WORDSWORTH'S SCRIPTURAL TOPOGRAPHIES

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ABSTRACT

Wordsworth's Scriptural Topographies
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In 1963, M.H. Abrams suggested that the ultimate source of Wordsworth's poetry is the Bible, and, in particular, the New Testament. This thesis, however, demonstrates the importance of the Old Testament and offers the first extended analysis of Wordsworth's use of Old Testament rhetoric. It examines both his affectionate perceptions of the natural world, and the Biblical recollections that saturate his writing. The purpose is to align two critical discourses— on Scripture and topography — and in doing so, situate Wordsworth's sense of himself as a poet- prophet in both Britain and America.

The four chapters are structured topographically (Dwelling, Vales, Mountains, Rivers), and organised around a phenomenological experience of lived space, as expressed in key poems. Close analysis of Wordsworth's poetic language from *Descriptive Sketches* to *Yarrow Revisited* reveals the influence of the Bible (and the recent analysis of sacred Hebrew poetry undertaken by Lowth), while the theories of Heidegger and Bachelard provide a conceptual approach to Wordsworth's investment in nature. The epilogue opens questions of Wordsworth's reception in America by exploring the awareness of cultural and physical geography and sense of Wordsworth's prophetic ministry amongst his heirs. The thesis concludes that Wordsworth's extensive recourse to scriptural language and the physical landscape strengthened his claim to be a Prophet of Nature. His poetry self-consciously adopted the universal 'language of men' – that of the King James Bible.

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Contents

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NOTE ON STYLE AND TEXTS

As far as possible I have prepared this thesis in accordance with the MHRA style guide (3rd edition, 2013). Unless otherwise stated, all quotation of Wordsworth's poetry is from the 'Reading Texts' in the Cornell Wordsworth Series; line numbers appear in footnotes to aid the reader. All quotation of the Bible is taken from the *Authorised King James Version*, and all italicisation in biblical quotation is original.

A version of Chapter Two was presented at the Wordsworth Summer Conference, 2011, and subsequently appeared as 'Lowth, Landscape and Biblical Echoes in "Home at Grasmere"', in *Grasmere 2012*, ed. by Richard Gravil (Tirril: Humanities-Ebooks, 2012), pp. 31-41. Sections of Chapter Three were presented at the NASSR conference, Washington D.C., 2014. Thanks are due to delegates of both conferences for helpful discussions.

Il est vrai qu'un livre de géographie contient un large savoir scientifique sur les paysages, les fleuves, les mers, mais ce savoir ne m'est accessible que sur la base d'une expérience individuelle originale, plus fondamentale et plus absolue. Cette expérience nécessite un contact quotidien avec les paysages, les fleuves et les mers.

-Maurice Merleau-Ponty

INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of his days, an elderly Wordsworth famously dictated to his friend Isabella Fenwick the connections between his poems and the real people and places that prompted them. These biographical details, collectively known as the 'Fenwick Notes', have provided insight into the composition of his poems and evidence of authorial intention. One such note in particular, however, casts light on Wordsworth's collected opus and triggered this study. Commenting on the 'Ode: Intimations to Immortality', a topic closer to him in 1843 than in 1804 when he first wrote it, he said:

> This was composed during my residence at Town-End, Grasmere […] Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere "a simple child that lightly draws its breath and feels its life in every limb, what should it know of death?" but it was not so much from [feelings] of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch & Elijah, & almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I s[d] be translated in something of the same way to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence & I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes.[2]

Although he admitted to changing his mind in later life, ('In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of the opposite character,') his dual allegiance to Scripture and place remained: a knowledge of Enoch and Elijah at such a young age did not wither, returning to him in his later years. Putting aside charges of heresy against Wordsworth for his suggestion of the soul's previous existence and philosophical accounts of the boy's understanding of a transcendental world, what remains in the memory recalled to Isabella

1 'It is true that a book of geography contains a large body of scientific knowledge about landscapes, rivers, and seas, but this knowledge is accessible to me only on the basis of a more fundamental and more absolute, original, individual experience. This experience requires an everyday contact with landscapes, rivers, and seas.' Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), my own translation.

2 *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared Curtis, Jared, rev. electronic edn (Tirril: Humanities-Ebooks, 2007), pp. 123-24. Subsequent entries referred to as *IF*.

Fenwick is a fundamental, physical attachment to the landscape as it presented itself unfolding before him. He did not grasp for another human or his books, but merged himself, as literally as he could, with the closest things in his immediate environs: in this case, a wall or a tree. He took what the local landscape provided him that was most tangible in the moment and united himself with its reality.

I

The connection throughout Wordsworth's poetical corpus between Scripture and topography, in particular local topography, begins at a very early age. The elements are present over a lifetime of writing, with the poet's earliest memories of childhood exemplary of both a subconscious application of a knowledge of Scripture and an attachment to place and landscape. This exploration found its roots in a claim made by David Norton in *A History of the Bible in Literature*. Speaking of Wordsworth, he said 'that he loved his Bible, but not enough to suggest that his perhaps lukewarm love was of central importance to him.'[3] Wordsworth was no Milton—that is true—but it struck me that his interest in the Bible could not have been at best 'lukewarm'. The numerous allusions, quotations and images taken from Scripture indicated a familiarity with it that was so commonplace it could be easily overlooked. To prove this point, in the pages that follow I offer a reading of those moments of his poetry where Nature was endowed with a moral force, acting both externally as a means of chastisement as well as internally as a product of the poet's own emotional infliction—usually that of guilt. The childhood moments of transgression that occur in the 'spots of time' in *The Prelude* raised yet another question: how could a reader reconcile the moral transgressions the young Wordsworth felt (and the older Wordsworth documented) with the seemingly dissonant moments of divine communion that were later attributed to the spots in the poems? What the spots of time indicate, I wish to show, is not only that sort of reconciliation of transgression with divine communion, but the way in which Wordsworth's poetic mind relied on his local surroundings—nature, landscape,

3 David Norton, *History of the Bible as Literature*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) II, 150.

place—to create his identity as a 'chosen son': a prophet-poet of the Romantic age.

The significance of Enoch and Elijah, prophets of the Old Testament, is of course that they do not die—rather, both ascend into the heavens. Enoch, a late descendent of Adam and a forefather to Noah, was described as having 'walked' with God:

> And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not, for God took him.[4]

The word 'walk' recurs in Scriptures in the context of God's dwelling in the Garden of Eden and in the tabernacle, connecting walking with being.[5] Enoch's life, 365 years, was short in comparison to his peers (Adam lived to be 930, while his own son Methuselah was 969)[6] and his legacy recorded not in the King James Version but in the Apocrypha, which made up a part of the Wordsworths' family Bible.[7] Elijah's role as a prophet of the Old Testament, on the other hand, was greater, but it was his ascension that was of interest to the boy: 'And it came to pass, as they [Elijah and Elisha] still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.'[8] Like Moses before him, Elijah also had powers of splitting the water: it was on the dry ground beneath the river Jordan that he walked with Elisha before his ascension. However, Enoch and Elijah are not the most obvious choices when considering those who were 'translated' into heaven: even those unfamiliar with the Bible would have first come to think of Jesus (and in some cases, of Mary). Yet Wordsworth chose these two prophets as his examples, indicating at the very least a profound knowledge of the Bible, even for such a young boy, and an affinity with the two men: he knew better than to compare himself to Christ. The Old Testament Scriptures would have been familiar not just to him however, but to all his readers throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The spots of time each demonstrate the interpolation between Scripture and topography

4 Genesis 5. 22-24.
5 See G.K. Beale's translation below, 'Dwelling', p. 31.
6 Genesis 5. 5; 27.
7 I am grateful to Jeff Cowton and the Jerwood Centre for allowing me to inspect the Wordsworth family Bible.
8 II Kings 2. 11.

found in Wordsworth. Given their number, I propose to briefly look at those 'spots of time' in *The Prelude* that Wordsworth found most problematic—that is to say, those which stem from negative emotions: The Robbing of the Snares, Bird's Nesting, Skating, and perhaps most importantly, the Stolen Boat.[9] The emotions that arise are linked with the physical exertion of the activity that makes up the memory; however, the reason for their being remembered is not the activity itself but the experience surrounding it. These serve as the entry points into what the rest of this thesis is attempting to show.

In 'The Robbing of the Snares' episode, beginning with the line 'Fair seed-time had my soul', the transgression the young poet admits to committing is that of robbery.[10] Wordsworth, walking late at night, plunders the rewards of snares (or traps) other farmers had set up. Unlike simple theft, the incident bears an element of violence, to which Wordsworth attests by admitting 'I was a fell destroyer'. The usage of the term 'fell' is not without gravity: the word can be read as both noun and adjective, providing several readings. First, it refers simply to the skin or hide of an animal, a mild reference to the woodcocks he was stealing. Secondly, as an adjective referring to 'animals and men, their actions and their attributes' it implies fierce, savage; cruel, [or] ruthless'.[11] In the north-west of England, 'fell' also indicates a hill or mountain, a meaning which carries with it the weight of ecological and emotional destruction—what is of particular significance to the elder Wordsworth is the timing of the passage. He begins it by re-establishing his presence in his birthplace at the age of nine: 'in that beloved Vale to which, erelong, | I was transplanted'.[12] Yet if the boy had been so jubilant to return to his birthplace, his attitude of 'plundering' towards the landscape is one of obvious subversion: the behaviour, distinctly child-like, is one of rebellious contradiction. It is interesting to note the context in which Wordsworth embeds this phrase. The sentence begins 'In thought and wish | That time, my shoulder all with

9 *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by Mark L. Reed, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), vol I, I. 309-32; 333-50; 451-489; 372-426. All references will be to the 1805 Prelude in this edition (vol I) unless otherwise indicated. Hereafter *Prelude*.

10 *Prelude*, I. 306-33.

11 'fell, n.' *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), [accessed 19 September 2014].

12 *Prelude*, I. 308-9.

springes hung, | I was a fell destroyer.'[13] 'In thought and wish' implies he was not actually a fell destroyer, but merely *wished* himself to be one, whilst wandering ready to hunt. At this point in the text, the reader has not yet been made aware of the violation—it is not until the boy, 'o'erpowered by [his] better reason', takes the prey of others.[14] His visitations, however, are marked as anxious, which Wordsworth attends to with the repetition of 'hurrying'.[15]

Both the anxiety and the fear that is later instilled after committing the robbery indicate that the boy was very much aware of his actions, but by allowing himself to be taken over by emotion, he also allows Nature to grow in his imagination. His self awareness, however, is what causes this incident to be committed to memory—he knows his place has disturbed the cosmos in some way:

> Moon and stars
> Were shining o'er my head; I was alone
> And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
> That was among them.[16]

The trouble his presence causes in the hills is one that is self-imposed: he feels his own guilt manifested later as 'low breathings coming after me'.[17] Wordsworth's portrayal of nature as a moral force raises questions whether it was the boy's own conscience which allowed for nature to act upon him, or whether nature does in fact serve as an agent of chastisement. Nature in this case, works along similar lines to Grace – one has to be opened to it before one can receive it. By resorting to the word 'breathings', Wordsworth aligns his poetry with a biblical tradition of *spiritus*: 'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'[18] That breath was also M.H. Abrams's 'corresponding breeze' that resonates through the entire Romantic canon. The image of a life-giving air-in-motion is not just Romantic, however, nor just biblical, as Abrams notes, but belonging to myth and folklore: from the Latin *anima* to the Sanskrit *atman* the breath was present

13 *Prelude*, I. 315-317.
14 Ibid., I. 326.
15 Ibid., I. 320-321.
16 Ibid., I. 321-4.
17 Ibid., I. 330.
18 Genesis 2. 7.

throughout all of recorded history.[19] In the Old Testament, the spirit or breath, 'ruach', animates the waters and the soul as well as the spirit of the first man; it has the power to be both destructive (as in Ezekiel 13. 11-13) and creative.[20] The external 'sweet breath of Heaven' in *The Prelude* is matched only with an internal 'corresponding mild creative breeze', inspiring and generating life.[21] Yet Wordsworth's 'breathings' in the Robbing of the Snares do not appear to be of the same nature, as they are filled with a negativity of the previously committed 'deed'. Because the aftermath of the sin occurs entirely in the boy's head, the haunting effect, created by the phrase 'coming after me', indicates the poet's desire to get away from the 'breathings'; which, if read as an act of God's creative Grace, reveal the boy's imaginative inclination to use the chastising force of Nature as a means of self-imposed punishment. This in turn indicates a much more acute morality than was originally attributed, and a developed conscience.

The following episode, 'Bird's Nesting',[22] moves from the 'frosty wind' of autumn in the previous episode to the springtime, 'when on the southern banks | The shining sun had from her knot of leaves | Decoyed the primrose flower.'[23] This, juxtaposed with the turned back of being chased, creates a new opening; a second chance of sorts. Yet again, Wordsworth sets himself up as a 'plunderer' eager to connect the destructive actions of both episode.[24] Here too, he is frozen by fear:

> Oh, when I have hung
> Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
> And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
> But ill sustained, and almost, as it seemed,
> Suspended by the blast which blew amain,
> Shouldering the naked crag.[25]

Literally hanging off the mountains he so loved, Wordsworth as a boy is again presented with the possibility of accepting Grace: the same *spiritus* that he imagined chasing him is now present in

19 M.H. Abrams, 'The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor', *The Kenyon Review* 19 (1957), 113-130 (p. 121).
20 Abrams, pp. 121-22.
21 *Prelude,* I. 41-47.
22 Ibid., I. 334-51.
23 Ibid., I. 334-5.
24 Ibid., I. 336. It is worth nothing, however, that ravens were enemies of lambs and boys were encouraged to raid the nests.
25 Ibid., I. 341-46.

the almost Pentecostal 'blast which blew amain', suspending him from the mountain side. The language of nature spoke with a 'strange utterance' to the boy's ears. The act in this episode is much more physically threatening, thereby rousing the landscape out of his own fear of death.

Returning to Wordsworth's Fenwick note raises another central issue: his inability to 'think of external things as having external existence'. The concern in the 'Bird's Nesting' passage is not with raven's eggs, but rather with the conflation of internal and external that is central to this and other spots of time. The 'utterance' of the wind and the 'motion' of the clouds are, superficially, descriptions of the boy's feeling of vertigo having climbed out on the 'perilous ridge'. Motion, however, implies something more. Like the 'undistinguishable motion' of the earlier 'Robbing of the Snares' episode, the movement is driven from within. It is also 'a motion and a spirit, that impels | All thinking things' in 'Tintern Abbey', the movement of the 'divine breath' that is felt when one is in the need of Grace.[26]

Motion also guides the remaining two negatively-infused spots of time: 'Skating' and 'The Stolen Boat'.[27] In these episodes, motions refer both to sporting activities—skating and rowing—and to the continuous motions of the landscape that outlive the boy's own physical trajectories. Set 'in the frosty season' of winter, Wordsworth tells of a time he went skating past his curfew: 'I heeded not the summons […] The village clock tolled six.' Instead, he chose to give in to the rapture of the moment, wheeling about 'Proud and exulting, like an untired horse | That cares not for his home.'[28] What is particular about his episode distinguishing it from the others is the acuteness of Wordsworth's ear: the bell tolls 'clear and loud', the skates 'hissed along the polished ice', the 'resounding horn' bellowed, 'And not a voice was idle'. The entire passage is a din-filled chaos of sound and sense: the 'precipices rang aloud', even the 'leafless trees' and icy crags 'tinkled like iron' and 'the distant hills | Into the tumult sent an alien sound | Of melancholy, not unnoticed.' The motion of sound—vibrations—finally give way to another motion when the boy retires 'Into a silent bay.' Once his body stops wheeling, however, 'the

26 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798', *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 116-20, ll. 101-2.
27 *Prelude,* I. 453-502; 373-428, respectively.
28 Ibid., I. 453; 55; 59-60.

solitary Cliffs' continue, 'even as if the earth had rolled | With visible motion her diurnal round.' Though what he is describing was the mere childhood pleasure of dizziness (lost to most in old age), the importance of the passage lies in the melancholy 'alien' sounds of the distant hills. With the union of the 'Souls of lonely places' that he later expresses comes the admonition of the hand of nature. Like St Augustine, whose confession is spurred by a melancholy wind, Wordsworth also comes into self awareness in the presence of such sounds, relating time and space into a single moment in the poet's personal history and memory.[29]

The final spot of time discussed here, 'Boat Stealing' epitomises the ability of the local topography to instill the boy with feelings of guilt. Seeing a boat on the shores of Ullswater at midnight, a young Wordsworth gives in to the desire to row it across the lake at night. As he does so, 'a huge Cliff' uprears its head and frightening the child, ushers him back to shore. Motion figures significantly in this episode. Here, as in previous examples, the young Wordsworth exists in a communion with external things, unable to detach himself from them. The act of rowing creates a cadence, a rhythmic sound that blends with the sound of 'mountain-echoes' that move his boat on. The huge cliff, we are told, 'Rose up between [him] and the stars, and still | With measured motion, like a living thing' strode after him.[30] The mountain thus creates a movement *within* the boy. Again, he presents an anxiety of being followed or chased, instigated by the emotional movement of guilt within him: 'It was an act of stealth | And troubled pleasure', he confesses.[31] This notion of 'troubled pleasure' is crucial to our understanding of Wordsworth's relationship with the divine: it is indicative of the rise in consciousness that the topographical elements—the mountains, winds and cliffs—incite. It is through particular experiences of space (the spots of time are indeed 'spots' of specific locality) and time (both as incidents in his childhood and his memory) that Wordsworth comes to use a biblical rhetoric: language evoking the style, manner and often imagery of the King James Bible. Because these intersections are profoundly personal for the poet, he was aware that his poetry required a more removed, but nevertheless familiar reference-point. The Scriptures served as that reference, when the specific

29 Abrams, p. 124.
30 *Prelude*, I. 410-12.
31 Ibid., I. 388-9.

places (Grasmere vale, Ullswater lake) did not. A conscientiousness of this sort of experience is what demands a phenomenological approach: one which a reading of Heidegger's *Dwelling, Building, Thinking* provides.

'Spots of time' are also very much removed from current trends in literature and science, a trend C. P. Snow first identified as the 'two cultures problem'. Not all of Wordsworth's poetry—or Romantic poetry, for that matter—requires a reading alongside contemporary and current scientific knowledge. Certain knowledge came from communal sources, from unqualifiable sources, from sources felt within.

II

In a recent article in *Science* magazine, entitled 'Pursuit of the Common Good', Cambridge economist Sir Partha Dasgupta and San Diego climatologist Veerabhadran Ramanathan proposed that religious leaders have a hand in the call to action towards climate change and sustainability.[32] Their reasoning went beyond the pulpit mobilising public opinion and voluntary organisations delivering funds and aid to ideological ones: environmental issues are historically religious ones. Their argument harks back to a precedent in the 1960s when Lynn Townsend White Jr, a Princeton historian, also published an article in *Science* entitled 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis'.[33] Suggesting a move in the same direction, White argued that 'since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.'[34] Returning to the religious roots of environmental discourse paves the way for a discussion of exactly *how* that religious genealogy came to permeate our understanding of landscape.

This study is the first detailed exploration of Wordsworth's use of biblical language, rhetoric and imagery in the context of the landscape. It concerns itself with questions of identity—both local and national, belonging, space and place, geography and topography. It

32 Partha Dasgupta and Veerabhadran Ramanathan, 'Pursuit of the Common Good', *Science*, 345. 6203 (19 September 2014), 1457-1458, DOI: 10.1126/science.1259406.

33 Lynn White, Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science*, New Series, 155. 3767 (March 10, 1967), 1203-1207.

34 Ibid., p. 1207.

takes two elements of Wordsworth's writing as its starting point: his affectionate and detailed perceptions of the natural world, particularly the natural world of his home, and the undeniable lexical traces of the King James Version that are audible everywhere in his writing.

The study of Scripture as poetry came to Wordsworth, as to most of Western readership, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, primarily through the work of Robert Lowth, who engaged not only with the poetics but also with the thematic concerns of the Ancient Hebrews. Unsurprisingly, these included their fraught, but inseparable, relation to the land. The current body of criticism duly notes Wordsworth's reliance on the Bible, beginning not in the least with M.H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism*, a work which is still taught and read as one of the cornerstones of Romantic criticism over forty years later. This thesis is greatly indebted to Abrams' work not only for directing me towards the scriptural in Wordsworth but leaving suggestive leads. Geoffrey Hartman is of course the other critic who has written richly, though not solely, on Wordsworth's scriptural resonances. *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-18* (1964) and *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (1987) have as a central theme finding possibilities of the sacred in his poetry. His works in particular gave rise to the prophetic aspect of this thesis. Martin Heidegger's work on dwelling laid the third and final cornerstone of this thesis. Though brief, his essay 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' provided the conceptual framework upon which I was able to build my argument of Wordsworth's dwelling.

This is not meant to be a thesis about language or politics, nor is it concerned with Wordsworth's own personal religious convictions. His own trajectory from so-called pantheism to High Anglicanism, though evident in his poetry, does not play a part in his habitual use of biblical language: the residual language remains. Nor is this a linguistic reading of the biblical lexicon: the question of how much Hebrew Wordsworth (and Coleridge) knew is not relevant, though Wordsworth's knowledge of Hebrew, if at all existent, was extremely limited, while Coleridge's only came to its fruition during his later years at Highgate after he met Hyman Hurwitz, though how much he previously knew is unclear. This is not necessary for this thesis because Wordsworth's understanding of biblical Hebrew is not a literal reading but a translated one: therefore, it is conceptual (though rhythms, parallel phrasing, and so on, can remain). A

philological analysis would thus serve little purpose within the scope of this project. What I am prodding at is the undercurrent that flows through not just Wordsworth's poetry but the whole Romantic period: and that is the undercurrent of a society deeply steeped in religion at a time of unprecedented destruction to the environment through warfare and industrialisation. Concerns about home, national security, and locality weave their way through the works of Thomas Paine, William Godwin, William Blake, Robert Burns, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Clare, John Keats and countless others.

The most resounding of the biblical resonances lies in Wordsworth's self-fashioned prophetic calling – his claim in the 1805 *Prelude* that he was a 'chosen son'.[35] This formulation, both Mosaic and messianic, speaks without the mediation of Milton, which has been one the dominant modes of reading scriptural resonances in Romanticism to date. Among critical contributions on this matter, Herbert J.C. Grierson first published *Milton and Wordsworth, Poets and Prophets: A Study of their Reaction to Political Events* in 1937. Leslie Brisman's *Milton's Poetry of Choice and its Romantic Heirs* did not appear until 1973, followed by Max Schulz's *Paradise Preserved: Recreations of Eden in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England* (1985). Lucy Newlyn's foundational *'Paradise Lost' and the Romantic Reader* (1992) still has a place on syllabi in both the Early Modern and Romantic periods. Several major works exist on Romanticism's prophetic vein and biblical borrowings, not in the least Murray Roston's *Prophet and Poet: the Bible and the Growth of Romanticism* which came out in 1965. Stephen Prickett has published extensively on this topic, including *Words and the Word: Language, Poetics and Biblical Interpretation* (1986) and *Origins of Narrative: the Romantic Appropriation of the Bible* (1996). Prophecy has once again gained favour in the twenty-first century with Ian Balfour's recent work *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (2002).[36] Though Wordsworth features strongly in these works, there is only one account that considers him as the

35 *Prelude,* III. 82-88.

36 There has been one other study published since 2000, but its critical reception being rather minimal and its overall argument a reinterpretation of Stephen Prickett's *Words and the Word* against M.H. Abrams' paradigm of secularization in *Natural Supernaturalism*, I have not chosen to include it in this short literature review. Further, it concerns itself with Wordsworth's 'incarnation poetics' and oscillates, unconsciously, between the secular and the religious readings of Wordsworth (Prickett, Greenblatt). It does, however, provide a close study of biblical allusions in Wordsworth's poems. It is Deeanne Westbrook's *Wordsworth's Biblical Ghosts* (2001). Dennis Taylor, of Boston College, points out the majority of Westbrook's faults in his review in *Religion and the Arts* 14 (2010), 489-93.

primary topic, despite the fact that he perhaps moreso than any other Romantic poet (and in a very different way from Blake) embodied the persona of a prophet until his last days in Rydal Mount. This work is J.R. Watson's *Wordsworth's Vital Soul: the sacred and the profane in Wordsworth's poetry* (1982), but it takes as its subject the religious, rather than the scriptural, and is not concerned with Wordsworth's connection to the land.

Wordsworth, like Moses, actually saw 'into the life of things',[37] a phrase enjoyed for its for its multiplicity of emphases: '*We* see into the life of things', 'We *see* into the life of things'; 'We see *into* the life of things', 'We see into the *life* of things', 'We see into the life of *things*'. The emphasis is not on Wordsworth's readers ('We') nor into what was meant by 'life', as numerous studies explaining the philosophy behind his poems exist. Nor is this a material study of thing theory and Romantic objects. It is in the second and third ways of reading the passage that this thesis is centred: seeing—how Wordsworth sees the world—as contrasted with hearing or sensing, is explored in chapters Three and Four; while the internalisations of the life of things—what is meant by 'into'—are explored in chapters One and Two. Each chapter provides a different way to read the landscape biblically, and engage with the materials that demonstrate this in the most efficient way. The first chapter, 'Dwelling' considers what occurs when man is at home in his environment. These concepts, closely linked with ideas of space and place demand a phenomenological approach which helps shape consideration of what I call Wordsworth's 'dwelling' poems: poems in which 'being in place' is dominant over all other qualities and the meanings of those places are explored. These poems include 'The Swallow's Nest', 'Gipsies', 'Tintern Abbey', and 'We are Seven', but also some of his poems considered to be 'on the road', such as 'Old Man Travelling', 'Old Cumberland Beggar', and parts of *The Prelude*. This chapter holds the source for the undercurrent of my work: Wordsworth's ability to stay in place; his seeking of the *here* and the *now* in the relief of the land around him; his building of a tabernacle. It goes against the grain of literature on Wordsworth and walking, and of current trends towards mobility and transportation.[38] This sort of thinking is illuminated by the philosophies of Martin

37 'Tintern Abbey', l. 50.

38 For Wordsworth and walking literature, refer to Chapter One, p. 30n, in which examples of this sort

Heidegger and Gaston Bachelard, who help define our conceptions of space and place.

The next chapter, 'Vales', presents a study of a single poem about the Vale of Grasmere ('Home at Grasmere') alongside the Bible (in particular, the Psalms), with biblical criticism contemporary to its time to guide and shape the reading. The work of Robert Lowth is important here—and throughout the thesis—because his formulations of Hebrew poetry, I argue, very clearly influence Wordsworth's own. Wordsworth would have read Lowth in March of 1798 and September 1800 at the very latest, as Duncan Wu suggests.[39] Part of the criticism occurs on a structural level, allowing the syntactic and linguistic variations (parallelisms) to demonstrate the way in which for Wordsworth, his local landscape and the language of the Bible were intertwined. However, it is not a detailed linguistic or formal reading of the verse. I demonstrate how, by using a biblical paradigm, Wordsworth begins his prophetic and poetic ministries through the meditated act of homecoming. In doing so, I offer an alternative reading to the current tropes of criticism regarding 'Home at Grasmere' as a paradise.

In the third chapter, 'Mountains', Wordsworth's mountain ascents provide the first exploration of sound over sight: I analyse what are perhaps the most-often read sections of *The Prelude*—the crossing of the Alps and the Ascent of Snowdon—in conjunction with the Caves of Yordas passage that divides them, exploring not just their topography but the way in which it is internalised for the poet in a moment of revelation, like Moses on the Mount. The 'revelations' that occur in the mountaintops literally reveal a face, or in Silva Benso's terms, a nameless face, a 'faciality'. This image awakens the awareness of the other in nature, providing traction against Thomas Burnet's visions of the divine in mountains. Burnet wrote *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, or *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681), a book which suggested an alternative account to the creation of mountains on the surface of the earth. His importance to Wordsworth was in the fact that he saw in mountains opportunities to commune with the divine, breaking traditions during his lifetime. I

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of criticism are given.

39 Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 89. We have no definitive proof that Wordsworth read Lowth, but it is clear he read Blair's summary. The example cited in his Note to 'The Thorn' could have also come from Thomas Gibbons, *Rhetoric*, (London: J. and W Oliver, 1767), pp. 209-210. My thanks to Jim Engell for pointing me in this direction.

finally raise questions of sublimity, turning to the *immensity* of space by using Gaston Bachelard's insights to guide my reading of both alpine passages in *The Prelude* to link Wordsworth's love of Nature to the love of Mankind.

Mountains are always for Wordsworth accompanied by the sound of roaring waters, and as such, I turn my ear to the multitude of rivers, named and unnamed, that run through Wordsworth's oeuvre, including the Duddon, the Derwent, the Wye and the Yarrow in my fourth chapter, 'Rivers'. It is through these streams that Wordsworth is brought into his fullest consciousness and hears his prophetic calling; rivers are the external source for his life's vocation. My analysis of Wordsworth's rivers offers concentrated readings of several poems, including the *Duddon Sonnets*, 'On the Power of Sound', and *The Prelude*, which show how sound, rather than sight, governs Wordsworth's prophetic thought. I focus in particular on 'On the Power of Sound', which in nearly every stanza points to a stream as a source of its voice. The prophetic interaction is thus seen as oscillating between creating and perceiving, as we are made aware in 'Lines written a few miles above 'Tintern Abbey' and *The Prelude*. I argue that Wordsworth's use of rivers provides the external voice of his prophetic calling: the eternal 'sound of many waters' of the Book of Revelation that haunted him throughout his career.

My final turn takes the shape of an Epilogue, '*America*', in which I examine Wordsworth's reach as a 'prophet of the nation' by considering the reception of his poetry on the other side of the Atlantic. This transatlantic move provides perspective by comparing an American approach to landscape in the late nineteenth century with Wordsworth's own. The chapter addresses the rhetoric of Wordsworth's 'ministry' and 'followers', including American 'worshippers' who made 'pilgrimages' to Rydal Mount as part of his prophetic calling. Wordsworth's 'real language of men', as well as his prophetic calling, was thus carried beyond the British landscape into a landscape of English language in America by writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Elisabeth Peabody, and John Muir. Wordsworth's conviction to stay in place and his near-veneration of the local was not a call for man to inhabit the Lakes; on the contrary, it was the imperative to find in the local—in *every* local—traces of God. And the local was found in the local topography: the rises and falls of the land in each man's progression through his

everyday. One cannot be local without place. I consider the American landscape through the lens cultural and physical geography in primary and secondary sources, including letters from Wordsworth's American following. The ecological and economic complexities of both landscapes are brought out in a tension that emphasizes a bifocal relationship of the American public with Wordsworth's poetry, and Wordsworth's with the American public.

One of William Wordsworth's greatest concerns throughout his life was the question of Man's place in his environment: in 'Nature' and 'Society'. In the Western world, that symbiosis of man ('Society') and environment ('Nature') was codified by Christianity's triumph over paganism – the Bible shaped our understanding of place. In other words, the way we approached nature, consciously or not, was rooted in the texts of the Scripture. Lawrence Buell, among other modern literary critics, was not the first to make this point by blaming the opening chapters of the book of Genesis as the 'root cause of technodominationism', finding fault in the biblical language of 'dominating' and 'subduing' the creatures of the earth.[40] This has been the dominant view, though there are some critics who disagree.[41] The Bible in its entirety is anything but coherent: the Sermon on the Mount, for example, is often ignored or forgotten in this issue. Speaking to the gathered multitude, Christ says: 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?'[42] There are two messages in his teachings: first, that God will provide, 'for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself', and second, that man is no different from his fellow creatures, whose worth is not determined by their purpose on this earth.[43] This thesis takes into consideration all the different voices speaking at once. It provides a contextual approach to Wordsworth poetry by situating it within a discourse of sermons, readings and biblical study that occurred on a communal level, and pairs it with close readings of the poems

40 Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), p. 2. Lynn White Jr. in *Machina Ex Deo* (1968) began this critique; Wendell Berry in "The Gift of Good Land" commented on White, continuing the debate.

41 Keith Thomas, in *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), pp. 165-172, argues that the anthropocentric position had largely eroded by the seventeenth century. Though this may have been the case, strong elements of anthropocentrism still dominant government policy and twenty-first century life.

42 Matthew 6. 26.

43 Ibid., 6. 34.

and the biblical passages they evoke.

The grand work of the thesis involved very careful scrutiny of topographical features of the Old and New Testaments using Cruden's Concordance to the Bible. Every instance and iteration of the landscape elements chosen was carefully analysed and then compared. The strongest ones (dwellings, valleys, mountains, rivers) became chapter headings. Furthermore, each topic was then explored in detail: for example, the search on rivers included also streams, rivulets, fountains, wells, springs, becks, rills and brooks. The second step was to search Wordsworth's poetry for the same terms, using both the concordance by Lane Cooper and a meticulous reading of the poems. The poems chosen were the ones that provided the most illustrative examples of the ways in which the biblical language is appropriated. For example, a passage from the Bible on mountains that reads: 'God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran Selah His splendour covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise.' (Habakkuk 3.3-6) is less fruitful than the passage: 'For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken, Says the LORD who has compassion on you' (Isaiah 54:10). The mountains in the second passage do not merely serve as contextual background or as specific local orientation, but they provide a metaphorical example of the Lord's 'lovingkindness'. The term 'lovingkindness' of course also harkens to the Wordsworthian reader to his poem 'Stray Pleasures', which as Adam Potkay eloquently points outs, derives its provenance of the term from the Hebrew '*hecedh*', referring to God's tenderness and mercy towards his creatures.[44] It was a word his readers, we are told, would have had familiarity with.

The choice to structure the thesis topographically struck me as the most organic one: its main purpose is to deliver through contemporary networks of association, meaning and feeling the way in which Wordsworth *inhabited* the land and how he interpreted his self-appointed role as Prophet of Nature, and subsequently, of the nation. His emphasis on the local rather than the

44 Adam Potkay, *Wordsworth's Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 120. This version of Isaiah that contains Potkays' seminal word 'lovingkindness' is actually the New American Standard Bible. The King James Version reads: 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.'

global granted him a universality that everyone experiences: that of belonging to a place. It is very loosely chronological, but chronology is of lesser interest here. The topographical features are not generic and abiding, but specific to Wordsworth and his networks of meaning, a meaning resonant with and mediated through the Bible. Topography, rather than landscape, was also chosen as the gathering term because, unlike 'landscape', it does not denote that which is apprehended pictorially.[45] 'Topography' carries the general concept of the terrain, but extends its meaning to include the relations of the physical features of land; their arrangement and their placement. Terrain, like landscape, however, implies an immediate field of vision, and is therefore limiting. The terrain can usually be applied 'to areas of land which can be seen, if not at a glance, at least without travelling too far in any direction.'[46] The landscape, conversely, has a wider range, but also limits us by the way of seeing it suggests: pictorial, or aesthetic. Topography carries neither limitation and introduces a further conception: that of geography. Taken from the Greek for *topos* and *-graphia*, it means a 'description of place'. Such descriptions require a mobility that the visions of landscape and the terrain do not.

As the term *topographies* also indicates, this thesis is not focused on the relation of landscape features of a single place. The vale of Grasmere, though of inestimable importance to Wordsworth as a poet and as a man, was not the only place that featured in his work. He writes liberally about the Lake District, presenting a superior native knowledge, but he also does not shy away from regions further afield, always demonstrating his prowess of the local geography (such as in his poems from his Tour of Scotland or about the Alps). He demonstrates a devotion to every region he considers and the connection between all the elements—human, natural, divine—within it. The ways in which these three elements connect determines the four underlying themes of this thesis: dwelling, prophecy, scriptural rhetoric and geography. Each theme stems from a particular relationship between these elements. If we take the divine, human and natural to form a triangle with the divine at the apex, then the first relation would be that of the divine and the human. Scripture—scriptural language in particular—is the only means by

45 See John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
46 Ibid., p. 1.

which man has access to the divine message. It is God's primary way of communicating with man. However, God can also communicate through his creation, as in the Medieval notion of the 'Book of Nature': God revealing himself in the natural world, but this 'Book' was meant to be read alongside the book of Scripture. Therefore the relationship between God and nature is one of prophecy: nature often serves as the intermediary between man and God, such as the burning bush in Moses's account, or the whale in Jonah's. The third relationship, between man and nature, is one of dwelling: of how man *is* on this earth. It incorporates the physical aspect of everyday existence with the spiritual aspect of existing. It is in this relationship that a phenomenological perspective is required because Wordsworth's prophetic strain required first and foremost, a deep understanding of his own experiences *in* the world and how that natural world affected him. Phenomenology—the study of the development of self awareness and human consciousness—provides a platform from which Wordsworth could profess. It did not rely on objective responses to stimuli but on the question of how can we contact what we know. Geography, the study of writing (*-graphia*) the landscape, and in particular, humanistic geography (the study of the products of human activity) is the final theme that relates these three elements to each other. Humans have always believed in some form of divine figurehead: ancient religions and creation myths, disparate as they are, all point to a greater being. The incorporation of religion—a set of guidelines that suggest ways of being—are particular to different lands, and within those, specific aspects of the land (valleys, mountains, rivers) limit and promote specific human activities. Geography thus dictates our existence on this earth (no one settles in Antarctica, after all), while religion guides it. Wordsworth understood this, and combined both to strengthen his poetic message.

In 1947 the geographer J. K. Wright coined the word 'geosophy', or 'the geography of knowledge'. Geographers, he thought, would benefit from charting not just the unknown *physical* world (which, by the late 1940s was nearly entirely mapped) but the only remaining *terrae incognitae*: 'the worlds known and unknown in everyday life'.[47] These, I argue, are Wordsworth's

47 J. K. Wright, 'Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 37 (1947), 1-15.

worlds: the 'Native Vale' of Grasmere in which 'dwelt a Man, | the Master of a little lot of ground' who accidentally became 'A lawless Suitor of the Maid'.[48] Or the world in which the poet describes

> A napkin, white as foam of that rough brook
> By which it had been bleached, o'erspread the board;
> And was itself half-covered with a load
> Of dainties,—oaten bread, curds, cheese, and cream,
> And cakes of butter curiously embossed,
> Butter that had imbibed a golden tinge,
> A hue like that of yellow meadow flowers
> Reflected faintly in a silent pool.[49]

To Wordsworth, even the culinary had a local provenance, and a relation with the landscape. The napkin white as the brook by which it was bleached, the butter the colour of meadow flowers. His everyday was beautifully external. His poetry explores and charts these unknown worlds of man and makes them accessible through a language and imagery available to all: that of the local or that of the Bible. He was the ultimate 'geosopher', interested in places not just for their own right but for their relations with mankind. 'Home' for him had an equal weighting to the Alps: it was in these places that he found the sacred.

Yet despite the notion of 'place' and 'home' being fundamental to human experience, there exists another yearning that pulls some more than others: to see what is 'yonder'. The most affecting children's literature is that which deals with these spaces of the imagination unknown to a small human being, limited in his or her ability to travel beyond the neighbourhood. These are the places of imagined landscapes, treasure islands, dangerous quests. It is this childhood wonder that Wordsworth uses to keep himself in check, be it asking 'How many are you?' in 'We are Seven' or 'What is it that you do and how is it that you live?' in 'Resolution and Independence'. Yonder is what incites and begins 'Home at Grasmere', the only part of *The Recluse* that Wordsworth did write: 'Once on the brow of *yonder* hill' the poet beget his 'boyish pursuits', free

48 *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First, of the Recluse*, ed. by Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), ll. 469-532. I have chosen to use this version as it was composed in 1800 in the midst of Wordsworth's move to Grasmere. Later versions do not capture in the same way the feeling of having just arrived in the vale and do not present the same poetical moment. All citations hereafter will be to MS. B, unless otherwise stated. Hereafter 'Home at Grasmere'.

49 *The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James A. Butler and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), II. 701-08. Hereafter *Excursion*.

to go and return as he pleased.[50] His interest in yonder included an interest in those who dwelt there (like the Leech Gatherer) as much as an interest in the places themselves. 'Yonder' also has a biblical provenance: Abraham says he will 'go yonder and worship' before taking his son to be sacrificed; Balaam, for all his faults, goes 'yonder' to meet the Lord, but refuses to curse the Israelites; and Jesus, following the Transfiguration says 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'[51] 'Yonder' is the Bible's *terra incognita*—'far from the heathfires of men'[52]—the boundaries of which were pushed back bit by bit while the Israelites wandered the desert. It was not 'out there' but 'in here' that was limitless: the confines of the home and the village were what provided endless insight and understanding. The everyday, not the journey, was what mattered. Mountaintops in particular breed a contemplative mood because they allow a vision of yonder, in which 'the entire earth appears as an intense patchwork of miniature *terrae incognitae*'.[53] This microgeography is aligned with an interest in the spiritual and the quotidian, and what happens when they meet. Striking diametric notions, one suggesting an other-worldliness that alludes transcendence of the earthly at the very least, while the other is firmly planted or rooted (both very *earthy* terms in themselves) in the material and the everyday; the mundane, the unseen, the local. Wordsworth is a poet who sees the one in the other: the spiritual in the quotidian, and the quotidian in the spiritual.

The quotidian and the spiritual are of interest to Wordsworth in the 'Prospectus' to *The Recluse*, where he sets up his Miltonic invocation with the opening 'On Man, Nature, and on Human Life', drawing critics to his declaration of his subject as 'the mind of Man, | My haunt, and the main region of my Song'.[54] However, read carefully, the Prospectus originally found at the ending to 'Home at Grasmere' has another topic: it is not the mind of man but his existence

50 'Home at Grasmere', l. 1.Yonder also features prominently in 'The Brothers' and 'Song at the feast of Broughman Castle'.)
51 Genesis 22:5, Numbers 23: 15, Matthew 17:20.
52 Wright, p. 1.
53 Ibid., p. 3.
54 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 989-90.

upon this earth, his homes and daily life, his interactions with beings and things in his immediate environment that interest Wordsworth:

> Paradise, and groves
> Elysian, fortunate islands, fields like those of old
> In the deep ocean—wherefore should they be
> A History, or but a dream, when minds
> Once wedded to this outward frame of things
> In love, find these the growth of common day?
> […]
> And if with this
> I blend more lowly matter—with the thing
> Contemplated describe the mind and man
> Contemplating, and who and what he was,
> The transitory Being that beheld
> This vision, when and where and how he lived,
> With all his little realities of life—
> Be not this labour useless. [55]

It is in the 'growth of common day', in an interest in the 'lowly matter' of life: the 'when and where and how he lived', that Wordsworth finds God. 'Paradise and Groves Elysian' are merely histories or dreams: the spiritual for him *is* quotidian because it is also communal: he finds God in his relation to others and to the land, in communion with his surroundings and his local environment.

Finally, it thus merits asking more directly: what is the local? Is it that which is close by, which is attainably by foot? In an urban society, the local is broken down into blocks, cafés, grocery stores, districts. But the city, in particular the twenty-first century city, promulgates an autonomous existence. The local is being washed out by the mass-produced and the global. The purpose of this study is to explore the different locals that existed for Wordsworth from a viewpoint that *is* attainable and imaginable by even those in drastically different circumstances: an urban readership, inhabitants in poor, rural farms and wealthy estates, inhabitants of Victorian London as much as 1870s America. By drawing on ancient sources of the Scriptures, Wordsworth brings the entirety of his readership—across time and space—to the same vantage point. He promoted the local using biblical language and in doing so brought it to a register that resonated with everyone for at least a century and a half. And it *still* resonates.

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55 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 996-1001; 1034-1041. This is also the section known as the Prospectus to the Recluse.

DWELLING

But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.
- II Chronicles 6. 2

In 1824, William Hazlitt set out to finally put to paper his collection of portraits defining what he called the 'spirit of the age': the 'progress of intellectual refinement, warring with our natural infirmities.'[1] Having already tarnished his own reputation with *Liber Amoris*, he allowed his insights the privilege of being lucid and at times brazen. When he came to write of Wordsworth, he retained his expertly modulating tone, depicting the poet as an Old Testament prophet among contrasting images of stylistic pomp and riches:

> The purple pall, the nodding plume of tragedy are exploded as mere pantomime and trick, to return to the simplicity of truth and nature. Kings, queens, priests, nobles, the altar and the throne, the distinctions of rank, birth, wealth, power, 'the judge's robe, the marshall's truncheon, the ceremony that to great ones 'longs,' are not to be found here. […] He chooses to have his subject a foil to his invention, to owe nothing but to himself. He gathers manna in the wilderness, he strikes the barren rock for the gushing moisture. He elevates the mean by the strength of his own aspirations […][2]

Casting aside his personal rift with the poet, Hazlitt found it appropriate to crown Wordsworth with the laurels of being the 'pure emanation of the Spirit of the Age', and did so by inadvertently also making him the leader of a wandering people, a guide of the Romantic Age. The context of the passage refers to Wordsworth's inartificial style, which Hazlitt hyperbolises as the '*tabula rasa* of poetry.' His emphasis, it is worth noting, is on the earthly and the common: Wordsworth does away with kings and nobles, with Classic writers and their forms, stripping off, he says 'decorations of vanity'. Wordsworth's poetic style, he concludes, 'makes the round earth its footstool, and its home!'[3] It is on that 'round earth' that Wordsworth's poetry takes place. The Mosaic comparison is striking, not because Wordsworth himself had earlier made the association

1 *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. by Duncan Wu, 9 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998),
2 Ibid., p. 162.
3 Ibid., p. 2-63.

in *The Prelude*, but because Hazlitt did not know that he had done so – *The Prelude* was not to be published for over thirty years. Yet it was not a comparison that Hazlitt had carefully thought out: Moses struck the rock twice, a sin for which he was never to be allowed into the Promised Land.[4] Surely Wordsworth had not committed anything equal to merit such a banishment? This small insight into Hazlitt's choice of passage of all available Mosaic (let alone biblical) stories exposes numerous problems. The punishment that Moses receives for striking the rock has often been seen as excessive for the deed committed: this is not the first time God commanded Moses to make water flow from a rock. In the earlier incident, he commands him to strike it, and Moses obeys:

> And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.[5]

The second incident is thus a repetition of the first, but it is an unsanctioned act by man in attempt to command with the power of God. This time, it is not by God's word but by Moses' that the rock he smote gushed forth to the thirsty mob:

> And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.[6]

Moses' sin was not violence towards nature – it was disobedience towards God and self-aggrandisement in the face of the public: 'must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?' Perhaps, then, Hazlitt intended the slighting comparison after all: in praising Wordsworth's 'inartificial style,' he introduced not only a Hebrew image of a man in direct communion with God, one who spoke in the vernacular and 'deliver[ed] household truths', but one whom Hazlitt believed thought himself somehow superior to others. 'We are convinced,' Hazlitt notes, 'if he had been early a popular poet, he would have borne his honours meekly, and would have been a person of

4 See Exodus 16. 11-15; Exodus 17. 3-6; Numbers 20. 7-12.
5 Exodus 17. 5-6.
6 Numbers 20. 10-11.

great *bonhommie* and frankness of disposition.'[7] Hazlitt's statement is elusive, indicating that Wordsworth had 'gnawed too much on the bridle' of criticism thrust his way.[8] The earlier Mosaic allusion had been itself stripped of its vanity.

What purpose does Hazlitt's aggrandisement of Wordsworth to the Mosaic (and therefore heroic, archetypal, and mythic) serve? Moses makes for a strong cultural figure not merely because he was Israel's first prophet and lawgiver, raised in exile as a royal only to be made aware of his true nature in early adulthood, but because, like many of the prophets, he was often challenged and unacknowledged.[9] His status—as a poet and legislator—symbolised the power that the Romantic poets, Wordsworth included, wished for their poetry to embody. As Britta Martens points out,

> the self-conceptualization as a prophet who is unacknowledged by his contemporaries is itself a Romantic *topos*. This allowed the Romantics to create a new role for themselves in a society where the poet has lost his social function, claiming divine authorization and invoking the precedent of Milton, who had conceptualized himself this way in Paradise Lost.[10]

Wordsworth comes to mind here particularly in light of Thomas Carlyle's second lecture in *On heroes, hero worship, and the heroic in history*, in which Carlyle contrasts the hero as prophet against the hero as poet.[11] Hazlitt's throwaway statement, then, is more meditated than it seems for further reasons.

The turn towards landscape, in particular biblical landscape, requires a guide through the wilderness, one who is as local and vernacular as he is national and communal. The most part of Moses' 'tenure' so to speak, takes place in the wilderness – for forty years, he guides the tribes of Israel in search of a home; he leads them towards a new dwelling-place. The Israelites' wandering in the desert makes for an interesting comparison with Wordsworth's own home-seeking in Grasmere at the turn of the century as the desire to acquire a home, to *reinhabit,* is overwhelming in both cases, but also exemplary across the Romantic Age. The way in which

7 Hazlitt, VII, 161.
8 Ibid., p. 168. This latter view is consistent with Hazlitt's review of *The Excursion*.
9 Such as in the story of the golden calf, in Exodus 32.
10 Britta Martens, *Browning, Victorian Poetics and the Romantic Legacy: Challenging the personal voice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 85.
11 Thomas Carlyle, *On heroes, hero worship and the heroic in history*, ed. by Goldberg, Michael K., Brattin, Joel J., and Engel, Mark (Berkeley; Oxford: University of California Press, 1993).

other writers sought to establish this 'ethos of reinhabitation' as Kate Rigby calls it, varied drastically (John Clare being another poet whose 'home-boundedness' fuelled his genius) and only with Wordsworth and Clare did it seek to find that home in an earthly, and furthermore, British, setting.[12] Perhaps Keats also sought the 'White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine; | Fast-fading violets' amongst Albion's bowers, but his search was never one that was domestically driven – it was not his home but his own voice he was searching for. In an article on place in European Romanticism, Rigby asks her readers to rethink the *oikos*, the Greek notion of household, family and place, in terms of the *polis*, the city-state.[13] My focus, however, is not on drawing comparisons between urban and rural but on understanding the Wordsworthian idea of dwelling: the *oikos* as a home, refuge, and locus of being, but also as building and engaging with the environment.

A distinction should be drawn here between 'dwelling' and 'reinhabiting', the obvious one of course taking reinhabiting to mean 'to dwell again'. Dwelling is thus inherent in reinhabiting. The distinction lies in the way in which both terms utilise the temporal quality: dwelling in its very origins implies a length of time; it means to remain. Reinhabitation requires some form of horizontal narrative in which one departs in order to be able to return. Where dwelling insists on continuity, reinhabitation emphasises a broken continuity, but the fulfilment of reinhabitation mends that tear to recreate the original continuity of dwelling. If we take the old meaning of dwell, to hinder or to delay, reinhabiting becomes a way of *dwelling* dwelling (delaying being); or forestalling being *in-place*. Dwelling has a further connotation which supports this synonymous reading: it means to allow things to remain as they are, to 'let alone'. The irony implicit here is that by being in a place, you are not 'letting it alone' at all, but altering it with your presence. By removing your own agency, and going away, the place will alter on its own, or on accord of others living in your place. Thus neither dwelling nor reinhabiting are fully organic.[14]

12 Kate Rigby, 'Ecstatic Dwelling: Perspectives on Place in European Romanticism,' *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities,* 9 (2004), 117-143 (p. 118).
13 Ibid., p. 118.
14 All definitions ('reinhabit, v.', 'dwell, v.') taken from the *OED Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

The concept of dwelling in twenty-first century criticism can, and perhaps needs to first, be explored in a post-Heideggerian light. His short essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' opens the vista to thinking about being, specifically being in a place, from a phenomenological perspective. Yet Heidegger, when read in line with other notions of dwelling in space, in particular Yi-Fu Tuan's understanding of space and place and the biblical concept of dwelling, presents an altogether different understanding of what Wordsworth was trying to achieve in his *reinhabitation* of Grasmere. Specifically, I argue that the semi-defiant act of creating a home, of poetically and physically building an abode, is an act that allows Wordsworth the flexibility and privilege of simultaneously dwelling in God and God dwelling in man. It is a mode of being that was exemplified by the ancient Hebrews, and whether consciously or not, a mode Wordsworth strove to emulate in his poetic career. A full consideration of Wordsworth's dwelling includes a thorough inventory of the multifaceted nature of the term (etymologically or otherwise). This chapter will consider dwelling first from the perspective of an inhabitant, specifically an inhabitant who has returned to his place of lodging. This consideration of *reinhabitation* will look at Wordsworth's poetry of return—his revisitings—not necessarily of 'affinities preserv'd' but the paths that brought him to the same places again and again.[15] How these revisitings 'inhabit' the memory will be taken into consideration, and in turn, yield new interpretations on how memory has the power to make a place sacred. A discussion of sacred places inevitably evokes biblical resonances which require an understanding of the ancient Hebrew landscape within its national context, such as the one Johann Gottfried Herder presented. When read alongside Wordsworth's descriptions of his beloved Lake District, Herder's *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (influenced by Lowth) and *Reflections on the Philosophy and History of Mankind* foster an exploration of the notion of dwelling in both settings, specifically asking whether the dwelling-place of the Lord lies in Nature or in Man. Turning finally to Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, I consider his conception of building cottages alongside the instructions for building a tabernacle in Exodus 26. In this instance, Heidegger's essay provides a theoretical and phenomenological framework for

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2014), [accessed 14 September 2014].

15 From Wordsworth's 'Michael'. See the Introduction to Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1-12.

thinking of building as a way of being, rather than just doing. In the last section of this chapter, I consider the permanence of dwelling, with wandering as the antithesis of dwelling, and domestic dwelling as a temporary locus for Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's 1799 return to the Lakes (and making 'Home at Grasmere' the centre of his poetic vocation) can also be thought of in a slightly different perspective from the one I discuss later: it was not only a delivery to the Promised Land but a conscious *reinhabitation*.[16] Reinhabitation has two conditions: that you have already inhabited a place, and that you return to it to stay. It is, in other words, a permanent revisiting, but one that bears with it all the connotations of *inhabiting*. To inhabit, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means 'to dwell in, occupy as an abode; to live permanently or habitually in'.[17] Dwelling in a place creates memories; it is the present moment that occurs before something is committed to memory, before it can be *dwelt on*. We do not think of dwelling as it happens because it is a part of the everyday: once we notice it, it escapes and becomes a construction: once we have thought about it, we have ceased to dwell and begun to build a memory of that dwelling. To dwell is thus to build, as Heidegger says, just as building is really dwelling. However, to Heidegger, to inhabit does not necessarily mean to dwell: houses do not hold any guarantee that 'dwelling' occurs in them, just as 'buildings that are not dwelling places remain in turn determined by dwelling insofar as they serve man's dwelling.' Dwelling is a separate sort of existence from what we call 'living.' In order for inhabiting to be dwelling, it must partake in 'being on the earth as a mortal.'[18] To reinhabit—to return to the same place and dwell there again—is thus to awaken memories, to re-build them in our minds, creating in our memory 'a kind of space'.[19] But that space that is created through the act of first forgetting. Wordsworth's 'spots of time' can be seen as re-created places (revisited locations) as well as newly-created memories. Inhabiting creates a habitat, perhaps even a habit, stemming from the Latin *habere*, meaning 'to have' or 'to hold.' There is a possessiveness embedded in inhabiting that is not present in dwelling: when one

16 See Chapter Two, p. 70.
17 'inhabit, v.', *OED Online* [accessed 12 September 2014].
18 Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: First Perennial Classics, 2001), pp. 144; 145.
19 Charles I. Armstrong, 'Dwelling upon Time: Memory's changing function in poetry of Wordsworth', *Nordic Journal of English Studies,* 1, (2002), 215-232 (p. 218).

dwells, one *is* and builds and passes through; when one inhabits, one has and holds and in return, belongs. To build shelters is as human as it is animal. Isaiah prophecies the happiness of the people when he says,

> And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.[20]

The sense of industry is rewarded: it would be a great wrong if one's enemies inhabited the house that he built, and reaped the fruits that he sowed. A sense of justice is preserved in inhabitation, such that to be allowed to reinhabit restores that justice and order. There is an element of such a restoration in Wordsworth, when in 1799 he famously asks: 'Was it for this […]' in the *II Part Prelude*:

> For *this* didst thou,
> O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
> Near my "sweet birth-place," didst thou beauteous Stream
> Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
> Which with its steady cadence tempering
> Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Among the *fretful dwellings* of mankind,
> A knowledge, a dim earnest of the calm
> Which Nature breathes among the fields and groves?[21]

'This' is never quite resolved; Wordsworth does not provide a direct reference.[22] But at a time when the poet was coming into his calling, 'this' could be read to signify his return to Grasmere and his reinhabitation of the vale. For this the Derwent enchanted him as a child, for this, it gave him 'a knowledge […] of the calm | Which Nature breathes'. His dwelling place was not 'fretful' because it was 'among the fields and groves.' Curiously it had the dual quality of being both nowhere specific—'among the fields and groves' is not exactly a place—and simultaneously rooted. In light of the mobility that was beginning with the Industrial Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, Wordsworth, like Clare, had found a 'sense of place' for himself in a world in

20 Isaiah 65. 21-22. This has strong resemblance with the current plight of Israeli and Palestinian settlers of the West Bank and other disputed territories.

21 *Prelude,* II. 6-15.

22 Most often, 'this' is regarded as the Poet's task. The question and phrasing are Virgilian.

which, as John Barrell states, 'we are all tourists now'.[23] Being a tourist, however, does the opposite to our relationship with landscape. Rather than creating a sense of place and enjoying man with nature, it distances, and the personalisation of local place can no longer occur. As the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan pointed out, the memory of a landscape is enhanced by the personal, human experience and incidents that occur within it. This is strengthened even further when the aesthetic pleasure of viewing a landscape is coupled with scientific curiosity.[24] Wordsworth is very aware of the fact that true dwelling, 'the calm | Which Nature breathes', is no longer possible because technology has increased the mobility of the population.

This element of displacement becomes particularly noticeable when considering the number of poems Wordsworth wrote that were, what I call, 'on the road.'[25] Several poems immediately spring to mind: 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' which is almost entirely set on roads; 'The Old Man Travelling', 'The Idiot Boy', 'Peter Bell' and 'Benjamin the Waggoner', 'The Female Vagrant', 'The Discharged Soldier', not to mention his itinerary poems written while he was on tour in Europe or in Scotland. The road, though not quite a motif in his poetry, features as a through-element: the path was part of the landscape in which he dwelt. In Book XII of *The Prelude*, he professed the gripping power of the 'public road':

> Few sights more please me than a public road:
> 'Tis my delight; such object hath had power
> O'er my imagination since the dawn
> Of childhood, when its disappearing line,
> Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep
> Beyond the limits which my feet had trod,
> Was like a guide into eternity,
> At least to things unknown and without bound.[26]

23 Barrell, p. 188.

24 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International, Inc., 1974), p. 95.

25 Several full-length studies have taken into account Wordsworth's travel poems, including Toby R. Benis, *Romanticism on the Road* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Gary Harrison, *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagining: The Poetry of Displacement* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987); and Anne Wallace, *Walking, Literature and English Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

26 *Prelude,* XII. 145-152.

The 'disappearing line' of the road enchants Wordsworth 'since the dawn of childhood' because of its potential to direct. It was 'like a guide unto eternity', somewhat qualified. The prospect of a guide is a tantalising one: Wordsworth fashioned himself a guide to future visitors to the Lakes when he published his own *Guide to the Lake District*.[27] Although never outwardly expressing his position as guide, it is evident in his approach that he fathomed his role as one, providing clear instructions to his readers and followers: 'The least advisable is the great north road […]'; 'The Traveller on foot, or horseback, would do well to follow the banks of the Wharf upwards […]'; 'They who wish to see the celebrated ruins of Furness Abbey, and are not afraid of crossing the Sands, may go from Lancaster to Ulverson […]'[28] His self-appointment as a guide to the Lakes also runs in parallel with the Mosaic self-image in 'Home at Grasmere'.

Travelling on roads and paths also has a strong biblical undercurrent (choosing the 'path of righteousness'; 'I am the way and the light') but nowhere is it as accurately depicted as in the Hebrew word הָלַךְ (halak), meaning 'to walk'. In *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, G.K. Beale explains the root of the word:

> The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) *mithallēk* (hithpael) used for God's 'walking back and forth' in the Garden (Gen. 3:8), also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14 [15]; 2 Sam. 7:6-7.) […] Genesis 2:15 says God placed Adam in the Garden 'to cultivate [i.e., work] it and to keep it'. The two Hebrew words for 'cultivate and keep' are usually translated 'serve and guard [or keep]' elsewhere in the Old Testament. […] When, however, these two words […] occur together in the Old Testament (within an approximately 15-word range), they refer either to Israelite 'serving' God and 'guarding [keeping]' God's word (approximately 10 times) or to priests who 'keep' the 'service' (or 'charge') of the tabernacle (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14)[29]

In this way, we can begin to see that the notion of a dwelling place was first founded in Eden, where God's 'walking back and forth' was synonymous with his 'dwelling.' In Wordsworth as

27 It is worthwhile pointing out that the first edition of the *Guide* was published anonymously in 1810 as text to engravings by Joseph Wilkinson. The volume was meant to serve as a supplement to Thomas West's *A Guide to the Lakes* (1778). I can only speculate as to why Wordsworth did not want his name to be associated with a tourist's guide to his Lakes. His own edition was published as a revised and expanded text first in 1820, with third, fourth and fifth editions to come out in 1822, 1823 and 1835. It is the 1835 edition that has been the definitive text and the one I use here. Wordsworth's volume *The River Duddon* included a 108-page prose 'Topographical Description of the Lakes' (see Nicholas Halmi, *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014) p. 540.

28 'A Guide Through the District of the Lakes', *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth,* ed. by J.W.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) II. 155-56.

29 G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), pp. 66-67.

well, we can see an implicit connection between the wandering of his characters and their 'dwelling' in the world:

> Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites;
> For many other uncouth Vagrants, pass'd
> In fear, have walk'd with quicker step; but why
> Take note of this? when I began to inquire,
> To watch and question those I met, and held
> Familiar talks with them, the lonely roads
> Were schools to me in which I daily read
> With most delight the passions of mankind,
> There saw into the depth of human souls,
> Souls that appear to have no depth at all
> To vulgar eyes.[30]

Wordsworth's understanding of 'the depth of human souls' comes to him on the 'lonely road,' as it does with the Discharged Soldier. 'Bedlamites' and 'Vagrants' of course have no fixed abode: their existence—and dwelling—is tied to the road. Wordsworth comes to see into human life and what it means to be alive on this earth – what it means to dwell. If we return to think about dwelling as a building, then the dwelling place of God in Eden that couples with God's 'walking back and forth' has a reciprocal counterpart in nature. Walking was for Wordsworth also a method of composition: whether during his rambles on the fells, or his more confined 'backwards and forwards' garden strides, the act of walking was an act of creating and world-building.[31] The dwelling characters on the road emphasise Wordsworth's constant search for a dwelling place. However, the poet was also quite aware that dwelling occurs without, in the 'fourfold' in Heidegger's terms. The 'fourfold' is the '*primal* oneness of the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals. […] Mortals *are* in the fourfold by *dwelling*.'[32] Wordsworth takes this fourfold on the road and opens it up in the open space; he does not need for it to be a specific location, though sometimes, as in the *Poems on the Naming of Places*, he creates one. I shall return to this later on.

Part of the allure of roads is that they can take you to a new place, but they can also bring you home. They are, after all, static. As roads can be places of dwelling, they can also lead to dwellings, and in Wordsworth's case, to revisiting. I am not concerned with Wordsworth's

30 *Prelude*, XII. 58-68.
31 See Andrew Bennett, *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 25.
32 Heidegger, pp. 147-8.

revisions as Stephen Gill defines them in *Wordsworth's Revisitings*: that is, texts that have 'an earlier Wordsworth text to which a later refers, or which it appropriates and revises.'[33] Rather, I wish to look at the actual places that Wordsworth came back to. Gill notes that 'Wordsworth could not bear to think that he had seen a place for the last time—the poignancy of his tour of Italy in 1837 comes largely from the knowledge that it was too late. Much longed-for, the tour had no antecedent he could revisit and the poet knew he would not be back.'[34] Coming back was a trope—one of repeated meditation and rumination—throughout the course of Wordsworth's life, beginning with his childhood nostalgia in Goslar. One of the first 'revisitings' Gill considers is the poet's return to Furness Abbey:

> HERE, where, of havoc tired and rash undoing,
> Man left this Structure to become Time's prey
> A soothing spirit follows in the way
> That Nature takes, her counter-work pursuing.
> See how her Ivy clasps the sacred Ruin,
> Fall to prevent or beautify decay;
> And, on the mouldered walls, how bright, how gay,
> The flowers in pearly dews their bloom renewing!
> Thanks to the place, blessings upon the hour;
> Even as I speak the rising Sun's first smile
> Gleams on the grass-crowned top of yon tall Tower
> Whose cawing occupants with joy proclaim
> Prescriptive title to the shattered pile,
> Where, Cavendish, *thine* seems nothing but a name![35]

Furness Abbey is an example of a Heideggerian dwelling-place (i.e. not a home) that moved across from being a place of man (an interior structure) to being an exterior structure—one where nature's 'counter work' had made of it a more distinguished dwelling; a place that gained meaning and specificity. That meaning was furthered through memory, much as the 'revisiting' (physical rather than textual) of Tintern Abbey commits the place to memory, turning the revisiting into a re-appropriation. In what is perhaps Wordsworth's most famous poem of return, dwelling is exhibited as both divine and human. He begins the poem by a reiteration of 'again' –

33 Gill, *Revisitings*, p. 10.
34 Ibid., p. 9.
35 'At Furness Abbey', *Last Poems 1821-1850*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 350. Curtis notes, p. 487, that 'WW described the poem as "Retouched, or rather rewritten Augst 25th 1843."' Wordsworth even visited Coleridge's Ottery St Mary on the day Dora wed.

a marker of time, not place. Despite the insistence upon a locality in its setting, the dwelling that has occurred in it is remembered first by sound, and only later by vision:

> and *again* I hear
> These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
> With a sweet inland murmur.
> […]
> The day is come when I *again* repose
> Here, under this dark sycamore,
> […]
> Once *again* I see
> These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
> Of sportive wood run wild.

From his vantage point 'a few miles above Tintern Abbey', it is not the monastery that is his focus but human life: what he sees beyond the hedge-rows are indicators of human dwelling, 'pastoral farms' and 'wreaths of smoke' that speak of 'vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,' or a hermit, sitting alone by his fire. These vagrant dwellers pose no problem, unlike the gipsies he later encounters in another poem. They are, in his mind, a part of a greater unity that subsumes the first half the poem,

> a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose *dwelling* is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.[36]

The unnameable essence that scholars have coined the 'One Life' represented for Wordsworth a sacramental communion between the dwelling of God and the mind of man.[37] It rendered all of nature a tabernacle – a sacred temple. Divine dwelling takes place on earth, as it does in the Old Testament, man is encouraged to dwell *in* God: 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'[38] The Hebrew word used here for

36 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 2-4, 9-10, 15-17; 21-23; 96-102. See also *Prelude*, II. 429-30.

37 The phrase 'One Life' is borrowed from Coleridge: 'the one life within us and abroad' in 'The Eolian Harp'. See also Coleridge *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) II, 865-66, where in 1802 he connects 'one life' directly with 'the Hebrew Poets' in a letter to William Sotheby: 'In the Hebrew Poets each Thing has a Life of it's [sic] own, & yet they are all one Life.'

38 Psalm 91. 1.

"dwelleth" is יָשַׁב (yashab) and it means 'to dwell, remain, sit, abide.'[39] Wordsworth's desire for a sort of permanence on earth found in nature is an indirect echo of this Hebraic 'dwelling'. It is also deeply human to want to dwell with the Lord: 'One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.'[40] As God's place is not restricted by time or space, the tabernacle serves as a physical manifestation of his dwelling place on earth; it is where man can be with God in private communion. It is that sense of dwelling that Wordsworth is constantly seeking; and finds it early on in the memories of the human mind:

> and in after years,
> When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
> Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
> Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
> For all *sweet sounds and harmonies*; Oh! then,
> If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
> Should by thy portion, with what healing thoughts
> Or tender joy wilt thou remember me,
> And these my *exhortations*![41]

Dorothy's dwelling-place in her memory, however, is not for images but for sounds.[42] Wordsworth is also an incredibly aural poet, often stopping to listen and hear the world around him. Geoffrey Hartman points out the 'feminine caesurae (winters, waters, murmur)' and echoing sounds that enrich the sense of continuity in the poem; noting the '*wave effect* of rhythm' that delays the climax;[43] Dorothy's memory, full of sounds, delivers that climax. Though the landscape is present, it slips into a mental topography, a constructed dwelling place where the original dwelling has already occurred and only its memory remains to be built. The visual, even the visual sublime, does not bear upon Wordsworth the same momentous force as the aural

39 Hebrew Lexicon :: H3427 (KJV). *Blue Letter Bible* (Sowing Circle, 2014) <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H3427&t=KJV> [accessed 16 Sept 2014].
40 Psalm 27. 4.
41 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 138-47.
42 For Dorothy's sensory experiences, see Suzanne Stewart, 'A Finely-Tuned Instrument: Dorothy Wordsworth and Synaesthetic Experience' *Grasmere 2012* ed. by Richard Gravil (Tirril, Humanities Ebooks LLP, 2012), 68-86.
43 Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1807* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 26.

sublime. Thus, Dorothy's memory serves in this case as a place for 'sweet sounds and harmonies' much in the way her brother's presence will be remembered by his 'exhortations' or utterances.[44]

There is in 'Tintern Abbey' one other biblical reference that casts light on Wordsworth's concept of dwelling. In one of his characteristic negations, he says

> that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us.[45]

The formulation is a direct allusion to Matthew 16.18, where Christ appoints Peter as the head of his church, saying: 'And I say also unto thee, That thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Wordsworth's formulation thus has building in mind. In the Septuagint, the word 'build' is οἰκοδομέω (oikodomeō) which means 'to build a house'.[46] Physical building is again here directly correlated with dwelling. Wordsworth sets himself in the place of Christ and puts Dorothy, the 'dwelling-place' for their 'sweet sounds and harmonies', in the place of Peter, the rock. His canon is therefore built upon a compilation of his own and Dorothy's memories.

Despite being a poet who had a place for silence and solitude in his life and works, the majority of his poetry is nevertheless intensely aural: silence forces one to listen, and listening to the world inevitably makes one sensitive to its sounds. He relies not just on the acoustics of his own poems but also on the sounds of nature around him. Before written language, before the epitaph, there was the voice. And so it was with the ancient Hebrews. In a chapter on 'Landscape and the Bible' in *Poetry, Space, Landscape,* Chris Fitter puts forward the proposition that the Hebrews', and consequently man's, relation to nature is a relation of song, the most prominent example being found in the psalms. 'Creation,' he says 'is called into being by a voice.' This recurrent voice, as opposed to the pictorial image in the Greek, keeps the language,

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44 Lucy Newlyn, in her new book *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) also uses 'Dwelling' as one of her chapter titles, though she approaches the topic from a different angle to my own.

45 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 129-33.

46 "Greek Lexicon :: G3618 (KJV)." *Blue Letter Bible*. Sowing Circle. [accessed 15 September 2014] <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3618&t=KJV>. I am indebted to Nicholas Halmi for pointing this out to me.

and the landscape, from becoming static: 'For the Hebrews, to "freeze" nature into a pictorial composition as a "landscape" would be to empty it of its essential significance as the platform of an ancient and continuing divine drama, as endlessly, preciously transfigurable.'[47] In Wordsworth, too, we see an inclination towards fluidity and flux; a constant motion away from the static. If Wordsworth feels compelled to write down his relation to nature in a *lyrical* form, does this not also fall into the category of vocal act, and therefore song? And is this song not a way of being for him? Bate is correct in saying that poetry is the Heideggerian 'song that names the earth', that 'poems can bring back to our memory humankind's ancient knowledge that without landmarks we are lost.'[48]

Historically and narratively, the Old Testament is a polyphony of voices collected over different periods; the uniformity in it is merely perceived and created. Northrop Frye points out that 'Symmetry, in any narrative, always means that historical content is being subordinated to mythical demands of design and form, as in the Book of Judges.'[49] Silence, then, is not a natural feature of a work (and a religion) whose Holy Book (or books, rather) are a chorus. Alexander Cruden, of *Cruden's Concordance*, says silence in the Bible 'does not only signify the ordinary silence, or refraining from speaking; but also in the stile of the Hebrews … an entire ruin or destruction, for a total subjection … for death and the grave.'[50] Silence, in some ways like wandering, is a form of punishment from God, it is a signifier of death and destructions. In *Silence: A Christian History*, Diarmaid MacCulloch identifies Yahweh 'a communicator, who in normal and desirable circumstances expresses himself in noise, usually emphatic noise.' He begins with spoken sound: 'And the Lord said […]', linking 'speech to the divine work.'[51] Even in the First Book of Kings, when Elijah seeks the Lord, he does not find him in terrors of the earth, he finds him in 'a still, small voice.' Thus God's need for a voice on earth is manifested in

47 Chris Fitter, *Poetry, space, landscape: Toward a new theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 70.
48 Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (London: Picador, 2001), p. 175.
49 Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, 1st edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 61. Frye considers also Christian readings of the typology of the Old Testament in Chapter Four.
50 Alexander Cruden, *A Complete Concordance to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament: in two parts […]* (London, 1738) pt i, s.v. 'Silence', as cited in Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence: A Christian History* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 12.
51 MacCulloch, p. 16.

his constant need of a prophet. Wordsworth sees himself to be that voice, as one of the 'Prophets of Nature' at the end of *The Prelude*.

II

Memory, in particular, memory of home, also returns in Wordsworth's poetry through the image of the bird nest. Both as a dwelling—Kerrigan and Bate turn to Bachelard as a source on Nests—and as a keeper of sounds—birdsong being the most universal of nature's music—birds and their homes make a suitable shelter for this theme. In 'The Sparrow's Nest' and 'A Wren's Nest', Wordsworth explores the different ways of mnemotechnical and physical dwelling. Written in 1801, he begins 'The Sparrow's Nest' with the specific:

> Look, five blue eggs are gleaming there!
> Few visions have I seen more fair,
> Nor many prospects of delight
> More pleasing than that simple sight!
> I started, seeming to espy
> The home and shelter'd bed,
> The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
> My Father's House, in wet or dry,
> My Sister Emmeline and I
> Together visited.[52]

The proximity and specificity of the sparrow's dwelling in relation to a human dwelling shifts the theme of the poem from natural history or even ecology to domestic arrangements. As James M. Garrett put it, the presence of 'My Father's House' evokes 'a remembrance of a past domestic idyll that would soon be shattered by the death of Wordsworth's father and the dispersal of the Wordsworth children.[53] 'The specificity of the description', he continues, 'points to a need for establishing particulars, as if particular details of location could establish a place as fixed and rooted.'[54] It moves from being a poem about a bird and its nest to being a poem about past memories rooted in place. Bachelard put it most succinctly when he said: 'If we return to the old home as to a nest, it is because memories are dreams, because the home of other days has

52 'The Sparrow's Nest' (1802) *Poems, in Two Volumes and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 212-13, ll. 1-10. Wordsworth wrote several other bird poems, among them: 'The Green Linnet', 'To a Skylark', 'To the Cuckoo', 'The Redbreast and the Butterfly', 'The Nightingale', 'Stay little chearful Robin' but these do not feature nests in a way that would be useful for this discussion.

53 John Wordsworth died on the 30th December 1783, aged only forty-two. Wordsworth was thirteen.

54 James M. Garrett, *Wordsworth and the Writing of the Nation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 32.

become a great image of lost intimacy.'[55] The nest is in this case the key that opens not only personal spaces, but also emotions in both siblings. The rest of the poem continues:

> She look'd at it as if she fear'd it;
> Still wishing, dreading to be near it:
> Such heart was in her, being then
> A little Prattler among men.
> The Blessing of my later years
> Was with me when a Boy;
> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.[56]

The impassioned outburst of love: 'She gave me eyes, she gave me ears' is almost embarrassing in this context, as the reader of *Poems, in Two Volumes* would not have been prepared for such strength of sentiment in a poem about 'five blue eggs'; the expectation is different. However, when read in a biblical context, the quotation makes more sense:

> Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, but hear not; for they *are* a rebellious house.[57]

Emmeline, whom we know to be Dorothy, providing eyes and ears for the poet in their father's house, implies the poet did not have eyes and ears of his own; he was dumb to the gentle world around him. She also ensures that their dwelling remains remembered and that, despite their later loss and separation, the emotional foundations for a home were already laid. However, as Kerrigan notes, 'When domestic dwelling *is* attained in Wordsworth, it proves, more often than not, sadly temporary.'[58] But if we are to read dwelling the Heideggerian way, as *bauen* (to build) and *sein* (to be), the concern for permanence falls within the natural order of things: mortals die, and their dwelling, as well as their dwelling places, are temporary.[59] 'The Ruined Cottage' is but one example of the impermanence of human life: 'four clay walls' can hardly be considered a

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55 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 100.
56 'The Sparrow's Nest', ll. 11-20.
57 Ezekiel 12. 2. See also Isaiah 6. 10, Jeremiah 5.21, Mark 8. 18 and Acts 28. 27 for similar references to this passage.
58 John Kerrigan, 'Wordsworth and the Sonnet: Building, Dwelling, Thinking' in *Essays in Criticism,* 35 (1985), 45-75 (p. 49).
59 *Ich bin* means 'I am' and is used in Hofstadter's translation to make the aural connection instead of *sein*.

dwelling-place.[60] Yet when we look at 'Gipsies', this temporariness poses a problem for Wordsworth.

Garrett reads into the discord between the juxtaposing of 'A Sparrow's Nest' with 'Gipsies' in the published version of *Poems in Two Volumes* in 1807, emphasising that it was not Wordsworth's intention to have the poems side-by-side in this order.[61] Rather, 'Gipsies' was meant to follow 'A Small Celandine' and be itself followed by 'A Sparrow's Nest' in Wordsworth's category of 'Moods of my own Mind'. The change results in a stark shift in tone from a warm, domestic responsiveness to the 'underlying nastiness' of 'Gipsies,'[62] which begins: 'Yet are they here?—the same unbroken knot | Of human beings, in the self-same spot!' Wordsworth makes no attempt to hide his obvious distaste for the gipsy life in this poem; there is no soft domesticity here; in fact, there is no 'abode' at all, merely a life of stops and starts. Perhaps what disgusts him so is the fact that in dwelling (being), the Gipsies do not actually 'dwell' anywhere or any place; they are, and will, be constantly in motion. Unlike the Israelites who wander the desert as admonishment, the Gipsies are not seeking a permanent resting place; they will not stop their vagabond lifestyle, they are idle. Elsewhere, Garrett reads the gipsies as posing a threat to Wordsworth: 'inconsequential and yet dangerous', their unknowable nature caused an 'epistemological panic' in the poet.[63] The poem has been called an 'embarrassment' and many critics have wished that Wordsworth hadn't written it.[64] The problem with the gipsies' existence that causes Wordsworth so much anxiety is labour and property – namely, elements of dwelling: 'labour' because it instils in man a sense of duty and purpose, and 'property' as the place where dwelling occurs: the roof over one's head. The distinction between property and dwelling in its relation to labour is demonstrated by the land ownership in 'Michael'.[65]

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60 *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, ed. by James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), l. 30. I am using MS. B (1798) as it is the earliest version of the poem. MS D, written in 1799, has 'four naked walls', l. 31.

61 See the table on p. 31 of Garrett's *Writing of a Nation*. The Cornell editor of *Poems, in Two Volumes*, Jared Curtis, points out the possibility of a printer changing the order of the poems on pp. 28-29; see also notes on pp. 211-12.

62 Garrett, *Writing of a Nation*, p. 33.

63 James M. Garrett 'The Accountable "Knot" of Wordsworth's "Gipsies"' in *Studies in Literature, 1500-1900*, 4 (2000), 603-620 (p. 605).

64 See David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination,* p. 25.

65 Marjorie Levinson explores the sociopolitics of property ownership in 'Spiritual Economics: A

Ownership of land, though not a necessary requirement for dwelling, was a way of life deeply engrained in the ethos of the Lake District at the turn of the nineteenth century. So why does he have problems with the gipsies but not with wandering, homeless beggars? Gary Lee Harrison, in *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty and Power* provides one answer, speaking to Simpson and Garrett: that the gipsies are a representation of idleness, lawlessness and revelry. They escape the census and remain unbrokenly 'the same.' Harrison points to another aspect of their existence: their representation in the picturesque, not the pastoral, disturbing the idyll and the economy of the countryside.[66] The other dwellers in Wordsworth's poems—Michael, Leonard, Simon Lee, Goody Blake, the 'aged Man constrained to dwell,' the female vagrant, and even the 'vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods' of 'Tintern Abbey'—did not so offend Wordsworth's sensibilities because they have 'goings on' in their existence, they 'nurture the things that grow, and specially construct the things that do not grow.'[67] The gipsies did neither.

Perhaps the answer lies in their name: they were *gyp*sies, or the so-called 'outlandish people calling themselves Egyptians' expelled from the country by the Egyptian Acts of 1539, repealed in 1783.[68] From a Judaic perspective, it was the Egyptians who watched in idleness while the Israelites built their pyramids; who caused fear and strife amongst the Israelites, who ultimately forced them out to wander in the desert. The Israelites lost their faith in God to deliver them into the Promised Land, and thus the forty years of wandering attributed to the nation was a punishment for their lack of faith, much like the Wandering Jew. Yet in Wordsworth, even the Jew finds wandering toilsome:

> Day and night my toils redouble!
> Never nearer to the goal,
> Night and day, I feel the trouble
> Of the Wanderer in my soul[69]

Reading of Wordsworth's "Michael", *ELH* 52 (1985), 707-31. Wordsworth's concern regarding 'labour' is that small property owners in the north of England are being removed from their own labour by a new class of 'hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing Poor' (p. 707). Levinson also carefully considers the biblical resonance between Michael and Luke and Abraham and Isaac (the *Akedah*).

66 Harrison, p. 103-4.

67 Heidegger, p. 149.

68 *The statutes at large from the Magna Charta, to the end of the eleventh Parliament of Great Britain* ed. by Danby Pickering (Cambridge: J. Bentham, 1763) p. 205.

69 'Song for the Wandering Jew' (1800), *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 189-190, ll.17-20.

while the gipsies' life is worse than 'wrong or strife' and 'vain deeds or evil.' Wordsworth's anxiety about his own poetry is present here. Hazlitt famously called Wordsworth the 'prince of poetic idlers' specifically in reference to this poem:

> We did not expect this turn from Mr Wordsworth, whom we had considered as the prince of poetic idlers, and patron of the philosophy of indolence, who formerly insisted on our spending our time in a "wise passiveness." Mr W. will excuse us if we are not converts to his recantation of his original doctrine, for he who changes his opinion loses his authority. We did not look for this Sunday-school philosophy from him. What had he himself been doing in these four and twenty hours? Had he been admiring a flower, or writing a sonnet? We hate the doctrine of utility, even in a philosopher, and much more in a poet: for the only real utility is that which leads to enjoyment [...] [The Gypsies] are an everlasting source of thought and reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the progress of civilisation: they are a better answer to the cotton manufactories than Mr W. has given in the '*Excursion.*'[70]

Hazlitt's analysis is witty, if not cunning: 'What had he been doing in these four and twenty hours? Had he been admiring a flower, or writing a sonnet?'[71] Indeed, Wordsworth's own occupation during this time (and countless others, surely) is not noted in the poem: we merely know the gipsies have been idle in this time. 'Utility' comes to question the poet's role: of what use, really, are his verses? Wordsworth is struggling in a world where poetic bearing is slowly beginning to lose its ground; where the public no longer want to listen. His poem about the gipsies, scorning them for their idleness is unprecedented and unwarranted because he is worried about his own poetic career.

Garrett's concern with the gipsies is of course for the nationalistic purpose of 'Counting the People'; quantifying a nation into able-bodied men, ready to fight if the need arises.[72] Similarly, Heather Glen in her excellent essay '"We are seven" in the 1790s' reads the question 'How many may you be?' as part of the 1790s statistical surveys. As she points out, this raises the question of what it means to be 'living' within the context of Jeremy Bentham's Pauper Population Table, noting his ambivalence over the issue of the dead as 'administratively

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70 'On Manner', *Hazlitt*, II. 46-7n. See also Simpson, pp. 43-45.

71 Wordsworth had been, in fact, on an excursion to Nottingham, near Castle Donnington, when he saw the gipsies. The purpose of the excursion, we are told, was 'to obtain plants for the winter garden at Coleorton.' Perhaps Hazlitt's accusation wasn't that far off the mark. The gipsies who inspired the poem were most likely observed near Castle Donington on the way. See Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Middle Years 1800-1815* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 348.

72 See Garrett, 'The Accountable "Knot"', pp. 603-620, on how class and poverty was under-represented in the national census.

unimportant', asking 'Do the recently dead count as people? Do the unborn? What is a family? What about those temporarily absent? Where does a person 'dwell'?'[73] It is this last question that interests me in 'We Are Seven': where, and I may add, how, does a person dwell? The little girl has her own idea of who counted as a person:

> She answered, "Seven are we,
> And two of us at Conway dwell,
> And two are gone to sea.
>
> Two of us in the church-yard lie,
> My sister and my brother,
> And in the church-yard cottage, I
> Dwell near them with my mother."[74]

Her insistence on including her deceased siblings includes them in the concept of dwelling. Their presence in the ground is noted and included in the overall headcount, which the questioning 'Master' fails to accept. Frances Ferguson calls attention to the fact that the little girl's 'ability to count her siblings first merely involves her ability to place them despite their physical absence from this place.'[75] It is not the little girl, however, but her questioner who places the dead siblings 'in Heaven.' The girls only says that little Jane 'In bed she moaning lay, | Till God released her of her pain, | And then she went away.' This 'went away' is obscure: earlier, she said she 'dwel[t] near them' whereas now the 'went away' signifies distance, just as her other siblings are 'gone to sea.' Whether one dwelt at home, or at sea, like Wordsworth's brother John, for example, depends on the understanding of the word dwelling. Heidegger sees buildings as dwellings, but notes that there are buildings in which one does not dwell, just as the domain of dwelling 'extends over these buildings and yet is not limited to the dwelling place.' For example, the working woman, he says, 'is at home in the spinning mill, but does not have her dwelling place there […] when to dwell means merely that we take shelter in [buildings].'[76] To the statistical survey, then, the dead do not 'dwell' at all. They do not count. To the little girl, and perhaps also to Wordsworth, mortals dwell on and in the earth, undistinguished by their capacity

73 Heather Glen, '"We are Seven" in the 1790s' in *Grasmere, 2012 Selected Papers from the Wordsworth Summer Conference*, ed. by Richard Gravil (Tirril: Humanities-Ebooks LLP, 2012), 8-33. (p. 30).
74 'We are Seven', *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 73-75, ll. 18-24.
75 Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 165.
76 Heidegger, pp. 143-4.

to breathe. The type of historical context that Glen provides is markedly different from the rest of this analysis to prove a point: dwelling then as much as now had a very real and very physical element, not just a philosophical one. Above all, thinking about dwelling meant asking precisely the sorts of questions that 'We are Seven' beckons: who counted, and who didn't.

Counting people, however, was considered a sin.[77] 'The people', as Glen notes, signified a collective noun in the language of the Bible, joining 'we' and 'us' into an innumerable unity. 'Numbering the people', she continues, was punishable by God, as in 1 Chronicles 21.8 and 2 Samuel 24:

> Why God punished David for numbering the people remains rather obscure. The reasons adduced in eighteenth-century sermons […] include the 'wanton pride' of worldly authority (especially, it seems, that of monarchy), and the sin of trusting in human strength.[78]

However, the story of the biblical census does not end there. God gives David a choice of punishment, of which he chooses pestilence upon Israel for three days, killing, we are told, seventy thousand men.[79] What is more interesting than the cost paid for the survey, is what happens next. David asks God to take the punishment upon himself, rather than his people, for it was his idea to count them in the first place. God agrees, and David spends the rest of the chapter building an altar to the Lord to stay the plague from his people: 'For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, *were* at that season in the high place at Gibeon.'[80] Again we come face to face with God's dwelling place on earth, and man's desperate need for this dwelling place to have physical boundaries.

In Wordsworth's writing, those physical boundaries are often reinforced by nature. Built structures, such as nests, capture the primal nature of dwelling. Nests naturally fall into discussions about dwelling as they represent an animal version of what we normally take to be a very human concept and entity. That birds also *build* homes, as opposed to seeking shelter in available natural habitats. Like 'A Sparrow's Nest,' Wordsworth's poem 'A Wren's Nest' uses the

77 Numbering also features in the New Testament as part of the Census of Cyrenius which forces all men, including Joseph and Mary, to return to the dwelling places of their ancestors in order to be counted.
78 Glen, p. 31.
79 I Chronicles 21. 14.
80 Ibid., 21. 29.

nest in his connection to other humans. However, in this case it does not draw him back into the recesses of childhood memory, though the 'bower' remains a primary concern. Bachelard again shapes Bate's and Kerrigan's thoughts in this respect. Specifically, they turn to him when considering the nest-like nature of a home in Clare (Bate) and Wordsworth (Kerrigan). The nest serves the function of inhabiting. A wren's nest in particular, Bachelard says, is like 'a thatched cottage, because it is a covered, round nest.'[81] It, like every nest, bears the quality of 'inhabiting': of soliciting a desire to return to it. Wordsworth's understanding of human dwelling is rooted in rural cottages and physical places, creating vulnerability and inspiring compassion, and losing trust and finding what he thought was an 'immutable place to dwell': the grave.[82] From about 1814 onwards, Kerrigan argues, Wordsworth commits his poetry to notions of celestial dwelling, still celebrating building but replacing cottages and tombs with chapels and churches. Furthermore, Kerrigan focuses the narrow lens of his study solely on the specificity of the sonnet, arguing that it is there, not in place but poetic form, within the fourteen-line structure that Wordsworth finds 'a uniquely comforting abode in which to dwell.'[83] I disagree – it is in physical places that the poet finds his dwelling, not in a poetic form that is not his own.

In 'A Wren's Nest,' the focus remains on the nest. He no longer needs to use the bird's dwelling place as a device to trigger his own memories, or as a prelude to a 'profounder' exploration of human dwelling. Instead, he has been able to turn his mind 'without disdain' to 'little things.'[84] He praises the birds' ability over that of man's to find a shadowy recess, away from harm and storms, to build a home:

> And when for their abodes they seek
> An opportune recess,
> The hermit has no finer eye
> For shadowy quietness.[85]

Wren's nests are often hidden, and the entrance remains concealed, making the wren's desire for solitude and reclusiveness a prime type of 'shadowy quietness' of the hermit, but also echoes the

81 Bachelard, pp. 98; 90; 98.
82 Kerrigan, p. 50.
83 Ibid., pp. 51; 57.
84 'A Wren's Nest', *Last Poems*, p. 232-234, l. 46-47.
85 Ibid., l. 13-16.

'shelter of one Cottage-roof' in 'Home at Grasmere.'[86] Wordsworth's ornithological knowledge and rather scientific observation of nature and its inhabitants transfers back onto his understanding of mankind. Thus by 1833, a poem about the wren's nest is sufficient: dwelling has come to be enough on its own.[87] He is neither seeking to go beyond it to the grave nor is he seeking a divine refuge beyond this world;[88] he is content to find dwelling and being in the building that occurs in Grasmere. When he attempts to show the bird's abode to like-minded friends, he sees that it is gone, only to find that it has been hidden behind a veil of primroses. The poem ends with a rejoicing of this hidden dwelling place:

> Think how ye prospered, thou and thine,
> Amid the unviolated grove
> Housed near the growing primrose tuft
> In foresight, or in love.[89]

The 'primrose tuft' that the poet finds harkens back to another poem by that name, written during the spring-summer of 1808.[90] *The Tuft of Primroses* was composed after the Wordsworths returned from their extended winter stay with Lord and Lady Beaumont at Coleorton, and explores a similar theme, however this time the poet is mourning the changes that occurred in his absence. A grove of firs and sycamores that had been cut near the church yard; Joseph Sympson, a local vicar had died, and his cottage had fallen into disrepair. Cottages as dwelling places are crucial both to 'A Wren's Nest' and to *The Tuft of Primroses* not least because of Wordsworth's domestic concerns: 1808 marked the year when the family had to move to Allan Bank, despite being strongly opposed to the building of the house several years earlier.[91] Their

86 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 734.

87 Wordsworth's earlier poems on birds include 'The Sparrow's Nest', 'To the Cuckoo', and the swans in 'Home at Grasmere'. To see a detailed list of Wordsworth's affinity for ornithology, see Stanley Finch, *Wordsworth's Birds* (Carnforth, Lancaster: Lunesdale Publishing Group, 1986).

88 See Kerrigan's argument.

89 'A Wren's Nest', l. 69-72.

90 See James Butler 'Wordsworth's "Tuft of Primroses": "An Unrelenting Doom"', *Studies in Romanticism* 14 (1978), 237-48 (p. 241).

91 See W.W. to Richard Sharp, 7 February 1805: 'Woe to poor Grasmere for ever and ever! A wretched Creature, wretched in name and Nature, of the name of Crump, […] has at last begun to put his long impending threats in execution; and when you next enter the sweet paradise of Grasmere you will see staring you in the face upon that beautiful ridge that elbows out into the vale (behind the church and towering far above its steeple) a temple of abomination, in which are to be enshrined Mr and Mrs Crump. Seriously this is a great vexation to us, as this House will stare you in the face from every part of the Vale, and entirely destroy its character of simplicity and seclusion.' The house, of course, was Allan Bank, and Wordsworth was to be his first tenant. His ability to put aside aesthetic considerations for the need of his family prove that dwelling—earthly dwelling—was above all, a practical matter.

cottage—Dove Cottage, that is—in harmony with its surrounding vale represented for the poet a truer dwelling place than Allan Bank ever was.

The wren's withdrawal into her secluded home marked by primroses must have reminded the elder Wordsworth of his first Grasmere abode – the cottage that was crucial to his sense of inhabiting. Yet hiding, as the wren does amidst the primrose tuft, is not the only quality of a dwelling place. A dwelling can evoke shelter, warmth, peace, and perhaps most importantly, the possibility of return. The Wordsworthian dwelling place, the 'unviolated grove' of Wordsworth's poem, takes on a secondary, more universal meaning when thinking about man's dwelling place on the earth: the wren's dwelling moves from general to specific to universal: originally 'Among the dwellings framed by birds,' Wordsworth rejoices to have found this particular nest after assuming it was lost, and then broadens this specificity in the last stanza, such that the 'unviolated grove' envelops not just the nest or the vale of Grasmere, but the whole earth and all the mortals in it through the element of 'love'. 'For the world is a nest, and an immense power holds the inhabitants of the world in this nest', says Bachelard.[92]

III

Nests are of interest to the phenomenologist because they exemplify dwelling in the natural world, like shells or shelters. They differ, however, in that (most) birds build their own nests, unlike shells which grow with their inhabitants, or other shelters which are sought out (like caves for example). The word 'shelter' also has an additional connotation: that of protection. It is incorporated into the idea of a dwelling place in that one can only feel *at home* when one feels safe. The feeling of safety and protection is drawn out by Heidegger when he engages with Old Saxon and Gothic roots behind the idea of dwelling. Asking 'in what does the nature of dwelling consist', he turns first and foremost to language. Exploring the multifaceted origins (which I return to later on), he points out that dwelling implies being at peace, and the word for peace,

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The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, ed. by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 534. Hereafter *EY*.

92 Bachelard, p. 104.

'Friede', means to spare, or preserve from harm.[93] Sparing, or returning something to its proper nature also includes sparing the land.

The connection between the language and the landscape is particular to both biblical Hebrew (as Lowth has shown) and to Wordsworth.[94] Despite Wordsworth's growing Christianity in later life, I maintain that his poetical interest lay within the Old Testament.[95] When treating the Bible as a poetic and literary text, the circumstances of the people and the writers in the Old Testament exemplify a rural life much more closely. The Christian religion, on the other hand, was a very urban one, its ministry beginning with the epistles to the inhabitants of different cities, and ending with the vision of a New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. Even the start of the New Testament, with the scene of the nativity was one that occurred under an urban edict: Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem because of a census issued by Cyrenius, governor of Syria.[96] The shepherds that are present are also accompanied by the three Magi: the scene takes place in a manger only because they family was turned away from the inn: it is far from pastoral.[97] Chris Fitter writes that Christianity was 'from very early on an urban religion, spreading through a cosmopolitan empire'.[98] This is the dominant reason why I see Wordsworth's relationship with the Bible and its language much more rooted in the Old Testament than the New: because the connection with nature that is innate to the language and culture of ancient Israel has been replaced in the New Testament with a transcendent desire for a heavenly kingdom. However, Fitter's claim about the cosmopolitan nature of the Christianity requires some modification when considering episodes such as the parables or the Sermon on the Mount, which do not take place in the city. Christ returns to agricultural and natural images because they help connect his narrative back to the prophetic visions of the Old Testament. The Sermon on the Mount, containing the Beatitudes and the Lord's prayer, echoes Moses' Ten Commandments received on Mount Sinai in style and format. The New Testament world is one

93 Heidegger, p. 147.
94 Refer to Chapter Two, 'Vales', on Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* p. 76-77.
95 In particular, see William Ulmer, *The Christian Wordsworth 1798-1805* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).
96 Luke 2. 2. Refer to p.44 above on counting being a sin in the Old Testament.
97 Note that only the Gospels of Luke and Matthew contain the nativity story: Mark and John begin with the baptising of Jesus by John the Baptist.
98 Fitter, p. 77.

of angry mobs, imprisonments, destroyed temples, violence and recalcitrance rather than one of a wandering people. It is the world of the city, not tribes in the wilderness.[99]

Understanding place has a very different meaning in an urban environment from a rural one. Places such as 'Emma's Dell' or 'Joanna's Rock' may be considered ineffectual in an increasingly urbanising world – it is often very difficult to identify separate overlapping cultural landscapes in cities, let alone personalised places. Poetic space is created when regular place is infused with meaning. Bachelard explains again, arguing that there are

> two kinds of space, intimate space and exterior space, [which] keep encouraging each other, as it were, in their growth. […] The poet goes deeper when he uncovers a poetic space that does not enclose us in affectivity. […] Poetic space, because it is expressed, assumes values of expansion. […] In this activity of poetic spatiality that goes from deep intimacy to infinite extent, united in an identical expansion, one feels grandeur welling up. As Rilke said: "Through every human being, unique space, intimate space, opens up to the world."[100]

The personal aspect of place, that opens it up into space, is what occurs in Wordsworth's 'A Wren's Nest'. By taking the limited and tangible confines of a nest and turning them into the boundlessness of landscape Wordsworth is engaging with a very biblical trope: to the God of the Old Testament, the world is both intimate and expansive: 'Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?'[101] It is both home and footstool, expressing the sublimity of God's power all the while portraying his desire to connect with the people of Israel. His 'house' is the tabernacle. This passage from Isaiah also returns us to Hazlitt's appraisal of Wordsworth's poetic style: like God, the poet 'makes the round earth its footstool, and its home!'[102] His place too is at once specific and universal.

In order for place to have meaning, it needs to be connected to a specific person or time; it needs to be infused with memory. This is the case as much in the Old Testament as in Wordsworth: 'Place means nothing without the impress of momentous occasion: hence the praise of sacred mountains such as Sion, and the abundant catalogue of sanctuaries in the

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99 It should be noted that, rather ironically, the book of the Old Testament that is most imported from a more commercially-advanced and metropolitan culture is the Song of Songs. See Fitter, p. 72-74.
100 Bachelard, pp. 201-202.
101 Isaiah 66. 1.
102 Hazlitt, VII, 162-63.

Pentateuch.'[103] Wordsworth also intentionally embeds memory onto places in order to imbue them not only with human but personal meaning. Even when describing a grove of trees in a valley he champions personal history over space – the landscape he is describing becomes his because he wrote a poem about it, if nothing else. The poem then, not the physical building is what remains: cottages, enclosed gardens, and roads are one way to interact with nature. It demands a respect for the land, while also relating an experience of perception that is the closest thing to being recreated imaginatively. By layering a mental topography onto the real one, he, like the Israelites, gives the land sacred meaning.[104] And it is in this sacred meaning that man dwells.

Harding names Coleridge as the master of occasion, arguing that in his poems, 'the poet invites us to trace the inspiration of the lines chiefly to the influence of the natural scene, although it is not so much a Wordsworthian sense of *place* that Coleridge seems to experience as a sense of *occasion*, the moment of interpenetration between the earthly and the celestial'.[105] His focus is not on the specific location where the poetic moment occurred as much as on the surrounding circumstances: time as well as space. Coleridge, however, is not alone in associating occasion with place. It is a trope that Wordsworth also championed: one needs only to think about the *Poems on the Naming of Places* for the most obvious example, such as 'Point Rash-Judgment' or 'There is an Eminence,—of these our hills'. There, we witness the event—the wrong admonishment of a man, or the feeling of communion with another in the solitude of a landscape—as much as the place itself creating the poetic meaning for the poet: the places are infused with memories and incidents.

When turning from biblical commentary to literary criticism to cultural geography, the idea of infused place carries through. In his introduction to *Space and Place*, the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues that 'What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we

103 Fitter, pp. 67-68. Fitter also suggests Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. by John McHugh, 2nd edn (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965), book 4, sections 1-2, esp. pp. 289-94.

104 For a reading of land and its function property from an Old Testament perspective, see Levinson, 'Spiritual Economics'.

105 Anthony J. Harding, *Coleridge and the Inspired Word* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), p. 41, emphasis in original.

get to know it better and endow it with value.'[106] However, this seems to be counter-intuitive to Heidegger's notion that a place (like a bridge) creates a space. In 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Heidegger discusses the difference between space and place. He identifies a location, something that is of its own kind and can make space for a site. A location is not present until something occurs in it, in his case, a bridge: 'there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something,' and one of them 'proves to be a location, and does so *because of the bridge.*'[107] It is such places—imbued with value, meaning, objects—that come to create space. In other words, his notion of space and place contradicts our general knowledge of it: 'Only things that are locations in this manner allow for spaces.' He then turns to etymology to deepen his concept of space. 'Raum' or 'Rum', he says, means 'a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging.' We do not build in 'empty' space; rather, space is what is created once we make room for it. A location, or what I have been calling a 'place' with embedded value, makes room for the existence of the fourfold: it '*admits* the fourfold and it *installs* the fourfold.'[108] The fourfold is Heidegger's created 'oneness' for dwelling. It is a space-making practice in which *Dasein*, our being a conscious part of the world (literally 'being there' in German), is located. The four elements of the fourfold create the pairs of nature (earth and sky) and culture (divinities and mortals) and erect the *space* for dwelling to occur. It is 'on the earth' and 'under the sky'. The fourfould, Heidegger continues, unfolds. It unfolds because being 'on the earth' already means 'under the sky', just as both also already mean 'remaining before the divinities' and include 'being with one another'.[109] The fourfold is thus the ambiguity of simultaneous space and non-space in which human beings exist; in which they *dwell*. Dwelling is a preservation of the fourfold. Wordsworth's place-conscious poems participate in the same act of dwelling: making room is what Wordsworth's poems do. 'Airey-Force Valley', composed in 1835, is precisely such a poem. It refers, as many of his poems do, to a specific place: Aira Force ('force' being the Cumbrian word for cataract) is a waterfall on the western shore of Ullswater, where Wordsworth

106 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 6.
107 Heidegger, p. 152.
108 Ibid., pp. 152; 155. All emphases original.
109 Ibid., p. 147.

often loved to bring visitors.[110] The poem captures, above all, the experience of the poet in a specific place and time, on the earth and beneath the sky:

> —Not a breath of air
> Ruffles the bosom of this leafy glen.
> From the brook's margin, wide around, the trees
> Are stedfast as the rocks; the brook itself,
> Old as the hills that feed it from afar,
> Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm
> Where all things else are still and motionless.
> And yet, even now, a little breeze, perchance
> Escaped from boisterous winds that rage without,
> Has entered, by the sturdy oaks unfelt;
> But to its gentle touch how sensitive
> Is the light ash! that, pendent from the brow
> Of yon dim cave, in seeming silence makes
> A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs,
> Powerful almost as vocal harmony
> To stay the wanderer's steps and soothe his thoughts.[111]

Wordsworth's experience of Aira Force in this poem is almost entirely sensory: one feels and hears and sees the place. The glen is quiet, the air is still, and the trees rock-like in their motionlessness. The only sound is that of the flowing brook. A wisp of wind ruffles the light ash, creating what Wordsworth calls 'a soft eye-music'. Yet there is no 'protagonist': despite being an intimately personal poem about the experience of a place, the subjectivity within it does not belong to an 'I' or a 'you'. It is at once subjective and objective; conscious of itself (what Husserl called 'intentional consciousness') yet aware of its being-in-the-world. Nevertheless, the 'soft eye-music' is seen and heard by the poet, and presently, by the reader. To Wordsworth and his family, the spot would have carried previous memories and meanings: it was near the entrance to Aira Force along Ullswater where the poet and Dorothy first saw the daffodils that led to his most unfortunately reproduced poem.

'Airey-Force Valley' makes room by replicating the spot by the waterfall into several further spots: the first is the original location, on the shores of Ullswater in Cumbria. The second is the spot as it occurred in Wordsworth's memory, followed by its replication and representation in his poem. Then it is imaginatively presented to a conjectural wanderer, suggesting the place

110 See John Edwin Wells, 'Wordsworth and Church Building; 'Airey-Force Valley', *Modern Language Review,* 35 (1940), 350-54 (p. 353).
111 'Airey-Force Valley', *Last Poems,* p. 285.

powerful enough to stay his steps and 'soothe his thoughts.' Finally, it is recreated, though not identically, in the mind of every reader. The wanderer bring us indirectly into the presence of other mortals, while the intimate mood of the poem reminds us, implicitly, about the presence of a divinity. 'Airey-Force Valley' therefore dwells in the fourfold. However, it is important to remember that dwelling is not inhabiting. It is where one is *at home*, where one *has a place*, but this is distinct from being *in* a home. Dwelling, especially Wordsworthian dwelling, is not limited to the confines of his cottage, important as that cottage may be to his sense of place. It raises the question of how language represents reality. Language gets its meaning from the speaker's involvement in the world, but the speaker needs that contact with the world before we can conceptualise about it. To convey what a place means, one has to have an understanding of what the language used to describe the place means. The transfer of experience from one 'experiencer' to another relies on a mutual medium, be it language or art. Understanding the meaning of place means first understanding the things—and places—the words themselves mean. Combining subjectivism with objectivism, this experience of Aira Force is *someone's* – in fact, Wordsworth's. It appeared, 'still and motionless' to him on a certain day in 1835. Yet it is also an attempt at representing the local in the world: his involvement with the waterfall is not purely inner, as it exists independently of him.

In his chapter on 'The Naming of Places,' Jonathan Bate emphasises local, and not national place, arguing that 'If nationality may be said to play an important role in the formation of our identities, then so may locality.'[112] To some, Wordsworth was known as a poet of the English Lakes rather than a poet of England, so much so that his editor Ernest de Selincourt, in his introduction to Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, said 'Wordsworth is regarded not merely as the prophet of Lakeland, but almost as its first discoverer.'[113] Dwelling, on the individual level, can occur only in one place at a time: one cannot dwell in all of England though one can *conceive* of such a dwelling. Bate relies on Edward Thomas' point that the public association of

112 Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 85.

113 Ernest De Selincourt, 'Introduction', *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes*, 5th edn (London: Henry Frowde, 1905), p. ix.

Wordsworth with a specific place, in this case, the Lake District, has to do with 'his *knowing* of place; his localness, his *naming* of places […] and his specificity, his *recording* of 'times and places of composition'.[114] Dwelling, whether read through Heidegger's lens or not, falls between all three. Before knowing and naming and recording, one has to *be* in a place, which results in the sort of 'location' poetry that Wordsworth (and later Thomas) championed.

The *Poems on the Naming of Places* beckon to be read in light of Heidegger's definition. They are, of course, of particular interest because Wordsworth intended for them to be personal poems about personal places: in the advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads*, he states: 'many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents will have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and particular Interest.'[115] These private poems give the places a sense of occasion. In the first of the series, 'In was an April Morning', the poet pauses in a spot, 'a sudden turning' where 'appear'd the voice | Of common pleasure'.[116] This spot, dedicated to Emma (Dorothy) grows as the poet describes it, until all the foliage and surrounding landscape is taken in. The spot is not the place itself but everything that can be seen from it, including the 'single mountain Cottage' seen from a distance. By incorporating the Cottage, Wordsworth includes human existence and human life into a natural scene, extending the definition of dwelling out of doors:

> ——Soon did the spot become my other home,
> My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
> And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
> To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
> Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
> Years after we are gone and in our graves,
> When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
> May call it by the name of Emma's dell.[117]

By naming the dell, Wordsworth not only personalises it in the moment, but also in time: he notes that it may be called 'by the name of Emma's dell' years after their death; it is an appropriation of the spot through time. His dwelling place, and by extension, Dorothy's, is thus not constrained by the earthly abode: it is not something that he carries with him to the grave,

114 Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, p. 87. Emphasis original.
115 'Poems on the Naming of Places', *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 241.
116 'It was an April Morning' *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 242-43, ll. 20-25.
117 Ibid., ll. 40-47.

nor is it something that ceases to exist once he passes. The dwelling place remains, even if the dweller is long gone.

The next poem in the sequence, 'To Joanna', bears a somewhat different treatment: it is jovial, if not self-mocking, in tone and filled with the 'noise of laughter.' Again, the poet begins by rooting the poem in place: 'While I was seated, now some ten days past, | Beneath those lofty firs [...]' and ends by pronouncing a name for the place that marked the incident of Joanna's laughter. However, Joanna's 'dell' in this case is not locatable: a poem is not a description or record of facts, even if it does refer back to a real, factual place. David McCracken traced Wordsworth's poems back to their places, but was careful to point out (perhaps obviously) that 'a poem, written or spoken, is different, essentially different, from an image, an experience, or a fact.'[118] The place in the poem is, according to Wordsworth, 'any place that will suit; that as well as any other.'[119] McCracken's rather phenomenological description of the poem and the reader's role in continuing the echoes of laughter in one's head merge to create a 'living' memorial. It is the experience of the dwellers rather than the dwelling place that is being recorded. The dwellers of this poem dwell together, in a communal 'we' that is later counterpointed with the speaker's individual dwelling in solitude 'by my fireside':

> Yet we who are transgressors in this kind,
> Dwelling retired in our simplicity
> Among the woods and fields, we love you well,
> Joanna![120]

All the poems on naming of places resonate with sound: in Emma's Dell, we are left with the 'voice of common pleasure' and the repeating name spoken by the shepherds; in 'To Joanna,' the sound of her laughter resonates amongst the mountain sides, with the 'brotherhood | Of ancient mountains' consisting of Fairfield, Helvellyn, Skiddaw and Glaramara all echoing in reply. 'There is an eminence' opens with a parley with the setting sun, while in 'A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags' the vacant wandering of the companions is broken by a noise of 'the busy mirth | Of reapers, men and women, boys and girls.' It is this noise that ultimately leads to

118 David McCracken, *Wordsworth and the Lake District*: *A Guide to the Poems and their Places* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 188.
119 As quoted in McCracken, p. 193.
120 'To Joanna', *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 244-46, ll. 9-12.

their self-reproach and the name of the place, 'POINT RASH JUDGMENT', for assuming the poor, sick man an 'idler' too lazy to participate in the harvest. The accusation of idleness, it should be noted, is reminiscent of Wordsworth's admonition of the gipsies for the same thing. However, this time it is meant to be ironic: he does not consider his and his friends' 'sauntering' on a 'calm September morning' to be idling at all because the poem is one of self-admonishment. Finally, in the fifth and last poem, 'To M.H.' we find no audible noise: all that remains is the name of the nook. Nature herself, in this sense, dwells, and Wordsworth suggests that man should dwell with and in her:

> And if a man should plant his cottage near,
> Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
> And blend its waters with its daily meal,
> He would so love it that in his death hour
> Its image would survive among his thoughts.

Wordsworth's preoccupation with death is striking not just here but in all his poems. Its looming presence reigns from his earliest poetry to his latest, but he never presents an anxiety about the transience of human nature. On the contrary, his representation of human dwelling carries through from the 'inscriptive' nature of the poems.[121] 'The poet is as much geographer as historian' Bate says, in response to the notion that we live and die in place. In *Essays on Epitaphs* (1810), Wordsworth implies that poetry has its origins in memorial inscription. Bate points out the traditions poetry is normally linked to—bards, songs, rituals of prophets and priests—are oral traditions. The 'epitaphic tradition' is different because it 'serves to sanctify a place and to preserve the memory of a person' and has origins in burial customs.[122] The epitaph, Bate goes on to argue, is the root of all lyric poetry, as Wordsworth himself says 'As soon as nations had learned the use of letters, epitaphs were inscribed upon these monuments'.[123] Yet neither he, nor those he memorialises, remain in the grave: the poem, and the act of naming and subsequently recalling the naming, stretch dwelling from the tangible to the transcendental. Bate also forgets

121 See Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 31-46.
122 Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, pp. 85-87.
123 'Essays upon Epitaphs, I', *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth,* ed. by J.W.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, 49-96 (p. 50). Originally published in *The Friend*, 22nd February, 1810.

the Priest's argument in 'The Brothers', where in response to Leonard's accusation of a barren church yard, he says:

> We have no need of names and epitaphs,
> We talk about the dead by our fire-sides.
> And then for our immortal part, *we* want
> No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale:
> The thought of death sits easy on the man
> Who has been born and dies among the mountains.[124]

Above all, 'The Brothers', like the *Poems on the Naming of Places* commemorate friendship and family, underpinning the belief that dwelling occurs in community, and furthermore, that the community is one that is created and maintained through poetry. The poem is therefore a necessary part of dwelling: it is at once the building and the naming and the recording that occurs when one *is*.

Heidegger's thesis on building and dwelling has been the theoretical *basso continuo* in this chapter, one I wish to finally address in more detail. Heidegger turns first and foremost towards etymology to answer the two questions he poses: '1. What is it to dwell? 2. How does building belong to dwelling?' Building, in German *bauen*, and in Old English and High German, *baun*, means to dwell. This is the relationship he wishes to unpack and one which Wordsworth fundamentally anticipated. In the original sense, the word *bauen* 'also says *how far* the nature of dwelling reaches': it extends to the German for 'to be' - *ich bin*, *du bist*, and the imperative *bis*.[125] However, dwelling is not the same as being, because dwelling 'is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.'[126] But building is a form of dwelling, and building can be subdivided into two categories: cultivation and construction. Heidegger takes the language further to its roots, by turning to the Old Saxon and Gothic words *wuon* and *wunian*, respectively. *Wunian*, according to Heidegger, means 'to be at peace', and *Friede* takes that further to mean 'to preserve from harm'. Thus, Heidegger posits, 'The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving'; man nurtures that which grows on the earth and creates that which does not.[127] Placing man on

124 'The Brothers', *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 141-59, ll. 176-80.
125 The imperative form of 'to be' is in fact *sei*, not *bis*, rendering Hofstadter's translation of Heidegger incorrect. I am indebted to Nicholas Halmi and Christoph Bode for pointing this out to me.
126 Heidegger, pp. 143-146.
127 Heidegger, pp. 146-47. These are Albert Hofstadter's own translations into English of Heidegger's originals into German.

earth creates a gap—a space between the heavens and the ground—which man has to tend to with his existence.

Heidegger himself provides the answer between sky and earth through the work of Hölderlin, when in his poem 'In lieblicher Bläue' Hölderlin says 'poetically man dwells'.[128] In order to make sense of this passage, we cannot understand poetry as merely literary and in the realm of imagination or dreams; nor can we assume dwelling to mean living under a roof, 'for dwelling, after all, already means man's stay on earth.' Poetry, in Hölderlin's poem, is in fact a measuring, and specifically, it is a measuring of man against the godhead, reminding us of the sin of counting from the Old Testament, and of the population census. Heidegger disassociates measuring from quantifying, just as number in its essence is not quantifiable. When the line is read in context, Hölderlin's poem says:

> May, if life is sheer toil, a man
> Lift his eyes and say: so
> I too wish to be? Yes. As long as Kindness,
> The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
> Not unhappily measures himself
> Against the godhead. Is God unknown?
> Is he manifest like the sky? I'd sooner
> Believe the latter. It's the measure of man.
> Full of merit, yet poetically, man
> Dwells on this earth. But no purer
> Is the shade of the starry night,
> If I might put it so, than
> Man, who's called an image of the godhead.
> Is there a measure on earth? There is
> None.[129]

Heidegger picks this poem apart, but nowhere in exploring the 'dimension' in which man is measured does he acknowledge the biblical resonance of the passage: Hölderlin is echoing Genesis 1.26: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' The poet emphasises man's dwelling as being 'on this earth', a feat that Heidegger describes as protective,

128 The dating (and in fact authenticity) of this poem is unknown. The poem was originally found (in prose) in a novel entitled *Phaëthon* written in 1822 by a seventeen-year-old boy named Friedrich Wilhelm Waiblinger, who had been acquainted with Hölderlin. Although the poem is attributed to Hölderlin dominantly because of Heidegger's use of it, Emmon Bach maintains that it was in fact a Waiblinger's own invention written in the style of late Hölderlin. See Emmon Bach, '"In lieblicher Bläue": Hölderlin or Waiblinger?', *Germanic Review* 36 (1961), 27-34. See also Silke-Maria Weineck, *The Abyss Above: Philosophy and Poetic Madness in Plato, Hölderlin and Neitzsche* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002).

129 Friedrich Hölderlin, 'In lieblicher Bläue' as quoted in Heidegger, p. 217.

expressing the nature of poetry: it 'does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling.'[130] Yet this earthly dwelling is again echoed in the biblical. That same verse continues: 'and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'[131] This view—that on earth, man builds and nurtures and reigns as he pleases; on earth, man is lord—was challenged as much in Wordsworth's day as in ours. Relating back to Wordsworth, Heidegger's treatment of Hölderlin casts light on Wordsworth's own dilemma of dwelling between the states of heaven and earth, and one might add, the grave. In Wordsworth's place-specific poems, there exists a continual drive for an expansion of dwelling to mean more than just lodging; and it is a dwelling that is embodied by the numerous characters he meets in Grasmere.

Hebrew poetry is similarly coloured by the characteristics of the landscape in which it takes place. When considering a nation's way of vocalising place, the surrounding circumstances contribute to the variety of expression. Hebrew nature-sensibility is established by its geophysical location and its language. Chris Fitter states that the epistemological sensibility of Hebrews was not materialist: it disposed inward. He argued that its geographical setting as a small, often-times homeless nation amongst the superpowers of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia was crucial: constantly humiliated and dwarfed, engulfed in a military and economic struggle, the Hebrews were bound to adopt a narrative of an elite in toils. Theirs was not a cosmopolitan culture, but a rural one forced to live between two increasingly cosmopolitan worlds. Thus, their sensibility was theocratic and visionary, and not sense-explorative. Whereas this is true, it is difficult to argue for a sense-explorative, and further, an ecological perspective in Hebrew culture because ecology was not a yet a formed concept: the term did not come into usage until 1876 (by E.R. Lankester, translated into English by Ernst Haeckel) and did not attain its current meaning until the twentieth century. Thus to expect a 'scriptural ecological perception' from the Hebrews as Fitter

130 Heidegger, p. 216.
131 Genesis 1. 26.

does is anachronistic: theirs was a culture in which not being in equilibrium with the environment was not a choice. They lived in tents in a 'baking mountainous landscape of semi-wilderness,' rendering any form of lush oasis as their sanctuary: the arboreal (tree of life), the agricultural (garden of Eden), and the aqueous (fountain of living waters).[132] In Isaiah 41.18-19, God idealises all three: 'I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness.' The Bible however, carries two different meaning of the word 'wilderness.' Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes between them as 'a place of desolation, the unsown land frequented by demons; […] condemned by God,' and 'a place of refuge and contemplation, or […] any place where the Chosen are scattered for a season of discipline or purgation.'[133] Man's place in the landscape is thus somewhere between the agricultural and the wild. Wordsworth's poem 'To M.H.' is a fine example of such blending. Taking place 'far among the ancient trees', in 'wild growth' with no public road or footpath, it is a 'spot made by Nature for herself'. He imagines, however, that one day a man 'should *plant* his cottage near […] and blend its waters with his daily meal', emphasising the harmony with nature through the act of 'planting' rather than 'building'. The nook, a private spot of wilderness, becomes sacred in the minds of those to whom it is dear, and thereby a dwelling-place.

Yet as Fitter points out, the practice of working the land is hidden among the poetry, in Isaiah, the Proverbs, the Book of Judges and the Psalms we are given descriptions of methods of field irrigation and ploughing. Initiated by the works of Lowth, understanding the Bible meant understanding Hebrew culture, a task that Herder took upon himself, and one that was furthered by his translator, James Marsh in 1833. Marsh criticised Lowth for being too much cultivated by 'classical learning', seeking to compare Hebrew poetry 'with the productions of Grecian and Roman art', instead of studying it on its own:

> the more thoroughly one's understanding is moulded by the forms, and occupied with the conceptions exhibited in the literature of the age and country, the less it is qualified to imbibe the genuine spirit, and feel the simple power of every other national literature. […] He must not only be acquainted with the facts of their history […] but must learn to place himself entirely in their *point of view*. […] When he has done this, he will be prepared to understand why they thought, and felt, and wrote as they did; and if he have

132 Fitter, pp. 53, 57, 58.
133 Tuan, *Topophilia*, pp. 109-110.

> the feeling and inspiration of the poet, he will sympathize with their emotions, and the living spirit of their poetry will be kindled up in his own imagination.[134]

Herder's, and subsequently Marsh's concerns were with the *spirit* of biblical poetry. Hebrew culture had to therefore be treated as foreign, and approached from basics, just as Lowth taught his audiences to read the poetry in the Scripture of the Bible. It was commonly believed that Hebrew poetry belonged to 'the earliest periods of recorded time' and thus presented simple and child-like conceptions of the human mind of the human race in its infancy, and therefore closeness to God. On this matter, Herder wrote that 'In this feeling of natural beauty and sublimity the child often has the advantage of the man of gray hairs, and nations of the greatest simplicity have in their natural imagery and expressions of natural feeling, the most elevated and touching poetry.'[135] Israel, being a nation in its infancy, and having a language that consisted mainly of verbs, 'awakens feeling'.[136] This simplicity and return to childhood was natural to Wordsworth, warranting his inclination towards Hebrew poetry (in the form of the Old Testament). In thinking about the poetry of place, one must also think about the language and the way in which it manifests the characters of its place of origin.

Following the argument that place shapes language, it becomes more difficult to trace a resonance between the poetry of the ancient Hebrews and Wordsworth's poetry, as obviously the Hebrew people have been acclimatised differently and to different land, climate and culture than the English of Wordsworth's time. Furthermore, English in no way resembles biblical Hebrew: stemming from two completely language groups (Indo-European and Hamito-Semitic respectively) the only connection between them in Wordsworth's time is the marvel that is the King James Bible. However, the fact that Wordsworth is driving towards a language and an idea of a people as closely linked to their landscape as the ancient Hebrews consciously or unconsciously allows for a wealth of comparisons that are cultural rather than linguistic, as I argue in the next chapter. Returning to Rigby, she continues her exploration of Herder through Humboldt, showing that 'on a more individual level, we can also be affected, if only in a

134 'Translator's Preface', J. G. Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, trans. by James Marsh, 2 vols (Burlington: Edward Smith, 1833), I, 4-5.
135 Herder, II, 8.
136 Ibid., I, 29.

transitory manner, by the physiognomy of those places in which we spend even a relatively short amount of time'.[137] If length of time plays a relatively small role in the way we are affected by place, could it thus be argued that we may be affected by places we have never really been to, or perhaps of which we have only read? If so, then Wordsworth's consistent reading (and hearing) of the Bible and its relationship to landscape can be seen to translate onto his character, and thereby his understanding of poetry.

Reading language like this however poses a problem in our understanding and use of Heidegger. Rigby states that 'the different languages that have been developed by different peoples over time nonetheless bear the trace of those places that their users have historically inhabited, both in phonetic echoes of the sounds of the natural environment, and […] on the level of lexicon.'[138] This is true, to an extent, because people's language changes as they migrate to different regions. There is no corresponding linguistic transition from biblical Hebrew (or Aramaic) to English. But what occurs when Heidegger rummages into the German etymology of the words 'dwelling' and 'building', and then again when these words are translated into English? It passes in this case because English and Germanic languages share many of the same roots. Yet even then, the sound of the word—to dwell, rather than *bauen*—inflicts a different sort of understanding on part of the listener. The Hebrew definition of dwelling ('yashab'), or what it means to 'build', (both 'build' and 'create' share a root in Hebrew, where Adam was created and Eve was built; 'children' and 'builders' also share a root) differs drastically from the English and German ones. Although Wordsworth had no knowledge of biblical Hebrew,[139] the language of his poetry is yoked with that of the Bible through the question of the Bible in translation being woven into the cultural fabric of English society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

137 Rigby, p. 130.
138 Ibid., p. 128.
139 Coleridge was much better versed in languages than Wordsworth. His library holdings and borrowings include several Hebrew lexicons. It undoubtedly helped that his father was a vicar and headmaster, often said to be reciting biblical verses in the original Hebrew. In later life, Hyman Hurwitz helped Coleridge reconstruct his Hebrew (see Ewan James Jones, *Coleridge and the Philosophy of Poetic Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 161-66.)

Natural places may have had 'a voice of their own', but cultural landscapes also contribute their voice to the symphony of meaning.[140]

When considering building, Wordsworth provides rather strict recommendations for cottage building in his *Guide to the Lakes*. First, however, we must disassociate the cottage from the cottage industry and from the work done within it, in order to achieve dwelling. Heidegger states that we dwell where we work, even though that is not our dwelling-pace (such as the truck driver on the highway, or the woman at her spinning mill) but he does not address what occurs when the place of work and the place of dwelling (the physical home as well as the phenomenological area devoted to dwelling) occupy the same place. Does the dwelling 'double up' so that the cottagers of Wordsworth's poems dwell in their essence and in their acts in these cottages? Is that what makes them so important, because they represent an older form of life that is semi-agricultural, semi-wild, and semi-industrial, much like the Israelites' existence? Dwelling, and by extension, resting (not wandering) was something that the Israelites sought. In prophesying a new reign of righteousness, Isaiah promises: 'And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places'.[141] Yet in the *Guide*, Wordsworth makes it clear that not all building is welcome in the environment. In fact, his opposition to expansions such as the Windermere Railway is a prime example of his devotion to the sacredness of natural place:

> Sacred as that relic of the devotion of our ancestors deserves to be kept, there are temples of Nature, temples built by the Almighty, which have a still higher claim to be left unviolated. Almost every reach of the winding vales in this district might once have presented itself to a man of imagination and feeling under that aspect, or as the Vale of Grasmere appeared to the Poet Gray more than seventy years ago. 'No flaring gentleman's house,' says he, 'nor garden-walls break in upon the repose of this little unsuspected *paradise*, but all is peace,' &c., &c.[142]

Changes in the landscape, specifically ones of human intervention once a settled mode of life has long been established, were to Wordsworth a 'profanation', implying that the landscape was innately sacred as it is. Speaking of Grasmere as well as all its 'sister Vales' he said:

140 Rigby, p. 130.
141 Isaiah 32. 18.
142 *Guide to the Lakes*, p. 162.

> It was well for the undisturbed pleasure of the Poet that he had no forebodings of the change which was soon to take place; and it might have been hoped that these words, indicating how much the charm of what *was* depended on what was *not*, […] (shall I dare to say?) would have secured scenes so consecrated from profanation.[143]

The new changes did not please him because they ruffled his aesthetic feathers, but also because they were seeping into what to him were the very foundations of the Vale. He liked it best when cottages were 'the colour of the native rock, out of which they have been built' and when they grew organically based on their owners' needs, as they were inherited from father to son, not in the least because this stimulated the sense of community.[144] And community was crucial to his dwelling in the Vale. In a section entitled 'The Country Disfigured', Wordsworth commenting on the aesthetic atrocities that have recently befallen St. Herbert's Hermitage and Hind's Cottage (both on islands in Derwentwater), notes among them the reconstitution of the church into a boat-house and the destruction of a Druid circle:

> […] and, without indignation on part of the spirits of the ancient Druids who officiated at the circle upon the opposite hill, the mimic arrangement of stones, with its *sanctum sanctorum*, has been swept away.[145]

Wordsworth's is referring here to the demolition of a fake druid circle created by a previous proprietor of the area. The reversal of this seeming sacrilegious act (the circle was a counterfeit of a real sacred ancient site) echoes the building of the tabernacle. *Sanctum sanctorum* meant 'holy of holies' and Wordsworth positioned himself as its keeper. He does this elsewhere, presenting himself as a druid priest, such as in Book I of *The Prelude* 'I told a prophecy […] | Spontaneously, and cloth'd in priestly robe', and in 'To Joanna': 'I like a Runic priest, in characters | Of formidable size, had chisel'd out | Some uncouth name upon the native rock.'[146] Wordsworth conflates the Druidic with the ancient Hebrew using the term *sanctum sanctorum*, which in the Bible was represented as a tabernacle. Whereas the world was constructed in six days, the tabernacle took forty: it was the dwelling place of the Lord on earth, necessary not for God himself, but for mankind. 'Tabernacle', translated from the Hebrew word מִשְׁכָּן (mishkan) means, 'dwelling place', specifically, a portable dwelling place for the divine presence from the exodus

143 *Guide to the Lakes*, p. 70. Wordsworth also cites the same passage from Gray in this section.
144 Ibid., p. 62.
145 Ibid., p.71
146 *Prelude* I. 59-62; 'To Joanna', ll. 28-30.

out of Egypt through to the conquering of Canaan.[147] Built to specifications revealed to Moses by Yahweh at Mount Sinai, the tabernacle was in reality a tent, much like the portable dwellings of the Israelites while they wandered in the desert. The English version of the superlative, 'holy of holies', in the King James Bible is always translated to 'Most Holy Place' to express the ultimate degree of holiness. Furthermore, it was hidden by a veil, no one was permitted to see it except the High Priest, and even then only once a year on the day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). In the wilderness, the day the tabernacle was set up a cloud covered it, while inside, in total darkness, was the Ark of the Covenant (or Moses' Tablets of the Covenant), gilded inside out. The specifications of the tabernacle made clear that the dwelling place of the Lord was of greater importance than that of man. Throughout his poetry, Wordsworth was modelling himself as one who could enter the dwelling-place of the Lord, as a 'high priest' who also gave out the 'law' on how man was to dwell in his own landscape. Referring to God's dwelling place, Wordsworth emphasised the fact that it is in nature, yet manmade, like the tabernacle. Its nomadic quality meant that there was no single dwelling place, and that he was wrong to admonish the gipsies.

In addition to thinking about place and space in Wordsworth's poems from the perspective of literary criticism, I propose to approach them from a cultural geographical perspective so that we can gain the distance necessary to observe Wordsworth's engagement with biblical landscape. As per Tuan, his poetry attempts to make sense out of the carnival of empiricism that man experiences on earth:

> People tend to suppress that which they cannot express […] In the large literature on environmental quality, relatively few works attempt to understand how people feel about space and place. […] Artists have tried—often with success. In works of literature as well as in humanistic psychology, philosophy, anthropology and geography, intricate worlds of human experience are recorded.[148]

Tuan is right in singling out artists' attempts at representing space and place, but his claim that few works in environmental literature aim to understand experience of place is not so accurate: since 1977, when his book was first published, the ecological and environmental debate has flourished, often taking into account phenomenological as well as scientific accounts. It is,

147 Hebrew Lexicon :: H4908 (KJV), *Blue Letter Bible* [accessed 26 October 2014].
148 Tuan, *Space and Place*, pp. 6-7.

nevertheless, beneficial to turn temporarily from literature back to cultural geography. Literature may present to us the experiences had, and express them in a way which allows the reader to comprehend and share in the 'sensorimotor, tactile, visual, conceptual' modes of experience,[149] but geography and philosophy add a new perspective from which we can begin to analyse what is really happening in Wordsworth's poetry of place. His idea of dwelling aligns with the Hebrews' during their time in the wilderness: it is a temporary means of experiencing God in this world, as he experiences in his poem of homecoming, 'Home at Grasmere'. Aware that the vale is only as permanent as his place in the world, he has 'Hope for this earth and hope beyond the grave'.[150] Wordsworth struggled between the physicality of place, of dwelling *somewhere* and the impermanence of dwelling that he felt occurred in nature, through nests and cottages. Dwelling for him included mortality, but also attempted to make a permanent place on earth. Like the Hebrews who placed their tabernacle high up in the mountains, Wordsworth also showed mankind that it was the content of the tabernacle, not the thing itself, that held utmost value. Speaking with Coleridge as a Prophet of Nature, he made it his duty to

> Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
> On which he dwells, above this Frame of things
> (Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
> And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
> In beauty exalted, as it is itself
> Of substance and of fabric more divine.[151]

To Wordsworth then, the entire earth was a tabernacle—the most holy place—because it held that which was the most beautiful and made in God's image: 'the mind of man'. Speaking about Basil Bunting, Bate said: 'To dwell you must be content to listen, to hear the music of the shuttle.'[152] Similarly, Wordsworth, in the closing of his autobiographical poem and opening of his life's greatest (unfinished) work, suggests that to dwell, one must listen, as in 'Airey-Force Valley', and hear the edification that nature brings through poetry.

149 Tuan, *Space and Place*, pp. 6-7.
150 'Home at Grasmere', l. 965.
151 *Prelude*, XIII. 446-52.
152 Bate, *Song of the Earth*, p. 236.

VALES

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.

-Isaiah 40. 4

'Loud is the Vale!' Wordsworth proclaims in his 1806 poem upon learning that the statesman Charles James Fox was close to death.[1] The poem, composed as the title states, 'at Grasmere, during a walk, one evening, after a stormy day, the author having just read in a newspaper that the dissolution of Mr Fox was hourly expected', was published in *Poems, in Two Volumes* in 1807, and was situated between 'Yes! full surely t'was the Echo' and 'Elegaic Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, painted by Sir George Beaumont', poems conditioned by landscape and loss. 'A power is gone, which nothing can restore', he says in 'Elegaic Stanzas', consoling himself with the idea that 'Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.'[2] The consolation—a poetic response to the news of his brother's death at sea—was also a biblical echo evoking, as Edward Wilson noted, St. Paul and the Collect in the Book of Common Prayer: 'O merciful God … who also hath taught us, by his holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him.'[3] Warning against loss in 'Yes! full surely 'twas the Echo', he ends: 'hold them dear; | For of God, of God they are!' Intended politically, 'Loud is the Vale' bemoans the loss of Fox as 'A Power […] passing from the earth': it is, as the title indicates, a poem intended as a lament. But without the full title, the poem's nature changes: it considers the role that the landscape—the Vale—has in providing consolation alongside the divine. The sound of 'A mighty Unison of streams', ravaging after the

1 'Lines, composed at Grasmere [...]', *Poems, in Two Volumes and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 265-66.

2 'Peele Castle', *Poems, in Two Volumes*, pp. 266-67, ll. 35; 60.

3 Edward Wilson, 'An Echo of St Paul and Words of Consolation in Wordsworth's "Elegaic Stanzas"', *Review of English Studies*, 43 (1992), 75-80, p. 75. The corresponding passage can be found in St Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, 4. 13. Wilson stressed the importance of the religious dimension in both the poem and Wordsworth's grief.

storm, joins with 'The Comforter' to ease his 'heavy load'. Infused with religious language,[4] the poem considers the fluid rhythm of life, contemplating the impermanence of dwelling on the earth:

> What is it more than this
> That Man, who is from God sent forth,
> Doth yet again to God return?
> Such ebb and flow must ever be,
> Then wherefore should we mourn?

Yet Wordsworth does mourn, even though he indicates his awareness of the futility of the act. His beloved Vale of Grasmere, through providing comfort, was not able to shield the poet from his losses. Death was always close by, be it Fox's, or John's, or later little Catharine's and Thomas'.[5] Wordsworth knew personal grief all too well, yet continued to 'walk in the valley of the shadow of death.'[6] The twenty-third Psalm was with him all along.

These three poems were written between May and September of 1806, by which time the Wordsworths had already been inhabitants of the vale for six years, and Wordsworth had finally and comfortably 'settled down'. Yet their lives during this period had been anything but dull: in 1802, Wordsworth travelled with Dorothy to France to settle affairs with Annette Vallon so that he could marry Mary Hutchinson. His first son John by Mary was born in 1803, following the declaration of war against France by Britain after the failed Peace of Amiens. Wordsworth found this to be his most productive few years, part of what would come to be considered his 'golden decade', completing, amongst other works, *The Prelude* in 1805. But that year also marked the start of a series of grave personal losses for the poet with the death of his brother John at sea, which Wordsworth marked with poems like 'Elegaic Stanzas'. By the time he came to write 'Lines composed at Grasmere [...]', he was a father of two (with a third, illegitimate daughter) and a published poet. His friendship with Coleridge was beginning to deteriorate. His sense of productive lament in 'Loud is the Vale' contrasts starkly with the

4 See Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography. The Later Years: 1803-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 74-75.

5 Charles James Fox died in 1806; Wordsworth's brother John died at sea in 1805; his children Catharine and Thomas died in 1812.

6 Psalms 23. 4.

original unfaltering joy he felt when he and Dorothy first arrived in Grasmere a few days before Christmas in 1799.

The winter of that year was a period 'turbulent and bleak' not just in terms of the weather that greeted them, but also the political situation at home and abroad. In Book II of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth refers to 1799 as a 'time | Of dereliction and dismay'.[7] He was afraid not just for the safety of his lover and daughter in France, but also for that of his country. By the end of Book III, he is steadfast in his resolution to position himself as the poet-prophet of the nation, making the concerns of England very much his own.[8] The gloom abroad also gave the British reason to worry about their own national security. Napoleon's armies had expanded into the Ottoman Empire, he had staged his 18 Brumaire *coup d'état* in the temporary absence of British troops on the French coast, and by 12 December he had installed himself as First Consul.[9] Amongst these national concerns, Wordsworth and Dorothy strove to make their own domestic bliss, as Wordsworth outlines in 'Home at Grasmere', a poem about the joy of returning to the Lake District and finding there a place which he could call home: 'here | Should be my home, this Valley be my World.' However, their steadfastness in the decision was tested from their arrival, as the Vale welcomed them with 'a sullen storm':

> It put the temper of our minds to proof,
> And found us faithful through the gloom, and heard
> The Poet mutter his prelusive songs
> With chearful heart, an unknown voice of joy
> Among the silence of the woods and hills,
> Silent to any gladsomeness of sound
> With all their Shepherds. [10]

Yet Wordsworth enters the vale as a 'chearful' poet with a forward-looking prospect – his 'prelusive songs' break the silence of the hills and shepherds with 'gladsomeness'.[11] He remains 'faithful through the gloom'. However, this period also proved to be both a time of realisation of the importance of place to his poetry and a test of his determination and confidence in his self-

7 *Prelude*, II. 456-7.
8 For a recent discussion on Wordsworth's nationalism, see Garrett, *Wordsworth and the Writing* (2008).
9 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 374-5.
10 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 43; 269-77.
11 'Prelusive' that is, to *The Recluse*, as Moorman notes in *Early Years*, p. 478.

proclaimed role as 'chosen son'.[12] Grasmere had the power to enable the recovery of deep memories of his childhood in the Lakes but also to kindle an inordinate sense of intimacy and belonging. Born in Cockermouth, orphaned, and schooled in Hawkshead until the age of 18, Wordsworth was a child of the fells and vales. His move was thus was a return into a landscape of childhood (a reinhabitation) that provided a source for creative output, but more importantly, it was a move forward towards the creation of a literal as well as imaginative home.

Home was a deeply religious, though quotidian, element in Wordsworth's life. He established very early on a life-long familiarity with the Bible, but also immersed himself with more academic influences, such as Hugh Blair, John Dennis and, in particular, Robert Lowth, who contributed to and informed his language of gratitude and sense of hope after the move back to the Lakes.[13] In his two-volume compilation *Wordsworth's Reading*, Duncan Wu suggests Wordsworth read Lowth's celebrated *Lectures on the sacred poetry of the Hebrews* by March 1798 (or September 1800 at the latest) citing evidence from Wordsworth's Note to *The Thorn* and Coleridge's borrowings from the Bristol Library.[14] Lowth's biblical language resonates particularly strongly in many of Wordsworth's compositions at the turn of the century. In addition to 'Home at Grasmere', in 1800 Wordsworth was working on the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, the Note to *The Thorn, Poems on the Naming of Places*, and several smaller poems. Composition of 'Home at Grasmere' was begun in 1800, with MS. B presenting the first complete version. Wordsworth, initially filled with enthusiastic inspiration, intended for the piece to be his life's magnum opus, *The Recluse*, which he began under Coleridge's influence in 1797-98. 'Home at Grasmere' was meant to be the first part, and celebrated 'Wordsworth's arrival into the Lakes after many years of wandering.'[15] It was never published during Wordsworth's lifetime, with the exception of the 'Prospectus' (the final 100 lines or so) which was added at the start of *The Excursion* in 1814.

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12 *Prelude,* III. 82-88.

13 Blair, being a minister, would have had even more influence than Lowth, as sermons tended to reach a wider audience. Blair reiterates many of Lowth's main points on Hebrew poetry.

14 Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*, p. 89. See p. 15 for suggested reading dates of the Bible.

15 Beth Darlington, 'Introduction', *Home at Grasmere*, p. 8. See also Kenneth Johnston, *Wordsworth and "The Recluse"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). Darlington is careful to separate Grasmere from Wordsworth's childhood Cockermouth or Hawskhead with the phrase 'arrival into'.

To say, however, that the years following the move to Grasmere were ones of unbroken productivity would be far from the truth. As Beth Darlington points out in her introduction to the Cornell edition of *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth, though struck by 'creative outburst[s]', made 'only halting progress toward the execution of his grand scheme' of *The Recluse*.[16] The compositional history of 'Home at Grasmere' is thus not a straightforward one: the family letters are dotted with excuses and apologies for not getting on with writing as Wordsworth's anxieties about producing *The Recluse* become more apparent. On 7 August 1805, Dorothy wrote to Lady Beaumont, reporting that 'My Brother has not resumed his great work since the finishing of the poem on his own life, and he now begins to be anxious to get forward again, but till we are alone I do not think he will do much.' And again, writing in November of the same year: 'My Brother has not yet begun fairly with his great work; but I hope he will after his return from Park house.'[17] Progress on 'Home at Grasmere', which was meant to be part of the grand architecture[18] of Wordsworth's work on 'Man, Nature and Society', became increasingly difficult as his relationship with Coleridge was strained by the new pressures of distance due to the Wordsworths' move away from Alfoxden, and Coleridge's growing addiction.[19] However, the exact date of composition is not the main concern here: in addition to Coleridge's prompts, 'Home at Grasmere' had another source of inspiration – the Hebrew Scriptures.

I

The Bible features strongly in Wordsworth's early childhood memories of Hawkshead.

16 Darlington, p. 5.

17 *EY*, pp. 617; 650. For further apologies from DW on part of her brother, see *EY* pp. 664 and *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*. Part I: 1806-1811 ed. by Mary Moorman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), *MY* I. 2, and *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*. Part II: 1812-20, ed. by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), II, pp. 200 and 402. Hereafter *MY*.

18 *The Prelude* was to be the 'Anti-Chapel' to the Gothic church of *The Recluse*. See Wordsworth's Preface to *Poems,* 1815.

19 Darlington, 'Introduction', *Home at Grasmere*, p. 5. Darlington suggests that for inspiration, Wordsworth seemed to depend entirely on Coleridge's idea and 'suffer'd greatly' in his absence; but points the reader to alternate sources of 'divergence' between the two friends and the 'mere bulk' of the work as possible reasons for the inability to finish, pp. 3-9. Gill, in *Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) proposes a different account of the compositional history, noting that from very early on, 'Coleridge had had reservations about Wordsworth as a lyric poet' and Wordsworth 'was not, and could not become, the poet of Coleridge's imaginings' (p. 146). Furthermore, he states that 'the poems themselves suggest one possible cause for Wordsworth's failure to proceed. Each is a reprise of earlier work, but in a more muted tone' (p. 270).

As a boarder in Ann Tyson's home, he tenderly calls forth her image, 'nodding over her Bible in front of the fire'[20] in the *1805 Prelude*:

> With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read
> Her bible on the Sunday afternoons,
> And loved the book when she had dropped asleep
> And made of it a pillow for her head.[21]

This affectionate and comfortable use of the Bible reinforces not only its commonplace nature in Wordsworth's life but also his familiarity with it, in all aspects of the word: the usage of the book was unceremonial (Ann Tyson 'made of it a pillow') and his intimacy with its content striking. It was both 'familial' and 'familiar'. His knowledge of the Bible was systematically strengthened over the course of his education and early adulthood. In 1815, in the Preface to *Poems*, he tells us that 'the grand store-house of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination is the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton.'[22] Rearranged in this volume were the *Lyrical Ballads* and the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' in the version that is currently known. However, the influence of Hebrew poetry through the medium of the Bible was not new-found, but rather a stable feature of Wordsworth's poetry, especially in his poem of homecoming, 'Home at Grasmere'. The question thus is not *whether* but *how* biblical paradigms influence Wordsworth's representation of his native landscape, looking both at the structures he employs and the role landscape has in his narrative of the poem. This is of particular interest in those moments of his poetry which were intended to be both 'prophetic' and 'lyrical'; a relationship that stems from an intimate and subconscious knowledge of the Holy Scriptures embedded in his mind from childhood, such as the one of Ann Tyson falling asleep on her Bible, and reinforced by regular church attendance.

The current body of criticism has exemplified an awareness of the similarities between the Holy Scriptures and 'Home at Grasmere' in two main tropes: first, through the general theme of the poem as a 'paradise regained' narrative; and second, by focusing on the marriage metaphor (lines 996-1014). Without entirely rejecting these readings of the poem, I argue that

20 Gill, *A Life,* p. 21n.
21 *Prelude,* IV. 218-21.
22 'Preface of 1815', *Prose Works*, III, p. 34.

'Home at Grasmere' is not a return to Eden but a return and creation of a *home*, when read alongside the well-known Twenty-Third Psalm. Wordsworth is using the tropes of Hebrew poetry to reverse the movement from earth to heaven, and in exalting the domestic and earthly over the transcendent has no need for a 'heaven on earth' in Grasmere.[23] Although the poem evokes a sense of Eden that has been the source of much critical analysis, 'Home at Grasmere' is set in England and takes place in a physical part of the English landscape. And if the Holy Scriptures serve as a store-house of the 'enthusiastic and meditative Imagination', it follows that the landscape of Grasmere itself also serves as a store-house for the poet's memory, which can be reached once triggered by a physical revisitation of the places in which he dwelt.

Contrary to current criticism, I wish to move away from a polemic of compositional history and comparison with *The Prelude* and explore, first and foremost, why the Vale of Grasmere is not actually a re-imagined Eden.[24] If we divide the criticism loosely into two camps – those who read 'Home at Grasmere' as a poem of exuberance and joy, and those who read it as a carefully but negatively infused self-justification, we find that the earlier critics all entertain the more optimistic reading.[25] The second reading, with overtones of regret, guilt, anguish along with violence, sacrifice and death, fills the Vale of Grasmere with a rather un-paradise-like, post-lapsarian mist. Further, the world which Wordsworth wishes to inhabit is not the

23 John Milton. *Paradise Lost,* IV: 208, ed. by Alastair Fowler (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 229.

24 See, for example, Bruce Clarke's reference on p. 356 to William Minto's article 'Wordsworth's Great Failure' (1889) in 'Wordsworth's Departed Swans: Sublimation and Sublimity in "Home at Grasmere"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 19, (1980), 355-374, in comparison with John Jones, *Egotistical Sublime: a history of Wordsworth's Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954) and Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*. Clarke disagrees with both, arguing that there is no regret in 'Home at Grasmere'. Turn also to the opening of Kenneth Johnston's article, '"Home at Grasmere": Reclusive Song,' *Studies in Romanticism*, 14 (1975), 1-28, for an entertaining recreation of the poem's history. Certain critics, namely Karl Kroeber ('"Home at Grasmere": Ecological Holiness', *PMLA,* 89, (1974), 132-144) and M.J. Mellown ('The Development of Imagery in "Home at Grasmere"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 5 (1974), 23-27) argue that the poem may be viewed as complete in and of itself on the grounds that 'it is unified by its consistent development of themes and images' (Mellown, p. 27) and more drastically that '"Home at Grasmere" is *The Recluse'* (Kroeber, p. 133). Stephen Gill in *Wordsworth's Revisitings* and Beth Darlington in her Cornell introduction both also make a similar claim.

25 Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life* (Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2003), p. 130, argues that Wordsworth embarks on a lengthy self-justification in 'Home at Grasmere' to a claim made by Coleridge that he was aloof from 'the mass suffering of humanity'. For a detailed exposition of the criticism, see Raimonda Modiano, 'Blood Sacrifice, Gift Economy and the Edenic World: Wordsworth's "Home at Grasmere"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32 (1993), 481-521 (p. 481n). Her work is succeeded (to my knowledge) by William Ulmer's 'The Society of Death in "Home at Grasmere"', *Philological Quarterly*, 75:1 (1996), 67-83, James McKusick's *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Christoph Bode & Jacqueline Labbe's *Romantic Localities: Europe Writes Place* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010).

untouched and primitive Eden, but a community of men – an already charted world, as Anthony Harding points out.[26] Finally, despite Wordsworth's claims to the contrary, Grasmere is not a vale of union and the marriage of 'the discerning intellect of Man' and 'this goodly universe' but one of a union that was never consummated—or perhaps never a union at all, to which Blake famously and fervently objected—as exemplified by his creation of a home with Dorothy.[27]

For a poem about paradise, it is peculiar that 'Home at Grasmere' begins with an allusion to death. We are introduced into Grasmere via the light-hearted musings of the young boy, who once stopped 'on the brow of yonder Hill', and was

> with a sudden influx overcome
> At sight of this seclusion, I forgot
> My haste—for hasty had my footsteps been,
> As boyish my pursuits—[and sighing said],
> "What happy fortune were it here to live!
> And if I thought of dying, if a thought
> Of mortal separation could come in
> With paradise before me, here to die."[28]

The unanswered yet inevitable question raised time and time again, and reiterated by William Ulmer, is: Why 'here to die'? Why, upon seeing this so-called paradise, does the boy think himself dead?[29] A possible answer lies in the obvious – paradise being not of this world requires a passage into the next. But if he is standing before a landscape he deems to be paradise, there is no need to go beyond it, and yet this is what he suggests. Oliver Goldsmith entertained a similar notion of the desire to die upon returning home. In 'The Deserted Village', he takes the perspective of a man (presumed to be a semi-biographical account of Goldsmith himself) who returns to his home after many years of absence only to find his village deserted. Goldsmith

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26 Anthony J. Harding, 'Forgetfulness and the Poetic Self in "Home at Grasmere"', *Wordsworth Circle*, 22 (1991), 109-118 (p. 115).

27 *Home at Grasmere* MS. D, l. 805-6. These lines do not appear in the earlier version. Blake wrote in the margins of the 'the Conclusion of the first Book of The Recluse': 'You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted I know better & Please your Lordship'. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* ed. and rev. by David V. Erdman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), p. 667.

28 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 5-12.

29 Ulmer, 'Society of Death', p. 68. James Butler focuses on the fact that Wordsworth sets himself up as a schoolboy in the poem – someone belonging to the neighbourhood of Grasmere, making him a native despite really being a newcomer to the vale. 'Tourist or Native Son: Wordsworth's Homecomings of 1799-1800', *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* 51 (1996), 1-15.

demonstrates an understanding that 'a continuity of self depends not upon memory but continuity of place':[30] 'I still had hopes, my long vexations past, | Here to return—and die at home at last.'[31] The desire to retire to one's childhood home is distinctly nostalgic, and like all nostalgia, contains an element of melancholy. It is a diametric opposition of past and future that culminates in the ultimate desire to bring things full circle, to start and begin with the same lines.[32]

The circle, symbolic of eternity and divine unity, is also representative of the creative process. However in an article on Wordsworth and Goldsmith, Laurence Goldstein suggests that 'the vale itself becomes an emblem of one creative mind, its physical properties extensions of the poetic intelligence that perceives them.'[33] The problem for Wordsworth was always one of the continuity of the creative mind, as it is crucial to his work that the vale, unlike the one in 'The Deserted Village', remained unchanged. It is through these 'perennial images of continuity', Goldstein states, that Wordsworth is able to preserve a 'unified self, experienced as landscape.'[34] What Goldstein is implying here is worth deliberation: if the vale is representative of the 'emblem' of the creative mind, there is a way in which both poet and landscape come together to create a 'unity entire'. This is similar to what occurs in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', where Wordsworth draws upon both inspiration that finds its source in its maker and one that derives from 'a motion and a spirit':

> Therefore I am still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
> And what perceive.[35]

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30 Laurence Goldstein, 'The Auburn Syndrome: Change and Loss in 'The Deserted Village and Wordsworth's Grasmere' *ELH*, 40 (1973), 352-71 (p. 356).

31 'The Deserted Village', *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins and Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (London: Longman, 1969), p. 680, ll. 95-6.

32 The desire to die at home is again echoed in Wordsworth's 'Hart Leap Well'. Refer to *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 378, for a note on the folk tradition of aspen wood and to Paul Korshin's *Typologies of England 1650-1840*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 360, for a discussion of the hart as a type of Christ. (This reading of the hart is also present in Cowper's *The Task*).

33 Goldstein, p. 362.

34 Ibid.,, p. 363.

35 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 103-8.

Wordsworth presents the mind both as receptive to nature, and as creative in and of itself; a mind not passive in its activity, but contributing and consciously participating in what it loves – in other words, a mind embodying Coleridge's 'primary imagination'. The inspiration that comes from what is perceived—in this case, the landscape—is at once external and internal. Because he is simultaneously remembering and experiencing, his mind becomes its own source of inspiration, and the whole act becomes one of creation.

In 'Home at Grasmere', we see that that which is half created and half perceived is, fundamentally, both the desire for and source of pleasure. The valley, which in Wordsworth's mind is given a face and all that comes with it, evokes in Wordsworth immense joy and simultaneously awakens that same desire for pleasure. The notion that poetry ought to produce pleasure is not an uncommon one: Robert Lowth points out in his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* that 'the purpose of poetry is to instruct while it gives pleasure'.[36] Lowth is merely quoting Classical convention, taken from Horace. What distinguishes Wordsworth and Coleridge is their emphasis on pleasure with or without instruction. Pleasure features strongly in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, when Wordsworth refers to the immediate pleasure that is the one responsibility of the poet. The necessity of producing immediate pleasure

> is an acknowledgement the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves.[37]

This passage is an echo of the words of St Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, where he states that in God 'we live, and move, and have our being'.[38] This allusion is a very bold move on Wordsworth's part – he inserts 'pleasure' when one would expect 'God'. By making this radical substitution, he brings the sort of pleasure described in his poetry on par with faith, virtue, morality and love. His argument is not one for hedonism, but for a sublimely acute self-

36 Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. by George Gregory, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1787), I, 1.

37 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads', *Lyrical Ballads,* p. 752. This phrase is repeated in *Prelude*, V. 355: 'That is his soul, there lives he, and there moves'.

38 Acts 17. 28. The quotation ends 'as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.'

awareness that is driven by personal experience of nature. What the Bible requires of man—to open himself up to the Grace of God in the act of religious meditation—Wordsworth requires of his readers. The theme of meditation that Wordsworth explores in 'Tintern Abbey' in 1798 is still with him when composing 'Home at Grasmere'. In the last section of 'Tintern Abbey', David Fairer, along with the Cornell editors, also notes an allusion to the Twenty-Third Psalm: the line 'for thou art with me' directed at Dorothy, echoes the line of the Psalm: 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death | I will fear no evil, for thou art with me'.[39] Fairer points out that the physicality of the Abbey no longer serves as the repository for his memory, but Dorothy's mind becomes the dwelling place: 'As Wordsworth recovers the holy text from his meditation, he reanimates the indwelling spirit as a companion, as a pledge for the future won from his recovery of his own narrative history.'[40] In 'Home at Grasmere', it is not Dorothy's mind that becomes the dwelling place of memories through meditation, but the landscape itself.

II

Religious meditation is not a concept foreign to Wordsworth. M.H. Abrams reminds us of Wordsworth's religious upbringing in a Church of England School in Hawkshead and the fascinating similarities between his works and those of Robert Lowth, Hugh Blair, and John Dennis.[41] Lowth's treatise in particular proves evocative. Lowth was a masterful rhetorician and biblical scholar in the mid-eighteenth century: he was named Oxford Professor of Poetry at the age of 31 for his reputation for classical learning. However, once appointed, he did the unexpected: in 1753, he married his ecclesiastic and literary knowledge by producing *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* which he had been working on earlier. These lectures were, in Murray Roston's words, 'a milestone of general literal criticism',[42] finally permitting a Western reading of the Bible as poetry. A brilliant Oriental scholar, Lowth was the first to suggest that

39 David Fairer, *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 116.
40 Ibid., p. 117.
41 M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (London: W. W. & Norton, 1973), p. 33.
42 Murray Roston, *Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), p. 21.

we must read the Bible in the context of the Hebrew culture and literature rather than our own. The treatise was a watershed work in its time, shaping subsequent understanding of the Bible as literature, for example in Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (published in 1783, but delivered from 1759). In 1787, Lowth's *Lectures* were translated into English by George Gregory, increasing their accessibility. 'It must be almost certain,' states G.L. Little in *A Note on Wordsworth and Blair,* 'that Coleridge drew his [Wordsworth's] attention to them and that they were discussed'.[43]

In those *Lectures*, Blair summarizes Lowth's arguments and addresses the keen reader: 'Dr Lowth's learned Treatise, "De Sacra Poësi Hebræorum," ought to be perused by all who desire to become thoroughly acquainted with this subject. It is a work extremely valuable, both for the elegance of its Composition, and for the justness of the criticism which is contains.'[44] Lowth's exposition of Hebrew poetic form, style and content shares several striking similarities with 'Home at Grasmere' that, if not intentional, have the benefit of illuminating each other when read side by side. In a similar vein, Jon Mee says about Blake in *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, 'I am not suggesting that the features discussed here […] were taken by Blake from Lowth. It is more likely that Blake had a familiarity with the language and cadences of the Bible from an early age which any subsequent contact with Lowth's theories served only to heighten.'[45] Wordsworth, like Blake, has instances where his versification adapts the 'parallelism' which Robert Lowth had identified as the basis of biblical verse. What Mee says about Blake also applies here: 'If Blake's versification betrays an intimate knowledge of biblical form, the sublime settings and imagery of Blake's prophetic narratives emulate what Lowth described as the "parabolic style" of the Old Testament.'[46] This parabolic style was 'peculiar to the poetry of the Hebrews', in which 'the Hebrew poets are accustomed to introduce allusions to the actions of former times, such as possess a conspicuous place in their history; and thus they illuminate with

43 G.L. Little, 'A Note on Wordsworth and Blair', *Notes and Queries,* 7 (1960), 254-55 (p. 255). Many critics, including M.H. Abrams, have based their arguments on these assumptions.

44 Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,* 2 vols (London: W. Strahan; T. Cadell, 1783), II, 385-86.

45 Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 24.

46 Ibid., p. 24.

colours, foreign, indeed, but similar, the future by the past, the recent by the antique, facts less known by others more generally understood'.[47] This 'placement' of events was embedded in the landscape, both physical and mental, in which they occurred. The remembrance of the events happened on an emotional level, contributing to the particular style of poetry, which Lowth goes on to describe as the product of 'enthusiasm', 'the effect from mental emotion.'[48]

'Home at Grasmere' is precisely this sort of exultation of 'enthusiasm'. Wordsworth is celebrating the good fortune that led him to Grasmere, a 'fulfilment of a schoolboy dream.' As Stephen Gill points out, the poem is full of language of religious exultation—'bliss', 'joy', ' boon' 'surpassing grace'—in an attempt by Wordsworth to incorporate the region and its inhabitants into his memory.[49] We know that Wordsworth was more concerned with 'nature's power to communicate with men' than its proof of divine creation, and it was only in his later years that he revised his earlier poems, inserting minor emendations to bring them into line with Christian belief. As Roston points out, in many of his poems Wordsworth casts aside theological doubts and 'has all nature bursting into a song of praise and gratitude not to the faintly camouflaged Spirit of the Universe but to the old-fashioned God of the Bible.'[50] We see several examples of such unabashed rejoicing in 'Home at Grasmere', where the creatures unite with the land in exaltation:

> Of Sunbeams, Shadows, Butterflies, and Birds,
> Angels, and winged Creatures that are Lords
> Without restraint of all which they behold.
> I sate, and stirred in Spirit as I looked,
> I seemed to feel such liberty was mine,
> Such power and joy [...][51]

In a similar way, we see the creatures and the land rejoicing for the love of the beloved in the Song of Songs:

> The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing *of birds* is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines *with* the tender grapes give a *good* smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy

47 Lowth, I, 186.
48 Ibid., I, 366.
49 Gill, *A Life*, p. 180.
50 Roston, p. 181-2. This aspect of Wordsworth's writing greatly attracted John Muir and is directly reflecting in Muir's writing. See John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (London: Canongate, 2007). First published in 1911. See below p. 204.
51 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 31-36.

> countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely.[52]

And again, in 'Home at Grasmere':

> Then hail!
> Hail to the visible Presence! Hail to thee,
> Delightful Valley, habitation fair!
> And to whatever else of outward form
> Can give us inward help, can purify
> And elevate and harmonize and soothe […]

And further still:

> Witness the delight
> With which ere while I saw the multitude
> Wheel through the sky and see them now at rest,
> Yet not at rest, upon the glassy lake.
> They cannot rest; they gambol like young whelps,
> Active as lambs and overcome with joy;
> They try all frolic motions, flutter, plunge,
> And beat the passive water with their wings.
> Too distant are they for plain view, but lo!
> Those little fountains, sparkling in the sun,
> Which tell what they are doing, which rise up,
> First one and then another silver spout,
> As one or other takes the fit of glee—
> Fountains and spouts, yet rather in the guise
> Of plaything fire-works, which on festal nights
> Hiss hiss about the feet of wanton boys.[53]

The land too exalts its creator in the Psalms:

> Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name. For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.[54]

Wordsworth wanted not only a poetry that was bursting with 'enthusiasm', but one that was clear in form and diction. Lowth cites Genesis and Job as examples of sublime simplicity, stating that 'the importance of the circumstance and the greatness of the idea […] is no less remarkable than the expressive brevity and simplicity of the language'.[55] The Bible offered the clearest example of poetry free from artificiality of diction, predominantly because

52 Song of Solomon, 2. 12-14
53 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 387-92; ll. 766-81.
54 Psalm 100. 1-5.
55 Lowth, I, 350.

> no matter how far Hebraic civilization might advance, it could never lose contact with the primitive natural world out of which it had sprung. Classical literature […] tended to artificialize the natural world in the process of transforming it into poetry. A gulf existed between the stylized pastoral and the real world of mud and manure, and it was a gulf which Hebrew poetry could neither create nor tolerate, for no vocabulary existed which was free from these everyday associations.[56]

Indeed, Roston presents a valid argument. He uses the example of the word 'sword', which in Hebrew stems from the same root as the verb 'to dry up', as warfare dries up the land. In translation, it is often impossible to see the deeply rooted connection to the landscape. Hebrew poets, thus, were always unintentionally pastoral; their work was filled with metaphors of everyday life. In Chapter 7, Lowth cites these metaphors as 'another source of poetical imagery' of Hebrew verse, as 'the whole course and method of common or domestic life among the Hebrews […] was simple and uniform in the greatest degree.'[57] Wordsworth's programme for poetry drew on many similar principles. In the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (written in the same year as 'Home at Grasmere'), he says that

> The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to chuse incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.[58]

Others have also noted the Lowthian resonances in the second edition of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, in particular, that the whole passage concerning the 'language of men' should be compared with Lectures 6 and 7 in Lowth.[59] Lectures 6 and 7 focused on 'Poetic Imagery – From the Objects of Nature' and 'From Common Life' respectively, predicting Wordsworth's own language. Some years later in *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge also noted Wordsworth's experiment to fit to metrical arrangement a selection of the 'language of men', choosing

56 Roston, p. 26.
57 Lowth, I, 145.
58 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads', *Lyrical Ballads,* p. 743n. The phrase 'real language of men' was introduced in the 1802 preface and carried into subsequent editions. This passage contains the 1802 changes to the 1798 text.
59 *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Michael Mason, 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 1992), p. 61n. Owen and Smyser comment that Wordsworth himself admitted to 'borrowing sometimes a Bible turn of expression' when describing rustic and oral language. See *Prose Works*, I, 169.

'incidents and situations from common life', in particular '*low* and *rustic* life'[60]. He argues, however, that the programme to write in the 'language of men' led Wordsworth to biblical language, which at once demonstrates that 'poetry of the highest kind may exist without meter.' (As examples of such poetry, he cites 'PLATO, and Bishop TAYLOR, and the Theoria Sacra of BURNET.')[61] Lowth also argued for the emphasis on plain language and simple imagery, saying, 'The truth of these observations will I think find further and more decisive confirmation, if those metaphors be considered, which are taken from arts, manners, and common life.'[62] The free use of imagery that was most familiar must have thus stemmed from every day life. And so it was with Hebrew poetry. Take, for example, Lowth's example of the image of God's wrath:

> "And I will wipe Jerusalem,
> "as a man wipeth a dish:
> "He wipeth it, and turneth it upside down.[63]

The sublimity of this passage comes from the contrast of the mundane and indifferent nature of the image, with the power of emotion. In explaining the ferocity of such a highly dualised but very domestic image Murray Roston directs us once again towards Lowth's own explanation, noting that Lowth relied on the 'firm assumption that the Bible's superiority over contemporary verse lay largely in its greater fervour and intensity.'[64] That fervour and intensity was the desire to praise and fear God.

III

Let us return to the Preface of *Poems* (1815), this time with emphasis: 'The grand store-house of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination is the *prophetic* and *lyrical* parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton.' Wordsworth's belief in 1815, thus, was not that *every* part

60 S.T. Coleridge, '*Biographia Literaria*' in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Princeton University Press, 1983), II. p. 42. Hereafter *BL*. Coleridge cites Henry More's *Enthusiasmus triumphatus*, §. XXXV that 'a man of confined education, but of good parts, by constant reading of the bible will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than those that are learned; the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing *their* style.' II. p. 44.

61 Ibid., p. 14. A discussion of the merits of neo-classical versification may be found in Roston.

62 Lowth, I,145.

63 Ibid.,, I, 155. See II Kings 21. 13 for the passage in the KJV.

64 Roston, p. 106; see Lowth I, 375n.

of the Bible contributed to the utmost forms of the Imagination, but that the *prophetic* and *lyrical* sections did. Lowth too focuses on the same divisions of 'prophetic and lyrical'. Both Lowth and Hugh Blair point the reader to the books of Daniel, Isaiah, Deborah (to whom Wordsworth turns in the Note to *The Thorn*), Song of Solomon and the Psalms as prime examples of both genres. The Psalms in particular play in both the prophetic and lyrical registers. Blair notes they 'exhibit to us this species of Lyric Poetry in its highest degree of perfection.'[65] In Lecture 25, entitled 'On Lyric Poetry', while Lowth confesses that the portrayal 'of the Deity in the character of a shepherd' is 'nowhere as pleasing as it is in Psalm 23', the translator, George Gregory, allows for a somewhat tangential, though illuminating, discussion of the origins of the Psalm in an extraordinarily long footnote. It is worth repeating some of it:

> If I am not mistaken, it was composed by David, when he was expelled from the holy city and temple: for in the 6th verse he hopes for a return to the house of God. Since of all the divine mercies he particularly commemorates this, that in time of necessity he *wants for nothing*, and is even received to a banquet in the fight of his enemies […] The scene which was before his eyes consisted of rude hills and valleys, deep, gloomy, dark, and horrid, the haunts of only the fiercest animals […] You are therefore presented with a great variety of contrasted imagery in this Psalm; on the one hand, the open pastures, and the flowing rivulets, the recollection of which never fails to delight, and on the other hand, the cheerless and gloomy vallies, which inspire the reader with fresh horror. Descending from figurative to plain language, he next celebrates the bounty of God in preparing him a banquet in the face of his enemies; and therefore regales himself with the delicious hope, that he shall once more be restored to his sacred temple.[66]

David, to Wordsworth, was a figure of particular literary importance in the Bible. His Grasmere neighbours seemed to have specific personal recollections of the poet speaking on the matter. Mrs Davy, who was married to Sir Humphrey Davy's brother, Dr John, and whose mother, Mrs Fletcher, acquired Lancrigg with Wordsworth's help, jotted down these recollections, which were later recorded by Rev. Alexander B Grosart in his edition of *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (1876). According to Mrs Davy, on January 15th, 1845, Wordsworth was known to have said: 'Paul and David [...] may be called the two Shakespearian characters of the Bible; both types, as it were, of human nature in its strength and weakness. Moses is grand, but then it is chiefly from position, from the office entrusted to him. We do not know Moses as a

65 Blair, II, 355.
66 Lowth, II, 205, emphasis my own. See II Samuel 18 for a longer version of the narrative.

man, as a brother man.'[67] His fascination with David may have been a more conscious choice in alluding to the Psalm.

The footnote also makes it obvious that the land referred to in the Psalm is not Eden but home – chosen, rather than prescribed. The place of 'not wanting' is the holy city from which David was expelled, yet it is filled with pastures and rivulets, indicating not a city but a natural environment, a combination of nature and human community. The landscape of Grasmere is also a landscape of such communion:

> Society is here:
> The true community, the noblest Frame
> Of many into one incorporate;
> That must be looked for here; paternal sway,
> One household under God for high and low.[68]

The single household under God is again a deliberate echo of the Psalm; 'and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' But like the Psalm, returning home to Grasmere also implies being emancipated. Around November 1799, Wordsworth was celebrating his own emancipation of several years of wanderings in the 'Glad Preamble':[69]

> A Captive greets thee, coming from a house
> Of bondage, from yon City's walls set free
> […]
> What dwelling shall receive me? In what Vale
> Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
> Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
> Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?[70]

The house of the Lord, unlike the 'house | Of bondage' from which Wordsworth was set free, is a rural, natural world, but it is not pastoral. He claims, like David and Moses, to have come

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67 *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, for the First time Collected, with Additions from Unpublished Manuscripts*. ed. by Rev. Alexander B. Grosart, 3 vols (London: Edward Moxon, Son, and Co., 1876), p. 455. The diary in which the entry on Paul and David was found belonged to Margaret Davy (née Fletcher), which has been hitherto unpublished. The same passage can also be found in H.A.L Rice's brief article, 'Wordsworth in Easedale,' *Ariel*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares, University of Calgary, 1 (1970), 34-35. Mary Moorman also makes reference to the Fletcher circle in her biography of Wordsworth, though she does not cite this passage directly. See *Later Years,* II, 73n. Other anecdotes (but not this one) can be found in *Autobiography of Mrs. Fletcher, With Letters and other family memorials,* ed. by The Survivor of her family [Lady Richardson] (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1875), but this episode is not present, as only fragments of Margaret Davy's journals are included.

68 *Home at Grasmere*, ll. 818-22.

69 Lines 1-54 of *The Prelude*. Jonathan Wordsworth, in *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), notes that Wordsworth composed the first version of the Glad Preamble 'on the way' to Grasmere (p. 101). The city of line 7 is that of London *and* Goslar, but also a state of mind from which he now felt free (p.103).

70 *Prelude,* I. 6-14.

from 'yon city's walls', into a place of his own choosing. His new place of habitation is a vale but also a harbour—a store-house, in other words—where he can 'lie down in green pastures', 'beside still waters.' The bliss of the natural world is thus not Edenic but domestic (describing Grasmere). He alludes to Milton, saying 'The earth is all before me […] should the guide I chuse | Be nothing better than a wandering cloud'.[71] The evocation is not one of paradise, but rather Adam and Eve leaving their Edenic bliss. Jonathan Wordsworth emphasises the contrast between Adam and Eve and Wordsworth, using the lines

> If not a settler on the soil, at least
> To drink wild water, and to pluck green herbs,
> And gather fruits fresh from their native bough'[72]

to demonstrate that Wordsworth is 'moving *into* a poem […] and is about to *enter* Paradise.'[73] Yet when these same lines are read alongside the Psalm, it becomes immediately clear that he is in a land that is plentiful: the promised land of abundance and not wanting, rather than Eden. In 'Home at Grasmere,' the creation of a true society, a place of home, results in a further, more provocative dismissal of 'all Arcadian dreams' in the following lines of the poem:

> Nature to this favourite Spot of ours
> Yields no exemption, but her awful rights
> Enforces to the utmost and exacts
> Her tribute of inevitable pain[74]

Thus Wordsworth no longer yearns for a paradise in Grasmere but rather for the communion of men in nature. The fusion of the two is what we find in Grasmere, a 'blended holiness' not only of earth and sky but also of solitude and communion, of high and low.

'Blended holiness' is also the theme of the divine marriage that runs throughout 'Home at Grasmere'. Described in the Book of Revelation as a marriage between Christ and the heavenly city, it has a type in God's covenant with Israel. The divine marriage in 'Home at Grasmere' takes two forms: first, that of nature to the human mind, as delineated in the

71 *Prelude,* I. 15-18.
72 Ibid., I. 36-8.
73 J. Wordsworth, *Borders*, p. 107.
74 *Home at Grasmere*, ll. 838-41. Moorman, points out that 'It was no Utopian or Arcadian community in which the Wordsworths had made their home. The shadow of debt and poverty hung over many of the little farms in the vale, for these were hard times.' (*Early Years*, p. 464).

Prospectus, and second, in the symbolic form of the two swans.[75] Their death is only hypothesised, yet in doing so, Wordsworth is filled with immediate guilt and reproach:

> I cannot look upon this favoured Vale
> But that I seem, by harbouring this thought,
> To wrong it, such unworthy recompense
> Imagining, of confidence so pure.[76]

'Unworthy recompense' refers back to the 'recompense' the older poet feels in 'Tintern Abbey', where the loss of the passions of adolescence is made up for by 'other gifts': the 'presence | That disturbs' the poet is also 'a sense sublime | Of something far more deeply interfused.'[77] The recompense in 'Home at Grasmere' appears to work in reverse: Wordsworth offers 'unworthy recompense' for his thought of the possibility that the shepherd may have shot the swans, the thought being unfitted to the vale. This passage raises two further critical questions. The first concern relates to the unspoken inclusion of death in Grasmere. The second is concerned with the broad scope in which Grasmere has been presented as a vale that is self-sufficient and entirely enclosed where even a thought cannot enter its circle.

We are presented with a landscape that affords the boy a vision 'soft' and 'green', 'not giddy yet aerial' (17-18). He addresses the valley:

> Thou are pleased,
> Pleased with thy crags and woody steeps, thy Lake,
> Its one green Island and its winding shores,
> The multitude of little rocky hills,
> Thy Church and Cottages of mountain stone—
> Clustered like stars, some few, but single most,
> And lurking dimply in their shy retreats,
> Or glancing at each other cheerful looks,
> Like separated stars with clouds between.
> What want we?[78]

By anthropomorphizing the vale, Wordsworth gives it an identity, thereby making it self-contained. But Wordsworth is also engaging in a Genesis-like process of creation. Each element within the vale is pleasing to itself, reminding us of the resonating echo in the first book of Genesis: 'and God saw that it was good.' The connection between early passions and creative

75 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 322-3.
76 Ibid., ll. 358-61.
77 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 76-88. 'Recompense' is also a biblical term, with several different meanings: to be at peace (Isaiah 65. 6), to turn back (Numbers 5. 7), to give or bestow (Ezekiel 7. 3), and to deal a hand, or recompense (Joel 3. 4).
78 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 136-45.

power in 'Home at Grasmere' is explored by Fiona Stafford in *Local Attachments.* The unruly passions of his youth intertwine with enduring features of the landscape, 'forming deep, if hitherto unnoticed attachments that were ultimately 'purifying' and 'sanctifying'. The 'giddy bliss' remebered in *The Prelude* fades, as it does in 'Home at Grasmere', but passionate feeling remains. If we question why this happens, we must look to the 'purifying' and 'sanctifying'—ritualistic words—as they tap deeply into the religious unconscious the speaker has with the land, which is the only thing that has remained the constant throughout generations.[79] This consistency and continuity of the landscape is what makes the place familiar, and thereby comforting, to Wordsworth. Having presented it as a living being, he presents its importance to him as something that is part of the collective human experience. Death, thus, is also a part of this experience.

Modiano points out that the price paid for mis-recognising life and death in the vale is the 'movement within limitation', flitting 'from field to rock, from rock to field, | From shore to island, and from island to shore...' and that it is a 'movement devoid of progress or a sense of direction.'[80] This sort of directionless movement, however, is exactly the movement of the Israelites during their forty years of exile and David before returning to the holy city – that of wandering. Reverting back to the Miltonic sense of the word, however, the negative connotation, as Modiano emphasizes, is strengthened, as it leads the protagonists Adam and Eve out of Eden and into a world of error:

> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and providence their guide,
> They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way.[81]

Wordsworth also had the option of choosing his place of rest, a freedom that permitted sin as well as virtue. Wandering has another implication for Wordsworth's homecoming. As Beth Darlington states, 'the beginnings [of 'Home at Grasmere'] were unpretentious, and hardly philosophical: they celebrate Wordsworth's arrival in the Lakes after many years of

79 Fiona Stafford, *Local Attachments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 40.
80 Modiano, p. 485. Also in Clarke, p. 361, and Johnston, p. 14; Modiano, p. 486.
81 *Paradise Lost*, XII. 646-9.

wandering'.[82] This is the same wandering that preceded the taking of the Promised Land by the Israelites. Wordsworth's arrival to Grasmere was both an indication of settled virtue, and a decisiveness to 'make his life as a man and as poet coherent in all its parts.' After years of wandering, Wordsworth had 'chosen his vocation'.[83] This makes his move to Grasmere in 1799 monumental in his career as a poet.

The biblical landscapes of Grasmere are characterised in particular by its mountains and streams. Both John Wyatt and Marjorie Hope Nicolson tell us that Wordsworth's library contained Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681), whose geological ideas were founded on the scriptural accounts of the formation of the earth, in particular the creation of landscape features after the Great Deluge.[84] The landscape itself thus is post-lapsarian: it has been marred by sin. This mindset begins to change in the mid-eighteenth century, when poets begin to see mountains as 'natural cathedrals' rather than 'Warts, Wens, Blisters, [and] Imposthumes' on the landscape.[85] Wordsworth gives mountains a specific purpose in 'Home at Grasmere': to be a sanctuary for his emotions and memories: 'Through this, their mountain sanctuary (long | Oh long may it remain inviolate!)'[86] This usage of the landscape as a sanctuary rather than as a moral force which it is in *The Prelude* is also present in *Poems on the Naming of Places.*[87] Like ''Home at Grasmere', these poems were written in the focal year of 1800. In them, he celebrates the landscape by appropriating it – the naming of places makes Grasmere distinctively 'his' but also helps him assign a specific, personal memory to a place, which he can return to physically and mentally. Streams and rivers have a slightly different function in the poem: 'perpetual streams', 'icy brooks' and 'sparkling fountains' raise questions of source and creative genesis, themselves wandering through the landscape of Grasmere and Wordsworth's mind.

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82 Darlington, p. 8.
83 Gill, *A Life*, p. 173-74.
84 See below, Chapter Three, 'Mountains', pp. 130-32. See also John Wyatt, *Wordsworth and the Geologists* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959). They are not the only sources to indicate Wordsworth's interest in Burnet (Duncan Wu *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) states on p. 36 that Wordsworth had him in his library) but they cover the topic in most detail.
85 Nicolson, p. 2. Consider, for example, Thomas Gray's 'The Bard' (1757).
86 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 685-6.
87 *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 242-51.

M.H. Abrams also emphasizes the biblical nature of Wordsworth's wanderings by pointing out that 'in his Pisgah-sight of it as a schoolboy he had looked upon it as a "paradise before him" (line 14); and it remains, after he takes up his abode in it, an "earthly counterpart" of heaven (line 642), which he describes in terms echoing Milton's description of the Garden of Eden'.[88] I propose a second reading of those lines, which considers the passing into 'paradise before me' as referring directly to Moses, who died and went (presumably) to heaven, bypassing the Promised Land altogether as a punishment for his earlier misdeed. The paradise before Moses is the one that occurs after death, not the Promised Land he is standing above. The vision on Pisgah in 'Home at Grasmere' is not a true parallel. Wordsworth, unlike Moses, does eventually enter his Promised Land:

> And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, *unto* mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, that *is* over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before *thee*; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.[89]

Evoking Deuteronomy, another similarity surfaces. During the Israelites' wanderings in the desert, God ensured that they were provided for: 'For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thee through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God *hath been* with thee; thou has lacked nothing.'[90] Grasmere too is a vale that 'lacks nothing', like the land in the Twenty-Third Psalm. This is made explicit when in line 145 of 'Home at Grasmere', Wordsworth asks 'What want we?', echoing the opening of the Psalm: 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' The landscape of Grasmere provides, as Kroeber is keen to note, a unity that 'is inseparable from the topographical actuality of the valley, above all, its self-completeness. The valley needs nothing because it is indivisibly self-unified.'[91] Although the indivisible self-unity of the valley is questionable, its self-completeness is not. It has

88 Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 289.
89 Deuteronomy 32. 48-52.
90 Ibid., 2. 7.
91 Kroeber, 'Ecological Holiness', p. 133.

everything it needs to complete itself; 'later in the poem he will stress this element of plenitude to such an extreme that it becomes almost an impertinence for him to say anything at all about the valley; it is full beyond speaking.'[92] Surely, then, there is little Wordsworth can do or say that would break up or even affect this plenitude, thus his feeling of guilt when he believes he has 'wronged' the valley by harbouring the thought of the death of the swans is irrelevant. The significance of the passage lies in the fact that death is merely a shadow, occurring outside the text, as it does with Grasmere's villagers: the adulterous shepherd, the withering widow and the father who lost his spouse. The 'valley of the shadow of death' of the Twenty-Third Psalm suddenly takes on new meaning.

The connection between 'Home at Grasmere'' and the Psalm is not merely one of content, but also one of structure. Turning away from narrative, I wish to now explore the structures that feature similarly in both Hebrew poetry and Wordsworth's great unpublished poem. Lowth identified Hebrew poetry as being made up of versification that did not rely on eighteenth century neo-classical ideals, but constructed on a system he called 'parallelism', which was divided into three types: synonymous, antithetic and synthetic. In each case, it consists of the division of each line of poetry to equal parts answering to each other, in which the sentiments are either repeated in equivalent terms, illustrated by their contraries, or by the form of their construction. As an example, he cites the second book of Isaiah:

> And the land is filled with silver and gold,
> And there is no end to his treasures:
> And his land is filled with horses
> Neither is there any end to his chariots.[93]

This is synonymous parallelism, where 'filled with silver and gold' is repeated as 'no end to his treasures.' Such passages in the Old Testament are of course numerous and may easily be pointed out. Take, for example, the synonymous parallelism apparent in the Psalm in question:

> The LORD *is* my Shepherd; ¦ I shall not want.
> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: ¦ He leadeth me beside still waters.
> He restoreth my soul: ¦ He leadeth me into paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, ¦ I will fear no evil:
> for thou *art* with me ¦ Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.[94]

92 Johnston, 'Reclusive Song', p. 10.
93 Lowth, II, 35-53; 44. See Isaiah 2. 7 for the biblical version.

Wordsworth echoes this Psalm in 'Home at Grasmere':

> This small abiding-place of many men, ¦ A termination and a last retreat, ¦ A Centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
> A Whole without dependence or defect, ¦ Made for itself and happy in itself, ¦ Perfect Contentment, Unity entire.[95]

The divisions that occur here rely upon the art of repetition, which is what Wordsworth has been criticised for. The value of such repetition is something that comes into question in the Note to *The Thorn*, written in 1800, the same year as 'Home at Grasmere'. Wordsworth defends the claim against repetition as tautology by saying that passion is in its nature repetitive: the 'craving in the mind' when trying to convey great emotion leaves one 'unsatisfied'. Words, not sufficient to express the desired emotion, are repeated, often verbatim, for emphasis. Thus words are 'not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion.'[96] Wordsworth's earthly fears and passions are, like words, not at all ephemeral but rooted. This need for continuity on the ground produces that continuity through the verse, like the Hebrews did, through the usage of the same words. The biblical example he gives is that of Deborah (a Prophetess and also the earliest example of Hebrew poetry). He refers to the entire Book of Judges as an example of 'that tumultuous and wonderful Poem', focusing on the movement in the repetition: 'Awake, awake Deborah: awake awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.'[97] The impassioned nature of the verse becomes even more apparent later in the chapter:

> She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.[98]

In this incredibly vivid and violent image, the death of Sisera is prolonged and extended: the agony of his death at her feet is slowly extended, and thus exalted. Repetition, then, serves both

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94 Psalm 23. 1-4. For the purposes of this argument, I have divided each set of parallel sentiments with ¦ to indicate parallelism.
95 'Home at Grasmere' ll. 165-170. As above; I have changed Wordsworth's original line breaks to demonstrate the parallelisms.
96 'Note to *The Thorn*', *Lyrical Ballads,* p. 351.
97 Judges 5. 12.
98 Ibid., 5. 26-27.

the high and the low. When used in exaltation, as Wordsworth does describing a flock of birds, it is a very outward gesture – the need to get something out has the effect of doubling or even tripling in spirals, as Wordsworth does here:

> Behold them, how they shape
> Orb after orb, their course, still round and round,
> Above the area of the Lake, their own
> Adopted region, girding it about
> In wanton repetition, yet therewith—
> With that large circle evermore renewed—
> Hundreds of curves and circlets, high and low,
> Backwards and forwards, progress intricate,
> As if one spirit was in all and swayed
> Their indefatigable flight.[99]

The rhythms of the poem fall not just in the verse, but in the content, hence the repetitious nature. And although Wordsworth's may not be a deliberate mimicry of the Sacred Hebrew style, it is an unconscious echoing of a deeply-ingrained text. The rhythm he seeks is one of impassioned thought, not versification.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the rediscovery of biblical poetry was a way to break away from the 'rules' of the versification of the Classics that so governed the preceding era.[100] It was only during what Roston calls a period of 'preromanticism' that the transformation from neo-classical to Romantic began to look at the Bible as poetry, rather than just sacred text. By the time the Wordsworths had moved to Grasmere at the end of 1799, Lowth's watershed work was commonplace in understanding literary criticism. Wordsworth's impact on poetic language was causally related to his discovery of the Bible as poetry, which he, like many other Romantic authors, owed largely to Robert Lowth.

Reading Wordsworth alongside the Bible is a somewhat prickly subject. Take, for example, Kenneth Johnston's critique of Abrams saying that he underestimates the tensions in 'Home at Grasmere'' in order to 'praise it for successfully manifesting a transference of the old wine of religious faith into the new wineskins of Romantic existential humanism – which is the key to his interpretation of Wordsworth and post-Romantic modern literature.'[101] My aim is not

99 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 292-301.
100 Roston, p 13.
101 Johnston, p 4.

to transfer old wine to new wineskins, nor worse, to turn water into wine. Rather, I have drawn on texts and culturally predominant ideas accessible to Wordsworth at the time of his writing in order to extrapolate the scriptural resonances that underpin Wordsworth's understanding of and articulation of the landscape. As Paul Korshin argues in *Typologies in England, 1650-1820*, Wordsworth 'sacramentalizes nature, and scans the great book of the Creation like a literary critic reading a text, finding "Characters," "types," and "symbols"—literary terms—in his exegesis.'[102] In the words of Stephen Gill, 'this is his "paramount endowment" – that in the exercise of its highest powers Imagination gives man a glimpse of the Divine which encompasses all'.[103] Imagination allows man to shape his world by converting his perception, past and present, into knowledge. Yet as Gill notes elsewhere, the moment of recalling memory forms a crucial part of this endowment for Wordsworth: 'Whatever Wordsworth experienced in 1790 […] pales before what happens at the moment of writing, when memory is most fully engaged.'[104] In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth sees on the landscape 'Characters of the great Apocalyps | The types and symbols of Eternity'.[105] These types, embedded in the typography of the land as in the local and personal stories behind it, like the hart of Hart-Leap Well, serve not only to smooth scriptural discontinuities but also the personal discontinuities of Wordsworth's memory. The memory, thus, is indeed also related to imagination. It is that which no longer exists – and so when Wordsworth describes the landscape of the Alps as 'types and symbols of eternity' and later, when he moves back to Grasmere to re-establish the emotional and mental connections of his childhood, he is doing so because he is acutely aware of the imaginary state of the past. The move to Grasmere is crucial because its physicality—the *place* of Grasmere—needs to serve as the poet's 'now': that which eliminates the imaginary by becoming complete reality.

Grasmere is not *meant* to be Eden: it is not an unpopulated, idyllic, all-natural, eternal dwelling place with two inhabitants. Wordsworth makes a point of showing Grasmere as a vale, a village, a communion of characters and nature, filled with traces of the divine and the human.

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102 Korshin, p 99.
103 Gill, p. 239.
104 Stephen Gill, *The Prelude: Landmarks of World Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 71.
105 *Prelude*, VI. 570-1.

His focus is on the earthly, and so he exalts the world around him using a language of domestic metaphors and tropes from Hebrew poetry to place the value on the material and the natural. The home that he wants and strives to create with Dorothy is very much a physical home on Earth – it is his version of the Promised Land, and a place of return. After completing his Tour of Scotland with Dorothy in 1803, he composed 'Fly some kind spirit', a poem announcing his return 'by this day's light' to his home and wife and child in Grasmere.[106] Grasmere remains a place of return not just in 1800 but for years after he has settled in the vale. He goes forth, but always come back, as one would to a Promised Land. Yet the Vale of Grasmere was not always full of 'Glad tidings': it was at times Wordsworth's own 'valley of the shadow of death'. The loom of death made it all the stronger: '*Not without* hope we suffer and we mourn', the 'Elegaic Stanzas' remind us. The Vale is dark with death but it is also a place of light and hope, of consolation, company and fortitude. Part of Wordsworth's role was to share this promise of consolation with others. In his decision to fulfil his self-proclaimed vocation as 'the chosen son', he placed himself in the footsteps of Moses and David, and England in the place of Israel. He wanted to unite his vocation as poet and prophet, as it is in the Hebrew word נָבָא (*nabiy'*) and could only do so by returning home to the land he believed he was promised. Only then could he begin to fulfil his role as the Prophet of the Nation.

106 'Fly some kind spirit', *Poems, in Two Volumes*, p. 597.

MOUNTAINS

The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.

- Habakkuk 3:10

For Wordsworth, dwelling was never something that took place in only one space. It was localised, but it was also deeply fashioned by his knowledge and awareness of the natural environment, not just at home, but abroad. His travels, often repeated, exposed the poet to different topographies from those of the Lake District, thereby providing him with a stronger ability to situate himself in the world. The 1790s, with the formation of the Ordnance Survey in 1791, were a time of national surveying: the landscape became less of a *terra incognita* and more particular.[1] 'Yonder' was no longer an applicable concept: with the help of a map, every hill and every brook had been charted. This mapping allowed for the common man to visualise himself in space in a way that was not possible before: in one's village, county, country, continent. The further out he went, the vaguer these concepts became. Situating oneself in the world relies on two key elements: the first is the internalisation of one's external space, and the second is the blurring of geographical and topographical boundaries that occurs when trying to place oneself in the landscape at the human, rather than geological, scale. Writing about the landscape, as it unfolds before its perceiver, is always a semi-conscious act of control (guiding the audience's perception) and subservience (being subject to the reality of the landscape). Likewise, a painter could only alter the scene before him so much before it became another unrecognisable place altogether. Wordsworth considers this notion in a letter to Reverend J. Pering, on 2 October 1808:

> Besides, you can easily conceive that objects may be too familiar to a Man, to leave him the power of describing them. This is the case with me in regard to these Lakes and

1 For a history of the Ordnance Survey, see Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (London: Granta, 2010).

> mountains, which are my native Country, and among which I have passed the greatest part of my life: and really I should be utterly at a loss were I about to set myself to a formal delineation of them, or of any part of them, where to begin, and where to end.[2]

His question, 'where to begin, and where to end', emphasizes the topographical blurring of landscape features that are strikingly easier to define in writing, or say, on a map, but not in reality. Even the contours of a river, often easily pointed out in the landscape, are indefinite. How does one know where the mountain truly begins and ends? Both controlled by the landscape, powerless to produce the words to describe it, and controlling it himself, the poet searches for a way to generate a beginning and an end to the vision; a way of organising focal points for an absent observer. This task maps out a topography of its own, formulating the dips and falls, stresses and omissions of the land that the speaker wishes to portray in his mediated vision. It beckons questions about the nature of landscape itself – is it always continuous, melting earth into rock into sea into air? Despite Wordsworth's reservations about being 'utterly at a loss' in describing the Lakes, at the time of writing to Reverend Pering, he was already working on 'a manual to guide travellers'[3] that would eventually become his own *Guide to the Lakes* in the tradition of Brown, West, and Gray. Further, on that same day—2 October 1808—he had written also to Reverend Francis Wrangham, urging *him* to write his own 'topographical History of [his] neighbourhood'.[4]

For Wordsworth, the Lake District, and in particular mountains, not only represented home, but also marked the place of sublimity and of fundamental religious experience. That notion—the sacredness of mountains—was not unfounded: biblical mountains had long been recognised as places of offering and covenant. Yet until the mid-eighteenth century, the untamed, irregular, gargantuan aesthetics of mountains were repellent and undesirable: they presented a dangerous, barren landscape that did not adhere to the orthodox pastoral imagination of the time and indicated a wildness: a lack of form and human control. More

2 W.W. to Revd J. Pering, 2 October 1808. *MY,* I, 271-2. Owen and Smyser also note the same letter in their introduction to Wordsworth's 'A Guide Through the District of the Lakes' in *Prose Works*, II, 123.

3 *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland,* ed. by The Earl of Ilchester (London, 1908), II, p. 231, as cited in *MY,* I, 272n. In Lady Holland's account, Wordsworth discusses opinions on the colours of the houses.

4 W.W. to Francis Wrangham, 2 October 1808. *MY,* I, 270.

distinctively, perhaps, many were unconquerable. For this very reason, they also captured the imagination of the select few who were brave (or lunatic) enough to scale the heights in search for a greater understanding – be it of science, man, or the divine. Travel texts in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had as their outcome, amongst other things, literary opportunity: going abroad provided discourses on education, books, trade and exploration, not merely picturesque views or scenes.[5] Yet by the nineteenth century, the sight of mountains had come to represent in art and in literature the epitome of the sublime, while travel, as in Wordsworth's case in 1790, had the aim of finding 'visual pleasures'.[6]

The historical lack of accessibility had rendered mountains exclusive, reserved for vicious warrior tribes, mystics, and outcasts.[7] Yet by 1856, the 'Warts, Wens, Blisters, Imposthumes' on the face of nature had become the 'temples of Nature built by the Almighty';[8] they were John Ruskin's sights of 'Clear, calm, placid, perpetual vision, far and near; the endless perspicuity of space; unfatigued veracity of eternal light'.[9] This change in attitude from the seventeenth century onwards, in some part due to the advances in travel, has been traced and detailed by Marjorie Hope Nicolson in *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (1959). Nicolson took her title from the last chapters of Ruskin's Volume IV of *Modern Painters*, which focuses on the geological elements in terms of landscape painting. Furthermore, she also pointed out that

> In the Bible, as in the classics, seventeenth-century poets found an implicit dualism, for the Old and New Testaments differed as did the Greeks and the Romans in their attitude toward grand nature. Familiar passages from the Old Testament recalled ancestors who had felt the peace of the everlasting hills, had lifted up their eyes to the mountains. […] Sinai and Ararat had long been sacred in literature and art.'[10]

Nicolson's observation provides the groundwork for my overall argument: by the time

5 Judith Adler, 'Origins of Sightseeing', *Annals of Tourism Research,* 16 (1989), 7-29 (p. 9). For a discussion on the emergence of 'tourism' in a time of travel, see also James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European tourism, literature, and the ways to culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

6 David S. Miall, 'The Alps deferred: Wordsworth and the Simplon Pass', *European Romantic Review*, 9 (1998), 87-102, (p. 88).

7 For example, the Assassins in the mountains of Elbruz in John Mandeville's *Travels*, the Zapoletes in Thomas More's *Utopia;* the Yamabushi, Japanese mystic ascetic hermits who reside in the mountains; or Lot and his daughters fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah: 'And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' Genesis 19. 17.

8 Nicolson, p. 2.

9 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters,* 5 vols (London: Smith Elder, 1856), IV, 57.

10 Nicolson, p. 42.

Wordsworth came to write *The Prelude*, his imagination had already been captured by the landscape in a similar manner to the Old Testament. Though he engages with the New Testament, it is in the Old that we can find Wordsworth's guide; the parallels and echoes he employs, thematically and structurally. The reason for this lies in the nature of the Old Testament as Hebrew Poetry, and indeed in the way in which the Hebrew language, as shown by Lowth, was simple, earthly and unadorned, presenting a greater capacity for towards the sublime.[11]

The 'secret tops' of mountains, in the Bible and elsewhere, have always served as meeting points between men and gods.[12] From offering solace to evoking fear of the Lord, they have been the sites of divine revelation and sacred reverence. Their remote uninhabitableness, daring angles and lack of accessibility only contributed to the mystique and task: meeting the gods would be no easy feat. The mountains of the Holy Land: Ararat, Sinai, Nebo, Sodom, Carmel, Lebanon, Zion, and later, those of the New Testament: Tabor, Cavalry/Golgotha, Mount of Olives all came to be known as sites of encounters with God, sites where man's strength and resilience was tested. Being granted a vision on a mountaintop was common amongst the prophets of the Old Testament: Ezekiel beheld the new temple: 'In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south.'[13] Elijah challenged the false god of Baal on Mount Carmel.[14] Isaiah tells us that 'the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths'.[15] In the Book of Obadiah, God brings down a nation (Edom) who has chosen their dwelling amongst high mountains, exalting themselves.[16] Perhaps most emphatically in the Old Testament, Moses saw

11 See Chapter Two, p. 80.
12 Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry,* p. 49.
13 Ezekiel 40. 2.
14 I Kings 18. 20-46.
15 Isaiah 2:2-3. Isaiah's passage ends with 'come ye and let us walk in the light of the LORD.' (2:5), indicating God as the source and catalyst of the vision.
16 Obadiah 1. 1-4.

the burning bush on the 'mountain of God' and received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.[17] The New Testament presents the mountain not only as the site of Christ's temptation and crucifixion but also the site of the Transfiguration: Moses and Elijah appear alongside Jesus to the disciples,[18] creating a pivotal moment in biblical history: the temporal meets the eternal; the Abrams-esque *super*natural allows for human nature to meet God without mediation. The location of the mountain provides both perceived proximity and seclusion.

I

Wordsworth's engagement with biblical mountains was not always by way of direct allusion or echoes to these and other incidences, though plenty exist. Rather, his experience upon the mountainside on nearly all occasions was to a degree, if not religious, then definitely spiritual. As J. R. Watson argues in *Wordsworth's Vital Soul: The Sacred and Profane in Wordsworth's Poetry*, 'much of Wordsworth's imaginative activity is governed by structures which are close to those of religious experience, and that is a major reason for Wordsworth's continued importance.'[19] I wish to expand and qualify Watson's insightful claim by adding that those religious experiences take place on mountain sites, and further, that his sight of the mountains is often not sufficient and does not make up the whole experience. Returning to that suggestive passage in 'Tintern Abbey', seeing 'into the life of things' is only possible 'with an eye made quiet by the power | Of harmony'.[20] That harmony comes not just from the unified elements of the landscape, blurred into one, but from the actual sound of the landscape. If we were to re-read the majority of the mountainous passages scattered throughout the poet's lifetime, we would find that more often than not, these passages are paired with or include expositions on mountain rivers. The vision on the mountaintop seems always to leave the poet wanting; from his early disappointments resulting from expectations of the sublime, the power of sight itself was never enough – imagination was required to fulfil the vision, and to do so, it had to be supplanted.

17 Exodus 3. 1-6.

18 See Matthew 4. 1-11, Mark 1. 12-13, and Luke 4. 1-13 for Christ's temptation on the mount; see John 19 for the Crucifixion. See Matthew 17. 1-9, Mark 9. 2-9, Luke 9. 28-36 for the Transfiguration.

19 J.R. Watson, *Wordsworth's Vital Soul: The Sacred and Profane in Wordsworth's Poetry*, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), p. 13.

20 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 48-49. See Introduction, p. 13.

That which cannot be seen by the eye can be understood through another 'sense | Of pleasant pleasure': sound.[21] Seeing, like hearing, was a psychological supplement to the experience of God *within* as well as without. Thus, while the apocalyptic visions on the mountainside drove Wordsworth towards an original language of religious experience, they also prepared him for his prophetic calling.

Let us return, then, to the image of the young Wordsworth, standing 'in his Pisgah-sight,' facing his own promised vale at the beginning of 'Home at Grasmere':

> Once on the brow of yonder Hill I stopped,
> While I was yet a School-boy (of what age
> I cannot well remember, but the hour
> I well remember though the year be gone),
> And with a sudden influx overcome
> At sight of this seclusion, I forgot
> My haste—for hasty had my footsteps been,
> As boyish my pursuits—[and sighing said],
> "What happy fortune were it here to live!
> And if I thought of dying, if a thought
> Of mortal separation could come in
> With paradise before me, here to die."[22]

As Abrams points out, the importance of this localisation is not that the vale is the boy's literal home, but that it was one he came to recognize as his spiritual home: 'the home of his imagining has become his actual home'.[23] In other words, he was able to settle because he had found his earthly dwelling-place. His understanding of his calling as a poet, prophetic in nature, was rooted in that moment of seeing before him the spot where he would produce his life's work. If the young Wordsworth had not already perceived the importance of place, and his position in it as part of a community upon that mountainside, he was to recognise it with hindsight. The landscape of the vale, as seen in its totality from above, represented the future stability of home – his connection with other men, as well as an awareness of the prophetic vision. Watson claims that 'the prophet-child [had] an insight to which Romantic poets naturally aspire, a visionary insight which transcends place and time, and which is nevertheless firmly rooted in both.'[24] If not the boy, then at the very least the older poet had come to this insight with retrospect. It was

21 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 63-64.
22 'Home at Grasmere', ll. 1-12. Refer to Chapter Two, p. 74.
23 Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 288.
24 Watson, p. 5.

an insight of what it meant to dwell. But for the young boy, the importance lay also in the act of seeing the vale, physically elevated much like his biblical predecessor.

Returning to the original Pisgah, let us read Wordsworth's passage alongside that of Moses's. Standing upon a mountaintop, Moses is facing the Promised Land where the Lord had called him up, and where he was laid to rest:

> AND Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that *is* over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him […] all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.[25]

Like the young poet, Moses is also presented with the land as a prospect from a mountain. Moses, like his brother Aaron before him, also proclaims his mission as 'here to die.' However, as I argued earlier, Wordsworth does enter his Promised Land of Grasmere, and cannot die on the mountainside because he has not fulfilled his life's duty, as Moses had. The notion of being the Prophet of the Nation was both inextricably linked with experiences he was yet to have, and also had already experienced at the time of writing the passage: experiences of intense, religious revelation on mountainsides. In this he differed from Moses, breaking the archetypal form while simulutaneously alluding to it. Being a self-proclaimed 'chosen son' allowed him to be able to 'hear the voice of nature in wind, mountain and stream.'[26] This state, whether in reality or in art, precluded the necessary narrative structures that are demanded of all great archetypes: some form of revelation that must occur.[27]

In the religious sense, a revelation is the removing of a veil, as in Exodus after revealing the covenant of the Ten Commandments:

> And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.[28]

In the New Testament, the tearing or removing of the veil occurs immediately following Christ's

25 Deuteronomy 34. 1-3.
26 Watson, p. 89.
27 For example, see Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953). Campbell indicates the revolving stages of the hero's progress in the form of a cycle: call, refusal, supernatural aid, threshold, revelation, transformation, atonement, return.
28 Exodus 34. 33-35. See also Watson, p. 143 for Wordsworth removing the veil of profane things.

death on the cross: 'And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent'.[29] Perhaps the most striking example, though, occurs in Isaiah. The prophet praises the Lord, and speaks of a feast on a mountain once the Israelites' enemies in Moab have been destroyed: 'And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.' [30] The reference to the veil on the mountain at once refers back to the veil that Moses wore during the revelation on Mount Sinai but it also clearly marks the mountain as a place of revelation. [31]

In order for revelation to occur, it must always first be seen through the eye, whether internal or external, before it can be mediated into greater forms of comprehension. The understanding and new-found knowledge that comes from it has been in some way brought about by a vision, real or imagined, earthly or supernatural. It is a lifting of what Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* calls 'the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude' that causes man to 'have eyes, yet not see, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.' Coleridge, referring here to Wordsworth's role in *Lyrical Ballads* 'to give the charm of novelty to things of every day' echoes Jeremiah: 'Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not'.[32] Wordsworth's great task was thus to reveal the sacred in the everyday, and give sense—empirical and metaphorical—to common experience. His goal is to make men see and hear and feel with something beyond their external senses; for him, seeing with the eyes is not enough and he knew this as early as 1798. The purpose of *Lyrical Ballads* was in part to open the eyes, ears and hearts of men: 'though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man.'[33] This understanding of revelation has embedded in it the notion of vision, fusing sight and spirituality. Abrams points out that

29 Matthew 27. 51. See also Mark 15. 38, Luke 23. 45.
30 Isaiah 25. 7.
31 Compare with the New Testament understanding of Christ as the son of God: II Corinthians 3:15 'But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts.'
32 Coleridge, *BL,* II, 7; Jeremiah 5. 21, and Isaiah 6. 10.
33 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*' (1802), *Lyrical Ballads,* p. 753, (ll. 398-401). This section was added to the 1800 Preface in 1802. Subsequent entries are to this version unless otherwise noted. I am reading the Preface on the assumption that it can be posed alongside, rather than against, the grain of his poetry.

Wordsworth has two major revelations in *The Prelude*, the discovery of precisely what he has been born to do, and the revelation he achieves on a mountain top.[34] The importance of uncovered sight is paramount to Wordsworth, as he harboured thoughts

> That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
> Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
> Have each for his peculiar dower a sense
> By which he is enabled to perceive
> Something unseen before.[35]

'Unseen before' for Wordsworth implies both from a new perspective offered by his elevated vantage points, and from an internal perspective, an inward vision. This inward vision is an element of the prophetic, a form of 'special' rather than 'general' revelation as outlined by St Thomas Aquinas.[36] It is also the 'celestial light' cast inwards in the invocation to Book III of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, an inversion of the mountain into a deep recess within the human soul:

> So much the rather thou celestial light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight. [37]

The purpose of the revelation in Milton, as in Scripture, is twofold: first to see, 'purge and disperse' the mists of misunderstanding, and secondly, to tell of that which has been revealed to the inward eye. Nature is for Wordsworth the catalyst of the inward vision, an external impression made to be shared. As Moses shares the Ten Commandments, Wordsworth was urged to do the same with *The Prelude* – but was held back by the fact it never reached its completion as *The Recluse*. Instead, for Wordsworth, it brought about the confessional model. The Psalms also present the notion of an inward revelation attained through nature:

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34 Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 77-8.

35 *Prelude*, XII. 301-05.

36 St Thomas Aquinas defines 'general' revelation as coming to understand about God through his creation and human intellect and reason, while 'special' revelation is the belief that knowledge of God can come from the supernatural, such as dreams, visions, miracles and scripture. Wordsworth's revelations on the mountainsides begin as general revelations in nature and become special through their prophetic quality.

37 *Paradise Lost*, III. 51-55. Milton situates several scenes on mountainsides: Book V contains a revelation from Raphael that the Lord-Son will be appointed vice-regent (V. 594-99) echoed in a vision of the angels approaching Lucifer on a mount, (V. 756-59) and again at the end of the book, Satan on a mount imitating the Messiah (V.764-65). In Book XII, Michael the Archangel, a 'seer blest', takes Adam up upon a mountain before showing him a vision of the far future that will be redeemed by Christ and Eden replaced with a 'paradise within thee' (XII. 585-87).

> THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. *There* is no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.[38]

Revelation in the biblical sense is more often than not accompanied by a voice, or the Word of God, as it is in the above passage: 'There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.' The patterns of speech are embedded in the pattern of ideas for the Psalmist, in the form of parallelism and simplicity of Hebrew Poetry as analysed by Lowth:

> The case is, however, materially different, when the attributes of God are considered in themselves *simply* and abstractedly, *with no illustration or amplification* from their operations and effects. Here the human mind is absorbed, overwhelmed as it were in a boundless vortex, and studies in vain for an expedient to extricate itself. But the greatness of the subject may be justly estimated by its difficulty; and while the imagination labours to comprehend what is beyond its powers, this very labour itself, and these ineffectual endeavours, sufficiently demonstrate the immensity and sublimity of the object.[39]

For Wordsworth, the attempt is solely not to consciously repeat and echo the language of the Bible but rather to make English behave the way biblical language does: untranslated, earthly, metonymic. The most accurate way for him to portray the voice of the divine is by using a voice similar to it, one that he finds in the natural language of the rural classes – 'because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language'.[40] The search for that plainer and more emphatic language was a quest that preoccupied seventeenth and eighteenth century linguists, amongst them Cave Beck and John Wilkins, as well as David Hartley.[41] Hartley in particular was searching for a 'philosophical language' that could 'denote all their Conceptions adequately, *i.e.* without any Deficiency, Superfluity, or Equivocation'. This, he claimed, was the pre-lapsarian language given to man and passed on to the Hebrews: 'the

38 Psalm 19. 1-6.
39 Lowth, I, 353.
40 'Preface', *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 743 (ll. 68-70).
41 Cave Beck (1623-1706) was an English schoolmaster and clergyman who proposed a universal language based on an numerical system in his book *The Universal Character*.

Language given by God to *Adam* and *Eve* [...] and, though it may be narrow, answered all their Exigences perfectly well.'[42]

Wordsworth's attention to 'philosophical language' amongst the rural classes as one 'arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings' echoes David Hartley's contribution to the philosophical and linguistic debates of the time.[43] Philosophical, in this case, did not mean the language used in philosophical discussion, but rather language that resonated with immediacy and responsiveness. Jonathan Lamb elucidates, saying Wordsworth implies that rural language is philosophical because it is more immediately responsive to the rhythms of everyday situations, rather than saying it is capable of finer reflections or distinctions.[44] Wordsworth's choice of 'low and rustic life' as his subject implied that a closeness to the earth—a rustic life—required a rustic language, and hence, also a simplicity that brought one closer to God. Like the Hebrews, whose language did not give the option of florid description and Augustan phrases, Wordsworth was trying to return to an earthly poetry – *tabula rasa* as Hazlitt put it.[45] By imitating or reflecting biblical style, using the rhetoric and topics of Hebrew poetry as brought to the forefront of literary interest by Lowth, Wordsworth was participating in the phenomenon that Scott Harshbarger coined 'rhetorical anthropology'. This process consisted of the rise of 'intense interest in non- or semiliterate cultures' during a time of a post-Enlightenment 'explosion of literate learning', which Harshbarger credited to a growing dual loyalty to oral values in addition to written ones.[46] Like the Psalmist explaining revelation through nature, Wordsworth came into his own revelation through divine creation rather than through the supernatural. The revelatory vision, however, does come from beyond his imagination and expands in his mind's eye. The religious nature of his mountain experiences forces him to tap into a 'philosophical language'

42 David Hartley, *Observations on man, his frame, his duty, and his expectations (1749)*, Two Volumes in One, Facsimile Reproduction (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1966) I, 315-6. For another view of the 'original' language given to mankind, see Hugh Blair's Lecture on the 'Rise and Progress of Language, where he states that men communicated only by 'cries of passion, accompanied with such motions and gestures as were farther expressive of passion' (*Lectures,* I, 101).

43 See his 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800.

44 Jonathan Lamb, 'Philosophical Language and Figures of the Sublime'. *MLN*, Vol. 97, No. 5, Comparative Literature (Dec., 1982), 1065-66.

45 See Chapter Two, p. 73 and Hazlitt, *Spirit of the Age*, *Selected* Writings, VII, 161-62.

46 Scott Harshbarger, 'Robert Lowth's Sacred Hebrew Poetry and the Oral Dimension of Romantic Rhetoric', in *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature* ed. by Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 199, 200, 212.

that has long been erased by Augustan poetic forms, a type of language that occurs naturally in the most sublime of biblical passages, and to use that language to convey a message that he felt compelled to pass on. Rather than embellishing the description of his visions in his poetry, Wordsworth actively aims to counter 'the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers,' and

> the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect where it exists, is more dishonourable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time, that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences.[47]

The use of unadorned, everyday speech combined with what was a preternatural experience of the sublime results in a mediated intimacy with his readers where a more floral expression, though more fashionable, would distance others from his experience. Wordsworth associated immediacy of emotion with that intimacy, as he does in 1802 in his Appendix on Poetic Diction: 'The earliest Poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as men: feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative.'[48] This simple, figurative language was reminiscent of Hartley's original language of Adam and Eve – sufficient enough to convey the power of the present moment.[49] Earlier in 1800, in his Note to *The Thorn*, Wordsworth specified that 'Words, a Poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling and not measured by the space which they occupy upon paper.'[50] The 'balance of feeling' was crucial: 'the Reader or Hearer' of a 'mechanical adoption' of language found himself 'in a perturbed and unusual state of mind' permitting poets, who recognised the desirable effects of feeling, to continue to write in language of passion wrested from its proper use.[51] Yet when genuine language of passion was used, the reader is permitted into a very private and personal realm, not merely that of imagination (which is presumed in a work of art) but that of the spiritual. This intimate contact through the

47 'Preface', p. 744 (ll. 90-95).
48 'Appendix', *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 761 (l. 7-10).
49 Hartley, p. 298. Hartley observes: 'I suppose also, that the Language, which *Adam* and *Eve* were possessed of in Paradise, was very narrow, and confined in great measure to visible Things; God himself condescending to appear in a visible, perhaps in a human Shape, to them, in his Revelations of himself. It might also be monosyllabic in great measure.'
50 'Note to *The Thorn*', *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 351 (l. 38-40).
51 Appendix, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 761, (ll. 13-25).

medium of poetry creates openness, advocating an authenticity and honesty towards the reader despite the privateness and individuality of the experience. Wordsworth's concern with language, and desire to write in a plain and unembellished form about even the most transcendent and personal experiences is later emphasised by his own 'humility' in publishing a work about his own life. In a letter to Sir George Beaumont, he famously stated that it is

> a thing unprecedented in Literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit, as you will know well, that has induced [me] to do this, but real humility; I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject and diffident of my own powers. Here at least I hoped that to a certain degree I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought, therefore could not easily be bewildered.[52]

His justification for doing so is that poetry serves as a tool for social and personal regeneration. For him, the self is what allows the connection from love of nature to love of humanity. His poetical work, like his personal revelations, bears the same necessity of being shared in order to promote his socially conscious agenda. Reading was the final stage of the revelatory process: the poet's experience was translated from the mountainside to the page, full of biblical echoes that were recognisable to the reader, and which promoted an awareness to do social good.

Social awareness for the poet always came about from an acute internal understanding; an introspective approach to the self, deepened through solitude and meditation, usually in nature, that resulted in a desire for social action. To many eyes, Wordsworth's entire life was indeed that – a solemn retreat into the seeming solitude of the Lakes in lieu of a political and literary life in London. And yet, like Petrarch's retiree in *De vita solitaria*, written in Vaucluse (which the ageing poet visited with Henry Crabb Robinson in 1837)[53] Wordsworth sought to live truthfully, walking the mountains and groves in meditation. His travels, however, in particular to

52 W.W. to Sir George Beaumont, 1 May 1805. *EY*, p. 586-87.

53 See *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), III. 489-90, and *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, ed. by E. J. Morley (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1938), II. 517 (hereafter *HCR*). At Vaucluse, Crabb Robinson notes Wordsworth 'was strongly excited […] and 'made a longer ramble among the rocks behind the fountain.' Refer also to Henry Crabb Robinson's letter to Dorothy of 24 October 1833 about Wordsworth's sonnet on *Malham Cove, Gordale*: 'I found in the *Cove* the worthy object of one exquisite Sonnet, which bears a striking resemblance to the *Vaucluse* which another great poet has rendered as illustrious in its own natural charms have made attractive' in *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with The Wordsworth Circle*, ed. by Edith J. Morley (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927) I. 249. Alan G. Hill cites the 'rural solitude' in Petrarch's *De Vita Solitaria* as a possible influence on Wordsworth's 'Home at Grasmere' in his essay 'The Triumphs of Memory', p. 252.

the mountainous regions of the Alps and to Snowdonia, indicated that Wordsworth's Grasmere was not his only 'last retreat': he sought in mountains a greater sense of the sublime.

The mountain, a visual representation of vastness, is in Gaston Bachelard's words the 'vital, intimate conviction' that 'transmits to our ears the echo of the secret recesses of our being.'[54] Thus, the spots of time in *The Prelude* create a conflation of feeling with the landscape around him, granting the landscape an unusual element of agency: as in the 'low breathings' of the 'solitary hills' coming after him as he hung off a cliff in the 'Robbing of the Snares' and the 'voice' of the mountain that propels the boy forward and awakens his guilt (reminding us of St Augustine stealing pears) in 'the Stolen Boat'.[55] Yet these passages are not situated on the mountains themselves, and thus should be differentiated from the 'inward uplift that comes with the conquering of [one's] peak' that causes one to look, with 'dizzy exaltation [...] godlike and alone, down on the immense world out of which one has climbed, and up to the nearness of heaven.'[56] Although Bachelard's context for the value and vocality of the word 'vast' was Beaudelaire, he touched upon the central idea of this chapter – namely, that mountains are for Wordsworth vehicles for sound, for the prophetic calling that he is to receive can be understood only *after* he experiences the revelation of his inward vision on the mountaintop.

II

The first of Wordsworth's mountain revelations occurs in the crossing of the Simplon Pass in Book VI of *The Prelude* (lines 426-524). That episode in the summer of 1790 presented for the young William (and his travelling companion, Robert Jones) a visual impression of the sublime: indeed, it was the object of their pilgrimage.[57] Inspired by the *Travels in Switzerland* by churchman and historian William Coxe, first published in 1779, they set out on their own search for the sublime.[58] Their method of travel, by foot, 'came without social pretensions' and covered over

54 Bachelard, pp. 196-97.
55 *Prelude*, I. 306-33; 373-428.
56 Morris Bishop, *Petrarch and his World* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p. 109.
57 Miall, p. 88.
58 Gill, *A Life*, p. 45. Gill notes it is not clear which edition of Coxe Wordsworth knew in 1790. The 1789 English edition likely inspired Wordsworth's trip, while a new edition was published in 1798, perhaps prompting him to return to his journey. See Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading*, I. p. 40.

2,000 miles of what was a well-known route by the eighteenth century. Their itinerary was guided by the route described by Coxe, only in reverse.[59] It included also several objectives: the monastery of Grande Chartreuse, the shore of Lake Geneva, Mont Blanc, and Chamonix. What the young, robust travellers did not anticipate upon setting out was that which no traveller anticipates: disappointment. Geoffrey Hartman reads this episode as a testimony to the power of Wordsworth's imagination to supersede actual experience due to the sublimity of his mind, fulfilling the urge unifying it with Wordsworth's *Prelude*.[60] Hartman reads the *Descriptive Sketches* as an earlier version of *The Prelude*, as the same experience spurred both poems. Nature does not provide the poet with what he seeks in terms of pure visual inspiration, and thereby forces him to turn inward, and I may add, to listen. It was not just a celebration of imagination, but Wordsworth's way of bringing the external in. The hymn to the imagination thus marks Wordsworth's arrival at self-consciousness, enabled by his ability to open his ears.

Despite being an entirely different poem from *The Prelude*, *Descriptive Sketches* provides Wordsworth's earliest disillusions with the power of sight. In a note to line 347 ('The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire') he elaborated on the choice of title, doing away with 'Picturesque' sketches as the Alps would be insulted by the term, but also asserting that his intention was not 'to make a picture of this scene' but to consult

> nature and my feelings. The ideas excited by the stormy sunset I am here describing owed their sublimity to that deluge of light, or rather of fire, in which nature had wrapped the immense forms around me; any intrusion of shade, by destroying the unity of the impression, had necessarily diminished its grandeur.[61]

Although outwardly this is a passage about vision, Wordsworth's emphasis on 'ideas' rather than pictures is an indication of the turn from the eye to the mind, also portraying the importance of the image of the mountain as a trigger: it is the vision that precipitates the rest of the experience.

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59 Max Wildi, 'Wordsworth and the Simplon Pass', *English Studies*. 40 (1959), 224-32 (pp. 225-26).

60 See Eric Birdsall 'Nature and Society in *Descriptive Sketches*', *Modern Philology* 84 (1986), 39-52, (p. 40) for Hartman's principle difference between Book VI and *Descriptive Sketches*. Book VI includes Wordsworth's increasing awareness of the power of the imagination, not present in the earlier work. *Descriptive Sketches* then fulfils the basic urge for unity in all of Wordsworth's oeuvre because it serves as a development for *The Prelude*. Birdsall offers an alternative reading of *Descriptive Sketches* that Hartman avoids, arguing that Hartman makes little to no use of the personal, social and historical information about the 1790-92 journey, confining the text of the poem in isolation. *Descriptive Sketches*, Birdsall concludes, is fundamentally a political, not personal, poem.

61 *Descriptive Sketches,* ed. by Eric Birdsall (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 72.

The power of the visual to excite the emotions re-entered philosophical and aesthetic discussions from the eighteenth century onwards through the debate on the sublime. Though the notion had been well-established in art and literature, most did not have the opportunity to witness the grandeur that was in vogue by means of a Grand Tour.[62] The social discourses and artistic representations of witnessing such immensity heightened the anticipation of the young travellers, thereby raising the possibility of disappointment. Wordsworth's trip to the Alps, as described in *Descriptive Sketches*, was originally one of a 'cycle of rising hopes followed by disappointment.'[63] But that was not the whole picture. In his 1790 letter to Dorothy, Wordsworth was explicit about the impact the passage through Simplon had had on him: 'The impressions of three hours of our walk among the Alps will never be effaced.'[64] Birdsall argues that the incident was of too great importance for Wordsworth to just forget, concluding that he must have excluded it from *Descriptive Sketches* deliberately.[65] The implicit purposes of the two poems—*Descriptive Sketches* and *The Prelude*—are entirely different and almost antagonistic, which is why a unified reading such as Hartman's does not fully explain the experience of crossing the Simplon pass.

Wordsworth's first impression of Mont Blanc was not a positive one, but one that lamented the image of the mountain:

> That day we first
> Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and grieved
> To have a soulless image on the eye
> Which had usurp'd upon a living thought
> That never more could be: the wondrous Vale
> Of Chamouny did on the following dawn,
> With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,
> A motionless array of mighty waves,
> Five rivers broad and vast, make rich amends
> And reconcil'd us to realities. [66]

The famous anticlimax of their trip to the Alps was followed by an equally well known, erupting exposition on the powers of imagination. This exposition often overshadows the initial

62 For exploration of the infrastructures created around 'tourism' and the Grand Tour, see Chapter 1 of James Buzard's *The Beaten Track.*

63 'Preface' *Descriptive Sketches*, p. x.

64 W.W. to D.W., 6 and 16 September 1790, *EY*, p. 33. For a detailed reconstruction of Wordsworth's journey and his writings afterward, see Wildi 'Wordsworth and the Simplon Pass'. The letter to Dorothy was penned three weeks after crossing the Simplon.

65 Birdsall, 'Nature and Society', p. 41.

66 *Prelude*, VI. 452-56.

disappointment, an integral part of the experience of the sublime. David Miall touches upon the disappointments based on 'pleasure of the eye' in Wordsworth's poetry, pointing out four characteristic sources of chagrin.[67] The travellers are disappointed by Lake Geneva ('The lower part of the lake did not afford us a pleasure equal to what might have been expected from its celebrity'), the first sight of Mont Blanc (as stated above), the Simplon Crossing (which Miall reads with the original cave passage relocated to Book VIII) and the Rhine Falls below Schaffhausen, which Wordsworth describes in a letter to his sister from a nearby village: 'Magnificent as this fall certainly is I must confess I was disappointed in it. I had raised my ideas too high.'[68] These four examples, along with Wordsworth's similar disappointment over London, make the young Wordsworth seem relentlessly demanding in his expectations for the sublime, as his reliance on sight hinders his ability to fully experience the landscape and intrudes upon his imagination. Although Miall makes a point of distinguishing passages in which Wordsworth finds examples that make 'ample amends,' it becomes clear that Wordsworth was looking too much outside and too little within. This complicates the relationship between the impressions of the external sublime upon that of the internal world through the medium of sight, and it is a relationship of which Wordsworth was well aware.

The crossing of the Simplon Pass was hardly about Mont Blanc at all – like all his original visions, the mountain in this case merely provides a backdrop. Mont Blanc was a disappointment, but the Vale of Chamonix 'With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice' made amends for it. Wordsworth's impression was not with the impregnable mountain but with the simple dwellings, 'Those sanctified abodes of peaceful Man':

> My heart leaped up when first I did look down
> On that which was first seen in those deep haunts,
> A green recess, an aboriginal vale
> Quiet, and lorded over and possessed
> By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents,
> Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns,
> And by the river side.[69]

67 Nicola Trott in 'Wordsworth Making Amends', *Wordsworth Circle*, 21:1 (1990), 28-34 also notes that William Coxe was equally disappointed in his expectations of the Alps (p. 28).
68 W.W. to D.W., 16 and 16 Sept 1790. *EY*, pp. 33; 35.
69 *Prelude*, VI. 445-52.

In this passage, the sublimity is inbuilt into the familiar – the Vale is reminiscent of Grasmere, and he concentrates on the dwellings of men, rather than on nature, even though he is in a foreign place. His is struck, however, not by its 'Swissness' but by the 'Indian cabins'. He finds in the transatlantic an image of the sublime embedded into the domestic, ironically removing the 'aboriginal' from its sense of place. The place itself, we are told, was the Trient Valley between Martigny and Chamonix,[70] where Wordsworth returned with Dorothy and Mary during their 1820 Tour of the Continent. Dorothy notes in her journals that this was the spot of the 'aboriginal vale' and 'green recess' of Book VI, but not before commenting that it was:

> a long and rambling Town […] stifled by hills. It looks poor and desolate, in the neighbourhood of luxuriant vine-yards and orchards. […] Our way was through a long steep, grassy hollow, between woody hills—*silent*—for there was no stream. […] At the head of the hollow, having walked a while on the top of the hill, I , being then alone, looked suddenly down from the edge of the steep into a long, level, verdant, and narrow Dell, sprinkled with brown wooden cottages.[71]

The initial sight of Mont Blanc paled in their memory against the small vale. The image itself seems generic enough: a poor alpine village of rustic cottages and a white-washed chapel, reminding them of England. Yet this very humble and undistinguished quality impressed itself upon the poet's mind. It was in the abodes of men—their dwelling places, home and abroad—that he found the sublimity and inspiration that guided him throughout the years. The Georgic, heavily agricultural scene of reapers binding and maidens working in the sun is interpolated with out-of-place images of lions and Indians. Place is 'sanctified' only where it breeds dwelling, and with it, greatness. Having unknowingly crossed the Alps, Wordsworth's overbearing sadness gives way to a representation of imagination that champions the 'invisible world' in its stead, and he is filled with hope:

> Our destiny, our nature, and our home
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.[72]

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70 Nicholas Halmi, ed., *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), p. 251, fn.9.

71 *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1941, repr. 1952), II, 280. Hereafter *JDW*.

72 *Prelude*, VI. 538-42.

His inconsistencies slowly become apparent. Earthly abodes, however sacred, are now insufficient – our true home, the poet notes, 'is with infinitude.' This is diametrically opposite to the hand-built cottages of man and the temporariness of their abodes in the vale. Too often, readings of Book VI end with this episode – the Alps were crossed, Imagination unbound, the Apocalypse evoked. But the Book—and the narrative—do not end there. The descent down the mountain to return to the 'road which [they] had miss'd' was, unlike the silent path to Martigny, filled with sounds: stationary blasts, thwarting winds, torrents shooting, close mutterings, speaking crags and noisy streams bewilder the poet's senses – the Apocalypse is one of the ear, not of the eye. Likewise, the rest of the trip follows a course of sound, from river to river. Wordsworth was disappointed upon the sight of Mont Blanc because the sublimity of his experience that he was anticipating was a visual one – instead, he walked into a sublime soundscape.

The study of the sublime is not a straightforward study of the quality of greatness in a landscape, but rather, the vibrations of pleasure and displeasure it produces in the mind of man. The study of these vibrations and how they were formed captivated seventeenth and eighteenth century discourse. In Immanuel Kant's words,

> where the size of a natural Object is such that the imagination spends its whole faculty of comprehension upon it in vain, it must carry our concept of nature to a supersensible substrate […] which is great beyond every standard of sense. Thus, instead of the object, it is rather the disposition of the mind in estimating it that we have to judge as *sublime*.[73]

Kant further subdivided the sublime into two categories: the mathematical and the dynamic. The former occurs when one is confronted with something so large it overwhelms the imagination's capacity to understand it, whereas the latter occurs when we realise we are witnessing a power that has dominion over us, and includes a recognition of our powerlessness, such as thunderclouds or earthquakes.[74] Mountains, in their seeming infinitude and purposelessness fall within the first category (which Schiller referred to as 'theoretical'). Samuel Monk added to this the notion that 'The emotion that accompanies this experience [of the

73 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 86. (Part I, Book II, § 26).
74 Kant, pp.78-87. (Part I, Book II, § 25).

sublime] is reverence or respect, since the reason imposes on us a law (the comprehension of an absolutely totality) which as sensuous beings we cannot obey.'[75] Reverence also implies a power greater than ourselves, a divinity, which is the law imposed on our reason. The reverence for the physical results from fear of the unknown: Wordsworth's ear is intensely in tune to the realisation that the external magnitude of heights is mirrored by unfamiliar chasms of one's soul when faced with 'the comprehension of an absolutely totality.' In this way, the experience of the mountainside is akin to the biblical experience of God – the sudden revelation of that which is unknown to man, turning ignorance into incomprehension.

Man's innate love of grandeur when represented by the sublime was documented by Longinus as the 'desire to emulate whatever seems to approach nearer to divinity than himself.'[76] Striving towards divinity is a natural occurrence for a creature made in the image and likeness of God because the mountainous sublime evokes the law imposed on man's reason which causes him to look towards his creator.[77] In the same letter to Dorothy in which Wordsworth spoke of his disappointment in raising his preconceptions too high, he also confessed that 'Among the more awful scenes of the Alps, I had not a thought of man, or a single created being; my whole soul was turned to him who produced the terrible majesty before me.'[78] Lowth also found the sublime not only in the strength of imagery but also in the simplicity of language.[79] Thus the turn towards the Hebrew poets and their language when describing the sublime was a natural one because their language contained that simplicity. The sublime in the Bible was for Wordsworth a life-long interest, to which he periodically returned. In a letter to Jacob Fletcher on 6 April 1825, Wordsworth also recognised the sublimity of the Hebrews over that of the Classics, saying:

75 Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 8.
76 Monk, p. 17.
77 Genesis 1. 27.
78 W.W. to D.W., 6 and 16 Sept 1790. *EY,* 34.
79 See *Sacred Poetry*, Lecture XVI, 'Of Sublimity of Sentiment' I. 346-64.

> What is there in Sappho's ode that has any affinity with the sublimity of Ezekiel or Isaiah, or even of Homer or Eschylus? Longinus treats of animated, impassioned, energetic or if you will, elevated writing—of these, abundant instances are to be found in Eschylus and Homer—but nothing would be easier than to shew, both by positive and negative proof, that his *υψος* when translated sublimity deceives the English Reader, by substituting an etymology for a translation.[80]

This letter to Fletcher followed a series in which Wordsworth indicated his dissatisfaction with earlier attempts to define sublimity and beauty. Years earlier (presumably 1811 or 1812) he discussed the topic in the manuscript to the Appendix of *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*, entitled only 'The Sublime and the Beautiful'. Elaborating on the topic, he states that to see a mountain from afar is not enough to experience the sublime. One has to climb it:

> If these objects [Pikes of Langdale] be so distant that, while we look at them, they are only thought of as the crown of a comprehensive Landscape; if our minds be not perverted by false theories, unless those mountains be seen under some accidents of nature, we shall receive from them a grand impression, and nothing more. But if they be looked at from a point which has brought us so near that the mountain is almost the sole object before our eyes, yet not so near but that the whole of it is visible, we shall be impressed with a sensation of sublimity.[81]

Thus sublimity for Wordsworth preserved the classifications that Burke established, in particular those of Obscurity and Vastness (which I shall return to later). In his *Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* of 1757, Burke named several other characteristics of the sublime, including also Terror, Power, Privation, Infinity. He also did not stop short of drawing examples from the Scriptures, stating that terrible things in nature were called up to contribute to the effect of the divine presence.[82] Using primarily the Book of Job and the Psalms ('I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made'), he reiterated Lowth's discussions of God's power in Hebrew poetry.[83] Coleridge, towards the end of his life, also identified the power of the sublime with the Hebrew Scriptures. In *Table Talk* (25 July 1832) he was noted to have said: 'Could you ever discover any thing sublime, in our sense of the term, in the classic Greek literature? I never could. Sublimity is Hebrew by birth.'[84] His knowledge of the power of Hebrew as a language began in childhood, as

80 W.W. to Jacob Fletcher, 6 April 1825, *Later Years, Part I: 1821-1828*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) I, 335. Hereafter *LY*.

81 'The Sublime and the Beautiful', *Prose Works*, II. 351

82 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1759; reprint. Menston: Scholar Press Limited, 1970), pp. 95-342.

83 Psalm 139. 14.

84 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. by Carl Woodring, 2 vols (Routledge: Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, 1990), II. 180.

his father, a minister, was noted for chanting biblical verses to stun his audiences.[85] It was with renewed interest he returned to it during his time at Highgate via his companionship with Hyman Hurwitz.

Wordsworth and Coleridge were not the only ones who recognised the origin of the sublime in the scriptures: De Quincey, a decent reader of Hebrew in his own right, also commented on the Hebrew predisposition towards the sublime, contrasting it with the Greek.[86] His discussion, although concerned with sublimity of language rather than landscape, considered 'the Hebrew poetry of Isaiah and Ezekiel as having the benefit of inspiration' and thereby not being eligible to be considered a 'human composition' for the purpose of his comparison. As he points out, the Greeks had no word for sublime: it stems from the Hebrew poets.[87] De Quincey's rejection of the Hebrew Scriptures as 'inspired' and thereby not a truly sublime source of writing created by man only contributes to the widely held belief at the time that the Scriptures provided one of the richest sources of sublime imagery.

Returning once again to Wordsworth's ascent of the Alps in 1790, his reference to the 'Characters of the great Apocalyps' is not only an evocation of geological time (the landscape as 'charactered' by the events of the great flood)[88] but an obvious biblical echo. Wordsworth guides the eyes of the reader through a chaotic description of his mountain revelation, beginning with the grief of having 'a soulless image on the eye' of Mont Blanc, only to be reconciled by the 'wondrous Vale | Of Chamouny.' He then likens the view of the landscape to a book, which 'Before our eyes we could not chuse but read,' at the same time placing his readers in a similar position and emphasising the controlling element of the landscape. The fateful news that they had crossed the Alps is followed immediately by a transition from past disappointment to the

85 J.C.C. Mays, *Coleridge's Experimental Poetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 70.

86 De Quincey's repeated accounts of examining Hebrew texts give evidence to a scholarly capacity of at least deciphering (if not altogether reading) Hebrew. He read Greek and Latin with ease, translated extensively from German, and comments often on French, Spanish, and Italian works: his knowledge of languages would have granted him strategies of access. He also relied on a biblical dictionary (probably the one by Joseph Frey, but maybe the augmented Calmet) that included Hebrew and Chaldee. (Information provided in private correspondence with Professor Frederick Burwick (UCLA), 25 June, 2013).

87 De Quincey, Thomas. 'Milton', *Works of De Quincey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop. 21 vols, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003) XI, 437.

88 See *The Prelude*, Book VI: 570.

present celebration of creative power and imagination. In the original manuscripts, however, the cave passage from Book VIII (which I will return to) separated the two dialectic moods. That creative power, imagination, is likened to an 'unfather'd vapour' that lifts itself 'Before the eye'.[89] A vapour appears again in Book XIII, when Wordsworth describes his ascent of Mount Snowdon, but also echoes Burke's requirement for Obscurity in order to render 'any thing very terrible'. Burke cites Milton as a prime example of someone who 'understood the secret of heightening, or of setting terrible things, if I may use the expression, in their strongest light by the force of a judicious obscurity',[90] drawing an example from Book II of *Paradise Lost*.[91]

Yet as Wordsworth demonstrated in his Appendix on 'the Sublime and the Beautiful,' and again the *The Prelude*, he also fully employed the veiling element first by way of the mountain itself, and then heightening it by mists, vapours and confusion. The rest of the passage plays with images of light and dark in order to transmit the sublimity of the revelation. The image of the 'light of sense' going out in 'flashes that have shewn to us | The invisible world' resonates with lines from the first book of Genesis, when the light of creation is the cast upon a landscape not yet formed.[92] As this creative power of imagination 'dislodged' the dejection of having crossed the Alps without knowing it, Wordsworth and his companion entered into 'a narrow chasm' to find the 'immeasurable height | Of woods decaying.' Yet in the chasm, it was not light and vision but sound that took over: 'stationary blasts of waterfall' 'thwarting winds', 'rocks that muttered', 'crags that spake by the wayside | As if a voice were in them.'[93] These last lines of black drizzling crags are present also in the much earlier poeticised version of the crossing in *Descriptive Sketches*. Originally written shortly after the trip, the image is a much more openly religious one:

> Black drizzling crags, that beaten by the din,
> Vibrate, as if a voice complain'd within;
> Bare steeps, where Desolation stalks, afraid,
> Unstedfast, by a blasted yew upstay'd;
> By cells whose image, trembling as he prays,

89 *Prelude,* VI. 570; 454; 456-7; 527; 526.
90 Burke, p. 100 (Part II, Sect. III)
91 *Paradise Lost*, II. 666-73.
92 Genesis 1. 2-4.
93 *Prelude*, VI. 534-36, 553; 556-7; 563-64.

> Awe-struck, the kneeling peasant scarce surveys;
> Loose-hanging rocks the Day's bless'd eye that hide,
> And crosses rear'd to Death on every side,
> Which with cold kiss Devotion planted near,
> And, bending, water'd with the human tear,
> Soon fading "silent" from her upward eye.[94]

Wordsworth footnotes 'cells' and 'crosses' with an explanation of the Catholic commemorative customs in Switzerland, usually reserved for the dead, as the road they were travelling on was particularly perilous. What follows in the *Sketches*, however, does not contain the climactic revelation that occurs in *The Prelude*. In 1805, Wordsworth's eye beholds an image extracted from the abstruse landscape, finally resting on 'the features | Of the same face' that his imagination had created. The resolution of the passage occurs in the sound of the verse as well as the meaning: the hard sounds and repeating consonants give way to the longer, open vowels of words like 'blossoms', 'apocalypse', 'symbols', 'first', 'last', 'eternity'. The encounter of a face, even if imagined, makes sense out of chaos and organises the seemingly unlinked elements of the landscape into something recognisable and human. The 'vapours' of confusion have cleared to reveal a creation of the mind of man through a process of revelation. However, that process cannot be fully understood without the cave passage that originally joined desolation to exaltation.

Before exploring the intermediary cave passage of Book VIII, it is necessary to pause at the vision of a face that Wordsworth sees during his mountain episode. In her book *The Face of Things*, philosopher Silvia Benso explores the question of how things (ecological or otherwise) are capable of expressing meaning and ethical signification, and in turn, how this demands an ethical response on part of human beings.[95] In her exploration of this, she comes up with the term 'faciality', which she defines in contrast to a face, which expresses 'specific content, a defined contour, an individuated existence.'[96] Facialities, however,

> invoke the intimation of signification of a face, and yet the vagueness of a cluster of meaning the demarcation of which remains blurred, fluid, porous to a continuous osmotic exchange between inside and outside that mobilizes boundaries, and therefore definitions; that runs the risk of a continuous slippage away into the night of the

94 *Descriptive Sketches*, ll. 249-59
95 Silvia Benso, *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) p. xxxi.
96 Ibid., p. xxix.

> indistinct, undifferentiated, anonymous; that creates zones of shadows, ambiguities, perplexities, contradictions, and therefore richness. Facialities evoke the possibility of the existence of faceless faces, which, despite their facelessness, are yet endowed with the intimating power of the face to demand an ethical response.[97]

This 'faceless face' is Wordsworth's vision on Simplon, the 'raving stream' and 'unfetter'd clouds', 'tumult and peace', 'darkness and light' that 'Were all like workings of one mind, the feature | Of the same face'.[98] This image that appears before him in the height of emotion and disillusion and speaks with an almost-human voice is precisely the demonstration of the 'osmotic exchange between inside and outside'; it is the creation in the mind of a faciality that brings about in Wordsworth the desire for social change – the inside, governed by the sensations of the exterior, in turn shapes the exterior. If mapped, the motion creates a topographical recess, or cavern. It is no wonder then that Wordsworth originally was prompted to immediately turn inwards after his mountain episode. Benso's concept of faciality helps us to better understand what is happening to Wordsworth on the mountainside. More than just using the mountains—the physical space—as storehouses, Wordsworth's fascination with mountaineering and his rather typical 'transcendent' mountainside experiences were driven by encounters with others: an ethic of social responsibility. This ethic was at once biblical and ecological; it was an ethics that, following Levinas' line of argument, stems from a response to the Other, as all language does, but also only comes into self-understanding in space. The face of vastness—the infinitude of a mountainside—triggers an ethical response because of the faciality of that mountain: we confront. If we consider language as always being a response to something, then Wordsworth's ethic is always a response to someone – even a mountain-esque someone. It is an ethic that responds when in the face of vastness, and mountains—the faciality, or facelessness of mountains—provide the trigger for that response. That is why Wordsworth is driven back to biblical language, to 'characters of the great Apocalyps' on the mountainside: because the Old Testament provides a means through which to convey his experience in words.

97 Ibid., p. xxix-xxx.
98 *Prelude*, VI. 565-69.

III

The cave passage of Book VIII of *The Prelude* provides an astute insight into the development of Wordsworth's mind during the revelatory process. The section is almost entirely dependent upon the play of sight and light that dominates this simile:

> As when a traveller hath from open day
> With torches pass'd into some Vault of Earth,
> The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den
> Of Yordas among Craven's mountain tracts;
> He looks and sees the cavern spread and grow,
> Widening itself on all sides, sees, or thinks
> He sees, erelong, the roof above his head,
> Which instantly unsettles and recedes
> Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
> Commingled, making up a Canopy
> Of Shapes, and Forms, and Tendencies to Shape,
> That shift and vanish, change and interchange
> Like Spectres, ferment quiet, and sublime;
> Which, after a short space, works less and less
> Till every effort, every motion gone,
> The scene before him lies in perfect view
> Exposed and lifeless as a written book.[99]

In its original context of the crossing of the Alps, this passage is an eversion: the extruding high precipices of mountains are turned inside out in his mind to make caverns and vaults.[100] This is what occurs when Wordsworth witnesses the faciality. The sublime protrusion thus becomes a sublime privation; immensity that has once taken up space has become immensity that creates space. The polarising contrast is evocative – the move itself creates sublimity in the way that the juxtaposition of light and darkness does: through a lack of unity. The image is also abundant with light and dark: the 'vault of the earth' is naturally dark, deprived of the light of creation. The torch, casting shadows as it flickers, lights the cavern but also makes it 'spread and grow' in the observer's eyes; it is the primordial act of creating through vision. Yet Wordsworth's vision in this passage, as in others, is not entirely reliable: he 'sees *or thinks* he sees', indicating the mind's inclination to fill in detail when the eyes cannot quite provide it. This same type of feeling occurs when gazing upon a mountainside, as Wordsworth indicates in 'The Sublime and the Beautiful'.

99 *Prelude*, VIII. 711-727. Drafted in 1804, this section originally preceded the lines on imagination in Book VI. 525-48.

100 'Eversion' is a mathematical (and physiological) term meaning 'The action of everting or turning (an organ or structure) inside out; the condition of being everted.' (*OED Online*, [accessed 17 Sept 2014]. In mathematics it involves turning an object inside out without causing any creases. The paradox of sphere eversion does not enter mathematics until 1958.

The commingling of light and darkness that occurs is foretelling of the immediately succeeding chaos of the drizzling crags. 'Sees or thinks | He sees' is also an echo of Book I of *Paradise Lost*, ('some belated Peasant sees, | Or dreams he sees')[101] further echoing Bottom awaking in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass, if he go about t'expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. [102]

Bottom's inarticulacy is apt here: unable to express the experience of his dream vision, he takes to repeating himself, finally turning it into a song. The haze of misunderstanding that conceals to him what really occurs is present also in Wordsworth's cave simile: in order to process his experience of the sublime mountain, he must turn towards another, everted, source of imagery. As the vision of the cave closes overhead with a canopy, several other dream visions come to mind, among them Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' and Pharaoh's vision of the fat and lean cattle before the famine.[103] Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic* also seems most fitting, where the perceived 'real' world of shadows cast by light is in actuality an illusion. Like Bottom, who shielded by the dream world did not recognise his own reality, Wordsworth was also shielded by the 'canopy of shapes that move of form | Massy & vast & with the qualities | Of smoke.'[104] The vapours and mists normally present on mountainsides also obscure his vision in the cave. Thus, both privation of light and obscurity of vision, Burke's characteristics of the sublime, infuse Wordsworth's first attempts to describe the crossing of the Simplon Pass. The travellers are not only burdened by a lack of insight, but also by the physical lack of sight due to the an actual mountain mist or shower that appears in the earlier drafts of the passage:

> A heavy Mist [shower]
> Began to fall with vapours streaming round
> Which forced to seek shelter. There we waited
> Underneath the cope of a rude outhouse

101 *Paradise Lost*, I. 783-4.
102 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. i. 199-211 (*The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et al, 2nd edn (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).
103 Genesis 41. See Chapter Four on Rivers pp. 167.
104 This is my simplification of [26^{v}] of MS. WW, found in *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, II, 256.

At length there a Peasant chanced to pass.[105]

It follows that senses are not to be trusted for conveying intense experience. The figure of the peasant (who in Book VI gives Wordsworth the unfortunate news that he 'had cross'd the Alps')[106] is also present in Milton's Pandemonium, but in Wordsworth's original is obscured by the weather, blurring the reality through restricted vision. In Plato's allegory, only the philosopher who is freed has been granted the revelation of true reality. Wordsworth's cave is resplendent not only with philosophic allusion but also with biblical prophecy. The eversion of the mountainside into a cave is reminiscent of the second book of Isaiah: in the well-known revelatory passage, the prophet speaks of the day of the Lord when 'upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low,' and prophecies that man

> shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. [107]

Fear of the Lord drives man into the recesses of the earth, deep into the abyss where he can be made aware of his own vanity. The caves of Antiparos and of Yordas, then, were perhaps Wordsworth's natural inclination to hide from embarrassment; to conceal his youthful vanity in attempting to cross a mountain passage and failing to do so; yielding, though unwillingly, to the power of nature in the mists and God in the creation of the mountains. Yet Wordsworth's inclination did not take him deep to the heart of the earth in the Alps, but rather into the heart of England, to Craven near his home. Biblically, caves took on one of two broad functions: temporary dwelling (or hiding) places, or tombs. The geology of Judea was highly favourable to the structure of caves – the dry limestone of the region created numerous caves and subterranean caverns.[108] These recur several times in the Old Testament, including Mechpelal, Malkadah, Adullam, Engedi and Elijah's cave in Horeb. The most famous biblical cave was the

105 [25v] MS. WW. II, 254-5.
106 *Prelude*, VI. 524.
107 Isaiah 2. 12, 19-21.
108 Henry Baker Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible* (London: R. Clay, Sons and Taylor, 1875), p. 17-18.

resting place of Abraham and Sarah, now known as the Cave of the Patriarchs. In the New Testament, the cave is most often referred to in the context of a sepulchre, such as Lazaras' or Jesus' resting place. Caves, like mountains, were much very a part of the sacred poetry and presented an accessibility of understanding to Western man because the geographical features of the Holy Land 'embraced within its range the natural features of almost every country.' It was not limited in its outward imagery: nomadic, pastoral, agricultural, and sublime imagery was all possible in the land of the Patriarchs.[109]

Wordsworth saw the caves at Yordas with his brother John in May of 1800 during a visit to the Hutchinsons.[110] He knew of the caves from the Addenda in Thomas West's *A guide to the lakes*, which in the 6th edition of 1796 contained a description of the caves by Hutton. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the caves of Yordas and Antiparos were brought to the public's imagination through engravings and etchings in books, often on travel and natural history. Duncan Wu and Nicola Trott gave two likely contemporary sources (the third being Classical) for Wordsworth's image of the cave of Yordas beyond his own visit in 1800: William Gilpin's 1789 *Observations* (which Wordsworth owned by 1804) and John Housman's *A Descriptive Tour, and a Guide to the Lakes, Caves and Mountains, […]* (2nd edn , Carlisle, 1802).[111] Years later, in 1819, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* published 'Three Sonnets by Wordsworth occasioned by William Westall's View of the Caves in Yorkshire' in which Hutton's note in the Addenda was unfavourably reviewed.[112] The grotto of Antiparos, a cave in Greece, had a similar provenance.

A famous etching of the grotto of Antiparos by William Daniell was published in 1807 by Cadell & Davies as an illustration to William Wood's *Zoography*, and was engraved by Thomas Fryer Ranson for a three-volume book by Thomas Taylor entitled *The Description of*

109 Tristram, pp. 13-14.

110 D.W. to Mrs. John Marshall, 10 and 12 Sept 1800. *EY*, p. 298: 'William and John were in Yorkshire last summer, at Gor Dale Yordas, &c, [...] During their absence I felt myself very lonely while I was within doors'.

111 Duncan Wu and Nicola Trott, 'Three Sources for Wordsworth's *Prelude* Cave', *Notes & Queries*, 38 (1991), 298-99.

112 'Three original sonnets by Wordsworth; suggested by Westall's Views of the Caves in Yordas', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 4.22 (1819), p. 471.

Greece, by Pausanias.[113] In William Knight's edition of *The Prelude*, the editor elaborates on the connection between Antiparos with Yordas due to their abundance of stalactites.[114] Wordsworth was clearly smitten by the caves including them again in his Book VIII descriptions of subterranean London. Wordsworth may have also known Athanasius Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* on hidden places within the recesses of the earth. Kircher was a Jesuit, traveller and expert on volcanoes, and a strong influence on Coleridge. It is possible that he also came across Kircher's diagrams of water being sucked up through channels at the bottom of the ocean into subterranean caves that produced springs and sources for rivers.

The water-filled caves at Yordas also raise another question: what occurs in the space within them? Caverns represent a form of 'infinite closure', forever repeating and forestalling closure but never giving away their end.[115] Infinite closure is what Gilbert Clavel saw as 'air-pockets of energy, compressed spaces in which something spiritual can then explode.'[116] These 'air pockets of energy' are of interest here because they encapsulate what happens in altered space: both mountaintops and caverns give the impression of space that appears different; the former denoting vastness and immensity, the latter compression and intimacy. If space is what we use to organise our memories and thoughts, structuring the way we orient ourselves in the ontological sphere, then what happens to our perceptions not just of ourselves but of the infinite, divine, and universal when our comprehension of space, or indeed the space itself, has been altered in some way? This sudden change in boundaries creates the sort of topographical and geographical blurring I mentioned earlier. Vision decides on the beginning and end, but the image is constantly incomplete: in the event of the cave, it is constantly pushing back boundaries through endless repetition; on the mountaintop it is reorienting focal points so as to situate what was once familiar at eye-level. This re-ordering of the landscape that occurs creates an equality

113 William Wood, *Zoography*, 3 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1807). Thomas Taylor, *The Description of Greece, by Pausanias* 3 vols (London: Priestley, 1824). Byron also travelled to the grotto, presumably around 1810-11 during his Grand Tour of Constantinople and Athens.

114 *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by William Knight, 3 vols (London, 1896) III. p. 289. For more information on Yordas, he suggests 'Allen's *County of York*, iii. p. 359; also Bigland's "Yorkshire" in *The Beauties of England and Wales*, vol. xvi. p. 735, and Murray's *Handbook for Yorkshire*, p. 392.'

115 A term I borrow from Peter Larkin's talk, 'Scenes of Infinite Closure in "Kubla Khan" and the "Cave of Yordas"' at the Wordsworth Summer Conference, 2014. Unpublished.

116 Gilbert Clavel, as quoted in Ben Hutchinson, 'The Truth is the Hole', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5784, (97 Feb 2014), p. 28. Thanks to Peter Larkin for drawing my attention to this article.

among the objects of the environment, an ethic of topography, so to speak, in which no single thing can take precedence over another. Wordsworth's original turn from mountain to cavern is fundamentally the same structure inverted: he turns to the caverns of the mind. Seeing inside the cavern, or questioning what is below the mountain, is a way of seeing *into* the life of things, of cutting them open and peering within.

Altered spaces, either too exposed or too enclosed, also alter the way sound travels. Our perceptions of them are changed because our received impressions of sound (and light) have also changed. Both mountains and caverns lend themselves to echoes, repetitions and reverberations of sound. In the last book he ever wrote, *Rhythmanalysis*, Henri Lefebvre considered our understanding of everyday life through the interactions space and time that are marked out in rhythms: natural, quotidian, mobile, or bodily. There is, Lefebvre says, 'Nothing inert in the *world*',[117] emphasising the motion that always accompanies sound, and resonating with Wordsworth's many 'notes | Which in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth | From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths and dashing shores,'[118] until they are united in 'wild concert'. The cavern too, is never static: he sees it 'spread and grow, | Widening itself on all sides', but the space occupied is imaginary – a metaphorical place that relies on intimacy to create immensity. The inner movement of emotion is stirred by outer movements of sound that, when united, bring about a feeling of sanctity and spirituality.

The cave simile as it stands revised in Book VIII of the 1805 *Prelude* is immediately preceded by the lines 'All that took place within me, came and went | As in a moment, and I only now | Remember that it was a thing divine.'[119] Situated as it was, the following line, 'As when a traveller', can be read as an example of 'a thing divine', granting both the passage in its original context and in its current meaning a place in Wordsworth's mind alongside the divine. When it was written to serve as part of the visionary experience of Simplon in the original draft (MS. WW), 'the cave imagery that follows is Wordsworth's retrospective attempt to convey the

117 Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Continuum, 2004), 17. Emphasis original.
118 *The Excursion*, II. 723-27.
119 *Prelude*, VIII. 708-10.

extent of the change' in his mind of the shift that occurred having discovered that he had crossed the Alps.[120] He uses the shadowy nature of the cave to explain the transition from the mist of vapours that impoverished his expectation to the vision of imagination. The 'unfathered vapour' of the celebration of Imagination, Miall points out, 'evolved from a literal vapour or mountain mist.' (That mist occurs again on Snowdon, but there it has a different purpose.) The reliance on vision and the 'visionary' qualities, and further Wordsworth's decision to cut the passage, emphasises his disappointment in the realm of the 'despotic' eye.[121] The illusion that he is about to enjoy a sublime view presents itself with a 'divine' twist: just as when expecting to be confronted with the face of God. Yet the cave passage ends with 'spectres' which 'work less and less' until they become still, they present the reader with the landscape as a lifeless image of 'a written book'.[122] The topography of the cave demands a subservience of the eye: vision, guided by reason, struggles to find an end to the cave, but is instead at the mercy of a subterranean topographical narrative.

However, the passage as it stands in Book VIII continues with a different sort of vision that Wordsworth reworked in place of the celebration of Imagination:

> But let him pause a while, and look again,
> And a new quickening shall succeed, at first
> Beginning timidly, then creeping fast
> Through all which he beholds: the senseless mass
> In its projections, wrinkles, cavities,
> Through all its surface, with all colours streaming,
> Like a magician's airy pageant, parts,
> Unites, embodying everywhere some pressure
> Or image, recognis'd or new, some type
> Or picture of the world; forests and lakes,
> Ships, rivers, towers, the Warrior clad in Mail,
> The prancing Steed, the Pilgrim with his Staff,
> The mitred Bishop and the Thronèd King—
> A Spectacle to which there is no end.[123]

The traveller now achieves a higher vision, 'some type | Or picture of the world' that is at once in opposition to the sort of imagination that the earlier passage in drafts of Book VI described,

120 Miall, p. 92. The drafts of the Cave simile in MS. WW can be found in *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, II, pp. 150-51; 318.
121 Ibid., p. 91.
122 *Prelude*, VIII. 723-27.
123 Ibid., VIII. 728-41.

but at the same time engaging with that very same power. However in this context, he moves the eye along a trajectory from natural to man-made to societal: 'forests and lakes' are followed by Ships' and 'rivers' indicating trade and commerce, towers, warriors and steeds reflect the warfare that often follows possession of land, while the 'mitred Bishop and the Thronèd King' present not just a spectacle of pomp and riches, but a complex societal system. The 'Pilgrim with his Staff' unites the lot, cutting his way across the country, presenting a loose link between the military and the church. Wordsworth's imagination had taken on a worldly, rather than a divine vision.

IV

The second revelation occurs on Mount Snowdon. Wordsworth returns to this ascent of 1791 at the end of *The Prelude* as a form of conclusion: 'travelling then | Through Wales, on foot, with a youthful Friend,' he describes this vision following a night of meditation.[124] Abrams posits that what 'has been revealed to Wordsworth in this symbolic landscape is the grand locus of *The Recluse* […] as well as the "high argument" of the poem, the union between the mind and the external world'.[125] But, like his revelation upon having crossed the Simplon pass, the apocalyptic experience that he had on Snowdon was a retrospective and reflective one.[126] It was, in other words, an act of re-creation. He describes the 'close, warm' summer's night that preceded the misty vapours on the mountain top:

> Little could we see,
> Hemm'd round on every side with fog and damp,
> And, after ordinary Traveller's chat
> With our Conductor, silently we sunk
> Each into commerce with his private thoughts.[127]

The journey was a reflective one from the beginning, being an internal as well as external ascent. The vision that opened before him was one of light in the midst of obscurity:

> And I, as chanced, the foremost of the Band,
> When at my feet the ground appear'd to brighten,

124 *Prelude*, XIII. 1-2.
125 Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism,* p. 78-9.
126 Basil Wiley, 'When Men and Mountains Meet' *English Studies*, 43 (1962), 378-383.
127 *Prelude*, XIII. 5-19.

> And with a step or two seem'd brighter still;
> Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,
> For instantly a Light upon the turf
> Fell like a flash: I look'd about, and lo!
> The Moon stood naked in the Heavens, at height
> Immense above my head, and on the shore
> I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
> Which meek and silent rested at my feet:
> A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
> All over this still Ocean, and beyond,
> Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
> In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
> Into the Sea, the real Sea, that seem'd
> To dwindle and give up its majesty,
> Usurp'd upon as far as sight could reach.[128]

Climbing at dawn, the brightening ground would have been immediately striking. The blinding flash at once conceals and then reveals the vision by the moonlight. The 'huge sea of mist' conflates the indistinct landscape before him with a liquid one, though neither reflects the reality of the rocks beneath. The act of creating, or in Wordsworth's case, re-creating a landscape and a memory in the form of a revelatory vision, is also an act of seeing. He is as much observer as he is being observed: 'the Moon stood naked'; 'Meanwhile, the moon look'd down upon this shew.'[129] Wordsworth's act of creation heralds back to the original act of Genesis, in which a mist appears before the creation of man: 'But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'[130] The breath has been often remarked upon, but the mist has not. However, what is apocalyptic in Wordsworth's recollection is not the vision of mist itself, but as in Genesis, that which comes after it: 'the roar of waters, torrents, streams | Innumerable, roaring with one voice.' Sight again proves fallible – mists appear as seas, mountains as vapours, and the 'universal spectacle' though 'shaped for admiration and delight' could not be fully trusted. For

> in that breach
> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thorough-fare, had Nature lodg'd
> The Soul, the Imagination of the whole.[131]

128 *Prelude*., XIII. 35-51.
129 Ibid., XIII. 52.
130 Genesis 2. 6-7.
131 *Prelude*, XIII. 58-9

From the outset of Book XIII, the travellers' vision is clouded: half threatened by cloud and rain, 'Little could we see | Hemm'd round on every side with fog and damp.' The Burkean mist on the mountain, while obscuring sight and producing a sublime scene, fractured to reveal 'a blue chasm,' 'through which | Mounted the roar of waters'.[132] Rather than creating a vision, the 'thin veil of glittering haze'[133] is removed to produce a sound, 'roaring with one voice.'[134] It is precisely that 'homeless voice,' belonging at once to all of nature but having no fixed abode, that is for Wordsworth the voice of prophecy. The speaking landscape becomes a moment of revelation that is simultaneously a moment of obscurity, in veiling the eye but revealing to the ear.[135] In his *Guide through the District of the Lakes*, Wordsworth commented on the strength of obscurity in the landscape

> the effect indeed of mist or haze, in a country of this character, is like that of magic. I have seen six or seven ridges rising above each other, all created in a moment by the vapours upon the side of a mountain, which, in its ordinary appearance, shewed not a projecting point to furnish even a hint for such an operation.' [136]

Mists, obscuring the view, create the necessary oscillation between pleasure and pain that is characteristic of the sublime. According to Burke's theory, that which renders obscure makes something more incomprehensible, and thereby more sublime. Though the mists and vapours on Snowdon are formless, they are equally vast and even less tangible than the mountain itself, their monopoly on vision being even more absolute. Climbing in mist strengthens the emotional experience, for fear of the mountain and fear of the mist combine, forcing the mind to create visions of its own.

In 1681, when Thomas Burnet was writing about mountains in his *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, it was the view, not the sound, of the mountains that mattered:

> There is nothing doth more awaken our Thoughts, or excite our Minds to enquire in the causes of such Things, than the actual View of them; as I have experienced myself, when it was my Fortune to cross the *Alps* and *Appenine* Mountains; for the Sight of those wild, vast, and indigested Heaps of Stones on Earth did so deeply strike my Fancy, that I was not easy till I could give myself tolerable Account how that Confusion came in

132 *Prelude*, XIII. 62-5; 15-16; 58.
133 'A Narrow Girdle of Rough Stones and Crags' *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 249, l. 48.
134 *Prelude*, XIII. 59.
135 Jon Roberts, 'Wordsworth's Apocalypse' *Literature & Theology*, 20 (2006), 361-78, (p. 372.)
136 *Prose Works*, II, 176, ll. 705-09.

Nature.[137]

Burnet (1635 – 1715) was uncharacteristic for his age: obsessed with mountains, he travelled widely and attempted to marry his religious and scientific knowledge in his theory. He crossed the Alps and Appenines for the first time in 1672. Nicolson expressed his unique position:

> As theologian, Burnet stressed Divine Wrath as the immediate cause of the Deluge. As scientist, however, he was insistent that the material cause of the Deluge—the collapse of the earth's superstructure—had been inherent in earth itself and so closely derived from its structure as to seem at once inevitable and independent of God's decrees.[138]

His concern, for the purpose of his book in any case, was much more devoted to the understanding of how mountains came to be rather than his own experience of them – their 'indigested' appearance would not let his Fancy settle until he had a valid argument for their creation, for a perfect God would not have created an imperfect world. The answer he supplies, in short, is that mountains were not part of the original plan: the Earth began as a smooth surface, and it was only with man's sin that mountains were formed after the Flood. Yet his own 'almost lyrical rhapsody on the exalted emotions he had experienced among the Alps' indicated a different impression over the mind of man, one foreshadowing Wordsworth's own impressions of vastness and immensity.[139] Wordsworth was familiar with Burnet's work and attraction to mountains: Wu gives 1804-05 as a possible reading date for Burnet's *Telluris Theoria Sacra* from the references in the *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, while Coleridge certainly knew the work as he cites it in *Biographia Literaria*.[140] Like Burnet, Wordsworth also felt the inspiration from scenes of nature's sublimity that mingled fear with religious sentiment, having 'read parts of the *Sacred Theory* after he completed the first book of *The Excursion* and copied out passages of Burnet's sonorous Latin to publish with his notes.'[141] Burnet's theory caused confusion and unease.[142] It was not beauty that he was responding to emotionally, but something else, and whatever it was, it was

137 Thomas Burnet, *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, 2 vols, 7th edn (London: 1759), p. 173.
138 Nicolson, p. 204.
139 Ibid., p. vii.
140 Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 36-37; Ralph J. Coffman, *Coleridge's Library* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1987), p. 37. Coleridge's copy of Burnet's *Telluris theoria sacra* was given to him c. 1812, and further, his epigraph to *Rime of an Ancient Mariner* is from Burnet's *Archaeologia philosophicae* (1692). My thanks to Nicholas Halmi for pointing this out.
141 Nicolson, p. 194.
142 See Nicolson's chapter, 'The Burnet Controversy', pp. 225-270.

transmitting the emotions usually reserved for God onto physical space and further, onto the terrestrial globe. Burnet felt that mountainous landscapes were, in the words of Thomas Gray, 'pregnant with religion and poetry […] scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument.'[143] Gray's statement was not an overstatement: such was the sublime power of mountains that it could turn the mind and heart of man towards the divine. The primary stimulus of the sublime, thus, for Burnet, but also for John Dennis, the Earl of Shaftesbury and John Addison, lay in nature reflecting the deity: the face (or rather, faciality) of God was in the mountains. The mountains, promontories, caves and caverns embodied the divine features of infinity and eternity, embodying a greatness that was what Abrams called the 'essence of the sublime.' Ashfield and De Bolla note, however, that the Enlightenment brought about 'a change from an epistemology based in theological belief and debate to one in which man must find from within himself the grounds of knowledge.'[144] The Romantic sublime tradition, however, was altered not just by the picturesque and philosophical advances, questioning the reality of the land and its users, but also by the events of 1789 in France, in which the political joined the aesthetic with 'distasteful' consequences (though not to everyone). The Romantic 'sublime' was therefore an ethical and political as well as an aesthetic one.

That 'essence' of sublimity found in mountains in particular can be summed up in one word: vastness. It is not surprising to trace the connection between nature and the divine through the endless expansions of time and space made concrete in natural form: mountains recapture the grandeur of God. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard explores 'intimate immensity' in a way fruitful to this study of Wordsworth's mountain passages. He posits that through means of meditation and imagination, images of immensity are enlarged; they expand in the mind aggrandising not merely the shape of the mountains, but their impression. The reason mountains are particularly suited to this sort of thinking is because from the human internal vantage point, they cannot ever be fully absorbed; they are, as Burnet described them,

143 Gray to West, 16 November 1739: *Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West and Ashton*, ed. by P. Toynbee, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), I, pp. 59-60.

144 Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, *The Sublime: a reader in British eighteenth-century aesthetic theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1. See the 'Introduction', pp. 1-16.

truly 'indigestible.' Immensity, Bachelard says, is often achieved through daydreams, because daydreaming 'contemplates grandeur,' producing a special inner state which 'transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity.'[145] What, if not a trace of this temporal infinity, occurs in Wordsworth's crossing of the Simplon Pass? 'The types and symbols of eternity, | Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.'[146] Time is also being addressed here in a more physical way: the apocalyptic passage refers specifically to earlier geological theory that posits the creation of mountains as a result of the Flood. [147] The last line, 'Of first, and last, and midst, and without end', quoted almost verbatim from Book V of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is strengthened by Milton's own use of obscure geological references to which Wordsworth returns again. M.H. Abrams hears in this passage a resonance of 'the God of wrath and destruction' coeternal with 'the God who manifests his love in the creation at the beginning and at the end of time: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending".'[148] This resonates as much on a geological level as on a metaphysical one. Wordsworth, as the original Norton editors (Abrams, Gill and J. Wordsworth) point out, would have been aware of the geological theories held in vogue during the eighteenth century. But the beginning and end speaks also to the revisionary urge within the poet; and an understanding of his state that is filtered first through his immediate experience of the Alps, and secondly, through his memory (and consequent composition) of the moment. The question thus arises: what happens when the daydream at hand (in this case, that of failing to notice his Alpine crossing) is not a daydream into imagined grandeur but remembered grandeur? Endlessness implies both directions – forwards and back. The external then becomes internalised, but it renders Wordsworth's experience under the category of daydream, self-created from within, rather than a revelation, enlightenment from without. Yet the notion of immensity, Bachelard states, is within ourselves: it begins when we are alone and 'flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere, in the space of *elsewhere*.' It is this inner immensity, he goes on, 'that gives […] real meaning to

145 Bachelard, p. 183.
146 *Prelude*, VI. l.571-2.
147 See footnote 6 on p. 218 of *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, Stephen Gill (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979). Hereafter *Norton Prelude*.
148 Abrams, p. 107.

certain expressions concerning the visible world.'[149] This is precisely why Wordsworth can return mentally time and time again to a geographical place that has little connection to its real-time location. The dimension of the place becomes endless, vast both because the progress moves inward into the realms of memory and imagination, and outwards into the real by virtue of his poetry.

In a discerning chapter on Wordsworth and the 'Types and symbols of Eternity,' David Pirie suggests that Wordsworth's feelings of betrayal in childhood stem from the early deaths of his parents, so that he unconsciously invests his strongest emotional commitments in the mountains of the Lake District because they proved more reliable than mankind.[150] Whereas the correlation of mountains and feelings for the poet is a deeply-rooted one, I question the pseudo-psychological explanation of nature replacing mankind to soothe the trauma of early orphanage. Both in childhood and later life, mountains were repositories of emotions; vaults containing feelings that were initially triggered in response to their sight. We find occurrences both in the Simplon Pass and on Snowdon, but also scattered throughout his poetry. As the spots of time exhibit, to explain his connection to the landscape with the mere emotional intensity of his past memories is not sufficient: each time, something external beyond the boy's mind and memory is introduced into the equation, as in the robbing of the snares, or the stealing of the boat. Indeed, this external influence is magnified in *The Excursion*, where the Solitary speaks of the vision he had on the mountainside after participating in a successful search party:

> The Appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
> Was of a mighty City—boldly say
> A wilderness of building, sinking far
> And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
> Far sinking into splendour—without end![151]

This image of a New Jerusalem demonstrates the biblical nature of mountain revelations for Wordsworth by 'sinking far' and being 'self-withdrawn into a boundless depth'.[152] Immensity,

149 Bachelard, pp. 184-85.
150 David B. Pirie, *William Wordsworth: The poetry of Grandeur and of Tenderness* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 3.
151 *The Excursion*, II. 869-73.
152 This image has been explored by others, namely Jonathan Roberts, 'Wordsworth's Apocalypse' (2006) and *Blake, Wordsworth and Religion* (London: Continuum, 2010).

Bachelard states, breeds or 'seems to expect images of immensity.'[153] Yet mountains in their very form, though unfathomable in their totality, are in fact finite, and they take up finite space; they are not endless space themselves. But the way we think and have been taught to think about them results in a material infiniteness, an imaginative expansion of something that our minds cannot fully grasp. Wordsworth's visions rely on that very imaginative expansion, resulting in perceived vastness. Ruskin also returns to that word—vast—in *Modern Painters*: 'Although there was no definite religious sentiment mingled with it, there was a continual perception of Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest;—an intensive awe, mixed with delight.'[154] Both Edmund Burke and Hugh Blair saw in mountains elements of the divine: 'But whilst we contemplate so vast an object, under the arm, as it were, of almighty power, and invested upon every side with omnipresence, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him.'[155] However, mountains themselves not being infinite but limited in their shape, encapsulate the interplay between light and dark: the vastness is internalised.

Internalised vastness does not necessarily always take place in the face of mountains. In a striking passage in Book IV, Wordsworth contemplates the reflection of mountains in water. This dual lens of memory and liquid allows both poet and reader to engage deeper than the mountains themselves. The vastness is internalised in the depths of the lake as much as in the depths of the soul:

> As one who hangs, down-bending from the side
> Of a slow-moving Boat, upon the breast
> Of a still water, solacing himself
> With such discoveries as his eye can make,
> Beneath him, in the bottom of the deeps,
> Sees many beauteous sights, weeds, fishes, flowers,
> Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more;
> Yet often is perplex'd, and cannot part
> The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
> Mountains and clouds, from that which is indeed
> The region, and the things which there abide
> In their true dwelling; now is cross'd by gleam
> Of his own image, by a sun-beam now

153 Bachelard, p. 190.
154 Ruskin, III, 295-98 (pt. 4, ch. 11).
155 Burke, p. 63.

> And motions that are sent he knows not whence,
> Impediments that make his task more sweet.
> —Such pleasant office have we long pursued,
> Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
> With like success.[156]

The image is 'perplexing' for shadow cannot be discerned from substance: the world of the real appears to be infinitely growing in the blue of the deep. Their 'true dwelling' is both on land and immersed in water, exemplifying the two kinds of space Bachelard speaks of: intimate space and experience. Both encourage each other in their growth and require a deeper examination to discover poetic space, dream space. By making space the subject of verbs such as 'opening up' and 'growing,' Bachelard, and consequently Wordsworth, is expanding that which is finite. Boundaries within the mind are endless, and it is this potential for infinite, uncontained space within the mind that produces sublimity. As with the cave passage, 'He looks and sees the cavern spread and grow, | Widening itself on all sides', that which has limited space becomes infinite. Bachelard explains: 'It would seem, then, that it is through their "immensity" that these two kinds of space—the space of intimacy and world space—blend. When human solitude deepens, then the two immensities touch and become identical.'[157] The vastness thus evokes calm, peace and serenity, despite belonging to the realm of the sublime. Vastness—in particular the internal expanse that allows the human mind to fathom both deep and high—reaches within. To repeat again Bachelard's phrase, it is the 'vital, intimate conviction' that 'transmits to our ears the echo of the secret recesses of our being.'[158] The formulation of this is fundamental to my argument about Wordsworth's mountains: the immensity of space outside (in the form of mountains) is the visual prompt that awakens the divine within. But it is not through the sight of this vastness that the 'intimate conviction' occurs, it comes in a sound, and for Wordsworth, that sound was the sound that 'carried far into his heart the voice | Of mountain torrents.' [159] The vastness of the human heart is captured by the word 'far' in a moment that De Quincey called 'a flash of

156 *Prelude* IV. 247-64.
157 Bachelard, p. 203.
158 Ibid., pp. 196-97.
159 *Prelude*, V. 408-9.

sublime revelation';[160] originally penned with Wordsworth as the protagonist, it was an insight to the internal mountainscapes that would house his prophetic calling.

In MS B of 'The Ruined Cottage', Wordsworth describes the Pedlar with a passage he later famously uses to refer to his own prophetic calling:

> He was a chosen son
> To him was given an ear which deeply felt
> The voice of Nature in the obscure wind,
> The sounding mountain and the running stream.
> […]
> In all shapes
> He found a secret and mysterious soul,
> A fragrance and a spirit of strange meaning.[161]

The implication of this is great: it was the ear 'which deeply felt': he was singled out to hear 'The voice of Nature'. Abrams points out that it is the compactness of this biography that 'allows Wordsworth to sustain the narrative mode of the transaction between mind and nature in a way not possible in the extended autobiography of *The Prelude*.'[162] Further, it raises the pragmatic function of revelations such as this one: what occurs when Wordsworth records what has been revealed to him, and how does it affect the consequent relationship between text and audience? The notion of a revelation moves from being a vision to being something that is heard, or related through voice. It is interesting thus that these revelations often occur when the poet is on the road, whether in the Alps or in the Lakes, rather than in the peace and solitude of his home. In Book V of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth begins with a passage of the power over that of discourse, or the ear:

> Visionary power
> Attends upon the motions of the winds
> Embodied in the mystery of words.
> There darkness makes abode, and all the host
> Of shadowy things do work their changes there,
> As in a mansion like their proper home:—
> Even forms and substances are circumfus'd
> By that transparent veil with light divine;
> And through the turnings intricate of Verse
> Present themselves as objects recognis'd

160 De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, David Wright Ed, (London: Penguin 1970) p. 161.
161 *The Ruined Cottage*, MS B ll. 76-85.
162 Abrams, *Natrual Supernaturalism*, p. 103.

In flashes, and with a glory scarce their own. [163]

Yet the passage reveals that the visionary power is not as powerful on its own: it harbours 'darkness' and 'shadowy things' and obscured through 'that transparent veil.' The objects 'with a glory scarce their own' rely on the 'light divine' to be recognised, but open up the dialectic between light and dark, intimating towards morality. Thus the mountain visions in the Alps and on Snowdon underlie his sense of community and responsibility towards mankind.

V

The act of looking towards and looking from the mountains are both inherently biblical: 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help'; while Moses and Christ are both taken upon the mountains to be shown the prospect before them: 'Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'[164] Both the Old and New Testaments relied on mountains in their myth-making. Wordsworth's impulse to defend English mountains could be read another way. In his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Lowth clearly outlined the specific parts of landscape that inspired some of the most poetic biblical books. Among them, he named mountains, and in particular, Mount Carmel and Mount Lebanon, for their features of the beautiful and the sublime respectively:

> Among the mountains of Palestine, the most remarkable, and consequently the most celebrated in the sacred poetry, are Mount Lebanon and Mount Carmel. The one, remarkable as well for its height as for its age, magnitude, and the abundance of cedars which adorned its summit, exhibiting a striking and substantial appearance of strength and majesty. The other, rich and fruitful, abounding with vines, olives, and delicious fruits, in a most flourishing state both by nature and cultivation, and displaying adelightful appearance of fertility, beauty and grace. The different form and aspect of these two mountains is most accurately defined by Solomon, when he compares the manly dignity with Lebanon, and the beauty and delicacy of the female with Carmel.[165]

Moses, after climbing Mount Sinai returned to his people with the tablets of the Ten

163 *Prelude*, v. 619-29.

164 Psalm 121. 1. All other translations use 'mountains' instead of 'hills'. The Hebrew form is הַר , (har) which is a shortened form of 'hä·rär' – both words mean 'hill' and 'mountain'; Matthew 4. 8-9.

165 Lowth, i, 134.

Commandments. Wordsworth, following his own encounters with the 'face' of the divine, shares his spiritual experience of mountain ascents in terms of the human imagination. He delivers to his readers his own version of the Ten Commandments, a calling from the Love of Man through the Love of Nature, but furthermore, a duty and responsibility to turn inwards in the Augustan way and contemplate one's own role in the great scheme of the world, as he had done in the composition of his own book. Yet Wordsworth's creed differs from both the Old and the New Testament commandments because he does not put God first: he reads the Book of Nature not to understand God, but to understand himself.

In *The Great Code*, Northrop Frye points out that a 'sacred book is normally written with at least the concentration of poetry, so that, like poetry, it is closely involved with the conditions of its language.'[166] Christianity, thus has always had to rely on translation. With Lowth, that reliance changed and a new understanding was available to common men. First, Lowth specified the attraction of light and dark that Milton had earlier used to his advantage in *Paradise Lost*:

> The images of *light* and *darkness* are commonly made use of in all languages to imply or denote prosperity and adversity, agreeably to the common sense and perception which all men have of the objects themselves. But the Hebrews employ those Metaphors more frequently, and with less variation than other people; indeed they seldom refrain from them whenever the subject requires, or will even admit of their introduction. These expressions, therefore, may be accounted among those forms of speech, which in the parabolic style are established and defined; since they exhibit the most noted and familiar images, and the application of them on this occasion is justified by an acknowledged analogy, and approved by constant and unvarying custom.[167]

The light and darkness of both the Simplon passage and the ascent of Mount Snowdon indicate Lowth's reasoning clearly. Wordsworth gives a further example of this in his *Guide to the Lakes*:

> […] the sense of sublimity depends more upon form and relation of objects to each other than upon their actual magnitude; and that an elevation of 3,000 feet is sufficient to call forth in a most impressive degree the creative, and magnifying, and softening powers of the atmosphere. Hence on the score even of sublimity the superiority of the Alps is by no means so great as might hastily be inferred; and, as to the *beauty* of the lower regions of the Swiss Mountains, it is noticeable that, as they are all regularly mown, their surface has nothing of that mellow tone and variety of hues by which mountain turf, that is never touched by the scythe, is distinguished.[168]

As a prophet, he posits himself also as a guide for the people, and indeed a local guide for those

166 Frye, p. 21.
167 Lowth, I, 127-128.
168 *Guide to the Lakes*, p. 102.

travellers who, like him in his youth, seek the experience the sublime and the beautiful. He does not distinguish between the size of mountains, saying sublimity does not depend 'upon their actual magnitude', but on the juxtaposition of form. Like Lowth's gentle beauty of Mount Carmel, the description of the lower Alps demonstrates a highly acute visual sense.

Despite his designation as 'Prophet of Nature' Wordsworth has time and time again been read as a poet of the people, in tune with the 'sad, still music of humanity' and inclined towards benevolence to mankind. His mountain visions serve as a connection between the Love of Nature and the Love of Mankind. When Robert Ryan in *The Romantic Reformation* describes Wordsworth as 'a prophet sent by Providence to effect the work of his countrymen's redemption,' he does not necessarily have in mind visions of mists and rocks in search of the universal spirit of truth and personal regeneration.[169] As has been often remarked, there is something egotistical about establishing oneself as a prophet who can bestow revelations on the rest of the world. But as Lucy Newlyn clarifies, Wordsworth's 'aim was nothing less than to show how the foundations for a benevolent society might be laid, using "the growth of a poet's mind" as his starting point.' 'Self,' she continues, 'as he understood it, was best seen in terms of its responsibilities to community'.[170] The second part of this statement helps somewhat to resolve the egotism that is found in his prophetic calling, even that which is ostensibly focused on landscape and not mankind. His responsibility came to action with the processes of writing and publishing: he came to understand man through a meditation on the self, which he could only acquire in solitude amongst nature. The failed project of *The Recluse* is only a further testimony to his lack of egotism: he does not complete or publish it because he felt he had not resolved the philosophical problem he outlined. Wordsworth's ethic is thus constructed upon the faciality of the landscape, allowing the poet to see himself as 'charged with the task of reminding fallen humankind of its potential for benevolence', as he states in Book VIII:

> that seeing, I essay'd
> To give relief, began to deem myself

169 Robert Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 100.
170 Lucy Newlyn, 'The noble living and the noble dead', *Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 59.

A moral agent.[171]

Seeing, however, does not prove to be enough for the young poet, for all his greatest passages are always accompanied by 'The voice of Nature'. Watson points out the inescapable influence of sound on the poet, echoing Coleridge's 'marvellous synthesis in "The Eolian Harp", "A light in sound, a sound-like power in light"'.[172] It is obvious that in Wordsworth's work, as in Ruskin's, the 'endless perspicuity of space; unfatigued veracity of eternal light,' caused the conflation of light and sound often to occur together, when, engulfed by his surroundings. Wordsworth as a boy gave into all of his senses, such that, in the earliest manuscript version (MS JJ) of the Boy of Winander, he wrote the passage in first person, standing in 'the watr'y vale he would hear the voice | Of mountain torrents':

> And when it chanced
> That pauses of deep silence mockd my skill
> Then, often, in that silence while I hung
> Listening a sudden shock of mild surprize
> Would carry far into my heart the voice
> Of mountain torrents […][173]

Growing up in the Lakes and travelling through the Alps, Wordsworth appreciated that life in mountainous regions concentrated in and around the vales. Their seclusion and shelter offered the psychological and physical intimacy of an abode. Mountains represented the unattainable and the harsh. From his ascents of the English mountains to crossing the Simplon Pass, the experience on the mountainside, and conversely, the caverns it evoked physically and internally, was one of divine revelation. The revelation could never come on its own: it was not a 'vision' but a sound—one that could only be heard between the echoes—which delivered the prophecy he was to receive. The voice that urged him to his calling was not his own but one 'of mountain torrents'.

171 Newlyn, p. 68; *Prelude*, VIII. 666-68.
172 Watson, p. 83.
173 *The Two-Part Prelude*, MS. JJ, [S^{r}] ll. 185-90 (p. 128).

RIVERS

> *And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*
> - I Kings 19.11-12[1]

'The voice of mountain torrents' which the young Wordsworth carried in his heart came to shape the rest of his poetic life. The mind and the river were, to him, inextricably linked, providing an image of a trajectory but also a fluid, fluctuating course. The river complicated his sense of place, being steadfast in its location in the landscape but never quite the same river. The river's voice—babbling, gushing, roaring, gurgling, murmuring—not only fixed itself in his imagination but was also for him the source of his poetic calling. The river gives shape to and flows thematically throughout all of his poetry, not least in *The Prelude*, setting out with an interrogation in his life's most epic poem: 'Who that shall point as with a wand, and say | "This portion of the river of my mind | Came from yon fountain?"'[2] The source of the river was imaginatively provocative from his childhood until his later years. Speaking to Isabella Fenwick in 1843, he noted his search for the source of the Duddon, his favourite river:

> It is with the little River Duddon as it is with most other rivers, Ganges & Nile not excepted,—many springs might claim the honor of being its head. In my own fancy I have fixed its rise near the noted Shire stones placed at the meeting point of the counties Westmoreland, Cumberland and Lancashire, They stand by the way-side on the top of the Wry-nose Pass, & it used to be reckoned a proud thing to say, that by touching them at the same time with feet and hands one had been in three counties at once.[3]

This 'native stream' brought him not just to the intersection between three counties, but also between three cultures: the Nile and the Ganges brought the obscure English Duddon alongside

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1 My thinking is greatly indebted to Geoffrey Hartman and his work on Wordsworth and the Old Testament in particular. This passage also appears as the epigraph to *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*.
2 *The Prelude*, II. 213-15.
3 *IF*, p. 98.

the sacred ancient rivers. Wordsworth's rivers manifested for him a different sort of sacred: it was through their voice that he confirmed his role as a 'chosen son' and prophet of Nature. Both in form and content, the uniting theme of this calling is that of a river: between the '*lofty banks*' of the Wye 'and its *mazy course*', the murmurs of the Derwent, the 'roaring blast' of the Duddon, and the meandering Yarrow, Wordsworth lends not only his verse but his ear to the voice of these rivers in order to fulfil his destiny.[4] The river, without doubt, is a dominant feature of Wordsworth's poetry and does not have a single, clear purpose: it serves as the metaphorical structure for the shape of his career and personal development; as a guide and moral force, mimicking the cleansing brooks and rivers of the Old Testament; and most importantly for this thesis, it provides the external voice of the prophetic calling: the eternal 'sound of many waters' of the Book of Revelation that haunted Wordsworth throughout his career.

This chapter explores the undercurrent of prophecy in rivers by taking a close look at four of the major rivers that feature in Wordsworth's poetry—the Wye, the Derwent, the Duddon and the Yarrow—along with the general metaphoric, lexical and unnamed rivers meandering throughout his works. The dominant poem guiding the chapter is Wordsworth's 'On the Power of Sound', composed from 1828, and later published in 1835. Although not a river poem by title, it was included as the closing piece for a volume which bore not only a river's name, but great personal significance for Wordsworth. Sound and stream run parallel throughout this series of sonnets. By tracing the shape of the river through the features of prophecy and in comparison with the rivers of the Bible, I hope to demonstrate Wordsworth's 'sense sublime | Of something far more deeply interfused' while exploring the function of the river's voice.[5] That 'sense sublime' is for the poet an insight into the divine, a face-to-face encounter with that which is most sacred and moving, transcending all time. As J. Douglas Kneale acutely points out in discussing the role of voice in Wordsworth's poetry, 'the most vocal

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4 William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales, &c., Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, made in the Summer of the year 1770,* 2nd edn (London: R. Blamire, 1789), p. 17. I would like to thank Fiona Stafford for drawing my attention to these lines.

5 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 96-97.

forms of nature are the streams, waterfalls, rivers and lakes.'[6] It is from Kneale I take my cue and like him, by 'voice' I mean not only 'personal style or rhetorical "figures of speech"' but also 'a man speaking to men'.[7] In order to understand how fluvial vocal forms work in the poetry, I first explore the terms of the biblical prophetic call and the distinction of the rivers into streams, fountains, brooks, sources and springs.

Kneale's essay on 'Wordsworth's Images of Language' provides a springboard into discussions of prophetic voices. Dividing language into voice and letter, he argues that Wordsworth is very much a poet of the voice, a 'man speaking to men' who privileges the spoken, and by extension, heard word, although his emphasis on the written is not forgotten (letters, carvings, marks). Kneale describes Wordsworth's process of language:

> Having bestowed the powers of speech and writing on nature, the poet is free to receive that language again, to hear nature's voice and to read its written texts. The growth of the poet's mind is thus also the development of a hermeneutic, an ability to interpret the mind's linguistic projections as a continuous allegory—specifically, an allegory in which the poet keeps discovering his own figurations as language keeps doubling back on itself.[8]

What Kneale omits is that Wordsworth conveys his aural emphasis not through speech but through writing. The vocal forms that arise from the river are, at the end of the day, presented in writing – that is, scripted. Wordsworth's personal projections cease being personal when they are shared through the medium of print, and this sharing is what causes language to double back on itself. Language that is repetitive, and further, continuously flowing, is in its plasticity the medium of prophecy and an emblem of the sublime. Repetition is of particular interest and has been pointed out by many, in relation to Wordsworth's 'Note to *The Thorn*' and in my earlier chapter on Lowth and 'Home at Grasmere'.[9] Repetition also permits for another feature of prophetic language – its relation to time. In a chapter called 'Prophetic Speech' in *The Book to Come*, Maurice Blanchot reminds us that 'Prophecy is not just a future language. It is a

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6 Douglas Kneale, 'Wordsworth's Images of Language: Voice and Letter in *The Prelude*', *PMLA* 101 (1986), 351-61, (p. 354).

7 Douglas Kneale, *Monumental Writing: Aspects of Rhetoric in Wordsworth's Poetry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), p. xiii.

8 Kneale, 'Images of Language', p. 352.

9 Namely, Eric Lindstrom (see below) and Corinna Russell. 'A Defence of Tautology: Repetition and Difference in Wordsworth's Note to "The Thorn"', *Paragraph*, 28 (2005), 104-118. See Chapter Two, pp. 91.

dimension of language that engages it in relationships with time that are much more important than the simple discovery of certain events to come. […] it is not the future that is given, it is the present that is taken away'. This is the sort of prophecy I have in mind when referring to Wordsworth. The relationship between God and man is manifested through speech – it is the space of the confrontation: man facing man, and the movement of the spirit: God speaking to man.[10] Balfour in his book on *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy*, emphasises the correlation between repetition and the manifestation of God as the living word: 'In the beginning, then, is the repetition of the word. Even if the prophet's word seems original, it is always already a repetition of the divine one, a quotation with or without quotation marks.'[11] This repetitive, continuous movement, I argue, occurs in Wordsworth's poetry in form of the river.

The metaphoric structure of Wordsworth's career has been explored by Nicola Trott in terms of a river and a church, both offering themselves as 'organic, counter-classical modes of organization'[12] focusing on the image of the river as continuous and the church as final and architectonic. The 'rivery form', however, proves itself to be the more ambiguous: linear in form but limiting in its exclusive shape.[13] That problematic shape, peripatetic yet omniscient, also gives way for the other senses to take over. From the beginning of the poet's life to his Victorian maturity, it is the sound rather than the shape of the river that structures his self-understanding and identity. Kneale points out that a 'vocal chiasmus' occurs at the beginning and ending of the 1850 *Prelude*: In Book I, the river makes 'ceaseless music' to 'a babe in arms', but by Book XIV, this has been reversed to a poet who listens to the 'natal murmur' of his own 'stream' of imagination.[14] Kneale's chiasmus however presents a problem, as Wordsworth altered this passage between the 1805 and 1850 editions. 'A babe in arms' was originally 'sweet birthplace' in 1805, a distinct quotation from Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight', while the 'natal murmur' was 'the sound of waters'. These later changes indicate the obvious rift with Coleridge,

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10 Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come* trans. by Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 79; 83.

11 Ian Balfour, *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 4.

12 Nicola Trott, 'Wordsworth: the shape of the poetic career' in *Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5-21 (p. 9).

13 Trott, 'Shape of the poetic career', p. 11.

14 Kneale, 'Images of Language', p. 353. Note that Kneale is using the 1850 edition of *The Prelude*.

altering the chiasmus, as the 'natal murmur', which makes the chiasmus work, loses its syntactical strength in the later version and is replaced by 'the very place of birth' of the stream in the 'blind caverns'. Wordsworth's prophetic calling was more distinct to him when he was a young man. By the time he had made the later revisions, his prophetic calling had been fulfilled, and his life's goal—to write *The Recluse*—was never accomplished. Over the course of this chapter, I propose to alter Kneale's chiasmus into another one that Wordsworth presents throughout his poetry – that of the stream of voice and the voice of the stream.

A distinction should be made between Wordsworth's uses of the different 'forms' of river: the streams, fountains, brooks, sources and springs that flow throughout his poetry. Unlike the biblical usage, in which the word 'river' is used to signify a valley, or a stream so small it hardly deserves the name, Wordsworth's rivers are rivers as bodies of flowing water through the landscape.[15] It is interesting to think even of his vocabulary as interchangeable and ambivalent, in a constant flux and reflux of meaning. His brooks, contrasting with the biblical usage of the term, are smaller bodies of moving water, rather than the major elements they represent in the ancient lands, such as the Brook of Kidron.[16] Springs and sources may be treated at face value, but fountains again prove evocative. The 'fountain of life' is yet another name for Yahweh, and is also found in the enclosed garden in the Song of Solomon. Fountains also have a more encompassing, politically charged meaning: on describing the importance of domestic independence in a class of men found only in the North of England, Wordsworth wrote in a letter to Charles James Fox on the 14th of January, 1801: 'Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings […] it is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn.'[17] In describing the ownership of land itself as a 'fountain' of affection, Wordsworth

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15 Alexander Cruden, *Cruden's Concordance to the Holy Scriptures: To the Old and New Testaments* (Lutterworth Press, London, 1941). Note for entry 'river', p. 551.

16 The Brook of Kidron holds a particular significance as it mentioned in the Old Testament as a body dividing Jerusalem from the wilderness (see *Cruden's Concordance*, 'brook', p. 62) and a place where idols were burnt (Deuteronomy 9. 21; I Kings 15. 13). In the New Testament, it is the river Jesus crosses on his way to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane.

17 W. W. to Charles James Fox, 14 January 1801, *EY,* p. 315. The editors claim that these letters could have been dictated by Coleridge as part of their project to send the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* to 'persons of eminence', but they were signed by Wordsworth, indicating his ownership of the text as

was also making a claim for his poem 'The Brothers', which uses with the image of two fountains to represent familial bonds.[18] The meaning of 'fountain' carries a multiplicity of connotations, often difficult to isolate from the biblical, where it means either the sacredness of a women's body ('A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed' or 'A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon') or the fountain of life ('For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light').[19] A fountain by definition indicates a spring or a source that collects in a basin, and is often used to indicate the source of a stream or river.[20] In 'Hart Leap Well', 'The Fountain', or 'The Brothers', the fountain carries social and historical connotations, indicating death and loss. Streams, often delineating shape not just type, have a more fluid meaning as the word itself carries more ambiguous connotations: it allows for the implication of a flow of water, or other less material substance, as in 'stream of thought'. Streams are usually defined as smaller than rivers. Brooks, rivulets and creeks all bear the connotations of small streams, with 'brook' often used to mean river in the Old Testament, such as the Brook of Kidron. The note in Cruden for 'river' says:

> Frequently this word is used where the Hebrew really means a *valley* or where the stream is small and hardly deserves the name. When the *river* is referred to it usually means the *Nile*. Where the expression *river of Egypt* is used it may mean [1] the *Nile*, or [2] a small brook or desert stream which formed one of the boundaries of Egypt. The word is also used symbolically of a great abundance.[21]

Cumbrian words such as 'beck', 'force', 'ghyll', 'gill', and 'rill' all indicate types of streams, while 'mere' and 'tarn' indicate mountain lakes. Most of these derive from Old English or Old Norse roots. A final, perhaps obvious, distinction ought to be made between rivers and lakes in Wordsworth's poetry. Although the Lake District setting intensely affected his poetry and the stillness of lakes enchanted his imagination, the nature of rivers as 'moving waters' made them the active, sonic agents in his poetry, thereby making them more pertinent to his prophetic calling.

The exploration of the potential of the river's voice in Wordsworth as the source of a

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much as Coleridge's.

18 'The Brothers, A Pastoral Poem', *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 141-59, ll. 138-45.

19 The Song of Solomon 4. 12 and 4. 15; Psalm 36.9.

20 'fountain', *OED*, 2014. [accessed October 27, 2014].

21 Cruden, *Concordance,* p. 551.

prophetic call requires a closer understanding of the structure of a call story. In the Old Testament, this has been grouped together and explored by theologians, and follows roughly the same five-, sometimes six-step process (though occasionally, some of the steps are omitted). First, there must be a confrontation with God, an encounter with the divine, be it a burning bush (Moses), a vision of a chariot (Ezekiel) or a dramatic vision of God (Isaiah). The exception to this step is Jeremiah, who was ordained a prophet before birth: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.' Following the encounter, there is usually an introductory speech by God before the call, often introducing himself as 'I am the God of your fathers.' At the heart of this introduction lies the promise that God will remain with the prophet. This is followed by the third and most crucial element: the imparting of a mission, or the call itself. Often, it is accompanied by the phrase 'I send you', as in 'I will send thee unto Pharaoh […].' Isaiah, in his eagerness, puts himself forward before being called. In most cases, the call is often answered by an objection, on grounds of lack of ability or being 'slow of speech and of a slow tongue.' Jeremiah too makes a similar claim: 'Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.' Jonah goes so far as to run away in the opposite direction to 'flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.' Ezekiel sulks in a resentful silence: 'I *heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.'[22] The objection is followed by a reassurance from God, in particular in the integrity of God's word. The final stage of the prophetic call is the sign, often times unclear. For Moses, it was the emancipation of his people from Egypt, and worship of God on this mountain. Isaiah's sign is the destruction of the people and the land.

This is not to say that Wordsworth's own prophetic call follows these steps, but that his own notion of being called to a prophetic and poetic vocation falls within a standardised tradition. In 'Home at Grasmere', he receives God's reassurance that he is the chosen one,

[22] Jeremiah 1. 5; Exodus 3. 10; Exodus 4. 10; Jeremiah 1. 6; Jonah 1. 3; Ezekiel 3. 13-14.

confirming his belief (like Jeremiah) since childhood, and in meeting the Leech Gatherer in 'Resolution and Independence', he takes this as a sign of confirmation of his poetic calling, 'to give me human strength, by apt admonishment'.[23] He falters, goes back into his moods, but ultimately proceeds. Prophecy, in his case, is not a straightforward foreseeing and foretelling of the future, but rather has another definition (also held by biblical scholars), namely, to relate God's word to the people. For Wordsworth, it is not necessarily God's word, but a word that has been divinely sanctioned and externally infused through the power of sound.

The relationship between the human and the divine, found in 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' is also the subject of Hartman's study in *The Unmediated Vision*. He elucidates:

> Poetry does not deal with relations, but with the totality of a relation, with identities. […] In the perfect work of art every sign, without losing its commonplace origin or rich connotation, will refer itself to a fundamental relation. When the poet says he hears "These waters rolling from their mountain springs" we are to imagine and understand not only the Wye, a river we may never have seen, or any particular river accidentally associated in our mind with that name and created thing, or even an abstract river, its qualities washed away by itself, but, ultimately, one prompting in us the *cogito, This river: I am.*[24]

Hartman touches upon a pivotal moment in Wordsworth's development as not only a poet but a prophet. His identity is sustained not by the poet himself and the thing perceived, but by the concerns of interpretation – the multiplicity of meaning that underlies the numerous relations of a single object. In this view, the specific evokes the universal – the Wye prompts the cogito.

Hartman's inclusion of Descartes is provocative, taking us back to *The Prelude*. In Book V, we witness a dream as told by a friend in the 1805 version, and amended as Wordsworth's own dream in the 1839 revisions. Jane Worthington Smyser explores the resonance the dream shares with one of Descartes', and conjectures a potential candidate for the 'friend' – Michael Beaupuy, suggesting that it could not have been Coleridge since the poem (*The Prelude*) was addressed to him. If we take her compelling argument to be true, it follows that the connection

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23 'Resolution and Independence', *Poems, in Two Volumes*, pp. 123-29, l. 119. Interestingly, Dorothy Wordsworth describes their first encounter with the Leech Gatherer as follows: 'we met an old man almost double, he had on a coat thrown over his shoulders above his waistcoat & coat. Under this he carried a bundle & had an apron on & a night cap. His face was interesting. He had Dark eyes & a long nose — John who afterwards met him at Wythburn took him for a Jew.' Friday 3 October 1800, *JDW,* I, p. 63.

24 Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unmediated Vision*: *An Interpretation of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke and Valéry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 44.

to Descartes can be exploited by a closer look at the dream. Smyser suggests that the changes made in the 1850 edition were for artistic reasons, no longer forcing Wordsworth to incorporate 'my friend said' into the lines of the dream, and using De Quincey's mis-remembrance of the dream as Wordsworth's own as an indication of the fact that it had more artistic force if it the mediator assumed possession of it.[25] The dreamer meets 'an Arab of the Bedouin Tribes' holding a shell and a stone ('Nor doubted once but that they both were Books') meant to represent poetry and geometry – Euclid's *Elements*, in particular. The dreamer holds the shell to his ear and

> heard that instant in an unknown Tongue,
> Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
> A loud, prophetic blast of harmony,
> An Ode, in passion utter'd, which foretold
> Destruction to the Children of the Earth,
> By deluge now at hand.[26]

The dreamer follows the Arab until, indeed, the latter announces: '"It is", said he, "The waters of the deep | Gathering upon us"' and is swallowed by the 'fleet waters'.[27] The importance of this passage in Book V is the emphasis on the prophetic voice *heard* from the shell, a symbol of the sea, but in this context, also of poetry. The stone, in contrast, stood for mathematics. It is of significance that the dreamer saw '"This other," pointing to the shell, "this book | Is something of more worth."'[28] The waters thus speak to the dreamer through a medium, the shell, in a dream. This very mediated message does not present a sight, but a sound, and in particular, an ode, 'a loud prophetic blast of harmony'. The 'blast' is often used by Wordsworth to describe water, specifically waterfalls, while the image of the sound is one of harmony. Harmony in writing, as Guinn Batten notes, is an act of creation that aims to reconstruct the literal and linguistic landscape through a resonance of text (allusion) and word (homonyms and homophones).[29] This resonance is repeated in 'Resolution and Independence', where the poet

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25 Jane Worthington, Smyser. 'Wordsworth's Dream of Poetry and Science: *The Prelude*, V', *PMLA*, 71 (1956), 269-275.

26 *Prelude*, V. 78; 113; 94-99.

27 'Fleet' originally was applied to the motion of water, rendering the phrase 'fleet waters' almost tautological. This note is indebted to James Engell.

28 *Prelude*, V. 130-31; 136; 89-90.

29 Guinn Batten, *The Orphaned Imagination: Melancholy and Commodity Culture in English Romanticism* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1998). Batten's book it particularly interesting in her

places himself as 'a Traveller then upon the moor' who also 'heard the woods and distant waters roar'. We will see the sound of the shell return again in Stanza 8 of 'On the Power of Sound': 'When Music deigned within this grosser sphere | Her subtle essence to enfold, | And Voice and Shell drew forth an ear | Softer than Nature's self could mould.'[30]

Although often remarked as being a poet of quietude and silent contemplation, Wordsworth is also a poet of the aural and audible, particularly in his youth: his representation of childhood, as Fiona Stafford points out, is not 'especially concerned with peace and quiet.'[31] One of his greatest works on the importance of sound was published in his volume *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* in 1835, a volume whose guiding principle theme was the river. Thus when he came to write 'On the Power of Sound' in 1828, we can see the fruits of a lifetime of contemplative listening to the rush of the world around him; fruits that, both in their form and meaning, belong to a lexicon of the river.

I

Wordsworth thought highly of 'On the Power of Sound', elevating its position as the concluding piece for his volume *Yarrow Revisited*, a spot often reserved by Wordsworth for poems he thought to be most important, such as the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' in *Poems in Two Volumes*. It is interesting to note that, like the synaesthesia in 'Tintern Abbey', a poem on the power of sound begins with the eye, not the ear: 'As if within thee dwelt a glancing mind | Organ of vision!'[32] This apostrophe is directed at the ear – the 'oracular cave' and 'intricate labyrinth', but the juxtaposition of the simile 'as if' denotes a visionary quality to listening. [33] If we consider this from a prophetic perspective, it reinforces the notion that prophetic understanding comes from that which is heard: despite the cell of hearing being 'dark and

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unconventional view of Wordsworth's vocation and poetic calling in *The Prelude*, as an orphaned—and homeless—son.

30 'On the Power of Sound', *Last Poems, 1821-1850*, pp. 116-124, ll. 117-20. All entries refer to the 1835 text. Lines numbers will be given, but stanzas will not. Hereafter 'Power of Sound'.

31 Stafford, p. 39.

32 'Power of Sound', ll. 2-3.

33 Ibid., ll. 5-6. Tim Fulford explores the cave passages in relation to sound in his chapter 'Naming the Abyss: Wordsworth and the sound of power' in *Late Poetry of the Lake Poets*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 205-43.

blind', it is informed by 'a Spirit aerial'. Furthermore, the stanza closes with the pealing of hosannas and requiems, audible religious manifestations of the stages of life. The second stanza of the poem opens again with an apostrophe, this time to the 'invisible spirit' of sound:

> The headlong Streams and Fountains
> Serve Thee, Invisible Spirit, with untired powers;
> Cheering the wakeful Tent on Syrian mountains,
> They lull perchance ten thousand thousand flowers.
> *That* roar, the prowling lion's *Here I am*,
> How fearful to the desert wide![34]

To the attuned ear, this opening stanza has an obvious biblical provenance. The 'wakeful Tent' represents the tabernacle, or house of the Lord, which the Israelites carried with them everywhere they went. The Syrian mountains—presumably Mount Hermon or Mount Lebanon—were the sites often used as the burial places of the patriarchs or remarked as landmarks – the cedars of Lebanon were of particular note.[35] The 'ten thousand thousand flowers' recalls the voice of 'many angels' of the Revelation: 'ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands'.[36]

It is among these biblical echoes that streams and fountains have a function to perform – they serve the spirit of Sound, their voices blending to create a sublimity that at once 'lulls perchance ten thousand thousand flowers' and roars with 'the prowling lion's "Here I am"'. Yet it is not the sound of the waters but its likeness—the lion's self-announcement—that resonates, echoing at once the divine revelation 'I am that I am' and the epistemological cogito 'I think, therefore I am.' Thus, in sound Wordsworth is able to blend the human with the divine, as described by Hartman. In the poem, Wordsworth makes the obvious connection between the roar of Jeremiah's lion and Moses' burning bush, but he also alludes to Coleridge's concept of primary and secondary imagination. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge uses the 'I am that I am' to evoke the primary imagination, which he holds 'to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the

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34 'Power of Sound', ll. 3-4; 17-22.

35 For burial of the patriarchs, see Genesis 13. 18; 23. 2; 35. 27. For Mount Lebanon's cedars see I King 5. 6, 9. 19; Isaiah 10. 34; Psalms 37. 35; Hosea 14. 6-7. Refer also to Lowth, Chapter Two, pp. 77-79.

36 Revelation 5. 11.

infinite I AM.'[37] But as Eric Lindstrom also notes, the 'I am' evokes 'the two-way conversions between "thinging" and "thinking".'[38] The thing—here, the river—belongs to the primary imagination, a 'repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'; the poem and in it, the lion's roar, is secondary, 'an echo […] co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency'.[39] It is in the word 'roar' that Wordsworth makes the connection between Jeremiah and the eternal roar of flowing waters, the power of sound transcending not only sense but also time. It is one of his favourite words to use when describing the sound of water and indeed one that has multiple biblical echoes. The lion's roar in the Book of Jeremiah is an indication of destruction: having chosen Jeremiah before his birth, God sends him to speak to his people, for they have

> committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a home-born *slave*? why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.[40]

Jeremiah's reply to God is of interest here: he claims himself unqualified because of his youth, fulfilling the pattern of the call: 'Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.'[41] His initial response to God is a refusal. Yet like the child Wordsworth, who even as a young boy, proclaims himself chosen, understanding he is, in some way, 'special', Jeremiah's commissioning to prophecy is likewise early. The fearful sound of the lion's roar in 'On the Power of Sound' is fearful because it is at once a calling and a symbol; it is, in itself, a metaphor for prophecy.

The Stanzas continue a lexicon of the river: the singing of 'Happy Milk-maids' is 'a *liquid* concert matchless by nice Art, | A stream as if from one full heart'.[42] Here we witness the chiasmus of the stream of voice—rather than the river producing sound, we witness sound (in this case, human song) creating a stream. Voices, shadows and 'Images of voice' are flung back and reborn, contributing to ebbing imagery that is so recurrent in Wordsworth's poetry. As we

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37 Coleridge, *BL*, I, 304.
38 Eric Lindstrom, 'Prophetic Tautology and the Song of Deborah: Approaching Language in the Wordsworth Circle', *European Romantic Review,* 23 (2012), 415-434. p. 421.
39 Coleridge, *BL*, I, 304.
40 Jeremiah 2. 13-15.
41 Ibid., 1. 6.
42 'Power of Sound', ll. 45-48.

continue through the poem, we find that each stanza presents an image of sound (and voice) in relationship to moving water. In stanza 4, the water is implicit, but the song is clear:

> Unscorned the Peasant's whistling breath, that lightens
> His duteous toil of furrowing the green earth.
> For the tired Slave, Song lifts the languid oar,
> And bids it aptly fall, with chime
> That beautifies the fairest shore,
> And mitigates the harshest clime.[43]

Here, we are presented with the song of the peasant or the slave as that which 'lightens | His duteous toil'. Both the reader and the peasant (or slave) are transposed from the field of work to an activity of leisure through the stream of sound a melody produces (the peasant lightens his work by whistling; the song of the slave eases his rowing), making the power of sound transformative. Andrew Marvell also describes a similar phenomenon in 'Bermudas', where a lonely group of rowers on the ocean sing themselves to shore:

> Thus sung they, in the English boat,
> An holy and a cheerful note;
> And all the way, to guide their chime,
> With falling oars they kept the time.[44]

Their 'holy' and 'cheerful' note is a song of praise and thanks to the one who 'makes the hollow seas, that roar, | Proclaim the ambergris on shore', turning toil into leisure.[45] Wordsworth, continuing in the same stanza, presents a prisoner, who reaches into the source, the fountain, the 'well-spring' of his soul in order to pacify his griefs:

> Nor friendless He, the Prisoner of the Mine,
> Who from the well-spring of his own clear breast
> Can draw, and sing his griefs to rest.[46]

Like Wordsworth in 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', we are presented with a man who relies on the fluvial music to relieve him of his grief. Yet unlike Wordsworth, the prisoner resembles the child in the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', capable of relying on the voice of Nature to pacify him even in the darkest of times. The 'Prisoner of the Mine' is an image that marries both the metaphorical and the local: the Lake District at the time of Wordsworth would have

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43 'Power of Sound', ll. 34; 51-56.
44 Andrew Marvell, 'Bermudas' *The Poems of Andrew Marvell* ed. by Nigel Smith (London: Longman, Pearson Education Ltd. 2003), pp. 54-58, ll. 37-40.
45 'Bermudas', ll. 27-8.
46 'Power of Sound', ll. 62-4.

been full of working mines, and the poet was not an opponent of them; in fact he embraced them as part of the local culture. Gill adds that 'Wordsworth [was] not objecting to non-pastoral industry: the Lake District had for centuries been busy with dirty and dangerous trade from slate stone quarrying, charcoal burning, mining, and smelting. It was part of the Lake District Wordsworth had grown up with.'[47] In *Guide to the Lakes*, Wordsworth presents a guide that at once appreciates the region but also warns the readers that the Lake District is already, in some ways, a landscape of the living past. Further, Wordsworth links Lakeland identity to the relation of man with his duty, and in the case of 'On the Power of Sound', has the miner performing the same action—that of digging—literally and figuratively to unite his identities, individual and social. It is an episode reminiscent of Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' composed in 1804, where addressing Duty as the 'Stern Daughter of the Voice of God' he asks her to grant him 'the spirit of self-sacrifice' to fulfil his duty (and thereby identity) as a prophet and poet.[48]

The next stanza in 'On the Power of Sound' moves immediately from imprisonment to civic identity, drawing a thread from the man who performs his duty in the mine, and that which brings about the 'voice of freedom'. Alluding to Milton, 'in Lydian airs',[49] Wordsworth has in mind not only the mazes in 'L'Allegro' but also an indication of the river's course; thereby we are still in the language of the river. Wordsworth directly correlates the musical movement with the movement of water:

> Point not these mysteries to an Art
> Lodged above the starry pole;
> Pure modulations flowing from the heart
> Of divine Love, where Wisdom, Beauty, Truth
> With Order dwell, in endless youth?[50]

Modulations, musical passages moving from one key to another, are 'flowing' in this passage, referring to the 'dull idiot' who cannot be but unchanged by music, but also to the deeper recesses of human existence – those aspects where the divine intermingles with the human.

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47 Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth and the River Duddon', *Essays in Criticism*, 57 (2007), 22-40 (p. 35). Indeed, even the Cumbria tourism website (http://www.visitcumbria.com/mining.htm) cites evidence of mining in the lakes as early as the twelfth century [accessed 18 September 2014].

48 'Ode to Duty', *Poems in Two Volumes*, pp. 104-110, ll. 1; 62.

49 From Milton's 'L'Allegro': 'Lap me in soft Lydian airs, | Married to immortal verse,' *The Poems of John Milton*. ed. John Carey and Alistair Fowler (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1968), p.139, ll. 136-37.

50 'Power of Sound', ll. 108-12.

Love, Wisdom, Beauty, Truth and Order are united in the harmony of the human heart, embodying the external river of 'primary imagination'. We are at every point reminded of the external playing on the subjective self.

The modulations of stanza 7 are indicative of the musical allusions punctuating the final stanzas of the poem. Stanza 9 begins with a reference to King Amphion, famous for constructing the walls of the city Thebes. Amphion married the daughter of a Lydian King, making Wordsworth's lines a further subtle allusion to Milton's 'Lydian airs'. Amphion, a great singer and musician, was the twin brother of Zethus – a hunter and a herdsman 'with a great interest in cattle breeding'. What is interesting about this allusion is that David, psalmist and king, was a unification of both twins—herdsman and musician, and the pastoral image of the shepherd. Wordsworth goes on to make further mythological references, mainly Greek: Arion was the citharist who swims with dolphins and makes music; and Pan was the faun-like god of Nature in Greek Mythology. The reference to 'Maenalian pines' is from Virgil's *Eclogues*:

> Ever hath Maenalus his murmuring groves
> and whispering pines, and ever hears the songs
> of love-lorn shepherds, and of Pan, who first
> brooked not the tuneful reed should idle lie.
> "Begin, my flute, with me Maenalian lays."[51]

From 'the pipe of Pan' to 'fauns and Satyrs', the importance of these allusions is fairly obvious: Wordsworth is merely asserting his position in a classical canon that, as he points out, also celebrates the 'life' to which the ear belongs. But he is also using these myths to assert his claim of the power of sound on the mind, and in particular, 'how the power of the mind's response to music becomes a means to conquer time, space and death.'[52] The earthly voices and sounds he hears, though of a prophetic strain, do not belong solely to the Christian tradition of death by burial, but place him in an aural and ancient pagan mythology. At the same time, however, he also distinguishes the earthly sounds, which are if not portentous, at least inauspicious, from the

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51 P. Vergilius Maro, *Eclogues*, VIII. Damon: 8-12, ed. by J. B. Greenough (Boston. Ginn & Co. 1895). http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0690.phi001.perseus-eng1:8 [accessed 12 September 2014].

52 Karen B. Mann, 'George Eliot and Wordsworth: The Power of Sound and the Power of Mind', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900,* 20 (1980), 675-94 (p. 682). Mann gives a thorough reading of these stanzas 'On the Power of Sound', focusing on the connection between sound and its affects on the mind according to Wordsworth, and later in the paper, George Eliot.

joyous sounds of 'cymbals' and 'cadences' of the mythological ones. Thus his lifelong notion of prophecy—from childhood belief to a fulfilment of his calling—though not limited to a Scriptural understanding of it, comes in the form of the 'Vast […] compass and swell of notes' that might 'tempt an angel to descend.' He is asking for a universal order:

> Ye wandering Utterances, has the earth no scheme,
> No scale of moral music—to unite
> Powers that survive but in the faintest dream
> Of memory?[53]

The theme of a morality of sound and music is not novel to Wordsworth. Dryden, in 'A Song for St Cecilia's Day, 1687' begins and later repeats: 'From harmony, from heavenly harmony, | This universal frame began'.[54] And again, in his Ode in honour of the patron saint of music, 'Alexander's Feast', he traces 'the song [that] began from Jove' to 'divine Cecilia' who with her heavenly voice, 'drew an angel down', emphasising music's power to evoke celestial beings.[55] The power of music to move human (and superhuman) emotions therefore has moral properties; but it is also the power of imagination that in turn allows said moral properties to respond, as in the Miltonic and Classical traditions.[56]

Thinking of the Imagination as a 'power' in the language of the the river aids us in our understanding of Wordsworth's understanding of both concepts. Karen B. Mann notes the juxtaposition of rivers to sound in relation to the imagination: 'And while the image of the river in the above passage takes us far in our understanding of the imagination as a power, it is not so revelatory of the nature of that power as is the equally if not more predominant metaphor of sound in the works of both Wordsworth and George Eliot'.[57] She notices both metaphors—that of sound and that of river—but fails to see the river and the sound (roar or murmur) as one

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53 'Power of Sound', ll. 169-72. Note that these lines are from the 1836 and 1839 revisions by Wordsworth, rather than the 1835 reading text.

54 Dryden, John. *The Poems of John Dryden* ed. by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, 5 vols (London: Longman, Pearson Education, 1995-2005), III, 185, ll. 1-2. Duncan Wu observes Wordsworth would have read 'Alexander's Feast' by August 1786, and 'St Cecilia's Day' by September 1798. See Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading*, I, p. 49.

55 *The Poems of John Dryden,* V, 9-18, ll. 25-27; 161-70.

56 The power of music on celestial beings is also a recurrent theme in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In Book IV, the music of the spheres becomes the singing of the angels, and even the fallen angels of Book II sing a 'partial' song that has harmony to 'suspend' hell. The account of creation in Book VII is accompanied by angelic music. In Classical tradition, Orpheus is the musician-prophet whose divine music charms all living things.

57 Mann, p. 679.

unified whole, whereas the two were often inseparable for Wordsworth. Thus, when he is lying in John's grove with Dorothy, it is an act of listening they partake in – it becomes an act that occupies time, due to the temporal quality of sound, and space, due to the physical movement of the waterfall nearby. It is a prodigious moment that is so firmly rooted in the present it allows the mind the freedom to roam in the past, and blurs the boundaries between self and world for both siblings. It is a moment of imagination, oscillating between internally driven and externally inspired; like the moment of prophetic calling that shifts from hearing to being heard. It is through the vocality of the rivers and fountains that Wordsworth is able to engage his Imaginative powers and hear the call or reaffirmation of the call. The image of the river provides an understanding of Imagination as a power, while the metaphor of sound reveals one aspect of the nature of Imagination's power. The transition from river to sound that Mann describes forgoes the fact that rivers and fountains are in fact vocal in Wordsworth. They blend into one metaphor because it reveals the true nature of Imagination, that is, as something transcendent that moves through all things as a force. The speaking river is thus an indication of how Imagination can move man, transcend mankind, and connect the realm of heaven with the everyday.[58]

In stanza 12 of 'On the Power of Sound', the realm of heaven is filled with 'innumerable voices' in 'everlasting harmony'. And yet the voices are united together not in joy but in a wintry dirge, conducted by the Ocean, that 'is a mighty harmonist'. Wordsworth is presenting an untangled duality between the mind of man and the heavens above, 'whose aspect makes our minds as still | As they themselves *appear* to be.' Yet this is only an appearance, we are shown, for the heavens are anything but still: the Universal air waves 'to and fro'; the sounds give semblance of a storm. The stillness is superficial, and perhaps *seen*, but it is not a stillness of the ear.[59] The sort of bodily stillness and peace of mind Wordsworth sought out through his interest in monasticism is not to be found in stanzas 'On the Power of Sound'.[60] Rather, they

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58 In *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge refers to Imagination as 'a synthetic and magical power', an energy that transforms and binds all things. II, 16.

59 'Power of Sound', ll. 184; 187; 181-2; 189.

60 See Simon Jarvis, *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

begin forcefully and gush with increasing fury towards their apocalyptic finale, beckoning the instruments to 'Break forth into thanksgiving […] Unite, to magnify the Ever-living'. But the unified sound that the instruments produce is not a natural one; it is the sound of 'inarticulate notes with the voice of words!' which 'by flaming Seraphim | Transmits to Heaven!'[61] All the sounds intertwine producing a strange, harmonious cacophony, from the 'lowing mean' and 'forest hum of noon' to the voice of the 'lone eagle' and 'hungry barkings' which then are '*poured* | Into the ear of God, their Lord!'[62]. Sound then, begins as a 'Spirit aerial' that 'informs the cell of hearing', its source is in the intricate labyrinths of the ear and flows—*pours*—outwards until it reaches the all-encompassing 'ear' of God. As Batten alludes to in her book: 'In her [Nature's] gloomy breaches, Wordsworth found a model for the vocation of the poet, one that exploits its melancholy by following rivers backward and downward to their silent sources as well as forward and upward to the mouth into which rivers and poems flow.'[63] The poem's semantic register not only engages with a flowing vocabulary but also takes the shape of the river itself, flowing from source to mouth, ebbing, doubling back on itself. James Chandler indicates the latter, when he points out the allusions to his previous works in an act of self-recapitulation.[64]

The final stanza moves from the 'ear' of the Lord to his mouth, as the first line recapitulates not Wordsworth's own poetry, but the book of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light […]'[65] In echoing Genesis, the opening line 'A Voice to Light gave Being' cannot but allude to the Gospel according to St John, which so boldly begins: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'[66] The emphasis on the Word strengthens the claim for Wordsworth's prophetic call because his poetic medium

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61 'Power of Sound', ll. 193-95; 196; 203-4.
62 Ibid., ll. 207-8.
63 Batten, p. 149.
64 For an account of which poems he is echoing, see James Chandler, 'The "Power of Sound" and the Great Scheme of Things: Wordsworth Listens to Wordsworth' in *Romantic Circles*, (Praxis Series, 2008). http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/soundings/chandler/chandler.html [accessed 13 September 2014].
65 Genesis 1. 1-3.
66 John 1. 1.

is the words themselves. In the midst of this apocalyptic closing, blasting trumpets and blaring sounds, he addresses Silence, asking her 'are Man's noisy years | No more than moments of thy life? | Is Harmony […] Thy destined bond-slave?' The reply comes thundering in with a categorical 'No!' Harmony's stay, he argues, 'Is in the WORD that shall not pass away.'[67] And that word is the same as in John, eternal and everlasting as the resonant 'I am.' The power of sound is the power of the voice – a human voice, articulate and heard, that is embedded into the landscape itself, and only those with the Grace of God and harmonious faculties of Imagination are equipped to hear it, and further, to respond to it.

What, then, is gained by evoking the sound of the river in this poem? What is the connection of sound to prophecy – and how can we be sure that Wordsworth intended to connect them? When Wordsworth evokes the power of sound he uses a lexicon of the river, and by doing so engages with a language that insists on the fact that the river has a voice, or indeed, that the voice is one of flowing water. This emphasis on streams in particular allows for the argument that the power of sound is also the power of the river. The language he uses, and the way he uses it, is indicative of the fact that the sound of flowing water has a hold that is unified and greater than the sum of all its parts; it is the prophetic voice which speaks in repetition and evocation, but is not necessarily one that foresees the future. Wordsworth's self-identification as a prophet is focused on the fact that he felt himself being called to his vocation as a poet, and that audible call came from the voice of the river. Not Nature in her totality, but rather a specific element of the landscape. Evocations of the river are often of biblical or prophetic nature for Wordsworth, consciously or not they are woven together through a rhetoric that borrows directly from the Hebrew Scriptures at times when it is most prophetic and often, most apocalyptic. Hence Engell notes that

> Of all the passages in Wordsworth, Blake most admired the one in *The Prelude* where Wordsworth's imagination, in a flash of perception, sees the woods and waters of Simplon pass in the Alps as the types and symbols of eternity and the apocalypse. Nature is one step in bringing man closer to God and to the apocalypse; Christ—who is man, nature, spirit and God as one—is the highest step.'[68]

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67 'Power of Sound', ll. 217-22; 224.

68 James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 250. Engell does not specify a reference for Blake's comment, but Henry

This apocalyptic vision anticipates Coleridge's idea of a Primary Imagination.

In 'Tintern Abbey', ideas of the Imagination are outlined through an invocation of Wordsworth's sister, which has been a source for criticism. He makes the visit to the Wye again in 1798, emphasising localising detail and composing the poem, he claims, on the spot, writing it down in the form we know it today once the pair reached Bristol.[69] Yet there are plenty of moments—visionary or not—which he shares with Dorothy that she documents and he does not. The episode in John's Grove, for example, is documented only in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal* for 29 April 1802, and it beautifully illustrates the collocation of the vocal sounds of waters with an epitaphic consciousness:

> Afterwards William lay, and I lay, in the trench under the fence—he with his eyes shut and listening to the waterfall and the birds. There was no one waterfall above another—it was a sound of waters in the air—the voice of the air. William heard me breathing & rustling now & then, but we both lay still, and unseen by one another; he thought that it would be as sweet thus to lie so in the grave, to hear the *peaceful* sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near.[70]

'Our dear friends' in this case is slightly ambiguous: it can refer to the people—William, John—but also the elements of Nature that both brother and sister cherished so much. Dorothy often refers to the animals and the trees as her 'friends' and indeed, in this case, she includes the waterfall. While Dorothy engages in a one-way exchange with the river in this example, Wordsworth, as Batten suggests, unites with the river's voice, making it his own:

> Subsequently Wordsworth will make Nature's—the river Derwent's—melodic powers his own by travelling with it to his "sweet birthplace," by bathing in its depths, and by participating in its metamorphosis into the powerful god of a thundershower. The same properties of speech that Nature possesses and bestows in images of water expressive of both voice and vocation enable Dorothy, *with* "Nature's self," in book 10 to "preserve" her brother as a poet through ministries that are both severe (hers is a voice of

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Crabb Robinson's letters are a useful source of guidance on Blake's reception of Wordsworth. Hazard Adams, in *Blake's Margins: An Interpretive Study of the Annotations* (London: McFarland and Co. Inc., 2009), notes that Blake was very fond of Wordsworth's poems and responded with enthusiasm to a suggested meeting with the poet, but it never came to pass. Crabb Robinson lent Blake his copy of Wordsworth's 1815 poems, which Blake annotated. In a letter to Dorothy, Crabb Robinson wrote that Blake said of Dante and Wordsworth, 'in spite of their Atheism, [they] were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, all real poetry is the work of the Holy Ghost, and Wordsworth's poems (a large portion, at least) are the work of Divine inspiration. Unhappily he is left by God to his own illusions, and then the Atheism is apparent' (p.162). For further detailed work on Blake's interaction with *Lyrical Ballads*, see Heather Glen, *Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's "Songs" and Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads"*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

69 Moorman, *Early Years*, p. 402.

70 *JDW*, I, 139-41.

> "admonition") and restorative, for to admonish is also, of course, to give back memory.[71]

It is tempting to hear Dorothy's voice blended with the voice of the river and by extension, of Nature. However, it is not her voice that Wordsworth is hearing, nor is she echoing the river. Her presence is always noted by him, but the purpose of it is altogether of a different nature. A keen observer of Nature and her brother's states in it, she knows her place much better than his readers do. Dorothy's journals are full of such incidences – she is fully aware of his presence, sees what he sees and hears what he hears, but her interaction with Nature is her own: 'we both lay still, & unseen by one another'.[72] Lucy Newlyn comments on this passage in her recent book *Wordsworth and Dorothy: All in Each Other*, saying that the space of the nook 'has the properties of a nest, a bed, and a grave. Dorothy is aware of how deeply absorbed [William] is in the sounds going on around them.'[73] There is a solitude in their company, but also a unity within that solitude. It is obvious she is aware of her place, and thus her experience of nature, and of the river's voice, is different to her brother's; whereas Wordsworth reads her voice in unison with that of Nature's, she does not read into the voice of the river at all. Her presence, and by extension, her notebooks, are a depository for Wordsworth's own memories, as here in 'Tintern Abbey':

> when thy mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
> Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
> For all sweet sounds and harmonies[74]

But she is also presented as his equal—when he can no longer hear her voice, he beckons her not to forget 'That on the banks of this delightful stream | We stood together'.[75] Batten continues with a play on words by elaborating on the extraction of tempus from time and tempor, as well as compound texting, tempering, tempests and other composition with regards to Wordsworth's poetry. She focuses on tempering, putting together, rather than tempo; and says composition originates in tempests because they transport into past mental and emotional

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71 Batten, p. 172.
72 *JDW*, I, 92. April 29, 1802.
73 Newlyn, *All in Each Other*, p. 171.
74 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 140-43.
75 Ibid., ll. 151-52.

states. She asks: 'How does Nature convey to the poet those past states?' Through breath comes the answer: 'Among the fretful dwellings of mankind | A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm | Which nature breathes among the fields and groves.'[76] The element of air—the openings and blockings of air currents—associated with voice has now been integrated into that of the fluid (and yet cadenced) river. That breath was Abrams's 'corresponding breeze' so called in his 1957 essay bearing the same name, originating from the Wordsworthian passage in the Glad Preamble in which the poet distinguishes between the 'sweet breath of Heaven' and the 'corresponding mild creative breeze'. The breath that escapes the body in speech is the very breath that God infused into Adam's nostrils, and the same 'spiritus' wind that descends upon the disciples at Pentecost. It is also the voice of that God grants to the prophets, the prophetic call:[77] 'Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'[78] Thus when we recall Wordsworth being a 'prophet to the open fields' he is not so different from the biblical prophets, as Balfour and others have suggested. Hebrew prophets were oftentimes called 'voices in wilderness', though without audience their prophecy was seen as futile, incomplete. Balfour argues that this is the case with Wordsworth's proclamation of 'To the open fields I told | A prophecy', saying that 'the prophetic word is typically nothing, or at best "imperfect," without an audience to be forewarned, threatened, or consoled. Wordsworth records here a scene of prophetic calling, even if his own voice is the source and echo of that calling.'[79] However I disagree with this reading – it is not Wordsworth's own voice that is the source of the calling: it is the river's. Balfour states, recalling Maurice Blanchot, that 'the prophetic encounter is a dialogue' but that 'Wordsworth is a witness only to his own voice – a single voice, initially […] [that] is soon doubled by "the mind's internal echo."'[80] The notion that the poetry of the Romantics is 'thoroughly ventilated' is part of the

76 *Prelude*, I. 284-86.
77 See Abrams, 'Correspondent Breeze'; *Prelude* I. 41-43.
78 Ezekiel 37. 9.
79 *Prelude*, I. 59-60; Balfour, p. 21.
80 Balfour, p. 20.

well established critical canon.[81] In reading wind and divine breath as a metaphor for change and a revival of poetic inspiration, which Wordsworth equates with inspiration of biblical prophets, it becomes apparent that the poet felt himself inspired, or called to, his work and his ability to engage with the Imagination in a way that his sister was not.

Wordsworth's ideas about the imagination and its force are nowhere as apparent as in his 'Lines Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey'. This particular river poem begins with a recognition of sense:

> Five years have past; five summers, with the length
> Of five long winters! and again I hear
> These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
> With a soft inland murmur.[82]

The opening lines are thus not of the Abbey (which, as has been pointed out, never makes it into the poem) nor of the area, but about hearing. The poem is a poem of sight: Wordsworth writes it upon visiting the *sight* on the banks of the Wye: 'Once again I see | these hedge-rows, […]' beauteous forms that 'have not been to me, | As a landscape to a blind man's eye'.[83] Yet in times of darkness and 'joyless daylight', he turns not to sight as consolation, but to the river:

> How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
> O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
> How often has my spirit turned to thee![84]

As vision is restored to him, he claims to bound over the mountains along 'deep rivers, and the lonely streams' 'like a roe'.[85] In maturity, his 'abundant recompense' (in contrast to the loss he feels in 'Intimations Ode') is that of having learned to look on nature and hear oftentimes, 'the still, sad music of humanity' and the 'still small voice' of God within it.[86] It is of particular interest to see what Wordsworth is doing with the senses here: in 'Tintern Abbey', he is *looking* on nature, be it human or landscape, yet *hears* humanity. This strange synaesthesia opens an

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81 The grounding work on this idea was M.H. Abrams' essay 'The Corresponding Breeze'. See Introduction, p. 6-7.

82 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 1-4.

83 Ibid., ll. 15-16; 24-25.

84 Ibid., ll. 56-7.

85 The phrase 'like a roe' is an echo of the Song of Solomon, 2. 9: 'My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth and the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.'. Wordsworth's roe, however, does not run towards what he loves but away from it.

86 'Tintern Abbey', l. 70; 68; 92.

empirical chasm between what is being experienced, and what *is*, thereby encouraging a different kind of listening. Kneale points out that the voice of nature, 'may once have been heard with the bodily ear but can now best be apprehended through imagination – that is, by listening through the ear and not with it.'[87]

I wish to take this a step further and argue that a sort of two-pronged listening must occur in order for one to hear the prophetic call. If we follow through Wordsworth's synaesthesia, we find that he asserts himself a lover 'of all the mighty world | Of eye and ear,—both what they half create, | And what perceive'.[88] Although we are presented with an ambiguous syntax—do the verbs 'create' and 'perceive' follow respectively from their subjects, eye and ear, or are both responsible for the inward and outward processes of the mind?—it is through both creation and perception that the poet comes into understanding.[89] The active and passive aspects are well represented in the trope of the child: 'Speaking of the way in which an infant begins to experience the world, he relates how the young mind coalesces feeling, impressions, and objects into larger wholes until, recreating the "*active* universe" within itself, the growing mind becomes "an *agent* of the one great mind."'[90] If we continue following this trope, we are told that 'in nature' Wordsworth recognised 'the nurse, | The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul | Of all my moral being.'[91] A year after composing 'Tintern Abbey' in July 1798, Wordsworth began work on what is now the 'Was it for this' passage, or *The Two-Part Prelude* of 1799. 'Was it for this', he asks, 'That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved | To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song'?[92] The figure of the nurse—an important one to the boy—is telling. If we assume that Wordsworth is always playing with the fullest potential of meaning of every word, and the proximity of composition of these two passages, we may also assume that

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87 Kneale, 'Images of Language', p. 354. Kneale is echoing Blake here, who says 'I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more that I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it' ('From a Vision of the Last Judgment, For the year 1810', *William Blake*, pp. 565-6).

88 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 106-08.

89 For a discussion on the merits of the ear over the eye in Wordsworth's poetry, see Chapter Three, pp. 102-102.

90 Engell, p. 267, *Prelude* II. 266; 272.

91 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 110-12.

92 *The Prelude, 1798-99 by William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Parrish (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1977), ll. 2-3. Hereafter *1799 Prelude*.

the nurse of 'Tintern Abbey' and the nurse of *The Prelude* are one and the same. If that is indeed the case, it is Nature who lulls the young boy to sleep, and her masculine counterpart, Derwent, who 'blends his murmurs' with hers. Nature is more than just perception; for Wordsworth it is the 'half-creation' that a prophetic calling demands; an outward act of interpretation. Kneale points out a tension between the two when he says that 'in book 1 the "nurse's song" appears to have a linguistic and temporal priority over the river's murmurs; the poet says that the river's song blends with the nurse's, and not hers with his. […] We begin with a river's murmurs that first blend with and then usurp the human voice'.[93] This theory is not surprising if we think of Nature as the nurse; a river is indeed only blended with her; a part of her. But the crucial element is not their harmony but rather, the distinction between them:

> Was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
> To blend his murmurs with my Nurse's song,
> And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
> And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
> That flowed along my dreams?[94]

Nature has a song, but the river sends a voice. This is where the two diverge: though both offer guidance and serve as a moral force in the poet's life, only one has the power of a calling.[95] Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but had to come from elsewhere. In the Old Testament, that origin came from God. Geoffrey Hartman points out, crucially, that 'a prophet is to us, and perhaps to himself, mainly a *voice*—as God himself seems to him primarily a voice'.[96] He is the Lord of the first book of Kings, who is not in the mountains, or wind, or earthquake or fire, but in 'a still, small voice'.[97] Thus the voice he hears and the voice he speaks with are a continuity of one another.

The Torah and the Old Testament differ in that, while being almost the same text, they reach a different audience, one believing it has been fulfilled and the other still awaiting a

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93 Kneale, 'Images of Language', p 353.
94 *1799 Prelude*, ll. 1-6.
95 Indeed, Nature does speak, but only once in the 1850 version of *The Prelude,* in Book VI. 430-35: '"Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!" […] "Your impious work forbear: perish what may, | Let this one temple last, be this one spot | Of early devoted to eternity!"' But her tone is imperative and commanding, not the prophetic voice that demands interpretation. For further commentary on Nature's voice see Douglas Kneale in *Monumental Writing*, pp. 76-77.
96 Geoffrey Hartman, *Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 164.
97 I Kings, 19.11-12.

resolution of the prophecies. Prophecy in the Torah and consequently in the ancient Jewish culture serves a corrective function – to remind people they are not following the law. In the Old Testament and thereby Judeo-Christian tradition, prophecy is seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit to receive and convey the message of God. In neither case does it necessitate a prediction about the future, nor need it come in a dream, and in both cases it is a revelation. Prophetic dreams do occur in the Bible, however, the most outstanding examples being Jacob's ladder and Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream in Egypt. It is the former that concerns us, in Genesis 41:

> AND it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.[98]

The river is not only a bearer of plenitude and famine, life and death, but also itself a bringer of prophets. Just as the dream of the river brought Joseph into the Pharaoh's attention and awoke his prophetic calling, so the river literally bears Moses, the most enlightened of the prophets and the only one to hear God's voice speaking direct, to the house of Egypt.[99] The importance of Moses' arrival is twofold: one, it reaffirms the purifying function of the river as an absorber of all that is cast away, and two, it is the bearer of the one who shall be God's mouthpiece on earth.

It is not always in the biblical stories that prophets come to their calling through nature or rivers in particular. As I have indicated earlier, the structure of the prophetic call relies on a confrontation, a dialogue. Wordsworth's innate understanding of nature as something that must be experienced in an oscillatory fashion, of incoming perceptions and projected creativity, allows him a sort of prophetic 'interaction' with his calling that manifests itself in the most vocal of nature's elements, rivers. Their purifying functions are made particularly explicit in the Old Testament, as with the Brook of Kidron. Both vocal and cleansing, rivers and streams are forces of moral (and occasionally physical) guidance, as in the crossing of the Alps passage in Book VI of *The Prelude*: first 'Five rivers broad and vast, make rich amends, | And reconcil'd us to

98 Genesis 41. 1-4.
99 Exodus 2. 1-10.

realities' and only once they left the river's path, did they lose their way:

> Erelong we follow'd,
> Descending by the beaten road that led
> Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off.
> […]
> A Peasant met us, and from him we learn'd
> That to the place which had perplex'd us first
> We must descend, and there should find the road
> Which in the stony channel of the Stream
> Lay a few steps, and then along its Banks,
> And, further, that thenceforward all our course
> Was downwards, with the current of that Stream.[100]

Listening to the the river provides Wordsworth not only with a physically guiding force, as it is here, but also a moral one on with spiritual grounds, as we see later in the passage. What he called the 'workings of one mind, the features | Of the same face […] Characters of the Great Apocalyps' were in fact the sublime aspects of nature: 'woods decaying', 'stationary blasts of waterfalls', 'winds thwarting winds', 'torrents shooting from the clear blue sky', 'black drizzling crags'.[101] Further, they were part of the same face but also shared another personifying feature: 'as if a voice were in them'. But as the earlier Norton editors of *The Prelude* note, the apocalyptic event to which he was referring was a combination of the elements water and stone, following the geological belief of the Great Flood engraving features in the landscape.[102] Thus the power of water, and its 'sick sight | and giddy prospect of the raving stream' were for Wordsworth a form of revelation.

Some of the most revelatory of passages on the sounds of rivers occur before the completion of *The Prelude*, when Wordsworth was working on the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality'. The Ode shares with 'On the Power of Sound' another intertextuality – the theme of silence:

> But for those first affections
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish us, and make

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100 *Prelude*, VI. 460-61; 501-19.
101 Ibid., VI. 568-70; 556-63.
102 See my discussion of Burnet, Chapter Three, pp. 130-32.

Our noisy years seem monuments in the being
Of the eternal Silence[103]

The 'fountain light' recalls Psalm 36: 'For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light we shall see light'.[104] The affections, casting light and understanding upon all, make sense of man's noisy years.' Yet when faced with eternity, the 'shadowy recollections' cast light on the futility of being which only 'seems' like monuments. The later stanzas 'On the Power of Sound' return to that same aural image of life represented as 'noisy years':

O Silence! are Man's noisy years
No more than moments of thy life?
Is Harmony, blest Queen of smiles and tears,
With her smooth tones and discords just,
Tempered into rapturous strife,
Thy destined Bond-slave? No! though earth be dust
And vanish, though the heavens dissolve, her stay
Is in the WORD, that shall not pass away.[105]

There is another reading of this which that differs from the one I offer above. The 'her' that is being referred to in the penultimate line has to date been read as 'Harmony', but it could be the case that Wordsworth has switched from second person address to Silence and now refers to 'her' in the third, implying that Silence's stay 'Is in the WORD, that shall not pass away'. This creates a paradoxical duality that produces a different outcome and understanding of the power of sound than the previous reading. Whereas in the first reading the harmony that stays in the Word is indicative of the plurality of all that the Word (God himself) encompasses, silence embodies all sound: 'Man's noisy years' are 'monuments' within her; thus expanding our understanding of the 'WORD' as something at once silent and audible, a sort of music of the spheres, a complex universal harmony audible only with the 'inner ear'.

Monuments, being static and silent objects, also speak in the 1850 edition of *The Prelude*: 'But images of danger and distress | Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms […] Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks | Immutable, and everflowing streams, | Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.'[106] It is in later life that Wordsworth sought to

103 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', *Poems, in Two Volumes*, ll. 151-58.
104 Psalm 36. 9.
105 'Power of Sound', ll. 217-24.
106 *The Fourteen Book Prelude*, ed. by W.J.B. Owen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), VIII. 164-72.

make the streams, again vocal, part of a landscape that partook in the prophetic process. Interestingly, the part of the 1805 *Prelude* that was removed and replaced by these words was The Matron's Tale, written at the same time as 'Michael', about a shepherd and his son who, in looking for a lost sheep, becomes stranded 'upon a plot of grass | An Island in the Brook'.[107] Reminding us of the Parable of the Lost Sheep in which the shepherd 'rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.'[108] Likewise, the young boy, upon seeing the sheep 'leapt upon the Island with proud heart | And with a Prophet's joy'.[109] The parable ends here, but Wordsworth's elaborates the tale, adding a further element of seeking that which has been lost. He describes the young boy stranded in fear by the surrounding 'tempestuous torrent' until his father 'seemed to hear a voice', 'Along the Steep that overhung the Brook' and rescued the boy from 'the middle of the roaring Stream'.[110] It is followed by a celebration and demonstration of Wordsworth's 'love and knowledge of Latin poetry', thereby leaving his readers with the 'speaking monuments'.[111] The following passage, however, draws the reader into an intimate knowledge not just of Latin poetry but of Italian rivers: the 'delicate Galesus', famed for its sheep-grazed banks, and the 'rich Clitumnus', celebrated for 'the clearness of it water and the whiteness of the cattle.'[112] The pastoral scene soothes the poet during his melancholy moods in Goslar, moods which also darken the Ode.

'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' marks in Wordsworth an outward expression of the inner call, a call that he wishes to sustain for as long as possible: 'And O ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves, | Forbode not any severing of our loves!'[113] He professes a love for the 'Brooks which down their channels fret' as 'the Clouds that gather round the setting sun | Do take a sober colouring from an eye', the realm of the sky providing a darker mirroring of 'man's mortality'.[114] It is also in this poem that he finally speaks back to the voice that calls him:

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107 *Prelude*, VIII. 270-71.
108 Matthew 18. 13. The parable can be found in Matthew 18. 12-14 and Luke 15. 3-7.
109 *Prelude*, VIII. 279-80.
110 Ibid., VIII. 287; 297; 296; 305.
111 Editorial note, *Norton Prelude*, p. 282.
112 See *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose*, p. 285n. Nicholas Halmi points out the significance of these rivers.
113 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', ll. 190-91.
114 Ibid., ll. 195; 199-200.

> The second verse is surely the inner call by which, in the restored continuum of inner and outer events, he replies to the cataracts. It is followed by a movement like the Psalmist's "Awaken the dawn," when he accepts the fact that the initiative is with him, and indicates his readiness to join "in thought" what others may still feel at heart.[115]

This is the inner response to the outer calling of the prophet, the acceptance of the call that was initially rejected and a fulfilment of one's inner duty through an act of grace. Hartman comments that the 'Immortality Ode' 'approaches the Psalms in sublimity, and also recalls the confessional style of St. Augustine.'[116] This combination of personal confession and recollection, as well as divinely inspired song (keeping in mind David, the main composer of the Psalms, was a musician) was Wordsworth at his most prophetic. The 'Immortality Ode' touches upon subjects that range from the mundane and quotidian, to the transcendent and sublime, perhaps intentionally echoing the Hebrew manner of doing the same in one phrase, and thereby awakening the spiritual qualities of everyday life.

II

In *The Song of the Earth*, Jonathan Bate makes a compelling case for Wordsworth's decision to dedicate a sonnet sequence specifically to the River Duddon, offering further a striking insight to the link between the 1820 volume and the next sequence, *Ecclesiastical Sketches.* He argues that although the Derwent had the stronger personal associations for Wordsworth, being also a much longer and more prominent river in the Lake District, the Duddon carried greater national significance, because it bordered three counties at once:

> If national identity is to be grounded in regional identity, county boundaries, being markers of regional differentiation, are pressure-points. In crossing them one sacrifices a certain racination. […] To stand at a point where one is in three counties at once is to retain one's root while also reaching out to the totality of counties which make up the nation. It is in this very specific sense that Wordsworth's Duddon binds.[117]

And indeed, concerns of the national versus the regional were of utmost importance to Wordsworth. His own move back to the Lake District in late 1799 signified a direct expression of his belief in 'retaining one's root while also reaching out to the totality'. Stephen Gill,

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115 Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, p. 275.
116 Ibid., p. 274.
117 Bate, *Song of the Earth,* p. 224.

however, offers a somewhat different justification for the Duddon's grasp on the poet's imagination, looking not outwards towards the national, but inwards towards the local: 'Local specificity, local pride, loving attention to the unsung and little known are keynotes not just of the sonnet sequence but of the whole volume', he points out.[118] In particular, he specifies that the critics' discomfort with the 'insignificant river' with a 'barbarous name' stemmed 'simply from lack of familiarity with it: Wordsworth was making claims for a region none of them knew.' He goes on to note that, despite the rise of tourism in the Lakes, the Duddon did not find itself in any of the guides, and Wordsworth was desperate to secure his authority as a native of the area.

The real reason for Wordsworth's interest in the Duddon, I believe, is both and neither. Both because the nation and the local are of crucial importance to the place of Wordsworth's poetry, and neither because his association with the river is largely imaginative – he draws on it from memories of childhood fishing trips and of walks with Dorothy and Mary he later recalls in the Fenwick Notes.[119] But more importantly, the Duddon for him is grounded in a purified personal and spiritual landscape: 'pure flow the verse, pure, vigorous, free and bright!' that is infused with religious language and imagery at every turn. It was also meant to be a postscript to Coleridge's grand project *The Brook*. He begins the sonnet sequence with an allusion to the Classical tradition: 'Bandusia, once responsive to the string | Of the Horatian lyre with babbling flow,' and 'Persian fountains' but indicates that it is no longer the prevalent one by suggesting that Bandusia 'once responsive' no longer replies. Breaking from this tradition, he sets out his mission clearly and concisely: 'I seek the birth-place of a native Stream.'[120] He follows from birth-place to childhood in the next sonnet, addressing the 'CHILD of the clouds' he makes an emphasis of being away from 'sordid industry' and turns to another, this time even earlier tradition for reference: the prehistoric.[121] Through his evocation of the 'bison' and 'huge deer' (as the footnote elaborates: 'The deer alluded to is the Leigh, a gigantic species long since

118 Gill, 'Wordsworth and The River Duddon', p 24.
119 *IF*, pp. 98-99.
120 'The River Duddon', *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845*, ed. by Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 56-77. I. 3-4; 5; 9. Hereafter 'River Duddon'. Stanza numbers indicated in Roman numerals.
121 'River Duddon', II. 1-2.

extinct') he is casting away the aforementioned classical references for a quieter past more in tune with the natural world, and perhaps also echoing his own earlier poetry: 'pierced by whizzing shaft of hunter keen' could be alluding to 'Hart-Leap Well'.[122] In the next sonnet, he is much concerned with portrayal, especially with the picturesque: 'how shall I paint thee?' But his verse is not one of paint but one of stone, evoking earlier references to 'speaking monuments' which place his poetry alongside the other speaking monuments of nature.[123] If he does in fact consider himself a prophet and a chosen son, then this statement is an indication of the seriousness of his vocation: by associating his own creation with that of the divine, he places himself on a much higher footing than the average human. Perhaps this is the egotistical sublime, but it is, I would argue, also an act of humility to respond to his calling and speak the words that are infused in him.[124] Interestingly, he is plagued by self-guilt and remorse, for he never writes *The Recluse*, and in the 1850 *Prelude* removes the line 'I was a chosen son' indicating another form of humility.

Having established himself as the locutor, he then recognises the Duddon's role: 'SOLE listener, Duddon!'[125] The exchange between him and the river has now become a genuine dialogue, both speak and listen in turn. But by making the river listen he is in fact prophesying to an auditor, verifying his prophecy as having an audience that can in fact respond, as he stated in *The Prelude*: 'To the open fields I told / A prophecy'. By Sonnet VIII, the sequence returns to the primeval. He questions 'what aspect' first brought (primitive) man away from his tribe to this dell, and who was the first to drink here. He raises a darker tone: 'Was the Intruder nurs'd | In hideous usages and rights accurs'd | That thinned the living and disturbed the dead?' But 'no voice replies' to his enquiry. The river does not keep a record of the ignorance it witnesses, as its function 'was to heal and to restore | To sooth and cleanse, not madden and pollute!', reminiscent perhaps of the biblical cleansing brook of Kidron.[126] But the Duddon, like most rivers in Wordsworth's poetry, has also another function, which he elucidates later on: 'The

122 Ibid., II. 10-11; 14.
123 Ibid., III. 1, 3.
124 See Chapter Three, p. 139.
125 'River Duddon', V. 1.
126 'River Duddon', VIII. 6-8; 9; 13-14.

Bard who walks with Duddon for his guide, | Shall find such toys of Fancy thickly set' and alludes to the stream that guided him in Book VI of *The Prelude*.[127] In the next stanza, he opens his prospects from the sublimity of the Alps to that of the wild Americas: 'Dread swell of sound! Loud as the gusts that lash | The matted forests of Ontario's shore'.[128] In making the transatlantic connection, he also evokes the anger of the Duddon, the inherent wrath that Nature is capable of, evocative of the wrath of the elements in the Old Testament. He returns to the 'American Tradition' in sonnet XVI, evoking the Oroonoko and the Great Flood:[129]

> *There* would the Indian answer with a smile
> Aim'd at the White Man's ignorance, the while
> Of the Great Waters telling, how they rose,
> Covered the plains and wandered where they chose,
> Mounted through every intricate defile
> Triumphant.[130]

Finally we see here an attempt at the marriage of the earlier prehistoric tradition with the biblical one that percolates through the poem. In the next sonnets, 'Return' and 'Seathwaite Chapel', he moves his way through the Druids and the 'Sacred religion'.[131] The sequence continues with numerous references to the voice of the Duddon: 'And seldom hath ear listen'd to a tune | More lulling than busy hum of Noon | Swoln by that voice'; 'WHENCE that low voice?'; as he portrays the river's absolving nature yet again: 'the pastoral River will forgive | Such wrong'.[132]

However it is not until the final poem of the sequence that he moves from the ear to the eye in proclaiming a prophetic vision. He addresses the Duddon as 'my partner and my guide', at once signifying an equal and a superior, in conversation with him but also the external source of his poetic and prophetic calling beyond him. Having reached the mouth of the Duddon he casts his eye backwards and sees 'what was, and is, and will abide' – in a vision that transcends

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127 Ibid., XII. 11-12.
128 Ibid., XIII. 7-8.
129 'Oroonoko' is a book by Aphra Behn about a royal slave in Surinam; 'Orinoko' is one of the longest rivers in South America. Wordsworth uses 'Oroonoko' but means the latter, as he would have read Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of travels to the equinoctial regions of the New Continent*, translated to English by Helen Maria Williams.
130 'River Duddon', XVI. 4-9.
131 Ibid., XVIII. 13.
132 Ibid., XIX. 10-12; XXI. 1; XXIII. 11-12.

time and proves truly prophetic, moving towards a power that is 'greater than we know.'[133] The stream is a representation of timelessness, forever gliding. It outlast the lives of men, brave, mighty and wise, but it is enough if man creates by his own hand, if 'something from our hands have power'. Poetry—Wordsworth's act which 'serve[s] the future hour'—thus runs parallel to the river, its everlasting partner and guide.

III

In addition to the Duddon sequence, Wordsworth also published, though not as one united collection, the Yarrow poems: 'Yarrow Unvisited', composed in 1803, published in *Poems, in Two Volumes* in 1807, 'Yarrow Visited', published in *Poems* (1815) and 'Yarrow Revisited' in *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* (1835). Each concerned itself with an experience (or non-experience) of the river over a course of time. *The Prelude* and 'Tintern Abbey' are in fact not Wordsworth's main river poems, nor did he see them as such – the sequencing of the Yarrow poems at the end of a volume, and similarly with the Duddon, indicates their importance to him. Sara Coleridge says of his poems in a letter to Derwent Coleridge, January 1852: 'How many lovers of Wordsworth are longing for a regular chronological arrangement of his poems. But W.W. suspected that his later poems were not so well liked as his earlier, by many, and hence was determined to force them down together.'[134] However, his insistence to 'force them down' could be read not merely as an indication of his desire for profit, but also an indication that he did in fact think that his later, more conservative and religious poems were of equal, if not greater value than his earlier ones. The first of the Yarrow poems appeared in *Poems, in Two Volumes* but was more concerned with his idea of experience of a place rather than the sound and voice of the river itself. 'Yarrow Unvisited' begins with a note alluding to other poems about banks of the Yarrow, especially the Ballad of William Hamilton, which begins 'Busk ye, busk ye'. It was composed probably between 14 October, 1803 and 6 March, 1804, and contains a simple narrative: he walked along banks of other rivers, then wanted to 'see the

133 'River Duddon'., XXXIII. 4.
134 Peter Swaab, *The Regions of Sara Coleridge's Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 99.

Braes of Yarrow'.[135] He speaks of 'Yarrow Folk', and how 'On Yarrow's Banks let herons feed, […]', 'But we will downwards with the Tweed, | Nor turn aside to Yarrow.' He lists all the places they pass 'in search of Yarrow' and asks 'What's Yarrow but a River bare'? saying 'There are a thousand such elsewhere' and is overcome by sadness that he could speak thus of the Yarrow. The sonnet concludes with the notion that knowing is enough and seeing is not necessary, contemplating on the power this non-experience has over the imagination and the hold it has over us:

> Be Yarrow Stream unseen, unknown!
> It must, or we shall rue it:
> We have a vision of our own;
> Ah! Why should we undo it!?
> The treasured dreams of times long past
> We'll keep them, *winsome Marrow!*
> For when we're there although 'tis fair
> 'Twill be another Yarrow![136]

In 1814, Wordsworth returns with Scott to the poignant spot, and subtitles the poem with the specificity of a date, 'September, 1814'. He begins this time with a doubt and a question:

> And is this—Yarrow?—*This* the Stream
> Of which my fancy cherish'd
> So faithfully, a waking dream?
> An image that hath perish'd!
> O that some Minstrel's harp were near,
> To utter notes of gladness,
> And chase this silence from the air,
> That fills my heart with sadness![137] (1-8)

In this case the Yarrow, unlike other Wordsworthian rivers, is not making any noise – and seemingly does not have a voice. The 'Minstrel' is, of course, Scott, with whom Wordsworth shared a friendship, and love of landscape, rivers, hills and mountains, and whose presence is much more apparent in the last 'Yarrow Revisited'.[138] The silence of the river however, has an adverse effect. It creates a great sadness, implying that the voice, and sound of the river, as it should be here, is a happy one for Wordsworth. Indeed, he ends the poem on a joyful note, with

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135 'Yarrow Unvisited', *Poems, in Two Volumes,* p. 198.

136 Ibid., ll. 49-56; earlier citations ll. 8, 13, 15-16, 24, 25, 30-32.

137 'Yarrow Visited', *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*, ed. by Carl H. Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 137-40, ll. 1-8.

138 In 1803, Scott published several border ballads in a volume entitled *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and three years later in 1805 he composed his famous long poem 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.'

a consoling and real impression of the river: 'Thy genuine image, Yarrow, | Will dwell with me—to heighten joy, | And cheer my mind in sorrow.'[139]

'Yarrow Revisited' returns with another form of sorrow: the imminent death of his friend Sir Walter Scott. Composed between 7 and 27 October, 1831, the poem is introduced as a 'memorial of a day passed with Sir Walter Scott, and other Friends visiting the Banks of the Yarrow under his guidance, immediately before his departure from Abbotsford, for Naples' and assumes that Wordsworth's readerships knew of the previous Yarrow poems. The poet refers to himself as 'The gallant Youth' who 'Was but an Infant in the lap | When first I looked on Yarrow', calling Scott the 'Great Minstrel of the Border'.[140] Scott's role as the Minstrel of the Border places the Yarrow in an interestingly similar category as the Duddon in Bate's commentary. Being a border poem between countries, the Yarrow represented more than just a border between local regions and nations: it was a testimony to his friendship with Scott.[141] Again in this poem he is troubled by 'grave thoughts' indicating that his visits to the Yarrow are always plagued with some sort of pessimism: 'For busy thought the Stream flowed on | In foamy agitation'. He has 'quiet contemplation' and asks for happy days. He again has a timeless vision on a riverbank, seeing 'Past, present, future, all appeared | In harmony united'. This vision makes him contemplate the sameness and consistent nature of the Yarrow in comparison with humans 'Though we were changed and changing', and directly addresses Scott: 'For thee, O SCOTT! Compelled to change' in a reference to his move away to Italy due to his health: 'And leave thy Tweed and Teviot | For mild Sorrento's breezy waves'.[142] He turns to Fancy to preserve his heart from sinking, and asks for Health and Strength to return to Scott:

> For Thou, upon a hundred streams
> By tales of love and sorrow,
> Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
> Hast shed the power of the Yarrow.[143]

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139 'Yarrow Visited', ll. 86-88.
140 'Yarrow Revisited', *Sonnet Series*, pp. 490-493, ll. 1; 3-4.
141 For an in depth analysis of Wordsworth's imaginative revisiting of the Yarrow and Scottish Borders, see Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth's Revisitings*.
142 'Yarrow Revisited', ll. 18-18; 20; 29-30; 49; 52-53.
143 'Yarrow Revisited', ll. 65-68.

The final lines of the poem bid the Yarrow to 'Flow on forever' and 'fulfil Thy pensive duty' – a duty both to serve and guide, listen and speak.[144] In fulfilling her duty, the Yarrow, like the other English rivers and streams, is the voice that calls him to his own duty and vocation. Like the Duddon, the Yarrow's role is to incite a creativity in man, guiding and serving at once. The inspiration Wordsworth found in nature—and in rivers in particular—came in the form of a biblical prophetic calling, a fluvial voice that in turn allowed Wordsworth to sustain a poetic voice of his own.

In the Introduction to Wordsworth's biography, Stephen Gill writes that 'the real importance of the poem [*The Prelude*] lies not in what it says about the present but in what it promises about the future. […] Wordsworth […] looks back as a young man, one with the future before him but little other than faith to support him in the belief that he will be worthy of the task to which he perceives he has been called.'[145] His calling, from murmur to roar, begins in his earliest years and is then cast into a light of understanding in his adulthood. It is fundamentally rooted in the notion of being called back to his home, a notion that demanded the decision to settle in the Lake District, as he justified in the *1799 Prelude*.[146]s His desire and need to be in a landscape allowed for his calling from youth to be an everyday reminder of his prophetic quest. However, for him, the experience of landscape was not a visual one at first encounter: the sound of running water always comes before the sight of a stream. His call to action is one that, throughout his poetry, stems from this sound.

The prophetic vocation is, above all, that which moves the called to action. It requires the belief in, or existence of, a higher power from whom the call descends, and further a confrontation with it. Wordsworth's confrontation occurs when he is out in the 'Fountains, Meadows, Fields and Groves', not when he is face to face with another human or the divine, but face to face with that in which the divine exists. Engell says of Wordsworth (and Coleridge, Blake and Schelling) that his believing in God, in particular his early ideas of God, are panentheistic, rather than pantheistic – the divine interpenetrates every part of nature and

144 Ibid., ll. 105-06.
145 Gill, *A Life,* p. 5.
146 Ibid.

timelessly extends beyond it, but is not synonymous with nature & the universe.[147] Hearing in Wordsworth's poetry the voice of the divine in rivers and streams—indications of a poetic and prophetic call communicating that relationship—strengthens Engell's claim for panentheism. 'Prophecy is living mimicry', Blanchot states.[148] The prophetic has an unusual relation to time in that it does not necessarily invoke the future, but is both within and beyond time altogether. It is the relationship between the past and present that Romanticism so much tries to unsettle. Wordsworth's prophetic calling to speak to the nations and to be a poet of nature came to him through the means of a river, itself an emblem of unsettled and ambiguous temporal relationships, neither past nor future, always flowing. In the *Essays on Epitaph*s, he paints the following picture:

> Never did a child stand by the side of a running stream, pondering within himself what power was the feeder of the perpetual current, from what ever-wearied sources the body of water was supplied, but he must have been inevitably propelled to followed this question by another: "Towards what abyss is it in progress? What receptacle can contain the mighty influx?" and the spirit of the answer must have been, though the work might be sea or ocean, accompanied perhaps with an image gathered from a map, or from the real object in nature—these might have been the *letter,* but the *spirit* of the answer must have been as inevitably a receptacle without bounds or dimensions;—nothing less than infinity.[149]

This image of a young Wordsworth looking at the river from source to end is the one we are left with, and it is one that echoes the boy Wordsworth standing on his Pisgah-site in 'Home at Grasmere' overlooking the vale. Interested in beginnings and endings and the notion of wholeness, even as a child he is able to oversee the whole course with a prophetic vision; and yet, it was something that he could not do with the river of his own mind and development as the chosen one. Like the source that called him, he was always ebbing, returning, eddying, revisiting.

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147 Engell, p. 251. Whether Wordsworth was of pantheistic of panentheist thought is explored more fully by Thomas McFarland in *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 268-70. However, Melvin Rader, in *Wordsworth; A Philosophical Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 59-60; 199-200, argues for the irrelevance of distinguishing pantheism from panentheism.

148 Blanchot, p. 84.

149 'Essays on Epitaphs, I', *Prose Works*, II, 51.

AMERICA

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

-Ecclesiastes 1. 7

William and Dorothy had been on the road for nearly a month. They had completed most of their circuit around Scotland, and had long parted ways with Coleridge. On a Sunday evening of September 1803, walking after sunset beneath a glowing sky along Loch Katrine, they were greeted by 'two neatly dressed women, without hats, who had probably been taking their Sunday evening's walk.'[1] One of them uttered the greeting which begot one of Wordsworth's finest poems: '*What! you are stepping westward?*'[2] The affect of this expression moved both brother and sister despite their having been on the road for so long because of its unexpectedness and friendliness: the greeting, spoken in English, was a sign of welcome. Its meaning, as intended in the poem, was the women's surprise at the pilgrims heading into the the remoter western regions of Scotland. However, their direction—westward—has been in recent critical readings discerned as a more distant destination: America.[3]

'Westward' also has a further connotation: to 'go west' intimates 'to die'. To cast one's eye westward implies a finality – the sunset, Henry King's 'west of life', the guarantee of never reaching the end.[4] But it also indicates a different perspective, one that follows the trope of *translatio studii*, historically a movement of the centre of civilisation away from Rome after the

1 'Recollections of A Tour made in Scotland (A.D. 1803)', *JDW*, I, 193-409, (p. 367).

2 I have chosen to use Dorothy's punctuation as it better represents the element of surprise; Wordsworth's version eliminated the exclamation point. He gives the anecdotal origins of the poem in a headnote. See *Poems, in Two Volumes*, pp. 185-86.

3 See James McKusick 'Stepping Westward', *Wordsworth Circle*, 32 (2001), 122-126, and Robin Jarvis, 'Madoc in Scotland: A Transatlantic Perspective on "Stepping Westward"', *European Romantic Review*, 19 (2008), 149-156, for an account of the poem read in the context of Southey's *Madoc* and Pantisocracy.

4 J. Wordsworth, *Borders of Vision*, p. 19.

decline of the Roman Empire and eventually leading towards England.[5] With the colonisation of America, the English 'diaspora' continued this shift westwards away from Europe towards a new and unobstructed vision of society.

Travel allows for a plasticity of mind that staying put solidifies. In his 'On Going on a Journey,' William Hazlitt examines that very notion: that changing our place changes our ideas, opinions and feelings.

> We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight, also blots it from our memory like a dream.[6]

Hazlitt is consciously engaging with Wordsworth's poetry here: 'the picture of the mind revives again' (line 61 of 'Tintern Abbey') and 'The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon' (line 5 of 'The world is too much with us') becomes 'the landscape [that] bares its bosom to the enraptured eye'. The plasticity of the mind (and the eye) is not just Hazlitt's: it is one that was Wordsworth's originally. Despite falling out with the poet, Hazlitt instructs his readers to engage in exactly the sort of imaginative travelling in which Wordsworth was himself partaking.

I would like to propose such a 'shift [of] our point of view', from one side of the Atlantic to the other, by viewing Wordsworth not through the eyes of his own society of British readers, but from the perspective of a nation that was only beginning to find its voice, settling down into what would become the American canon. Taught independently of British literature in academia today, American literature derives more from its British roots than is often given credit. Leonard Tennenhouse, in *On the Importance of Being English* questions the traditional approaches of 'how soon and in what respects the British Americans began to think of themselves as American rather than British', arguing that it wasn't until the latter half of the

5 Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora, 1750-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 12-13.

6 Hazlitt, 'On Going on a Journey', *Selected Writings*, VI, p. 167-68.

nineteenth century that the need to create 'a literature of their own' became pressing.[7] Leading up to that moment of national self-revelation was a century of conflicting alliances and revolutionary defiance spilling over into the cultural sphere.

Inverting Wordsworth's own self-prescriptive gaze back onto him from across the Atlantic serves several purposes. First, it allows for an unadulterated examination of the poet's reach: something he could not have fully expressed himself, despite his fame in later life. Second, America, and in particular New England, served as the good soil upon which the seeds of Wordsworth's ideas fell: Wordsworth editions were affordable and attainable.[8] The vastness of the American frontier and unknown expanses of wilderness contributed towards a different relationship to the landscape – one that in crowded Europe was unthinkable. Third, the identity of the country—still only half-formed—was strongly fixed to the notions of religious freedom that brought the Pilgrim Fathers to Plymouth. And with this religious freedom also came a fierce religious rhetoric, which lent itself very well to the commonly-held belief that America was the 'New Israel'. These conditions, though not without obstacles, created an environment in the mid-nineteenth century that not only accepted Wordsworth's ideas, but independently turned him into their very own prophet. The combination of language and landscape flowered into something beyond Wordsworth's capacity as a poet-prophet in England.

Over the course of this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate how Wordsworth's reading of the landscape interacted subconsciously and consciously with his reading of the Bible. Exploring different topographical elements and notions, his poetry spoke with a self-perpetuating agenda that relied on an Old Testament-like connection with the land. Overlaying Wordsworth's biblical landscapes onto those of Puritan New England thereby connected him to an audience that heard the same 'real language of men' that he did. Concerned with language

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7 Tennenhouse, p. 1. James Engell also argues this point in *The Committed Word: Literature and Public Values* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). See especially chapter 8, pp. 119-40.

8 For comparison, the Moxon 1850 *Prelude* cost fourteen shillings, equivalent to about ten days' wages ploughing the fields. The Appleton 1850 *Prelude*, published in America, cost about ninety cents, just over a day's wages. Converted, the Appleton would have cost three shillings six pence in contemporary British currency, and the Moxon would have cost about three dollars and ninety-two cents in America. See Joel Pace, *Wordsworth in America: 1802-1850*, unpublished DPhil thesis (Bodleian Library: Oxford, 1999), pp. 181-82.

in its most national form, both Wordsworth and his American readership had defined ideas about the 'common tongue.' Thus the rhetoric they employed, infused with biblical imagery and religious speech, lent itself to a discourse of prophetic ministry. American audiences were responding to Wordsworth differently because by the time his work gained full appreciation in America (1850s onwards) the landscapes of Europe he mentions in his poetry have already been exhausted and explored. Tourism in Europe was in full bloom, and unspoilt natural sights became crowded.

Wordsworth's reception in America allowed for a novelty his poetry no longer held in Britain because of the cultural texture and publication history. By the time of the publication of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* in 1850, his reputation was already fixed, as Lindenberger pointed out, in 1850, 'Wordsworth's reputation was already firmly established—too firmly one might add, for any new work to excite the kind of interest one could expect from a still controversial author.'[9] Prior to *The Prelude*, only select publications of his works were available in America, including an 1835 publication of *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* and Henry Reed's *Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (1837). Some of Wordsworth's poems were available earlier – either published in newspaper and magazines (such as Joseph Dennie's *Port Folio* of Philadelphia) or as pirated editions. Early nineteenth-century America was a place that was deeply in search of its own identity, a nation that had finally settled in its self-defined mission as the Promised Land, and as such was embedded in a scriptural discourse that is much more literal than the British. This process of self-defining struck a chord with Wordsworth's poetry in a way that differed significantly from his British audiences. Stephen Fender in *Sea Changes* points out that the 'American difference' or 'ideology' turned on defining itself as 'the first new nation', a definition that had to be made against the pre-existing 'parent' so to speak. Thus, the sublimity of the land made up for the lack of a deeply rooted cultural and historical past: what years of history and cultural heritage were to Europeans, plains and mountains were to Americans. Where Europe has landmarks and ruins and ancient columns, America had only the vastness of

9 Herbert Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's Prelude* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 196.

the landscape. And so this landscape took shape as the replacement for millennia of artistic tradition.[10]

The late eighteenth century was a time of revolutions in the modern sense—American, French, Industrial—but it was also a time of revolution in the older sense – of revolving, coming around again. The landscape, both in Britain and America, was changing so radically that everyone was living in a constant state of flux. The drive to prevent the change was correlated with a motion towards seeing homelessness and wandering as a spiritual condition, an interest in the changing outer world mirrored by changing inner world. The uncertainty that surrounded the epic called for a spiritual counsellor – and the American public, like the English, sought one out in Wordsworth. Thomas Pringle, poet, explorer, and anti-slavery activist, went on to demonstrate this need in his *Poems* of 1839. His sonnet 'Poems are Nature's Priests' likens England to degenerate Israel and concludes: 'Yet Israel then had SAMUEL—We have WORDSWORTH still.'[11] Replacing the prophet Samuel with Wordsworth demonstrated not just the poet's self-promoted prophetic status, but the unanimity it attained outside of England – in Scotland and America too. Wordsworth's poetry belonged to no nation, but his voice was heard across the plains and oceans. On his seventy-second birthday, Lydia Sigourney sent Wordsworth a poem, addressing the 'High-thoughted Bard, of Rydal's sounding tide':

> Whose stricken lyre across the Ocean blue,
> Doth stir our forests in their unshorn pride
> And wondering steal the woodman's cabin through [...][12]

Wordsworth was as much the pride of America as he was the Poet Laureate of England. The landscape of the West, at once new and old, brought together Wordsworth's reliance and usage of biblical rhetoric and imagery with a impetus towards the future. By 1851, the *North American Review* boasted more admirers of Wordsworth than any other nation.[13] Among them was novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne. What the *New Yorker* in 1838 wrote about his *Twice Told Tales*

10 In her paper 'Cycles of Time and Stages of Life: The Transatlantic Legacy of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"', given at the Wordsworth Summer Conference in 2012, Samantha Harvey reiterated the notion that in nineteenth-century America, landscape replaced European monuments.

11 Thomas Pringle, 'Poets are Nature's Priests', *The Poetical Works of Thomas Pringle With a Sketch of His Life*, by Leitch Ritchie (London: Edward Moxon, 1839), p. 186.

12 Jerwood Manuscript: WLMS A / Sigourney, L.H. / 2.

13 Harshbarger, p. 123.

applies just as much to Wordsworth's poetry: it was 'the Story without an End, of which all true stories are but episodes, is told by Nature herself.'[14] Nature, landscape and the Bible were one continuous narrative. The Americans read the Bible like they read their landscape: this was the story that all their stories took part it, and it was a story that Wordsworth helped write.

I

The notion of *translatio studii* originates in the second book of Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel interprets a dream for the king Nebuchadnezzar, in which his own empire of 'gold' is to be followed by three more—silver, bronze and iron—and then an empire of iron and clay which will end all time:

> And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.[15]

The search for a final kingdom that shall never be destroyed echoes the finality that Jonathan Wordsworth hears in 'Stepping Westward.'[16] 'That region bright' of the second stanza refers directly to the glow of the sky after the setting sun, but like all sunsets, comes with the promise of a tomorrow: the promise of an afterlife, or a new start. The transfer of the seat of knowledge or learning from one geographical place to another denotes a linearity in history, very typical of the Middle Ages, exemplified by authors like Chretien de Troyes and later Geoffrey of Monmouth. Thomas Gray's Pindaric ode, 'The Progress of Poesy' expresses the concept much more explicitly. Composed between 1751-54, the ode traces poetic movement from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England.[17] The trajectory, varying from author to author, sees the 'light' of learning move from Eden, to Jerusalem, Babylon, Greece, Rome, Paris, London until it

14 Harshbarger, p. 124.
15 Daniel 2. 44. The rest of the dream can be found in Daniel 2. 31-45.
16 J. Wordsworth, *Borders of Vision*, p. 19.
17 Gray adds the following footnote (1786): 'Progress of Poetry from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England. Chaucer was not unacquainted with the writings of Dante or of Petrarch. The Earl of Surrey and Sir Tho. Wyatt had travelled in Italy, and formed their taste there; Spenser imitated the Italian writers; Milton improved on them; but this School expired soon after the Restoration, and a new era arose on the French model, which has subsisted ever since'. *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith,* p. 170.

finally settles as far west as it can – in America.[18] Although this viewpoint very clearly ignores the seats of civilization in the Far East, to which a continuation westward would undoubtedly lead, its ideology was clear – America was to be the pinnacle of learned civilisation, the real and last 'new' world.

The prospect of 'newness' and originality promised by the American topography was infused with a capacity for imaginary space during the Romantic period. It was a land of promise that attracted the imaginations of many writers around the turn of the century: Coleridge and Southey planned to set up their Pantisocratic colony on the banks of the Susquehanna River; George Keats embarked in 1818 for Louisville, Kentucky for a life of civic leadership; Thomas Paine sailed to Philadelphia as early as 1776; Joseph Priestly and his sons left in 1793. Wordsworth even sent his Solitary in the *Excursion* to make his way to America with hopes for a better future. America was, as Susan Manning put it, 'Europe's imaginary space for thinking "Romantically".'[19]

Over time, the concept of *translatio studii* became so engrained in American minds, that it was still resonating in the nineteenth century with the Transcendentalists of New England. Later, Elizabeth Peabody would express this notion in a letter to Wordsworth, in which she presented herself as the embodied voice of America. The 'wildish' and 'heavenly' destiny of 'Stepping Westward' fulfills, to a certain degree, the 'manifest destiny' that began to crystallise after the war of 1812. America was even then still a land 'far from home', as many, even until the late nineteenth century, viewed themselves as British 'guest[s] of Chance' rather than intentional Americans. Having left England for fear of religious persecution, the Pilgrim Fathers had the 'spiritual right | To travel' and settle in a land that allowed them the freedom to both practise their faith and still maintain ties to their culture. The 'dark and cold' 'dewy ground' upon which they first landed was a first and foremost a promise – it presented the potential of light, warmth and growth. The colonial expansion in of the Prairies in particular, places where

18 See, for example, Philip Freneau's poem 'The Power of Fancy' which ends on 'California's golden shore' – the ne plus ultra of *translatio studii*. My gratitude to James Engell for pointing me to this work.

19 Susan Manning, 'Americas', in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 149.

the vast expanse of sky would undoubtedly lure any traveller and 'lead him on' further, gave the impression of the continent being entirely 'without place or bound'.[20] America was neither specific, not mapped or charted or belonging to a local place, nor bound by territories, laws, contracts and history. America was 'westward.'

The notion that America was 'unpopulated' or 'virgin' territory is a white colonial construct: one needs to look no further than Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* to get a taste of exactly how wrong this image was.[21] However, it was an image that held steadfast in the eyes and minds of men, both in America and in England. In his book on *Romantic Indians*, Tim Fulford notes that Manifest Destiny had a hand in the imaginative configuration of the landscape as virginal, for two reasons.[22] Manifest Destiny argued that 'Indians, as nomadic hunters, were of a more primitive stage of cultural development than whites', asking 'who put the land to improved use in accord with the biblical injunction "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it?"'[23] Unable, or unwilling, to till the land, the Indians were idealised as a 'dying race', a concept James Fenimore Cooper touches upon in *The Last of the Mohicans* and Fiona Stafford explores in her book *The Last of the Race*. Early dying Indians were also better for Wordsworth: they represented a weak, destitute peoples on the brink of 'civilisation'. The idealisation of dying Indians, needless to say, was a dangerous act because it placed them in the past. Wordsworth's poem, 'The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman' begins 'Before I see another day | Oh let my body die away!' immediately placing the Indian with one foot in the afterlife of race.[24] His knowledge of the tale was based on Hearne's journeys – the headnote of the poem explicitly refers to him.[25] In another vein, his often neglected poem 'Ruth' considers the role of the American Indian in shaping the 'Youth' who bore such resemblance to them ('From Indian blood you deem him sprung'). The Indians are not ever

20 'Stepping Westward', *Poems, in Two Volumes*, pp. 185-86, ll. 2, 12, 4, 5, 15-16, 9, 8, 14.
21 Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).
22 Fulford uses the term Indian - I follow his cue, but with the awareness that the proper, politically correct term today is 'Native American'.
23 Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature, and Transatlantic Culture 1756-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 29.
24 'Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman', *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 111-13, ll. 1-2.
25 Nicholas Halmi notes that Wordsworth may have read Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from the Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean* (London, 1795) from the copy Coleridge borrowed from the Bristol Library. (See Norton *Wordsworth*, p. 61).

present in the poem, only in the poem's past, and as such, we are left with Ruth's desolation amidst the Somerset countryside – even the American wilderness had been removed. Her sexuality, insinuated by her nine-month imprisonment, is emblematic of the connection between a 'virgin' landscape and a virgin body. Savage bodies, Fulford points out, such as those of the Indians, are bodies at one with nature; their presence 'Autochthonous, "primitive", they also seemed fierce, excessive, cruel and superstitious—characteristics that [...] made them both horrible and desirable.'[26] The unison with nature isolated them from civilisation, and made them more primitive. They exemplified the land on which they lived: the virgin landscape (and culture) was as much untouched by civilisation as the virgin body was untouched by 'man'. American topography, even in Wordsworth's poetry, contributed to the imaginative sublimity of the New World and altered European perceptions of the Other.

In Levinas' ethic of the face-to-face encounter, the existence of the Indian Other problematises the conception of America as a 'Promised Land'. Encountering others, in particular, others that present an 'at-one-ment' with their natural environment, raises a tension between that to which one returns, or reinhabits, and that which is new. The 'unpopulated' land that made up 'Manifest Destiny' or the 'Promised Land' was not seen as populated because the Indians' presence was somehow not seen as problematic; they were not considered 'civilised' and therefore fitted in with the image of a 'unconquered' land. Tying the American identity to the ancient Hebrew one in this case provided a parallel: the Israelites too conquered a 'Promised Land' which was not exactly unpopulated, with repercussions ongoing today.[27] The faces of the Indian Other—just like the faces of the gentile Others of the Old Testament—were determinedly ignored and refashioned into something other than a face. Their existence was, in essence, so traceless that it became subsumed into the landscape itself, permitting for a reading of America as 'virginal'. It was a concept of the West that was at its roots, still imperialistic.

Westward is the epitome of an endless spatiality, a Bachelardian vastness 'without place or bound'. It is this precise quality—of placelessness—that made the New World the perfect

26 Fulford, p. 5.

27 See Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*, 2nd edn (London: Pluto Press, 1993, orig. 1983).

receiving ground for Wordsworth's poetry and philosophy, and the growth of his 'ministry'. Even in America itself, any Romantic movement was westwards, 'away from Europe and towards the frontier; it covered spiritual rather than land-bound miles.'[28] Thus, when re-reading Wordsworth's westward-leaning poem from a transatlantic vantage point, it suddenly takes on a different meaning:

> *'What you are stepping westward?'— 'Yea'*
> —'Twoud be a wildish destiny,
> If we, who thus together roam
> In a strange Land, and far from home,
> Were in this place the guests of Chance:
> Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
> Though home or shelter he had none,
> With such a Sky to lead him on?
>
> The dewy ground was dark and cold;
> Behind, all gloomy to behold;
> And stepping westward seem'd to be
> A kind of *heavenly* destiny;
> I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
> Of something without place or bound;
> And seemed to give me spiritual right
> To travel through that region bright.
>
> The voice was soft, and she who spake
> Was walking by her native Lake:
> The salutation had to me
> The very sound of courtesy:
> It's power was felt; and while the eye
> Was fixed upon the glowing sky.
> The echo of the voice enwrought
> A human sweetness with the thought
> Of travelling through the world that lay
> Before me in my endless way. [29]

Removing the poem from its context within the Wordsworths' 1803 Tour of Scotland, and placing it instead into the context of transatlantic writing, it is possible to imagine the speaker of this poem as one of the Pilgrim Fathers, or an early pioneer travelling to the unknown land. James McKusick also hears American echoes in the poem, relating it instead to the Lewis and Clark voyage across America that also occurred in 1803. He sees the Americans seeking Celtic identity to mark out Indians (in the search for Madoc's 'Welsh Indians') as an irony.

Scottish emigration to America was common during the late 1700s and early 1800s, not

28 Manning, p. 155.
29 'Stepping Westward', pp. 185-86.

in the least because of the Highland Clearances. Emigration, caused by changes in the traditional tenant system to a large-scare agricultural revolution, began as early as the 1730s and continued throughout the century. The Scottish settlers populated parts of the United States (Georgia) and Canada (Nova Scotia) but their presence there was also problematic. As Eric Richards in his recent book *Highland Clearances* notes, 'The Highland Scots, forced off their ancestral lands in Scotland, were now robbing the American Indians of their own ancestral lands. The ironies of the story multiplied throughout the age of the clearances, which mainly began after 1780.'[30] Wordsworth and Dorothy encounter one of these émigrés during their Highland tour: near Loch Lomond, they encountered a group of women, among whom was a man who they had met earlier that day. Dorothy recounted his poverty:

> Amongst them was a man, who had walked with us a considerable way in the morning, and told us he had just come from America, where he had been some years,—was going to his own home, and should return to America. He spoke of emigration as a glorious thing for them who had money; poor fellow! I do not think that he had brought much back with him, for he had worked his passage over: I much suspected that a bundle, which he carried on a stick, tied in a pocket-handkerchief, contained his all.[31]

His presence must have made an impression that day, as Dorothy, overcome by the vastness of Loch Lomond, referred to it in terms of America. Dorothy notes in her *Recollections:*

> What I had heard of Loch Lomond, or any other place in Great Britain, had given me no idea of anything like what we beheld: it was an outlandish scene—we might have believed ourselves in North America. The islands were of every possible variety and shape and surface—hilly and level, large and small, bare, rocky, pastoral, or covered with wood.[32]

Dorothy's use of the modal perfect indicates her awareness of a lack – in this case, a lack of terminology and a lack of experience. Instead, she resorts to imagination: turning to North America, where she has never been, for a suitable explanation of her perceived image of the Loch. Dorothy mentions America on no fewer than four separate occasions in her *Recollections*, though twice with the mention of the 'poor fellow', freshly returned to Scotland. She refrains from comment on emigration, but given her speculations about how much sugar the blacksmith

30 Eric Richards, *Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2013), p. 82.
31 'Recollections', *JDW*, I, p. 257.
32 Ibid., p. 252.

takes in his tea, it would be fair to assume she spoke to William about it.[33] Her concern with the levels of poverty in the Highlands following the clearances—few would have had the luxury of sugar—and the aftermath of its effects are present in her journals. Those forced to migrate, like the Israelites, were searching for a new place to call home. It is clear that the poem—and their journey—moved westwards in their minds. Particularly telling, however, is the fact that they rely on the mythos of North America—the vastness, immensity—to capture in their imagination the 'outlandish scene' of Loch Lomond before them. The emotion evoked by Scotland itself was not sufficient: they required a further, more remote, wilder landscape to match what was felt interiorly. The prospect before them, as Dorothy describes earlier, was 'so singular and beautiful that it was like a flash of images from another world.'[34] That 'other world' was the 'heavenly destiny' of 'Stepping Westward'.

II

In 1834, a sixty-four year old Wordsworth rejected the idea of 'stepping westward' while dictating a letter of his disapproval of Henry Crabb Robinson's proposed voyage to America, even to see Niagara. To set sail towards the New World, when England provided such an accurate picture of its 'Manners and Society' in books, was an unpleasant and unnecessary task. Despite a youth of uninhibited travel and one final tour of Italy (with Crabb Robinson) still to come in 1837, the poet did not share his friend's excitement about a crossing of the Atlantic. Worried more about his own well being, he deemed himself 'too old to think without some pain of our friends being separated so far from us.' In response to Crabb's so-called American 'scheme', he wrote:

> There are not many things in America which can be called sights. Niagara it is true, is a first rate one — but not worth crossing the Atlantic for — and as to American Manners and Society — we have it in so many books, that it seems as well to be contented with what may be collected from them while at ease upon ones own Sofa — or under the shade of an English Oak, in this sweet summer weather.[35]

33 Dorothy says of the blacksmith: 'He hastily swallowed his breakfast, dry bread and a basin of weak tea without sugar, and held his baby on his knee till he had done.' 'Recollections', *JDW,* I, 149.

34 'Recollections', *JDW,* I, p. 251.

35 W.W. to Henry Crabb Robinson, 10 June 1834, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, Part II:1829-34*, p. 715. Hereafter *LY*.

That the Prophet of Nature—who spent his youth scaling the Alps in search of the sublime—would so casually denounce one of the most sublime sights in North America in favour of his own Sofa is rather striking. The Sofa, as Fulford is also quick to note, comes to symbolise civilisation (rather problematically) in Cowper's *The Task*. Wordsworth's comment, then, revealed a deeper imaginative response to the 'threat' of the American sublime. His knowledge of North America was obvious through earlier poems like 'Ruth' and 'The Forsaken Indian Woman', as well as the River Duddon Series. His readings of Samuel Hearne and William Bartram's travels are well documented.[36] The fact he could identify the falls by name indicated its reputation,[37] and its growing fame as a tourist destination. Indeed, 'Hundreds of descriptions and images of the place circulated in the press on both sides of the Atlantic, and it became a symbol both of the uncorrupted nature of North America and of nature's transformative power.'[38] His dismissal of the falls, thus, is indicative of a greater general animosity towards America stealing his friend away.

Visitors to Niagara were all taken aback by the 'transformative power' of the Falls: in an album of poems written by visitors to the sight, many spoke of the raw and reverential feelings the place evoked.[39] The album was later deeply criticized by Dickens, who visited what he termed 'Nature's greatest altar' in 1842, for 'the triviality and cheapness of the typical tourist response' as it spoiled the sense of 'reverence and awe.'[40] Writing to his friend and critic John Forster, Dickens described his visit, taking the boat to Horseshoe Falls:[41]

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36 For Bartram and Hearne, see Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*, pp. 9; 72-73 respectively. See also Charles Norton Coe, *Wordsworth and the Literature of Travel* (New York, Bookman Associates, 1953).

37 The Wordsworths acknowledge the falls by name in one other letter: Dorothy writes to John and Jane Marshall, 13 July 1830, mentioning that 'Sarah and Elizabeth Ferguson had remained at New York to visit the Falls of Niagara, and would return to England in the Autumn.' *LY*, II, 301.

38 *Transatlantic Romanticism*, ed. by Lance Newman, Joel Pace & Chris Koenig-Woodyard, (NY; Pearson Longman, 2006), pp. 2-3. Niagara was by that time famous, especially as an example of the sublime. See Elizabeth McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

39 For a detailed account of the environmental impact of the tourism industries around Niagara Falls, see Kevin Hutching's article 'Romantic Niagara: Environmental Aesthetics, Indigenous Culture, and Transatlantic Tourism, 1794-1850' in *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges* (Farnhman: Ashgatte, 2011), pp. 153-68.

40 *Transatlantic Romanticism*, pp. 2-3.

41 Niagara Falls consists of three waterfalls: Horseshoe Falls, being the grandest and deepest, is on the Canadian side (this is the one usually pictures in photographs and images of the Falls). The American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls are on the American side, but do not contain the quintessential arch.

> I saw the water tearing madly down from some immense height, but could get no idea of shape, or situation, or anything but vague immensity. […] I went down alone, into the very basin. It would be hard for a man to stand nearer God than he does there. There was a bright rainbow at my feet; and from that I looked up to—great Heaven! to *what* a fall of bright green water! The broad, deep, mighty stream seems to die in the act of falling; and, from its unfathomable grave, arises that tremendous ghost of spray and mist which is never laid, and has been haunting this place with the same dread solemnity—perhaps from the creation of the world.[42]

Dickens' experience epitomises the transcendent impression of the forces of nature on the mind of man. He turns first to the divine, and raising his gaze, somewhat ironically senses the sublime, an implicated timelessness in the stream that 'seems to die in the act of falling' and the perennial spray from 'creation of the world.' His depiction thus comes full circle: having no beginning and no end, as the ever-ceaseless flow of running water neither runs out nor fills up.

This ecclesiastical notion of return and revolution relies upon a certain level of perspective. Wordsworth, having never seen Niagara Falls, dismisses it as 'not worth crossing the Atlantic for.' Yet many went to see it anyway. Amongst countless hoards of tourists, American transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, born in Massachusetts, made the journey to the falls. She was able to witness nature at its most powerful and isolated because of growing industrialisation and the rise of tourism. The first known efforts to harness the waterfall's hydraulic powers began in 1759, and continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Meanwhile, the growing recreation industry boomed alongside the declining sawmills, with Niagara featuring on countless woodcuts, prints, postcards and stereographs.[43] Like Wordsworth in *Guide to the Lakes*, she was very much aware of the contradictory nature of her state. Yet while viewing the Falls, Fuller felt that she needed to cross over from the American side of the Falls to the British (Canadian) side in order to get the whole perspective. Speaking of her experience, she said 'As a picture, the falls can only be seen from the British side. There they are seen in their veils, and at sufficient distance to appreciate the magical effects of these,

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Niagara Falls is renowned for having the highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world.

42 Charles Dickens to John Forster, 24 and 26 April, 1842, *The Letters of Charles Dickens: 1820-1870,* ed. by Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson, 12 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-2002), III, 210-11.

43 I am grateful to Bruce Graver for his knowledge and advice on this topic, and his work on stereoscopic tours in the UK and America.

and the light and the shade.'[44] That a good vantage point requires distance is obvious, but it is precisely what Wordsworth, looking into America from the British perspective of books and news does not offer.

III

America was not the landscape Wordsworth had in mind while writing 'Stepping Westward' - rather, he was thinking of the Trossachs. It was, however, at the forefront of his thoughts when he was writing *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. Urged by Henry Reed and Bishop Doane of Philadelphia, Wordsworth expanded this collection in 1842 by adding three poems on 'The Pilgrim Fathers'. His concern in the poems was regarding the creation of the American Episcopal Church, for which these pilgrims 'their loved abodes forsook.'[45] Although these three poems (not exactly Wordsworth's finest) do not touch upon the issues of landscape and prophecy, their composition and inclusion in *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* indicated the poet's growing ties with America. Around the same time, in 1837, the famous poet Lydia Sigourney, known across the Atlantic as the 'American Hemans' (who began communicating with Wordsworth in 1836) published her own poem on the Pilgrim Fathers, entitled 'The Indian's Welcome to the Pilgrim Fathers' in which she presented a view of the landscape from the American perspective: a 'sterile plain' with 'remnants of the wintry snow' met the Pilgrims, and a 'red-brow'd chieftain' arrived from 'the forest wide' to bring 'to the Old World […] The welcome of the New.' As an American, she invokes streams, seas, plains and forests in her account, focusing on the openness of the land to newcomers.[46] This contrasts with Wordsworth's account, which focuses more on the country they forsook and the spread of Anglican community into America.

Wordsworth's American correspondence has been duly noted by Alan G. Hill, Stephen

44 Fuller, as cited in *Transatlantic Romanticism*, p. 4. The American and Bridal Veils Falls on the side of the American Border do not offer a complete view of the Horseshoe Falls, on the Canadian side.

45 'Pilgrim Fathers', *Sonnet Series*, pp. 214-15, l. 3.

46 However, Tricia Lootens, in her article 'States of Exile' in *The Traffic in Poems: Nineteenth-century Poetry and Transatlantic Exchange*, ed. by Meredith L. McGill (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 35, duly points out that Sigourney's treatment of Indians wasn't always linear: in a later poem called 'The Landing of the Pilgrim: A Picture by George Flagg' begins with the notion of delivering a 'fading' white woman from a 'savage' and terms the Mayflower as an 'ark that touched | Our Ararat', indicating incorrectly that the ship had landed on uninhabited land, p. 35, 41n.

Gill, and Joel Pace amongst others.[47] In particular, his friendship with the editor Henry Reed came to define Wordsworth's reception in the States. Reed was said to have 'almost single-handedly spread Wordsworth's poetry to every city and town in America. His 1837 edition of *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* 'sold so well that it was reprinted in countless editions over the next twenty years, guaranteeing that Wordsworth's verse would always be on American booksellers' shelves.'[48] Indeed, Reed also collected $700 in mites for the Wordsworth Memorial in the church in Ambleside. In a newspaper advertisement in *The Register* in Philadelphia, regarding the memorial, but explicitly not asking for subscriptions, Reed used the American landscape to draw in supporters, speaking of the

> vast spaces of our continent, with English speech sounding over it, [which] when contemplated by Wordsworth from a distance, helped to deepen that sense of responsibility with which during his long life he devoted the genius, wherewith he was gifted, to the service of God and to the good of his fellow-men.[49]

These sentiments were echoed by the letters he later received with contributions. The claim that Wordsworth belonged in America as much as in England resonated with the public, including several notable figures, many of whose support Reed had already quoted in the advertisement. This included a certain Mr Bancroft, who said

> The true poet belongs to all countries and all time; but if a narrower region is to be considered the sphere of his social influence, and, so to say, the home of his glory, no more contracted bounds have be set for that of Wordsworth than the limits of the nation whose mother tongue is English. He is as much read on this side of the water as on the other; and I believe that he himself looked to this country as the guardian of his memory almost as much to his own.[50]

Speaking on behalf of his countrymen, Bancroft echoed a popular opinion that America wanted to be 'the guardian of his memory'; that it was language, rather than nationality, that made Wordsworth's poetry so widely accessible. Although some had their reservations, among them Emerson[51], Wordsworth's fame and popularity among the American public was due in part to

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47 Alan G. Hill, 'Wordsworth and His American Friends', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 81 (1978), 146-160; Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Pace 'Wordsworth in America'.

48 *Transatlantic Romanticism*, p. 456.

49 Jerwood Centre manuscript, WLMS A / Davy John / 7 / 15, Cutting from *The Register*, (Philadelphia, 2 July 1853) pp. 317-18.

50 WLMS A / Davy John / 7 / 15.

51 Emerson's opinion of Wordsworth teetered between borderline disgust and outright veneration. For but one example, see his journal entry of March 1819: 'I have thirsted to abuse the poetical character

the fact that the poet met many of them in person. Despite the fact that his own opinion of America was rather conservative by the 1830s, as Emerson notes in his *English Traits*, 'Wordsworth eagerly received over one hundred visitors from the young republic during his lifetime.'[52]

The venerating public did not come just from America, however. As Gill points out in *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, his fame produced numerous fanatical and blasphemous 'worshippers'.[53] During the last decade of his life (and later, for years following his death) his home at Rydal Mount was a place of pilgrimage. What made this act of celebrity-seeking extraordinary was that the object of such universal veneration was present to receive it: 'For the first time in English history a writer's home had become a place of general pilgrimage while its saintly incumbent was still alive. The faithful could even buy an icon.'[54] Gill's language in describing the bard consciously yields to the very same rhetoric that guided the American public. Wordsworth had somehow ceased to be a poet among his readers, and suddenly became a prophet, with a 'ministry' and 'followers' who treated him with religious devotion. This phenomenon was such that Gill records visitors who insisted on taking bits of leaf or rock from Rydal Mount as souvenirs – or rather, as relics of the living saint. This reputation as a spiritual guide carried on in America, where his role as spiritual counsellor was also attested by many private testimonies. William Ellery Channing told him in a letter of 4 March 1835 that his poetry had long been 'a fountain of spiritual life' for him.[55] As Gill noted, 'Elizabeth Ogle wrote

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of Mr. Wordsworth whose poems have lately been read to me. […] At once then his poetry is the poetry of pigmies […] He is the poet of pismires.' (*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by William H. Gillman et al (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 162. Contrast this with his letter to Mary Moody Emerson of Cambridge, 30 June, 1826: "But I shd not worry myself with abusing Mr Wordsworth, not even for his serene egotism whereby he seems at every turn thunderstruck to see what a prodigious height human genius had headed up in him, but that he has occasionally written lines wh I think truly noble. He wd be unworthy your notice but that now & then comes from him a flash of divine light & makes you uneasy that he shd be such an earthen vessel.'(*The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vols VII-X*, ed. by Eleanor M. Tilton. (New York: Morningside Heights, Columbia University Press, 1939), VII, 149-50.

52 *Transatlantic Romanticism*, p. 13.

53 Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 15-16.

54 Ibid., p. 11.

55 Jerwood Centre Manuscript, WLMS A / Channing, William E / 1, William Ellery Channing to William Wordsworth, 4 March, 1935.

that seeking strength she had turned to the poems, "And here she found it—here she first began to drink those waters of peace."'[56]

Numerous other Americans joined the chorus of religious praise of Wordsworth. Atkinson, of West Roxbury, wrote to Wordsworth on 25 May, 1845, stating that 'in times of peculiar spiritual loneliness, when my mind was but half developed, my principles half formed, your words were more to me than anything save the Gospels.'[57] Lydia Sigourney, in response to Henry Reed's efforts for the Wordsworth memorial in Ambleside, wrote that she rejoiced 'in whatever does honour to hallowed genius, and strengthens the bonds of amity, between the two most Christian nations on earth.'[58] The religious connection between England and America was a clear reason for her celebration of Wordsworth.

The most fervent of Wordsworth's American correspondents, however, was another young woman, who later came to hold a strong position in New England society. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was a mere twenty-one years old when she first gathered the courage to write to the poet, lying about her age.[59] She had a thorough knowledge of his philosophy and his poetry – indeed, her letters, especially at first, are full of references to Wordsworth's works, including 'The Tables Turned', 'Ode to Duty', 'Intimations Ode' and *The Excursion.* In an introduction to the eight surviving letters from Peabody to Wordsworth, Margaret Neussendorfer notes that Peabody

> felt herself also to be the voice of America, speaking on behalf of the poet's audience across the Atlantic, to thank him for truths he had unveiled and inspiration he had given, to tell him of events and attitudes among his American readers, to suggest special conditions and desires that set New England apart from the Old.[60]

This was a fair representation of the young Peabody. In the most enthusiastic of her letters, she echoes Bancroft's notion that Wordsworth's poetry did not belong to England, but to all those sharing in the English language:

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56 Gill, *A Life*, pp. 398-99.

57 Jerwood Centre Manuscript, WLMS A / Atkinson, W.P. / 1, P. Atkinson to William Wordsworth, 25 May, 1845.

58 Jerwood Centre Manuscript, WLMS A / Davy, John / 7 / 13 b, Transcriptions of Letters by Henry Reed.

59 She introduced herself in her letter of 9 December, 1825 saying: 'I am an American girl of twenty-two, and have read your Poetical Works'. WLMS A / Peabody, Miss / 1.

60 Margaret Neussendorfer, 'Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to William Wordsworth: Eight Letters, 1825-1845', *Studies in the American Renaissance,* (1984), 181-211, (p. 182).

> You perceived my wish […] that you are the poet not of the English nation—but of the English language—that you were sent—divinely commissioned—to all to whom the language is nature—from the rising to *beyond* the setting sun—where they are *growing up* under all varieties of circumstance.[61]

Her conviction of Wordsworth's mission is unwavering, seeing him as a 'divinely commissioned' poet who transcended both divisions of language and of geographical place. She would later write to him to say that his 'voice reverses the common law of nature, and seems fresher, younger & more birdlike as earth recedes & time changes into Eternity.'[62] In that same letter, she also confirms his reach as a 'prophet of the nation', calling him 'the Columbus of Poetry':

> & how truly may your disciples put in your claim as the Columbus of Poetry on whom a New World has opened with its mines & solitudes.—I would even say more—as the Messiah of the reign of the Saints—a true Christian prophet—[63]

If Peabody did indeed see herself as the voice of America, then calling Wordsworth 'the Messiah of the reign of the Saints' and further, 'a true Christian prophet', placed his reception in America exactly where he saw himself. His self-presentation was finally matched by the way he was perceived by his audience – and this image was independently fashioned. Wordsworth was a poet-prophet to the Americans, a mediator of the divine and a spiritual guide. This was no longer the passive *nabiy'* of the past who served merely as a vessel for God's word, this was an active and gifted agent whose personal relationship with nature delivered his readers into a proverbial Promised Land. This was precisely the sort of prophet that America needed and appropriated in Wordsworth – one who expressed the nation's 'special' relationship with God, when the 'Promised Land' was inextricably bound up to the reality of the vastness of the landscape.

That is not to say that this veneration of Wordsworth was unobstructed. As American Romanticism began to take shape, it did not rely solely on the prototypes set up by English Romanticism, though it did concern itself with it. Like Emerson, prior to the 1830s Americans were cautious in lavishing excessive praise, resulting in a movement in which 'the elements of

61 Peabody to Wordsworth, 27 March, 1829, Jerwood Centre Manuscript, WLMS A / Peabody, Miss / 2.
62 Peabody to Wordsworth, 7 September, 1835, Jerwood Centre Manuscript, WLMS A / Peabody, Miss / 3.
63 Ibid.

English romanticism not acceptable to the American temperament were winnowed out. Byron was banished before the period closed; Keats and Shelley neglected; Wordsworth and Coleridge were accepted with reservations; Hazlitt was attacked, Scott was welcomed.'[64] Wordsworth in particular was received with a mixed attitude, but one which warmed over the course of the nineteenth century. One of the major opponents of British Romanticism was Dr. McHenry, editor of the *American Monthly Magazine* published in Philadelphia. According to Charvat, he 'found incomprehensible all of the verse which had been inspired by Wordsworth or Coleridge.'[65] The tide turned in 1824, with the publication of the Boston edition of his works.[66] Reviewed by a certain Mr. Greenword, Wordsworth was praised for his 'language of nature' and lamented for having been 'unworthily neglected' up until this point. Individuals like Channing and Robert Sands also helped raise his profile, calling to both his religious ministry and the quality of his poetry. Charvat raises an important point: that Wordsworth has somehow won over the support of diverse branches of Christianity, thereby conquering the American market at the time:

> He had allied poetry of a high order with religion; he had succeeded in being didactic without losing his artistic integrity. In fact, his integrity was rooted in his didacticism. American criticism seemed to sigh that here at last was what it had been looking for: spirituality without unintelligibility, vitality without sensuality, edification with didacticism, good workmanship, and finally, a type of romance satisfying to every one in that it lifted the reader above common life without taking him out of it.[67]

It was that correlation—between spirituality and the common life—that allowed for his language to transcend the American public. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* had dispensed with high-brow eighteenth-century language, described life as is was, and invested in nature a private spirituality. Further, its radical politics was 'much more sympathetic to American democracy than British monarchy'.[68] Politically as well as historically, Wordsworth's poetry was resonating with a deeply receptive audience, through the medium of his publications, which, thanks to

64 William Charvat, *The Origins of American Critical Thought*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936) p. 3.

65 Charvat, p. 21. See Charvat for a fuller discussion of the nuances of the reception of English Romanticism in America.

66 Scott Harshbarger also argues for 1824 as the date in which America is no longer indifferent to Wordsworth's influence. Scott Harshbarger, 'Transatlantic Transcendentalism: The Wordsworth-Peabody-Hawthorne Connection', *The Wordsworth Circle,* 21 (1990), 123-26, (p. 123).

67 Charvat, p. 75.

68 *Transatlantic Romanticism*, p. 446.

Henry Reed, became widely accessible. Reed was, according to one American, 'the medium of communication between the literature of the New World and that of the Old.'[69] Statements such as this one signified the beginning of a national literature (though not without its exceptions) as defined against its predecessors: the need for a literature of the New World, a distinctively American literature, distinguishing itself from its British roots, had finally arisen. Wordsworth's biblical rhetoric was falling upon eager ears and open hearts.

Reviews of Wordsworth improved as more of his publications became available. In the January 1839 edition of the *New York Review*, an anonymous reviewer spoke of Wordsworth as a prophet, saying : 'Is it not a frailty in our nature, which withholds honor from the prophet familiarly living in the present household of the world?'[70] The *American Quarterly Review*, speaking on Wordsworth's initial poor reception, amended its view:

> He did not obtrude his advice or his opinions on the unwilling ear of society, nor enforce them with a ferocious audacity and impudence. Like the oracle, he stood aloof from human interests, and thence possessed a clearer judgment of things as they occurred. He hoarded wisdom, and drew experience from the views and vivid representations of his own intelligence; for the depths of a great soul that seem so dark, and strike with so much awe those who strive to fathom them, reflect with all the lustre and power of prophecy those two mighty fragments of time, the past and the future, and throw, as with a lens, their whole intensity on the present.[71]

Calling Wordsworth an oracle, the American reviewer saw that Wordsworth was patient with his readers until the matured into his poetry.

The beginnings of a truly 'American' literature arrived with Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant and James Fenimore Cooper. American environmental literature, however, began with Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. Thoreau's works—*Walden* in particular—have been argued by Weisbuch and others as American responses to Romanticism, so much so that he has been said to rework vignettes from Wordsworth into his own writing.[72] It is his essay 'Walking', however, which proves most insightful to an understanding of

69 Jerwood Centre Manuscript, WLMS A / Davy, John / 7 / 13 b, copied out in Henry Reed's hand. The writer of Rev. Dr Potter.

70 Review of 'The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, edited by Henry Reed', *New York Review*, 4, VII (January 1839), 1-70, (p. 2).

71 Review of 'Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems, by William Wordsworth, London: 1835', *American Quarterly Review*, 20, XXXIX (September and December 1836), 61-88, (p. 66-67).

72 Pace, 'Wordsworth in America', pp. 210, 213.

Wordsworth reception as a prophet in America.[73] At a time when many Americans were making their own pilgrimages to Europe, either to explore the well-known ruins or to visit the famous names of British literary culture, Thoreau contemplated the origins of such a process. Defending, in a very Wordsworthian way, the right to amble through a landscape, Thoreau took the time to ponder the origins of sauntering. To saunter, he said, is a word which is

> beautifully derived from the 'idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under the pretext of going *a la Sainte Terre*"—to the Holy Land, til the children exclaimed, "There goes a Sainterrer," a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean.[74]

Thoreau's etymology opens up a discourse which unites American and European heritage through the notion of a religious act – that of a pilgrimage. By referring to the medieval practice of going to the Holy Land in an essay about walking in the American landscape, Thoreau accomplishes several things. He at once makes walking an act that is both new and old: the discovery of what the landscape beyond his door holds was a practice that had much cultural and historical weight in Europe. He turns it into a spiritual, if not religious act, by reminding his readers of the sacredness of the earth: the *Sainte Terre* is not just the goal of pilgrimages, it is any land. And in doing so, he aligns the great American landscape with the Holy Land, addressing a deeply-rooted belief in the spiritually sanctioned notion that this was the American destiny. As Brian Yothers notes, here 'Thoreau detaches the term 'Holy Land' from any literal geographical associations and instead invests it with metaphorical significance.'[75] Walking thus contributes to an American self-fashioning as well as to a connection with nature. Thoreau strengthens the notion of being chosen within the American psyche by going on to state that every walk 'is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.'[76] Moving from a passive connection with medieval Europe to a more active call to action, Thoreau's vision of America as a New

73 'Walking' was also a form of dwelling, echoing God's 'walking' back and forth in the Garden of Eden as discussed in Chapter One, p. 32.

74 'Walking', *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, 20 vols (New York: AMS Press, 1968), V, 205.

75 Brian Yothers, *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790-1876* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 6.

76 'Walking', p. 206.

Israel becomes stronger: the 'Holy Land' to him was, rather problematically, something to be 'reconquered'.

The early American fascination with the Holy land began at the pulpit, with religious rhetoric embedding itself permanently in a national self-perception. Rejecting the maxims of the past, the promise of a new land appealed to many, among them Herman Melville and Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens). Both authors travelled to the Holy Land on their transatlantic voyages, and came to incorporate it in their writing, though more often than not, the Holy Land was only a trope, as it was for Thoreau. Although Melville's 1867 *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* was a complete flop, it was not the content but the delivery that caused it to fail. Two years later, Twain published his satirical novel *The Innocents Abroad, or, The New Pilgrim's Progress*, which was an immense success and sold '"right along" like the Bible.'[77] Yothers, in his book *Holy Land in American Travel Writings*, attempts to take up Obenzinger's quest 'for a way of imagining America that dispenses with the needs to associate it with a divine mission.'[78] The divine mission however, as Obenzinger argues, was precisely what America used to define itself, by conceiving itself as New Jerusalem typologically and metaphorically, and in doing so both challenged and reaffirmed 'America's narrative of settlement as divine errand.'[79]

But before it can be settled, a landscape must first be explored. The freedom which this requires was precisely what drew Thoreau to emphasise the uninhabited nature of the landscape:

> I can easily walk ten, fifteen, twenty, any number of miles, commencing at my own door, without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and the mink do: first along by the river, and then the brooks, and then the meadow and the wood-side. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant. From many a hill I can see civilization and the abodes of man afar.[80]

This unpopulated land is reminiscent of Wordsworth's idealised Lake District, which, though populated for centuries since the days of the druids, is prized for its remoteness: 'Hence these lakes and inner valleys are unadorned by any remains of ancient grandeur, castles, or monastic

77 Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. x.
78 Yothers, p. 3.
79 Obenzinger, p. x.
80 'Walking', p. 212.

edifices, which are only found upon the skirts of the country'.[81] Wordsworth was not, however, praising a virgin landscape without a community: he was as much a poet of listening and conversing with others. He praised it for the inhabitants' ability to live in harmony with the landscape. The lack of human interference with the landscape is praised as much by Thoreau as it is by Wordsworth, both making it the focal point of their inspiration. Thoreau brings Wordsworth directly into to this discussion by quoting the famous anecdote, also found as a vignette in *Walden*, where Wordsworth's servant girl, showing an American tourist around Rydal Mount, says: 'Here is his library, but his study is out of doors.'[82] Thoreau, like his Romantic predecessor, also made his study out of doors, and his subjects, when they entered into the picture, the marginalised. By including hermits and labourers alongside his own childhood memories, Thoreau engages with landscapes 'he has radically depopulated and selectively recolonized with expert locals, sympathetic marginal people, and various other iconic figures.'[83] Similarly, Wordsworth also 'colonises' his landscape with the marginalised, choosing to focus on the fringes, all the while idealising an agricultural, anti-industrial existence. This Thoreau would have appreciated and likely picked up. Likewise, his knowledge was local knowledge – not only of the paths he walked, but of the ferns, trees, and animal inhabitants. He had a surveyor's eye, in addition to a walker's and a dweller's knowledge. Writing at a time when natural theology was dwindling and the science of geography was beginning to gain credit, Thoreau's unique approach was echoing Wordsworth's. Much like his English predecessor, he simultaneously incorporated and eschewed the knowledge available to him, melding it with his own observations of the land as fragmentary but contradictingly unified.

Thoreau's vision of the landscape confirms the more general trope of *translatio studii*: by slowly moving west, and taking on the divinely-inspired mission of New Israel, America and New England in particular, was setting itself up as the seat of cultural exchange. In 'Walking',

81 *Guide to the Lakes*, p. 54.

82 'Walking', p. 210. 'When a traveller asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, "here is his library, but his study is out of doors." The passage in Walden reads: 'My "best" room, however, my withdrawing room, always ready for company, on whose carpet the sun rarely fell, was the pine wood behind my house.' 'Walden', *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, II, 157.

83 John S. Pipkin, 'Hiding Places: Thoreau's Geographies', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91 (2001), 527-45, (p. 539).

Thoreau said that moving East was for history, but to 'go westward', crossing the 'Lethean stream' of the Atlantic, was to go 'into the future,' with a spirit of enterprise and adventure'.[84] To Thoreau, as much as to his American readers, the West was also 'but another name for the Wild'. This was a sentiment that John Muir (originally Scottish) as much as Wordsworth would have agreed with, as 'wildness is the preservation of the world.'[85] Moving eastward, he stated, was 'only by force; but westward I go free.' By 'walking westward', Thoreau echoed Wordsworth's 1803 poem: the sky and the heavenly destiny lead him on.

The early Americans struggled to know what to do with the sense of landscape proposed before them: there was a quality of the unknown about it, much like vast portions of the European mountains, but this lack of knowledge was accompanied by an 'uncontainedness', a vastness that allowed for a greater imaginative capacity, as the term 'American frontier' indicated. Here was a nation whose intrinsic and fundamental belief stemmed from a group of people who called themselves 'Pilgrims' and gave themselves blind into a vast and unknown wilderness, and who fostered a cultural—and even national—belief that they were 'the chosen nation'. Although such a belief was not the first (England around Milton's time, Poland during the eighteenth century, and the Millenialism of certain sects in the late 1700s followed a similar messianic trope) it was underpinned by a strong rhetoric and belief that America's destiny as a New Israel (or, indeed, a New England) was chosen by God, and was going to be fulfilled:

> So we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun will shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bankside in autumn.[86]

Onto this ground of virgin landscapes, vacant spaces and open minds and hearts, Wordsworth's ideas were planted.

Wordsworth's opinion of America hardened when in 1838, a Mississippi financier sold two million dollars' worth of stocks – some of which belonged to him and his family. Although he had numerous American friends (and an even larger 'following' as his letters show) including

84 'Walking', p. 218.
85 Ibid., p. 224.
86 'Walking', p. 217; 247-48.

Henry Reed, Elizabeth Peabody and Ralph Waldo Emerson, from as early as 1833 he expressed a dissatisfaction in the democratic project abroad. In his published account *English Traits*, Emerson quoted Wordsworth as having said:

> There may be […] in America some vulgarity in manner, but that's not important. That comes of the pioneer state of things. But I fear they are too much given to the making of money; and secondly, to politics; that they make political distinction the end, and not the means. And I fear they lack a class of men of leisure,—in short, of gentlemen,—to give a tone of honor to the community.[87]

As a result, Emerson termed Wordsworth as giving the 'impression of a narrow and very English mind'. Thoreau initially took his cue from Emerson's opinion of Wordsworth, which in turn hardened towards the British poet when Henry Reed published a series of personal correspondences with the poet in Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs* of the poet. In those letters, Wordsworth unabashedly revealed his opinions of American transcendentalism: 'Where is the thing which now passes for philosophy at Boston to stop?' Until recently, it was assumed that Emerson and Thoreau read the English publications of the *Memoirs*, but as Joel Pace's thorough research proved, both had access to the Boston edition with Reed's added letters. Pace also discovered an early erased laudatory note in Emerson's own copy of Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality,' probably removed in line with his later offence at Wordsworth's opinion of the transcendentalists.[88]

Wordsworth's reception in America differed significantly from that in Britain because of the access his readers had to his works. The poet received a mixed reception throughout his life: both praised and criticised for his radical politics in the 1790s, heavily critiqued for his middle years (particularly *The Excursion*), and finally recognised and appointed Poet Laureate in old age.[89] His *Excursion* was much more warmly received in America than in Britain (though some,

87 'English Traits', *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Philip Nicoloff et al., 10 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994) V. p. 10.

88 Pace, 'Wordsworth in America', p. 132. The erased comment reads: 'The Ode is truly noble, it will redeem volumes of absurdities. There is Wonderful eloquence of sentiment if any distinction might be made, in the V & the XI stanzas.'

89 For Wordsworth's British criticism, see N.S. Bauer, *William Wordsworth: A Reference Guide to British Criticism, 1793-1899* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978), James V. Logan, *Wordsworthian Criticism: A Guide and Bibliography* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1961) and Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For a detailed version of his American reception, Joel Pace's thesis (1999) provides the most up-to-date account. The only book published on the topic is the outdated *Wordsworth in Early American Criticism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1928) by

like Emerson, had their views tainted by the British reviewers) while his 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' was taught as theological curriculum in some schools.[90] In fact, Emerson referred to it as 'the high-water-mark which the intellect has reached in this age.'[91] By elevating the Ode almost to the level of Scripture, Wordsworth was granted a prophetic quality. His less-than-positive opinions of America were kept mainly to himself and his correspondents, while his poetry spoke of a different 'west'. The Solitary who 'leapt ashore' upon American soil with resolve to 'be a Man' and drove westward to be-rid himself of his past ('having o'er the past no power, would live | No longer in subjection to the past, | With abject mind') returns in abjection, having been deluded by the American promise.[92] Americans sought the wildness of the landscape of the frontier to fulfil their destiny, and Wordsworth was the poet to point them in this direction. The power of an uncultivated landscape did not compare to anything in Europe, and they had this to be proud of:

> Can aught produced
> In the old World compare, thought I, for power
> And majesty with this gigantic Stream,
> Sprung from the Desart? And behold, a City
> Fresh, youthful, and aspiring![93]

Like the image of the City arisen from the clouds in *The Excursion*, so many early Americans saw the landscape as infused with futurity: it was to them a symbol of potential, possibility, freedom and above all, detachment from the past. Thus, Stephen Fender's argument in *Sea Changes* that the American landscape provided two views—one of the future, and one of the sublime—was contradictory; the 'detachment' thus from the Old World was not really so detached after all, as the sublime required a lineage of European commentary on the landscape. Despite the claims to detach an American audience from its European parent, Tennenhouse's argument holds: the Americans were more British than we presumed, and they used their landscape as a replacement for what Europe had – history. This was the difficult and strained parent-offspring

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Annabel Newton. Chapters 1 and 2 of John L. Mahoney's book, *Wordsworth and the Critics: The Development of a Critical Reputation* (Rochestery NY: Camden House, 2001) also address his American reception.

90 Channing and Peabody in particular promoted Wordsworth's poems in their education and school.

91 'English Traits', 168.

92 *Excursion*, III. 879-83.

93 Ibid., III. 889-93.

relationship that America inherited, once mimicking while attempting to distinguish itself from its heritage.

This struggle across the Atlantic occurred at a time when the Romantic-era writers were turning their poetry to the splendours of the natural world, but also struggling to move away and beyond the rules set out by the neo-classics. Through the work of scholars like Lowth and, in part, Blair, who was hugely influential in the States, they sought—and found—a new literary model, one that was inaccessible before due to the obscurity of the poetry and the techniques used.[94] Now that these were brought to light, the Bible's—Old Testament's—approach to landscape fitted the fervour of the Romantics. America in the mid- to late-nineteenth century plays with and picks up on both traditions in a novel way, and for its citizens, and the New England Transcendentalists in particular, Wordsworth became a figurehead.

IV

> To appreciate Wordsworth, one must have a soul attuned more or less keenly to the gentler and sweeter harmonies of nature; capable of relishing the pleasures of a sentiment which is meditative and reflective; one must be able to see and feel that the natural world, all around, is typical, almost sacramental; shadowing forth and as it were, breathing into the soul, holy truths. […] A strong love of his poetry, is evidence of a very high order of intellect. Neither a weak man, or a very bad one, will ever admire him; although very weak and very bad men have admired such poets as Byron and Burns. Wordsworth is unquestionably the great poet of this century. […] This poem […] will be read with great pleasure by all his admirers.[95]

The Prelude overwhelmed the American reading public with an almost religious zeal, appealing to both the religious and the intellectual. One can imagine the multitudes of American readers, strewn in their homes across the country, while in their hands lay open for the first time the recently published edition of William Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, or, *Growth of a Poet's Mind, An*

94 Hugh Blair's sermons were read with regular voracity across curricula in the US: 'While our English professors were teaching us out of Blair's *Rhetoric*, we were forming our taste by making copious extracts from Sir Thomas Browne, or Ben Jonson. Our real professors of rhetoric were Charles Lamb and Coleridge, Walter Scott and Wordsworth', as quoted by James Freeman Clarke regarding the 'unofficial' curriculum at Harvard in the 1830s. See Perry Miller, *The Transcendentalists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 47, and Lance Newman, 'Wordsworth in America and the Nature of Democracy', *The New England Quarterly*, 74 (1999), 517-538.

95 A.C. Heitmann, 'The Prelude: Or Growth of a Poet's Mind', *Church Review and Ecclesiastical Register* III, no. 3 (1850), p. 464.

Autobiographical Poem. Familiar with his other poems, at times living by them as if they were the teachings of the Gospels, the readers turned the pages to behold a poet-prophet, speaking to them from across the ocean using language which echoed their own religious upbringing:

> —to the open fields I told
> A prophecy:—poetic numbers came
> Spontaneously, to clothe in priestly rove
> A renovated Spirit singled out,
> Such hope was mine, for holy services.[96]

The calling resonated strongly with their national rhetoric of Liberty and a land of possibility. Here was a man, 'Free as a bird to settle where [he] will, […] with a heart | Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty'.[97] Unbound by residence or occupation, he expressed the freedom to choose his own place and vocation, like their ancestors did before them:

> whither shall I turn,
> By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
> Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
> Upon the River point me out my course?[98]

Recognising the responsibility, he makes his choice 'Of a known Vale', and 'as a Pilgrim resolute' takes 'the road that pointed tow'rd the chosen Vale.' American readers would have recognised not only the 'Pilgrim' but also the dark-skinned boy bathing in the stream, 'A naked Savage' 'bronzed with the deepest radiance', standing 'Beneath the sky, as if [he] had been born | On Indian plains'.[99] By the publication of the 1850 *Prelude* in America, the late Wordsworth, the poet-prophet nursed by a river, was the 'lasting inspiration' upon the English-speaking world.[100]

Unbeknownst to him, after his death, Wordsworth became the 'Prophet of Nature' he set himself the task of becoming. His poetry, ringing in American and British ears, also resonated with the sounds of Sunday's preachings. It was at once familiar and new. His professed love of nature, local topography and place demonstrated 'how the mind of Man becomes | A thousand times more beautiful than the earth | On which he dwells.'[101] It was not

96 *Fourteen-Book Prelude,* I. 50-53.
97 Ibid., I. 9-15.
98 Ibid., I. 27-30.
99 Ibid., I. 295-300.
100 Ibid., XIV. 447.
101 Ibid., XIV. 450-52.

the earth around him that evoked such affect, but his experience of it. Wordsworth's poetry is at its core, deeply phenomenological, and as such, reliant on his mind's ability to absorb, internalise, and then recreate his perceptions. Moved by nature in a new way, his Moses-like status allowed him to deliver the torch of eco-sensitivity to his American heirs. Receiving instruction from God through nature, as a prophet-poet, he translated it into the language of comment men—familiar, biblical—and passed it on to those living in their own Promised Lands, be they of Grasmere or Concord. By reading the Bible as literature, as Lowth had done, Wordsworth's poetry merged the sacred with the secular. He was a prophet not restricted to the vatic requirement of foretelling only of the future: his poetry concerned itself with dwelling in his home in the Vale of Grasmere; with the mountain visions and uttering streams. He was, and shall remain, a poet of the present moment.

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