

**Beyond Byron, legitimising Lamb : The cultural context of
Caroline Lamb's life and works.**

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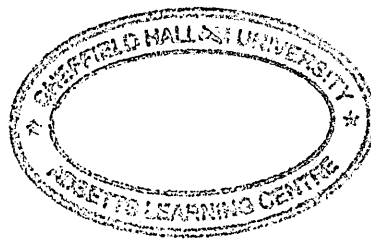
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**Beyond Byron, Legitimising Lamb: The Cultural Context of
Caroline Lamb's Life and Works**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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Abstract

'Beyond Byron, Legitimising Lamb: The Cultural Context of Lamb's Life and Works'

This interdisciplinary thesis is concerned with the works by and cultural perception of Lady Caroline Lamb (1785-1828). Focusing upon her three published novels, *Glenarvon* (1816), *Graham Hamilton* (1822) and *Ada Reis* (1823), I will argue that, when considering the texts in the social and political context of Lamb's life, the novels can be read as a critique of the moral bankruptcy and political ineffectiveness of her milieu of the Whig aristocracy, in which she includes herself and her notorious affair with Lord Byron. Though Lamb's fictional portraits of Byron, particularly in *Glenarvon*, have been read as an expression of her spleen, they are more than that: it is a continuation of her sophisticated critique of contemporary Whig morality and politics. A close reading of the texts will discuss Lamb's choice of the novel as a vehicle for her critique as one that is informed by the orientation of her writing towards the intended readership of her own milieu. This thesis will offer a new perspective upon how much Lamb was prepared to willingly submit her own experiences and that of her immediate family to the scrutiny of public gaze as a means to ensure the efficacy of her communicative intent, and how the construction of the novels reveals an hitherto unsuspected sophistication in the assessment of her readership and of the most effective vehicle by which to reach them. This thesis will also undertake a reassessment of Lamb's cultural legacy as an hysterical woman, fatally obsessed with Byron, and how this perception of her has diminished her reputation as a writer, undermined her critique of the aristocracy, and which has been exacerbated by biographical and fictional representations. Thus this thesis considers Lamb as a writer of significant interest that goes beyond the inhibiting presence of Byron by taking into account the wider cultural and political moment of production to offer a more productive reading her work.

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Introduction

In 1816 Lady Caroline Lamb's first novel, *Glenarvon*, was published and thus began Lamb's career as a writer. Lamb wrote two more full length novels, *Graham Hamilton* (1822), *Ada Reis* (1823), is the accepted author of two anonymous critiques of Byron's stature as a poet and the first two cantos of Byron's *Don Juan*, *A New Canto* (1819) and *Gordon: A Tale* (1821), and wrote poetry that appeared in the novels and as a posthumous collection collated by Isaac Nathan.¹ However, despite this body of work Lamb is largely forgotten as a writer and is chiefly remembered for the scandal created by her emotional involvement with Lord Byron in 1812. The content and timing of the publication of *Glenarvon* has done much to impede Lamb's reputation as a writer. Central to this novel is a representation of Lamb's relationship with Byron, and it was published a month after Byron left England in self-imposed exile and under a cloud of suspicion as to the exact nature of his relationship with his half-sister and his wife. The close temporal proximity of the novel to Lamb's involvement with Byron, and the emotional intensity of the content has, until relatively recently, precluded Lamb from being considered as anything other than egotistical or desperate. Lamb herself underplays the sustained intellectual commitment necessary to produce the work by claiming that she wrote the novel in secret and in just one month, 'unknown to all (save a governess, Miss Welsh), in the middle of the night.'² However, invaluable research by John Clubbe reveals this claim to be spurious as he discovered that *Glenarvon* was begun, even if only in outline, possibly as early as 1813.³ This suggests that Lamb's claim is a strategic one rather than an accurate one; the speed and secrecy possibly excusing her from both inherent faults within the novel and the emotional outrage that she predicted would inevitably follow when she observed that even 'before I published it I thought myself ruined past recall'.⁴ It is this self-awareness that prompts the crucial questions that lie at the heart of this thesis. Why, when knowing the consequences of her actions, did she feel compelled to enter the public arena of print culture with such personal and inflammatory material? Once she had done so, what can be made of Lamb's decision to pursue her writing career, and how has this sustained intellectual effort been systematically over looked?

In order to answer these questions, this thesis is structured in two parts as it addresses two issues, which have been separated in previous work on Lamb but which are inextricably linked: Lamb as a lucid writer of an incisive social and political critique of her own milieu, and the process by which Lamb's profile as a writer has been undermined by the biographical and fictional representations of her as a historical figure. This first part, consisting of chapters one to four, considers the legitimacy of viewing Lamb as a serious writer. To do so means going beyond the inhibiting presence of Byron by considering the context of Lamb as a socio-historical subject whose novels are, I shall argue, written for the specific audience of her own milieu. A close textual analysis of the novels will reveal the context of shared experience between writer and idealised reader that can only be gleaned when the works are re-connected to the socio-historical context and the envisioned readership, and will reveal Lamb to be a hitherto unrecognised commentator upon contemporary issues.

It is necessary to state here that it is primarily the three published novels, *Glenarvon*, *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis*, that are under scrutiny in this thesis. The two major poems, *A New Canto* and *Gordon: A Tale* are discussed at length on the subject of genre choice in chapter two, and the majority of the shorter poems initially appeared in the novels. That is not to say that I have deemed them unworthy of further study, but it is within the three novels, read as a body, that a sustained intellectual commitment to her message for reform is present. Similarly, while letters by Lamb are referred to in this research, they are consulted in a supportive capacity to the literary endeavour undertaken by Lamb as a sustained intellectual commitment. Letters are, by nature, transient, and contain what Lamb herself spoke of the truth as being 'what one believes at the moment.'⁵ Letters are a representation of a moment in time and, although a valuable source of information, such as Paul Douglass' recent publication of a selection of Lamb's letters, and whilst certainly thought provoking they are not products of a sustained intellectual endeavour or necessarily subject to scrupulous revision, and it is in Lamb's public presentation of her ideas that I am interested. Unless a whole lifetime's correspondence is presented, the very process of selecting letters by a posthumous editor for publication is an act of choosing from a wide variety of others to represent not just the subject but the editor's view upon that subject, to highlight his or her own persuasion in an attempt to persuade others. In the case of Douglass' recent selection of letters for example, the choice highlights his firm

conviction of Lamb's inherent insanity, and is supported by his editorial commentary that precedes each letter. The first letter to be selected is written by Caroline when she was only twelve years old contains childish word play in the construction of a rhyme to her cousin, Georgiana Cavendish (Little G), who was only two years older. As a reproduced letter, it tells us nothing at first glance, as it appears to contain nonsense:

Oh sweetest de vel tis now my turn to write to you what you should burn is
hario ill I'm sorry for it [...] Oh lord what troubles in this be and naught but
gambling wine and [glee?] will cure it what am I writing come sing row de
low row de low we leave for our heroes pleasure if fighting.⁶

As a piece of text it is nonsense because the content stands alone, removed from the context of the dialogue in which it was clearly produced as indicated by Lamb stating it was her 'turn to write'. The only sense that can be made of it therefore is what Douglass' tells the reader it means by way of his editorial input in which he says that it is evidence of Lamb's burgeoning insanity rather than childish playfulness in that, for her, 'the emotional pendulum is always swinging.'⁷ It must be acknowledged that the same process of selection applies to this thesis in that I have chosen letters that support my own view that there is an alternative view of Lamb as a writer who took herself seriously and denied the charges of madness.

This thesis presents itself as a challenge to the telling of Lamb's story. It is not a work that sets out to recover the incontestable truth about her involvement with Byron or the actual state of her mental health, but an examination of how Lamb's own perceptions of herself and her writings have become secondary to what is believed to be the 'truth' about her. This process has been aided by the appropriation of Lamb by writers of fiction that has its basis in historical fact, written contemporaneously to Lamb and after her death. The second part of the thesis, consisting of chapters six and seven, examines how Lamb becomes a caricature of herself in novels by her contemporaries and how her own narrative is retold in a fictional format in the twentieth century that blends fact and fiction to re-create the inner, hidden recesses of objective historical facts that usually defines itself against uncritically sympathetic fiction. What becomes clear about the fictionalisation of Lamb is that it is doubtful it would have occurred if she had not written a fictional version of herself first. The bridge between these two halves is chapter five, an intermediary chapter that considers Lamb's diminished reputation as a writer. Her reputation as, at best, an eccentric is precisely because of the very act of her

taking up the pen and the personalised content of *Glenarvon*, and it allowed others to portray her for their own ends in their interpretation of an historical period.

Although Byron can be considered as a primary interlocutor for Lamb's communicative act, and their fictionalised relationship gives *Glenarvon* much of its impetus, this thesis argues that Lamb's envisioned audience included Byron but in a much broader context than a mere re-telling of their affair. Instead, Lamb portrays their relationship as a microcosm of a morally bankrupt section of society, the aristocracy, and it is towards this section of society that Lamb orientates her writing towards with a consistent message for the need for internal reform. Lamb condemns a code of behaviour, such as entrenched adultery and the accruing of large gambling debts, which threatened to compromise the legitimisation and presentation of the aristocracy as natural leaders in whom authority and responsibility were invested on behalf of the people. As a member of the most fashionable and politically prominent families of ruling classes, the Ponsonbys, Spencers and Cavendishes, Lamb was well qualified to write upon what she viewed as the endemic moral chaos that was in conflict with oppositional party politics. However, it is this close proximity to her subject matter that I shall argue has precluded Lamb's criticisms from being regarded as anything other than either as a spiteful attempt at revenge against Byron by her contemporary milieu, or simply as an example of both the cause and effect of that very process, so closely was she identified with the perceived excesses and lax morality of the period. In studies of her life, as a 'Devonshire House girl', a phrase that William Lamb used as a collective description of Lamb and her cousins.⁸ It is a phrase that is deployed by Lamb's biographers as implying a giddy irresponsibility with vast hereditary wealth at her disposal, having the same connotations as a modern day 'It girl' that we are so familiar with in the shape of current aristocratic celebrities such as Tara Palmer-Tompkinson and Lady Victoria Hervey. The essence of an 'It' girl is an encapsulation of the spirit of her times; the actress Clara Bow who starred in the 1927 Paramount film 'It' who was the perfect emblem of the flighty hedonism of pre-depression America, an unstoppable exhibitionist who dyed her hair and her dog red to match her car.⁹ Although Bow, a working class girl from Brooklyn, was the first to be designated an 'It' girl, the term swiftly came to be synonymous with the exuberant and extravagant lifestyle of aristocratic women who had the capacity to fascinate and appal a simultaneously admiring and censorious public who read about their exclusive exploits in the press.

As shall be discussed in chapters five, six and seven it is this version of Lamb as a representative of the flamboyant narcissism of the Regency period that attracts her biographers and writers of fictional versions of Lamb's life, which has all the elements of the excessive lifestyle that has its modern equivalent in the repetitive tabloid reports of the excesses of modern day aristocratic party girls such as Palmer-Tompkinson, and it is these representations that have contributed towards the lack of critical engagement with Lamb. However, it is precisely because of her connection with the aristocratic lifestyle of ephemeral excess that enables Lamb to write the lack of a sense of purpose, discipline and integrity within the aristocracy, and the dangers of being too closely associated with fashionable elitism. Her novels are reflective of the increasing criticisms, in the aftermath of the French Revolution and in the build up to the 1832 Reform Bill, and of how easily entrenched, arbitrary privilege could be replaced by the emerging class of evangelical and entrepreneurial professionals that practised morality in both public and private. Although Lamb is not unique in criticising the system of 'Old Corruption', a phrase identified by Gary Kelly as meaning a recognition of the inadequacies of the patronage system of a hierarchical and paternalistic social order,¹⁰ she is extraordinary in that she is doing so from within the very heart of it and it is this milieu that is Lamb's envisioned audience.

In spite of the fact that Lamb's novels consistently critique the aristocracy she is not advocating their removal but is, instead, reasserting the 'naturalness' of rule by members of a long-established ruling class distinguished by *noblesse oblige*, a high sense of honour, responsibility and public duty. As I discuss in chapter one, Lamb's view of the aristocracy is conservative in the manner of Edmund Burke and her view of her position is informed by what Bourdieu describes as 'habitus.' Bourdieu's concept of habitus is a set of dispositions which incline the subject to act and react in certain ways that are inculcated practices, perceptions and attitudes determined by the formative social conditions in which individuals exist.¹¹ Therefore biographical references to Lamb as a 'Devonshire House' girl and the anecdote of her drinking 'confusion to the Tories in mugs of milk'¹² are illustrative, albeit clumsily of Lamb's formative habitus as a member of the aristocratic opposition party, the Whigs. Devonshire House was the focal point for the Whig opposition to the Tory government of George III, presided over by her famously fashionable aunt, and the doyenne of the Whig party, Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire, as is discussed at length in chapter one. According to

Bourdieu, the habitus also provides the individual with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of daily life, orientating their actions and inclinations without determining them. Lamb is therefore inclined to 'be' an aristocrat with Whig principles, so a brief explanation of these principles and biographical outline of Lamb as an inheritor of the Whig tradition is necessary.

The origins of the Whig party were forged in the unsuccessful struggle in 1679-81 to exclude from the British throne the Roman Catholic Duke of York, who did eventually succeed as James II (1685-1688). Whigs gloried in the part they played in overthrowing James in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, using as justification the philosophy of John Locke, who argued that the representatives of the people have the right to dismiss any political authority that does not fulfil the purpose for which it was created, primarily to protect the natural rights of each citizen in the form of life, liberty and, perhaps most importantly, property.¹³ Thus the Whigs, in opposing what they viewed as the inherent autocracy of George III with regards to the liberty of his subjects (particularly the American colonists and the Irish), came to advocate a responsible constitutional government. Consisting of a core of intermarried aristocratic families, the Devonshires, Spencers, Russells and Bedfords, the Whigs dominated nineteenth-century liberal politics. They were committed to constitutional and religious liberties, but were not democrats. Instead, they were patrician leaders who believed that the aristocracy ruled in trust for the people, positioning themselves as intermediaries between the monarchy and the populace, allowing themselves to reconcile the necessity of political change with political and social stability.

The Whigs were in political opposition for the duration of Lamb's life and it is this position that informs her critique of her milieu, since she recognised that reform was necessary if they ever hoped to regain the political initiative. Born in 1785, she was the fourth child and only daughter of Frederick Ponsonby, third Earl of Bessborough, and Henrietta Frances, the daughter of the first Earl Spencer and sister of Georgiana, the fifth Duchess of Devonshire. Although her father's political career is of little interest, Lamb's eldest brother, John William Ponsonby, later fourth Earl of Bessborough, entered Parliament in 1805 in the Whig interest at Knaresborough, one of the Duke of Devonshire's seats. He was an important figure of the Holland House set, a stronghold of Whig politicians and men of letters, although open to anyone of talent and

like-minded religious and political sympathies. The focus of the circle was the home of Henry Richard Fox, the third Baron Holland, and his wife Elizabeth Vassall Fox, with whom Lamb was friends, despite the former's socially unacceptable status among women as a divorced wife who then married her lover, and until Lamb alienated her by her portrayal of Lady Holland in *Glenarvon*. John Ponsonby became chief whip for the Whigs and with Lords Durham and Russell, and Sir James Graham, he prepared the first Reform Bill in 1830.¹⁴ Lamb's aunt, Georgiana, was the undisputed leader of the fashionable society, who was adored by the Prince Regent and an intimate of Marie Antoinette. She was also an important figure within the Whig party as its chief negotiator and campaigner whose staunchest supporter was Charles James Fox, a leading figure of the Holland House set. As Lamb's mother and aunt were inseparable, Lamb was brought up with her cousins as part of an extended family that also included politicians, playwrights, writers, musicians and artists, for the Whigs were great patrons of the arts. As a young girl, Lamb spent time abroad due to her mother's ill health and Georgiana's enforced exile due to the Duke of Devonshire's discovery of her affair with and pregnancy by Charles Grey, later Earl Grey.¹⁵ On return to England, Lamb attended school briefly but on the whole, any formal education was neglected. Lamb was married in 1805 to William Lamb, later Lord Melbourne, who became first Prime Minister to Queen Victoria. Despite being the second son, and before his elder brother's death, William was the hope of his mother, Lady Melbourne's, political ambitions and was a regular fixture of the Holland House set. He entered politics under Whig patronage in 1806, taking the seat for Leominster. William's early political career was promising but patchy for which his marriage to Lamb has been held responsible. It was not until his appointment as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1827, which he gained because of his Whig connections, that William's political career began an upward trajectory, culminating in the first Premiership of the reign of Queen Victoria.

In the early years of their marriage, Lamb suffered a miscarriage, the death of a premature baby girl, and her only surviving son, Augustus George, remained undeveloped mentally and suffered frequent fits. Lamb's marriage to William survived despite these tragedies, her infidelity with Byron and the subsequent emotional aftermath. William also supported Lamb's intellectual efforts, after the shock of *Glenarvon* being published, having acted as tutor to Lamb in the early days of their

marriage. Eventually, he succumbed only to pressure from his family, who feared for William's political prospects and were convinced of Lamb's insanity, and he formally separated from Lamb in 1825. Lamb removed herself to Paris in the same year, William having settled an allowance of three thousand pounds a year upon Lamb. She did not remain there for long; she departed in August and William allowed her to return to Brompton Hall, the country seat of the Melbournes, by October, where she lived alone until the last few months of her life. In December 1827, she was taken to London under medical supervision, having developed symptoms of dropsy, a condition that is described in a medical dictionary of 1829 as 'a preternatural swelling of the whole body, or some part of it, occasioned by a collection of watery humour'.¹⁶ Lamb died in January 1828 but despite the lonely end of her life, Lamb's central position within the opposition elite connects her to an intellectually stimulating, politically challenging and artistically creative cultural discourse of diversity in the early nineteenth century in which she actively engaged. Lamb campaigned on behalf of her brother-in-law, George Lamb, in 1819, corresponded with Amelia Opie, Lady Morgan, John Murray and William Godwin, and assisted Godwin financially along with William Blake. She attended the literary salons of Elizabeth Benger and Elizabeth Spence, where she became reacquainted with her neighbour Edward Bulwer Lytton, upon whom she had exercised a critical influence and, it has been suggested, whom she became romantically involved with. It is also where she met his bride to be, Rosina Wheeler Doyle, who has been described as Lamb's protégée.¹⁷ It is these rich cultural connections that form part of the extra-verbal context in which Lamb's novels are situated that justify a re-examination of Lamb as something more than the cast-off mistress of Byron. Most importantly of all, it is the innate sense of belonging to this distinct social position that sheds the most light on the meaning of her novels.

It is this innate sense of belonging to the cultural and political elite that is important when re-considering Lamb's novels. Bourdieu's work on institutional hierarchy defines the social context, or the 'field of cultural production', as a structured space of positions, determined by the distribution of various kinds of capital, such as economic (actual wealth), symbolic (accumulated prestige) or cultural (knowledge or cultural acquisitions). I will draw on this to show that Lamb has enough 'cultural capital' of her own to warrant a re-reading of her novels in this light.¹⁸ Cultural capital can be more fully defined as a form of knowledge or internalised code that invests the

social agent with a competence for deciphering the social relations that maintain the institutionalised hierarchy, something which is particularly pertinent in the case of Lamb:

The kinds of capital, like trumps in a game of cards, are powers which define the chances of profit in a given field [...]. For example, the volume of cultural capital [...] determines the aggregate chances of profit in which cultural capital is effective, thereby helping to determine position in the social space (in so far as position is determined by success in the cultural field.)¹⁹

It is important to recognise that cultural capital cannot be ‘bought’ by money or an accumulation of knowledge, learned skills or other cultural acquisitions because, by virtue of the habitus, individuals are already predisposed to act in certain ways. Lynne Pearce illustrates this predisposition with an example from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. Pearce argues that ‘despite their “book learning”, Heathcliff and Hareton will retain a vestige of their regional accent and gruff elocution, and Nelly her “provincialisms.”’²⁰ In her second novel Lamb writes of just such an outsider’s uncomfortable self-awareness on entering the company of an elite whom he had only previously watched through windows with envy. This concept of cultural capital being innate corresponds with Lamb’s view of the naturalness of the aristocracy, a conservative view as defined by Burke, which is discussed in chapter one. Lamb’s cultural capital therefore granted her the authority with which to speak upon the subject of the aristocracy, and gives weight to the consistent message of reform present in her novels.

Recent work undertaken by scholars such as Gary Kelly, Duncan Wu, Frances Wilson, Caroline Franklin, Barbara Judson, Ghislaine McDayter and Paul Douglass has begun a process of rehabilitation of Lamb as a writer upon contemporary issues. Focusing upon *Glenarvon*, Gary Kelly writes of Lamb as a popular author, in conjunction with Amelia Opie and Maria Edgeworth, using the novel to intervene in the debate about domestic affections being the site of moral and social cohesion in the aftermath of the French Revolution.²¹ Kelly also includes Lamb in his overview of English fiction in the Romantic Period, recognising Lamb’s critique of the representation of the authentic self in relation to society and her portrayal of ‘transcendent female selfhood’ in *Glenarvon*, and the exoticism of *Ada Reis* as a popular type of novel that relocated the criticisms of British court culture to the usefully

comparative location of the East.²² Duncan Wu included Lamb's *A New Canto* in the second edition of *Romanticism: An Anthology*, whereas it had been excluded from the first, commenting in the introduction of the second edition that Lamb intended to 'mimic – and excel – *Don Juan*' by appropriating Byron's personality and rhyming scheme, proving that she could 'handle both.'²³ Wu has also written a full length account of how Lamb achieved this act of literary and personality piracy and has included Lamb in his anthology of Romantic women poets, as has Harriet Devine Jump, but she is omitted from Fiona Robertson's most recent collection from the period, indicating a burgeoning but patchy interest in Lamb as a poet.²⁴ In the same year as Wu's article on Lamb's *A New Canto*, Wilson and Franklin both published an edition of *Glenarvon*, Franklin's being the first of a twelve volume set entitled *The Romantics: Women Novelists*, which is demonstrative in itself of developing interest in Lamb as a novelist as well as a poet. Both Wilson and Franklin write of the novel as an attempt to 'convert personal experience into a dramatisation of the social restraints upon female sexuality' whilst also recognising Lamb's negotiation of the interconnecting social and political conventions.²⁵ Wilson has also written on representations of Lamb and Byron as allegorical figures in the melodramas of their own lives, and of Lamb's literary seduction by Byron.²⁶ Barbara Judson and Ghislaine McDayter have both written on the political dimension of *Glenarvon*. Judson focuses upon the dynamics of the genre of the *roman à clef* and the subtleties of betrayal that provide Lamb with her subject matter and method of execution; McDayter analyses the contemporary associations between female hysteria and mob violence as represented in the novel.²⁷ Paul Douglass is the most recent and most prolific Lamb scholar, having published a biography, a selection of her letters and numerous articles on Lamb by way of rehabilitating her as a complex personality and a vivid writer.²⁸ Although this work already undertaken by Lamb scholars primarily concentrates on *Glenarvon*, it provides a solid foundation upon which this thesis rests in terms of providing a supporting framework that allows for the possibilities of a revisionist approach.

However, these isolated pockets of scholarly interest do not yet add up to a greater sum of interest than its individual parts and Lamb remains dismissed from sustained academic study despite, and as this thesis will argue, because of her connection with one of the most distinctive literary figures in the canon. That is not to say that Lamb has been neglected in other areas, as she has been the subject of five

biographies, but the mainstay of interest lies with Byron, rather than Lamb's own intellectual achievements. Elizabeth Jenkins' *Lady Caroline Lamb* was the earliest expression of interest in Lamb, first published in 1932 and re-published in 1974. This was followed by Henry Blyth's *Caro: The Fatal Passion* in 1972, Sean Manchester's *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* in 1992, Susan Normington's *This Infernal Woman* in 2001 and Paul Douglass' *Lady Caroline Lamb* in 2004.²⁹ What is striking is the similarities in each study, each being almost a copy of the one that has gone before, and I will argue in chapters five and seven that the 'truth' of these studies has taken on an almost mythical status because of this repetition. Lucasta Miller observes a similar phenomenon occurring in the reconstruction of the lives of the Brontës, although on a much larger scale. Miller writes:

Even a true story can become a myth by being endlessly repeated and woven into culture. To call an event in history mythic does not necessarily denigrate its reality or truth value. But it does acknowledge the penumbra of emotional, aesthetic and ideological resonances which have clustered about it.³⁰

Facts, whilst appearing to be conclusive and non-negotiable, can therefore take on a mythic quality, as can be seen by the similarities between the biographies and twentieth-century reconstructions of Lamb as a fictional character discussed in chapter seven. This is due to the limits of the biographical format, the main aim of which appears to be, in Lamb's case, to present its subject in the most sympathetic light, rather than to offer an objective critical study, thereby limiting the scope for critical analysis. To overcome what I perceive to be a resistance to a re-reading of Lamb's novels by her biographers, a revision of Lamb's reputation as a woman fatally obsessed with Byron and an investigation into the lack of critical curiosity into Lamb's intellectual efforts is necessary. The two strands are inextricably intertwined and are discussed at length in chapter five. For example, the 'evidence' that is presented in studies of her life appears to point towards Lamb's mental state before and after her relationship with Byron, which this thesis argues is actually past knowing, appears at first glance to be conclusive. However, in light of research undertaken by Elaine Showalter, Jane Ussher and Phyllis Chesler that clearly demonstrates the historic and contemporary limitations and the misogynistic bias of alleged female insanity, any unquestioning acceptance of the presumed state of Lamb's mental health can only be considered suspect.³¹ That is not to say that this thesis is a rejection of the biographical approach because a re-evaluation of the cultural context of Lamb's novels will necessarily involve a critical

engagement with biographical detail and Lamb's life is not only an interesting one, but was also a crucial factor in the construction and reception of her novels. The value of the biographical detail for this thesis lies less in the simple rehearsal of the story, however melodramatic it is made to seem, than in the ways Lamb transformed her own story into art. Michel Foucault argues that the social subject can only speak through a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures³² and that speech is a reflection of those pressures, having embedded within it the power structures of the hierarchy. However Foucault also argues that where there is power there is negotiation and resistance, and that language is the site where these struggles are acted out. Lamb's decision to take up the pen is therefore to be interpreted as a method of resistance to the threatened diagnosis of insanity and as resistance to the pressure put upon her to silence her embarrassing revelations about the dissolute nature of the aristocracy. The process by which Lamb and her knowledge have been delegitimised is discussed at length in chapter five. Lamb's last novel was published in 1823 and she died in 1828, but she pre-empted not only the provisions of the 1832 Reform Bill that reinforced the position of the aristocracy, but also themes in the later works of her contemporaries, Edward Bulwer Lytton, Benjamin Disraeli and Mary Shelley. Lamb is not acknowledged as a source by any of these more established writers, but there are distinct points of convergence that are worthy of examination because of the disparity in their social and political positions, and these come under examination in chapters two, four and six.

This introduction has highlighted the questions that arose at the outset of my research as I recognise a tension between the authoritative voice of the author of *Glenarvon*, *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis* and the sustained critique of a specific milieu, and representations of Lamb as an historical and hysterical figure. My first chapter, entitled 'Authority and Legitimacy: The Cultural Context of Lamb's Novels,' examines Lamb's ideological blueprint as a Whig, which forms the basis of the consistent message for aristocratic reform that informs her novels. Having fully outlined the extraverbal content of the novels, the generic features of Lamb's novels come under scrutiny in my second chapter, entitled 'Genre: the Politics of Form.' Following on from the examination of how the external form is linked to the ideological content, my third chapter, entitled 'Settings and Destinations: The Political and Moral Landscape,' will examine the concomitant element of genre in that the choice of genre affects the temporal and geographical setting of the novels. Chapters two and three,

therefore, go some way to offering a revisionist reading of Lamb's novels in that neither the form nor the content are taken for granted. My fourth chapter, entitled 'A Written Warning,' traces Lamb's sustained use of the works of John Ford, whose influence upon Lamb is recognisable in so far as she consciously flags up the source of her female protagonist in *Glenarvon*; Lady Calantha is named after the heroine of Ford's play, *The Broken Heart*. What has hitherto gone unnoticed is the profound influence of Ford's lesser known works upon Lamb's development as a writer. Lamb draws upon Fordian names and themes repeatedly throughout her work and she shares a common feature with Ford in that they both explore the role of the aristocracy and codes of aristocratic behaviour, and use their works as ideological vehicles by which to offer their findings as recommendations. Ford also offers his work as a model for the sensitive treatment of unconventional love, social ostracism and misconstrued reputation, particularly in relation to his female characters. It was something that Lamb had personal experience of but she drew upon from Ford for expression of it. As I discuss in this chapter, Lamb's use of Ford sustains her critique of the aristocracy not only because of the borrowed imagery; there is a factual and tangible lineage between dedicatees of Ford's work and Lamb's extended family. Having examined Lamb's novels as constructions by which she conveyed her message of reform towards an envisioned readership, my fifth chapter, entitled 'The Limitations of Biography and the Assertion of Madness,' offers an explanation of how that message has been lost, ignored or wilfully misread. An examination of the cultural context of Lamb's presumed insanity not only reveals the unstable foundations upon which the diagnosis is based, but also how the stigma of insanity delegitimises Lamb and her knowledge, and the method by which this familiar image has become a matter of historical fact by virtue of repetition. My sixth chapter, entitled ' "Portrait of a Lady": Contemporary Literary Representations of Lamb,' is an examination of how Lamb is appropriated as herself a fictional character by her contemporaries by way of augmenting their own legitimacy as writers, and as evidence of her own delegitimised status. This chapter also traces her possible influence upon her contemporary, Edward Bulwer Lytton.

My final chapter, entitled 'Lamb's Modern Legacy: Historical Fiction and Fictional History,' is an examination of Lamb as a character in, mainly romance, fiction of the twentieth century and how Lamb becomes part of the Regency re-packaging as a way of expressing modern emotional needs and desires, and thus cementing her status

as someone beyond the boundaries of ‘serious’ academic study. This thesis as a whole aims, therefore, to address the current situation of Lamb within academia as exemplified by the quotation below:

Bernard: [...] I’m ashamed to say I never read her fiction, and how right you are, it is extraordinary stuff. [...] To rehabilitate a forgotten writer, I suppose you could say that’s the main reason for an English don. [...] I expect someone will be bringing out Caroline Lamb’s oeuvre now? [...] How wonderful! Bravo! Simply as a document shedding light on the character of Byron[.]³³

The speaker of the above quotation from Tom Stoppard’s play *Arcadia*, is Bernard Nightingale, an English don and Byron scholar whose response to the work of Lamb scholar, Hannah Jarvis, is as fake as it is effusive. Nightingale is already known to Jarvis as someone who reviewed her work by stating that he would see her ‘off the premises with a pat on the bottom.’³⁴ Frances Wilson notes in an overview of Lamb’s critics in her edition of *Glenarvon* that Stoppard’s character, Nightingale, represents an academic attitude towards Lamb that is presented as being ‘tired, reactionary and misogynistic,’ arguing that the tide of literary criticism was turning in Lamb’s favour.³⁵ However, the words of the fictional Nightingale, first uttered in 1993, still reflect some elements of truth with regards to Lamb’s current position academia in that she is underrepresented as a writer of importance, whose works are rarely read for their own sake but for the interest in ‘shedding light’ on Byron. It is the overall aim of this thesis to bring about a reconsideration of Lamb and her works not only in the interests of rehabilitating a forgotten author, but also as an illustration of how the historically favoured canonical voice can distort and disarm the search to bring forward new voices that can offer a new and complementary perspective to an historical and literary period already under scrutiny. The original contribution to knowledge of this thesis is the discovery of how much Lamb was prepared to willingly submit her own experiences and that of her immediate family to the scrutiny of public gaze as a means to ensure the efficacy of her communicative intent, and how the construction of the novels reveals an hitherto unsuspected sophistication in the assessment of her readership and the most effective vehicle by which to reach them.

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- ² Morgan, S. Lady (1863), *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, 3 Volumes, Leipzig: Tauchnitz, vol 2, p. 323.
- ³ Clubbe, J. (1979), 'Glenarvon – Revised and Revisited', *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol x, no. 2, p. 210.
- ⁴ Lamb quoted in Normington, S. (2001), *Lady Caroline Lamb: This Infernal Woman*, London: House of Stratus, p. 185.
- ⁵ Graham, P. (1991), 'Fictive Biography in 1816: The Case of *Glenarvon*', *The Byron Journal*, 19, p. 54.
- ⁶ Lady Caroline Ponsonby to Lady Georgiana Cavendish, 7th January, 1797, printed in Douglass, P. (2006), *The Whole Disgraceful Truth: Selected Letters of Lady Caroline Lamb*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Blyth, H. (1972), *Caro: The Fatal Passion, The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*, New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan. Having spotted Lamb playing with her cousins, William Lamb is recorded as saying 'Of all the Devonshire House girls, that is the one for me', p. 37.
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- ¹⁰ Kelly, G. (1989), *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, London & New York: Longman, p. 222.
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- ¹⁸ Bourdieu, (2003), p. 14.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p. 230.
- ²⁰ Pearce, (1994), p.127.
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³⁰ Miller, L. (2002), *The Brontë Myth*, London: Vintage, p. xi.

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³³ Stoppard, T. (1993), *Arcadia*, London: Faber & Faber, p.27.

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Chapter 1
Authority & Legitimacy: The Cultural Context of Lady Caroline Lamb's Novels

Disparaging references to Lamb's personal life have too often become a substitute for critical engagement with her work; judgements of the woman and the texts have become fused together. Ghislaine McDayter observes that '[...] for most modern critics, *Glenarvon* remains, in Samuel Chew's words, "the product of [Lamb's] hysteria" and can thus be summarily dismissed, aesthetically and politically, in a single satisfying stroke.'¹ Both the hysteria and the novels are perceived as having their interchangeable origins in what is considered to be Lamb's presumed obsession with Lord Byron that lasted until her death. Frances Wilson has already demonstrated how Lamb has been perceived as an 'exaggerated woman' whose name has 'become synonymous with melodrama',² which has conditioned all fictional representations and biographical studies of Lamb as unable to tell the difference between fact and fiction due to self-indulgent emotional excess, as is discussed at length in later chapters. This chapter will argue that Lamb was acutely aware of the 'real' world, her understanding of which is shaped by her position from within the centre of the overlapping social and political worlds, by virtue of her birth, as it is this milieu that she critiques in her novels. I would argue that it is not, as Paul Douglass suggests, Lamb's supposed mental problems that are 'crucial to understanding her literary efforts'³ but this extraverbal context. In all three of her published novels, *Glenarvon* (1816), *Graham Hamilton* (1822) and *Ada Reis* (1823), Lamb depicts the concept of nobility, both as a character trait and as part of an aristocratic inheritance and an aristocracy, as a code of behaviour that has been distorted and neglected. In particular, Lamb is concerned with the discrepancy between the ideal of the aristocracy, as an independent governing body free from pettiness and self-interest, and the possible perception that it represents an expression of entrenched privilege and arbitrary power with no rational basis and which was replaceable.

Lamb is writing as an aristocrat, from the particular standpoint of a Whig, who is aware that the perception of the effectiveness of the Whigs as politicians was being undermined by their performance as leaders of the fashionable society. As Leslie

Mitchell observes, the ‘moral chaos’ of the Whigs’ private lives had an inevitable impact upon the perception of them as ‘untrustworthy and unprincipled politicians.’⁴ Mitchell’s discussion of the Whigs refers primarily to Lamb’s immediate family and the Holland House set, as it is they that were the instantly recognisable face of the party. When Lamb and her works are read in the context of her milieu her critique of the moral and political bankruptcy of her sphere of existence, in which she includes herself, becomes clear. Lamb has been described as a ‘Devonshire House Girl’,⁵ referring to her extended family of the Cavendishes, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and with a vague implication of an adherence to the principles of Whiggism. Although in some ways an accurate summation of Lamb, it is one that remains inadequate because of the lack of qualification. However, if we consider this from the perspective of the argument put forward by Pierre Bourdieu that ‘individuals are the products of particular histories which endure in the habitus, their actions can never be analysed adequately as the outcome of conscious calculation’,⁶ then the unconscious discourse that informs the communicative intent of the written or spoken word, which Bourdieu argues is the driving force behind what appears to be a purely aesthetic endeavour, becomes clear.⁷ Lamb writes her critique of the aristocracy as self-serving social and political animals, from within an unconscious inculcated discourse of being an aristocrat. From her position within she recognises the need for a reform of the aristocracy, so that they might maintain their position of power and privilege, rather than its abolition. In presenting a portrayal of why the Whig aristocracy may be perceived by others as being unfit to assume a position of authority, Lamb draws on the cumulative experiences not only of herself but also of her immediate family connections and presents them against the accumulated ideological inheritance of generations that informs her outlook and convinces her of the naturalness of their position.

The Whigs’ supremacy in office was between 1714 and 1783, with only a brief interruption from Lord Bute between May 1762 and April 1763.⁸ The ascension of Pitt the Younger in 1783, which followed the short lived Whig / Tory coalition in place from March to December 1783, saw the Whigs develop a political position that Mitchell describes as an ‘oppositional creed.’⁹ As the opposition party to the King’s government, the Whigs were adopted by the Prince of Wales as a personal gesture of animosity towards his father, George III. The Prince of Wales subsequently abandoned the Whigs when he became Prince Regent, so for the duration of Lamb’s lifetime (1785-

1828) the Whigs were consigned to a political hinterland.¹⁰ The Whigs viewed themselves as the natural intermediaries between the parliamentary and public political worlds, and nobody appeared to bridge this gap between the two worlds more effectively than Lamb's beloved aunt, Georgiana Cavendish, the Duchess of Devonshire (1757 – 1806). Georgiana was the leading Whig hostess of her generation; Devonshire House became the (un)official party headquarters, its vast spaces lending themselves to gatherings for social solidarity in times of celebration and commiseration.¹¹ Georgiana's successful campaigning on behalf of Charles James Fox for the Westminster Election of 1784 brought the glamour and sophistication of an otherwise remote realm of experience to the daily lives of the voters. Amanda Foreman discusses Georgiana as an astute politician, who recognised the potency of symbols, giving the example of Georgiana's early propaganda coup of adapting the female riding habit into a faux-military uniform and parading at the 'head of the beauteous Amazons on Coxheath.'¹² This not only demonstrated the patriotism of the aristocratic wives supporting their husbands, but also gave the Whigs a much-needed boost at a time when they had been denounced because of their support of the American War of Independence. Georgiana's patronage of the arts also increased the association of the Whigs with the fashionable culture of wit, taste and talent. Her own popularity, which resulted in powders, perfumes, colours and even a dance being named after her and her own innovations being slavishly imitated, such as her famously extravagant headdresses,¹³ also led to intense scrutiny in the press, elevating her popularity into the phenomenon of celebrity. Georgiana became the public face of the fashionable and the political; she was the embodiment of the Whigs.

However, Georgiana's public success belied the disaster of her personal life and a profound sense of disillusionment with the fashionable life. Her husband, the 5th Duke of Devonshire, was indifferent towards her and preferred her friend Lady Elizabeth Foster. The three lived together for over twenty years in an uneasy triumvirate, a relationship that was mutually dependent but fraught with difficulty. By way of compensation, Georgiana became addicted to gambling and what she described as 'a vortex of dissipation'.¹⁴ Lamb uses this exact phrase in *Glenarvon* to describe Lady Calantha's immersion into London society, where 'every night was passed in the same vortex of fashionable dissipation'.¹⁵ Georgiana conducted an affair with Charles Grey, and when she was discovered to be carrying his child her husband sent her into

exile for three years. Georgiana's personal life is a prime example of Mitchell's 'moral chaos', of which Georgiana and Lamb illustrated in their fiction. Georgiana wrote about her experiences of living *a la mode* in an epistolary novel, entitled *The Sylph* (1779). The novel was published anonymously but the identity of the author was soon discovered as clues are within the text; Georgiana playfully names herself as a rival to the heroine for the best bunch of radishes as decoration for one of her famously extravagant head-dresses. It is an epistolary novel that follows the marriage of the young and beautiful Julia Stanley to the cruel and reckless Sir William Stanley. Julia tries to maintain the affections of her husband, whose only interests lie in gambling and fashion, by adopting the habits and attitudes of the *bon ton*, at the expense of being corrupted by the cynicism and heartlessness that characterises the fashionable world. The heart of the novel is Julia's struggle to maintain her integrity whilst those around her submit to and are beaten down by an immoral life.¹⁶ The unhappy marriage of Georgiana that formed the basis of that of Julia Stanley also provided the model for Lamb's Lady Orville in her second novel, *Graham Hamilton*. The eponymous hero's uncle, Sir Malcolm, describes Lady Orville as

the most beautiful, the most accomplished, the wildest, and yet the gentlest – the most admired yet the most virtuous. – Yet Graham, mark her fate. This happiest [...] dearest child of prosperity is involved in deep distress. Imprudence, pushed to the utmost – a beneficence, that knew not refuse [...] and a wasting spirit that scorned to take the means of preserving anything, have brought her to utter ruin.¹⁷

Lady Orville's social brilliance eclipses financial extravagance and impending ruin, a direct result of a failing marriage to an indifferent husband. Sir Malcolm mocks the mercenary aspect of the dynastic marriage in terms that reflect the emptiness of the marriages of Georgiana and Lady Orville: 'Marry some girl of rank, whom others love [...] but sells herself for your fortune; and let her be the only woman you treat with cold neglect'.¹⁸ That is not to say that the Duke of Devonshire was deliberately cruel to Georgiana, but Lamb highlights the basic incompatibility of such a match. Lord Orville, like the Duke of Devonshire, is older than his vivacious wife whose temperament Lamb describes as

[O]ne, but not the only instance of a great nobleman, who from his youth seemed to take no great delight in [...] any of his own possessions or advantage. – He allowed all about him to spend his fortune and exert his privileges, without concerning himself about one or the other. Thus he made many friends, and few enemies – for he hurt no one and sought no one. His abilities

were good, but his love of repose, and his distaste for all sort of show or noise, prevented them from being generally known.¹⁹

Lord Orville's natural indolence drives his wife to seek recompense and companionship in society, and he is only roused by the impending financial disaster that is born out of Lady Orville's need to compensate for her empty marriage. Lady Orville is separated from her husband and her children, and is sent into the country to live quietly, where she finds fulfilment in charitable work. Lady Orville's personal fulfilment is parallel to Georgiana's overcoming her own private failures to find fulfilment as a respected politician and mediator.

As a Whig, Georgiana supported the initial principles of the French Revolution in that she supported its attempt to establish a constitutional monarchy, which enshrined representative democracy; as an aristocrat and a friend of Marie Antoinette, she abhorred the mob violence that she had witnessed firsthand during her visit in 1789 and the mob rule that resulted in the violent deaths of several close friends, including the French Queen.²⁰ Georgiana's views on the Revolution epitomise the division within the Whig party, the 'new' Whigs led by Fox and the 'old' Whigs led by Fox's one-time friend and the spokesman for the Rockingham Whigs, Edmund Burke. Fox supported the Revolution as a necessary change and as an attempt at democracy, whereas Burke, who did not oppose the principle of reform, objected to the drastic nature of the rapid, uncontrolled change that placed power in the hands of amateurs who had little or no political expertise. Burke was unusual in his lack of support for the removal of an autocratic monarch, but he foresaw that the only outcome would be conflict and bloodshed, and that the inevitable wars that he predicted would lead to Revolution that would only result in a military dictatorship. He published *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as a warning to those, including the Foxite Whigs, which supported the Revolution, believing that France was having its own version of the Glorious Revolution.

Burke had built up his reputation on his defence of the rights of Parliament and on his support for the rights of citizens, as exemplified by his position on American independence and Ireland's Catholics. On the publication of *Reflections*, it seemed that he was contradicting himself by apparently defending the French monarchy and it was

this *volte face* that caused the very public and acrimonious split between Fox and Burke in 1791 during a parliamentary debate. Burke justified his stance against the Revolution in his work *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), an extended defence against charges of inconsistency and a departure from true Whig principles. The argument of the *Appeal* reiterates that of *Reflections*; the Revolution was ‘madness masked as sanity’²¹ in the pursuit of liberty and what appeared to be a democratic struggle for social liberty was actually driven by inflamed passions that could only end in anarchy because of the lack of experience and insight. He appealed to the New Whigs to reject the madness of supporting such an endeavour based upon abstract theories and to look to the acquired experience of the Old Whigs that had gradually produced the status quo in Britain. The work is a defence of a ‘natural’ aristocracy; one that is essential and inseparable from the nation and that embodies the classical virtues that represent a civilised state, therefore ‘the true nature of man.’²²

Hierarchy was, according to Burke, the ‘role God ordered you to play, and where you have been placed in the society of men’ and if each man was to claim what was supposed to be individual rights, the end result could only be an incoherent babble of anarchy and disorder.²³ Burke identified the virtues, embodied by the informed and responsible few, in an exhaustive list:

To be bred in a place of estimation; to see nothing low and sordid in one’s infancy; to be taught respect for one’s self; to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; to look early to public opinion; to stand upon such elevated ground as to be enabled to take a large view of the infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs of society; to have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse; to be enabled to draw the court and attention of the wise and learned, wherever they are to be found; to be habituated in armies to command and obey; to be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honour and duty; to be formed to the greatest degree of vigilance, foresight and circumspection in a state of things in which no fault is committed with impunity and the slightest draw on the most ruinous of consequences; to be led to a guarded and regulated conduct, from a sense that you are to be considered as an instructor of your fellow citizens in their highest concerns, that you act as a reconciler between God and man; to be employed as an administrator of law and justice, and thereby amongst the first benefactors to mankind; to be a professor of high science, or of liberal and ingenuous art; to be amongst rich traders, whom from their success are presumed to have sharp and vigorous understandings, and to possess the virtues of diligence, order, constancy, and regularity, and to have cultivated a habitual regard to commutative justice – these are

circumstances of men that form what I should call a 'natural' aristocracy, without which there is no nation.'²⁴

Burke is talking of the duties that are inherent with a position of privilege; *noblesse oblige* entails responsibilities that are not voluntary and are inculcated from birth, and young aristocrats received the wisdom and benefit of experience derived from an institution that had lasted for centuries. It is a chivalrous code of behaviour, the essential function of which, writes Linda Colley, is to reaffirm the 'paramount importance of custom, hierarchy and inherited rank.'²⁵ Burke was not saying that the institution had to be rigidly and slavishly adhered to, whatever the cost, but that is one that it can be adapted as new circumstances arise. Thus the status quo in Britain can be preserved but the operation is improved. The purpose of the *Appeal* as a defence for organic growth, rather than the immediacy of a revolution, is to refute the critical responses to his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, most notably by Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791-1792). Paine is scathing in his attack on the aristocracy, stating that it is this hereditary system that hampers the development of a society into maturity:

Titles are but nick-names, and every nick-name is a title. The thing is perfectly harmless in itself; but it makes a sort of foppery in the human character, which degrades it. It reduces man into the diminutive of man in things which are great, and the counterfeit of woman in things that are little [...] A certain writer of antiquity, says, "When I was child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I must put away childish things."²⁶

Paine applauds France for 'outgrowing the baby-cloaths of *Count and Duke*' and having 'breached itself in manhood' and denounces the 'visible imbecility and want of intellects [that] is the general character of [...] what are called Nobility, or rather Nobility, in all countries.'²⁷ Considering Burke's Irish ancestry and meritocratic career, Burke's view of the aristocracy was perhaps formulated by his association with the Marquis of Rockingham, whom Burke served in the capacity of private secretary and Whig party spokesman.²⁸

This was the legacy inherited rather than acquired by Lamb. Although Burke's arguments refer directly to the French Revolution, they are pertinent to Lamb's moment of cultural production. Lamb's three published novels were published in 1816, 1822 and 1823 respectively, the period crossing from the Regency into the reign of George

IV. Frank O’Gorman states that before 1780, aristocratic pre-eminence was rarely, if ever, questioned and that they themselves never doubted their right to speak on behalf of those beneath them, but between the years of 1780-1815 unquestioning acceptance of the natural aristocracy began to give way to criticisms of corruption.²⁹ Colley supports this view in that whilst criticism of the aristocracy had appeared occasionally in polemics aimed at specific individuals, it was from the 1780s that ‘denunciation of the landed classes as a discrete group’ entered the mainstream of political discourse because of the journalism of Paine and William Cobbett, among others, and focused upon the aristocracy as a separate class that was a parasite upon the nation, rather than as part of the nation and as its natural leaders.³⁰

Burke’s view of a true and ‘natural’ aristocracy is not one that is a ‘separate interest in the state, or separable from it,’³¹ but this division between governors and governed is exactly how Lamb portrays the Whigs. The aristocracy that is represented in her novels is not the epitome of classical virtues that embodied the civilised state of society; neither do they fulfil their obligations to those that are dependent upon them. In *Glenarvon*, the Duke of Altamonte has retired from social and political life, having over-rated his own superiority and failed to realise his ambition. He has retreated ‘sullen and reserved’ to Ireland, and as a representative of the landholding elite he is ineffective as the Irish rebellion gathers momentum around him; his own tenants are ‘mutinous and discontented’ because he ‘refused to attend to the grievances and burthens of which the nation generally complained.’³² Lamb is not advocating the disposal of the aristocracy, but she recognises the validity of criticisms of the aristocracy as a separate state within a state. Lamb’s portrayal of this dissolute society can be neatly illustrated by with a single quotation from *Graham Hamilton*, in which the hero is being offered ironic advice on how to proceed with his education from his Scottish money-lending uncle:

I, Sir Malcolm, thus speak to my heir: ‘Take money in thy hand – open thy house – ha’ the best of everything. – And, as my Lord Chesterfield doth hold that the exterior deportment is one of the most important consequence to the man, take care, dear Nephew Graham, to acquire an easy, and something of an insolent manner; look nae modest, nae sharp. Have eyes that see not, ears that hear not; and repress every voice that would utter the genuine feelings of human nature. Learn neither to laugh loud, nor weep; say little, learn discretion [...] Affect to be weary of everything and in time you will

grow so [...] Hate no one, - it is too much trouble; envy no one [...] Aspire to nothing, then nothing will greatly humiliate you. Never love; and whilst you assume power over every other, beware of putting yourself into the power of anyone [...] Form no intimate friendships [...] associate with the worthless [...] Call feeling hypocrisy.³³

This is the complete opposite from the precepts that Burke listed as providing criteria for a noble education. Lamb's concern, as represented by the curriculum for Hamilton's education, is that what is being inculcated from birth is no longer *noblesse oblige* but mannerisms developed for the public arena. The educational systems in place, as Bourdieu stresses, are a key component for creating and sustaining the institution of hierarchy.³⁴ He identifies an institution as a set of relatively durable social relations that endows individuals with relative power, status and resources, which allows a tiered expression of power, duty or obligation. The role of education, as he sees it, is to reinforce these relations by immersing the sons of 'peers' in a society of 'peers' of the realm-in-waiting in an exercise in mutual recognition of their own worth and superiority. O'Gorman and Colley both elucidate the historical basis of Bourdieu's educational theory. O'Gorman observes that schooling habits were designed to install a collective sense of identity and purpose into aristocratic sons via a select diet of Classics, culture and art, and that group identity was forged in physical bonding.³⁵ Colley agrees that from 1800 there was a new emphasis upon collegiate learning, rather than the previous model of private tuition, that brought the sons of the gentry into prolonged contact with each other and exposed them to a 'uniform set of ideas, as well as ensuring that they learnt how to speak the English language in a distinctive and characteristic way.'³⁶ Sir Malcolm credits his method of education with having the same result that would have taken Hamilton 'ten years fagging at a public school.'³⁷ A distinctive deployment of language to reinforce social identity and cohesiveness within a group is immediately apparent in the adoption of what was known as the 'Devonshire House drawl', which Foreman describes as 'part baby-talk, part refined affectation.'³⁸ Lamb, aged thirteen, mimicked the affectation in a letter to her cousin saying 'Haryo is so so so naughty not to write to 'oo my love.'³⁹ Initially an internal family trait of the Devonshires, it extended outwards to members of the Devonshire House circle and, by the middle of the nineteenth century, it became a symbol of political allegiance to the Whigs.⁴⁰

The educational development of young aristocrats functioned as a ritual of initiation that ensured an adoption of a behavioural code that conformed to that of the larger social group to which they belonged. However, if the characteristics of the group are as Lamb represented in Sir Malcolm's mocking invective of a gentleman's education in the presence of Lord Orville, then her concern is that an appropriate code of behaviour is not being initiated. Instead, Lamb's representation of the education of a 'gentleman' is that it is reinforcing a sense of separateness and distinction, thus leading to an adoption of conforming behaviour that is inappropriate and will demean the aristocracy by downgrading the external markers of social distinction. That is to say that, as Lamb has Sir Malcolm point out to Hamilton, the superficiality of 'exterior deportment' has become of primary importance; social markers of distinction, such as codes of dress, speech and etiquette that previously pointed to the social essence of inherent nobility are no longer reliable signifiers of nobility in its true form. Hamilton is astonished to discover that a young man at the theatre whom he judged to be a 'most valuable acquaintance' because of his 'dress and perfect ease of manner', and his telling numerous entertaining anecdotes upon the fashionable world in 'a jargon not very easy to understand', was actually a servant who had 'been permitted to throw aside' his uniform for the evening.⁴¹ It is the 'advantages' of an 'easy, unembarrassed manner, an air of fashion' that Hamilton is, at first, self-consciously lacking.⁴² But whilst Hamilton recognises that 'however absurd and affected much of this might be', his own initial desire to blend in leads him to adopt this codified behaviour, observing that those who possessed this easy air 'were persons of real refinement and manners.'⁴³

The Whigs were convinced of their legitimacy as defenders of the Constitution and natural representatives of the people, and recognised the effects of a well-managed performance of political sincerity in persuading the rest of the social hierarchy of their worth, the deployment of Georgiana amongst the Westminster voters being a case in point. As the natural leaders they traditionally believed themselves to be, they had to present themselves as such and were dependent on verbal and visual codes of recognition, such as behaviour, dress and language, that legitimised them not only in the eyes of the people but, as Rodney Barker importantly argues, also to themselves.⁴⁴ It is the public spectacle of refinement that is associated with the monarchy and the aristocracy that clearly defines them as legitimate holders of invested authority, and that Lamb recognised as being undermined and devalued. Lamb's concern is that the clearly

defined public persona of the Whigs as an effective party of opposition is one of damaged leadership qualities and lacking in self-belief, thereby presenting an incoherent and inconsistent perception of themselves. This is certainly how O’Gorman views the status of the Whigs in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, at the time of Lamb’s writing; according to him, the Whigs existed in a government-in-waiting, acting as a semi-permanent opposition and weakened by years of failure, demoralised by internal divisions and crippled by indecisive leadership. He uses the same adjective as Lamb, in the above description of the Duke of Altamonte, in describing them as ‘sullen and aloof’.⁴⁵

Colley observes a distinctive ‘*sturm-und-drang*’ quality about British Patrician life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, recording the high number of political suicides and emotionally driven confrontations; she notes a self-destructive impulse born out of the calling into question of the very legitimacy of the power-holding elite and criticises them as a ‘separate class parasitic on the nation.’⁴⁶ It is this sense of the aristocracy having separated themselves from the rest of the nation that Lamb consistently criticises as being self-destructive in her novels. In *Glenarvon* the 1798 Irish rebellion gathers momentum around the Delaval family because of their neglect of duty. Lady Orville dreads the ‘tediousness of [country] neighbours’⁴⁷, preferring to remain within her own elevated circle despite imminent ruin. Ada Reis represents the aristocracy *in extremis*; he is guaranteed impunity from a murder motivated by greedy acquisition, which in turn is part of a prophecy representing the fulfilment of an inheritance:

Continue thy course: a monarch’s crown awaits thee, in a land where diamonds and emeralds shall be strewn under thy feet, and where the blood of the innocent may flow, without fear of revenge.⁴⁸

According to the narrative frame, the story of Ada Reis is written by himself for the benefit of his successors so that they may learn that ‘no man has reason to proud’, the manuscript being recovered posthumously.⁴⁹ The eponymous character is sold into slavery as a child but finds himself in the care of a benevolent Genoese merchant. Given a good education, ‘the young Adamo’ finds a place in the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and it is here that he ‘became cunning and corrupt.’⁵⁰ After his dismissal from court, Ada begins a life of ‘peril and adventure’ in emulation of the

‘histories of the Corsairs’, and acquires the ‘title as well as the authority of Reis.’⁵¹ According to Lamb’s endnotes for the novel, Reis is the rank of captain in the Turkish navy, and it is a position that Ada acquires by instigating a mutiny and murdering the existing captain. Ada Reis, as he is now referred to throughout the novel, later reminisces that he ‘was prouder of the title of Reis than of any other because he had laboured for it, and won it by his own energy.’⁵² While awaiting the fulfilment of the prophecy, Ada Reis, as a young man with no responsibilities, continues his ruthless pursuit of wealth and women, ‘vanity and vehemence’ becoming his defining characteristics.⁵³ But on becoming a father, Ada Reis, having murdered the mother of his child, returns to the court of Tripoli to prepare himself and ‘the offspring of [his] body, the child of blood, [who] shall wear an imperial crown.’⁵⁴

However, despite his pride in his independent wealth and status, declaring that ‘were the appointment [of Viceroy] offered to him he would disdain it’, Ada Reis, ‘like most pretended philosophers, [...] valued above all things he ever affected to despise.’⁵⁵ Ada Reis prepares himself and his daughter for the fulfilment of their destinies by assuming the ‘symbols of royalty’, such as sumptuously dressed slaves and guards for his palace ‘such as are employed in the service of the Pasha of Tripoly [sic]’.⁵⁶ Ada Reis thereby convinces himself and others of his greatness by acquiring the external signifiers of a legitimate ruler. Barker argues throughout his work on the self-legitimising strategies of rulers that the social hierarchy is divided into three groups; custodians that are actively engaged in governing, those in close proximity to custodians but who take no active part in governing, and subjects and/or citizens.⁵⁷ The process of self-legitimation, according to Barker, is to not only convince those whom the custodians represent of their distinctiveness and capabilities, but for the custodians to convince themselves that they are eligible and able to engage actively in governing. It is a process that occurs as much out of the public gaze as in it. David Cannadine agrees, arguing in his exploration of the monarchy’s role in the invention of tradition and the meaning of symbolic rituals that class identity was forged in expressions of solidarity:

So, the royal ritual [...] was not so much a jamboree to delight the masses but a group rite in which the aristocracy, the church and the royal family corporately re-affirmed their solidarity (or animosity) behind closed doors.⁵⁸

Barker and Cannadine agree that rulers justify themselves to themselves through a variety of rituals and rhetoric, using everything from architecture to etiquette; those within the inner circle affirm and confirm their position. Therefore any event that did include the masses was an exercise in self-legitimation that reaffirmed the exclusion of all others. Barker gives the example of the approach to the royal presence at the palace of Versailles; the anterooms became increasingly grand so that whilst, in physical terms, the monarch was getting nearer, in symbolic terms, the approach actually increased the distance between the monarch and the subject.⁵⁹

A more pertinent example of an exercise in legitimisation, in relation to Lamb, is that of the 'public days' hosted by Georgiana at the Derbyshire seat of the Devonshire, Chatsworth House. As Amanda Foreman observes, Chatsworth was designed to impress and command respect, from the first glimpse of the impressive façade from the approach to the fabulously decorated interior featuring Cavendish ancestors juxtaposed with classical gods.⁶⁰ The 'Public Days' were an expensive hangover from an era of feudalism designed as an act of public relations. Public Days were held at Chatsworth once a week, during which the house was open to the tenants of the estate and to any respectable passer-by, and the free dinner on offer to all visitors, was presided over by Georgiana and the Duke whilst attired in court dress.⁶¹ This access to the home and hospitality of the Devonshires implied an unrestricted access to the Devonshires themselves. However, I would argue that what appears to be social inclusion as a method of ensuring the safekeeping of the local political influence in favour of the Duke actually serves as a reminder of the distinctive nature and necessity of the aristocracy as a ruling body that necessitates the exclusion of the majority of the population. The grandeur of the house and gardens, the lavish extravagance of the fare on offer and the distinctive, courtly dress and demeanour of the Devonshires are all symbolic signifiers of their social essence as the elite. This certainly lends a new perspective to the democratic forays made by Georgiana into the streets and crowds of Westminster, drinking in public houses and becoming godmother to hundreds of children. Horace Walpole's commentary on the canvassing techniques of Georgiana by which she 'dazzl[ed] and enchant[ed] them [the public] by the fascination of her manner, the power of her beauty and the influence of her high rank'⁶² suggests that these occasions served to remind the electorate that this appearance amongst them was the exception rather than the rule.

The symbolic distance between governors and governed is vast; the very attributes that earmark the governors as being worthy repositories of invested authority actually serve to disconnect the relationship, and replace it with a quasi-relationship that is more reminiscent of that between celebrity and fan (for those not critical of the aristocracy) than it does the social contract between ruler and subject. The Whigs were conspicuous as leaders of the fashionable sphere, as well as the political opposition. The Whigs possess an air of glamour that was not matched in the Tory camp, due to the initial patronage of the Prince of Wales, and being publicly supported by the likes of Georgiana, her sister Henrietta, and Mary Robinson, the celebrated actress and mistress to the Prince of Wales and Charles Fox. Lamb's concern is that, due to being in opposition for so long, the Whigs' status as fashionable celebrities was superseding that of an effective political opposition, thereby putting them in danger of becoming a transient commodity and laying themselves open to the criticism of outward ostentation replacing inner integrity. This is clearly signalled in the introduction of *Ada Reis*, in which Lamb describes the famous adventurer Belzoni⁶³ breaking open a temple, 'the wonder and pride of man, perchance the sepulchre of kings, [and finding] in it a loathsome toad, its sole proprietor.'⁶⁴ This is a clear allusion to Christ's characterisation of his opponents, the Pharisees, whom he denounces as 'whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.'⁶⁵ The dazzling exterior belies the lack of inner substance, as Lamb attempts to reveal by peeling back the surface glamour. Leo Braudy writes of this transition occurring across Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century, in that the 'Aristocracy, so used to considering its style a by-product of status, now had to convince of status by its style.'⁶⁶ Style as an indicator of distinction was subject to imitation and manipulation, and therefore unreliable, as Lamb illustrates with the revolutionary glamour of Glenarvon, Lady Orville's superficial appearance of wealth when actually crippled with debt, and the brutality and greed of *Ada Reis* masked behind the external accoutrements of the ruling elite.

Lamb's concerns were not so much that an aristocrat will be mistaken for a bourgeois and vice versa, but are more in keeping with Braudy's observations upon the increasing over-emphasis of style over substance:

The new speed with which fashion was being communicated [...] had an indelible impact on the nature of fame. In Europe especially the standards for seeing and being seen were adapted from the practice of aristocrats and pseudoaristocrats of the early part of the [nineteenth] century; and [others] often took their lead from the circles of fashionable wealth. Appropriately, this new conception of the importance of aristocratic style accords closely with a continued attack of aristocratic political power. What cultural credit they [the aristocracy] did possess was invested more and more in being seen. Here they were the specialists and, if they could no longer unrestrictedly lead as members of a privileged class, they could through their inbred or acquired awareness of what it meant to be on stage.⁶⁷

The emphasis upon the appearance of the aristocracy is one of staged theatricality for public consumption, such as Georgiana's public days or appearances amongst the voting public. The exercises in self-legitimation that occurred in public were exercises in propaganda, presenting the desirable and acceptable face of the Whig aristocracy to the public. This, coupled with the Whigs' celebrity status as leaders of the circles of fashionable wealth from which the public, through the medium of the press, took their lead, emphasised the split between the public and the private self; in short, between what one is and what one purports to be. Throughout her novels Lamb explores the disjunction between the private and the public in that the public face is no longer reliable. The celebrity aspect of this split was functioning merely as a distraction from the Whig party's increasing ineffectualness as an opposition party.

Chris Rojek identifies the disintegration of twenty-first century cultural values of integrity as being represented by a vacuous, superficial, acquisitive commodity culture with fashion being the marker of distinction, offering a façade of attraction designed to generate desire and envy as an articulation of the wants, needs and aspirations of everybody outside of the charmed circle.⁶⁸ Rojek's comments on this century are equally applicable to Lamb's depiction of the disintegration of the Whigs' identity as a political force to be reckoned with. They are emulated as part of the fashionable consumer culture more than they are appreciated for the hereditary sense of honour, responsibility and duty that is implied by their genealogy. The element of celebrity, that was initially a by-product of the attributed cultural capital ascribed to the aristocracy, eventually supersedes the status and masks the disintegration of the values of the 'natural' aristocracy that was outlined as desirable by Burke. The increasing scrutiny from the press also meant that the distinction between the public and private

was collapsing, resulting in a criticism of an oligarchy that contrasted unfavourably with an emerging class of entrepreneurial and evangelical professionals that practised morality in public and private. Lamb is acutely aware of the need in her message of reform to ensure the survival of what she perceives to be the natural order of the social hierarchy. As Braudy states, the overthrow of a king, and by extension the attending aristocracy, requires

not just an explicit political theory or a set of grievances but also a deep seated conviction that kings can be overthrown; that their authority and power, their “true” fame, is not sufficient to protect them or make them innately superior to anybody else.⁶⁹

The point that Braudy is making is that kings and aristocrats ‘[...] are as various as people and must justify themselves by their actions rather than their genealogy’,⁷⁰ and he recognises the role of the monarch as just that, a role that must be performed by such a good actor that the appearance of the monarch in public matches the virtue of the inner nature, drawing attention to the theatricality of the ritual and ceremony that creates a context of the unchanging, and therefore the very persuasive, form of rule. The coronation of the Prince Regent as George IV is a case in point, an extravagant affair with a medieval motif that was an exercise in self-legitimacy and public propaganda in an attempt to persuade an increasingly hostile public of his authority to occupy the throne. The emphasis upon medievalism was an attempt to inspire loyalty and almost feudal enthusiasm for the tradition and authority of the monarchy, and for the monarch in particular.⁷¹ As an exercise in self-legitimation, the implementation of overtly stage-managed royal ritual was criticised as a hollow and misguided sham that relied upon theatrical props and, as such, was ridiculous in an enlightened age; this is certainly how the new monarch was perceived, for George IV was described as looking ridiculous, ‘more like an elephant than a man.’⁷² For Lamb the performance of the role is not enough. Performance is still a posture that is insincere, easily imitated and can be exposed as rhetoric, as represented in her recurring portraits of the aristocracy as performers of a role, of which Lamb identifies Byron as the epitome on a personal and political level. Though Lamb’s fictional portraits of Byron, particularly in *Glenarvon*, have been read as an expression of her spleen, they are more than that: it is a continuation of her sophisticated critique of contemporary Whig politics. Her portraits of Byron are the vehicles, rather than the target, of her critique.

Byron, despite the circuitous route that brought him to the Baronetage, practised the rituals of self-legitimation and controlled his image as an aristocrat. The formalised education at Harrow and then Cambridge, the occupation of the ancestral home of Newstead, albeit briefly, speeches in the House of Lords, the undertaking of an alternative Grand Tour, the refusal of payment for his poetry despite his increasing debts, even the pursuit of the wives of his contemporaries, all function as rituals of legitimacy which cohere into a code of behaviour that distil into Byron the essence of being aristocratic. Christine Kenyon Jones identifies how, even despite the apparent informality of his self-representation in portraiture, Byron asserted himself as an aristocrat rather than a poet, consistently resisting artists' attempts to add poetic paraphernalia 'upon ye canvas.'⁷³ Byron recognised for himself the aspect of performance in fulfilling the role of the governing class. At the beginning of his Parliamentary career he chose the subject of the proposed capital punishment of the Nottinghamshire 'frame-breakers' for his maiden speech, yet made the distinction between the speech and the speaker in a letter to Lord Holland in which he wrote of his apprehension that 'his' Lordship will think [Byron] too lenient towards these men, and half a *frame-breaker* [him]self.'⁷⁴ He performed his speech as an oration and wrote later that it was 'perhaps a little theatrical', following which he rarely fulfilled what he termed his 'senatorial duties' and wrote to his half-sister Augusta that he had 'no intention to "strut another hour" on that stage' after experimenting with the posture of 'being born for opposition.'⁷⁵

The art of effective and persuasive speechmaking as a performance is at the centre of Byron's short parliamentary career and this is how he, as a representative of the Whig patriarchy, is portrayed as Glenarvon, a skilful and manipulative rhetorician. The dangers of the performative art of rule and the neglect of senatorial duties are embodied in the character of Glenarvon, who is a persuasive and charismatic man who seduces with rhetoric and who legitimises himself to the increasingly restless Irish in the same way as the existing rulers have done, thereby presenting what Barker describes 'an acute challenge [by the rebel leader] to the legitimating self-identification of rulers [by presenting] to the government its own mask carried by other players.'⁷⁶ However, Glenarvon's purpose is not ennobled by what Barker would describe as a sense of moral justice on behalf of the oppressed indigenous population as he has own hidden agenda for leading the uprising of the United Irishmen, but he does distinguish himself as a

leader from the bulk of the population; Lamb describes him as appearing ‘amidst the grotesque and ferocious rabble, like some God from a higher world.’⁷⁷ Glenarvon throws the existing rulers into relief as an elite that oppresses the identity of the indigenous population by his appropriation of the language of egalitarian nationalism. He adopts the anthems, ballads and insignia of Ireland to his cause, and uses the secrecy of the rebellion as a powerfully cohesive force for ensuring loyalty and solidarity via codes, secret hideouts and oaths of allegiance, all of which are external signifiers for what is assumed to be an internal conviction to the cause of liberating the oppressed population.

Despite his apparent egalitarianism Glenarvon is not a democrat and insists that he alone is still referred to by his title, to which he has a very dubious claim, when all others have renounced theirs.⁷⁸ His title and the ancestral lands that he claims back in the name of Glenarvon, St Alvin Priory and Belfont Abbey, fulfil the same legitimising functions as the trappings of achievement of the existing rulers; they mark Glenarvon out as a figure of distinction and authority, with a tradition of leadership in his genealogy. The corridors of Belfont Abbey are lined with ancestral portraits, which are shown to the visitors from the neighbouring Castle Delaval, who feel able to call upon Glenarvon’s home unannounced in the same way that Chatsworth was open to respectable visitors on Public Days.⁷⁹ The title and estates legitimise Glenarvon on three fronts: to himself; to the Delavals to whom it represents, despite the politics of the notorious but as yet unseen Glenarvon, a legitimate member of the aristocracy upon whom they must call out of courtesy as well as curiosity; and to the indigenous population to which they imply an education and tradition within politics and the credentials of leadership and authority. That he betrays both the governors and the governed underlines Lamb’s concern with the deceptive and persuasive nature of social signifiers and rhetoric, and makes it clear that the present state of unrest, because of the neglect of ‘senatorial duties’, allows for the possibility of rebellion.

Although Lamb paints a fairly damning picture of Byron in *Ada Reis*, it is one that is a condemnation of the society that lionised him rather than of Byron himself. His appearance as the son of the Spirit of Darkness is verified by Lamb in a letter to Lady Morgan, in response to her praise of *Ada Reis*:

[Thank you] for yr kind reception of Adamo el Reis - you must tell Lady or Mrs Fletcher that Condulmar not Ada is Ld Byron that is if there be a Byron in the Tale and as to the Radicals in Hell they must be some where you know & where the Deuce in these Aristocratic days can they be.⁸⁰

It is not only the Radicals being punished in Hell, but also the aristocrats; Lamb's version of the infernal regions is unique, designed to her own specifications for a distinct purpose, as is discussed at length in a later chapter. Suffice it to say here that this is a section of Hell especially designed by Lamb to accommodate the sins of the fashionable world; the 'crowds [driven] elsewhere [from the gates of Hell] are the lower orders.'⁸¹ Those awaiting their trial within this Hell are described as Lamb as

personages from civilised countries, who possessed rank, dignity, and riches when alive; such as have dreamed away life's little hour without committing any actual crime; but misspending every moment in idleness and folly, have proved the cause of ruin to others, and have brought themselves, by mere wantonness and neglect of duty, into out abode.⁸²

Condulmar tells his 'Creatures of clay' that they arrived in his domain of their own free will, 'we force no votaries into our train.'⁸³ As Condulmar reveals his true nature his handsome, distinctly Byronic, face

became deformed, and its expression terrible. His adulators started back. "Is this," they said, "him whom we have loved?" "I was ever" he cried, "the monster you now see me. I did not even disguise myself, fair and frail ones, but you chose to love me in spite of what I was. I sought you not; more even than this, I warned you. I have the same splendid talents now, the same powers of seduction: one only gift I retain not, and, to your shame, I speak it, it seems the only one which has power to win and keep you – I mean beauty. My conversation shall be as delightful, but my smile more horrible than imagination can conceive."⁸⁴

Condulmar, as 'fashion's favourite', beguiled these 'creatures of clay' and made them instrumental in their own damnation because 'beauty has been given, by nature, a fatal ascendancy over man and over woman'.⁸⁵ Fiormonda is in much more danger from Condulmar than when she had 'been assailed by mysterious beings, by enchanters, necromancers.'⁸⁶ Condulmar's beauty gains ascendancy over Fiormonda and when he urges her 'to follow her desires; indulge freely thy pleasure or thy curiosity', she is unable to resist.⁸⁷ Similarly, Ada Reis' 'clear auburn hair hanging in curls over his fair brow and white neck, his eyes beaming with love, his smile irresistible, his voice most

melodious' prevents him from being 'abhorred even though his crimes were suspected.'⁸⁸ However, Condulmar's beautiful face makes him the favourite of the fashionable elite and only masked his demonic essence because of what Lamb identifies as a willingness to sacrifice 'honour, peace of mind, health, wealth, wives, parents and [...] children at the shrine of this [...] fashion'; her ultimate indictment is that 'no country but England acknowledges such a master.'⁸⁹

The over-identification of the Whig aristocracy as the fashionable elite has fragmented their identity as an effective party of opposition, and as such obscured, according to Lamb's representation, a sense of purpose and a disintegration of a moral framework within which to recognise and implement the principle of duty. 'How', Graham Hamilton asks, on behalf of Lamb, 'to learn to speak of virtue, when we have forsaken it; to express abhorrence at the views we practice; to jest with frivolity upon subjects we still venerate [...], to look so innocent, when our hearts, and the whole world, know that we are guilty[?]'⁹⁰ Hamilton's own preference for the 'middle rank' of society is Lamb's most overt criticism of the aristocracy as capable leaders:

It seems to me that in it is the sap and stamina of the country. The flower is more beautiful; but, as Dryden says, "The life is in the leaf." From that order, vice, dissipation are in a great measure excluded. The regular habits of necessary industry discourage and repress them, and though some will tread in the steps of higher classes, these are but as froth on the wave: the stream below runs fresh, strong and uncontaminated, and long may it continue to do so.⁹¹

In a speech made in the House of Lords in 1831 Grey stated that 'aristocratic influence would have to be exercised in a less arbitrary fashion' and that the future of the aristocracy depended upon

their cultivating a good understanding with the people, becoming known for their good offices, supporting the principles of the constitution, and the rights of the people, and by the performances of these duties for which alone the public trust and confidence, and all the privileges enjoyed, were given them.⁹²

Parliamentary reform would strengthen rather than undermine the position of the aristocracy by detaching the aspirant middle class from the more unpredictable element of the working class, and cultivating them in their own image. Barker recognises that

Rulers, in order to sustain and cultivate their own identity and authority, sustain and cultivate not only their own but that of those they recognise as marked off from the mass of their

subjects by identities which attach them to both other individuals and groups, and raise them above them as leaders, representatives and spokespersons.⁹³

The enfranchisement of the middle classes constructed a new participating citizen in the image of the existing rulers, what Barker calls a 'cultivation of a coherent character' of the ruling and voting classes,⁹⁴ an approximation and aspiration of themselves in taste and education which confirmed the distinction of the original model of the legitimate aristocracy. However, Hamilton's recognition of the middle class as retaining 'fresh, strong and uncontaminated, and long it may continue to do so' is countered by Mr. M-'s retort that it 'cannot long continue to do so if care is not immediately taken to check a fast-spreading corruption.'⁹⁵ Mr. M- is voicing Lamb's concern that the aristocratic behaviour that was being emulated was not that of the desirable code outlined by Burke as befitting a natural aristocracy. Lamb's works have not been taken seriously as a critique of the aristocratic lack of integrity because she is perceived to be an integral part of that very culture that denigrated integrity, primarily because of her very public display of adultery.

Byron's dismissal of *Glenarvon* has been well documented, in that he denied the authenticity of his portrait since the author had not written the 'truth' and he did not 'sit long enough' for a good likeness to be made.⁹⁶ Byron's critical distancing of himself from Lamb's creation is, to a certain extent, an exercise in damage limitation, the book being published the same year as his departure from England. As Kenyon Jones has described Byron's maintaining strict control upon his replication in portraiture, so Ghislaine McDayter has demonstrated the lack of control through which literary replicas of himself took upon an 'uncanny life of their own.'⁹⁷ Lamb's sister-in-law, Emily, Lady Cowper (later Lady Palmerston) sums up the general reception by her contemporaries of Lamb's later literary endeavours in her response to *Ada Reis*, in that she recommends it to her brother, Frederick, as 'a strange farrago but you may think it worth fifteen shillings to satisfy your curiosity.'⁹⁸ Lamb's husband, William, was supportive of these later novels though he expressed concern about the ending of *Ada Reis*, stressing in a letter to John Murray, who published it, that he hoped that Murray's reader, William Gifford, would 'impress upon Lady Caroline the absolute necessity of [...] revising the third volume and particularly the conclusion of the novel,' with regards to the apocalyptic ending of the novel, perhaps fearing that it would be a

reminder of the supernatural ending of *Glenarvon*.⁹⁹ These were concerns that Murray and Gifford did not share and the ending stayed as it was. Although *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis* did not reach the success of *Glenarvon*, only having a print run of a single edition each as opposed to four, they did receive critical attention. Reviewers were mixed on the subject of Lamb's talent, ranging from her 'animated style, brilliance of imagery, and the skilful delineation' of character for *Glenarvon*,¹⁰⁰ to the declaration that *Ada Reis* must have been, and if not should have been, 'the production of that gifted child of the Lakes, the Opium-eater'¹⁰¹ for its abundant absurdity. Not all recognised the intended message for aristocratic reform, but the *British Critic* journal in reviewing *Glenarvon* commented that if Lamb's work is a faithful delineation of the fashionable world, and if it was her intention to stem the tide of 'Continental profligacy,' then she did not 'write in vain.'¹⁰²

ENDNOTES

- ¹ McDayter, G. (2001), 'Hysterically Speaking: Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* and the Revolutionary Voice', *Romantic Generations: Essays in Honour of Robert F. Gleckner*, eds. Batten, G., McDayter, G. & Milligan, B. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, p. 155.
- ² Wilson, F. (1999), '“An Exaggerated Woman”: The Melodramas of Lady Caroline Lamb', *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Macmillan, p. 195.
- ³ Douglass, P. (1999), 'The Madness of Writing: Lady Caroline Lamb's Byronic Identity', *Pacific coast Philology* 34 (1), p. 53.
- ⁴ Mitchell, L. (2005), *The Whig World 1760-1837*, London & New York: Hambledon & London, p. 5.
- ⁵ Blyth, H. (1972), *Caro: The Fatal Passion, The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*, New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, p. 26; Manchester, S. (1992), *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know: The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*, London: Gothic Press, p. 28.
- ⁶ Bourdieu, P. (2003), *Language & Symbolic Power*, trans. G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 17.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p. 16.
- ⁸ Black, J. (1993), *The Politics of Great Britain 1688-1800*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 37-52. See also Elofson, W.M. (1996), *The Rockingham Connection and the Second Founding of the Whig Party 1768-1773*, Montreal and London: Queen's University Press.
- ⁹ Mitchell, (2005), p. 8.
- ¹⁰ Smith, E. A. (1999), *George IV*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 139-145.
- ¹¹ Foreman, A. (1998), *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire*, London: Harper Collins, pp. 92, 139.
- ¹² *Ibid*, p. 65.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p. 37.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 44-61.
- ¹⁵ Lamb, C. Lady, (1816), *Glenarvon, 3 Volumes*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 1, p. 267.
- ¹⁶ Cavendish, G. Duchess of Devonshire, (2001), *The Sylph; A Novel*, York: Henry Parker.
- ¹⁷ Lamb, C. Lady, *Graham Hamilton, 2 Volumes*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 1, pp. 182-183.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 62.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 180.
- ²⁰ Foreman, (1998), pp. 234, 249.
- ²¹ Burke, E. (1962), *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, ed. Robson, J. M., New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, p. x.
- ²² *Ibid*. p. 104.
- ²³ *Ibid*, pp. 98-100.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 104-105.
- ²⁵ Colley, L. (1996), *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, London: Vintage, p. 156 (first published by Yale University Press, 1992).
- ²⁶ Paine, T. (1995), *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. Philip, M., Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 131.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 132, 231-232.
- ²⁸ Burke was born in Dublin. His mother was a Catholic; his father had converted to Anglicanism and practised as a solicitor. Burke was brought up as an Anglican, was educated at Trinity College and his initial career decision was for Law. Between 1761-1764 Burke was private secretary to W. G. Hamilton, M.P., who was the Chief Secretary for Ireland. Burke began working for Rockingham, in the same capacity, in 1765. Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham, was the leader of the Whig party and Prime Minister twice, first in 1765-1766 and again in 1782. As a landowner of vast estates in both England and Ireland, Rockingham was apparently an exemplary employer and landlord. He took great interest in the welfare of his estates, tenants and servants and, in Ireland, granted long leases to Catholics, reduced rents in times of hardship, improved the housing of his tenants and was always accessible. Rockingham appears to be the embodiment of, and inspiration for, Burke's aristocratic ideal. See Ayling, S. (1988), *Edmund Burke: His Life and Opinions*, London: John Murray; Elofson, W.M. (1996), *The Rockingham Connection and the Second Founding of the Whig Party*, Buffalo, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- ²⁹ O'Gorman, F. (1997), *The Long Eighteenth Century; British Political and Social History 1688 – 1832*, London & New York: Arnold, p. 331.
- ³⁰ Colley, (1996), p. 162.
- ³¹ Burke, (1962), p. 104.
- ³² Lamb, (1816), vol. 1, p. 12; vol. 2, p. 77.

- ³³ Lamb, (1822), vol 1, pp. 57-59.
- ³⁴ Bourdieu, (2003), p. 24.
- ³⁵ O’Gorman, (1997), p. 331.
- ³⁶ Colley, (1996), p. 180.
- ³⁷ Lamb, (1822), vol. 1, p. 60.
- ³⁸ Foreman, (1998), p. 45.
- ³⁹ Douglass, (2004), p. 26.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 46.
- ⁴¹ Lamb, (1822), vol. 1, pp. 68-69.
- ⁴² Ibid, vol. 1, p. 129.
- ⁴³ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 138.
- ⁴⁴ Barker, R. (2001), *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentation of Rulers and Subjects*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 42.
- ⁴⁵ O’Gorman, (1997), p. 285.
- ⁴⁶ Colley, (1996), p. 161.
- ⁴⁷ Lamb, (1822), vol. 2, p. 33.
- ⁴⁸ Lamb, (1823), vol. 1, p. 22.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, vol. 1, p. xviii.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 3.
- ⁵¹ Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 3, 5.
- ⁵² Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 23-24.
- ⁵³ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 27.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 25.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 6; vol. 1, p. 48.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 6.
- ⁵⁷ Barker, (2001), p. 42.
- ⁵⁸ Cannadine, D. (1994), ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the “Invention of Tradition”, 1820-1977’, *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 116.
- ⁵⁹ Barker, (2001), p. 79.
- ⁶⁰ Foreman, (1998), p. 24.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, p. 28-29.
- ⁶² Ibid, p. 143.
- ⁶³ Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778-1823), an explorer who discovered the temple of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, and was the first person to penetrate the second pyramid of Giza and locate the inner chambers.
- ⁶⁴ Lamb, C. Lady, (1823), *Ada Reis, 3 Volumes*, London: John Murray, vol. 1, p. xviii.
- ⁶⁵ The Book of Matthew, 23: 27.
- ⁶⁶ Braudy, L. (1997), *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, New York: Vintage Books, p. 348.
- ⁶⁷ Braudy, (1997), p.480.
- ⁶⁸ Rojek, C. (2001), *Celebrity*, London: Reaktion Books, pp. 106-109.
- ⁶⁹ Braudy, (1997), p. 342.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 343.
- ⁷¹ Girouard, M. (1981), *The Return to Camelot; Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, pp. 25-27.
- ⁷² Cannadine, (1994), pp. 101, 117.
- ⁷³ Kenyon Jones, C. (1999), ‘Fantasy and Transfiguration: Byron and His Portraits’, *Byromania; Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Macmillan, p. 114.
- ⁷⁴ Marchand, L. (1993), *Byron; A Portrait*, London: Pimlico, p. 113.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 114, 125, 141.
- ⁷⁶ Barker, (2001), p. 101.
- ⁷⁷ Lamb, (1816), vol. 3, p. 21.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, vol 2, p. 80.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 24.
- ⁸⁰ Douglass, P. (2004), *Lady Caroline Lamb: A Biography*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 252.
- ⁸¹ Lamb, (1823), vol. 3, p. 52.
- ⁸² Ibid, vol. 3, p. 50.
- ⁸³ Ibid, vol. 3, p. 115.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 130-131.

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- ⁸⁵ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 65.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 181, 177.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 28.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 26, 37.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 90-91.
- ⁹⁰ Lamb, (1822), vol. 1, p. 145.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 149-150.
- ⁹² Grey quoted in O’Gorman, (1997), p. 366.
- ⁹³ Barker, (2001), p. 71.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 118.
- ⁹⁵ Lamb, (1823), vol. 1, p. 150.
- ⁹⁶ Marchand, (1993), p. 248.
- ⁹⁷ McDayter, G. (1999), ‘Conjuring Byron: Byromania, Literary Commodification and the Birth of Celebrity,’ *Byromania; Portraits of the Artist and in Nineteenth- And Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Wilson, F. London: Macmillan, p. 54.
- ⁹⁸ Airlie, M. (1922), *Lady Palmerston and Her Times, 2 Volumes*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, vol. 2, p. 110.
- ⁹⁹ Douglass, (2004), p. 250.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Theatrical Inquisitor*, 9th August, 1816, pp. 122 -125.
- ¹⁰¹ *The Examiner*, No: 796, 27th April, 1823, pp. 87 – 90.
- ¹⁰² *British Critic*, Volume 5, June 1816, pp. 627-633.

Chapter 2

Genre: The Politics of Form

In chapter one, I have examined the extra-verbal social context of Lamb's works. It is now necessary to examine the external form and in particular her choice of specific genres as foundations upon which Lamb builds her critique. Lamb's choice of the novel as a vehicle for her social and political critique follows the example of British writers of the 1790s, such as Lamb's correspondent William Godwin, with whom she first made contact in 1819 whilst canvassing for support for George Lamb's election campaign.¹ Gary Kelly writes that Godwin was one of a number of intellectuals who gave the novel a political purpose, using it to disseminate to a wide audience a critique of the cultural and political hegemony that was inspired by the French Revolution and political protest in Britain.² Like the English Jacobin novels, such as Godwin's *Things as They Are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), Robert Bage's *Man As He Is* (1792) and *Hermesprong; or, Man As He Is Not* (1796) and Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St Ives*, Lamb uses the novel to depict the experiences of an individual within social institutions, with the emphasis upon the inner self in collision with misleading social categories of identification. The focus of this chapter will be to examine Lamb's decision, which must be considered as a conscious one, to employ identifiable generic traits of the novel form as the vehicle for her political and social critique: the revelatory nature of the *roman à clef* that shocked, dismayed and titillated the readership of *Glenarvon*, the 'silver-fork' connotations of *Graham Hamilton* and the apocalyptic orientalism of *Ada Reis*. Lamb's conscious choice of genre is, I shall argue, less to do with Peter Graham's assertion that Lamb's aristocratic status and femininity created barriers that prevented her from reaching her full potential,³ and more to do with a considered choice of the genre as a salient feature of the novel which reminds us of the specific relationship between the author and intended audience. Like the Jacobin novelists, Lamb envisioned that change could be brought about by changing the minds of the individuals outside of the text by association with the narrative of the individual within the text. But whereas, as Kelly observes, the Jacobin writers aimed to bring about the process of historical reform via identification with the critique of the cultural and political hegemony by the emergent professional class, Lamb wrote to bring about a reform of behaviour within the aristocracy itself.⁴

As for the knowledge of the intended recipient, Bourdieu asserts that speech, either spoken or written, is produced with the speaker or, as in this case, writer having taken into account the market conditions within which their utterances will be received and evaluated by others.⁵ The use of economic terminology is particularly useful when considering Lamb's novels were marketed by her publishers for a wider consumer culture beyond the perimeter of her envisioned audience. Bourdieu goes on to say that the speaker's assessment of the market conditions and the anticipation of the likely reception of the product utterance acts as a form of self-censorship on the process of production, that individuals implicitly and routinely modify their expression through the process of assessment, anticipation and the selection of the appropriate genre, which Bourdieu terms 'speech tact'. This is the capacity to act upon the information that has been gathered, processed and internally modified to render the communication not only acceptable but efficient and effective.⁶ This line of enquiry is an intriguing one when considering Lamb's choice of genres, especially the *roman à clef* which offended so many of her circle. The choice of genre gives shape and force to the written word, acting as a model of writing but also, as Tzvetan Todorov identifies, functioning as 'horizons of expectation' for the readers.⁷ Lamb's decision to place the critique of her milieu within the specific genres of the novel is a critical act in itself. The *roman à clef* for *Glenarvon*, the silver-fork connotations of *Graham Hamilton* and the oriental extravagance of *Ada Reis* are all chosen with a keen understanding of the economic market place and for maximum efficacy whilst fulfilling the horizons of reader expectation as dictated by the choice of genre.

Glenarvon: Roman à Clef and Confessional Narrative

In terms of being able to recognise the ability to select the appropriate genre within which to speak, with an understanding of the idealised recipient, what is to be made of Lamb's choice of the *roman à clef* for her first novel? It is a genre that Peter Graham condemns as one that 'seldom gains high esteem' and he implies that her decision was an arbitrary one.⁸ As such, the choice has been deemed as being spectacularly inappropriate, commensurate not with power but rather with solipsistic insanity. The inappropriateness of the *roman à clef* genre is gauged by the perception of the content being nothing more than a shameless 'kiss and tell' confessional or as Byron damningly put it, '---- and publish',⁹ and also by the embarrassment caused to those that identified themselves within the text in what they perceived as an act of petty

vengeance by Lamb. The novel has also been interpreted by modern critics as a compulsive need to reveal and confess; Clark Olney is first in his observation that Lamb intended the novel 'primarily as an act of contrition and humility; a public confession of her sin.'¹⁰ John Clubbe suggests that the novel 'forced itself out of her: she had to write it as much as Byron had to write his confessional poems.'¹¹ This is an impulse that Graham likens to a volcanic explosion from within over which she had no control, condemning her for '[...] foolishly publishing a transcript of her own folly [;] Lady Caroline makes a good confession but a bad novel.'¹²

The idea of *Glenarvon* as confessional is an intriguing one, as it begs the question of what exactly is it that Lamb is perceived to be revealing or confessing, when the details of her relationship with Byron were already common knowledge? Frances Wilson refers to Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion that we only read the books that we already know the contents of, suggesting that contemporary readers of the novel came to it assuming that they were going to find a story of which the details were already common knowledge, and instead found a story that they had never heard before, a fantasy rather than a factual Byron.¹³ I would like to slightly amend this with regards to the first half of the statement; a general, wider readership, beyond Lamb's immediate circle, would have discovered in the novel the external details of an affair that were already common knowledge. The unknown elements to a general readership, such as Lamb's portrayal of her internal dilemmas of being torn between duty and self-fulfilment, the initial fascination with, and intensity of feeling for, Byron, his own duplicity and the inclusion of his letter sent to her in Ireland that definitively ended their affair, would already have been apparent to her own immediate circle. Those that came to the novel expecting to find further revelations must have been either disappointed or relieved - particularly Byron for, as Caroline Franklin points out, there was no mention of the scandal of incest and sodomy.¹⁴ But what appears to be a straightforward confessional narrative can actually act as a form of rebellion when we take into consideration Lamb's account of why she sent the novel to be published in the first place.

In the conciliatory preface that was inserted into the second edition of the novel, which appeared a matter of weeks after the first, Lamb stated that *Glenarvon* was a piece of work that sought to correct 'excited misrepresentation[s]' of her character.

This motivation is echoed in a letter to Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, in which she asserted that she felt justified in parodying ‘Emily, Lady Melbourne and Lady Holland [sister-in-law, mother-in-law and former friend respectively] because they supported Byron for four years even though it annoyed William [Lamb]’ and that she resented having all her misdemeanours ‘stretching back to the days of infancy brought forth to view without mercy’ by William’s family in repeated attempts to have her certified insane.¹⁵ Lamb’s rebellion took the form of doing what few had dared to do in refusing to be silent about what she saw as an unfair bias, an act of defiance that has, as Frances Wilson identifies, a modern day counterpart in a descendant of Lamb from the Spencer line, Diana, Princess of Wales.¹⁶ Both women became a huge embarrassment for the establishment as represented by their husbands and extended families by publicly denouncing the embedded hypocrisy that punished all forms of female transgression with the utmost severity. By refusing to remain silent, Lamb, like Diana, stamped her authority upon the unfolding narrative of events as told by others. Lamb projects into her text the authority of experience, and the historicity of personal experience and its inclusion in public discourse in the form of the novel makes *Glenarvon* what Kirk Curnutt describes as an ‘incontestable site of evidence’ as witnessed by ‘those that have been there’.¹⁷ The privileging of the experiencing subject that is inherent in the form of the confessional narrative denies those that have not ‘been there’ the right to speak upon a particular topic and is something Bourdieu recognises as being commensurate with power and authority in the form of a kind of social contract. Bourdieu concurs that those that ‘speak’, or in this case ‘write’, on a given subject must ensure that they are entitled to do so and those that listen must recognise that those who speak are worthy of attention.¹⁸

There is no doubt about Lamb’s authority to write about the subject of her relationship with Byron as one who had ‘been there’ and those that read the book into four editions certainly esteemed Lamb as being worthy of attention, even though this can also be attributed to the fortuitous timing of the novel and the demand for any fresh information about the scandalous poet. The mixed reaction of outrage from Lamb’s immediate circle and delight from the reading public, evidenced by the instant success of the novel, can be attributed to another factor: that the publication of the novel is what was considered then, as it is now, an extraordinary flouting of not only convention but of Bourdieu’s ‘speech tact’. Lamb’s publishing caused indignation precisely because it

was considered that this particular linguistic expression was not ‘tactful’ in any way and was perceived instead as a flagrant exercise in self-aggrandisement. The foregrounding of such a personal experience was read as a shameless and emotive play for sympathy and it is arguable that Lamb’s legacy of insanity is largely based upon what appears to be a grossly irrational and inappropriate act of social suicide. If *Glenarvon* is to be read as such, then Peter Graham is correct in that the format of the *roman à clef* is one that seldom gains high esteem. But if we go back to Lamb’s initial claim for what was her motivation for writing the novel, taking into account the efficacy of form, then the choice of genre does seem to be the most appropriate as a revelatory text. The novel then becomes something more than just about Lamb and Byron in particular, and becomes the exposure of the moral and political bankruptcy that Lamb felt was endemic within the aristocracy.

In choosing the *roman à clef* Lamb was acutely aware of the interest in the movements of the aristocracy within the popular print culture, with newspapers and periodicals such as *Bon Ton Magazine*, *Morning Post and Gazetteer* (formerly known as the *Morning Post and Fashionable World*) and *Morning Herald*, all of which took a keen interest in the social life of the pre-eminent political families of the day and had reported extensively upon her own family. Lamb signalled her awareness of the interest in the behaviour of the aristocracy when she wrote to her cousin ‘Hart’, later the sixth Duke of Devonshire, in 1810:

I am safe but not overwell [sic]; however I neither had my neck broke nor got into the newspapers, tho’ I behaved a little wild, riding over the Downs and about the sands, with all the officers at my heels, in a way not very decent for one of my cloth.¹⁹

Lamb demonstrates an awareness of an expected code of behaviour for ‘one of [her] cloth’, and it is the transgressing of those expectations that excites the most interest. The *roman à clef* guaranteed a wider readership than the one she was writing for; she wanted to expose the failings of the aristocracy to a wide audience. However, in a letter to Granville Leveson Gower, her cousin’s husband, Lamb identifies her envisioned readership. She said that she wrote and published the novel because she was tired of her own character being continually misrepresented and attacked by the Melbournes, who had already tried to force a separation from William on the grounds of her presumed insanity, and by those people that had pointedly ignored her and, having ‘taken Lord

Byron's part, had all stood by him, though cruelty and falsehood were heaped upon him.²⁰ So even though Lamb had already written previously to Annabella, now Byron's estranged wife, to warn her that Byron and Lady Melbourne were the two of the 'greatest Hypocrites & most corrupted Wretches that were ever suffered to Exist upon this earth,'²¹ Byron was not the primary target for embarrassment. As she said herself about Byron after publication, 'Had I chosen to be ill-natured, God knows without deviating from the truth I had plenty of means.'²² Lamb's envisioned recipients were those that snubbed her in favour of Byron; the power of the social snub lies in the close proximity between the sender of the signal indicating contempt and the receiver, who therefore could only be those of her milieu. By exposing Byron's shortcomings as Glenarvon, 'the idol they once adored [...] a coward and a hypocrite [...] smooth dissembler [who] smiles while he stabs,'²³ she is exposing the warped values of a society that knowingly continued to favour behaviour that was as incriminating as her own.

Barbara Judson writes of the *roman à clef* that the 'writer's gratification depends on the audience's facile penetration of authorial disguise' and that 'exposure constitutes an important function' of the genre.²⁴ For the general, wider readership the 'facile penetration' and recognition of the encoded figures is of little value other than to enjoy the discomfort of the aristocracy having its dirty linen washed in public. But for Lamb's envisioned audience the *roman à clef* is not primarily for the recognition of the author, but so that they can recognise themselves in relation to Lamb. When the novel is re-read as a revelatory text, Kirk Curnutt's work upon public confession is helpful in that he describes the medium as a 'self-autopsy', and considered as such the novel takes on a new dimension as

[A] form of confession that justified the intimate exposure of private life by presenting it as a therapeutic form of self-improvement. Beneath its breathless, brazen exposés of sin, sorrow and suffering, the popular confession was a genre reserved for its subjects who far from meriting approbation, were to be emulated as symbols of the will to recover and reconstitute proper mores.²⁵

Curnutt is referring to the confessional as popularised in pulp magazines and advertising in the nineteen twenties and thirties, but it has a resonance when applied to Lamb's deliberate choice of the *roman à clef*. Again, I would like to slightly modify the quotation from Curnutt by adding the codicil that the novel can be read as a form of

confession that justified an *apparent* intimate exposure of private life as, as has already been noted, there was very little that was actually new to Lamb's envisioned audience of her immediate circle. As a form of 'self-autopsy', Lamb places herself on the dissecting table by way of legitimately being able to then insert the scalpel into others, peeling back the fleshy and flashy veneer of the aristocracy to reveal a moral vacuum. As Calantha, Lamb publicly upbraids herself and begs for forgiveness from her husband, before paying the ultimate sacrifice of every transgressing fictional heroine, but even in death Calantha's conduct is something 'we do not excuse'.²⁶ Curnutt describes those that make a public admission of guilt as being able to command authority which is exercised through suffering: 'the guilty take advantage of their "honesty" and the show of some awful social courage by dominating the situation.'²⁷ By apparently confessing her sins and undertaking the brave act of publicly admitting her own guilt, Lamb perhaps hoped that others would take stock of their own shortcomings and admit the unfairness with which she had been treated and acknowledge the entrenched hypocrisy.

After his initial shock and having read *Glenarvon* for himself, William Lamb is recorded as being sympathetic to her need to write the novel and was actually rather pleased with his own portrait as Lord Avondale.²⁸ The novel can, therefore, be re-interpreted as evidence of not only Lamb's own will to recover but also for the need for the aristocracy, certainly including those of Lamb's immediate acquaintance to reconstitute proper social mores. To use Curnutt's example of pulp-fiction confessionals again as a parallel to Lamb's own narrative, he writes that the confessional depends upon an empathic interlocutor who can validate and recognise the self-narrative that allows confessors to address their envisioned audience as a penitent, which grants the speaker the authority to present themselves as role models for self-improvement that is justified by the revelation of their own secrets.²⁹ As a moral parable disguised as a confessional narrative, *Glenarvon* takes advantage of the enduring public appetite for scandal, especially anything relating to Byron, by representing the sin and the suffering as guaranteed to highlight the shortcomings in such a glare of publicity that the only possible course of action would be to follow a similar course of self-improvement. In the concluding chapters of *Glenarvon* Lamb highlights this as the motivation by recounting the lessons the principal characters have learned, or rather, strictly speaking, not learned:

The Marquis of Delaval, restored to his family and fortune, forgot the lesson adversity had taught. In the same follies and the same vanities his predecessors had passed their days, he likewise endeavoured to enjoy the remainder of his. The Duke of Altamonte lived long enough to learn the mournful truth, which pride had forborne to teach, [...] the littleness of all human greatness, and the vanity of every enjoyment this world can offer. Of Sophia, of Frances, of Lady Dartford, what is there to relate? They passed joyfully with the thousands that sail daily along the stream of folly [...] Lady Mandeville and Lady Augusta Selwyn fluttered away likewise each pleasurable moment as frivolously, though perhaps less innocently; then turned to weep for the errors into which they had been drawn, more humble in themselves when sorrow had chastened them.³⁰

Despite the furore that surrounded the appearance of *Glenarvon* Lamb was granted permission by her husband to allow a second edition to be printed. In the preface added to the second edition Lamb wrote that despite the universal condemnation of the novel as being of an ‘immoral tendency’ it was the ‘general tendency of the work [to be] favourable to the interests of virtue.’³¹ In issuing the second (and third edition to which this preface was also attached), Lamb recognised that she must bow to the opinion of the public but questioned them as to whether or not the morality of the tale had ‘been injured by the description of desperate characters, depraved conduct, and daring crimes?’³² That Lamb was expecting a reaction to the publication of the novel is reflected in a comment made on receiving the finished product: ‘It looks so beautiful but it [makes] my heart beat.’³³ The addition of the conciliatory preface can be interpreted in two ways: as an attempt to re-ingratiate herself with her immediate family and in-laws having realised that this time she had gone too far, or as an acknowledgement that the work did indeed have a moral purpose. She does go on to say that despite the work being a work of fiction, she made an attempt to distinguish between ‘painting human nature *as it is* [my italics], and the base desire of deforming and degrading it.’³⁴ Lamb felt that she did not need to act upon the base desire of malevolence, because human nature as she saw it was already deformed and debased, and the author could not help but draw from life as ‘the lineaments, with which he is most familiar, will sometimes almost involuntarily rise beneath the touch of his pencil.’³⁵

It is a preface that is simultaneously apologetic and unrepentant, arguing that similar or worse had already appeared in ‘novels, romances and romantic poems’, and

that the offending material is due to the ‘personal application’ of the perceived imputations.³⁶ Lamb places the onus upon the reader for identifying any real life personages because of their

designing ill-will and erring curiosity, [they] may exert themselves to discover realities in murders, intrigues, marriages, separations, which have only been introduced for the sake of giving some interest to the narrative; but good sense, and discernment, will easily distinguish between such ill-founded applications, and those observations in which, it is trusted, the fair freedom of remark, and censure, which belongs to the British press, has neither been exceeded, nor abused.³⁷

There should be no difficulty, Lamb suggests to the knowing reader, between distinguishing the fact from the fiction; whilst she maintains that she is availing herself of the freedom of speech which is neither exaggerated nor any more libellous than the press. At the very end of the preface Lamb refuses to concede the charge that her motive was vengeance or that she deliberately caricatured anybody, which is the fundamental problem with the critical reception of the text:

If in any part of the work, any deviation from this prescribed course can be discovered: if any sentiment throughout these volumes, appears even to approach to the toleration of vice and immortality it is vain now to say, how from the heart it is wished unwritten; but in censures which spring from very different motives, in misconstructions, misrepresentations, and above all, in the charge of malevolence, the author never will silently and tamely acquiesce.³⁸

Critics of Lamb have read *Glenarvon* as a melodrama, which Lamb inhabited as the tragic heroine and one that crossed over into the real world so that she could no longer tell the difference. This reading of *Glenarvon* is not one of a life producing the autobiographical basis of the text but rather the other way around. The text has produced the life, the one that critics of the novel have read as Lamb having chosen for herself. Instead of verifying the claims of truth that are present in the autobiographical fiction, criticisms have focused upon the rhetorical techniques by which the ‘truth’ is told, thereby undermining any claims of telling any truths at all, emphasising the implied connotations of the *roman à clef* of confessional scandal and exposure.

‘Graham Hamilton’ and the Fashionable Novel: Not a Silver Fork in Sight

Glenarvon and *Graham Hamilton* were published by Henry Colburn, who was responsible for the availability of the majority of fashionable novels, that later became

known as silver-fork novels. This was an immensely popular genre that flourished in the mid- to late 1820s and early 1830s; the earliest influential example being Theodore Hook's three volume collection of stories entitled *Sayings and Doings* (1824).³⁹ The appeal of the genre was initially the sharing of an insider's view of the privileged world of high society, the authenticity of which was vouched for by the marketing of the authors as members of the aristocracy, or at least in close proximity to them. Ellen Moers recognises Colburn's 'genius' as being the identification of a very profitable niche in the market in the form of

a literature written about exclusives, by the exclusives (or those that knew them well) and for the exclusives would be royally supported by those who were not but desperately wanted to become exclusives: the nouveaux riches of post-war England.⁴⁰

Alison Adburgham attributes Colburn as not only the publisher of the genre, but also its 'conceptor, producer, editor [and] – most effectively – promoter.'⁴¹ Colburn recruited aristocratic authors: his list included Lord Normanby, Lady Charlotte Bury, Lady Morgan and Lady Blessington, with an emphasis upon authenticity.

The defining feature of the novel of fashionable life was the faithful depiction of the day-to-day detail of what to wear, how to behave, where to be seen and who to know, knowledge that was imparted by witty conversation. So much emphasis was put upon the minutiae that the prolific journalist, critic and essayist, William Hazlitt, in his exasperation with the emphasis of style over substance, inadvertently christened the genre in his essay 'The Dandy School' when attacking Hook's writing:

Provided a few select persons sit eat fish with silver forks, he considers it a circumstance of no consequence if a whole county starves; but these privileged persons are not surely thinking all the time and every day of their lives of that which Mr. Theodore Hook has never forgotten since he first witnessed it, viz. that *they eat their fish with silver forks.*⁴²

As Harriet Devine Jump has shown, the emphasis upon the frivolous and purely aesthetic nature of the genre could be, and was, read through many perspectives, as a celebration of exclusivity, as a handbook for aspirant social climbers or as a warning to the spiritual emptiness of the elite.⁴³ However they were read, the presumed authenticity of the silver-fork formula, in Andrea Hibbard's words, of 'dressing, dining, dancing, coquetting, gambling, duelling and politicking – calculated to establish just this extravagance and provoke [...] wonder'⁴⁴ was the essential ingredient and was promoted

as such; it is a list of criteria that Winifred Hughes concurs ‘no self-respecting silver fork novel would be complete without.’⁴⁵ I say ‘presumed’ authenticity because despite Colburn’s accumulation of aristocratic authors, the best selling novelists of the genre, as Jump and Cronin both observe, came from slightly lower down the social scale and gleaned their authenticity by association rather than birthright.⁴⁶

Although *Glenarvon* and *Graham Hamilton* pre-date the timeframe of the silver-fork genre, there are points where the novels and the format converge, particularly in the case of *Graham Hamilton*. Lamb certainly fits the preferred profile of an author of the fashionable genre and both *Glenarvon* and *Graham Hamilton* contain some of the identifiable and desirable elements of the genre as listed above; *Glenarvon* is driven by the political situation in Ireland and features a duel between Glenarvon and Lord Avondale; *Graham Hamilton* also contains a duel, scenes at the opera and Lady Orville’s ball, and the practising of the female arts of flirtatious wit upon Hamilton. The ‘I-spy’ nature of the *roman à clef* was also a desirable feature by way of asserting the fashionable or aristocratic credentials of the content as well as the author, and an element that Colburn made great use of in his marketing campaigns.⁴⁷ This feature has already been discussed in terms of *Glenarvon* and the voracious appetite for anything that resembled new information about Byron, but this is also in evidence in *Graham Hamilton*, drawing as it does upon the unhappy marriage of Georgiana although this may not have been immediately obvious to a readership outside of Lamb’s milieu. However, although the activities in both novels revolve around the higher echelons of society, the atmosphere invoked by Lamb is not what might be expected from what became an identifiable feature of the Colburn stable; Lamb’s books do not, as Cronin succinctly sums up the ambiguous attraction of the fashionable novel, ‘satirise the world they celebrate, and celebrate the world they satirise.’⁴⁸ Instead, the attention to the documentary-like detail associated with fashionable novels is conspicuously absent in both *Glenarvon* and *Graham Hamilton* and Lamb concentrates on what Kelly asserts as the defining feature of the silver-fork genre which is the ‘familiar Romantic examination of the social construction of the individual as well as the familiar Romantic opposition of self and society.’⁴⁹

When considering a second novel, Lamb apparently sought the advice of Ugo Foscolo, an exiled Italian novelist who had found refuge with the Whig literati of

Holland House, who advised her ‘write a book which will offend nobody, women cannot afford to shock.’⁵⁰ Whether or not Lamb heeded this advice, a review of *Graham Hamilton* (1822) applauded her for leaving behind the perceived insidious excesses of *Glenarvon*:

[W]e have pleasure in stating our opinion that it is much more creditable to her than its predecessor, both as displaying greater powers and as subject to less objection on the score of personal allusions and revolting characters. It is an elegant and pathetic tale; and its style and execution would not reflect discredit upon names much more known in this department of literature than her Ladyship. [...] [I]t displays, in polished and vigorous language, the rocks on which the young, the unthinking and the gay have so often wrecked their hopes, their conscience, and their tranquillity [sic]; and to the thoughtless worshippers of fashion it addresses a grave and awful admonition, well calculated to awaken them from the dream of folly and dissipation[.]⁵¹

Blackwood's Magazine similarly applauded the novel in its advertisements for recently published books, describing it as belonging ‘to the class of proper and of good novels’ as it presented a ‘spirited picture of the manners and follies of the times.’⁵² *Graham Hamilton* is indeed a much simpler tale than *Glenarvon*, and one that owes a clear debt to Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), as is acknowledged in the naming of her female protagonist Lady Orville, the name that *Evelina* is to take after her own novel ends. Also in acknowledgement of Burney, Lady Orville’s young son is named Lord Merton and Lamb’s vulgar and obsequious Brandon siblings owe their existence to *Evelina*’s cousins, the Branghtons. The eponymous hero narrates his own tale in retrospect, telling of his relocation from the rural idyll of Scotland into the heart of London society where he, like *Evelina*, has to negotiate the pitfalls of an alien society. Hamilton equates the move to the metropolis to become the heir of his uncle with selling his ‘liberty, youth and happiness for gold.’⁵³ Unlike *Evelina*, whose naivety lends itself to humour, albeit of a sometimes distressing nature, Hamilton’s experiences within silver-fork society nearly destroy him physically and financially.

The novel is an intimate study of the effects of the authentic self being corrupted by an artificial society; the lack or undermining of a true internal identity reveals the lack of outward stability, precipitating a self destructive conflict between what people are and what they wish to be perceived as. Hamilton is initially conscious of his parvenu status and wishes it otherwise:

I began now to observe the smiles which my peculiar dress excited; for I had arrived in my very best attire, boots, hat, handkerchief, and coat, quite new – quite stiff all cut and made in the very extreme of the present fashion [...] Indeed no one who has not been bred in retreat, can comprehend what it is to be exposed to the insolent stare and the pretended condescension of people, *soi-disant* of fashion.⁵⁴

Hamilton's mortification turns to anger directed against those whom he judges as inferior to his own 'genius and natural endowments', which have been appreciated as superior elsewhere.⁵⁵ It is as his friend, Moncrief, recognises, in that Hamilton feels 'lost and humbled' because he has not yet acquired the nonchalant attitude required for his new environment, and when he does so, Moncrief assures him, all his 'high principles and exceeding delicacy will vanish.'⁵⁶ Lady Orville hides her desperation of debts and a loveless marriage behind a façade designed to provoke envy and admiration. Lady Orville becomes so entrenched within the charade that she is terrified of leaving the city behind for the countryside in a bid to save her from financial and spiritual ruin. When Hamilton urges Lady Orville to accept her husband's request that she leave for the country in an attempt to discharge her debts, she is horrified:

"But my friends who now consider me as their first object – my parties, to be invited to which there is so much emulation – my suppers, at which politics are debated, and where statesmen settle their measures – all these will be lost for ever, and the world will seek some other general place of union, if I give up my present place in society, and retire into the country for three years."⁵⁷

Lady Orville's existence is only validated in the gaze of others, so successful has she been at smothering her authentic self and assimilating the external values of an artificial society. The 'perpetual change of scenery, variety of conversation, and multiplicity of acquaintance' has 'become necessary'.⁵⁸

This lack of depth is the defining feature of the society in which Hamilton and Lady Orville are enmeshed, with the emphasis upon the appearance of sophistication and the fear of ridicule. As Hamilton's interlocutor, Mr. M-, observes:

the 'greatest reproach that can be cast on the votaries of fashion is the slavish fear they ever seem to be under from each other; the dread [...] of exciting ridicule; the anxiety to be distinguished and yet not to be considered dissimilar from their associates[.]'⁵⁹

Lamb portrays the vacuous nature that the contradictory demands of dread and desire of distinguishing features produce, of which the Brandons are the embodiment. Frederic and Miss Brandon are the son and daughter of Lord S-, who, despite having 'a good cook, a good house, and a great deal of money [...] was not the fashion', much to the embarrassment of his children.⁶⁰ Hamilton had once met Frederic before in Scotland, and Frederic had extended an invitation to visit him in London. The invitation is delivered with 'ostentatious civility', the emptiness of which is revealed when Frederic is mortified when Hamilton does indeed take it up, demanding of Hamilton 'are you come to remain all night [...] with affected coldness and ill-concealed alarm.'⁶¹ Frederic is embarrassed by the provincialism of Hamilton, and his antipathy towards him is contrasted by Frederic's 'manner towards a few select associates, to whose whims, caprices, and foibles he appeared a perfect slave.'⁶² Frederic's frosty reception of Hamilton only begins to thaw when he sees Hamilton being received with favour by Lady Orville and her mother, Lady Denmont. Miss Brandon shares the same aspiration to be in the 'very extremity of fashion', which manifests itself as 'professing to like singularity, and to be herself odd', but she was 'always anxious to ascertain how far such extravagances would suit the very elevated taste of the small circle to which Lady Orville belonged.'⁶³ Both Frederic and Miss Brandon embody the limitations of a society that only requires the veneer of sophistications. Hamilton admires 'the dexterity displayed by those that appeared to have read everything and know everything':

All tediousness was avoided by the rapid change of topics, which, like the scenery of a pantomime must be shifted every instant [...] an effect produced [...] by skimming books, and cursory reading of reviews.⁶⁴

The cursory approach to knowledge is, says Lamb, like 'water through a pipe or channel, leaving [the brain] as empty as it found it, [putting] words in the mouths of fools.'⁶⁵ Frederic Brandon's amusing but inane chatter keeps Hamilton 'entertained without enlightening [his] mind' because his 'slender stock' of intelligence garnered by the skimming of books and reading of reviews is rendered 'powerless, meagre and insufficient', whereas Moncrief's 'superior intelligence [and] natural quickness' were developed because of the 'large [...] resources upon which he drew.'⁶⁶

As a genre, the silver-fork novel is associated with the thick description of a consumer society. Lamb, by contrast, employs a didactic minimalism to great effect, introducing elements of luxury when it is offered as a stark contrast to necessity. The

following extract is the only one that contains any extended references to luxurious living; here an unnamed man she has reduced to destitution by refusing to acknowledge a debt of a thousand pounds confronts Lady Orville:

“Far be it from me,” he continued, “to judge you – beggared as I am by my trust in your countenance of innocent sweetness. [...] I have a year’s imprisonment expiated the crime, your want of punctuality – your riot and extravagance led me to commit.” [...] “See,” continued the man, pointing to her, “what gifts of heaven has bestowed there – and yet that heart, in the midst of this splendour, must, if it beat at all, beat with self-reproach. Amongst the many whom you and your gay associates have brought to ruin, I am one of the most unfortunate. [...] I was utterly destitute. I attempted a robbery – I was seized and prosecuted: I was convicted, but obtained a pardon after long confinement. [...] Three days ago I wrote to you again. My letter was menacing was desperate; but so was my situation. All yesterday, all this day I have awaited your answer; to-night the answer is given – a ball and supper, splendour, excess: this is my money – this is my sustenance. [...] Are you not afraid of wearing before the almighty God who made you, those glittering baubles, which you must feel are the bread of my children. [...] What you have taken from me, that alone I claim: and if you are too poor to restore it, are you not too poor to wear this costly attire, to keep these liveried minions, to give this feast?”⁶⁷

This passage demonstrates not only the disparity between necessity and luxury, but also the interconnectedness of the hierarchical structure, which would have pleased Hazlitt had he ever read *Graham Hamilton*. Lady Orville’s debt is another man’s destitution; her refusal to acknowledge her mounting financial problems is symptomatic of the inertia in which she is immersed but also a demonstration of the lack of facing up to responsibility in general, in this case with devastating repercussions. The Whig aristocracy were consumers *par excellence*; where they led others followed into the furthest regions of fashionable excess. A leisured lifestyle was an extraordinarily expensive one and that eventually had to be paid for in one form or another. The extended credit necessary to supplement Lady Orville’s leisured lifestyle, and her inability to pay because of gambling would eventually snap what Linda Colley describes as the ‘complex web of dependency and obligation.’⁶⁸ The simple act of non-payment of a bill and the accumulation of debt was to neglect a fundamental responsibility. Lady Orville’s irresponsibility and ignorance of the consequences is reflected in a verbal portrait of Lamb’s life as told to and recorded by Lady Morgan. Lamb recounted thinking that all people were either ‘dukes or beggars’ and never had to

‘part with their money’ because of the cocooned and privileged existence that belied the interdependent nature of society.⁶⁹

As far as an authentic representation of the lives of the aristocracy goes, Lamb delivers exactly that and one that is based upon her own family experience. This authenticity not only subverts but pre-empted the expectations of the silver-fork genre in its early stages because of her awareness of the keen interest that existed (and still does) in the intimate details of exclusive living. Lamb chose a popular vehicle that appealed to the basic reader instinct of curiosity, as did *Glenarvon*, for the purpose of criticising the abuse of class distinction and privilege. As representatives of novels of fashionable life *Glenarvon* and *Graham Hamilton* anticipate the politicised form of the genre as practised by Edward Bulwer Lytton (the potential for Lamb’s influence upon his writings will be discussed in a later chapter) and Mary Shelley. By the time Bulwer Lytton published *Pelham: or The Adventures of a Gentleman* in 1828, as Fiona Stafford and Harriet Devine Jump identify, the silver-fork novel was no longer regarded as mere frivolous escapism and had taken on an inherently political colouring in both production and reception.⁷⁰ In his collection of essays *England and the English* (1833) Bulwer Lytton wrote that the authors of the genre had contributed to the necessity for parliamentary reform having by ‘unconsciously exposed the falsehood, the hypocrisy, the arrogant and vulgar insolence of patrician life’ by subjecting the reader to a ‘parade of frivolity, the ridiculous disdain of truth, [...] these novels exhibited as a picture of aristocratic society.’⁷¹ By ‘the authors’ Bulwer Lytton included himself; *England and the English* was published after he had launched his parliamentary career, having been elected MP for St Ives in 1831 as a radical independent and a supporter of the Reform Bill, and, in the following year, elected as MP for Lincoln in the first post-reform government. Lamb similarly projected a picture of aristocratic life but did so consciously, deliberately stripping it bare of the ‘parade of frivolity’ and purposefully exposing the ‘disdain of truth.’

Lisa Vargo writes of Mary Shelley’s *Lodore* (1835) that it should be recognised for the ‘skill with which Mary Shelley appeals to popular taste for the purpose of sustained political debate rather than the consolidation of class privilege.’⁷² *Lodore* has much in common with *Graham Hamilton*, and possibly owes a debt to it, though there is no way of knowing whether or not Shelley ever read *Graham Hamilton*. Even if she did

it was not a debt that could be acknowledged because of the vigilance of her father-in-law, Sir Timothy Shelley, who was ever on the look out for any sign of impropriety in the writing career of Shelley. Any reference to the scandalous Lady Caroline Lamb would have supplied Sir Timothy with further ammunition with which to control the good name of Shelley and curtail her writing activities even further. Like Lamb's Lady Orville, Shelley's character of Cornelia Lodore is what Charlene E. Bunnell calls 'too subservient to manners and image', initially relying on 'society's glass' as the barometer of conduct which, inevitably, results in the loss of the sense of self.⁷³ Both women become so entrenched in the conventions of expected society mores that they find it difficult to relinquish them when the opportunity arises as it does for Cornelia on finding her self alone after the deaths of her controlling husband and mother. Lady Orville has to choose between remaining in the city and separation from her husband or removing herself to the country to save herself from financial ruin, to which her initial reaction is to view the removal to the country as a loss of her central position in society, even though the same fate would await her if she remained. Cornelia and Lady Orville finally relinquish the masks they have used as props and exit the public arena of spectacle by the end of the novel. Cornelia resigns her fortune to her impoverished daughter and finds happiness with the scholarly Horatio Saville; Lady Orville voluntarily leaves the city to undertake unspecified charitable works in the country in which she finds happiness for the first time. However, this is not quite the end of the novel in both instances. As Vargo comments on *Lodore*, Cornelia and her daughter find happiness but Shelley then turns to the character of Fanny Derham, challenging the closed form of the genre; having assisted Cornelia and her daughter to find each other and happiness, Fanny's course in life is yet to be run.⁷⁴ This is an echo of the open-endedness also found in Lamb's work; Graham Hamilton, who has narrated his story to the mysterious Mr. M., finishes it with a declaration that life may well be impossible under the burden of grief he carries and sometimes he wishes death would come sooner rather than later.

Shelley was initially going to include the subtitle of 'a tale of present time', recalling the title of her father's novel, *Things as They Are*, and the temporal setting of the novel is 1831 during the debate of the proposed passing of the Reform Bill. Fiona Stafford recognises the sub-title as being a 'valuable insight into her attitude' towards the novel at the time of its inception.⁷⁵ Shelley had written as early as 1830, which

Stafford works out as being immediately prior to beginning work on *Lodore*, describing the current political situation:

The people *will* be redressed – will the Aristocrats sacrifice enough to tranquillise them – if they will not – we must be revolutionised.⁷⁶

Like Lamb's characters in *Graham Hamilton*, the main characters are either of the aristocracy or related to it and the overall theme of both is an indictment of a society that privileges style over substance, manners over morals. Both indict the aristocracy for its shortcomings as an intermediary between people and crown but from oppositional political positions. Lamb writes her critique as an aristocrat who has inhabited the very heart of fashionable society and under the political banner of Whig. *Graham Hamilton* was written before the parliamentary debate upon and the passing of the Reform Bill, and expresses the need to reform before they were 'revolutionised.' Shelley writes as a radical, but one beholden to her aristocratic father-in-law; the novel was published after the Reform Bill has been passed in 1832, but reflecting the same criticisms of the aristocracy at the time of the novel's temporal setting. Lamb anticipates and subverts the stylistic expectations of the silver-fork genre; Shelley similarly makes use of the power of popular interest to exploit its potential for social criticism. Both Lamb and Shelley recognised that the aristocracy were fighting a rearguard action against democracy and equality by proclaiming the enclosed perfection of their elite, but by so ostentatiously staging their elitism, they contributed inexorably to both the 'popularisation and merchandising of exclusivity itself,'⁷⁷ of which Lamb and Shelley both took full advantage. The fundamental difference is that Lady Orville, who is only referred to by her Christian name, Augusta, once in the novel, retains her title and Cornelia, Lady Lodore, is happy to relinquish hers.

Richard Cronin argues for Shelley's *Lodore* is an example of what he terms 'hybrid fiction', a form of fiction that is interested in the point of contact between inner feelings and material fact, the collision between the workings of society and of the spirit and the adverse effect that the former has upon the latter.⁷⁸ Cronin suggests that Shelley, as a writer of hybrid fiction, was not only influenced by the style of Edward Bulwer Lytton, whose works Shelley eagerly anticipated, but that she is the 'more prescient of the two' in opening up a new subject matter for the Victorian novel, that of the unhappy marriage.⁷⁹ However, *Graham Hamilton* also has at its core the unhappy

marriage of Lady Orville, a state of affairs that drives forward all other events. Both *Graham Hamilton* and *Lodore* are novels about money and marriage, and how both female protagonists can, to a certain extent, be held responsible for their own unhappiness as they become susceptible to the allures of high society. Lady Orville rejects the worthy Moncrief at the request of her mother, Cornelia Santerre is urged into marriage with Lord Lodore by her manipulative mother, Lady Santerre, whose name Lisa Hopkins recognises as meaning ‘without earth’, referring to her poverty-stricken or landless state.⁸⁰ Cornelia then allows her adherence to the artificial courtesies of metropolitan society to dictate her actions to her second suitor, the worthy Horatio Saville, making Saville think that she is insincere in her affections for him. Money dictates modes of behaviour within polite, aristocratic society and it is only when both women give up the artificial mores of metropolitan society that they find a sense of themselves that had been repressed by social economic politics. The suggestion that Bulwer Lytton can be considered as an influence upon Shelley is an interesting one in that I argue later in chapter six that Lamb can be considered of seminal influence upon Bulwer Lytton, and considering the similarities between Lamb and Shelley discussed here and in chapters three and four, Lamb can now be re-considered as a factor in the eddying of influence that Cronin suggests flows between Shelley and Bulwer Lytton.

Ada Reis: Apocalyptic Orientalism

As *Graham Hamilton* was acknowledged to be a credit to Lamb due to the elegant simplicity of the style, *Ada Reis*, in the eyes of the critics that reviewed it, merely re-affirmed the conception of Lamb as the embodiment of a dissipated and dysfunctional aristocracy. The critic from the *New Monthly Magazine* read the novel as a ‘faithful index of her mind, nothing can be more *bizarre* than the nature of her compositions’; due to her existence in the ‘magic circle within which the exclusive upper class congregates’ the novel reflects this exalted sphere’s ‘follies, its dissipations, its heartless inanity and its freezing apathy’. He adds that Lamb is, at least, ‘better employed writing even a bad book, than in setting society a bad example of idleness and dissipation[.]’⁸¹ The reviewer from the *New Monthly Magazine* had the same difficulty in understanding the tale’s development, anticipating readers’ responses to the novel as being framed by the question ‘Is this probable? Is that in nature?’⁸² Similarly recognising the penmanship of Lamb, the *Literary Gazette* was baffled by the ‘wild inconsistent medley’, as was *The Examiner*, which asserted that ‘if these volumes were

not the production of that gifted child the Opium-eater, they certainly ought to be [...] concocted by opium and a wayward imagination.’⁸³ The tale is indeed an imaginative one, telling the story of Ada Reis, a self-indulgent tyrant who renounces all forms of deity to serve his own greedy ambitions, encouraged all the way to his own damnation and the sacrifice of his daughter by an agent for the forces of darkness, the magician Kabkarra. In this, the most allusive of the three novels, Lamb sustains her critique of separatist elitism by employing the connotations of excess associated with Orientalism, yoked together with the motif of descent into the subterranean mythology of the Underworld and the theme of temptation and redemption that draws upon and acknowledges its predecessors. The review in *The Examiner* provides a list of ‘kindred works of the imagination’:

Anastasius, Don Juan, and the Corsair, seem to furnish the *tout ensemble* of [Ada Reis’s] characteristics. Maugraby [the magician from *The Arabian Nights*], the Giaour in the Caliph Vathek – [...] and the Mephistophilies [sic] of Faust make up the infernal instigator of himself and daughter, whilst the latter is Nourronihar [the princess from *Vathek*], and her Good Genius [is] somewhat of the Gulchenrouz [playmate of Nourronihar] of Mr. Beckford. *Le Diable Boiteux* and the Visions of Quevodo, come into play in a satirical description of Hell. [...] It would not be astonishing to those whose souls are too high (we envy them not) to read Eastern and other Tales, to learn how much they owe to each other [...] but we might proceed in this ungracious way, *ad infinitum*, to very little purpose – so no more of it.⁸⁴

As a list of sources and inspirations, this should be extended to include Byron’s *Darkness*, Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Dante’s *Inferno* and Milton’s *Paradise Regained*, all of which provide the chapter epigraphs in the third volume, have a clear relevance to the structure of the volume, and evoke the entwined themes of apocalyptic damnation, temptation and redemption. Kelly describes the use of quotations, epigraphs and allusions from literature and history as a device by which to support the fictional or ideological arguments from which parallels can be drawn, and the use of endnotes (which *Ada Reis* has in abundance and in French, the second language of the aristocracy) as an indicator that the work is to be taken seriously.⁸⁵ The identification of the intertextual nature of any work goes towards the act of interpretation, so that while the review in *The Examiner* is pointing out that Lamb’s work is considered only as a repetition of those that have gone before, it also does her the unintended favour of placing her work within a literary tradition that invokes the supernatural, the classical

and the exotic by way of what Marilyn Butler recognises as a tried and tested method of critiquing excesses nearer to home.⁸⁶

As an allegorical tale, *Ada Reis* has a four-fold structure of meaning: the literal or aesthetic that comprises the story, the ethical or moral meaning, the historical or socio-political meaning and the apocalyptic or spiritual meaning. The difficulty that the reviewers appeared to have with the novel arose because they confined themselves to the literal or aesthetic meaning. Baffled by the supernatural narrative that, on its own, renders the novel incoherent, they were unable to appreciate the complexity of the narrative structure. Todorov sums up what appears to be the difficulty Lamb's contemporary critics had with interpreting Lamb's supernatural tale and has this to say about the function of allegory:

[T]he difficulty we have understanding the tale's development [is] if we limit ourselves to its literal meaning. The role of the supernatural [...] and the bizarre nature of the story's transitions [...] here play the role of allegorical indices, and oblige us to set out on an interpretive track that is independent of the principal semantic line.⁸⁷

On the literal, aesthetic level of reading *Ada Reis* is a difficult tale to follow; characters appear under numerous names and guises and locations shift in the blink of a magic eye. It is only when the moral and socio-political elements are interpreted against Lamb's background does the meaning of the apocalyptic ending and the message for redemption and reform become clear in the final volume. On the task of interpretation, Todorov recognises the role that the author has to play as to which interpretative track to follow if the system of values and ideas that underpin the ideology of the text is to be considered:

[A]fter constructing the events that make up a story, we then give ourselves over to the task of reinterpretation, which allows us to construct the work's characters on the one hand, the system of ideas and values underlying the text on the other. This reinterpretation is not arbitrary; [...] it suffices for the author to spend a little time teaching us how to interpret the events he evokes. [...] We have learned the lesson, and we shall continue to interpret as [the author] has taught us to do.⁸⁸

To read the novel only as a literal story was to ignore Lamb's introduction in which she clearly outlines the morality of the tale, thereby clearly not giving credence to her authoritative authorial voice or her statement of intent. Lamb uses the space of the introduction to spend a little time teaching the reader the guiding philosophical

principles that underpin the moral framework of her tale. The widely influential doctrine of Manichaeism was founded and spread by the Persian philosopher Mani (216-77), a severely ascetic teaching of a radical dualism that represents the spiritual element of the world as the Light, and the material as the creation of Darkness, a force driven by desire. The Light and the Darkness are independent beings but in the world and all its creatures they are mixed. Humans are represented as being built from the tainted, material matter of Darkness from which the Light, and therefore true happiness, struggles to be released, which only occurs through the redeeming knowledge of the spiritual self.⁸⁹ Having taught the reader how to ascertain the ethical meaning of the text, that is that humans have to transcend the material to achieve the spiritual, Lamb then proceeds with the narrative that will bring to bear the historical/socio-political and the apocalyptic/spiritual climax.

The historical layer of the allegory is that of her own time and space and is identified from the outset, also adding to the Turkish-ness of the tale. Ada Reis is the 'once famous Corsair, the merchant, the traveller, the Don Juan of his day',⁹⁰ an allusion that draws attention not only to Byron but also the similarities to be found between *Ada Reis* and his Turkish tales. Byron's Corsair, Conrad, is a pirate chief who has to leave his island on hearing that the Turkish Pacha (as it is spelt in *The Bride of Abydos*) is about to descend upon him; Lamb's Corsair, Ada Reis, is similarly piratical, having murdered his captain with the aid of his second in command and assumed control of the authority of the ship and the title of 'Ada' ('Captain'). Having promised his daughter, Fiormonda, in marriage to the son ('Bey') of the Pasha (as it is spelt in *Ada Reis*) of Constantinople, Ada Reis is forced to leave because of the Pasha's intent to murder him on discovery of his own crimes of murder and treachery. There is also an echo here of *The Bride of Abydos*: Fiormonda's arranged marriage is similar to that of Zuleika, the daughter of the Pasha Giaffir who is destined on her father's order to marry the Bey of Carasman. Selim, the hero of *The Bride of Abydos*, voices what becomes the overarching theme of all Lamb's novels, 'I am not, [...] what I appear.'⁹¹ However, where Byron's Corsair is a noble outlaw, Ada Reis is a merciless tyrant and egomaniac. Byron's Don Juan is a charming and handsome young man but also rather vacuous, whereas Lamb reverts back to the characteristics of the Spanish original, in that Ada Reis is a ruthless and impious seducer who murders the mother of his child. Like Byron's characters, Lamb's are what Mohammed Sharafuddin describes in his

study of Islamic influence upon Romantic Orientalism as examples of Islamic ‘incorrigible masculinity,’ an expression of the male ideal as a virile and commanding type that has proved itself in war, government and a capacity ‘to keep what [he] possesses,’ be it land or women.⁹² The whole of Byron’s experience in the East lies behind these ideals and is reflected in the Turkish tales as characteristics of aggression and uncompromising command of the self and others and as Sharafuddin convincingly continues, the Orient significantly affects the persona of the Byronic hero. Byron’s heroes are fascinating because they are able to shrug off the protective layer of Western cant and live out the danger and extremes of human existence but can only take such a daring stance because of the foreign exoticness:

[T]he Byronic hero must possess a tinge or taint of the Islamic, at a cultural level, and [...] of the demonic at the spiritual level.⁹³

Lamb takes a backward glance at the Byronic and re-writes it, exposing the sexual allure and dangerous eroticism of this uncompromising masculinity as mere selfish cruelty, greed, sadism and ruthlessness. The reader learns of Ada Reis’ attraction to women but also of the murder of his lover, Bianca, in a jealous rage; of how his ambition is pursued at any price, even if it costs him his daughter; of his apparent disdain for social structures and conformity yet his burning desire to be recognised as among the elite. The more that Lamb states the less room there is for fantasy. Andrew Elfenbein and Inga-Stina Ewbank both observe a similar representation in their analysis of Emily Brontë’s recreation of the Byronic; Heathcliff is a ‘Byron with the glamour gone’ and that *Wuthering Heights* presents the ‘Byronic lover at his best and at his worst, and reveals that the two are the same.’⁹⁴ But where Brontë’s is an imaginative exercise, with reference to the *roman à clef*, Lamb writes with the authority of experience not only of Byron, but also as a reader who had endowed him with the eroticised danger of a noble outlaw. It is as much a criticism of the readership that recreate Byron in the image of their own desires, investing the unknown factual with a ‘knowing’ fiction, as it is of Byron himself. Lamb aims to counter reader responses such as evinced by the Quaker school girl Mary Jane Taylor in 1850, as illustrated by Elfenbein,⁹⁵ who was convinced that had she been Lady Byron she would have handled him better and would have been more appreciative of him and his talents. Lamb attempts to do in fiction what Elfenbein argues that Thomas Moore did with his biography of Byron: that is debunk the myth that Byron was the same as his fictional heroes, and saying instead that he *was* like his gloomy heroes but only when he *chose* to

adopt one of the personalities that jostled for space amongst ‘the childish joker, the cynical lover and the ardent patriot.’⁹⁶

The introduction of the religious philosophy of Manichaeism as a framework through which the novel should be read prepares the reader not only for the geography and genre of the text, but also the final allegorical layer of spirituality and the apocalyptic climax. Like Ada Reis’ literary ancestors, Dr Faustus and Vathek, Reis indulges in the ‘reckless exoticism and extravagance of the oriental despot’ for the sake of empty pomp and forbidden knowledge.⁹⁷ Ada Reis creates for himself an artificial paradise to protect his daughter from prying eyes and to await the fulfilment of the prophecy, an allusion not only to Vathek’s five palaces of pleasure but also to the religious symbolism of the landscape in Islam and Christianity. Ada Reis fully subscribes to Caliph Vathek’s adage that it was not ‘necessary to make a hell of this world to enjoy the paradise of the next.’⁹⁸ As Sharafuddin notes, inhospitable environments were to be accepted and embraced for the purposes of purification and salvation, as reinforced by Lamb’s epigraph from Milton’s *Paradise Regained* and Christ’s temptation in the desert. The materialism of greedy tyrants such as Vathek and, by extension, Ada Reis provokes the opposite and blasphemous response of altering this god-given condition designed to forge and harden faith.⁹⁹ Ada Reis forces the landscape to bend to his will, reinforcing his ambition for power and the tyrannical ruthlessness that he has already demonstrated to his fellow man, deprives the paradise of its innocence and renders it oppressive for Fiormonda, who recognises herself and her pets as captives within the illusion of luxury and comfort. It is of little wonder that when Ada Reis arrives in Lamb’s aristocratic country house that is Hell he fails to recognise it as a place of punishment. Ada Reis’ paradise contains the traditional trappings that Marilyn Butler describes as the ‘idealised world of consumerist delights’ that typifies Oriental excess such as exotic gardens, veiled maidens, magical and ingenious contraptions and iced sherbets,¹⁰⁰ and, perhaps most significantly, an abundance of water.

The multitude of fountains and channels in Ada Reis’ paradisaical retreat not only reflects his ability to force a hostile environment to bend to his will to produce a garden in the desert, it is also of enormous symbolic significance in Islam, and indeed Christianity and many other world faiths. In Islam, water is important for purifying and

cleansing. Muslims must be ritually pure before approaching God in prayer and water is made available at mosques for this purpose. Ada Reis, as a convert, 'believed as little in Mahomet' as he did in the 'sacred rites of [C]Christianity' but paid lip service to the rituals in public so as not to offend the populace of his chosen country of residence.¹⁰¹

This does not either last long or extend to the requirements of sobriety:

"Not drink!" he cried, "by Allah, or by Mahomet, or by all the holy saints of Christendom, wine and spirits are the soul of life!" And early he had learned to quaff the intoxicating draught, which opened every cell where fancy slept, putting to flight each sluggish and dormant thought, and adding light and fire to those that remained.¹⁰²

Ada Reis' thirst for inebriation is matched by a thirst for adventure and novelty, none of which are conducive to spiritual reflection and self-knowledge. As techniques, they all serve the purpose of avoiding the 'reflection he dreaded',¹⁰³ as does the altering of a barren landscape into a lush paradise. Even Ada Reis, however, tires of self-gratification and turns to study to search for the mysteries of the universe and proof of an existence beyond the immediate. However, having 'assembled around him the learned and the travelled' Ada Reis soon found their 'wisdom degraded by envy, vanity, a desire of petty distinctions, a pedantry, and a love of display' and soon tires of them.¹⁰⁴ The voraciousness with which Ada Reis initially pursues knowledge is reminiscent of that of Milton's Adam in *Paradise Lost*, which the angel Raphael acknowledges as a good thing as long as it re-affirms the omnipotence of God.¹⁰⁵ Ada Reis' thirst for everything other than the spiritual purity of water is a value system debased by the materialism of his humanity as defined by Manichaeism. Similarly, Vathek develops a raging thirst for the promises of riches by, and the subsequent disappearance of, the Giaour. His thirst is one of greedy acquisition that cannot be slaked even by lapping at the sacred water in his 'Eden' in the 'debasing posture' of a dog.¹⁰⁶ Only when Ada Reis finds himself in Hell does he unconsciously ask for a glass of water. His literal thirst is expressive of a spiritual thirst, necessary for the purification with which to approach God. Albeit unconscious on behalf of Ada Reis, the simple request is enough to make his demonical guide falter and become unsure of the ultimate victory over his soul.¹⁰⁷ It is here that the theme of repentance and redemption is first suggested in *Ada Reis*, the emphasis upon penitence is Islamic orthodoxy, but the redemption it carries and the recovery of natural piety, suggests Sharafuddin, is essentially a Romantic one.¹⁰⁸

'A New Canto': Mocking the Mock Epic

Lamb's work has been largely discussed as an attempt by her to maintain a connection with Byron via literary imitation, transgression and forgery of him. James Soderholm attributes to Lamb a desire to 'recreate the Byronic hero in her own fashion.'¹⁰⁹ Nicola Watson suggests that Lamb 'pilfered Byron's authority.'¹¹⁰ Even the most recent and sympathetic of Lamb's biographers, Paul Douglass, reiterates this theme of identity theft, summing up his position in relation to Lamb's work by saying that, 'like other women before and since, she had confused loving a writer with being a writer herself.'¹¹¹ This is reinforced by earlier observations when Douglass states that the end of Lamb's life witnessed an abandonment of 'her abortive struggle to become a feminine novel-writing version of Byron.'¹¹² It would, therefore, be negligent to assess Lamb's ability as a competent speaker in the correct genre, in terms of not appropriating Byron's authority or identity, without taking into consideration the occasion when Lamb clearly did appropriate Byron's poetic voice with her assumed authorship of *A New Canto* (1819). Published anonymously, *A New Canto* purported to be a continuation of *Don Juan*, cantos one and two of which had been published in the same year. It is now generally considered that Lamb is the author and it has been reprinted as such by Margot Strickland and Duncan Wu.¹¹³ In an article that discusses the appropriation of Byron, Wu argues that Lamb's authorship of *A New Canto* was driven by Lamb being 'stricken by grief', and in writing it 'she was attempting to retrieve the lost object of her love.'¹¹⁴ This argument is not convincing when considering the portrait she had already painted of him in *Glenarvon* three years earlier, depicting him as a self-serving political turncoat, or the irreverent tone that bounds through the poem. Nor does it go as far as Wu's concomitant suggestion that it was an attempt to 'repossess' Byron and destroy his reputation, but the point he makes, in that an appreciation of *A New Canto* is dependent upon familiarity with the original, is a valid one.¹¹⁵

A New Canto is one of four responses to *Don Juan* identified and collated by Peter Cochrane, the other three being Felicia Hemans' *The Sceptic* (1820), William Hone's *Don Juan, Canto the Third* (1820) and John Clare's *Don Juan A Poem* (1841); the latter is similar to Lamb's, suggests Cochran, being a similar experiment by one poet in 'somebody else's idiom, and from motives as murky as hers.'¹¹⁶ Lamb's *A New*

Canto is made up of twenty seven stanzas which, as the editors of *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English* observe, ‘fizzes with verbal inventiveness,’¹¹⁷ describing an apocalyptic vision of the end of civilisation beginning with the destruction of London, and all its inherent vanities and vices (a theme close to Lamb’s heart), which then spreads around the world. In the first person, *A New Canto* starts as it means to go on:

I’m sick of fame – I’m gorged with it, so full
I almost could regret the happier hour
When northern oracles proclaimed me dull,
Grieving my Lord should so mistake his power –
E’en they who now my consequence would lull,
And vaunt they hailed and nursed the opening flower.
Vile cheats! He knew not, impudent reviewer,
Clear spring of Helicon from common sewer. (I; 1-8)

Lamb is clearly indicating the reception of Byron’s *Hours of Idleness*, his first volume of poetry published in 1807 that was savaged by the *Edinburgh Review*, and therefore giving us a clear reference to Byron; the ‘regret’ being that the anonymous review did not stop his career but instead urged him forward, and the consequences of that sudden fame. The desire to retire is, however, empty rhetoric, as the last two stanzas are keen to elucidate:

Mad world! For fame we rant, call names and fight –
I scorn it heartily, yet love to dazzle it,
Dark intellects by day, as shops by night,
All with a bright, new speculative gas lit
Wars the blue vapour with the oil-fed light,
Hot sputter Blackwood, Jeffrey, Gifford, Hazlitt –
The muse runs madder, and, as mine may tell,
Like a loose comet, mingles heaven and hell.

You shall have more of her another time,
Since gulled you will be with our flights poetic,
Our eight, and ten, and twenty feet sublime,
Our maudlin, hey-down-derrified pathetic;
For my part, though I’m doomed to write in rhyme,
To read it would be worse than an emetic –
But something must be done to cure the spleen,
And keep my name in capitals, like Kean. (XXVI-XXVII,
201-216)

These stanzas intimate that Byron only writes for the sake of fame which he ‘scorns’ yet delights in dazzling a ‘mad world’ that prizes ‘fame’ as a form of currency, and has nothing but contempt for his readers who are ‘gulled’ by the poetic voice, as were readers of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* when they equated the poet with the poem. But

there is also a compulsion to write; the author is ‘doomed to write’ to ‘cure the spleen’, much as Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* is compelled to speak to relieve his agony of the desire for recognition. The poet’s inspiration blazes a trail but careers randomly across the sky, his muse ‘a loose comet,’ producing poetry that is, according to *A New Canto*, vomit inducing, by which Lamb means *Don Juan*. Despite their personal differences, Lamb’s appreciation of Byron’s poetic gift never waived, from her initial response to *Childe Harold*, (in an anonymous letter to Byron on having first read the poem, Lamb wrote ‘Oh that like thee Childe Harold I had power / With master hand to strike the thrilling lyre’)¹¹⁸ to discussing the merits of *The Corsair* with his publisher and her good friend, John Murray.¹¹⁹ The exception, however, was *Don Juan*, which she described to Murray as ‘neither witty nor in very good taste’ and overall ‘weak,’¹²⁰ and Lamb was not alone in her disapproval as booksellers refused to stock it, although not for the same reasons. As *A New Canto* clearly demonstrates, she thought it beneath his genius, a sacrifice of talent for mere publicity and an abuse of his readership. This criticism is continued in the anonymous *Gordon: A Tale, A Poetical Review of Don Juan*, which appeared in 1821, after the publication of canto five of *Don Juan*, although the preface indicates that the work was inspired by cantos one and two and was completed ‘long before’ cantos three, four and five.¹²¹ Although there appears to be some confusion as to the author (the British Library attributes this manuscript to Byron), *Gordon: A Tale* is more commonly attributed to Lamb and the criticism of Byron as the author of *Don Juan* is in keeping with that of *A New Canto*. The work again pays tribute to Byron’s poetic power, and the narrator purchases a copy of *Don Juan* in eager anticipation, only to be grossly disappointed, crying ‘Would that he used his talents for good [instead] to infect: / Its powers perverted, all its time mispent’ (I, 37, 39).

Both *A New Canto* and *Gordon: A Tale* describe in apocalyptic terms the demise of integrity and taste, and the abuse of poetic talent that Lamb espied as being in evidence in *Don Juan*. The second canto of *Gordon: A Tale* features the narrator encountering a supernatural being who argues that Byron may yet redeem himself by fulfilling his promise that *Don Juan*, as yet unfinished, will be a moral tale:

I have no fear but he’ll accomplish all
That he has promised, and conclude it well. (II, 16)

In what can be read as a precursor to Lamb's vision of hell in *Ada Reis*, the supernatural being reveals that Byron does indeed intend to include a description of 'The very place where the wicked people go', a direct reference to *Don Juan*,¹²² but only to argue the non-existence of God, heaven or hell and reduce all to a farce (II, 36). The supernatural being, which is joined by a host of other demons, then shows the narrator that hell does indeed exist and that admirers of an inanity like *Don Juan* should probably prepare themselves for it. The ending of *Gordon: A Tale* is reminiscent of Cazotte's *The Devil in Love*, with which Lamb was familiar, having signed herself 'Biondetta', the female demon who appeared as a page to her lover.¹²³ The narrators in both tales are threatened with being overwhelmed by the supernatural force they have summoned, and on preparation for death all traces of the threat vanish, being only a premonition of the dangers to come if the same path is pursued, and leave the narrators to choose their own fate: to continue reading *Don Juan* for Lamb's narrator, to return to needless enquiry into forbidden and dangerous knowledge for Cazotte's, or to guard against their future damnation by learning from their experiences, again a common theme in Lamb's work.¹²⁴

The apocalypse in *A New Canto* affords Lamb the opportunity to highlight the coarse vulgarity that she perceived in Byron's *Don Juan*. The 'I' of the poem, Byron, desires to witness the final conflagration before touching his 'sinner's salary' from the top of St. Paul's Cathedral, from where he, 'the graceless poet', can hear, but would not offend 'proper feeling' by reporting the 'saints in agitation, / The *lapsus linguae* [slip of the tongue] of an execration' (VI, 45-48). The 'graceless poet' does, in keeping with the emetic-inducing *Don Juan*, paint a striking image of 'Norway's copper mines about the Baltic' erupting like a huge torrent of diarrhoea:

Swell, heave, and rumble with their boiling ore,
 Like some griped giant's motion peristaltic,
 Then burst, and to the sea vast gutters pour,
 And as the waters with the fire-streamed curl,
 Zooks! what a whizzing, roaring sweltering whirl!(XII, 91-96)

All the while, the poet scorns all 'coward sinners', not caring for the 'hereafter' being a 'radical, a stubborn and an old one', mocking the hypocrisy of all that seek repentance after a lifetime of debauchery whilst he alone remains defiant and laughing with the 'devils (in my arms I long to fold one) / Splitting their blue and brazen sides with

laughter' (XIV, 105-110). Lamb also makes a mockery of Byron's worship of Napoleon, who 'hung the citizens of Moscow gaily', by making him 'pitifully wince' on his deliverance to Beelzebub (XI, 84-85).

Peter Graham has argued that Lamb had neither the skill nor the confidence to take on work in a 'serious' genre that would come 'more easily to men of her class.'¹²⁵ The difficulty that such critics appear to have with *A New Canto* is a problem with women attempting the mock-epic in general. Adeline Johns-Putra argues that to write in the genre is to assume the task of deflating, ridiculing, and judging, a task that is considered as unfeminine, not just because it requires unkindness but also because it implies a moral supremacy.¹²⁶ Lamb's appropriation of Byron's epic satire and his voice assumes the task of deflating the ego that is 'gorged' in the very first line, the mock-epic being a popular method, as Johns-Putra notes, of 'putting down the mighty.'¹²⁷ Lamb, masquerading as Byron, dispenses with the 'literary figleaf', to borrow a phrase from Wu,¹²⁸ that Byron used as a narrative device to hide behind, being thereby able to elude any identification between himself and his eponymous creations; this enables Lamb to attribute all that she identified as 'neither witty nor clever' and the inherent 'weakness' of the original to Byron. The stripping away of the figleaf is the implied moral superiority of Lamb's satire upon Byron's mock-epic; having had the social courage to reveal and include herself amongst those that she named and shamed in *Glenarvon*, she takes issue with Byron's retreating behind a persona to lampoon his estranged wife.

Byron portrays Annabella as Juan's bluestocking mother Donna Inez. Over several stanzas he ridicules their marriage and their attempts at reconciliation, also her intellectual ability and 'perfection' that was rendered 'insipid in this naughty world of ours', which placed her 'far beyond the cunning powers of hell.'¹²⁹ Byron blames Donna Inez's perfection for the extra-marital activities of her husband, Don Jose, who 'like the lineal son of Eve / Went plucking various fruit without her leave.'¹³⁰ Despite her morality, Byron attributes to Donna Inez an illicit passion for Donna Julia's husband, Don Alfonso, with whom she 'forgot [...] her very prudent carriage.'¹³¹ As early as 1812 Lamb had written of respect for the character of Annabella, who was her cousin by marriage to William:

No Annabella I will not wrong you so much as offering you my Friendship. I know exactly how you feel towards me at this moment... you cannot now conceive how obliged to me you will be for avoiding you and refusing it. You seem to me [...] very superior to those that I have the honour of associating with.¹³²

Having warned Annabella that Byron and Lady Melbourne were not to be trusted,¹³³ Lamb's exposure of Byron is, in part, in defence of Annabella, as one of 'Love's single-hearted victims, sacred, true', unlike the 'prostituted sense about / The misery of never quench'd desire' of the narrator.¹³⁴ Lamb's response to *Don Juan* is a response to Byron's censure that 'some play the devil, and then write a novel.'¹³⁵ Lamb takes on the role of the devil in bringing about an apocalypse to end the world and consigns Don Juan to the cunning powers of hell neatly avoided by Donna Inez, thereby suffering the same fate as his Spanish ancestor. Her irreverence towards *Don Juan* is a mockery of the content and style of the mock-epic and its author, self-consciously drawing attention to *A New Canto* as a continuation by its title and suggestively promising more to come, 'You shall have more of her another time' (XXVII, 209). Wu's observation that an appreciation of this work is dependent on knowledge of the original is entirely validated, but, as we have seen, this is neither the limit of the work nor the apex of Lamb's literary output.

ENDNOTES

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- ³ Graham, P. (1990), *Don Juan and Regency England*, Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, p. 91.
- ⁴ Kelly, (1989), p. 36.
- ⁵ Ibid, p. 19.
- ⁶ Ibid, p. 20.
- ⁷ Todorov, T. (1990), *Genres in Discourse*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 18.
- ⁸ Graham, P. (1990), p. 94.
- ⁹ Marchand, L.A. (ed.) (1976), 'So Late into the Night', *Byron's Letters & Journals, Volume 5*, London: John Murray, p.85.
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- ¹¹ Clubbe, J. 'Glenarvon –Revised and Revisited', *The Wordsworth Circle*, Spring, vol. x, no.2, p.205.
- ¹² Graham, (1990), pp.99-100.
- ¹³ Lamb, C. Lady, (1995), *Glenarvon*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Everyman, p. xxv.
- ¹⁴ Lamb, C. Lady, (1995), *Glenarvon*, ed. Franklin, C., London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, p. vii.
- ¹⁵ Normington, S. (2001), *Lady Caroline Lamb: This Infernal Woman*, London: House of Stratus, p. 185.
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- ¹⁸ Bourdieu, P. (2003), p. 8.
- ¹⁹ Normington, (2001),p. 65
- ²⁰ Douglass, P. (2004), *Lady Caroline Lamb: A Biography*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 182.
- ²¹ Ibid, p.178.
- ²² Ibid, p.193.
- ²³ Lamb, C. Lady, (1816), *Glenarvon*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 3, p. 285-286.
- ²⁴ Judson, B. (1999), 'Roman à Clef and the Dynamics of Betrayal: The Case of *Glenarvon*', *Genre – Forms of Discourse and Culture*, Winter, 33 (2), p. 155, 159.
- ²⁵ Curnutt, (1999), p.299.
- ²⁶ Lamb, (1816), vol. 3, p.286.
- ²⁷ Curnutt, (1999), p. 309.
- ²⁸ Normington, (2001), p.183.
- ²⁹ Curnutt, (1999), p. 310.
- ³⁰ Lamb, (1816), vol. 3, p. 296-297.
- ³¹ Lamb, (1816a), *Glenarvon, Second Edition*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 1, p. ii.
- ³² Ibid, vol. 1, p. ii.
- ³³ Douglass, (2004), p. 184.
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- ³⁵ Ibid, vol. 1, p. iii.
- ³⁶ Ibid, vol. 1, p. ii-iii.
- ³⁷ Ibid, vol. 1, p. x.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Jump, H.D. (ed), (2005), *Silver Fork Novels 1826-1841, 6 Volumes*, London: Pickering & Chatto, vol. I, p. ix; Kelly, G. (1989), *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, London & New York: Longman, p. 220; Cronin, R. (2002), *Romantic Victorians; English Literature 1824-1840*, Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave, p.118.
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- which in turn inspired Byron's composition 'Remember Thee! till Lethe quench Life's burning stream.' James Soderholm notes that Lamb's inscription is reminiscent of the last words of the Ghost to Hamlet: 'Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me' as is Byron's reminiscent of Hamlet's repetition of 'Remember Thee!' Soderholm also recognises that 'Remember me' is perhaps a conscious echo of 'Ridorati di me che son La Pia' ('do thou remember me, who are La Pia'), V, iii. La Pia is among three sinners who were impenitent up to the last hour, see J. Soderholm (1991), 'Lady Caroline Lamb - Byron's Miniature Writ Large', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, p. 42).
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Chapter 3

Settings and Destinations: The Political and Moral Landscape of Lamb's Novels

When considering Lamb's choice of genre, the temporal and spatial setting of the novels must also be taken into account as the two can be considered as interdependent. Franco Moretti argues that 'every genre possesses its own space [...] and each space its own genre.'¹ So, for example, a *roman à clef* could not be set in a time and space that was so far removed from the experience of either the reader or the personages represented in the novel as to render the fictional portraits unrecognisable; nor could a silver-fork novel conceivably be set, say, on the Hebridean islands. To do so would not make sense of the generic conventions, though it might subvert or re-invent the genre for a specific purpose, and thereby create its own distinctive generic space. Lamb's locations are charged with significance on the map of Whig ideology, and are determined by the genre of each novel, and vice versa: the *roman à clef* of *Glenarvon* dictated that the time and space events impinged directly on the audience she wished to reach. Ireland in 1798 has a specific personal and political resonance, as I will explore; the emphasis upon fashionable society in *Graham Hamilton* meant that it could only take place in London, but the close connections between Lamb and her family, and the city, also means that the silver-fork genre was an obvious medium of critique. The locations in *Ada Reis* may at first appear to be an exception to this: there are no obvious connections between the Whigs and Genoa (Ada Reis' place of origin), Tripoly, Lima or, for that matter, the Catholic manifestation of Hell. However even though the flamboyant adventures of Ada Reis, the intervention of the supernatural and the final destination of the underworld can be considered as a critique of readers of the Byronic Oriental or Eastern tale whilst simultaneously incorporating the recognisably autobiographical, and by now familiar, message for reform is revealed not only in the contemporary popularity of the exotic but also the geographical shift from the East to South America, and culminating in the surprisingly aristocratic twist that Lamb imposes upon the Classical descent into the underworld motif.

'Glenarvon': Ireland, Patrician Politics, Personal Vendettas

The physical and temporal setting of *Glenarvon* is revolutionary Ireland, 1798. This was a rebellion that was inspired by successes of America and France, and that sent the clear message that home rule was a distinct possibility for the indigenous population to rid themselves of oppressive overlords, such as the English and the

Bourbon monarchy. With the promised aid of the French, the Society of United Irishmen set aside their religious differences to, as Robert Kee succinctly puts it, 'eradicate the baneful English influence and destroy the aristocratic tyrants of the land.'² The landscape of Lamb's Ireland is criticised by James Garver as being unknown and unknowable, an appropriation of a literary myth of the country as 'sublimely wild and desolate; ominously castellated; infested by banditti variously known as rapparees [...] who reflected a historical muddle of Jacobite or Jacobin conspiracies of rebellion.'³ Bemoaning the lack of topographical features that would elevate the setting beyond mythical vagueness, Garver asserts that Lamb's total acceptance of the myth is crude and naïve, orientated by her inherent 'Englishness' as part of the ruling elite that fears a revolutionary conspiracy. This is echoed by Malcolm Kelsall's view that the novel reflects suspicion of the Irish from the landholding elite. Kelsall argues that there is no account of the oppression that provoked the rebellion, and there exists a naivety in a landscape of the 'picturesque imagination.'⁴ Lamb's depiction of Ireland was necessarily informed by the picturesque imagination because it is a place that she had limited experience of, only having visited it during the few months in 1812 when her family removed her from Byron's immediate vicinity, as Garver acknowledges.⁵ But the conspiracy to rebellion in *Glenarvon* is no fiction of the imagination, although it is fictionalised. The landscape is wild, dangerous and untameable, seething with insurrection as the rebels have literally been driven under and into the ground. Lamb does indeed write from the position of her inherent Englishness but she was also, as Garver does note, well placed to write with authority upon the disintegration of Anglo-Irish relations.

The Duke of Devonshire, Lamb's uncle, was Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, the Governor of County Cork and owned Lismore Castle in County Waterford. The Earls of Bessborough, of which Lamb's father was the third, trace their descent and acquisition of Irish lands to Sir John Ponsonby, an English colonel in a horse regiment in Cromwell's army. He was granted lands at Kildaton in County Kilkenny, under the Act of Settlement, which he later renamed Bessborough in honour of his second wife. His great grandsons, William, the second Earl of Bessborough, and his brother John Ponsonby, both married the daughters of the third Duke of Devonshire, thereby creating an alliance between two families that were equally powerful in Irish and English politics. William Lamb was also heir to the Irish Viscounty of Melbourne, seated at

Kilmore in County Cavan.⁶ Lamb is not in fear of the indigenous population as Kelsall suggests, but as a Whig is in support of Catholic emancipation, even though her outlook, as discussed earlier, is one informed by Burkean conservatism. Due to the interconnecting nature of family estates, Lamb is conscious that the families of the English aristocracy and Irish Protestant Ascendancy, which owned the majority of Irish lands, had stronger personal and material connections in England than in Ireland, and sums up the state of Irish dissatisfaction in the face of the occupation by uninterested Anglo-Irish:

Numerous absentees had drawn great part of the money out of the country; oppressive taxes were continued; land was let and sub-let to bankers and stewards of estates, to the utter ruin of the tenants; and all this caused the greatest discontent.⁷

As well as Lamb's familial connections with Ireland and what she views as an endemic neglect of their responsibilities, it is also the site of a very personal sense of betrayal. Garver re-affirms the Byron connection between Lamb and Ireland by also reminding us that it was here that she received the vituperative letter informing her that Byron was no longer her lover, thereby revealing his duplicity, as he had been up until that moment writing to assure her of his affections;⁸ Kelsall observes that any socio-political commentary Lamb had to make was subsumed by the 'heady mixture of Satan and sexuality.'⁹ This foregrounding of Byron's connection with Lamb's writing of Ireland affirms Ghislaine McDayter's observation that Lamb is perceived as being incapable of writing about the legitimate subject of politics.¹⁰ The combination of Byron's duplicity being revealed to her in Ireland, Lamb's association with Anglo-Irish politics, and the conscious choice of the 1798 rebellion as the temporal setting for the novel elevates this portrayal of Byron above and beyond a simple re-telling of their disastrous relationship. Lamb makes illustrative use of Byron as Glenarvon; he becomes a microcosm of her Whig milieu whose stand against tyranny, as Barbara Judson notes, could be criticised as strategic posturing rather than a republican commitment, a posture that reveals a self-serving ethos.¹¹

The key to the self-serving ethos of Glenarvon lies in the very beginning of the novel, as it is here that the much criticised but previously overlooked significance of the revelation that Glenarvon and Count Viviani are one and the same person lies. This duplication is normally attributed to Lamb's gothic excesses or inability to keep abreast

of her own plot developments, rather than clever plot construction. At the beginning of the novel, Glenarvon is in Italy, the Countess of Glenarvon having been escorted to Italy by Lord Dartford who has asked her to marry him (Glenarvon's father, it is implied, is already dead). Lord Dartford has caught the eye of Lady Margaret, Calantha's aunt, of whom a full character sketch must be given to appreciate why the character's original, Lady Melbourne, Lamb's mother-in-law, took such offence, as well as to understand the necessity of Glenarvon becoming Viviani.

Lady Margaret Delaval is the only surviving sister of the Duke of Altamonte, and after dispatching her husband and son, William, to Ireland, she remains in Naples:

Freed from the last tie which had bound her to one feeling of honour or of virtue she, without remorse, gave way [...] to a life of extravagance and vice, ensnaring the inexperienced by her art, and fascinating the most wary by her beauty and her talents. The charms of her person and the endowments of her mind were worthy of a better fate [...] But, under the semblance of youthful gaiety, she concealed a dark intriguing spirit [...] She had been hurried on by the evil activity of her own mind, until the habit of crime had overcome every scruple, and rendered her insensible to repentance, and almost to remorse. In this career, she had improved to such a degree her natural talent of dissimulation, that, under its impenetrable veil, she was able to carry on securely her darkest machinations; and her understanding had so adapted itself to her passions, that it was in her power to give, in her own eyes, a character of grandeur, to the vice and malignity, which afforded an inexplicable delight to her depraved imagination.¹²

Lord Dartford is powerless to resist and his defection results in the premature death of the Countess of Glenarvon. Young Glenarvon has already been entrusted into the care of Count Gondimar, and is thus removed from the circle that surrounds Lady Margaret. Glenarvon is embroiled in his own affairs of the heart, which results in the mysterious death of first his mistress, and then her husband. This is a small but crucial plot development as it prevents Glenarvon from meeting Lady Margaret so that he remains unknown to her and can approach her in the guise of Viviani, a character who appears to fall in love with her, but whose sole purpose is to gain access to her family in order to destroy them and avenge his mother's death. Those that know Glenarvon do not know Viviani, and vice versa, the implication by Lamb being that each person cannot really know more than the aspect of Byron that he chose to present. When Viviani apparently leaves Ireland after supposedly kidnapping Lady Margaret's nephew, whose birth has thwarted her plans of her own son inheriting the dukedom, Viviani only leaves the acquaintance of Lady Margaret and remains in Ireland to reappear as Glenarvon. It is

during the interim that Alice MacAllain mysteriously disappears and this is when she is seduced, impregnated and abandoned by Glenarvon. Calantha is the only one to have seen both Viviani and Glenarvon but it is important to realise that she is not aware that the two are the same. When she meets Viviani, it is at a masquerade ball and he is in disguise as a friar, hence he is unrecognisable. What has previously been discussed as a random course of events is the intricately constructed key to the rest of the novel. Glenarvon plots to bring down the house of Delaval by whatever means necessary; firstly, by insinuating himself into the favours of Lady Margaret and pretending to kidnap and murder the newborn heir of the Duke of Altamonte on her instructions, secondly by adopting the cause of the United Irishmen, the timing of which could not be more fortuitous for Glenarvon's purpose. The personal vendetta of Glenarvon becomes enmeshed with the political clash between the Protestant Ascendancy landholding elite, represented by Castle Delaval, and the indigenous population, represented by Belfont Abbey, the ruined estates of the Earls of Glenarvon.

The autobiographical basis of the work is beyond dispute and the originals of the characters had no difficulties spotting themselves and each other. Lady Holland was outraged by her portrayal as the Princess of Madagascar, a name she was referred to behind her back for years to come.¹³ Since the novel was marketed and read as a *roman à clef*, the portrayals of Lamb as Calantha and Byron as Glenarvon have directed the emphasis towards examining the retelling of their affair, and the emphasis upon the personal has been to the detriment of the political content of the novel. As McDayter has already commented, a novel that sympathetically presents the concerns of Irish nationalism and political reform at a time of anti-republican feeling invoked 'nary a peep of remonstrance' from the critics about its political ramifications.¹⁴ Even modern critics and Lamb's biographers refer to Glenarvon as the hero of the novel when Lamb's intention was to portray him as precisely the opposite, which she does by writing Glenarvon as the antithesis of a real life hero of the 1798 Irish rebellion, Lord Edward Fitzgerald.¹⁵ Byron had previously expressed an admiration for Fitzgerald, regretting the fact that he had only been a boy at the time of the Irish Rebellion and declaring 'had [he] been a man I would have made an English Lord Edward Fitzgerald.'¹⁶ It is unclear whether or not Lamb was aware of this recollection of youthful hero worship but, as Richard Cronin comments, she 'fulfils his ambition' but makes him an 'inauthentic version of the Citizen Lord.'¹⁷

In light of the research undertaken by Stella Tillyard for her biography of Fitzgerald, the extent to which he was connected with the extended Whig families that incorporated Lamb's own can be acknowledged.¹⁸ He was born in 1763 into the Irish Anglican aristocracy, the youngest son of the Duke of Leinster. His mother was Lady Emily Lennox, whose sister Caroline was married to the first Baron Holland, Henry Fox, making Fitzgerald cousin to the charismatic Whig, Charles James Fox. He had an affair with Elizabeth Linley by whom he had a daughter whose husband, the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, had a tempestuous, long-running relationship with Lamb's mother. There is even a possibility, as Paul Douglass discusses, that Sheridan was Lamb's biological father.¹⁹ The Fitzgeralds, as the Earls of Kildare (the title, Duke of Leinster, is an English one procured for him by his father-in-law, the Duke of Richmond), were among the first peers in Ireland.²⁰ During the eighteenth century, however, they were powerful among the Protestant Ascendancy that had risen to prominence during the last two hundred years. This latter position had placed them at odds with the interests of the Irish Catholics and placed them in the position of figureheads for the movement for Irish Protestant nationalism.²¹ The radicalism of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, as a disciple of Paine, placed him in direct opposition to his own family as well as the rest of Protestant Ascendancy society, which included Lamb's immediate family. If for no other reason, Lamb would have been aware of him due to his relationship with Elizabeth Sheridan. He joined the British Army as a teenager and fought in the American War of Independence for the British, during which he was badly wounded. An escaped African slave, Tony Small, saved his life and they became inseparable until Fitzgerald's death. Fitzgerald was elected into the Irish Parliament in 1783 but his radical republican beliefs eventually alienated him from the government; he spoke almost for the last time against the Insurrection Act in 1796. He returned to North America and travelled to Canada where he spent time with the Iroquois, whose society represented for him a perfected model of social and political republican equality.²² On his return Fitzgerald became a disciple of Tom Paine, and visited Revolutionary France, from where he wrote letters home dated '1st Year of the Republic', signing himself 'le citoyen Edouard Fitzgerald,'²³ and where his enthusiastic toasting of the Marseillaise resulted in his dismissal from the British Army in 1792. On his return from Paris, he sought out and became actively involved with the United Irishmen, becoming the chief organiser of their military efforts. In 1798, he was forced

into hiding by the government's swift campaign to disarm the rebels by invoking martial law. The English authorities finally caught up with him whilst, ironically, he was sick in bed; he was shot resisting arrest and died in Dublin Castle as a result of his injuries. Tillyard states that even Fitzgerald's marriage was a political statement of his commitment to the republican enterprise; his wife, Pamela, was believed to be the illegitimate daughter of Philippe Égalité, duc d'Orléans and cousin to Louis XVI, a republican sympathiser who was nevertheless guillotined, and his long term mistress, Madame de Genlis.²⁴

Descriptions of Lord Edward indicate a similarity in appearance with Glenarvon/Byron, with the 'beauty of his grey-green eyes, long lashes, high forehead and thick dark brown hair,'²⁵ but it is the differences that highlight how the posturing nature of Glenarvon/Byron as a champion of liberty reveals itself to be purely performance. Although Lamb may not have been aware of Byron's admiration for Fitzgerald, she would certainly have been acquainted with Fitzgerald himself, even though he died when Lamb was only thirteen, through family and political connections, and, more importantly, so would the tight knit community of her envisioned readership. The involvement of a Protestant aristocrat as titular leader of the United Irishmen would have been shocking enough for Lamb and her circle to be at least acquainted with his circumstances because of their interrelated Anglo-Irish affiliations. In making Glenarvon the antithesis of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Lamb ridicules what Barbara Judson refers to as Byron's celebrated resistance to tyranny, exposing it as mere word play and posturing.²⁶ Lamb strips away the glamour of the Childe Harold persona for which he was mistaken, despite his own protestations to the contrary; Glenarvon's assertion 'I am not what I seem, I am not him who you take me for' is an echo of this.²⁷ This verbal portrait of Childe Harold that was so seductive to Lamb and many others is represented in the text by Glenarvon's pamphlet addressing the United Irishmen; Calantha finds it entrancing, and is able to 'hear and think of nothing else.'²⁸ She replaces the imagined portrait of Glenarvon, garnered from his verbal performance as a champion of liberty, with a portrayal of aristocratic self-interest. Whereas Lord Edward is a man of action, Glenarvon is a man of words. Fitzgerald rejected rule by the English crown over an annexed Ireland that the presence of the Devonshires and the Bessboroughs and even his own family represented, and so, it would at first appear, does Glenarvon. Fitzgerald renounced his title and claims upon the land; Glenarvon

insists that he retains his, to which he has a dubious claim, whilst urging others to renounce theirs. Fitzgerald dies for his principles, while Glenarvon changes sides when it suits him, fighting for the British for the legitimate restoration of his lands. In addition, Glenarvon is proved to be a murderer, having the blood of the husband of a former mistress and Alice MacAllain on his hands. Lamb strips away the theatrical and mysterious elements of the character, forewarning the reader that he is not to be trusted, and replaces the abstraction that surrounds the character of Childe Harold with the sordid specifics, thereby insulating the reader from the seductive appeal of the Byronic. As Ada Reis is made by Lamb to observe eight years later, 'how popular the devil is become of late!':

Language is exhausted for the purpose of representing him in interesting colours. We hear nothing but the high endowments of his mind and the melancholic beauty of his countenance.²⁹

The Miltonic connotations of Glenarvon's appearing as Lucifer, god-like before the rabble of Pandemonium, at first suggests the Whiggish interpretation of Lucifer being the first rebel, a scourge against a tyrannical, autonomous power, which led Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), to identify Milton's Lucifer with the Promethean hero.³⁰ However, Lamb's appropriation of the image does away with this apparently altruistic stance of liberator on behalf of the oppressed and reveals the ethos of the self-serving and personally ambitious Miltonic devil.

Glenarvon's duplicity is defined by Lamb as not only Byronism but also, by extension, Whiggism, for both position themselves as the defenders of popular liberty and yet both can be accused of appropriating the posture. Even though most Whigs had supported, in principle, the American and French Revolutions, which stood for the removal of entailed and hereditary privilege, and the granting of political equality and parliamentary reform, they had, like Glenarvon, no intention of renouncing their own entailed privileges. Lamb is not, as Kelsall suggests, depicting the 'perversions of Irish rebellion as seen by the Whig nobility,'³¹ but rather the other way around. Lamb is portraying the perversion and neglect of the Whig nobility that allowed the rebellion to gather momentum in the first place, and the perception of the ruling elite by those people that they claimed to represent. Only Lord Avondale, the respected Whig commander, is worthy of the respect shown to him by the Irish. He is presented as a natural leader whose honour remains intact throughout, but even his single-minded

approach to defend the honour of his country at any cost reveals ‘bitter contempt’ towards the rebels, when they first threaten him and then hail him as their leader on recognition.³² However, Avondale’s frustration with the ‘fickle senseless beings [...] these creatures we would take to govern us: this is the voice of the people: these are the rights of man’³³ is an echo of Burke’s fears about the drastic and uncontrollable nature of change brought about rapid revolution that propelled those with no political experience into positions of leadership, such in revolutionary France. The flirtation with the dangers of republicanism is personified by the women associated with the Castle Delaval, Lady St. Clare and her daughters, Lauriana and Jessica, who ‘drest in the most flaunting attire, singing [...] the song of liberty, covered with green ribbands, were walking in company with a vast number of young men, most of them intoxicated, and all talking and laughing loudly.’³⁴ Not only are the women compromising their own physical and moral welfare, they are portraying the potential ridiculousness in the empty gesture of adopting party colours, calling to mind the Whigs’ adoption of the buff and blue uniform of the ‘American’ army in the battle for independence.³⁵ Lady St. Clare and her daughters reduce the seriousness of the crisis and the necessary response to a fad of fashion of which they soon tire and return home, thereby adding to the grievances against them. Only Elinor St. Clare, the ex-lover of Glenarvon and the embodiment of Ireland, recognises that the word of the English nobility ‘passes not current among us, [...] woe to the tyrant who has betrayed his trust.’³⁶ As an Irish woman Elinor stands for the authenticity of the rebellion in contrast to Glenarvon’s posturing, and she, like Lord Edward Fitzgerald, is the only one prepared to die for her principles rather than be subjugated by the duplicity of either Glenarvon or the Whig paternalism that he represents.

‘Graham Hamilton’: Scotland and the Reduction of the Silver Fork City

The London of *Graham Hamilton*, unlike the topographically indistinct Ireland of *Glenarvon*, is signposted with recognisable features, and though they are few they all point towards a contemporary location for a pointed criticism of the priorities and values of the aristocracy as experienced through the newly arrived eponymous hero. Similar to Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), Hamilton’s experiences of the city are much like *Evelina*’s own in that he has to learn to negotiate his way through an alien environment obsessed with the visual signifiers of social status. It is his inexperience that illuminates a complex and socially coded environment that places great demands upon personal

integrity. Hamilton's parvenu status is continually reinforced by his discovery of the invisible social boundaries that are embedded within a reduced cityscape of London, the type identified by Moretti in his discussion of the silver-fork novelists' attempts to address the complex urban location of their fictions.³⁷ Lamb's London is an extremely simplified version of the binary representations of London by silver-fork novelists, of west and east, aristocracy and other. Lamb is not writing to support the topographical and social separateness but rather to unite the two halves into a city of a single system, as a reminder of the interconnected nature of society that the silver-fork map seeks permanently to divide.

At the beginning of the novel, Hamilton is to be found in a Scotland that is as devoid of identifying landmarks as Glenarvon's Ireland, and as such is symbolic rather than specific. Scotland is indicative of Hamilton's pre-lapsarian state, the natural hills, plains and pure clean air being far removed, geographically and metaphorically, from the arbitrary social institutions embedded in London. As such, its virtues are represented in the two characters of faultless probity, Hamilton's cousin and, later, fiancée Gertrude and his friend Moncrief. Hamilton's estrangement from Gertrude, because of his involvement with Lady Orville, is his estrangement from the rural idyll that she represents. On his arrival in London, Hamilton exclaims 'Oh! for Scotland's hills and plains! Oh for fresh air and Gertrude.'³⁸ Lamb employs an epigraph from Burns to indicate that saying goodbye to Gertrude is saying goodbye to the peace of mind that she and Scotland represent for Hamilton:

Farewell old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!
Farewell, my friends! Farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those –
These bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr.³⁹

Similarly, although always at Lady Orville's side, Moncrief remains detached from the pettiness to be found in London society and is the only true friend of Hamilton in his time of need. Moncrief has devoted his life to protecting Lady Orville's reputation and virtue, and his integrity attributed to his Scottish origins. There is a resonance of a young Byron in Lamb's portrayal of Hamilton as an innocent abroad who becomes tainted with the less desirable aspects of fashionable society. Byron, it will be

remembered, was of Scottish descent and was brought up in Aberdeen prior to his ascendancy to the baronetage; despite being proud of his Scottish ancestry, his accent was, like Hamilton's, a source of initial embarrassment in the drawing rooms of the Whig aristocracy as evidence of his provinciality before he fully assimilated himself into fashionable society.⁴⁰

Hamilton is spoiled by his contact with London society; he becomes 'cold [...] and cruel' towards Gertrude, whose simplicity he recognises as his lost self: on the thought of seeing her again after a lengthy separation, he hoped to find in her 'a stiffness or vulgarity of manner [...] a north-country accent [...] an awkward simplicity – a vacant laugh displeasing to one of my refinement.'⁴¹ However, Gertrude 'had never appeared so captivating' because of her association with 'former scenes of home [...] her innocent love', and she dispels all the 'vain-glorious joys of the world.'⁴² The freshness and naturalness of Gertrude contrasts with the 'vulgar servility of those [...] pushing their way into the world of fashion, and the equally vulgar arrogance of those who considered themselves their leaders.'⁴³ Yet it is this world that Hamilton wants to introduce Gertrude to; his plans for their marriage includes 'servants, clothes, jewels, such as I had seen in London [...], theatres, balls and splendour', whereas her plans consist of 'rural scenes, a cottage, a farm, a small library.'⁴⁴ Hamilton's material aspirations have increased in correlation with his social ones and as such, Sir Malcolm is 'compelled' to leave all his money to Hamilton and none to Gertrude, as 'her wants are few – [Hamilton's], unhappily [...] numerous.'⁴⁵ Gertrude's untimely death is the direct result of Hamilton becoming embroiled with Lady Orville and her debts, for which he takes responsibility and is arrested for non-payment. Gertrude's constitution collapses under the strain of hearing rumours that Hamilton has shot himself after eloping with Lady Orville, and with her death comes Hamilton's total alienation from his homeland, so deeply entrenched is Gertrude's association with the rural simplicity that had been corrupted within Hamilton.

Sir Malcolm, despite his title, is not a hereditary member of the aristocracy but a self-made man, a money-lender to whom those in the fashionable circle are seen to apply, such as Lord Orville, as witnessed by Hamilton on his arrival. Located on Abchurch Street near the Royal Exchange and the Bank of England, Sir Malcolm's premises are both shop and home, within the heart of the commercial boundaries of the

City of London. In direct opposition to the commercial district of the city is Lady Orville's town house, situated in Portland Place in the West End, which Roy Porter describes as an area where the aristocracy had laid out town versions of their country estates in a style of classical regularity that was unlike any other part of the city.⁴⁶ Hamilton, like Evelina who traverses from the Mirvans' house in Queen Ann Street to the Branghtons' shop-cum-residence in High Holborn and Snow Hill, experiences both ends of the socially divided of the city. His crossing of the geographical boundaries from the commercial city into the leisured town highlights two things: the beginning of his struggle to maintain his integrity and the interdependent nature of the metropolis and its inhabitants. Hamilton's first tangible experience of London, a place of 'magnitude and opulence'⁴⁷ and of a contradictory nature, is garnered on a guided walk with his uncle; on the steps of Westminster Abbey a beggar approaches him. From the fifteenth century until being cleared to make way for Victoria Street in 1845-51, Westminster was an area notorious for being a rookery of slums and alleys that afforded sanctuary to any fugitive and its inhabitants were chiefly made up of the criminal and the destitute, rubbing cheek by jowl with the seat of Christian charity, Westminster Abbey.⁴⁸ This is the Westminster which Georgiana entered to canvass for votes on behalf of Fox in the 1798 election, her direct interaction with the inhabitants being the exception rather than the rule. It is here, on the steps of the Abbey, that Hamilton is reprimanded by his uncle for his giving money away, Sir Malcolm saying that Hamilton needs to learn the value of it before he can give it away, and proposing to teach Hamilton to become a gentleman rather than teach him a profession. This is the very education that will guarantee that Hamilton will not learn the value of money as Hamilton has already reflected on the uselessness of hoarding money for its own sake and on his own violently impulsive and passionate nature.

Hamilton is told of Portland Place by the servant he mistakes for a gentleman at the theatre, which is also where he first spots Lady Orville, watching Sarah Siddons, whose success as an actress was partly due to Georgiana's patronage.⁴⁹ Portland Place, the town house of the Orvilles is, according to Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert's exhaustively researched *London Encyclopaedia*, the grandest street of eighteenth century London, laid out by the Adam brothers in 1778 and named after the ground landlord, the Duke of Portland. The extraordinary width of the street is due to a wish of Lord Foley, whose house blocked the southern end of the street, that nothing should

obscure his north facing windows.⁵⁰ Located at the north end of the exclusive western district of the city, Portland Place is described by Lamb as a ‘most unfrequented quarter.’⁵¹ Even after the completion of Regent Street in 1825 after twelve years in the making, Edward Copeland notes Portland Place as being considered inaccessible, as recorded by Catherine Gore’s 1831 novel, *Pin Money*.⁵² Amanda Foreman records a contemporary visitor to London marking the contrast between the ‘pure air that circulates’ in the large spacious areas of the West End, in contrast to the ‘fetid stench of the alleyways behind Westminster’, mainly caused by the area being built upon swampy marsh land, rendering it susceptible to pestilence.⁵³ Hamilton sets out to find it and his journey from Westminster to Portland Place is the journey of his aspirations, and he becomes embarrassed by his uncle’s residence, which is also his place of business, and the obvious newness of his clothes and his money. Portland Place represents and is surrounding environs represents not only Lamb’s habitus but the social ease, grace and acceptance that Hamilton feels he lacks. It is as far removed socially as well as geographically as it is possible to get from Hamilton’s current location. Hamilton’s outsider status is reaffirmed as he peers up at balconies and in through windows, while a party for the young son of Lady Orville is in progress inside. However, this perception of Portland Place as an existence that is desired and desirable is swiftly dispensed with by Lamb; it is the scene of gossip and the origins of scandal when Hamilton’s name is linked to Lady Orville’s because of the ambiguous nature of their relationship, and visits are made here by bailiffs and creditors due to Lord and Lady Orville’s debts. It is the location for what Hamilton believes to be her attempted suicide at the final ball to be held there, which was to be her swan song as a social hostess before retiring to the country, and also the scene of the central crisis of the novel when Lady Orville is confronted by the repercussions of her negligence. The arrival of the recently released debtor is perceived as an invasion by the commercial and criminal aspects of the east and the south side of the city into the drawing room of the elegant west embodied by Portland Place. The illusion that the two geographical areas were distinct and separate entities is shattered and highlights the interconnected nature of society. The previously unseen consequences of Lady Orville’s actions are literally brought home to her; the refusal and inability to acknowledge the debt is an act of neglect that has immediate ramifications beyond the protective boundaries of the elegant geometry of the west end of the city.

Lamb reduces the complexity of the geographically and socially interconnected relationship of society to this simple exchange between aristocratic consumer and tradesman producer. The element of movement, the crossing of one side to the other via a series of interconnecting streets, acts as a metaphor for the nature of society as a whole. The presumed physical inaccessibility of, or at least difficulty of reaching, Portland Place is disproved by Lamb by first having Hamilton make his way there from at least as far south as Westminster, and then the unknown man who has made his way from the labyrinthine east, where he has just emerged from prison; although Lamb does not specify which one, all the major prisons were on the east side of the city. The separateness of 'town' and 'city' proves to be a mindset rather than a physical actuality, and the imagined barriers can be traversed. Moretti, on studying Charles Booth's 1889 colour-coded map that revealed the social topography of the city, observes that a 'good walker could cross the entire spectrum of Booth's seven classes in no more than five minutes';⁵⁴ this observation reveals the arbitrary nature of the imagined social boundaries, such as the building of what Edward Copeland describes as the *cordon sanitaire* of Regent Street.⁵⁵ The design of Regent Street, which joins Portland Place with Charing Cross, was, according to John Nash, intended to highlight a social distinction that already existed and to act as a boundary between the streets and squares occupied by the aristocracy and the 'narrower [s]treets and meaner houses occupied by the mechanics and the trading part of the community.'⁵⁶ However, the completion of Regent Street post-dates *Graham Hamilton* either by one or three years, according to Moretti and Copeland respectively. Just as Georgiana descended into the labyrinthine areas around Westminster courtesy of connecting thoroughfares, so could Hamilton and the unknown man ascend into the stronghold of the elite by traversing the same routes.

'Graham Hamilton' & 'Ada Reis': America, Land of Opportunity

Graham Hamilton is narrator as well as eponymous character, and the events are related with the benefit of hindsight created by the distance in time and space. Hamilton has banished himself not only from London, but from the whole of Europe and heads for the 'great prospects opening in the New [World].'⁵⁷ Thomas Paine viewed America as being unscarred by the European legacy of hereditary privilege and monarchical government, 'made up, as it is, of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of government', and as such it represented the possibility and

principles of liberty and equality because of the necessity of overcoming those very differences.⁵⁸ America has a strong association with the Whigs as the embodiment of political and social liberty, having supported the colonists in what the Whigs viewed, through the lens of Westminster politics, as a struggle to maintain liberty against impositions from the crown. The Whigs' political colours of buff and blue were adopted from the uniform of the 'American' army. The 'great prospects' open before Hamilton were the possibilities of what Leo Braudy describes as a 'social rebaptising' that the space of the New World allowed, it was an opportunity to be 'born again.'⁵⁹ The absence of an endemic caste system was the deciding factor in rejecting the 'Old' world of Great Britain and Europe in favour of the blank canvas of the 'New.' Lamb harnesses the potential for the individual in a democracy as a direct contrast and therefore commentary upon the location of London, but Hamilton's narration does not end with a successful re-location; in fact it augurs only the beginning of another one. Hamilton sails for America several years after his sojourn in London, during which he has been returned to the bosom of his family in Scotland, Gertrude has died, Lady Orville has moved to the country and is cheerful in performing good deeds, and Hamilton's self-imposed exile is made possible when he becomes sole inheritor of Sir Malcolm's fortune. The subtlety of Lamb's plot is that Hamilton, at the beginning of his narrative, has only just arrived in America and with a vast fortune at his disposal; it hangs in the balance whether Hamilton will be able to value what America might be able to teach him, putting himself and his money into what Lamb calls a 'field of enterprise,'⁶⁰ or whether he will again become a victim of his own character, described by himself as one of the 'strongest passions, and the weakest judgement.'⁶¹

Hamilton's rejection of modern society as represented by Lamb in favour of the virgin territory that has the potential for self-discovery is the inverse of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's time spent in North America and with the Iroquois in Canada. Fitzgerald, having been brought up as an aristocrat, embraces the rural idyll; Hamilton, having been brought up in the implied simplicity of Scotland, will either retrieve his peace of mind as an active citizen within a newly formed democracy or adhere to his uncle's ironically intended advice on becoming a gentleman with his new fortune. The symbolic values of America are also invoked in Mary Shelley's *Lodore*, set in the first year of the Reform Act and written as a commentary upon the corrupting nature of a class ridden society, and the similarities between the two novels are worth noting. Graham

Hamilton and Lord Lodore, whose family name is Fitzhenry, are both refugees in the New World because of personal disasters brought about by the rigorously coded behaviour of British society. Shelley also invokes the spirit of Fitzgerald in an epigraph that quotes him as saying 'few people know how little is necessary to live,'⁶² a reflection upon Shelley's theme of redemption through relinquishing the social trappings of an artificial society. However, neither Hamilton nor Lodore seem able to fully embrace the same discovery, as they do not fully integrate themselves into a landscape that is replete with the symbolic associations of rebirth, personal freedom and social liberty. Lodore leaves his wife and England, with his young daughter, rather than face fighting a duel with his son from an earlier relationship, and retreats to the remote wilderness of Illinois. Whilst his daughter, too young to know any different, imbibes the simplicity and equality that is embedded in the landscape, Lodore remains aloof and remote from it; the very isolation of his rural idyll enables him to retain his identity as an English aristocrat. His pride in his lineage and his refusal to integrate with the democratic citizens results in what Lisa Vargo calls his 'senseless death,'⁶³ en route back to England, Lodore overhears an American discussing him in terms of a coward who hides behind his name, to which he asserts 'I am Lord Lodore' and engages in a fatal duel to defend his honour. Fiona Stafford likens Lodore's aloofness to that of Prospero, regarding the American settlers to that of a race of Calibans.⁶⁴ Similarly, Hamilton's status is still that of a stranger in a strange land, unable or unwilling to integrate himself in the society of the unnamed American city in which he finds himself; instead he prefers the company of the mysterious 'Mr. M.-', a figure that Hamilton finds physically and morally repulsive, but is reluctantly drawn to because he is English, and like Hamilton is a stranger in a strange land, hence Hamilton's narration of his story. Mr. M-. has fully taken advantage of his new surroundings; despite a 'form wrought in heaven's anger; with the worst passions and principles, and the shameless avowal of them,'⁶⁵ he has become prosperous. On Hamilton's avowal at the end of his narrative, that while he lives he will be unhappy, it is Mr. M-. who urges him to 'rally to life' and take advantage of his wealth and the opportunity he has been given. Hamilton, like Lodore, appears unable or unwilling to value what America might teach him but, unlike Lodore, his future fate still hangs in the balance.

As a landscape symbolic with the possibilities of rebirth and redemption America has a significant role in Lamb's third novel, *Ada Reis*, though this time it is not

the newly liberated democratic North inhabited by settlers, but the dark and impenetrable interior of the Southern hemisphere, the indigenous population of which fluctuates between pre-civilisation savages and pre-lapsarian innocents. Lamb represents all the native inhabitants of South America as Indians and, crudely drawn as they are, they perform an effective contrast to the notion of European superiority. Before Ada Reis enters the dark interior of the continent, he and his daughter are residing in the city of Lima, the 'wonder of South America,'⁶⁶ and the year is, though this is not overtly stated, 1746. Lima, Lamb accurately informs the reader, was founded by the conqueror Don Francisco Pizarro in 1535 on behalf of Spain, the Viceroy of Lima representing the King of Spain.⁶⁷ The city itself was known as the 'city of kings' due to the vast wealth channelled through it on its way to Spain, and was noted for its architectural splendour until it, and the neighbouring city of Callao, was destroyed by an earthquake in October 1746; an event that Lamb incorporates into her plot by way of precipitating the fulfilment of Ada Reis' prophecy by throwing him into the protective custody of the anonymous Indian discussed below. The earthquake also represents the throwing off of the colonial presence and the destruction of the man-made, transient façade of civilisation based upon brutal occupation by a European power. Ada Reis is in Lima, having fled from Tripoly (as spelt by Lamb) because his treachery was discovered against the Ali Pasha, and keeping himself aloof and his daughter mysteriously veiled, his presence excites considerable interest amongst the nobility and wealthy elite, but it is here that events begin to spiral out of his control. Increasingly aware of his own mortality and impatient for the fulfilment of the prophecy that promises a crown for himself and Fiormonda, Ada Reis is keen to ingratiate himself with the Spanish nobility as he has been dazzled by their own successes at building an empire. During a feast for the Viceroy, over which Ada Reis presides, he is approached by the ghost of one he has murdered and, in the manner of Hamlet's father or Keats' cold philosopher, he reveals to Ada Reis that his true nature is known and the day of retribution is at hand; this is due to occur on the 28th October, the date of the earthquake.

The earthquake is not only the day of reckoning for Ada Reis, but also for the Spanish in the context of the novel. It is brought about by the appeal of an Indian to his Sun God to destroy Lima, the citadel of the 'Christian [...] merciless tyrants' who had imprisoned and tortured him, and who had the 'blood of the natives of his fair country on their heads.'⁶⁸ The destruction of Lima is a destruction of the fragile veneer of

European civilisation erected by the Spanish conquistadors, whereas the native Indians remain untouched and unsurprised by the disaster, building and taking only what they need to survive. It is among these that Fiormonda finds redemption at the end of the novel, renouncing all worldly goods and re-dedicating her life, like Lady Orville, to the benefit of others. Ada Reis, like the Spanish, can only count the cost of the damage in terms of what he has lost and determines to return to Lima to search amongst the wreckage, but the Indian takes him in the other direction, into the interior and towards his destiny. The fulfilment of the prophecy for Ada Reis to wear a crown does indeed come true, but, predictably, not in the manner he had envisioned. Instead of uniting himself with the crowned heads of Europe, Ada Reis becomes first a chief, then a god, of the Indian's tribe, whose murderous excesses and deliberate cruelty outstrip even Ada Reis' own. Like Lodore, Ada Reis views the population as a sub-standard species, from whom he must remain aloof:

Praise [said Ada Reis], to gratify my vanity, must come from beings, if not superior, at least equal to me; and distinction must be an acknowledged superiority over creatures like myself, and not over those blinded by bigotry and ignorance.⁶⁹

However, the more proud and aloof that Ada Reis holds himself the more that the Indians worship him, his aloofness considered by them to be dignity, his excesses to be necessary gratification for one of his status. It is a caricature of the feudal relationship between rulers and ruled that Lamb was aware no longer existed. But this portrayal of a savage and superstitious race that worship what Ada Reis perceives to be false idols is neatly subverted by Lamb to reveal instead the worship of false idols by Ada Reis:

You have seen those who worship the all-glorious sun, and in its up-rising and down-setting think that they behold a God: they, mistaken as they are, adore at least what a God alone could have created or guided in its orbit: but for these singular believers, these enlightened idolators, who ridiculed the worshippers of the sun whilst on earth, how can you account for their infatuation? They have bowed the knee to a meaner object than a cow or an image [...] They have sacrificed honour, peace of mind, health, wealth, wives, parents, and, shudder when you think of it, their children, at the shrine of this painted doll, this Fashion[.]⁷⁰

As Ada Reis, for which we must read aristocracy, eventually discovers, those that assume the mantle of responsibility, be it a crown of 'thorns or gold', and assume a pre-eminence above their fellow creatures undertake an 'arduous task'; for Lamb failure is not an option.⁷¹

'Ada Reis': The Construction of Hell

Fiormonda's arrival in South America, where she is to spend the remainder of her life working amongst the Indian population as a missionary, is an opportunity of redemption; at the hour of judgement in Hell, Fiormonda kneels down and prays for the first time for support to resist temptation when it is again set before her, and subsequently her soul is saved by 'the Being who delights in mercy, and to whom she commended her spirit.'⁷² Ada Reis, however, is condemned to remain, unable to overcome his self-obsessed shortcomings of greed and jealousy. Hell is not only the estrangement from the rewards of Heaven, but is constructed by Lamb as the place she foresaw as a possibility for herself. In a letter to William Godwin, she wrote:

It were all very well if one died at the end of a tragic scene, after playing a desperate part, but if one lives, and instead of growing wiser one remains the same victim of ever folly and passion without the excuse of youth and inexperience, what then?⁷³

This is the plea that Fiormonda makes to Condulmar, as Prince Regent of the underworld and her consort, after he has made plain that the inhabitants have damned themselves by their own volition:

It is true, that in the short deceitful days of life, we committed errors: young in mind, and wanting in experience, we suffered ourselves to be beguiled; we knew right from wrong, I allow; but daemons in your form being permitted to arise and tempt us, it was scarce possible for us to resist: in the name of these beings, who like myself, have been beguiled, I plead [...] try us but once again; permit us, with our present consciousness of the punishment that awaits us, to encounter any temptation: and should we, by our conduct, and sincere repentance, merit some mitigation of our menaced fate, may we hope to find it?⁷⁴

The trial of temptation is agreed and, not surprisingly in Lamb's sustained critique of the aristocracy, they all fail, for this version of Hell is exclusively aristocratic and designed by Lamb for this very purpose, to demonstrate the self-inflicted nature of the criticism aimed at them during the debate for reform. Kabkarra, the servant of this realm, speaks on behalf of Lamb when he impresses upon Ada Reis that they are all responsible for their own actions, and therefore the consequences:

My good friend, if the devil really did the mischief which you upon earth lay at his door, we should have a much more difficulty in making out our case than we have: but of what you call accident, misfortune, calamity, disaster, infliction, you will find here the real names to be negligence, sloth, imprudence, despondency, and intemperance.⁷⁵

Taking her cue from Dante's *Inferno*, Lamb here strips away the false, comforting nature of mitigating circumstances to reveal both the true nature of sin and with whom the blame lays.

The construction of Lamb's Hell serves her intentions; it is a unique construct as are all interpretations of this visionary space. As architect, Lamb has constructed her final destination as one that resembles an aristocratic country residence 'which was neither gloomy nor terrific in its aspect but, on the contrary, of modern date; and such as appeared to promise comfort and luxury within' approached by a 'long avenue of lofty trees.'⁷⁶ On the steps and in the entrance, there is a gathering of a 'crowd of personages of courtly manners and cultivated minds, who seemed, like him, to consider themselves as far above the vulgar herd', to whom Ada Reis, ever the sycophant even here, is keen to pay his 'devotions to where he thought they would be best appreciated.'⁷⁷ The lower orders are driven away from the gates into an unspecified region. The interior is consistent with the first impression, containing entrance halls, reception rooms, music rooms, a nursery and a library, but all on a massive scale; a corridor that contains portraits of all who have traitors to God and their country is 'four hundred years long'. The vastness of the interior allows Ada Reis and the reader to be taken on a Dantean tour, with Kabkarra in the role of Virgil, revealing the exclusive nature of this Hell. Lamb as herself appears as the shade of a 'thin woman [with a] faded wreath, [a] haggard air, [a] lingering step' whose punishment is to see all who loved her pass by with indifference, who can hear the time-pieces chime all day and night 'not the hours but all my thousand follies and faults repeated; and to be conscious that all my thoughts, wishes and actions are misrepresented.'⁷⁸ Lamb's punishment of eternal misrepresentation is a fate that she is acutely aware will be her own as an historical figure as shall be seen in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

It is from Hell, Ada Reis discovers, that all the trappings of his false deity of fashion are sent forth into the world in order to inflame desire and envy, alongside all the perfumes, make-up and addictive drugs designed to corrupt the flesh. He discovers in each room inventive and, in some instances, comical forms of punishment that reflect the nature of the sin. In the nursery, there is a swing upon which a lady swung for over two hundred years until she learned her own mind; an unfaithful man was turned into a shuttlecock to be played between two of his lovers in a match of badminton that lasted

centuries, and two politicians are on a see-saw which they must learn to balance. In the printing room, bad authors and their publishers are literally transformed into their own body of work, pressed into stupendous folios. In the pharmacy, doctors are made to swallow the pointless and potentially poisonous medicines from which they made their money. In the boudoir, maids become the mistresses and vice versa; the newly promoted ladies visit upon their maids the savageness of temper and unreasonable expectations which were the lot of the maids in life. Fortune hunters are made to swallow molten gold, and being chained together for eternity punishes mercenary marriages. The temperature is freezing, a reflection upon the freezing apathy of the population. Lamb's Hell is one of her own existence, and it has already been described in *Graham Hamilton* as one in which '[a]ll tediousness was avoided by the rapid change of topics which, like the scenery of a pantomime, must be shifted at every instant.'⁷⁹ Compare Hamilton's first experience of 'living in the best society'⁸⁰ with the following description of the suffocating atmosphere of Ada Reis' new domain:

"The master we serve," said Kabkarra, "is particular in these trifles: it his chief amusement to vary our dress and the furniture of his own house; the hangings, trappings and ornaments, are changed daily; the newest fashions in the best taste are ever studied, and forwarded by one of us to your world, as soon as adopted here."⁸¹

And again, at the hour of temptation and trial:

The tables were covered with the richest meats, fruits the most tempting, and wines of exquisite and rare flavour, whilst opening doors displayed a superb range of apartments, ornamented with breathing marbles, and paintings most exquisite: one charm alone was wanting – the charm of rarity; for jewels were scattered around with such profusion as to be disregarded, and the blaze of light from the mirrors was reflected from so many mirrors, that the dazzled eye had difficulty in fixing itself on any one object.⁸²

The luxury of the surroundings distract the inhabitant from their fate, as 'each individual awakened from despair to remorse, from remorse to hope',⁸³ as they are reassured by the gratification of their materialist desires. The inhabitants are truly damned precisely because they do not realise the worthlessness of the wealth because of its very abundance, and as a result do not seek out the one thing of value in the entire place, the 'Book of Truth and Knowledge', until after the hour of temptation has passed. The book is permanently open, even though demons do their best to obscure the pages with fire and smoke, and when the despairing damned read the pages that they had

previously ignored, they are confronted with the knowledge that they had chosen their own path to that place. Whilst Ada Reis is on his tour he observes that there are fewer women than men present, to which his guide responds that women are generally punished on earth for their offences, followed by an appearance of Lamb herself. Ada Reis observes a 'thin woman' who is set apart from the largest part of the assembly, who are in turn set apart from the 'vulgar herd' and to whom Ada Reis is instinctively drawn.⁸⁴ Lamb punishes the aristocracy not for having committed any crime as such but for the abuse of talent, wealth, privilege and opportunity, thereby promoting their own ruin and those that depend upon them, as in the case of Lady Orville in *Graham Hamilton*, who would have found herself in there as self-induced poverty is also identified as a punishable offence.

Lamb's connecting of the aristocracy and Hell is not as far fetched as it first might appear. The origin of the word 'hell' is from a Germanic root that means 'to cover' thereby associating it with being underground and the connotations of being denied light.⁸⁵ Donald Low identifies a connection between the etymological origins of the underworld and the merging of the surface glamour and the seamier aspects of the aristocracy as 'a submerged, hidden or secret region or sphere of life, especially one given to crime, profligacy and intrigue.'⁸⁶ It is therefore no coincidence that the most common cause of aristocratic ruin, self-inflicted poverty, took place behind the closed doors of private clubs, to which was applied the soubriquet 'hells', the name implying those that entered were lost souls and London had the largest population of such establishments.⁸⁷ Lamb's construction of hell is not merely didactic but is designed to illustrate the tragedy of human waste. Lamb concludes the novel thus:

Look then into your own heart; repent, and pray; beware of the fate of Ada Reis; for however seductive the paths of pleasure, however delightful the palace, the banquets, and the song of the tempter, remember that, step by step, they lead to the gate of the burning vault. Over which it is written – 'Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'intrate.'⁸⁸

The last line is a direct quotation from the entrance gates of Dante's *Inferno*, 'Abandon all hope ye who enter here.' Captain Rees Gronow, Regency dandy, debtor and famed duellist, records in his memoirs that it is a phrase he thought to be an appropriate inscription to be above the entrance into the 'fatal chamber' of a gambling-house.⁸⁹ The wording suggests that the perils of hell, and the gambling den, are not pre-determined

and are therefore avoidable. Lamb's Hell, and the gambling 'hells,' are both entered by 'personages from civilised countries, who possessed rank [and] dignity' who are not otherwise usefully employed, with money and time to waste, and who are brought through the doors 'by mere wantonness and neglect of duty.'⁹⁰ The real hell, though, is as Lamb opined to Godwin and Ada Reis discovers, to remain forever the victim of every vice and folly instead of growing wiser.

For Ada Reis hell is a state of mind as well as a physical place, recalling the declaration of Mephistopheles in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*:

Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?
O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strike terror to my fainting soul.⁹¹

This speech on the torment of being denied spiritual fulfilment is recalled in *Ada Reis* by Kabkarra, the son and agent of the devil:

"Judge thou, then, Ada Reis, [...] what the agony of [the Devil's] heart must have been [...]; what the grief, the despondency, of that mighty mind which had known the perfection, and the loveliness of the scenes, he had ever renounced?"⁹²

Ada Reis, like the legend of Doctor Faustus, is a tale of the tragedy of human waste, the sacrifice of the spiritual for the sake of the material. Even though the generic features of *Ada Reis* have already been discussed, it is worth noting here that it has clear parallels with the type of morality play of which Marlowe's play is a type. Morality plays follow a common plot of contest for the spiritual welfare of a representative type, an allegorical and symmetrical conflict between good and evil, the spiritual and the material of Lamb's Manichaeism. Following the path from original innocence, which arguably Ada Reis was endowed with in the brief period he was under the fostering tuition of the Genoese merchant that had taken the orphaned boy in, to remorse and demonic retribution, via plotting, temptation and transgression. Significantly, Ada Reis and Doctor Faustus are not so much tempted but are fatally flawed by the sin of self-interest. A striking correlation between this structure of a morality play and the geographical settings of the novels is the inherent Catholicism of the landscape. Ireland, Spanish South America and Hell are all theologically mapped as Catholic,

which is perhaps indicative of Whig support for the necessity for Catholic emancipation,⁹³ but also provides Lamb with the Catholic belief in purgatory, allowing the opportunity for true repentance, which washes away all sin in the sacrament of penance. Lamb makes Lady Calantha's religious principles overtly Catholic in the second and revised edition of *Glenarvon*, Fiormonda reaches the final stage of repentance and penance, and so does Lady Orville. Graham Hamilton's fate, it will be remembered, hangs in the balance having reached the stage of remorse but it remains uncertain as to whether or not he will redeem himself by availing himself of the opportunity to be reborn in the New World, whilst Ada Reis' unrepentant state destroys his chance to redeem himself. A ghost ship of those he has ruined, with a ghostly friar at the helm, pursues *Glenarvon* to his death. The last thing that *Glenarvon*, and the reader, hears is a distinctly Catholic voice of judgement:

Cursed be the murderer in his last hour! – Hell awaits its victim.
[...] Hardened and impenitent sinner! The measure of your iniquity is full: the price of crime has been paid: here shall your spirit dwell for ever, and for ever. You have dreamed away life's joyous hour, nor made atonement for error, nor denied yourself aught that the fair earth presented you. [...] O, cry upwards from these lower pits, to the fiends and companions you have left, to the sinner who hardens himself against his Creator
[...] Tell him how terrible a thing is death; how fearful at such an hour is remembrance of the past.⁹⁴

An integral part of the punishment meted out to *Glenarvon* and the lost souls of Ada Reis' hell, as in Dante's *Inferno*, is the retaining of the memory of their sins to enable a retelling as the warning to others to avail themselves of the possibility of redemption through a purgatory which is denied by the Protestantism that dominated the political and theological map of Georgian England.

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holding office and entering some professions, attending university, buying land or even own a horse worth more than £5. Some measure of relief was periodically given but full emancipation was consistently vetoed, particularly by George III who saw it as an infringement of his coronation oath to uphold the Protestant constitution.

⁹⁴ Lamb, (1816), vol. 3, p. 320-321.

Chapter 4
A Written Warning: Lamb's Use of John Ford

Among those that Lamb condemned to Hell in moral judgement for their neglect of duty and abuse of their wealth and talents, there are others who have committed no actual crime. Instead, they have been tried, judged and condemned by the unwritten laws that governed 'polite' society. Ada Reis observes a woman whom he did not expect to meet in the infernal regions and asks his guide what sin she is being punished for:

"You are very much mistaken," said Kabkarra, "if you suppose that that lady has any actual misconduct to answer for:- she has to account for falling under the suspicion of errors that she did not commit, and having lost her character without any reason." "Is that her fault?" said Ada Reis. "That is owing to the censoriousness of the world, the general love of scandal, the envy of rivals, the malice of enemies. [...] But, after all, is it a crime?" "One of the greatest that can be committed: it has all the effects of actual guilt; it sets a bad example, and it injures the individual [...] because in your world, no one can injure himself without injuring all with whom he is connected, and more particularly those with whom he is the most nearly connected, and whom it is his particular duty to benefit and assist."¹

This theme of moral judgement imposed by society is in evidence throughout all three of Lamb's works and will be discussed throughout this chapter in recognition of her extensive use of the Caroline playwright, John Ford. During the Romantic period, the works of Ford had something of a resurgence in popularity. Charles Lamb included him in *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (1808). A new edition of his work were published by Henry Weber in 1811 and, as T.J.B Spencer succinctly observes, the merits of his works discussed by critics such as Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*, William Gifford in *The Quarterly Review* (who subsequently issued his own edition of Ford in 1827) and William Hazlitt in his *Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, delivered in 1819.² Early editions may well have found their way into the library at Chatsworth as early dedicatees included William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, to whom the play *Perkin Warbeck* was dedicated in 1634. Cavendish's father was the younger son of Bess of Hardwick's second marriage to Sir William Cavendish, making the Earl of Newcastle cousin to the first Duke of Devonshire.³

The attraction of Ford to Lamb can be considered as two-fold: firstly, Ford deals with the sensitive issues of sexuality and social acceptability, but without offering a moral judgement; instead he writes on the psychological aspect of the emotional dilemmas that self and society find themselves defined by and trapped within. For expression of her own experiences Lamb draws upon Ford's sympathetic treatment of lovers who find themselves beyond social acceptability, themes of thwarted love, concealed and mistaken identity, and the damaging consequences of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of character. T.J.B. Spencer suggests that Ford is progressive in rejecting the social aspects of sexual relations in favour of a more spiritual approach, one of the heart, and that, for Ford, passion is the strongest emotion as it is a true one that takes complete possession and is unchangeable, whatever the consequences are.⁴ Ford does demonstrate sympathy for lovers who go against the grain of public opinion, whatever the consequences. As Lisa Hopkins suggests in her discussion of Lamb's use of Ford, the attraction of his works may lie in his 'sensitive treatment of those cast outside their social group because of their sexual sins.'⁵ The second aspect of Ford that has a resonance for Lamb is that he has been identified as a covertly political writer who exemplifies not only the effectiveness, but also the legitimacy of the aristocracy and their intermediary position between the monarchy and the people. Very little is known about Ford as an individual, but Lisa Hopkins has traced an affiliation between Ford's dedicatees that reveals a network of familial, religious and political sympathies: a tightly defined group of people with whom Ford obviously had very close links.⁶ Hopkins discovers that of the nineteen, predominantly aristocratic dedicatees, the majority of them are related by blood or marriage and form a core of aristocratic opposition to Charles I.⁷ Ford's work, *Perkin Warbeck* in particular upon which Lamb draws heavily, asserts an interest in aristocratic primacy and innate nobility, a distinctly recognisable aspect of Lamb's works. Ford asserts the primacy of the aristocracy as a reminder to the monarch that he owes them a debt of gratitude, whereas Lamb writes to remind the aristocracy of a code of aristocratic behaviour, another distinctly Fordian theme.

Heroical and Platonic Love: the Influence of Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' and Henrietta Maria

Before going on to examine the influence of Ford's plays in relation to the works of Lamb, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at a work that many critics of Ford have recognised as being of huge significance upon his own works, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). Burton sought to explain the physical aspect of moral behaviour, which has a bearing on Lamb's empathy with Ford's characters. Dominick J. Hart observes that the aspect of Burton's work that is of most interest to Ford is that of the humours, and in particular, the humour which controls passion and the physical effect that the humour produces when the passion for a heart's desire remains unfulfilled.⁸ According to Burton there are two categories of passionate love, heroical and jealous: the former precedes marriage and the latter manifests itself after. Ford is interested in both, but it is the former that is the most pertinent when considering the works of both Ford and Lamb. Heroical love is the all-consuming desire for a coveted object which must be achieved for the well being of the lover, and gains such control that the individual will stop at nothing, however irrational, to secure possession. This irrationality is the product of what Burton identified as 'adust', a poison created by the burning of the unfulfilled humour which drives passion and which will cause suffering, sickness and eventually death. The only protection against or cure of this poison is to secure the object of desire if the desire itself cannot be subjugated or transferred to another, and the only socially acceptable way of possessing the object in terms of another individual is marriage. However, the marriage can only be a success if it is free from impediments, and if there are obstacles then the individual must either accept the consequences of producing the deadly adust as a result of frustration or conduct a socially illicit but humour-gratifying relationship; the tragedy in both Ford and Lamb, as will be seen, is when this conflict between the desire for and the social acceptability of possession occurs.

In his theory that humankind is governed by humours Burton places his analysis of the passions in the realms of the purely physical, thereby denying the possibility of free will. Ford does not take issue with this aspect of Burton's work, merely portraying the emotional and social dilemma in which this accepted theory may place an individual in a given situation. For example, Ford does not condemn the incestuous relationship

between Giovanni and Annabella, the brother and sister at the centre of *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*, but brings it to its conclusion with Giovanni's murder of Annabella, a relationship that has no other possible outcome according to Burton's anatomy. Significantly, it is possibly Ford's most famous play but Lamb avoids any overt reference to *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*. The closest she comes to it is that her female heroine in *Glenarvon* has a daughter named Annabella. It would be reasonable to suggest that this was primarily due to the sensitive nature of the theme of incest and Lamb's close proximity to Byron, whose own marriage to Annabella Milbanke struggled because of the Burtonian impediment of his suggested relationship with his sister, Augusta.⁹ With reference to Burton's anatomy, Byron's relationship with both his wife and his sister was doomed to fail and although none of them died as a result of being poisoned by their own adust, it could be suggested that the social disgrace that attended Byron and Augusta, and the devastating humiliation suffered by Annabella, was close enough.

A second influence upon Ford that is reflected in Lamb's *Graham Hamilton* is the concept of Platonic love as introduced into the English court of Charles I by the French Queen Henrietta Maria. Hart outlines a summary of the Platonic code of behaviour:

[F]ate rules all lovers, therefore lovers have no choice; that beauty and goodness are one and the same; that beautiful women are souls to be worshipped, and, therefore to be the principal objects of men's desires; that true love is of equal hearts and divine, that is, true love is of the soul not the body; and finally that love is all important and more powerful than reason.¹⁰

In Ford's *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*, Giovanni tries to persuade the Friar of Annabella's virtue by waxing lyrical upon her physical beauty.¹¹ Similarly, Lamb has Graham Hamilton exclaim, upon spying Lady Orville in company with his esteemed countryman Moncrief, 'they are all as virtuous as they are beautiful.'¹² Later, Moncrief tells Hamilton that he has devoted his entire life to protecting Lady Orville's reputation and virtue. The first and fourth principle, the fate of lovers and that true love is of equal hearts, is under scrutiny in both *Glenarvon* and *Ada Reis*, but, unfortunately for Calantha and Fiormonda, in that who they are in love with is unworthy of them, and it is not a love that is reciprocated and equal.

'The Broken Heart': Glenarvon, the Aristocratic Ideal and Self-Annihilation

The heroine of Lamb's *Glenarvon*, Lady Calantha Delaval, is named after the Princess Calantha of Ford's tragedy, *The Broken Heart*, published in 1633. Ford's Calantha is princess of Sparta, who is betrothed to marry the prince of Argos, her cousin Nearchus. However, she is in love with Ithocles, a favourite of the Spartan court. They seek and gain permission to marry from Calantha's father and Nearchus, recognising the love match between Calantha and Ithocles, stands down as suitor. Penthea, twin sister of Ithocles, is in love with Orgilus. However, Ithocles insists that she marry an older man, Bassanes, whom Ithocles considers a better match. The marriage, inevitably, is a miserable one; Bassanes is a doting but insanely jealous husband, and Penthea is a dutiful but grief-stricken wife, who eventually dies as the result of self-imposed starvation. Orgilus holds Ithocles responsible for the death of his true love, Penthea, and murders him. The climax of the play is during a festival dance. Calantha hears of the deaths of her father, her friend, Penthea, and her betrothed, Ithocles, in quick succession. Apparently unmoved, she urges that the dance should continue. Only after it finishes does she acknowledge what she has heard and, as she is now queen, she sentences Orgilus to death, disposes of her kingdom to her cousin, Nearchus, the prince of Argos, and finally puts a wedding ring on the finger of the murdered Ithocles, her 'contracted Lord', and dies of the eponymous broken heart.

The Spartan setting of *The Broken Heart* is synonymous with a code of conduct embodied by the powers of endurance and self-restraint and chastity, particularly the moral strength of its women, all of which are present in *The Broken Heart*, and which are distinctly lacking in all of Lamb's novels. Princess Calantha¹³ endures hearing of three successive deaths without losing her countenance of innate nobility, restraining herself from any emotional outpouring of grief until duty and justice have been formally dispensed, and even then dying with a quiet dignity as befitting her short-lived station as Queen. Penthea is chastity and moral strength embodied, refusing to be unfaithful to a husband she detests and banishing from her the sight of her true love, Orgilus, for the protection of them both. Clifford Leech reads *The Broken Heart* as a model of the aristocratic ideal of endurance, stating that the most impressive of Ford's characters always remember that, despite their distress, they are of the nobility.¹⁴ The standards of courtesy and propriety are so rigorously applied that Donald K. Anderson asserted that he was tempted to label *The Broken Heart* a 'tragedy of manners',¹⁵ the inverse is true

for Lamb's aristocracy in all three of her novels. Interestingly, Hopkins has observed that Ford's Sparta was a once noble culture in a state of deterioration, an endemic feature of the moral bankruptcy of the nobility to be found in Lamb's work.¹⁶

There are distinct parallels between *The Broken Heart*, *Glenarvon* and, to an extent, Lamb's own life. In all three instances, the women were originally intended to be married in a dynastic rather than a love match: Princess Calantha to Nearchus the Prince of Argos; Lady Calantha to her cousin William Buchanan; Lamb, it was commonly supposed within the family, to her cousin 'Hart', the Marquis of Hartington, heir to the title of Duke of Devonshire.¹⁷ Both Ford and Lamb reject the dynastic marriage that goes so tragically wrong for Penthea, in favour of true lovers; in all three scenarios, the dynastic wishes of the families are not enforced and the women are allowed to make their own choices to marry Ithocles, Lord Avondale and William Lamb respectively. In *Glenarvon* Lamb draws attention to the similarities between Lady Calantha and her literary predecessor:

The heiress of Delaval [Lady Calantha], decked in splendid jewels [...] was the reigning favourite of the moment: everyone observed it, and smiled upon her more on that account. To be the favourite of the favoured was too much. [...] but alas a deeper interest employed her thoughts, and Glenarvon's attention was her sole object. [...] Lord Glenarvon had conversed with her with his customary ease but something had wounded her; [...] possibly her heart reproached her [but] she danced on with energy and perseverance, which excited the warmest approbation in all. [...] She herself only sighed. 'Have you ever read a tragedy of Ford's?' whispered Lady Augusta as soon as she had ceased to exhibit – 'a tragedy entitled *The Broken Heart*.' [...] At this moment you put me vastly in mind of it. you look most woefully. Come, tell me truly, is not your heart in torture? and like your namesake Calantha, while lightly dancing the gayest in the ring, has not the shaft already been struck, and shall you not die ere you attain your goal.¹⁸

This is a re-enactment of Princess Calantha's final scene in which she continues to dance after hearing of her bereavement. Lamb's Lady Calantha attempts to mask an emotion not quite as noble, that of guilt. The goal that Lady Augusta is referring to is, for both Calanthas, to be united with their spiritual choice of lover, Ithocles and Glenarvon. Unfortunately for Lamb's Lady Calantha, she is already married and Lady Augusta's prediction does come true: she will die before she attains her goal, not realising until too late that she was already married to her choice of lover in the form of Lord Avondale.

Lamb also borrows from Ford and re-interprets the thematic annihilation of the self as a direct result of the thwarting of true love. In *The Broken Heart* Princess Calantha's self is annihilated after being denied Ithocles, and Penthea, starved of love from both her true love Orgilus and her husband Bassanes, literally starves to death, not before losing all reason, an extremely resonant image when considering Lamb's own description of herself in a letter to Byron in 1814, denigrating herself to him as 'ugly & thin & mad.'¹⁹ In *Glenarvon*, Alice MacAllain follows a similar path to Penthea, descending into skeletal madness after having been abandoned by Glenarvon, and returning to the narrative after disappearing to give birth to his child as an 'emaciated form' with a 'wild and haggard eye.'²⁰ Lady Calantha, like her namesake, is nearly destroyed by her all-consuming love for Glenarvon, but in this instance only to discover that her emotional investment is not reciprocated. On receiving the fateful letter from Glenarvon, informing her that he was 'no longer [her] lover', under the seal of his new lover Lady Mandeville, Calantha was instantaneously

Overpowered, annihilated, she called for mercy and release. She felt that mortal passion domineered over reason; and, after one desperate struggle for mastery, had conquered and destroyed her.²¹

However, on recovery from the initial shock, Lady Calantha recalls the appearance and actions of her literary forebear:

When the very soul is annihilated by some sudden and unexpected evil, the outward frame is calm – no appearance of emotion, of tears, of repining, gives notice of the approaching evil. Calantha, motionless, re-perused Glenarvon's letter, and spoke with gentleness to those who addressed her. Oh! did the aunt that loved her, as she read that barbarous letter, exhibit equal marks of fortitude? No: in tears, in reproaches, she vented her indignation: but still Calantha moved not.²²

Lady Calantha is not the only character of Lamb's to suffer the same threat to the self in *Glenarvon* due to extreme emotional shock; the nurse of her baby brother does not react to the apparent death of her charge, but while some called her 'hard and unfeeling' others recognised that the

apparent insensibility was the effect of a deeper feeling – of a heart that could not recover its loss – of a mind totally overthrown.²³

Similarly, Graham Hamilton's first impression of Lady Orville is of someone barely conscious. Lamb likens her to Constance de Beverley, the perjured nun about to be

walled up alive, from Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* (1808), and includes Scott's description of Constance before her judges:

And there she stood so calm and pale,
That, but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head,
And of her bosom, warranted,
That neither sense nor pulse she lacks,
You might of thought a form of wax,
Wrought to the very life, was there;
So still she was, so pale and fair.²⁴

Lady Orville's living death is the result of denying her true feelings for the man she was to marry, with whom she was in love, for a man who only had his title as a mark of social desirability to recommend him; she has forsaken a man of inner quality for the sake of outward quantity in the form of social prestige and acceptability.

Frances Wilson identifies Lamb's adoption of Edmund Burke's psychological sublime as a model for this fatal passion, in which 'the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other,'²⁵ a similar effect to that of Burton's irrationality as the result of the all consuming and poisonous adust. The Burkean sublime passion is exhilarating to contemplate, dreadful and daunting in the threat of annihilation to the self, a truthful, ruling emotion that, in Burtonian terms, neither Lady Calantha or indeed Lamb were able to resist and that was destructive in its intensity. Interestingly, Lamb does not allow Lady Calantha to die after Glenarvon extricates himself from her in the same abrupt manner in which Byron did from Lamb; Lamb reproduced the letter that Byron had sent to her declaring that he was no longer her lover.²⁶ Lady Calantha feels herself to be annihilated but it is a state of mind that is only temporary; she does recover from Glenarvon, an important point when considering Lamb's post-Byronic stage of life which is discussed in the next chapter. Like Ford's Princess Calantha, Lamb's Lady Calantha also dies of grief on being denied the fulfilment of her true love. On her deathbed she cries 'Oh, is it too late?',²⁷ an awareness that the object of her true passion was, and always had been, Lord Avondale, and that Glenarvon was only a form of temporary madness. Lamb, acknowledging her source, writes of Lady Calantha's death rattle as 'a piercing shriek [that] had escaped from a broken heart',²⁸ as she clings to what Ford would have referred to as her 'contracted lord.'²⁹

'Glenarvon' & 'The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck': Assumed Identity

Glenarvon's multiple identity has already been described in the previous chapter as a demonstration of his opportunistic appropriation of the United Irishmen's cause for his own ends. With the novel's insistent concern with concealed and manipulated identity, and its enquiries into the performative and charismatic elements of leadership, *Glenarvon* invokes the story of Perkin Warbeck, a young man who claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the Princes in the Tower who was previously thought to have died in captivity along with his brother, Edward. As such, he tormented Henry VII for eight years with uncertainty and a possible legitimate claim to Henry's crown.³⁰ Perkin Warbeck, the name that was eventually settled upon him, was not the first pretender to Henry's throne; Perkin was preceded by Lambert Simnel who was paraded as the Earl of Warwick, a potential threat to Henry's position as he had been (for a short time at least) named as Richard III's heir. Henry VII had the real Earl of Warwick in the Tower so Simnel's role as pretender was short lived. However, Perkin was the one that unnerved and unsettled not only the king, but also the status quo of the country that was now enjoying a hard won peace after the prolonged War of the Roses.³¹ What impresses about Perkin from the outset is not so much about the actual evidence that supports the truth to his claim, but the inherent nobility of his bearing that lends legitimacy to his claim.

Ford dramatises the story as *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck; A Strange Truth*, entered in the Stationers' Register in January 1634,³² and takes up the theme of inherent nobility. Ford does not allow Perkin's claim to falter, and the suppression of the historical Perkin's confessing himself to be an imposter allows the distinction with which Perkin carried himself to stand. Other characters comment upon their responses to his presence; James of Scotland's acknowledgment of the veracity of Perkin's claim is based upon his 'instinct of sovereignty'³³ and he urges the Earl of Huntly, soon to be Perkin's reluctant father-in-law, to be assured of this judgement:

James: Peace, old frenzy. –
How like a king 'a looks! Lords, but observe
The confidence of his aspect! Dross cannot
Cleave to so pure a metal; royal youth!
Plantagenet undoubted!³⁴

James' perception of Perkin's innate nobility is preceded by that of the Countess of Crawford and Lady Katherine Gordon, the daughter of the Earl of Huntly and soon to be Perkin's wife:

Countess: I have not seen a gentleman
Of a more brave aspect or goodlier carriage;
His fortunes move not him. – Madame, y'are passionate.

Katherine: Beshrew me, but his words have touched me home,
As if his cause concerned me. I should pity him
If 'a should prove another than he seems.³⁵

Glenarvon's caution to his followers that 'I am not what I seem' is a direct echo of Katherine's concern for Perkin's safety should he prove to be an imposter, and of the theme of charismatic leadership and uncertain identity.

Glenarvon and Perkin Warbeck both make their debut as legitimate leaders in Ireland, laying claim to titles to which some observers believe that they have a spurious claim. When Lady Calantha's cousin refers to Glenarvon by his title she is rebuked by her mother:

'I wish Frances,' said Mrs Seymour, 'you would call people by their right names. The young man you call Lord Glenarvon has no claim to that title; his grandfather was a traitor; his father was a poor miserable exile, who was obliged to enter the Navy by way of gaining a livelihood; his mother was a woman of very doubtful character [...]; and this young man, educated nobody knows how, having passed his time in a foreign country, nobody knows where [...] is now unfortunately arrived here to pervert and mislead others [...]. Oh he is a dishonour to his sex; and it makes me mad to see how you all run after him, and forget both dignity, modesty, to catch a glimpse of him.'³⁶

Mrs Seymour refers to not only the doubtful legitimacy of the claim to the title but also to the fact that Glenarvon himself is not fit to uphold the rank; the nobility of his bearing, as well as his lineage, is also called into question, although there is apparently no doubt of his abilities of persuasion. Much is made of the contrast between the new arrivals in both stories and the indigenous population of Ireland. Lamb's portrayal of Glenarvon as appearing '[...] amidst the grotesque and ferocious rabble, like some God from a higher world'³⁷ is evocative of Perkin's appearance there in an attempt to initiate Yorkist support for his claim. According to earlier sources examined by Ann Wroe, Perkin appeared in Ireland dressed in gorgeous silks that nobody below the rank of knight could wear, amongst people whose loyalty to Henry was bought with 'lengths of green and blood-red woollen cloth.'³⁸ Wroe identifies discrepancies in the various

versions as to whether or not the silks actually belonged to Perkin or not, but the point is that they marked him out as being of an higher order. As Hopkins wryly observes, Perkin, having been apprenticed to a silk merchant, arrives in Ireland, '[...] dresses in some of his master's ware, and is immediately hailed as so good-looking that he must be the long-lost Plantagenet prince.'³⁹ Ford touches upon this only briefly, writing within a condensed timeframe and concentrating upon the disparate natures between the English and Scottish courts of Henry VII and James IV, but Henry's brief summation of Perkin's career to date includes a derisory commentary upon the dramatic effect his appearance had:

Henry: We know all, Clifford, fully, since this meteor
This airy apparition, first discreded
From Tournai into Portugal, and thence
Advanced his fiery blaze for adoration
To th'superstitious Irish[.]⁴⁰

Ford's description of Perkin as a meteor places him above the human sphere of activity, but in Henry's mouth it becomes a derisory description of what he perceives as the flashy transience of the perceived threat. Though Lamb may not have been aware of these earlier more detailed accounts, one of which is the official Tudor version of events in the form of the historical 'confession', the legitimising of Perkin through external signifiers is, as has already been discussed, of huge significance to Lamb's work.

According to Wroe, for Perkin, if he was indeed Richard, Duke of York, to go to Ireland looking for support was a sensible move as it was a place of strong Yorkist sympathies where the lieutenancy of the elder Richard, Duke of York (Edward IV's father) was fondly remembered as he had not tried to impose English ways on the Irish as Henry VII was doing.⁴¹ Richard had allowed free rein to the ambitions of the Anglo-Irish lords such as Desmond and Kildare, enthusiastic supporters of the newly emerged White Rose of York. Ford's representation of Henry's contempt for what he interpreted as the ignorant credulousness of the Irish, and their willingness to support the as yet unverified figure of Richard, suggests the king's lack of natural fealty amongst them. Ireland presented the same problem in the fifteenth and sixteenth century for Henry VII as it did for the eighteenth and early nineteenth century minority politics as represented in *Glenarvon*; in both cases, Ireland was viewed as an annexed property over which England had authority, and resisted tyrannical imposition by a remote monarch. Perkin and *Glenarvon* are the embodiment of the spirit of independence of Ireland and

deliverance from the English crown, as indicated by the readiness with which they are accepted as who they claim to be, with only a command of the spoken word with which to assert their authority.

It has already been suggested that *Perkin Warbeck* is a play about kingship, and the innate nobility of Perkin is placed for comparison with the democratic but Machiavellian statecraft of the usurper Henry VII, and the secure and legitimate yet autocratic James IV. The fortunes of both kings depended upon the support of the nobility, who are ancestors of Ford's dedicatees, in their roles as advisors, generals and ambassadors.⁴² The criticism of the monarchy in the play, in particular the dismissive attitude of James towards his courtiers, is an implied criticism of Charles I who owed his throne to his descent from both Henry VII and James IV, the former being indebted to his supportive aristocracy. Charles, having summarily dismissed his council of advisors and elevated the low-born Buckingham over the heads of the legitimate aristocracy, is being reminded by Ford that Charles owes the legitimacy of his throne to the good offices of the nobility, all of whom are ancestors of Ford's dedicatees. Like Lamb's general readership of *Glenarvon* and the interconnected political agenda represented in the text, Ford's general audience would not have had the necessary information to decode the necessarily covert political remonstrance to Charles, but the represented *dramatis personae* in both works would certainly have recognised themselves, as they were certainly intended to.

'The Fancies, Chaste and Noble' & 'The Witch of Edmonton': Misrepresentation and Misunderstanding in 'Graham Hamilton' & 'Ada Reis'

The theme of true identity is to be found in other works by Ford which Lamb also draws upon for *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis*. For Lamb it is not so much identity as misrepresented and misconstrued, although, in Ford's works, role playing is still the root cause of confusion. Published in 1638, Ford's *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble* features a glut of characters pretending to be something other than they are, rather than somebody else as in the case of Perkin Warbeck. The title is representative of the contradictory characters within the play; the 'Fancies' are three young women that are perceived by the other characters and the audience to be of dubious morality, kept in what is thought to be a type of harem by an old man, the Duke Octavio, for dubious

motives. By the end of the play the Fancies are revealed to be of 'Chaste and Noble' character and actually the nieces of Octavio who is providing them with education and protection. Castamela, a young woman who is taken to live with the Fancies, learns the truth about the Duke and his nieces but colludes with the misconception of them by acting like the concubine that she is already thought to be to teach her brother, who sent her there not knowing the truth, a lesson. In the subplot of the play, there is Spadone who pretends to be a eunuch, Flavia who adopts an 'antique carriage'⁴³ to fend off the advances made towards her by her husband's servants and Morosa, who is represented by Spadone as an adulteress and procurer of young girls for the bower of Fancies, of which she is neither. As Dominick J. Hart observes, the misunderstandings that pervade the play are also heralded by the title in that 'fancies' stands for a groundless supposition as well as an amorous inclination.⁴⁴

In *Ada Reis* the character of Bianca Castamela has a complicated lineage and a fleeting appearance at the beginning and the end of the novel, but the name appears to be an acknowledgement of Ford's influence upon this work. Bianca Castamela is an amalgamation of Castamela from *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble*, and Bianca from another of Ford's works, *Love's Sacrifice*, published in 1633. Ford's Bianca is misrepresented to her husband, the Duke of Pavia, as being unfaithful by the Duke's sister, Fiormonda, who is jealous of the attention that Bianca is receiving from the Duke's friend, with whom Fiormonda is in love. As it turns out, Bianca and Fernando have fallen in love but have not consummated the relationship but this is unknown to the Duke who stabs Bianca in a fit of Burtonian post-marital jealous love. Lamb's Bianca Castamela is similarly murdered by Ada Reis, but as they are not married this could be considered as an example of Burton's heroic love; she becomes the lover of Ada Reis and when she discovers she is pregnant, they plan to run away together. Bianca, frightened by a storm, refuses to sail and Ada Reis promises to return to fetch her, which he does but only after three years have elapsed and she is married to another man whom she does not love; Ada Reis first strangles then stabs her, leaving the murder scene taking with him their child, Fiormonda. It is in this literary descendant of Ford's Castamela that Lamb invests the theme of misrepresentation, as state of confusion with which, like her forerunner, Fiormonda colludes to teach a lesson.

Lamb's *Fiormonda* has been brought up by her father, Ada Reis, in isolation and in anticipation of the fulfilment of the prophecy that she will wear an imperial crown. Her only companion as she reaches maturity is Condulmar, whom she and her father save after apparently having been shipwrecked. Unbeknown to *Fiormonda* and her father, his father, the Devil, has sent Condulmar to precipitate events that will ensure that *Fiormonda* and her father condemn themselves into his eternal care by playing on their weaknesses. In the case of *Fiormonda*, having managed to get her youthful temper and passions under control, her only weakness is Condulmar; even when she knows that Condulmar boasts of his conquest of her virtue and is abusing her character in public, she displays the symptoms of Burton's heroic love in the constancy of her attachment. *Fiormonda* is not only misrepresented as Condulmar's mistress but is also held responsible for the death of an attached suitor. Alphonso, the Duke of Montevallos, is believed to have killed himself because of what is perceived as *Fiormonda*'s coldness towards him.⁴⁵ The Duke was actually murdered by Condulmar, from whom the Duke wished to rescue *Fiormonda* for her destructive and unreciprocated love for a monster, Alphonso being the only person that sees him for what he is, crying out to Condulmar during their fatal combat 'what are you?'⁴⁶ Condulmar's cruelty in misrepresenting *Fiormonda* as his mistress, his making a mockery of the death of Alphonso, and the mortification that *Fiormonda* suffered at the hands of women with 'high rank but little morality'⁴⁷ determine her to avenge herself in the way that this judgemental society will recognise. *Fiormonda* sets out to ensure that 'their names will be forgotten when mine is celebrated', at the pinnacle of the society that Condulmar desires and making sure that those that passed 'with such insolence of contempt, shall do [her] homage.'⁴⁸ Having been warned by the shade of Alphonso to renounce all earthly pride in rank, beauty and youth in favour of humility, charity and faith,⁴⁹ this determination proves to be *Fiormonda*'s undoing.

Lamb fully understood the weighty impact of social judgement; before her own experience in the aftermath of the Byron affair Lamb was well acquainted with the precarious nature of female social position. A case in point is the political tactics employed by the Tories in the face of Georgiana's personal success in campaigning for Fox in the 1784 Westminster election. They attacked her credibility by attacking her morality, equating her public display of herself with prostitution despite the Tories having female electioneers of their own.⁵⁰ On the fringes or completely beyond the

boundaries of Lamb's society, there hovered women whose actions had removed from the sphere of acceptable company, such as the divorced Ladies Wellesley and Holland; the latter having married again, to her co-respondent in her divorce, and Lamb kept company with her at the risk of her own reputation.⁵¹ Lady Melbourne once wrote to Lamb that 'when one braves the opinion of the World, sooner or later that will feel the consequences of it,'⁵² an observation and a warning that was given before Lamb's involvement with Byron but one that proved no less true in her case than it did for Lady Wellesley and Lady Holland. The theme of social judgement is one that is also explored in *Graham Hamilton*, in the relationship of Lady Orville and Graham Hamilton, which remains ambiguous and could be interpreted in one of two ways: that Lady Orville has ensnared the young and inexperienced Graham Hamilton with her physical charms, seeing him as a possible cash cow with which to solve her financial problems, as Sir Malcolm warns Hamilton 'she's only making much o'ye to get at my money',⁵³ or that Graham Hamilton is the one true friend that Lady Orville can confide in where they are thin on the ground.

The ambiguous nature of the relationship in the first volume of *Graham Hamilton* encourages Lamb's readership and the other characters in the novel to think the worst of the situation. A similar device has been observed by Juliet Sutton as being in evidence in *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble*. Sutton points out that both the main and sub plots are based upon the 'groundless suspicion' interpretation of 'fancy', and that the act of misunderstanding extends to the audience as well as the other characters.⁵⁴ The opening of the very first scene sets the precedent in which Troylo, the nephew of the Duke Octavio, and Livio, the brother of Castamela, are brought on stage midway through the heated conversation in which Troylo is trying to convince Livio to send Castamela to his uncle's bower of 'fancies'. Troylo never actually says that the bower is a harem but Livio, and the audience, think the worst. Lamb's use of a Jonathan Swift poem as an epigram is deployed to reprimand the readership and flags up the censorious nature of an acquisitive and competitive culture. This echoes Castamela's accusation to her brother that he has 'forgot the nobleness of truth / and fixt on scandal:'⁵⁵

Bare innocence is no support,
When you are tried in Scandal's court.
Stand high in honour, wealth or wit;
All others who inferior sit,
Conceive themselves in conscience bound
To join and drag you to the ground.

Your altitude offends the eyes
Of those, who want the power to rise.
The World, a willing stander-by,
Inclines to aid a specious lie;
Alas! they would not do you wrong;
But all appearances are strong!⁵⁶

Scandal's court in Lamb's novels is what she designates as 'the world', the habitus of the social elite that is described by her as being 'ensorius, officious, intermeddling [...] ever greedy of scandal, ever ready to adopt the worst construction, and hasty to condemn[.]'⁵⁷ Volume one ends and volume two begins with the gossip about the nature of Hamilton's relationship with Lady Orville reaching its climax as the result of a series of misinterpreted scenarios. At a ball held by Lady Orville, Graham Hamilton is witnessed being called to say goodnight to her children and is seen later, at the same ball, supporting Lady Orville and leading her from the ballroom in obvious distress after her interview with the man she has reduced to destitution. A servant of Lord Orville's also witnesses Hamilton leaving Lady Orville's extremely late after being closeted away in her boudoir for hours. It is only the readers that discover that, with reference to the latter scenario, Hamilton and Lady Orville were discussing her future prospects. It appears to the other characters that they are indeed having an affair because of the lack of the concept of platonic friendship and appearances are against them. Even Hamilton misinterprets Lady Orville's motives for appealing to him for support as she finds herself 'alone upon the earth; [passing her] days in a struggle to appear gay, [her] nights in tears.'⁵⁸ Hamilton takes her hand to kiss and Lady Orville exclaims 'Oh no, [...] you misunderstand me: 'tis a friend – a kind, an ardent friend, unspoiled friend, I wish for[.]'⁵⁹

Lady Orville's cry for a true friend echoes that of an earlier plea to be found in *The Sylph* by Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire entitled. As briefly discussed in chapter one the novel is based upon Georgiana's own experiences, the young and naïve heroine, Julia, marries the heartless Sir William Stanley. Julia, 'who is without friend or relation with her' slowly succumbs to the pressures of the *ton* and becomes trapped in living *à la mode* at the cost of her innocence being corrupted by the cynicism of fashionable society.⁶⁰ Georgiana describes fashionable society as 'a dangerous place for young inexperienced girls to be left to their own guidance.'⁶¹ Her integrity is saved through correspondence with the anonymous Sylph, an earlier and faithful lover of

Julia's. Lamb also repeats this theme of moral guardianship in *Ada Reis* with Fiormonda being visited by Zevahir, the spirit of light also known as Phaos, who endeavours to keep Fiormonda from destroying herself by urging her to keep her passions in check. Hamilton learns to appreciate the role of friend over and above that of a lover when he is dismayed by Lady Orville's cavalier treatment of Moncrief, her previous protector, who has moved aside in response to Lady Orville's obvious preference for Hamilton. Lady Orville tires of Moncrief's continuing admonishments as to her extravagant behaviour, recognising the 'justice of his reproofs', as does Fiormonda when she rejects Zevahir because of 'he repressed her [...] admonished her to keep a stricter watch over her thoughts.'⁶² Hamilton assures Lady Orville that Moncrief has her best interests at heart in by telling her 'A friend has a sacred character, and should be more considered [...] Moncrief possessed a character not to be trifled with.'⁶³ This is what Fiormonda also comes to appreciate at the end of the novel, when she prays to Zevahir for guidance and the strength to resist temptation; 'the resolution and energy which his lessons inspire can, by sure but slow degrees, raise and elevate to the summit of happiness and honour.'⁶⁴ Lamb paints a damning portrait of her milieu in which friendship is an alien concept, as it is Hamilton's open defence of Lady Orville that is the cause of the scandal that surrounds them. He fights a duel in retaliation for the 'many unfounded stories [that] were circulated by malice against her', for which Moncrief condemns Hamilton as adding to the precariousness of Lady Orville's situation, saying 'be her ruin; go the old hackneyed course, under the name of Friendship.'⁶⁵ The difference between Moncrief aiding Lady Orville and Hamilton's defence of her is that Moncrief did so unobtrusively whereas Hamilton's is carried out in the full glare of a society that 'judging from [its] own want of both, believed in neither honesty nor virtue[.]'⁶⁶

The theme of misrepresentation is one that recurs throughout Lamb's fiction and functions as a powerful motivating force. In July 1823, Lamb wrote a letter to her cousin, the sixth Duke of Devonshire, saying that she was working on a new novel entitled *The Witch of Edmonton*.⁶⁷ Although this manuscript can only be traced through references in her correspondence, it is enough to know that Lamb planned to make use of another of Ford's plays, co-authored with Thomas Dekker and William Rowley. In the preface written for the second edition of *Glenarvon*, also published in 1816, Lamb wrote:

This work is not the offspring of calm tranquillity, and cool deliberation, it does not bear the marks of such a temper, or of such a situation. It was written under the pressure of affliction, with the feelings of resentment which are excited by misrepresentation, and in the bitterness of a wounded spirit, which is naturally accompanied by a corresponding bitterness both of thought and expression.⁶⁸

This motive for writing *Glenarvon* reinforces the close affiliation between Ford's work and Lamb's, and demonstrates an empathy Lamb felt with his misunderstood characters, whose course of behaviour is dictated by misrepresentation. In the play, the 'witch', Mother Sawyer, lives beyond the physical boundaries of Edmonton and the metaphorical boundaries of acceptable, ordinary society, banished by, and made a scapegoat for, the community:

Mother: And why on me? Why should the envious world
Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
'Cause I am poor, deform'd and ignorant,
And like a bow buckl'd and bent together
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself?
Must I for that be made a common sink
For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
To fall and run into? Some call me witch,
And being ignorant of myself, they go
About to teach me how to be one; urging
That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,
Forespeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse.
This they enforce upon me, and in part
Make me credit it.⁶⁹

Mother Sawyer seeks the aid of the devil, in the guise of a talking dog, and 'becomes' a witch only after she has been misrepresented as such for so long. When questioned directly by the magistrate as to whether she is a witch or not Mother Sawyer laughs in his face and replies 'who is not?'⁷⁰, alluding to others in Edmonton more deserving of condemnation than Mother Sawyer. Sir Arthur Clarington, the local landowner, has impregnated his servant girl, Winnifride. Clarington dismisses Winnifride from her position and tricks Frank Thorney into thinking the child is his, then urges Frank to marry her. Later, Frank conceals his marriage to Winnifride and enters into a bigamous marriage with Susan Carter, the daughter of a wealthy yeoman, for her money to repair the fortunes of his father. Frank eventually murders Susan as a way out of bigamy and shifts the blame onto previous suitors of Susan, Warbeck and Sommerton. Like Mother Sawyer, Lamb was surrounded by those whose own transgressions went unreported to the wider world, and she perhaps recognised the process of becoming a scapegoat. To

an unnamed correspondent, possibly as early as 1810 and before the scandal with Byron, Lamb wrote:

What is the meaning of right and wrong – all is but appearance – who that looks innocent can be thought guilty – what is guilt – there is no such thing as a conscience[...] – who shall dare say that I am not good [.]⁷¹

Again, in the same year, she wrote to her cousin Hart that she was ‘pitted all over’ with sin, but ‘many a fair outside covers a blacker heart,’⁷² and to Lady Holland, over the row that erupted over Lamb’s brief flirtation with Lady Holland’s son by her first marriage, Sir Godfrey Webster:

[A]s to the gnats [and] mites that dare to peck at me let them look to themselves – I will turn upon them before long with the vengeance which one baited [and] pursued at length is taught to feel [and] level them to the dust from which they sprung – what are these things that dare to speak of me – at best only my equals [and] by what I can find many of them inferior to me in the satiric powers they would stab me with[.]⁷³

Lamb’s anger at being vilified by Lady Holland, amongst others, whose presence could not be tolerated in ‘decent’ society could have come directly from the mouth of Mother Sawyer herself as an exposure of the embedded hypocrisy and the deflecting of a collective guilt within the community. In all of Ford’s plays it appears that where both men and women are guilty of social and moral transgression, the women are the primary sufferers when deviancy is suspected or discovered; Annabella and Bianca are murdered, Penthea destroyed by implication, Mother Sawyer is vilified, scapegoated and hanged. Likewise, Lamb bore the full brunt of social animosity whereas Byron’s misdemeanours were treated as a matter of course.

Contemporary Recognition of Ford: Gifford, Byron & Shelley

Whether or not some of Lamb’s intended, or indeed wider, readership recognised her extensive use of Ford is past knowing, but there are at least three people that would have done so instantly. William Gifford, Byron⁷⁴ and Mary Shelley were all very aware of Ford’s re-vitalised cultural currency which in the case of the former two is illustrated by their intended and actual use of Ford. William Gifford heavily criticised Weber’s 1811 edition and produced his own in 1827, and also acted as the publisher John Murray’s reader for *Ada Reis*. William Gifford was an implacably conservative satirist and outspoken critic of Whig, liberal and radical literary circles and ideas; so rabid was his review of *Endymion* in 1818, that Gifford has been attributed with

hastening Keats' death. As editor, Gifford was famous for subjecting all contributions to the *Quarterly Review* to close scrutiny and political censorship. Byron considered him to be the greatest critic of the age and Gifford was well disposed towards Byron, recommending to Murray, as his chief literary advisor, that he publish *Childe Harold*, though he despaired of *Don Juan*.⁷⁵ It was at William's behest that Murray consulted Gifford about the third volume of *Ada Reis*. Lamb, who apparently knew Gifford's reputation, was understandably reluctant and nervous whilst awaiting his response.⁷⁶ Gifford, however, approved of the novel and would undoubtedly have recognised Lamb's incorporation of Fordian names and themes with the novel. It is possible that the praise for Lamb's work came not from Lamb's sources but what he would have read as an appropriate ending of *Ada Reis*, where he found the hated Whigs being tormented and condemned in a place he deemed as most suitable for them.

Byron recognised Ford's innovative exploration of the difficult theme of incest in relation to his own work, *The Bride of Abydos* (1813). On 11th December 1813 Byron alludes to Ford and *'Tis Pity She's A Whore* in a letter to his friend and fellow writer, John Galt:

I meant to have gone on with the story [of making Selim and Zuleika brother and sister], but on second thoughts, I thought myself two centuries at least too late for the subject; which, though admitting of very powerful feeling and description, yet is not adapted for this age, at least this country, though the finest works of the Greeks, one of Schiller's and Alfieri's in modern times, besides several of our old (and best) dramatists have been grounded on incidents of a similar cast.⁷⁷

A couple of days later, Byron wrote to Professor Edward Daniel Clarke on the subject of the close relationship intended for Zuleika and Selim, this time making a direct reference to Ford:

It was with this notion that I felt compelled to make my hero and heroine relatives – as you well know that none else could there obtain that degree of intercourse leading to genuine affection – I had nearly made them rather too much akin to each other - & thought the wild passions of the East - & some great examples in Alfieri – Ford - & Schiller (to stop short of Antiquity) might have pleased in favour of a copyist – yet the times and the North [...] induced me to alter their consanguinity & confine them to cousinship.⁷⁸

Presumably 'the North' refers to Annabella Milbanke with whom Byron was corresponding at the time and whose parental home was located at Seaham, on the east

coast of County Durham. Byron's defence of the incest and the almost celebratory recognition of the unflinching attitude of previous ages may be interpreted as an attempt to justify to himself his own relationship with his half-sister Augusta, which was not yet common knowledge. Augusta gave birth to the baby generally believed to be his, Elizabeth Medora, on April 15th 1814, so the deed would have been committed sometime in the beginning of August, 1813, and *The Bride of Abydos* was written in November of the same year. Interestingly, the one woman that did appear to know of the relationship between Byron and Augusta at the time it occurred was Lamb's mother-in-law and Byron's confidante, Lady Melbourne.

Byron refers to Ford once more in his letters, this time to Murray defending *Don Juan* in 1819:

If the poem has poetry – it would stand – if not – fall [...] As to the Cant of the day - I despise it – as I have ever done all its other finical fashions, - which become you as paint became the Ancient Britons. If you admit this prudery – you must omit half Aristoso – La Fontaine –Shakespeare – Beaumont – Fletcher – Massinger – Ford – all the Charles the second [sic] writers – in short, Something of most who have written before Pope[.]⁷⁹

It would appear that Byron, like Lamb, also appreciated Ford's sympathetic position on sexual relationships that were socially taboo and his much more direct approach when discussing them. There is also the possibility that Byron appreciated Ford's interpretation of Burton's heroic love, in that, like Giovanni's passion for his sister, he could interpret his passion for his own sister as a physical condition which he could do not do anything about. Byron also borrowed an image directly from Ford that appears in *Marino Faliero* (1821), the phrase 'leprosy of lust.'⁸⁰ This appears in two of Ford's plays; in *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*, the Friar to whom Giovanni confesses his passions urges him to 'Beg Heaven to cleanse the leprosy of lust / That rots thy soul,'⁸¹ and in *The Fancies, Chaste & Noble* Livio accuses Castamela as being infected with 'A whorish itch [...], a leprosie [sic] / of raging lust.'⁸²

Byron's interest in Ford can also be attributed to a familial relationship in that Byron's mother, Catherine Gordon of Gight was descended from the factual heroine of *Perkin Warbeck*, Lady Katherine Gordon. Katherine was the daughter of the Earl of Huntly and his first wife Annabella Stewart, daughter of James I of Scotland. Lisa Hopkins observes that Byron is known to have had an interest in Richard III, having

ordered a copy of Sir George Buc's defence of Richard and began to write a poem on Bosworth.⁸³ Patricia Brady suggests that this family connection would almost certainly have been known to Byron, who was 'inordinately proud of his lineage,' which may have been the 'possible spark' for Mary Shelley's decision to write a novel based on Warbeck's story.⁸⁴ Another 'possible spark' for Mary Shelley may have been the Shelleys' own connection with Ford, again traced by Lisa Hopkins; Ford's grandmother was a member of the important Welsh family Stradling of St. Donat's. Whilst Ford was growing up the head of the family would have been Sir Edward Stradling, who was succeeded by Sir John Stradling. Both Sir Edward and Sir John married members of the Gage family from Sussex, and Sir Edward's wife, Agnes, was the granddaughter of Sir John Shelley of Michelgrove.⁸⁵ As Brady points out, this kinship network would not have been lost on Mary Shelley, and neither would the subject matter of a play that concentrates upon a code of aristocratic behaviour.⁸⁶

Mary Shelley's debt to Ford is immediately apparent in her extended usage of him and the subject matter of his play, *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830). The choice of subject matter could be interpreted as ancestral flattery towards her father-in-law. However, Shelley's novel also takes up Ford's theme of innate nobility that was not in evidence in the behaviour of the parsimonious Sir Timothy towards Shelley, who kept her and her son in a ruthless stranglehold of financial dependence. In trying to make a new and respectable life for herself and her son, her choice of an historical theme could not be construed as cause for offence, but perhaps she chose this particular history because of its illustration of an ideal, not only of nobility but also a marriage. Shelley's retelling of *Perkin Warbeck* adheres to Ford's in that a convincing confession of imposture is conspicuous by its absence and she consistently refers to her protagonist as Richard unless necessity dictates otherwise. When he apparently does publicly confess to Katherine, in front of a crowd, it is unconvincing as he is chained in an 'instrument of disgrace' and it is clearly made under the duress of physical suffering.⁸⁷ In the event, Katherine gives no credence to the confession and urges that he 'recal[] the false words wrung from his agony.'⁸⁸ Shelley takes Ford's cue in omitting the later life of Katherine, who not only married a further three times but also accepted a pension from her husband's executioner, Henry VII, and presents her as the perpetually grieving widow. Shelley's representation of Katherine's devotion to Richard after his death is emblematic of Shelley's devotion to the memory of Percy Shelley, again possibly for

the benefit of Sir Timothy, and the close bond between Katherine and those that were close to Richard, in particular his sister Elizabeth of York, Queen of England, is reminiscent of Shelley's attachment to those that knew her husband, in particular Jane Williams. Katherine, speaking of the Queen, talks of how 'they wept together – how long and how bitterly – the loss of our loved one,'⁸⁹ two women united in grief for the same object in same way that Shelley and Jane were for the same tragic accident, although this relationship was to eventually sour.⁹⁰

In the conclusion of *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* there is a latent suggestion of time moving on and the inevitability of recovery that is repeated in *Lodore* eight years later that again looks to Ford for support. Shelley's opening line in the last chapter is imbued with the bitterness of what Hopkins calls the 'grief of the survivor'⁹¹:

Time, we are told by all philosophers, is the sole medicine for grief. Yet there are immortal regrets which must endure while we exist. Those who have met one, with whose every feeling and thought their thoughts and feelings were entwined, who knew no divided past, nor could imagine a solitary futurity, to them what balm can time bring?⁹²

This is a statement of suffering that speaks for both Shelley and Katherine and appears to be insurmountable. Shelley then gives Katherine a speech that confirms that while she does not cease to grieve she is also 'human [...], whose weakness it is, too eagerly, and too fondly, to seek objects on whom to expend [the heart's] yearnings' (Shelley, 399). Katherine then refers to her doting upon Elizabeth's children as Shelley doted on her own son, but there is also a suggestion here of Shelley's own humanity and thoughts of re-marriage which finds expression in *Lodore*.

The frontispiece of all three volumes of *Lodore* has an epigraph from Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*:

In the turmoil of our lives,
Men are like politic states, or troubled seas,
Tossed up and down with several storms and tempests,
Change and variety of wrecks and fortunes;
Till, labouring to the havens of our homes,
We struggle for the calm that crowns our ends.⁹³

It is this struggle for calmness after a turbulent voyage through life that is echoed at the end of the novel, again concluding with an epigraph from Ford's last play, *The Lady's Trial* (1638), by way of introducing the conclusion of the novel:

None, I trust,
Repines at these delights, they are free and harmless:
After distress at sea, the dangers o'er,
Safety and welcomes better taste ashore.⁹⁴

Cornelia Lodore does indeed find a calm happiness in the harbour of being reunited with her daughter and in her second marriage to Horatio Saville, after a lifetime of subservience to her domineering mother, her unsuccessful marriage to Lord Lodore and what she believed to be an enforced separation from her only child. One cannot help but wonder if Shelley, after her own unconventional childhood, elopement, marriage and successive bereavements of her mother, children and husband, and the trials of Sir Timothy, also wished to find respite in a haven after her 'distress at sea.' Shelley, like Lamb, draws upon Ford for his sensitivity towards human needs and desires, unconventional or otherwise, that lead to the social ostracisation experienced by both women. There is one final parallel between Shelley and Lamb that arises in this context, although not strictly relating to Ford. As Hopkins has already commented, in *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* Shelley introduces a character that does not appear in Ford's version, that of Jane Shore, who is cast by Shelley as the antithetical fallen and repentant woman to Katherine Gordon's virtuous wife.⁹⁵ Jane Shore was the historical mistress of Edward IV over whom she exercised a great deal of influence because of her beauty and wit. Richard III accused her of sorcery, imprisoned her and made her do public penance. Shelley's inclusion of Jane Shore possibly alludes to her own earlier status as mistress to a married man and the fact she is humbled to the status of penitent and to do penance by Sir Timothy. Lamb's public penance is well known, and she writes of her position to Lady Morgan that she 'might have died by a diamond' but will now do so 'by a brickbat', but takes comfort in William being to her 'what Shore was to Jane Shore.'⁹⁶

ENDNOTES

- 1 Lamb, C. Lady, (1823), *Ada Reis*, 3 Volumes, London: John Murray, vol. 3, p. 81.
- 2 Ford, J. (1980), *The Broken Heart*, ed. Spencer, T.J.B., Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 27-29.
- 3 Hopkins, L. (1994), *John Ford's Political Theatre*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, p. 25.
- 4 Ford, (1980), pp. 48-49.
- 5 Hopkins, L. 'Mary Shelley, Caroline Lamb and John Ford', <<http://www.shu.ac.uk/schools/cs/teaching/lh/Ford/Fordnow.html>>
- 6 Ibid, p. 29.
- 7 Ibid, p. 4.
- 8 Ford, J. (1985), *The Fancies, Chaste and Noble*, ed. Hart, D.J., New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc, p. 12.
- 9 I am grateful to Lisa Hopkins for pointing out to me this anomaly in Lamb's extensive use of Ford.
- 10 Ford, (1985), pp. 19-20.
- 11 Ford, J. (1995), 'Tis Pity She's A Whore', *Tis Pity She's A Whore and Other Plays*, ed. Lomax, M., Oxford: Oxford University Press, II.v. 14-26.
- 12 Lamb, C. Lady, (1822), *Graham Hamilton*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 1, p. 75.
- 13 Although referred to simply as Calantha in Ford's work, the prefix of 'Princess' will distinguish between Ford's Calantha and Lamb's, who will be referred to as 'Lady Calantha.'
- 14 Leech, C. (1957), *John Ford*, London: Longman, p. 12.
- 15 Ford, J. (1968), *The Broken Heart*, ed. Anderson, D.K., London: Edward Arnold, p. xvi.
- 16 Hopkins, L. (1997), 'Spartan Boys: John Ford and Philip Sydney', *Classical and Modern Literature: A Quarterly*, Volume 17, No. 13, p. 227.
- 17 Hart was devastated by Lamb's acceptance of William Lamb's proposal and his remaining a bachelor throughout his life has been attributed to his attachment to Lamb, to whom he remained loyal throughout the scandal caused by Lamb's association with Byron.
- 18 Lamb, (1816), vol. 2, pp.133-135.
- 19 Douglass, P. (2004), *Lady Caroline Lamb; A Biography*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 158.
- 20 Lamb, (1816), vol. 2, p. 321.
- 21 Ibid, vol. 3, p. 87.
- 22 Ibid, vol. 3, p. 88.
- 23 Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 49-50.
- 24 Lamb, C. Lady, (1822), *Graham Hamilton*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 1, p.137.
- 25 Lamb, C. Lady, (1995), *Glenarvon*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Everyman Edition, p. xxi.
- 26 Lamb, (1816), vol. 3, p. 82.
- 27 Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 160-161.
- 28 Ibid, vol. 3, p. 161.
- 29 Ford, J. (1995), 'The Broken Heart', *Tis Pity She's A Whore and Other Plays*, ed. Lomax, M., Oxford: Oxford University Press, V.iii.63.
- 30 Arthurson, I. (1997), *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491 -1499*, Stroud: Sutton, pp. 42-53.
- 31 Ibid, pp. 100-145.
- 32 Ford, (1995), p. xxi.
- 33 Ford, J. (1995), 'The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck; A Strange Truth', *Tis Pity She's A Whore and Other Plays*, ed. Lomax, M., Oxford: Oxford University Press, II.iii.42.
- 34 Ibid, II.iii.72-75.
- 35 Ibid, II.i.1 15-120.
- 36 Lamb, (1816), vol. 1, p. 292.
- 37 Ibid, vol. 3, p.21.
- 38 Wroe, A. (2003), *Perkin; A Story of Deception*, London: Jonathan Cape, p. 48.
- 39 Hopkins, (1994), p. 39.
- 40 Ford, (1995), 'The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck', I.iii.35-39.
- 41 Wroe, (2003), p. 44.
- 42 Hopkins, (1994), pp. 43-45.
- 43 Ford, (1985), Hi. 126.
- 44 Ibid, p. 34.
- 45 Lamb, (1823), *Ada Reis*, London: John Murray, vol.2, p. 93.
- 46 Ibid, vol. 2, pp.86, 91.
- 47 Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 80, 106, 75.

- ⁴⁸ Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 114, 116.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 103.
- ⁵⁰ Foreman, A. (1998), *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire*, London: Harper Collins, p. 144.
- ⁵¹ Douglass, (2004), pp. 63, 91.
- ⁵² Ibid, p. 91.
- ⁵³ Lamb, (1822), vol. 1, p. 180.
- ⁵⁴ Sutton quoted in Ford, (1985), p. 34.
- ⁵⁵ Ford, (1985), I.iii. 36-38.
- ⁵⁶ Lamb, (1822), vol. 2, p. 1.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 11.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 19.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 20.
- ⁶⁰ Cavendish, G. Duchess of Devonshire, (2001), *The Sylph*, York: Henry Parker, p. 28
- ⁶¹ Ibid, p. 74.
- ⁶² Lamb, (1823), vol. 1, p. 99.
- ⁶³ Lamb, (1822), vol. 2, p. 51.
- ⁶⁴ Lamb, (1823), vol. 3, p. 143.
- ⁶⁵ Lamb, (1822), vol. 2, pp. 10, 46.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 10.
- ⁶⁷ Letter quoted in Normington, S. (2001), *Lady Caroline Lamb: This Infernal Woman*, London: House of Stratus, p. 225.
- ⁶⁸ Lamb, C. Lady, (1816a), *Glenarvon, Second Edition*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 1, p. iv.
- ⁶⁹ Dekker, T., Ford, J. & Rowely, W. (1983), *The Witch of Edmonton*, London: Methuen, II.i.1-15. (the notes refer to this edition following the 1658 text, but the play was first published in 1621).
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, IV.i.104.
- ⁷¹ Douglass, (2004), p. 82.
- ⁷² Ibid, p. 97.
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ I would like to thank Christine Kenyon Jones for sharing her knowledge of Byron's references to Ford.
- ⁷⁵ Marchand, L.A. (1970), *Byron: A Portrait*, London: Pimlico, pp. 105, 308.
- ⁷⁶ Douglass, (2004), p. 250.
- ⁷⁷ Marchand, L.A. (ed.) (1974), 'Alas! The Love of Women', *Byron's Letter and Journals, Volume 3, 1813-1814*, London: John Murray, p. 196.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 199.
- ⁷⁹ Marchand, L.A. (ed.) (1976), 'The Flesh is Frail', *Byron's Letters and Journals, Volume 6, 1818-1819*, London: John Murray, p. 95.
- ⁸⁰ *Marino Faliero*, II.i..
- ⁸¹ Ford, (1995), 'Tis Pity She's A Whore', I.i.74.
- ⁸² Ford, (1985), IV.i.68-69.
- ⁸³ See note 7.
- ⁸⁴ Brady, P.D. (1991), 'Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* and Lord Byron', *The Ricardian*, Vol. IX, No. 115, pp. 172-173.
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- ⁸⁶ Brady, (1991), p. 173.
- ⁸⁷ Shelley, M. (1996), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck; A Romance*, ed. Fischer, D.D., *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley, Volume 5*, London: Pickering Masters, pp. 366-367.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 367.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 399.
- ⁹⁰ Seymour, M. (2000), *Mary Shelley*, London: John Murray, pp. 323-324
- ⁹¹ Hopkins, L. (1997), 'The Self and The Monstrous: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*', *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley After 'Frankenstein'*, ed. Conger, S.M., Frank, F.S. & O'Dea, G., London & Madison, Teaneck: Associated University Press & Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, p. 271.
- ⁹² Shelley, (1996), p. 395.
- ⁹³ Ford, J. (1995), 'The Lover's Melancholy', *'Tis Pity She's A Whore and Other Plays*, ed. Lomax, M., Oxford: Oxford University Press, V.i.4-9.
- ⁹⁴ Quoted in Shelley, M. (1996a), *Lodore*, ed. Stafford, F., *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley, Volume 6*, London: Pickering Masters, p. 311.
- ⁹⁵ See note 7.

⁹⁶ Morgan, S. Lady, (1863), *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, 3 Volumes, Leipzig: Tauchnitz, vol. 2, p. 334.

Chapter 5
The Limitations of Biography and the Representation of Madness: The Case Study of Lady Caroline Lamb

Lamb has come to inhabit her infamous epigram upon Byron; she is the one that is now regarded as ‘mad, bad and dangerous to know.’¹ There are five full length biographies of Lamb: Elizabeth Jenkins’ *Lady Caroline Lamb* (1974, first published in 1932), Henry Blyth’s *Caro; The Fatal Passion* (1972), Sean Manchester’s *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know; The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb* (1992), Susan Normington’s *Lady Caroline Lamb; This Infernal Woman* (2001) and, the most recent, *Lady Caroline Lamb; A Biography* by Paul Douglass (2004).² In each she is portrayed as spending her life obsessed with Byron, with whom her involvement cost her what little was left of her already depleted sanity; accounts of Lamb’s life portray her as a case history of a female hysteric obsessed with a single object whose family, quite rightly, tried to have her committed as lunatic. As Frances Wilson observes, Lamb’s life has been broken down into a series of melodramatic episodes that have ‘been pared down to a history of embarrassing dramas in which the woman behaved badly.’³ The repetitive highlighting of these episodes has resulted in an ever-decreasing circle of ‘evidence’ that confirms Lamb’s ‘madness’ only by virtue of repetition; yet biographers of Lamb are never explicit about how this madness manifested itself beyond vague descriptions of mood swings, a volatile temper and extravagant behaviour. Caroline Franklin’s sympathetic account of Lamb in the new *Dictionary of National Biography* highlights the reductive nature of popular biographers and films that concentrate upon apocryphal stories of the scandals that surround Lamb.⁴ It has become a matter of historical fact, an immutable truth, that Lamb was mad and each of the studies of her life is orientated accordingly. However, each study of Lamb’s life is a virtual carbon copy of the one before, thereby authorising its own legitimacy by adhering to what appears to be a sanctioned version of Lamb’s life, reaffirming what is thought to be already known. The ‘Lady Caroline Lamb’ that each biography claims to reveal does appear to be more than a little eccentric and perhaps even dangerous but, as Dorothy E. Smith, in her study of what criteria and procedures a subject under scrutiny ‘becomes’ mentally ill, rather obviously observes, there is always more than one version of any given event,⁵ and this can surely be no exception. Smith describes a process by which mental illness is defined as being not

just a record of events as they happened, 'but of events as they were seen as relevant to reaching a decision about the character of those events'; the preliminary work of such an assessment is done on a 'non-formal' basis by family and friends, which also incorporates an element of social organisation and control however unconscious that may be.⁶ It is this 'non-formal' technique that appears to be relied upon in studies of Lamb's life; descriptions of her mental health contain nothing of analysis, but rather they are unqualified statements that are driven by semantic connotations: for example Jenkins describes Lamb as having an air of 'wild intelligence'.⁷ Blyth hints at Lamb's similarity to her ancestor, the Duchess of Marlborough, the 'remarkable [...], the excitable and unstable Sarah Jennings', but does not expand as to how Sarah's instability or Lamb's likeness to her manifests itself.⁸ Blyth does go on to say that Lamb also resembled Sarah's favourite child, Anne, Countess of Sunderland, who was a woman of 'sweetness and infinite charm', reinforcing Blyth's earlier statement that Lamb 'there were two Carolines', the first 'an enchanting girl', the second 'a detestable girl.'⁹ Wilson observes of Blyth's assessment of Lamb's character that there are two Carolines:

[B]oth of whom are children, not because the self cannot be restricted to one version of itself alone, but because in his version Caroline Lamb *was* simply *two* people, one good and one bad, and she was two people not because of any psychological or cultural complexities which his biography will unearth, but because she was a naughty little girl and refused to be one person.¹⁰

Blyth's splitting of Lamb into two distinct and separate personalities does reflect his belief that she was, at times, 'mentally and physically sick' and in 'urgent need of treatment' for her disabilities.¹¹ Sean Manchester also describes the duality of a naughty girl who was both 'fragile and pathetic', and contained the capacity to throw 'violent tantrums, rebel against all forms of discipline and amaze everyone with her capacity to lie': the 'portrait of the child is the blueprint of the woman', resulting in unspecified 'madness'.¹² The scope of this chapter is not to conclusively confirm or deny this view of Lamb, as the actual state of Lamb's mental health is past knowing, but to examine the context and procedures, both formal and informal, in and by which Lamb's madness was diagnosed and to discover why Lamb's own protestations to the contrary have not been given credence.

As a nineteenth-century woman and an aristocrat Lamb becomes a primary candidate as a sufferer of mental illness according to contemporary diagnosis. For late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century physicians, the internal space of women was porous and penetrable, as opposed to firm and resistant, therefore rendering them more susceptible to bewilderment and delusions.¹³ In particular, women of a leisured class, for whom Lamb arguably becomes a stereotype, being used to commodities, luxuries and indulgences, were thought to be open to fluctuations of desires and impulses, as opposed to women of a labouring class who were thought to be immune to hysteria because of the hardness and discipline of their daily routine.¹⁴ As Foucault observes, madness as diagnosed by eighteenth century physicians becomes a question of morality as well as medicine because of this need for resistance in overcoming this internal softness that allowed disordered penetration in favour of an organised and rigidly self-disciplined internal space.¹⁵ The images of disorder in mind and body that Lamb appears to personify represent a dramatisation of a loss of the self-control that was so despised by the epitome of adulterous discretion, Lamb's mother-in-law Lady Melbourne, about whom more will be said later. Lamb's supposed insanity, when read in the context of contemporary medical discourse, can be interpreted as less to do with madness than it was to do with socially acceptable behaviour that could be contained and managed.

Using Showalter's thesis on the 'female malady' of madness as a framework within which to read the symptoms of Lamb's insanity, her behaviour can be read as a deviation from what was expected of ladylike behaviour and was severely punished. Showalter examines the concept of 'moral insanity' -madness re-identified not as a loss of reason but as - deviance from socially accepted behaviour that required management or supervision.¹⁶ It is the following elements that apply to the popular conception of Lamb's character as having:

a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect, or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination.¹⁷

As Showalter comments, this definition of madness was one that could be applied to any kind of behaviour that fell short of community standards. Similarly, Foucault observes that there was, particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, a generalisation of the understanding of madness that offered no specific 'semantic distinction' and was applied to a series of conditions ranging from 'madness proper' to extravagance.¹⁸ Lamb fell drastically short of the community standards that prescribed the comparative freedom of aristocratic women, who could have discreet affairs after having first fulfilled their duty in producing a legitimate heir; what was not tolerated was bringing the aristocracy into disrepute in the public arena by becoming an object of gossip and derision. Such aristocratic women did not, as Lamb did, openly profess their love for another man; neither did they burn effigies of him whilst reading a rite of exorcism or write a novel based upon an adulterous affair, the details of which were already, notoriously, public property.

Helen Small identifies that traits that were ascribed to hysteria increased during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

By the end of that period the hysteric had *carte blanche* when it came to self expression. She could possess any (and would quite likely give signs of several) of the following characteristics: a nervous temperament, violent and unstable emotions, depression, excitement, poor attention span, disturbed intellect, disturbed will, deficient judgement, dependency, immaturity, egocentricity, attention-seeking, deceitfulness, theatricality, simulation, fearfulness and irritability.¹⁹

As a profile of a textbook nineteenth century hysteric, it is one that perfectly matches the popular and perpetuated image of Lamb. In his introduction, Blyth states that he sought medical input when writing his study in the 1970s to confirm his belief that Lamb was mad.²⁰ However, even the authority of this approach can be disputed in the light of Showalter's examination into how cultural ideas about 'proper' feminine behaviour have shaped the definition and treatment of female insanity. Showalter identifies that twentieth century medical discourse and treatment was still defining perceived abnormalities of behaviour as predominantly female, with the schizophrenic woman replacing the cultural stereotype of the hysteric.²¹ The consensus by her biographers is that Lamb was demonstrably mad; and evidence is gathered retrospectively to support the pre-determined conclusion. Lamb's own accusation of having all her 'wrongs, crimes and follies,

stretching back to the days of infancy and all brought forth to view without mercy'²² (of which her eternal punishment is a repeat) in an attempt to have her certified insane is one that could, with some justification, be levelled at her biographers. They all describe, to a greater or lesser degree, her wit, vitality, inventiveness and generosity but this 'Lady Caroline Lamb' is swiftly crushed under the weight of evidence of her mood swings, extravagant and extrovert behaviour, undisciplined and wild intelligence, which, significantly, is the sum of evidence against her.

Lamb's childhood has been plundered for scenes of bad behaviour in a tactical deployment of evidence with which to condemn her adulthood. Episodes of curiosity are held up as examples of uncontrollable behaviour; what could equally be described as burgeoning intellect and desire for knowledge is, instead, put to use as an example of nervous restlessness that was, according to Normington, a contributing factor to what biographers describe as a constant source of embarrassment and the blueprint for an almost inevitable breakdown:

Caroline was curious about everything and constantly asked 'Why?' When she received an answer she asked another question about the answer that had just been given. Her search for knowledge drove her family to distraction [...]. Since arriving in England, Caroline had become stubborn, perverse and argumentative and, on occasions, violent. Lady Spencer consulted Dr Warren who recommended that she should be isolated from her brothers and cousins. He believed if she could no longer show off or turn the schoolroom into a battlefield she would become bored and behave properly. [...] When Caroline was naughty she was ignored, and when she was disobedient she was dosed with sal volatile or was spoken to so sharply she was reduced to tears. [...] Her good conduct was rewarded by being allowed to spend days with her brothers in Cavendish Square or with her cousins at Devonshire House. Just when everything seemed to be going well, Caroline fell from grace by quizzing Lady Spencer on religion [...]. Her punishment was to sit in a 'cupboard' with Mary [the governess] until it was time to go to bed with a dose of laudanum laced with lavender oil.²³

Similarly, Douglass cites examples of Lamb's asking of 'incessant questions' which she returned to 'no matter how many distractions were put in her way', which he attributes to her desire to be constantly heard and noticed,²⁴ without considering the prospect of an unfolding intellectual ability that desired answers. Clearly, Lamb's outspoken and

demonstrative behaviour was deemed unacceptable even as a child; hardly surprising, then, that it was considered even less so in the woman. Dr Warren's diagnosis was that Lamb's brain was 'too fertile and too agile [...], undoubtedly gifted and even brilliant [but] she should be encouraged to play more and use her brain less.'²⁵ Stating that there was no evidence of insanity, Dr Warren prescribed that she should 'not be taught anything or placed under any kind of restraint.'²⁶ This is a stark contrast to the attempts to give her son, Augustus, a full classical education as befitting the male heir even though he never developed beyond the mental capacity of a child. Lamb is caught in a trap of contradictions and an almost self-fulfilling prophecy: on the one hand she had to practise self-control and moderation that was enforced through isolation and sedation and on the other the prescribed 'cure' was non-restraint and the lack of any real, focused intellectual stimulation for which she was clearly equipped.²⁷ Lamb's enforced isolation, both as a child and an adult, in order to learn self-control, correlates with the treatment of women patients in nineteenth century asylums, albeit in more hospitable surroundings; women were put into solitary confinement and sedated up to five times more than the male patients, on account of deviating from ladylike behaviour.²⁸

The symptoms of 'excitability' and 'wild intelligence'²⁹ that caused Dr Warren to be summoned, from which he did not diagnose insanity, yet prescribed uneducated and unrestricted freedom within an already liberal environment, allowed Lamb's childhood propensity to be outspoken and demonstrative to develop into the woman who defied conventions for 'acceptable' feminine behaviour. She is condemned as an hysteric for being self-expressive and self-expression is seen as a symptom of hysteria, yet confusingly she was not diagnosed as being either hysterical or insane by the examining doctors. Interestingly, the loudest declarations of Lamb's madness would persistently emanate from women that were within Lamb's closest circle. Lady Holland observed in a letter that 'The physicians will not sign to her being mad enough to be confined. They say she is only wicked from temper and brandy', but she is swift to condemn Lamb as being inherently deranged.³⁰ Others that called for Lamb's incarceration were her aunt, Lady Lavinia Spencer, her sister-in-law Lady Emily Cowper, her mother-in-law Lady Melbourne, and her

cousins Lady Georgiana Howard and Lady Harriet Leveson-Gower. Lamb recognised the problem for herself:

My mother, having boys, wished ardently for a girl, and I, who evidently ought to have been a soldier, was found a naughty girl, forward talking like Richard III.³¹

That Lamb's behaviour was cause for concern because she was a 'naughty girl' is nowhere better illustrated than by a comparison with her brother, William or Willy. Normington describes this brother as closest to Lamb in temperament as well as age.³² Both are described as 'lively, exuberant, curious and eccentric children' but Willy's chatter and comments amused his family and friends and he is described as 'quite well' despite displaying temper when tired, whereas Lamb, who said 'anything that [came] into her head', caused distress and embarrassment to her family, and her temper becomes a portent for disaster in later life.³³

When considering the opinion that Lamb's presumed fragile mental health was irreparably damaged after her involvement with Byron, I want to explore the hypothesis of recovery; Lamb did suffer as a result of her treatment by Byron but in terms of betrayal, humiliation and justifiable anger instead of mental collapse. Lamb does not easily settle into the picturesque, sentimental or violent version of madness as a feminine condition that is prosaically reproduced in studies of her life. Foucault, like Showalter and Small, identifies a link between madness and passion, where love that is disappointed or abandoned has no other recourse but to 'pursue itself into the void of delirium.'³⁴ However, he goes on to state that passion is, in fact, a temporary form of madness in itself and is a form of blindness:

Blindness: one of the words which comes closest to the essence of classical madness. It refers to that night of quasi-sleep which surrounds the images of madness, giving them, in their solitude, an invisible sovereignty; but it also refers to ill-founded beliefs, mistaken judgements, to the whole background of errors inseparable from madness.³⁵

Unreason, to use Foucault's phrase, is associated with dream-like error and delirium is not, he explains, reason lost, alienated or diseased but must be understood as reason dazzled, effecting a temporary blindness in which moral errors and misjudgements are made.³⁶ This

is exactly how Lamb comes to understand and write her relationship with Byron and, on a wider scale, how she understands the seduction of herself, her friends and family by the superficial, as being temporarily dazzled. Lamb, in a letter to Lord Clare, wrote that she had ‘been so ill that I can only thank God I am again in my senses.’³⁷ She went on to say that she worried that had she not ‘felt unfortunately [...] deeply truly attached [to Byron] I might have got over it – but do you know I begin to think I shall not recover – my mind has been distracted.’³⁸ The cause of the distraction was two-fold: bewilderment by Byron’s ‘cruel insults’ that she felt she did not deserve as she ‘could not doubt him I am sure he did feel all he said’, and the sense of humiliation she felt because ‘Friends [she had] behaved most ill to should now be kind – and that the one I sacrificed so much for should thus treat [her].’³⁹ If Doherty’s calculations are correct, this letter was written somewhere between the end of December 1812 and early January 1813, still only a matter of months after the end of the affair, and the confused sadness that pervades the letter is palpable. Elsewhere, in Jenkins’ biography, Lamb is quoted as saying, in 1816, that for ‘three years [she] had worshipped him,’⁴⁰ thereby recognising that the period was finite, belonging to the past, and that the end of the affair would be a cathartic moment for Lamb in terms of intellectual activity, contradicting the post-Byronic stasis that she is described as inhabiting by her biographers. Jenkins, Blyth, Manchester and Normington all describe Lamb as occupying a post-Byronic hinterland, literally a ‘no-man’s land’ that had been rendered meaningless by the absence of Byron, using the same evocative image of her wrapped in shawls gazing at a chair in which Byron allegedly sat to have his portrait painted.⁴¹ This is an image that leaves Lamb, quite literally, gazing at the empty space that Byron once occupied and one that is deployed as a metaphor for the emptiness of her life. Only Jenkins gives any kind of reference as to where this image came from, naming as the source Lady Morgan, who was describing her visit to Lamb, who was suffering from an illness and apparently in a reflective mood.⁴² In Blyth and Manchester the scenario is repeated verbatim as an objective truth. But, interestingly, while the image remains the same the location within Lamb’s life changes. Jenkins and Manchester place the description somewhere between writing and publishing *Glenarvon* (1816) and publishing *Graham Hamilton* (written in 1820, published in 1822) whereas Blyth places it after all three novels have been published which would be 1823 onwards. Evidently the sentiment of the pathetic love-lorn figure is

more important than the chronological details or context in which the observation was originally written.

Showalter observes that two of the major contributing factors toward the female experience of nineteenth-century breakdown were the lack of meaningful occupation and of fulfilling companionship.⁴³ Lamb, at the heart of a fashionable society that she had already described as vacuous as early as 1811, was deprived of any real vocation; as early as 1811, Lamb addressed a poem to Lord Holland which contained the lines ‘By Heav[a]ns [sic] I’m sick of Dissipation / And want some serious occupation.’⁴⁴ In December 1817, during a period of recuperation after a fall from her horse and a subsequent fever, Lamb wrote the following letter to Lady Morgan:

For one week I never swallowed anything. The moment of danger passed, and now I believe, in truth, I died; for assuredly a new Lady Caroline has arisen from this death. I seem to have buried my sins, griefs, melancholy, now, and to have come out like a new born babe, unable to walk, think, and speak but perfectly happy. [...] My mind is calm – I am pleased to be alive - grateful for the kindness shown me; and never mean to answer questions further back than the 15th of this month, that being the day of this new Lady Caroline’s birth, and I hate the old one. She had her good qualities, but she had grown into a sort of female Timon – not of Athens – bitter, and always going over old, past scenes. She also imagined people hated her. Now the present Lady Caroline is as gay as a lark, sees all as it should be, [...] but, at present, like her predecessors, and like one of your countrymen, is going about wanting work. I have nothing necessarily to do. I know I might and ought do a great many things, but then am I am not compelled to do them. As to writing, assuredly, enough has been written, besides it is different when one’s thoughts flow out before one’s pen, and writing with one’s pen waiting for thoughts. Would I could be useful!⁴⁵

The desire and need for a meaningful occupation is the theme of the two published works that came after this letter, *Graham Hamilton* (written 1820, published 1822) and *Ada Reis* (1823). Lady Orville laments her lack of practical skills to Graham Hamilton, saying ‘You once told me that existence was [...] dead without active pursuits, and that action was the light of life. I cannot labour – write I do; but were I to publish [...] I would only make enemies, or incur censure.’⁴⁶ In the introduction of *Ada Reis*, this theme of usefulness is reiterated:

The moral of the tale appears to be that he, who remains amidst the busy scenes of life, himself without employment, is in constant danger of becoming prey of wicked feelings and corrupt passions; for as use of preserves iron from rust, so labour and exertion purify and invigorate the soul.⁴⁷

Despite Lady Orville's voicing Lamb's fears of censure for publishing, it may have been because of Byron that Lamb discovered the 'mind-saving role' of writing as therapy, as he described it, in volcanic terms again, as the 'lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake – [...] that I cannot help thinking rhyme is so far useful in anticipating [and] preventing the disorder.'⁴⁸ The act of disciplined writing was an activity that enabled Lamb to distance herself from a source of despair, an outlet for an intellect that had been repressed since childhood and a way of communicating what she thought of as a necessary illustration for the need for reform. Showalter illustrates the devastating effects of enforced idleness as demonstrated in the writings of Florence Nightingale:

The accumulation of nervous energy, which has had nothing to do during the day, makes [women] feel every night, when they go to bed, as if they are going mad; and they are obliged to lie long in bed in the morning to let it evaporate and keep it down.⁴⁹

Whilst Nightingale was more forcibly restrained by the even narrower confines of middle-class Victorian womanhood than Lamb, as an aristocrat, the end result of deprivation of any meaningful activity is arguably the same. The physical exertions of Lamb, notably her total immersion in social activities (in which she is not alone), her passion for riding and breaking in horses and what Douglass describes as her 'hunger for outdoor activity' are employed to demonstrate the excessive nature of Lamb, leading towards the final analysis of madness.⁵⁰ These pursuits can be re-interpreted as a burning off of excess energy that, left unspent in any productive way, could drive any woman as mad as Florence Nightingale feared she was becoming.

During this period of literary production that saw *Glenarvon*, *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis* published, Lamb had also completed the twenty seven stanza *A New Canto* (1819); the twelve stanza *Gordon: a Tale* (1821); a further four novels being revised in 1822 but having been started much earlier, *Rosamund*, *Penruddock*, *Rose and Mary* and *Sir Eustace de Grey*; and an outline for her novelisation of the drama *The Witch of Edmonton*

by Thomas Dekker, William Rowley and John Ford that she began in 1823. All of these works have been identified by Normington and Douglass, but they make no investigation into what this spurt of activity might mean nor identify the correlation between this output and the fact that Lamb was also making new friends.⁵¹ Douglass also identifies others along the way that remained unpublished and which are only mentioned in passing: a short story written in 1812 that is a re-working of Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable Amoureux*;⁵² an original short novel written about a gypsy girl named Bessy Grey, an epistolary novel based on letters from a 'Venetian nobleman [...] to a very absurd English Lady', all in 1813; two unnamed play manuscripts passed on to Byron, via his wife in 1815, for the attention of the Drury Theatre management.⁵³ The lack of curiosity that these works arouse in her biographers is indicative of how little consequence Lamb's intellectual efforts are to the main thrust of the narrative that charts her mental disintegration.

Similarly, the friendships being forged by Lamb during this period of creativity have previously been seen as a result of a necessary downgrading due to Lamb's perceived status as a social outcast from her own milieu. This new circle of companionship and intellectual support, I would like to suggest, replaced one of superficial, fashionable acquaintance that was deprived of 'significant spheres of action', allowing Lamb thereby to escape an over-reliance upon an inner life that was responsible for over-identification with the imagination, that resulted, Showalter argues, in more women suffering from symptoms of depression and breakdown.⁵⁴ In the case of Lamb, this could explain her over-identification with and literary seduction by the poetic voice of Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. These new friendships, I would argue, appear to be the most rewarding of Lamb's life as the development of them coincides with her most creative period. Already friends with the authors Lady Sydney Morgan and Amelia Opie, Lamb began to associate with the literary circles that met in Doughty Street and Little Quebec Street, the residences of Elizabeth Benger and Elizabeth Spence respectively. These literary gatherings included the poets Emma Roberts and Laetitia Elizabeth Landon and Edward Bulwer Lytton. Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger and Elizabeth Isabella Spence devoted their time in later life to the pursuit of learned exchange of conversation and ideas. Such was their keen interest in developing and maintaining literary relationships particularly, though not exclusively, with

published women that Madame de Staël, whom Lamb had previously met in 1813 during de Staël's stay in London,⁵⁵ has been recorded as saying that Benger was the most interesting woman in England.⁵⁶ This is not an accolade that is recognised by Lamb's biographers as being deserved as both Benger and Spence are barely acknowledged. Instead, any significance of Benger and Spence's presence in studies of Lamb's life is reduced to a few lines, which focus upon their exaggerated dress sense, their plain looks, unfashionable addresses, the meagre refreshments on offer and Benger's role in providing the ominous first meeting place between Lamb and Rosina Wheeler Doyle, later to become the wife of Edward Bulwer Lytton, whose experiences bear a striking resemblance to those of Lamb and are discussed below. Jenkins refers to an anonymous description of Miss Benger wearing a tippet 'the produce of some consumptive bear', and an anecdotal incident in which Lamb's dog retrieved items of dirty linen from under Benger's bed.⁵⁷ Blyth mentions that she was 'a minor poet [and] a minor novelist.'⁵⁸ Normington comments that poor, thin and a 'rather plain' Benger made up for her lack of beauty with a 'sparkling eyes and dazzling conversation.'⁵⁹ Only Douglass refers to the literary basis of their friendship, and quotes Miss Spence's declaration that she 'honoured Lamb 'more for her *litry* [sic] abilities than for her rank'.⁶⁰

Such treatment is opposed to their identities as writers, committed to their interest in the status of writing and the position of women, in particular, as Rosemary Mitchell argues, in the work of Benger as a pioneering biographer of historical women.⁶¹ Leslie Mitchell, in his most recent work on Edward Bulwer Lytton, introduces this literary salon as a 'demi-monde' that was populated by amateurs excluded from the 'best society' because of political, sexual or religious irregularities, in which he squarely places Lamb, whom he describes as being 'tainted with scandal' and as forced to move 'among those with other stigmas.'⁶² This perception of a seedy underworld is at odds with what Cynthia Lawford describes as Benger and Spence's creation of a forum of literary debate that was utterly respectable, which was accessed by invitation only and designed to promote a supportive environment for primarily female writers.⁶³ Evidence for the valuable network of mutual support and encouragement offered at the informal gatherings can be found in Lamb's dedication of her third novel *Ada Reis* (1823) to the Irish intellectual Lydia White, to whom

Lamb wishes to 'dedicate these pages' in acknowledgement of White's 'superiority of intellect and literary talents' to prove Lamb's 'grateful recollection of [...] kindness[.]'⁶⁴ The disdain with which Benger and Spence, who saw themselves as respectable, serious women of letters, educators and writers of fiction, and Lamb's association with them, are dismissed is a reflection of Lamb's presumed eccentricity and loss of status in keeping bizarre and second-rate company. The suggestion of Lamb now mixing amongst marginalised, somehow sub-standard, company is one that fits comfortably with the perception of her, instead of the more challenging possibility of re-figuring Lamb as pursuing a sustained commitment of writing within a supportive intellectual environment.

The lack of attention paid to this intellectual environment and Lamb's works in the biographies is evidence that Lamb not being taken seriously as a writer. Jenkins merely outlines the plots of the novels, observes that *Graham Hamilton* contained 'nothing of note' and concludes that Lamb had no opinion upon her own work.⁶⁵ Blyth views the production of *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis* as taking place in isolation and devoid of any stimulus because of Byron's departure for the continent.⁶⁶ Manchester condenses the chronology of the writing and production of *Graham Hamilton*, which took two years, to a passing reference and omits all mention of *Ada Reis* in favour of a lengthy description of Byron's death and funeral arrangements, complete with illustrations.⁶⁷ Normington includes references to other works by Lamb that remain unpublished, but still does not demonstrate any critical curiosity into the field of cultural production in which Lamb was working or to what end.⁶⁸ It is worth repeating Douglass' comment on what he perceives to be Byron's relationship with Lamb's writing in chapter two, which bears repeating in this context because of the assessment of her state of mind; he states that Lamb 'confused loving a writer' with being one.⁶⁹ It is because of the absence of Byron that Lamb is not taken seriously and these works and friendships are dismissed so lightly. It is as if his absence indicates that anything else that came after him can only be of secondary interest because, as Blyth observes of this period, 'with Byron in exile in Italy, and her own withdrawal from Society, she had lost the stimulus for writing which she had previously enjoyed.'⁷⁰ It is as Wilson suggests, the melodrama of Lamb's life is of key interest to her biographers.⁷¹ I would suggest that this period of intellectual exertion is a noticeably quieter one, hence the

lack of interest, and the attention is being driven continually forward to the next scene of absurdity and madness.

The one relationship from this period that does attract the interest of Lamb's biographers is that with the Bulwer Lyttons, Edward and Rosina. The details of the exact nature of Lamb's relationship with Bulwer Lytton are uncertain but it is reported by Blyth to be 'a shameless seduction of an inexperienced youth by a designing woman.'⁷² Lamb appears in the story of the Bulwer Lyttons like a bad fairy at a christening; her motives are suspected as being entirely malevolent. She is seen as acting from no better reason than to soothe her own wounded vanity and her inability to be anything other than destructive.⁷³ Mitchell describes Lamb's delight in 'seducing young men', speaks of her influence as 'almost entirely malign' and refers to the 'devastation [that she brought] to her own and other people's lives' whom 'mere death' could not stop.⁷⁴ As with Lamb's own biographers, nothing more concrete is offered to substantiate this impression, which, after all, is all it amounts to due to the lack of any supporting sources for this judgement upon her character. Mitchell implies an explicit link between the fact that Bulwer Lytton proposed to his future wife, Rosina, in the grounds of Broomfield Hall, the country home where Lamb was to be effectively exiled, and the subsequent breakdown of Rosina's marriage.⁷⁵ During the process of separation, charges of madness were levelled at Rosina by her husband and there are distinct parallels between the attempted commitment of Lamb as a lunatic by her husband's family, apparently with the sanction of her own, and the commitment of Rosina Bulwer Lytton. Whatever the relationship between Lamb and Bulwer Lytton, she and Rosina⁷⁶ have much more in common than the men in their lives. The parallels have been identified by Marie Mulvey Roberts:

Both rebelled against the prescribed roles of femininity to such an extent that their relatives tried to certify them as insane. Writing fiction provided them with a means of therapy and empowerment in the aftermath of unhappy love affairs.⁷⁷

I would argue that Lamb used the novel as a vehicle for exploration rather than for vindication in the style of Rosina, but the point is a valid one. Both Lamb and Rosina were critical of their circumstances and were committed to airing their grievances publicly, and that both were threatened with restraint was not a coincidence. Like Lamb's, Rosina's

madness is read as manifesting itself as a personal vendetta against a man of letters. Like Lamb's, it is as a result of Rosina's actions rather than those of the man in question that results in the charge of madness being the weapon of choice in an assassination of her character. Like Lamb, Rosina is accused of theatricality and melodrama⁷⁸ and becomes a source of embarrassment because of her refusal to be constrained by the public limitations of acceptable feminine behaviour.

Evidence is gathered against Rosina in a similar way as happens to Lamb in a deliberate attempt to discredit her both by Bulwer Lytton and his biographers, and the starting point is Rosina's mother. Anna Doyle Wheeler left an unsatisfactory marriage, taking her children with her, and after a period of four years, travelled to France where she was an adherent to the ideals of Saint-Simonian female emancipation, having already absorbed the philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft.⁷⁹ Edward Bulwer Lytton expressed his distaste for such militant feminism by declaring 'the only excuse for Mrs Wheeler was that she was mad.'⁸⁰ A similar sentiment comes from Benjamin Disraeli, a close friend of Bulwer Lytton, in which he associated the political female with the gypsy in Keat's poem who 'would stare/ Full hard at the moon'⁸¹:

Mrs Wheeler was there [at dinner]; not pleasant, something between Jeremy Bentham and Meg Merrilies, very clever but awfully revolutionary. She poured forth all her systems upon my novitiate ear, and while she advocated the rights of women, Bulwer abused system mongers and the sex, and Rosina played with her dog.⁸²

Michael Sadleir depicts the 'Goddess of Reason' as nothing more than a harpy who made her husband's home hell and made her children acolytes at her altar for a 'small group of embittered cranks in Caen' and whose common behaviour, 'wrongheadedness' and tedium Rosina inherited.⁸³

Disraeli's comment on Rosina playing with her dog does suggest her lack of interest in the polemics of her mother but the desire for equality in the marriage was what, ultimately, led to the breakdown of the Lytton's marriage and the subsequent public acrimony. Bulwer Lytton summed up in his position in a letter adopting the baby talk of their courtship:

No, my sagacious Poodle, no me does not wish oo a bit more stupid than oo is...but me wants to have only the perfections, not the faults of a clever woman. Me wants the companion, not the Caviller or Contradictor, which me thinks clever women generally become when the Mistress grows into the Wife, and me thinks oo has a certain independence of character that belies oo softness of temper and even oo love for me. But me won't talk of this now, prettiest.⁸⁴

Because Rosina would not make 'greater concessions than the man' and would not feel that those concessions, when given, should be a source of pride, Bulwer Lytton predicted that there could be no permanence of attraction.⁸⁵ When Bulwer Lytton began to distance himself by spending more time away from home and with his mistress, Rosina likened her condition to being kept in 'solitary confinement.'⁸⁶

Unable to discover concrete evidence for adultery committed by Rosina, Bulwer Lytton took advantage of the 'facilities the lunacy law affords for disposing of inconvenient wives.'⁸⁷ The Commissioners of Lunacy were given the task of discovering whether or not Rosina was actually insane or 'a tiresome woman [that] had been kidnapped in order to silence her.'⁸⁸ It is telling that Mitchell adopts turns of phrase such as 'an equilibrium [...] as fragile as Rosina's', 'Rosina's behaviour became odder and odder, no doubt assisted by a heavy intake of alcohol and her fear of persecution', despite having not mentioned a fragile equilibrium or a problem with alcohol before, and despite having adequately demonstrated that Rosina's paranoia was extremely well-founded due to the constant surveillance she was under from agents of her husband.⁸⁹ Similar tactics coerce the reader of studies of Lamb in subtle attempts to reinforce the stereotype with references to alcoholism and drug dependency; Normington refers to Lamb's 'medicinal glass of sherry gradually turn[ing] into a bottle' with no previous reference to Lamb's recourse to drink.⁹⁰ Even Douglass, the most scholarly of Lamb's biographers, refers to any recourse to artificial stimulants in an oblique manner; her fear of death 'may have stemmed from [...] laudanum-induced hallucinations', her role as Bulwer Lytton's 'probably drug-induced paramour', and Lamb's symptoms of manic-depression 'might also have been due to [...] drug use'; he cites her failure to have dinner with her grandmother, Lady Spencer, as

evidence for a life spiralling out of control.⁹¹ Lamb may well have been dependent on both drugs and alcohol but, as Jenkins kindly observes, she would have been in good company as the use of opiates and alcohol were widely prescribed and entrenched in everyday life;⁹² witness the use of laudanum to quieten down Lamb as an overactive child in the above quotation. This kind of anecdotal aside appears to be, perhaps unconsciously, employed to lend weight to the arguments that Lamb and Rosina were certifiably insane and to impair their authenticity as critical forces. This 'evidence' is offered in isolation from any kind of context, which effectively removes them from the discourse of 'normality' where decent people do not engage in extra-marital affairs, drink, take drugs, accuse their husbands of cruelty. When re-positioned within the wider context of their cultural milieu it would appear that Lamb and Rosina are only unusual in setting down their experiences in print.

Foucault suggests that confinement is utilised as a device to avoid scandal, and that madness, in the classical civilisation, becomes a source of shame and as such must be removed to avoid bringing dishonour upon families.⁹³ Even though Foucault refers to the seventeenth century with regards to linking madness and scandal, which must be hidden, this provides a new dynamic when considering Lamb and Rosina. They were an embarrassment to their families and their exclusion was an attempt to silence them both as a method of self-defence. Those that tried to silence Lamb and Rosina were not just embarrassed *of* them but *by* them: they exposed the inherent hypocrisy and weaknesses of social institutions of the social hierarchy and marriage in their novels. The threat of incarceration as lunatics was an attempt to render both Lamb and Rosina powerless by invalidating their knowledge. The power dynamics embedded within the cultural connotations of insanity would deny Lamb and Rosina an authoritative voice, excluding them from meaningful dialogue. That the lives and novels of these women have been virtually ignored is because of this process of de-legitimation. Despite pockets of isolated interest, the ability to summarily dismiss Lamb and Rosina stems from what Roy Porter identifies as 'a callous belief that the insane [or, by extension, those believed to be] do not suffer and that any problems they may express are bound to be imaginary.'⁹⁴ Anything they had to say in their own defence was necessarily ignored as delusional, hence declarations by Lamb that she was not mad are greeted with, at best, scepticism and

criticism of cultural elite in her novels is disregarded in favour of a wilful misreading of an obsession with Byron. Porter describes how the noisiest patients were not only shut up but ‘shut up’: madness could not be cured by listening to what the mad had to say ‘there being less communication than excommunication’;⁹⁵ Lamb’s banishment to Brocket was tantamount to solitary confinement.

Lamb’s behaviour is depicted as aggressively abnormal, the counteracting model of normalcy being that of the passive figure of Byron, the recipient and enforced respondent of this unwanted attention. For example, Byron had numerous relationships with women, which have been well documented, but even the rumoured affair with his half-sister and suspicions of his own history of manic depressive illness, as identified by Kay Redfield Jamison,⁹⁶ leave his historical legacy undiminished. Lamb, on the other hand, only had one high-profile extra-marital affair, thereby rendering her a monomaniac.⁹⁷ Byron’s behaviour escapes similar analysis because of his maleness; Lamb’s invites it because her behaviour was, and apparently still is, considered to be unseemly in a woman. What becomes immediately clear in the four full-length studies of Lamb is that their perception of Lamb is swayed by an apparent allegiance to Byron, and that the authors take the view that, as Byron’s friend and biographer Thomas Moore stated, ‘His very defects were among the elements of his greatness’.⁹⁸ Elizabeth Jenkins asserts that it would be an ‘ungracious task to vilify Byron, to whom everyone who is fond of poetry owes a debt of gratitude,’ suggesting that there is something for which he should be vilified but that it would be considered rude to do so.⁹⁹ Sean Manchester states his position quite clearly at the beginning of his work on Lamb: not only does he adopt Lamb’s quotation on Byron as the descriptive title of Lamb’s life by removing the quotation marks, but he makes quite clear where his allegiance lies by asserting that Byron was his ‘great, great Grandfather.’¹⁰⁰ Out of the seventy-five of Manchester’s sources listed in his bibliography there is only one primary source that is directly related to Lamb, and that is *Glenarvon*, a work that he dismisses as ‘the product of an immature mind and badly written with its Gothic absurdities and constant melodrama.’¹⁰¹ Similarly, seven out of fifteen chapters of Henry Blyth’s life of Lamb are devoted to Byron, and Blyth, is, in his own words, ‘unduly tolerant’ of Byron’s erratic behaviour, simply ascribing him as ‘singularly lacking the attributes of a gentleman.’¹⁰²

The most recent studies of Lamb by Susan Normington and Paul Douglass are more extensive works that include deeper research, but the perception of a woman bent upon revenge is set before Normington's book is begun. The sub-title of Normington's work refers to Lamb as 'this infernal woman'; this is a direct quotation from her brother-in-law, Frederick Lamb, and one that underlines the common perception of Lamb as a malignant pest, and in the foreword, endorsed by Normington, the actress Sarah Miles states that Lamb was determined to 'bask in the glory of Byron's reputation.'¹⁰³ Frederick Lamb's fulmination against Lamb is reported in full by Normington: 'This infernal woman has advertised her memoirs for publication.'¹⁰⁴ Frederick uttered this phrase in 1825, less than a year after he was threatened with blackmail by the courtesan Harriette Wilson, who threatened to publish her own uncensored memoirs that would reveal details of her relationship with Frederick Lamb, among others, but whose silence could be bought.¹⁰⁵ Frederick's outburst, when placed in this wider context, is less to do with Lamb than it is to do with Frederick's own recurring fear of exposure by women armed with powerful knowledge about him and his family that would undermine his position as the newly appointed Minister to Spain. Normington's critical naïvety with regard to Byron is nowhere better reflected than when she describes how Byron attempted to shock Lamb out of love with him by '*letting her believe*' [my italics] that 'he had taken part in homosexual acts during the two years he was abroad,'¹⁰⁶ as if in complicity with a presumed reader who also knew that Byron could not have committed such debauchery.¹⁰⁷ The story of Lamb's life becomes less about her and more about the effect of her upon the culturally acceptable and legitimately historical figures of the men in her life, primarily Byron and Lord Melbourne, both of whom are seen as victims of this apparent monomaniac because of what is perceived as her shameless pursuit of the former and her marriage to and neglect of the latter.

Jenkins writes that 'to find [Lamb] one must return to the scraps and fragments, so nugatory in themselves.'¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately the most prolific source for these scraps and fragments mined by Jenkins, Blyth, Manchester and Normington is the correspondence between Byron and Lamb's mother-in-law, Lady Melbourne. Their evidence is called upon by biographers of Lamb as primary because of their intimate involvement with Lamb and

therefore accepted unquestioningly as an accurate representation, even though the correspondence was, by definition, highly subjective and written by two people who had actively distanced themselves from her because she became a source of embarrassment to them both. Byron, by his own admission, disliked scenes, especially where Lamb displayed a 'want of common conduct.'¹⁰⁹ Byron's description of Lamb as a volcano, in whom he wished the lava in her veins would flow so as colder to make a marble slab of her,¹¹⁰ has been interpreted in terms of Lamb's want of seemly conduct but elsewhere he uses the volcanic metaphor as a way of describing his own creativity, without which he would go mad, saying it is 'the lava of imagination that whose eruption prevents an earthquake.'¹¹¹ Is it Lamb's anti-social behaviour that Byron is criticising or her active imagination for which there is no immediate outlet? Is her having an active imagination the unseemly conduct that Byron is criticising? As Kay Redfield Jamison observes in her study of manic depressive illness and the artistic temperament, Byron was himself described in volcanic terms because of his volatile temper, intense emotions and erratic mood swings from suicidal melancholia to violent derangement and was plagued by a fear of the possibility of genetic madness.¹¹² Yet even here, in an apparently objective view of mental illness, Byron's dysfunctional personality is privileged because of his contribution to poetry; that 'his very defects were among the elements of his greatness' and he is applauded for the monumental effort it must have taken to achieve greatness in the face of such adversity, whereas Lamb whose life and works, are not investigated in an even superficial way, is simply dismissed as unable to restrain herself.¹¹³

Lamb infuriated Lady Melbourne, more subtly, because of her apparent refusal of the outward convention of acceptable female behaviour. Lady Melbourne, in a much-quoted letter, declared that 'when anyone braves the opinion the world, sooner or later they will feel the consequences of it.'¹¹⁴ When she compared Lady Melbourne to Madame de Merteuil, the archetypal practitioner of sexual and political intrigue from Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Lamb's mother, Lady Bessborough, acutely summed Lady Melbourne up as having never braved the opinion of the world herself, due to the calculated hypocrisy that demanded the appearance of 'reputation' in women.¹¹⁵ Out of six children it was only the eldest, Peniston, which could, with any certainty, be identified as being

fathered by her husband, the first Viscount Melbourne. Ensuring the legitimacy of the dynastic lineage being the principal duty of aristocratic wives, once that duty was performed discreet extra marital affairs were tolerated. William (Lamb's future husband) and Harriet were thought to have been fathered by Lord Egremont, Emily by Francis, the Duke of Bedford, Frederick by Frederick, the Duke of York, and George by George, the Prince of Wales. Despite a baronetcy and considerable wealth, William's family were *nouveaux riches* compared to the pedigree of Lamb's extended family of Cavendishes and Spencers, and the politically ambitious Lady Melbourne augmented her position with familial alliances. It could be argued that Lady Melbourne would have been less upset by the embarrassment of the affair between Lamb and Byron if it had actually achieved a greater end for her family. Lamb's earlier liaison with Sir Godfrey Webster enraged Lady Melbourne as it temporarily damaged relations between William Lamb and Sir Godfrey's stepfather, Lord Holland, the titular head of the Whig party.¹¹⁶ Lamb made the mistake of being too open about her relationship with Byron, and the penalty for failure to pay lip service to the conventions of propriety was indeed severe. To use Wilson's phrase Lamb has become represented as an 'exaggerated woman' whose story is told by other people who have little patience with her. Byron's denial of any similarity between himself and the fictional Glenarvon as he 'did not sit still long enough for any likeness to be drawn' neatly put critical distance between himself, the book and any insinuation of any serious involvement with Lamb.¹¹⁷

It would appear that insanity is determined by constructions of appropriate behaviour. The norms of propriety, against which the deviancy is measured, serve to reinforce those structures that legitimise the symbolic power of hierarchy. The label of insanity conveniently confines and negates any threat that Lamb and Rosina may pose to the burgeoning political careers of their husbands and the damage done by their revelations. The lives and madness of Lamb and Rosina Bulwer Lytton have been told through the refractory lens of the prominent men in their lives, resulting in their narratives being marginalised as delusional and obsessional when what they wanted was for them to be read as narratives that register protest and disillusionment with a hierarchy that was doing its best to suppress them and what they had to say against internal corruption and abuses of

power and privilege. Lamb and Rosina use the vehicle of the novel to register this protest, and the aims and objectives are made quite clear within the texts. Language gave Lamb and Rosina a tool with which to negotiate a place for themselves to be heard. Foucault suggests that where there is language there is power and where there is power there is resistance; language is the site where the struggles are acted out and those in a 'powerless position can negotiate with that position and accrue power to themselves.'¹¹⁸ As Lamb said, in a poem addressed to Harriette Wilson, when she was threatening to reveal the details of her liaisons in which Frederick Lamb was implicated:

Harriet Wilson, shall I tell thee where,
Beside me being *cleverer*,
We differ? – thou wert hired to hold thy tongue,
Thou hast no right to do thy lovers wrong:
But I, whom none could buy or gain,
Who am as proud, girl, as thyself art vain,
And like thyself, or sooner like the wind,
Blow raging ever free and unconfin'd
What should withhold my tongue with pen of steel,
The faults of those who have wrong'd me reveal?
Why should I hide men's follies, whilst my own
Blaze like gas along this talking town?
Is it being bitter to be too sincere?
Must we adulterate the truth as they do beer?
I'll tell thee why then! As each has a price,
I have been bought at last – I am not ice:
Kindness and gratitude have chained my tongue,
From henceforth I will do no mortal wrong.
Prate those who please – laugh – censure who that will.
My mouth is sealed – my thoughts – my pen are still.
In the meantime – we Lambs are seldom civil,
I wish thy book – *not thee* – at the Devil.¹¹⁹

It would appear that the structures of propriety finally forced Lamb to lay down her pen of steel. It was, though, more than an implement of revenge exposing men's follies; it also enabled her to examine her own follies and rehabilitation in the context of the symbolic power of the hierarchy. One cannot help suspecting that the silence was bought by the threat of being incarcerated within an institution, and the kindness and gratitude because of relief that this draconian solution was not implemented. Indeed, Lamb wrote that 'as to any promises I may have been forced to make [not to obstruct the impending separation from William] when a straight waistcoat & a Mad Doctor are held forth to view – they cannot expect that I should think them binding.'¹²⁰ Significantly, Brocket was exactly the kind of

country house that Showalter identifies as being the model for the architecture of the modern nineteenth-century asylum, but one that did not look like a prison.¹²¹ For Lamb, her solitary confinement at Brocket, a house belonging to her husband's family, though not an asylum was still an incarceration and as restricting as being chained to the wall as in a public institution.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This is a phrase that has become synonymous with Lamb. However, the closest contemporary source is a recording of a conversation between Lamb and Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson), published in the latter's memoirs. See Morgan, S. Lady, (1863), *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence, 3 Volumes*, Leipzig: Tauchnitz, vol. 2, p. 322.
- ² The full reference for each will be given when cited from for the first time.
- ³ Wilson, F. (1997), 'The Melodramas of Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb', *Lord Byron – A Multidisciplinary Open Forum*, 23rd Congrès International de la Byron Society Organisé par la Société Française des Études Byronniennes, Versailles, 1997, ed. Tessier, T., p. 115.
- ⁴ Franklin, C. (2004), 'Lamb, Lady Caroline (1785-1828)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/articles/15911>, accessed 2 June 2005].
- ⁵ Smith, D.E. (1990), 'K is Mentally Ill', *Texts, Facts and Femininity; Exploring the Relations of Ruling*, London: Routledge, p. 24.
- ⁶ *Ibid*, pp.12-13.
- ⁷ Jenkins, E. (1974), *Lady Caroline Lamb*, London: Cardinal, p. 19.
- ⁸ Blyth, H. (1972), *Caro: The Fatal Passion, The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*, New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghan, p. 8.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 6-8.
- ¹⁰ Wilson, (1997), p. 113.
- ¹¹ Blyth, (1972), p. 3.
- ¹² Manchester, S. (1992), *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know: The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*, London: Gothic Press, pp. 31-33.
- ¹³ Foucault, M. (1988), *Madness and Civilisation; A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, New York: Vintage Press, pp. 147-149.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 149. Helen Small refutes this class distinction of leisured women being more susceptible to hysteria by illustrating how prevalent hysteria was amongst the working classes, see. Small, H. (1998), *Love's Madnes; Medicine, the Novel and Female Insanity 1800-1865*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 18.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁶ Showalter, E. (1998), *The Female Malady; Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980*, London: Virago, p. 29.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸ Foucault, (1988), p. 66.
- ¹⁹ Small, (1998), p. 17.
- ²⁰ Blyth, H. (1972), p. 3.
- ²¹ Showalter, (1998), p. 249. See also Jane Ussher's interrogation into the misogynistic bias of diagnosed mental illness, Ussher, J (1991), *Women's Madness – Misogyny or Mental Illness?* New York & London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- ²² Lamb quoted in Normington, S. (2001), *Lady Caroline Lamb; This Infernal Woman*, London: House of Stratus, p.185.
- ²³ *Ibid*, pp. 15, 18.
- ²⁴ Douglass, P. (2004), *Lady Caroline Lamb; A Biography*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 16.
- ²⁵ Blyth, (1972), p.27.
- ²⁶ Jenkins, E. (1974), p.16.
- ²⁷ There were educational opportunities but no real incentive to pursue them or anybody in a suitably authoritative position to ensure that these opportunities were made the most of. Lamb's governess was Selina Trimmer, daughter of the famous educationalist Sarah. According to Amanda Foreman's authoritative study on the Devonshire household, Selina was introduced into the family by Lady Spencer, Lamb's grandmother, in a desire to provide Lamb and her cousins with a stable background in contrast to their parent's immorality (Foreman, 251). However, even Selina was powerless to enforce her charges to pursue a study that her charges did not wish to undertake. When Selina complained to the her patroness that Lamb was refusing to do her arithmetic, Lady Spencer advised the governess not to worry as 'the fancy [...] will come again as I have reason enough to be very sure she can do anything of that kind when she chooses to set about it.' Letter from Dowager Countess Spencer to Selina Trimmer, dated 15th February, 1792, quoted in Normington, (2001), p. 14.

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- ²⁸ Showalter, (1998), p. 81.
- ²⁹ Jenkins, (1974), p. 16.
- ³⁰ Normington, (2001), 230.
- ³¹ Jenkins, (1974), p. 16.
- ³² Normington, (2001), p.16.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Foucault, (1988), p. 30.
- ³⁵ Ibid, p. 105.
- ³⁶ Ibid, pp. 107-108.
- ³⁷ Lamb quoted in Doherty, F. (1967), 'An Unpublished Letter of Lady Caroline Lamb to Lord Clare', *Notes & Queries*, August, p. 297.
- ³⁸ Ibid, p. 298.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Jenkins, (1974), p. 95.
- ⁴¹ Blyth, (1972), p. 221; Jenkins, (1974), p. 118; Manchester, S. (1992), p. 144.
- ⁴² Jenkins, (1974), p. 118.
- ⁴³ Showalter, (1998), p. 61.
- ⁴⁴ 27th June 1811, British Library Add. MSS 51558, f.7.
- ⁴⁵ Morgan, (1863), vol. 2, pp. 280-282.
- ⁴⁶ Lamb, C. Lady, (1822), *Graham Hamilton*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 2, p. 33.
- ⁴⁷ Lamb, C. Lady, (1823), *Ada Reis*, London: John Murray, vol. 1, p. x.
- ⁴⁸ Jamison, K.R. (1994), *Touched with Fire; Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*, New York: Free Press Paperbacks, p. 122.
- ⁴⁹ Florence Nightingale quoted in Showalter, (1998), p. 64.
- ⁵⁰ Douglass, (2004), p. 22.
- ⁵¹ Normington, (2001), pp. 218-225; Douglass, (2004), pp. 175, 237, 240, 242.
- ⁵² First printed in 1772, it is a tale of how the devil assumes the form first as a demon that looks like a camel, then a spaniel, then a young woman when summoned by a Spanish gentleman, Alvaro. As a young woman the devil apparently falls in love with her master and fulfils all of his wishes to the utmost and almost succeeds in seducing him. It is not until the end that the beautiful Biondetta is revealed to be Beelzebub, who still adores Alvaro but then disappears. Lamb, when sending Byron a cutting of her pubic hair, referred to herself as Biondetta and had her portrait painted by Thomas Phillips in 1813, dressed as a page, as the character Biondetta appears, accompanied by a spaniel. Lamb's own version of Biondetta, as described by Douglass, is the devoted spaniel Biondetta (Lamb) was once a favourite of Lord Byron's but whose possessiveness forces him to give it up. The dog then dies with its affections unaltered and the body, in the first version, is returned to Byron, and in the second version, Byron refuses to see the body, Douglass, (2004), p. 125.
- ⁵³ Douglass, (2004), pp. 125, 146-147, 154-55.
- ⁵⁴ Showalter, (1998), p. 64.
- ⁵⁵ Douglass, (2004), p. 154.
- ⁵⁶ Aikin, L. (1827), 'Memoir of Miss Benger', *Memoirs of the Life of Anne Boleyn, Queen of Henry VIII* by Benger, E. Third Edition, London: Longman, p. xi.
- ⁵⁷ Jenkins, (1874), pp. 119-121.
- ⁵⁸ Blyth, (1972), p. 230.
- ⁵⁹ Normington, (2001), pp. 218-219.
- ⁶⁰ Douglass, (2004), p. 274.
- ⁶¹ Mitchell, R. (2004), 'Benger, Elizabeth Ogilvy', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2093>, accessed 2 June 2005].
- ⁶² Mitchell, L. (2003), *Bulwer-Lytton; The Rise and Fall of a Victorian Man of Letters*, London: Hambledon & London, p. 15.
- ⁶³ Lawford, C. (2004), 'Turbans, Tea and Talk of Books: the Literary Parties of Elizabeth Spence and Elizabeth Benger', *CW3 Journal: Corvey Women Writers on the Web 1796 – 1834*, [<http://www.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3journal>, accessed 14 September 2006].
- ⁶⁴ Lamb, C. Lady, (1823), *Ada Reis*, London: John Murray, pp. i-iii.
- ⁶⁵ Jenkins, p. 123.

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- ⁶⁶ Blyth, (1972), pp. 218-220.
- ⁶⁷ Manchester, (1992), pp. 144-156.
- ⁶⁸ Normington, (2001), pp. 220-225.
- ⁶⁹ Douglass, (2004), p. 117.
- ⁷⁰ Blyth, (1974), p. 218.
- ⁷¹ Wilson, (1997), p. 114.
- ⁷² Blyth, (1972), p. 224. This relationship is discussed at length in chapter six.
- ⁷³ See also Mitchell, (2003), pp. 13-16; Sadlier, M. (1933), *Bulwer and His Wife; A Panorama 1803-1836*, London: Constable & Co., pp.31-100.
- ⁷⁴ Mitchell, (2003), pp.14-16.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 16.
- ⁷⁶ I refer to Rosina Bulwer Lytton by her first name to avoid her being confused with Edward Bulwer Lytton.
- ⁷⁷ Bulwer Lytton, R. (1994), *A Blighted Life: A True Story*, ed. Mulvey-Roberts, M., Bristol: Thoemmes Press (first pub. 1880), p. xv.
- ⁷⁸ Mitchell, (2003), p. 25.
- ⁷⁹ Bulwer Lytton, (1994), pp x-xi.
- ⁸⁰ Mitchell, (2003), p. 25.
- ⁸¹ Keats, J. (1985), 'Meg Merrilies', *Keats: Selected Poems*, ed. Morpurgo, J.E., London: Penguin Books, p. 252.
- ⁸² Mitchell, (2003), p. 25.
- ⁸³ Sadlier, (1933), pp. 71-81.
- ⁸⁴ Mitchell, (2003), p. 37.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 27.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 38.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 62.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 55, 61.
- ⁹⁰ Normington, (2004), p. 193.
- ⁹¹ Douglass, (2004), pp. 236, 258, 137.
- ⁹² Jenkins, (1974), p. 97.
- ⁹³ Foucault, 1988), pp. 66-67.
- ⁹⁴ Porter, R. (2002), *Madness: A Brief History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 160.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 158.
- ⁹⁶ Jamison, (1994), pp. 150-190.
- ⁹⁷ This assertion is made due to the lack of evidence, other than anecdotal, of the rumoured affairs with the young Edward Bulwer-Lytton and various doctors brought in to care for her son. The only other known involvement is a brief flirtation with Sir Godfrey Webster and unsubstantiated rumours of affairs with various doctors brought in to treat her son. During a period when serial adultery was commonplace, Lamb is conspicuous because of her lack of extra-marital lovers.
- ⁹⁸ Moore quoted in Jamison, (1994), p. 150.
- ⁹⁹ Jenkins, (1974), p. 52.
- ¹⁰⁰ Manchester, (1992), p. 16.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 138.
- ¹⁰² Blyth, (1972), p. 3.
- ¹⁰³ Normington, (2001), p. xiv.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 235.
- ¹⁰⁵ Wilson, F. (2003), *The Courtesan's Revenge: Harriette Wilson, the Woman Who Blackmailed the King*, London: Faber & Faber, pp. 224-225.
- ¹⁰⁶ Normington, (2001), p. 131.
- ¹⁰⁷ Byron's homosexuality proclivities are fully discussed and established beyond doubt in MacCarthy, F. (2002), *Byron: Life and Legend*, London: John Murray. MacCarthy examines Byron's homosexual relationships from Cambridge schoolboy John Edlestone, with whom Byron intended to put the Ladies of Llangollen 'to the Blush' (pp. 60-61), to his final infatuation for his page, Lukas Chalandritsanos, in his final months in Greece (pp. 566-557).
- ¹⁰⁸ Jenkins, (1974), p. 153.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 60.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Jamison, (1994), p. 122.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 153.

¹¹³ Ibid, pp.171-172.

¹¹⁴ Jenkins, (1974), p. 45.

¹¹⁵ Normington, (2001), p. 17; Ziegler, P. (1976), *Melbourne; a Biography of William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne*, London: Collins, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ The same could be said for Lady Melbourne's second daughter-in-law, also known as Caroline. Caroline St Jules was the illegitimate daughter of Lady Elizabeth Foster and Duke of Devonshire, husband of her best friend Georgiana, Lady Caroline Lamb's aunt. Caroline St Jules was discreetly assimilated into the Cavendish household and brought up with Lamb and her cousins, and eventually married William Lamb's brother, George. Caro-George (as she became known) also fell from favour with Lady Melbourne not so much for having an affair with Henry Brougham but because of Brougham's allegiance to the Prince of Wales' estranged wife, Princess Caroline of Brunswick; see Airlie, M. (1922), *In Whig Society 1775-1818*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, p. 187. Similarly, Normington suggests that Lady Melbourne advised her daughter Emily to be faithful but not to her own husband, Lord Cowper, but to her lover, Lord Palmerston, as Lady Melbourne predicted a bright future for him; see Normington (2001), p. 199.

¹¹⁷ Marchand, L. (1993), *Byron; A Portrait*, London: Pimlico, p. 248.

¹¹⁸ Foucault quoted in Mills, S. (1997), *Discourse*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 41-43.

¹¹⁹ Lamb published in Nathan, I. (1829), *Fugitive Pieces and Reminiscences of Lord Byron: Containing and Entire New Edition of the Hebrew Melodies, With the Addition of Several Never Before Published; the Whole Illustrated with Critical, Historical, Theatrical, Political, and Theological Remarks, Notes, Anecdotes, Interesting Conversations and Observations, Made by that Illustrious Poet: Together with His Lordship's Autograph; also Some Original Poetry, Letters and Recollections of Lady Caroline Lamb*, London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., pp. 195-196.

¹²⁰ Douglass, (2004), p. 180.

¹²¹ Showalter, (1998), pp. 34-35.

Chapter 6

'Portrait of a Lady': Contemporary Literary Representations of Lady Caroline Lamb

At the end of chapter one, in which both the concept of the construction and legitimisation of authority and identity was explored, the conclusion was that Lamb's critique of the disintegrating values of her milieu was not taken seriously as she was perceived as a representation of both the cause and effect of that very process, so closely was she identified with the perceived excesses and lax morality of an environment that was coming under increasing novelistic scrutiny. As an easily identifiable figure Lamb became a shortcut into the beating heart of the aristocratic elite, and in no small way her own self-portrait in *Glenarvon* can be considered as responsible for her becoming a literary commodity. That Lamb should commit to print a portrayal of herself as a wife and mother who was openly tempted by the attentions of a man other than her husband confirmed for many her reputation as shameless and unrepentant, especially as the first edition appeared without any conciliatory or apologetic preface. As she was perceived to have made free use of others in print Lamb became fair game herself; she had placed herself in the line of fire after firing the first salvo herself. As Lamb had responded to Byron's *Don Juan* with the publication of *A New Canto* (1819), her self-portrayal legitimised subsequent literary responses.

Lamb and Representations of the Regency

The first response to Lamb's literary self-portrait is by Elizabeth Thomas, better known as the author 'Mrs Bridget Blumantle', but who published *Purity of Heart, or The Ancient Costume* (1816) under the mantle of 'an Old Wife of Twenty Years'. The preface to *Purity of Heart* begs her readers to excuse any errors to be found in the work because speed of publication was of the essence for the novel's critique of *Glenarvon* to be successful. *Glenarvon* is a novel she detests for 'its horrible tendency, its dangerous and perverting sophistry; its abominable indecency and profaneness.'¹ She goes on to say that if 'the world has indeed saddled the production of *Glenarvon* on the rightful owner, she hopes and believes it is one solitary instance of depravity which cannot be paralleled' and that she wishes that her own novel may be read only for 'the pure morality [...] she has endeavoured to inculcate.'² The fact that a second edition of Thomas' production was required must have gratified her as evidence that her sense of morality had swiftly reached the reading public as an effective antidote to the evils to be found within the pages of *Glenarvon*. The accusation of sophistry levelled at Lamb by

Thomas, and the retribution that she delivers upon her fictional counterpart, Lady Calantha Limb, leaves no doubt that Thomas perceived the writing and publication of *Glenarvon* to be a true reflection of Lamb's character. Lady Calantha Limb is an exhibitionist whose lack of self-restraint ultimately leads her to madness and certain death. The violation of marriage vows by Lady Calantha in *Glenarvon*, Lamb in real life and Lady Calantha Limb in *Purity of Heart*, is, for Thomas, the most heinous crime of all, a position declared from the outset by Thomas' adoption of the pseudonym, for the sole purpose of this novel, 'an Old Wife of Twenty Years.' Lamb/Limb is compared with the heroine of the novel, Camilla, and is found wanting. Despite cavalier treatment of her by her adulterous husband and the relentless pursuit of her by the dangerous Lord Ellesmere, Camilla (whose actions, as are the plots against her, are reminiscent of Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*) remains faithful to her errant husband who is eventually reconciled to her and his Christian duty as a husband. Lady Calantha Limb, on the other hand, renounces all for a faithless lover named De Lyra, a name that suggests both a poet and his lyre and a liar, who later abandons her. She avenges herself by writing a novel and stages a dramatic suicide attempt that fails, the melodrama of which leaves her a laughing stock. Camilla fears for Lady Calantha's sanity when the latter declares she is still in love with De Lyra, even though he has left her and fathered a child with another woman, who has been captured by the 'Algerines' against whom he was fighting. Lady Calantha's plan is to dress as a Prussian soldier and, in order to rescue De Lyra, she will seduce then kill the enemy commander who holds him prisoner.

Thomas brings together in her work, possibly for the first time, what becomes the quintessence of 'Lamb'; adultery, cross-dressing, theatrical suicide attempt, madness, a dangerous lack of moral fibre and sophistry in the form of novel writing. *Purity of Heart* is an early example of the episodic melodrama as a literary device that is consistently used to (de)construct Lamb identified by Frances Wilson. Thomas' speedy response to *Glenarvon* is, she asserts, to counteract Lamb's attempt to undermine the public morality and virtue that is the 'ancient costume' referred to in the sub-title of Thomas' novel. The choice of sub-title is interesting in itself: presumably Thomas, the wife of a clergyman, did not intend to suggest that the commitment to the Christian sanctity of the marriage ceremony, as demonstrated by her heroine Camilla, was a costume to be put on and taken off at will, a mask only to be worn in public. The full

title of Thomas' novel, *Purity of Heart, or the Ancient Costume*, is indicative of the work that supplied Lamb with the model for her Lady Calantha Delaval, John Ford's tale of Spartan stoicism *The Broken Heart*. Nowhere is ideal model of behaviour more apparent than when Camilla urges Lady Calantha Limb to repress her desire and gain self-control over her passion for De Lyra. This is the fundamental message of the work in that without self-control the very fabric of society is at risk, as demonstrated by Lady Calantha Limb's self-destruction which is occasioned by an abandonment of societal rules at the behest of her manipulative lover. Camilla is shocked by Limb, as is Thomas by Lamb, not only for her violation of her marriage vows but also writing a novel based upon that personal experience, thereby exacerbating the original sin of adultery by publicly proclaiming it. Thomas and Camilla both view the novelistic production by both Lamb and Limb as a powerfully persuasive tool that is designed with the sole intention to urge impressionable readers to do likewise.

There is, perhaps, another and equally driving motivation for the speed of the response to *Glenarvon* for which Thomas provides the clue herself in the very preface that demonstrates so much moral outrage. Thomas' apology for any errors in the novel excuses any mistakes caused by haste because the timing was crucial to ensure the success of the critique of the perverting sophistry of Lamb. Thomas also says that she is 'a mother of a growing family, actively engaged in the duties of her station.'³ Prior to the publication of *Purity of Heart*, Thomas, as Bluemantle, had published seven novels, and was to publish a further three novels, not including the second edition of *Purity of Heart*, and collections of poetry, all of which would have produced a satisfactory supplement to an income perhaps already stretched by her growing family. As a novelist, Thomas could hardly fail to recognise the sensational aspects of Lamb and her involvement with the most glamorous male figure of the period. Thomas recognised the marketability of Lamb as a consumable fashionable product and knew that timing was of the essence. The success of *Glenarvon* ensured a readership for any new material that contained the merest possibility of any further revelations. The preface sought to admonish Lamb for her disgraceful behaviour whilst simultaneously titillating the readership; to discover that the novel did not contain anything new it had first to be bought and read. As Deirdre Coleman notes, in her *Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Thomas, Thomas was criticised for digressing from her intended polemic into

what appeared to be a personal attack upon Lamb, yet a portrait of Lamb in all her melodramatic absurdity is what was required to both make her point and sell the novel.

Thomas' portrait of Lamb was, however, considered accurate enough to be acknowledged in an anonymous publication entitled *Prodigious!! Or Childe Paddie in London* (1818). The work is not so much a novel but a collection of observations and essays upon the fashionable London society. As an obvious riposte to Byron's Childe Harold, Childe Paddie is no more than a linking device as he disappears for the most part of the three volumes to be replaced by the omnipotent anonymity of 'the author' or simply 'we'. Childe Paddie, as may be safely assumed, is the alleged author, and is an Irish foil to the inanity of the English elite whose follies are, as the title suggests, prodigious, whereas the Irish are continually represented as barbarians and savages in a 'permanent state of insurrection and rebellion.'⁴ Childe Paddie is sent to London by his father and placed in the care of his uncle, a jaded habitué of fashionable society, Colonel Hornet. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, Childe Paddie, during the progress of his visit to London, encounters many a temptation as exemplified by a class who 'shine in [...] singularities and eccentricities' and his sojourn amongst them is to expose these faults to the reader so as they may be equipped to avoid them.⁵ The novel offers an insight into the ridiculousness of every aspect of life in the capital: masquerades, gambling, dancing, the opera, wealth, fame, politics, duelling, and language. In short, observes the author, it is a summary of the 'utmost difficulty of [aristocratic] lives' and that is 'how to kill a day.'⁶ Character portraits of the population of this society are a mixture of the real and the allegorical. Childe Paddie has already encountered Byron and his fictional namesake, Childe Harold, and both are dismissed as 'repulsive.'⁷ Having been treated to essays upon the relative merits of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and the actor Kean in the second volume, the third volume offers insights into the demerits of Colonel Dagger, Sir John Horseflesh, Squire Foxhunter, Princess of Pugs, Duke of Gold-Plate and Lord First-Floor. It is amongst these undesirable personages that the reader is introduced to 'Lady Glenalvon [sic]', referencing both Lamb and her novel, *Glenarvon*, a 'PROD[I]GIOUS in petticoats!'⁸ The character faults of this particular personage have been 'better argued [...] in that "Purity of Heart" [and] enough has been said.'⁹ Lamb had offended the author of *Prodigious* on all counts as the epitome of all that is wrong with English aristocrats and authors, and the author's displeasure is evident in including Lamb as the only figure based upon a real person amongst the allegorical

figures designed to ridicule the worst possible character traits of the English elite. As an aristocrat, she is a repeat offender of ‘all the folly of their system’ that is exposed to them in endless publications, and who remains, like the rest of her class ‘in idle and voluptuous sameness [...] with the same torpid and sleepy pertinacity, as a bat clings to the roof of his winter dormitory.’¹⁰ As an author, she had represented the Irish in a state of rebellion and insurrection that the author of *Prodigious* had earlier objected to as becoming the defining characteristic of the nation; and as a woman, she has displayed an ill-judged attempt to appear wise by writing a novel when the effect has been the reverse. Lady Glenalvon is held up as an example to all women whose vanity and immorality, exemplified in donning ‘masculine airs’, can only lead to the ‘best foundations of society [being] undermined.’¹¹ This character assassination of Lamb does not even take up two of the extremely narrow and short pages of the work. Clearly *Purity of Heart* had said enough and was still sufficiently well known for the author of *Prodigious* to refer to, even a year after the second edition was produced, as was Lamb herself.

A decade later Lamb was still a saleable commodity and indeed an apparently necessary component for the newly fashionable literature as represented by the ‘silver-fork’ novel. As has already been discussed in an earlier chapter, the novels are ambiguous in their presentation of a picture of late Regency society, depicting a society that would shortly become obsolete in this transitional period from Romantic to Victorian values. Gary Kelly neatly sums this up as a shift from the Romantic examination into the construction of the self, as well as the opposition between self and society as represented by Byron, towards the Victorian cultural values of the professional and power-holding middle class.¹² The novels, fashionable items of consumption in themselves, were marketed as being written by actual aristocrats as a method of guaranteeing the authenticity of the contents; indeed some were, and the author of one of the earliest proponents of the genre, Thomas Lister moved in these circles and would have certainly have known Lamb. Thomas Henry Lister was born in 1800, the eldest son of a country gentleman with Whig credentials; his sister was married to Lord John Russell. Alison Adburgham identifies Lister as being a frequent visitor to Holland House, and he was the author of reviews for the Whig journal, the *Edinburgh Review*.¹³ Lister’s first novel, *Granby* (1826), is described by Matthew Whiting Rosa as ‘firmly establishing’ the fashionable novel,¹⁴ and it certainly bears all

the hallmarks of the genre, in its concentration upon the comings, goings and conversations of the fashionable elite into which the eponymous hero is introduced. The novel embodies, as Claire Bainbridge observes, the conflict of two value systems, the Regency and the (proto) Victorian as represented by the cousins Tyrrell and Granby respectively.¹⁵ Tyrrell, who at the outset of the novel, appears as the natural son and heir of Lord Malton, embodies the worst excesses of the Regency period, a gambler and ringleader of a gang who set out to ruin Granby's friend, Courtenay, even though Tyrrell is in line for a vast inheritance on the death of his 'father,' Lord Malton. Lister's characterisation and naming of Tyrrell is clearly derived from William Godwin's arrogant and tyrannical country squire of the same name in *Caleb Williams* (1794). Granby, on the other hand, begins by having no such expectation and requests his 'uncle' for permission to train for an occupation as he does not wish to remain idle. The end of the novel reveals the switch of the cousins at birth and Granby as the rightful son and heir to Lord Malton, whose death elevates Granby to his proper position, but not before the unfitness for the peerage is revealed in Tyrrell and Granby's natural nobility has been established. The discrediting and disappearance of Tyrrell in favour of the industriousness and innate nobility of Granby reflects Kelly's shift towards the Victorian values of professionalism, but the novel also justifies control of the state by the upper classes, as made evident by Granby's fortuitous ennoblement. Tyrrell's passing marks the passing of a previous age that contained within it some undesirable qualities, such as Tyrrell and the mean-minded professional dandy, Trebeck. However, there is also a nostalgia for the characteristics of the Regency period that was not quite over, embodied in what Bainbridge describes as the 'lively nonsense' of Lady Harriet Duncan.¹⁶

The name of Lister's fictionalisation of Lamb is Lady Harriet Duncan, an indicator of her factual counterpart; Harriet is the abbreviated Christian name of Lamb's mother, Henrietta, and Duncannon was the courtesy title of her father, and then her brother, as heir to the Spencer Earldom. Lady Harriet's imminent arrival at Hemingsworth, the home of Lord and Lady Daventry, is discussed by the select and fashionable few gathered there. Trebeck remarks on the marriage of Duncan to Lady Harriet:

Some people say that he never did a more foolish thing than when he married Lady Harriet. I cannot say I think so. Nobody

acts foolishly in pleasing themselves – and she is certainly an amusing piece of silliness.¹⁷

This is hardly effusive in its praise, but coming from a man who prides himself on upon not demonstrating enthusiasm upon any subject, it is praise indeed. Significantly, the sentiment is echoed by female guest of the gathering:

‘Oh, I think’, said Lady Elizabeth, ‘she is absolutely charming – [...] with her simplicity, and her romance, and her little enthusiastic fancies; and above all, her bluestocking airs.’¹⁸

Published in the same year that Lamb finally and formally separated from William and moved to Brompton to live out the remaining two years of her life in solitude, this is a sympathetic portrait of Lamb. She is depicted as enchanting, harmless and welcome, instead of tiresome, socially unacceptable and insane. Lister refutes Lamb’s reputation of derangement in a small speech granted to Lady Harriet that echoes Lamb’s own protestations by which she defends herself against the attentions of an overzealous, powerfully authoritative doctor:

‘[A] tyrannical physician conspired to keep us within his clutches [...]. He absolutely would not let me travel - talked of nervous debility and I don’t know what – forbid Rome – that was cruelest [sic] of all[.] I don’t see what right physicians have to be so despotic.’¹⁹

Lady Harriet receives the ultimate seal of approval from Lister in the form of Caroline, the decorous heroine destined to make the perfect match with Granby, who only looked around at her surroundings and her fellow guests at Hemingsworth ‘as much as was justifiable in her age and sex.’²⁰ Caroline, ‘who had never before seen anything like her,’ takes great delight in making Lady Harriet’s acquaintance, even though she was ‘by no means prepared for that diverting breadth of singularity which she now witnessed [...] of this very original lady.’²¹ Caroline is the very soul of proto-Victorian propriety and her amusement with Lady Harriet, who is a welcome and, more importantly (considering Lamb’s position at the time of publication) an invited guest at all the gatherings of the select and fashionable few, is a seal of approval. The portrait of Lady Harriet is, as Bainbridge is to point out, is ‘no more than a *jeu d’esprit*’²² but is fondly drawn by Lister, who does not bow down to public opinion of her and suggests that Lamb’s reputation within the enclave of Whig society in which Lister moved was not completely annihilated. Fifteen years Lamb’s junior, Lister was too young to be acquainted with Lamb but the impression he gleaned of her was certainly favourable, ‘with all her oddities’ Lady Harriet was a ‘pleasant person’ who had a ‘hatred of form’

and wanted nothing more than for everybody to 'do and say whatever they pleased.'²³ If Tyrell represents the worst of Regency society, and Granby the progressive and professional aristocrat that Victorian cultural society would embrace with Caroline at his side, then Lady Harriet is the embodiment of Lister's regret for the passing of the idiosyncratic elements of an age.

Despite Colburn's implication that all his authors were bona fide members of the silver-fork society, to which Lister belonged, Benjamin Disraeli was not. This makes Disraeli's portrait of Lamb all the more interesting, as it is a representation of an aristocrat penned by a man being represented by himself and his publisher as an aristocrat. The act of verisimilitude can only ever be a semblance of the original article, and in terms of Bourdieu's concept of capital, it can never be mistaken for the real thing. Christopher Hibbert, Disraeli's most recent biographer, notes that Disraeli's first novel, *Vivian Grey*, which was published in the same year as Lister's *Granby*, is largely autobiographical.²⁴ Vivian Grey is the son of a literary man with a private income; he leaves school to educate himself in his father's library and, like Disraeli, rejects a career at the bar, exclaiming 'Pooh! THE BAR![...] Besides to succeed as an advocate, I must be great lawyer, and, to be a great lawyer, I must give up any chance of being a great man.'²⁵ *Vivian Grey* is an irreverent study of a young man's desperation and unscrupulous ambition to gain entrance into an egotistical and superficial society, and the novel's tone has flippancy and flamboyancy that encapsulates Disraeli's and the Regency period's defining pre-occupation with fame and fashion, represented by figures such as the monarch, Byron and Beau Brummel. For the most part of the first half, the novel is set at Château Desir, the country seat of the Marquess of Carabas and where a character called Mrs Felix Lorraine is in permanent residence. Hibbert recognises Lamb's inclusion in the novel, but Robert Blake, in his biography of Disraeli, observes that the character of Mrs Felix Lorraine was 'alleged without much basis to be a portrait of Lady Caroline Lamb.'²⁶ Indeed, the bad complexion, indifferent features, the 'vacancy of German listlessness'²⁷ would appear to be rather a direct reference to the much maligned Caroline of Brunswick, estranged wife of George IV at the time of publication, than to Caroline Lamb. Despite the difference of opinion as to Lamb's inclusion, it is nevertheless worthwhile investigating what it is about the characteristics of Mrs Felix Lorraine that could signpost the way to Lamb.

Mrs Felix Lorraine enters the plot of *Vivian Grey* at a time when the eponymous hero is invited to the home of the Marquess of Carabas, her brother-in-law and a powerful but disappointed politician whom Grey is manipulating to satisfy his own political ambitions. Grey's secret ambitions to create a new party faction, headed by the Marquess, are thwarted by Mrs Felix Lorraine, who later tries to poison Vivian. Her motivation for this act of vengeance against Vivian is that he has stumbled across a secret involvement between herself and the enigmatic and married Cleveland, the leader-designate of the new party. She also makes advances to Vivian at the beginning of their acquaintance, which he rejects immediately. Mrs Felix Lorraine is described as being fond of waltzing, a dance that shocked 'decent' English society for its physical intimacy and which was popularised by Lamb, who held regular practising parties at Melbourne House.²⁸ This is not in itself conclusive as Caroline of Brunswick was caricatured for her coarseness, vulgarity and promiscuity, and shares the German origins of the dance.²⁹ There is gossip about the promiscuity of Mrs Felix Lorraine; she is rumoured to be involved with her father-in-law, the Marquess, and another house guest called Colonel Delmington is heading towards her room. She attempts to seduce Vivian on various occasions, and she is suspected of being involved with Cleveland.³⁰ Lamb's adultery with Byron is a matter of historical fact, but Caroline of Brunswick's promiscuity was also common knowledge and the subject of many a caricature.³¹

The double blow of having Vivian reject her advances and his discovery of her desire for Cleveland is the catalyst for Mrs Felix Lorraine's vengeful actions. She advises the Marquess that he is not to be trusted, thus undermining his political ambitions, and is seen putting poison into Vivian's drink by Vivian himself.³² The final distinguishing characteristic of Mrs Felix Lorraine is her eccentricities that develop into fully-fledged lunacy; a fondness for moonlit walks escalates into a scene of madness and mysticism. Vivian Grey, prior to encountering Mrs Felix Lorraine, has been musing on the beauties of the night in the elevated language of an inspired poet:

Shine on, shine on! although a pure Virgin, thou art the mighty
mother of all abstraction! The eye of the weary peasant
returning from his daily toil, and the rapt gaze of the inspired
poet, are alike fixed on thee; thou stillest the roar of marching
armies, and who can doubt thy influence o'er the waves who has
witnessed the wide Atlantic sleeping under thy silver beam?³³

In contrast, the moon has had a disturbing effect on Mrs Felix Lorraine, transforming her into a mystic, shrieking visionary who only ceases from what Vivian openly calls madness when the moon disappears behind a cloud; under the lunar influence, Mrs Felix Lorraine undergoes a metamorphosis from '[...] the vacancy of Germanic listlessness' into a 'tigress' with 'wild curls', a 'wildness in her eyes', with an agitated frame and spirit that is so redolent of Lamb.³⁴ After this episode, the last time Mrs Felix Lorraine appears is when Vivian confronts her about her treachery in undermining his credentials with the members of his proposed party. Having already determined that she keeps company with 'Mephistophiles' [sic], Vivian is now waging mental war against this 'female fiend.'³⁵ Although his ambitions are in tatters, Vivian scores a victory over her by telling her that all her interference has come to nothing and that Cleveland now despises her and she is ruined, information which has the dramatic effect of Mrs Lorraine bursting a blood vessel and thus ending her involvement in the story of Vivian Grey.³⁶

Despite Blake's dismissal of the claim that Mrs Felix Lorraine is based upon Lamb, there is a strong case to be argued that this is the case; an argument that can be based upon more than the instantly recognisable character traits of the popular conception of Lamb as a single-mindedly vindictive and theatrically manipulative woman, driven to madness by the rejection of her lover. This is not to say that Disraeli knew Lamb, but he would certainly have known about her. Disraeli was an ardent admirer of Byron and was fascinated by every aspect of his career; he reconstructed Byron's flamboyant persona as a passport into literary society and re-traced Byron's footsteps and 'relived [the] poet's experiences.'³⁷ In 1824, the year of Byron's death, Thomas Medwin published *Conversation of Lord Byron*, which contained references to Byron's relationship with Lamb and which Disraeli would have undoubtedly read. Isaac D'Israeli, Disraeli's father,³⁸ was an intimate friend of and published by John Murray, and was known to and admired by Byron. Disraeli was to enter into an unsuccessful working relationship with Murray, who published and corresponded with Lamb. With the conscious accumulation of what Andrew Elfenbein succinctly refers to as 'ersatz' Byronism³⁹ around himself, it is not possible that Disraeli would have been unaware of Lamb, and Byron's antipathy towards her, at this early stage of his literary career. Disraeli's imitation of Byron as a method of amassing symbolic capital is augmented by his appropriation and dismissal of Lamb in *Vivian Grey*. Disraeli is

writing a work of fashionable fiction, posing as an insider, a falsehood that cost his reputation dear when he was discovered to be an outsider for whom 'nobody cared a straw.'⁴⁰ As Andrea Hibbard observes, Disraeli adopts the narrative aside to convince his readership of his implied insider status, dropping in phrases such as 'we all know' and 'of course', thereby indicating to others that he also 'knew.'⁴¹ To add to his credentials as an insider, he included in his panoramic view of fashionable society one of its most recognisable figures. Trading upon his symbolic Byronism and insider, albeit second-hand, knowledge of Lamb, Disraeli simultaneously acknowledges and dismisses Lamb with a familiarity that is contemptuous. Disraeli accessorises Lamb as the necessary ingredient by which to align himself with his role model, not only to convince his readership of his insider status but also to convince himself of his Byronic capital. To truly relive the poet's experiences, not only does Disraeli adopt the flamboyant costume and stance of sexual deviancy, but he also re-enacts a version of his relationship with Lamb. Disraeli's fictional alter ego is undoubtedly that of Vivian Grey, and thereby Vivian Grey's entanglement with and eventual vanquishing of Mrs Felix Lorraine becomes a surrogate entanglement between Disraeli and Lamb. References to Lamb obviously endowed Disraeli's novel with cultural distinction, and Lamb was clearly considered a worthy opponent for this ambitious author and his fictional alter ego. Having destroyed Mrs Felix Lorraine, Vivian, and by extension Disraeli's impersonation of Byron, 'left the boudoir', the imagined site of battle between Lamb and Byron, with a countenance 'that could not have been more triumphant.'⁴²

Lamb and the Victorian Man of Letters

The reissue of *Vivian Grey* in 1853 contained an advertisement that distanced Disraeli from the work, by which he was evidently embarrassed as a mature statesman; he had previously refused permission to have the work reprinted. The advertisement inserted in the 1853 reissue begins with:

Books written by boys which pretend to give a picture of manners, and to deal in knowledge of human nature, must necessarily be founded upon affectation. They can be, at the best, but the results of imagination, acting upon knowledge not acquired by experience.

This concludes with a plea for *Vivian Grey* to be read with an '[...] indulgent recollection of the conditions under which it was reproduced.'⁴³ In 1853, Disraeli was a landowning Tory MP, leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer; little wonder then that he wished to distance himself from the excesses of his youthful phase of Byronism. Disraeli began his political career in the early 1830s as a proud Romantic individualist, but did not find his political feet until 1837, when he entered Parliament for the first time under Tory colours as the MP for Maidstone. This year also saw the publication of *Venetia*, and the novel is testament to Disraeli's transition from the performance of being Byron. In *Venetia* Lamb makes a second appearance in Disraeli's fiction, nine years after her death, demonstrating her power of evoking the time and place and the political ethos of the Whigs. Critiques of *Venetia* have tended to focus upon the identification of the two male poets, Marmion Herbert and Plantagenet Cadurcis, as being based upon Shelley and Byron respectively.⁴⁴ There are Shelleyan attributes to be discovered in both characters, most notably the vegetarianism of Cadurcis, the declaration by Herbert of the line by Shelley that poets are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'⁴⁵ and the drowning of both in a boating accident. However, it is arguable that Cadurcis and Herbert are both representations of Byron, given the youthful, posturing arrogance of Plantagenet Cadurcis and the alienation of Marmion Herbert from his homeland as a 'traitor to his king and an apostate from God', as a supporter of American Independence, coupled with the scandalous separation from his wife and child. Marmion Herbert is an ambiguous mixture of heroic and villainous character traits that became synonymous with the Byronic persona, but also has roots in his earlier namesake from Sir Walter Scott's poem of the same name.

The portraits of Cadurcis and Herbert are the expression of the ineffectuality of Romantic radicalism as represented in literature and, by extension, politics, which remain undeveloped and outdated in both the youthful and mature representations. The idealism is revealed to be nothing more than 'crude dreams' that tell 'devilish well in a stanza';⁴⁶ the republicanism of Cadurcis and Herbert is replaced with a fatalistic renouncement of their artistic and political vision. As Elfenbein observes, this artistic death prefigures their literal deaths,⁴⁷ but the drowning of both Cadurcis and Herbert also buries, once and for all, Disraeli's youthful stance of Romantic individualism as seen from the vantage point of his new Tory platform. The death of Romanticism is

represented as being associated with a past age, and flags up Disraeli's new party colours. This is reaffirmed in the deployment of Lamb as Lady Monteagle as doyenne of the Whig party; Disraeli appropriates the name of Monteagle from *Glenarvon*.⁴⁸ Lamb has been temporally displaced by a generation and is placed in the position of her aunt, Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, as 'Muse of the Whig party', whose house has been converted into a 'sacred temple' for their 'political rites' where many 'a votary [was] initiated.'⁴⁹ It becomes rapidly apparent that Lady Monteagle is Lamb rather than Georgiana due to her acrimonious involvement with the literary sensation of the season, Cadurcis. The trajectory of their relationship has parallels in well-known anecdotes of Lamb and Byron: Lady Monteagle reads advance copies of Cadurcis' version of *Childe Harold*; he eats only biscuits and soda water in public, which others call affectation and she defends as a sign of genius; she becomes possessive and he resentful; she smuggles herself into his rooms dressed as a boy and creates a scene; and finally Cadurcis' rejection of Lady Monteagle results in harassment followed by retribution, though not in the form of writing a novel. In a parallel to Lamb's fictional duel between her husband and lover in *Glenarvon*, Cadurcis is challenged to a duel by the hitherto passive Lord Monteagle, in which the latter is seriously wounded and Cadurcis, 'the periodical victim [...] of English morality,'⁵⁰ leaves England in self-imposed exile. Lady Monteagle epitomises a society which Cadurcis has already condemned as tedious in its 'hollow bustle' and 'false glitter.'⁵¹ Towards the end of the novel, Cadurcis can only speak and think of London 'with disgust';⁵² it is a place implicitly bound up with Lady Monteagle as she is the only character not attached to the family of Venetia that Disraeli fully develops to represent Cadurcis' sojourn in the city.

Shortly before *Venetia* was published, Disraeli had secured a seat in parliament for the first time, as Tory MP for Maidstone, having rejected his independent radical stance in recognition of the two-party nature of the political system.⁵³ *Venetia* was written primarily for money, as the expenses of an election increased Disraeli's existing debts, but is also a testament to his new political allegiance to the Tory party. Disraeli combines his contempt for the Whig party and the flagging up of his own political maturity in the relationship between Lady Monteagle and Cadurcis. In his political career Disraeli denounced the Whigs as a 'Venetian constitution', a 'factitious aristocracy' of great families who had secured their hold on power by claiming to protect the civil rights of the people when really protecting and rewarding themselves.⁵⁴

The introduction of the Whigs into the novel via Lady Monteagle as the ‘muse’ at ‘whose shrine every man of wit and fashion was proud to offer his flattering incense,’⁵⁵ undermines any serious political intent by allying the party with the fickleness of the fashionable and using language more associated with a pagan cult rather than a political party. The close association of Lady Monteagle with the Whigs is to show the party as self-absorbed, instinctively exclusive and obsessed with trivialities. The nature of her astonishment at Cadurcis’ evident attachment to Venetia reveals that her personal invective against this unknown girl is inseparable from political interest:

[T]he lady looked a little surprised at the company in which she found her favourite, and not a little mortified by his neglect. What business had Cadurcis to be speaking to Miss Herbert? Was it not enough that the whole day not another name had scarcely crossed her ear, but the night must even witness the conquest of Lord Cadurcis by the new beauty? It was such bad ton, it was so unlike him, it was so underbred, for a person in his position immediately to bow before the new idol of the hour, and a Tory girl too!⁵⁶

Lady Monteagle reveals her desire to keep Cadurcis politically and emotionally aligned to herself, which is registered in the surprise of Cadurcis’ attachment to a *Miss* Herbert and a Tory at that. At the same time, she shows herself to be immersed within the trivialities of an affected fashionable society associated with London in that she is surprised at Cadurcis for acting in a manner that undermines the codified behaviour of the fashionable set. Cadurcis is positioned as a possible representative for the Tory landed interests, which later becomes idealised in ‘Young England’, a group of young Tory aristocrats with whom Disraeli aligned himself in the early 1840s. The philosophy of ‘Young England’ was a belief in the rejuvenation of the Conservative party through an alliance between the people and a reformed aristocracy.⁵⁷ The Young England set were youthful and energetic Tory backbenchers who sought to return England to an idealised medieval past for the sake of the socially responsible hierarchical community that industry and utilitarianism had destroyed.⁵⁸ Like them, Cadurcis was young, noble, was in love with a ‘Tory girl’ and idealistic, and his Christian name of Plantagenet invokes a sense of nostalgic feudalism. However, Venetia’s initial refusal to marry Cadurcis separates him from her Tory sphere of influence, his ancestral home and therefore his duty as a feudal nobleman with entailed responsibilities. By the time they meet up again, Cadurcis has allowed himself to be taken up by the Whigs who celebrate his poetic genius at the expense of the party’s standing with the majority of the voting

public, to whom his opinions on morals and religion must be ‘so offensive [that they] must ultimately prove anything but advantageous.’⁵⁹ His involvement with Lady Monteagle lasts as long as his adherence to the ‘high philosophy’ of Whiggism; both are jettisoned in favour of an ‘absorbing egotism’ and the stance, if not the commitment, to Romantic individualism.⁶⁰ The re-appearance of Venetia reawakens the possibility that Cadurcis may yet fulfil his responsibilities as the attachment is revived and she has a strict sense of duty, but it is this duty to her mother that dashes Cadurcis’ hopes and forces ‘his steps in another direction.’⁶¹ Cadurcis’ rejection of the Tory Venetia and the Whig Lady Monteagle signals his rejection of the two-party system and an assertion of the Romantic individualism that will ultimately fail and die, allowing Disraeli to assert his own political maturity having killed off the Romanticism of his youth that Cadurcis represents.

Disraeli’s own recognition of the two-party system actually came prior to his successful candidature for Maidstone in 1837; he stood as an independent radical but with the financial assistance from the Tory funds, and in the spring of 1835 he fought the Taunton by-election as a Tory. During this period Disraeli received support from Edward Bulwer Lytton, but even before they had actually met a literary correspondence had been established. Bulwer Lytton’s first successful novel *Pelham* (1828) was a response to *Vivian Grey*, published two years earlier. Disraeli, on completion of *The Young Duke* in March 1830, sent a copy of the manuscript to Bulwer Lytton, already a correspondent of Isaac D’Israeli, for his comments. They met later in the same year and the friendship was as instantaneous as it was lasting. Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton had much in common: both were admirers and slavish imitators of Byron and noted for their extravagant dress, and both embarked upon a literary career as a means to secure independence and prominence in the culturally exclusive arenas of fashion and politics.⁶² Such were their similarities and close friendship they were viewed as a pair; an 1839 engraving of Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton shows them as doubles of each other.⁶³ As has already been noted, Disraeli did not know Lamb personally but Bulwer Lytton did. Eighteen years his senior, Lamb had known Bulwer Lytton since he was a boy as they were neighbours on their respective estates of Brocket and Knebworth. The exact nature of their adult relationship is unclear, but whether sexual or platonic, Lamb was to make a lasting impression upon Lytton, as will be discussed later. However the point here is that there is a triumvirate of mutuality between Lamb, Bulwer Lytton and

Disraeli, and there can be no doubt that, due to the young men's shared passion for Byron, Lamb would feature prominently in their discussions. For Bulwer Lytton knowing Lamb was as close as he was ever going to get to knowing Byron, and this was knowledge he would have undoubtedly shared with Disraeli:

She interested me chiefly, however by her recollections and graphic descriptions of Byron; with whom her intimacy lasted the three most brilliant years of his life in England [...] At the time I now speak of, there was no bitterness in her talk of him [...] She was no mean judge of human character; and viewing Byron then from the point of view no longer obscured by the passions, I think her estimate of him sound – as a being somewhat akin to herself in strange caprices and wild affectations [...] but, on the whole, with many redeeming qualities, lovable and noble.⁶⁴

As with Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton's admiration for and imitation of all things Byronic was also a device by which he hoped to gain prominence in the closed circles of the fashionable and political elite, successfully making the transition from literature to politics in 1831 when elected as MP for St Ives as an independent radical. His maiden speech was in support for the second reading of the Reform Bill. It is in 1831 that Bulwer Lytton and Disraeli met for the first time after a correspondence that began in 1829 and the subject matter of which flows seamlessly between literature and politics:

My dear Disraeli – you quite misconceive me, if you suppose for a moment that I wish you to *dream* of suppressing your new book. All I ask that you will consider whether you will correct it. I assure you I think it a very fine and brilliant book. But it has stuff in it worthy of severe polish; and occasional faults which render such polish more of use than it would be to a work of colder and – I do not say more solid, but – a duller genius. [...] Many thanks for your kindness and trouble about Parliament. I have the satisfaction of telling you that I yesterday brought to a conclusion an affair of that sort, though it is not to be consummated till next session. You may be sure of having, for the sake of your idle friends, one of the earliest copies of 'Paul Clifford' with a copy of 'Falkland'. [...] Yours Sincerely,
E. Lytton Bulwer⁶⁵

By the time Disraeli had published *Venetia* in 1837, Lytton had written a pamphlet in support of the Whigs, in response to the 1834 dismissal of the ministry headed by Lamb's husband, now Lord Melbourne, and in 1838 Melbourne had recommended Bulwer Lytton for a baronetcy for his service to literature. This brief overview of the career of Bulwer Lytton and his friendships with Lamb and Disraeli show the narrowness of the field of literature and politics: it constantly overlapped to reveal a

cultural network in which Lamb, Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton participated and which is articulated in correspondence and conversation.

If Disraeli's use of Lamb as a cipher for his burgeoning political career is rendered of further interest because he did not actually know Lamb personally, her distinct absence from the published works of Bulwer Lytton is doubly so precisely because he did. That they were involved in some kind of relationship has already been touched upon; it is necessary here to give a little more context to this to appreciate the impact she had upon him as a developing writer. As has been said, Lamb knew Bulwer Lytton from a young age, her residence of Bocket neighbouring his at Knebworth, in Hertfordshire. In 1818, aged fifteen, Bulwer Lytton wrote a poem to Lamb that was inspired by a 'noble example of humanity' when, having witnessed the injury of a labourer at Hoo races, Lamb had him 'conveyed to her carriage, and interested herself most anxiously as to his recovery.'⁶⁶ A response from Lamb encouraged further poetry to which she gave her critical attention and wrote back, suggesting he should avoid the emulation of 'Lord Byron [...] or any of the living race' of poets who were all guilty of affectation.⁶⁷ Their correspondence continued while Bulwer Lytton was at Cambridge, which he entered in 1822, and in 1823 Lamb published *Ada Reis*, a character which was based upon Bulwer Lytton and which he read and complimented her upon. Also in 1823 Lamb wrote to William Godwin, with whom she had corresponded since 1819, with an invitation to Bocket so that Bulwer Lytton could meet him. The crucial period of their relationship is recorded as being 1824 to 1825, what Bulwer Lytton describes in an autobiographical fragment as a period of 'familiar intimacy,'⁶⁸ but in a letter to his mother in 1825, at the end of the 'affair', he wrote that Lamb had 'resisted what few women would have done.'⁶⁹ The letter to his mother was written in January 1825 and the general consensus among biographers of both Lamb and Bulwer Lytton is that the termination of the 'affair' signalled the termination of their acquaintance. However, in 1826 Bulwer Lytton interceded with Thomas Medwin on Lamb's behalf, asking him to withdraw from his *Conversations of Lord Byron* a passage that referred to *Glenarvon* as libellous to Byron.⁷⁰ In the same year he published a collection of poems entitled *Weeds and Wildflowers*, containing a poetic tribute to Lamb and to which she responded kindly in letters, again upbraiding him for an over-reliance upon Byron and the need for him to write 'for, and from, [himself].'⁷¹ Whatever the nature of the relationship during this period it did not appear to significantly interfere with their correspondence and

friendship, even if it was on a slightly different footing, and this was to continue until her death in 1828, outlasting the marriage between Bulwer Lytton and his wife, Rosina, the courtship of which was conducted in its early stages at Lamb's house in Brompton.

Bulwer Lytton's most recent biographer, Leslie Mitchell, writes of Lamb that 'mere death [...] was not enough to curtail her influence' over Bulwer Lytton, influence that Mitchell predictably describes as entirely 'malign.'⁷² However, Mitchell also mentions, almost in passing, that Lytton was 'still using her references to ingratiate himself with publishers' three years after her death.⁷³ Bulwer Lytton writes as early as 1825 how he hoped that Lamb would intercede with the publisher John Murray on his behalf to have a poem published.⁷⁴ As well as using her influence to introduce Bulwer Lytton into established literary circles, Lamb appears to have been an influence in Bulwer Lytton's struggle to find a literary voice before his success with *Pelham* in 1828, in both her person and her style. Andrew Elfenbein suggests that *Pelham* was, in itself, a response to Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* in that Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham* develops the character of Vivian Grey beyond the superficially vain and ambitious into Pelham the reformed gentleman.⁷⁵ Significantly, Lamb does not appear anywhere in the novel, although it encompasses the vast panorama of the social scene in both Paris and London of the late Regency period. The full title of the novel is *Pelham, or Adventures of a Gentleman* and, like a gentleman, Pelham does not reveal the names of the aristocracy that are only deployed only to add *éclat* to the setting of the fashionable scenes, substituting them instead with a series of dashes as in the case of the 'Duchess of D-----e', a clear reference to the Duchess of Devonshire, yet Lamb is still conspicuous by her absence. However, *Pelham* does supply the reader with a possible solution as to why this might be; in trying to delineate a literary portrait of his friend that would do him justice Pelham says:

I do not know a more difficult character to describe than Lord Vincent's. Did I imitate certain writers, who think that the whole art of portraying individual character is to seize hold of some prominent peculiarity, and to introduce this distinguishing trait, in all times and in all scenes, the difficulty would be removed.⁷⁶

If *Pelham* is a response to *Vivian Grey*, then this would appear to be a direct rebuke to Disraeli for reducing a personal friend into a caricature. However Lamb does appear in no fewer than three pieces of work by Bulwer Lytton, and the unfinished and

unpublished status of these literary fragments is highly suggestive that he, like Disraeli, recognised the fictional potential that any encounter with Lamb seemed to promise, but also that he could not transcend the autobiographical or would not indulge the apparent propensity to descend into caricature.

The first of these fragments is *De Lindsay* in 1825, followed by *Greville* in 1829 and *Lionel Hastings*, apparently written some time around 1840, but possibly as late as 1850.⁷⁷ The first and last are distinctly autobiographical and relate to the end and beginning respectively of the much speculated period of 1825 to 1826. *De Lindsay* was presumably written after Bulwer Lytton had written to his mother at the very beginning of 1825, in January. Rupert De Lindsay is introduced as a man whom experience has taught and moulded from the ‘deceived [into] the deceiver.’⁷⁸ In his boyhood, he formed a ‘visionary attachment’ to Lady Melton, whom he describes as unconventionally beautiful, benevolent, eccentric, a woman of genius and imagination and whose attachments are as short-lived as they are intense. What is interesting about the fictional relationship is that he is at pains to stress that the relationship was not a sexual one but one of the imagination on both sides. The relationship is ended when De Lindsay, arriving at a ball after some weeks’ absence from home, sees Lady Melton with what he presumes is his replacement, Sir Frederick Summers, who is celebrated for nothing more than the cut of his coat and the beauty of his person. The intense poetic relationship between De Lindsay and Lady Melton has evaporated into what he presumes to be a purely physical attraction, as there is no actual confrontation between De Lindsay and Lady Melton or Sir Frederick. De Lindsay’s anger finds expression in nothing more than a desire for somebody else to tread on Sir Frederick’s foot, and the authorial voice only comments that ‘It is so provoking to be in a passion and to have at hand nobody on whom to vent it.’⁷⁹

The episode of replacement finds exact repetition in Bulwer Lytton’s own account of the end of his relationship, as opposed to his friendship, with Lamb, written as both an autobiographical account dated 1824 and in a letter to an ‘intimate friend’ dated 1825.⁸⁰ The letter to the intimate friend positively bristles with resentment of a young man whose pride has been wounded, even though he states from the outset that it was an attachment that was ‘little to do with the heart, but a great deal to do with the imagination.’⁸¹ According to Bulwer Lytton, Lamb wished for him to be ‘the dearest of

her friends, but not her lover' which resulted in Bulwer Lytton being 'more in love with her than ever.'⁸² He then attended a ball held by Lady Cowper, Lamb's sister-in-law, where he witnessed what he presumed was his supplanting by a young Mr Russell, illegitimate son of the Duke of Bedford, whom Lamb had known for many years. What convinced Bulwer Lytton of his being replaced in the affections of Lamb was the fact that Russell wore a ring that had once belonged to Byron and which Lamb had allowed Bulwer Lytton to wear on occasion. Bulwer Lytton's indignation is palpable:

Mr Russell, a fashionable beau, extremely handsome, but dull, insipid and silly. [...] And now *he* wore it. Can you conceive my resentment, my wretchedness? After dinner, I threw myself on the sofa. Music was playing. Lady Caroline came to me. 'Are you mad?' said she.[...] 'Don't play this melancholy air. It affects Mr. Bulwer so that he is actually weeping.' My tears, my softness, my *love*, were over in an instant. I sprang up, laughed, talked, and was the life of the company. But when we broke up for the evening I went to her, and said 'Farewell for ever. It is over. Now I see you in your true light. Vain and heartless, you have only trifled with my feelings in order to betray me. I despise as well as leave you. Instead of jealousy, I only feel contempt. Farewell. Go and be happy!'⁸³

This re-telling of events is distinctly literary in style with the short sharp sentences building up to the climax of a declaration of intent. It is impossible to tell if the fragment of *De Lindsay* was written before or after this letter (more likely to be after as the letter to his mother was dated from January) but the reduction of the episode into a fictionalised account in both the fragment and the letter is strongly suggestive of both pieces being an exercise in reclaiming, if not dignity, than control over the situation in which a sensitive young man feels humiliated. Although unfinished and fairly short, probably due to the sensitive nature of the contents and, apparently, the author, the immediacy of *De Lindsay* suggests that Bulwer Lytton was still searching for a narrative and a style that was to reach maturity in *Pelham*.

In the autobiographical fragment, Bulwer Lytton does say that he felt himself to be 'severely wounded rather perhaps in pride than vanity than in heart.'⁸⁴ This sketch of their period of intimacy lacks the immediacy of *De Lindsay* and the vitriol of the letter, suggesting that it was written much later than the date of the events it narrates, and is, overall, a much more objective and kinder view of Lamb, acknowledging her intelligence, her wit and her generosity. It also recounts the episode with Mr Russell but without the vindictiveness of the earlier account:

I arrived [at Lady Cowper's ball] and before the evening was over I saw that I was supplanted. A singularly handsome man, in the prime of his life, Mr Russell [...] I had the wit to see that Lady Caroline and this gentleman were captivated with each other. The next morning I had a private conversation with the lady, which ended in my bidding her farewell[.]⁸⁵

Bulwer Lytton is able to give a much kinder portrait of Lamb as his view in 'no longer obscured by the passions,'⁸⁶ and this would appear to be the case with the unfinished *Lionel Hastings*. Autobiographical again, this time it is an attempt to recount the very beginning of their mature relationship when Lamb was observed by Bulwer Lytton to assist the injured man at a race meeting. Lamb appears just before the end of the manuscript as Lady Clara, so it is impossible to tell how Bulwer Lytton was going to develop the character. Suffice to say that in the mood of mellow maturity, Bulwer Lytton puts all condemnations of her character in the mouths of a supporting cast of caricatures:

'One of Lady Clara's theatrical exhibitions,' said Lady Dumdrum. 'Sentimental,' murmured a man of the world, riding away unperceived. 'Damn'd affected,' lisped a dandy, in the wake of the world. 'What a bore all this must be for Manford [Lady Clara's husband]!' growled a London formalist. 'She is mad as a March hare,' quoth a blunt country squire.⁸⁷

This return to the re-examination of the relationship in fiction approximately twenty years after *De Lindsay* is demonstrative of the impact of her personality upon Bulwer Lytton. All condemnations of Lady Clara's character are by those that do not actually know her, and are therefore rendered invalid by the author; a significant act of rehabilitation on behalf of, by this time, one of the most successful authors of the day. The unfinished nature of the two pieces that directly relate to the actual events suggest that although Bulwer Lytton recognised the rich literary seam that an encounter with Lamb invariably offered to a potential readership he was reluctant to mine it precisely because, unlike Disraeli, he did know her, a reluctance that even when the portrayal is at its most vociferous shows a certain amount of respect for their friendship.

Lamb appears just once more, to certain knowledge, in the unpublished works of Bulwer Lytton and that is in the guise of Lady Bellenden in an unfinished work entitled *Greville*, written somewhere in between the publication of *The Disowned* in 1828 and *Devereux* in the summer of 1829, the year after Lamb's death.⁸⁸ Lytton's chronology on the pieces that feature Lamb is slightly confused as he states that the picture drawn of

Lady Bellenden ‘show[s] his final impression of [Lamb], as embodied in his fictions, was, on the whole, a not unkindly one.’⁸⁹ As has been discussed, *Greville* is actually the central of the three pieces, sandwiched between *De Lindsay* and *Lionel Hastings*. Although Lytton’s asserted that his father based Lady Bellenden upon ‘some features of her character,’⁹⁰ this cannot be taken as a wholly reliable indicator that this is Lamb rather than Lytton’s impression of what Lamb must have been like due to the common cultural perception of her as unstable and manipulative. So what is about Lady Bellenden that suggests itself as being Lamb to Lytton? The physical characteristics, like Disraeli’s Mrs Felix Lorraine, could not be any further removed from the reality. Lady Bellenden is of ‘remarkable and masculine height, [...] her hair of the richest gold, bright, luxuriant [...]; her eyes were blue and large’ and she was a ‘great’ Tory.⁹¹ Contemporary descriptions and portraits of Lamb indicate a small and slight build, red-gold curly hair that she always wore short, with dark or hazel coloured eyes, and Lamb’s affinity to the Whigs has been well established. Lady Bellenden and Lamb do share, according to Bulwer Lytton, small hands and feet, perfect teeth and an age of ‘about thirty-nine in reality, and about twenty-seven by courtesy.’⁹² It is, therefore, not her physical attributes but her overall character and impact that suggests that Lady Bellenden is indeed Lamb, which is, to begin with, extremely flattering. Lady Bellenden is, according to the narrator of *Greville*, ‘beyond all comparison the most striking and brilliant person in London’, a woman of ‘real, impassioned genius.’⁹³ She is intelligent, witty and not afraid to strike out in her own direction in taste and friendships as she is ‘too high for fear.’⁹⁴ Lady Bellenden is one of the few people to appreciate and cultivate Greville, who cuts an unusual figure in that he does not care what anybody else thinks of him and is wise beyond his years. She is a mass of contradictions, loving and loathing all that the fashionable world represents, selfish except to her lover with a mind that is both brilliant and unquiet.⁹⁵ The Lamb that is by now all too familiar begins to emerge out of the pages, and what follows is predictable. Lady Bellenden, who is married, is in love with Greville, but she sees a rival in her own sister and designs to steal him away from her, and she is melodramatic, theatrical and shallow. Bulwer Lytton only completed seven chapters of the novel but had clearly thought it out as there is a chapter plan that outlines the rest of the novel to its conclusion in which Lady Bellenden, who is by far the most fully developed character, plays a significant part. She was to have had an ‘impressive scene’ with her sister, Lady Agnes; attended one of Greville’s rare dinners to discuss fashionable novels, an episode

to be followed by a whole chapter about her; there was to be a morning scene featuring Lady Bellenden, chocolate and opium; she experiences a swoon, a fright and a terror at seeing a boy and a mysterious woman in various locations; she is to warn off her sister and make advances upon Greville, and despair when rejected; a certain death is the end of both Lady Bellenden and the novel, though it is unclear if this was to be by her own hand, when Greville and Lady Agnes are finally reunited.

The two novels that immediately precede and follow *Greville*, *The Disowned* and *Devereux*, are both, as Allan Conrad Christensen terms it, ‘communications from beyond the tomb’; novels that are metaphysically rooted in the past as opposed to the contemporary satires upon fashionable life that comprised Bulwer Lytton’s first two full length novels, *Falkland* and *Pelham*.⁹⁶ Christensen suggests that his publisher advised Bulwer Lytton that the reading public were tiring of such light hearted works and that *Pelham* and *Falkland* represented his immature attitudes as a writer.⁹⁷ Lytton suggests that his father gave up working upon *Greville* because he had tired of the inanity of the ‘semi-exclusive social world that great people call small and small people call great’, that the resources for drawing on such a limited sphere were limited and the work was in danger of becoming too personal.⁹⁸ Whatever the reason, the fact the *Greville* remained unpublished when novels of fashionable life were still in great demand, despite Christensen’s assertion to the contrary, is indicative of Bulwer Lytton’s reluctance to abuse his relationship with Lamb for commercial gain, even though she is now safely dead. Whether Lady Bellenden is actually based upon Lamb, as Lytton suggests, or not, the concern may have been that in the small world of the fashionable, the association of Lady Bellenden with Lamb might have been an all too easy one to make and one that Bulwer Lytton wished to avoid: not wishing to reduce Lamb’s reputation any further to the simple formula of ‘half diamonds, half tinsel.’⁹⁹ At the risk of becoming reductionist, it is quite likely that Lady Bellenden has her origins in Lamb; the intensity of the condemnation of Lady Bellenden’s flaws, such as her cruelty to her lovers, emanates not from the mouth of another character but from the anonymous narrator. The examination of the treatment of Lamb in the three unfinished pieces of work also shows a developing confidence and sophistication in Bulwer Lytton as a writer, especially in the two earlier works: *De Lindsay* shows an ability to recognise the potential of drawing upon the autobiographical as a source for inspiration but is still very raw and lacks the polish of *Pelham*, with which, according to Lytton, his father

reached authorial maturity, whereas *Greville* is of the same quality as *Pelham* yet still demonstrates an inability to distance himself from his autobiographical material. That Bulwer Lytton was searching for an authorial voice to call his own is in evidence not only from Lamb's criticism of him being too fond of emanating Byron, but also in his emulation of Lamb's works. Around the same time as *De Lindsay* and *Greville*, Bulwer Lytton was writing lists of possible themes he considered worthy of investigation, and was also working on a full length poem and a prose piece, all of which owe discernible debts to Lamb.

In 1824, Bulwer Lytton wrote an essay entitled 'Hades, or High Life Below Stairs', described by his son as one of his father's juvenile pieces.¹⁰⁰ It is a satire upon the intellectual wasteland of the social world, depicting the author, having been transported to Hell, being conducted on a tour of the infernal regions by a spirit guide, and has a direct correlation with Lamb's *Ada Reis*, published a year earlier:

Just then a coxcombical sort of demon, delicately clothed, with a mean look, but a supercilious air, sauntered by, carrying in his hand a card on which was written 'Countess of Belial at home.' My curiosity was excited. 'Do they give parties in Hell?' I asked. 'Certainly,' said my Mentor. 'The giving of, and going to, parties is one of the chief punishments here. One half of Hell is compelled to give them. The other half of Hell is compelled to go to them. The localities in which these punishments are inflicted are invariably the hottest corners in Hell; and by some sort of infernal infatuation all the sufferers are impelled forward into the most burning berth of the torture chambers appropriated to this kind of torment. They can't help it. There is no escape for them.'¹⁰¹

That Bulwer Lytton was familiar with *Ada Reis* is beyond doubt and the similarity cannot be a coincidence. The infernal episodes of *Ada Reis* are similarly concerned with the inanity of fashionable society, unable to save itself from its own apathy and foibles, which have condemned them to Hell. The narrator of Bulwer Lytton's essay and the character of *Ada Reis* are both delighted to discover that all appears as below as it did above, only to discover that the appearance of normality is swiftly replaced with a realisation of their participation in their own damnation by their adherence to the trivial pursuits of the fashionable for the sake of a superficial acceptance into a social world that had no soul and no heart. This is a theme that is echoed throughout Bulwer Lytton's work, from the early unpublished pieces already examined to the better known works of *Pelham* and *Paul Clifford*.

Similarly, two pieces of work begun in 1826 have distinct echoes of Lamb's work, the unfinished 'Glenallan' and the poem 'O'Neill', completed in 1826 but not published until 1827,¹⁰² both of which seem to primarily derive from *Glenarvon*. The setting for both is a turbulent Ireland, with an overriding concern for the conditions of the indigenous population. The similarity between Glenallan and Glenarvon is immediately apparent; the hero of Bulwer Lytton's work is Redmond Glenallan, the anti-hero of Lamb's is Clarence de Ruthven, Lord Glenarvon. Ruthven is also the name that John Polidori gave to his seductive villain in the novel *The Vampyre* (1819), for which Lord Glenarvon was arguably the model as his effect on the population is similarly vampiric, infecting women with desire for him that is 'a phrenzy [...] a pestilence that has fallen on the land.'¹⁰³ Redmond Glenallan has a cousin called Ruthven Glenallan, who is as charismatic, popular and handsome as Glenarvon, and as sinister and contemptuous of those he perceived to be beneath him.¹⁰⁴ Though the extract finishes before the identity of the leader of a rebel gang is revealed it is certain that it was to be Ruthven Glenallan. Redmond Glenallan discovers the gang at their hide-out and the spokesperson is 'more closely disguised than the rest, for he wore a black mask,'¹⁰⁵ suggesting that he was well known in the locality. The content and course of 'O'Neil' is exactly the same, except that the hero, Desmond, finds redemption for his sins in the love of a pure woman. The poem is dedicated to Rosina, his soon-to-be wife, though not by name but asterisks and a confession in the dedication that he is enraptured by the 'concentrated perfection of ONE.'¹⁰⁶ What is significant about the date of these two productions is that it coincides with the time that Lamb was writing to Bulwer Lytton with critical advice on his poetry, warning him against the 'faults of the present age [which] are affectation, imitation, and fear' and over zealous emulation of Byron.¹⁰⁷ Bulwer Lytton was also writing to his mother about consulting with Lamb on literary matters.¹⁰⁸ Inter-textual references demonstrate that Bulwer Lytton had heeded Lamb's advice about avoiding Byron; in the immature fragment of 'Glenallan' Redmond Glenallan, as the narrator, regrets that Byron 'had not then become famous' as he is sure his new acquaintance, who is an admirer of poetry, 'would have adored him,'¹⁰⁹ whereas in the later and successful *Pelham*, this admiration has disappeared. Byron and those that admire him are condemned by the narrator for melancholy posturing, 'dramatic brown studies, and quick starts, which young gentlemen in love with Byron are apt to practise.'¹¹⁰

One other possible example of Lamb's influence can also be found within *Pelham* and that is a reference to John Ford, whose work, as has been seen, exerted considerable influence over Lamb's works. In *Pelham*, Glanville, Pelham's one true friend, quotes lines from *The Broken Heart*, which he professes to be by his favourite author, thereby endowing him with qualities of noble sensibility; and these refer to the crux of his mysterious sadness that Pelham determines to uncover.¹¹¹ Although it is quite likely that Bulwer Lytton may have discovered Ford on his own, it is equally likely that Lamb, having used Ford extensively herself, had discussed Ford's values to her as a writer with Bulwer Lytton. It is certainly too much of a coincidence to dismiss outright. It would appear that 1826 was a formative year for Bulwer Lytton's career as a writer and in which Lamb had no small part to play in helping develop a mature and distinct authorial voice, and the emulation she warned him against included that of her own style and content.

These literary portraits of Lamb by her contemporaries fall into two categories, sympathetic (rather than pitying) and critical; the deciding factor appears to be the proximity of the writer to her. Those that actually knew Lamb or at the very least inhabited the same sphere, Bulwer Lytton and Lister, recognise other qualities within her, such as her generosity, active curiosity and lively spirits and, significantly, avoid any reference to her involvement with Byron. They refused to reduce her to a single event. In contrast, those that do not know her or inhabit the same sphere, Thomas and Disraeli, have constructed their own image of Lamb to their own ends, to exemplify themselves as arbiters of taste and decency by reducing her to merely a character delineated in an outline which is based upon publicly available 'knowledge.' With the exception of Elizabeth Thomas, whose portrayal was a direct response to the outrage caused by Lamb's *Glenarvon*, Lamb's appearance as a defining feature of representations of the Regency is indicative of not only her innate cultural capital, but the capital that her presence confers on others. The underlying significance of these representations is that, again with the exception of Thomas and the anonymous author of *Prodigious*, they were all written towards the end of Lamb's life when she was living alone at Brompton Hall, or years after her death. Lamb is so adept at manoeuvring through the complex web of social relations of the institutionalised social hierarchy, as represented in these novels, that she is called upon to serve one of two functions for

these young men, Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton in particular, whose political ambitions were, in no small way, to be met by the fulfilment of their literary ones. As Elfenbein notes, 'literature, politics and fashion were inextricably mingled in the shifting strata of society after the Napoleonic Wars [...] and [being] local celebrities [turned them into] potential politicians.'¹¹² Literary portraits of Lamb by those that knew her and who had fewer obstacles to overcome in attaining their ambitions, such as Lister and Bulwer Lytton, reflect a kinder attitude towards her. Disraeli's representation of Lamb is more brazenly aggressive, portraying her as manipulative, mad and destructive in *Vivian Grey* as he faced greater barriers to success. His attack upon Lamb is vital to his impersonation of Byron in order to gain the social symbolic capital that compensated for his lack of cultural capital, such as the family connections of Lister or the natural habitué status of Bulwer Lytton within the politically powerful fashionable world. His portrayal of Lamb in *Venetia* is clearly not as virulent, since he had by then achieved at least the first grip upon the greasy pole that he was to ascend, but written nine years after her death, Lamb is still, for Disraeli, still represents a formidable obstacle to overcome because of her innate and representative position within the social and political elite. In all of these representations, though, Lamb is clearly an important social signifier that validates each representation, and the author, of a particular time and place.

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- ³ Thomas, (1817), p. v.
- ⁴ Anon. (1818), *Prodigious!!! Or Childe Paddie in London; a Novel in Three Volumes*, London: W. Lindsell, vol. 1, p. 3.
- ⁵ Ibid, vol. 1, p. xii.
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- ⁷ Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 169-175.
- ⁸ Ibid, vol. 3, p. 240.
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- ¹⁰ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 35.
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- ¹² Kelly, G. (1989), *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, London: Longman, pp. 220-227.
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- ¹⁵ Lister, (2005), p. xxxi.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, p.44.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
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- ²⁰ Ibid, p. 34.
- ²¹ Ibid, p. 49.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 185.
- ²⁴ Hibbert, C. (2005), *Disraeli: A Personal History*, London & New York: Harper Perennial, p. 24.
- ²⁵ Disraeli, B. (1853), *Vivian Grey*, London: Longmans, Green & co. (first published by Henry Colburn, 1826), p. 18.
- ²⁶ Hibbert, (2005), p. 25; Blake, R. (1966), *Disraeli*, London: Methuen, p. 39.
- ²⁷ Disraeli, (1853), p. 40.
- ²⁸ Douglass, (2004), pp. 95, 105.
- ²⁹ Fraser, F. (1996), *The Unruly Queen; The Life of Queen Caroline*, London: Papermac, pp. 450-451.
- ³⁰ Ibid, pp. 80, 96, 98.
- ³¹ Fraser, F. (1996), p. 362.
- ³² Disraeli, (1837), p. 104.
- ³³ Ibid, p.108.
- ³⁴ Ibid, pp. 40, 114-116.
- ³⁵ Ibid, pp. 50, 150.
- ³⁶ Ibid, pp. 153-154.
- ³⁷ Bradford, S. (1983), *Disraeli*, New York: Stein & Day, p. 28.
- ³⁸ Benjamin Disraeli had dropped the apostrophe in his surname certainly by December 1822 but was used sporadically until the 1840s. See Bradford, S. (1983), *Disraeli*, New York: Stein and Day, p. xiii.
- ³⁹ Elfenbein, (1995), p. 206.
- ⁴⁰ Blake, (1966), p. 41.
- ⁴¹ Hibbard, A. (1999), 'Vivian Grey and the Silver-Fork Etiquette of Authorship', *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*, Winter, 32 (4), p. 254.
- ⁴² Disraeli, (1853), p. 154.
- ⁴³ Ibid, p. i.
- ⁴⁴ Elfenbein, (1995), p. 225.
- ⁴⁵ Disraeli, B. (1837), *Venetia*, London: Peter Davies, p. 369.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 415.
- ⁴⁷ Elfenbein, (1995), p. 228.
- ⁴⁸ Lamb, (1816), vol. 1, p. 263.
- ⁴⁹ Disraeli, (1837), p. 215.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 336.

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- ⁵¹ Ibid, p. 250.
- ⁵² Ibid, p. 464.
- ⁵³ Hibbert, (2005), p. 106.
- ⁵⁴ Blake, (1966), pp. 194-195.
- ⁵⁵ Disraeli, (1837), p. 215.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 273.
- ⁵⁷ Blake, (1966), pp. 167-168.
- ⁵⁸ The primary triumvirate of the group consisted of George Smythe, Lord John Manners and Alexander Baille-Cochrane. See Girouard, M. (1981), *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 82-85.
- ⁵⁹ Disraeli, (1837), p. 219.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 240.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, p. 324.
- ⁶² This has already been referred to in the case of Disraeli and, rather than repeat the process with Lytton, I refer the reader to the full chapter in Andrew Elfenbein's work (cited above) entitled 'The Shady Side of the Sword: Bulwer Lytton, Disraeli, Wilde and Byron's Homosexuality', pp. 206-246.
- ⁶³ Mitchell, L. (2003), *Bulwer Lytton; The Rise and Fall of a Man of Letters*, London & New York: Hambledon & London, p. 136.
- ⁶⁴ Bulwer Lytton cited in Lytton, E.R.B, 1st Earl of, (1883), *The Life, Letters and Literary Remains of Edward, Lord Lytton by His Son, 2 Volumes*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, vol. 1, p. 329.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 320.
- ⁶⁶ Bulwer Lytton, E.G., (1820), *Ismael; An Oriental Tale*, London: J. Hatchard & Son, p. 61. When this work was published, Bulwer Lytton was actually 'Edward George Lytton Bulwer', having reordered his surname on his mother's death. I have referred to the work here as 'Bulwer Lytton' for the sake of consistency and to distinguish Bulwer Lytton from his son, Lytton, as the editor of *Life, Letters and Literary Fragments*.
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- ⁶⁸ Lytton, (1883), vol.1, p. 330.
- ⁶⁹ Sadleir, M. (1933), *Bulwer and his Wife; A Panorama 1803-1836*, London: Constable & Co., p. 59.
- ⁷⁰ Douglass, (2004), p. 261.
- ⁷¹ Lytton, (1883), vol. 2, pp. 28-19.
- ⁷² Mitchell, (2003), p. 15.
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ Lytton, (1883), vol. 2, p. 40.
- ⁷⁵ Elfenbein, (1995), p. 221.
- ⁷⁶ Bulwer Lytton, E.G. (1831), *Pelham*, London: Walter Scott Limited, (first published 1828), p. 39.
- ⁷⁷ Lytton, (1883), vol. 1, pp. 175-223, 337-357; vol. 2, pp. 331-392.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 339.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 343.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 326-336.
- ⁸¹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 334.
- ⁸² Ibid.
- ⁸³ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 335.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 330.
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- ⁸⁶ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 329.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 221.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 331.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, vol. 1, p. 358.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 344.
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- ⁹³ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 379.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 373.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid, vol 2, p. 382.
- ⁹⁶ Chistensen, A.C. (1976), *Edward Bulwer Lytton; The Fictions of New Regions*, Athens, USA: The University of Georgia Press, p. 54.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ⁹⁸ Lytton, (1883), vol. 2, p. 332.

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- ⁹⁹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 382.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 332.
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² Ibid, vol. 2, p. 64.
¹⁰³ Lamb, C. Lady, (1816), *Glenarvon*, London: Henry Colburn, vol. 2, p. 7.
¹⁰⁴ Lytton, (1883), vol. 2, pp. 75-77.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 85.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 65.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 29.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 40.
¹⁰⁹ Ibid, vol. 2, p. 81.
¹¹⁰ Bulwer Lytton, (1831), p. 156.
¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 182.
¹¹² Elfenbein, (1995), p. 213.

Chapter 7
Lamb's Modern Legacy: Historical Fiction and Fictional History

In the last chapter, the appropriation of Lamb as a contemporary fictional character illustrated that she had sufficient cultural capital of her own to be woven into the fabric of fictional societies to lend credence to both the authors and their works. Representation of Lamb varied between a caricature of gently amusing aristocratic eccentricity or being offered up as an example of the very worst of aristocratic excess. In either form, Lamb is always amongst the supporting cast that drives forward the main thrust of the narrative on behalf of the hero/ine. It is not until the twentieth century that Lamb begins to emerge as a character in her own right, though still, on the whole, dogged by the shadow of Byron. From the beginning of the twentieth century, there is a distinct development of the popular historical novel that is specifically aimed at women, identified by Diana Wallace as being a genre that gave women the opportunity to re-evaluate the role and desires of women.¹ Throughout this development there is a recurrence of interest in the Regency period, as exemplified by the prolific careers of Georgette Heyer (1902-1974), the one-woman fiction factory and self-styled 'Queen Mother of Romance,'² Barbara Cartland (1901-2000), and the 'Masquerade' series that was launched by the publishing house Mills and Boon in 1977 which consistently placed the narratives against the backdrop of the Regency period.³ Wallace notes that the 'Masquerade' series was a deliberate attempt to fill the considerable gap left in the market of historical fiction by Heyer's death by linking the series name with the recurrent period setting of her early work.⁴ It is arguable that the popularity of the Regency period as the predominant setting for the historical and 'costume' novel is because it is a short self-contained period of conspicuous style, consumption and personalities, sandwiched as it is between the long reigns of George III and Victoria (incorporating the seven year reign of William IV), both of which laid heavy emphasis upon domesticity and duty. The Regency period has become branded as a backdrop for the extravagant possibilities of sex, scandal and intrigue, linked as it is with the subversive connotations of the 'Masquerade.' It would be a fair assumption that Lamb, due to her own cultural legacy, would feature prominently in a genre that appears to specialise in aristocratic and emotional excess, cross-dressing and recognisably Byronic alpha males. Surprisingly, this is not the case: Lamb, as an identifiable historical figure, unlike Byron, is curiously absent from this Regency re-packaging, even though she

could be considered as a recognisable cultural type if searched for in terms of defining characteristics; Lamb can be found in any one of the numerous women who inhabit a genre that is pre-occupied with cross-dressing or aristocratic women who demonstrate their wildness by riding their horses too fast and who take control of their own desires. The heroine, for example, of Georgette Heyer's *These Old Shades* (1926) Léonie has the same short, curly copper-red hair and slight, 'boyish' figure as Lamb, and a penchant for dressing in the attire of a page, having fulfilled that role as a boy named Léon between the ages of twelve to nineteen. Léonie has the same disdain for the limitations of her feminine role as did Lamb, who told Lady Morgan that, despite her passion for William, she would rather not have married him but would have preferred to dress and follow him as a clerk so that they might both be free.⁵

The twentieth century sees a distinct attempt to reclaim the life of Lamb, as a figure who has been marginalised, conquered and victimised by the telling of her story by and on behalf of the male victors, an exercise begun by Elizabeth Jenkins' *Lady Caroline Lamb* (1932). However, despite this attempt at reclamation, novelists appear to be attracted to Lamb's story for its symbolic value over and above its documentary value, a precedent that Lamb had set by novelistic treatment of her relationships as symbolic, thereby legitimising the fictional format as an invitation to a more creative attitude to telling the story of a life. This, as shall be seen, frees the writer from the mere documenting of facts and enables a projection, with greater imaginative empathy, into the subjective life as it is imagined to have been lived, with varying degrees of success. This chapter will study fictional representations of Lamb, of which there are only six in a span of a hundred years, five novels⁶ and one film: Mrs Humphry Ward's *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905), Doris Leslie's fictional biography *This For Caroline* (1964), Robert Bolt's directorial debut starring Sarah Miles as the eponymous heroine, *Lady Caroline Lamb* (1972), Eva McDonald's *Lady Caroline Lamb* (1973), Jill Jones' *My Lady Caroline* (1996) and John D. Hasler's fictionalised *Memoirs – Lady Caroline Lamb* (2005). The chronological order in which these fall forms a neat pattern for discussion: Ward and Leslie will be considered first as both are fictional representations of Lamb that are also deliberately biographical but to different ends; Ward's being to discuss the destructive shortfall of female education and Leslie's to illustrate the inadequacy of factual biography to convey the emotional complexity of Lamb and to discuss issues of sexual desire. McDonald's book was originally

published under the title *Lord Byron's First Love* (1963) but was re-issued to coincide with the release of Bolt's film of the same name; both name Lamb as the title character, yet she becomes relegated to the role of a supporting character in the story that bears her name. Jones and Hasler, both American, use Lamb by way of entry into an alternative or supplementary view of history that emphasises the status and value of an historical representation as merely a matter of selection.

Biographical Fiction / Fictional Biography

As a preface to *The Marriage of William Ashe* Ward writes a short note to her 'Gentle Reader' warning him or her to be prepared to meet the '[...] ghosts of men and women well known to an earlier England', some of who may be 'dimly recalled', and to remind them '[...] that all that has been may be again [...] and that the present [...] is perennially fed from the sources and stimulated by the records of the past' (Ward, 3.) Of all of the novels under discussion in this chapter Ward is something of an exception, her text being the only one that is not an historical novel but rather one that transposes recognisable historical figures into a contemporary setting. It is beyond a shadow of a doubt that the models for Kitty Bristol, William Ashe and Geoffrey Cliffe are Lamb, William Lamb and Byron:

"I saw nothing lamblike about Lady Kitty," said Ashe.⁷

That a man should know himself a fool was in [Ashe's] eyes as it was in Lord Melbourne's the first of necessities.⁸

The country house belonging to Ashe and Kitty is called Haggart, where Kitty offers to banish herself to after declaring herself a 'horrible wife', referring to Brocket Hall to which Lamb was effectively banished, where the butler was called Haggard. Complete scenarios are transposed from fact to fiction, wholesale:

[Lady Tranmore, Ashe's mother] saw two figures in the pretty bright-coloured room. William sat astride upon a chair in front of Kitty, who, like some small mother-bird, hovered above him, holding what seemed to be a tiny strip of bread and butter, which she was dropping with dainty deliberation into his mouth.⁹

This refers, as it does in Ward's novel, to the imminent separation of Lamb and William Lamb and is repeated in all the biographies upon the couple; compare the following extract from the most recent of Lamb's biographies:

They [the Lambs] badgered William into agreeing to a separation, had the papers prepared, and forwarded them to Brocket. Lady Melbourne set out from London for Welwyn to

make sure all went as planned. Upon her arrival at Brocket, however, “she found the happy couple at breakfast and Lady Caroline drawling out – ‘William, some more muffin?’ – and everything made up.¹⁰

Kitty appreciates the intensity of the poetic voice of Geoffrey Cliffe and her passion for him is one of the imagination; Lamb, having first read advance copies of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, declared that if Byron was ‘as ugly as Aesop’ she must meet him.¹¹ Lamb’s famous bonfire at Brocket, when she symbolically burnt copies of Byron’s letters, is re-enacted by Kitty, who performs a similar rite of exorcism in an effort to symbolically dispel Cliffe from her life. There are numerous references to the possible precariousness of Kitty’s mental health, her outrageousness, her charm and William’s utter devotion to her. Geoffrey Cliffe who, like Byron, is a poet turned freedom fighter for the cause of Bosnian independence is in perpetual need of money for which he contemplates marriage. Cliffe’s death, like Byron’s, has a pathetic quality; Cliffe, having laid his life on the line for Bosnia, is rather ignominiously assassinated upon the orders of a discarded mistress, La Ricci, with whom he conducted an affair in Venice. Ward refers simultaneously to Cliffe and Byron as ‘a flawed poet and a dubious hero.’¹² Both Cliffe and Byron were, in essence, destroyed by their involvement with women; Byron, it will be remembered, was in self-imposed exile in Venice after the separation from his wife.

By appropriating Lamb, William Lamb and Byron, Ward gives voice to her own concerns about the lack of a decent formal education for women that would equip them to play a significant role in the public arena. She is stressing in the novel that without such educational provision, the historical destruction of intelligent and resourceful women will continue until this is rectified. Both Wallace and Avrom Fleishman have commented upon how the historical novel inevitably engages with, is compromised by or says more about the time in which it is written than the time in which it is set;¹³ but this is true in the inverse for Ward. The fictionalisation of an actual person, argues Wallace, is not concerned to represent a transcendent or authentic ‘truth’ about the past but rather to urge a re-evaluation of and dialogue with the past in light of the present.¹⁴ By appropriating recognisable historical figures from the past, Ward is seeking to represent an authentic truth about the present. Ward portrays Lamb in the guise of Lady Kitty Bristol, a woman with a powerful but unformed intelligence and the embodiment of Ward’s warning about history repeating itself. Kitty is repeating Lamb in Ward’s

modern context of the burgeoning campaign for female suffrage. Mary Augusta Ward, *née* Arnold, known as Mrs Humphry Ward (1851-1920) was a novelist, philanthropist and political lobbyist, nearly as well known to her contemporaries for leading the National Anti-Suffrage Leagues as she was as a successful novelist. She was the niece of the poet Matthew Arnold the eldest child of Thomas Arnold, whose conversion to Catholicism forced a move from Tasmania to England in 1856. His subsequent re-conversion to Anglicanism allowed Thomas Arnold to take up a teaching post at Oxford, where Mary Augusta's intellectual development and writing career began; she studied early Spanish history and published stories in periodicals. She met her husband, Thomas Humphry Ward, a fellow of Brasenose College, and they were married in 1872. With Louise Creighton and Charlotte Green (married to philosopher T.H Green), Ward was instrumental in initiating the Lectures for Women Committee, which led to the establishment of Somerville Hall (later Somerville College, the first women's college at Oxford) in 1879. The first of her twenty-eight novels was a story for children called *Milly and Olly* published in 1881. It embarked her upon a career in which she soon became one of the most popular novelists of her time, on both sides of the Atlantic. Ward consented to head the Women's Anti-Suffrage Association in 1908 and this apparent stance against the rights of women condemned Ward as old-fashioned but, as Beth Sutton-Ramspeck convincingly argues, this is rather too simplistic a judgement of what she describes as Ward's negotiation between 'competing and often contradictory feminisms' at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Ward was opposed to national suffrage on the grounds that it was unthinking rivalry, competing rights and selfish radicalism. Instead, she campaigned in support of women's active participation in local politics and social welfare, bringing the roles of women out of the ideology of separate spheres into a mutually beneficial public arena. Ward was committed to the feminist goal of equal education and professional opportunities that would allow women to develop and control their own lives, enabling them to become disinterested but active citizens in the public arena at a local level for the benefit of the nation as a whole.¹⁶

Ward's portrayal of Lamb as Kitty identifies her as a force of nature who needs to be taught 'how to behave'¹⁷ in the social and political world inhabited by her husband. Before, and in the early stages of, her marriage Lamb as Lady Kitty is unearthly and childlike; even the name is a diminutive, and she is an ethereal and elemental being to whom the rigid codes of turn-of-the-century British society does not

apply. Ashe, who realises his wife is the object of society gossip for her indiscretions involving other men, makes the distinction between Kitty and ‘ordinary “fast” women:

[O]ther women may be of the earth earthy [sic]. Kitty was a sprite, with all the irresponsibility of such incalculable creatures. The men and women – women especially – who gossiped and lied about her, who sent abominable paragraphs to scurrilous papers – [...] spoke out of their own vile experience, judged her by their own standards.¹⁸

This is a distinction that Ward presumes that William Lamb made, when refusing to give in to social pressure to separate from Lamb, stating that it was his duty to ‘stand or fall with Lamb, ‘however painful’ it may be to ‘maintain [his] position.’¹⁹ Her alliance with the natural world is evident from the outset, when she appears at a large country party, with a large scarlet butterfly that ‘shone defiantly against the dark background of books’ pinned in her hair and an untamed dog in tow.²⁰ She is unabashed at the lateness of her arrival, which has upset the artificial order of the country house society. Ashe, on proposing, exclaims he does not want a ‘domestic dove’ but the ‘hawk [...] with its quick wings and daring bright eyes.’²¹ When not being likened to the animal kingdom, Kitty is mythologised: ‘an insubstantial sprite and airy nothing’ with ‘a spirit touch’, a goddess whose costume for a fancy dress ball is Diana the Huntress.²² Kitty as a ‘little wild lovely thing’²³ is enthrallingly and amorally dangerous, like the huntress, whose apparel she wears, who had Acteon torn to shreds by his own hounds without emotion. Kitty becomes the ‘smallest and most delicate of the furies’, a ‘Mænead held at bay’ and the murderous Medea, to whom Byron likened Lamb when he discovered that she gained possession of his favourite miniature.²⁴ Kitty has a laugh that is both ‘musical and malicious’ and is possessed by an ‘evil spirit’ and an ‘elfish curiosity’; this malicious streak is shown almost in passing when Kitty wonders whether or not she could ruin the life of Mary Lyster, who was initially earmarked as the perfect wife for Ashe, by seducing away Mary’s potential suitor, Geoffrey Cliffe, the Byronic poet and liberating hero of Bosnia, which she does.²⁵ As an untamed animal and mythological child-woman, Kitty describes herself as ‘spoiled, indulged, flattered [and she] made all sorts of follies’ and who needs firm guidance.²⁶ To ensure Kitty’s total alienation from the society of Ashe, Ward makes her mother’s morality and reputation extremely dubious and Kitty’s upbringing French Catholic. Ward had also experienced a sense of alienation from mainstream society as a result of her father’s brief conversion to Catholicism, which directly led to the breakdown of her parents’ marriage because of

her mother's abhorrence for, and refusal to convert to, the Catholic church. This marital incompatibility witnessed by Ward is a possible origin for the basic incompatibility that undermines the marriage of William Ashe.

The de-humanisation and infantilism of Kitty highlights the essential clash between herself and William Ashe. Ashe is a man comfortable in the ways of the man-made and public world that 'breathed England, and the traditional English life', and who is 'glad to be an Englishman, and a member of an English Government.'²⁷ Modelled on Lamb's husband, Ashe shares not only William Lamb's name but also his physique, tall and dark to Kitty's small and pale; his laconic personality and his career follows the same trajectory:

Was it all part of the general growth and concentration that any shrewd observer might have read in William Ashe – the pressure, enormous, unseen, of the traditional English ideals, English standards, asserting itself at last in a brilliant and paradoxical nature? It had been so conspicuously in the case of one of his political predecessors. Lord Melbourne had begun his career as a person of idle habits and imprudent adventures, much given to coarse conversation, and unable to say the simplest thing without an oath. He ended it as a man of scrupulous dignity, tact and delicacy, who moulded the innocent youth of a girl-queen, to his own lasting honour and England's gratitude. In ways less striking the same influence of vast responsibilities was perhaps acting on William Ashe. It had already made him a sterner, tougher, and no doubt a greater man.²⁸

Ashe recognises the advantages of 'custom and inheritance, of strength and narrowness, of cramping prejudice and stubborn force' that is the quintessence of aristocratic Englishness, from which he initially remains ironically detached, but does eventually embrace.²⁹ Lady Tranmore, Ashe's mother, fears for both the marriage and Ashe's career, recognising Kitty as wholly unsuitable as a politician's wife, in contrast to the restrained Mary Lyster. Lady Tranmore is appalled to hear of Ashe's decision not to interfere with and control his wife's behaviour, and recounts a tale of an elfin maid who only married a mortal on the condition that he does not ill-treat her, disappearing back to fairyland in 'a crash of thunder' when he speaks crossly to her.³⁰ Further evidence of the essential incompatibility of the marriage is found in the only son of Kitty and Ashe, born with a deformed leg, which Kitty interprets as tangible evidence of the damnation of their union:

I remember so well when I first saw his foot [...] It seemed to me it was the end [...] of my dream [...] Do you remember the masque in the 'Tempest'? First Iris, with saffron wings, and rich Ceres, and great Juno [...] Then the nymphs and the reapers – dancing together on the 'short-grassed green' – the sweetest gayest show [...] Then suddenly [...] Prospero starts and speaks. And in a moment – without warning – with a "strange, hollow and confused noise" [...] "*they heavily vanish.*" That [indicating her son's foot] was for me the sign of Prospero. [...] The first year I had been so happy [...] Everything was so perfect, so glorious. Life was like a great pageant in a palace. All the old terrors went. I often had fears as a child – fears I couldn't put into words, but that overshadowed me. [...] But that was all gone. I thought God was reconciled to me, and would always be kind to me now. And then I saw that foot, and I knew He hated me still. He had burned His mark into my baby's flesh. And I was never to be quite happy again, but always in fear [...] of pain, and death, and grief.³¹

In her fear that the deformed leg is a manifestation of Prospero's anger, Kitty is referring to the masque scene from *The Tempest*.³² It is worth pausing to recall that *The Tempest* is also the origin of Ariel, the spirit that embodies the idea of the insubstantial and has the power of self-transformation, qualities that are frequently attributed to Lamb, and Ariel was a name by which she was referred to by members of her family. Kitty is referring to an ominous warning from Prospero to Miranda and Ferdinand, that if Ferdinand 'dost break her virgin knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies [...] then they must expect 'barren hate / Sour-ey'd disdain and discord shall bestrew / The union of your bed [...].'³³ Although there is no evidence that Kitty and Ashe had pre-marital intercourse, the unhappiness predicted by Prospero certainly becomes the pattern of married life for them and for the Lambs. In a letter to her husband, Lamb reveals her fears that all is not well in the marriage:

I think lately my dearest William we have been very troublesome to each other which I take by wholesale to my own account & mean to correct leaving you in retail with a few little sins which I know you will correct also [...] I will on the other hand be silent of a morning – entertaining after dinner – docile – fearless as a heroine in the last vol. of her troubles [...]³⁴

The letter in which she outlines her programme by which to become a model wife was written a matter of months after Lamb's second miscarriage and when it was becoming clear that her only surviving child was not developing normally. Kitty also fears the Byronic connotations of damnation and persecution as the child's disability refers directly to Byron's own deformed foot; Ashe tells his wife not to be so morbid and the child shall have 'so much brains that nobody will remember [the foot]. Think of

Byron!’³⁵ Unfortunately, the child does not live for long, devastating Kitty, confirming her fears that she is cursed and denying her, like Lamb whose son eventually had to be cared for by a nurse despite her best efforts, even the focus of maternal duty as a distraction from a failing marriage.

Kitty is clearly intelligent: she is shown demonstrating her ability to hold her own against antagonism from the radical poet Geoffrey Cliffe, and she is also a member of the ‘Archangels’, a ‘daring coterie of young and [innately] brilliant people’ that were defining a new world order of art and intellect, and writes a novel of political satire.³⁶ Lamb’s *Glenarvon* is transformed into Kitty’s *Politics and the Country Houses*, a book written and published in secret. Ashe considers the book, as did William Lamb, an act of treachery aimed at himself, it being a satire on his political superiors and their wives, full ‘with all sorts of details of the most intimate and offensive kind [.].’³⁷ Kitty had placed Ashe at the heroic centre, ‘Ashe glorified, Ashe explained, Ashe intrigued against, and Ashe triumphant’ but also, unknown to the author, Ashe ‘the fool of the piece.’³⁸ Ashe is humiliated, and the exercise was not only a breach of confidence between a man and his wife but also tasteless in the extreme; Lord and Lady Parham, the main targets of Kitty’s vitriol, were guests in their house at the time it was written and Ashe is forced to consider resignation. William Lamb’s reaction was the same: when he found himself portrayed as the heroine’s husband in *Glenarvon*, which also vilified his political sponsors, Lord and Lady Holland, he excused himself from calling on them ‘on the ground of “embarrassment” over the “wanton and unjustifiable” character assassination [.].’³⁹ Kitty’s explanation to Ashe as to why she wrote it is demonstrative of the need for constructive occupation but also the dangers of an ungoverned intellect:

You know I told you, when we had that talk in London, that I wanted to write. I thought it would be good for me – would take my thoughts off [the death of her son]: And I began to write this – and it amused me to find I could do it – and I suppose I got carried away. I loved describing you and glorifying you, and I loved making caricatures of Lady Parham – and all the people I hated. I used to work at it whenever you were away – or I was dull and there was nothing to do.⁴⁰

Kitty enjoys the intellectual stimulation that she receives from exerting herself, but her failing, as Ashe observed just before he discovers Kitty’s literary pursuits, is that she as

a woman cannot help but be too involved with her subject matter. While she slept, Ashe admired the innate intelligence in Kitty, but despaired of its ever being useful:

Hand, brow, mouth – they were the signs of no mere empty and insipid beauty. There was not a movement, not a feature that did not speak of intelligence and mind. And yet, were he to wake her now and talk to her of the experience of his evening, how little joy would either get out of it. Was it because she had no intellectual disinterestedness? Well, what woman had? But other women, even if they saw everything in terms of personality, had the power of pursuing an aim, steadily, persistently, for the sake of a person. He thought of Lady Palmerston – of Princess Lieven fighting Guizot's battles – and sighed. By jove! The women could do most things, if they chose.⁴¹

The contents of Kitty's novel are clearly not disinterested, concerned as it is with extolling the virtues of her husband and the desire for petty revenge against '[...] Society with a big S.'⁴² Lamb claimed that to write *Glenarvon* '[...] was then my sole comfort' against particular members of society who had persistently misrepresented her and 'had supported Byron [...] even though they knew it annoyed William.'⁴³ However, Ward's condemnation of Kitty's lack of self-control or self-discipline is not placed entirely on Kitty's shoulders, but also partly on those of Ashe. The title, *The Marriage of William Ashe*, at first suggests that Ashe as the focus of sympathy, but the title reveals the crux of the novel: the marriage of William Ashe is one-sided. The development of Ashe's career at the expense of his marriage bears the weight of Ward's criticisms in that the marriage of William Ashe does not embody the mutually supportive and interdependent roles of male and female can and should play. Ward's criticisms of William Ashe are also directed at William Lamb. Ward undertook to educate herself under the guidance and encouragement of Mark Pattison and T.H Green, and the early stages of Lamb and William Lamb's marriage are discussed in terms of willing student and tutor.⁴⁴ Ashe is held responsible for Kitty's failing by the dereliction of his duty as mentor to Kitty's burgeoning but wide-ranging intelligence. Kitty remains unfocused as the result of her formative years spent in a convent, an unconventional mother and absent father, the dissolute Lord Blackwater. However, it is William that Ward holds accountable for Kitty's shortcomings because of his desire that his wife should be free to go her own way and his refusal to 'coerce her.' Lady Tranmore's observation that Kitty doesn't quite understand the ramifications of her actions 'in spite of her great cleverness' is only half of the problem as Ward sees it;⁴⁵ not only should Kitty be aware of the consequences of her impulsive actions, Ashe

should also be encouraging and guiding Kitty's 'great cleverness' into productive channels, having received the benefit of a formal education himself. Instead of a beneficial partnership, his refusal to let her behaviour interfere with his ambitions again completely shuts Kitty out of the part of his life that matters the most. It is because she is left so completely alone that Kitty undertakes to write the book in a misguided attempt to assist Ashe's career; Lamb also claimed to have written *Glenarvon* unknown to all except a governess called Miss Welsh.⁴⁶ Ward identifies not so much the writing of the books by Kitty and Lamb as the cause of damage to their own reputations and their husbands' political aspirations but the fact that they undertook the tasks alone and without guidance. At the end of the novel, Ashe questions the reasons that his marriage failed with the only person who encouraged Kitty's talents, the Dean. The Dean puts it to Ashe, on behalf of Ward, that loving Kitty was not enough, and that in marrying her he undertook an 'obligation' to one 'so young and undisciplined' to guard and guide her, an undertaking that he accuses Ashe (and William Lamb) of not having taken seriously enough.⁴⁷

The parallels are drawn and the message is clear: Ward appropriates Lamb as an historical figure to make a contemporary point that the lack of any provision for a decent education has hampered the intellectual and moral development and contribution of women in the past and will continue to do so until rectified. Ward views the domestic environment as a microcosm of the public arena, with marriage as an example of how a mutually beneficial recognition of the different strengths that each partner brings into the home will enhance their effectiveness outside of it. The incompatibility of the couple and the ultimate failure of the partnership has repercussions upon Ashe's effectiveness in the political arena because of Kitty's inability to function in a world she is not equipped for. Kitty's intelligence is an unnecessary commodity in a society that infantilises women through the lack of any significant and formative developments in female education, thereby undermining the sense of personal and civic responsibility championed by Ward. After their enforced separation, which was brought about by the vindictive machinations of Mary Lyster, an act that reveals her own failings and petty frustrations at her circumscribed role, Kitty shows inner strength, drive and determination when working alongside Cliffe in the cause of Bosnian liberation. Like Lamb's attraction to Byron, Kitty's original infatuation with Cliffe was a 'passion of the imagination,'⁴⁸ yet Cliffe is the one that encourages her to seek her sense of self worth

defined by a sense of purpose that goes beyond the self. Cliffe argues that the artificial world of Ashe is killing Kitty, and that the experience he is offering Kitty would enhance her capabilities and powers 'and so enlarge her being'; women are not, asserts Cliffe, in unconscious agreement with Ashe, as weak as they seemed, or believed themselves to be, and a 'rural and simple life would mean not only fresh mental but fresh physical strength.'⁴⁹ What others view as Kitty's instability, Cliffe sees as a slow, crumbling death through intellectual suffocation and lack of stimulus. At their reunion at the end of the novel, Kitty amazes Ashe, when recounting her Bosnian experience with 'flashes of insight, [and] profound and passionate experience, which seemed to fashion her anew before his eyes.'⁵⁰ Cliffe wanting Kitty by his side to work in the nursing station for the benefit of the Bosnian nation is the embodiment of Ward's ideal, the nurturing and caring role of the women developed on a national scale to ensure the social welfare of the inhabitants of a state; Ward called women's civic duties the 'enlarged housekeeping of the nation.'⁵¹ Ward identifies the condition of leisured women and pinpoints Lamb's dilemma, of which Lamb was painfully aware; in a letter to William Godwin, Lamb writes 'I have nothing to do – I mean necessarily. There is no particular reason why I should exist.'⁵²

In his biographical entry on Ward for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, John Sutherland recognises the period of literary production that included *The Marriage of William Ashe* to be a decline in the quality of Ward's work, due to an increased need to write for money and poor health. Sutherland detects in *The Marriage of William Ashe* a 'growing penchant for melodrama.' Melodrama, as Frances Wilson observes, is the mainstay of any re-telling of the relationship between Lamb and Byron, who are 'stripped of psychological depth.'⁵³ As a genre melodrama is an emotionally exaggerated conflict between purity and villainy, and is the chosen genre for representations of the conflict between Lamb and Byron, and, as in any conflict, the observer is forced to choose between the combatants. This is certainly the case for Doris Leslie's *This for Caroline* (1964), as suggested by the title. Wilson also observes that it appears to be impossible to tell the tale of Lamb without the writer also becoming melodramatic.⁵⁴ *This for Caroline* is an attempt to reclaim Lamb from the marginal status accorded her because of the cultural prominence of Byron and Melbourne, in that order. It is, by Leslie's own admission, a hybrid of factual biography and historical fiction, and is written in answer to those studies of her that Leslie considers either

apocryphal or grossly exaggerated. Leslie differs, she assures the reader in her author's note, in that she intended the novel to be a reconstruction of Lamb's life built up from the recollections of those that knew her personally, therefore 'much of the dialogue and many of the scenes are [...] authentic.' This authenticity is underscored by a brief bibliography at the end of the work. Leslie's approach to the re-telling of the story expresses dissatisfaction with the format of standard biography. It is clearly her desire to reach for what A.S Byatt describes as the 'invisible things' of a person that cannot be accessed via a straight forward re-telling of facts, which Byatt identifies as 'thought processes, attractions, repulsions, subtle or violent changes in whole lives or groups of lives.'⁵⁵ Leslie's combination of fact and fiction is an attempt to give a much fuller account of a complex character that only the prose of a novel can convey and to get to the heart of what a biography cannot reveal because of the latter's reliance on facts as the basis for interpretation. Byatt utilises a useful phrase from the novelist Ford Madox Ford in that the 'rendering' of a character is the central concern for the novelist to try and capture and convey 'meanings, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of human spectacle.'⁵⁶ However, in the case of Leslie, this is an exercise fraught with difficulty for two reasons. Firstly the prose language necessary to get to the heart of the matter that lies beyond biography is precisely what Wilson describes as the writer becoming embroiled in the melodrama. Secondly, the work straddles two genres and because it is both 'history' and a novel, the public mind invests it with qualities that it may not necessarily have. By being 'historical' it is perceived as being true, the events and the situations are assumed to be accurate; because of the 'authenticity' proclaimed by Leslie and the impossibility of distinguishing between the fiction and the fact, the novel can promote an 'authentic' truth which is, in reality, an exercise of the imagination and a reconstruction of the subject on the writer's own terms. Lamb is returned to the Regency period for Leslie's re-telling which she savours as not only a clearly defined period but a self-contained society, one 'not to be disturbed [or] diverted from the charming dissipations of a summer season [,]' not even by the threat of an imminent invasion by Napoleon who is consistently cut down to size by being referred to as the 'little Corsican.'⁵⁷ It is an 'an era unique in splendour' and of hedonistic pleasure that knows nothing, and cares even less, of how the other half live, an approach to living whose days are numbered with the oncoming and sinister undercurrent of the Industrial Revolution.⁵⁸ The historical setting of the novel, that is an irretrievably 'lost' place due to the advances of the machine age, gives Leslie space

to examine the 'invisible things' identified by Byatt, specifically those relating to physical attraction, which in biography cannot be stated or explored explicitly.

Lamb, like Lady Kitty Bristol, is described by William as an elemental being who is 'ageless', whilst simultaneously recognising that she was of an age that had not quite reached womanhood: 'the tender curves of her body under the close clinging muslin gown were not yet shaped.'⁵⁹ Lamb likens her undeveloped status to that of the virginal moon:

You, [...] Artemis, Diana – you are sickly-faced tonight. The Greeks believed you goddess, but you have never lived. You are a sun as yet unborn, which in some timeless time will burn red-hot and so burn up this world as I burn now, red-hot for him [...], I've the instinct of the harlot. Stripped naked she stood adoring herself in the long cheval-glass, fingering her small firm breasts, smoothing her slender flanks. In the candleshine her flesh held a pale luminous transparency. "How beautiful you are!" she whispered. "And all of this is his. I give it all to you, my William[.]"⁶⁰

Lamb is on the verge of a sexual awakening, her body has the same 'pale luminous' quality of the moon, both of which she views as containing the potential for a passion that once aroused, will consume and destroy the world. It is imagery that once again invokes Ariel, a name by which Lamb is referred to by Leslie,⁶¹ the sprite that is transformed into an engulfing flame:

I flamed amazement. Sometime I would divide,/And burn in many places. On the topmast, / The yards, and boresprit would I flame distinctly, / Then meet and join.⁶²

Lamb's body becomes a votary offering to William so that she may be initiated into the rites of sexual experience, and the desire she feels for William is entirely reciprocated. However, once Lamb recovers from being 'basically unprepared for her wifely obligations,'⁶³ her awakened passions and newly discovered sexuality do indeed burn too hot for William, thereby sowing the seeds of destruction for them both. William is shocked by Lamb's open declarations about how much she enjoys his 'love-play,'⁶⁴ and Lamb is keen to unmask his hypocrisy:

It was during a dinner at Devonshire House that an enormous silver dish was carried to the table, and the cover lifted to disclose Lady Caroline impersonating Eve: [...] "You have ashamed me and disgraced yourself. What possessed you to behave like a whore or a lunatic?" "The spirit moved me," she retorted [to William], to uncover not my nakedness but yours – your prudery worn like a hairshirt of a hypocrite. I stripped you

bare to wake the prig in you at war with your desire for and your delight in me. You know that you and all the men, if not the women, enjoyed my little act.”⁶⁵

Lamb declares herself to be appreciative of the excesses of Roman life as they know how to live ‘unashamed and joyously’ whilst being capable of producing great philosophers, the only shame being in ‘alcoved lusts.’⁶⁶ Now that William has initiated Lamb’s sexual awakening, it reveals their differences in attitude that lies at the heart of their incompatibility; William’s acceptance of the social mores that govern public behaviour and Lamb’s desire to tear the veil that shrouds such a fundamental thing as sex in shame. Leslie’s portrayal of Lamb as a sexual and sensual being is a way of demonstrating the heterosexual desire that she invokes in the men with whom she comes into contact, including Byron. This is by way of refuting claims that Lamb, as Wilson puts it, has gone down in Byron mythology as a ‘failed woman’, a failure because she did not win Byron back and also too ‘boyish’ or sexually assertive to be acceptably feminine, either to Byron or anyone else.⁶⁷ William’s desire for his future wife can barely be contained, especially when it looks as though their plans to marry are about to be thwarted:

“Did you say Gretna Green? [...] You will have to take me as I am in these very clothes I am wearing, with not even a toothbrush, lest my maid should suspect and go sneaking to Mama.” “You won’t need clothes,” said William chokingly. “I am sure you are right,” her eyes were dancing. “I am at my loveliest with nothing on –as you will see.” He clutched her to him. “I cannot wait to see.”⁶⁸

Byron is similarly unable to resist devouring Lamb, even when he is practising abstinence from food not only as part of his strict dieting regime, but also for the ‘good of [...] body and soul’:

“May I tempt you to a fondant? They are stuffed with cherries soaked in cognac. Or let me order you a sandwich; you must be hungry.” “I am.” [Byron’s] eyes weighed on [Lamb]. “But not for food.”⁶⁹

Lamb ‘madden[s]’ Byron with desire, as she does the poets Samuel Rogers, Thomas Moore and ‘sundry others’, from baronets to shop-boys, leaving them ‘greedy’ for her and ready to walk through ‘flood and fire to help her.’⁷⁰ Even at the termination of the affair, Byron is still sexually attracted to her, tearing open her jacket to ‘kiss her breasts.’⁷¹ Byron is reduced to tears at the thought of their parting, Leslie thereby vindicating Lamb’s reputation as a desirable and caring woman by demonstrating the

'genuine' regard that Byron held for her, right until the end. Even on the eve of his separation and exile, Leslie suggests that Lamb was, by his own admission, the only woman suitable for Byron, despite his well documented assertions to the contrary.⁷²

Having established the heterosexual credentials of normality for Lamb, William Lamb and Byron, Leslie also investigates the subject of incest and what Wallace calls the 'spectre of homosexuality'⁷³ that is ingrained in any re-telling of the events that surround Lamb. The subject of incest is swiftly dealt with and dispatched by the authorial voice as a distasteful subject, asserting that the 'monstrous offence' of which Byron and Augusta stand accused 'has never been proven in fact.'⁷⁴ Any further references to it are represented as scurrilous gossip repeated by discredited characters such as Samuel Rogers, a notorious scandal-monger, low class servants, and as doubts in the mind of Lamb. Leslie does portray Byron confessing his secret to Lamb, but it is given little credence as he is drunk and, as Lamb is placed to say on Leslie's behalf, he knows not what he says.⁷⁵ That Lamb has doubts about the authenticity of the confession is Leslie's refusal to confirm or deny the truth of it. Lamb asserts that the rumours and supposed confession 'make no sense', and when she confides in William her 'secret' knowledge, he tells her to 'pay no attention to his fantasies' as Byron has told the secret to 'heaven knows who else'.⁷⁶ When Lamb finally confronts Byron with his 'unusual code of morals' Byron laughs her complaints off as Lamb's 'powers of invention' and as a 'pretext, admit it, to gain access to [him]'.⁷⁷ During this exchange between Lamb and Byron, Lamb refers to Byron's 'peculiar attractions' as a code of morals that would have 'flourished under the Borgias or the Pharaohs' and a similar reference had been made earlier as an almost subliminal introduction to the subject of incest. Lamb indulges in a brief flirtation with Sir Godfrey Webster which William does not take seriously as they are 'almost like brother and sister', to which Lady Melbourne retorts 'in the sense, no doubt, of sister to a Pharaoh.'⁷⁸ Lady Melbourne is pointing out the sexual nature of the affair between Lamb and Webster, and Leslie is alluding to the normal practice of full brother-sister relations in Ancient Egypt that Sarah Pomeroy describes as a method of ensuring a pure line of succession and eliminating foreign influence in the court.⁷⁹ Leslie has, by placing a large historical gap between the act itself and her protagonists and in the format of an historical novel, found a way to remain historically accurate to the subject matter of her story whilst avoiding coming to any conclusions on the subject.

Leslie broaches the subject of gendered desire, and in particular the bisexuality of Byron, in the same sideways manner; at the time of Leslie's writing homosexuality was still a criminal offence due to Victorian anti-homosexuality legislation, passed in 1861 and 1885, which was not repealed until 1967. The format of the historical novel, with the repetitive motif of masquerade associated with the Regency period as dominated by Georgette Heyer, gives Leslie a precedent by which to explore the homoerotic undercurrent that is attributed to Byron's attraction to Lamb's androgynous appearance. Heyer's heroine of *These Old Shades*, Léonie, clearly owes a debt of existence to Lamb and her representation of herself as a page in a portrait painted by Thomas Phillips in 1813. In turn, Leslie's re-telling of Lamb owes a debt to Heyer, by emulating the spirit of adventure as embodied by the freedoms discovered and symbolised by cross-dressing, and the potential for unnameable desires to be discussed. Cross-dressing not only recognises the socially constructed nature of gender, and therefore the potential for performance and fluidity of gender, it also represents the fluidity of desire between genders. In *These Old Shades* the Duke of Avon claims to have seen straight through Léonie's impersonation of Léon, because, as Wallace observes, what the story cannot admit is the possibility of another reason for Avon buying a boy from the backstreets of Paris.⁸⁰ Leslie prepares the reader for this mutability of desire by first attributing it to the inherently masculine and patriarchal figure in the book, William. Leslie has William's first observations of Lamb be at a distance as she is riding her horse towards him:

He, who rode bare-backed, dismounted and came running, vaulted a wicket gate in the hedge, and skirting the lake, tore across the lawn to halt beneath the terrace. His short curly hair, sun-gilded, swept back from the pink-flushed forehead. Legs wide apart, he stood staring up at William looking down; but seen at such close quarters, the open-throated shirt clung, sweat-dampened, to define the small firm breasts and nipples ofno boy. William released a breath.⁸¹

What at first simply seems to be a case of mistaken identity, due to the initial distance of the rider of the horse, becomes a discourse upon the shifting boundaries of desire. William is on the terrace with Lamb's mother, with whom Leslie suggests that he was initially involved, when he spies what he thinks is a young boy. William's release of breath at the end is one of relief as he realises the figure he is captivated by is actually that of young girl. In the space of a paragraph William has switched from heterosexual

desire of a young man for an older woman, to a homosexual desire of an older man for a young boy, back to the heterosexual desire of an older man for a young girl.

The confusion in gender is not only attributed to short hair and clothes, but also to Lamb's thorough enjoyment of the physical freedoms afforded her because of the clothes she is wearing. Similarly Byron finds Lamb's 'boyish adolescence' one of her 'strongest attractions,' as it

accounts for much of her unorthodox behaviour [...] one might believe her incarnate from some exquisite hermaphrodite attendant on and loved by the Lesbian poet Sappho.⁸²

Lamb's unorthodox behaviour is represented as a breaking free of the socially constructed constraints of femininity by incorporating both sexes into one body. There is also an appreciation of her hybrid sexuality, albeit safely as a distant classical allusion, which allows Leslie the possibility of Byron admitting his own. The only time Leslie allows Byron to refer openly to his bisexuality it is through the medium of his desire for Lamb, and again when he is drunk so the veracity of what he is saying is neither confirmed nor denied:

Come here, you li'l bitch, my li'l love – I love you like this as a boy. Had I known you in Sicily three thousand years ago I'd have loved you as no woman could be loved[.]⁸³

Lamb's cross-dressing is therefore not just an escape for her from the narrow confines of proscribed femininity, but is also a useful, as well as historically accurate, code of addressing the possibilities of homosexuality in a manner that is legally sanctioned as Byron's bisexuality is still embedded in the heterosexual relationship with Lamb, however it may be interpreted. The re-telling of the relationship between Lamb and Byron in the format of the historical novel is, therefore, much more than a vindication of Lamb; it also allows for the exploration, possibly for the first time, of the contentious subject matter of the transgressive desires that Leslie considered the 'invisible things' of the human condition, as identified by Byatt, that are embedded in the story of Lamb, William and Byron.

'Lady Caroline Lamb': Best Supporting Actress

So far, the fictional renderings of Lamb have been an attempt to vindicate the historical reputation of Lamb, as a woman thwarted by either the lack of intellectual provision or by the inadequacies of the traditional format of biography that fails to convey the complex nature of desire. Sue Harper, writing on the historical pleasures of the costume melodrama in film, identifies the gender bias of the melodrama towards the female and the female fascination of the dominant male as the primary selling point.⁸⁴ Identifying melodrama with the kind of popular fiction that tended to be written 'by and for women,' adaptation of films from novels were chosen for their exotic energy of those that have been identified as being beyond the reach of normal existence, such as the upper reaches of the aristocracy, and whilst they encourage viewers to take initial pleasure in the excesses of the costumes, the settings, sexual behaviour or class power, the audience were, Harper argues, impelled to make a judgement upon some aspect of the excess, a judgement that is usually directed toward the female in terms of consumption and, in the case of the aristocratic female, perceived sexual excess.⁸⁵ Despite Harper's analysis concentrating on the costume melodrama produced by Gainsborough studio in the nineteen forties, her conclusions apply to the cinematic treatment of Lamb in the nineteen seventies; it was perhaps inevitable that Lamb would become the focus of film, the only surprise being, considering Harper's findings, is that it took so long. The re-telling of Lamb's story in the nineteen seventies, by Robert Bolt in film and Eva McDonald in a short novel, both entitled *Lady Caroline Lamb*, suggests that she is the object of sympathy, yet her position as the eponymous heroine actually places her as the focus of judgement and critique of excess.

Robert Bolt's film appears to be a straightforward re-telling of the events surrounding Lamb's involvement with Byron, the appeal of which can be summed up by an observation by the actor, writer and director John Sayles upon historical films, and novels, in general:

Sometimes historical movies get made because they're just good stories, and it's easier to begin with a story that already exists than to pick one up out of your head. Somebody's already done the living and the plot. Very often, if the story is fairly old history, if it's more than fifty years old, there's been some shaping over the years – the story has become legend – so that a lot of the details that aren't necessarily dramatic have fallen away. A lot of the work has already been done for you.⁸⁶

The story of Lamb and Byron is indeed legendary and has, as Wilson has observed, been pared down over time to the basic episodic elements that constitute the preferred melodramatic version of their relationship.⁸⁷ Bolt's interest in the re-telling of the story is driven not by the interest in the characters, but in what the characters represent:

I was interested in the period, Regency. The romantic movement was coming to its head. And the Caroline – William – Byron triangle gave me the conflict I needed, the clash between romantic yearning for naturalness and spontaneity and the classical regard for good behaviour; the conflict between two opposing view of life.⁸⁸

Lamb is the site of this conflict; she is torn between Byron's Romanticism and William's Classicism, and it is her inability to resolve the conflict within herself that ultimately destroys her. The interest in the symbolic value of the story explains the changes that Bolt made to almost every aspect of the film: the locations of events, the telescoping of the chronology, and in the case of Byron, blatant historical inaccuracies. As Bolt's biographer Alan Turner explains, some of the changes were for practical reasons, such as the re-location of Lamb's honeymoon to Italy due to the film being a joint venture of English and Italian producers, thereby under contractual agreement to be filmed in both countries.⁸⁹ There is a necessary element of telescoping the events due to the necessity of making the film a practical length; the historical marriage of Lamb took place in 1805, the Byron affair lasted a matter of months and occurred in 1812, and Lamb's death was in 1828. Bolt's version is that the affair began shortly after Lamb's return from honeymoon, lasted no more than a few weeks, and was followed by Lamb's death no more than six months later, as indicated by the change of seasons. The most important change that Bolt made was to the timing of William's political career. This change of chronology has a direct impact upon the interpretation of Bolt's triangle of conflict described above, as it is actually William, and not the eponymous character of Lamb as might be expected, that is the focus of Bolt's sympathy.

A critic of the film complained that it was unclear whether approval was to be directed towards Lamb or William, and he was congratulated by Bolt for his perception.⁹⁰ Initially the film was to be called simply *Lamb*, thereby making the focus William Lamb who emerges from Bolt's rendering of the drama a man of intellect and principle, who refuses to abandon his wife no matter how much she humiliates him.

The function of the romance between Lamb and Byron is to highlight what Leger Grindon describes as the central conflict of the historical film, the relationship between the individual and society:

A tension exists between the personal needs of the individual and the needs of the community for cooperative action and mutual responsibility.⁹¹

So while the title suggests that the individual in conflict with society's expectations is Lamb, Bolt's manipulation of the timeframe changes it to William, thus altering the interpretation of Lamb, resulting in what Bolt called 'fruitful ambiguity.'⁹² Bolt's chronology has William as a Member of Parliament before his marriage to Lamb, which took place in 1805. He returns from his honeymoon to resume his seat, and is offered the post of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on condition of separating from Lamb, in what must still be the year 1812. Historically, William was not elected to the backbenches until 1806, and it was not until 1827, at the age of forty-seven, that William was offered the post of Chief Secretary. Bolt's William is shown as an articulate and dynamic Whig politician, debating upon the need to repeal the death sentence for poaching; after his impassioned speech delivered with wit and reason that brings about the reform, the law is amended and William is brought to the attention of the Prime Minister of the Tory government, William Canning. The purpose of this alteration is to juxtapose William's working towards the needs of the community for cooperative action and responsibility, with Byron's Romanticism, which Bolt reveals to be a fallacy and Lamb's admiration of it facile; immediately after the scene of William's political success, Lamb first meets Byron at a bare-knuckle boxing match, with three companions that, between them, represent the aristocratic vices of idleness, blood sports, gambling and infidelity. Ralston and Sondergard have written upon how Byron has been denigrated by Bolt so that Caroline Lamb can be considered the focus of sympathy; Byron is without a limp that might have otherwise have garnered sympathy, his make up and dramatic entrances are reminiscent of a Vaudeville villain, he is feminised by preferring to withdraw with the ladies after dinner given in honour of a 'real' man, Wellington, his poetry is only written for profit and he certainly is not a true gentleman, being shown to cheat in a boxing match he cannot otherwise win. They suggest that Byron becomes a 'whipping boy for the sins of the decadent upper class' to the inherent socialism of Bolt, who was the son of a Lancashire shopkeeper and had a brief flirtation with the Communist party, whilst arguing that this 'vituperation' does not

extend to the Lambs.⁹³ While it is true that Byron is the undoubted villain of the piece, whose Romanticism is portrayed as nothing more than a posture for economic and social gain, Lamb is also held up as an example of the degenerate aristocracy. Lamb's involvement with Byron hinders William's career, rendering him inarticulate and therefore useless and prevents him, initially, from taking up the post of Chief Secretary.

Lamb's central position as the recipient of sympathy is subtly undermined by Bolt, by his use of what Grindon refers to as 'a repertory of dramatic and visual signs'⁹⁴ that speak for Lamb rather than allowing her to speak for herself, as this is not a film of extended conversation pieces. These visual signs are supported by what Sue Harper identifies as the 'nonverbal discourses of décor and costume,'⁹⁵ the authenticity of which asserts the authority of the film as having a solid foundation in fact; the accuracy of the costumes, the references to the grand narrative of the war against Napoleon, the use of Chatsworth, home of Lamb's aunt, as a location, all flag up the credentials of research and thus support the representation of Lamb as one based on historical fact. In essence, this is true of Bolt's portrayal that contains everything that the audience thinks that they might already know about Lamb, and nothing that they might not; the mandatory references to cross-dressing and madness, the abandonment of the socially proscribed self which is coded through the furious riding of her horse in the opening credits, a familiar device deployed throughout the genre of historical films and fictions.⁹⁶ Bolt's desire to create a film composed of an 'icon-like style, still and formally composed'⁹⁷ sequence of photographs does not, because of its over-reliance upon the repertory of dramatic signs, allow Lamb to contradict the assertions made by the non-verbal discourses necessarily embedded in a film so stylistically composed. Lamb's attempted 'suicide', staged at a dinner given for Wellington rather than at Lady Heathcote's ball, is such an acutely observed exercise in melodramatic excess; streaks of scarlet blood arcing through the air to bespatter the pale and appropriate dresses (Lamb is dressed as a page) of the hysterical women present, and Lamb being pinned down by at least half a dozen men, screaming and thrashing about.⁹⁸ Wellington's sardonic comment that 'there is no difficulty killing yourself, if you really mean to' underlines the theatricality of the event and the gesture, and therefore implies a judgement of Lamb, is weighted with authority because, as a man of active service, can presumably tell the difference between a genuine and merely gestured suicide. The theatrical nature of the event is rapidly underlined by the very next sequence of events

in the film. Lamb is represented as the proverbial madwoman in the attic whose breakdown is signified by a room of institutional white in the eaves of a country house, the only other colour being the black of Lamb's shapeless black dress and the exaggerated black rings round her eyes. She is accused by William of, 'having given us the dagger scene,' next giving the obligatory mad scene, saying if it is 'sham [...] it is beyond forgiveness.'

Because of Lamb's silence, which she only breaks to ask if William is going to leave her as if realising that she had gone too far, it is difficult not to wonder with William how much of it is performance, and if so, whether a woman who would go to such lengths to deceive or elicit sympathy is actually mad after all. Even the suggestion of Lamb dying a spontaneous romantic death in the classical rotunda of the ancestral home, during a wild, full-moon night, is swiftly undercut by Lady Melbourne, who in reality dies ten years earlier than Lamb, having the very last line of 'Well, wouldn't she!' Bolt describes the ending of the film as 'deliberately over the top,' the idea being, he said, to inflate the Romantic bubble [...] and then burst it', the result being a 'fruitful ambiguity,'⁹⁹ a fitting summation of not only the end of the film but of the character of Lamb. Lamb's desire to be romantically spontaneous is derided by William as nothing more than affectation, a judgement that Bolt urges the viewer to collude with in a scene in a Roman amphitheatre during the Lamb's fictitious Italian honeymoon. Lamb acknowledges the amphitheatre as an historic site of conflict and bloodshed by hailing the ghosts of gladiators that had died there, a battle cry that draws forth a group of desperate beggars from the tunnels underneath. William scatters a few coins; Lamb responds to what she considers to be William's parsimonious gesture by throwing into the crowd a diamond bracelet. Like the blood in the suicide scene, the bracelet arcs gratuitously through the air giving William, their guide and the viewer time to realise that Lamb's gesture was pointless, self-indulgent and destructive, resulting in the death of the young boy that catches it as the rest of the beggars turn on him. Lamb's act of impulsive generosity is shown to be selfish in the thoughtlessness of the possible consequences, and is a precursor for her involvement with Byron.

Bolt's initial premise that he wanted to portray the conflict between Romanticism and Classicism is identified by Grindon as an endemic feature of all historical films, which are animated by the dramatic conflict provided by the privacy of

romance and the public nature of spectacle, highlighting a negotiation of the relationship between the individual and society.¹⁰⁰ In Bolt's film, Lamb and William, then Lamb and Byron represent the romance, and William represents the spectacle. William is the embodiment of the social and public code of the community, the Classical good behaviour of Bolt's conflict, and as a result, is alienated from the excess of Lamb's romance with Byron and also himself. The tension generated in the union of Lamb and William, and then Lamb and Byron, indicates the irresolvable conflict between public and private life that was generated by Lamb's excessive attachment to Byron, portrayed as essentially self-gratification. William is the embodiment of what Grindon identifies as being the polar opposite of the element of the lovers in the historical film: that is, the great leader, a figure of self-sacrifice because he represents the interests and conscience of a community and the person who must resolve the conflict of love and duty.¹⁰¹ William has the potential to be a great leader that is nearly thwarted completely by the romanticism of Lamb, and the conflict is resolved first by his choice of duty over love, as Bolt makes it clear he must, and then by Lamb's timely death. As Harper acknowledges, overt female sexuality is 'indissolubly linked with aristocratic excess [and] is always categorised as danger' when it cannot be recuperated by either marriage or true love, therefore the excessive woman must be banished to a safe place.¹⁰² As there is no such historical happy ending in store for Lamb, she is therefore contained by not only the film but also the implicit judgement embedded within it.

Eva McDonald's novel was first published under the title *Lord Byron's First Love* (1968), but was re-published with the title *Lady Caroline Lamb* after the release of Bolt's film, and is similarly judgemental of Lamb, whose story is placed in direct opposition with the desired outcome of marriage and true love. The story of Lamb's involvement with Byron is a supporting one to the main narrative, which borrows heavily from Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860), opening with a similarly mysterious encounter. Lord Ashworth is walking home through London, after leaving the historical ball held at Lady Westmoreland's at which Lamb and Byron were famously first introduced, when a carriage drives past at high speed and throwing out the body of a young woman into the street. This is Lady Anna Carr whose husband, in a desire to be free of her so that he may inherit her fortune, has heavily sedated her and tossed her out into the street so that her body may then be picked up by a hired assassin

named Samson and taken to the river to be drowned. Lord Ashworth attends to Lady Carr, who is not dead but heavily sedated, and meets Samson, who assures Ashworth that his intentions were entirely honourable. By agreeing to be the assassin, Samson hopes to save Lady Anna's life by substituting for her a corpse he has already salvaged from the river, thereby convincing Lord Carr that the deed has been done. Having decided to trust Samson, Lord Ashworth takes Lady Anna to a private asylum, where his own wife is being cared for, where she is to remain hidden from her husband whilst the corpse is taken back to Lord Carr, who identifies 'his wife' by the colour of her hair, her wedding ring and her having been dressed in Lady Anna's clothes. No other form of identification is possible because the face has been smashed during its time in the river. So while Lady Anna remains in hiding, first in the asylum and then with her only relative, the unknown woman is buried with full honours in the family vault. Lady Anna is eventually forced to re-assert her identity because of Lord Carr's pursuit of another potential bride, Clarissa Charrold, who loves, and is loved by, Lord Ashworth. This dangerous undertaking takes place at the scene of another famous encounter between Lamb and Byron, Lady Heathcote's ball. Because of the fracas caused by the encounter between Lamb and Byron, Lord Carr manages to force his wife into a carriage from which she escapes by jumping out at the asylum, into which he chases her with the intention of reclaiming his wife by force when he suffers a fatal heart attack. In the meantime, Lord Ashworth's wife, the only inmate of the asylum, tries to stop Lord Carr to which he responds by throwing her over the stair banisters and she dies of her injuries, thereby freeing Lord Ashworth to marry Clarissa. The happiness does not end there, as Samson, who is discovered to be the illegitimate son of Lord Egremont, marries Lady Anna. This interesting plot development would actually make the fictional Samson the half-brother of the factual William Lamb, also thought to be the son of Lord Egremont.¹⁰³

Throughout, the fictional plotline is intertwined with Lamb's relationship with Byron, serving as a shadowy double to the fate of the main protagonists. As Lord Ashworth remarks, 'It was strange [...] how the fate of Lady Carr always seemed to be, in some inexpressible way, caught up in that of Lady Caroline;'¹⁰⁴ for instance when the fictional Lady Carr disappears from the asylum, the factual Lamb simultaneously disappears from Melbourne House after an altercation with her father-in-law, Lord Melbourne.¹⁰⁵ Both Lady Anna and Lamb, for McDonald, represent vulnerability of

women in love; both adored the men they married, but William Lamb and Lord Carr prove to be a disappointment to both women; William for what McDonald interprets as his apparent indifference to his wife, Lord Carr for trying to kill his for her money. Lady Anna and Lamb 'lost the first of [their] most cherished illusions.'¹⁰⁶ They then discover how 'one man could change the universe,'¹⁰⁷ for Lamb it is Byron and for Lady Anna it is Samson. However, Lamb's shadowing of Lady Anna's progress is to reveal the very different paths that romance can take. McDonald places the factual and fictional romances in opposition of each, to hold up Lamb as an example of the dangers of unchecked passion in favour of the steady and long-term romance. McDonald consistently refers to Lamb's infatuation as dangerous, seeing Byron as a rescuer from an unsatisfactory husband and having her sanity destroyed by 'that headlong whirlwind of love.'¹⁰⁸ By comparison Samson's courtship of Lady Anna is, by necessity, slow and painstaking as she recovers her health and overcomes her natural suspicions of someone she assumed tried to kill her at her husband's request. Even when the courtship is halted due to the predicament of Lady Anna actually still being married, patience and virtue win out in the end and they are united in a companionate marriage. Similarly, Ashworth, as the name suggests, is a man of character but without the fire of passion that embodies Byron, 'that stormy petrel.'¹⁰⁹ Ashworth is ash, the residue that is left after the burning of passion, because of his passionless marriage to a woman who is no more than a child, having lost her reason due to the death of their son, and to whom he remains faithful despite his love for Clarissa. The inherent goodness of Samson and Lord Ashworth is in opposition to the cruelties of Byron, whose humour 'could be dipped in venom' when roused,¹¹⁰ and the villainous Lord Carr. Samson and Ashworth are both true gentlemen, as Samson is discovered to be when acknowledged by his aristocratic father, as opposed to gentleman in title only, such as Lords Byron and Carr.

McDonald's novel falls into the category of popular historical fiction, associated with Mills and Boon and Barbara Cartland. This kind of fiction which dominated half of the reading practices of the nineteen seventies was derided by literary and feminist critics alike. It was, notes Wallace, in direct opposition to the ascent of the 'confessional realist' consciousness-raising novel that was directly aligned to the feminist movement.¹¹¹ The historical romance novel was a distinct genre nevertheless and one that can be interpreted as a rearguard action against the aggressive onslaught of feminism. Women's reading was therefore split into two identifiable camps, the

'serious' novel that was concerned with the oppression of women in a male dominated society, and the 'popular' novel that was epitomised by the element of romance and the happy ending of a desired and desirable marriage, invariably set against an historical background. McDonald's novel clearly falls into the second category, the historical background engaging with the present as an assertion of the ideal of love and romance in a climate that is pouring scorn on the notion that there is any such thing. As well as merging fact and fiction, McDonald's authorial voice flits between the past and the present to legitimate the focus upon love and desire by asserting continuity. The use of an historical background serves as a setting that provides enough distance between the setting and the reader. This allows the subject matter of romance to be interpreted as escapist, whilst corroborating the fictional romance with factual historical data to achieve a recognisable reality, thereby legitimising the message of the possibility of a successful companionate marriage.

McDonald identifies William Lamb as Lamb's '*preux chevalier*' after all, the tragedy being that she was distracted from this desired end-goal by Byron.¹¹² McDonald then closes the distance between the past and the present by referring to the continuity of desire from the historical past into the present. McDonald switches from the third person narrator of the story into a first person firmly located in the present:

It was, as Ashworth guessed it would be, Lady Caroline Lamb in a green velvet coat and hat of the same hue and material. Her hazel eyes were alight with expectation, she was aglow in that strange and subtle fashion that always proclaims a woman in love. It was perhaps not wholly Byron's fault, if Lady Caroline was caught up in the magic of his personality, consciously he did not exert that potent magnetism, nature had bestowed that quality we now call sex appeal most prodigally upon him [.]¹¹³

The change in authorial voice is self-consciously referring to the use of history as the basis for a fiction that is forcing the reader to acknowledge the lessons of the past and the implications of those lessons for the historical present. The novel is, therefore, closely connected with the moment of cultural production, a moment that was proving hostile to the kind of fiction that feminist critics such as Germaine Greer were deriding as reinforcing the sexual, political and economic inequality of women; 'The traits invented for [the hero] have been invented by women cherishing the chains of their bondage.'¹¹⁴ The type of novel has been recognised, however, as serving a recognisable function in fulfilling the need for expression of love and desire, albeit in a surreptitious

manner; Diana Wallace observes that many feminist critics were 'closet romance readers' and that the reading of romances fulfilled an emotional need not supplied anywhere else.¹¹⁵ The overlap of romance as a love-story and romance in its original form as characterised as being set in the past serves McDonald's purpose very well, as she has Byron assert on her behalf, '[...] all historical romance should be fiction married to facts.'¹¹⁶ McDonald's interconnection of the fictional narrative and factual biographical data, and the closing of the gap between the past and the present, prevents the novel being read as inconclusive. McDonald steers the reader towards the judgement of Lamb, in much the same way as Bolt does, by placing her in direct opposition with Lady Anna and Clarissa who achieved the desire ending of living happily after because they were, 'unlike poor Caro Lamb [...] normal people [and] sensible human beings,'¹¹⁷ and so are, by implication, McDonald's readers who understand the value of the comparison.

An Alternative View: American Tourism and Imagined Memoirs

McDonald relies upon the unquestioning acceptance of the known facts of Lamb's relationship with Byron to underline the tragedy of her story in that Lamb had in her grasp McDonald's end goal of the desirable and desired marriage. McDonald does not seek to question, excuse or justify Lamb's behaviour in the same way that Ward or Leslie does. In the same manner as Ward, McDonald does draw a parallel between the past and the present, but unlike Ward McDonald does not seek to interrogate the past and its representation, but merely appropriates it as an illustration of the timelessness of the human condition of love and marriage, a pre-history to the present. Linda Hutcheon, in her investigation into the postmodern condition of history and fiction, observes how the mixing of the historical and the fictive gives rise to the possibilities of critically rethinking of how the past is written and presented, revealing the similarities between the discourse of history and literature and offering the possibility of a revisionist version of history that reveals a distrust of the seemingly objective recounting of historical facts.¹¹⁸ Hutcheon's recognition of the textual basis of historical fact, such as letters, journals and eye-witness accounts, underlines the similarity of history with literature in that they are both human constructions, and as such, permanently contain the potential for deliberate or inadvertent error or falsification.¹¹⁹ Hutcheon refuses to accept the view that only history has a claim to representing the 'truth,' revealing what Wallace calls 'scepticism towards the grand

narratives.’¹²⁰ The possibilities of revising a singular representation of history in fiction form the basis of Jill Jones’ novel *My Lady Caroline* and John D. Hasler’s fictional *Memoirs*, though having said that they do not alter the known facts of historical representation but rather investigate the possibility of an alternative by exploiting the gaps in the historical narrative.

For Jones, the possibility of disrupting the singular narrative that relates Lamb’s relationship with Byron as told by historians traditionally sympathetic to Byron arises because of the gap made available by the burning of Byron’s historical memoirs. The non-existence of the historical memoirs gives rise to the possibility of multiple versions, the historical value of them undermined as subjective, textual constructions. Jones’ blurring of the generic boundaries between history and literature begins with her protagonist’s, Alison Cunningham’s, confusion between the two:

“A little known fact of my life,” [Alison] said, yawning, “is that I’ve read a lot of Regency romances. You know, the lord-and-lady-of-the-manor stories?” [...] “The Regencies are all set up in the early nineteenth century, in the court of George IV.”¹²¹

Alison’s reference to the ‘Regencies’ as a literary genre rather than an historical period is partly due to her American ignorance of British history and partly because of the close relationship between the factual background and fictional characteristics of the genre of historical romance, to which Alison is referring. It must be assumed that the confusion is the character’s and not the author’s because Jones then repeats the difficulty of distinguishing between fact and fiction with her unusual characterisation of Lamb, by way of investigating the value of a singular representation of an historical event. Lamb is a ghost who draws Alison to England to search for the memoirs of Byron in an effort to redeem her good name and reputation and to prove that Byron did, contrary to historical opinion, love her. Lamb claims that the supposedly unique copy of Byron’s memoirs were, in fact, only her copy of the original. Her detractors, by burning this copy, had therefore failed to prevent the future exposure of Byron’s cruelty towards her. Lamb urges Alison to find them before Jeremy Ryder does, who is also searching for them, as she is certain that he will sell them to a private collector and therefore maintain the status quo as far as the historical record of Byron’s contempt for Lamb is concerned. Alison, as an American, has no interest in the recovery of the memoirs as a means to re-interpreting English Romanticism apart from the desire to do

the right thing in restoring the balance on a history that is misrepresented as authorial, whereas Jeremy, as an English man and an antiques dealer, recognises the only quantifiable aspect of this piece of revisionary history in terms of money:

“Then you must admit, Mr Ryder, that is possible that there are a great many valuable artefacts, items than might even change our view of history, that lie in the vaults of collectors and that are not even available to scholars to evaluate” [said Alison]. “It is a romantic notion, the part about changing our view of history, but what you say is possible. Not likely, however. [...] It is simply the rarity [...] that gives it its value. Not the content”¹²²

Only after direct contact with the ghost, does Ryder change his mind about the acquisitive nature of history. He becomes aware of the individual that had previously been objectified in his version of history, and he joins Alison in seeking to restore that piece of history that ‘Byron’s well-meaning friends had destroyed.’¹²³ In the meantime, however, Jones supplies the deficiency created by the ‘well-meaning friend’ by interweaving her own reconstruction of Byron’s memoirs, interspersing them with extracts form actual letters, highlighting the difficulty of the textual reliability of historical narrative, proving her own claim in the novel that ‘anybody can write anything and [call it] history [...] whether it really happened or not.’¹²⁴ When the memoirs are discovered, there are two sets, one that vilifies and one that compliments Lamb. Initially, even Lamb cannot remember which one is Byron’s original and which is her own amended version, no longer being able to recognise the ‘truth’ in a textual representation. Even when she admits she does recognise the original (unsurprisingly the version that vilifies), she declares that they prove nothing. The textual nature, as Lamb’s confusions attest to, are only words on a page that can have meaning extracted from them, and as such, are as unreliable as Lamb’s own spectral presence that, as a direct link between the past and the present, is a foregrounding of the faulty and subjective nature of historical memory.

Jones’ identification of false representations in constructed history is a concern for recognition of the possible multiplicity of truths though, is not one that she takes seriously enough in this case to alter what she considers to be the ‘known’ facts. She is merely identifying the gaps in which such a possibility can occur. Jones’ exploration is a rethinking of historical documents as texts that, in Hutcheon’s view, can only ‘supplement or rework reality,’¹²⁵ rather than constituting reality comprised of hard facts; as such they are not to be relied upon. The mixing of the historical and the

fictive, and this tampering with the facts, albeit temporarily in Jones' case, reveals the difficulties of textual authority within a fictional format. Lamb and Byron's historicity is framed with the fictional counterpart of the romance between their counterparts in looks and temperament, Alison and Jeremy.

John D. Hasler, on the other hand, presents his interplay between history and fiction as a pseudo-biographical 'memoir', which he has 'edited', supplying a bibliography, footnotes, and an appendix that explains the different ranking of the English peerage. Hasler is at pains to assert that he is nothing more than the editor; in the preface he explains the constant switching between the past and the present tense (*italics added for emphasis*):

It should be remembered *she* collated reports chronologically in assembling *her* material in 1824. For example in 1824 in preparing *her* story, *she* inserted *her* 'Recollections' of the 1804 trip to Paris, putting in *her* impressions as best *she* could remember from twenty years earlier.¹²⁶

Hasler's insistence upon the authority of the authorial voice is, however, swiftly undermined by the Americanisms that 'Lamb' periodically lets slip, such as referring to Autumn as 'Fall', referring to Tsar Peter I as 'Peter the 1st', 'quit' instead of stop, and discussing the construction of 'bleacher seats' for the public spectacle of the coronation, all of which sit uncomfortably in the mouth of a nineteenth century aristocratic female. The errors within the text are legion, despite the extensive research evidenced by the reproduction of Lamb's letters: referring to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as *Elizabeth Bennett*, Elizabeth Benger as 'Miss Banger', the coronation of George IV as taking place two days after his father's death, when it did not take place until the following year, and describing the Irish revolution in 1798, the background to *Glenarvon*, as 'mythical', referring to Laetitia Elizabeth Landon as Irish, confusing *Ada Reis* with *Graham Hamilton*.¹²⁷ He is writing for a specifically American audience who he presumes knows nothing about England or English history; he converts dowry money into present-day dollars and calls it 'buying power', describes Chatsworth House as being part of the "'peak" district' that is located over a hundred miles from London, footnotes a biographical explanation of everybody (again signifying extensive research), and inserts lengthy lessons in English history and examples of how the days were spent when in residence at country houses that sit clumsily with the attempt to construct a first hand narrative that constitutes a memoir. Suffice it to say that it soon becomes apparent

that Hasler is not interested in Lamb *per se*,¹²⁷ but of the possibility she offers for exploring Hasler's own expressed interest in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century history. He describes himself on the back cover of the novel as 'an attorney still exerting himself in Florida, although candidly admitting to an age that normally spells retirement', and as a 'student of history, he is presently engaged in a Memoir on the Romanticists of the XIXth century Regency era'. Hasler recognises the worth of Lamb's her social position as it becomes the gateway to the quintessentially English world of the eccentric aristocracy, the monarchy, and the country houses, coupled with the interest in those who Hasler considers the arbiters of Romanticism: Byron, Shelley, Blake and Godwin.

Hasler is writing as an American for an American market, priding himself and his readership as having a shared heritage of America having successfully cast of the shackles of English rule whilst having an aesthetic nostalgia for the costume drama that constitutes historical English life. Whilst this aesthetic appreciation is at the forefront of this exercise in imaginary reconstruction, Hasler's appropriation of Lamb's life is motivated by a desire to reclaim this period of English history for his fellow Americans by revealing the interconnectedness of the period:

Many incidents [in this book] will be found to have an incredible association with people and events in the post-revolutionary War decade of America.¹²⁸

Through Lamb, Hasler illustrates the interrelated histories of England and America, in particular the events and personalities of English Romanticism, by creating a supplementary history that runs along the same time scale. Brian McHale terms this historical discourse as apocryphal history, one that does not contradict the 'official' history but supplements it by what has previously been considered as lost, repressed or simply separate.¹²⁹ Hasler takes advantage of what McHale calls 'dark areas' of history:

Within the 'dark areas' the historical novelist is permitted a relatively free hand. For example, history does not record that Queen Caroline ever interviewed a Scottish girl named Jeanie Deans sometime in the year 1736 [...] but neither does it positively rule out such an encounter [...]¹³⁰

Hasler identifies 'dark areas' in Lamb's life to enable him to fill in the blanks that links his version of American history and English Romanticism by skills of invention. His narrative coheres into a story that does not contradict the facts. There is no evidence,

for example, of Lamb ever having been presented to Napoleon whilst on a factual trip to Paris in 1802 but there is also no evidence to say that she conclusively was not. Therefore Hasler creates the encounter that allows Lamb, on behalf of Hasler, to observe that Napoleon, surrounded by the ‘treasures of the Bourbon dynasty [he] had eliminated,’ was ‘reversing before our very eyes’ the ideals of the French Republic in favour of a self-styled elite,¹³¹ and to compare this reversion of principle with the success of the American War of Independence that did remain true to its ideals. Similarly, after this presentation, Hasler provides Lamb with the opportunity to meet Lord Cornwallis, an English commander in the American revolution who surrendered to George Washington in Yorktown in 1781, and thereby discuss the merits of Cornwallis losing his ‘dignity’ to the worthy opponent of Washington.¹³² Again there is no evidence that she did meet Cornwallis at a reception at the Hotel Bateliere, but neither is there any evidence to say that she didn’t, the imagined conversation allowing Hasler scope to yoke together his twins of interest in Romanticism and pride in American independence.

In Hasler’s version, Lamb, in her desire to educate herself, develops a thirst for knowledge of American political affairs and discusses them at length with William and recording her findings in her journal, apparently forgetting ‘her’ loyalties when describing the ‘courageous American privateers’ attacking English ships, and vacillating between despair (the sacking of the President’s house by British troops led by General Ross) to joy (the signing of the Treaty of Ghent that ended the 1812 war between America and Britain).¹³³ With all the exciting news coming over the Atlantic, all other events, including her involvement with Byron, have been subsumed by the greater scheme of things. At a masquerade ball, Lamb is scolded and scowled at by Byron:

It was amusing to fathom how my conduct or apparel (even if it were *risqué*, which it was not) could in the least be any of his concern, after his abrupt rejection of the relationship we had. [...] Anyway, his behaviour and antics in no way dampened the evening for me, although William was perturbed and repeatedly muttered angrily about that “d” Byron. Being a gentleman, he restrained himself, when I asked that he simply ignore the man.¹³⁴

The Byromania, and therefore Byron, traditionally associated with Lamb have been diminished in favour of her political awareness. Hasler has reconstructed Lamb as a device to untie the overlapping histories of America and Britain under the banner of

Romanticism. Lamb's prominence in the overlapping social and political makes her 'memoir' the ideal vehicle for Hasler's revisionist history. As for Jones, the absence of an actual memoir allows for the possibility of an imaginary one, as it cannot contradict the facts, Hasler's memoir is the 'dark area' of Lamb's history that allows Hasler to unite his interests in British Romanticism and American history. Hasler's revisioning of the past is what Hutcheon recognises as 'an act of community', acknowledging that history is a shared territory.¹³⁵ As such the narrative can exist as either a collective awareness of the past, or as a private revision of public experience. Hasler's reconstruction of Lamb is a reorientation of historical and literary emphasis that is selected to highlight the shared histories of British and American Romanticism.

Conclusion: Harmless History or the Embedding of a Myth?

For the modern writers of historical fiction discussed here, Lamb's charm is the possibilities that her narrative possesses rather than the cultural significance of Lamb, be it the deficiency of the nurturing educational role model for women as portrayed by Mrs Ward, or the sex, the scandal, the extravagance synonymous with an easily identifiable and self-contained historical period, dominated by characters with whom even the most casual reader of history and historical fiction would be familiar, such as Wellington and Byron. This intermingling of fact and fiction raises the question of how much the poetic licence taken by these writers compromises the perception of an historical figure, especially one as marginalised as Lamb? As has been discussed, 'accurate' biographical representations of Lamb's life are produced via a selective system of orientation towards a judgement of Lamb. The fictional representations of her, which make no such claims of accuracy but implies it by the inclusion of biographical detail, and the accuracy of the décor and costumes, are similarly orientated. Lamb is chosen as either a victim to be vindicated or as an identifiable historical figure to bolster claims about the present, as represented in each fiction. But despite the different approaches of each author who takes up Lamb's story, the use of an identifiable historical figure, however marginalised, has to take into the account the historical facts of that life as they are known. The fictions bear a striking resemblance to the biographies as a result of the shared territory of history. History, writes E.H. Carr in his essays upon the theory of history and the role of the historian, is an 'enormous jigsaw with a lot of missing parts.'¹³⁶ Therefore, the visible parts that have been selected have been done so because of their prominence, and this is certainly the case

with biographical and fictional representations of Lamb's life, both overlapping because both are drawing upon the visibly selected parts that have already been discussed as the episodes of melodrama. So even though the historical fiction that has been examined here exploits the gaps between the visible parts of the jigsaw, it does so by relying upon those pieces to support the narratives, thereby further embedding the mythical status of the known facts of Lamb's life. So repetitive is the retelling of Lamb's life that the 'truth' of the study has taken on an almost mythical status by being endlessly repeated and woven into culture, and taking upon themselves a resonance of knowledge so that no further explanation needs to be sought for.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Wallace, D. (2005), *The Women's Historical Novel; British Women Writers 1900-2000*, London: Palgrave, p. 205.
- ² Sales, R. (1999), 'The Loathsome Lord and the Disdainful Dame: Byron, Cartland and the Regency Romance', *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Culture*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Macmillan, p. 169.
- ³ Wallace, (2005), p. 151.
- ⁴ Ibid, p. 152.
- ⁵ Morgan, S. Lady, (1883), *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence, 3 Volumes*, Leipzig: Tauchnitz, vol. 2, p. 321.
- ⁶ When searching for novels that might contain a version of Lamb, I came across Rachelle Edwards' *The Outrageous Lady Caroline* (1980), and made the instant deduction that any title containing the words 'outrageous' and Caroline must have, at the very least, taken inspiration from Lamb, especially when it proclaims itself to a 'Regency Love Story.' The assumption was a wrong one, the name being the only characteristic shared, which clearly demonstrates how deeply entrenched the cultural myth that surrounds Lamb is, even when trying to dismantle it.
- ⁷ Ward, H. Mrs. (Mary Augusta), (1905), *The Marriage of William Ashe*, London, Edinburgh & New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, p. 41.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. 65.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 247.
- ¹⁰ Douglass, P. (2004), *Lady Caroline Lamb; A Biography*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 181.
- ¹¹ Ibid, p. 102.
- ¹² Ibid, p. 449.
- ¹³ Wallace, (2005), p. 4; Fleishman, A. (1971), *The English Historical Novel; Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins Press, p. 14.
- ¹⁴ Wallace, (2005), p. 205.
- ¹⁵ Sutton-Ramspeck, B. (1999), 'Shot Out of the Canon: Mary Ward and the Claims of conflicting Feminisms', *Victorian Woman Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. Thompson, N.D., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 205.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, p. 210-211.
- ¹⁷ Ward, (1905), p. 107.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, p. 194.
- ¹⁹ Jenkins, E. (1974), *Lady Caroline Lamb*, London: Cardinal, p. 102.
- ²⁰ Ward, (1905), pp. 43-44.
- ²¹ Ibid, p. 106.
- ²² Ibid, pp. 75, 107, 113.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 103.
- ²⁴ Ibid, pp. 93, 128, 170; Douglass, (2004), p. 145.
- ²⁵ Ward, (1905), pp. 123, 129, 185.
- ²⁶ Ibid, p. 78.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p. 65.
- ²⁸ Ibid, p. 357.
- ²⁹ Ibid, p. 65.
- ³⁰ Ibid, p. 134.
- ³¹ Ibid, p. 167.
- ³² *The Tempest*, IV.i. 1-140.
- ³³ Ibid, IV.i.15-21.
- ³⁴ Douglass, (2004), p. 80.
- ³⁵ Ward, (1905), p. 166.
- ³⁶ Ibid, pp. 87, 152, 330.
- ³⁷ Ibid, p. 386.
- ³⁸ Ibid, p. 275.
- ³⁹ Douglass, (2004), p. 194.
- ⁴⁰ Ward, (1905), p. 385.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 341-342.
- ⁴² Ibid, p. 274.
- ⁴³ Normington, S. (2001), *Lady Caroline Lamb; This Infernal Woman*, London: House of Stratus, p. 185.
- ⁴⁴ Douglass, (2004), p. 53.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 219.

- ⁴⁶ Morgan, (1883), vol. 2, p. 323.
- ⁴⁷ Ward, (1905), p. 439.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 210.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 410.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 467.
- ⁵¹ Sutton-Ramspeck, (1999), p. 210.
- ⁵² Jenkins, (1974), p. 133.
- ⁵³ Wilson, F. (1999), 'An Exaggerated Woman: The Melodramas of Lady Caroline Lamb', *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Culture*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Macmillan, p. 196.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 196.
- ⁵⁵ Byatt, A.S, (2002), *Portraits in Fiction*, London: Vintage, p. 1.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 15.
- ⁵⁷ Leslie, D. (1963), *This for Caroline*, London: Heinemann, pp. 20, 207.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 97.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 26.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 28.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, p. 25.
- ⁶² *The Tempest*, Act 1, scene 2, lines 198-201.
- ⁶³ Leslie, (1963), p. 54.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 56.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 58. Katie Hickman observes that stories of outrageous women having themselves served up on a silver platter is a recurring one, with no single, identifiable factual basis; numerous courtesans, including Cora Pearl, La Belle Otero and Marie Duplessis, of 'La Dame aux Caméllias' fame, have similarly claimed to have performed the same stunt. Similarly, there is no evidence for Lamb having done so either. See Hickman, K. (2004), *Courtesans*, London: Harper Perennial, p. 234.
- ⁶⁶ Leslie, (1963), p. 59.
- ⁶⁷ Wilson, (1999), p. 202.
- ⁶⁸ Leslie, (1963), p. 33.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 121.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 127, 149.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, p. 188.
- ⁷² Ibid, p. 237.
- ⁷³ Wallace, (1999), p. 42.
- ⁷⁴ Leslie, (1963), p. 204.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 217.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid, pp. 222-223.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 237.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 237, 78.
- ⁷⁹ Pomeroy, S.B. (1994), *Goddesses, Whores, Wives & Slaves; Women in Classical Antiquity*, London: Pimlico, p. 124.
- ⁸⁰ Wallace, (1999), p. 42.
- ⁸¹ Leslie, (1963), p. 17.
- ⁸² Ibid, p. 140.
- ⁸³ Ibid, 217.
- ⁸⁴ Harper, S. (2001), 'Historical Pleasures: Gainsborough Costume Melodrama', *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*, London: The Athlone Press, p. 101.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 103.
- ⁸⁶ Sayles cited in Ralston, R.M. & Sondergard, S.L. (1999), 'Screening Byron: The Idiosyncracies of the Film Myth', *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Culture*, ed. Wilson, F., London: Macmillan, p. 137.
- ⁸⁷ Wilson, (1999), P. 199.
- ⁸⁸ Bolt cited in Prüfer, S. (1998), *The Individual at the Crossroads: The Works of Robert Bolt, Novelist, Dramatist, Screenwriter*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, p. 132.
- ⁸⁹ Turner, A. (1998), *Robert Bolt; Scenes From Two Lives*, London: Hutchinson, p. 323.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 334.
- ⁹¹ Grindon, L. (1994), *Shadows on the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 9.
- ⁹² Turner, (1998), p. 334.

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- ⁹³ Ralston & Sondergard, (1999), p. 142.
- ⁹⁴ Grindon, (1994), p. 6.
- ⁹⁵ Harper, (2001), p. 98.
- ⁹⁶ Wallace, (2005), p. 84.
- ⁹⁷ Turner, (1998), p. 326.
- ⁹⁸ There are varying accounts of the events at Lady Heathcote's ball, and none can say with certainty what actually happened. What is clear is that a verbal exchange between Byron and Lamb took place, then she either took up a knife to use perhaps against herself or Byron, and her hand was cut when somebody tried to remove it from her, or she took up a pair of scissors and attempted to harm herself, or she took up a glass which broke, cutting her in the process. It was represented in the press as Lamb, taking up a dessert knife, attempting to stab herself, and the Duchess of Beaufort reported a rumour that she had become hysterical, wounding herself and was carried out in a straight jacket. What is interesting is, despite the conflicting nature of the accounts in which the wounding could equally have been accidental as deliberate, it is assumed that Lamb must have staged a deliberate attempt at suicide, and the incident is reported as such in every biography. Her own account is generally discredited as inaccurate in that Byron, having seen that she had a knife in her hand, taunted her about using against her own heart as she had already struck his, at which she cried out his name, and turned away from him, knife still in hand and people, assuming she meant harm, tried to take the knife off of her which resulted in her hand being cut.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 334.
- ¹⁰⁰ Grindon, (1994), p. 10.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 11.
- ¹⁰² Harper, (2001), p. 104.
- ¹⁰³ Ziegler, P. (1976), *Melbourne; A Biography of William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne*, London: Collins, p. 16.
- ¹⁰⁴ McDonald, E. (1973), *Lady Caroline Lamb*, London: New English Library, p. 73.
- ¹⁰⁵ The disappearance that McDonald is alluding to is when Lord Melbourne ordered Lamb out of his house and told her to go to Byron 'if he would have her.' Lamb was found by Byron at a doctor's house where she had taken refuge. See Douglass, (2004), p. 120-121.
- ¹⁰⁶ McDonald, (1973), p. 10.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 90.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 94.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 43.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 110.
- ¹¹¹ Wallace, (2005), pp. 150, 152.
- ¹¹² McDonald, (1973), p. 172.
- ¹¹³ Ibid, p. 45.
- ¹¹⁴ Greer, G. (1993), *The Female Eunuch*, London: Flamingo, p. 202 (first published 1971).
- ¹¹⁵ Wallace, (2005), p. 153.
- ¹¹⁶ McDonald, (1973), p. 165.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 174.
- ¹¹⁸ Hutcheon, L. (1992), *A Poetics of Postmodernism; History, Theory, Fiction*, London & New York: Routledge, p. 88.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 114.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 93; Wallace, (2005), p. 3.
- ¹²¹ Jones, J. (1996), *My Lady Caroline*, New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, p. 52.
- ¹²² Ibid, p. 169.
- ¹²³ Ibid, p. 238.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 197.
- ¹²⁵ Hutcheon, (1992), p. 100.
- ¹²⁶ Hasler, J.D. (2005), *Memoirs; Lady Caroline Lamb*, Florida: Xlibris, p. 15.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid, pp. 423, 482, 535, 551.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 14.
- ¹²⁹ Mchale, B. (1989), *Postmodern History*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 90-91.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 87.
- ¹³¹ Hasler, (2005), p. 114.
- ¹³² Ibid, p. 117.
- ¹³³ Ibid, pp. 317, 324, 332
- ¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 327.
- ¹³⁵ Hutcheon, (1992), p. 93.

Conclusion

This aim of this study has been to reassess Lamb's novels taking into account the cultural and political moment of production, establishing that it is the shared territory of the cultural context in which the novels are produced that links the external form of the utterance and the embedded ideological discourse within it. I have also undertaken a study of the process by which Lamb's life and works have been reduced to the single defining feature of her relationship with Lord Byron. I have argued that the narrow context of Byron has distorted any other legitimate and possibly more productive reading of her work, despite Lamb's prominence within the social, cultural and political elite of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. With this in mind, I examined Lamb's ideological blueprint as a Whig that informed the immediately apparent and consistent theme, throughout all of Lamb's novels, of the need for aristocratic reform. This examined the strategies by which the aristocracy justified to the 'people' and to themselves that they were the natural and legitimate repositories for invested power, and how this 'naturalness' was being compromised by the moral chaos that disfigured the personal lives, which were tantamount to the public lives, of the Whigs in particular. I have examined Lamb's formative milieu that was also comprised of her envisioned readership to examine the basis for Lamb's concerns for the need of an internal reform if the Whigs were ever going to regain the political initiative; having lost the support of the Prince Regent the Whigs were more dependent than ever upon the voting populace.

Having established the external cultural field of production, I examined how Lamb's choice of genre, which had previously been presumed as purely malicious in the case of *Glenarvon* and been ignored in the case of *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis*, was a conscious one of the most appropriate vehicle for her communicative intent to her audience. I have argued that Lamb's choice of genre was a salient feature of each of her novels as an indicator of Lamb's knowledge of her subject matter and envisioned audience, and the power by which to maximise the efficacy of the chosen vehicle for the communicative intent. I have also argued that Lamb's choice of location and timeframe was determined by the genre, thereby challenging a previous misconception that Lamb's choices were arbitrary, and determining that the interdependent nature of the genre and location were sophisticated choices predicated upon the envisioned readership of her

own milieu, whom it can be supposed would immediately apprehend the intended meaning of the ideological signposts.

This chain of signs that forges meaning in the act of reference is scrutinised in my examination of how Lamb's message for reform is solidly underpinned by the intertextual references to John Ford's plays. Lamb's characters have a complex relationship with those of Ford's from his lesser-known plays that brings to the foreground themes of innate nobility, the misrepresentation of character, unconventional love and the resulting social ostracism. Not only do Lamb's novels and characters share the same names and fates as those of Ford's works, but also the works of both authors are similarly used as vehicles for covert political means. Ford dedicates his work in support of the aristocracy against an autocratic monarch, and it is to this monarch that Ford orientates his recommendations of how a monarch should behave towards an aristocracy to whom he owes his throne. Lamb orientates her writings towards an aristocracy who are the direct descendants of Ford's dedicatees to remind them of their noble lineage and the time-honoured code of appropriate aristocratic behaviour.

Having established a revisionist reading of Lamb's works as read against the moment of cultural production and the methods by which she chose to promulgate her message for reform, I have undertaken the task of understanding why it is that Lamb has received so little critical attention, despite Lamb's prestigious amount of cultural capital, she having been born into the apex of the overlapping social and political spheres. I examined the processes by which the legitimacy of Lamb's knowledge of her subject matter and her envisioned audience was eroded by repeated claims of insanity that had no formal basis. I demonstrated that at the very heart of this lay Lamb's association with Lord Byron, a 'legitimate' canonical figure that placed Lamb, therefore, in binary opposition against him as an illegitimate subject for study that was solely defined by his presence. Despite this process of delegitimisation, which I have argued began in Lamb's lifetime, the figure of Lamb still held currency within the literary market which her contemporaries appropriated as a way of augmenting and asserting their authority of their own portrayals of an elite sphere, and how each portrayal of Lamb depended upon how intimately acquainted the writer of the caricature was with the original. The fictionalisation of Lamb continues with modern portraits of her that initially suggested a rehabilitation of her as an historical figure. Instead, I have

argued that, despite taking centre stage in what purports to be reclamations of Lamb's own narrative, they merely reinforce Lamb's status of the embodiment of all that she sought to rectify in her own works thus coming full circle.

The implications of this research are to analyse the ease by which a significantly informed voice, specifically in this thesis in terms of the social, cultural and political arenas of the latter half of the Romantic period, can be still be wilfully misread and dismissed, and the processes by which that has been allowed to happen. This work has demonstrated that Lamb can no longer be considered as being only legitimated by presence of Byron. Lamb has an authoritative voice with which she demonstrates her knowledge of her subject matter, her authority upon which to speak about and to her envisioned audience, that includes Byron, reflects a self-awareness that has previously been interpreted as egotism, and attests to her competence to engage with contemporary issues. The stereotype of Lamb as venting her frustrated feelings for Byron is no longer viable as this reading demonstrates that her relationship with Byron is seen and used by Lamb as an example of the necessity to reform. Therefore readings of Lamb's work can no longer be reduced to being read as either a personal vendetta intended to destroy the reputation of an eminent man, or as a case study of a female hysteric whose works are the mere ramblings of a disordered mind. Neither can it be claimed that Lamb tried to appropriate Byron's authority in a desire to imitate and emulate him, as Lamb has her own authority upon which to speak about her subject matter of aristocratic reform. It is the legitimacy of Lamb's response that is under scrutiny in this research, the act of writing being a defiant rejection of a code of behaviour that insisted she remain quiet. The impact of this reassessment of Lamb is that it draws attention to the historical pattern of how the act of writing by women who are viewed in a partnership with a male literary figure is seen as a challenge to that male authority. Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* explores the correlation between the perception of this threat and the subsequent diagnosis of madness, in which she reconsiders the lives and works of Elizabeth Packard, Ellen West, Virginia Woolf, Zelda Fitzgerald and Sylvia Plath, gives my analysis of Lamb added validity. This is especially true when read in conjunction with her re-examination of Zelda Fitzgerald's literary ambitions, which were seen as a direct challenge to her husband's, F. Scott Fitzgerald, own literary profile and, as such, a source of embarrassment to him which he addressed by having his wife repeatedly committed as insane.¹ Originally published in 1972, Chesler asks the question 'What

has changed since I [first] wrote this book?’ to which she answers thirty years later ‘too little.’² Jane Ussher’s examination into the misogynistic bias of the diagnosis of madness notes that while literary critics who have pored over the works of men do so ‘hardly noticing their private lives [but] seem unnaturally interested in the woman creator’s personal habits and especially her sexuality. [Thus] Harriet Martineau is portrayed as a crank, Christabel Pankhurst as a prude, Aphra Behn as a whore, Mary Wollstonecraft as promiscuous.’³ Although a generalisation, Ussher’s commentary had particular resonance when approaching Lamb and her critics for the first time.

As has already been noted, there is an interesting parallel between Lamb and Rosina Bulwer Lytton, who also flouted feminine convention to the embarrassment of her husband. Edward went one step further and actually had Rosina abducted and committed into an asylum, and only public outcry secured her release. Lamb and Rosina share an allegiance in their attempts to find and assert their authority and release their repressed energies in the written word. Rosina similarly used the novel as a vehicle by which to criticise her husband’s treatment of her, most famously in her account of her abduction and incarceration entitled *A Blighted Life*, first published in 1880. By struggling free of the narrow confines of proscribed behaviour, both Lamb and Rosina have paid very heavy prices in terms of marital disharmony, accusations of disloyalty, social ostracism, actual or the threat of imprisonment, and accusations of madness. All of which have combined to obscure their rights and talents to express themselves, and it is an historical pattern that has repeated itself. Many women who are psychiatrically labelled, privately treated, and publicly hospitalised are not mad, and have merely been designated as such by those whose sensibilities are affronted by their bold actions. Work undertaken by Marie Mulvey Roberts and Virginia Blain, in which they examine the partisan distortion of historical bias, with regards to Rosina Bulwer Lytton’s literary reputation, provided a starting place from which I could begin to initiate the same process of recovery for Lamb in this thesis.⁴

What is interesting, considering Lamb and Rosina’s motivations for writing, and would be an interesting subject for further research, is where they met, which has been briefly examined by Rosemary Mitchell, Cynthia Lawford, and acknowledged by Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy.⁵ The literary salons of Elizabeth Benger and Elizabeth Spence are a recurring feature on the landscape of women’s

literary endeavours in the 1820's to those familiar with Lamb, Rosina, the poets Letitia Landon and Emma Roberts, novelists Lady Morgan, Jane and Anna Maria Porter and woman of letters, Elizabeth Hamilton. Benger and Spence's gatherings sought to encourage and promote a discourse of culture and civility in mixed company, afforded an opportunity of developing networks of correspondence but primarily focused upon promoting the inclusion and elevating the status of women within public life via their literary endeavours. This has not been an endeavour adequately recognised as providing a valuable network of support and encouragement within an entirely respectable atmosphere. Instead, Benger and Spence's reputations have not fared any better than those of Lamb or Rosina, focus tending to settle upon their dress sense and meagre refreshments rather than their contribution to the widening and increasingly competitive market place of print culture. Therefore the efforts of Benger and Spence to support isolated women writers with respect, encouragement and networking opportunities, that brought such diverse writers such as Lamb and Landon into the public arena, must be adequately acknowledged.

Overall, by examining the context, generic traits and content of Lamb's novels as a body of work from the viewpoint of her ideological blueprint as a Whig, I have argued that Lamb can be considered as a writer of significant interest beyond her involvement with Lord Byron. This perspective enables an understanding of the act of writing as a desire to communicate to her envisioned audience the necessity of reform if the Whigs were ever to be able to regain the political initiative and return to their 'natural' place, functioning as a two-way mirror between the monarch and the people. Given that Lamb's desire to write is driven by the desire of communicative intent, this thesis has investigated not only the origins and execution of that act, but also assessed the extent, nature and consequences of the autobiographical basis of her fiction.

ENDNOTES

¹ Chesler, P. (2005), *Women's Madness*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 62-72.

² Ibid, p. 10.

³ Ussher, J. (1991), *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness*, New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p. 282.

⁴ Mulvey Roberts, M. (2001), 'Fame, Notoriety and Madness: Edward Bulwer Lytton Paying the Price of Greatness', *Critical Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 115-134; Bulwer Lytton, R. (1995), *Shells From the Sands of Time*, Intro. Mulvey Roberts, M., Bristol: Thoemmes Press (first published 1876); Bulwer Lytton, R. (1994), *A Blighted Life: A True Story*, Intro. Mulvey Roberts, M. Bristol: Thoemmes Press (first published 1880); Blain, V. (1990), 'Rosina Bulwer Lytton and the Rage of the Unheard', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, No. 53, pp. 211-236.

⁵ Lawford, C. (2004), 'Turbans, Tea and Talk of Books: the Literary Parties of Elizabeth Spence and Elizabeth Bengier', *CW3 Journal: Corvey Women Writers on the Web 1796 – 1834*, [<http://www.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3journal>, accessed 14 September 2006]; Blain, V., Clements, P. & Grundy, I. (1990), *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 82; Mitchell, R. (2004), 'Bengier, Elizabeth Ogilvy', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2093>, accessed 2 June 2005].

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