

From 'long-back'd' to 'long-roof'd' :
Wordsworth's Later Modification in The Prelude
(In Honour of Professor Fumio Miyahara On the
Occasion of His Retirement)

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*From “long-back’d” to “long-roof’d”
– Wordsworth’s Later Modification in The Prelude*

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The Book Third of *The Prelude* deals with Wordsworth’s college life in Cambridge. As he writes, he arrived in Cambridge in a chaise that came through the plains of Huntingdon. It means that he entered Cambridge from the north west of the town by way of Huntingdon Road as the road is today called. He writes that he ‘drove beneath the castle, down By Magdalene Bridge’...and cross’d the Cam,...’ (It happens that this particular area is quite familiar to the writer of this paper.) There is practically only one big road that comes into Cambridge from the north west side of the town and it leads to the street called Castle Street which lies ‘beneath the castle’. The castle site still remains from the time of William the Conqueror. William was in Cambridge in 1068 only two years after the conquest of England. It is only about a quarter of a mile distance from the Castle to Magdalene Street where the bridge is to cross over the Cam river.

Now, as Wordsworth writes, the first thing he saw in approaching Cambridge was King’s College Chapel which seemed to have been dominant over the Cambridge sky with its turrets and pinnacles.

The writer’s argument in this paper is focused on the different ways in which the poet described the chapel in the two editions of *The Prelude*. In the 1805 edition of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth writes ‘long-back’d chapel of King’s College’, whereas he later modifies it to ‘long-roof’d chapel of King’s College’ as shown in the 1850 edition edited by E. de Selincourt.

It may appear that this is only a matter of textual difference, but the

writer's interest lies in the apodictical logic rather than textual. His concern is to find out the inevitable factors on the part of the poet that eventually led him to the above-mentioned modification. The fact is that as the poet admits himself, there was a time when he was willingly led by his 'wilful fancy'. The writer of this paper presumes that it was in one of those moments that Wordsworth first described the chapel as a young man full of hope and enthusiasm for his new life at Cambridge that was shortly to begin. His modification about the description of the chapel seems undoubtedly the result of his growth as a man as well as a poet. But in between so many factors come in and these must be considered to make this kind of study logically convincing.

This paper is a preliminary piece of work that should lead to some further study on the characteristic features of Wordsworth's imaginative creativity such as his seemingly invented poetic dictions, like the word 'hang'.