog. "I approached him tenderly, for I loved even him; but he showed his whole set of teeth, got under a chair expressly to snarl, and wouldn't hear of the least familiarity. . . . He was mortally jealous of me, and persisted in barking at me." The dog is called Gip (spelt 'Jip' in the original manuscript), not so very far

⁸ 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig', *LM*, Sept. 1822, included in *Essays (Works, Vol. I, pp. 627-8)*.

⁹ *The Life of Charles Dickens* by John Forster, edited by J.W.T. Ley (London, 1928), pp. 25 and 29.

¹⁰ But alone, it should be noted, in the company of six hundred playmates! 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', *LM*, Nov. 1820, included in *Essays (Works, Vol. I, p. 487)*.

¹¹ *Ibid.* (*Works*, pp. 490-1).

removed from 'yap', which was the persistent reaction of Test, the dog featured in Lamb's Popular Fallacy No. XIII ('That You Must Love Me, and Love My Dog'), when confronted by Elia.¹²

Harold Skimpole, the prince of borrowers, is only too happy to explain his philosophy of life to the readers of *Bleak House*. The world, he considers, has a duty to maintain him and he is conferring a positive benefit on the world by allowing it to do so. "There was a perfect charm in him," records Esther Summerson. "All he said was so free from effort and spontaneous, and was said with such a captivating gaiety, that it was fascinating to hear him talk. . . . And what with his fine hilarious manner, and his engaging candour, and his genial way of lightly tossing his own weaknesses about. . . the effect was absolutely dazzling." In like fashion, indeed, had Ralph Bigod dazzled his listeners some thirty years earlier when soliciting funds. "For Bigod", Elia exclaims, "had an *undeniable* way with him. He had a cheerful, open exterior, a quick jovial eye, a bald forehead, just touched with grey. . . He anticipated no excuse, and found none." He described his benefactors as "tributaries, feeders of his exchequer; gentlemen, his good friends (as he was pleased to express himself), to whom he had occasionally been beholden for a loan. Their multitudes did in no way disconcert him. He rather took a pride in numbering them."¹³ John Fenwick and Leigh Hunt, the respective originals of Bigod and Skimpole, stand before us as Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Bleak House was followed by *Little Dorrit*, in the third chapter of which we find Arthur Clennam depressed by the capital's celebration of the Sabbath:

It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. . . . Everything as bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an overworked people. No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world - all *taboo*. . . . Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it - or the worst, according to the probabilities.¹⁴

Dickens was writing in 1855. Elia, thirty years earlier, had been similarly dispirited by the solemnities attendant upon the Sabbath:

There is a gloom for me attendant upon a city Sunday, a weight in the air. I miss the cheerful cries of London, the music, and the ballad-singers - the buzz and stirring murmur of the streets. Those eternal bells depress me. The closed shops repel me. . . . Nothing to be seen but unhappy countenances - or half-happy at best - of emancipated 'prentices and little tradesfolks, with here and there a servant maid that has got leave to go out, who, slaving all the week, with the habit has lost almost the capacity of enjoying a free hour; and livelily

¹² *David Copperfield* (1849-50) (Clarendon edition edited by Nina Burgis (1981), p. 336). 'That You Must Love Me, and Love My Dog', *New Monthly Magazine*, Feb. 1826, included in *Last Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 803-7).

¹³ *Bleak House* (1852-53) (*NOID*, pp. 68-9 and p. 71) and 'The Two Races of Men', *LM*, Dec. 1820, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 501).

¹⁴ *Little Dorrit* (1855-57) (*NOID*, p. 28).

expressing the hollowness of a day's pleasuring. The very strollers in the fields on that day look anything but comfortable.¹⁵

Gloom, bells, streets and monotony. Everything closed. Nothing to breathe - nothing to see. Clearly, or on this occasion at any rate, Arthur Clennam and the Superannuated Man are interchangeable.

Elsewhere, that Superannuated Man, dazed by his sudden freedom, briefly assumes the lineaments of Dr Manette - "I was in the condition of a prisoner in the old Bastille, suddenly let loose after a forty years' confinement."¹⁶ There is a faint possibility that the courteous, white-haired but dignified old gentleman portrayed in *A Tale of Two Cities*, occasionally sunk in moods of prolonged abstraction, corresponds with Dickens's impression of Charles Lamb. An alternative depiction may be found in *Our Mutual Friend*, for the down-trodden Reginald Wilfer (cherubic in appearance, admittedly) is a mild-mannered poor clerk, of a sad but whimsical turn of mind, who works for a drug company in Mincing Lane - the street where the Superannuated Man had himself served a term of thirty-six years. "He had never yet attained the modest object of his ambition: which was to wear a complete new suit of clothes, hats and boots included, at one time. His black hat was brown before he could afford a coat, his pantaloons were white at the seams and knees before he could buy a pair of boots, his boots had worn out before he could treat himself to new pantaloons, and by the time he worked round to the hat again, that shining modern article roofed-in an ancient ruin of various periods."¹⁷

This, perhaps, is as far as one need venture when seeking to trace the influence of Charles Lamb on the novels of Charles Dickens. Totally undeniable is the fact that Dickens produced some magnificent, awe-inspiring works, most of them still very readable, and - despite some obvious faults - is generally considered to be largely unrivalled. As a novelist, he occupies a supreme pinnacle. Given that the writing of articles formed only a very small part of his overall literary activities, the quantity and quality of such work he produced in the years of his maturity is, even so, breathtakingly impressive, and it is this which now concerns us. For what needs to be considered, and of much greater importance so far as the present study is concerned, is the influence which Charles Lamb brought to bear on the *essays* of Charles Dickens.

It should be remembered that the average life-span, in the early years of the nineteenth century, rarely exceeded sixty years and could often be much less. Middle age and old age came early. With the publication of his *Works* in 1818, as something by which Posterity might care to remember him, Lamb had signalled his belief that the major part of his literary career was over. When the first of his Elia essays was written, two years later, he was forty-five years old. The stream of reminiscences and anecdotes which then started to flow from his pen were basically afterthoughts, or postscripts - reflections and recollections written in a relaxed, informal manner - but as their quantity increased so they became an exhilarating corpus in their own right, and his career took on a fresh lease of life. Dickens was forty, or thereabouts, when his own journalistic pieces - primarily ephemera before 1850 - began maturing into essays of a similar warmth, mellowness, detachment and quiet

¹⁵ 'The Superannuated Man', *LM*, May 1825, included in *Last Essays (Works, Vol. I, pp. 712-13)*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* (*Works*, p. 715).

¹⁷ *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) (*NOID*, p. 32).

amusement. Knowingly or not, he followed in Lamb's footsteps to a significant extent, particularly - as the following examples will illustrate - when it came to re-examining his earliest memories.

"From my childhood", says Lamb, "I was extremely inquisitive about witches and witch-stories. My maid, and more legendary aunt, supplied me with good store."¹⁸ Dickens, for his part, recalled that it was his nurse who had introduced him to "utterly impossible places and people", many of them highly frightening, before he was six years old.¹⁹ Lamb was particularly haunted by an illustration from Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* of the Witch raising up Samuel "which no lock or bar could shut out, and which was destined to try my childish nerves rather more seriously [than any other]. - That detestable picture!"²⁰ In much the same way was the young Dickens terrified of a cardboard mask. "The mere recollection of that fixed face," he exclaims, "the mere knowledge of its existence anywhere, was sufficient to wake me in the night all perspiration and horror, with, 'O I know it's coming! O the mask!'"²¹

For both youngsters, bedtime could clearly be traumatic. "The night time solitude, and the dark, were my hell," declares Lamb. "The sufferings I endured in this nature would justify the expression. I never laid my head on my pillow, I suppose, from the fourth to the seventh or eighth year of my life - so far as memory serves in things so long ago - without an assurance, which realized its own prophecy, of seeing some frightful spectre."²² And Dickens, as well as being pursued by the mask and other horrors, descried "remembrances of winter nights incredibly long; of being sent early to bed, as a punishment for some small offence, and waking in two hours, with a sensation of having been asleep two nights; of the leaden hopelessness of morning ever dawning; and the oppression of a weight of remorse."²³

Each of them soon became acquainted with Noah's ark. In Lamb's case it took the form of yet another Stackhouse illustration, for turning the page over too quickly "I unhappily made a breach in its ingenious fabric - driving my inconsiderate fingers right through the two larger quadrupeds - the elephant, and the camel - that stare (as well they might) out of the two last windows next the steerage in that unique piece of naval architecture."²⁴ Dickens, however, went one better with a genuine wooden ark, a wonderful creation, even though it proved unseaworthy "when put in a washing-tub, and the animals were crammed in at the roof, and needed to have their legs well shaken down".²⁵

Great was the excitement when Elia attended his very first play:

The afternoon had been wet, and the condition of our going (the elder folks and myself) was, that the rain should cease. With what a beating heart did I watch from the windows the puddles, from the stillness of which I was taught to prognosticate the desired cessation! I seem to remember the last spurt, and the glee with which I ran to announce it. . . . I

¹⁸ 'Witches, and Other Night-Fears', *LM*, Oct. 1821, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 553).

¹⁹ 'Nurses Stories', *All the Year Round*, hereinafter cited as *AYR*, 8 Sept. 1860, reprinted in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, hereinafter cited as *UT* (*NOID*, p. 150).

²⁰ 'Witches, etc' (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 555).

²¹ 'A Christmas Tree', *HW*, 21 Dec. 1850, reprinted in *Christmas Stories* (*NOID*, p. 5).

²² 'Witches, etc' (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 555).

²³ 'A Christmas Tree' (*NOID*, p. 9).

²⁴ *Ibid.* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 555). He also referred to this illustration when writing, as 'Maria Howe', the first of the three chapters ('The Witch Aunt') which he contributed to *Mrs Leicester's School* (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 395).

²⁵ 'A Christmas Tree' (*NOID*, p. 7).

remember the waiting at the door. . . . - O when shall I be such an expectant again! . . . But when we got in, and I beheld the green curtain that veiled a heaven to my imagination, which was soon to be disclosed - the breathless anticipations I endured! . . . The curtain drew up - I was not past six years old - and the play was Artaxerxes! . . . Gorgeous vests, gardens, palaces, princesses, passed before me. I knew not players. I was awe-struck, and believed those significations to be something more than elemental fires. It was all enchantment and a dream. No such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams. - Harlequin's Invasion followed; where, I remember, the transformation of the magistrates into reverend beldams seemed to me a piece of grave historic justice, and the tailor carrying his own head to be as sober a verity as the legend of St Denys.²⁶

And Dickens, in due course, attended *his* first plays and pantomimes:

The promise; the hope deferred; the saving-clause of 'no fine weather, no play' . . . scrutiny of the weather during the day! . . . The green curtain, with a hole in it, through which a bright eye peeped. . . [I remember] our intense, fear-stricken admiration of the heroine, when she let her back hair down, and went mad, in blue. . . . The funny man (there never was such a funny man) in a red scratch wig, who, when imprisoned in the deepest dungeon beneath the castle moat, sang a comic song about a leg of mutton. . . [And my speculations] extended to Harlequins, Pantaloons, and Columbines, all of whom we believed to be real and veritable personages, existing in the same forms and characters all the year round.²⁷

But Elia, returning to the scenes of his earliest childhood six years later, is momentarily disillusioned:

I had left the temple a devotee, and was returned a rationalist. The same things were there materially; but the emblem, the reference, was gone! . . . I thought the fault was in them; but it was in myself, and the alteration which [time] had wrought in me. . . . [But] comparison and retrospection soon yielded to the present attraction of the scene.²⁸

And Dickens, returning to the scenes of *his* earliest childhood, is similarly disillusioned until wiser considerations prevail:

Ah! who was I that I should quarrel with the town for being changed to me, when I myself had come back, so changed to it! All my early readings and early imagination dated from this place, and I took them away so full of innocent construction and guileless belief, and I brought them back so worn and torn, so much the wiser and so much the worse!²⁹

²⁶ 'My First Play', *LM*, Dec. 1821, included in *Essays (Works, Vol. I, pp. 592-5)*.

²⁷ 'First Fruits', *HW*, 18 May 1852 (reprinted in *Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from Household Words, 1850-1859*, edited by Harry Stone (Indiana, 1968), pp. 415-16) - plus, for ease of comparison, a final sentence taken from CD's Introduction to the *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* (1838), reprinted in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Heron Books (1970?), Vol. I, p. 3).

²⁸ 'My First Play' (*Works, Vol. I, p. 596*).

²⁹ 'Dullborough Town', *AYR*, 30 June 1860, reprinted in *UT (NOID, p. 136)*.

Each of them penned vivid recollections of schooldays. "O," exclaimed Lamb in 1825, "how I remember our legs wedged into those uncomfortable sloping desks, where we sat elbowing each other. . . . What a world of little associated circumstances, pains, and pleasures. . . ." ³⁰ Dickens, in 1863, would remember the sheer drudgery and weariness of schoolwork, "when figures wouldn't work, when dead languages wouldn't construe, when live languages wouldn't be spoken. . . [and the seats became] too hard to be sat upon after a certain time". But when recalling Our School twelve years earlier, however, he had concentrated his attention on describing pupils and masters in much the same way as Lamb had done when describing Christ's Hospital. ³¹

Ruminating on the qualities required by a modern school teacher, Lamb concluded that "the least part of what is expected from him, is to be done in school-hours. He must insinuate knowledge at the *mollia tempora fandi*. He must seize every occasion - the season of the year - the time of the day - a passing cloud - a rainbow - a waggon of hay - a regiment of soldiers going by - to inculcate something useful. He can receive no pleasure from a casual glimpse of Nature, but must catch at it as an object of instruction. He must interpret beauty into the picturesque. He cannot relish a beggarman, or a gypsy, for thinking of the suitable improvement. . . . The Universe - that Great Book, as it has been called - is to him indeed, to all intents and purposes, a book, out of which he is doomed to read tedious homilies to distasting schoolboys." ³²

All of which might pass very well as a character sketch of Mr Barlow, the omniscient teacher called into existence by Thomas Day in *Sandford and Merton*, who lectures unmercifully (or so it is alleged) the two small boys entrusted to his charge. Dickens, indeed, affected to believe that Mr Barlow had so far intruded into his own young life as to positively blight it. "He knew everything," Dickens declared, "and didactically improved all sorts of occasions, from the consumption of a plate of cherries to the contemplation of a starlight night. . . . What right had he to bore his way into my *Arabian Nights*? Yet he did. He was always hinting doubts of the veracity of Sindbad the Sailor. If he could have got hold of the Wonderful Lamp, I know he would have trimmed it and lighted it, and delivered a lecture over it on the qualities of sperm-oil, with a glance at the whale-fisheries. . . . So I took the path, which, but for Mr Barlow, I might never have trodden. . . . I took refuge in the caves of ignorance, wherein I have resided ever since, and which are still my private address." ³³

The dawn of a New Year provided, for each of them, an appropriate time for looking back at their early manhoods. "I would scarce now have", muses Lamb at the start of 1821, "any of those untoward accidents and events of my life reversed. I would no more alter them than the incidents of

³⁰ 'Captain Starkey', *The Every-Day Book*, 21 July 1825, included in *Eliana* (1864), edited by J.E. Babson (*Works*, p. 381).

³¹ 'Our School', *HW*, 11 Oct. 1851, included in *Reprinted Pieces* (*NOID*, pp. 566-73) and 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', *LM*, Nov. 1820, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 486-98). Neither Lamb nor Dickens received a university education, although Elia, strolling in the grounds (and peeping at the kitchens) of empty Oxford colleges, consoled himself with the reflection that one such as himself, "defrauded in his younger years of the sweet food of academic institutions", could "here play the gentleman, enact the student" ('Oxford in the Vacation', *LM*, Oct.. 1820, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 482). Dickens (inveighing against his parents) considered that he too had been "defrauded" but was much less philosophical about the deprivation: one searches in vain for any mention of dreaming spires, let alone college quadrangles, in the pages of his books. On just one occasion, however, he gave vent to his bitterness: see 'Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of persons variously engaged in the University of Oxford', *The Examiner*, 3 June 1843, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Heron Books (1970?), Vol. I, pp. 103-7).

³² 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster', *LM*, May 1821, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 536-7).

³³ 'Mr Barlow', *AYR*, 16 Jan. 1869 (*NOID*, pp. 338-40).

some well-contrived novel. Methinks, it is better that I should have pined away seven of my goldenest years, when I was in thrall to the fair hair and fairer eyes of Alice W - n, than that so passionate a love-adventure should be lost."³⁴ Dickens, in *The Haunted Man*, was equally adamant that early memories - however unhappy some of them might have been - should never be erased. Elsewhere he would recall that he had been briefly in love on several occasions between the ages of thirteen and twenty-three and that one particular affair had lasted for "six or seven long years" only to crumble away at the last.³⁵ "And O, Angelica, what has become of you?"³⁶

Looking back was, indeed, the principal stock-in-trade of both authors so far as their later essays were concerned. Lamb often depicted himself as a middle-aged, childless bachelor, sitting by his fireside reflecting on what might have been, and this was a persona which Dickens himself delighted to adopt. He becomes, for example, Master Humphrey, an old bachelor retired from business, who lives "a lonely, solitary life" in a suburb of London, although this does not prevent him from walking abroad and delighting in the company of humble folk and children.³⁷

In one of his most celebrated essays, Lamb conjured up the two children, Alice and John, who might have been his had the fair Alice W - n looked more kindly upon his suit. He tells them of their grandparents, and of his courtship of their mother, and there is a happy convivial atmosphere, but then the children fade from view - "We are only what might have been" - and he awakes to find himself in his bachelor armchair with his sister by his side.³⁸ It was a story which particularly affected Dickens, as we have noted already, and - paying homage, as it were - he tried his hand at a re-run in 1852. "My Castle", says Michael, the narrator, towards the end of his tale, "is not a splendid place, but it is very comfortable, and it has a warm and cheerful air, and is quite a picture of Home." He refers to his eldest girl, "who is very like her mother", and to his other children and grandchildren. But it is, of course, only a Castle in the Air, for we know from the outset that Michael is a poor relation, "a bachelor of between fifty-nine and sixty years of age".³⁹ (As, indeed, was Lamb when he died.)

Walking the streets of London at all hours of the day, in a state of continual fascination at what might be glimpsed, was another joint interest.⁴⁰ Lamb marvelled at "the lighted shops of the Strand

³⁴ 'New Year's Eve', *LM*, Jan. 1821, included in *Essays (Works, Vol. I, p. 505)*. Cf. CD's 'New Year's Day', *HW*, 1 Jan. 1859, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Heron Books (1970?), Vol. II, pp. 171-82).

³⁵ CD to Thomas Powell, 2 Aug. 1845, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, edited by Kathleen Tillotson and others (Oxford, 1965 - ongoing), Vol. 4, p. 346.

³⁶ 'City of London Churches', *AYR*, 5 May 1860, reprinted in *UT (NOID, p. 89)*.

³⁷ *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840) (*NOID, p. 5*). "I am a bachelor," he subsequently declared in a sketch written ten years later, "residing in rather a dreary set of chambers in the Temple" - "The Ghost of Art", *HW*, 20 July 1850, included in *Reprinted Pieces (NOID, p. 438)*. An echo, perhaps, of yet another well-known opening line: "I was born, and passed the first seven years of my life, in the Temple" - CL's "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple", *LM*, Sept. 1821, included in *Essays (Works, Vol. I, p. 574)*.

³⁸ 'Dream-Children; a Reverie', *LM*, Jan. 1822, included in *Essays (Works, Vol. I, p. 600)*.

³⁹ "The Poor Relation's Story", which formed part of *HW*'s 1852 Christmas number, reprinted in *Christmas Stories (NOID, pp. 29-39)* - a title reminiscent, of course, of CL's "Poor Relations", *LM*, May 1823, included in *Last Essays (Works, Vol. I, pp. 667-73)*.

⁴⁰ Alan D. McKillop, in a *Rice Institute Pamphlet* published in 1935, wrote (so Houtchens tell us) "an excellent article", 'Charles Lamb Sees London', in the course of which he "compares Lamb and Dickens as Londoners" (*The English Romantic Essayists, A Review of Research and Criticism*, by Carolyn Washburn Houtchens and Lawrence Huston Houtchens (New York, 1966, p. 71). Despite his best endeavours, in the course of which he has ascertained that it is issue No. XXII and that the text appears on pages 105-27, the present writer has been unable to locate a copy of this pamphlet. Should one ever come to light, and copyright considerations permitting, it is suggested that - in view of its evident rarity -

and Fleet Street, the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, waggons, play houses, all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden, the very women of the town, the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles. . . . The wonder of these sights impells me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much Life."⁴¹ The Uncommercial Traveller, slightly younger than Master Humphrey, also wanders "here and there from my rooms in Covent Garden, London - now about the city streets: now, about the country by-roads - seeing many little things, and some great things".⁴² He too is addicted to night walks and knows "well enough where . . . Vice and Misfortune" may be found.⁴³ (Covent Garden was a constant central point for each of them, but both were equally at home in the streets of the City. Elia's recollections of the South Sea House, and the clerks who worked there, lead us into the world of the office-workers depicted by Boz.)

There are continuing points of similarity. Elia wrote about beggars, while Dickens wrote about tramps. Elia celebrated 'All Fool's Day', while Dickens produced 'Stories for the First of April'. Lamb addressed the editor of *The Reflector* 'On the Inconveniences Resulting from being Hanged' while Dickens wrote three letters to the *Daily News* urging the abolition of capital punishment. Elia in 1825, as we have seen, was unhappy about the dreariness of Sundays in London, "the very worst adapted for days of unbending and recreation", while Dickens (under the pseudonym Timothy Sparks) issued a pamphlet in 1836 urging that they be brightened up and returned to the attack fourteen years later, proclaiming afresh the injunction that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."⁴⁴

Apart from the extent to which the choice of subject-matter of the two writers coincided, there is also the question of style to be taken into account. As foregoing examples will have indicated, there was often very little to choose between them - for extracts from an essay by Elia could perfectly well have been inserted in one by the Uncommercial Traveller with no one being any the wiser, and vice versa. But certain mannerisms or phrases used by Lamb will often be echoed by Dickens.

To revert to a passage quoted earlier in this article, for instance, Elia told us that -

In my way to school (it was over London bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit).

And the Uncommercial Traveller, revisiting the scenes of his childhood, recalls a town hall

where I had seen an Indian (who I now suppose wasn't an Indian) swallow a sword (which I now suppose he didn't).⁴⁵

it would be useful if it could be reprinted in a future issue of 'The Bulletin'.

⁴¹ CL to William Wordsworth, 30 Jan. 1801, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, edited by Edwin W. Marris, Jr. (New York, 1975), Vol. I, p. 267.

⁴² 'His General Line of Business', *AYR*, 28 Jan. 1860, reprinted in *UT (NOID)*, p. 2).

⁴³ 'Night Walks', *AYR*, 21 July 1860, reprinted in *UT*, in which the region of Covent Garden, where the offices of *All the Year Round* were located, looms particularly large. On an earlier occasion, heading for the east end after leaving Covent Garden, Dickens passed the India House, "thinking in my idle manner of Tippto-Sahib and Charles Lamb" - 'Wapping Warehouse' *AYR*, 18 Feb. 1860, also reprinted in *UT (NOID)*, pp. 135 and 18).

⁴⁴ 'The Superannuated Man' (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 712); *Sunday Under Three Heads* (1836) (*NOID*, pp. 635-63) and 'The Sunday Screw', *HW*, 22 June 1850, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Heron Books (1970?), Vol. I, pp. 259-67).

⁴⁵ 'Dullborough Town' (*NOID*, p. 120).

Meantime, the panic-stricken Elia bitterly reproaches himself -

I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I - I myself, and not another - would eat her nice cake - and what should I say to her the next time I saw her - how naughty I was to part with her pretty present, etc.

just as the equally young Dickens, already nursing feelings of guilt at having been separated from his guardian, is struck with horror at the thought that he might have won a donkey in a raffle -

I thought how all the people would shriek when they saw it had fallen to a little fellow like me. How should I lead him out? - for of course he would not go. If he began to bray, what should I do? If he kicked, what would become of me? . . . It was bad enough to have gone astray by myself, but to go astray with a donkey, too, was a calamity more tremendous than I could contemplate.⁴⁶

Lamb produced, in 'Popular Fallacies', a series of grumbles prefaced (almost invariably) with the word 'That', while he continually proclaims, when it comes to the putative existence of modern gallantry, "I shall believe it when. . ." as the prelude to pinpointing society's current shortcomings.⁴⁷ In much the same way Dickens came up with batches of disparate thoughts, irritations or hobby-horses prefaced by the rhythmical chant "We have never outgrown. . ." or "It is not generally known that. . ." and, on one occasion, simply "Why. . .?"⁴⁸

Palpable similarities between these two writers have been touched upon, but the other side of the coin needs to be considered. Leaving aside the obvious facts that Charles Lamb was not a novelist, and that he lived modestly and in comparative seclusion, as distinct from raking in the profits and being hailed as a celebrity wherever he went, there are some underlying differences that ought to be noted. For however close their outputs may have been in style, and whatever other surface similarities there may have been, the two personalities were not totally interchangeable. Primarily, it would seem to be an issue of mobility and energy.

Elia, notwithstanding his knowledge of London and visits to Hertfordshire, University towns and the seaside, is essentially a passive figure. He moves in limited circles. He recalls happenings, people and places of days gone by or reflects on current domestic incidents or exchanges, all of which trigger off marvellous trains of thought and fancy. The Uncommercial Traveller, on the other hand, while gladly affecting the detached role of contemplative observer, and happy to recall the past, is - almost despite himself - unceasingly active. He goes much further afield in the most literal sense - always, in the last analysis, the investigative reporter seeking new experiences and fresh copy⁴⁹ - and to make a true comparison we should perhaps hive off the articles produced by Dickens the Journalist from those produced by Dickens the Essayist.

⁴⁶ 'Gone Astray', HW, 13 Aug. 1853, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Heron Books (1970?)), Vol. I, p. 432).

⁴⁷ 'Popular Fallacies', published primarily in *The New Monthly Magazine* at various dates, and reprinted in *Last Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 786-814) and 'Modern Gallantry', *LM*, Nov. 1822, included in *Essays* (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 570-4).

⁴⁸ 'Where we Stopped Growing', 'It is not Generally Known' and 'Why?', *HW*, 1 Jan. 1853, 1 March 1856 and 2 Sept. 1854, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Heron Books (1970?)), Vol. I, pp. 385-90 and 469-76 and Vol. II, pp. 96-102).

⁴⁹ "My journeys as Uncommercial Traveller for the firm of Human Interest Brothers have not slackened since I last

Even so, the output and range of the Essayist remains formidable. Childhood and early memories, walking the streets of London, sympathetic depictions of both persons and neighbourhoods, speculation on what might-have-been but never was, and meditations suffused at times with melancholy, at others with buoyant good humour, and overall a profound knowledge of the ways of the world, were areas which Dickens (in the eyes of his immediate contemporaries) made peculiarly his own. But they were regions which Lamb had visited first and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, in these particular spheres, Dickens was following closely in his footsteps. For he had assimilated his predecessor's arts, while developing some of his own, and eventually attained the same wonderful felicity of touch. Essays such as 'A Christmas Tree', 'Our School', 'Shy Neighbourhoods', 'Tramps', 'Night Walks', 'Chambers', 'Arcadian London' and 'The City of the Absent', to name but a few, are some which only a student of Lamb could have written.

There is, finally, one very interesting side-issue, or postscript, to this story. Is it remotely possible that Dickens could have read *Mrs Leicester's School* when he was a child? The book had been first published in 1808 and had passed through nine editions by 1825. The very structure of the book - in which a handful of people, brought together in a particular set of circumstances, take it in turn to relate their individual stories to the rest, under the benign guidance of a chairman, or master of ceremonies - is one that would greatly appeal to him in later life.⁵⁰ It is, of course, a structure that harks back to *The Canterbury Tales* (and even *The Decameron*), but Mary Lamb had given it a fresh lease of life, at the very outset of the nineteenth century, and the extent to which the young Dickens would have been familiar with the works of Chaucer (let alone Boccaccio) is a moot point.

Mrs Leicester, in charge of the newly-established Amwell School, ushers her first ten pupils into her cosy parlour and seats them round a blazing fire. Nearly all are in a tearful state, having just parted from their nearest and dearest, and to encourage greater intimacy she invites them to narrate their life histories - or, at any rate, anything that made a great impression on them when they were very young. This sets the scene for the ten stories that follow (lots having been drawn to determine who will start first). Seven of the stories were written by Mary Lamb and three of them by Charles, although the book was published anonymously.

Given that it enjoyed widespread popularity for almost twenty years, it is quite possible that Fanny Dickens, Charles's sister, would have been presented with a copy. If we accept the likelihood of this then it is equally possible that Charles himself (a voracious reader) would have borrowed it. Fond though he was, in later life, of recalling his first encounters with the Yellow Dwarf, Mother Bunch, *Sandford and Merton* and *The Arabian Nights*, the adult Charles Dickens, much given to exhorting the virtues of 'manliness', might well have hesitated to acknowledge *Mrs Leicester's School; or The History of Several Young Ladies, related by themselves*, as a crucial part of his childhood reading. But the manner in which the book is written, and some of the incidents depicted

reported of them," Dickens acknowledged towards the end of 1868, eighteen months before his death, "but have kept me continually on the move." Anxious to maintain his image as a relaxed, reflective observer, however, he instantly adds: "I remain in the same idle employment. I never solicit an order, I never get any commission, I am the rolling stone that gathers no moss - unless any should by chance be found among these samples" - 'Aboard Ship', *AYR*, 5 Dec. 1868, reprinted in *UT (NOID)*, p. 309).

⁵⁰ As editor of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, faced with the task of bringing out a special Christmas number each year.

therein, put one in mind, to a quite startling extent, of presentations, scenes and episodes that would subsequently become synonymous with himself.

The very first of the stories, 'The Sailor Uncle', begins in a churchyard. "The first thing I can remember", declares its narrator, Elizabeth Villiers, daughter of the village curate, "was my father teaching me the alphabet from the letters on a tombstone that stood at the head of my mother's grave." She equates her mother with the actual memorial - "I had an idea that the words on the tombstone were somehow a part of mamma".⁵¹ Sitting by herself on the stile into the churchyard, repeating the letters of her mother's name, the child is suddenly confronted by a strange man. This is *Great Expectations* territory with a vengeance - we recall, to begin with, the words of Pip, gazing at his parents' grave ("From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly") followed by the sudden appearance of Magwitch.⁵²

In Elizabeth's case, it transpires that the stranger is her sailor uncle, home from a long sea-voyage and totally unaware of his sister's death. In jubilant mood, he takes hold of the little girl's hand and proposes that they go and see her mother. But the child objects that he does not know the way and leads him instead into the churchyard. Partly amused, and partly mystified, he follows her.

At last I stopped at my mother's grave, and, pointing to the tombstone said, "Here is mamma," in a voice of exultation, as if I had now convinced him that I knew the way best.⁵³

And in *Great Expectations*:

"Now lookee here!" said the man. "Where's your mother?"

"There, sir!" said I.

He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"There, sir!" I timidly explained. "Also Georgiana. That's my mother."⁵⁴

Realisation dawns on Magwitch, just as it had dawned on Elizabeth's horrified uncle. And the latter, after his first distress has abated, takes Elizabeth in hand and teaches her to read with the aid of proper books before going back to sea. Magwitch, of course, will later seek to take Pip in hand, but of more direct relevance at this point is a tale by Dickens called 'His Boots', the second chapter in the novelette *Somebody's Luggage* (1862), in which a French corporal takes charge of a pretty child called Bebel before (sadly) disappearing from the scene. (As does for that matter, in the very last story contributed by Mrs Leicester's pupils, a young sailor called Atkinson take charge of orphaned five-year-old Arabella Hardy during a frightening voyage from the East Indies to England.)

Elizabeth and her father and their servant live in the parsonage, next door to the churchyard in which her mother is buried. She is called 'Betsy' by her father - reminiscent, perhaps, of the Betsey in *David Copperfield* - and it is also tempting to suggest that the near-opening sentence of this little story - "The first thing I can remember. . ." - is equivalent, in the second chapter of *Copperfield*, to

⁵¹ *Mrs Leicester's School* (Works, Vol. II, p. 341).

⁵² *Great Expectations* (1860-61) (NOID, p. 1).

⁵³ *Mrs Leicester's School* (Works, Vol. II, p. 342).

⁵⁴ *Great Expectations* (NOID, p. 2).

the much grander "The first objects that assume a distinct presence before me, as I look far back, into the blank of my infancy. . ." Elizabeth talks about "the smooth green grass" of the churchyard. The house in which David lives with his mother and *their* servant also adjoins a churchyard, the one in which his father is buried, and he knows "nothing half so green" as its grass.⁵⁵

Elizabeth's uncle, presenting her with a coat for the winter, calls her "Little Red Riding Hood, and bade me beware of wolves, and. . . I laughed and said that there were no such things now; then he told me how many wolves and bears, and tigers, and lions he had met with in uninhabited lands, that were like Robinson Crusoe's Island."⁵⁶ We may catch a faint echo of this exchange in 'A Christmas Tree' (1850), with Dickens recalling that "Little Red Riding Hood comes to me one Christmas Eve to give me information of the cruelty and treachery of that dissembling Wolf who ate her grand-mother" with, a little later, "many fancies" jumbled "with Robinson Crusoe on his desert island".⁵⁷

Louisa Manners, who relates the second story in Mrs Leicester's collection - all about a visit to her grandmother's farmhouse - is only seven. Exactly the same age, indeed, as Miss Alice Rainbird, who narrates the tale of the magic fishbone in Dickens's *Holiday Romance* (1868).

The mother of Elinor Forester (the fourth narrator) had died while her daughter was still very young, and the child was brought up by her father and the housekeeper. "From the time of her death", Elinor tells us, "no one had ever spoken to me of my mamma" and she comforts herself in playing with her doll.⁵⁸ But the day comes when her father announces, with great pleasure, that he is to about to remarry. Initially delighted at the prospect, the child finds, when her father brings home his bride, that she is unable to love her. Matters will soon be rectified, but she evidently had much in common with Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* - "I had never heard my mamma spoken of", Esther informs us.⁵⁹ Esther comforts herself by playing with her doll and feels guilty at being unable to love her godmother.

Later, after her godmother's death, Esther journeys to London in a coach and her fellow-passenger for part of the journey is an amiable but rather mysterious gentleman. In much the same way does Emily Barton (the sixth narrator) travel to London in a chaise with a jovial but equally mysterious gentleman. But she learns at the end of the journey - when her mother is there to greet them both - that this gentleman is really her father, whom she has not seen since her earliest childhood, and they are all going to live together in a new home. (Just as Esther will eventually live with John Jarndyce - the strange fellow-passenger in *her* coach - in a new home.) At one of the stops on their journey this jolly companion had told a milliner that they were running off to Gretna Green, just as Master Harry would inform Boots at the Holly Tree Inn that he and Miss Norah (both of them aged six, or thereabouts) were running off to Gretna Green.⁶⁰

Emily Barton's earlier life had been an unhappy one, for she had been sent - for reasons not clear - to live with a distant aunt and uncle and her three cousins (all girls). She had been "very disconsolate, because I had no mamma of my own" and the cousins quarrel with her, continually finding fault and complaining about her to their mother. The aunt "was always praising my cousins because they were affectionate; that was sure to be her word" and claims that Emily, in contrast, has

⁵⁵ *Mrs Leicester's School* (Works, Vol. II, pp. 340 and 342; *David Copperfield* (NOID, pp. 12 and 14).

⁵⁶ *Mrs Leicester's School* (Works, Vol. II, p. 346).

⁵⁷ 'A Christmas Tree' (NOID, pp. 7 and 9).

⁵⁸ *Mrs Leicester's School* (Works, Vol. II, p. 374).

⁵⁹ *Bleak House* (NOID, p. 16).

⁶⁰ 'The Holly Tree', part of HW's 1855 Christmas number, reprinted in *Christmas Stories* (NOID, p. 120).

not one atom of affection in her disposition. Her aunt and uncle also think her shy, and leave her to her own devices.⁶¹ There are slight parallels, here, to the childhood experiences of Miss Wade, a discontented character in *Little Dorrit*, who writes an account of her early life in which everything (so the reader perceives) has become distorted. She quarrels with the other girls at the school which serves as her home, after discovering that she (unlike them) is an orphan, but is nevertheless taken home for the holidays by a girl who befriends her - only to find that she is isolated and that the cousins and a family aunt (for good reasons, it must be conceded) find her a tiresome, unpleasant member of the household. At this point - on hearing herself discussed - the "poor miserable girl" (so Miss Wade retrospectively describes herself) storms into the room exclaiming "Send me home!" and parts company with that particular household.⁶² In effect, the simple tale of *Emily Barton* has been twisted and perversified into something much darker.

Dickens's Master B., a pampered pupil at another Dame school, decides to maintain a Seraglio - in much the same way that Margaret Green (the fifth narrator) decides that she is a Mahometan. But great is the downfall of Master B., for news arrives of a crisis in the family:

I was taken home, and there was Debt at home as well as Death, and we had a sale there. My own little bed was so superciliously looked upon by a Power unknown to me, hazily called 'The Trade, that a brass coal-scuttle, a roasting-jack, and a birdcage, were obliged to be put into it to make a Lot of it, and then it went for a song.⁶³

He could have turned for sympathy to Charlotte Wilmot (the eighth narrator), the spoilt daughter of a rich merchant, who had suffered a similar traumatic "riches-to-rags" experience:

My father had what is called an execution in the house; every thing was seized that we possessed. Our splendid furniture, and even my wearing apparel, all my beautiful ball-dresses, my trinkets, and my toys, were taken away by my father's merciless creditors.⁶⁴

It has long been accepted that notions and images absorbed into a young child's consciousness in his earliest days can lodge there permanently and become a part of his very fabric. Nor is it doubted that, after lying dormant for many years, they can re-emerge much later, in however altered or refined a condition, to be absorbed in turn by a fresh circle of listeners. It is tentatively suggested therefore, in the light of the foregoing, that the tales narrated by at least six of Mrs Leicester's pupils could well have made a much greater and lasting impact on posterity than that good lady would ever have thought remotely possible. Amwell School, if it still exists, should make a special point of celebrating Founder's Day.

Mary Lamb died on 20 May 1847 at the age of eighty-two and was buried in Edmonton churchyard alongside her brother eight days later. The mourners included John Forster, the close friend of Charles Dickens. The novelist himself (convalescing in Brighton, in the company of

⁶¹ *Mrs Leicester's School* (*Works*, Vol. II, pp. 384-6).

⁶² *Little Dorritt* (*NOID*, pp. 663-5).

⁶³ 'The Ghost in Master B.'s Room', part of *HW*'s 1859 Christmas number, reprinted in *Christmas Stories* (*NOID*, p. 251).

⁶⁴ *Mrs Leicester's School* (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 401).

Dombey and Son) did not attend nor, indeed, was there any obvious reason why he should have done, for he had never encountered Mary just as he never met Charles. But in the interests of poetic justice it is a pity that he could not have been present. For it would seem that, consciously or not, he owed a significant debt to each of them.

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Epitaphs, Effusions and *Final Memorials*: Wordsworth and the Grave of Charles Lamb

By SAMANTHA MATTHEWS

IN OCTOBER 1862, almost twenty-eight years after Charles Lamb's death (27 December 1834), an account of a visit to his grave at All Saints' Church, Edmonton, appeared in the *Saturday Review*.¹ The anonymous writer describes an experience consistently marked by disappointed expectations. The grave in the churchyard that Lamb shares with his sister Mary, was found only after 'considerable search,' located in 'one of the most neglected parts' of the large churchyard, that itself 'has an air of neglect and desolation.' Mid-Victorian ideas about good burial-places were formed by a sentimental ideal of a small, pretty, unpretentious and lovingly maintained country churchyard, an ideal increasingly scarce in reality, and particularly rare in a 'suburban village.' The writer, self-consciously performing an act of secular 'pilgrimage,' expected Lamb's memory to be honoured at his burial-place: instead he found an obscure grave, 'overgrown with nettles and long grass.' Lamb's grave was difficult to read: literally, as the weeds got in the way of the inscription, and iconographically, since they symbolised 'neglect,' violating the writer's fancy that he was following in the footsteps of many other 'pilgrims.' More bathetically, Lamb's simple headstone was overshadowed by 'a hideous erection of the fluted order of village architecture,' commemorating a local banker, Gideon Rippon. To the *Saturday Review*'s readers, this description would immediately have identified the monument as a product of social-climbing pretension; the writer found it incongruous and distracting, suggesting that the world remembers bankers, but forgets 'one of the most charming and original English writers of the nineteenth century.'²

Paying one's respects at the graves of favourite authors was a mainstream nineteenth-century pastime; the graves of 'genius' were extremely popular subjects for actual and imaginative sentimental contemplation. Guidebooks such as T.P. Grinstead's *Relics of Genius: Visits to the Last Homes of Poets, Painters, and Players, with Biographical Sketches* (1859) catered for the growing tourist market in celebrity grave-visiting, while young poets conventionally paid homage to their poetic mentors (and chalked up their ambitions to out-do them) in verses located at the mentor's burial-place, as in Matthew Arnold's tribute to Wordsworth, 'Memorial Verses' (1850).³ Moreover, the author's grave was 'read' as having a significant relationship to his/her life, works and reputation. As the location of the author's physical 'remains,' the visible grave or tomb constituted both a symbolic substitute for absent genius, and a key influence on early constructions of the author's biography: in the *Saturday Review*'s words, '[authors'] graves have met with the treatment they themselves met with in their lives.' The self-reflexive relationship between the dead author and his/her grave is traceable in the peculiar difficulty survivors found in constructing appropriate monuments, epitaphs and inscriptions for authors' graves. The symbolic relations between authors, graves and books were also registered metaphorically in commemorative and memorial publications. Both the author's dead body and manuscripts left at

¹'The Grave of Charles Lamb,' *Saturday Review*, 4 October 1862:402.

²Rippon's quasi-classical stele (erected after his death in April 1855) was designed and positioned to share in the reflected glory of Lamb's celebrity.

³*The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth and Miriam Allott (London: Longman, 1979), 239.

death were referred to as ‘remains,’ while posthumously published works, correspondence and memoirs were generally titled *Remains*, *Memorials* or *Relics*.

The evolution of Charles Lamb’s grave—its headstone, inscription and iconography—was marked by laudable but troubled attempts to honour Lamb’s memory. In what follows I describe how the material situation of Lamb’s grave came about, focusing on Wordsworth’s instrumental role in interpreting and commemorating his friend’s character, and his authoritative contribution to the early construction of Lamb’s reputation and biography. Wordsworth was a figure of increasing fame and public stature in the later 1830s and 1840s: his failure to write Lamb’s epitaph, or, viewed more positively, his success in composing ‘Written After the Death of Charles Lamb,’ materially affected responses to and representations of the grave, most of which construct the grave as disappointing, obscure or neglected.⁴

Present-day visitors to Edmonton find a churchyard long since closed to new burials; many monuments have been cleared, and the churchyard is now maintained as a ‘remembrance garden,’ with monuments of historic interest preserved. This scheme makes some attempt to privilege Lamb’s grave; the area around the grave is railed off from the churchyard, partly paved with concrete, and planted with ornamental cherry trees. At the centre of this enclosure Lamb’s grave huddles together with Gideon Rippon’s monument and an anonymous ivy-covered altar tomb: it is marked by a plain headstone, and a narrow rectangle of kerb stones (in which holes indicate where protective wrought iron railings once stood), filled in with crazy paving. Despite these efforts, the environs of the grave has an unsympathetically municipal flavour; even on a bright autumn day, Lamb’s stony grave, alienated from its historical context on a concrete island, is a discouragingly bleak and unaffectionate goal.

In 1862 the *Saturday Review* had come to terms with the grave’s prosaic quality by concluding that after all it was perfectly congruous with Lamb’s biography: ‘To have a neglected grave in an ugly suburban village was at least a consistent end to such a career.’⁵ In conclusion the article looked at the posthumous destiny of several Romantic survivors, and attributed Lamb’s relative neglect to urban insensibility and the separation of private lives from public honours in English culture; that is, good old-fashioned British philistinism. Lamb’s grave is compared with those of Wordsworth and Southey in protected, unambiguously rural Lake District churchyards, and it is argued that distinguished authors ‘wish to be private men, and to live and die as private men. They desire to be buried where they have lived.’ All three were buried ‘at home,’ but customs differ between rural and suburban communities: Lamb’s grave is neglected, because ‘his lot in life was cast in London and its suburbs, and no one notices his neighbour much, or has any great care for literature, in a suburban town,’ thus perfectly fulfilling the received view of Lamb’s urban and urbane character as the spirit of Romantic London.

According to the *Saturday Review*, the most incongruous element at Lamb’s grave, and the greatest impediment to revering Lamb’s memory there, was the headstone inscription:

[B]etween the dates recording that Charles Lamb died December 27, 1834, aged fifty-nine, and that Mary Anne Lamb died May 20, 1847, aged eighty years, are inserted twelve [lines] of the very worst verses that the ingenuity of friends could

⁴See Melba S. Brandes, ‘“Into the Edmonton Churchyard”: My Visit to the Grave of Charles Lamb,’ *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s. 106 (April 1999):84-6.

⁵‘The Grave of Charles Lamb’:403.

have struck out. In the beautiful and touching lines in which Wordsworth sketched the character and the history of his friend, he tells us that he meant the earlier portion of the piece to be placed on Lamb's tombstone, but that other arrangements had been made. The visitor to Edmonton may see what was the effusion that was preferred to Wordsworth's. It begins by declaring that Lamb's meek and harmless mirth 'no more shall gladden our domestic hearth.' It goes on to assure the deceased that he is not all lost—and that his writings shall 'win many an English *bosom* pleased to *see* that old and happier vein revived in thee.' Everything is in a sort of rude harmony—the nettles, the shrine of Gideon Rippon, and the doggel.⁶

This is a cruelly funny dissection of the epitaph composed by Henry Francis Cary for his friend, about which I will have more to say in conclusion. The verses commit the ultimate posthumous insult to a significant author, of being simply *bad writing*: the strained rhyme of 'mirth' with 'hearth,' the clichéd banality of 'see/thee,' and inane use of epitaphal convention (direct address to the dead) to console Lamb that he is 'not all lost,' are all mercilessly mocked. The epitaph's capital crime, however, lies simply in not being authored by Wordsworth. It appears that reading Wordsworth's 'beautiful and touching lines'—'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb'—had inspired the writer's desire to visit Lamb's grave, and his raised expectations. In this context the grave's neglect, and the absence of specific or ambient Wordsworthian associations at Edmonton, constitute a form of insult to Wordsworth's memory, in his high-Victorian guise as Poet Laureate, iconic Bard and Prophet.⁷ This contemporary slant to the *Saturday Review's* criticism is also indicated by the writer's separation of the framing text from the epitaph. The framing text on its own conforms well to 1860s' ideas about how to commemorate great men. Verse epitaphs had gone out of fashion, and Wordsworth's own headstone at Grasmere, which bears only his name (without honorifics) and death-date, significantly influenced the fashion for reticent grave inscriptions.⁸ A glorious name could speak for itself, and real reputation was only undermined by verse epitaph's explication and justification, which evinced anxiety that perhaps the subject's fame could not survive unaided.

It is not true that Wordsworth's offering was spurned by ignorant 'friends' who preferred the ridiculed 'effusion': Wordsworth knowingly offered an entirely impracticable epitaph, in order to be released to write the 131 line 'effusion' we now know as 'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb.'⁹ The full textual and printing history and three different versions of 'The Poems Written After the Death of Charles Lamb' may be found in Jared Curtis' definitive volume in the Cornell Wordsworth series, *Last Poems, 1821-1850* (1999).¹⁰ These versions testify not only to

⁶This paragraph was excerpted in *The Times*, 7 October 1862:9a.

⁷See Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: O. U. P., 1998), ch. 1.

⁸Tennyson advocated the unadorned name as the most powerful memorial inscription; see his trenchant advice about the Wordsworth memorial at Grasmere, Alfred Tennyson to Thomas Woolner, 10 March [1851], *Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), II:10.

⁹See Alan G. Hill, 'Lamb and Wordsworth: The Story of a Remarkable Friendship,' *Charles Lamb Bulletin* n.s.37 (January 1982):91-2.

¹⁰*Last Poems, 1821-1850* by William Wordsworth, ed. Jared Curtis with Apryl Lea Denny-Ferris and Jillian Heydt-Stevenson (Ithaca/London: Cornell U. P., 1999), 291-304. My reconstruction of the poem(s)' evolution, put together without the help of this volume, has benefited from Curtis' excellent pithy analysis (465-9).

the poet's famous obsessive habits of revision, and his elaborate care in writing his friend's tribute, but to the difficult transformation of an epitaph—with its attendant complex of 'rules' and inhibitions for the author of the three 'Essays on Epitaphs' (1810)—to an elegiac effusion or monody. Wordsworth's correspondence with Edward Moxon and Curtis' persuasive reconstruction of the stages of composition provide an exceptional insight into the poet's troubled engagement with epitaph-writing, and the problems specific to commemorating Lamb.

Moxon was professionally linked with Lamb as publisher of the *Album Verses* (1830), and personally through his marriage to the Lambs' adoptive daughter Emma Isola. In November 1835, ten months after Lamb's death, he first approached Wordsworth to write an epitaph for his friend; the poet responded by writing the 34-line text beginning 'To the dear memory of a frail good Man' on 19 November.¹¹ On 20 November Wordsworth sent Mary Wordsworth's fair copy with a letter, observing that 'I have prepared the way, I believe, for a speedy repentance—as I dont know that I ever wrote so many lines without some retouching being afterwards necessary,' and attempting to forestall objections to the 'extreme length' by recommending that the epitaph be 'engrav[ed] . . . in double column, and not in capitals,' and would in any case only be suitable for a memorial in the church: 'It is much too long for an out-door stone, among our rains, damps, etc.'¹² Although this draft of the epitaph shares many lines with the final monody, such as the implication that this Londoner has found rest in a country churchyard—'Here he lies apart/ From the great City, where he first drew breath' (2-3)—Wordsworth's wish to explicate the adversities of Lamb's life resulted in characterising too many of his 'frailties.' Lines 20-29 were given over to hints of manic depression, 'impetuous fancy,' 'domineering humour' and other weaknesses, making the concluding 'O, he was good, if e'er a good Man lived!' (34) sound less like affectionate tribute than special pleading.

Since Wordsworth evidently understood that this text was impracticable, it is not immediately obvious why he offered it. Despite his own advice in the 'Essays on Epitaphs' that the epitaph should be recorded, 'where it can, in *close connection with the bodily remains of the deceased*,' Wordsworth presents verses only suitable for a memorial within the church, away from the grave: his self-justificatory claims to have modelled the epitaph on the literary authority of Chiabrera (also the inspiration named for the three 'Essays') come to nothing if what he has written cannot function as an epitaph.¹³ A partial explanation may be suggested by the context in which Wordsworth was striving to write a good epitaph. As Joshua Scodel and Paul Vita have argued, by the nineteenth century the genre of literary epitaph had declined significantly from the respectable position it had held for the Augustans, when with Pope's epitaphs setting the pace, the form's demanding nature had led to its reputation as a test of writerly virtuosity.¹⁴ The 'Essays on Epitaphs' may thus from one point of view be read as an honorable but futile attempt to rescue epitaph from the humbled and subliterate fate to which it had rapidly succumbed, a

¹¹Huntington MS.2, *Epitaph*, Curtis (1999) 297-98.

¹²William Wordsworth to Edward Moxon (hereafter W.W. and E.M.), 20 November 1835, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, Part III, 1835-1839*, 2nd ed., rev., arranged, and ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 113, 114.

¹³'Essay upon Epitaphs, 1,' *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II:53; Hill (1982), 114.

¹⁴Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Paul Vita, 'In Keeping With Modern Views: Publishing Epitaphs in the Nineteenth Century,' *Victorian Review* 25.1 (Summer 1999):14-34.

theoretical exercise in reclamation, rather than a practical manual. At the same time, while Wordsworth was keen to fulfil Mary Lamb's wish that he write the epitaph, his strong feelings about Lamb demanded a form less restricted in scope and bound by conventions than epitaph. Like a sonnet or a miniature portrait, the best epitaphs present *multo in parvo*, and signify intensely within a small compass: even Wordsworth's first draft is too long, and the process of 'improvement' and revision only extended it.

Charting its development into 'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb,' we see the epitaphal form undergoing a transformation, which reflects Wordsworth's self-identification as a published author rather than an epitaph-writer. Where the composer of epitaphs should subordinate his written voice to the deceased subject, we find Wordsworth increasingly prioritising his own subjective feelings. His assertion on 20 November that no 'retouching [was] afterwards necessary' to the first draft, sought to forestall any request for revision—particularly that he should *shorten* it.¹⁵ Even the courtly proviso that 'If these verses should be wholly unsuitable for the end Miss L. had in view, I shall find no difficulty in reconciling myself to the thought of their not being made use of, tho' it would have given me great, *very* great, pleasure to fulfil, in all points, her wishes,' has a defensive tone of *take them or leave them*, which suggests authorial inflexibility—or perhaps incapacity.¹⁶

William Ruddick has suggested that the epitaph's transformation into a monody received a 'wholly unexpected stimulus' from Wordsworth reading a newspaper notice of the death of James Hogg, poet and author of *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*; the notice appeared in the *Newcastle Journal* on 21 November, and must have arrived at Rydal Mount soon after.¹⁷ According to the Fenwick Notes, Wordsworth sat down to write the 'Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg' 'immediately after reading a notice of the Ettrick Shepherd's death.'¹⁸ While I am persuaded by Ruddick's argument that Wordsworth effused about Hogg (who he didn't much care for) because of Hogg's associations with Scott (whom he did), the spontaneous conditions of composition and catalogue of recently dead authors within the poem (Hogg, Scott, Coleridge, Lamb, Crabbe and Hemans) suggest to me that the 'Extempore Effusion' was a byproduct of Wordsworth's hard thinking—and subjective feeling—about how best to commemorate Lamb. The exhilarating experience of writing the monody gave Wordsworth the confidence and determination to follow his own inclinations to use the more flexible and expansive form for Lamb.

Wordsworth's correspondence with Moxon between November 1835 and February 1836 shows the poet not only worrying over individual phrases and lines, but hoping that he might be spared the task altogether. On 23 November he shamefacedly admitted that 'It has been in respect to the Epitaph as I foretold; I have been tempted to retouch it'; the exchange of three new lines (beginning 'So Genius triumphed over seeming wrong . . .') for the excision of 'two lines [that] may easily be spared' does sound like 'retouching';¹⁹ however the poet's desire for release from his commission was clear: 'I cannot help expressing a wish that Miss L.'s purpose had been

¹⁵De Selincourt read 'retouching' as 'retrenchment.' Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years*, 3 v. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), II:760-3.

¹⁶Hill (1982), 114.

¹⁷William Ruddick, 'Subdued Passion and Controlled Emotion: Wordsworth's 'Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg,' *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s.87 (July 1994):101.

¹⁸*The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 58-61.

¹⁹W.W. to E.M., 23 November [1835], Hill (1982), 119.

better carried into effect. Suppose Mr Talfourd or yourself were to try? I cannot *put* aside my regret in not having touched upon the affection of the Brother and sister for each other.' Wordsworth reveals his problem: his epitaph only treats Charles, whereas for Wordsworth, as for all the Lambs' friends, the close union between brother and sister absolutely defined Lamb's character. It is hardly surprising that Dorothy's brother should feel strongly about this unusual sibling bond; however, his concern has particular point here. Lamb's biography is now defined by the tragic events of 1796, when Mary stabbed their mother to death during a manic episode, and Charles took on lifelong responsibility for her welfare, rather than see her committed to a public insane asylum. Although the family history was well known within the Lambs' circle of friends, who equally admired Charles's personal sacrifice, Mary's charm, and their close relationship, the story did not enter the public domain until after Mary's death in 1847. In the intervening twelve years, the many publishing authors in the Lambs' confidence protected the secret, while attempting to do justice to Charles' character. This problem seriously inhibited Wordsworth: an epitaph is a public tribute, 'exposed to all . . . concerning all, and for all:' how then to write the truth about Lamb without exposing the secret?²⁰

On 24 November he was writing to Moxon again, sending the second, 38-line version.²¹ He expressed satisfaction with the changes, which he saw as giving a more balanced portrait of Lamb's character, softening weaknesses, putting virtues 'in a stronger light';²² although Lamb was still 'a frail good Man,' the tone was more positive, with space given to his love for books and his 'Works potent over smiles and tears,' while the hints at mental instability had become as lightning 'innocently sport[ing]' around mountains (18). The text for the first time included Wordsworth's tender pun on his subject's name ('From the most gentle Creature nursed in fields/ Has been derived the name he bore' [23-4]), introducing the more assured Christian note that his 'soul [is] by resignation sanctified' (31). However the covering letter's defensive reflection that 'at all events, [the revised lines] better answer my purpose,' prepares us for the postscript, which shows Wordsworth explicitly breaking away from Mary Lamb's original 'purpose.' The poet considers that the expanded text absolutely disqualifies it as a functional epitaph, and for the first time he suggests instead that it be 'printed with his Works as an effusion by the side of his grave; in this case, in some favorable moment, I might be enabled to add a few Lines upon the friendship of the Brother and Sister.'²³ From this moment, Wordsworth regarded himself as freed from the responsibility to write the epitaph; his only concern was that 'the lines should be approved of by Miss L. as a not unworthy tribute, as far as they go, to her dear Brother's memory.' This change in attitude is confirmed by his strenuous efforts in early December to find a replacement:

²⁰Owen and Smyser, II:59. This difficulty of balancing truth-telling with discretion is evident in Wordsworth's comment on 'To a good Man of most dear Memory' in the Fenwick Notes during 1843, mid-way between the publications of his monody and the Lambs' full story: 'Light will be thrown upon the tragic circumstance alluded to in this Poem when after the death of Charles Lamb's Sister, his biographer Mr. Sergeant Talfourd shall be at Liberty to relate particulars which could not at the time when his memoir was written be given to the public.' Curtis (1993), 58.

²¹Huntington MS. 4, *Epitaph written on Charles Lamb by William Wordsworth*, Curtis (1999), 298-99.

²²W.W. to E.M., [24 November 1835], Hill (1982), 120.

²³Moxon had already printed off a few copies of the epitaph as a pamphlet, which survives in a unique copy: on 4 December Wordsworth was thanking Moxon for the proof, requesting only one correction.

I send you an Epitaph volunteered for Ch. Lamb by the Son of his old friend Charles Lloyd, to whom I had shewn my Verses observing that they were unfit on acc^l of their length. I did the same to Mr Hartley Coleridge, and *asked* him to try his powers. Now as he is very ready, and has *great* powers, and retains a grateful affection for our deceased Friend, we expect something good and appropriate and suitable. Not that it is our wish that any thing from this quarter should take [the] place of what may be produced by Mr Talfourd, yourself, or any other London Friend. Mr Owen Ll.'s verses are not without merit, and would be read with pleasure in many a church, or ch.yd, but they are scarcely good or characteristic of the Subject.²⁴

Now the task was no longer his own, Wordsworth's sense of the decorum of epitaph again became more stringent: he hoped Hartley Coleridge could manage a 'good and appropriate' epitaph (though early in February he admitted 'I have not yet seen H. Coleridge, he has been off on one of his drinking bouts'), and gently rejected Owen Lloyd's.²⁵ During December, the 38-line epitaph became a 131-line monody, allowing Wordsworth to treat the Lambs' friendship in rather more than 'a few Lines.' On 3 January 1836, Henry Crabb Robinson recorded that 'In the evening Wordsworth read his verses on Charles Lamb—supplemental to the Epitaph. I fear though written with the utmost delicacy that they cannot be printed in Miss Lamb's lifetime.'²⁶

There is not space to give a detailed reading of 'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb';²⁷ my concern here is the transformation of an epitaph into 'a Meditation supposed to be uttered by his Graveside,' indeed, the monody's *incorporation* of the epitaph.²⁸ The poem begins with the epitaph, virtually unchanged but for the important revision of the opening line from 'To the dear memory of a frail good Man' to 'To a good Man of most dear memory.' The change in generic context, as well as the poem's expanded scope, licenses more subjective and generous sentiments; the local revision creates a circular movement in the epitaphal section, turning the unchanged last line ('O, he was good, if e'er a good Man lived!') into a more emotional and affirmative reprise, confirmed by the evidence provided in the intervening lines. The epitaphal section does indeed emulate Chiabrera in seeking to be 'characteristic and circumstantial'; however, transferred to a monody the conventional epitaphal gesture ('To . . . / This Stone is sacred' [1-2]), reads as vividly concrete and loco-descriptive, bringing Lamb's grave *into the poem* for the reader's imaginative contemplation. Translated to the page, it becomes obvious that the text was originally conceived for the page; lines which, as an incised epitaph in a church, would appear pompous—convolute and overlong sentences, straining at the seams—conform to the discursive manner of monody, proving a touching and effective tribute distilled from years of

²⁴W.W. to E.M., 6 December [1835], Hill (1982), 130. See also W.W. to H.C.R., 25 November 1835: 'I wish that some one else, Mr Talfourd, Mr Moxon, Mr Southey, or any other of his friends accustomed to write verse would write the Epitaph. —Miss L. herself, if the state of her mind did not disqualify her for the undertaking. —*She* might probably do it better than any of us.' Hill (1982), 122.

²⁵W.W. to E.M., 8 February [1836], Hill (1982), 164. When Owen Lloyd died in 1841, Wordsworth wrote *his* epitaph, published as 'Epitaph in the Chapel-Yard of Langdale, Westmoreland.'

²⁶*Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley (London: J. M. Dent, 1938), II:477.

²⁷Text of 1836, Curtis (1999), 299-304.

²⁸W.W. to H.C.R., 25 November 1835, Hill (1982), 122.

friendship, and benefiting from the impromptu mood of the ‘Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of James Hogg.’

In Wordsworth’s letter of 20 November offering the epitaph’s first draft, he had talked longingly about the different material he would have included ‘Had I been pouring out an Elegy or Monody’: principally ‘the most striking feature of our departed friend’s character and the most affecting circumstance of his life, viz, his faithful and intense love of his Sister.’²⁹ Wordsworth’s anxiety to present ‘the sanctity of that relation as it ought to be seen and felt’ is as laudable, as his sense that ‘lights are required which could scarcely be furnished by an Epitaph’ is commonsensical. The recontextualised ‘epitaph’ is separated from the continuation dealing with the sibling relationship by a line of asterisks, representing an interval of time and reflection: the speaker re-appears as a mourner, given the opportunity to offer a more subjective portrait. Ironically then, the ‘effusive’ continuation actually fulfils one of the Essay’s key strictures: ‘to raise a monument is a sober and a reflective act; . . . the inscription which it bears is intended to be permanent, and for universal perusal; . . . the thoughts and feelings expressed should be permanent also.’³⁰

The monody treats the Lambs’ relationship as ‘a double tree / . . . sprung from one root’ (96-7), and justifies their trials as evidences of God’s grace, culminating in ‘the blest world where parting is unknown’ (131). In a move akin to the opening of *The Prelude*—where a fluent, expressive passage is followed by a more circumspect critical verse paragraph describing the circumstances of the first’s composition—the elegiac section begins by explaining that ‘From a reflecting mind and sorrowing heart / Those simple lines flowed’ (39-40) with a ‘doubting hope’ (41) that they might be appropriate to ‘guard the precious dust of him / Whose virtues called them forth’ (42-3). Although the commonplace images of ‘sorrowing hearts’ and ‘precious dust’ (39, 42) are redolent of epitaph, the poem’s mood has become more discursive, as the speaker reflects on the failure of his ‘faltering pen’ to meet the demands of ‘truth’ (45). The comparison with *The Prelude* is not idle, since Wordsworth revalues the epitaph in relation to his own immortality as an author:

Yet, haply, on the printed page received,
The imperfect record, there, may stand unblamed
As long as verse of mine shall breathe the air
Of memory, or see the light of love. (46-9)

Here Wordsworth recoups the failure of the epitaph to ‘guard’ Lamb’s ‘precious dust,’ by offering instead a ‘printed page’ of his own poetical works to make a commemorative gesture, however ‘imperfect.’ Despite the invocation of the modesty topos, the poet’s view of his works’ longevity is hardly modest. By allowing the epitaph to retain its original form, but recontextualising it as the mere foundation stone to a substantial elegy, Wordsworth explicitly contrasts the merits and capacities of the two genres, and finds epitaph lacking. Where epitaph is site-specific, subordinating the poet’s text to the grave’s complex iconography, grave-visitors’ demands, and (in the churchyard) the perils of erosion and erasure, commemoration on the ‘printed page’ has the advantages of mass circulation, a general readership, and prolonged life.

²⁹Hill (1982), 114-15.

³⁰Owen and Smyser, II:59.

This distinction is interestingly commented on by an intermediate stage of the text, as a limited edition broadside pamphlet printed by Moxon. On 4 January 1836 Wordsworth thanked him for sending ‘Lamb’s Poems, and the Verses—they are now quite correct and I have no wish to alter them further’ (immediately adding a correction): the ‘Verses’ were the latest broadside version.³¹ Although in a letter of 30 January Wordsworth gave Moxon free choice as to how many such copies of the poem to print, he would not permit unregulated circulation, differentiating between the propriety of periodical and book publication: ‘[I]t would not be desirable they should get into the Athenaeum, or any other periodical, before they come out with the book. I should not like it, nor would it be so respectful to dear Lamb’s memory.’³² This separates Wordsworth’s sensitive and protective attitude to the monody on Lamb from his more distanced treatment of the ‘Extempore Effusion,’ which he sent for immediate publication in the *Newcastle Journal*.³³ The value of the broadsides, although cheaply and quickly produced, came from their immediacy, small number and personal readership; Wordsworth asked Moxon to send pamphlet copies to mutual friends—including Isabella Fenwick, W. Strickland Cookson, Joshua Watson, Samuel Rogers—and, continuing the attention to sibling relationship, Rogers’ sister. These pamphlets, light, apparently ephemeral, and intimate to read, functioned as personal memorials within a closed circle; published in the *Poetical Works* (1836-37), the monody addressed a general readership, to whom the physical and symbolic weight of the volume added a monumental and authoritative quality. Here the verses became a public statement, designed (in the words of the ‘Essay’) for ‘permanent, and for universal perusal.’³⁴

Thus Wordsworth’s motive in presenting an impracticable epitaph, that he might retain the right to recraft it as an elegy for publication, was I think unimpeachable. While the decision betrays as much the author’s artistic ambition as affection for his dead friend, Wordsworth had a realistic view of the power of his own authorial reputation, which made conventional publication a more effective and democratic means of commemorating Lamb than any unique and site-specific epitaph. The numbers who have taken the trouble to visit Lamb’s grave are insignificant compared with Wordsworth’s readers, and with those readers whose ideas about Lamb were formed by reading ‘Written After The Death of Charles Lamb.’

The monody’s influence was not limited to Wordsworth’s readers, but quickly became integrated into the evolving narrative of Lamb’s biography. The first significant biographical and memorial publication was of course *The Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life* (1837), edited by Thomas Noon Talfourd, one of the executors and the Lambs’ close friend. In his preface, Talfourd invoked the conventional metaphor of the dead author’s posthumously published manuscripts as ‘precious relics,’ and defended the publication of Lamb’s personal correspondence, by his editorial principle of avoiding ‘subjects too sacred for public exposure.’³⁵ In dedicating to Mary Lamb ‘*These Letters*, The memorials of many years which she spent with the writer in undivided affection,’ Talfourd covertly signalled the main reason for his conservative editorial approach: any revelation which brought pain to Mary would insult her brother’s memory.

³¹W.W. to E.M., 4 January 1836, Hill (1982), 147.

³²W.W. to E.M., 30 January [1836], Hill (1982), 162.

³³W.W. to John Hernaman, [30th November 1835], Hill (1982), 127.

³⁴Owen and Smyser, II:59.

³⁵Thomas Noon Talfourd, *The Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of His Life*, 2 v. (London: Edward Moxon, 1837), I:ix.

The structure of the *Letters* also signals its memorial function. Most of the two volumes are taken up with chronologically arranged extracts from Lamb's correspondence, with brief connecting comment from Talfourd. This technique allows the dead Lamb to narrate his life (or, his life edited by Talfourd) in his own distinctive, confiding voice, while the reader listens over his correspondents' shoulders: as a reviewer of a later 'life and letters' observed, 'Where the subject of the memoir was "a good correspondent," we enjoy in his letters the nearest substitute for conversation with him.'³⁶ Talfourd's judiciously censored 'Sketch of his Life' appears at the end of the second volume, and with a few thematic digressions repeats the chronological progression, moving from youth to Lamb's rapid, peaceful death of 'erisipelas in the head' brought on by an apparently superficial facial injury after a fall.³⁷ The narrative approaches its end in a description of Lamb's funeral: 'his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister, on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried.'³⁸ No mention is made of the actual epitaph inscribed on Lamb's headstone; the last pages of the Sketch, and the volume, are occupied by posthumous tributes from contemporaries, with Talfourd's final sentence triumphantly citing Lamb's 'intimate friendship with some of the greatest of our poets—Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth; the last and greatest of whom has paid a tribute to his memory, which may fitly close these volumes.'³⁹ 'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb' is then printed in full, finishing halfway down the first of several blank pages, that most graphic sign of the silenced author. Thus the voice which closes the *Letters* belongs neither to Lamb nor Talfourd, but Wordsworth the elegist, who had anxiously written to Talfourd on 16 April 1836, checking that Moxon has passed on the 'corrections of the Verses upon Lamb, which I wished to be looked to when the Lines were printed in your Work.'⁴⁰ Talfourd thus defers generally to poetry's emotive and expressive power to offer a transcendent resolution, and specifically to Wordsworth's authority as the last and greatest of Romantic poets. While the ascent to elegiac commemoration is a poignant and effective termination for the *Letters*, the question arises of whether Wordsworth's very public visibility and authority wrests the reader's eye away from 'Elia.' Wordsworth's tribute is weakest in its testimony to Lamb's literary achievement, being almost entirely dedicated to Lamb's character and life. His only reference to Lamb's literary works comes in genius 'pour[ing] out truth in works by thoughtful love / Inspired—works potent over smiles and tears' (16-17); an uninformed reader could learn nothing specific about Lamb's writings from the monody. And while this is the point—that Wordsworth aims to touch readers who already know and love Lamb's works—the biographical emphasis plays into the hands of the increasingly voracious public demand for ever more revelatory biography, and the fetishisation of the author as celebrity. In February 1835 Caroline Bowles had written to Robert Southey, asking with palpable disapproval 'Are you, as the periodicals announce, about to edit the correspondence of Charles Lamb, and to write his life? They are mangling that, and his memory already, I see, according to the taste of the times.'⁴¹ Southey was not, but it is strange to

³⁶W.B. Donne, 'Review of The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey,' *Edinburgh Review* April 1851:370.

³⁷Talfourd (1837), II:313.

³⁸Talfourd (1837), II:314.

³⁹Talfourd (1837), II:334.

⁴⁰W.W. to Thomas Noon Talfourd, 16 April [1836], Hill (1982), 200.

⁴¹Caroline Bowles to Robert Southey, 28 February 1835, *The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles*, ed. Edward Dowden (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis/London: Longman, 1881), 320.

see Wordsworth—so protective of his own privacy, and who tried to control his ‘Life’ beyond the grave—in harmony with this ‘taste of the times.’⁴²

When Mary Lamb died in 1847, there was no longer any obstacle to Talfourd telling the full story of the Lambs’ life together, and the following year *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb; consisting chiefly of his letters not before published, with sketches of some of his companions* (1848) was published, a complement to and continuation of the 1837 volume. The influence of ‘Written After the Death of Charles Lamb,’ and the escalation of Wordsworth’s fame during the intervening ten years was this time explicitly addressed in a fulsome, full-page dedication: ‘To / WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, Esq., D.C.L., / Poet Laureate, / THESE FINAL MEMORIALS / of one who cherished his friendship as a comfort / amidst / griefs and a glory amidst depressions, / are, with affection and respect, / INSCRIBED / by one whose pride is to have been in old time his / earnest admirer, / and one of whose fondest wishes is / that he may be long spared to enjoy fame, rarely accorded to the living.’⁴³ In Talfourd’s zeal to celebrate Wordsworth’s late-career fame, he presents Lamb in a supporting role to the Laureate, and cannot help advertising his own long-standing admiration, and offering up a superstitious and puzzling prayer that the elderly poet may long ‘enjoy [his] fame.’ With the benefit of hindsight—Wordsworth’s death only two years later—this final prayer appears tragically implausible, almost against nature. It shows typical mid- to late-Victorian cultural fetishising of the aged poet as prophet, preserved by God’s express command beyond an ordinary course of years, so that society may benefit from his wisdom and experience; the pressure for old poets to be ‘bardic’ is clearly evinced in attitudes towards Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson, Meredith and Hardy in their late-careers. It is this trope which frames Lamb’s *Final Memorials* as a proleptic tribute and memorial to the elderly Laureate.⁴⁴

Mary Lamb’s death finally allowed the resolution of her brother’s literary remains and his grave. The *Final Memorials* seeks to be final and authoritative (forestalling further revelations, such as those in the *British Quarterly Review*, which had finally determined Talfourd to print the Lambs’ ‘secret’ history).⁴⁵ Talfourd’s revelation of the reasons for Lamb’s devotion to his sister created a marked shift in attitudes, and increased the overdetermined role of biography in assessments of his art; Winifred F. Courtney summarises the prolonged effect as a secular canonisation: “‘Saint Charles!,” the exclamation of William Makepeace Thackeray, provided an E.V. Lucas title, *At the Shrine of St. Charles*, as late as 1934.’⁴⁶ Although later admirers could visit Bay Cottage—later re-named ‘Lamb’s Cottage’—where the Lambs had lived, and stand ‘in his front bedroom, his death-room,’ the Edmonton grave was the primary ‘shrine’ of this cult of

⁴²Wordsworth’s campaign to prevent Barron Field publishing his 1840 biographical study, the Fenwick Notes and the written agreement with Dr. Christopher Wordsworth to write biographical annotations to the poems (not a straight ‘Life’) all show Wordsworth trying to control and limit biographical revelation and speculation.

⁴³Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb; consisting chiefly of his letters not before published, with sketches of some of his companions*. 2 v. (London: Edward Moxon, 1848).

⁴⁴The *Final Memorials* also contain Lamb’s own endorsement of Wordsworth’s ideas about epitaph: ‘Your Essay on Epitaphs is the only sensible thing which has been written on that subject, and it goes to the bottom.’ Talfourd (1848), I:180. Christopher Wordsworth drew attention to Lamb’s approval in his commentary on the ‘Essays on Epitaphs’ in the *Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet Laureate, D.C.L.*, 2 v. (London: Edward Moxon, 1851), I:444.

⁴⁵See Talfourd (1848), I:ix-x.

⁴⁶Winifred F. Courtney, ‘Charles Lamb,’ *British Romantic Prose Writers, 1789-1832 First Series*, ed. John R. Greenfield (*Dictionary of Literary Biography* v. 107) (Detroit/London: Gale Research, 1991), 152.

St. Charles.⁴⁷ Talfourd contributed by attributing Mary Lamb's reluctance to leave Edmonton after her brother's death to his grave's affective magnetism:

He was there, asleep in the old churchyard, beneath the turf near which they had stood together, and had selected for a resting-place; to this spot she used, when well, to stroll out mournfully in the evening, and to this spot she would contrive to lead any friend who came in the summer evenings to drink tea and went out with her afterwards for a walk.⁴⁸

Crabb Robinson testifies to this, recording one visit of 23 August 1837, and another on 19 June 1844 when Mary 'showed me her brother's grave . . . with composure and something like cheerfulness.'⁴⁹ Talfourd portrayed Mary as the original grave-pilgrim, a type of the resigned, loving and worshipful visitor, to be emulated by later payers of homage. The message was reinforced by inclusion in the *Final Memorials* of Edward Moxon's sonnet, 'Here sleeps beneath this bank, where daisies grow,' in which the speaker not only identifies the site as ideal for a poet—'In such a spot I would this frame should rest' (3)—but presents Mary as the lone mourner, 'she who comes each evening / . . . to shed / A sister's tears' (7-9).⁵⁰

Where the 1837 *Letters* had ended on the transcendent note of Wordsworth's elegy, the 1848 *Final Memorials* conclude with Talfourd's eye-witness account of Mary's funeral in May 1847, and the graphic termination of the subject's grave. Here we see Talfourd's determination to represent Lamb's grave as a fit goal for sentimental pilgrimage:⁵¹

So dry . . . is the soil of the quiet churchyard that the excavated earth left perfect walls of stiff clay, and permitted us just to catch a glimpse of the still untarnished edges of the coffin in which all the mortal part of one of the most delightful persons who ever lived was contained, and on which the remains of her he had loved with love, 'passing the love of woman,' were henceforth to rest;—the last glances we shall ever have even of that covering;—concealed from us as we parted, by the coffin of his sister. We felt, I believe after a moment's strange shuddering, that the re-union was well accomplished.⁵²

As in accounts of the opening of Robert Burns' tomb in 1815, the reappearance of the author's buried body creates an irresistible frisson of excitement and complex quasi-supernatural feeling, particularly when as here mourners who had seen the grave close over Lamb in 1835, witnessed the brief revelation of the coffin after twelve years underground.⁵³ While the 'strange

⁴⁷Martin, 137-8.

⁴⁸Talfourd (1848), II:236.

⁴⁹Morley (1938), II:536; III:853.

⁵⁰Talfourd (1848), II:237; *Sonnets by Edward Moxon* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1830-35), II:18.

⁵¹The funeral is presented not simply as Mary's last rite, but a rare gathering of 'A few survivors of the old circle, now sadly thinned'; Talfourd's mournful attention to 'the scanty remnant of their friends' is an elegiac tribute to the glory days of the Romantic generation. Talfourd (1848), II:237.

⁵²Talfourd (1848), II:238-39.

⁵³William Grierson was present at the exhumation: 'There were the remains of the great poet . . . The scene was so imposing that most of the workmen stood [with heads] bare and uncovered . . . and at the same time felt their frames thrilling with some undefinable emotion, as they gazed on the ashes of him whose fame is as wide as the world

shuddering' seems a reasonable physiological response to the shock of seeing their friend's coffin again, Talfourd's exegesis has a loftier end. We may feel that there is a discrepancy between the strong biographical emphasis on Lamb's living character as a 'good man,' and this frank curiosity about his 'mortal part;' yet the nineteenth-century propensity for reading experience allegorically, suggests that the literal reunion of the brother and sister's physical remains in the grave was interpreted as a visible, earthly illustration of an invisible spiritual reunion. The 'glimpse' of and 'last glance' at the coffin is literally a form of 'revelation'; looking down into the 'other world' of the grave evokes its complement and antithesis, looking up into the immaterial other world of heaven. Promisingly, the coffin's edges are 'still untarnished,' making it easier to think of Lamb as a peaceful sleeper (not a decaying corpse), while fittingly the vision ends when Charles' coffin is 'concealed from us as we parted, by the coffin of his sister.' This reading is supported by Talfourd's allusion to 'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb' (line 64), where Wordsworth adopts David's lament over the bodies of Saul and Jonathan, to describe Charles' love for Mary as "passing the love of woman" (2 Samuel 1:26). He ends the account of the funeral with the assurance that even an inconsolable mourner will 'now join the scanty remnant of their friends in the softened remembrance that "they were lovely in their lives," and own with them the consolation of adding, at last, "that in death they are not divided!"' Although this second quotation from David's lament (2 Samuel 1:23) is one of the Bible texts most frequently adopted as an epitaph, Talfourd's primary inspiration here is Wordsworth and the monody.

In neither memorial volume does Talfourd refer to H.F. Cary (1772-1844) as the author of Lamb's epitaph. After Wordsworth's failure, Cary was asked to write the epitaph early in 1836, not only on the basis of his long-term friendship with Lamb, but his reputation as a poet, scholar and translator of Dante.⁵⁴ Talfourd's elision of Cary's offering, and his presentation of substitute epitaphs (from Moxon, the Bible, but especially Wordsworth), suggest that he, like the *Saturday Review*, considered Cary's verses to be 'doggerel.' The epitaph is seldom reprinted in biographies of Lamb, although Cary's biographer sighs that 'It is unfortunate that in English we have many good elegies which are unsuitable for epitaphs, and very few good epitaphs which are also completely successful as poems,' before reproducing the text:⁵⁵

*FAREWELL, DEAR FRIEND; THAT SMILE, THAT HARMLESS MIRTH,
NO MORE SHALL GLADDEN OUR DOMESTIC HEARTH;
THAT RISING TEAR, WITH PAIN FORBID TO FLOW,
BETTER THAN WORDS, NO MORE ASSUAGE OUR WOE;
THAT HAND OUTSTRETCH'D, FROM SMALL BUT WELL-EARNED STORE,
YIELD SUCCOUR TO THE DESTITUTE NO MORE:
YET ART THOU NOT ALL LOST; THRO' MANY AN AGE,*

itself.' William McDowall, *Memorials of St. Michael's, the Old Parish Churchyard of Dumfries* (Edinburgh: Black, 1876).

⁵⁴See Charles Branchini, 'Poet Father and Painter Song: The Rev. Henry Francis Cary (1772-1844) and his son Francis Stephen Cary (1808-1880),' *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s. 60 (October 1987):122-131. Cary also wrote an epitaph for Lamb's friend the poet George Dyer (d.1841); Dyer's stone in Kensal Green Cemetery is now virtually illegible due to air pollution. For the text, see R.W. King, *The Translator of Dante: The Life, Work and Friendships of Henry Francis Cary (1772-1844)* (London: Martin Secker, 1925), 281.

⁵⁵King, 254.

WITH STERLING SENSE AND HUMOUR SHALL THY PAGE
 WIN MANY AN ENGLISH BOSOM, PLEASED TO SEE
 THAT OLD AND HAPPIER VEIN REVIVED IN THEE.
 THIS IS FOR OUR EARTH; AND IF WITH FRIENDS WE SHARE
 OUR JOYS IN HEAVEN, WE HOPE TO MEET THEE THERE.

Cary's epitaph is guilty of the several faults attributed to it, from B.E. Martin's reflection that 'Cary's feeble lines, [are] affectionate enough, no doubt; but who cares to wade through a deluge of doggerel, to learn that Lamb's "meek and harmless mirth no more shall gladden our domestic hearth"?' to the labourers reputed to have agreed that it was 'a very fair bit of poetry . . . rather too long, though.'⁵⁶ According to Percy Fitzgerald in 1866, the problem was less length than obsolescence; he mentions the 'stanzas cut upon [Lamb's] tomb, according to a practice happily now a little old-fashioned. Such tributes, unless very short, genuine, and done with a tender and simple touch, savour of affectation.'⁵⁷ I would suggest that Cary's epitaph also suffers from perfunctory execution; the mason compressed the lines and ran them almost flush to the sides of the headstone, compromising legibility, while italicised capitals give the text an unfortunately hurried, hectoring appearance.

Where Cary's epitaph succeeds, however, is in connecting Lamb's private character as the writer's 'dear friend' (1) to his published persona. To say that 'Yet art thou not all lost' (7) risks bathos, but also closely identifies Lamb's personality with the written works he leaves behind him. Where Wordsworth contemplated the immortality of his own 'printed page,' Cary assures Lamb that 'thy page' is 'winning,' and helps to create a living link between the 'old and happier vein revived' (10) in Lamb's style and criticism, and future generations of readers. Finally, the epitaph's writer presents his own text as modest and contingent: 'This for our earth; and if with friends we share / Our joys in heaven, we hope to meet thee there' (11-12).⁵⁸ The monumental inscription is earthbound and comparatively ephemeral; but Lamb will have both personal and literary immortality.⁵⁹ That Wordsworth was the far superior poet goes without saying; but Cary's text is sincere, emotional and unpretending, not compromised by authorial self-consciousness.

Complaining about the neglect of the Lambs' grave in 1910, E.V. Lucas quoted W.B. Donne's 1835 opinion that '[Lamb] should have an epitaph over him like "O rare Ben Jonson": common epicedia will not suffice.'⁶⁰ Lucas believed that the 'only real memorial is the joint tablet to Cowper, Keats, and himself, in Edmonton church.' This mural tablet, erected during a wave of commemorative subscriptions in the 1880s, and recording the three writers' associations with the area, includes a medallion bust of Lamb, with three lines from Wordsworth's monody:

⁵⁶Martin, 139-40; King, 254.

⁵⁷Percy Fitzgerald, *Charles Lamb; his friends, his haunts, and his books* (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), 192. Fitzgerald continues, 'Churchyard poetry has never been of the highest order; still we would wish that Lamb had found a better poet' (193).

⁵⁸Unfortunately the mason botched this line, which he carved as a statement, 'Our joy's in heaven.'

⁵⁹Headstones and monuments are less permanent than we like to pretend; E.V. Lucas noted in 1910 that already 'Private piety has twice restored the stone.' E.V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*. Fifth ed., rev. (London: Methuen, 1910), v.

⁶⁰Ibid.

. . . At the centre of his being lodged
 A soul by resignation sanctified . . .
 Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived.⁶¹

The inscription comprises lines 30-1 and 38 of the epitaphal section of 'Written After the Death of Charles Lamb,' pragmatically edited to fit the brief space beneath the medallion portrait—an adaption and recontextualisation of Wordsworth's original text it is difficult to imagine him authorising. One wonders whether B.E. Martin would have thought these lines so 'impressive' had he been ignorant of their authorship; their value is less inherent than associative, endowed by originating with Wordsworth, and by familiarity.⁶² As the *Saturday Review* observed 'He was, as Wordsworth said of him, "good, if e'er a good man lived,"' and this line, quoted in all the biographies, became Lamb's unofficial epitaph: Wordsworth has the last word on Lamb.⁶³

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⁶¹The quotation is prefaced by an inscription: 'In Memory of Charles Lamb, the gentle Elia, and author of the Tales from Shakespeare. Born in the Inner Temple 1775, educated at Christ's Hospital, died at Bay Cottage, Edmonton, 1834, and buried beside his sister Mary in the adjoining churchyard—.'

⁶²Martin, 140.

⁶³It is literally the last line of Lucas's *Life*, which ends by reprinting the three lines of Wordsworth's monody engraved inside the church.

Reviews

ROBERT WOOF, ED. *The Critical Heritage: William Wordsworth. Volume 1 1793-1820*. London: Routledge, 2001. Pp. xx + 1092. ISBN 0-415-03441-8. £150 hardback.

Dr Robert Woof's long-awaited Critical Heritage volume brings together diary entries, letters, reviews, comments and opinions about Wordsworth in a single volume spanning the years 1793 to 1820. It covers everything from the beginning of the poet's career through to publication of *The River Duddon*. Over the last three decades several volumes have appeared containing some of this material, particularly the early and seminal reviews—Jeffrey's essay on *The Excursion*, Southey's on *Lyrical Ballads* and Byron's on *Poems* (1807). Woof includes all major reviews but supplements them, within the space of over 1000 pages, with a vast array of other material from a range of contexts. The result is a scholarly resource essential for all Wordsworthians and research libraries.

One is tempted to say that only someone who, like Dr. Woof, commands the resources of a dedicated library such as that owned by the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere could compile a volume of this sort. Certainly, this book brings to fruition Dr Woof's labours over many years, drawing together printed materials from little-known sources and manuscript texts that appear in print for the first time. It is a marvelous selection that establishes the critical ebb and flow of Wordsworthian criticism up to 1820.

Even for someone familiar with the critical terrain, a reading of this volume is both enlightening and depressing. The range of texts is wide enough to keep any Wordsworthian on their toes, but at the same time it is sad to see how often Wordsworth's contemporaries went out of their way to misread him, either by design or default. The litany of complaint, much of it (one suspects) inspired by spite and envy, becomes drearily predictable from an early stage in Wordsworth's career. Much of the motivation is political, while a number of the reviewers, such as Josiah Conder and that arch Caledonian Francis Jeffrey, felt uncomfortable with what they called his 'mystical meanings'. Indeed, embarrassment over Wordsworth's theology recurs many times throughout this book, sometimes in surprising ways. In 1820 Thomas Mulock, for instance, dismissed Wordsworth's religious verse 'as atheism', on the grounds that 'all declamations about God as recognized in the beauties and wonders of nature were mystical nonsense' (pp. 1057-8). Though not always expressed at that level of intensity, this view was shared by many readers and viewers.

Along with his religious inclinations, Wordsworth's politics provide another focus for the volume. In 1806 Farington records that Wordsworth was 'strongly disposed towards Republicanism' (p. 130), and in 1809 Sir George Beaumont is to be found warning his guests: 'Wordsworth may walk in; if he do, I caution you against his terrific democratic notions' (p. 254). This was the man who, within the space of nine years, would serve on the wrong side in the corrupt Westmorland election of 1818, and who in 1821 would apologise to his old friend James Losh 'for his political *apostasy*' (p. 301). The snippets provided here convince me that there is more to be said about Wordsworth's politics in the first three decades of the nineteenth century—a period of his life that has failed to attract critical interest.

Even experts will learn much from Dr Woof's wide ranging collection. I was not previously aware of Christopher Wordsworth's comments on *Lyrical Ballads*, which commend 'The Idiot Boy' and 'The Thorn' (p. 55); Thomas Twining's account of Mary Hutchinson as a 'Wood

nymph' (p. 119); Francis Homer's insistence in correspondence with Jeffrey that Wordsworth merited criticism but not contempt (p. 128); Mrs Skepper's character sketches of Wordsworth and Coleridge (p. 250); and Horner's criticism of *The Excursion* for being 'radically against all propriety and good taste' (p. 502). I searched high and low for misprints but failed to find any. The only fault I can find is a minor inconsistency, which hardly merits note: the 'Mrs A.B. Skepper' whose birthdate is given as 'c. 1773' on page 249 is the very same 'Mrs Basil Montagu' who resurfaces at page 593, her birthday less doubtfully recorded as '1773'. Hardly an indictment of a fine work of scholarship and an invaluable contribution to Wordsworth studies.

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ROY PORTER. *Madness: A Brief History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. 233, illustrations. ISBN 0-19-280266-6. £11.99 hardback.

JULIA SWINDELLS. *Glorious Causes: the Grand Theatre of Political Change, 1789 – 1833*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 202, illustrations. ISBN 0-19-818729-7. £40 hardback.

Before I looked into the late lamented Roy Porter's valuable survey I had only a sketchiest notion of what may have befallen Mary Lamb had her brother eventually decided to forego a family life to care for her. At the time of her temporary incarceration in the Islington madhouse there were around fifty licensed private asylums in Britain, only a handful of which could be said to have been run as compassionately as the one chosen by Lamb. The most feared, not least by Mary herself, was of course 'Bedlam', but at this time, there were a number of equally monolithic institutions springing up around the edges of London to house the shell-shocked casualties of the war with Napoleon. Madness was very much a 'business' in which the inadequately qualified physician as well as the grossly unqualified amateur could make a great deal of money. Nathaniel Cotton's tiny asylum at St Albans, where William Cowper stayed contentedly for eighteen months, housed no more than half a dozen patients at five guineas a week. Then there was Ticehurst House in Sussex, where residents might live in private houses on the estate, perhaps with a servant. However, the vast public mental hospitals, like Friern Barnet and Colney Hatch, did not come about until after an act of Parliament of 1845 stipulated that public funds be used for the provision of asylums. And yet by 1850 more than half the insane were still in private institutions. Nor, despite the fact that so many establishments were run by physicians, was there any mandatory medical provision until the 1820s. Even if he could have afforded the expense, which he could not, Lamb would have thought deeply before abandoning Mary to the care of even the kindest of madhouse keepers. We know the choice he made in 1799, but under pressure from his brother John, who urged him to consider his own future, the final decision couldn't have been any easy one to make.

The sort of care and consideration expended on the privileged insane was seen as essential to the healing process. Moreover, such an approach enabled one particular proto-psychiatrist, William Battie, to develop a radical new theory of madness. This was the notion that insanity was not something one was born with—like 'original sin'—and thus incurable—but was the result of events in one's life, and therefore treatable. But while in England such enlightenment came with a price tag, across the Channel the Revolution fostered an egalitarian attitude towards mental health care. In Paris the physician Pinel recommended removing the manacles from the

lunatics of the Salpêtrière and Bicêtre asylums. In London Bedlam's Thomas Monro declared to a Commons Commission in 1815 that while to a pauper the use of manacles was bearable, 'a gentleman . . . would not like it'. William Blake was, of course, a pauper by the standards of Monro. One shudders to think how this patron of Turner might have treated the visionary had he mentioned seeing the ghost of a flea. They manage these things better in France, evidently. Thanks to the Revolution and to Pinel and others, public asylums were established in each department seven years before the United Kingdom made similar provisions. And in the United States a number of asylums combining private and charity provisions on the Pinel model were built in the years immediately following the end of hostilities.

The social history of madness in the age of Reason seems to interest Porter much more, perhaps, than the developments in psychiatry that followed the recognition of a 'mad' type in the late 19th century. Consequently, we are given a rather breathless tour through the history of psychiatry (it is, after all, a 'brief' history). During this part of the book what we most notice is the singular absence of British figures in these pioneering years. Note the names—Lombroso, Charcot, Freud, Adler, Jung; it is only until we get to Freud's interpreter, Ernest Jones, in the early twentieth century and later, Donald Winnicott, that major figures emerge. Porter attributes this singular lack of interest in the study of the psyche to a British 'phlegm'—what he calls a suspicion of navel gazing. This depressing tendency, which is as prevalent today as it was then, part has given us British the stiff upper lip we are so proud of, a distrust of 'intellectuals', the conviction that boarding schools taught character and bred 'moral fibre', and the idea that children should be seen and not heard. Worst of all, as we have seen, it has justified the bourgeois hypocrisy which has made us capable of defending the incarceration of an insane relative for the sake of 'appearances'. Perhaps the fact that Lamb eschewed this particular option says a lot for his humanity.

Lamb makes a fleeting appearance in Julia Swindells' study of the 'political character of theatricality and the theatrical character of politics' between 1789 and 1832, as do Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Clare, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt. But Ms Swindells is less concerned with the theatre that Hunt or Hazlitt reviewed, and more with the work of contemporary playwrights like Thomas Morton, which tackled the iniquities of slavery, W.T. Moncrieff, who openly urged political and theatrical reform, and the proto-feminists Elizabeth Inchbald and Joanna Baillie. Ms Swindells also considers the ways in which political activists like Thomas Hardy of the London Corresponding Society used theatrical language to dramatise their role as victims of persecution, which Ms Swindells argues that in an era of radical debate, playwrights interested in social progress saw the stage as a natural 'theatre' in which topical debate could be aired in a way that evaded the government censure that stymied the more openly critical radicals. She also emphasises the role of melodrama, which was brought to England from France by Hazlitt's mentor, Thomas Holcroft, as a vehicle in which issues affecting the common people rather than the middle and upper classes, could be played out before an audience of the same class. Ms Swindells is convincing in the weight she gives to drama hitherto neglected as 'minor'. There can surely be no doubt that the very naturalism of this popular art form had a strongly radical effect on already radicalised theatregoers and helped create a climate in which political change could be achieved.

I feel, however, that the book could have extended its scope to explore the ways in which orators like Eliza Sharples, the Rev Robert Taylor, and others exploited theatricality in the service of radical reform. I was also disappointed, given the quasi-political dimensions that Gary

Dyer has revealed, not to find at least a mention of 'Mr H'; moreover, the omission of any reference to Cobbett's anti-Malthusian play 'Surplus Population', is a fault. But all the same this is a valuable study of a neglected area.

R.M.Healey

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES:

About 50 members of the Society enjoyed a wonderful afternoon on 16 February when they attended the annual Birthday Celebration at the usual venue, 14 Prince's Gate, overlooking Hyde Park. This handsome house, now the home of the Royal College of the General Practitioners serves as the London residence of Joseph Kennedy, U. S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom before and during the Second World War, and thus for a time was home to the young John F. Kennedy and his siblings. The toast of 'The Immortal Memory' proposed by our President, Professor John Beer appears as the opening piece of this issue. A splendid lecture followed from our guest of honour, Professor Hermione Lee.

We have known for some time the exciting news that Penguin are due to publish a joint biography of Charles and Mary Lamb. The author, Dr. Sarah Burton, addressed the Society in April on the topic of Biographical Dilemmas. What we have only lately learned is that a *second* Lamb biography is in progress. This is a life of Mary Lamb, being written by Kathy Watson for Bloomsbury and likely to appear in about two years' time. A revival of general interest in the Lambs seems well under way!

Readers may recall that the Society has provided the University of Manchester with a fund to establish the Bill Ruddick Memorial Bursaries. These are offered each year in memory of the late Bill Ruddick, formerly Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and American Studies at Manchester and Editor of the Bulletin. Bursaries are awarded to enable students reading for the degree of M.Phil. or PhD to attend academic conferences in their fields of study. Preference is given to conferences in the field of Romantic Studies. The Society is delighted that this scheme, initiated three years ago, is working well, as the extracts from recipients' letters set out below testify:

Society Notes and News From Members

NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

In Memoriam

John Stevens

It is with great regret that we record the death on 14 February of John Stevens, who served as President for several years up to 1988. Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge from 1978, he was also well known as a scholar of music; indeed from his earliest career it was recognized that he could as easily have held appointments in either of the two Faculties, and when he was made CBE in 1980 it was for services to musicology. In spite of his specializations in the earlier period, he had a very wide knowledge of later literature and music also: I well remember that in speaking to us on one occasion (I think he was replying to the Toast) he effortlessly quoted Blake, proposing to Pipe a song about a Lamb. The fact that, like Coleridge and Lamb, he had spent his schooldays at Christ's Hospital made him doubly welcome to preside over the Society, his natural geniality setting him as much in the tradition of Lamb as of Chaucer. As with those predecessors, moreover, a strong sense of humour was accompanied by a firm uprightness and an unceasing regard for standards, shown equally in his devotion to Magdalene, his college, in the musical groups he formed and conducted, and in the performance of his academic duties generally.

Similarly, despite this devotion to one of the most important of the Romantic writers, and although one of his most illuminating books, in which he took the story up to more modern writers such as Conrad and James, was entitled *Medieval Romance*, it should not be supposed that he was a romantic in any loose sense of the term. Indeed, one of his obituarists has remarked that he was a foremost leader in dismissing romantic ideas of that relationship between writing and music which interested him so deeply. He thought that in the Middle Ages it had in fact been largely arbitrary, delighting all the more, nevertheless, in arranging concerts where the two modes, speaking and playing, could be interspersed.

He had a strong practical streak, which showed itself not only in his musical capabilities but in his enjoyment of construction and sailing (during the War he had served in the navy in minesweepers). He taught himself wall-building and, since the University Library proved deficient in manuals on that subject, delighted in seeking instruction from any builders he saw engaged on it. Occasionally, however, his different occupations might claim varying modes of attention—to the point of absent-mindedness. One of his friends recalled how once, while they were setting up some bookshelves together, he decided that some rope was needed, set off to find it and disappeared. When eventually sought out, he was found sitting quietly, listening absordedly to some recorded music he had just acquired, having completely forgotten his original mission.

Lamb, who claimed to have no ear for music, and indeed to have suffered as a result more pain than pleasure, being constitutionally susceptible of noises, would have sympathized with a man who, having perfect pitch, suffered during his naval service whenever he had to listen to one of the minesweeping instruments because it was pitched a quarter-tone out, but in that respect it would have been from an uncomprehending distance; in all other respects he would have greeted him unhesitatingly as a natural Elian. The fact that he died on St Valentine's Day, subject of one of his most memorable Essays, would no doubt have added a touch of melancholy irony.

JOHN BEER

Zoe Kinsley, a 3rd year PhD student from Manchester University has recently written to the Society regarding the Rudduck Bursary: In September 2001 funding from the Bursary enabled me to attend and give a paper at a three day conference at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, entitled 'Romantic Wales: Literature, Landscape and Travel, 1740-1850'. This was the first conference outside Manchester at which I had given a paper and it provided an invaluable opportunity for me to get some feedback on my work.

The other papers were all interesting and thought-provoking and the whole weekend was an extremely productive one. Since then the organisers of the conference have invited the speakers to submit their papers in essay form to be published in a volume based on the proceedings of the conference. This is, of course, an exciting opportunity for me and one that I would have missed out on if I had not received funding to attend the conference.

Also from Manchester, Willem Hollmann advised the Society of his deep appreciation and gratitude towards it for having offered him the opportunity, through the Ruddick Bursary, to attend the LAGB Spring 2001 Conference in Leeds, the 34th Meeting of the *Societas Linguistica Europaea*, Leuven (Belgium) and the LAGB Autumn Conference in Reading.

Christina Lee, a graduate student from Nottingham, similarly writes, I have been the beneficiary of the Bill Ruddick Fund in respect of the Leeds International Medieval Congress and the International Medieval Conference at Kalamazoo in the U. S. I think that it is vital for graduate students, most of whom are quite isolated during their period of research, to present their ideas and argue with their peers. In an every growing field they have to know what others are doing and how they are doing it. Attending conferences has also helped me to raise my profile, so that I walked straight into a (temporary) lectureship at Nottingham after writing up my PhD. My current employers had heard me speak at two venues and I am sure that this influenced their decision.

Rosamund Paice, another Manchester graduate, informs us that her first paper given with the assistance of the Ruddick Bursary, was at the University of Essex's Millennium Conference, *Friendly Enemies: Blake and the Enlightenment*. Then, in March 2001, the Ruddick Bursary enabled her to travel to Belfast for the second Northern Romanticists Network Conference, *Romanticism and Genre*, at Queen's University. The Ruddick Bursary also funded a conference trip to the University of Surrey, Roehampton, where Paice was able to address an audience for the first time on a subject which she came to through Blake, the late eighteenth-century encyclopaedia in Britain. At each of these conferences, Paice concludes, she presented a paper, but the Bill Ruddick Bursary has, she says, helped her even more when she did not. At the December 2000 Tate Conference, *Blake Nation and Empire*, Paice was able to hear many of the foremost scholars in the study of Blake, including Robert Essick, with whom she has been able to establish contact. She concludes by noting: 'I can't emphasise enough how much the Ruddick Bursary helped me over my doctorate. I would certainly not have been in the position to attend the conferences noted above without it'.

Kalpen Trivedi adds: During my time at Manchester I availed myself of the Bill Ruddick Bursary on two occasions, once to attend the Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo in 2000 and again to attend the MLA Conference in Washington, D. C. during that same year. I found that the experience gained and the contacts made during these two major conferences was invaluable for my academic formation. I am quite certain that were it not for the assistance provided by the Bursary I should not have been able to attend two conferences overseas.

Finally, Rachel Gilmour says that in April of 2001 she was accepted to give a paper at the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Conference at the University of Oregon. The Ruddick Bursary provided a much needed top-up to the AHRB funding to attend this, my first overseas conference. My paper was well received, I met with like-minded academics from around the world, and it did wonders for my confidence. If funding had not been available I could never have afforded the expense of the trip.