



## The Construction of a Reputation for Madness: The Case Study of Lady Caroline Lamb

Leigh Wetherall Dickson  
Northumbria University

In 1816 Lady Caroline Lamb's first novel, *Glenarvon*, was published amid a storm of controversy, due to the content, a fictional account of Lamb's relationship with Lord Byron, and the timing. The novel appeared a month after Byron had left England in self-imposed exile. The sensation created by this novel has, to a certain extent, obscured the fact that Lamb wrote two more full length novels, *Graham Hamilton* (1822) and *Ada Reis* (1823), is the accepted author of two anonymous critiques of Byron's abuse of his talent as a poet, *A New Canto* (1819) and *Gordon: a Tale* (1821), and composed verse that appeared in the novels and as a posthumous collection collated by Isaac Nathan. As a body of work, the three published novels and the two poetical critiques of Byron presents a damning indictment of the moral bankruptcy (of which her relationship with Byron is held up as an example), of the abuse of talent and the privileges of their position and of the political ineffectiveness of her milieu of the Whig aristocracy. In *Glenarvon*, the Duke of Altamonte has retired from social and political life, having over-rated his own superiority and failed to realise his ambition. He has retreated 'sullen and reserved' to Ireland, and as a representative of the landholding elite he is ineffective as the Irish rebellion gathers momentum around him; his own tenants are 'mutinous and discontented' because he 'refused to attend to the grievances and burthens of which the nation generally complained' (12, vol 1; 77, vol 2). In her second novel, speaking on Lamb's behalf the parvenu Graham Hamilton asks 'how to learn to speak of virtue, when we have forsaken it; to express abhorrence at the views we practice; to jest with frivolity upon subjects we still venerate [...], to look so innocent, when our hearts, and the whole world, know that we are guilty[?]' (145; vol 1) Hamilton's own preference for the 'middle rank' of society is Lamb's most overt criticism of the aristocracy as capable leaders:

It seems to me that in it is the sap and stamina of the country. The flower is more beautiful; but, as Dryden says, "The life is in the leaf." From that order, vice, dissipation are in a great measure excluded. The regular habits of necessary industry discourage and repress them, and though some will tread in the steps of higher classes, these are but as froth on the wave: the stream below runs fresh, strong and uncontaminated, and long may it continue to do so. (148-150; vol 1)

Yet despite this rich material, borne out of Lamb's own experiences within the very milieu which she so overtly criticises, written at a time when the role of the aristocracy

was under increasing scrutiny and criticism in the years leading up to the Reform Bill, Lamb and her work remain underrated. Recent studies of Lamb's work undertaken by scholars such as Gary Kelly, Duncan Wu, Frances Wilson, Caroline Franklin, Barbara Judson, Ghislaine McDayter and Paul Douglass have begun a process of rehabilitation of Lamb as a writer of interest.<sup>1</sup> However, these isolated pockets of scholarly interest do not yet add up to a greater sum of interest of more than its individual parts and Lamb remains a marginalised literary figure, despite and because of the notoriety of her involvement with Byron. That is not to say that Lamb has been neglected in other areas, as she has been the subject of five biographies, but the mainstay of interest lies with Byron, rather than Lamb's own intellectual achievements, and the systematic charting of Lamb's own presumed mental disintegration which, I shall argue, is a contributing factor to Lamb's current position of near-invisibility. This paper will argue that it is these representations of Lamb's life that have contributed to Lamb's status as a writer of limited interest, and is comparable with that of Rosina Bulwer Lytton, who will be brought into the discussion later. The scope of this paper is not to conclusively confirm or deny the actual state of Lamb's mental health, but to examine the context and procedures, both formal and informal, in and by which Lamb's madness was diagnosed and to discover why, despite being included in later studies of her life, particularly those by Normington and Douglass, Lamb's own protestations to the contrary have not been given credence.

Lamb has come to inhabit her infamous epigram upon Byron; she is the one that is now regarded as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know' (Morgan 322; vol. 2).<sup>2</sup> There are five full length biographies of Lamb: Elizabeth Jenkins' *Lady Caroline Lamb* (1974, first published in 1932), Henry Blyth's *Caro: The Fatal Passion* (1972), Sean Manchester's *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know: The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb* (1992), Susan Normington's *Lady Caroline Lamb: This Infernal Woman* (2001) and, the most recent, *Lady Caroline Lamb: A Biography* by Paul Douglass (2004). In each she is portrayed as spending her life obsessed with Byron, with whom her involvement cost her what little was left of her already depleted sanity; accounts of Lamb's life portray her as a case history of female hysteric obsessed with a single object whose family, quite rightly, tried to have her committed as lunatic. As Frances Wilson observes, Lamb's life has been broken down into a series of melodramatic episodes that have 'been pared down to a history of embarrassing dramas in which the woman behaved badly' (115). The repetitive highlighting of these episodes has resulted in an ever-decreasing circle of 'evidence' that confirms Lamb's 'madness' only by virtue of repetition; yet biographers of Lamb are never explicit about how this madness manifested itself beyond vague descriptions of mood swings, a volatile temper and extravagant behaviour. Caroline Franklin's sympathetic account of Lamb in the *Dictionary of National Biography* highlights the reductive nature of popular biographers and films that concentrate upon apocryphal stories of the scandals that surround Lamb (1). Because of this focus each study of Lamb's life is a virtual carbon copy of the one before, thereby authorising its own legitimacy by adhering to what appears to be a sanctioned version of Lamb's life, reaffirming what is thought to be already known. The 'Lady Caroline Lamb' that each biography claims to reveal does appear to be more than a little eccentric and perhaps even dangerous. However, Dorothy E. Smith, in her study of by what criteria and procedures a subject under scrutiny 'becomes' mentally ill, describes a process by which mental illness is defined as being not just a record of events as they happened, 'but of events as they were seen as relevant to reaching a decision about the character of those events'; the preliminary work of such an assessment is done on a 'non-formal' basis by family and friends, which also

incorporates an element of social organisation and control, however unconscious that may be (12). It is this 'non-formal' technique that appears to be relied upon in studies of Lamb's life; descriptions of her mental health contain nothing of analysis, but rather they are unqualified statements that are driven by semantic connotations: Jenkins describes Lamb as having an air of 'wild intelligence' (19). Blyth hints at Lamb's similarity to her ancestor, the Duchess of Marlborough, the 'remarkable [...], the excitable and unstable Sarah Jennings', but does not expand as to how Sarah's instability or Lamb's likeness to her manifests itself (8). Blyth also says that Lamb resembled Sarah's favourite child, Anne, Countess of Sunderland, who was a woman of 'sweetness and infinite charm', reinforcing an assertion by Blyth that 'there were two Carolines', the first 'an enchanting girl', the second 'a detestable girl' (6). However, Wilson observes that Blyth's assessment of Lamb's character as schizophrenic stems from Blyth's own reductiveness rather than Lamb's flawed psychological make-up as a split personality:

[B]oth of whom are children, not because the self cannot be restricted to one version of itself alone, but because in his version Caroline Lamb *was* simply *two* people, one good and one bad, and she was two people not because of any psychological or cultural complexities which his biography will unearth, but because she was a naughty little girl and refused to be one person. (113)

Similarly, Sean Manchester also describes the duality of a naughty girl who was both 'fragile and pathetic', and contained the capacity to throw 'violent tantrums, rebel against all forms of discipline and amaze everyone with her capacity to lie': the 'portrait of the child is the blueprint of the woman', resulting in unspecified 'madness' (31).

Using Elaine Showalter's thesis on the 'female malady' of madness as a framework within which to read the symptoms of Lamb's insanity, her behaviour can be read as a deviation from what was expected of ladylike behaviour and, as such, it was severely punished. Although, comparatively speaking, this is an early work upon the subject of how cultural ideas of 'proper' feminine behaviour have shaped the definition and treatment of mental disorder, it is a useful place to start in beginning a re-assessment of Lamb's reputation as an archetypal female hysteric as represented in studies of her life. Showalter examines the concept of 'moral insanity'; madness re-identified not as a loss of reason but as deviance from socially accepted behaviour that required management or supervision, and it is this element that applies to the popular conception of Lamb (29). Moral insanity was defined as:

a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect, or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination. (Showalter 29)

This definition of madness was one that could be applied to any kind of behaviour that fell short of acceptable behaviour as sanctioned by the general consensus. Showalter echoes an earlier observation of Michel Foucault in which he recognised there was, particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, a generalisation of the understanding of madness that offered no specific 'semantic distinction' and was applied to a series of conditions ranging from 'madness proper' to extravagance (66). Lamb fell drastically short of the community standards that prescribed the comparative freedom of aristocratic women, who could have discreet affairs after having first fulfilled their duty in producing a legitimate heir; what was not tolerated was bringing the aristocracy into disrepute in the public arena by becoming an object of gossip and derision. Such

aristocratic women did not, as Lamb did, openly profess their love for another man; neither did they burn effigies of him whilst reading a rite of exorcism or write a novel based upon an adulterous affair, the details of which were already, notoriously, public property.

As a nineteenth-century woman and an aristocrat Lamb becomes a primary candidate as a sufferer of mental illness according to contemporary diagnosis. For late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century physicians, the internal space of women was porous and penetrable, as opposed to firm and resistant, therefore rendering them more susceptible to bewilderment and delusions (Foucault 147). In particular, women of a leisured class, for whom Lamb arguably becomes a stereotype, being used to commodities, luxuries and indulgences, were thought to be open to fluctuations of desires and impulses, as opposed to women of a labouring class who were thought to be immune to hysteria because of the hardness and discipline of their daily routine (Foucault 149).<sup>3</sup> As Foucault observes, madness as diagnosed by late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century physicians becomes a question of morality as well as medicine because of this need for resistance in overcoming this internal softness that allowed disordered penetration in favour of an organised and rigidly self-disciplined internal space (149). The images of disorder in mind and body that Lamb appears to personify represent a dramatisation of a loss of the self-control that was so despised by the epitome of adulterous discretion, Lamb's mother-in-law Lady Melbourne. Lamb infuriated Lady Melbourne because of her apparent refusal of the outward convention of acceptable female behaviour. Lady Melbourne, in a much-quoted letter, declared that 'when anyone braves the opinion the world, sooner or later they will feel the consequences of it' (Jenkins 45). When she compared Lady Melbourne to Madame de Merteuil, the archetypal practitioner of sexual and political intrigue from Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Lamb's mother, Lady Bessborough, acutely summed Lady Melbourne up as having never braved the opinion of the world herself, due to the calculated hypocrisy that demanded the appearance of 'reputation' in women (Ziegler 15). Out of six children it was only the eldest, Peniston that could, with any certainty, be identified as being fathered by her husband, the first Viscount Melbourne. Ensuring the legitimacy of the dynastic lineage being the principal duty of aristocratic wives, once that duty was performed discreet extra marital affairs were tolerated. William (Lamb's future husband) and Harriet were thought to have been fathered by Lord Egremont, Emily by Francis, the Duke of Bedford, Frederick by Frederick, the Duke of York, and George by George, the Prince of Wales. Despite a title and considerable wealth, William's family were *nouveaux riches* compared to the pedigree of Lamb's extended family of Cavendishes and Spencers, and the politically ambitious Lady Melbourne augmented her position with familial alliances. It could be argued that Lady Melbourne would have been less upset by the embarrassment of the affair between Lamb and Byron if it had actually achieved a greater end for her family. Lamb's earlier liaison with Sir Godfrey Webster enraged Lady Melbourne as it temporarily damaged relations between William Lamb and Sir Godfrey's stepfather, Lord Holland, the titular head of the Whig party.<sup>4</sup> Lamb made the mistake of being too open about her relationship with Byron, and the penalty for failure to pay lip service to the conventions of propriety was indeed severe. Lamb's supposed insanity, when read in the context of contemporary medical discourse, can be interpreted as less to do with madness than it was to do with socially acceptable behaviour that could be contained and managed.

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

By the end of that period the hysteric had *carte blanche* when it came to self expression. She could possess any (and would quite likely give signs of several) of the following characteristics: a nervous temperament, violent and unstable emotions, depression, excitement, poor attention span, disturbed intellect, disturbed will, deficient judgement, dependency, immaturity, egocentricity, attention-seeking, deceitfulness, theatricality, simulation, fearfulness and irritability. (17)

As a profile of a textbook nineteenth century hysteric, it is one that perfectly matches the popular and perpetuated image of Lamb. In his introduction, Blyth states that he sought medical input when writing his study in the 1970s to confirm his belief that Lamb was mad (3). However, even the authority of this approach can be disputed in the light of Showalter's identification of twentieth century medical discourse and treatment that was still defining perceived abnormalities of behaviour as predominantly female, with the schizophrenic woman replacing the cultural stereotype of the hysteric (249). The consensus by her biographers is that Lamb was demonstrably mad and evidence is gathered retrospectively to support the pre-determined conclusion. Lamb's own despair at having all her 'wrongs, crimes and follies, stretching back to the days of infancy and all brought forth to view without mercy' in an attempt to have her certified insane is one that could, with some justification, be levelled at her biographers (Lamb in Normington 185). Normington observes that the primary tactic of the campaign to have Lamb certified, led by her sister-in-law Lady Cowper who took up the mantle after Lady Melbourne's death, was that 'all Caroline's eccentricities and light-hearted pranks in the past were now being carefully collated for future use' (229), yet this is exactly what all the biographers of Lamb are guilty of. They all describe, to a greater or lesser degree, her wit, vitality, inventiveness and generosity but this 'Lady Caroline Lamb' is swiftly crushed under the weight of evidence of her mood swings, extravagant and extrovert behaviour, undisciplined and wild intelligence, which, significantly, is the sum of evidence against her.

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

Caroline was curious about everything and constantly asked 'Why?' When she received an answer she asked another question about the answer that had just been given. Her search for knowledge drove her family to distraction [...]. Since arriving in England, Caroline had become stubborn, perverse and argumentative and, on occasions, violent. Lady Spencer consulted Dr Warren who recommended that she should be isolated from her brothers and cousins. He believed if she could no longer show off or turn the schoolroom into a battlefield she would become bored and behave properly. [...] When Caroline was naughty she was ignored, and when she was disobedient she was dosed with sal volatile or was spoken to so sharply she was reduced to tears. [...] Her good conduct was rewarded by being allowed to spend days with her brothers in Cavendish Square or with her cousins at Devonshire House. Just when everything seemed to be going well, Caroline fell from grace by quizzing Lady Spencer on religion [...]. Her punishment was to sit in a 'cupboard' with Mary [the governess] until it was time to go to bed with a dose of laudanum laced with lavender oil. (15)

Similarly, Douglass cites examples of Lamb's asking of 'incessant questions' which she returned to 'no matter how many distractions were put in her way', which he attributes to her desire to be constantly heard and noticed without considering the prospect of an unfolding intellectual ability that desired answer (*A Biography* 16). Clearly, Lamb's outspoken and demonstrative behaviour was deemed unacceptable even as a child; hardly surprising, then, that it was considered even less so in the woman. Dr Warren's diagnosis was that Lamb's brain was 'too fertile and too agile [...], undoubtedly gifted and even brilliant [but] she should be encouraged to play more and use her brain less' (Blyth 27). Stating that there was no evidence of insanity, Dr Warren prescribed that she should 'not be taught anything or placed under any kind of restraint' (Jenkins 16). This is a stark contrast to the attempts to give her son, Augustus, a full classical education as befitting the male heir even though he never developed beyond the mental capacity of a child. Lamb is caught in a trap of contradictions and an almost self-fulfilling prophecy: on the one hand she had to practise self-control and moderation that was enforced through isolation and sedation, and on the other the prescribed 'cure' was non-restraint and the lack of any real, focused intellectual stimulation for which she was clearly equipped.<sup>5</sup> Lamb's enforced isolation, both as a child and an adult, in order to learn self-control correlates with the treatment of women patients in nineteenth century asylums, albeit in more hospitable surroundings; women were put into solitary confinement and sedated up to five times more than the male patients, on account of deviating from ladylike behaviour (Showalter 81).

The symptoms of 'excitability' and 'wild intelligence' that caused Dr Warren to be summoned, from which he did not diagnose insanity, yet prescribed uneducated and unrestricted freedom within an already liberal environment, allowed Lamb's childhood propensity to be outspoken and demonstrative to develop into the woman who defied conventions for 'acceptable' feminine behaviour. She is condemned as an hysteric for being self-expressive and self-expression is seen as a symptom of hysteria, yet confusingly she was not diagnosed as being either hysterical or insane by the examining doctors. Interestingly, the loudest declarations of Lamb's madness would persistently emanate from women that were within Lamb's closest circle. Lady Holland observed in a letter that 'The physicians will not sign to her being mad enough to be confined. They say she is only wicked from temper and brandy', but she is swift to condemn Lamb as being inherently deranged (Normington 230). Others that called for Lamb's incarceration were her aunt, Lady Lavinia Spencer, her sister-in-law Lady Emily Cowper, her mother-in-law Lady Melbourne, and her cousins Lady Georgiana Howard and Lady Harriet Leveson-Gower. Lamb recognised the problem for herself:

My mother, having boys, wished ardently for a girl, and I, who evidently ought to have been a soldier, was found a naughty girl, forward talking like Richard III.  
(Lamb in Jenkins 16)

That Lamb's behaviour was cause for concern because she was a 'naughty girl' is nowhere better illustrated than by a comparison with her brother, William or Willy. Normington describes this brother as closest to Lamb in temperament as well as age: both are described as 'lively, exuberant, curious and eccentric children' but Willy's chatter and comments amused his family and friends and he is described as 'quite well' despite displaying temper when tired, whereas Lamb, who said 'anything that [came] into her head', caused distress and embarrassment to her family, and her temper becomes a portent for disaster in later life (16).

Showalter observes that two of the major contributing factors toward the female experience of nineteenth-century breakdown were the lack of meaningful occupation

and of fulfilling companionship (61). Lamb, at the heart of a fashionable society that she had already described as vacuous as early as 1811, was deprived of any real vocation; as early as 1811, Lamb addressed a poem to Lord Holland which contained the lines ‘By Heav[e]ns I’m sick of Dissipation / And want some serious occupation.’<sup>6</sup> In December 1817, during a period of recuperation after a fall from her horse and a subsequent fever, Lamb wrote the following letter to Lady Morgan:

For one week I never swallowed anything. The moment of danger passed, and now I believe, in truth, I died; for assuredly a new Lady Caroline has arisen from this death. I seem to have buried my sins, griefs, melancholy, now, and to have come out like a new born babe, unable to walk, think, and speak but perfectly happy. [...] My mind is calm – I am pleased to be alive - grateful for the kindness shown me; and never mean to answer questions further back than the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month, that being the day of this new Lady Caroline’s birth, and I hate the old one. She had her good qualities, but she had grown into a sort of female Timon – not of Athens – bitter, and always going over old, past scenes. She also imagined people hated her. Now the present Lady Caroline is as gay as a lark, sees all as it should be, [...] but, at present, like her predecessors, and like one of your countrymen, is going about wanting work. I have nothing necessarily to do. I know I might and ought to do a great many things, but then am I am not compelled to do them. As to writing, assuredly, enough has been written, besides it is different when one’s thoughts flow out before one’s pen, and writing with one’s pen waiting for thoughts. Would I could be useful! (Morgan 280; vol 2)

The desire and need for a meaningful occupation is the theme of the two published works that came after this letter, *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis*. Lady Orville laments her lack of practical skills to Graham Hamilton, saying ‘You once told me that existence was [...] dead without active pursuits, and that action was the light of life. I cannot labour – write I do; but were I to publish [...] I would only make enemies, or incur censure’ (*Graham Hamilton* 33; vol 2). In the introduction of *Ada Reis*, this theme of usefulness is reiterated:

The moral of the tale appears to be, that he, who remains amidst the busy scenes of life, himself without employment, is in constant danger of becoming prey of wicked feelings and corrupt passions; for as use of preserves iron from rust, so labour and exertion purify and invigorate the soul. (*Ada Reis* x; vol 1)

Despite Lady Orville’s voicing Lamb’s fears of censure for publishing, it may have been because of Byron that Lamb discovered the ‘mind-saving role’ of writing as therapy, as he described it, in volcanic terms, as the ‘lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake – [...] that I cannot help thinking rhyme is so far useful in anticipating [and] preventing the disorder’ (Byron in Jamison 122). The act of disciplined writing was an activity that enabled Lamb to distance herself from a source of despair, an outlet for an intellect that had been repressed since childhood and a way of communicating what she thought of as a necessary illustration for the need for reform. Showalter illustrates the devastating effects of enforced idleness as demonstrated in the writings of Florence Nightingale:

The accumulation of nervous energy, which has had nothing to do during the day, makes [women] feel every night, when they go to bed, as if they are going mad; and they are obliged to lie long in bed in the morning to let it evaporate and keep it down. (64)

Whilst Nightingale was more forcibly restrained by the even narrower confines of middle-class Victorian womanhood than Lamb as an aristocrat, the end result of deprivation of any meaningful activity is arguably the same. The physical exertions of Lamb, notably her total immersion in social activities (in which she is not alone), her passion for riding and breaking in horses and what Douglass describes in his biography of Lamb as her ‘hunger for outdoor activity’ are employed to demonstrate the excessive nature of Lamb, leading towards the final analysis of madness (22). These pursuits can be re-interpreted as a burning off of excess energy that, left unspent in any productive way, could drive any woman as mad as Florence Nightingale feared she was becoming.

During the period of literary production that saw *Glenarvon*, *A New Canto*, *Gordon: A Tale*, *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis* published, a further four novels were being revised in 1822 but having been started much earlier, *Rosamund*, *Penruddock*, *Rose and Mary* and *Sir Eustace de Grey*; and an outline for her novelisation of the drama *The Witch of Edmonton* by Thomas Dekker, William Rowley and John Ford that she began in 1823. All of these works have been identified by Normington and Douglass, but they make no investigation into what this spurt of activity might mean nor identify the correlation between this output and the fact that Lamb was also making new friends (Normington 218-225; *A Biography* 175, 237, 240). Douglass also identifies others along the way that remained unpublished and which are only mentioned in passing: a short story written in 1812 that is a re-working of Jacques Cazotte’s *Le Diable Amoureux*;<sup>7</sup> an original short novel written about a gypsy girl named Bessy Grey, an epistolary novel based on letters from a ‘Venetian nobleman [...] to a very absurd English Lady’, all in 1813; two unnamed play manuscripts passed on to Byron, via his wife in 1815, for the attention of the Drury Theatre management (*A Biography* 125, 146-147, 154-155). The lack of curiosity that these works arouse in her biographers is indicative of how little consequence Lamb’s intellectual efforts are to the main thrust of the narrative that charts her mental disintegration.

Similarly, the friendships being forged by Lamb during this period of creativity have previously been seen as a result of a necessary downgrading due to Lamb’s perceived status as a social outcast from her own milieu. This new circle of companionship and intellectual support, I would like to suggest, replaced one of superficial, fashionable acquaintance that was deprived of ‘significant spheres of action’, allowing Lamb thereby to escape an over-reliance upon an inner life that was responsible for over-identification with the imagination, that resulted, Showalter argues, in more women suffering from symptoms of depression and breakdown (64). In the case of Lamb, this could explain her over-identification with and literary seduction by the poetic voice of Byron in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. These new friendships, I would argue, appear to be the most rewarding of Lamb’s life as the development of them coincides with her most creative period. Already friends with the authors Lady Sydney Morgan and Amelia Opie, Lamb began to associate with the literary circles that met in Doughty Street and Little Quebec Street, the residences of Elizabeth Benger and Elizabeth Spence respectively. These literary gatherings included the poets Emma Roberts and Laetitia Elizabeth Landon and Edward Bulwer Lytton. Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger and Elizabeth Isabella Spence devoted their time in later life to the pursuit of learned exchange of conversation and ideas. Such was their keen interest in developing and maintaining literary relationships particularly, though not exclusively, with published women that Madame de Staël, whom Douglass observes that Lamb had previously met in 1813 during de Staël’s stay in London (*A Biography* 154), has been recorded as saying that Benger was the most interesting woman in England (Aiken xi). This is not an accolade that is recognised by Lamb’s biographers as being deserved as



both Benger and Spence are barely acknowledged. Instead, any significance of Benger and Spence's presence in studies of Lamb's life is reduced to a few lines, which focus upon their exaggerated dress sense, their plain looks, unfashionable addresses, the meagre refreshments on offer and Benger's role in providing the ominous first meeting place between Lamb and Rosina Wheeler Doyle, later to become the wife of Edward Bulwer Lytton, whose experiences bear a striking resemblance to those of Lamb and are discussed below. Jenkins refers to an anonymous description of Miss Benger wearing a tippet 'the produce of some consumptive bear', and an anecdotal incident in which Lamb's dog retrieved items of dirty linen from under Benger's bed (119-121). Blyth mentions that she was 'a minor poet [and] a minor novelist' (230). Normington's comment that poor, thin and a 'rather plain' Benger made up for her lack of beauty with 'sparkling eyes and dazzling conversation' (218-219) indicates that Benger's intellectual capacity was compensatory. Only Douglass refers to the literary basis of their friendship, and quotes Miss Spence's declaration that she honoured Lamb 'more for her *littry* [sic] abilities than for her rank' (*A Biography* 274).

Such treatment is opposed to their identities as writers, committed to their interest in the status of writing and the position of women, in particular, as Rosemary Mitchell argues, in the work of Benger as a pioneering biographer of historical women (1). Leslie Mitchell, in his most recent work on Edward Bulwer Lytton, introduces this literary salon as a 'demi-monde' that was populated by amateurs excluded from the 'best society' because of political, sexual or religious irregularities, in which he squarely places Lamb, whom he describes as being 'tainted with scandal' and as forced to move 'among those with other stigmas' (15). This perception of a seedy underworld is at odds with what Cynthia Lawford describes as Benger and Spence's creation of a forum of literary debate that was utterly respectable, which was accessed by invitation only and designed to promote a supportive environment for primarily female writers (1). Evidence for the valuable network of mutual support and encouragement offered at the informal gatherings can be found in Lamb's dedication of her third novel *Ada Reis* (1823) to the Irish intellectual Lydia White, to whom Lamb wishes to 'dedicate these pages' in acknowledgement of White's 'superiority of intellect and literary talents' to prove Lamb's 'grateful recollection of [...] kindness' (*Ada Reis* i-iii). The disdain with which Benger and Spence – who saw themselves as respectable, serious women of letters, educators and writers of fiction – and Lamb's association with them are dismissed is a reflection of Lamb's presumed eccentricity and loss of status in keeping bizarre and second-rate company.

The suggestion of Lamb now mixing amongst marginalised, somehow sub-standard company is one that sits comfortably with the perception of her sliding down the social scale and into madness, and therefore appears to preclude the necessity of investigating a correlation between Lamb pursuing a sustained commitment to writing and the supportive intellectual environment in which she was moving at the time of production. Jenkins merely outlines the plots of the novels, observes that *Graham Hamilton* contained 'nothing of note' and concludes that Lamb had no opinion upon her own work (123). Blyth views the production of *Graham Hamilton* and *Ada Reis* as taking place in isolation and devoid of any stimulus because of Byron's departure for the continent (218-220). Manchester condenses the chronology of the writing and production of *Graham Hamilton*, which took two years, to a passing reference and omits all mention of *Ada Reis* in favour of a lengthy description of Byron's death and funeral arrangements, complete with illustrations of the arrangements of the caskets in the family vault (144-156). Normington includes references to other works by Lamb that remain unpublished, but still does not demonstrate any critical curiosity into the

field of cultural production in which Lamb was working or to what end (220-225). Douglass comments on what he perceives to be Byron's relationship with Lamb's writing whilst simultaneously assessing her state of mind; he states that Lamb 'confused loving a writer' with being one (*A Biography* 117). It is because of the absence of Byron that Lamb is not taken seriously and these works and friendships are dismissed so lightly. It is as if Byron's absence indicates that anything else that came after him can only be of secondary interest because, as Blyth observes of this period, 'with Byron in exile in Italy, and her own withdrawal from Society, she had lost the stimulus for writing which she had previously enjoyed' (218). It is as Wilson suggests, the melodrama of Lamb's life is of primary interest to her biographers and I would suggest that this period of intellectual exertion is a noticeably quieter one, hence the lack of interest and the driving of the reader's attention continually forward to the next scene of absurdity and madness.

The one relationship from this period that does attract the interest of Lamb's biographers is that with the Bulwer Lyttons, Edward and Rosina. Eighteen years his senior, Lamb had known Bulwer Lytton since he was a boy due to the close proximity of Bocket Hall and his ancestral home of Knebworth. For Lamb's biographers the crucial period of their relationship is recorded as being 1824 to 1825, what Bulwer Lytton himself describes in an autobiographical fragment as a period of 'familiar intimacy' (Lytton 330; vol 1), but in a letter to his mother in 1825, at the end of the 'affair', he wrote that Lamb had 'resisted what few women would have done' (Bulwer Lytton quoted in Sadler 59). The letter to his mother was written in January 1825 and the general consensus among biographers of both Lamb and Bulwer Lytton is that the termination of the 'affair' signalled the termination of their acquaintance. However, Douglass does note that in 1826 Bulwer Lytton interceded with Thomas Medwin on Lamb's behalf, asking him to withdraw from his *Conversations of Lord Byron* a passage that referred to *Glenarvon* as libellous to Byron (*A Biography* 261). In the same year he published a collection of poems entitled *Weeds and Wildflowers*, containing a poetic tribute to Lamb and to which she responded kindly in letters, again upbraiding him for an over-reliance upon Byron and the need for him to write 'for, and from, [himself]' (Lytton 19-28; vol 2). Whatever the nature of the relationship during this period it did not appear to significantly interfere with their correspondence and friendship, even if it was on a slightly different footing, and this was to continue until her death in 1828. The details of the exact nature of Lamb's relationship with Bulwer Lytton are uncertain but it is reported by Blyth to be 'a shameless seduction of an inexperienced youth by a designing woman' (224). In biographies of Bulwer Lytton, Lamb appears like a bad fairy at a christening; her motives are suspected of being entirely malevolent. She is seen as acting from no better reason than to soothe her own wounded vanity and her inability to be anything other than destructive (Sadler 31-100). Leslie Mitchell describes Lamb's delight in 'seducing young men', speaks of her influence as 'almost entirely malign' and refers to the 'devastation [that she brought] to her own and other people's lives' whom 'mere death' could not stop (14-16). As with Lamb's own biographers, nothing more concrete is offered to substantiate this impression, which, after all, is all it amounts to due to the lack of any supporting sources for this judgement upon her character. Mitchell implies an explicit link between the fact that Bulwer Lytton proposed to his future wife, Rosina, in the grounds of Bocket Hall, the country home where Lamb was to be effectively exiled after her separation from her husband, and the subsequent breakdown of Rosina's marriage (16). During the process of separation, charges of madness were levelled at Rosina by her husband and there are distinct parallels between the attempted commitment of Lamb as a lunatic by her

husband's family, apparently with the sanction of her own, and the commitment of Rosina Bulwer Lytton. Whatever the relationship between Lamb and Bulwer Lytton, Lamb and Rosina have much more in common than the men in their lives. The parallels have been identified by Marie Mulvey Roberts, in her introduction to Rosina Bulwer Lytton's own account of her marriage, supposed madness and enforced incarceration in a private asylum by her husband, in that

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

I would argue that Lamb used the novel as a vehicle for exploration rather than for vindication in the style of Rosina, but the point is a valid one. Both Lamb and Rosina were critical of their circumstances as publicly maligned women and were committed to airing their grievances publicly, and that both were threatened with restraint was not a coincidence. Like Lamb's, Rosina's madness is read as manifesting itself as a personal vendetta against a man of letters. Like Lamb's, it is as a result of Rosina's actions rather than those of the man in question that results in the charge of madness being the weapon of choice in an assassination of her character. Like Lamb, Rosina is accused of theatricality and melodrama and becomes a source of embarrassment because of her refusal to be constrained by the public limitations of acceptable feminine behaviour (Mitchell 25).

Evidence is gathered against Rosina in a similar way as happens to Lamb in a deliberate attempt to discredit her both by Bulwer Lytton and his biographers, and the starting point is Rosina's mother. Anna Doyle Wheeler left an unsatisfactory marriage, taking her children with her, and after a period of four years, travelled to France where she was an adherent to the ideals of Saint-Simonian female emancipation, having already absorbed the philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft. Edward Bulwer Lytton expressed his distaste for such militant feminism by declaring 'the only excuse for Mrs Wheeler was that she was mad' (Bulwer Lytton in Mitchell 25). A similar sentiment comes from Benjamin Disraeli, a close friend of Bulwer Lytton, by which he associated the political female with the mad eponymous gypsy of Keats's poem:

Mrs Wheeler was there [at dinner]; not pleasant, something between Jeremy Bentham and Meg Merrilies, very clever but awfully revolutionary. She poured forth all her systems upon my novitiate ear, and while she advocated the rights of women, Bulwer abused system mongers and the sex, and Rosina played with her dog. (Disraeli quoted in Mitchell 25)

Michael Sadleir depicts the 'Goddess of Reason' as nothing more than a harpy who made her husband's home hell and made her children acolytes at her altar for a 'small group of embittered cranks in Caen' and whose common behaviour, 'wrongheadedness' and tedium Rosina inherited (Sadleir 71-81).

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

No, my sagacious Poodle, no me does not wish oo a bit more stupid than oo is...but me wants to have only the perfections, not the faults of a clever woman. Me wants the companion, not the Caviller or Contradictor, which me thinks clever women generally become when the Mistress grows into the Wife, and me thinks oo has a

certain independence of character that belies oo softness of temper and even oo love for me. But me won't talk of this now, prettiest. (Bulwer Lytton quoted in Mitchell 37)

Because Rosina would not make 'greater concessions than the man' and would not feel that those concessions, when given, should be a source of pride, Bulwer Lytton predicted that there could be no permanence of attraction (Mitchell 27). When Bulwer Lytton began to distance himself by spending more time away from home and with his mistress, Rosina likened her condition to being kept in 'solitary confinement' (Rosina Bulwer Lytton quoted in Mitchell 38).

Unable to discover concrete evidence for adultery committed by Rosina, Mitchell observes that Bulwer Lytton took advantage of the 'facilities the lunacy law affords for disposing of inconvenient wives' (62). The Commissioners of Lunacy were given the task of discovering whether or not Rosina was actually insane or 'a tiresome woman [that] had been kidnapped in order to silence her' (Mitchell 62). It becomes clear that Mitchell is persuaded by the former and it is telling that he adopts turns of phrase such as 'an equilibrium [...] as fragile as Rosina's', 'Rosina's behaviour became odder and odder, no doubt assisted by a heavy intake of alcohol and her fear of persecution', despite having not mentioned a fragile equilibrium or a problem with alcohol before, and despite having adequately demonstrated that Rosina's paranoia was extremely well-founded due to the constant surveillance she was under from agents of her husband (55, 61).

Similar tactics coerce the reader of studies of Lamb in subtle attempts to reinforce the stereotype with references to alcoholism and drug dependency; Normington refers to Lamb's 'medicinal glass of sherry gradually turn[ing] into a bottle' with no previous reference to Lamb's recourse to drink (193). Even Douglass, the most scholarly of Lamb's biographers, refers to any recourse to artificial stimulants in an oblique manner; her fear of death '*may* have stemmed from [...] laudanum-induced hallucinations', her role as Bulwer Lytton's '*probably* drug-induced paramour', and Lamb's symptoms of manic-depression '*might also* have been due to [...] drug use' (emphasis added); he cites her failure to have dinner with her grandmother, Lady Spencer, as evidence for a life spiralling out of control (*A Biography* 236, 258, 137). Lamb may well have been dependent on both drugs and alcohol but, as Jenkins kindly observes, she would have been in good company as the use of opiates and alcohol were widely prescribed and entrenched in every day life (97); witness the use of laudanum to quieten down Lamb as an overactive child in the above quotation. This kind of anecdotal aside appears to be, perhaps unconsciously, employed to lend weight to the arguments that Lamb and Rosina were certifiably insane and to impair their authenticity as critical forces. This 'evidence' is offered in isolation from any kind of context, which effectively removes them from the discourse of 'normality' where decent people do not engage in extra-marital affairs, drink, take drugs, accuse their husbands of cruelty. When re-positioned within the wider context of their cultural milieu it would appear that Lamb and Rosina are only unusual in setting down their experiences in print.

Foucault suggests that confinement is utilised as a device to avoid scandal, and that madness, in the classical civilisation, becomes a source of shame and as such must be removed to avoid bringing dishonour upon families (66-67). Even though Foucault is referring to what he describes as the 'great confinement' of the eighteenth century with regards to the scandal of madness within a civilised state, this provides an interesting vantage point from which to consider Lamb and Rosina. Both were an embarrassment to their families and their exclusion was an attempt to silence them both as a method of

self-defence. Those that tried to silence Lamb and Rosina were not just embarrassed of them but *by* them: they exposed the inherent hypocrisy and weaknesses of social institutions of the social hierarchy and marriage in their novels. The threat of incarceration as lunatics was an attempt to render both Lamb and Rosina powerless by invalidating their knowledge. The power dynamics embedded within the cultural connotations of insanity would deny Lamb and Rosina an authoritative voice, excluding them from meaningful dialogue. That the lives and novels of these women have been virtually ignored is because of this process of de-legitimation. It is as Virginia Blain recognises in the case of the partisan distortion in the case of Rosina, despite the wealth of evidence of Bulwer Lytton's mistreatment of her, and which is equally applicable in the case of Lamb, in that the lack of incentive to re-assess the case of both of these women is precisely because of the embarrassment factor which turns the 'person with a grievance into a social liability' and that 'the partisan distortion and the embarrassment factor has come down to us in *literary* history' (213). Despite pockets of isolated interest, the ability to summarily dismiss Lamb and Rosina stems from what Roy Porter identifies as 'a callous belief that the insane [or, by extension, those believed to be] do not suffer and that any problems they may express are bound to be imaginary' (160). Anything they had to say in their own defence was necessarily ignored as delusional, hence declarations by Lamb that she was not mad are greeted with, at best, scepticism and criticism of cultural elite in her novels is disregarded in favour of a wilful misreading of an obsession with Byron. Porter describes how the noisiest patients were not only shut up but 'shut up': madness could not be cured by listening to what the mad had to say 'there being less communication than excommunication' (158). After a brief self-imposed exile in France following her separation from William, Lamb returned and was allowed to stay at Brompton Hall, a country seat belonging to her ex-husband's family. Interestingly, Brompton was exactly the kind of country house that Showalter identifies as being the model for the architecture of the nineteenth-century asylum, but one that did not look like a prison (34-35). For Lamb, her lonely residence at Brompton, for which she was obliged to her husband and his family and that lasted until the end of her life, was tantamount to solitary confinement.

It would appear that insanity is determined by constructions of appropriate behaviour. The norms of propriety, against which the deviancy is measured, serve to reinforce those structures that legitimise the symbolic power of hierarchy. The label of insanity conveniently confines and negates any threat that Lamb and Rosina may pose to the burgeoning political careers of their husbands and the damage done by their taking up of the pen for the purposes of exposure. The lives and madness of Lamb and Rosina Bulwer Lytton have been told through the refractory lens of the prominent men in their lives, resulting in their narratives being marginalised as delusional and obsessional when what they wanted was for them to be read as narratives that register protest and disillusionment with a hierarchy that was doing its best to suppress them and what they had to say against internal corruption and abuses of power and privilege. Lamb and Rosina use the vehicle of the novel to register this protest, and the aims and objectives are made quite clear within the texts. Language gave Lamb and Rosina a tool with which to negotiate a place for themselves to be heard. Foucault suggests that where there is language there is power and where there is power there is resistance; language is the site where the struggles are acted out and those in a 'powerless position can negotiate with that position and accrue power to themselves' (Foucault quoted in Mills 41-43). As Lamb said, in a poem addressed to Harriette Wilson, when she was threatening to reveal the details of her liaisons in which Lamb's brother-in-law, Frederick Lamb, was implicated:

Harriet Wilson, shall I tell thee where,  
 Beside me being *cleverer*,  
 We differ? – thou wert hired to hold thy tongue,  
 Thou hast no right to do thy lovers wrong:  
 But I, whom none could buy or gain,  
 Who am as proud, girl, as thyself art vain,  
 And like thyself, or sooner like the wind,  
 Blow raging ever free and unconfin'd  
 What should withhold my tongue with pen of steel,  
 The faults of those who have wrong'd me reveal?  
 Why should I hide men's follies, whilst my own  
 Blaze like gas along this talking town?  
 Is it being bitter to be too sincere?  
 Must we adulterate the truth as they do beer?  
 I'll tell thee why then! As each has a price,  
 I have been bought at last – I am not ice:  
 Kindness and gratitude have chained my tongue,  
 From henceforth I will do no mortal wrong.  
 Prate those who please – laugh – censure who that will.  
 My mouth is sealed – my thoughts – my pen are still.  
 In the meantime – we Lambs are seldom civil,  
 I wish thy book – *not thee* – at the Devil. (Nathan 195-196)

The structures of propriety finally forced Lamb to lay down her pen of steel. It was, though, more than an implement of revenge exposing men's follies; it also enabled her to examine her own follies and rehabilitation in the context of the symbolic power of the hierarchy. One cannot help suspecting that the silence was bought by the threat of being incarcerated within an institution, and the kindness and gratitude because of relief that this draconian solution was not implemented. Indeed, Lamb wrote that 'as to any promises I may have been forced to make [not to obstruct the impending separation from William] when a straight waistcoat & a Mad Doctor are held forth to view – they cannot expect that I should think them binding' (Lamb quoted in Douglass 180).

The overall consensus of Lamb's biographers is that Lamb's already fragile mental health was irreparably damaged after her involvement with Byron, but here, by way of drawing this paper to a conclusion, I want to briefly explore the hypothesis of recovery. Lamb did suffer as a result of her treatment by Byron but in terms of betrayal, humiliation and justifiable anger instead of mental collapse. Foucault identifies a link between madness and passion, where love that is disappointed or abandoned has no other recourse but to 'pursue itself into the void of delirium' (30). However, Foucault goes on to state that passion is, in fact, a temporary form of madness in itself and is a form of blindness:

Blindness: one of the words which comes closest to the essence of classical madness. It refers to that night of quasi-sleep which surrounds the images of madness, giving them, in their solitude, an invisible sovereignty; but it also refers to ill-founded beliefs, mistaken judgements, to the whole background of errors inseparable from madness. (105)

Unreason, to use Foucault's phrase, is associated with dream-like error and delirium is not, he explains, reason lost, alienated or diseased but must be understood as reason dazzled, and affecting a temporary blindness in which moral errors and misjudgements are made (107). This is exactly how Lamb comes to understand and write her relationship with Byron and, on a wider scale, how she understands the seduction of herself, her friends and family by the superficial, as being temporarily dazzled. Lamb,

in a letter to Lord Clare, wrote that she had ‘been so ill that I can only thank God I am again in my senses’ (Lamb in Doherty 297). Lamb writes on the sense of humiliation she felt because ‘Friends [she had] behaved most ill to should now be kind – and that the one I sacrificed so much for should thus treat [her]’ (Lamb in Doherty 298). If Doherty’s calculations are correct, this letter was written somewhere between the end of December 1812 and early January 1813, still only a matter of months after the end of the affair but already talking in terms of recovery. Elsewhere, in Jenkins’ biography, Lamb is quoted as saying, in 1816, that for ‘three years [she] had worshipped him’ (95), thereby recognising that the period was finite, belonging to the past, and that the end of the affair would be a cathartic moment for Lamb in terms of intellectual activity, contradicting the post-Byronic stasis that she is described as inhabiting by her biographers. Jenkins, Blyth, Manchester and Normington all envision Lamb as occupying a post-Byronic hinterland, literally a ‘no-man’s land’ that had been rendered meaningless by the absence of Byron, using the same evocative image of her wrapped in shawls gazing at a chair in which Byron allegedly sat to have his portrait painted (Blyth 221; Jenkins 118; Manchester 144).

This is an image that leaves Lamb, quite literally, gazing at the empty space that Byron once occupied and one that is deployed as a metaphor for the emptiness of her life. Only Jenkins gives any kind of reference as to where this image came from, naming as the source Lady Morgan, who was describing her visit to Lamb, who was suffering from an illness and apparently in a reflective mood (118). In Blyth and Manchester the scenario is repeated verbatim as an objective truth. But, interestingly, while the image remains the same the location within Lamb’s life changes. Jenkins and Manchester place the description somewhere between writing and publishing *Glenarvon* (1816) and publishing *Graham Hamilton* (written in 1820, published in 1822) whereas Blyth places it after all three novels have been published which would be 1823 onwards. Evidently the sentiment of the pathetic love-lorn figure is more important than the chronological details or context in which the observation was originally written. The similarities in each study demonstrate that the ‘truth’ of these studies has taken on an almost mythical status because of this repetition. Writing upon the limitations of biographical representation and the posthumous accretion of cultural baggage Lucasta Miller suggests that

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

Facts, whilst appearing to be conclusive and non-negotiable, can therefore take on a mythic quality that deflects the eye of the researcher as well as the reader, when reviewing a life posthumously, from any engagement other than what is presumed to be already known, thereby further entrenching any original distortions, bias or prejudices that were inherent towards Lamb even during her lifetime.

---

### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> See list of works cited for selected works by these scholars.

<sup>2</sup> This is a phrase that has become synonymous with Lamb. However, the closest contemporary source is a recording of a conversation between Lamb and Lady Morgan by Morgan herself.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Small refutes this class distinction of leisured women being more susceptible to hysteria by illustrating how prevalent hysteria was amongst the working classes (18).

<sup>4</sup> The same could be said for Lady Melbourne's second daughter-in-law, also known as Caroline. Caroline St Jules was the illegitimate daughter of Lady Elizabeth Foster and Duke of Devonshire, husband of her best friend Georgiana, Lady Caroline Lamb's aunt. Caroline St Jules was discreetly assimilated into the Cavendish household and brought up with Lamb and her cousins, and eventually married William Lamb's brother, George. Caro-George (as she became known) also fell from favour with Lady Melbourne not so much for having an affair with Henry Brougham but because of Brougham's allegiance to the Prince of Wales estranged wife, Princess Caroline of Brunswick; see Airlie. Similarly, Normington suggests that Lady Melbourne advised her daughter Emily to be faithful but not to her own husband, Lord Cowper, but to her lover, Lord Palmerston, as Lady Melbourne predicted a bright future for him (Normington 199).

<sup>5</sup> There were educational opportunities but no real incentive to pursue them or anybody in a suitably authoritative position to ensure that these opportunities were made the most of. Lamb's governess was Selina Trimmer, daughter of the famous educationalist Sarah. According to Amanda Foreman's authoritative study on the Devonshire household, Selina was introduced into the family by Lady Spencer, Lamb's grandmother, in a desire to provide Lamb and her cousins with a stable background in contrast to their parent's immorality (Foreman 251). However, even Selina was powerless to enforce her charges to pursue a study that her charges did not wish to undertake. When Selina complained to her patroness that Lamb was refusing to do her arithmetic, Lady Spencer advised the governess not to worry as 'the fancy [...] will come again as I have reason enough to be very sure she can do anything of that kind when she chooses to set about it' (Spencer in Normington 14).

<sup>6</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> June 1811, British Library Add. MSS 51558, f.7.

<sup>7</sup> First printed in 1772, it is a tale of how the devil assumes the form first as a demon that looks like a camel, then a spaniel, then a young woman when summoned by a Spanish gentleman, Alvaro. As a young woman the devil apparently falls in love with her master and fulfils all of his wishes to the utmost and almost succeeds in seducing him. It is not until the end that the beautiful Biondetta is revealed to be Beelzebub, who still adores Alvaro but then disappears. Lamb, when sending Byron a cutting of her pubic hair, referred to herself as Biondetta and had her portrait painted by Thomas Phillips in 1813, dressed as a page, as the character Biondetta appears, accompanied by a spaniel. Lamb's own version of Biondetta, as described by Douglass, is the devoted spaniel Biondetta (Lamb) was once a favourite of Lord Byron's but whose possessiveness forces him to give it up. The dog then dies with its affections unaltered and the body, in the first version, is returned to Byron, and in the second version, Byron refuses to see the body (Douglass, *A Biography* 125).

### Works Cited:

- Aikin, Lucy. 'Memoir of Miss Benger'. *Memoirs of the Life of Anne Boleyn, Queen of Henry VIII*. By E Benger. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. London: Longman, 1827.
- Airlie, Mabel. *In Whig Society 1775-1818*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922.
- Blain, Virginia. 'Rosina Bulwer Lytton and the Rage of the Unheard'. *Huntington Library Quarterly* 53 (1990): 211-236.
- Blyth, Henry. *Caro: The Fatal Passion, The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghan, 1972.
- Bulwer Lytton, Rosina. *A Blighted Life: A True Story*. Ed. Marie Mulvey-Roberts. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994.
- Doherty, Frances. 'An Unpublished Letter of Lady Caroline Lamb to Lord Clare' *Notes & Queries* (August 1967): 297-299.
- Douglass, Paul. *Lady Caroline Lamb: A Biography*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- . 'The Madness of Writing: Lady Caroline Lamb's Byronic Identity' *Pacific Coast Philology* 34.1 (1999): 53-71.



- . *The Whole Disgraceful Truth: Selected Letters of Lady Caroline Lamb*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- . 'Playing Byron: Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* and the Music of Isaac Nathan' *European Romantic Review* 8.1 (1997): 1-24.
- . 'What Lord Byron Learned from Lady Caroline Lamb'. *European Romantic Review* 16.3 (2005): 273 – 281.
- . 'Lady Caroline Lamb Before Byron: The Godfrey Vassal Webster Affair' *The Wordsworth Circle* 36.3 (2005):117-24.
- Foreman, Amanda. *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire*. London: Harper Collins, 1998.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York: Vintage Press, 1988.
- Franklin, Caroline. 'Lamb, Lady Caroline (1785-1828)'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2 June 2005.  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/articles/15911>>
- Jamison, Kay. *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1994.
- Jenkins, Elizabeth. *Lady Caroline Lamb*. London: Cardinal, 1974.
- Judson, Barbara. 'Roman à Clef and the Dynamics of Betrayal: the Case of *Glenarvon*' *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture* 33.2 (2000): 151-169.
- Kelly, Gary. 'Amelia Opie, Lady Caroline Lamb and Maria Edgeworth: Official and Unofficial Ideology'. *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 12.4 (1981): 3-24.
- Lamb, Caroline, Lady. *Glenarvon*. London: Henry Colburn, 1816.
- . *A New Canto*. London: William Wright, 1819.
- . *Gordon: A Tale*. London: T & J Allman, 1821.
- . *Graham Hamilton*. London: Henry Colburn, 1822.
- . *Ada Reis*. London: John Murray, 1823.
- Lawford, Cynthia. 'Turbans, Tea and Talk of Books: the Literary Parties of Elizabeth Spence and Elizabeth Bengier'. *CW3 Journal: Corvey Women Writers on the Web 1796 – 1834*. 14 September 2006. <<http://www.shu.ac.uk/corvey/CW3journal>>
- Lytton, E.R.B, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of. *The Life, Letters and Literary Remains of Edward, Lord Lytton by His Son*. 2 Vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883.
- Manchester, Sean. *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know: The Life of Lady Caroline Lamb*. London: Gothic Press, 1992.
- Marchand, Leslie. *Byron; A Portrait*. London: Pimlico, 1993.
- McDayter, Ghislaine. 'Hysterically Speaking: Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* and the Revolutionary Voice'. *Romantic Generations: Essays in Honour of Robert F. Gleckner*. Ed. McDayter, G., Batten, G. and Milligan, B. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001.
- Miller, Lucasta. *The Bronte Myth*. London: Vintage, 2002.

- Mills, Sara. *Discourse*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Mitchell, Leslie. *Bulwer-Lytton; The Rise and Fall of a Victorian Man of Letters*. London: Hambledon & London, 2003.
- Mitchell, Rosemary. 'Benger, Elizabeth Ogilvy'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2 June 2005.  
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2093>
- Morgan, Sydney, Lady. *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence, 3 Volumes*. Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1863.
- Nathan, Isaac. *Fugitive Pieces and Reminiscences of Lord Byron; Some Original Poetry, Letters and Recollections of Lady Caroline Lamb*. London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co, 1829.
- Normington, Susan. *Lady Caroline Lamb: This Infernal Woman*. London: House of Stratus, 2001.
- Porter, Roy. *Madness; A Brief History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Sadlier, Michael. *Bulwer and His Wife; A Panorama 1803-1836*. London: Constable & Co, 1933.
- Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady; Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980*. London: Virago, 1998.
- Small, Helen. *Love's Madness; Medicine, the Novel and Female Insanity 1800-1865*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Smith, Dorothy. 'K is Mentally Ill'. *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Wilson, Frances. "'An Exaggerated Woman": The Melodramas of Lady Caroline Lamb'. *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*. London: Macmillan, 1999.
- Wu, Duncan. 'Appropriating Byron: Lady Caroline Lamb's *A New Canto*' *Wordsworth Circle* 26.3 (1995): 140-146.
- . 'Lady Caroline Lamb (1785-1828)' *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.
- . 'Lady Caroline Lamb (1785-1828)' *Romanticism: An Anthology, Second Edition*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- Ziegler, Philip. *Melbourne: A Biography of William Lamb, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Melbourne*. London: Collins, 1976.