UNIVERSITÀ DEL PIEMONTE ORIENTALE

Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Lingue, Culture, Turismo

Tesi di Laurea

"SHE GAVE ME EYES, SHE GAVE ME EARS": A BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S SENSE OF PLACE

Relatrice: Prof.ssa Carla Pomarè

Correlatore: Prof. Marco Pustianaz

Candidata: Dalma Fanchi

Matricola: 20036053

Anno Accademico 2022/2023

A me stessa. Al mio coraggio e alla mia determinazione.

A chi non ha mai smesso di credere in me.

Sono sempre i sogni a dare forma al mondo

Sono sempre i sogni a fare la realtà

Contents

Introduction

> *It was a strange love, profound, almost dumb, as if brother and sister had grown together and shared not the speech but the mood, so that they hardly knew which felt, which spoke, which saw the daffodils or the sleeping city; only Dorothy stored the mood in prose, and later William came and bathed in it and made it into poetry.*[1]

The aim of this work is to provide a portrait of Dorothy Wordsworth, who has been described as "the most remarkable and the most distinguished of English prose writers who never wrote a line for the general public."[2]

Since Dorothy Wordsworth never intended to be published or praised as a writer and only extracts from her diaries appeared during her lifetime, she is often regarded as playing an undervalued or exploited role in the Wordsworths' household. In point of fact, the lives of the siblings were deeply intertwined and on numerous occasions William acknowledged Dorothy's importance to him. This work examines the close relationship between Dorothy and her brother, the considerable influence she exerted on his poetry, and their creative collaboration, dealing also with her relationship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the role she played in his life and career. The main focus, however, is on Dorothy's own life and works, retraced by relying in particular on her travelogues, which are known as *Journals*, and on her correspondence with family members and friends, from which her own voice emerges. Thus, Dorothy's works contribute to the narration of her story, and excerpts from minor texts show that her talent was not related only to prose writing.

The underlying thread of this thesis is Dorothy's sense of place: her attachment to the different dwellings where she lived, and her sense of wonder at the new places she visited are analysed in order to show the significant effect they had on her biography as well as on her literary production. This also sheds light on what might be described as Dorothy's philosophy of life: her belief in the healing as well as nurturing power of nature, her trust in walking as a means of fostering creativity, and her intense devotion to her brother and his family.

Since this work discusses Dorothy Wordsworth's life and her relationship with her brother highlighting the significance of her attachment to the different places she lived in and visited, it relies mainly on the important biographical studies by Ernest de Selincourt and Lucy Newlyn. The

---

[1] V. Woolf, *The Common Reader Second Series, Essay on Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 169, qt. in *A Little Society From the Brontës to Dorothy and William Wordsworth, literary siblings challenge assumptions of lonely genius*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/70071/a-little-society, Accessed 10/03/2023.

[2] *The Guardian view on Dorothy Wordsworth: a rare achievement*, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/19/the-guardian-view-on-dorothy-wordsworth-a-rare-achievement, Accessed 10/03/2023.

final chapter looks at their role in the development of what has become the rich field of Dorothy Wordsworth studies today, at the same time providing an overview of the main critical contributions that in recent years have moved beyond the biographical to intersect with the developments of literary theory.

1. Homeless

> *Oh! Jane, I hope it may be long ere you experience the loss of your parents, but till you know that loss you will never know how dear to you your sisters are; till you feel that loss!*[1]

Dorothy Wordsworth was born on 25 December 1771 in Cockermouth, at the northern edge of the Lake District, Cumberland, daughter to John Wordsworth and Anne Cookson. Dorothy's father was educated for the law and, like his father Richard, he entered the service of the Lowther family. On 5 February 1766 he married Anne and they had five children: Richard (1768), William (1770), Dorothy (1771), John (1772), and Christopher (1774).

The name Dorothy derives from the Greek and it means "gift of God"; the choice of this name clearly shows how joyfully her birth was welcomed by her family. Moreover, her arrival on the most important day of the Christian calendar adds symbolic significance to her birth and it would influence how she was perceived by her brother William. From the first, Dorothy and William were specially drawn to one another: in temperament alike, they were born to be companions. The intense mutual attachment between Dorothy and William began ever since their baptism, which took place at the same time, despite the fact that he was eighteen months older.

John Wordsworth worked as attorney for the tyrannical Sir James Lowther. Furthermore, he was Bailiff and Recorder of Cockermouth and Coroner of the Seignory of Millom. He was a man of practical ability, intent on building up a good financial position. Certainly, being a man of a reserved nature and busy with affairs, he was not the type of man who found it easy to be part of the life of his children. Therefore, he seems to have made no lasting impression on his sons and daughter.

On the other hand, Dorothy's mother, Anne, was a woman of high character and rich in common sense. She was devoted to her children and she fully understood them, not expecting them to be prodigies, but loving them for what they were. Anne let them run into the open air and play in the garden or in the fields by the river's edge.

Dorothy's early childhood was happy and settled. Her family lived in one of the best houses on Cockermouth's main street, a long red-brick building close to the bridge over the river Derwent. The property belonged to Sir James Lowther; since there is no entry for rent in the accounts of John

[1] Letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Jane Pollard, Summer 1787, qt. in E. de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth, A Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1933, p. 14; Dorothy Wordsworth's correspondence quoted in de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth, A Biography* and included in this dissertation is taken from *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, collected and edited by William Knight, 3 vols., 1907.

Wordsworth, it is probable that the family lived in it rent-free, in part-payment for his professional services. The house had a garden at the back, bounded by a high terrace, with a view of the castle to the right; memories of her family home remained with Dorothy all her life. In 1806 she wrote that she could picture her birthplace "as vividly as I had been there the other day."[2]

The trouble-free childhood of Dorothy was interrupted on 8 March 1778 by the sudden death of her mother, which separated her from her brothers and father. At Anne's dying request, the little girl was entrusted to the care of her mother's cousin Elizabeth Threlkeld. For this reason, Dorothy moved 70 miles away in the West Yorkshire town of Halifax. Instead, her four brothers were sent to school in Hawkshead, a small village in Northern Lancashire, where William and Richard attended the local grammar school. During these years, William gained a solid grounding in the classics and poetry, which prepared him for taking up his place at Cambridge. In addition, his landlady Ann Tyson gave him the freedom to explore the surrounding countryside of Hawkshead.

To the acutely sensitive and affectionate Dorothy, the loss of her mother and the separation from her nearest brother and playmate William were a great sorrow. Grief was particularly sharp for her as well as for William. Both of them suffered a lot from emotional deprivation and they would keep these memories their entire life; early bereavement and homesickness would influence their later writings.[3]

Elizabeth Threlkeld had an instinctive understanding of young children. She succeeded in combining a firm sense of discipline with respect for the child's personality and inborn love of freedom. She was a woman of alert intelligence and wide culture, devoted to her garden and to the simple pleasure of country life. At Halifax, Dorothy found the love and security she needed, and she was very affectionate towards "Aunt" Threlkeld, as is shown by references in her later letters: "The loss of a Mother can only be made up by such a friend as my Dear Aunt."[4] Although Dorothy never once returned home during her childhood, not even on Christmas day, her reminiscences of the nine years spent at Halifax show neither trace of melancholy nor depression; until the happy time when she eventually could set up house with William at Grasmere, she always looked upon Halifax as her home.

Dorothy owed the development of her delight in the service of those she loved, her strong sense of duty, and her unselfishness to the example of her dear aunt. Moreover, Elizabeth Threlkeld

---

[2] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 616, qt. in L. Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 2.
[3] See Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 2.
[4] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 15-16, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 4.

was responsible for the best part of her education. In 1781 Dorothy started Dr. and Mrs. Wilkinson's boarding school in Hipperholme, two miles away from Halifax, but she spent there only six months, since family financial resources were not sufficient to pay her school fees. She was obliged to return to Halifax, where she attended Miss Mellin's, a non-conformist co-educational day-school, where she was introduced to the English, Latin, and Greek classics. In her later writings, Dorothy would make no impressive allusion to the time that she spent at school: she did not learn to write long letters in French without making mistakes and she was not very good at music or at drawing. The school at Halifax did not aim at perfecting its pupils in those elegant accomplishments which would impress the world. But she grew to love good old English reading and early acquired a taste for the best things in literature. She read on her own Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, which was quite an unusual reading for a fourteen-year-old girl, and her library contained the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Furthermore, the letters that she wrote as a girl of sixteen are remarkable for their correctness and maturity of style, and they show that easy mastery of language which would later characterize her own writing.[5]

But books never came first with Dorothy, since Halifax was a social place that had plenty of young gay companions with whom to play games and go for country rambles. Among these was Jane Pollard, with whom Dorothy struck up a lifelong friendship. She enjoyed wandering the moors near Halifax with Jane and her sisters. Almost all the knowledge we have of Dorothy's early life is owed to the letters she sent to Jane Pollard after she left Halifax.

It is clear that Dorothy spent a happy girlhood at Halifax. She was impulsive in her manner and quick in her responses to all that was going on around her, with an inexhaustible fund of enjoyment, and she won affection on all sides.

But on 30 December 1783 Dorothy's life was struck by another tragedy: her father died, after having spent two months and a half seriously ill. The family's financial situation worsened: John Wordsworth died without making a will, and he left his five children orphaned and penniless. The little fortune that he left behind him was in the hands of the despotic Lord Lowther, who refused to surrender it. Therefore, the boys were forced to leave their home. They spent their vacations at their grandparents' in Penrith and they remained under the guardianship of their uncles until they completed their education and were able to earn a living.

[5] See de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 7-8.

As to Dorothy, in May 1787, when she was in her sixteenth year, she was again uprooted; she had to move to Penrith to live with her elderly grandparents. Undoubtedly, her Halifax guardians thought it was time for Dorothy to make herself useful. Notwithstanding her eagerness to reunite with her brothers, this was a heavy change for Dorothy: to bid good-bye to her dear aunt and especially to Jane was a terrible wrench, and Penrith was everything but welcoming. Dorothy's grandfather, William Cookson, was already seriously ill and not in the exact mood to take care of children. On the other hand, his wife believed in a different system of education than the one Dorothy had met with at Cockermouth and Halifax. She did not stand Dorothy's personality, considering it intractable and wild, and made it her duty to tame her. Obviously, Dorothy found this new environment unpleasant and constraining, as she revealed in one of her letters to Jane Pollard:

> One would imagine that a Grandmr [*sic*] would feel for her grandchild all the tenderness of a mother, particularly when that Grandchild had no other parent, but there is so little of tenderness in her manner or of anything affectionate, that while I am in her house I cannot at all consider myself as at home, I feel like a stranger.[6]

Clearly, Dorothy longed for the friendly and warm atmosphere of the Threlkeld household in Halifax.

At Penrith, during the summer of 1787, the Wordsworth boys were reunited with their sister, after a separation that lasted almost ten years. Their meeting was doubtless a cause of joy, but also of grief. On the one hand, those spent with her brothers were Dorothy's only moments of delight and she was in rapturous joy to see them: they seemed like a gift to her, and she to them. In addition, with them she could eventually grieve the loss of their parents. Undeniably, feelings of bereavement and separation contributed to strengthen the special bond between the five siblings, as Dorothy recorded in a letter to Jane: "These afflictions have all contributed to unite us closer by the Bonds of affection notwithstanding we have been compelled to spend our youth far asunder."[7] On the other hand, the Wordsworths knew what they had lost, they did not have shared memories, and they had neither a home nor financial security. Moreover, Dorothy's sense of grievance against her relatives increased, since they never gave up treating them with contempt, as she wrote in a letter to Jane Pollard during that summer:

> Many a time have Wm, J, C, and myself shed tears together, tears of the bitterest sorrow; we all of us, each day, feel more sensibly the loss we sustained when we were deprived of our parents, and each day

[6] Letter from *D. W. to J. P.,* late Autumn 1787, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 16.
[7] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 88, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 5.

we receive fresh insults. You will wonder of what sort; believe me of the most mortifying kind, the insults of servants.[8]

Dorothy's mood was badly affected by her grandparents' manners, as she revealed in her next letter to Jane:

You cannot think how gravely and silently I sit with her [grandmother] and my Grandfr [*sic*], you would scarcely know me. You are well acquainted that I was never remarkable for taciturnity, but now I sit for whole hours without saying anything excepting that I have an old shirt to mend.[9]

Furthermore, Dorothy found it very hard to get over the separation from her brothers, and the loss of communal experiences and memories:

I cannot help having many a Sigh at the Reflection that I have passed one and twenty years of my Life, and the first six years only of this Time was spent in the enjoyment of the same Pleasures that were enjoyed by my Brothers, and that I was then too young to be sensible of the Blessing.[10]

During the difficult years that Dorothy spent at Penrith, she took some consolation from writing and walking, as is clearly shown by her breathless letters to Jane, where she gave voice to her personal thoughts and sorrow:

As I was returning home in the afternoon two young ladies engaged me to walk with them; I was in low spirits; I thought a walk would perhaps put off for a while my melancholy reflections therefore I consented. […] While I have you my dear Jane to whom I will ever lay open all the secrets of my heart.[11]

From a very early age, walking became crucial to Dorothy's life and to her sense of herself as woman and writer, to the point that she has been included among the ten greatest women walkers of the last three hundred years. If, at the beginning, walking had a healing power over her "low spirits and melancholy", it then contributed to foster her creativity.[12] Certainly, her brother William exerted considerable influence on the importance that Dorothy attached to walking. Walking has been acknowledged as central to the writing of William Wordsworth. He gained readers of his own time, and has continued to enjoy admiration since, not only for his literary accomplishments but his physical feats: it has been estimated that William walked 180,000 miles in his lifetime on what has been described as "serviceable legs beyond the average standard of human requisition."[13] Walking played an essential role in the Romantic writers' reputation and it is considered to be the ideal

[8] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 3, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 4.
[9] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 5 and 6 Aug. 1787, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 16-17.
[10] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 88, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 6.
[11] Letter from D. W. to J. P., Summer 1787, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 15-16.
[12] See K. Andrews, *Wanderers A History of Women Walking*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2020, pp. 9-10.
[13] T. de Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey*, David Masson, London, 1986, p. 242.

means by which a poet can experience "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" that William thought necessary for composition.[14]

In 1788 Dorothy sadly wrote in a letter to Jane that they were "squandered abroad", describing her and her brothers' situation by using a quotation from *The Merchant of Venice* that reveals her literary sensibility.[15] At that time William was already at Cambridge, whereas her three brothers were scattered in different villages. The quotation from Shakespeare highlights Dorothy's extraordinary memory and natural skill for literary allusion. At Penrith, Dorothy did not give up her education; on the contrary, she continued with her ponderous reading: "I am determined to read a great deal now, both in French and English. […] I am at present reading the Iliad, and like it very much."[16] In spite of her efforts to keep pace with her brothers' education, Dorothy knew that hers had not been as rigorous as her brothers'. While her brothers were able, because of their sex, to go to university, or to sea, or to travel through Europe, Dorothy's existence always depended upon the benevolence of her benefactors and she had to accept, as a young and unprotected woman, whatever her extended family offered. For this reason, she always stood in awe of them and devoured the books they gave her: "Fielding's works, Hayley's poems, Gil Blas, Goldsmith's poems, other trifling things."[17] Before William set out for Cambridge, he gave Dorothy a copy of Simon Burns' *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, which became a symbol of their brotherly as well as literary union.

Luckily, at Penrith Dorothy met Mary and Peggy Hutchinson, with whom she spent many pleasant moments, as she would write a few years later to Jane:

> [Mary and Peggy Hutchinson were] my sole companions at Penrith, who removed the tediousness of many an hour and whose company, in the absence of my brothers, was the only agreeable variety that Penrith afforded.[18]

Mary and Peggy Hutchinson lived at Penrith with their mother's sister; like Dorothy, they were orphans and this contributed to forge a strong bond between them. Together, they took many

---

[14] W. Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter, Peterborough, 2008, p. 175; see Andrews, *Wanderers*, pp. 16-17.

[15] Folger Shakespeare Library, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, scene 3, line 21, https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/the-merchant-of-venice/read/#line-1.3.15 (Accessed 30/03/2023), qt. in Letter from D. W. to J. P., January 1788, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 19; see *The Guardian view on Dorothy Wordsworth: a rare achievement,* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/19/the-guardian-view-on-dorothy-wordsworth-a-rare-achievement, Accessed 10/03/2023.

[16] Letter from D. W. to J. P., Summer 1787, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 16.

[17] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 8, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 12; see Andrews, *Wanderers*, p. 60.

[18] Letter from D. W. to J. P., April 1795, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 17.

walks around Penrith and spent many hours talking over the kitchen fire. In addition, as a small boy William had been at the same dame school as Mary, the woman who would later become his wife.

At Penrith, Dorothy's intellectual abilities were detected by her uncle, the Reverend William Cookson. He was a man of taste and feeling, and a scholar who had experience of a wider world than Penrith. William Cookson resented the way in which her niece was attacked by her grandmother. He interested himself in Dorothy's education and took her every morning to lessons in French, Geography, and Arithmetic. Moreover, her uncle sympathized with Dorothy's desire to pour out her heart to her distant friend Jane and allowed her to write letters in lesson-hours, something that her grandmother would have certainly disapproved of. Undoubtedly, Dorothy responded to her uncle William's kindness with all the warmth of her nature, as she told Jane: "He is a friend to whom […] I owe the greatest obligations, every day he gives me new proofs of his affection."[19]

Dorothy's grandfather died during the winter, making the house as well as her mood even sadder. Since her brothers did not visit her at Christmas, she felt more than ever the separation from them and the cheerful society of Halifax. Dorothy, driven by the deepest melancholy, described herself as "poor Dolly" in her letter to Jane in January 1788.[20]

The absence of correspondence between Dorothy and Jane in the summer of 1788 may be related to the fact that life at Penrith was becoming more tolerable to her. Her friendship with the Hutchinsons was growing, as well as her affection for her uncle William. Furthermore, the Wordsworth brothers spent much of their holidays at Penrith. Dorothy and William's reunion was of considerable significance to both of them. It was during the summer of 1788 that the strong emotional bond between them strengthened. Dorothy got increasingly closer to William and she watched over him as a parent might. They discussed poetry and they loved to roam the country that surrounded Penrith; these walks were only the first of the many they would take during their life. Dorothy encouraged him to write and she offered criticism, whereas William stimulated her to read. Moreover, it was at Penrith that they started to dream of a happy future together. Dorothy was fully aware of the role she played in her brother's life: to help him with loving sympathy, to provide the quickening influence that he needed, and to be always at his side, smoothing his path before him.[21] In the subsequent autobiographical reconstruction of his intellectual growth, *The Prelude*, William

[19] Letter from D. W. to J. P., late Autumn 1787, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 19.
[20] Ibid, January 1788.
[21] See *Britannica, Dorothy Wordsworth,* https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dorothy-Wordsworth, Accessed 09/03/2023.

often expressed his deep affection for his sister. Book VI of *The Prelude* contains a tribute to Dorothy which refers to the summer of 1788:

> Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
> Of my own native region, and was blest
> Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
> Above all joys, that seem'd another morn
> Risen on mid noon, the presence, Friend, I mean,
> Of that sole Sister, she who hath been long
> Thy Treasure also, thy true friend and mine,
> Now, after separation desolate
> Restor'd to me, such absence that she seem'd
> A gift then first bestow'd.[22]

In these lines William thanked Providence for the presence of his sister and he depicted her as a gift, referring to the Greek meaning of her name.

Since their reunion, Dorothy formed a close literary bond with William: her presence and their conversation inspired him and quickened his creativity. Additionally, soon after they were together again, a system of gift-exchange in the form of poetic and prose tributes began between them, and it would continue throughout their lives. It can be considered part of a therapeutic approach to heal the loss of their parents, home, and communal identity. In his most famous poem of gratitude, *The Sparrow's Nest*, William attributed his own gift as a poet to Dorothy's influence on his sensibility:

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.[23]

During the summer vacation of 1787, as William prepared to leave for Cambridge, he composed the second part of one of the first poems where he expressed his devotion to his sister: *The Vale of Esthwaite*. Dorothy's presence is particularly evident in the closing lines of the poem:

> Sister for whom I feel a love
> What warms a Brother far above
> On you as sad she marks the scene

[22] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, *Book VI*, ll. 209-218, https://genius.com/William-wordsworth-the-prelude-book-6-annotated, Accessed 27/10/2023.
[23] W. Wordsworth, *The Sparrow's Nest*, ll. 17-20, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 7-12.

Why does my heart so fondly lean
Why but because in you is giv'n
All all my soul could wish from heav'n
Why but because I fondly view
All, all that heav'n has claim'd in you.[24]

In these lines William's brotherly affection and even filial devotion emerge in the repetition of "Why…". His confession that he "fondly leans" on Dorothy suggests that she plays a sort of parental role.

[24] W. Wordsworth, *The Vale of Esthwaite*, ll. 380-386, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 11; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 11.

2. Forncett

> *Oh Jane, the last time we were together he won my affection to a degree which I cannot describe; his attentions to me were such as the most insensible of mortals must have been touched with, there was no pleasure he would not have given up with joy for half an hour's conversation with me.*[1]

In autumn 1788 Dorothy moved to Forncett St Peter, a parish in Norfolk, near Norwich, to live with her uncle William and his wife, Miss Cowper. Forncett was a small and remote village of farmers. Despite the fact that the environment Dorothy came in contact with was evangelical and conservative, in sharp contrast to the progressive Halifax, it had all that she asked for. She slipped quickly into a routine and she spent her days praying, gardening, reading, writing, improving her French, visiting the poor, and walking. Moreover, she continued to be tutored by her uncle. The letter that she wrote to Jane in December proves clearly her renewed happiness:

> To live in the country and with such kind of friends! Have I not every reason to be thankful? My happiness was very unexpected, […]; when my Uncle told me I was almost mad with joy; I cried and laughed alternately.[2]

Dorothy loved her country life and its simple pleasures because she had the ability to make the most of whatever the present had to offer and she had plenty of duties to occupy her time. In August 1789 she began to run a Sunday school for nine girls, teaching them to read and spell, and the catechism, an activity she was very proud of. She visited the parishioners with her uncle and helped her aunt in the management of the household. When her uncle and his wife's children were born, she became their nurse and tutoress.

There was little society at Forncett to distract her. The Cooksons had only one neighbour, but on some occasions they welcomed visitors from the more distant world. In the summer of 1789 both her aunt Elizabeth Threlkeld and her brother William were at Forncett. Furthermore, the following Christmas William Wilberforce was their guest for a month. Wilberforce had already mounted his campaign for the abolition of the slave trade and Dorothy caught some of his passion for the cause, as she begged Jane to solicit her father's vote for him at the next election. Evidently, Dorothy too made a strong impression on him, since he promised her ten guineas a year to distribute among the poor of the parish. In addition, Wilberforce gave Dorothy a copy of Sarah Trimmer's *Oeconomy of Charity*.

---

[1] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 16 June 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 42.
[2] Ibid, 6 Dec. 1788, p. 22.

In the summer of 1790, while Dorothy was working as a nanny at her uncle's, William left Cambridge to set out on a strenuous walking tour of nearly three thousand miles across Europe with his friend Robert Jones. The two young men were inspired by French radical fervour. During this period, William formed his early political opinions, particularly his passionate hatred of tyranny. These ideas would be greatly transformed over the coming years, but never totally abandoned. William and Robert Jones arrived in France on the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille; the excitement about the revolutionary ardour which they found had a profound effect on them.

During the whole vacation William never failed to write to Dorothy, describing the beautiful landscapes he encountered and the wanderlust that drove him onward, underlining how dearly he missed her:

I have thought of you perpetually; and never have my eyes burst upon a scene of particular loveliness but I have almost instantly wished that you could for a moment be transported to the place where I stood to enjoy it.[3]

At Forncett, Dorothy read these lines enthusiastically and she shared them with her friend Jane, highlighting her pride at William's prowess. She followed her brother's itinerary on her map, energized by the excitement of his travel. Notwithstanding her pride at William's achievement, Dorothy had been very anxious about him the entire summer, as she revealed in a letter to Jane:

I assure you, when I trace his paths upon the maps I wonder that his strength and courage have not sunk under the fatigues he must have undergone; […] I confess, however, that had he acquainted me with his scheme before its execution I should […] have looked upon it as mad and impracticable.[4]

At Christmas 1790 Dorothy was eventually reunited with her brother William, after a separation of eighteen months. When William visited her, the journey was still fresh in his mind and he told about it to Dorothy in detail during their evening walks. These walks became a moment of intense emotion for both the Wordsworths, as Dorothy recorded in a letter to Jane:

I rise about six every morning and, as I have no companion walk with a book till half past eight, if the weather permits… sometimes we walk in the mornings… after tea we all walk together till about eight, and then I walk alone as long as I can in the garden; I am particularly fond of a moonlight or twilight walk – it is at this time I think most of my absent friends.[5]

[3] Letter from William Wordsworth to Dorothy Wordsworth, 6 Sept. 1790, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 28.
[4] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 6 Oct. 1790, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 27-28.
[5] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 23 May 1791, qt. in Andrews, *Wanderers A History of Women Walking*, p. 58.

Moreover, Dorothy and William discussed their family affairs, their prospects of recovering their little inheritance, and the future that was in store for each of them. Above all, they talked about their shared dream: to have a home together.

In her next letter to Jane, Dorothy wrote about William's studies, his fondness for reading, and his great attachment to Italian poetry, something that he wished to share with his sister: "We promise ourselves much pleasure from reading Italian together at some time, he wishes that I was acquainted with the Italian poets."[6] Clearly, the siblings' common interest in reading and writing grew during these years.

While Dorothy kept following with keen interest all that her four brothers were doing, and writing it on to Jane, an exciting break came in her life. Her uncle William was appointed Canon of Windsor and in July 1792 he moved his whole household to take up a three months' residence there. Since Dorothy had found her balance at Forncett, she did not look forward to the change; but when it came she was ready enough to enjoy it. In a letter that she sent in October to Jane, Dorothy enthusiastically narrated her adventures at Windsor: the delightful weather, the kindest friends, the splendour of the royals, the immense castle and the beautiful park, and of course her "charming little excursions into the country."[7] Furthermore, Dorothy made her entrée into society by taking part in a ball, an event that certainly made her experience strong emotions: "I had the most severe tremblings and palpitations during the first dance, that can be conceived by any trembling female."[8]

While Dorothy was enjoying her time at Windsor, leading a relatively quiet and sheltered life, her beloved William had completed his European tour and went back to France, where he associated with republicans. These included members of the Society for Constitutional Information and intellectuals who gathered around the radical publisher and bookseller Joseph Johnson. During this time, William read the major political documents of the day and responded with enthusiasm to republican ideas.

In the spring of 1792 he started a relationship with Marie Anne Vallon, a charming French woman, some four years older than himself. Undoubtedly, William was subject to deep fits of melancholy and felt often lonely, but he also had a passionate and idealistic nature struggling to break out; on the other hand, Annette was vivacious, impulsive, and had a generous heart. In the contrast between them lay an irresistible attraction and in the summer she found herself pregnant with his child.

---

[6] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 6 June 1791, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 22.
[7] Ibid, 16 Oct. 1792, p. 32.
[8] Ibid, p. 33.

Moreover, William started a firm friendship with Michel Beaupuy, an intellectual and philosophical army officer with whom he discussed politics. Furthermore, he conversed with members of Les Amis de la Constitution, he attended sessions of the National Assembly and the Jacobin Club, and composed his most radical poem, *Descriptive Sketches*, inspired in equal measure by his walking tour of 1790 and the revolutionary sympathies which had led him back to France. William had been an instinctive democrat since childhood, and his experiences in revolutionary France developed and consolidated his beliefs.

William's life was in turmoil: unemployed, penniless, and without a home for Annette and their daughter Caroline, who was baptized in Paris on 15 December. He tried in vain to claim his inheritance; therefore, he desperately wrote for money to his brother Richard. By the end of 1792 William was back in London, where he cast about for a suitable career. As a fervent democrat, William had serious reservations about being ordained, although he had written to his friend William Matthews in May 1792 to that effect. Perhaps this plan was the reason why he was reading sermons early in 1793, when he came across a sermon by Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, which contained an appendix denouncing the French Revolution. Thus, his democratic sympathies aroused, William spent the following weeks working on a reply. Meanwhile, William had also been reading William Godwin's lately published *Political Justice* (1793) and had fallen considerably under its influence. The outcome was *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (also known as *Apology for the French Revolution*), where William indignantly replied to the forces of repression, darkness, and, above all, monarchy. His prose echoed the revolutionary clarity of Thomas Paine, whom William quoted in his refutation of Bishop Watson's appendix. *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* is notable partly because William seems to have begun giving up his tenets almost as soon as he wrote them. Despite the fact that he remained for the time being a strong supporter of the French Revolution, his interest in verse composition started to grow. Consequently, he began to reconsider, between 1793 and 1796, his adherence to William Godwin's rationalistic model of human behaviour, upon which his republicanism was widely founded. It is not clear whether *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* did not appear through caution or circumstance. As William turned his attention to poetry, he came up with his own theory of human nature, which had very little to do with Godwin's philosophy.

When William's relationship with Annette Vallon became known to his relatives, any opportunity of entering the Church was foreclosed. At that point, he hoped to improve his situation with the publication of his two most recent poems: *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, which were published early in February 1793.

William had devoted his undergraduate years, in particular the autumn of 1789 when he had returned to Hawkshead and had rambled around the places of his boyhood, to the composition of *An Evening Walk*, his next important poem addressed to Dorothy. In the opening line, he referred to her as "My Dearest Friend." Moving on, he spoke more intimately:

> Say, will my friend, with soft affection's ear,
> The history of a poet's ev'ning hear?[9]

In these lines William implied that Dorothy's listening presence could fill the physical gap between them, in the present as well as in their unshared past. This poem affirms William's sense of belonging to Hawkshead and, to a greater extent, to the entire region of the Lake District, which he thought of as home. In addition, the piece of poetry works as a reparative gift for Dorothy, depicting a time and a place from which she was excluded. William wanted his sister to know the place he had visited and the memories he had kept in order to compensate the lost years. The melancholy tone of the poem arises partly from his longing to return to childhood and partly from his own exile at Cambridge. But in the piece of poetry William wrote also about his future home with Dorothy, since he depicted her as a moonlit night and he personifies the moon as the hope that guides them homeward:

> Ev'n now [the moon] decks for me a distant scene,
> (For dark and broad the gulph of time between)
> Gilding that cottage with her fondest ray,
> (Sole bourn, sole wish, sole object of my way;
> How fair its lawn and silvery woods appear!
> How sweet its streamlet murmurs in mine ear!)
> Where we, my friend, to golden days shall rise.[10]

In this nostalgic image, William vowed perpetual devotion to Dorothy and to their native place.

Notwithstanding his determined effort, the French declaration of war against England further lessened William's hopes of finding a profitable employment. Moreover, it prevented him from crossing the Channel to be with Annette and Caroline. Since his uncle William Cookson did not invite him to join Dorothy at Forncett, he embarked on a memorable journey to the Isle of Wight and Salisbury Plain. The experiences he had and the persons he met prompted the narrative poem *Salisbury Plain*, that drew on his and Dorothy's experience of homesickness to portray the

[9] W. Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk*, ll. 51-52, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 15.
[10] Ibid, ll. 413-422, p. 16.

two homeless protagonists. The woman was born in Cumberland like them and had lost her husband and children during the war. Furthermore, her father had been dispossessed by a greedy nobleman, as it happened to them after their father's death. The poem has an optimistic conclusion, which is undoubtedly related to the hope for a new life for Dorothy and himself:

> But now from a hill summit down they look
> Where through a narrow valley's pleasant scene
> A wreath of vapour tracked a winding brook
> Babbling through groves and lanes and meads of green.[11]

While William was travelling through Europe, beset by uncertainties, Dorothy had turned twenty-one, completely unaware of his troubles. Despite the fact that he regularly kept in touch with her after his return to England, the cheery tone of Dorothy's letter to Jane on 16 February clearly demonstrates that she was still ignorant of his recent difficulties. Indeed, in her letter Dorothy wrote about the happy time she spent with her brother Christopher during Christmas holidays. She also took the chance to express once again her attachment to her siblings: "Neither absence nor distance nor time can ever break the chain that links me to my brothers."[12] In addition, by the time she wrote to Jane, she had already begun to read and review her brother's writings, thus becoming his first literary critic. Undoubtedly, Dorothy took pride in helping to shape William's poetry and was perfectly conscious of the role she played within the generative process of his literary composition. The relationship between the siblings increased day by day, taking the form of exclusive devotion. In her letter, Dorothy asked for Jane's frank opinion, stating that "My Brother Kitt and I […] amused ourselves by analysing every line and prepared a very bulky criticism", but she also excused him for his many faults.[13]

The fact that Dorothy was kept in the dark about William's situation is proved by her expressed desire to share her life with her brother contained in the same letter to Jane:

> When I think of Winter I hasten to furnish our little Parlour, I close the Shutters, set out the Tea-table, brighten the Fire. When our Refreshment is ended I produce our Work, and William brings his book to our Table and contributes at once to our Instruction and amusement, […]. We talk over past days, we do not sigh for any Pleasure beyond our humble Habitation.[14]

[11] W. Wordsworth, *Salisbury Plain*, ll. 406-410, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 21.
[12] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 16 Feb. 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 37; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 18.
[13] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 16 Feb. 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 38.
[14] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 16 Feb. 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 36.

Dorothy wrote about her future life as if she were a character in a novel. Her confident vision of the future drew on the dreams she shared with William.

Perfectly conscious that he was totally out of favour, William turned to his sister, knowing that his only hope lay with her understanding of his troubled situation; therefore, he opened his heart to her. The news about Annette and Caroline might have caused Dorothy some distress, as it appears from the words she took down for Jane: "The subject is an unpleasant one for a letter, it will employ us more agreeably in conversation, then, though I must confess that he has been somewhat to blame."[15] But whatever she thought, her devotion to William overcame it, and she was ready to share his burden. She wrote straightforward to Annette, offering support and affection, and showing again her absolute commitment to her brother's cause.

Although Dorothy was well aware that "this favourite brother of mine happens to be no favourite with any of his *near* relations, except his Brothers", she tried in vain to restore the peace between William and their uncle.[16] William had never been a simple soul: as a boy he had been headstrong and obstinate, whereas as an undergraduate he was both extravagant and idle, constantly throwing away the chances he was offered to ramble around Europe. Clearly, the latest news was everything but welcomed by Reverend Cookson, who did not offer him his help. Dorothy's disagreement with her uncle put a heavy strain upon their daily intercourse while it intensified her love for William. At this point, she was conscious that, without any financial support from their relatives, she was far away from realizing her hopes, as she confessed to Jane:

I cannot foresee the day of my felicity, the day in which I am once more to find a home under the same roof with my Brother: all is still obscure and dark, and there is much ground to fear that my scheme may prove a shadow, a mere vision of happiness.[17]

Evidently, the separation proved very painful for Dorothy; she became increasingly unhappy and her health deteriorated. Her life at the Rectory became almost unbearable. She longed to visit Jane at Halifax, drawing comfort from her childhood memories in order to compensate for separation from her beloved brother. Above all, she wanted to get away and join him. Meanwhile, William felt the same urgent need to be reunited with his sister:

Oh my dear, dear sister, with what transport shall I again meet you, with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight… I assure you so eager is my desire to see you that all obstacles vanish. I see you in a moment running or rather flying to my arms.[18]

---

[15] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 10 July 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 36.
[16] Ibid.
[17] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 93, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 22.

Since Dorothy was already looking forward to a visit to her aunt Elizabeth, she arranged with her uncle that she would be escorted to Halifax by a friend of theirs, Mr. Griffith. There, she would find William, who had already received an invitation from their relatives. Clearly, the Cooksons were not aware of the siblings' secret plan, otherwise they would have stopped it. Dorothy's letters during the summer betrayed the thrill in which she was living, her joy at the prospect of meeting again her childhood friend, her anxiety about William, and, above all, her desire to be once more at his side. On 16 June she wrote: "I often hear from my dear Brother William, I am very anxious about him just now as he has not got any settled employment."[19] In her next letter dated 10 July, Dorothy revealed the secret she was sharing with William, giving voice to the excitement of introducing him to Jane:

Here let me caution you not read any part of what I am going to write as you will betray a secret which it is of some importance not to disclose. […] I cannot however resist my desire of making *you* acquainted with the scheme which we have in agitation of bringing about a meeting at Halifax… It is enough for *you* that I am likely to have the happiness of introducing to you my beloved Brother.[20]

Her letters markedly show that domestic duties at Forncett weighed her down:

As I am head nurse, housekeeper, tutoress of the little ones, or rather superintendent of the nursery, I am at present a very busy woman and literally *steal* the moments which I employ in letter writing. I hope, however, very soon to have more leisure, but my aunt does not gain strength so fast as I had expected…[21]

Dorothy was also thrilled about the prospect of meeting Jane after so many years: "Three months! – long, long months I measure them with a Lover's scale!"; "Oh Jane with what Transport shall I embrace you."[22]

So Dorothy spent the summer in anxious expectancy of her visit to Halifax. But autumn and Christmas passed without any news from Mr. Griffith. It was not till early February 1794 that she was able to set off to Halifax.

---

[18] William's lines were included in the letter from D. W. to J. P., 10 July 1793, in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 46.
[19] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 16 June 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 42.
[20] Ibid, 10 July 1793, p. 43.
[21] Ibid, p. 44.
[22] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 108, 91, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 24.

3. Halifax and the North

> *I am now twenty-two years of age, and such have been the circumstances of my life that I may be said to have enjoyed his company only for a very few months. An opportunity now presents itself of obtaining this satisfaction, an opportunity which I could not see pass from me without unspeakable pain.*[1]

A warm welcome awaited Dorothy at Halifax, when she finally got there in February 1794. In 1791 Elizabeth Threlkeld had married a local merchant, William Rawson, and had moved to Mill House, three miles south-west of town. Mr. Rawson immediately proved to be a kindly host, winning Dorothy's affection by making her a gift of two important volumes of poetry. His gift showed great interest in his niece's intellectual skills as well as knowledge of William's poetic talent.

Dorothy enthusiastically entered into the pleasant society that surrounded her: she was among the companions of her childhood, who had amusements similar to hers, and she eventually met with Jane Pollard, who was now the charming fiancée of Mr. Marshall of Leeds. Dorothy too had changed: the society of her educated uncle William Cookson, and the study of books recommended to her by him and by her brother had developed her acute intelligence as effectively as a more formal education could have done. Moreover, her busy life as housekeeper and head nurse separated from those she loved had strengthened her character, and had made her wiser, without repressing her positive attitude to life.

Notwithstanding William's uneasiness among strangers, his blood relatives at Halifax were ready to accept him. The progressive Unitarian society of Halifax had certainly more sympathy with revolutionary principles than a Canon of Windsor. Furthermore, William's travels around Europe and the poems he had just published aroused enormous interest in both the Threlkelds and the Rawsons. Therefore, their choice to dub him an "eccentric young man" was more in admiration than in censure.[2] Clearly, her relatives' appreciation of her brother filled Dorothy's heart with pride and joy.

Finally, Dorothy and William were reunited after three long years. They had a lot to share: she told him about her childhood, a part of her life from which he had been so early excluded; on the other hand, he narrated his extraordinary experiences in France. Additionally, together they could finally discuss their plans for their future.

---

[1] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. Crackanthorpe., 21 Apr. 1794, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 53.
[2] Ibid, p. 50.

While enjoying their relatives' company at Mill House, the Wordsworths were lucky enough to get offered to live rent-free in a farmhouse in Windy Brow, above Keswick. The property belonged to some friends from William's Hawkshead days, William and Raisley Calvert. Therefore, in April 1794 Dorothy and William embarked on the first stage of their domestic life together. Henceforth, brother and sister would remember the long walk (thirty-three miles from Kendal to Keswick via Grasmere) to their destination as their first pilgrimage. It was the first hike of this length and ardour that Dorothy experienced, and she really enjoyed the delicious spring weather and the brightest colours of nature, as she recorded in her next letter to Jane: "I walked with my brother at my side… through the most delightful country that was ever seen."[3] Actually, she was tramping for the first time a road that was to become the most familiar to her: the one to Grasmere. The siblings even passed the very doors of Dove Cottage, which would one day be their chosen home. Moreover, before reaching their destination, they walked along the road that they would one day so often traverse with Coleridge. Dorothy was truly astonished by the spacious cultivated valley and the breath-taking view that surrounded their home, as she wrote in a detailed descriptive register to Jane:

> You cannot conceive anything more delightful than the situation of this house. It stands upon the top of a very steep bank, which rises in a direction nearly perpendicular from a dashing stream below. From the window of the room where I write I have a prospect of the road winding along the opposite banks of the river, of a part of the lake of Keswick, and of the town, and towering above the town a woody steep of a very considerable height whose summit is a long range of silver rocks. This is the view from the house, but a hundred yards above it is impossible to describe its grandeur.[4]

It was at Windy Brow that Dorothy and William had a brief foretaste of the shared life they had for so long dreamed about. Furthermore, they began to recover their communal regional identity through walking and dwelling. Brother and sister quickly started to get used to a daily routine of work and leisure: while William revisited some of his earlier writing and translated Ariosto and Tasso with his sister's help, Dorothy took care of domestic duties and wrote her letters. Under her brother's direction, Dorothy read much in English and French, made the acquaintance of many of his old friends, and was initiated into the proud task of copying out his new or corrected verses. Together, they explored the surrounding hills.

As to William, after his long distracted wandering, he eventually found peace in his sister's companionship and in the beautiful countryside around him. He gave serious consideration to Dorothy's criticism of his early poems *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, which she

[3] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 113-114, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 26.
[4] Letter from D. W. to J. P., April 1794, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 51.

considered full of faults, particular expressions, and uncommon words. William revised the first piece of poetry accordingly and extended it to almost double its original length, using a plainer vocabulary, a more personal register, and adding several descriptions of human beings. In the new version, William showed openly the intention to celebrate his regional identity and his voice emerged as more reflective than in the first. In addition, he addressed Dorothy as the beloved companion who walked at his side:

> Come with thy Poet, come, my friend, to stray,
> Where winds the road along the secret bay;
> Come, while the parting day yet serves to show
> Thy cheek that shames the water's crimson glow,
> By rills that tumble down the woody steeps,
> And run enamoured to the dimpling deeps…[5]

Dorothy as well as the landscape are described as sources of energy and joy. Doubtless, she must have recognized in the use of the epithet "thy Poet" a thankful reference to her positive encouragement to continue his chosen path. In the poem, William also praised Dorothy for her sensitive soul and her attentiveness to the active universe:

> Yes, thou are blest, my friend, with mind awake
> To Nature's impulse like this living lake,
> Whose mirrour makes the landscape's charms its own
> With touches soft as those to Memory known
> While, exquisite of sense, the mighty mass
> All vibrates to the lightest gales that pass.[6]

William highlighted that Dorothy did not simply receive the beauty of the environment but strengthened it with her own active mind.

In the poem, William also depicted Dorothy as one of:

> those favoured souls, who, taught
> By active Fancy or by patient Thought,
> See common forms prolong the endless chain
> Of Joy and grief, of pleasure and of pain.[7]

[5] W. Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk*, ll. 414-419, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 29.
[6] Ibid, ll. 191-196, p. 31.
[7] W. Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk*, ll. 203-206, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 31; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 27-33.

By using the "chain" metaphor, the poet referred to the emotional link that connects human beings. Dorothy had already used the same powerful metaphor in a letter to Jane (dated February 1793) in order to describe the indissoluble ties within the Wordsworth family: "Neither absence nor distance nor time can ever break the chain that links me to my brothers."[8] Evidently, William saw in Dorothy the part of that chain that connected him with his family's living and dead members and, ultimately, a possibility of forging a special bond of feelings and memories.

An Evening Walk features, like the first poem William addressed to Dorothy, *The Vale of Esthwaite*, two of the Wordsworths' main topics: homesickness and nostalgia. The two writers often described and imagined the secluded spot in the Vale of Grasmere, where they would later realize their shared dream of rural happiness. Moreover, the desire to return to one's birthplace was one of the typical themes of European Romanticism. Dorothy and William developed their personal remedy for nostalgia through long walks in the countryside and collaborative work, which helped them to transform homesickness into positive feelings of communal belonging. This healing process continued for both of them throughout their entire lives.

Dorothy and William were spending at Windy Brow one of the happiest times of their lives; but their relatives strongly disapproved of their bohemian lifestyle and, above all, of Dorothy's living in an unprotected situation. Dorothy's reply to her censorious aunt Crackanthorpe revealed the simplicity of their life, her dignity of character, and her independence:

I affirm that I consider the character and virtues of my brother as a sufficient protection; and besides I am convinced that there is no place in the world in which a good and virtuous young woman would be more likely to continue good and virtuous than under the roof of these honest, worthy, uncorrupted people. […] Besides, I not only derive much pleasure but much improvement from my brother's society. I have regained all the knowledge I had of the French language some years ago, and have added considerably to it. I have now begun Italian, of which I expect to have soon gained a sufficient knowledge to receive much entertainment and advantage from it.[9]

In the same letter, Dorothy countered her aunt's criticism at hearing of her niece's walking:

I cannot pass unnoticed that part of your letter in which you speak of my 'rambling about the country on foot.' So far from considering this as a matter of condemnation, I rather thought it would have given my friends pleasure to hear that I had courage to make use of the strength with which nature has endowed me,

[8] Letter from D. W. to J. P., 16 Feb. 1793, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 37.
[9] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. Crackanthorpe, 21 Apr. 1794, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 53-54.

when it not only procured me infinitely more pleasure than I should have received from sitting in a post chaise, but was also the means of saving me at least thirty shillings.[10]

Dorothy was very fond of walking; in her adult life, she would explore the meaning of walking for her as a writer, as a woman, and as a human being. But because of her sex, her prodigious ambulations were considered by some to be detrimental to her appeal as a woman, as it is indicated by De Quincey's description:

> The greatest deductions from Miss Wordsworth's attractions, […] were the glancing quickness of her motions, and other circumstances in her deportment (such as her stooping attitude when walking), which gave an ungraceful, and even an unsexual character to her appearance when out-of-doors.[11]

De Quincey's description distinctly presents cultural prejudices against women's walking, which was considered to be unfeminine and unsexual; proper women were not supposed to be physically strong. But Dorothy's response to her aunt clearly demonstrates that neither these cultural prejudices nor her relatives' outspoken criticism could prevent her from performing pedestrian feats to match her brother's. Furthermore, her reply shows that walking was not only of physical benefit to her, but was a matter of personal and moral courage. To walk was to make use of God-given physical gifts and was, from a domestic economy perspective, financially prudent. Dorothy did not pay particular attention to the conservative sensibilities of Aunt Crackanthorpe; on the contrary, she defended her right to enjoy her walking and its importance to her physical as well as spiritual well-being.

After so long an absence from the North, Dorothy and William had many dutiful visits to pay to their relatives. In the spring of 1794, they stopped at their birthplace along the road that led to their uncle Richard Wordsworth at Whitehaven. Their family home in Cockermouth looked forlorn and deserted, and the garden was sadly overgrown; but the terrace walk was still full of roses, as it was when they last saw the sparrows' nest in it, nearly twenty years before.

Windy Brow was only the first step Dorothy and William took in building a shared future. After their uncle Richard's death, they were parted again and were to be separated for more than a year. In July 1794 Dorothy reluctantly agreed to stay for some months with Uncle and Aunt Crackanthorpe at Newbiggin Hall, whereas William wandered about the country, staying with different friends. Although Aunt Crackanthorpe was as disagreeable as she had anticipated, her uncle surprised Dorothy by the warmth with which he received her, showing the most affectionate

[10] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. Crackanthorpe, 21 Apr. 1794, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 53.
[11] De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of T. de Quincey*, p. 239, qt. in Andrews, *Wanderers*, pp. 20-21; see Andrews, *Wanderers*, pp. 20-22.

sentiments towards his niece. Dorothy spent Christmas at her cousins the Griffiths in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Before returning to her aunt Rawson at Halifax, she stayed a month at Sockburn-on-Tees, where her friends Mary and Peggy Hutchison now lived with their brothers. Dorothy was very pleased to see them happy and settled, as they had hoped some years before:

Very different indeed is their present situation from what it was formerly, when we compared grievances and lamented the misfortune of losing our parents at an early age and being thrown upon the mercy of ill-natured and illiberal relations.[12]

At Sockburn, Dorothy first met Sara Hutchinson, who was destined to become one of her dearest friends. Sara was a woman of considerable intellectual gifts and she had a keen sense of quiet fun, which made her fully worthy to be Dorothy's intimate friend.

Dorothy spent the summer months of 1795 at Halifax. The idea of returning to the Cooksons was obviously repugnant to her, since William was still in disfavour with them. In addition, their reunion at Windy Brow had only intensified her desire to share home with him. But the security they craved seemed still remote. On the contrary, Dorothy's best friend Jane had realized her dream: on 5 August she had married John Marshall.

As to William, ever since his return from France he had sought an employment, that would permit him to acquire professional competence and yet would leave him time for poetry, but all his efforts were in vain. He revealed his concerns to his friend William Mathews:

I have done nothing and still continue to do nothing. What will become of me I know not. I cannot bow my mind down to take orders, and as for the law I have neither strength of mind, purse, or constitution, to engage in that pursuit.[13]

William had tried unsuccessfully to obtain a travelling tutorship; some form of journalism seemed his last opportunity. But his radical sympathies did not help him with his aim. Additionally, the chances of success in the lawsuit to get his inheritance would vanish if the family was accused of revolutionary tendencies. Evidently, William was in a vicious circle: he was penniless and kept waiting for something to turn up. Eventually, in autumn 1794 he returned to Windy Brow to give help and comfort to his friend Raisley Calvert, who had developed a rapid consumption. William stayed there until January 1795, when his friend died. Before his illness, Raisley Calvert had provided a bequest of £900 for William in his will, with a clause that made Dorothy a co-beneficiary. This generous gesture shows clearly Calvert's confidence in William's creative ability

[12] Letter from D. W. to J. P., April 1795, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 55-56.
[13] Letter from W. Wordsworth to William Mathews, 17 Feb. 1794, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 57.

and his awareness of the close tie which bound his friend to his sister. The legacy gave William some financial security; it allowed him to go to London and see what prospects literature afforded. Dorothy was meant to join him in the capital to share his labours, working as a translator; but Mrs. Rawson disapproved of their plan, considering it "a very bad wild scheme."[14] Ultimately, William came to think the same: life in London was too crowded and noisy for his nerves, and did not help him to recover his lost peace of mind. He longed for the country and, thanks to some friends of his who never failed to believe in his genius and character, his desire would soon be satisfied.

In September 1795 William's friend Montagu proposed to him that he and Dorothy should take charge of his little son Basil, and their cousin made a similar request for his niece. At the same time, they were offered from another friend of his, Mr Pinney, to stay rent-free at Racedown Lodge, in rural west Dorset. Financially, the scheme was good: the proceeds of the inheritance would be increased by the fees for the children's board and William might add to this the profits of his pen. Dorothy planned to offer elementary education to Basil, since she had already trained as a teacher back in Norwich. But in a letter she wrote to Jane a month before settling at Racedown, she gave voice to her worries: "I confess when I think of the importance of my duties I am anxious and sometimes fearful, but resolved as I am to do all that my abilities will permit I hope I shall not fail."[15] Notwithstanding her concerns, she was more than happy to earn a modest income, which would render her more independent and would help to relieve the humiliation of "living upon the bounty of one's friends."[16] Above all, Dorothy was eventually fulfilling her lifelong dream of sharing permanent home with her brother. Until William's death, they were rarely to be parted for more than a few weeks at a time.

[14] Letter from Mrs. Rawson to Sam Ferguson, 11 Mar. 1795, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 59.
[15] Letter from D. W. to Jane Marshall, 2 Sept. 1795, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 60.
[16] Ibid.

4. Racedown

> *We have hills which seen from a distant almost take the character of mountains, some cultivated nearly to their summits, others in their wild state covered with furze and broom. These delight me the most, as they remind me of our native wilds.*[1]

At Racedown Lodge, everything came up to Dorothy's highest expectations. The house was well equipped and she particularly loved their common parlour: "[…] It is the prettiest little room that can be, with very neat furniture, a large bookcase on each side the fire, a marble chimney piece, bath stove, and an oilcloth for the floor."[2] Since they hired a servant, Peggy, Dorothy was not thoroughly absorbed by domestic concerns and could enjoy "many very pleasant walks."[3] Certainly, much of her time was devoted to the education of their little guest, Basil Montagu. To Dorothy's disappointment, the little girl who was to join their family never arrived, but the boy provided material enough for the study of children psychology, which generated considerable interest in both the siblings. They took their parental role seriously and it was deep satisfaction to them to see Basil develop his faculties under their care. Moreover, everything that Dorothy learned while looking after Basil allowed her to supply Jane with hints, when she found out that her friend was expecting her first child:

> You ask to be informed of our system respecting Basil; it is a very simple one, […] We teach him nothing at present but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability. […] Our grand study has been to make him happy, in which we have not been altogether disappointed, he is certainly the most contented child I ever saw.[4]

Undoubtedly, Dorothy's view about children's education was very modern: she suggested following the child's natural inclination with the ultimate aim of making him happy. Surely, memories of her growing up in her aunt Elizabeth's progressive environment helped Dorothy to develop the aforementioned considerations.

The Wordsworths soon settled into their new home, continuing with the rhythm of the domestic life they had begun at Windy Brow: writing, reading, and walking. For two years the siblings lived at Racedown Lodge in seclusion, as Dorothy wrote in a letter to Jane: "We are… both as happy as people can be who live in perfect solitude. We do not need a soul."[5] Apart from a five

[1] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 30 Nov. 1795, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 62.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, 19 Mar. 1796, p. 63.
[5] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years*, *1787-1805*, p. 154, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 40.

weeks' visit from the two Pinney youths at Christmas and a few friendly neighbours, Dorothy and William did not cultivate their society and were thrown upon their own resources. Since one day was so much like another, Dorothy had little to record in her letters to Jane. But the siblings were satisfied with their simple life, for they shared those two accomplishments needful for the enjoyment of winter in the countryside: they could read and they could walk. Besides looking after Basil, Dorothy busied herself with sewing and gardening. Furthermore, she found leisure for the improvement of her mind: *Tristram Shandy* as well as French books were among her choices, and her Italian improved greatly over the course of those two years. As to a journal that Dorothy allegedly wrote at Racedown, there is no surviving evidence but a note that a neighbour of theirs, Joseph Gill, recorded in his journal in December 1796: "Miss Ws Diary 10d."[6] Apparently, the diary was merely a journal in which to enter her accounts.

As to William, in addition to manual labour in the wood and in the garden, he devoted himself to the composition of his tragedy *The Borderers*.

Undoubtedly, the two years Dorothy and William spent in Dorset were the fulfilment of their lifelong dream and they provided the foundation for lasting domestic happiness. Some years later, while recalling Racedown Lodge in her *Memoirs*, Dorothy described it as "the place dearest to my recollections upon the whole surface of the island; it was the first home I had."[7]

At Racedown, Dorothy played a prominent role in the healing process of William's recent personal events. She clearly understood the difficult situation of her brother: the issue of Annette and his daughter, cut off from him by an insurmountable barrier of international hostility, filled him with remorse. Moreover, the thought of the French Revolution, on which he had built all his hopes, had thrown him upon a barren philosophy which had dried up his emotions. Although such thoughts never perplexed her mind, Dorothy's great empathy for her brother allowed her to sympathize with his suffering. Her only concern was succeeding in restoring her brother to health and happiness, in order to enable him to become the great poet she knew him potentially to be. Furthermore, she knew, as no other, what type of man William had been in health, and her sisterly love suggested that she had within herself the power to restore him.

As to William, years later he would depict his sister's personal qualities in Book XI of *The Prelude*:

> She welcom'd what was given, and craved no more.
> Whatever scene was present to her eyes,

[6] Joseph Gill's note is quoted in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 64.
[7] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 281, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 40.

That was the best, to that she was attuned
Through her humility and lowliness,
And through a perfect happiness of soul
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight:
For she was Nature's inmate. Her the birds
And every flower she met with, could they but
Have known her, would have lov'd. Methought such charm
Of sweetness did her presence breathe around
That all the trees, and all the silent hills
And every thing she look'd on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures.[8]

In these lines, William described the secret of the spell Dorothy cast on everybody she met: her regard for common things and her ability to see beauty in the most ordinary sight or incident. In addition, he highlighted his sister's relationship with nature: both the siblings strongly believed in the healing power of nature. The recurrent topics related to their surroundings were a means of returning thanks to the soothing power that nature had on their broken souls. Moreover, the Wordsworths saw in the bonds they created with nature a way of filling the gaps left by the death of their parents.

William was fully aware that his sister had saved his life. He never forgot that, in his darkest moments of trials and perplexity, she never left his side, as he would later record in Book X of *The Prelude*:

Then it was
That the beloved Woman in whose sight
Those days were pass'd, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition, like a brook
That did but cross a lonely road, and now
Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league,
Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; for, though impair'd and chang'd
Much, as it seemed, I was no further chang'd

[8] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, *Book XI*, ll. 207-220, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 67; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 67 and Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 8, 41.

Than as a clouded, not a waning moon:
She, in the midst of all, preserv'd me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name
My office upon earth, and nowhere else.[9]

The passionate devotion of Dorothy and William Wordsworth has been defined as one of the most profoundly moving relationships in literary history.

Besides preserving the poet in him, Dorothy had also become the guide of his poetic mind, exerting a powerful influence over his lack of tenderness with her innate genius for the trivial. Years later, William would explain his sister's major role in his poetry in Book XIII of *The Prelude*, using powerful metaphors related to nature:

But for thee, sweet Friend,
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had been
Far longer what by Nature it was framed,
Longer retain'd its countenance severe,
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favourite of the Stars.
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers.[10]

At Racedown, the influence between the siblings was mutual and Dorothy was stimulated to develop that instinct for observation which would soon flourish in her *Journals*. Her talent for observation is shown in her records of the dreadful conditions of the poor during those years of war, an issue of deep concern for her as well as for William. In November 1795 Dorothy wrote: "The peasants are miserably poor; their cottages are shapeless structures… of wood and clay – indeed they are not at all beyond what might be expected in savage life."[11] As to William, he expressed his sympathy for the indigent in the revision of the poem *Salisbury Plain*, where he protested against "the calamities of war as they affect individuals."[12]

During the two years spent at Racedown, Dorothy and William developed their shared interests. They believed in the mutual bond between human beings and the environment; they were

[9] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude, Book X*, ll. 907-921, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 68; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 69.
[10] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude, Book XIII*, ll. 227-236, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 69.
[11] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 162, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 41.
[12] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 159, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 41.

interested in psychology, mental processes, and the influence of the environment on emotions; they were convinced of the importance of growing up in a rural context in order to reach moral happiness. Furthermore, they took a particular interest in education, following the theories of Rousseau's masterpiece *Emile, or On Education*; indeed, they put a lot of effort in their role of foster-parents. But the concept that mattered most to them were the principles of Hartley's *associationism*: the brain was the seat of the sensitive soul, memory had a creative function, and the environment had an influence on human beings. According to Hartley, the differences between the siblings, which could result from their separate childhood, could disappear through the exposure to the same impressions and associations. Eventually, Dorothy and William would become perfectly similar and would be able to heal the breach that had developed between them during childhood. Evidently, these principles were strongly related to the Wordsworths' healing process, which had begun in 1787, and which was mainly based on doing joint activities, and sharing their thoughts and experiences before writing them down, using an associative language made of echoes, quotations, and allusions.[13]

The winter 1796 brought two welcome guests: Basil's father and Mary Hutchinson, who stayed some months at Racedown while William was in Bristol. Mary's favourite sister Peggy had died the previous spring and she rejoiced the companionship of Dorothy. Mary perfectly fitted in with the siblings' routine and she began to help Dorothy to transcribe William's poetry. Dorothy was very pleased about their reunion, as she wrote to Jane:

> She is one of the best girls in the world, and we are as happy as human beings can be; that is when William is at home, for you cannot imagine how dull we feel and what a vacuum his loss has occasioned, but this is the first day: to-morrow we shall be better. William is as chearful [*sic*] as anybody can be; perhaps you may not think it, but he is the life of the whole house.[14]

Undoubtedly, Dorothy wrote these lines to her friend in justification of her brother's behaviour: when Jane had made his acquaintance, three years before, he surely did not live up to the glowing picture that his sister had painted of him in her early letters. At the time, his sombre mood was related to his mental turmoil. Certainly, Dorothy's help as well as time had worked wonders on him; but some part of his present happiness was also attributed to the presence of Mary. They had been friends at school, then lovers; this earlier affection, which had been swept away by William's passion for Annette, was now beginning to revive. Although the present state of the passion can only be conjectured, since the correspondence between William and Mary has not survived, it can

[13] See Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 44-46.
[14] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 19 Mar. 1797, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 70.

be safely assumed that the passage of four years had brought a change in his feelings for Annette and in hers for him. Annette was an intensely patriotic Frenchwoman, who had thrown herself with courage into a dangerous cause, and was definitely unwilling to give up a life of so much excitement to settle down in a foreign country whose language she did not know, and, moreover, with a man whose interests were opposed to hers. On the other hand, William must have realized that a union with her would be impossible and, above all, fatal to the achievement of his poetic ambitions. Dorothy realized it too and she possibly confided to Mary her dream of a future with them both.

In 1797 William completed his greatest tragic study of domestic affections, *The Ruined Cottage*. The poem was about the decline of an abandoned woman and the disintegration of her house. Obviously, the story was connected to the Wordsworths' personal memories. On Dorothy's part, it related her feelings of abandonment, loneliness, and poverty; on William's, his remorse for his past with Annette Vallon. In addition, the plot was also connected to the loss of their family home and the experience of seeing it a decade later, deserted and run-down, when they visited it in the spring of 1794. The comforting conclusion of the piece of poetry was part of the healing process that both the siblings were undergoing.

Dorothy's life was deeply intertwined not only with her brother's but also with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's. She got to know him through William, who first met Coleridge in September 1795 at Bristol, where the poet was working as a radical Unitarian lecturer. Thenceforth, they formed a deep and lasting friendship. The two men shared political affinities and they began to pay tribute to each other in poems.

William and Coleridge supposedly met a second time at Bristol in 1797. Coleridge, two years younger than William, was already known as a poet and preacher to a wide circle of literary figures, including the English essayist and critic Charles Lamb. Wherever he went, his brilliant genius and his charismatic personality were recognized, and he had already published his first volume of poems. His impulsive and hyper-sensitive nature, and his endless need for love, perfectly matched with William's generous enthusiasm. As to William, among the friends who believed in his talent, there was none like Coleridge who could meet him on equal terms. In Coleridge's intellectual power William found that stimulus which, together with Dorothy's loving care of him, completed his regeneration. Evidently, the two men were made for each other.

Coleridge, who had recently settled at Nether Stowey, in Somerset, with his wife Sara and their child Hartley, visited the Wordsworths at Racedown in June 1797, thus marking the beginning of a friendship and of a literary collaboration that would last many years. In order to describe the

relationship and the affection that connected him to the siblings, Coleridge wrote these famous lines: "Tho we were three persons, it was but one God."[15] When she first met Coleridge, Dorothy was deeply impressed by him, as she recorded in a letter to Mary Hutchinson, who had just left Racedown Lodge:

> You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. […] His eye is large and full, […] it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of the 'poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed.[16]

Coleridge stayed at Racedown about ten days, but this was only the first of the many visits that followed. In the summer of 1797 it was the Wordsworths' turn to visit the poet at Nether Stowey, where they spent the entire season. Dorothy was very excited to make the acquaintance of Sara Coleridge and little Hartley. Moreover, she was introduced to Charles Lamb, who was to become one of her dearest friends.

At Nether Stowey, Coleridge had the opportunity to admire not only William's genius but also his sister's personal qualities, since Dorothy began to help the poet with his writings, something that she had been doing for some time now with her brother. She assisted him with last-minute corrections to his *Poems*. In a letter to his publisher Joseph Cottle, Coleridge praised Dorothy not only for her role as amanuensis but also for her intellectual status:

> W. and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind I mean, and heart; […] but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion, her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say, 'Guilt was a thing impossible in her.' Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste, a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties, and most recondite faults.[17]

Undoubtedly, Coleridge's loss of his sister Nancy in 1791 made him appreciate Dorothy all the more. In the first draft of his poem *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*, the poet referred to Dorothy as "My Sister."[18]

The Wordsworths were greatly pleased with all they saw in Somerset. In a letter to Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy expressed her and William's delight in the surroundings, which reminded them of their native place:

---

[15] D. Wordsworth, *All Poetry*, https://allpoetry.com/Dorothy-Wordsworth, Accessed 17/03/2023.
[16] Letter from D. W. to Mary Hutchinson, 1797, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 73-74.
[17] Letter from S. T. Coleridge to Joseph Cottle, June 1797, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 75.
[18] J. C. C. Mays, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 16, *Poetical Works*, 2 vols, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 353-354, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 49.

There is everything here; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full-grown timber trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic, and it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighbourhood of the lakes.[19]

At Coleridge's house, Dorothy was able to capture one of the key concepts of Romanticism: old associations revitalized by new surroundings.

On one of their wanderings, the Wordsworths walked past Alfoxden, a large country house surrounded by a deer park. The place gave them such delight that they began to dream of renting it and settling there. A few days later, they heard that the house was actually for rent and they secured it immediately. Clearly, Dorothy's and William's enjoyment in sharing their daily activities with Coleridge played a major role in their joint decision.

[19] Letter from D. W. to M. H., 4 July 1797, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 75-76; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 48.

5. Alfoxden

> *We lay sidelong upon the turf, and gazed on the landscape till it melted into more than natural loveliness. The sea very uniform, of a pale greyish blue, only one distant bay, bright and blue as a sky; had there been a vessel sailing up it, a perfect image of delight.*[1]

On 14 July 1797 Dorothy and William moved to their new home: Alfoxden House. The property was set on the edge of the Quantocks, a mile from the small village of Holford and four miles west of Nether Stowey; it was ideal, as Dorothy wrote a month later in a letter to Mary Hutchinson, describing in full details their house and its surroundings:

> The house is a large mansion, with furniture enough for a dozen families like ours. There is a very excellent garden, well stocked with vegetables and fruit. […] This hill is beautiful, scattered irregularly and abundantly with trees, and topped with fern, which spreads a considerable way down it. The deer dwell here, and sheep, so that we have a living prospect. […] Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops, the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity: they are perfectly smooth, without rocks.[2]

It is evident that Dorothy literally fell in love with the tremendous sense of space of their residence and its environs. Reminiscent of the time they had spent together at Nether Stowey during the previous summer, Dorothy, William, and Coleridge soon settled into a routine of writing, reading, and walking.

At Alfoxden, Dorothy and William received visits from many radical intellectuals with whom Coleridge was connected and who brought new creative stimuli. One of them was the Jacobin activist John Thelwall, who had just been released from prison, where he had been confined during the reactionary terror of the previous year; now, he was in search of a quiet retreat in the country. Thelwall truly enjoyed the Wordsworths' safe haven, as he recorded in his poem *Lines written at Bridgewater*, where he expressed his desire to settle there in the company of:

> Allfoxden's musing tenant, and the maid /
>
> Of ardent eye.[3]

Despite the fact that Thelwall departed at the end of July, his presence at Alfoxden House gave rise to rumours that sedition was being plotted. For this reason, the Home Office sent a special

---

[1] All the excerpts of Dorothy Wordsworth's Alfoxden Journal quoted in this chapter are taken from *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, vol. I, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Co., London, 1897, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42856/pg42856.txt, Accessed 11/03/2023; 26 Feb. 1798, p. 11.
[2] Letter from D. W. to M. H., 14 Aug. 1797, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 77-78.
[3] J. Thelwall, *Lines written at Bridgewater*, ll. 129-131, https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/lines-written-bridgewater, Accessed 27/04/2023.

agent, who was to make enquiries and to spy on the three companions while they were rambling around the countryside, as Coleridge would later narrate in his *Biographia Literaria*. These suspicions had serious consequences for Dorothy and William, since only two months after their arrival they were informed that the lease on the property would not be renewed the following year.

So far as it is known, it was not until 20 January 1798 that Dorothy began to write a journal to give an account of her daily life and movements with William and Coleridge around Alfoxden, describing this period of time as full of collaborative activity, friendship, and conversation. The journal was continued uninterruptedly until 22 May 1798. Dorothy's work would later be known as *Alfoxden Journal*, a descriptive title given by the editor William Knight, since she never had the intention to see her writings published.[4] In January 1798 Dorothy was already aware that the lease on Alfoxden House would shortly run out; the sense of writing a journal may be related to her need to make a lasting memorial of the place before leaving it. Moreover, keeping a journal bonded Dorothy to the surrounding countryside, while the companionship of William and Coleridge invested her life with meaning.

There is no surviving manuscript of the *Alfoxden Journal*, which was first published in an abridged edition by William Knight in 1897. It seems highly probable that Dorothy kept it at her brother's suggestion and for his special pleasure. The influence of Dorothy's writings on her brother's poetry is related to the fact that they made use of the same notebook. Indeed, the four opening sentences of the *Journal* appear in William's handwriting in his *Alfoxden Notebook* (1798); this may suggest that the diary is the result of shared authorship.[5] Although Dorothy owed much of her vocabulary and many of her experiences to the company of William, the use she made of them entirely depended upon herself; all that she noted in her entries has that freshness and spontaneity which were hers alone. The *Alfoxden Journal* is the symbol of what two years of close companionship with her brother brought to birth.

If Dorothy's earlier letters express with a ready pen her delight in the country life, the *Alfoxden Journal* markedly shows, from the very first entry for 20 January, her genius; she provided a detailed description of nature and its colours, using powerful adjectives and verbs:

The green paths down the hillsides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges, the sheep are gathered together on the slopes. After the wet dark

[4] See William Knight, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal, written at Alfoxden (from 20th January to 22nd May 1798), Prefatory note*.
[5] See Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 55.

days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers.[6]

This entry portrays rapid and clear images, which catch the vibrancy of nature through movement and relationship. The connections between them are established with a series of syntactical parallels and metrical echoes that give a sense of balanced composition. In the third sentence, the passive voice changes to the active and the rhythm quickens, as if in response to the awakening countryside. In the fourth sentence, "It peoples itself" is a rare example of metaphor, which establishes a link that permeates the entire *Journal*: the one between human beings and nature, a relation that was of paramount importance for Dorothy as well as for William. Furthermore, although Dorothy began her diary in January, when the English countryside has least attraction to common eyes, she was nonetheless able to portray a beautiful scene.

The *Alfoxden Journal* is a collection of diary entries, some shorter, made of only one sentence, for example: "Walked only to the mill.", and some others longer and more descriptive:[7]

A deep snow upon the ground. Wm. and Coleridge walked to Mr. Bartholemew's, and to Stowey. Wm. returned, and we walked through the wood into the Coombe to fetch some eggs. The sun shone bright and clear. A deep stillness in the thickest part of the wood, undisturbed except by the occasional dropping of the snow from the holly boughs; no other sound but that of the water, and the slender notes of a redbreast, which sang at intervals on the outskirts of the southern side of the wood. There the bright green moss was bare at the roots of the trees, and the little birds were upon it. The whole appearance of the wood was enchanting; and each tree, taken singly, was beautiful. The branches of the hollies pendent with their white burden, but still showing their bright red berries, and their glossy green leaves. The bare branches of the oaks thickened by the snow.[8]

In the *Alfoxden Journal* there is no attempt to use formal writing and the entries are often quick notes or disjointed sentences without verbs:

Bright sunshine, went out at 3 o'clock. The sea perfectly calm blue, streaked with deeper colour by the clouds, and tongues of points of sand; on our return of a gloomy red. The sun gone down. The crescent moon, Jupiter, and Venus.[9]

Yet no studied composition could convey with a clearer touch the landscape of rural England. In addition, it is evident that Dorothy had a deep knowledge of science, since she was able

[6] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 20 Jan. 1798.
[7] Ibid, 28 Jan.1798.
[8] Ibid, 17 Feb. 1798.
[9] Ibid, 23 Jan. 1798.

to identify planets. As the *Alfoxden Journal* progressed, her interest in science diminished, since she became more concerned with the diurnal world.

In the *Alfoxden Journal* Dorothy rarely wrote using the first person; instead, she began many entries with a verb in the simple past form: "Walked on the hill-tops – – a warm day."; "Gathered sticks with William in the wood."[10] Moreover, many of them start with the description of the weather conditions: "Bright sunshine, went out at 3 o'clock."[11]

Almost all the entries of the *Alfoxden Journal* are precisely located in time and place, and they depict images that are associated with feelings. In reading the entries it is not always explicit whether Dorothy was alone while observing or writing; but since much of the creative work of that year was the result of the collaboration between the three writers, either William or Coleridge must have been present when she was taking down her impressions or soon after. Furthermore, singular personal pronouns are often replaced with plurals, thus suggesting that the experiences narrated were collective: "The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the top of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this to the bareness of the trees, […]."[12] On the one hand, the *Journal* enabled Dorothy to develop her own identity as a writer. On the other hand, it simultaneously recorded reflections on behalf of the group. In addition, some of the entries are written with the present tense, thus implying that they were outdoor sketches, whereas others are a review of what happened during the day.

Dorothy's language reflected the principles of vernacular directness that belonged to the Unitarian tradition to which she was introduced during her education at Halifax. Her way of writing is characterized by the use of metonymy in preference to metaphor, deictic syntax, and immediacy. These elements allowed Dorothy to celebrate her bond with nature by looking at what she saw in a specific place and to note down all her impressions. The images she portrayed are not connected to one another because each one is a self-contained moment in time; the result is so powerful that it can be compared to an imagist poem.

The *Alfoxden Journal* is no mere record of domestic tasks and daily errands as it may appear on first reading: "I spent the morning in starching and hanging out linen […]."; "Walked to the blacksmith's and the baker's."[13] Here, for the first time, Dorothy disclosed her gift of accurate observation and her sensitive susceptibility of sight and hearing which proclaimed her talent: "The

[10] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 21 Jan. and 14 Feb. 1798.
[11] Ibid, 23 Jan. 1798.
[12] Ibid; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 57.
[13] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 22 Mar. 1798 and 30 Jan. 1798.

half dead sound of the near sheep-bell, in the hollow of the sloping coombe, exquisitely soothing."[14] Her powers of observation applied also to the people she met during her walks, towards whom she showed a special interest:

The young lasses seen on the hill-tops, in the villages and roads, in their summer holiday clothes – pink petticoats and blue. Mothers with their children in arms, and the little ones that could just walk, tottering by their side.; […] The children playing about, the old man at the top of the hill gathering furze; interesting groups of human creatures, the young frisking and dancing in the sun, the elder quietly drinking in the life and soul of the sun and air.[15]

In her entry for 26 February, Dorothy discussed the effect that nature had on her mind: "Again sat down to feed upon the prospect; a magnificent scene, – curiously – spread out for even minute inspection, though so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate its bounds."[16] She was also able to underline the power of nature which overcomes the will of men to rule over it by composing an extremely effective sketch:

Quaint waterfalls about, about which Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed – ruins, hermitages, etc. etc. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalised trees. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve the valleys according to our fancy.[17]

Like many of her contemporaries, Dorothy felt a great sense of wonder at the mysterious intricacy of the natural world. Moreover, the influence of the British physician and botanist Erasmus Darwin brought her to note botanical details with the eye of a miniaturist: "The hollies capriciously bearing berries."[18] Furthermore, the accurate descriptions that Dorothy gives of her surroundings makes it clear that she had a deep knowledge of Somerset's natural flora: "The tops of the beeches of a brown-red, or crimson. Those oaks, fanned by the sea breeze, thick with feathery sea-green moss, as a grove not stripped of its leaves."[19] In addition, in portraying the woods and the countryside Dorothy used verbs which usually apply to the human sphere, therefore creating impressive images: "The trees almost roared, and the ground seemed in motion with the multitudes of dancing leaves, which made a rustling sound, distinct from that of the trees."[20]

[14] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 24 Jan. 1798 and 30 Jan. 1798; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 78.
[15] Ibid, 4 Feb. and 10 Mar. 1798.
[16] Ibid, 26 Feb. 1798.
[17] Ibid, 15 Apr. 1798.
[18] Ibid, 22 Jan. 1798; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 56.
[19] Ibid, 21 Jan. 1798.
[20] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 1 Feb. 1798.

Over the course of time in which Dorothy kept her *Journal*, she found her own individual voice through the practice of writing and the daily exploration of her surroundings. A significant development can be traced over the four months. The opening entries contain gothic touches, fanciful metaphors, similes, and personifications which refer to Dorothy's poetic register; for example, the garden is depicted as "a mimic of spring."[21] As the *Journal* moves on, a progression of her style can be observed: syntax becomes more straightforward, images and analogies are clearer, and similes increasingly draw on the domestic sphere: the sea is "like a basin full to the margin."[22]

William heavily drew on Dorothy's *Alfoxden Journal*, which became an excellent source of inspiration with its combination of lyrical intensity, sentimental attachment, and grounded particularity, which distinguished it from all the other prose he was learning from. In particular, he began to explore the poetic possibilities of prose, realizing that it was at the same level as poetry. From this moment on, William devoted himself to well authenticated facts, personal observations, conversations with friends, and to an intelligible language. The starting point of the connection between Dorothy's prose and William's poetry can be observed in the *Alfoxden Journal* entry for 25 January and William's poem *A Night Piece*:

The sky spread over with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon, which, though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light to chequer the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the centre of black-clue vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed concentrated, (half moon).[23]

The sky is overspread
With a close veil of one continuous cloud
All whitened by the moon, that just appears,
A dim-seen orb, yet chequers not the ground
With any shadow – plant, or tower, or tree.
At last a pleasant instantaneous light
Startles the musing man whose eyes are bent
To earth. He looks round, the clouds are split
Asunder, and above his head he views
The clear moon and the glory of the heavens.
There in a black-blue vault she sails along
Followed by multitudes of stars, that small
And bright, and sharp along the gloomy vault

[21] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 20 Jan. 1798.
[22] Ibid, 24 Feb. 1798.
[23] Ibid, 25 Jan. 1798.

Drive as she drives. How fast they wheel away![24]

William's minimalism reflected the particularity of Dorothy's writing style: the rhythm of daily experiences, and local sights and sounds. Both pieces of writing feature the creative confluence between poetry and prose. William's poem opens abruptly, like Dorothy's *Journal* entry, and a few of the images and words correspond exactly, for example "chequer" and "vault." Both descriptions present an epiphany, conveying the viewer's excitement as the moon stands out clearly in the immense depth of the dark sky, accompanied by the stars. Both writers use verbs of movement: Dorothy "cleave" and "sail", William "split" and "wheel." The siblings employ the adjectives "small", "bright", and "sharp" in order to depict a specific visual image. Undoubtedly, the Wordsworths shared perceptions, vocabulary, and oral composition. Eventually, the connection William made with nature's generative process enabled him to draw creative energy from the environment.

There are other connections between the writing of the two: the asses which Dorothy recorded "pasturing in quietness under the hollies" inspired William's narrative poem *Peter Bell*, as it distinctly emerges from his note:

In the woods of Alfoxden I used to take great delight in noticing the habits, tricks and physiognomy of asses, and I have no doubt that I was thus put upon writing the poem out of liking for the creature that is so often dreadfully abused.[25]

In the entry for 18 March, Dorothy recorded what they had experienced during one of their daily walks: "On our return, sheltered under the hollies, during a hail showers. The withered leaves danced with the hailstones. William wrote a description of the storm."[26] The image of the dancing leaves can be found also in the closing of William's poem *A Whirl-Blast from behind the Hill*:

And all those leaves, in festive glee,
Were dancing to the minstrelsy.[27]

Many of the writings on which William and Coleridge had been working while at Alfoxden were published in the collection of poems *Lyrical Ballads*. Despite the fact that *Lyrical Ballads* was an anonymous publication, William, Coleridge and also Dorothy were involved in collaboration, and there was no competition for ownership. *Lines written at a small distance from my house*, one of the poems included in the collection, is a verse letter addressed to Dorothy, where William

[24] W. Wordsworth, *A Night Piece*, ll. 1-14, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 58.
[25] W. Wordsworth, *Note to Peter Bell*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 81.
[26] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 18 Mar. 1798.
[27] W. Wordsworth, *A Whirl-Blast from behind the Hill*, ll. 21-22, https://allpoetry.com/A-Whirl-Blast-From-Behind-The-Hill, Accessed 04/05/2023.

acknowledged her influential importance in his life. The domestic details celebrate William's newly awakened faith in nature's blessing while the use of the present tense shows his enjoyment of immediacy. In the poem, William invited his sister to abandon Gregorian time and suggested dating the year from that moment, 1 March 1798, chronicling their future together in the living calendar of feelings. The poet underlined what Dorothy had given to him, both emotionally and creatively, through her continuous presence and her daily celebration of their shared connection with a special place and time:

> It is the first mild day of March:
> Each minute sweeter than before,
> The red-breast sings from the tall larch
> That stands beside our door. […] No joyless forms shall regulate
> Our living Calendar:
> We from to-day, my friend, will date
> The opening of the year.
> Love, now an universal birth,
> From heart to heart is stealing,
> From earth to man, from man to earth:
> – It is the hour of feeling.[28]

At Alfoxden, the siblings enjoyed the pleasure of country rambles, during which they stored up memories and feelings. They still had Basil to take care of with the help of their servant Peggy, who joined them once they were settled. As to their neighbours, Dorothy and William saw them more than when they were at Racedown. But the fundamental change in their life sprang from the constant companionship of Coleridge. Apart from when he visited friends or went away to preach in a Unitarian chapel or on his tours around the country, hardly a day passed without him paying a visit to Alfoxden. Dorothy's and William's usual habit of walking in the afternoon or evening was frequently interrupted by his incursion in the early morning, and they often joined him on his way back to Nether Stowey. Whenever Coleridge had a guest, his first impulse was to introduce him to his friends. The three companions were satisfied with their own neighbourhood and they spent their time "loitering long and pleasantly" in the combes or beside the waterfall, discussing the principles of poetry and sharing their latest verses:[29] "Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished."[30] On many occasions, Coleridge went to Alfoxden in order to escape from his own

[28] W. Wordsworth, *Lines written at a small distance from my house*, ll. 1-4, ll. 17-24, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 61.
[29] S. T. Coleridge, *The Nightingale*, l. 91, https://poetryarchive.org/poem/nightingale/, Accessed 04/05/2023.
[30] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 23 Mar. 1798.

troubles; his high spirits alternated with periods of deep depression. But Dorothy and William never failed to offer him their great sympathy, as Dorothy recorded in many of her diary entries: "[…] Met Coleridge returned from his brother's. He dined with us. We drank tea, and then walked with him nearly to Stowey…"[31] Moreover, the poet considered Dorothy a stimulus to his creativity, thanks to her powers of observation. She would play a major role in his later composition of *Christabel*: "the thin grey cloud" and "the spring comes slowly up this way" testify the common outlook and shared experience of the two writers.[32]

In order to seal his friendship with Dorothy and William, Coleridge composed the gift-poem *The Nightingale*. The combined experiences of conversation, walking, and writing made 1798 a year that the three of them would treasure forever. Furthermore, the three writers shared the same philosophy: *associationism*. Following the principles of *associationism,* they explored the ways in which associations connect human beings to each other and to a particular place. The writings that were produced between 1797 and 1798 celebrate the bonding of their creative personalities into a community. As a matter of fact, their energetic walking proved to be highly effective as creative stimulus. It brought to light three pieces of poetry which would later become masterpieces of English Romanticism: Coleridge's *The Nightingale* emerged out of a nocturnal ramble taken in the woods at Alfoxden, whereas *The Ancient Mariner* out of a joint tour the three made in November to the Valley of the Rocks; William's *The Thorn* out of a sight the poet noticed with Dorothy on a ridge. Exploring the local landscape drew the three companions together in an intimacy they would never forget.

This fruitful collaboration was interrupted in December and January, when Dorothy and William went to London and, after they returned to Alfoxden, they found out that their friend had departed to Shrewsbury to work as prospective Unitarian minister. In London, Dorothy was delighted to meet for the first time the poet and writer Robert Southey, as she recorded in a letter to her aunt, describing him as "a young man of the most rigidly virtuous habits, but though his talents are certainly very remarkable for his years […] I think them much inferior to the talents of Coleridge."[33] Although Dorothy was glad about this meeting, it is evident that she did not lose the chance to praise Coleridge once more.

Actually, the Wordsworths had been drawn to the city at Coleridge's suggestion, since he was on friendly terms with the manager of Covent Garden, who promised to read William's tragedy

[31] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 18 Apr. 1798.
[32] S. T. Coleridge, *Christabel*, l. 16, l. 22, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43971/christabel, Accessed 04/05/2023.
[33] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. Rawson, 3 July 1798, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, p. 83.

The Borderers and to produce it, if he thought it likely to be successful. Unfortunately, this was not the case, since he did not like the leading character of William's play. The siblings' disappointment at the rejection markedly emerges from the words that their cousin Elizabeth Threlkeld wrote to Sam Ferguson, a relative of theirs; the letter is of further interest as it discloses how keenly the circle at Halifax followed the fortunes of Dorothy and William:

> They had planned many schemes to follow if it succeeded, one of which was a pedestrian tour through Wales and by Yorkshire into Cumberland. This would *by many* be thought rather a *wildish* scheme, but by them it was thought very practicable and would certainly have been put into execution had not the play unfortunately been rejected. […] W. is not determined whether he shall publish it or no. […] These are visionary plans, the distant prospect of which may be very pleasant, but which on a narrow view almost always disappoint one.[34]

As Dorothy and William attributed the rejection of *The Borderers* to corruption, they did not allow their disappointment to weigh heavily on their minds and they enthusiastically went back to their old daily routine, as is noticeable in a letter which Martha Ferguson wrote to her brother Sam:

> Dorothy, from whom we have heard lately, is deeper in plays and poetry then ever; if they publish the one they have wrote we shall certainly send it to you. It is highly spoken of by those who have read it in manuscript.[35]

It is clear that her relatives at Halifax considered Dorothy to be a joint author with her brother.

In all likelihood, the spring of 1798 was the time of most lasting happiness of Dorothy's entire life. In her *Alfoxden Journal* and few surviving letters there are no traces of the acute anxiety that would later affect her optimistic mood. The three friends were united in a strong bond of mutual sympathy and, despite the fact that Coleridge had already begun to use opium, he had not developed an addiction yet. In a letter to Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy commented on her brother's boundless energy: "His faculties seem to expand every day; he composes with much more facility than he did as to the mechanism of poetry, and his ideas flow faster than he can express them."[36]

But Dorothy's and William's blissful life at Alfoxden House was not to continue. Their hospitality to John Thelwall aroused suspicion and made them undesirable tenants for so magnificent a mansion. When they learnt that the lease on the property would not be renewed, they

[34] Letter from Elizabeth Threlkeld to Sam Ferguson, 14 Feb. 1798, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, p. 83.
[35] Letter from Martha Ferguson to S. F., September 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 83.
[36] Letter from D. W. to M. H., 5 Mar. 1798, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, p. 85.

had to face the difficult task of finding a new home. Above all, they did not want to lose the companionship of Coleridge, as Dorothy recorded in a letter to Mary:

It is most probable that we shall go back again to Racedown, as there is little chance of our getting a place in the neighbourhood. We have no other very strong inducement to stay but Coleridge's society, but that is so important an object that we have it much at heart.[37]

Eventually, the Wordsworths and Coleridge made the joint decision to leave for a four-month sojourn in Hamburg. Meanwhile, Dorothy and William did not allow thoughts of their departure to interfere with their domestic happiness. For the first time, the siblings witnessed together the onset of spring in a fertile country and their hearts responded to the gaiety of the season:

The sloe in blossom, the hawthorns green, the larches in the park changed from black to green in two or three days. […] The Spring advances rapidly, multitudes of primroses, dog-violets, periwinkles, stitchwort.[38]

At that time, William was working on his volume of poems; in May, Coleridge's publisher, Joseph Cottle, paid them a visit to discuss its publication. Early in June the writer William Hazlitt went to Alfoxden House and, in William's absence, Dorothy read him some of her brother's manuscript poems. On 25 June 1798 the siblings bid farewell to their house and they went to spend a week at Nether Stowey before going to Bristol with Cottle. From there, Dorothy dispatched a letter to her aunt Elizabeth, telling her their regrets at leaving Alfoxden, their plans for Basil, and their project to visit Germany:

We have long wished to go into that country for the purpose of learning the language, and for the common advantages to be acquired by seeing different people and different manners. Coleridge has had the same wish; and we have so arranged our plan that I hope we shall sail in two or three months. […] It is our intention (William's and mine) to board in some respectable family for the benefit, or rather the obligation of talking German constantly. […] We hope to make some addition to our resources by translating from the German, the most profitable species of literary labour, and of which I can do almost as much as my Brother. Poor Basil! We are obliged to leave him behind, as his father, on account of having altered the course of his pursuits in the law, will not be able to pay the additional expenses which we should incur on his account. […] I am convinced it is not good for a child to be educated alone after a certain age. […] Till a child is four years old he needs no other companions than the flowers, the grass, the cattle, the sheep that scamper away from him when he makes a vain unexpecting chase after them, the pebbles upon the road, etc etc. After the age of about four years he begins to want some other stimulus than the mere life that is in him; […] I have

[37] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. Rawson, 3 July 1798, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, p. 83.
[38] D. W., *The Alfoxden Journal*, 9 and 17 Apr. 1798.

not often felt more regret than when we quitted Allfoxden [*sic*]; I should however have felt much more if we were not likely in so short a time to have again the pleasure of Coleridge's society, an advantage which I prize the more, the more I know him… […] We have parted from our servant. Poor girl! it was a hard trial for her. She would have gone to the world's end with us. I believe she was much more attached to us than to any other beings in the world…[39]

At Bristol, the Wordsworths' business was to see the *Lyrical Ballads* through the press. Only a week passed before they understood that they could not endure the hustle and bustle of the city. In addition, William was eager to share with Dorothy the lovely country which he had visited five years before, on his returning from France, where he had thrown off the troubles that weighed upon him and had recaptured the cheerful spirit of his youth. Therefore, they embarked on a five-day tour in Monmouthshire; for Dorothy, this was the first time she saw the valley. In his later *Memoirs*, William would narrate their experience:

We crossed the Severn ferry, and walked ten miles further to Tintern Abbey, a very beautiful ruin on the Wye. The next morning we walked along the river through Monmouth to Goodrich Castle, there slept, and returned the next day to Tintern, thence to Chepstow, and from Chepstow back again in a boat to Tintern, where we slept, and thence back in a small vessel to Bristol.[40]

No holiday that the siblings ever took together left a deeper mark either on their memories or on English poetry. They observed the valley together, taking in the beauty of their surroundings, once again conscious of their uncertain future. The lines of the poem *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, composed on the last day of their excursion and finished when they returned to Bristol, were William's major contribution to his coming volume and the greatest tribute to what his sister had meant to him since their reunion at Racedown. In his piece of poetry, William reflected on his recovery from the emotional crisis of 1793, expressing his gratitude for the time spent with Dorothy, who is portrayed not only as his sister but also as his friend and muse of his creative life. The low-key register, the realism, and the full description of a pastoral scene recall Dorothy's *Journal* entries, thus acknowledging her intellectual as well as spiritual influence through poetic associations and allusions. Moreover, William incorporated her vision of nature into his own:

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! And again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur. – Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,

[39] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. R., begun 13 June, finished 3 July 1798, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 86-88.
[40] W. Wordsworth, *Memoirs*, vol. i, p. 117, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 88.

Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.[41]

The opening lines of the poem with the repetitions of "again I hear", "Once again / Do I behold", "I again repose", and "Once again I see" make a clear reference to William's and Dorothy's shared memories of home. Dorothy is addressed as the muse of memory and her presence is tacitly acknowledged through the tribute to their origins.

Throughout the poem, Dorothy's role can be defined as implied listener. At the beginning, she is celebrated through echo, allusion, and hesitancies. Towards the conclusion, she is directly addressed through William's urgent claims:

Nor, perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh, yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister![42]

The solemn words "For thou art with me" echo Psalm 23 of David, *The Lord is my Shepherd*: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."[43] This quotation underlines the spiritual quality of the bond between brother and sister. Furthermore, it highlights Dorothy's pastoral role as religious guide. William entrusted his sister with the task of sustaining the memory of this spot when he would be gone, thus paying tribute to her power to protect the spirit of the place, just as she had preserved Alfoxden in her *Journal*. In addition, William first addressed his sister as his "dear, dear Friend" and a few lines later as his "dear, dear Sister", thus identifying the two creative identities closest to him.

The tone of William's language oscillates between tender solicitation and prayer:

[41] W. Wordsworth, *Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour. July 13, 1798*, ll. 1-8, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 62.
[42] Ibid, ll. 112-122, p. 65.
[43] Bibleserver, *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, https://www.bibleserver.com/ESV/Psalm23, Accessed 21/03/2023.

When thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; Oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor perchance,
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence, wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service – – rather say
With warmer love, oh with far deeper zeal
Of holier love! Nor wilt thou then forget
That, after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake.[44]

In these closing lines, William drew images of possible future events which his sister might experience, thus prefiguring his death. He exhorted Dorothy to remember him with "healing thoughts of tender joy" and wanted her not to forget the time they spent together in nature. Moreover, William wanted his sister to remember him as an "unwearied worshipper of nature", who, after many years of wanderings, found solace and pleasure in it. In these healing thoughts Dorothy might find some comfort.

William identified Dorothy as a younger version of himself, since he was in advance of her by virtue of age and experience. But he also paid tribute to her as the keeper of memories, guardian of place, and nurse of his creative spirit. Throughout the years, *Tintern Abbey* remained a memorable example of their creative collaboration, and their spiritual and emotional kinship. Furthermore, the position of *Tintern Abbey* at the end of *Lyrical Ballads* clearly demonstrates that it is the culminating work of 1798, a symbol of the triangular conversations of that peculiar year.

[44] W. Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798*, ll. 140-160, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45527/lines-composed-a-few-miles-above-tintern-abbey-on-revisiting-the-banks-of-the-wye-during-a-tour-july-13-1798, Accessed 08/05/2023.

After their return to Bristol, Dorothy and William moved to the nearby village of Shirehampton, where they could live in quietness and be close to Cottle's printing office. Here, Coleridge often joined them and sometime in August he and William went to Wales, because the latter wanted to show him the country around Tintern which had lately inspired his poem. Before the end of August, the two men along with Dorothy set off for Germany, with the intention of acquiring "the German language, and to furnish ourselves with a tolerable stock of information in natural science."[45] On 27 August they arrived in London, where they stayed for two weeks before reaching Yarmouth, from where they sailed for Hamburg. Their German adventure was about to begin.

[45] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 213, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 68.

6. Hamburg

> *There is such a constant succession of hateful smells, that is quite disgusting to pass near the houses. […] A little girl about 8 years old, well-dressed, took up her petticoats in full view of the crowd and upon the green where people walk, and sat undisturbed till she had finished her business.*[1]

On 16 September 1798 the Wordsworths, Coleridge and his young friend Chester set sail for Hamburg. Notwithstanding the sadness with which Dorothy left Alfoxden, she had high hopes for the tour and she saw it as an opportunity to improve her literary resources.

If William described their voyage as "very pleasant", Dorothy's account of it is less enthusiastic, as she recorded in her second journal:[2] "Before we heaved anchor I was consigned to the cabin, which I did not quit till we were in still water at the mouth of the Elbe on Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock."[3] Since Dorothy adopted a formal register, she remained politely silent on the matter of her seasickness during the first days of the journey. But Coleridge's account overtly disclosed the conditions which kept her and William below deck: "Wordsworth shockingly ill, his Sister worst of all-vomiting, & groaning, unspeakably!"[4]

Like the *Alfoxden Journal*, Dorothy's second piece of writing has no title; therefore, it is conventionally referred to as *The Journal of days spent at Hamburg, in September and October 1798*. It begins with a retrospective account of the journey from London to Hamburg via Cuxhaven (14-19 September) and it ends with the siblings' arrival in Goslar on Saturday 6 October. The *Hamburg Journal* appears in two notebooks and it contains Dorothy's observations on German manners and morals.

In the first entry, Dorothy proceeded with the comment on her feelings as she emerged from below:

I was surprised to find, when I came upon deck, that we could not see the shores, though we were in the river. It was to my eyes a still sea. But oh! The gentle breezes and the gentle motion! … As we advanced

[1] D. Wordsworth, *Journal of my tour in Hamburg. The Continental Journals 1798-1820*, edited with a new introduction by Helen Boden, Thoemmes Press, Bristol, 1995, pp. 30-31, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 74.
[2] Letter from W. W. to Henry Gardiner, 3 Oct. 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 91.
[3] *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of days spent at Hamburgh, in September and October 1798*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, vol. I, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Co., London, 1897, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42856/pg42856.txt, Accessed 11/03/2023; 14 Feb. 1798, p. 16.
[4] *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71, vol. i, p. 416, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 70.

towards Cuxhaven the shores appeared low and flat, and thinly peopled; here and there a farm-house, cattle feeding, hay-stacks, a cottage, a windmill.[5]

In this first notation, Dorothy is able to convey the sense of movement through the use of powerful nouns, adjectives, and verbs. But the opening entry of the *Hamburg Journal* immediately shows that the tone is markedly different from that of the *Alfoxden Journal*. Dorothy wrote as a tourist embarking on her first experience abroad, whose expectations were constantly disappointed:

At four o'clock in the morning we were awakened by the heaving of the anchor, and till seven, in the intervals of sleep, I enjoyed the thought that we were advancing towards Hamburg; but what was our mortification on being told that there was a thick fog, and that we could not sail till it was dispersed.[6]

This mood of disappointment hung over the whole day, as is evident from the continuation of the first journal entry: "I enjoyed solitude and quietness, and many a recollected pleasure, hearing still the unintelligible jargon of the many tongues that gabbled in the cabin."[7] In this striking opposition between quietness, pleasure, and recollection on the one hand, and noise and confusion on the other, it is clear that Dorothy experienced Hamburg as an assault on her sensibility and on the creative harmony she had achieved with William at Alfoxden. The closing of the entry is no more optimistic: "[…] We were conducted through dirty, ill-paved streets to an inn, where, with great difficulty, and after long seeking, lodgings had been procured for us."[8]

The first entry of the *Hamburg Journal* deserves close attention since it contains words and images that refer to the mutual literary influence of Dorothy's and Coleridge's works. Dorothy recorded in full details the poetic images she held in her memory: "The moon shone upon the waters. The shores were visible with here and there light from the houses. Ships lying at anchor not far from us. We drank tea upon deck by the light of the moon."[9] She portrayed a domestic and peaceful scene she had shared with her brother, Coleridge, and Chester. The way Dorothy depicted this episode recalls either one of Coleridge's *Conversation poems* or *The Foster-Mother's Tale*, since both include the image of moonlight. Or perhaps, sitting with him on the deck, Dorothy could have caught a glimpse of the letter he wrote home that evening:

[5] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 14 Sept. 1798, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 16.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid, p. 17.
[9] Ibid, p. 16.

Over what place does the Moon hang to your eye, my dearest Sara? To me it hangs over the left bank of the Elbe¸ and a long trembling road of moonlight reaches from thence up to the stern of our Vessel, & there it ends.[10]

Their journey slowly proceeded; they arrived near farm-houses and cottages, passed Cuxhaven, reached Blankenese, "a village or town scattered over the sides of three hills, woody where the houses lie and sleep down below", came in sight the spires of Altona, from where they took a boat "and rowed through the narrow passages of the Elbe, crowded with vessels of all nations", and they eventually landed at the Boom House.[11] While William went to seek lodgings, Dorothy found plenty of amusement in observing the heterogeneous crowd that thronged the busy quayside:

I was much amused by the various employments and dresses of the people who passed before us… There were Dutch women with immense straw bonnets, with flat crowns and rims in the shape of oyster shells, without trimming, or with only a plain riband round the crown, and literally as large as small-sized umbrella. Hamburgher [*sic*] girls with white caps, with broad overhanging borders, crimped and stiff, and long lappets of riband. Hanoverians with round borders, showing all the face, and standing upright, a profusion of riband… Fruit-women, with large straw hats in the shape of an inverted bowl, or white handkerchiefs tied round the head like a bishop's mitre. Jackets the most common, often the petticoat and jacket of different colours. The ladies without hats, in dresses of all fashions. Soldiers with dull-looking red coats, and immense cocked hats. The men little differing from the English, except that they have generally a pipe in their mouths.[12]

Certainly, novelties of dress aroused Dorothy's curiosity.

Another notable example of the connection between Dorothy's and Coleridge's writing is the comparison between the aforementioned entry and a long journal which the poet wrote at Ratzeburg, working from notebook entries he had made earlier, and then enclosed in his letters home to Sara. If Dorothy was able to catch the continental flavour of the city, making a quick sketch of all social classes and drawing metaphors mostly from a familiar vocabulary, Coleridge described the details of fashionable finery using alliteration:

Dutch Women with large umbrella Hats shooting out half a yard before them, and with a prodigal *plumpness* of petticoat *behind* – the Hamburghers [*sic*] with caps, plated on the cawl with silver or gold, or both, fringed with lace, & standing round *before* their eyes, like a canopy-veil – the Hanoverian Women with

[10] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. i, pp. 415-416, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 71; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 71.
[11] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 14 Sept. 1798, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 16.
[12] Ibid, p. 17.

the fore-part of the Head bare, then a stiff lace standing upright like a Wall, perpendicular on the Cap; and the Cap behind *tailed* with a monstrous quantity of Ribbon which lies or tosses on the Back.[13]

The coincidence between Dorothy's and Coleridge's impressions distinctly shows that, when writing, they both remembered things they had seen together, and they possibly even responded to each other.

Unfortunately, the lodging found by William was not as inviting as the siblings might have thought, as Dorothy wrote in her *Journal*:

The first impression that an Englishman receives on entering a Hamburgh [*sic*] inn is that of filth and filthy smells… On inquiry we found that we could have no dinner, as dinner was over… […] My room was at the top of the house, the floor just washed, but I could see that the process had spread or plaistered the coating of dirt, no carpet, the floor painted brown. When I returned I found the party eating cold beef, no cloth spread, no vegetables, but some bad cucumbers pickled without vinegar, […].[14]

Certainly, this was everything but an encouraging opening to their holiday. The account which William provided of the inhabitants confirmed their first negative impression of the city: "It is a sad place; I have no doubt this city contains a world of good and honest people if one had but the skill to find them."[15] During their sojourn in Hamburg, Dorothy and William had their hard times: living in a foreign city, with different currency, language, and customs brought them financial hardship and depression, and they were clearly not keen on getting to know the locals.

The Wordsworths were constantly annoyed by the dishonesty and greed they experienced with German people, not least their landlord, who cheated them in their bill and of whom Dorothy left a vivid picture:

[…] he sat with his greasy face at the head of the table, laughing with landlord-like vulgarity and complaisance at the jokes of his guests, or while he exercised the force of his mind on the best way of cutting the beef.[16]

In Dorothy's *Journal*, William told his bitter experience at the baker's, which added to their antipathy towards the locals:

---

[13] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. i, p. 431, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 72; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 72.
[14] *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of days spent at Hamburgh, in September and October 1798*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, vol. I, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Co., London, 1897; September 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 92. All the excerpts of Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* quoted in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography* and included in this dissertation are taken from *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, II vols., Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Co., London, 1897.
[15] Letter from W. W. to Thomas Poole, 3 Oct. 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 92.
[16] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 92.

I put two shillings into the baker's hands for which I was to have had four small rolls. He gave me two. I let him understand that I was to have four, and with this view I took one shilling from him, pointed to it and to two loaves and at the same offering it to him. Again I took up two others. In a savage manner he half knocked the rolls out of my hand, and when I asked for the other shilling he refused to return it, and would neither suffer me to take bread, nor give me back my money, and on these terms I quitted the shop.[17]

Besides relating the Wordsworths' disputes with German tradesmen and porters, the *Hamburg Journal* is rich in detailed descriptions, which provide a lively picture of the city and its neighbourhood:

The houses on the banks of the Elbe, chiefly of brick, seemed very warm and well built. […] The small cottage houses seemed to have little gardens, and all the gentlemen's houses were surrounded by gardens quaintly disposed in beds and curious knots, with ever-twisting gravel walks and bending poplars.[18]

The features of her style declare that Dorothy was a woman of sensibility, who had her own rural and romantic aesthetic preferences. She emphasized her position as writing-subject by repeatedly using the pronoun "I": "I could not but remark how much the prospect would have suffered by one of our English canopies of coal smoke."[19]

Notwithstanding Dorothy's subject position, the manuscript indicates that William did take up his pen more than once to write in the *Journal*. For the entry of 28 September, he recorded a shocking incident witnessed by himself in the district of Altona. The prose style does not noticeably change as he takes over; the change of handwriting is sufficient to identify him as the author:

Yesterday saw a man of about fifty years of age beating a woman decently dressed and about 37 years of age. He struck her on the breast several times, and beat her also with his stick. The expressions in her face were half of anger and half of a spirit of resistance, what her offence had been we could not learn. It was in the public street, he was better dressed than she was, and evidently a stranger.[20]

William's interest in social problems and his intervention in the *Hamburg Journal* are significant, as he was planning his *Essay on Morals*. Dorothy too interested herself in social problems, as is evident from the entry she took down two days later. She reported with indignation a second violent incident in the streets which involved the persecution of a Jew; the use of the personal pronoun *we* indicates that both siblings were present:

[…] we saw a surly-looking German driving a poor Jew forward with foul language, and making frequent use of a stick […]. The countenance of the Jew expressed neither anger nor surprise nor agitation;

[17] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 29 Sept. 1798, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 18.
[18] Ibid, 28 Sept. 1798.
[19] Ibid, September 1798, p. 17.
[20] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 28 Sept. 1798, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 75.

he spoke, but with meekness, and unresisting pursued his way, followed by his inhuman driver, whose insolence we found was supported by law; 'the Jews have no right to *reign* in the city of Hamburgh [*sic*]', as a German told us in broken English. The soldiers who are stationed at the drawbridge looked very surly at him and the countenance of the bye-standers expressed cold unfeeling cruelty.[21]

Dorothy's entry amplified William's expression of sympathy for Hamburg's oppressed minorities. She stood out as a sympathetic witness while her narrative considered the emotions of the oppressor as well as the oppressed. She highlighted the dignity of the abused Jew, who "unresisting pursued his way." Moreover, Dorothy drew on the Bible: the oppressed Jew shows the "meekness" which is traditionally associated with Christ, whereas the Christian community blames him as a foreign upstart.

Another topic which was discussed by both Dorothy and Coleridge was the Hamburgers' approach to gardening. After she and William witnessed the brutal attack on the Jew, they went on their way; Dorothy looked for the consolation offered by nature, observing that:

The buildings all seem solid and warm in themselves, but still they look cold from their nakedness of trees. They are generally newly built, and placed in gardens, which are planted in front with poplars and low shrubs, but the possessors seem to have no prospective view to a shelter for their children.[22]

Dorothy, shocked by the previous assault, longed for reassurance in one of the most ancient symbols of nature's kindness to humanity: the shelter provided by trees. Instead, she found only further evidence of the coldness witnessed in the cruel incident. Furthermore, Dorothy's critique involved matters of ecology, since she implied an unsettling disconnection between the suburban *gentleman* of Hamburg and the continuous process of nature.

Coleridge discussed this subject in a more complex and ambiguous way. In the entry of his journal for 27 September, he recorded a walk from Empfelde to Hamburg, noticing "light cool Country houses, *which you can look thro*" and "the gardens behind, with Trees in piazzas."[23] Coleridge took pleasure in observing the airiness and transparency of the houses, which matched his mood of relaxation to the point that he almost abandoned his prejudices as an English tourist: "every house with neat rails before it, & green seat within the rails – everything, nature & all, neat & artificial."[24] Apparently, Coleridge was succumbing to the seductive allure of German summer houses. But his stance soon shifted, since in the next sentence he overtly condemned the vulgarity

[21] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 28 Sept. 1798, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 76; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 76.
[22] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 1 Oct. 1798; qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 18; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 77.
[23] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. i, pp. 455-456, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 77.
[24] Ibid.

of Hamburgers, underlying that German gentlemen were not able to enjoy the natural scenery they adopted:

If the House and Gardens & Pleasure fields had been in a better Taste… the narrow-minded, ignorant, money-loving Merchant of Hamburgh [*sic*] could only have *adopted*, he could not have *enjoyed*, the wild simplicity of Nature.[25]

Scholars argued that, in this entry, Coleridge may also be teasing Dorothy for her innocent devotion to trees. They also stated that, if the two writers had a real conversation about the style of the suburban gardens they had seen, it is evident that they had a mild disagreement based on different considerations. Their primary assumptions about the superiority of wildness to cultivation were identical, but their ultimate positions were diverse. Dorothy was shocked at a deep emotional level by what she saw; Coleridge, by contrast, was able to observe German life as a detached *flaneur*, thanks to his worldly humour and his ability to indulge, ironize, and also condemn.

As Dorothy was accustomed to the freedom of English countryside, she was clearly disappointed by life in a walled city:

While the sun was yet shining pleasantly we were obliged to think perpetually to turn our eyes to the church clock. The gates are shut at half past six o'clock, and there is no admittance into the city after that time. This idea deducts much from the pleasure of an evening walk. You are haunted by it long before the time has elapsed.[26]

She was astonished at the dullness of the shops, arranged with neither order nor elegance, and the size and height of the houses in the city, which stood in stark contrast with the merchants' houses in the suburbs. Dorothy did not miss the chance to sharply note down what she witnessed on a Sunday:

In our road to the boat we looked into one of the large churches. Service was just ended. The audience appeared to be simply composed of singing boys dressed in large cocked hats, and a few old women who sat in the aisles. The inferior shops open, women sitting at their doors knitting and sewing, and I saw one woman ironing. It seems there is not any imposition of either law or custom which prevents people from making Sunday as much a day of labour as any other if their avarice or it may their industry – but alas! I fear the former motive is the moving spring of the Hamburgher's [*sic*] mind![27]

Undoubtedly, in Germany the Wordsworths had the opportunity to observe the disintegration of natural moral happiness under urban pressure. The experience abroad confirmed

[25] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. i, p. 456, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 77; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 78.
[26] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 94.
[27] Ibid, September 1798, p. 95.

and strengthened their faith in the nurturing power of the rural environment, a conviction they shared with Coleridge; in their opinion, benevolence and quietness grew within the human being as a response to fields and mountains.

The *Journal's* cultural high point is the visit which the siblings paid to the prosperous merchant Herr Klopstock, who treated them with great kindness and introduced them to his brother, the famous poet Friedrich Klopstock:

> Dined with Mr Klopstock. Had the pleasure of meeting his brother the poet, a venerable old man, retaining the liveliness and alertness of youth, though he evidently cannot be very far from the grave. His second wife much younger than he, a fine fresh looking woman, but with an unpleasant expression of countenance, vain, and not pleasing in her manners. Mr Klopstock the merchant very polite and kind, his wife, who cannot speak a word of English or French, appears a very interesting woman. […] We were conducted through the warehouse and counting house into a large low room, with two windows at the end and a glass door opening upon a balcony, which overlooks a part of the Elbe. […] The part talked with much interest of the French comedy, and seemed fond of music. The poet and his lady were obliged to depart soon after six. He sustained an animated conversation with William, during the whole afternoon. Poor old man! I could not look at him, the benefactor of his country, the father of German poetry, without the most sensible emotions.[28]

Dorothy took pleasure in the animated conversation in French between William and Klopstock. She also discussed the women of the family, openly criticizing the vanity of the poet's wife and daughter, and noticing with pleasure the manner of the servant, who "seemed more at her ease and more familiar than an English servant."[29] This entry also reveals Dorothy's interest in domestic economy and the condition of women: she observed how they dressed, the way they sat at shop doors, knitting and sewing, she listed the price of food, and she described the furnishing of rooms and family habits.

The *Hamburg Journal* is different from the *Alfoxden Journal*; if the first can be defined as a response to sensory and aesthetic stimuli, and as a celebration of friendship and creativity in a habitable place, the second has to be read as a case study in emotional deprivation and alienation. The content and the style of Dorothy's accounts distinctly reflect her mood of depression, since she strongly believed in the connection between physical environment and mental life, something that she could not truly reach in Germany, as can be easily understood in the following example: "The

[28] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 1798, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 95-96.
[29] Ibid.

view of the Elbe and the spreading country must be very interesting in a fine sunset"; however, "There is a want of some atmospherical irradiation to give a richness to the view."[30]

Notwithstanding their initial purpose of learning the language, neither Dorothy nor William could speak German. Her *Journal* clearly presents Dorothy as an inquisitive outsider, who commented on a community she failed to make a connection with.

Instead of paying attention to the German language, Dorothy and William continued to think, talk, and write about the influence of the environment on the emotions. Unlike them, Coleridge was really interested in assimilating the German language, culture, and philosophy. In addition, he could afford the luxury of a German lifestyle. Therefore, after ten days, the three companions separated: the siblings went to the medieval town of Goslar, in Lower Saxony, whereas their friend first chose as his destination the picturesque island resort of Ratzeburg, and later moved to the university town of Göttingen. The separation caused nostalgia and suffering on both parts. On the one hand, the Wordsworths missed their companion dearly; on the other hand, Coleridge missed them too but he also envied their exclusive love: "William, my head and my heart! Dear William and dear Dorothea! You have all in each other; but I am lonely, and want you!"[31] But in a sense they were never apart, because they exchanged letters and carried him in their minds and hearts.

[30] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 28 Sept. 1798, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 18.
[31] S. T. Coleridge, *Hexameters*, ll. 39-40, https://allpoetry.com/Hexameters, Accessed 13/03/2023.

7. Goslar and Sockburn

> *We crossed the Elbe at one o'clock. The same moon that shone when we crossed the channel, now in its wane, lighted the waters of the Elbe: and it was of great use to us during the whole of our journey.*[1]

On Saturday 6 October Dorothy and William arrived at Goslar, where they spent the winter 1798, which proved to be the heaviest recorded in the century. They found lodgings with Frau Dippermaer, a widow who kept a small draper's shop. It is difficult to understand why they chose to settle at Goslar, except in the belief that living there was cheap. At Goslar, Dorothy's great disappointment with German people was confirmed:

It is not a place where it is possible to see anything of the manners of the more cultivated Germans, or of the higher classes. Its inhabitants are all petty tradespeople, in general a low and selfish race; intent upon gain, and perpetually of course disappointed. […] The woman of this house, who is a civil and good kind of a respectable woman *in her way* could not refrain from cheating us of halfpence and farthings when we first came.[2]

Since a man accompanied by his sister was expected to give entertainments, something that the siblings could not afford to do, they were debarred even from such poor society as Goslar had to offer. So that while Coleridge was pursuing his own different course in Ratzeburg "in high life among barons, counts and countesses", they had to be content with the company of a French émigré priest and a young apprentice to the drapery business.

As they had little company and limited access to books, their expectation of learning enough German to become translators never materialized. As a matter of fact, William complained that he acquired more French in two months than he would acquire German in five years, living as he did. Before the end of November, the Wordsworths were anxious to try their luck elsewhere, but the severity of the weather kept them prisoners. In a letter that Dorothy sent to her brother at Christmas she wrote:

The cold was so excessive that when we left the room where we sit we were obliged to wrap ourselves up in great coats etc. in order not to suffer much pain from the transition, though we only went into the next room or downstairs for a few minutes.[3]

Although there is no evidence that Dorothy kept a journal, the five-month retreat in the German city was characterized by the siblings' intense creativity, which expressed their longing for

[1] Letter from D. W. to Christopher Wordsworth, 3 Feb. 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 97.
[2] Ibid, p. 99.
[3] Letter from D. W. to Christopher Wordsworth, 3 Feb. 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 100.

home and the process of remembering childhood memories; if Dorothy fondly remembered the loving care provided by her aunt Elizabeth while she was at Halifax, William recalled his time at Hawkshead. Paradoxically, the separation from Coleridge allowed them to rapidly develop as writers. On the one hand, Dorothy's writing ability is shown by the many letters she wrote; on the other hand, William began to draft *The Two-part Prelude*, using the notebook which already contained the last part of his sister's *Hamburg Journal* and his fragment *Essay on Morals*. The proximity of these three pieces of writing within a single notebook shows once again how closely the thoughts and concerns of the siblings were connected.

William's most important manuscript from this period is a poem of 150 lines, *Childhood and School-time*, contained in Book 1 of *The Prelude*:

> Was it for this?
> […]
> For this didst thou,
> O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
> Near my sweet birth-place, didst thou, beauteous stream,
> Give ceaseless music to the night and day,
> Which with its steady cadence tempering
> Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Among the fretful tenements of man
> A knowledge, a dim earnest of the calm
> That nature breathes among her woodland haunts?[4]

In this poem, which is a memory of infancy, nature compensates for the missing family members, who are evoked through metaphors, allusions, and associations. The enfolding arms of the mother are associated with the rhythm and sound of the river Derwent. Moreover, in the piece of poetry, William discussed the origins of creative power, and in doing so he tacitly included Dorothy. He reminded her of the song they had heard in infancy and later on, during their visit to Cockermouth in 1794. William also alluded to the symbolic importance of the river Wye for them both during their walking tour earlier in the year. The soothing influence of the rivers Derwent and Wye is related to his sister through a history of association. Undoubtedly, William's poetry served as a form of healing therapy for both of them, after the culture-shock they experienced in Hamburg and the subsequent sense of exile. Poetry enabled them to reconnect with nature and its nurturing power. In this poem, Dorothy was once again her brother's addressee, since he was trying to restore

[4] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude, Book I: Childhood and School-time*, ll. 1, 6-15, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 83.

her to a landscape from which she had been wrenched at the age of six. Despite the fact that early separation inevitably shaped their memories in a different way, with the opening lines of the poem *Was it for this?* William wanted to reassure his sister that they shared the same understanding of home.

In Book I of *The Prelude,* William used the phrase "Fostered alike" in order to portray the childhood experience he shared with his sister. Furthermore, he wanted to refer to their collective responsibility of looking after Basil Montagu during the years at Racedown and Alfoxden. When they were planning their trip to Germany, they reluctantly decided to leave Basil behind.

William's work on familial associations gave birth to the poem *Three years she grew in sun and shower*. Although the piece of poetry is apparently addressed to a girl named Lucy, it is soon clear that it is dedicated to his sister. The poem tells the story of Lucy's growth towards womanhood in the countryside:

> Myself will to my darling be
> Both law and impulse, and with me
> The Girl in rock and plain,
> In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
> Shall feel an overseeing power
> To kindle or restrain.
> She shall be sportive as the fawn
> That wild with glee across the lawn
> Or up the mountain springs;
> And hers shall be the breathing balm,
> And hers the silence and the calm
> Of mute insensate things.
> The floating clouds their state shall lend
> To her, for her the willow bend,
> Nor shall she fail to see
> Even in the motions of the Storm
> Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
> By silent sympathy.
> The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her; and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound

Shall pass into her face.
And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell.
Thus Nature spake – The work was done –
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.[5]

In the piece of poetry, there are many references to Dorothy. First of all, the verbs "mould" and "pass into", which evoke nature's beneficence, belong to a vocabulary which William shared with his sister. The actions of seeing, hearing, and feeling are connected with Dorothy, while the word "wild" is linked to her "wild eyes" in *Tintern Abbey*. The girl's responsiveness to "motions of the storm" and "stars of midnight" reminds of Dorothy's interest in planets and science. The speaker's "overseeing power – To kindle and restrain" suggests William wishful compensation for absence during Dorothy's formative years. But there is also a darker side in the poem, which refers to the years of Dorothy's youth that he did not witness, and are therefore *lost*. This passage also seems to be about Dorothy's imagined death. In addition, William was prophesying the passage of his daughter Caroline from infancy to womanhood, something that he was not able to witness, as had happened with his sister.

At Goslar, Dorothy and William missed Coleridge intensely, as is evident from the final page of the *Hamburg Journal*. On their three-day journey to the German city, they stopped overnight at Brunswick. Later on, in recording the morning breakfast they had in a garden, Dorothy used a pun to name the pitcher she was carrying, alluding to Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*: "Upon this I breakfasted, and carried *Kubla* to a fountain in the neighbouring market-place, where I drank some excellent water."[6] Seated by a fountain in a foreign land, drinking the local water, Dorothy expressed her emotions by referring to Coleridge's poetic creation.

[5] W. Wordsworth, *Three years she grew in sun and shower,* https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45559/three-years-she-grew, Accessed 24/03/2023.
[6] D. W., *The Hamburg Journal*, 1798, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 80; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 80, 92-94.

The arrival of a letter from Coleridge was an event eagerly awaited by both brother and sister, as Dorothy wrote in one of their joint replies:

First let me speak of the joy we felt at seeing your handwriting again; I burst open the seals and could almost have kissed them in the presence of the postmaster, but we did not read a word till we got to the inn when we devoured them separately, for at least two hours.[7]

As far as distance and an erratic postal service would allow, they strove to keep up the united life of the happy days at Alfoxden: William asked his friend's opinions on German poetry, discussed English comedy, and spoke of his work's progress, while Dorothy selected and transcribed passages of William's poetry, which were interspersed with her own comments. One of these was the poem *Skating*, which William had written as a response to Coleridge's description of skating parties in Ratzeburg. Dorothy used the skating topic for expressing her concern about Coleridge's German high life, underlining that he would certainly enjoy the exercise of skating in the wild setting of Cumberland: "A race with William upon his native lakes would leave to the heart and the imagination something more dear and valuable than the gay sight of ladies and countess whirling along the lake of Ratzeburg."[8] Dorothy's aim was both domestic and moral: to remove the poet from a corrupting environment, and to restore him to his family responsibilities and secluded rural life. She attentively chose the key words "heart" and "imagination" in order to appeal to her reader. Dorothy began to imagine a rebuilding of the intimacy which had flourished in Somerset, but this time in her own native environment. Therefore, she wrote to him: "You must come to us at the latter end of next summer. We will explore together every nook of that romantic country."[9]

Thus happily and fruitfully passed their five-month seclusion at Goslar. About the middle of February, on the first signs of the breaking up of winter, Dorothy and William decided to take their courage in both hands and to walk across the Harz Forest to Nordhausen, setting off for a tour of southern Germany. During their two-month tour, the siblings kept a shared journal. Unfortunately, this did not survive but there is one long letter addressed to Coleridge written jointly by them. In this letter, the Wordsworths had separated duties: Dorothy provided domestic details while William wrote on other matters; later, they would comment on each other's work. In this case, William discussed contemporary German literature, whereas Dorothy gave a full account of their journey through the Harz Forest. As in her *Journals*, Dorothy conveyed the pleasure of observations shared with her brother: "The brilliant green of the earth-moss under the trees", which "made our eyes ache

[7] Letter from W. W. and D. W. to S. T. C., 27 Feb. 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 100.
[8] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 238-239, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 85.
[9] Ibid, p. 241, qt. on p. 86.

after being so long accustomed to the snow."[10] Undoubtedly, the siblings were finally enjoying the spring, after the harsh winter they had spent in Goslar. But the letter also reports their critical remarks of German towns and indicates that they were uncomfortable on their travel: the people seemed "dirty, impudent, and vulgar", and Dorothy objected to being "stared completely out of countenance by passers-by."[11]

Coleridge was perfectly conscious of Dorothy and William's discomfort in Germany. As a matter of fact, the siblings' weariness and homesickness were once again confirmed when they stopped off at Göttingen to see him in April 1799. In his writings, Coleridge observed: "They burn with such impatience to return to their native Country, they who are all to each other."[12] From these words it is evident that Coleridge was fully aware of the special relationship between Dorothy and William, who were always together for better or worse.

The Wordsworths' desire to return to their own country emerged from the words William wrote to Cottle on their arrival: "We have spent our time pleasantly enough in Germany but we are right glad to find ourselves in England, for we have learned to know its value."[13]

William's relatives had hoped that, on his return from abroad, he would at last face the problem of earning a decent livelihood; but again, he disappointed them. Despite the fact that William and Dorothy were running out of money and they still had no regular income, their only wish was to see Mary, and on landing they made straight for Tom Hutchinson's farm at Sockburn-on-Tees, in Yorkshire, where they remained for seven months.

Aunt Rawson's growing discontent at the siblings' alternative lifestyle appears from a letter she sent to Sam Ferguson: "How they propose to add to their incomes I cannot tell, if by their pens they will be at a great distance from the capital."[14] But neither sister nor brother were seriously disturbed by it. More disturbing to them was the fact that their letters to Coleridge received no answer. He had returned from Germany at the end of June and they were longing for him to join them. When he eventually appeared on 26 October, he found William ill in bed with a pain on his side, a recurring psychosomatic symptom of anxiety, overwork, and homesickness. At the Hutchinsons', Coleridge immediately realized the love of William and Mary, and he soon became affectionate towards the woman, who became, like Dorothy, his *sister*. Moreover, his insatiable

[10] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 250-251, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 98.
[11] Ibid, p. 252, qt. on p. 98.
[12] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. i, p. 484, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 98.
[13] Letter from W. W. to Joseph Cottle, May 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 106.
[14] Letter from Mrs. Rawson to S. F., 28 June 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 106.

craving for love and sympathy drew him irresistibly to Sara Hutchinson, starting that fervid passion which, of all his many loves, went the deepest and lasted the longest.

Once William recovered from his illness, he, his brother John, and Coleridge started off upon a walking tour in the Lake District. Together, the three friends, by way of Haweswater, Bowness, and Hawkshead, reached Grasmere. Grasmere gave them great delight, as Coleridge wrote to Dorothy: "It was to me the vision of a fair country. Why were you not with us, Dorothy, why were you not with us, Mary?"[15]

It was no new spell that Grasmere exerted on William. Years before he had pictured to himself a home there with Dorothy, a plan that he was now able to share with her:

You will think my plan a mad one but I have thought of building a house there by the Lake side. John would give me £40 to buy the ground and for £250 I am sure I could build one as good as we can wish… There is a small house at Grasmere empty which we might take, but of this we will speak.[16]

With extraordinary singleness of purpose, William settled on the cottage they would live in and arranged to rent it; by the end of November, he was back to Sockburn to collect his sister. In December 1799 the Wordsworths returned to their roots, realizing their long-cherished dream of home.

[15] Letter from S. T. C. and W. W. to D. W., October 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 107.
[16] Ibid, pp. 107-108.

8. Homecoming

Peaceful our valley, fair and green,
And beautiful her cottages,
Each in its nook, its sheltered hold,
Or underneath its tuft or trees.
Many and beautiful they are;
But there is one that I love best,
A lowly shed, in truth, it is,
A brother of the rest.[1]

On Friday evening, 20 December, after a three-day journey, Dorothy and William arrived at their new home, which was later known as *Dove Cottage*. The house was located at Town End, a group of half-dozen small cottages near the village of Grasmere; the place had a special significance for them, since it was located less than twenty miles from their birthplace. Throughout their journey, Dorothy and William had felt that particular thrill known only to the traveller who returns after long absence to the land of his childhood. In Grasmere, they would be among their own people, with the habits and traditions in which they had been bred, and listen to the dialect and accent of their childhood.

Dove Cottage stood alone on the east side of the old road from Rydal to Grasmere, with a little garden and an orchard which rose steep up the fell behind; from the front windows there was an uninterrupted view over meadows and the Rydal Water. From the very beginning, Dorothy loved her new place, which she described as "truly and literally a cottage, not an advertisement cottage with coach house and even stable, but a little low-roofed building with the entrance through the kitchen."[2]

To mark the symbolic importance of their arrival, Dorothy and William sent a long letter to Coleridge, who was still at Sockburn. In the letter, which was composed jointly, the Wordsworths described in full detail their journey and the beauties of nature they had watched throughout. They carefully chose every word in order to awaken Coleridge's desire to join them. On this occasion, William was Dorothy's amanuensis, since she was "racked with the tooth-ache."[3] There are passages in the letter which markedly show her attentiveness to natural beauty:

When we reached this point the valley opened out again, two rocky banks on each side, which, hung with ivy and moss and fringed luxuriantly with brush-wood, ran directly parallel to each other and then

[1] D. Wordsworth, *Grasmere - a fragment*, ll. 1-8, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 105.
[2] D. W. ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 111.
[3] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 274, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 103.

approaching with a gentle curve, at their point of union presented a lofty waterfall, the termination of the valley.[4]

Settlement in Grasmere was a gradual process and it took a while before the siblings felt that that was the place they could finally call *home*. Many were the duties which had to be carried out, since everything was in confusion, as William wrote to Coleridge:

> […] painting the rooms, mending the doors, and heaven knows what, and Dorothy has so much work for her needle among the bed curtains, etc., that she is absolutely buried in it. She has scarcely been out since our arrival; […].[5]

But all that work could not dull their happiness: "Dorothy is much pleased with the house and appurtenances, the orchard especially."[6]

As the Wordsworths had little savings, they had to practise an economy even more rigid than at Racedown. As a consequence, they decided to keep no servant but engaged for some hours a day their old neighbour, Molly Fisher. Although she was "very ignorant, very foolish, and very difficult to teach", as Dorothy told Jane Marshall, she proved herself "as good and honest as ever was human being."[7] Molly remained in their service for more than four years, and she was a constant source of entertainment to Dorothy and her guests. With only Molly to help her, Dorothy found plenty to occupy her in the house; but such did not weigh heavily upon her and she still found time for her brother, to talk or walk with him, to help him in the garden, to write his letters or to copy out his poems.

Before many weeks had passed, Dorothy and William settled down at Grasmere as if they had lived there their entire lives. From the first, they established friendly relations with their neighbours, as Dorothy recorded in a letter to Jane:

> They are excellent people, friendly in performing all offices of kindness and humanity, and attentive to us without servility, if we were sick they would wait upon us night and day.[8]

There were no social claims which forced their lives into a prescribed routine, and they could keep their own hours, as Dorothy underlined:

> Our employments are not very various, yet they are irregular. We walk every day and at all times of the day, we row upon the water, and in the summer sit a great part of our time under the apple trees of the

[4] Letter from D. W. and W. W. to S. T. C., December 1799, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 104.
[5] Letter from W. W. to S. T. C., 24 Dec. 1799, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 112.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 10 Sept. 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 113.
[8] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 10 Sept. 1800, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, p. 114.

orchard, or in a wood close by the lake-side. Wm. writes verses and we read the books we have and such as we can procure.[9]

Clearly, Dorothy and William went soon back to their daily routine of writing, walking, and gardening. In particular, they were very pleased with their garden: in making it they felt that they were expressing their gratitude for returning to their place of origin together. Moreover, the garden became the symbol of their family's attachment to the region. Dorothy and William's enjoyment in planting a garden shows once again their close relationship to nature and its healing power.

During the first years at Grasmere, William established the basis for the story of his life as he would present it in *The Prelude*. Undoubtedly, the role of Dorothy was crucial, since he saw in her as well as in Grasmere the recompense for bereavement and early separation. Grasmere symbolically represented their earthly Paradise, from which they had been expelled after the death of their parents, and to which they now had the possibility of returning.

The poem *Home at Grasmere*, William's greatest homage to the region, was mostly written during the first year spent at Town End. Besides emphasizing his lifelong spiritual as well as emotional connection with the place, and the memories which came flooding back, William thanked Dorothy for her companionship and he contemplated their joint future:

> What I keep, have gained,
> Shall gain, must gain, if sound be my belief
> From past and present, rightly understood,
> That in my day of childhood I was less
> The mind of Nature, less, take all in all,
> Whatever may be lost, than I am now.[10]

In the piece of poetry, William portrayed Dorothy as the answer to all his initial doubts about returning north:

> For proof, behold this Valley and behold
> Yon Cottage, where with me my Emma dwells.[11]

The poet used the pseudonym *Emma* to connote the whole nature of Dorothy's significance to him, since in many languages "Emma" is a familiar term for "mother." The verse moved between past and present, blurring the boundary between the idea of Dorothy and her material presence.

---

[9] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 10 Sept. 1800, qt. in *D. W., A Biography*, p. 114.
[10] W. Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, ll. 91-96, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 108.
[11] W. Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, ll. 97-98, p. 108; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* pp. 104, 106-108.

As the poem progressed, William depicted his sister as a constant presence in his life: if once she had been the light which illuminated his thoughts, now she was indistinguishable from the home they shared. The poet paid tribute to her "hidden" voice and her "unseen" presence, which referred to her roles as collaborator in his writings and as keeper of their shared memories:

> Mine eyes did ne'er
> Rest on a lovely object, nor my mind
> Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,
> But either She who now I have, who now
> Divides with me this loved abode, was there, Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
> Her Voice was like a hidden Bird that sang;
> The thought of her was like a flag of light
> Or an unseen companionship, a breath
> Of fragrance independent of the wind.[12]

Home at Grasmere can be read as an expression of the siblings' longings and hopes and as a wedding song which celebrates the spiritual union of brother and sister.

At line 143, William switched from singular to plural pronouns as he narrated their moving story of separation and reunion:

> Long is it since we met to part no more,
> Since I and Emma heard each other's call
> And were Companions once again, like Birds
> Which by the intruding Flower had been scared,
> Two of a scattered brood that could not bear
> To live in loneliness; 'tis long since we,
> Rememb'ring much and hoping more, found means
> To walk abreast, though in a narrow path, With undivided steps.[13]

In order to describe their journey through life, William employed Biblical references. First, the image of a "scattered brood" echoed Genesis 11:4: "[…] we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."[14] Then, the image of brother and sister who "walk abreast", united in their journey along the "narrow path" of life, hinted at Adam and Eve after the Fall.

In returning to the Lake District with his sister, William experienced again the embracing protection of a familiar landscape associated with the memory of their parents:

---

[12] W. Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, ll. 104-113, p. 108.
[13] Ibid, ll. 171-179, p. 109.
[14] Genesis*, 11.4, The Tower of Babel*.

No where… can be found
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here as it abides by day,
By night, here only.[15]

Ultimately, Dove Cottage can be seen as Dorothy and William's nest-house, the natural habitat to where the siblings dreamt to come back and that was able to combat the absence of the previous years.

Throughout the winter and early spring of 1799, William was highly productive, unlike Dorothy. The poem *When first I journeyed hither* dealt again with the topic of kinship and homesickness, but this time it involved also their sailor brother John, who helped Dorothy and William put the final touches to their cottage. They were very affectionate towards John, whose character was very similar to theirs, as Dorothy wrote to Jane:

[He] loved solitude and he rejoiced in society; he would wander alone among these hills with his fishing rod, or led on merely by the pleasure of walking – or he would walk with William or me or both of us, […].[16]

In *When first I journeyed hither*, William wrote about a place which became known as "John's Grove", a fir plantation which was John's favourite spot during the nine months he spent at Grasmere. William recalled how that "sequestered nook", where bushes had grown "in such perplexed array", had then been worn by his brother into a pathway, where he could walk to and fro while composing.[17] The grove bore a symbolic meaning, which was related to the brothers' early memories in Cockermouth, their kinship that crossed time and space, and that was renewed through the rhythmic actions of pacing and reciting verse:

Hither he had brought a finer eye,
A heart more wakeful… more loth to part
From place so lovely he had worn the track,
One of his own deep paths! by pacing here
With the habitual restlessness of foot.[18]

The poem's significance deepened when Dorothy's fondness for the fir-grove was taken into account. Since she used to walk backwards and forwards with William while he composed his

[15] W. Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, ll. 155-159, p. 110; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 108-110.
[16] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 16 Mar. 1805, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 115.
[17] W. Wordsworth*, When I first journeyed hither,* ll. 34-38, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 111.
[18] W. Wordsworth*, When I first journeyed hither,* ll. 67-71, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 112.

pieces of poetry, their affinity with the fir-grove was strictly connected to the affinity between them, and the action of pacing to and fro enabled them to strengthen their shared relationship with Grasmere. The fir-grove became the symbol of the assimilation between a family and a place.

Dorothy and William, together with John, worked hard in order to enclose the small garden at the front of Dove Cottage. During their first summer at Town End, the siblings began to see the results of their joint work. In writing to Jane, Dorothy recorded that they regarded the garden with "pride and partiality" as "the work of our own hands."[19] The use of the personal pronoun suggests that the work of building their home was shared by all members of the household. Dorothy's words revealed how houseproud she was about their cottage and garden:

> Our cottage is quite large enough for us though very small, and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors and it looks very nice on the outside, for though the roses and honeysuckles which we have planted against it are only of this year's growth yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers, for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful, but very useful, as their produce is immense.[20]

Besides John Wordsworth, among the stream of visitors who came to stay at Dove Cottage was Coleridge. Coleridge arrived at Town End in June 1800 for a three-week stay, during which he resentfully observed that the siblings were completely absorbed in their new home. In a letter he wrote to his friend James Tobin, a note of mischief could undoubtedly be noticed:

> Wordsworth remains at Grasmere till next summer (perhaps longer). […] His cottage is indeed in every respect so delightful a residence, the walks so dry after the longest rains, […] and the whole vicinity so tossed about on those little hills at the feet of the majestic mountains, that he moves in an eddy; he cannot get out of it.[21]

Furthermore, Coleridge was perfectly aware that, as Dorothy was moving forward into a central position in her brother's life and consciousness, his philosophical influence on William and their joint works had been gradually put aside. Notwithstanding his doubts about the Wordsworths' way of life, he succumbed to the pressure to live as their neighbour and in July he moved with his family into Greta Hall in Keswick, about 13 miles from Grasmere.

In 1800, the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published. It included three formal inscriptions which had island habitations as their theme: one for Grasmere, one for Derwentwater,

---

[19] Letter from D. W. to J. M., Summer 1800, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 113; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 111-113.
[20] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 295, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 113.
[21] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge,* vol. i, pp. 613-614, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 113-114; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* pp. 113-114.

and one for Rydal. Inscriptions were a means of commemorating domestic occasions and feelings, and of reflecting on the sacramental bond which poets had with places. The last of this group of three inscriptions, *Lines written with a Slate pencil*, is the one most connected with Dorothy. William wrote as an environmentalist who is eager to protect natural beauty from the intrusions of rich aristocrats; his lines celebrated the failure of Sir William Fleming's ambition to build a big house on one of the Rydal islands. Since Dorothy and William watched the appearance of new buildings with dismay, the inscription voiced their shared concern with protecting the Lake District's natural beauty. They also disliked when humble houses were whitewashed, because they stood out as eyesores against the natural stone and turf of the fells:

> Leave
> Thy fragments to the bramble and the rose,
> There let the vernal slow-worm sun himself,
> And let the red-breast hop from stone to stone.[22]

In these lines, the recollection of William's blessing on Dorothy at the end of *Tintern Abbey* can be noticed:

> Let the moon
> Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
> And let the misty mountain winds be free
> To blow against thee.[23]

In this solitary place, William connected Dorothy's affinity with wildness and freedom to the return of wildlife to its natural habitat.

One further inscription, this time for a rustic seat, was *Inscription for a seat by the pathway side ascending to Windy Brow*, which resulted from the collaboration between the Wordsworths and Coleridge; it expressed their emotional as well spiritual attachment to the region of the Lake District. The piece of poetry was initially composed in 1794, when William and Dorothy reunited, and it was then revised and extended two years later. The inscription carried a message of compassion, addressing passers-by and urging them to be sympathetic towards those less fortunate.

[22] W. Wordsworth, *Lines written with a Slate pencil,* ll. 32-35, in *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 210, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 116.
[23] W. Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, ll. 135-138, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 116; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 114-117.

It was included in the *Racedown Notebook* in Dorothy's rough handwriting, taken down while William dictated "All too rapidly, changing his mind and trying out variants as he went along":[24]

> Here stop and think on them
> The weary homeless vagrants of the earth
> Or that poor man the rustic artisan
> Who laden with his implements of toil
> Returns at night to his far-distant home… […].[25]

A further revised version was published as one of Coleridge's contributions to the *Morning Post* in 1800, with the title *Inscription for a Seat by a road-side, half way up a steep hill, facing the south*:

> And for thy future self thou shalt provide
> Through ev'ry change of various life a seat,
> Not built by hands, on which thy inner part,
> Imperishable, many a grievous hour,
> Or bleak, or sultry, may repose.[26]

This new version drew a biblical analogy between building an actual "seat of sods" at Windy Brow and building a place in the afterlife.[27] The seat at Windy Brow was symbolically associated to the Wordsworths' memories of their reunion in 1794, when they thought of their parents, both of whom had been denied old age. Six years later, they returned and rebuilt the seat, renewing their emotional ties with a dearly loved spot. When Coleridge moved to Keswick in 1800, he was closer to Windy Brow than the siblings. Participating in rebuilding the seat and rewriting the poem included him in their passionate involvement with the region and strengthened their ties. Therefore, the newly published inscription was like an arrangement which bound the three companions to each other.

While Coleridge was at Town End, another welcome visitor arrived for a six-week visit: Mary Hutchinson. Before Mary left the cottage, William and John decided to pay her a return visit at Gallow Hill, in Yorkshire, where the Hutchinson had lately moved from Sockburn. In mid-May, when the two brothers went off for three weeks, Dorothy was left entirely to herself; it was her first experience of complete solitude and she felt with a peculiar poignancy her dependence upon

---

[24] *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, ed. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 750, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 118.
[25] *Inscription for a seat by the pathway side ascending to Windy Brow,* ll. 5-9, in *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, p. 754, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 118.
[26] Ibid, ll. 35-39, p. 756.
[27] Ibid, l. 24; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 117-119.

William. When he was not at her side, she felt totally empty; as a matter of fact, love for her brother was "the building up of my being, the light of my path", and in his absence her bright path darkened.[28]

Certainly, now that William was gone to Mary, Dorothy could not fail to think of that time, soon to come, when she would no longer be mistress of his home. Although she knew that his marriage would not entail separation from him, something unthinkable for them both, the thought was not the less bitter that she would have to share with another a companionship who had been all her own ever since. Yet, there was no trace of selfishness in her; it was in this mood that she resumed the *Journal* which she had kept at Alfoxden and in Germany, giving birth to her most renowned piece of writing, the *Grasmere Journal*.

[28] Letter from D. W. to Lady Beaumont, 17 Mar. 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 116.

9. The Grasmere Journal

> *My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to Wm. when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. […] I resolved to write a journal of the time till Wm and J. return, because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give William pleasure by it when he comes home again.*[1]

Dorothy kept her *Grasmere Journal* between May 1800 and January 1803; these three years were the richest in her life and her *Journal* is a testament to that. She wrote her diary in five small notebooks which had already been used either by herself or William. She used the first notebook for her *Journal* between 14 May and 22 December 1800; it already contained material from her seven months in Germany as well as some writings related to the time she spent in Sockburn. In the extant manuscript books there is a gap of nine months; it is more likely that the second notebook, which covered the time from 23 December 1800 to 9 October 1801, was lost rather than it was not written. The third notebook, in which Dorothy recorded events from 10 October 1801 to 14 February 1802, dated back to 1798; it included her *Hamburg Journal* from 14 September to 1 October 1798 as well as sum and expenses from Hamburg and a list of reading matter. In addition, William had used it in late 1799-1800 for drafts of some of his works, like *Poem on the Naming of Places*. The fourth notebook covered the time from 14 February to 2 May 1802, one of the most significant periods of Dorothy's life. This notebook had already been used by both siblings: by Dorothy for exercises in German grammar and the last section of her *Hamburg Journal*, whereas William used it for his *Essay on Morals*, the *Two-Part Prelude*, and drafts of other writings. The fifth and last notebook consisted of the *Grasmere Journal* from 14 May 1802 to 16 January 1803, and William's drafts of his poems. The decision to recycle partly used notebooks was related to the high price of paper. Undoubtedly, besides mere economic reasons, sharing notebooks is a symbol of Dorothy and William's newly found cohabitation and it allowed their words to be in close proximity, thus providing a context of mutual influence.

Dorothy began her *Grasmere Journal* in the early summer of 1800, when William and John were away from home for three weeks; writing a new diary worked as a kind of healing therapy.

[1] *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal written at Grasmere (14th May to 21st December 1800)* in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, vol. I; 14 May 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 117.

Since she wrote it to "give William pleasure", the broken patterns of composition were dictated by his activities, his sleep, and also his absences.[2]

In her entry for 16 May, Dorothy recorded what it meant to be settled at Grasmere, looking forward to his return:

I had been very melancholy in my walk back. I had many of my saddest thoughts, and I could not keep the tears within me. But when I came to Grasmere I felt that it did me good. I finished my letter to M. H. – ate hasty pudding, and went to bed.[3]

So Dorothy jotted down, day by day, her occupation in the cottage and in the garden, and her minutest observations in her usual walk to Ambleside to get William and Coleridge's letters. She doubtless missed her brother intensely during his absence; since the time of his return was uncertain, two days before his arrival she did not go far from home lest she should not be there to welcome him. In her diary entry for 6 June 1800, Dorothy recalled her mood from those previous nights: she had been lying in bed and listening to every noise outside, hoping that it was William coming home. At last, the next day:

[…] sitting at work till after 11 o'clock I heard a foot go to the front of the house, turn round, and open the gate. It was William! After our first joy was over, we got some tea. We did not go to bed till 4 o'clock in the morning, so that he had an opportunity of seeing our improvements. The birds were singing; and all looked fresh, […].[4]

Considering the diary entries before 7 June and reading on after this date, they convey the impression that Dorothy did not feel complete without William. Indeed, before he was back, she had often been in a state of melancholy. By contrast, after William's return the diary entries became shorter, thus indicating that she had less time than before because she spent a lot of it with her beloved brother.

The *Grasmere Journal* tells a tale of high as well as plain living but it also includes those trivialities that make up a significant part in Dorothy's life: "I was not very well, mended stockings.", "A cold evening. Molly stuck the peas. I weeded a little. Did not walk." At times she reveals the naiveté of a child, as in the entry that recorded a day passed on the hills: "William and Coleridge repeated and read verses; I drank a little brandy and water, and was in heaven." But the

[2] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 14 May 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 117.
[3] *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; 16 May 1800, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 141.
[4] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 7 June 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 118; see H. Geisler, *Dorothy Wordsworth and her influence on the life and work of William Wordsworth with particular emphasis on the "Grasmere Journal 1800-1803"*, Grin Verlag, Norderstedt Germany, 2012, p. 4.

loyalty with which Dorothy set down whatever passed through her mind gives to the *Grasmere Journal* the stamp of a living human document and shows her ability as an artist to recreate the world around her in pictures of a beauty proportionate to her feelings. Since the days of her *Alfoxden Journal*, Dorothy had grown in depth as well as in breadth of character, and her feelings had become more sensitive and acute. Her eager response to the sounds and sights about her was charged with deeper emotions, and she revealed the mind and the heart of a poet, as it emerges from the description of her as well as William's favourite birch-tree:

It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The sun went in and out and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a creature by its own self among them.[5]

Dorothy's favourite solitary walk was that which led her through Rydal to Ambleside, where she could admire the nature before her eyes:

I went round by the stepping stones. Rydale was very beautiful, with spear-shaped streaks of polished steel. Grasmere was very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight. It calls home the heart to quietness.[6]

Dorothy's range of sympathies had grown wider and responded to all that was going on around her. At Grasmere, she threw herself with great interest into the life of the whole village. In this she was at one with William, who recorded in *The Prelude* how conversing with humble people on his return from France had helped him to regain his lost faith in human beings. Certainly, Dorothy had a genius for getting into close touch with all those who crossed her path. It is not surprising that the *Grasmere Journal* conveys a lively impression of the daily life of the village, the character and habits of its people, their dress and manner of speech. At Town End, Dorothy simply entered into the joys and sorrows of her neighbours, and made them her own:

Sent Peggy Ashburner some goose. She sent me some honey, with a thousand thanks. […] She talked about Thomas's having sold his land. […] then she told me with what pains and industry they had made up their taxes, interest, etc. etc., how they all got up at 5 o'clock in the morning to spin and Thomas carded, and that they had paid off a hundred pounds of the interest.[7]

[5] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 24 Nov. 1801, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 119.
[6] Ibid, 16 May 1800.
[7] Ibid, 24 May 1801, pp. 121-122.

The triviality and at times even the inconsequence of her entries stamped them as a transcript from real life, whereas in her more detailed sketches Dorothy revealed that vital sympathy which was the true secret of her power, as in the picture of a pauper's burial:

Went to a funeral at John Dawson's. About 10 men & 4 women. Bread, cheese, and ale. They talked sensibly and cheerfully about common things. […] The priest met us. He did not look as a man ought to do on such an occasion. I had seen him half-drunk the day before in a pot-house. Before we came with the corpse one of the company observed he wondered what sort of cue our Parson would be in![8]

The *Grasmere Journal* is even more precious when it discloses the life of those with whom Dorothy was in closest intimacy. In their first summer at Town End, passing beside Thirlmere, a happy company of friends had cut upon a rock their initials, a symbol of their lifelong friendship: W. W., M. H., D. W., S. T. C., J. W. and S. H.[9] This was the world of which Dorothy was the vital centre.

Many other friends used to visit Dorothy and William at Dove Cottage: William's college friend Robert Jones, Jane's husband Mr. Marshall, the Clarksons, Sam Ferguson and some others of the Halifax circle, the Hutchinson brothers, more than once Mrs. Coleridge and her children, the Sympsons and other neighbours with whom they exchanged an occasional visit.

In summer 1800, Coleridge had moved on to Greta Hall, in Keswick, where the Wordsworths had found a house for him; doubtless he would have settled nearer if an empty dwelling had been available. Thus the old intimate friendship was resumed, although daily intercourse as at Alfoxden was not possible, since Dove Cottage and Greta Hall lay 13 miles apart. But if their meetings were not as frequent as in the past, they were more prolonged, lasting for several days each time. When they were parted, the three companions exchanged daily letters, but at any hour Coleridge might suddenly appear and he was always welcome. Often the siblings had discovered a new nook in the hills to which their friend must be taken, so that he could share their pleasure. Moreover, new verses or additions to the forthcoming *Lyrical Ballads* or the new *Preface* had to be discussed. Coleridge recorded that it arose "out of conversations so frequent that with few exceptions we could scarcely either of us positively say who first started a particular thought."[10] Such are the typical *Journal* entries related to Coleridge:

We walked in the wood by the lake. W. read *Joanna* and the *Firgrove* to Coleridge. […] After dinner Coleridge discovered a rock-seat in the orchard; Coleridge read *Christabel* a second time; we had increasing

[8] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 3 Sept. 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 122-123.
[9] The initials refer to William Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Wordsworth and Sara Hutchinson.
[10] S. T. Coleridge, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 125.

pleasure. A delicious morning. Wm. and I were employed all the morning in writing an addition to the Preface.[11]

But the joy which Coleridge brought to both Dorothy and William was soon to be tempered by the deepest sorrow. On 20 December 1800 Dorothy took down: "Coleridge came. Very ill, rheumatic, feverish."[12] In contrast to his immense vitality, Coleridge's health had never been robust. An attack of rheumatic fever, from which he suffered in his boyhood, left him with a constitutional tendency to all those illnesses which are worsened by the damp climate of a lake area; and this illness was only the prelude to a long series of ailments in almost every part of his body. But worse than all was his addiction to opium. He had started taking it at Nether Stowey without harmful results; it was at Greta Hall that, having read that laudanum was an infallible remedy for swellings on the knee, he began to use it regularly and rapidly became addicted to it. This disastrous habit destroyed his will, which was already weak by nature, and arose suspicion in others, gradually undermining his relations even with his dearest friends.

Coincident with the deterioration of his health came the failure of his marriage, which had been contracted while he was still in love with Mary Evans, his former lover. Despite the fact that the marriage brought him a brief happiness and he was devoted to his child Hartley, on his return from Germany Coleridge realized how empty he felt when the Wordsworths were beyond his reach. When he rejoined them at Sockburn, and to their love was added that of Mary and Sara Hutchinson, he found that sympathy which he missed at home. Although Mrs. Coleridge was ignorant of his passion for Sara Hutchinson, she was perfectly aware that in spirit his husband belonged to William, Dorothy, Mary Hutchinson, and, ultimately, to Sara. Certainly, she began to give her husband signs of her resentment, exacerbating his nervous and sensitive nature. To Coleridge, his own home became a source of growing torment, which his friend witnessed with growing discontent, as Dorothy wrote in a letter to Mary:

We left poor Coleridge on Monday evening: we had been with him a week and a day. […] he was sitting in the parlour, and looked dreadfully pale and weak. He was very, very unwell in the way that Sara can describe to you: ill all over, back, and stomach, and limbs, and so weak that he changed colour whenever he exerted himself at all. Our company did him good, and the next day he was much better. […] Mrs. Coleridge […] is indeed a bad nurse for C., […] She is much, very much to be pitied, for when one party is ill-matched the other necessarily must be so too. She would have made a very good wife to many another

[11] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 31 Sept. and 5 Oct. 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 125.
[12] Ibid, 20 Dec. 1800.

man, but for Coleridge!! Her radical fault is want of sensibility and what can such a woman be to Coleridge?[13]

So passed the summer and autumn; in November, Coleridge went to London to work for *The Morning Post*, hoping that his health could improve. But his friends could not stop thinking of what might befall him, now that he was beyond that sympathy on which he was so dependent. In her diary, Dorothy recorded her constant thoughts of their absent friend:

Every sight and every sound reminded me of him – dear, dear fellow, of his many walks to us by day and night, of all dear things. I was melancholy and could not talk, but at last eased my heart by weeping […]. O! how many many reasons have I to be anxious for him.[14]

During the winter, many letters came from Coleridge and they were for the most part gloomy, for he chose to write them when he was sick and lonely, and felt most in need of their support:

His letter made us uneasy about him. I was glad I was not by myself when I received it; […] Two very affecting letters from C.; I was stopped in my writing and made ill by the letters. W. a bad headache.[15]

Undoubtedly, Coleridge exploited his friends' devotion, not making any effort to bear his own burdens. Accounts of the time he spent in London and at Nether Stowey at Christmas suggests that his health was not in so desperate a condition. He knew well the suffering that his letters caused to Dorothy and William; but in so writing he felt relieved, showing a complete lack of that sympathy for which he so desperately craved. Notwithstanding the great sorrow he caused them, their love for him never failed.

In the following months, Coleridge came to visit Dorothy and William many times; it was on one of these occasions that Dorothy learnt about his addiction to opium. Furthermore, during one of his visits at Town End, he read the verses he wrote to his wife Sara, which were the first version of his *Ode to Dejection*. In its first form, Coleridge revealed his weakness and his mental suffering. The poem caused Dorothy a great distress:

I was affected with them and was on the whole, not being well, in miserable spirits. The sunshine, the green fields, and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy, sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me… I went to bed after dinner, could not sleep.[16]

[13] Letter from D. W. to M. H., 27 Apr. 1801, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 127-128.
[14] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 10 Nov. 1801, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 129.
[15] Ibid, 25 Dec. 1801 and 6 Feb. 1802.
[16] Ibid, 21 Apr. 1802, p. 130.

Despite his abject misery, in the company of Dorothy and William Coleridge could still forget his troubles. They had many happy meetings during the summer and at home, for a time, things went better with him.

The tender affection with which Dorothy wrote of Coleridge has led some readers to conclude that he held the first place in her heart and that a frustrated passion for him was the secret tragedy of her life. Actually, holding this view would mean to misread her. Certainly, Dorothy loved Coleridge with such intense devotion which rendered his later deterioration under the influence of opium the most excruciating torment of her life; but the true tragedy of her life was not attributable to Coleridge, rather to that consuming passion for her brother. It is evident that every page of the *Grasmere Journal* reflects the passion with which she lived for her brother; whether present or absent, he was the centre of her life. This is a representative tale of one of his short absences:

Since he left me […] I laid by his clothes which we had thrown here and there and everywhere, […] I transplanted some snowdrops – the Bees are busy. Wm. has a nice bright day. It was hard frost in the night. The Robins are singing sweetly. Now for my walk. I *will* be busy. I *will* look well, and be well when he comes back to me. O, the Darling! Here is one of his bitten apples. I can hardly find my heart to throw it into the fire. I must wash myself, then off! (*Later*) […] I worked and read the L. B., enchanted with the *Idiot Boy*. Wrote to Wm. then went to bed.[17]

And here is an account of a typical day when William was at home:

I went and sate with W. and walked backward and forwards in the orchard till dinner time. He read me his poem. After dinner we made a pillow of my shoulder. I read to him, and my Beloved slept… A sweet evening, as it has been a sweet day, […].[18]

Undoubtedly, absorbed as she was in her love for William, Dorothy precluded herself from feeling for any other man an emotion which would satisfy both the spiritual and physical side of her nature.

As to the composition of the *Grasmere Journal*, the register which Dorothy adopted in writing down her experiences clearly signals that she was perfectly conscious of making a story about herself. Her very first entry quoted at the beginning of this chapter contains a literary *topos*: the symbolic departure of the loved one, accompanied by a confession of great sadness. There is definitely a striking difference from her first entry in the *Alfoxden Journal* quoted in Chapter 5. The use of the figure of speech "I knew not why" and the gesture of weeping signal that Dorothy was

[17] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 4 Mar. 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 132-133.
[18] Ibid, 17 Mar. 1802, p. 133; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 130-132.

writing in the style of a novel of sensibility. One of the most distinctive features of her style is the combination of fidelity to the real world and heightened feeling. Sometimes Dorothy drew on standard sentimental tropes, such as dissolving and weeping ("My heart dissolved in what I saw […]."") or on well-known figures of speech: "My heart fails in me." But more often a vivid and idiomatic sentence caught the sound of her voice, thus speaking directly about her feelings: "It made my heart almost feel like a vision to me." The care with which Dorothy detailed her feelings indicated their aesthetic value. Such mixing of genres and registers, along with the rapid style of the entries, the use of abbreviations and dashes, and the shifts of mood and pace conveyed the sense of a life lived while it was being processed.

In the lines which followed, a different kind of writing as well as topics from the *Alfoxden Journal* and the *Hamburg Journa*l are instantly recognizable:

As I was going out in the morning I met a half crazy old man. He showed me a pincushion, and begged a pin, afterwards a halfpenny. He began in a kind of indistinct voice in this manner 'Matthew Jobson's lost a cow. Tom Nichol has two good horses strained – Jim Jone's cow's broken her horn, &c &c –' He went into Aggys and persuaded her to give him some whey & let him boil some porridge. She declares he ate two quarts.[19]

Firstly, Dorothy employed a mix of registers, using direct speech with its songlike rhythm and regional accent, which made the writing more vivid and immediate. Then, she combined realism with poetic descriptions of landscape. There was a strong interest in narrative and the personal pronoun "I" is used more frequently. Dorothy's worry for the "half crazy old man" markedly expressed her empathy.

Home and community are at the centre of the *Grasmere Journal*. Dorothy divided her time between domestic tasks, such as washing and drying, baking and cooking, binding carpets and mending shoes, gathering mosses, transplanting radishes, picking and boiling gooseberries, visiting neighbours, and talking to beggars and her role as William's amanuensis, transcribing his poems. In addition, she always found some time for her daily walks and reading:

Sauntered a good deal in the garden, bound carpets, mended old clothes, read – Timon of Athens – , dried linen… Walked up into the Black Quarter.; Walked in the morning to Ambleside. I found a letter from

[19] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 16 May 1800, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 141.

Wm. and one from Mary Hutchinson. Wrote to William after dinner, worked in the garden sate in the evening under the trees.[20]

In the *Grasmere Journal* two contrasting strands, both referring to the idea of home, are interwoven: realistic reportage of other people's experiences, and detailed and reflective description of her own. Dorothy's early experiences of being orphaned and exiled from Cockermouth caused her to feel great sympathy for the orphans and the homeless whose lives she told. The intensity of happiness she felt was overshadowed by the awareness of others' misfortunes as well as by fears for her fortune. The *Grasmere Journal* dealt with a major turning point in her life, as she accommodated herself to William and Mary's decision to marry and settled back into domestic happiness after a period of anxiety surrounding the marriage itself. Two are the other domestic subplots, both causing disruption to the steady habits of home life: the siblings' highly emotional visit to France to see Annette Vallon and Caroline, and the painful dissolution of Coleridge's marriage.

In the summer of 1800, when she began to keep her journal, Dorothy had a considerable knowledge of what writing a "Life" might involve. Obviously, this was related to William's work on *The Prelude*, although this was not the only reason. Dorothy shared with her brother the interest in the lives of humble people, whom she could easily meet in the neighbourhood of Grasmere. Moreover, during the years covered by the *Grasmere Journal*, she also became interested in the lives of famous writers, for example Ben Jonson, John Logan, and Samuel Johnson, whose experiences she read together with William in Robert Anderson's anthology *The Works of the British Poets with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical* which the siblings had received from their brother John. Consequently, the way in which Dorothy observed and recorded life at Town End was influenced by her knowledge of these famous lives, together with her awareness of William's identity as a published poet.

Dorothy's prose was based on the principles of *associationism*, and the terms in which she developed it are those she and William had evolved together during 1798. Since she often reread *Lyrical Ballads*, both for pleasure and moral instruction, she remained faithful to its principles, observing the bonds between human beings and places. Dorothy's sympathy for the poor people who wandered past Town End conveyed her personal gratitude for belonging, and her vivid language was able to catch the hardships of their lives even in a single sentence: "A broken soldier

[20] *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal written at Grasmere (14th May to 21st December 1800)* in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, vol. I, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Co., London, 1897, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42856/pg42856.txt, Accessed 10/08/2023; 19 and 24 May 1800, pp. 20-21.

came to beg in the morning."[21] Other times, it was her detailed language which built up a credible picture:

> In the afternoon a poor woman came, she said, to beg, … but she has been used to go a-begging, for she has often come here. Her father lived to the age of 105. She is a woman of strong bones, with a complexion that has been beautiful, and remained very fresh last year, but now she looks broken, and her little boy – – a pretty fellow, and whom I have loved for the sake of Basil – – looks thin and pale. I observed this to her. 'Aye,' says she, 'we have all been ill. Our house was nearly unroofed in the storm, and we lived in it so for more than a week.' The child wears a ragged drab coat and a fur cap, poor little fellow, I think he seems scarcely at all grown since the first time I saw him.[22]

Dorothy's prose enabled her to stay closely in touch with the reality of the obscure lives of those around her. When she recorded the words of the beggars she encountered on her walks, it was the rhythms of their voices which struck the authentic note. Meetings with destitute mothers, discharged soldiers, and sailors were all noted down. As a consequence, the *Grasmere Journal* could be described as a graphic and detailed record of indigence in wartime.

Dorothy's interest in narrative emerges from her telling and retelling of stories. Usually, she gave a rapid summary of a person's life, weaving in phrases from their own paraphrased accounts. She gradually incorporated passages of direct speech, showing a sharp ear for idiomatic uses and she collected them, because she heard them as a kind of oral poetry. Indeed, local usages passed into her vocabulary, as it happened with a phrase of Molly Fisher, whom she trained in the rudiments of housekeeping: "It snowed in the night, and was, on Saturday, as Molly expressed it, a Cauld Clash."[23] Two days later, Dorothy reused it: "After dinner […] we went towards Rydale for letters. It was a "cauld clash." A paragraph later, the idiom had passed into her vocabulary: "We walked on very wet through the clashy cold roads."[24] Furthermore, Dorothy peppered her prose by using as well as repeating metaphors and expressions taken from spoken language, for example: "lass", "bairn", "fagging", "auld", and "gang." Consequently, her sentences appear more accurate, like the following, where the word "wildness" is connected to the repetition of "lass" to make a word-cluster: "There was a wildness in her whole figure, not the wildness of a Mountain lass, but of the Road lass, a traveller from her birth."[25]

In her *Grasmere Journal*, Dorothy experimented with many different types of narration, shifting her focus as she moved through several biographical and autobiographical roles. Evidently,

[21] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 23 Dec. 1801, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 145.
[22] Ibid, 12 Feb. 1802.
[23] Ibid, 6 Feb. 1802, p. 143.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, 14 Feb. 1802.

she was interested in poetry's relation to health and happiness, and concerned with her own creative process with reference to William's, keeping a detailed record of his mood-swings and ailments as well as of her own. Therefore, her prose echoed a case study of the connection between productivity and health, as in the following entries:

William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm; William worked at – The Leech Gatherer – almost incessantly from morning till tea-time. I copied – The Leech Gatherer – and other poems for Coleridge. I was oppressed and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death.[26]

Dorothy's familiarity with her unfolding emotions, especially in respect of her brother's variable moods and Coleridge's deepening unhappiness, is indicative of her interest in psychology and mental health. As a matter of fact, her *Journal* had an important therapeutic dimension as it traced the tranquillizing influence of nature on her spirit during periods of anxiety or sadness. Since Dorothy knew that her prose would be read by William, she made her diary into a household gift.

The *Grasmere Journal* is rich in symbolism, as shown by the entry for Tuesday 24 November. It is shaped by a walk with William and Mary, following an unplanned route and returning to Town End. Two are the key events: first there is the shared delight of seeing a birch tree "yielding to the gusty wind":

It glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower – it was a tree in shape with stem and branches but it was like a Spirit of water – The sun went in and it resumed its purplish appearance the twigs still yielding to the wind but not visibly so to us. The other Birch trees that were near it looked bright and chearful [*sic*] – but it was a Creature by its own self among them.[27]

The three observers were linked in Dorothy's memory of the moment, which she presented as a spiritual awakening. The stationary tree was momentarily transfigured by sun, wind, and rain into a moving "Spirit" or "Creature." Not even the sun's dimming could take away the memory of the tree as a "flying sunshiny shower": it went on being a "Creature by its own self", distinguished from all the "other Birch trees."

The second event refers to the conversation Dorothy had that same day with her neighbour Peggy Ashburner, who lamented the selling of her family's land. Dorothy noted down their conversation as evidence that members of the local farming community were as susceptible as she was to the familiar beauty which surrounded them:

[26] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 2 Feb. and 9 May 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 140; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 140, 142-143.
[27] Ibid, 19 and 24 May 1800, p. 143; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 140-141, 145.

O how pleased I used to be when they fetched [the sheep] down, and when I had been a bit poorly I would gang out upon a hill and look ower t' fields and see them and it used to do me so much good you cannot think.[28]

Dorothy's own "moment of being" was paralleled with the oral immediacy of Peggy's words in dialect. The pairing implies a bond of sympathy between neighbours, suggesting that their feelings were nurtured by the habitual impression they shared. At the end of the day, a letter from Coleridge drove William out from the fireside into the cold where he was "surprised and terrified by a sudden rushing of winds." This closing contrast between the fireside and William's exposure to wind is the ultimate symbolic event related to Dorothy's fear of losing her home, Peggy's lost land, and Coleridge's failed marriage.

As the *Grasmere Journal* unfolds, it is possible to understand some of Dorothy's processes of selection and the associations they entail. Over the months, among apparently insignificant details of her daily life, Dorothy offered a series of encounters with the beauty of the natural world, which were similar to William's "spots of time." What connected them was the belief that daily contact with nature had a favourable influence on moral growth.

In describing nature, Dorothy made full use of similes: mountains gave "a musical bell-like answering" to the voice of birds and crows were "like shapes of water passing over the green fields." In the *Grasmere Journal* similes do not reveal an unexpected likeness between two apparently different things but they confirm an underlying relation between occurrences which are already alike, either because they belong to the same lexical field or they are in geographical proximity. Following this criterion, Dorothy remained resolutely grounded in the familiar world she knew, a world which was tightly bounded by habit and association, in which the same mountains were seen reflected in the same lakes, and the same paths were walked with the same companions, day after day. Nearly all the similes were based on natural phenomena which Dorothy could observe in the Vale of Grasmere, very close to her birthplace. The vale represented a home to which she had returned after long absence; therefore, a connection between her peculiar use of figurative language and the vale as a home recovered could be identified.[29]

In the *Grasmere Journal*, poetic metre is less visible than figurative language, since it came to Dorothy as naturally as talking. In the Wordsworths' household, reading aloud and transcribing poetry were part of the daily activities, which meant that she carried poetic metre with her everywhere she went. With her way of writing, Dorothy was able to catch the changeable rhythms

[28] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 24 Nov. 1801, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 145.
[29] See Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 145-146.

of life. She experimented with a wide range of metrical patterns, building poetic units out of more than one sentence, or breaking a single sentence down into subsidiary clauses, which sound like poetic lines when they are read aloud. In this case, it seems that the prose hovers on the edge of verse:

> […] a sweet sound of water falling – into the quiet lake – Helm Crag rose very bold and craggy, a being by itself – the air was become still – the lake was of a bright slate colour, the hills darkening. The Bays shot into the low fading shores.[30]

Dorothy's handling of metre is responsive to the changing rhythms of the day and her moments of stillness are part of the day's happenings. These word compositions have their own distinctive pattern, and they were composed in order to resemble pictures and to be read aloud.

Dorothy's poetic voice was established by her habits of syntax and phrasing. First of all, she had the habit of using paired adjectives to close a sentence: "Snowdrops quite out, but cold and winterly." In addition, she used to balance a sentence so that it became a composed unit: "Sheep resting all things quiet." Moreover, repetition is a recurrent feature of the *Grasmere Journal* which suggests a habitual process of going over her thoughts to revise them: "There was no one waterfall above another. It was a sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air."

Since the *Grasmere Journal* contains too many random elements, it cannot be described as *unified*. Yet, its principles of organization, in terms of narrative, syntactical, figurative, and metrical, produce momentary effects of unity as well as more extended passages that appear composed, thus allowing talking about its *poetics of prose*. In the *Preface* to *Lyrical Ballads*, William observed that "poetry… can boast of no celestial Ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both." Undoubtedly, the *Grasmere Journal* played an active role in sharpening his awareness of the potential confluence between poetry and prose, offering striking evidence of the way they can move alongside each other. In placing prose on the same level as poetry, William wanted to honour Dorothy's creative talent, acknowledging the equality of their partnership in writing.

[30] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 18 Nov. 1801, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 148.

9.1 The Grasmere Journal as a source of inspiration for William Wordsworth's writings

Mine eyes did ne'er
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,
But either she, whom now I have, who now
Divides with me this loved abode, was there,
Or not far off. […][1]

The *Grasmere Journal* was sometimes read aloud by Dorothy as a prompt for poetic composition; some of the material she collected provided the basis for poems William later wrote and some of the poetry he had already written shaped the way Dorothy collected material. Certainly, Dorothy and William used to talk a lot about their experiences; frequently, those experiences were written with words they heard each other use. The *Grasmere Journal* played a key role in their shared creativity by recording conversations, supplementing their recollections, and providing poems with an authentic grounding in real life. Composition of prose and poetry was partly oral and collaborative, and it was accompanied by moments when the siblings turned back to consult the *Journal*. Consequently, the *Grasmere Journal* offers a domestic context for reading William's writings as well as various detailed portraits of him in the act of creation.

A notable example of the fruitful collaboration between Dorothy and William is the poem *Beggars*, which was written in March 1802. The piece of poetry was based on an encounter Dorothy had two years earlier with a beggar woman and her deceitful sons. In June 1800, Dorothy described a begging situation from 27 May. In the *Journal* entry, some of the beggar's characteristics were described, for example the woman's height and clothes:

A very tall woman, tall much beyond the measure of tall women, called at the door. She had on a very long brown cloak, and a very white cap without bonnet. Her face was excessively brown, but it had plainly once been fair.[2]

After having given the woman a piece of bread, Dorothy went for a walk to Ambleside and saw two young boys, surely the begging lady's children, playing on the road. As she wanted to pass by them, the two boys began to beg and whine but Dorothy claimed that she had already given their mother something to eat. The little beggars denied being that woman's children but since Dorothy was sure of this she just walked on after the two boys had run away. The incident from the year

[1] W. Wordsworth, *On Nature's invitation do I come*, ll. 15-20, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 136.
[2] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 10 June 1800, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 23.

1800 was transformed into a poem by William almost two years later. In William's piece of poetry *Beggars*, striking parallels to Dorothy's *Journal* entry are evident. Some characteristics of the beggar woman are processed, such as her height, her white cap, and her brown skin; even Dorothy's encounter with the boys was transformed into verses by William, as shown distinctly in the last two stanzas of the poem:

> They dart across my path – but lo,
> Each ready with a plaintive whine!
> Said I, 'not half an hour ago
> Your Mother has had alms of mine.'
> 'That cannot be,' one answered – 'she is dead:' –
> I looked reproof – they saw – but neither hung his head.
> 'She has been dead, Sir, many a day.' –
> 'Hush, boys! You're telling me a lie;
> It was your Mother, as I say!'
> And, in the twinkling of an eye,
> 'Come! Come!' cried one, and without more ado
> Off to some other play the joyous Vagrants flew![3]

In this case, Dorothy's experiences worked as negative image, which William just had to transform into poetic language.

On that occasion, Dorothy's language was so inevitable to William as to hamper him in his attempt to reshape it in verse, as she recorded in her entry for 13 March 1802:

> William finished Alice Fell, and then he wrote the Poem of the Beggar woman taken from a woman whom I had seen in May – (now nearly two years ago) when John and he were at Gallow Hill – I sate with him at intervals all the morning, took down his stanzas, and c… After tea I read to William that account of the little boys belonging to the tall woman and an unlucky thing it was for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem, he left it unfinished and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydale he had got warmed with the subject and had half cast the poem.[4]

William's *writer's block* seems to have been caused by the feeling that Dorothy's narrative provided a surplus of the authenticity he was looking for in poetry, leaving no space for his imagination; but talking as they walked allowed him to compose less self-consciously and cast his poem. Certainly, Dorothy's writing, as distinct from her conversation, exerted a powerful influence

[3] W. Wordsworth, *Beggars*, qt. in Geisler, *D. W. and her influence on the life and work of W. W.*, p. 6.
[4] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 13 Mar. 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 150.

on William's imagination, with which he partly struggled. There may have been a creative tension between the claims of *prosaic truth* and *poetic fiction*.

Another good example of the collaborative process between Dorothy and William is the poem *The Leech-Gatherer*. The piece of poetry initially drew on Dorothy's *Journal* for its vivid circumstantial details; later, William toned Dorothy's minute details down so that his poem achieved an independent life. There was a gap of eighteen months between Dorothy's entry for 26 September 1800, where she described their encounter with "an old man almost double", and William's first version of *The Leech-Gatherer*, in 1802. In her diary, Dorothy lingered over the plain facts of the man's hardship as he travelled from place to place:

> He lived by begging and was making his way to Carlisle where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce partly owing to this dry season, but many years they have been scarce… Leeches were formerly 2/6 [per] 100; they are now 30/. He had been hurt in driving a cart his leg broke his body driven over his skull fractured – he felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then 'late in the evening – when the light was just going away.'[5]

Dorothy's narration was controlled: she did not comment on the man's suffering, leaving his resilience to speak for itself. She put one of his sentences in quotation marks, moved by the elegiac quality of his phrasing.

As to William's piece of poetry, it stayed very close to the spirit of Dorothy's entry. *The Leech-Gatherer* is authentic in its matter-of-factness, catching the stoical fortitude of the old man, who did not brood over his troubles but simply told the circumstances of his life:

> Feeble I am in health these hills to climb
> Yet I procure a living of my own
> This is my summer work in winter time
> I go with godly Books from Town to Town
> Now I am seeking Leeches up and down
> From house to house I go from Barn to Barn
> All over Cartmell Fells and up to Blellan Tarn.[6]

In the poem, the name of local places conveyed the impression of authentic reportage, as much as circumstantial details did in Dorothy's *Journal* entry. The prosaic quality of William's verse was a deliberately achieved effect. It mattered to him, as much as it did to his sister, that the leech-gatherer was not depicted as a fictional character but as a living person, whose story and

[5] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 26 Sept. 1800, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 152-153.
[6] W. Wordsworth, *The Leech-Gatherer*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 153.

strength of mind he and Dorothy had witnessed together. When Sara Hutchinson objected to the piece of poetry's "tediousness", William explained that its power consisted in its fidelity to experience. Dorothy too defended the poem's authenticity, writing to Sara:

> […] and when you feel any poem of [William's] to be tedious, ask yourself in what spirit it was written – whether merely to tell the tale and be through with it, or to illustrate a particular character or truth.[7]

To Dorothy's mind, William's work had exactly captured the spirit of their memorable encounter.

After a few weeks, William revised the poem, following Sara Hutchinson's suggestion. *Resolution and Independence*, the published text, is more figurative and less prolix than either *The Leech-Gatherer* or Dorothy's *Journal* entry. In its revised form, the piece of poetry demonstrated the power of imagination to shape the materials it worked upon. The old man took on a mythical otherworldliness:

> Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
> Or like a Man from some far region sent;
> To give me human strength, and strong admonishment.[8]

Undoubtedly, in moving from a matter-of-factness to a dreamlike register, William had to sacrifice some of the power which lodged in the original encounter.

Returning to the Lake District was of primary importance for both Dorothy and William, so that they could reclaim their regional identity and re-establish their family. This necessity clearly emerges from their writings about Grasmere, where their longing for oneness with place is intensified by early memories of dispossession.

William's collection *Poems on the Naming of Places* was an authentic celebration of his and Dorothy's settlement in Grasmere, and of their identification with the vale itself as home. The poems were shaped by walks in and around Grasmere and each one was evocative of the region, describing a unique place in ways which made it vividly real. Furthermore, they did not connote only attachment to the vale but they also evoked feelings. Each piece of poetry focused on an act of naming a loved person, whose identity was not fully disclosed by name and who was connected with a nearby place where something memorable had happened. The term *naming* also referred to unnamed or unknown places where little incidents had occurred; within this context and through the

[7] Letter from D. W. to Sara Hutchinson, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 135.
[8] William Wordsworth, *Resolution and Independence*, ll. 117-119, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 154.

act of naming, these occurrences acquired significance. In addition, naming provided recognition of the communal bonds which formed between people and places by virtue of habitual association.

The poems were simultaneously gifts to family members and friends who visited Town End in 1800 as well as homages to places. In the collection, William repeatedly used the plural pronoun "we", thus reinforcing the feeling that the pieces of poetry were spoken by a pair of subjects, who shared love for each other and for Grasmere. William underlined how communal bonds were strengthened by contact with the environment and he affirmed the belief that memories provided lasting foundations for community. Consequently, even when separated, individuals were linked through associations to spots which could be revisited either physically or in their memory. *Poems on the Naming of Places* was, like Dorothy's *Grasmere Journal*, an attempt to produce an assimilation of family and place, renewing ancient bonds of kinship with the land.

One of these poems, *It was an April Morning*, was written to and for Dorothy. In order to highlight Dorothy's central role in William's life, it appears first in the sequence. William recalled that the verses were suggested on the banks of the brook which run through Easedale, the place where, in their first week at Town End, he and Dorothy discovered a terrace walk, which long remained one of their favourite spots. Subsequently, Wordsworth associated this valley with his sister, who often went there, in his company or alone. William's presence in the scene was understated, since at the centre of it there was the importance of rivers as similes for creativity and the significance of companionable walking alongside streams. When Dorothy first explored the Quantocks in 1797, she was vividly reminded of her childhood in Cumberland by finding pebbly brooks and "a sequestered waterfall in a dell."[9] It was to such spots that this piece of poetry referred. The dedication to Dorothy distinctly emerges in the last verses of the poem:

> I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
> 'Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,
> My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.'[10]

William expressed the desire to share his thoughts with his sister. At the lyric's conclusion, he described the place as "wild", an adjective which calls to mind Dorothy's eyes in *Tintern Abbey*. Ultimately, he connected the place with his sister by giving it her nickname, Emma:

> When they [the Shepherds] have cause to speak of this wild place,
> May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL.[11]

[9] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 189, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 123.
[10] W. Wordsworth, *It was an April Morning*, ll. 37-39, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 124.
[11] W. Wordsworth, *It was an April Morning*, ll. 46-47, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 124.

Dorothy's presence could be detected also in the poem *To M. H.*, that William addressed to Mary Hutchinson and that was closely connected to *It was an April Morning*. Both pieces of poetry focused on a walk that led towards a beautiful and secluded spot, which the poet named after Mary in order to balance "Emma's dell":

> The spot was made by Nature for herself;
> The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
> Unknown to them; but it is beautiful,
> […] And therefore, my sweet MARY, this still nook,
> with all its beeches we have named from You.[12]

The use of the inclusive pronoun "we" confirmed that Dorothy joined his expression of love for the woman who would later become his wife.

A link between William's *Naming of Places* and Dorothy's *Grasmere Journal* was established by their dealing with the same topics, as in the poem *A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags* and Dorothy's entries for 9 and 10 October. William's piece of poetry was composed in October 1800, after his sister had recorded a sequence of encounters with poverty-stricken people. On 9 October, Dorothy set down that a man called at Town End, and that "he was thirty years old – of Cockermouth, had lost a leg & thigh in battle… He could earn more money in travelling with his ass than at home."[13] The following day, she wrote about a female traveller arrived to sell "thread hardware mustard etc. – Her husband will not travel with an ass, because it is the tramper's badge – she would have one to relieve her from the weary load."[14] It was within this context that William "sat up after me writing Point Rash Judgement", the name that Dorothy gave to his lyric *A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags*.[15] In the piece of poetry, Dorothy and Coleridge were depicted strolling alongside William. The poem's patterns of association conveyed the sense of shared journey, in which the three companions' thoughts and memories were mingled, also in their misjudgement of:

> The tall and upright figure of a Man
> Attired in peasant's garb, who stood alone
> Angling beside the margin of the lake.[16]

[12] W. Wordsworth, *To M. H.,* ll. 15-17, 23-24, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other,* p. 125.
[13] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 9 Oct. 1800, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 129.
[14] Ibid, 10 Oct. 1800.
[15] Ibid.
[16] W. Wordsworth, *A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags*, ll. 50-52, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 129.

Both the siblings and Coleridge hastily jumped to the wrong conclusion: they thought that he was an "idle man", who was wasting a day in mid-harvest "when the labourer's hire / Is ample" and he might earn some money.[17] As they moved towards him, it was soon evident that they had committed a grave error of judgement, from which Dorothy's title for the composition "Point Rash-Judgement" derived. William carefully described the shocking view which stood before their eyes:

> […] whereat he turned his head
> To greet us – and we saw a man worn down
> By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks
> And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean
> That for my single self I looked at them,
> Forgetful of the body they sustained.[18]

Translating the meaning of this encounter into serious musing and self-reproach, Dorothy's title "Point Rash-Judgement" served as a perpetual memorial to their encounter.

The oral and collaborative nature of composition in the Wordsworth household makes it sometimes difficult to identify the *base author* of a piece of writing. Since Dorothy never intended her *Grasmere Journal* for publication, its use by her brother has caused a great deal of commentary and speculation from critics preoccupied with issues of authorship and copyright. In order to shed some light on this long-standing question, the genesis of William's poem *I wandered lonely as a cloud* is here analysed. The piece of poetry was written at least two years after his experience of "strolling with his sister" by Ullswater on 15 April 1802. At the time, the siblings had recently reunited; when they finally turned their step homewards, an incident occurred, which was recorded by them both. Dorothy's unstudied prose described it with particularly loveliness:

> When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seed ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road.[19]

The joy of their reunion markedly emerges from Dorothy's entry. In her metaphor, she introduced a connection between the daffodils and the two companions on their journey. As her description shifted to the first person singular, Dorothy was able to capture a mood of excitement in herself which seemed to quicken in response to the wind's movement among the daffodils. She

[17] W. Wordsworth, *A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags*, ll. 59-60, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 130.
[18] Ibid, ll. 63-68, pp. 129-131.
[19] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 15 Apr. 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 137-138.

identified with some of the flowers flattened by the wind and her spirit "dances" with the whole colony as it moved like a crowd of people:

I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway.[20]

Dorothy used an almost poetic language to express herself. By the use of metaphors, her descriptions become alive and the image of the daffodils moving in the wind sets up in the reader's mind. Moreover, this entry is characterized by a spiritual quality which arises from Dorothy's knowledge that she and William were on their journey homeward. The subliminal connotation of pilgrimage is reinforced by the road metaphor, which returns in the closing "that one busy highway."

When William composed his poem two years later, he oriented himself by Dorothy's *Journal*. In William's piece of poetry, the flowers were closely connected to dancing: "Fluttering and dancing in the breeze" they were "tossing their heads in sprightly dance" and when he was home alone and thought about the sweet incident, his heart:

[…] with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.[21]

The dancing is present also in Dorothy's diary entry, as shown in the excerpt quoted above.

Furthermore, Dorothy, mentioning the daffodils for the first time, took down that they were "close to the water side" and that "there was a long belt of them along the shore." William, after reading Dorothy's entry, wrote that he saw the daffodils "Beside the lake, beneath the trees" and that, paraphrasing his sister:

they stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay.[22]

[20] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 15 Apr. 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 157; see Geisler, *D. W. and her influence on the life and work of W. W.*, p. 7.
[21] W. Wordsworth, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, ll. 23-24, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45521/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud, Accessed 31/10/2023.
[22] Ibid, ll. 9-10.

Another marked similarity between the two writings is that linked to "a gentle breeze." Dorothy recorded that the daffodils "verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them", while William wrote of "the breeze" the daffodils were dancing in.

The most probable writing scenario is that in which Dorothy, William, and Mary were all present. Dorothy brought out her *Journal* and read aloud her account of that journey, including the vivid description of the daffodils. In this way, she might have helped William create his own memory-poem or suggested ideas, rhymes, and metaphors. In this family scene, Dorothy's *Journal* served as a valued record of an experience jointly remembered by them both. In addition, it gave pleasure to Mary, who had not been with them, and it generated a poem. Undoubtedly, *I wandered lonely as a cloud* could not have been written without the help and groundwork of Dorothy and her ability to observe and describe things in an impressing and astonishing way. Therefore, it is established that Dorothy and William both participated in the composition of *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, and that he did not misrepresent a collective experience as personal by transforming it into his piece of poetry. The "I" does not refer to William himself but it has to be read as the "I" of lyric utterance itself, with which not only William but also Dorothy and Mary could identify. Very few details in the poem, other than the metaphor of the joyous dance, correspond exactly to the entry's description of the daffodils. The lyric is structured around a moment of remembering, in which the speaker gave voice to his gratitude for a gift he received at the time, but later learnt to value more consciously:

> I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
> What wealth the shew to me had brought.[23]

Another fine example of the connection between Dorothy's and William's writing is the description of London, where the siblings stopped off on their way to Calais in July 1802. They left the city early in the morning, when most of its citizens were still asleep. London and its appearance aroused feelings of tenderness within both of them. In her diary, Dorothy recorded the following entry:

> It was a beautiful morning. The City, St pauls, with the River & a multitude of little Boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of

[23] W. Wordsworth, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, ll. 11-12, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 159; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 157-159.

smoke & they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly with such a pure light that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand Spectacles.[24]

On this particular occasion, when the city was not yet overflowed by millions of Londoners and nature tried to prevail over it, the urban environment evoked beauty in Dorothy's watchful eyes.

William's sonnet *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*, shows parallels and similarities to Dorothy's feelings and thoughts:

> Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty;
> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
> Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
> Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
> The river glideth at his own sweet will:
> Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
> And all that mighty heart is lying still![25]

In this piece of poetry, William took the city as a perfect example of beauty. It is highly probable that William drew on his sister's notations to compose his sonnet. In describing the beauty of the city, which lay in a wonderful light early in the morning, Dorothy wrote "one of nature's own grand Spectacles"; William agreed with her perception in the first line of the poem: "Earth has not anything to show more fair." William also paraphrased Dorothy's image of the sun, which "shone so brightly with such a pure light" by writing "Never did sun more beautifully steep."

Dorothy was not only the primary source of inspiration for William's poems but also his first critic, as she frequently recorded in her *Journal*:

[24] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 20 July 1802, qt. in Geisler, *D. W. and her influence on the life and work of W. W.*, p. 8.
[25] W. Wordsworth, *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802*, qt. in Geisler, *D. W. and her influence on the life and work of W. W.*, p. 8; see Geisler, *D. W. and her influence on the life and work of W. W.*, pp. 8-9.

William met me at Rydale with the conclusion of the poem of the Robin. I read it to him in bed. We left out some lines; When I came home I found William at work attempting to alter a stanza in the poem on our going for Mary, which I convinced him did not need altering.[26]

And when a volume was ready for the press, they carried on these eager discussions till the latest possible moment, even when the manuscript had already been posted. Evidently, notwithstanding the stubborn front with which he faced criticism, William was beset with fears and doubts. The anguish with which he revised his verses proved how hard he found it to satisfy himself. Certainly, the constant companionship of Dorothy, who never failed to show him her profound admiration, gave him the strength he desperately needed.

For his part, William often paid tribute to the source of his inspiration, as in the poem *On Nature's invitation do I come*, written in the early days at Dove Cottage:

> […] Where'er my footsteps turned,
> Her voice was like a hidden Bird that sang;
> The thought of her was like a flash of light
> Or an unseen companionship, a breath
> Or fragrance independent of the wind.
> In all my goings, in the new and old
> Of all my meditations, and in this
> Favourite of all, in this the most of all.[27]

But the days were numbered in which Dorothy would be the sole mistress of Dove Cottage. At the onset of spring, William and Mary started to think about their marriage; in the meantime, letters were exchanged between William and Annette. Although their content is unknown, it is supposed that she expressed her acquiescence in their union. Since William often lodged with Mary and Dorothy could not be left alone at Dove Cottage, she went to stay with the Clarksons at Eusemere. On 12 April she received a joint letter from the two lovers, who told her of their decision to get married in the autumn. Her conflict of emotions can be felt in her record of receiving the letter, when she was disturbed by an inquisitive neighbour:

Every question was like the snapping of a little thread about my heart. I was so full of thought of my half-read letter and other things. I was glad when he left me. Then I had time to look at the moon while I was

[26] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 18 Apr. and 17 June 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 134.
[27] W. Wordsworth, *On Nature's invitation do I come*, ll. 20-27, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 136.

thinking over my own thoughts […] At this time William, as I found the next day, was riding by himself between Middleham and Barnard Castle.[28]

But Dorothy was still William's first thought; it was on his return to Eusemere to collect his sister that he composed for her *Among all lovely things*, a poem which related to an earlier incident in their life together at Racedown. Once again, his heart had gone out to Dorothy with the most tender passion.

On her arrival at Grasmere, Dorothy wrote to Mary, expressing the most affectionate feelings and her concern for her friend's health:

My dear, dear Mary! I am deeply concerned to hear that you are so thin. Till I had seen William I had no idea how thin you were. I cannot doubt but that you *will endeavour* to take [care] of yourself, yet I am very fearful that your ardour of mind may lead you to do imprudent things. […] You ought to have been with us, we saw so many sweet things. Every foot of the road was new to me, and all that we saw was interesting, yet for ever changing. We sauntered and rested, loved all that we saw, each other, and thee, our dear Mary – sauntered and rested, lounged and were lazy.[29]

The next three months passed in the same close companionship, despite the fact that their happiness was spoilt by Coleridge's spiritual dejection. Furthermore, Dorothy suffered more acutely than ever from fears for William's health, as she often recorded in her entries: "Wm. nervous and jaded in the extreme."[30] Certainly, the constant anxiety in which she had been living produced a harmful effect on her health, which was slowly deteriorating.

During all the summer 1802, Dorothy was preparing for the reception into their home of Mary, her future sister. The garden was tended with an extra care and many loving letters were exchanged between the two women.

In July, the time eventually came for Dorothy and William to set off on the journey from which they were to return with Mary. A flow of mixed emotions assuredly swept through Dorothy, as she jotted down in her *Journal*:

We walked backwards and forwards on the White Moss path; there was a sky-like white brightness on the lake. Glowworms out, but not so numerous as last night. O, beautiful place! Dear Mary, William. The hour is come. *Friday morning* – so I must give over. William is eating his broth – I must prepare to go.[31]

Undoubtedly, Dorothy was undergoing one of the major changes of her entire life.

[28] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 12 Apr. 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 137.
[29] Letter from D. W. to M. H., 16 Apr. 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 138-140.
[30] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 9 May 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 141.
[31] Ibid, 8 July 1802, p. 143.

10. The Orchard at Town End

> *This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom. He and John Hutchinson led me to the house, and there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary.*[1]

On Friday 9 July 1802 Dorothy and William set out for Gallow Hill in order to meet Mary. Since to them travel was not merely a means of getting from one place to another, they stopped off at Keswick to see Coleridge, whose spirits were still low. Notwithstanding their worries for their friend, their journey was a joyous adventure, as Dorothy set down in her *Grasmere Journal*:

> We had a chearful [*sic*] ride, though cold, till we got to Stainmoor, and then a heavy shower came on, but we buttoned ourselves up both together in the Guard's coat, and we liked the hills and the rain the better, for bringing us so close to one another. I never rode more snugly.[2]

After having reached Gallow Hill and having spent there a few days, Dorothy and William went to London, and from there they started for Calais. Early in March, when the Peace of Amiens made travel to France possible, they had decided to visit Annette Vallon in order that a permanent financial settlement could be made for her and Caroline.

At Calais, Annette and Caroline were awaiting them, and the Wordsworths settled down for four weeks. Dorothy was deeply stirred by the beauty of those summer evenings, of which she provided vivid descriptions: "The reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself, purple waves brighter than precious stones, for ever melting away upon the sands."[3]

If Dorothy's retrospective narrative in her diary was full of detailed observations about their travels, it fell silent on their meeting with Annette and Caroline. Indeed, the entry quoted above concludes with "Caroline was delighted": this is all Dorothy recorded of William's daughter, whereas of Annette there is absolutely nothing. Since Dorothy was silent on the subject of Annette, her impression of the French woman could only be assumed. Certainly, the two women belonged to completely different worlds. In addition, Dorothy, with her imperfect knowledge of spoken French, might have found it difficult to get into close touch with her. Whether she appreciated the courage with which Annette had rebuilt her life and the considerable daring she had shown for the Royalist cause remains an unsolved mystery. But her words on their way home say a lot about her affection

[1] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, October 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 150.
[2] Ibid, 14 July 1802, p. 146.
[3] Ibid, August 1802, p. 147.

for Annette and Caroline: sitting upon the cliffs at Dover, she "looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought."[4]

As an era at Dove Cottage was coming to an end, Dorothy and William were awaiting the settlement of their family's financial affairs. In particular, William's forthcoming marriage raised the question of Dorothy's future maintenance. Since childhood, she had relied for money on casual gifts from her brothers, other relatives, and friends; but dependence, even on those she loved, had always annoyed her. A large amount of money was still owing to them from the Lowther estate and there was no immediately foreseeable outcome of the long legal wrangle. Moreover, William was seriously worried about his insecure circumstances and his responsibilities, not just as a future husband but also as an absent parent. Furthermore, he fully understood the precariousness of trying to make a living from poetry.

In the poem *Among all lovely things* mentioned in the previous chapter, William identified Dorothy as the object of his past devotion, thus offering reassurance that, in the difficult run-up to his marriage, her place at the centre of his life would continue unchanged. Undoubtedly, William did not record the strictly monogamous feelings which might be expected from a betrothed lover in the months leading up to his marriage. Instead, with the lines of his piece of poetry he confirmed the continuity of pre-existing family bonds within a newly defined household:

> The whole next day, I hoped, and hoped with fear;
> At night the glow-worm shone beneath the tree;
> I led my Emma to the spot, "Look here",
> Oh! joy it was for her, and joy for me![5]

In this first version of the lyric that William sent to Coleridge, the lover was identified as "Emma", his sister's nickname. But when Dorothy copied the piece of writing out to send it to her future sister-in-law, she revised the name to "Mary." Therefore, a poem reassuring Dorothy of William's continuing devotion became a more tactful expression of love for his bride-to-be.

In observing the switch from one addressee to the other, a sense of discomfort might be felt. But it should be remembered that the triangular relationship between Dorothy, William, and Mary had very solid foundations which dated back to 1788, when their friendship started at Penrith. At the turn of the eighteenth century, this kind of family structures was very common. In addition, the old system of consanguinity ensured that sisters, equally with their brothers, were seen as keepers of

[4] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, August 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 148.
[5] W. Wordsworth, *Among all lovely things*, ll. 17-20, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 163; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 162-164.

the family honour and name. With the subsequent rise of individualism, traditional ties of blood would give way to the more strictly defined "nuclear family" structure which nowadays is taken to be the norm. Clearly, as Dorothy prepared herself for her brother's wedding, she feared that she might be displaced. But William's writings revealed his loyalty to ancient ties of kinship and his intense devotion to the woman whom he loved as much as his future wife.

As William's marriage approached, the siblings expressed their gratitude for each other's presence more markedly. Some of the lyrics William wrote in 1802 were not only homages to Dorothy but also to their garden. Indeed, the orchard behind Town End proved the perfect environment for creativity during spring and early summer, featuring on numerous occasions in Dorothy's entries and in William's poems as an idyllic retreat. On 25 July 1800 Dorothy recorded:

> All the morning I was engaged in unpacking our Somersetshire goods. The house was a hot oven. I was so weary, I could not walk: so I went out, and sate with Wm. in the orchard, we had a delightful half-hour in the warm still evening.[6]

As to William, in the piece of poetry *The Orchard Pathway* he expressed his thanks for the creative companionship associated with the place. The path received William's blessing and, although she was not directly mentioned, Dorothy's presence was implied in the line "Ever with thee I go", which echoed *Septimi Gades*, written at Windy Brow in 1794:

> No separate path our lives shall know
> But where thou goest I will go.[7]

In these verses, Dorothy was depicted both as a companion on the path and as the path's companionship.

The entire garden, steeped with associations, was a collaborative tribute from the Wordsworths to the Lake District, a kind of thanksgiving for the family's restoration to the vale. Dorothy and William had collected and transplanted wild flowers, mosses, and ferns from the fells, John had planted trees in the orchard, and Coleridge had found a seat under the trees and cleared it of brambles. There was also the terrace walk under the apple trees, where Dorothy often walked to and fro with William, as she wrote in the following entry:

> A very fine clear morning. After Wm. had composed a little, I persuaded him to go into the orchard. We walked backwards and forwards. The prospect most divinely beautiful from the seat; all colours, all melting into each other.[8]

---

[6] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 25 July 1800, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 25.
[7] W. Wordsworth, *The Orchard Pathway*, l. 2, & *Septimi Gades*, ll. 10-11, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 165.

As the garden took centre stage in their writings, so did the story of the Fall and its retelling in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton. In the group of poems William collected under the title *Moods of my own Mind*, the orchard's paradisal associations accompanied the recurring theme of childhood innocence, with subliminal suggestions of an imminent fall, as in the two lyrics titled *To a Butterfly*. In the second of these pieces of poetry, composed in April 1802, the orchard is present as a setting and is connected with the Wordsworths' garden at Cockermouth where they used to play as children. William held himself and Dorothy close in the orchard's seclusion, suggesting how the days of childhood were prolonged in his memory. The endless summers in Cockermouth were nostalgically evoked as signifiers of a lost paradise:

> We'll talk of sunshine and of song;
> And summer days, when we were young,
> Sweet childish days, that were as long
> As twenty days are now![9]

Through its associations with Cockermouth, the garden came to represent an Eden which had been regained during the last few months of William's unmarried life. But even as the siblings recovered early memories, their happiness was shadowed by a sense of imminent loss.

A sketchy Miltonic subtest could be found also in William's most famous tribute to Dorothy, *The Sparrow's Nest*, which had already been mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation. This piece of writing was written in the orchard in the spring of 1802. The poem was inspired partly by a real sparrow building its nest in the orchard and partly by memories of the Wordsworths' favourite playground at Cockermouth:

> She looked at it as if she feared it;
> Still wishing, dreading to be near it:
> Such heart was in her, being then
> A little Prattler among men.[10]

As the two children hovered temptingly near the nest, the four verbs looking, fearing, whishing, and dreading conveyed Dorothy's anxiety in anticipating what was forbidden. In William's imagination, she was the unfallen Eve, whose heart kept her safe, in spite of her precocity as "a little Prattler among men."

---

[8] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 15 Oct. 1800, qt. in *Journals of D. W.*, edited by W. Knight, p. 32.
[9] W. Wordsworth, *To a Butterfly*, ll. 16-19, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 166; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 169.
[10] W. Wordsworth, *The Sparrow's Nest*, ll. 11-14, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 169.

Since the *Grasmere Journal* is often read as more faithful to real life than William's poems, it is necessary to bear in mind that Dorothy began writing it to give him pleasure. Moreover, her prose played a personal as well as a communal role in the creative collaboration of the household. In the *Journal*, the shadowy plot line of a novel could be identified, in which William is the hero and Dorothy is his devoted and soon-to-be-displaced lover. Since Dorothy was fully aware of literary genres, the fact that her diary resembles a love story it is more than coincidence. Indeed, she selected incidents in order to heighten their narrative significance as stages in her own emotional life. In the excerpt quoted in the previous chapter, where Dorothy explained that she had found and treasured William's half-eaten apple, she wrote with a playful consciousness of the associations between the garden and their roles as Adam and Eve.[11]

If the *Grasmere Journal* at times mirrors a love story, it is precisely in the spring and summer of 1802 that is more intense. Dorothy's feelings as well as her register shifted subtly to reflect a range of moods and emotions, shading from sexual desire, as in the aforementioned example of the bitten apple, to the tenderly love of a married couple working alongside each other:

A mild morning William worked at the Cuckow poem. I sewed beside him. After dinner he slept I read German, & at the closing in of day went to sit in the Orchard – he came to me, & walked backwards & forwards, we talked about C – Wm repeated the poem to me – I left him there & in 20 minutes he came in rather tired with attempting to write.[12]

At the end of the day, the tense altered: Dorothy captured a peaceful fireside scene and the surrounding silence was so profound that she could hear William's breathing:

He is now reading Ben Jonson I am going to read German it is about 10 o clock, a quiet night. The fire flutters & the watch ticks I hear nothing else save the Breathings of my Beloved & he now & then pushes his book forward & turns over a leaf.[13]

In several highly symbolic entries such as the previous, Dorothy's diary memorialized the last months of her life alone with William through framed moments of gesture as well as silence, both signifying reciprocal love.

Around the mid of June, Dorothy's mood changed and it became more apprehensive, as distinctly emerges in her entry for the 13th: "In the evening we walked first on our own path. There we walked a good while – It was a silent night. The stars were out by ones or twos but no cuckow,

[11] See Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 166-169.
[12] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 23 Mar. 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 170.
[13] Ibid, 23 Mar. 1802, p. 171.

not little Birds."[14] In these lines, Dorothy emphasized the failure of nature to match up to poetic expectation.

At Town End, Dorothy often busied herself with birdwatching, an activity which always gave her great delight, as she often noted down in her diary: "A pair of stone-chats, with their restless voices as they skimmed along the water, following each other, their shadows under them."[15]

In those days of June 1802, Dorothy was preoccupied with a pair of swallows who built their nest under her bedroom window. The swallows bore a metaphorical meaning, since they were connected both to the pair of swans in William's poem *Home at Grasmere* – emblems of the siblings' love – and to William and Mary, who were soon to mate together. On the 16th, Dorothy watched the swallows making "a bustle and a little cheerful song hanging against the panes of glass."[16] Three days later, the birds "were very busy under my window" building their nest; but on the 25th she recorded that the nest had gone:

I looked up at my swallow's nest, and it was gone. It had fallen down. Poor little creatures, they could not themselves be more distressed than I was. I went upstairs to look at the ruins. They lay in a large heap upon the window-ledge; these swallows had been ten days employed in building this nest, and it seemed to be almost finished.[17]

Dorothy's elegy for the birds' ruined nest offers an insight into her feelings as she prepared herself anxiously for departure from Grasmere.

But Dorothy's sombre mood was lightened by the news of the Lowther settlement, following which she spent a perfect day with William, talking "sweetly about the disposal of our riches."[18] This was a crucial moment in the Wordsworths' lives, as it marked the end of their long grievance against the Lowther family and allowed them to finally begin a more comfortable life.

On her last morning before leaving Grasmere, while the horse was arriving and she was writing her last hurried words, what worried Dorothy was the swallows' nest:

I must prepare to go. The swallows, I must leave them, the well, the garden, the roses, all. Dear creatures! They sang last night after I was in bed; seemed to be singing to one another just before they settled to rest for the night. Well I must go. Farewell.[19]

---

[14] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 13 June 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 174.
[15] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 16 May 1800, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 141.
[16] Ibid, 16 June 1802, p. 142.
[17] Ibid, 25 June 1802.
[18] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 20 June 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 175.
[19] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 8 July 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 143.

Dorothy's final word, "Farewell", was connected to the valedictory poem William had drafted in May, first known as *The poem on going for Mary* and later retitled *A Farewell*. This highly wrought piece of poetry had preoccupied William for several weeks, thus suggesting its therapeutic function at this anxious time. In the lyric, William blessed the garden on his own as well as on Dorothy's behalf, expressing his thanks for the two years they had spent tending it and enjoying its beauty:

> Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain ground,
> Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
> Of Fairfield's mighty Temple that doth bound
> One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare,
> Sweet Garden-orchard![20]

The poem was suited to the complex occasion it marked, having some of the characteristics of an epithalamion, others of a valediction; therefore, it included both Dorothy and Mary in its circling embrace. William offered the piece of poetry as a gift to the "Garden-orchard" which, half-cultivated and half-wild, was depicted as a microcosm of Grasmere vale, to which he and Dorothy owed endless gratitude, for it had given them far more than they could ever return:

> Thou for our sakes, though Nature's Child indeed,
> Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
> Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need.[21]

The piece of writing assumed also the role of a nuptial poem: William transformed the personal union of bride and groom into a communal ceremony in which Mary was wedded to the orchard:

> We go for one to whom ye will be dear…
> [A gentle Maid] Will come to you; to you herself will wed;
> And love the blessed life which we lead here.[22]

In these verses, William anticipated the future when, after their return with Mary, they would share with her not only the "Garden-orchard" but also its peaceful memories, included the spring just past, his last alone with Dorothy.

William's marriage to Mary was very different from the return to Town End he had imagined in his tender poem. It took place without Dorothy on 4 October 1802 at the church in

[20] W. Wordsworth, *A Farewell*, ll. 1-5, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 176.
[21] Ibid, ll. 38-40.
[22] Ibid, ll. 25, 31-32, p. 177.

Brompton, not far from the Hutchinsons' farm. On 29 September, in a letter to Jane Marshall, Dorothy had confessed the mixed feelings with which she viewed William's approaching marriage:

I have long loved Mary Hutchinson as a Sister, and she is equally attached to me. This being so, you will guess that I look forward with perfect happiness to this Connection between us, but, happy as I am, I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings, past, present and future which will come upon me on the wedding morning. […] I seem to myself to have scarcely anything left to wish for but that the wedding was over, and we had reached our home once again.[23]

Dorothy's fear was justified, since on the day itself she buckled under the strain, as she wrote a few days later, recording the astonishing ritual of ring-giving which took place on the morning of the wedding. Later on, the entry was heavily erased in the manuscript of the *Journal*:

William had parted from me up stairs. I gave him the wedding ring – with how deep a blessing! I took it from my forefinger where I had worn it the whole of the night before – he slipped it again onto my finger and blessed me fervently […].[24]; I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer & threw myself on the bed where I lay in stillness, neither hearing nor seeing any thing, till Sara came upstairs to me & said "They are coming".[25]

As though uttering vows at their own secret ceremony, Dorothy and William solemnly implied a promise to remain together in a single household. When she wrote, Dorothy looked back on an event which occurred a few weeks earlier, but her prose dwelled on her emotions as if she was still in shock. Everything in her handling of this episode suggests deep feeling, from the dramatic pause as the ring changed hands to her collapse into stillness and silence. It is highly probable that Dorothy erased this passage in order to keep it private, even from William's eyes.

Dorothy's entry for that day sheds some light on the unconventionality of the wedding service: three of Mary's brothers were present, but no relative of William's. Furthermore, the sisters who were dearest to both bride and bridegroom did not attend the ceremony. And, when the party returned to the house, William had his sister, not his wife, upon his arm.

During their return journey to Grasmere, Dorothy's mind was on an earlier homecoming, when she and William had walked together through Wensleydale on their way from Sockburn to Grasmere in December 1799:

---

[23] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 29 Sept. 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 150.
[24] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, October 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 178.
[25] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, October 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 150; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 178-179.

When we passed thro' the village of Wensly my heart was melted away with dear recollections, the Bridge, the little water-spout the steep hill the Church – They are among the most vivid of my own inner visions, for they were the first objects that I saw after we were left to ourselves, & had turned our whole hearts to Grasmere as a home in which we were to rest.[26]

Nostalgically, Dorothy's memory took possession of the village as if reclaiming a part of William himself.

When the Wordsworths arrived home on the evening of 6 October, they took a walk in the orchard garden; the stroll was both a commemorative ritual and a gesture of welcome to the bride. In her diary, Dorothy was reticent about her feelings, allowing seasonal change to speak for itself:

I cannot describe what I felt, & our dear Mary's feelings would I dare say not be easy to speak of. We went by candle light into the garden & were astonished at the growth of the Brooms, Portugal Laurels &c &c &.[27]

In this spirit of sheer happiness, Dorothy opened a new chapter of her life. For half a century she was to live with Mary under the same roof and in the same devoted service; there was never a trace of either jealousy or disagreement between them. In her sister-in-law Dorothy had a friend who knew what William meant to her and who was ready to share husband and children, all that was most cherished.

The rest of the year 1802 slipped quickly by, with autumn being the most charming season in the Lake District, as recorded by Dorothy in one of her entries for that period: "It is a breathless, grey day, that leaves the golden woods of autumn quiet in their own tranquillity, stately and beautiful in their decaying. The lake is a perfect mirror."[28]

Since now Dorothy had the constant companionship of Mary and the emotional turmoil of the last months was over, she felt less inclined to spend time writing her diary. In November and December, the jottings were very few and brief; in January, notwithstanding her New Year's resolution to "[…] take a nice Calais Book and *will* for the future write regularly […]", her *Journal* ended abruptly, in mid-sentence, on the 16th.[29]

The last entry of the *Grasmere Journal*, despite its triviality, combines all the elements which gave to Dorothy's diary its peculiar quality: her impeccable sense of the details, her lively sympathy for the life about her, and her watchful love for William:

---

[26] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, October 1802, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 179.
[27] Ibid, p. 180.
[28] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 30 Oct. 1802, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 152.
[29] Ibid, 11 Jan. 1803, p. 153.

Intensely cold – Wm. had a fancy for some gingerbread – I put on Molly's cloak and my Spenser, and we walked towards Matthew Newton's. […] The blind man and his wife and sister were sitting by the fire, all dressed very clean in their Sunday clothes, the sister reading. […] The next day the woman came just when we were baking – We bought two pennyworth.[30]

With the cessation of her *Journal*, Dorothy resumed her correspondence. To Jane she wrote less often; her most intimate letters were now addressed to Catherine Clarkson, whom she had first met soon after settling into Dove Cottage. Mrs. Clarkson was a great admirer of William's writings, as she explained in a letter to a friend:

You must buy W's two volumes of Lyrical Ballads […] … I am fully convinced that Wordsworth's genius is equal to the Production of something very great, and I have no doubt that he will produce *something that Posterity will not willingly let die*, […].[31]

In a letter to Catherine Clarkson dated June 1803, Dorothy returned to the story of the swallows and their nest which had so absorbed her the previous summer:

I am writing in my own room. Every now and then I hear the chirping of a little family of swallows that have their abode against the glass of my window. The nest was built last year, and it has been taken possession of again, about six weeks ago, needing no repairs whatever.[32]

The figurative dimension of the swallows' story took on a new significance as a reassuring symbol of continuity. Moreover, the swallow's anecdote could be compared to the story of her own "little family." Furthermore, Dorothy's expression of joy in the chirping sounds so close to her "own room" signalled her full acceptance of different circumstances as well as new roles in the household. In addition to all the changes Dorothy had undergone that year, a momentous event was unfolding: Mary was expecting her first child, John, in a month's time.

In one of the letters Dorothy sent to Mrs. Clarkson, she told her the wonderful news of Johnny's birth: "Oh my dear friend how happy we are in this blessed Infant! […] He is a noble looking Child, has a very fine head, and a beautiful nose, and thrives rarely."[33] Certainly, the child's advent was as vital to Dorothy as to both his parents. Ever since she had looked after her uncle's babies at Forncett she had loved children; now, she had one whom she could regard as her own. For many years to come Johnny and the siblings who followed him into the world would be a theme upon which Dorothy was extremely voluble; her writings did become a little tedious when she

[30] D. W., *The Grasmere Journal*, 16 Jan. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 153.
[31] Letter from Catherine Clarkson to the Rev. R. E. Garnham, 12 Feb. 1801, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 154.
[32] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, p. 393, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 180.
[33] Letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 19 June 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 156.

lingered over the minutiae of their size and growth. Her brother liked to tease her about this matter: "William was frightened when he saw me with this long sheet of paper, and called out that I was not to say a great deal about John, for it would be quite tiresome […]."[34] Undoubtedly, to Dorothy's anxious temper the baby brought that calm which is of all things the most healing and, while attending on him, she could forget for some time her fears for William and Coleridge.

The breaking of the Peace of Amiens induced a general mood of restlessness which reached Town End too, where William's work on *The Recluse* was making little progress. Even if travelling abroad became more difficult and possibly dangerous, an unexpected plan emerged; it was arranged that, as soon as it was safe to leave Mary and her child in the hands of her sisters, William and Dorothy would go off for a rambling holiday in Scotland with Coleridge, in search of health and new stimulus for their writing. Although for Dorothy the wrench of leaving her nephew cast a shadow over the departure, the prospect of travelling was thrilling; the magic of the Highlands drew all three companions together, holding the promise of a foreign land where they were sure to discover inspiring people and places. Moreover, Dorothy and William were perfectly aware of the strains their relationship with Coleridge had been under for some time and they hoped to rebuild the intimacy which had thrived at Alfoxden.

[34] Letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 13 Nov. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 157.

11. The Scotch Tour

> *I am setting about a task which however free and happy the state of my mind had been, I could not have performed well at this distance of time, but now, I do not know that I shall be able to go on with it at all – I will strive, however, to do the best I can, setting before myself a different object from that which I have hitherto aimed at, which was to omit no incident, however trifling, and to describe the face of the country so minutely that you should, where the objects were the most interesting, feel as if you had been with us.*[1]

On 15 August 1803 Dorothy, William, and Coleridge started upon their six-week tour of Scotland. Up to the last moment Coleridge was uncertain whether he would go; the rainy weather of the Highlands did not thrill him. In addition, he soon discovered that his habits were incompatible with the Wordsworths'. In particularly, he found that William was too silent and hypochondriac a companion. In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson he explained that "somehow or other I had not been quite comfortable"; from these few words is clear that he was in such a state which did not allow him to enjoy the new adventure.[2] Indeed, he decided two leave his two companions only after a fortnight. It was the first time that the society of Dorothy and William failed to satisfy him.

Coleridge's reaction to the expedition suggests that, even before they were alone, Dorothy and William had begun to re-establish the exclusive relationship they enjoyed at Goslar. To them, travelling together was always an absorbing experience, during which they recalled earlier symbolic journeys they had undertaken as a pair. The Scotch tour had a restorative function, and it allowed them to store vivid memories of people and landscapes. The writings generated by their trip – Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland, A. D. 1803*, and a number of William's poems – were written retrospectively, after returning to Grasmere, and they convey the sense of powerful shared experiences which have been shaped by memory.

Dorothy began to write about Scotland immediately after her return to Town End, in September 1803. Since it was not her intention to publish her recollections as a book, she wrote them mainly "for the sake of my friends who, it seemed, ought to have been with us": her brother John, Mary, Sara and Johanna Hutchinson, and Coleridge, who had gone off on his own for part of the holiday.[3] Of all Dorothy's writings, *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* is the most accurately composed and the only one which has been published *in extenso*; even if it is not characterized by the intimacy of her *Journals* and of some of her *Letters*, yet it is perfectly free

[1] D. Wordsworth, *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland, (A. D. 1803)*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, vol. I; 11 Apr. 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 405.
[2] Letter from S. T. C. to Mrs. Clarkson, 1 Sept. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 161.
[3] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 162.

from affectation. Dorothy set down, with no attempts at fine writing, her impressions of Scotland and of its inhabitants. In one of her *Recollections*, she distinctly recorded:

> On going into a new country I seem to myself to waken up, and afterwards it surprises me to remember how alive I have been to the distinctions of dress, household arrangements etc. and what a spirit these things give to the wild, barren or ordinary places.[4]

Dorothy made good progress with writing throughout the autumn and by December she had covered the trip up until the beginning of September 1803. Then, she was suddenly interrupted. Indeed, it took her two years to complete her literary masterpiece, because the period from December 1803 to April 1805 was one of the most difficult of her life: first, at the end of 1803, she met the challenge of nursing Coleridge through a breakdown; then, she had to carry out the burdensome task of copying a considerable selection of William's poetry into a home-made notebook in time for Coleridge's departure for Malta in April 1804; next, a tragic event unfolded: her brother John died at sea in February 1805.

Clearly, Dorothy and William were devastated by the terrible news; inevitably, Dorothy's account of the Scotch tour was heavily influenced by the death of her brother. When she resumed writing, in April 1805, she was distraught and unsure she would be "able to go on with it at all."[5] Her coverage of the rest of the journey, from 5 September onwards, was selective and coloured by her mood, "dropping the incidents of the ordinary days, of which many have slipped from my memory."[6] Dorothy eventually managed to complete her piece of writing, with William's encouragement, on 31 May 1805. The original manuscript did not survive; a copy of it was made by Catherine Clarkson and a further copy was made by Dorothy. The existence of three additional fair copies signals the importance which Dorothy attached to her travelogue as well as the book's wide circulation among family and friends.

Although William wrote relatively few poems about Scotland, Dorothy's prose in her *Recollections* coveys a sense of his companionship and imaginative presence throughout. Indeed, it was in this piece of work that Dorothy, more consciously and consistently than elsewhere, embraced the influence of William's poems – the ones he had composed *before* the Scottish tour – on her way of seeing and remembering. Certainly, her role as William's amanuensis during 1804 exerted a major influence on the process of writing about Scotland.

---

[4] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 24 Aug. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 162.
[5] *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, *A. D. 1803*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, II vols., London: Macmillan, 1941; 11. Apr. 1805, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 183.
[6] Ibid.

The trip to Scotland enabled both Dorothy and William to get in touch with its people and its culture, observing the customs and living conditions of local families. The siblings' creative responses to the Scotch tour can be considered side by side, with William's writings performing an illustrative function in Dorothy's narrative.

Dorothy's interest in the Highlands had been aroused by the poetry of Scottish authors. Furthermore, she had often looked at maps of Scotland, following the intricate windings of sea-lochs, "till, pleasing myself with my own imaginations, I have felt a longing, almost painful, to travel among them by land or water."[7] As to William, during his childhood he had been told tales about the region around Loch Awe by his foster-mother Ann Tyson. Now, they finally had the chance to visit the place which had been for so long the object of their desire.

Further inspiration for the Scotch tour came from the poet Robert Burns, for whom both Dorothy and William had profound admiration. Burns had travelled through the Highlands in 1787 and, after his return, became a regular visitor to their household. In addition, his collection of poetry *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect* had been an important gift from William to Dorothy after their reunion in 1787. During their tour of Scotland, the siblings wanted to pay their respects to Burns by visiting his grave at Dumfries. Despite the fact that they were unable to find it, the melancholic memory of their visit to Dumfries lingered for days, as Dorothy recorded: "There is no thought surviving in connexion with Burns' daily life that is not heart-depressing."[8]

Dorothy and William's visit to the churchyard in Dumfries had a significant impact on them; they both started to think about the "final home" and how obscure lives, and not just those of poets, should be commemorated. They found Scotland's struggle for survival against poverty and oppression sorrowful as well as uplifting. Moreover, Scotland's history provided many examples of heroics deeds which had passed into legend, thus offering the consolation of immortality in communal memory.

After Dumfries, Dorothy, William, and Coleridge journeyed further north, enjoying the sight of the magnificent Falls of Clyde. The region was steeped in memories of the Scottish hero William Wallace and the three travellers passed two sites where he had allegedly taken refuge. Furthermore, Dorothy was very impressed by the Fall of Cora Linn, as she would later recollect:

[7] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 29 Aug. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 185.
[8] Ibid, 18 Aug. 1803, p. 186.

I was much affected by the first view of it. The majesty and strength of the water (for I had never before seen so large a cataract), struck me with astonishment, which did not die away, giving place to more delightful feelings.[9]

Approaching the banks of Loch Lomond, Dorothy realized that they had arrived in the Highlands, "an outlandish scene – We might have believed ourselves in North America."[10] Here, they found the most romantic, wild, and solitary landscapes. From Inch-na-Vannach they saw two islands in the middle of the lake; later on, Dorothy provided a description of the lovely scenery: "[…] all in motion with travelling fields of light, or dark shadows under rainy clouds."[11] From there, they set out on a tour on the trail of the famous Scottish outlaw Rob Roy, whose legendary life they had the chance to hear from a local "handsome, healthy and happy-looking" family, the MacFarlanes. Thus, they discovered that Rob Roy was "as famous here as ever Robin Hood was in the Forest of Sherwood; he also robbed from the rich, giving to the poor and defending them from oppression."[12]

While in the Trossachs, Dorothy and William learned how the Highlanders' customs and rights had been swept away in the brutal acts of repression which followed the Battle of Culloden (1786) and how many of them were forced to emigrate to the United States or to the coast of Scotland, thus leaving mountainous areas depopulated. Near Loch Lomond, the three companions walked with a nearly blind man who was returning to his parish after several years abroad. In her *Recollections*, Dorothy wrote an account of this memorable encounter:

He spoke of emigration as a glorious thing for them who had money; poor fellow! I do not think that he had brought much back with him, for he had worked his passage over: I much suspected that a bundle, which he carried upon a stick, tied in a pocket handkerchief, contained his all.[13]

From the MacFarlanes they also heard about the government's restrictions on emigration and about the appalling conditions endured by those staying in Scotland, many of whom lived on the breadline or wandered the roads begging. On meeting a woman living in "miserable conditions" by Inversneyde, Dorothy observed:

Every step was painful toil, for she had either her child to bear or a heavy burthen. *I* walked as she did, but pleasure was my object, and if toil came along with it, even *that* was pleasure, – pleasure, at least, it would be in the remembrance.[14]

---

[9] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 21 Aug. 1803. qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 187.
[10] Ibid, 25 Aug. 1803.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, 27 Aug. 1803, p. 188.
[13] Ibid, 25 Aug. 1803.

Undoubtedly, the harsh reality of these encounters provided a marked contrast with the beauty of the surroundings.

In the third week of the tour, a weary Coleridge frequently chose to walk alone, while Dorothy and William explored the lakes by boat. The trip had already proved too much for him, as he confessed in a letter: "I was so ill that I felt myself a burthen on them & the exercise was too much for me, & yet not enough."[15] Certainly, the Scotch tour brought into clearer focus Coleridge's increasing alienation from William, whom he considered withdrawn and self-absorbed, as he often commented:

> A brooder over his painful hypochondriacal Sensations… not my fittest Companion. […] living wholly among Devotees – having every the minutest Thing, almost his very Eating and Drinking, done for him by his Sister, or Wife.[16]

In addition, the trip to Scotland had intensified Coleridge's sense of exclusion from Dorothy and William's intimacy. Saddened by their disagreements, the three travellers parted at Arrochar. Although Dorothy shivered at the thought of his being "sickly and alone, travelling from place to place", Coleridge enjoyed his new-found freedom and, having abandoned his intention to return home, he instead proceeded on a wild journey through the Highlands, heading then south to Edinburgh.[17]

On 29 August, Dorothy and William pushed on to the north-westerly region of Argyllshire. In the Strath of Appin, they glimpsed a sea loch and were bewitched by the wildness of the scenery and the magic of local place names, like "Morven" and "Appin", which were traditionally associated with the mythic Gaelic kingdom. As they travelled deep into Scotland's past, the Wordsworths assimilated a number of sites connected with Jacobite uprisings, like the pass of Killiecrankie in Perthshire, where Highland Scottish clans supporting the ousted King James II had met and had triumphantly defeated government troops in 1689. Reaching the pass at dusk, around the hour when the battle had taken place, Dorothy and William went through it "hearing only the roaring of the river, and seeing a black chasm with jagged-topped black hills towering above."[18]

Throughout their tour, Dorothy and William were fully aware of the daily threat of French invasion; they reflected on the courage of the Jacobites, considering them a positive role model for young English men at their own time of national crisis, as markedly appears from Dorothy's words:

---

[14] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 12 Sept. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 188-189.
[15] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. ii, p. 994, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 189.
[16] Ibid, pp. 1010, 1013.
[17] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 29 Aug. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 189.
[18] Ibid, 6 Sept. 1803, p. 190.

"One could not but think with some regret of the times when from the now depopulated Highlands forty or fifty thousand men might have been poured down for the defence of the country."[19]

Dorothy and William reached the most northerly point of their journey on 7 September, when they arrived near Blair Atholl Castle, a vast mansion "commanding a prospect all round of distant mountains, a bare and cold scene."[20] In nostalgic mood they visited the natural Falls of Bruar, which had been the subject of one of Burns' poem, *The humble petition of Bruar water*. Sixteen years after his visit, the Wordsworths admired the same view, as Dorothy took down in one of her recollections: "I do not wonder at the pleasure which Burns received from this stream."[21]

The scenery through which Dorothy passed could not fail to enchant her, as she later wrote:

Scotland is the country above all others that I have seen, in which a man of imagination can carve out his own pleasures… I can always walk over a moor with a light foot. I seem to be drawn more closely to nature in such places than anywhere else, or rather I feel more strongly the power of nature over me.[22]

Dorothy's ability to catch the essential features of the ever-varying landscape and her fidelity in recording them certainly bore witness to "the power of nature." But she was always happiest when she saw the splendour around her as the setting to human life and emotion. Before heading home, Dorothy and William returned to the Trossachs, where they met "two neatly dressed women, without hats", one of whom said in a gentle voice: "What! you are stepping westward?"[23] This encounter had a major impact on them, since the voice of the woman epitomized the pastoral hospitality typical of the Highlanders, which the siblings saw everywhere on their trip. It formed a sharp contrast to the history of turbulence which they had been tracing during their visits to Jacobite sites; yet that encounter was subliminally connected with that history, as Dorothy later wrote: "I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun."[24]

Later on, Dorothy would associate William's poem *The Solitary Reaper* with this part of their tour, using it as an accompaniment to her description of a pastoral scene near Loch Voil:

It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly… enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lovely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed.[25]

---

[19] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 8 Sept. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 190.
[20] Ibid, 7 Sept. 1803, p. 191.
[21] Ibid.
[22] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 20 Aug. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 167.
[23] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 11 Sept. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 191.
[24] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 11 Sept. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 192.
[25] Ibid, 13 Sept. 1803.

In William's piece of poetry, this bucolic scene was transfigured by the reaper's song, which filled the vale and seemed unending:

> Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
> And sings a melancholy strain;
> O listen! For the Vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound.[26]

The solitary Highland reaper seemed to be the symbol of Scotland and of what the Wordsworths had come to value during their trip: the sense of connection with "old, unhappy, far-off things / And battles long ago."[27]

Dorothy and William's interest in the survival of traditional Scottish songs and legends strengthened in the final week of their journey, when they met Walter Scott, the living embodiment and custodian of Scottish culture. The siblings spent an entire week at his summer home in Lasswade, from where Scott showed them the local sights. They were delighted by his cordiality and his lively entertaining conversation; they met as if they had not been strangers and they parted friends. Moreover, they found his friendship the best of passports, as Dorothy took down: "Mr Scott is respected everywhere, I believe that by favour of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout the borders of Scotland."[28]

They were both particularly impressed by Scott's attachment to traditional customs, as Dorothy later remembered:

> […] his whole heart and soul seem to be devoted to the Scottish Streams Yarrow and Tweed Tiviot and the rest of them which we hear in the Border Ballads, and I am sure that there is not a story ever told by the firesides in that neighbourhood that he cannot repeat and many more that are not so familiar.[29]

Listening to Scott read aloud his compilation of local ballads *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, both Dorothy and William sensed an immediate affinity, which would last for many years.

During the Scotch tour, Dorothy added also Samuel Rogers to her literary acquaintance. The Wordsworths only had the chance to meet him on the road, but years later Rogers would recall their encounter, giving voice to the vivid impression Dorothy left on him: "[…] we fell in with

---

[26] W. Wordsworth, *The Solitary Reaper,* ll. 5-8, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45554/the-solitary-reaper, Accessed 30/08/2023.
[27] W. Wordsworth, *The Solitary Reaper,* ll. 19-20, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 192.
[28] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 18 Sept. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 170.
[29] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 590-591, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 193.

Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth, and Coleridge, […]. She [Dorothy] was a most delightful person, so full of talent, so simple-minded, and so modest!"[30]

Soon after their return to Town End, Dorothy began to transform the documentary evidence she had collected into an inspiring portrait of the Scots' courage and resilience, which she considered not only a tradition preserved in legends but a living reality. She was able to ennoble the lives of the labouring poor by discussing them, just as William had done with their Westmorland counterparts in *Lyrical Ballads*. Describing an old man living alone, she went into detail about his half-furnished house and the bareness of his pantry: "He had no other meat or drink in the house but oat bread and cheese."[31] Looking back on the trip, Dorothy remembered the kindness she had received, even from the neediest people and she commemorated the dignity which accompanied the man's simple lifestyle: "There was a politeness and a manly freedom in this man's manners which pleased me very much."[32]

Despite the fact that *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* has the structure of a travelogue, it was written with little help of notes, as Dorothy told Mrs. Clarkson: "By the bye I am writing not a journal for we took no notes, but *recollections* of our Tour in the form of a journal."[33] Nonetheless, she did take occasional notes and made her own sketches of rivers. The great attention to detail shows an accurate memory, which was certainly reinforced by conversation. Here lies, in part at least, the secret of the success of *Recollections*: Dorothy recorded, trusting her memory, only that which, after a passage of time, was still a vital experience. The result is one of the most readable of all travel books, which is quite surprising since Dorothy did not share her brother's passion for this kind of literature, as she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson: "You will be amused at it for our sakes, but I think Journals of Tours, except as one is interested in the Travellers, are very uninteresting things."[34]

In Scotland, Dorothy and William passed through several deserted villages: even the main thoroughfares were unfrequented and, off the highroads, they rarely saw any but natives, to whom a visitor from the outer world was an event: "A laugh was on every face when William said we were come to see the Trossachs: no doubt they thought that we had better have stayed at our own homes."[35]

---

[30] S. Rogers, *Table Talk of S. R.*, ed. Dyce, 1887, pp. 208-209, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 170.
[31] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 19 Aug. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 194.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 13 Nov. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 336.
[34] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 163; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 194.
[35] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 26 Aug. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 163.

The Scottish tour reinforced Dorothy and William's allegiance to the Protestant tradition of travelling on which they had drawn in previous writings. Although Dorothy occasionally used picturesque criteria to evaluate the beauty of Scottish landscapes, her writings had little in common with the visual representations of Scotland which illustrated contemporary guidebooks. Instead, it had been the austerity of Protestant genre which had always shaped her and her brother's memories. Following that tradition, she interested herself in the realism of pastoral scenes, observing shepherds labouring in the fields and women bleaching linen. Her landscape descriptions focused on herdsman's huts and cottages, thus reinforcing her narratives' recurrent concern with home. When she portrayed the inside of these dwellings, her accounts were closer to seventeenth-century Flemish paintings than to British contemporary art. Furthermore, she examined domestic economy in detail, like degrees of cleanliness and quality of furnishings; she was able to evoke the bustle of kitchens, thus creating a sense of community spirit. When she set her portrayals in barren landscapes, she provided human figures with that grandeur and simplicity which characterized the hills which surrounded them: two herdsmen glimpsed in the fading light near the river Dochart, "were exceedingly distinct, a beautiful picture in the quiet of a Sabbath evening, exciting thoughts and images of almost patriarchal simplicity and grace."[36] It is possible to draw a connection between this account and William's *Leech-gatherer*, whose fortitude had offered him strength in his time of crisis in 1802.

Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland shows Dorothy's ethnographic interest in the Scottish language and customs. She attentively recorded dialect words, like "burnies" (streamlets) and "shiels" (mountain-huts). In addition, she incorporated snatches from Scottish songs and ballads into her narrative, as when her conversation with a guide near Loch Achray called to mind "the old Scotch songs, in which you continually hear of the 'pu'ing the birks [birches]'."[37] At other times, her narrative paused in order to explain the curiosity of certain Scottish expressions: "We were amused with the phrase 'Ye'll get that' in the Highlands, which appeared to us as if it came from a perpetual feeling of the difficulty with which most things are procured."[38] Dorothy derived great pleasure from hearing English when it was spoken with a Scottish accent. Recalling a conversation with two girls near Loch Lomond, she wrote:

[36] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 4 Sept. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 195.
[37] Ibid, 27 Aug. 1803, p. 197.
[38] Ibid.

I think I never heard the English language sound more sweetly than from the mouth of the elder of these girls, while she stood at the gate answering our inquiries, her face flushed with the rain; her pronunciation was clear and distinct; without difficulty, yet slow, like that of foreign speech.[39]

Dorothy's analysis of the Highlanders' power of speech exerted considerable influence on William's poems about the Scottish trip. A fine example is *To a Highland Girl*, in which he paid tribute to the innocence and intelligence of the girl at Loch Lomond. In William's opinion, the girl was able to convey her thoughts through the animation of her face, thus making up for "[…] thy few words of English speech."[40]

Dorothy treasured every scrap of conversation which seemed to her characteristic of the people and of their manners. And often, when no words were exchanged, a lonely human figure had just to cross her line of vision to invest the landscape with an added significance, as she movingly took down:

An old man, the first we had seen in a Highland bonnet, walking with a staff at a very slow pace by the edge of one of the moorland cornfields: he wore a grey plaid, and a dog was at his side. There was a scriptural solemnity in the man's figure, and a sober simplicity, which was most impressive.[41]

Thus, she experienced "many most interesting feelings connected with man in dreary solitariness."[42]

In Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, the Homeric motifs of wandering and returning home are intertwined with those of dwelling and nature; the same themes can be found in William's *The Prelude*. The Wordsworths progressively found their communal identity as writers who belonged to a local landscape and its community.

When Dorothy and William returned at Dove Cottage, they "found Mary in perfect health, Joanna Hutchinson with her, and little John asleep in the clothes-basket by the fire."[43] Among the joys of being at home again there was certainly little Johnny, who was more wonderful than ever, as Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson: "If I were not afraid of making even you laugh at me, I should say that he looks as if he was not the child of ordinary parents…"[44]

---

[39] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 28 Aug. 1803, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 198.
[40] W. Wordsworth, *To a Highland Girl*, l. 41, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45560/to-a-highland-girl, Accessed 31/08/2023.
[41] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 20 Aug. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 169.
[42] Ibid.
[43] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, 25 Sept. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 171.
[44] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 13 Nov. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 172.

But Dorothy's domestic happiness was overshadowed by agitation about the French wars and by increased anxieties for Coleridge. The Peace of Amiens had lasted only fourteen months; since May, the growing fear of invasion had roused England to a pitch of excited patriotism. Moreover, since the rise of Napoleon, William had become a determined hater of France; he decided to "volunteer his services with the greatest part of the men of Grasmere."[45] Undoubtedly, Dorothy was very concerned about William's purpose, but she would never let him down, as she told Mrs. Clarkson:

Alas, alas, Mary and I have no other hope than that they will not be called upon out these far off places except in the case of the French being *successful* in their landing, and in that case what matter? We may all go together.[46]

Besides confirming her loyalty to William, in the same letter Dorothy revealed her worry for Coleridge: "We have not seen Coleridge since our return. He is taking a violent medicine in the hope of bringing his disease to a fit of the gout… he is often dreadfully ill."[47] Since Coleridge had come to the conclusion that nothing but a warmer and drier climate could restore his health, he planned to embark on a journey to Malta. On his way to London, he stopped off at Grasmere, where he fell seriously ill. For more than three weeks Dorothy and Mary remained at his bedside, as Coleridge later recorded: "Mary and Dorothy were my kind nurses who tended me with a sister's and a mother's love, and often, I well know, wept for me in their sleep and watched for me even in their dreams."[48]

Dorothy was doubtless fully employed with nursing and with household duties, and she had little time left to go on with her writing, as she announced to Mrs. Clarkson:

I have told you that he [Coleridge] was the cause of my not writing […], but I had so much uneasiness about him and *so much to do* that I seemed to have scarcely the quiet and leisure necessary to make me feel fit to write a letter that would give you any comfort.[49]

Once recovered, Coleridge left Town End and went to stay with the Beaumonts in Essex, from where he fervently asked the Wordsworths that "Mary and Dorothy should begin to transcribe *all* William's MS [manuscript] poems for me."[50] Coleridge's request was immediately granted; in the next few weeks, every spare moment was given to copy, as Dorothy told Mrs. Clarkson: "I have been literally at work from morning till night… the manuscripts were in such a wretched condition,

[45] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 13 Nov. 1803, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 172.
[46] Ibid, 9 Oct. 1803.
[47] Ibid, p. 173.
[48] S. T. Coleridge, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 173.
[49] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 15 Jan. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 173-174.
[50] Letter from S. T. C. to D. and W. W., 8 Feb. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 174.

and so tedious to copy from, […].”[51] For another fortnight the frenetic work went on; Dorothy’s mind was not at ease until she heard that the volumes had safely arrived to him. She was undoubtedly eager to make her own contribution to Coleridge’s happiness, as she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson: “Thinking of his banishment, his loneliness, the long distance he will be from all the human beings that he loves, it is one of my greatest consolations that he has those poems with him.”[52] Before Coleridge sailed for Malta, Dorothy sent him a very affectionate letter, expressing her strong devotion as well as telling him the latest news: “Before your Return I hope we shall be blessed with another little baby. I should be thankful if it be a girl, but not disappointed if not…”[53]

Coleridge’s farewell letter was written on 14 April and “concluded in the moment when the ship was going to sail.”[54] Dorothy described that moment “like another parting to us”[55]; and she was not mistaken, since that same Coleridge with whom, for the last eight years, they had lived in rarest intimacy, was never to return.

In the following months, Dorothy was fully occupied with home labours, as their old servant, Molly Fisher, had left them. Furthermore, Mrs. Coleridge and her three children spent much time at Dove Cottage, thus creating a happy but hardly peaceful household. On 6 August, little Dorothy was born. Despite the fact that Dorothy did “not like that the child should be saddled with such a name for my sake”, William insisted that she must be called after her aunt, and Dorothy had to submit.[56] Dorothy was delighted with the newborn, as she wrote to Lady Beaumont: “Your goddaughter grows a very pretty baby – she is her Father’s darling. […] She wins her way into all our hearts, […].”[57]

In October 1804, as Mary and baby Dora throve rapidly, Dorothy was rewarded for her devoted care by a little holiday with William to the mountains of Ennerdale and Wasdale. Of this short tour she wrote to Lady Beaumont, narrating their adventures as well as the beauty which surrounded them:

In Duddon vale hills, rocks, bushes, and trees are striving together for mastery, green fields and patches of green are to be spied wherever the eye turns, with their snug cottages half-hidden by the rocks, or so like them in colour that you hardly know from cottage.[58]

---

[51] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 24 Mar. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 175.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Letter from D. W. to S. T. C., 29 Mar. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 178.
[54] Letter from S. T. C. to D. and W. W., 9 Apr. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 179.
[55] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 14 Apr. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 179.
[56] Letter from D. W. to Lady Beaumont, 25 July 1804, qt. de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 182.
[57] Ibid, 23 Sept. 1804.
[58] Ibid, 7 Oct. 1804, p. 184.

Once Dorothy and William were home, she and Mary had their hands full with the house and children, while he busied himself with *The Prelude*. Since the birth of little Dora, the arrival of any visitor had made them feel cramped for space; they knew that their final settlement was unavoidable, but they delayed moving, as Dorothy recorded:

> We cannot, however, hear of a house, and though we are very industrious inquirers, yet I think we are half glad of it, for though when we have any single person staying with us we are forced to wish ourselves in another place, when we are alone we gather ourselves together, and looking round our lowly sitting room we feel as if we could never find another home.[59]

It was partly to ease this situation that they set about the building of a little shed at the top of the orchard:

> A sort of larger Bird's nest (for it is lined with moss) a place for my Brother to retire to for quietness on warm days in winter, and for a pleasure-house, a little parlour, for all of us in summer – it is large enough for a large party to drink tea in.[60]

By Christmas 1804, the moss hut was almost finished and William urged his brother John to "come and see it, do come and see it if only for a fortnight."[61]

While the Wordsworths were busy with the construction of the moss hut, Coleridge was always on their minds, especially because they had little news of him. But the poet was not Dorothy and William's only anxiety. During the summer and autumn, their brother John was on the high seas and, at any time, they feared that his ship might be captured by the French. However, in December they were relieved to know that he was safely back in England and they longed to see him. But John had recently obtained the command of the ship *Earl of Abergavenny* and was busy preparing his next voyage, from which he hoped to return rich and eventually settle down with his siblings.

Unfortunately, on 11 February 1805 a short letter from their brother Richard informed them that the *Earl of Abergavenny* had struck a rock off Weymouth and had gone to the bottom. Of the four hundred men on board the great majority had perished and John was among them. His loss came as a devastating blow to Dorothy and William, as emerges from the first letter Dorothy was able to write to Richard after their brother's death: "We go about our house and garden with dismal hearts – John knew this place and loved it well – everything I see reminds me of him."[62] Clearly,

---

[59] Letter from D. W. to Lady Beaumont, 7 Oct. 1804, qt. de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 185.
[60] Ibid, 25 Dec. 1804.
[61] Letter from W. W. to John Wordsworth, December 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 186.
[62] Letter from D. W. to Richard Wordsworth, 4 Mar. 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 189.

this was one of the hardest times in the siblings' lives and they found their only comfort in helping one another to bear the burden of their affliction. More than a month elapsed before Dorothy could command enough self-control to respond to the loving sympathy which had reached her from many quarters, although those replies were blotted with tears, as the one to Mrs. Clarkson: "… My dear Friend what a struggle we have gone through! And how much sorrow have we not yet to endure!"[63]

For months after John's death the work on the moss-hut was suspended; it stood unfinished at the top of the orchard, a symbol of dashed hopes and tragic loss, constantly reminding the Wordsworths about their brother, as Dorothy confessed in a letter to Jane:

I can turn to no object that does not remind me of our loss. I see nothing that he would not have loved with me and enjoyed had he been by my side… he loved our cottage, he helped us to furnish it, and to make the gardens – trees are growing now which he planted.[64]

Certainly, in the short term, bereavement took on a heavy toll on the siblings' attachment to their home. But with time, the human history which permeated the place brought them solace. After a period of hard work completing *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* and *The Prelude*, Dorothy and William turned their minds back to the cottage and the garden, and in summer of 1805 the moss-hut was ready for use. In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson, Dorothy highlighted the nest-like quality of the hut, where she felt secure:

I write to you from the Hut, where we pass all our time except when we are walking – it has been a rainy morning, but we are here sheltered and warm, and in truth I think it is the sweetest place on Earth – the little wrens often alight on the thatch and sing their low song, but this morning all the birds are rejoicing after the rain.[65]

Undoubtedly, both Dorothy's and William's writings and their preoccupation with mortality were intensified by the loss of their brother John. The Scottish journey, which from a certain point of view was a pilgrimage to a land where the dead seemed to live forever, offered to the siblings remembered joys and intense emotions to confront the dramatic effect of bereavement. When Dorothy resumed her narrative, she included a *memorandum* of John's death, thus calling attention to the effect of grief on her memories and alerting her first readers to the emotional turmoil which ran through the last section.

[63] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 18 Mar. 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 191.
[64] *The Letters of W. and D. W.: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, pp. 559-560, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 210.
[65] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 11 June 1805, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 211.

Gradually, Dorothy was able to take up the threads of her life: "I have done a good deal. I keep myself constantly employed and seek after chearful [*sic*] thoughts for the sake both of the living and the dead."[66]

The summer season brought many visitors to Dove Cottage: Mrs. Coleridge, Walter Scott, Mrs. Clarkson, Mrs. Threlkeld and her daughter Elizabeth from Halifax. Mrs. Threlkeld and Elizabeth had not seen Dorothy for some years; they were deeply shocked at her worn and aged appearance, as Edward Ferguson would later write to her brother Sam:

> Elizabeth gives us a sad account of poor Dorothy, who is grown so thin and old that they should not have known her, lost many of her teeth, and her cheeks quite sunk that it has entirely altered her profile.[67]

The last couple of years had definitely been a time of great emotional upheaval, which left an indelible mark on Dorothy's mind and soul.

[66] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 4 May 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 192.
[67] Letter from Edward Ferguson to Sam Ferguson, 22 July 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 194.

12. Grasmere and Coleorton

> *From the horizon's edge to a great height the sky was covered with rosy clouds, and I cannot conceive anything more beautiful and glorious and solemn that this light seen through the trees, and the majestic trees themselves.*[1]

An unusually wet summer was followed by a glorious autumn; early in November 1805 Dorothy and William started off on a tour to explore the region of Ullswater, taking the route over the Kirkstone Pass. The dreadful weather did not damp their spirits, for when they were on the tramp they felt closer to one another, as Dorothy took down in her account of the nine-day trip, *Journal of a Mountain Ramble*, which William afterwards recast and included in his *Guide to the Lakes*:

> As the mist thickened our enjoyments increased, and my hopes grew bolder: and when we were at the top of Kirkstone (though we could not see fifty yards before us) we were as happy travellers as ever paced side by side on a holiday ramble.[2]

Dorothy's travel journal emphasizes the sense of companionship she and William sought, even on the bleakest heights. At the top of Kirkstone, they discovered the fragment of an old wall, which, in this desolate setting, reminded them of "some noble monument of ancient grandeur."[3] Moreover, every scattered stone and ruined building responded to their yearning for human habitation.

While staying in the village of Patterdale, William "pitched upon the spot where he should like to build a house better than in any other he had ever yet seen."[4] Afterwards, he was able to acquire this fertile plot and, although his plan to build on it was abandoned, the purchase was the first step towards a new and less Grasmere-centred phase of the Wordsworths' lives.

On 12 November, Dorothy and William reached Lowther Woods. Walking here took them back in time, since they had explored these woods together in their teens. In her 1805 *Journal*, Dorothy wrote nostalgically about the days of her youth, when she used to walk with Mary and Peggy Hutchinson in order to escape from the stern eye of her grandmother: "So vividly did I call to

---

[1] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 14 Nov. 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 210.
[2] *Journal of a Mountain Ramble by Dorothy and William Wordsworth, November 7th to 13th, 1805*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, vol. II, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: The Macmillan Co., London, 1897, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42857/42857-h/42857-h.htm, Accessed 15/09/2023.; 7 Nov. 1805, p. 80.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, 8 Nov. 1805.

my mind those walks, that, when I was in the wood, I almost seemed to see the same rich light of evening upon the trees which I had seen in those happy hours."[5]

Among the beautiful places she visited with William during this tour, Dorothy recorded their excursion to Penrith, remembering how:

Mary and her sister Margaret and I used to steal to each other's houses, and when we had had our *talk* over the kitchen fire, to delay the moment of parting, pace up one street and down another by moon or starlight.[6]

In these fond memories of a joyous female community, Dorothy's emotional pilgrimage reached its end point. Her evocation of Penrith commemorated the shared-past with her sister-in-law and contributed to strengthen the indissoluble bond between them.

When Dorothy and William reached home, it was Mary's turn for a release from domestic duties; therefore, she went off on a visit to Park House, the farm where the Hutchinsons had moved the previous year. Since William divided his time between Park House and Town End, Dorothy was left alone with the children and a maid who helped her. Being the sole mistress of her leisure, she composed her most revealing letters, in particular in the quiet evenings, when she felt most eagerly the need of companionship:

I have many dear and chearful [*sic*] thoughts, and many melancholy ones in my solitude – these I sometimes seek, but at others they master me, and I turn my cowardly heart to some other employment – I read – I copy some of my Brother's Poems […] or I write a letter.[7]

When Christmas came, William and Mary were still at Park House; Dorothy spent the day with the children, writing her melancholy thoughts to her friends:

I can almost tell where every Birthday of my life was spent, many of them even *how* from a very early time. The day was always kept by my Brothers with rejoicing in my Father's house, but for six years (the interval between my Mother's death and his) I was never once at home, never was for a single moment under my Father's roof after her death, which I cannot think of without regret for many causes, and particularly that I have thereby been put out of the way of many recollections in common with my Brothers of that period of life, […].[8]

Shortly after Mary's return to Grasmere, her sister Sara joined her; for the rest of her life, she was to live with the Wordsworths, helping them to look after the children. Obviously, with one

[5] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, II vols., London: Macmillan, 1941; 12 Nov. 1805, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 214.
[6] D. W., ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 214-215.
[7] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 29 Nov. 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 198.
[8] Ibid, 25 Dec. 1805, p. 202.

more permanent inmate at Dove Cottage, they were "crammed in their little nest edge-full", as Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson in March 1806.[9] Clearly, the problem of finding another house became more urgent, but nothing could be decided in Coleridge's absence. In this difficult situation, the strain of their uncertainty about his movements became more and more tormenting. Ever since the previous May they were expecting him, but had received only sporadic news. They were not sure whether he was travelling by land or sea and, in either case, were apprehensive about the dangers which would threaten him, as Dorothy told Mrs. Clarkson:

We were wearied out with conjectures, and expectations worn out, for though every post-day we trembled when the news was coming upstairs 'no letters', yet we had scarcely anything like expectation left… when I was alone in bed at night I could not banish the most dreadful images, […].[10]

Since William was in a state of restless excitement, they all resolved that he would leave for a six weeks' visit to London. While in London, William sent daily letters to his sister, whose tender replies resembled more the missive of a young wife to her husband rather than that of a middle-aged woman to her brother:

The wind is howling and the rain beats. Oh my dear William that thou wast humming thy own songs to it and untying thy many strings or resting thy hands upon thy knees as thou art used in musing while work pauses. But thou art happy and it is better perhaps that we should sometimes be separated even if thou didst not take such pleasure in things (as thou dost). God bless thee.[11]

On 23 May William was back at Grasmere and on 15 June his second son, Thomas, was born. Dorothy welcomed the news with overwhelming joy and she expressed her feelings in a letter to Lady Beaumont:

[…] on the 18th of June, on such another morning, after such a clear and starlight night, the birds singing in the orchard in full assembly as on this 15th, the young swallows chirping in the self-same nest at the chamber window, the rose-trees rich with roses in the garden, the sun shining on the mountains, the air still and balmy, – on such a morning was Johnny born, and all our first feelings were revived at the birth of his brother two hours later in the day, and three days earlier in the month; […].[12]

While William was working on *The Excursion* and on other poems, much of Dorothy's time was taken up with childcare, so she did not keep a journal. She began to try her hand at writing for

[9] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 2 Mar. 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 204.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Letter from D. W. to W. W., 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 205; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 204-206.
[12] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 17 June 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 206.

the children's amusement, as in the lullaby *To my niece, Dorothy, a sleepless baby*, in which she captured the silence of Town End at night, when there was:

> nothing stirring in the house
> Save one wee hungry nibbling mouse.

In a second lullaby, written in the form of a poem in rhyming couplets, *Address to a Child in the High Wind*, Dorothy tried to offer comfort to her restless four-year-old nephew.

When William visited the Beaumonts, he read both of his sister's recent pieces of writing to them, although Dorothy disclaimed any pretentions to authorship, as distinctly appears from her reply to Lady Beaumont's requests that she should take herself seriously as a poet:

> And you would persuade me that I am capable of writing poems that might give pleasure to other besides my own particular friends!! Indeed, indeed, you do not know me thoroughly; you think far better of me than I deserve. […] Believe me, since I received your letter I have made several attempts […] and have been obliged to give it up in despair; and looking into my mind I find nothing there, even if I had the gift of language and numbers, that I could have the vanity to suppose could be of any use beyond our fireside, or to please, as in your case, a few partial friends; but I have no command of language, no power of expressing my ideas, and no one was ever more inapt at moulding words into regular metre.[13]

Dorothy's modesty notwithstanding, her identity as a writer was clearly on the increase within the Beaumonts' circle, also thanks to William's help to promote her work; in due course, these poems would be published in his collection *Poems* (1815), as written by "a Female friend."[14]

During Coleridge's absence, the Wordsworths' friendship with the Beaumonts strengthened. When the couple offered them the loan of the farmhouse on their property at Coleorton, in Leicestershire, in order to escape from the overcrowded cottage in Grasmere, they accepted gladly; but they would not leave without any news from Coleridge.

During his stay in Malta, Coleridge, lonely and homesick, had succumbed to opium addiction and deep depression, which had worsened his already weak nature. Finally, on 15 August Dorothy and William got the blessed news that he was in quarantine off Portsmouth. Despite the fact that they were expecting him, he did not appear and ignored their repeated statements that all their movements depended upon him. Apparently, Coleridge's delay was due to his domestic problems, as Dorothy recorded in a letter to Lady Beaumont:

---

[13] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 20 Apr. 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 223-224.
[14] W. Wordsworth, *Poems*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 215-216.

Poor soul! He had a struggle of many years, striving to bring Mrs. Coleridge to a change of temper, and something like communion with him in his enjoyments. He is now, I trust, effectually convinced that he has no power of this sort, […] that I would gladly hope things will not be so bad as he imagines when he finds himself once again with his children under his own roof…[15]

All through October the Wordsworths were kept in the same miserable suspense, but they could put off their journey to Coleorton no longer, since all the children had suffered from whooping cough during the summer. On 26 October they left Grasmere for Kendal, where they met Coleridge at last. In her message to Mrs. Clarkson, Dorothy gave an account of the poignant meeting with their friend:

[…] never never did I feel such a shock as at first sight of him. We all felt exactly in the same way – as if he were different from what we have expected to see; almost as much as a person of whom we have thought much, and of whom we had formed an image in our own minds, without having any personal knowledge of him… […] He is utterly changed.[16]

The Beaumonts received their guests like old friends and, after a few days, Dorothy felt herself at home in her new quarters. Although she certainly missed her beloved mountains, she admitted that the flat midland country had its compensations:

We like the place more and more every day, for every day we find fresh comfort in having a roomy house. […] These sunsets are a gift of our new residence, for shut up as we are among the mountains in our small deep valley, we have but a glimpse of the glory of the evening through one gap called the Dunmail Gap, the inverted arch which you pass through in going to Keswick.[17]

While Dorothy and William were enjoying the comfort and the space of Coleorton, they decided to repay the Beaumonts' hospitality by offering advice on designing and planting a Winter Garden on their estate. Both the siblings made independent suggestions, and the garden was a topic of discussion for the whole household that season. Later on in their stay, William superintended work on the garden, while Dorothy looked on admiringly: "The plan and I may say invention is entirely William's, and a beautiful picture or romance it is; and when time has helped the work it will be a substantial and true paradise."[18]

[15] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., late September 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 207.
[16] Ibid, 6 Nov. 1806, p. 209.
[17] Ibid, 14 Nov. 1806, p. 210.
[18] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, 1806-1820*, vol. i, p. 138, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 216.

Eventually, Coleridge resolved to separate from his wife; a few days before Christmas, he joined Dorothy and William at Coleorton, where he stayed for nearly two months. Dorothy was delighted by his presence, as she confessed in her writing to Lady Beaumont:

I think that I was never more happy in my life than when we had had him for an hour by the fireside: for his looks were much more like his old self, and though we only talked of common things, and of our friends, we perceived that he was contented in his mind, and had settled things at home to his satisfaction.[19]

During Coleridge's stay at Coleorton, William read aloud *The Prelude*, hoping his work would relieve his friend's tension. He was rewarded with great admiration and praise in Coleridge's answering poem *To William Wordsworth*, but there was no doubt that the two men had moved apart. William was making no progress with *The Recluse*, which interested him only intermittently. Furthermore, the poetry composed during the past five years and assembled in *Poems, in Two Volumes*, showed how manifestly William had diverged from the philosophical path Coleridge had mapped out for him and how he had instead turned to domestic affections.[20]

Despite the fact that it seemed as if the three companions were taking up again the old blissful life, this was not to be; a change had come over Coleridge and weighed heavily upon him. Over-indulgence in alcohol and narcotics had not only weakened his will but also began to undermine his affections and his moral sense. He was subject to moods in which love and gratitude were crossed with resentment and jealousy. He could not rejoice at the thought of William's happy home life without bitter reflection on his own abject misery. In addition, he feared that William not only came first with Dorothy and Mary but was replacing him in the affections of Sara. He became silent and volatile, and his friends had no idea of what was passing through his mind; they only saw that he was no longer the cheerful companion of earlier days. Although Dorothy, for a time, tried to persuade herself that the separation from his wife was the cause of Coleridge's despondency, after a few months she had to make the sorrowful confession that "we had long experience at Coleorton that it was not in our power to make him happy."[21]

At Coleorton, Dorothy and William received the visit from Walter Scott and, on his departure, they accompanied him for a leg of his journey; in June 1807, the whole Wordsworth family set out for Grasmere. They broke the journey for a fortnight at Halifax, among Dorothy's old friends: the Pollards, the Rawsons, and the Threlkelds. She was thrilled to see them, as she later recorded: "I had great pleasure in the revival of many old recollections, and in finding every

[19] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 23 Dec. 1806, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 210-211.
[20] See Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 217.
[21] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 28 Dec. 1807, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 212.

favourite valley more beautiful than I had ever imagined."[22] The few days she spent with Jane were enough to bring back to its old warmth the friendship which a busy life as well as new bonds had allowed to fall into the background; henceforth, they kept once more in close touch with one another.

Unfortunately, the family homecoming was darkened by changes in the village which had taken place in their absence, as Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson:

> On our arrival here our spirits sank and our first walk in the evening was very melancholy. Many persons are dead, old Mr Sympson, his son the parson, young George Dawson, the finest young Man in the vale, Jenny Hodgson our washerwoman… All the trees in Bainriggs are cut down, and even worse, the giant sycamore near the parsonage house, and all the finest firtrees that overtopped the steeple tower.[23]

Dorothy associated the felling of trees with the human deaths which had occurred in the parish when she and William were absent.

William too melancholy focused on the unjustified destruction of such a natural habitat in the lyric *The Tuft of Primroses*:

> Ah what a welcome! When from absence long
> Returning, on the centre of the Vale
> I look'd a first glad look, and saw them not.[24]

Moreover, he discovered five newly made graves in the churchyard. In the near future, he would celebrate the "un-ambitious lives" of those people in *The Excursion*, his poem of Christian consolation for the local dead.[25]

Undoubtedly, Dorothy and William's stay at Coleorton had reinforced not just their environmental principles but also their religious faith; from this time forward, Grasmere church was to take on a prominent role in their lives as well as in their writings.

At Grasmere, the Wordsworths packed once more into their tiny cottage. It was too tight and, in the daytime, there was not much peace. They hired Sally Green, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a poor statesman in Easedale to help to look after the children, who were energetic and really noisy. The situation worsened in bad weather, when they were all confined to the house and

[22] D. W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 213.
[23] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, 1806-1820*, vol. i, p. 158-159, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 218-219.
[24] W. Wordsworth, *The Tuft of Primroses*, ll. 94-96, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 219.
[25] Ibid, l. 205; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 217-219.

the strain upon the nerves was almost unbearable. As usual, Dorothy saw the situation from William's perspective:

I cannot but admire the fortitude, and wonder at the success, with which he has laboured in that one room, common to all the family, to all visitors, and where the children frequently play beside him![26]

All family members were absolutely delighted to learn that a large house, situated on a hill at the north-end of the Lake, was to let. Despite the fact that both the siblings resented the building of such pretentious residences, whose construction Dorothy described as "public sorrow", they had to admit that the mansion represented the ideal solution to their pressing housing problem.[27] The house was not to be ready for at least six months, but they could ease the present overcrowding by paying visits. Apart from spending some days at the Beaumonts', Dorothy was often left alone with the children, which was doubtless extremely tiring, as she confessed in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson: "I am very happy amongst my little ones but oh! How glad shall I be when William and Mary come back again."[28]

In November, a new friend was welcomed at Dove Cottage: the writer Thomas De Quincey. Dorothy immediately took a liking to him, as she told Lady Beaumont:

I think of this young man with extraordinary pleasure, as he is a remarkable instance of the power of my brother's poems over a lively and contemplative mind, unwarped by any established laws of taste.[29]

As to Coleridge, his wife paid the Wordsworths more than a visit and she was doing her best to keep up appearances. Although Dorothy resented Mrs. Coleridge's conventionality, she had to admit that fault was not all on her side; for, as she explained to Mrs. Clarkson, Coleridge was constantly putting her "into disagreeable situations, by his delays in coming to her at the time promised, and the like."[30] In truth, Coleridge was behaving towards them no better than he was behaving towards his wife. One of the main reasons they embarked on the expense of so large a new house had been that they would have space for him and his two boys. Furthermore, they were prepared to face the gossip which would charge them as they would help him to leave his family. But now they were not certain anymore whether he would come, since for months they had no direct news of him, as Dorothy resentfully wrote to Mrs. Clarkson:

[26] Letter from *D. W. to Lady B.*, February 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 214.
[27] Ibid, 7 Nov. 1805.
[28] Letter from *D. W. to Mrs. C.*, 7 Dec. 1807, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 215.
[29] Letter from *D. W. to Lady B.*, 6 Dec. 1807, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 216.
[30] Letter from *D. W. to Mrs. C.*, 2 Dec. 1807, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 216.

He has never written to us and we have given over writing to him. For what is the use of it? We believe that he has not opened one of our letters. Poor soul! He is sadly to be pitied. I fear all resolution and strength of mind have utterly deserted him.[31]

But when the Wordsworths learned that Coleridge was again alarmingly ill, their friendship and their love prevailed over their disappointment. Therefore, William made the decision to "go up to London and see him, and if he be strong enough, to endeavour to persuade him to return with him to this country."[32] For more than a month, William was in devoted attendance on Coleridge, whose physical as well as mental health seemed to recover. But when William left him, he soon relapsed into his old ways; he felt that the whole world was involved in a conspiracy against him and he retaliated by attacking those friends whose loyalty none of his weaknesses had been able to destroy.

To Grasmere he sent a message of passionate recrimination; despite the fact that the letter is not extant, its content could be inferred from William's reply:

There is more than one sentence in your letter which I blushed to read, and which you yourself would have been unable to write, could never have the thought of writing, […] had you not acquired a habit which I think a very pernicious one, of giving pen and voice to your most lawless thoughts, and to your wildest fancies an external existence, and thus furnishing the bad Soul, […].[33]

Their mortification notwithstanding, Dorothy and William realized that the letter had not been written by the Coleridge they knew and loved, but by a man whose state of mind was certainly insane. They trusted that the fit would pass and, before the end of September, Coleridge was with them at Grasmere.

[31] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 4 Nov. 1807, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 217.
[32] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 23 Feb. 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 217.
[33] Letter from W. W. to S. T. C., 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 218-219.

13. The Lake District

> *How closely the bonds of family connection are held together in these retired valleys.*[1]

Early in 1808, a new stage began in Dorothy and William's collaboration as Westmorland writers. The family's public role in their community emerged in response to the shocking tragedy of a local couple, George and Sarah Green, who died in the snow on 19 March. The Greens had been returning over the hill to their home in Easedale when they lost their way and perished overnight. At the time, William was attending on Coleridge in London; in the letter she sent to his brother, Dorothy told a tale which moved her to the depths of her nature:

> They came to the highest nose of the hill that can be seen from Langdale in good time, for they were seen there by some people in Langdale; but alas! They never reached home. […] – six children had been left in the house, all younger than Sally, and the youngest an infant at the breast. Poor things they sate up till 11 o'clock on Saturday night, expecting their parents, and then went to bed, satisfied that they had stopped all night in Langdale on account of the bad weather; […] and many men went out to search upon the Fells. Yesterday between 50 and 60 were out, and to-day almost as many, but all in vain. […] Mary and I have been up at the house this morning, two of the elder daughters are come home, and all wait with trembling and fear, yet with most earnest wishes, the time when the poor creatures may be brought home and carried to their graves. It is a heart-rending sight – so many little, *little* creatures.[2]

Since Sally, one of the Greens' eight children, had been working at Town End as a nanny, the children's predicament touched the Wordsworths deeply. Although they had known George and Sarah Green for a while, until the tragedy they did not realize that Sally's family was among the poorest in the vale. Despite the fact that they owned a small estate, this was heavily mortgaged and they had never got assistance from the parish. The whole neighbourhood was profoundly stirred by their death; therefore, a fund was opened for the relief of the destitute orphans. Dorothy and William wrote to many friends and the success of the appeal was largely due to their exertions. The siblings' support for the children was not only an expression of sympathy for their bereavement but also a political intervention: lending their personal whole-hearted support to the orphans, they implicitly condemned its alternative, the humiliating and impersonal workhouse system, where the Greens' children would have certainly ended up.

---

[1] D. Wordsworth, *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 220.
[2] Letter from D. W. to W. W., 23 Mar. 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 224-225.

Dorothy was profoundly impressed by the sympathy which the tragedy awakened in every inhabitant of the vale, and even more by what she now learnt of the life and character of the Greens: their cheerful independence, their heroic poverty, and their passionate attachment to their small inheritance. As to William, he saw in their story a powerful testimony of those virtues he loved to celebrate in verse; hence, he encouraged his sister to compose a narrative of the tragedy as part of the fundraising for the orphaned children. Dorothy's memoir *Addressed to a friend*, probably Mrs. Clarkson, circulated among family and friends under the title *A Narrative of George and Sarah Green*; later, when she was pressed by the Clarksons to publish the story more widely, Dorothy resisted, sensing the importance of protecting the children's privacy:

> […] I cannot have that narrative published. My reasons are entirely disconnected with myself, much as I should detest the idea of setting myself up as an Author. […] but on account of the family of the Greens I cannot consent… by publishing this narrative, I should bring the children forward to notice as individuals, and we know not what injurious effect this might have upon them. […] Thirty or forty years hence, when the characters of the children are formed and they can be no longer objects of curiosity, if it should be thought that any service would be done, it is my present wish that it should then be published, whether I am alive or dead.[3]

From the extracts which are quoted below is evident that the judgements of the Clarksons were not at fault: when prose was Dorothy's medium, and she wrote of what stirred her heart and mind, her power of expression never failed her. And her "simple and fervid memoir", as Thomas De Quincey called it, is a masterpiece of narrative.

After a chronicle of the tragedy, similar to that she had given in the letter to William, Dorothy's account continued by portraying the terrible misfortune suffered by the Greens' children:

> Soon after the alarm had been spread on Monday afternoon […] two or three women friends of the family […] went to take care of the poor children, and they found them in a wretched state – 'all crying together.' They had passed the whole days (from Saturday noon till Monday noon) without seeing anybody, waiting patiently and without fear; and when the word came that their father and mother must have died upon the hills it was like a thunder-stroke.[4]

To Dorothy as well as to William, sympathy was not just a fact of life but a measure of authentic feeling, as clearly appears from *A Narrative of George and Sarah Green*. Sympathy was

[3] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., December 1810, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 227; see T. De Quincey, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 227.
[4] D. Wordsworth, *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, II vols.; qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 227-228; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 227-228.

strictly connected to the close ties which bounded human beings in the Vale of Grasmere; in her piece of writing, Dorothy provided a real insight into what was going on in their neighbourhood:

On the second evening I asked a young man, a next-door neighbour of ours, what he should do to-morrow? 'Why, to be sure, go out again', he replied, and I believe that though he left a profitable employment […] he would have persevered daily if the search had continued many days longer – even weeks.[5]

With her conversational intimacy, Dorothy was able to draw her reader into the Greens' tragedy as if it were a fireside story, as William did in many of his poems: "You remember a single Cottage at the foot of Blentern Gill: – it is the only dwelling on the Western Side of the upper reaches of the Vale of Easedale, and close under the mountain…"[6]

With an eye for domestic detail, Dorothy conveyed a full and living picture of ordinary lives in a small community united by grief. By adding facts about the Greens' poverty and local place names, such as Blentern Gill and Mill Beck, the tragedy is deeply rooted in a familiar landscape:

They never made tea, and when the neighbours went to look after the children they found nothing in the house but two boilings of potatoes, a very little meal, little bread, and three or four legs of lean dried mutton. […] The furniture of the house was decayed and scanty, but there was one oaken cupboard which was so bright with rubbing that it was plain it had been prized as an ornament and a treasure by the poor woman then lying in her coffin.[7]

Precise images captured the family's varied responses to the aftermath of death:

In the church the two coffins were placed near the Altar, and the whole family knelt on the floor on each side of the father's coffin, leaning over it. The eldest daughter had been unable to follow with the rest of the mourners, and we had led her back to the house before she got through the first field. The second fainted by the grave-side; and their brother stood like a Statue of Despair silent and motionless; the younger girls sobbed aloud.[8]

And all the while, as Dorothy noted down laconically, the natural rhythms of life continued:

[Mary and I] went out of doors, and were much moved by the rude and simple objects before us – the noisy stream, the craggy mountain down which the old Man and his Wife had hoped to make their way on that unhappy night – the little garden, untilled – […].[9]

[5] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 228.
[6] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 222.
[7] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 228, 230.
[8] Ibid, p. 230.
[9] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 222-223.

In her *Narrative*, Dorothy depicted the intensity of the family's attachment to their smallholding: "You will wonder how they lived at all; and indeed I can scarcely tell you. They used to sell a few peats in the summer, which they dug out of their own hearts' heart, their Land."[10] Like William, Dorothy firmly believed in the importance of a settled connection with the land as the proper foundation for moral happiness; she affirmed that the virtuous character of the Green children had developed because their parents' employment was exclusively centred in the patrimonial fields:

> The love of their few fields and their ancient home was a salutary passion, and no doubt something of this must have spread itself to the children. The parents' cares and their chief employments were centred there, and as soon as the children could run about even the youngest could take part in them, while the elder would do this with a depth of interest which cannot be felt, even in rural life, where people are only transitory occupants of the soil on which they live.[11]

To Dorothy's enormous relief, thanks to the subscription which had been raised for the Greens, it was possible to secure comfortable homes for the orphan children:

> It had been declared with one voice by the people of the parish, men and women, that the infant and her Sister Jane should not be parted. The woman, who has to have the care of these two, […] has engaged to instruct Jane in sewing and reading, […], and her husband is a remarkably ingenious and clever man, a blacksmith by trade; […].[12]

Bereavement elicits fellow-feeling, thus providing the foundation for community; and Dorothy and William's own sorrows drew them into fellowship with their neighbours. The story of a couple dying in the snow and leaving their children orphaned touched on their traumatic family memories: the death of their own parents. As emerges from her tale, Dorothy identified with both the parents and the children of the Green family.

At the close of her *Narrative*, Dorothy expressed the fear that she had spun it out to a tedious length: "I cannot give you the same feelings that I have of them as neighbours and fellow inhabitants of this vale; therefore what is in my mind a full and living picture will be to you but a feeble sketch."[13] But what she described as a "feeble sketch" is actually a faithful living picture of life in a humble village two centuries ago. Moreover, Dorothy's piece of writing reveals her rare power of entering into that life with deep sympathy and of making it an integral part of her own.

---

[10] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 223.
[11] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 235.
[12] Ibid, p. 231; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 223-225.
[13] D. W., *George and Sarah Green, A Narrative*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 236; see de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 236.

On 6 April 1808, William returned at Town End from his attendance on Coleridge. Although Dove Cottage was home to all of the Wordsworths, it had become unbearably cramped; therefore, they reluctantly accepted that moving to a bigger house was a priority. Despite the fact that the Greens' tragedy occurred at a time when they could hardly afford to make room for an extra member of the household, they kept Sally on, as their personal contribution to the appeal.

In order to fund their move, William had been counting on the income from his collection *Poems, in two volumes*, which was published early in May. Unfortunately, the volume did not achieve the success he and his sister expected; on the contrary, the reception was worse than Dorothy had thought possible, since both the editors stopped its sale. She was bitterly disappointed, also because among the pieces of writing contained in the collection there were some of the dearest to her, like *The Sparrow's Nest* and *Daffodils*. William's confidence in his power to attract readers left him and he began to think of giving up the publication of his works. Dorothy heard with dismay her brother's uncertainty, as she wrote to him:

> It is our belief, and that of all who have heard it read, that the *Tale* would bear it up – and without money what we can do? New House! new furniture! Such a large family! Two servants and little Sally! We *cannot* go on so another half-year; […]. Do dearest William; do pluck up your courage, and overcome your disgust to publishing.[14]

After a short time, William's long narrative poem *The White Doe of Rylstone* was ready to be published. However, at the last minute, fearful of hostile review, he once again postponed publication, thus provoking an outburst from his sister, who resumed her attack on William's hesitations and doubts. Although Dorothy recognized that poetry was first and foremost a vocation, her brother's reluctance to make it a lucrative profession had its disadvantages. In this case, William's scruples won the day, especially after Coleridge's strong criticism of his last work, and *The White Doe of Rylstone* remained for another eight years in manuscript. Despite the fact that not even this time Dorothy gained her point, the incident is a reminder that she could sometimes spring into life as manager.

Financial difficulties notwithstanding, towards the end of May the Wordsworths moved to Allan Bank, a large Georgian villa overlooking Grasmere Lake. As usual, the bulk of the work fell upon Dorothy's shoulders, as she told Mrs. Clarkson:

[14] Letter from D. W. to W. W. (enclosed in a letter to S. T. C.), 31 Mar. 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 222.

Being very poor we are determined to make the carpets and do everything ourselves; […]. Judge how busy I must have been for this fortnight past – papers, linen, books, everything to look over in the old house and put by in the new – besides curtains to make etc. etc. etc.[15]

But even in the desolate chaos of a removal Dorothy could look on the brighter side of things, and, in spite of her fond regrets for the cottage which was no longer to be their home, she admitted that the situation of the new house was as lovely. Furthermore, she could finally have some chance of a little privacy, as she wrote in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson:

Sara and I have a delicious view from our several windows – both look to the east – the mighty mountains of Fairfield and Seat Sandal, now green to the very summits. […] Oh that you could see the bonny cottages and their tufts of trees and the sweet green fields. It is a soothing scene, […]. We already have the comfort of having each a room of our own, and begin to love them – but the dear cottage! I will not talk of it.[16]

William and Mary's fourth child, Catherine, was born on 6 September; before the end of the month, Thomas De Quincey was a member of the Wordsworth household. A year later, De Quincey settled into Dove Cottage, where he was to make his home for the next six years. He arranged that Dorothy should oversee preparations for his arrival; the frequent visits that she had to pay to the cottage gave her pure delight:

It is quite a pleasure to us to go down to the old spot and linger about as if we were again at home there. Yesterday I sate half an hour musing myself in the moss-hut, and for the first time this season I heard the cuckoos there.[17]

Dorothy's great nostalgia for Dove Cottage was intensified by anxieties about the destruction of woodlands, which she could witness on a daily basis in the vale, as she took down:

There is no other spot which we may have prized year after year that we can ever look upon without apprehensions that next year, next month, or even tomorrow it may be deformed and ravaged.[18]

Fortunately, the orchard at Town End remained a paradisal refuge to them all: "We have now almost a home still, and the old and dearest spot of all."[19] Two years later, when De Quincey

[15] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 10 May. 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 238.
[16] Ibid, 6 June 1808.
[17] Letter from D. W. to T. De Q., 6 May 1809, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 240.
[18] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, 1806-1820*, vol. i, pp. 337-338, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 226
[19] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, 1806-1820*, vol. i, p. 376, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 226.

cut down the ash tree and the hedge all around the orchard, Dorothy was "so hurt and angry that she can never speak to him anymore."[20]

During the two years at Allan Bank, the Wordsworths were intermittently living under the same roof with Coleridge. In addition, his two boys often visited him during weekends and holidays, thus making the house even fuller. Clearly, with baby Catherine as first claim upon Mary's time, Dorothy was chiefly responsible for the house management. To make matters even more difficult, they had:

> […] grievous troubles to struggle with – a smoky house, wet cellars and workmen by the half dozen making attempts, hitherto unsuccessful, to remedy these evils… […] Chairs, carpets, the painted ledges of the rooms, all are ready for the reception of soot and smoke, requiring endless cleaning, and are never clean.[21]

The brightest pages in the annals of Allan Bank are devoted to William and Mary's children: Johnny, with "his shy looks of gladness and beautiful blushes" when anything pleased him; Dorothy, "a mixture of wildness and elegance, quick at her book and quick at everything", but wayward and difficult to subdue, like what her aunt must have been at her age; Thomas, "a great chatterer" and "simple, innocent and very loving", who spent so much time in the kitchen that he was known as *Potiphar*; and lastly baby Catherine, not quite so handsome as the others, "in spite of her blue eyes", but pronounced to be "the wittiest of the set."[22]

Dorothy would have found it hard to say which of the four children was her favourite, for each had his separate niche in her heart. Moreover, in entering into their lives, she found a joyful distraction from the troubles which weighed upon her, since she had worries enough. William thought to supplement his slender income by journalism, as he had always interested himself in national affairs. All through winter 1806, William worked on an eloquent pamphlet in which he strove to rouse his countrymen to their sense of moral duty; a portion of it later appeared in *The Courier*. Furthermore, he resolved to keep writing in *The Courier* or in some other newspapers "for the sake of getting money."[23] Dorothy viewed with dismay a project which would certainly divert her brother from his real vocation, for "It was never intended that he should make a trade out of his

[20] *Letters of Sara Hutchinson*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 227.
[21] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 8 Dec. 1808, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 241.
[22] Ibid, 8 Dec. 1808 and 18 Nov. 1809, p. 242.
[23] Letter from D. W. to T. De Q., 1 May 1809, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 243.

faculties"; and yet, she added, "I know not how we can go on without his employing some portion of his time in that way."[24]

Besides writing for *The Courier*, in those years William completed his essay now known as *Guide to the Lakes*, in which he included Dorothy's *Journal of a Mountain Ramble*, as mentioned in the previous chapter of this dissertation. First published anonymously, the volume appeared in 1810 under the title of *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire*. The book has a distinct regional identity and it encompasses a grand survey of Lakeland scenery as well as of its inhabitants' way of life. It celebrates the interchange between the region of the Lake District and the shepherds who lived and worked there. In addition, *Select Views* is an expression of Dorothy and William's shared environmental beliefs and aesthetic principles. With their writing, the siblings tried to protect the vale from the depredations of newcomers, who whitewashed buildings and put up pretentious new villas. To the Wordsworths' way of thinking, the natural beauty of the region was inseparable from its long history of traditions.

Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire has been identified as a founding text of modern environmentalism. Its figurative language reveals how closely Dorothy and William's ecological concerns were connected with the history of their resettlement in the region. They were *native* writers, whose cohabitation and cooperation attached them more tightly to their origins. The volume contains many echoes from and allusions to their shared work; a number of its passages bear the imprint of Dorothy, whereas others refer to ideas they discussed so often and so accurately that it would be difficult to identify who originated them. *Select Views* is the very epitome of the natural unity to which the intermingling of their writings led.

While William was working on *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire*, Dorothy worried herself sick about Coleridge. In spite of what William wrote about him, "[…] that he neither will nor can execute any thing of important benefit either to himself, his family, or mankind", both he and Dorothy, in receiving him into their home, were striving to wean him from his evil habits.[25] At Allan Bank, Coleridge applied himself "to some grand object of permanent effects": the production of a new periodical, *The Friend*.[26] Although both Dorothy and William knew that none could have been less fitted by natural temper for a work which called for regular application, they realized that his only salvation lay in its accomplishment, because another failure would be worse for him than if he never made the effort.

[24] Letter from D. W. to T. De Q., 1 May 1809, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 244.
[25] Letter from W. W. to Thomas Poole, 31 Mar. 1809, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 244.
[26] Ibid.

Fully alive to his friends' devotion, Coleridge had determined not to disappoint them. He reduced his dose of opium to a sixth of what he had been taking, with the result that his general health and mental activity were stronger than he had known them for years. But two months passed and *The Friend* never appeared; and then difficulties arouse over its publication. When Coleridge left for Penrith in order to make arrangements with a printer there, Dorothy gave voice to her worries in a letter to Thomas De Quincey:

I cannot but fear that the journey and one thing or other […] will knock him up, and that all will at last end in nothing. […]; and at this critical moment it will be for ever to be regretted if any accident of fatigue, bad accommodations etc. should disarrange his body or mind.[27]

Dorothy's anxiety as to what might happen to Coleridge when he was beyond their sphere of influence was not unjustified, since he answered none of the many letters they wrote to him. Despite the fact that April and May passed without any sign of *The Friend*, on 1 June the first number was published, followed punctually by the second on the 8th. On 14 June Coleridge was back at Grasmere and, spurred on by the sympathy and the example of his friends, he made a big effort not to let them down. For the next six months, *The Friend* appeared frequently, to the siblings' relief: "Coleridge is going on well at present […], as to his future regularity I dare not speak… at present he is full of hopes and has, I believe, made excellent resolutions."[28] Coleridge's industry reached its climax in December 1809, when, besides writing *The Friend*, he sent a series of essays to *The Courier*. But early in 1810 he began to flag and to fall back on any old material which he had already written; and when, even so, he had nothing ready for the press, William came to rescue with an article. They all did their best to put heart into him but a lethargy had now fallen upon him from which no entreaties could rouse him. Moreover, Coleridge's difficult situation was worsened by his unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson, who, worn out with her attendance on him, left Grasmere to make a long stay with her brother. Dorothy poured out their forlorn hopes in her writing to Mrs. Clarkson:

As to Coleridge, […] I hope you are sufficiently prepared for the worst. We have no hope of him. None that he will ever do anything more than he has already done. If he were not under our roof, he would be just as much a slave of stimulants as ever, and his whole time and thoughts, except when he is reading […] are employed in deceiving himself, and seeking to deceive others.[29]

[27] Letter from D. W. to T. De Q., 10 Mar. 1809, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 245.
[28] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 27 Aug. 1809, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 246.
[29] Ibid, 17 Apr. 1810, p. 248.

At the beginning of May 1810, Coleridge went off to Keswick, since Mary was expecting another baby and he did not intend to return "till the bustle was over."[30] In truth, Dorothy was not sorry to be relieved of the household work which his presence always required; and Coleridge too was glad to leave Allan Bank. He could face his wife, for whom he had no affection, with composure; but he could not endure any longer the presence of his friends, whom he loved, who had helped him with such devotion, from whom he had resolved to conceal nothing, and whom he had failed. At the end of October, he went to London; ten years were to elapse before Dorothy would see him again.

In London, Coleridge took up his abode at Hammersmith with the Montagus, but he sent no word of himself either to Grasmere or to Keswick. Although Dorothy heard from some mutual friends that he was well, without any news directly from him she became anxious, as she told Mrs. Clarkson: "I am going to write him on business"; but she received no answer.[31] At the time, Coleridge was offended with William, who had told Montagu about the nature of his habits in order to warn him. Despite all the attempts made by the Wordsworths to bring about a reconciliation, Coleridge refused to see them. A whole year had to pass before he was willing to meet William; notwithstanding her bitter disappointment, Dorothy's love for their friend never decreased, as appears from the words she sent to William:

> When you see him give my love to him. I suppose he will not receive it, though he has acted indeed to us all […] as if he intended to insult us. I am sure he does not know the depth of the affection I have had for him…[32]

At last, reconciliation was effected and friendship renewed, but with a difference: the division between Coleridge and the Wordsworths had been too deep and had lasted too long for it to be ever completely healed. They could never again be upon the old intimate footing.

In the following months, Dorothy and William did their best to resume their relationship with Coleridge, but with little success. He promised to visit them at Allan Bank but he broke his word. At that point, the siblings were fully aware that there was nothing more they could do for him; therefore, they showed their devotion to his children. And so, although frequent reference to Coleridge in the later correspondence bears witness to the eagerness with which they still followed his concerns, he passed at the back of their minds.

---

[30] S. T. Coleridge, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 249.
[31] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 23 Feb. 1811, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 250.
[32] Letter from D. W. to W. W., 10 May 1812, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 256.

On 12 May 1810 Mary gave birth to her fifth child, William, and Dorothy assumed the role of sole nurse. At the beginning of July, she left Grasmere with her brother for a much-needed holiday. Since little Catherine had recently suffered from convulsions, the Wordsworths left home with many forebodings. But a cheering report from Mary provided some relief from their worries and they pursued their way in better spirits.

The siblings stayed about a month at the Beaumonts in Coleorton, where Dorothy was delighted to see the many friends she had made during the winter she had spent at the farm house. When William left her to meet Sara Hutchinson in Wales, Dorothy joined Mrs. Clarkson at Bury St. Edmunds. The letter in which she recounted to her brother the details of her journey gives an accurate picture of cross-country travels in the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, Dorothy provided vivid descriptions of the new places she visited:

I was pleased to find at Stamford so many new pleasures in store for our latter years. I used to think it an ugly town – and wherever I looked I saw something to admire – the churches – the old houses – the forms of the streets. In short it seems to me a very fine town for a Painter.[33]

At Bury St. Edmunds Dorothy was perfectly happy: she loved the little town and she felt at home in the house as well as in the garden. In addition, after five years she was again with the friend with whom she was in deepest sympathy. Before she left, Henry Crabb Robinson, a middle-aged barrister and the cousin of Mrs. Clarkson, joined them. He discerned Dorothy's brilliance at once: "Without her brother's genius and productive power [she] had all his tastes and feelings."[34]

After Bury, Henry Crabb Robinson travelled with Dorothy to London. In spite of her initial doubts about being "distracted by noise and the multitude of objects so different from those among which our lives are spent", she was a tireless sight-seer.[35] Therefore, she was able to enjoy her walks with Mr. Crabb Robinson, who gave up his morning duties to be her cicerone, and her visits to the British Museum; she also went to an opera at Covent Garden. Later on, Dorothy would recall to Henry Crabb Robinson the pleasure of "our long journey side by side in the pleasant sunshine, our splendid entrance into the great city, and our rambles together in the crowded streets."[36]

From London Dorothy set off for Binfield, near Windsor, where her uncle, Canon Cookson, was now the rector. At Binfield, she received a warm welcome from everybody, as she emotionally recorded: "The old nursemaid who has lived with them 17 years received me with tears in her

[33] Letter from D. W. to W. W. and Sara Hutchinson, 14 Aug. 1810, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 261.
[34] *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworths*, ed. E. J. Morley, vol. i, p. 60, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 262.
[35] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 7 Aug. 1805, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 263.
[36] Letter from D. W. to H. C. R., 6 Nov. 1810, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 263.

eyes."[37] The children she had taken care of at Forncett were now in their twenties and everyone was very pleased to see her. Unfortunately, Dorothy had to abandon her plan to stay a fortnight at Binfield when she heard that Catherine was dangerously ill. She felt sorry that she had not been at home when Mary and the children most needed her; consequently, she immediately resolved to follow them first at Hackett and then at Elleray in order to take the children away from an epidemic of scarlet fever. Notwithstanding her constant concerns, Dorothy was able to enjoy the delightful weather and the enchanting places which surrounded her, as she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson: "Oh could you see the glittering lake of Windermere which lies before me – bays, islands, promontories. It is paradise itself, […]."[38]

The Wordsworths returned to Allan Bank just before Christmas; they enjoyed the festivities all together and Dorothy was eventually able to put aside her anxious thoughts.

Early in May 1811, their three years' occupancy of Allan Bank came to an end. Despite the fact that the house itself, with its chimneys which smoked intolerably, had never appealed to Dorothy, she could not leave it without regrets, as she told Lady Beaumont: "Oh, my dear friend this place – the wood behind it, the rocks, the view of Easedale from them, the lake, and church and village on the other side – is sweeter than paradise itself."[39] The family moved to Grasmere Rectory, a damp house which needed much renovation before it would be habitable. But towards the end of May the house was more or less tidy and they were able to move in. Inside, it proved to be very comfortable and Dorothy saw no reason why it should not "be made a very canny spot."[40]

While living at the Rectory, the Wordsworths became regular attendants at Grasmere parish church. Since the days at Forncett, Dorothy's visits to church had been only sporadic. Evidently, until 1810, the Church held no central place in her religious life; instead, she expressed her spirituality by providing love and service to her family. But when Mr. Johnson, whom Dorothy found amiable as well as inspiring, was installed as curate of Grasmere, she began to attend church regularly, also for the children's sake. Gradually, Dorothy's habits changed to the point that she looked back on her earlier attitude with disapproval. In 1832, turning over the pages of her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, she added a thoughtful note:

[37] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 15 Oct. 1810, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 263.
[38] Ibid, 12 Nov. 1810, p. 265.
[39] Ibid, 10 May 1810, p. 266.
[40] Ibid, 30 Dec. 1810.

I find that this tour was both begun and ended on a Sunday. […] My sentiments have undergone a great change since 1803 respecting the absolute necessity of keeping the Sabbath by a regular attendance at a Church.[41]

The next summer and winter were fully occupied with domestic duties. A nice Christmas was followed by a sunny spring; in April 1812, William and Mary decided to leave temporarily the "hateful house" which was as smoky as Allan Bank to pay a visit to Thomas Hutchinson at Hindwell.[42] While William was in London hoping for a reconciliation with Coleridge, the Wordsworths' world was once again turned upside down. On 3 June, little Catherine was seized with convulsions; although Dorothy did her best to help her, the girl died the following morning. Undoubtedly, Catherine's death was a terrible shock to everyone. The tragic event was all the more bitter for Dorothy, who had to take on the sorrowful task of arranging for her burial. When Mary arrived, she looked terribly thin and worn, and Dorothy had to struggle to keep her own grief under control. Everyone felt that a change was necessary for Dorothy; her reluctance notwithstanding, since she "could not bear to leave them", she accepted to visit Jane Marshall and old Aunt Rawson at Watermillock.[43]

The summer brought many visitors to Allan Bank and the sombre mood of the house was lightened. But late in autumn 1812 the renewed stability of the household was threatened by another shocking event. On 1 December little Thomas, then aged six, died of measles, almost as suddenly as his sister had done only six months before. At the time, Dorothy was staying with the Marshalls at Watermillock; in a long letter to Mrs. Clarkson she recorded the whole story of their grief:

When I came home […] she [Mary] received me with the calmness of an Angel – she comforted me – and in truth I was ashamed of my own weakness, and bitterly reproached myself that I could not bear the sorrow as she did.[44]

William's tenderness provided great comfort to his wife's heavy heart. Their mutual attachment strengthened in the aftermath of the terrible tragedies which had occurred, also thanks to Dorothy's great sympathy. She felt extremely relieved when William decided to turn back to his work, as she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson:

William has begun to look into his poem, The Recluse, within the last two days, and I hope he will be the better for it. He looks better… it would have pitied the hardest heart to witness what he has gone through – […].[45]

[41] D. W., *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 268.
[42] Letter from Sara Hutchinson to Mary Monkhouse, March 1812, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 270.
[43] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 21 June 1812, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 271.
[44] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 5 Jan. 1813, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 275.

At that difficult time, nothing would do Dorothy and William as much good as Coleridge's presence. But apart from sending them his letter of condolence, he took no notice of their invitation to come to Grasmere and went instead to the seaside.

From the Rectory, the Wordsworths looked out every day towards the graves of Catherine and Thomas. Despite their trust in the soothing power of communal memory, this daily reminder of the children's deaths became too painful to bear. All of them doubtless longed to get away from Grasmere and all its painful associations, as Dorothy confessed in her writing to Mrs. Clarkson:

We are determined to quit Grasmere and have every reason to expect that we shall get that house called Rydale Mount… It is most delightfully situated, the very place which in happier days we longed for.[46]

On May Day 1813 the family was able to move into Rydal Mount, the house overlooking Ambleside which was to be their home for the next forty years:

The weather is delightful, and the place a paradise: […]. I was the last person who left the House yesterday evening. It seemed as quiet as the grave, and the very churchyard where our darlings lie, when I gave a last look upon it, seemed to chear [*sic*] my thoughts. […] – the house only reminded me of desolation, gloom, emptiness, and cheerless silence – but why do I turn to these thoughts? The morning is bright and I am more chearful [*sic*] to-day.[47]

As appears from Dorothy's words to Jane, the whole family clung to the hope that they might find some solace in the new setting.

[45] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 5 Jan. 1813, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 277.
[46] Ibid, p. 275.
[47] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 8 Apr. 1813, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 278.

14. Rydal Mount and Dorothy's travels

> *Think how years go by – how the children are coming forward to take their place in active life, and we are going down the hill. […]; and for my part I have as much enjoyment in walking as when I first came into Westmorland twenty years ago, yet you will be surprised when you see me, in face a perfect old woman…*[1]

The Wordsworths' instincts were right: keen as always on the outdoor life which nourishes health and creativity, they immediately fell in love with their new house. All of them tried to keep as busy as possible with the removal; they had furniture to buy and the large hillside garden to look after to, with Sara as head gardener, as Dorothy took down: "I am contented to work under her, and Mary does her share, and sometimes we work very hard, and this is a great amusement to us, though sad thoughts come often between."[2] Moreover, William built a terrace walk and a moss-hut like the one at Town End, which symbolized the continuity of the family's attachment to the region. The time which was spared from house and garden was spent on the lake: "We have two nice boats on Rydale at command, and it is a sweet lake to fish upon."[3]

This new life brought the Wordsworths into contact with the Ambleside gentry, a novelty greeted with some apprehension by Dorothy, as she wrote in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson: "The simplicity of the dear Town End Cottage come before your eyes and you are tempted to say 'are they changed, are they setting up for fine Folks? For making parties – giving Dinners etc?'"[4]

In October 1813, Dorothy was already looking forward to "long evenings and winter's quiet", as she told her friend Catherine Clarkson.[5] For the first time, all the children would be at school; finally, Dorothy would have a little more time to pursue her abiding interests: books and the circle of friends, which was always widening. Unfortunately, her concern for Mary's physical as well as mental health never decreased, as she confessed in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson:

> […] she will never be the same chearful [*sic*] creature as heretofore. The worst of it is that she has a bad appetite, and the habit she has always had of disregarding herself makes her unwilling that any little things not going in the family should be provided for her.[6]

Constant anxieties notwithstanding, in August 1814 Dorothy and Mary witnessed a momentous event: the appearance of *The Excursion*, the first part of William's projected

[1] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 1 Aug. and 19 Dec. 1819, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 319.
[2] Ibid, June 1813, p. 281.
[3] Letter from S. H. to Mrs. Thomas (Mary) Hutchinson, 1 Aug. 1813, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 281.
[4] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C, 1813, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 231.
[5] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 4 Oct. 1813, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 282.
[6] Ibid, 24 Apr. 1814, p. 284.

masterpiece. For years, Dorothy had followed the progress of its composition; now, the work was published in an edition of 500 copies, at the price of two guineas. Unfortunately, its reception did not satisfy Dorothy's great expectations; the price was considered too high. Besides revealing her discontent, in a piece of writing addressed to Mrs. Clarkson Dorothy underlined once more her complete trust in her brother's skills:

I think, that so small an Edition *must* sell, though I see clearly that the effect of the publication has not been such as I expected. […] as to the permanent fate of that poem or of my Brother's collected works I have not the shadow of a doubt. I know that the good and pure and noble-minded will, in the days when we sleep in the grave, be elevated delighted and better for what he has performed in solitude for the delight of his own soul, independent of lofty hopes of being of service to his fellow creatures.[7]

Dorothy followed the fortunes of *The Excursion* with intense interest; she did all that was in her power to help William, like urging the Clarksons to press its sale among their richer Quaker friends or getting favourable reviews into quality newspapers. Despite Dorothy's efforts, the sale was slow; 200 copies remained unsold and the cheaper edition did not appear until 1820.

Dorothy's mind was never entirely absorbed in family matters; through the years, she had fervently monitored the progress of national affairs. She had watched with deep anxiety the struggle against the hated Napoleon Bonaparte, re-echoing her brother's sentiments. As to the English successes in Spain during the spring of 1811, Dorothy observed that:

God be thanked the tide is turned against Buonaparte, and we shall see, I trust, the delusion speedily vanish which even in England has spread too widely, that he was a great genius and a great hero.[8]

In April 1814, when the news of Napoleon's abdication reached Rydal Mount, she voiced her thoughts in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson:

[…] surely it must seem to us, encircled by these mountains, that our own little concerns outweigh the mighty joys and sorrows of nations, or I could not have been so long silent. It is not so; every heart has exulted, we have danced for joy! But how strange; it is like a dream – peace – peace, all in a moment – prisoners let loose – Englishmen and Frenchmen brothers at once, no treaties, no stipulations.[9]

Her writing continued with a strong reproach to the way Bonaparte had been treated:

I am however vexed beyond my strength that Buonaparte should have been thus treated: the power was in the hands of the Allies. If he would have stood but with a few of his Miscreants they should have fought him to the death and yielding him a prisoner he should have been tried for the murderers of the Duc

[7] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 31 Dec. 1814, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 284-285.
[8] D. W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 288-289.
[9] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 24 Apr. 1814, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 289.

d'Enghien, […]; and what a pension they have granted him! This is folly, rather than liberality; for of what use can a large income be in an island without luxuries, and without company? […] In short he ought not to be suffered to live except utterly deprived of power, and while he has so much money he will certainly contrive to convert it into power.[10]

Among the released prisoners there was Eustace Baudouin, a young French lieutenant, who, during his residence in England, had made several visits to the Wordsworths. It is uncertain how their acquaintance had developed, but it seems highly probable that Baudouin was introduced to them by Annette Vallon, who shared his royalist sympathies. After his return to France, Dorothy and William heard that Baudouin's brother, Jean Baptiste, had requested Caroline's hand in marriage; on this occasion, both Caroline and Annette exhorted Dorothy to attend the wedding. Evidently, their meeting at Calais twelve years before had strengthened Annette's affection for Dorothy. It is not known whether Annette suggested that William should come with his sister; ultimately, it was decided that Sara should be her companion.

Since the Clarksons were among the many English people who immediately took advantage of the peace to visit Paris, Dorothy anxiously wrote to her friend Catherine for news which might help her in making plans. In her note, it could be noticed how the prolonged war had prejudiced her mind against France and everything which was related to that country:

We are delighted to hear that you are so much pleased with Paris and the French people, now we venture in our little way to expect pleasure and amusement. All the accounts we have received from other quarters have been unfavourable, that neither provisions nor anything else was much cheaper than in England, which, allowing for the exchange we thought would make things dearer – and the people rude and brutal in their manners.[11]

Although April 1815 had been defined for her visit to France, on New Year's Eve Dorothy was even more doubtful:

I find the king is to be anointed in June, – all France will be gathered together and I fear there may be disturbances; for though all is quiet at present it is evident enough that the party of discontented and turbulent spirits is very strong. […] But I never, never, dreaded so much to leave home as now, so deeply am I impressed with the image of what William and Mary have lately suffered in my absence, and with the uncertainty of all things.[12]

[10] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 24 Apr. 1814, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 289.
[11] Ibid, 9 Oct. 1814, pp. 290-291.
[12] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 31 Dec. 1814, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 291.

As time passed by, Dorothy looked forward to the journey with growing apprehension; certainly, if it had not been for Caroline's exhortations, she would have dropped the idea, as appears from the words she wrote to Sara on 18 February:

I fervently wish it may be given up for this year. If, however, we find that we shall have no peace or rest without it I must try to imitate your good example and make a pleasure of it. A fortnight or little more must settle the point.[13]

And the point was settled, at least for the time: on 1 March Napoleon landed from Elba and in a few weeks he was back to Paris. Throughout these months of national alarm, Dorothy's letters have not merely a personal interest but they also reflect what must have been the general state of English opinion and feeling. On 16 March she took down in a piece of writing to Sara:

On Monday the tidings of the Buonapartist entrance into France would reach you. As Dorothy [her niece] said, 'why did they not kill him when they *had* him?' So you would say, with many an indignant reflection upon the childish follies of the Allies. […] he [Napoleon] will attempt to fall back to Italy, and there William thinks Murat and he may be very troublesome; but God grant that his insane mind may push him on till he is surrounded and captive! At all events we have nothing to do as present but to be thankful that we are not already in France; and it is very unlikely that it will be prudent for us to think of going as soon as we had intended… I am exceedingly distressed for poor Annette and Caroline – especially Annette; […] so near happiness and again to lose it![14]

A few weeks later, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson in much the same vein:

In common with you our minds have been occupied continually by the tremendous changes in France. Till we heard of the arrival of B. [Bonaparte] in Paris I never slept without dreaming of troubles connected with his fiendish ambition, and every night I was kept awake for hours. […] God grant that if they [the Allies] have once again the Sword and the Victory in their hands no puny relentings of mercy may stop the slaughter till the Tyrant is taken and his wicked followers completely subdued. To this result I look forward with hope.[15]

Two months elapsed before Dorothy resumed her correspondence with Mrs. Clarkson. After Napoleon's final defeat in the Battle of Waterloo, the particulars of which she described as "dreadful", in her next letter dated June 28, Dorothy expressed her huge surge of relief:

Before I go to bed I must tell you that, saving grief for the lamentable loss of so many brave men, I have read the newspapers of to-night with unmingled triumph; and now I wait anxiously for Friday's post, to

[13] Letter from D. W. to S. H., 18 Feb. 1815, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 292.
[14] Ibid, 16 Mar. 1815, pp. 292-293.
[15] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 4 Apr. 1815, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 293-294.

know how our armies will proceed. So the abdication was made to his own people! That is as it should be: and I hope he is now a safe prisoner, somewhere.[16]

But the conduct neither of the armies nor of the diplomats satisfied Dorothy's intense hatred for Napoleon, as emerges from the severe words full of invective which she recorded two months later:

Oh I am sick of the adulation, the folly, the idle curiosity which was gathered together round the ship that held the dastardly spirit that has so long been the scourge of all whom he [Napoleon] *could* injure. *He* kill himself! No, he is too much of a coward, and we can be so dull of perception, so insensible to the distinctions between vice and virtue, as to bend, to bow, to take off our hats to him and to call him great. […] as to the French Government and the French people they too would not be worth a thought, if it were not that, left to themselves, they would soon plague us and the rest of the world.[17]

Despite the fact that Annette urged her to go to France, for all was safe and quiet, in the same letter to Mrs. Clarkson Dorothy added that "it is impossible for me to think of going to Paris this year." Therefore, in the following February, Caroline's marriage took place without her presence.

Four years were to pass before Dorothy got to Paris. Although she wished "very much" to go, William feared that another war was imminent; thus, she had to give up until "William would consent provided I could hear of proper companions for the journey."[18]

In the years during which Dorothy's trip to France was being discussed and repeatedly put off, she divided herself between child-rearing and visits to relatives and friends. In September 1814, Dorothy and Sara set off for a visit to Thomas and Mary Hutchinson at Hindwell near Radnor, Wales. They enjoyed every minute of their holiday: much of the country was new to them and there were friends to see on the way.

In spite of Dorothy's great passion for her native land, she was not blind to the beauties of the west country, as she took down in her writing to Mrs. Clarkson:

You could hardly believe it possible for anything but a lake to be so beautiful as the pool before the house. It is perfectly clear and inhabited by multitudes of geese and ducks, and two fair swans keep their silent and solitary state apart from all the flutter and gabble of the inferior birds.[19]

At Hindwell, Dorothy took lessons in riding, something she was very proud of:

[16] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 28 June 1815, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 296.
[17] Ibid, 15 Aug. 1815.
[18] Ibid, 4 Apr. 1816, p. 297.
[19] Ibid, 9 Oct. 1814, p. 298.

By little and little I have become a tolerable horsewoman, I have no fears, and that is a great point, but I cannot attain the power of managing my horse; I can however ride for four or five hours without fatigue, and at a pace which was torture to me when I first began.[20]

But, best of all, Thomas Hutchinson took Dorothy for a few days' expedition down to the Wye, a place which was crowded with some of her fondest memories.

In autumn 1815, Dorothy and William received the bad news about the death of their brother Christopher's wife, Priscilla. In December, once she made sure that her brother did "not seem to want anyone to lean upon, even for a time", Dorothy started with William for a week's holiday of the kind she was most pleased with:

The weather was frosty without snow, and I never in my youngest days, in the summer season, had a more delightful excursion; except for the intervention of melancholy recollections of persons gone, never to return. We set off at one o'clock, walked over Kirkstone, and reached Patterdale by daylight; […] the lake was calm as a mirror, the rising sun tinged with pink light the snow-topped mountains, and we agreed that all we saw in the grander part of the scene was more beautiful even than in summer.[21]

In the same letter addressed to her friend Catherine Clarkson, Dorothy highlighted the wonderful feelings which walking aroused within her:

I was just as fresh as on that day week when we began our journey. My dear friend, have I not reason to be thankful that my strength is thus continued to me, and that my pleasure in walking remains as keen as ever?[22]

Dorothy and William's lives were once again overshadowed by a tragic family event: in May 1816 their brother Richard died. Besides the sorrow for their brother's premature passing, Dorothy and William were deeply concerned about their family finances. Despite their efforts to urge their brother to draw up the necessary documents which assigned the money of their father's estate to the several heirs, Richard died before this was done. As a consequence, neither Dorothy nor William could use a penny of their portion until Richard's little boy came of age. This insecurity was a source of acute anxiety for Dorothy as well as for William, whom, as Sara recorded, was "so little fit for business" and worried himself "beyond all measure."[23] To Dorothy, this waste of William's energies and time was extremely distressing, as she confessed in her next writing to Mrs Clarkson:

[20] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 11 Nov. 1814, p. 299.
[21] Ibid, 23 Dec. 1815, p. 301.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Letter from S. H. to Thomas Monkhouse, February 1817, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 302.

One can see no end to it, but I think he begins to take things more quietly, and for the first time during more than a year and a half he has taken to his old employments. To-day he has composed a sonnet, and in our inner minds we sing 'Oh, be joyful!' It has indeed been most melancholy to see him bowed down by oppressive cares, which have fallen on him through mismanagement, dilatoriness, or negligence.[24]

Visibly relieved that her brother was going back to composing, in October 1816 Dorothy went on a visit to Halifax, where she divided her time between her two aged relatives, Mrs. Threlkeld and Mrs. Rawson. Notwithstanding the many reproaches she received from home for her prolonged absence, she did not return until the middle of February. On the one hand, she was not able to resist the animated entreaties of her dear aunt Elizabeth Threlkeld, who had been a mother to her in her girlhood. On the other hand, at Halifax Dorothy had the chance to observe the poverty which was so widespread throughout the country, but of which she was barely conscious at Rydal Mount. In a piece of writing to Catherine Clarkson, Dorothy gave voice to her concern for the situation around her, to which she had been almost blind:

The wealthy keep their mills going, chiefly for the sake of employing workmen, and few get more than *half* work – great numbers none at all, so that really a great part of the population is reduced to pauperism, a dreadful evil. Things cannot go on this way. […] It is a great comfort to me that my home is out of the way of these dismal sights and sounds, we see little of distress in our neighbourhood that we cannot in some degree diminish either by sympathy or help, but if one lived here it would be far otherwise.[25]

For the three following years there is little record of Dorothy's doings, save of her reports about politics. First, in the spring of 1818, the Westmorland elections were held; Dorothy took a special interest in them, as shown by the passionate account of candidate Brougham's visit to Kendal she described to Sara:

The Hero of the day had been dragged by a set of ragamuffins in blue Ribbands from within 3 miles of Burton, and when he drew up towards the door with music, Banners, horse-men, and the immense multitude on foot all joining in one huzza, fearless of the driving storm, the spectacle was grand. […] He appeared at the window – face to face with us. Silence was proclaimed and the oration began. […] But Mr B.'s speech was addressed *to* a mob, intended *for* a mob; and that mob he invited to meet him at Appleby.[26]

Later, in the summer of 1818, William Wilberforce spent six weeks at Rydal Mount with his family. Dorothy had not seen him since he was a young college friend of her uncle at Forncett. He was now a prominent politician; Dorothy busied herself with arranging accommodation for his

[24] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 13 Apr. 1817, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 302.
[25] Ibid, 10 Jan. 1817, p. 305.
[26] Letter from D. W. to S. H., 24 Mar. 1818, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 307.

party of nineteen, something which caused her great anxiety. But everything went smoothly, as Dorothy confirmed in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson:

But I assure you it was a pleasing contrast when they *did* come – all joy, animation and thankfulness. The rooms were larger than they expected – and so *many* sitting rooms, it was quite delightful, and as to the garden, the situation, everything was to their minds.[27]

In the following October, Dorothy joined Miss Barker, a late addition to the Wordsworths' circle of friends, in ascending Scafell Pike, England's tallest mountain. She wrote an account of her expedition for Mr. Johnson, the former curate of Grasmere and now master of the Central School in London; Dorothy's report was later included as an appendix in William's *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire*. With her typical great attention to detail, Dorothy provided an accurate as well as vivid portrayal of what she saw and felt during her excursion:

From the top of Eskhause we beheld a prospect which would indeed have amply repaid us for a toilsome journey, if such it had been; and a sense of thankfulness for the continuance of that vigour of body, which enabled me to climb the high mountain, as in the days of my youth, inspiring me with fresh chearfulness [*sic*], added a delight, a charm to the contemplation of the magnificent scenes before me, which I cannot describe. […] But how shall I speak of the peculiar deliciousness of the third prospect? At this time that was the most favoured by sunshine and shade. The green Vale of Esk – deep and green, with its glittering serpent stream, was below us, and on we looked to the mountains near the sea – Black Comb and others, – and still beyond, to the sea itself in dazzling brightness. […] I ought to have described the last part or our ascent to Scaw Fell Pike. There, not a blade of grass was to be seen – hardly a cushion of moss, and that was parched and brown; and only growing rarely between the huge blocks and stones which cover the summit and lie in heaps all round to a great distance, like skeletons or bones of the earth not wanted at the creation, and there left to be covered with never-dying lichens, which the clouds and dews nourish; and adorn with colours of the most vivid and exquisite beauty, and endless in variety.[28]

With the election, the visit of the Wilberforces, and the ascent of Scafell Pike, 1818 had been an eventful year for Dorothy; 1819 passed more quietly. As usual, she divided herself between friends and visitors, and the children, who had now grown up. Although looking after them throughout the years had been physically as well as mentally demanding, their presence kept Dorothy's spirit young. Now, she began to notice the ravages of time, as she reflected in her writing to Catherine Clarkson:

---

[27] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 18 Sept. 1818, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 313.
[28] *Account of D. W.'s expedition to Scafell Pike, written for Mr. Johnson*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, II vols.; October 1818, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 314-315.

My teeth are all gone but three above and three below, and I have now a true old woman's mouth and chin. My profile is 70. Shall I get a set of new teeth? We talk of it, yet I do not altogether like the experiment.[29]

Her fears notwithstanding, Dorothy eventually resolved to face the ordeal of getting "a set of new teeth." In May 1820 she went to London, where the visits to her many friends compensated for the horrors of the dentist's chair and the "ten days when she could not show herself."[30] To Dorothy's great joy, all her friends seemed to be collected in London: Mrs. Clarkson, Miss Lamb, the Marshalls, Robert Southey, the young Cooksons, her nephew Willy, and Derwent Coleridge, whose father is never mentioned in the account of her London days. On this occasion, Dorothy also met Johanna Baillie, whom she had already briefly seen some years before at Allan Bank. Dorothy was really pleased to meet her again, as appears from the description of her which she provided: "One of the nicest of women, very entertaining in conversation, without the least mixture of the literary lady."[31]

Dorothy was perfectly happy in London, whether she was in her "nice drawing room which overlooks the Archbishop's garden grounds" at her brother Christopher's house at Lambeth or she walked alone enjoying the beauty of the city:

I left my writing to take a solitary walk – solitary though in a crowd, for I came up the Strand having crossed Waterloo Bridge. The river was most beautiful to-day and beyond Vauxhall Bridge all was clear and bright as among the Lakes… Though I walked in the morning, I must go out again to look at the sunset. The trees are casting their long shades over the green field, and the sparrows are making no unpleasant chirping – and I do assure you that I sometimes hear the notes of the thrush and blackbird from these trees – […].[32]

Thus nicely Dorothy spent nearly three months in London; in June, William and Mary joined her. They all stayed in London until July, when Mary's first cousin Thomas Monkhouse married Jane Horrocks. Afterwards, the Wordsworths accompanied the newly married couple on a continental tour. This would be the third honeymoon in which Dorothy was to participate and she could not be happier to go.

[29] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 1 Aug. and 19 Dec. 1819, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 319.
[30] D. W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 320.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Letter from D. W. to Thomas Monkhouse, 9 and 16 May 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 321.

15. Tour on the Continent

> *We ascended a hill till we came in view of as magnificent a prospect as can be conceived. The Jung-frau, the Shreckhorn, the Wetterhorn, and many other famous mountains, their summits crowned with snow. I sate upon one of the seats placed under shade of trees beside the broad highway; and the others went further. I should have been ungrateful could I have felt a regret at parting from them, with such a spectacle before me, indeed, it seemed almost a privilege that my weakness removed all temptation to go further.*[1]

On 12 July 1820 the party of travellers set off from Calais on a four-month tour of Europe. Dorothy provided a perfect description of their departure:

Off we drove preceded by our friends, each Postilion smacking his whip along the streets with a dexterity truly astonishing. […] we jolted away as merry as children, – showed our passports, passed the gateways, drawbridges and shabby soldiers, and fresh to the feeling of being in a foreign land, drove briskly forward, watchful and gay.[2]

During their continental tour, the Wordsworths visited, partly by carriage and partly on foot, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and northern Italy; on 2 October, they arrived in Paris, where they spent a month; after ten days in Boulogne, they reached London on 9 November.

Besides exploring new countries, the journey was also an opportunity to look for health, since middle age had recently begun to take its toll on both Dorothy and William. The group, consisting of Dorothy, William, Mary, her cousin Thomas Monkhouse, his wife Jane, her sister Miss Horrocks, and their maid, was eager to finally share the excitement of travelling abroad, which had been impossible during the Napoleonic wars. Moreover, Dorothy and William desired to fulfil the promise to visit Annette and Caroline, who had now two young daughters.

By 1820, the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, which was usually organized around the cultural centres of Europe, had been reshaped by the new interests of English tourists. The Wordsworths' itinerary had been planned accordingly; they all looked forward to viewing the Alpine landscapes, which appeared in travel writings as well as in contemporary poetry. The crucial stage of the trip about which Dorothy and William dreamed since their youth was Switzerland, as

[1] *Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of a Tour on the Continent, 1820*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, vol. II; ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 327.
[2] Ibid, 12 July 1820, p. 323.

she recorded: “Switzerland was our end and aim when that romantic country was first shut out from the traveller.”[3]

Thirty years had elapsed since William’s walking tour of Europe with Robert Jones. Despite the fact that the 1820 route moved in an opposite direction, following the new road built by Napoleon’s army, it allowed Dorothy and Mary to explore the places which William had visited as a student. Therefore, the journey was a nostalgic pilgrimage for him.

Although with so many companions it was not possible to recover the intimacy they had enjoyed during the final leg of their Scottish tour, Dorothy was still able to take down personal incidents she shared with her brother only, thus expressing her profound admiration for him. In the following entry, she described what happened at Engleburg:

> […] we breakfasted in view of the flashing, silver-topped Mount Titlis, and its grey crags, – a sight that roused W’s youthful desires, and in spite of weak eyes and the weight of fifty winters, he could not repress a longing to ascend that mountain. He had much earnest conversation with the waiter, who had attended an English gentleman on that perilous adventure, and shewed us the snow patterns with which they were shod, described the scarification of their cheeks, […] and his resolution never to trust himself again to like perils. But my brother had his own visions of glory, and, had he been twenty years younger, sure I am that he would have trod the summit of the Titlis.[4]

Around the middle of August, when they were approaching the Alps, the party split in two, because the walking became too strenuous for Jane, who was, as Mary wrote, “of a very delicate constitution and unable at present to keep pace with us.”[5] While Jane and her sister rested at Geneva for six weeks, Thomas Monkhouse pushed on to the Alps with Dorothy, William, and Mary. At Lucerne, the ardent travellers were joined by their friend Henry Crabb Robinson, with whom Dorothy had gone to London ten years before. The continental holiday was the occasion for further expressions of friendship for Dorothy, whom Mr. Crabb Robinson greatly admired.

Later on, Dorothy reflected that the diverse groupings which had been possible in such large a party was one of the key factors behind the success of the trip:

---

[3] D. Wordsworth, *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, London: Macmillan, 1941, vol. II; ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 244.
[4] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 15 Aug. 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 332.
[5] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, Oxford: University Press, Oxford, 1958, p. 60, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 243.

We set forward together, forming different companies – or sometimes solitary – the peculiar charm of pedestrian travelling, especially when the party is large – fresh society always ready – and solitude to be taken at will.[6]

Once Jane Monkhouse left the group, the pedestrian tour truly began, something which Dorothy appreciated far more than travelling in a carriage, as she recorded:

[Up the valley of Lauterbrunnen] we travelled pleasantly enough in the char-a-banc; yet I thought how much more delightful were pedestrian liberty, … the sounding torrents undisturbed by rattling wheels.[7]

During the journey, Dorothy and Mary took notes of the continental ways of life. Once at home, they used their records to produce independent journals. Mary completed her piece of writing in March 1821; she described it as "a mere transcript of the hasty notes, made by snatches, during our Journey."[8] In addition to preserving the fresh immediacy of impressions, Mary included many quotations from William's poetry. Furthermore, she recognized the superiority of Dorothy's writing skills: "As D is journalist general I shall in future, go on giving our route without comments, for, to describe where there is so much, – at every step something beyond description, is not a work for me."[9]

With her reputation as "journalist general" to keep up, Dorothy was even more tense than Mary about her writing. She began her *Journal of a Tour on the Continent* in February 1821; but in March she already complained that "Mary seems to have succeeded so well in the brief way that I can hardly hope my lengthiness will interest in like degree."[10] Her travelogue was becoming elaborate as well as very long, to the point that she was herself a little daunted by its length, as appears from the words she took down while sitting in her bedroom at Rydal Mount, "copying that enormous journal which I can never expect anyone, except a few idle folk, ever to read through."[11] She completed the first version in August 1821 and, in the following October, she began to copy it out; unfortunately, none of the original drafts survived. The only extant manuscript, made up of a pair of volumes, was in the hand of an unknown friend, who transcribed it in November 1825.

Despite the fact that Dorothy asserted that "My object is not to make a Book but to leave to my Niece a neatly penned Memorial of those few interesting months of our lives", the polished format of the volumes, which also contained a report of the miles covered on each stage of the

[6] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 10 Sept. 1820, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 244.
[7] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 30 July 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 326.
[8] Letter from Mary Wordsworth to Dora Wordsworth, 20 Feb. 1821, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 244.
[9] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 245.
[10] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Alan G. Hill, 4 vols, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1978-1988, vol. i, p. 115, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 245.
[11] D. W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 325.

journey as well as several coloured prints, suggests a more ambitious plan.[12] After having seen the *Journal's* market potential, Henry Crabb Robinson urged Dorothy to shorten and to publish it, but she refused: "As to compressing – or re-writing I shall never do it, for it well answers the purpose intended, of reviving recollections."[13]

As to William, in 1821 he drew on his memories of the travel to compose thirty-eight poems on a variety of subjects, and in different forms and genres. He heavily relied on Dorothy's notes of the tour, "asking me for hints and thoughts", she later recorded.[14] Initially, William planned to write only a few pieces of poetry to accompany Dorothy's prose, as Mary set down: "Wm is writing Poems to intersperse – several very beautiful ones he has already done."[15] With Mr. Crabb Robinson's encouragement, the Wordsworths started to think about a collaborative volume. However, in January 1822 Dorothy reported that her brother's work "has grown to such importance… that I have long ceased to consider it in connection with my own narrative"[16]; by March, William's piece of writing had expanded further. It was published that same year under the title *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820*. In order to honour the original collaborative project, Dorothy included some of William's poems in her *Journal of Tour on the Continent*.

The creativity generated by the continental tour had an engaging dynamic, which enabled Dorothy, William, and Mary to merge as writers within the single household of Rydal Mount. During the creative process, the writers' positions took different directions. Whereas Mary constantly deferred to Dorothy's narrative, the latter took care not to refer to Mary's while she was writing; thus, the two women's accounts remained separate. Certainly, the presence of a third writing subject effected a change in the established cooperative habits of the siblings. It is not known whether there were rivalries between the two female writers of the family, but a semi-figurative passage from Dorothy's *Journal*, in which she discussed the movement of streams at Interlaken, may disclose her fear that their narrative would be subsumed by William's:

I have seen a muddy and a transparent streamlet, at a few yards' distance hurrying down the same steep: – in one instance the two joined at the bottom, travelled side by side in the same track, remaining

[12] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. i, p. 271, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 245.
[13] Ibid, p. 337.
[14] Ibid, p. 113.
[15] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, 5 Nov. 1821, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 245.
[16] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. i, p. 104, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 246.

distinct though joined together, as if each were jealous of its own character. Yielding to mild necessity, they slowly blended, ere both, in turbulent disrespect, were swallowed up by the master-torrent.[17]

As it turned out, William's "master-torrent" did not "swallow up" Dorothy's and Mary's "muddy and transparent streamlets", but took a different course. In spite of William's wish that his poetry might appear in print alongside his sister's and his wife's works, both their accounts remained unpublished during their lifetime. Nonetheless, substantial extracts from Dorothy's *Journal* were included in the 1827 edition of William's *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent*.

In Europe, Dorothy and William had the chance to retrace the route they had taken in 1802, just before his marriage to Mary; undoubtedly, the places they visited were crammed with fond and moving memories. They also arrived in Calais, where Dorothy looked around the city which she and her brother had explored with Annette and Caroline many years before. In addition, the Wordsworths' travel through the Continent, where many people had perished during the Napoleonic wars, involved a personal reckoning with the passage of time as well as a communal recognition of large-scale suffering. These sentiments were related to the "tender melancholy" Dorothy felt in "pensive images of monastic life among the quiet goings-on of a thinly peopled city."[18]

As the group travelled through Northern France and The Netherlands, Dorothy recorded her observations on the damage caused by the war to destitute people. At the entrance of the choir at Calais Cathedral, she noticed a lonely "squalid ragged woman" with "a white dog beside her […] probably her only friend, for never was there a more wretchedly forlorn and miserable-looking human being." Dorothy continued her narrative by describing the change in "her melancholy and sickly aspect […] and […] in the woman's skinny, doleful face" when she gave her a penny:

It was brightened by a light and gracious smile; – the effect was almost as of smoothing supernatural; she bowed her body, waved her hand, and, with a politeness of gesture unknown in England in almost any station in life, beckoned that we might enter the church.[19]

Poverty was now a distinct feature in places which were once famous for their beauty. Even in the romantic city of Aix-La-Chapelle, which was traditionally associated with Charlemagne, the companions caught sight of a "squalid half-naked woman" looking out after the rattling carriages as

[17] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 10 Aug. 1820, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 246; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 246.
[18] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 248.
[19] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 12 July 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 336

they went past.[20] In every village or small town they visited, "the veil of romance was withdrawn; and we were compelled to think of human distress and poverty", Dorothy wrote.[21]

At Dunkrik, Dorothy noted that numerous vagrants seemed to be evidence of "abject poverty", and she asked herself: "Where do they live? I have seen no dwellings that seem to belong to very poor people."[22] At Alost, she commented that the people were "dirty, ragged, – bold, and the children obstinate sing-song beggars, following our carriages while breath would serve."[23] From Dorothy's entries it is clear that, everywhere she went, she saw that the centres of European civilization were precarious and subject to the prevailing forces of human ambition, nature, and time. When she wrote about the "venerable antiquity" of Ghent, Dorothy provided a description of "multitudes of swallows [which] were wheeling round the [cathedral] roof", their "restless motions and plaintive call […] seemed to impart a stillness to every other object."[24] She considered the swallows as prefiguration of a "period when that once superb but now decaying structure shall be 'lorded over and possessed by nature'."[25]

When William walked across Europe in 1790, he had been an ardent Francophile; now, his opinions had utterly changed and the whole middle-aged family experienced sombre feelings on their way towards Waterloo. In Brussels, the Wordsworths visited the assembly room to hear details of the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond the night before the battle of Waterloo. Dorothy talked to an eyewitness, who gave particulars of that evening "with lively gestures and animated language."[26]

On their road to Cologne, Dorothy noticed the resemblance between the Rhine and the Wye, and she nostalgically recalled her feelings of "glad eagerness of hope" during the walking tour of 1798, when she was alone with her brother and "first visited the Wye, and all the world was fresh and new."[27]

Early in August 1820, the party arrived at Lake Constance, where the Alps were shrouded in mist, obscuring what should have been "the glittering prospect of the mountains of Switzerland."[28] Inspired by William's memories and writings, the journey through Switzerland had become the fulfilment of Dorothy's lifelong dream, as she would later recall in her *Journal*:

---

[20] *D. W., Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 251.
[21] Ibid, 25 July 1820.
[22] Ibid, ?, p. 249.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, 15 July 1820.
[25] Ibid; see Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 249.
[26] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 249.
[27] Ibid, 20 July 1820, p. 252.
[28] Ibid, 30 July 1820.

The first sight of that country, so dear to the imagination, though of no peculiar grandeur, affected me with various emotions. I remembered the shapeless wishes of my youth – wishes without hope – my brother's wandering thirty years ago, and the tales brought to me the following Christmas holidays at Forncett; and often repeated while we paced together on the gravel walk in the parsonage garden, by moon or star light.[29]

When she was young, her "shapeless wishes" to visit the country had been "without hope" because of the impossibility of travelling for unmarried women. Moreover, domestic duties and the war had put further obstacles to her desire. Dorothy's excitement when she caught the first glimpse of the Alps covered in snow is told by Mary, who reported that "About five or six miles from Zurich […] D. […] gave a scream that made us think something had happened."[30] Although during their entire journey through Belgium and Germany Dorothy had been sick, she did not allow her poor health to dampen the enthusiasm of her anticipations: she was finally able to realize her dream.

After a few days in Switzerland, Dorothy had fully recovered, as emerges from her words:

The change was marvellous; for when I began to climb the mountains the full possession of health and even youthful vigour seemed to have returned, and never again did I suffer a moment from pain or weakness, hardly from fatigue.[31]

Dorothy felt great awe for the landscape: the impressive waterfall at Shaffhausen where she was "gloriously wetted and stunned and deafened by the waters of the Rhine", Mont Blanc with its "pikes, towers, needles and wide wastes of everlasting snow, in dazzling brightness", and the "terrible solitudes of the Wetterhorn", where "all night, and all day, and for ever, the vale of Meiringen is sounding with torrents."[32]

In a letter to Mrs. Clarkson dated 3 September, Dorothy confirmed her excellent health: "I am grown fat in the journey, and we are all perfectly well."[33]

It took them three weeks of strenuous walking to cross Switzerland; then, the Wordsworths travelled over the St Gothard Pass into Italy, where they spent a couple of weeks exploring Lombardy. Dorothy described their ascent of the Pass as "the most delightful day of travelling that Mary and I had ever spent, for we were *crossing* the Alps and in our way to Italy!"[34] She would

[29] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 30 July 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 325.
[30] *Mary Wordsworth's Journal of the Continental Tour 1820*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 325.
[31] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 30 July 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 326.
[32] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 30 July, 12 Aug. and 14 Sept. 1820, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 252.
[33] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 3 Sept. 1820, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 327.
[34] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 337.

later recollect the local people she encountered, like the Swiss peasant, "stiff-set, rosy faced, short-bodied", who helped them with their baggage, since it was:

A load for a horse! And yet was kind enough to wish to rid us of any little encumbrances, basket or umbrella, that we carried ourselves… he was sweating under his burthen with face all on fire, and while he halted on a bridge looking down on the raging stream, said to me with a sociable smile 'Das Wasser macht es so kühl!'"[35]

Early in September, they arrived in Haute-Savoie, from where they descended into Chamonix for the conclusion of their alpine adventure. The European holiday proved to be inspiring as well as health-giving, especially for Dorothy, who was immensely proud to have been able to walk much further than Thomas Monkhouse, and in all weathers, for "a wetting was, amongst *us* at least, no great evil."[36] She considered travelling on foot "for a hundred reasons the pleasantest mode of travelling in a mountainous country", something which made her "happy in my freedom."[37]

As any serious walker, Dorothy felt a sense of fellowship with the pedestrians she met on the heights. In the Swiss Alps, she recorded not just the stunning view of the "ocean of mountain summits" but also a group of diverse travellers:

Ladies, middle-aged men, students from the Universities, without hat or cap, rough-headed, bare-necked – all on the look-out – all met together as friends, as if being uplifted from the world did but bring human beings nearer to each other.[38]

Although Dorothy's French was imperfect, her German even worse, and the jargon of the locals often puzzled her, she never gave up trying to get to know the people she met, their habits, and their way of life, as Mary admiringly wrote:

Dorothy is an adept at making her way, for she never hesitates – off into the kitchens, talks to everybody there, and in the villages, on the roads, makes friends and gains information, and jabbers German everywhere. She astonishes us all.[39]

When the Monkhouses chose to visit Baden-Baden, a place which was of no interest to William, Dorothy decided to go with them to act as their interpreter, something out of which she got sheer pleasure, as Mary later took down: "D. in high spirits – had managed so well, given greater

[35] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 337.
[36] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 253.
[37] Ibid, p. 252.
[38] Ibid, p. 253.
[39] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 338.

satisfaction than any gentleman, and had delighted all parties she came in contact with, and been delighted herself."[40]

On one of these occasions, Dorothy started a friendship with Pierre, a guide she met on the way, whose family had lived for five centuries in the Vale of Chamonix. She immediately felt close to him, since he had for the place the same sensation of local attachment she and her brother had for the Lake District.

While talking to the country folk she met in remote villages, Dorothy learned details of their simple history, which she cherished as personal enrichment. If sometimes she happened to walk only with Mary or alone, she was never scared, as she would later set down:

Before we came in view of the vale of Grindelwald I (on foot at a distance from my comrades) met several peasant travellers bringing on their backs burthens from the valley. They addressed me with kindly smiles; and often I thought I could have no fears, except from the tremendous powers of nature, if wandering alone among these simple people.[41]

In her *Journal of a Tour on the Continent*, Dorothy used a figurative language, which conveyed the liveliness and the movement of what she observed:

Below, in the ferment and hurly-burly, drifting snow, and masses resembling collected snow, mixed with sparkling green billows. We walked upon the platform as dizzy as if we had been on the deck of a ship in a storm.[42]

As to her descriptive register, Dorothy was accustomed to dealing with the lower peaks of southern Westmorland; therefore, she was challenged by the massive mountain ranges of Europe. In order to capture their magnificence, Dorothy used long sentences with subordinate clauses and analogies. Furthermore, her language strove to relate the danger and the suffering caused by avalanches, as she recorded at Goldau, where a former village lay in ruins and the "masses of barren rubbish lie close to the houses, where, but a few years past, nothing was seen but fruitful fields."[43] In addition, Dorothy was struck by the "frequent memorials" which marked places where wayfarers were killed in avalanches, like the small wooden crosses placed under the stones, "so slightly put together that a child might break them to pieces: – yet they lie from year to year as safe as in a sanctuary."[44]

---

[40] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 338.
[41] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 339.
[42] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 30 July 1820, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 254.
[43] Ibid, 19 Aug. 1820.
[44] Ibid, 22 Aug. 1820, p. 260.

While the party descended into the valley of the Rhone, the geological formations told a dreadful story, as Dorothy took down: "The northern Barrier that, year by year, is wasting away, and scattering over the level of the vale barrenness that defies all industry of man."[45] These desolate landscapes were all the more manifest for their contrast with the peaceful valleys of Switzerland, which evoked strong memories of home, as emerges from Dorothy's *Journal* entry:

> All things were quiet: the weak tinkling of bells of cattle (here pasturing in the vale) seemed but to add to the stillness which accompanied every image of social life at that hour, when the day's labour was ended.[46]

Despite the fact that some of Dorothy's comments suggest homesickness, as when she longed for the "blue-grey, pebbly bed", for the most part the valleys of Switzerland gave rise to striking similarities.[47] Thus, Dorothy compared the avalanches below the Wetterhorn to the screes of Wasdale, and the village of Lungern to Grasmere; in Lombardy, she noticed how Lago di Piano "sweetly surprised us" like "a little *Loughrigg Tarn*."[48] As always, Dorothy described and evaluated the new places she saw with reference to familiar scenes of the Lake District. Therefore, her thinking as well as her prose turned out to be complex and allusive.

During the continental tour, Dorothy was profoundly moved by scenes which she could connect to William's undergraduate tour, about which she read in her brother's *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) and in Book VI of *The Prelude* (1804). Finally, she could see with her own eyes places which had long been precious to her imagination, as she recorded in the following entry:

> Our journey through the narrower and more romantic passages of the vale of the Rhine was specially endeared to Mary and me by recollections connected with times long past, when my brother and his friend (it is thirty years ago) floated down the stream in their little bark.[49]

On the one hand, Dorothy tried to check her impressions against William's; on the other hand, she approached significant episodes of his past life from which she had been excluded in order to try to close the gaps left in his narration.

At the top of St Gothard Pass, Dorothy sympathized with William's feelings of "sadness" and "disappointment" when he was told that "the Alps were crossed."[50] Near Gravedona, Dorothy

[45] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 255.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 329.
[50] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, 23 Aug. 1820, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 256.

looked for the place where William got lost in a thunderstorm in 1790; on the shores of Como, she observed that:

Though often baffled, it was a constant amusement to attempt to trace that path which my brother had formerly paced, perhaps with more delight than any other; and Mary and I often wished we had been pursuing the track of his youthful steps.[51]

Undoubtedly, Dorothy's effort to recover her brother's past experiences was an attempt to sensitively enter into his past. She paid special attention to William's moments of disappointment and loss in *The Prelude*, thus trying to create an accurate map of his developing consciousness.

Dorothy's *Journal* deals with the difficulties of retrieving the past not just by mentioning William's undergraduate tour and his subsequent writings but also with reference to the new road built by Napoleon's army, which she described as the "track of all nations […] clearing crabs, bridging chasms, bestriding precipices, or stretched out in sweeping bold curves."[52] At one point, Dorothy, William, and Mary temporarily separated from the rest of the group and decided to walk on the old muleteer's track where William had journeyed in 1790. As Dorothy took down, their decision was made because she and Mary shared "sympathy with his [William's] feeling."[53] In one of her *Journal* entries, Dorothy noticed how William was delighted by moments of recognition, as when he discovered the track which had led him accidentally to cross the Alps:

W. was waiting to shew [*sic*] us the track, on the green precipice. It was impossible for me to say how much it had moved him, when he discovered it was the very same which had tempted him in his youth. The feelings of that time came back with the freshness of yesterday, accompanied with a dim division of thirty years of life between.[54]

On ascending from Martigny, with the Vale of Trientz below them, the Wordsworths travellers took great pleasure in discovering that the "aboriginal vale" quoted in *The Prelude* had not changed:

I being then alone looked suddenly down from the edge of the steep into a long level verdant and narrow dell, sprinkled with brown wood cottages. While standing on the brow of the precipice above this shady deep recess, the very image of pastoral life, stillness and seclusion Wm came up to me, and, if my feelings had been moved before, how much more interesting did the spot become when he told me it was the same dell, that '*aboriginal vale*', that '*green recess*' so often mentioned by him – the first of the kind that he

[51] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 330.
[52] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 256.
[53] Ibid, p. 257.
[54] Ibid, 9 Sept. 1820.

had passed through Switzerland and 'now' said he, 'I find that my remembrance for thirty years has been scarcely less vivid than the reality before my eyes!'[55]

The rediscovery of this "aboriginal vale" occurred after the Wordsworths had crossed the Alps into Savoy and they were on the final leg of their continental tour. This "deep recess, the very image of pastoral life" was linked to memories of Westmorland and the Wye Valley, and to vivid images of Grasmere which went back to William's boyhood. Hence, it represents the climax of Dorothy's narrative as well as the conclusion of her emotional journey.

The Wordsworths and the Monkhouses entered Paris in pouring rain. Dorothy's immediate impression was negative enough, as she later recorded:

Travelled over rough pavement, black, slippery and plashy – through narrow streets between high grey houses, hung with gaudy symbols – golden balls, painted images, red giant hands […] legs of the same hue and fifty other quaint things – but nothing else to be seen that had a touch of gaiety: the only business of the women to ward off splashes from their white stockings: […]. We drove to the Hotel de Toulouse – […], a narrow street, near the Palais Royal, indeed all the streets of Paris that we had seen were crooked and ugly, and appeared thoroughly comfortless in the heavy rain.[56]

But the next morning the sun shone, as it did for the rest of the month they spent in Paris. During their stay, they saw a lot of Annette and the Baudoins, although Dorothy's *Journal* is discreet about their meetings. The only comment on them is the brief remark she wrote in a letter to Mrs. Clarkson: "We have had great satisfaction in seeing our friends whom I have mentioned to you. Of this when we meet."[57]

In Paris, the Wordsworths spent their days sightseeing and went six times to the Louvre. Dorothy's account of her sojourn in Paris is one of the shortest, for she would not "attempt describing things lately so well described in books that are in everybody's hands."[58]

Of their homeward journey Dorothy had more to tell, since it proved to be the most thrilling incident of their entire tour. After having spent one night at a comfortless hotel at Boulogne, the party went to stay with their friend Miss Barker, who was now residing there for health reasons. They planned to stay two days in Boulogne, but were forced to stay ten. At first, a boat sailed, but there was no room for them; when they finally managed to go aboard a small vessel, they narrowly escaped shipwreck, as Dorothy related:

---

[55] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 330.
[56] Ibid, p. 341.
[57] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 342.
[58] D. W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 342.

Even *Mary* was daunted by the breakers outside the harbour, and I descended into the vessel as unwillingly as a criminal might go to execution, and hid myself in bed. Presently our ship moved, and before ten minutes were gone, she struck upon the sands. I felt that something disastrous had happened; but know not what, till poor Mary appeared in the cabin, having been thrown down to the top of the steps. There was again a frightful beating and grating at the bottom of the vessel – water rushing in very fast. […] even at the moment when I believed that we might all be going to the bottom of the sea together; and the agonizing thoughts of the distress at home were rushing in my mind. My brother, thinking it would be impossible to save his wife and me, had stripped off his coat to be ready to swim; but what was our joy and thankfulness when he came into the cabin to tell us that the retreating tide would soon leave the ship bare; and all was safe.[59]

On the following Wednesday, ten days after their first attempt to get across the Channel, they eventually succeeded in arriving safely at Dover, where they enjoyed every sight of their home country:

The day was pleasant and every English sight delightful – the fields sprinkled with cattle – the small snug cottages, the pretty country houses. Many a time we said to each other "what a pleasant country this must appear to the eyes of a Frenchman!" … It was to all of us an interesting moment, when we found ourselves crossing Westminster Bridge, the point whence sixteen weeks' pleasant rambling had begun.[60]

As much as the Wordsworths enjoyed their European journey, they were glad to be back to England, as clearly emerges from Dorothy's words.

[59] D. W., *Journal of a Tour on the Continent 1820*, ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 343-344.
[60] Ibid.

16. Wanderlust

> *Ferry house at Inversneyds just the same, excepting now a glass window. A Girl now standing at the door, but her I cannot fancy our Highland Girl, & the Babe, which its Grandame rocked, while the Babe squalled, now must be grown-up to toil & perhaps hardship or is it in a quiet grave?*[1]

In London, Dorothy and William had the chance to meet up with some of their dearest friends: Samuel Rogers, John Kenyon, the Lambs, and Coleridge were among them. In November, they left for Cambridge, to see their brother Christopher. Then, William and Mary went north to Westmorland, while Dorothy spent January in the south, dividing herself between Cambridge and Playford Hall, where the Clarksons were staying. In early February 1821, after almost a year since she had left Rydal Mount, Dorothy returned home.

Although old age was approaching for Dorothy as well as for William, they were both exceptionally fit, as appears from her words: "I was never leaner in my life. I can walk with as little fatigue as when I was 20."[2] As to William, his sister observed that: "He is still the crack skater on Rydal Lake, and, as to climbing mountains, the hardiest and youngest are yet hardly a match for him."[3]

Even so, life was not always easy at Rydal Mount during the 1820s. There were many uncertainties about the future of the three surviving children: John, who graduated from Oxford but had great difficulty in finding a suitable curacy; William, who struggled at Charterhouse school and was later dependent on his father to find him a job; and Dora, who remained at home with her parents because of her poor health, until her late marriage in 1841.

Once at home, William channelled his energy into composing sonnets on the church of England, consequently postponing the conclusion of *The Recluse*, which caused him to be the subject of Dorothy and Mary's complaints. In particular, his sister became increasingly anxious about his prospects of finishing it, as she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson:

> This disturbs us. After fifty years of age there is no time to spare, and unfinished works should not, if it be possible, be left behind. This he feels, but the will never governs *his* labours. How different from

[1] D. Wordsworth, *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland, 1822: A Complete Edition of Dove Cottage Manuscript 98 and Dove Cottage Manuscript 99*, ed. Jiro Nagasawa, Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1989; p. 5, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 269.
[2] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. i, p. 62, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 266.
[3] Ibid, vol. ii, p. 191.

Southey, who can go as regularly as clockwork, from history to poetry, from poetry to criticism, and so on to biography, or anything else. If their minds could each spare a little to the other, how much better for both![4]

Moreover, William focused on bringing old pieces of poetry up-to-date and began to enjoy the delayed rewards of literary success. In 1824, the first collected American edition of his compositions was published and in 1827 his five-volume *Collected Works* appeared. A year later, William's poems were published in a single volume in Paris, an unmistakeable sign that he had gained recognition abroad. The four women of the household invested considerable time in the preparation of pieces of writing for the press. This shared activity consolidated William's reputation and contributed significantly to his success as a Victorian poet.

As William became famous, his relationship with Dorothy entered a new stage. Journeys to London took him frequently away from the rural life to which they were used. Furthermore, a consciousness of the public sphere affected the family's creative activities. Undoubtedly, William's increased devotion to his wife and his daughter changed the nature of his dependency on Dorothy. Similarly, Dorothy's relationships with Sara and Johanna Hutchinson became stronger as she aged. Since they were apart more often than in the past, the writings of the siblings often grew out of separate experiences; therefore, they were not as closely intertwined as they had been in the past. Notwithstanding differences, remarkable affinities between the works of Dorothy and William remained. For instance, recollection assumed central importance: they both nostalgically drew on shared memories, particularly of past tours.

The biggest event of 1821 was the addition to the Wordsworths' intimate circle of Edward Quillinan, a lieutenant with a special interest in literature. As a matter of fact, he had long been an admirer of William's poetry and was eager to make his acquaintance. For this reason, Quillinan took a holiday to Rydal Mount in order to meet Wordsworth; after their first encounter, he decided to settle down at Spring Cottage, on the banks of the Rotha, only half a mile from Rydal Mount, with his wife and child. The Wordsworths and the Quillinans struck up a close friendship and they spent a lot of time exploring the countryside together. Unfortunately, Mrs. Quillinan began to suffer from a mental illness after the birth of her daughter. In addition, early in the summer she was involved in a fire accident. On both these occasions, Dorothy and Mary helped to nurse her. After Mrs. Quillinan showed signs of improvement, she had a sudden relapse, as Dorothy told Jane: "It was my lot to attend her death-bed… It was well that Mary was spared the last awful scene."[5]

[4] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 27 Mar. 1821, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 347.
[5] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 13 June 1822, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 351.

After his wife's death, Mr. Quillinan went to Kent, leaving Dorothy to deal with the business of Ivy Cottage, which he had recently rented. Evidently, immersed as she was in the Quillinans' affairs, Dorothy had little leisure time left and she could not enjoy the visit from the Clarksons, to which she had been long looking forward.

After so difficult a summer, Dorothy much needed a holiday. Hence, on 14 September 1822 she set forth with Joanna Hutchinson on her second journey to Scotland. The two women travelled in the opposite direction from Dorothy's 1803 Scottish tour with William and Coleridge; although Joanna's failing health held her back on many occasions, she found their slow pace productive.

During the seven-week trip to Scotland, Dorothy recorded her impressions in a notebook, which was later enlarged to become a fuller account of the journey with the tile *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland*. Dorothy's *Journal* differs in some stylistic features from her earlier writings, thus showing the revisit mode she and William had developed over a lifetime. Instead of discussing an itinerary structured by traditional famous landmarks, she turned her attention on how the country had changed in the last nineteen years, mapping her tour through personal recollections.

Walking to Arrochar with Johanna, Dorothy remembered descending the same track with William and Coleridge: "*My* approach now slower, & I was glad, both for the sake of past & present times."[6] Inevitably, visiting Arrochar brought back the painful memories of parting from Coleridge.

In 1803, the Trossachs had been a major source of inspiration for the Wordsworths' most suggestive works; therefore, it was overlaid with associations. As Dorothy approached Loch Lomond, she recognized the "proud summit" of Inch Davannoch, from where she had viewed "so sublime a prospect" with her two companions almost twenty years before. She described how she looked out for the island which she had then imagined as her ideal home: "I missed the [Islet] with the ruins and could not find our own cottage Isle."[7]

As usual, Dorothy derived immense pleasure from conversing with the country folk, like the Scotch doctor "who enthusiastically pronounced Loch Lomond to be the finest lake in the world… [though] it was plain that he had never been out of his own country?"[8] It was exactly on Loch Lomond and in its neighbourhood that Dorothy spent her merriest days, both because of their beauty and of the fond memories they recalled, as she took down:

We darted through what seemed a wilderness of rocks and woods upon the waters. I could not discover that islet which our fancy (William's and mine) gave to the huts by the wayside, and which charmed

[6] D. W., *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland*, ? 1822, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 269.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid, p. 355.

us so much on first entering the Highlands. The Bay of Luss even more beautiful than in my imagination. Thatched cottages near the shore – two or three white houses visible and the Chapel and Belfry – the lively brook with its beds of blue gravel. But I have forgotten Inch Devannoc the woody island whence we, (Wm, Coleridge and myself) had so sublime a prospect.[9]

Dorothy's writing skills enabled her to create memorable images from ordinary sights she glimpsed while passing on the streets: "Three children beside giant house, a Single Robin at the window. Cattle in the fields – as beautiful as if all were a living innocence."[10] As always, Dorothy concerned herself with the appalling conditions endured by those she encountered on her travels and depicted their lives using as few words as possible:

Mistress pretty tall woman, a Tear on her cheek. Three or 4 pretty children, all in a crowd. Within J said lay a dead child, nicely set out. I entered fire in centre chearful [*sic*], cakes Baking, house small & melancholy.[11]

Despite the fact that the *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland* is much less known than Dorothy's earlier writings, it is an interesting object of study which allows to analyse her habits of revision. Thanks to the survival of all three manuscripts, it is possible to track the different stages through which her travelogue went and its developing character. Dorothy's brief entries are often nothing more than mnemonic devices for subsequent description and reflection:

Cobler to right, huge stones scattered over glen. One hut in first reach, none in 2nd, white house in 3rd. Broken sash windows. Lieutenant. Stones. Fish. Father. Drunkenness. Shabby clothes, dirty shirt.[12]

The expanded version of Dorothy's *Journal* underlines her increasing awareness of readers beyond the family circle. In spite of her initial reluctance to the novel as a form, Dorothy was able to handle her narrative with the novelistic aspect of suspense. In a section of her diary about the trip from Crawford to Moffat, she described her fears as a traveller. Followed by two men whom they believed to be thieves, she and Joanna later discovered their blunder, and made light of it. In order to add humour as well as tension to this episode, Dorothy employed the device of anti-climax.

On her return from Scotland, Dorothy did not concentrate her efforts on the notes which she had made during her journey; instead, she focused on the revision of *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*. Up to that moment, the travelogue had been circulating in manuscript; among its enthusiastic readers there was Samuel Rogers. When they had met in London in 1820, he had urged Dorothy to print the volume, offering to find her a publisher. Since Dorothy had always been

[9] D. W., *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland*, ? 1822, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 356.
[10] D. W., *Journal of my Second Tour in Scotland*, ? 1822, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 270.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

modest about her writing skills, she recoiled from the idea of appearing before the world as an authoress. Her reluctance notwithstanding, she accepted Rogers' offer, for it now occurred to her that she might earn enough money from the sale to afford the cost of another continental tour. Before she left for Scotland, she had asked William to write to Rogers to that effect; Rogers' reply leaves no doubt about his opinion of Dorothy:

Wherever there is a *real merit* in a work, and you know my opinion of your Sister's, I think when *it can be done*, it is best to enter the Lottery oneself and not sell the ticket for little or nothing to the bookseller.[13]

In her answer to Rogers, Dorothy laid down her conditions:

I cannot but be flattered by your thinking so well of my journal as to recommend […] that I should not part with all power over it, till its fortune has been tried. […] I have, then, to ask whether a middle course be not possible, that is, whether your favourable opinion, confirmed perhaps by some other good judges, might not induce a bookseller to give a certain sum for the right to publish a given number of copies. In fact, I find it next to impossible to make up my mind to sacrifice my privacy for a certainty *less* than two hundred pounds – a sum which would effectually aid me in accomplishing the ramble I so much, and I hope not unwisely, wish for…[14]

Although Dorothy committed herself to revising her manuscript, nothing came of it. It can be supposed that Rogers was not able to find a publisher who was willing to accept Dorothy's terms.

In the spring of 1824, Dorothy, fired by her wanderlust, was back to travelling. After a few days at Oxford, she reached London in the last week of March, where she stayed for a month; then, in May, she divided herself between Cambridge and Playford Hall. It was not until June that she returned home.

In a letter Dorothy wrote to Tom Monkhouse's brother, John, she told about all her doings in London. She went to the British Museum with the Beaumonts and Henry Crabb Robinson, she saw the Lambs, she spent some time observing the latest curiosities of Piccadilly, and she admired the panoramic view from Waterloo Bridge. Unfortunately, Dorothy's happiness in London was spoiled by the news of the failing health of her friend Tom Monkhouse, who was breaking up under the stress of some mysterious ailment. He died the following January, leaving Dorothy with a deep sense of loss: since the defection of Coleridge, Tom Monkhouse had been her closest friend.

[13] Letter from Samuel Rogers to W. W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 361.
[14] Letter from D. W. to Samuel Rogers, 3 Jan. 1823, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 361.

Once she had completed the account of her second Scottish tour, Dorothy went back to the more informal writing in which she had found her voice as a young woman, recording daily events in what is known as the *Rydal Journal*. The majority of the *Rydal Journal* is unpublished; it survives in fifteen little notebooks which cover the period from December 1824 to 1833. The impressions jotted down are more sporadic than those of the *Grasmere Journal*, as if their primary purpose was to serve as a mere mnemonic device. At times, when Dorothy was away from home, her *Rydal Journal* blossomed out into something of a travelogue; but, for the most part, it consists of briefest entries, scribbled down in a careless and often illegible handwriting, describing the weather, the comings and goings of family members and visitors, details of her health, and, in the last years, much about her own severe symptoms. The nature of these entries is entirely capricious: memorable events are barely alluded to and sometimes omitted, and particulars of daily happenings are rarely developed. Dorothy seldom made the *Rydal Journal* the repository of her feelings or the record of her impressions of life.

Dorothy's observations of the weather, with a careful use of dashes, conveyed a rapid sense of the connection between her moods of the mind and the continually changing sky:

Thaw – heavy rain – clear before day – Walk on Terrace – amber Clouds – To Ambleside with Wm and Dora – Full moon – tip toe – on dark Cloud – lost again. […] Very close – and hot – Thunder showers – head-ache… Letters to Coleridge etc. Great thunders elsewhere – Man killed on Lake.[15]

The following passage is one of the few in which Dorothy took down her thoughts on human absurdity:

Fair mild morning – walk to Mrs Troughton's sale at Weobley Parsonage. Bells ringing for new vicar – very discordant with the melancholy appearance of strangers gathered together and furniture spread on the lawn. Mrs Lomax admired Paradise Lost – wished she could buy one – had never heard of Paradise Regained. Her young friend observed it was 'very entertaining, very pretty.'[16]

After a year of much wandering, the Wordsworths were glad to finally spend the summer of 1825 at Rydal Mount, where they welcomed many guests: Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and Maria Jane Jewsbury, who had recently joined their literary circle.

[15] Karl Ketcham (ed.), *Selections from the Rydal Journal, with a Critical Introduction and Notes*, (Unpublished; Wordsworth Trust archive); 6 Dec. 1824 and 6 May 1825, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 272.
[16] D. Wordsworth, *The Rydal Journal*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, II vols.; 5 Sept. 1826, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 369.

If Dorothy was ageing in body she was not in spirit, as emerges from the words which Maria Jane Jewsbury wrote to Dora: "I dread growing old, it is a gradual death; if I could age like your aunt Wordsworth, and unite green vigour with grey maturity, it were well; but who is like her?"[17]

In February 1826, after a few days at Miss Jewsbury's home in Manchester, where she enjoyed the "extraordinary" talents of her new friend, Dorothy spent the greater part of the following months with Joanna on Thomas Hutchinson's new farm at Brinsop Court, near Hereford; this was the longest separation from William since she had joined him at Racedown, nearly forty years before.[18] At the Hutchinsons', Dorothy wrote some of her *Rydal Journal*'s fullest as well as happiest entries; she was able to observe the Herefordshire landscape as winter turned to spring, portraying it with an attention to detail which reminded of the Alfoxden and the Grasmere days: "Green pastures in valley spotted with sheep – venerable pear trees – crested and tufted with mistletoe – branched with grey moss – Woods above."[19]

Brinsop Court was delightfully situated, with lovely walks in the neighbourhood and a small lake in front of the house, as Dorothy recorded: "[…] swans floating before me and 32 cattle feeding like one on the slope opposite my window."[20]

In the *Rydal Journal*, William is a constant, felt presence; in March 1826, while exploring her dear Wye valley, Dorothy remembered her brother's words in *Tintern Abbey*: "Visited by 'something of sad perplexity' – and shocked at the changes about New Weir – No longer the beauty of wild desolation and grandeur which I recall."[21] The quotation marks signal William's words, whereas the use of the word "wild" highlights the sense of personal loss.

In May, Dorothy spent some days with Joanna at Gwerndyffnant, a small farmhouse three miles south of Hindwell which Tom Hutchinson still retained. In June, she stayed one week in Worcester with Lady Beaumont's cousin, Miss Willes, roaming the Malvern Hills. Early in September, she left Brinsop Court for Leamington, where Miss Jewsbury was recovering from a bad illness. Here, Dorothy amazed her hostess by her endless passion for sightseeing, as Miss Jewsbury explained in a letter to Dora:

Your aunt […] in a yellow gig and brown travelled and saw – 'words are wanting to say what' – […]. She is a real darling – the exemplification of an old age as serene and bright and lovely as a Lapland night! Kenilworth she knows by heart, stick and stone – Warwick she has absolutely digested, St Mary's

[17] Letter from Maria Jane Jewsbury to Dora W., 8 Oct. 1825, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 367.
[18] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, February 1826, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 368.
[19] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, 25 Feb. 1826, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 272.
[20] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, ? 1826, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 371.
[21] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, 25 Apr. 1826, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 272.

Chapel and Guy's Cliff included – Stratford and Charlecote she swallowed whole – and bye bits of rides and sights went down between times.[22]

After nine months, on 4 November Dorothy returned to Rydal. In the following year, she was again away from home for a long period of time: she spent three weeks with the Cooksons at Kendal and from June to September she was at Halifax, where, in the company of her god-daughter Julia Marshall, she revisited many of the places she used to frequent with Julia's mother, Jane. Once at home, she took part in an expedition to Saddleback. For the first time, Dorothy had to admit that the hike was too arduous for her and that she had "knocked up."[23]

For much of the winter 1827, Dorothy was left alone at home in charge of her two nephews. John had taken his degree at Oxford and was soon to enter holy orders, while Willy's destiny was still uncertain: he set his heart on the army but his father wanted him to pursue a career in business. At last, it was decided that Willy was to be entrusted to the care of Henry and Joanna Hutchinson, who were now living on the Isle of Man. Therefore, in the early summer of 1828, Dorothy joined her nephew on the island; she then included a narrative of her two-month visit in the *Rydal Journal*. She began it at home; then, she described her solitary journey to Whitehaven via Cockermouth, her birthplace, where she could notice "Lime trees gone from my Father's Court."[24] Despite the fact that the *Tour on the Isle of Man* was never revised and consisted mostly of notes rather than finished narrative, Dorothy's report shows her insatiable appetite for adventure and her powers of observation of the island and its inhabitants as her more precise *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* and *Journal of a Tour on the Continent* do:

[…] Sad at thought of my voyage, cheared [*sic*] up only by the end of it – sate long at Morris' door – grey and still – coach full, and sour looks within, for I made a 5th. Won my way by civility and communicating information to a sort of gentleman fisher going to Wytheburn – English manners ungracious – he left us at Nag's Head without a bow or good wish. […] …Very fine walk after tea on the cliffs – sea calm and as if enclosed by hazy dark steeps. Fishes sporting near the rocks – a few sea-birds to chatter and wail, but mostly silent rocks. Two very grand masses in a little bay – a pellucid rivulet of sea water between them – the Hills mostly covered with cropped gorse, a rich dark green. The moon rose large and dull, like an ill-cleaned brass plate – slowly surmounts the haze and sends over the calm sea a faint bright pillar.[25]

[22] Letter from M. J. Jewsbury to Dora W., 2 Oct. 1826, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 372.
[23] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, 1827, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 374.
[24] D. W., *Tour on the Isle of Man*, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by William Knight, vol. II, London Macmillan and Co., LTD. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1897; ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 273.
[25] *Dorothy Wordsworth's Tour on the Isle of Man*, 1828, qt. in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, vol. II; 26 June 1828, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 375-376.

Dorothy explored the Isle of Man combining a tourist's perspective with insider knowledge she acquired from her hosts. The *Journal* entries provided a vivid account of the island community, demonstrating Dorothy's keen interest in domestic scenes, as when she captured the bustle of market day:

> […] Women often with round hats, like the Welsh; and girls without shoes and stockings, though otherwise not ill-dressed – country people speak more Manx than English, the sound is not coarse or harsh.[26]

When Dorothy was at home again, the entries in her *Rydal Journal* decreased to their usual brevity, recording the last days in which she had enough strength to roam the countryside with William. In November 1828, she set off for the curacy of Whitwick, near Coleorton, where she was to keep house for her nephew John. On the way, she broke her journey at Manchester to see Miss Jewsbury, who forwarded to Dora a lively description of her aunt's boundless energy: "She left us yesterday in excellent health and spirits with a most lovely day for her journey. […] I think you would smile if you knew all she did and saw."[27]

Dorothy passed a pleasant winter with her nephew, helping him in his parish duties and walking in the surroundings. Moreover, she visited Coleorton, where her friend Lady Beaumont lived alone after her husband's death. In April 1829, Dorothy's simple life at Whitwick was suddenly interrupted by a violent inflammation of the bowels, which struck her down. The spread of the disease was an issue of considerable concern for the entire family, especially for William, as he told Crabb Robinson: "What a shock it was to our poor hearts. Were She to depart, the Phasis of my Moon would be robbed of light to a degree that I have not courage to think of."[28] As Dorothy's life had been in serious danger for a couple of days, it took her a month to recover. When Mary reached her, she informed the whole family that she was "all well as heart could wish"; actually, Dorothy had had a narrow escape and she needed constant care for a long time.

From this time forward, although her health improved rapidly, Dorothy was fully aware that her constitution was unavoidably weakened. She felt immense gratitude for the sympathy which she got from her family and friends, as she told Crabb Robinson:

> It drew tears from my eyes to read of your affectionate anxiety concerning me. In fact it is the first time in my life of fifty six [*sic*] in which I have had a serious illness, therefore I have never before had an opportunity of knowing how much some distant Friends care about me – Friends abroad – Friends at home – all have been anxious… and more so, far more, I am sure, than I deserve; but I attribute much of this to my

[26] D. W., *Tour on the Isle of Man*, 28 June 1828, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 376
[27] Letter from M. J. Jewsbury to Dora W., November 1828, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 379.
[28] Letter from W. W. to H. C. Robinson, 26 Apr. 1829, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 381.

having been so remarkably strong and healthy, it came like a shock to everyone to be told of a dangerous illness having attacked me.[29]

A month later, Dorothy was disappointed that "her usual strength is so slow to return"; early in July, she was nonetheless judged healthy enough to leave Whitwick.[30] On her way home, Dorothy stopped off at Halifax to stay with her aunt Elizabeth Rawson, but she fell again gravely ill, this time with a disease which was diagnosed as cholera morbitis.

It was not until 9 September that Dorothy was back at Rydal Mount, "thankful to be at home again", she set down in a letter to Jane Marshall.[31]

Once at home, she took to her bed and tried slowly to regain her strength. Due to her invalid state, Dorothy had to rely on her niece Dora to fulfil her domestic duties, as she affectionately recorded: "[Dora] takes all care from her mother & me – as an Amanuensis to her Father – & Reader – spares our aged hands, eyes, & voices."[32]

Unfortunately, two months later Dorothy was again confined to her bed, where she was to stay until the following April. When William wrote to Charles Lamb in January 1830, he described his sister's condition as "her dangerous illness – the effects of which are not yet got over."[33] But Dorothy was not satisfied with her brother's account of her health; therefore, she added in a postscript:

His account of me is far too doleful. I am, I assure you, perfectly well; and it is only in order to become strong, as heretofore, that I confine myself mainly to the house; and yet, were I to trust my feelings merely, I would say that I am strong already.[34]

All through 1830 and the following year Dorothy's health was gradually healing; consequently, her mood improved, allowing her to spend a joyous summer and autumn in the company of the many visitors who arrived at Rydal Mount. Despite the fact that Dorothy seldom walked beyond the garden terrace, she did own a pony chaise in which, from time to time, she called on neighbours. Early in September 1831, she felt strong enough to leave home for ten days to join her nephew John and his wife Isabella at her parents' house on Belle Isle, Windermere.

[29] Letter from D. W. to H. C. Robinson, 2 May 1829, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 381-382.
[30] Letter from Dora W. to Edward Quillinan, 3 June 1829, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 382.
[31] Letter from D. W. to J. M., 15 Sept. 1829, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 382.
[32] *Letters of Dora Wordsworth*, ed. Howard P. Vincent, Chicago: Pickard & Company, 1944, p. 64, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 275.
[33] Letter from W. W. and D. W. to Charles and Mary Lamb, 9 and 10 Jan. 1830, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 382.
[34] Ibid.

Furthermore, in October she was glad to welcome Robert Jones, "the companion of my brother forty years ago over the Alps", she reminded Mrs. Clarkson.[35]

But 1831 ended sombrely enough, for in the week before Christmas Dorothy suffered from gallstones; she almost failed to recuperate, as William sadly explained in a letter to their brother Christopher: "Her recovery from each attack is slower and slower."[36] This violent internal inflammation was followed by a swelling of the legs and the ankles which deprived her almost completely of the power of walking.

Physical strength had always been crucial to both Dorothy's emotional well-being and creative life with William. Now, she was confined to her bedroom at Rydal Mount; the only two sources of delight were the view she could enjoy from the window and the garden, where she sometimes ventured. All the family members became increasingly worried about her frequent attacks of illness, which were worsened by progressive arteriosclerosis. But according to letters written by her relatives, Dorothy remained cheerful: she was pleased to welcome visitors, to read or to listen to William reading aloud, and to relive memories of joyous times, as her brother took down:

> Her friends might suppose that, having been so fond of the country, its prospects, and exercise she would have been in bad spirits under confinement, but it is not so – she finds compensation in reading, and her time never hangs heavy.[37]

Dorothy devoted herself to reading, an activity which she had to put aside when the children were younger; this was some sort of recompense for her physical inaction. Among the books she read, or reread, there were the English classics, such as Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, but also the Italians Dante and Tasso, and the Spanish Cervantes. In addition, Dorothy transcribed Virgil and studied the Bible regularly. Her optimism notwithstanding, the household lived in dread of the worsening of her conditions, as appears from the letter which Dora sent to Edward Quillinan in May 1832:

> She [Dorothy] was sadly overcome by the exertion the first time – but of course she was affected at once again finding herself in this lovely garden, which looked to all of us a thousand times more lovely than it ever looked before. I see her out of my window making her way by help of Mother's arm towards the

[35] Letter from D. W. to Mrs. C., 9 Sept. 1831, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 386-387.
[36] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. ii, p. 521, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 275.
[37] Ibid, p. 504, qt. on p. 276.

Green Terrace. Father is very anxious that she should see the improvements that he has been making in that bit of ground, and I think they will accomplish it for she says 'I am quite strong.'[38]

Besides Dora's letter, Edward Quillinan got "an affecting poem which she [Dorothy] has written on the pleasure she received from the first spring flowers."[39] As Dorothy lay upon her sickbed, she dedicated herself to the writing of verses. In her note, Dora observed that "Aunt cannot write regular metre"[40]; although Dorothy's lines may be considered flat and their measure limping, and they are not provided with that liveliness which characterized her prose, they do reflect a real part of her mind, which oscillated between despair and acceptance of her invalid state. The prevalent tone of Dorothy's poems is religious, thus suggesting the spiritual strength which had accompanied her for the last twenty years. Dorothy viewed her physical decay as a sign of divine love which brought no loss but instead a stronger assurance of the permanent blessings of her life:

> No prisoner I am on this couch,
> My mind is free to roam,
> And leisure, peace and loving friends
> Are the best treasures of an earthly home.
> Such gifts are mine, then why deplore
> The feeble body's slow decay, A warning mercifully sent
> To fix my hope upon a surer stay?
> And may I learn those precious gifts
> Rightly to prize, and by their soothing power
> All fickle murmuring thoughts repress
> And fit my fluttering heart for the last hour.[41]

When Dorothy's grand-nephew Gordon Graham Wordsworth arranged the family papers, he decided that the entries in her *Rydal Journal* between 1831 and 1833 were "so full of her malady that I have had no hesitation in excising and destroying them after making a copy of every record that seemed to me of permanent interest."[42] For this reason, there is no trace of eighteen pages in one of the *Rydal* notebooks.

Early in 1833, Dorothy had another attack, the worst since her first seizure. On 22 February, Dora described the family's grave concern: "A week ago we little expected my dear aunt would

[38] Letter from Dora W. to E. Q., 25 May 1832, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 387.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] D. W., *Poem ?*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 388-389.
[42] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, ?, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 292.

look on this fair world again – Mr Carr thought with us that she had scarcely an hour to live."[43] But again Dorothy rallied and, towards the end of April, she was well enough to record a vivid entry in her *Journal*:

> Two glowing anemones and a snow white companion are in a pot on my window ledge, and two knots of primroses of the Alpine purple. Rooks busy – all the birds of sky and earth are singing and all is wrapped in happy brightness.[44]

During the spring and early summer of 1833, Dorothy gradually recovered, also thanks to the great help she received from the entire family, who decided to hire an extra servant to attend to her basic needs. By May she was able to walk with sticks and on 16 July she resumed her *Journal*. Moreover, when William wrote to Charles Lamb about his new volume, *The last essays of Elia*, he explained that he had been enjoying it with his sister, thus underlying her renewed interest in literature. Dorothy's healthy state was reported also by Dora: "She can read, write, work, talk and walk about her room without a stick – dress herself – and drives out every day – has been sitting for her portrait to a Mr Crosthwaite […]."[45]

Unfortunately, her improvement did not last long; at the beginning of December 1834 she was in bed for three weeks. Afterwards, her health progressively deteriorated.

Certainly, Dorothy's decline produced a significant effect on William's spirits and writing. Apart from the grief and the strain of looking after an invalid, there was a real threat to his work. The presence of Dorothy and the activities they did together, walking, observing, and remembering had a key role in William's existence; now, it was hard to imagine a different kind of life.

When it was evident that Dorothy would never accompany him again on his travels, William had to seek solace in other companions, like his daughter. Therefore, in August 1831 the two started upon a tour of Scotland. As in the Wordsworth family journeys to Scotland were considered like pilgrimages to an inspiring country, the trip was organised not only to raise William's flagging spirits but also to boost his creativity. The 1831 expedition had the desired effect: walking twenty miles every day with Dora, he visited many places and had the opportunity to observe with dismay the many changes which had taken place since his last visit. Furthermore, William had the chance to reflect on the central role played by centuries-old customs and traditions, which secured his steadfast devotion to the country. Dorothy was doubtless a constant presence in his thoughts

[43] Dora W., ?, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 390.
[44] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, April 1833, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, pp. 390-391.
[45] Letter from Dora W. to E. Q., 10 Sept. 1833, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 391.

throughout the entire tour, during which he returned to some of the villages and valleys they had visited together in 1803.

The Scottish journey with Dora provided William with the stimulating change he so much needed. He was productive even while travelling, when he composed five sonnets; once at home, he completed the entire sequence, of which Dorothy made fair copies. In order to carry out the daunting task of transcribing her brother's pieces of poetry, Dorothy had to hide her great disappointment at being left home and tried to imagine William and Dora's journey through his words. The copying process doubtless revived memories of her own trips to Scotland.

In 1833, William set off on a fifth tour of Scotland with his son John and Henry Crabb Robinson. Once again, the primary goal of William's journey was to seek new stimuli for his poetry. The first part of the 1833 route followed Dorothy's 1822 trip, stopping off at Cockermouth and proceeding from Whitehaven to the Isle of Man. The letters which William sent to Rydal Mount were full of concern for his infirm sister and contained descriptions "chiefly for dearest Dorothy" of places she had visited in 1822:

> I thought far too much about your fatiguing walks in the Isle of Man and wished many times for you all to see the objects which pleased me so much. […] Upon the whole, Dearest D. I liked your Isle of Man better than I expected.[46]

While William was walking, he did not compose any poems. But after his return, he wrote a series of sonnets; this time it was his daughter Dora who made fair copies of his works, some of which drew inspiration from their visit to Cockermouth. Undoubtedly, Dorothy's nostalgic pilgrimage to their birthplace in 1822 exerted a major influence on her brother's writing on Cockermouth.

Between 1838 and 1839, Dora was his father's primary scribe for copying *The Prelude*, which William would continue to annotate and which would serve as the basis for the final version of 1850. Actually, William had completed a full-length draft of his work already in 1805. This draft had followed several earlier shorter drafts; it would take various forms and it would be revised several times over the decades before the final version of 1850. *The Prelude* recounts a journey of self-exploration in which William discussed the bedrocks of his mental and moral growth: from the early death of his parents to his political and religious revisions, from the relationship between emotion and cognition to the nurturing power of nature.

---

[46] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. ii, p. 631, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 282.

The passing of time notwithstanding, William's wanderlust did not diminish. In the spring of 1837, he set out on a tour of Italy, once more with Crabb Robinson. With the Italian journey, William achieved his long-postponed ambition to complete the traditional "Grand Tour" of Europe by visiting Rome. In addition, William's aspiration had been reawakened by Samuel Rogers' book on Italy, which he and Dorothy received in 1834. Dorothy was "affected even to the shedding of tears" on receiving Rogers' book as a gift, since she too had long cherished a dream to return to Italian places which were associated with happier and healthier times. Before departing, William wrote to Dorothy from London: "How I wish you could have gone with us; but I shall think of you every where, and often shall we talk of you."[47] Despite the fact that William may appear selfish for getting away from Rydal Mount while his sister was progressively declining, it should be remembered that Mary and her children never left her side. But Dorothy did sometimes complain about feeling neglected, as she recorded in the following *Journal* entry, dated 17 February 1835, when Dora was also bed-bound:

> This day William and Mary left us in the car to go to London. Both in good spirits till the last parting came – when I was overcome… [I] shall only state my sorrow that our friendship is so little prized and that they can so easily part from the helpless invalides [*sic*].[48]

William's aim was fulfilled: after he had returned to Rydal Mount, he composed a final travel sequence, *Memorials of a Tour in Italy*, which was later published in 1842 as subsection of *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years*.

[47] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. iii, p. 373, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 283.
[48] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, 17 Feb. 1835, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 284.

17. Home

When shall I tread your garden path?
Or climb your sheltering hill?
When shall I wander, free as air,
And track the foaming rill?
A prisoner on my pillowed couch
Five years in feebleness I've lain,
Oh! Shall I e' er with vigorous step
Travel the hills again?[1]

As Dorothy's health deteriorated and one after another their friends died, consciousness of mortality began to weigh heavily on the Wordsworth household. The death of Sir George Beaumont in 1827 and of his wife two years later affected the whole family deeply. In the next eight years, many other names were added to the list of close friends who passed away, thus severing strong ties with the past: Walter Scott in 1832, Coleridge and Lamb in 1834, John Fleming and Robert Jones in 1835. Despite the fact that the news of Coleridge's passing must have rekindled numerous moving memories, he had long been no more than a memory to Dorothy; moreover, she was herself too close to death to utterly feel any further sense of separation. In truth, it had been Coleridge's folly to leave an indelible impression on her: with the best years of life still before him, he lacked the courage to deal with his problems and had instead succumbed to his apathy, consequently losing his golden opportunities. Dorothy, instead, never wasted a moment of her past; now, clinging to the few precious days which still lay before her, she addressed her goddaughter Elizabeth Hutchinson with the following words:

I send you a God-mother's blessing, with sincerest wishes that you may not waste the happy days of Youth. Make the most of them. They will never return, and if you do not profit by present advantages you will bitterly repent when it is too late.[2]

The year 1835 proved to be the gloomiest of that period: in the early months, Dora was seriously ill with inflammation of the spine and, a little later, Sara Hutchinson, who had been for years the anchor of the family, suffered from acute rheumatic fever. Dorothy's conditions were not better:

Aunt Dorothy grow weaker and weaker, but so imperceptibly – at one time you might think she had not ten minutes to live, at another [she is] so bright and strong that you are almost cheated into a belief that she may be spared to you even for years.[3]

[1] D. W., *Poem ?*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 294.
[2] Letter from D. W. to Elizabeth Hutchinson, 14 Sept. 1834, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 392.

Sara's demise in June was a shattering blow to Dorothy, as she wrote down: "My tears are all shed. […] I do not feel that I have lost her, I am brought nearer to her."[4] With these words, she symbolically anticipated her own passing.

While Dorothy gradually began to regain some physical strength and her body revived, she lost control over her mind. Since girlhood, she had to cope with her great sensitivity, trying to keep her intense emotions under control, as she had told Lady Beaumont a few years before: "Any strong emotion cures my diseases for a time, and if I am well as surely brings them on."[5] Throughout her entire life, Dorothy kept asking of her body more than it could safely give; its frailty notwithstanding, for sixty-four years it had stoutly responded to the call. But the onset of the subsequent severe attacks of sickness destroyed completely the delicate balance of mind and body, and the latter was saved at the expense of the former.

By bitter irony, the years which saw a drastic degeneration of Dorothy's health coincided with the consolidation of William's poetic reputation. His 1835 collection *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* sold more copies than any volume he had previously published. Furthermore, between 1839 and 1850 his *Poetical Works* were reissued nine times. As he became more and more famous, the number of readers who were interested in meeting him rapidly increased. In addition, in 1838 and 1839 William received honorary degrees from the Universities of Durham and Oxford; in 1843, on the death of Robert Southey, he became Poet Laureate.

The onset of Dorothy's debilitating mental condition worsened her already precarious health and caused alarming new symptoms. Firstly, her short-term memory disappeared, thus intensifying her emotional attachment to the past, as William recorded: "She remembers and recollects all but recent things perfectly, and her understanding is, as far as her strength will allow her to think, clear as it ever was."[6] Secondly, Dorothy became totally unable to walk; consequently, she spent much of her day in her room. Moreover, she progressively grew into a demanding, "very *clever tyrannical* spoilt child", as Mary observed.[7] Her feelings came to be restless and she was incapable of finding the necessary calm to read, "nor will she often listen to it – she says she is too busy with her own feelings."[8] When William and Mary tried to wean Dorothy off opiates, she became even more

---

[3] Letter from Dora W. to E. Q., 1 June 1835, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 393.
[4] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. iii, pp. 41, 73-74, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 287.
[5] Letter from D. W. to Lady B., 7 Oct. 1804, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 394.
[6] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. ii, p. 564, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 292.
[7] Letter from Mary Wordsworth to Mary Anne Marshall, 4 May 1836, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 395.
[8] Letter from M. Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson, 1837, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 395.

irritable, responding with fits of rage and even physical violence. Although attending to Dorothy was an arduous task, her family doted on her and never left her side.

The entries of the *Rydal Journal* between 1834 and 1835, the last period of Dorothy's sanity, are intermittent and brief. Besides jotting down her fluctuating symptoms, "pain – sickness – headache – perspiration – heat and cold", and the goings-on in the household, Dorothy noted the death of friends: "How recent the deaths of poor Coleridge and Lamb! […]."[9]

In spite of her declining state, Dorothy's prose reminds of her own voice in the *Grasmere Journal*, for she captured the beauty of the changing seasons, the busy life of birds, her constant effort to do a little gardening, and the pleasure of being taken out in her wheelchair or of being transported in the family horse-drawn carriage to revisit her favourite spots:

> Dora and Mrs E. Took me to Grassmere Lake [*sic*] – never more beautiful – the Oaks changing their first yellow to the purest of bright green hues – all things partook of life and happiness – As I said to Wm. – there was a calm brilliancy surpassing any thing I ever saw at that hour.[10]

As much as in the Grasmere days, Dorothy treasured the moments when she was alone with her brother: "A lovely day – dear William even purposed bearing me in his arms to the terrace to view his last improvement."[11]

In its edited form, the *Rydal Journal* is free of resentment; Dorothy was extremely grateful for the possibility of seeing the world outside her sickroom; and when she was confined inside, she admired the wonders of nature from her window: "I prudently contented myself with sitting before the window and was never more cheared [*sic*] – with sun-set and moon-rising – and clouds gathering and melting away – it was perfect healing."[12]

The *Rydal Journal* came to an abrupt end in November 1835. In 1837, William wrote about Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* to his publisher Edward Moxon; he hoped that the business of "taking it through the press" might act "as a profitable stirring of her mind."[13] After much hesitation, William resolved to give up his plan, for he felt that there "would be some indelicacy in drawing public attention to her in her present melancholy state."[14] For this reason, Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* saw the light only in 1874.

---

[9] D. W., *The Rydal Journal*, 9 Jan. 1835, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 292.
[10] Ibid, 22 May 1834, p. 293.
[11] Ibid, 23 Nov. 1834.
[12] Ibid, 29 July 1833.
[13] Letter from W. W. to H. C. Robinson, 15 Dec. 1837, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 362.
[14] Letter from W. W. to H. C. Robinson, 15 Dec. 1837, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 362.

Dorothy's last surviving letter, which she wrote in the spring of 1838, was addressed to Dora. It begins with an unusual note in which she protested against the *obligation* to communicate:

My dearest Dora, They say I must write a letter – and what shall it be? News – news – I must seek for news – My own thoughts are a wilderness 'not pierceable by power of any star' – News then is my resting place – news![15]

In these lines, Dorothy quoted *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, thus showing the persistence of her excellent memory. Then, with a sudden shift of register, she turned to her community of female friends, most of whom were no longer with her:

Poor Peggy Benson lies in Grasmere Churchyard beside her once beautiful mother. Fanny Haigh is gone to a better world. My friend Mrs Rawson has ended her ninety and two years pilgrimage – and *I* have fought and fretted and striven and am here beside the fire.[16]

In these last words, Dorothy sorrowfully acknowledged her physical decay and the struggles of old age.

Despite the fact that Dorothy and William's literary dialogue became one-sided when she stopped writing, her influence over his poetry and her role as his muse continued until the end of his life. During her intervals of lucidity, she still was the most valuable source of emotional as well as creative life, thus helping to shape the poems William wrote in the 1830s. Some of these pieces of poetry were implicitly addressed either to her or to her decline; others merely dealt with themes of sickness and healing; others celebrated their life together. One of these is *A Night-Thought*, composed in 1842. The poem portrayed the moon's emergence from behind the clouds, an image connected with both William's *A Night-Piece* (1798) and Dorothy's *Alfoxden Journal*.

William decided to recognize Dorothy's contributions to his work anonymously. In 1835, when his collection *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* was published, he included a favourite lyric of hers, *The Sun has long been set*, but referring to her as "a friend who was present when the lines were thrown off as an impromptu."[17] Furthermore, Dorothy's poem *The Floating Island at Hawkshead* appeared in William's 1842 *Poems* as composed by "DW": the use of her initials represents a noteworthy achievement in the way he approached their creative collaboration.

William's volume *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* included also two long passages from Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*. He identified the two works as taken "from

[15] Letter from D. W. to Dora W., Spring 1838, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 396.
[16] Ibid.
[17] *Last Poems, 1821-1850*, ed. Jared Curtis, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Pres, 1999, p. 247, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 298.

the journal of a Lady, my fellow-traveller in Scotland, in the autumn of 1803."[18] The first passage contains information about the siblings' visit to Bothwell Castle on their earlier travel, to which William had returned with his daughter; the second is the description of the inside of a Highland hut. The latter piece of prose is among Dorothy's finest and it recalls her sheer joy while she lay alone in 1803, listening to the sound of waves breaking on the shore of Loch Katrine:

I went to bed some time before the rest of family: the door was shut between us, and they had a bright fire, which I could not see, but the light it sent up among the varnished rafters and beams, which crossed each other in almost as intricate and fantastic a manner as I have seen the under boughs of a large beech tree withered by the depth of shade above, produced the most beautiful effect that can be conceived. It was like what I should suppose an underground cave or temple to be, with a dripping or moist roof, and the moonlight entering upon it by some means or other; and yet the colours were more like those of melted gems.[19]

This excerpt, though slightly revised from Dorothy's original version, stressed her importance as a writer as well as a travelling companion. By publishing it, William wanted his sister to receive the proper recognition she deserved. In addition, its presence within his volume represented his strong desire for continuity between past and present. Moreover, it might have contributed to compensate for Dorothy's exclusion from William and Dora's 1831 Scottish tour.

As members of the Wordsworth circle watched Dorothy gradually declining into inactivity, they began to write down their appraisals of her talent, although too late to be of any practical use. In 1833, Coleridge described her as "a Woman of Genius, as well as manifold acquirements" who "but for the absorption of her whole Soul in her Brother's fame and writings would, perhaps, in a different style have been as great a Poet as himself."[20] In his 1839 essay *William Wordsworth*, Thomas De Quincey paid tribute to Dorothy's "originality and native freshness of intellect", portraying her as "an intellectual creature from the cradle, with much of her illustrious brother's peculiarity of mind."[21] In his piece of writing, De Quincey referred not only to Dorothy's unpublished *Journals*, but also to her conversation, highlighting that she would make "many a sudden remark or ejaculation, extorted by something or other that struck her eye, in the clouds, or in

[18] *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems*, 1820-1845, ed. Geoffrey Jackson, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 520, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 281.
[19] Ibid, p. 522.
[20] *Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, vol. vi, p. 959, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 299.
[21] T. De Quincey, *William Wordsworth*, ed. Lindop, 2003, vol. xix, pp. 399, 397, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 299.

colouring, or in accidents of light and shade, of form or combination of form."[22] In particular, De Quincey gave Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* special praise:

> [This Journal] is absolutely unique in its class: and, though it never could be very popular, from the minuteness of its details… and the luxuriation of its descriptions, yet I believe no person has ever been favoured with a sight of it, that has not yearned for its publication.[23]

Until the end of his life, Dorothy remained William's dearly loved sister, as markedly appears from the note he sent to Charles Lamb in 1833: "In tenderness of heart I do not honestly believe [she] was ever exceeded by any of God's Creatures. Her loving kindness has no bounds."[24]

Throughout their lives, *Tintern Abbey* came across as a symbol of William's devotion to his sister. He often read it aloud to the family and Dorothy mentioned it repeatedly as a "source of tranquil restoration."[25] The considerable importance assumed by William's work is testified by the fact that the Wye Valley had become a place of pilgrimage for members of the family across the years. Furthermore, reading *Tintern Abbey* aloud was a major component in the palliative care William provided for his sister, thus strengthening their bonds as her health deteriorated. In 1832, Dorothy responded to the consolation which *Tintern Abbey* gave her with *Thoughts on my sick-bed*, a touching poem of gratitude. In her piece of poetry, Dorothy recalled their 1798 symbolic pilgrimage to the Wye Valley when William had addressed her as the Muse of memory:

> No prisoner in this lonely room,
> I *saw* the green banks of the Wye,
> Recalling thy prophetic words –
> Bard, brother, friend from infancy![26]

In his later writings, William commemorated Dorothy's lifelong presence. One of these is the collection of memories and poems *Fenwick Notes*, in which he recalled the importance of daily life as well as the most significant emotional events he shared with his sister. In addition, he associated specific incidents with the place where they had occurred, thus remembering the different homes they had shared and the thousands of miles they had walked. William's late memories acknowledged Dorothy's presence not only in the substance but also in the form. In his poetry, William stuck to the principle of veracity, which was so intensely present in Dorothy's

[22] T. De Quincey, *William Wordsworth*, ed. Lindop, 2003, vol. xix, pp. 399, 397, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 399.
[23] Ibid.
[24] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. ii, p. 621, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 295.
[25] D. W., *?*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 300.
[26] D. W., *Thoughts on my sick-bed*, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 301.

Journals. Her ways of noticing and recording had persuaded William to respect the realities of life by including prosaic details in his poems, as he had done for one of the first times in *The Leech-Gatherer*.

After the onset of dementia, Dorothy found it impossible to concentrate on books when they were read aloud to her, unless this was done at a very slow pace. The recital of familiar poems proved to be a more reliable therapeutic tool; on these occasions, Dorothy felt comfortable "[…] repeating the favourite small poems of her brother, as well as a few of her own", Crabb Robinson observed.[27] Moreover, William noted that "My poor sister… talks much of her Aunt… of Halifax and all her early connections there; nothing indeed seems to employ her thoughts so much."[28] He understood that, in his sister's mental state, long-term memories were much stronger than short-term ones. Therefore, he tried to gain a benefit from their habit of recollecting, by making reference to places they had visited together or experiences they had shared. In this regard, William's poetry performed a soothing function.

In 1840, Dorothy's conditions worsened: she developed the unpleasant habit of "blowing loudly & making a nondescript sound more shrill than the cry of a partridge or a turkey", Crabb Robinson recorded.[29] However, she continued to have periods of clarity in which her behaviour seemed normal, especially when she read or repeated poetry aloud. Despite the fact that she was totally unaware of it, Dorothy was doubtless taking advantage of the healing power of rhythm, which can survive long after other forms of memory have disappeared, as Oliver Sacks discussed in his volume *Musicophilia*.[30]

When Dora married Edward Quillinan in 1841, Dorothy was too ill to attend the ceremony; she was also unable to join the family in their nostalgic pilgrimage to Alfoxden.

In the fourteen years which followed, Dorothy's life was related from the words of relatives and friends who shared the great torment of witnessing her progressive wreck and who, through a long period of vain hope and deep sorrow, repaid her for the love which she never failed to show them, as appears from Mary's letter:

Distressing as her state is more especially to those who know what she once was, it is a comfort to see that she is happy – that is that she has no distress or sorrow that oppresses her more than the transient

[27] Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary*, in *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 3 vols., London: Macmillan and Co., 1869, vol. iii, p. 78, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 302.
[28] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, 1821-1853*, vol. iii, p. 507, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 307.
[29] H. C. Robinson, *Diary*, vol. i, p. 421, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 302.
[30] See Oliver Sacks, *Musicophilia*, 2008, p. 373, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 303.

sorrow of a spoilt child, – to such an one we can only liken her. Yet at times, if you can fix her attention, her intellect is as bright, and she will express an opinion when asked, with as much judgement, as in her best days – but alas these gleams are shortlived.[31]

In Dorothy's fits of erratic behaviour, William was the only one who had the power to calm her. The secret of his spell over his sister had its roots in an affinity of mind and temper which had united them instinctively in their childhood and had been reinforced by years of intimate companionship. Like William, Dorothy had always drawn inspiration for present days from the past; and now, although her mind was dimmed, the power of evoking remained with her. For William, his sister's intellect was still the place, albeit ruined, in which all lovely forms resided. Together, the siblings relived the shared moments of their past, rambling again over the Quantock Hills and along the banks of the Wye, meeting again the joyful Coleridge as he burst in on them at Racedown, sitting again in their kitchen at Dove Cottage, and pacing to and fro in their orchard at Town End.

On 9 July 1847, at the age of forty-four, Dora became terminally ill with tuberculosis, only six years after her marriage to Edward Quillinan. Her sudden death came as a huge blow to her old father. In the aftermath, William withdrew from all social contact; his only consolation was taking care of his poor sister, as Mary dismally recorded: "The only enjoyment he seems to feel is in his attendance on her – her death would be to him a sad calamity."[32]

In 1848, William's low spirits rallied a bit, for he was able to resume his walks and revisit his favourite places which reminded him of his daughter. But the emotional strain was too much for him; in the winter of 1850, he contracted pneumonia and became critically ill. William's infirmity acted as a powerful stimulus to Dorothy, reviving her maternal instinct. According to Quillinan, it seemed that Dorothy's mental faculties were restored to her as if by miracle, as he wrote in a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson:

Miss Wordsworth is as much herself as she ever was in her life, and has an almost absolute command of her own will! Does not make noises; is not all self; thinks of the feelings of others […]; is tenderly anxious about her brother, and in short, but for age and bodily infirmity, is almost *the* Miss Wordsworth we knew in past days. Whether this will last, or be the sign that she will not long survive her brother is beyond us.[33]

[31] Letter from Mary Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson, 1837, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 395.
[32] Mary's lines were included in the letter from H. C. Robinson to Miss Fenwick, 15 Jan. 1849, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 398.
[33] Letter from E. Quillinan to H. C. Robinson, 23 Apr. 1850, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 399.

But Dorothy's improvement was not to last long: when William died on 23 April 1850, she sank once more into numbness; only the mention of her brother would rouse her from apathy and, in those temporary glimpses of her former self, she repeated her verses. But Mary, who kept looking after her with kind tenderness, noticed that while she was less nervous, at the same time she became increasingly indifferent to ordinary things.

On 25 January 1855, a month after her eighty-fourth birthday, Dorothy died, as Mary wrote in a note to Mary Hutchinson, the wife of her brother Thomas:

> Dearest [Mary] Our remaining Sister Yesterday at 20 minutes past 5 o'c (too late for post) Our dear Sister was released after her prolonged but *fitful* suffering & some few hours of peaceful & anxious waiting.[34]

Dorothy was buried in Grasmere churchyard near the remains of William, three of his children, and Sara Hutchinson.

For four more years Mary lived on, almost the last of her generation; all of Dorothy's dearest friends had already passed away: Joanna Hutchinson in 1843, Jane Marshall in 1847, and Mrs. Clarkson in 1856. It was Mary who supervised the publication of *The Prelude* and supported her nephew Christopher Wordsworth in writing a biography. She lived until 1859, a "Solitary Lingerer", before joining her family in the Grasmere churchyard.[35] With her death, Rydal Mount, the family's home for more than forty years, passed into other hands.

Locals in the neighbourhood of Rydal Mount later remembered Dorothy as the clever and talkative woman to whom William always deferred: "Well, fwoaks said she was cliverest mon of the two at his job, and he allays went to her when he was puzzelt. Dorothy hed t'wits, tho' she went wrang, ye kna'."[36] Despite the fact that Thomas De Quincey called attention to Dorothy's ability as a writer and William had published excerpts of her *Journals* on a few occasions, it was not until the publication in 1851 of Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoir* of his uncle that the *Grasmere Journal* began to appear in the public sphere, thus giving Dorothy's talent the opportunity to be more widely valued.

Dorothy, like William, had long outlived herself. For this reason, she is remembered for what she was in her youth and adult life: her impulsive nature, her pure delight in walking and observing flowers and birds, which made her the perfect companion of mountain rambles, and for

---

[34] Letter from Mary Wordsworth to Mrs. Thomas (Mary) Hutchinson, 26 Jan. 1855, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 416.
[35] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, p. 353, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 309.
[36] *Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmoreland*, complied by Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, London: Dillon's, 1968, p. 36, qt. in Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, pp. 309-310.

being the beloved sister who gave to the poet William Wordsworth eyes and ears, and to whom he paid his noblest tribute:

> She who dwells with me, whom I have loved
> With such communion that no place on earth
> Can ever be solitude to me.[37]

[37] W. Wordsworth, *The Sparrow's Nest*, qt. in de Selincourt, *D. W., A Biography*, p. 400.

Coda: Biography and beyond

During her lifetime, Dorothy Wordsworth's writing talent was known and appreciated in the family circle for whom her diaries were intended. Her brother William had published segments of her *Journals* on several occasions since 1807. Moreover, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey had drawn attention to her genius in 1833 and 1839 respectively. However, it was not until the publication of her nephew Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* in 1851 that the *Grasmere Journal* began to emerge in the public sphere, enabling Dorothy's talent to be more widely recognized.

Since then, several scholars have studied the figure of Dorothy Wordsworth. Certainly, Ernest de Selincourt's volume *Dorothy Wordsworth, A Biography* is still considered one of the fundamental texts for students and researchers.

De Selincourt's biography appeared in 1933. At the time of publication, the novelty of de Selincourt's volume was in its peculiar perspective: while the story of the Wordsworths, which had already been known to the public, was commonly told with William in the foreground, de Selincourt's focus was on Dorothy, and people and events were shown in relation to her, rather than to her brother. What emerged was that Dorothy's relationships with other characters, for example with Coleridge, were as important and as interesting as William's, and her need of William as clear and urgent as William's need of her.[1]

For the most part, de Selincourt gives the floor to Dorothy, since, as he explains:

> Dorothy Wordsworth was a writer with a rare gift of description and a transparent sincerity in speaking of herself, I have thought it best to let her tell own story, leaving her *ipsissima verba* to stand out clear from the narration that connects them.[2]

Dorothy's quotations are the jewels of the book, being perfectly interwoven in the narrative, which results coherent and smooth. Furthermore, they allow to see how the same thing appeared to different people.

De Selincourt combines critical method with sympathetic understanding, thus recreating the image of a rarely sensitive woman as she lived, walked, and suffered. He uses manuscript material

[1] For critical assessments of de Selincourt's work see E. C. Batho, "Review of E. de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth. A Biography*", *The Modern Language Review* 29, (1934): pp. 462-463; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/3715617, Accessed 26/12/2023; A. Beatty, "Review of L. N. Broughton, *Wordsworth and Reed: The Poet's Correspondence with his American Editor, 1836-1850*; E. C. Batho, *The Later Wordsworth*; E. de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography*", *Modern Language Notes* 51 (1936): p. 183.

[2] E. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth, A Biography*, Preface, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1933, p. vii.

as well as letters and records, making available an impressive quantity of heretofore unprinted or badly edited letters and excerpts from Dorothy's *Journals*. The result is that, for the first time, the Wordsworths' readers had a documented report of the daily life in the Lake District and a picture of the part which Dorothy played in that small but lively community: a simple life shared with family members and friends, but also with the many writers and poets she met with her brother.

In his volume, de Selincourt gives ample space to the glorious friendship between the Wordsworths and Coleridge, and to its unfortunate decline. If Dorothy and William gave more love and patience than they received, they are not to be pitied for that, especially because they considered their friend worth all they gave. Actually, doubts still remain whether to pity Dorothy at all; the portrait which appears from de Selincourt's work is that of a woman who had a full and rich life. She did not belong to the conventional type: she did not marry and had no children, although, as clearly emerges from her diaries, she found personal happiness in vicarious motherhood.

Relying almost entirely on original documents, de Selincourt's meticulous work bears more resemblance to the old-fashioned "lives" than to modern biographies. Dorothy's life and literary production are presented chronologically, with the contribution of her own diaries and her correspondence. Thus, she is let to narrate her own story, which emerges as a sincere one. By including excerpts from Dorothy's *Journals* and letters, e Selincourt allows the reader to recreate in his mind the world in which she moved: the distinctive beauties of the countryside in which she spent her days, the account of the lands she visited, and, particularly, the descriptions of an England so different from the modern one. Moreover, the tense excitement of the Napoleonic wars and the lesser stirrings of a county election give an authentic background of the life of her time.

In his traditional biography, de Selincourt presents the relationship between Dorothy and William from childhood until old age, recounting the events as they occurred without truly investigating the psychology of the siblings. By providing numerous extracts from both Dorothy and William's writings, the outcome is the picture of a sister who devoted a great part of her time and effort to her brother and his own family, and who never failed to lend her support either to William or to Coleridge, especially in difficult times.

In 1985, fifty years after the publication of de Selincourt's volume, a second biography of Dorothy Wordsworth appeared, by the writer and biographer Robert Gittings and his wife Jo Manton, who relied on the several biographies and the numerous critical works about William which appeared after de Selincourt's publication, providing some new information of their own. Written in an efficient and engaging style, Gittings and Manton's biography presents a portrait of Dorothy which is sympathetic as well as perceptive. They not only call attention to her selfless

devotion to William, Mary, and their children as de Selincourt did before them, but they also discuss her insincere condemnation of Thomas De Quincey's marriage to a servant, her and William's development of what their friend Catherine Clarkson defined as their "thoroughly Torified" sentiments, and "her habitual self-effacement."[3]

While de Selincourt gives plenty of quotations from Dorothy's correspondence, letting her and her addressee speak in their own voice, Gittings and Manton mainly reproduce one or two sentences. In addition, de Selincourt offers a broader context for many events of Dorothy's life and speculates reasonably on her feelings. Instead, Gittings and Manton conclude a number of episodes in Dorothy's life with statements such as "there can be no rational account" and "not a word remains."

Following de Selincourt's example, the two authors go into detail about Dorothy's daily life, they list the responsibilities which fell to her as steadfast sister and aunt, and stay alert to many of the questions haunting her at critical moments in her relationships with her brother, Mary, Coleridge, and others.

Gittings and Manton's work focuses on Dorothy's *Journal* entries which relate her daily walks in the surroundings, often in bad weather. Moreover, it includes excerpts from her travelogues, where she narrates her endless walks, in sunshine and shower, as well as vivid descriptions of the natural beauty which surrounded her and her encounters with local people she met. This aspect of Gittings and Manton's biography suggests how much of a pioneer Dorothy was. Their work also quotes extracts of the poems edited by Alan G. Hill in *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, from which Dorothy's "I" strongly emerges, seeking identity and affiliation, especially with female correspondents: "I hope my name does not sleep by your fireside, and my dearest friend that you think of me in your solitary hours", she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson.[4] If, on the one hand, Dorothy lacked the ambition to publish, on the other hand she was more at ease with the intimacy of letter writing.

---

[3] For critical assessments of Gittings and Manton's work see L. Waldoff, "Review of David Ellis, *Wordsworth, Freud and the Spots of Time: Interpretation in 'The Prelude'*; Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*; Dorothy Wordsworth and Alan G. Hill, *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Selection*", *The Modern Language Review* 83 (1988): p. 157; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/3728571, Accessed 27/12/2023; D. E. Hayden, "Review of R. Gittings and J. Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5 (1986): p. 125; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/463666, Accessed 27/12/2023; R. Sheets, "Review of R. Gittings and J. Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*; H. Heineman, *Frances Trollope*; G. G. Yates and H. Martineau, *Harriet Martineau on Women*; A. G. Hill and D. Wordsworth, *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Selection*", *Victorian Studies* 30 (1986): p. 145; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828215, Accessed 27/12/2023.

[4] *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Selection*, edited by Alan G. Hill, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, qt. in R. Sheets, "Review of R. Gittings and J. Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*", p. 145; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828215, Accessed 27/12/2023.

Despite the fact that Gittings and Manton provide a faithful account of Dorothy's daily life, their biography does not delve deeply either into her psychology or into her relationship with William. On the contrary, the authors accept the typical view on Dorothy as unsexual character and they refuse to comment on what is more extreme, such as the intense emotional conflict caused by William's decision to marry Mary Hutchinson.

As of today, Pamela Woof is one of the greatest experts on Dorothy Wordsworth. She is the author of the volumes *Dorothy Wordsworth, Writer* (1988) and *Dorothy Wordsworth Wonders of the Everyday* (2013), where she analyses the collaboration between Dorothy and her brother, and the relationship of the siblings with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Dorothy's thoughts, experiences, and her ability to see wonder in the everyday are described through her travel narratives, her diaries, and her letters. Furthermore, Woof wrote a series of academic articles and essays, and booklets for the Wordsworth Trust; her writing has significantly contributed to deepen scholars' as well as readers' knowledge of Dorothy's compositional processes. In addition, she edited Dorothy's *Grasmere Journals* (1991) and *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* (2002), in which she paid scrupulous attention to the circumstances and chronology of composition.

Woof's first edition of *The Grasmere Journals* (1991) has been defined as "outstanding", especially for its Introduction and Notes.[5] In the Introduction, Woof gives valuable information about the history of the *Journals* and the conditions under which they were written. The great merit of Woof's work is the restoration of deleted text and authentic punctuation, which brings the reader closer to Dorothy Wordsworth's initial thoughts. The Notes record Dorothy's writing habits: her times and places of writing, her additions, revisions, and crossings out. The notation of variants yields notable revelations, as in the famous entry for 18 March 1802, written while William was away: "It made me more than half a poet."; Woof informs us that: "Writing against her fatigue Dorothy at first wrote 'It made me more than half I was tired a poet'."[6] Such discoveries say a lot about the fragility of Dorothy's writing gift and the way in which the writing was itself taken up in the absence of her beloved brother. The numerous revisions recorded in the Notes markedly reveal the great care with which Dorothy worked on her *Journals*.

Although Woof's book provides comprehensive accounts of the connections with William's writings, the text presented is centred neither around him nor his works. Therefore, this volume

[5] N. Trott, "Review of P. Woof, *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Grasmere Journals*", *The Wordsworth Circle* 23 (1992): p. 213; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24042577, Accessed 27/12/2023.
[6] Pamela Woof, ed., *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Grasmere Journals*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, qt. in Trott, "Review of P. Woof, *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Grasmere Journals*", p. 213.

takes the reader closer to the actualities of the lives in which the reading and the writing took place. This new edition of Dorothy's *Journals* definitely establishes her full independence as a writer.

Woof's edition of *The Grasmere Journals* is remarkable also for the historical information and the restored passages it contains. The details of local history set the Wordsworths in a solid context, complete with information about contemporary wages, eating habits, farming, and industry. Taken as a whole, Woof's Notes make up a continuous supplementary narrative, which turns mere names into real people; thus, Dorothy's brief note that "Molly [Fisher] weeded the turnips" prompts an account of her age, family, and connection with the Wordsworths, supported by quotations from various letters.[7]

In more recent times, Lucy Newlyn wrote the first literary biography of the Wordsworths' creative collaboration, *All in Each Other* (2013). Her work accurately analyses the full range of Dorothy's writing alongside William's. Her primary purpose is to give each author the same level of attention, emphasizing the communal nature of their creative process. In particular, Newlyn focuses on studying how their intertwined writings were part of the lifelong work of re-building their family and recovering their communal regional identity through the sharing of painful memories. Furthermore, she discusses how walking was as crucial to their relationship as composing. In addition, Newlyn examines the Wordsworths' re-settlement in the Lake District as recompense for the loss of shared childhood. Moreover, Newlyn underlines how both Dorothy and William drew nourishment from their surroundings, which were considered as a healing as well as a creative source.

Newlyn's project is to present Dorothy and William from a relational perspective. Her volume is rendered as a kind of novelization and it carefully describes the intimacy of their close relationship, which was formative as well as inspiring. She narrates their sharing of early grief and homesickness, the joy of living together again, their travels and returns, and, ultimately, the ills of old age. *All in Each Other* is written with deepest sympathetic immersion, to the point that Newlyn seems to be a member of the Wordsworths' circle; indeed, she does not only have extensive knowledge of their life but she is also related to them, having been married to a descendant of Dorothy and William. Clearly, Newlyn's volume is everything but academic; indeed, she openly refuses the detachment from their subject matter typical of critical monographs.[8]

---

[7] *The Grasmere Journals by Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by Pamela Woof, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, qt. in F. Stafford, "Review of P. Woof (ed.), *The Grasmere Journals by D. Wordsworth*", *The Review of English Studies* 44 (1993): p. 594; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/517366, Accessed 27/12/2023.

[8] S. J. Wolfson, "Review of L. Newlyn, *William & Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other*", *The Wordsworth Circle* 46 (2015): p. 214; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24888071, Accessed 27/12/2023.

Certainly, Newlyn's choice has its inevitable consequences. Her book lacks the necessary engagement with the pioneering works on Dorothy Wordsworth. Furthermore, she often pauses in her narrative for sketches of places and characters which, for most scholars and readers, have a very minor interest: for example, what the French markets looked like or nicely contoured portraits of minor characters, such as Edward Quillinan (William's daughter Dora's husband) and Thomas Monkhouse (Mary Hutchinson's cousin). Even so, Newlyn's novelization is a good and informative volume. The analysis of William's poems in relation to Dorothy's prose is especially highly praised, as well as her discussion of Dorothy's travelogues. Newlyn not only details the adventures at hand and the writing generated in the moment and in recollection, but she also notes how these tours were often re-tracings, which allowed Dorothy to share what had been solitary with new company or to feel the absence of former company.

The aforementioned studies are among the best known as well as the most valued works on Dorothy Wordsworth. As to the relationship between Dorothy and her brother William, they all adopt the same approach, narrating their strong relationship and their mutual steadfast devotion. In the field of critical studies on the Wordsworths, there have been a few scholars who saw the bond between Dorothy and William from a different perspective, that of sibling incest, and wrote about it accordingly.

The rumours about Dorothy's sexual intimacy with her brother had been doubtless known also to the authors previously discussed, who decided either not to mention them at all, as de Selincourt does, or to briefly suggest that they held a different opinion. Robert Gittings and Jo Manton imply that they are not interested in investigating "the Grasmere gossip" citing a conversation that John Keats' friend, Richard Woodhouse, had with Thomas De Quincey, in which the latter said that this "unnatural tale" had been spread by people who had "not the slightest idea of pure love for any one or of that fine tie which forms the affection between a brother and a sister", and that the tale had been "made up into the abominable accusation bruited about… amongst his [Wordsworth's] coarse-minded neighbours."[9]

Pamela Woof's observation that Dorothy and William's love for each other resembles that of Heathcliff and Cathy in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* evokes their passionate affinity without literally implying incest.

In the Preface to *All in Each Other*, Lucy Newlyn asserts that:

[9] R. Gittings and J. Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, pp. 105-106, qt. in Waldoff, "Review of Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*", p. 157.

A suspicion of something illicit in the Wordsworths' relationship began to circulate in their lifetime, and has had a habit of resurfacing. In this book, however, I am interested in the siblings' cohabitation as evidence of their intense emotional and spiritual need, which arose out of circumstances unique to their family history.[10]

One of the first scholars who suggested an incestuous relationship between Dorothy and William was Frederick Wilse Bateson in his volume *Wordsworth – A re-interpretation* (1954). Analysing the biographical significance of William's poems on Lucy and assuming that she symbolically represented Dorothy, Bateson discusses Lucy's early death and her sexlessness. According to his hypothesis, the crisis which William confronted in 1798 had been caused by the discovery that he and his sister were falling in love. William, shocked by the realization of what was happening, had to thrust forcibly this idea out of his conscious mind; but it remained in his subconscious. The dangerous relationship with Dorothy was solved subconsciously by killing her off symbolically through the early death of the beloved Lucy in his poetry. Thus, the guilty possibilities were evaded by the subconscious removal of the guilty object. Another piece of evidence which supports his theory is Lucy's sexlessness: the emotional intimacy between Dorothy and her brother must not have a physical basis, even subconsciously.[11]

In addition, in his book Bateson examines the melancholy and the deepest depression which afflicted William when he wrote *Resolution and Independence* (1802) and *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1804). According to his theory, William's mood was in part related to his longing for the impossible: his secret desire to marry Dorothy, offered as "contradictory advice" by the voice of his conscience.[12] Inevitably, William had to redeem himself and to choose a different path, since "incest is a deadly sin."[13] The necessary conclusion of William's redemption was the composition of *Ode to Duty* and *The Prelude*. In the first, he appealed to the principle of morality for guidance and support, withdrawing his earlier faith in the spontaneous and unguided impulses of the heart, while in the second he reflected on his moral as well as intellectual growth.[14]

Another author who supported the theory about sibling incest was Molly Lefebure in her biography of Coleridge, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium* (1974). In the opinion of Lefebure, Dorothy and William did not only love each other deeply as brother and sister but they also became physical lovers. This happened at the time of their isolation together in Germany,

[10] L. Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, Preface, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. xi.
[11] F. W. Bateson, *Wordsworth – A Re-interpretation*, Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, London, 1954, p. 153.
[12] Ibid, p. 162.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

between 1798 and 1799, if not earlier. As to the evidence for her claims, Lefebure writes about the poems William composed while living together with Dorothy, "in which he referred to his sister as if she were his mistress."[15] Lefebure asserts that "the very core of William Wordsworth, both as a poet and a man, vibrated for and with Dorothy… They were obsessed with one another."[16] According to the writer, Dorothy and William's decision to lead a solitary existence in a country where nobody knew them was taken to protect themselves from the inevitable consequences of gossip. But in 1801 things changed; once Dorothy and William returned home, they had to keep up respectable appearances again. Thus, their incest came to a reluctant end. Lefebure's incest theory assumes that the reason behind the many friends who visited the siblings at Dove Cottage was a desperate attempt not to find themselves alone together. From her studies, Lefebure concludes that the frustration which emerges from the pages of the *Alfoxden* and *Grasmere Journals* was caused by Dorothy's tremendous effort to conceal the feelings for her brother.[17]

Moving beyond biographical reconstruction and speculation, the relationship between Dorothy Wordsworth and her brother has been considered from a different perspective in the field of women's and gender studies, which have redirected critical attention to Dorothy Wordsworth as a writer caught up in the gender dynamics of the early nineteenth century. Various scholars have analysed the function of the *Grasmere Journal* as a representation of womanhood in the nineteenth century, focusing mainly on Dorothy's failure to realize herself, develop her talent, and affirm her identity.[18]

In his essay "Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals: Putting Herself Down" James McGavran examines the genre of autobiography, the question of authority in writing an autobiography, and particularly how women defined the terms of autobiographical writing.[19] As to Dorothy's "self", McGavran asserts that, in her relationship with William, she paid the "terrible price" of "the loss of any firm sense of personal identity."[20] Along similar lines, Margert Homans has analysed in her pioneering volume *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson* how the consciousness of being a woman affected the working of poetic

[15] M. Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium*, Stein & Day Pub., 1974, p. 275, qt. in H. O. Dendurent, "Review of M. Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium*", *The Wordsworth Circle* 6 (1975): p. 157; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24039265, Accessed 27/12/2023.
[16] Ibid, p. 278.
[17] Ibid, pp. 157-158.
[18] P. Comitini, "'More than half a poet': vocational philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", *European Romantic Review* 14 (2003): p. 307.
[19] J. H. Jr. McGavran, "Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals: Putting Herself Down", in S. Benstock (ed.), *The Private Self, Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1988, p. 7.
[20] A. K. Mellor, "Writing the Self/Self Writing: William Wordsworth's Prelude/Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals", in A. K. Mellor (ed.), *Romanticism and Gender*, Routledge, New York, 1993, p. 144.

imagination. She investigates how three women writers of the nineteenth century struggled to form their imaginative "self" in a patriarchal tradition, discussing their response to a literary tradition that defined the poet as male. Homans focuses on how a poet is created, on the interactions between poetic language and sexual identity, and how poets can use their literary past.

According to Homans, in her *Journals* Dorothy tried "to use language not to augment her own power but as a vehicle of her respect for the other." This respect is part of Dorothy's failure to develop her own "poetic I AM" which enabled her brother to write.[21] Homans assumes that Dorothy's neglect of the "I" is indicative of her "tendency to omit a central or prominent self in her journals", and sees it mainly as a fragmentation of her self-identity.[22]

Kurt Heinzelman has dealt with Dorothy and her relationship with William in terms of gender and class oppositions in "The Cult of Domesticity: Dorothy and William Wordsworth at Grasmere",[23] arguing that Dorothy was cast by William in the role of improver of the male personality. Heinzelman thinks that the *Grasmere Journal* has a "georgic vision", manifested in the daily domestic activities in which Dorothy and her brother engaged. Thus, domestic activity fosters creativity, and is linked to poetic and discursive production. Since Dorothy wrote her *Journal* from an autobiographical present's perspective, the narration of her daily personal activities assumes importance.[24] Heinzelman summarizes the different attitudes of Dorothy and William toward their shared household in order to compare male and female concepts of the "self." Despite the fact that both Dorothy and William viewed their home as a centre of value, especially as a site for self-development and integration into community, they conceived of family relations as well as household tasks differently. Dorothy saw writing as only one of many domestic activities, while William viewed household tasks as background of support for his work as a poet. They divided domestic activities along gender lines and William valued his sister in conventionally masculine terms, as a feminizing agent useful to his self-development.[25]

In his essay "On the Autobiographical Present: Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals" Liu analyses the meaning of the "present" in Dorothy's *Grasmere Journals*. He argues that the substance of the lived present can only reside in the "autobiographical present", which is clearly

---

[21] M. Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990, p. 86, qt. in A. Diamond, "Review of M. Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 81 (1982): p. 272; JSTOR http://www.jstor.org/stable/27709002, Accessed 31/12/2023.
[22] Comitini, "More than half a poet": vocational philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", p. 314.
[23] K. Heinzelman, "The Cult of Domesticity: Dorothy and William Wordsworth at Grasmere," in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 52-78.
[24] Comitini, "More than half a poet": vocational philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", p. 313.
[25] P. Cramer, "Review of A. K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Feminism*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 89 (1990): p. 560; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27710431, Accessed 31/12/2023.

expressed in Dorothy's *Journals*. The true idiom of Dorothy's autobiography does not lie in what is "on the page", but it actually resides in the laborious motions of hand, body, and heart behind the writing. The *Journal* is the final result of the combination of a series of factors, that are the four activities in which Dorothy and William engaged at Dove Cottage: the inspiration and composition of William's poetry, the textual work, which included writing of letters, revisions, and reading, housework, and walking and gardening in nature. These tasks are interconnected in a self-completing universe, that Liu calls "dome of labour"; each action refers to the others for its meaning, and provides in turn the meaning of others. These actions constitute the present recorded in the *Journals*, which is entirely familiar.[26]

The linguistic representation of the "self", which had a key role in the construction of masculine and feminine Romanticism, is at the centre of Anne Mellor's approach to Dorothy Wordsworth.[27] In her "Writing the Self/Self-Writing: William Wordsworth's Prelude/Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals" Mellor raises questions about the reasons behind the definition of Dorothy as repressed and inadequate woman, and of her writing as the failure to achieve narrative representation of a distinctive subjectivity. Moreover, she examines whether this is the only and most appropriate way of reading Dorothy's *Journals*. In order to answer these questions, Mellor takes into consideration both the way in which the "self" was constructed during the Romantic period and the role played by autobiography in reinforcing this specific Romantic "self."[28] Mellor argues that Dorothy has been defined as "a model of alterity" because the feminine subject produced within the *Journal* is constructed as incomplete, since she writes about herself as a subject which is always on a state of "becoming": to grow, to improve, or to help others to improve. She emerges as a new social model of femininity and her most prominent form of literary production, the journal, is fully functional to the task.[29]

In her book *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, Susan Levin discusses how Dorothy's texts, which frequently do not conform to traditional notions of literature and were not considered, until recent times, quality work, actually raise important questions, related to issues involving women's writing and contemporary literary criticism, and Romanticism as a literary phenomenon. Levin argues that although Dorothy lived and wrote in awareness of the great Western myths of

[26] A. Liu, "On the Autobiographical Present: Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", *Criticism* 26 (1984): pp.115-118; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23105122, Accessed 31/12/2023.
[27] Mellor, "Writing the Self/Self Writing: William Wordsworth's Prelude/Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals", p. 144.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Mellor, "Writing the Self/Self Writing: William Wordsworth's Prelude/Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals", p. 157, qt. in Comitini, "'More than half a poet': vocational philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", p. 319.

masculine power, she presents an alternative to them. Therefore, she is a novelty compared to what the public was accustomed to read.[30]

In her rendering of Dorothy's subjectivity, Levin describes her "self" as precarious, vulnerable, ambivalent, and as a "negative centre" whose writing is mainly characterized by gestures of refusal.[31]

In her study "'I shall be beloved – I want no more': Dorothy Wordsworth's Rhetoric and the Appeal to Feeling in The Grasmere Journals" Anita McCormick suggests another approach to Dorothy's writings, different from the traditional one which portrays her as an ideally supportive and self-sacrificing sister, completely devoted to her brother's welfare. She proposes considering her personality as complex and troubled. She argues that both features of Dorothy's personality emerged not only in old age, when she was full of anger and passionate longings which her relatives described as selfish, but also during her young age, when she was deeply concerned about her own needs and her insecure situation, especially during William's courtship of Mary, when she feared to lose the place she had found in his heart and in the community at Grasmere. She revealed her anxieties and anger indirectly, through recurrent illnesses with psychosomatic components and through her diaries. From this perspective, her decline in old age can be viewed as the result of these factors, and not, as it is traditionally seen, as an inexplicable development in a personality whose traits altered radically and without warning.[32]

In *Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William*, Susan Wolfson asserts that for Dorothy "the truest record of the self is familiar, communal and social", while, in his works, William underlines the importance of self-sufficiency.[33] According to Wolfson, Dorothy's feminine subject in the *Grasmere Journal* is constructed of the three realms of the middle-class woman of her day: family, charity, and domesticity, which blur into one another. Through these qualities, Dorothy writes a real "self" that is at once domestic, tied to family, and philanthropic. To this end, her discursive work becomes vocational much in the same way as William's poetry.[34]

---

[30] S. M. Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, Revised Edition, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, North Carolina, 2009, p. 4.
[31] Mellor, "Writing the Self/Self Writing: William Wordsworth's Prelude/Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals", p. 144.
[32] A. H. McCormick, "I shall be beloved – I want no more": Dorothy Wordsworth's Rhetoric and the Appeal to Feeling in The Grasmere Journals", *Philological Quarterly* 69 (1990): p. 471; ProQuest, urly.it/3z7zr, Accessed 31/12/2023.
[33] S. J. Wolfson, "Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William", in A. K. Mellor (ed.), *Romanticism and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988, p. 156, qt. in Cramer, "Review of Romanticism and Feminism, by A. K. Mellor", p. 560.
[34] Wolfson, "Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William", p. 160, qt. in Comitini, "More than half a poet": vocational philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", p. 313.

Bibliography

Andrews K., *Wanderers A History of Women Walking*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2020.

Bateson F. W., *Wordsworth – A Re-interpretation*, Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, London, 1954.

Batho E. C., "Review of E. de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth. A Biography*", *The Modern Language Review* 29, (1934): pp. 462-464; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/3715617.

Beatty A., "Review of L. N. Broughton, *Wordsworth and Reed: The Poet's Correspondence with his American Editor, 1836-1850*; E. C. Batho, *The Later Wordsworth*; E. de Selincourt *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography*", *Modern Language Notes* 51 (1936): pp. 182-184; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/2912835.

Comitini P., "More than half a poet": vocational philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", *European Romantic Review* 14 (2003): pp. 307-321.

Cramer P., "Review of A. K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Feminism*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 89 (1990): pp. 559-562.

De Selincourt E., *Dorothy Wordsworth, A Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1933.

Dendurent H. O., "Review of M. Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium*", *The Wordsworth Circle* 6 (1975): pp. 155-158; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24039265.

Diamond A., "Review of M. Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson*", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 81 (1982): pp. 270-274.

Geisler H., *Dorothy Wordsworth and her influence on the life and work of William Wordsworth with particular emphasis on the "Grasmere Journal 1800-1803"*, Grin Verlag, Norderstedt Germany, 2012.

Heinzelman K., "The Cult of Domesticity: Dorothy and William Wordsworth at Grasmere," in *Romanticism and Feminism*, Mellor A. K. (ed.), Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 52-78.

Hayden D. E., "Review of R. Gittings & J. Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5 (1986): p. 125; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/463666.

Homans M., *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990.

Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, edited by William Knight, II vols., Macmillan and Co., Ltd., New York: 1897, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/42856/pg42856.txt.

Levin S. M., *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, Revised Edition, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, North Carolina, 2009.

Linkin K. H., "Review of A. K. Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender*", *Studies in Romanticism* 32 (1993): pp. 464-468.

Liu A., "On the Autobiographical Present: Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals", *Criticism* 26 (1984): pp.115-118; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23105122.

McCormick H. A., "'I shall be beloved – I want no more': Dorothy Wordsworth's Rhetoric and the Appeal to Feeling in The Grasmere Journals", *Philological Quarterly* 69 (1990): pp. 471-474; ProQuest, urly.it/3z7zr.

McGavran J. H. Jr., "Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals: Putting Herself Down", in Benstock S. (ed.), *The Private Self, Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1988, pp. 230-253.

Mellor A. K., "Writing the Self/Self Writing: William Wordsworth's Prelude/Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals", in Mellor A. K. (ed.), *Romanticism and Gender*, Routledge, 1993, pp. 144-169.

Newlyn L., *All in Each Other*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.

Sheets R., "Review of R. Gittings and J. Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*; H. Heineman, *Frances Trollope*; G. G. Yates and H. Martineau, *Harriet Martineau on Women*; Dorothy Wordsworth and A. G. Hill, *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Selection*", *Victorian Studies* 30 (1986): pp. 145-146; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828215.

Stafford F., "Review of P. Woof (ed.), *D. Wordsworth: The Grasmere Journals*", *The Review of English Studies* 44 (1993): pp. 594-595; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/517366.

Trott N., "Review of P. Woof, *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Grasmere Journals*", *The Wordsworth Circle* 23 (1992): pp. 213-214; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24042577.

Waldoff L., "Review of David Ellis, *Wordsworth, Freud and the Spots of Time: Interpretation in 'The Prelude'*; Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*; Dorothy Wordsworth, and Alan G. Hill, *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Selection*", *The Modern Language Review* 83 (1988): pp. 156-158; JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/3728571.

Wolfson S. J., “Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William”, in Mellor A. K. (ed.), *Romanticism and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988, pp. 139-166.

Wolfson S. J., “Review of L. Newlyn, *William & Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other*”, *The Wordsworth Circle* 46 (2015): pp. 213-215; JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24888071.

Web references

Britannica, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dorothy-Wordsworth.

Coleridge S. T., *Christabel*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43971/christabel.

Coleridge S. T., *Hexameters*, https://allpoetry.com/Hexameters.

Coleridge S. T., *The Nightingale*, https://poetryarchive.org/poem/nightingale/.

Folger Shakespeare Library, *The Merchant of Venice*, https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/the-merchant-of-venice/read/#line-1.3.15.

The Guardian view on Dorothy Wordsworth: a rare achievement, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/19/the-guardian-view-on-dorothy-wordsworth-a-rare-achievement.

Thelwall J., *Lines written at Bridgewater*, https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/lines-written-bridgewater.

Wordsworth D., *All Poetry*, https://allpoetry.com/Dorothy-Wordsworth.

Wordsworth W., *A Whirl-Blast from behind the Hill*, https://allpoetry.com/A-Whirl-Blast-From-Behind-The-Hill.

Wordsworth W., *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45521/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud.

Wordsworth W., *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45527/lines-composed-a-few-miles-above-tintern-abbey-on-revisiting-the-banks-of-the-wye-during-a-tour-july-13-1798.

Wordsworth W., *The Prelude*, *Book VI*, https://genius.com/William-wordsworth-the-prelude-book-6-annotated.

Wordsworth W., *The Solitary Reaper*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45554/the-solitary-reaper

Wordsworth W., *Three years she grew in sun and shower,* https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45559/three-years-she-grew

Wordsworth W., *To a Highland Girl*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45560/to-a-highland-girl.