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William Godwin's Juvenile Library

By Pamela Clemit

THE PUBLISHING ROOMS OF JOHN MURRAY AT 50 ALBEMARLE STREET seem an appropriate setting for discussion of William Godwin's Juvenile Library. Like Murray's rooms, and like the houses of other major London publishers of the time, such as those of Joseph Johnson and Richard Phillips, Godwin's premises at 41 Skinner Street served not only as a bookshop but also as an intellectual salon. Henry Crabb Robinson wrote of Godwin's shop in 1810: 'I now and then saw interesting persons at his house; indeed, I saw none but remarkable persons there'.¹ In addition to literary figures such as Charles and Mary Lamb, Coleridge, and Shelley, Godwin received political friends such as Archibald Hamilton Rowan, the Irish nationalist; Aaron Burr, former vice president of the United States; and Maurice Margarot, former chairman of the London Corresponding Society, who was sentenced to fourteen year's transportation in 1794 and returned to England in 1810.²

Perhaps it was all the comings and goings at Skinner Street that provoked the interest of a government informer, who reported on the Juvenile Library to the Home Office in June 1813:

Godwin's Library was carried on for some time in Hanway Yard, Oxford Street, without any name either at the shop or on the several publications published for it. The business has since been removed to Skinner Street, Snow Hill, for the last three or four years; for some time also it was called the Juvenile Library; no name appeared.

At length Mr. J. Godwin was written on the door-post in very small letters; within a few months it appeared boldly in large letters over the door; still it is very little known that the proprietor is *Godwin*, the author of *Political Justice*. There appears to be a regular system through all his publications to supersede all other elementary books, and to make his library the resort of preparatory schools, that in time the principles of democracy and Theo-philanthropy may take place universally.

In order to allure schools of a moderate and a lower class, he holds out the temptation of an allowance of three pence in every shilling for such books as are published by him. He publishes books with the name of Edward Baldwin, Esq., which are said to be his own writing.

One of these, *Baldwin's Mythology*, has been introduced at the *Charter House*. It is an insidious and dangerous publication. The preface is calculated to mislead well-disposed persons, who may perhaps be too indolent or misjudging to read through the whole work; it professes to exalt the purity and show the superiority of Christianity over the heathen morality taught in the Grecian and Roman mythology, and then through the whole work improperly excites the curiosity of young persons to read the grossest stories on the subject, and artfully hints the wisdom of the morality of the heathen world. The principal works he has published are a Grecian, a Roman, and an

¹ *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: J. M. Dent, 1938), 1: 14.

² Godwin's social contacts during his years at Skinner Street (May 1807-May 1822) are recorded in his unpublished diary, Bod. [Abinger] Dep. e. 209-19. I am grateful to the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, for permission to publish materials from the Abinger papers. See also *The Private Journal of Aaron Burr*, 2 vols. (Rochester, NY: privately printed, 1903), 2: 271, 283, 286-7, 326, 398.

English History, all three of the size of Goldsmith's abridgments. In these, every democratic sentiment is printed in italics that they may not fail to present themselves to a child's notice....

By these different publications it is evident there is an intention to have every work published for the Juvenile Library that can be required in the early instruction of children, and thus by degrees to give an opportunity for every principle professed by the infidels and republicans of these days to be introduced to their notice.

By such means did Voltaire and his brethren for twenty years before the Revolution in France spread infidelity and disloyalty through the remotest provinces of that country, and we know too well how they succeeded.³

This document has no signature or endorsement, and there is no evidence that any action was taken. Even so, its language indicates the suspicion in which Godwin was still held by conservatives in the early nineteenth century.

That suspicion was first aroused by the publication in 1793 of Godwin's *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice*. This philosophical treatise became an immediate success among revolutionary sympathisers of all persuasions. Despite Godwin's principled opposition to the use of force, his criticism of traditional forms of political authority seemed to offer leaders of the democratic reform movement a philosophical justification for their practical demands, and this prompted the government to debate his prosecution.⁴ The view that Godwin's theories were a danger to social stability was reinforced by his next two publications: *Things As They Are; or...Caleb Williams* (1794), a novel dramatizing the fate of a victim of legalized persecution, and *Cursory Strictures* (1794), a pamphlet written in defence of twelve leading radicals who were charged with high treason in October 1794. Indeed, by late 1797 Godwin's teachings were felt to be so dangerous that the *Anti-Jacobin*, a satirical journal supported by government funds, launched a popular campaign to discredit him.⁵ Godwin's publication of *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), in which he defended the unconventional conduct and beliefs of his late wife, the proto-feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, prompted a new wave of conservative hostility. By the end of the 1790s, his name was associated in the popular imagination with sedition, atheism, and sexual immorality.

The spy was right to describe the Juvenile Library as an outlet for progressive children's books, but he misrepresented Godwin's publishing aims. To begin with, Godwin was not a member of an underground book trade of the sort which Robert Darnton had exposed in pre-revolutionary France.⁶ On the contrary, Godwin was educated in the traditions of Rational Dissent, the heterodox wing of English religious nonconformity, which was noted for its vigorous publicists.⁷ This made him part of a community which was 'very much above ground, being both respectable and critical, and resented for such reasons'.⁸ In addition, the reformist character of Godwin's schoolbooks did not reside in their sentiments 'printed in

³ 'Domestic, Geo. III., 1813. January to March. No. 217', Public Record Office, quoted in Denis Florence MacCarthy, *Shelley's Early Life from Original Sources* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1872), 162-4.

⁴ Mary Shelley, 'Life of William Godwin', in *Mary Shelley's Literary Lives*, ed. Nora Crook *et al.*, 4 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2002), 4: 86.

⁵ Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1984), 211-33.

⁶ See especially Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982).

⁷ Marshall, *William Godwin*, 32-45.

⁸ Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Heretical Religion and Radical Political Ideas in Late Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 349.

italics'. It was their formal strategies, designed to foster the moral autonomy of the child reader, that made his books uniquely progressive or dangerous, depending on one's point of view.

Far from withdrawing from public debate under the pressure of financial hardship, as is sometimes thought,⁹ Godwin turned to children's books as a continuation of his radical programme of the 1790s. His first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, of whom he wrote, 'No person was ever better formed for the business of education', had given him a new sense of the moral importance of children's books.¹⁰ His second wife, Mary Jane Godwin, who had worked as a translator and an editor of children's books before she married Godwin, brought valuable commercial experience.¹¹ That Godwin needed a steady income cannot be denied; by 1805 his household included five children under the age of twelve – only two of whom, Mary and William, were his own. The others were Fanny Imlay, the daughter of Wollstonecraft and her American lover Gilbert Imlay, and Charles and Jane (later, Claire) Clairmont, the children of Mary Jane Godwin's previous liaisons.

Godwin felt a responsibility not only to provide for but also to educate his family, who became the first readers of his children's books. On 21 March 1807 he wrote to Joseph Johnson:

The children that daily eat with me at my table, are now growing up, & continually more & more demand from me education, as well as subsistence. I am desirous of educating them so as may best enable them hereafter to live in independence.... In the case of my death...young women might without any impropriety be engaged in conducting a bookseller's & stationer's shop...nor is it impossible that one or other of them may hereafter have talents for the composition of books for young persons.¹²

None of Godwin's children entered the business, but Mary Godwin, later Mary Shelley, did indeed become an author of children's books.

Yet the Juvenile Library project was not solely driven by economic necessity. Godwin inherited from the Rational Dissenters a lasting faith in the printed book as an agent of reform and a keen awareness of what would sell. Just as, in 1794, he turned to the novel, the genre of widest social circulation, to popularize his ideas among 'persons, whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach',¹³ so too he later turned to children's books to enfranchise a new generation of middle-class readers and their parents. By setting up his own publishing house, independent of other booksellers, he sought to capitalize on the opportunities for bringing about ideological change afforded by the expanding children's literature industry.¹⁴

⁹ Eg. Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 222; Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), 244, 245-6.

¹⁰ Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp et al., 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992), 1: 98.

¹¹ *Shelley and his Circle, 1773-1822*, eds. Kenneth Neill Cameron, Donald H. Reiman, and Doucet Devin Fischer, 10 vols. to date (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1961-), 1: 296-300; Brian Alderson, 'Mister Gobwin' and His "Interesting Little Books Adorned with Beautiful Copper-Plates"', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 59 (1998), 163.

¹² Godwin to [Joseph Johnson], 21 March 1807, Bod. [Abinger] Dep. b. 227/3(a).

¹³ Godwin, *Things as They Are: or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, preface (dated 1796), in *Novels and Memoirs*, 3: 279.

¹⁴ F. H. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), 137-8; J. H. Plumb, 'The First Flourishing of Children's Books', in *The Pierpont Morgan Library, Early Children's Books and their Illustrators* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1975), xvii-xxx;

The Juvenile Library opened for business in the summer of 1805 in Hanway Street, an alley off Oxford Street.¹⁵ At first Godwin sought to avoid controversy by registering the firm in the name of his shop manager, Thomas Hodgkins. In May 1807 he moved to new premises at No. 41 Skinner Street, Snow Hill, Holborn, sacked Hodgkins (after he was caught taking money from the till), and reregistered the firm in the name of his second wife and business partner, Mary Jane Godwin. M. J. Godwin & Co. became one of the most successful small outlets for educational books in early nineteenth-century Britain. Godwin's unpublished papers contain evidence of a sales network in Scotland and shipments to India.¹⁶ Although the firm never made a profit, it flourished for two decades, with the assistance of Godwin's wealthy political friends.¹⁷ They supported its move, in July 1822, to No. 195, Strand, where it reopened as the French and English Juvenile Library. The firm was finally brought down by the financial crisis of 1825.

The list of M. J. Godwin and Co. was not confined to titles by Godwin, but grew to around sixty items, including works by his literary associates and friends. From Charles and Mary Lamb, for example, he commissioned not only *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) and *Mrs Leicester's School* (1809), but five other titles.¹⁸ Charles produced the verse fairy tales *The King and Queen of Hearts* (1805), *Prince Dorus* (1811), and *Beauty and the Beast* (1811); while Charles and Mary collaborated on *Tales from Shakespear* (1807), a recognized classic, and *Poetry for Children* (1809). Lady Mountcashell, an Irish aristocrat who had been educated by Wollstonecraft, contributed two collections of *Stories of Old Daniel; or, Tales of Wonder and Delight* (1808, 1820): these appeared under the adopted name of 'Mrs. Mason', the benevolent instructor in Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788).¹⁹ William Hazlitt wrote *A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue* (1810).²⁰ Eliza Fenwick, who briefly took over the management of the Juvenile Library in November 1807, wrote *Rays from the Rainbow* (1808) and *Lessons for Children* (1808). Mary Jane Godwin produced several translations, including the first English version of Johann Rudolf Wyss's *The Family Robinson Crusoe* (1814), better known as *The Swiss Family Robinson*, which became an enduring children's favourite.²¹

Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 3-4, 169-206.

¹⁵ The most helpful surveys of the Juvenile Library venture are Marshall, *William Godwin*, 266-92, and William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989), 279-98. See also Sue Taylor, 'M. J. Godwin & Co.', *Horn Book*, 20 (March-April 1944), 79-87; Margaret Fearn, 'William Godwin and the "Wilds of Literature"', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 29 (1981), 247-57; Alderson, 'Mister Gobwin', 159-89; Margaret Kinnell, 'Childhood and Children's Literature: The Case of M. J. Godwin and Co., 1805-25', *Publishing History*, 24 (1998), 77-99; Janet Bottoms, "'Awakening the Mind": The Educational Philosophy of William Godwin', *History of Education*, 33 (2004), 267-82. For a fuller statement of the argument developed in the remainder of the present essay, see Pamela Clemmit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', *Bibliion: The Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 9: 1/2 (Fall 2000/Spring 2001), 44-70.

¹⁶ See correspondence of Godwin with John Fairley of Edinburgh, 1809-23, Bod. [Abinger] Dep. b.228/7; Godwin, undated notes concerning Juvenile Library finances, [?1825], Bod. [Abinger] Dep. c. 766/1.

¹⁷ C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: H. S. King, 1876), 2: 259-61; *Shelley and his Circle*, 1: 411-12, 431-3.

¹⁸ See Joseph E. Riehl, *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Americanistik, 1980), 60-86; Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespeare*', *Children's Literature*, 17 (1989), 47-63.

¹⁹ On 'Mrs. Mason', see Mitzi Myers, 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books', *Children's Literature*, 14 (1986), 36-54.

²⁰ See Uttara Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 11-20.

²¹ St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 282-3, 293-4.

Godwin himself was the author of seven works for the Juvenile Library, as well as several abridgements and compilations. For prudential reasons, all of these books were published under pseudonyms. As 'Theophilus Marcliffe', Godwin wrote two children's biographies. In *The Looking-Glass: A True History of the Early Years of an Artist* (1805), he told the story of the early life of William Mulready, highlighting his rise from social obscurity because of his precocious talent for drawing – examples of which were included in the volume to inspire young readers. Between 1805 and 1806 Mulready was a frequent visitor at Skinner Street; by 1807 he had become the Juvenile Library's chief illustrator, claiming later to have executed 307 designs at 7s. 6d. each.²² In Godwin's second, more conventional biographical work, *The Life of Lady Jane Grey* (1806), he told the story of the young Protestant girl who was put on the throne by unscrupulous politicians and executed nine days later. Her life-story is presented as both an example of individual moral fortitude and a 'small fragment of the history of nations',²³ reflecting Godwin's belief in the inseparability of private and social experience.

It was as 'Edward Baldwin, Esq.', however, that Godwin established a name for himself as a shaper of juvenile knowledge. Baldwin's most popular work, *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1805), which included seventy-three copper plate illustrations by Mulready, presented a revision of Aesop's fables with an egalitarian spin. For example, the well-known fable, 'Counting the Cost', in which a wild and a tame ass compare their lot in life, is recast by Godwin as a conversation between a lean and hungry wolf and a plump, well-fed mastiff. The moral is drawn not through a traditional application, but through action and dialogue. When the wolf, previously envious of the mastiff's domestic comforts, sees that his neck bears the marks of a chain, he takes his leave: 'Good morning, cousin! said the wolf...hunger shall never make me so slavish and base, as to prefer chains and blows with a belly-full, to my liberty'.²⁴ This story of the hidden costs of servitude is rendered in simple and direct language, and the narrative moves at a pace appropriate to the understanding of children. As Godwin wrote in the preface to *Fables*:

If we would benefit a child, we must become in part a child ourselves. We must prattle to him: we must expatiate upon some points: we must introduce quick unexpected turns which, if they are not wit, have the effect of wit to children. Above all, we must make our narrations pictures, and render the objects we discourse about, visible to the fancy of the learner.²⁵

This child-centred approach was welcomed by contemporaries. On 27 October 1806, Godwin reported to Josiah Wedgwood his early commercial success and outlined his plans for expansion:

The popularity of my Baldwin's Fables has equalled, perhaps I ought to say has exceeded, my most sanguine expectations. They came out however with one disadvantage, which I trust will not ultimately prove a disadvantage. If however they had been published in the customary size & type of the common Fable-Books at first, they would never have excited so much attention, or been so favourably received. I have now been encouraged by the sale of the expensive edition, to print a new edition

²² *Shelley and his Circle*, 1: 391-2.

²³ 'Theophilus Marcliffe', *The Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley, her Husband* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806), preface, iv.

²⁴ 'Edward Baldwin, Esq.', *Fables Ancient and Modern. Adapted for the Use of Children*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805), 1: 144-5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, preface, iv.

in one volume fitted for universal use; & it is now the decisive opinion of the booksellers that in this form they will get into all schools. ...If the cheap Fables get into general school use...the sale of 10,000 copies per annum would be no exaggerated statement of what I expect, & in that case £500 per annum would be the profit of that single book, to mention no other.²⁶

There is no way of checking Godwin's sales projection, but *Fables* went through ten British editions by 1824, as well as several in America. A French translation by Mary Jane Godwin appeared in 1806.

Almost as popular was Baldwin's *The Pantheon: or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome* (1806). This work depicted pagan Greek mythology as 'a collection of the most agreeable fables that ever were invented', which were, in the words of the preface, 'admirably calculated to awaken the imagination'.²⁷ The *Pantheon* went through eight editions by 1836 and became a standard text in schools; attentive readers included John Keats.²⁸ Godwin's other publications as Baldwin included a series of Whiggish political histories, which were still being reprinted well into the 1840s. In *The History of England* (1806), he adopted the Whig thesis that the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 marked the restoration of the ancient constitution that had been broken by the actions of Charles I. In *The History of Rome* (1809), he presented the heroes of the Roman republic as models of 'elevated sentiment and disinterested virtue' which, he claimed, were equally valid in the nineteenth century.²⁹ And in the *History of Greece* (1822), published at the time of the War of Greek Independence, he extended this view to the ancient Greeks. Yet the political tendentiousness of Baldwin's schoolbooks was so understated that they were praised by conservative reviewers, who never questioned the author's identity. Godwin's new-found popularity among his former enemies greatly amused the Whig aristocrat Lord Holland, one of the Juvenile Library's principal financial backers. He recalled in his memoirs:

The good little books in which our masters and misses were taught the rudiments of profane and sacred history, under the name of Baldwin, were really the composition of Godwin, branded as an atheist by those who unwittingly purchased, recommended, and taught his elementary lessons.³⁰

What were Godwin's 'elementary lessons'? To answer this question, we need to look briefly at his political and philosophical views. The Miltonic belief that the liberty of the country depended on the education of the people was fundamental to Godwin's thought. When he abandoned his early career as an Independent minister, his first plan was to contribute to public welfare by establishing a school. Although the idea came to nothing, he

²⁶ Godwin to [Josiah Wedgwood II], 27 October 1806, Bod. [Abinger] Dep. b. 227/3(a).

²⁷ 'Edward Baldwin, Esq.', *The Pantheon: or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome*, 2nd edn. (London: M. J. Godwin, 1809), preface, x. On the politics of Greek mythology, see Robert M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1798-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 152-78.

²⁸ *The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers, 1816-1878*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Harvard, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1948), 1: 258.

²⁹ 'Edward Baldwin, Esq.', *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic*, 2nd edn. (London: M. J. Godwin, 1811), preface, v.

³⁰ For correspondence of Godwin with Lord Holland, see Bod. [Abinger] Dep. b. 214/8(e), Dep. b. 227/3(b); Henry Richard Vassell, 3rd Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party, 1807-1821, with Some Miscellaneous Reminiscences* (1854), ed. Lord Stavordale (London: John Murray, 1905), 381.

wrote a prospectus, *An Account of the Seminary* (1783), setting out a reformed curriculum, in which he described education as the key to social progress:

The state of society is incontestably artificial; the power of one man over another must be always derived from convention, or from conquest; by nature we are equal. The necessary consequence is that government must always depend upon the opinion of the governed. Let the most oppressed people under heaven once change their mode of thinking, and they are free.³¹

The language of this passage may be reminiscent of Rousseau's social writings, but a similar emphasis on education as the key to social change was fundamental to Dissenting thought. A belief in the formative power of education is equally central to Godwin's theory of philosophical anarchism. In *Political Justice*, he argues that the exercise of rational judgement will lead to men and women gradually becoming wiser, until government withers away because it is no longer necessary. In the mid-1790s, as Godwin came to terms with the temporary defeat of the British reform movement, he renewed his commitment to education as the chief means by which social change would be achieved. In *The Enquirer* (1797), a collection of essays on education, manners, and literature, he turned his attention to the rising generation and set out a pedagogical theory designed to encourage the child's free exercise of private judgement.

Three aspects of Godwin's educational theory in *The Enquirer* are of special interest in relation to his later, experimental children's books. First, he emphasizes the primary importance of 'awakening the mind' (*Political and Philosophical Writings*, 5: 83). The purpose of education, in Godwin's view, is not to make the child an expert in a particular field of knowledge, but to encourage 'habits of intellectual activity' (ibid. 85). Godwin shares the belief of the Rational Dissenters that individuals should learn to think and act independently so as to develop their capacity to govern themselves in all areas of life. In Richard Price's words, 'education ought to be an initiation into candour, rather than into systems of faith'.³² The Dissenting concept of candour might best be defined as a commitment to think, act, and speak according to the impartial dictates of conscience.³³ It shapes the second significant aspect of Godwin's educational theory, that of respect for the autonomy of the student:

There is a reverence that we owe to every thing in human shape. I do not say that a child is the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with powers of reasoning, with sensations of pleasure and pain, and with principles of morality.... By the system of nature he is placed by himself; he has a claim upon his little sphere of empire and discretion; and he is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence. (*Political and Philosophical Writings*, 5: 119)

³¹ Godwin, *An Account of the Seminary that will be opened on Monday the Fourth Day of August at Epsom in Surrey*, in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp et al., 7 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1993), 5: 5. (Hereafter *Political and Philosophical Writings*, followed by volume and page number).

³² Richard Price, *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World* (1785), in *Richard Price: Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 138.

³³ D. O. Thomas, *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 99-101.

This belief in the child's entitlement to a 'portion of independence' leads Godwin to sketch a mode of schooling based on the pupil's own initiative and desires.

Third, Godwin accords a pivotal role to sympathy and feeling as agents of moral growth. Although in the first edition of *Political Justice* he posits reason as the sole motive to action, in the second and third editions (1796, 1798) he places increasing emphasis on the moral importance of sympathy.³⁴ As he wrote in *The Enquirer*, 'Not only the passions of men, but their very judgments, are to a great degree the creatures of sympathy' (*Political and Philosophical Writings*, 5: 106). In his children's books, he tends to equate the imagination and the moral sense. For example, Godwin's first schoolbook, *Bible Stories* (1802), published under the name of 'William Scolfield', consists of episodes from the King James's Bible, retold in simple language.³⁵ These are presented not as vehicles of religious truth but as 'tales of ancient times', designed to awaken the imagination. In the preface, he explained to parents why it was so important to engage the child's imaginative faculties:

Our youth, according to the most approved recent systems of education, will be excellent geographers, natural historians and mechanics...Every thing is studied and attended to, except those things which open the heart, which insensibly initiate the learner in the relations and generous offices of society, and enable him to put himself in imagination into the place of his neighbour, to feel his feelings, and to wish his wishes.

...Without imagination we may have a certain cold and arid circle of principles, but we cannot have sentiments: we may learn by rote a catalogue of rules...but we can neither ourselves love, nor be fitted to excite the love of others. (*Political and Philosophical Writings*, 5: 313-14)

A modern audience may find such beliefs uncontroversial: as Virginia Woolf remarked of Wollstonecraft's *Vindications*, 'their originality has become our commonplace'.³⁶ But they challenged the dominant educational traditions of the time.

Godwin's Lockean conception of the child's mind as 'a sheet of white paper' (*Political and Philosophical Writings*, 5: 111), to be inscribed by experience, questioned the traditional Christian view of the child as inherently sinful and in need of external guidance. This view had shaped Godwin's own Calvinist upbringing and was revived in the Romantic era by conservative Anglican educationalists. In addition, Godwin's commitment to fostering the child's moral autonomy placed him at odds with contemporary progressive educators, such as Anna Letitia Barbauld, Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, and Wollstonecraft, with whom he is often associated.³⁷ These writers sought to engineer the child's development through rational pedagogies based on the prescriptive techniques advocated by Locke and Rousseau in their educational writings.³⁸ Whatever their ideological differences, they shared with conservative moralists a belief that the child was unfit to make independent moral decisions.

³⁴ On the ethical dimension of Godwin's revisions, see Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 142-53, 202-9.

³⁵ 'William Scolfield', *Bible Stories. Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges and Kings: Extracted from their Original Historians. For the Use of Children*. 2 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1802); *St. Clair, The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 279, 545n.

³⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'Four Figures' (1929), in *The Common Reader*, 2nd Series (1932), ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 158.

³⁷ E.g., Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society, A Study of a Theme in English Literature*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), 39-41.

³⁸ Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 127-53

What these writers sought to prevent – the possibility of children forming their own principles – Godwin aimed to promote. In 1802 the bookseller William Cole asked him for advice concerning which books to give to ‘female children from the age of two to twelve’. Godwin replied that he made no distinction between ‘children male & female’ and recommended fairy tales.³⁹ Such works had been proscribed by Locke, Rousseau, and their followers because of their supernatural qualities; but for Godwin they were invaluable, as ‘books calculated to excite the imagination, & at the same time [quicken] the apprehensions of children’.⁴⁰ His specific suggestions included traditional fairy stories, such as Perrault’s ‘Tales of Mother Goose’ and *Beauty and the Beast*, and popular chapbooks, such as *Valentine and Orson* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*.⁴¹ Yet, for Godwin, ‘old books’ (*Political and Philosophical Writings*, 5: 313) were not incompatible with certain educational works in the Lockean tradition. He also recommended Barbauld’s innovatory series, *Lessons for Children* (1778-9), which empowered very young readers through the use of simple language and concepts they could understand⁴² – a strategy Godwin sought to emulate in his own publications under the Juvenile Library imprint.

Godwin ultimately solved the problem of which books to give children to read by writing his own. In composing specimens of reformed history, classical literature, and English language study, he followed in the tradition of Dissenting academy tutors, who had constructed a new, enlightened syllabus as an alternative to the traditions of the ancient universities.⁴³ More significant than the subjects of Godwin’s books, however, was his fashioning of a mode of educational writing that would encourage children to think for themselves, and thus prepare them for a future as autonomous moral agents.

During the credit crunch of his later years, Godwin consistently defended his ‘little civic establishment’ at Skinner Street and the books it produced.⁴⁴ The importance he attached to his own books for children is suggested by a note for his literary executor, dated 2 January 1828, in which he requested that Baldwin’s principal works – *Fables*, *The Pantheon*, and the histories of England, Rome, and Greece – together with the preface to *Bible Stories*, should be included in any future edition of his miscellaneous works.⁴⁵

If the number of editions can be regarded as evidence of success, Baldwin’s publications were far more effective than Godwin’s in conveying his reformist social vision to a mass audience of nineteenth-century readers. When the Juvenile Library stock was sold off to Baldwin, Craddock and Joy in 1825,⁴⁶ new editions of Baldwin’s works, still under their pseudonym, continued to appear. As textbooks, adopted for class as well as home use, they were studied by generations of schoolchildren who had never heard of *Political Justice*.

³⁹ Godwin to William Cole, 2 March 1802, Bod. [Abinger] Dep. b. 215/2 (printed in Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, 2: 118-20).

⁴⁰ Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, 42-4; Sylvia W. Patterson, *Rousseau’s Émile and Early Children’s Literature* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1971), 20-1; Godwin to William Cole (Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, 2: 119); for a comparison of Godwin’s views with those of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lamb, see Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, 126-7.

⁴¹ Godwin to William Cole (Kegan Paul, *William Godwin*, 2: 119-20); for Godwin’s own experiments in publishing chapbooks, see David Foxon, ‘The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs’ *Tales from Shakespear*’, *Book Collector*, 6: 1 (1957), 41-53.

⁴² Sarah Robbins, ‘*Lessons for Children* and Teaching Mothers: Mrs. Barbauld’s Primer for the Textual Construction of Middle-Class Domestic Pedagogy’, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 17 (1993), 135-51.

⁴³ See H. McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts: Being the History of the Nonconformist Academies, 1662-1820* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1931); J. W. Ashley Smith, *The Birth of Modern Education: The Contribution of the Dissenting Academies, 1600-1800* (London: Independent Press, 1954).

⁴⁴ Godwin to [Lord Holland], [?1810], Bod. [Abinger] Dep. b. 227/3(b).

⁴⁵ Godwin to [his literary executor], 2 January 1828, Bod. [Abinger] Dep. c. 604/2.

⁴⁶ Godwin, undated notes concerning Juvenile Library finances, [?1825], Bod. [Abinger] Dep. c. 766/1.

Moreover, as Britain moved towards the limited concessions of the 1832 Reform Act, the expanding middle class targeted by the Juvenile Library was increasingly regarded as *the* class with the power to make or unmake social change. Through the medium of educational books, Godwin contributed to this consolidation of middle-class identity. The key beliefs which shape his Juvenile Library venture – that individuals should be encouraged to think for themselves and resist state attempts to regulate behaviour – have become part of our liberal heritage.

Durham University

Mrs. Leicester's School

By Mary Wedd

IN OCTOBER 1802 LAMB WROTE TO COLERIDGE MOURNING the substitution in Children's Literature of preachy moralizing by the likes of Mrs. Barbauld and Mrs. Trimmer, who disapproved of fairy-tales and even of verse, instead of the 'old classics of the nursery' which fed the imagination.

Everything must come to the child in the *shape of knowledge* ... instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to Poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men.¹

Is there perhaps a lesson here for our generation too with its overcrowded syllabus and all its tests from an early age? Is there any time or energy left for nourishment of the creative life? Charles and Mary set about remedying this unbalance. Winifred Courtney quotes Christopher Lehmann-Haupt reviewing *The Oxford Book of English Verse* who says, 'Not until Charles and Mary Lamb's "The First Tooth"... do we become aware of any real attempt to imagine the world from the child's point of view'.² The last line of that poem from their *Poetry for Children* speaks volumes, 'A child is fed with milk and praise'.³

To provide an alternative to 'the cursed Barbauld Crew', the Lambs wrote for the Godwins' Children's Library their most famous and long-lasting work, *Tales from Shakespear*, written in 1805-6 and published dated 1807. Then came Charles's *Adventures of Ulysses* published in 1808 and at the end of 1806 Mary is already writing to Sarah Stoddart, 'I have been busy making waistcoats and plotting new work to succeed the Tales'.⁴ The result of her plotting was, in 1808-9, *Mrs. Leicester's School*, and I am not alone in absolutely loving it! Much greater judges than I have left their tributes.⁵ Crabb Robinson said of Mary, 'what grace and talent has she not manifested in *Mrs. Leicester's School*?' Coleridge said to Allsop:

It at once soothes and amuses me to think – nay to know – that the time will come when this little volume of my dear and well-nigh oldest friend, Mary Lamb, will be not only enjoyed but be acknowledged as a rich jewel in the treasury of our permanent English literature...

The book did indeed go into eight editions by 1823 but we seem to be content to lose incomparable riches which perhaps do not suit the fashions of a day. Landor wrote,

Show me the man or woman, modern or ancient, who could have written this one sentence: 'When I was dressed in my new frock, I wished poor mamma was alive, to

¹ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, Letters*, ed. E. V. Lucas, Vol. 1 (1912), p. 260.

² *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, Special Sesquicentennial Number, July/October 1984, p. 164.

³ Lucas, Vol. III, *Books for Children*, p. 415.

⁴ Lucas, Vol. I, *Letters*, p. 380.

⁵ Lucas, Vol. III, *Books for Children*, pp. 508-9.

see how fine I was on papa's wedding day; and I ran to my favourite station at her bedroom door' ... a fresh source of the pathetic bursts out before us, and not a bitter one ... The story is admirable throughout – incomparable, inimitable...

In another letter, Landor again praises this story, 'The Father's Wedding' calling it:

with the sole exception of the *Bride of Lammermoor*, the most beautiful tale in prose composition in any language, ancient or modern ... Did you ever imagine that a fresh source of the pathetic would burst forth before us in this trodden and hardened world? I never did, and when I found myself upon it, I pressed my temples with both hands, and tears ran down to my elbows.

How was this miracle achieved? Precisely by that revolutionary stance of 'attempting to imagine the world from the child's point of view' and succeeding, while having at the same time an adult overview which makes a strong impact on the grown-up reader.

The framework of the book is a time-honoured literary device but adapted so that the children tell their own stories. Mrs. Leicester has started a boarding-school and, noticing that at the first arrivals of the pupils 'The traces of tears were on every cheek',⁶ she collected the children round 'a bright fire that blazed in the chimney' and suggested that each child should 'relate some little anecdotes of your own lives', thus getting to know each other and finding consolation. Gone is the nauseous moralizing: there *are* morals in the tales but they arise spontaneously out of the child's experience and simply sum up what she has learnt from it. The language is simple, as befits the narrators, but the child's unconscious irony is so skilfully and delicately portrayed that it pierces the heart of the adult reader quite without sentimentality. The children see the world within the limits of their understanding and the gap between their view and that of the reader provides some devastating implications.

Charles wrote three of the tales, Mary seven. 'The Witch Aunt', Charles's first story, foreshadows his essay 'Witches and Other Night Fears', but is told by the child in the first person with a couple of interpositions by the teacher which help to place the account in its frame of the school. As well as 'the Witch of Endor picture' from Stackhouse, he tells of the seventeenth century 'book called Glanvil on Witches' and says, 'This was my treasure', though it is not mentioned in the Elia essay. His second story 'First Going to Church' is told by a girl living in such isolated country in the Lincolnshire fens that the nearest Church is seven miles away over difficult country not possible for the child until the family acquired a carriage. Her only knowledge was of the Church bells, so she had no idea what to expect and her guesses were quite off the mark, ranging from a 'great hollow cave' to 'a wagon or a cart'. 'Was it any thing to eat or drink, or was it only like a great huge plaything, to be seen and stared at? – I was not quite five years of age when I made this inquiry'. Her mother tries to enlighten her but, even so, when she finally got to Church 'all was new and surprising to me on that day'. She was puzzled by the gargoyles. 'I somehow fancied they were the representation of wicked people set up as a warning'. She also pondered on the tomb of a judge with his effigy kneeling in front of a Bible, as if 'the dead judge ... said his prayers at it still'. The child ends by rejoicing though:

Oh! It was a happy day for me my first going to St. Mary's church: before that day I used to feel like a little outcast in the wilderness, like one that did not belong to the world of Christian people. I have never felt like a little outcast since.

⁶ Lucas, Vol. III, *Books for Children*, pp. 316 ff. for quotations from *Mrs. Leicester's School*.

The community aspect of churchgoing is vital to the child. 'But I can never hear the sweet noise of bells that I don't think of the angels singing, and what poor but pretty thoughts I had of angels in my uninstructed solitude'.

Charles's third tale is of a little girl coming home from India for an English education. The young woman who was to have accompanied her upon the voyage was taken ill and could not go, so that the child was put in the care of the sailors. One of these, Atkinson, nicknamed 'Betsy', was particularly put in charge of Arabella, aged five. A touching though matter-of-fact account is given of their relationship. 'Betsy', who was first mate, 'had a great character for bravery, and all sailorlike accomplishments' and it was his 'gentleness of manners' and his 'weakly constitution' which earned him his nickname. Before the end of the voyage Atkinson had died, succumbing to a fatal illness brought on by the effects of a wound he had previously got when successfully defending his captain against enemies who had boarded his ship. The child has to come to terms with having 'lost my old ship-mate' and eventually after reaching home succeeds in meeting his family. Lucas comments, 'Nothing else that Lamb wrote is quite so far from the ordinary run of his thoughts; and nothing has, I think, more charm'.

But, charming though Charles's stories are, they do not compare in subtlety and sophistication with Mary's contributions. Crabb Robinson was right – 'what grace and talent has she not manifested in "*Mrs. Leicester's School?*"' Her narrative in the voices of children is both economical and compelling, her use of irony delicate but often heart-rending. The loneliness and grief at the cruelty of fate and of other people is balanced by the compassion and human kindness shown by some of the characters, as though it were a spontaneous response to be sorry for suffering, even of people who may seem to be enemies, and to wish to help. There is no need for sententious sermonizing when the lessons are implicit in the texture of the writing.

These qualities are apparent in Mary's first story 'The Sailor Uncle', told by Elizabeth Villiers.

My father is the curate of a village church, about five miles from Amwell. I was born in the parsonage house, which joins the churchyard. The first thing I can remember was my father teaching me the alphabet from the letters on a tomb-stone that stood at the head of my mother's grave. I used to tap at my father's study-door; I think I now hear him say, 'Who is there? – What do you want, little girl?' 'Go and see mamma. Go and learn pretty letters'. Many times in the day would my father lay aside his books and his papers to lead me to this spot, and make me point to the letters, and then set me to spell syllables and words: in this manner, the epitaph on my mother's tomb being my primer and my spelling-book, I learned to read.

She knows now, and tells her listeners, that the gentleman who one day found her sitting on the churchyard stile was her sailor-uncle, who after long at sea had come to visit his sister, not knowing her to be dead. The irony here lies in the double view-point of the child, of the seeming immediacy of remembered events and feelings juxtaposed with the better comprehension of them that has since come with the passage of time. At that time she was quite unaware of his identity.

I agreed to take him to mamma, but we had a dispute about the way thither. My uncle was for going along the road which led directly up to our house; I pointed to the churchyard, and said, that was the way to mamma. Though impatient of any delay, he was not willing to contest the point with his new relation, therefore he lifted me over the stile, and was then going to take me along the path to a gate he knew was at the

end of our garden; but no, I would not go that way neither: letting go his hand, I said, 'You do not know the way – I will show you': and making what haste I could among the long grass and thistles, and jumping over the low graves, [...] 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; I looked up in his face to see him acknowledge his mistake; but, Oh, what a face of sorrow did I see! I was so frightened [...] I knew not what to do; my mind was in a strange confusion; I thought I had done something wrong, in bringing the gentleman to mamma to make him cry so sadly; but what it was I could not tell. This grave had always been a scene of delight to me.

Soon afterwards, when the brothers-in-law meet, she 'conceived a dislike to my uncle because he had made my father cry'. 'Now I first learned that my mother's death was a heavy affliction'. Her happy routine of visiting the grave with her father was interrupted, and her resentment at her uncle was expressed in those techniques of bad behaviour with which children know only too well how to exasperate adults. Mary's heroines are human children, warts and all. 'I screamed loudly, till my father came out to know what it was all about'. He took her to the tombstone but not for their usual activities there. 'I sate upon my father's knee, looking up into his face, and thinking "*How sorry papa looks*", till, having been fatigued with crying and now oppressed with thought, I fell fast asleep'.

How sensitively Mary tempers the child's love and pity for her father with the mundane fact that crying and mourning makes one very tired.

Gradually, by sensitive and thoughtful manoeuvres, the uncle weans them both from their obsession with the tomb of the dead mother and draws them out into a normal and happy life again. Then he has to go back to his ship and Betsy is overcome with remorse about 'how unkind I had been to my uncle when he first came'. Her father comforts her by saying, 'This is the sort of way in which we all feel, when those we love are taken from us...'. Here comes the moral but it is an unexceptionable one and brave when one remembers Mary's history.

Put away from you this unfounded grief; only let it be a lesson to you to be as kind as possible to those you love; and remember, when they are gone from you, you will never think you have been kind enough.

He ends his homily,

But your uncle will come back again, Betsy, and we will now think of where we are to get the cage to keep the talking parrot in, he is to bring home; and go and tell Susan to bring the candles, and ask her if the nice cake is almost baked, that she promised to give us for our tea.

The stories are always preserved from mawkishness by such down-to-earth touches from everyday life to which every child – and adult – will respond.

In the tale that so affected Landor, *The Father's Wedding-Day*, told by Elinor Forester, the child's mother is dead and her bedroom door is locked. Elinor has not forgotten her and says,

I used to go to the door of the room in which I had seen her in her last illness; and after trying to open it and peeping through the keyhole, from which I could just see a glimpse of the crimson curtains, I used to sit down on the stool before the door and

play with my doll, and sometimes sing to it mamma's pretty song of 'Balow my babe'; imitating as well as I could the weak voice in which she used to sing to me.

When her father told her that he was to marry Miss Saville, a family friend who had known her mother 'when they were young', he did so 'with such pleasure in his looks that I thought it must be a very fine thing indeed to have a new mamma...' especially as Elinor was given new smart clothes for the wedding. Seeing her delight the Housekeeper 'shook her head, and said, "Poor thing! how soon children forget everything!"' The irony of this is intensified when Elinor comments,

I could not imagine what she meant by my forgetting everything, for I instantly recollected poor mamma used to say I had an excellent memory. When I was drest in my new frock I wished poor mamma was alive to see how fine I was on papa's wedding-day, and I ran to my favourite station at her bedroom door.

Elinor says, 'I foolishly imagined that Miss Saville was to be changed into something like my own mother' and when she discovered otherwise she said, 'Miss Saville shall not be my mamma,' and began to behave like a problem child. The first breakthrough comes when Elinor sees 'Miss Saville' weep and, in spite of her previous resentment, is sorry for her. Mary manages this perfectly, without sentimentality, by preserving the child's-eye view.

I was so very sorry to hear her cry so, that I forgot I did not love her, and I went up to her, and said, 'Don't cry, I won't be naughty any more, I won't peep through the door any more'. Then she said I had a kind little heart, and I should not have any occasion, for she would take me into the room herself...'

The new wife then insists on having the door of 'Mamma's room' unlocked, taking the child in and letting her talk about her mother. Eventually the room is made into her play and lesson area, where her new mamma teaches her to read. Mary is as skilled in framing the resolutions to her stories as she is introducing them.

If you think the deaths of mothers are much in evidence the answer is that so they were then. Deaths in childbirth or from complications afterwards were as common as deaths of children, and had to be assimilated into a child's picture of life. We are more fortunate now. But that they were common did not make such events less painful and Mary deals with them with a most skilful and delicate art.

In Ann Withers' story 'The Changeling', as Jonathan Wordsworth says, Mary 'reverses generations of changeling denouements by concerning herself with the one who was *not* the princess...'⁷ He goes on, 'A more adult style has been adopted for this older child and her deeper grief. Drawing on her own "experience in sorrow", Mary creates a story that is compelling and sustained. To quote Robinson one last time, it is "full of deep feeling, and great truth of the imagination"'. The story begins thus:

My name you know is Withers, but, as I once thought I was the daughter of Sir Edward and Lady Harriot Lesley, I shall speak of myself as Miss Lesley, and call Sir Edward and lady Harriott my father and mother during the period I supposed them

⁷ Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Introduction' to the Woodstock Facsimile Edition of *Mrs. Leicester's School*.

[Careful readers of the Lamb Bulletin will notice that I have plagiarised myself by ending this talk with a repetition of a passage from my previous piece on Mary Lamb based on a lecture to the Friends of Coleridge, given at Kilve in 1997.]

entitled to those beloved names. When I was a little girl, it was the perpetual subject of my contemplation, that I was an heiress, and the daughter of a baronet; that my mother was the Honourable Lady Harriott; that we had a nobler mansion, infinitely finer pleasure-grounds, and equipages more splendid than any of the neighbouring families. Indeed, [...] I am ashamed to confess what a proud child I once was.

Miss Villiers, the curate's daughter, tries to console her with her father's assurance that 'pride is a defect inseparable from human nature'. We see the effects of this vice also in Charlotte Wilmot's tale 'The Merchant's Daughter', with her pride in wealth, until it is all lost. When her father's fortunes are restored Charlotte has learned her lesson. In 'The Changeling', the wet-nurse, a family retainer, substitutes her own baby for the daughter of Sir Edward and Lady Harriot. The developments of the story are beautifully handled, as the supposed 'princess' gradually brings about her own downfall. The two little girls become playmates as small children, then 'I formed a resolution to beg of my parents that I might have Ann for a companion, and that she might be allowed to take lessons with me of my governess'. This was allowed, the narrator unknowingly thus ensuring that her future supplanter would be qualified to take up her superior position. When her playmate tells her the truth, 'I thought how praiseworthy it would be in me to restore to my friend the rights of her birth; yet I thought only of becoming her patroness, and raising her to her proper rank; it never occurred to me that my own degradation must necessarily follow'. The true heir did not make the truth public because of the shame it would bring on her 'mother'. Then, when Ann was not there the narrator puts on a play with a group of her children friends which she has written herself.

...I have already told you what a proud girl I was. During the writing of this piece, the receiving of my young friends, and the instructing them in their several parts, I never felt myself of more importance [...] It was a new scene of triumph for me, and I might then be said to be in the very height of my glory.

Unfortunately, she could not think of a plot, so she used the story Ann had told her, though 'I had a few scruples that it might, should it come to the knowledge of Ann, be construed into something very like a breach of confidence'.

So the secret was out and the proud girl's humiliation was only begun. It soon transpires that the new Miss Lesley has inherited her real mother's gift for music and 'All day long the notes of the harp or the piano spoke sad sounds to me, of the loss of a loved mother's heart'. Everyone behaves well though Ann cannot resist a certain cattiness about her ouster, 'Neither dancing, nor any foolish lectures, could do much for Miss Lesley, she remained for some time wanting in gracefulness of carriage' but she has to admit 'but all that is usually attributed to dancing, music finally effected'.

The resolution, such as it is, comes in a heart-to-heart conversation between Ann and Lady Harriot, in the course of which it becomes clear that Ann's situation is impossible and the best way out of it is for her to go away for a year or two to *Mrs. Leicester's School*.

Particularly delightful is the ending of 'The Young Mahometan', in which Margaret Green's ill-advised solitary reading has persuaded her that she must be a Mahometan and has put her in a worry about how she and others would be able to get across the bridge, no wider than a silken thread that they must cross after death. The doctor is called in because she has made herself ill with anxiety. Luckily his wife is in the carriage with him and he asks her 'what was good for a Mahometan fever'. 'She studied a little while, and then she said, "a ride to Harlow fair would not be amiss"'. And so it proved. For 'when we arrived at the fair', 'Ishmael, Mahomet, and the narrow bridge, vanished out of my head in an instant'. The setting of this story is recognisably Blakesware.

'Visit to the Cousins' illustrates the wanton unkindness with which children can treat each other, in this case abetted by their parents. Emily has been left with an uncle and aunt for a year while her mother and father are abroad. Her cousins find every way they can to exclude her from the family.

My cousins very often quarrelled with me, and then they always said, 'I will go and tell my mamma, cousin Emily'; and then I used to be very disconsolate, because I had no mamma to complain to of my grievances. My aunt always took Sophia's part, because she was so young; and she never suffered me to oppose Mary, or Elizabeth, because they were older than me. The playthings were all the property of one or other of my cousins. [...] I had nothing that I could call my own, but one pretty book of stories; and one day, as Sophia was endeavouring to take it, from me, and I was trying to keep it, it was all torn to pieces; and my aunt would not be angry with her. She only said, Sophia was a little baby, and did not know any better. My uncle promised to buy me another book, but he never remembered it.

I haven't time to quote more but it is brilliantly done and reminds me of a family I visited as a child where a young cousin was being brought up with the children of an aunt and uncle and I was acutely aware of all the cruel ways they found of rejecting her. Her parents were in India. The pains of Empire were not all on one side.

But in Mary's story the *coup de grâce* comes when Emily is so little protected that she goes off trustingly with an unknown gentleman in a chaise and is taken to London. It transpires that he is her father but she has forgotten what he looked like. This, too, is true to life, for I remember being surprised at the appearance of my own parents when they met me from the train after a long term at boarding school. Now that Emily has a mamma to stick up for her and has toys of her own, her mother has to teach her not to imitate her cousins' behaviour to her. 'Do you not see you are doing the same unkind thing to your playfellow that they did to you?' That is the moral and now they can relax and go to the theatre together! And we share Emily's delight in her first play.

Not all the stories hinge on different kinds of suffering and their cure. The youngest narrator, who is only seven, tells of an idyllic visit to her grandmother's farm on her fourth birthday. It is probably Mackery End, as Margaret Green's setting is Blakesware, but seen through Mary's rather than Charles's eyes. The hen's character is particularly well developed by Grandmamma. 'A hen, she said, was a hospitable bird, and always laid more eggs than she wanted, on purpose to give her mistress to make puddings and custards with'. But there was another side to her. As a mamma to the 'little yellow ducklings' she left something to be desired. 'She was so frightened if they went near the water. Grandmamma says a hen is not esteemed a very wise bird'.

I have only been able to give you a taste of the artistic skill and human understanding shown in *Mrs. Leicester's School*, but I do recommend it to you – *if* you can find a copy.

Sevenoaks, Kent

Lamb and *The Adventures of Ulysses*

By Felicity James

2008 MARKS THE BICENTENARY OF THE LAMBS' CHILDREN'S BOOKS, *Mrs Leicester's School* and *The Adventures of Ulysses*. These books deserve to be celebrated as small triumphs of early nineteenth-century children's literature, yet they are often overlooked in favour of the *Tales from Shakespear*, Mary and Charles's better-known collaborative volume, published at the close of 1806. This book, their first experience of publishing for Godwin's *Juvenile Library*, has remained consistently in print, forming the first introduction for generations of readers to Shakespeare. The *Tales* have had plenty of critical attention, and multiple reincarnations. It was through the *Tales*, for instance, that Shakespeare first entered Chinese culture, through a 1903 translation *Strange Tales from Abroad*.¹ It is still reprinted as a children's book, inspiring new versions such as Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* and his script for the popular BBC series of the 1990s, *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales*. The Lambs' children's books of 1808 are now less well-known, but had similar significance in their period, and should be remembered alongside their more famous counterpart. Both *The Adventures of Ulysses* and *Mrs. Leicester's School* share something of the characteristics of the *Tales from Shakespear*, and, similarly, have wider political and literary implications.

After the collaborative endeavour of the *Tales*, *The Adventures of Ulysses* was, by contrast, Charles's own enterprise. It was, perhaps, an attempt to compensate for the failure of Charles's play, the farce *Mr. H—*, which was accepted by Richard Wroughton and produced at Drury Lane, only to be hissed at its only performance in December 1806. After this 'cursed fall from off the top of Drury Lane Theatre into the Pit',² Charles turned to alternative means of securing income, producing two books – designed for different audiences but nevertheless related – which were both published in 1808.

The one is a Juvenile Book, [as he told Manning in February 1808,] *The Adventures of Ulysses*, intended to be an introduction to the Reading of Telemachus! – it is done out of the *Odyssey*, not from the Greek – I would not mislead you – nor yet from Pope's *Odyssey*, but from an older translation of one Chapman. The *Shakespeare Tales* suggested the doing it [...] The other is done for Longman, and is *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* contemporary with *Shakespeare*. (Marrs, II: 272)

The Adventures of Ulysses and the *Specimens* share a common aim – to celebrate the achievements of the Elizabethan poets, and to open them up to a wider readership. One of the most important aspects of *The Adventures of Ulysses* is its distinctive, strongly-flavoured prose, which comes – sometimes directly – from George Chapman's 1614 translation of the *Odyssey*. Like Keats looking into Chapman's Homer, the book registers the Romantic thrill at re-encountering the Elizabethan versions of the classics, and the new worlds opened up by these 'bold' translations.³

¹ Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 4.

² *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, 3 vols. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1975), II: 272. Hereafter cited in text as Marrs. The original spelling and punctuation of the Lambs' letters has been retained.

³ John Keats, *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard (2nd edition; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 72.

As Lamb's letter to Manning shows, *The Adventures of Ulysses* also looks back to *Tales from Shakespear*, since both are adaptations designed to open up the classics for children. *The Adventures* offers a lively, inventive, poetic retelling of famous aspects of Ulysses' story, reordered and simplified for child readers. We open with Ulysses yearning for his 'wife and native country Ithaca'.⁴ Despite its being a 'barren spot, and a poor country', 'he could never see a soil which appeared in his eyes half so sweet and desirable' (Lucas: III, 241). From the start, it is clear quite how closely Lamb's text parallels Chapman's translation. In Book Nine of Chapman's *Odyssey*, Ulysses describes how Ithaca 'with barren rocks and cliffes is over-runne':

Nor could I see a Soile, where ere I came,
More sweete and wishfull.⁵

Lamb borrows and rearranges different aspects of the *Odyssey* for dramatic and emotional impact. We now begin with Ulysses' story, rather than Telemachus' search for his father: Ulysses is thus emphasised as the main character, a feeling and responsive figure, with whom the reader is encouraged to sympathize through swiftly moving, plot-driven episodes. Lamb narrates his encounters with the lotus tree, adventures in the cave of the Cyclops, Aeolus's gift of the winds which the 'covetous mariners' let loose, the horror of coming amongst the Laestrygonian giants and Circe and her 'wicked sorceries' which transform Ulysses' men into bristling, grunting swine. At the end of the second chapter, Lamb does not spare his child audience a description of Ulysses' poignant voyage to the land of the dead, whom he tempts with a feast of blood, and where he meets not only Agamemnon, Achilles, and the resentful Ajax, but also his own mother. In Chapter Three, Ulysses has to encounter the Sirens and the 'celestial harmony' of their song, which Lamb renders with a direct quotation from Book Twelve of Chapman's *Odyssey*:

Ulysses! stay thy ship; and that song hear
That none past ever, but it bent his ear. (Lucas, III: 264)⁶

Then come the desperate attempts to pass Scylla and Charybdis, whose boiling, roaring whirlpools Lamb describes in particular detail, inspired into some of the best writing in the book:

Charybdis's black throat drew into her all the whirling deep, which she disgorged again, that all about her boiled like a kettle, and the rock roared with troubled waters; which when she supped in again, all the bottom turned up, and disclosed far under shore the swart sands naked, whose whole stern sight frayed the startled blood from their faces, and made Ulysses turn his to view the wonder of whirlpools. (Lucas, III: 266)

⁴ *The Adventures of Ulysses* (London: 1808), 2. Although checked against the first edition, for ease of reference, I will hereafter give references to the text of the *Adventures* reprinted in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas, 8 vols. (London: Methuen, 1912), III: 241. Hereafter cited in text as Lucas.

⁵ Chapman's *Homer. The Iliad, the Odyssey and the lesser Homerica*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1957), II: 151 (lines 52, 54-5).

⁶ Chapman's version runs:

'Ulysses! stay thy ship, and that song heare
That none past ever, but it bent his eare' (*Chapman's Homer*, ed. Nicoll, II: 215 (lines 274-5)).

Taking advantage of Ulysses' distraction, Scylla then snatches up with her 'six long necks', six of his men, 'whose cries Ulysses heard, and saw them too late, with their heels turned up, and their hands thrown to him for succour' (Lucas, III: 266). His men are soon still further diminished when they rebel against his command and slaughter the oxen of the sun; Ulysses is then cast away alone. In Chapter Four, 'single', 'naked', a 'poor ship-wrecked chief', he lands upon Calypso's 'Delightful Island', with its 'crystal fountains, running brooks, meadows flowering with sweet balm-gentle and with violet: blue violets which like veins enameled [*sic*] the smooth breast of each fragrant mead' (Lucas, III: 270). Those blue violets have been borrowed from Chapman, Book Five:

Foure Fountaines one against another powrd
Their silver streames, and medowes all enflowrd
With sweete Balme-gentle, and blue Violets hid,
That deckt the soft brests of each fragrant Mead.⁷

Amid these ornamental Elizabethan descriptions, Lamb is also eager to point out Ulysses's misery on Calypso's isle, which functions as a 'memorable example of married love, and a worthy instance how dear to every good man his country is' (Lucas, III: 270). He therefore must set sail once more, and endure another shipwreck. In the closing chapters, he finally arrives at Ithaca, battles the suitors, and regains Penelope. The book ends with a Biblical flourish, 'for he that had been so long absent was returned to wreak the evil upon the heads of the doers; in the place where they had done the evil, there wreaked he his vengeance upon them' (Lucas, III: 315).

Those extracts demonstrate the allusive and evocative power of Lamb's language in the *Adventures*. In those descriptions of the 'swart sands naked', or the flowering meadows, we can see how he is repeating and reinventing Elizabethan and Jacobean poetic rhythms, just as in the *Tales from Shakespear* he and Mary often use Shakespeare's own language. In the 'Preface' to their *Tales*, the Lambs explain how in their process of adaptation

his words are used whenever it seemed possible [and] diligent care has been taken to select such words as might least interrupt the effect of the beautiful English tongue in which he wrote. (Lucas, III: 1)

In *The Adventures of Ulysses*, it is not so much Homer as the 'beautiful English tongue' of Chapman which is celebrated. As Lamb says in his 'Preface', 'if I were to state the obligations which I have had to one obsolete version' – and here he footnotes 'the translation of Homer by Chapman in the reign of James I' – 'I should run the hazard of depriving myself of the very slender degree of reputation which I could hope to acquire from a trifle like the present undertaking' (Lucas, III: 240-1).

This celebration of Chapman also shows us how the *Adventures* are part of a larger Romantic conversation, which stretches back to that famous letter from Lamb to Coleridge in November 1802. Here, as Lamb complains about 'Mrs. B[arbauld]'s & Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense', we see the first glimmerings of the idea that Lamb might write his own children's works:

Knowledge insignificant & vapid as Mrs. B's books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, & his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers, when he has learnt, that a Horse is an Animal, & Billy is better than a

⁷ *Chapman's Homer*, ed. Nicoll, II: 91 (lines 95-8).

Horse, & such like: instead of that beautiful Interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. (Marrs II: 81-2)

That letter is well-known, and has been discussed at length: the *Tales from Shakespear* has been read in light of his – and Coleridge’s – attraction towards ‘wild tales’, and Lamb’s dismissal of Barbauld’s children’s fiction, and his praise of Goody Two Shoes, has been shown to be slightly disingenuous.⁸ What’s not so frequently remembered is that as he sat down to write this letter, he was under the intoxicating influence of a first reading of Chapman’s translations. We know from Keats quite how powerful that first encounter with Chapman might be; looking into the ‘beautiful copy of the folio edition of Chapman’s translation of Homer’⁹ owned by Thomas Alsager, with his friend Charles Cowden Clarke, Keats expresses his joy at finally encountering the world of ‘deep-browed Homer’:

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.¹⁰

Lamb, similarly, fourteen years earlier, gives a wonderful image of being carried away by Chapman’s poetry:

I have just finished Chapman’s Homer. Did you ever read it? It has *most* the continuous power of interesting you all along, like a rapid original, of any: & in the uncommon excellence of the more finish’d parts goes beyond Fairfax or any of ’em. – The metre is 14 Syllables & capable of all sweetness & grandeur. Cowper’s damn’d blank verse detains you every step with some heavy Miltonism. – Chapman gallops off with you his own free pace. (Marrs: II, 82)

He was to return to this love of Chapman in the other production of 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*. Here he comments on Chapman’s closeness to Shakespeare, and his power as an Epic poet,

for his Homer is not so properly a Translation as the Stories of Achilles and Ulysses re-written. The earnestness and passion which he has put into every part of these poems would be incredible to a reader of mere modern translations.¹¹

Passion is a watchword in Lamb’s description of Chapman; even though Chapman’s translations have flaws – chiefly, an ‘unconquerable quaintness’ which ‘pours out in the same

⁸ See, for instance, George Barnett, “‘That Cursed Barbauld Crew’ or Charles Lamb and Children’s Literature”, *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 25 (1979): 1-18, Susan Wolfson, ‘Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb’s Tales from Shakespear’, in *Women’s Re-Visions of Shakespeare: On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. Marianne Novy (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 16-41, and my own piece which draws on both these articles, “‘Wild tales’ from Shakespeare: Readings of Charles and Mary Lamb”, *Shakespeare*, 2:2 (December 2006).

⁹ Charles Cowden Clarke and Mary Novello Clarke, *Recollections of Writers* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1878), 128.

¹⁰ *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard, 72.

¹¹ *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakspeare: with Notes* (London: 1808), 98; hereafter cited in text as *Specimens*.

breath the most just and natural and the most violent and forced expressions' – nevertheless, says Lamb,

passion (the all in all in Poetry) is every where present, raising the low, dignifying the mean, and putting sense into the absurd. He makes his readers glow, weep, tremble, take any affection which he pleases, be moved by words or in spite of them, be disgusted and overcome their disgust. (*Specimens*, 98-99)

That description is very close to Coleridge's comments on Chapman's *Odyssey*,

in short, it is an exquisite poem, in spite of its frequent & perverse quaintnesses & harshnesses, which are however amply repaid by almost unexampled sweetness & beauty of language, all over spirit & feeling. In the main it is an English Heroic Poem, the *tale* of which is borrowed from the Greek.¹²

Both Coleridge and Lamb are eager to point out the poetic qualities of Chapman as a translator: 'Chapman writes & feels as a Poet', wrote Coleridge, '– as Homer might have written had he lived in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth'.¹³ Lamb comments on Chapman almost taking on a Homeric identity, having an 'almost Greek zeal', he says, 'for the honour of his heroes' (*Specimens*, 98). Years later, in 1821, he forcefully commended 'Reverend Chapman!' above Pope: 'I shall die in the belief that he has improved upon Homer, in the *Odyssey* in particular', he told Charles Abraham Elton.¹⁴ If writers such as Coleridge and Lamb enthusiastically commended Chapman's sympathy with Homer, they were also keen to suggest their own sympathy with Chapman and the Elizabethans. Chapman became a part of Romantic friendly and creative exchanges: Lamb had first sent extracts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to Coleridge; Coleridge continued the chain by sending a copy of Chapman's translations to Sara Hutchinson; Hazlitt paid tribute to Lamb's comments on Chapman in his lectures on the Elizabethan poets. Keats – himself informed by his reading of Lamb's *Specimens* and his attendance at Hazlitt's lectures – built his reading of Chapman in Cowden Clarke's borrowed volume into part of his narratives of friendship.¹⁵

Lamb's desire to adapt his *Odyssey* for child readers may be seen as one more step in that sociable conversation, a gradual broadening and democratising of the classics. In his 'Preface' he calls attention to the same qualities he had admired in Chapman. He claims that he has tried to avoid the 'prolixity' of Homer, gaining 'a rapidity to the narration, which I hope will make it more attractive and give it more the air of a romance to young readers', although this means at points sacrificing 'the manners to the passion' (Lucas, III: 240). That emphasis on rapidity, romance, and passion is strongly reminiscent of his praise of Chapman – whose translation he footnotes in the 'Preface' – and shows how closely this little book is entering into the Romantics' long-running, sympathetic engagement with Chapman.

I will just give a brief example of how closely Lamb drew upon and reshaped Chapman's verse – and some of the problems it then caused – by exploring the episode in the Cyclops

¹² *Collected Letters of Coleridge*, ed. Griggs, III: 68.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to which are added those of his sister, Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas. 3 vols (London, 1935), II: 304.

¹⁵ Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) has discussed the shared conversations around Chapman (pp. 92-93). See also Helen E. Haworth, 'Keats's Copy of Lamb's *Specimens* of English Dramatic Poetry', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 74 (1970), 419-27.

cave. Here Ulysses and his men first meet the Cyclops, ‘more like a mountain crag than a man’ (Lucas, III: 243). Mocking their faith in Jove, the Cyclops grips two of Ulysses’s men, as if they had been no more than children, he dashed their brains out against the earth, and (shocking to relate) tore in pieces their limbs, and devoured them, yet warm and trembling, making a lion’s meal of them, lapping the blood. (Lucas, III: 244)

This startling passage runs very closely to Chapman, as opposed to the two translations of Homer with which Lamb was also familiar, Pope and Cowper.

Pope singles out this passage as being a particularly fine example of Homer’s versification. As the companions are ‘dash’d against the rock, to express the horror of the action Homer dwells upon the most inharmonious harsh letters and syllables’. His own version runs:

His bloody hand
Snatch’d two, unhappy! of my martial band;
And dash’d like dogs against the stony floor:
The pavement swims with brains and mingled gore.
Torn limb from limb, he spreads his horrid feast,
And fierce devours it like a mountain beast:
He sucks the marrow, and the blood he drains,
Nor entrails, flesh, nor solid bone remains.¹⁶

Cowper’s version shrinks from describing the devouring or sucking:

...like whelps against his cavern-floor
He dash’d them, and their brains spread on the ground.
These, piece-meal hewn, for supper he prepar’d,
And, like a mountain-lion, neither flesh
Nor entrails left, nor yet their marrowy bones.¹⁷

Both versions feature the dashing and spreading of the men’s brains; both make Cyclops beast-like. Yet both have a curiously domestic touch – ‘spreads his horrid feast’, ‘for supper he prepar’d’. Chapman’s Cyclops, however, is unrestrainedly savage:

No mountaine Lion tore
Two Lambs so sternly, lapt up all their gore
Gusht from their torne-up bodies, lim by lim,
(Trembling with life yet) ravisht into him.
Both flesh and marrow-stuffed bones he eate,
And even th’uncleansed entrails made his meate.¹⁸

Lamb’s Cyclops, ‘making a lion’s meal’, owes a good deal to Chapman, especially in his use of the word trembling, and the ‘lapping’ of the blood, a detail not present in Pope and Cowper. Strong stuff – as it turned out, too strong for his publisher.

¹⁶ Alexander Pope, *Translations of Homer. The Odyssey, I-XII*, ed. Maynard Mack, vol. IX, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, gen. ed. John Butt, 10 vols. (London, New Haven: Methuen, Yale University Press, 1967), 320.

¹⁷ William Cowper, *The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), 204.

¹⁸ *Chapman’s Homer*, ed. Nicoll, II: 159 (lines 101-4).

William Godwin, friend and publisher of the Lambs, was somewhat taken aback by passages such as the Cyclops' lapping of the blood. He had been the first to think of their writing for children, and he was obviously encouraged by the success of the *Tales from Shakespeare* into commissioning *Mrs Leicester* and the *Adventures* the subsequent year. Moreover, he, too, was sympathetic to Chapman's translations. In his *Lives of Edward and John Philips, Nephews and Pupils of Milton: Including Various Particulars of the Literary and Political History of Their Times* (1815) he enlarged on his love of Chapman in terms very similar to those of Coleridge and Lamb, and perhaps shaped by shared conversation:

In the old English Homer for example, I have some pleasure, in as much as I find Homer himself there; but I have also an inestimable pleasure added to this, while I remark, and feel in my inmost heart, the venerable and illustrious garb in which he is thus brought before me. This further pleasure I have, which I could not even find in the original itself. The translation of Homer, published by George Chapman, in the reign of queen Elizabeth and king James, is one of the greatest treasures the English language has to boast.¹⁹

Like Lamb, Godwin commends Chapman as a man who 'had a deep and true feeling of what a poet is'.²⁰ He goes on to compare his translation, favourably, with particular passages in Pope's *Odyssey*. 'Can any thing be more spirited, free, and full of animation and enthusiasm, than the version of the elder poet?' he argues. 'And, on the other hand, can any thing be more vapid than the lines of Pope?'²¹ However, despite this deeply felt appreciation, and the radical commitment of his publishing ventures – discussed in detail by Pamela Clemit in this issue – he had strict views on what might be suitable for a child readership. Faced with Lamb's lively version of the 'spirited, free' verse of Chapman, Godwin was not afraid to urge restraint, or even to try to censor certain passages.

He urges Lamb, interestingly, not to think of his possible child readers, but their parents, who will after all be choosing them, and who will certainly deem the book unsuitable for girls:

We live in squeamish days. Amidst the beauties of your manuscript, of which no man can think more highly than I do, what will the squeamish say to such expressions as these? 'devoured their limbs, yet warm and trembling, lapping the blood'. p. 10, or to the giant's vomit, p. 14, or to the minute & shocking description of the extinguishing the giant's eye, in the page following. (Marrs, II: 278)

The giant's vomit – which must have been based on Chapman's description of the drunken Cyclops from whose throat 'brake out' 'wine, with man's flesh gobbets, like a spout' – was expunged from the text:

The Giant's vomit was perfectly nauseous, and I am glad that you pointed it out. I have removed the objection. – To the other passages I can find no other objection but what you may bring to numberless passages besides, such as **Scylla** snatching up the six men &c – that is to say, they are lively images of *shocking* things. If you want a

¹⁹ William Godwin, *Lives of Edward and John Philips, Nephews and Pupils of Milton: Including Various Particulars of the Literary and Political History of Their Times* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Browne, 1815), 241-2.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 242.

²¹ *Ibid.* 244.

book which is not occasionally to *shock*, you should not have thought of a Tale which was so full of Anthropophagi & monsters. (Marrs, II: 279)

But Lamb characteristically refused to alter anything else; he also refused to add a preface explaining Homer (we might bear in mind here his objections to Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads* exerting a 'diminishing idea with the Poems which follow' (Marrs, I: 266)). Godwin, eventually, gave in, and the book was published as Lamb wished.

The disagreement between Lamb and Godwin points to the battleground which children's literature had become by the time of the Juvenile Library, and gives us a useful glimpse into Godwin's delicate negotiations as publisher in this treacherous field, trying to steer a way between educational and financial obligations, and juggle his different roles of author, bookseller, tradesman, parent. It also alerts us to the subversive potential of the Lambs' children's books: although they often have a clear moral – Ulysses is commended, for instance, as a 'brave man struggling with adversity', whose wisdom and 'inimitable presence of mind' (Lucas, III: 240) are examples for children – the books never forget their origins in 'romance' and 'wild tales' (of which Godwin, in his role as author, as opposed to bookseller, did approve).

Lamb's refusal to change his book does not seem to have harmed his sales too much, since it was reprinted numerous times during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, it lies buried at the heart of one of the greatest retellings of the story, James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Joyce encountered *The Adventures of Ulysses* in John Cooke's revised school-text version in 1893-4, when it was one of the prescribed books at Clongowes College as he prepared for the Intermediate Examination in English at Preparatory Grade. 'This is Joyce's first Homer', comment Alistair McCleery and Ian Gunn in their edition of Cooke's version, and they cite Joyce's advice to his aunt Josephine, puzzled at her first encounter with his *Ulysses*:

Buy at once *The Adventures of Ulysses* (which is Homer's story told in simple English much abbreviated) by Charles Lamb.²²

The version Joyce encountered was slightly censored – the lapping of the blood remained, but mild sexual allusions were removed. Circe's appeal to Ulysses – 'O Ithacan, a goddess woos thee to her bed' (Lucas, III: 253) – has been removed; Penelope is no longer allowed to imagine 'that more intimate and happy union when in her long-widowed bed she should once again clasp a living Ulysses' (Lucas, III: 315). Nevertheless, as McCleery and Gunn speculate, the humanity and sympathy highlighted in Lamb's version of Ulysses, as well as the linear, chronological progression of the narrative, and the 'pleasure of language' which shines through from its use of Chapman may all have had a powerful effect on Joyce as a young reader.²³

Two hundred years on, *The Adventures of Ulysses* still remains a hit with child readers. The International Children's Digital Library Foundation lists it as one of their children's classics, and I found two children, Devin, aged 9 from Chicago, and Jonah, aged 8, from College Park, Maryland, who had submitted their approving reviews.²⁴ 'This book is almost my favourite book', Devin had written, giving it five stars, and while he doesn't comment

²² 'On Looking Into Joyce's First Homer', Alistair McCleery and Ian Gunn, *Adventures of Ulysses, John Cooke's Edition* (Edinburgh: Split Pea Press, 1992), 159.

²³ *Ibid.*, 162-3.

²⁴ International Children's Digital Library Foundation, Manchester, MA: <<http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>>, accessed 24/02/2009.

directly on the blood and gore he adds 'it had some funny parts in it'.²⁵ Jonah described it as 'a really good adventure story' and chose as his favourite part Ulysses's journey 'to the land of the dead [where] he met his dead mother and his dead friend. It's like a reunion with dead people'²⁶. He wrote that the book made him feel 'funny, sad, and scared'; perhaps not too far from Lamb's comments on Chapman making his readers 'glow, weep, [and] tremble'. It is an enduring testimony to the book's ability to involve the imaginative response of the reader – in part because it represents a creative, sympathetic reading of its own, alluding to and reinventing the work of Lamb's predecessors.

Much more remains to be done to continue these readings, and to open up the wider meanings of this little book, and its place in larger Romantic conversation. This paper is necessarily only a very brief introduction to Charles Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses*, and a plea for its bicentenary re-reading: I hope 2008-9 will mark a rediscovery of this relatively neglected work.

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²⁵ 'Review by Devin', *The Adventures of Ulysses*, International Children's Digital Library Foundation <http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookReview?bookId=lamadve_00150027&route=text&reviewerId=25&lang=English>: accessed 24/02/2009.

²⁶ 'Review by Jonah', *The Adventures of Ulysses*, International Children's Digital Library Foundation <http://www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/BookPreview?bookid=lamadve_00150027&route=text&lang=&msg=&lang=English>: accessed 24/02/2009.

*Mrs Leicester's School and Schools for Treason*¹

By Susan Manley

IN JANUARY 1809, THE *ECLECTIC REVIEW* PUBLISHED A BRIEF BUT DISAPPROVING NOTICE OF *Mrs Leicester's School*, commenting that 'this little publication of Mr. or Mrs. Godwin', though apparently 'entertaining and harmless', actually harboured disturbing and dangerous moral tendencies. These suspect tendencies, the *Eclectic* hinted, were also present in an earlier anonymous publication of Godwin's Juvenile Library, the *Stories of Old Daniel* (by Margaret King, Countess of Mountcashell), and the *Eclectic's* readers were referred back to a review of the latter published in March 1808.² The earlier review had reproached the 'Proprietors of the Juvenile Library' for leaving the name of the writer and proprietors off the title-page, and triumphantly exposed 'the celebrated Mr. *William Godwin*' (celebrated, of course, not just for exploding the Pitt government's case against a group of prominent reformers and radicals in the Treason Trials of 1794, but also for his avowed atheism) as the real figure behind the Juvenile Library. That Godwin – who had attacked the corrupt foundation of government and law and social inequality in the mid-1790s – should now be working, in the guise of anonymity, to contact the rising generation through children's books, evidently made the *Eclectic* reviewer very suspicious of the 'principles' that books by such an author might convey to impressionable minds. Having been suppressed by the government in the wake of the Treason Trials of 1794 and the ensuing Gagging Acts of 1795, democratic ideas might now be smuggled through to, and gain youthful proselytes in, the child readers of books like the *Stories of Old Daniel*, which, though superficially benign, neglected to inculcate what the *Eclectic* saw as the essentially religious basis of morality. 'There is ... scarcely an allusion to any religious principle in it', the *Eclectic* reviewer complained: instead *Old Daniel* propagated a bogus morality founded on pride rather than piety, 'constantly recommend[ed]' the 'profanation of the Sabbath', and was therefore 'mischievous' in 'tendency'.³

These may seem arbitrary criticisms that would strike any current reader of *Old Daniel* or *Mrs Leicester's School* as absurd. But the hostile response of the *Eclectic* is far from unusual in the atmosphere of political reaction that followed in the wake of the revolutionary decade of the 1790s and in the midst of ongoing conflict with Napoleonic France. As Janet Bottoms

¹ I take my title from Edmund Burke's denunciation of the London Treason Trials of 1794 as a perversion of law and education: 'Public prosecutions are become little better than schools for treason; of no use but to improve the dexterity of criminals in the mystery of evasion'. *First Letter on a Regicide Peace* (1795), *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. IX: I. *The Revolutionary War 1794-1797*; II. *Ireland*, ed. R.B. McDowell; textual ed. William B. Todd (Oxford, 1991), 198.

² *Eclectic Review* (January 1809), V. 95. The review is unsigned, but may be by John Foster, who criticised Maria Edgeworth in 1812 for the lack of 'correct, scriptural principles': a 'radical defect' in her fiction for adults and children (October 1812, VIII.979-1000). William Godwin's first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, was governess to the daughters of Viscount Kingsborough in Ireland in 1786-7, including the future Lady Mountcashell, Margaret: Margaret was her favourite. Lady Mountcashell had left her husband, Earl Mountcashell, in 1805, giving up her claims to her seven children by him and renouncing her title in order to live with her lover, George Tighe. She later published books for children under the name 'Mrs. Mason': the name that Wollstonecraft had given to her autobiographically drawn teacher in her *Original Stories* (1788).

³ *Eclectic Review* (March 1808), IV.274. The title-pages of both *Stories of Old Daniel* and *Mrs. Leicester's School* omit the names of the authors: the former states that it is printed for the proprietors of the Juvenile Library, while the latter declares that it is printed for M. J. Godwin (Mary Jane, Godwin's second wife and business partner) at the Juvenile Library. The *Eclectic* strongly objected to what it saw as the dishonesty of this refusal to name proprietors or authors, and named William Godwin as 'the Manager of this establishment', claiming: 'A much stronger suspicion will attach to the concealment, than to the avowal, of such a name' (IV.274).

has observed, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the role played by reading in the formation of character had taken on 'a national as well as individual importance it had never been accorded before', and children's books were not exempt from suspicion.⁴ The government-funded *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, launched in 1798, had alleged a 'torrent of licentiousness, incessantly roaring forth from [the] numerous presses'⁵ of radicals and democrats, and had notoriously identified both Charles Lamb and William Godwin as members of its demonised crowd of idolaters of revolution in the Gillray caricature and accompanying poem entitled 'New Morality' (published in the *Anti-Jacobin*, 9 July 1798). The poem pointed the finger at Lamb and Godwin as authors who

make the Rights of Man your theme,
Your Country libel, and your God blaspheme...⁶

It thus decisively associated the 'new morality' of critics of inequality with actual immorality, atheism, and traitorous leanings. Sarah Trimmer, a prominent and celebrated writer of books for children and educational tracts, explicitly linked this tendency towards a non-religious, pretended 'morality' with the newly burgeoning market of children's literature in her periodical, *The Guardian of Education*, which attacked the use of children's books by 'enemies of revelation and social order' as vehicles of subversion.⁷ Drawing on Rousseau, these writers, argued Trimmer, were mounting a '*conspiracy against CHRISTIANITY*', seeking 'to banish Christianity from the nursery and the school, to make room for a *false PHILOSOPHY*, which has no foundation in truth or reason'.⁸ Among those that she selects for prolonged interrogation in issues published between 1802 and 1803 are works by David Williams, a well-known republican who had set up a boys' school, whom she calls 'an open and professed infidel'.⁹ She repeatedly alleges a similar hostility towards revealed religion in Maria Edgeworth's writing for and about children, which included several collections of children's stories from 1796-1801 and an educational manual, *Practical Education*, in 1798. *Practical Education*, Trimmer complains, has 'no admonition to guard [young people] against the contagion of licentious manners', and has nothing to say about instilling female chastity.¹⁰ In encouraging the development of an independent rationality, without any mention of inculcating a '*fear of GOD*' or of implanting in children 'the desire of obtaining the favour of the SUPREME BEING', Trimmer asserts that Edgeworth is theorising a morality without solid foundation in permanent principles. For Trimmer, Edgeworth's plan of reading for young people is fatally flawed: she rejects the Bible as the source of true enlightenment, and offers up instead a system of education based, alleges Trimmer, on 'the sophisticated writings of a *Williams* and a *Rousseau*', and the "'charming eloquence" of a *Godwin*'.¹¹ In the stories by Edgeworth published as *The Parent's Assistant* in 1796, Trimmer again sees a provoking absence of reference to Christianity. Edgeworth's child heroine, Simple Susan, for instance, acts and feels as a Christian would, but these sentiments

⁴ Bottoms, 'The Battle of the (Children's) Books', *Romanticism* 12:3 (October 2006), 212.

⁵ Prospectus of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or Monthly Political and Literary Censor* (July 1798), I.[1].

⁶ *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner* (4th ed., revised and corrected, 1799), II.636: lines 330-31.

⁷ 'Address to the Public for the Society for the Suppression of Vice, instituted in London, 1802', *The Guardian of Education*, 5 vols (London, 1802-6): III (1804), 149.

⁸ *Guardian of Education* I (1802), 2; 10.

⁹ *Guardian of Education* II (1803), 411. Williams was one of the 'creeping creatures, venomous and low' (along with Paine, Godwin and Thomas Holcroft – another writer for children) vilified in the poem 'New Morality': see line 345. *The Anti-Jacobin*, II.636.

¹⁰ *Guardian of Education* I (1802), 495-6.

¹¹ *Guardian of Education* II (1803), 100; 101.

and actions are 'never ascribed by the author to those motives which Christianity alone inspires. Susan appears throughout to act from the impulse of a good disposition, and to have like the Paria in *St Pierre's* Indian cottage, "her laws of conduct written by nature on her heart". In effect, this was a denial, Trimmer complained, of 'the necessity of Revealed Religion'.¹² Trimmer thus objected to the representation of Edgeworth's fictional children, as well as the real children on whom Edgeworth's system in *Practical Education* was based, as original and independent beings, continually encouraged to think for themselves and to express their thoughts, to form their own ideas of right conduct rather than being told what to think by adults. Such a representation constituted a threat to those who, like Trimmer and the reviewers of the *Eclectic*, defined conduct as obedience to pre-existing laws – whether those were the laws of God or of his earthly deputies, the British government.

But how could a reviewer of *Mrs Leicester's School* have seen in it such clear signs of Godwinianism and of the corrupt 'new morality' of Jacobins and democrats? One answer might be in the presentation of the Lambs' ten little girl pupils. We find scant evidence of any attempt to limit or moralise what the little girls say in their 'histories', or to enforce scriptural principles, something that is clear when we compare *Mrs Leicester's School* to one of the books which influenced it, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749), in which nine little girls fight over a basket of apples (already echoing the fatal temptation of Eve in *Genesis*), and intermingle nine individual confessional narratives with a series of interpolated 'amusements', entertaining moral tales. Fielding's little girls use their autobiographical stories (which often, like the Lambs', begin with the death of a mother) to confess their faults and apologise. The Lambs' small girls, in contrast, are invited by their unnamed 'faithful historiographer', a stand-in for 'Mrs Leicester' herself (Mrs Leicester never appears), simply to tell stories about themselves in order to awaken their inventive powers, create new bonds of affection, and thus find consolation for their separation from loved ones. Each girl is, their adult 'amanuensis' assures them, 'naturally eloquent', since she is 'the heroine of [her] own tale': if each tells of 'whatever happened to make a great impression on you when you were very young', or of the first thing she remembers, she will command an audience. Not only this, but the histories that the girls give of themselves will constitute them as a new society: they will help them to establish 'their own customs' and will thus bring them together as a community.¹³ In short, the adult 'historiographer' encourages the girls to see themselves as individuals, as authors and heroines, rather than as subjugated generic creatures – creating their own sense of self and a social sense through story-telling, thinking for themselves. Sarah Trimmer had stressed the moral necessity of raising children to be obedient listeners to adult exhortation, receivers of 'lasting impressions concerning things of the utmost importance to their present and future happiness'¹⁴ – by which she means religious revelation. *Mrs Leicester's School* proposes quite another kind of education, one that gives a sympathetic and imaginative hearing to the thoughts and feelings of children, and which attends to *their* impressions and experiences. The position of adults in these stories is not always as respected authorities. Margaret Green's mother, for instance, frustrates her

¹² *Guardian of Education* II (1803), 358. Trimmer's allusion here is to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *La Chaumière indienne* (1790), translated into English as *The Indian Cottage, or, a Search After Truth* (London, 1797), in which a scholar goes to India in a philosophical quest, but finds wisdom, not at the courts of men accorded high respect for their learning, but in the cottage of a pariah, who offers him shelter in a storm. The pariah believes that truth may be found and human happiness augmented 'by the means of a simple heart' (78), and claims to draw all his principles from nature alone (75). Saint-Pierre's utopian philosophy was heavily influenced by Rousseau.

¹³ *Mrs. Leicester's School: or the History of Several Young Ladies, Related by Themselves* (1809), in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 7 vols (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), III: Books for Children, 273; 275; 276; 274.

¹⁴ Mrs. [Sarah] Trimmer, *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools* (London, 1792), 34.

daughter's desire both to speak and to read: we are told that her mother 'had almost wholly discontinued talking to me'¹⁵, and that, though an avid reader, Margaret is forbidden to read anything but the Bible, and is not permitted to pursue even this restricted reading except for very short periods – helping to give rise to a frustration and a sense of isolation that leaves her abandoned and vulnerable. 'Elizabeth Villiers' and 'Elinor Forester' both present us with fathers who have lost their wives, the little girls' mothers, and who forget to communicate effectively with their daughters.

It is worth looking more closely at just one of these stories, 'Elinor Forester; or, the Father's Wedding-Day', in order to consider how a hostile reader might have found in its plot and characterisation evidence of a dubious morality and attitude towards authority. Elinor's story begins, as many in *Mrs. Leicester's School* do, with the death of a parent: 'When I was very young, I had the misfortune to lose my mother. My father very soon married again'. Elinor's opening words hint at depths of feeling which the story mines very fully. Told on the morning of the wedding that she is to have 'a new mamma', Elinor's father clearly believes that his daughter understands his real meaning: that he is to have a new wife – and she gratifyingly responds to the 'pleasure' that she reads in his face.¹⁶ Rather like the child in Wordsworth's 'Anecdote for Fathers', who implicitly reads and tries to reproduce the feelings of the adult who is catechising him about 'Kilve' versus 'Liswyn Farm', Elinor does not understand his words, but instinctively acts out his 'ecstasy', only to have her display of pleasure misread by the household servants: 'Poor thing! how soon children forget every thing'. Elinor's silence here is worth remarking upon. She thinks, but does not at the time speak, her dissent from this judgement, recalling that 'poor mamma used to say I had an excellent memory'.¹⁷ When the servants make unguarded comments on their new white gloves, presented to them for the occasion of the wedding as for their former mistress's funeral shortly before, which have, as before, all torn along the seams – suggesting the rupture and separation at the heart of this story – the association between her mother's death and her father's wedding is deeply impressed upon the child's mind. Again, we are aware as readers of what no one in Elinor's household, neither her father nor the servants, has noticed: that Elinor is herself bewildered and clearly grieving the loss of her mother. We learn that

From the time of her death no one had ever spoken to me of my mamma, and I had apparently forgotten her; yet I had a habit which perhaps had not been observed, of taking my little stool, which had perhaps been my mamma's footstool, and a doll, which my mamma had drest for me, while she was sitting in her elbow-chair, her head supported with pillows ... to the door of the room in which I had seen her in her last illness.

There Elinor sits peeping in through the keyhole of the locked room, only able to see 'a glimpse of the crimson curtains', and cradling her doll imitates her mother's 'weak voice', singing to her doll the lullaby she remembers her mother singing to her.¹⁸ To the best of her ability, the child has instinctively been trying to bring her mother back to life, and simultaneously to revive the idea of herself as a cherished, securely held baby. As readers we intuit all this, and connect the child's evidently 'excellent memory' of her mother with her mistake in imagining that Miss Saville, her father's new wife, will 'be changed into something like my own mother, whose pale and delicate appearance in her last illness was all that I retained of her remembrance'. The repression of the child, her silence and her apparent

¹⁵ 'Margaret Green; or, The Young Mahometan', in *Works* III.308.

¹⁶ 'Elinor Forester; or, The Father's Wedding-Day', in *Works* III.302; 303.

¹⁷ 'Elinor Forester', 303.

¹⁸ 'Elinor Forester', 303.

invisibility in the house, symbolised by the locked room with the lost warmth and comfort of the 'crimson curtains', strikes the reader forcibly. Elinor's grief and fury at the puzzling and devastating difference between the 'high colour' of the replacement 'mamma' and her dead mother's remembered pallor, while they are unarticulated and thus inexplicable to her father, are rational responses when we recall the extent to which the little girl has been left to her own devices and the evident lack of real conversation between herself and the adults responsible for her welfare. Her father's reaction is to become 'very angry' at his daughter's inability over the next few days to look at his new wife in the way that he expects; and when finally Elinor 'will not speak one word to either of them', her father, 'quite in a passion', storms out of the house.¹⁹ Unable to understand (and evidently unwilling to enquire into) his daughter's refusal to accept the 'new mamma', the father punishes her by noisily absenting himself.

Here, we might think of what Godwin has to say about punishment and political coercion in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. It is worth noting that Godwin explicitly links what he has to say with the parent-child relationship: he disapproves of parents trying to enforce conformity to their wishes and relying on their 'superior strength' rather than on their powers of reasoning to secure the child's compliance. For Godwin, the use of punitive discipline is

a tacit confession of imbecility. If he who employs coercion against me could mould me to his purposes by argument, no doubt he would. He pretends to punish me, because his argument is strong; but he really punishes me, because his argument is weak.²⁰

Godwin held that truth and reason had power to transform human character and relationships, and in order to achieve 'political justice', open discussion and negotiation were essential. Thus, when Godwin himself was planning a small school for boys in 1783, he emphasised that education from earliest childhood should be based on frank and honest conversation; that children should not be terrified by adults, since this leads to 'concealment'; that gentleness and kindness rather than severity will encourage children to express their thoughts without 'restraint'; that adults should not use 'unintelligible jargon', and that if children are consistently asked to give 'plain and simple reason[s] for their opinion[s]' in familiar talk, they will deliver their ideas with 'freedom, perspicuity and fluency'.²¹

In Mary Lamb's story, it is only when the father, the household authority, has left the building that the refusal of censorship and establishment of a much more frank and equal exchange with little Elinor becomes possible. It turns out that Miss Saville has noticed what nobody else has observed, that Elinor was 'peeping through that door the day your papa brought me home' (although she has tactfully held back from discussing this before now). Furthermore, she introduces the discussion by very noticeably relinquishing her position of adult power, identifying herself imaginatively with the disobedient child, telling Elinor with a smile, 'Now we are alone together, ... let us forget papa is angry with us; and tell me why you were peeping through that door the day your papa brought me home, and you cried so at the sight of me'.²² Miss Saville, as Godwin urges, accords the little girl's opinions due weight, responding to the child's explanation of why she was peeping through the keyhole by

¹⁹ 'Elinor Forester', 304.

²⁰ William Godwin, *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1793), II.244.

²¹ [Godwin], *An Account of the Seminary that will be opened on Monday the fourth of August, at Epsom in Surrey, for the Instruction of twelve pupils in the Greek, Latin, French, and English Languages* (London, 1783), 27; 31; 36.

²² *Works* III.304.

opening up the locked room. The fact that the housekeeper tries to persuade her not to do so suggests that the order for the room to remain shut up comes from the father, an order that Miss Saville is prepared to disobey in the interests of the child's happiness.

Unlocking the room is only the first step in challenging the family order established by the father. Miss Saville was, she reveals, a school friend of Elinor's mother, and she tells her step-daughter stories of 'mamma when she was a little girl no bigger than me', imaginatively introducing the idea of the adult as herself a child, and thus creating a 'friendship' rather than a hierarchy.²³ Miss Saville in fact enacts Godwin's recommendation that the adult who seeks to instruct children should be a friend and adviser, rather than a master. If, then, this is a moral tale, it is a tale with a moral for the adult reader rather than for the child-author: empathising with the grief of a lonely child and learning to understand her actions, the adult reader also learns to understand the importance of allowing a child to have a voice, a right to representation and a fair hearing. But it is also a moral tale consonant with a Godwinian 'new morality'. For Godwin, it was history – the telling of stories or 'fables' about people's lives – that led 'directly to the most important of all attainments, the knowledge of the heart ... The moment in which the faculty of memory begins to unfold itself, the man begins to exist as a moral being'. It was important that children should be encouraged to read and comment on the histories of characters from the past because this introduced them to the idea that 'the persons about us have life and feeling as well as ourselves', an idea vitally linked to 'the feelings of right and wrong' and to the development of 'compassion and generosity'.²⁴ By reawakening Elinor Forester's powers of recall, and strengthening these memories with her own memories, Miss Saville enables the child's moral development and shows by example how this sympathetic, non-judgmental and non-authoritarian approach unlocks children's power to think and feel.

Mitzi Myers has commented that 'juvenile writing is an inherently transgressive genre, one that insists on writers and readers canny enough to be in two places at once, to play both child and adult'.²⁵ Mary Lamb's 'Elinor Forester' is not the only story in *Mrs Leicester's School* that shows adult characters who are willing to enter into a child's feelings, thoughts and imagination – one might think of 'Elizabeth Villers' and Charles Lamb's 'Arabella Hardy' as examples. In this willingness to speak from the point of view of the child, to allow girl characters distinctive voices and ideas, and in its lack of interest in religious consolation for loss – preferring story-telling to scriptural instruction – *Mrs Leicester's School* was readable in its own time as a 'school for treason'.

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²³ This is anticipated in the admission of the Preface's 'faithful historiographer' on seeing new arrivals with the 'traces of tears ... on every cheek': 'I also was sad; for I, like you, had parted from my friends' (*Works* III.274).

²⁴ *Account of the Seminary*, 43; 46; 48.

²⁵ Mitzi Myers, 'De-Romanticizing the Subject: Maria Edgeworth's "The Bracelets," Mythologies of Origin, and the Daughter's Coming to Writing', in Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (eds), *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1995), 92.

Celebrating ‘wild tales’: Lamb and Godwin’s Groundwork for Children’s Literature

By Malini Roy

IS THERE NO POSSIBILITY OF AVERTING THIS SORE EVIL? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives’ fables in childhood, you had been crammed with Geography and Natural History?

Damn them. – I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those Blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man & child.

(Letter from Charles Lamb to S. T. Coleridge, 1802)¹

These people, as I have said, aim at cultivating one faculty, and I another. I hold that a man is not an atom less a man, if he lives and dies without the knowledge they are so desirous of accumulating in the heads of children. Add to which, these things may be learned at any age, while the imagination, the faculty for which I declare, if cultivated at all, must be begun with in youth.

(Letter from William Godwin to W. Cole, 1802)²

Two letters by two friends, Lamb and Godwin, written in the same year to different people.³ The grievances they voice are strikingly similar. Both letters express concern about what children are reading. Lamb’s letter describes his sister Mary’s visit to the shop of the publisher John Newbery, and her ensuing dismay at the surplus of fact-based ‘Geography and Natural history’ books by Anna Laetitia Barbauld (and Sarah Trimmer, who is mentioned just before the extract I have quoted). Rejecting these informational books, Lamb pleads nostalgically for the imaginative stories of folksy ‘Tales and old wives’ fables’. Godwin’s letter describes how he is educating his two daughters, Fanny and Mary, to think in creative ways. In the rest of his letter, Godwin separates himself from the ‘ruling passion’ of his information-biased ‘contemporaries’, illustrating their tendency through a bookseller’s suggestion for a children’s book called ‘A Tour Through Papa’s House’. The ‘Tour’, written in the form of a story, would explain the history of the manufacture of furniture, carpets and iron. Godwin grumbles that ‘this is exactly the sort of writing for children which has lately been in fashion’.⁴

Lamb and Godwin are prescient in indicating the course of mass-produced English children’s books through the next two centuries. From the 1823 publication of the Grimm’s fairy tales as *German Popular Stories* through the magical world of Harry Potter, reading for children would comprise not only fact books but also aesthetically rich ‘children’s literature’. I use the term *literature* here in the sense of ‘imaginative literature’, in the dated definition of René Wellek and Austin Warren, to signal children’s books whose primary purpose is to tell

¹ Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marris, vol. II. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1976), 81-82.

² William Godwin, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, ed. C. Kegan Paul, vol. II. (London, 1876), 118-20.

³ See Lamb, *Letters* I 27n. 185-86. Lamb and Godwin would have known each other at this time.

⁴ Lamb and Godwin’s fears were justified. See William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 567-68. Sales figures analysed by St. Clair show that many more people were reading Barbauld and Trimmer than Godwin.

entertaining stories rather than convey useful information.⁵ Of course, the seemingly transcendental term 'literature' has become politically suspect ever since critics began to deconstruct a canon dominated by white, male authors (and the scholarly discipline of 'children's literature' is a way of revising that canon.) Given this topology, I contend that Lamb and Godwin stand strangely excluded from histories of 'children's literature', despite their commitment to imaginative books for children. This essay will question and redress this exclusion.

To open this discussion, it is necessary to note that Lamb and Godwin differ in their estimation of their female contemporaries, despite their shared male-centred view of the 'child' growing up into the generic 'man'. Lamb figures the 'Barbauld Crew' as a furious swarm of insect pests ravaging an essentialist, fertile, free 'Human' terrain. Invoking a commonality of male, liberal attitudes with Coleridge, Lamb sets up an opposition with female, didactic writers that underlay histories of children's books for several years.⁶ This polarity has been challenged recently by scholars like Mitzi Myers, Norma Clarke and Matthew Grenby who have reclaimed the intellectual seriousness of female educational writers.⁷ Compared to Lamb, Godwin is nuanced towards his 'contemporaries'. His letter elsewhere recommends Barbauld's books enthusiastically as 'admirably adapted' to 'the capacity and amusement of young children'.⁸ Perhaps he was recalling his shared Rational Dissenting heritage with Barbauld, as well as her primer, *Lessons for Children* (1778-88), on which his late wife Mary Wollstonecraft had modelled a set of fragmentary reading lessons for Fanny.⁹ Lamb and Godwin's letters also vary as per their familial contexts. Lamb's hypothetical 'you' to Coleridge expresses a general concern about any child's mental development, while Godwin's fatherly words advocate what he thinks best for his daughters in the strident 'I declare'. For Godwin, the parent has a duty to ensure that the child reads edifying material.

Lamb and Godwin's approaches to children's books continued to differ after the latter set up his publishing-cum-bookselling firm, 'Juvenile Library', with his second wife, Mary Jane Godwin in 1805.¹⁰ Godwin wrote some children's books for the firm, and commissioned Lamb to write some. Lamb often wrote with artsy abandon, while Godwin, with a bookseller's eye on customers, would gently chastise Lamb for not being chary of his readership. In a letter to Lamb, Godwin observed the peculiarities of selling children's books: 'It is children that read children's books (when they are read); but is parents that choose them'. The bookseller, therefore, had to find out 'what will please the parent, & what the parent will condemn'. Gesturing at the 'squeamish' nature of prospective customers, Godwin asked Lamb to remove his graphic description of the 'Giant's vomit' in *Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) and made other minor suggestions. Lamb eliminated the vomit, but dismissed Godwin's other revisions as 'nonsensical objections'. Moreover, Godwin wanted Lamb to

⁵ René Wellek & Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, rev. ed. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 11-12.

⁶ For but one example, see Samuel Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1981).

⁷ Norma Clarke, "'The Cursed Barbauld Crew': Women Writers and Writing for Children in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing, and Childhood 1600-1900*, eds. Mary Hilton, Morag Styles & Victor Watson (London: Routledge, 1997), 91-103; Matthew Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery: British Children's Literature and the French Revolution', *The Lion and the Unicorn* 27.1 (2003), 1-26.

⁸ See n. 2.

⁹ See Anne Janowitz, 'Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld's "free familiar conversation"', *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, eds. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 62-81; Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 202.

¹⁰ William St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys* (London: W.W. Norton, 1989), 165-81.

write a scholarly, exhaustive preface to the narrative to contextualise the identity and literary merits of Homer. Lamb declared this 'drawling biography' distasteful.¹¹

Overall though, both authors wrote with a shared sense of social responsibility, sharply aware of the requirements of their young audience. In the preface to *Tales from Shakespear* (1807), Charles (with his sister Mary) advertised that the stories would serve as a 'few hints and little foretastes' of Shakespeare's marvellous but difficult language. Since these Tales were to serve as 'easy reading for very young children', 'the writers' had 'constantly kept this in mind'.¹² When Lamb produced *Adventures of Ulysses* about a year later, Godwin desired Lamb to write the preface since 'It is not every one that knows Homer'.¹³ In Godwin's *The Pantheon* (1806), the preface states that the book would enable 'young readers to admire and to enjoy the immortal productions of Homer, Horace and Virgil'.¹⁴ These pedagogic claims for the Juvenile Library books worked to exercise Godwin's republican politics. The books were priced within easy reach of a lower middle-class clientele, with costs varying from a few shillings to a few pence.¹⁵ In introducing classical authors to this audience, Godwin and Lamb appropriated the Western literary canon for those who were denied access to a traditional upper-class education. Many of the Juvenile Library books were marketed as textbooks to lower middle-class schools, a fact which underwrites their pedagogic purpose.

In the small body of criticism on the Juvenile Library books, scholars have generally saluted Godwin and Lamb's democratic politics. William St. Clair, who originally drew attention to the Juvenile Library books, observed that Godwin, as a sidelined intellectual in the conservative political atmosphere of the 1800s, reacted by steering away from direct addresses to adult readers, and worked 'quietly away at influencing the next generation'.¹⁶ Pamela Clemit has illuminated Godwin's innovative 'formal strategies', revealing his belief in 'education as the means by which social change was to be achieved'.¹⁷ Felicity James scrutinises Lamb's use of the word 'wild' in the letter to Coleridge and examines how this informs *Tales from Shakespear* to play an 'an important educational and moral role'.¹⁸ In James's sensitive reading, even as the Lambs 'open up Shakespeare for the child-reader of 1807', their concept of the 'wild' works within a regulatory frame as they 'seek to control and guide the reactions of that reader'. These appreciations of Godwin and Lamb's pedagogic claims have disclosed exciting aspects of their writing, revealing the sheer bravery of writing children's books in that historical context.

The question I would like to ask here is, in staking the claims of the Juvenile Library books upon their educational value for their own times, did Godwin and Lamb unwittingly disqualify their works from being recognised as aesthetically fecund children's literature in modern-day scholarship? If Godwin and Lamb were busy simplifying the classical canon, what becomes of their own status as creative authors? If Godwin's *Pantheon* is only a primer to classical writers, does this imply that this children's book should be jettisoned for a later,

¹¹ Lamb, Letters II. 278-79.

¹² Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 8 vols. (London: Methuen, 1912), 3: 2.

¹³ Lamb, Letters II. 282.

¹⁴ Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The Pantheon: or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes* (London, 1806), v.

¹⁵ See n.10.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Pamela Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', *Bibliography: The Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 9 (2000-01), 44-70.

¹⁸ See n.1; Felicity James, "'Wild tales" from Shakespeare: Readings of Charles and Mary Lamb', *Shakespeare* 2 (2006), 152-66.

mature, adult acquaintance with Homer, Horace and Virgil? Are the Juvenile Library books 'Virgil Made Simple' or 'Shakespeare For Dummies'?

Hard facts contradict such assumptions. The Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* may have served the immediate, temporal needs of early-1800s England, but continues to be reissued even now in attractive formats.¹⁹ Were the book only an introduction to Shakespeare's plays, a reader might well access plot summaries on Wikipedia. Godwin's children's books have faded from public view, but not from scholarly discourse. Taking an approach different from the pedagogical, Brian Alderson has demonstrated how the Juvenile Library books, with respect to Godwin's contemporary publishers, stand as creative artefacts in themselves through their attractive illustrations and packaging.²⁰ Alderson's reading hints at how Godwin and the Lambs can be appreciated through their aesthetic merits.

Shifting focus from the pedagogic is essential if Godwin and Lamb's works are to be given their due as children's literature, in today's contexts. Standard histories of children's literature construct a narrative movement from educational books of the eighteenth century to imaginative works in Victorian times (which I will elucidate shortly). Today, it is assumed that children are entitled to read books for pleasure (it may be a pleasure to adults that they read books at all, given the competing claims of leisure activities like video games). What children read continues to concern adults, as children's books with risqué content elicit frequent calls for censorship by parents, teachers and librarians.²¹ Still, children's authors are not expected to defend their books in terms of their educational value. The children's writer Philip Pullman can affirm on his website, without raising public hackles, that his books are written for himself, and 'No-one else' in a creative, individualistic stance that is recognisable as a Romantic legacy. Pullman disavows that he writes specifically 'for children' at all, and spells out that some 'clever adults read' his books too, in a classic inversion of the standard intelligence hierarchy.²²

To Godwin and Lamb, Pullman's irreverence towards his readership would perhaps have seemed foreign and irresponsible. Apart from their self-professedly educational aims, their invisibility in the history of children's literature partly owes to their being from the early nineteenth-century, a period that receives limited attention in children's literature studies. I take the reputed scholar Patricia Craddock's undergraduate courses as representative, where Tom Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) marks the locatable beginning of children's literature. The field flowers through the so-called Golden Age (1860-1910).²³ In a recent issue of the academic journal *Children's Literature*, only two out of nine essays feature pre-nineteenth-century children's books. The two essays are about how women authors overwrite sexist ideology. Lynne Vallone's essay 'History Girls' shows how 'the compelling figure of Mary, Queen of Scots represented in conventional schoolroom textbooks inspired Jane Austen, Queen Victoria and Marjory Fleming to write counter-narratives about her life'. The other essay, 'Centering the Home-Garden' by Elise L. Smith, shows how the feminine 'cultivated garden, centered on the arbour and bordered by fences, was seen as a training ground for children in moral tales written in late 18th and early 19th century England'.²⁴

¹⁹ See, for instance, Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*, introd. Marina Warner (London: Penguin, 2007).

²⁰ Brian Alderson, "'Mister Gobwin" and His "Interesting Little Books, Adorned with Beautiful Copper Plates"' *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 59 (1998), 159-89.

²¹ One example is the huge controversy in America regarding the word 'scrotum' in Susan Patron's 2007 Newbery medal winner *The Higher Power of Lucky* (2007), <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/books/18newb.html>> 16 Feb 2009.

²² <http://www.philip-pullman.com/about_the_writing.asp> 16 Feb 2009.

²³ <<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/pcraddoc/kidsy197.htm>> 20 Feb 2009.

²⁴ See 'Table of Contents', *Children's Literature* 36 (2008), <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature/>

Both essays feature women's writing for children in relation to pedagogy, building on the feminist reclamation of writers whom Lamb rejected.²⁵

Sadly, Romantic-era children's books (including those of the Lambs and Godwin) remain subject to the condition that Julia Briggs observed of all children's books in an article published twenty years ago:

The role of children's books within the wider process of education, and in particular self-education, is of such importance that it has tended to eclipse their study as works of imagination with a history and taxonomy worth exploration[.]²⁶

Children's literature is a burgeoning academic field today unlike what used to be mocked by canonical practitioners as 'kiddie lit' in the 1970s.²⁷ But the samples of children's literature scholarship cited above show that Romantic-era children's books are rarely examined in terms of their aesthetic influence upon later texts for children or adults. This is not true of all children's books written before the Harry Potter phenomenon. It is standard, for instance, to trace connections between the nonsense writing of the Victorian-era Lewis Carroll and the Modernist T.S. Eliot.²⁸ With the Romantic era, the Lambs have received some attention in the history of Shakespeare adaptation.²⁹ With Godwin, Rob Anderson has identified how the lower middle-class John Keats transformed his childhood reading of classical mythology from *The Pantheon*.³⁰ But these examples are few and far between. I have yet to come across an extensive study of how Godwin's biography of a child artist in *The Looking-Glass* (1805) may have influenced the writing of later *kunstlerroman*. The explanation cannot be that the text was completely unavailable, for the copy in the Bodleian library contains an exhaustive appendix by F.G. Stephens for an 1885 publication.³¹ Godwin's works for children appear to sit in a time warp with the rest of Romantic-era children's books, hermetically sealed off from literary history.

Godwin and the Lambs' imaginative contributions to children's books call for a backdating of the accepted mid-nineteenth century origin of children's literature by about half a century (if there must be a point of origin at all). I will not focus upon the Lambs here but on Godwin, as he is the epicentre of the Juvenile Library books. He offers his works explicitly as educational texts, but the texts strain at their generic expectations as they ask the reader to subvert what is overtly stated in the text. In looking at Godwin's books as literary rather than as educational texts, I will build on the approach suggested by Zohar Shavit, where she points out the need to read 'children's literature as literature per se', without the empirical need to demonstrate what it may have done for the reader. Although Shavit suggested her method way back in 1986, her text-focused, semiotic approach is still valid, given the general neglect of Romantic-era children's books as literature.³² I will not primarily look at what benefits (or not) Godwin would have conferred on the children who read his

toc/chl.36.1.html> 20 Feb 2009.

²⁵ See n.7.

²⁶ Julia Briggs, 'Reading Children's Books', *Essays in Criticism* 3 (1989), 1-17.

²⁷ See Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: the Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003), 1-15.

²⁸ See Elizabeth Sewall, 'Lewis Carroll and T. S. Eliot as Nonsense Poets', *T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Hugh Kenner (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 65-72.

²⁹ See n.18 (James).

³⁰ See Rob Anderson, 'Godwin, Keats and productive leisure', *Wordsworth Circle* 33 (2002), 10-13.

³¹ William Godwin [Theophilus Marcliffe], *The Looking-Glass. A True History of the Early Years of an Artist; Calculated to awaken the Emulation of Young Persons of both Sexes, in the Pursuit of every laudable Attainment: particularly in the Cultivation of the Fine Arts*, 1805, rev. ed. (London, 1885).

³² Zohar Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1986), ix-xii.

books—though such benefits might come in as auxiliary merits. Reading is not a cause-and-effect linear process, as everyone knows from literature for adults: scholars do not feel the need to defend Percy Bysshe Shelley in terms of how many political revolutions he inspired. Rather, I will establish continuities between Godwin's work with later children's literature. One way of doing this would be to show the importance of childhood habits of reading Godwin's books, as Rob Anderson has shown in the case of Keats.³³ But such an archival approach would not suffice for remapping a literary history. Knowing that Keats possessed a copy of Godwin's *Pantheon* helps to know how he learnt his mythology, but Keats could also have taken inspiration from a random story he overheard from strangers. A more comprehensive method would be to illumine literary continuities, in the way Edward Larissy's *Blake and Modern Literature* traces links between Blake and writers as diverse as Yeats, Angela Carter, and Salman Rushdie.³⁴ Godwin may not have influenced writers far distant in space and time directly. But once his ideas were circulated through print they may well have changed the art of writing children's books. I will focus on narrative strategies where Godwin differs from his contemporaries (as he claims in his letter to Cole) and foreshadows later developments in children's literature.³⁵ To avoid a teleological trap, I will nuance Godwin's foreshadowing of later children's books by revealing points where Godwin resembles his contemporaries rather than later authors. Because of space constraints, I will explore only two examples here. But they should suffice to establish this approach as a rich line of enquiry which can be extended to the Lambs or other children's writers associated with Godwin.

I will turn now to Godwin's version of Aesop's *Fables* (1805), written in a genre much approved by his contemporary educators.³⁶ The book was even praised by members of Godwin's 'rival camp'. In the politically conservative periodical, *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, edited by Trimmer, *Fables* was seen as 'unquestionably written' for 'making an impression on, and conveying instruction to, those for whose use they are designed'.³⁷ Whether the morals are so 'unquestionably' written into the text remains to be seen.

In one story in *Fables*, entitled 'The Poor Farmer and the Justice', Godwin expresses transparent, demagogic derision towards the materialism of the rich and sympathy towards the poor. His narrative begins with vivid graphic caricatures of the 'rich justice of the peace' and a 'poor farmer', who has come to the justice to redress a grievance. The justice is afflicted with material excess. He boasts 'five or six footmen', 'several parlours', lives upon rich food every day, and in consequence, is a hypochondriac. The hard-working farmer, on the other hand, boasts 'no superfluity of provisions', and 'had not a pain or an ache about him'. Such egalitarian sentiments were not particularly novel, as Matthew Grenby has documented in his study of political content in children's books of the time. I will extend Grenby's observation by looking at Trimmer's dismissal of the rich and socially powerful in *A Comment on Dr. Watts's Divine Songs for Children* (1789). This work was published before the oracular egalitarianism of the French Revolution sent shock-waves through England.³⁸

³³ See n. 30.

³⁴ Edward Larissy, *Blake and Modern Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³⁵ See n. 2.

³⁶ William Godwin [Edward Baldwin], *Fables, Ancient and Modern, Adapted for the Use of Children*, 1805, ed. David L. Greene (New York: Garland, 1976); Gillian Brown, *The Consent of the Governed: the Lockean Legacy in Early American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2001), 57-82.

³⁷ See flyleaf, William Godwin [Theophilus Marcliffe], *Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley, Her Husband* (London, 1806).

³⁸ See n. 7.

What should *rich people* do with a *part* of their riches? Should they behave unkindly to their poor neighbours? Should they forget that the poorest person upon earth is of the *same nature with themselves, and heir to eternal glory through CHRIST?*³⁹

Godwin and Trimmer were united in alerting the well-off to the sufferings of the poor. In Godwin's story, the narrative twist comes after the introduction. Predictably, the justice's attitude towards the farmer's grievance is dismissive at first. Standing above and beyond the latter's universe, he negates the validity of its concerns: 'You little farmers are for ever falling out among yourselves, and then you come and plague me with your quarrels'. It turns out that the justice possesses an unruly bullock that constantly breaks into the farmer's fields and destroys his crops. But, in a tactical move, the farmer asks the justice how he would deal with the bullock if it hypothetically belonged to the farmer. The justice falls for the underdog farmer's defence strategy, and with cruel complacency, rules that the farmer 'shalt kill him immediately'. At this, the farmer immediately clarifies that the bullock actually belongs to the justice, not the farmer, and luckily, the justice has humanity enough to see the farmer's side of the question. Instead of a eulogy on the impartiality of the judge, the seemingly naïve narrator comments:

The justice was terribly ashamed of himself. If the farmer had said at first that it was the justice's bull that had done all the mischief, I am afraid he would have set a very different face on it. But he thought he could not sit there as a justice, and say that there was one rule for a rich man and another for a poor one. So he sent his bailiff, and paid the waste, and the poor man was contented with this, and excused his worship from killing the bull.⁴⁰

But the narrative does not end with this peaceful conflict resolution. The farmer goes home with a lingering sense of guilt, and confesses to his wife: 'I have told a sort of a lie, and this money will never prosper with us'. He swears henceforth that he would 'rather stand by the loss of half a field of corn, than not tell the honest truth at once'. But from the plot, and asides delivered in this story, it is evident that had the disempowered farmer told the 'honest truth' at once, he would never have received justice from the oppressive authority figure. The farmer's linguistically subversive trick complicates the black-and-white morality at the beginning of the story. His misadventure shows that the moral planted by Godwin is not to be taken at face value.

How does such a technique of subversion work in later children's literature, as the author shares a joke with the reader about the pompousness of the high and the mighty? For this I turn to Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), one of his lesser known works. The narrative revolves around two fairy-children called Sylvie and Bruno. Here, a stereotypical Professor makes a demonstration of several of his strange inventions to an Emperor and his family. This demonstration includes the newly-created 'Megaloscope', which serves the opposite purpose of a microscope by making enormous objects smaller and therefore easier to see and examine. The Professor shrinks an elephant to the size of a common mouse. The fairy-child Bruno appreciates this mini-elephant spontaneously, and promises to touch it 'welly gently'. The pretentious Empress instead inspects the animal cautiously with 'her eye-glass'. Her reaction is:

³⁹ Sarah Trimmer, *A Comment on Dr. Watts's Divine Songs for Children, with Questions; Designed to Illustrate the Doctrines and Precepts to which they Refer; and Induce a Proper Application of them as Instruments of Early Piety* (London, 1789), 85 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>25 Feb 2009.

⁴⁰ Godwin, *Fables* 66-68.

'It is very small', she said in a deep voice. 'Smaller than elephants usually are, I believe?' The Professor gave a start of delighted surprise. 'Why, that's true!' he murmured to himself. Then louder, turning to the audience, 'Her Imperial Highness has made a remark which is perfectly sensible!' And a wild cheer arose from that vast multitude.⁴¹

Carroll's writing carries multiple levels of irony as he mercilessly mocks the self-satisfied Empress, the fawning attitude of the Professor and the 'vast multitude' as they hear her platitude. Perhaps Carroll even mocks Bruno who only sees the cuteness of the elephant and hardly appreciates the Professor's intellectual brilliance. Yet Carroll, an Oxford Don in his academic life, has an undertone of sympathy for the helpless Professor who inadvertently exposes the usual stupidity of the Empress, as well as a jubilant participation in his strange and useless invention. The text exposes the abuse of power like Godwin's fable, though there is a difference of tone between Godwin's moral seriousness and Carroll's humour, which perhaps makes Carroll a greater joy to read. Nevertheless, Godwin and Carroll share a faculty for linguistic subversion that requires the reader to continually decode what they write.

Complexity of linguistic registers operates differently in Godwin's *The Looking-Glass*, a biography of Godwin's friend William Mulready as a child-artist. The young Mulready is held up as a positive example to the child-reader in terms of character development, as the work's subtitle preaches: '*Calculated to awaken the Emulation of Young Persons of both Sexes, in the Pursuit of every laudable Attainment: particularly in the Cultivation of the Fine Arts*'. In this *kunstlerroman*, the protagonist is the son of a lower-middle class breeches-maker. He draws for his own pleasure, augmented by some training. When he grows up through the 'assiduity he had long exercised in solitude and obscurity', he gets admitted to the Royal Academy, enacting the artist's fantasy of recognition by the cultural intelligentsia.⁴² But in this narrative of the artist's progress, the protagonist's character bears considerable ambivalence. This appears in an episode where he serves as a model for an established painter. The painter's occasional conversation with the boy reveals his subject's 'love for the arts of design'. Stirred by curiosity, the painter asks about the boy's formal training in the visual arts, and according to custom, if 'he was in the habit of copying?' In reply, Godwin says,

The poor boy answered, with an air of self-complacence, Oh, sir, I have left off copying!⁴³

The characterisation 'self-complacence' appears to indicate his ignorant self-confidence at having left the mechanical task of 'copying' for the higher flights of inspired work. Yet, Godwin's use of the adjective 'poor' for the boy indicates his sympathetic, if slightly patronising, understanding of the developing artist's resistance to conventional codes of knowledge. The adult painter's idea that the boy ought to start his artistic training by 'copying' is to some degree merely a convention, probably true of the progress of some artists but not of others. The boy does not subscribe to this seemingly self-evident rule, but this says more about the fossilisation of the adult artist than the child-artist's lack of correct method. Earlier in the book, Godwin narrates an episode where the boy comes to London for the first time. He has never seen St. Paul's Cathedral before, but recognises the monument by

⁴¹ Lewis Carroll [Charles Lutwidge Dodgson], 'Sylvie and Bruno Concluded', 1893, *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll*, introd. Alexander Woollcott (London: Nonesuch, New York: Random House, 1939), 639-40.

⁴² Godwin, *Looking-Glass*, 60-62.

⁴³ Godwin, *Looking-Glass*, 42.

having drawn pictures of it based upon reproductions elsewhere.⁴⁴ The boy thus has a strong grasp on concrete designs when he creates abstract representations in his copies. Through the boy's realistic reproduction, Godwin indicates that the boy's self-confidence about his artistic maturity is somewhat justified, and not just blissful, ignorant conceit.

Even as Godwin criticises the young artist's behaviour, he decentres the established, adult painter as the expected source of moral authority. This contrasts starkly with the punitive logic in the works of Godwin's near-contemporary Mary Martha Sherwood. In her popular *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818), the Fairchild children are taught the rules of good behaviour through the negative example of young 'Miss Augusta'. Augusta has taken a candle up to a room without her parents' permission. There is an unexplained accident and she is burnt to death 'in agonies'. This, the author says, is 'a warning to all children' lest 'they presume to disobey their parents'. This moral is validated by citing a Biblical quote from Proverbs 30:17: 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuses to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it'.⁴⁵

Godwin's moral ambivalence about regarding a character's development is comparable to one of the iconic children's books of the later twentieth century, Maurice Sendak's *Outside Over There* (1981). Here, young Ida has been left by her parents to take care of her baby sister. Ida busily plays her 'wonder horn' in a possible echo of *The Boy's Magic Horn* (1805-08), a collection of German Romantic folk poetry collected by Arnim and Brentano.⁴⁶ Ida does not notice that a band of goblins steal away her baby sister, leaving her an ice-baby instead. Sendak's situation captures a child's anxieties about losing her younger sibling through a moment's inattention, and perhaps through undercurrents of sibling rivalry. But the erring Ida recovers her sister successfully from the goblins through the rest of the narrative, through a psychic journey into 'outside over there'.⁴⁷ In a children's literature climate more tolerant of character flaws than in Godwin and Sherwood's time, a New York Public Library review merely noted that Ida 'makes discoveries about herself and those she loves'.⁴⁸

Without further ado, then, I hope that this essay has established that Godwin and the Lambs' works ought to earn them an honoured place not only in the history of children's education, but also in the literary history of children's books as an art form.

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⁴⁴ Godwin, *Looking-Glass*, 9-10.

⁴⁵ Sherwood, 156-57.

⁴⁶ Maurice Sendak, *Outside Over There* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 5.

⁴⁷ Sendak 14.

⁴⁸ <<http://www.amazon.com/Outside-Over-There-Caldecott-Collection/dp/0064431851>> 20 Feb 2009.

REVIEWS

MARY B. BALLE, *Mary Lamb: An Extraordinary Life of Murder, Madness, and Literary Talent*. Troy, N.Y. Available at www.tbmbooks.com or Mary B. Balle, P.O. Box 327, Stockbridge, MA. 01262. £16 including postage to U.K.

WHEN MARY BLANCHARD BALLE LEFT THE UNITED STATES to pursue postgraduate studies in family therapy in London for a time, little did she think that taking lodgings in the borough of Islington, where she often passed Colebrooke Row, would lead to years of study and research into the life of Mary Lamb, whom she had previously known only as Charles Lamb's sister and literary collaborator. The more she learned about her the more she respected her. She says, 'I have always believed that appreciation of Mary Lamb, the impact of her personality upon others, and her lifelong struggle with mental illness have been neglected. She deserves a fully notated biography of her own. *Mary Lamb: An Extraordinary Life* is my attempt to rectify this oversight'. No doubt Kathy Watson's and Susan Tyler Hitchcock's books did not appear until after Mary Balle's was well under way, though not published till 2009.

The long neglect of Mary Lamb was originally due to her unwillingness to put her name to her works because of her fear 'lest the facts of her mother's death and her part in it be revisited'. But now we can recognize that of the Lambs' longest-lasting work *Tales from Shakespear*, which was originally attributed to Charles, Mary wrote all but six of the stories and of *Mrs. Leicester's School* all but three. There can be no doubt about the "Literary Talent" of the title and one of the achievements of this biography is that this is never lost sight of in the midst of the vivid demonstration of Mary's remarkable courage in the management of her illness. Resigned to its permanent presence in her life, when she recognized the symptoms of an approaching attack she lost no time in warning whoever was with her that she must at once be taken into care. Coleridge's letter to his wife of April 4, 1803, quoted on page 122, provides an apt illustration, reporting the occasion when he 'went for a Hackney Coach' to convey her to an asylum.

But when she was well 'Her strength, her compassion, and her kindness were what drew others to her. She had the ability to listen and hear. She seldom, if ever, judged and was slow to offer advice', though she did so upon occasion, for example to Sarah Stoddart. Mary Balle demonstrates the qualities of Mary Lamb's influence, generally quiet and self-effacing yet capable of powerful impact when occasion demanded, for example, as in her letter to Coleridge in September, 1806, insisting that he write to his wife on his return from Malta, 'a letter from me or you *shall go to-day*'. On September 16, 1806, Coleridge's letter to his wife *Did Go!*

As we progress through the familiar vicissitudes of the Lambs' life together, we are led to make enquiries we may have overlooked before. For example, at their weekly – later monthly – evening entertainments, who was responsible for ensuring that, as Procter recorded, 'The supper of cold meat ... was always on the side-table? Who superintended the roasting of pig? Who, with the aid of their "treasure" Becky, cooked Charles's evening meal and the extras required when Coleridge was staying with them?' If you want details of what was cooked 'Over a coal grate fire' on these occasions, you will find details on page 86 and on page 354 will learn of the 'three-pronged forks and broad-end knives' they ate with, 'which were useful for eating peas and catching gravy'. One is reminded of the old rhyme, 'I eat my peas with honey...'

More importantly perhaps, what was Mary's function among these gatherings and friends? Mary Balle says, 'Her quiet presence was actually the heart and soul around

which these parties revolved'. Through this record we meet those friends and, as with Duncan Wu's *Life of Hazlitt*, one of the great joys one takes away from this book is the coming together of characters whom we may have met before separately, until we feel we might now walk in to such a party and know everyone there. We might perhaps even catch Hazlitt saying that among all the women he had met only Mary Lamb was 'thoroughly reasonable'.

Mary Balle has done an excellent job of research and has meticulously annotated the sources for her text. Above all, she brings alive for us those past days. Alongside her report on the present state of places familiar to us from the Lambs and Hazlitt, some of her detailed discoveries transport us back to their time. For example, 'The Hut, now renamed the Pheasant, still stands on the main road from London – the new paved road, the A30, runs at what was the back of the Hut'. But 'The cost of a round-trip ticket from London to the Hut was 32s, inside, and 21s outside. From the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, January 7, 1811'. Can we afford to go?

We come away from this book with a strong sense of the wonderful courage and integrity of Mary Lamb and also of her wisdom based on a combination of strong intellect and a deep understanding of and unillusioned sympathy with other human beings. We travel with her and Charles through their life together and their relationships with friends and the story continues after his death to a period about which most of us know little. It is good to read that Mary's friends did not forget her and were eventually able to arrange her removal from Edmonton to London, where she was much happier. They continued to visit her until her deterioration made any real communication impossible and she died when 'Old age and the ravages of time had finally conquered her indomitable spirit'.

This book, so evidently a labour of love, is enthralling. Based on sound research it is compulsive reading and should give Elians particular pleasure.

Mary Wedd