

BEYOND THE POINT OF CHILDISHNESS

(Volume I)

CHARLES AND MARY LAMB' S *TALES FROM SHAKESPEAR*
and
AFTER

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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June 1999

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K926588

M00458658u



Abstract

Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* has offered the first taste of Shakespearean drama to children for nearly two hundred years. Though it has not always been realised, the book has become one of the most influential publications related to the study of Shakespeare. However, academic studies of Lambs' tales are scarce and often inadequate. This thesis is the first extensive and detailed study of Lambs' tales, which also explores their profound influence. It consists of two volumes. In Volume One, I examine the roles of the Lambs as children's writers; including, how Charles integrated his Romantic criticism into the six tragic tales, and how Mary campaigned for educational reform through her fourteen comic and romantic stories. Moreover, I have identified which editions of Shakespeare's plays were used by the Lambs as their textual basis. With fresh evidence, I also bridge over many gaps in the publishing history regarding both Lambs' tales and their rival publications. Volume Two is an edition-based annotated bibliography of prose narratives adapted for children from Shakespeare's plays 1807-1998. The Annotated Bibliography is the most complete documentation on this subject. It covers 42 different versions of Shakespeare stories, and includes, altogether, 304 entries.

This thesis contains 79,845 words.

Table of Contents

Volume I:

	Page
INTRODUCTION Beyond the Point of Childishness	1
CHAPTER I 'The Cursed Barbauld Crew'	7
CHAPTER II 'Hook in the Nostrils of this Leviathan'	47
CHAPTER III 'A Sort of Double Singleness'	112
CHAPTER IV 'A Happy English Wife'	166
CHAPTER V 'Tom' s Approbation'	212
CHAPTER VI 'Bridget and I Should be Ever Playing'	252
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	294

Volume II:

The Annotated Bibliography of Prose Narratives Adapted for Children from
Shakespeare' s Plays 1807-1998

List of Illustrations

Figures:

- Figure 1. 'Nic Bottom & the Queen of the Faries.' Following p. 258
- Figure 2. 'Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing'
- Figure 3. 'Hermione restored to her Husband.' Following p. 259
- Figure 4. 'Brabantio gives his Daughter to Othello.'
- Figure 5. 'Marriage of Romeo.' Following p. 262
- Figure 6. 'Timon gives his Treasure to Alcibiades.'
- Figure 7. 'Lear and his Daughters.' Following p. 265
- Figure 8. 'Portia returns Bassanio' s Ring.'

Plates:

- Plate 1. A Page from Staunton' s edition of *The Works of Shakespeare* (1857-1877) Following p. 272
- Plate 2. A Page from Routledge' s 1878 edition of *Lambs' Tales from Shakspeare*

Charts:

- Frequency and Popularity Chart I, following p. 283
- Chart: Versions of Prose Narratives Adapted for Children from Shakespeare' s Plays II, following p. 7

Definitions and Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated, references to Shakespeare's plays are all standardised to the Arden edition, and all references to Lambs' tales are standardised to the first edition. Each of the Lambs' twenty prose tales is regarded as a chapter in this two-volume book; therefore, the title of every tale will be placed within a pair of inverted commas rather than be italicised. As for the title of the book, it is as printed on its title-page, *Tales from Shakespear* [sic], but its unusual spelling will not be marked with [sic], when the book is mentioned in the chapters. This rule is also applied to all the references listed in the footnotes, the explanatory notes for illustrations, and the Selected Bibliography.

The abbreviations for *King Lear*, *Sir John Oldcastle* and *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* are *KL*, *OLD* and *CRO*. As for the other Shakespeare's plays, their abbreviations are all based on the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*.

Any other symbols or abbreviations related to the Annotated Bibliography are fully listed and explained in the guidelines for using the bibliography (for details, see the 'Guidelines' at the beginning of Volume Two.)

INTRODUCTION.

Beyond the Point of Childishness

Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*¹ may be one of the most influential publications related to the study of Shakespeare, which has shaped our understanding and interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. Although it is not always realised, for nearly two hundred years not only have those who have read Lambs' tales been influenced by them, but also those who have never read Lambs' tales can not be totally free from their spells. Lambs' tales are the origin of many ideas and insights which we take for granted today. When we talk about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a play suitable for children, or make a comparison between the two recognition scenes in *King Lear* and in *Pericles*, we are already under the influence of the Lambs. However, the scholarly research on Lambs' tales is scarce. No substantial work on this subject has ever been done. About a dozen essays exist, but they consist of brief journal articles or chapters in accounts of children's literature. Most of these essays are based on inadequate research or insufficient evidence and, inevitably, they are full of fallacies. This state of affairs is truly alarming, when we consider the importance of Lambs' tales in offering the first taste of Shakespearean drama to the unformed minds of children for nearly two centuries.

This thesis is, therefore, the first extensive study of the Lambs' prose narratives for children adapted from Shakespeare's plays, and it also offers a consideration of their profound influence. Its aim is to supply future researchers with correct and

crucial information regarding Lambs' tales as a children's book, as a subtle piece of Romantic criticism of Shakespeare in the disguise of children's stories, as a fine piece of English literature in its own right, and as the origin of a whole host of adaptations from great literary works for the delight and enjoyment of children. It also seeks to provide children's writers, publishers, librarians, parents, teachers and whoever concern themselves with children's recreational reading and learning about Shakespeare, with useful information regarding the achievements and failures in this particular branch of children's literature.

Because of the extensiveness of the work, the thesis is necessarily divided into two volumes. The first volume consists of six chapters, and the second volume is an edition-based annotated bibliography which covers all the traced English editions of Lambs' tales published as children's literature, as well as all of the other versions of prose narratives published for the same purpose.

The first chapter, 'The Cursed Barbauld Crew', includes a detailed analysis of Charles Lamb's ideal children's literature and the ways in which his six tragic tales retold from *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Othello* incorporate his ideas. In fact, the quarrel between Charles Lamb and the moralist writers, such as Anna Letitia Barbauld and Sarah Trimmer, during the early nineteenth century is still going on today in the discussion of sex, violence, horror and sensationalism contained in children's television programmes, films, comic books, etc.

Charles Lamb achieved his literary fame with his *Elia* essays and his critical essays on Shakespeare's poetry and plays, although he is now more widely known as the author of *Tales from Shakespear*. In the second chapter, 'Hook in the Nostrils of

¹ Title of the book, as printed on the title-page of the first edition of Lambs' tales.

this Leviathan' , a close examination of the making of Charles Lamb, the Romantic critic and the essayist of *Elia*, through his six tragic tales is also given. The findings are remarkable and reveal, as never before, how Charles Lamb was capable of making personal and emotional contact with a dramatic character, and how he turned his prose tales into creative commentaries on Shakespearean drama and into philosophical reflections upon life.

The third chapter, 'A Sort of Double Singleness' , concentrates on the similarities and the differences between the tales written by Charles Lamb and those by his sister, Mary. In general, *Tales from Shakespear* as a collection of children' s stories gives its readers the impression of a single authorship, but there are delicate and definite differences between the brother' s and the sister' s approaches to Shakespeare' s tragedies and comedies, including the ways in which they chose and used the same editions of Shakespeare' s plays as the textual basis of their tales. This is the first time, the textual basis of Lambs' tales has ever been discovered or discussed.

The fourth chapter, 'A Happy English Wife' , is fundamentally an attempt to delineate what was Mary Lamb' s ideal children' s literature and how she integrated her own ideas into the fourteen comic tales. It is not difficult to see why this task has not been tried before, for relevant records are hard to find. However, this chapter lays out the ground work for an important discussion in the next chapter, 'Tom' s Approbation' .

Mary Lamb is regarded as a conservative woman-writer who wrote exclusively for girls and whose writings purposefully endorsed patriarchal values. This view can not be further away from the truth, but it has dominated academic opinion on Mary Lamb' s comic tales for a decade. With new evidence brought to light during my

research, I will prove that Mary Lamb was a children's writer in the truest sense of that title, and that her stories actually sought to campaign for the revolutionary ideas about education for both boys and girls that she always held.

The final chapter, 'Bridget and I Should be Ever Playing', functions as a conclusion for the first volume and, at the same time, an introduction to the second. In this chapter, not only is the complicated publishing history of Lambs' tales since 1806 dealt with, but the relation and the interaction between Lambs' tales and their rivals in the juvenile book-market will also be explored. The whole discussion is based on a careful analysis of over a thousand imprints and publisher's advertisements, and of hundreds of surviving editions, re-issues and reprints of Lambs' tales and the other prose versions of Shakespeare's plays. With fresh evidence, I will bridge over the many gaps in the publishing history, which have been left unresolved all this time.

The final chapter, as mentioned before, is also an introduction to the second volume of my thesis--*The Annotated Bibliography of Prose Narratives Adapted for Children from Shakespeare's Plays 1807-1998*. It is a comprehensive reference bibliography and the most complete documentation in the field of studying both Lambs' tales and their rivals in the juvenile book-market. In fact, as far as I know, there have been only two attempts to list or estimate the existing editions of Lambs' tales during the 1980s; such an extensive and detailed study of all the existing editions of Lambs' tales published as children's literature, and of the other versions of prose tales of the same nature has never before been attempted.

In 1985, Dover G. Wilson made the first attempt to count the editions of Lambs' tales. Based on his own private collection, and the catalogues of the British Library and the University Library at Cambridge, Dover Wilson compiled a check-list of

some eighty editions, including those translated into foreign languages, for the Charles Lamb Society.² In preparing the British Academy Shakespeare Lecture, 'Tales from Shakespeare', Stanley Wells made the second attempt in 1987, and considered the collections of the British Library and the Bodleian Library. He estimated that around two hundred English editions of Lambs' tales were published from 1806 to 1987.³ In this same lecture, Stanley Wells acknowledged the importance of carrying out such bibliographical research:

the successive retellings of Shakespeare's stories offer a body of material that permits an interesting exploration of narrative techniques, that--like stage adaptations--they can reflect changing critical and moral perspectives on Shakespeare himself [...]⁴

At the same time, Stanley Wells also pointed out that this important task would be extremely difficult to perform:

To chart their [Lambs' tales'] progress [in publication] fully would require a bibliographical study which so far as I know has not been undertaken, and which would be difficult to prepare accurately, because even the copyright libraries seem to have wearied of giving shelf-room [to] the full spate of editions and reissues.⁵

The libraries not only do not have copies of all the editions of Lambs' tales, as already pointed out by Stanley Wells, but the libraries also do not preserve copies of all the varieties of prose adaptations for children from Shakespeare's plays.

In order to prepare as complete and precise an annotated bibliography as possible, I have worked on the collections of the British Library, the Bodleian Library, the Birmingham Shakespeare Library, the Shakespeare Centre Library in

² See: D. G. Wilson, 'Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 49 (1985), 14-17.

³ See: Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare Lecture: Tales from Shakespeare', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 73 (1987), 125-152 (p. 131).

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 149.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 131.

Stratford-upon-Avon and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. I have also examined the catalogue of the University Library at Cambridge. Furthermore, I have tracked down and purchased several editions of Lambs' tales or of the other versions of prose adaptations not written by either Charles or Mary Lamb, which have somehow escaped all the above mentioned Libraries' collections. However, I am fully aware that there are questions about the Lambs still to be answered, gaps in the publishing history of prose adaptations not yet filled, and some volumes of once treasured prose stories still undiscovered in an obscure corner somewhere. This two-volume thesis is the results of my research up to the present stage; through presenting the thesis, I wish to share my observations and to prove that the whole idea of introducing children to great literature through adaptations is not in the least childish.

CHAPTER I.

'The Cursed Barbauld Crew'

Charles and Mary Lamb paid a visit to the Coleridges at Keswick in the August of 1802. During the visit, Charles Lamb became particularly attached to Derwent Coleridge (1800-1883), the second son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Lamb's fondness for Derwent, nicknamed Pi-pos, has been most affectionately recorded in a letter, written on September 8, 1802, to the boy's father:

Particularly tell me about little *Pi-pos* (or flying Opossum) the only child (but one) I have had ever an inclination to **steal** from its parents[...]

But don't be jealous. I have a very affectionate memory of you all, besides Pi-pos: but *Pipos* I especially love.¹

For the sake of young Derwent Coleridge, Lamb went to Newbery's bookshop with his sister, intending to buy some books, which had once been their own childhood favourites, including *Goody Two-Shoes*. However, the trip to the bookshop was unpleasant.

At Newbery's, Charles Lamb discovered that nearly all his favourite children's books had disappeared from the usual shelves. Instead, a new type of literature occupied that space. Eventually, the Lambs obtained what they set out to look for, but Charles was alarmed by the phenomenon, as he told Samuel Taylor Coleridge in another letter dated October 23, 1802:

I am glad [...] Pi-pos's Books please.--Goody Two Shoes is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; & the Shopman at Newbery's hardly deign'd to reach them off an old exploded

¹ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 132; September 8, 1802), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 65-67 (pp. 66-67).

corner of a shelf, when Mary ask' d for them. Mrs. B' s & Mrs. Trimmer' s nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant & vapid as Mrs. B' s books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, & his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers, when he has learnt, that a Horse is an Animal, & Billy is better than a Horse, & such like: instead of that beautiful Interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to Poetry no less in the little walks of Children than with Men.--: Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives fables in childhood, you had been crammed with Geography & Natural History.? **Damn them.** I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those **Blights & Blasts** of all that is **Human** in man and child.²

The question prompted by Lamb in the letter, 'Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil?'³ seems to signify that, in as early as 1802, he had already considered writing for children himself, although Lamb' s first children' s book, *The King and Queen of Hearts*, was published no earlier than 1805. Nevertheless, a succession of children' s books soon followed *The King and Queen of Hearts: Tales from Shakespear* came out in 1806 (dated 1807 on the title-page); *The Adventures of Ulysses*, 1808; *Mrs. Leicester' s School*, 1808 (dated 1809 on the title-page), and so forth.

In the early twentieth century, children' s literature gradually became a subject, regarded as worthy of scholarly attention. *The Dawn of Juvenile Literature in England*, published in 1925 in Amsterdam, is one of the pioneering researches on the history of children' s books. Its author, Gesiena Andreä, has eagerly quoted Lamb' s October letter to Coleridge in the book, to define and describe the 'Juvenile

² Charles Lamb' s letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 136; October 23, 1802), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 80-83 (pp. 81-82).

³ *Ibid*, p. 82.

Literature of the nineteenth century' ⁴ and, simultaneously, praises the books written by Mary and Charles Lamb for children as 'worthier literature' than those condemned by Charles:⁵

At the beginning of the nineteenth century we find by the side of Mrs. Trimmer's, Mrs. Barbauld's and Miss Edgeworth's Juvenile Literature imbued with a utilitarian spirit, these delightful histories [*Mrs. Leicester's School* and *Tales from Shakespeare*] without moral reflections and without shallow learning.⁶

'*The Tales from Shakespeare*', as Andrea went on to remark, 'still rank under the best literature for young people.'⁷

In 1932, seven years after Gesiena Andrea had published *The Dawn of Juvenile Literature in England*, Harvey Darton brought out the famous *Children's Books in England*. In Darton's book, Charles Lamb is no longer thought to be 'a trustworthy guide'⁸ in such matters as either delineating the outlook of nineteenth century children's literature or judging the real value of any children's books. The same letter written by Lamb to Coleridge is quoted again but, this time, to exemplify the flaws in Lamb's argument:

He [Charles Lamb] had in mind, in memory, I think, the old familiar faces we all know - the folk in books who were never there in reality: the Robinson without prayers, the Red Riding Hood without a moral, the Aesop with no prosaic doubts about a fox's greed for 'raisins'. The sad truth is that Mrs Barbauld's books contained as much semi-detective 'stuff' as 'science', and some of them were in poetical prose which Elia himself might have respected; while *Goody Two-Shoes* itself was utterly remote from the region of 'tales and old wives' fables'. It was the very foundation of the Moral Tale - of *Mrs Leicester School*, for example - and of the unimaginative virtue-is-its-own-reward and virtue-pays-in-

⁴ Gesiena Andrea, *The Dawn of Juvenile Literature in England* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1925), p. 76.

Lamb's letter is quoted on pp. 115-16.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 116.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 131.

the-long-run type of story which, in spirit, Lamb so thoroughly abhorred. It was to Coleridge he condemned that sort of thing, not to Godwin, for whom he himself wrote the same kind of stuff.⁹

On reaching the final verdict that *Goody Two-Shoes* is 'a piece of serious English history';¹⁰ in other words, 'an [*sic.*] historical document'¹¹ rather than 'a good readable story',¹² Darton denies Charles Lamb the qualification of an able critic of children's literature:

Was Lamb justified? Is it [*Goody Two-Shoes*] a book for children of his day or of our day?¹³

Harvey Darton's *Children's Books in England* remains a standard reference today; anyone who wishes to study children's literature must be familiar with Darton's work. As a result, it is hardly surprising to see that Darton's opinions have been echoed by many more recent critics, and in numerous later publications on the same subject. To name but the few most well-known writers and their books or articles, there are John Rowe Townsend's revised editions of *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature* (since 1974),¹⁴ Gillian Avery's *Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁴ John Rowe Townsend only began to pay any attention to this issue in the second/revised edition of *Written for Children*; see John Rowe Townsend, *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature*, second edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974; rpt., 1976), pp. 34 & 43. In 1990, when the fifth/revised edition was issued, Townsend maintained the same opinions; see John Rowe Townsend, *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature*, fifth edition (London: Bodley Head, 1990), pp. 19 & 27.

Fiction 1770-1950 (1975)¹⁵ and her chapter on 'Morality and Levity 1780-1820', included in *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, a book edited by Peter Hunt (1995),¹⁶ George L. Barnett's "'That Cursed Barbauld Crew" or Charles Lamb and Children's Literature' (1979), printed in *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*,¹⁷ Joseph E. Riehl's *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature*, published as the ninety-fourth volume of the Romantic Reassessment series in 1980,¹⁸ and Geoffrey Summerfield's *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (1984).¹⁹ Geoffrey Summerfield did more than repeat and refer to what Darton has said in *Children's Books in England*; in 1984, he made a full and fearsome attack on both Lamb's view-points on children's books and his writings for children (see also Chapter II.)

In *Fantasy and Reason*, Geoffrey Summerfield has also quoted a considerable proportion of Lamb's October letter to Coleridge. As soon as the quotation comes to an end, Summerfield adopts an extremely vicious tone and dismisses Lamb's critical opinions as distasteful expressions of misogyny merely:

Lamb is here offering Coleridge an assurance that is in part an echo or mirror-image of Coleridge's own position; there is a hint of preening, too: a whiff of 'Thank God you were not perverted!'; and Lamb also indulges in a fashionable, rather silly contempt for blue-stockings, an attitude that is seen at its most repulsive in Southey, and often indulged in by Coleridge. In this letter Lamb

¹⁵ Gillian Avery, *Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction 1770-1950* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), p. 14.

¹⁶ Gillian Avery, '3. Morality and Levity 1780-1820', in Peter Hunt (ed.), *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 46-76 (53).

¹⁷ George L. Barnett, "'That Cursed Barbauld Crew" or Charles Lamb and Children's Literature', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin. The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 25 (1979), 1-18 (p. 3).

¹⁸ Joseph E. Riehl, *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature*, ed. by James Hogg, Romantic Reassessment 94 (Salzburg: Univ. of Salzburg, 1980), pp. 24 & 44.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 248.

[...] falls into some odd confusions and misrepresentations: for *Goody Two-Shoes* was a type of the very didacticism that Lamb is attacking! As for Mrs. Barbauld, had she not written [...] a poem entitled, 'To Mr. S. T. Coleridge, 1797' ! The inference is irresistible - that Lamb is playing up to Coleridge's prejudices.²⁰

Was Charles Lamb doing nothing in his letter, but 'playing up to Coleridge's prejudices'²¹? Was Lamb really no judge of the true worth of children's literature so that the stories, which he wrote for children, including the six tragic tales of *Tales from Shakespear*, inevitably turn out to be 'the same kind of stuff'²² that he found so offensive in 1802?

In this chapter, I intend to re-examine Charles Lamb's October letter in detail and to prove how much the contents of the letter have been twisted and misunderstood over the years. Also, a full account of Lamb's ideal children's literature will be given, along with a discussion on how Lamb integrated his ideas into his writings, especially, the six tragic tales included in *Tales from Shakespear*, published during the Christmas season of 1806.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 131.

1.

In *Fantasy and Reason*, Geoffrey Summerfield asserts that Charles Lamb 'falls into some odd confusions and misrepresentations'²³ in his epistolary criticism, written on October 23, 1802 on early nineteenth century children's literature. As a matter of fact, it is Summerfield himself, who falls into some odd confusions, while commenting upon Lamb's letter. To argue against Lamb's opinions and to prove that Mrs. Barbauld was capable of writing poetry, Summerfield mentions her poem 'To Mr. S. T. Coleridge, 1797'.²⁴ In fact, Barbauld had written some other, far better poems than the one dedicated 'To Mr. S. T. Coleridge, 1797', and one of her best poetic works, 'Life', is still included in certain anthologies of English literature.²⁵ However, these are beside the point, for neither 'To Mr. S. T. Coleridge, 1797' nor 'Life' were written for children. Besides, in Lamb's letter to Coleridge, he gave a very specific example of Barbauld's writings for children, which he so abhorred:

Knowledge insignificant & vapid as Mrs. B[arbauld]'s books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, & his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers, when he has learnt, that a Horse is an Animal, & Billy is better than a Horse, & such like[...]²⁶

²³ Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 248.

²⁴ A few lines of the poem are also quoted in Summerfield's book. See the previous footnote.

²⁵ For example, see M. H. Abrams (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, sixth edition, 2 vols. (London: Norton, 1993), II, 866.

²⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 136; October 23, 1802), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 80-83 (p. 81).

In the third part of Mrs. Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*,²⁷ there is a passage which verbally resembles that given example in Lamb's letter:

Do you know why you are better than Puss? Puss can play as well as you; and Puss can drink milk, and lie upon the carpet; and she can run as fast as you, and faster too, a great deal; and she can climb trees better; and she can catch mice, which you cannot do. But can Puss talk? No. Can Puss read? No. Then that is the reason why you are better than Puss--because you can talk and read. Can Pierrot, your dog, read? No. Will you teach him? Take the pin, and point to the words. No--he will not learn. I never saw a little dog or cat learn to read. But little boys can learn. If you do not learn, Charles, you are not good for half as much as a Puss. You had better be drowned.²⁸

From the outset of this extract, 'Do you know why you are better than Puss?'²⁹ an obviously didactic tone prevails. The speaker, who asks the question, has already assumed a superior position as a provider of knowledge. What kind of knowledge is conveyed but of the most factual kind:

Puss [...] can catch mice, which you cannot do[...] the reason why you are better than Puss--because you can talk and read.³⁰

This kind of knowledge confines children within the boundary of this material world and does not allow their imagination to stretch out into the other realm. Furthermore, what is the ultimate purpose of providing children with that knowledge but to contrive a trivial moral, 'If you do not learn, Charles, you are not good for half as much as a Puss',³¹ which is simply too strained and too judgmental for Lamb's taste.

In one of Charles Lamb's *Elia* essays, 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster', he satirically classified the nineteenth century moralists, like Mrs. Barbauld and Mrs.

²⁷ The third part of Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* was first published in 1779, under the title of *Second Part of Lessons for Children, of Three Years Old*.

²⁸ Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Second Part of Lessons for Children, of Three Years Old* (Dublin: Jackson, 1779), pp. 4-7.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 4-6.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

Trimmer (whose works will soon be discussed too), as 'the modern schoolmaster' .³²

As explained further by Lamb in the essay, such persistent moralisation as Barbauld's and Trimmer's, on every sight and sound offered by surrounding environments and occasions, gives no joy to either the teacher or the taught:

He [The modern schoolmaster] must insinuate knowledge at the *mollia tempora fandi*. He must seize every occasion--the season of the year--the time of the day--a passing cloud--a rainbow--a waggon of hay--a regiment of soldiers going by--to inculcate something useful. He can receive no pleasure from a casual glimpse of Nature, but must catch at it as an object of instruction. He must interpret beauty into the picturesque. He cannot relish a beggar-man, or a gipsy, for thinking of the suitable improvement. Nothing comes to him, not spoiled by the sophisticating medium of moral uses. The Universe--that Great Book, as it has been called--is to him indeed, to all intents and purposes, a book, out of which he is doomed to read tedious homilies to distasting schoolboys.³³

By 'explaining every thing', as Lamb also says elsewhere in 'Play-House Memoranda', 'We crush the faculty of delight and wonder in children' .³⁴

Charles Lamb had a good reason for singling out this particular publication of Mrs. Barbauld as an instance of bad children's books, for the first part of *Lessons for Children* was designed for children from two to three years old, and Derwent Coleridge was two years old in 1802. However, what Lamb did at Newbery's bookshop was probably turning a few pages over, instead of carefully perusing the whole book, which, altogether, consisted of four parts. Therefore, Lamb did not realise that 'Mrs. Barbauld's books contained as much semi-detective "stuff" as

³² Charles Lamb, 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 49-55 (p. 52).

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 52-53.

³⁴ Charles Lamb, 'Play-House Memoranda', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 158-60 (p. 160).

“science”’,³⁵ as justly described by Harvey Darton in *Children’s Books in England*.

In the final part of *Lessons for Children*,³⁶ for example, Mrs. Barbauld applies the technique of personification while introducing young Charles Aikins, the hero of the book, to the Sun and the Moon. Part of the Sun’s speech addressed directly to Charles Aikins, Mrs. Barbauld’s nephew and adopted son, goes like this:

The Sun says, My name is Sun: I am very bright[...] I look in at your window with my bright golden eye, and tell you when it is time to get up; and I say, Sluggard, get up[...] I have a crown upon my head of bright beams, and I send forth my rays every where[...] I give you light, and I give you heat, for I make it warm. I make the fruit ripen, and the corn ripen. If I did not shine upon the fields, and upon the gardens nothing would grow[...] I have been in the sky a great while. Four years ago there was no Charles; Charles was not alive then, but there was a sun. I was in the sky before papa and mamma were alive, a great many years ago; and I am not grown old yet. Sometimes I take off my crown of bright rays and wrap up my head in thin silver clouds, and then you may look at me; but when there are no clouds, and I shine with all my brightness at noon-day, you cannot look at me, for I should dazzle your eyes, and make you blind[...] I shine in all places[...] I am the most beautiful and glorious creature that can be seen in the whole world.³⁷

This mode of speech used by Barbauld to introduce children to the Sun and the Moon, was soon to be outlawed by Mrs. Trimmer in 1803, for involving metaphorical expressions:

The description of the *sun*, as given in the *first person*, we think may convey an idea to children, that this bright luminary is the DEITY; and an objection of the same nature may be made to the description of the moon.³⁸

Therefore, Charles Lamb’s attack on Mrs. Barbauld’s books for children was not unfounded but too harsh. Whereas, Mrs. Trimmer deserved the full force of his

³⁵ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children’s Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 131.

³⁶ The final part of *Lessons for Children* was first published under the title of *Lessons for Children from Three to Four Years Old*.

³⁷ Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children from Three to Four Years Old* (London: Johnson, 1788), pp. 95-104.

³⁸ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* (London: Hatchard, 1802-6), II (1803), 45.

condemnation.

Mrs. Trimmer was a life-long devotee of the establishment of Sunday schools and the improvement of education especially for the poor. Among all her books for children, *Fabulous Histories*, remembered now as *The Robins*, is the most famous and typical of Trimmer's writings. The episodes of *Fabulous Histories* were primarily intended to be published as religious tracts. When they were first collected and published in book form in 1786, Mrs. Trimmer had firmly established herself as a respectable children's writer, and the stories had already enjoyed a universal favour among children of the lower classes. It is no wonder, therefore, that the collected volume was issued jointly by several publishers, including Longman, Johnson and J. Robinson, who were confident of its immediate sale.

Fabulous Histories. Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals is based on the idea of having a family of birds, the Redbreasts, to make observations on a human family, the Bensons, and *vice versa*. All the happenings take place in a familial background, and nothing goes beyond the domestic affairs of the families and their neighbours, either of the Bensons or of the Redbreasts. Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories* is the fountainhead of many other, far better written, animal stories, such as Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) and Richard Adams's *Watership Down* (1972), which would come in later years.

The most fundamental purpose of Mrs. Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories* is, of course, to campaign for animal rights, as suggested both in its full title and in Trimmer's 'Advertisement' :

It certainly comes within the compass of *Christian Benevolence*, to show compassion to the *Animal Creation*; and a good mind naturally inclines to do so. But as, through an erroneous education, or bad example, many children contract habits of *tormenting* inferior creatures, before they are conscious of giving them

pain; or fall into [the] contrary fault of *immoderate tenderness* to them; it is hoped, that an attempt to point out the line of conduct, which ought to regulate the actions of *human* beings, towards those, over whom the SUPREME GOVERNOR hath given them dominion, will not be thought an useless undertaking: and that the mode of conveying instruction on this subject, which the Author of the following sheets has adopted, will engage the attention of young minds, and prove instrumental to the happiness of many an innocent animal.³⁹

To achieve the specified aim, Trimmer has been extremely cautious about not passing on any incorrect ideas or knowledge, regarding the animals that appear in her book.

Although the stories are supposed to be fables, *Fabulous Histories* begins with a demythologised introduction, in which children are especially cautioned against the notion of talking animals:

but before Henry and Charlotte began to read these Histories, they were taught to consider them, not as containing the real conversations of Birds, (for that is impossible we should ever understand,) but as a series of FABLES, intended to convey moral instruction applicable to themselves, at the same time that they excite compassion and tenderness for those interesting and delightful creatures, on which such wanton cruelties are frequently inflicted, and recommend *universal Benevolence*.⁴⁰

With such a relentless prior design on her young readers' heads and minds, not a story, out of the entire volume, is told for its own sake.

The whole volume of *Fabulous Histories* is so heavily moralistic that almost every page contains a moral lesson for children to learn. These moral lessons with regard to the qualities of obedience, tolerance, selflessness and so on, do not simply emerge from the stories. It is more often the case that Trimmer preaches them explicitly to her young readers through a monologue of some respectful character or in an appended authorial summary of the event. At times, purely for the sake of moralising, Trimmer forces an animal, e.g. a mock-bird, to live and act outside of its

³⁹ Sarah Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories. Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals* (London: Longman, 1786), pp. vii-viii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. x-xi.

natural environment and inclination. It may sound paradoxical to Trimmer's doctrine, but she has thought of a way out of the difficulty. By supplying a footnote, Trimmer, on one hand, excuses the ambivalence of her attitude as a well-meaning compromise; on the other hand, she provides her young readers with desirous facts, in terms of natural history:

* The Mock-Bird is properly a native of America, but is introduced here [in England] for the sake of the moral.⁴¹

Although *Fabulous Histories* was written and published mainly with the readership of children in mind, much of Trimmer's moral instruction was meant for adults too.

In the narration of several incidents befalling the Addis family, Mrs. Trimmer warns parents against the evils, which result from permitting servants to take over their children's education. Mrs. Addis, a rich widow-mother of two children, prefers her pet-animals to her seven-year-old daughter, Miss Augusta, so Augusta is constantly left to the company and guidance of the maid-servant. As can be expected, Augusta is not properly brought up. In order to control Augusta's bad temper and behaviour, the servant supplies her with various unhealthy bribes instead of good moral education. One day, Augusta is presented to a visitor, Mrs. Benson;

Mrs. Benson was quite shocked to see how sickly, dirty, and ragged this child was, and what a vulgar figure she made, for want of instruction[...]⁴²

As for the long-term effect, Trimmer did not fail to point it out in the concluding chapter of *Fabulous Histories*:

In the meantime, her children grew up, and having experienced no tenderness from her [Mrs. Addis], they scarcely knew they had a mamma; nor did those who had the care of their education inculcate, that her want of affection *did not cancel their duty*; they therefore treated her with the utmost neglect, and she had no friend left[...] and [...] ended her days in sorrow and regret[...] Miss Addis being, as I observed in a former part of this history, left to the care of servants,

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 141.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 104.

grew up with very contracted notions. Among other prejudices, she imbibed that of being afraid of spiders, frogs, and other harmless things[...] she extended her fears to every kind of creature, and could not take a walk in the fields, or even in the street, without a thousand apprehensions. At last, her constitution, which from bad nursing, was very delicate, was still more weakened by her continual apprehensions; and a rat happening to run across the path, as she was walking, she fell into fits, which afflicted her, at intervals, during the remainder of her life.⁴³

Charles Lamb was born and brought up in the serving class. How would he feel about and respond to such a low but fashionable opinion of the servants? (see Chapter II.)

In the early nineteenth century, Mrs. Trimmer was as much an authoritative critic of children's literature as a major children's writer. In the line of education, the five volumes of *The Guardian of Education* were remarkable endeavours. From 1802 to 1806, Trimmer produced a massive quantity of review-articles on various children's books, collected in *The Guardian of Education*. She scrutinised almost everything which was available in the juvenile book-market of her days, and her witch-hunt knew no bounds. The removal of *Goody Two-Shoes* from its usual place at Newbery's shop might owe something to Trimmer's campaign for safe-guarding children's reading, although Trimmer's book-review of *Goody Two-Shoes* did not come out until November 1802.

In the first volume of *The Guardian of Education*, Mrs. Trimmer expressed a strong 'wish' to have 'some parts' of *Goody Two-Shoes* 'to be altered, or omitted'.⁴⁴ She noticed that the 'observations upon animals' in the book 'are not quite correct'.⁴⁵ Moreover, one of the episodes is a pseudo ghost-story, '*How the whole Parish was frightened*'⁴⁶ by Lady Ducklington's ghost, which evoked in

⁴³ *Ibid*, pp. 222-24.

⁴⁴ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* (London: Hatchard, 1802-6), I (1802), 430.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 431.

⁴⁶ [Anonymous], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes*,

Trimmer 'a very great objection.'⁴⁷ Witchcraft is introduced in another chapter of the book, which is a pseudo witch-story regarding '*How Mrs. Margery was taken up for a Witch*'.⁴⁸ As far as Trimmer was concerned,

if nothing had been introduced about witchcraft, the Book would in our opinion have been more complete.⁴⁹

Above all else, the social evil exposed in the first two chapters of the book, is exactly what Trimmer would keep children completely ignorant about.

In the introductory chapter of *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, Margery Meanwell, *alias* Goody Two-Shoes, was the daughter of 'a considerable Farmer'⁵⁰ and 'lived comfortably'.⁵¹ She was orphaned by 'the wicked Persecutions of Sir Timothy Gripe, and an over-grown Farmer called *Graspall*.'⁵² Because Farmer Meanwell 'was a charitable good Man'⁵³ and always 'stood up for the Poor at the Parish Meetings,'⁵⁴ his 'Opposition' 'gave Offence' to the tyrannical Sir Timothy Gripe,⁵⁵ who was not only the 'perpetual Overseer' of the estate,⁵⁶ where the Meanwells lived, but also the 'perpetual Church-warden', 'perpetual Surveyor of

third edition (London: Newbery, 1766), p. 45.

⁴⁷ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 5 vols. (London: Hatchard, 1802-6), I, 431.

⁴⁸ [Anonymous], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes*, third edition (London: Newbery, 1766), p. 121.

⁴⁹ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 5 vols. (London: Hatchard, 1802-6), I, 431.

⁵⁰ [Anonymous], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes*, third edition (London: Newbery, 1766), p. 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 6.

the Highways', etc.⁵⁷ Sir Timothy, with the assistance of Graspall, tried to force Farmer Meanwell out of his farm. Farmer Meanwell sought help from the Law, but 'the Law was so expensive, that he was ruined in the Contest'.⁵⁸ Sir Timothy seized the opportunity and turned the Meanwells 'out of Doors, without any of the Necessaries of Life to support them.'⁵⁹ At the beginning of the first chapter, Farmer Meanwell died of 'a violent Fever',⁶⁰ and his wife 'survived the Loss of her Husband but a few Days, and died of a broken heart.'⁶¹ Living conditions became so devastating for Margery that all she 'had' was 'but one [Shoe].'⁶² Mr. and Mrs. Smith of the same parish took pity of her and would 'breed her up with their Family',⁶³ if 'that Tyrant of the Parish, that *Graspall*' and Sir Timothy did not interfere again and 'threatened' to ruin them too.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Mrs. Smith gave Margery a pair of new shoes, before they send her away; hence, Margery 'obtained the Name of *Goody Two-Shoes*.'⁶⁵ The two shoes mark the turning point in Margery's life, for they enable her to wander up and down the parish, and discover some means to teach herself to spell and read. With her learning, Margery finally becomes 'a trotting Tutoress'⁶⁶ and rises from 'a state of Rags and Care'⁶⁷ to that of riches.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

In the book-review of *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, printed in the first volume of *The Guardian of Education*, Mrs. Trimmer argues that Margery and her brother can still be 'represented as helpless orphans, without imputing their distress to crimes, of which young readers can form no accurate judgment.'⁶⁸ In particular, 'in these times,'⁶⁹ Trimmer continues in her article,

when such pains are taken to prejudice the poor against the higher orders, and to set them against parish officers, we could wish to have a veil thrown over the faults of oppressive 'squires and hard-hearted overseers[...] and should these readers be of the *lowest class*, such a narration as this might tend to prejudice their minds during life, against those whose favour it may be their future interest to conciliate, and who may be provoked by their insolence (the fruit of this prejudice) to treat them with harshness instead of kindness.⁷⁰

As opposed to Sarah Trimmer, Charles Lamb had a great relish of such an account of social evil.

Charles Lamb was thoroughly convinced that a truthful representation of social evil, either in books, such as *The History of Goody Two-Shoes*, or in pictures, such as Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*, contains 'the "scorn of vice" and the "pity" too.'⁷¹ It is 'something to touch the heart, and keep alive the sense of moral beauty.'⁷² The heart can only be 'made better'⁷³ by feeding it with this '*strong meat for men*.'⁷⁴ By contrast, in those children's books which would be approved of and

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, title-page.

⁶⁸ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 5 vols. (London: Hatchard, 1802-6), I, 431.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

⁷¹ Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With Some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 70-86 (p. 83).

⁷² *Ibid*.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 82.

recommended by Mrs. Trimmer, charity was always taught through platitudinous narratives: good boys or girls relieve a famished beggar by their penny or half-penny and win praises for their generosity. For example, there is a standard narrative of the kind in Mrs. Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*:

It is cold, Charles, very cold! [...] I wonder what poor little boys do, that have no fire to go to, and no shoes and stockings to keep them warm, and no good papas and mammas to take care of them and give them victuals. Poor little boys! Do not cry, Charles, for here is a halfpenny, and when you see one of those poor little boys you shall give it him: he will go and buy a roll with it, for he is very hungry; and he will say, Thank you, Charles, you are very good to me!⁷⁵

Charles Lamb has admitted that these well-meaning children's stories 'are doubtless [...] pretty things to teach the first rudiments of humanity',⁷⁶ but they are 'milk for babes',⁷⁷ which is not nutritious enough for children's minds and nourishes vanity rather than virtue in the long run. It is important for children to learn about alms-giving, but it is even more vital for them to understand the causes and the motives that prompt and call for such a charitable act. If children learn about charity merely from the latter example, as given in Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*, they can but imitate the act of alms-giving. In that case, it is some vague and vain notion of self-gratification which motivates the act. More harm than good may come from it; or, at least, the alms may be thrown away and totally wasted.

In order to credit his argument, Charles Lamb has cited an example from his own childhood experience in 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig'. He shows what a

⁷⁵ Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Lessons for Children, of Three Years Old. Part I* (Dublin: Jackson, 1779), pp. 68-70.

⁷⁶ Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With Some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 70-86 (p. 81).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

ridiculous and undesirable effect the approved nineteenth century moral tales could work on a child's mentality:

My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweet-meat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcombry of charity, school-boy-like, I made him a present of--the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction[...]⁷⁸

However, Lamb also learned about charity from the other kind of children's stories, such as *Goody Two-Shoes*. Therefore, he was able to detect and bitterly regret his own folly soon enough:

but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I--I myself, and not another--would eat her nice cake [...]-and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness[.]⁷⁹

Goody Two-Shoes cannot be the same type of book that Mrs. Trimmer wrote for children, since it contains so many elements that Trimmer would certainly not tolerate; not to say, include in her own writings. Evidently, Geoffrey Summerfield is wrong again in making the assumption in *Fantasy and Reason*, that '*Goody Two-Shoes* was a type of the very didacticism that Lamb is attacking!' ⁸⁰ even though the book is, as Harvey Darton manifests in the *Children's Books in England*, 'the very

⁷⁸ Charles Lamb, 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 120-26 (p. 125).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 248.

foundation of the Moral Tale.’⁸¹

John Newbery, the publisher, who brought out the first edition of *Goody Two-Shoes*,⁸² was one of the pioneers in the business of the children’s books trade. In 1745, when Newbery moved to the Bible and Sun in St. Paul’s Churchyard, he was quick to see that children’s literature deserved special attention and development. Apparently, he also captured the fact that the wide circulation of chapbooks, since the reign of Queen Anne, had catered for a huge public which consisted mainly of peasants and children. Based on the existing chapbooks, Newbery deliberately set up a higher standard in writing, printing and binding of his own children’s books. In a word, Newbery’s books were chapbooks in an improved format. The contents of chapbooks, in particular, were of a miscellaneous nature. Many folk beliefs and customs of English peasantry, old wives’ tales about witches and ghosts, English legends about Robin Hood and Jack, the Giant-Killer, traditionally handed down by word of mouth, found their way into the printed world of the chapbooks. Similar to the comic books of our modern time, chapbooks were viewed suspiciously or even despised by the parents of a more sophisticated class in Newbery’s days. Newbery knew that it was essential to convince parents that reading his children’s books would do their children good; otherwise, parents simply would not buy his books. Purely for commercial reasons, Newbery often paraphrased or quoted John Locke’s educational theories in his publications. Without exception, *Goody Two-Shoes*, one of Newbery’s very first publications for children, was full of moralisation in the Lockean fashion. For example, the moral reflection of the seventh chapter,

⁸¹ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children’s Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 131.

⁸² No copy of the first edition of *Goody Two-Shoes* has survived. The earliest traceable copy is that of

'Containing an Account of all the Spirits, or Ghosts, she [Goody Two-Shoes] saw in the Church',⁸³ is:

After this, my dear Children, I hope you will not believe any foolish Stories that ignorant, weak, or designing People may tell you about *Ghosts*; for the Tales of *Ghosts, Witches, and Fairies*, are the Frolicks of a distempered Brain. No wise Man ever saw either of them. Little *Margery* you see was not afraid; no, she had *good Sense, and a good Conscience*, which is a Cure for all these imaginary Evils.⁸⁴

The moral is clearly derived from one of John Locke's principles, as laid out in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693):

I would not have Children troubled whilst young with Notions of *Spirits*, whereby my meaning was, that I think it inconvenient, that their yet tender Minds should receive early impressions of *Goblins, Spectres, and Apparitions*, wherewith their Maids, and those about them, are apt to fright them into a compliance with their Orders, which often proves a great inconvenience to them all their Lives after, by subjecting their Minds to Frights, fearful Apprehensions, Weakness, and Superstition; which, when coming abroad into the World, and Conversation, they grow weary and asham'd of, if not seldom happens, that to make as they think, a thorough Cure, and ease themselves of a load, which has sate so heavy on them, they throw away the thoughts of all *Spirits* together, and so run into the other but worse extream [*sic*].⁸⁵

In order to reinforce the impression that Goody Two-Shoes was a brave and virtuous girl, 'shut in all Night'⁸⁶ in the 'Parish Church' where 'Lady Ducklington [...] was buried'⁸⁷ but never afraid, some sensational narration typical of the ghost stories, however, is given in the preceding chapter, '*How the whole Parish was*

the third, published in 1766.

⁸³ [Anonymous], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes*, third edition (London: Newbery, 1766), p. 51.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 56.

⁸⁵ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. by John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 245-46.

⁸⁶ [Anonymous], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes*, third edition (London: Newbery, 1766), p. 49.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 45.

frighted' :⁸⁸

After which [the Corpse of *Lady Ducklington* was interred], in the Night, or rather about Four o' Clock in the Morning, the Bells were heard to jingle in the Steeple, which frightened the People prodigiously, who all thought it was *Lady Ducklington'* s Ghost dancing among the Bell-ropes.⁸⁹

With or without the moral lesson, children are perfectly able to enjoy and indulge their imagination with this kind of ghostly horror, as long as the ghost stories are retained in their books. Children' s peculiar capacity to disregard the pointed moral in their books has also been observed by Charles Lamb. When speaking from his personal experience, Lamb recalls how he responded to the Biblical parables as a child-reader in the *Elia* essay on 'All Fool' s Day' :

When a child, with child-like apprehensions, that dived not below the surface of the matter, I read those *Parables*--not guessing at their involved wisdom--I had more yearnings towards that simple architect, that built his house upon the sand, than I entertained for his more cautious neighbour; I grudged at the hard censure pronounced upon the quiet soul that kept his talent[...]⁹⁰

More importantly, perhaps, children inwardly yearn for these fictional tales. If they do not read them in books, they find horrors and sensations elsewhere:

Dear little T[hornton] H[unt]⁹¹ who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition--who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to read or hear of any distressing story--finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own "thick-coming fancies;" and from his midnight pillow, this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquility.⁹²

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

⁹⁰ Charles Lamb, 'All Fool's Day', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 42-44 (p. 44).

⁹¹ Son of Leigh Hunt.

⁹² Charles Lamb, 'Witches, and Other Night-fears', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays*

It is not only useless to prevent children from reading these fantasies and imaginary tales, or try to protect them from superstitions or irrational fears, but such precautions are purely unnecessary. Charles Lamb pronounced in one of his most famous *Elia* essays, 'Witches, And Other Night-fears', that

Credulity is the man's weakness, but the child's strength.⁹³

Through frequent contact with these stories, children's resilience has the chance to be developed, and the faculty of delight and wonder is preserved and strengthened.

Lamb then goes on to cite Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet, as the best example:

There is Coleridge, at his will can conjure up icy domes, and pleasure-houses for Kubla Khan, and Abyssinian maids, and songs of Abara, and caverns,
Where Alph, the sacred river, runs,
to solace his night solitudes--⁹⁴

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was of Lamb's mind, as he wrote to Thomas Poole on October 16, 1797:

For from my early reading of Faery [*sic*] Tales, & Genii [*sic*] &c &c--my mind had been habituated to the *Vast*--& I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions not by my *sight*--even at that age [about seven or eight]. Should children be permitted to read Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii [*sic*]?--I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative.--I know not other way of giving the mind a love of 'the Great', & 'the Whole' .-- Those who have been led to the same truths step by step thro' the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess--They contemplate nothing but *parts*--and all *parts* are necessarily little--and the Universe to them is but a mass of *little things*.--It is true that the mind *may* become credulous & prone to superstition by the former method--but are not the Experimentalists credulous even to madness in believing any absurdity, rather than believe the grandest truths, if they have not the testimony of their own senses in their favor?--I have known some who have been *rationaly* educated, as it is styled. They were marked by a microscopic acuteness; but when they looked at great things, all became a blank & they saw nothing--and denied (very illogically) that any thing could be seen; and uniformly put the negation of a

of *Elia*), 65-70 (p. 68).

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.66.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 69.

power for the possession of a power--& called the want of imagination
Judgment, & the never being moved to Rapture Philosophy!--⁹⁵

Charles Lamb was undoubtedly sure of his friend's sympathy, when he wrote the often quoted and discussed letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1802. It was not because, as surmised by Geoffrey Summerfield in *Fantasy and Reason*, Lamb was playing up to Coleridge's misogynistic prejudices, but because Lamb knew his close friend and fellow Romantic critic shared the same ideas about what children's literature should be.

⁹⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge's letter to Thomas Poole (Letter 210; October 16, 1797), in *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71), I (1785-1800), 352-55 (pp. 354-55).

2.

The sustained publication of *Goody Two-Shoes* would definitely amaze Harvey Darton (d. 1936), if he were still alive today. In 1932, he prophesied in the first edition of *Children's Books in England*, that Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes*, which 'is not even a good readable story of its kind,'⁹⁶ was 'entirely of its period and died with it,'⁹⁷ and 'no amount of sentiment can anyhow revive it.'⁹⁸ In 1982, when a third/revised edition of *Children's Books in England* was called for, the editor, Brian Alderson, though he made no direct comment upon Darton's criticism of *Goody Two-Shoes* (as quoted earlier), inserted a new illustration on the same page, where Darton's words were re-printed. It was a photograph of 'A modern eight-page chapbook from Raphael Tuck's *Tiny Tuck* series, sold to be read in air raid shelters c. 1940!'⁹⁹ The title of the book read '*The Story of Goody Two Shoes.*'¹⁰⁰

Brian Alderson was also the editor of one Garland edition of *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, first published in 1977 and available for the following twenty years. There was also a paper-back edition of *Goody Two-Shoes*, which was brought out by Applewood Books in 1992 and just went out of print last year (1998).

⁹⁶ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1931), p. 131.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Brian Alderson's description of the additional illustration, in F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life*, ed. by Brian Alderson, third edition (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 131.

¹⁰⁰ The title is printed on the front cover of the book. See: the photograph included in F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life*, ed. by Brian Alderson, third

Currently, in the book-market, apart from a sumptuous Genesis edition of Newbery's *History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, there is a pantomime play-text, adapted by Richard Hills and made available since 1995 at the price of £ 3.70.

It is true that Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* was a loosely constructed story. The time sequence is obscure; the narration is all episodic. However, Harvey Darton made a mistake in declaring that

Goody Two-Shoes itself was utterly remote from the region of 'tales and old wives' fables'. It was the very foundation of [...] the unimaginative virtue-is-its-own-reward and virtue-pays-in-the-long-run type of story, which, in spirit, Lamb so thoroughly abhorred.¹⁰¹

The virtue-is-its-own-reward and virtue-pays-in-the-long-run type of story is, in fact, deeply rooted in folklore. For instance, the heroine of tale type 403, 'The Black and the White Bride',¹⁰² is always characterised by the virtues of courtesy and kindness. In the beginning of the story, she is driven out of doors by her unkind step-mother to perform some impossible task, e.g. to fetch strawberries in a snowy winter. On her way, she meets a stranger in need. Regardless of her own distress, she is courteous and helpful to the stranger and receives, as gifts, great beauty and the power of dropping flowers and jewels from her mouth. A prince comes along and is impressed by her magical beauty and riches. He marries her and she is thus rewarded with a royal husband too. The most famous version of the tale type, handed down in the form of literature, is Charles Perrault's 'The Fairy', included in his *Histoires or*

edition (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 131.

¹⁰¹ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 131.

¹⁰² For the standard reference to the tale type, see Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folk-Tale. A Classification and Bibliography*, trans. and ed. by Stith Thompson (New York: Franklin, 1971), p. 64.

Tales of Past Times (1729).¹⁰³ During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, Perrault's 'The Fairy' was also known, by English boys and girls, as *Toads and Diamonds* in chapbook form.¹⁰⁴

In Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes*, Margery is characterised by the virtues of industry and diligence. Regardless of her poverty, she persists in the pursuit of knowledge, and becomes a learned teacher and a wise woman. During her trial for practising witchcraft, Margery Two-Shoes, instead of being convicted as a witch, proves 'her Virtue, good Sense, and prudent Behaviour.'¹⁰⁵ Sir Charles Jones, one of 'the Gentlemen present',¹⁰⁶ becomes so 'enamoured with her'¹⁰⁷ that he 'soon after made her Proposals of Marriage.'¹⁰⁸ The attraction of *Goody Two-Shoes*'s story lies exactly in its basic plot, which was borrowed from folk origins.

Disregarding its lack of a neat story-line, *Goody Two-Shoes* has been chosen and adapted into pantomimes,¹⁰⁹ a particular type of entertainment, based on the dramatisation of a fairy tale or traditional nursery story.¹¹⁰ Therefore, Charles Lamb

¹⁰³ Charles Perrault's 'The Fairy' was first translated into English in 1729. The most accessible text of that edition is the one re-printed in Iona and Peter Opie (eds.), *The Classic Fairy Tales* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 98-102.

¹⁰⁴ For example, there is a facsimile text of Catnach's chapbook, *Toads and Diamonds*, included in Victor E. Neuburg, *The Penny Histories. A Study of Chapbooks for Young Readers Over Two Centuries* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 185-92.

¹⁰⁵ [Anonymous], *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes; Otherwise Called, Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes*, third edition (London: Newbery, 1766), p. 129.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁹ Apart from Richard Hill's printed text of the pantomime, at least one of the pantomime versions of *Goody Two-Shoes* has been actually staged. The Local History Department of the Birmingham City Centre Library preserves some production-photographs of another pantomime, adapted from the story of *Goody Two-Shoes* by Emile Littler.

¹¹⁰ For the full definition of twentieth century pantomime, see the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

was totally justified in recommending Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* to children as one of the 'Tales and old wives fables'¹¹¹ in 1802.

In Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, dated October 23, 1802, furthermore, he expressed no objection whatsoever to the kind of moral lessons preached in the folk tales. On the contrary, Lamb wrote of 'all that is **Human** in man and child'¹¹² and 'that beautiful Interest in wild tales,'¹¹³

which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child.¹¹⁴

It is because, in a folk tale, not only are the moral and the story inseparable, but both the moral and the story share the genuine concerns and interests of the common people.

The distressed step-daughter, who appears in the type of folk tales labelled as 'The Black and the White Bride'¹¹⁵, for example, is the prototype heroine. She is physically vulnerable and superficially insignificant, but capable of achieving something rich and strange in a hostile world. Notwithstanding the odds against her, she insists upon maintaining certain degrees of human decency, and ultimately triumphs through the operation of good fortune, through the aid of magic and through feats of endurance. These folk tales, though fantastic and unrealistic, address a symbolic truth about the insubordinate spirit locked away inside those who are treated without question as naturally subordinate, i.e. poor people or people of the lower

¹¹¹ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 136; October 23, 1802), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 80-83 (p. 82).

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 82.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 81.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁵ Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folk-Tale. A Classification and Bibliography*, trans. and ed. by Stith

classes, women and, particularly, children. This kind of moral belongs to mankind's own morals rather than those of one particular epoch. This is also the same moral world, which integrates Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes*.

The folk tales were once treated as amoral or even immoral by the moralists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Mrs. Trimmer, chiefly because of their inclusion of elements of horror, brutality, superstition, and disregard for class-distinction in society.¹¹⁶ Based on the same objections to folk tales, Trimmer also found fault with some parts of Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* (as discussed earlier in the chapter.) However, while telling a story about the struggle between good and evil, it is simply impossible to introduce the virtuous hero without the devilish villains. Meanwhile, the villains in the story have a crucial part to play. The more evil and dangerous villains the hero has to encounter, the greater his conquests will be. The more dark and sinister forces are involved in the story, the more sensationally pleasurable it gets. Besides, these villains are of some moral use too, as Charles Lamb proclaims in the essay 'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity' :

The tales of our nursery,--the reading of our youth,--the ill-looking man that was hired by the Uncle to dispatch the Children in the Wood¹¹⁷,--[...]--the exaggerations of picture and of poetry,--what we have read and what we have dreamed of,--rise up and crown upon us such eye-scaring portraits of the man of blood, that our pen is absolutely forestalled[...] The fiction [...] is accordant with those wise prejudices with which nature has guarded our innocence, as with impassable barriers, against the commission of such appalling crimes[.]¹¹⁸

Thompson (New York: Franklin, 1971), p. 64.

¹¹⁶ See: Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* (London: Hatchard, 1802-6), II (1803), 185-86.

¹¹⁷ It refers to the old ballad, which was widely circulated through eighteenth century chapbooks. For example, there is a facsimile reprint in Victor E. Neuburg (ed.), *The Penny Histories: A Study of Chapbooks for Young Readers Over Two Centuries* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 129-44.

¹¹⁸ Charles Lamb, 'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity; With a Hint to Those Who Have the Framing of Advertisements for Apprehending Offenders', in Charles and Mary

As a natural consequence, when Charles Lamb came to write for the Juvenile Library, he made frequent use of folklore or directly employed these elements of folk tales in his children's stories.

Charles Lamb's first book for children, *The King and Queen of Hearts*, was a re-working of the traditional nursery rhyme. *Mrs. Leicester's School*, published in 1808, was a collaboration of Charles Lamb and his sister, Mary. One of the three stories that Charles Lamb contributed to the volume is a semi-autobiography, 'Maria Howe' or 'The Witch Aunt'. Vividly, Lamb gives a detailed account of how reading witch-stories had once caused, in his childish mind, some confused notion about his maiden aunt:

The stories of witches so terrified me, that my sleeps were broken, and in my dreams I always had a fancy of a witch being in the room with me[...] One night that I had been terrified in my sleep with my imaginations, I got out of bed, and crept softly to the adjoining room. My room was next to where my aunt usually sat when she was alone[...] The old lady was not yet retired to rest[...] her head nodding over her prayer-book; her lips mumbling the words as she read them, or half read them, in her dozing posture: her grotesque appearance; her old-fashioned dress [...]; all this, with the dead time of night, as it seemed to me, [...]all joined to produce a wicked fancy in me, that the form which I had beheld was not my aunt, but some witch. [...]I shrunk back terrified and bewildered to my bed, where I lay in broken sleeps and miserable fancies, till the morning, which I had so much reason to wish for, came.¹¹⁹

Mrs. Leicester's School was, in general, much admired as a children's classic in the nineteenth century; however, many parents 'would not' let their children read the book 'till' they 'had torn out [...] *The Witch Aunt*',¹²⁰ lest the terrors described in

Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 64-69 (p. 68).

¹¹⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Maria Howe' or 'The Witch Aunt', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 318-23 (p. 322).

¹²⁰ Henry Crabb Robinson's letter to John Miller (October 10-17, 1853), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on*

the story make too strong an impression upon their young minds. Charles Lamb, as recorded in one of Henry Crabb Robinson's correspondence, was fully aware of the situation, and he was actually proud of the panic that 'Maria Howe' had produced among nineteenth century parents.¹²¹ Indeed, neither the parents nor his publisher, William Godwin, were able to change Lamb's mind about how to write a children's book.

In 1808, when William Godwin read through Charles Lamb's manuscript of *The Adventures of Ulysses*, he was absolutely shocked by some graphic details of cannibalism and torture that it included. Alarmed, Godwin entreated Lamb, 'with all humility',¹²² to alter or omit them:

We live in squeamish days. Amidst the beauties of your manuscript, of which no man can think more highly than I do, what will the squeamish say to such expressions as these? "devoured their limbs, yet warm & trembling, lapping the blood." p. 10 [...] or to the minute & shocking description of the extinguishing the giant's eyes, in the page following. You I dare say have no formed plan of excluding the female sex from among young readers, & I, as a book-seller, must consider that, if you have, you exclude one half of the human species.¹²³

After receiving Godwin's letter, Lamb was undaunted and stood firm on his ground.

He dispatched a ruthless reply to Godwin straightaway:

If you want a book which is not occasionally to *shock*, you should not have thought of a Tale which was so full of Anthropophagi & monsters. I cannot alter those things without enervating the Book, I will not alter them if the penalty should be that you & all the London Booksellers should refuse it.--But speaking as author to author, I must say, that I think *the terrible* in those two passages seems to me so much to preponderate over the *nauseous* as to make them rather *fine* than *disgusting*[...] As a bookseller I say, Take the work such as it is, or

Books and Their Writers, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), III, 833.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² William Godwin's letter to Charles Lamb (Letter 223; March 10, 1808), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 278.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

refuse it.¹²⁴

Tales from Shakespear, like *Mrs. Leicester School*, is also a joint work of Charles and Mary Lamb. Charles Lamb claimed to have read Shakespeare's dramatic works, even before he reached the age of six. It was Nicholas Rowe's edition¹²⁵ (see also Chapter III.) Ever since then, the dramatic works of Shakespeare remained Lamb's favourite volumes. In 1806, when Lamb came to work with his sister on the project of adapting twenty of Shakespeare's plays into prose tales, he was full of enthusiasm (see Chapter III.) Lamb was responsible for the six tragedies. They are *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens* and *Romeo and Juliet*.¹²⁶ In re-telling the stories from the six tragedies, Lamb, as always, refused to make any concession on their horror, superstition or violence.

In re-telling the story of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, for example, Charles Lamb daringly raises the social issue of poverty. Even though the Gloucester sub-plot is omitted (see also Chapters II & III), the appalling living conditions of 'a poor Bedlam-beggar' (I, 208)¹²⁷ are portrayed in the prose tale, and the masochistic behaviour, as a means to earn his living, is retained and paraphrased from Edgar's

¹²⁴ Charles Lamb's letter to William Godwin (Letter 223; March 10, 1808), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 279.

¹²⁵ See: Charles Lamb, 'My First Play', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 97-100 (p. 98).

¹²⁶ See: Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (p. 256).

¹²⁷ References to Lambs' tales are all standardised to the first edition, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807). Each prose tale is regarded as a chapter in the book and, therefore, the title of a tale will be placed within a pair of inverted

speeches in the play (*KL*, II. iii. 14-22 & III. iv. 50-59):¹²⁸

[This poor fellow was] one of those poor lunatics who are either mad, or feign to be so, the better to extort charity from the compassionate country-people; who go about the country, calling themselves poor Tom and poor Turlygood, saying, "Who gives any thing to poor Tom?" sticking pins and nails and sprigs of rosemary into their arms to make them bleed; and with such horrible actions, partly by prayers, and partly with lunatic curses, they move or terrify the ignorant country-folks into giving them alms. (I, 208)

The basic plot of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a ghost story, and Charles Lamb unhesitatingly retained the ghost of King Hamlet in his tale. Moreover, Lamb recounted in the prose paraphrase, the ghost's sensational description of what effect the poison had on his human body (*HAM*, I. v. 64-73):

swift as quicksilver it courses through all the veins of the body, baking up the blood, and spreading a crust like leprosy all over the skin[...] (II, 184)

Furthermore, *Macbeth* is a ghost story as well as a witch story. Not only the ghost of Banquo re-appears in Lamb's tale, but so do most of the references to the witches and witchcraft. Those omitted references to Shakespeare's witches in Charles Lamb's 'Macbeth' are the two scenes of Singing Witches (*MAC*, III. v & IV. i. 39-43) and some of the ingredients thrown into the cauldron, e.g. 'toe of frog,/Wool of bat' (IV, i.14-15). They were omitted for the sake of emphasizing, not mitigating, 'the most serious and appalling' effect,¹²⁹ which Lamb expected the appearance of the witches to create in the minds of young readers. 'The Weird Sisters are serious things', as once explained in Lamb's essay on the 'Characters of Dramatic Writers, Contemporary with Shakspeare [*sic*]', 'Their presence cannot co-exist with

commas.

¹²⁸ References to Shakespeare's plays are all standardised to the Arden Shakespeare.

¹²⁹ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation', *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 109).

mirth.'¹³⁰ The singing witches and the few ingredients, which 'savour of the grotesque'¹³¹ rather than the 'spell-bound',¹³² are the sort of 'properties, which [Thomas Middleton] has given to his hags'¹³³ and excite nothing but 'smile'.¹³⁴

Othello is not exactly a witch story but, because the eponymous hero comes from a primitive background, the play is somehow linked to witchcraft through him. Especially, in the making of Desdemona's lost handkerchief (*OTH*, III. iv. 72-77), the process, as revealed by Othello, directly involves an old witch and her supernatural activity. In Lamb's tale, the full terror of that process is preserved in the prose narration:

continued Othello[:] "it is a magical handkerchief; a sybil that had lived in the world two hundred years, in a fit of prophetic fury worked it; the silk-worms that furnished the silk were hallowed, and it was dyed in mummy of maidens' hearts conserved." (II, 225)

In the wooing of Desdemona, moreover, Othello tells her of the strange sights, which he saw during the travels of his youthful days (*OTH*, I. iii. 140-46). Othello's report in Shakespeare's tragedy was regarded by Charles Lamb to be one of the kinds of stories that would allow the imagination of his young readers to run wild.

In one of his nostalgic essays, 'Recollections of Christ Hospital', Charles Lamb recollected how, under the influence of 'the thousand tales and traditions' read in

¹³⁰ Charles Lamb, 'Characters of Dramatic Writers, Contemporary with Shakspeare', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 40-56 (p. 47).

¹³¹ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 109).

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Charles Lamb, 'Characters of Dramatic Writers, Contemporary with Shakspeare', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 40-56 (p. 47).

chapbooks,¹³⁵ 'some half-dozen' of blue-coat boys 'set off from school, without map, card, or compass, on a serious expedition to find out *Philip Quarll's Island*.'¹³⁶

Like the brief account of Othello's wanderings in foreign lands, *The Adventures of Philip Quarll*¹³⁷ is usually categorised into the genre called travellers' tales. Like the pseudonymous journal of Philip Quarll's isolated life on an uninhabited island, Othello's report of these remote places is, by no means, accurate or truthful.

However, travellers' tales about exotic places can enrich a child's fancy, just as the story of *Philip Quarll* certainly did with Lamb's and his school-mates' imaginations.

Therefore, Othello's speech, after being paraphrased into prose, is retained in

Lamb's tale.

In Charles Lamb's 'Othello', the extraordinary sights are, in fact, recounted from the point of view of Lamb himself as the third-person narrator:

all these accounts, added to the narration of the strange things he had seen in foreign countries, the vast wildernesses and romantic caverns, the quarries, the rocks and mountains, whose heads are in the clouds; of the savage nations, the cannibals who are man-eaters, and a race of people in Africa whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders: these travellers' stories would so enchain the attention of Desdemona[...] (II, 207)

In addition to the authority of the omnipresent narrator, the present tense used in a middle part of the quoted passage is deliberate, and further reinforces in the incredible account a sense of truthfulness. This same device is employed, again and again, in

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Charles Lamb, 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 139-49 (p. 142).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *The Adventures of Philip Quarll, the English Hermit; Who Was Discovered by Mr. Dorrington on an Uninhabited Island, Where He Had Lived Upwards of Fifty Years* was first published in 1713. The British Library has preserved several chapbook editions of Philip Quarll's story; for example, see the

Lamb's six tragic tales, whenever some inaccurate observations on plants, animals or natural environments, which occur in Shakespeare's plays, are recounted in Lamb's tales. In *Macbeth*, for example, Banquo agrees to Duncan's praise of Macbeth's castle by saying:

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his lov'd mansionary, that the Heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here; no jutting, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate. (I. vi. 3-10)

Martlets, swallows or house-martins will build nests on the outer walls of any buildings, not even excluding the most risky spot, as Shakespeare has made the Prince of Arragon state in *The Merchant of Venice*:

the martlet
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty. (II. ix. 28-30)

In his 'Macbeth', however, Charles Lamb integrates Banquo's words into his narration and presents the fallacy in the present tense and in a matter-of-fact tone:

where those birds [the martlet, or swallow] most breed and haunt, the air is observed to be delicate. (I, 218)

Since Lamb knew well that the information on geography and natural history, as borrowed from Shakespeare's six tragedies, is false, one cannot help but suspect that such kinds of deliberate and constant borrowing in Lamb's tragic tales might serve some secret purpose of his own. Perhaps, by supplying his young readers of the tales with false knowledge disguised as facts, Lamb was mocking the endeavours of the other children's writers of his days, such as Mrs. Barbauld and Mrs. Trimmer, who 'crammed' their young readers with so much factual knowledge of 'Geography and

Charles Lamb was, nonetheless, bred and nurtured in the Age of Reason. He simply could not resist from making occasional observations and reasoning upon the causes and the effects of certain incidents in his prose tales. For instance, in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, while digging for roots, Timon digs out heaps of gold (*TIM*, IV. iii. 25-26). To make sense of the whole incident in the play, Lamb has attempted to explain the source of the buried gold in his tale:

which some miser had probably buried in a time of alarm, thinking to have come again and taken it from its prison, but died before the opportunity had arrived, without making any man privy to the concealment; so it lay, doing neither good nor harm, in the bowels of the earth, its mother, as if it had never come from thence, till the accidental striking of Timon's spade against it once more brought it to light. (II, 137-38)

Most interestingly, in rationalising the source of Timon's gold, Lamb, once again, makes use of a common folk motif, 'Treasure buried by men' (N 511.1).¹³⁹ The same motif was also used by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, where Horatio confronts the ghost of King Hamlet. Thus Horatio addresses to the ghost:

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which they say you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it, stay and speak. (*HAM*, I. i. 139-42)

Thus, Charles Lamb's rationalisation strengthens, rather than weakens, the connection of his prose tales to the folk tradition, as well as to Shakespeare's dramatic works.

¹³⁸ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 136; October 23, 1802), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 80-83 (p. 82).

¹³⁹ For the standard reference to folk motif, see Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, second edition, 6 vols. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde

It is important to be aware of the fact that Shakespeare's dramatic works were not usually recommended to children, before Charles and Mary Lamb came to write the *Tales from Shakespear*. Their immensely pleasurable nature, as recognised and emphasized by Charles Lamb in the six tragic tales, was the very reason that the plays were regarded as being enjoyable for adults but unsuitable for children. (The discussion of whether Shakespeare stories are suitable for children continues in the following three chapters.) During the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the other equally crucial factor, which determined the case, was the belief that Shakespeare wrote his plays with little or no moral purpose. Such a prevailing opinion was derived from the leading Shakespearean criticism of the time.

In the preface of Samuel Johnson's 1765 edition of Shakespeare's dramatic works, Dr. Johnson rated the gravest fault of Shakespeare as a dramatist to be

that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose.¹⁴⁰

To support his own critical opinions, Johnson further remarked individually, upon the lack of morality in certain Shakespeare's plays, and Shakespeare's tragedies like *King Lear* and *Hamlet* are marked out in Johnson's commentaries as failing to fulfill the criteria of poetic justice. Meanwhile, in a rather desperate attempt to justify the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, Johnson managed to extract some moral significance from the tragic ending, 'perhaps Shakespeare meant to punish her [Juliet's religious] hypocrisy'.¹⁴¹ Johnson's moralistic criticism is, nevertheless, awkward. Why

and Bagger, 1955-58), V, 111.

¹⁴⁰ Samuel Johnson, 'Preface', in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vol. (London: Tonson, 1765), I, xix.

¹⁴¹ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VIII, 98.

should the story 'of Juliet and her Romeo' (*ROM*, V. iii. 309) be felt to be so much 'woe' (V. iii. 308), if the deaths of the two young lovers were just punishment for Juliet? Charles Lamb simply did not share Johnson's critical opinions on account of the morality in Shakespeare's plays.

The dramatic works of Shakespeare, in Charles Lamb's opinion, are far more than just 'enrichers of the fancy'.¹⁴² At the same time, they are 'strengtheners of virtue, a withdrawing from all selfish and mercenary thoughts, a lesson of all sweet and honourable thoughts and actions,'¹⁴³ and teach the virtues of 'courtesy, benignity, generosity, humanity.'¹⁴⁴ As Lamb specifically pointed out at the end of 'Romeo and Juliet', for example, the story is meant to expose the foolishness of feudal strife and to inculcate the importance of mutual tolerance:

So did these poor old lords [Capulet and Mountague (sic)], when it was too late, strive to outgo each other in mutual courtesies: while so deadly had been their rage and enmity in past times, that nothing but the fearful overthrow of their children (poor sacrifices to their quarrels and dissensions) could remove the rooted hates and jealousies of these noble families. (II, 175-76)

Evidently, Lamb's moral interpretation is more in harmony with the sentiment expressed in the concluding speech of the Prince of Verona (*ROM*, V. iii. 308-9) and the Prologue, part of which (Prologue, 5-11) has also been paraphrased by Charles Lamb into his authorial comment. Furthermore, Lamb has shown that a Shakespearean play can still have a moral, even though poetic justice is dispensed with.

Charles Lamb indeed discovered a wealth of moral beauty in Shakespeare's tragedies, to which a man like Samuel Johnson, representing the spirit of the Age of

¹⁴² Charles Lamb, 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, ix.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Reason, had so far been blind. However, to extract more fitting and convincing moral lessons from Shakespeare's tragedies truly required something more than Lamb's usual understanding of children's literature and his familiarity with folk culture. These were but two organic parts of a whole system of Lambish moralisation. How Charles Lamb, as a Romantic critic, came to discover this brave moral world of Shakespeare and share it with his young readers through the six tragic tales will be detailed in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER II.

'Hook in the Nostrils of this Leviathan'

Charles Lamb was introduced to the theatre at an early age. According to one of his *Elia* essays, 'My First Play',¹ Lamb's godfather, Francis Field (d. 1809), who used to keep 'the oil shop [...] at the corner of Featherstone-buildings, in Holborn'² and supplied the oil for 'nightly illumination of the orchestra and various avenues of that theatre [Drury Lane]',³ provided the free tickets for Lamb's first play at Drury Lane. 'I was not past six years old,' Lamb exclaims enthusiastically, 'and the play was *Artaxerxes!*'⁴

One play followed another 'in quick succession' 'in the season 1781-2'.⁵ The theatre-going was only interrupted, when Lamb became a blue-coat boy, 'for at school all play-going was inhibited'.⁶ However, no sooner had Lamb left Christ's Hospital in 1789 than he 'again entered the doors of a theatre'.⁷ Mrs. Siddons was now the star-performer. Although Lamb, rather disappointingly, found himself more discriminating and less enchanted than he had been, he nevertheless considered

¹ 'My First Play' was first printed in the *London Magazine* in 1821.

² Charles Lamb, 'My First Play', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 97-100 (p. 97).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

watching theatrical performances as 'the most delightful of recreations' .⁸

The more discriminating Charles Lamb could no longer be content with his old position as a mere audience. He wrote theatre reviews and eulogies in praise of several actors, whom he sincerely admired. He saw Mrs. Siddons (1755-1831) in the role of Lady Macbeth and her performance inspired him to write this sonnet:

As when a child on some long winter' s night,
Affrighted clinging to its grandma' s knees
With eager wond' ring and perturb' d delight,
Listens strange tales[...]
[...]Anon the tear
More gentle starts, to hear the Beldame tell
Of pretty babes, that lov' d each other dear,
Murder' d by cruel Uncle' s mandate fell:
Ev' n such the shiv' ring joy thy tones impart,
Ev' n so thou, Siddons! meltest my sad heart!⁹

Lamb wrote the sonnet in 1794. In 1812, one of his most important critical essays, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic]', appeared in *The Reflector* and showed a distinctive change of attitude towards actors and theatrical performances.

The name of Mrs. Siddons is mentioned again in the essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic]' but, this time, she is accused of materialising and bringing down 'a fine vision', created by Shakespeare through the character of Lady Macbeth, to 'the standard of flesh and blood.'¹⁰ The irony is that Lamb wrote the essay in response to another eulogy, written by Samuel Jackson Pratt for another fine performer, David Garrick. The verse is inscribed on Garrick' s monument and ends with these lines:

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Poems in Coleridge' s *Poems on Various Subjects*, 1796', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), V (Poems and Plays). 3-4 (p. 3).

¹⁰ Charles Lamb. 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare. Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation'. in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 98).

And till ETERNITY with power sublime,
Shall mark the mortal hour of hoary TIME,
SHAKSPEARE [*sic*] and GARRICK like twin stars shall shine,
And earth irradiate with a beam divine.¹¹

After reading Garrick's epitaph, Charles Lamb was sorely indignant and dismissed it immediately as 'this farrago of false thoughts and nonsense.'¹²

It is true that Charles Lamb was too young to see Garrick (d. 1779) on stage. However, it was not Garrick's art of acting that Lamb had a quarrel with. Did Garrick not perform Tate's adaptation of *King Lear* instead of Shakespeare's original play? This fact was enough, for Lamb, to deny Garrick 'the merit of being an admirer of Shakspeare [*sic*]'¹³ and 'of possessing a *mind congenial with the poet's*'.¹⁴ Lamb argued that Shakespeare's play 'is beyond all art';¹⁵ therefore, to make the play more sensually entertaining, Tate provided the stage with an adaptation consisting of love scenes and a happy ending:

Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily.¹⁶

The idea expressed in Lamb's essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]' was certainly controversial at the time, when people went to the theatre, saw adaptations of Shakespeare's plays performed, and generally accepted them either as

¹¹ These lines were written by Samuel Jackson Pratt and quoted in Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 97).

¹² Charles Lamb. 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation'. in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1934), 97-111 (p. 97).

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 105.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 107.

Shakespeare's original dramas (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Gra. 1840/1) or as improved versions of the plays. In the case of *King Lear*, Tate's adaptation was sanctioned by Dr. Johnson's 'sensations'.¹⁷ Johnson particularly recommended the moral discretion of Tate and the poetic justice, achieved in the happy ending (see also Chapter I), in addition to 'the general suffrage'.¹⁸

In 1817, Charles Lamb was ranked as 'A better authority' than Dr. Johnson by William Hazlitt.¹⁹ In the *Characters of Shakespear's [sic] Plays*, Hazlitt quoted part of Lamb's remarks on the acting of *King Lear* from the essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic]' to support and conclude his own argument on the same theme.²⁰ Since then, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic]' continued to be quoted in parts or in full to testify the excellence of Shakespeare's dramatic works and exemplify the degenerate state that his plays had once endured in the theatre. Nowadays, the essay is regarded as an important document in the fields of both stage history and the history of Shakespearean criticism, and is often included in anthologies of Romantic criticism on Shakespeare's plays. It is, therefore, surprising to see how Lamb's six tragic tales as part of *Tales from Shakespear*, have been chastised for their incompleteness and inaccuracy in the twentieth century. It seems, once again, Lamb's spleen has turned around and vented itself upon himself (see also Chapter I.)

In 1900, F. J. Furnivall found the Lambs' omissions of subplots and comic

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Samuel Johnson's editorial note in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VI, 159.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (London: Hunter, 1817), p. 175.

²⁰ The part of Lamb's essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', having been quoted verbatim by Hazlitt, begins with 'The Lear of Shakespear cannot be acted'. See: William Hazlitt, *Characters of*

characters in *Tales from Shakespear* not always justifiable; therefore, he wrote in the general introduction to a sumptuous new edition of *Tales from Shakespeare*:

The odd thing is, that two such humourful folk as Mary and Charles Lamb were, two who so enjoyed Shakspeare' s [sic] fun, made up their minds to keep all that fun (or almost all) out of his plays when they told the stories of them to boys and girls who so like fun too[...] I can' t help thinking that most boys would like the fun put into the Tales[...]²¹

Consequently, Furnivall supplied each tale with an individual introduction in which the, so-called, fun omitted by Charles or Mary Lamb was quoted from the play. The reputation of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* as a classic had been firmly established before 1900 (see Chapter VI). Furnivall was aware of the danger in criticising such a reputable literary work, so he also cautiously asked those who 'will think even any addition to it an impertinence' to 'skip all that I have written' .²² In 1902, when Sidney Lee wrote the 'Introduction' to Mary MacLeod' s *The Shakespeare Story-Book*, he attacked Mary Lamb fiercely as the much inferior writer of the two, but merely suggested that 'in Charles Lamb' s own work on the tragedies, Shakespeare' s text is at times misinterpreted' .²³

The case for inaccuracy, in terms of the relation between Shakespeare' s plays and Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, was eventually concluded in *Children' s Books in England*. In 1932, Darton pronounced the final verdict:

not everyone to-day, perhaps, would affirm with complete conviction that the *Tales* [...] represent Shakespeare accurately[.]²⁴

Shakespear' s Plays (London: Hunter, 1817), pp. 175-77.

²¹ F. J. Furnivall, 'General Introduction' , in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, 2 vols. (London: Tuck, 1900), I, vii-xiii (p. xi). This item is listed in the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1900/1.

²² *Ibid*, p. xiii.

²³ Sidney Lee, 'Introduction' , in Mary MacLeod, *The Shakespeare Story-Book* (London: Darton, 1902), pp. vii-xiii (x). This item is listed in the Annotated Bibliography: McL. 1902/1.

²⁴ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children' s Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge:

In defending the omissions and alterations made in Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, Joseph E. Riehl argues in *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature*, that the prose tales were fundamentally a product of a peculiar situation. The Lambs had to submit themselves to certain practical conditions under the control of 'censorship', in order to make the book marketable in '1807'.²⁵ As soon as 'the conditions in which Shakespeare can be given to children unabridged' have been 'created', Lambs' tales will retire into oblivion.²⁶ 'Where there is no censorship', Riehl thus concludes his 'Section 3. Tales from Shakespeare', 'there is no need for paraphrases'.²⁷ However, the outcome does not accord with Riehl's naive prediction at all. On the contrary, *Tales from Shakespear* has continued to be re-printed and re-told in various forms and methods since his pronouncement in 1980 (for new editions of Lambs' tales published after 1980, see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1985/1; 1986/1; 1987/1; 1993/1 & 2; 1994/1-4.) In fact, *Tales from Shakespear* has been so popular that Geoffrey Summerfield feels utterly scandalised.

In 1984, Summerfield called it 'the lamentable *Tales from Shakespeare*[...] the most appropriate analogy is with the burglar who steals nothing that is of any real value.'²⁸ Summerfield could not understand why the book had been read for so many generations and was still in print. In his book on eighteenth century children's literature, *Fantasy and Reason*, Summerfield blamed 'generations of parents, anxious

Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), p. 198.

²⁵ Joseph E. Riehl, *Charles Lamb's Children's Literature*, ed. by James Hogg, Romantic Reassessment 94 (Salzburg: Univ. of Salzburg, 1980), p. 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 243.

for their children to meet "high" culture sooner rather than later', for using *Tales from Shakespear* 'as a stepping-stone' and thereby sustain and increase the sale of what he judged to be an undeserving publication.²⁹

There are undoubtedly many omissions and alterations in Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*. However, is accuracy so vital to re-tell a story targeted, especially, at juvenile readers? Is there something else, perhaps, more important than some details of the plays? or, at least, something able to compensate for the loss of these details? The Lambs' prose narratives are not the only versions of Shakespeare's plays designed for children's reading. Why are they so widely read and considered as a classic, when the others, including MacLeod's *Shakespeare Story-Book* (see the Annotated Bibliography: McL. 1902/1), could but enjoy a brief triumph in the juvenile book-market and then simply disappear? (see Chapter VI.)

The relation between the omissions and alterations in *Tales from Shakespear* and the collaboration of Charles and Mary Lamb will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter, the focus is on Charles Lamb's six tragic tales and the connection between their so-called inaccuracies and Lamb's own point of view on Shakespeare's tragedies.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 258.

1.

In 1806, Charles Lamb came to write the six tragic tales, 'King Lear', 'Macbeth', 'Timon of Athens', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Hamlet' and 'Othello', to be included in *Tales from Shakespear*. During the period from 1780, when Lamb had been taken to see his first play, to 1806, many of Shakespeare's tragedies, if they were performed on the English stage, were only performed as adaptations. Lamb saw *King Lear* staged, without the Fool but with the love scenes and a happy ending, as interpolated by Nahum Tate.

The character of the Fool was believed to have little importance in the development of the Lear plot, so he was omitted from Tate's *King Lear* (1681). However, Charles Lamb thought otherwise. Lamb argues in his essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth', first printed in *The Reflector* in 1811, that the existence of the Fool is mainly of aesthetic value:

The concluding scene in the *Rake's Progress* is perhaps superior to the last scenes of *Timon*. If we seek for something of kindred excellence in poetry, it must be in the scenes of Lear's beginning madness, where the King and the Fool and the Tom-o'-Bedlam conspire to produce such a medley of mirth checked by misery, and misery rebuked by mirth; where the society of those "strange bed-fellows" which misfortunes have brought Lear acquainted with, so finely sets forth the destitute state of the monarch, while the lunatic bans of the one, and the disjointed sayings and wild but pregnant allusions of the other, so wonderfully sympathized with that confusion, which they seem to assist in the production of, in the senses of that "child-changed father."³⁰

Nonetheless, by the end of the passage, Lamb also points out that the aesthetic value

³⁰ Charles Lamb. 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With Some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 70-86 (p. 71).

of the Fool, in terms of sustaining the sublimity of Lear by producing a 'medley' spectacle of mirth and misery,³¹ is but one of the reasons that the Fool should remain in the play. The 'disjointed sayings and wild but pregnant allusions'³² of the Fool, in fact, 'assist in the production of' Lear's madness.³³ In such a way, the contribution of the Fool to the plot-development cannot be said to be too insignificant, either.

In 1812, another essay of Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic]', appeared also in *The Reflector*. In this essay, Lamb overtly expresses a genuine disgust at Tate's interpolations:

it is too hard and stony; it must have love-scenes, and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter, she must shine as a lover too[...] A happy ending!--as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through,--the fraying of his feeling alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation,--why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station,--as if at his years, and with his experience, any thing was left but to die.³⁴

Charles Lamb admits that Shakespeare's *King Lear* can be 'too hard and stony'³⁵ at times, but only when the play is materialised by realistic staging. He thus describes his personal response to the storm scene while witnessing it being acted:

So to see Lear acted,--to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me.³⁶

As a result of this inference, Lamb comes to announce his view that Shakespeare's

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Charles Lamb. 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation'. in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 107).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

King Lear cannot be acted. The 'paradox'³⁷ of the case, explains Charles Lamb, is that the 'distinguished excellence'³⁸ of Shakespeare's *King Lear* makes it unsuitable for stage performance.

A play, well calculated for stage performance, has to take into account the 'physical properties, vastly desirable in an actor, and without which he can never insinuate meaning into an auditory'.³⁹ When a play is performed on stage, what the audience sees is 'an actor personating a passion, of grief, or anger, for instance,'⁴⁰ and what the audience recognises is 'a copy of the usual external effects of such passions'.⁴¹ However, there is little calculation on how an actor may use his eyes, his voice or gestures to convey '*the symbol of the emotion*'⁴² in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Shakespeare's *King Lear* appeals to our feelings not to our senses:

The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear,--we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks, or tones, to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of the *heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds them that "they themselves are old." What gesture shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things?⁴³

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

The key to appreciating Shakespeare's *King Lear*, therefore, is to enter the mind of Lear through the process of reading the play, not seeing it acted. When 'we are Lear',⁴⁴ Lamb declares, 'we should feel'⁴⁵ what Lear feels through the 'indigenous faculties of our own minds, which only waited the application of corresponding virtues in him to return a full and clear echo of the same.'⁴⁶ Based on this idea that the best way to approach Shakespeare's plays is to read them not to see them acted in the theatre, Charles Lamb wrote in 1806 in the 'Preface' to *Tales from Shakespear*, that the book was designed 'to make them [young readers] wish themselves a little older, that they may be allowed to read the Plays at full length.'⁴⁷ Most significantly, many critical opinions, as set down in both essays 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' and 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]', are either expressed or implied in Lamb's 'King Lear' too.

The Fool, to begin with, is restored, prior to his theatrical restoration in 1838, in

Lamb's 'King Lear' :

Nor was Kent the only friend Lear had. In his degree, and as far as so insignificant a personage could shew his love, the poor fool [...] clung to Lear after he had given away his crown, and by his witty sayings would keep up his good humour; though he could not refrain sometimes from jeering at his master for his imprudence, in uncrowning himself, and giving all away to his daughters [...] (I, 198-99)

At this first introduction of the Fool, Lamb points out straightaway that the Fool has a dramatic function as a reminder of Lear's foolishness. His 'wild sayings, and scraps of songs' (I, 199) are of a thematic importance; directly, they are linked to the cause

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 102.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 103.

⁴⁷ Charles Lamb, 'Preface' , in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear, Designed for the Use*

of Lear's trouble, his daughters. When Lamb's narration comes to the storm scene, the aspect that Lear's misery is mixed with the Fool's merriment, is deliberately emphasized:

The old king was now left with no other companion than the poor fool, who still abided with him, with his merry conceits striving to outjest misfortune, saying, it was but a naughty night to swim in, and truly the king had better go in and ask his daughter's blessing[...] (I, 206)

Although the Fool's 'conceits' (I, 206) are described as 'merry' (I, 206) and meant to 'outjest misfortune' (I, 206), it is noticeable that, at least, one of the Fool's jests, 'the king had better go in and ask his daughter's blessing' (I, 206), paraphrased from III. ii. 11-12,⁴⁸ is bitter too. The Fool's jests are so closely and bitterly concerned with Lear's afflictions that, eventually, they help to drive Lear mad. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the function of the Fool was to be fully discovered and discussed in 1812 in Lamb's essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [sic]'.

Nahum Tate's love scenes, of course, never enter into Charles Lamb's 'King Lear'. In Lamb's tale, Edgar is mentioned twice, merely as Edmund's brother (see Chapter III). The 'Love betwixt Edgar and Cordelia, that never chang'd word with each other in the Original', in Tate's *King Lear* was added to render 'Cordelia's Indifference [...] in the first Scene probable.'⁴⁹ Therefore, Cordelia is made to utter these lines:

Now Comes my Trial, how am I distrest,
That must with cold speech tempt the chol'rick King
Rather to leave me Dowerless, than condemn me
To loath'd Embraces! (I. i. 92-95)⁵⁰

of Young Persons, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, viii.

⁴⁸ References to Shakespeare's plays are all standardised to the Arden edition.

⁴⁹ Nahum Tate, 'The History of King Lear', in *Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare*, ed. by Christopher Spencer (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), pp. 201-73 (203).

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 209.

Although Charles Lamb considers that Cordelia's refusal to play Lear's game of love contest needs some explanation, her conduct is not utterly incomprehensible and, therefore, needs no amendment.

In 'King Lear', Charles Lamb acknowledges in his authorial comment that the way in which Cordelia weighs out her love due to her father in Shakespeare's play (*KL*, I. i. 95-104), sounds 'a little ungracious' at first (I, 191). However, since the game is a love contest and the nature of contest demands calculation, Lear has nothing in return but what he deserves; that is, 'these qualifications' (I, 191) laid out by

Cordelia:

If she [Cordelia] should ever wed, she was sure the lord to whom she gave her hand would want half [of] her love, half of her care and duty; she should never marry like her sisters, to love her father all. (I, 191)

Moreover,

after the crafty flattering speeches of her sisters, which she had seen draw such extravagant rewards after them, she thought the handsomest thing she could do was to love and be silent. This put her affection out of suspicion of mercenary ends, and shewed that she loved, but not for gain; and that her professions, the less ostentatious they were, had so much the more of truth and sincerity than her sisters. (I, 191-92)

In paraphrasing part of Kent's prayer for Cordelia (*KL*, I. i. 184) into another piece of authorial comment, Lamb reinforces the impression that Cordelia had indeed 'so rightly thought, and so discreetly spoken' (I, 194).

In Shakespeare's play, furthermore, when Lear falls out with Goneril and is on his way to Regan, he mumbles:

O most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show,
Which like an engine wrenched my frame of nature
From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love
And added to the gall. (*KL*, I. iv. 258-62)

Lamb does not fail to comment upon these words in 'King Lear'. In mentioning

how Lear 'thought to himself, how small the fault of Cordelia [...] now appeared' (I, 201), Lamb immediately challenges Lear's thoughts in parenthesis, 'if it was a fault' (I, 201), and appeals to the authority of the omnipresent, third-person narrator to confirm Lamb's own earlier argument that Cordelia is never at fault. According to Charles Lamb, it is exactly because of Cordelia's spotless virtue that she is marked out for death:

it is an awful truth, that innocence and piety are not always successful in this world. The forces which Gonerill [*sic*] and Regan had sent out under the command of the bad earl of Gloucester were victorious, and Cordelia by the practices of this wicked earl, [...] ended her life in prison. Thus Heaven took this innocent lady to itself in her young years, after shewing her to the world an illustrious example of filial duty. (I, 213)

In Lamb's tale, Cordelia is explicitly defined as a Christ figure or a patron saint of filial piety, whose life has nothing to do with living into a ripe old age, achieving worldly success or being rewarded with material wealths. Her life is endowed with a special purpose; she only lives to show 'the world an illustrious example of filial duty' (I, 213). As soon as that is done, Cordelia dies and is reclaimed by 'Heaven' (I, 213). Thus, as far as the Lear plot goes, Lamb's tale actually gives a far more accurate account of Shakespeare's play, compared to Tate's adaptation. Far more than a mere summary of the play, Charles Lamb projects his own understanding into the narration and makes the tale 'a kind of creative commentary'⁵¹, as Jonathan Bate would call it.

Cordelia so dies at the end of Charles Lamb's 'King Lear', before her death was restored on stage in 1823. The same sequence of restoration happened to Lear's death; Lamb also tells the readers of his tale:

⁵¹ Jonathan Bate, 'Lamb on Shakespeare', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 51 (1985), 76-85 (p. 76).

Lear did not long survive this kind child. (I, 213)

It seems, in 1806, Charles Lamb was not yet satisfied even with the number of casualties in the end of Shakespeare's original play. To increase the gravity of the catastrophe, Kent also dies in the end of Lamb's tale:

this faithful servant to the king, between age and grief for his old master's vexations, soon followed him to the grave. (I, 214)

Although Kent does not die on stage, according to the plot of Shakespeare's tragedy, while rejecting Albany's invitation to assist him to restore the order of the state, Kent says:

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
My master calls me, I must not say no. (*KL*, V. iii. 320-21)

Kent's reply is usually understood as an awareness of his own death in a near future.

In regard to the character of Kent, his explicit death is comparatively a very minor change in Lamb's tale. The character of Kent in 'King Lear' has been conspicuously enlarged by Charles Lamb, in order to play a more active and dominant part in the story of Lear plot:

And now the loyalty of this worthy earl of Kent shewed itself in more essential services than he had hitherto found opportunity to perform. For with the assistance of some of the king's attendants who remained loyal, he had the person of his royal master removed at day-break to the castle of Dover, where his own friends and influence, as earl of Kent, chiefly lay: and himself embarking for France, hastened to the court of Cordelia, and did there in such moving terms represent the pitiful condition of her royal father, and set out in such lively colours the inhumanity of her sisters[...] (I, 209)

In Lamb's 'King Lear', Kent both initiates and is in command of the move to Dover; whereas, in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Gloucester informs Kent of 'a plot of death upon' Lear (*KL*, III. vi. 86) and, subsequently, advises him to remove Lear 'toward Dover' (III. vi. 88), where 'Both welcome and protection' (III. vi. 89) can be found. Moreover, the castle of Dover is never mentioned in the play, nor is the

political power of Kent, as his title of the earl of Kent may imply. In Lamb's tale, Kent visits the French court in person, but Shakespeare's Kent never leaves England for France. In Shakespeare's drama, the first meeting of Kent and Cordelia after his banishment from the English court and her departure for France takes place in IV. vii, where Cordelia has already landed in Dover with a troop of French army. Part of the alterations results, inevitably, from the omission of the Gloucester subplot (see also Chapter III), but there is 'undue emphasis on Kent',⁵² as Jonathan Bate observed.

In his paper, 'Lamb on Shakespeare', given at the Charles Lamb Society's Day Conference in Cambridge on September 22, 1984, Jonathan Bate conjectured:

Might it have been because he [Charles Lamb] saw himself as a Kent-figure, characterized by loyalty and honesty, a willingness to remain in the shadow of the great souls around him, a preference for plain language, prose to the verse of Wordsworth and Coleridge? *Lear* and *Hamlet* were the two plays that exercised the most influence over the Romantic imagination. If we accept the identification of Lamb with Kent, the two plays may be yoked together. Coleridge said 'I have a smack of Hamlet myself' (*Table Talk*, 24 June 1827); Lamb plays Kent, the loyal servant, not to Lear but to Coleridge's Hamlet. We are thus given a model for the relationship between the Shakespearean criticism of the two writers, which I have explored in this paper: Kent is a furnisher of common sense remarks and single pithy insights; Hamlet philosophizes on them at length, occasionally wrong-headed or eccentric, always brilliant and enthusiastic. Put together, the two give us Shakespearean criticism at its best.⁵³

In spite of the wrong conclusion (as I will argue later), which ends the conference paper, Jonathan Bate has opened up an extra dimension to explore Charles Lamb's 'King Lear'. Like 'Maria Howe' or 'The Witch Aunt' in *Mrs. Leicester's School*, 'King Lear' may well be another one of Charles Lamb's autobiographical or semi-autobiographical stories (see also Chapter I.)

In 1990, "'Double Singleness": Gender Role Mergence in the Autobiographical Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb', an article written by Jane Aaron, was

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 84.

published as the second chapter in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, edited by Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom. This article reveals that Charles Lamb describes Lovel in his *Elia* essays with the same reference used to describe Kent in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Lovel is a character in 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple' as well as a portrayal of Lamb's own father:

I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and "would strike".⁵⁴

The reference is to the last scene of *King Lear*, when Kent attempts to disclose the double role, which he has played since his banishment, to the dying king:

Lear. are you not Kent?

Kent. The same;

Your servant Kent; where is your servant Caius?

Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;

He'll strike and quickly too. He's dead and rotten. (*KL*, V. iii. 279-83)

'Through this connection with the figure of Kent/Caius', Jane Aaron points out, 'Lamb adds to the portrait of his father a grace and a dignity which John Lamb may have had in spirit but could not have had materially, for he, unlike Kent, was never in a position to serve "for love."' ⁵⁵

In 1991, Jane Aaron continued to pursue the same theme in the first chapter of her book, *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb*. She discovered another reference to the last scene of *King Lear* in Lamb's 'Table-

⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁴ Charles Lamb, 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 82-91 (p. 87).

⁵⁵ Jane Aaron, 'Chapter Two. "Double Singleness": Gender Role Mergence in the Autobiographical Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb', in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1990), pp. 29-41 (34).

Talk by the Late Elia' ⁵⁶:

So ends 'King Lear,' the most stupendous of the Shakespearian dramas; and Kent, the noblest feature of the conceptions of his divine mind.⁵⁷

On the basis of Lamb's praise for Kent as 'the noblest feature of the conceptions of [Shakespeare's] divine mind' ⁵⁸, Jane Aaron extended her earlier exploration of 1990 even further:

For his son [Charles Lamb], at least, his life [the life of John Lamb] appears to have served as a potent emblem of the highest type of nobility, a nobility embodied in acts of voluntary and self-sacrificing dedication[.]⁵⁹

As a matter of fact, in as early as 1811, Charles Lamb had already proclaimed Kent as 'the noblest pattern of virtue which even Shakspeare [*sic*] has conceived' ⁶⁰ in his essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth'. Is Kent, therefore, such another sainted figure in 'King Lear' and, like Cordelia, marked out for death because of his extraordinary virtue?

Charles Lamb was born in the serving class, and his admiration for his father and the ideal of abnegation and voluntary service, which John Lamb (1722-99) represents, was by no means feigned or temporary. It was a natural consequence that the ethos of domestic service should thus impress upon the mind of Charles Lamb as the most influential ideology inherited from his father. In 'The Old Benchers of the Inner

⁵⁶ 'Table-Talk by the Late Elia' was first printed in *The Athenæum* in 1834.

⁵⁷ Charles Lamb, 'Table-Talk by the Late Elia', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 344-50 (p. 346).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Jane Aaron, *A Double Singleness: Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 30.

⁶⁰ Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With Some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 70-86 (p.

Temple' , Charles Lamb depicts Samuel Salt, his father' s employer, as totally dependent upon Lovel:

Lovel took care of every thing. He was at once his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his "flapper," his guide, stop-watch, auditor, treasurer[...] He [Samuel Salt] put himself almost too much in his hands, had they not been the purest in the world.⁶¹

In re-defining the role of Kent in 'King Lear' , Charles Lamb also pictures the fate of Lear as absolutely entrusted to the hands of Kent. After Lear went mad in the violent storm, Lear is not capable of taking care of himself any longer. It is Kent, who places Lear in a safe environment within the walls of the Dover castle, campaigns for Lear' s rights as a parent and a monarch, and finally persuades Cordelia to raise 'a sufficient power to subdue these cruel daughters and their husbands, and restore the old king her father to his throne' (I, 209). The correspondence between Lovel, hence John Lamb, and Kent is simply undeniable. Instead of Charles Lamb himself, as suggested by Jonathan Bate in 'Lamb on Shakespeare' (quoted earlier in the chapter), Lamb actually identifies his father as Kent in 'King Lear' .

The way in which Charles Lamb has recreated the character of Kent in 'King Lear' shows that the, so-called, inaccuracies contained in his tragic tales can be highly meaningful. Apart from summarising the story from Shakespeare' s *King Lear* and offering subtle literary criticism which would help his young readers to understand the intricacies of the plot, Charles Lamb exemplifies in 'King Lear' how it could be possible to apply the 'indigenous faculties of our own minds' ⁶² to obtain

72).

⁶¹ Charles Lamb, 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple' , in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 82-91 (p. 86).

⁶² Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for

'a full and clear echo'⁶³ of Shakespeare and his characters. To conclude, there are three main factors--summary, literary criticism and autobiography--active in the shaping of Charles Lamb's tragic tales (see also Chapter I.) In the next three sections, I intend to discuss how these three factors decide the outlook of the other five prose tales narrated by Charles Lamb. The next section includes 'Timon of Athens', 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Othello'. 'Macbeth' will be included in the third section and surveyed, especially, from the perspective of a kind of semi-biography. As to 'Hamlet', the most undeservingly ignored prose tale, it will be discussed in the light of Lamb's semi-autobiography in the fourth section.

Stage Representation', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 103).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

2.

Both Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* and *King Lear* are regarded by Charles Lamb as, in different degrees, analogues of the *Rake's Progress* in his essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' :

I have sometimes entertained myself with comparing the *Timon of Athens* of Shakspeare [sic] [...] and Hogarth's *Rake's Progress* together. The story, the moral, in both is nearly the same[...] The concluding scene in the *Rake's Progress* is perhaps superior to the last scenes of *Timon*. If we seek for something of kindred excellence in poetry, it must be in the scenes of Lear's beginning madness[...]⁶⁴

These two Shakespearean tragedies, as suggested by Lamb, have a few things in common and, like *King Lear*, *Timon of Athens* also contains a noble servant, Flavius. The strong sympathy Lamb felt for the noble servants, such as Kent in *King Lear*, has been discussed already. Similarly, Lamb once commented upon Flavius as 'the kind-hearted Steward--that fine exception to the air of general perfidy in the play'.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, therefore, in Lamb's 'Timon of Athens', the character of Flavius, only next to Timon himself, looms largest (see also Chapter III):

While he [Timon] lived in this forlorn state, leading a life more brutal than human, he was suddenly surprised one day with the appearance of a man standing in an admiring posture at the door of his cave. It was Flavius, the honest steward, whose love and zealous affection to his master had led to seek him out at his wretched dwelling, and to offer his services [...] the good servant by so many tokens confirmed the truth of his fidelity, and made it clear that

⁶⁴ Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With Some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 70-86 (p. 71).

⁶⁵ Charles Lamb, 'Shakspeare's Improvers', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 321-23 (p. 322).

nothing but love and zealous duty to his once dear master had brought him there, that Timon was forced to confess that the world contained one honest man[.] (II, 139-40)

There are no real additions, however, made in Charles Lamb's portrayal of Flavius in the tale. Indeed, 'Timon of Athens' presents barely more than a straightforward re-telling story from Shakespeare's play. It is probably because, regardless of its limited artistic value as a tragedy, *Timon of Athens* was generally accepted as morally explicit and correct, as guided by Dr. Johnson's critical opinions:

In the plan there is not much art, but the incidents are natural, and the characters various and exact. The catastrophe affords a very powerful warning against that ostentatious liberality, which scatters bounty, but confers no benefits, and buys flattery, but no friendship.⁶⁶

Besides, *Timon of Athens* was rarely staged during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Charles Lamb probably had never seen any of the adaptations of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* being performed, before he wrote 'Timon of Athens', although he later came by a copy of Shadwell's version, as he wrote in 'Shakspeare's [*sic*] Improvers'⁶⁷ in 1828:

Shadwell, another improver, in *his* version of *Timon of Athens*, a copy of which (1677/8) is lying before me, omits the character of *Flavius*[.]⁶⁸

Lamb definitely had never seen Shakespeare's own *Timon of Athens* being staged, before he came to write the tale in 1806. Not until 1816, did Edmund Kean make the first attempt in stage history to bring Shakespeare's play back to the theatre. Since there was nothing particular to campaign for, 'Timon of Athens' remains a relatively

⁶⁶ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VI, 276.

⁶⁷ 'Shakspeare's Improvers' was first printed in *The Spectator*.

⁶⁸ Charles Lamb, 'Shakspeare's Improvers', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 321-23 (p. 322).

simple story.

Charles Lamb's 'Romeo and Juliet', on the other hand, presents a very perplexing story. Lamb seemed to pay little attention to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the greatest love stories in the world, in his literary criticism. In his essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]', Lamb mentions the play briefly as one of Shakespeare's tragedies, which, like *King Lear*, was spoiled by 'the practice of stage representation' of his own time.⁶⁹

The love-dialogues of Romeo and Juliet, those silver-sweet sounds of lovers' tongues by night [...] all these delicacies which are so delightful in the reading [...] by the inherent fault of stage representation, how are these things sullied and turned from their very nature by being exposed to a large assembly[...]⁷⁰

Does Charles Lamb here imply that he has seen *Romeo and Juliet* on stage? If he did, the *Romeo and Juliet* Lamb saw would be some kind of adaptation in the Otway-Cibber-Garrick tradition. There would be no references to Romeo's love for Rosaline during the entire performance, and Juliet woke up before Romeo died and the lovers exchanged a few words of last farewell to each other in the tomb scene. What did Charles Lamb think about these interpolations? How did he evaluate Shakespeare's play itself? If there is an answer to either question, it can only be discovered in his prose tale.

In Lamb's 'Romeo and Juliet', Romeo's love for Rosaline in the beginning of Shakespeare's play is restored:

Old lord Capulet made a great supper[...] At this feast of Capulets, Rosaline, beloved of Romeo, son to the old lord Mountague [*sic*], was present; and though it was dangerous for a Mountague [*sic*] to be seen in this assembly [...] for the love of Rosaline, he was persuaded to go. For Romeo was a sincere and

⁶⁹ Charles Lamb. 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation'. in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 100).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

passionate lover, and one that lost his sleep for love, and fled society to be alone, thinking on Rosaline, who disdained him, and never requited his love with the least show of courtesy or affection[...] (II, 145-46)

In restoring Romeo's love for Rosaline, Lamb marks him out, from the outset, as a emblem of 'sincere and passionate lover' (II, 146). Nevertheless, the sudden change of Romeo's love from Rosalind to Juliet has been criticised as 'a Blemish in his Character'⁷¹ and seems rather to be a proof of Romeo's inconstancy than otherwise, so it was consistently omitted from Otway's, Cibber's, Garrick's and his followers' theatrical adaptations.

Charles Lamb's restoration of Romeo's love for Rosaline in the tragic tale proves to be of no avail, for he fails to justify later the transition from the love for Rosaline to that for Juliet:

when Romeo revealed his new passion for Juliet, and requested the assistance of the friar to marry them that day, the holy man lifted up his eyes and hands in a sort of wonder at the sudden change in Romeo's affections, [...]and he said, that young men's love lay not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes. But Romeo replying that he himself had often chidden him for doting on Rosaline, who could not love him again, whereas Juliet both loved and was beloved by him, the friar assented in some measure to his reasons [...] (II, 155)

Not in the least is Friar Lawrence satisfied with any of Romeo's lame excuses in Shakespeare's play. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, it is made clear that the friar only consents to perform the nuptial rite with the hope that the marriage of Romeo and Juliet can bring about the conclusion of the feudal strife in the future:

Romeo. Thou chid'st me oft for loving Rosaline.

Friar Laurence. For doting, not for loving, pupil mine.

Romeo. And bad'st me bury love.

Friar Laurence. Not in a grave,

To lay one in, another out to have.

Romeo. I pray thee chide me not, her I love now

Doth grace for grace and love for love allow.

⁷¹ David Garrick, *Romeo and Juliet* (London: Tonson, 1750; facsimile repr., Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. 5.

The other did not so.
Friar Laurence. O she knew well
Thy love did read by rote that could not spell.
But come, young waverer, come, go with me,
In one respect I' ll thy assistant be.
For this alliance may so happy prove
To turn your household' s rancour to pure love. (*ROM*, II. iii. 77-88)

As the case stands, Charles Lamb, like Romeo, could think of nothing tangible to excuse this sudden change of heart.

It is with a better success that Charles Lamb restores Shakespeare' s original arrangements of the tomb scene in 'Romeo and Juliet' :

Here Romeo took his last leave of his lady' s lips, kissing them; and here he shook the burden of his cross stars from his weary body, swallowing that poison which the apothecary had sold him, whose operation was fatal and real, not like that dissembling potion which Juliet had swallowed, the effect of which was now nearly expiring, and she about to awake, to complain Romeo had not kept his time, or that he had come too soon. (II, 171)

A poignant sense of sadness prevails in Lamb' s writing of Romeo' s death, and a true pathos embodied in Shakespeare' s tomb scene is finely caught and represented in this passage.

In Shakespeare' s tragedy, because Romeo lacks the true knowledge of his situation, which the audience is fully aware of, the pathos deepens at the moment when Romeo drinks off the poison (*ROM*, V. iii. 119):

Romeo. Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
That unsubstantial Death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
For fear of that I still will stay with thee,
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again. (*ROM*, V. iii. 101-8)

In mistaking the signs of life in Juliet, 'Why art thou yet so fair' (*ROM*, V. iii. 102), as a signal that Death intends to keep Juliet 'to be his paramour' (V. iii. 105),

Romeo' s jealousy is aroused. He hastens the plan of suicide and dies not long before

Juliet's awakening.

In a similar manner, Charles Lamb makes a few deliberate comparisons in his tale, between the real state of affairs and Romeo's misconception of them, and between what the lovers know and what the readers are constantly told. The 'poison', which the apothecary gives to Romeo, is 'fatal and real' (II, 171); the 'potion', which Juliet obtains from Friar Laurence, is 'dissembling' (II, 171). The 'effect' of the sleeping potion, which Juliet has swallowed, is 'now nearly expiring' (II, 171); whereas, the deadly poison, which Romeo has just drunk off, is taking its ultimate effect. At last, Lamb sharpens the edge of this tragic moment with a finishing touch of his own imagination: Juliet is 'about to awake, to complain Romeo had not kept his time, or that he had come too soon' (II, 171).

These few words, which conclude the paragraph, call for a further comparison between the story of Romeo and Juliet and the other numerous love stories both in folk-lore and in literature, where mistresses complain about their lovers who cannot keep their hours and always come too late. Thus, the story of Romeo and Juliet stands apart from all the others and, yet, surpasses them all in the loving reproach of Juliet, that Romeo 'had come too soon' (II, 171). Its gentle grief aims to penetrate the feelings of the readers, not to draw tears from them, as Lamb's close friend and fellow critic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was to comment upon this point. According to one entry in John Payne Collier's diary on October 17, 1811, Coleridge was led to the subject by Charles Lamb on a private occasion. 'To be sure', Coleridge said of the tomb scenes, as interpolated by Garrick and his followers, 'they produce tears, and so does a blunt razor shaving the upper lip'.⁷²

⁷² John Payne Collier, 'Collier's Record of Coleridge's Conversation', in Samuel Taylor Coleridge,

This fine quality of Charles Lamb's story-telling, however, is not sustained until the end of his tale. The death of Juliet, rather regrettably, comes off like a careless relapse into inaccuracy:

then hearing a nearer noise of people coming, she quickly unsheathed a dagger which she wore, and stabbing herself, died by her true Romeo's side. (II, 172)

In the play, Shakespeare has made it clear that Juliet kills herself with Romeo's dagger:

Capulet. O heavens! O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!
This dagger hath mista' en, for lo, his house
Is empty on the back of Montague,
And it mis-sheathed in my daughter's bosom! (*ROM*, V. iii. 201-4)

Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge shared many ideas and critical assumptions about Shakespeare's plays but, in terms of their opinions on Desdemona's love for Othello, Lamb's is distinctively different from Coleridge's. In his notes on Shakespeare's *Othello*, Coleridge condemns Desdemona's choice of love as 'something monstrous':⁷³

No doubt Desdemona saw Othello's visage in his mind; yet, as we are constituted, and most surely as an English audience was disposed in the beginning of the seventeenth century, it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro. It would argue a disproportionateness, a want of balance, in Desdemona, which Shakespeare does not appear to have in the least contemplated!⁷⁴

The racist implication in the quoted passage is so strong that, during the process of editing *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, Thomas Middleton Raysor inserted a note to denounce the authenticity of the passage and thus exempt Coleridge from

Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), II, 28-55 (p. 35).

⁷³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), I, 47.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

any possible accusations for being a racist:

This paragraph is interpolated from *L[iterary] R[emains]*. The authenticity of this passage may be suspected, certainly in part and perhaps even as a whole.⁷⁵

In fact, Raysor's anxiety as an editor is superfluous. Such a racist remark belongs to by-gone days and was taken for granted by many other critics of the past. Before this Romantic critic, Dr. Johnson had made another similar statement in his 1765 edition of the play:

objection may be made [...] against the imprudent generosity of disproportionate marriages. When the first heat of passion is over, it is easily succeeded by suspicion, that the same violence of inclination which caused one irregularity, may stimulate to another; and those who have shewn, that their passions are too powerful for their prudence, will, with very slight appearances against them, be censured, as not very likely to restrain by their virtue.⁷⁶

Charles Lamb, on the contrary, considered Desdemona's marriage as a noble act on her part:

Nothing can be more soothing, more flattering to the noble parts of our natures, than to read a young Venetian lady of highest extraction, through the force of love and from a sense of merit in him whom she loved, laying aside every consideration of kindred, and country, and colour, and wedding with a *coal-black Moor*--[...]--it is the perfect triumph of virtue over accidents, of the imagination over the senses.⁷⁷

It is worth noticing, however, that Lamb's statement is both conditional and problematic. What Lamb expresses in this statement is restricted to the impression that Desdemona gave him during the process of his reading of the play. Lamb was not totally free from racial prejudice either. As he teasingly terms it himself in the

⁷⁵ Thomas Middleton Raysor's editorial note, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), I, 47.

⁷⁶ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VIII, 397.

⁷⁷ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 108).

Elia essays, he was always subject to his private 'Imperfect Sympathies' .⁷⁸

In his essay on the 'Imperfect Sympathies', Charles Lamb declares that he always 'felt yearnings of tenderness towards'⁷⁹ some of 'the Negro countenance [...] with strong traits of benignity',⁸⁰ but

I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good-nights with them--because they are black.⁸¹

It was in a psychological state of imperfect sympathy towards black people, that Charles Lamb formed his criticism on the character of Othello. Therefore, he continues in his essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]' :

But upon the stage, when the imagination is no longer the ruling faculty, but we are left to our poor unassisted senses, I appeal to every one that has seen Othello played, whether he did not, on the contrary, sink Othello's mind in his colour; whether he did not find something extremely revolting in the courtship and wedded caresses of Othello and Desdemona; and whether the actual sight of the thing did not over-weigh all that beautiful compromise which we make in reading;--and the reason it should do so is obvious[...] What we see upon a stage is body and bodily action[...]⁸²

As a result of such reasoning, Lamb also comes to make the announcement that

Othello, 'though more tractable and feasible [...] than Lear',⁸³ is still 'improper to be shewn to our bodily eye'.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Charles Lamb's essay on the 'Imperfect Sympathies' was first printed under the title of 'Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and Other Imperfect Sympathies' in *The London Magazine* in 1821.

⁷⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Imperfect Sympathies', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 58-64 (p. 62).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare; Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 108).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

The essay on 'Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and Other Imperfect Sympathies' was not printed until 1821, but Charles Lamb owned his imperfect sympathies throughout his entire life. In particular, the double standard shown in Lamb's racial discrimination against black people is not only reflected in his essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]', but also in his story retold from Shakespeare's *Othello*. In Lamb's prose tale, Desdemona is introduced as a 'discerning lady' (II, 209) who has chosen Othello for a husband; in spite of

his very colour, which to all but [herself,] would have proved an insurmountable objection[...] (II, 209)

Lamb's tale, however, is meant to be read, so that, during the course of narration, Lamb is able to exercise more sympathy than repulsion towards Othello on the page:

Bating that Othello was black, the noble Moor wanted nothing which might recommend him to the affections of the greatest lady. (II, 206-7)

Above all, the character of Othello is defined by Lamb 'as free from jealousy as he was noble, and as incapable of suspecting, as of doing, a base action' (II, 213).

Is Othello not jealous? The question may sound absurd, when Othello is considered as the hero in a domestic tragedy about marital jealousy. But, Othello's jealousy has been the theme of a long debate in the history of Shakespearean criticism. According to Othello's dying speech in the play, he reports himself as

one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme[...] (*OTH*, V. ii. 343-44)

Charles Lamb apparently took Othello's word for it, but Dr. Johnson, before Charles Lamb, had refused to do the same. In his 1765 edition of the play, Johnson declares that Othello is 'not [...] as he says of himself.'⁸⁵ During the late eighteenth and early

⁸⁵ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VIII, 472.

nineteenth centuries, when the study of Shakespearean criticism was predominated by Johnsonian principles, it is Charles Lamb's critical approach that was most likely to be regarded as preposterous. Besides, it is not without some good reason that Othello was deemed to be a jealous character by Johnson. What made Samuel Johnson judge Othello as a jealous character is the curious time scheme employed in Shakespeare's tragedy.

In the play, it has been manifested that Othello suspects Desdemona as 'false/To wedlock' (*OTH*, V. ii. 138-39), but there is very little opportunity for the supposed adultery to take place before the arrival in Cyprus. Othello sets sail on his wedding day. Cassio sails at the same time as he does, although they are in different vessels. Desdemona, Iago and Emilia follow them later in another vessel. There is no point of time that the supposed adultery may take place during their stay in Cyprus, either. On the first night in Cyprus, Cassio is degraded for being involved in a drunken brawl, and Othello murders Desdemona on the second night. During the day, Desdemona is constantly attended by Emilia, who answers Othello's interrogation with further confirmation for Desdemona's innocence:

Othello. You have seen nothing, then?

Emilia. Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

Othello. Yes, and you have seen Cassio and she [Desdemona] together.

Emilia. But then I saw no harm, and then I heard
Each syllable that breath made up between 'em.

Othello. What, did they never whisper?

Emilia. Never, my lord.

Othello. Nor send you out o' the way?

Emilia. Never.

Othello. To fetch her fan, her mask, her gloves, nor nothing?

Emilia. Never, my lord. (*OTH*, IV. ii. 1-10)

No matter how credulous Othello is, he cannot be expected to accept impossibilities. Therefore, blind jealousy seems to suggest itself as the alternative answer. It was not until 1849, when John Wilson (Christopher North) began to publish a series of three

articles, 'Christopher Under Canvass', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, that the so-called 'Double Time' scheme⁸⁶ in *Othello* was finally propounded.⁸⁷

In the critical commentary on Emilia's line, ' 'Tis not a year or two shows us a man' (*OTH*, III. iv. 104), Johnson also speculates that 'the authour [*sic*] intended the action of this play to be considered as longer than is marked by any note of time'.⁸⁸

After making few more observations on the Cyprus scenes, he affirms his earlier surmise in the same editorial note:

A little longer interval would increase the probability of the story, though it might violate the rules of the drama.⁸⁹

While admitting that the violation of the unity of time may be necessary, Johnson dismisses the Venice scenes on the grounds that they break the rule of the unity of place:

Had the scene opened in *Cyprus*, and the preceding incidents been occasionally related, there had been little wanting to a drama of the most exact and scrupulous regularity.⁹⁰

In 1806, when Charles Lamb came to write 'Othello', he took Johnson's point that 'A little longer interval would increase the probability of the story'.⁹¹

Nonetheless, the rapid continuity of movement in the Cyprus scenes is highly desirable, in terms of building up the dramatic tension. From the point of view of credibility, it is also indispensable. If Iago's scheme does not work quickly, it will not work at all. Iago is acutely aware of this: 'the Moor/May unfold me to him

⁸⁶ John Wilson, 'Christopher Under Canvass', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 67 (1850), 481-512 (p. 512).

⁸⁷ For a detailed analysis about the double time scheme in *Othello*, see John Wilson, 'Christopher Under Canvass', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 67 (1850), 481-512 (pp. 489-512) & 622-39 (pp. 626-633).

⁸⁸ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VIII, 416.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 473.

[Cassio] there stand I in peril' (V. i. 20-21). Therefore, instead of stretching out the time scale of the Cyprus scenes, Lamb decided on keeping up their original rapid pace; meanwhile, the time supposedly spent in Venice is evidently lengthened.

In 'Othello', the story does not begin with the discovery of the secret marriage of Othello and Desdemona. Before the discovery is made, a certain period of time elapses, although Charles Lamb does not calculate exactly how long. He merely says:

Their marriage, which, though privately carried, could not long be kept a secret, came to the ears of the old man, Brabantio[...] (II, 209)

No matter how long the interim is, it has to be long enough to allow a new episode to take place:

Nor had the marriage of this couple made any difference in their behaviour to Michael Cassio. He frequented their house, and his free and rattling talk was no unpleasing variety to Othello, who was himself of a more serious temper [...] and Desdemona and Cassio would talk and laugh together, as in the days when he went a courting for his friend. (II, 213)

Charles Lamb did not choose the new scenario at random. Later in 1834, in an attempt to 'settle the dispute, as to whether Shakspeare [*sic*] intended Othello for a jealous character',⁹² Lamb then proposed to his readers of 'Table-Talk by the Late Elia' to compare Othello with Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and 'consider how differently we are affected towards him [Othello]',⁹³ for 'Leontes *is* that character [but] Othello's fault was simply credulity'.⁹⁴ In the light of this commentary made in 1834, the choice of scenario inserted into 'Othello' in 1806 suddenly makes sense. Lamb evidently tried to picture a visual image which would remind his young readers

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁹² Charles Lamb, 'Table-Talk by the Late Elia', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 344-50 (p. 349).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

of the early scenes in *The Winter's Tale* and, in such a manner, encourage them to compare Othello with Leontes.

At the beginning of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes is blessed with a beautiful and virtuous wife and enjoys the visit of his best friend, Polixenes. There are no obvious reasons for Leontes to be jealous of Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*. At least, judging from any information, gathered from Camillo's and Archidamus's conversation in I. i or Hermione's and Polixenes's conversation in I. ii, the two kings are each other's equal:

Hermione. Was not my lord
The verier wag o' th' two?
Polixenes. We were as twinn' d lambs[...] (*WT*, I. ii. 64-66)

Neither is younger, handsomer, or more attractive than the other. The first verbal signal of Leontes's jealousy, 'Too hot, too hot!' (*WT*, I. ii. 108), is given at the moment when Leontes is simply watching Hermione and Polixenes talk and laugh together. Emilia's comment on jealousy gives Leontes's jealousy a perfect definition:

They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself. (*OTH*, III. iv. 160-62)

In 'Othello', by contrast, Charles Lamb draws many traits from the original tragedy and emphasizes the fact that Othello is black, older and, therefore, less attractive, under normal circumstances, than Cassio. Cassio is every inch a womaniser; whereas, Othello is, in many ways, his opposite:

he [Cassio] was handsome, and eloquent, and exactly such a person as might alarm the jealousy of a man advanced in years (as Othello in some measure was), who had married a young and beautiful wife[...] (II, 212-13)

Unlike Leontes, Othello has many reasons to be jealous. If Othello is a jealous

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

character like Leontes, what he has experienced in the new scenario is enough to provoke a jealous outbreak. On the contrary, Othello is said to 'delight' in Cassio's 'free and rattling talk' with Desdemona on this occasion (II, 213). Meanwhile, this new scenario also suggests that there are opportunities for the supposed adultery to take place. Given both causes for jealousy and chances for acts of adultery in 'Othello', not only the supposed adultery of Desdemona becomes a possibility in Lamb's tale, but Lamb also successfully argues that the cunning of the 'artful' Iago (II, 214), instead of Othello's jealousy, is the real cause of the tragic ending. Thus, Othello's noble nature untainted by jealousy is firmly established in the Venice episodes, without sacrificing the dramatic tension and the sense of urgency in the Cyprus episodes. For Charles Lamb, who was never good at plotting a story (see also Chapter III), it was no mean achievement to work out such a consistent story-line. It is no wonder that he should inform William Wordsworth in a letter, dated January 27, 1807, that 'Othello' was considered by himself and his sister as his best tale.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 27, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), II (1801-1809), 256-257 (p. 256).

3.

The function of Charles Lamb's six tragic tales as a kind of literary criticism, though it is not yet fully realised, has been long recognised. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Jonathan Bate dwelt at length on this subject in his conference paper, 'Lamb on Shakespeare', and gave a detailed analysis of Lamb's 'King Lear' in 1984. Prior to Jonathan Bate's paper, Joan Coldwell edited a volume in 1978, which was especially dedicated to Lamb's criticism of Shakespeare's works. Among other critical essays, the six tragic tales were included as the fifth part of this volume, published under the title of *Charles Lamb on Shakespeare*. In the 'Introduction', the editor, Joan Coldwell, thus justifies her editorial decision on the inclusion of these six tales:

in his [Charles Lamb's] selection of details and emphases[,] one can observe the influence of his general critical approach.⁹⁶

Subsequently, Charles Lamb's 'Macbeth' is singled out as an example:

Although Lamb intended to make only such alterations as were necessary to provide 'easy reading for very young children', he here seems rather to introduce changes to fit his own interpretation of the tragedy.⁹⁷

As observed by Coldwell, Lamb's 'Macbeth' contains curious examples of alterations and omissions.

In Charles Lamb's 'Macbeth', Lady Macbeth is inflexibly categorised as 'a bad ambitious woman' (I, 217). It is Lady Macbeth, who 'cared not much by what means' (I, 217) to 'arrive at greatness' (I, 217) and makes the first attempt at

⁹⁶ Joan Coldwell, 'Introduction', in Charles Lamb, *Charles Lamb on Shakespeare*, ed. by Joan Coldwell (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1978), p. 14.

regicide herself:

So with her own hands armed with a dagger, she approached the king's bed; having taken care to ply the grooms of his chamber so with wine that they slept intoxicated, and careless of their charge. There lay Duncan, in a sound sleep after the fatigues of his journey, and as she viewed him earnestly, there was something in his face, as he slept, which resembled her own father; and she had not the courage to proceed. (I, 220)

However, this particular incident may still derive from a hint, traceable in the original play. In the beginning of II. ii, Lady Macbeth soliloquies:

Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done' t. (*MAC*, II. ii. 12-13)

The narration goes on, nonetheless, and Charles Lamb reminds his young readers again that Lady Macbeth is 'a bad ambitious woman' (I, 221). She is 'not easily shaken from her purpose' (I, 221), so she returns to her husband and 'began to pour in at his ears words which infused a portion of her own spirit into his mind' (I, 221), and 'so chastised his sluggish resolution, that he once more summoned up courage to the bloody business' (I, 221-22). After the murder of Duncan, Lady Macbeth carries on plotting, together with Macbeth, against the lives of Banquo and Fleance:

they determined to put to death both Banquo and his son[...] (I, 224)

However, in the play, Macbeth alone decides on the second murder and Lady Macbeth is not even consulted. When she enquires about the matter, 'What's to be done?' (*MAC*, III. ii. 44), Macbeth merely replies:

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. (*MAC*, III. ii. 45-46)

Although Lamb recounts in his tale that Macbeth and 'His queen [...] had their sleeps afflicted with terrible dreams' (I, 226), the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth is omitted. Charles Lamb allows no chance for any sympathy towards Lady Macbeth to

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

develop.

Lady Macbeth is not mentioned again in Lamb's tale, until Malcolm's army moves towards Scotland:

While these things were acting, the queen, who had been the sole partner in his wickedness, in whose bosom he [Macbeth] could sometimes seek a momentary repose from those terrible dreams which afflicted them both nightly, died[...] (I, 230)

Not only is the timing of her death unspecified, but the way in which the death of Lady Macbeth is announced seems to suggest that, only by her ambiguous and untimely death, she is prevented from committing more crimes after the murder of Banquo.

The portrayal of Lady Macbeth in Lamb's tale, as indicated in Coldwell's 'Introduction' to *Charles Lamb on Shakespeare*, fits well Lamb's own critical opinion of that character. As 'recorded by H. C. Robinson'⁹⁸, Coldwell has also noticed that, during an evening's discussion of one of Coleridge's lectures given in 1811, Charles Lamb was led to comment upon the character of Lady Macbeth:

'I think this one of Shakespeare's worst characters', said Lamb-- 'it is at the same time inconsistent with itself. Her sleep-walking does not suit such a hardened being.'⁹⁹

However, Lamb's view on Lady Macbeth was not always so harsh. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Lamb had the opportunity to see Mrs. Siddons acting that part and was deeply moved by her performance. In his sonnet to Mrs. Siddons, written in 1794, Lamb acknowledges 'thou, Siddons! meltest my sad heart'.¹⁰⁰ What

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (December 10, 1811), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), I, 54-55 (p. 54)

¹⁰⁰ Charles Lamb, 'Poems in Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects, 1796*', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5),

caused Charles Lamb to change his mind about Lady Macbeth has never been discussed or discovered.

In Lamb's 'Macbeth', furthermore, Lady Macbeth is depicted as one that 'had the art of covering treacherous purposes with smiles; and could look like the innocent flower, while she was indeed the serpent under it' (I, 218). Undoubtedly, this particular piece of authorial comment is paraphrased from the original text. In the play, Lady Macbeth advises her husband:

bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like th' innocent flower,
But be the serpent under' t. (*MAC*, I. v. 63-65)

This instance of verbal transformation is neither accidental nor insignificant. It involves more than the change of genre from verse to prose. Henceforth, Lady Macbeth is the devilish serpent itself in Lamb's tale and, like the serpent in the Bible, lures Macbeth away from honour to the bloody path of great crimes. Through this literary allusion, Lamb has also established a link between the dramatic character and a real woman, Mary Jane (Clairmont) Godwin, whom he had not met until 1801 and was deemed by Lamb himself to be just such another deadly creature.

Charles Lamb wrote to Thomas Manning on February 15, 1802:

More News. The Professor's Rib has come out to be a damn'd disagreeable woman, so much as to drive me & some more old Cronies from his House. If a man will keep Snakes in his House, he must not wonder if People are shy of coming to see him because of the Snakes.¹⁰¹

Both 'The Professor's Rib'¹⁰² and 'the Snakes'¹⁰³ are referred to the second Mrs.

V (Poems and Plays), 3-4 (p. 3).

¹⁰¹ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 127; February 15, 1802), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976). II (1801-1809), 54-59 (p. 55).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Godwin, and the allusions are, of course, biblical too. William Godwin met Mary Jane Clairmont (c. 1768-1841) on May 5, 1801 and married her on December 21 of the same year. Charles Lamb was made an acquaintance of hers by Godwin, but was never taken in by her. As a matter of fact, Lamb felt so much contempt towards Mrs. Godwin that he once declared to Manning:

Mrs. ----- grows every day in disfavour with God and Man. I will be buried with this inscription over me, Here lies C L the Woman Hater: I mean, that hated one woman. For the rest, God bless them[...]¹⁰⁴

For the rest of his life, Lamb was as good as his word and remained the bitterest enemy of the second Mrs. Godwin. He invented various unflattering nick-names for Mrs. Godwin and one of them, 'the bad baby',¹⁰⁵ employs the same adjective, which he has freely adopted to define the character of Lady Macbeth in the tale. Lamb probably saw Mrs. Godwin as Lady Macbeth.

Mrs. Godwin was thought to be responsible for the many misfortunes, which later befell the Godwin family, including the suicide of Fanny Wollstonecraft (d. 1816), the illegitimate daughter of Godwin's first wife (see also Chapter V.) She might not deserve all the sinister charges brought against her, but she was a confirmed hypocrite and notorious for her envious disposition (see also Chapter IV.) Lamb describes her in 'The "Lepus" Paper'¹⁰⁶ as Mrs. Priscilla Pry, who constantly

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 232; March 28, 1809), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), III (1809-1817), 3-6 (p. 4).

¹⁰⁵ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters to Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (p. 256).

¹⁰⁶ Charles Lamb's 'The "Lepus" Paper' was first printed in *The New Times* in 1825.

cherishes 'the craving, gnawing, *mercenary* (if I may so call it) inquisitiveness'.¹⁰⁷ The 'success of her researches is nothing',¹⁰⁸ as exclaimed by Lamb, but it 'feeds' her 'Envy'.¹⁰⁹ One of Lamb's letters to Godwin provides us with a typical example of how Mrs. Godwin nourished her envy.

William Godwin had a new book published in 1803. It was the *Life of Chaucer*.

Mrs. Godwin asked Charles Lamb what he thought about Godwin's book:

I plainly told Mrs. Godwin that I did find *a fault*, which I would reserve naming until I should *see you* and *talk it over*. This she may very well remember, and also that I declined naming this fault, until she drew it from me by asking me, if there was not too much fancy in the work. I then confessed generally what I felt, but refused to go into particulars, till I had seen you.¹¹⁰

In spite of Lamb's prudence, the dissension, which Lamb had tried to avoid, still took place. It seems that, after the meeting with Lamb, Mrs. Godwin returned to her husband and reported to him whatever information could be gathered from her conversation with Lamb, probably not without some misconceptions of her own. Godwin was agitated and set on to challenge Lamb. Lamb's letter was written mainly for the purpose of clearing his own name. In the same letter, Lamb frankly told Godwin that his wife was to blame:

If Mrs. G. has been the cause of your misconstruction, I am very angry, tell her[...]¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Charles Lamb, 'The "Lepus" Paper', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 270-80 (p. 278).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 279.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁰ Charles Lamb's letter to William Godwin (Letter 154; November 10, 1803). in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), II (1801-1809), 127-29 (p. 127).

¹¹¹ *Ibid*.

In similar ways, Mrs. Godwin also alienated Coleridge¹¹² and many other old friends of Godwin's in later years.

In Charles Lamb's 'Macbeth', it is also Lady Macbeth, who, 'with the valour of her tongue' (I, 221), 'spurred on the reluctant purpose of Macbeth, who felt compunction at the thought of blood' (I, 217-18). In the beginning of the tale, Macbeth 'stood high in the opinion of all sorts of men' (I, 220), but the murderous deeds, which Macbeth has been set on to do by his wife, 'alienated the minds of all his chief nobility from him' (I, 229-30). Indeed, Godwin, the 'kind, warm-hearted' Tom Prynne in 'the "Lepus" Paper',¹¹³ gradually became, like Macbeth in Lamb's tale, a solitary figure 'without a soul to love or care for him' (I, 230). Lamb seems to pity Godwin so much that he ends his prose tale with little rejoicing in Malcolm's triumph, but much sorrow for Macbeth's 'despair' (I, 234).

Charles Lamb's loathing for Mrs. Godwin cannot be lightly dismissed as merely his misogyny. Lamb did not usually reserve so much resentment for a member of the opposite sex. On the contrary, Lamb says in 'Old China', one of *The Last Essays of Elia*:

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.¹¹⁴

¹¹² For the major dissension of 1804 between Coleridge and Godwin, see Samuel Taylor Coleridge's letters to William Godwin (Letter 551; February 3, 1804) and to Robert Southey (Letter 562; February 20, 1804), in *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71), II (1801-1806), 1056-57 & 1072-73.

¹¹³ Charles Lamb, 'The "Lepus" Paper', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 270-80 (p. 276).

¹¹⁴ Charles Lamb, 'Old China', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 247-52 (p. 248).

Furthermore, Lamb's writings have often been noted for his ability to enter into and to identify himself with feminine concerns. For instance, he wrote the story of 'Arabella Hardy' or 'The Sea Voyage', a children's story,¹¹⁵ in which he adopts the identity of the eponymous heroine and tells her story as the first-person narrator. Not only does Lamb conceal successfully his true male identity behind the female character, but he is able to cut into the core of her fear and anxiety as a young girl and the only female passenger during a long sea-voyage:

I have looked around with a mournful face at seeing all *men* about me[...]¹¹⁶

The hatred Charles Lamb felt for Mrs. Godwin resulted partly from the actual damage, which he considered Mrs. Godwin had done to his reputation and his friendship with William Godwin. It was also caused by the conflict between Lamb's own social and gender ideals and those of his time, and Mrs. Godwin's behaviour, which conflicted with these norms.

Charles Lamb had great sympathy for the serving class and the ideal of loyalty and self-sacrifice, which he thought it symbolized (as already discussed earlier in this chapter.) Because of the way in which the system of rank operated in relation to that of gender, many offices of a servant were regarded as equivalent to those of the wife or of the mother. Therefore, in his essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth', while evaluating 'the scene in Bedlam, which terminates the *Rake's Progress*',¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ 'Arabella Hardy' or 'The Sea Voyage' was first published in *Mrs. Leicester's School* in 1808 (dated 1809 on the title-page).

¹¹⁶ Charles Lamb, 'The Sea Voyage' or 'Araballa Hardy', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 331-35 (p. 333).

¹¹⁷ Charles Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; With Some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the Late Mr. Barry', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 70-86 (p.

Lamb consciously draws a comparison between the figure of Kent and that of the

Rake's misused mistress:

Is it carrying the spirit of comparison to excess to remark, that in the poor kneeling weeping female, who accompanied her seducer in his sad decay, there is something analogous to Kent, or Caius, as he delights rather to be called, in *Lear*[.]¹¹⁸

The feminine traits in Kent, as perceived by Lamb, were sneered at by social convention as unsuitable in a man, and the conflict between social prejudice and Lamb's ideology is the essence of 'Arabella Hardy'.

Arabella, a colonial orphan, travels alone on a sea voyage. She is affectionately mothered by a sailor, Atkinson. Atkinson voluntarily takes up the female office purely for the sake of love and humanity, and his action gains him the nickname, 'Betsy'. Before the voyage comes to an end, Atkinson dies. At the end of the story, Arabella learns from Atkinson's mother and sisters about the real cause of his death:

from them I have learned passages of his former life, and this in particular, that the illness of which he died was brought on by a wound of which he never quite recovered, which he got in the desperate attempt, when he was quite a boy, to defend his captain against a superior force of the enemy which had board him, and which, by his premature valour inspiring the men, they finally succeeded in repulsing. This was that Atkinson, who, from his pale and feminine appearance, was called Betsy. This was he whose womanly care of me got him the name of a woman, who, with more than female attention, condescended to play a hand-maid to a little unaccompanied orphan, that fortune had cast upon the care of a rough sea captain, and his rougher crew.¹¹⁹

Atkinson's story affirms that he, like Kent in *King Lear*, does not lack the manly prowess. However, he contents himself with being a servant, 'a hand-maid'¹²⁰ in

71).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 72.

¹¹⁹ Charles Lamb, 'The Sea Voyage' or 'Arabella Hardy', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 331-35 (p. 335).

¹²⁰ *Ibid*.

fact, to a female orphan, and resists the jeers from the rest of the crew. Arabella's admiration and appreciation, which closes the story, glorifies Atkinson's final act as the noblest of all. This is because the more the much needed attention and services seen as typical of the female are condemned by a social code as inappropriate in a man, the more real valour and fortitude are exhibited in Atkinson's refusal to submit to the folly of that convention. The fact that Lamb has christened Atkinson 'Charles'¹²¹ testifies how highly Lamb thought of this noble pattern of voluntary service. In the light of Lamb's social and gender ideology, it is not difficult to understand why Lamb disliked men or women who behaved in a manner perverse to his beliefs. Mrs. Godwin, from Charles Lamb's point of view, had the ordained office of bringing comfort to Godwin's life. On the contrary, she dominated Godwin's life and interfered with his friends, and her manipulation eventually destroyed the peace and harmony of that life. That is what Charles Lamb objected to, and Mrs. Godwin thereby became the only woman that he ever hated. It is because Lamb saw Mrs. Godwin as Lady Macbeth, he also judged the dramatic character to be 'a hardened being,'¹²² totally incapable of anything good.

Both Charles Lamb's criticism of the character of Lady Macbeth and his portrayal of that character in his prose tale expose the limits and weaknesses of his critical approach to Shakespeare's plays. Lamb himself had objections about seeing many of Shakespeare's characters acted on stage, because the stage performances would materialise them and give these imaginary beings bodily existence. However, the way in which Lamb identified Mrs. Godwin as Lady Macbeth shows that his

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 332.

¹²² Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (December 10, 1811), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), I, 54-55 (p. 54)

imagination, at times, had to build on a solid and realistic figure drawn from life and, while making critical commentaries, he was not always able to detach himself from his personal feelings towards the chosen object and, sometimes, even allowed his feelings to interfere with his better judgement. Therefore, Lamb was not able to perceive what later occurred to H. C. Robinson after their talk on that evening of December 10, 1811:

It, however, occurs to me that this sleep-walking is, perhaps, the vindication of Shakespeare in his portraiture of the character, as it certainly is his excellence that he does not create monsters, but always saves the honour of human nature, if I may use such an expression. So in this, while the voluntary action and sentiments of Lady Macbeth are all inhuman, her involuntary nature rises against her habitual feelings, sprung out of depraved passions, and in her sleep she shows to be a woman, while waking she is a monster.¹²³

T. W. Craik was also right, when he pointed out in the Twelfth Annual Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture, given on October 6, 1984, that Lamb's 'much heavier emphasis on Lady Macbeth's compunction'¹²⁴ introduces 'an unnecessary complication'¹²⁵ in the tale:

In his [Lamb's] version she [Lady Macbeth] contemplates doing the murder but stops short of it; in Shakespeare's she is so eager for the murder that she is almost carried away to do it herself - a stroke much more consistent with the ruthlessness that she opposes to her husband's moral hesitation.¹²⁶

The best description for Lamb's failing in his critical assumption about Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is, rather ironically, his own attack on the theatrical representations of Shakespeare's plays, made in the essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]' :

¹²³ *Ibid*, pp. 54-55.

¹²⁴ T. W. Craik. 'Charles and Mary Lamb: *Tales from Shakespear*', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 49 (1985), 2-16 (p. 4).

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*.

We talk of Shakspeare' s [*sic*] admirable observation of life, when we should feel, that not from a petty inquisition into those cheap and every-day characters which surrounded him, as they surround us, but from his own mind, which was, to borrow a phrase of Ben Jonson' s, the very "sphere of humanity", he fetched those images of virtue and of knowledge, or which every one of us recognizing a part, think we comprehend in our natures the whole; and oftentimes mistake the powers which he positively creates in us[.]¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (pp. 102-3).

4.

Hamlet might not be the most famous Shakespearean character that John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) ever played, but Kemble was still considered as a celebrated Hamlet of his days. In fact, Kemble performed that part in every one of his London seasons, the only exception being a curious gap between the years of 1789 and 1795. Charles Lamb evidently had the chance to see Kemble's Hamlet, for he admits in the essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]' :

It is difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembarass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr. K[emble].¹²⁸

In the same essay, Charles Lamb goes further to express his overt dissatisfaction with the ways in which the character of Hamlet was interpreted on stage during the Kemble era.

Hamlet, unlike Lear or Othello, is not one of those Shakespearean characters, which, Charles Lamb would argue, 'should not be acted,'¹²⁹ but 'Hamlet is made another thing by being acted.'¹³⁰ According to Lamb,

The play itself abounds in maxims and reflexions [*sic*] beyond any other, and therefore we consider it as a proper vehicle for conveying moral instruction. But Hamlet himself--what does he suffer meanwhile by being dragged forth as a public schoolmaster, to give lectures to the crowd!¹³¹

Moreover, Hamlet was always made to show too much 'contempt in its very grossest

¹²⁸ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 98).

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 101.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 100.

and most hateful form' ¹³² and to express too much 'vulgar scorn at Polonius' to render the dialogues between Hamlet and Polonius 'palatable' .¹³³ In similar manner, during Hamlet's meetings with Ophelia, he was made to 'rant and rave at her as if she had committed some great crime' ¹³⁴ and to 'put on such brutal appearances to a lady whom he loved so dearly.' ¹³⁵ Charles Lamb's criticism on the theatrical representation of Hamlet is both perceptive and profound. No less acute is Lamb's analysis of the character of Hamlet in his prose tale, where the so-called delay in Hamlet's act of revenge and the enigma of Hamlet's pretended madness are explained for the very first time.

In the Age of Reason, the pretended madness and the delayed revenge of Hamlet were deemed to be incomprehensible and unjustifiable. This trend of criticism prevailed also in the Johnsonian age. In 1765, Dr. Johnson uttered this comment:

Of the feigned madness of *Hamlet* there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity. He plays the madman most, when he treats *Ophelia* with so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty.

Hamlet is, through the whole play, rather an instrument than an agent. After he has, by the stratagem of the play, convicted the King, he makes no attempt to punish him, and his death is at last effected by an incident which *Hamlet* has no part in producing.¹³⁶

If the happenings of *Hamlet* are surveyed from the point of view of a calm and detached bystander, like Samuel Johnson did, there is no practical reason for Hamlet to either pretend to be mad or not to exact the revenge on Claudius earlier. However, as a Romantic critic, Charles Lamb was able to identify himself as Hamlet and

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 103.

¹³³ *Ibid*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*.

¹³⁶ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by

worked out the psychological possibilities for Hamlet's seemingly irrational behaviour.

In his 'Hamlet', Charles Lamb feelingly tackles the issue of Hamlet's delay, if delay it really was. At the beginning of Lamb's tale, Hamlet is regarded, first and foremost, as a victim of his mother's misconduct:

Gertrude, queen of Denmark, becoming a widow by the sudden death of king Hamlet, in less than two months after his death married his brother Claudius[...] this Claudius did no ways resemble her late husband [...] but was [...] base and unworthy in disposition[...]

But upon no one did this unadvised action of the queen make such impression as upon this young prince [Hamlet], who [...] did sorely take to heart this unworthy conduct of his mother Gertrude: insomuch that, between grief for his father's death and shame for his mother's marriage, this young prince was overclouded with a deep melancholy[...] what so galled him [...] was, that his mother had [...] married again, married his uncle, her dead husband's brother, in itself a highly improper and unlawful marriage, from the nearness of relationship[...] (II, 177-79)

Charles Lamb also considered himself as a victim of his mother's misconduct.

In one of the letters written to Samuel Taylor Coleridge not long after Mary's matricide, Charles Lamb confides to his 'dearest friend'¹³⁷ that his mother, Elizabeth (1732-96), would always favour her eldest child, John Junior, who was not worthy of that affection:

Poor Mary, my mother indeed *never understood* her right[...] Never could [my mother] believe how much *she* loved her--but met her caresses, her protestations of filial affection, too frequently with coldness & **repulse**, [...]she would always love my brother above Mary, who was not worthy of one tenth of that affection, which Mary had a right to claim.¹³⁸

John Lamb Junior (1763-1821), unlike Charles, did not physically resemble their father, John Senior. Neither did John Junior inherit the ideology of voluntary service

Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VIII, 311.

¹³⁷ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 9; October 17, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 51-53 (p. 51).

and self-sacrifice, which John Senior was thought to represent. In 1792, Samuel Salt died and the Lamb family faced a serious financial crisis. With the death of their benefactor, the family lost the privilege of continuing to live in the Temple. Charles had just started a three-year apprenticeship at the East India House and, according to his contract, he could receive no pay for the three years. Although John Junior was promoted to the position of Deputy Accountant at the South Sea Company also in the year of 1792, he chose the moment to leave home, and he abandoned the impoverished family to Mary. Almost single-handedly Mary fed, clothed and accommodated the whole family with the meagre income, which she struggled to earn as a seamstress (see also Chapter IV.) At the same time, Mary provided for the special needs and cared for the senile father and the invalid mother. Although John Junior had not contributed anything to his needy family, he did not disdain to return home years later, with a badly injured leg, and demand that Mary should nurse him back to health. John's home-coming in the summer of 1796 was the last straw. Mary could no longer cope with the burden of life and finally went mad.

On September 22, 1796, while preparing dinner for the family, Mary suddenly 'seized a knife laying on the table' and, 'with loud shrieks, approached her parent'.¹³⁹ The knife 'pierced to the heart' of Elizabeth Lamb.¹⁴⁰ Bound by the filial tie to Elizabeth and the sibling tie to John, Charles rarely spoke ill of either but, after the matricide, Charles would often put on a 'trick' of 'hilarity',¹⁴¹ shouting a

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 52.

¹³⁹ This account of matricide is given in the *Morning Chronicle* on Monday, September 26, 1796. The full text is reprinted in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 45 (n. 1).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁴¹ T. Westwood, 'Charles Lamb: Supplementary Reminiscences', *Notes and Queries: A Medium of*

brief rhyme which consists of some three lines made up by himself:

I had a sister--
The devil kist her,
And raised a blister!¹⁴²

It is absolutely crucial to note that, in Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet also refers to the outcome of Gertrude's second marriage as 'a blister' (III. iv. 44):

Queen. What have I done, that thou dar' st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
Hamlet. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Call virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths-- (*HAM*, III. iv. 39-45)

How far Elizabeth Lamb's fondness for her eldest son corresponds, in Charles Lamb's opinion, to Gertrude's incest with Claudius in *Hamlet*, is not known for sure. Charles could never consciously talk about his mother 'but *most* respectfully, *most* affectionately.'¹⁴³ Whenever there was an occasional slip of tongue, Lamb would quickly cover it up with some self-reproach.

In 'Rosamund Gray',¹⁴⁴ Charles Lamb's first semi-autobiographical prose story, he portrays his parents as a loving couple. After the wife died, the husband simply could not long endure 'his existence'.¹⁴⁵ Most ironically, John Lamb, the

Intercommunication for Literary Men, General Readers, etc., 65 (1882), 381-82 (p. 381).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 9; October 17, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 51-53 (p. 52).

¹⁴⁴ 'Rosamund Gray' was first published under the title of *A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret* in 1798.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Lamb, 'Rosamund Gray', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 1-30 (p. 17).

father, was still alive, when Charles wrote the story during the years of 1797 and 1798. Apparently, the depiction in 'Rosamund Gray' contradicts the reality. John Senior, against his son's secret wish, survived his wife for nearly three years. But only a few days after the matricide took place, was John Senior discovered playing 'cribbage'.¹⁴⁶ Charles was amazed by what he thought to be the forgetfulness of his father:

for so short is the old man's recollection, that he was playing at cards, as tho' nothing had happened, while the Coroner's Inquest was sitting over the way!¹⁴⁷

John Senior evidently did not grieve for the death of his wife. Was it merely because, as suggested by Charles, he had a short-lived memory of the tragic event? During the last days of his life in 1799, John Senior was said to have recollected 'his favourite Garrick [the actor]'¹⁴⁸ and his return 'in his smart new livery to see [his mother]' in Lincoln,¹⁴⁹ but his wife was never mentioned. Why was Elizabeth Lamb not missed by her husband, not even during the very last few days of his life?

Charles Lamb, though he considered himself as a victim of his mother's false behaviour, could not help but mourn for her death like a dutiful son, and yearn for the days when she was alive (see also Chapter IV.) He wrote to Coleridge on November 14, 1796:

Oh! my friend, I think sometimes, could I recall the days that are past, which among them should I choose? [...]but the days, Coleridge, of a *mother's* fondness for her *school-boy*. What would I give to call her back to earth for *one*

¹⁴⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 8; October 3, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 47-51 (p. 49).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Charles Lamb, 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 82-91 (p. 88).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

day, on my knees to ask her pardon for all those little asperities of temper which, from time to time, have given her gentle spirit pain[.]¹⁵⁰

However, Charles Lamb has never cited one single instance of his 'mother's fondness for her *school-boy*',¹⁵¹ because 'the kindest goodest creature to [Charles Lamb] when [he] was at school'¹⁵² was not his mother, but his paternal aunt, Sarah, or Aunt Hetty, as he called her (see also Chapter I.) With gratitude, Aunt Hetty's kindness is remembered in the essays of *Elia*:

he [Charles Lamb] had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting grisen (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his [...] aunt! I [Elia] remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands [...]; and the contending passions of L[amb] at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer; shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing [...]; and, at top of all, hunger [...] predominant, breaking down the stony fences of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling over-consciousness.¹⁵³

The cruel truth about Lamb's relation with his mother is not revealed until he puts on the disguise of a fictional character, Maria Howe, in 'The Witch Aunt':

My parents, and particularly my mother, [...]gave themselves little trouble about me, but [...] generally left me to [...] indulge myself in my solitude[...]¹⁵⁴

Owing to this parental neglect, Maria Howe/Charles Lamb became the charge of a

¹⁵⁰ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 13; November 14, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 62-64 (p. 64).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 21; February 5-6, 1797), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 94-98 (p. 96).

¹⁵³ Charles Lamb, 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 12-22 (p. 13).

¹⁵⁴ Charles Lamb, 'Maria Howe' or 'The Witch Aunt', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for

paternal aunt:

My aunt was my father's sister[...] As I was often at home with her [...], an intimacy grew up between the old lady and me, and she would often say, that she only loved one person in the world, and that was me.¹⁵⁵

It is only in the name of defending the propriety of Hamlet's scolding Gertrude in the prose tale, that Lamb dares to justify, covertly, the 'little asperities of temper'¹⁵⁶ addressed to his mother, Elizabeth, 'in all our little bickerings,/Domestic jars':¹⁵⁷

And though the faults of parents are to be tenderly treated by their children, yet in the case of great crimes the son may have leave to speak even to his own mother with some harshness, so as that harshness is meant for her good, and to turn her from her wicked ways, and not done for the purpose of upbraiding. (II, 195)

Otherwise, Lamb would constantly strive to convince himself that his mother 'loved us all with a **Mother's love**'¹⁵⁸ and blame himself for always being 'a wayward son' to her.¹⁵⁹ It plainly shows how much influence and control Elizabeth still had over Charles, though she, apart from giving him birth, was probably not much of a mother to him. Through the painful awareness of that far from perfect relation with his own mother and the rivalry with his brother for their mother's attention and

Children), 318-23 (p. 318).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 319.

¹⁵⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 13; November 14, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 62-64 (p. 64).

¹⁵⁷ Charles Lamb, 'Written Soon After the Preceding Poem', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), V (Poems and Plays), 22.

¹⁵⁸ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 9; October 17, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 51-53 (p. 52).

¹⁵⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Written Soon After the Preceding Poem', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), V (Poems and Plays), 22.

affection, Lamb was able to reach a kind of understanding towards Hamlet and judged that Gertrude is the essential cause of Hamlet's 'delay' (II, 188):

Every hour of delay seemed to him a sin, and a violation of his father's commands. Yet [...] the presence of the queen, Hamlet's mother, who was generally with the king, was a restraint upon his purpose, which he could not break through. Besides, the very circumstance that the usurper was his mother's husband filled him with some remorse, and still blunted the edge of his purpose. (II, 188)

It took modern psychology another hundred years to develop the conclusion announced here by Charles Lamb in 'Hamlet'.

In 1900, Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams*, one of the most important documents on human psychology. One of the ground-breaking discoveries, vigorously discussed in the book, is the theory of the Oedipus Complex. Based on this theory, Freud diagnosed Hamlet's delay as a natural consequence of a son's Oedipus Complex, which makes the son wish to kill his father and marry his mother:

Another of the great creations of tragic poetry, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, has its roots in the same soil as *Oedipus Rex*[...] The play is built upon Hamlet's hesitation over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result[...] Hamlet is able to do anything - except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realised. Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish.¹⁶⁰

Based on Freud's original diagnosis of Hamlet, Ernest Jones extended the examination in 1910, *via* relocating the case into a broader context. On the grounds

¹⁶⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. by Angela Richards, Penguin Freud Library (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953; rpt., Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 166-67.

that Claudius is 'an exceedingly near relative [...] an actual member of the family',¹⁶¹ to which Hamlet obviously belongs, 'the actual usurpation further resembled the imaginary one in being incestuous.'¹⁶² In his well-known article on modern psychology, 'The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery', Ernest Jones thus concludes the case of Hamlet's delay:

[Hamlet] is therefore in a dilemma between on the one hand allowing his natural detestation of his uncle to have free play, a consummation which would make him aware of his own horrible wishes, and on the other ignoring the imperative call for vengeance that his obvious duty demands. He must either realise his own evil in denouncing his uncle's, or strive to ignore, to condone and if possible to forget the latter in continuing to "repress" the former; his moral fate is bound up with his uncle's for good or ill. The call of duty to slay his uncle cannot be obeyed because it linked itself with the call of his nature to slay his mother's husband, whether this is the first or the second; the latter call is strongly "repressed," and therefore necessarily the former also.¹⁶³

Ernest Jones's article caused much sensation when it was published, and is considered as an important landmark in the study of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

However, the fundamental idea that Hamlet subconsciously refuses to kill Claudius, because, in killing his uncle, he kills 'his mother's husband',¹⁶⁴ as explained by Ernest Jones in 1910, had been printed since 1806 in Lamb's tale (as quoted earlier in the chapter). Because Charles Lamb had never intended to make his prose tale a systematic study of psychology as Ernest Jones apparently did with his journal article, Lamb's psychological finding, explored in 'Hamlet', has always been overlooked. Treated as a children's story, Lamb's 'Hamlet' has rarely been taken seriously by its adult readers. Because of this, the contribution of Lamb's tale, in terms of

¹⁶¹ Ernest Jones, 'The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: A Study in Motive', *The American Journal of Psychology*, 21 (1910), 72-113 (p. 91).

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 99.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 101.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

expounding the essence of Hamlet's feigned madness, has never been acknowledged either.

Charles Lamb was not unfamiliar with the mental state called madness. Not only because his sister murdered their mother 'in a fit of insanity',¹⁶⁵ but also because Lamb himself had the experience of spending six weeks 'very agreeably in a **mad house**'¹⁶⁶ during the winter, ending the year of 1795 and beginning that of 1796. Afterwards, Lamb never relapsed into that insane state and was never sent back to a madhouse. Even after the matricide, as Lamb told Coleridge, he sustained a kind of extraordinary calmness, which almost could be mistaken as being unconcerned (see also Chapter IV):

I have never once been otherwise than collected, & calm; even on the dreadful day & in the midst of the terrible scene I preserved a tranquillity, which bystanders may have construed into indifference[...]¹⁶⁷

This calm state of mind did not last for ever; the temporarily suppressed feelings and emotions were soon to emerge. Throughout the later years of his life, Lamb frequently felt an urge to have a sudden outbreak of hilarity; 'the triplet' (quoted earlier) would come out from his mouth 'on such occasions'.¹⁶⁸ This rhyming and

¹⁶⁵ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 7; September 27, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 44-45 (p. 44).

¹⁶⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 1; May 27, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 1-5 (p. 4).

¹⁶⁷ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 8; October 3, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 47-51 (p. 47).

¹⁶⁸ T. Westwood, 'Charles Lamb: Supplementary Reminiscences', *Notes and Queries: A Medium of Intercommunication for Literary Men, General Readers, etc.*, 65 (1882), 381-82 (p. 381).

riddling habit was not regarded as mad but 'grotesque':¹⁶⁹

It was his pretence to be proud of this triplet, as if a rhyming difficulty vanquished.¹⁷⁰

These moments of Lamb's hilarity were as grotesque as Hamlet's spontaneous reactions to the encounter with the ghost of King Hamlet in Shakespeare's play (*HAM*, I. v. 116-90). Moreover, at the point when Hamlet celebrates the success of his device to 'catch the conscience of the king' (*HAM*, II. ii. 601) in III. ii. 259-88, the mode of Hamlet's speech closely resembles that of Lamb's, as particularly noted by Lamb himself in the tale:

Now Hamlet had seen enough to be satisfied that the words of the ghost were true, and no illusion; and in a fit of gaiety, like that which comes over a man who suddenly has some great doubt or scruple resolved, he swore to Horatio that he would take the ghost's words for a thousand pounds. (II, 192)

The terror of Mary Lamb's matricide did indeed effect a great emotional disturbance in Charles Lamb's psyche. A family disaster, such as Mary's matricide, is daunting enough for anyone; not to mention, Charles, who continuously experienced more than four years of gloomy poverty and depression. The six-week confinement could testify how vulnerable his mental condition must have been. Owing to such an intense experience of mental illness and emotional upheavals, Charles Lamb was qualified to tell the subtle difference between an 'almost unhinged [...] mind' (II, 185) and the mental state of being 'really and truly mad' (II, 185). In Lamb's tale, the narration shows his genuine appreciation of Hamlet's feigned madness as mingled with some real distraction:

The terror which the sight of the ghost had left upon the senses of Hamlet, he being weak and dispirited before, almost unhinged his mind, and drove him beside his reason. And he, fearing that it would continue to have this effect [...]

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

took up a strange resolution from that time to counterfeit as if he were really and truly mad[...] (II, 185)

Consequently, when Hamlet is confronted with his love for Ophelia, he is said to have responded as a madman, which he pretends to be, and, at the same time, as an emotionally disturbed man, which he really was. Therefore, Hamlet's behaviour fails to be consistent with his pretended madness:

Before Hamlet fell into the melancholy way which has been related, he had dearly loved a fair maid called Ophelia[...] But the melancholy which he fell into latterly had made him neglect her, and from the time he conceived the project of counterfeiting madness, he affected to treat her with unkindness, and a sort of rudeness[...]

Though the rough business which Hamlet had in hand, the revenging of his father's death upon his murderer, did not suit with the playful state of courtship, or admit of the society of so idle a passion as love now seemed to him, yet it could not hinder but that soft thoughts of his Ophelia would come between, and in one of these moments, when he thought that his treatment of this gentle lady had been unreasonably harsh, he wrote her a letter full of wild starts of passion, and in extravagant terms, such as agreed with his supposed madness, but mixed with some gentle touches of affection, which could not but shew to this honourable lady, that a deep love for her yet lay at the bottom of his heart. (II, 186-87)

In 1811, Charles Lamb invented a peculiar term, '*supererogatory love*',¹⁷¹ to register the type of attachment that Hamlet reserves for Ophelia. Founded on the belief that Hamlet's expressions of love are dominated by his half-feigned and half-genuine madness simultaneously, Lamb forcefully rebuked the theatrical interpretation of Hamlet as putting too much emphasis on the superficial level of meaning that Hamlet's 'satirical' words suggest.¹⁷² Meanwhile, such an emphasis actually blurs our awareness of the deeper level of meaning, which Hamlet's words truly signify. As Lamb explicitly explains to his adult readers of the essay 'On the

¹⁷¹ Charles Lamb, 'The Tragedies of Shakspeare', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1796-1801), 97-111 (p. 103).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]' ,

All the Hamlets that I have ever seen, rant and rave at her [Ophelia] as if she had committed some great crime, and the audience are highly pleased, because the words are satirical, and they are enforced by the strongest expression of satirical indignation of which the face and voice are capable. But then whether Hamlet is likely to have put on such brutal appearances to a lady whom he loved so dearly, is never thought on[...] It may be said he puts on the madman; but then he should only so far put on this counterfeit lunacy as his own real distraction will give him leave; that is, incompletely, imperfectly; not in that confirmed, practised way, like a master of his art, or, as Dame Quickly would say, "like one of those harlotry players."¹⁷³

In preparing the lecture, 'The Character of Hamlet' , for the Bristol series of 1813,¹⁷⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge jotted down these curious lines in his note-book:

Add too, Hamlet' s wildness is but *half-false*. O that subtle trick to pretend the *acting* only when we are very near *being* what we act.¹⁷⁵

Can we assume that Coleridge borrowed the idea of Hamlet' s half-feigned and half-genuine madness from Charles Lamb? Between two such close friends as Lamb and Coleridge, ideas and opinions were constantly exchanged during their daily conversations and written correspondence. It is hard to determine who was the one initiating a certain idea. However, that no pre-1806 record exists probably signifies that Coleridge has not resolved the crux of Hamlet' s pretended madness before that marked year. Besides, William Hazlitt, another fellow Romantic critic and regular borrower of Lamb' s critical opinions, said once, 'L[amb] has furnished many a text for C[oleridge] to preach upon' ,¹⁷⁶ and the idea of Hamlet' s half-feigned and half-

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 103-4.

¹⁷⁴ It is dated by Thomas Middleton Raysor in an editorial note. See: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1960), I, 34 (n. 1).

¹⁷⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Character of Hamlet' , in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1960), I, 34-37 (p. 36).

¹⁷⁶ William Hazlitt, 'Essay IV. On the Conversation of Authors' , *The Complete Works of William*

genuine madness might be one of those.

William Hazlitt's comment might also be true in a wider sense than it has been given credit for. In 'Rosamund Gray', Charles Lamb records in a metaphorical way the aftermath of Mary's matricide, and the supposed narrator of the story is the 'bosom friend'¹⁷⁷ of Allen Clare/Charles Lamb. Half way through the story, it lapses into epistolary form, and the original versions of the letters are those which Lamb wrote to Coleridge, confiding his inmost feelings and hopes after the tragical event. In real life, Coleridge did exactly what 'Allen's bosom friend'¹⁷⁸ supposedly has done with 'Rosamund Gray', telling the tragic story of the Lamb family in his own writings, including his poetic works, and defending the reputation of both Mary and Charles from infamy. The most well-known instance of the kind is Coleridge's poem, 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison', where Lamb is referred to as 'My gentle-hearted Charles'.¹⁷⁹ Lamb reserved a strong objection to such a saintly praise for himself, and came to correct what Lamb considered to be a fallacy in Coleridge's understanding:

For God's sake (I never was more serious), don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print[...]¹⁸⁰

Hazlitt, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: Dent, 1930-4), XII, 35-44 (p. 36).

¹⁷⁷ Charles Lamb, 'Rosamund Gray', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 1-30 (p. 10).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ The poem was first published in the second volume of *The Annual Anthology*. Prior to its first publication, a copy had been sent to Robert Southey in a letter (Letter 74; July 1797), in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1895), I, 221-28 (p. 226).

¹⁸⁰ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 76; August 6, 1800), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 216-220 (p. 217).

It was nothing unusual for Charles Lamb to correct Samuel Taylor Coleridge in such a bold and blunt manner to make sure that Coleridge understood his story in the right sense. For example, Coleridge also wrote to Lamb once, and portrayed him as 'a temporary sharer in human miseries that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine nature'.¹⁸¹ In reply to Coleridge's letter, Lamb told him frankly that his expression contained 'an air of mysticism, [...] consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy',¹⁸² which overstepped the modesty of weak and suffering humanity, and wished to 'remind' Coleridge of 'that humility which best becometh the Christian character',¹⁸³ such as Lamb himself.

The good offices that Samuel Taylor Coleridge actually carried out for Charles Lamb, moreover, were extremely similar to those Hamlet counts on Horatio to do, near the end of Shakespeare's tragedy. In his dying speech, Hamlet entreats Horatio:

O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
 Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
 To tell my story. (*HAM*, V. ii. 349-54)

The manner of debate on several philosophical subjects between Horatio and Hamlet in Shakespeare's play is not a little like that of the epistolary exchanges between Coleridge and Lamb during the years from 1796 to 1797. Lamb seemed to notice these remarkable similarities himself and, in the essay 'On the Tragedies of

¹⁸¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge's letter to Charles Lamb (Letter 61; September 28, 1796), in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1895), I, 171-72 (p. 172).

¹⁸² Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 10; October 24, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), 53-54 (p. 53).

Shakspeare [*sic*]', he deliberately compares 'the form of speaking'¹⁸⁴ in

Shakespeare's dramas, especially in *Hamlet*, 'whether it be in soliloquy or

dialogue',¹⁸⁵ to 'the *epistolary form*':¹⁸⁶

Why, nine parts in ten of what Hamlet does, are transactions between himself and his moral sense, they are the effusions of his solitary musings [...] or rather, they are the silent meditations with which his bosom is bursting, reduced to *words* for the sake of reader, who must else remain ignorant of what is passing there.¹⁸⁷

Therefore, 'These profound sorrows, these light-and-noise-abhorring ruminations' of

Hamlet, Lamb continues in his essay, should never be represented 'by a gesticulating

actor, who comes and mouths them out before an audience, making four hundred

people his confidants at once'.¹⁸⁸ However, as briefly mentioned earlier in the

chapter, Hamlet was frequently portrayed 'as a public schoolmaster' in the theatre

'to give lectures to the crowd.'¹⁸⁹

If Charles Lamb sees himself as Hamlet in the prose tale, who else can Coleridge be but 'his dear friend Horatio' (II, 185)? (see also Chapter V.) In 1827, Coleridge eventually came to notice that 'every incident sets him [Hamlet] thinking'¹⁹⁰ and, perceiving himself shared this single trait with Hamlet, he exclaimed, 'I have a smack

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 54.

¹⁸⁴ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 97-111 (p. 99).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 100.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Table-talk: Hamlet--Polonius', in *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), II, 352.

of Hamlet myself; if I may say so.' ¹⁹¹ But as far as the relation of Lamb and Coleridge was concerned, it would always be that of Hamlet and Horatio in Lamb's tale. Thus, we are given a model for the relationship between the two great Romantic writers. Hamlet is the furnisher of ideas and insights; Horatio 'philosophizes on them at length, occasionally wrong-headed', ¹⁹² but always 'enthusiastic.' ¹⁹³ Together, Charles Lamb/Hamlet and Samuel Taylor Coleridge/Horatio have given us most moving Romantic prose and poetry as well as most innovative literary criticisms of Shakespeare's plays.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Jonathan Bate, 'Lamb on Shakespeare', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 51 (1985), 76-85 (p. 85).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III.

'A Sort of Double Singleness'

Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons was first published in the December of 1806 by the Juvenile Library. The Juvenile Library belonged to the Godwin family, but was then registered under the name of the manager, Thomas Hodgkins. William Godwin has admitted that the arrangement was out of absolute necessity:

Reviewers & old women of both sexes, have raised so furious a cry against me as a seditious man & an atheist that the tabbies who superintend schools either for boys or girls would have been terrified to receive a book under the name of Godwin.¹

The Godwins, however, were actively involved in the publishing business.

William Godwin wrote prolifically for the Juvenile Library under the pseudonyms of Edward Baldwin or Theophilus Marcliffe, and his works for children included *The History of England, For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* and *Fables. Ancient and Modern, Adapted for the Use of Children from Six to Twelve Years of Age*. Godwin's second wife, Mary Jane (Clairmont), was the author of some *Dramas for Children*, but her most important work was *The Family Robinson Crusoe*. By bringing out this first English translation and abridgement of Johann Wyss's *Der Schweizerische Robinson* (1812-3), Mary Jane Godwin made a notable coup in the Juvenile book-market in 1814. Their three daughters, including Fanny Wollstonecraft (see also Chapters II & V) and young Mary (Shelley), were 'the most respected

¹ William Godwin's MS, printed in Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), p. 266.

critics of the works of the Juvenile Library.'² Often, the Godwins would invite their friends in the literary circle to contribute their works. Charles and Mary Lamb, close friends and regular visitors of the Godwin family, remained the best contributors among them, and the *Tales from Shakespear* became the most famous and enduring publication of Godwin's Juvenile Library.

Tales from Shakespear, moreover, was the first collaborative output of Mary and Charles Lamb. Mary was its primary author, and she eventually adapted fourteen comedies and romances into prose narratives; that is, more than two thirds of the whole book. Charles's involvement probably played no part in the original plan of the Godwins. In a letter dated May 10, 1806, Charles informs Thomas Manning:

She [Mary Lamb] says you saw her writings about the other day and she wishes you should know what they are. She is doing for Godwin['s] Bookseller 20 of Shakespears [*sic*] plays to be made into Children['s] tales.³

In the same letter, Charles also told his friend, who was then travelling towards China, that he has already 'done Othello & Macbeth and mean to do all the Tragedies.'⁴

Charles Lamb might have been drawn to write the six tragic tales of his own accord. In 1827, he would come to make this statement in William Hone's *Table Book*:

the plays of Shakspeare [*sic*] have been the strongest and the sweetest food of my mind from infancy.⁵

² Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), p. 267.

³ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 201; May 10, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 225-226 (p. 225).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Charles Lamb, 'Notes, Etc., To Extracts from the Garrick Plays', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford edition, 2 vols. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1908), I (Miscellaneous Prose, *Elia*, *Last Essays of Elia*), 397-408 (p. 401).

Therefore, it is possible that, in 1806, Charles took a genuine interest in the idea of adapting Shakespeare's plays into children's stories, and formed a firm faith in the future popularity of the prose narratives among young readers. In the letter to Thomas Manning, dated May 10, 1806, Charles Lamb goes on to remark: 'I think it [Lamb's tales] will be popular among the little people.'⁶

Charles Lamb might have decided to share the responsibility and the work-load of *Tales from Shakespear* with Mary also out of the consideration for Mary's mental health. Although the brother and sister had been living together since April 23, 1799, Charles was under constant threat of being separated from her. Mary's insanity, which had already driven her to commit matricide in 1796 (see also Chapters II & IV), proved to be a recurring problem for the rest of her life. Such an intellectual activity as writing, furthermore, would sometimes prove to be a real trial for Mary's state of mind and trigger off her mental illness. Not surprisingly, she found little enjoyment in writing books for children or articles for magazines, as she once admitted to Henry Crabb Robinson:

She [Mary Lamb] spoke of her writing as a most painful occupation, which only necessity could make her attempt[.]⁷

Charles understood well her difficulty, as he wrote to William Wordsworth on June 26, 1806:

she [Mary Lamb] often faints in the prosecution of her great work[.]⁸

⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 201; May 10, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 225-226 (p. 225).

⁷ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (December 11, 1814), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), I, 156.

⁸ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 203; June 26, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London:

Consequently, whenever Charles detected any signs presaging another of Mary's intermittent attacks of insanity, no matter how slight they might be from the point of view of a by-stander, he would force Mary to rest and not even allow her to write a trivial letter to their most intimate friends. For example, on behalf of Mary, Charles dispatched two letters on December 11, 1806, to William Wordsworth and Sarah Stoddart respectively. 'Mary is by no means unwell',⁹ he says apologetically in the letters, but he 'wouldn't' take any risk to 'let her write.'¹⁰ After Mary was engaged by the Godwins to write the twenty prose tales, Charles watched over his sister, perhaps, not without some anxiety. If any of her relapses occurred, he had to hand her over, back to the care of Hoxton Asylum. Since Charles had grown so attached to Mary, Mary's company became the most precious thing in his life, and he could not write any of his famous essays without her presence.¹¹ As a matter of fact, the most recurring topic in Charles's famous *Elia* essays is his shared life with his elder sister.¹² From time to time, Mary would also contribute some thoughts to keep up Charles's writings.¹³ Whenever Mary was sent away, as Henry Crabb Robinson

Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 230-33 (p. 233).

⁹ Charles Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 210; December 11, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 252.

¹⁰ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 209; December 11, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 250-51 (p. 251).

¹¹ For example, see Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 198; March 14, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 218-21 (p. 220).

¹² For example, see Charles Lamb's *Elia* essays on 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire' and 'Old China'.

¹³ For example, see Charles Lamb's essays on 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster' and 'Captain Starkey'.

often recorded in his diary, Charles became a completely lost soul. He could not bear to stay in the empty home by himself, and was somehow forced to sleep elsewhere, at a friend's house, night after night, 'with his clothes on.'¹⁴ He fell in and out of, alternatively, the two extremes of emotion, either that of sadness or of merriment, for

His sister's illness, I [Henry Crabb Robinson] dare say, leaves him [Charles Lamb] in no state than outward affliction, or violent and false spirits which he works himself into, to subdue his real feelings.¹⁵

Whatever motivated Charles to partake of the enterprise of *Tales from Shakespear*, he quickly established a close working relationship with Mary, as revealed in their several surviving letters.

In Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart, begun on May 30 and finished on June 2, 1806, she described just how closely the siblings had been working together:

you would like to see us as we often sit writing on one table (but not on one cushion sitting) like Hermia & Helena in the [*sic*] *Midsummer's* [*sic*] *Night's* Dream. or rather like an old literary Darby and Joan. I taking snuff & he groaning all the while & saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished and then he finds out he has made something of it.¹⁶

Not only did Charles find the task of converting Shakespeare's dramas into children's stories difficult, but Mary also groaned and moaned about it. In the letter to William Wordsworth, dated June 26, 1806, Charles Lamb gives a report on how Mary begrudged the same task:

Mary is just stuck fast in *All's Well that Ends Well*. She complains of having to set forth so many female characters in boy's clothes. She begins to think Shakespear [*sic*] must have wanted Imagination.-- I to encourage her [...], flatter

¹⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (May 28, 1832), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), I, 407.

¹⁵ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (March 16, 1811), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), I, 27.

¹⁶ Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 202; May 30-June 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 227-30 (pp. 228-29).

her with telling her how well such a play & such a play is done. But she is stuck fast & I have been obliged to promise to assist her.¹⁷

Charles' s flatteries and promises seemed to work wonders on Mary, for, on the

Sunday morning of July 2, 1806, she sent a bright and joyous letter to Sarah Stoddart:

I am in good spirits just at this present time for Charles has been reading over the *Tale* I told you plagued me so much and he thinks it one of the very best. It is "All' s Well that Ends Well." You must not mind the many wretchedly dull letters I have sent you for indeed I cannot help it, my mind is so *dry* always after poring over my work all day. But it will soon be over.¹⁸

The job was done by September 1806. The twenty tales were bound and sold in two volumes at the price of eight shillings, not long before the Christmas of the same year.

On the title-page of this first edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, only the name of Charles Lamb was printed on the title-page; as for Mary' s contribution to the book, it was totally neglected (see also Chapter VI.)

Tales from Shakespear subsequently received six book-reviews, which appeared in seven contemporary periodicals.¹⁹ Four of the critics rendered high praise to their works. The critic of *The Monthly Mirror* judged the 'execution' of the book to be 'excellent'.²⁰ The 'dramas of Shakespear' are retold 'in a manner likely to be extremely attractive to young readers',²¹ says the *British Critic*. Both the *British*

¹⁷ Charles Lamb' s letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 203; June 26, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 230-33 (p. 233).

¹⁸ Mary Lamb' s letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 204; June 27-July 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 234-37 (p. 237).

¹⁹ *The Satirist* has merely reprinted two passages extracted from the book-reviews of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* and the *British Critic* respectively. See: *The Satirist, Or Monthly Meteor*, 5 (1809), 93.

²⁰ [Anonymous], *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners. With Strictures on Their Epitome, the Stage*, N.S. 2 (1807), 39.

²¹ [Anonymous], *British Critic*, 33 (1809), 525.

Critic and the *Gentleman's Magazine* noted the ease and grace of 'the language', and felt sure of the book's fitness to be 'an introduction' to the study of Shakespeare.²² The highest praise came from the *Critical Review*:

We have compared it [Lamb's *Tales*] with many of the numerous systems which have been devised for rivetting attention at an early age, and insinuating knowledge subtilly [*sic*] and pleasantly into minds, by nature averse from it. The result of the comparison is not so much that it rises high in the list, as that it claims the very first place, and stands unique and without rival or competitor [...] although adapted to instruct and interest the very young, it offers amusement to all ages.

In these times of empiricism and system-building, the world has been too credulous to the professions of old women of both sexes, who hold the reins of government over the education of children. We have grown so very good of late, that none but devotional books or moral tales, as they are called are entrusted into the hands of our children[...] We will not scruple to say, that these little volumes are more calculated to conquer the distaste in children for learning, than any[...] and in humanizing and correcting the heart, they will effect more than all the cant that ever was canted by Mrs. Trimmer and Co. in all their most canting and lethargic moments.²³

What evoked admiration from the four reviewers (cited earlier) aroused quite the opposite reaction from the two of *The Literary Panorama* and *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*.

The critic of *The Literary Panorama* condemned, first of all, the choice of plays. *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in particular, contain literary allusions 'of the existence of witches', 'sprites' and 'the Fairies'; 'how should such information have reached the youthful mind?'²⁴ exclaimed the critic. 'The early hours of youth are invaluable', urged the critic further in *The Literary Panorama*, 'they should be improved,' but the *Tales from Shakespear* contains little or none of the 'morals' deduced from the plays according to the early nineteenth

²² [Anonymous], *Gentleman's Magazine*, 78 (1808), 1001. See also the previous footnote.

²³ [Anonymous], *Critical Review*, 11 (1807), 97-99 (p. 98).

²⁴ [Anonymous], *The Literary Panorama. A Review of Books, Register of Events, Magazine of Varieties, etc.*, 3 (1807), 294-95 (p. 294).

century moral standards, set up by the fashionable moral tales, in order to 'promote virtue' effectively.²⁵ Not enough 'beauties of the great Dramatic Poet' have been quoted, either.²⁶ Meanwhile, the critic of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* was even more alarmed by the part of the preface written by Charles Lamb, which openly encourages young readers to 'wish' themselves 'a little older, that you may be allowed to read the Plays at full length.'²⁷ It was bad enough to inform 'girls' that 'there are parts in Shakspeare [*sic*] *improper* for them to read at one age', it would make the matter worse to recommend Shakespeare's dramas in such a way as in 'the preface', which 'only serves as a stimulus to juvenile curiosity, which requires a *bridle* rather than a *spur*'.²⁸ (The authorship of the 'Preface' to the first edition of Lamb's tales is discussed in Chapter V.)

Condemning or recommending, there was one thing the six contemporary book-reviews all had in common; that is, not even one of them expressed the slightest suspicion that more than one author was involved in the execution of the book. They all took it for granted that *Tales from Shakespear* was written by Mr. Lamb alone. It is because the twenty tales, indeed, possess some superficial characteristics of single authorship, which can fool any readers who fail to scrutinise the prose tales with care and discover the differences they contain.

This impression of single authorship embodied in Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*, in fact, characterises all the siblings' collaborative works for children, i.e. *Mrs. Leicester's School* and *Poetry for Children*. Charles Lamb once suggested

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 295.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷ Charles Lamb, 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, viii.

to Thomas Manning that he could 'amuse' himself 'in guessing [...] out' who is the author of a certain piece of writing.²⁹ Charles Lamb's suggestion certainly implied that there are extreme similarities in his and Mary's writings but, at the same time, his words also suggested there are delicate, yet definite, differences between their works, for he and Mary wrote together 'in a sort of double singleness.'³⁰

'[D]ouble singleness'³¹ is a unique phrase invented by Charles Lamb himself, to register that happy and contented life he shared with Mary, whom he refers to under the pseudonym of Bridget Elia in the *Elia* essays. In his essay on 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', Charles celebrates that life most affectionately:

BRIDGET ELIA has been my housekeeper for many a long year. I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the period of memory. We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness[...] We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits--yet so, as "with a difference." We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings--as it should be among near relations. Our sympathies are rather understood, than expressed[...] We are both great readers in different directions. While I am hanging over (for the thousandth time) some passage in old Burton, or one of his strange contemporaries, she is abstracted in some modern tale, or adventure, whereof our common reading-table is daily fed with assiduously fresh supplies. Narrative teazes me. I have little concern in the progress of events. She must have a story--well, ill, or indifferently told--so there be life stirring in it, and plenty of good or evil accidents. The fluctuations of fortune in fiction--and almost in real life--have ceased to interest, or operate but dully upon me. Out-of-the-way humours and opinions--heads with some diverting twist in them--the oddities of authorship please me most. My cousin has a native disrelish of any thing that sounds odd or bizarre. Nothing goes down with her, that is quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy.³²

²⁸ [Anonymous], *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, 26 (1807), 298.

²⁹ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 245; January 2, 1810), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), III (1809-1817), 34-38 (p. 35).

³⁰ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 75).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

In this chapter, the similarities, which reside in all the twenty prose tales retold from Shakespeare's plays and have conjured up the impression of single authorship in Lambs' writings, will be thoroughly surveyed. With no less emphasis, the deviations, which give away the true identities of the story-tellers, either of the comic or of the tragic tales, will also be carefully analysed. Moreover, I intend to exemplify how the daily readings of Charles and Mary Lamb determined their different approaches to Shakespeare's plots, characters and language, in adapting the dramatic works into prose tales.

1.

In a letter completed on June 2, 1806, Mary Lamb informed Sarah Stoddart of the Godwins' original plan for the twenty prose tales adapted from Shakespeare's plays:

My Tales are to be published [as] separate story books, I mean in single stories like the children[']s little shilling books, I cannot send you them in Manuscript because they are in the <bookseller's hands> Godwins['] hands but one will be published very soon & then you shall have it *all in print*.³³

Apparently, the Godwins later changed their minds about the format for presenting *Tales from Shakespear*, so, when the twenty tales came out for the first time in 1806, they were in two collected volumes instead (see Chapter VI.) However, from 1807 to 1808, eight tales were brought out by the Godwins in chapbook form as eight individual booklets. 'These single tales are', once declared by David Foxon in *The Book Collector*, 'probably the greatest rarities of more recent English literature.'³⁴

The first six single tales (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1807/2) were advertised in 1807. The publisher's advertisement attached to the end of a new edition of *The History of England* runs like this:

N.B. Six of these Tales [from Shakespear] are already published in single Numbers, each Number being adorned with Three Plates, beautifully coloured, price 6d. The remainder will speedily follow.³⁵

In 1808, the publisher announced that two more single tales (see the Annotated

³³ Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 202; May 30-June 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 227-30 (p. 227).

³⁴ David Foxon, 'The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*', *The Book Collector*, 6 (1957), 41-53 (p. 41).

³⁵ The publisher's advertisement, in Edward Baldwin (pseud.), *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (London: Hodgkins, 1807), p. iv (advertisement).

Bibliography: L. 1808/1) had been added to the existing chapbooks. The new advertisement was added to the last page of *The Adventures of Ulysses*:

N.B. A specimen of these Tales [from Shakespear] is just published in eight single Numbers, each Number being adorned with three Plates, beautifully coloured, price Sixpence. The reminders [*sic*] will speedily follow.³⁶

Finally, in 1809, the publisher abandoned the idea of issuing any more single-tale volumes. There was no more talk about the remainder of the tales in the new advertisement, which appeared in the second edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1809/1.) The existence of these chapbook editions of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* provides us with a vital clue concerning the restriction imposed on the length of each prose tale from the outset, which Charles and Mary Lamb had to take into account while abridging the stories from Shakespeare' s plays.

The eight tales, which were issued as chapbooks, are *The Winter' s Tale*, *Othello*, *The [sic] Midsummer Night' s Dream*, *Cymbeline*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The longest is *Othello*, which occupies thirty-eight pages; the shortest, *The Winter' s Tale*, thirty-two pages. More than half of these single-tale volumes uniformly take up thirty-six pages. It was a considerable challenge, to reduce a play-text which usually takes two to three hours to perform in the theatre to the size of approximately thirty-six tiny pages of a short story. A summary mentioning all the characters and the incidents of the play, could have filled up all the available pages. Nevertheless, the Lambs meant to do more than merely supply their young readers with summaries of Shakespeare' s plays. At least, as far as Charles Lamb was concerned (as already discussed in the previous two chapters), he

³⁶ The publisher' s advertisement, in Charles Lamb, *The Adventure of Ulysses* (London: [Godwin], 1808), p. 203 (advertisement.)

meant to present his prose tales as a kind of pleasure reading and, at the same time, as a means to convey personal insight and Romantic criticism of Shakespeare's tragedies. Inevitably, many incidents and characters in Shakespeare's original plays have to be omitted, in order to give way to the additional matter.

Charles Lamb discovered that the titles of the six tragedies were an immensely useful guide in terms of plot-selection. For example, in re-telling the story from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, he decided that, according to the title of the tragedy, the 'adventures' of 'Lear and his Three Daughters' 'alone concern our story' (I, 214). As soon as the story has begun, the narration plunges straight into the centre of the Lear plot:

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

The Gloucester sub-plot barely exists.

The Gloucester family is introduced in Charles Lamb's 'King Lear', only when the fates of Lear and his three daughters are to be determined through their diverse connections to 'Edmund, a natural son of the late earl of Gloucester' (I, 212):

who by his treacheries had succeeded in disinheriting his brother Edgar the lawful heir from his earldom, and by his wicked practices was now earl himself[...] (I, 212)

This is all that is said about the Gloucester sub-plot in Lamb's tale. Charles Lamb justifies the omission in the concluding paragraph:

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

For a similar reason and in a similar way, the Alcibiades sub-plot is omitted from Lamb's 'Timon of Athens'.

Charles Lamb's Alcibiades, unlike his dramatic counterpart in Shakespeare's

Timon of Athens, does not appear in front of the senators to plead for mercy. The cause of Alcibiades' s revolt is reduced to a vague hint in Lamb' s tale.

'Alcibiades' , says Lamb, is

the Athenian captain [...] who upon some disgust taken against the senators of Athens (the Athenians were ever noted to be a thankless and ungrateful people, giving disgust to their generals and best friends) was marching at the head of the same triumphant army which he had formerly headed in their defence, to war against them[...] (II, 138-39)

This is the single appearance that Alcibiades makes in Lamb' s tale. At the height of Timon' s hatred for all mankind, Alcibiades, 'passing through the woods near to his [Timon' s] cave' (II, 138), receives gold from Timon to 'pay his [Alcibiades' s] soldiers' (II, 139); in return, Alcibiades conveniently offers Timon 'no other service [...] than that he should with his conquering army lay Athens level with the ground, and burn, slay, kill all her inhabitants' (II, 139). There is no final reconciliation between Alcibiades and the Athenians in the prose tale. Lamb' s tale simply ends with Timon' s death and without any hope for redemption (II, 144).

The Alcibiades sub-plot is not the only conspicuous omission in Charles Lamb' s 'Timon of Athens' . Within the Timon plot, Apemantus is also omitted. In a dramatic work, the dramatist often tries to balance a play by presenting various viewpoints on the same subject through different characters. Shakespeare' s Apemantus in *Timon of Athens*, for example, is a kind of chorus. He observes and comments on Timon' s behaviour and his friends' conduct. Whereas, in a prose narrative, such as Charles Lamb' s 'Timon of Athens' , it is the narrator' s role to observe and to comment upon the incidents and the characters, and the existence of a chorus becomes redundant. Besides, Apemantus, a useful check on Timon' s extreme behaviour in the play, 'The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends' (*TIM*, IV. iii. 301-2), would distract the attention of young readers from the theme of

'hypocritical and deceitful mankind' in Lamb's tale (II, 144), and somewhat complicate the issue and slow down the story-telling process. To stream-line the plot further, Apemantus is reduced by Charles Lamb to no more than a shadowy, nameless 'cynic' at the beginning of the tale (II, 121).

The same plot-selection and character-omitting principles were applied by Mary Lamb, as long as they were feasible in dealing with the comedies and the romances.

In re-telling the story from *The Taming of the Shrew*, for example, the taming plot is the sole concern in Lamb's tale. Not only are the Sly Induction and its sequels omitted, but also omitted is the sub-plot of the wooing of Bianca. The lute scene and the head-breaking of II. i are retained, but it is Katherina's 'music-master' (II, 26), not Hortensio in disguise, who is made a victim of Kate's violent temper. Altogether, Bianca makes only two appearances in the tale. At the beginning, she is to contrast with Katherina as the 'gentle sister' (II, 24). Near the end, she turns out to be one of the 'head-strong women' (II, 42), who have lost the contest of wifely obedience to Katherina. Throughout the whole prose narrative, the focus stays firmly on how Petruchio transforms Katherina into 'the most obedient and duteous wife in Padua' (II, 43) and never goes astray (see also Chapter V.)

In Mary Lamb's 'The Winter's Tale', furthermore, Autolycus and the clownish son of the Old Shepherd, the adoptive brother of Perdita, are omitted. No matter how much the dual play of Autolycus and the Clown is enjoyed and applauded in the theatre, the existence of these two characters, who provide a kind of comic relief in the play, inevitably slows down the action. In particular, Autolycus deflects the Shepherd and the Clown from their proposed visit to King Polixenes and gets them on board the ship, which takes Florizel and Perdita to Leontes, for he considers it 'more knavery to conceal' the flight of the prince and Perdita and, in so doing,

more 'constant to [his] profession' (*WT*, IV. iv. 682-83). In such a way, Autolycus complicates the discovery procedure of Perdita's true identity. Without Autolycus and the Clown, Lamb's tale is able to develop at a faster pace, and the way in which Perdita's noble birth is brought to light becomes more straightforward.

'Camillo', as narrated by Mary Lamb in the prose tale, 'proposed to Florizel and Perdita, that they should accompany him to the Sicilian court' (I, 56):

To this proposal they joyfully agreed; and Camillo, who conducted every thing relative to their flight, allowed the old shepherd to go along with them.

The shepherd took with him the remainder of Perdita's jewels, her baby clothes, and the paper which he had found pinned to her mantle.

After a prosperous voyage, Florizel and Perdita, Camillo and the old shepherd, arrived in safety at the court of Leontes. [...]Perdita, whom Florizel introduced as his princess, seemed to engross all Leontes' attention[...]

When the old shepherd heard how much notice the king had taken of Perdita, and that he had lost a daughter, who was exposed in infancy, he fell to comparing the time when he found the little Perdita with the manner of its exposure, the jewels and other tokens of its high birth; from all which it was impossible for him not to conclude, that Perdita and the king's lost daughter were the same. (I, 56-57)

As revealed in this quoted passage, Autolycus and the Clown do not simply disappear. The omissions of these two characters demand some adjustments to be made, in the ways in which the other characters are portrayed in Mary Lamb's 'The Winter's Tale'. Evidently, the part of the Old Shepherd is enlarged, and the character appears to be more courageous and intelligent than his dramatic counterpart. Disregarding Polixenes's apparent threat of 'a cruel death' (I, 55), the Old Shepherd stands by Perdita's cause, joins the party, which already consists of Perdita, Florizel and Camillo, and flees to Sicily. At their arrival, he is also able to analyse the information regarding the lost princess, and draw a right conclusion 'that Perdita and the king's lost daughter were the same' (II, 57). Meanwhile, the character of Camillo is more consistently 'good' (I, 45), for he never betrays Florizel's confidence as his counterpart does in Shakespeare's original drama.

The comedies and the romances are, however, 'more perplext [*sic*] and unmanageable' than the tragedies, as noticed by Mary Lamb.³⁷ For this same reason, Mary decided to let her younger brother, Charles, to have 'picked out' the tragic stories 'first'; 'Charles', who had a full-time job at the East India House, as Mary told Sarah Stoddart, 'was forced to get them now or he could not have had any at all.'³⁸ Subsequently, Mary was left with 'these latter ones' that would 'take more time' to work on.³⁹

The task of abridging the stories from Shakespeare's comedies and romances became more laboured for Mary Lamb for various reasons. First of all, the titles of the plays simply ceased to be helpful, when Mary Lamb came to narrate stories from such plays as *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will*. Under this circumstance, Mary was bound to find a fresh angle for her abridgements, and she eventually sought out an alternative. Since *Tales from Shakespear* was designed for 'young ladies'⁴⁰ and 'young gentlemen'⁴¹, Mary Lamb chose to narrate the part of the comedy that concentrates on the lives and adventures of those youthful characters, who belong to the same social class and, presumably, would share a similar prospect in life with her intended readers (see also Chapters IV & V.) For example, Mary Lamb's 'As You Like It' becomes a story about Rosalind, Celia, Orlando and Oliver, and how they find true love and obtain eternal happiness. Touchstone and

³⁷ Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 204; June 27-July 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 234-237 (p. 235).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, vi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

Jaques are entirely omitted, even though Touchstone and Jaques are much admired in the theatre and, sometimes, prove to be the most memorable characters for readers of the play. As for the omission of Touchstone in Lamb's tale, it makes the journey to the forest of Arden potentially more dangerous for the two young ladies, Rosalind and Celia, and renders Rosalind's male disguise really and truly 'a [...] greater protection' during their travels (I, 94). Similarly, Mary Lamb's 'Twelfth Night' begins with:

Sebastian and his sister Viola, a young gentleman and lady of Messaline, were twins[...] (II, 97)

The focus of the narration is fixed upon the romantic plot of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* from beginning to end:

Thus the twin brother and sister were both wedded on the same day: the storm and shipwreck, which had separated them, being the means of bringing to pass their high and mighty fortunes. Viola was the wife of Orsino, the duke of Illyria, and Sebastian the husband of the rich and noble countess, the lady Olivia. (II, 120)

The drunken trio, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste, simply do not exist in Lamb's tale.

The gulling of Malvolio is never mentioned, though the scheme against Malvolio is often treated by actors and readers of the play as the primary interest, as underlined in

Charles Lamb's *Elia* essay, 'On Some of the Old Actor' :

The part of Malvolio, in the *Twelfth Night*, was performed by Bensley, with a richness and a dignity[...] when Bensley was occasionally absent from the theatre, John Kemble thought it no derogation to succeed to the part.⁴²

In combining the two previous methods of plot-selection together, Mary Lamb came up with another new strategy to deal with the intriguing plots of Shakespeare's comedies. Lamb's 'The Merchant of Venice', as a direct result of this third

⁴² Charles Lamb, 'On Some of the Old Actors', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of*

approach, is a story about the life and adventures of 'Anthonio [*sic*], a young merchant of Venice' (I, 140), even though many actors who have acted the part of Shakespeare's Antonio, portray him as an elderly man and a father-figure to Bassanio. Since Antonio is 'the generous merchant' (I, 140) mentioned in the title, and the focus of Lamb's tale, as summed up by Mary Lamb, is 'this rich merchant's story' (I, 163), the casket scenes have become irrelevant and are entirely omitted. The wooing of Portia is swiftly concluded in her ready consent 'to accept of him [Bassanio] for a husband' (I, 145). Jessica's elopement with Lorenzo is merely touched upon once, when Antonio's generosity is to be further emphasized in the prose tale:

The generous Anthonio [*sic*] then said, that he would give up his share of Shylock's wealth, if Shylock would sign a deed to make it over at his death to his daughter and her husband; for Anthonio [*sic*] knew that the Jew had an only daughter, who had lately married against his consent to a young Christian, named Lorenzo, a friend of Anthonio's [*sic*] which had so offended Shylock, that he had disinherited her. (I, 157)

Due to such extensive omissions and alterations of the plot, Mary Lamb's Antonio turns out to be totally selfless and is portrayed as a more praise-worthy character than his dramatic counterpart in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (see also Chapter V.)

Most of the perplexity discovered by Mary Lamb in Shakespeare's comedies, probably would not be regarded as equally unmanageable, if Charles, not Mary, were the teller of the comic tales. Of the two of them, Mary was more inclined to be perplexed by Shakespeare's ways of plotting. As delineated by Charles Lamb in his *Elia* essay on 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', the brother and the sister found amusement in different sorts of reading. Charles had 'little concern in the progress of

Elia), 132-41 (p. 134).

events' ⁴³ and was fond of things 'odd or bizarre.'⁴⁴ Since the 'fluctuations of fortune' had 'ceased to interest' Charles in reading,⁴⁵ it seems that he consequently paid little attention to them in writing. In his six tragic tales, Charles seldom made any attempt to tidy up the textual inconsistencies in Shakespeare's tragedies. The timing for Juliet to take the sleeping potion (*ROM*, IV. i. 90-94 & IV. iii. 58) and the duration for the effect of the potion to wear off (IV. i. 105 & V. iii. 147) in *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, remain exactly the same in Lamb's tale. In Charles Lamb's 'Romeo and Juliet', the effect of the potion still lasts for 'two-and-forty hours' (II, 165) and, after Juliet has drunk it off on 'the night before the marriage' (II, 164), she wakes up long passed midnight or near dawn (II, 169 & 171), a much later hour than the one appointed. As a matter of fact, Charles was so careless about the development of a plot, that he often made gross mistakes in recounting it in detail. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, Charles actually mistook the owner of the dagger, which Juliet used to stab herself in 'Romeo and Juliet'.⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is nothing unusual for Charles to interrupt his own story-telling, and suddenly change the subject to something else deemed to be more interesting, but not always connected to the on-going narration. For example, in Lamb's 'King Lear', a considerable length of his narration is devoted to the description of the miserable life of a Bedlam beggar, which is not directly connected to the development of Lear's story (for details, see also

⁴³ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 75).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ For further example, see also Charles Lamb's *Elia* essay on 'The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple'.

Chapter I).⁴⁷ It is only necessary to add that Charles Lamb was not afraid of giving offence, and never attempted to avoid improprieties or taboos during the course of narration. Gertrude's incest, for instance, is openly discussed in Charles Lamb's 'Hamlet'; so is Desdemona's supposed adultery in his 'Othello' (for details, see also Chapter II). However, in Mary Lamb's case, the opposite is true.

Mary Lamb, on the other hand, 'must have a story' for her reading,⁴⁸ and she had 'a native disrelish of any thing' 'quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy.'⁴⁹ Her reading preferences also seem to be reflected in her writings, for in most of her comic tales violence and sex, if not omitted entirely, have been vastly toned down (see also Chapters IV & V.) In 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona', for example, Proteus never intends to rape Silvia. After rescuing Silvia 'from the hands of the robbers' (I, 135), as Mary Lamb tells her young readers, he 'began to distress her afresh with his love-suit', 'rudely pressing her to consent to marry him' (I, 135). In 'Pericles', the deaths of many princes, who failed to guess aright the meaning of Antiochus's riddle, are not mentioned at all, because the prose story does not begin until Pericles goes into his 'voluntary exile' (II, 231),

to avert the dreadful calamities which Antiochus, the wicked emperor of Greece, threatened to bring upon his subjects and city of Tyre, in revenge for a discovery which the prince had made of a shocking deed which the emperor had done in secret[...] (II, 231)

As to the incestuous nature of that 'shocking deed' (II, 231), it does not figure in Lamb's tale. Subsequently, the brothel scenes in Shakespeare's *Pericles* are entirely

⁴⁷ For further example, see also Charles Lamb's prose story, 'Rosamund Gray'.

⁴⁸ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 75).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

omitted, and Marina is 'sold' to be 'a slave' (II, 248), not a prostitute, in the prose version. More significantly, perhaps, the sequence of events in a Shakespearean comedy is often re-arranged by Mary Lamb in her prose adaptation, if the structure was thought to be problematic or inconsistent.

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, for example, opens with music conveniently provided in the theatre, 'If music be the food of love, play on,/Give me excess of it' (*TN*, I. i. 1-2). Neither time nor place is specified in this first scene of the play. Illyria is the setting of the comedy, which is not stated until I. ii:

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

Before the second scene comes to an end, Viola asks the Captain to 'present me as an eunuch' to Duke Orsino (*TN*, I. ii. 56); 'for I can sing', she says, 'And speak to him in many sorts of music,/That will allow me very worth his service' (I. ii. 57-59).

However, in the disguise of Cesario, Viola does not perform the service of an eunuch, but that of a page. After she, as Orsino's love emissary, has paid Olivia two visits, Cesario concludes the second visit by swearing to Olivia, 'never more/Will I my master's tears to you deplore' (III. i. 163-64). Contrary to her previous declaration, Cesario calls on Olivia once more and, during this third visit, Olivia gives Cesario/Viola a miniature portrait of herself (III. iv. 210).

Mary Lamb, to tidy up the inconsistent details and make sense of the whole romantic story for her young readers, makes some new arrangements in her prose version of the play. 'Twelfth Night' begins with I. ii of Shakespeare's comedy, where the shipwreck that separates Viola from Sebastian takes place:

They were born in one hour, and in one hour they were both in danger of perishing, for they were shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria as they were making a sea-voyage together. (II, 97)

After being rescued by the Captain, Viola comes to serve Orsino 'as a page' (II, 99). '[I]n a man's habit' (II, 99), Viola pays, altogether, two visits to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf: the first visit takes place after she has told Orsino the story of a supposed sister's unrequited love (II, 102-3), and the second one occurs after she has elusively confessed to Orsino her own secret love for him (II, 110). The news about Olivia's determination to walk veiled for seven years in mourning for her brother's death (*TN*, I. i. 26-32), does not reach Orsino until he has already heard Cesario's story about the sister's pining away for love (*TN*, II. iv. 110-20). In fact, it is this piece of news from Olivia's house that distracts Orsino from his absorption in Viola's story, and revives his nearly extinguished ambition to obtain Olivia's love (II, 103). Thus, Mary Lamb also gives her prose tale a psychological subtlety.

In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the development of the romantic comedy comes to a slightly awkward moment at II. iv. 122. When all of Viola's intention is to dissuade Orsino from sighing vainly for Olivia, and her contrivance has obviously been rewarded with the desired effect, it can seem odd that Cesario voluntarily reminds Orsino of her mission as his love envoy to Olivia:

Duke. But died thy sister of her love, my boy?
Viola. I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too: and yet I know not.
Sir, shall I to this lady?
Duke. Ay, that's the theme. (*TN*, II. iv. 120-23)

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

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

and then he [Orsino] remembered how often she [Viola] had said *she loved him*[.] (II, 119)

The result of shifting scenes in Lamb's tale is a finely structured and nicely balanced story.

It is not always the inconsistent development of a Shakespearean comedy, which caused problems for Mary Lamb. Sometimes it is also how the play ends. The way in which Shakespeare finishes a comedy often does not conform to the convention that justice is done and all live happily ever after. *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Tempest*, for example, are two such plays.

In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Hero has cleared her name and is married to her heart's desire in the end. Nevertheless, the exoneration and rewarding of Claudio with the chaste and loving Hero does outrage some sensibilities, because Claudio has displayed so much callousness in his character, when he makes the public and fierce accusation in the church scene (IV. i). Subsequently, on hearing of the death of Hero and facing Leonato's challenge, Claudio shows little respect for the old father's loss and grief, 'We [Claudio and Don Pedro] had liked to have had our two noses snapped off with two old men without teeth' (V. i. 114-15), and his disrespectful attitude actually provokes Benedick's comment, 'In a false quarrel there is no true valour' (V. i. 119). Whereas, in Mary Lamb's 'Much Ado About

Nothing', the unpleasant aspects in Claudio's character are either excused or abated to prepare for an ethically happier ending.

In Mary Lamb's prose tale, Claudio is a 'noble' character, judged by both social and moral standards (I, 75). He is temporarily made 'hard-hearted' by his 'anger' (I, 76), so he 'left the church, without staying to see if Hero would recover [from the fainting fit], or at all regarding the distress into which [he and Don Pedro] had thrown Leonato' (I, 76). When he meets Leonato again, however, Claudio is said to have 'respected his age and his sorrow' (I, 81). Shakespeare's Claudio mourns for Hero's supposed death at Leonato's request:

Leonato. if your love
Can labour aught in sad invention,
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb,
And sing it to her bones, sing it tonight. (*ADO*, V. i. 276-79)

However, Mary Lamb's Claudio needs no prompting at all, and has 'passed that night' before his second nuptial, alone, 'in tears, and in remorseful grief, at the tomb which Leonato had erected for Hero' (I, 83).

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, justice is done in terms of the reward and the punishment having been distributed as could be expected:

Gonzalo. In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
Where he himself was lost, Prospero his dukedom
In a poor isle, and all of us ourselves
When no man was his own. (*TMP*, V. i. 208-13)

Nonetheless, the ending can not be described as exactly happy. Although, at the close of Shakespeare's play, Prospero decides that 'The rarer action is/In virtue than in vengeance' (V. i. 27-28) and, in the following sequence, Alonzo is welcomed (V. i. 106), Gonzalo is embraced (V. i. 121), and the 'rankest fault' of Antonio is pardoned (V. i. 132), although Antonio is silent. Antonio's silence seems to repel rather than

accept Prospero's self-proffered forgiveness. Therefore, Mary Lamb was obliged to supply Antonio with the wanted reaction and end the prose adaptation in a more comfortable atmosphere than that of the play.

In Mary Lamb's 'The Tempest', the assassination of Alonzo is not plotted between Sebastian and Antonio, although it is discussed in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

Sebastian. I remember
You did supplant your brother Prospero.
Antonio. True:
And look how well my garments sit upon me;
Much feater than before: My brother's servants
Were then my fellows; now they are my men.
Sebastian. But for your conscience?
Antonio. Ay, sir where lies that? It 'twere a kibe;
'Twould put me to my slipper: but I feel not
This deity in my bosom: (II. i. 265-73)

Without Antonio's downright denial, 'I feel not/This deity [conscience] in my bosom' (II. i. 272-73), there is some scope for Antonio to repent and to choose good, when the time comes in Lamb's tale. Indeed, after being reminded of his past usurpation by Ariel 'in the shape of a harpy' (I, 16), Antonio has already begun to repent 'the injustice [he] had done to Prospero' (I, 16); whereas, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Antonio's reply is far from being penitent for his crime:

Sebastian. But one fiend at a time,
I'll fight their legions o'er.
Antonio. I'll be thy second. (TMP, III. iii. 102-3)

Eventually, when Antonio is brought before Prospero in Lamb's tale, he

with tears and sad words of sorrow and true repentance implored his brother's forgiveness (I, 17).

Prospero's forgiveness is certainly granted and, then, Miranda is introduced. The appearance of Miranda kindles the memory of Antonio's cruel deeds, done to the baby Miranda twelve years ago, and a confirmation of Prospero's forgiveness is

required at this point:

And then Prospero embraced his brother, and again assured him of his forgiveness; and said that a wise, over-ruling Providence had permitted that he should be driven from his poor dukedom of Milan, that his daughter might inherit the crown of Naples, for that by their meeting in this desert island, it had happened, that the king's son had loved Miranda. These kind words which Prospero spoke, meaning to comfort his brother, so filled Antonio with shame and remorse, that he wept and was unable to speak[.] (I, 18-19)

Through her narration, Mary Lamb offers a far more benign portrayal of Prospero and, simultaneously, a more optimistic interpretation of Antonio's silence is also proposed.

These alterations and omissions, purposefully made in the comic tales by Mary Lamb, testify to her persistence and capability to work out a clear and consistent story-line for each of her tales. Because Mary Lamb's comic tales are so characterised by clarity and lucidity, her tales are always found to be more comprehensible and approachable for children than Charles's.⁵⁰ Furthermore, in scrutinising the structure of a comedy through its prose counterpart, Mary Lamb made another important contribution to the study of Shakespeare's comedies and romances, which has not yet been realised. *Via* story-telling, Mary Lamb made some subtle points about the meaning and the artistic value of some of Shakespeare's plotting techniques, which had been so far overlooked.

Cymbeline, for example, was probably the most condemned of Shakespearean romances for its inconsistent and massive plots. During the Age of Reason, *Cymbeline* was absolutely dismissed as a thing of absurdity. In 1753, Charlotte Lennox rejected 'the whole Conduct of the Play' in her *Shakespear* [sic] *Illustrated*

⁵⁰ For example, see Carolyn Misenheimer, 'The Pleasure of Early Enlightenment: The Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, N.S. 67 (1989), 69-82.

as 'absurd and ridiculous to the last Degree.'⁵¹ In 1765, Samuel Johnson considered it too incongruous to be worthy of any literary criticism at all:

To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.⁵²

However, in 1806, when Mary Lamb came to re-tell the story from the play, she discovered the technical brilliance of the last scene and integrated her appreciation into the process of her story-telling.

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

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

The king is in a position of authority, and has the power either to reward or punish any of these characters, and each of them, in one way or another, is associated with the king and his future happiness, though the king is not in the least aware of the situation. It is Iachimo's answer to Imogen's question, 'Of whom he had this [diamond] ring' (*CYM*, V. v. 135), which is to bring all the secrets to light and determine how Cymbeline shall decide the fates of the others. Mary Lamb, consequently, highlights the request of Imogen by way of describing the intense

⁵¹ Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespear Illustrated: Or the Novels and Histories, On Which the Plays of Shakespear Are Founded*, 3 vols. (London: Millar, 1753-4), I, 166.

⁵² Samuel Johnson's editorial notes, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), VII, 403.

expectation from all directions:

They all were attentive to hear what thing the page would ask for[...] Imogen then fixing her eye on Iachimo, demanded no other boon than this, that Iachimo should be made to confess whence he had the ring he wore on his finger. (I, 184-85)

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

Finally,

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

Mary Lamb's finding was to be further developed into a critical essay in 1817 by William Hazlitt, who, as one of the three great Romantic critics, actually takes the full credit for it. (William Hazlitt's indebtedness to Mary Lamb is discussed in the fourth and the fifth chapters.) In the *Characters of Shakespear's* [sic] *Plays*, William Hazlitt explicitly expounds the technicality involved in concluding this 'dramatic romance':⁵³

The business of the plot evidently thickens in the last act: the story moves forward with increasing rapidity at every step; its various ramifications are drawn from the most distant points to the same centre; the principal characters are brought together, and placed in very critical situations; and the fate of almost every person in the drama is made to depend on the solution of a single circumstance--the answer of Iachimo to the question of Imogen respecting the obtaining of the ring from Posthumus. Dr. Johnson is of opinion that Shakespear [sic] was generally inattentive to the winding up of his plots. We think the contrary is true; and we might cite in proof of this remark[...] the present play [...] in which the last act is crowded with decisive events brought about by natural and striking means.⁵⁴

⁵³ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (London: Hunter, 1817), p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2.

2.

The status of Shakespeare as the most celebrated English playwright had been long established, but one of the most notable contributions to the study of Shakespeare made by the three great Romantic critics--Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb--was to proclaim and demonstrate to the world that not only was Shakespeare a great dramatist but also the greatest poet that England had ever produced. In the Age of Reason, when language was cleansed of metaphors and ambiguities, prose was thought to be a better writing style than poetry (see also Chapter I), and 'the works of Shakespeare and Milton', as William Wordsworth complained in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), 'are driven into neglect,'⁵⁵ *Tales from Shakespear* came out as a defence of poetry in prose and certainly had its significance at the time it was produced.

Earlier in 1805, Charles Lamb had written a simple rhyming entertainment, *The King and Queen of Hearts*, for children who were at the time deprived of the enjoyment that reading poetry for entertainment could bring (see also Chapter I.) *Tales from Shakespear* allowed the Lambs to go further and, in 1806, via Shakespeare's unique usage of the English language, a more sophisticated and much subtler style of versification than the traditional nursery rhyme was introduced to children. To achieve this aim, Shakespeare's words were included in Lambs' tales, as far as it was possible to do so.

There are certain songs and rhymes, quoted verbatim from Shakespeare's plays,

⁵⁵ William Wordsworth, 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads', in *William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill, Oxford Authors Series (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), p. 599.

still preserved in their original verse form in Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*. For example, the lyrics of both Ariel's famous songs, 'Full fathom five' (*TMP*, I. ii. 399-407) and 'Where the bee sucks, there suck I' (*TMP*, V. i. 88-94), are retained in Mary Lamb's 'The Tempest' (I, 9 & 20); so are Feste's love-laments, 'Come away, come away, Death' (*TN*, II. iv. 51-66), in her 'Twelfth Night' (II, 109), although the singer, Feste, is omitted. Some bitter remarks about Lear, such as 'He that has and a little tiny wit' (*KL*, III. ii. 74-77), chanted by the Fool, are also given with very slight alterations in Charles Lamb's 'King Lear' (I, 206). Nevertheless, prose, instead of verse, is the unifying style employed throughout Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, so the dramatic speeches, either set in prose or verse by Shakespeare in his plays, are all laid out in prose form by the Lambs in their tales. This does not mean, however, that Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* is merely a volume of well-known quotations.

Charles Lamb had, in fact, little faith in constantly quoting from Shakespeare's plays. As expressed in his essay 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*]', the common phenomenon of quoting and reciting Shakespeare's most famous dramatic speeches out of the original context means, for Charles, no more than a cruel and detestable deprivation of both the sense and the meaning of these fine passages:

How far the very custom of hearing any thing *spouted*, withers and blows upon a fine passage, may be seen in those speeches from Henry the Fifth, &c. which are current in the mouths of school-boys from their being to be found in *Enfield Speakers*, and such kind of books. I confess myself utterly unable to appreciate that celebrated soliloquy in Hamlet, beginning "To be or not to be," or to tell whether it be good, bad, or indifferent, it has been so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanly from its living place and principle of continuity in the play, till it is become to me a perfect dead member.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Charles Lamb, 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1905-8), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-

Therefore, if there is a passage quoted from the play, it will be a brief rhyme or song or something that is self-contained. Otherwise, Shakespeare's words are more frequently introduced in the form of paraphrase instead of direct quotation.

The four basic paraphrasing techniques used in Lambs' prose tales are modernisation, simplification, exposition and grammatical correction.

Certain expressions and vocabulary used in Shakespeare's dramas were no longer used by those who lived in the early nineteenth century. For a child reader, who was not accustomed to Shakespeare's antiquities and could be easily vexed by them, the Lambs replaced those archaic words with more up-to-date usages of their own time. For example, 'oft' is replaced by 'often'; 'posy', 'poetry', 'nought', 'nothing'; 'ere', 'before'; 'spake', 'speak'; 'his wonted way' (*HAM*, III. i. 41), 'his accustomed way' (II, 188); 'she would spell him backward' (*ADO*, III. i. 61), 'she would dispraise him' (I, 72); 'walk a bout', 'dance', etc.

Some of Shakespeare's words were deemed to be too difficult or too unusual for children to be acquainted with in their daily lives, and the Lambs replaced these words with simpler or more familiar terms. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, for example, Petruchio thus informs his wife:

Well, come, my Kate, we will unto your father's
Even in these honest mean habiliments. (*SHR*, IV. iii. 166-67)

In Mary Lamb's 'The Taming of the Shrew', 'habiliments' (IV. iii. 167) is replaced by 'garments' (II, 35). Moreover, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Hero tells Ursula that Beatrice's 'spirits are as coy and wild/As haggards of the rock' (*ADO*, III. i. 35-36), but in Mary Lamb's prose tale, a more general term, 'birds' (I, 71),

rather than 'haggards' (III. i. 36), is used.

Shakespeare's language is modernised and simplified in Lambs' tales, not without some regrettable consequences, as acknowledged in the 'Preface', written for the first edition of *Tales from Shakespear*: 'the beauty of his language is too frequently destroyed by the necessity of changing many of his excellent words into words far less expressive of his true sense.'⁵⁷ In *Twelfth Night*, for example, Viola plays upon the double meaning of the word, 'favour', while having a conversation with Orsino and giving him a evasive answer that she is in love with him:

Duke. thine eye
Hath stay' d upon some favour that it loves.
Hath it not, boy?
Viola. A little, by your favour. (*TN*, II. iv. 23-25)

Viola's oblique reply and her witty pun, 'by your favour', implying both 'by your leave' and 'someone resembles you', establish the poignant situation in which her disguise permits her to speak of her love only through hints and half-truths. On the other hand, in Mary Lamb's modernised version, Viola's answer is given a more definite interpretation and the word-play exists no longer:

Her sad looks were observed by Orsino, who said to her, "[...]your eye has looked upon some face that it loves; has it not, boy?" "A little, with your leave," replied Viola. (II, 110)

Such loss of vivid expressiveness in Shakespeare's language is inevitable but, to reduce it to a minimum, both Charles and Mary Lamb endeavoured to search for the required verbal substitutions within Shakespeare's dramatic works. So that, in 'King Lear', Kent advises the king to take shelter, because 'Man's nature cannot endure the affliction' caused by the stormy night (I, 207). Although, in *King Lear*, the exact

⁵⁷ [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, v.

wording of Kent's speech is 'Man's nature cannot carry/Th' affliction' (*KL*, III. ii. 48-49), Kent also uses the verb, 'endure', to indicate the same situation but in a later scene of the play:

Kent. The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure. (III. iv. 2-3)

Similarly, in 'The Merchant of Venice', Portia asks Shylock 'if the scales were ready to weigh the flesh [cut off from Antonio]' (I, 154), though, in Shakespeare's play, 'balance' (*MV*, IV. i. 251), not 'scale', is the term spoken by her at this point. Approximately seventy lines later in the court-room scene, however, Portia cautions Shylock: 'nay if the scale do turn/But in the estimation of a hair,/Thou diest' (IV. i. 326-28).

The most straightforward method to assisting young readers to understand Shakespeare's language is, perhaps, simply to spell out the meaning of the words. Therefore, many additional phrases are inserted, because they make manifest what certain ambiguous or extraordinary expressions used in Shakespeare's dramas truly signify. Lafeu's comforting words addressed to the Countess in the opening scene of Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, for example, could be in danger of being misinterpreted by a child-reader as prophesying a marriage proposal from the king:

You shall find of the king a husband, madam; you,
sir [Bertram], a father. (I. i. 6-7)

In the prose adaptation of the play, Mary Lamb has interpolated into Lafeu's speech a couple of explanatory clauses (italicised below) to prevent any confusion of this kind:

Lafeu, who came to fetch him [Bertram], tried to comfort the countess for the loss of her late lord, and her son's sudden absence; and he said, *in a courtier's flattering manner*, that the king was so kind a prince, she would find in his majesty a husband, and that he would be a father to her son: *meaning only that the good king would befriend the fortunes of Bertram*. (II, 2)

Exposition is further applied, when there are words or phrases, though old-

fashioned, capable of lending the Lambs' prose narratives some flavour of historical or geographical authenticity. Under the circumstance, these words are not discarded or disregarded, but juxtaposed with their more up-to-date synonyms in the tales. The 'host' in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 'friar' in *Much Ado About Nothing* and 'thane' in *Macbeth* are terms belonging to this category. Consequently, in Mary Lamb's 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona', Julia is said to enter 'into conversation with the innkeeper, or host, as he was called' (I, 130), and a 'priest, or friar as he was called' is present in the church 'to pronounce the marriage-ceremony' for Hero and Claudio in 'Much Ado About Nothing' (I, 75-76). Moreover, the narration of Charles Lamb's 'Macbeth' begins in this manner:

When Duncan the Meek reigned king of Scotland, there lived a great thane, or lord, called Macbeth. (I, 215)

The task of explaining Shakespeare's text to young readers was not always as straightforward as the Lambs could desire. At times, Charles and Mary Lamb had to confront the few instances, where, for generations, many a Shakespearean scholar has failed to determine what situations, emotions or impact Shakespeare meant a phrase to convey. What did Shakespeare really refer to, for example, when he wrote the phrase, 'waterish Burgundy', for the French king to deliver in the opening scene of *King Lear* (I. i. 260)? Could he refer to the state of Burgundy itself, which is full of streams and rivers? Jay L. Halio, the editor of the New Cambridge Shakespeare, conjectures in his edition of the play that

the [French] king may be casting a slur on the wine of Burgundy as well!⁵⁸

Whereas, Charles Lamb approached the phrase from a totally different angle in his

⁵⁸ Jay L. Halio's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. by Jay L. Halio, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992; rpt., 1995), p. 109

tale:

and he [the French king] called the duke of Burgundy in contempt a waterish duke, because his love for this young maid had in a moment run all away like water. (I, 195)

Charles Lamb's unique interpretation of Shakespeare's 'waterish Burgundy' (I. i. 260) was probably inspired by some similar phrases, also used by Shakespeare in another tragedy, *Timon of Athens*, which was somewhat regarded by Lamb as a kind of analogue of *King Lear* (for details, see Chapter II.)

In Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, Flaminius, one of Timon's servants, condemns the falsehood in Lucullus' friendship, proffered to his master, in these indignant terms:

Has friendship such a faint and milky heart
It turns in less than two nights? (*TIM*, III. i. 54-55)

In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Burgundy is also associated with milk at one point of the play, although it is in a difference sense:

Lear. now, our joy [Cordelia],
 [...]to whose young love
The vines of France, and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interested[...] (*KL*, I. i. 82-85)

Moreover, in the scene in which Timon provides his professed friends with a last feast, he gives a farewell speech to disown their hypocritical friendships and another liquid image occurs in Timon's speech:

May you a better feast never behold,
You knot of mouth-friends! Smoke and lukewarm water
Is your perfection. This is Timon's last;
Who, stuck and spangled with your flatteries,
Washes it off, and sprinkles in your faces
Your reeking villainy. (*TIM*, III. vi. 84-89)

It might be the combination of the ways in which both the milk and the water images

are used in *Timon of Athens* that gave Charles Lamb the impression that Burgundy's love for Cordelia is like some liquid, either water or milk, running away from her, as soon as he has discovered that Cordelia is to be married without dowry, just as the friendships offered to Timon are turned away from him, as soon as his so-called friends have realised that Timon squandered all his money.

Shakespeare wrote extensively in verse, and verse differs from prose in more than one way. Sometimes, it is not enough to break down the verse form and merely set the words into prose, that would make verse sound like prose. Verse also tends to break a few grammatical rules freely to achieve certain required aesthetic effects. For example, double comparative is one of the most commonly seen grammatic irregularities in Shakespeare's plays, and often used to make a point of double emphasis. Before Timon goes into the woods, he thus avowed that he 'shall find/Th' unkindest beast more kinder than mankind' (*TIM*, IV. i. 35-36). Such grammatic irregularities in the plays became a problem for the Lambs as the narrators of the tales, because *Tales from Shakespear* was meant to be a children's book, and grammatical correctness has been considered as of vital importance in a book which would encourage and form a young learner's habit of using the language correctly (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Max. 1828/1.) As a result, Shakespeare's grammar was to be corrected and, in the case of Timon's farewell to Athens and mankind, the narration in Lamb's tale becomes:

he [Timon] went to the woods, where he said he should find the unkindest beast much kinder than mankind. (II, 136)

Since the grammatical rules were broken by Shakespeare for the sake of making his verse more aesthetically appealing in the first place, it is hardly avoidable that, in correcting the grammar, much of the beauty in Shakespeare's poetry is incidentally

destroyed by the Lambs. In *The Tempest*, for example, when Miranda welcomes the 'brave new world' (*TMP*, V. i. 183), she heartily exclaims:

O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in 't! (V. i. 181-84)

Shakespeare's original verse is forceful and exciting, but its prose version, though grammatically correct, sounds rather lame and wordy, even after one whole sentence,

'How beauteous mankind is' (V. i. 183), has been taken out by Mary Lamb:

"O wonder!" said Miranda, "what noble creatures these are! It must surely be a brave new world that has such people in it." (I, 17-18)

Verse also contains more rhyme than prose, although Shakespeare's habitual form, blank verse, does not rhyme. To make Shakespeare's words more integrated into the prose tales and the prose story-telling audibly less obtrusive, the Lambs chose to write in poetic prose, a heavily rhymed prose style. Thus, Mary Lamb described the interim, during which Katherine the Shrew is gradually transformed into Katherine the Obedient Wife:

Another day Katherine was forced to practise her newly-found obedience, and not till he had brought her proud spirit to such a perfect subjection, that she dared not to remember there was such a word as contradiction, would Petruchio allow her to go to her father's house[...] (II, 36)

The extract quoted from 'The Taming of the Shrew' is full of atmospheric alliterations which begin with /p/- or /f/-sounds, and half-rhymes which end with /t/-, /s/- or /d/-sounds. Even the name of the hero, 'Petruchio', alliterates with 'practise', 'proud', 'spirit' and 'perfect'. These buoyant rhymes suit well 'the boisterous air [Petruchio] assumed when he became the husband of Katherine' (II, 25). The only perfect rhyme dwells in the multi-syllabic 'subjection' and 'contradiction', which sound laboured and seemingly out of place among the jaunty

rhymes and, therefore, comically reflect upon the compelled transformation of Katherine during the taming process (see also Chapter V).

The use of poetic prose in Lambs' tales succeeds to some extent. In particular, Charles Lamb was both fond of and famed for such a writing style. It is no wonder that the best example of poetic prose is to be found in Charles Lamb's 'Timon of Athens'. The scene in which Timon vainly discharges his 'desperate' debts (*TIM*, III. iv. 100-1) is pointedly and economically summarised by Charles Lamb in his tragic tale:

Now was Timon's princely mansion forsaken, and become a shunned and hated place, a place for men to pass by, not a place as formerly where every passenger must stop and taste of his wine and good cheer; now instead of being thronged with feasting and tumultuous guests, it was beset with impatient and clamorous creditors, usurers, extortioners, fierce and intolerable in their demands, pleading bonds, interest, mortgages, iron-hearted men that would take no denial nor putting off, that Timon's house was now his jail, which he could not pass, nor go in nor out for them; one demanding his due for fifty talents, another bringing in a bill of five thousand crowns, which if he would tell out his blood by drops, and pay them so, he had not enough in his body to discharge, drop by drop. (II, 133)

The whole sequence of the event takes up over a hundred lines to develop in Shakespeare's tragedy (*TIM*, III. iv. 1-104), but Charles Lamb was able to condense it into one breath-taking sentence. Many of Shakespeare's own words, e.g. 'I am thus encounter'd/With clamorous demands of debt, broken bonds,/And the detention of long since due debts/Against my honour' (II. ii. 42-45) and 'The place which I have feasted, does it now,/Like all mankind, show me an iron heart' (III. iv. 81-82), and images, e.g. 'must my house/Be my retentive enemy, my gaol' (III. iv. 79-80), either in the scene indicated or elsewhere in the play, are skillfully woven into Lamb's passage. In addition, the rhyming pattern of the passage itself further enhances Timon's state of affairs, as described in Charles Lamb's prose tale.

At the beginning of the passage quoted from Charles Lamb's 'Timon of

Athens', the tempo starts evenly, while the narrator compares the two extreme states, with which Timon has been confronted. Gradually, the pace moves on faster and faster with the cumulations of monetary terms, all ended with a harsh, consonant /s/-sound. At last, the three mono-syllabic words, 'drop by drop' (II, 133), conclude Timon's useless struggle, and Timon succumbs reluctantly to the human cruelty besieging him. The prose narration, in fact, becomes so neatly constructed that it portrays Timon's tragic fall in a more intensive and audibly impressive manner than Shakespeare's original play. Such excellent prose writing is something Mary Lamb could never surpass or equal, though she maintains a fair share of literary merit in her comic tales.

These general rules in preserving and paraphrasing Shakespeare's words and expressions, observed by both Charles and Mary Lamb, are exactly what conjures up the impression of single authorship in *Tales from Shakespear*. The rules might not have been set out deliberately, but simply developed during the close working process of the brother and sister, as Charles Lamb would probably like to define it himself in these words, 'Our sympathies are rather understood, than expressed.'⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 75).

3.

The examples to which I referred earlier in the chapter, supposedly quoted from Shakespeare's plays in Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*, occasionally differ from those with which we are familiar. The Fool's remarks on Lear's foolishness, as printed in Charles Lamb's 'King Lear', are:

But he that has a little tiny wit
With heigh ho, the wind and the rain!
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day[.] (I, 206)

For those who are familiar with the Quarto texts of *King Lear* (either Q1 or Q2), it is immediately recognisable that, unlike Lamb's tale, 'hey ho'⁶⁰ instead of 'heigh ho' (*KL*, III. ii. 75) are the words printed in Shakespeare's Quartos. Similar to Lamb's tale, however, 'heigh-ho' is printed in the First Folio.⁶¹ The textual variations seem slight, but they indicate which edition or editions of Shakespeare's collected works, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* is based on. As can be deduced from this first instance, the Lambs probably used Shakespeare's Folio or some edition that was based on the Folio text.

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* was first printed in the First Folio of 1623, and the only authoritative text of the play is that of the Folio, in which the lyrics of Feste's song are:

⁶⁰ William Shakespeare, *King Lear: 1608 (Pied Bull Quarto)*, Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles No. 1 (London: The Shakespeare Association, 1939), p. 50 (III. ii. 74); *M. William Shake-speare's King Lear: The Second Quarto, 1608, A Facsimile*, Shakspere-Quarto Facsimiles, No. 34 (London: Praetorius, 1885), p. 44.

⁶¹ William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. by Charlton Hinman, The Norton

*Come away, come away death,
And in sad cypresse let me be laide.
Fye away, fie away breath,
I am slaine by a faire cruel maide[.]*⁶² (TN, II. iv. 51-54)

In Mary Lamb's 'Twelfth Night', however, the third line is changed into 'Fly away, fly away, breath' (II, 109), as in Nicholas Rowe's edition.⁶³ Furthermore, like *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* was also first printed in the First Folio, the only text having authority. There is no stage direction, marked between lines 418 and 419 in IV. iv:

Pol. Marke your diuorce (yong sir)
Whom sonne I dare not call[.]⁶⁴ (WT, IV. iv. 418-19)

Whereas, according to Mary Lamb's narration, Polixenes removes his disguise while taxing his son with lacking in filial consideration:

"Mark your divorce, young sir," said the king, discovering himself. (I, 54)

'*Discovering himself*' is the exact phrasing of Nicholas Rowe's stage direction, inserted right after 'Mark your divorce, young sir' in his edition of *The Winter's Tale*.⁶⁵

In 1709, Nicholas Rowe published a six-volume octavo edition of Shakespeare's plays, which was mainly based on the Fourth Folio of 1685 but with an immensely improved text. Later in the same year, Rowe's edition was re-issued with some slight

Facsimile, second edition (London: Norton, 1996), p. 804.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 280.

⁶³ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), II, 845; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), II, 845, and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), III, 32.

⁶⁴ William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. by Charlton Hinman, The Norton Facsimile, second edition (London: Norton, 1996), p. 312.

⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), II, 947; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), II, 947, and

alterations, and this new edition was expanded into seven volumes in 1710. In 1714, another edition was published with minor corrections in eight volumes, and this third edition was later expanded into nine volumes in the same year. In Rowe's editions of *King Lear*, the Fool also delivers the words, 'heigh ho',⁶⁶ as in Lamb's tale, even though it is printed 'height-ho' in the Fourth Folio.⁶⁷ Therefore, it is likely that Rowe's editions were the basis of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*. However, Rowe's editions were also the basis of certain eighteenth century standard editions of Shakespeare's dramatic works that were yet to come, such as Alexander Pope's edition of Shakespeare's plays.

From 1723 to 1725, Alexander Pope completed his six-volume quarto edition of *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear* [sic], in which many emendations and alterations, already made by Nicholas Rowe, were retained. In other words, the Lambs did not have to consult Rowe's Shakespeare in 1806, in order to come by some of the textual changes made by Rowe, such as those discussed earlier on. In addition, Pope made some arbitrary corrections in his new edition, relegating certain passages to the margin and rejecting altogether some lines that offended his personal taste. Pope's edition of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, above all, is the first conflation of both texts of the Quarto and the Folio, and the concluding speech of the play is no longer attributed to Edgar, as in either the Folio or in Rowe's editions,⁶⁸ but to

[third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), III, 316.

⁶⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), V, 2512; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), V, 2512, and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), VII, 51.

⁶⁷ William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, Faithfully Reproduced in Facsimile from the Edition of 1685* (London: Methuen, 1904), p. 99.

⁶⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), V, 2551; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), V, 2551,

Albany, as in the Quarto:⁶⁹

Alb. The weight of this sad time we must obey,
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath born most; we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.⁷⁰ (V. iii. 322-25)

The way in which Pope's *King Lear* concludes suggests that Albany alone is to succeed to the throne and rule Britain in the future, a notion fully anticipated in the last paragraph of Charles Lamb's prose adaptation of the tragedy:

Gonerill's [*sic*] husband, the duke of Albany, who was innocent of the death of Cordelia, and had never encouraged his lady in her wicked proceedings against her father, ascended the throne of Britain after the death of Lear[.] (I, 214)

Could it be that, rather than any of Rowe's editions, the Lambs actually used Pope's first edition as the basis of their prose tales? While examining this possibility, it is also important to bear in mind that, in Lamb's 'King Lear', the Gloucester subplot is omitted and Edgar is no more than a shadowy figure. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Edgar is briefly mentioned twice at the end of the story, as 'his [Edmund's] brother', the 'lawful' heir of Gloucester (I, 212 & 214). Since Edgar does not play a part in Lear's story as substantial as that of his dramatic counterpart, Lamb probably did not consider the little involvement of Edgar qualified him for the future king of Britain; in comparison, Albany would have been preferred anyway.

In Alexander Pope's first edition of Shakespeare's dramatic works, furthermore, *Pericles*, whose story was retold by Mary Lamb in 1806, had been

and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), VII, 91.

⁶⁹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear: 1608 (Pied Bull Quarto)*, Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles No. 1 (London: The Shakespeare Association, 1939), p. 87 (V. iii. 324-27); *M. William Shakespeare's King Lear: The Second Quarto, 1608, A Facsimile*, Shakspeare-Quarto Facsimiles, No. 34 (London: Praetorius, 1885), p. 87.

⁷⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1723-5), III, 111.

excluded. The play was, nevertheless, included as the first play in the ninth volume of Pope's second edition, published in 1728. Was Pope's second edition, instead of the first, used by the Lambs as the textual basis of their tales? Before this question can be answered, certain anomalies concerning the publication of Pope's second edition must be considered.

The inclusion of *Pericles* in Pope's second edition has not been generally known. It was not acknowledged by the other eighteenth century editors. Once Pope's first edition had been brought out, the subsequent editors simply followed Pope's example, as set up by his first edition, and all excluded *Pericles* from the canon. Not until Edmond Malone published his two-volume *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens* in 1780, did *Pericles* make an official return to the complete works of William Shakespeare. Neither was this inclusion mentioned in the Arden edition of the play, edited by F. D. Hoeniger.⁷¹ The Arden Shakespeare is a series of modern editions of Shakespeare's works that is highly acclaimed for its thoroughness in the discussion of printing and publishing history of various editions of Shakespeare's plays. The usual inattentiveness to the inclusion of *Pericles* in Pope's second edition probably results from the curious manner in which the ninth volume was brought out in 1728.

On the title-page designed for Pope's second edition, it was unambiguously stated that 'Mr. Pope' was the editor, and the book consisted of 'Eight', not nine, volumes.⁷² At the end of its eighth volume, it was also clearly marked as 'The END

⁷¹ See: Hoeniger's introduction to the play, in William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. by F. D. Hoeniger, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1963; repr., Routledge, 1994), pp. xxiii-xlix.

⁷² William Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespear*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 9 vols. (London: Tonson,

of SHAKESPEAR' S [*sic*] Plays' .⁷³ Evidently, the ninth volume 'was issued', as pointed out by H. L. Ford in *Shakespeare 1700-1740*, 'shortly afterwards'.⁷⁴ Moreover, the editor was not identified on the title-page of the ninth volume. Since the editor was unspecified and the ninth volume came out later than the other eight, the inclusion of *Pericles* in Pope' s second edition has, not surprisingly, been overlooked. More curiously, perhaps, the play-text of *Pericles* in Pope' s second edition was, by and large, reprinted from Rowe' s 1714 edition. Although the printing type was re-set, the text itself was Rowe' s *Pericles*. Pope did not add any critical commentary or put any editorial note to it. These curious features seem further to suggest that the inclusion of *Pericles* was not Pope' s editorial decision. Pope' s publisher, Jacob Tonson, had brought out Rowe' s editions in 1709, 1710 and 1714, and it might have been Tonson, instead of Pope, who decided to reprint Rowe' s *Pericles* and include it, with a frontispiece identical to that of Rowe' s 1714 edition of the play, in the additional volume to Pope' s 1728 edition. Consequently, the two texts of *Pericles*, edited by Nicholas Rowe and Edmond Malone respectively, became the only two candidates for the textual basis of Mary Lamb' s 'Pericles'. In Rowe' s edition of *Pericles*, the name of Cleon' s wife is consistently spelt as 'Dionysia' as in the Folio texts (either F3 or F4) and in Mary Lamb' s prose tale, but her name is ended with '-za', instead of '-sia', in Malone' s edition of the play, which follows the Quarto. Mary Lamb must, therefore, have used Rowe' s *Pericles* as the basis of her prose adaptation.

1728), I, title-page.

⁷³ *Ibid*, VIII, 427.

⁷⁴ H. L. Ford, *Shakespeare 1700-1740. A Collation of the Editions and Separate Plays. With Some Accounts of T. Johnson and R. Walker* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), p. 24.

I propose that the Lambs mainly based their prose narratives on Nicholas Rowe's Shakespeare, with occasional references to Alexander Pope's versions of Shakespeare's plays. The case for Rowe's and Pope's editions as the textual basis of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* can also be supported by some external evidence.

Rowe's Shakespeare always meant something special for Charles Lamb, as it was honoured by being the medium responsible for Lamb's first encounter with Shakespeare's dramas. In 'My First Play', an essay first printed in *The London Magazine* in 1821, later collected in the essays of *Elia*, Lamb recalls his childish delight in reading 'Rowe's Shakspeare [*sic*]' ⁷⁵ (see also Chapter II.) Although the book is not listed in the 'Catalogue of Charles Lamb's Library' included in William Carew Hazlitt's *Mary and Charles Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains* (1874)⁷⁶ or 'Lamb's Library', a corrected and enlarged catalogue in *The Lambs: Their Lives, Their Friends, and Their Correspondence* (1897),⁷⁷ Charles Lamb undoubtedly owned a copy of Rowe's Shakespeare, as implied in the essay on 'My First Play':

But when we got in [the play-house], and I beheld the green curtain that veiled a heaven to my imagination, which was soon to be disclosed-----the breathless anticipations I endured! I had seen something like it in the plate prefixed to *Troilus and Cressida*, in Rowe's Shakspeare [*sic*]--the tent scene with Diomedes--and a sight of that plate can always bring back in a measure the feeling of that evening.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Charles Lamb, 'My First Play', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 97-100 (p. 98).

⁷⁶ For the list of items auctioned after the death of Mary Lamb, see the 'Catalogue of Charles Lamb's Library, For Sale by Bartlett and Welford, Booksellers and Importers, 7 Astor House, New York' in William Carew Hazlitt, *Mary and Charles Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains* (London: Mathews, 1874), p. 297 onwards.

⁷⁷ See: 'Lamb's Library', in William Carew Hazlitt, *The Lambs: Their Lives, Their Friends, and Their Correspondence* (London: Mathews, 1897), pp. 59-67.

⁷⁸ Charles Lamb, 'My First Play', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 97-100

While re-telling the stories from Shakespeare's plays, Charles Lamb might have decided to use, as the textual basis of the tales, the same edition of the plays, which had already given him so much pleasure in childhood. Mary simply followed suit. This view-point may sound suspiciously sentimental at first, but Charles Lamb was a writer constantly contemplating his lost childhood, and always looking back nostalgically into the past. Moreover, as a copy of Rowe's Shakespeare was already in the possession of the Lambs, there was no reason not to make good use of it.

In January 1806, the Lambs spent two pounds and two shillings to purchase a copy of Alexander Pope's first edition of Shakespeare's plays on behalf of the Wordsworths. On February 1, 1806, Charles Lamb wrote a letter to William Wordsworth and explained how Mary and he 'used our own discretion in purchasing Pope's fine Quarto in six volumes which may be read *ad ultimam horam vitæ*.'⁷⁹ This incident had happened about the time when Mary was commissioned by the Godwins to write the twenty Shakespeare stories. Although Charles disagreed with certain editorial decisions made by Pope, to make up their minds about whether they should buy the copy for the Wordsworths, the Lambs apparently went through the pages with great care. In the letter to Wordsworth, Charles pointedly draws Wordsworth's attention to the few peculiarities about the book:

N.B. there is writing in the Shakespear [*sic*]: but it is only **varicæ** lectiones which some careful Gentleman the former Owner was at the pains to insert in a very **neat** hand from 5 Commentators. It is no defacement. The fault of Pope's edition is, that he has comically & coxcombically marked the Beauties: which is vile, as if you were to chalk up the cheek & across the nose of a handsome

(p. 98).

⁷⁹ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 192; February 1, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 204-7 (p. 204).

woman in red chalk to shew where the comeliest parts lay.⁸⁰

When the Lambs began to work on their prose tales, the memory of Pope's Shakespeare was probably fresh in their minds. This incident taking place in the beginning of the year, 1806, might explain how those textual variations, which do not exist in Rowe's but in Pope's editions, got into Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*.

The Lambs, especially Charles, did not make extensive use of Pope's Shakespeare, probably because they never owned a copy of Pope's edition, either of the first or of the second. Although they bought a copy of Pope's first edition for the Wordsworths, Charles evidently did not regard it as an ideal choice. In his *Elia* essay on 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', Charles made an explicit declaration that Rowe's editions, all brought out by Tonson, would always be his favourite:

I do not care for a First Folio of Shakspeare [*sic*]. I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson, without notes, and with *plates*, which, being so exactly bad, serve as maps, or modest remembrancers, to the text; and without pretending to any supposable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakspeare [*sic*] gallery *engravings*, which *did*.⁸¹

Pope's first edition contained editorial notes and no illustrations at all. Although some of Shakespeare's plays (*Hamlet* excluded sometimes)⁸² in Pope's second edition were accompanied by plates, the critical commentaries and notes made by Alexander Pope were retained in the first eight volumes of this 1728 edition.

To recognize the textual basis for Lambs' tales is important, in terms of

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 205.

⁸¹ Charles Lamb, 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 172-77 (p. 174).

⁸² The Shakespeare Centre Library has preserved an irregular copy which does not contain the frontispiece of *Hamlet*.

understanding how and why some crucial scenes in the plays are interpreted in certain ways. For example, the behaviour of Hamlet at Ophelia's funeral is described by Charles Lamb in this manner:

Then discovering himself,⁸³ he leaped into the grave where Laertes was, all as frantic or more frantic than he[...] (II, 202)

One of the common practices in the theatre during the early nineteenth century was to enact Laertes '*Springing out of the Grave, and seizing HAMLET*',⁸⁴ and simultaneously addressing the line, 'The devil take thy soul' (*HAM*, V. i. 251). The theatrical interpretation rendered Hamlet more composed in his mourning for Ophelia's death than Laertes, who initiates the physical violence, or than the Hamlet portrayed in Rowe's editions. Whereas, Lamb's Hamlet, who behaves as required by Rowe's additional stage direction, is a young prince who forgets all good manners, being struck down by a sudden revelation of his own irredeemable loss.

Although the First Quarto also includes a similar stage direction to Rowe's, '*Hamlet leaps in after Laertes*',⁸⁵ judging from the close verbal resemblance of Lamb's narration to Rowe's stage direction, '*Hamlet leaps into the Grave*',⁸⁶ Charles Lamb

⁸³ This '*discovering himself*' is another instance that Pope's additional stage direction was used by Charles Lamb. Compare Rowe's and Pope's editions: William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), V, 2454; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), V, 2454, and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), VI, 394, and *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1723-5), VI, 457.

⁸⁴ William Shakespeare, *Shakspeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, A Tragedy, Now First Published as it is Acted by Their Majesties Servants at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane* (London: Ridgway, 1805), p. 75.

⁸⁵ William Shakespeare, *Shakspeare's Hamlet: The First Quarto, 1603, A Facsimile in Photo-Lithography*, ed. by William Griggs, *Shakspeare-Quarto Facsimiles*, No. 1 (London: Griggs, 1880), p. 59.

⁸⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols.

must have consulted Rowe's *Hamlet*, rather than the First Quarto, while determining how the eponymous hero should respond to Ophelia's death in the prose tale.

The Ghost in Charles Lamb's 'Hamlet', moreover, is consistently presented as a public figure of the militant king:

And he [Hamlet] asked her [Gertrude] how she could continue to live with this man [Claudius], and be a wife to him, who had murdered her first husband and got the crown by as false means as a thief-----And just as he spoke, the ghost of his father, such as he was in his life-time, and such as he had lately seen it, entered the room[...] (II, 196-97)

Once again, in the closet scene of the First Quarto, the Ghost enters, according to the stage direction, 'in his night gowne'.⁸⁷ When the ghost of King Hamlet enters the queen's closet in his night gown, the private and domestic aspect of the dead king's identity as Gertrude's husband and the father of Prince Hamlet is emphasized by this particular garment he wears. However, in Rowe's *Hamlet*, which followed the Folio text, there is no indication of any change of garments at the Ghost's second appearance. On the contrary, a frontispiece is inserted in Rowe's *Hamlet*, and it depicts the Ghost dressed in full armour while entering the queen's closet.⁸⁸ Since Lamb based his prose tale on Rowe's version of the tragedy, he tells his young readers that the Ghost is consistently 'clad in the same suit of armour, from head to foot, which the dead king was known to have worn' (II, 180). The result is that the Ghost in Lamb's tale manages to uphold the dignity of the dead king as a brave

(London: Tonson, 1709), V, 2454; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), V, 2454, and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), VI, 394.

⁸⁷ William Shakespeare, *Shakspeare's Hamlet: The First Quarto, 1603, A Facsimile in Photo-Lithography*, ed. by William Griggs, Shakspeare-Quarto Facsimiles No. 1 (London: Griggs, 1880), p. 45.

⁸⁸ See: the frontispiece, in William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), V, 2365; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson,

warrior throughout, but the pathos of the Ghost's frustrated attempt to re-join his royal family in the queen's closet, as underlined in the First Quarto, never comes across to the readers of the tale.

The most fascinating example of this kind is actually provided by Mary Lamb. In Mary Lamb's story adapted from Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Marina patiently watches over her sleeping father during his uncanny slumber:

He now complaining of a drowsy slumber coming over him, Lysimachus persuaded him to rest on a couch, and placing a pillow under his head, he, quite overpowered with excess of joy, sunk into a sound sleep, and Marina watched in silence by the couch of her sleeping parent. (II, 256)

In this quoted passage from 'Pericles', Mary Lamb has pictured an image of filial piety which closely resembles that of Cordelia's waiting, by the bed-side, for her 'child-changed father' (*KL*, IV. vii. 17) to recover his wits and senses. It is rather doubtful whether Shakespeare had ever thought of presenting the scene in the same manner as Mary Lamb did in her tale.

In Rowe's editions of *Pericles*, as in both the Quarto and the Folio texts of the play, no exit is marked at V. i. 237. Judging from Lysimachus' line, 'So leave him [Pericles] all' (*PER*, V. i. 234), a verbal signal for several exits, Lysimachus, Hellicanus, Marina and her 'companion maid' (*PER*, V. i. 77) may leave Pericles, alone, on the stage at V. i. 237. This conjecture was made by Edmond Malone in 1780, in his *Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*.⁸⁹ Subsequently, Malone also inserted a new stage direction at the moment, when Pericles wakes up and calls for attention (V. i.

1709-1710), V, 2365, and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), VI, 301.

⁸⁹ William Shakespeare, *Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*, ed. by Edmond Malone, 2 vols. (London: Bathurst, 1780), II, 149.

249): 'Enter Lysimachus, Hellicanus, and Marina.'⁹⁰ However, Rowe differs from Malone in that only Lysimachus' re-entry is indicated in Rowe's *Pericles* at this same moment,⁹¹ but Marina is definitely spoken to at V. i. 262, 'Come, my Marina.' As could be deduced from Rowe's additional stage direction at V. i. 249 and his play-text based on the Folio, Mary Lamb concluded that Marina did not leave her father's side until Pericles wakes up and leads her off at V. i. 262, where the whole scene ends. Besides, earlier in the same scene, has Lysimachus not cautioned the other characters present on the stage, 'It is not good to cross him [Pericles]; give him way' (*PER*, V. i. 229)? It is a hint that Pericles' s announcement of hearing 'The music of the spheres' (V. i. 228) is considered by Lysimachus as a sign of his wits and senses having been overwhelmed by too much joyful surprise in too short a span of time.

This point is made explicit in the narration of Mary Lamb's 'Pericles' :

As there was no music to be heard, Lysimachus concluded that the sudden joy had unsettled the prince's understanding; and he said, "It is not good to cross him; let him have his way[.]" (II, 255-56)

As a result, not only does the loving daughter, Lamb's Marina, like Cordelia, express her filial concern by watching over her parent, but Lamb's Pericles, the beloved and attended royal father, also resembles Lear more closely in the process of his recovery, even though the causes for their mental disturbance are of two distinctively different kinds.

The presentation of this particular scene in *Pericles*, as handed down for generations, is always thought to be the most touching and beautiful, always reminding us of the tender feelings in the recognition scene of one of Shakespeare's

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 150.

⁹¹ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709), VI, 3004; [second edition], 7 vols. (London: Tonson, 1709-1710), VI, 3004,

greatest tragedies, and it somehow redeems a rather loosely written play. But, it does not alter the fact that the gentle and serene feelings this scene evokes are due no less to Nicholas Rowe's incomplete stage direction and Mary Lamb's ingenious interpretation of it than to Shakespeare's own texts either of the Quarto or of the Folio.

and [third edition], 9 vols. (London: Tonson, 1714), VIII, 65.

CHAPTER IV.

'A Happy English Wife'

Mary Lamb's greater contribution to *Tales from Shakespear* hardly caught any scholarly attention until the last ten years. After 1989, although academic studies on her fourteen tales retold from Shakespeare's comedies and romances have been carried out, the material relating to Mary Lamb's ideas of children's literature continues to be ignored. The danger of neglecting such research will be examined in the next chapter; in this chapter, Mary Lamb's ideal children's literature and her childhood experience that shaped it are to be tackled first.

The social status of the Lamb family, in some measure, coincided with the emerging middle class of the eighteenth century, for John Lamb, the father, was the upper servant in Samuel Salt's household (see also Chapter II.) During the eighteenth century, boys and girls of the middle and upper classes were educated separately and differently. As the only female child in the family, Mary's education would have been the responsibility of her own mother, Elizabeth, for a daughter's education was then conducted by her mother or a hired governess.

In the eighteenth century, furthermore, the combination of subjects involved in a girl's education and the ways in which knowledge was conveyed to her would vary from one family to another; it all depended upon who was actually in charge of the girl's education. Nonetheless, the ultimate purpose of a daughter's education would always remain the same; that is, to make her desirable in the marriage market. According to the comments made by some eighteenth century intellectual men and women, there was one further aspect of girls' education that would always be the

same. Educated for this principal purpose, many girls grew up to be vain and shallow women. Mary Wollstonecraft, the famous author of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), for example, often grumbled about the behaviour of eighteenth century young ladies.

Mary Wollstonecraft often referred to those eighteenth century young ladies of middle and upper classes as 'silly females':¹

their boisterous spirits and unmeaning laughter exhaust me, not forgetting hourly domestic bickerings.²

To her disappointment, Wollstonecraft found it totally impossible to have 'social converse' with any lady of quality,³ for a lady of quality could talk of 'nothing but dress and ridicule'.⁴ Wollstonecraft blamed this sad outcome of girls' education on the system itself:

a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers[.]⁵

Consequently, girls of the middle and upper classes spent 'many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments',⁶ which were, as dismissed by Mary Wollstonecraft, but 'a heap of rubbish'.⁷

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft's letter to Everina Wollstonecraft (November 17, 1787), printed in C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: King, 1876), I, 187-88 (p. 187).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft's letter to Everina Wollstonecraft (October 9, 1787), printed in C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: King, 1876), I, 184-85 (p. 184).

⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Miriam Brody, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 79.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft's letter to Mrs. Bishop (November 5, 1787), printed in C. Kegan Paul, *William*

Charles Lamb, on the other hand, congratulated himself on having his devoted elder sister, Mary, as a life-long companion, instead of some 'furniture' wife.⁸ As endorsed by Charles, Mary Lamb was an ideal companion. In his *Elia* essay, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', Charles attributed, rather paradoxically, all the amicable qualities of Mary as a companion to a highly unconventional education:

Her education in youth was not much attended to; and she happily missed all that train of female garniture, which passeth by the name of accomplishments. She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it; but I can answer for it, that it makes (if the worst come to the worst) most incomparable old maids.⁹

No matter how much Charles romanticised his sister's education in girlhood, Mary knew better and had a very different opinion.

Mary Lamb, as a young girl, had but a brief education in literacy at one Mr. William Bird's School in Fetter Lane. Her literary and intellectual attainments, which amazed many contemporary women and, more so, men, had nothing to do with the education that she had had during these early years of her life. Mr. Bird's School was 'in fact a humble day-school', as admitted by Charles in his essay on 'Captain Starkey',¹⁰ 'at which reading and writing were taught to us boys in the morning, and the same slender erudition was communicated to the girls, our sisters, &c. in the

Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries, 2 vols. (London: King, 1876), I, 186-87 (p. 187).

⁸ Charles Lamb, 'Table-Talk by the Late Elia', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 344-50 (p. 344).

⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 76).

¹⁰ 'Captain Starkey' was first printed in William Hone's *The Every-Day Book* in 1825.

evening' .¹¹ The curriculum was nominally 'languages and Mathematics'¹² but, in reality, as revealed by Charles Lamb in the same essay,

Heaven knows what "languages" were taught in it then; I am sure that neither my Sister nor myself brought any out of it, but a little of our native English. By "mathematics," reader, must be understood "cyphering."¹³

After having left Mr. Bird's School, Charles followed his elder brother's path and was enrolled at the Christ Hospital, where he was to enjoy his seven-year school-life as a blue coat boy. Without the good fortune of either of her brothers, Mary was apprenticed to be a seamstress.

The 'spacious closet of good old English reading',¹⁴ mentioned in Charles Lamb's essay, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', refers to Samuel Salt's library. Out of his kindness, Salt allowed the three Lamb children, John Junior, Charles and Mary, to use his library freely. Although the library doors were open to Mary as well, with her 'slender erudition',¹⁵ she was still barred from the knowledge conveyed in the books lying within her reach. Feelingly, Mary has depicted this unsatisfying situation in an autobiographical account, included as one of the episodes in her children's story, 'The Young Mahometan'.

'The Young Mahometan' is the fifth story of *Mrs. Leicester's School*. It tells

¹¹ Charles Lamb, 'Captain Starkey', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 299-302 (pp. 299-300).

¹² *Ibid*, p. 299.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 76).

¹⁵ Charles Lamb, 'Captain Starkey', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 299-302 (pp. 299-300).

how Margaret Green, a fatherless girl, discovers 'a very large library'¹⁶ in her mother's patroness' manor house. Since Margaret Green/Mary Lamb 'was very fond of reading',¹⁷ she comes to regard it as 'a precious discovery' at first:¹⁸

I looked round on the books with the greatest delight. I thought I would read them every one. I now forsook all my favourite haunts, and passed all my time here. I took down first one book, then another.¹⁹

However, her search for 'an entertaining book' is soon frustrated, she discovers 'nothing but disappointment.'²⁰ The insufficient education she has received is mainly to blame for the disappointment:

All the books within my reach were folios of the gravest cast. I could understand very little that I read in them, and the old dark print and the length of the lines made my eyes ache.²¹

Furthermore, Mary Lamb, unlike Charles, believed that it was the parents' responsibility to supervise their children's reading, for unsupervised reading could do much harm to the psyche of a child-reader.

In 'Margaret Green', Mary Lamb thus goes on to narrate how she discovered and came to read '“Mahometism Explained” [...] a very improper book':²²

I shall be quite ashamed to tell you the strange effect it had on me. I know it was very wrong to read any book without permission to do so. If my time were to come over again, I would go and tell my mamma that there was a library in the house, and ask her to permit me to read a little every day in some book that she might think proper to select for me. But unfortunately I did not then recollect that I ought to do this: the reason of my strange forgetfulness might be that my

¹⁶ Mary Lamb, 'Margaret Green' or 'The Young Mahometan', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 305-11 (p. 308).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

mother, following the example of her patroness, had almost wholly discontinued talking to me.²³

The patroness mentioned in the story of 'Margaret Green', represents Mary Lamb's maternal grandmother, Mary Field (1713-92), who is said to favour their eldest brother, John, and always 'love' John Junior 'in a special manner'.²⁴ Like their mother, Elizabeth Lamb, Grandmother Field could never understand Mary's thirst for knowledge and love for reading (see also Chapter II.) Not long after the matricide, Mary Lamb told Charles in a pensive tone, that she hoped to see their dead mother and Grandmother Field 'again in heaven',²⁵ and

she [my mother] will then understand me better, my Grandmother too will understand me better, & will then say no more as she used to Do, "Polly, what are those poor crazy moyther'd [*sic*] brains of yours thinkg [*sic*] of always?"²⁶

Through commenting upon Margaret Green's 'solitude', just 'as perfect' as that of 'Robinson Crusoe' on an uninhabited island,²⁷ Mary Lamb, very tentatively, reveals the painful truth about her own lonely childhood and, simultaneously, explains that the subsequent effect, a state of hysteria and 'a fever',²⁸ which the unsupervised reading had on herself, was all due to the negligence of her mother and Grandmother

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Charles Lamb, 'Dream-Children; A Reverie', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia and The Last Essays of Elia*), 100-3 (p. 102).

²⁵ Mary Lamb's conversation with Charles is recorded in Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 9; October 17, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 51-53 (p. 52).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Mary Lamb, 'Margaret Green' or 'The Young Mahometan', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (*Books for Children*), 305-11 (p. 308).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Field.

The seamstress, a profession chosen by Elizabeth Lamb for Mary, moreover, belonged to the lowest class of menial work during the eighteenth century. In *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft ranked 'milliners and mantua-makers' as a 'class' only slightly above 'prostitution.'²⁹ In 1815, Mary Lamb also wrote in her article, 'On Needle-Work', first printed in *The British Lady's Magazine and Monthly Miscellany*, that her 'former humble labours'³⁰ were 'a trade, from which she could never expect to reap any profit, but at the expense of losing' her marriage prospect.³¹ Not only was the work poorly paid, but also the job itself was extremely tiresome. It was a profession no careful or caring 'parents of female children' would allow their daughters to enter into in the first place.³² Most interestingly of all, in this same magazine article, Mary Lamb actually assumes that her social status has been promoted, since she entered into a new profession and became an authoress.

Writing stories for children and articles for women's magazines, indeed, allowed Mary Lamb to earn a living and, at the same time, to be accepted into a more advanced and respectable status within middle-class society. The 'authoress'³³, as indicated by Judith Rowbotham in *Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guidance for Girls*

²⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. by Miriam Brody, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 261.

³⁰ Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-Work', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 176-80 (p. 176).

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 179.

³² *Ibid*, p.178.

³³ Judith Rowbotham, *Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guardianship for Girls in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 245.

in Victorian Fiction (1989), was 'the first female profession' involving intellectual activities and open to the working women who 'intended to perpetuate the values of that society'.³⁴ As declared by Mary Lamb in the magazine article, 'On Needle-Work', 'the kind patronesses' of 'the industrious sisterhood to which I once belonged'³⁵ were now level with 'the present circle of my acquaintance', among whom 'I am proud to rank many that may truly be called respectable'.³⁶ This drastic improvement in her social status could have never been possible, if Mary Lamb had not committed matricide and got Elizabeth Lamb out of her way, once and for all (see also Chapter II.)

The notorious matricide took place on September 22, 1796. The event was the turning point in the life of Mary Lamb. Her younger brother, Charles, soon took over the family affairs. He allowed and, in fact, encouraged Mary to leave off her previous profession as a needle-woman. Mary now had more time to herself and could read to her heart's content. She was the one organising her own education in womanhood. With Charles's support and occasional assistance, Mary Lamb gradually built up her capability to write. Later in life, Mary Lamb also taught herself Latin, French and Italian. The renowned actress, Fanny Kelly (1790-1882) was one of her private pupils and took French lessons from her. Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke and William Hazlitt, son of the Romantic critic, William Hazlitt, also took Latin lessons from Mary Lamb, when they were young (see also Chapter VI). Through the common interest in the Italian language, she made friends with the Isola family, from which Emma Isola

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 245-46.

³⁵ Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-Work', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 176-80 (p. 176).

³⁶ *Ibid*.

(1809-91), the adopted daughter of Charles and Mary Lamb, descended.

Subsequently, to prepare young Emma for a living as a governess, Mary committed herself to give her adopted daughter French and Latin lessons at home.

After the matricide had taken place, Mary Lamb was immediately sent away to a mad-house. Charles paid her frequent visits there, and brought her epistolary greetings from Samuel Taylor Coleridge and daily supplies of books. As observed by Charles during these visits, Mary appeared to be completely serene. She was not unaware of the enormity of the crime that she had committed, but she told her younger brother that she felt neither guilt nor fear. To cope with this catastrophe, Mary Lamb apparently regressed into a mental state of infantile fantasy:

I have no terrifying dreams. At midnight when I happen to awake, the nurse sleeping by the side of me, with the noise of the poor mad people around me, I have no fear. The spirit of my mother seems to descend, & smile upon me, & bid me live to enjoy the life & reason which the Almighty has given me.--³⁷

The mother figure, which Mary Lamb saw in her vision, was certainly not the real Elizabeth Lamb. The image of the mother in her mind was split into two archetypes, often encountered in fairy tales. One is the fairy god-mother and the other, the wicked step-mother. '[S]uch a splitting up of one person into two', as explained by Bruno Bettelheim in *The Use of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), 'occurs to many children as a solution to a relationship too difficult to manage or comprehend.'³⁸ In terms of psycho-analysis, such fantasies are known as the pubertal child's family romance. These fantasies seize on the idea that one's parents are not really one's parents, but that one is the child of some exalted

³⁷ Mary Lamb's words are recorded in Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 9; October 17, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 51-53 (p. 52).

³⁸ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Use of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London:

personage but, due to unfortunate circumstances, one has been reduced to living with these people, who claim to be one's parents. The child's hopeful expectation is that, one day, by chance or design, the real parent will suddenly turn up and the child will be elevated to his rightful state and live happily ever after. These fantasies are 'helpful', said Bruno Bettelheim, who had been working as a therapist with children for many years, because 'they permit the child to feel really angry [...] at the "false parent" without guilt.'³⁹ So it was with Mary Lamb. She could maintain her serenity during the confinement, because she believed that it was the false mother, whom she had killed, and the good mother visited her at night. The good mother would certainly understand and approve of her pursuit of knowledge, which the false mother had previously denied her. Meanwhile, Charles, far more than just sympathising with Mary, actually shared her vision of the good mother.

In mourning for the dead mother, Charles Lamb wrote a poem on the first anniversary of the matricide. Mary's night-vision is fully integrated into Charles's poetry and becomes Charles's vision too:

Thou [Mary Lamb], and I, dear friend,
With filial recognition sweet, shall know
One day the face of our dear mother in heaven;
And her remember'd looks of love shall greet
With looks of answering love; her placid smiles
Meet with a smile as placid, and her hand
With drops of fondness wet, nor fear repulse.⁴⁰

It is no wonder, therefore, that in the same way as Mary, Charles was able to face the death of the false mother, Elizabeth Lamb, with great composure. When he mourned,

Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 67.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Charles Lamb, 'Written a Year After the Event', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), V (Poems and Plays), 20-22 (p. 21).

at times, as a dutiful son, it was the good mother in the regressive vision that Charles had in mind. (Charles Lamb's response to the matricide is discussed in Chapter II.)

Mary Lamb was so pre-occupied with this splitting-up of the mother-image that it became a recurring theme in her writings for children. The story of 'Ann Withers', for example, is told in *Mrs. Leicester's School* with genuine pathos by Mary Lamb. Ann Withers, 'the daughter of my supposed nurse',⁴¹ was substituted for 'the daughter of a baronet'.⁴² The truth came out at the moment when the act of substitution was innocently re-constructed by the eponymous heroine herself in a child's play. Afterwards, Ann Withers is forced to confront the vital issue regarding the biological and the adopted mothers, i.e. which is the 'bad' mother.⁴³ The same theme also plays an extraordinary part in Mary Lamb's prose story retold from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

In Mary Lamb's 'Cymbeline', the murderous intent is now projected onto Cymbeline's wicked queen, who, undoubtedly, represents the real Elizabeth Lamb, the false mother. Once again, in terms of psycho-analysis, as the parent becomes separated into two figures, representative of the opposite feelings of loving and rejection, the child externalises and projects onto the negative figure all the taboo feelings, which the child senses inwardly, but are all too monstrous to be recognised as part of oneself. In other words, the wish to obliterate a parent arouses great guilt, but it is justified in the reversal in which the wish is projected onto the parent, and the guilty feelings of the child are thus eliminated.

⁴¹ Mary Lamb, 'Ann Withers' or 'The Changeling', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 288-302 (p. 299).

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 289.

In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Cloten is be-headed by Guiderius (IV. ii. 112).

The Queen pines away because of Cloten's mysterious absence and eventually dies without knowing what happened to her son:

Cornelius. in time
(When she [the Queen] had fitted you [Cymbeline] with her craft) to work
Her son into th' adoption of the crown:
But, failing of her end by his strange absence,
Grew shameless-desperate, open' d (in despite
Of heaven and men) her purpose: repented
The evils she hatch' d were not effected: so
Despairing died. (V. v. 54-61)

In Shakespeare's play, the Queen dies without repenting the harm, which she has already caused the royal family to suffer. On the contrary, she is said to regret that other evil designs are prevented by the unexpected absence of her son, Cloten.

However, in Lamb's tale, all the Cloten scenes are omitted, although the character of Cloten is retained and mentioned several times in the prose narrative.

Cloten is introduced, at the beginning of Mary Lamb's 'Cymbeline', as the Queen's beloved son and as a means to usurp Imogen's legitimate rights:

The queen, though she hated Imogen, yet wished her to marry a son of her own by a former husband[...] for by this means she hoped upon the death of Cymbeline to place the crown of Britain upon the head of her son Cloten[.] (I, 167)

Unlike his dramatic counterpart, Mary Lamb's Cloten never leaves Cymbeline's court and is, finally, killed by an anonymous character. Mary Lamb then goes on in her prose tale to excuse the killing as a justifiable execution:

How Cymbeline's wicked queen, through despair of bringing her projects to pass, and touched with remorse of conscience, sickened and died, having first lived to see her foolish son Cloten, slain in a quarrel, which he had provoked, are events too tragical to interrupt this happy conclusion by more than merely touching upon. (I, 186-87)

What is so significant about the ending of Lamb's 'Cymbeline' is that the Queen,

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 290.

though becoming remorseful in the end, is punished in a more severe manner than that her dramatic counterpart endures in Shakespeare's play.

It is essential to note that, as a common rule, Mary Lamb would provide a comic tale of *Tales from Shakespear* with a more benign ending than that of its source play. The wrong-doers, in particular, are often made to repent and, then, join in the final reconciliation, like Antonio in Lamb's 'The Tempest' (for details, see Chapter III.) In those cases where the wrong-doers do not repent, such as Don John in Lamb's 'Much Ado About Nothing', they still meet with a more lenient punishment than the one prepared for them in the play. Therefore, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don John is eventually caught and brought back to Messina, and waits for Benedick to 'devise' some 'brave punishments' next day (V. iv. 125-26). Whereas, in Lamb's prose version of the play, Don John has little to fear of any horrible torments, for the 'brave punishment' is simply 'to see the joy and feastings which, by the disappointment of his plots, took place at the palace in Messina' (I, 85). In comparison with Antonio in 'The Tempest' and Don John in 'Much Ado About Nothing', the Queen in 'Cymbeline' is treated in an exceptionally harsh manner. Not only has the Queen paid for her past wicked deeds with her own life, as her dramatic counterpart does, but she has to witness how her only son is slaughtered and is, then, driven into despair and so dies. Furthermore, there is, conspicuously, another factor that dominates the ways in which Mary Lamb has shaped the story-line of 'Cymbeline'.

The sibling rivalry between Mary Lamb and John, her elder brother and the favourite child of the mother and the maternal grandmother, was also active, when she was busy with plotting the story of 'Cymbeline'. What competence John Junior possessed in real life was beside the point. From Mary's point of view, her elder brother was but the vile and 'foolish' step-brother, Cloten, in 'Cymbeline' (I, 186).

Thus, through her prose adaptation of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Mary Lamb was able to turn her genuine feeling of inferiority into a defensive feeling of superiority, and to have her revenge on her elder brother. The unsympathetic dismissal in the concluding paragraph of her 'Cymbeline', in which Mary Lamb excludes both *Cymbeline*'s Queen and Cloten from the happy ending, became a perfect wish-fulfilment in her unconsciousness.

The conduct of Mary Lamb, under sane and normal circumstances, was nonetheless guided by the code of filial piety. She is said to have paid extreme, even excessive, attention to the care and comfort of her mother, especially during the period of the mother's infirmity.⁴⁴ Charles Lamb regarded this filial show as Mary's 'gratifying recollection':⁴⁵

But it is my Sister's gratifying recollection, that every act of duty & of love she could pay, every kindness (& I speak true, when I say to the hurting of her health, & most probably in great part to the derangement of her senses) thro' a long course of infirmities & sickness, she could shew her, **she ever did.**⁴⁶

Yet, a psychologist's opinions on Mary Lamb's behaviour could be drastically different from her protective younger brother's.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Sigmund Freud, after examining certain symptoms of one of his patients, which describe remarkably similar behaviour to that of Mary Lamb towards her mother, makes this diagnosis:

In the confusional state, in which, as I believed[...] her unconscious hostility to her mother found a powerful *motor* expression[...] When a normal state was still

⁴⁴ For example, see Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 5; June 29-July 1, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 34-36 (p. 34).

⁴⁵ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 9; October 17, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 51-53 (p. 52).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

more firmly established, it led to the production of her exaggerated worry about her mother as a hysterical counter-reaction and defensive phenomenon.⁴⁷

So it could be with Mary Lamb. Mary's exaggerated filial acts were probably expressions of her real hatred towards her mother, and the guilty feelings, which veiled her genuine hostility. All too perfectly, this indicated mental trait accords with Mary Lamb's own incessant intellectual pursuit and her adoration for intelligent women both in fiction and in history.

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, was regarded as Shylock's play during the eighteenth century. Although Mrs. Siddons was a celebrated Portia, Portia, as a dramatic character, hardly caught any critic's attention. Elizabeth Griffith was the first critic paying any tribute to the character of Portia but, in *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated*, published in 1775, Griffith merely praised her as a sincere and affectionate female character, endowed with 'a becoming reserve and modesty' by Shakespeare.⁴⁸ The status of Portia as an intelligent woman was not thought upon until Mary Lamb came to re-tell the story from Shakespeare's play in 1806.

In Mary Lamb's 'The Merchant of Venice', the fact that Portia, in the disguise of a young doctor of law, defeats Shylock's villainous schemes through the verbal quibble, which did not even occur to the wisest men in Venice, is greatly emphasized and enthusiastically applauded:

Now as it was utterly impossible for Shylock to cut off the pound of flesh without shedding some of Anthonio's [*sic*] blood, this wise discovery of Portia's, that it was flesh and not blood that was named in the bond, saved the life of Anthonio [*sic*]; and all admiring the wonderful sagacity of the young counsellor, who had so happily thought of this expedient, plaudits resounded

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953; repr., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 361.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Griffith, *The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated* (London: Cadell, 1775), p. 55.

from every part of the senate-house[.] (I, 155)

In addition, in one of the *Winterslow* essays, William Hazlitt recalls that the person Mary Lamb 'would wish to have seen' was 'Ninon de l' Enclos',⁴⁹ the seventeenth century courtesan, who, according to the description of Simone de Beauvoir, attained 'the rarest intellectual liberty'.⁵⁰ This kind of obsession with intellectual attainments has been categorised by Carl Gustav Jung as the (d) type of mother-complex of the daughter:

resistance to the mother can sometimes result in a spontaneous development of intellect for the purpose of creating a sphere of interest in which the mother has no place. This development springs from the daughter's own needs and not at all for the sake of a man whom she would like to impress or dazzle by a semblance of intellectual comradeship. Its purpose is to break the mother's power by intellectual criticism and superior knowledge, so as to enumerate to her all her stupidities, mistakes in logic, and educational shortcomings.⁵¹

Ninon de l' Enclos, though whole-heartedly admired by Mary Lamb, was jeered at and criticised by some eighteenth century men, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Ninon de l' Enclos was such a prodigy of intellect that, as a man, Rousseau felt quite threatened by this 'learned lady'.⁵² '[I]n spite of her high reputation', Rousseau avowed in *Emile* (1762), 'I should no more desire [Ninon de l' Enclos] as my friend than as my mistress',⁵³ for 'a female wit is a scourge to her husband, her children,

⁴⁹ William Hazlitt, 'Essay XII. Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen', in William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: Dent, 1930-34), XVII (Uncollected Essays), 122-34 (p. 133).

⁵⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H. M. Parshley (London: Cape, 1953; repr., Pan Books, 1988), p. 581.

⁵¹ C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, ed. by Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, etc., second edition, 21 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957-79), IX (The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious), 91.

⁵² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. by Barbara Foxley, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1911; repr., 1984), p. 371.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 349.

her friends, her servants, to everybody.’⁵⁴ Subsequently, ‘on these grounds’, Rousseau determined the ‘general terms’⁵⁵ of women’s intellectual education in the final chapter of *Emile*, ‘Sophy, Or Woman’.

Sophy, the ‘helpmeet’⁵⁶ of Emile, must be taught to like ‘the feminine arts’, especially, ‘Needlework’.⁵⁷ As to book-learning, a rather unfeminine virtue, it is to be discouraged. Therefore, Sophy is allowed to read only one book, *The Adventures of Telemachus*,⁵⁸ during her entire girlhood. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Book V. Sophy, Or Woman* was exactly one of ‘the books written on this subject [of girls’ education] by men’,⁵⁹ thoroughly abhorred by Mary Wollstonecraft. To some extent, Mary Lamb shared Mary Wollstonecraft’s objection to such constraints as imposed on a girl’s intellectual development by men.

In Mary Lamb’s only surviving magazine article, ‘On Needle-Work’, she considers first of all, that a girl ‘may reasonably look forward, inasmuch as it is by far the most *common lot*, namely, the condition of a *happy English wife*’.⁶⁰ However, for ‘reasons deduced from authentic facts,’⁶¹ as emphasized by Mary Lamb, girls should, by all means, be given greater intellectual liberty, even to the extent that they should have the same education as that for the boys, if girls were truly

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 371.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 349.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 321.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 357.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 367.

⁵⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Miriam Brody, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 79.

⁶⁰ Mary Lamb, ‘On Needle-Work’, in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 176-80 (p. 179).

expected to 'soften and sweeten life'⁶² and to become 'the help-mates of *man*'⁶³

In how many ways is a good woman employed, in thought or action, through the day, in order that her *good man* may be enabled to feel his leisure hours *real substantial holyday*, and perfect respite from the cares of business! Not the least part to be done to accomplish this end is to fit herself to become a conversational companion; that is to say, she has to study and understand the subjects on which he loves to talk. This part of our duty, if strictly performed, will be found by far our hardest part. The disadvantages we labour under from an education differing from a manly one make the hours in which we *sit and do nothing* in men's company too often any thing but a relaxation; although as to pleasure and instruction, time so passed may be esteemed more or less delightful.⁶⁴

In Shakespeare's comedies and romances, there exist many female characters, either reaching a marriageable age and seeking for a suitable match, or already coping with various domestic crises as wives. Since love and marriage are two such prominent themes in these plays, it might not be a mere coincidence that Mary Lamb chose to develop and dwell upon her concept of 'a *happy English wife*'⁶⁵ in adapting the fourteen tales from Shakespeare's comedies and romances. As to how and what Mary Lamb has communicated to one half of her young readers, i.e. girls, on this subject, this will be discussed in the following two sections in this chapter.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 180.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 177.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 177

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 179.

1.

Little is known about Mary Lamb's ideal children's literature. In her semi-autobiographical story, 'The Young Mahometan', she recalls the 'pleasure' she used to take in reading 'the large-print Family Bible'.⁶⁶ Apart from the Bible, fairy tales are the other reading matter, to which Mary Lamb/Margaret Green refers with great relish. In fact, the reason why Margaret Green is so absorbed in reading the 'improper'⁶⁷ book, *Mahometism Explained*, is that, as specifically pointed out by Mary Lamb, the book 'was as entertaining as a fairy tale.'⁶⁸

Fairy tale is a term which has been used rather loosely in our modern time. However, the term came from France and used to refer to one particular branch of literature, derived from the folk tales but developed into a popular genre in its own right during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.⁶⁹ More precisely, the term came from Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Les Contes des Fées*, first published in French in 1698 and later translated into English as *Tales of the Fairies*⁷⁰ or *Fairy Tales*⁷¹.

⁶⁶ Mary Lamb, 'Margaret Green' or 'The Young Mahometan', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 305-11 (p. 306).

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 308.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 309.

⁶⁹ The background information concerning French literary fairy tales is mostly compiled from Jack Zipes's and, Iona and Peter Opie's books; see the Selected Bibliography at the end of the thesis.

⁷⁰ The title was translated as *Tales of the Fairies*, when it was first published in London as the fourth part of *The Diverting Works of the Countess D'Anois* in 1707 (British Library: 12236.bb.11.)

⁷¹ The title was sometimes translated as *Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales*. For example, see the edition published by the Newberys in 1773 (British Library: 1568/4521).

Until the seventeenth century, the oral folk tale in France was not deemed worthy of being transcribed or transformed into literature. The reason is that, apart from the Italian scholars, most of the European aristocracy and intelligentsia considered the folk tale as a part of the vulgar people's tradition, beneath the dignity of cultivated people and associated with pagan beliefs and superstitions that were no longer relevant in Christian Europe. If the literate members of the upper class acknowledged the folk tale at all, it was as crude, homily entertainment in its oral form, transmitted through such intermediaries as wet-nurses, servants, etc.

In the 1630s, deprived of access to schools and universities, the French aristocratic women began organizing gatherings in their homes to which they invited other women and gradually men (e.g. Charles Perrault) in order to discuss art, literature and topics important to them, e.g. love, marriage and freedom. This was the salon movement. Some of the most gifted writers of the time came out of this movement, and their goal was to gain more independence for women of their own class and to be treated more seriously as intellectuals.

The women, who frequented the salons, were constantly seeking innovative ways to express their needs and to embellish the forms and the style of speech and communication that they shared. Given the fact that they had all been exposed to oral folk tales as children and they entertained themselves with conversational games that served as models for the occasional lyric and the serial novel, it is not by chance that they turned to the folk tale as a source of amusement. About the middle of the seventeenth century, these aristocratic women started to invent parlour games, based on the plots of folk tales, with the purpose of challenging one another in friendly fashion to see who could create the more compelling narrative. Such challenges led the women, in particular, to improve the quality of their dialogue, remarks and ideas

about morals, manners, taste and education and, at times, to question male standards that governed their lives. These tales displayed a certain resistance towards male rational precepts and patriarchal realms by conceiving pagan worlds, in which the final say was determined by female fairies, extraordinarily majestic and powerful.

The early French fairy-tale writers employed models from French folklore and the medieval courtly tradition. Embellishment, improvisation and experimentation with known folk motifs were stressed. Since everyone prepared their tales very carefully and rehearsed them before going to a salon, the air of improvisation of the tales was, of course, feigned. The speakers all endeavoured to portray ideal situations in the most effective oratory style, which would gradually be transmuted into literary forms and set the standards for what we now call the literary fairy tale. In *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment: Classical French Fairy Tales* (1991), Jack Zipes divided the development of the literary fairy tale approximately into three phases: 'the experimental salon fairy tale', 'the Oriental tale' and 'the conventional and comical fairy tale'.⁷²

The first phase covered the period of the last decade of the seventeenth century and the turn of the eighteenth century, when the salon fairy tale became so acceptable that women and men began writing down their tales for publication. Marie-Catherine (la Mothe) d' Aulnoy (c. 1650-1705) was one of those pioneers in publishing the salon fairy tale, and set the trend in France. She began her career as a fairy-tale writer with the novel *L' Histoire d' Hippolyte, Conte de Douglas*, which contains the prose fairy tale, '*L' île de la Félicité*', translated into English as 'The Island of Happiness'. In this first literary fairy tale, published in 1690, d' Aulnoy attacked the

⁷² Jack Zipes' s 'Introduction', in *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment: Classical French Fairy Tales*,

reign of Louis XIV, which had begun during the Age of Reason, and turned reason against itself to justify the king's desire, taste and private ambition for glory, which led to wars and irrational policies that were destructive for France.

In 'The Island of Happiness', Prince Adolph fails to attain complete happiness, because he sacrifices love for 'honor [sic]':⁷³

he reapproached [sic] himself for having spent so much time with a mistress without having done anything that would place his name among the ranks of heroes [...] and at last, he said farewell to the woman he had adored [for three hundred years], and whom he still loved with a great deal of tenderness.⁷⁴

After Prince Adolph has been captured and suffocated to death by Father Time, who had been looking for him and waiting for those three hundred years, the Island of Happiness, associated with his wife, Princess Felicity, is shut forever and will remain beyond our reach:

She [Princess Felicity] ordered the doors of her palace to be closed forever, and ever since that fatal day nobody has seen her[...] every one keeps saying that there is no avoiding Father Time. Nor is there perfect happiness.⁷⁵

'The Island of Happiness', as a narrative strategy to criticise Louis XIV and to elaborate a code of integrity, was a rational endeavour on the part of the writer to illuminate the irrational and destructive tendencies of her time. Given the fact that writers were not allowed to criticise Louis XIV directly, due to censorship, the salon fairy tale became, in this regard, a means to vent criticism and, at the same time, project hopes for a better world. This idea formed the basis of most of the fairy tales produced during the 1690s in France. Perhaps, this is why there was always something inherently suspicious and subversive about the development of the literary

trans. & ed. by Jack Zipes (London: Meridian, 1991), p. 5.

⁷³ Marie-Catherine d' Aulnoy, 'The Island of Happiness', in *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment: Classical French Fairy Tales*, trans. & ed. by Jack Zipes (London: Meridian, 1991), pp. 299-308 (306).

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 306-7.

fairy tale.

Many of the salon fairy tales, contrary to the modern notions of a fairy tale, are highly provocative, bizarre and nightmarish, and do not end happily. Often, humans in the salon fairy tale must live under the fairy laws that they do not understand and under the fairy powers which are arbitrary, not unlike Louis XIV and his ministers. In 'The Yellow Dwarf',⁷⁶ another of Marie-Catherine d' Aulnoy's fairy tales, for example, All-Fair and her choice of a husband, the King of Gold Mines, are torn asunder and tortured, in both physical and mental ways, by the wicked, monstrous but powerful Yellow Dwarf and Desart[sic]-Fairy, who lust for the princess and the king respectively. In the end, the Yellow Dwarf's jealousy of the handsome and beloved King of Gold Mines grows to such a height that

he stabbed the King to the heart; whose Death the Princess [All-Fair] was not able to survive, but fell on her dear Prince's Body, and poured out her Soul with his. Thus died these two illustrious, but unfortunate Lovers[...] The wicked Dwarf was better pleased to see his Princess void of Life, than in the Arms of another; and the Desart[sic]-Fairy [...] conceiv'd as great an [sic] Hatred against the Memory of the King of the Gold Mines, as Love for his Person[.]⁷⁷

The second phase (c. 1704-1720) was much less connected to utopian criticism than the first. Most of the salon fairy-tale writers had either died or been banished from Paris by 1704, so that some of the fairy-tale writers sought their inspiration from Oriental literature, a more distant and, therefore, safer resource. The most remarkable achievement of this phase was Antoine Galland's French adaptations of Arabic tales, *A Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Night's Entertainments*. By the 1720s,

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 380.

⁷⁶ The tale was first translated into English and published as part of *A Collection of Novels and Tales of the Fairies* in 1721. The most easily accessible text of this first English translation is reprinted in Iona and Peter Opie (eds.), *The Classic Fairy Tales* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 68-80.

⁷⁷ Marie-Catherine d' Aulnoy, 'The Yellow Dwarf', in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. by Iona & Peter Opie (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 68-80 (80.)

the interest in the salon fairy tale continued to diminish, although its tradition persisted and was carried on by certain serious fairy-tale writers, such as Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve (1695-1755), who was the first writer to develop the plot of 'Beauty and the Beast' as we generally recognise it today. The original '*La Belle et la Bête*' is a three-hundred-and-sixty-two-page long romance, included in *Les contes marins ou la jeune Américaine*, first published in 1740.⁷⁸ Along with the continuing development in the traditional line, the interest in the literary fairy tale gradually turned to parody, or utilization for children's literature.

During the long course of its development, the literary fairy tale had been simplified, abbreviated and published as chapbooks, so its condensed versions were taken up by the half-literate peasants and children. This re-integration into the folk, oral culture did not take place only in France, but all over the Europe through various translations. The increasing popularity of the literary fairy tale in the chapbook form was exactly what gave the idea of adapting the literary fairy tale for children. As a result, during the second half of the eighteenth century, the literary fairy tale came to its own and became a legitimate means to convey standard notions of propriety and morality that reinforced the process of socialisation in France. Most significantly, Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont's abridgement of de Villeneuve's '*La Belle et la Bête*' was published in 1756 as one of the didactic fairy tales, included in *La Magasin des Enfants*. This two-volume book was first translated into English as *The Young Misses Magazine, Containing Dialogues Between a Governess and Several*

⁷⁸ The most easily accessible English translation of the standard text is by Jack Zipes, included in *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment: Classical French Fairy Tales*, trans. & ed. by Jack Zipes (London: Meridian, 1991), pp.153-229.

Young Ladies of Quality, Her Scholars in 1759.⁷⁹ Its design is similar to that of Sarah Fielding's *The Governess*, also known as *The Female Academy* (1749), and Charles and Mary Lamb's *Mrs. Leicester's School*.

In *The Young Misses Magazine*, a group of young ladies, whose age ranges from five to thirteen, is made to speak and act 'according to her particular Genius, Temper and Inclination'⁸⁰ (e.g. Lady Sensible, Lady Witty, Lady Trifle and Lady Tempest),⁸¹ and 'Their several Faults'⁸² and 'the easy Way to mend them, as well as to think, and speak, and act properly'⁸³ are pointed out *via* discussing and commenting upon the included fairy tales. Among them, there is the famous 'Beauty and the Beast'.

Beauty, in Le Prince de Beaumont's abridgement, is the model female protagonist, whose inner goodness is manifested by her outward appearance; however, in de Villeneuve's novel, Beauty is a confused princess, constantly wrestling with her erotic dreams about a handsome prince-husband. The novel, as a whole, is an intricate discourse on true love, false appearance and class distinction in marriage; whereas, Le Prince de Beaumont has switched the focus of the story to the proper upbringing of young girls, like Beauty, who must possess the virtues of industriousness, self-sacrifice, modesty and diligence, in order to obtain happiness. Because Le Prince de Beaumont (1711-80) wrote specially for children, she kept her language and plot as simple as possible, and made her moral messages absolutely clear by way of using explicitly didactic commentaries. Beauty's two sisters,

⁷⁹ The earliest surviving edition is the second, published in 1767.

⁸⁰ Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, *The Young Misses Magazine*, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Nourse, 1767), I, title-page.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, I, viii.

⁸² *Ibid.*, I, title-page.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

furthermore, appear to be indolent, petty and jealous in de Villeneuve's romantic novel, but they are neither condemned nor punished. Whereas, the malevolent, greedy, proud and jealous sisters, under Le Prince de Beaumont's handling, must stand as statues forever, witnessing Beauty's success:

As to you, ladies, said the fairy to Beauty's two sisters, I know your hearts, and all the malice they contain: become two statues, but, under this transformation, still retain your reason. You shall stand before your sister's palace gate, and be it your punishment to behold her happiness; and it will not be in your power to return to your former state, till your own your faults, but I am very much afraid that you will always remain statues. Pride, anger, gluttony, and idleness are sometimes conquered, but the conversion of a malicious and envious mind is a kind of miracle.⁸⁴

The manner in which Le Prince de Beaumont's version of 'Beauty and the Beast' deviates from de Villeneuve's actually characterises the essential differences between the conventional and the salon fairy tales. Once more, in 'The Yellow Dwarf', for example, All Fair is said to own 'intolerable Pride'⁸⁵ at the beginning of the fairy tale, but her later misfortune has little to do with this drawback in her character.

When Princess All-Fair dies as a true lover in the end, she is in a position to be pitied not scorned:

the kind Mermaid, who was grieved at this Misfortune, she could obtain no other Favour of Fate, but to change them [All-Fair and the King of Gold Mines] into two Palm-Trees; which preserving a faithful and lasting Passion for each other, caress and unite their Branches together.⁸⁶

The aims and methods, applied by Le Prince de Beaumont in transforming the salon fairy tale into the didactic fairy tale, eventually won her great respect from the English moralists, such as Sarah Trimmer.

In *The Guardian of Education*, Sarah Trimmer vehemently censures the bad

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, I, 67.

⁸⁵ Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, 'The Yellow Dwarf', in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. by Iona & Peter Opie (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 68-80 (68.)

influence, which 'French novels and other corrupting books', including fairy tales, had on English youth.⁸⁷ She sneers at the salon fairy tale, in general, as lacking 'moral instruction level to the infantine [sic] capacity'.⁸⁸ She disapproves of d'Aulnoy's fairy tales, in particular, as 'only fit to fill the heads of children with confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events, brought about by the agency of imaginary beings'⁸⁹ (see also Chapter I.) Nevertheless, Le Prince de Beaumont's fairy tales are deemed to be the exception.

Instead of being banned by Sarah Trimmer in 1802, Le Prince de Beaumont's didactic fairy tales, such as those contained in *The Young Misses Magazine*, are highly recommended to the perusal of children:

Some valuable *French Books* for children and young persons likewise made their appearance in the world, about the middle of the last century, namely, '*La Magazine des 'Enfans [sic],'* and '*La Magazine d'Adolescenec [sic],'* by *Madame le Prince de Beaumont*[...] ⁹⁰

Perhaps, this ambivalent attitude towards fairy tales gave Mary Lamb an idea that she could adapt Shakespeare's plays into children's stories in the same manner that Le Prince de Beaumont had conventionalised the salon fairy tale.

There is no direct evidence to prove that, in re-telling the stories from Shakespeare's dramas in 1806, Mary Lamb deliberately imitated Le Prince de Beaumont's story-telling techniques or principles. However, as could be gathered from her childhood experience, Mary Lamb was evidently aware of the charm and the wonder that fairy tales are able to excite in the minds of children. Since what we write is often under the influence of what we read, and we can also be sure that Mary

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 80.

⁸⁷ Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, 5 vols. (London: Hatchard, 1802-1806), I (1802), 12.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, II (1803), 186.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 185.

Lamb was familiar with both the salon fairy tales and the didactic fairy tales, the case for Lamb's use of the conventionalisation of literary fairy tale is well worth consideration.

Mary Lamb, as described by Charles in the *Elia* essay, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', was particularly fond of reading 'modern tale, or adventure',⁹¹ which was a wider generic category covering the ground of the French fairy tales. Moreover, the eighteenth century chapbook was a great distributor of fairy tales and, in another essay of *Elia*, 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', young Mary Lamb, when she was still a 'lone sempstress',⁹² is said to have been daily 'cheered' by chapbooks,⁹³

after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents!⁹⁴

How knowledgeable Mary Lamb was about the French fairy tales can also be perceived from her use of a fairy-tale allusion to satirise Mrs. Godwin and from Lamb's two verse tales adapted from Le Prince de Beaumont's prose fairy tales, 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Prince Désir and Princess Mignone'.

In a letter dated November 7, 1809, Mary Lamb described to Sarah Stoddart, who was then Mrs. Hazlitt, what an envious disposition Mrs. Godwin possessed.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, I (1802), 63.

⁹¹ Charles Lamb, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 75-79 (p. 75).

⁹² Charles Lamb, 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), II (*Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*), 172-77 (p. 173).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

(Mrs. Godwin's envy is also discussed in Chapter II.) After Mary spent a month with the Hazlitts at their home in Winterslow, she writes in the letter:

I continue very well & return you very sincere thanks for my good health and improved looks which have almost made Mrs Godwin die with envy[.] She longs to come to Winterslow as much as the spiteful elder sister did go to the well for a gift to spit diamonds.--⁹⁵

What is referred to in Mary Lamb's letter is indubitably one of Charles Perrault's fairy tales, '*Les Fées*', first published in 1697, during the first phase of the literary fairy tale. Mary probably read the story in some English translation and from a chapbook variation of 'Diamonds and Toads' (see also Chapter I.)

The two verse tales, *Prince Dorus; Or, Flattery Put out of Countenance* and *Beauty and the Beast; Or, A Rough Outside with a Gentle Heart*, both published in 1811 by the Godwins, were chosen and adapted by the Lambs.⁹⁶ Given the fact that the tales were selected from Le Prince de Beaumont's *The Young Misses Magazine* and were the only two moral fairy tales out of the entire collection which contain any real literary value, Charles and Mary Lamb must have known this particular publication of the conventional fairy tales very well.

Mary Lamb, moreover, expressed some anxieties about the few elements contained in Shakespeare's plays and resembling those characteristics of the salon fairy tale, which were vigorously attacked by the eighteenth century moralists. Her

⁹⁵ Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart Hazlitt (Letter 243; November 7, 1809), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1795-8), III (1809-1817), 30-32 (p. 32).

⁹⁶ *Beauty and the Beast; Or, A Rough Outside with a Gentle Heart*, though it is generally attributed to Charles Lamb, has been suggested by William MacDonald that the real author was probably Mary, not Charles. For details, see MacDonald's 'Introduction', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. by William MacDonald, 12 vols. (London: Dent, 1903), VIII (Poetry for Children), xxvi.

unease about the existence of supernatural beings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the difficulty of extracting any suitable moral messages from Oberon's trick played upon Titania, for instance, are underlined in her prose version of the play. She thus concludes 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' with an apology, paraphrased from Puck's epilogue (V. i. 409-16):

And now, if any are offended with this story of fairies and their pranks, as judging it incredible and strange, they have only to think that they have been asleep and dreaming, and that all these adventures were visions which they saw in their sleep: and I hope none of my readers will be so unreasonable as to be offended with a pretty harmless Midsummer Night's Dream. (I, 42)

Under this circumstance, Le Prince de Beaumont's moral fairy tales would be an illustrious precedent for Mary Lamb that, if she could also turn Shakespeare's stories to some moral use, there was hope that her tales would be universally accepted as proper reading for children too (see also Chapter III.)

Scattered within Shakespeare's comedies and romances, there are numerous hints and traces of topical issues concerning gender and social norms. Apparently, Mary Lamb noticed them, for she has transformed them into moral lessons or advice on good behaviour for young ladies in her two-thirds of the *Tales from Shakespear*.

Hermione, for example, when she is falsely accused of adultery in *The Winter's Tale*, pleads for the Heavens to grant her patience, so she can 'go on' an 'action' which 'Is for my better grace' (II. i. 121-22):

There's some ill planet reigns:
I must be patient till the heavens look
With an aspect more favourable. (II. i. 105-7)

In Lamb's tale, patience becomes the virtue that Mary Lamb preaches, and Hermione is established as a role model of patient endurance for that purpose. Much emphasis is given to Perdita's home-coming as the reward for the long suffering, which Hermione has been through, in the moralistic ending, looking forward into a much

brighter future far beyond the end of the play:

Thus we have seen the patient virtues of the long-suffering Hermione rewarded.
That excellent lady lived many years with her Leontes and her Perdita, the
happiest of mothers and of queens. (I, 62)

Mary Lamb's role models are not all positive like Hermione in 'The Winter's Tale'. The positive role models are for young ladies to emulate; meanwhile, there are negative role models in Lamb's tales, which represent the vices that young ladies are to avoid.

Juliet and Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, for example, have anticipated consummating their relationship in marriage. During her imprisonment, however, Juliet is in no need of moral guidance. She carries sin and bears shame with due patience and penitence; meanwhile, a natural joy arises from her condition as an expectant mother:

Juliet. I do repent me as it is an evil,
And take the shame with joy.
Duke. There rest. (II. iii. 35-36)

Nevertheless, in Mary Lamb's prose tale, Juliet is moulded into a negative role model, in order to warn young ladies away from pre-marital sex.

In 'Measure for Measure', Juliet is, therefore, introduced as one of 'the young ladies in Vienna', who 'had been seduced from their [parents'] protection, and were living as the companions of single men' (II, 70). Although Juliet is not pregnant in Lamb's tale, her companionship with Claudio remains a sexual one, for Angelo thus proposes the only terms and condition to save Claudio's life to Isabel:

he [Angelo] said to her [Isabel], if she would yield to him her virgin honour, and transgress even as Juliet had done with Claudio, he would give her her brother's life: "for," said he, "I love you, Isabel[...] Claudio shall not die, if you will consent to visit me by stealth at night, even as Juliet left her father's house at night to come to Claudio." (II, 79)

In Lamb's tale, by drawing such a comparison between Juliet and Isabella, the

negative and the positive role models in the same story, Mary Lamb has sharpened the contrast between the two role models. In the past, Juliet willingly succumbed to Claudio's seduction, but Isabella will soon decisively turn down Angelo's vile suggestion. At this juncture, Mary Lamb has also high-lighted the moral point about maiden purity, for a maid has both the power and the responsibility to refuse temptation and preserve her own 'virgin honour' (II, 79).

In Mary Lamb's 'Measure for Measure', furthermore, it is all due to the 'pious conversation with the duke, who in his friar's habit had also visited Juliet', that the 'guilty' Juliet and Claudio are finally brought 'to a proper sense of their fault' (II, 81). When the two culprits inwardly confront their sin, which was mutually committed, more blame is clearly laid upon Juliet according to Lamb's third-person narration:

unhappy Juliet with tears and a true remorse confessed, that she was more to blame than Claudio, in that she willingly consented to his dishonourable solicitations. (II, 81)

Juliet is only made happy in the end, as moralised by Mary Lamb, after she becomes 'the repentant wife of the reformed Claudio' (II, 96).

The Lambs' publishers, William and Mary Jane Godwin, certainly captured the pedagogical potential of Mary Lamb's comic tales, and a new business plan was formed in their minds (see also Chapter V.) In 1809, when the second edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* came out to meet the reading public's demand, it was brought out in two separate issues. One of them was issued for children, and its printing and binding was based the same design as that of the former edition. The other, without the original twenty plates but with a portrait of Shakespeare as its new frontispiece, was meant to be 'an acceptable and improving present to young ladies

advancing to the state of womanhood',⁹⁷ as explained in the publisher's

'Advertisement to the Second Edition' (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1809/1.)

This business plan did not work in the way in which the Godwins had expected. The sale of *Tales from Shakespear* actually slowed down for a while. The Godwins admitted to the potential purchasers in the advertisement that the 'twenty prints' included in the first edition and certain copies of the second edition, were not 'high finishing' art works.⁹⁸ (The quality of the plates is discussed in Chapter VI.) Such an advertisement discouraged, rather than encouraged, customers from buying the illustrated copies. Ten thousand copies of the second edition had not yet been sold out in the following year, when the second edition was re-issued. Very obligingly, the Godwins withdrew the 'Advertisement to the Second Edition' in 1810 (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1810/1.)

Whether the publishers advertised it or not, didacticism prevails in Mary Lamb's comic tales. Many Victorians recognised and, actually, appreciated Mary Lamb's endeavours to conventionalise Shakespeare's plays. Or, rather, the Victorians took it for granted that the moral lessons taught in Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*, were what Shakespeare would like to teach through his dramatic works. Therefore, during the nineteenth century, Shakespeare, who had once been condemned as a playwright 'much more careful to please than to instruct'⁹⁹ in the previous century, was regarded as 'Our great Poet-teacher' of womanly virtues.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, *Tales from*

⁹⁷ [William Godwin], 'Advertisement to the Second Edition', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear, Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Godwin, 1809), I, iii.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. iii-iv.

⁹⁹ Samuel Johnson, 'Preface', in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), I, xix.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend', *The Girl's Own Paper*, 8

Shakespear and Shakespeare' s dramatic works were regarded as two essential landmarks in the moral and literary education of a Victorian girl, as remarked by Mary Cowden Clarke in *The Girl' s Own Paper*:

Happy she who at eight or nine years old has a copy of "Lamb' s Tales from Shakespeare" given to her, opening a vista of even then understandable interest and enjoyment! Happy she who at twelve or thirteen has Shakespeare' s works themselves read to her by her mother, with loving selection of fittest plays and passages! Happy they who in maturer years have the good taste and good sense to read aright the pages of Shakespeare, and gather thence wholesomest lessons and choicest delights!¹⁰¹

(1887), 562-64 (p. 562).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 564.

2.

Mary Wollstonecraft, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, had hard opinions on her contemporary women. Mary Lamb, however, was much more sympathetic.

In her magazine article, 'On Needle-Work', Mary Lamb observed that many of her contemporary women actually strove hard to be good wives. They looked after domestic affairs; some of the ladies were 'so industrious' that they should be respected as 'the fair votaries of voluntary housewifery'.¹⁰² Sophy, Rousseau's ideal woman, could do no more. However, according to Mary Lamb's observation, there was still 'some essential drawback'¹⁰³ to the 'domestic comfort of both sexes'.¹⁰⁴

To become 'a conversational companion'¹⁰⁵ to her husband, father, brother or son, emphasized by Mary Lamb in 'On Needle-Work', is of 'a consoling importance'.¹⁰⁶ If a woman were able to perform successfully this particular one of the 'feminine duties',¹⁰⁷ it would 'prove an incalculable addition to general happiness.'¹⁰⁸ Therefore, 'the sum and substance' of a '*British*' lady's 'domestic

¹⁰² Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-Work', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 176-180 (p. 176).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

ambition' ¹⁰⁹ should be

To make a man's home so desirable a place as to preclude his having a wish to pass his leisure hours at any fireside in preference to his own[.]¹¹⁰

Because to accomplish this end requires much 'mental exertion' ¹¹¹, for which a young lady's education did not prepare her, this most important domestic duty of an English wife was also the most ill-performed one. Owing to their insufficient intellectual training, as pointed out in 'On Needle-Work', women did not even know what 'subjects' could be of any interest to their men¹¹² and, therefore, failed to become 'the contributors' to 'the undisturbed relaxation of man.'¹¹³ Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors*, as perceived by Mary Lamb, faced a similar domestic problem to that of her contemporary English ladies.

The Comedy of Errors had been regarded as a mere farce and not worthy of serious treatment during the Age of Reason. The Romantic critics inherited this opinion and did not think much of the play, either. Thus, Samuel Taylor Coleridge continued to comment upon *The Comedy of Errors* in the same mode:

Shakespeare, has in this piece presented us with a legitimate farce in exactest consonance with the philosophical principles and character of farce, as distinguished from comedy and from entertainments.¹¹⁴

Whereas, as far as Mary Lamb was concerned, *The Comedy of Errors* did more than merely provoke laughter.

Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* dramatises a severe disruption of family

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 178.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 177.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 178.

¹¹⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), I, 99.

relationships, and Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus, in particular, genuinely suffer in the play. One of the sources, which results in the chaotic situation, is Adriana herself. She does not understand what are the proper subjects for daily conversation with her husband, as she confesses in the final act. The only subject of Adriana's domestic discourse has ever been her husband's suspected adultery:

Adriana. It was the copy of our conference;
In bed he slept not for my urging it,
At board he fed not for my urging it;
Alone, it was the subject of my theme;
In company I often glanc' d at it;
Still did I tell him it was vile and bad.

Abbess. And thereof came it that the man was mad. (*ERR*, V. i. 62-68)

Therefore, Mary Lamb purposefully re-moulded the character of Adriana into a negative role model in her prose narrative. Adriana, says Lamb, 'was of a jealous temper' (II, 53) and ever speaking 'unkind words of jealousy and reproach of her husband' (II, 53). The 'cause' of her husband's 'frequent absence from home' (II, 63), as explicitly expostulated by Mary Lamb in the tale, 'was not his love for another, but the teasing jealousy of his wife's temper', which was so little restrained and had so often spoiled the 'conversation' of the husband and the wife (II, 63).

The Abbess, by contrast, is the positive role model in Mary Lamb's 'The Comedy of Errors'. In the pre-play episodes, Shakespeare establishes the relation of Emilia and Egeon as a happily married couple and, in the play, Emilia, after becoming an Abbess, is portrayed as a wise and holy woman. In *The Comedy of Errors*, Egeon, in reporting the story of his life before his arrival at Euphesus, tells the Duke that he was 'wed/Unto a woman happy but for me,/And by me' (*ERR*, I. i. 36-38). After being tricked into a confession of her own faults, Adriana has no words to rebuke the Abbess and admits to her sister that the Abbess 'did betray me to mine own reproof' (V. i. 90). While Shakespeare is content to end his play in everybody's accepting of

the Abbess' invitation and going to the 'gossips' feast' (V. i. 405), Mary Lamb has assigned one more task for the 'wise and virtuous' Abbess to perform (II, 67), before the tale is finally ended happily.

The Abbess in Lamb's tale is to teach her daughter-in-law, Adriana, what a 'happy family discourse at leisure' is composed of (II, 68). Adriana, as narrated by Mary Lamb,

had so well profited by the good counsel of her mother-in-law, that she never after cherished unjust suspicions, or was jealous of her husband. (II, 68)

Hereafter, the twins will still be mistaken as their brothers occasionally but, since Adriana is reformed by the Abbess and the missing part of her education is thus supplied, the mistakes concerning the twins' identities, made in the future, will be harmless to all parties and merely some 'comical blunders [...] making altogether a pleasant and diverting Comedy of Errors' in their lives (II, 69).

Other Shakespearean comedies and romances also provided Mary Lamb with further instances to preach the importance of a woman becoming a conversational companion. Some of Shakespeare's female characters, such as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Marina in *Pericles*, exercise their intellectual power and work wonder in their own lives or the lives of those who they care for (see also Chapter V.) Others, such as Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* and, to some extent, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, fail to become fit conversational companions to their men and are forced to embark on an educational journey of re-discovery towards that end. Among all these prose adaptations of fourteen of Shakespeare's comedies and romances, none, however, has conveyed the idea of improving women's intellectual education and the importance of being a conversational companion more completely and distinctively than Mary Lamb's 'All's Well That Ends Well'.

In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Shakespeare's Helena seems to have received a manly education from her father, for medicine, her 'legacy' 'sanctified/By th' luckiest stars in heaven' (*AWW*, I. iii. 240-41), was a manly subject. As already discussed earlier in the chapter, Mary Lamb affirms her belief in 'On Needle-Work', that giving a woman a 'manly'¹¹⁵ education will assist her to 'study and understand the subjects on which' man 'loves to talk',¹¹⁶ which is a crucial step to 'fit herself to become a conversational companion'.¹¹⁷ Therefore, Mary Lamb had no doubt that Helena's manly education would enable her to become a fit conversational companion to Bertram, and her narration of 'All's Well That Ends Well', as a result of this firm belief, comes to focus on how, before Bertram acknowledges Helena as his wife on a public occasion, Helena must make Bertram fall in love with her as a conversational companion on a private occasion.

In 'All's Well That Ends Well', being pregnant with Bertram's child is never one of Helena's impossible tasks. All the terms and conditions, laid out in Bertram's letter to Helena, are:

When you can get the ring from my finger, which never shall come off, then call me husband, but in such a Then I write a Never. (II, 12)

Nor does Bertram intend to violate Diana, when he woos her in Florence. He only means to obtain her permission, in order to pay her a visit on a private occasion:

all his suit to her was that she would permit him to visit her by stealth after the family were retired to rest[...] (II, 15)

Diana refuses Bertram, mainly because he is already 'a married man' (II, 15).

¹¹⁵ Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-Work', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 176-80 (p. 177).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Bertram's 'suit' becomes 'improper', because he is wooing another, who is not his wife (II, 15). Providentially, Helena 'clad in her pilgrim's weeds', arrives, at this juncture, 'at the city of Florence [...] through which the pilgrims used to pass on their way to St. Jaques le Grand' (II, 14). As soon as Helena has heard of Bertram's infatuation with Diana, 'a project' is conceived in 'the ardent mind of Helena', 'nothing discouraged at the ill success of her former one' (II, 16).

'Helena', as Mary Lamb continues in 'All's Well That Ends Well', 'caused information to be sent to Bertram, that she was dead', so Bertram 'thought himself free to make the second choice by the news of her death' (II, 17). Meanwhile, Helena also asks 'her kind hostess and her daughter' to 'suffer this visit from Bertram to take place' (II, 16),

and allow her to pass herself upon Bertram for Diana; telling them, her chief motive for desiring to have this secret meeting, with her husband was to get a ring from him, which he had said if ever she was in possession of, he would acknowledge her as his wife. (II, 16-17)

In Shakespeare's play, it is Diana, who persuades Bertram to give her the ancestral ring, before Bertram has even called on Helena, who will be in the disguise as Diana to receive him.

In Shakespeare's play, furthermore, Bertram consents to hand over the ancestral ring but to use it as a decoy to obtain Diana's consent, so his sexual appetite can be satisfied that evening:

Bertram. Here, take my ring;
My house, mine honour, yea, my life be thine,
And I'll be bid by thee.
Diana. When midnight comes, knock at my chamber window;
I'll order take my mother shall not hear.
Now will I charge you in the band of truth,
When you have conquer'd my yet maiden bed,

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Remain there but an hour, nor speak to me. (*AWW*, IV. ii. 51-58)

At receiving the ring, Diana orders specifically that Bertram shall not speak to her, when he pays her the promised visit. This special requirement of silence is understandable. If Helena begins to talk, Bertram may recognise her voice. In Lamb's tale, however, such an anxiety is purely unnecessary.

In Mary Lamb's prose tale, it is made clear that Helena has never been voluble, especially not in front of Bertram. Helena's much inferior social status before the nuptial would always require her to remain silent in Bertram's presence, and she is abandoned by him immediately after the imposed wedding ceremony was over. Therefore, the image of 'the despised Helena', which is so fixed in Bertram's prejudiced mind (II, 18), and the charming impression, which she gives him during the 'conversation', in which he takes so much delight (II, 18), are too utterly different from each other to raise any suspicion at all:

Bertram never knew how sensible a lady Helena was, else perhaps he would not have been so regardless of her[...] of her understanding it was impossible he should judge, because she felt such reverence, mixed with her love for him, that she was always silent in his presence; but now that her future fate, and the happy ending of all her love-projects, seemed to depend on her leaving a favourable impression on the mind of Bertram from this night's interview, she exerted all her wit to please him; and the simple graces of her lively conversation and the endearing sweetness of her manners so charmed Bertram, that he vowed she should be his wife. (II, 18)

No sooner had Bertram 'made her a solemn promise to be her husband' (II, 17) than Helena, still in the disguise of Diana, 'begged the ring from off his finger as a token of his regard' (II, 18). Bertram's promise, made to the disguised Helena in the tale, is sincere, so the act of giving away the ancestral ring is to be understood as an equally solemn matter for Bertram. Thus, the 'night's interview' (II, 18) taking place in Lamb's tale paves the way to a happier ending than that of the play.

In the final scene of the play, Bertram is betrothed to Lafeu's daughter, and his

thoughts for Diana are quite laid aside. While being confronted by Diana later, Bertram denies his promise of marriage first and, then, slanders Diana in a desperate attempt to save his own life, calling her 'a common gamester to the camp' (*AWW*, V. iii. 187). When the pregnant Helena appears, the overwhelmed and disgraced Bertram finally acknowledges her as his wife, but there is reluctance in the final acknowledgement, which is addressed to the King, not Helena:

If she, my liege, can make me know clearly,
I' ll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly. (V. iii. 309-10)

However, at the end of Lamb's tale, the second marriage between Bertram and Lafeu's daughter is never proposed. Bertram is truly in love with the supposed Diana, whom he talked with in the 'night's interview' (II, 18.) The memory of her remains vividly in his mind, and Bertram is more than willing to acknowledge Helena as his wife, as long as Helena and the supposed Diana are one and the same:

Bertram replied, "If you can make it plain that you were the lady I talked with that night, I will love you dearly, ever, ever, dearly." (II, 22)

Therefore, Bertram's request is addressed directly to Helena, and much excitement and amazement is implied in his words. The king's authority and interference in this affair are absolutely not required. As for Helena, as concluded by Mary Lamb in 'All's Well That Ends Well', she has much to be thankful for in her education, so-called, 'her father's legacy' (II, 23). It is the manly education, which Helena has received from her dead father, that makes her a fit conversational companion to Bertram as well as promotes her social status from the serving class to the served:

Thus Helena at last found that her father's legacy was indeed sanctified by the luckiest stars in heaven; for she was now the beloved wife of her dear Bertram, the daughter-in-law of her noble mistress, and herself the countess of Rossilion. (II, 23)

Helena, as a positive role model in Mary Lamb's 'All's Well That Ends Well',

is obviously a very different character from Shakespeare's Helena, since the story-line of *All's Well That Ends Well* has been so drastically revised in Lamb's tale. Mary Lamb's Helena is endowed with more delicacy and sweetness in her character than Shakespeare's heroine possesses. This great improvement made in the characterisation of Helena has much to do with the omission of the bed-trick in the tale.

The bed-trick used in Shakespeare's play, has offended the moral sense of many critics. Samuel Johnson, for example, utterly dismissed the whole scheme of substituting one virgin with another, in his 1765 edition of the play:

The story of Bertram and Diana had been told before of Mariana and Angelo, and, to confess the truth, scarcely merited to be heard a second time.¹¹⁸

The unsavoury impression created by the bed-trick, is subsequently attached to the schemer, Helena herself. Moreover, when Helena confronts Bertram in the final scene, with her fulfilment of the impossible tasks, she overlooks the reason that the terms and conditions were made in the first place:

And look you, here's your letter. This it says:
When from my finger you can get this ring
And is by me with child, &c. This is done;
Will you be mine now you are doubly won? (*AWW*, V. iii. 305-08)

Helena has indeed fulfilled both criteria listed in Bertram's letter. However, Bertram never meant to have these two stipulations carried out, but his letter was to effect a separation between them as husband and wife. Without regard for Bertram's actual feelings, Helena is restored to her lawful place as his wife rather uncomfortably, as remonstrated by Charlotte Lennox in *Shakespear* [sic] *Illustrated* (1753):

After having made him [Bertram] endure so much Shame and Affliction, she [Helena] haughtily demands his Affection as a Prize she had lawfully won[...]

¹¹⁸ Samuel Johnson's editorial note, in William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols. (London: Tonson, 1765), III, 399.

Shakespear [sic] she is cruel, artful, and insolent, and ready to make Use of the King' s Authority to force her Husband to do her Justice[.]¹¹⁹

In spite of all these negative traits in Helena' s character, which had provoked so many indignant comments from the eighteenth century critics, the three great Romantic critics, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt, universally praised Helena as a sweet, delicate and lovely Shakespearean heroine.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge actually ranked Helena as Shakespeare' s 'loveliest' character.¹²⁰ Charles Lamb, in his essay on the 'Characters of Dramatic Writers,

Contemporary with Shakspeare [sic]' , also eulogised Helena:

Helena in Shakspeare [sic] is a young woman seeking a man in marriage. The ordinary rules of courtship are reversed, the habitual feelings are crossed. Yet with such exquisite address this dangerous subject is handled, that Helena' s forwardness loses her no honour; delicacy dispenses with its laws in her favour, and nature, in her single case, seems content to suffer a sweet violation.¹²¹

In the *Characters of Shakespear' s* [sic] *Plays*, William Hazlitt even declared that, in courting her husband 'both as a virgin and a wife' , 'the most scrupulous nicety of female modesty is not once violated' ,¹²² and the character of Helena 'is one of great sweetness and delicacy' .¹²³ One wonders how did the three Romantic critics consider the bed-trick in Shakespeare' s play? or did they ever look at the incident from Bertram' s point of view? Samuel Taylor Coleridge certainly did in 1833 and was embarrassed by it.

¹¹⁹ Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespear Illustrated: Or the Novels and Histories, On Which the Plays of Shakespear Are Founded*, 3 vols. (London: Millar, 1753-4), I, 192.

¹²⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge' s Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), I, 113.

¹²¹ Charles Lamb, 'Characters of Dramatic Writers, Contemporary with Shakspeare' , in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 40-56 (p. 53).

¹²² William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear' s Plays* (London: Hunter, 1817), p. 287.

In 'Table-talk', Samuel Taylor Coleridge begins a vigorous defence against 'the solemn abuse which the critics have poured upon Bertram'.¹²⁴ When his argument reaches the point, where Bertram is forced to marry Helena, Coleridge has to confess:

her character is not very delicate, and it required all Shakespeare's consummate skill to interest us for her [Helena.]¹²⁵

As could be deduced from Coleridge's second piece of criticism, Helena's status as Shakespeare's 'loveliest'¹²⁶ heroine is rather problematic. What had outraged the critics in the Age of Reason, evidently could still prove to be unacceptable, judged by the moral standards of a Romantic critic. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out what actually gave the three Romantics the impression that Helena is so much imbued with delicacy, sweetness and loveliness. The answer lies in William Hazlitt's

Characters of Shakespear's [sic] Plays:

The interest excited by this beautiful picture of a fond and innocent heart is kept up afterwards by her resolution to follow him to France, the success of her experiment in restoring the king's health, her demanding Bertram in marriage as a recompense, his leaving her in disdain, her interview with him afterwards disguised as Diana, a young lady whom he importunes with his secret addresses, and their final reconciliation when the consequences of her stratagem and the proofs of her love are fully made known.¹²⁷

In Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena does not arrange any interview with Bertram, either as herself or as Diana. It is in Mary Lamb's prose tale, where Helena talks to Bertram in a night's 'interview' (II, 18). It is very likely that

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Table-talk (July 1, 1833)', *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), I, 356-57 (p. 356).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹²⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. by Thomas Middleton Raysor, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1930), I, 113.

¹²⁷ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (London: Hunter, 1817), pp. 288-89.

William Hazlitt was confused about the two Helenas, one in Shakespeare's play and the other in Lamb's tale, when he wrote the criticism on the character of Shakespeare's Helena. While discussing the impact of the bed-trick in Shakespeare's play, Hazlitt was actually thinking of the 'night's interview' in Lamb's tale (II, 18), in which Helena proves her true worth, simply by turning herself into a charming conversational companion to Bertram. In this manner, Bertram is informed of the good qualities of Helena, of which he was not aware before the interview. There can be no violation of any code of morality or modesty in such a self-introduction of Helena in Lamb's tale.

Mary Lamb probably never intended to interfere with the development of Romantic criticism of Shakespeare's dramatic works. She consented to write the prose tales, mainly for the '60 guineas' that William Godwin had promised to pay her.¹²⁸ However, both the charms and the literary merits in her comic tales began to attract a wide readership and exercise their extraordinary influence on their readers, both young and old, from the time when *Tales from Shakespear* was first published in 1806.

¹²⁸ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 201; May 10, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (Lodnon: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 225-226 (p. 225).

CHAPTER V.

'Tom' s Approbation'

Feminism has been established in recent years as a recognised and respected trend in literary criticism. As a result, a vigorous search for prominent and hidden women-writers in history has also been conducted over the years, and it was simply impossible that Mary Lamb would be overlooked during this search. Mary Lamb's share in the *Tales from Shakespear*, furthermore, was singled out by two critics, Jean I. Marsden and Susan J. Wolfson, as an example of how an educated woman would convey her ideals of femininity through writing books for girls.

Jean I. Marsden's article, 'Shakespeare for Girls',¹ was printed in the seventeenth volume of *Children's Literature. An International Journal*.² Susan J. Wolfson's 'Explaining to Her Sisters'³ was published as one of the collected essays in *Women's Re-vision of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*. The book was edited by Marianne Novy. Since Marsden's journal article and Wolfson's critical essay were published respectively, in 1989 and 1990, Mary Lamb's prose tales have been unequivocally established as one of the choicest literary works by a woman-writer, who wrote deliberately and exclusively for adolescent girls and young women. This view, as I will argue in the chapter, is but Marsden's and Wolfson's own prejudices.

What inspired Jean I. Marsden to write 'Shakespeare for Girls' was another

¹ Title abbreviated from 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespeare*' .

² Title abbreviated from *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*.

journal article, 'Impeccable Governess',⁴ which was written by Mitzi Myers and printed in the fourteenth volume of *Children's Literature. An International Journal*.⁵ Having read 'Impeccable Governess', Marsden declared that 'a strong resemblance to the moral tradition of children's literature outlined and discussed by Mitzi Myers in her article on Mary Wollstonecraft' was also found in 'the [Lamb's] tales.'⁶ Thus, Mitzi Myers's article evoked a strong feeling in Marsden, that both Charles and Mary Lamb, in re-telling the stories from Shakespeare's plays, must have shaped their prose tales on the principles already laid out by 'such educators as Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft.'⁷

Jean I. Marsden cites, first of all, the middle part of the 'Preface' to Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*, which, as presumed by Marsden, was written 'solely' by Mary Lamb,⁸ to support her own theory that Mary Lamb 'deliberately directed this project toward a female audience':⁹

I have wished to make these Tales easy reading for very young children[...] For young ladies too it has been my intention chiefly to write, because boys are generally permitted the use of their fathers' libraries at a much earlier age than girls are, they frequently having the best scenes of Shakespear [*sic*] by heart, before their sisters are permitted to look into this manly book; and therefore,

³ Title abbreviated from 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*' .

⁴ Title abbreviated from 'Impeccable Governess, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books' .

⁵ See: Mitzi Myers, 'Impeccable Governess, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books' , *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 14 (1986), 31-59.

⁶ Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespear*' , *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 17 (1989), 47-63 (p. 61, 4 n.)

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 47.

instead of recommending these Tales to the perusal of young gentlemen who can read them so much better in the originals, I must rather beg their kind assistance in explaining to their sisters such parts as are hardest for them to understand; and when they have helped them to get over the difficulties, then perhaps they will read to them (carefully selecting what is proper for a young sister's ears) some passage which has pleased them in one of these stories, in the very words of the scene from which it is taken; and I trust they will find that the beautiful extracts, the select passages, they may chuse [*sic*] to give their sisters in this way, will be much better relished and understood from their having some notion of the general story from one of these imperfect abridgements:--¹⁰

To reinforce her argument, Marsden also quotes the 'Advertisement to the Second Edition' of Lambs' tales (see also Chapter IV):

The Proprietors of this work willingly pay obedience to the voice of the public. It has been the general sentiment, that the style in which these Tales are written, is not so precisely adapted for the amusement of mere children, as for an acceptable and improving present to young ladies advancing to the state of womanhood.¹¹

Thirdly, the way in which 'the Lambs divided up Shakespeare's plays', that Mary wrote the fourteen comic tales and Charles, the six tragic tales (for the genuine reasons for such a division, see Chapter III), Marsden asserts, must have followed 'strict gender lines', for 'the tragedies' were 'presumably a more masculine subject.'¹² However, Marsden immediately gives a warning in 'Shakespeare for Girls', that such a division is merely superficial and rather deceptive. Totally disregarding Charles Lamb's explicit denial that he ever wrote stories for children of one particular gender (see also Chapter I), or had anything to do with the middle part

¹⁰ [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, vi-viii.

¹¹ [William Godwin], 'Advertisement to the Second Edition', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear, Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Godwin, 1809), I, iii.

¹² Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespear*', *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 17 (1989), 47-63 (p. 50).

of the 'Preface',¹³ Marsden claims to have discovered 'the same patterns of feminization as Mary's' in Charles's tragic tales and affirms that Charles Lamb had intentionally echoed 'Hannah More's strictures [*Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*] for women or girls'¹⁴ in his tales:

the [Shakespeare's dramatic] works selected represent the private sphere and focus on [...] family issues (as in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*). Only Charles's versions of *Macbeth* and *Timon of Athens* [...] portray a more public, "masculine" realm, and *Macbeth* is, of course, also a play about marital influence.¹⁵

In this case, Marsden was merely ignorant of the fact that Charles Lamb had never read Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, which, she felt so sure, had a strong influence on Charles's writings.

In a letter written sometimes around mid-April 1800, Charles Lamb teasingly complains to Samuel Taylor Coleridge about how he and Mary became victims of Coleridge's reputation as a celebrated Romantic poet. One Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger (1778-1827), knowing that the Lambs were close friends of Coleridge, called on them one day, and insisted upon having the brother and sister to 'drink tea with her next night'.¹⁶ Both Charles and Mary Lamb, merely out of politeness, went to Miss Benger's tea party as promised, only to be embarrassed on this occasion. Their hostess would talk of nothing but 'Miss More's book on education', which is the

¹³ See: Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57.

¹⁴ Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespeare*', *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 17 (1989), 47-63 (p. 51).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 52.

¹⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 66; April 16 or 17, 1800), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 198-201 (p. 198).

very *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), and 'which', as frankly admitted by Charles Lamb to Coleridge, 'I had never read'.¹⁷

In 1809, Charles Lamb eventually read one of Hannah More's books. It was not *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* but *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, which was published and reached twelve editions in 1809. Having read Hannah More's book, Charles Lamb thought it utterly detestable, as he informs Coleridge in another letter, dated June 7, 1809:

Have you read Cælebs [sic]? which has reach' d 8 Editions in so many weeks, yet literally it is one of the very poorest sort of common novels with the drawback of dull religion in it[...] I borrow' d this Cælebs [sic] in search of a Wife of a very careful neat Lady, & return' d it with this staff written in the beginning

If ever I marry a Wife
I' ll marry a Landlord' s Daughter,
For then I may sit in the Bar,
And drink cold Brandy & Water!--¹⁸

Jean I. Marsden, moreover, has evidently noticed that some of Lamb's tales do not fit into the framework of her argument, that the two entire volumes of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* were deliberately designed for nineteenth century girls only. Instead of paying more attention to these two tales outside of her framework, Marsden contented herself to acknowledge merely, 'with the exception of "Macbeth" and "Timon of Athens"', every tale details and highlights the experiences of women'.¹⁹ Instead of dwelling upon facts, Marsden conjures up an imaginery scenario of the

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 199.

¹⁸ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 236; June 7, 1809), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1809-1817), 12-14 (p. 14).

¹⁹ Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from shakespeare*', *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 17 (1989), 47-63 (p. 55).

working process of the Lambs in her journal article:

They [Charles and Mary Lamb] may have worked initially on separate sheets, but they then passed these sheets across a shared table. As a result it is difficult (if not impossible) to distinguish precisely where Mary's work stops and Charles's begins[...] I would argue that Mary was the informing presence[.]²⁰

Thus, Marsden is satisfied and believes that her readers are also convinced, why there are 'no comments [...] concerning the male role in marriage' ever made in Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*,²¹ and the '*Tales* lack almost any reference to the specifically masculine traits one would expect, had the work been directed at both boys and girls'.²² Finally, Marsden draws her conclusion in these words:

Mary Lamb reached her goal of giving girls the access to Shakespeare that they might otherwise never have had. But the "Shakespeare" they were to read was not the literature their brothers knew. Rather, it represented the nineteenth-century ideal of what young ladies should learn from England's greatest poet[...] *Tales from Shakespeare* [...] are merely the most prominent example of a gender-based division (and revision) of literature.²³

Susan J. Wolfson probably knew nothing about Marsden's research on the same subject, for she shows no awareness of Marsden's article in her essay, 'Explaining to Her Sisters', which came out one year later than Marsden's journal article, 'Shakespeare for Girls'. If Wolfson was indebted to any earlier publications for her hypothesis, that Mary Lamb's fourteen comic tales were 'a practical response to recent feminist calls, such as Mary Wollstonecraft's'²⁴, it would be Katharine Anthony's *The Lambs: A Story of Pre-Victorian England*, one of the biographies of

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 50-51.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 56.

²² *Ibid*, p. 57.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 60.

²⁴ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (16).

Charles and Mary Lamb that Wolfson definitely consulted during her own research.²⁵

The Lambs: A Study of Pre-Victorian England was first published in New York in 1945. In 1948, it was also made available in London by the publishing firm, Hammond, Hammond & Co. Ltd. Katharine Anthony has made some daring but utterly unfounded conjectures in this biography of the Lambs, regarding whether certain events ever took place in the lives of Charles and Mary Lamb. One of these conjectures is Mary Lamb's assumed acquaintance with Mary Wollstonecraft's

Vindication of the Rights of Woman:

It is not to be supposed that Mary Lamb missed the most exciting book of the year 1792, the year that initiated her hardest struggle. In *A [sic] Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft had set forth the blasting thesis that women should be equally educated with men[...] To Mary Lamb the teachings of Mary Wollstonecraft were a familiar current thought; the thesis of *Vindication* was one to which she had already in her own way given some attention.²⁶

Absolutely no evidence whatsoever exists to prove that Mary Lamb read *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. As a matter of fact, Katharine Anthony's assumption indicates one good reason why Mary Lamb probably did not read Wollstonecraft's book in that particular year. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* came out in 1792, 'the year that initiated her [Mary Lamb's] hardest struggle'.²⁷ In that year, the benefactor of the Lamb family, Samuel Salt, died, and John Junior abandoned the impoverished family, entirely, to the care of Mary (for details, see Chapter II.) Therefore, how was Mary Lamb supposed to find the time and spare the energy to read Wollstonecraft's book during that critical period of her life? Besides, Wollstonecraft's book is full of multi-syllabic words,

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 36 (13 n.)

²⁶ Katharine Anthony, *The Lambs: A Study of Pre-Victorian England* (London: Hammond, 1948), p. 33.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

complicated and long sentences, and numerous literary allusions to Shakespeare, Milton, Rousseau, Adam Smith, etc.,²⁸ which were far beyond Mary Lamb's 'slender erudition'²⁹, just enough to cope with the literacy level of eighteenth century chapbooks. (Mary Lamb's literacy education is discussed in Chapter IV.) Even if Mary Lamb had managed to obtain a copy of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, her reading experience of the book would most likely prove to be unsatisfactory, as expressed in the words of Margaret Green, the Young Mahometan:

I could understand very little that I read [...] and [...] the length of the lines made my eyes ache.³⁰

Nevertheless, in 1990, Susan J. Wolfson modified Katharine Anthony's theory and proffered another, much more probable proposition.

In 'Explaining to Her Sisters', Susan J. Wolfson postponed the date for Mary Lamb to make the first encounter with Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist ideas:

[Mary] Lamb's acquaintance with William Godwin might have given her access to a more personal account of Wollstonecraft, both as a political theorist and as a theorist of children's, especially daughter's, education.³¹

Wolfson's new proposition is not only highly probable, but also opens up some other

²⁸ The first edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the rights of Woman: With Strictures of Political and Moral Subjects* was published by J. Johnson. The British Library has preserved a copy of the first volume of the second edition, also published in 1792 (C.133.e.7).

²⁹ Charles Lamb, 'Captain Starkey', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 299-302 (pp. 299-300).

³⁰ Mary Lamb, 'Margaret Green' or 'The Young Mahometan', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 305-11 (p. 308).

³¹ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-vision of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*,

possibilities worth serious consideration.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), the first wife of William Godwin and the famous writer of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, was also the author of *Thoughts on Education of Daughters* (1787). Wollstonecraft was regarded, by her husband, as 'the best qualified [person] in the world' to educate her two 'poor children', Fanny (Imlay Wollstonecraft) and Mary (Wollstonecraft Godwin, later, Shelley).³²

Unfortunately, Wollstonecraft had died in 1797 in giving birth to her second child, Mary (1797-1851); since then, Godwin committed himself to bring up Wollstonecraft's two daughters, according to their mother's pedagogic theories and methods.

Constantly would Godwin consult Wollstonecraft's books for inspiration, and *Thoughts on Education of Daughters* was one of them. Kegan Paul, one of Godwin's biographers, has dismissed *Thoughts on Education of Daughters* as 'a small, and in no way remarkable pamphlet';³³ yet, no matter how insignificant this pamphlet seems to be, it probably initiated a remarkable project, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*.

In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, Mary Wollstonecraft devoted one chapter to the discussion of the theatre as a provider of 'amusements' for young ladies.³⁴ In this chapter, Wollstonecraft laments how Shakespeare's tragedies were spoiled by the melodramatic acting style, which was one of the common practices in

ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (35, 3 n.)

³² William Godwin's letter to Mrs. Cotton (October 24, 1797), in C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: King, 1876), I, 281.

³³ C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: King, 1876), I, 179.

³⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, 'Thoughts on the Education of Daughters', in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Janet Todd & Marilyn Butler, 7 vols. (London: Pickering, 1989), IV, 3-49 (p. 47).

the eighteenth century theatre. The tragedies were so presented on stage that they could never 'please a person of discernment'³⁵:

The almost imperceptible progress of the passions, which Shakespeare has so finely delineated, are not sufficiently observed, though the start of the actor is applauded.³⁶

Even so, as Wollstonecraft almost immediately continues to remark, Shakespeare's tragedies contain pedagogical value, which is not to be slighted or discarded. The only thing is that some proper guidance is required for young ladies:

Young persons, who are happily situated, do well to enter into fictitious distress and if they have any judicious person to direct their judgment, it may be improved while their hearts are melted.³⁷

It is possible that Wollstonecraft's opinions on the theatre in general and on Shakespeare's tragedies in particular, gave Godwin the idea to employ Mary Lamb as the 'judicious person',³⁸ revising twenty of Shakespeare's plays into moral tales for 'Young persons'³⁹ in 1806 (see also Chapter III.) Hence, Lambs' tales, as two volumes of collected stories, were granted the full title of *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. If it were so indeed, when Godwin suggested the project to Mary Lamb, he meant to adapt the plays for young ladies, such as Wollstonecraft's two young daughters. The 'young ladies' mentioned in both the middle part of 'Preface'⁴⁰ and the 'Advertisement to the Second Edition'⁴¹ of *Tales*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ See: [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, vi.

⁴¹ See: [William Godwin], 'Advertisement to the Second Edition', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear, Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, second edition (London: Godwin, 1809), I,

from *Shakespear*, would refer to girls who are aged, approximately, from nine to twelve, for Fanny (1794-1816) was twelve years old and young Mary was nine in 1806.

Thoughts on Education of Daughters, nevertheless, is not the book of Mary Wollstonecraft on 'children's, especially daughters', education',⁴² which Susan J. Wolfson had in mind in 1990. Wolfson chose to analyse Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* instead, to exemplify how Wollstonecraft meant to use 'quotations of or allusions to Shakespeare' to express her 'striking divisions of sympathy and exasperation' on the subject of girls' or women's education.⁴³ One of the instances cited by Wolfson in the essay, is an allusion to Hamlet's bitter denunciation of Ophelia and the female sex (*HAM*, III. i. 144-48):

The education of women has of late been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex[...] It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves - the only way women can rise in the world - by marriage[...] - they dress, they paint, and nickname God's creatures. Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio!⁴⁴

As observed by Wolfson, the way in which Wollstonecraft adopts the language of male characters in Shakespeare's tragedies is common throughout *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and the voices of male misogyny are applied by Wollstonecraft to

iii.

⁴² Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', *Women's Revision of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (35).

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Mariam Brody, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 83.

underline the problems 'rather than as resources for a solution'.⁴⁵ More importantly, perhaps, as further commented by Wolfson, Lamb's fourteen prose adaptations of Shakespeare's comedies and romances 'are not so overtly antagonistic' as Wollstonecraft's.⁴⁶

Mary Lamb, as already discussed in the previous chapters, intended to use her prose tales to guide her young readers and show them the path to virtue and improvement. Though the tales are didactic in nature, the narrator's voice is persuasive yet humorous (for details, see Chapters III & IV.)

In 'Explaining to Her Sisters', Susan J. Wolfson regards this milder attitude of Mary Lamb as a sign, signifying that Lamb actually possessed less radical feminist ideas than Wollstonecraft's. Wolfson strongly argues that Mary Lamb's less revolutionary attitude has produced a kind of 'ambivalence' in her writings, which 'produces narratives that alternatively resist and reinscribe conventionality':⁴⁷

Reading Shakespeare as a woman and converting his texts into tales for younger women, Lamb is sensitive to the codes of gender, but at the same time she is cautious about identifying an ideological problem, either for herself or for her readers.⁴⁸

The middle part of the 'Preface' to *Tales from Shakespear*, once again, unquestionably attributed to Mary Lamb, is cited by Wolfson to support this argument.

The dramatic works of Shakespeare are referred to, in the middle part of

⁴⁵ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (18).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

'Preface', as the 'manly book',⁴⁹ which is kept in the 'fathers' libraries'⁵⁰ and away from the reach of 'young ladies'.⁵¹ The statement, according to the interpretation of Susan J. Wolfson, 'implies' that certain features in Shakespeare's plays were also deemed to be unsuitable for young ladies by Mary Lamb; therefore, she actually agreed with the conventional idea that young ladies should be barred from 'the "fathers' libraries"'.⁵² To strengthen this point of her argument, the frontispiece included in the first volume of the first edition of *Tales from Shakespear*, is attached with some sort of 'iconic' importance by Wolfson.⁵³

Susan J. Wolfson asserts that Miranda, 'of course [...] is a young lady with no access to her father's library',⁵⁴ and the posture of Prospero, as depicted in the frontispiece, 'assumes the quality of an emblem', a father shielding his daughter from the harm, which his library might have caused her:⁵⁵

Prospero, in the posture of an Old Testament patriarch, has his left arm raising a staff and his right extended across Miranda, his whole body in a posture that bars her from something which, one senses, he alone is empowered to address.⁵⁶

The fact that all the plates, including the frontispiece, were selected by Mary Jane Godwin, the second wife of William Godwin,⁵⁷ from Wolfson's point of view,

⁴⁹ [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons* (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, vi.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (18-19).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 36 (12 n.)

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ See: Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and

enhances the whole point. Wolfson firmly believes that 'this project' of re-telling the twenty plays of Shakespeare as children's stories 'originated in the mind of another woman, Mary Jane Godwin',⁵⁸ because

it was she, as everyone knew, who got the Godwins into the business of publishing juvenile literature and developed their list. The business that opened in 1806 bore her name: "M. J. Godwin & Co., at The Children's Library."⁵⁹

Since the market for girls' books was more profitable during the nineteenth century, for boys were granted more freedom to choose their own reading matter and, as a publisher, Mary Jane Godwin would certainly want to sell as many copies of the book as possible, Mary Lamb, says Wolfson, would be required to anticipate this 'female encouragement actualized by M. J. Godwin.'⁶⁰ However, this elaborate argument of Wolfson's was based on nothing more than her own misconceptions of certain information, provided by one of the research resources, i.e. E. V. Lucas's editorial notes in the third volume of *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*.⁶¹

To begin with, the Godwins set up the publishing firm, 'The Juvenile Library' not 'The Children's Library',⁶² in 1805 not '1806'.⁶³ The firm was first registered

Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (p. 256).

⁵⁸ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (34).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Compare: Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', *Women's Re-Vision of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (18-19, 28-29, 34 & 35 (1n.), 36 (12 n.)), and E. V. Lucas's editorial notes, in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 474-78.

⁶² Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', *Women's Re-*

under the name of a hired manager, Thomas Hodgkins, not 'M. J. Godwin' ⁶⁴ (for details, see also Chapter III.) Hodgkins nearly stole the ownership of the publishing firm from the Godwins in 1807, but William Godwin detected his dishonest scheme in time and sacked him. On May 18, 1807, Godwin transferred the Juvenile Library from Hanway Street to a larger premises at 41 Skinner Street and, then, had the firm re-registered in his wife's name. Both the husband and wife were actively involved in the family business (see also Chapter III), but Godwin was the one, who had the direct contact with the Lambs about publishing their *Tales from Shakespear*, as suggested in one of Charles Lamb's letters to William Wordsworth.

In the letter dated January 29, 1807, Charles Lamb complains to William Wordsworth about William Godwin's several arrangements for the presentation and the publication of *Tales from Shakespear*:

You will forgive the plates, when I tell you that they were left to the direction of Godwin, who left the choice of subjects to the **bad baby**[...]--. suffice it, to save our taste & damn our folly, that we [Mary and Charles Lamb] left it all to a friend W[illiam] G[odwin]--who in the first place cheated me into putting a name to them, which I did not mean, but do not repent, & then wrote a **puff** about their *simplicity* &c. to go with the advertisement[,] as in my name!⁶⁵

It is in this same letter, that Charles Lamb informs Wordsworth:

<God bless me>, I had almost forgot, My [*sic*] part of the Preface begins in the

Vision of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (34).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (p. 256).

⁶⁶ The actual word printed in the 'Preface' is 'fortunately', not 'happily'. See: Charles Lamb, 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, viii.

middle of a sentence, in [the] last but one page after a colon thus

:--*which if they be happily*⁶⁶ *so done &c.*

the former part hath a more **feminine** turn and does hold me up something as an instructor to young Ladies: but upon my modesty's honour I wrote it not--⁶⁷

As can be deduced from Charles Lamb's declaration, he certainly did not write the middle part of 'Preface'. Neither did he name the author of 'the former part' of 'Preface'.⁶⁸ Both Jean I. Marsden and Susan J. Wolfson took it for granted that Mary Lamb was responsible for 'the former part [of the Preface, which] hath a more **feminine** turn',⁶⁹ but it is neither an established fact nor a universally recognised case.

Peter H. Marshall, one of William Godwin's biographers, for example, being unable to identify any other writings of Godwin as the '**puff** about [the tales'] simplicity',⁷⁰ mentioned in Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth, actually identified the first two-thirds of the 'Preface', which describes the tales as 'imperfect abridgements' of Shakespeare's plays,⁷¹ to be Godwin's puff.⁷² I, however, have discovered Godwin's mysterious puff in the new edition of *The History of England*. A brief passage printed along with a piece of advertisement and attached to the end of the book, thus announces the publication of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*:

In these Tales the words of Shakespear [*sic*] are employed as frequently as

⁶⁷ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (pp. 256-57).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, viii.

⁷² See: Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), p. 275.

possible. They are related with a simplicity adapted to the apprehension of the untutored mind, which may thus be made familiar with the various and admirable conceptions of Shakespear [*sic*], several years before it would be practicable to read them with profit as they stand in his works.⁷³

Therefore, I propose Mary Lamb to be the author of the first two-thirds of 'Preface' to the *Tales from Shakespear*. The middle part of the 'Preface', nonetheless, does not convey the true intents of Mary Lamb as one of the authors of the tales.

Mary Lamb, as already discussed in the previous chapter, often expressed her admiration for intelligent women, in particular, those who enjoyed intellectual pursuits without restraint. Far from agreeing with the conventional idea that girls should be barred from their fathers' libraries, Mary Lamb, in fact, appealed to their parents to give young girls an education similiar to that enjoyed by boys (for details, see Chapter IV.) There was but one condition which must be observed. As described in 'The Young Mahometan', girls urgently required some proper supervision for their reading. As soon as suitable guidance is provided, even the 'improper'⁷⁴ book, *Mahometism Explained*, turns out to be not so improper after all:

this good lady [...] explained to me very seriously the error into which I had fallen. I found that so far from "Mahometism Explained" being a book concealed only in this library, it was well known to every person of the least information. [...]if the leaves of my favourite book had not been torn out, I should have read that the author of it did not mean to give the fabulous stories here related as true[...] By the good offices of the physician and his lady, I was carried home at the end of the month, perfectly cured of the error into which I had fallen, and very much ashamed of having believed so many absurdities.⁷⁵

What Mary Lamb truly intended to do with her comic tales was also to present them

⁷³ The publisher's advertisement, in Edward Boldwin (pseud.), *The History of England. For the Use of School of Young Persons*, new edition (London: Hodgkins, 1807), p. iv (advertisement.)

⁷⁴ Mary Lamb, 'The Young Mahometan', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), III (Books for Children), 305-11 (p. 308).

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 310.

as a kind of guidance, as underlined in the first sentence of the 'Preface' :

The following tales are meant to be submitted to the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespear[.]⁷⁶

The whole collection of *Tales from Shakespear* was never meant to be either a substitute or an alternative to Shakespeare's plays. As far as Mary Lamb was concerned, neither was it supposed to be gender-based literature, exclusively written for young ladies.

On December 23, 1806, Mary Lamb specified the identity of one of her intended readers, for whom she wrote the fourteen comic tales. As soon as *Tales from Shakespear* had been printed and published, Lamb eagerly informed Mrs. Clarkson:

I am glad to hear of my friend Tom's improvement, never mind his learning that will come in due time. Indeed I have reasons for wishing him a little backward in that respect, for I have a little book I mean to send him & the printer has been so long bringing it out I began to fear Tom would attain so much knowledge as to outgrow the use there of, & Tom[']s approbation of my first production, was one of the things I built upon.--⁷⁷

Both the 'little book' and 'my first production', mentioned in Lamb's letter, are *Tales from Shakespear*.⁷⁸ As for Tom Clarkson (1797-1837), he was the only child of Mrs. Catherine (Buck) Clarkson, a childhood friend of Henry Crabb Robinson. In 1802, the Clarksons lived in the Lake District near the Wordsworths, and the Lambs stayed with the family during their visit to the surrounding areas in that year. Therefore, Mary Lamb must have known Tom Clarkson, since he was a little boy. In 1806, however, Tom would have been nine years old and no longer qualified to be called a very young child, either by our modern standard of age-divisions for

⁷⁶ [Mary Lamb], 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, iii.

⁷⁷ Mary Lamb's letter to Mrs. Clarkson (Letter 211; December 23, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 252-54 (p. 254).

children' s literature or by the nineteenth century standard.⁷⁹ In spite of 'being a little tall, a little awkward, and not over passionately addicted to literature',⁸⁰ Tom Clarkson was Mary Lamb' s firm friend. After the Clarksons moved away to Bury St. Edmunds, the Lambs visited them again and stayed with the family in 1807. During this visit, Tom Clarkson became Mary Lamb' s 'partner in the robbery' of a 'cherry tree.'⁸¹

In this same letter to Mrs. Clarkson, dated December 23, 1806, furthermore, Mary Lamb evidently expressed some anxiety about the delayed publication of *Tales from Shakespear*: 'the printer has been so long bringing it out I began to fear Tom would attain so much knowledge as to outgrow the use there of'.⁸² Indeed, the book came out about six months later than Lamb had expected. According to another of Lamb' s letters to Sarah Stoddart, which was sent on June 2, 1806, the 'Tales' were supposed to be 'published [as] separate storybooks', and 'one' of them was long due in June.⁸³ (The complicated publishing history of Lambs' tales is discussed in

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ See: Sarah Trimmer' s 'Introduction', in *The Guardian of Education*, ed. by Sarah Trimmer, 5 vols. (London: Hatchard, 1802-1806), I (1802), 63-66.

⁸⁰ Mary Lamb' s letter to Mrs. Clarkson (Letter 187; December 25, 1805), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 193-94 (p. 193.)

⁸¹ Mary Lamb' s letter to Mrs. Clarkson (Letter 229; December 10, 1808), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 289-90 (p. 290).

⁸² Mary Lamb' s letter to Mrs. Clarkson (Letter 211; December 23, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 252-54 (p. 254).

⁸³ Mary Lamb' s letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 202; May 30-June 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 227-30 (p. 228).

both Chapters III & VI.) What Mary Lamb experienced during the last six months of 1806 is, by no means, an unfamiliar phenomenon in the life of a professional writer. Therefore, it is possible that, as any other desperate writer would do under the circumstances, Mary Lamb merely wrote the 'Preface' at the request of the Godwins, and for the sake of settling the matter with her publishers, regarding the publication of *Tales from Shakespear*. Because of the publishers' preference to market the tales as a girls' manual, Mary Lamb might have written the middle part of 'Preface', simply to satisfy the Godwins. Therefore, the middle part of 'Preface' was not only inconsistent with the final part written by Charles Lamb, but was also at odds with the first one-third of the 'Preface', probably also written by Mary Lamb herself.

Jean I. Marsden's journal article, 'Shakespeare for Girls', and Susan J. Wolfson's critical essay, 'Explaining to Her Sisters', have successfully drawn much scholarly attention towards Mary Lamb's comic tales during the past ten years. They challenged the long neglect of male critics, such as Joseph E. Riehl and Harvey Darton, those who consistently and constantly focused on Charles's tragic tales and slighted Mary's larger proportion of and her greater contribution to *Tales from Shakespear*. (The opinions of Riehl and Darton on Lambs' tales are discussed in Chapters I & II.) Both Marsden's and Wolfson's criticisms have made the modern academic world aware of the dilemmas that Mary Lamb, as a woman-writer, confronted in a patriarchal, nineteenth century society, and the skills that she employed to address gender issues to young ladies without being offensive to the existing patriarchal norms:

[Mary Lamb's] Her tales offer a valuable perspective on the way one intelligent, well-read woman, conscious of the "disadvantages her 'sisterhood' laboured under from an education differing from a manly one," struggled with the

ambiguous task of explaining to her sisters those issues of women's identity, relationships, social engagement, and sexuality with which Shakespeare's plays had agitated and challenged her own attention.⁸⁴

However, Mary Lamb and her tales suffer from a great deal of misunderstanding and misinterpretation for this rising status as a prominent woman-writer.

The more recent studies and publications on Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* have failed to break free from the limitations of either 'Shakespeare for Girls' or 'Explaining to Her Sisters', because Jean I. Marsden and Susan J. Wolfson so narrow-mindedly fixed the inflexible label on Mary Lamb's fourteen tales as girls' stories. Not even the two brief articles written by such outstanding scholars as Julia Briggs and Ann Thompson are exceptions. In both Julia Briggs' 'Introduction' to the new Everyman's Library edition of *Tales from Shakespeare*, first published in 1993 (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1993/1) and the chapter on Mary Lamb in Ann Thompson's newly edited anthology, *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660-1900* (1997),⁸⁵ Mary Lamb's prose tales retold from Shakespeare's comedies and romances, in particular, are treated as moral stories, written for the sole purpose of teaching womanly virtues to young ladies. Consequently, Mary Lamb has been long denied the remarkable insight that she always had.

Mary Lamb knew first-hand how much men could do to improve the living and educational standards of her contemporary women. She was first rescued by her younger brother, Charles, from the dreadful fate of a pauper lunatic. With occasional help from Charles, she successfully transformed herself into a learned lady and a fit

⁸⁴ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (34-35).

⁸⁵ See: Ann Thompson & Sasha Roberts (eds.), *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660 - 1900. An Anthology of Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 49-51.

conversational companion for any intellectual men of her time. Apart from the numerous testimonies scattered within Charles Lamb's correspondence and literary works, all the male members of the Lamb circle could testify to Mary's wit and wisdom.

Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867), for example, remembered Mary Lamb 'as one of the most amiable and admirable women'.⁸⁶ In his diary, Robinson often recorded his longing to be 'alone' with 'Miss Lamb', for only 'With her I can unbosom myself cordially.'⁸⁷ Thomas Allsop (1795-1880) also recalled of 'Miss Lamb's addressing me in a tone which acted at once as a solace and support, and after as a stimulus, to which I owe more extended arguments of all others.'⁸⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge considered 'Mary Lamb' so 'dear to my heart', 'as it were, *my heart*'.⁸⁹ However, it is William Hazlitt's testimony, which, as judged by Thomas Noon Talfourd, the first biographer of Charles Lamb, really sums up the fittest praise denoted to Mary Lamb:

Hazlitt used to say, that he never met with a woman who could reason, and had met with only one thoroughly reasonable--the sole exception being Mary Lamb.⁹⁰

Unlike Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who felt threatened by a learned lady like Ninon de l'Enclos, those men in the Lamb circle appreciated Mary Lamb's wit and wisdom

⁸⁶ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (January 12, 1835), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), II, 456.

⁸⁷ For example, see Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (January 10, 1824), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), I, 301.

⁸⁸ Thomas Allsop's comment is recorded in Anne Gilchrist, *Mary Lamb*, ed. by John H. Ingram, Eminent Women Series (London: Allen, 1883), p. 223.

⁸⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge's MS, printed in Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Memoirs of Charles Lamb*, ed. by Percy Fitzgerald (London: Gibbings, 1892), p. 213.

⁹⁰ William Hazlitt's comment is recorded in Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Memoirs of Charles Lamb*, ed. by

and, subsequently, all reaped benefits from their sincere appreciation of Mary Lamb as the learned lady (see also Chapter IV.) In particular, William Hazlitt (1778-1830) 'began to stammer out' his 'passionate thoughts' before her, and found himself 'thoroughly understood and dexterously cheered by Miss Lamb, whose nice discernment of his efforts in conversation were dwelt upon by him with affectionate gratitude, even when most out of humour with the world.'⁹¹ When William Hazlitt made his first acquaintance with Mary Lamb in 1804, he was an artist and a portrait painter. In 1806, when the Lambs were working on *Tales from Shakespear*, Hazlitt entrusted Mary to read his 'Manuscript'⁹², and the making of William Hazlitt, the critic and the essayist, was underway.

Mary Lamb died in 1847. Though never married and constantly threatened by her periodic attacks of insanity, she had a happy life as a spinster after the matricide. Throughout that shared happy life with her younger brother, Mary was always conscious of and grateful for the kindness and the appreciation rendered by her bachelor brother, Charles, and their mutual friends in the Lamb circle. Mary also knew that she was exceptionally fortunate in that respect. One of her close friends, Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855), who was also a spinster and a learned lady, was much less fortunate than herself. Dorothy was not so much appreciated as Mary was, not even by the Wordsworth family. Mary Lamb once spoke out for Dorothy

Percy Fitzgerald (London: Gibbings, 1892), pp. 223-24.

⁹¹ Thomas Noon Talfourd, *Memoirs of Charles Lamb*, ed. by Percy Fitzgerald (London: Gibbings, 1892), p. 190.

⁹² Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart (Letter 204; June 27-July 2, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 234-37 (p. 234).

Wordsworth: 'all treat her ill'.⁹³

Dorothy Wordsworth, somewhat similar to Mary Lamb, shared a close sibling tie with her brother, William. William Wordsworth (1770-1850), however, was not as protective a brother to Dorothy as Charles Lamb was to Mary, and he allowed Dorothy to be 'ill-treated by her sister-in-law and the family'.⁹⁴ Dorothy Wordsworth was finally driven insane by the unkind treatment that she had received throughout her life. During the period of her madness, Dorothy incessantly 'sang some of her brother's poems, which she seems to do as a relief from thinking';⁹⁵ meanwhile, William Wordsworth passively waited to 'be comforted by her death'.⁹⁶ It is not by mere coincidence, therefore, that, in Mary Lamb's fourteen tales retold from Shakespeare's comedies and romances, the capability to appreciate a woman's intelligence and wisdom is deemed to be a manly virtue, and is turned into one of the most repeatedly occurring moral lessons for young gentlemen.

In 'All's Well That Ends Well', for example, Bertram's appreciation of Helena's conversational charm gains himself a loving and lovely wife (for a detailed analysis of Lamb's 'All's Well That Ends Well', see Chapter IV.) In 'Pericles', furthermore, Marina is sold as a slave (see also Chapter III), and Lysimachus finds her in this 'humble situation' (II, 249):

⁹³ Mary Lamb's complaints are recorded in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (January 12, 1835), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), II, 455.

⁹⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (January 12, 1835), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), II, 455.

⁹⁵ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (January 31, 1836), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), II, 487.

⁹⁶ Henry Crabb Robinson's diary (January 2, 1836), in *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), II, 477.

the fame of her learning [...] came to the knowledge of Lysimachus [...], and Lysimachus went himself to the house where Marina dwelt, to see this paragon of excellence, whom all the city [of Metaline] praised so highly. Her conversation delighted Lysimachus beyond measure, for though he had heard much of this admired maiden, he did not expect to find her so sensible a lady, so virtuous, and so good, as he perceived Marina to be[...] he wished to marry her, and notwithstanding her humble situation[...] (II, 248-49)

At the end of the tale, 'the well-deserving Lysimachus', of course, marries 'the virtuous Marina' (II, 260), but the Marina he marries, as a reward to Lysimachus's genuine appreciation of her as a conversational companion and an intelligent lady, is not a slave but the Princess of Tyre.

The full scope of Mary Lamb's ideals of 'a *happy* English wife'⁹⁷ can not be fully grasped until the understanding is reached, that young gentlemen, such as Tom Clarkson, actually formed the other half of the readership in the mind of Mary Lamb. To improve women's intellectual education and to promote the welfare of mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, as perceived by Mary Lamb, both young ladies as well as young gentlemen required an improved and modified system of education, which would assist them to form a more harmonious relationship with the opposite sex and, together, to create a better future for both sexes.

⁹⁷ Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-Work', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), I (Miscellaneous Prose 1798-1834), 176-80 (p. 179).

1.

In 'Shakespeare for Girls', Jean I. Marsden declares that Lambs' tales make 'no comments [...] concerning the male role in marriage'⁹⁸ and 'lack almost any reference to the specifically masculine traits'.⁹⁹ On the contrary, not only are Charles Lamb's tragic tales full of references to a man's life, but Mary Lamb's comic tales also refer frequently to the so-called masculine sphere.

Mary Lamb, as already discussed in this chapter, repeatedly preaches to young gentlemen the importance of appreciating an intelligent woman in her prose tales. As a matter of fact, discussion of the conventional ideas of masculinity abounds in Shakespeare's comedies and romances, such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. In re-telling the stories from these plays, Mary Lamb deliberately selected certain aspects of manliness and shaped them into adequate moral lessons specially for young gentlemen. She would often advise young gentlemen how to win a lady's love, how to keep the balance between love and friendship, and how to become a model husband in the future. In 1989, Marsden simply turned a blind eye to these moral lessons, designed for the other half of Mary Lamb's intended readers, i.e. boys, just as she refused to discuss Charles Lamb's more 'masculine' tales, i.e. 'Macbeth' and 'Timon of Athens', in her critical appraisal of 'Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespeare*'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Jean I. Marsden, 'Shakespeare for Girls: Mary Lamb and *Tales from Shakespeare*', *Children's Literature. An International Journal, Including Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 17 (1989), 47-63 (p. 56).

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 52.

Mary Lamb's 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' was judged by Jean I. Marsden as no more than one of those gender-based moral tales, 'defining feminine features' for nineteenth century young ladies,¹⁰¹ and Julia in the tale is a negative role model, who loses 'her "noble maiden pride and dignity of character" [, when] she adopts male attire and follows her lover' to Milan.¹⁰² In Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, however, the relevance of certain demands made by male-bonding is also questioned, and the conflict between friendship and love is tackled simultaneously. In the play's notorious final scene, after Proteus abruptly repents his past treacheries, Valentine forgives them all in a no less abrupt manner. Furthermore, as required by the code of friendship, Valentine hands over Silvia to Proteus, who had tried to rape her about twenty lines previously:

Valentine. And that my love may appear plain and free,
All that was mine in Silvia I give thee. (V. iv. 82-83)

The absurdity in Valentine's offer was evidently noted by Mary Lamb, for she has marked it out as a moral lesson for young gentlemen in her prose version of the play.

There is no rape or any attempt of it in Mary Lamb's 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona'. After rescuing Silvia 'from the hands of the robbers,' says Lamb, Proteus 'rudely' presses Silvia 'to consent to marry him' (I, 135). Valentine catches Proteus at the moment, when he is merely 'courting Silvia' (I, 135). This alteration is made, of course, on the principle of avoiding references to sex or violence whenever possible (for details, see Chapter III.) The omission of Proteus's attempted rape of Silvia, nonetheless, makes Valentine's subsequent proffering Silvia to Proteus a more probable act:

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 55.

¹⁰² *Ibid*.

Valentine, whose nature was noble and generous, even to a romantic degree, not only forgave and restored him [Proteus] to his former place in his friendship, but in a sudden flight of heroism he said, "I freely do forgive you; and all the interest I have in Silvia, I give it up to you." (I, 136)

At this juncture, Mary Lamb neither confronts nor ridicules Valentine's behaviour with overt authorial comment. Instead, she subtly switches the attention of her readers to the unexpressed feelings of Silvia, who speaks not a word after being thus proffered to Proteus:

Julia [...] fainted, and they [Valentine, Proteus and Silvia] were all employed in recovering her: else would Silvia have been offended at being thus made over to Proteus, though she could scarcely think that Valentine would long persevere in this overstrained and too generous act of friendship. (I, 136)

In this manner, Mary Lamb covertly passes on her judgment to young gentlemen, that Valentine is wrong to proffer Silvia to Proteus, without even consulting Silvia's opinions first. Yet, Valentine, as fully expected, does not 'long persevere' in this mood (I, 136), and somewhat redeems himself, after Thurio comes onto the scene.

Thurio's attempt to take possession of Silvia reminds Valentine of his former love for her, and Valentine re-claims Silvia and challenges Thurio's right 'in a very spirited manner' (I, 137). The Duke, as Mary Lamb informs her young readers, 'was a very brave man himself' (I, 137). In Valentine's heroic claim, the Duke recognises something of a kindred spirit and would now prefer Valentine to the cowardly Thurio as a son-in-law. Although, in Shakespeare's play, Valentine accepts the Duke's offer with merely a brief answer, 'I thank you grace; the gift hath made me happy' (*TGV*, V. iv. 146), in Lamb's tale, Valentine does more to prove that he is already changed. Valentine has learned a precious lesson from the event: owing to his own folly, he nearly lost Silvia to another man. At the point of receiving Silvia's hand in marriage from her father, Valentine is, in a sense, given a second chance, so

Valentine then with great humility kissed the duke's hand, and accepted the

noble present which he had made him of his daughter with becoming thankfulness[.] (I, 138)

The grateful and humbled Valentine in the end of Lamb's tale is not the same Valentine, who took Silvia's love for granted and would surrender her to Proteus earlier on.

Jean I. Marsden paid even less attention to Mary Lamb's 'The Merchant of Venice' than 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona'. Very briefly, Marsden suggested that Portia is 'presented' in Lamb's tale as one of the 'positive role models', in order to teach the virtue of 'graceful modesty' to young ladies.¹⁰³ (The significance of Portia as a role model is discussed in Chapter IV.) However, as underlined in the title of the original play, *The Merchant of Venice*, finance, trade, or transactions of money, properties or any kinds of wealth, which form an absolutely crucial part in a man's life, are some of the main concerns in the dramatic action. Bassanio, as he confesses to Antonio at the beginning of the play, is not at all good at managing his own financial affairs:

Bassanio. 'Tis not unknown to you Antonio
How much I have disabled mine estate,
By something showing a more swelling port
Than my faint means would grant continuance[.] (I. i. 122-25)

Therefore, in Lamb's prose adaptation of the play, Bassanio is moulded into a negative role model to warn young gentlemen away from similar sorts of spendthrift behaviour:

Bassanio, a noble Venetian, who, having but a small patrimony, had nearly exhausted his little fortune by living in too expensive a manner for his slender means, as young men of high rank with small fortunes are too apt to do. (I, 141)

Opposite to Bassanio, Antonio, 'a young merchant of Venice' (I, 140), is established as the positive role model of abnegation for young gentlemen to emulate (see also

Chapter III.)

In Mary Lamb's 'The Merchant of Venice', Antonio is portrayed as a much nobler character than his dramatic counterpart. His total selflessness comes across most impressively in the court-room episode. After Shylock's cruel scheme against his life is defeated by Portia, 'The generous Anthonio [*sic*]', as narrated by Mary Lamb, 'would give up his share of Shylock's wealth' (I, 157), and the only condition he makes is that 'Shylock would sign a deed to make it over at his death to his daughter and her husband' (I, 157). Never does Antonio spare a thought for himself or his already impoverished condition. Whereas, in Shakespeare's play, Antonio still requires the use of one half of Shylock's wealth, forfeited to himself, and Shylock can keep the other half, forfeited to the state, on condition that Shylock restores Jessica's inheritance, acknowledges Lorenzo as his son-in-law, and turns Christian:

Antonio. So please my lord the duke and all the court,
To quit the fine for one half of his goods,
I am content: so he will let me have
The other half in use, to render it
Upon his death unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter.
Two things provided more, that for this favour
He presently become a Christian:
The other, that he do record a gift
(Here in the court) of all he dies possess'd
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter. (IV. i. 376-86)

Neither does Mary Lamb's Antonio plead in the open court, compelling Shylock to forsake his Jewish religion and become a Christian. The religious conversion is an option in its strictest and truest sense, and is suggested by the Duke, not Antonio, in Lamb's tale:

"Get thee gone, then," said the duke, "and sign it [the deed]; and if you repent

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

your cruelty and turn Christian, the state will forgive you the fine of the other half of your riches." (I, 157)

This portrayal of Antonio as 'the kindest man that lived' (I, 141) persists till the end of Lamb's tale.

Mary Lamb's Bassanio, like Shakespeare's Bassanio, gives away Portia's ring as a fee to the supposed doctor of law, only under Antonio's persuasion:

"Dear Bassanio," said Anthonio [*sic*], "let him have the ring; let my love and the great service he has done for me be valued against your wife's displeasure." (I, 159)

According to Antonio's understanding, no more than Portia's 'displeasure' is at stake (I, 159). It is because, in Lamb's tale, Bassanio's first refusal to the same request has nothing to do with Portia's wifely 'commandment' (*MV*, IV. i. 447):

Bassanio was sadly distressed, that the counsellor should ask him for the only thing he could not part with, and he replied in great confusion, that he could not give him that ring, because it was his wife's gift, and he had vowed never to part with it[.] (I, 159)

When Mary Lamb's Portia gave Bassanio the ring, she gave it away unconditionally. She is far more 'generous' a lady (I, 147) than her dramatic counterpart, who commands her husband to safeguard the ring and, meantime, threatens him with all sorts of terrors, if he shall ever lose the ring:

this ring,
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you. (III. ii. 171-74)

Bassanio in Lamb's tale is such a spendthrift, who spends his words as well as his wealth in the same prodigal manner, so that, at the point of receiving the ring from Portia, he voluntarily 'vowed never to part with it' (I, 146). Portia is too wise not to perceive that Bassanio will not be capable of keeping that promise; especially, after witnessing him declare, in the court-room, 'in these strong terms' (I, 153):

“Anthonio [*sic*], I am married to a wife, who is as dear to me as life itself; but life itself, my wife, and all the world, are not esteemed with me above your life: I would lose all, I would sacrifice all to this devil here, to deliver you.” (I, 153)

Portia, ‘the kind-hearted lady’, as narrated by Mary Lamb, ‘was not at all offended with her husband for expressing the love he owed to so true a friend as Anthonio[*sic*]’ (I, 153); when this ‘wily lady’ (I, 158) begs the ring from her husband in the disguise of a young counsellor, her sole aim is simply to ‘make a merry jest[,] when she saw her Bassanio again’ (I, 159).

Bassanio, in spite of all his faults, proves at the end of the tale, that he actually possesses some good ‘qualitites’ (I, 145), which make Portia fall in love with him and accept him as her own choice of a husband. (The omission of the casket scenes is discussed in Chapter III). One of these ‘worthy qualities’ (I, 145), as pointed out in Lamb’s concluding paragraph, is Bassanio’s sincere and thorough appreciation of Portia’s courage and wisdom:

Bassanio found to his unspeakable wonder and delight, that it was by the noble courage and wisdom of his wife that Anthonio’s [*sic*] life was saved. (I, 163)

Like Bertram in ‘All’s Well That Ends Well’ and Lysimachus in ‘Pericles’, in understanding how to appreciate Portia as an intelligent woman, Bassanio in ‘The Merchant of Venice’ is also deemed to be deserving of a fair, rich and virtuous wife.

The existence of this guidance for the male sex in Mary Lamb’s comic tales, such as ‘The Two Gentlemen of Verona’ and ‘The Merchant of Venice’, has always been overlooked, because Lamb’s tales are so rigidly labelled as gender-based stories for girls. From such a prejudiced point of view, Mary Lamb’s ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ is perhaps the most seriously misunderstood story among all the fourteen comic tales. Far more than just being misinterpreted as a story written exclusively for girls, ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ has been attached with all sorts of

hidden meanings that do not exist in reality.

In 'Explaining to Her Sisters', Susan J. Wolfson conjectures that Lamb's tale, as retold from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, functioned as a kind of semi-autobiography:

Its spectacle of a motherless woman aggressively out of control and virtually requiring strait-jacketing by the male establishment eerily coincides with the chief trauma of her adult life: her fatal attack on her mother in a fit of insanity. While she apparently never mentioned that event, reading and retelling this play may have evoked phantoms that she then worked to contain within the tradition of orthodox readings to which she could refer.¹⁰⁴

The basis of Wolfson's fantastic theory is not any kind of document or any psychological theories, but Wolfson's own insufficient research and unscholarly approach to this particular tale.

There is no psychological evidence, which can support Susan J. Wolfson's surmise, that the taming-plot of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, in any way, 'touches on a potent personal circumstance' of Mary Lamb,¹⁰⁵ or that the process of 'reading and retelling this play' is particularly therapeutic in her case.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, Mary Lamb, as recorded in certain correspondence between Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, actually talked with her younger brother about their mother and the matricide several times after the tragic event. She once confessed to her younger brother the full knowledge that she had committed 'a **Mother's murder**'.¹⁰⁷ (Mary Lamb's response to the matricide is discussed in

¹⁰⁴ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (24).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 8; October 3, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London:

Chapter IV.)

The matricide, being the darkest history of the Lamb family, certainly would not become a regular or even suitable topic for their daily conversation or correspondence with just any of their acquaintances. Understandably, the Lambs chose to discuss it with the few, very selected people that they believed to be trust-worthy. Therefore, apart from his sister, Charles Lamb only confided to Samuel Taylor Coleridge and, only in the letters addressed to this 'dearest friend', Charles would pour out his deepest feelings concerning Mary's matricide.¹⁰⁸ Charles's brother, John Junior, discovered his secret communication with Coleridge, and attempted to pry into Charles's secret thoughts through Coleridge. In one of these surviving letters to Coleridge, Charles Lamb explicitly warns Coleridge about the hypocrisy of his elder brother. John Junior always appeared to be on friendly terms with Coleridge, but it was merely feigning; besides, John Junior had already attempted to 'make inquisition into our papers', says Charles Lamb in the letter dated December 10, 1796.¹⁰⁹ To 'keep' their correspondence 'out of my brother's sights', Charles Lamb thus informs Coleridge that he was obliged to get rid of nearly all the letters, even though Coleridge's letters 'are sacred things' to Charles.¹¹⁰ (The friendship of Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge is extensively discussed in Chapter II.) This recorded incident certainly explains why so little is known and documented about the early lives of Charles and Mary Lamb, and their relations with their mother, Elizabeth

Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 47-51 (p. 47).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Charles Lamb's letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Letter 17; December 10, 1796), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), I (1796-1801), 77-79 (p. 78).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Lamb.

In 'Explaining to Her Sisters', furthermore, Susan J. Wolfson strives hard to establish a link between Lamb's prose version of *The Taming of the Shrew* and David Garrick's theatrical adaptation of the same play, *Catherine and Petruchio*:

Lamb's bias against Kate responds to more than personal necessity; it also perpetuates the interpretation of the play codified in and by Garrick's version [...] her supplements are remarkably similar. Both give unquestionable credit to Petruchio's judgment[.]¹¹¹

However, rather than Mary Lamb's bias against Katherina 'unproblematically endorses' 'the force of male domination' in her prose tale as Garrick does with his *Catharine and Petruchio*,¹¹² Wolfson's own false preconception has, once again, misled her judgment in this case. Not only, as Wolfson herself was fully aware in 1990, is there no evidence to prove that 'Lamb had Garrick's play in mind as she worked out her tale',¹¹³ but the two approaches of Mary Lamb and David Garrick to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* are two distinctively different kinds. In fact, they have little in common, except that both adaptations concentrate on the taming plot. (The plot-selecting methods of Mary Lamb are discussed in Chapter III.)

In the prose tale, Petruchio is not simply motivated by some mercenary reasons in marrying Katherina. Mary Lamb informs her young readers that, as far as Petruchio is concerned, Katherina herself forms half of the attraction in the marriage:

Petruchio [...] hearing she [Katherina] was rich and handsome, resolved upon marrying this famous termagant, and taming her into a meek and manageable wife. (II, 25)

¹¹¹ Susan J. Wolfson, 'Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear*', in *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others*, ed. by Marianne Novy (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 16-40 (25).

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 27.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 25.

Whereas, in both Garrick's and Shakespeare's plays, Petruchio declares that he comes 'to wive it wealthily in Padua;/If wealthily, then happily in Padua'¹¹⁴ (*SHR*, I. ii. 74-75). His servant, Grumio, unflatteringly confirms that Petruchio marries Kate merely for the sake of her rich dowry, for 'nothing comes amiss' for Petruchio, so far as 'money comes withal'¹¹⁵ (*SHR*, I. ii. 80-81). Indeed, through or by Grumio in both plays, many unsavoury aspects of Petruchio and the taming process are exposed to criticism. Therefore, the way in which Mary Lamb has handled the character of Grumio in the prose tale further exemplifies how much she questioned the wisdom and doubted the judgment of the dramatic Petruchio in Shakespeare's play, and how markedly the essential idea of her tale deviates from either Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* or David Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio*.

In Garrick's play, as in Shakespeare's play, Kate is not only denied food, but baited by Grumio with the idea of food. To receive humiliation from such an insolent servant, provoked Kate to utter this passionate outburst:

Go, get thee gone, thou false deluding slave[.]¹¹⁶ (IV. iii. 31)

It is evident that Mary Lamb does not credit such inhuman and humiliating methods, used by Shakespeare's Petruchio to tame his shrewish wife. By contrast, in Lamb's tale, Katherina is completely freed from humiliation in the eyes of a servant, because Grumio is entirely omitted. 'Petruchio', as further emphasized by Mary Lamb in her tale, 'not meaning she [Katherine] should be quite starved' (II, 32), 'suffered her to make a slender meal' (II, 33).

The more humane methods, applied by Mary Lamb's Petruchio during the

¹¹⁴ David Garrick, *Catharine and Petruchio. A Comedy in Three Acts* (London: Tonson, 1756; facsimile repr., Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

taming process, are entirely consistent with the portrayal of the tamer himself in Lamb's tale. From the outset, Petruchio is defined as 'a witty and most happy-tempered humourist' (II, 25):

he well knew how to feign a passionate and furious deportment, when his spirits were so calm that himself could have laughed merrily at his own angry feigning, for his natural temper was careless and easy; the boisterous airs he assumed when he became the husband of Katherine being but in sport, or, more properly speaking, affected by his excellent discernment, as the only means to overcome in her own way the passionate ways of the furious Katherine. (II, 25)

Nevertheless, the whole taming process is subtler and more complicated in Lamb's tale than thus outlined and summarised in the beginning of the story.

Petruchio soon discovers that it takes far more than just to 'feign a passionate and furious deportment' (II, 25) to make his taming scheme work, for his 'angry feigning' (II, 25) only shocks Katherine into a temporary 'fear' (II, 29). She recovers from it after the wedding, and 'the enraged Katherine' repays him with more 'angry words' (II, 30). Swiftly, Petruchio launches into the second phase of the taming process, and starvation, the second strategem, works better than the first. 'Extreme hunger' much abates 'the pride' (II, 33) of 'the haughty Katherine' (II, 32). Yet, as soon as Katherine is fed, 'her fallen spirit' is again 'a little revived' (II, 34). To counteract the new situation, Petruchio quickly takes the third step, and deliberately breaks down the communication with Katherine in the haberdasher and the tailor episode:

Petruchio would not hear these angry words, for he had happily discovered a better way of managing his wife than keeping up a jangling argument with her [...] Petruchio [...] affect[ed] to misunderstand her. (II, 34)

The third strategem works even better than the second, and Katherine is 'almost overcome by the vehemence of his manner' (II, 35). Henceforth, Katherine dares but

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 43.

to correct Petruchio 'modestly' (II, 35), when he tells the wrong time of the day. Seeing some desired changes already worked upon his wife, Petruchio re-establishes communication, discards 'the boisterous airs he assumed' (II, 25) and, calmly and plainly, tells Katherina what he wants from her:

"whatever I say or do you still are crossing it. I will not go to-day, and when I go, it shall be what o' clock I say it is." (II, 36)

Whereas, in both Garrick's and Shakespeare's plays, there is no obvious change in the character of Katherina up to this point, and Petruchio demonstrates some possibly genuine frustration, impatience, and even a hint of violence, while he utters this line in the sun and the moon scene:

Evermore cross' d and cross' d, nothing but cross' d.¹¹⁷ (*SHR*, IV. v. 10)

The line is omitted from Lamb's tale, and the next episode of the sun and the moon is to mark the ultimate triumph of Petruchio's taming scheme.

In 'The Taming of the Shrew', Mary Lamb explains to her young readers that, although Katherina is transformed into an 'obedient' wife (II, 36), 'her newly-found obedience' is like a newly apprenticed trade, which needs much practice (II, 36):

even while they were upon their journey thither [her father's house], she was in danger of being turned back again, only because she happened to hint it was the sun, when he affirmed the moon shone brightly at noon-day. (II, 36)

However, when Petruchio 'made as if he were going back again' (II, 36),

Katherine, no longer Katherine the Shrew, but the obedient wife, said, "Let us go forward, I pray, now we have come so far, and it shall be the sun, or moon, or what you please, and if you please to call it a rush candle[;] henceforth, I vow it shall be so for me." (II, 36)

It is well worth noticing that, due to the concentration on the taming plot and the omission of Grumio, the taming process in Lamb's tale, carried out so far, is a strictly

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 50.

private matter between the husband and the wife. There is no Hortensio to witness the taming process either in Petruchio's house or during their journey to Baptista's house. Katherina is apparently obedient to his will after the sun and the moon episode, but Petruchio desperately wants a re-assurance that his wife will submit to his will also in public. Therefore, to greet an old man as a young maid becomes the first public trial for Katherina's wifely obedience in the tale:

further to try if this yielding humour would last, he addressed an old gentleman they met on the road as if he had been a young woman, [...]and asked Katherine if she had ever beheld a fairer gentlewoman[...] (II, 37)

Petruchio is not disappointed by the result of this first public trial:

The now completely vanquished Katherine quickly adopted her husband's opinion, and made her speech in like sort to the old gentleman[...] (II, 37)

The husband and wife then journey on for the double wedding of Bianca and Lucentio, Hortensio and the Widow, which is an incident entirely omitted from Garrick's *Catherine and Petruchio*. Before the wager is laid by the three husbands, Lamb's Petruchio knows for certain that Katherina will win the contest of wifely obedience.

There is a conspicuous progression in the taming process in Lamb's tale, which does not exist either in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* or in Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio*. The subtle progression is not only on the part of Katherina, who is transformed from 'Katherine the Shrew' to 'Katherine the most obedient and dutiful wife in Padua' (II, 43), but it is also on the part of Petruchio as a tamer. Mary Lamb details how he behaves at different stages of the taming process, and how he confronts various difficulties peculiar to every stage of that process. Above all, Petruchio never loses his temper or patience during the whole process. He, in fact, becomes a hero in the conventional fairy tale, who accepts challenges, conquers all

odds against him, and is rewarded for his brave deeds (see also Chapter IV.) The character of Petruchio is thus idealised in Lamb's tale to become one of the positive role-models in *Tales from Shakespear* for young gentlemen to emulate. Through Petruchio, Mary Lamb teaches boys that they should always keep up their spirits and face any marital crisis with intelligence and wisdom. It is William Hazlitt's comment upon the character of Petruchio in *Characters of Shakespear's [sic] Plays* that captures the essence of Mary Lamb's 'The Taming of the Shrew' :

Petruchio [...] acts his assumed character to life, with the most fantastical extravagance, with complete pretence of mind, with untired animal spirits, and without a particle of ill humour from beginning to end[...] it is difficult to say which to admire most, the unaccountableness of his actions, or the unalterableness of his resolution. It is a character which most husbands ought to study, unless perhaps the very audacity of Petruchio's attempt might alarm them more than his success would encourage them.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (London: Hunter, 1817), pp. 312-13

CHAPTER VI.

'Bridget and I Should Be Ever Playing'

The first publication of *Tales from Shakespear* brought much excitement into that shared life of Charles and Mary Lamb. On January 29, 1807, Charles Lamb dispatched a copy of the book to William Wordsworth with a letter. In the letter to William Wordsworth, it is clearly indicated that Charles Lamb was pleased with the tales. Although Charles complains in the letter, that William Godwin 'cheated me into putting a name to them [the tales]', he quickly clarifies that he simply 'did not mean' to claim all the credit for the work, 'but do not repent' letting people know that he had a hand in them.¹ He further informed Wordsworth that he and Mary had their own favourites, i.e. 'Othello' and 'Pericles' (see also Chapter II) but, in general, he thought 'all have some good.'² There were only two things about the book itself he found objectionable: the first was the middle part of the 'Preface', which 'hath a more **feminine** turn and does hold me up something as an instructor to young Ladies,'³ (as already discussed in Chapter V), and the other, the twenty black and white illustrations.

The designs of the twenty plates, disliked by Charles Lamb, are customarily attributed to William Mulready, who had done some illustrations for the Godwins' 'Juvenile Library' before, but there is no other evidence to substantiate this surmise.

¹ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (p. 256).

² *Ibid.*

The primary reason for Charles' dislike of the plates was the subject matter, and their low artistic standard was another:

You [William Wordsworth] will forgive the plates, when I tell you that they were left to the direction of Godwin, who left the choice of subjects to the **bad baby**, who from mischief--(I suppose) has chosen one from damn' d beastly vulgarity (vide Merch. Venice) where no atom of authority was in the tale to justify it--to another has given a name which exists not in the tale, **Nic. Bottom**, & which she thought would be funny[...] & one of Hamlet, & Grave diggg.[sic], a scene which is not hinted at in the story, & you might as well have put King Canute the Great reproving his courtiers--the rest are Giants & Giantesses--.⁴

In fact, the quality of the plates was uneven rather than, altogether, as bad as claimed by Charles Lamb. It is true that some of the twenty plates contained human figures drawn out of proportion, e.g. 'Countess of Roussilion & Her Daughter-in-Law' (II, frontispiece), or were hardly finished at all, e.g. 'Pericles is Informed that His Armour is Saved' (II, facing p. 231). However, some of them also displayed much dramatic force and theatricality, such as 'Orlando Saves the Life of His Brother' (I, facing p. 36) and 'Isabel Pleads for the Life of Her Brother' (II, facing p. 70).

Perhaps, as suggested by William Macdonald, there was a third reason for Charles Lamb's disliking the plates:

he liked them all the less because the subjects had been chosen, without any consultation with him, by the only person of his acquaintance whom he really disliked--namely, by Mrs. Godwin, his publisher's wife[.]⁵

The '**bad baby**'⁶ mentioned in Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth is M. J. Godwin (see also Chapter II.)

³ *Ibid*, pp. 256-57.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 256.

⁵ William Macdonald's 'Bibliographical Introduction', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. by William Macdonald, 12 vols. (London: Dent, 1903), VI, xix.

⁶ Charles Lamb's letter to William Wordsworth (Letter 212; January 29, 1807), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 256-57 (p. 256).

Tales from Shakespear. Designed for the Use of Young Persons subsequently received six book-reviews between 1807 and 1809, and four of them recommended Lambs' tales. (The press reception is discussed in Chapter III.) However, the popularity of the book at its first appearance and during the life-time of Charles and Mary Lamb, claimed by later critics, is something of a mystery. The numerous comments made upon the book's popularity by twentieth century critics, range from one extreme to the other but, with few rare exceptions, the methods used to gauge it are not explained (see also Chapters I & II.) The first notable exception in this case is William Macdonald's 'Bibliographical Introduction' included in the sixth volume of *The Works of Charles Lamb*.

William Macdonald judged, in 1903, that the first edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* had been a success. 'Eight' of the twenty tales 'did appear' in chapbook form, 'before the publication of the completed work' in two volumes, and 'at least', says Macdonald, 'some of them continued to be so reprinted for a few years later.'⁷ Macdonald's conjecture, that the chapbooks had been published before the two-volume edition, was based on what is indicated in Mary Lamb's letter to Sarah Stoddart, dated from May 30 to June 2, 1806: 'My Tales are to be published [as] separate story books'.⁸ Therefore, the popularity of the single-tale edition, according to Macdonald's inference, was followed up by that of the collected edition, and the latter 'prospered so well that a second edition appeared in 1809 [...] others in

⁷ William Macdonald, 'Biographical Introduction', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. by William Macdonald, 12 vols. (London: Dent, 1903), VI, xix.

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

1810, 1816, 1822, to say nothing of editions innumerable in more recent ages' .⁹

Nevertheless, there is a serious flaw in Macdonald's argument, detected by Thomas James Wise in 1928. Macdonald had only seen one surviving copy of the chapbook edition, which was 'a unique volume containing four Tales bound up together, but separately paged, and three of them having separate title-pages' .¹⁰ Evidently, William Macdonald did not see enough proofs, as remarked by Wise, to ascertain that the chapbook edition had ever been 'reprinted' .¹¹

For a long time, *The Ashley Library. A Catalogue of Printed Books, Manuscripts and Autograph Letters* (usually known as *The Ashley Catalogue*), collected by Thomas James Wise and printed for private circulation only (1922-1936), was 'the chief existing authority' ,¹² as regards to the popularity of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*. In the third volume of the *Ashley Catalogue*, printed in 1928 by the British Museum, Wise declared that the publication of the first edition of Lambs' tales 'as "Children's Books" ended in disappointment if not in failure.'¹³ The basis of Wise's judgment was a close study of the chapbook editions in the Ashley collection of the British Library, with reference to the double-volume, chapbook edition, published by William Jackson and mistakenly dated 1808 in the *Folger Shakespeare Library Catalogue*. Wise suggests in the *Ashley Catalogue* that two or

⁹ William Macdonald, 'Biographical Introduction' , in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. by William Macdonald, 12 vols. (London: Dent, 1903), VI, xviii.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. xix.

¹¹ Thomas James Wise, *The Ashley Library. A Catalogue of Printed Books, Manuscripts and Autograph Letters*, 11 vols. (London: British Museum, 1922-1936), III, 44.

¹² David Foxon, 'The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*' , *The Book Collector*, 6 (1957), 40-53 (p. 41).

¹³ Thomas James Wise, *The Ashley Library. A Catalogue of Printed Books, Manuscripts and Autograph Letters*, 11 vols. (London: British Museum, 1922-1936), III, 44.

three 'of these separate *Tales*, *Timon of Athens* and *Othello*--and possibly *Romeo and Juliet* also--were issued in the form of individual booklets prior to the publication of the complete series in two volumes',¹⁴ since he could discover 'no evidence at all' that 'the remaining five' produced in '1808, 1809 and 1811', according to the dates shown on the title-pages (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1808/1.(KL) & (MV); 1809/2.(WT); 1811/1.(MND) & (CYM)),¹⁵ 'are reprints of an 1806 or 1807 original.'¹⁶ After having also consulted an unspecified advertisement of the publisher and 'some [...] of the unsold sheets' of the chapbooks, 'afterwards made up in groups as remainder volumes, and [...] offered for sale in this form',¹⁷ Wise concluded that the first, chapbook edition of Lamb's tales 'failed to meet with success':¹⁸

It may reasonably be surmised that the publication of the whole twenty *Tales* in two attractive volumes prevented the sale of the separate booklets from being sufficiently extensive to encourage their publisher to increase the number beyond the original eight.¹⁹

Simultaneously, Wise implies that the two-volume edition, marketed as a girls' manual, was comparatively successful.

In 1954, Percy Muir published *English Children's Books 1600 to 1900*, one of the standard reference books for the study of children's literature. The comments made by Muir regarding the popularity of the first edition of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* were, by and large, based on the *Ashley Catalogue*:

The fact that the first of them [the chapbooks] preceded the complete collection in two volumes, that they were not all separately issued, and that "remainders" of some of them, bound more than one in a volume--and sometimes with the

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 44.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 47

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

imprint of another publisher, William Jackson and Co.--suggests that they were not a success in that form.²⁰

Somehow, Percy Muir partially misunderstood what is stated in the *Ashley Catalogue*, when he asserted that the first collected edition was a collection of the chapbooks, including the eight single-tale volumes as well as the twelve 'remainders' never printed 'in separate form':²¹

A little further light is thrown on the failure of the separate issue by the fact that in the second edition the twenty plates from the first edition were omitted and a prefatory note explains that this is because they [Lambs' tales] had been found more suitable for young ladies than for children as originally intended.²²

The point is that the eight sets of three plates, included in the chapbook editions, are based on totally different designs from those of the twenty plates, included in the first collected edition.

The twenty-four plates designed for the chapbook editions of Lambs' tales are usually attributed to William Blake. The identity of the illustrator was first proposed by William Carew Hazlitt. Since no evidence is provided in *Mary and Charles Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains* (1874), where he prompts the suggestion, and William Carew Hazlitt is not noted for accuracy elsewhere, whether William Blake actually designed or had anything to do with the plates must be in doubt.²³ Furthermore, the technical character of each set differed from one another. For example, the set of three plates included in *Romeo and Juliet* (L. 1807/2.(ROM)) and another set, in *Timon of Athens* (L. 1807/2.(TIM)) are engravings proper, but the three plates of *Othello* (L. 1807/2.(OTH)) and those of *The Winter's Tale* (L. 1809/2.(WT)) are

²⁰ Percy Muir, *English Children's Books 1600 to 1900* (London: Batsford, 1954), p. 130.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 130-31.

²³ See: William Carew Hazlitt, *Mary and Charles Lamb: Poems, Letters, and Remains* (London: Mathews, 1874), p. 170.

stipple-engravings. The process of producing the latter six plates would involve etching techniques as well. The designs of the plates themselves also exhibited distinctively different styles. The six engravings, designed for *King Lear* (L. 1808/1.(KL)) and *The Merchant of Venice* (L. 1808/1.(MV)), for example, were simple and crude, and akin to the style of wood-cuts. However, another six engravings, designed for *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens*, were extremely detailed and highly polished. These peculiarities of the plates suggest that the execution of these eight sets probably involved more than one illustrator.

In 1957, David Foxon finally disproved all the previous fallacies with his brilliant article, 'The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* [sic]' in *The Book Collector*. Foxon strongly argued that the chapbooks could not have been published before the two-volume edition. There exists another letter, written by Charles Lamb to Thomas Manning and dated December 5, 1806, in which Lamb tells Manning that 'Tales from Shakespear [sic] are near coming out' but not yet.²⁴ Based on the fact that no references to the chapbook editions are ever made in either the Lambs' correspondences, dated from December 1806 to January 1807, or in the publisher's advertisement, dated before 1807, Foxon convincingly argues:

The absence of any reference to separate tales may encourage the view that none was yet published.²⁵

Instead of succeeding, the collected *Tales*, as pointed out by Foxon, actually preceded the chapbooks.²⁶ Needless to say, it was the popularity of the first collected edition of

²⁴ Charles Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning (Letter 208; December 5, 1806), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marris, Jr., 3 vols. (London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975-8), II (1801-1809), 244-48 (p. 247).

²⁵ David Foxon, 'The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*', *The Book Collector*, 6 (1957), 40-53 (p. 42).

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 43.

Figure 1. 'Nic Bottom & the Queen of the Fairies' by an unknown artist. Picture provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library. The original is a hand-coloured engraving, included in a chapbook edition of Mary Lamb's *The Midsummer Night's Dream* (London: Godwin, 1811), frontispiece. Its style drastically differs from William Blake's drawing for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (see Figure 2.)



Figure 2. 'Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing' by William Blake. Picture provided by the Tate Gallery. The original drawing is in watercolour.



Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, which encouraged the Godwins to issue them in separate chapbook form as well.

The other important findings in David Foxon's article concern the dates of the several surviving chapbooks. 'William Jackson', as noted by Foxon for the first time, 'was a cover for Godwin in his bankruptcy'; therefore, the double-volume chapbook, dated 1808 in *Folger Shakespeare Library Catalogue*, was in fact issued after 1825²⁷ (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1825/1.) After comparing the 'Folger *Othello*' and the 'Ashley *Othello*', furthermore, Foxon also discovered that these two chapbooks are actually two different editions:²⁸

the Folger *Othello* and the tale in the collected [first] edition [...] share the error 'had chose for the object of her affections' which was corrected to 'chosen' in the second edition of both versions.²⁹

The 'Ashley *Othello*' is, consequently, re-dated 1809.³⁰ Similarly, Foxon affirms that 'These two tales [*King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* (a copy of each tale is kept at the British Library and the Folger Shakespeare Library respectively)] were twice printed in 1808'.³¹ Moreover, after comparing the 'the style of the plates'³² and 'the sequence' in which the eight chapbook titles appear in 'the publisher's advertisements'³³ (see also Chapter III and the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1809/1), Foxon observed that the eight separate tales could be grouped into, roughly, four pairs, and three of them were probably published first in 1807 and the rest, in 1808. That is to say, *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*, *The* [sic] *Midsummer Night's Dream*

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 43.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 42.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 45.

³² *Ibid*.

Figure 3. 'Hermione restored to her Husband' by an unknown artist.
Picture provided by the British Library.
The original is a stipple-engraving, included in a chapbook edition of
Mary Lamb's *The Winter's Tale* (London: Godwin, 1809), frontispiece.

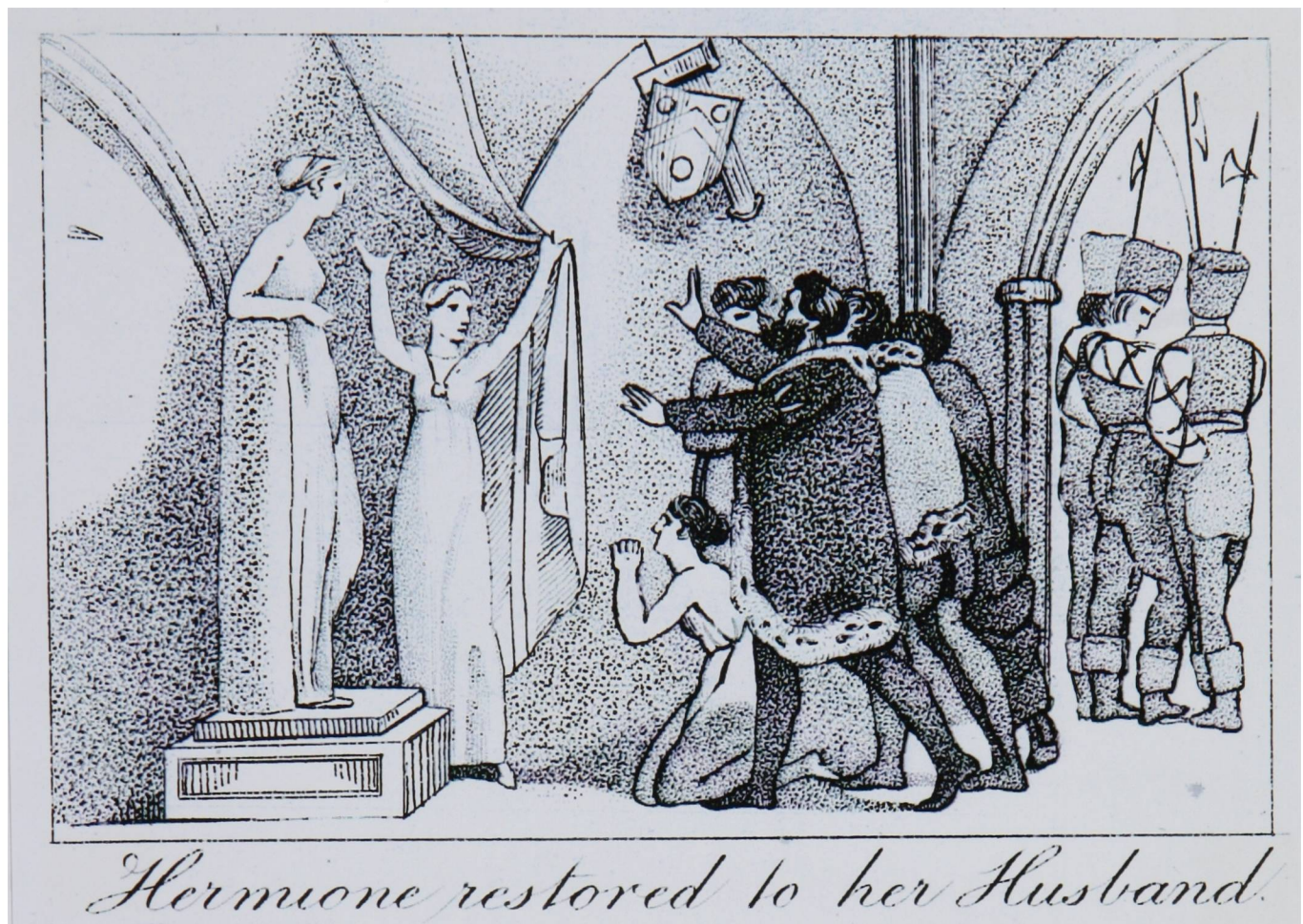


Figure 4. 'Brabantio gives his Daughter to Othello' by an unknown artist.
Picture provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library.
The original is a hand-coloured stipple-engraving, included in a chapbook
edition of Charles Lamb's *Othello* (London: Hodgkins, 1807),
frontispiece.



and *Cymbeline*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens* were published as three pairs and in 1807. *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*, as a pair, were published in 1808. Accordingly, the surviving copies of *The [sic] Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Cymbeline*, both dated 1811 on the title-pages (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1811/1.(MND) & (CYM)), are not the first edition, supposedly published in 1807. To conclude, apart from '*Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon* [which] appear in one edition', the others 'were reprinted' once.³⁴ The popularity of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear* is thus thrown into a new light, and both the chapbook and collected editions were not utter failures.

David Foxon was, however, puzzled by the publication of the multi-volume, chapbook editions. The earliest advertisement for a multi-volume chapbook, which had been issued by the publisher and was tracked down by Foxon in 1957, was the one added at the end of the third edition of *Stories of Old Daniel*, published in 1813:

N.B. A Selection of Four from these Twenty Tales [from Shakespear] is published, in 18mo. with Numerous Engravings, price 2s. 6d.³⁵

This particular piece of information was printed on the seventh page of a sale catalogue. The catalogue, as observed by Foxon, had its own numbering system and was not specially printed to be bound into the 1813 edition of *Stories of Old Daniel*, where it was found. Furthermore, most of the items advertised in this catalogue predated 1813; in fact, one of the most recent publications was *History of Greece*, published in 1811. In a word, the catalogue had been circulated for two years, before it was bound into the 1813 edition of *Stories of Old Daniel*. As a natural consequence

³³ *Ibid*, p. 42.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 45.

³⁵ The publisher's advertisement, in [Charles Lamb], *Stories of Old Daniel: Or Tales of Wonder and Delight*, third edition (London: Godwin, 1813), p. 7 (advertisement.)

of this discovery, Foxon conjectured that the date of publication of the catalogue must be 1811. Since only one of the multi-volume chapbooks had been advertised in 1811, it seemed logical for Foxon to further conjecture that the publisher had only advertised the first multi-volume in the 1811 catalogue. Given the fact that the front cover of the surviving multi-volume chapbook, preserved by the British Library in fragments only, declares that it was the second multi-volume and originally contained *Romeo and Juliet*, *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*, the copy mentioned by William Macdonald in 1903, which contained 'the *Winter's Tale* (1809) [...] *Othello* (title[-page] wanting) [...] *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1811) [...] and *Cymbeline* (1811)',³⁶ must be the first, advertised in the 1811 catalogue.³⁷ Subsequently, Foxon also proposed 1812 as the date of publication for the second multi-volume chapbook,³⁸ not advertised in the 1811 catalogue. In general, Foxon still considered that the Godwins had bound up and sold the chapbooks in multi-volume format as a means to get rid of overstocked volumes:

Two years later a reissue of *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* was advertised at 1s (catalogue in Edward Baldwin, *Fables...Fourth Edition*, 1815.) These two tales were twice printed in 1808 and were clearly overstocked; the reissue was still advertised in a catalogue of about 1820 and, as will be seen later, was still available in 1825. The only other trace of the books I can find is that *The Winter's Tale*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear* were still listed among 'Books at 6d each' in the same catalogue (in *Mrs Leicester's School...Eighth edition*, 1821).³⁹

Foxon did not consult the Bodleian Library collection in 1957 and, of course, he did not know that both multi-volume chapbooks had already been advertised no later than

³⁶ William Macdonald's 'Bibliographical Introduction', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. by William Macdonald, 12 vols. (London: Dent, 1903), VI, xxi.

³⁷ David Foxon, 'The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*', *The Book Collector*, 6 (1957), 40-53 (pp. 51-52).

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 51.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 44-45.

1810, evidence for which was to be found in a Bodleian Library book.

In 1810, when the Godwins issued, for a second time, the second edition of the Lambs' twenty tales in two collected volumes (see also Chapter IV), they inserted another twelve-page catalogue at the end of each volume and after the usual space reserved for the publisher's advertisement (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1810/1.) The catalogue is titled, separately, *New Books for Children, Published by M. J. Godwin, At the Juvenile Library, No. 41, Skinner Street, Snow Hill, And to be Had of All Book Sellers*. Like the 1811 catalogue inserted in the 1813 edition of *Stories of Old Daniel*, the pages of the 1810 catalogue are also numbered separately from the other publisher's advertisement, as if it was not printed specially to go into the 1810 edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* [sic]. On the eighth page of the catalogue, it is advertised:

N.B. A Selection of Eight from these Twenty Tales is just published, in 2 vols. 18mo. with Numerous Engravings, price 2s. each.⁴⁰

Therefore, the copy of the first multi-volume edition, mentioned in William Macdonald's 'Bibliographical Introduction' to the sixth volume of *The Works of Charles Lamb* and dated 1811 by David Foxon, would be either a reprint or a re-issue of the one advertised in 1810, and the chapbooks, being bound up and sold together with the other single-tales, were not simply over-stocked volumes.

The existence of this 1810 catalogue confirms that the single-tale editions of Lambs' tales were chapbooks indeed. They were bound in small volumes of the usual chapbook size. They were sold at sixpence per tale, which was a price for relatively good quality, nineteenth century chapbooks, such as those published by

⁴⁰ The publisher's advertisement, in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear, Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Godwin, 1810), I & II, 8 (additional

Figure 5. 'Marriage of Romeo' by an unknown artist.
Picture provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library.
The original is an engraving, included in a chapbook edition of Charles Lamb's *Romeo and Juliet* ([London]: [Hodgkins], [1807]), facing p. 2.



Figure 6. 'Timon gives his Treasure to Alcibiades' by an unknown artist.
Provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library.
The original is an engraving, included in a chapbook edition of Charles Lamb's *Timon of Athens* (London: Hodgkins, 1807), facing p. 28.



John Harris. Most significantly of all, the reprints of these chapbook editions of Lambs' tales were also bound up and sold in multi-volumes, according to the sale pattern commonly applied to all chapbooks and their direct descendants, penny-dreadfuls (for example, see the Annotated Bibliography: Gra. 1840/1 & Bre. 1882/2.) Neither the popularity of the book nor the number of volumes in stock had anything to do with the sale pattern. It was the common fate of all chapbooks that their publishers would supply the market with as many reprints as the printing block could make until it was completely worn out or broken up, and no more prints could be made out of it.

The multi-volume chapbook, advertised in the 1811 catalogue, would still be the first volume, as suggested by David Foxon, and it would contain *The Winter's Tale*, *Othello*, *The [sic] Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Cymbeline*, as witnessed by William Macdonald. Given the fact that, no later than 1815, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* had been bound up as a double-volume edition, and that only five single tales were continuously advertised for sale in 1821, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens* had probably gone out of print, as they were no longer advertised either as single-tale volumes or as parts of the second multi-volume chapbook after 1811. That the publisher did not issue any more reprints of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens* might be because no more could be produced from the old printing block.

The surviving title-pages of the chapbook editions always carry the words, 'Embellished with Three Copper Plates'. If this piece of information, provided by the publisher, is to be trusted, the printing plate used to produce the illustrations, was made of copper. As far as the durability of the printing block was concerned, copper was not an ideal choice. It wore out far too quickly. Therefore, it might not be a

coincidence that the more sophisticated and detailed designs for the engravings included in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens* were the first to go out of print. The simplest and crudest designs for the engravings included in *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*, were available in the market longer than any others. Although the chapbook editions of *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* were also reprinted twice, there were apparently more copies than any others.⁴¹ However, given that the printing plate was probably made of copper, the number of copies, altogether, could not be too many anyway. The 1807 edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*, published in both the collected and chapbook forms, might be fairly judged to be a success, but it was not a huge one. Lambs' tales were certainly not popular enough to make Charles Lamb a household name or even to make the Godwins' business rivals aware of the existence of these tales.

In 1822, Elizabeth Wright Macauley's *Tales of the Drama* (Mac. 1822/1) was published by Sherwood, Neeley and Jones. The purpose of Macauley's book was not merely to popularise Shakespeare's plays, but to render 'the real beauties of the British stage more familiar, and better known to the younger class of readers';⁴² therefore, only six of Shakespeare's plays, *King John*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar*, were selected and retold. The publisher, furthermore, claimed in the 'Preface', that the book was the first venture 'to restore, or to change, the acted Drama to the more popular form of narrative'.⁴³ The statement seems to imply that the publisher did not know anything about the

⁴¹ David Foxon, 'The Chapbook Editions of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*', *The Book Collector*, 6 (1957), 40-53 (p. 48.)

⁴² The publisher's 'Preface', in Elizabeth Wright Macauley, *Tales of the Drama* (London: Sherwood, 1822), p. vi.

⁴³ *Ibid*, pp. v-vi.

earlier publication of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear*. In fact, the fourth edition of the Lambs' twenty tales in two collected volumes came out in the same year of 1822 (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1822/1).

The publication of Lambs' tales nearly came to a halt in 1825, since the Godwins had gone bankrupt. The double-volume chapbook, containing *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* (mentioned before), was the only edition known to be available during the period from 1825 to 1827. Not until 1831, did Baldwin and Cradock bring out the fifth edition of the twenty tales in a single volume, with a new set of twenty engravings, designed by William Harvey, a popular but mediocre illustrator of the early nineteenth century (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1831/1.)

During the absence of Lambs' tales from the juvenile book-market, *The Juvenile Edition of Shakspeare* [sic] was published in 1828. Although, in *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660-1900*, *The Juvenile Edition of Shakspeare* [sic] is described as adopting 'the format successfully established by Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* [sic] (1807) of paraphrasing Shakespeare's plays for children',⁴⁴ the author, Caroline Maxwell, did not make any statement that she was in any way indebted to Lambs' tales. Neither did Maxwell's paraphrasing style show any signs of the Lambs' influence (see the Annotated Bibliography: Max. 1828/1).

Charles Lamb died in 1834. Publications connected to this now famous writer of the *Elia* essays suddenly attracted many publishers' attention. In 1837, three new editions of Lambs' tales appeared, and two of them, published by J. Pigot (L. 1837/2) and Charles Tilt (L. 1837/3), were specified as memorial editions. Tilt's edition, in particular, was sold at the price of three shillings; that is, five shillings cheaper than

⁴⁴ The editorial note, in *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660-1900. An Anthology of Criticism*, ed. by

Figure 7. 'Lear and his Daughters' by an unknown artist.
Picture provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library.
The original is an engraving, included in a chapbook edition of Charles Lamb's *King Lear* (London: [Godwin], 1808), facing p. 2.

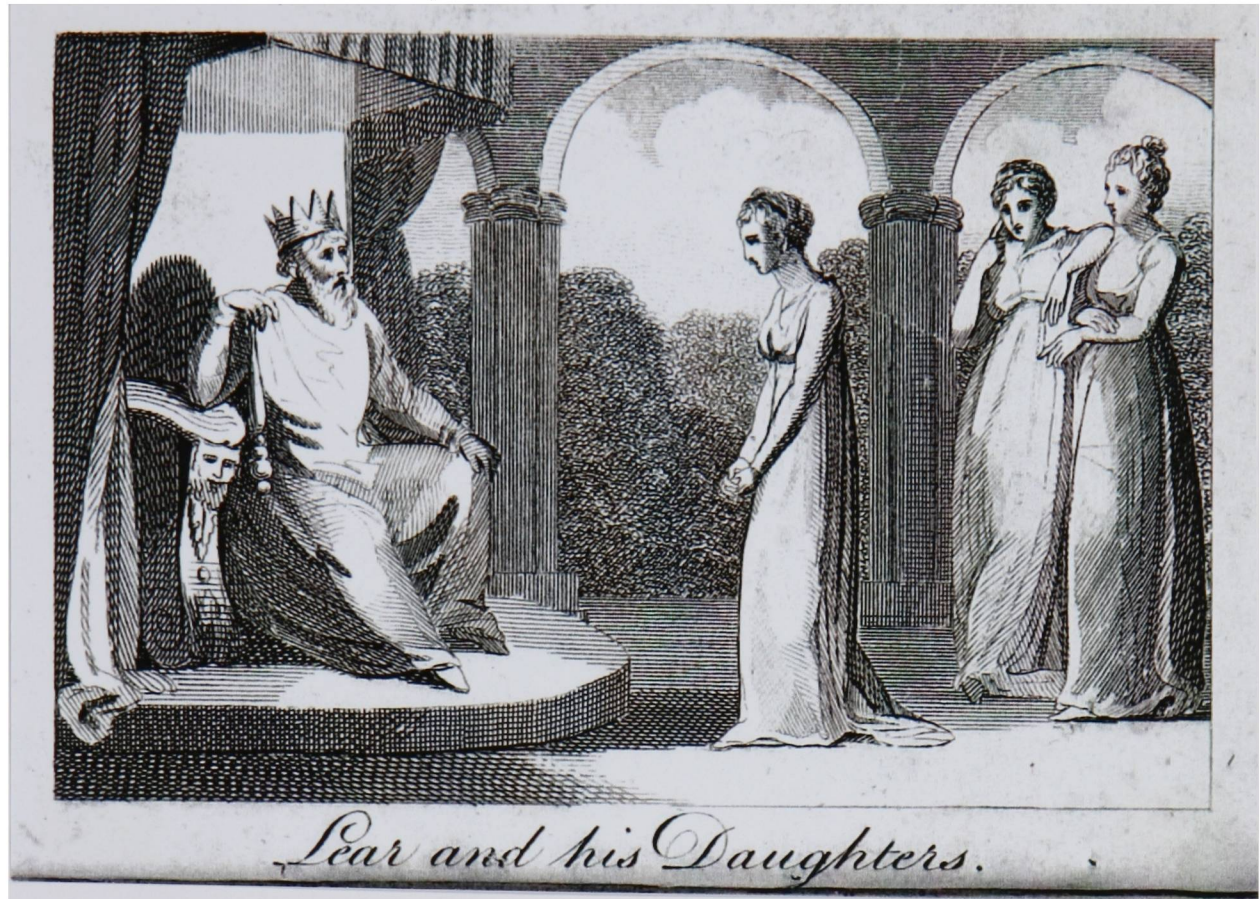


Figure 8. 'Portia returns Bassanio's Ring' by an unknown artist.
Picture provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library.
The original is a hand-coloured engraving, included in a chapbook edition of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespear. Containing King Lear, Merchant of Venice* (London: Jackson, [1825]), facing p. 29.



the first collected edition of Lambs' tales, for the publisher also wished to increase the 'circulation' of the book by way of bringing out this cheap edition.⁴⁵ Mary Lamb's share in the tales was not general knowledge at the time, and it was not acknowledged at all until the sixth official edition was published by Baldwin & Cradock in the following year (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1838/1.) In 1840, the Lambs' son-in-law, Edward Moxon,⁴⁶ published another new edition of the Lambs' twenty tales. Although only the name of Charles Lamb was printed on the title-page, Moxon marked out all the fourteen tales written by Mary with an asterisk in the table of contents (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1840/1.)

During the 1840s, there was a deliberate effort to market Lambs' tales as suitable reading for adults, too. In 1840, William Hazlitt⁴⁷ selected four of Mary Lamb's comic tales and included them in the third and fourth volumes of *The Romancist, and Novelist's Library: The Best Works of the Best Authors*, the periodical publication edited by Hazlitt at the time. *The Romancist, and Novelist's Library* was meant to include 'a complete repertory of the best Romances, Novels, and Tales that have been produced in Great Britain, in America, and on the Continent',⁴⁸ and this is where the English translation of Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* was printed for the first time. Therefore, the four chosen tales, 'The Tempest', 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'The Winter's Tale' and

Ann Thompson & Sasha Roberts (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1997), p. 62.

⁴⁵ The publisher's 'Advertisement', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakspeare, Designed for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Tilt, 1837), I, ix.

⁴⁶ Husband of Emma Isola, adopted daughter of both Charles and Mary Lamb (see also Chapter IV.)

⁴⁷ Son of the Romantic critic and essayist, William Hazlitt (see also Chapter IV).

⁴⁸ William Hazlitt (Jr.), 'Address', *The Romancist, and Novelist's Library: The Best Works of the Best Authors*, 4 (1840), i.

'Much Ado About Nothing', all attributed to Charles Lamb,⁴⁹ were regarded by Hazlitt as specimens of 'English Classics'⁵⁰ rather than Children's Classics.

The other endeavour of the same nature was Charles Knight's edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakspeare* [sic], which he published as the fourth and seventh volumes of the 'Knight's Weekly Volume for All Readers' series in 1844 (L. 1844/1.) The title no longer specified children as the intended readers. The 'Preface', partly written by Charles Lamb for the 1807 edition (see also Chapter V) and addressed directly to young readers, was also omitted. Moreover, Knight's 1844 edition was the first containing additional quotations from Shakespeare's original plays, and many later editions of Lambs' tales, especially those designed to be used in schools, were to follow its example and also include some extra extracts quoted from the plays.⁵¹ Most interestingly, in the publisher's advertisement, Charles Knight proposed to issue 'a companion work' to Lambs' tales, *Histories from Shakspeare* [sic]; the companion volume would include the prose adaptations of Shakespeare's history plays, not yet retold by either Charles or Mary Lamb.⁵² Although this book was never published as promised by Knight, the project was attempted in later years by some other writers, e.g. Sir Arthur T. Quiller Couch (Q. 1899/1) and Thomas Carter (Car. 1912/1).

⁴⁹ See: [Mary Lamb], 'The Tempest', *The Romancist, and Novelist's Library: The Best Works of the Best Authors*, 3 (1840), 140-41, and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'The Winter's Tale' and 'Much Ado About Nothing', *The Romancist, and Novelist's Library: The Best Works of the Best Authors*, 4 (1840), 223-24, 383-84 & 410-11.

⁵⁰ William Hazlitt (Jr.), 'Preface', *The Romancist, and Novelist's Library: The Best Works of the Best Authors*, 3 (1840), i.

⁵¹ For example, see Charles and Mary Lamb, *A Selection of Tales from Shakspeare*, ed. by J. H. Flather, Pitt Press Series (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1897).

⁵² The publisher's 'Advertisement', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakspeare*, 2 vols.

Before Mary Lamb died in 1847, two more official editions of Lambs' tales had been issued by Henry G. Bohn, and the eighth edition was, in fact, published in the same year she died (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1847/1). In the following year, David Bogue re-issued Tilt's memorial edition (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1848/1), but it was probably a mere coincidence and seems to have had nothing to do with Mary's death in 1847. Up to 1848, twenty editions had been published, and from then on, the publication of Lambs' tales increased steadily, and new editions, re-issues and reprints of the existing editions appeared with increasing rapidity. After the eleventh official edition had come out in 1856 (L. 1856/1), the publisher, Henry G. Bohn, abandoned the counting of editions.

1.

For about thirty years, Charles and Mary Lamb's twenty tales monopolized the market of prose narratives adapted for children from Shakespeare's plays. After Joseph Graves had completed all the twenty-two chapbook tales included in the three-volume *Dramatic Tales Founded on Shakespeare's Plays* during the 1840s (Gra. 1840/1), Lambs' tales did not meet any rival in the juvenile book-market until 1879. But, during this period, some remarkable developments took place.

In 1862, James Gordon published a new edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* in four parts. The book marked the return to marketing Lambs' tales as stories written specially for children, and it formed a part of 'Gordon's School and Home Series' (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1862/1). As time went by, however, the book was used more and more in school rather than at home (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1869/1), and it became the source and origin of the school editions of Lambs' tales, which were yet to come.⁵³

Four tales were omitted from James Gordon's edition of *Tales from Shakespeare. Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. They were 'Cymbeline', 'Pericles', 'Othello' and 'Measure for Measure'. No explanation of the omissions was offered, but 'Measure for Measure' was probably omitted for its sexual content (see also Chapter IV). A public announcement made by another publisher, Marcus Ward, in the school edition of 1883, may shed some light on this matter:

⁵³ This thesis will concentrate on Lambs' tales published as children's books, as Charles and Mary Lamb originally intended (see also Chapter I.) The publication of Lambs' tales as text-books is not my concern.

This Edition does not contain Lamb's account of "Measure for Measure," to which teachers find objection[...]⁵⁴

As a result, 'Measure for Measure' was also omitted in many subsequent editions of Lambs' tales; particularly, in those editions brought out by certain publishers, such as 'Blackie and Son', whose name was closely associated with educational publications or school text-books (for details about Blackie's editions of Lambs' tales, see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1894/1; 1899/1; 1904/1 & 2; 1910/1; 1912/1 & 2; 1919/1; 1949/1).

In 1866, George Routledge published another new edition of Lambs' tales, which was also marketed as juvenile literature. The most impressive feature of Routledge's edition was the inclusion of colour plates, based on the designs of John Gilbert. However, John Gilbert did not design the colour plates specially for Routledge's 1866 edition of *Tales from Shakspeare* [sic]: *Designed for the Use of Young Persons*. John Gilbert was, in fact, invited by George Routledge in December 1856, to illustrate the forty-two shilling parts of *The Plays of Shakespeare*, which was edited by Howard Staunton and was also issued in three volumes from 1858 to 1860.⁵⁵ The illustrations eventually amounted to about a thousand in all. They were drawn by Gilbert on wood and, then, engraved by the four Dalziel brothers--George, Edward, John and Thomas. The wood-engravings were printed in Staunton's edition of Shakespeare's plays in black and white. In *The House of Routledge 1834-1934*, Frank A. Mumby praises the enterprise as 'the most memorable venture' of George

⁵⁴ The publisher's 'Note', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakspeare* (London: Ward, 1883), p. ii.

⁵⁵ See: William Shakespeare, *The Plays of Shakespeare*, ed. by Howard Staunton, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1858-1860).

Routledge during the 1850s and the 1860s,⁵⁶ and the illustrations themselves as representations of 'the robust art of that pioneer of pictorial journalism at its best'.⁵⁷ This 'work', remarked Mumby, 'will always rank as Gilbert's masterpiece'.⁵⁸

In 1866, several of John Gilbert's designs for Shakespeare's dramatic works were selected, according to the contents of Lamb's tales and, subsequently, printed in colour in Routledge's new edition of the tales. This edition seems to have been an immense success, judging by the many surviving reprints and re-issues of the same edition (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1866/1 & 1883/1.) Moreover, in 1878, George Routledge brought out another new edition of Lamb's tales (L. 1878/1), which was lavishly illustrated with Gilbert's black and white drawings. This time, one hundred and eighty-four pictures were selected from Staunton's edition of Shakespeare's plays, and most of them had not been included in the 1866 edition. In the following year, one more new edition (L. 1879/3) was published in two volumes, and it contained one colour frontispiece and nineteen black and white illustrations, still based on Gilbert's designs and selected from either the 1866 or the 1878 edition of Lamb's tales. In three consecutive years of 1881, 1882 and 1883, three more new editions were published by George Routledge and all contained Gilbert's illustrations, previously included in the 1866 and the 1878 editions (for details about these three editions, see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1881/2; 1882/1; 1883/1). All these six editions were subsequently reprinted or re-issued several times. The last edition of Lamb's tales to be illustrated with Gilbert's pictorial designs, came out in 1921 (L. 1921/1). George Routledge himself died in 1888, but the 1921

⁵⁶ F. A. Mumby, *The House of Routledge 1834-1934* (London: Routledge, 1934), p. 74.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

edition was published by the original publishing firm, 'George Routledge and Sons, Ltd.'

The sustained popularity of George Routledge's editions of Lambs' tales, as illustrated with John Gilbert's pictorial designs, probably encouraged the other illustrators and publishers to produce more new editions of the tales, accompanied by high quality pictures. New illustrations, drawn by Keeley Halswelle for the editions published in 1873 (L. 1873/1 & 2), and designed by John Moyr Smith for another edition published by Chatto & Windus in 1879 (L. 1879/1), all achieved a respectable artistic standard. Their work was followed by even better artistic work by the more famous illustrators, e.g. Arthur Rackham (L. 1899/2 & 1909/2), Robert Anning Bell (L. 1899/3), Norman M. Price (L. 1905/5) and George Soper (L. 1909/5).

The tradition of regarding Lambs' tales as an English classic instead of a children's classic, which began in the 1840s, by no means died out. In 1876, the first edition of Lambs' tales containing twelve selected black and white plates from the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery was published by Bickers and Son for adults and, in the following year, the same edition was also issued for children (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1876/1.)

The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery was a series of paintings, executed by the leading artists of the eighteenth century, such as Henry Fuseli and James Northcote. The project was promoted by Alderman John Boydell in 1786 and, eventually, it ended in financial disaster for the Boydell family in 1805,⁵⁹ when a two-volume folio catalogue of a hundred copper-plate engravings was published. In 1874, all the

⁵⁹ Printed 1803 on the title-page of the catalogue, see [The Boydell Gallery], *A Collection of Prints, From Pictures for the Purpose of Illustrating the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, By the Artists of Great Britain*, 2 vols. (London: Boydell, 1803).

Plate 1. A Page from Howard Staunton's Edition of *The Works of Shakespeare*, published from 1857 to 1877.

Picture provided by the Shakespeare Centre Library.

The original illustration is a wood-engraving, designed by John Gilbert for *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by Howard Staunton, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1857-1877), I, 348. It depicts the scene in which Puck makes his first appearance in the play and meets a fairy (*MND*, II. i. 1).



ACT II.

SCENE I.—A Wood near Athens.

*Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, and Puck.**

PUCK. How now, spirit! whither wander you?
 FAI. Over hill, over dale,
 Thorough* bush, thorough brier,
 Over park, over pale;
 Thorough* flood, thorough fire,

(* First folio, *through*.)

* *Enter, &c.*] The original stage direction is "Enter a Fairy at one door, and Robin Good-fellow at another;" and in the prefixes to his speeches, until the entrance of Oberon and Titania, Puck is thus designated.

† To dew her orbs—] The *orbs* are those circles in fields known as fairy rings, and popularly supposed to be produced by these "demi-puppets" in their moonlight revelry:—

I do wander everywhere,
 Swifter than the moon's sphere;
 And I serve the fairy queen,
 To dew her orbs[†] upon the green:
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
 In their gold coats spots you see;
 Those be rubies, fairy favours,
 In those freckles live their savours:

"And in their courses make that round,
 In meadows and in marshes found,
 Of them so called the fairy ground."

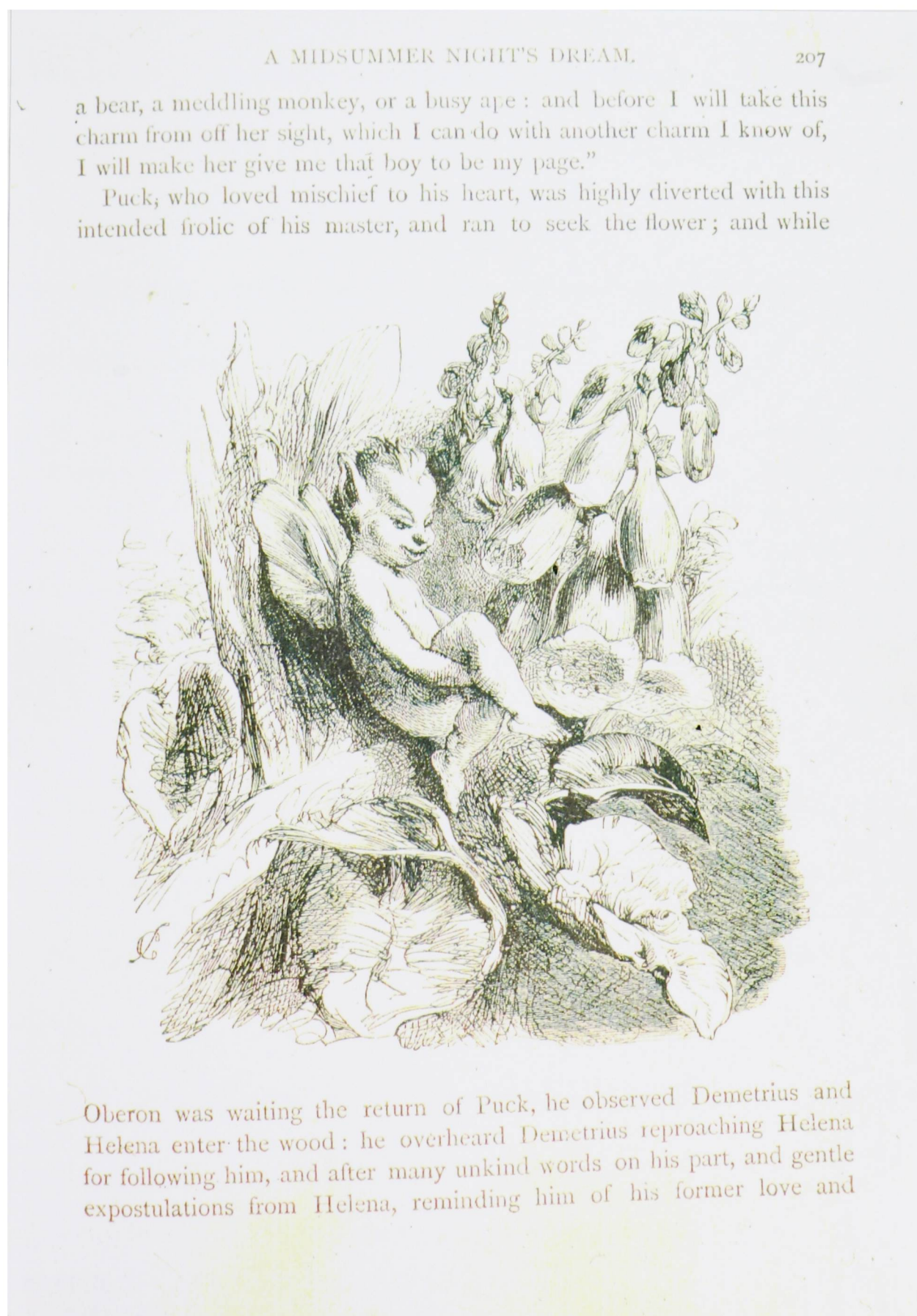
DRAYTON'S *Nymphidia*

There is a peculiar propriety in the office assigned to the fairy of refreshing these ringlets, since we learn from Olaus Magnus, that the night-tripping spirits always parched up the grass on which they danced.

Plate 2. A Page from George Routledge's Edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakspeare*, published in 1878.

Picture provided by the Bodleian Library.

In his original design (see Plate 1), John Gilbert depicts the meeting of Puck and the fairy, an incident omitted from Mary Lamb's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Therefore, the fairy is trimmed out of this illustration, which only introduces Puck in Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakspeare. Designed for the Use of Young People* (London: Routledge, 1878), p. 207.



copper-plate engravings included in the 1805 catalogue, were photographed by Vincent Brooks, Day, and Son in permanent Woodbury type, and published by Bickers and Son as a volume of *The Boydell Gallery. A Collection of Engravings Illustrating the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, By the Artists of Great Britain*.⁶⁰

The photographic reproductions of the original engravings, published by Bickers and Son in 1874, were the direct source of the black and white plates, included in the 1876 edition of Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*, published by the same publisher. If Charles Lamb had been alive in 1876, he probably would have had strong objections to this particular edition of the tales. As expressed in his letter to Samuel Rogers, dated December 21, 1833, Charles Lamb considered the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery as merely a group of unimaginative pictures:

What injury (short of the theatres) did not Boydell's 'Shakespeare Gallery' do me with Shakespeare?--to have Opie's Shakespeare, Northcote's Shakespeare, light-hearted Fuseli's Shakespeare, heavy-headed Romney's Shakespeare, wooden-headed West's Shakespeare (though he did the best in 'Lear'), deaf-headed Reynold's Shakespeare, instead of my, and everybody's Shakespeare. To be tied down to an authentic face of Juliet! To have Imogen's portrait! To confine the illimitable!⁶¹

Nevertheless, Bickers' photographic reproductions of *The Boydell Gallery* soon became one of the main sources of illustrations for many later editions of Lambs' tales, not only for those published by Bickers and Son, but also those brought out by other publishers, such as the Oxford editions (see the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1905/4 & 1925/1).

The monopoly of Charles and Mary Lamb's tales, which had existed since the

⁶⁰ See: *The Boydell Gallery. A Collection of Engravings Illustrating the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, By the Artists of Great Britain* (London: Bickers, 1874).

⁶¹ Charles Lamb's Letter to Samuel Rogers (Letter 984; December 21, 1833), in Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1935), III, 393-96 (p. 394).

1840s, ended in 1879, when the first condensed edition of *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* was published for children. This was also brought out by Bickers and Son. *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* was written by Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke. It was originally issued in fifteen booklets at a shilling each between 1850 and 1852, but, after every five tales had been completed, they were also bound and sold as a collected volume until there were three volumes altogether (see the Annotated Bibliography: Cla. 1850/1.) Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke did not write the fifteen tales for children, and the tales contained extremely graphic accounts of violence and sex. The tales probably fell into the hands of children by accident. As pointed out by Cowden Clarke herself, 'the word "Girlhood"' in the title of the series probably 'induced some idea that these are juvenile tales'.⁶² The unsuitability of the standard text as children's reading material probably alarmed the publisher, who had re-issued it in 1864. Consequently, the publisher invited Sabilla Novello, sister of Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, to condense the fifteen tales into a collected volume of children's stories (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Cla. 1864/1 & 1879/1).

Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke was commissioned to write *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines; In a Series of Fifteen Tales* in 1850, after she had published the first analytical essay in a series, 'Shakspeare [sic] -Studies of Women', in *The Ladies' Companion at Home and Abroad* earlier in the same year. *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* shared the same fundamental idea with the series of essays, as advocated in 'Shakspeare [sic] - Studies of Women':

in Shakspeare's mirror, a woman may obtain a psychological reflex of her

⁶² Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke's 'Preface to New Edition', in Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines in a Series of Tales*, 5 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1892), I, vi.

nature that may aid her to its spotless array, and to the utmost perfection in adornment of which it is susceptible.⁶³

Evidently, this notion about Shakespeare's plays or, more precisely, about Shakespearean heroines, is based on Mary Lamb's idea of using Shakespeare's female characters as positive and negative role models in the fourteen comic tales (see also Chapter IV). Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke acknowledged the Lambs' influence in her autobiography, *My Long Life*; since her father had given her the two volumes of 'an early edition of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare',⁶⁴

a vast world of new ideas and new delights that opened to me--a world in which I have ever since much dwelt, and always with supreme pleasure and admiration.⁶⁵

The condensed edition of *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines; A Series of Fifteen Tales* had proven popular and been reprinted several times, before the standard text was eventually revived in 1892 (Cla. 1892/1.) During the early twentieth century, nonetheless, the condensed edition became the basis of further condensed versions, especially designed to be used in school.⁶⁶ Rather than a rival, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* was, perhaps, a reinforcement to the popularity of Lambs' tales. In 1887, Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, as the author of *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*, was invited to contribute an article to *The Girls' Own Paper*, one of the most popular and respected nineteenth century girls' magazines. In the article entitled 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend', Cowden Clarke advises the

⁶³ Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, 'Shakspeare-Studies of Women', *The Ladies' Companion at Home and Abroad*, 1 (1850), 25.

⁶⁴ Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, *My Long Life: An Autobiographical Sketch*, second edition (London: Unwin, 1896), p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ For example, see Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, *The Girlhood of Viola*, ed. by Isa M. Jackson, John Drinkwater Series for Schools (London: Collins, 1924).

readers of the magazine to obtain 'a copy of "Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare"', as soon as they reach the age of 'eight or nine', and the book shall serve as both an introduction to Shakespeare as well as the beginning of their moral formation (see also Chapter IV.)⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke, 'Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend', *The Girl's Own Paper*, 8 (1887), 562-64 (p. 564).

2.

The year, 1879, was apparently a very prosperous year in the juvenile book-market. Apart from the condensed edition of *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* brought out by Bickers and Son in that year (Cla. 1879/1), three new editions of Lambs' tales were also published by Chatto and Windus (L. 1879/1), Macmillan and Co. (L. 1879/2) and George Routledge (L. 1879/3); notwithstanding, in the previous year, two editions of the Lambs' twenty prose tales had been published by the Virtue brothers (L. 1878/2) and George Routledge (L. 1878/1). This record clearly shows that there was a growing demand for prose narratives adapted for children from Shakespeare's plays, and *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told* was published by Thomas Nelson in the following year, 1880, to meet that demand.

Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told was written by Mary Seamer (later Seymour). It was the first genuine attempt to re-tell the stories from Shakespeare's plays for very young children or, in Seamer's own words, 'the youngest readers'.⁶⁸ Seamer did not, however, tell the stories directly from Shakespeare's plays. Instead, she used Lambs' tales as the basis of her own new narratives. For example, this is how Seamer described the dwelling place of Prospero and Miranda in the beginning of 'The Tempest':

Their home was in a rocky cavern, which was divided into two or three apartments, and in one of these the old man kept his books, which treated of a strange art, much thought of in olden time. It was called *magic*[...]⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Mary Seymour, *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told*, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Nelson, 1883), I, iii.

⁶⁹ Mary Seamer, *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told* (London: Nelson, 1880), p. 9.

The passage is evidently paraphrased and further condensed from Mary Lamb's prose tale:

They lived in a cave, or cell, made out of a rock: it was divided into several apartments, one of which Prospero called his study; there he kept his books, which chiefly treated of magic, a study at that time much affected by all learned men[...] (I, 1)

The verbal resemblance is unmistakable. Besides, Mary (Seamer) Seymour also admitted in 1883 that her stories were 'a simpler rendering' of 'the stories of Shakespeare's plays [...] ably told by a writer of long-past days'.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, in the case of certain famous Shakespearean speeches, Seamer quoted directly from the plays rather than follow the Lambs' prose paraphrases. For example, Portia's speech on Mercy is paraphrased in prose in Mary Lamb's tale but, rather than a condensed version of Lamb's prose passage, the first four lines of that speech (*MV*, IV. i. 180-83) were quoted verbatim and in verse form in Seamer's 'The Merchant of Venice'.⁷¹ In this manner, Seamer hoped to introduce children to 'the "Beauties of Shakespeare"' as early as possible.⁷²

In the following year, 1881, *Stories from Shakespeare. Complete Richard the IIIrd.* [sic] was published by 'Boys of England' (Bre. 1881/1.(R3)). It was probably a revolt against both Lambs' tales, which were regarded by many Victorians as girls' moral stories, and Seamer's *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told*, which was targeted at very young children. The publishing firm, 'Boys of England', marketed *Complete Richard the IIIrd.* [sic] as a book exclusively for boys. It was complete in that even the most violent and blood-thirsty scenes in Shakespeare's original plays, *Richard III*

⁷⁰ Mary Seymour, *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told*, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Nelson, 1883), I, iii.

⁷¹ Mary Seamer, *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told* (London: Nelson, 1880), p. 27.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. v.

and the last two scenes of *Henry VI. Part III*, which would have been omitted from Lambs' tales and Seamer's stories, were included. For example, after Richard murdered King Henry, as narrated by the anonymous story-teller, Henry VI is found 'sitting in his chair, his head fallen on the table, a pool of blood around his feet.'⁷³ A black and white drawing of 'The Murder of the Two Princes' (R3, IV. iii. 1-19) was also inserted.⁷⁴

The publisher did not advertise any further volumes, when *Complete Richard IIIrd.* [sic] was first introduced in the autumn of 1881. However, a second volume, *Complete Hamlet*, came out on the following Monday. From the issue of this second volume, the name of the author, Edwin J. Brett, was printed on all subsequent title-pages. One complete story from Shakespeare was brought out every week (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Bre. 1881/1.(HAM)), and, eventually, it ran into a series of twelve volumes by January 1882 (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Bre. 1882/2.) The basic principle of story-telling remained the same in all the volumes. For example, the blinding of Gloucester was given a sensational account in the eighth volume, *Complete King Lear*:

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth ere he [Cornwall] tore out his right eye. "The other too," cried the Hecate Regan. "One side will mock the other." And inserting her long nails, she drew out the quivering orb, and stamped upon it.⁷⁵

To make the event more horrifying, Brett altered the order of events. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Gloucester's eyes are both torn out by Cornwall (KL, III. vii. 80-83). Brett not only arranged for Regan to tear out the other eye of Gloucester, but also rendered the blinding process in graphic detail.

⁷³ Edwin J. Brett, *Stories of Shakespeare*, 12 vols. (London: Boys of England, 1881-2), I, 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, I, 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, VIII, 12.

Six new *Stories from Shakespeare*, retold by A. S. MacFarland and Abby Sage from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Pericles*, *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, were published by Blackie and Son also in 1882 (McF. 1882/1.) Exactly how MacFarland collaborated with Sage is unknown, but what is known is that all six stories, similar to Brett's complete 'Stories from Shakespeare's Plays' series, narrated both the plots and the sub-plots of the original plays, and included a considerable number of minor characters, including Amiens in *As You Like It*. Unlike Brett's stories, however, MacFarland and Sage would still fall back upon Mary Lamb's comic tales, whenever they were confronted by a reference to sex or impropriety (see also Chapter III.) Therefore, in 'The Wonderful Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre', retold from Shakespeare's *Pericles*, Marina, like Mary Lamb's Marina, was sold 'as a female slave', not as a prostitute, in 'Mitylene'⁷⁶ (see also Chapters III & V).

In 1883, Seymour's *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told* ran into a new edition. The second edition contained all the twenty-six stories published in the 1880 edition as well as the other eight newly retold by Mary (Seamer) Seymour. The 1883 edition was the first attempt to adapt all the dramatic works into prose stories for children. The book was divided into two volumes; the first volume included all the stories retold from Shakespeare's *Comedies*, and the second, *Tragedies and Histories*. In terms of story-telling, the quality of the second volume was, in general, much inferior to the first.

Charles and Mary Lamb did not tell all the stories from the Shakespeare's plays in 1806; therefore, Seymour had to rely on herself to narrate most of the stories from Shakespearean tragedies and all the stories from Shakespeare's history plays, none of

⁷⁶ A. S. MacFarland & Abby Sage, *Stories from Shakespeare* (London: Blackie, 1882), p. 87.

which had ever been touched by either of the Lambs. Without Lambs' tales as a convenient textual basis, Seymour was evidently at a complete loss. For example, the two parts of *Henry IV* were conflated into one story in the second volume. Seymour began her narration by mentioning the lives of Hotspur, Hal and Falstaff, but nearly all the story-lines were begun only to be dropped immediately. Seymour, moreover, criticised Hal as a wild prince, but no actual evidence of his wild behaviour was ever given. She also mentioned the 'plan of high-way robbery'⁷⁷ and that Prince Hal 'was persuaded' to join in,⁷⁸ but never told her readers what actually happened to the robbery plan, etc. Although 'Henry IV' was first published in 1880, its drawbacks became more noticeable, when it was grouped with the other tragic and historical tales, most of which shared the same problem, in the second volume of the 1883 edition of *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told*.

Seymour's failure in re-telling a comprehensive story from any of Shakespeare's plays independently, may explain why those plays most frequently chosen to be adapted into children's stories coincide with the titles included in the collection of Lambs' tales. Indeed, many writers found that Lambs' tales were a useful reference book while working on their own new prose versions of Shakespeare's plays (further discussed later in the chapter.) Therefore, the most popular choice is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, retold thirty times from 1806 to 1998. It is followed by *The Tempest*, twenty-eight times, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* and *Macbeth*, twenty-five, *Romeo and Juliet*, twenty-three, *Hamlet*, twenty-two, *King Lear*, twenty-one, *Twelfth Night*, twenty times. The number ten

⁷⁷ Mary Seymour, *Shakespeare's Stories Simply Told*, second edition, 2 vols. (London: Nelson, 1883), II, 184.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 185.

choice is *Julius Caesar*, which is the only play listed in the top ten chart, which was not touched by the Lambs. *Julius Caesar* is one of the most frequently performed Shakespearean dramas; according to Terry Deary, only *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *The Taming of the Shrew* have been able to compete with its popularity in the theatre,⁷⁹ and this might have encouraged writers to tell its story to children.

The number eleven on the chart is *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry IV. Part I*, both retold sixteen times. *Othello*, retold fifteen times, is the number thirteen, followed by *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Henry V*, both retold fourteen times. *King John*, retold thirteen times, is the number sixteen. *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Cymbeline*, *Richard III* and *Henry IV. Part II* have been retold twelve times and are all equally ranked as top seventeen on the chart. However, after taking into account that H. S. Morris' s, Winston Stokes' s and J. C. Trewin' s books (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Mor. 1893/1; Sto. 1911/1; Tre. 1964/1) all contained their own new versions as well as Lambs' twenty tales, in order to present a complete collection of stories from Shakespeare' s plays, *The Winter's Tale* has actually been chosen no less frequently than *Julius Caesar*; meanwhile, *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew* are, in fact, slightly more popular than *Henry IV. Part I*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Cymbeline* are more popular than *Henry V*. *The Comedy of Errors*, the number twenty-one on the chart, is actually as popular as *King John*, and has been chosen oftener than *Richard III* and *Henry IV. Part II*. Altogether, fifteen of the twenty titles included in Lambs' tales appear on the top twenty chart; that is, the considerable proportion of three quarters (for the complete listing, see the Frequency and Popularity Chart.)

These four new versions of collected prose narratives, adapted for children from

⁷⁹ See: Terry Deary, *Top Ten Shakespeare Stories* (London: Scholastic Children' s Books, 1998).

Shakespeare's plays and published from 1880 to 1883, established the basic principles and paraphrasing methods, which were to be applied over and over again by writers of the next eighty years and beyond. The prose narratives were, henceforth, treated as no more than a temporary medium to introduce children to the actual words of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's own words, first of all, were to be quoted as much and as often as possible in prose adaptations for children. The more famous a Shakespearean speech, the more frequently it would be quoted. Some of the prose narratives were so full of quotations, that there was hardly any space left for story-telling. For example, consistent and coherent narrative was almost completely dispensed with in Thomas Carter's *Stories from Shakespeare* (Car. 1910/1) and *Shakespeare's Stories of the English Kings* (Car. 1912/1).

In order to provide children with a complete and accurate impression of any Shakespearean drama, furthermore, it became an absolutely vital requirement for a prose adaptation to recount all the incidents taking place in the original play, and to mention as many dramatic characters involved in that play as possible. Sometimes, this principle was applied by certain writers to the extreme. These writers, such as Alice Spencer Hoffman (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Hof. 1904/1; 1905/1; 1906/1) and Samuel Davis (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Dav. 1928/1; 1930/1; 1931/1; 1932/1; 1933/1; 1935/1), would do far more than merely recount the events. They often elaborated on some minor details in the dramatic text and portrayed the dramatic characters as real men or women, who owned lives beyond the play-text or were endowed with some sort of strong physical presence. In the case of Hoffman's prose stories, in particular, the prose adaptations could occasionally turn out to be as long and as complicated as the original dramas. Meanwhile, the other aspect of completeness, to supply children with prose stories retold from all of

Shakespeare's dramatic works, brought about many supplementary or companion editions to Lambs' tales, e.g. *Tales from Shakespeare, Including Those by Charles and Mary Lamb, With a Continuation by Harrison S. Morris*, first published in 1893 (Mor. 1893/1) and *All Shakespeare's Tales. Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb and Tales from Shakespeare by Winston Stokes*, first published in 1911 (Sto. 1911/1).

These special efforts for completeness and accuracy, tellingly illustrated a growing familiarity with Shakespeare's dramatic works. It showed how successfully Charles and Mary Lamb had achieved the ultimate aim, for which they set out to write the twenty prose tales:

if they [the tales] be fortunately so done as to prove delightful to any of you, my young readers, I hope will have no worse effect upon you, than to make you wish yourselves a little older, that you may be allowed to read the Plays at full length (such a wish will be neither peevish nor irrational).⁸⁰

Although both the accuracy and the completeness of Lambs' tales could not match up to their later rivals, the influence of Lambs' tales has not abated over the years. Perhaps, it is partly because most of the new narratives were either modified versions of Lambs' tales or new stories which constantly referred to them.

The new prose adaptations differed from one another mainly in the degree and methods in which they observed and combined the striving for textual purity with the interpretation of Lambs' tales. For example, between 1928 and 1935, Samuel Davis turned thirteen of Shakespeare's plays into considerably detailed and accurate prose stories (as mentioned earlier in the chapter). Nonetheless, in describing the love at first sight of Celia and Oliver in *As You Like It*, Davis evidently did not follow

⁸⁰ Charles Lamb, 'Preface', in Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespear. Degisned for the Use of Young Persons*, 2 vols. (London: Hodgkins, 1807), I, viii.

Shakespeare's drama, where no reason for the sudden emotion is given (V. ii. 1-9):

The manly way in which Oliver owned up to the wrong he had done, and the sorrow he showed for his deeds, quite touched the heart of tender little Celia, and she straightway fell in love with him. And Oliver, seeing how sorry Celia was for him and how much she pitied him, fell in love with her.⁸¹

Davis's narration, in fact, verbally resembled Mary Lamb's description of the same love affair:

The sincere sorrow that Oliver expressed for his offence made such a lively impression on the kind heart of Aliena, that she instantly fell in love with him; and Oliver observing how much she pitied the distress he told her he felt for his fault, he as suddenly fell in love with her. (I, 108)

On the other hand, E. Nesbit, as she admitted in the author's 'Introduction' in 1895, 'arrange[d]' her stories, 'with the recollection of Lamb's tales'.⁸² Although Nesbit's *The Children's Shakespeare* was, by and large, based on Lambs' tales, she restored several incidents and dramatic characters, previously omitted by Charles and Mary Lamb. For example, Malvolio, omitted from Mary Lamb's 'Twelfth Night', was described as 'Olivia's steward, a vain officious man' in Nesbit's version of the same story.⁸³ The gulling of Malvolio, nevertheless, was still omitted from Nesbit's 'Twelfth Night', in order to maintain the focus on the romantic love story of Viola, as re-arranged by Mary Lamb in 1806 (see also Chapter III).

The pressure of maintaining the purity of Shakespeare's dramatic texts also had some effect on the ways in which certain new editions of Lambs' tales were edited. Either to make the prose tales more entertaining or to strengthen their educational function, some editors of Lambs' tales occasionally interpolated additional matter. For example, a sumptuous two-volume edition of Lambs' tales was published by

⁸¹ Samuel Davis, *Shakespeare's As You Like It*, Shakespeare Retold for Little People (London: Bell, 1928), p. 76.

⁸² E. Nesbit, *The Children's Shakespeare* (London: Tuck, [1895]), p. 6.

Raphael Tuck in 1900. Tuck's edition was edited by F. J. Furnivall, the founder of New Shakspeare [*sic*] Society (1873-94). Furnivall supplied each of the twenty tales with an individual introduction, in which the characters and the sub-plots omitted from Lambs' tales were extensively discussed. Moreover, Furnivall summarised the other six tragedies and comedies, which were excluded from the collected volume of Lambs' tales, to complete a collection of prose narratives of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies (see also Chapter II and the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1900/1.) Four years later, Israel Gollancz became involved in a new project called *The Lamb Shakespeare for Young People*, and made more drastic attempts to maintain the textual purity of Shakespeare's dramatic works.

Israel Gollancz (1864-1930) was an outstanding Shakespearean scholar and the general editor of the 'Temple Shakespeare'. He began *The Lamb Shakespeare for Young People* in 1904, but the project was soon aborted for unknown reasons.

Unreadiness was probably one of them, for the little volume published in 1904 by Alexander Moring, contained incorrect information about the Lambs, which was surprisingly unscholarly (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1904/3.)

Nevertheless, the project was revived in 1907 and eventually ran into a popular ten-volume series, 'The Lamb Shakespeare for the Young'. The first volume of 1904 was re-issued with corrections, and the volumes that followed the first were, in general, more carefully edited and prepared in 1907 (see also the Annotated Bibliography: L. 1907/1; 1908/1; 1909/1.) The standard approach in this series to Lambs' tales was to insert some famous scenes and speeches, omitted from Lambs' tales and, occasionally, Gollancz would interpolate a comment or an explanation into the tales or newly inserted scenes. For example, the casket scenes omitted by Mary

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 68.

Lamb, were restored in dramatic form in the fourth volume, *The Merchant of Venice*. Gollancz declared that, in so doing, he meant to contrast a tale of love through the casket scenes with the 'tale of hate',⁸⁴ or the story of 'the Pound of Flesh'.⁸⁵ However, the point about Portia choosing Bassanio for her true love and his genuine appreciation of her wisdom in Mary Lamb's original tale, was completely lost in Gollancz's interpolations (see also Chapter V).

From time to time, some interesting points would be made by an editor of Lambs' tales or some new insight about Shakespeare's plays would be brought up by a narrator of new prose stories. However, apart from E. Nesbit's *The Children's Shakespeare*, which is still available in the United States of America, none of the prose narratives published since 1880, are still in print either in Britain or in America. As a class of literature, they were dependant upon the existence of a greater literature, and they had little or no true literary merit of their own. Their authors never intended that they should exist for their own sake; as a result, they quickly disappeared without a trace. It was not until 1964 that children's writers began to realise that, although an adaptation of any literary classic is meant to be an introduction to a world of great literature, the adaptation itself can still exist for its own sake and even become a classic in its own right. Lambs' tales are the best example in this case, as noted by Roger Lancelyn Green in his fourth/ revised edition of *Tellers of Tales*:

[Lambs'] Tales may not be complete guides to the plays, but they live by being works of literature in their own right: beautiful charming preludes or companions to our earliest meetings with the real Shakespeare.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Israel Gollancz's editorial note, in Mary Lamb, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by Israel Gollancz, The Lamb Shakespeare for the Young (London: Chatto & Windus, 1908), p. 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Roger Lancelyn Green, *Tellers of Tales: Children's Books and Their Authors from 1800 to 1964* (London: Ward, 1965), p. 14.

On this basis, more successful and better written prose adaptations were to come.

3.

As the Shakespeare quatercentenary of 1964 approached, the number of new editions of Lambs' tales and new prose versions of Shakespeare's plays steadily increased. In 1962, the publishing firm, Golden Pleasure Books, brought out a new edition of the Lambs' twenty tales, charmingly illustrated by Karel Svolinsky (L. 1962/1). In 1963, Collier-Macmillan issued, in London, an American edition of Lambs' tales, finely illustrated by a New York artist, Richard M. Powers (L. 1963/1.) Irene Buckman's *Twenty Tales from Shakespeare* also came out in this year. Buckman's book was not, however, designed as an introduction to Shakespeare's plays themselves, but meant 'for the young playgoer and the young playgoer's parents',⁸⁷ and was illustrated with photographs of recent productions of the selected twenty plays. As if in anticipation of the quatercentenary celebration, one more new edition of Lambs' tales, published by Blackie and Son (L. 1964/1), along with four other new versions of prose narratives, adapted from Shakespeare's dramatic works, appeared in 1964.

Roger Lancelyn Green's *Tales from Shakespeare*, like Buckman's book, was also designed to be 'a vivid preparation for seeing the plays performed, or for reading after a visit to the theatre';⁸⁸ whereas, *Tales from Shakespeare. All Those Told by*

⁸⁷ Peggy Ashcroft's 'Foreword', in Irene Buckman, *Twenty Tales from Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. iii. This thesis only deals with prose narratives designed to introduce children to Shakespeare's plays, as Lambs' tales were originally intended; therefore, any publications designed solely for the purpose of introducing children to the theatre are not my concern, and will not be listed in the Annotated Bibliography either.

⁸⁸ Christopher Fry's 'Foreword', in Roger Lancelyn Green, *Tales from Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (London: Gollancz, 1964), I & II, iii. This item is not listed in the Annotated Bibliography; see the previous

Charles and Mary Lamb With 12 Others Newly Told by J. C. Trewin (Tre. 1964/1)

was designed to provide children with a collection of prose narratives, retold from the complete dramatic works of Shakespeare. Many famous quotations, especially from Shakespeare's history plays, were included in Trewin's book. Shirley Goulden's *Tales from Shakespeare* (Gou. 1964/1), although a picture book, accurately summarised the stories of five selected plays. Among the four new prose versions, however, Ian Serraillier's *Stories from Shakespeare. The Enchanted Island* showed a deliberate effort, on the part of the narrator, to break free from the restrictions of accuracy and completeness, which had been imposed on the prose adaptations from Shakespeare's plays for eighty odd years.

Ian Serraillier's status as a prominent children's writer had been firmly established since the publication of *The Silver Sword* in 1956. His intent in bringing out *The Enchanted Island* was explicitly stated in the publisher's advertisement printed on the paper wrapper of the book:

Mr. Serraillier's purpose in *The Enchanted Island* is therefore a limited one. He does not try to form the beginnings of a taste for Shakespeare's poetry. Nor does he try to summarise the plots, or even to cover whole plays. These are stories *from* the plays, not *of* them. Usually, as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*, he chooses the main plot. Sometimes, guided by the subject matter, he follows one of the side paths--in *Twelfth-Night* it is the Malvolio story, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Bottom and the workmen.⁸⁹

The plot-selecting method applied by Serraillier clearly displayed the influence of Lambs' tales (see also Chapter III), and the result of Serraillier's endeavours was a collection of straightforward and uncondescending prose stories, full of action.

However, when Serraillier came to narrate the story of *Hamlet*, possibly overwhelmed

footnote.

⁸⁹ The publisher's advertisement, in Ian Serraillier, *Stories from Shakespeare. The Enchanted Island*

by the reverence attached to this particular play, he included a detailed account of the complicated dramatic actions and used up twice as much space as he normally reserved for a single story (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Ser. 1964/1.) Nevertheless, the idea that prose adaptations of Shakespeare's plays should be treated as a class of literature in its own right was to be gradually accepted.

In 1976, when Bernard Miles selected five of Shakespeare's dramas, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for his *Favourite Tales from Shakespeare*, he actually produced five free adaptations, rather than re-telling stories, of the selected plays. Miles's stories were told for the sake of introducing children to Shakespeare as much as for the sake of story-telling itself. Moreover, as an experienced actor and producer, Miles sometimes would integrate his long working experience in the theatre into the book and, thus, enriched the contents (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Mil. 1976/1.) Yet, better works were still to come.

Shakespeare Stories and its sequel, *Shakespeare Stories II*, were published in 1985 and 1994 respectively. Both were written by Leon Garfield, who also wrote the twelve screen-plays for the *Animated Shakespeare*. The twelve thirty-minute programmes, i.e. *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Winter's Tale*, *As You Like It*, *Othello*, *Julius Caesar* and *Richard III*, were intended for older children, age around ten; whereas, *Shakespeare Stories* and *Shakespeare Stories II* were designed for teenagers. Therefore, Garfield often examined the incidents of a Shakespearean drama as part of the progress towards maturity or the sad loss of childhood. For example, Garfield describes the deposition of King Richard the

(London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), wrapper.

Second in these terms:

Richard was indeed a child, who had been fetched into the harsh world of men; and his loss was more than the loss of kingship; it was the loss of childhood, too.⁹⁰

Ophelia's tragedy, as interpreted by Garfield, is partly due to her failure to catch up with Hamlet, who is fast growing up into manhood. A huge gap of communication and mutual understanding is, therefore, breached between Ophelia and Hamlet:

He [Hamlet] did indeed love Ophelia, but for her dear soul and not for her unformed mind. In her stiff words he smelt out the instruction of her pompous meddling father; and he became very angry.⁹¹

Garfield's stories also contain other omissions and alterations, which show the influence of Lambs' tales. For example, as in Mary Lamb's 'The Taming of the Shrew', the taming methods applied by Garfield's Petruchio are more humane and less humiliating than those used by Shakespeare's Petruchio. Garfield's Katherina, like Lamb's Katherina, is spared from the jeers and taunts of Grumio, and she is not totally denied food either.⁹² (Mary Lamb's 'The Taming of the Shrew' is analysed in detail in Chapter V).

Leon Garfield's stories are so rich in metaphors, beautiful rhymes and rhyming patterns, along with his profound insights into human nature and about human sufferings, that *Shakespeare Stories* and *Shakespeare Stories II* are not undeserving of the attention of adult readers (see also the Annotated Bibliography: Gar. 1985/1 & 1994/1). Not surprisingly, Garfield's stories were singled out and highly recommended by Stanley Wells in the Shakespeare Lecture, 'Tales from Shakespeare', at the British Academy:

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 135.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 187.

⁹² See: Leon Garfield, *Shakespeare Stories* (London: Gollancz, 1985), p. 116.

Garfield is best known as a writer for teenagers, and his volume [*Shakespeare Stories* (1985)] is presented in a manner that seems intended primarily for young readers, but his transmuting power gives his stories a wider appeal; they are not pale reflections of Shakespeare, not introductory studies, but fully imagined recreations with a life of their own.⁹³

Both Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* and *Shakespeare Stories II* are regarded as modern classics, and it is to be expected that they will endure the test of time, as Lambs' tales have stood the trial of nearly two hundred years.

In 1806, the project of *Tales from Shakespear* might have been initiated by either William Godwin or Mary Jane Godwin, and the twenty plays retold by the Lambs were probably also chosen by the Godwins (see also Chapters III & V). Nonetheless, it was Charles Lamb/Elia and his Bridget/Mary Lamb, who wrote the twenty prose tales, and, in carrying out the project, they have not only given the world a valuable collection of children's stories adapted from Shakespeare's plays, which in itself is a literary classic and no mean achievement, but also innovated the invaluable idea that any adaptations for children from great literary works really belong to a class of literature in its own right. This notion has only begun to be understood by children's writers since 1964, and brought about another classic of English literature, Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* and *Shakespeare Stories II*. It is to be hoped that more enduring and even better written children's literature of this nature will be produced in the next millennium for the delight and enjoyment of children.

⁹³ Stanley Wells, 'Shakespeare Lecture: Tales from Shakespeare', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 73 (1987), 125-152 (p. 149).

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