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Appropriate(d) nursery reading; or, Charles Lamb's (implied) child reader and the adaptation of 'adult' fiction for the Godwins' Juvenile Library

One does not have to look hard to find the British Romantics' anxiety concerning early nineteenth-century children's books—or scholarly debates about Romanticism and children's literature. Often brandished about in this fray is Charles Lamb's letter to Coleridge railing against "that cursed Barbauld crew".[1] Lamb is a curious figure in Romantic criticism—a prolific essayist and children's writer not often known for his children's works, he is frequently treated as the fullest expression of the Romantic critical mind or "the perpetrator of its worst excesses."[2] Lamb certainly belongs to the British Romantic huddle: a close correspondent with Coleridge and Wordsworth, he is immortalised as "gentle-hearted Charles" in Coleridge's "Lime-Tree Bower". Moreover, Lamb's representations of the child seem seminally Romantic. His cry, "The soul of a child… how apprehensive! how imaginative! how religious!",[3] and his comment that "beautiful interest… made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child",[4] correspond with Wordsworth's declaration that the "Child is the Father of the Man". Yet the assumption that Lamb subscribed to a Romantic ideology of the spiritually pure child becomes problematic when examining his works for children, published by the Godwins' Juvenile Library.

The Juvenile Library was established in 1805 by the Romantic radical republican, William Godwin, and his second wife, Mary-Jane. The Godwins commissioned pieces by authors like the Lamb siblings, educators such as William Mylius, and worked with illustrators including William Mulready. The Library was not particularly profitable, but Pamela Clemit's claim that it was "one of the most successful small outlets for educational books and children's literature" in the Romantic period remains a dominant critical view.[5] This question of "success" is fraught: if the Library was not financially profitable, how does one measure "success"? Past critics have cited Godwin's statement that the child's sympathetic

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[1] Letter to Coleridge 23 October 1802, in *The Complete Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol. VI (*Letters* 1796–1820), edited by E. V. Lucas, (London: Methuen & Co, 1904), 253.
[2] Joseph E. Riehl, *That Dangerous Figure: Charles Lamb and the Critics*, (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), 4.
[3] Charles Lamb, review of *The Excursion*, cited by George L. Barnett, "'That Cursed Barbauld Crew' or Charles Lamb and Children's Literature", *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* 25 (Jan 1979): 11.
[4] See note 1.
[5] Pamela Clemit, "Philosophical anarchism in the schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805–25", Biblion: *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 9 (1/2): 44; also Margaret Fearn, "William Godwin and the 'Wilds of Literature', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 29.3 (1981): 247–257.

imagination is "the ground-plot upon which the edifice of a sound morality must be erected" as particularly innovative.[6] In this reading, didacticism and delight are considered as dichotomous, even contradictory aims, and success is measured by the extent to which the Library's books promoted imaginative, rather than educational material. In this narrative of the development of children's literature, the fact that Lamb's *The King and Queen of Hearts* is entertaining and not educative speaks in its favour as a "successful" Juvenile Library text. However, by the same token, one need only open Mrs Caroline Barnard's *The Rays of the Rainbow* or Eliza Fenwick's *Grammar Lessons* to conclude with Geoffrey Summerfield that the Library was based on an ostensibly "unresolvable" philosophical commitment to unite child enlightenment with imaginative stimulation.[7] But this once dominant interpretation of children's literary history as a progression from dry to imaginative texts is increasingly under question, and Donelle Ruwe has scornfully termed it an "outdated Manichaen approach."[8] Rather, it is more helpful to assess the Juvenile Library's philosophical and ideological commitments using a more nuanced understanding of William Godwin's philosophy. This essay builds on Susan Manly's analysis of Godwin's concept of the imagination as radical and anarchic, able to sift through multiple viewpoints to decide upon a personal moral value system.[9] In this light, the Godwins' Juvenile Library may be credited as a pioneering enterprise. The two Charles Lamb works examined in this article, *The King and Queen of Hearts: With the Rogueries of the Knave Who Stole the Queen's Pies*, and *The Adventures of Ulysses*, are adaptations of texts not initially written for child readers. They retain (even in their adapted forms) questionable and ambiguous elements that suggest Lamb's shared commitment with Godwin in presenting the child reader with the chance to exercise his or her imagination in forming individual moral judgements.

The original rhyme *The King and Queen of Hearts* appears to have crossed over from the adult sphere of satire into the world of children's nursery rhymes. The rhyme's earliest dated appearance was in 1782 in *The European Review,* where it was used as a political satire; five years later Canning used it as the basis of a satire on poetic criticism.[10] Peter and Iona Opie posit that it was already a nursery rhyme by the time

[6] William Scofield [William Godwin], Preface to *Bible Stories*, (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806), 1. Also Fearn, "Godwin and the 'Wilds of Literature'; Barnett, " 'That Cursed Barbauld Crew'".
[7] Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century, (*London: Methuen & Co, 1984), 246.
[8] Donelle Ruwe, *British Children's Poetry in the Romantic Era: Verse, Riddle, and Rhyme*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4.
[9] Susan Manly, "William Godwin's 'School of Morality', *The Wordsworth Circle* 43.3 (2012): 135–142.
[10] Peter and Iona Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951, 2nd edition, 1997), 427.

Charles Lamb produced his elaboration, [11] but this is an unsubstantiated claim. Lamb's elaboration is dated from 1805. His adaptation is unusual: he takes the first line of the traditional rhyme and produces a series of related sextets. Unusual, but not a masterpiece: *The King and Queen of Hearts: With the Rogueries of the Knave Who Stole the Queen's Pies* is as unwieldy as its title suggests. Nevertheless the title is thematically indicative: by highlighting the knave's thievery, Lamb signals that his work will thematise challenges to the 'right' of authority figures.

The text is packaged to recall chapbooks (see Fig. 1.). Chapbooks were small, unbound books that consisted of folded sheets of paper stitched together. Due to their production methods, chapbooks were cheap, often sold at a penny or less. They enjoyed a wide distribution, particularly in rural areas, as they were not sold by booksellers in city centres, but by itinerant merchants known as chapmen.[12] Chapbook culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became increasingly seen as morally and culturally questionable. As Margaret Spufford notes, chapbooks were so cheap they were often omitted from inventories, and many diarists confessed to reading chapbooks as a sin.[13] Mary V. Jackson similarly notes the association of chapbooks with scandalous material,[14] while St Clair describes the picture of life in chapbooks as "harsh and violent" where luck, rather than the increasingly prominent middle-class values of hard work and moral uprightness, shapes protagonists' (and antagonists') fates.[15] Thus, Godwin's omission of references to Charles Lamb and the already-respectable artist William Mulready on the title page evokes the chapbook culture of anonymity and amorality. The book's construction from folded, coarsely stitched pages strengthens the evocation of the chapbook aesthetic and culture.

[11] Ibid.
[12] M. O. Grenby, "Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature," *The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 8.3 (September 2007): 277–78.
[13] See seventeenth-century Puritan diarists John Bunyan and Richard Baxter: Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 46–48
[14] Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England rom Its Beginnings to 1839* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 66.
[15] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 343.

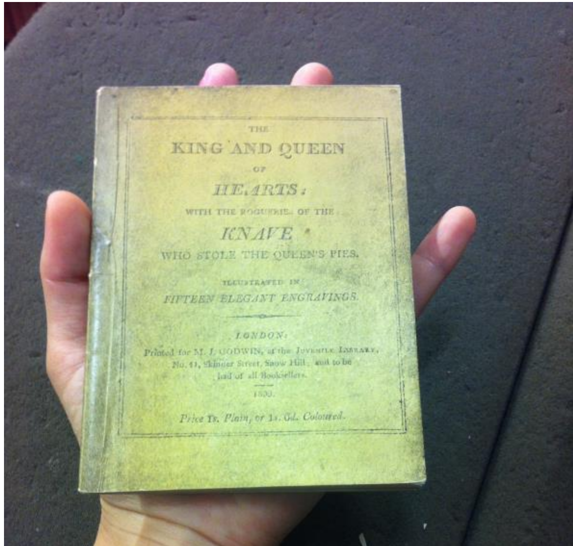

Fig. 1[16]

The poem opens, apparently affirming the authority of the Queen of Hearts:

> High on a throne of State is seen
> She whom all Hearts own for their Queen
> Three pages are in waiting by;
> He with the umbrella is her Spy,
> To spy out rogueries in the dark,
> And smell a rat, as you shall mark.

The scansion of Lamb's stanzas is irregular, mirroring Coleridge's fondness for counting in syllables rather than feet. This unstable scansion mirrors Lamb's complication of notions of authority. Although the stanza opens with the preposition "High", demonstration of the Queen's authority, the syntax of the line recalls Milton's Satan.[17] This intertextuality implicates the Queen with Satan's darkness and malice (Satan not yet recuperated as a Byronic hero), suggesting that her authority, like that of Satan's, is falsely gained and built on unstable premises. Moreover, the sibilance of "State" and "seen" emphasises the arbitrariness of her power. The Queen's authority is implicitly positioned as (mis)perception: her might comes from the fact that she is "seen" atop the throne. Lamb also puns on "own". In the context of the sextet, it speaks not of definite possession, but refers to the fact that the Queen's subjects profess her authority, highlighting again the arbitrary nature of her power. The word also foreshadows the poem's climactic conflict: the knight's act of stealing the Queen's pies, or tension over the concept of private property. Mulready's illustrations parallel Lamb's interrogation of the justice of

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[16] Images reproduced courtesy of the Pollard Collection, Trinity College Dublin.
[17] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II:1.

unequal power structures: his richly clad Queen is juxtaposed with her stunted, slave-like pages. As Mulready's image occupies the majority of the page, the page layout highlights the centrality of Mulready's images to the text (see Fig. 2).

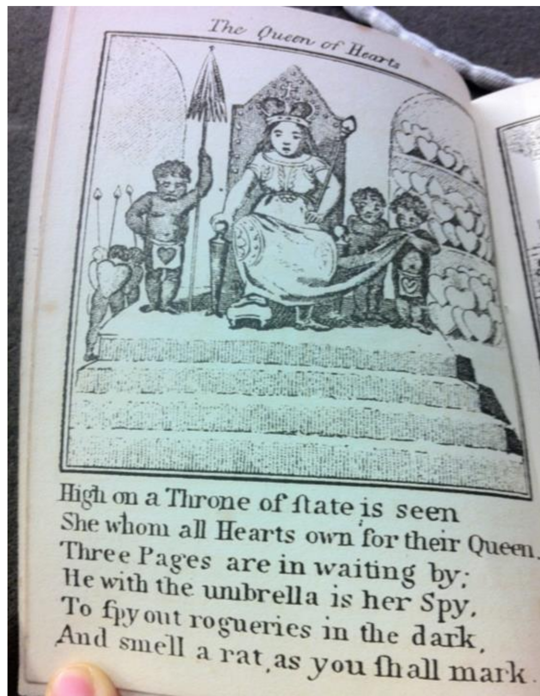

Fig. 2

The images in *The King and Queen of Hearts, with the Rogueries of the Knave Who Stole the Queen's Pies* are ethnically and politically problematic, particularly considering the contextual slavery debates and the then-recent Mansfield ruling. Mulready's images constantly verge on the edge of the offensive and transgressive. The Queen's spy, Mungo, is identified in Lamb's text as possessing an umbrella: he is illustrated as a child-like slave, clad in nothing but a primitive loin-cloth stamped with the Queen's heart. Indeed, the text in general revels in the problematic. Lamb indulges in violence. When Mungo reports the Pambo's thievery (the eponymous Knave), the King punishes Pambo such that the narrator exclaims, "You'll beat poor Pambo into dust!" and Mulready energetically depicts the King gleefully beating the Knave (see Fig. 3).

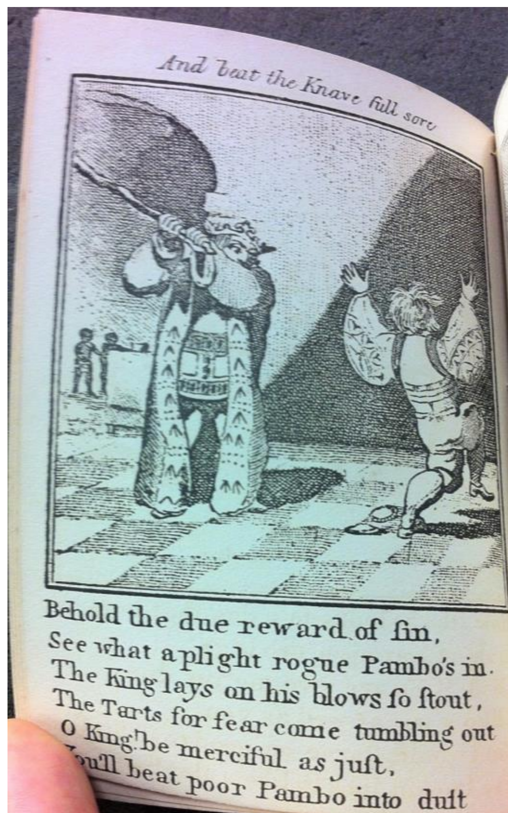

Fig. 3

Most significantly, Lamb adds a coda. The King and Queen eat and drink themselves into a stupor, and Pambo the Knave takes revenge upon Mungo the spy for reporting his thievery: "Now Pambo, is the time for you / Beat little Tell-Tale black and blue!" This is no straightforward adaptation. Readers might want to sympathise with Mungo for discharging his duty to his Queen, but the narrator brands him "little Tell-Tale". William Godwin might write that the imagination ought to be the ground-plot for moral development, but Lamb's imaginative elaboration between the lines of the rhyme leads to amoral violence.

If Lamb adhered to an image of a spiritually pure child, the violence and crude poetry in *The King and Queen of Hearts* must lead us to conclude with George Barnett that Lamb's children's works are not "consistent with his theory".[18] Yet Barnett's criticism was that Lamb's children's works are *too* didactic.[19] Is *The King and Queen of Hearts* an outlier in Lamb's *oeuvre*; a piece of 'hack work"? In that case, Barnett's claim that "Expediency required concession" must be our final stamp.[20]

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[18] Barnett, "Lamb and Children's Literature", 15.
[19] Ibid, 10.
[20] Ibid, 15

Yet Lamb was fond enough to mention this work to Wordsworth's son, Johnny,[21] and Godwin thought enough of it to republish it. Moreover, in its anarchic subversions, it *does* reflect some of Lamb's philosophies concerning children's literature. Michael Kooy's analysis of Lamb's moral paradigms suggests that Lamb was an iconoclast who understood moral didacticism in terms of power dynamics.[22] Lamb's elaboration of *The King and Queen of Hearts* and his coda emphasise the arbitrary nature of authority. By transforming the monarchs into violent, gluttonous buffoons, the poem focuses on the shifting dynamic between Pambo and Mungo and encourages children to think *between* the lines of a poem, and *about* the justice and efficacy of authority structures. Indeed, Lamb was reasonably consistent when injecting his philosophical iconoclasm into children's texts.

Of Lamb's children's texts, *The King and Queen of Hearts With the Rogueries of the Knave Who Stole the Queen's Pies* is one of the least famous. Three years later, Godwin commissioned Lamb to write the text that later became one of the most significant of Lamb's children's stories.[23] Lamb's adaptation of *The Odyssey*, *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808), is a chronological, linear narrative focusing solely on Ulysses' journey back to Ithaca. It simplifies the narrative focus and progression of time in *The Odyssey,* but problematises notions of textual authority and nineteenth-century morality.

Lamb highlights the intertextuality of his adaptation to destabilise the concept of an authoritative source text. He describes his work as a "supplement" to Fenelon's *Télémaque,* and makes reference George Chapman as the translator through whom he accessed and adapted Homer's epic.[24] Thus, for the more experienced reader, or for adults mediating the text to child readers, Lamb's preface provokes the question: who holds ultimate authority in determining a narrative when several writers have shaped the narrative for different cultures at different times? This question is mirrored by the events of the narrative, too, for Ulysses is alternately granted protection and curses depending on the whims of the gods, goddesses,

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[21] Lamb, letter to William Wordsworth 1 February 1806, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, edited by E. V. Lucas (New Haven: Yale University Press), vol. 1, 420.
[22] Michael John Kooy, "Lamb's the Moralist", *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 127 (July 2004): 57–69.
[23] Lamb's adaptation was edited for use in schools in the United States of America (edited by David Henry Montgomery in 1886), Ireland (edited by John Cooke, 1892), and England (J. C. Dent, for Westminster School, in 1939); and James Joyce credited *The Adventures of Ulysses, edited by John Cooke* (1892) as a sources of inspiration for *Ulysses*: see Alistair McCleery and Ian Gunn, "Apparatus", *The Adventures of Ulysses, edited by John Cooke* (Edinburgh: Split Pea Press, 1992), 159.
[24] Charles Lamb, "Introduction", *The Adventures of Ulysses, edited by John Cooke* (1892), xix–xx. Quotations from this version will be cited in-text as *Adventures*.

demi-gods and demi-goddesses he encounters. Furthermore, Lamb's insistence that his work was "designed as a supplement" to Fenelon's text has multiple implications. Initially published in 1699 and reissued in 1717, *Télémaque* was a didactic text designed for Louis XIV's grandson. Inspired by *The Odyssey*, *Télémaque* omitted Odysseus' journeys, instead elaborating upon Telemachus' education by Minerva in the seven years. Upon publication it was recognised as a political critique of the current French king, and an attempt to shape the civilising mission of future French kings. Over the course of the eighteenth century royal tutors provided their charges with the text.[25] It was hugely popular internationally and was a bestseller in England in the eighteenth century.[26] Lamb's appeal to Fenelon's text thus operates on several levels. On a functional level, it justifies Lamb's narrative decision to excise a parallel narrative from *The Odyssey* and to focus solely on the journeys of one character, allowing *The Adventures of Ulysses* to be a linear narrative of Ulysses' journeys. Moreover, by invoking Fenelon's text, with its history of engaging with concepts of leadership and authority, Lamb signals his interest, and his text's interest, in questions of power and leadership. This is further politicised by the fact that the book was commonly used in English Dissenting communities.[27] Lamb was, potentially, suggesting a subtle affinity with Dissenting principles, a politically suggestive allusion to the political inequality experienced by Dissenting communities in early nineteenth-century England. Additionally, Lamb's reference to *Télémaque* suggests an appeal to the cultural and didactic authority of Lamb's own adaptation: an attempt to market *The Adventures of Ulysses* as a similarly culturally revolutionary pedagogical text.

In *The Adventures of Ulysses,* Lamb accommodates *The Odyssey* for younger readers—to a degree. In his highly abridged version of Ulysses' journey home, Lamb uses his preface to announce that he will eschew the "prolixity which marks the speeches and the descriptions in Homer" which he hopes will attract young readers, and insists that his work is not "a comparison with any of the direct translations" (Preface, *Adventures*, 1.). Reading Lamb's abridgement, though, we see his joy in challenging child readers with lengthy sentences: so much so that a later editor, John Cooke, replaced many of Lamb's colons with full stops to give "more ease to the text" (*Adventures*, iii.).

[25] See David Avrom Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare As We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007), 171–175.
[26] See Ruth B. Bottigheimer, "Fairy Tales, Telemachus, and Young Misses Magazine: Moderns, Ancients, Gender, and Eighteenth-Century Children's Book Publishing", *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 28.3 (2003): 171–175.
[27] Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 169.

Lamb's decision to alter the form of *The Odyssey* and present a linear narrative is perhaps his greatest accommodation for child readers. Working with a prose narrative instead of a poem, Lamb removes the invocation to the Muse and positions his adaptation as an authoritative history, presenting Ulysses as the embodiment of patriotic fervour:

> This history tells of the wanderings of Ulysses and his followers [...] He was king of a barren spot, and a poor country [...] yet wherever he came, he could never see a soil which appeared in his eyes half so sweet or desirable as his country earth. This made him refuse the offers of the goddess Calypso [...] this gave him strength to break from the enchantments of Circe" (*Adventures*, I:1).

Although referring to Ulysses' journeys as "wanderings", Lamb stabilises Ulysses from the "wondrous" traveller of Chapman's poem who internalises and comes to "know" men and different cultures. In Lamb's text, Ulysses is fundamentally driven by his love for Ithaca, and it is this patriotic passion that provides him with the moral strength to resist supernatural temptation from goddesses and enchantresses. The moral gloss is also significant. As Matthew Grenby notes, the nineteenth-century chapbook industry was still thriving amongst poorer readers and child readers, and "respectable children's literature" was designed so guardians of affluent children might perceive their moral and pedagogical superiority.[28] Lamb's moral gloss in the opening sentence of his work suggests an attempt to appeal to morally concerned guardians browsing bookstores for appropriate reading material for their young charges.

However, after the opening paragraph, Lamb's text repeatedly transgresses expectations that a child's text be morally clear and 'safe'. Lamb insisted that his adaptation should not compromise all the terror or poetry of Homer's narrative. He famously denied Godwin's request to tone down the violent imagery of Polyphemus eating Ulysses' crew, or Ulysses blinding Polyphemus, writing, "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 and wonders".[29] Lamb's comment sheds light on the relationship between authors and publishers, and the different pressures exerted upon each. Godwin was most likely responding to the pressures of middle-class reading expectations, which had been shaped by the rigorous reviews and essays in Sarah Trimmer's periodical *The Guardian of Education*; Lamb (and, perhaps, the

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[28] M. O. Grenby, "Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature".
[29] Charles Lamb, letter to Godwin 11 March 1808, *Letters* ed. E. V. Lucas, 386 – 87.

twenty-first century reader) was responding to the censorious pressure of a seemingly over-zealous editor.[30]

Lamb pointedly limits the extent to which he accommodates his text for children, morally and linguistically. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, educational theorists and child writers were expressing concern that children's books used language in a sophisticated manner beyond the syntactic and linguistic ability of the children for whom they were aimed.[31] Lamb is almost defiant in his indulgence in complex and lengthy sentences that undoubtedly challenged child readers. When Ulysses and his men pass the Sirens, Lamb writes:

> He would have broke his bonds to rush after them; and threatened, wept, sued, entreated, commanded, crying out with tears and passionate imprecations, conjuring his men by all the ties of perils past which they had endured in common, by fellowship and love, and the authority which he retained among them, to let him loose; but at no rate would they obey him. And still the Sirens sang. Ulysses made signs, motions, gestures, promising mountains of gold if they would set him free; but their oars only moved faster. And still the Sirens sang. (III: 50–51)

The energy of the accumulated verbs in the paratactic sentences contrast jarringly with the short, alliterative clause "And still the Sirens sang", enacting Ulysses' passion upon hearing the Sirens, and his inability to break free from the mast. Such passages suggest that Lamb's disclaimer that he "subordinated the manner to the passion" (*Ulysses,* Preface) was disingenuous, or authorial dissembling.

Perhaps most significantly, Lamb transgressed nineteenth-century expectations to communicate clear moral values. He was vague in describing moral virtue. He praises Ulysses as "a brave man struggling with adversity" who "by a wise use of events, and with an inimitable presence of mind… forced out a way for himself" (Preface, *Ulysses*). "Forcing" a way for oneself was not promoted in moralistic

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[30] Evidence of publishers responding to the pressure of Sarah Trimmer's reviews include F. Houlston and Son's publication lists from 1809–10, which list multiple fairy-tales but notably omit *Cinderella*, the fairy-tale Trimmer singled out for criticism in *The Guardian of Education*: Margaret Nancy Cutt, *Mrs Sherwood and her books for Children* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 29.

[31] For instance, Sarah Trimmer marketed *The Little Spelling Book for young Children* as a preparatory text to Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Lessons for Children*, concurring with the Edgeworths that Barbauld's book was above the reading capabilities of such young children: *The Little Spelling Book for young Children,* 2nd ed. (London: J. Johnson, 1786); also Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education,* 2nd edition, 3 vols (New York: Woodstock Books, 1996), 81.

children's works at the time, and "bravery", while a virtue, is morally ambiguous. Indeed, the subject matter with which Lamb was commissioned to work is morally dubious. If a situation required Ulysses to indulge in an extramarital affair, Lamb saw no reason to euphemise the fact. After confronting Circe with her lies, Circe exclaims, "This haughty bosom bends to thee. O Ithacan, a goddess woos thee to her bed" (*Adventures* II:19). Incidentally, this line was removed in later publications of Lamb's adaptation,[32] revealing the editorial tendency to euphemise and 'sanitise' child-specific adaptations for ostensibly moral purposes, regardless of the moral dubiousness of the original tale.

And what could be more morally dubious than the story of *The Odyssey*, nestled within the Greco-Roman mythological body of adulterous and incestuous gods and figures? Charles Lamb highlights the amorality of the Greco-Roman *mythos* when Ulysses descends to the Underworld and encounters notorious mythological women:

> Then saw he Tyro, who when she lived was the paramour of Neptune, and by him had Pelias and Neleus. Antiope, who bore two like sons to Jove [...] with her fair daughter, afterwards her daughter-in-law, Megara. There also Ulysses saw Jocasta, the unfortunate mother and wife of Œdipus; who ignorant of kin wedded with her son, and when she had discovered the unnatural alliance, for shame and grief hanged herself. ("Apparatus", *Adventures*, 158.)

Lamb repeatedly references the infidelities of the Greco-Roman gods, suggesting the importance of questioning the virtue of established figures. Moreover, in his use of free indirect discourse, the narrator implicitly invites the child reader to sympathise with Jocasta, subtly inserting the adjectives "unfortunate" and "ignorant" to explain her accidental incest. It is fairly instructive to note that later editors of Lamb's work altered the content of this scene: David Henry Montgomery entirely omits references to any women in his schoolbook edition of *The Adventures of Ulysses*,[33] while John Cooke emphasises the virtuous characters in Greco-Roman mythology, describing Leda as "the wife of Tyndarus, the mother of the beautiful Helen, and of the two brave brothers, Castor and Pollux" (*Adventures*, II:24). Although Cooke cannot un-write Zeus' rape of Leda, he emphasises Leda's normative role as Tyndarus' wife and as the mother of the "beautiful" Helen (whose

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[32] For more see McCleery and Gunn, "Apparatus", *The Adventures of Ulysses*, 157–58.
[33] Charles Lamb, *The Adventures of Ulysses: Edited, with notes, for schools* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1886), Archive.org, URL: <https://archive.org/stream/adventuresofulysoolambuoft>, 24.

infamous infidelity remains glaringly unmentioned), and the "brave brothers" Castor and Pollux, whose selfless love is described in great detail.

As an inhabitant of this morally dubious world, Ulysses is a remarkably morally dubious protagonist. As the ultimate adapter, he is a skilled liar, and the narrator even praises Ulysses' ability to lie. When Ulysses reaches Ithaca, the narrator declares,

> So prudently he carried his joy, that dissembling his true name and quality, he pretended to the shepherd that he was only some foreigner [...] the young shepherd, laughing [...] said to him: "[...] think you that you are unknown?" (VII:86).

The narrator stresses that Ulysses' dishonesty is *prudence:* a virtue. Moreover, Minerva reacts fondly to Ulysses' attempt to deceive her, and provides him with a divinely empowered disguise as an old beggar, suggesting the arbitrariness of moral categories of good or bad.

At times the narrator intrudes with a moral lesson, usually praising Ulysses' faithfulness to Penelope. The ending, however, avoids middle-class values of self-restraint and self-effacement:

> So from that time the land had rest from the suitors. And the happy Ithacans with songs and solemn sacrifices of praise to the gods celebrated the return of Ulysses: for he that had been so long absent was returned to wreak the evil upon the heads of the doer; in the place where they had done the evil, there wreaked he his vengeance upon them. (*Ulysses,* X: 124)

The language is emotively charged and retributive. Lamb subversively uses Biblical allusions: "the land had rest" is the clause that brackets Israel's conquests in Canaan in the books Judges and Joshua. Lamb also mimics the King James Version's dependence on paratactic sentences beginning with the conjugation "and". He thus posits a link between the ultimate Christian text and violence, and implies that Scriptural values are present in non-Christian legends: even in the ultimate dissembler.

So, Charles Lamb's stance against didactic moral children's literature is consistent with the anarchic, subversive texts he produced for the Godwins' Juvenile Library. But what of his Romantic-era child reader? Lamb's decision to adapt adult works for children suggests, by implication, that Romantic writers did not believe that the ideal child figure was the ideal reader. In *Tales for Shakespeare,* Charles and Mary Lamb anticipate that child readers will use the stories as a 'stepping stone' to

Shakespeare's plays, implying that the developing Romantic ideology of childhood was not synchronous with the ideal Romantic reader.[34]

I here appeal to an alternative, organic theory of Romanticism and childhood that highlights the continuity between childhood and experience. Alan Richardson and Judith Plotz describe 'organic' models of understanding the 'Romantic' child in Blake's poetry.[35] In this view, children possess innocence and insight, and, in their growth, they attain more complex insights such that innocence and experience are "subsumed into the comprehensive (and dynamic) vision […] 'organized innocence'."[36] To re-quote Charles Lamb, "beautiful interest […] made the child a man"[37]— in other words, children *will* mature, and this is good. Using this paradigm, the adaptation of adult works for child readers is a logical progression that arms children to navigate the literary world of experienced readers.

A final thought.

Velma Bourgeois Richmond suggests that Lamb's child-specific adaptations provided "a correlative to popular chapbooks".[38] I will not overstress Lamb's significance in opening adult literature to child audiences. William Godwin, after all, commissioned the works. It is better to say that Lamb, alongside Godwin, facilitated children's access to adult literature.

It is the second part of Richmond's claim that is fascinating. Romantics elegised the chapbook: Wordsworth lamented the loss of the

> …invisible coat
> Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood
> And Sabra in the forest with St George.[39]

Yet, as Clair's research suggests, quantification indicates that *more* chapbook titles were being produced during the Romantic period, and larger numbers were sold in

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[34] "Preface" by Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*, (London: Puffin, 2010), xvi.
[35] Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780 – 1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20; also Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood,* (New York: Palgrave 2001), 89.
[36] Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism,* 20.
[37] See note 1.
[38] Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Shakespeare as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures,* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2008), 13.
[39] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: Book 5*, lines 342–344.

towns and rural country areas, than in previous years.[40] What was changing was chapbook culture itself, as traditional titles were replaced by more recently composed texts, and chapbooks came to be associated with the reading material of the lower classes.[41] Grenby suggests that "respectable children's literature" was designed to provide affluent children with products perceived as morally and pedagogically superior to chapbooks.[42]

Subsequent to St Clair and Grenby's observations, I wish to suggest that William Godwin's adaptations for children were part of a concerted effort to *supplant* the chapbook industry: not merely to act as a "correlative", as Richmond posits. We have seen the extent to which *The King and Queen of Hearts* mimicked the aesthetic and, importantly, the price of chapbooks. Truncated narratives formed the backbone of chapbooks, and it is difficult to *not* read the narrative condensation of *The Adventures of Ulysses* within the chapbook tradition. In this light, Lamb's lament about the decline of the "old classics of the nursery" may contain an agenda;[43] a legitimate lament over the popularity of rational, moralistic children's books, but also an attempt to pre-emptively sound a death-knell for the chapbook industry he and Godwin would seek to supplant.

And where stands the child?

Rather, where stands *a* child?

Lamb's children's works imply *a* Romantic child reader: a child possessing the imaginative ability to discern implicit moral lessons who still requires guidance as a reader. This child who progresses from innocence to experience is as embedded within the Romantic tradition as the spiritually pure infant. Charles Lamb's adaptations for children invite us to read anew the complexity ascribed to the apparently simple 'Romantic child'.

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[40] St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period,* 348.
[41] Ibid; also M. O. Grenby, "Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature", 277 – 303.
[42] Grenby, "Chapbooks, Children, and Children's Literature."
[43] See note 1.