A STUDY OF ENGLISH HUMOUR
IN CHARLES LAMB

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Trying to take the humour of Charles Lamb as a medium for the Englishness of the English is the aim of this thesis. For English teachers in Japan, it is, of course, necessary to master the skills of handling English, and at the same time, not to neglect the study of the background of English is also important. Because teaching English will be on the rock without any knowledge of the spiritual background of the English. It seems to me that they have humour as one of the conditions of gentlemen. I am sorry to say that the textbooks used in Junior High Schools of Japan have no proper teaching materials of humour. I am afraid jokes or laughter are only put on them rather than humours.

My study is not directly concerned with the critical analysis of the textbooks, but I am sure this will become one of the fundamental studies for it.

Here I must say thanks Pro. Tsukano of Hyogo University for his kindness. He gave me valuable pieces of advices in making up the plot of this thesis. Most of all he was kind enough to help me to get the Lucas' and other materials.
Chapter I Introductory Survey of English Humour

(1)

Learners about English literature have often pointed out that humour is one of the spiritual factors forming the Englishness of the English. One of its distinctive characteristics is practicality as Louis Cazamian put it. Practicality is nothing but a realization of things which keeps its "feet firmly enough on the solid ground of facts." ¹ With this realization of things, that is practicality. Humour has a deep relation indeed with it; humour can only show itself when men are in contact with a sense of real things and hope to leap over the barriers which are in their way. To seek for the roots of the Englishness of the English, we need to study their humour. We have many humorists in English literature, and here I will focus my eyes on the humour of Charles Lamb (1775–1834).

Charles Lamb was in the main current of English humour, so making a start with him seems to be necessary and essential to my mind. Perhaps he will give us a proper key for the subject.

Cazamian is of the opinion that "humour is not the privilege of any country and any time," ² and that "In its broadest connotation, it is an aspect of thought, or an aesthetic category," but his main concern is not the presentation of this kind of generality, he takes humour to be essentially concrete; and consequently the conclusion he came to is that humour has its roots no less, and more, in the originality of national groups, than in the faculties of the abstract human being. Among the representative writers of this sort Cazamian mentioned, are Cervantes (1547–1616), Rabelais (1495–1553), Shakespeare (1564–1616), and Charles Lamb.

In case of studying culture, one of the most orthodox way of understanding is to study the roots of the culture historically as R. Fukuhara did. Another way of understanding is to try to cut the stem of culture in order to make a cross section of culture as M. Hirai did. On the surface of the section we can see many pipes consisting of the English culture, and I can distinguish the pipe of humour

from others, then, I can recognize if it is through the originality of national groups referred to by Cazamian.

This is only hypothetic. If I can put my hands on the roots of Lamb’s humour, I will be able to spike a nail into the English humour taken to be one of the most important ingredients of the Englishness of the English.

It is true, of course, some will agree with May that “Lamb was a genius and a poet; nevertheless (and the paradox is not unique) it was not in his verse that either his genius or poetry was most conspicuously manifested — but in prose,” but if each essay written by Lamb is taken to be a prose poem as is understood by the late Dr. Fukuhara, the best approach to the core of the essayist’s sense of humour seems to me to be in terms of his works: The Essays of Elia and The Last Essays of Elia; and the alternative approach to the subject is to try to start with poems among his pre-Elian works. There may well be a deep relation between his essays and poems. A poem in a general sense of the word is something on which to sing man’s feeling. Then the spirit of humour in Lamb, which constantly runs through Elia and taken to be of the most English sort must have a deep rooted connection with his poems. I don’t think it is irrelevant to seek for the roots of his humour in the poems.

Therefore the aim of this thesis is to seek for the roots of his humour through his poems, and not to make a list of his humours and put them into ordered groups.

(2)

First I have to approach the conception of humour. The late Dr. Kenji Ishida, in his essay English humour and English character, referred to Carlyle (1795—1881), who said: “True humour springs not more from the head than from the heart; it is not contempt, its essence is love; it issues not in laughter but in still smiles which lie far deeper. It is a sort of inverse sublimity; exalting, as it were, into our affections what is below us, while sublimity draws down into our affections what is above us.”

4 K. Ishida, English humour and English character (Tōkyō : Kenkyū-Sha, Shōwa 24 ), p. 26
According to Carlyle, humour is taken to be the symbol of the complete personality. It seems to me that personality becomes complete when he can show his affections to every man and everything, above all when he has freedom to express himself fully anytime, and I suppose a man may become a satirist or a humorist depending upon the degree of the health of his mind. A man of humour who is self-contented, needs nothing for himself; that distinguishes him from a satirist who needs everything for himself. A man of humour also has almost the same appearance as a man of innocence. Innocent as he is like Laoz, his mind is soft and flexible, and he can enter into the hearts of others in his free way. This freedom allows him to cry and laugh with the others. He can stand on the same level as others and can be therefore truly companionable. In this state there is no distinct difference between comedy and tragedy. A man who sees life as it is never sees it only in favour of its tragedy, nor only in favour of its comedy. To him both its tragedy and its comedy are as they are; comedy and tragedy can co-exist in this way. They never contradict each other in the mind of a man of humour. This is what Carlyle means to say.

In the same essay, J. B. Priestly (1894 – ?), the novelist and essayist, has admirably defined humour: “Humour has well been defined as thinking in fun while feeling in earnest.” According to him, humour can be realized at the very place where tragedy turns into comedy. This may sound paradoxically, but Blindness written by Charles Lamb proves to be a proper model of the definition. The definition holds good for understanding of the pathos of the poem. The pathos will be referred to in a later chapter.

A careful reading of the definition by Cazamian will be a good help to our understanding of the definition of the English humour. Cazamian refers to the comedy of Shakespeare, saying that humour, in principle, always “preserves some connection, near or distant, with laughter.” He goes on to say that “humour is a mode of the discovery and enjoyment of the comic.” What he means to say is that humour in principle concerns the mode of comic and keeps with laughter.

Referring to Ben Jonson (1573–1637) Cazamian gives a description as follows: “The notion of oddity and eccentricity became the very core of the idea

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5 Ibid, p. 25
6 L. Cazamian, The Development of English Humour, p. 307
the word humour conveyed; when the word was in constant use and the idea grew to
be almost an obsession, the meaning that most crops up is, as the New English
Dictionary describes it, a particular disposition, inclination, or liking, especially one
having no apparent ground or reason; mere fancy, whim, caprice, freak, vagary. 7
Since Ben Jonson, the term of humour has much had the same meaning as we now
use. According to him, a sense of humour is the notion of oddity and eccentricity, and
yet it seems to me to be a monster eating foolishness of men. Here is perhaps the
original form of humour.

Cazamian is of an opinion that the characteristics of humour consist in the
duality of intent. One aspect of the intent will lead us to the mood of laughter; and
that the other one will help us to obtain the mastery of the realities of our life as they
are, by saying and thinking something "in fun" while feeling in earnest.

As the conditions of humour, he goes on to say that a man is in need of both
"the shrewdness" 8 that perceives the actual paradoxes of experience and "the agility"
with which one is allowed to think on two different planes. The two different planes
mean two things which contradict each other as comedy and tragedy. It seems to
me that they are dialectically synthesized into the upper plane, which is the world
of humour.

He tries to take the mechanism making up humour as follows: "...... the trick
of inversion is naturally bound up with a mood in which the stimulus of unexpected-
ness is cared for, sought after; the humorist joins hands with the artist who gives
us the pleasure of a refreshed world; and just as the artist must take his stand
upon facts as they are before he bathes them in an idealized light, the humorist
reaps the benifit of his startling slyness through the concrete realism of his manner,
the more objective his picture, the more vividly does the soul of his subjective intent
flash out." 9 He goes on to say that the humorist is primarily a man with an eye
for potential fun of life, and that the humorist must have a supple sense of the
actualities of things and a command of his own reactions. Both the sense and the
command enable him to enjoy the feeling of "pleasure of a refreshed world."

According to the interpretation of the term "humour" from a dictionary of

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7 Ibid., p. 310
8 Ibid., p. 6
9 Ibid., p. 6
literary terms, French humour is more intellectual in the sense that it means “wit” in most cases. Contrary to this kind of humour is English humour, which carries humane feelings with it, and these humane feelings are shown to be what is called “pathos” as revealed in the essays of Charles Lamb. The feelings find their expression in the another form of “fun” as is shown in the buffo Bottom of A Midsummer Night’s Dream by Shakespeare. In pathos and fun lies the secret of the door of wisdom which opens into a new world. The very secret of turning over leads us to the “wise passiveness” 10 which never frets in the face of realities of our life. The wise passiveness is in a sense “thinking in fun while feeling in earnest.” Some philosophers may call it “speculation.” 11 To speculate is to see things as they are. The things seen in this way never belong to the world of tragedy alone, nor do they belong to the world of comedy alone. To realize this is the essence of humour. This realization is fulfilled in a perfect way in the way of looking at things of Charles Lamb.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lamb, Hazlitt (1778—1830), Leigh Hunt (1784—1859), De Quincey (1785—1859), and other essayists came out and began their literary activities under the development of journalism. An epoch of essay was established by these essayists, and it is not an exaggeration to say that we associate the name of Lamb with the idea of essay in English literature, and that the attitude of mind as revealed in these essayists, especially in Charles Lamb, is one of the remarkable aspects of the English traditional culture.

Lamb gave a description of life and man with his own philosophy having the play of townspeople. In this description, we can see his humour well illustrated in its “pathos.” The humour in pathos is nothing more and nothing less than the speculation of a man as he is. It is true that a man may be weak and foolish, and that he more often than not plays the part of a foolish man; but in the very foolishness and weakness is a man lovable, loving is an essence of humour. Really he left us with a remarkably wise saying: “I love a fool.” A man who really loves a fool

10 W. Wordsworth’s ‘Expostulation and Reply,’ I. 24.

The realization may be well illustrated in terms of the poet Keats, who writes to his friend Richard Woodhouse on October 27, 1818, that this kind of speculation is equivalent to the enjoyment of light and shade.
is the author of the poems and essays which will be treated in the following chapter.
Chapter II Humour in Charles Lamb

(1) The Old Familiar Faces

The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb were edited by Lucas in 1903. The third vol. of the complete works is The Books for Children and the fifth vol. is entitled Poems and Plays. The total number of the poems in these volumes is more than three hundreds. Here I will select one among them, and let it be the first key for his humour.

The Old Familiar Faces
I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school days,
All, all are gone, the old Familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women:
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her ——
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man,
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Let him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost like, I paced round the haunts of my childhood
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces ——
How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.  

About this poem, some questions are unsettled. One of the questions is about who the old familiar faces are. Here I will follow the note written by the editor of the complete works. The note under the letter dated 28th, January 1798, from Charles Lamb to S. T. Coleridge shows us that “it has been conjectured that Lloyed was the friend of the fifth stanza, and Coleridge the friend of the seventh,” and that “the underlined half line might refer to Ann, but, since she is mentioned in the fourth stanza, it more probably refers to Mary Lamb, who had been so ill as to necessitate removal from Hackney into more special confinement again.”

According to the text of 1818, the first stanza was cut out, so the stanzas are different in number from those of the original poem. The first friend in this poem means Charles Lloyed, he was a member of the Quaker’s and wrote some poems in Blank Verse with Charles Lamb. The next friend means S. T. Coleridge, who was Lamb’s dearest friend since the Blue-coat school days, and two years older than Lamb. Lamb’s first poems were put up in Coleridge’s Poems on Various Subjects in 1796. “A love” in the third stanza means Ann Simons who was the first love of Lamb. The underlined part of the last stanza is taken to be his sister Mary. She was insane in those days and needed to go to the special confinement from Hackney. I suppose “some” is one of the poetical expressions. It means his sister Mary and others. The vague expression like this may make a poetical impression upon the readers. I will follow the opinions of Lucas. To give proper nouns to the names in the poem is surely valuable, because the poem might be realized the proper names. But I don’t think it changes the value of the poem essentially. The most important thing here is that the first stanza in the poem of the original began as follows:

Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?


I had a mother, but she died, and left me,
Died prematurely in a day of horrors —
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces. 3

It was not until he cut out the stanza that he published the poem. The reason for this cutting out of the earlier stanza should be based on the memory of his mother's death rather than on the problem of his poetical techniques. I am sure the very motive of this poem is in the part being cut out.

Reading this poem again and again silently, I feel sadness coming all over my heart through the bottom of its soft tone. The refrain "All, all are gone..." succeeding one after another, the soft tone runs through from the first to the last stanza. In the last stanza, the repetition of the term "some" are matted over rather rapidly, and such expressions as "All are departed; All, all are gone," make a soft and calm current and run through my mind.

This poem could not be written without the tragedy between his mother and his sister Mary. I can understand it from the fact that the first stanza for his mother was cut out in its publication. The tragedy was too bloody in his memory to sublimate itself into a poem, or missing the first stanza of the original might be Lamb's strong feeling for his sister Mary. I am sure the presence or absence of the first stanza make the difference in depth of sorrow.

In the calm and sorrowful tone of Lamb's breathing, I can see one of the roots of his humour. I suppose it has a kind of clarity. Clarity bears the world having the view point of resignation.

About this poem J. L. May describes as follows: "I have never met any admirer of The Old Familiar Faces who was at all able to account for his partiality for that poem on grounds other than pathos, the sadness involved in recalling a past that can never return." 4

I agree with him. I think it is enough for my thesis to have the same opinion as May, because one of the aims of my thesis is to seek for the roots of Lamb's humour.

3 Ibid, p. 294
4 J. L. May, Charles Lamb, A Study, p. 185.
Here I must put aside the appreciation of the poem. The fact has to be borne in my mind that the poem has some important persons in it. They are his mother, his sister May, Lloyed and Coleridge. They have connections with various ways. Without them, I suppose, he might not bear his humour.

I must refer to an incident that happened to his family in 1796. It was a tragic drama between his mother and his sister. I am sure it became the main motive of the poem The Old Familiar Faces. His sister May (1764 – 1847) had a fit of insanity which led to her killing the mother with the knife. The incident was quite unhappy for the Lambs. Since then the life of Charles Lamb was completely changed. His sister was eleven years sinior to him, and helped the living of the family by cutting out and making up the clothes. Lamb himself wrote a letter to his friend Coleridge.

( P. M. 27th September 1796 )

My dearest friend-White or some of my friends or the public papers by this time many have informed you of this terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines. My poor dear dearest sister in a fit of insanity has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a mad house, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital.

God has preserved to me my senses, – I eat and drink and sleep, and have my judgement I believe very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris of the Blue coat school has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend, but thank God I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do, Write, – as religious a letter a possible-but no mention of what is gone and done with-with me the former things are passed away, and I have something more to do that ( than ) to feel –.

God almighty have us all in his keeping –. 5

And he proceeded to say to his friend: I charge you don’t think of coming to see me. Write, I will not see you if you come." I can hear his mounful breathing

from “I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do.” Lamb himself also was kept in Hoxton, a hospital for the disease of the mind, from the close of 1795 to the beginning of 1796. Mary had experiences to go to the hospital several times, and what is worse, she was ordinarily on bad terms with her own mother. It is said that her mother loved the eldest son John Lamb alone and did not try to understand her daughter. The cause of the matter was in the desperate state between the two.

In the night of September 21, 1796, the strange fit of insanity fell upon her, and she could not get well till the next morning. Lamb hurried in vain to the doctor, so he went to his office. In the evening of that day the terrible calamities happened. At that time Lamb was only twenty-one years old and Mary was thirty-two years old.

J. L. May said about the tragedy: “In a moment, the world, life itself had changed for Charles Lamb. The grim, invisible terror had swept through his abode and left an irremediable sorrow in its train. In that moment of unspeakable sorrow and anguish, he was born in a new and endless life.” It is clear that the unhappiness caused “the turning point” of Lamb. From that turning point, he must begin to walk toward the “new and endless life.” I can guess the matter had the effect upon his character, which was based on the calm and resigned mind. In this sense “his pathos and sadness” became a fire point to be solid in a number of regular forms of Elia’s essay. Lamb was born in a new and endless life and did for Mary through all his life.

In the essays of Lamb, Mary was put on as a cousin Bridget again and again, and in the letters to his friends, her literary ability was written about. In this connection, she was truly a genius. In 1807 she wrote part of comedies in Tales from Shakespeare, and in 1809 she, with her brother Charles Lamb, wrote many poems in The Poetry for Children.

Here is a poem included in The Blank Verse, whose title is Written on Christamas Day 1797.

I am a widow thing, now thou art gone!

Now thou art gone, my familiar friend,
Companion, sister, helpmate, councillor!
Alas! that honour'd mind, whose sweet reproof
And meekest wisdom in times past have smooth'd
The unfilial harshness of my foolish speech,
And made loving to my parents old,
( Why is that so, ah God! why is that so? )
That honour'd mind became a fearful blank,
Her senses lock'd up, and herself kept out
From human sight or converse, while so many
Of foolish sort are left to roam at large
Doing all acts of folly, and sin, and shame?
Thy paths are mystery!

Yet I will not think,
Sweet friend, but we shall one day meet, and live
In quietness, and die so, fearing God.
Or if not, and these false suggestions be
A fit of the weak nature, loth to part
With what it loved so long, and held so dear;
If thou art to be taken, and I left
( More sinning, yet unpunish'd save in thee. )
It is the will of God, and we are clay
In the potter's hands; and, at the worst, are made
From absolute nothing, vessels of disgrace,
Till, his most righteous purpose wrought in us,
Our purified spirits find their perfect rest.  

The poem was written while Mary was in hospital. He calls Mary his “familiar friend, Companion, sister, help-mate and counsellor.” He cries for God, “Why is that so, ah God! why is that so?” In deep sorrow, he made an appeal to the justice of God through the poem. His affection to his sister and his loneliness become

very clear to my mind. According to the note given by Lucas, "Mary Lamb, to whom these lines were addressed, after seeming to be on the road to perfect recovery, had suddenly had a relapse necessitating a return to confinement from the lodging in which her brother had placed her." 8

This poem was written in the dark state. It seemed to Lamb that she was apparently on the road to recovery, but suddenly turned to the worse, which circumstance drove her back again to the state of confinement. The prevailing tone of the poem is of sadness and loneliness of the poet, with his sister "gone." The misery which finds its desperate expression in "I am a widow thing, now thou art gone, is brought home directly to the readers. Since his childhood, Mary was an existence like his shadow. It proves that the first root of Lamb's humour was in Mary.

(2) Blindness

I am going to seek for another root of his humour in the following poem. Blindness is the poem which is in The Poetry for Children.

Blindness

In a stage-coach, where late I chanc'd to be,
A little quiet girl my notice caught;
I saw she look'd at nothing by the way,
Her mind seem'd busy on some childish thought.

I with an old man's courtesy adress'd
The child, and call'd her pretty dark-eyed maid,
And bid her turn those pretty eyes and see
The wide extended prospect. "Sir," she said

"I cannot see the prospect, I am blind."
Never did tongue of child utter a sound
So mournful, as her words fell on my ear.

Her mother related how she found
Her child was sightless. On a fine bright day
She saw her lay her needle work aside,
And, as on such occasions mothers will
for leaving off her work began to chide.

"I will do it when 'tis day-light, if you please ;
I cannot work, Mamma, now it is night."
The sun shone bright upon her when she spoke,
And yet her eyes receiv'd no ray of light.  

What a deep pathos it has! I need not look for the source of the material of this poem. Perhaps this is the motive taken from his usual life. The scene of the poem is composed by the talking of the three persons, Mother, her daughter and I, in a stage-coach running in the suburbs of London. In a prose-poem style containing usual conversations of townspeople, Lamb tried to put a spotlight slightly on the sadness of life. The poem has two dramatical inversions in itself. One is brought about when I, the writer, talked to a pretty dark-eyed maid to see the wide extended prospect outside, and the daughter answered “I can not see the prospect, I am blind.” The other happens when the daughter, laying aside her needle work, and without awareness of her being sightless, said to Mother, “I can not work, Mamma, it is night.” These inversions fit to the mechanism of humour, and lead us to the world of pathos and sadness. In the last stanza, the sun is shining on the pretty dark-eyed maid. He leaves the sun alone to explain all, that he means to say ; everything left to the sun, the poem comes to an end. The sun means the symbol of the comedy and tragedy being synthesized dialectically. The dialectical complex of this kind of tragedy-comedy is the core, at least to the present writer, of the poem. In this core lies the essence of his sense of humanity. The humanity revealed in the poem is soft and touching. The touching sensitibity is, of course, characteristic of the poet, but the attribute is to a great extent a universal one. The universality makes a vivid

impression upon the reader. In this kind of dual vision of things is the sense of humour given birth to. The dramatical technique is to be called good hand.

As for The Poetry for Children, Hazlitt, an essayist three years junior to Lamb, referred to it as follows: “This little book, of which a great deal too much has been made by accidental possessors and dilettanti, is really a very poor performance, as well as a palpable and weak imitation of similar child’s poetry by the Taylors and others.” Many will agree, it is true, with Hazlitt that the collection of verses named The Poetry for Children is a very poor performance, but the very existence of this particular poem Blindness alone entitles the book of verses to praise. It is generally known to the readers that Lamb spoke of the collection as his “task work”.

The world of real things is nothing but one of earning one’s living. Never to turn away from the business of living is another name for honest living. The honesty is indispensable to a man who is not rich enough to be content with the present state of affairs. This kind of man is Charles Lamb, who has to do his best to earn his daily life, with his potential invalid, his sister Mary. The sense of real things is reflected, to my mind, in this peculiar term “task work”. The term must not be taken for granted; the reader is to be expected to enter into the connotation of the significant usage of the word. He was bold enough to face the realities of his life. And he was prudent enough not to make things too serious. This sort of balanced sense is based on “thinking in fun while feeling in earnest”, as Priestly puts it. To this attitude is due humour. Humour, though it is buried deep, tends to make the poem ‘Blindness’ touching. The characteristic proves the quality of the poem, which turns out one of the best of his poems.

In London, there must have been so many people like Mother and her daughter in this poem, who were walking on the pavements with the heavy burdens on their backs. Those who were sightless might be coming and going there in the Metropolis. Lamb himself had a stiff leg and had trouble in talking clearly, and was not free to make free movement of his arms, in addition to these, he had an insane sister dependent upon him. He himself also had an experience of the mad house. The probabilities

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are heavy that he saw the image of himself in one of those figures who were walking about with their eyes blind. The sight induced the sympathy of the poet with those who were helpless. The sympathy finds its another expression in the touching paragraph which begins _The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers_. The passage runs as follows:

I like to meet a sweep—understand me—not a grown sweeper—old chimney sweepers are by no means attractive—but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek—such as come forth with the dawn, or somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the peep peep of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise? I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks—poor blot—innocent blackness—\footnote{E. V. Lucas, ed., _The Works_, Vol. 2, p. 108.}.

The feeling may be called one of his sympathies with the poor child chimney-sweepers. I suppose the sympathy for them is of the same quality as for a daughter in _Blindness_. I can say the soil of Lamb's pathos may be in the crowd of London. Now let him talk about himself.

_C_ I was born, as you have heard, in a crowd. This has begot in me an entire affection for that way of life, ... I have no hesitation in declaring, that a mob of happy faces crowding up at the pit door of Drury-lane 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.

This passion for crowd is no where feasted so full as in London. That man has a rare 'recipe' or melancholy, who can be dull in Fleet-Street. I am naturally inclined to hypochondria, but in London it vanishes, like all other ills. Often, when I have felt weariness or distaste at home, have I rashed out into her crowded strand, and fed my humour, till tears have wetted my cheek.
for unutterable sympathies with the multitudous moving picture, which she never fails to present at all hours, like the scenes of a shifting pantmime ... 12

This was put on The Morning Post in 1802. Lamb told us in the following passages that he liked "the very deformities", "the endless successions of shops", and above all "the very smoke of London". But I suppose what he liked best might be the figures of the people crowding on the pavements of the Strand. Lamb said, "I was born in a crowd", and he was a son of the City. Here I remember the popular song; "Watashi wa machi no ko, chimata no ko, mado ni akari ga tumoru koro ..." sung by a popular singer in Japan after the World War II. Lamb was not so popular, of course, but I feel in the bottom of the tone that the song has much the same as Lamb's affection to the streets in London. When he got tired of the burden of attending on his sister Mary, or he had something worrying about at home, he rushed out into the Strand, and sat down in the coffee house facing to the big street. Through the windows he saw a lot of people walking along the pavements. They were just the successions of shifting pantmimes. At the sight of pantmimes, his tears rolled down his cheeks for "unutterable sympathies with the multitudous moving picture." The main actors of the dramas were nameless numbers of the crowd. This was the way in which he "fed my humour". The very souce of his humour lay in the crowd of London.

The description of the then town is well given in a passage of the letter sent to his friend Manning.

Street, street, street, market, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat sempstresses, ladies cheapening, gentlemen behind counters lying, authors in the street with spectacles, Geoge Dyers (you may know them by their gait), lamps lit at night, pastry-cooks' and silver-smiths' drowsy cry of mechanic watch man at night, with bucks reeling home drunk; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of Fire and Stop thief; inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like Cambridge colleges; old book stalls, Jeremy Taylors,

The spectacles of the streets of the town are in good harmony with the movements of the mind of the writer. The harmony may well be called a kind of "London rhapsody". I have sought for the roots of Lamb from Blindness to crowd and crowd to the streets of London.

(3) The Fair-Hair'd Maid

According to Lucas, the following poem was written in the summer of 1795.

When last I roved these winding wood walks green,
Green winding walks, and shady pathways sweet,
Oft times would Anna seek the silent scene,
Shrouding her beauties in the lone retreat.
No more I hear her footsteps in the shade:
Her image only in these pleasant ways
Meets me self wandering, where in happier days
I held free converse with the fair-hair'd maid.
I passed the little cottage which she loved,
The cottage which did once my all contain;
I spake of days which ne'er must come again,
Spake to my heart, and much my heart was moved
Now fair befall thee, gentle maid! " said I,
And from the cottage turned me with a sigh.  

A girl named Anna in this sonnet is called a fair-hair'd maid. She, Ann Simmons, was the first love of Lamb. When she grew up, she married Londoner Mr. Bartram —— Bartrum in Dream Children —— who was a pawnbroker. Lamb made her acquaintance near the house of Blakesware, where his grandmother lived as a housekeeper. Here I will refer to the house of Blakesware.

"Mainly, however, were the boy's holidays passed with his grandmother Field, the old and trusted housekeeper of the Plumer family at Blakesware, in Hertfordshire: an ancient mansion, topped by many turrets, gables, carved chimneys, guarded all about by a solid red-brick wall and heavy iron gates. He was not allowed to go outside the grounds, and was content to wander over their trimly-kept terraces and about the tranquil park, wherein aged trees bent themselves in grotesque shapes. Beyond, he fancied that a dark lake stretched silently, striking terror to the lad's imagination." 15

It seems to me that visiting Blakesware was something like a fantasy in Lamb's boyhood. And I suppose his longing for a fair-hair'd maid was a proof of his dreamy boyhood. His grandmother died, and so did his mother on account of the fatal disaster due to her daughter's insanity. Unfortunately the circumstance prevented him from fostering his innocent love.

There is no denying that the poem is a very good one. The comparison of the poem with Hester whose main theme is on love will convince the reader that the former falls short of the latter. It is true there is no natural flow of feeling in this poem. No doubt the poem is lacking in something, but the poem has a value of its own. The value is that the fair-hair'd maid shows herself in another disguise as Alice W — n in both his essays, New Years Eve and Dream Children. No one can read the last part of Dream Children without bearing in mind the long lost love in the imagenary marriage with the maid. I will quote the last part of Dream Children.

Then I told how for seven long years in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W — n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens — when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of representment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew

fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mourning features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech; “We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethemillions of ages before we have existence and a name” — and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side — but John (or James Elia) was gone forever. 16

Pathos runs through the whole passage: in the dream the children said, “We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams ...”. Awaking from the dream, he found himself seated quietly in his bachelor arm-chair with no body beside him but his faithful sister Mary; before him, he could see no children.

Here I took up The Fair-Hair'd Maid as a poem having a relation with Dream Children. I suppose one of the roots of Lamb’s humour might be here, too. As other materials of this kind, I will have to study Hester, a famous poem, having a connection with A Quaker’s Meeting.

(4) Work

There is a poem published in the Examiner in 1819. The title of the poem is Work. It does not seem to deserve the name of a well wrought one, but it is very important in seeking for the root of Lamb’s humour.

Work (1819)
Who first invented work, and bound the free
And holiday-rejoicing spirit down
To the ever-haunting importunity
Of business in the green fields, and the town —

To plough, loom, anvil, spade —— and oh! most sad,
To that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood?
Who but the Being unblest, alien from good,
Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
Task ever plies 'mid rotatory burnings,
That round and round incalculably reel ——
For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel ——
In that red realm from which are no returnings:
Where toiling, and turmoiling, ever and aye
He, and his thoughts, keep pensive working-day. 17

I think the expression "desk's dead wood" strikes the reader as extraordinarily significant. The word "dead" of the phrase means the lifeless and heavy monotony of his work. The monotony of his work is reinforced by the repetition of the sound [d] in line 6. It was indeed a simple "unglad Task". Standing still in the somewhat dark room day after day, he battled on with the disgusting numbers on the counting paper. It was just a monotonous pattern of life. He had been working such an "unglad Task" in the East India House for more than thirty years. I feel his sadness and anguish coming through the poem. Here is his readiness to give the living life the superiority rather than any other thing. I suppose the consciousness is of much the same category as that of "a sense of real things" presented by Keats. The motive of this poem is in having much to do with his sense to real things. In the letter to Wordsworth in September, 1805, he gave a paradoxical praise of "Indolence" as follows: "Hang work! I wish that all the year were holidays. I am sure that Indolence indefeasible Indolence is the true state of man and business the invention of the Old Teazer who persuadeth Adam's Master to give him an apron and set him a-haunting, Pen and Ink and Clerks, and desks were the refinements of this old torturer a thousand years after ..." 18 As he desired to keep the literary activities, the work in the office proved to be a torture for him. Indeed he wishes that all the year were holidays. On the other hand he was a typical English man,

so life itself was to him the most important of all, and the life itself was heavier to him than literary works or political matters. For that reason, he could stand against "the desk's dead wood" as a poor clerk for long years.

The following material must be taken here. That is The Superannuated Man in The Last Essays of Elia. This essay was printed in The London Magazine in 1825. The essay is practically a record and fact. It begins as follows:

If peradventure, Reader, it has been thy lot to wast the golden years of thy life — thy shining youth — in the irksome confinement of an office; to have thy prison days prolonged through middle age down to decrepitude and silver hairs, without hope of release or respite; to have lived to forget that there are such things as holidays, or to remember them but as the prerogative of childhood; then, and then only, will you be able to appreciate my deliverance.

It is now six and thirty years since I took my seat at the desk in Mincing Lane. Melancholy was the transition at fourteen from the abundant play time, and the frequently intervening vacation of school days, to the eight, nine, and sometimes ten hours' a day attendance at a counting house. But time partially reconciles us to anything. I gradually became content-doggedly contented, as wild animals in the cages. 19

It was just the life as "doggedly contented as wild animals in the cages". He started his carrier as a clerk only when he was fourteen years old; three years later, from the South Sea Company he moved to the East India House, at the age of fifty-one he found himself to be a superannuated man. Meanwhile he kept on his family. When his sister Mary fell in a fit of insanity, he always brought her to the hospital. His neighbours saw them hurrying to the hospital, weeping together.

He began to express his essays about twenty years after the tragedy of 1796. No one could deny that the disaster gave him an alarming depression. Even if he said anything in fun or kept himself in a very pleasant way in public, those who knew him could not fail to see what he was thinking about.

One day in January, 1823, Lamb received a letter from his friend Barton, who had long been meditating upon the advisability of giving up his place in the bank and of depending upon his pen. Surprised at the irrationality of the plan, Lamb all at once wrote to him in answer, saying that the young friend did not know what would become such kind of thoughtless decision. The protest made to the young man's decision by Lamb goes on as follows:

Throw yourself rather, my dear Sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you had but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the Book sellers. They are Turks and Tartars, when they have poor Authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arms length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors for bread, some repining, others envying the blessed security of a Counting House, all agreeing they had rather have been Taylors, Weavers, what not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a work house. You know not what a rapacious, dishonest set these book-sellers are. Ask even Southey who ( a single case almost ) has made a fortune by book drudgery, what he has found them. O you know not, may you ever know! the miseries of subsisting by author-ship. 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine, but a slavery worse than all slavery to be a book seller's dependent, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious Task-Work. Those fellows hate us. The reason I take to be, that, contrary to other trade in which the Master gets all the credit ( a jeweller or silversmith for instance ), and the Journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the background : in our work the world gives all the credit to Us, whom they consider as their Journeymen, and therefore do they hate us and opress Us, and would ring the blood of us out, to put another six pence in their mechanic pouches. I contend, that a Bookseller has a relative honesty towards Authors, not like his honesty to the rest of the world. B ( aldwin ) who first engaged me as Elia, has not paid me up yet ( nor any of us without repeated mortifying applials ), yet how the Knave
fawned while I was of service to him! Yet I dare say the fellow is punctual in settling his milk score, &c. Keep to your Bank, and the Bank will keep you. Trust not to the Public, you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leaden hall, good B. B., in the Banking Office; what, is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time if you could think so? Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. Of the corroding torturing tomenting thoughts that disturb the Brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance. Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment, look upon them as Lover's quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of a desk, that makes me live. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious. If you can send me Fox, I will not keep it six weeks, and will return it, without bolt or dog's ear. You much oblige me by this kindness. 20

Bernard Barton was a man of Bank, a young friend of Lamb's and one of the contributors to the London Magazine. Much attention is to be paid to the way of life which is characteristic of a realist. Can anyone but a robust realist use such kind of expressions as "Keep to your Bank, and the Bank will keep you," or "Welcome, dead timber of a desk, that makes me live"? In the letter we have other interesting expressions as follows: "a Bookseller has a relative honesty towards Authors, not like his honesty to the rest of the world," and "Those fellows hate us. The reason I take to be, that contrary to other trades in which the Master gets all the credit, ... in our work the world gives all the credit to us." These pointed remarks on the relation between Booksellers and Authors can be allowed only to a realist. It is sure Lamb has eyes of realist and the base of these expressions lies in practical way of thought. These expressions seem to me to be the accounts with rings of actuality. They are quite suggestive of his sense of real things. Without the certainty

of recognition of the real things, Lamb's humour and also his Elia could not come into existence. To say from another angle, in the root of English humour, the Englishman has such a real and practical way of thought.

The Englishman, especially in the case of Charles Lamb, having the sharp sense of real things, succeeds in overcoming the difficulties before him with his sense of humour. Humour finds its full expression in the process of his overcoming the real difficulties. R. Fukuhara says that English humour is somewhat similar to Japanese trick-comedy "Kyogen" and has a heart string feeling which is penetrative to our minds. "To a short cut hair'd man, God changes up the wind" is a French proverb. As for the epigram, an Englishman named Lamb translated it into "To a short cut hair'd lamb, God changes up the wind." Shivering with cold, a poor clerk who had a name of lamb punned "Go—God chan—changes up the—the wind to a sh—sh—short cut hair'd lamb." Since then the epigram has appeared on the literary stage. His pathos can be seen here. It is the expression of half crying and half smiling, which leads us to the world of "thinking in fun while feeling in earnest" as Priestly put it. In this way, he can eat his poor meals warmly, even if it is severely cold in the evening and the winter wind blows hard outside. By means of the trick, he managed to make his poor meals gorgeous. I think his pathos in this episode shows us one of the typical types of English humour.

(5) Composed at Midnight

Composed at Midnight
From broken vision of perturbed rest
I wake, and start, and fear to sleep again.
How total a privation of all sounds,
Sights, and familiar objects, man, bird, beast,
Herb, tree, or flower, and prodigal light of heaven
'T were some relief to catch the drowsy cry
Of the mechanic watchman, or the noise
Of revel reeling home from midnight cups.
Those are the moaning of the dying man,
Who lies in the upper chamber; restless moans,
And interrupted only by a cough
Consumptive, torturing the wasted lungs.
So in the bitterness of death he lies,
And waits in anguish for the morning light.
What can that do for him, or what restore?
Short taste, faint sense, affecting notices,
And little images of pleasures past,
Of health, and active life, a good name, sold
For sin's black wages.  
Blessed be God,
The measure of judgment is not fixed
By man's erroneous standard. He descerns
No such inordinate difference and vast
Betwist the sinner and the saint, to doom
Such disproportion'd fates. Compared with him,
No man on earth is holly called: they best
Stand in his sight approved, who at his feet
Their little crowns of virtue cast, and yield
To him of his own works the praise, his due.21

In the beginning half of the poem composed about in 1797, he, waking at midnight "From broken vision," heard "the drowsy cry Of the mechanic watchman" or "the noise Of revel reeling home from midnight cups," or "the moaning of the dying man" from the upper chamber. These lines point to the sadness of the word, the weakness of man, and also the foolishness of man. In the latter half, "The measure of judgment is not fixed By man's erroneous standard." From the view of God, "No man on earth is holly called." Here the sinner is on a level with the saint. Here in this poem lies the essence of Lamb's humour. It is not an exaggeration to say that the essence is nothing more and nothing less than the archetype of his philosophic mind.

The thought that both a sinner and a saint are on the same level might be

due to his shocking experience which he suffered at his dying mother’s bedside in 1796. It must be the thought that a sinner in the eyes of God does not have the reason to blame a sinner such as his sister Mary. This sort of thinking is reflected in the following wisdom: “I cannot hate anyone whom I have once seen.” Another good example of this wisdom is to be found in his essay, All Fools’ Day, which draws to a close with the following passage: “… I will confess a truth to thee, reader. I love a Fool — as naturally, as if I were of kith and kin to him.” 22 This wisdom becomes a gentle heart whose eyes are open to the weaknesses of man and are ready to “feel them in earnest” and to forgive them.

(6) Conclusion

The starting point of this chapter was the drama which was played by his mother and sister on the stage of Lamb’s life. Bearing in mind the drama, I have sought for the sources of his humour. My effort extends from Blindness to the crowd in London and to Work, and the last goal was the poem, Composed at Midnight. Now I can divide his ground of humour into two phases; one is to put a spotlight on the weakness and foolishness of man, the other is the strong will to fight with various real things in order to live on. These two currents were mixed and mingled each other into his humour. Therefore we always see “pathos and sadness” in the bottom of his humour. Pun is alien to his humour. In the face of the sadness and anguish of the world, his sense of humour helped him to overcome the difficulties in which he found himself.

It is often said that Lamb had an adherence to, and looked back to nothing but his past, but I think he fought with the real things and went on with his life.

I shall have to see what is the relationship of Lamb with his friends such as Coleridge and Wordsworth, and further, the study of the relationship will extend to the comparison with the humour in Shakespeare or Dickens. In this light the qualities of humour in Lamb and the English character in its relation will be more amply illustrated.

Chapter III Essence of English Humour

One is often inclined to say as a good advice that to see things as they are is to lead a wise life. One knows that Matthew Arnold in one of his essays spoke of the main effort of the intellect of Europe as that of "seeing the object as in itself it really is." It is true that the seeing of things as they are is theoretically a wisdom of life; but is it possible for us to remain neutral to the challenge of the things around us? No one can be absolutely free from something tinged with his own temperament. Something of his temperament never fails to enter into what he does and says. What may be the case with an individual may be said of a country. And moreover, however different in character one individual may be from another, the individuals grouped together as a nation, must necessarily form a general characteristic of a nation. In this way the national temperament can be defined as a whole.

Then, what is the definition of the national character of the English? Answers to the question may be given from various angles; but what most strikes foreigners is the quality which may be called a sense of humour. On this sense of humour foreign observers agree with one another when they talk about what the most distinguished quality of the Englishman is. I have observed in the first part of this paper that Englishman's sense of humour is characteristically based on his sense of real things. What I call the sense of real things may sound vague and ambiguous, but it may be well explained when it is translated into another expression of the sense of "actual experience." Professor Tsukano reminds us of this aspect of the English character in terms of his reference to the definition given by Ifor Evans. Ifor Evans in his English Literature: Values and Traditions, regards "the faith in the individual life" as the most permanent and secure element in the Englishman's unwritten spiritual creed, and then comes to this conclusion:

Given a human situation the Englishman sees clearly, and if that human

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situation can be solved in human terms he will deal with it successfully. If, however, the human situation has to be translated into abstract terms or arouses fundamental considerations, he is apt to become distrustful.\(^3\)

That by "fundamental considerations" he means to refer to abstract and intellectual ways of thought, is clearly shown by the following passage:

The English have not as a nation been attracted to abstract thought; they have preferred to review life in the terms of actual experience. The greatest mind of the age which produced the Authorized Version was that of Francis Bacon, and it is interesting to speculate why in his own country he has never had the reputation which his genius deserved. It may be that he has suffered because many of his most notable works were in Latin, but enough remains in English to show that the modern world in its philosophical and scientific thought originates more in his works than in that of any other single mind. Further, he was the master of a prose style, coloured, imaginative and compact. In an age when much of our prose was uncertain even when brilliant, he showed a disciplined mind in control. May it not be due to the fact that the English judge greatness by personality rather than by any qualities of pure intellect?\(^4\)

Evan's insistence on the theory of the English characteristic "faith in the individual life" leads to his conclusion that the Englishman prefers to "review life empirically in the terms of actual experience," not in the terms of "pure intellect." The essence of the Englishman's preference lies in "personality" and not in "pure intellect." A man of personality prefers to "review life empirically in the terms of actual experience." This is why I have said the Englishman's sense of humour is primarily based on his sense of real things. A man with this preference is therefore a man with his sense of humour.

I have said that the sense of humour enables us to "review life empirically in the terms of actual experience." To review life in this way is an attribute of detach-

\(^3\) Ibid., p.80.
\(^4\) Ifor Evans, p.78.
ment. To detach oneself from anything in which one finds himself involved is to see it objectively. This attitude may appear very cold at first glance and at the very moment; and of this apparently cold attitude the English have long been accused; foreign observers are often apt to bring against the Englishman a heavy charge of coldness, which one might almost name difference, to the things or the other men that have no direct connection with him. The truth is that, below the upper crust which may appear cold at first glance, lies a wise detachment which may justly be called the sense of humour. The sense of humour is an instrument by means of which one gets oneself out of self-centered sentimentalism. Sentimentalism is one of the things which the Englishman most dislike, and which have nothing to do with a man whose concern is to "see life empirically in the terms of actual experience." The Englishman's dislike for sentimentalism is closely allied to "his inveterate habit of understatement." This is well described by Philip Carr as follows:

... humour is closely allied to another of the inherent characteristics of the Englishman, his inveterate habit of understatement, which must not be confused with irony, for it is something very different. In moments of crisis it gives him the quiet courage without a smile but with the mere suggestion of one at the corners of the mouth ---- It comes out in the grocer who is not content to announce that his shop, of which the front has been bombed, will carry on "business as usual," but puts up "more open than usual." ------ In ordinary times understatement is not only a form of the Englishman's humour which is sometimes irritating to those who are not accustomed to it, but is often, for himself, a safety value which enables him to keep his temper. 5

As to the definition of the term humour, NED gives us a well-defined one: after giving to it the meaning "that quality of action, speech, or writing, which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comically fun. The faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject," the dictionary

concludes with the assertion that humour is

Distinguished from wit as being less purely intellectual, as having a sympathetic quality in virtue of which it often becomes allied pathos.

Here we remember Evans claiming that “the English judge greatness by personality rather than by any qualities of pure intellect.” “Pure intellect” has nothing to do with humour, because the latter is “sympathetic” and “allied to pathos.” Sympathy and pathos indeed are allied to each other.

Sympathy is another name for love. Love is, in the true sense of the word, the capacity to put oneself into another’s place. A man who is capable of love identifies himself with others; this is what P.B. Shelley teaches us in his ‘A Defence of Poetry’:

The greatest secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature and identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own.  

A man to whom “the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own,” is a man who “can feed this mind of ours / In a wise passiveness,” as William Wordsworth put it in his lovely lyric ‘Expostulation and Reply’. The basis of the sense of humour is on love, whether we may call it “a wise passiveness” or “a going out of our own nature and identification of ourselves with … many others.” Such a man never allows himself to look down upon those who are physically or morally handicapped, nor does he envy those who are rich enough not to realize what unhappiness is. It is because he knows that, however hard one pretends to be more than what one is, such a pretentious effort may in the end turn out fruitless; and

that, however poor one may find himself, the poverty never discourages him. He knows the wisdom contained in the proverb which goes "It takes all sorts to make a world." A man who has realized this truth, finds that the world in which one lives is a good place to live in. To this sort of man, everything can become an object of his love.

This is the reason why, while Lamb did his utmost to give us a number of fools like pictures in a gallery, in one of his well-known essays titled All Fools' Day, he could not help addressing his readers "Do not we know one another? what need of ceremony among friends? we have all a touch of that same — you understand me — a speck of the moltley," and whispering to them in this way:

... in sober verity I will confess a truth to thee, reader. I love a Fool — as naturally, as if I were of kith and kin to him. 8

A man who can say in this way must have come to learn that there is something of a fool even in himself, and that he can never laugh at those who are commonly called fools. It is not a fool who can acknowledge and confess that he himself is among fools; this is a great truth. This wise "fool" is a kind of magician who is able and ready at any time to put things into their proper place. The things which are put into their proper place, are worthy of their existence. To accept things in this way enables us to "think in fun and feel in earnest," which is the essence of humour, especially English humour as is well shown in the works of Charles Lamb. "To think in fun and feel in earnest" and to accept things with sympathy and pathos, is an attribute of a man whose sense of humour helps to "review life empirically in the terms of actual experience," and in the end to penetrate the depth of something which underlies the surface of our mortal life. It is then that our life, however tragic it may sometimes appear, proves to be a thing to rejoice at. This is the lesson that we learn from Charles Lamb.

APPENDIX

- Selected samples of teaching materials for humour in Junior High Schools.

(1) **New Prince Reader**, published by Kairyu-Do.

(Text of Shōwa 53)

1. A young man was sitting in a bus one morning. An old lady got on the bus and stood in front of him. The young man stood up. The lady pushed him back into his seat and said, "Don't stand up. I don't want to sit down."

   The man stood up once again. The lady pushed him down again and said, "You don't have to give me your seat. I like to stand." The man tried to stand up for the third time. The lady tried to push him down again.

   The man shouted, "Don't push me, please! I have to get off the bus!"

2. Little Jack saw a tadpole for the first time. "Mother," he said. "What's this?" "It's a tadpole," said his mother. "A tadpole becomes a frog." "Is that right?" "Look at that caterpillar," said his mother. "That kind of caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly."

   Jack looked at his beautiful mother for a minute. Then he asked, "What were you years ago, Mother?"

3. A: Do you want to be a member of our club? Then you must answer this question. I cut a piece of beefsteak in two. And I cut each piece in two again. How many pieces do I get?

   B: Four pieces.

   A: Good! I cut each piece in two again. How many do I get?

   B: Eight pieces.

   A: Good! And once more?

   B: Sixteen.

   A: And once more, and once more?

   B: I don't know. But we call it hamburger.

   A: Very good. We'll make you a member of our club.
4. An old lady comes to a hotel by the sea and asks the man at the front desk.
Lady: Do you think this is a good place for health?
Man: Yes. Our doctor says that this is the best place for health.
L: I like the south wind.
M: The wind always comes from the south here.
L: But the wind is coming from the north now.
M: Well, the south wind is on its way back to the south today. It will come from the south tomorrow.

5. After many rainy days, a telephone at the police station started ringing late one night. A man's voice said, "I am standing in three feet of water. Please come and help me!" "What's the matter?" asked the policeman. "Are you taking a bath?" "No!" cried the man. "It's a flood! Now the water is coming up higher and higher!" "Well," said the policeman, "three feet of water is not very deep. Why don't you walk away? "You don't know where I am," said the man. "I'm calling from upstairs!"

6. A barber put a large sign at the entrance of his shop.

WHAT DO YOU THINK I'LL CUT YOUR HAIR FOR NOTHING AND GIVE YOU A DRINK

A man saw this. He said to himself, "I wonder what it means." Then he went into the shop. When the barber finished cutting the man's hair, the man asked him for a free drink. "What!" shouted the barber. "Do you think I'll cut your hair for nothing and give you a drink?"

7. A man was going home from Oakland to Los Angeles by train. He told his wife on the telephone to meet him at the station.
The train stopped many times on the way. So he did not know when his train would reach Los Angeles. When it arrived at last, it was five hours behind time. He looked for his wife but could not find her. He put his head into the office and shouted, "Why so much delay! What's the use of time schedule?"
"Sorry, sir," said one of the men in the office, "but it's quite useful. If you don't have the time schedule, you don't know anything about the delay."

8. Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President of the United States, was famous as a man of few words. He knew when he should talk and when he should not.

It was very hard for anyone to enjoy talking with him. One evening he was invited to dinner. A lady sitting next to him passed the sugar for his coffee.

"Mr. President," she said. "Today a friend of mine said that I couldn't get more than two words out of you. I said I could. We made a bet."

"You lose," answered the President.


1. (Text of Showa 53)

A Present For You

Only one dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. Della became sad. The next day was Christmas Day. It was snowing outside. Della wanted to buy a present for Jim. But she did not have enough money. "I'll have to sell something," she said to herself. "But is there anything to sell?"

Della stood before the mirror. She looked at herself in the mirror. She thought she looked very tired. She saw her own hair. Her rich hair was her only treasure.

"That's a good idea!" she said. Della went to a shop. "I want to sell my hair," she said. "Would you please buy it?" "Of course," answered the woman in the shop. "It's very pretty, isn't it? I'll pay twenty dollars for beautiful hair like that." Then Della went to a store and bought a watch chain. "Jim's gold watch will look nice on this chain," she thought. She paid twenty-one dollars for it.

When Jim married Della, he said, "This watch was given me by my father many years ago." The watch was now his only treasure, but he did not have a chain for it.

It grew dark, and soon Jim came back. He was knocking the snow off his coat, but suddenly he stopped. He was surprised to see Della's short hair.
“What have you done with your hair?” he cried.

“I’ve sold it,” said Della.

Jim took out a small box from one of his coat pockets, and put it on the table. Della opened it and saw a set of pretty combs in it. “This is a Christmas present for you.” “Oh, Jim!” cried Della.

They were both silent for a while. At last Della smiled and said, “You don’t mind, do you? My hair will soon grow long again. I’ll also bought a Christmas present for you. Merry Christmas!”

She took out the watch chain from her bag, and handed it to Jim. “I sold my hair to buy this,” she said. “Your watch will look nicer on this chain.”

“Oh, Della,” said Jim. “But I sold my watch to buy your combs.

2. ( Text of Showa 56 )

A Pot Of Poison

This is a story about a priest. The priest had many treasures, and among them there was one thing he treasured most of all. It was a pot. One day he had to go away for a day or two. He told his two pupils to come and see him.

“You see that pot over there in my room,” he said. “You mustn’t touch it because it’ll break easily. A little wind coming through the window may break it. So shut all the doors and windows. I want you to watch it for me from outside the room.”

“What’s in the pot, Master?” asked the pupils.

“It’s full of poison,” said the priest.

Chin : I’ve watched the pot for two hours. Now it’s your turn, Kan.

Kan : All right. But I wonder what’s in it.

Chin : Master said it was full of poison.

Kan : I know. But does he have so much poison?

Chin : I don’t know.

Kan : I wonder who gave it to him.

Kan : I must look at the poison. I feel I can’t stop myself.

( Kan opens the shoji and goes up to the pot. )

Chin : Be careful, Kan.
(Chin watches Kan. Kan opens the pot and looks in.)

Kan: It's something brown. I'll eat some.
Chin: Stop it! It's poison! You'll die.
Kan: Don't tell me to stop. Oh, it's delicious.
Chin: You'll die!
Kan: No, I won't. I wander where Master got this.
Chin: This is not poison.
Kan: What is it?
Chin: Stop it!
Kan: Don't tell me to stop. Oh, it's delicious.
Chin: You'll die!

(They eat all the sugar)

Kan: We've eaten all the sugar.
Chin: Master will be angry.
Kan: Do you know when he will come back?
Chin: This afternoon, perhaps.
Kan: There is no time to lose. We'd better break his treasured vase.
Chin: Do you think so?

The pupils broke the priest's vase and waited for him. The priest came back. He saw no one in front of his room. He rushed in. "Oh," he cried, "it's all gone!"

The pupils went up to the priest. "I told you to watch my sugar, didn't I?" said the priest. "Where is my sugar?" "Sugar?" said Chin. "It was poison, wasn't it? I broke your treasured vase," said Kan. "I didn't know how to repair it. I didn't know what to do. I thought I should kill myself, so I took all the poison that was in the pot."

3. (Text of Showa 56)

Humour

Life is full of trouble. It is sometimes very difficult to get over trouble. How do you get over trouble when it comes? A sense of humour will help you.

The British people were fighting against Germany. London was bombed by
German planes a number of times. One day a big store was bombed and half knocked down. The next morning a notice was put up on the entrance. It said, "More open than usual."

This is wonderful, isn't it? In those days they were having a difficult time. You may think they had no time for jokes. Their sense of humour helped to make them strong people. It gave them courage to fight on.

All these examples may be enough for a kind of mental rest, but serious attention should be paid to whether or not they are suitable for the materials arranged for the purpose of the understanding of foreign cultures, especially in the case of English and American culture, and its background.
# CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>Charles Lamb born at 2 Crown Office Row, the Temple.</td>
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<td>1782</td>
<td>Enters Christ's Hospital.</td>
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<td>1789</td>
<td>Leaves Christ's Hospital.</td>
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<td>1791</td>
<td>Appointed to clerkship in the South Sea House.</td>
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<td>1792</td>
<td>Leaves the South Sea House.</td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Coleridge in London, meeting Lamb nightly.</td>
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<td>1795</td>
<td>Southey meets Lamb.</td>
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<td>1794–5</td>
<td>Lamb’s youthful passion for Ann Simmons.</td>
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<td>1795</td>
<td>Lamb spends six weeks in a madhouse.</td>
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<td>1796</td>
<td>Publishes four sonnets in volume of Poem by S. T. Coleridge.</td>
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<td>1797</td>
<td>Aunt Hetty buried.</td>
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<td>1798</td>
<td>Lamb writes Rosamund Gray.</td>
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<td>1799</td>
<td>Death of Lamb’s father.</td>
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<td>1802</td>
<td>Publishes John Woodvil.</td>
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<td>1806</td>
<td>The Farce Mr. H — accepted for Drury Lane.</td>
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<td>1806</td>
<td>Mr. H — fails the first night.</td>
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<td>1807</td>
<td>Tales from Shakespeare (with Mary Lamb) published.</td>
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<td>1808</td>
<td>Specimens of English Dramatic Poets and Adventures of Ulysses published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Poetry for Children (with Mary Lamb) and Mrs. Leicester’s School (with Mary Lamb) published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Lamb proposes unsuccessfully to Fanny Kelly, the actress.</td>
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<td>1820</td>
<td>Lamb begins to contribute the Essay of Elia to the London Magazine.</td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Death of John Lamb, his elder brother.</td>
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<td>1823</td>
<td>Essays of Elia published.</td>
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1825 : Retires from the East India House on pension.
1833 : Last Essays of Elia published
 "  : Emma Isola married to Edward Moxon.
1834 : Death of Coleridge
 "  : Lamb dies of erysipelas after a fall, aged 59 years 10 months.
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## ERRATA

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ABSTRACT

Title: A STUDY OF ENGLISH HUMOUR IN CHARLES LAMB

1981

Student number: 80238

Name: Michinori MORISHITA

Hyogo University of Teacher Education
ABSTRACT

First I have to approach some of the conceptions of humour. According to Thomas Carlyle, humour is taken to be a special kind of delicacy which "springs not more from the head than from the heart—its essence is love; it issues not in laughter but in silent smiles which lie far deeper." John Boynton Priestley has defined humour in this way: "Humour has well been defined as thinking in fun while feeling in earnest." Louis Cazamian is of the opinion that the characteristics of humour consist in the duality of intent; and as the conditions of humour, he goes on to say, it a man is in need of both the "shrewdness" that perceives the dual paradoxes of experience and the "agility" with which one is allowed to think on two different planes. The two different planes mean the two things which contradict each other as comedy and tragedy. It seems to me that they are dialectically synthesized into the upper plane which is called the world of humour. Short the English humour is contrary to the French humour which is more intellectual, and it carries humane feelings with it.

The humane feelings are shown in what is called "pathos" as revealed in the works of Charles Lamb.

The best approach to the core of Lamb's sense of humour seems...
me to be in terms of his essays, and the alternative one to the subject is to start with some poems among his pre-Elian works. There may well be a deep relation between his essays and his poems.

The first poem among them is The Old Familiar Faces. The most important thing in the poem is that the first stanza of the original was cut out in its publication. The reason should be seen on the memory of his mother's death. No one can deny that a calamity caused his "turning point." In the calm and sorrowful tone of Lamb's breathing in this poem, we can see the first dot of his humour.

The second root of Lamb's humour can be found in Blindness. It puts a spotlight on the sadness of life. The poem has two dramatic inversions in itself; one happens when he talked to a pretty eyed maid to see the prospect from the stage coach, and the maid answered "I cannot see the prospect, I am blind." The other happens when the daughter who laid her needle work aside, thought any awareness of her being sightless said to her mother, "cannot work, Mamma, it is night." These inversions fit in the chanism of humour, and lead us to the world of pathos and sadness.

In London there were so many people walking on the pavements with the heavy burdens on their backs. Lamb himself had a stiff gait and had some trouble in talking clearly; and what is worse, he had an insane sister. When he was tired of the treatment of a sister, he rushed out into the Strand and saw a lot of people
alking along the street through the windows of a coffee house. \n\ny were just a succession of shifting pantomimes; and his eyes \nwere wetting his cheeks in sympathy with the multitudinous pic- \nare. This was the way to feed his own humour. \nThe next poem is Work. The term "dead" in "desk's dead wood" \nthe poem means the dark and heavy mood of his work. The mo- \nive of the poem was from having much to do with his sense of \nral things. The Englishman might have such a real and practical \ny of life, and especially in the case of Lamb, having a sharp \nse of real things, he can get over the difficulties before his \nsuppose the third root of his humour is in the poem entitled \nposed at Midnight. In the beginning of the poem, he gives a \escription of the weakness of man and the foolishness of the \rld; and in the latter half he sings as follows: "no man on \rth is holly called," and both of the sinner and the saint are \na level from the view of God. Here is the archetype of his \nosophy. \nI can divide the ground of his humour into two phases: one is \nput a spotlight on the weakness and foolishness of man, and \ne other is the strong will to fight against a variety of real \nings to go on with his life. These two currents are mixed and \ngled with each other into his humour. \nThe essence of the Englishman's preference lies in "personality
not in "pure intellect" as Ifor Evans puts it. A man of personality prefers to "review life empirically in the terms of actual experience." This is why I have said the Englishman's sense of humour is primarily based on his sense of real things. To review life in this way is an attribute of detachment. This attitude may appear very cold at first glance. The truth is that, low the upper crust which may appear cold at first glance, lies a wise attitude of detachment which may justly be called the sense of humour. The sense of humour is an instrument by means of which one can get oneself out of self-centered sentimentalism. Here we remember Evans claiming that "the English judge greatness by personality rather than by any qualities of pure intellect." "Pure intellect" has nothing to do with humour, because the latter is "empathetic" and "allied to pathos." Sympathy is another name for love. The basis of the sense of humour is on love indeed. We call it "a wise passiveness" or "a going out of our own nature and identification of ourselves with...many others." To accept things with sympathy and pathos and "to think in fun while feel earnest" is an attribute of a man whose sense of humour helps "review life empirically in the terms of actual experience." It is then that our life, however tragic it may sometimes appear, does to be a thing to rejoice at. This is the lesson I learn from Charles Lamb.