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LAMB AND FOOD *The thirteenth annual Ernest Crowsley Memorial Lecture, given to the Society by Professor J.R. Watson on 7 December 1985*

Any reader of Charles Lamb cannot fail to notice that he is very interested in food. His childhood reading included a cookery book, and as Fred V. Randel has noted in his chapter on eating and drinking in *The World of Elia*, specific foods mentioned in the *Elia* volumes include

muffin, cold mutton, punch, pies, the juices of meats and fishes, wine, beer, gooseberry, port, woodcocks, dotterels, cod's heads, French beans, lobster boiled, eels, fattened calf, nectarines, peaches, oranges, grapes, Saloop, sausages, hot meat and vegetables, butter, turbot, claret, soup, Madeira, pudding, salads, biscuits, broths, cordials, ale, roast fowl, salt, Cognac, water, beef, turkeys, custard, pancakes, cold fowl, tongues, hams, botargoes, dried fruits, tea, caudle, cold lamb, hare, grouse, Canterbury brawn, bread and cheese with an onion, cabbage, potatoes, a leg of a goat, a horse's shoulder, pork, veal, Sherry, Malaga, and honey. (1)

In addition to this, Randel observes that there are many instances of language concerned with nourishing and tasting. And if Ruskin's habitual metaphor for the processes of the mind was that of seeing, (2) Lamb's was that of eating. We find him saying, of Quakers, that 'I should starve at their primitive banquet' ('Imperfect Sympathies'), and describing himself (in 'Oxford in the Vacation') as one 'who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution'. In 'The Old Margate Hoy' he speaks of the fragrance of summer days and youthful times, 'bequeathing nothing but their remembrance for cold and wintry hours to chew upon'. In 'Blakesmoor in H-----shire' he describes the habit of visiting country churches, where the visitor can 'drink in the tranquillity of the place'. These images seem to come naturally, and perhaps unconsciously; at other times there are apparently conscious uses of food imagery, as when in 'A Chapter on Ears', Lamb describes 'those insufferable concertos' as worse than piling 'honey upon sugar, and sugar upon honey, to an interminable tedious sweetness'; or in 'New Year's Eve', Charles Cotton's verses 'fortify

like a cordial; enlarging the heart, and productive of sweet blood and generous spirits, in the concoction'. Coleridge's book-borrowing is described in 'The Two Races of Men' thus: 'you are sure that he will make one hearty meal on your viands, even if he can give no account of the platter after it'.

There are many other examples, and Fred V. Randel has studied the whole subject. His theory is a psychological one - that Lamb associated nourishment with maternity, and that in his work ingestion becomes a model for coping with the external world. I find all this very interesting, if I understand it correctly, but I should make clear at once that it is not related to the purpose of the present lecture. I mean no disrespect to Professor Randel and his stimulating book if I say that I find the psychological approach fascinating but ultimately something of a dead end. We can all appreciate that there are hidden motives for Lamb's obsession with food, and his language about it, just as there are unconscious motives for our own reactions to food, sex, work, and other people. What interests me, in other words, is not the psychological importance of food in Lamb's work so much as the way in which he *uses* food in his writings, and how that affects our sense of him and his work.

I begin with a simple but (to me) important point. The presence of food in Lamb's work is one of those examples of something that Rachel Trickett emphasised so movingly in her address to this society at Highgate last May - Lamb's interest in the goings-on of common life, the ordinary things that make up our day-to-day existence. Lamb's attitude to food is like that of Dr. Johnson, who, you will remember, condemned people who 'have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat'.(3) Lamb, equally, would have thought it false and affected to pretend not to be interested in food, and so he very properly makes no effort to hide the fact that he *is*. After a long cold journey to Cambridge, for example, it is natural to look forward to 'Muffins and Coffee upon Table', and it would be silly to pretend otherwise.(4) Part of the pleasure of walking in the country (in 'Old China') is the little hand-basket with its cold lamb and salad; he looks forward to dinner with the Morgans on a Sunday at Hammersmith,(5) and to the annual feast of the East India House clerks;(6) when Coleridge goes to Germany he is, according to Lamb's wishes, to see Schiller, '& sit upon a Tun, & eat fat hams of Westphalia'.(7) People, places, and food, all go together.

John James Morgan, whose house Lamb and his sister went to lunch at on that March Sunday, had 'a particular kind of rabbit like delight in munching salads with oil without vinegar - after dinner - a steady contemplative browsing on them'.(8) This is one of the many occasions in which Lamb's interest in how other people eat, or what they eat, becomes an indication of character; or, as Lamb put it himself in 'Grace before Meat', 'there is a physiognomical character in the tastes for food'. Lamb is really very clever at making this an indicator: how vividly we can picture Evans, the Welsh cashier at the South Sea House, 'his tristful visage clearing up a little over his roast neck of veal at Anderton's at two' ('The South Sea House')! The finest example of this is Captain Jackson, whose genteel poverty is treated with marvellous sympathy and sensitivity. 'Alack', writes Lamb, 'how good men, and the good turns they do us, slide out of memory'; but he recalls the captain's cheerful suppers - 'the noble tone of hospitality,

*Captain Sword and Captain Pen* is a powerful, necessary document that contains some of the most lucid anti-war reasoning in English literature. The Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries are to be congratulated on reprinting it -- and at this critical period in world history.

R.M. Healey

Anthony John Harding *Coleridge and the Inspired Word* Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985. pp xiv + 187. \$27.50.

Since Samuel Taylor Coleridge played a crucial role in introducing the German 'Higher Criticism' of the Bible into England, this study by Professor Anthony John Harding is of singular importance. What makes it of even more value is that Harding treats, in more depth than it has ever been done before, Coleridge's views not only on biblical inspiration but also on the inspiration poets claim for themselves.

Let me say right at the outset that Harding has given us a brilliant and incisive book, which is bound to have considerable influence on Coleridge studies (especially our ways of viewing his religious thought), on Romantic studies, and on 19th century scholarship generally. Since he relates Coleridge to such later figures as John Sterling, Julius Hare and F.D. Maurice, Victorianists will also find it useful and important, as will Americanists for his splendid treatment of Coleridge's influence on Emerson. Biblical scholars and theologians, too, will find it fascinating, since it brings into sharper focus than ever the biblical criticism of a seminal thinker who was important not only for his role in introducing the Higher Criticism into England, but for the brilliance and daring originality of his thought.

Harding's generous introduction is a lucid, brilliant overview of the difficult terrain to be crossed. He is splendid and perceptive there on Coleridge himself, admirably clear on German thinkers like Herder and Schleiermacher, and sensible and cogent in a brief sketch of the complexities of Emerson. He is helpful, too, in showing -- without jargon -- the relevance of Coleridge to current structuralist and post-structuralist thought, and in his use of such recent scholars of oral usage as Walter Ong and Stanley Fish.

In the six chapters this introduction so helpfully ushers in, Harding covers skilfully an awesome range of difficult material which is important for understanding the 'Coleridge tradition' of inspiration: the Enlightenment; the German *Naturphilosophie*; Coleridge's own 'Letters on the Inspiration of the Scriptures' (published posthumously as *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*); Maurice and the Broad Church; Sterling; Emerson and New England Transcendentalism. Harding moves skilfully through all this difficult material, and his command of sources, both primary and secondary, is formidable indeed. He has read well nigh everything, it seems, but knows just how much or how little to put up front in his text; as for the rest, his detailed documentation is always there in the note, and always just what is needed.

Harding is particularly interesting and helpful in his treatment of the nature of prophecy, and of myth and a 'post-mythological age' (in chapter I); on Coleridge's resistance to pantheism, and on the ways in which he distances himself from Schelling (in chapter II);

in the whole of chapter III, which is the best informed and most persuasive commentary I have seen on the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*; on the inter-relationships of Hare, Maurice and Sterling, and the relationship of all of them with Coleridge (in chapter IV); and in his excellent and blessedly lucid treatment of Emerson in chapter VI. This latter chapter is also fascinating for the light it sheds (especially in its excellent discussion of James Marsh) on an early 18th century view of the intellectual and religious backgrounds of the 'Founding Fathers' of the United States. In particular, it helps dispel the myth that they were rationalists first, religious only secondarily.

It remains only to add a word about Harding's treatment of Coleridge's poetry, which comes to the fore in chapter I, especially as Harding discusses the sources of prophetic knowledge of spiritual reality. His control of the poetry is steady, and his touch is invariably deft, yielding subtle and sophisticated readings of difficult poems. One may not always agree (for example, with the assertion that in his 'demoniac' poems, Coleridge 'moved much closer to a Shelleyan scepticism about the extent to which humanity can "read" divine love in the face of Nature'), but his readings of such poems as 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan' are provocative in the most helpful way -- leading one to re-read the poem and to re-think one's assumptions.

In short, then, this is a splendid book: in thought, both profound and persuasive; in style, admirably readable, sometimes even eloquent. Perhaps the highest praise I can offer is, very simply that it is worthy of its subject.

J. Robert Barth, S.J.  
University of Missouri-Columbia

#### OBITUARY

ALICE BISHOP was born on 31st December 1890 in Lambeth and died on 2nd December 1985, a month short of her 95th birthday. Like Lamb, she was a life-long Londoner. She joined the CLS on 10th February 1940 (Lamb's birthday and her wedding anniversary) and was a loyal supporter of all the Society's activities. This she could hardly fail to be, having been variously wife, mother and mother-in-law of a succession of Officers of the Society. Members will recall many gatherings at her book-filled home in Maida Vale, the last in September 1985. Although unable to attend meetings recently, she always looked forward to the arrival of the *Bulletin* and of the annual Programme.

She had many talents - as pianist, water colourist and needlewoman - and has left a charming memoir of her Victorian childhood. Other interests included travel, especially in Italy, and correspondence with a world-wide circle of friends.

Florence Reeves represented the Society at the Memorial Thanksgiving Service held at St. John's Wood Church on 4th January 1986. Readings included extracts from 'Dream Children' (her favourite Lamb Essay) and from 'Rabbi ben Ezra'.

dislikes more than being different from the others: although in this case there was one stronger passion, the oldest and strongest of passions, hunger. If hunger broke down all the resistance of shame and solitariness, we are perhaps able to imagine how the others were feeling. Perhaps they understood that there *were* too many of them to share; perhaps they forgave Lamb because he was just lucky, or because of his speech difficulties: or perhaps, like the other boys, he had to endure far greater injustices and deprivations:

Under the same *facile* administration, can L. have forgotten the cool impunity with which the nurses used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables, one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing srupulously weighed out for our dinners?

In this action is included two crimes: greediness and the abuse of power, not to mention deceitfulness and unfairness. In the essay the benevolent but unwatchful matron is a part of the generally slack running of the place: and it is the boys who bitterly notice the contrast between the pictures on the walls of 'sleek, well-fed blue-coat boys' and themselves, the living ones, 'who saw the better part of our provisions carried away before our faces by harpies'. The same failure of supervision led to bullying, as in the case of the 'petty Nero' who took bread from the other boys in order to feed the young ass. And it could be said, I think, that Lamb was taught at Christ's Hospital to abhor greediness, unfairness, and the falsehood of the public image as opposed to the reality; he learned the bitter lesson that slack government means that the weak are unprotected from the strong; and he learned it through the most important article to a hungry schoolboy, food.

Other moral lessons associated with food are found in the accounts of these early years. One of the matters over which all the boys, including Lamb, were united was the horror of *gags*, or the fat of fresh boiled beef. The word itself is most expressive, suggesting something that sticks in the throat and prevents a person from speaking. A gag-eater was infinitely worse than someone who had dainties brought from home; a gag-eater was thought of with fear and horror, and was equivalent, says Lamb, 'to a goule' (or ghool, an evil spirit supposed to eat the flesh of corpses). The boy who collected gags was ostracised, then followed, and finally exposed - discovered to have been taking the fatty scraps to a starving old couple. The episode is brilliantly told by Lamb, especially in the way in which he recaptures the arrogant assurance of the ganging-up schoolboys:

None spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated; put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment, which is more grievous than many stripes.

The lesson on this occasion is the simple one of rash judgment, and the danger of judging by appearances. The whole episode must have lain in Lamb's mind, and surfaced in his later remark that 'The greatest pleasure I know, is to do a good deed by stealth and to have it found out by accident'.(9)

A more subtle and contrasting episode is that of the plum cake, which Lamb (rather disregarding the unities of time, place, and action) slipped into 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig':

My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweet-meat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcombrity of charity, school-boy like, I made him a present of - the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I - I myself, and not another - would eat her nice cake - and what should I say to her the next time I saw her - how naughty I was to part with her pretty present - and the odour of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last - and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing, old grey impostor.

As Winifred Courtney has aptly written, this is 'one of those episodes that haunt the mind - the amalgam in a single act of goodness and badness, elation and despair, as confusing to the generous child as to any sensitive adult'. (10) To this useful comment I would add that its morality is fine because it is more subtle than might have been expected. Instead of taking the obvious moral - it is good to give charity to the poor - Lamb complicates the whole matter by making his charity the giving away of something which had been given to him (so that, in a sense, it is not his to give away; or it suggests ingratitude); then there is a doubt, as there often is, about the recipient. He is, at first sight, a grey-headed old beggar; by the end of the paragraph he has become 'that insidious, good-for-nothing, old grey impostor'. And as for the donor: he has convicted himself of ingratitude, remembering the pleasure that his good aunt had had in making it; and he has accused himself of the 'vanity of self-denial', the 'sweet soothing of self-satisfaction', and 'out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness'. Self-denial and goodness are both qualities which are associated with virtue: but Lamb has the perception to see that there are times in which they can be inappropriate, or used for selfish ends.

Lamb is capable of such complex moral understanding: he can also be utterly simple. Plain thankfulness is one of his most delightful gestures towards the ordinary pleasures of life: 'A man may feel thankful', he writes, 'heartily thankful, over a dish of plain mutton with turnips...'. This comes from 'Grace before Meat', an essay which is one of Lamb's finest achievements, full as it is of that natural good sense and nobility of feeling which he expresses so well, and linking them with very serious moral and religious themes, Food, he argues, is only one of the many things in life which we should be thankful for: why have we no grace for books, for example, 'those spiritual repasts' -

a grace before Milton; a grace before Shakespeare; a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the Fairy Queen?

So far as food is concerned, grace 'has its beauty at a poor man's table'

or at the simple and unprovocative repast of children. It is here that the grace becomes exceedingly graceful. The indigent man, who hardly knows whether he shall have a meal the next day or not, sits down to his fare with a present sense of the blessing, which can be but feebly acted by the rich, into whose minds the conception of wanting a dinner could never, but by some extreme theory, have entered. The proper end of food - the animal sustenance - is barely contemplated by them. The poor man's bread is his daily bread, literally his bread for the day. Their courses are perennial.

This is Lamb's very proper and well-observed version of the saying of Jesus that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. This is interwoven with the phrase from the Lord's prayer - 'Give us this day our daily bread' - and with the simplicity of children. Jesus said 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God': this comes from the same chapter in St. Mark's Gospel as the image of the camel and the needle's eye, and it would seem that at least part of the effect of 'Grace before Meat' comes from its unobtrusive and delicate handling of these teachings of the New Testament. Similarly, in the paragraph which follows, Lamb introduces the phrase 'rich men's tables', which immediately reminds the reader of the story in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter 16, of Dives and Lazarus. The beggar desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; in Lamb's use of the phrase here we may detect a deep seriousness beneath the apparent lightness:

A man may feel thankful, heartily thankful, over a dish of plain mutton with turnips, and have leisure to reflect upon the ordinance and institution of eating; when he shall confess a perturbation of mind, inconsistent with the purpose of the grace, at the presence of venison or turtle. When I have sate (*a rarus hospes*) at rich men's tables, with the savoury soup and messes steaming up the nostrils, and moistening the lips of the guests with desire and a distracted choice, I have felt the introduction of that ceremony to be unseasonable. With the ravenous orgasm upon you, it seems impertinent to interpose a religious sentiment. It is a confusion of purpose to mutter out praises from a mouth that waters.

The whole of this passage is a most delicate and civilized reminder of the place of religion in life, of the way in which it is so difficult to keep in balance the desires of the body and the needs of the soul. In this case the excellence of the food cuts out the religious observance, and Lamb is only one step away from reminding us that gluttony is traditionally one of the seven deadly sins. And when people eat well while others starve, the parable of Dives and Lazarus is replayed; Lamb makes this explicit at the end of the paragraph:

The heats of epicurism put out the gentle flame of devotion.  
The incense which rises round is pagan, and the belly-god intercepts

it for his own. The very excess of the provision beyond the needs takes away all sense of proportion between the end and means. The giver is veiled by his gifts. You are startled at the injustice of returning thanks - for what? - for having too much, while so many starve. It is to praise the gods amiss.

The whole passage is a very remarkable example of that seriousness which is often present in Lamb's essays. Here he remembers those who are described by St. Paul as 'the enemies of the cross of Christ' (Philippians 3.18), 'whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things'. The rich smells of the food become, by a poetic transposition, the incense of a false religion, so that the introduction of a grace is incongruous. And the reminder that some have too much while others starve is unusually sharp. The same sharpness is seen in Lamb's reply to an imaginary interlocutor later in the essay:

I hear somebody exclaim, - Would you have Christians sit down at table, like hogs to their troughs, without remembering the Giver? No: I would have them sit down as Christians, remembering the Giver and less like hogs.

The inversion of the word order here is a brilliant piece of rhetorical writing, conveying quite subtly but nevertheless unequivocally Lamb's feeling that too many so-called Christians *do* eat like pigs: the whole world of self-indulgence which is suggested by this, and by other parts of the essay, has its spokesman in the blustering questioner, and its quiet but devastating response in which the word 'Christians' is given additional weight by its placing in the sentence. 'I would have them sit down *as Christians*' places the word 'Christians' first, and invites the reader to dwell on its significance; and what follows suggests that habitually Christians do *not* remember the Giver and *do* eat like hogs.

Throughout this remarkable essay, Lamb is concerned with the very delicate and significant relationship between eating and Christianity. The good clergyman, he observes, often seems embarrassed at having to say grace at a sumptuous feast, and later in the essay he suggests that 'before meat especially' graces 'seem to involve something awkward and unseasonable'. He reserves his praise for the silent grace of the Quakers, not only because, being silent, it is presumably felt inwardly, but also because 'their applications to the meat and drink following' is 'less passionate and sensual than ours'. What Lamb is talking about here is self-control, the regulation of the passions and the senses in a temperate and dignified manner.

Eating, and the rituals attached to it, become in this essay an index of human behaviour. Although lightly sketched, we can discern a version of human beings who are dominated by greed, selfishness, passion, and hypocrisy - not to mention sanctimonious behaviour, as when the two Methodist ministers differ about whether to say grace over a cup of tea. Even the food itself takes on a moral character, as Lamb shrinks instinctively from one who professes to like minced veal: I think that here he is repelled by the thought of mincing the veal; but there may also be a suggestion that someone who is insensitive enough to *declare* a liking for the flesh of young calves minced up is an example of the awful possibilities of human character. Opposed to minced veal is asparagus, 'which still seems to inspire gentle thoughts'. Minced veal opposed to asparagus: the examples seem trivial, but the symbolic



reference is Shakespearean in its opposition of cruelty, thoughtlessness, and selfishness to sweetness and gentleness. It is Goneril and Regan as opposed to Cordelia.

Lamb is careful not to exclude himself from the charge of selfishness and greed. He knows that he can become irritable if the food is not to his liking:

I am impatient and querulous under culinary disappointments, as to come home at the dinner hour, for instance, expecting some savoury mess, and to find one quite tasteless and sapidless. Butter ill melted - that commonest of kitchen failures - puts me beside my tenor.

Recognising such human weakness in himself, he remembers Dr Johnson also:

The author of the *Rambler* used to make inarticulate animal noises over a favourite food. Was this the music quite proper to be preceded by the grace?

Lamb in an uncertain temper, and Johnson grunting, are types of human weakness which we contemplate uncomfortably as we read: and yet we all know of the ideal as opposed to the actual:

Graces are the sweet preluding strains to the banquets of angels and children; to the roots and severer repasts of the Chartreuse; to the slender, but not slenderly acknowledged, refection of the poor and humble man:...

Most of us, however, are too sunk in our own ways to change, and our behaviour is a sad comment on the human race:

We sit too long at our meals, or are too curious in the study of them, or too disordered in our application to them, or engross too great a portion of those good things (which should be common) to our share, to be able with any grace to say grace.

By this stage of the essay, saying grace has become a quite extraordinary indicator of human character: 'To be thankful for what we grasp exceeding our proportion, is to add hypocrisy to injustice'. Much of this deep and penetrating seriousness, of course, is lightened by the comedy of the essay, the criticism of the banquet in *Paradise Regained* and the remark attributed to Coleridge, 'that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple dumplings'. But this idea (with which Lamb agrees) is allowed, like other apparent trivia, to illuminate all aspects of human behaviour.

Lamb's awareness of food and its rituals as profound indicators of human behaviour suggest that he is, perhaps surprisingly, a forerunner of modern sociology and anthropology. A writer such as Claude Levi-Strauss (*The Raw and the Cooked*, 1970; *From Honey to Ashes*, 1973; and *The Origin of Table Manners*, 1978) is anticipated in some of his ideas (though not, of course, in his methods) by Lamb, most notably in 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig'. From the moment of hearing the title of this lecture announced, you will have expected me to talk about this essay, though perhaps not in the context of Lamb as a proto-anthropologist: and yet it is quite clear that the origins

of Lamb's essay were in some sort of discussion with Manning and others of questions which are of great importance to anthropologists. Thomas Allsop's anecdotes of Lamb include a reference to Manning, on leave from China, entering upon a discussion -

or, as it rather seemed, the solution of some of the most interesting questions connected with the early pursuits of men.

Among these most interesting questions, Allsop remembered, was

the origin of cooking, which it seems was deemed of sufficient importance by older, and therefore wiser, nations to form part of their archives ... (11)

and, according to Allsop, it was from this discussion that 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig' was written.

Carnivorous animals eat raw meat, and carrion-eaters eat rotten meat: human beings cook food, and this is one of the fundamental distinguishing features of human *culture* as opposed to *nature*. There are many myths which deal with the understanding of this, some of which Lamb would have appreciated if he had known them: they deal with such things as the opposition between boiled and roast, the making of noise (or not) while eating, and the place of raw natural food (such as honey) in relation to a substance which is burnt (such as tobacco). 'A Dissertation upon Roast Pig' is, of course, Lamb's comic anthropology, inventing his own myth and then discussing it.

It begins before the transformation of nature into culture:

Mankind ... for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, ...

This period, says Lamb inventively, was described by Confucius as a kind of golden age, using the term 'Cho-fang, literally the Cook's holiday'. Since there were no cooks, as we immediately realise, they could not have been on holiday: the absurd anachronism prepares us for other agreeable nonsense, such as the name Ho-ti (from the Greek particle), and the litter of new farrowed pigs at a time when roast pork was unknown. The story (or perhaps it might be called an anti-myth or comic myth) describes how Bo-bo first smelt the odour of cooked meat, and then felt his mouth watering. He stooped down to feel the pig, burnt his fingers, and licked them:

Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted - *crackling!*

The placing of the crackling at the end, its italicizing, and its separation from the remainder of the sentence, all suggest that part of the comedy is in its timing: the word 'crackling' comes as a surprise. It is a very modern word: in this sense, as the crisp skin of roast pork, it dates from 1709. In its modernity lies its comedy, for what Lamb has done is to collapse into one sentence the slow processes of ages: from the discovery of roast meat to the 1709 cookery book in a process of gradual evolution which Lamb conveniently ignores. The result is a pleasure which the gourmet recognises,

as Lamb acknowledges later when he insists that a sucking pig must be roasted:

I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed, or boiled - but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!

The opposition between roasting and boiling is of interest to anthropologists, for whom roasting appears to be connected with the natural way of cooking and boiling with the cultural or processed way of cooking. Lamb is, of course, defending the simpler way: not because of any principle but because he finds it the most appetising.

His description of the comic myth begins with Ho-ti and Bo-bo gobbling the pig in an utterly uncivilized manner. Ho-ti, who is still a child (and therefore, by the rules of ancient practice, supposed to be silent when eating) punctuates the meal by shouting 'Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste - O Lord', - 'with such-like barbarous ejaculations'. Both father and son then consume the pig in hideous haste, as though Lamb wishes to interpose a distance between his own time and theirs, between nature and culture.

The comedy of temporal distance continues with the description of the proceedings in court, the judge subsequently buying up all the pigs he can find, and the houses all being burned down so that 'the insurance offices one and all shut up shop'. Just when the reader is becoming accustomed to his own superiority, however, Lamb turns the essay back upon itself: instead of suggesting that Ho-ti and Bo-bo were barbarians and we of our generation are civilised, he produces a rapturous description of the taste of 'a young and tender suckling'. It begins with an elaborate description of the crackling:

There is no flavour comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling*, as it is well called - the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle, resistance - with the adhesive oleaginous - O call it not fat - but an undefinable sweetness growing up to it - the tender blossoming of fat - fat cropped in the bud - taken in the shoot - in the first innocence - the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food - the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna - or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make one ambrosian result, or common substance.

There is something of the mock-heroic about this: Lamb knows perfectly well that he is inflating the subject out of all proportion, and indulging his gluttonous imaginings. But *is* he pretending? This is a very difficult question to answer. Certainly the description of the young pig hanging from the string is not for the squeamish; nor is the description of him lying in the dish, 'his second cradle'. Is this the Lamb, we may well ask, who was upset by someone proclaiming a liking for minced veal? Even his satire on the kind of religious consolation prevalent in his own day does not alleviate this:

wouldst thou have this innocent grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one

he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal - wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation - from these sins he is happily snatched away -

Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade,  
Death came with timely care -

his memory is odoriferous - no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth the rank bacon - no coalheaver bolteth him in reeking sausages - he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure - and for such a tomb might be content to die.

Judicious epicure, or heartless glutton? We may say that all this should not be taken too seriously, but however lightly it is interpreted it seems as if Lamb's imagination has got out of control in this essay.

Unless - and this seems to me to be a real possibility - he is being like Swift and catching us off guard. He may be subtly trying to remind us all how similar we are to Ho-ti and Bo-bo in our sensual appetites. His description of his own gluttonous contemplation of the child-pig (which has, surely, some echoes of Swift's *A Modest Proposal*) may, in this reading, be offering himself as a sacrifice to pull us up short: how justified are we in killing young animals in order to gratify our refined appetites?

The question is raised in a more acute form at the end of the essay, which inclines me to believe that Lamb *was* deliberately trying, like Swift, to make us feel uncomfortable. He raises a further possibility, familiar to anyone who has contemplated the morality of *pâté de foie gras*: are we justified in causing suffering to animals in order to gratify our own palates? Suppose a young pig were whipped to death to make it more tender: would this whipping be justified? 'We ought', says Lamb, 'to be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice'.

This sounds specious, and Lamb knows it. That Lamb is detaching himself with some horror from the practice of causing pain to young animals is suggested, I think, by his sudden adoption of the role of a Jesuit:

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, 'Whether, supposing that the flavour of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*) super-added a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?'  
I forget the decision.

This paragraph, I think, gives the game away, and shows us that Lamb stands well apart from those who would make animals suffer. The Jesuits' question, the Latin tag, all these things seem unreal, a subject for theological debate; and the debate is everything - the decision does not matter. It is carried on with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, forgetting, we are to suppose, the feelings of the pig itself.

If this is the case, then perhaps we are to read the same callous learning

and pleasantries back into earlier parts of the essay, and see the whole description as an exercise in playing the role of a thoughtless gourmet. And yet it is difficult to do this, if only because of the opening reference to 'my friend M', which suggests Manning, and implies that Lamb is writing *in propria persona*. Possibly Lamb is trying to have it both ways (to have his pig and eat it, we might say): he knows that he relishes sucking pig, but he feels guilty about it, and wants to have nothing to do with cruelty to animals. And this may be why the episode of the plum-cake, which I discussed earlier as breaking the unity of the essay, may have a more subtle connection than I had supposed. It too joins two things, principle and practice, in an uneasy conjunction. And in a curious way, we may perhaps see the essay as a kind of rich meal, with one kind of dish following another in a piquant and sometimes surprising manner.

We have seen how Lamb can describe human character as demonstrated by food; how he can use food to discuss the deepest problems of religious behaviour and moral philosophy, problems of how to live; and we have seen him taking on the roles of a comic anthropologist and a Jesuit novice to ask questions about eating meat. Two other points remain. The first is the very serious one that Lamb is aware of but cannot bring himself to write about very often, and that is real poverty - not just the genteel poverty of a Captain Jackson, but the poverty which means that in some families the children do not get enough to eat. Part XII of 'Popular Fallacies', entitled 'That Home is Home though it is never so Homely', describes the poor man going to the ale house and taking an interest in other people's food, feeling that 'there is such a thing as beef and cabbage, which he was beginning to forget at home'. This is the underside of the simplicity which was praised in 'Grace before Meat':

Oh, 'tis a fine thing to talk of the humble meal shared together!  
But what if there be no bread in the cupboard? The innocent  
prattle of his children takes out the sting of a man's poverty.  
But the children of the very poor do not prattle.

It is the children who suffer most, not only because they are hungry, but because they have to worry about money, and the next meal, and work. 'The children of the very poor', says Lamb perceptively, 'have no young times'. Poverty in other words, robs them of their childhood.

In Lamb's many-toned art, the serious compassion of this leads, by way of poor relations, to the way in which food can become a rich source of comedy, both in itself and in the way it brings people together. In 'Poor Relations', for example, there is a painfully accurate portrait of a cadger, who 'casually looketh in about dinner-time - when the table is full'. Pressed to stay, of course, 'he declareth against fish, the turbot being small - yet suffereth himself to be importuned into a slice against his first resolution'. With wine, 'he sticketh by the port - yet will be prevailed upon to empty the remainder glass of claret'. Even worse is the female Poor Relation, who takes everything but makes a great fuss about it. The problem about such things as poor relations, as Lamb acutely notices, is that they are

replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations,  
that it is difficult to keep the account distinct without blending.

The episode which follows, describing the humiliation of John Billet over the pudding - 'Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day' is a very good example of the tragi-comic mixture of feelings which Lamb depicts so well, and which often go with the business of eating and drinking.

Lamb's interest in this comes from his own self-awareness, as tragi-comic eater and drinker. For, at the centre of all this enquiry about Lamb and food, there is Lamb himself; and his insight into others, their appetites, hopes, expectations, kindness, greediness, selfishness, pretence, and simplicity, comes from his own self-knowledge. His appreciation of the generosity of others, such as Captain Jackson, comes from his own kindness; his appreciation of the frailty of human beings comes from his awareness of his own failings. 'Pray for me', he writes to Coleridge -

I am going to eat Turbot, Turtle, Venison, marrow pudd, - cold punch, claret, madeira, at our annual feast at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 4 this day. Mary has ordered the bolt to my bedroom door inside to be taken off, & a practicable latch to be put on, that I may'nt bar myself in and be suffocated by my neckcloth, so we have taken all precautions, three watchmen are engaged to carry the body upstairs,  
*Pray for me* - (12)

This is Lamb being prescient, forecasting all too well what is going to happen. His experience of hangovers was an unavoidable indicator:

My head is playing all the tunes in the world, ringing such peals! It has just finished the 'merry Xt. Church Bells' and absolutely is beginning 'Turn again Whittington'. Buz, buz, buz, bum, bum, bum, wheeze, wheeze, wheeze, feu, feu, feu, tinky, tinky, tinky, *craunch*. I shall certainly come to be damned at last.(13)

But set against this awareness of human frailty is the other side of Lamb, the generous, compassionate, fun-loving, food-loving man; and his frailty is inextricable from his warmth as a human being. In yet another image taken from food, Lamb makes us realise how much of his writing, and especially his correspondence, depends upon the tone of warm and impulsive sympathy which pervades it. In 'Distant Correspondents', he casts the essay in the form of a letter to Barron Field in Sydney, New South Wales, feeling that 'the weary world of waters between us oppresses the imagination'. The problem is that by the time the letter gets to Australia, the news is cold:

This kind of dish, above all, requires to be served up hot, or sent off in water-plates, that your friend may have it almost as warm as yourself. If it have time to cool, it is the most tasteless of all cold meats.

A word such as 'taste', or 'flavour' comes often to the mind when thinking about Lamb in his correspondence. I think that this is because he is so ready to reveal not only his frailty, but also his enjoyment, his gusto, his appetite for living, and his taste for food. As my last example, there is the letter about Cambridge brawn:

Tis of all my hobbies the supreme in the eating way. He might have sent, sops from the pan, skimmings, crumplets, chips, nog's

lard, the tender brown judiciously scalped from a fillet of veal ... the tops of asparagus, fugitive livers, runaway gizzards of fowls, the eyes of martyr'd Pigs, tender effusions of laxative woodcocks, the red spawn of lobsters, leveret's ears, and such pretty filchings common to cooks: but these had been ordinary presents, the every-day courtesies of Dish-washers to their sweet-hearts. Brawn was a noble thought. It is not every common Gullet-fancier that can properly esteem of it. It is like a picture of one of the choice old Italian masters. It's gusto is of the hidden sort. As Wordsworth sings of a modest poet: you must love him ere to you he will seem worthy of your love: so Brawn, you must taste it ere to you it will seem to have any taste at all.(14)

We may note in passing that brawn is one of those foods which is of great interest to anthropologists because it is not only cooked but also then processed into something else, so that it is at two removes from nature: it is cooked food, and therefore associated with culture rather than nature, but it is at one stage further on in the process, a mark of an advanced civilization. So Lamb's sense of its delicacy is, among other things, an acknowledgment of its refinement, and indicates his own level of civilized appreciation. But the passage also indicates his sense of fun, in comparing Wordsworth's poet with a piece of brawn (a comparison which is in keeping with Lamb's perpetual slight irreverence towards Wordsworth's genius); and it indicates, above all, perhaps, Lamb's humanity, which is so often displayed in his writing about food. As I said at the beginning, Lamb, like Johnson, would have thought it pretentious and affected not to mind what he was eating: and in his writing about food we can see his care for the common things of life, his sense of human frailty, his observation of morality and character, his gratitude for food and friends, and his generosity.

When John Wilkes was attacked once at a *London Magazine* dinner, Lamb defended him, quoting the story of Wilkes's reply when the blackbirds stole his cherries: 'Poor birds, they are welcome'.(15) It is typical of Lamb that he should have seized upon something good in another person, and brought it out; and I hope that in this lecture, I have succeeded in bringing out some of the best, most generous, most serious and most human qualities in Lamb himself.

#### NOTES

- 1 Fred. V. Randel, *The World of Elia*, Port Washington, N.Y., and London, 1975, p.114.
- 2 George P. Landow, *Ruskin*, Oxford, 1985, p.21
- 3 *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G.B. Hill, revised L.F. Powell, Oxford, 1934, I.467.
- 4 *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin L. Marrs, Jr., Ithaca and London, 1975 - ,I.263.
- 5 *Letters*, III.74.
- 6 *Letters*, III.103-4.
- 7 *Letters*, I.129.
- 8 *Letters*, III.108.

- 9 Quoted in Winifred Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb, 1775-1802*, London, 1982, p.44.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Quoted in Edmund Blunden, *Charles Lamb: His Life Recorded by his Contemporaries*, London, 1934, p.151.
- 12 *Letters*, III.104.
- 13 *Letters*, I.224.
- 14 *Letters*, II.155-6.
- 15 Blunden, *Charles Lamb: His Life Recorded by his Contemporaries*, p.126.

TENDENCIES IN WORDSWORTH'S *PRELUDE* REVISIONS

Harriet Jump *Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford*

it appeared to me  
 The perfect image of a mighty mind,  
 Of one that feeds upon infinity,  
 That is exalted by an underpresence,  
 The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim  
 Or vast in its own being ...

(1805 xiii 68-73)

In these lines, which were first drafted in February 1804, Wordsworth is looking back to an experience which he claimed to have had while climbing Snowdon on a walking tour of Wales in 1791. What actually happened -- what he saw, or felt, or thought about it at the time -- is impossible to say; the version of the experience which he chose to present thirteen or so years later is coloured by the belief-system, and its accompanying vocabulary, which he had developed during the intervening period. However, the climactic positioning of the passage (1), and the terms in which he describes both the event and his subsequent reflection upon it, make it clear that he now wishes the reader to see it as in some way archetypal. The 'mighty mind' whose image was, he says, evoked for him by the sight of the sea of mist in the moonlight has a 'sense of God ... in its own being'. Such moments of what Wordsworth believed (or wished the reader to think that he believed) to be direct apprehension of the divine happen to Wordsworth himself a number of times in *The Prelude*, and are presented as important contributory factors in a process which he described as 'the growth of my own mind'. However, there is a noticeable difference in the way in which he presented the importance of these moments in the 1805 text and in the revised 1850 version of the poem. It is this difference which will form the subject of the following paper.

In his 1962 discussion of *The Prelude*, Herbert Lindenberger described the kind of discourse which Wordsworth developed to give expression to his spiritual experience as 'the rhetoric of interaction', a rhetoric which he saw as producing 'a type of poetry centrally concerned with process and movement, not only in its explicitly stated themes, but above all in the way in which it attempts to enact its theme for the reader'. (2) The lines which were quoted at the beginning of this paper provide an example of one such spiritual experience; and an analysis of the language in which it is expressed offers some useful indications of the way in which Wordsworth characteristically attempted this enactment.



At the moment which is being described, the scene which had initiated the experience has 'passed away', and Wordsworth is going on to explain what happened at some point later on the same night when, he claims, 'a meditation rose in me' (1805 xiii 68,66). The choice of phrase is significant. It strongly suggests a complete absence of conscious will or deliberate reflection; instead, the important philosophical realisation is presented as having occurred in a powerfully involuntary way. There is also a noticeable emphasis on the personal quality of the experience: the meditation rose 'in me', the scene appeared 'to me'. This usefully illustrates what could be seen as a conflict of purpose in the early *Prelude*. On one level the poem has an expressedly didactic intention, which leads Wordsworth to attempt to present his spiritual intuitions as being universally available to the rest of mankind: 'we may teach them how:/Instruct them how the mind of man becomes/A thousand times more beautiful than the earth...' (1805 xiii 444-6). Underlying this level, however, is the undoubted fact that Wordsworth seems to have a much stronger desire to present them as being very specifically *his*. He is, after all, 'a favoured being', 'a chosen son', 'otherwise endowed', 'with holy powers', and so on (1805 i 364, iii 82, 93, 83). The presentation of his rather extraordinary sense of election provides a marked contrast to the poem's universalising didacticism, engendering some interesting tensions within the fabric of the early *Prelude*.

The language used in this passage can also be seen to emphasise some other important characteristics. The experience is presented as one which expands the awareness beyond its normal boundaries: the mind is 'mighty'; it 'feeds upon infinity'; it has a feeling of 'vast'-ness within 'its own being'. At the same time there is a related suggestion of vagueness, of ungraspability: 'underpresence' suggests something which lurks below the level of conscious awareness; 'sense of' indicates an intuitive, non-rational mode of functioning; 'dim' is presented in apparently deliberate opposition to its unspoken opposites 'clear' or 'bright'.

These important definitive characteristics are by no means confined to the experience on Mount Snowdon. On the contrary, they can be seen to recur in various forms whenever Wordsworth wishes to enact moments of apparently heightened spiritual insight. The power of these moments is suggested by the fact that he frequently chooses to figure them in terms of the fundamental energies of the natural world, like the 'vital breeze' of inner creativity which becomes 'a tempest, a redundant energy' (i.44,46), or the childhood intuitions remembered as 'Gleams, like the flashing of a shield' (i.614), or the image of Wordsworth's mind turning around at the spectacle of the blind beggar 'as with the might of waters' (vii 616). The related sense of their involuntariness is enacted by comparably vivid images which frequently carry a suggestion of tangibly physical sensations. They 'come fast upon me' (i 21); they are said to have 'flowed in by gushes' or 'rushed in as if on wings' (viii 178, 627); the soul is 'strongly breathed upon' by them (viii 831); Nature 'thrusts' them 'forth upon the senses' (xiii 86), and so on.

A number of strategies are used to suggest the idea of expansion of awareness. We have already found what prove to be typical suggestions of size (vastness) in the Snowdon passage; these recur in various forms in a number of other passages, as we shall see below. There are also suggestions

of a deliberately induced mental expansion, of which the most clearly defined is probably 'spread my thoughts/And spread them with a wider creeping' (iii 113-14). This habit that Wordsworth's thoughts seem to have in such moments of intense spirituality of extending beyond their normal boundaries is frequently related to their vagueness or intangibility, just as it was in the Snowdon passage ('dim or vast'). They bring 'fleeting moods/Of shadowy exaltation' after which

the soul--  
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt  
Remembering not -- retains an obscure sense  
Of possible sublimity ...  
(ii 331-2. 334-7).

Their source is presented as mysterious and unspecific: 'How shall I trace the history? Where seek/The origin of what I then have felt?' (ii 365-6); while contemplation of their possible origins takes the mind to the very fringes of time and space ('Sounds that are/The ghostly language of the ancient earth/Or make their dim abode in distant winds' (ii 327-9) ), or even beyond, so that 'the soul .../Passing through all Nature rests with God' (viii 833, 836).

All the above quotations have been taken from the 1805 *Prelude*. They seem to indicate that when Wordsworth was writing this early version of the poem he felt that it was important to emphasise by various linguistic and stylistic means certain characteristics which were common to many of his spiritual intuitions. It is therefore extremely interesting to discover, on turning to the 1850 version of the text, that his revisions demonstrate recurring tendencies to minimise or play down all these same characteristics.

For example, there are a very large number of instances in which changes have been made to the language or style which markedly decrease the personal quality of Wordsworth's experiences. This is effected by a number of revision strategies, one of which is the avoidance of the use of personal pronouns; one commentator has noted that he removes them 'nearly 150 times'.(3) Sometimes he replaces 'my' with 'the' or 'those' or 'thou', as in 'My darling vale'/'Thou one dear vale' (ii 202/198). Sometimes he replaces 'I' with 'we' -- the birds nesting episode at 1805 i 333-350 provides a good example of this. Sometimes he adds extra words to the line as a substitute for personal expressions; for instance 'But speedily a longing in me rose' (i 123) becomes 'But speedily an earnest longing rose' (i 114). In a very large number of other cases he replaces an active, transitive verb with its passive, intransitive case. Thus 'I made a choice' (i 81) becomes 'choice was made' (i 72); 'which I blame' (i 154) turns into 'to be blamed' (i 144); 'that I forgot/That I had bodily eyes' (ii 368-9) -- 'that bodily eyes/Were utterly forgotten' (ii 349-50); 'Nor had I time to ask the cause' (xiii 38) -- 'Nor was time given to ask the cause' (xiv 37). Sometimes he transfers the experience to an abstract object, as when 'I mean to speak' (ii 401) becomes 'the song would speak' (ii 382). At other times he transfers it to a generalised representative of the human race: 'the hiding places of my power' (xi 336) is altered to 'the hiding places of man's power' (xii 279). Perhaps the most extreme of these de-personalising strategies is the transfer of the experience from Wordsworth himself to some newly introduced third person. A good example of this is the revision of the line which describes his first view of the 'green recess' in the Swiss

mountains. In 1805, the line reads 'My heart leaped up when first I did look down...' (vi 446). By 1850, after trying several new versions of it, he had abdicated all personal responsibility from the experience and given it to somebody else: 'Well might a stranger look with bounding heart/Down...' (vi 517). (4)

Elsewhere in the poem, this minimisation of what had apparently seemed important characteristics in 1805, is effected by various changes of style and language. We saw, for instance, that in the early *Prelude* Wordsworth had tended to enact power and involuntariness by means of metaphorical images drawn from the energies of the natural world. A great many of these metaphors were changed or deleted during the course of his revisions. Thus 1850 loses 'flowed in by gushes' (viii 178) and 'rushed in as if on wings' (viii 627), as well as 'I was hurried forward by a stream/And could not stop' (vi 183-4). As for the most frequently recurring of all these metaphors, that of a breath or a breeze, this is removed again and again. In fact, the only place where it is allowed to remain is at the start of Book One, where the 'corresponding mild creative breeze' (i 43) is retained, though in a somewhat devitalised form. Gone, however, is 'The mind of man is framed even like the breath/And harmony of music' (i 351-2); gone, too, is the fact that 'the passions of its mother's eye' pass into the life of the Infant Babe 'like an awakening breeze' (ii 243, 245). A lost passage from Book Six describes how 'by simple stains/Of feeling, the pure breath of real life/We were not left untouched' (vi 471-3); and the one from Book Eight about the soul being 'strongly breathed upon/By this sensation' (viii 831-2) becomes 'the soul, when smitten thus/By a sublime *idea*' (viii 672-3; Wordsworth's italics). Perhaps the most instructive of all these changed metaphors is the final one in Book Eleven. 1805 reads:

Ye motions of delight, that through the fields  
Stir gently, breezes and soft airs, that breathe  
The breath of paradise, and find your way  
To the recesses of the soul... (xi 9-12).

In 1850, this becomes:

... ye breezes and soft airs  
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers  
Feelingly watched, might teach man's haughty race ... (xii 10-12)

In 1805, the outer material breeze has somehow been transmuted during the course of the lines so that it manages to combine being an involuntary physical sensation and a spiritual manifestation, an example of the early Wordsworth's characteristic tendency to merge inner and outer experiences. In 1850 this merging is no longer found. The breeze now interacts with the flowers (outer with outer rather than outer with inner); while man is no longer the involuntary participant in a powerful internal experience but is instead an excluded observer, with full conscious control over his faculties of watching and learning.

As well as removing these metaphorical suggestions of involuntary power, Wordsworth made a number of changes in his choice of language which seem to tend towards the underplaying of this characteristic. One such change is the removal of the term 'flash', which he returns to a number of times in the 1805 text whenever he is describing a particularly vivid intuition. Thus, in

Book One, instead of 'gleams of light/Flash often from the east...' (i 134-5) we find 'welcome light/Dawns...' (i 124-5). In Book Three, 'on my view/Did flash a different image of old age' (iii 581-2) becomes 'appeared a different aspect...' (iii 552). In Book Four, 'I marvel that a fancy did not flash...' (iv 50) is replaced by a personification: 'Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered...' (vi 60). Even the best known multiple 'flashes', the ones that characterise the experience of 'Imagination' in Book Six, are revised to become a single 'flash' in 1850 (vi 535/601). This, and other linguistic changes to be discussed below, seems to suggest that in the main the terminology of 1850 has a tendency to become somewhat less assertive, somewhat more passive; as Donald Davie noted in his 1955 analysis of the revisions of the 'Infant Babe' lines in Book Two (and his comment is, as I hope to show, equally applicable to a number of other passages in the poem): 'Not only are there more active verbs in the first version, but they are more energetic'. (5)

Wordsworth's apparent desire to play down almost all the factors which characterised his presentation of his moments of insight in 1805 could be argued for by a process of going through the poem, picking out a phrase here or a line there; but this piecemeal approach would seem to be of limited value. Instead it may now be helpful to look at some parallel passages where this tendency may be seen on a larger scale. For an example of one such passage, where the stylistic alterations may be seen to undermine both the suggestion of characteristically expansive intangibility and that of power or immediacy, we need look no further than the opening lines of the poem. 1805 reads:

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze,  
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds  
And from the sky; it beats against my cheek,  
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.

(i 1-4)

In 1850, we find:

O there is a blessing in this gentle breeze,  
A visitant that while he fans my cheek  
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy he brings  
From the green fields and from yon azure sky.

(i 1-4)

In terms of content, Wordsworth is apparently saying the same thing in both 1805 and 1850. The tone is one of grateful optimism which is derived from contact with a physical manifestation of Nature, the breeze. This particular breeze, unlike many of the ones which were discussed above, has a real material existence; but the sense of at least partially active participation which is attributed to it introduces the concept, fundamental to the argument of *The Prelude*, that Nature interacts in a deliberate way with the workings of the human mind. There are, however, obvious stylistic differences between the two versions.

One of the most noticeable changes which Wordsworth has made to this passage is one of syntax. He has tidied up the construction, doing away with the need for a semi-colon. In doing so, however, he has not only changed the movement of the lines, but has altered the character of the experience in a

number of ways. In the first version the breeze is described in a subordinate clause which tells us two things about it, what it does and where it comes from. 'That blows...' can be seen as fulfilling a double function. It describes what the poet says he is experiencing here and now, but it also expresses an activity which is a constant feature of the breeze's existence; it is blowing now, but it also always blows, has done so in the past and will do so in the future. In other words, 'That blows...' carries a suggestion of temporal expansion. In the rest of the phrase, 'from the green fields and from the clouds/And from the sky...', a comparable spacial expansion is enacted, as a contemplation of the breeze's origins takes Wordsworth's awareness from the close and concretely experienced 'green fields' through the more distant and less clearly defined 'clouds' to the vastness and distance of the 'sky'. Somewhat understated though they are, these suggestions of expansion act as a preparation for the fact that the fourth line clearly identifies the experience as one of Wordsworth's moments of spiritual insight, the attribution of some form of awareness to the breeze itself. This intuited animism is further prepared for by the choice of verb which describes the sensation of the breeze in the previous line, 'it beats against my cheek'. As well as the primary sense of being 'weather-beaten' (6) there seems to be an underlying suggestion of an essentially vital activity such as the beating of the human heart.

Turning to the revised version in the light of this analysis, we can see that rather more than a simple change of syntax has taken place. The suggestion of temporal expansion which was carried by 'That blows' has been lost. So too has been the spacial expansion of the progression through the 'green fields...clouds...sky'. In 1805 the breeze simply 'gives' the joy; in 1850 it 'brings' it 'from the green fields and from yon azure sky'. Not only does this undermine the enactment of a gradual spacial expansion by losing the clouds altogether, but it also minimises the characteristically sourceless vagueness of the 'joy' by specifically locating its origin. The addition of 'yon azure' suggests that for the later Wordsworth the sky has ceased to function as a symbol of vastness and has instead become a rather predictable poetic figure. Finally, the powerful nature of the experience is somewhat diminished by the fact that the strong, energetic verb 'beats against' has been altered to the more conventional and far gentler 'fans'.

A further demonstration can be seen in one of the most famous, and most significantly revised passages in the poem. These are the lines from Book Six which Wordsworth inserts at the point when he and Jones have just been informed by a peasant that, much to their surprise, they have already crossed the Alps. In 1805 the passage begins:

Imagination! -- lifting up itself  
 Before the eye and progress of my song  
 Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,  
 In all the might of its endowments, came  
 Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,  
 Halted without a struggle to break through,  
 And now, recovering, to my soul I say  
 'I recognise thy glory'....

(vi 525-532)

In 1850, it has become:

Imagination -- here the Power so called  
 Through sad incompetence of human speech,  
 That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss  
 Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,  
 At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;  
 Halted without an effort to break through;  
 But to my conscious soul I now can say --  
 'I recognise thy glory'...

(vi 592-599)

Most of the experiences of heightened insight which are described in *The Prelude* supposedly took place during Wordsworth's childhood or youth. This one differs in that it purports -- in 1805 at least -- to give an account of such an experience at the actual time of its occurrence. The feeling which Wordsworth describes is so vivid and overpowering that it almost incapacitates him, and demands expression before he can continue his account of his adventures. Again, however, although the apparent meaning is the same in both versions, the 1805 lines have a markedly different character from those of 1850. This can be attributed to a number of stylistic alterations.

Two important changes have been made to the first few lines of the passage. The syntax has been altered, and an unusual and somewhat ambiguous metaphor has been lost. In 1805 the word 'Imagination' is followed immediately by a verb, 'lifting' which, because it is a present participle, conveys the sense that Wordsworth is actually reporting the experience as it takes place. The rather curious word order -- 'lifting itself up' would be the more conventional usage -- places 'up' next to 'lifting' and moves 'itself' to the end of the line. This gives the word a quite unexpected emphasis, which conveys the suggestion that this event is not only startlingly vivid but also self-generated and thus quite outside Wordsworth's conscious control.

The next line, 'Before the eye and progress of my song', is an interesting one. It takes what seem to be two different metaphors and links them together to produce a somewhat unexpected image. 'Before the eye' suggests that Wordsworth is talking about the 'mind's eye', and in fact one of his interim revisions does read 'Before my mental eye'. (7). 'Before the ... progress of my song' makes sense, too; it carries the suggestion that the experience has halted the creative process. The difficulty, if it is a difficulty, arises when one puts the two together; 'Before the eye ... of my song'. Here, the 'song' appears to have become a living entity, complete with perceptions which parallel Wordsworth's own and which are equally capable of being obscured by the sudden uprising of the 'Imagination'. Finally, 'like an unfathered vapour' carries the by now familiar suggestion of sourceless intangibility, adding to the feeling that Wordsworth has been momentarily taken outside his normal experience of space and time. The first word of the next phrase, 'here', starts to relocate him temporally and spatially; he becomes more objective, and explains what has happened: 'here that Power/In all the might of its endowments, came/Athwart me'. More objective though it is, however, the phrase simply reinforces the sense of the powerful nature of the experience ('that power', 'the might of its endowments') as well as its involuntariness ('came/Athwart me'). Still more reinforcement comes with the next phrase; 'I was lost as in a cloud/Halted without a struggle to break through'. The state which Wordsworth is enacting here seems to come dangerously close to frightening him by bringing

what appears to be almost total paralysis; thus, there is a slight sense of relief in 'and now, recovering' in the next line.

In 1805, then, Wordsworth's concern seems to have been to enact an exceptionally powerful involuntary mental experience by means of a combination of metaphor, diction, and carefully arranged syntax. The experience is still described in 1850, but its original characteristics are now, it appears, being purposefully minimised. Several factors contribute to this. First, the phrase, 'lifting up itself/Before the eye and progress of my song' has gone. By removing this phrase, with its unconventional grammar and its ambiguous metaphor, Wordsworth has greatly decreased both the sense of power and immediacy and the suggestion of intangible expansiveness. Also, interestingly enough, without the reference to the 'progress of my song' and the present tense 'lifting', it becomes possible to read the lines as a description of something which took place when Wordsworth and Jones were told that 'we had crossed the Alps' (vi 524/591). (8) The drastically altered syntax places 'like an unfathered vapour' at a much greater distance from 'Imagination'. This seems to weaken it, since by the time we get to it so much has happened to undercut the experience. It was noted above that 'here' was responsible for the slight distancing effect, and a re-location in space and time; in 1850 the word comes immediately after 'Imagination'. This effectively undermines the suggestion that the poet is literally incapacitated as well as temporally and spacially dislocated by his experience.

In 1805, 'Imagination' is presented as a purely abstract quality, defined only by the subsequent description of its attributes and its activities. In 1850 it has become 'the Power so-called/By sad incompetence of human speech,/That awful Power...', a phrase which suggests a certain anxiety on Wordsworth's part that his readers may not know what he is talking about. He substitutes the more conventional past-tense 'rose' for the energetic, self-activated 'lifting up itself', and removes the suggestion of expansive sourcelessness by locating the Imagination's origin in 'the mind's abyss'. The 'unfathered vapour' now enwraps, not Wordsworth himself, but 'some lonely traveller', another of the added third-persons who, as we have seen, form part of what seems to be a deliberate de-personalising strategy on Wordsworth's part. The 'cloud' has gone, the very physical 'struggle' has been replaced by the somewhat less forceful 'effort', and 'recovering' has also disappeared. Every change, in fact, whether of syntax, diction or metaphor, seems to indicate a desire on Wordsworth's part to play down the ways in which the earlier lines had attempted to enact the qualities of powerful involuntariness, of sourceless expansiveness, and of intense personal feeling.

A final demonstration of the fact that these are indeed recurrent revision tendencies can be found by comparing the two versions of the Ascent of Snowdon passage in the final book. The passage begins by describing how the three travellers -- Wordsworth, Jones and the guide -- began their silent climb, 'Hemmed round on every side by fog and damp' (1805 xiii 16). At some stage, however, they evidently reached the point on the mountain where they emerged above the low cloud, and

instantly a light upon the turf  
Fell like a flash. I looked about, and lo,  
The moon stood naked in the heavens at height  
Immense above my head, and on the shore  
I found myself of a huge sea of mist,  
Which meek and silent rested at my feet.

A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
 All over this still ocean, and beyond,  
 Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves  
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
 Into the sea, the real sea ...

(xiii 39-49)

This is the 1805 version. In 1850, the lines have been considerably re-written; they now read:

instantly a light upon the turf  
 Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up  
 The Moon hung naked in a firmament  
 Of azure without cloud, and at my feet  
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.  
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
 All over this still ocean; and beyond,  
 Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,  
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
 Into the main Atlantic...

(xiv 38-48)

The picture has become prettier and more conventional in 1850, but it also seems to have shrunk. The reduction in the sense of size is partly to be attributed to the elimination of the placing of the moon 'at height immense' and to the loss of the adjective 'huge' which describes the sea of mist in 1805. However, another way in which the suggestion of vastness has been minimised is in the decrease in the use of the figure of the poet himself. In 1805 Wordsworth seems to deliberately offer himself as a kind of yardstick against which the enormously expanded sense of scale may be measured; 'the moon ... at height/Immense above my head' produces this effect, as does 'and on the shore/I found myself of a huge sea of mist...'. The removal of these details from 1850, as well as decreasing the suggestion of spacial expansion, also lessens the personal quality of Wordsworth's account of the experience.

Next, Wordsworth has changed his description of the action of the vapours. There is an obvious link here with the 'Imagination' passage in Book Six. There, the experience of the imagination suggested to Wordsworth the activity of a metaphorical vapour; here, real material vapours will suggest the activity of the imagination. This being the case, it is hardly surprising to find both kinds of vapours being described as behaving in a similar way. The vapour of Book Six was said to be 'lifting up itself'; the vapours of 1805 Book Thirteen 'shot themselves/In headlands...'. 'Shot themselves' is certainly unexpected and unconventional, but it does manage to combine a sense of vitality and energy with a suggestion of self-generated intention on the part of the vapours, implying that they, like the breeze of Book One, may be 'half conscious'. Again, the altered phrase 'the solid vapours stretched' replaces an active verb with a more conventional but less energetic one. It also decreases the suggestion of the vapours' expansive vagueness by describing them as 'solid'.

So far we have found examples in this passage of the tendency to de-personalise, the tendency to reduce suggestions of expansiveness and the



tendency to decrease the sense of power and energy. A few lines further on, Wordsworth removed the famous metaphor which equated the 'breach/ Through which the homeless voice of waters rose' with 'the soul, the imagination of the whole' (1805 xiii 62-3, 65). Not only does this put something of a strain on the link between the scene and his subsequent visionary intuition, it also demonstrates the tendency to remove suggestions of sourcelessness ('homeless'). Only two more of Wordsworth's recurrent revision tendencies have not so far been demonstrated: the removal of suggestions of the involuntary nature of experiences and the de-personalising strategy of introducing third persons. This lack is supplied by the lines which immediately follow:

A meditation rose in me that night  
 Upon the lonely mountain when the scene  
 Had passed away, and it appeared to me...  
 (1805 xiii 66-68).

These lines, which bring us back to the passage which was quoted at the beginning of this paper, were altered to read in 1850:

When into air had partially dissolved  
 That vision, given to spirits of the night  
 And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought  
 Reflected, it appeared to me...  
 (xiv 63-66).

In 1805, as we have already seen, the experience is said to have occurred in a completely spontaneous and involuntary way to Wordsworth himself: 'rose in me'. In 1850, it is presented as being the result of deliberate reflection 'in calm thought', and seems to happen not just to Wordsworth himself but to an unspecified number of third persons in the form of the 'spirits of the night' as well as to Jones and the shepherd. (9)

This has been a necessarily brief analysis of what is, after all, an extremely long and very heavily revised poem; but I hope it has adequately demonstrated that Wordsworth did indeed tend to make use of certain recurrent strategies in his *Prelude* revisions. The changed emphasis which results reveals much about his own changing attitudes. 1805 and 1850 are both, I think, deeply religious poems. The fact that the earlier text seems to set out deliberately to enact intensely personally felt experiences which are 'dim and vast', powerful and involuntary indicates that at this stage in his life Wordsworth wanted to suggest that he himself had experienced moments of direct, intuitive apprehension of the divine. In later life he apparently came to feel that this vividly experiential quality should be somewhat played down, and more emphasis put instead on universal availability, on mature and thoughtful reflectiveness, and to a lesser extent on scriptural revelation. Which of these two approaches a reader prefers will depend to a very large extent on his or her particular cultural or ideological bias; both versions together constitute valuable documentary evidence of Wordsworth's own shifting and modifying ideas and beliefs.

#### NOTES

- 1 The Ascent of Snowdon was originally intended to be the similarly climactic opening of the final book of the Five-Book *Prelude* which Wordsworth was planning in the spring of 1804; see William Wordsworth:

*The Prelude* 1799, 1805, 1850, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, *Norton Critical Editions* (New York and London, 1979), 516. All quotations from *The Prelude* have been taken from this edition.

- 2 Herbert Lindenberger: *On Wordsworth's 'Prelude'* (Princeton, 1963), 43.
- 3 Mary E. Burton: *The One Wordsworth* (University of North Carolina, 1942), 119.
- 4 Other examples of the introduction of third persons into 1850 can be found at i 90-91, v 482, vii 72, vii 747-9 and xiv 63-4.
- 5 Donald Davie: *Articulate Energy: An Enquiry into the Syntax of English Poetry* (London, 1955), 114. Davie goes on to point out that 'In 1805 the child *claims* kindred and *gathers* passion, where in 1850 he 'drinks in' feeling. His mind *spreads*, is eager to combine, tenacious and *apprehensive* ... The later version is mawkish, emphasising the frailty of the child' (114, Davie's italics).
- 6 Another example of Wordsworth's use of this verb to describe the activity of the wind can be found in *The Ruined Cottage*:

And when  
I passed this way beaten by autumn winds,  
She told me that her little babe was dead...  
(MS B 473-5)

*William Wordsworth: 'The Ruined Cottage' and 'The Pedlar'*, ed. James Butler, Cornell Wordsworth Series (Ithaca, N.Y., 1979), 68.

- 7 Quoted in *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd edn., revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford, 1959), 208.
- 8 For an interesting argument based on this fact, see Robert A. Brinkley: 'The Incident in the Simplon Pass: A Note on Wordsworth's Revisions', *The Wordsworth Circle* Vol. XII, No. 2 (Spring, 1981), 122-125.
- 9 Jonathan Wordsworth has recently argued that this revision contributes to 'a dwindling of the poet's own importance', since

the vision is given first to spirits, and  
then, on a lower level (as the self-abasing  
tones imply), impartially to the shepherd,  
the poet, and Jones.

*William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford, 1982), 330.

#### BOOK REVIEWS

##### THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE: WHICH TEXTS FOR STUDENTS?

*The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth* Edited by Stephen Gill £5.95 1984  
(Paperback Edns) *Samuel Taylor Coleridge* Edited by H.J. Jackson £6.95 1985

*William Wordsworth: 'The Pedlar', 'Tintern Abbey', 'The Two-Part Prelude'*  
*The Ruined Cottage, 'The Brothers', 'Michael'*.

Both edited by Jonathan Wordsworth Cambridge University Press Paperback  
£2.95 each 1985

*The Penguin Poetry Library: Wordsworth* Poems selected by W.E. Williams  
*Coleridge* Poems and Prose selected by Kathleen Raine. Both re-issued 1985 £1.95 each

1985 was the fiftieth anniversary of Penguin Books and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Everyman Paperbacks.

Some years ago it was my regular duty to introduce groups of students to Wordsworth as part of their Romantics course for B.A. (Hons.) English and for various joint degrees. I had each group for a period one day a week for one term. The first question to be answered was which selection would give them in a short time a fair over-all view of the poetry, as a basis for future study and which they could also afford to buy. In addition I had for a time to try to prepare students for a Special Author paper on Wordsworth and again the problem arose, what books? It seemed essential that the poems should be chronologically arranged, as the commonest error of non-specialists seems to be the idea that Wordsworth's philosophy, individual style and emotional attitudes burst once and for all readymade from his brain, to continue the same for ever, like Athena from the head of Jove.

At that time, after investigation, for the first course I plumped for the Everyman *Selected Poems of Wordsworth* Edited by Walford Davies, which when I first started using it ten years ago cost £1.20, in paperback. It is still excellent value at £1.95. As always, there were one or two short poems missing that I would have found room for, such as 'The Small Celandine', and there were only selections from *The Prelude* but those students who were 'hooked' were recommended to go on to the Penguin Parallel Text Edited by J.C. Maxwell which, when I originally bought it, cost 70p., now £5.95. The Everyman Selection was chronological but in order of publication rather than of composition, which would have been preferable. Moreover the latest texts were always used, which meant my providing notes of earlier versions where this seemed essential, as in the case of *The Ruined Cottage*. Nevertheless, it presented a fair spread of poems for an introduction.

A number of the second category of students bought the Oxford Standard Authors edition, which I had myself as an undergraduate, with Wordsworth's own categories - and bitterly regretted it. It is hopelessly difficult for the inexperienced to find their way about in. Better was the two volume Penguin edited by John O. Hayden, which, despite the difficulties, aims to be arranged in order of composition, but again, complying with Wordsworth's stated wishes, uses the latest published texts. There is no denying that editors of Wordsworth are in a real quandary here. These two Penguin volumes then cost £3.75 each, to which the Penguin Parallel Text of *The Prelude* had to be added. In order that the students doing the Special Author paper should be able to consult the De Selincourt-Darbishire edition, I tried to get an extra set for the Library, as well as more copies of Mary Moorman's biography - unsuccessfully even then, for they were going out of print. What is to be done when these definitive works just become unobtainable? The Cornell *Wordsworth*, admirable though it is, does not fulfil the same function and its publication is likely to be incomplete after many generations of undergraduates have departed.

If I were to start again now what would be the position? Even allowing for inflation, prices have put many texts out of reach of students whose grants have not increased proportionately. The first volume of the Penguin Collected Poems now costs £10 and the second £5.50, just under £16 in all. The Norton *Prelude* edited by Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams and Stephen Gill, which has largely replaced the Penguin Parallel Text, has the great advantage of also including the two-part poem, as well as some critical essays, but costs £8.50. If students are to afford this, then they must spend less on other poems. So it was with some hopeful anticipation that I greeted the arrival of two newcomers, the re-issued Penguin *Wordsworth Poems*

Selected by W.E. Williams at the modest price of £1.95, and the *William Wordsworth* in the Oxford Authors Series, Edited by Stephen Gill, a fat paperback costing only £5.95.

The Penguin selection contains a great deal of the best of Wordsworth, with extracts from *The Prelude* though not such a good choice as the Everyman (for example, no 'crossing the Alps' or 'spots of time' passages) and with extracts from *The Excursion*, including the 'Prospectus to the Recluse' and 'The Ruined Cottage'. For the general reader this little volume is undoubtedly value for money. But it would not have done for my students, partly because, reflecting the taste of the time when it was compiled (first published 1943), it not only omits what we would now consider such 'key' passages from *The Prelude* but also those poems from *Lyrical Ballads* which we have learnt to value also as 'essential Wordsworth' such as 'The Idiot Boy', 'Simon Lee' and the Matthew poems, which are in the Everyman Selection. Secondly, there is no attempt at chronology, either in the order of the poems or in indicating dates when any of them were written.

Would the new 'Oxford Authors' selection then have been the answer to my prayer? At first glance it looks as though it might. At last, as Stephen Gill says, 'Here for the first time a selection of Wordsworth's work is offered in which the poems are ordered according to the date of their composition, and presented in texts which give as nearly as possible their earliest completed state'. Only so can one really see each piece as it was originally conceived and trace Wordsworth's development. Yet it is exactly here, in relation to his development, that one has to feel reservations. How can any editor, aware of Wordsworth's brave struggles towards 'victories in the world of the spirit', omit such a crucial poem as 'The White Doe of Rylstone', which is in the much smaller Everyman Selection? Indeed, in such a fat volume as this, how can one justify to Elians the omission of 'Benjamin, the Waggoner'? Worst of all, we are given the whole of *The Prelude* but only the 1805 text. In a Selection, surely it would have been better to provide extracts from the preferred text of *The Prelude*, leaving room for the inclusion of these other important poems, and referring readers, as indeed the present note does, to the parallel text for further study. In the old Oxford *Wordsworth* we had the whole of the 1850 *Prelude* and of the *Excursion*. In this selection we have only the earlier text of the one and nothing at all of the other. Are we going from one unrepresentative choice to its opposite, equally unrepresentative? Are there no passages in *The Excursion* worthy of quotation apart from those written much earlier and tacked on, such as 'The Ruined Cottage' or the 'Prospectus to the Recluse', included here as part of 'Home at Grasmere'? Is the predilection for 'earliness' perhaps beginning to go too far? Is it really sensible, for instance, in what is presumably intended to be a popular edition, to call the Ode we all know as 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality...' just 'Ode', because the familiar title was not given till 1815, so that a reader at first might be forgiven for thinking it omitted? One might just as well call *The Prelude* 'untitled long poem', since Mary Wordsworth named it after her husband's death.

Our wish to have available the poems' texts 'in their earliest completed state' is because, as Jonathan Wordsworth has shown in his book *The Music of Humanity* concerning 'The Ruined Cottage' and as, following Miss Darbishire's famous essay of 1926, Harriet Jump demonstrates in her study of

revisions to *The Prelude* in this *Bulletin*, Wordsworth's changed view of the world when it is imposed on an earlier one can destroy (in 'The Ruined Cottage') or modify (in *The Prelude*) his original conception. This is not to say, however, that we do not wish to be aware of his later stance when it does not damage an earlier work of art or, on the contrary, may even create a new one. In spite of Jonathan Wordsworth's apt description of the *Apparatus Criticus* as 'that ancient instrument of torture', I should like this edition much better if it had found a way of indicating the changes made by the poet, for example in 'Simon Lee', of which the De Selincourt - Darbishire edition says, 'On the text of no other short poem did W. expend so much labour as on *Simon Lee*,' his object being 'to broaden and emphasize the contrast between Simon's radiant youth and decrepit age'. True, Stephen Gill's note says, 'Greatly revised in later editions', but this is not much use unless we know how. Students are interested too in alterations Wordsworth made in response to criticisms of the 'swollen ankles' here or the measurement of the pond in 'The Thorn'. One cannot assume that first thoughts are *always* best, even in Wordsworth, or that every change ruins the work of art. Imagine if one applied such an idea universally! We should have 'The Aeolian Harp' without some of Coleridge's most often quoted lines (beginning 'O! the one Life within us and abroad,') because they were not added till 1817 in the Errata to *Sibylline Leaves*. Fortunately H.J. Jackson, editor of 'The Oxford Authors' *Coleridge*, following E.H. Coleridge's texts in the main, does not fall into this trap. In Wordsworth's case, though his earliest versions often seem tous superior, this does not *invariably* follow. For example, would we prefer 'Resolution and Independence' in the form which the Hutchinson sisters found 'tedious' or a completed 'Ballad-Michael' to the poems we have now? Can there be much doubt that Wordsworth improved 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' when he substituted 'golden' for 'dancing' in line 4 or 'jocund' for 'laughing' in line 10 (16), or added the stanza beginning 'Continuous as the stars that shine', as late as 1815 too? Well, I suppose one could argue against these being changes for the better, though I wouldn't, but at least one *would like to know* about them. The poem is, of course, printed without any indication even that a stanza is missing in this collection. Or, in 'Michael', surely the line 'Would overset the brain, or break the heart' strengthens the text, though this change was made for the 1820 edition.

In the case of *The Prelude*, too, it would be a tragedy if we lost the 1850 version altogether. Visiting a Grammar School sixth form, who were doing the first two books of *The Prelude* for A-Level, though delighted by the boys' response to it, I was shocked to find that they only had the 1805 text. While I would myself always read from the left hand, 1805, page of the parallel text, frequent glances to the right hand would alert me to changes in the 1850; and what a pity that students should be deprived of 'the reflex of a star', or, in later books, of the face of Newton's statue as

The marble index of a mind for ever  
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone...

of the Lake District fells in autumn

Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern.

What right have we to impose our taste and opinions on students to the extent

of not even letting them *see* the varieties or the author's final approved text and so judge for themselves. While it can only increase our admiration for Wordsworth to have access to his earliest completed texts, perhaps we should also have some respect for his own words, quoted by Hayden, 'You know what importance I attach to following strictly the last Copy of the text of an Author'. In the case of shorter poems it is not impossible to indicate revisions, as the old Oxford Standard *Coleridge* (Ed. E.H. Coleridge) did, still available in paperback at £5.95. It would be a great pity if, tempted by the price and the prestigious title of the series, students were to buy 'The Oxford Authors' selection from Wordsworth thinking they had a broad and balanced picture of his work.

We shall anxiously await the forthcoming Cambridge *Wordsworth*, of which we have a foretaste in two delightful - but for students expensive-slim volumes containing in each case a choice of poems which together form a unity, 'a natural group'. These little books are eminently suited for students, with introductions simply expressed but not superficial and with excellent notes. They cannot, of course, provide more than 'a bite', 'a mouthful', whereas I was looking for a representative selection, but pupils would at least have one or two first-rate poems well digested. The problem of providing only the earliest texts still remains. The Shakespearian overtones of 'Overset the brain and break the heart' are still lost in 'Michael'. Jonathan Wordsworth says that the 'Two-Part *Prelude*' can be seen as a 'beautifully self-contained work, which not only includes most of the famous poetry that has become known through later forms of the poem, but presents the great sequences - the "spots of time" especially - in their most original and striking combination'. It would undoubtedly form a most palatable set-text for those A-Level Grammar School boys but one would prefer them at least to be *aware* of the 1805 and 1850 versions, as contained in the Norton edition.

So what would I do now if still asked to take these two groups of students? I think I should still recommend the Everyman *Selected Poems of Wordsworth* for the first group, supplemented by Jonathan Wordsworth's edition of *The Ruined Cottage*, at least for myself. Previously I had to draw on his book for a text or latterly the Cornell edition. For both groups I should suggest the Norton *Prelude* but which 'Complete Poems of Wordsworth' I could call upon I still don't know. Would anyone like to try an edition that somehow managed to do justice to both the earlier and the later poet?

For Coleridge's poetry the Everyman Edition edited by John Beer has long been an admirable stand-by, with its useful summary of the background to the period before each section of the work, though even so students could sometimes do with fuller notes as well. This is still available in paperback at £1.95, marvellous value. The new 'Oxford Authors' edition has brief end-notes but one misses E.H. Coleridge's textual footnotes in the old Oxford edition, which did not seem at all intrusive. The poems are arranged chronologically and the selection is discerning if perhaps rather Procrustean. One looks in vain for 'To Asra', the gem 'Phantom', or the two 'Daydream' poems and we are not given the 'Letter to Sara Hutchinson', only 'Dejection: An Ode', whereas John Beer gives both versions.

As for prose, the Wordsworth volume includes the Prefaces and some oddments usually found in notes. The smaller bulk of Coleridge's poems allows his

editor to include the whole of *Biographia Literaria*, together with extracts from other prose writings not readily available to readers without easy access to the Bollingen or Shedd volumes. This must be a bonus for those who wish to have an idea of the whole range of Coleridge's work and justifies the slightly higher price of £6.95, the reader gaining two books - plus - in one. The growing tendency among scholars to emphasize Coleridge's prose at the expense of his poetry is clearly reflected in this selection. I am not sure that it is a preference shared by the average undergraduate - or even common reader - who might, perhaps be content with the two single Everyman books, much easier to handle, the one containing many more poems, the other devoted to the only prose text that most students are likely to need, *Biographia Literaria*, Paperback £3.50.

In this respect Kathleen Raine was perhaps wise in her Penguin *Coleridge* selection to choose to 'omit entirely whole fields of thought, and to represent as fully as space permits Coleridge as poet and as critic of poetry'. This little book at £1.95 does provide a possible text for students. It is arranged chronologically and each poem is given probable date of composition, though there are no notes. It too omits 'To Asra' and the 'Daydream' poems and 'Letter to Sara Hutchinson', but does include 'Phantom'. First published in 1957, again this re-issue reflects its time. One is somewhat startled by the statement in the Introduction that 'Coleridge was not, like his elder contemporary Blake, a great religious thinker'. Even so, the book is well worth its modest price, containing a good selection of prose as well as verse.

On my father's bookshelves were Everyman hardbacks which had cost him a shilling each, on mine are still some that cost me two. Now we celebrate twenty-five years of Everyman Paperbacks. What a wonderful institution Dents have given us! Why does not every bookshop have shelves and shelves of Everyman? At one time, they were almost alone in keeping Scott's novels easily available. Long may they last alongside that more recent phenomenon Penguin Books, fifty years young.

Mary Wedd

Leigh Hunt *Captain Sword and Captain Pen Facsimile of the First Edition of 1835*; with an Introduction by Rhodes Dunlap, Iowa City, Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1984, \$10.

I firmly believe that war, or the sending thousands of our fellow-creatures to cut one another to bits, often for what they have no concern in, nor understand, will one day be reckoned far more absurd than if people were to settle an argument over the dinner-table with their knives.

This determined declaration of Leigh Hunt in 1835 may come as somewhat of a surprise to those who know the author as a light-hearted essayist, a charming, though minor, versifier, a friend of Keats and Shelley, and the original of Dickens' pathetic Skimpole. But anyone familiar with the fierce *Examiner* leaders, the violent political squibs, and the often uncompromising *Autobiography*, will immediately recognise the tone of voice. It is one of indignation. And, though a far cry from the sunniness of *Foliage* and

*The Story of Rimini*, Hunt's *Captain Sword and Captain Pen*, from which the above extract is taken, reflects the same passion for life and scorn for systems of religion and government. The book is a crusade - and Hunt was a crusader on behalf of life and reason.

There were anti-war poems before *Captain Sword and Captain Pen* (one thinks of Southey's 'Blenheim') and, of course, there have been countless since. But for all their integrity as the products of first-hand experience the works of Owen, Sassoon, Keith Douglas and the rest do not engage the intellect in the same way as does Hunt's poem and its lengthy postscript. His aim was to shock the reader and to reason with him afterwards -- quite a new departure. Hunt had never himself fought -- though he had been a sort of Home Guard volunteer -- but this lack of personal involvement in battle was more an advantage than a hindrance to Hunt. It meant that instead of being blinkered by war experience, or even blinded by war's traumas, he found himself able to scan a wide range of descriptive sources (some of which are acknowledged in the postscript) to maximum imaginative effect. *Captain Sword and Captain Pen* is entirely free from the brothers-in-arms sentimentality that characterises much war-writing, including that of Edmund Blunden who, incidentally, for a Hunt enthusiast seems unaccountably unwilling to discuss the poem at length in his biography.

Nevertheless Blunden was right to call *Captain Sword and Captain Pen* one of the author's most remarkable poems and to point to the cinematographic technique in which scenes of joy or horror are flashed before the reader's eye, often in direct contrast. Hunt the film-director cuts from Captain Sword, the universal army officer, in essence Wellington, marching to glory at the head of his troops, to the battle-ground -- 'a spot of rural peace ... singing in the sun with birds', and then to the ensuing carnage (presented with the stomach-churning authenticity of a war-movie). From the sumptuous banquet, where the brave Captain is the object of female adoration, Hunt cuts to the battlefield after the victory and focuses on a mortally wounded soldier in a ditch:

His nails are in earth, his eyes in air,  
And "Water" he crieth -- he may not forbear.  
Brave and good was he, yet now he dreams  
The moon looks cruel; and he blasphememes.

He dies, while at home his mother and sweetheart still imagine him safely tucked up in bed. The language is harrowing and as moving as anything that came out of the First World War. Truly, indignation produced the best in Hunt, but he was not yet finished with *Captain Sword*.

Made arrogant by his military victories the Captain becomes (in Hunt's delightfully scathing phrase) 'infirm in his wits' and believes, quite wrongly, that a great soldier in wartime can become a great statesman in peace-time. The truth was that Wellington as Prime Minister after the death of Canning in 1827 was a disaster. Even the Tories admitted as much. Men like Wellington, Hunt argues, know only the way of the sword. Their enemies are the very leaders of Reform and enlightenment whose own foes turn out to be, not Sword and his kind, but ignorance, famine and plague, and whose weapon is the printing press. So, in the end, thanks to *Captain Pen*, who is arguably Lord Brougham, men refuse to fight with *Captain Sword*. War becomes impossible.



when first you set your foot in the *cottage* - the anxious ministerings about you, where little or nothing (God knows) was to be ministered':

You saw with your bodily eyes indeed what seemed a bare scrag - cold savings from the foregone meal - remnant hardly sufficient to send a mendicant from the door contented. But in the copious will - the revelling imagination of your host - ... whole beeves were spread before you - hecatombs - no end appeared to the profusion.

Lamb goes on to describe how the old gentleman, full of hospitable sayings and good wishes, would slide 'a slender ratio of Single Gloucester upon his wife's plate, or the daughters'', and 'convey the remenant rind into his own, with a merry quirk of "the nearer the bone", etc., and declaring that he universally preferred the outside'. Somehow, by such self-sacrificing devices, the half-pay captain managed to make the food last out: 'only he would sometimes finish the remainder crust, to show that he wished no savings'.

The incident is characteristic of Lamb at his best, partly because it depends on a delicate understanding between author and reader. They come together, as it were, in a charitable conspiracy: Lamb knows, and his readers know, that the real reason why the captain finishes the crust that is left is that he is hungry, after giving others the cheese and himself the rind. But the captain likes to pretend that he eats the crust so as not to appear parsimonious, and we go along with this fiction in compassion and gladness of heart; which is one reason why Lamb is so fine a writer - he appeals to the best and noblest and kindest instincts in us.

Captain Jackson had no wine, but as Lamb (again kindly) remarks, 'the sensation of wine was there':

Shut your eyes, and you would swear a capacious bowl of punch was foaming in the centre, with beams of generous Port or Madera radiating to it from each of the table corners.

This benevolent state of being well deceived is one which continued to interest Lamb. Captain Jackson, as the latter part of the essay which bears his name makes clear, is a self-deceiver, but when self-deception is allied to selflessness and generosity it often turns out to surprise by being a virtue. Deception and self-deception are often found in Lamb's writing about food, and he uses food frequently to talk about morality.

Food, and human attitudes to it, are subjects which lend themselves to such moral treatment. Dickens obviously knew this in his portrayal of Oliver Twist in the workhouse or of Chadband stuffing himself at Snagsby's table while giving the starving Jo a sermon in *Bleak House*. Who eats, and who does not, is a profound and pressing question which the rich countries of the world have had to face recently when confronted by famines in Africa; how a person eats, and what he eats, are indicators of civilized behaviour and of a concern for others: how much, for instance, should one enjoy food, seek to gratify refined tastes, turn cuisine into an art? All these questions suggest that food ought to be, and often is, one of the most moral of subjects.

In Lamb's case, the enquiry begins at Christ's Hospital. In 'Christ's Hospital

Five-and Thirty Years Ago', Lamb describes himself through the eyes of Coleridge and shows himself as particularly favoured in the matter of food:

He had his tea and hot rolls in a morning, while we were battenning upon our quarter of a penny loaf - our *crug* - moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of "extra-ordinary bread and butter", from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant (we had three banyan to four meat days in the week) - was endeared to his palate with a lump of double-refined /sugar/, and a smack of ginger (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon.

All this is very much to Lamb's discredit: he appears like a spoiled boy, and we have to work hard to remember that this has been written by himself and is by way of being something of a confessional piece. But worse is to come:

In lieu of our *half-pickled* Sundays, or *quite fresh* boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as caro equina), with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth - our scanty mutton scraggs on Fridays - and rather more savoury, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion) - he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting griskin (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his maid or aunt!

By putting this into the mouth of a school-fellow, Lamb is able to portray the envy which they must have felt as they watched him eat his veal or griskin (lean pork or bacon). It also gives a very vivid portrayal of the diet which was eaten by the remainder of the boys. School dinners have always been a source of grumbling, but perhaps never so vividly as this.

The essay continues, describing the conflicting emotions of the privileged Lamb as if through the eyes of someone else:

I remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands (of higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite); and the contending passions of L. at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer; shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing; sympathy for those who were too many to share in it; and, at top of all, hunger (eldest, strongest of the passions!) predominant, breaking down the stony faces of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling over-consciousness.

The whole passage seems remarkably authentic in its registering of contending emotions; it also has to record what was, for Lamb in recollection, an embarrassing case of being privileged. There is nothing a school child

## CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

The Birthday Celebration was held this year on 8th February at the Vitello d'Oro Restaurant, Westminster, under the kind Chairmanship of our President, Professor John Stevens, and was very well attended. Our guest of honour, Ronald Blythe, gave a delightful account of the friendship between Lamb and Hazlitt and proposed the toast to the Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb. Our Hon.General Secretary, Mrs. Madeline Huxstep, proposed the toast to Provincial and Overseas Members and Guests, reminding us by name of many good friends of the Society all over the world. According to custom, we had with us both girls and boys from Christ's Hospital and Grace before and after meat was said for us by two Grecians.

## NOTES

THE CROWSLEY MEMORIAL LECTURE, given by Professor Watson of Durham University, was in December and not, as in the past, in September, which explains its appearance in the April rather than the January *Bulletin*. It was a great pleasure to have him with us.

A BIG 'THANK YOU' to Miss Helen Stutfield, who has shouldered the tedious task for years of sending out the *Bulletins* for us as one of her many voluntary works of kindness. Now that we can at last afford to do so, we are glad to be able to ask our printers to relieve her of this duty and we wish to express our warm gratitude to her.

## PROFESSOR JAMES MISENHEIMER

Members will be delighted to know that Professor Misenheimer will again be speaking to the Society on 7th March 1987. Several Lamb members enjoyed his talk to the Johnson Society in January, as well as the chance to visit literary sites in Twickenham (including Pope's Grotto and Strawberry Hill) with him.

## 'WORDS'

Mrs. Barbara Brill tells us that she has been commissioned by the editor of the magazine 'Words' to write an article on literary societies in Britain for publication during 1986. We have sent her information about the CLS and in turn she has sent us a fascinating article (from the 'Library Review') which links her own family history with that of Charles Lamb. If any member would like to borrow this, please send a (large) S.A.E. to the Honorary Secretary.

CHIARA PERBELLINI (Via Anzani 15, 37126 Verona, Italy) writes:

'I am studying English Literature at the Università Cattolica del S. Cuore in Brescia ... and am to write a dissertation concerning Charles Lamb. The

exact title of my work is: "Comparison of the language (that is imagery) in *Macbeth* by W. Shakespeare and in the tale for children *Macbeth* by Charles Lamb ..."

We have sent Chiara *Bulletin 49* (containing Professor Craik's delightful lecture on 'Lamb's Tales') and *Bulletin 25* (with Professor Barnett's lecture on 'That cursed Barbauld crew'). Should other members have contributions for Chiara's dissertation, perhaps they would like to write to her direct.

M.R.H.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Charles Lamb Society will take place at the Mary Ward Centre, Queen Square, London, W.C.1. on Saturday 10th May at 2.45 p.m. Nominations are invited for Officers and Members of the Council, and should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible, after ensuring that nominees are prepared to stand.

#### NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. B.J. Cunningham, 32 Imperial Drive, N. Harrow Middlesex HA2 7LQ.

Prof. R. Maniquis, English Department, University of California, Los Angeles,  
CA 90291, U.S.A.

Miss B. Stephenson, Millstream Cottage, Cros-combe, Near Wells, Somerset.

Dr. D.P. Whitmore, 1404 East 5th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, U.S.A.

Portland State University Library, P.O. Box 1151 Portland, Oregon 97207, U.S.A.