# Dorothy Wordsworth's Distinctive Voice

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ABSTRACT

The following study is interested in Dorothy Wordsworth's formation of her unique authorial identity and environmental ethos. I attend to her poetry and prose, specifically her journals written at Grasmere and her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1874) to demonstrate how she shaped her individual voice while navigating her occasionally conflicting roles of sister and writer. My project begins with a chapter providing a selective biographical and critical history of Dorothy Wordsworth and details how my work emerges from current trends in scholarship and continues an ongoing critical conversation about Dorothy Wordsworth's agency and originality. In my analysis of Dorothy's distinct poetic voice, I compare selections of her writing with William's to demonstrate how Dorothy expressed her perspectives regarding nature, community, and her place within her environment. In my chapter on *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, I analyze the ways in which Dorothy's narrative embraces the tenets of the picturesque while simultaneously acknowledging the tradition's limitations. Her environmental perspective was inherently rooted in domesticity; the idea of home and her community connections influenced how she engaged with and then recorded the environments she traveled to and the people she met. My project concludes by demonstrating how Dorothy Wordsworth's environmental ethos relates to the values promoted by modern environmental writers. Dorothy was intimately connected to her home and environment and modern environmental protection and conservation efforts encourage human connection to home and place. I consider how modern environmentalist movements could benefit from embodying the empathy that Dorothy showed for the natural world in their practices today.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

My thesis argues that while Dorothy Wordsworth was intrinsically involved in her brother William's poetic process, she actively created a unique writerly identity that can be detected throughout her journals and poems. My project begins with a chapter detailing how my work emerges from current trends in Dorothy Wordsworth scholarship, including feminist and ecocritical studies. In my analysis of Dorothy's individual poetic voice, I suggest that through her distinctive style and her mingling of poetry and prose, Dorothy was strongly asserting herself and her perspectives even when they conflicted with William's. Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* exemplifies her unique environmental perspective, which was influenced by her community-centered identity; this contributes to what she chooses to recollect in her journal. My project concludes by demonstrating how Dorothy Wordsworth's environmental ethos relates to the values promoted by modern environmental writers. Dorothy was intimately connected to her home and environment and modern environmental protection and conservation efforts encourage human connection to home and place. I consider how modern environmentalist movements could benefit from embodying the empathy that Dorothy showed for the natural world in their practices today.

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# Introduction

In 1828, just before she would fall seriously ill for the first time, Dorothy Wordsworth was described by Maria Jane Jewsbury in a letter to Dora Wordsworth, Dorothy's[1] niece:

> I think you would smile if you knew all she did and saw… Churches – Museums – Factories – Shopping-Institutions – Company – at home and abroad – not that I attempted to compete with her, –no I merely lay in bed and legislated – provided relays of friends and carriages – and had the pleasure of knowing that my visitor was pleased – and that she won all hearts before and around her. She is the very genius of Popularity – an embodied spell. I should be jealous of her for a continuance. I should be dethroned even on my own sofa – amidst my own circle." (qtd in Levin, *Longman* 242)

Although the vitality that is represented in this passage would soon fade, Jewsbury's portrayal of Dorothy's character is one that was felt and seen by nearly all who knew her. She seemed to be admired both by close friends and new acquaintances and was full of desire to participate in life and in the world around her. Jewsbury's catalogue of the places Dorothy visited demonstrates Dorothy's need to learn as well, as she visited different factories and museums. Descriptions such as Jewsbury's predominately influence my reading of Dorothy, as they represent an active and enthusiastic woman, and not one who lived in the shadow of others.

Thomas De Quincey's extended description of Dorothy offers in part a similar portrayal; he depicts Dorothy as a woman grounded in her community, able to form close connections with the people around her due to her remarkable capacity for compassion:

> I may sum up in one brief abstract the amount of Miss Wordsworth's character,

[1] Although referring to Dorothy by her first name can seem patronizing and too familiar, referring to her as "Wordsworth" seems misleading. Throughout this thesis, I refer to both Dorothy and William Wordsworth by their first names for clarity and efficiency.

> as a companion, by saying, that she was the very wildest (in the sense of the most natural) person I have ever known; and also the truest, most inevitable, and at the same time the quickest and readiest in her sympathy with either joy or sorrow, with laughter or with tears, with the realities of life or the larger realities of the poets! (qtd in Levin, *Longman* 240)

While De Quincey's portrait of Dorothy acknowledges the conflict between her artistic ambition and domestic duties – a position he posits as leading to Dorothy's eventual mental and physical deterioration – passages such as these complicate that assumption. Dorothy was "quickest and readiest" in sympathy, which demonstrates how important human connection was to her. My interpretation of Dorothy suggests that she willingly and unreservedly chose to make her brother William her priority, without regret, due to her unfailing need to be of service to her family and community.

De Quincey's longer description of Dorothy also reveals that she was a woman of strength and vigor. She was constantly walking, either to and from visits with friends and neighbors, to check for letters, or by William's side through nature while he gathered material and inspiration for his poems; she was active in both body and mind (qtd in Levin, *Longman* 238). This strength would not last, however, and in Dorothy's later years when her health began to fail, her importance to William and the family is continuously noted. After Dorothy's first bout of illness, Dora wrote that William would suffer greatly if his treasured sister was separated from him in death, as "such love as he bears to her is of no common nature" ("List of Letters"). Dorothy had spent her adult life always by her brother's side; William did not know if he could possibly live without her.

While my interpretation of Dorothy rests on the idea that although she was dependent upon William, that bond did not impede her artistically, it is necessary to address how such a relationship was formed. The origin of Dorothy and William's mutually supportive relationship is inextricably linked to their tragic separation as children and their subsequent desire to remain in close connection with each other. After their mother's death when Dorothy was a child, she was sent to live in Halifax, Yorkshire with her mother's second cousin Elizabeth Threlkeld. William was sent to boarding school in Hawkshead, located in the Lake District where the siblings would eventually make their home. Although Dorothy did regret the time away from her father and brothers, she was beloved by her 'Aunt' Threlkeld and lived a contented life during her childhood in Halifax. Her anxiety surrounding her separation from her family did not prevent her from forming intimate and sustaining friendships; Halifax is where she met Jane Pollard, a girl her own age who became a lifelong friend. Dorothy's relationship with her aunt and her friendship with Jane helped to fill the void that was left by her mother's death and her separation from her siblings.

Dorothy was a child eager to learn and spent a few years in boarding school, but after her father's death her tuition could no longer be afforded. She had not seen her father or her brothers in the six years that passed between her departure and his passing; she, for unknown reasons, was never allowed to return home and this forced separation would define her for the rest of her life; her desire for a home and the importance of community and relationships stems from her early loss. Dorothy did not return to boarding school and instead attended the small school in Halifax, which Jane also attended. Her education was furthered by her insatiable reading habits and the fact that her Aunt Threlkeld's shop held the town's library. Dorothy's brothers also encouraged her and provided her with a selection of books and plays, which "included the *Odyssey*,

Fielding's works, Hayley's poems, *Gil Blas* in French, Goldsmith's poems, Milton's works and 'other trifling things'" (Gittings and Manton 11). While not formally educated as William was, Dorothy was certainly well-read and admired for her intelligence. She continued to self-educate through reading for the rest of her life. Unfortunately, Dorothy's comfortable childhood ended in 1787 when she was needed in Penrith to assist her maternal grandparents; as their poor relative, she was required to earn her living with them and she bemoaned that her life was ruled by domestic work. However, her home in Penrith is where she was eventually reunited with William, and the two maintained an intimate correspondence while they dreamed of making a home together.

The initial revitalizing of their familiarity and close friendship was significant for both Dorothy and William, a sentiment that was reflected in many of their letters. While on a tour of Switzerland in September 1790, William wrote to Dorothy:

> 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. (De Selincourt, *Early Letters* 34)

Already, William recognized that his travels would be improved by Dorothy's presence. He valued his experiences more if they were shared with Dorothy. Later in 1793, Dorothy communicated the depth of her admiration and affection for William in a letter to Jane:

> [William has] a sort of violence of Affection if I may so term it which demonstrates itself every moment of the Day when the Objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a Tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manners

as I have observed in few men (De Selincourt, *Early Letters* 83-84).

As a young woman who suffered the premature loss of her parents and the intimate relationship siblings often have, Dorothy greatly valued William's obvious affection for her. Dorothy and William undoubtedly treasured the renewal of their close bond, and it was difficult for them to be parted for such long stretches of time after they had finally been reunited.

The idea of home, to both Dorothy and William, was influenced by the keen regret they felt for the years they spent separated. They wanted to rebuild a life together, settled in a place of their own where they could live and work harmoniously. They moved together several times, comparing "each temporary home against the original," Cockermouth, "which figured in their fantasies as a lost paradise" (Newlyn, *All in Each Other* 5). Finally, William and Dorothy settled into Dove Cottage in Grasmere in 1799, which would become their most beloved home. In this cottage, their close connection grew into a true communion of minds and souls that would endure until their eventual deaths. William's marriage to Mary Hutchinson and the children that followed would not hinder the bond the siblings had, as Dorothy remained essential to William's poetic work and she became indispensable to their household.

Dorothy's deeply feeling personality made her a vital part of their community in Grasmere. While William and his family were Dorothy's principal focus, the care that Dorothy exuded for her family extended to their neighbors as well. In 1808, George and Sarah Green of Easedale, in Grasmere, perished while walking home in a snowstorm. They left eight children at the mercy of the Grasmere community, and Dorothy was an integral part of fundraising to help support the orphans. She wrote a narrative of the Green family which was copied and spread throughout the community to raise money for the children; her efforts were quite successful. Two years later Dorothy was prompted to publish the narrative by her friend Catherine Clarkson.

She refused out of concern for the Green children; she did not want to expose them to public scrutiny and wished for them to remain anonymous. Dorothy was a woman who cared greatly for the people around her, and "was rare for being so unreservedly in touch with her feelings" (Woof, *Wonders* 13). Witnessing the orphan children might have encouraged remembrance of her own childhood sorrow, and perhaps she wished to try and spare them some of the pain she always felt when thinking of her early losses.

Although Dorothy's stated reasons for refusing to publish the Green narrative revolved around the children, this reluctance towards publishing was consistent throughout her life, which resulted in most of her work being published after her death. Despite this and her relatively small output, Dorothy is a writer about whom new discoveries can constantly be made. Although compared to William's oeuvre, she did not produce a particularly large body of work, her journals, letters, and poems continue to be read and explored in innovative ways. In the first chapter of my thesis, "Dorothy Wordsworth: The Critical Context," I trace changes in how scholars have approached these texts. I highlight Pamela Woof's comprehensive studies of Dorothy, which have been instrumental in enlightening me to the intricate balance Dorothy maintained between her roles as woman, sister, and talented writer; the tension between these multiple roles can be found throughout Dorothy's work. I then demonstrate how my own work draws on these recent trends and contributes to the current critical conversation surrounding Dorothy Wordsworth as a woman and writer capable of decisive agency and stylistic experimentation.

In the second chapter, "'More than half a poet': Dorothy Wordsworth's Path to Poetic Identity," I explore Dorothy's creation of her unique authorial identity. Although she has often been described as self-effacing or humble in her writing, I suggest that through her distinctive

style and her mingling of poetry and prose, Dorothy was strongly asserting herself and her perspectives, often challenging those put forth by her brother. Through close readings and comparisons between Dorothy's and William's separate works, I demonstrate that Dorothy fashioned an individual poetic self, separate from William's own theory of poetry. She used her distinct writing ability to express her opinions on humanity, nature, and her place in her community and environment.

In the third and final chapter, "'Inhabited Solitudes': Dorothy Wordsworth's Environmental Ethos," I examine Dorothy's unique perspective regarding the environment and her place within it. I begin by explicating her engagement with the tenets of the picturesque tradition through an exploration of her Scottish travel narrative. Her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1874) exemplifies a picturesque travel guide, yet recognizes the limitations of standard picturesque language and values to convey real life. While Dorothy is at times overtly critical of Scottish landscapes and homes, she shows a deep appreciation for the people she meets, particularly the several women with whom she formed close connections. Her sense of identity is almost dependent upon the importance she places on community, and this contributes to what she chooses to recollect in her journal. The homes in which she rested and the people she met throughout her journey are prioritized; at times they are even remembered more fondly than the landscapes she viewed. In this chapter I seek to elucidate Dorothy's strikingly complex consciousness that emerges throughout her *Recollections*.

In the Afterword, I gesture towards future areas of study regarding Dorothy's work, particularly her environmental writing. Much of contemporary environmental literature focuses on the importance of human connection to home and place and how those connections influence environmental protection and conservation efforts. Dorothy Wordsworth was intimately

connected to her home and environment, and I am interested in exploring connections between her work and that of modern environmental writers.

Altogether, the image of Dorothy that emerges from her oeuvre of letters, poetry, and prose is one of a complex woman and writer. Her letters and journals often portray a woman of devotion: a loyal friend, a faithful sister and aunt, a caring and supportive member of her community, and a person interested in sustaining her home environment and ecosystem. Although she is not always obviously self-expressive, within her journals readers meet a woman who felt deeply and could become overwhelmed with emotion. Her poems, which often were subject to an extensive editing process, evidence an author striving to consistently enhance her skill and improve her methods of recording her meticulous observations. This study of Dorothy Wordsworth promotes a fuller understanding of the sensibility of an intelligent and talented contributor to Romantic literary history.

# 1. Dorothy Wordsworth: The Critical Context

Dorothy Wordsworth has always been appreciated for the assistance and inspiration she provided for her brother William's work, and for the additional depth and context her work brings to William's own life. However, as further scholars turn their attention to the life and work of Dorothy Wordsworth, it is no longer easy to relegate her to the background of Romantic literary history. As the sister of a markedly more famous poet, she never fully intended for her writing to be widely read outside a circle of close family and friends, let alone published, yet her position as a talented writer is now widely recognized. No longer solely appreciated for her contributions to William's poetic process and the inspiration she provided him, Dorothy has come to be valued for her own unique style and perspective. While she did not consider herself to be an author in the sense that William was, she wrote constantly, and was said to have written until she no longer possessed the physical strength to lift a pen.[2] Since her death in 1855, critical scholarship regarding Dorothy has continued to evolve and shift in focus concurrent with changing contemporary concerns. In this chapter I begin with a brief overview of Dorothy's contemporary reception. Then, I explore the trends in scholarship that have emerged over the last half-century which have influenced my interpretation of Dorothy and my approach to her writing. Through a discussion of these critical contexts, I demonstrate how my argument emerges from these current trends and continues an ongoing critical conversation about Dorothy Wordsworth's agency and originality.

[2] See Pamela Woof's "Dorothy Wordsworth and Old Age" for an extensive account of Dorothy Wordsworth's last years. Woof writes that in October 1853, Dorothy wrote a letter to Mary; the short note is the last known piece of Dorothy's writing. Dorothy would die a little more than a year later, on January 25, 1855.

**Contemporary Reception**

While Dorothy did not often write with the explicit goal of publishing, she produced several journals and wrote twenty-seven poems over the course of several decades (Levin, *Romanticism* 177). Dorothy never thought of herself as an author, but her contemporaries – William most of all – were quite aware of her talent and her significance to William's work. William consistently praised Dorothy for her support and references her throughout his poetry. When Dorothy's health began to fail in her later years, William wrote that "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" (qtd. in Woof, *Wonders* 73). Dorothy was William's muse and inspiration and his love and appreciation for her was undeniable; he knew that without the support of his sister, he likely would not have been the poet he was. Several of Wordsworth's peers commented on Dorothy's necessary role in the production of William's work and the talent inherent in her own writing. In 1815, three of Dorothy's poems were included in William's published collection: "To my Niece Dorothy, a sleepless Baby," "An address to a Child in a high wind," and "The Mother's Return" (Levin, *Romanticism* 113). The poems were written for William's children – the speaker a caretaker, but not a mother herself. They received a favorable response from Charles Lamb, who wrote to the Wordsworths:

> The one of the wind is masterly, but not new to us. Being only three, perhaps you might have clapt a *D*. at the corner and let it have past as a print[e]rs mark to the uninitiated, as a delightful hint to the better-instructed. As it is, <u>Expect a formal criticism on the Poems of your female friend and she must expect it.</u> (qtd in Levin, *Romanticism* 113)

Lamb's response conveys that he was already familiar with one of Dorothy's published poems, reinforcing the idea that she did circulate her verses to be read and critiqued; his tease about

possibly identifying Dorothy as the author hints that there was indeed a substantial circle of 'initiated' readers who were familiar with Dorothy's poetry. My interpretation of Dorothy as a woman and writer asks readers to recall that Dorothy's worth as a writer significantly predates her twentieth-century "discovery": she was recognized as an accomplished poet during her own lifetime by well-known writers.

More of Dorothy's work would be published four years before her death; a selection of her writing was included in her nephew Christopher Wordsworth's 1851 *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*. Christopher included excerpts from her *Grasmere Journal* and 50 pages of her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, printed in full. Although Christopher's biographical study was not considered to have done proper justice to William, many appreciated the inclusion of Dorothy's texts for the depth they brought to William's life and work (Bellanca 201). The *Gentleman's Magazine* wrote that Dorothy's *Recollections*, with their "grace, expression, and vivacity," constituted "the prominent gem, as well as the principal nucleus, of these volumes" (qtd in Bellanca 201). Several of Dorothy and William's close peers recognized her talent: Thomas de Quincey noted that Dorothy "would have merited a separate notice in any biographical dictionary of our times, had there even been no William Wordsworth in existence" (qtd in Woof, *Wonders* 73). Sara Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's wife, was privy to the Wordsworths' lives and writing process and commented that William was the only poet known to make use of the women in his life on such a large scale (Jones 331). Henry Crabb Robinson and Charles Lamb referred to Dorothy, William's wife Mary, and their daughter Dora as Wordsworth's "three wives," and in Robinson's memoir he speculated that without their aid and willingness to transcribe for him, he would not have been the poet that he was (Jones 330).

**Seminal Biographical Studies**

While biographies of William typically include mention of Dorothy and her importance to William's life and work, there have been four major biographies that focus directly on Dorothy: Edmund Lee, *The Story of a Sister's Love* (1886); Ernest de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography* (1933); Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth* (1985); and Francis Wilson *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth* (2009). Gittings and Manton's volume relies extensively upon Dorothy's abundant collection of correspondence and is still the authoritative text. Wilson's biographical study examines Dorothy from a markedly more psychological lens than previous biographies. While Wilson focuses mostly on the years in which Dorothy composed her journal at Grasmere, 1800-1803, she does mention significant moments throughout Dorothy's lifetime. Wilson's text provides nuanced interpretations of Dorothy's *Grasmere Journal* and her life with William but emphasizes the possibility of a passionate relationship between the siblings; Wilson reads William's marriage as the death of Dorothy's authorial self and believes that her mental degradation stemmed from an intense loneliness and depression. While Wilson's text is useful in that it concentrates on Dorothy as a woman and not just a writer and sister, my reading of Dorothy's life and work is grounded in accepting her as an active and decisive agent in her own life; if tension or conflict arose from her devotion to William's work, I posit that she knowingly chose to engage with it.

Pamela Woof is considered Dorothy's most careful and caring editor and has been instrumental in guiding scholars to reexamine and interpret Dorothy's life as a woman and writer; she has written prolifically on Dorothy and her work is the starting point for much modern criticism. Her *Dorothy Wordsworth, Writer* (1988) is a comprehensive and concise introduction to Dorothy's prose in its entirety, including her letters. Her more recent *Dorothy*

*Wordsworth: Wonders of the Everyday* (2013) is, in her words, not quite a biography but a beautiful exposition of the writer's life. Woof includes a reproduction of a silhouette of Dorothy as a young woman, as well as Samuel Crosthwaite's oil painting of Dorothy at 61 years old. Woof compares this image of Dorothy with portraits of William: Dorothy's eyes are "bright," "open," and "watching" the world around her, while portraits depict William's eyes as "look[ing] downward and within" (Woof, *Wonders* xvi). In the opening pages, Woof delineates the difference between the siblings' perspectives that would define their writing. The first section of Woof's text deals with Dorothy's life and writing while the second attends to the important moments of her life, including her vision of the daffodils that featured so memorably in her own and William's writings. Sarah Weiger writes that "Woof successfully reads Dorothy's journal and letters as a way of telling her life" and provides "generous access" to "the special excellence of all of Dorothy's writing" (93, 95). Woof's work is essential for any Dorothy Wordsworth scholar to familiarize themselves with her life and work. Woof's thorough descriptions and interpretations of Dorothy and her treatment of Dorothy as an individual totally involved in her community is significant for my work. Dorothy went through life absorbing all that the world could offer her, and Woof's record of Dorothy contributes to my reading of her prose and poetry as the work of an intentional writer who actively chose to engage with the tension that might have arisen from her position as a domestically motivated woman writer.

**Manuscript Studies, Archival Research, and New Editions**

While a considerable amount of Dorothy's work remains unpublished and in manuscript form, her published texts have gone through several editions. Woof's 1991 edition of the *Grasmere Journals* is still the authoritative standard. Previously, overzealous editors had combed

through the journals to correct inconsistent punctuation; Woof's edition maintains the idiosyncratic punctuation that Dorothy often used, which retains the sense of "immediacy" intrinsic to Dorothy's writing (Woof, *Grasmere* xxi). Reading Dorothy's journals in their near original form allows for a further understanding of the life she led at Grasmere and greater insight into the type of writer she was. She often wrote in sentence fragments and abbreviations, suggesting a quick hand. Yet we also know that she revised her journals constantly, either in the moment of writing her entries or when the journal was reread. Woof's edition includes these details and in doing so "br[ings] us nearer to the heart of the Journals," revealing "how conscious a writer Dorothy often is" (Tomlinson par. 2, 5). It is unsurprising then that three decades later Woof's edition remains the definitive text.

Woof's careful editing of Dorothy's journals demonstrates how paramount her manuscripts are to a comprehensive understanding of her authorial identity. Archival research allows for further understanding of Dorothy's writing process and the existence of her intentional, editorial acts. Analyzing these instances, Rachel Feder focuses on a collection of Dorothy's poems within her commonplace book manuscript. Feder argues that reading Dorothy's work in its archival state demonstrates her experimental writing process and allows one to see that she composed her verses across multiple pages and in the margins of her journal entries, and that she often thoroughly revised her work (541). Dorothy's consistent revision of her work reveals that she was working towards a higher standard; even if friends and family were the only anticipated readers of her verses, she made efforts to improve her poetic abilities. Analyzing Dorothy's work in its manuscript form allows greater insight into her motivations for writing and acknowledges the presence of a strong authorial identity. Reading Dorothy as an author and her

work as a series of intentional writerly decisions is imperative to my exploration of Dorothy's creation of her poetic identity in Chapter Two.

Easily one of Dorothy's most lauded pieces of prose writing, her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* received further attention in 1997 when Carol Kyros Walker published her edition of the Scottish travel narrative. Walker preserves Dorothy's original spelling of names and places and populates the journal with black and white photographs taken as she retraced Dorothy's steps. Walker also includes Dorothy's hand-drawn maps that she incorporated in her manuscript, which previous editions of the *Recollections* had neglected. The maps trace the winding of rivers or the different water inlets in the land. In her narrative, Dorothy writes that "the greatest charm of a brook or river is in the liberty to pursue it through its windings…The beauties of a brook or river must be sought, and the pleasure is in going in search of them; those of a lake or of the sea come to you of themselves" (*Recollections* 72-73). Throughout her travels through Scotland, Dorothy held a deep appreciation for the winding rivers that hid scenes just out of sight, treating travelers to a variety of views. Later, Dorothy writes that while "looking over a map of Scotland" she often "followed the intricate windings of one of th[o]se sea-lochs" until she "felt a longing, almost painful, to travel among them by land or by water" (*Recollections* 117). For Dorothy, then, the sight of the sea-loch at Arrochar fulfilled a long-held dream, and Walker's inclusion of Dorothy's maps emphasizes her treasuring of the journey.

**Reviving Dorothy Wordsworth Through Feminism: Dorothy and Women Writers**

Prompted by the desire to liberate women writers from the shadows of their male counterparts, feminist readings of Dorothy Wordsworth have focused on her individual achievements and contributions to literary history. Margaret Homans's *Women Writers and*

*Poetic Identity* (1980) places Dorothy in context with Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson and analyzes each woman's variable successes in shedding the limitations of the male traditions they were composing within. While Homans succeeds in exploring Dorothy's poetic experimentations and the ways in which her work deviates from William's, she allows Dorothy less authorial agency than I suggest she possessed. Homans uses Dorothy's and Brontë's "failures" to emphasize the importance of Dickinson's success, while I argue that Dorothy was intentional in how she created and negotiated her identity as a writer. As I propose in Chapter Two, Dorothy did not suffer under the weight of William's genius or the theories of poetics he was establishing and therefore fail to establish an identity of her own; she was an integral part of the Wordsworths' poetic process and her dedication to William was an important facet of her identity, not a hindrance to her.

Susan Levin extends the feminist restoration of Dorothy by providing the first full length study of Dorothy's life and work, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism* (1987). Levin includes a full compilation of Dorothy's poems, the first time that all of them had been amassed together in print; Levin found they constituted a more substantial collection of verse than had been previously supposed. While Levin does support the idea that Dorothy's eventual physical and mental decline was caused by her inner conflict and suppressed artistic talent, her overall argument calls for scholars to focus on Dorothy's work and accomplishments, rather than ruminating on the kind of author she might have been had she not been the sister of William Wordsworth. Early feminist criticism of Dorothy's work often depends on analyzing the difference gender makes in Dorothy's and William's writing, and typically views Dorothy as participating in a kind of "feminine" or "female" Romanticism. While I do discuss Dorothy's distinct writing style in Chapter Two, I do not conclude that it is merely a byproduct of her

gender; rather, I connect it to her distinctive community-centered perspective. In Chapter Three I explore Dorothy's portrayal of domestic scenes in Scotland and how her position as a woman provides her with a different traveling experience, but I do not posit that her gender is a determining influence on the *Recollections*.

While Homans compared Dorothy with other female poets, Meena Alexander considers Dorothy together with Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley in *Women in Romanticism* (1989). However, as is consistent with an early feminist reading of Dorothy, Alexander places Dorothy firmly in the realm of a feminine Romanticism, struggling to reconcile her conflicting roles of sister and writer. Alexander writes that Dorothy's "life overwhelmed her imaginative resilience" (25), which calls to mind the old familiar image of Dorothy: a tormented woman, grappling to stay afloat in the waves of William's poetic genius that threatened to subsume her. As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, Dorothy openly engaged with William's ideas and perspectives, creating her own poetic identity. Alexander blames William's "cult of individual genius" for its stunting of Dorothy's authorial desire, and yet William's appreciation for Dorothy's contributions and for her own talent is well-documented (25). Certainly, Alexander's scholarship contributes to our overall understanding of Dorothy's life as a woman writer and the sister of a more prominent poet. However, Alexander's intense focus on gender, contemporary gender roles, and the supposed limitations Dorothy experienced depend too much on speculation rather than evidence. I prefer to concentrate my interpretations and argument on the choices that Dorothy demonstrably *did* make.

Susan Levin expanded upon her 1987 study of Dorothy in 2009 when she edited *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Longman Cultural Edition.* Including selections from the full range of her literary oeuvre, even her much lesser-known works, Levin provides readers with the opportunity

to familiarize themselves with a comprehensive overview of Dorothy's life and writing. Levin's approach to Dorothy and her world is novel as she further contextualizes life in the Lake District; her extensive footnotes provide necessary historical and political context, and later Levin even incorporates an excerpt from a popular contemporary cookbook. Writing of Levin's shift in focus from her earlier *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism* to her 2009 study, Judith Page remarks that Levin succeeds in foregrounding Dorothy as a woman "embedded in the community and daily affairs" (par. 4). My analyses in Chapters Two and Three rely upon reading Dorothy as a community-centered woman writer, and Levin's work forms a solid basis for further exploration and interpretation of Dorothy's texts.

The increase in scholarship that focuses explicitly on Dorothy's own merit as a writer and the rise in feminist scholarship has prompted greater interest in analyzing Dorothy alongside other women writers. Studying Dorothy in this light lends itself to considering her as an author unattached from William. Magdalena Ożarska has contributed significantly to scholarship that compares Dorothy with other women writers. In *Lacework or Mirror? Diary Poetics of Frances Burney, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Mary Shelley* (2013), Ożarska discusses the stylistic differences present in the journal writing of these women. Her study foregrounds the idea that the journal is a separate literary genre that can be studied alongside other literary texts. Ożarska compares Dorothy with Shelley in her discussion of their respective travel narratives, Dorothy's *Journal of a Tour on the Continent* (1820) and Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844); Ożarska finds that Dorothy embodies the romantic values of traveling and that Shelley often represents the less romantic ideals of the tourist. However, Ożarska argues that Dorothy displays a "spectatorial gaze" throughout her narrative, recording ephemeral images or interactions with people without attempting to interpret them (115). In Chapter Three, I

discuss Dorothy's *Recollections* and find that she does think deeply at times about the lives and experiences of the people she meets, recognizing their struggles and striving to remember them faithfully.

**Dorothy and Ecocritism**

As might be expected of a writer during the Romantic literary movement, Dorothy features nature heavily in her poetry and prose. Recognizing Dorothy's engagement with environmental writing and the picturesque is fundamental to fully understanding her unique perspective and the depth of her contribution to Romanticism. In 1964, John R. Nabholtz was one of the first to relate Dorothy's writing to the picturesque tradition; in his seminal piece, he argues that the language of the picturesque tradition can be found throughout Dorothy's prose writing. Decades later, his work endures and is still regularly cited and engaged with; his essay sparked my interest in exploring the profound connections Dorothy had with her environment. In *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology* (2007), Kenneth Cervelli attends to Dorothy's prose and poetry, arguing that she possessed a distinctive environmental perspective that results in her journals forming an ecosystem of their own. Cervelli sees gender as a factor in Dorothy's authorial identity, but not an exclusive or limiting factor. Although Dorothy's poetry is often understudied when compared with her prose, Nicola Healey writes that Cervelli's extensive study "amply proves that Dorothy is an ecopoet" (229). Cervelli's analysis of Dorothy's writing and her passion for and connection to the natural world forms the foundation for my analysis of Dorothy's multifaceted environmental ethos in Chapter Three. Expanding upon Cervelli's discussion of Dorothy's environmental writing and the ecosystem her journals created, Sarah Weiger positions Dorothy as writing a "natural history" of the places, people, and nonhuman

entities she encounters (652). Rather than viewing the natural world in relation to herself, Dorothy was interested in the ways each individual feature of nature defined and was defined by its surroundings. Weiger's discussion of Dorothy's continual emphasis on communities, even those composed of nonhuman entities, is important to my reading of Dorothy in Chapter Two where I mention her tendency to prioritize nature over the human self in her poetry.

While Dorothy's connections to the picturesque have been explored, Denys Van Renen's "Decomposing the Picturesque and Re-collecting Nature in Dorothy Wordsworth's Scotland" (2015) attends to an often overlooked facet of her environmental writing. Dorothy's *Recollections* consistently uses a picturesque discourse, and Van Renen examines in detail the way that picturesque tourism and aesthetics effaced and excused environmental degradation in Scotland. He engages with Cervelli's text, yet questions his praise for Dorothy's ecological awareness and environmental perspective. Van Renen's work is essential to a further understanding of Dorothy's unique relationship to her environment as he argues that she was aware of how the picturesque tends to "desensitiz[e] the beholder from environmental destruction" (174). As I show in Chapter Three, this elision of collateral damage is not confined to environmental destruction, but to poverty and lived experience as well. My work expands on these analyses of Dorothy's environmental writing, particularly her *Recollections*, to explore how she simultaneously employs and questions the limitations of picturesque expression; I ultimately find that her environmental ethos was deeply influenced by her community-centered, domestically focused identity.

**Dorothy and William as both Collective and Separate Speakers**

One trend in scholarship that has remained consistent is analyzing Dorothy and William's intertwined literary relationship. They lived and wrote together for their entire adult lives, and unquestionably influenced and inspired each other. Elizabeth Fay writes of the collective persona that William adopted in *Becoming Wordsworthian: A Performative Aesthetics* (1995). According to Fay, William's writing voice is representative of both William's and Dorothy's perspectives. Lucy Newlyn's *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: 'All in Each Other'* (2013) is the first full length study of the siblings that attends to their lives and writing equally. A "chronicle of a joint spiritual journey," *'All in Each Other'* traces the Wordsworths' rebuilding of a home through their symbiotic creative and poetic processes (Wu par. 3). Newlyn's text emphasizes the healing and therapeutic power of nature that featured so often in William's and sometimes Dorothy's writing. In both Chapters Two and Three, I explore how the importance of community and home is reflected throughout Dorothy's poetry and prose; I also analyze small discrepancies between how Dorothy and William regarded memory.

Allison Turner's "Nature and Classification in Dorothy and William Wordsworth's Writings" (2018) also addresses the literary deviations within the siblings' writings, positing that William and Dorothy had differing ideas about the importance of the self, as William's poetry embodies the solitary romantic figure while Dorothy lived her life in full connection with their community. Turner argues that William was consistently influenced by Dorothy's relationship with nature, which she represented in her journals, and that her voice is present within his work. Another more obvious example of the relationship between Dorothy's and William's work is found in the dialogue that is present within several of the siblings' poems. In Anne K. Mellor's *Romanticism and Feminism* (1988), Susan Wolfson discusses Dorothy's ideological and poetic

divergence from William's own poetry and theories. Wolfson argues that the most observable example of dissimilarity between the siblings occurs within Dorothy's unwillingness to privilege the self above the community (148). While Wolfson discusses the subtle conversation present within the Wordsworths' writing, Erinç Özdemir explores the direct dialogue the writers engage in. Specifically, Özdemir references William's address to Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey" and Dorothy's allusion to this address in her "Thoughts on my sickbed." Özdemir's readings of Dorothy's poems and their interaction with William's imply that Dorothy was purposefully challenging William's poetics. Although he also suggests that the Wordsworths embodied a collective writing voice, Özdemir posits that Dorothy's inability to consistently maintain an individual voice led to "the tentativeness of her poetic subjectivity and identity" (579). Sarah Steger's "Paths to Identity: Dorothy and William Wordsworth and the Writing of Self in Nature" (2009) uses the siblings' respective poetry to explore the way they viewed individuals in community and in nature. In Chapter Two I expand on the conversation that occurs throughout Dorothy's and William's work, including the instances where they directly reference each other, and the moments of more subtle communication, where Dorothy seems to be speaking to William's poetic theories rather than to the poet himself.

Parallel with analyzing how Dorothy's work and authorial identity engages with and deviates from William's own, scholarship that considers Dorothy apart from William contributes to recognizing her individual successes. Newlyn examines Dorothy's literary experimentation in her Alfoxden journal, "in which Dorothy explored not only her relationship to the landscape around her, but her ideas about language itself" (329-30). Newlyn discovers a writer experimenting with form, style, the pacing of her sentences, and poetic rhetorical devices. Dorothy's Alfoxden journal serves as the testing ground for her individual writing style that

materializes so poetically in her journals written at Grasmere; I explore Dorothy's prose writing and her wielding of a unique poetic voice in Chapter Two.

In the following chapters, I build upon the scholarship represented in this chapter to demonstrate how Dorothy intentionally created her own authorial identity, clearly distinguishing herself from William and their contemporaries. While Dorothy's writing was certainly influenced by her gender, I do not maintain that she was participating in a solely female Romanticism. Dorothy keenly navigated life as both an individual writer and an essential partner to William; I promote the idea that she *was* writing within the greater, male-dominated Romantic movement, but in a way that was deeply inclined towards the communal rather than the solitary. Dorothy possessed a unique perspective regarding herself, her community, and the environment, which she communicated without appropriating the people and nature that surrounded her.

## 2. ‘More than half a poet’:

## Dorothy Wordsworth’s Path to Poetic Identity

Across all genres of Dorothy Wordsworth’s writing, her propensity for self-effacement is clearly discernable and recognized by most scholars. Elizabeth Fay states that Dorothy’s dedication to “description” rather than “meditation” contributes to her “avoidance of the main aspects of romantic methodology” and “displaces her from the center” of her surroundings (115). Frances Wilson writes that in Dorothy’s writing, her self “gradually dissolves into its surroundings” and that “when Dorothy refers to herself” in her journals, “it is usually to inscribe her own effacement” (13). Dorothy’s consistent use of the communal “we” instead of the first person “I,” her deep entrenchment in her community and environment, and her profound desire for a home demonstrate that her devotion was not to herself, but to others. These tendencies are present in her journals, those celebrated, minute recordings of everyday life, and in her poetry and miscellaneous prose. In her representations of the earth and the world around her, she never appropriated nature for her own gain.

In this chapter I suggest that Dorothy’s self-effacement was not as absolute as previously thought; perhaps her form of self-assertion was simply different from William’s, less obvious but still perceptible in her writing. I will demonstrate how Dorothy Wordsworth established her own identity and how her unique voice manifested in some of the important writerly choices she made – choices about how to define her subject, what perspective to employ, and which genre to define as her own. The chapter will pay special attention to how Dorothy positions herself with respect to the natural world and to subtle differences in the way she defines and values memory and imagination. I will first reconsider the claim that the circumstances of Dorothy’s life

hampered the formation of a strong identity and left her in a lifelong state of dependency in her domestic arrangements. Close comparative readings of selected texts by Dorothy and William will illustrate Dorothy's significant departures from the models that William created. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of genre, especially as inflected by gender. I will examine the difference it makes that Dorothy merely "experimented" with poetry, that her primary investment as a writer and the genre for which she is now most known is the journal. I argue that her succinct, often unembellished descriptions of everyday life have their own intrinsic literary value and that a hallmark of her writerly identity is her distinctive blending of poetry and prose – as moments of great emotion follow paragraphs on household details, or nature's astonishing beauty breaks in upon an account of the day's chores.

Dorothy's identity as a writer was profoundly shaped by the circumstances of her early life. In 1771, she was born to John and Ann Wordsworth, the only girl, and at six years old she lost her mother and was sent to live with a relative in Halifax. Her father died six years later – she had not seen him nor her brothers since their mother's death – and her brothers were sent to live with various relatives. It would be nine and a half years before Dorothy was reunited with her brothers William, John, and Christopher at their grandparents' home in Penrith. Although Dorothy had a happy childhood in Halifax, this reunion with her brothers, particularly with William whom she was closest to in age, resulted in a realization of the familiarity the siblings had lost by their dispersion.

Some critics have said that Dorothy's separation from her siblings left her in a state of perpetual dependency after they finally reunited.[3] Margaret Homans speculates that Dorothy, who possessed few "fond memories" of her own from those early years, may have been deprived

[3] Aside from emphasizing this fact of Dorothy's dependency, both Kathleen Jones and Frances Wilson denote William's marriage to Mary Hutchinson as the death of Dorothy's writerly life.

"of the strong sense of identity necessary to writing Romantic poetry" (70). Although it is true that Dorothy and William had strikingly different childhoods, I argue that Dorothy's sense of rootlessness and separation – which resulted in her eventual dependence upon William – did not erode her identity; rather she developed a sense of self quite distinct from her more famous sibling. Although they would go long periods of time without seeing each other, Dorothy and William continued to foster their close relationship, and in September 1795 their dream of a home together was fulfilled; the two lived together at Racedown Lodge in Dorset, foster parenting and tutoring a child for income. Thus commenced the profoundly intertwined relationship that Dorothy and William would maintain until William's death in 1850. Their personal and writerly lives were dependent upon each other, and this was indeed a lifelong mutual dependence. Dorothy relied upon William for a home, sustenance, and economic support while Dorothy was William's transcriber and editor, and her journals were his references. Dorothy would eventually become a devoted aunt and caretaker for William's children as well. Even more importantly, however, Dorothy's presence and unique view were a source of inspiration. In "Home at Grasmere," William celebrates Dorothy's company:

> 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
> Of fragrance independent of the wind; (110-113)[4]

Even when Dorothy is not physically near, William imagines her as an almost spectral presence. The siblings were so in tune with each other that her presence, and therefore her opinions and perspectives were constantly with him. In *The Prelude,* William writes that Dorothy "in the

[4] All references to William Wordsworth's writing are taken from Stephen Gill's *William Wordsworth, The Major Works*, Oxford University Press, 1984.

midst of all, preserved [him] still / A Poet, made [him] seek beneath that name / [His] office upon earth, and nowhere else;" (918-20). Dorothy was clearly of vital importance to William; she acted as a steadying and motivating force. Therefore, it has been wholly accepted that Dorothy was an integral component in William's writing process and that their writing was often obviously linked. A close comparison of her writing with William's shows, however, a strong vein of independent artistic experimentation.

Both Homans and Sara Steger have compared Dorothy's "Grasmere – A Fragment" and William's "Nutting" to show the siblings' different representations of the self within nature and their portrayals of a gendered or ungendered nature (Homans 50; Steger par. 7). William's poem was composed sometime during 1798-1799 and was published in 1800, while the dating of Dorothy's poem is uncertain. Both poems were written to memorialize their arrival in Grasmere; after so much time apart, the siblings were finally at home together. The most obvious distinction between the two poems is found in how each writer's speaker experiences nature. Dorothy's speaker is "lured by a little winding path" to a large rock; she allows nature to lead her and does not set her own path (53).[5] Conversely, William's speaker "forced [his] way" through the woods until he found a "virgin scene," a "nook" that was "unvisited" or untouched and lacked signs of man's presence or "devastation" (13-19). While Dorothy's speaker is grateful to the scene she witnessed because she has learned to appreciate the beauty that can be found in nature in all seasons, William's speaker destroys the nook, and "drag[s] to earth both branch and bough, with crash / and merciless ravage;" (42-43). Although William's speaker recalls the disastrous event with regret and seems to learn from his mistakes, the harm of the destruction remains. William ends his poem with an address to Dorothy: "Then, dearest Maiden! move along these shades / In

[5] All references to Dorothy Wordsworth's poetry are from Susan Levin's *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism,* Rutgers University Press, 1987.

gentleness of heart; with gentle hand / Touch, – for there is a Spirit in the woods" (52-54). He cautions Dorothy to learn from his error, and his address to her invites her to engage in poetic discourse. Homans suggests that Dorothy's poem is an alternative reading of William's and discusses the complications that occur when Dorothy, or Dorothy's speaker, encounters the masculine ideal of nature that has been gendered or "feminized" (50). The mutilation of the environment, described as virginal, makes the gendering of nature easy to recognize. Steger's close reading of the two poems explicates Dorothy's prioritizing of nature rather than the speaker and posits that this technique "suggests an alternative positioning of the self *in* nature" (par. 12). While these poems are undoubtedly related, and even speaking to one another, Dorothy's challenging of William's ideas shows her shaping a path to her poetic self.

A comparison between Dorothy's journal entry dated 15th April 1802 and William's corresponding poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," reveals further points of contrast and correlation between the siblings' writing styles. Both pieces were inspired by the sight of a "long belt" of daffodils growing along the bank of a lake (*Grasmere* 85). Here William's poem supplants the observations Dorothy recorded in her journal. Both Dorothy and William personify the flowers. In the journal entry, some of the flowers "rested their heads" while others "tossed & reeled & danced" (*Grasmere* 85); years later when William would return to Dorothy's journal for inspiration for his poem, he described the flowers as dancing as well. However, the split is noticeable when considering how the siblings present the relationship between the daffodils and the speakers, which is representative of their environmental ethos. As might be expected, William's poem features the pronoun "I" prominently, so that the speaker's presence and interaction with the scene increases throughout the poem's progression. At the poem's conclusion, the daffodils have retained their prominence insofar as they are able to be called up

in the speaker's mind to cheer him when he is "in vacant or pensive mood" (14). In Dorothy's journal entry, the focus leaves the "I" and "we" and is on the daffodils themselves, and as the scene is described, the human presence fades entirely. The flowers are appreciated for their beauty alone, and there is no mention of the possibility of their future worth after Dorothy and William have left the scene. After Dorothy's initial description of the moving flowers, she writes that "the wind blew directly over the Lake to them. There was here & there a little knot & a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as to not disturb the simplicity & unity & life of that one busy highway" (*Grasmere* 85). She then moves to an account of the rest of the day's journey, choosing not to contemplate the possible meaning of the scene. While William turns the band of daffodils into an inspiring memory, Dorothy simply explicates nature's natural, common beauty without appropriating it.

Dorothy's conception of human interaction with the environment differs greatly from William's, and "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey" is paramount to understanding their related but distinct ethos. It is clear from reading "Tintern Abbey" that William believes childhood to be the time when human beings live in closest communion with nature, and that when childhood is over, memories are what sustain the connection. However, this poem also reveals his tendency to aestheticize human intrusion and subsequent environmental degradation. In "Tintern Abbey" William mentions that he has been parted from the scenes of the Wye for "five summers, with the length/ of five long winters" (1-2) and the "forms of beauty" (24) he has missed include not just the natural landscape, but signs of human life and activity:

> These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard tufts,
> Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,
> Among the woods and copses lose themselves,

Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms
Green to the very door; and wreathes of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone. (11-23)

The "hedge-rows" that are "hardly hedge-rows" have become overgrown; the wilderness is creeping back in and blurring the previously laid boundaries between cultivated and uncultivated ground. The scene described not only interweaves the natural and the man-made, but the beauty of the landscape almost depends on human intrusion, rather than being admired for its undisturbed state.

In many of Dorothy's ecological poems, however, human intrusion is not celebrated. In fact, often human presence fades entirely; Dorothy's "Floating Island at Hawkshead, An Incident in the schemes of Nature" is one such poem. Written sometime in the late 1820's, the poem describes a small island that is continuously covered and uncovered by the waters of a lake. Dorothy tells of a speaker's encounter with the island:

Once did I see a slip of earth,
By throbbing waves long undermined,
Loosed from its hold; – *how* no one knew

But all might see it float, obedient to the wind. (5-8)

The nature of the poem's beginning might lead one to think that the speaker's presence will remain constant throughout the poem, recounting the sights that she witnessed. However, the presence of the speaker fades to the background while the life of the island is brought to the forefront:

Food, shelter, safety there they find

There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;

There insects live their lives – and die:

A people *world* it is; -- in size a tiny room. (13-16)

There is no mention of any kind of human life or intrusion on the small island. While the spectacle of the island described certainly seems beautiful or wondrous, it is not appropriated for any human gain. This emphasis on the importance of nature over man is typical of Dorothy's work, and she reveals her perspective on seeking out natural sights when describing the possible future degeneration of the island. A person might notice while "wandering forth," "without an object, hope, or fear" that the island has disappeared (21, 23). The imagined wanderer is not purposeful or pursuing nature but happening upon it. There is no reference to what the island scene may do for a human witness. Dorothy's speaker allocates all future benefits of the island back to the environment: when the island is once more "buried beneath the glittering Lake," it is not human memory that will benefit from the remainders or reminders of the island, but nature itself as "the lost fragments shall remain / To fertilize some other ground" (25, 27-28). Kenneth Cervelli has commented on the cyclical nature of Dorothy's poem and how it contributes to the overall "ecosystem" of Dorothy's oeuvre (67).

Throughout “Tintern Abbey” William references the power of landscape scenes and how they can affect the viewer long after he has departed. In the five years that have passed since he last stood above the Wye, the remembered beauty has calmed and comforted the speaker when he was surrounded by the loud intensity of the city that is at once both lonely and teeming with people. He even attributes the altruism of man to the lingering, unknown results of “unremembered pleasure” that stem from having communed with the environment (32). However, this is where William begins to suggest his perspective on the difference between imagination and reality. For five years, the poem’s speaker has had a fading image of the Wye in his mind that has either consciously been recalled, bringing relief, or has subconsciously restored him. Now, this treasured image is challenged by the sight of the genuine, living landscape. Whether the speaker is disappointed or buoyed by the difference is unknown, but he will continue to benefit from the scene in the years to come now that his image has been refreshed. Even while he is currently enjoying the landscape’s beauty, he is already looking forward to the future when he might have need of the image. For William, like many of the Romantics, nature was valued not just for its momentary invigoration but for the restorative powers it continued to confer.

Dorothy emphasizes, however, that it is not just a landscape or a scene that can recall memories, but the people within them. In a poem written about a visit to Thomas Hutchinson’s farm, Dorothy recalls:

> Gladly we seek the stillest nook
> Whence we may read as in a book
> A history of years gone by,
> Recall’d to faded memory’s eye

By bright reflexion from the mirth

Of youthful hearts, a transient second birth

Of our own childish days. (61-67)

For Dorothy, it is not the familiar farm that evokes pleasant memories of times past, but the laughing and joy of the children. The remembrances seem to steal over the women in the nook slowly, as one reads a book, rather than appearing in an immediate burst of restorative memories. The speaker also recognizes that the memory is "transient" and cannot be recalled simply by viewing the farm; rather, it is captured in the children's eyes. Levin has commented that in this poem "the speaker's memory functions in the context of community" (*Romanticism* 124), and this community-centered perspective is fundamental to Dorothy Wordsworth's sensibility.

As stated by William in his preface, memory and imagination were the foundations of his poetic theory, and his childhood, although he was separated from his beloved sister, was the time when he was closest to nature. His remembered and recalled experiences form the basis for much of his work, and in "Tintern Abbey" the speaker divulges how his perspective and appreciation of nature changed and evolved as he matured. Dorothy was deprived of a similar upbringing and education, but the faculty of memory and the importance of imagination can be found in her writing as well. As scholars have noted, several of the siblings' poems are in conversation with each other, particularly those I will discuss now in their relation to memory.[6] William's "Tintern Abbey" ends with a long address to Dorothy that conveys his wish for Dorothy's memories of William and their time spent in nature together to be a blessing for her:

When these wild ecstasies shall be matured

Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind

[6] See Özemir, Stger, and Homans (50-57).

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! (139-147)

William composed "Tintern Abbey" after a tour in 1798, and three decades later his predictive verses were realized. In 1829 Dorothy's health eventually began to fail while she was keeping house for her nephew John, a newly ordained deacon in Whitwick. She suffered from extremely debilitating pain in her bowels, and this attack began a long period of torment that would last until her death in 1855. In 1832, Dorothy wrote her own verses in "Lines written (rather say *begun*) on the morning of Sunday April 6th," that directly respond to William's words in "Tintern Abbey." Dorothy engages in poetic conversation with William when she ends her poem with an optimistic tone that refers to her brother's earlier wish for her:

No prisoner am I 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 body's gentle slow decay,

A warning mercifully sent

To fix my hopes upon a surer stay? (53-60)

Later, in 1832 Dorothy composed “Thoughts upon my sick-bed” during a time when she was confined to her bedroom. In this poem, she reuses her verses and ideas from “Lines written,” directly addressing William and his wish for her from “Tintern Abbey”:

No prisoner in this lonely room,

I *saw* the green Banks of the Wye,

Recalling thy prophetic words,

Bard, Brother, Friend from infancy!

No need of motion, or of strength,

Or even the breathing air:

- I thought of Nature’s loveliest scenes;

And with Memory I was there. (41-52)

Memory and imagination are Dorothy’s aids when she is in her darkest and lowest mental state. Unable to experience nature apart from the flowers that are brought to her and the view from her window, she relies upon memories of previous scenes and her bygone physical strength to supply her with a kind of spiritual strength instead. Importantly, Dorothy does not refer to her memories as simply providing her with transient joy; they sustain her almost as well as being physically present in the scene. Dorothy did not just imagine herself in the landscape; she “trod the Hills again” (44). The distinction here is significant, as memory is not only important for its function in composing poetry; it can be just as restorative as the nature that memory summons.

Although “Tintern Abbey,” “Lines written,” and “Thoughts upon my sick-bed” directly interact through their mentions of the restorative power of memory, Dorothy’s poem brings her unique perspective into focus. In “Tintern Abbey” William elaborates one of his most encompassing themes: while children exist in the closest harmony with nature that human beings

can imagine, it is possible for adults to recall these memories to recreate those feelings even after the intimacy has been lost. Familiar sights, such as the River Wye in "Tintern Abbey," recall emotions William's mind has associated with specific scenes. It is significant that Dorothy does not seem to share the same consistent reverence for memory that William had, or to believe that adults have lost the ability to commune with nature properly. William's address to Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey" is not just a wish for her memories to be a blessing for her later in life; he states that Dorothy has retained the intimacy with nature that is typical in children. Addressing Dorothy, the poem declares:

> – 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! (118-122)

Although William is now older and wiser than he once was, and therefore further removed from nature, Dorothy is represented as still inhabiting a childlike state.

A fundamental difference between the siblings' intertwined writing styles and poetic theories can be found in their chosen media. While Dorothy did experiment with poetry, she was above all a prose writer and this distinction is notable when recalling William's thoughts on prose writing. In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) he asserts "that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition" (602). William defines his own theory of poetry in this way:

> I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings:

> it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. (611)

Dorothy's journal writing was often the product of remembered events, thoughts, and feelings that were "recollected in tranquility," that is when she could pause in her activities to prioritize her writing. However, a journal is often written during a writer's spare time, or in the evening to recap a day's events; thus, by virtue of its generic constraints, Dorothy's writing is not as inwardly retrospective as William's theory of poetry requires. Her journal entries then, while certainly poetic, might not be considered poetry. Dorothy's entries – her responses to her experiences and environmental surroundings – are more naturally occurring and less self-conscious than William's reflections. She records what she observes, and her reactions to those observations in language that is often enhanced, but does not embellish her experiences. She is not searching for meaning in the moments she describes, but simply recording them. Dorothy's uniquely poetic prose is thus indicative of the siblings' individual motivations. While Dorothy is keenly interested in humanity, her community, and nature, William is more interested in how the mind perceives these external phenomena. The siblings possess a wealth of shared experiences and sights but interpret them in immensely dissimilar ways; Dorothy strives to accurately record her surroundings and her appreciation of life's experiences, while William focuses on the broader connectedness of imagination, physical experience, and memory.

Dorothy's choice of prose over poetry does not reduce the worth of her writing however, and she has often been praised for her succinct descriptions of everyday life in the Wordsworth household and the depth she brings to understandings of William's own work. Dorothy's

journals reflect not just household chores and daily activities; they are also rife with moments of great emotion and reveal her aptitude for poetic description. In a March 18, 1802 journal entry that begins with a routine and seemingly tame description of her day, Dorothy writes:

> But as I climbed the Moss the moon came out from behind a Mountain Mass of Black Clouds – O the unutterable darkness of the sky & the Earth below the Moon! & the glorious brightness of the moon itself! There was a vivid sparkling streak of light at this end of Rydale water but the rest was very dark & Loughrigg fell & Silver How were white & bright as if they were covered with hoar frost. The moon retired again & appeared & disappeared several times before I reached home. Once there was no moonlight to be seen but upon the Island house & the promontory of the Island where it stands, 'That needs must be a holy place' &c – &c. I had many many exquisite feelings when I saw this lowly Building in the waters among the dark & lofty hills, with that bright soft light upon it – it made me more than half a poet. I was tired when I reached home I could not sit down to reading & tried to write verses but alas! I gave up expecting William & went soon to bed. (*Grasmere* 80-81)

Here, Dorothy recognizes her capacity to be influenced and inspired by nature but in a less deliberate manner than is typically associated with Romantic poets. She is "made" "more than half a poet" by the landscape surrounding her, and her modest language and passive role in the entry indicate her distinctive understanding of her environment and her place within it. Dorothy experiments with poetic techniques in this entry, as demonstrated by her use of alliteration in the first line – moss, moon, mountain, and mass. She describes the contrasting elements of the scene: the "darkness of the sky" and the "brightness of the moon" begins a theme of dark vs. light that

carries throughout her description. While Dorothy mentions that she failed to record her experience in poetic "verses," she succeeded in producing poetic prose.

The journal entry quoted above is the only place where Dorothy admits to being a poet in any way, and it is just one example of Dorothy's ability to observe and then later record detail, a poetic talent that was appreciated by others besides her brother, who notoriously relied on her recollections in her journals for his own poetic material. Coleridge referred to Dorothy's "eye watchful in minutest observation of nature – and her taste a perfect electrometer – it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults" (qtd in Woof, *Wonders* 71). Thomas De Quincey noted the "originality and native freshness of her intellect, which settled with so bewitching an effect upon some of her writings, and upon many a sudden remark or ejaculation" (qtd in Woof, *Wonders* 72). This is a striking vision of Dorothy, an extremely gifted but humble talent, who seamlessly knit together the mundane and poetic in her writing and, according to De Quincey, in her everyday speech as well. The lyricism of her writing can impart the feeling that one is reading a prose poem and not just a common, daily journal entry. Although Dorothy did not consider herself to be a true poet or author, the existence of her poetry and the regularly lyrical nature of her prose is evidence of her unique authorial identity.

Dorothy's distinct writing style includes her unwillingness to appropriate nature in her journals, which relates to the often personal, non-generalizing nature of her poetry. Levin remarks on this tendency in Dorothy's poetry, specifically her "To my Niece Dorothy, a sleepless baby," which William later edited and published alongside his own poems in 1815 (*Romanticism* 114). While Dorothy's anonymity was preserved by the editorial changes, as the poem's title and content were clearly personal, they also had the effect of making the poem more generalized. The poem becomes "A Cottager to her Infant" and is distanced from Dorothy's

personal connection to the lines and subject. William also adds two concluding stanzas about the feelings of a mother who "must rise to industry" at daybreak rather than staying to soothe her baby's cries (Levin, *Romanticism* 115). Dorothy, rejecting this globalizing intervention, crossed out the lines in her notebook. Levin mentions that possessing a "limited scope" was a common critique of women writers, and Dorothy's personal focus resulted in poetry that was not meant for the world, but for her close friends and family (*Romanticism* 116). Her poetry became much more important to her in her later years, when she was often sick. Her so-called narrow view is not a failure, but rather evidence of her distinctive poetic theories and modes of self-expression.

Dorothy's preference for journal writing over poetry and her community-centered mindset have contributed to a critical view that she lacked her own poetic identity or was incapable of expressing herself in writing. However, Dorothy is quite revealing in many of her entries, although she does not often pause to examine her own thoughts and feelings. One such moment comes with her very first journal entry written from Grasmere. William and John have just left her and she is overcome with sadness:

> My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate for a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, & 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. (*Grasmere* 1)

Clearly, Dorothy is unhappy that her brothers have gone and those melancholic feelings affect how she interprets her environment. She writes the journal specifically for William to read, and notes that her brothers' parting is a source of great sadness for her, so there would be no reason to hide from him the projecting of her melancholic emotions onto the lake. It had been not quite five years that Dorothy and William had been living together and perhaps she was not yet aware

of how William's absence would affect her. It seems likely, though, that she was somewhat aware that her emotions were affecting her perspective; three years later Dorothy would write in her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* after viewing Loch Long that "had [they] been in a more cheerful mood of mind [they] might have seen everything with a different eye. The stillness of the mountains, the motion of the waves…were all melancholy" (117). Here, Dorothy plainly recognizes that parting with Coleridge has caused her and William to be disappointed in what they see, a matured and self-aware introspection that is missing from her first Grasmere entry.

Another instance of her expressive prose is her often-mentioned journal entry reflecting on William's marriage to their mutual friend Mary Hutchinson. Although Dorothy had worn the wedding ring the entire night before and blessed it when she returned it to William, she did not attend the ceremony. Her account reveals tumultuous emotions surrounding the marriage:

> 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 or seeing any thing, till Sara came upstairs to me & said 'They are coming'. This forced me from the bed where I lay & I moved I knew not how straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me till I met my beloved William & fell upon his bosom. (*Grasmere* 126)

Many have speculated on the importance of this moment in Dorothy's life when she was no longer the only female presence in the Wordsworth household; Frances Wilson opens her exploration of Dorothy's life with William with this very entry. Wilson believes this moment to have been so traumatizing to Dorothy that she was no longer able to write in her journal (5). Wilson also writes that this entry is a moment where, rather than just recording what she observes, Dorothy records her emotions as well. However, it does not appear that Dorothy

completely understands or even recognizes what she is feeling, as this startlingly emotional entry is bookended by entries that are typical of her writing style, describing in simple terms the details of her daily travels. Dorothy also knew that her family would read her journal; perhaps she wanted to keep her deeper insecurities to herself. Whatever her reasons for depicting her experiences in such a manner, the entry is more evidence that Dorothy was a woman who did possess passionate emotions; her lack of rumination on the implications of those emotions does not negate their existence and she constantly and candidly revealed a complex self in her prose.

While the influence of William Wordsworth and his Romantic circle are undeniably found within Dorothy's writing, it is also clear that the siblings spoke a vastly different language when conveying their unique perspectives; their shared experiences take on entirely different meanings depending on their authorial identities. While Dorothy was often reliant upon William and their family, her dependence was not a deficiency. Rather, the importance of family and community was one of many facets of Dorothy's complex personal and writerly identity. In the chapter that follows I will discuss Dorothy's exclusively environmental writing, her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*. Dorothy's community-centered perspective affected how she observed and later portrayed Scotland and its people; while her language can seem simple and straightforward, it is at times quite complex as we see her actively questioning the picturesque tradition that she was clearly writing within. Dorothy recognized and tested the limitations of the picturesque – even as she employed its language – as it often elided the reality and lived experiences that she strove honestly and accurately to record.

## 3. ‘Inhabited Solitudes’: Dorothy Wordsworth’s Environmental Ethos

While Dorothy Wordsworth’s distinctive environmental ethos appears in her poetry and journals, her account of her time in Scotland offers a sustained opportunity to examine her thinking about nature’s grandeur and the place of humans within it. Published in full for the first time in 1874, Dorothy’s *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* recounts the strenuous six-week journey that inspired several of William’s poems and resulted in what is considered one of the finest travel records of its kind.[7] In this chapter, I examine Dorothy’s contradictory relationship to the picturesque tradition and especially to its model of aesthetic tourism. I explore how the picturesque tradition shaped what Dorothy Wordsworth saw and valued in the Scottish landscape and its people, and equally the ways Dorothy resisted the constraints of the picturesque to enact her own ways of seeing, experiencing, and knowing the land and people. I then demonstrate how Dorothy’s community-centered identity influenced her interpretations of her experiences and contributed to her sustained focus on domestic scenes throughout her *Recollections*.

Dorothy Wordsworth, along with her brother William and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, departed for the tour on August 15, 1803, just two months after William’s wife Mary had given birth to their first child John. The precise motive for their trip is uncertain, but it is likely that the summer journey was meant to revitalize their health; both Dorothy and William suffered from fatigue, severe intestinal discomfort, and headaches, although their pains were not incapacitating at the time of their trip. Coleridge, however, was addicted to opium and was most likely experiencing withdrawal as well as extremely debilitating gout. The journey was an opportunity

[7] Nigel Leask refers to *Recollections* as “the most widely read work of the genre” and believes it is “perhaps the masterpiece of all the tours studied” in his *Stepping Westward: Writing the Highland Tour c. 1720-1830* (197).

to reaffirm the tight-knit relationship the trio possessed, although Coleridge would leave the Wordsworths partway through. The motivation behind his departure is ambiguous, but it was most likely caused by the arduous journey's worsening his physical pain and by the instability of his intimate friendship with William.

The pleasure of Dorothy's first visit to Scotland would not be dampened by these tensions however. Throughout the six-week tour she encountered stunning landscapes and desolate, barren scenes, as well as the obligatory literary and historical pilgrimage sites. The travelers wound their way through Scotland, following in the steps of other travelers before them, viewing the graves of Robert Burns and Rob Roy[8], and visiting popular destinations such as Leadhills, Glasgow, Loch Lomond and Luss, and the Trossachs. After they returned home to Grasmere, Dorothy began composing her narrative mostly from memory in September 1803, as she had taken minimal notes.[9] She would not complete the tour's record until May 1805 after several periods of hiatus, probably caused by friendly visits or by her attentiveness to William's writing and the family.

Reminiscent of her previous journals, the *Recollections* charts the group's journey in language that is straightforward and economical, but also at times poetic and lyrical. All Dorothy's readers, namely friends and family, recognized the writing skill evidenced in the journal. However, Dorothy did not write her *Recollections* with publication in mind. Much later, in 1822 William wrote to Samuel Rogers, whom the Wordsworths and Coleridge had met during their 1803 tour, inquiring about the possibility of publishing the journal. Although this possibility

[8] Although the Wordsworths visited several graveyards and were told they viewed Roy's grave, they later learned that they were accidently given false information and did not see his grave on this tour.
[9] Dorothy wrote to her friend Catharine Clarkson regarding her Scotland account, emphasizing that what she was writing "was not a journal, for [they] took no notes, but *recollections* of [their] Tour in the form of a journal" (*Recollections* 19, emphasis in original). However, for simplicity I will refer to the narrative as a journal throughout this chapter.

never materialized, Dorothy had been pleased with the thought of using her profits from the journal to fund future travel. The *Recollections* was finally published in 1874 by John Shairp and then in 1897 by William Knight, after which Ernest de Selincourt included the narrative in his 1941 compilation of Dorothy's journals. More recently, Carol Kyros Walker produced a 1997 edition of the *Recollections* that includes photographs of landmark locations in Dorothy's journal, taken by Walker herself, which beautifully complement the reading and retracing of Dorothy's journey.

Dorothy and her companions made their trip when the picturesque movement was widespread. Arising in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the picturesque was both an artistic and literary tradition that valued landscapes, especially cultivated landscapes or gardens, composed and framed 'like a picture.' Humphry Repton, renowned landscape architect, described a picturesque landscape as:

> a view capable of being represented in painting. It consists of two, three, or more, well marked distances, each separated from the other by an unseen space which the imagination delights to fill up with fancied beauties, that may not perhaps exist in reality. (97)

English artist and cleric William Gilpin influentially promoted the pursuit of aesthetical landscapes by tourists. As with other tourist-authors, Gilpin recorded his tour of the River Wye and his journeys throughout England explicitly to record his picturesque observations. His narratives were published in the 1780's and were widely read by other seekers of the picturesque. Gilpin believed that England possessed more scenes of picturesque beauty than any other nation; John R. Nabholtz describes Gilpin's role in establishing the Lake District, the Wordsworths' beloved home, as the epitome of picturesque beauty (120-21). The Lakes were also often subject

to the travels of tourists seeking the picturesque due to several published guidebooks, including those by Thomas West in 1778, Thomas Gray in 1775, and Gilpin in 1786 (Andrews 159). Even William Wordsworth himself would eventually perpetuate picturesque travel with his highly popular *Guide to the Lakes*, published in 1810.

The picturesque movement was characterized by tourists searching for a kind of wild nature that they had seen represented in art; a landscape was more highly valued if it appeared to be remote and undiscovered. Yet picturesque tourists valued ideal environments, or scenes, that had been cultivated in some way by man. Malcolm Andrews discusses the paradoxes of the picturesque movement: that once a tourist or traveler had seen the landscape they sought, some place "untouched by man," they immediately found it lacking in some way. This means that somewhere, these tourists had garnered the idea of what an "ideal landscape" should look like, and they compared all that they saw to this imagined model (Andrews 3). This tendency of the picturesque tourist to either physically or imaginatively develop the landscape is prevalent throughout Dorothy's *Recollections*, as is the specific language associated with the tradition.

Dorothy would have undoubtedly been exposed to the tenets of the picturesque tradition; Nabholtz traces the picturesque influence upon her *Recollections* and discusses her ability to create pictorial compositions with her descriptive language. While Jonathan Bate's *The Song of The Earth* does not specifically discuss Dorothy, his ecological study of English literature provides a comprehensive overview of how the picturesque tradition began; the conflict between nature and art and the question of which was meant to reflect the other, combined with society's increasing domination over the natural world allowed for an aesthetical appreciation of nature, insofar as it imitates art and fulfills expectations (122-126). Kenneth Cervelli fills in the gaps of Bate's work by examining the ecological aspects of Dorothy's writing and contributes to our

perception of her as an environmental writer. Throughout the *Recollections* Dorothy communicates her clear attentiveness to the tenets of the picturesque through her assessments of the different landscapes the group encountered and her use of evaluative language. In what follows, I will demonstrate the ways in which Dorothy, at times, fully embodied the persona of a seeker of the picturesque.

Dorothy's critical evaluations of the landscapes she and her companions encountered and the way she structured her depictions of them reveal her inclination towards the picturesque. In one scene, the trio have left Leadhills and come upon a "desolate" vale that makes a profound impression on them (*Recollections* 54). The place is bleak and uninhabited, yet full of potential due to the beauty of the hills that border it. Indeed, Dorothy believes that the vale would be much improved if it were full of human life, punctuated with "trees, cottages, green fields, and hedgerows" (*Recollections* 54). The scene is beautiful to her because of what she can imagine there, and not for how it appears to her in the moment. Dorothy observed and described her surroundings, including the vale itself which held a "decayed tree" and "cottage," and a "field, without fence" or "division" (*Recollections* 54). However, she found the vale itself wanting, and conjured up objects to fill the space to make it more "lovely" and memorable to her (*Recollections* 54). Dorothy's description of the vale and how it could be improved is reminiscent of how a picture or a painting would be arranged: the vale is the central focus and the hills frame the scene.

A second, more obvious example of the picturesque in Dorothy's narrative comes when the group reaches Tarbet and sees the mountains surrounding them. They spot a "craggy-topped mountain amongst other smooth ones" and "ca[ll] out with one voice, 'That's what we wanted!' alluding to the frame-like uniformity of the side-screens of the lake for the last five or six miles"

(*Recollections 90*). The village is sheltered, with the fields framed or "screened" by the hills and lake, and although it is populated sparsely, the group thinks it could have just as easily been a remote, barren spot. Dorothy's description of the place could certainly be imagined as a landscape nicely contained within a painting or picture.

Dorothy also expresses displeasure when witnessing scenes that do not fit together as well as the picturesque requires. During the fifth week of their tour the Wordsworths visit the Abbey at Melrose and Dorothy is disappointed by what she sees:

> The ruin is of considerable extent, but unfortunately it is almost surrounded by insignificant houses, so that when you are close to it you see it entirely separated from many rural objects, and even when viewed from a distance the situation does not seem to be particularly happy, for the vale is broken and disturbed, and the Abbey at a distance from the river, so you do not look upon them as companions of each other. (*Recollections* 206)

While viewing the Abbey from afar, Dorothy wishes that the ruin and the river were "companions," situated together without the interruption of the "houses," or signs of more modern human life. She would prefer the ruin and the vale to be more harmonious, the vale deserted as well as the Abbey. Her disappointment is rectified when their guide leads them "into the gardens and orchards of a Mr. Riddel, from which [they] had a very sweet view of the Abbey through trees, the town being entirely excluded" (*Recollections* 207). Their observation of the Abbey is improved when it is framed by trees and when human life is taken out of the 'picture'; this is a distinctively picturesque assessment.

Dorothy's propensity to aestheticize the environment dovetails with her descriptions of the people of Scotland as well. She consistently stresses the importance of imagination when

conceiving of a land that is often barren or uncultivated, and imagination is also implicitly involved in Dorothy's descriptions of the people they see but do not meet. She continuously projects emotions upon them, inspired by the land that surrounds them. After viewing a barren vale, the group realizes that the vale is not wholly uninhabited, as they observe a woman sitting alone in a field, whose "appearance [is] very melancholy" (*Recollections* 54). They assume that she lives in the cottage nearby, but cannot be sure; Dorothy remarks that:

> there was so much obscurity and uncertainty about her, and her figure agreed so well with the desolation of the place, that we were indebted to the chance of her being there for some of the most interesting feelings that we had ever had from natural objects connected with man in dreary solitariness. (*Recollections* 55)

Dorothy's rumination on the desolation of the place and how the woman's spirits seem to reflect its misery reveals the picturesque penchant for aestheticizing human suffering. The woman's situation is "obscure" and "uncertain," so the travelers are unable to ascribe any details to her life or attribute her obvious suffering to any tangible cause, other than the dilapidation of what they assume is her home. So rather than contemplating the reasons for the woman's melancholy or wondering about her quality of life in a place previously thought to be uninhabited because it was so bleak, Dorothy appreciates the woman's presence for the aesthetic value she brings to the scene. Importantly, Dorothy labels the sentiments the woman evokes "interesting," which possibly had a different connotation for Dorothy than for her modern readers. That their "feelings" were "interesting" could have meant that they were "important" or that the sight of the desolate woman was a kind of "appeal to the emotions" (OED). However, the travelers are "indebted" to her not because her presence provoked thoughts about Scotland's widespread

poverty and the devastation of much of its land, but because her despondency added to the overall somber atmosphere of the vale.

Soon after discovering the solitary woman in the field, the travelers see a man dressed in the Scottish fashion. Dorothy's recollection of the sight results in the expressive prose that is common to her:

> There was a scriptural solemnity in this man's figure, a sober simplicity which was most impressive. Scotland is the country above all others that I have seen, in which a man of imagination may carve out his own pleasures. There are so many *inhabited* solitudes, and the employments of the people are so immediately connected with the places where you find them, and their dresses so simple, so much alike, yet, from their being folding garments, admitting of an endless variety, and falling often so gracefully. (*Recollections* 55)

Dorothy has noticed that many Scottish people live very near to or on the land or place that they work. They are intimately connected with their environments as the Wordsworths were connected to Grasmere. While Dorothy's writing conveys an aesthetical attraction to the land and its people, she consistently emphasizes the imagination one must have to witness Scotland. In Scotland there are "*inhabited* solitudes" that one may use one's "imagination" to fill, just as Dorothy had used her own imagination to fill the vale they saw after Leadhills., The barrenness of the land, although populated, allows the group to imaginatively conjure "pleasures" rather than embracing the landscape as it is. We consistently perceive elements of the language of picturesque aesthetics throughout Dorothy's narrative, and we must reconcile those moments with the knowledge of her deeply caring and community-focused perspective.

The journal offers evidence that Dorothy did not want to be seen as a tourist of any kind — even a "picturesque tourist."[10] The Wordsworths and Coleridge approached their trip through Scotland with a specific mindset regarding how they were going to travel. They deliberately attempted to separate themselves from tourists. In fact, the very word seems to have had a negative connotation; early in Dorothy's narrative when the group is staying in Hamilton, she writes that they were "alarmed for [their] accommodations for the rest of the tour, supposing the house to be filled with *tourists*" (*Recollections* 69, emphasis in original). The absence of carriages in the road and other signs of wealth and refinement assures them, however, that the home is filled with only travelers such as themselves. The Wordsworths continued to value a more rugged experience over luxury. Dorothy complains, for example, that the inn they stay in near Cairndow is too "over-rich in waiters and large rooms" (*Recollections* 121). Reading Dorothy's narrative through this lens of "traveler" and not "tourist" creates tension, as her engagement with the picturesque reveals itself when she consistently evaluates and criticizes not just the landscape but the quality of Scottish society and life, in the vein of a tourist seeking a picturesque experience.

The journal is perhaps most interesting for the ways Dorothy extends or resists the tenets of the picturesque to create her own ways of knowing the landscape and its inhabitants. While Dorothy's assessments often reveal how beholden she was to the language of the picturesque, she does acknowledge and challenge its limitations. Denys Van Renen has discussed how Dorothy's unique use of the picturesque tradition both represents and minimizes the effects of tourism's contribution to the environmental degradation of Scotland (171). Through her narrative

[10] Elizabeth Bohls is one of several scholars who have commented on the Wordsworths' irregular means of travel and their seeking out of "rugged back country" (183).

we can see how the language of aesthetics could also elide reality and the lived experiences of Scotland's people.

During the second week of their tour the Wordsworths and Coleridge reach Luss, and Dorothy remarks on the lack of luxury or cultivation that she and William noted during their walk to the village:

> I could not but regret a want of loveliness correspondent with the beauty of the situation and the appearance of the village at a little distance; not a single ornamented garden. We saw potatoes and cabbages, but never a honeysuckle. (*Recollections* 84)

For a moment, Dorothy wishes for the landscape surrounding her to fit her expectations of the place. The land itself is beautiful to her, so the homes of the people who live there should reflect that beauty. However, she and William recognize that regretting the lack of flower gardens is a privileged attitude, "as they are symptoms of leisure and comfort, or at least of no painful industry" (*Recollections* 84). The people who live in Luss are clearly hardworking and, in Dorothy's view, impoverished and their gardens supply food and sustenance; they are for practical use and not "ornamented" for viewing pleasure. As Dorothy wrote her travelogue after returning home from the tour, it is hard to be certain if this self-chastisement occurred only just after their moment of rumination about the lack of beauty, or if weeks later she realized the dangers of her almost dismissive attitude towards the lived experience of the townspeople. Throughout their journey the Wordsworths and Coleridge attempted to be travelers and not tourists, but prioritizing aesthetics perpetuated an inaccurate image of life in Scotland and settled them more firmly in the tourist category.

While Dorothy does utilize the language of the picturesque, she also recognizes its limitations for conveying the authentic experience of witnessing Scottish landscapes. While Dorothy, William, and Coleridge are on their way towards the Trossachs, they ride in a ferry through Loch Ketterine. Describing their view of the mountains and hills rising around them and the spot where the lake turns to river, she writes:

> Here I ought to rest, as we rested, and attempt to give utterance to our pleasure: but indeed I can impart but little of what we felt. We were still on the same side of the water, and, being immediately under the hill, within a considerable bending of the shore, we were enclosed by hills all around, as if we had been upon a smaller lake of which the whole was visible. It was an entire solitude; and all that we beheld was the perfection of loveliness and beauty. (*Recollections* 102)

Dorothy continues to describe the landscape they saw that day, and how it differed from the other solitary places they had seen throughout Scotland. Her writing, however, is simple here. No less beautiful for its lack of elaborate or picturesque language, the description conveys her interpretation of the environment in honest terms. While Dorothy certainly was capable of recollecting what the trio felt on their ferry-ride or the conversations they may have had surrounding the site, she chooses not to include them in her narrative. She realizes that her transcription of the event would pale in comparison to the genuine experience and might possibly contribute to a false picture of the place. Later, describing their tour of Glen Coe led by a Highland guide, Dorothy writes that she "cannot attempt to describe the mountains. I can only say that I thought those on our right – for the other side was only a continued high ridge or craggy barrier, broken along the top into petty spiral forms – were the grandest I had ever seen" and that they "appeared to [her] more majestic in their own nakedness than our imaginations

could have conceived them to be" (*Recollections* 152). Dorothy recognizes that there are no picturesque expressions that can properly convey her recollections of the mountains, so she does not even try.

Throughout the *Recollections,* Dorothy demonstrates a unique perspective not always consistent with notions of the picturesque. Rather than focusing entirely on landscape scenes, her narrative reflects an environmental ethos rooted in domesticity, stemming from her early desire to cultivate a true home for herself and William. Not only did Dorothy compose this travelogue from her home in Grasmere, but her identity was so centered on her home and community that her perspective manifests in her recollections of their journey through Scotland. She does not attempt to glamorize their trip and includes decidedly unromantic details from the domestic scenes they witnessed in Scotland. Scholars such as Anne Wallace and Kenneth Cervelli have drawn attention to Dorothy's focus on the domestic environments the group encountered throughout the trip.[11] In the *Recollections,* her attention to details that may seem mundane or insignificant to others, such as the "nice honey" (53) the group had at the inn in Leadhills and her meticulous descriptions of the people they meet and lodgings they stayed in, demonstrate that to Dorothy, her 'environment' did not simply consist of the nature and landscapes the group sought out, but the beings who peopled them as well.

Dorothy's descriptions of the food the group ate and the meals they shared with their hosts contribute to the sense of community Dorothy consistently created throughout their travels. After they had reached Glengyle, they were forced to "[throw] [themselves] upon the mercy" of a gentleman, Mr. Macfarlane, to procure accommodation for the night (*Recollections* 96). The

[11] See Anne Wallace's "Inhabited Solitudes: Dorothy Wordsworth's Domesticating Walkers," 99 and Kenneth Cervelli's *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology* 39-41.

travelers were made very comfortable, surrounded by the Macfarlane family, and Dorothy provides a thorough description of the next morning:

> Before I rose, Mrs. Macfarlane came into my room…I asked her for a little bread and milk for our breakfast, but she said it would be no trouble to make tea, as she must make it for the family; so we all breakfasted together. The cheese was set out, as before, with plenty of butter and barley-cakes, and fresh baked oaten cakes, which, no doubt, were made for us: they had been kneaded with cream, and were excellent. All the party pressed us to eat…. (*Recollections* 98)

Rather than the Wordsworths and Coleridge eating separately in their rooms, Dorothy presents us with the pleasant image of them mingling and sharing a meal with the family. While the ability to provide such a generous meal speaks to the financial security the Macfarlanes possessed – which many Scottish people lacked – it is still a kindness that Dorothy chooses to linger on and clearly vividly recalls. Rather than receiving a sparse breakfast of whatever the hosts can spare, as Dorothy would experience as her journey continued, the group is supplied with "oaten cakes" "kneaded with cream" made specifically for their enjoyment. That the "party," which consists of two generations of the Macfarlane family encouraged them to indulge as much as they wished would have been a boon to the travelers, as at times they had to begin or end their long days of travel with little sustenance.[12] Dorothy follows this account by telling of Mrs. Macfarlane's kindness; she shows Dorothy the town's burial grounds and gifts her the feathers of an eagle, which Dorothy vows to "preserve in memory of her kindness and simplicity of manners, and the Highland solitude where she lived" (*Recollections* 100).

[12] After leaving Glen Coe, the Wordsworths stopped at King's House, which was a place of "poverty and misery"; they were fed "a shoulder of mutton so hard that it was impossible to chew the little flesh that might be scraped off the bones, and some sorry soup made of barley and water, for it had no other taste." The next morning Dorothy was given a single egg for their breakfast. (*Recollections* 153-156).

Dorothy's own situation as a homemaker and her proclivity for depicting domestic life often results in thorough descriptions of not only the food they ate, but also the quality of their lodgings and their experiences in them. She unabashedly criticizes the service they received throughout their journey, describing the landlady of the inn at Luss as "the most cruel and hateful-looking woman [she] ever saw" (*Recollections* 85). Dorothy is not at all timid in her remonstrations about the poor manners they encountered. However, the importance of a wholesome and welcoming home is also revealed when she celebrates some of the homes they stayed in. After the three travelers have seen the Trossachs they stay the night in a small Highland hut; William and Coleridge have to sleep in the barn, while Dorothy is given a room. The wonders she saw in her room that night, and her rainy view of the lake from her window, resulted in her remembering more fondly their stay at the hut than their viewing of the beautiful Trossachs:

> I went to bed sometime before the family…[T]he light [the fire] sent up among the vanished 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 the 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 a moist roof, and the moonlight entering in upon it by some means or other, and yet the colours were more like melted gems. (*Recollections* 107)

Dorothy often describes her time in the Highlands, and specifically in the more modest homes they lodged at, in fantastical or fairytale-like terms; her comparison of the ceiling to a "cave or temple" is an example of her elevating the importance of domestic spaces. Dorothy had already

recalled the glossy blackness of the house's "varnished rafters and beams" and as she could see the lake through her window and envisioned "moonlight entering" the imagined sanctuary, it must have been a moonlit evening. The light of the fire filtering through the gaps between the tops of the walls and the ceiling, combined with the light of the night sky, results in a private show for Dorothy. Earlier, they had "[laughed] like children at the strange atmosphere in which [they] were" (*Recollections* 106). Dorothy's stressing of the home's strangeness does not necessarily mean it was an abnormal or bizarre place, but rather one that inspired wonder in its visitors (OED). The place of honor the home occupies in her memory emphasizes not only the beauty of the landscape surrounding the hut, but also the splendor the home itself creates.

However, the group's journey did not only consist of evenings such as the one they spent in the highland hut. Dorothy's narrative also reveals the often-overlooked reality of the treacherous landscape they traveled. The Wordsworths did not travel with a guide or a servant and this lack of extra assistance almost spelled the end of their trip on the road to Glen Coe. This moment in Dorothy's narrative demonstrates how dangerous traveling could be, as their horse was spooked when they were on the road close to the water. William's attempts to control the horse were futile:

> we both leapt upon the ground, and the horse dragged the car after him,
> he going backwards down the bank of the loch, and it was turned over,
> half in the water, the horse lying on his back, struggling in the harness,
> a frightful sight! I gave up everything; thought that the horse would be
> lamed, and the car broken to pieces. Luckily a man came up in the same
> moment, and assisted William in extricating the horse…. (*Recollections* 147)

It would have been disastrous for the group if they had lost their horse and their cart with their belongings. Dorothy's inclusion of this scene reminds readers that traveling through Scotland could be demanding and that they should be prepared for a strenuous journey. Not only was the act of traveling dangerous itself, but they were not always certain of having warm and safe lodgings each night. Dorothy and William often traveled over ten miles a day and would be walking to their next destination well into the afternoon or evening. On one such day they had traveled at least sixteen miles and were turned away from the public-house they had meant to stay in. Although they entreated lodging for the sake of their horse more than themselves, they were forced to seek shelter elsewhere. This difficulty caused them to miss the sight of the Pass of Killiecrankie, but they could not bring themselves to be too resentful of the loss "when [they] had seven miles to travel in the dark, with a poor beast almost sinking with fatigue" (*Recollections* 170). Dorothy continued to show sympathy for their animal and was wary of its condition throughout their journey. While many contemporary picturesque travel guides commented on road conditions and often recommended certain routes or lodgings, Dorothy's emphasis on the difficulty of traveling continues to elucidate the dangers or hardships that could befall those in search of the picturesque.

The events that Dorothy chose to record reveal her unique perspective, as she continually included details that might easily be overlooked or suppressed in the name of the picturesque, such as the horse's difficulty and conversations with the people the travelers met. Although Dorothy had harsh criticism for a few Scottish people and did not enjoy the company or manners of everyone they met, she made meaningful connections with several women who left significant impressions upon her. As a woman herself, Dorothy had access to the interior workings of life and domesticity in the villages and towns they encountered; this was demonstrated on the

evening that Dorothy and William were turned away from the public-house in Blair after their sixteen-mile day. The travelers were forced to trudge on and were luckily spared further hardship that night by a woman who led them to her cottage for the evening. The woman's kindness immediately endeared her to Dorothy. Dorothy was interested in learning about the woman and her family, her husband and a single child, and observed that they lived in poverty, assisting their much wealthier neighbor in exchange for free rent (*Recollections* 171). At this point in the narrative Dorothy had taken a break from her writing and could no longer recall exact details, and she wished she had taken notes from her conversation with the impoverished woman. It is obvious that Dorothy valued the woman's compassion, as she was generous even when she did not have much to give, and was truly disappointed that she was unable to fully record their interaction.

After their horse was spooked on the road from Leadhills to Glen Coe Dorothy and William stopped in a village to employ the blacksmith to fix the horse's harness. Dorothy rested in the blacksmith's home with his wife, Mrs. Otto, and engaged in lengthy conversation with her and several other women. Although the home is not clean, Mrs. Otto's "benevolent, happy countenance" creates a comfortable environment (*Recollections* 148). Dorothy then meets Mrs. Otto's neighbor, a woman from Leadhills, and when she learns that Dorothy had just sojourned there "a joy lighted up her countenance which [Dorothy] shall never forget" and the woman's "eyes filled with tears" (*Recollections* 148). A further connection was made between Dorothy and the women of the village when it was discovered that there was an important family living there who had come from around Grasmere. Dorothy was treated extremely well by the women she met in this village – women whom she and William might have passed over if it had not been for their earlier mishap.

It appears that over the course of their trip, through her interactions with the Scottish people, particularly the women, Dorothy recognized that her perspective was entwined with her own financially secure situation. During their second visit to the ferry-house at Inversneyde, Dorothy learned from their hostess that Coleridge had commented on the improvements that might be made to the home; while the house was in a sorry state, allowing rainwater in to cover the floor of the house, the people themselves were not impoverished and could afford the amendments. However, the woman confided in Dorothy that if they were to improve their home, they would be in danger of being perceived as wealthier and subsequently might be charged more in rent (*Recollections* 184). Dorothy's recognition of Coleridge's privileged, offhand comment, combined with the knowledge that the family must live in a dilapidated home to avoid being overcharged, seems to affect Dorothy's perspective; immediately following this disclosure she observes and empathizes with a poor family being ferried across the lake, particularly the wife and mother:

> [her] 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. (*Recollections* 184)

Although Dorothy has long commented on the conditions of Scotland and its people, this is the first obvious moment where she shows a consciousness of her own fortunate circumstances. Rather than continuing to equate poverty with the inability to fully appreciate Scotland's beauty, she recognizes the disparity between her own experiences and those of the impoverished. Dorothy knows the comforts of her Grasmere home await her at the end of their journey, while the poor woman may continue to suffer.

Dorothy's narrative concludes with their arrival home at Grasmere, where Mary awaits with little John and their friend Joanna Hutchinson (*Recollections* 218). The narrative is not only written entirely from Grasmere then, but she begins and ends the account with their home as well. Throughout her record of the tour, it is difficult to tell if Dorothy recognized how extensively she drew upon picturesque values and how they affected her representation of the environment and Scotland's people, particularly the less wealthy, impoverished working class. Her acknowledgement of the tradition's limitations when describing some of the landscapes the travelers encountered indicates that she was self-aware enough not to present erroneous images or interpretations of the physical environment. This is especially important when considering she wrote the entire narrative after their journey; she would have had time to ruminate on her descriptions and chose to reflect the picturesque even though at some level she was aware of its dangers. It is possible that Dorothy's conflicting environmental perspective, imbued here with the picturesque, was a result of her unfamiliarity with most of Scotland and its people, which was so unlike Grasmere, where she and William knew the land and their neighbors intimately. What is perhaps most essential to our understanding of the *Recollections* is that Dorothy endeavored to connect with Scotland's people everywhere she went; this is particularly noticeable in her conversations with different types and classes of women. She was building a community of domesticity that she could reflect fondly upon after they had moved on, which is contrary to how she aestheticized the people they did *not* meet. Regardless of how we are to evaluate Dorothy's awareness of her participation in the picturesque tradition, we can trust that she strove to convey her experiences and thoughts candidly, as she did throughout the entirety of her writing life.

## Afterword: Dorothy Wordsworth's Ethos and Modern Environmentalism

In her discussion of Dorothy and William's much-loved home in Grasmere and the Lake District, Newlyn writes that "increasingly, the Wordsworths distanced themselves from picturesque aesthetics and romantic tourism, finding their communal identity as writers who belonged to a local landscape and its working community" ('*All in Each Other'* 203). This idea of not only settling in a home but becoming intimately familiar with its landscape and people was significant for the siblings who for so long had yearned for a place of their own. The importance of fostering a relationship between oneself and the land one calls home can be found in the Wordsworths' writing and in the work of writers who brought about the rise of modern environmentalism beginning in the 1960's and 70's. Critics have already drawn connections between the values of the canonical Romantic writers and today's concerns of environmental degradation and conservation.[13] In this research project, I have discussed Dorothy's unique environmental ethos and how it was influenced by her community-centered identity and her connections to her home and environment. In Dorothy's work, I see important links between her individual values and those of modern environmental writers. The ongoing climate crisis and my personal environmentalist ideals have spurred my interest in exploring what can be learned from returning to values presented in Dorothy Wordsworth's environmental writing.

[13]See Lewis and Sandra Hinchman's "What We Owe the Romantics" in *Environmental Values* vol. 16, no. 3, 2007, pp. 333-354 for an extended exploration of Romanticism's impact on modern environmentalism. The Hinchmans posit that while the Romantics had "untenable scientific ideas," their significance is in their recognition that emotional and caring connections with the land are necessary to its preservation; See Katey Castellano's "Romantic Conservatism in Burke, Wordsworth, and Wendell Berry" in *Substance* vol. 40, no. 2, 2011, pp. 73-91 for a discussion of Berry's ideologies as they relate to William Wordsworth's values of conservationism and his wariness of "improving" the land. Both the Hinchmans' and Castellano's work engages with William Wordsworth, but makes no mention of Dorothy.

While William was familiar with Grasmere as a schoolboy years before he and Dorothy would make their home there, Dorothy would eventually grow to know and love the land as much as he did. The importance of a familiar relationship with the land on which one lives is inherent in modern environmental writer Wendell Berry's philosophy. Upon returning to his native Kentucky, where he would make his permanent home, Berry writes that he "walked over it, looking, listening, smelling, touching, alive to it as never before. [He] listened to the talk of [his] kinsmen and neighbors as [he] had never done" (7). Berry's ideology rests on the importance of having a "native" land, a land one is born to and will always belong to; he writes of "the intimacy the mind makes with the place it awakens in" (7). However, I suggest that these principles can apply to any land where a person feels most at home and attuned to their environment. For the Wordsworths, this place was their chosen home in the Lake District.

The consciousness that Berry writes of includes not just the place one lives, but its people as well; this idea is prevalent throughout Dorothy's writing. While she was intimately familiar with the Lake District's environment, Dorothy's journals and letters record visits and walks with friends and convey a vested interest in the well-being of her neighbors. The Ashburner family, Thomas and Peggy and their children, lived in a small cottage just up and across the road from the Wordsworths' Dove Cottage. In a journal entry from November 16, 1801, Dorothy mentions Peggy Ashburner being sick with a terrible cough (*Grasmere* 38). Later in the month, Dorothy writes that she sent Peggy some goose, and that Peggy in turn sent Dorothy honey (*Grasmere* 41). It seems that Dorothy wanted to be of assistance to her neighbor, and in her short entry from December 20, she quickly noted that Peggy had recovered and their children looked well (*Grasmere* 49). The health of her neighbors was important to her and warranted recurrent notation in her journal.

Dorothy's environmental perspective can be compared with more recent environmental writers as well. Robin Wall Kimmerer is a plant ecologist and environmental biologist who combines her scientific background with her indigenous cultural beliefs to advocate for improved relationships between people and the earth. In *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), Kimmerer writes that she is often asked "what one thing [she] would recommend to restore relationship between land and people," and her typical response is to "plant a garden" (126). In Chapter Two of this project I drew attention to Dorothy's journals written during the Wordsworths' time in Grasmere and her unique mode of self-expression and writing style present within them. However, the journals are also significant for their portrayal of Dorothy's consistent cultivation of the Wordsworths' carefully plotted and lovingly maintained garden.

Part of what made Dove Cottage so attractive to the Wordsworths was that it would be truly their own, to remodel as they wished in accordance with their earlier dreams. Bordered by woodland, the cottage land included a garden and orchard, which would become a locus of natural creative inspiration and peace for both Dorothy and William. The garden was both practical and ornamental, and Dorothy planted only what could be found and foraged in the surrounding area; both she and William did not believe in "improving" land through imported objects, so there were no exotic flora brought in for viewing pleasure or aesthetics. Rather, Dorothy's journal shows habitual collecting of mosses and plants, or gathering of flower cuttings from neighbors' yards to replant in her own garden. Peas, beans, lemon thyme, and daisies were a small selection of the eclectic assortment of flora that constituted their garden.

Kimmerer writes that "in a garden, food arises from partnership" (126). There is a reciprocity that occurs between gardener and soil, and each reaps the benefits of this relationship. "Partnership" not only describes what transpires within a garden but can be applied to most

aspects of the Wordsworths' daily lives. While Dorothy was the primary architect of their garden, the act of gardening itself was a collective effort, as all tasks were in the Wordsworth home. On a morning in early June 1802 when William and their brother John were away, Dorothy wrote that she "worked in the garden & planted flowers" while "John Fisher stuck the peas" and "Molly weeded & washed" (*Grasmere* 7). Molly was Molly Fisher, a girl employed daily by the Wordsworths to help with housework. John, Molly's brother, also helped the Wordsworths with their garden and the eventual construction they completed there, which included a bower, a terrace, and steps. William, when not composing verses, was an accomplished gardener as well, and there are many references throughout Dorothy's journal to his working alongside her.

Speaking again of reciprocity, the Wordsworths' cultivation of their home, garden, and orchard provided numerous benefits for them. Primarily, their garden was physically nourishing and sustaining for them and for their neighbors; there are several entries in Dorothy's journal where she mentions taking peas or plants to their neighbor and other acts of sharing or trading food. The orchard itself provided a resting place and shelter from the sun, and Dorothy's journal shows that the siblings often sat there under the trees. The garden and orchard offered creative inspiration as well; Dorothy and William "sauntered" in the garden and while Dorothy read and wrote letters in the orchard, William habitually went to the orchard to compose his poems (*Grasmere* 12). Although Dorothy's motives are not necessarily based in ecology or climate science, which form the basis of today's arguments for environmental protection, her unique ethos emphasizes a spectrum of personal reasons to safeguard and cherish the land. Environmental writers such as Berry and Kimmerer suggest that when people foster personal connections to the land, they can bring about environmental change; people are less likely to

continue devastating the land they know well and understand. For the Wordsworths, this sense of familiarity with the land extended to the greater Lake District as well, and their own home was not complete without their personal landscape to care for, connect with, and enjoy.

Several years after Dorothy and William had settled in Grasmere, Dorothy's deeply personal and emotional connections to their Dove Cottage garden and orchard were brought even more into focus. Dorothy's younger brother John came to stay at Dove Cottage in January 1800, a visit that would last for eight months until he was called back to sea as captain of the East India Trading Company Ship *Earl of Abergavenny* (Gittings and Manton 98). John was an active participant in the domestic activities of the Wordsworth home. He helped furnish the house, assisted in the garden, and was a welcome addition to Dorothy and William's regular walks. Dorothy's "heart was right sad" to see John leave at the end of September. Over a year after John departed from Grasmere, Dorothy wrote of "John's Grove," a place her younger brother must have frequented as there she and William "walked backwards & forwards some time for dear John's sake" (*Grasmere* 72). Although Dorothy and William missed John's daily presence, visiting a piece of land that he loved must have recalled cheerful memories from the time the three siblings spent together.

John's presence could also be felt around the cottage grounds, and in one entry Dorothy comments on the "beautiful" state of "John's Rose tree" (*Grasmere* 104). Soon, this presence would become bittersweet; John Wordsworth died at sea in February 1805. The Wordsworths were stunned by his loss, and it affected their perception of their environment for some time. In the month after John's death, Dorothy wrote a letter to her childhood friend, Jane, expressing how her grief for John was intimately tied to the land they walked together in Grasmere:

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… I know it will not always be so – the time will come when the light of the setting sun upon these mountain tops will be as heretofore a pure joy – not the same *gladness,* that can never be – but yet a joy even more tender. It will soothe me to know how happy *he* would have been could he have seen the same beautiful spectacle. (De Selincourt, *Early Letters* 467)

In the same moment that Dorothy expresses pain at her loss, she recognizes that soon her memories of John will make Grasmere and the cottage even more significant to her.

A few years later the arrival of several children caused the Wordsworth family to outgrow their cottage, and they were forced to move to a larger home within the Lake District. Dove Cottage had been as close to an ideal home for Dorothy as she could imagine, and she missed it greatly. However, the true agony came two years after De Quincey had moved into their beloved cottage; he "polled the ash tree and cut down the hedge all around the orchard" (Newlyn, '*All in Each Other'* 226). Dorothy was so distraught that she had no desire to ever speak to their friend again (Newlyn, '*All in Each Other'* 227). The destruction of the environment that she had so carefully cultivated, which had meant so much to her and was the locus of her fondest memories with both William and John, was a devastating blow.

Dorothy Wordsworth's meaningful connections with the land she lived on and cultivated, and with the people she shared that land with, speak to the values that modern environmental writers encourage today. It can be difficult for people to understand why they should care for land that they do not know or have never seen. Motivating people to begin by developing connections with their own environments can lead to a greater appreciation for the earth as a whole; while Dorothy loved the Lake District, her environmental ethos was not limited to her

home environment. Through an exploration of Dorothy's unique environmental perspective and the depth of her care for the land, I suggest that today's environmentalist movement could benefit from embodying the compassion and dedication that Dorothy showed for the natural world, and perhaps be more effective for it.

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