

**THE USE OF ALLUSIONS IN CHARLES LAMB'S *ESSAYS OF ELIA***

**By Herbert M. Spencer**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

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Winnipeg, Manitoba  
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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
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## CONTENTS

Preface	i
Glossary	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1 Biblical and Classical Allusions in Lamb's Essays	9
CHAPTER 2 Lamb's References to Shakespeare and Milton	38
CHAPTER 3 Lamb and his Contemporaries	71
CONCLUSION	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	95

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## PREFACE

This thesis springs from an interest in Charles Lamb which I developed in my Grammar School days in Antigua. I have always felt that such an accomplished writer has been sadly undervalued. It has profited enormously from the patience and meticulous supervision of Dr Pamela Perkins, a young member of the Department of English, who followed its development with exceptional keenness. Without her support and encouragement it might not have been completed. I have also to thank Dr John Ogden, another member of the Department of English, who offered useful suggestions. Ms Lucia Flynn, the departmental administrative assistant, and Ms Marianne Harnish, the departmental secretary, both offered valuable assistance and much cherished moral support. I have to acknowledge, too, the cooperation of the principal of Sisler High School, Mr George Heshka, who is an effective promoter of teacher professional development. Above all, however, I have to express my undying gratitude to Dr Keith A.P. Sandiford, a former professor of history at the University of Manitoba, and to his wife, Lorraine, who have encouraged all of my efforts ever since I was an undergraduate student in Winnipeg. Dr Sandiford was always willing to type the various drafts of the dissertation and to offer solid advice on matters pertaining to style and historical context.

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## GLOSSARY

- Absorptive allusion:** a reference mixed so thoroughly with the writer's context that distinction between text and source is almost impossible.
- Adsorptive assimilative allusion:** a blending of context and source referred to which clings to the surface of the piece.
- Assimilative allusion:** a reference closely linked with the content and spirit of the writer's context.
- Cento:** a linking together of passages from different authors.
- Comparative allusion:** a reference intended to express discontinuity or difference from the source alluded to.
- Compounded allusion:** a reference or echo embedded in the prime allusion, or two allusions from different sources.
- Contaminatio:** a Renaissance pattern of allusion that denies special privilege to any single author or text or literary period.
- Double echo:** another expression for compounded allusion.
- Topoi (singular topos):** motif or theme.

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## INTRODUCTION

The well-known English essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834) wrote in that era commonly referred to as the late Romantic period (1808-1830). Even though there has always been fierce debate about what is meant by Romanticism and exactly who were the Romantic writers, it can generally be agreed that the Romantic movement contained within itself a number of identifiable characteristics. In this thesis, Romanticism is going to be defined very much in the same way that the literary critic Thomas McFarland has viewed it. He has identified, from his reading of traditional texts, the following hallmarks:

external nature, imagination, egotism, love of the particular, flight into the medieval, flight into the Orient, flight into drugs, a preoccupation with dreams, with melancholy, solitudes, suicide, an ubiquitous awareness of process and current, a longing for the infinite and unattainable, an omnipresent involvement with the organic, and a profound commitment to symbol. (13)

McFarland further contends that there are even more distinguishing features to Romantic writing. He suggests that "the diasparactive triad of incompleteness, fragmentation and ruin" (13), may also be added to this list. Lamb's *Essays of Elia* contain many of these elements, even though it must be said that he eschewed external nature as well as flights into the mediaeval, drugs and the Orient.

Traditionally, commentators thought that these elements were more clearly pronounced in the writing of such poets as Blake, Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth, and the bulk of their literary criticism focused on poetry. Such an approach obviously ignored very important contributions made by dramatists, essayists and novelists. This failing has been vigorously criticised by such modern scholars as Marilyn Butler and Anne Mellor who were quick to notice that female writers especially have consistently been marginalised. They have also observed that much of what the so-called 'Big Six' produced had origins in the writing of

lesser-known contemporaries. Sexism and elitism are the two features of traditional criticism which disturb Butler and Mellor most of all. It should be added that other commentators, including Stephen Behrendt, have reached the same conclusion (13).

Elitism in the Romantic period not only implied special literary privileges for the upper classes, it also meant hierarchy in terms of genres. Poets were at the top of the totem pole. Behrendt refers to this bias as "The masculinist heroic ideology ... long associated with Romantic poetry" (7). He argues that "The distinction that has been with us at least since the early eighteenth century between 'great' works and 'popular' ones betrays a cultural elitism that has clouded judgements about cultural activities for centuries" (13). On this matter of elitism, Mellor posits that "The writing of poetry thus became a masculine occupation, and one associated especially with the aristocratic or leisured class" (6). Middle class male poets such as Coleridge and Wordsworth thus signalled the opening up of this exclusive club.

It is in this context that Charles Lamb, as an essayist, suffered the same fate as many novelists who were mostly women. He has seldom received the acclaim of a Byron or a Wordsworth and is not often thought of as a truly Romantic writer.<sup>1</sup> This thesis will demonstrate, however, that Lamb's essays contain several elements of Romanticism even though he often tried to distance himself from the age in which he lived and worked. He once said, for instance, "Damn the age, I'll write for antiquity", a clear statement of his intentions to deviate from the prevailing trend.<sup>2</sup> Even the form of writing he employed marked him as a Romantic

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Robert Frank, *Don't Call Me Gentle Charles* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1976), 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 1984, July/October.

with a difference. In an age dominated by the medium of poetry, Lamb resorted to the essay as the form through which he attempted to carve a literary niche for himself. He had previously tried without much success to write poetry and drama.<sup>3</sup> Two striking features of his essays are their whimsy and charm, which do not meet with the same approval today as they once enjoyed. As Randel has observed, such critics as A.C. Bradley, Walter Pater and Algernon Swinburne all wrote admiringly of Lamb in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. But, apart from Virginia Woolf, twentieth-century writers have generally tended to neglect him (Randel, preface). Randel himself suggests various reasons for this neglect, chief among which has been the reluctance of modern commentators to recognize that a familiar essay is no less a work of art than a lyric poem. On this matter of Lamb's waning popularity, Robert Frank considers Denys Thompson and Mario Praz as his most relentless detractors mainly because they saw Lamb as a sycophant appealing to the bourgeois foibles of his own time (21-22).

According to Marie Hamilton Law, the essay as a form emerged in the work of Michel de Montaigne, its most distinguishing feature being its subjectivity. The familiar essay conveys the moods, fantasies, the whims, the chance reflections and random observation of the essayist, and it has been excellently defined as a short prose composition in which the author, writing of himself or of something near to his heart, discloses his personality to the reader in an intimate and familiar way. It was introduced to England in the seventeenth century.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the periodical essay, spearheaded by such eminent writers as Addison and Steele, made its appearance in England. It featured description, narration and informal discussion, treating trivial material in a whimsical manner. It is written

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<sup>3</sup> See Morley, pp. 112-18, 154-58 and 193-200.

for the most part in the first person, is conversational in tone, addresses the reader in a friendly fashion, is witty, humorous and brief. Thus, in many essentials, it is closely allied to the familiar or personal essay. The periodical essay may at times include autobiographical elements and may express the opinion of the writers on a variety of topics, but it is not as self-revealing as the familiar essay. They do not show the innermost workings of their hearts, but conceal themselves behind fictitious figures, such as Isaac Bickerstaff or the Spectator. The purpose of the periodical essay is to report news, to provide entertainment, and to bring about reform in morals, manners and taste. Therefore, the periodical essay differs on several counts from the familiar essay.

In the work of Hazlitt, Hunt and Lamb, the familiar essay preserved all of its earlier characteristics, but became so infused with the Romantic spirit, that it took on a new identity of its own. There was something quite spontaneous about the familiar essay, the moral and didactic aspect so prominent in the periodical now largely concealed. Its charm consisted in its numerous digressions, its flavour of good conversation, the warmth of its imaginative fancy and the self-revelation of the writer. The subject matter - grave, gay, humorous, witty - depending on the mood of the essayist, displayed infinite variety. The perfect freedom of the familiar essayists to wander whither their fancy led, to range over all time, and to employ any theme, to begin where they pleased, and to stop when they wished, afforded an aesthetic of delight which had been wanting in the more limited range of subject matter, and in the realistic treatment characteristic of the periodical essay in the eighteenth century (Law, 8-10).

Despite his desire to be different, however, Lamb was clearly influenced by the literary trends of his generation and the writings of the previous age. Like all writers of his time,

Lamb, too, was the product of "an age marked by extreme cultural upheaval throughout Europe" (McGann, 40), the French Revolution being one factor triggering this upheaval. In any case, he was too close a personal friend of Coleridge not to have been touched in some manner by the latter's influence. Moreover, as an outsider and a loner, his own personal situation dictated that he should become, as McFarland suggests, an iconic figure for the Romantic situation (27).

Lamb was even more influenced by his biblical and classical studies which formed a large part of the curriculum at Christ's Hospital, the grammar school he attended. He also showed a keen interest in the Elizabethans. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that in his *Essays of Elia*, Lamb alludes freely to biblical and classical sources, to Shakespeare, Milton, the neo-classics and to writers of his own generation. In his use of this wide range of allusions, Lamb is inviting his readers to share and engage with his vast library of literature.

It is this question of allusions that this study is attempting to address. The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines allusion as a tacit reference to another literary work, to another art, to history, to contemporary figures, or the like. Allusions may be used merely to display knowledge, to appeal to a reader or an audience to share some experience or knowledge with the writer, or to enrich a literary work by merging the echoed material with the new poetic context. The use of allusions differs from mere source-borrowing, because it requires the readers' familiarity with the original texts for full understanding and appreciation. It differs also from mere reference, because it is tacit and fused with the context in which it appears (Preminger, 18). Previous commentators have examined Lamb's work in several different ways but have not paid enough attention thus far to this very important aspect of his

writing. This thesis will look carefully at the way in which Lamb employs allusions and try to explain why he does so.

Several distinct ways of alluding are to be noted in the *Essays of Elia*: direct quotations, fragmentary quotations, allusions, clear echoes and faint echoes. Whereas quotations and allusions result from a conscious effort on the part of the writer, echoes do not depend on conscious intention (Hollander, 64), and faint echoes will be audible only to ears well tuned to the sources alluded to. Lucy Newlyn, in her preface to *Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Language of Allusion*, offers similar views, while contending that an echo "can either be used consciously by the poet, or be an unacknowledged presence in his writing". She hastens to add that "in practice, however, any distinction in intention breaks down very fast". Moreover, "since allusions work associatively ... those that are unconscious are no less valid or interesting to the reader" (vii).

Lamb often uses allusions in a playful manner with humour or irony nearly always in the background of his handling. Lamb may at times be in turn serious, semi-serious, or satiric in his employment of allusions which he includes in his essays primarily to lend support to assertions raised. His subtle references, however, are intended to challenge the educationally élite sector of his audience. Allusions as deployed by Lamb also serve to increase the range of voices that surface in the essays. These added voices may either be appropriated or subverted or partially so. Occasionally, he seems to desire several voices to speak as one. The technique of the *contaminatio*, which was such a common feature of Renaissance literature, became one of his favourite devices. In a *contaminatio*, "allusions, echoes, fragmented quotations, *topoi*,

motifs, images, philosophical ideas, stylistic features, and structural elements from heterogeneous models jostle one another" (Stein, 86).

On this crucial question of voices, it is important to establish that Elia, the persona through whom Lamb pens his thoughts, is not primarily autobiographical Charles Lamb. Indeed, Lamb himself warns: "let no one receive the narratives of Elia for true records! They are, in truth, but shadows in fact - verisimilitudes, not verities" (McFarland, 47; Lucas, 2: 90). McFarland is probably correct in suggesting that "in the intertext of the essayistic verisimilitudes we can repeatedly discern the verities of Lamb's existence" (47). Thus there are times, in this thesis, when Elia is treated as Lamb and instances when he is not. In fact, Elia does not appear to have stable characteristics or a fixed role. He is an elusive character who may in turn be a devil's advocate, a moderator, a comedian, or a credible narrator.

Lamb uses allusions not only for his own pleasure but for that of his readers. He also employs allusions to stake claims as a leading literary figure and intellect of his day, and it is almost certain that he did not wish to be eclipsed by his more illustrious university-trained friends, as Frank V. Morley has suggested (91). This competitive aspect of Lamb's personality may in part explain the frequency and abundance of allusions that appear in *The Essays of Elia*. His extensive use of allusions invites us to place Lamb among the best of the well read Romantic writers. However, the frequent humour and irony derived from disjunctions between his contexts and the literature to which he alludes allow him to slip away from the more serious high road taken by most well-known Romantic writers. Despite this tendency on Lamb's part to shun the crowd and trends of his day, this thesis will attempt to show that he deserves honorary status at least among leading writers of his time.

The contemporary with whom Lamb seems naturally most comparable is Hazlitt. But this thesis focuses more on Wordsworth because, like Lamb, Hazlitt was born and bred in the city and drew much from his urban experience and classical education. Wordsworth, on the other hand, as a rustic Romantic, is a natural foil to Lamb. Furthermore, as probably the leading literary figure of his time, the choice of Wordsworth makes positioning Lamb as a writer in the Romantic movement both valid and credible.

The thesis is organized according to sources rather than categories. This seems the most logical format, especially since Lamb was using allusions, as some commentators have argued, to invite his readers to share his library. The allusions indicate that he was himself not only very well-read but had ready access to a wonderful array of texts. It is true that Edwin Stein offers a different model with his *Wordsworth's Art of Allusion*, but he is more concerned with Wordsworth's place in the continuum of the literary tradition and his perception of himself as introducing a new trend in the philosophy and writing of poetry. Lamb's ambition held no such pretensions as he deliberately eschewed the notion of a philosophy of literature. The Bible, the Classics, Shakespeare, Milton and Lamb's contemporaries were the main sources from which he drew. By arranging the study in this manner it becomes easier to analyze Lamb's treatment of allusions as well as his approach to his sources. It becomes clear, for instance, that his references to the Bible and to Milton often reflect a more serious mood, while those to the Classics and to Shakespeare reveal the author's more playful side; and Lamb is most often mildly satirical and subversive when alluding to the works of his contemporaries.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BIBLICAL AND CLASSICAL ALLUSIONS IN CHARLES LAMB'S ESSAYS

Fond as he was of antiquity, Lamb was very much at ease in alluding frequently to the Bible. In his *Essays of Elia*, he sometimes uses biblical allusions playfully. More often, however, his references to the sacred text point to a more serious treatment in which he reflects a childhood steeped in biblical studies. Lamb employs biblical allusions to strengthen assertions raised in his essays and to invest his source with a special kind of authority. Very often, too, these allusions function as a binding strategy, blending theme, structure and imagery.

Like Lamb, most Romantics whether practising Christians or not were quite familiar with the Bible. However, in that era, as McFarland emphasises with the repeated phrase, "Everything was in flux" (7). Contributing to this state of flux were advances made in science, especially in electrical dynamism, and extreme cultural upheaval including the diminution of the influence of Christian mythology to which the Bible is central (McFarland, 7; McGann, 40). William Blake, for example, "took the Christian mythology as Milton had employed it, with the emphasis on the creation and the resurrection - paradise lost and paradise regained - ...[but] manipulated it to his inclusive purposes" (Schorer, 36). Indeed, in his 'visionary' approach to poetry and painting, Blake sometimes treated the Bible in a fanciful way, so fanciful in fact that he once declared: "The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly assert that God spoke to them;..."<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Coleridge, himself a deeply religious man who did in fact write religious treatises,<sup>2</sup> treated the sacred text in a more orthodox and respectful manner, as did William

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<sup>1</sup> See Keynes, *William Blake*, xx.

<sup>2</sup> See Lamb's letter to Coleridge, 27 May 1796.

Wordsworth. It must be said, however, that the latter referred to Milton almost 14 times more frequently than to the Bible (Stein, 10). These statistics underscore this decline of influence of the Bible on Romantic writers. In light of this waning scriptural influence, Lamb's foregrounding of the Bible may be seen as counter to contemporary trends.

At times Lamb connects the biblical world with his context in a playful manner. In contrast to the serious approach to literature taken by the vast majority of his contemporaries, this playful connection with his compositions, the competing voices and the chameleon nature of the narrator, Elia, allow late twentieth century readers to appreciate the sportive and experimental aspect of Lamb's writing. There is, of course, a marked difference in the way Lamb handles polyvocality and the linking of worlds and the strategy employed by postmodernist writers with these devices. Lamb regularly invokes the power and authority of sources alluded to and seldom subjects them to parody. In fact, Lamb's connection of worlds is a far cry from Bryan McHale's observation of the linking of worlds by postmodernist writers. Their linkings deal with connecting males with females, friends with friends, the political with the social, people with the city, and city with the world at large in a network of concentric, interlocking circles of these worlds. Even with all this sophisticated elaborate attempt at connectedness on the part of the postmodernist writers, there is often a missing link, a missed connection. In other words, postmodernist authors ultimately and invariably parody and subvert their own attempts at connectedness (McHale, 190-91). Thus, although portions of his works seem to bear some resemblance to the literature of the late twentieth century, some of these resemblances, on careful examination, are not as close as they at first appear to be.

One good example of Lamb's playful use of connections with the biblical text surfaces in *Poor Relations*. The Bible has much to say about the poor; therefore, it is not surprising to discover in this essay several references to the holy text. In his opening pastiche, Lamb equates a poor relation to a most unpleasant burden to be endured and perhaps one whose complete absence from sight is ideal. Elia refers to him as a Mordecai. The story in *Esther 3* highlights a certain Mordecai as emblematic of all Jews whom Haman wished to exterminate (verse 6). The Lazarus reference, "Lazarus at your door" (Lucas, 2: 158) is quite predictable, he being the biblical embodiment of poverty as recounted in *Luke* (16: 20). However, Lamb's choice of allusion here presents a problem, for in the after-life, so the story goes, Lazarus enjoyed ease and comfort in heaven, whereas the rich man experienced torment and suffering in hell. Appearing also in quick succession in this essay are allusions to *Kings* (13: 24); *Exodus* (8: 3, 6); *Ecclesiastes* (10: 1), in "A lion ... a frog ... a fly". "A mote in your eye" and "The one thing not needful" are drawn from *Matthew* (7: 3) and *Luke* (10: 42). This is one example of Lamb's clustering of similar types of allusions. Inside this cluster are some inappropriate references. There is too, a clear reversal of ideas in the Matthew 7:3 and the Luke 10:42 references; for the Luke passage reads, "the one thing needful". The reader is thus tempted to think that Lamb is setting up Elia as a narrator to be mocked, and perhaps one not to be taken too seriously. Here then is an example in which Elia is not Lamb.

There is also a certain measure of overkill in these references. The first noun in each phrase of the catalogue at the beginning of the essay conjures up images of disgust. Collectively they multiply that sense of repugnance to sight or touch. They are annoyances to be completely removed from sight or thought. Worthy of note is the indiscriminate mingling in this tirade of

the concrete and the abstract, the comic and the tragic. Elia is here speaking for himself, and is at a loss later in the discourse, after he had begun half-seriously, to explain why he has "fallen upon a recital so eminently painful" - the description of a poor school-fellow friend of his who was excessively sensitive to his indigent circumstances. "But this theme of poor relations". Elia continues, "is replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations, that it is difficult to keep the account distinct without blending" (Lucas, 2: 161).

Half-seriously implies half-playfully, the initial tone of this composition that deals with the universal theme of poor relatives. Part of the strategy of this semi-serious treatment involves what appears to be a bizarre blending of allusions, echoes and maxims. Elia suggests that such blendings are often unavoidable, but there are times when he deliberately strives for the shocking. This is one such example.

Incongruous as this unflattering defamatory catalogue of the poor relative appears to be, the biblical allusions contribute much both to its half-serious and semi-playful aspect. Dehumanising epithets followed by biblical references at first seem a mismatch. However, although Elia is not holding up the sacred text to ridicule, he is very much aware of the Bible as a hallowed text and a historical record of a particular racial/religious group, and as in any society there will be some who fall into the marginal or undesirable category. The biblical Mordecai and Lazarus find their counterparts in every society, even in family units. Hence the relevance of these allusions. Biblical references in this context also serve to moderate any perceived excesses in the lampoon. The contrast of biblical echoes and vituperative, belittling insults also adds to the piece a touch of humour for which Lamb is well-known. Indeed, in this composition, he is making heavy demands on his readers: they must be knowledgeable of the

Bible, be tolerant of the mild eccentricity of the writer, if they are not themselves moderately eccentric, and they must, above all, be of a humorous turn of mind, for humour surfaces quite regularly in most of his essays.

Playfulness with the holy text is not, however, the norm in the *Essays of Elia*. In *The Good Clerk*, Lamb points out the need for the ideal clerk to maintain a calm disposition in dealing with his clients, however impertinent or difficult some may be. To strengthen this assertion, Elia refers his reader to a passage in *Proverbs* which states that a good clerk is like "the borrower [who] is servant to the buyer" (4:7). Lucas suggests that Lamb might also have been thinking of *Isaiah* (24:2):

And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with the master; as with the maid, so with the mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.

It is unlikely that Lamb was making a connection with this passage in *Isaiah* which, in the previous verse, speaks of a wasteland and a state of disorder:

Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down and scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof.

In defining the good clerk, Lamb is promoting a sense of harmony in the clerk-client relationship. The passage from *Proverbs* is thus the most obvious intended reference and the one most suitable for the assertion raised. It is, however, quite significant that the allusion blends thematically with the essay's topic. Lamb, through Elia, is perhaps speaking from personal experience, having been a clerk first at South Sea House and then at the East India Company, where he remained for thirty three years (Morley, 79-80).

In *Confessions of a Drunkard*, Lamb attempts to capture the inevitable social, physical and mental decline of the alcoholic and the wretchedness that accompanies his fall from grace.

Assuming the persona of a drunkard, Elia poses the rhetorical question:

Could the youth to whom the flavour of his first wine is delicious...: - could he see my fevered eye, feverish with last night's drinking, and feverishly looking for this night's repetition of the folly; could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebler and feebler outcry to be delivered, - (Lucas, I: 137)

The phrase, "the body of the death", is a well concealed allusion to *Romans* (7:24): "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This subtle allusion suits well the wretchedness that Lamb seeks to evoke from a confessed drunkard. This wretchedness is well depicted in the episode of the drunkard viewing a Corregio print which captures the themes of 'Sensuality', 'Evil Habit' and 'Repugnance'. The drunkard admires the skill of the painter, but goes away weeping since the painting prompts him to reflect on his own pitiful condition (Lucas, 1: 136-37). The initial playfulness in this piece later turns to seriousness and self-pity. The drunkard's state of wretchedness together with the biblical allusion serves as a warning to those at risk at becoming addicted to strong drink.

More biblical allusions occur in *Oxford in the Vacation*, in which Lamb compares his writing to Joseph's vest, a clear reference to Joseph's coat of many colours (*Genesis*, 37:3). In this well-known biblical story, Jacob's coat becomes the symbol of envy for his numerous siblings. This allusion leaves the reader wondering whether or not Lamb might have included this reference as rebuttal to his detractors, suggesting envy on their part. Elia continues to impress with his biblical knowledge. The allusion which appears towards the end of *Oxford in the Vacation* attempts to portray George Dyer as a serious and dedicated research worker. "The

Cam and the Isis", Elia says are to Dyer better than all of the waters of Damascus. *2 Kings* (5:12) reads:

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?

There is a clear suggestion in this reference that George Dyer's intellectual pursuits at Oxford were secular and not clerical. This particular reference, passing as it is, is smoothly integrated in the essay. It is also to be noted that Elia is in serious complimentary mode here, as he extols the academic excellence for which Dyer is known. The allusion itself serves to heighten the accolade showered on a distinguished local personality. Elia's high regard for scholarship and learning emerges in this piece.

Elia cites as the locale for his vacation Oxford University which many distinguished graduands of Christ's Hospital attended to pursue ecclesiastical studies. The biblical references are thus pertinent to the theme as well as the setting of this essay which is marked by a distinct reflective tone. Elia sees 'Oxford' as an enlarged version of Christ's Hospital which offers its students wider opportunities to delve more deeply into biblical and classical studies than those available at a grammar school. Biblical and classical allusions serve as a conduit to the two levels of educational institution. Elia is also making connections with the religious and the secular, the ancient and the modern, the clerk and the scholar, the academic and the mundane. The allusion to Joseph's vest also serves to underscore the intricate nature of these connections.

In addition, biblical allusions hold together two notes of regret embedded in the composition: that he, Lamb, has fallen short of his former assiduous, religious practices. In observing Saints' days and other holy days, he recalls that he was once "as good as an almanac" (Lucas, 2: 8). His other regret, a more nagging one, relates to his failure to gain acceptance

to Cambridge because of his impediment of speech. His words, "To such a one as myself who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution..." (Lucas, 2:8), point to the depth of his disappointment.

Lamb's visit to Oxford provides him with the opportunity of playing the gentleman and enacting the student (Lucas, 2:9). It is thus reasonable to conclude that these visits were of special therapeutic value. The biblical allusions are not only a part of this therapeutic experience, they also serve as a sharp reminder to his more fortunate school mates, to those who had something to do with his disqualification from the clergy and indeed to Lamb himself that he was in no way deficient in scholarship or aptitude for the cloth. And this essay provides a classic example of Lamb's ruminative, introspective style.

Further evidence of Lamb's biblical scholarship surfaces in his essay on Christ's Hospital, a school grounded on Christian principles. Predictably, in this piece, Lamb includes numerous references to the Bible. The first relates to the story of Elijah, the Tishbite in hiding, being fed by the ravens (1 *Kings* 17) as the author attempts to underscore the kindness of a good, elderly relative who supplemented his meagre fare at Christ's Hospital with "Viands of a higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite" (Lucas, 2:13). The secrecy with which these acts of kindness were conducted for Lamb's benefit invests the allusion with a certain cleverness and poignancy.

A passing reference in *Christ's Hospital* features the wall of Jericho (*Joshua* 6) as Elia recalls the story of a former student, one H [Hodges] who was "seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks" (Lucas, 2:14). H's period of profligacy at Christ's Hospital, where he arrogantly transgressed rules, came to an abrupt end when he proclaimed publicly his good fortune "toppling down the walls of his own Jericho" (Lucas, 2:

14-15) by revealing his success, thus removing all concealment from his acts of defiance. The blast of the ram's horn and the sound of the trumpet, equivalent to H's proclamation of his success, served as the signal that the walls of his Jericho were about to fall flat (*Joshua* 6,5). The inclusion of this allusion dramatizes most vividly the fall of a defiant, tyrannical student at Christ's Hospital in Lamb's time and hints at the dramatic aspects of Elia's personality and writing craft. The use of an allusion which overstates the importance of Hodges' indiscretions adds to the melodrama of the narrative.

Another biblical connection surfaces with the mention of Goshen, a sort of Israeli mini-paradise, after the fall of man (*Exodus* 8:22). With this analogy, Lamb stresses the sharp contrast of the strict discipline and hard work demanded of Boyer's students of the upper Grammar School with the laxity enjoyed by students of the lower school under the care of Matthew Field. Occurring in the same paragraph with the Goshen reference is yet another biblical allusion (inverted as it is) that recalls the story of Gideon's miracle. In the Old Testament narrative, Gideon placed a fleece of wool on the floor. If he found dew on the fleece only and not on the surrounding earth that would be a sign that God would save Israel by his (Gideon's) hand. Just as the children of Israel were saved when dew appeared only on the fleece of wool, so, too, Lamb's peers under Field's tutelage were spared the rigours and Spartan-like discipline suffered by students in Boyer's care. This biblical allusion reflects Lamb's engaging mind and his innate wit. In modifying the biblical story (for the Boyer Boys were, like the Jews, the chosen ones), Lamb succeeds in emphasizing the stark contrast between Field's easy-going ways and Boyer's strict academic regimen.

Especially worthy of note in this piece is Lamb's employment of a Romantic strategy of turning to the past (the child) to explain the present (the man) [Siskin, 25]. Lamb returns to the past to explore the importance of childhood learning as it pertains to his development as a man and as a writer. Wordsworth, too, recalls his childhood for similar reasons. In *The Prelude Book I*, he describes, in these words, his enjoyment of the natural world and the learning process concomitant with his experience:

Wisdom and spirit of the universe,  
 Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,  
 That givest to forms and images of breath  
 And everlasting motion! - not in vain,  
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
 The passion's that build up our human soul,  
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
 But with high objects, with enduring things  
 .... (lines 429-37) [Woo, 293-94].

He repeats in *Book V* this faith in childhood knowledge acquired through his youthful exploration of the natural world and his boyhood enjoyment of the poetic and prosaic words of the literary tradition (lines 482-607). Thus, whereas Nature and texts, such as *Arabian Nights* and famous poems, were the prime influences in Wordsworth's childhood learning, Lamb's childhood education drew mostly from the Bible and the classics.

No better example of the biblical influence in Lamb's work exists than in *A Quakers' Meeting*, in which he attempts to capture the sanctity and spiritual power of the Quaker's silence in worship. The psalm which he draws from deals with the psalmist's thirst for God. The psalmist says: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the waterspouts (*Psalms* (42:7)). However, the Quakers' spiritual thirst expresses itself through silence which "is multiplied and rendered more intense by numbers" (Lucas, 2: 45).

Closely related to silence is the "complete distracted solitude" (Lucas, 2: 46) that defines the Quakers' meeting. The loneliness "to be felt" refers to *Exodus* (10: 21) which reads:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, and there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.

Thus, the phrase "to be felt" (Lucas, 2: 46) invests the Quakers' meeting with a certain divine sanction and a profound aura of godliness, inducing Elia to wax poetic:

Here is something, which throws Antiquity herself into the fore-ground - silence - eldest of things - language of old Night - primitive Discourser - to which the insolent decays of mouldering grandeur have but arrived by a violent, and, as we may say, unnatural progression. (Lucas, 2: 46)

Given Lamb's knowledge of, and admiration for, the Quaker sect which surface in this essay and in *Imperfect Sympathies*, it is reasonable to assume that Elia is really speaking for Lamb in *A Quakers' Meeting*.

Further respect for the Quakers' religious faith and practice appears in a very subtle biblical reference "not made with hands". The complete verse goes as follows:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal and in the heavens. (2 *Corinthians* 5.1)

This allusion serves to underscore the sincerity and conviction of the Quakers' style of worship and Lamb's deep admiration thereof. And yet another biblical reference appears in *A Quakers' Meeting* by way of the expression "that unruly member". *James* 3 (verse 5) characterizes the tongue as "a little member". Verse 8 refers to it as "untenable, unruly and full of deadly poison". With the aid of this allusion, Lamb downplays the need for talking (the use of the tongue) in worship. Hence he informs his readers:

More frequently the meeting is broken up without a word having been spoken. But the mind is fed. You go away with a sermon, not made with hands. (Lucas, 2: 48)

Lamb is clearly, in this essay, espousing the power and influence of silent worship.

The biblical references in *A Quakers' Meeting* not only strengthen assertions raised, but also work in concert with its thematic, structural and imagistic plan. The essay begins with a poem invoking Silence, enumerating his attributes and establishing him with a clear identity. The narrator then invites him (Silence) to leave one setting for another. The essay, too, is a form of invitation, for in it Lamb/Elia issues the invitation three times - once at the end of the opening paragraph, again at the end of the second paragraph, and once more late in the essay after he has taken us in imagination with him to a Quaker's meeting. The invitations function like a refrain, the last one being fuller, more varied and expansive (Jordan, 97). The Biblical allusions serve as a clinching, persuasive strategy. They enlist the readers' cooperation, one that is almost guaranteed because the essayist has prepared his audience well with his evocative description of a Quakers' meeting.

Immediately after the inclusion of the allusions, Lamb turns from the inner to the outer Quaker "giving us a visual image of unity, cleanliness, whiteness and light irresistible in imaginative appeal" (Jordan, 97). The reader is almost compelled to make a sacred connection between the physical image of Quakers at worship and the holy text. Biblical echoes are also vital to the central themes of the spiritual power of silence in Quakers' meetings and "the paradox that perfect solitude, true peace and quiet, are to be had in company, in crowds, in cities - in short, in a Quakers' meeting" (Jordan, 98). It is no coincidence that these clusters

of images bracket the biblical quotations which serve as adhesives binding and blending by their strategic positioning, theme, structure and imagery.

The afore-mentioned paradox undermines the Wordsworthian/traditional Romantic concept of solitude. Lamb, himself a city boy through and through, has little tolerance for those who need to migrate to some secluded wood or grove to find peace and quiet. He contends that whatever calm and serenity may be experienced alone in a rustic retreat are equally available in crowds and in an urban setting. Lamb's style is described as "deliberately egotistical and conscientiously allusive" (Quiller-Couch, 241). *A Quakers' Meeting* is a good example of this aspect of his writing style.

Although scriptural references are ample enough in his writings, the Bible is not the main source from which Lamb draws his allusions. The self-effacing bachelor-essayist is in his real element alluding to classical sources. Steeped as he was in Graeco-Roman language, history and literature, Lamb's penchant for the classics comes naturally.

Lamb sometimes uses classical references in a serious manner. More often though, he is in more playful mood in his treatment of classical allusions, the ironic, the satiric, and even the subversive at times surfacing in this playful handling. Especially worthy of note also is the full range of Lamb's allusive art that emerges in classical citations. Quotations from Roman literature appear in full, in part or modified. Sometimes Lamb inserts a Latin word or phrase to enhance visual imagery or to heighten a mood he seeks to create. Other times, he summarises from his source or makes a quick passing reference. At times, too, Lamb uses classical allusions by way of contrast. Sometimes he simply echoes a classical source. These echoes may be overt, well-concealed or very subtle. Concealed and subtle use of classical allusions points

to Lamb's desire to draw attention to his scholarship, while his extensive deployment of these sources serve as an invitation to his reader to share his vast library of classical texts.

Paradoxically, classical influence in the Romantic period was both strong and on the wane. Latin and Greek language, literature and history still held much prominence in the curricula in English Grammar schools. Latin was a compulsory subject for matriculation at London University and Edinburgh University medical dissertations were still being written in Latin in the eighteenth century (Vance 6, 15). Of the 'Big Six', Blake had no patience with Rome or classical mythology, but Byron in *Childe Harold* muses on the palace of the Caesars and the moonlit colosseum. For Keats, too, the classics were an important source from which he drew, best exemplified in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. However, Jonathan Bate has demonstrated the extent to which Shakespeare, in the period 1730-1830, took over from the classics as a site of political expression and debate and a source of political caricature.<sup>3</sup> Given this gradual movement away from the classics, Lamb's showcasing of Graeco-Roman literature and his frequent inclusion of Latin phrases in his essays were seen by many even in his own era as somewhat anachronistic. Hazlitt, for instance, once observed in his *Spirit of the Age* that Lamb's style was somewhat "quaint" (262-63).

One example of Lamb's serious treatment of classical allusions appears in *On the Genius and Character of Hogarth* which includes two citations. "Lacrymae rerum" comes from *Aeneid* (1: 462). Shipwrecked Aeneas reaching the spot where Dido's workmen were building Carthage, sees in a temple of Juno representations of the Trojan War. "En Priamus", he cries,

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<sup>3</sup> See his *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); and Vance, 28.

"Sunt hic etiam sua praemia laude/ Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentiam mortalia tangunt". (Here glory has its meet rewards; here are tears for human life, and mortal sorrows touch the mind). In this essay, Lamb posits that Hogarth's paintings sometimes divorce themselves from sordid themes, showcasing instead subject matters dealing with the

"Scorn of vice" and the "pity", too, something to touch the heart and keep alive the sense of moral beauty; the "lacrymae rerum" and the sorrowing by which the heart is made much better. (Lucas, 1: 83)

The Virgilian reference strengthens most convincingly this assertion regarding Hogarth's works, heightening at the same time the pathos of the caption of "the supplicating posture of patient Poverty in the poor woman that is persuading the pawnbroker to accept her clothes as pledge" (Lucas, 1: 83). The Trojan War for Virgil is a metaphor for human suffering and mortal woes, the end result of man's quest for glory. Virgil's reflections and Hogarth's painting are made to seem synonymous, creating a near-perfect marriage of the Elia text and the classical work referred to. This blending of artistic works supports Hollander's claim that "the text alluded to is not totally absent, but is a part of the portable library shared by the author and his ideal audience" (69). In this piece, there is a pronounced melancholic tone, reminiscent of Byron's *Childe Harold*, *Manfred* and *Cain* and many of Keats' and Wordsworth's poems. As McFarland vigorously argues "it was not joy that was the Romantic norm, but melancholy" (29).

A second Latin quotation surfaces towards the end of *On the Genius and Character of Hogarth*: "Taedium quotidianarum formarum" which comes from Terence's *Eunuchus* (297): "Taedet cotidinarum harum formarum" [These daily rules annoy me] (Lucas, 2: 411). While expressing his fascination for the shocking, even the ridiculous in Hogarth's paintings, Lamb is

at the same time airing a Romantic rejection of the neo-classics' obsession for form, rules and structure which he finds both tedious and stifling to the imagination.

Further examples of this serious treatment occur in *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare*, in which the unofficial deputy Grecian (Morley 58-59) draws from his classical background at Christ's Hospital. At this institution, it was the highest honour to be recognized as a Grecian, one of three outstanding classical students with leadership qualities, including proficiency in public speaking. Because of his speech impediment, Lamb was not eligible for this distinction. However, since he was in the class with Greek scholars, Grecians and deputy-Grecians, he was considered an honorary deputy-Grecian (Morley, 57). Examples of this solid classical grounding abound in his *Essays of Elia*. He includes, for instance, a phrase from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, "ore rotundo", (Lucas, 1: 100) to highlight a tendency on the part of some players to overact. The complete Latin sentence goes as follows: "Graii ingenium Graii dedit ore rotundo/ Musa loqui" (The Muse granted the Greeks the art to speak with well-turned utterances). Elia is suggesting that actors who play the meditative character, Hamlet, should speak softly, employ mild, controlled gestures and deliver their speeches in "well-turned utterances". Elia is here in his rare overt didactic mode, a noticeable departure from his usual style of offering an opinion or presenting an argument. Part of the didactic component in this piece relates to Lamb's privileging of the imagination of the reader of Shakespeare's plays over stage performances.

As is more usually the case, Elia reveals his playful mood in *Edax on Appetite*, where another reference to Horace appears. Assuming the persona of a glutton, Elia confesses his weakness, expressing his hope "to find a cure in some of those precepts, philosophers or poets,

'verba et voces' of which Horace speaks: 'Quibus hunc lenire dolorem/ possis, et magnam morbi deponere partem'" (Words and charms to assuage this pain and shake off a great part of your disorder). Elia seems to think that all solutions to his problems are to be found in ancient sources, "the charm" and the "everything of antiquity", as he describes them in 'Oxford in the Vacation' (Lucas, 2: 9), to underscore his faith in the ancients. Lamb continues to express his faith in the ancients with the phrase, "Cup of old Baucis" (Lucas, 1: 120), a reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8: 677-683). Thus, when Elia forbids the other guests at the table to watch his plate, and orders them to cease making "ungracious comparisons" of it to the seven baskets of fragments and the supernaturally-replenished cup of old Baucis (Lucas, I: 120), Lamb captures vividly with the aid of a biblical and classical allusion the insatiability of the glutton's appetite.

Again in playful, semi-satiric mood, Lamb in *South Sea House* draws from Virgil (*Aeneid* 10: 859) with the phrase "Decus et Solamen" (Glory and consolation) to comment on a certain Thomas Tane, a former clerk of South Sea House, who poor though he and his wife were, still clung to the comforting thought of her gentle descent. This is a most fitting allusion in that it evokes much pathos from the reader for this couple almost comically keeping up appearances of gentility (glory and consolation) despite their obvious indigent circumstances. Tane's shallow intellect in the context of this posturing almost makes him out to be a buffoon. Worthy of special note, however, is the positioning of the Virgilian reference at the very end of the cartoon-like portrait, giving the classical allusion the final word and thus investing it with a special kind of authority. The final stroke of this cartoon emerges in the ungainly comparison of a relatively obscure Englishman of the late eighteenth century to a time-honoured Roman

mythological hero. This is the mock-heroic technique of parody, a favourite device in Lamb's satiric pieces.

To underscore the range of his classical scholarship, Elia next draws from a Greek mythological reference. In entertaining with his fiddle, Elia says that John Tipps, an accountant of South Sea House, "sate like Lord Midas among them" (Lucas, 2: 5). 'Them' refer to his guests who were mostly musicians or choralists "who ate his cold mutton and drank his punch and praised his ear" (Lucas, 2: 5). "The ears of Midas, the wealthy king of Phrygia, were changed to those of an ass for saying that Pan played better than Apollo" (Lucas, 2: 301). The innuendo here (a subtle one indeed) is that Tipps was making an ass of himself by his lacklustre posing as a musician. In these character sketches, Elia is assuming an audience equally knowledgeable of, and ready to be amused by, the type of individual under discussion.

More assumption of an audience with specific knowledge occurs in *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago* which understandably features several classical allusions and Latin phrases, including "cara equina" (horseflesh) which appears early in the essay and "ultima supplica" (extreme penalties). Horseflesh is Elia's name for the boiled beef that was served to the students on Thursdays. "Ultima supplica" refers to the severe beatings which boys incurred after three attempts to run away from the school. With these direct Latin quotations, Elia is taking it for granted that his audience is well-schooled in the classics and is especially familiar with the Latin language. And for the benefit of his university-trained friends he is also presenting himself as a classical scholar. Thus, not only is Lamb indulging in play with his own text and the sources alluded to, but he seems also to be orchestrating mind games with his more educated compeers. Worthy of note is his inclusion of Latin (and Latinized) words and phrases in this piece. This,

of course, was in keeping with the classical tradition which dominated all English education for a very long time.

More assumption of a knowledgeable readership and Elia's posturing as a classical scholar are revealed in the phrase 'Caligula's Minion' which also appears in this essay. It is a reference to a horse raised by Caligula (a Roman emperor) to the post of chief consul. Lamb cites this classical episode to emphasize the audacity of a fellow student's smuggling in and pampering a young ass into the dormitory. Elia also complains that the better part of the boys' provisions were carried off before their faces. 'Harpies' is a reference to *Aeneid* (3: 244-257). The nurses at Christ's Hospital are made to seem like Harpies, Prince of the Furies, carrying off to their tables one out of two of every hot joints from the boys' table. 'In the hall of Dido' is yet another reference to *Aeneid* (Book I), where Aeneas studies the pictures in the temple which Dido was raising to Juno and was comforted by them. Hence the narrator states: "Animum pictura pascit inani" (He feeds his soul on the bodiless presentiment). The boys were forced to feed on pictures of the well-fed students of Christ Church as a consolation for the meat stolen from them. Elia, too, feeds his soul by reflecting on his days at Christ's Hospital (Lucas, 2: 318).

Another special way in which Lamb feeds his soul is by reflecting on his classical studies. Thus, he draws freely from his Virgilian reference shelf in *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers* which features a most pertinent classical allusion to comment on the wretched and hazardous environment in which these unfortunate little children ply their trade. Even the sound effect of "Fauces Averni" (the jaws of hell) from *Aeneid* (6: 20) contributes to this sense of the daring, sordid and dangerous. Elia's tender feelings of empathy emerge in this essay and

provide evidence of his social consciousness and his concern for the underclass in English society.

A glancing reference to the *Aeneid* again appears later in this essay in "folden between a pair of sheets whiter and softer than the lap where Venus lulled Ascanius - was discovered by chance ... a lost chimney sweeper" (Lucas, 2: 112). This exhausted sweeper lost his way and was lulled to sleep by the inviting appearance of an attractive bed. This allusion demonstrates Lamb's natural flair for making classical connections and for doing so in a semi-satirical, semi-didactic tone (Quiller-Couch, 249). The Venus-Ascanius allusion is also suggestive of care and protection of the child, a sharp contrast with the lot of young chimney sweepers having to work to the point of exhaustion. This allusion of contrast makes a powerful statement on the exploitation of the weak and the vulnerable. The sooty, exhausted sweeper enticed to slumber in the attractive bed of a member of the upper class, represents an ironic and satiric juxtapositioning of the underclass and luxury. The underlying lesson in this episode is that something ought to be done about what would later be regarded as child abuse.

Further attention to Virgil surfaces in the opening gambit to *Newspapers Thirty Five Years Ago*. Lamb complains of his reluctance to get up in the morning and, even worse, his resentment at being roused from slumber after only four hours of sleep. To emphasize his displeasure with these experiences, he calls upon Virgil who sings:

"facil" and sweet had been the "descending" of the overnight, balmy the first sinking of the heavy head upon the pillow; but to get up as he goes on to say, - revocare gradus, superasque ad auras and to get up moreover to make jokes with malice prepeded - there was the "labour", there the "work". (Lucas, 2: 222)

This represents an interesting feature of Lamb's use of allusions. He alludes and at the same time includes fragments of a quotation. The full quotation from Virgil reads:

Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Averno;  
 Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis;  
 Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,  
 Hoc opus, hic labor est. (*Aeneid*, VI: 126-129)

The English translation goes something like this: "Trojan son of Anchises, easy is the descent to hell; night and day open stand the gates of gloomy Dis; but to retrace your steps and escape the upper air - that is labour, that is the challenge". Lamb may be accused of over-indulging in allusions in this instance, for he simply wishes to say: "it is an easy matter to go to bed, but not so easy a task to get up in the morning". Nevertheless, he manages to forge a comparison between the sleeping experience and Aeneas' visit to the gloomy, forbidding caverns of the underworld. Allusions may lend support to Elia's arguments and may even have helped in keeping the classics alive; however, Elia may be accused here of overuse of allusions which tends to stifle originality and to interrupt the flow of argument.

The numerous references to ancient sources suggest that Lamb's library of classical literature is so close to hand that he often incorporates it into the text he creates. Coming as they do in such quick succession, these allusions are so smoothly integrated into the narrative that they are made to seem indispensable to the composition. They serve as a kind of bonding agent for the various facets of the essay while at the same time contributing much to its persuasive aspect. Lamb maximizes the use of this library and wishes to share it with his audience.

This blending of classical allusions (mostly Latin phrases and quotations) with the standard English of the day is exemplified in *The Two Races of Men* which presents us with the smooth, smiling, attractive personality of the borrower who "applieth the 'lene tormentum' (gentle stimulus) to your purse" (Lucas, 2: 23). This Latin quotation comes from Horace's *Odes*

(3: 21, line 13). In his attempt to convey the honest, cheerful look of old Bigod, the famous borrower, Elia picks up Virgil's phrase on the *Aeneid* (1: 292) "cana fides", signifying ancient honour, grey hair being the badge of ancient honour (Lucas, 2: 235). "Priam's refuse sons" (Lucas, 2: 25) is a reference to the *Iliad* (24: 456) "where Priam begs from Achilles the body of Hector, the best beloved son of the fifty born to him; nine of whom were still living (Lucas, 2: 326). These allusions have a direct bearing on the theme of suppliant pleading for a favour. There is, of course, some exaggeration in comparing a father in the thick of battle pleading for the body of his slain son, and a beggar seeking a favour to assist him in procuring his next meal. However, the phrase "Cana fides" invests the act (some might say the art) of begging with a respectable code of honour. The allusion thus serves to blur the border between seriousness and humour, while at the same time elevating Bigod to the status of a mock hero.

Sometimes, Lamb draws from several sources to establish firmly a point he wishes to make. In *Grace Before Meat* he draws from three ancient writers. "Virgil knew" refers to the *Aeneid* (3: 247-257) where "Caelano shouts and curses after Aeneas and the Trojans" (Lucas, 2: 371). Virgil put anything but a blessing at meal time in Caelano's mouth. The single word reference, "Lucian", draws from Lucian's Dialogues, "written in the second century, [which] treat religious matters with a delicate raillery" (Lucas, 2: 372). Lamb, too, in this essay treats rather light-heartedly a religious practice and custom. Once more, Lamb's choice for this allusion is both pertinent and elucidating. Towards the end of this essay, a Latin sentence appears: "Nunc tunc illis erat locus" which echoes Horace's "Sed nunc non erat his locus" (*Ars Poetica*, line 19). In both, the English equivalent is "[But] that was not the occasion for such things". Elia is here demonstrating his penchant for divergent thinking. He sees something

intrinsically wrong about religious statements prior to embarking upon an indulgent, if not gluttonous, exercise. His choice of an ancient writer with a similar satiric gaze at a religious matter becomes all the more logical.

Lamb's writing in fact bears some striking similarities to that of Horace whose works Edward P. Morris describes as "easy in style and handling, humorous and yet in a certain way serious" (9). These similarities are by no means coincidental, because he obviously admired Horace's work and was very keen to incorporate portions of it in his own compositions. Just as Horace's satires lampooned the foibles of Roman society, Lamb's essays frequently did the same to contemporary Britain. Both Horace and Lamb delighted in ridiculing friends, acquaintances and the community at large. In Satire 1 of Book 1, for example, Horace satirizes the tendency of human beings to be discontented with their lot. In Satire 2 of the same book, he lampoons the adulterer. In Satire 9, Book 1, he ridicules the bore. In the third Satire, he first makes fun of the singer, Tigellus, but does not pound his victim to pieces. Horace leaves Tigellus with much of his pride intact when he reminds his reader that "Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur optimus est qui minimus urgetur" [No human being is born free of faults. The best simply has fewest].

Horace's satires are generally of a gentle, restrained kind. Indeed, he says that a good satire needs to be brief so that it may convey meaning clearly without fanfare of words or burden to the ears (Satires 1:10: 9-10). A provocative smile, he insists, can often do more in a tricky situation than self-righteous scorn (Satires 1:10: 14-15). Similarly, Lamb seldom destroys his victim completely. In fact, he invariably leaves his victim with some of his/her

pride intact. As comically as Tane in *South Sea House* is depicted, for example, Lamb leaves the reader with clear impressions of Tane's decency and general goodness.

The uncanny similarities in satiric aspects of Lamb's essays and Horace's works are endless. Morris' description of Horace's satires as good-natured is equally applicable to the satiric content of Lamb's essays. Horace's observant eye embraced a most interesting variety of types and individuals; Lamb's essays likewise cover a wide spectrum of personalities, classes and professions. The range of themes explored by Horace includes reflections on his form of writing, ethical discourses, greed, gluttony, pretentiousness of the bourgeoisie and political cartooning. Lamb studiously avoided politics, but like Horace, explored all of the other themes mentioned above.

In Horace's works, several voices appear in the form of dialogues and the interplay of writer and an assumed vocal reader. In Book 2, Satire 3, for example, the voices of the following surface: Agammemnon, Stertinus, a slave, Damasippus and Horace. Elia of course represents the main voice in Lamb's essays, but Burton's voice appears in *Anatomy of Tailors* and *A Chapter on Ears*, while the voice of Thomas Browne emerges in *The Two Races of Men* and *On Burial Societies* (Law, 58-59). In *Christ's Hospital*, voices of Lamb's schoolmates echo most distinctly, particularly that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Variety of tone which Horace recommends for the satirist is readily discernible in Lamb's essays. The hanged man's brooding reflections and scathing indictment of the fickle nature of friendship contrasts sharply with the spirited, zestful tone that permeates *Christ's Hospital*. And one outstanding feature of Lamb's essayistic style is his economy. For despite his tendency to digress and even to ramble at times, he very rarely engages in lengthy descriptive pauses and

seldom includes ornate similes. In addition, his portrayal of characters, vivid and revealing as they are, is consistently succinct. Horace, however, is more overtly didactic in his satires which are punctuated with the Aristotelian doctrine of the golden mean. Satire in Lamb's essays is not based on any philosophical doctrine even though the epicurean and stoic approach to life surface occasionally in his works.

Both writers also indulge in semi-playful, semi-serious self-mockery. Horace, in Book 1, Satire 4, says:

Primum ego me illorum, dederint quibus esse poetis, excerptam numero;  
 [Firstly and for my part, I insist on excluding myself from the number of these  
 I would call poets]

Lamb's self-mockery appears mostly in the form of confessions of his short-comings or weaknesses. In *New Year's Eve*, for example, he refers to himself as "a stammering buffoon" (Lucas, 2: 38), but as Frank has pointed out, many critics have been "gulled" by Lamb's self-effacing representation of himself (28). A satirist who frequently operates in the hazy zone of the half-serious, half-humorous must always be treated with much caution.

Horace, of course, was but one of many Roman authors whose works Lamb treasured dearly and wished to share with his readers. Ovid was another. The expression "Os Sublime", in *Decay of the Beggars*, is a direct reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1: 84-86). Ovid's phrase attempts to explain the substance, the original heavenly seed which Prometheus "mixt with living streame" (Hulley and Vandersall, 27) and which the Maker used to create human kind. Lamb is here driving home the point that despite the loss of his legs, the famous London beggar never lost the essence of his humanity or the strength of his personality.

Another allusion to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* appears in *Blakemoor in H-shire*. Here, Lamb is attempting to convey the magical spell that the interior of the house casts on him:

The tapestried bed-rooms, tapestry so much better than painting - not adorning merely, but peopling the wainscots - at which childhood ever and anon would steal a look, shifting its cover-lid (replaced as quickly) to exercise its courage in a momentary eye-encounter with those stern bright visages, staring reciprocally - - all Ovid on the walls in colours vider than his descriptions - Actaeon in mid sprout, with the unappeasable prudery of Diana; and the still more provoking, and almost culinary coolness of Dan Phoebus, eel-fashion, deliberately divesting of Marsyas. (Lucas, 2: 154-155)

The Ovid reference suitably enhances the magical, shock effect the tapestry creates on a child's imagination. Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses* relates how Actaeon, for daring to behold Diana and her attendants bathing, was changed to a stag and hunted to death. Book 6 of the Ovid epic features the story of Marsyas, who challenged Apollo to a contest of musical skill, the winner to flay the loser, and Apollo won. Lamb's imagination is in full flight here as he indulges in his peculiar romantic brand of association. Wordsworth, in his retreat to the natural world (be it the seclusion of a grove or shady brook) gazes thoughtfully on the object in nature that fascinates him. In the intensity of this gazing, he is led to thoughts associated with that object. Lamb, however, chooses as his subject of study not sights in nature but ones to be found in a domestic setting. The object he is gazing at initiates thoughts on analogous episodes captured so well in classical mythology, inducing him to establish links with his art form to the ancient world and his generation. Lamb is doing with the pictorial arts in an urban setting what Wordsworth does with the natural world. It is also worthy of note that Lamb is employing a common Romantic pattern partly to subvert it, but partly too to show his qualified commitment to that pattern (Randel, 8). The thoughts, ideas and freedom of the imagination that come to Wordsworth, as he observes nature (the Romantic notion of association), is a pattern Lamb

employs in principle; however, he chooses something as mundane as a house as his source of inspiration. Lamb seems to be attempting to say that the imaginative capacity may be prompted by domestic scenes as well as rustic settings.

Lamb sometimes demonstrates his creativity and his eccentric ways of alluding by modifying the text from which he draws. One example of this occurs in the partial quotation occurs in 'Graium tantum vidit', an adaptation from Ovid's account of his own youth (Trist, 4: 10, 51) which reads in full:

Virgilium vidi tantum; nec amaro Tibullo  
 Tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.  
 [Virgil I saw no more; nor did harsh fate  
 grant Tibullus time to be my friend].

Once again, mere reflecting on George Dyer's near drowning experience directs Lamb's musings to the classical world from which he draws an analogy. The near loss of his friend, George Dyer, recalls Ovid's deep sense of loss of two close friends, Virgil and Tibullus. Lamb could easily have drawn from his English heritage to underscore this strong emotional feeling, but he chose, in this instance, to resort to the classics instead. Indeed, so familiar is Lamb with Latin literature that he often refers to the classics with an unconscious reflex impulse as he works his way through his essays. It must be said, however, that he sometimes draws from Shakespeare and other sources to express such strong feelings.

Seneca's works, too, occupy a special corner in Lamb's classical library. *Poor Relations* features a citation from Seneca, 'Aliquando sufflaminandus', and an allusion to the story of Hercules, killed by wearing a shirt or tunic soaked in the poisonous blood of the centaur, Nessus ('Nessian Venom'). The full excerpt from Seneca goes as follows:

Tanta illi erat velocitas orationis ut vitium fieret. Itaque D. Augustus optime dixit Aterius noster sufflaminandus est. [Such was the rapidity of his speech that it passed into a defect. And so Augustus of blessed memory well observed, "Our Aterius needs the drag]. (Lucas, 2: 409)

Lamb in this essay presents us with a poor male relative who comments in rapid fire on all and sundry of the possessions of his more fortunate kinsman. Elia finds it necessary to impose limits to this idle chatter just as Augustus saw it fitting to put the drag on the fast-talking Aterius. Hence, the powerful Latin gerund of necessity or obligation, "sufflaminandus" which echoes Cato's constant reminder to the senate: "Delenda est Carthago (Carthage must be destroyed)". The reference to poisonous garb which resulted in Hercules' death captures well the fierce pride of W (a certain Favell) who left Cambridge because he was ashamed of his house-painter father and because of his utter resentment for the servitor's gown he was forced to endure. While this does not represent Lamb's most noteworthy allusion, the incongruous connection of the garments, a concrete entity, to a scholarly decline points to Lamb's keenness, even his relentless preoccupation, to seek classical analogies for his writing.

Aside then from confirming his partiality for antiquity, Lamb's use of biblical and classical allusions assumes the reader's familiarity with the classics and the scriptures. Allusions also serve to enrich his literary work by merging the echoed material with the new essayistic context (Preminger, 18). Most of the classical allusions comprised quotations or misquotations from Latin texts, while some surface as allusions in the sense of "allusio" and "ludus", playful punning (a form of allusion which John Hollander speaks of in *Figure of Echo* (63-64)). In fact, more playfulness occurs in classical references. Playful or serious, classical allusions are integrated smoothly into the narrative to provide added strength and vividness to the essays. The Bible and the classics were so much a part of Lamb's childhood learning that even as a mature

man and writer these early educational groundings had become so much a part of his consciousness and frame of reference that he drew from them naturally.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### REFERENCES TO SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON

In drawing on Shakespeare, Lamb continues in his semi-serious, semi-satiric ways. His references to the renowned Elizabethan dramatist are often linked with Elia's literary and social criticism. They sometimes also serve to assist in undermining or debunking popular sentiments or trends.

*On the Tragedies of Shakespeare* reveals many of Lamb's views on the poet and dramatist, whom he calls "our sweet Shakespeare" (Lucas, 1: 105; Bate, 120). In this essay, Lamb also says that Shakespeare's plays are "natural, indeed, they are grounded deep in nature, so deep that the depth in them lies out of reach of most of us" (Lucas, 1: 102). Samuel Taylor Coleridge, classical scholar, Romantic poet and raconteur extraordinaire, expresses similar views when he says:

Another excellence in Shakespear, and in which no other writer equalled him, was in the language of nature, so correct was it that we could see ourselves in all he wrote; his style and manner has also that felicity, that not a sentence could be read without its being discovered if it were Shakespearian. (Bate, 131)

Coleridge also contends that Shakespeare "never deserted the [moral] high road of life" (Bate, 131).

William Hazlitt, a most distinguished Romantic essayist and critic, says of William Shakespeare: "The striking peculiarity of Shakespeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds..." (Hazlitt, 62). Quite clearly, Shakespeare was greatly admired by the Romantics (Bate, introduction).

One feature of Romanticism points to its "preoccupation with character analysis" (Bevington, Introduction, xcvi). Shakespeare, who was a master at pointing to the external and internal facets of his characters, attracted much interest from a wide spectrum of Romantic

writers. Hence Bevington concludes: "As a whole, the Romantics were enthusiasts of Shakespeare and sometimes even idolators" (Introduction). Given then this high level of respect, it comes as no surprise that the Romantics made frequent references to Shakespeare, Lamb perhaps more so than most.

Lamb's allusions in general present us with a continuum of techniques ranging from full comparative allusions to assimilative echoes of the faintest kind. Lamb often employs comparative allusions when he engages in thoughts different from mainstream Romantic ideology or when he wishes to express strong views. His allusions to Shakespeare are often linked with the ironic or satiric. Sometimes, too, Lamb employs the Renaissance strategy of *contaminatio*, a kind of smorgasbord of ideas. On these occasions, he seems to be blurring the border between prose and poetry, for although *contaminatio*s do appear in prose, it is in poetry that they are employed more frequently and in which they find their most subtle and complex expression. Lamb also expects much from his reader, and premises his author/reader relationship upon a reciprocity of the author's imaginative allusiveness and the intellectual ability and cooperative spirit of the reader to be a fellow-traveller in these allusive escapades.

One of these escapades occurs in *Imperfect Sympathies*, a confessional piece dealing with Elia's/Lamb's prejudices. It includes a passing reference to Desdemona in *Othello*. Elia expresses his admiration for the Quakers' ways, their style of worship and their principles, but he cannot love them enough, as Desdemona would say, "to live with them". *Othello*, among other things, explores the theme of prejudice. Desdemona, of course, goes against the mores of her countrymen by marrying and living with a dark-skinned Moor. This comparative allusion draws a sharp contrast between Desdemona's attitude to those who are different and Elia's

position on the subject. Elia is of course reflecting the prejudices of his time and his own shortcomings in dealing with otherness. Elia emerges as an honest, frank fellow. Of greater importance, however, is the adroitness of the Shakespearean allusion, for Elia could count on the understanding, if not agreement of his readers by alluding to a Shakespearean character with a most unusual liberal attitude to people of the dark-skinned races. Unlike Desdemona, Elia cannot love someone of another race or religious persuasion sufficiently to live with him or her. In this very essay, his strong negative views on Scotsmen, so close in kin and geography to Englishmen, confirm this attitude.

Another comparative allusion appears in *On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity*, in which Elia echoes King Duncan in *Macbeth* when he says: "I believe that there is, or may be, an art to 'read the mind's construction in the face'" (Lucas, 1: 64). This is the opposite to the sentiment expressed by King Duncan, still puzzled by Cawdor's treachery: "There is no art/ To find the mind's construction in the face", laments the disappointed monarch (Act 1, Scene 4, lines 11-12). Elia emerges here as a competent debater. In principle, he takes a position opposite to that of King Duncan; however, he hastens to remind his readers that "in every species of reading, so much depends on the eyes of the reader" (Lucas, 1: 64). He further argues that if the eyes of the readers are "blear, or apt to dazzle, or inattentive or strained with too much attention, the optical power will infallibly bring home false reports of what it reads" (Lucas, 1:64). Avid reader as he is, Elia is perhaps speaking from personal experience of reading to the point of physical exhaustion which may partly explain inaccuracies in quoting that appear in his essays. Here then is another parallel with direct experience. Duncan's failure to

read faces may thus be viewed as a confession by Elia of his failure to read some books diligently or even accurately.

This citation from *Macbeth* is a comparative allusion in that Elia says that there is or may be an art to reading facial expressions, a contrary view to that held by King Duncan. It is unlikely, however, that Elia is expressing any shortcomings in Shakespeare, whose characters are portrayed as real flesh and blood human beings with their strengths, failings and weaknesses and who are given full rein to express themselves freely. Goethe perhaps sums up best Shakespeare's characters when he compares them to "watches with crystalline plates and cases, which while they point out the hours as correctly as other watches, enable us at the same time to perceive the inward springs whereby all this is accomplished" (Bate, 97-98). Lamb has perceived the limited capacity of Duncan's "inward springs". The allusion to a Shakespearean character with a patent limitation to comment on human potential to read facial expressions sets up opposing dispositions, a favourite device with Lamb. In the final analysis, however, he wishes to say that it is possible to read intentions from facial expressions, but it is also possible to misread them. Lamb's independent mind does not allow him to accept every thought or idea uttered by characters or writers, including Shakespeare.

Elia continues his argument vis-à-vis the tricky business of reading faces by posing the rhetorical question: Who can really describe the look of a murderer before he commits the crime? Elia includes a most vivid Shakespearean reference, albeit adapted: "Tarquin tread and millstone dropping eyes" (Lucas, 1:68). Gloucester, addressing the two murderers, states: "Your eyes drop millstones, when fool's eyes drop tears" (*Richard III*, 1:3: 354). Macbeth, too, says: "Withered murderer ... When Tarquin's ravishing strides towards his design/ Moves like

a ghost" (*Macbeth*, 3:1: 52, 55-56). In this instance, the Shakespearean reference may be classified as a double echo in that it draws from two of Shakespeare's plays. The point Elia seeks to establish is this: whereas in drama, fiction and poetry exaggerations and embellishments are allowed, in real life situations, one should guard against such hyperboles and stereotypes, particularly those relating to a lack of distinction between moral and personal deformity. There is considerable irony here because Elia's writing reveals many exaggerations and stereotypical characters.

More examples of comparative allusions surface in *The Londoner*. Lamenting his inability to vie for offices such as the Lord Mayoralty of London (an ineligibility related to his impediment of speech), Lamb consoles himself that the furred gown is but a mask under which such officials hide. "Furred gown" appears in *Measure for Measure* (3: 2, 8). It is the traditional dress of usurers, the biblical and mediaeval equivalent to modern day 'loan sharks'. While he is not suggesting that the Lord Mayor is a loan shark, Lamb does imply that the ostentatious garments of officials often conceal their true personality. King Lear also speaks of the furred gown as a cover for the inner corruption of high legal officials with "Robes and furred gown hide all" (*King Lear*, 4: 6, 165). Lamb loathes facades and pretensions as he makes clear in a letter to Coleridge, dated 3 October 1796: "I hate concealment". The self-mocking satiric tone of the opening paragraph hints of regret verging on resentment of the limits imposed upon him by his tendency to stammer.

After these initial, digressory thoughts, Lamb then proceeds to address the central idea of the essay: the joys of city life. In stating his preference for an urban setting, Elia says:

For my own part, now that the fit is past, I have no hesitation in declaring, that a mob of happy faces crowding up at the pit door of Drury Land Theatre, just at

the hour of six, gives me ten thousand sincerer pleasures, than I could ever receive from all the flocks of silly sheep that ever whitened the plains of Arcadia or Epsom Downs. (Lucas, 1:39)

The king in *Henry VI*, Part III, uses the expression "silly sheep" in bemoaning the burden of monarchical responsibilities, a sharp contrast with the leisurely life of a shepherd. There may also be a 'double entendre' and another joke embedded in the linking of the plains of Arcadia and Epsom Downs. The lords and ladies who assembled from time to time at Epsom Downs may in fact be depicted as sheep, as Elia is relying upon a reader conversant with the mores and social habits of the English élite to embark with him on a flight of the imagination capturing ladies in broad-rimmed hats, white gloves, full-length, flouncing frocks, parasol in one hand, daintily brandishing a fan with the other; and gentlemen in top hats, sporting canes, in waistcoat and tailcoats all properly controlling their emotions, all graciously polite and circumspectly British, but all very clone-like and as undistinguishable from one another as sheep in a flock. Although Lamb's satires are never vicious, the implicit comment he may be making on the English aristocracy with the aid of a Shakespearean and a classical echo borders on the scathing, but provides much humour nevertheless. Thus, while the bizarre juxtapositioning of a much revered site in ancient Greece, suggestive of the original model of pastoral poetry as fashioned by Theocritus and Hesiod, and a meeting place for the fashionable British aristocracy, suggests that Arcadia is as real to him as Epsom Downs. Elia's classical background, his lively imagination and his refusal to accept the historical and geographical gaps that separate these fields are contributory factors to this contrived sense of reality. The Shakespearean reference ("silly sheep") embedded in this linking makes clear and categorical Elia's preference for an urban life-style, parodying at the same time Wordsworth's rustic ideal. For just as the foresters

of Arden, implies Elia, feed spiritually and intellectually on their idyllic, pastoral landscape, so too does the city-dwelling artist nourish his intellect and creativity in an urban setting. This is the gist of Elia's nurturing imagery beginning with the rhetorical question:

where has spleen her food but in London? Humour, Interest, Curiosity, suck at her measureless breasts without the possibility of being satiated. (Lucas, 1: 40)

Although the contribution of these echoes to the essay may be considered modest, their subtlety may well have had a special appeal to the educated élite who would then have been quite familiar with Shakespeare's works. It must have been very satisfying to the keen student of Shakespeare to have detected these hidden references.

Towards the end of this essay, Elia quotes directly from *As You Like It* - "Found tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, /Sermons in stones, and good in everything" (Act 2, Scene 1, 16-17) - to support his argument that there is much to be enjoyed in city life. Elia is in a sense reworking a traditional theme in English literature only to debunk it in order to establish his point of the equivalency of the urban and the rustic (the natural) as a source of creative energy. The inclusion of a classical echo and four allusions to Shakespeare's works creates layers of allusions. While these layers of allusions do not represent a genuine *contaminatio* since there are too few of them, they may well be classified as a *cento*, the "evolved reductive form of a *contaminatio*". According to Stern, the "*cento* evolved from a struggle for voices" (90). Lamb is attempting to garner and blend voices. In the process, he rejects one of them, providing another reason why this compounding of voices may not be classified as a *contaminatio* which, by definition, does not privilege any voice over the other. With the aid of these allusions, however, Elia is clearly defending an urban life style, placing him outside of the mainstream of the Romantic love affair with nature. By his ironic juxtapositioning of the ancient

and the modern, the distant and the local, Elia is subverting Romantic faith in nature, exemplifying at the same time his fascination for "blendings or reconciliation of opposites" (Randel, 14).

Comparative allusions do not, however, appear as frequently in *The Essays of Elia* as do assimilative ones. Assimilative allusions serve to enrich a literary work. As Stein has observed:

The effect of this blending, when successful, is either to absorb the old taste -- to make cling to the surface a flavor at once familiar and piquant -- or to absorb it, mixing it in so thoroughly that it adds only a subtle essence. (142)

Several such assimilative allusions drawn from the works of Shakespeare appear in *The Old Benches of the Inner Temple*. In this essay, Elia's comment on the antique image of sundials:

What an antique air had the now almost effaced sun-dials, with their moral inscriptions, seeming coevals with that Time which they measured, and to take their revelations of its flight immediately from heaven, holding correspondence with the fountain of light. (Lucas, 2: 83)

alludes to *Sonnet 104*:

Ah! yet doth beauty like a dial-hand  
steal from his figure, and no pace perceived!

Shakespeare is here attempting to capture that sense of the timelessness of beauty but Elia's sundials, once imbued with magic, are now Victims of Time. Almost defaced and stationed as they are on the outside of the temple, the sundials help to explain how the allusion to *Sonnet 104* works assimilatively at the adsorption level with the essay as a whole.

Elia's discourse on sundials and clocks reminds his readers of their primitive origins, echoing the King's words in *Henry the Sixth, Part III*:

O God! methinks it were a happy life.  
To be no better than a homely swain;  
To set upon a hill, as I do now,  
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point. (Act 2, Scene 5, Lines 21-24; Lucas, 2: 363)

This Shakespearean echo, "carved it quaintly" (Lucas, 2: 83), is a genuine echo in that it repeats the sound of the monarch in *King Henry III*. It attempts to capture that state of inner bliss Elia links with The Inner Temple. This paradisaal beauty and the feelings of ecstasy it engenders can only be experienced by those who are knowledgeable of the details and intricacies of the beauty of the Temple. The echo, linking as it does deep internal feelings with The Inner Temple, is thus absorbed into the discourse. Quite fittingly, *Old Benchers* which deals with time and ageing, concludes with an echo from *King Lear*: "Ye yourselves are old" which recalls words by the aged ruler himself:

If you do love old men,  
if your sweet sway allow obedience,  
if you yourselves are old,  
make it your cause. (2:4: 193-195)

This final Shakespearean echo blends almost perfectly with theme and characters, if not setting, merging aged lawyers with an aged Shakespearean hero. Elia thus emerges as a master craftsman of the allusive art. He has cleverly employed assimilative allusions at three different levels in his references to Shakespeare.

Assimilative allusions also appear in *Valentine's Day*, which with its theme of love, fittingly draws from a Shakespearean love story. The phrase "gives the very echo ..." (Lucas, 2: 56) typifies Elia's partiality for fragmentary and adapted quotations. The full citation goes as follows:

Viola           It gives a very echo to the seat where love is throned (*Twelfth Night*, 2:4: 21-22).

In this quotation, Elia substitutes "hope" for "love" and "seated" for "throned" -- a deliberate misquoting because he is attempting to capture the ensuing suspense following the knock at the

door on Valentine's Day. "Hope", therefore, is the preferred abstraction for Elia's discourse and "seated" more suitable than "throned". But when Elia says:

As the raven himself was hoarse that announced the fatal entrance of Duncan, so the knock of the postman on [Valentine's] day is light, airy confident and befitting one that bringeth forth good tidings. (Lucas, 2: 56)

the reader is somewhat puzzled by this bizarre parallel, the one dealing with treachery and an impending murder, the other with the suspense that attends possible tidings of love. Incongruous allusions such as this one point to a somewhat eccentric and unpredictable Elia, who is linking two disparate suspenseful situations. Elia's unpredictability is marked by the presentation of himself in turn as theatre critic, admirer of a religious sect, satirist, opinionated commentator on fashions of the day, debater, or compassionate advocate for the underclass.

*Valentine's Day* concludes with an allusion to Ophelia, mentally unbalanced after her father's murder, singing about Valentine's Day (*Hamlet*, Act 4, Scene 5). Elia does draw some parallels related to love, but most of the allusions invest this essay with a certain melancholy bordering on the macabre. The reader is left to speculate whether Lamb's misfortune in his fledgling love affair might have coloured his attitude in this case.<sup>1</sup> Elia in fact may be making a veiled cynical comment on love. Paralleling a Shakespearean source that ends in death to hope of love on Valentine's Day suggests the possibility of the termination of that love before it is given time to grow. Elia is perhaps hinting that the birth and death of love are obverse sides of the same coin, thus making the Duncan reference a plausible assimilative allusion.

*On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century* has one recognizable assimilative Shakespearean reference. Elia is comparing the attitude of theatre-goers of the last century to

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<sup>1</sup> See Lucas, *Letters*, II, 254-255.

that of frequenters in his time. Elia posits that theatre-goers of his generation "do not go thither, like our ancestors, to escape from the pressure of reality, so much as to confirm our experience of it; to make assurance double, and to take a bond of faith" (Lucas, 2: 142). "To make assurance double and take a bond of faith" are Macbeth's thoughts following the revelation of the second apparition (*Macbeth*, 4:1: 83-84), who makes contradictory utterances when it says:

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth (1V.i. 79-81)

In order to make his monarchy doubly safe, notwithstanding the final reassuring words of the apparition, Macbeth orders his men to murder Macduff. The use of an allusion which points to a planned assassination induces the reader to think that Elia may be suggesting that writers and theatre-goers are engaging in the murder of comedy! He is expressing a strong personal opinion, citing a reference from the celebrated English dramatist. The Shakespearean reference, "assurance double", parallels Elia's "double" condemnation of writers and theatre-goers, making the allusion a pertinent and clever one indeed.

It is also to be noted that Elia chooses for his source a tragedy which deals with the rise and fall of leaders to comment on contemporary approaches to comedy which he sees are heading for failure. There is some hyperbole in the allusion, but a very functional one. Elia wishes to capture and maintain his readers' attention. Indeed, Lamb had an abiding love for the theatre and drama, including the works of less familiar playwrights, such as Marston, Heywood, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher. "No one", says John Mason Brown in his introduction to *Charles Lamb: Letters and Essays*, "has written about the theatre with greater warmth or

perception than did Lamb about vanished players or the playhouses of his youth" (35). Elia emerges here as a credible theatre critic.

*Amicus Redivivus* features three assimilative references to Shakespeare. George Dyer, rescued from his near-drowning experience, has been recuperating on Lamb's couch. He would sometimes burst out into chanting songs of his childhood, displaying a tenderness reminiscent of "Good Sir Hugh" in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

Sir Hugh Evans      'Pless my soul, how full of cholers I am, and trempling of  
mind! ... Pless my soul!

To shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals;  
There will we make our peds of roses,  
And a thousand fragrant posies.  
To shallow --

Mercy on me! I have a great disposition to cry.  
(Act 3, Scene 1, Lines 11-22)

This allusion is a most suitable parallel to the child-like tenderness of George Dyer as he recuperates from his near-drowning experience. However, the lines beginning from "To shallow rivers" to "To Shallow --", clearly a corruption of Christopher Marlowe's words in *The Passionate Shepherd*, complicates this child-like tenderness. Elia might well be implying that Dyer was conducting some "love affair" with the thought of dying.

In this context, Elia employs another Shakespearean echo. The phrase "with Clarence" represents an allusion to *Richard the Third*. Elia has "nothing but water in his head o'nights since the frightful accident. Sometimes he is with Clarence in his dream" (Lucas, 2: 212). In Act 1, Scene 4, Clarence recounts his frightful dream, mirroring his agitated mind in the same

way that Elia's dreams reveal his disturbed mental state after Dyer's accident. The allusion thus makes more vivid Elia's adverse psychological difficulties after the Dyer crisis.

The third citation, a faint echo indeed, appears in the Latin phrase "tremor cordis" which comes from *The Winter's Tale*, Act I, Scene 2, line 110. Shakespeare shows Leontes under "tremor cordis", fluttering of the heart, suggestive of shock or anxiety when he realises Hermione has offered her hand to Polixenes and not to him. In the context of the Elia essay, the "tremor cordis" which Dyer experiences is more akin to grateful feelings of relief from a life-threatening episode. This is another example of Lamb's employment of apparent incongruous paralleling. Leontes' fluttering heart following hard upon Hermione's rejection of his overtures is linked with the trembling heart beat of Dyer, happy to be rescued. Feelings of disappointment and those of gratitude are almost diametrical opposites, but Lamb succeeds in bringing them to a common physical result.

*Amicus Redivivus* not only recalls a tense story, it also attempts to explore the psychological dynamics of rescuer and rescued in a near-drowning episode. Lamb's choice of Shakespeare as one of his sources of allusions is deliberate and sensible, for no writer, in Lamb's opinion, explores with greater depth of insights the inner workings of the minds of his characters than does Shakespeare. Further evidence of his faith in Shakespeare's ability to penetrate the minds of his characters appears in *On The Tragedies of Shakespeare*, where Lamb, in speaking of the criminal characters Macbeth, Richard and Iago, had this to say:

... We think not so much of the crimes which they commit, as of ambition, the aspiring spirit, the intellectual activity, which prompts them to overleap their moral fences. (Lucas, 1: 106)

Lamb is here stating what readers can do that the stage cannot, but it is Shakespeare who leads his reader to delve into the inner workings of the minds of these criminals. It is also worthy of note that Lamb employs as a source for this allusion a Shakespearean character with a criminal mind to throw light upon the tender feelings of contentment and lingering anxiety experienced by the rescuer in the near fatal mishap. Lamb is once again playing with apparently incongruous parallels. In this case he wishes to suggest that these emotions are not restricted to the good and godly, but are human feelings experienced by depraved characters as well.

Perhaps the quintessential examples of assimilative allusions occur in *All Fools' Day* which deals ostensibly with fools and the fooled. Since Shakespeare's plays are amply supplied with fools, clowns and the gulled, Elia draws from his works. The citations are assimilated in the essay by blending thematically with the topic and the playful tone of the essay. The phrase "-- and let us troll the catch of Amiens - duc ad me - duc ad me - how goes it?" is an allusion to *As You Like It* (Act 2, Scene 5). Jaque's third verse to Amiens' song goes as follows:

Thus it goes:  
 If it do come to pass  
 That any man turn to ass,  
 Leaving his wealth and ease,  
 A stubborn will to please,  
 Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame.  
 Here shall he see  
 Gross fools as he  
 An if he will come to me.

Amiens then poses the question, "What's that 'ducdame'?" To which Jaques replies: "'Tis a Greek invocation to call fools to a circle." "Gross fools as he" and "To call fools into a circle" dovetail nicely with the subject of the essay, *All Fools' Day*. It is also an invitation for all fools to assemble because it is All Fools' Day!

In this essay Lamb also assembles, through echoes and allusions, a variety of Shakespeare's fools. "Samphire picking", for example, is a faint echo of *King Lear* (4:6: 14-15) where Edgar, deceiving, with good motives, his father, Gloucester, now blind, says: "Half-way down/ Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade". Gloucester is in this episode fooled by his son in disguise. Edgar wishes to save his father who has suicidal intentions. This echo operates at the adsorbing level in that love and loyalty are the most prominent themes in the episode. "Aguecheek" is from *Twelfth Night*; "Slender" is a character in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as is "Shallow"; and "Silence" appears in *Henry IV, Part 2* (Lucas, 2: 43). All of these characters are linked with fools and/or the fooled. "That Malvolian smile" alludes to *Twelfth Night* (3: 4) where Malvolio, gulled by Maria's letter, comes smiling into his mistress's presence (Lucas, 2: 342-343).

*All Fools' Day* is not only a prime example of Lamb's use of assimilative allusions, it also exemplifies his employment of the *contaminatio*. Although it is only three pages long, it features, in addition to seven clear allusions to Shakespeare's works, Latin, an English wine, sundry quotations, allusions and references to contemporary scholars as well as those of a previous age. The Latin expression, "stultus sum" (I am a fool) sets the playful tone of the essay. The excerpt from Jaques' third verse to Amiens in *As You Like It* represents a singing voice of a fool as part of the general fabric of the essay. References to two mediaeval scholars, Raymond Lully (1235-1315) and Duns Scotus (1265?-1308?), appear here also. Alexander the Great, foolishly weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer, surfaces too. Allusions to Ben Jonson (*Every Man in His Humour*), Wordsworth (*The Fountain*), Fielding (*Joseph Andrews*), Richard Barnfield (*As It Fell Upon a Day*), Cervantes (*Don Quixote*) and Gay's *Song*

of *Macbeth* all find a place in this essay. These allusions all feature fools, the fooled, and foolish conduct. There are also two faint echoes of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, one Old Testament allusion and an oblique reference ("Those Parables") to three passages in *Matthew* and one in *Luke* (Lucas, 2: 341-343). In this collection of voices, Lamb does not seem to privilege any one voice over the others.

It must be said, however, that more references to Shakespeare than to any other writer or work appear in *All Fools' Day*. Thus, some may argue that by virtue of numbers of allusions and the position of a Shakespearean reference near the beginning, in the middle, and near the end of the essay, Lamb may in fact be favouring the master dramatist from Stratford-upon-Avon over the others. If this was Lamb's intention, this unorthodox *contaminatio* is another example of his modifying a literary form to make it peculiarly Lambian.

This modification of the *contaminatio* also occurs in *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* which over and above references to Michelangelo's *Moses* and biblical Saul includes an assortment of echoes and allusions. In this essay, the voices of Danes Barrington, Shakespeare, Spenser and Swift all vie for equal recognition. Once again, however, by virtue of the number of allusions to him, Shakespeare seems to win the day (Lucas, 2: 362-370). Two of these references appear near the beginning of the essay and one near the end. It is as though Lamb is giving Shakespeare the final word to create a unique version of the *contaminatio* which in any event is an allusive style more likely to be found in poetry. Thus a *contaminatio* when it appears in the *Essays of Elia* may be considered the prosaic version, or it may point to a poetic feature in Lamb's essays.

Briefly, then, in the *Essays of Elia* allusions to Shakespeare's works are frequent. They are quite often, too, a part of the diverse, complex pattern of echoing deployed by Lamb who has high expectations of his reading audience. His readers must share his delight in the eclectic, allusive style; they must be very familiar with the rich literary and cultural tradition of England. Above all, they need to understand Lamb's deep admiration for Shakespeare, better even if they, too, are enamoured with the man from Stratford.

Another author whose works Lamb held in high regard was the seventeenth century poet, John Milton, best known for the brilliant epic *Paradise Lost*. Whereas allusions to Shakespeare tend to feature Renaissance patterns, the assimilative and comparative mode of referencing, citations from Milton seem often linked with Lamb's play with voices. In his introduction to *The Romantics on Milton*, Joseph Anthony Wittreich Jr. posits that Romantic criticism is distinguished for its ability to hold John Milton -- man, thinker, and poet -- in balance (9), and that "Milton was for the Romantics, a daring individualist who took his place outside the circle of conformists" (11). Wittreich also contends that Blake's "*Milton* [a poem in two parts] epitomizes what Milton the man and the thinker meant to these critics" (11). Indeed, Blake sees Milton as "England's saviour at [that] dark moment of her history" (11). Wittreich concludes that "the Romantics' love for Milton deepened into a kind of veneration that they had for no other poet" (11).

William Wordsworth's respect for Milton is best summed up in thoughts expressed in *London 1802*:

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour;  
 England hath need of thee: She is a fen  
 Of stagnant waters: ...

....

Oh, raise us up, return to us again;  
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;  
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
 In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay. (Wittreich, 111)

From the body of Wordsworth's works, Wittreich has recorded 138 references to Milton. Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his poems, letters, lectures and essays, has referred to Milton 392 times. Charles Lamb's references to Milton, as collated by Wittreich, number a meagre forty. However, Lamb's admiration for Milton goes much deeper than these figures seem to indicate. For example, he says:

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears. (Lucas, 2: 175; Wittreich, 302)

In Lamb's eyes, there is something almost sacred about Milton's works. One way in which he expresses this respect is by choice echoing and alluding to them when he has something serious to say, a strategy similar to his employment of biblical allusions. But, as is so often the case with Lamb, this seriousness is sometimes tinged with the satiric or the humorous.

Lamb/Elia also continues to delight in some unlikely linking of situation or character of sources alluded to and the context of his essay. In addition, references to Milton frequently appear in compounded allusions or multi-layered echoes which may be used comparatively or in an assimilative manner. These echoes may at times be vague, uncertain, or slippery; occasionally, too, the sound of faint echoes is related to the aural sensitivity of the listener. In contrast to this light touch in his handling of allusions is Lamb's penchant for playing with and appropriating voices.

Elia is in serious mood in *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare* which includes two references to Milton. In the first one, Elia claims that "the practice of stage representation reduces everything to a controversy of elocution". For example, he continues:

The love-dialogue of Romeo and Juliet, those silver-tongued sounds of lovers' tongues by night; the more intimate and sacred nuptial colloquy between an Othello or a Posthumus with their married wives, all those delicacies which are so delightful in reading, as when we read of those youthful dalliances in Paradise

--

Fair couple link'd in happy nuptial league,  
Alone:

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  
... (Lucas, 1:100)

The Milton quotation comes from Book 4 of *Paradise Lost*, lines 338-340. Elia's allusion supports this point that the "silver-sweet sounds of lovers' tongues" require absolute privacy, hence the abrupt ending of the citation with the very significant word: "alone". For example, it is only through the imaginative process in reading that one can capture that sense of quietude and bliss in this private moment of a love scene. Elia wishes to make his position abundantly clear: some things simply cannot be, and ought not to be, represented on stage. This is what he has to say:

But to think by the help of painted trees and caverns, which we know to be painted, to transport our minds to Prospero, and his island and his lonely cell; or by the aid of a fiddle dexterously thrown in, in an interval of speaking, to make us believe that we hear those supernatural noises of which the isle was full: -- the Orrery Lecturer at the Haymarket might as well hope, by the musical glasses cleverly stationed out of sight behind his apparatus, to make us believe that we do indeed hear the chrystal spheres ring out that chime, which if it were to inwrap our fancy long, Milton thinks,

....

Time would run back and fetch the age of gold,  
And speckled vanity  
Would sicken soon and die,

And leprous Sin would melt from earthly mould;  
 Yea Hell itself would pass away,  
 And leave its dolorous mansions to the peering day.  
 (Lucas, 1: 110)

Elia is here quoting from Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, XIV. He is saying that if the portrayal of all these complex emotions is possible on stage, we would be turning back Time to the golden, paradisaal age in which sin and hell do not exist.

Elia is also in serious mode in *Oxford in the Vacation* when he says: "These were bright visitations in a scholar's and clerk's life -- 'far off their coming shone'" (Lucas, 2: 8). "Far off their coming shone" is a partial quotation from a Miltonian source which goes as follows: "Attended with ten thousand saints/ He onwards came, far off his coming shone" (*Paradise Lost*, 6: 767-768). To glorify his son, the Father Almighty sent him to rescue the Angels, Michael and Gabriel, hard pressed by the battle-raging, rebellious Satan. The glorious spectacle of the Messiah's approach is made conspicuous by the shining images of brightness and light in Milton's narrative. The innuendoes here are worthy of note. Firstly, Elia is projecting himself as a scholar. Secondly, the Miltonian allusion invests the bright visitations with a certain Christ-like aura which (by inference) undercuts the modesty Elia attempts to cultivate, for example, in *Christ's Hospital* in his employment of Biblical allusions.

In his attempt to depict George Dyer's keenness and dedication to his research, Elia has this to say:

D. is assiduous in his visits to these seats of learning. No inconsiderable portion of his moderate fortune, I apprehend, is consumed in journeys between them and Clifford's-Inn -- where, like a dove on the asp's nest, he has long taken up his unconscious abode, amid an incongruous assembly of attorneys, attorneys' clerks, apparitors, promoters, vermin of the law, among whom he sits "in calm and sinless peace". (Lucas, 2: 10)

The final prepositional phrase is a direct quotation from *Paradise Regained*, Book 4, line 425, where Milton presents Christ as all composure and perfect dignity in the wilderness, despite Satan's attractive enticements and temptations. This assimilative allusion, distinguishing Lamb's friend with a Christ-like presence, is as flattering to George Dyer as it is scathing to the legal profession. Dyer does work with the legal establishment, but Elia is careful to point out that he is not one of them.

Elia is not always in serious mood in his references to Milton. His unlikely allusive linkings appear frequently and they do so with a distinct subtlety and complexity. In *The Two Races of Men*, Elia introduces us to Ralph Bigod, Esq. who succeeded in divesting himself of the fortune he inherited from his mighty ancestors. Elia suggests that in

getting rid of the cumbersome luggage of riches more apt (as one sings)

To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,  
Than prompt her to do aught that may merit praise,

he set forth, like some Alexander, upon his great enterprise "borrowing and to borrow!" (Lucas, 2: 24)

There is something almost bizarre in comparing Bigod's ridding himself of the encumbrances of his wealth to gain respectability for his borrowing ways and Christ's rejection of Satan's persuasive offer of Riches, Wealth and Treasure with this warning:

Extol not riches then, the toil of Fools,  
The wiseman's cumbrance if not snare mob  
To slacken virtue, and abate the edge  
Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise,  
(*Paradise Regained*, 2: 453-456)

Elia is not treating ironically the allusion *per se*. He is, however, lampooning both Bigod's addiction to borrowing and the eccentric ways of a member of the British upper class, for Bigod

is not begging because of indigent circumstances or a physical inability to earn a living. His pathway of life is by choice. Far from being disconcerted by the prodigious number of people from whom he borrows, Bigod seems to have regarded them as his 'tributaries'. In fact, "He rather took pride in numbering them; and, with Comus, seemed pleased to be 'stocked with so fair a herd'" (Lucas, 2: 24). Elia, himself, too is 'well-stocked' with many quotations including those from the works of Milton. The full reference reads:

Now to my charms  
And to my wily trains; I shall ere long  
Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd  
About my mother Circe. (*Comus*, 151-153)

Comus seems capable by his charms and trains (lures) of increasing his herd in the same way that Bigod adds to his score of lenders by his charming, persuasive personality. On the surface, Elia appears to be attempting an unlikely linking of Comus and Christ. However, the analogy of Bigod to Christ, parodical and playful as it is, yet speaks to the spiritual, elevated aspect of Bigod's motives, whereas the Comus parallel throws light upon the lower, primitive instincts and drives in him. In the final analysis, though, there is something quite ironic and humorous in the twist Lamb gives to the familiar story of improvident gentry. The satiric element in the lampooning and the employment of Miltonic allusions are well exemplified in this piece.

Another incongruous paralleling occurs in *Praise of Chimney Sweepers*. Elia's universal host, the chimney sweepers, after a thunderous roar of applause, began their solemn supper. In this essay, Elia speaks of a certain James White who instituted an annual feast for chimney sweepers "at which it was his pleasure to officiate as host and waiter" (Lucas, 2: 112). It was White's custom first to express thanks for the honour the company had bestowed upon him, then to hug and lightly kiss the plumpest of the cooks, "whereat the universal host would set up a

shout that tore the concave, while hundreds of grinning teeth startled the night with their brightness" (Lucas, 2: 113). "Whereat the universal host" is a paraphrase of Milton which goes:

At which the universal Host upsent  
A shout that tore Hell's concave and beyond  
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.  
(*Paradise Lost*, 1: 541-543)

The paraphrase suggests that Lamb intended a limited analogy here. Thus, it is unreasonable to equate the chimney sweepers, victims of poverty, with Satan's angels in their chaotic boisterous setting.

The annual banquet symbolises a temporary reprieve from the drudgery and grim reality of the lives of chimney sweepers. As readers, we share their joy on this special occasion, but the analogy to Satan and his angels, limited as it is intended to be, reminds us of the hell-like environment in which they work and the sordid circumstances of their lives in general. The chimney sweepers are portrayed as heroes, but the Miltonian citation aids in the underlying questioning of a socio-economic system that leaves them trapped in a life of misery and poverty.

And yet another unlikely linking appears in *On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century*. The second of two references to Milton takes the form of an echo. Commenting on Crabtree and Sir Benjamin, actors who played the role of snakes, Elia insists that they "must be ripened by this hot-bed process of realization into asps or amphisbaenas" (Lucas, 2: 146). This echo recalls Milton's line in *Paradise Lost* (10: 424): "Scorpion and asp, and Amphisbaena dire". This is the point in the narration when Satan arrives in Pandemonium and boastfully relates his success against Mankind, God's cherished creation. Instead of applause, Satan is greeted with a universal hiss from the audience, transformed with himself suddenly into serpents. Theatrical

transformation of humans to serpents parallels fallen angels' metamorphosis into vipers. It is hardly likely that Elia wishes to depict comedians as devils. However, he calls upon an episode in *Paradise Lost* featuring a frightful gathering of demons to suggest that the act of transforming oneself into a serpent, however illusionary that effort is intended to be, is tantamount to a devilish exercise.

Lamb also uses a compounded allusion to Milton in this essay. Elia is expressing his need to escape the pressure of daily life to retreats where "hunters" cannot follow him. He draws a parallel with Milton's Saturn and Vesta meeting in

Secret shades  
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
While yet there was no fear of Jove,  
(*Il Penseroso*, 28-30)

Elia is happy to report that such escapes are not without Miltonian and Graeco-Roman divine sanction. The citation employs Milton's words but the allusion to Graeco-Roman mythology is very obvious. The Milton allusion is thus strengthened (compounded) by a classical echo.

Another example of a compounded allusion appears in *A Quakers' Meeting* in which Elia portrays a Quaker of giant stature, shaking all over with the spirit, under which influence he "seemed not speak but to be spoken to", and whose expression would have scared away the Levities "faster than the Loves fled the face of Dis at Enna" (Lucas, 2: 48). The subordinate clause at the end of the quotation echoes both Milton and the classics:

Not that fair field  
Of Enna, where Prospina gath'ring flow'rs  
Herself a fairer flow'r by gloomy Dis  
Was gather'd ... (*Paradise Lost*, 4: 268-271).

The giant's facial expression in that "Foxian Orgasm" would drive away the Levities, spirit of humour and laughter, faster than Dis (Pluto) snatched Prospina off to the underworld. The portrayal of a Quaker speaking in tongues seems at this point in the essay to be a contradiction of the pious ways of the Quakers. But Elia wishes to stress the point that observing a Quaker speaking in tongues is a learning as well as a spiritual experience, for the giant's voice seems to be appropriated by some higher spiritual presence. Thus, the utterances of a Quaker speaking in tongues is a most reassuring reminder of God's presence in their midst. Lamb chooses to refer to Milton to make a statement about higher powers because no English writer has explored more fully the concept of God, the Almighty, than has Milton. The allusion serves to remove any trace of ridicule from the episode. The double echo lends support to Brown's view (22) that Lamb was well aware that his own voice contained the voices of others. Lamb was equally aware that quoted sources often include voices other than the authors'.

There can be little doubt, however, about the voices that emerge in the popular fallacy that "a bully is always a coward" which features yet another example of a compounded allusion. In his attempt to discredit the stereotypical saying that a bully is always a coward, Lamb cites Harapha in *Samson Agonistes* as an example of the bully-coward. He argues that

Milton has made him at once a bully and a blusterer, a giant and a dastard. But Almanzor, in Dryden, talks of driving armies singly before him -- and does it. (Lucas, 2: 253).

The Milton allusion exemplifies the bully/coward while the Dryden citation showcases the daring bully who is unafraid to take on insurmountable challenges. The voices of Elia, Milton and Dryden are clear and distinct, while the manner in which Lamb handles these allusions reaffirms the notion of Elia as a master debater.

Perhaps the quintessential example of compounded allusions or double echoing occurs in *All Fools' Day* which features three Miltonian echoes. For the *Empedocles* connection, Lucas refers to Lamb's *London Magazine* footnote: "He who to be deem'd/ A god leap'd fondly in Etna's flames" (*Paradise Lost*, 3: 470-471). For the *Cleombrotus* reference, Lamb's footnotes say: "He who to enjoy/ Plato's Elysium, leap'd into the sea" (*Paradise Lost*, 3: 471-472). And for the *Plasterers at Babel* echo, Lamb's magazine notes point to "The builders next of Babel on the plain/ of Semnaar (*Paradise Lost*, 3: 466-467). "Fondly" takes on its archaic meaning, foolishly, and all three Miltonian echoes recall mythological or biblical personalities who engaged in foolish or pointless acts, marking them as fools, the topic of the essay. This device of employing several allusions to embellish a single point compounds or doubles the effect of the echo, leaving no room for doubt about the assertion Lamb wishes to make.

Allusions to Milton sometimes appear in the form of echoes, partial quotations or adaptations. One Miltonian echo surfaces in *Old Margate Hoy*. Elia shares with his readers his experience on the vessel, 'The Old Margate Hoy'. A combination of youthful enthusiasm, the abandon of the holiday spirit and the joys of out-of-door adventure made these excursions, whether pleasurable or mournful, forever memorable to him who had been pent up in populous cities. The Miltonian clause reads: "As one who long in populous cities pent" (*Paradise Lost*, 9: 445). This echo is pertinent in that Satan, having left his murky abode in Hell to tempt Adam and Eve in Paradise, pauses on his arrival thither to admire the beauty of Eden in all its vegetative and floral splendour, just as one who has been restricted to the confining atmosphere of an urban setting is likely to appreciate the idyllic landscape of the rural world with its defining sense of freedom and natural beauty. Elia wishes to capture in words the aesthetic

quality of his new and invigorating holiday experience in a rustic setting after he has been pent up so long with tedious routine in the city. Enjoying the pleasures of a vacation and the natural world, he suggests, is therapy for the soul and another source of inspiration for the writer.

Thus Elia says of the true poet:

In the groves of Eden he walks familiar as in his native paths. He ascends the empyrean heaven, and is not intoxicated. He treads the burning marl without dismay; he wins his flight without self-loss through realms of chaos and "old night". (Lucas, 2: 187)

"Burning marl" is a partial quotation from "To support uneasy steps/ Over the burning marl" (*Paradise Lost*, 1: 295-296). And "old night" is an extract from the same poem which reads, in part (1: 541-543):

The universal host upsent  
A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond  
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.

"Over the burning marl" is Milton's description of the flames of hell over which the rebellious Satan in war-like fashion moves. The point Elia wishes to establish is that the true poet is equally at ease in his imaginary flights of fancy in heaven or in hell. Like his contemporaries, Lamb recognizes the power and the importance of the imagination to create, or re-create, any world that strikes its fancy. The allusion to "Old Night", in context, suggests that the true poet may, by the fancy of his imagination, journey to Hades to emerge without any loss of his identity. Milton describes hell in a most unorthodoxly glamorous and vivid fashion. Hence Elia's recourse to his epic poem for references to substantiate his argument in this essay.

An example of a concealed, uncertain allusion occurs in *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*.

Elia is describing the fate of the suckling pig:

he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of a judicious epicure -- and for such a tomb might be content to die. (Lucas, 2: 124).

Lucas suggests that Lamb may have been thinking of the final couplet from Milton's epitaph on Shakespeare:

And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie  
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die. (2: 391)

Milton states that Shakespeare is buried in the pomp and distinction of his work. The roast pig, entombed in the stomach of an epicure, on the surface, does little credit to the Milton source. On closer examination, however, the Miltonian allusion, concealed (entombed) as it is in the discourse, serves in its own way to embellish it, at the same time inviting the reader to trace its source. This is another example of the kind of partnership Lamb expects of some of his readers.

A partial quotation emerges in *On Some of the Old Actors*, in which Elia paints a very moving picture of the sad countenance of Dodd, a former comic actor whom he chanced to meet on the street shortly before his death. Elia says of him: "Dying he put on the weeds of Dominic" (Lucas, 2: 138). The partial quotation, "The weeds of Dominic", comes from *Paradise Lost*, 3: 478-479:

And they who to be sure of paradise  
Dying put on the weeds of Dominic.

In Milton's narrative, Satan is in the Limbo of Vanity. Some of the inhabitants here are hell-bound, but those on their way to Paradise, like Dodd, put on the weeds of Dominic -- black garments symbolic of sadness and contrition (Lucas, 2: 394). Actor Dodd, previously hailed as cheerful, happy and humorous, is now reduced to a sad, pathetic spectacle when Elia chances upon him shortly before his death. Lamb is once again playing with opposites: jollity and sadness, life and death, and the playfulness of actors and the theatre in general offset by the

serious matter of death. The theme of this piece, death and the afterlife, is a morbid one. The Milton underworld allusion thus dovetails well thematically with the essay. Although Elia appears sympathetic to Dodd (Lucas, 2: 138), the reader is left uncertain whether Dodd is heading for heaven or hell.

Another partial quotation from Milton is included in Elia's speculation on the cause of Dodd's falling out of favour. He poses the rhetorical question: "Was he adjudged to lack something even in those early years, of the gravity indispensable to an occupation which professeth to "commerce with the skies?" (Lucas, 2: 138). The concluding phrase in this citation is part of "And looks commercing with the skies" (*Il Penseroso*, 39). These are the narrator's words to sum up the pensive, holy look of the nun; it is a heavenly look. Elia uses the allusion to describe, ironically, the actors' exalted perception of themselves. Dodd, a comic actor reduced to misery and contrition by his own approaching death, is unable to sustain himself by the habits and the occupation which served him well for most of his life. Elia recognizes sympathetically the ironic twist in Dodd's life.

Another partial quotation and an adaptation appear in *To the Shade of Ellison*, in which Elia speculates on his imaginary death. To the question, where is his spirit now that he has escaped the prison of his mortal frame? Elia replies:

-- not far perchance from that storehouse of all vanities, which Milton saw in  
visions -- a Limbo somewhere for Players and that

Up hither like aerial vapours fly  
Both all Stage things, and all that in Stage things  
Built their fond hopes of glory or lasting fame?  
All the unaccomplished works of authors' hands  
Abortive, monstrous or unkindly mix'd  
Damn'd upon earth, fleet thither --  
Play, Opera, Farce with all their trumpery -- (Lucas, 2: 166)

Here, Elia makes an adaptation of Milton's words:

Up hither like aerial vapours flew  
 Of all things transitory and vain, when sin  
 With vanity had fill'd the works of men:  
 Both all things vain, and all who on vain things  
 Built their fond hopes of glory or lasting fame,  
 Or happiest in this or th'other life:  
 All who have their reward on earth, the fruits  
 Of painful superstition and blind zeal,  
 Nought seeking but the praise of men, here find  
 Fit retribution, empty as their deeds;  
 All th'unaccomplished works of nature's hand,  
 Abortive, monstrous or unkindly mixt,  
 Dissolv'd on Earth, fleet hither and in vain  
 Till final dissolution wander here. (*Paradise Lost*, 3: 445-458)

Elia, like Milton, is espousing the notion of the transience and vanity of man's hope, glory and fame. Elia is in deeply reflective mood here; consequently, he calls upon a writer much revered by the Romantics for support to his argument.

These partial quotations, adaptations and subtle or concealed echoes are all strategies employed by Lamb in his play with voices. As Alison Hickey has observed, "Lamb is fascinated by the elusiveness of the distinctions between imposing one's voice on others (or otherness), [and] appropriating other voices and letting others speak through one" (756). For example, the epigraph which precedes the account of George Dyer's near-drowning experience in *Amicus Redivivus* "Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep/ Clos'd o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?" is a direct quotation from Milton's *Lycidas* which chronicles in verse the drowning of one Edward King, one of Milton's friends. The parallel with George Dyer's story in *Amicus Redivivus* is obvious. Of greater significance, however, is the appropriation of Milton's voice. Elia and Milton seem to be speaking as one, the story of poem and essay being

so uncannily similar. Since this essay is a true story, Lamb is speaking through Elia who in turn is echoing Milton only to create an intriguing blend of voices.

Milton is not the only voice Lamb appropriates in this manner. Further examples of this elusiveness of the distinction of voices appear in *On the Melancholy of Tailors* and *A Chapter on Ears*, in which Lamb quotes from Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* "to give added point and flavor to his essays" (Law, 58). In attempting to explain the melancholy of tailors, Lamb suggests diet as a contributory cause, at which point he quotes freely from Burton's chapter, 'Bad Diet a Cause of Melancholy'. Here, he succeeds in mingling Burton's voice with those of Galen and Isaack whom Burton also echoes (Lucas, 1:175).

More play with voices surfaces in *A Chapter on Ears* where Lamb again quotes Burton at length. In lamenting his lack of a musical ear, Lamb admits that in the opening of the concert he has experienced "something vastly lulling and agreeable" (Lucas, 2: 40). But shortly thereafter languor and oppression set in "like the comings on of melancholy described by Burton, doth music make her first insinuating approaches" (in *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 1, Section 2, Me. 2, subsection 6; Lucas, 2: 40-41). The words preceding the lengthy quotation, "doth music make her first insinuating approaches", echo a certain poetic flavour reminiscent of Shakespeare which adds to the mix of the voices of Lamb, Elia and Burton. Lamb is quoting Burton, but given his own proclivity for melancholy, the appropriated voice is almost made to seem authentically Lamb's.

Similarly, in *On Burial Societies*, Lamb quotes from Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* the passage "Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave" (Chapter V) and humorously comments upon the "appetite in the species" for things funereal (Law, 59).

Browne's words are so smoothly incorporated in the essay that it is difficult to ascribe ownership of voice.

Lamb does not always appropriate and blur voices in an assimilative manner. He begins *Imperfect Sympathies* by quoting from Browne's *Religio Medici* (Pt 2, sec. 1): "I am of a constitution so general that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy in anything. Those national repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard or Dutch" (Law, 58). Usually in drawing so directly from another writer, Lamb blends voices in such a manner that the voice of the source echoed and his own voice become indistinguishable. In this instance, though, he proceeds to disagree with some of Browne's ideas and, in debunking the latter, he imitates Browne's Latinised and periodic style to give added poignancy to his refutation. Voice appropriation and imitation thus become in this essay comparative allusions.

In the final analysis, it is clear that Lamb plays often with a range of voices, but it is from Milton's works that he draws more frequently than any author in his play with voices. This is not altogether surprising since Milton himself is a master of the allusive style. Some may argue, however, that in appropriating voices, Lamb sometimes blurs the distinction between allusion and plagiarism, the introduction to *Imperfect Sympathies* being one such example. But Lamb's penchant for play and humour probably exonerates him from the sin of plagiarism which suggests a surreptitious, deliberate (hence serious) attempt at copying, without due acknowledgement, someone else's work or thoughts. In any event, Lamb usually acknowledges his sources either in the text or in his notes.

In brief, then, Lamb alludes frequently to Milton's works, and he does so not only when he has something serious to say, but also when he wishes to experiment with voices or to engage in more complex echoing or when he simply wishes to play. Never, however, is he anything but respectful of the epic writer. But he does continue to make heavy demands of his reading audience: that they be very familiar with Milton's works, that they be equal to the task of taking on the challenge of working out faint and subtle echoes, and that they be reader-friendly to his creative blending of voices.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### LAMB AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Thus far in this thesis, the focus has been on Lamb's dealing with the past. He does of course allude to many more authors who preceded him. Cervantes, Chaucer, Dante, Dryden, Ben Johnson, Pope, Marvel and Edmund Spenser immediately come to mind. In the *Essays of Elia*, he makes at least seven direct references to Spenser, four of which are to the *Faerie Queene*. A direct quotation from his *Prothalamion* appears near the beginning of *The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*.

Lamb also alludes to a wide spectrum of other neo-classical and other Elizabethan writers and to authors of the first half of the eighteenth century. In fact, as George Barnette has observed, "It is startling to discover that there are more quotations in his [Lamb's] essays from parts of the eighteenth century than there are from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century put together still excluding the drama" (224).

But Lamb was also more influenced by his contemporaries than he would readily have admitted. Hazlitt was at one time a regular visitor at the Lambs'. Their mutual influence was quite natural. In a letter to J.J. Morgan, dated 7 January 1818, Coleridge "suggested that he visited Lamb less because Hazlitt was always there" (Greggs, *Letters IV*, 798). Hazlitt, himself a distinguished essayist and critic, wrote in a more ornate, almost convoluted style. His essays tended to be more serious, clinical and evaluative than Lamb's. Coleridge contends that "Hazlitt was more indebted to Lamb for ideas than ever Lamb was to Hazlitt" (Lucas, 2: 330). But since Coleridge's dislike for Hazlitt is quite apparent, this comment must be considered biased.

Lamb did show some enthusiasm for Blake but did not seem to care much for Byron or Shelley (Brown, 18-19) and although he never met Keats, both writers seem to be drawing from

a common source in *Old China* and *Ode on a Grecian Urn* in which there are some noticeable parallels. "As Elia's attention focuses on a china teacup, the language shifts from a prose of statement to a prose of images and meditation. The movement of his mind during the meditation increasingly identifying itself with the figures on the teacup, is similar to the method used by Keats in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*" (Haven, 137-146; Frank, 125).

In fact, in Lamb's essays, there are quotations from Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Landor, Procter, Thomas Moore and Wordsworth (Frank, 23). Coleridge, however, had the most profound influence on him. For example, in echoing Milton's phrase "In populous cities pent" (*Paradise Lost*, 9: 445), Lamb is also recalling the same phrase used by Coleridge in *This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison* (line 13). As Morley says, "To understand Lamb it is vital to understand the impact of Coleridge upon him" (92). This impact stemmed from the friendship of these two 'old boys' of Christ's Hospital, a friendship which Lamb treasured and worked hard to maintain as evidenced by their open, cordial correspondence. For example, in a letter dated 8 November 1796, Lamb writes:

My Brother, My Friend, - I am distressed for you, believe me I am; not so much for your painful troublesome complaint, which, I trust, is only for a time, as for those anxieties which brought it on, and perhaps even now may be nursing its malignity. Tell me dearest of my friends, is your mind at peace, or has anything happened to give you fresh disquiet and steal from you all the pleasant dreams of future rest? (Brown, 54)

Lamb cherished this friendship because he saw Coleridge as a very well read man with a superior intellect and an engaging mind, and one whose oratorical skills were almost legendary.

Coleridge introduced Lamb to literary society, published poetry jointly with him, and wrote encouraging words when calamity threatened to overwhelm him (Randel, 4). It was Coleridge who first suggested to Lamb the idea of writing in the manner of Burton, which

resulted in his forgery of a manuscript of the latter. These fragments purporting to be taken from Burton's diaries were published in 1801 with *John Woodvil* (Law, 57). Coleridge also introduced him to Jeremy Taylor. "Coleridge", Lamb says, "was the man who first solemnly exhorted me to 'study' the words of Jeremy Taylor, and I have had reason to bless the hour in which he did it" (Law, 61). But there can be no better testament to Coleridge's influence than Lamb's own words on the passing of his dear friend:

His [Coleridge's] great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations.  
(Lucas, 1: 351)

Wordsworth was also one of Lamb's friends, but his influence on Lamb was not as strong or definitively positive. "Lamb chose to write about common experiences and simple emotions, and he wanted the reader to experience them aesthetically, that is, not to enter into them as if they were a re-enactment of reality" (Frank, 39). In the *Prelude*, Wordsworth enunciates his poetic aspirations thus:

I yearn towards some philosophic song  
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;  
With meditations passionate from deep  
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse  
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre.  
(Book I: 213-235)

Lamb's desire to write about common experiences and simple emotions is akin to Wordsworth's ambition to sing "of truth that cherishes our daily life". But whereas Lamb invites his reader to accompany him on an aesthetic journey with the caveat: 'read not my essays as a re-enactment of reality', Wordsworth creates his poetry from the realities of daily life and aims for a philosophic basis for his creation which he intends to embellish with such passionate sentiments

from the deepest recesses of the human heart that it will be worthy of being set to music. The 'Orphean lyre' is also suggestive of an aesthetic experience attained by the conduit of the heart. Of greater significance, however, is Wordsworth's wish that his poetic efforts be blessed with immortality. Lamb's objective, essentially aiming for some kind of intellectual delight, lacks Wordsworth's lofty aspirations. And, as is shown earlier in this study, Lamb's views on Wordsworth's faith in the rural setting are clearly spelled out in *The Londoner*. Lamb expresses similar views in a letter to Wordsworth, dated 30 January 1801 (Brown, 91). In short then, there is a kind of influence observable in the Lamb/Wordsworth relationship, "but it works by combat ..." (Randel, 7).

One essay which sheds some light on Lamb's relationship with his peers is *Witches and Other Night Fears*. In it Lamb quotes Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* when he makes the point that all the cruel, tormenting devils in Dante's *Inferno* --"tearing, mangling, choking, stifling, scorching demons" are not half as fearful as the simple idea of "a spirit unembodied following him -

Like one that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turn'd round, walks on,  
And turns no more his head;  
Because he knows a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.  
(Lucas, 2: 68)

On the very next page, Lamb pays a compliment to his friend and mentor: "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 - when I cannot muster a fiddle".

Immediately after, Lamb mentions Barry Cornwall, whose real name was Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), and who was one of Lamb's literary friends. Once again, Lamb laments his limited imaginative capacity compared to a popular Romantic poet then:

Barry Cornwall has his tritons and his nereids gamboling before him in nocturnal visions, and proclaiming sons born to Neptune - when my stretch of imaginative activity can hardly, in the night season, raise up the ghost of a fish-wife.  
(Lucas, 2: 69)

However, after reading Procter's poem, *A Dream*, his "fancy [ran] strong upon [those] marine spectra; ..." (ibid). In his dream he saw himself "upon the ocean billows at some sea nuptials, riding and mounted high ...". The dream seems to have served as a momentary corrective to his perceived stunted imagination. Lamb's comments vis-à-vis his limited imaginative capacity exemplify his modesty and his penchant for self-mockery. His imaginative powers do fall short of a Coleridge, a Keats or a Wordsworth, but he is not without imaginative capability. He simply employs it in a different way. One reason relates to the form and theme of his writing. His essays deal primarily with the urban experience and urban characters. The realist nature of his writing does not grant him the same latitude as that accorded to a poet creating a character from a distant country on adventurous journeys to other lands. Lamb's creative prowess lies in the ironic twists he sometimes gives to familiar characters and situations.

One of Lamb's friends, Robert Southey, expressed strong negative views on *Witches and Other Night Fears*. Lucas contends that this section:

Dear little T.H. 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 little midnight pillow, this nurse child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of

tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-dammed murder are tranquility.  
(Lucas, 2: 68)

was Southey's main bone of contention in his criticism of *Elia* as a book wanting "a sounder religious feeling and led to Lamb's expostulatory letter".<sup>1</sup> Southey disapproved of this section which he thought promoted training of the young child in the ways of modern philosophy and not those of a good Christian (Lucas, 2: 353). This same Southey corresponded with Lamb and was a regular visitor at his home which points to the closeness of their friendship. The disagreement with Southey underscores the notion that Lamb was prepared to preserve his individuality and his freedom as an artist even at the risk of offending a close friend. T.H. refers to Thornton Hunt, Leigh Hunt's eldest son and Lamb's "favourite child" (Lucas, 2: 353). Leigh Hunt was also an essayist who contributed regularly to *The Literary Examiner* and who was also on visiting terms with Lamb (Lucas, 2: 415). Thus, in this essay not only do the readers learn something about Lamb's circle of friends, they also get some insight into the collaborative nature of these literary friendships. These friends read one another's works. They even co-authored works. Lamb and Lloyd, for example, produced together *Blank Verse* when they were very close friends in 1797 and 1798 (Morley, 182).

Influenced as he was by his contemporaries, Lamb did manage, however, to preserve his own uniqueness as a man and as a writer. His preference for antiquity, his "quaintness and singularity of style" set him apart from his peers, friendly as he was with a number of them. As Hazlitt points out in *The Spirit of the Age*:

He does not march boldly along with a crowd, but steals off to the pavement to pick his way in the contrary direction. He prefers *bye-ways* to *highways*. (263)

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<sup>1</sup> See Lucas, 2: 329, and 1: 226.

To underscore Lamb's resistance to conformity, Hazlitt also has this to say:

He pitches his tent in the suburbs of existing manners, brings down the account of character to the few struggling remains of the last generation, seldom ventures beyond the bills of mortality, and occupies that nice point between egotism and disinterested humanity. (265)

Part of this uniqueness shows in Lamb's handling of allusions. A comparison with Wordsworth's art of alluding will serve to showcase this uniqueness as well as some similar patterns. Wordsworth "was one of the first major writers in England to think of English poetry as constituting a long and worthy tradition, and to make a lifelong practice of drawing, by way of quotation, echo, or allusion, on a generous range of its stores" (Stein, 1). In

the 60,000 - plus lines in the completed poetic works, Wordsworth has borrowed from, paralleled, reflected or alluded to roughly 150 writers. The most echoed writer is Milton ... [whose] works will be found the source of about 550 echoes out of a grand total of some 1,300. The next most echoed writer is Shakespeare, represented by nearly 100 instances. Following these giants come (with number of echoes rounded off to the nearest multiple of five, given in parentheses) Gray (50), Spenser (40), the Bible (40), Thomson (35), Coleridge (35) and the ballads found in Percy's and other collections (25). Other authors overheard more than five times may be divided into two groups (the order is that of decreasing frequency): (a) *from 10 to 20 times* - Collins, Pope, Virgil, Burns, Beattie, Cowper, John Dyer, Akenside, Bowles, Drayton and Daniel; (b) *from 6-9 times* - Chaucer, Young, Johnson, Dryden, Michael Bruce and Ann of Winchilsea. (Stein, 10)

Wordsworth also echoes a wide assortment of eighteenth century poets and prose writers.

Lamb, too, draws freely and numerously from the English tradition, but he demonstrated a fond partiality for the classics as a source for his allusions. He also warmed especially to the Elizabethans whose style he persistently imitated. Both Lamb and Wordsworth alluded to their contemporaries and near-contemporaries. Wordsworth, for example, echoes George Bell, Blake, Campbell, Cottle, Crabbe, Crowe, Cunningham, Erasmus Darwin, Robert Greenwood, James Hogg, James Hurdis, Keats, Landor, James Montgomery, Rogers, Walter Scott, Shelley,

Southey and Helen Maria Williams; Lamb's *Sonnet to Himself* is also echoed (Stein, 10-11). Of this list Lamb alludes to or echoes Cottle, Hogg, Keats, Landor and Southey. Both authors also quote from Coleridge.

In his *Essays of Elia*, by my computation, Lamb alludes to Shakespeare approximately 130 times, the classics 85, Milton 65, and the Bible 50. The number of lines in Lamb's essays is approximately 21,220 which is roughly a third of the lines of poetry written by Wordsworth. The grand total of echoes and allusions in Lamb's essays is in excess of 470 which means that in proportion to number of lines written, Lamb uses allusions slightly more frequently than does Wordsworth.

Further similarities in the allusive art of Lamb and Wordsworth relate to their employment of the Renaissance device of the *cento*. In the notes to the 1835 edition of his poems, Wordsworth tells us that "he sometimes indulges" in "this practice ... of linking together, in his own mind, favourite passages from different authors", claiming for it only the value of "private gratification".<sup>2</sup>

A good example of Wordsworth's employment of the *cento* appears in Book XIII of *The Prelude*. The struggle for voice which defines the *cento* takes the form of Wordsworth's attempt in this instance to wrest poetic voices from the tradition, and is best summed up in Stein's words:

One rather subtle dialogue is carried on in a famous passage in *The Prelude*, the meditation on the meaning of the Mt. Snowdon vision (XIII, 66-119). There are parallels to Young's *Night Thoughts* (IX, 1061-66), to Shakespeare's *Sonnet 64*

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<sup>2</sup> See Ernest de Selincourt *et al.* ed, *The Poetic Works of Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952-59), IV: 396-97.

and to Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* ([1774] 1:121 and other lines), but these are all used assimilatively, in the spirit of eclectic imitation. (99)

Stein goes on to show that the most profound parallel in this *cento* is to an "equally famous passage in *Paradise Lost* expounding the Chain of Being (V, 451-505)". Wordsworth, however, is displacing Milton's concept with his own. Thus, in this case, he is alluding comparatively. As Stein (99) also notes, "The allusive markers are not obvious. The only direct echo is Wordsworth's "discursive or intuitive", which repeats exactly a phrase from *Paradise Lost* (V, 488)". However, the context surrounding this phrase in *The Prelude* evocatively supports the central thrust of Milton's passage, placing the origin of things in God: For Wordsworth, the highest minds, those capable of using imagination, or "Reason in her highest mood

are truly from the Deity,  
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss  
That can be known is theirs, the consciousness  
Of whom they are habitually infused  
Through every image, and through every thought,  
And all impressions; hence religion faith  
And endless occupation for the soul  
Whether discursive of intuitive;  
Hence sovereignty within and peace at will[,]  
Emotion which best foresight need not fear [,]  
Most worthy then of trust when most intense  
Hence cheerfulness in every act of life[;]  
Hence truth in moral judgements [,] and delight  
That fails not in the external universe.  
(XIII, 106-119; Wu, 466)

The expression of liberating joy in this passage, the "delight/That fails not in the external universe", parallels Milton's "enjoy/Your fill what happiness this happy state/Can comprehend, incapable of more (V, 503-505)" {Stein, 99-100}.

Lamb tends to favour the *contaminatio* which grants him wider scope for playing with opposites and bizarre paralleling and for attempting to find some kind of reconciliation of them.

Playfulness and personal delight are the driving force in Lamb's employment of the *contaminatio*. In *Reminiscence of Sir Jeffery Dunstan*, effigies, reference to the comical Garrat election, the character sketch of Dunstan himself, allusions to two of Shakespeare's plays, an adaptation from Pope, an echo of Virgil, references to Samuel Foote's play, *The Devil on Two Sticks* (1778), and to Congreve's *The Relapse* and the stylistic device of the mock heroic all jostle one another for equal attention in Lamb's version of the *contaminatio* (Lucas, 2: 516-518).

Also noticeable in this piece is the undisguised humorous, playful tone that permeates the discourse as is evidenced in the description of Dunstan's sack and its contents:

He still carried his sack, but it seemed a part of his identity rather than an implement of his profession; a badge of past grandeur; could anything have divested him of *that*, he would have shown a "poor forked animal" indeed. My life upon it, it contained no curls at the time I speak of. The most decayed and spiritless remnant of what was once a peruke would have scorned the filthy case; would absolutely have "burst its cearments". (Lucas, 1: 312)

The paralleling of the remnants of the peruke (wig) to the corpse of Hamlet's father "[bursting] its cearments" is humorous because of the gross incongruity of the linking. Lamb is clearly at play with the comic figure of Dunstan in his heyday and the pathetic sight of his decline as well as with the juxtaposing of the Shakespearean source dealing with such serious themes as betrayal and spousal infidelity.

Similarly, he adapts a passage from Pope, a serious neo-classical writer, with:

Alas! how changed from him,  
The life of humour, and the soul of whim,  
Gallant and gay on Garrat's hustings proud.

Here, Lamb is accentuating the comic effect of Dunstan's life story, while at the same time drawing attention to the blatant mismatch of his comical subject and the serious writing of the neo-classic writer. Dunstan is here being dressed up metaphorically in the princely robes of

Pope after having been initially presented in his most sordid garb. In addition, the episode of the quick-witted, loquacious Dunstan failing to recite his lines when he was introduced to the stage mingles irony with the intended humour of the essay (Lucas, 1: 313).

With Wordsworth, on the other hand, even the personal delight he speaks of in his use of the *cento* is often linked with his aspiration to retrieve poetic voices and to give a new direction to the English literary tradition.

Lamb and Wordsworth also employ both assimilative and comparative allusions in the orthodox manner: assimilative to strengthen and embellish, comparative to express difference or to challenge thoughts in the echoed text. Wordsworth's assimilative allusions are, however, linked with his various moods: moralising, stoic, epicurean, apocalyptic, naturalising and anthropologizing, as Stein (142-69) has observed.

Although Lamb echoes or alludes to a number of the same writers as Wordsworth, his references to them are less predicated by mood than they are by theme or character. Wordsworth's library also appears to be larger than Lamb's and his ability to recall voices as he writes seems at least equal to that of Lamb, if not superior.

There are, of course, some noticeable differences in the manner in which these two Romantic writers employ echoes and allusions. Whereas Lamb's allusive art includes much play and works to support argument, embellish character or enhance visual imagery, Wordsworth's style of echoing appears to be more painstakingly serious and crafted. It is no coincidence, for example, that Wordsworth draws mostly from Milton, who in turn emulated Virgil, himself perhaps the archetypal high priest of the allusive art. "Wordsworth's art often turns away from the brilliance of interruptive allusion, directing us instead toward the contextual deepening

of the voice addressing us, accomplished by the overpassing shadow of a mood" (Stein, 114).

Stein elaborates on this point, contending that

It is precisely the instauration or thickening of a mood that directs Wordsworth's art of borrowing. The echoic process is the natural method for a poet who sees it as his prime task to lead poetry from "an institution easily infected by *ratio*... back to its source in *oratio* ..." (116)

The phrase "to lead poetry" is a most significant one. It speaks to the poet's self-appointed mission to lead poetry in a new direction, one that entails echoing voices past and present and those from nature as well. It also hints of something well-thought out and designed in his system of echoing. Lamb's style of allusions, on the other hand, may be described as occasional (as in suited for the occasion). Allusions in his essays are often employed in an 'ad hoc' basis. It must be said, however, that Lamb's allusions are often adroit and masterfully blended with theme. A poet of feeling as he is, Wordsworth employs allusions to enhance the mood he seeks to establish. Thus, "we may see his art of borrowing as a modification of an intellectually guided echoic one (Stein, 120). The elusiveness Lamb sees in voices contrasts with Wordsworth's faith in the possibility of recovering voices as distinct entities. Wordsworth's recovered voices echo one another, but their individuality is often preserved. He capitalises on these retrieved voices by making them work for his poetic aspirations.

One of these aspirations, the quest for symbols that transcend the disparity between his experience and that of Coleridge, is well exemplified in Wordsworth's poem *To Hartley Coleridge* (Newlyn, 142). Here, the young Hartley Coleridge is seen in his unfallen state as a symbol of imaginative response:

O, Thou! whose fancies from afar are brought;  
Who of thy works dost make a mock apparel  
And fittest to unutterable thought

The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;  
 Thou Faery Voyager! that doest float  
 In such clear water, that thy Boat  
 May rather seem  
 To brood on air than on earthly stream  
 (De Selincourt, 247)

"Suspended in a stream as clear as sky" (line 9 of *To Hartley Coleridge*), suggests that Hartley has the capacity for imaginative trance, and belongs more to the air than to the earth. Newlyn suggests that Hartley resembles Wordsworth's butterfly, "self-poised upon [a] yellow flower" (*To a Butterfly*, 2) waiting the breeze that will "call [him] forth again".

Newlyn, in fact, goes on to demonstrate quite convincingly that echoes from Coleridge, from Marvell's *On a Dew Drop*, and from several of Wordsworth's own poems appear in *To Hartley Coleridge*. (144-160). Thus, not only does Wordsworth echo himself and previous poetic voices, he also alludes to his contemporaries, including his close friend, Coleridge. Lamb never echoes himself, but like Wordsworth he borrows freely from his predecessors and contemporaries.

Another example of Wordsworth's carefully crafted allusive style appears in *Remembrance of Collins*:

Glide gently, thus for ever glide,  
 O Thames! that other bards may see  
 As lovely visions by thy side  
 As now, far river! come to me:  
 O glide, fair steam! for ever so,  
 Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,  
 Till all our minds for ever flow  
 As they deep waters now are flowing.

Vain thought! - Yet be as now thou art,  
 That in thy waters may be seen  
 The image of a poet's heart,  
 How bright, how solemn, how serene!

Such as did once the Poet bless,  
 Who, murmuring here a later ditty,  
 Could find no refuge from distress  
 But in the milder grief of pity.

Now let us, as we float along,  
 For *him* suspend the dashing oar;  
 And pray that never child of song  
 May know that Poet's sorrow more.  
 How calm! how still! the only sound,  
 The dripping of the oar suspended!  
 - The evening darkness gathers round  
 By virtue's holiest Powers attended.

In the third stanza of this poem, Wordsworth echoes a line of Collins and in so doing evokes the earlier poet's *Ode Occasioned by the Death of Mr. Thompson*, especially the following stanza:

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore  
 When Thames in summer wreaths is dressed,  
 And oft suspend the dashing oar  
 To bid his gentle spirit rest! (13-16)

This stanza seems to have suggested the first word of Wordsworth's last stanza in its first published form ("Remembrance as we glide along," (*Lyrical Ballads*, 1798), a word that was transferred to the title as we now have it, in 1805" (Stein, 20).

Other echoes are to be found in *Remembrance of Collins*. Collectively they serve as "remembrances", "prompted - as if on the occasion of the poet's visit to the same spot Collins had honoured - by a pious impulse to celebrate a cherished predecessor and rescue something from his death" (Stein, 20). This is early Wordsworth demonstrating his leanings toward allusive methods, a proclivity that should not be too surprising for his "literary apprenticeship was served according to the usual model, learning by singing in borrowed robes" (Stein, 21). In fact, the incentive to use textual references was an important part of Wordsworth's art.

There is even more sophistication to the echoing in this poem, for Wordsworth evokes Collins who in turn echoes Thomson who in his way was an echoer of Milton, whose *Il Penseroso* Wordsworth seems to echo in his last lines, as if completing a circle:

- The evening darkness gathers round  
By virtue's holiest Powers attended.

These lines recall the evening appearance of Melancholy, the "pensive Nun, devout and pure" (accompanied by various companions including two - "calm Peace and "quiet" - evoked by Wordsworth's "How calm! how still!"), who will bestow prophetic strain on the man who chooses her. The evocation is most fitting because the poem's central concern is to assure poetic speech (Stein, 22).

In brief, then, knowledgeable and sensitive readers can see, through these layers of echoes, a continuum of the tradition through Collins, Thomson, Milton, Spenser, and indeed Wordsworth himself. As Stein argues, *Remembrances of Collins* aptly demonstrates that Wordsworth's echoic techniques were employed

as an intensive experiment with tradition in which he sought the means to express a new vision of things. He developed the means and the vision more or less, though not wholly, in tandem; and since his aim was to revolutionize and yet renew the tradition, echoing was an inherently sympathetic means. (39)

Like Lamb, however, Wordsworth developed his eighteenth century heritage of fragmentary quotation, atmospheric echo and slight allusion.

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, from the examples of *To Hartley Coleridge* and *Remembrances of Collins* that there are considerable differences in the objectives and handling of allusions in Lamb and Wordsworth. Lamb's allusions lack the sustained, lofty aspirations that those of Wordsworth strove for. Wordsworth's use of allusions is linked both to his perception

of self as a standard bearer of the new direction he wishes to give to the tradition, and as a recorder of voices to preserve it. Lamb's handling of allusions points to his perception of tradition as a vast body of voices inclusive of the ancients, biblical and English literature available to the writer to make witty, serious or humorous connections as his fancy dictates. His allusions invariably work only in the context of the particular essay and never attempt to forge links in the continuum of English literature. With Lamb, too, echoing and alluding are for the gratification of the artist, and serve to satisfy his need to feel as scholarly and literary as his peers. They also serve as an invitation to his readers to acquaint themselves with the sources of his allusions. In repeatedly echoing himself, Wordsworth is attempting to establish some kind of credo or homespun philosophy on symbols in his poetry. Echoing in Wordsworth thus becomes a version of the exercise of the imaginative powers. By his own words and somewhat ironically, Lamb confesses to his limited imaginative capacity. In *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*, he says:

I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me. (Lucas, 2: 172)

The final sentence of the above quotation points to Lamb's reluctance to take risks by embarking on his own imaginative flights of fancy or by attempting to formulate a philosophical basis for his art form. In a word, whereas Lamb's art of allusion often operates at the adsorbing or surface level, casting him in the role of a sculptor, Wordsworth's style of echoing functions mostly at the absorbing level to establish a chain-like link back to the archetypes of echoing and alluding, thus making him out to be the curator of the historical museum of the allusive art and the new visionary thereof. In the final analysis, it is reasonable to conclude that the allusive

ways of both writers have a direct bearing on their vast libraries, and that they both assume readers with equally large book-shelves who will be empathetic with their allusive connections. Wordsworth's allusive craft reflects a certain orthodoxy and depth whereas Lamb's allusions tend to be more experimentally playful and witty and lack the profundity and visionary component that define so much of Wordsworth's poetry, marking him as the latest icon of his day in the continuum of the rich tradition of English literature. Lamb, on the other hand, simply wishes that his art form be duly recognized, that he be accepted among the highest echelons of the literary community, and that his scholarship, partly reflected in the quantity and quality of his allusions be well respected.

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## CONCLUSION

One feature of Lamb's essays is his fondness for drawing together a disparate and even an incoherent range of references. *Valentine's Day*, by its very title, suggests a bright story about love; thus, the allusion to King Duncan's impending murder seems out of place. Readers in Lamb's time and in the late twentieth century are naturally curious to see how this incongruity will be resolved. Indeed, on closer reflection on details in the text, they will come to a closer understanding of what Lamb presents as the ephemeral nature of love and life. It is as though Lamb seeks to imbed in his discourse his own reality check on anyone who is at risk of getting too carried away by the hope and expectation of a knock at the door on Valentine's Day. Consequently, this apparent contradictory reference takes readers through a reflective process that helps them recognize the uncertainties of love.

At other times, these disparate linkings compel readers to meditate upon the complexity of the human psyche. Dyer's recuperation is accompanied by an allusion to Good Sir Hugh in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Sir Hugh's speech captures well the mood of Dyer's child-like tenderness, but included in his ramblings is an adaptation of Marvell's *Passionate Shepherd to His Love* which seems out of place. It is quite likely, given the innuendo which occurs later in the piece, that Lamb is suggesting that Dyer may have been courting a love affair with death even though, on the surface, he appears grateful to be saved from drowning. These disparate parallels encourage the reader to peruse more carefully and to engage with these oddities and their concomitant complexities to discern the intricate and contradictory nature of the human psyche. Thus, although these unlikely parallels seem at first outrageous, they do place some measure of responsibility on the part of the reader to work through these oddities and

complexities, a responsibility quite familiar to late twentieth century readers. They also mirror the playful side of Lamb as well as one facet of his creativity.

Another aspect of his creativity points to the polyphonic nature of some of his pieces. Polyvocality is one feature of post-modernist literature; thus, late twentieth century readers may find a number of Lamb's essays quite appealing. In *Christ's Hospital*, Elia appropriates the voice of Coleridge to profile Lamb as a student at that school. The reader is intrigued by what 'Coleridge' has to say about Lamb then, and is equally curious to discover whether Elia/Lamb did convey accurately both the spirit and content of 'Coleridge's' thoughts. Another puzzle which the reader will be eager to solve is identifying points in the narrative when Elia, and not 'Coleridge,' speaks. This elusiveness of the narrator is likely to intrigue today's readers.

One very intriguing aspect of the polyvocality that surfaces in the *Essays of Elia* is Lamb's ability to make several voices speak as one. In *On the Melancholy of Tailors*, Burton, Galen, Isaack and Elia all speak with one voice on the subject of the contribution of diet to a person's disposition. In Lamb's time, readers were thus persuaded to think seriously about the argument presented if they did not accept it completely. In *Imperfect Sympathies*, however, Elia appropriates Browne's voice only to debunk the latter's speculative, abstract, philosophical theories. Elia wishes to remain earth-bound in his dealings with his fellow human beings and in his artistic endeavours. These examples of the various strategies Lamb uses in his play with voices invite today's readers to think about Patricia Waugh's theory of postmodernism "as late flowering Romanticism".

Echoing voices is, of course, part of the allusive style which is a marked feature of Lamb's writing. To gain maximum pleasure, the reader needs to examine closely just a few

essays at each sitting, and to refer to whatever notes that are available, for Lamb wished that his essays be treated as art objects (Frank, 13) of which allusions are but a part of the tapestry of that art. Hence the need to observe (to read) carefully. In this sense, Lamb was not operating in isolation. Hunt, De Quincey and Hazlitt, all contemporaries of Lamb, also worked "to elevate the essay to an aesthetic, artistic form" (Frank, 45). Like Hunt's and Hazlitt's, Lamb's essays are distinguished by the imaginative fancy and self-revelation of the writer, a fancy that led the essayist (Lamb) "to range over all time" (Law, 9-10), but one devoid of Wordsworthian outpouring of deep personal feelings.

Ironically, this freedom of his imagination to wander over time and to make connections with a wide assortment of writers is not without limitations imposed upon him by his peculiar domestic circumstances. Burdened by the daily demands in the office at the East India Company, and saddled with the care of his mentally ill sister at home, Lamb must have led a life marked by an overload of responsibilities that rendered it almost impossible for him to widen his literary repertoire by visits to the Continent much less the Orient. His reading and writing, including his use of allusions, together with his circle of close friends must have served as a three-pronged therapeutic strategy for respite from what must have been a most restricted life.

In his use of allusions, Lamb demonstrates his ability to emulate and yet differentiate himself from those he admired (Randel, 4). One good example of this relates to his inclusion of archaic words and phrases in his essays, such as 'methinks', he 'riseth', and he 'thinketh', to echo the style of a bygone (Elizabethan) age. In this clear echoing and incorporation of an old-fashioned style in his writing, Lamb nevertheless succeeds in creating pieces peculiarly his own.

In his recourse to allusions, Lamb seems to view the composite body of literature past and contemporary as an organic whole of voices of which his writing is but a part. He feels comfortable drawing from this body of voices, confident that his doing so will not alter the totality of things, even though the configuration of that body may at times be slightly altered by his echoing. Indeed, one of the purposes of allusions in Lamb's essays is "to unify past and present, near and far" (Randel, 166) as was observed in Chapter 1 of this thesis in discussions on *The Londoner*.

Like other Romantics, Lamb alludes to Milton out of respect for the epic poet, more so because Milton "was a daring individualist who took his place outside the circle of conformists" (Wittreich, 11). For indeed one feature of the Romantic movement relates to a passionate desire to distance itself from the dogma and strict artistic rules of the neo-classics (Law, 10-11); another to foster diversity and encourage individualism. Allusions to Milton also invariably add to the complexity, charm and beauty of Lamb's writing.

Given his interest in character types and the psychological forces that drive them, it is quite understandable, too, that Lamb frequently calls upon Shakespeare for models and support. His allusions to that great dramatist and poet are, however, not without historical colouring. Like his fellow Romantics, Lamb wrote his essays in the shadow of Napoleonic France's aspirations towards a pan-European hegemony which extended well beyond the cultural (Bate, 10). This hegemony meant for the Romantics stringent, restrictive rules and regulations, rigorous adherence to neo-Aristotelian system of artistic principles, theoretical mechanism, and strict observance of form (Bate, 12), all of which ran counter to the Romantic ethos. Many

writers of this era,<sup>1</sup> Lamb included, thus frequently drew from Shakespeare as a cultural and artistic alternative that espoused freedom, individual creativity and diversity.

Lamb sometimes expresses his admiration for seventeenth and eighteenth century writers by imitating them. Imitation is of course a most overt form of echoing. In copying the style and sometimes incorporating the exact words of Burton and Browne, Lamb was indebted to Coleridge, who first suggested to him the idea of writing in the style of Burton (Law, 57) and who also recommended highly to him the works of Jeremy Taylor. Echoing by imitation adds variety to Lamb's essays, reminding his readers at the same time of distinctive voices of the past.

Central to this enormous Lambian umbrella of intertextual connections is the sense of play often reflected in his humorous, unlikely parallels which tell us something about his mild eccentricity and witty turn of mind. As a proponent of the allusive style, Lamb dresses himself up in Jacob's coat of many colours. The biblical rainbow colours are immediately noticeable. The distinctive purple and maroon of Roman civilization are well foregrounded. The orange, red, white and blue hues of English literature, though not at first sight remarkably conspicuous, turn out, on closer inspection, to be more prevalent after all.

Most of Lamb's allusions and echoes are conscious and deliberate; however, given his familiarity with such a broad spectrum of literature, he could not avoid, on occasions, alluding unconsciously. In addition, observant readers who are equally familiar with the sources from which he borrows will hear echoes perhaps not intended by Lamb, but are no less meaningful

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<sup>1</sup> See Simon Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism*, especially the Introduction, in which such writers as Byron and Hazlitt are reported as regarding Napoleon as the greatest man of the age.

to them. This, of course, is not uncommon in the writer/reader relationship vis-à-vis allusions. But given the kind of reciprocity he expects from himself and his readers, Lamb would probably be delighted to learn of other faint or related echoes received by his audience.

It is also worthy of note that whereas neo-classical writers, such as Addison and Pope, tended to employ allusions in a serious manner and to accentuate the moral perspective (Law, 10-14, 131), Lamb often uses allusions to inject humour in his essays and to assert himself as a man of letters. This sportive aspect of Lamb's allusions comes with a strategy. Just as he saw it necessary to seek some kind of harmony or compromise in the contradictions and turbulence of his personal life, he also seems at times to be attempting to find some kind of order and balance in the vast heterogeneous body of literature with which he was familiar. Hence his fondness for playing with opposites. The sportive aspect of his allusions sometimes invites his readers to take a fresh look at the way evoked voices may be handled in echoes and allusions.

Lamb also uses allusions to add pungency to his comments and observations of trends and follies in his society. *Grace Before Meat*, *On the Custom of Hissing in Theatres*, and *On the Artificial Comedies of the Last Century* are replete with this treatment. T.S. Eliot, a later writer, takes the use of allusions several steps further: to place western literature in a continuum of history, to warn, to rebuke, to advertise his superior scholarship and to satirize.

Lamb then must be considered a master of the allusive art; however, just as he was an honorary Deputy Grecian at Christ's Hospital by virtue of his close association with Grecians, so too as a writer he may be regarded as an honorary member of the group of Romantic writers deemed by canonical authorities as the most illustrious, not only because of his close friendship with two of the 'Big Six', but also because of identifiable Romantic features in his writing. His

return to childhood and to the past has been noted in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis. In addition, Lamb also reveals frankly much of himself in his essays, expressing strong feelings in some of them. *Christ's Hospital* and *Imperfect Sympathies* immediately come to mind as examples. Lamb also stresses the dignity and worth of human nature as exemplified in the ordinary man, and sympathy for the suffering individual. *In Praise of Chimney Sweepers*, *Captain Jackson* and *Barbara S* all speak to this aspect of his writing. And most prominently foregrounded in his essays is a sense of delight in the concrete and particular as opposed to the abstract and universal. All of these are features that Law (132) has observed in the Romantic movement.

Lamb is also recognized as one of six late Romantic essayists writing in the prosaic-poetic style in their description of London. Marilyn Butler argues that these writers -- Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Pierce Egan, Theodore Hook and Thomas Hood -- in their contribution to the *London Magazine* and other middle class journals "became the main initiators of a culture to which we might agree to give the word 'Romantic' which thus emerged as the world was robbed by death or physical decline of the main writers which we call English Romantics" ("Culture's Medium: The Role of the Review", 143-46). There can be little doubt, therefore, of Lamb's prominent position as a late Romantic writer, his allusive ways contributing much to the new blend of the poetic and the prosaic as a style of writing then.

Although Lamb's allusive art falls short of Wordsworth's impressive depth and visionary scope, there is something to be said for his delightful, teasing handling. In the context of a

rapidly increasing reading public and expanding middle classes,<sup>2</sup> Lamb was filling the need for pleasure in the reading experience of a group (mostly the increasing numbers of the middling classes) with whom he must have been very familiar, given his own literary, personal and business connections. A jealous protector of his individuality, Lamb deliberately strove to inject humour and play in his echoing and alluding. In this sense, his approach to allusions may be seen as a foil to Wordsworth's much more serious handling. It is reasonable to posit then that Charles Lamb merits honourable status whenever well-known and distinguished Romantic writers are mentioned.

In the final analysis, it must be said that Lamb's use of allusions both distinguishes him and contributes to his loss of popularity. It distinguishes him in that there are few writers today who can draw so freely from the classics and the Bible. It diminishes his popularity because Lamb's assumed informed audience today is even more limited than it was in the early decades of this century. Classical and biblical studies are available today in very few high schools in the western world, and the classics do not have the same prominence in Grammar schools in the United Kingdom and in her former colonies as they did in Lamb's time. Nevertheless, by his allusive style, Lamb has succeeded in creating a compact library of biblical, classical and English writings. His *Essays of Elia* therefore could well be of much value to current and future scholars in these fields of literature and to all those who wish to familiarize themselves with the manners, customs and lifestyle of those times. For Lamb's employment of allusions clearly reveals his desire to celebrate the thoughts and pleasures of those great authors who wrote prior

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<sup>2</sup> Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's Medium: The Role of the Review', *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (London, 1993), 143-46.

to as well as during his own lifetime and to derive from them perspectives and figures for representing his own views.

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