‘The most affecting eloquence’: Wordsworth and Silence

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

TRINITY TERM, 2013

ABSTRACT

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term, 2013

This thesis is the first close study of Wordsworth and silence. It uncovers the comprehensive investigation into monastic history and hagiography (with special emphasis on St Basil) that Wordsworth engaged in between 1807 and 1810, showing that the type of silence he valued came from the monastic tradition. I trace Wordsworth's material commitment to the power of silence through his use of hermit figures and his habit of visiting ruined monasteries. I concentrate on the poetry he composed from 1807 onwards and mark his eight-month residence in 1806-7 at the home of Sir George and Lady Beaumont as the locus at which his intensive interest in monasticism germinated. I thus reveal a new dimension to this important patronal relationship, while additionally offering an analysis of a previously unstudied manuscript pamphlet ('An account of an English Hermit' by Thomas Barnard) which Lady Beaumont sent to the Wordsworths in 1809. I show how Wordsworth's fascination with monastic sites and silence influenced his understanding of linguistic and political representation, inheritance, community, and pastoral retreat. At the same time, this critical attention to silence aids a revaluation of the religious vision of his work.

The thesis uses this historical and biographical information as a means of closely reassessing formal, linguistic, and generic features of Wordsworth's poetry. At its root, my work is about the natures of language, poetic representation, and readerly experience. How does Wordsworth communicate via silence? How does he use silence to 'create the taste' for his poetry? Where does silence impact on his renovation of genre and conceptions of form? I conclude that, for Wordsworth, silence is a positive gathering of stillness from within that is nourished by patterns of repeated activity and community. It is one of his most profound heuristic tools.

Word Count: 91,507

And further; by contemplating these Forms
In the relations which they bear to Man,
He shall discern, how, through the various means
Which silently they yield, are multiplied
The spiritual Presences of absent Things

(Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV. 1224-8)

I can say nothing higher of my ever dear Brother than that he was worthy of his Sister who is now weeping beside me, and of the friendship of Coleridge; meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a Poet in every thing but words.

(Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, 11 February, 1805)

Quiet then, […] is the first step in our sanctification […]. Thus the mind, saved from dissipation from without, and not through the senses thrown upon the world, falls back upon itself, and thereby ascends to the contemplation of God.

(Letter of St Basil of Cappadocia to St Gregory of Nazianzus, c. 358 CE)

Only a quiet man can be happy—only a quiet man can be holy. Holiness is quietness for ever.

(Letter of Frederick William Faber to Lord John Manners, 25 January, 1839)

If I have spoken I have not said what I wished to say. Whence do I know this, except because God is ineffable? If what I said were ineffable, it would not be said. And for this reason God should not be said to be ineffable. For when this is said something is said. And a contradiction in terms is created, since if that is not ineffable which cannot be spoken, then that is not ineffable which can be called ineffable. This contradiction is to be passed over in silence rather than resolved verbally.

(Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, c. 397 CE)

He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
Through consciousness that silence in such place
Was best,—the most affecting eloquence.

(Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV. 414-16)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Fellows of St John's College, Oxford, for the award of a Lamb and Flag Scholarship which enabled me to undertake doctoral study, and for the Special Grants, Academic Grants, and the Alister Sutherland Award that allowed me to make research trips to Grasmere and Switzerland. I am also obliged to the Trustees of The Wordsworth Trust for permission to transcribe their manuscripts. Jeff Cowton and Rebecca Turner made my trip to the Jerwood Centre an absolute pleasure.

My greatest debt of gratitude is to Jon Roberts, through whose inspirational teaching I first encountered Wordsworth. Jon is responsible for a greater amount of my intellectual growth than I could ever thank him for. Fiona Stafford has been a wonderful academic role model; I could not have wished for a more hard-working, supportive, and encouraging supervisor. The wisdom, generosity, and kindnesses of Stephen Gill are immeasurable; it has been a privilege to receive his guidance. I am also indebted to Ying Roberts for her friendship and to Paul Baines for his support during my time at the University of Liverpool. Thank you to Barbara Harvey, who provided important information on the history of monasticism, and to Clare Tilbury who generously offered excellent observations about the Winter Garden at Coleorton. Seamus Perry has carefully assessed the development of this thesis to its great benefit; Roger D. Sell and Thomas Keymer offered incisive comments on a draft of Chapter Five for which I am grateful.

I am also obliged to the convenors and attendees of Romantic Realignments for their companionship and stimulation—James Castell, Judyta Frodyma, Lucy Kellett, and Olivia Reilly. Many friends have helped in numerous ways; in particular I would like to thank Simon Bishop, Olivia Bliss, Suzannah Hexter, Sophie Howarth, Richard Hutton, Rosie Mulqueen, Raye Ng, Alison Tedcastle, Julia Tejblum, Bonnie Wulff and Philip Wulff. Micha Lazarus's sharp intellect has kept me on my toes and his wit has kept my spirits up; he has been a great friend. I did not know the true value of the skills I learned from Jean Graves until I arrived in Oxford. I could not have written this thesis without Tom Owens. Like Wordsworth's poetry, he shows me how to feel and how to see what is most important. I am in awe of his talents and wish that I could sufficiently thank him for all we have shared. His incomparable friendship has shaped every sentence.

The thesis is dedicated to my family. They come before everything else and for them I have always tried to be the best that I can be.

ABBREVIATIONS

De Selincourt *Journals*	*Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt, 2 vols. (1941; repr. London: Macmillan, 1952)
DWJ	*The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. by Pamela Woof (2002; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
Excursion	*The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007)
EY	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, ed. by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967)
Fourteen-Book Prelude	*The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985)
Grosart Prose	*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by A. B. Grosart, 3 vols. (London, 1876)
HCR Diaries	*Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. by Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. (London, 1869)
IF Notes	*The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared R. Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993)
Last Poems	*Last Poems, 1821-1850*, ed. by Jared R. Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999)
A Life	Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (1989; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)
LY i	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years pt. I, 1821-1828*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978)
LY ii	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years pt. II, 1829-1834*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979)
LY iii	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years pt. III, 1835-1839*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982)

LY iv	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years pt. IV, 1840-1853*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988)
Lyrical Ballads	*Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992)
MY i	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years pt. I, 1806-1811*, ed. by Mary Moorman (Oxford, Clarendon, 1969)
MY ii	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years pt. II, 1812-1820,* ed. by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970)
P2V	*Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared R. Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983)
Prose	*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974)
Shorter Poems	*Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*, ed. by Carl H. Ketcham (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989)
SL	*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: a Supplement of New Letters*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993)
Sonnet Series	*Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845*, ed. by Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004)
Thirteen-Book Prelude	*The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by Mark L. Reed, 2 vols. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), I
W's Library	Chester L. Shaver and Alice C. Shaver, *Wordsworth's Library: A Catalogue, Including a List of Books Housed by Wordsworth and Coleridge from c. 1810 to c. 1830* (New York and London: Garland, 1979)
W's Reading I	Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading, 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
W's Reading II	Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading, 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

NOTE ON STYLE AND TEXTS

As far as possible I have prepared this thesis in accordance with the MHRA style guide (2nd edition, 2008). Unless otherwise stated, all quotation of Wordsworth's poetry is from the 'Reading Texts' in the Cornell Wordsworth Series; line numbers appear in parentheses in the text and also (where appropriate) page references appear in footnotes to aid the reader (for example, to distinguish between the *Thirteen-Book* and *Fourteen-Book* versions of *The Prelude*). All quotation of the Bible is taken from the *Authorised King James Version*, most recently edited by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett.

A version of Chapter One was presented at the Wordsworth Summer Conference, 2011, and subsequently appeared as 'Wordsworth's Poetic Cells: Hermits, Silence, and Language', in *Grasmere 2011*, ed. by Richard Gravil (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2011), pp. 80–91. Sections of Chapters Three and Four are developments of 'Prospects of Contemplation: Wordsworth's Winter Garden at Coleorton, 1806-1811', *European Romantic Review*, 24 (2013), 307–15, which I presented at the NASSR conference, University of Neuchâtel, 2012. Thanks are due to delegates of both conferences for helpful discussions.

INTRODUCTION

> It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of Poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of Poetry in my sense of the word is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.[1]

Wordsworth's *Poems, in Two Volumes* were prepared for the press over the winter of 1806-7 while the Wordsworth family were residing at Coleorton, the Leicestershire estate of Sir George and Lady Beaumont. A month after the volumes appeared, Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont (who was at that time staying at Grosvenor Square, London) to assure her that he was in no way deterred by the derisive reviews that had already been written because the reviewers were

> altogether incompetent judges. These people in the senseless hurry of their idle lives do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them that they may talk about them. And even if this were not so, never forget what I believe was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste; but for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy, and misguided, and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be a work *of time* [Wordsworth's italics].[2]

This letter anticipates Wordsworth's public pronouncements of his poetic project: he would explain his endeavour to produce poetry that 'might live' in the Preface to *The Excursion* (1814), and he would expand his discussion of the necessity of 'creating the

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[1] Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, 21 May 1807, *MY i*., p. 146.
[2] ibid, p. 150. Reviews of *Poems, in Two Volumes* include Francis Jeffrey, *Edinburgh Review*, 11 (1807); Lord Byron, *Monthly Literary Recreations*, 3 (July 1807); *The Critical Review*, 3rd Series, 11 (August 1807); *The Literary Annual Register*, 1 (October 1807); *Satirist* (November 1807); *Literary Panorama*, (November 1807).

taste by which he [was] to be enjoyed' in the Preface to his 1815 *Poems*.[3] In an important sense, this letter also encapsulates the purposes of this thesis. At its root, the thesis is an explanation of how and why Wordsworth attempted to 'create the taste' for his poetry; it is about the nature of Wordsworthian poetic communication, representation, and linguistic suggestion; it is an attempt to analyse the complicity Wordsworth aimed to cultivate between the reader and himself, and why he framed this in terms of 'reverence for God'. I contend that silence constitutes the basis of Wordsworth's heuristic task.

Silence is a form of communication that depends on the interpretative acuity of its apprehender. Silent communication works at one remove from images and words; this freedom from mediation gives it greater efficacy to penetrate the listener's emotional consciousness. The impulses of silence solicit collaboration; silence is fulfilled and understood when it is felt and shared. Wordsworth's silences draw the apprehender in by subordinating the eye to the heart and the ear. Once this has happened, the text becomes subsidiary so that Wordsworth is able to say:

> Enough of science and of art;
> Close up these barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives. (29-32)[4]

George Steiner identifies the lyrics of Friedrich Hölderlin as the first to embrace the paradox inherent in a poet's renunciation of books and words:

> The strategic myth of the philosopher who chooses silence because of the ineffable purity of his vision or because of the unreadiness of his audience, has antique precedent. […] But the poet's choice of silence, the writer relinquishing his articulate enactment of identity in mid-course, is something new.[5]

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[3] *Excursion*, p. 38, and *Prose*, vol. 3, 80.
[4] *Lyrical Ballads*, 'The Tables Turned', p. 109.
[5] The revaluation of silence as a positive presence (not a negation) began with Hölderlin and is evident in the epistemology of Wittgenstein, the aesthetics of Weburn and Cage, and the poetics of Beckett: George Steiner, *Language and Silence, essays 1958-1966*, abridged edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp. 68 and 70.

Wordsworth was convinced of the unpreparedness of his audience and, as I will go on to argue, his particular formulation of silence in poetry, which is created linguistically, formally, and generically, goes some way towards overcoming the contradiction that Steiner expresses.

However, Wordsworth was embroiled in another paradox that he could not break. It is precisely because of Wordsworth's emphasis on silence, quiet things, and the skills involved in appreciating them, that he had to 'create the taste' for his poetry. And yet, silence itself was one of his chosen means of cultivating that taste. Wordsworth was bound by this circularity. The lessons that the Wanderer provides for the Solitary throughout *The Excursion* demonstrate most thoroughly Wordsworth's careful thinking about this problem.

*

Silences in Wordsworth's poetry are religious in character insofar as they indicate his instinctual faith in the presence of something hidden, distant, or indistinct. In the Ode ('There was a time') and 'On the Power of Sound', he specifically defines an 'eternal Silence' as divine.[6] In this way, a 'feeling' of the suggestive qualities of poetic language—which points towards something greater than it appears to be—begins to resemble 'reverence for God'. Furthermore, the thesis is religiously inflected in that I locate the origin of the type of silence Wordsworth valued in the monastic tradition. However, this is not a study of what Wordsworth believed, nor am I concerned by what readers might deduce from any doctrinal pronouncement he may (or may not) have made in letters, prose, or poetry.

[6] Ode ('There was a time'), *P2V*, p. 276, line 158; 'On the Power of Sound', *Last Poems*, pp. 123-4, lines 209-24.

Aubrey De Vere's reminiscence of Wordsworth reveals Isabella Fenwick's opinion of the poet's faith:

> A flippant person present inquired, "Did you ever chance, Miss [Fenwick], to observe that heavenly expression on [Wordsworth's] countenance, as he was walking into church, on a fine May morning?" A laugh was the reply.[7]

Perhaps Miss Fenwick laughed because she knew that Wordsworth disliked attending church in general, or perhaps the detail of the 'fine May morning' made her incredulous that Wordsworth would give up the natural world to worship indoors when the weather was good. It is possible that Fenwick suspected Wordsworth did not fully adhere to a definable set of religious precepts, or, if he did believe, that his faith was amorphous. In any case, the laugh is evasive; it is a nonverbal expression of emotion that potentially has a multitude of causes and meanings. This anecdote is a useful way of thinking about Wordsworth's relationship with religion and the Church specifically because the ambiguity of Fenwick's laughter encapsulates critical inability to determine the answers. Attempts to codify Wordsworth's "religion" have been systematically inconclusive.[8]

Wordsworth's private letters, public prose, and various published and manuscript versions of the poetry (which evolved as he tinkered with them over decades) reveal differently nuanced statements or suggestions that make it difficult for scholars to establish any settled picture of his "religious" life. For example, Wordsworth proclaimed his outright opposition to Catholic Emancipation in his personal correspondence; he made public assertions of his humanitarian position in documents such as the Appendix to the 'Postscript' of *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* (1835), and his poetry includes a spectrum of implicitly and explicitly religious

[7] *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 499. De Vere's reminiscence is dated 1876.
[8] For an account of these studies see Chapter Five. Stephen Gill claims that any such attempt 'runs exactly counter to what the poetry is and does', see *William Wordsworth's The Prelude: A Casebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 41.

or spiritual material. It is difficult to ignore potential overlap and incongruity between Wordsworth's beliefs, his public role, and his poetic identity.[9] Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (1851) propelled this entanglement between private, public, and poetic by claiming that all of Wordsworth's life had already been written in his published works: 'Regarding the Poems as his Life, the author of these volumes considers it to be his duty to endeavour to supply materials, subordinate and ministerial to the Poems, and illustrative of them; in a word, to write a biographical commentary on the Poet's work'.[10] According to the authorised biographer, factual detail can only supplement the subjective content of the poetry, which contains everything.[11] More recently, Stephen Prickett offered the similar opinion that any document expressing the poet's 'ideas' should be given equal weight, but that somehow all the ideas manage to infiltrate the 'verse':

> The notion of differentiating a poet's "ideas" from his "verse" would have seemed [to Wordsworth and Coleridge] to be challenging the whole concept of poetry as the product of an organically unified sensibility. This kind of distinction put forward by both Carlyle and Arnold would have implied to them a lack of seriousness about the nature of poetry itself, and a fundamental devaluation of its status.[12]

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[9] For example Wordsworth writes to Francis Wrangham in 1813: 'I cannot act with those who see no danger to the constitution in introducing Papists into Parliament'. A month later Dorothy makes the explicit point to Catherine Clarkson: 'William is decidedly against the Catholics, and I think he would convince you if you had an hour's talk with him and you *shall*, and you *must* have it next summer' [Dorothy's italics]: *MY ii*., pp. 108 and 116. The Appendix to the 'Postscript' of *Yarrow Revisited* appears in *Prose*, vol. 3, 260-74. William Ulmer, for example, attempts to map Wordsworth's faith onto his poetry and the result is a complaint that: 'the motives and meaning of Wordsworth's imaginative recourse to Christianity can appear teasingly ambiguous': *The Christian Wordsworth 1798-1805* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), p. ix. The most valuable studies I have encountered on Religion in terms of Wordsworth's poetry after 1814 are those by Alan G. Hill. These are listed in the bibliography.

[10] Christopher Wordsworth (Jnr), *The Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, 2 vols. (London, 1851), vol.1, 3.

[11] There has been systematic disagreement about the religious nature of Wordsworth's poetry beginning with nineteenth-century reception of *The Excursion* and *Ecclesiastical Sketches*. John Wilson's essay of 1842 defines 'Sacred Poetry' in terms of the reader's experience, not its doctrinal content. Wilson concludes that *The Excursion* is unaided by the inspiration of Revealed Religion, and while it contains a very high religion, it is not Christianity. *Ecclesiastical Sketches* on the other hand 'are sacred poetry indeed': Christopher North, 'Sacred Poetry', in *Recreations of Christopher North*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842), vol. 2, 345 and 360.

[12] Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 4-5.

Scholars have been caught in a spiral of biographical and poetic detail that does not seem to cohere.[13]

On several occasions Wordsworth stated theoretical connections between poetry and religion. For example, in the 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' of 1815, he drew an analogy between the symbols of the church and poetic language in terms of their shared roles as vessels of infinite substances.[14] In 1824, Wordsworth stated that 'all great poets are […] powerful religionists' because the imaginative capacity is by its infinite creative nature, religious.[15] But despite Wordsworth's use of religion to explain the inner workings of poetic creation, I am aware that poetry is unlike religion, and imagination is unlike faith. There are differences between faith—which is itself both private and communal—and the poetic construction of faith.

My aim has been to decipher relations between language, sound and silence, poetic suggestion, and doctrinal concept without being methodologically constrained by a desire to systematize Wordsworth's beliefs. The chapters that follow draw on aspects of monasticism, hesychasm, Quietism, Quakerism, Negative Theology, and Tractarianism. They do so with an aim, not of determining Wordsworth's denominational allegiances, but of throwing light on how he understood the materials with which poetry is made and the type of communication silence enables. The attempt to discover the reasons why Wordsworth conceives of poetry in religious terms constitutes the religious dimension of my work.

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[13] Jonathan Roberts has opened a way out of this problem by focusing on Wordsworth's 'religious experience' rather than 'religion': 'Wordsworth and Religious Experience', in *The Oxford Handbook to William Wordsworth*, ed. by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
[14] *Prose*, vol. 3, 65.
[15] *LY ii*., p. 245

Studies of silence in literature, religion, and philosophy are, more often than not, rooted in suspicion: on the one hand, silence is considered as a mode of concealment, suppression or exclusion; on the other hand, silence results from distrust of language.[16] For example, Dairmaid MacCulloch's history of silence in Christianity adopts the tenor of the Old Testament in which silence signifies destruction, subjection, and death; silent prayer was a controversial custom, and Yahweh usually expressed His presence via emphatic noise.[17] Although the New Testament, to some extent, reverses these negative connotations of silence with the image of the 'suffering servant' and the story of Martha and Mary, MacCulloch retains the balance of suspicion by focusing on acts of secrecy and repression exacted by the Christian Church in recent centuries.[18] Moreover, silence in the monastic tradition has been interpreted as a metaphor for detachment from and disregard for society.[19] Asceticism originated in the Hellenistic world as a term for the rigour of an artisan's skill or an athlete's training; it entered the Christian tradition via Plato's assertion of the soul's immortality and Stoicism's indifference to worldly incident.[20]

Conversely, Raoul Mortley has traced how, in the history of Greek philosophical thought, there began to develop a mistrust of discourse and a corresponding belief that lack of words could convey the deepest meanings.[21] The dilution and distraction of written language, attested by Philo, Socrates, and Pythagoras,

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[16] This matches the majority of the senses of 'silence' in the *OED*: 'silence, v.', (senses 1-6) and 'silence, n.' (sense 3), *OED Online*, 2013 (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/> [accessed 21 June 2013].
[17] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence: a Christian History* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), pp. 1-21.
[18] The 'righteous servant' of Isaiah 53 is identified as Jesus in Acts of the Apostles, ibid, p. 22. The story of Martha and her sister Mary, who sat in quiet attendance of Jesus appears in Luke, 11: 38-42.
[19] Oliver Davies, 'Soundings: towards a theological poetics of silence', in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, ed. by Oliver Davies and Denys Turners (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 201-22, (p. 209).
[20] Karl Suso Frank, *With greater liberty: a short history of Christian monasticism and religious orders*, trans. by Joseph T. Lienhard (Kalamazo: Cistercian Publications, 1993), pp. 19-22. On Wordsworth and Stoicism see Jane Worthington, *Wordsworth's Reading of Roman Prose* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946).
[21] Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, 2 vols. (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), vol. 1, 94-112.

permeated theological accounts of God as the unspeakable, real essence.[22] Apophatic Theology, for instance, which is framed in terms of negations, has the potential to lead to nihilism, leaving one with nothing to believe in.[23] Thus, the treatment of silence has been troped in terms of omission, repression, and disavowal of the world; while language has been sullied as limited, defective, and incapacious.

These two veins of suspicion, both leading to silence, map onto literary theoretical treatments of Wordsworth. Firstly, he has been reproached for allegedly obscuring and suppressing political or religious contexts in favour of a 'Romantic Ideology'.[24] New Historicist critics, focusing especially on Wordsworth's description of his visit to Tintern Abbey in July 1798, argued that gaps or absences in his poetry are spaces where he excluded social circumstances in favour of his own transcendent vision.[25] Wordsworth's retirement to Grasmere in December 1799 has equally been interpreted as neglect of politics.[26] Alan Liu asserts that Wordsworth's greatest theme is the denial of history; Wordsworth communicates the underlying chasms of history through ideas such as nature, time, affection, imagination, and self.[27] In claiming this, New Historicists reacted against influential studies such as Geoffrey Hartman's

[22] ibid, p. 122.
[23] J. P. Williams, *Denying Divinity: Apophasis in the Patristic Christian and Soto Zen Buddhist Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 8-9.
[24] Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and Clifford Siskin, *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[25] For example, Kenneth Johnston, 'The Politics of "Tintern Abbey"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 14 (1983), 6–14; Marjory Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 14-57.
[26] Such issues are covered by Nicholas Roe in, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) and *The Politics of Nature: Wordsworth and Some Contemporaries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).
[27] Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 39 and 48.

Wordsworth's Poetry and M. H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism*, which analysed these transcendent Romantic concepts in a framework of 'Romantic' assumptions.[28]

Wordsworth's pronouncements about the adequacy of books as physical vessels of thought, and his doubt about the capacity of words to represent the ideas in the mind of the speaker (particularly as they are expressed in Book V of *The Prelude* and the *Essays upon Epitaphs*) meant that he came under fire from deconstructionist critics, who reduced the concepts of time, nature, imagination, and even history to linguistic constructs, ultimately empty of emotion and meaning.[29] For example, in reference to Wordsworth's presentation of deprivation and grief, Paul de Man claims that 'death is a displaced name for a linguistic predicament'.[30] Deconstructionists focused on struggles between presence and absence, voice and the annulling, textual silencing of voice.

More recently, negative interpretations of silence were adopted in a collection of essays edited by Fiona Price and Scott Masson, entitled *Silence, sublimity, and suppression in the Romantic Period*, which is the only book-length study of Romantic literature and silence.[31] Wordsworth scholars have joined this discourse of suppression. For example, Adam Potkay has interpreted Emily's silence in *The White Doe of Rylstone* as a sign that she has no consciousness, no character, and acts as a blank

[28] Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*, (1964; repr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
[29] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Frances Ferguson, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Paul de Man, 'Time and History in Wordsworth', *Diacritics*, 17 (1987), 4–17; Cynthia Chase, 'Monument and Inscription: Wordsworth's "Lines"', *Diacritics*, 17 (1987), 66–77.
[30] 'Autobiography as De-facement', *Modern Language Notes*, 94 (1979), 919–930 (p. 930).
[31] Fiona L. Price and Scott Masson, *Silence, Sublimity, and Suppression in the Romantic Period* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2002).

absentee. Evan Radcliffe has congruously claimed that Emily's silence denotes passivity and inefficacy.[32]

The interpretation of silence as omission and suppression, or as an expression of the emptiness of language, has pervaded critical reception of Wordsworth in recent decades. However, while I do not deny that Wordsworth had significant anxieties about language, one of the purposes of my study is to show that, in fact, he uses silence neither as an antidote to this inadequacy, nor as a signal of negation or renunciation.[33] This study began in dissatisfaction with highly theorized readings of Wordsworth. One of my implicit aims is to show that, through a comprehensive understanding of the presence and uses of silence, Wordsworth's struggle with language, his evasion or elision of politics, and his reclusion, may be reinterpreted. As such, the thesis uses historicist and biographical information to reassess formal, linguistic, and generic features of Wordsworth's poetry. Wordsworth's positive poetics of silence shows him striving for a type of pure representation that avoids the interpretative pitfalls or restrictions of language. He is able to take most control over his reader's associative responses and to communicate his passion most accurately by leaving non-prescriptive spaces of silence. Wordsworth invites the reader to turn inwards and create meaning for him/herself; he does not tell the reader what to think, rather he shows the reader how to feel. By engaging in a close analysis of his texts, I follow Wordsworth in an investigation of poetry as a means of effective social engagement and communication. What does silence look like? How does silence manifest? How does Wordsworth use

[32] Adam Potkay, *Wordsworth's Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp. 187-93; Evan Radcliffe, 'Wordsworth and the Problem of Action: The White Doe of Rylstone', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 46 (1991), 157–80.

[33] Lane Cooper's concordance records only one occurrence of 'silenced' in Wordsworth's corpus in *Descriptive Sketches* (549): 'While prayer contends with silenced agony': *A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1911), p. 867. Anne K. Mellor, in *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980) established the case that the Romantic poets understood that what they were attempting to say could not be reconciled with their means of expression.

silence to influence readerly experience? Where does silence impact on his renovation of genre (especially the pastoral) and conceptions of form?

In order to answer these questions I examine Wordsworth's use of tentative linguistic constructions, narrative pauses, repetition, echoes, murmurings, breathings, and his juxtaposition of sound (particularly psalmody and birdsong) with quietness. The thesis thus identifies a spectrum of silences. For example, anterior silence—the foundation or baseline into which sound breaks—which has divine solidity and completeness; an example of this is the 'eternal Silence' of the Ode ('There was a time') which God broke with the first speech of Creation. Another mode becomes evident when certain sounds deepen or enhance the power of silence; for example, when meditative repetition transforms the semiotic character of language as in some of William's and Dorothy's soothing domestic habits, or when murmuring bees and tinkling streams enrich the silence outside the Solitary's cottage in *The Excursion* (III. 1-7). Echoes and murmurings function as shades of silence: they are not quite defined as sounds because they subsist at a degree below that which they imitate. Wordsworth's indirect syntax ('not without', 'not unwilling') stretches the linguistic content of his lines and creates diffusive articulation. The thesis uses these sounds and verbal constructions to trace how Wordsworth's notion of epitaphs, inscriptions, and sonnets evolves in conjunction with this working armature of silence to create a monastically infused form of pastoral poetry.

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One of the underlying aims of the thesis is to foreground the importance of Wordsworth's middle period, which began, I suggest, during Wordsworth's residence at Hall Farm on the Beaumonts' Coleorton Estate. Another aim is to highlight the roles of

Sir George and Lady Beaumont in Wordsworth's poetic and personal development after 1807.

Wordsworth and his family resided at Coleorton from the end of October 1806 until 10 June 1807.[34] This was a time of significant transition, for personal as well as poetic reasons. Coleorton usually marks the termination of Wordsworth's so-called 'Great Decade': *Lyrical Ballads* had been through four editions, the first complete draft of 'The Poem to Coleridge' was complete in thirteen books, and *Poems, in Two Volumes* were in the press. Wordsworth's alleged descent from this poetical high watermark has been connected with the death of John Wordsworth in February 1805, which is also held responsible for the increase of the poet's commitment to the Church of England. However, it is at this point precisely that Wordsworth's patronal relationship with the Beaumonts deepened into close friendship, described by Wordsworth as 'one of the best gifts of my life'.[35] The thesis aims to demonstrate that greater knowledge of the Beaumonts' involvement at this time, aids interpretation of Wordsworth's middle and later periods, in terms of the direction of his poetry and the orientation of his ideas.

The Beaumonts differ greatly from Wordsworth's other major patrons, Lord Lonsdale and Lord Lowther, with whom Wordsworth's correspondence is restricted to financial and political business. In some sense, the moral support Sir George and Lady Beaumont supplied for William and Dorothy replaced (albeit inadequately) the comfort they had received from John. First, Lady Beaumont, who zealously defended the poetry against unfavourable reviews, adopted John's role as careful sympathetic reader and committed believer in Wordsworth's poetic vocation; she also offered warm friendship

[34] Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Middle Years, 1800-1815* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 336-56.
[35] *MY i*., p. 94.

to Dorothy.[36] Secondly, Sir George provided the financial protection that John's final sea voyage was intended to guarantee.

Yet, this relationship was not entirely based on amiable agreement. Robert Perceval Graves noted that Wordsworth's friendship with Sir George, 'had the beauty of congeniality […] it had the beauty of an honest frankness'.[37] Graves quotes a letter from Wordsworth to Beaumont regarding Pitt:

> I am aware it is not unlikely you may differ greatly from me in these points. But I like in some things to differ with a friend, and that he should *know* I differ from him: it seems to make a more healthy friendship, to act as a relief to those notions and feelings which we have in common, and to give them a grace and spirit which they could not otherwise possess [Wordsworth's italics].[38]

The tensions between Wordsworth and the Beaumonts are particularly interesting in terms of Wordsworth's opposition to Catholic Emancipation, which began to develop at Coleorton in 1806 alongside his interest in monastic history. As Wordsworth and Dorothy drew closer to the Beaumonts, the exchange between the two families incorporated disagreement that was productive of new ideas about landscape art and gardening, politics, religion, and poetic form (especially inscriptions and sonnets). This dialectical relationship nourished a new phase in Wordsworth's career.

Wordsworth's life and work immediately after the publication of *Poems, in Two Volumes* is, in some sense, riddled with failure. He refused to publish *The White Doe of Rylstone* (composed 1807), which would have alleviated the family's financial worries, due to a hurtful response from Charles Lamb; he aborted *The Tuft of Primroses* (composed 1808) before he was able to shape it into a complete movement suitable for

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[36] John was attached to *Lyrical Ballads* and believed they would eventually be immortalized. He was very angry at their misprinting and complained to Rees. *The Letters of John Wordsworth*, ed. by Carl Ketcham (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 109.

[37] Robert Perceval Graves, 'Recollections of Wordsworth and the Lake Country', in *The Afternoon Lectures on literature and art, delivered in the theatre of the Museum of Industry, Dublin* (Dublin, 1869), pp. 275-321 (p. 294).

[38] ibid, pp. 299-300.

The Recluse; his pamphlet *Concerning the Convention of Cintra* drew him into complicated disagreements that strained his friendship with Thomas De Quincey (who was running editorial errands for him in London), and the pamphlet failed to make any impact when it was eventually published in 1809 because public interest in the calamities of the Peninsular War had waned.[39] Coleridge was bowed down under the weight of *The Friend* and his ruined marriage and bad health were the cause of much anxiety in the household at Allan Bank, which proved to be an annoyingly uncomfortable residence.[40]

And yet, despite these failings and the somewhat peripheral positions these works held in the Wordsworth canon of the twentieth century, they constitute the centrepiece of the thesis. This cluster of poetry and prose takes precedence over the thirteen-book *Prelude* and *Lyrical Ballads*; I also give minimal attention to *Descriptive Sketches*, which, in a thesis about monastic silence, may be surprising. My concentration on Wordsworth's middle period is followed by readings of *The Excursion* (1814), some inscriptions from *The River Duddon* collection (1820), *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822), and selections from the Italian Memorials that appeared in Wordsworth's final volume of original poetry, *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842). These choices have two explanations. First, I elected works that were published and enjoyed during Wordsworth's lifetime and cherished by the Victorians based on my underlying concern with Wordsworth's task of creating sympathetic, contemplative

[39] Wordsworth wrote to Coleridge: 'Let Lamb learn to be ashamed of himself in not taking some pleasure in the contemplation of this picture, which supposing it to be even but a sketch, is yet sufficiently made out for any man of true power to finish it for himself': *MY i.*, p. 222. Wordsworth kept the poem in manuscript until 1815, despite Dorothy's and Mary's entreaties to publish for the sake of the family finances. *The Tuft of Primroses* breaks off in mid-sentence. De Quincey was entrusted with the role of editorial assistant and runner when he was sent to London by Wordsworth in February 1809 and became embroiled in an exasperating publication process: *Prose*, vol. 1, 229-44.

[40] Wordsworth resolved to travel to London in February 1808 because of 'such alarming accounts' of the state of Coleridge's health: *MY i.*, p. 198. The smoking chimney at Allan Bank caused much discomfort as explained, for example, in *MY i.*, pp. 306, 324, 325, 380.

readers with a taste for his work.[41] Poems that remained in manuscript could have had no immediate role in Wordsworth's undertaking. Second, and most importantly, these are the poems I consider to be most influenced by a study of monastic history and hagiography that Wordsworth pursued, supported by Beaumont, between 1806 and 1810. It was in this research that Wordsworth found the roots of communal silence, which he had long valued.

Wordsworth 'greedily [devoured]' topographical studies by Thomas Dunham Whitaker and Thomas West, the hagiography of William Cave, and John Weever's study of epitaphs.[42] While these sources have long been identified, scholars have neglected to notice that they constitute a substantial study of medieval monasticism. These volumes reveal the routines of monastic living, the architectural layout of monasteries, the origins and social prominence of religious orders, and their legacies. Wordsworth discovered from these sources how the social and geographical landscape of the north of England had been shaped by the Cistercian communities that were founded and governed under the Rule of St Basil. Wordsworth's *The Tuft of Primroses*, which versifies some of the letters of St Basil, has been discussed in great detail by Simon Jarvis, who focuses on the anxieties shared by monks and poets about the type of "work" in which they engage, and the economic contribution they make.[43] According to Jarvis, Wordsworth was responding to accounts of monastic history he had read in the 1790s. I develop Jarvis's assessment by locating *The Tuft of Primroses* in a nexus of composition that was propelled by Wordsworth's reading from 1806 onwards.

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[41] *The Tuft of Primroses* was incorporated into *The Excursion*, III. 376-410; the first *Essay upon Epitaphs* was printed as a note to Book V of *The Excursion*. *The White Doe* was eventually published in 1815, a year after *The Excursion*. Stephen Gill opens his invaluable study, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) by emphasising the importance of *The White Doe*, *The Excursion* and *The River Duddon* in the Victorian Period, pp. 1-2.

[42] *MY i*., p. 167.

[43] *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 112-25. This fine study has done much to raise the profile of *The Tuft of Primroses*, which, as a fragment of *The Recluse* that made its way into *The Excursion* has received minimal attention in comparison to *Home at Grasmere*, *The Pedlar*, and *The Ruined Cottage*.

The coenobitic monastery, established by St Basil, is important to Wordsworth because it fosters silence within community. This differs from reclusive silence, which can be emotionally and socially detrimental. For Wordsworth, silence should not be primarily a product of solitude or asceticism; rather it is a positive gathering of stillness from within that is sustained by patterns of repeated behaviour, familiar non-verbal exchange, and complicity. These are the conditions under which the real language of men flourishes.

Wordsworth's monastic reading opened up, for me, a surprising coherence between the poems and prose of the middle years. It drew together themes of inheritance, progeny, and linguistic, familial and national representation, which resulted in a new reading of the *Essays upon Epitaphs* (1810) framed by St Basil's teaching. This resolved tensions between public service and secluded retirement that pervade Wordsworth's anxious thinking about *The Recluse* and initiated my investigation into Wordsworth's development of pastoral quietness. This provided new ground from which to approach *The Excursion* (1814), after which, I felt liberated to engage with Wordsworth's post-1815 compositions. That John Ramsden Tutin's 1889 collection of the *Early Poems of William Wordsworth* contained a handful of *The River Duddon* sonnets is not so surprising when Wordsworth's oeuvre is taken in the entirety of its six-decade span.[44]

The thesis treats Wordsworth's work chronologically but, in effect, its impetus starts after his 'Great Decade'. Wordsworth asserted his objection to a chronological assessment of his writing in a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson of 27 April 1826:

> One word on the subject of arrangement—Lamb's order of time is the very worst that could be followed; except where determined by the course of

[44] Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, p. 2.

> public events; or if the subject be merely personal—in the case [of] Juvenile Poems, or those of advanced Age.[45]

This thesis goes against Wordsworth's preferences about arrangement of material in order, precisely, to suggest that obscured valuations often come from dichotomising his work into 'early' and 'late'. The way to achieve a sense of the cohesion of Wordsworth's poems (which he envisaged as interconnected features of a gothic structure), and the enduring coherence of his thinking, is to understand what happened in the 'middle'.

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Chapter One is the shortest section of the thesis and it raises more questions than it attempts to answer. It should be read as a preliminary excursus into Wordsworth's conception of *The Recluse* and the associated metaphorical implications of his interest in hermitude. It outlines the inherent paradoxes involved in presenting silence in poetry and in attending to that silence; it establishes an awareness of the distinctions between text and voice, and reading aloud and privately, which underscore the arguments of all subsequent chapters. It highlights difficulties and contradictions, such as Wordsworth's concomitant desire for silence and community, which the thesis as a whole explains.

Chapter Two argues that various processes of repetition gave Wordsworth access, in the domestic setting of Dove Cottage, to a particular type of prayerful silence. My point of departure is Wordsworth's alignment of repetition and passion in the note to 'The Thorn' (1800). I compare patterns of behaviour that Dorothy describes in the Grasmere Journal with psalmodic recitation, arguing that through meditative repetition of short phrases—a practice akin to hesychasm, which was popularised by writers such as Jeremy Taylor and William Law—Dorothy activates various modes of silence and

[45] *LY i.*, p. 444.

layers of non-semiotic meaning, which Wordsworth appropriates in his poetry as a means of transferring passion to the reader. In 1803 Coleridge became concerned that the 'habit' of writing shorter poems, especially sonnets, was harmful to Wordsworth because it distracted him from *The Recluse*. But in composing pieces for *Poems, in Two Volumes*, Wordsworth thrived on formal restraint because it matched his sympathy for the habitual practices of reclusive figures. Together, Chapters One and Two show that Wordsworth was perfectly disposed to take up a study of monastic history.

Chapter Three uncovers in detail the intense research into monastic life that Wordsworth engaged in between 1806 and 1810. His reading of Whitaker, West, Weever, and Cave, together with numerous visits to monastic sites, provides the basis for the poetry of this period—*The White Doe of Rylstone*, *The Tuft of Primroses*—and the themes of familial inheritance, communal identity, public representation, and progeny come to fruition in his prose works—*Concerning the Convention of Cintra* and *Essays upon Epitaphs*. I revise the critical understanding of Wordsworth's conception of language as 'incarnation' by situating the *Essays* within this monastic context.[46] Wordsworth's study of St Basil—which explains the foundation of the first coenobitic order and the formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity—significantly shapes Wordsworth's prose discussion of the nature of epitaphs and poetic language. Implicitly, this chapter reveals a moment at which Wordsworth anticipated the Oxford Movement.

In Chapter Four, I establish that Thomas Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism* (1806) and Wordsworth's design for Lady Beaumont's Winter Garden at Coleorton (1806-7) were catalysts for the poet's study of monasticism. This provides a new context in which to read silence in *The Excursion*. I argue that when Wordsworth

[46] *Prose*, vol. 2, 84.

returned to *The Excursion* (after a three-year intermission) in 1810, he recognised the affinities between Quaker spirituality, rural quietness, and the principles of monastic life; this resulted in his modification of pastoral quietness. Chapter Four thus revises existing readings of the pastoral character of *The Excursion*, which tend to focus on georgic retreat. I show how a monastic-pastoral mode became incorporated with the Wanderer's persuasive techniques, which use narrative pauses and the breakage of silence as means of showing the Solitary a way back to God. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Wordsworth's 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' of 1815 and of the affinities between religion and poetry, which implicitly gives credence to the Wanderer's attempts to use modes of silence to restore the Solitary's faith.

Chapter Five has two aims. First, it attempts to disentangle the apparent discrepancy between Wordsworth's fascination with monastic life and his objections to Catholic Emancipation. By uncovering the Beaumonts' Roman Catholic sympathies and tracing Wordsworth's friendship with them, I update existing interpretations by showing that his opposition to the Catholic Question began to develop from as early as his residence at Coleorton in 1806. During this time, two changes of government took place which hinged on issues of Catholic Relief and Wordsworth read the works of Beaumont's recusant literary ancestor, Sir John Beaumont. I analyse a manuscript, 'An account of an English Hermit', which Lady Beaumont sent to Allan Bank 1809, in order to draw out this new aspect of tension in Wordsworth's relationship with his patrons. The pamphlet's underlying message about Nonjurors promotes the separation of a person's privately held religious belief from his/her ability to occupy a public role (a precept that I implicitly apply to Wordsworth). The 'English Hermit' exhibits passive virtues in conjunction with acts of public charity; he thus combines community engagement with profound solitude and silence, and helps to distinguish, without

synthesizing, some difficult entanglements in Wordsworth's thought. A transcription of this previously overlooked manuscript appears in Appendix I.

The second aim of this chapter is to offer an explanation as to why critical reception of religious aspects of Wordsworth's life and work has been biased or undecided. I do so, through readings of *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822) and the 'Hermit Inscriptions' of *The River Duddon* collection (1820), by showing how Wordsworth's sonnets evolved in line with his understanding of the generic qualities of the inscription. This formal development is an extension of Wordsworth's new monastic-pastoral project.

Chapter Six is a discussion of the cycles of joy and repose (rather than parsimony and denial) that Wordsworth valued in and drew from silence. I focus on the sonnet 'A volant Tribe of Bards' (1827) to define two kinds of silence: the silence of the hills and the 'more than silent' skies. I analyse the first type in passages from the fourteen-book *Prelude* and the second type in Wordsworth's Italian Memorial, 'The Cuckoo at Laverna', showing how the Cuckoo's blithe call creates a myriad of iterative silences and echoes. I present the affinity Wordsworth felt with St Francis of Assisi on visiting the monastery at Laverna in 1836 as an aspect of 'wise passiveness', and use this to discuss how Wordsworth's nineteenth-century readers emulated his empathetic touristic style when making pilgrimages to Rydal Mount and the Lake District.

The thesis is framed by two experiences of song that affected Wordsworth profoundly. The first is the voice of 'The Solitary Reaper'; the second is the Cuckoo's call. These sounds are crucial to my understanding of Wordsworth's means of avoiding the apparent paradox of his advice to give up books in favour of the silences of nature. Wordsworth read of the Highland Reaper in a manuscript version of Thomas

Wilkinson's *Tours of the British Mountains*.[47] This reading would have recalled for him similar reapers he had encountered during his own tour of Scotland in 1803. The textual experience of this song activated Wordsworth's memory, which caused him to translate the sounds back into text so that the reader is subsequently able to convert those words into his/her own imagined melody. At Laverna, Wordsworth's apprehension of the cuckoo activated his imagination, connected him with St Francis and caused him to write a poem so that future readers may recall cuckoos they have heard. This interchange of textual and imaginative experience teaches the reader, not how to read, but how to listen in silence for similar experiences. 'The Solitary Reaper' and 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' both involve interruptions of silence that gently shock Wordsworth's imagination into activity. The faculty of hearing is usurped by the silence of introspection. It is not the song that has most effect, but the imagination's ability to interpret, retain, and recreate that song in silence. This interpretative activity converts ordinary experience into something sacred and poetical. Silence grows out of physical or aural manifestations of the imagination at work; silence then helps facilitate the interpretation of those manifestations. Without text and sound, silence lacks imaginative nourishment. Based on such thinking, this thesis will show how Wordsworth embraced, without contradiction, three apparently incongruous binaries: text and silence, community and silence, song and silence.

[47] Wilkinson's text circulated in MS among friends before publication. See *P2V*, p. 415 and Wilkinson, *Tours to the British Mountains, with the descriptive poems of Lowther, and Emont Vale*, (London, 1824), p. 12.

CHAPTER ONE

'The spiritual Presences of absent Things'

In Book IV of *The Excursion*, the Wanderer attempts to persuade the Solitary to leave his isolated hermitage, rediscover God, and reconnect with the community. One way the Solitary might do this, the Wanderer urges, is through recognition of the divinity that silently inhabits the forms of nature:

> And further; by contemplating these Forms
> In the relations which they bear to Man,
> He shall discern, how, through the various means
> Which silently they yield, are multiplied
> The spiritual Presences of absent Things[.] (IV. 1224-8)

In the corrected second issue of the first edition of *The Excursion*, quoted from here, Wordsworth capitalises 'Presences' and 'Things', but not 'spiritual' or 'absent'. While this is possibly the result of contemporary typographical practices, it nonetheless provides a useful way into thinking about this passage. Although the silence of the landscape may sometimes seem like emptiness from the Solitary's perspective, it is in fact (for Wordsworth as much as it is for the Wanderer) a substantial positive presence. Silence carries meaning and negotiates relations between man and nature with the power of a physical object or 'Thing'. Wordsworth, perhaps, does not capitalise 'absent' because the silence of the 'Forms' denotes neither suppression nor neglect, neither restraint nor omission. The adjective 'spiritual' is moderated because the scale of its value has to be determined by the individual: the Wanderer does not seek to press faith onto the Solitary; rather he aims to teach the Solitary how to discern and evaluate its prominence for himself through recognition of silence. This chapter is an attempt to explain how Wordsworth's early poetry manages to depict the physical and spiritual, present and seemingly absent qualities of that silence.

The chapter is in three sections. The first is concerned with Wordsworth's formulation of *The Recluse*, his projection of himself as a retired solitary, and his presentation of other hermit figures. The second section considers the implications for the study of silence in Wordsworth's poetry of the difference between reading aloud and silent reading. Finally I analyse Wordsworth's attempts to reconfigure the sensory stimulation of his reader, and establish the metaphorical significance of hermits as physical instantiations of silence.[1]

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Wordsworth's rhetorical projection of himself as a recluse in retirement defined and guided his (and his friends') understanding of the prophetic vocation he spent decades attempting to realize. The Preface to *The Excursion* explains that he had 'retired' in December 1799 'to his native Mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live'.[2] In *The Prelude*, he described this repatriation as hermitic retreat:

> What need of many words?
> A pleasant loitering journey, through two days
> Continued, brought me to my hermitage. (I. 114-16)[3]

[1] Parts of this chapter were presented at the Wordsworth Summer Conference 2011 and published in *Grasmere, 2011*, ed. by Richard Gravil (Penrith: Humanities E-Books, 2011), pp. 80-91.
[2] *Excursion*, p. 38. *The Recluse* was conceived by Wordsworth and Coleridge at Alfoxden in 1798 and Wordsworth made a series of serious attempts at composition in 1798, 1800, and 1808, yielding 'Home at Grasmere', 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', 'The Ruined Cottage', 'The Discharged Soldier', 'A Night-Piece', and 'The Tuft of Primroses'. Wordsworth publicly announced his project in 1814 in the Preface to *The Excursion*. Dorothy was still talking of the completion of *The Recluse* in 1824: *LY i.*, p. 292. Kenneth Johnston argues that *The Recluse* in fact exists as the composite of its fragments. He claims that the work is Wordsworth's portrayal of the evolution of Christianity into a secular, individualised system of redemption: *Wordsworth and "The Recluse"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). Johnston's secularizing thesis aligns with Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism*. In my view, *The Recluse* exists as a character and a concept that shapes Wordsworth's thinking. While Johnston argues that the project is converted back into a Coleridgean one in 1815 with *Biographia Literaria*, I see it as an on-going Wordsworthian matter. See also Kenneth Johnston, 'Wordsworth's Last Beginning: "The Recluse" in 1808', *English Literary History*, 43 (1974), 316–341, and Jonathan Wordsworth, 'On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life', *The Review of English Studies*, 31 (1980), 17–29.
[3] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, p. 109. In Chapters One and Two quotation of *The Prelude* is taken from the 1805 version because of its contemporaneousness with the other poems under discussion.

However, this reclusion is far from a rejection of community and companionship. Wordsworth was aiming to produce some public work that would 'benefit his countrymen', and was aware of the risks of withdrawal.[4] He believed (as he comprehensively expressed in the character of the Solitary) that hermitude sometimes leads to a perversion of the mind and diminishment of human sympathies; in *The Prelude* he recognised a time when, 'like a Monk who hath forsworn the world', he was 'Zealously' disconnected from his heart (XI. 76-7).[5] For Wordsworth, the recluse must therefore remain engaged with the community for the sake of his passions and affections.

In the eighteenth century, hermit figures appeared frequently in popular art and literature where they were generally taken as either emblems of picturesque aesthetics, of quaint pastoral withdrawal from politics, or as stock literary characters that signalled a medieval revival.[6] Yet Wordsworth's proposed self-image did not align with these

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[4] *Excursion*, p. 39.

[5] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, p. 296. For my discussion of *The Excursion* see Chapter Four below. Coleridge's 'The Dungeon' laments the prisoner's impoverished ability to receive and release his passions. Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas: Prince of Abissinia* (1759) evaluates various modes of retirement and contemplation. Johnson's female characters are attracted to the peace and safety of the enclosure of St Antony's monastery, which is Johnson's central image of refuge and happiness. But their male companions warn them of the 'danger of the cloister' in favour of the joys of love and marriage. Solitary retirement is associated with a 'rejection of pleasure' and is supposed to result in an accumulation of misery: *The History of Rasselas: Prince of Abyssinia*, ed. by Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 68-79 and 103. Wordsworth owned a copy: *W's Library*, p. 141.

[6] William Gilpin discussed the picturesque effects of introducing hermits to landscapes in *Observations , relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1772*, 2 vols. (1786; repr. London, 1792), vol. 2, 44-6. John Constable's 'Dedham Vale' exemplifies this fashion. See James Heffernan, 'Wordsworth's "Levelling" Muse in 1798', in *1798: The Year of the Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Richard Cronin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), pp. 231-53 (p. 240). Kenneth Johnston suggests 'many writers opted for expressions of pastoral retreat to escape the repressive climate against free expression that Pitt's clamp-down on sedition […] had cast over the land': 'Wordsworth and "The Recluse"' in *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 70-89 (p. 75). In the autobiographical Preface to his *Poems* (1801), John Thelwall referred to himself as 'the new Recluse', signalling his intention to distance himself from politics, partly out of necessity and self-defence when he was pushed out of Stowey into a retreat in Wales: Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (1989; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 155-60. Sophia Lee's *A Hermit's Tale: Recorded by his own hand and found in his cell* was criticised in the *European Magazine* of 1787 for its 'hackneyed' subject: James Averill, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 41-2. Wordsworth kept up with the *European Magazine* at Cambridge: *W Reading I*, pp. 54-5.

prevalent characterisations. Dorothy's Alfoxden Journal, for example, conveys the negative opinion of picturesque hermitages that William shared:

> Set forward after breakfast to Crookham, and returned to dinner at three o'clock. A fine cloudy morning. Walked about the squire's grounds. Quaint waterfalls about, where Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed—ruins, hermitages, &c., &c. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalised trees. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy.[7]

Dorothy objected to the artificially imposed features of the landscape garden and (by extension) the mock hermits that frequently inhabited such grounds; correspondingly, she was relieved that the mountains and valleys were preserved from the coaxing and manipulation of interfering gardeners.[8] Wordsworth's *Guide through the District of the Lakes* later explained that pretentious ruins have no bearing within mountainous regions:

> Mountainous countries, more frequently and forcibly than others, remind us of the power of the elements, as manifested in winds, snows, and torrents, and accordingly make the notion of exposure very unpleasing; while shelter and comfort are in proportion necessary and acceptable. Far-winding vallies [sic] difficult of access, and the feelings of simplicity habitually connected with mountain retirements, prompt us to turn from ostentation as a thing there eminently unnatural and out of place.[9]

Wordsworth retired to his 'native mountains' in order to avoid the transiency and artificiality that picturesque objects encapsulated. Like follies and ruins, the hermit was undignified unless he was fully assimilated into the natural simplicity of a sheltered landscape.[10] The land should be in control of the characteristics and feelings of its inhabitants, not *vice versa*. The location of Wordsworth's retirement matched the

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[7] *DWJ*, 15 April 1798, p. 152.
[8] Gordon Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden: from Imperial Rome to Ornamental Gnome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[9] *Prose*, vol. 2, 213. The text quoted from is that of the fifth edition published in 1835. Wordsworth first produced this work in 1810. For a textual history see *Prose*, vol. 2, 133-9.
[10] More than thirty mock ruins of abbeys and castles were erected in English landscape gardens in the eighteenth century: Jeffrey W. Whitelaw, *Follies*, 4th edn (1982; repr. Princes Risborough: Shire, 2005) and Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001).

authenticity and irrevocable commitment with which he undertook what he saw to be a divinely ordained task.

In a metaphor associated with the description of his retreat, Wordsworth described the interrelated structure of *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*: 'the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, […] as the Anti-chapel has to the body of a gothic Church'. Moreover, Wordsworth's shorter, previously published poems, in their proper arrangement, 'will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral Recesses, ordinarily included in those Edifices'.[11] This visualisation of his shorter poems as quiet reflective spaces, and his longer works as a vast awe-striking nave, combines to create an architectural structure of verse into which the reader is invited: it draws together the physical places in which recluses reside and the poetic spaces that Wordsworth creates. His poems become metaphorical cells or hermitages, which demand the reverent approach of the reader. And yet the gothic church is a place in which a community of readers might *simultaneously* experience this quietness. The church is the spiritual centre of a community: it is a place to which people come to be silent together. The type of reclusion that Wordsworth establishes as his ideal model thus hinges on silence and relationship, rather than isolation.

Between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, monastic life flourished in England. In addition to communities of enclosed Orders, there were at least seven hundred and fifty hermitages or anchoritic cells across the country housing two distinct types of

[11] *Excursion*, p. 38. Wordsworth would have encountered gothic architecture in France; in particular, Orleans Cathedral, where his daughter Caroline was baptized on 15 December 1792, had been destroyed and rebuilt in the gothic style and was noted as an ideological proclamation pertaining to the restitution of Catholicism in France. (Wordsworth, in all likelihood, did not attend the Baptism): *EY*, p. 161, n. 1. Donald E. Haydon provides a photograph and description of Orleans Cathedral: *Wordsworth's Travels in Europe*, 2 vols. (Tulsa: University of Tulsa Press, 1988), vol 1, 16-7. Ernest de Selincourt attests to Wordsworth's belief that *The Prelude* was an integral part of *The Recluse* in its early stages: *Wordsworth's Prelude* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. xxv-xxvi.

Christian recluses: hermits (from the Greek *eremia* meaning desert) and anchorites (from *anachorein*, meaning to withdraw). Hermits were generally illiterate and itinerant; they could leave their hermitage to offer counsel or engage in public works such as mending roads. Anchorites were often well-educated and gained enormous status when they undertook a life of strict and irreversible enclosure. The rite of enclosure included prayers for the dying and as the recluse entered his/her cell (which could be as small as 2.4 metres square) the door was walled up. Enclosure signalled a permanent alteration of the self, the beginning of a new life. There would usually be a window onto the outside world at which visitors could be received from behind a black curtain. Servants would bring food and take away waste through such windows. Solitude, containment, repetition, silence, and contemplation were the foremost conditions of anchoritic life. Villages were considered to be blessed by the residence of an anchorite, who, in a cell that abutted the parish church, remained at the physical and spiritual centre of the community.[12] Of these two types of recluse, it was the less severely isolated hermit that most interested Wordsworth.[13]

Lane Cooper has noted that Wordsworth and Coleridge had a particular interest in hermits as they were devising plans for *The Recluse*.[14] Cooper provides a series of examples and puts this interest down to the influence of Spenser, Milton, and Parnell.

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[12] For an introduction to hermits and anchorites see Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (1914; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968), Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and Christopher Cannon, 'Enclosure', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 109–123. For details of the political power and functions of monasteries see *The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries 1066-c.1280* ed. by Barbara F. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *Living and Dying in England, 1100-1540: the Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). A 'recluse' is 'a person who is or has elected to be secluded or isolated from the world for the purpose of religious meditation, as a monk, nun, hermit etc.; spec. a person who remains shut up in a cell under a vow of strict seclusion'. 'recluse, adj., n., and adv.', (sense B. 1. a.), *OED Online* [accessed 6 October 2011].

[13] Only two anchorites appear in Wordsworth's poetry: one in the sonnet 'To the River Duddon' (composed 1802) and another in the late sonnet, 'St Catherine of Ledbury': *P2V*, pp. 142-3 and *Last Poems*, p. 91 respectively.

[14] Lane Cooper, 'The "Forest Hermit" in Coleridge and Wordsworth', *Modern Language Association*, 24 (1909), 33-6. Critical attention to hermits in Wordsworth's poetry has focused almost exclusively on the hermit of 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', details of which appear below.

But he does not offer any specific argument as to why hermits might have intrigued Wordsworth (and Coleridge) as anything other than stock literary characters. On the premise that they are stereotyped, Cooper is not able to establish relations between any examples of hermits in Wordsworth's work. However, Cooper's conclusion that Wordsworth's interest in hermits is generic and derivative is, at least in part, a result of the methods Wordsworth used to present them. Particularly in the poetry he composed between 1798 and 1800, Wordsworth hides the hermit from the reader's view, signifies him indirectly, or pictures him from a distance. For example, the first verse-paragraph of 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, On revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798' culminates with the image of the possible presence of a hermit hidden within an unseen cave:

> wreathes of smoke
> Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,
> With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
> Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
> Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
> The hermit sits alone. (18-22)

The silent smoke is non-substantial; it emits 'some uncertain notice' which Wordsworth further qualifies with the triple hesitancy of 'as might seem'. The people or person responsible for this fire is either a group of vagrants who dwell intermittently in 'houseless woods', or some unidentified hermit.[15] Sitting alone beside his fire and out of view, the hermit is neither absent nor fully present. Wordsworth avoids the standard picturesque scene by omitting the abbey's ruins from the poem and, likewise, the hermit

[15] For theories of possible historical sources for this hermit see Damian Walford Davies, '"Some Uncertain Notice": The Hermit of "Tintern Abbey"', *Notes and Queries*, 43 (1996), 422–424, and Mark English, '"Recognitions Dim and Faint": The Hermit of "Tintern Abbey" Again', *Notes and Queries*, 44 (1997), 324–325. Walford Davies develops his argument about Wordsworth's knowledge of Tewdrig, the hermit-king of David Williams' *History of Monmouthshire* (1796), in *Presences That Disturb: Models of Romantic Identity in the Literature and Culture of the 1790s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002). For Walford Davies's discussion of tidal movement at Tintern see 'Romantic Hydrography: Tide and Transit in "Tintern Abbey"', in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 218–36. Fiona Stafford offers a valuable introduction to 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' in *Lyrical Ballads 1798 and 1802* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. xx-xxiii.

is not a straightforward pastoral figure; rather he is part of the poem's nexus of absence.[16]

The impetus for the poem is the emotion induced by Wordsworth's return to the Wye Valley after an absence of five years, which makes the landscape 'More dear' (160):[17]

> Though absent long,
> These forms of beauty have not been to me,
> As is a landscape to a blind man's eye[.] (23-5)

The forms of beauty which, in *The Excursion*, yield up the 'spiritual Presences of absent Things', had been imaginatively visible in Wordsworth's mind, even when they were not before his eyes. These 'absent Things' were thus two degrees away from being physically visible. Wordsworth evokes even more indeterminacy in the phrases 'unremembered pleasure' (32) and 'nameless, unremembered acts | Of kindness and of love' (35-6), which denote feelings and incidents not quite forgotten but productive of a type of haunting similar to the 'gleams of half-extinguish'd thought, | With many recognitions dim and faint' (59-60). This technique is repeated in conditional statements, such as, 'If this | Be but a vain belief' (50-1), 'somewhat of a sad perplexity' (61), 'Nor, perchance, | If I were not thus taught' (112-13).[18] Wordsworth's cautious

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[16] Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* states: 'Every thing around breathes an air so calm, and tranquil; so sequestered from the commerce of life, that it is easy to conceive, a man of warm imagination, in monkish times, might have been allured by such a scene to become an inhabitant of it: quoted in Mary Jacobus, '"Tintern Abbey" and Topographical Prose', *Notes and Queries*, 18 (1971), 366–369, 368.

[17] Political and historical readings of the poem have attempted to show Wordsworth's erasure of the social deprivation of the Wye Valley: Robert Brinkley, 'Vagrant and Hermit: Milton and the Politics of "Tintern Abbey"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 16 (1985): 126-32; R. J. Fertel, 'The Wye's "Sweet Inland Murmur"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 16 (1985): 134-5; Marjory Levinson, 'Insight and Oversight: Reading "Tintern Abbey"', in *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*, pp. 14-57; Nicholas Roe, *The Politics of Nature*; Crystal B. Lake, 'The Life of Things at Tintern Abbey', *The Review of English Studies*, 63 (2012): 444–465.

[18] Kenneth Johnston notes Wordsworth's tentative qualifications in 'The Politics of Tintern Abbey', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 14 (1983): 6-14 (p. 7). Gavin Hopps discusses Wordsworth's language of seeming in '"Je Sais Bien, Mais Quand Meme...": Wordsworth's Faithful Scepticism', in *Romanticism and Religion from William Cowper to Wallace Stevens*, ed. by Gavin Hopps and Jane Stabler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 57–74. Hopps argues that by qualifying his assertions, Wordsworth lets the reader know that he knows he cannot know. See also J. Hillis Miller, 'The Still Heart: Poetic Form in Wordsworth', *New*

phraseology is not indicative of indecision or negation but part of a working syntactical armature of silence that claims as present that which is not, at first glance, entirely so.

Even where a hermit is the main subject of the poem, as in 'The Voice from the Side of Etna; or, The Mad Monk', he is presented only by a song emanating from behind a mountain:

> I HEARD a voice from Etna's side,
> Where o'er a Cavern's mouth,
> That fronted to the South,
> A chestnut spread its umbrage wide.
> A Hermit, or a Monk, the man might be,
> But him I could not see:
> And thus the music flow'd along,
> In melody most like an old Sicilian song. (1-8)[19]

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge are associated with the authorship of this poem, but the identity of the writer is hidden under the pseudonym 'CASSINI JUN', which potentially refers to St John Cassian who, along with St Basil, was responsible for introducing monasticism to the West.[20] Cassian was a fourth-century monk who lived as a hermit in the desert. The uncertainty of the poem's authorship is suitably fitted to the choice of pseudonym and to the poem's hermitic content. The concealment of the author's identity matches the conflation of two voices in the poem: the reader sees neither the narrator (Cassini) nor the 'Mad Monk' directly; nor do these characters see

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Literary History, 2 (1971), 297–310 for a discussion of negatives and metaphorical language in 'On Westminster Bridge'.

[19] All quotation of 'The Mad Monk' is from the reproduction of the text published in the *Morning Post*, 13 October 1800, printed in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 804-6.

[20] Stephen Parrish argues that 'The Mad Monk' was written by Wordsworth; David Erdman claims it was the work of Coleridge. Details of the authorship debate appear in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 802-4. Robert Woof recounts Wordsworth's contributions to *The Morning Post* and attributes 'The Mad Monk' to Coleridge, in 'Wordsworth's Poetry and Stuart's Newspapers: 1797-1803', *Studies in Bibliography*, 15 (1962): 149-89 (pp. 174-6). Woof speculates that Wordsworth or Coleridge took the pseudonym of Cassius Longinus from Bayle's *General Dictionary* (1739), vol. 6, 166 (Woof, p. 176). Carol Landon writes: 'At all events the name has hermit associations, for the original Cassianus was a fourth- and fifth-century theologian and monk who had lived as a hermit in Egypt': 'Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the "Morning Post": an Early Version of "The Seven Sisters"', *The Review of English Studies*, 11(1960), 392-402 (p. 397). St John Cassian (c. 360-435) brought his extensive experience of Egyptian monasticism to Gaul in the fifth century. In the decades after his death, the Benedictine Rule was formulated to dictate how to create a single community, living in obedience to its abbot, fully independent of any other: MacCulloch, *Silence: a Christian History*, p. 92. See also Suso Frank, *With greater liberty*.

each other as they inhabit opposite sides of the volcano and its umbrageous tree. The narrator, the monk, and the reader therefore have space to speculate about the origin of the sounds and words they encounter. As the poet hides his identity, so does the hermit.

It is difficult therefore to distinguish any particular characteristics of Wordsworth's hermits; the recluse in *Peter Bell* is so concealed that he is in fact not discernibly present at all in a secluded area near the old quarry: 'And is there no one dwelling here, | No hermit with his beads and glass?' (371-2).[21] Yet Wordsworth's oblique presentation of hermits aligns with his characteristic syntactic distancing which pushes meaning away in order to linguistically mirror the presence of almost-absent things.[22] The hermit is a figuration of the triumph of implicature over utterance. Along with these linguistic techniques, the hermit is a vehicle for introducing silence.

The Recluse was to be the work of a poet in retirement, not a contemplative monk: it was to be a work of imagination and observation that relied on language, not prayerful devotion.[23] Language implies not just the speaker, but also that which is spoken of, and the one who is spoken to; in its essence, language is communal.[24] Words are the poet's means of representing absent objects or ideas, and silence in poetry depends on linguistic evocation. In all cases (whether reading or listening), recognition of silence involves attending to an absent-presence; hence, when poets write *about* silence this process of bringing a non-verbal thing into view is reiterated.[25] Wordsworth's indirect presentation of hermits, who choose to hide themselves, echoes

[21] *Peter Bell*, ed. by John E. Jordan (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 74.
[22] I discuss Wordsworth's indeterminate syntax in greater detail in Chapter Four.
[23] When they were not signals of eighteenth-century antiquarianism, literary hermits and monks functioned to fuel prejudice against Roman Catholics. Although Wordsworth's knowledge of monastic history was comprehensive, his self-characterisation as a recluse in retirement was neither strictly religious nor political in character. Chapter Five includes my argument concerning the entanglement of hermits and Wordsworth's nationalistic objections to Roman Catholic Emancipation.
[24] Davies, 'Soundings: towards a theological poetics of silence', p. 204.
[25] Raoul Mortley writes: 'If one concedes that the non-verbal is that which words strive to communicate, that the absent is the object of the present linguistic artefacts, then the conclusion that words are injurious to the attempt to grasp it is not far away': *From Word to Silence*, vol. 1, 110.

the process whereby a sign brings forward an indistinct object. It becomes relevant therefore that the hermit remains hidden or, as Cooper concluded, indeterminate.[26]

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While Wordsworth's 'Inscription for the Spot where the Hermitage stood on St Herbert's Island, Derwent-water' focuses more clearly on the hermit, it continues to develop themes of proximity, presence, and absence. It also extends the communal nature of language to cover silent prayer. It tells the story of the seventh-century monk who lived alone on that island; St. Herbert's constant prayer was that he would be reunited in death with his beloved fellow-monk, St Cuthbert:

> If thou in the dear love of some one friend
> Hast been so happy, that thou know'st what thoughts
> Will, sometimes, in the happiness of love
> Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence
> This quiet spot—St. Herbert hither came
> And here for many seasons, from the world
> Remov'd, and the affections of the world,
> He dwelt in solitude. He living here,
> This island's soul inhabitant! had left
> A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man lov'd
> As his own soul; and when within his cave
> Alone he knelt before the crucifix
> While o'er the lake the cataract of Lodore
> Peal'd to his orisons, and when he pac'd
> Along the beach of this small isle and thought
> Of his Companion, he had pray'd that both
> Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain
> So pray'd he:—as our Chronicles report,
> Though here the Hermit number'd his last day
> Far from St. Cuthbert his beloved friend,
> These holy men both died in the same hour. (1-21)[27]

[26] On the manifestation of silence see Scott Bruce, *Silence and Sign in Medieval Monasticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Studies of Wordsworth's theories of language include, Stephen, J. Land, 'The Silent Poet: An Aspect of Wordsworth's Semantic Theory', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 42 (1973), 157–169; Don L. Jobe, 'Wordsworth's Metaphysics of Presence', *Studies in Romanticism*, 34 (1995), 583–613; William Hatherell, '"Words and Things": Locke, Hartley and the Associationist Context for the Preface to "Lyrical Ballads"', *Romanticism* 12 (2006): 223-35.

[27] All quotation of the inscription is from the text of 1800, in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 179-80. The Venerable Bede relates the story of Herbert's meeting with Cuthbert in Carlisle. Herbert's prayer was that, 'I beseech you by the Lord not to desert me but to remember your most faithful companion and ask the merciful Lord that, as we served Him together on earth, we may journey together to the skies to behold

Wordsworth presents the word 'Remov'd' almost before the reader expects it (it is perhaps expected at the beginning of line eight), and the half-rhyme between 'Remov'd' and 'solitude' highlights Herbert's isolation; the parataxis of the clauses 'from the world' and 'the affections of the world' further enacts the physical disconnection between the Herbert and the community. Yet Herbert's prayer that he and Cuthbert might die 'in the same hour' collapses spatial and temporal distance. Wordsworth singles out St Herbert not just because of his devout life, but because he managed to retain exemplary emotional acuity, which Wordsworth adopts and uses to appeal to the reader's sense of love and happiness: 'If thou in the dear love of some one friend' (1). Wordsworth found Herbert's reclusion attractive because although he was physically isolated, Herbert remained in Cuthbert's company via prayer and affectionate remembrances. Herbert and Cuthbert thus achieved spiritual community and hermitic silence concomitantly, assured that in the moment of death, the present and the absent would intersect.

Wordsworth does not describe the hermitage or the island but uses the vocative opening, together with repetition of 'here' (6, 8, 19), the specificity of 'This quiet spot' (5), and the detail of the poem's title, to elicit the reader's imagined proximity to the hermit's cell.[28] Inscriptions, like epitaphs, suppose intimate connections between written language, defined locations, and an associated community of situated readers. Wordsworth draws the current reader into company with those of previous generations who have visited the island, and with the historical chroniclers who recorded and

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His grace in heaven': *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, (1969; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 441. I discuss Wordsworth's revisions to the Inscription in Chapter Five.

[28] Herbert Lindenberger notes Wordsworth's repeated use of island imagery in relation to solitude and contemplation in *The Prelude*. He points out that Wordsworth refers to hermits when he is preparing to relate his own solitary musings: 'Images of Interaction in The Prelude', in *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 642-63 (pp. 649-54).

perpetuated the story. The inscription continues what the chroniclers achieved by allowing future generations of readers access to the sentiment of Derwent's hermitage. Yet Wordsworth calls these temporally and spatially dispersed readers to private reflection in the same imagined hermitage, which matches the conjunction of silence and companionship in Herbert's life. For Wordsworth, reclusive silence is less powerful than that which is produced within groups and in patterns of complicit non-verbal exchange. Silence in community is shared and it is this sharing that makes absent things present. The hermit noted in *Descriptive Sketches* is accordingly surrounded by his family: 'His children's children join'd the holy sound' (174).[29] The best hermitic companionship is generational and sustainable.

In two consecutive poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth presents the graveyard as a site of quiet reflection, but these graves are unmarked by epitaphs or inscriptions. At the end of 'There was a Boy', the narrator stands beside the boy's grave for a 'full half-hour together' (31) and at the beginning of *The Brothers* Leonard Ewbank meditates in a churchyard of unmarked graves for the same length of time (77-96).[30] Wordsworth placed these poems side by side towards the front of the second volume of the 1800 publication showing, adjacently, two men engaged in prolonged silent meditation without the aid of a text.

In *The Brothers*, the community of Ennerdale, to which Leonard returns, have no gravestones bearing epitaphs, nor do they keep public chronicles of their history. The Priest explains:

> so far from wanting facts or dates

[29] *Descriptive Sketches*, ed. by Eric Birdsall (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), ll. 162-75, p. 54. This hermit is reminiscent of Rev. Robert Walker whom Wordsworth celebrates in an extended note to 'Seathwaite Chapel' in *The River Duddon*. The note appears in *Sonnet Series*, pp. 86-97.

[30] *The Brothers* appeared with its own half title: 'A Pastoral Poem'. The narrator of 'There was a Boy' is unsure about the identity of the inhabitant of the grave by which he stands, implying that it was unmarked: 'At evening, I believe, that near his grave | A full half-hour together I have stood | Mute' (30-2). My discussion of silence and echoes in 'There was a Boy' appears in Chapter Six below.

> To chronicle the time, we all have here
> A pair of diaries, one serving, Sir,
> For the whole dale, and one for each fire-side.
> Yours was a stranger's judgment[.] (159-63)

Leonard observes in response: 'your church-yard | Seems […] | To say that you are heedless of the past' (164-6). The processes through which local tales and relationships are passed on in Ennerdale are different, inversely, from those Wordsworth depicted in the 'Inscription for St Herbert's Island'. At Derwent Water, chronicles (18) had been a vital means of transacting the story of Herbert and Cuthbert who were physically separated in life but together in death; their voices are absent from the poem (a narrator presides) but the presence of the text is emphasised by the materiality of Wordsworth's choice of an inscription. In *The Brothers*, present voices take precedence over texts: local diaries, which are living and constantly in progress, and the voices of fire-side conversations and spoken epitaphs are important, while written documents for posterity are neglected. The poem's dialogue form emphasises this.

Because Leonard conceals his identity from the Priest, he is both present and strangely half-absent, both alive and assumed to be dead. The Priest proleptically produces, in Leonard's concealed presence, his verbal epitaph: 'When last we heard of him, | He was in slavery among the Moors' (312-13); 'no doubt', the Priest assumes, 'it ended in his death' (314-15). Therefore, Leonard is simultaneously part of the community and disconnected from it; he receives 'a kind of second life' (183) in this conversation. However, the poem ends with the narrative voice explaining details of a letter Leonard sent back to the Priest once he had left the village. Leonard's reliance on this text to explain his identity, rather than delivering a face-to-face explanation, epitomises and finalises his severance from the community and their oral traditions. He cannot explain his feelings to the Priest and so cannot be reincorporated into the village. James and Leonard did not manage the reunion that Herbert and Cuthbert shared. For

the brothers, death marked separation; for the monks, death was the end of their separation. These poems thus mediate senses of companionship and isolation, which are epitomized through text, voice, and form. Does Wordsworth give precedence to communities of speech or silence?

This dialectic between silence and conversation, and the sense of community or companionship through presence and absence is linked to the process of reading, either aloud or privately; it also foregrounds the distinction between narrated sound or silence, and that which is created or enacted when the text is vocalised. These issues of silence and voice are underpinned by the reader's awareness of the text as the artificial construction of a self-conscious poet, where narrated silence highlights that self-reflexivity.[31]

Spoken verse implies the presence of listeners in a particular place at a particular time.[32] Oral, ballad poetry thus aligns with Wordsworth's emphasis on cultivation of relationships. Whilst recitation and reading aloud are not necessarily group activities, evidence from the period suggests that the oral and auditory nature of poetry and group reading was important. Anthologies such as Enfield's *Speaker*, Wollstonecraft's *Female Reader*, and Barbauld's *Female Speaker* were designed to create occasions on which readers and auditors of any age might assemble to enjoy a text together.[33] David Perkins provides an account of the conditions under which

[31] J. Hillis Miller identifies self-reflexive points at which language becomes a representation of a representation in, *The Linguistic Moment: From Wordsworth to Stevens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 59-113.

[32] In Carthusian monasteries, monks achieved a combination of solitude and community through reading. Monks residing in separate cells would simultaneously read a set text at the sound of a bell; they thus read together but continued in solitude: Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 27-57.

[33] Frances Ferguson, 'Writing and Orality around 1800: "Speakers", "Readers", and Wordsworth's "The Thorn"', in *Wordsworth's Poetic Theory: Knowledge, Language, Experience*, ed. by Stefan H. Uhlig and Alexander Regier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 119-138 (p. 132-3). These anthologies 'heightened their readers' consciousness of the audience and created the conditions for an increased acknowledgement of those readers' (p. 134).

Wordsworth (and Coleridge) recited poetry: 'for the Romantics poetry was a strongly "temporal" and oral art—an art realized in time by the voice'.[34] Many manuals of elocution were published between 1760 and 1830 which often included instructions for reading verse aloud. In the classroom there was also emphasis on recitation; Wordsworth was able to recite ninety two pages of verse (not his own) to Lady Lowther.[35]

In *Lyrical Ballads*, these issues of reading aloud verses silent reading, are even more pertinent. Fiona Stafford identifies a paradox: 'Where ballads had traditionally circulated by word of mouth, the printed poem was part of the uniform, industrialised processes that Wordsworth denounced in his Preface'.[36] In the concept of a printed collection of "lyrical ballads", Wordsworth combines features of his pastoral dialogue and his hermit inscription.[37] *The Brothers* and 'Inscription for St Herbert's Island' show the merits of both written history and spoken voice. And yet, the absence of both is also powerful. At the graveside, where text and voice are absent, Leonard does not know whether James lives. However, in this thirty-minute period of meditation, the proximity between Leonard and James is most acute: without the text of an epitaph, Leonard has to do more work in order to remember and interpret the camber of the land.[38] As he

[34] 'How the Romantics Recited Poetry', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 31 (1991), 655-671 (p. 656).
[35] William Hazlitt compares Wordsworth's and Coleridge's style of 'chaunting' poetry in *My First Acquaintance with Poets* (1823) (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1993): 'Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of Betty Foy'; '[W] sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear, gushing accents in his voice, a deep gutteral intonation, and a string tincture of a northern *burr*, like the crust on wine' (pp. 76-7). Lucy Newlyn provides a thorough analysis on the practice of reading aloud and the tension with growing print culture in *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 333-71.
[36] Stafford, *Lyrical Ballads 1798 and 1802*, p. xliii.
[37] For my discussion of Wordsworth's pastoral renovation with regard to the hermit inscriptions of 1818 see Chapter Five.
[38] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 29-56. In particular, Iser discusses how Henry Fielding and Lawrence Sterne offered modes of participation to readers. On Wordsworth's implication of hermeneutic responsibility see Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism*, pp. 109-17. Newlyn argues that instead of the tearful, self-indulgent responses of narrators evident in the

engages silently with his memories and affections, he becomes like Herbert who prays, in silence, to be reunited with his beloved companion (in life or death). When text and voice are both absent, Leonard has the greatest capacity to develop his skills of perception. His reflection ceases only when the Priest disturbs him. However, as far as hermits are freed, like Herbert, from communication, the poet is tied to discussion of the nature of silence within the constraints of language. A poet's silence needs to be somehow manifested.

Wordsworth added the following passage to *The Prelude* in the 1820s:

> When from our better selves we have too long
> Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,
> Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
> How gracious, how benign is Solitude!
> How potent a mere image of her sway!
> Most potent when impressed upon the mind
> With an appropriate human centre—Hermit
> Deep in the bosom of the Wilderness;
> Votary (in vast Cathedral, where no foot
> Is treading and no other face is seen)
> Kneeling at prayer; or Watchman on the top
> Of Lighthouse beaten by Atlantic Waves;
> Or as the soul of that great Power is met
> Sometimes embodied on a public road,
> When, for the night deserted, it assumes
> A character of quiet more profound
> Than pathless Wastes. (IV. 354-70)[39]

Wordsworth evokes a type of separation that takes place within the self and is caused by the over-stimulation of a hurrying, populous world. Too much interaction causes an internal fissure between the self and 'our better selves', which heightens the need for solitude and the reunion of disparate aspects of the self. Wordsworth goes on to explain that solitude is 'Most potent' when it has 'an appropriate human centre' in the form of a hermit, a votary, or a night-watchman. The hermit is thus important insofar as he is a human image onto which solitude and silence are grafted. Moreover, the hermit is not in

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literature of sensibility, Wordsworth calls his characters in *Lyrical Ballads*, and implicitly the reader, to experience quietude and meditation.

[39] *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, p. 89.

fact entirely disconnected from humanity: Wordsworth's knowledge that the path along which he walked was usually populated, enriched the isolation he felt. Wordsworth upholds the interchange between solitude and community throughout. The hermit is therefore an instantiation of the intangible qualities he represents; he holds, as a text does, the vision, the contemplation, and the transcendence that the poet pursues in a physical, human frame.

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Wordsworth's model of himself as a recluse in retirement, formulated between 1798 and 1800, permeates his poetic project. Moreover, the literary and artistic freedom associated with the gothic architecture that he appropriates is particularly pertinent to the aesthetic agenda of *Lyrical Ballads*, which contains poems 'so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed'.[40] Gothicism became an embodiment of imaginative liberty and innovation; it sought to excite and stimulate (rather than explain) according to its own rules.[41] Wordsworth's metaphor of the gothic structure of his work, stated in the Preface to *The Excursion*, is an extension of his plan to reorient readers' cravings for 'extraordinary incident' and 'outrageous

[40] In seventeen- and eighteenth-century thought, gothic architecture's freedom from neo-classical restraints was associated with Whig principles of political and religious liberty. From the opposing Tory point of view, the symmetry and balance of classical design 'apotheosized the Tory aim of maintaining national stability through a vested aristocratic interest and a strong monarchy': Samuel Kliger, *The Goths in England: a Study of Seventeen- and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 19. Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, in *Prose*, vol. 1, 138-85 (140).

[41] Kliger discusses, for example, Gilbert West's *Stowe, the Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Lord Viscount Cobham* (1732), and Samuel Boyse's 'The Triumphs of Nature' (1742) as instances of gothic literature: *The Goths in England*, pp. 29-30. Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London, 1762) describe the structure of Spenser's *Faery Queene* as gothic because it is internally coherent despite its disobedience to classical rules: 'When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined it is seen to have its merit, as well as the Grecian', p. 61. See also John Ruskin, 'The Nature of the Gothic', in *The Works of John Ruskin: The Stones of Venice*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903-12), vol. 10 (1904), pp. 180-269; Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: an Essay in the History of Taste*, 3rd edn (1928; repr. London: John Murray, 1962); and Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon, 1999). For Wordsworth's later connection with the Cambridge Camden Society see Chapter Five below.

stimulation'.[42] His aim was to subdue rather than quench readers' thirsts for the 'gross and violent stimulants' of 'sickly and stupid German tragedies', and he attempted to construct a new public taste for poetry in line with his version of incorporated reclusion.[43]

In 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth conveys his own modes of sensory stimulation and perception:

> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things. (48-50)

The eye is subdued by an aural power which facilitates a vision of 'the life of things'. The most penetrating act of perception does not happen with the eye but through a quietness that permeates all the senses. Wordsworth highlighted a similar characteristic in his brother John:

> thou didst become
> A silent Poet! from the solitude
> Of the vast Sea didst bring a watchful heart
> Still couchant, an inevitable ear
> And an eye practis'd like a blind man's touch. (87-91)[44]

John's heart adopts the work of his eyes: his sight, which tells him only of physically present things, does not determine his course; rather his reflective emotional knowledge of that which he *cannot* see is of most importance. The eye which is 'like a blind man's touch' understands the things it perceives in terms of how they *feel* to him, not how they look. This haptic formulation of sight is 'practised' and 'couchant', cultivated in the heart over time. But this deferral is undercut by John's 'inevitable ear'. Aural ability is inevitable insofar as it cannot be temporarily closed off (as, for example, when the

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[42] *Prose*, vol. 1, 150.
[43] ibid, vol. 1, 148 and 150. Coleridge had also written several devastating reviews attacking the structure and style of Gothic novels. However, Coleridge's emphasis on narrative style is an implicit defence of the actual practices of recluses against the lurid stereotypes presented by Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and Mary Robinson: *The Critical Review* (August 1794), 361-72; (February 1797), 194-200; and (August 1798), 472. See also *W's Reading I*, pp. 115, 86, and 160.
[44] *P2V*, p. 566.

eyes are shut). However, just as John watches for that which is not visible, the inevitability of his ear is concerned with detection of silence.

In *The Prelude*, Mary Wordsworth is presented as having similar characteristics:

> Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;
> Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
> Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
> Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
> When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
> She welcomed what was given, and craved no more[.] (1850. XII, 153-8)[45]

Mary's heart presides over the work of her eyes. Her understanding of the world is not merely noetic but grounded in the body, in repeated experience, in the motions of the blood. This stimulatory quietness brings about recognition of the presence of an impulse of sadness that emanates from nature and is complicit with human affections, as at Tintern Abbey:

> but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts (91-6)

Comprehending the 'still, sad music of humanity' makes an absence present. The 'music of humanity' is a silent emanation that simultaneously subdues and stimulates, bringing joy and sadness. This 'music' arises from nature where the Wanderer encourages the Solitary to detect it. Robert Perceval Graves's observation helps to explain the means by which it should be comprehended:

> [W]e owe to [Wordsworth] the bringing out into definite form, for our more conscious enjoyment, of spiritual instincts which are at the foundation of

[45] Coleridge agrees with Wordsworth's understanding of a connection between the eye, the heart, and poetic sensibility. In a letter of 13 July 1802 to William Sotheby, in which he talks about the Preface, Coleridge writes that a great poet must have: 'for all sounds, & forms of human nature the *ear* of a wild Arab listening to the silent Desert, the eye of a North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves that strew the Forest— ; the *Touch* of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child — / and […] a *heart* sufficiently pure & simple' [Coleridge's italics]: *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71), vol. 2 (1956), 810.

> our being—of transitional states of feeling, the knowledge and observation of which enrich for ever our self-intelligent life.[46]

Wordsworth's poetry draws its life from within the apprehender. Discernment of silence, through reading or listening, is instinctual but not immediately accessible without practise. Hermits are not important to this thesis in themselves, rather they are models through which Wordsworth's conceptions of poetic vision, language, and 'spiritual Presences', might be understood. These are the ways of reaching his silences.

In the 1802 additions to the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explains that a poet is the man equipped with a 'disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present'.[47] The primary skills of the poet are observation and contemplation. The hermit is the ideal figure for the poet because he requires minimum stimulation to achieve extended perception: his craving is for absent things rather than 'gross and violent' things. His fixed vision is pure because it is imageless; his companionship with God is pure because it is wordless. Freed from communication and indirect perception, the hermit glimpses eternity; the poet on the other hand is anchored by the necessity of language to communicate his experience.

The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* frames Wordsworth's ideas about poetic language in terms of contemplation, repetition, and containment. In enclosed rural communities 'elementary feelings are in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated': 'from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse', rural men are able to 'convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions'.[48] Wordsworth's admiration for language characterised by repetition of activity in an enclosed community resonates with the circumstances of the hermit's life. The hermit is

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[46] Graves, 'Recollections of Wordsworth and the Lake Country', p. 304.
[47] *Prose Works*, vol. 1, 159.
[48] ibid, vol. 1, 144.

attached to a particular spot and thrives on the stimulation of his pure imageless vision. Such habitude and stability counters the linguistic multiplicity and associationism Wordsworth feared.

In 1954, in a seminal discussion of Wordsworth, Geoffrey Hartman stated that 'much will eventually have to be said on Wordsworth's use of the hermit figure'.[49] In context, Hartman was referring to the scope of his own study, but the gravity of the contribution this essay made to Wordsworth scholarship suggests that this call for an extensive discussion of hermits should be taken more literally. For Hartman, hermits are important metaphorically; they are an image of transcendence, exemplifying the poetic skills of meditation and concentrated perception. As such, Hartman attests that in the quintessential poetry of *The Prelude*, 'Tintern Abbey' and the 'Ode' ('There was a time…'), the hermit is 'Wordsworth's prophetic figure *par excellence*'.[50]

In this way, the root and purpose of Wordsworth's poetic project is tied up with the space of the hermitage. Wordsworth's hermits guide the reader to a consideration of the importance of language and silence; they are symbols of the transcendence poetry can achieve. The project of *The Recluse* does not hinge on reclusion so much as it depends on the reorientation of the reader's capacity for stimulation. Hermits and solitaries are important for Wordsworth insofar as they impact on his poetics of silence, which opens up, rather than restricts, engagement with the world and with others; it reveals the potency of under-stimulation.

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[49] *The Unmediated Vision: an Interpretation of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke, and Valery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 9-10.
[50] ibid, pp. 33-4.

CHAPTER TWO

Passion, Repetition, and Meditation: 1800-1807

> To speak and to remain silent, each is a perfection. The case of each consists in holding to the proper *measure* of words. Silence is great and speech is great, but the wise man sets a *measure* upon them both [my italics].[1]

Wordsworth's early exposure to the history of asceticism was acutely unforgiving of its values; the studies he encountered as a schoolboy and as a young man employed a common vocabulary to depict monastic vices. Eighteenth-century accounts of medieval monasticism present religious solitary figures that are credulous, indolent, and superstitious. Pierre Bayle's *General Dictionary* assumes that avaricious nuns and monks cannily took advantage of the 'superstitious credulity of the laity' by forging 'spurious saints and relics' on account of which the faithful parted with their money.[2] Edward Gibbon describes hoards of anchorites in the deserts who were 'impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition' and lost their rationality by 'habits of credulity and submission'.[3] Such portrayals were revivified at the end of the eighteenth century when the French Revolution stimulated interest in religious practices in Europe. Joshua Lucock Wilkinson's travel journal contains a chapter entitled 'Superstition' which mocks the idolatry of 'deluded' Catholics in Spain. Wilkinson describes the

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[1] Bishop Valerian of Cimiez, quoted in Bruce, *Silence and Sign*, p. 37.

[2] Pierre Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical*, trans. by J. P. Bernard and others,10 vols. (London, 1734-41), vol. 1, 28. Volume 1 contains a discussion of hagiography and the history of monasticism. In 1798 Wordsworth and Coleridge were consulting the 1697 edition published in Rotterdam: *W's Reading I*, p. 10.

[3] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and Other Selected Writings* (1776-87), ed. by H. R. Trevor-Roper (Buckinghamshire: Sadler & Brown, 1966), pp. 172 and 174. Gibbon describes the isolating and debilitating living conditions, sleeping patterns, diet, and silence of ascetics who 'seriously renounced the business and the pleasures of the age, […] chastised their body, mortified their affections, and embraced a life of misery as the price of eternal happiness' (p. 168). Gibbon sardonically draws a fine line between saint and madman. Wordsworth would have read Gibbon as a schoolboy at Hawkshead: *W's Reading I*, p. 158.

garrulous laity on the roadside 'alternately repeat[ing] their short prayers, questions, and responses: more noisy, perhaps not less insincere, than their priests', and tells how hermits 'fled [the world] for refuge from its cares or to shelter a weak understanding under the pious credulity of the cowl'.[4] Robert Southey's *Letters from Spain and Portugal* similarly abound with insults of monastic life: 'The indolent who is content to vegetate through existence without experiencing more pleasure or more pain than vegetables probably feel, the bigot whose mind is rendered dark and sullen […] will alike love the tranquillity of the Convent; for tranquillity is all they ask, and this is all the Convent can bestow'.[5] In the same vein, Francis Wrangham's sermon, 'Rome is Fallen!', traces how Christianity became an object of ridicule following the French Revolution: 'enormous errors removed millions from their allotted stations in society, and begot the superstition that darkened the cloister, and the fanaticism that added savageness to the desert'.[6] Wrangham's objection to monastic reclusion was social and political: indolent monks make no contribution to society. It is a perversion of the Gospels to remove a member from the body of Christ hence the eradication of monasticism during the Revolution meant that 'henceforward the *European* community will assert with effect its claim upon the services of every individual, who enjoys its

[4] *The Wanderer: Or, a Collection of Anecdotes and Incidents, with Reflections, Political and Religious, During Two Excursions, in 1791 and 1793, in France, Germany, and Italy*, 2 vols. (London, 1795), vol. 2, 21-2 and vol. 1, 285. Wilkinson writes: 'because we sometimes delight in retirement, and as the mind is most confessedly purified by its solitary conversation with itself, I would not recommend the gloomy devotion of a monastic life. These institutions, if we may judge from experience of many countries, are no way favourable to the improvement of the condition of mankind' (vol. 1, 284). Wilkinson made tours of the continent in 1791 and 1793. Wordsworth had lodged with Wilkinson in London in 1792-3 while he prepared *Descriptive Sketches* for the press and the two men are likely to have compared notes about their European travels: *W's Reading I*, pp. 148-9 and Chester L. Shaver, 'Wordsworth's Vaudracour and Wilkinson's The Wanderer', *The Review of English Studies*, 12 (1961): 55-7.

[5] *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal* (Bristol, 1797), pp. 271-2.

[6] *Thirteen Practical Sermons; Founded Upon Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul. To Which Are Annexed Rome Is Fallen! a Sermon Preached 1798, with Notes and Illustrations, & C.* (London, 1800), p. 236. Wordsworth requested copies of these sermons in a letter of February 1801, *EY*, p. 318. Duncan Wu assumes Wrangham would have sent the sermons to Grasmere following this letter: *W's Reading II*, p. 250.

protection' [Wrangham's italics].[7] In England, the imagined political and public danger of Catholicism was fuelled by violent opposition to the Catholic Relief Acts (1778 and 1791) that resulted in The Gordon Riots (1780) and the United Irish Rebellion (1798). The Union with Ireland Act brought these issues into particular contention in 1800.[8] However, Wordsworth's own response to the Grande Chartreuse after his visit in August 1790 was somewhat different. Dorothy reported to Henry Crabb Robinson: 'I do not think that any one spot which [William] visited during his youthful Travels with Robert Jones made so great an impression on his mind: and, in my young days, he used to talk so much of it to me'.[9]

The narrator of Wordsworth's 'The Thorn', is 'credulous', indolent, 'prone to superstition' (9-11) and therefore likely to be the object of ridicule.[10] Without claiming that Wordsworth was necessarily cognizant of similarities of vocabulary between descriptions of religious recluses and his own narrator, this chapter will use hermitic prayer as a vehicle for investigating two themes which grow out of Wordsworth's note to 'The Thorn': firstly Wordsworth's concerns about the textual transaction of passion,

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[7] Wrangham, *Rome is Fallen*, p. 237. Wrangham speaks against the hierarchical structures of the Catholic Church and believes that if everyone is equal, everyone should contribute equally. However, he later became a fervent supporter of Catholic Emancipation in Britain.

[8] Michael Tomko, *British Romanticism and the Catholic Question: Religion, History, and National Identity, 1778-1829* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and Simon Jarvis, 'Wordsworth and Idolatry', *Studies in Romanticism*, 38 (1999), 1–27. For Wordsworth's engagement with Catholic Emancipation, see Chapter Five below.

[9] *LY i.*, p. 176. An account of Wordsworth's 1790 tour is provided in *A Life*, pp. 44-9, and by Donald E. Hayden, *Wordsworth's Walking Tour of 1790* (Tulsa: University of Tulsa Press, 1983). Wordsworth records his response to the Grande Chartreuse in *Descriptive Sketches* (1793, 53-79; 1836, 52-76) and eventually in *The Prelude*, VI. 419-89. See *Descriptive Sketches*, pp. 42-7 and *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, pp. 123-6. For my discussion of the Grande Chartreuse in Wordsworth's *Recluse* fragment, *The Tuft of Primroses*, see Chapter Three below. Simon Jarvis helpfully emphasises the earnestness and breadth of Wordsworth's research into monastic history in preparation for *The Recluse* in *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, pp. 111-32. Jarvis understands eighteenth-century accounts of asceticism in terms of economics and argues that Wordsworth used monasticism to grapple with his own concerns about the economic value of his poetic vocation. After his visit to Wordsworth in 1849, Ellis Yarnall reported that in France Wordsworth 'had known many of the abbés and other ecclesiastics, and thought highly of them as a class; they were earnest, faithful men: being unmarried, he must say, they were the better able to fulfil their scared duties; they were married to their flocks.' *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 479. The date of this comment makes it a dubious piece of evidence, yet it suggests at least a shade of remembered approval.

[10] All quotation from the note is from *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 350-1. Editorial line numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

and secondly, the relation between repetition, reading, and prayer.[11] How does repetition transform words into a substance similar to silence?

Wordsworth added the note to 'The Thorn' to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in order to explain the manner in which superstitious men repeatedly cling to words as a means of expressing passion; the note defines poetry as passion and is troubled by the provenance and transference of such. The object of the poem is 'to take care that words, which in [the minds of persons such as the narrator] are impregnated with passion, should likewise convey passion to Readers who are not accustomed to sympathise with men feeling in that manner, or using such language' (24-7). Wordsworth created a character resembling a retired sea captain in order to 'exhibit some of the general laws by which superstition acts upon the mind' (12-3). He aimed to 'shew [sic] the manner in which such men cleave to the same ideas; and to follow the turns of passion, always different, yet not palpably different, by which their conversation is swayed' (19-21). 'The Thorn' therefore becomes a dramatic monologue: it is a study primarily of how the superstitious narrator associates ideas in a state of excitement, rather than a narrative about the plight of Martha Ray.[12] Wordsworth felt it necessary in the 1798 'Advertisement' to *Lyrical Ballads* to explain that 'The poem of the Thorn […] is not supposed to be spoken in the author's own person' and after reflecting on its reception he presented the note in 1800 as a substitute for an introductory poem which, if he had ever been in the mood to write, would have

[11] Studies of Wordsworth's encounters with religious retreat have drawn few conclusions about how we might better understand Wordsworth's early attitudes towards poetry and reading practices. For example Peter Manning, 'Wordsworth at St Bees: Scandals, Sisterhoods, and Wordsworth's Later Poetry', *English Literary History*, 52 (1985), 33-58 and Tonya Moutray, 'Remodelling Catholic Ruins in William Wordsworth's Poetry', *European Romantic Review*, 22 (2011), 819-31. These studies draw conclusions about Wordsworth's later attitudes towards monasticism and the political implications of his interest in monastic ruins.

[12] Stephen Maxfield Parrish, '"The Thorn": Wordsworth's Dramatic Monologue', *English Literary History*, 24, (1957), 153-63.

properly explained the narrator's character.[13] Wordsworth took care to separate his own notion of passion from that of the narrator, presenting the garrulous character as a model of how *not* to experience and convey passion. The note to 'The Thorn', together with several poems Wordsworth composed in the early 1800s and Dorothy's accounts of their habits in Grasmere, demonstrate patterns of behaviour and communication that sympathise with certain prayerful aspects of hermitic life, opposed to the pervading cynical portrayal of indolent monasticism.[14] For Wordsworth, hermits in fact provide models for the authentic generation and conveyance of passion that suit a poet's purposes very well because repetition has the efficacy to transform words into a type of soothing psalmody.

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Hermits and monks became model readers of scripture through the practice of hesychasm. The term comes from the Greek *hesychia* meaning stillness, rest, quiet, and silence. In physical terms it refers to one who lives in solitude (a hermit or recluse); in a spiritualised sense it means inner stillness or silence of the heart. Hesychast prayer, which became prevalent among Byzantine monks in the fourteenth century, involves the intensification of sense perception, imagination, and attention to the body.[15] The practice includes adopting a posture of stillness whilst directing the inner thoughts and the outer eye towards the navel. Hesychasts then control the rhythm of their breathing as a means of sending the mind down to the heart and keeping it there before exhaling.

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[13] *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 739.

[14] Thomas Dudley Fosbroke, *British Monachism; or, Manners and Customs of the Monks and Nuns of England* (London, 1802) provides an account of the rules and routines of prayer by which Medieval British nuns and monks lived. See also, Fosbroke's 'Prefatory Dissertation' in *The Economy of Monastic Life* (Gloucester, 1795).

[15] Dirk Krausmuller, 'The Rise of Hesychasm' in *Eastern Christianity*, ed. by Michael Angold, 20 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. 5, 101-26, and M. S. Laird, *A Sunlit Absence: Silence, Awareness, and Contemplation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 13-4.

Simultaneously, the hesychast will repeat a short scriptural phrase or prayer word (*versiculum*) which focuses the mind and shuts out distracting thoughts. In doing so, hesychasts follow the example set by Jesus who repeated a phrase from Deuteronomy to guard himself against temptation in the desert and also answer Paul's instruction to 'Pray without ceasing'.[16] The aim of this technique is to achieve conscious union with God on a level free from mental images and discursive thinking. Imageless and wordless contemplation is achieved through repetition of short phrases coupled with this psychosomatic technique. Byzantine texts promise that hesychasts will attain visions of divine light similar to the apostles' experience of the transfigured Christ on Mount Tabor if they regularly practice this form of meditation. The technique has been continually used in religious and secular contexts, inside and outside the monastic setting, since the thirteenth century.[17]

The distinction between meditation and contemplation is an important one. Meditation is a methodical, teachable, and unremarkable activity that may be undertaken by anyone. It is an activity of practiced, iterative attentive thought. On the other hand, contemplation is the supra-sensory *result* of meditation. It is the permanent pure focus of the mind on divine things. Thus meditation is an activity towards contemplation.[18]

Hesychast meditative practice was appropriated and democratized in the seventeenth century by the Quietist movement in France. Jeanne Guyon's *A brief and very easy method of mental prayer* (1685) controversially offered unmediated

[16] Matthew 4: 1-11 and 1 Thessalonians 5: 17.
[17] Kallistos Ware, *'Act out of stillness': The Influence of Fourteenth-Century Hesychasm on Byzantine and Slav Civilisation* (Toronto: The Hellenic Canadian Association of Constantinople and The Thessalonikean Society of Metro Toronto, 1995) and Christopher D. L Johnson, *The Globalization of Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer: Contesting Contemplation* (London: Continuum, 2010).
[18] Throughout the thesis I adhere to this distinction which is of ancient origin and which was the root of the seventeenth-century Quietist teaching of Madam Guyon. See Richard Parish, *Catholic Particularity in Seventeenth-century French Writing: 'Christianity Is Strange'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 164-72.

experience of the presence of God to everyone who adopted her methods of regularised mental prayer (not just monks, nuns, and priests).[19] Such meditative practice was anglicised and domesticized by writers such as Jeremy Taylor, William Law, and William Melmoth, all of whose work Wordsworth knew. Taylor was a household favourite of whom Wordsworth and Coleridge highly approved; his practical guide, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650), is a directory for Christian life providing instruction in areas such as prayer, fasting, chastity, alms giving, and duty to those in power.[20] On the topic of prayer Taylor fervently recommends a version of hesychast practice: 'In the midst of the works of thy Calling often retire to God in *short prayers* and ejaculations […] for so thou reconcilest the outward work and thy inward calling […] the employment of the Body and the interest of thy Soul [Taylor's italics].'[21] Taylor notes that it is good practice to 'measure the day' by reciting a short ejaculation 'every hour, that the parts and returns of devotion may be the measure of your time'.[22] He goes on to provide a list of these 'ejaculations' or short phrases, mostly taken from the Psalms, which should be recited during 'all *intervals* or void spaces of time' [Taylor's italics].[23]

William Law's *Serious Call* (1728) provides instructions on how to chant a psalm and directs its readers to collect short phrases from the Psalter, memorise them, and reflect on them periodically. William Melmoth's household manual, *The Great Importance of a Religious Life* (1711), similarly provides prayers and ejaculations to be

[19] ibid, pp. 164-7. Guyon was imprisoned in the Bastille between 1695 and 1703 for publishing this heretical book. Her mystic passivity seemed to dismiss the need for sacraments and works.
[20] In a diary entry for 28 March 1809, Joseph Farington recorded Lady Beaumont's report that Wordsworth and Coleridge 'highly approve the writings of Dr. Jeremiah Taylor': *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. by Kenneth Garlick and others, 16 vols. (New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1978-98), vol. 9 (1982), 3426.
[21] Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650), 23rd edn (London, 1719), p. 7. An annotated copy of this volume was owned by Wordsworth: *W's Library*, p. 254 and *W's Reading II*, pp. 208-9.
[22] Taylor, *Holy Living*, p. 11.
[23] ibid, pp. 6, 41, 46, 293.

used repeatedly throughout the day as a means of preventing unchristian behaviour.[24] Taylor's instructions are representative of the content of these volumes:

> Break your office and devotion into fragments and make frequent returnings by ejaculations. […] by often praying in such manner and in all circumstances, we shall *habituate* our Souls to Prayer, by making it the business of many lesser Portions of our Time: and by thrusting it in between all our other Employments, it will make every thing relish of Religion, and by degrees turn all into its nature [my italics].[25]

Taylor's rules for 'Hearing and Reading the Word of God' advise Christians to extract and memorise phrases ('write the Word in your Heart') for the purpose 'of some affectionate Ejaculations'. He encourages Christians to read with an open heart in order to commit phrases to memory and repeat them in between Bible readings.[26]

In the note to 'The Thorn', Wordsworth goes one step further than Taylor by recognising the cycles of repetition through which biblical narratives are inherited, and also the literary beauty of repetition discoverable within the Bible:

> The truth of these remarks might be shewn [sic] by innumerable passages from the Bible, and from the impassioned poetry of every nation.
> Awake, awake Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise Barak and lead thy captivity captive, thou Son of Abinoam.
> 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.
> Why is his Chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the Wheels of his Chariot — Judges — Chap 5th Verses 12th 27th and part of 28th — See also the whole of that tumultuous and wonderful poem — — — (52-61)

Here repetition linguistically mirrors the recurrent pattern of lying or falling down, waking up and rising, and finally dying. The narrative cycle of the Book of Judges—which is concerned with false rulers, transgression of the covenant, the Lord's anger at this transgression, and the advent of a deliverer who will restore the proper rod

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[24] William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. Adapted to the State and Condition of All Orders of Christians* (London, 1728), pp. 228, 252 and 262-3. William Melmouth, *The Great Importance of a Religious Life Consider'd. To Which Are Added Some Morning and Evening Prayers* (London, 1711). See *W's Reading II*, pp. 132, 145. Wordsworth mentions these works in a letter to Francis Wrangham of 1808, *MY i*., p. 249, but it is likely that they were known to him before 1798.
[25] Taylor, *Holy Living*, p. 240.
[26] ibid, p. 214.

of inheritance—demonstrates structural repetition in that the same process of legacy, disobedience, and delivery recurs over several generations. This structure parallels the means by which its contents have been inherited: for the Bible to maintain its position as a divine authoritative text, its narratives must preserve passion across generations. In other words, the passion impregnated in words belonging to the narrator must be conveyed to the mind of the reader. The Bible in general and the Book of Judges in particular are therefore important paradigms for Wordsworth of the transference and propagation of passion via linguistic and structural repetition.[27]

In the note to 'The Thorn' Wordsworth explains that the 'deficiencies of language' cause dissatisfaction and a 'craving in the mind' of the speaker (44-5). This craving is satiated by repeatedly clinging to words which are imbued with passion: 'the mind luxuriates in the repetition of words which appear successfully to communicate its feelings' (51-2). Words may be repeated without tautology, Wordsworth explains, when they are 'weighed in the balance of feeling' (38-9): repetition and apparent tautology are thus 'frequently beauties of the highest kind' (47). He values repetition because it causes words to become 'things, active and efficient' (49 [Wordsworth's emphasis]) which are not only symbols of the passion but 'are of themselves part of the passion' (50). Repetition therefore springs from a deficiency of language and it functions to transform words from signs into actual feeling and emotion.

As Wordsworth attempts to collapse the representative gap between passion and language, repetition becomes an antidote to, rather than an expression of, the inadequacy of words. This 'craving in the mind' mirrors prayerful hesychast repetition, through which communication with God pushes language beyond its conventional grammatical constructions. Hesychasm is a habitual practice that uses repetition to

[27] On Wordsworth's appropriation of this passage from the Book of Judges see Eric Lindstrom, 'Prophetic Tautology and the Song of Deborah: Approaching Language in the Wordsworth Circle', *European Romantic Review*, 23:4 (2012): 415-434.

purify passion in order to traverse the fissure between the finite and the infinite, between the hesychast and God.[28] In the note to 'The Thorn' Wordsworth combines the concepts of superstition, repetition, and habit in order to convey the narrator's passion directly to the reader.

Wordsworth's anxieties about the adequacy of language as a vehicle of poetic passion were intimately connected with his thinking about mortality and physicality.[29] Indeed, for Wordsworth, composition was an unpleasant psychosomatic experience:

> I do not know from what cause it is, but during the last three years [i.e. since 1800] I have never had a pen in my hand for five minutes, before my whole frame becomes one bundle of uneasiness; a perspiration starts out all over me, and my chest is oppressed in a manner which I cannot describe. This is a sad weakness; for I am sure, though, it is chiefly owing to the state of my body, that by exertion of mind I might in part control it.[30]

Wordsworth understood that he might control this somatic aversion to writing by focusing his mind and harmonizing bodily and mental experience by reciting, repeating, and arranging verses whilst walking. He revealed the effectiveness of such pacing in his plan to dedicate the opening section of *Poems, in Two Volumes* to 'The Orchard Pathway': 'Orchard Pathway, to and fro | Ever with thee, did I go'.[31]

Wordsworth's pedestrian habits of composition have been mythologized since the early nineteenth century and consequently many critics make assumptions about Wordsworth as "the poet who did not write".[32] Andrew Bennett has proposed, however,

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[28] Alexander Regier argues that Wordsworth's note presents repetition as a symptom or enactment of unsuccessful communication, and also a source of pleasure or beauty: the poet's description of words as 'things' means that they are neither material nor immaterial, and both: 'Words Worth Repeating: Language and Repetition in Wordsworth's Poetic Theory', in *Wordsworth's Poetic Theory: Knowledge, Language, Experience*, pp. 61–80. I disagree that, for Wordsworth, repetition is always a sign of both inadequacy and beauty in language. See also, Debra Fried, 'Repetition, Refrain, and Epitaph', *English Literary History*, 53 (1986), 615–632.

[29] This is most plainly evident in Book V of *The Prelude*, which relates the deaths of Wordsworth's mother, the boy of Winander, the drowned man of Esthwaite, and a dream of an apocalyptically destructive flood.

[30] *EY*, p. 407.

[31] *P2V*, p. 63.

[32] In 1882, H. D. Rawnsley collected accounts from Westmorland peasants of Wordsworth's habits: 'Reminiscences of Wordsworth Among the Peasantry of Westmorland', in *Wordsworthiana: A Selection from papers read to the Wordsworth Society*, ed. by William Knight (London, 1889), pp. 81–119. "Mr

that perambulatory *recitation*, not composition, was more often Wordsworth's activity.[33] This conclusion aligns the poet's practices more closely with those of the hesychast; it also highlights the difference between repeated recitations of a phrase or word extracted from a text and repetition within the text itself (as exemplified in 'The Thorn'). The latter is the poet's deployment of repetition as a literary device, which is liable to go wrong ('Oh misery! oh misery! | O woe is me! oh misery!'); the former shows Wordsworth personally partaking in and advocating this meditative practice.[34]

Wordsworth describes his own habit of pacing whilst repeating verses in 'When first I journeyed hither' where the shade of a fir grove beside Dove Cottage provides 'Commodious harbour, a sequester'd nook | Or cloister' (9).[35] The ecclesiastical connotations of Wordsworth's vocabulary indicate that his pacing is a secluded, solitary activity. He describes,

> A length of open space where I might walk
> Backwards and forwards as long as I had liking
> In easy and mechanic thoughtlessness. (36-8)

By pacing habitually about this enclosed grove, Wordsworth matches repetition of movement with repetition of language and this 'mechanic' action enables him to disconnect his thoughts from the immediate physical surroundings. Wordsworth was delighted to find that his brother John had already worn out a 'hoary pathway […] around the trees' (57) in the fir grove:

> more loth to part
> From place so lovely he had worn the track,
> One of his own deep paths! by pacing here
> With that habitual restlessness of foot

Wordsworth went humming and booing about, and she, Miss Dorothy, kept close behint him" (p. 84); "he bummed a deal" (p. 89); "it was bum, bum, bum, stop; then bum, bum, bum, reet down till t'other end, and then he'd set down and git a bit o' paper out and write a bit; and then he git up, and bum, bum, bum, and goa on bumming for long enough reet down and back again" (p. 90); "He wozn't a man as said a deal to common folk. But he talked a deal to hissen" (p. 92) [sic].

[33] *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 19-41. Bennett draws his conclusion from an examination of the Grasmere Journal and the Wordsworths' correspondence.

[34] Martha Ray's refrain appears in lines 65-6, 76-7, 202, 252-3.

[35] The poem appears in *P2V*, pp. 563-7.

> Wherewith the sailor measures o'er and o'er
> His short domain upon the Vessel's deck
> While she is travelling through the dreary seas. (68-74)

As he recognises the correlation between his own mechanic pacing and freedom of thought, Wordsworth makes a connection between the rhythmic feet of written verse and the reader's engagement with the poem. Wordsworth invites the reader to follow him 'by pacing here' along the written track he has marked on the paper, and to internalise the rhythmic structure of these lines by repeating them over and again. Habitually moving backwards and forwards over metrical lines, the reader gains access to what Wordsworth describes to John Thelwall as 'the passion of metre', which, he notes, it is 'Physically impossible' to avoid.[36] John Wordsworth would have felt and heard similar rhythmic ebbing at sea in the to and fro of the waves. These cadences contributed to John's meditative disposition, facilitating imaginative freedom within the confines of the deck, as in 'The Brothers' where Leonard freely imagined himself in the pastoral landscape of Ennerdale while he was at sea.[37] John's physical pacing therefore demonstrates a combination of confinement and freedom which the reader might simulate through repetition of a short phrase.

In June 1802, Wordsworth rediscovered a literary model of hesychast perambulation in Milton's *Il Penseroso* (1645). Dorothy explains that when their afternoon of walking upon the Turf Path was curtailed by rain, she sat 'in the window reading Milton's Penseroso to William': [38]

> Come pensive nun, devout and pure,

[36] *EY*, p. 434. Paul Fry analyses the simulation of metric time via the pacing of hoofed animals in *Wordsworth and the Poetry of What We Are* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 91-118. Geoffrey Hartman's response to Fry's study appeared in 'Paul Fry's Wordsworth, and the Meaning of Poetic Meaning, or Is It Non-Meaning? Letter to a Colleague and Friend', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 8 (2010), 1–22.

[37] John is the perfect model of a sea captain who offers an alternative to the garrulous narrator of 'The Thorn'. Wordsworth writes of John: 'having been from his earliest infancy of most lonely and retired habits (my Father in allusion to this part of his disposition used to call him Ibex, the shyest of all the beasts) had lived all his life with all the deepest parts of his nature shut up within himself': *EY*, pp. 562-3.

[38] *DWJ*, 3 June 1802, p. 105.

> Sober, steadfast, and demure,
> All in a robe of darkest grain,
> Flowing with majestic train,
> And sable stole of cypress lawn,
> Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
> Come, but keep thy wonted state,
> With even step, and musing gate,
> And looks commercing with the skies,
> Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
> There held in holy passion still,
> Forget thyself to marble, till
> With a sad laden downward cast,
> Thou fix them on the earth as fast. (31-44)[39]

Milton's melancholic speaker recognises the nun's quotidian routine, listens for her call to prayer or curfew bell (74), and observes her cowled figure pacing in the darkness: 'Thee chantress oft the woods among | I woo to hear thy even-song' (63-4). Regulated pacing is part of the nun's meditation and her restrained demeanour, which Milton emphasises with steady iambic octosyllabic couplets.[40] The poem ends with its speaker wishing he had his own hermitage:

> And may at last my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage,
> The hairy gown and mossy cell,
> Where I may sit and rightly spell[.] (167-70)[41]

This mossy hermitage became one of the models on which eighteenth-century landscape garden designers would cast their picturesque grottos, and as stated in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth desired to reach his own hermitage (I. 115). In reading these lines aloud to William when rain had forced an early end to their outdoor walking Dorothy provided an audible substitute for rhythmic pacing indoors. She adopted the role of the

[39] *Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. by John Carey, 2nd edn (1971; repr. Essex: Longman, 1997), p. 146.
[40] Carey describes the peculiar metre of the opening ten lines, ibid, p. 134.
[41] ibid, p. 151.

chauntress as (we might imagine) William listened and turned about the room with his eyes cast on the floor.[42]

The Grasmere Journal reveals another instance of Dorothy repeating lines to evoke a state of repose in her brother's mind: 'I repeated verses to William while he was in bed—he was soothed & I left him. "This is the Spot" over & over again'.[43] Dorothy implemented the practice recommended by Jeremy Taylor whose directory on *Holy Living* includes a list of 'Ejaculations and short Meditations to be used at Night when we awake'. Taylor specifically endorses Psalm 4:4-3: 'commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.'[44] Dorothy's own well-chosen ejaculation comes from Wordsworth's manuscript fragment, DC MS 15 (1802), which poignantly mirrors the themes of the psalmist. Following the spirit of Taylor's instruction, the lines describe a 'bed of heath' (4) on which William and Dorothy had spent 'such happy hours together' (10): 'let me see thee sink into a dream | Of quiet thoughts' (6-7).[45] As it celebrates hours spent resting in a particular spot, the poem's title, 'Travelling', seems incongruous. However, just as Wordsworth found metal release and freedom of mind by pacing up and down short pathways, Dorothy's method of repeating these lines creates a similar sense of movement and the illusion of mental 'Travelling'. Dorothy's repetition of the verse therefore completes the meaning of the poem.

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[42] Upon its publication in 1815, Wordsworth dated 'When first I journeyed hither' to 1802 and so it is possible that this reading of 'Il Penseroso' was influential. Mark Reed suggests the poem was composed in August 1800: *Chronology of the Middle Years*, p. 82, n. 42. Gill states that composition spanned 1800-1804. The poem was published as 'When to the Attractions of the Busy World'. *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (1984; Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 2008)

[43] *DWJ*, 4 May 1802, p. 96.

[44] Taylor, *Holy Living*, p. 46.

[45] *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 307. The stimulus for serious literary work on the Psalms came from the Reformation emphasis on vernacular worship and the particular need for English Psalms given their centrality in Anglican liturgy. Philip and Mary Sidney were the first poets to work on the Psalms and their translations influenced Donne and Herbert: Alastair Hunter, 'Psalms', in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, ed. by Andrew Hass, David Jasper and Elisabeth Jay (Oxford University Press, 2009), <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com> [accessed 8 April 2013].

The poem states that 'the air | In the habitual silence of this wood | Is more than silent' (2-4). Dorothy's action shows that the poem contains a spectrum of various modes of silence, where habitual practices or quiet repetition constitute one such mode. Habitual silence is created and fostered within small communities or between intimates who share patterns of behaviour and frequently employ familiar vocabulary. In such situations, silent behaviour becomes acutely expressive, i.e. 'more than silent'.[46] This links Dorothy's use of repetition to the 'real language of men' in that repeated actions and shared affection within a close community create a pattern of 'mechanical' language use which is particularly forceful and authentic. Silence between intimates, which is the product of habitual activity, is a potent form of communication.

However, words which are subjected to prolonged repetition, as Dorothy demonstrates, lose their semiotic status and their semantic function is transformed. A repeated word becomes an empty sign which no longer exists as anything other than a sound.[47] Dorothy recognises this in her response to 'The Solitary Reaper' as she writes to Lady Beaumont:

> There is something inexpressibly soothing to me in the sound of those two Lines "Oh listen! For the Vale profound | Is overflowing with the sound—" I often catch myself repeating them in disconnection with any thought, or even, I may say, any recollection of the Poem.[48]

In the poem, Wordsworth fills the Highland Vale with the reaper's voice. The speaker listens as 'the plaintive numbers [of her song] flow' (18) until he has had his 'fill' (29) and then carries the music in his heart 'long after it was heard no more' (32).[49] The

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[46] This resembles Ludwig Wittgenstein's argument about 'language games' made in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), trans. by Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe and Rush Rhees, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976).

[47] Kevin Barry, *Language, Music and the Sign: a Study in Aesthetics, Poetics and Poetic Practice from Collins to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) is an interesting discussion of how Romantic poets responded to the early nineteenth-century aesthetics of music and sound.

[48] *EY*, p. 650. Dorothy begins this letter by exulting in the 'quietness that takes possession of [Dove Cottage] when [the children] are gone to sleep' (p. 648).

[49] Geoffrey Hartman's famous discussion of 'The Solitary Reaper' opens his study: *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

image of an overflowing cup as a metaphor for the abundance of God's provision and consolation comes from Psalm 23:5 ('The Lord is my Shepherd'), which was a popular hesychast refrain.[50] Wordsworth's lines incorporate the imagery of the Psalm and in turn Dorothy uses the poem as psalmody, shortly after the death of her brother John, in order to subdue feelings of emptiness and grief.[51] Dorothy's almost unconscious repetition of these lines as she goes about domestic work reflects the Solitary Reaper's practice of singing to release herself from the physical hardship and sadness of work in the field, both of which reflect the monastic combination of labour and psalmody. St Jerome, for example, describes medieval monastic routines:

> there was nothing to be heard but psalms: one could not go into the field, but he should hear the ploughman singing in his hallelujahs, the sweating mower solacing himself with hymns, and the vine-dresser tuning David's Psalms. Thus the ancient monks joined their bodily and spiritual exercise together, and made their common labour become acts of devotion to God.[52]

In the monastery and on the grange, time was measured by prayer and singing. Psalmody and repeated ejaculations were pace-makers and a means of harmonizing bodily labour and spiritual focus. Psalmody and silence were the two pillars of monastic life.[53]

The narrator of 'The Solitary Reaper' is moved by the girl's singing but he cannot understand her language: 'Will no one tell me what she sings?' (17). Her 'melancholy strain' (6) is affective therefore not because of its semantic

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[50] The repetitive prayers of the Desert Fathers were taken from Psalms: Johnson, *The Globalization of Hesychasm*, p. 32. See also, John Chryssavgis, *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

[51] John Wordsworth had died at sea in February 1805.

[52] St Jerome, Letter 18, paraphrased in Joseph Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae, or the antiquities of the Christian Church*, 10 vols. (London, 1710-22), vol.1, 259.

[53] The verb 'meditation' appears fourteen times in the King James Version of the Bible; nine of these are found in Psalms. The noun 'meditation' occurs six times, all six are in Psalms. Harold Fisch has explained how the Psalter is a special locus for the soul in meditation. Its intense lyrical subjectivity is a prototype for spiritual confessions which developed from Augustine to the Romantics: *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 104-35. On the relationship between labour/physical activity and contemplation/idleness in the Romantic period see, Richard P. Adelman, *Idleness, Contemplation and the Aesthetic, 1750-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

content—Wordsworth would not have understood the Gaelic language of the song—but precisely because it touches the listener at an emotive, supralinguistic level.[54] The narrator speculates that this 'melancholy strain' tells of some

> Familiar matter of today?
> Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
> That has been, and may be again! (22-4).

The poem presents the singer's voice as both a visual and an auditory experience: 'I saw her singing at her work' (27). The reaper's rhythmic body-language becomes part of her song and helps to transport her mind. But Wordsworth had only heard and seen this particular reaper by way of a line he read in a manuscript version of Thomas Wilkinson's *Tours of the British Mountains*.[55] Wilkinson's prose captured the reaper's song which Wordsworth subsequently converted into the words of his poem. The supralinguistic passion of the highland girl passed through Wilkinson and Wordsworth, to Dorothy. In her grief, Dorothy uses repetition to transform the words of the poem back into the non-semiotic music of the reaper and she finds herself in a state approaching hesychast reverie or psalmody. The letter to Lady Beaumont explains that the calmness Dorothy attained from this repetition was 'inexpressible'; that is to say, through a prayerful form of poetic repetition Dorothy tapped into a mode of silence.

A nineteenth-century development of this type of hesychast practice occurred in response to John Keble's *The Christian Year* (1827), to which Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822) were presented as a companion piece. Keble's volume was marketed as a book for repeated private reading, as shown by the number of pocket-sized editions. The experience of reading Keble's highly popular work was said

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[54] In a sense, the reaper becomes a figure for the poet who issues her song and the speaker becomes a figure for the attentive reader.

[55] 'Singing at work is a common context for the solo voice, often for women performing daily domestic tasks or working outside in the yards or fields.' J. H. Prynne, *Field Notes: The Solitary Reaper and Others* (Cambridge: 2007), p. 11. Wilkinson's text was published in 1824 but circulated in manuscript among friends before publication. See, *P2V*, p. 415 and Wilkinson, *Tours to the British Mountains*, p. 12. Wordsworth and Dorothy would have seen other Scottish field workers during their 1803 tour.

to be calming, consoling, and healing to both body and mind. For example, John Henry Newman explained that his sister 'told us that during the acuteness of her previous spasms she had received great comfort from being able to repeat to herself Keble's hymns'.[56] This repetitive action was a psychosomatic means of reducing unwanted thought or physical pain.[57]

Dorothy's journal entries and correspondence with Lady Beaumont implicitly advocate the therapeutic and devotional efficacy of repetition, which transformed the semiotic value of words by turning them into sounds which block out unwanted thoughts, cultivate prescribed thoughts, and intensify specific feelings. But this implies a hierarchy of permissible and impermissible cognition, potentially casting a negative, prohibitive light over what Wordsworth attempted to achieve. Taylor specifically recommends repetition that regulates breathing by 'short stages and periods' as a remedy for wandering thoughts during prayer:

> when you have observed any considerable wandering of your thoughts, bind yourself to repeat that Prayer again with actual attention […] and repeat it in all the effects and desires of it: and possibly the tempter may be driven away with his own art, and may cease to interpose his trifles, when he perceives they do but vex the person into carefulness and piety.[58]

In 1844 Wordsworth admitted that repetition was a powerful tool for forming or strengthening religious convictions. Mrs Davy of The Oaks, Ambleside, recalled:

> The safest training for the mind in religion [Wordsworth] considered to be a contemplating of the character and personal history of Christ. "Work it", he said, "into your thoughts, into your imagination, make it a real presence in your mind." I was rejoiced to hear this plain, loving confession of a

[56] Kirstie Blair, 'Keble and the Christian Year', in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, [accessed online, 5 March 2013]. Lori Branch discusses *Ecclesiastical Sketches* as therapeutic prayer in, *Rituals of Spontaneity: Sentiment and Secularism from Free Prayer to Wordsworth* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), pp. 175-209.
[57] During the final stages of this thesis Lucy Newlyn's study *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) came to my attention. Newlyn provides a careful analysis of the therapeutic value of reading aloud: when Dorothy descended into illness in later life, William and Mary read and repeated verses to her as a means of soothing her distress.
[58] Taylor, *Holy Living*, p. 238.

> Christian faith from Wordsworth. I never heard one more earnest, more as if it came out of a devoutly believing being.[59]

But how closely does this religious 'training for the mind', which Wordsworth reportedly advocated in later life, resemble indoctrination? And how does it manifest in his early poetics?

Wordsworth was anxious both about fixing the meaning of language and about the liability of having unpractised readers make unsanctioned associations. This concern—as explained in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*—meant he was keen to inhibit excessively stimulating vocabulary. Wordsworth wanted to control the reader's associative response in the way that hesychasm controls and purifies thought and feeling during prayer and, in some cases, throughout the day and night. On 7 June 1802 he wrote to John Wilson: 'a great Poet ought […] to a certain degree to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane pure and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things'.[60] However, Wordsworth sought to purify and stabilize the reader's feelings and responses in an unexpected way: he attempted to control the reader's associations by causing him to do more rather than less work. As I will go on to argue in more detail, Wordsworth's appropriation of prayerful repetition, which is connected to the emphasis he places on silence, causes the reader to turn inwards and focus on his own phenomenal experience in order to understand and make judgements about poetry. By under-stimulating the reader, Wordsworth asks more of that reader. Paradoxically he prescribes and controls the reader's response by making it a matter of personal responsibility and effort. Passion is not in fact transacted via

[59] *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 440.
[60] *EY*, p. 355.

language, but through the supralinguistic emotion the reader is able, meditatively, to create from the poetry.

In August of 1805 Dorothy had not known 'when the day will come that I shall find solace in murmuring to myself these lamentations for [John's] loss, but I trust it *will* come; for William is comforted in that manner, and I already at times love to hear him repeat these verses ['To the Daisy'], and others which John particularly delighted in' [Dorothy's italics].[61] Repetition focuses Wordsworth's memories of John and helps him to control his grief by revaluating the significance and meaning of words that John had taken pleasure in. Dorothy loves to *listen* to her brother's murmured refrain as he reciprocates the calming mantra she chanted for him whilst he lay in bed. When William and Dorothy abstract sound from words—or turn words into non-semiotic sounds—through repetition, it becomes apparent that linguistic meaning is not so much dependent upon signified content as it is on the relationships that result from usage and structure. Dorothy trusts that with time she will be comforted by words that are currently a source of grief. Words which are laid open to the meditative process carry more meaning and more passion because the provenance of that passion, and the associations attached to it, are now in Dorothy's hands. It seems therefore that the anxieties Wordsworth stated in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* were not ungrounded and his own domestic habits attempted to allay them.

The meaning that emanates from sound or music is entirely under the control of the auditor. Adam Smith's *Of the Nature of that Imitation which takes place in what are called the Imitative Arts* (1795) explains how music recreates emotions in the listener in ways that imitative arts (sculpture for example) cannot: 'Whatever we feel from instrumental Music is an original, and not a sympathetic feeling: it is our own gaiety,

[61] ibid, p. 617. On the shared grief William and Dorothy felt after their father's death see Duncan Wu, 'Wordsworth's Poetry of Grief', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 21 (1990), 114–17.

sedateness, or melancholy; not the reflected disposition of another person'.[62] Similarly Rousseau's *On the Origin of Language* (1781) states that the 'sounds of a melody do not affect us merely as sounds, but as signs of our affections, of our feelings'.[63] Whatever original effect is produced by the sounds of music is immediate; it is not constrained by any sign or image. Through hesychasm, or the transformation of poetry into psalmody, the reader is made to reflect and feel his own, rather than the poet's passion. This transformation of words into music is a means of overcoming the epistemological difficulty of transferring ideas and passions from the poet to the reader. Rather than transfer them, Wordsworth encourages the reader to create new ones. Therefore, the burden of communication by which Wordsworth was concerned in the note to 'The Thorn', shifts from the writer to the reader.[64] The superstition and indolence of the narrator, together with the use of repetition in 'The Thorn', is in fact pivotal to Wordsworth's definition of poetry as passion and his task of conveying that passion directly to the reader.

'The Thorn' and its note would have been revived in the minds of all at Dove Cottage after John's death in 1805 for two reasons: firstly, Wordsworth was anticipating the publication of the fourth edition of *Lyrical Ballads*[65]; secondly the prospect arose of the arrival of Sir George Beaumont's painting inspired by 'The Thorn'. (Beaumont's painting of Peele Castle prompted Wordsworth's 'Elegiac

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[62] *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (London, 1795), p. 164.
[63] *On the Origin of Language: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Essay on the Origin of Languages: Johann Gottfried Herder, Essay on the Origin of Language*, trans. by John H. Moran, and Alexander Gode (1966; repr. New York: Frederick Ungar Publications, 1967), p. 53. See also T. S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry', in *On Poetry and Poets*, (1942; repr. London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 26–38.
[64] Kenneth Johnston's discussion of *The Tuft of Primroses* is predicated on the assumption of Wordsworth's egotism. In comparing himself to St Basil, Johnston claims that Wordsworth was attempting to pass beyond institutional Christianity into a radically personal and individualised existential understanding of God: *Wordsworth and "The Recluse"*. This radical individualism, I suggest, is more fruitfully understood when it is viewed as a characteristic Wordsworth cultivated with the intention of bestowing onto his readers. See David Toop, *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener* (London: Continuum, 2010) for a discussion of the spectrum of silence and noise in literature and film.
[65] The accounts for which commenced with Longman on 3 July: *Chronology of the Middle Years*, p. 292.

Stanzas' around this time). Wordsworth writes to his patron: 'Lady Beaumont mentioned some time ago, that you were painting a picture from the Thorn, is it finished? I should like to see it, the poem is a favourite with me and I shall love it the better for the honour you have done it'.[66] Wordsworth's understanding of the poetic transference of passion is part of his attempt to *create* a type of reader or a certain taste for poetry which is not contained in, or constrained by, the grammatical structures of language. Beaumont's creative, artistic responses to Wordsworth's poems were particularly pleasing because they proved that Beaumont had been fashioned into an adequate reader: a meditative encounter with 'The Thorn' caused Beaumont to create his own, new, and non-linguistic piece of art. Like music, the painting imposes meaning at one stroke. On closer inspection then, the credulousness, indolence, and superstition of the narrator of 'The Thorn' form part of Wordsworth's attempt to create a new taste for poetry.

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Wordsworth and Dorothy read Milton's *Il Penseroso* again on Christmas Eve 1802: 'I have been beside [William] ever since tea running the heal of a stocking, repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating, reading some of Milton's & the Allegro & Penseroso'.[67] The process of listening and repeating lines of poetry alongside the execution of domestic tasks was Dorothy's contribution to Wordsworth's sonnet writing, which he engaged in industriously towards the end of 1802. Between 1800 and 1807, as Wordsworth composed material for *Poems, in Two Volumes*, he was burdened with the imperative of proceeding with *The Recluse*. Coleridge in particular was anxious that time spent on short poems was time squandered in respect of the great

[66] *EY*, p. 588. The painting arrived at Dove Cottage on 29 August 1806: *Chronology of the Middle Years*, p. 334.
[67] *DWJ*, 24 December 1802, pp. 134-5.

philosophical project: 'The habit', Coleridge said in 1803, 'of writing such a multitude of small Poems was […] hurtful to him'. Coleridge issued 'urgent & repeated—almost unremitting—requests & remonstrances' for Wordsworth to 'go on with the Recluse exclusively.'[68] John Wordsworth agreed. Writing to Dorothy in December 1802 he remarked: 'I am much pleased with Wms sonnet to Bonaparte. I think it is well written—it is like the rest of his sonnets which I have seen not much likely to please *common* people at the first sight but I think they are very good—yet still I think it is a pity he should employ himself in that way' [John's italics].[69] Coleridge was concerned that Wordsworth's increasing inclination to compose small poems was developing into a bad 'habit'. Are these small poems—little cells and oratories as Wordsworth would describe them in the Preface to *The Excursion*—an unwanted distraction as Coleridge and John suggest, or is it the case that, in the context of the repetitive activity I have analysed above, confinement within the sonnet and other short verse forms helped to focus Wordsworth's mind and thus became part of his self-preparation in respect of *The Recluse*?[70]

Scholars often agree with Coleridge and John that there is a correlation between the frequency of Wordsworth's choice of the sonnet and his creative decline.[71] However, the sonnet's provision of regulated poetic space forced the poet to circumscribe his thoughts and associations, and this had a particular salutary effect. Wordsworth's recourse to tight poetic form demonstrates his anxiety about the expansive liberty of blank verse, and he admits in 'Nuns fret not at their Convent's

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[68] *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 2, 1013.
[69] *The Letters of John Wordsworth*, pp. 1345.
[70] By 1822 when he had given up on *The Recluse*, Wordsworth agreed with Coleridge and John: 'from want of resolution to take up anything of length, I have filled up many a moment in writing Sonnets, which, if I had never fallen into the practice, might easily have been better employed': *LY i.*, p. 126. I argue that this is not his opinion between 1802 and 1807.
[71] For example, Nancy Easterlin has suggested that Wordsworth's increasingly recurrent use of the sonnet is an emblem of imprisonment, burial, and 'artistic death': *Wordsworth and the Question of 'Romantic Religion'* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1996), pp. 119.

narrow room' that formal restraint in fact leads to intellectual or spiritual freedom. He carefully presents this poem as 'Prefatory' to the entire collection of sonnets in the 1807 volumes:

> Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room;
> And Hermits are contented with their Cells;
> And Students with their pensive Citadels:
> Maids at the Wheel, the Weaver at his Loom,
> Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,
> High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
> Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells:
> In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
> In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:
> Pleas'd if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
> Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
> Should find short solace there, as I have found. (1-14)[72]

At the loom or in the cell, as in Dorothy's domestic labour or with Wordsworth's turning about the room or the Orchard Pathway, repetitious activity frees the worker from focusing on the constraints of space and physical exertion. The mind is released from the rigours of labour, and sonnet writing becomes a pastime. But Wordsworth chooses the sonnet form as a temporary abode, unlike religious figures whose enclosure is permanent, or peasant labourers who have no other choice of work, or bees that need to pollinate: his iterative work is different from theirs because it involves an element of creative freedom. Although the structure of each sonnet has to adhere to the same underlying constraints, infinite poetic variation co-exists within replication.

The assonance of Conv*en*t/cont*en*ted/p*en*sive and Wh*ee*l/W*ea*ver/B*ee*s refers the ear back and forth over the first five lines. Referral and correspondence continue within the alliteration of convent/contented, and the shared consonants and rhyme sounds of

[72] For discussions of this sonnet see, for example: Lee M. Johnson, *Wordsworth and the Sonnet* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1973), pp. 63-88 and Colin Jager, *The Book of God: Secularization and Design in the Romantic Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 210-15.

Cells/Citadels, Furness Fells/Foxglove bells. Line six enacts the measured symmetry Wordsworth had sought from Dorothy's reading of *Il Penseroso*: 'High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells'. The central 'Peak' of the line is flanked by alliterative phrases, the first rising and the second falling, which enacts the pacing up and down of Milton's 'pensive nun'. The cadence of line seven then invokes a downward path: 'Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells'. In both of these lines the first three feet head in one direction before a preposition ('of' or 'in') turns the rhythm allowing the two final feet to come back. The pacing of lines six and seven is important preparation for the disruption that occurs through punctuation in lines eight and nine.

The last line of the octave and the first line of the sestet are the climax of the sonnet: their pacing feet contain the poem's central message. The regular stride that Wordsworth established is hijacked by commas and a colon, and line eight is the first one not to be end-stopped. There are thus five periods over these two lines:

> In truth, / the prison, / unto which we doom Ourselves, / no prison is: / and hence to me

The first three periods build to the volta: 'no prison is'. Wordsworth conveys the freedom that he gains from the constrictions of regularity by breaking those self-imposed rules. It is only when Wordsworth executes his own interpretation of the pentameter that he comes to express how the constraint of form helps the poet. Self-imposed formal regularity, like perambulatory habits or repetitive prayer, frees the mind allowing it to create its own meaning. The iambic 3:2 split of lines six and seven returns in line fourteen, accentuated by a comma after the third foot, to announce the resumption of comfortable repetitive pacing.

By presenting religious recluses alongside pensive students, and by invoking images of industrious weavers and working bees, Wordsworth moves away from the derisive eighteenth-century characterisation of hermits as credulous and indolent. From

the peak of Furness Fells, the ruins of the medieval monastery of Furness Abbey are visible. At this site, Cistercian monks lived enclosed lives with an emphasis on manual labour. The hermit-monks would cultivate their own scanty plots of ground whilst chanting prayers, creating a murmur that Wordsworth captures in his description of the bees. The whirr of the spinning wheel and the hum of the loom produce a similar calming effect that leads to contentment. In the Alfoxden Journal, Dorothy had described a type of silence that she only experienced in winter when such an underlying buzz was absent:

> The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in the summer air. The villages marked out by beautiful beds of smoke. The turf fading into the mountain road, the scarlet flowers of the moss.[73]

For the Wordsworths, iterative drones that fill the summer air with life create 'noiseless noise', which amounts to something fuller than the deadening stillness and sparse silence of winter. The summer air is quiet but simultaneously busy and vivifying; its murmurs enhance and thicken the landscape, whereas the clear winter silence matches the lassitude of fading grass and hanging smoke.[74] As well as the blithe liberty produced from dwelling with the repetitive constraint of the sonnet form, 'Nuns fret not' demonstrates a series of susurrating sonic images produced through repetition, which result in felicitous silence similar to that which William and Dorothy created in order to relieve their grief at Dove Cottage.[75]

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[73] *DWJ*, 23 January 1798, pp. 141-2

[74] Wordsworth notices a similar correspondence between the quietness of the summer air and the psalmodic worship of Methodists in the Fenwick note to *Peter Bell*: 'The worship of the Methodists or Ranters is often heard during the stillness of the summer evening in the country with affecting accompaniments of rural beauty. In both the psalmody & the voice of the preacher there is, not unfrequently, much solemnity likely to impress the feelings of the rudest characters under favourable circumstances': *IF Notes*, p. 18.

[75] On silence as music see John Cage, *Silence* (London: Boyars, 1939). Max Picard, *The World of Silence*, trans. by Stanley Godman (London: Harvill, 1948) is a nostalgic discussion of the natural manifestations

Looking back in 1832, Coleridge explained what he expected Wordsworth's *Recluse* to be: 'he should assume the station of a man in repose, whose mind was made up, and so should deliver upon authority a system of philosophy. He was to treat man as man—as subject of eye, ear, touch, and taste in contact with external nature.'[76] *The Recluse* would require the cultivation of a meditative disposition, and repeatedly composing short poems was a means by which Wordsworth identified and refined his inner passions.[77] The sonneteering habit was therefore a process of self-formation and a means of focusing his mind in readiness for that mammoth task, but it was also a development of William and Dorothy's repetitive domestic practices which were soothing and creative of harmonic silence. Coleridge and John were wrong to worry that the sonnets were a harmful distraction.

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The achievement of a state of hesychast contemplation yielded a vision of divine light, thought to be akin to that which the apostles witnessed during Christ's Transfiguration when he appeared alongside Moses and Elijah: Jesus 'appeared in glory' and 'his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light'.[78] The light of the Transfiguration thus pinpointed an interstice between heaven and earth.[79] Wordsworth

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and origins of silence. Adam Potkay, focuses on music, hearing, and sound in *Wordsworth's Ethics*, pp. 13-30.

[76] *Table Talk*, ed. by Carl Woodring, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan paul, 1990), vol 1, 307-8.

[77] Jared Curtis, *Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems Of 1802* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); Lucy Newlyn, *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion*, 2nd edn (1986; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), and Brennan O'Donnell, *The Passion of Meter: A Study of Wordsworth's Metrical Art* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995) provide discussions of Wordsworth's work with a variety of verse forms. On Romantic formal development see Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Susan J. Wolfson, *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[78] Luke 9:31 and Matthew 17:2 respectively.

[79] Krausmuller, 'The rise of hesychasm', p. 101. The Transfiguration is related in Matthew 17: 1-9, Mark 9: 2-9, and Luke 9: 28-36.

uses light in the Ode ('There was a time') as the medium through which we glimpse immortality:

> There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight
> To me did seem
> Apparell'd in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream. (1-5)

The world once wore a transfigured glow (as did the sight of London from Westminster Bridge early one morning in 1802) but as 'The Rainbow comes and goes' (10) maturity awakens the child to the realisation that this 'visionary gleam' (56) passes away. Shadows of experience interrupt the light:

> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy[.] (67-70)

The sun travels from its glorious birth in the east towards the west where it sets and fades into the 'light of common day': the movement of the sun is a metaphor for the boy's life and the child is an acute apprehender of celestial light. In other words the boy is both the producer and receptor of light. Doubts brought on by recollection of past communion with God lead the boy to a fuller comprehension of light:

> 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
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal Silence […] (150-8).[80]

The Ode contains multiple images of light: 'celestial light' (4), the light of the rainbow, the moon, the stars (10, 12, 14), warm sunshine (48), 'visionary gleam' (56), flowing light (69), 'the light of common day' (76), light from his father's eyes (89), 'warm

[80] The *OED* records this as the earliest usage of 'silence' to denote 'the state beyond this life', 'silence, n.' (sense 2. b.), *OED Online* [accessed 16 July 2012].

light' (122), 'fountain light' (154), 'master light' (155), 'radiance' (188).[81] These images accumulate until the point when Wordsworth defines God as 'the eternal Silence', after which references to light trail off. Biblically, language and light were created simultaneously: the first pronouncement, 'Let there be light', created both voice and light from silence.[82] Wordsworth alludes to this and the reciprocal time of apocalypse in 1828/9 in 'On the Power of Sound':

> A Voice to Light gave Being;
> To Time, and Man his earth-born Chronicler;
> A Voice shall finish doubt and dim foreseeing,
> And sweep away life's visionary stir;
> The Trumpet (we, intoxicate with pride,
> Arm at its blast for deadly wars)
> To archangelic lips applied,
> The grave shall open, quench the stars.
> 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. (209-224)[83]

These passages demonstrate complex religious and ontological connections between language, silence, and light. Wordsworth imaginatively conflates the opening lines of St John's Gospel ('In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1)) with lines from the opening chapter of John's first epistle which declares that 'God is light' (1:5). Wordsworth addresses God as Silence and

[81] James Baxendine has identified a possible source for Wordsworth's image of the poetic visionary light fading into the 'light of common day' in Book V of Lucan's *Pharsalia*: 'The Common Daylight and the Light of Common Day', in *Grasmere 2009*, ed. by Richard Gravil (Penrith: Humanities E-Books, 2009), pp. 104-16. On connections between silence, music, and light see Steiner, *Language and Silence*, pp. 60-71. For naturalistic and humanistic readings of the Ode see Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1955; repr. London: Cornell University Press, 1971) and Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: a Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (1962; repr. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971).

[82] Genesis 1:3.

[83] Quotation of the final lines of the published version of 1835 is from *Last Poems*, pp. 123-4. Simon Jarvis contrasts 'On the Power of Sound' with the Ode ('There was a time') in arguing for the metrical and haptic efficacy of music and inarticulate sounds: 'Wordsworth's Late Melodics', in *Wordsworth's Poetic Theory*, pp. 158–175.

answers the question he had posed in the Ode: is human life a temporary noise in the eternal silence? Will language be swept away and silence restored? Wordsworth's answer in 1828-9 (which he had not reached by 1804) is a Christian one: the Word (the Incarnation) will redeem humanity. Wordsworth is not necessarily saying that language, which is analogous with the mortal human state, will survive the apocalypse, but that humanity will be saved through the 'Word', who is the Son of Silence. The nature of the 'Word' is therefore unclear.

Wordsworth may have been following Book III of *Paradise Lost* where Milton invokes light:

> Hail, holy light, offspring of heaven first-born,
> Or of the eternal co-eternal beam
> May I express thee unblamed? since God is light,
> And never but in unapproached light
> Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
> Bright effluence of bright essence increate. (III. 1-6)[84]

Milton combines Christian and Platonic traditions in his interpretation of Light as the principle image of God. The Son/Word is the offspring or emanation of God's 'eternal beam'.[85] Wordsworth's redeeming Word is thus consubstantial with Light and Silence. The ontology of silence and light are strikingly similar. Both are intangible yet their presence can be felt; both carry energy invisibly, and both are concomitant with what they transmit; neither depends on mediation. For Wordsworth, the Father may be Silence and the Son may be Light; the physical manifestation of both of these divine substances is language. The purpose of meditative prayer is to reverse the process of

[84] *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alexander Fowler (Essex: Longman, 1971), pp. 141-2.
[85] Given Milton's Arianism, I make this statement tentatively. The tract that revealed his heterodoxy, *Christian Doctrine*, was first published in 1828. Wordsworth would have been aware of it when he composed 'On the Power of Sound': Maurice Kelley, 'The Recovery, Printing, and Reception of Milton's Christian Doctrine', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 31 (1967), 35–41. Simon Jarvis provides a comprehensive discussion of the philosophical and theological history of images of light and glory: *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, pp. 195-213.

instantiation: the hesychast converts language back into silence and eventually divine light.

The Ode describes the grave as 'a lonely bed without the sense or sight | Of day or the warm light, | A place of thought where we in waiting lie' (120-3). The grave is a waiting-place between the light of common day and the eternal Silence in which glorious light will be re-established. This image recalls Dorothy's journal entry for 29 April 1802 which describes an afternoon she and William spent in John's Grove:

> William lay, & I lay in the trench under the fence—he with his eyes shut & listening to the waterfalls & 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, & 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 & just to know that ones dear friends were near [Dorothy's italics].[86]

This description differs from the grave in the Ode because William and Dorothy share a sensory experience: they do not see or speak to one another but feel and know each other's presence as if they were lodged in adjacent grave-like cells. They are simultaneously together and alone. This apparently indolent activity enlivens and awakens their aural perception of the natural world, unlike the actual grave of the Ode which is 'without sense or sight'. Through listening, they hear their own physical impulses, their heartbeats, and breathing: they become part of the earth through hearing the 'sounds of the earth'.

The alignment of the heart and the breath is one of the hesychast models for focusing the mind in order to attain visions of divine light.[87] Wordsworth explores the interconnection between the mind and the heart in Book II of *The Prelude* where the infant babe lying on his mother's breast gathers 'passion from his Mother's eye!' (II.

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[86] *DWJ*, 29 April, 1802, p. 92. Wordsworth began composition of the 'Ode' on 27 March 1802 and returned to the poem on 17 June: ibid, pp. 83 and 111, and *Chronology of the Middle Years*, p. 156.

[87] I do not mean to suggest that the Wordsworths were aware of the undertones of their actions, but they do exhibit patterns of behaviour which can be fruitfully understood in relation to hermitic practices.

243).[88] The definition of 'passion' involves physical susceptibility to some external force or impulse as in *The Prelude*: 'Along his infant veins are interfus'd | The gravitation and the filial bond | Of nature, that connect him with the world' (II. 262-4).[89] The gravitation between two bodies—mother and baby, brother and sister—is a pre-linguistic transaction of 'poetic spirit' or passion based on the impulses of nature: 'by intercourse of touch | I held mute dialogues with my mother's heart' (II. 282-3). At the mother's breast, the baby felt her heartbeat and his own 'infant veins' were vitalised as his mind became 'prompt and watchful' (II. 247). Like the child in the Ode, the baby became 'creator and receiver both' (II. 273): physical receiver of silence and creator of its passionate meaning.

Dorothy continues her journal entry with observations of the supernatural effects of the sunlight that also recall the Ode:

> Came home to dinner then went to Mr Simpson. We rested a long time under a wall. Sheep & lambs were in the field—cottages smoking. As I lay down on the grass, I observed the glittering silver line on the ridges of the Backs of the sheep, owing to their situation respecting the Sun—which made them look beautiful but with something of strangeness, like animals of another kind—as if belonging to a more splendid world. Met old Mr S at the door—Mrs S poorly—I got mullens & pansies [.][90]

Throughout the Ode Wordsworth depicts various non-verbal 'utterances' of nature. A tree, a single field, and a pansy 'speak' to him of the absence of the 'visionary gleam' (51-7). The consistency with which Wordsworth and Dorothy describe the experience of light, silence and gravitation, helps to explain how mute trees and flowers communicate the message of immortality.

'Visionary' experience is not strictly ocular because it is a product of the perceiver's mind. That is to say, the object perceived is not independently "out there" in the world but it exists within and as part of the perceiving mind fuelled by the

[88] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, pp. 103-1.
[89] 'passion, n.' (sense 3. 11. a.), *OED Online* [accessed 17 February 2012].
[90] *DWJ*, 29 April 1802, p. 93.

imagination.[91] As he explains in the Fenwick note to this poem, Wordsworth was accustomed to such visionary experience in childhood. 'Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being': he would 'brood over' the biblical stories of Enoch and Elijah convinced that he would be 'translated in something of the same way to heaven'.[92] He wanted to pass, like Enoch and Elijah, between material and immaterial states of being. This brooding—or repeated meditation—perpetuates an inability 'to think of external things as having external existence': as the poem puts it, the child raises 'obstinate questionings | Of sense and outward things' (143-4). He communed with what he saw of the external world as if it were part of his own immaterial nature. In other words he collapsed all external objects into states of thought or consciousness.[93] He was so aware of the 'feelings and experiences of his own mind' that often on the way to school he had to grasp at a wall or tree in order to recall himself from the abyss of idealism. A letter written from Bonamy Price to William Knight describing Wordsworth in later life makes the point clearly:

> The venerable old man raised his aged form erect; he was walking in the middle, and passed across me to a five-barred gate in the wall which bounded the road on the side of the lake. He clenched the top bar firmly with his right hand, pushed strongly against it, and then uttered these ever-memorable words: "There was a time in my life when I had to push against something that resisted, to be sure that there was anything outside me. I was sure of my own mind; everything else fell away, and vanished into thought.[94]

Wordsworth had to remind himself of the existence of the material world by physically re-establishing subject-object relations. The 'visionary gleam' is an internally produced

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[91] For an account of the influence of empiricist philosophy on the Romantic imagination see Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

[92] *IF Notes*, p. 61. I use the Fenwick note here with caution, since it was composed four decades after the poem.

[93] For a discussion of the Romantic understanding of the nature of things external to the mind, see Seamus Perry, 'Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Other Things', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 29 (1999), 31–41.

[94] *Poems Published in 1807*, ed. by Helen Darbishire (1914; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 456.

image which is felt subjectively and confirmed through reconnection with something physical.[95]

We listen to silence through the body rather than by the mediation of language or signs: 'listening [is] a generative process not of noises external to me, but from inside, from the body, where my subjectivity is at the centre of the sound production, audible to myself'.[96] When he is alert to silence, the listener gains a heightened awareness both of his inner subjectivity and his physicality. The presence of silence makes apparent the physical, rather than signitive, impulses of communication. A silent utterance from a single tree or a pansy is therefore a physical impulse like those that Wordsworth and Dorothy listened for when they lay in adjacent tranches in John's Grove. Indeed the apprehension of silence, like the apprehension of warm visionary light, is a haptic experience. Wordsworth explains in 'The Tables Turned':

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man;
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can. (21-4)[97]

Nature mediates comprehensive messages in silent, non-semiotic ways which are grasped with the body. Through the physical impulses of nature we are led back to a pure spirituality, and the 'meanest flower' can understandably give 'Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears' (206): too deep for external signs; too deep for words.

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[95] For a psychoanalytic discussion of Wordsworth's understanding of touch and sight in art see Geoffrey Hartman, 'A Touching Compulsion' in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 18-30. Hartman notes that Wordsworth often singles out the ear as an 'organ of vision' (p. 23).

[96] Salomé Voegel, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 83. See also Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence: the Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

[97] *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 109. Wordsworth indicates the importance of 'The Tables Turned' when he moves it to the beginning of the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. The importance of this poem is also apparent in that, along with 'The Thorn', it is one of only five poems Wordsworth mentions in the 1798 'Advertisement'. Alan G. Hill attributes Wordsworth's theory of moral education by nature (rather than books) to the Renaissance educational theorist John Amos Comenius (1592-1670): "As far as possible men are to be taught to be wise, not by books, but by the Heavens, the Earth, oaks and beeches; that is, they must learn to know and examine the things themselves, and not the observations and testimony of others about things": 'Wordsworth, Comenius, and the Meaning of Education', *The Review of English Studies*, 26 (1975), 301–312 (pp. 303-7).

The Prelude further explains the silent poetic power that emanates from nature:

> From nature doth emotion come, and moods
> Of calmness equally are nature's gift,
> This is her glory; these two attributes
> Are sister horns that constitute her strength,
> This twofold influence is the sun and shower
> Of all her bounties, both in origin
> And end alike benignant. Hence it is,
> That Genius, which exists by interchange
> Of peace and excitation, finds in her
> His best and purest Friend, from her receives
> That energy by which he seeks the truth,
> Is rouzed, aspires, grasps, struggles, [ ]
> From her that happy stillness of the mind
> Which fits him to receive it, when unsought. (XII. 1-14)[98]

Genius flourishes through interaction with nature, which provides the 'interchange | Of peace and excitation'. The sun is Wordsworth's vehicle for stillness and reflection; showers provide the complimentary stimulation. The mind's capacity to "sun itself" in meditation is proportional to its receptivity to impulses from nature. A tree, a field, and a pansy are equally receptive of and dependent upon both sun and showers. Metaphorically, nature upholds poetic genius when water from its showers refracts the sunlight to reveal hidden colours: 'the rainbow comes and goes'.[99] Accordingly, the

[98] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, pp. 304-5. G. S. Morris argues that Coleridgean prayer and meditation fundamentally depend on conversation and sound, not stillness and silence: the meditation that takes place in the conversation poems is possible because of the presence of a listener. This is because sound and active encounter reconnect the apprehender with creation and vitalise the living scripture of nature. Coleridge construes silence as an impediment to meditation because it represents an absence of encounter and of divine language: 'Sound, Silence, and Voice in Meditation: Coleridge, Berkeley, and the Conversation Poems', *Christianity and Literature*, 55 (2005), 51–71. Wordsworth composed Books XI-XIII of *The Prelude* in May 1805 shortly after he resumed work on that poem following John's death.

[99] The eighteenth century saw advances in philosophical theories of sense perception and physiological theories of the science of light. The former included work by Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Hartley; the latter developed out of Newton's *Opticks* (1704). On Newton's influence see Marjory Hope Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's Opticks and the Eighteenth Century Poets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946); Frederick Burwick, *The Damnation of Newton: Goethe's Colour Theory and Romantic Perception* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), pp. 183-4, and Ben Ross Schneider, *Wordsworth's Cambridge Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 156-63. Wordsworth composed 'My heart leaps up' (which Dorothy refers to as 'The Rainbow') the day before he embarked on the Ode, and he returned to it within a week of beginning 'The Leech Gatherer': *DWJ*, pp. 82-3, 94, and 111. The interaction of sun and showers, which he developed in 1805 into a metaphor for the silence and stimulation that the poet gathers from nature, shows Wordsworth combining philosophical theories of sense perception and scientific theories of light.

efficacy of stillness and meditation is not fully activated until it is interspersed with stimulation.[100]

The interaction of sun and showers is explicit in the opening lines of *Resolution and Independence*: 'The rain came heavily and fell in floods; | But now the sun is rising calm and bright' (2-3):

> All things that love the sun are out of doors;
> The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
> The grass is bright with rain-drops; on the moors
> The Hare is running races in her mirth;
> And with her feet she from the plashy earth
> Raises a mist; which, glittering in the sun,
> Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run. (8-14)[101]

The sportive hare kicks up a mist from the showers which refracts the colours of the sunlight. This scene of morning light after a heavy storm (the remnants of both will soon be gone) accords with the passage of gleaming youthful optimism in the Ode. The young narrator is despondent and dejected and he cannot sympathise with 'All things that love the sun'; that is, all things that appreciate silence and meditation including those aspects of nature that issue silent impulses.

This vibrant scene calms as the narrator observes an old man 'continuing motionless' for 'a minute's space' (60-1). The leech gatherer is 'Motionless as a Cloud' (82) ―apparently static but always imperceptibly moving―and seemingly inanimate like 'a huge Stone' (64). But he is not senseless to the touch of the sun or the ubiquitous noise of the waters. He 'seems a thing endued with sense […] which on a shelf | Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself' (68-70). His stillness and ability to 'sun' himself

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[100] Geoffrey Hartman has noted that 'when the poet wishes to evoke an image of tranquillity he chooses the glitter made by light on wet things', *The Unmediated Vision*, p. 29. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth describes 'shining water' as a 'field of light': *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, I. 607-8, p. 123.

[101] In *The Prelude* Wordsworth explicitly calls himself a lover of the sun: 'already I began | To love the sun, a Boy I lov'd him, as a pledge | And surety of our earthly life, a light | Which while we view, we feel we are alive; | But, for this cause, that I had seen him lay | His beauty on the morning hills, had seen | The western mountain touch his setting orb, | In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess | Of happiness, my blood appear'd to flow | With its own pleasure, and I breath'd with joy' (II. 183-93): *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, p. 129.

facilitate his ‘stately speech’ which is ‘above the reach | Of ordinary men’ (102-3). But this speech suddenly becomes blurred:

> The Old Man still stood talking at my side;
> But now his voice to me was like a stream
> Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
> And the whole Body of the man did seem
> Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
> Or like a Man from some far region sent,
> To give me human strength and strong admonishment. (113-19)

The poet becomes unable to register the content of this speech. Divine admonishment is conveyed as a blurred sound resembling a stream ‘scarce heard’ like the blended waterfalls Dorothy remembered hearing while lying in the trench in John’s Grove. The leech gatherer’s words are emptied of distinct semantic content and transformed into a murmur. However, rather than disengage the poet, this stream of sounds is more effective. Like the Solitary Reaper’s song that is repeated and borne in the heart ‘long after it was heard no more’, the leech gatherer’s blurred message remains with the poet: ‘“God” said I, “be my help and stay secure; | I’ll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor”’ (146-7).[102]

This combination of contemplative sunlight and a shower of indistinct words bring us back to hesychast prayer. The hermit’s chant contributes to and deepens the silence of the monastery rather than disrupts it: Dorothy soothes Wordsworth’s mind not by silence but by incessant repetition of verse: ‘“This is the spot” over & over again’. Repetitious murmurings facilitate and uphold silence. They also succeed in carrying the passion of the poem which the meditative reader can access again and again.

Why then does Wordsworth write verses if poetic spirit is fundamentally a non-linguistic experience that can be felt in the ‘meanest flower’ and glimpsed in blurred

[102] Anthony Conran provides a useful discussion of the influence of Chaucer, Milton and Chatterton in this poem in, ‘The Dialectic of Experience: A Study of Wordsworth’s “Resolution and Independence”’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 75 (1960), 66–74.

streaming sounds? Hesychasm, in its monastic form, is an effective means of conveying passion because it facilitates unmediated communion with the divine Creator. By analogy, the reader who learns from the hesychast is encouraged to gain direct access to the feelings of the creative poet. Sympathetic identification with the author was regarded as the basis of reading experience in the eighteenth century and William Godwin in particular believed that imaginative identification with the author's passions was necessary if communication was to take place.[103] This is precisely what Wordsworth advises Sara Hutchinson to endeavour to achieve when she struggles to appreciate 'The Leech Gatherer': 'You speak of his speech as tedious: everything is tedious when one does not read with the feelings of the Author'.[104] Sara had been displeased with the poem but Dorothy was on hand to explain what her brother meant by this advice: 'when you feel any poem of his to be tedious, ask yourself in what spirit it was written'.[105] Wordsworth considers it 'not a matter of indifference' whether Sara was pleased with 'The Leech Gatherer'. On the contrary, he writes, 'it is of the utmost importance that you should have had pleasure from contemplating the fortitude, independence, persevering spirit, and the general moral dignity of this old man's character'. It is morally important that Sara is able to admire not the poem, but the old leech gatherer's qualities: 'it may be comparatively [important], whether you are pleased or not with *this poem*'.[106] Wordsworth suggests that the way to achieve the correct moral response is to traverse the medium (the words of the poem) and enter into direct communion with the poet's feelings.

[103] But this identification could become destructive if it was not regulated as discussed by Jon Mee in *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 62.
[104] *EY*, p. 367.
[105] ibid.
[106] ibid.

Initially, Wordsworth appears not to be personally wounded by Sara's criticism: he shifts the blame onto her inability to sympathise. Yet he did take note of her criticism and revised the poem accordingly. This indicates that his didactic purpose in writing 'The Leech Gatherer', and later *Resolution and Independence*, was not wholly irrespective of the poem as an autonomous formal object. The phrase from 'The Solitary Reaper' that Dorothy chants 'in disconnection with any thought or […] recollection of the Poem' suggests that passion can be communicated independently of the context in which it is embedded; form is therefore separate from the substance of a poem—where substance includes the moral or the idea that may be extracted from the text. Wordsworth's decision to revise 'The Leech Gatherer' however suggests that Sara was right to imply that form and substance are concomitant. Only after a process of extraction and a period of reflection can the reader attend to the moral of a poem in isolation from its form. Wordsworth demands the type of reader who is able to separate the two but appreciate both.[107] Like the leech gatherer, Sara must 'scarcely hear' the words in order to grasp the passion.

Repetition causes words to blur into sounds; 'visionary' experience blurs the physical world with imagined objects of the mind. Both instances facilitate the effective transference of passion that concerned Wordsworth in the note to 'The Thorn'. But the Fenwick note to the Ode foregrounds the necessity of physically rooting experience in the world and using material things to monitor and understand various levels of silent (or murmured) communication. Wordsworth's understanding of words as corporeal 'things' goes some way towards recalling him from the 'abyss of idealism'. Wordsworth's childhood impulse to cling to physical objects is reiterated throughout his life as he clings to words as 'things' through textual revision. Poetry is at root

[107] A.C. Bradley, *Poetry for Poetry's Sake: an Inaugural Lecture Delivered on June 5, 1901* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).

ethereal, transcendent, and felt but it needs to be sustained in words, things, and bodies so that in future years he may reiterate the process and cling to his manuscripts as he did in childhood to a tree or a wall. He *habitually* writes and returns to his texts in order to maintain a grasp of or recapture messages or utterance that may not be semiotic. Wordsworth appeals to repetition, silence, and the collapse of subject-object relations to draw attention to the efficacy of words emptied of semiotic value. This causes the reader to cultivate the skills he advises Sara Hutchinson to adopt but that process must be supported formally.

In the way that hesychasm creates model readers of scripture by blocking out "unwanted" distractions, Wordsworth endeavours to 'create the taste by which he is to be relished'.[108] But the capacity for repetition—internal and extrapolated—to cultivate a certain type of reader is not wholly contingent on repetition itself; rather, its efficacy resides in its ability to focus the mind and transform words into phenomenal passions or 'things': things which are felt at a non-linguistic level. John Wordsworth was right to worry that his brother's poems would not be likely to please the public at first sight: the reader will make best sense of the lines when he has returned to them repeatedly and meditatively.

[108] *MY i.*, p. 150.

CHAPTER THREE

Representation and Monastic Poetics: 1807-1810

On 25 October 1853, Aubrey de Vere wrote to Isabella Fenwick from Grace Dieu Manor in Leicestershire: 'My dear Miss Fenwick,—I really cannot help writing you a few lines to tell you of the great pleasure I have had in treading again Wordsworthian ground'.[1] He had been visiting the ruins of Grace Dieu Priory just a few miles from Coleorton Hall, which Wordsworth visited twice during his stay at the Beaumont's residence over the winter of 1806-7.[2] The Priory had been dissolved on 28 October 1538 and its contents were immediately bought by Sir John Beaumont who converted the building into a manor house. The ruins of this monastic site, as well as the historic ties with the Beaumont family, were the subject of an inscription Wordsworth composed for the grounds of Coleorton in 1811, which De Vere recalled for Miss Fenwick:

> The ivied ruins of forlorn Grace Dieu,
> Erst a religious house, which day and night
> With hymns resounded and the chaunted Rite.[3]

But in 1853, De Vere did not have to imagine these psalmodic sounds as Wordsworth had done. In 1835 the village of Whitwick, just a short distance from Grace Dieu, became the site of the first monastery to be established since the Reformation. De Vere heard the monks at prayer at the new Cistercian Abbey of Mount Saint Bernard

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[1] *Aubrey De Vere, a Memoir Based on His Unpublished Diaries and Correspondence*, ed. by Wilfred Philip Ward (London, 1904), p. 223.
[2] *MY i.*, pp. 108-9, 123. Grace Dieu was an Augustinian Priory founded circa 1239-41. Details of the priory are provided by Kenneth Hillier and Peter F. Ryder, *Grace Dieu Priory: North West Leicestershire* (Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum and Grace Dieu Priory Trust, 2006), and John Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 4 vols. (London, 1804), vol. 3, pt. 2, 651-64.
[3] De Vere, *Memoir*, p. 224. 'Inscription for a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton' was erected in the grounds of Coleorton in 1812. The Coleorton Inscriptions appear in *Shorter Poems*, pp. 100-8. See also *MY i*, p. 519. In footnote 2 to this letter, Moorman claims that her source for De Vere's visit to Grace Dieu in 1853 is *William Allingham: A Diary*, ed. by H. Allingham and D. Radford (London, 1907). The account is not in fact recorded by Allingham.

declaring that 'whatever time is not spent in psalmody, vigil and meditation, is spent in manual labour'.[4] He was delighted to discover that in 1841 Wordsworth himself had seen the monks at work and heard their 'chaunted Rite': 'he must have heard […] the very same harmonies as in the time of St Bernard, and, centuries earlier, of St Benedict. I have no doubt he was delighted with all he saw; and gave it at least a poetical, if not a theological, blessing'.[5] De Vere believed that the audible harmony between Cistercian lives in Leicestershire in the sixth century and in the nineteenth would have thrilled Wordsworth, even if he had reservations about the resurgence of Catholicism. Indeed, Wordsworth's knowledge of medieval Cistercian life was comprehensive and had a significant impact on the poetry of his middle and later periods. Visiting Mount Saint Bernard in 1841, Wordsworth would have been reminded not only of England's pre-Reformation history but also of the work he produced between 1807 and 1810.

While De Vere speculated over the extent to which Wordsworth had been impressed with Mount Saint Bernard, he was left in no doubt as to the abbot's admiration of the poet. In conversation with De Vere, with a portrait of Wordsworth hanging on the wall, the Abbot of Grace Dieu confessed that his 'first inclination to monastic life had arisen from reading lines in the "Excursion"':

> The life where hope and memory are as one,
> Earth quiet and unchanged; the human Soul
> Consistent in self-rule; and heaven revealed
> To meditation in that quietness![6]

With a routine of labour and psalmody, monastic life brought about a collapse of temporality; monks were bound by the Rule of their order—which had been constructed

[4] De Vere, *Memoir*, p. 225.
[5] ibid, p. 226. Wordsworth reports his visit to Isabella Fenwick in a letter of 24 July 1841, *LY iii*., pp. 217-8. He approved of the grounds and the site but believed that 'surely it is too late in the day for such institutions to be of much service, in England at least'. Wordsworth's son John would become curate to the parish at Whitwick. Mary Wordsworth made an extended visit to her son there in 1828 while William was on his German Tour.
[6] De Vere quotes lines from *The Excursion*, Book III, 407-10, in De Vere, *Memoir*, p. 225.

and passed down by Early Church Fathers—rather than civil laws. Wordsworth's lines indicate the self-discipline and industry involved in meditative silence. What the future-abbot could not have known was that Wordsworth first composed this verse to describe what drew St Basil, the founder of Eastern Monasticism and originator of the Cistercian Rule of St Benedict, into a life of retirement. St Basil makes no appearance in *The Excursion* but Wordsworth had in fact drafted the lines that awakened the Abbot's vocation as part of a fragment of *The Recluse* in 1808, *The Tuft of Primroses*.[7]

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For eight months during the winter of 1806-7, Wordsworth and his growing family resided at Hall Farm on Sir George Beaumont's Coleorton Estate in Leicestershire. These months mark a poetic as well as a personal watershed. *Lyrical Ballads* had gone through four editions, Wordsworth was preparing *Poems, in Two Volumes* for the press, and he had completed the thirteen-book *Prelude*. Coleridge returned from Malta to join the family at Coleorton where Wordsworth read the poem to its addressee over several winter evenings. The work of his so-called 'Great Decade' was done. The sojourn at Coleorton is also often cited as a period of transition in the development of Wordsworth's religious life. After the death of John Wordsworth in 1805, Wordsworth admitted to Beaumont that he could only explain the presence of evil and suffering by supposing that there must exist '*another* and a *better* world' [Wordsworth's italics].[8] From Coleorton, Dorothy joked to Lady Beaumont about Wordsworth taking Holy Orders and confessed to Catherine Clarkson that they regularly attended church, if only

[7] DC MS 65 appears in *The Tuft of Primroses, with Other Late Poems for The Recluse*, ed. by Joseph F. Kishel (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 39-56. The lines quoted by De Vere are 303-8.
[8] *EY*, p. 556.

for the sake of the children.[9] Moreover, the friendship between Wordsworth and Beaumont became much deeper such that Wordsworth was able to write:

> I esteem your friendship one of the best gifts of my life; I and my family owe much to you and Lady Beaumont, I need not say that I do not mean any addition to our comforts or happiness, which, with respect to external things, you have been enabled to make; but I speak of soul indebted to soul.[10]

After John's death, Beaumont took on not just the financial role of a patron but the emotionally supportive role of a brother.

Far from marking the termination of Wordsworth's poetic power, Coleorton is the locus at which a new phase of Wordsworth's poetic life germinated. As he made two consecutive visits to the ruins of Grace Dieu, and as he embarked on a design for the Beaumonts' Winter Garden, Wordsworth began a study of the history of monasticism, hagiography, and epitaphs which would form the basis of the poetry and prose he would compose over the next four years. On the journey home from Coleorton in July 1807 he visited the ruins of Kirkstall and Bolton Abbeys, which initiated a course of reading on monastic life, beginning in November 1807 with Thomas Dunham Whitaker's topographical studies, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (1805) and *An History of the Original Parish of Whalley, and Honor of Clitheroe* (1801).[11] Wordsworth 'greedily' devoured these descriptions of the medieval monastic establishments of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and he quickly produced *The White Doe of Rylstone*.[12] Shortly afterwards, Wordsworth turned to William Cave's hagiographic *Apostolici* (1662), containing biographies of the Early Church Fathers, and Thomas West's *Antiquities of Furness* (1774), which opens with an account of the development

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[9] *MY i.*, pp. 100, 136, and 487.
[10] *MY i*., p. 94.
[11] *MY i*, pp. 157-8. Thomas Dunham Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (London, 1805), *An History of the Original Parish of Whalley and Honor of Clitheroe* [sic] (Blackburn, 1801).
[12] *MY i*., p. 167.

of the Cistercian order in England.[13] After spending the spring of 1808 with his brother Christopher, where he had access to the extensive archives of Lambeth Palace Library, Wordsworth composed *The Tuft of Primroses*. He incorporated into these lines descriptions of St Basil's hermitage at Pontus and the Grande Chartreuse in France. Throughout the summer of 1808, when he was preoccupied with the Convention of Cintra and the events of the Peninsular War, Wordsworth's interest in England's Catholic heritage transferred to religious practices in Spain. He also consulted John Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (1631) in which he not only found copious examples for his *Essays upon Epitaphs*, but gained an in-depth knowledge of the origins of the monastic orders and the habits of hermits and anchorites.[14]

In the light of this study of monasticism, which has received no previous scholarly attention, this chapter will revaluate Wordsworth's understanding of the nature of poetic representation. The chapter traces the ideas behind Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* as far back as his first visits to Grace Dieu and his sojourn at Coleorton. It thus reveals a new context behind the poetry and prose of Wordsworth's middle period. In particular, it offers a new interpretation of the *Essays* by demonstrating the significance of St Basil's life and thought to Wordsworth's metaphor of language as 'incarnation'.

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[13] William Cave, *Apostolici: Or, The History of the Lives, Acts, Death, and Martyrdoms of those Who Were Contemporary with or Immediately Succeeded the Apostles* (1662), 4th edn (London, 1716). A copy of this volume was in the Rydal Mount Library: *W's Library*, p. 49. Thomas West, *The Antiquities of Furness: Containing a Particular Account of the Royal Abbey of St. Mary, in the Vale of Nightshade Near Dalton in Furness; Belonging to the Right Honourable Lord George Cavendish* (1774). Wordsworth owned a copy published in Ulverston, 1805, from which I quote. See *W's Library*, p. 271.
[14] John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments within the United Monarchie of Great Britaine, Ireland, and the islands adiacent: with the dissolued monasteries therein contained* [sic] (London, 1631).

On 16 October 1807, two books arrived at Dove Cottage on loan from the Marshalls: Thomas Whitaker's histories of the *Deanery of Craven* and the *Parish of Whalley*. Two days later, Dorothy wrote to Jane Marshall: 'I cannot express how much pleasure my Brother has already received from Dr Whitaker's Books'; Wordsworth had been 'greedily devouring them' and had found 'all the information which he wanted for the execution of his plan'.[15] The plan was *The White Doe of Rylstone* and Dorothy included in her letter a précis of that narrative poem, 'The Force of Prayer'.[16]

Whitaker's topographical studies demonstrate how the Dissolution of the Monasteries radically and violently tore a line across the social and geographical history of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Whitaker provides extensive details of pre-Dissolution Cistercian life in the north of England.[17] He includes genealogical lists of parish inhabitants and monks together with maps and plans of the abbeys annotated with explanations of the reasoning behind the position and layout of the monastic rooms and outbuildings. Epitaphs are some of Whitaker's key sources. He laments the declension of Christian sentiment in modern epitaphs and calls for a revival of the affecting style of rural epitaphs that retained the 'humble admonition' that the living and the dead are part of one community.[18] Such epitaphs, Whitaker notes, tend to be written in the first

[15] *MY i*, p. 167. The volumes remained in Wordsworth's possession until December 1808 when Dorothy assured Jane Marshall that they would be returned in safe hands: *MY i*, p. 281. The fact that Wordsworth sent a copy of the manuscript of *The White Doe* to Whitaker attests to the depth of his influence.
[16] The poem was completed by 1808 and sent to Coleridge in London for publication. Wordsworth retracted it, however, and kept it in manuscript until a revised version was eventually published by Longman in 1815. Where possible, quotation of the poem is from MSS 61 and 62, which are produced in *The White Doe of Rylstone: or, The Fate of the Nortons*, ed. by Kristine Dugas (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 226-371. DC MS 61 contains work recorded sometime between 2nd December 1807 and 3rd January 1808; DC MS 62 is the remnants of the manuscript sent to Coleridge in London in the spring of 1808 for publication at that time by Longman. Both MSS 61 and 62 are incomplete. Quotation from the 1815 first edition is used where earlier manuscripts are absent. The 1815 published version is Dugas's 'Reading Text', printed on pp. 81-146. I indicate the version of the text and line numbers in parentheses.
[17] Whitaker includes detailed accounts of Bolton Priory's expenditure on food and wine, clothing, horses, mattresses and so on; he concludes that there were circa 200 monks resident there from the twelfth century who wrote poetry, practiced alchemy, and observed the stars. The priory was sold by the King in 1542. *History of Craven*, pp. 325-45.
[18] Whitaker, *History of Whalley*, p. 293.

person, reminding the reader that the history belonging to the inhabitant of any place reaches backwards and forwards but is fully present in the silence of the graveyard. Wordsworth shares Whitaker's admiration for first-person memorials and it is possible that Whitaker's instruction that his readers consult John Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments* was the catalyst for Wordsworth's own study of epitaphs.[19] Whitaker's dependence on epitaphs generates a previously un-noted source for Wordsworth's *Essays* and gives the poetry and prose Wordsworth produced between 1807 and 1810 a new coherence.

Whitaker's volumes are not concerned with the religious faith of the monks and anchorites; they describe how the monastic world operated civically. Within the bounds of the grange, ownership, inheritance, governance, and representation all operated according to the monastic Rule. This civic system impinges on Wordsworth's thinking in two ways: firstly in his questioning of how democratic representation and decision-making functioned during the Peninsular War; and secondly, in his preoccupation with how the living and the dead become part of one community through the graveyard and the language of epitaphs. Immediately, however, it influenced his portrayal of the Norton family.

The White Doe is set during the Rising of the North (1569); the Dissolution of the Monasteries was recently complete and Roman Catholic noblemen occupied Durham Cathedral in a rebellion that attempted to re-establish a Catholic monarchy by putting Mary Queen of Scots on the throne through marriage to the Duke of Norfolk. Wordsworth considers how the destruction of monastic life in England distorted the sense of patriotism, familial loyalty, and local attachment. Emily Norton manufactures a banner picturing the five wounds of Christ to which her Catholic father is fanatically

[19] Whitaker refers his reader to Weever at *History of Whalley*, p. 242. Wu suggests Wordsworth read Weever by February 1810: *W's Reading II*, p. 236. Paul de Man famously discusses Wordsworth's use of the trope in, 'Autobiography as De-facement'.

committed. However, Emily and her eldest brother, Francis, adhere to the 'faith reformed and purified' (1044). They reject the rituals of Catholicism whilst attempting to remain loyal to their family. Richard Norton and his comrades are patriotic in a now outdated and dislocated way; he marches into battle, against Francis's wishes, and is killed along with seven of his sons. Francis survives the battle but is later captured and dies during an attempt to carry the Norton banner to St Mary's altar at Bolton Abbey. The only comfort Emily gains is from a doe which habitually visits the abbey's grounds and continually reminds parishioners of Bolton's medieval legacy.

The Doe frequents Bolton's ruins and its preserved nave bringing life to the 'Pile of state | Overthrown and desolate' (80-1). As time passes, the ruins are transformed into a naturalised memorial ground:

> Old magnificence undone
> Or the gentler work begun
> By nature softening & concealing
> And busy with a hand of healing
> The altar whence the cross was rent
> Now rich with mossy ornament. (MS 61, 114-9)

The deterioration of the abbey resembles a process of humanisation and the ensuing progression from decay to magnificence prefigures the consolation Emily received. Through this cyclical movement, ecclesiastical architecture gains new value as an adornment of the landscape. Despite their growth and change, the ruins are a monument to the monastic life at Bolton Abbey. The Doe is likewise both a living animal and a monumental object gazed at in the churchyard by members of the congregation.

Wordsworth's continual presentation of Emily seated under a yew tree connects her with her predecessor in sorrow, Lady Aaliza. 'The Force of Prayer' tells of Lady Aaliza's inconsolable grief at the death of her son Romilly who drowned when he fell down a chasm in the River Wharf (locally called The Strid). She commissioned the building of Bolton Abbey on the spot closest to that of her son's death.

> Oh! Was he not a comely tree?
> And proudly did his branches wave,
> And the Root of this delightful tree
> Is in her Husband's grave! (49-52)[20]

In his mother's memory, Romilly resembles the yew tree in the churchyard at Bolton. Emily similarly sits under her yew tree with its roots reaching into Francis's grave; she sits beneath the legacy of Romilly and Lady Aaliza, who similarly submitted herself to 'endless sorrow' (2). Aaliza asks, in anticipation of Emily, 'whence can comfort spring | When prayer is of no avail. | What is good for a bootless Bene?' (7-9). Wordsworth uses 'The Force of Prayer' to indicate that Bolton Abbey was intended, from its twelfth century origin, as an epitaphic site memorialising a deceased boy. But Emily finds the answer to Aaliza's prayer in her communion with the Doe.

The cause of Emily's sorrow was her father's actions. Richard Norton had defied Francis's plea not to take up arms, which left Francis with a conflicted conscience:

> I, in the right of eldest born,
> And in a second father's place
> Presumed to stand against their scorn,
> And meet their pity face to face;
> Yea, trusting in God's holy aid,
> I to my Father knelt and prayed; (1815, 488-93)

As the eldest son of an aristocratic family, Francis is his father's first representative and 'a second father' to his siblings. When Francis invokes the aid of his heavenly Father through prayer, Wordsworth implies a comparison with Jesus who is the 'second father' of the Trinity. Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Francis pleads with his Father to be relinquished of the suffering he knows is inevitable. Francis attempts to adopt the role of an heir—"Might ever son command a sire, | The act were justified today" (MS 61, 412-13) —but his petitions to *both* Fathers go unanswered and his prayers only

[20] Quotation of 'The Force of Prayer' is from the earliest version as transcribed by DW in a letter to Jane Marshall of 18 October 1807: *MY i*., p. 168, reprinted in *The White Doe*, pp. 384-8.

demonstrate the root of his alienation from Norton. Despite being morally opposed to the rebellion, Francis joins his family in battle. His bodily presence means that he represents his father only in the way that an artificial sign, such as the banner, can signal meaning to an outsider: 'I in body will be there' (1815, 514). But his heart is not with the rebels and Francis thus does not truly represent his father.

Norton's dying wish was that Francis would convey the banner to Bolton:

> The banner strive thou to regain;
> And, if the endeavour be not vain,
> Bear it—to whom if not to thee
> Shall I this lonely thought consign? —
> Bear it to Bolton Priory,
> And lay it in Saint Mary's shrine. (1815, 1304-9)

After his father's death, Francis feels the full spiritual and familial significance of the banner—'under law | Of inward occupation strong' (1815, 1407-8) —and it becomes his 'oblation' (1416). For Francis, the banner is then not a sign of Catholicism but of his incorporation within the Norton family; he is only able to authentically become the 'second father' when he admits his shared commitment to the banner and only then is he able to sacrifice his life.

At the time of the uprising, and Francis's defiance, Norton did not have an authentic heir. Neither did England. The fact that Queen Elizabeth had no successor was a catalyst for the rebellion: "the minds of men will own | No loyal rest while England's crown | Remains without an heir" (MS 61, 586-8). The Earls' lineage constitutes their identity and the realignment of the monarchic bloodline is their fighting cause:

> Brave Earls, to whose heroic veins
> Our noblest blood is given in trust,
> To you an injured State complains
> And ye must raise her from the dust. (MS 61, 595-8)

The blood-red banner, with its depiction of five wounds, indicates the Earls' belief that Jesus is the Incarnation of his Father. This relation extends to their own patriarchal identity as rightful inheritors of the land and of the Catholic faith. The state is 'injured' because the flow of its bloodlines has been corrupted, but the females of the narrative—Emily, Queen Elizabeth, and Lady Aaliza—offer a different model of inheritance. The heroines of *The White Doe* are the terminating figures of their family lines; none of the females has an heir.[21]

Lines of apostolic heritage were ruptured at the English Reformation. Whitaker implicitly attempts to compensate for this breach by spending a large proportion of his *Histories* listing details of the ownership of ex-monastic lands. He produces countless family trees and lineage tables but complains that 'in ascertaining the parentage of the monks we must almost always be content with circumstantial evidence, as they were persons dead in law, and therefore never occur in inquisitions, or other legal transactions, but in connection with the monastery to which they belonged'.[22] Upon entering the monastery, monks removed themselves from the patrilineal system: they were exempt from tithes and civil responsibility, submitting instead to the Rule of the Order. Whitaker points out family trees where sons entered the monastery, causing the vertical line of inheritance to terminate. Family representation, manifested in the inheritance of land and the endurance of a name, had no place in the monastic system. Instead, Whitaker lists the succession of abbots until this line of inheritance is completely severed at the Dissolution. In the discontinuation of family lines in *The White Doe*, Wordsworth suggests that the Reformed Church benefitted by ridding itself

[21] Meanwhile the name of The Strid, and Bolton's ruins endure: 'A thousand years hath it borne that name, | And shall — a thousand more' (23-4). Susan Doran notes that the myth of Elizabeth's oath of virginity was based on the version of her 1559 speech to parliament which first emerged in William Camden's early seventeenth-century history of the reign: *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.
[22] Whitaker, *History of Whalley*, pp. 241-2.

of systems of inheritance and progeny which had maintained hierarchical structures. For Whitaker, as well as for Wordsworth, the removal of the monasteries is as important as their initial presence: the presence and absence of the monasteries presaged, in different ways, the collapse of lineage.

Whitaker's volumes deal with issues of inheritance which Wordsworth had already explored in *Michael*.[23] At the end of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) Wordsworth presented himself as a father with a legacy to pass on 'for the sake | Of youthful Poets, who among these Hills | Will be my second Self when I am gone' (37-9) and, reciprocally, Michael has the qualities of a poet: like the infant babe of *The Prelude* who imbibes poetic spirit from his mother, he is 'prompt | And watchful' (46-7).[24] But Michael's role as progenitor goes deeper than that of the Earls in the Rising of the North: 'these fields, these hills | Which were his living Being, even more | Than his own Blood' (74-6). Michael cannot endure his 'patrimonial fields' (234) passing into a stranger's hands. His legacy is his 'living Being' and so he will live on if, and only if, the land is inherited appropriately. Isabel explains to Luke: "if thou leave thy Father he will die" (308). The proper inheritance of the land would preserve Michael's existence. Moreover, Wordsworth demonstrates that the line of inheritance must be maintained in a way that involves more than ties of blood or name: a spiritual attachment to *place* is what fundamentally holds father and son together.

The ruin of the unfinished sheepfold functions as a covenant linking the past with the future: 'let it be to thee | An emblem of the life thy Fathers liv'd' (419-20). In a letter of 9 April 1801 Wordsworth told Thomas Poole that in *Michael* he had 'attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart; the parental affection, and the love of

[23] All quotation from *Michael* is taken from *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 252-68.
[24] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, II. 247, p. 130.

property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence'.[25] Wordsworth adopted Grasmere as his 'patrimonial field' and considered his poetry to be the legacy he would bequeath. The type of progeny Wordsworth advocates is based on genuine sentiment and attachment to place, not bloodlines. Inheritance is not a straightforward matter of son substituted for father: as Luke fell into the prodigality of London and became the inadequate heir of the 'Evening Star', Wordsworth was able to become the authentic inheritor of Grasmere Vale.[26]

In *The White Doe* Emily inherits her faith from the female line, remembering her mother's lessons:

> 'tis that bless'd Saint
> Who with mild looks and language mild
> Instructed here her darling Child,
> While yet a prattler on the knee,
> To worship in simplicity
> The invisible God, and take for guide
> The faith reformed and purified. (1815, 1038-44)

Seated on her mother's knee, Emily is an image of the Doe who in turn offers consolation at Emily's knee. In presenting these mute, sedentary, and pious females, Wordsworth comments on the nature of outward expression, inheritance, and representation. The female characters of the poem *represent* in their simplicity the purified faith and the rejection of superstitious rituals and banners:

> Behold her like a Virgin Queen
> Neglecting in imperial state
> These outward images of fate,
> And carrying inward a serene
> And perfect sway, through many a thought
> Of chance and change that hath been brought
> To the subjection of a holy
> Though stern and rigorous melancholy. (MS 62, 1609-16)

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[25] *EY*, p. 322.

[26] Wordsworth and his siblings were orphaned when their father died in 1783 and they struggled until 1804 to win the inheritance they were due from Lord Lonsdale: *A Life*, pp. 34-5. Wordsworth's 'inclusive familial network [including the Hutchinsons, De Quincey, Coleridge, Lamb] was affective and sentimental, sustained by emotion rather than inheritance alone': Emma Mason, *The Cambridge Introduction to William Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 38.

The regal language and comparison with Elizabeth I ascribe divine authority to Emily. Like the 'Virgin Queen' she propagates no offspring. The fact that the females remain childless is an extension of their Protestant rejection of 'outward images': in Emily's case this resistance to representation extends even to an abstention from spoken words. Emily's consolation is built on silent communication with the Doe. In contrast, the Earls are part of an active realm governed by bloodlines, paternal representation, and ritual.[27] As I will go on to argue, the Protestant women of *The White Doe* are in fact more in sympathy with the early roots of monasticism than the Catholic Earls: the non-hierarchical, non-expressive commitment of Emily, Queen Elizabeth, and the Doe aligns with the egalitarianism and non-representational mode of representation that St Basil fought for in the fourth century and that Wordsworth argued for in the *Convention of Cintra*. In upholding the Patristic thinking of St Basil, Wordsworth in fact showed that the Anglican position was closer to the origins of the Christian Church than the Catholic position of Richard Norton.[28] In rejecting patrilineage at the Reformation, the Anglican Church recovered an aspect of St Basil's scheme of coenobitism and of his formulation of a consubstantial Trinity.

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At the beginning of *The Tuft of Primroses*, Wordsworth addresses a delicate primrose on a high bank: 'but Thou art here, reviv'd, | And beautiful as ever, like a Queen |

[27] Francis operates between the male and female groups: his initial refusal to carry the banner equates to his incapacity to be the 'second father'; in other words, his incapacity to be Norton's representative. Tracing a combination of Stoicism, Quakerism and mystical Quietism, Evan Radcliffe argues that *The White Doe* demonstrates most fully Wordsworth's aversion to action: 'Wordsworth and the problem of action: The White Doe of Rylstone', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 46 (1991), 157-8.
[28] As such Wordsworth anticipates the principles of The Oxford Movement.

Smiling from thy imperishable throne' (7-9).[29] These lines recall the final image of *The White Doe* where Emily sits 'Upon a primrose bank, her throne | Of quietness' (MS 62, 1601-2). The tuft is protected by its secluded position and by the feelings of love it evokes in passers-by which prevent it from being plucked. It is an object of reverence and a natural sign of annual renewal and continuity. It is a

> distinguished Flower
> Well worthy of that honourable place
> That holds thy beauty up to public view,
> For ever parted from all neighbourhood,
> In a calm course of meditative years,
> Oft have I hail'd thee with serene delight. (48-53)

The primrose functions as a figure for Emily's renewal: the flower resembles a meditative solitary, separate from the community but offering itself to that community as a symbol of the promise of peace and happiness. This image thus links *The White Doe*, set in the immediate shadow of the Dissolution, with *The Tuft of Primroses*, which evokes the fourth-century origins of monasticism in the East.

During his stay at Coleorton, Wordsworth was preoccupied with designing and planting Lady Beaumont's Winter Garden. Beaumont hoped this project would help Wordsworth to recover from the loss of John and as such the garden, with its evergreen yews, firs, box, and pine, anticipates the medieval setting for Emily's consolation.[30] Throughout Wordsworth's poetry, pines and firs (which he seems to designate synonymously) denote silence and everlasting life. In 1800, Wordsworth had cherished the fir grove beside Dove Cottage as a place favoured by John who loved 'the fir-grove with a perfect love' (94).[31] There is a recurring elegiac tone to Wordsworth's evocation of trees and he often employs cloistral or monastic vocabulary: 'for within its shade I

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[29] All quotation of *The Tuft of Primroses* is taken from the reading text in Kishel, *The Tuft of Primroses*, pp. 39-56.
[30] 'Beneath yon cypress spiring high, | With pine and cedar spreading wide | Their darksome boughs on either side | In open moonlight doth she lie' (1815, 989-92).
[31] *P2V*, p. 566.

found | Commodious harbour, a sequester'd nook | Or cloister with an unencumber'd floor' (8-10).[32] Wordsworth learned from Whitaker that ancient yew trees were often found in the cloister courtyards of monasteries and were traditionally used in the north of England as substitutes for palms in religious processions.[33] Yews were thus associated with Palm Sunday and the Christian promise of the resurrection and new life; the branches were local substitutes for Norton's manufactured banner. Just as Lady Aaliza's grief had coincided with the birth of Bolton's Cistercian community, Emily's yew tree symbolises the hope of the Reformed era at Bolton Abbey that was born out of her sorrow.

Wordsworth's knowledge of the botanical characteristics and historical associations of trees was founded on his reading of John Evelyn's *Sylva*.[34] Evelyn's premise is that trees physically and imaginatively provide links with the past and future: they are gifts from our ancestors and should be planted for the benefit of future generations. Wordsworth adhered to this view throughout his life. In 1845, in correspondence with arboriculturist James Grigor (1811-1848), author of *The Eastern Arboretum*, Wordsworth discussed the Highland Pine trees he was attempting to acclimatize at Rydal Mount, noting their place in his childhood memories:

> It is my opinion that these mountains [in Westmorland] were formerly covered in some places to their very summits with pines of that species: and when I was a boy descendants of those aboriginals survived in several places near the yeomen's cottages and substantial country houses and halls: nor are they yet entirely extinct. […] The old pines which I have mentioned as standing near houses almost always grew in the shape of a tall-very tall-ship's mast, with boughs only near the top, making a fine round head.[35]

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[32] ibid, p. 563.
[33] Whitaker, *History of Craven*, p. 357. See also *The White Doe*, especially Canto 2 were Emily is presented under a yew tree.
[34] *Sylva, or, A discourse of forest-trees, and the propagation of timber in His Majesties dominions* (1664), 2nd edn (London, 1670).Wordsworth read Evelyn at Hawkshead: *W's Reading I*, p. 56.
[35] Alan G. Hill quotes this otherwise unpublished letter in 'The "Poetry of Trees" and Wordsworth's New Vision of Pastoral: An Unrecorded Letter', *Philological Quarterly*, 81 (2002), 235–245. See also James Grigor, *The Eastern Arboretum, or Register of Remarkable Trees, Seats, Gardens, &c. in ... Norfolk* (London, 1841).

Towards the very end of his life, Wordsworth remained tied to his childhood through memories of pine trees, which were the 'descendants' of much older 'aboriginal' pines. The trees had been steadily present in the Westmorland landscape and in 1845 Wordsworth perhaps recalled the pine he had saluted in Hawkshead when he returned from Cambridge for the summer vacation of 1788: 'the spreading Pine | And broad stone Table underneath its boughs | Our summer seat in many a festive hour' (IV. 36-8).[36] As he cultivated his own arboreal legacy at Rydal Mount, in conjunction with these memories, Wordsworth conflated his genealogy with that of the trees. The pines he recalled as symbols of heritage survived near the homes of freehold landed estates and cottages, which Wordsworth valued as powerful loci of the 'domestic affections' precisely because the land descended from the inhabitant's ancestors. As he had explained to Charles James Fox in 1801 (with reference to *Michael* and *The Brothers*), Wordsworth saw such tracts of land as 'a tablet upon which [the domestic feelings] are written'.[37] Pointing upwards towards heaven, the pines also metaphorically enable Wordsworth to look forward, as if from the top of a ship's mast, to future generations.[38]

On his return from Coleorton in 1807, Wordsworth was utterly devastated to discover that the fir grove, which had signified the spiritual centre of the community of Grasmere, past and future, was destroyed. His grief was part of the impetus for *The Tuft of Primroses*:

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[36] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, p. 152.
[37] *EY*, pp. 314-15.
[38] In several notebook entries over the summer of 1807, Coleridge also demonstrated an interest in planting trees. He records a method for planting oaks and is delighted to think that 'By these means in 50 years you will have Oaks more worthy the name of British than the common ones of 100'. The purpose of growing these trees was to support future generations through the sale of timber: 'for T. Wordsworth's Son or Daughter at 23—Grandchild of W Wordsworth Esq, the Poet. What an event!' Coleridge conceived of trees as a gift to future generations; as reliable connections between past and future. They are 'planted for posterity': *Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 5 double vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957-2002), vol. 2 (1961), 3111, 12.14. Coburn states that Coleridge's source was an article by Richard Yates, 'Observations on the Cultivation and Growth of Oak Timber' in William Nicholson, *A Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts*, vol. 2 (Jan 1804) 17-23.

> I look'd a first glad look and saw them not.
> Was it a dream! the aerial grove, no more
> Right in the centre of the lovely vale
> Suspended like a stationary cloud,
> Had vanish'd like a cloud—yet say not so,
> For here and there a straggling Tree was left
> To mourn in blanc and monumental grief,
> To pine and wither for its fellows gone. (96-103)

Wordsworth puns on the personified 'monumental grief' of the remaining trees: they serve as memorials of their ruined brethren and 'pine' in their affliction, while they also denote the enormity of the loss. The repeated references to the clouds are an effort to hold and fix that which has passed away.

> Then, Grasmere, then
> Thy Sabbath mornings had a holy grace,
> That incommunicable sanctity
> Which Time and nature only can bestow[.] (114-7)

The sanctity of the grove was communicated in silence (by its presence alone) to the villagers. Similarly, Emily and the Doe were complicit in a silent transaction of 'holy grace'. In the context of *The White Doe* therefore, the fir grove is a figure for the monastic past and its removal is as monumental in the context of Grasmere parish as the Dissolution of the Monasteries was in England's national history. The change irrevocably altered the spiritual topography of Grasmere. Wordsworth's emotional response to its removal is therefore not hyperbolic. [39]

In June 1807, to mark the end of Wordsworth's residence at Coleorton, he and Beaumont ceremoniously planted a cedar tree.[40] John Evelyn discusses cedar and

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[39] From 1302 St Oswald's Church in Grasmere had been under the jurisdiction of St Mary's Abbey of York, meaning that the monastery had claim over all the Church's funds. Accordingly, at the Dissolution, St Oswald's was required to submit all rights and assets to Henry VIII: Mary Armitt, *The Church at Grasmere* (Kendal, 1912), pp. 54-5. Perhaps this helps to explain the hatred of Henry VIII that Wordsworth confessed to Ellis Yarnal in 1849: 'Of that king he spoke in terms of the strongest abhorrence. […] "I loathe his very memory". *Wordsworth and the Coleridges* (New York, 1899), p. 37. I disagree with Kenneth Johnston who argues that Wordsworth's reaction to the loss of the grove is too bombastic and that there is too much disparity between Grasmere Vale and the Chartreuse. Wordsworth's fragment fails, according to Johnston, because there is too great a discrepancy between tenor and vehicle. *Wordsworth and "The Recluse"*, pp. 246-59.

[40] Reed, *Chronology of the Middle Years*, p. 355.

cypress under the same heading, explaining that trees of this family have their origins in the east: 'It was 680 years after the foundation of Rome, ere Italy had tasted a cherry of their own, which being brought thither out of Pontus […] did afterwards travel to *adultimos Britannos*'.[41] The Cedar of Lebanon also has a high profile in the Bible as the tree that stands above all other evergreens exemplifying the everlasting life that will come to all: 'The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary'.[42] The Coleorton cedar was the symbolic climax of the gardening Wordsworth had done for Beaumont, signifying links between past and future generations of poets and artists at Coleorton.[43] Wordsworth knew from Evelyn that the cedar and the cypress were natives of Pontus. In 1808 therefore, when Wordsworth began a study of St Basil's hermitic life at Pontus, his attachment to the Coleorton cedar provided a personal point of reference. *The Tuft of Primroses* accurately features a 'sober-headed Cypress' (349) in its description of Basil's 'high-perch'd cell' (346). Thus Wordsworth made imaginative arboreal links between Grasmere, Pontus, and Coleorton.

In *The Tuft of Primroses*, Wordsworth continually anthropomorphises the vale making it sing and murmur. When Mr Sympson dies (he was 'The Patriarch of the Vale' (171) and a keen gardener) sounds pour from the hillsides:

> Though fram'd of sad and melancholy notes,
> Sweet, perfect, to be wish'd for, save that here
> Was something sounding to our mortal sense
> Like harshness[.] (160-3)

Sympson's death caused the emission of a silent mournful hymnody from the landscape, which was only apprehended by those attuned to the loss. The vale shared

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[41] Evelyn, *Sylva*, p. 116.
[42] Isaiah 60: 13.
[43] Wordsworth and Beaumont had specifically been thinking about the seventeenth-century poet John Beaumont and his brother, and dramatist, Francis Beaumont. For details of the significance of Beaumont's literary ancestors see Chapter Five below.

the community's grief, indicating its realisation of its own 'mortal sense'. This caused the mountains and streams to petition for protection:

> Have not th' incumbent Mountains looks of awe
> In which this mandate may be read, the streams
> A voice that pleads, beseeches, and implores? (272-4)

The world ignores these silent pleas: 'the deafness of the world is here' (275). And yet Wordsworth describes inattentiveness rather than deafness: the deaf man is in fact more likely to notice nature's silent communication: inattentiveness to the impulses of nature causes the 'Dearest resting places of the heart | [to] Vanish beneath an unrelenting doom' (278-9).

Before composing *The Tuft of Primroses*, Wordsworth read Thomas West's *Antiquities of Furness* and he quotes from the Foundation Charter of Furness Abbey when versifying Basil's entreaties to Gregory to join him in reclusion: 'What if the Roses and the flowers of Kings, | Princes and Emperors, and the crowns and palms | Of all the great are blasted and decay' (365-7).[44] West opens his genealogical study with an account of the history of the English Cistercian Order. The local attachment of the people of Furness is rooted in the abbey:

> to derive an importance from descent, is itself laudable, and useful to society: but where facts are ascertained from authentic records, sufficient to mark the illustrious origin of a nation, tribe, or family, from ancestors of high antiquity, such descent is to be considered as a perpetuity of succession in the present representatives, with obligation of conveying the same to their posterity: and this seems to be the genuine meaning and the natural language, of that partiality to national and family ancestors, which characterises all men, civil or barbarous, and is found in one of the great principles of social compact, "amor patriae", that partiality felt by every one for the nation he belongs to.[45]

[44] Tomoya Ody notes that Wordsworth versified a section of Furness's Foundation Charter in 'The Tuft of Primroses' and concludes that his source was West, hence we can date the poet's reading of this volume to before April 1808: ''Wordsworth's Reading of Thomas West's Antiquities of Furness in 1808'', *Notes and Queries*, 51 (2004), 147–8.
[45] West, *Antiquities of Furness*, p. 202.

Our sense of identity and nationhood is a natural consequence of descent, but this is enhanced through the study of local records. 'Present representatives' are the guardians of their cultural and physical heritage, yet the phrase is suggestive of inherent temporality and absence. Previous inhabitants remain representatives; they continue to stand in place of those that came before them. The desire to be remembered by future generations links genealogical records to epitaphs. The monastery is the central locus of tradition for the families of Furness and so to memorialise the monastery is to honour ancestry. In effect, the whole of West's study is an epitaph to Furness. The contents of the volume and the process of studying its records create a bond between the living and the dead which also proceeds from the graveyard.

Simon Jarvis analyses *The Tuft of Primroses* as 'almost a direct rebuttal' of Peter Bayle and a rethinking of Edward Gibbon. Wordsworth had read these eighteenth-century derisive accounts of monasticism while at Hawkshead and during the 1790s. But by 1808 they were not foremost in his mind.[46] Monasticism was not only an Eastern, Egyptian, or Continental phenomenon (as Gibbon, Bayle, and Jarvis would have it); it was inscribed in the history and geography of Wordsworth's local landscape. In 1808 Wordsworth was responding to the local histories he had recently studied and the sites he had visited. The ruins of the monasteries of Cumbria, Lancashire, and Yorkshire were Wordsworth's legacy; he had expressed in *Michael* the exact sentiment that pervades West's *Antiquities*: heritage is our 'genuine meaning and natural language'.

Wordsworth's primary source for *The Tuft of Primroses* was the letters of St Basil of Cappadocia (b. circa AD 330). Mary Moorman speculates that Wordsworth read these letters in Latin whilst staying with his brother Christopher at Lambeth in

[46] Jarvis, *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, p. 116. *W's Reading I*, pp. 10 and 158.

March 1808.[47] While the Lambeth Palace Library Catalogue of 1812 does not in fact record a Latin edition of the letters, it does include Basil's tract on Christian Doctrine (*Liber de Doctrina Christianorum*) and an account of his life (*Episcopi*).[48] There is no conclusive evidence regarding Wordsworth's reading at Lambeth, but the closeness of lines from *The Tuft of Primroses* to the text of Basil's letters, particularly those addressed to Basil's fellow Cappadocian Father, St Gregory Nazianzen, indicates at least a thorough knowledge of Basil's life and doctrine. Joseph Kishel speculates that Wordsworth took most, if not all, of the details of Basil's biography from William Cave's *Apostolici* (1716) which draws extensively on these letters.[49] Wordsworth later owned a copy of Cave's work and he may well have encountered it in the library of St John's College, Cambridge.[50] In any case, Wordsworth certainly had access to Basil's hagiography through John Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments.*

Kishel suggests that Wordsworth's interest in Basil was contingent on the coincidental parallels between the poet's relationships with Dorothy and Coleridge, and Basil's admiration for his sister Marcina and his great friend Gregory Nazianzen (whom he eventually broke with).[51] Basil's letters also describe the landscape of Pontus in

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[47] Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography*, 2 vols. (1957-65; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), vol. 2, 133. Reed, *Chronology of the Middle Years*, pp. 378-9. At this time, Christopher Wordsworth was preparing his *Ecclesiastical Biography; or Lives of eminent men, connected with the history of religion in England; from the commencement of the Reformation to the Revolution*, 6 vols. (London, 1810), for which he drew on the extensive archives at Lambeth.

[48] Henry John Todd, *A Catalogue of the Archiepiscopal Manuscripts in the Library at Lambeth Palace* (London, 1812). Entry 378.2 (p. 50) reads: 'S. Basilii Liber de Doctrina Christianorum. fol. 15'. Entry 94.2 (p. 10) reads: 'S. Basilii Episcopi. Kal. Januar. Extat apud Surium, mutato stilo, Amphilochio inscripta. fol. 25 b.' ('Lives of the Holy Men. 2. Of St Basil, Bishop. This survives with an altered pen/style, inscribed "Amphilochio"'). I am grateful to Micha Lazarus for this translation.

[49] *The Tuft of Primroses*, p. 21. Given Cave's dependence on Basil's letters, Mary Moorman is incorrect to say that Wordsworth's was the first English rendering of the Latin text. John Henry Newman edited a full account of Basil's life and letters that appeared in series in the *British Magazine* from 1833 which was collected in *The Church of the Fathers* (London: 1840).

[50] Duncan Wu suggests that Wordsworth read Cave in May 1808. Cave and Wordsworth were fellow alumni of St John's College Cambridge, the library of which contains a copy of *Apostolici*: *W's Reading II*, p. 44 and *W's Library*, p. 322. Wordsworth also owned a copy of Gregory Nazianzus, *Opera, é graeco sermone in latinum uersa*, (1522): *W's Library*, p. 109.

[51] For a summary of the lives of Basil and Gregory, see Michael B. Trapp, *Greek and Latin letters: An Anthology with Translations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 19-20. Kishel outlines the similarities between these relationships on p. 23.

terms notably similar to Grasmere.[52] However, there is a more intricate twofold explanation behind Wordsworth's choice of this particular Cappadocian bishop: firstly, Basil is celebrated for introducing the coenobium, which allowed ascetics to live in silent community; secondly, he was responsible for formulating and defending the doctrine of the Trinity.

Basil is renowned as the father of Eastern Monasticism. He regulated the church in the East and, at the end of the fourth century, Rufinus of Aquileia translated Basil's Rule for the Italian monastery of Pinetum (south of Rome), making his ascetical doctrine available to monks in the West. This doctrine became the basis of St Benedict's Rule, which devoted an entire chapter to the moral benefits of silence, beginning with Psalm 38:2-3: 'I have set a watchman to my mouth, I was mute and was humbled and I remained silent from good things'.[53] The adaptability of Benedict's Rule made possible the rapid growth of the Cistercian order in the north of England during the twelfth century. The Cistercian emphasis on common life made its monks saviours of coenobitism, which was the central tenet of Basil's teaching.[54] John Henry Newman offers a translation of Basil and Gregory's definition of coenobitism, which classifies reclusion as an act of service:

> Gregory speaks of two ascetic disciplines, that of the solitary or hermit, and that of the secular; one of which, he says, profits a man's self, the other his neighbour. Midway, however, between these lay the Coenobite, or what we commonly call the monastic; removed from the world, yet acting in a certain select circle. And this was the rule which the friends at length determined to adopt, withdrawing from mixed society in order to be of greater service to it.[55]

The type of monastic life Wordsworth could have imagined from his visits to the Cistercian ruins of Furness, Tintern, Kirkstall, Fountains, and the Grande Chartreuse,

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[52] *The Tuft of Primroses*, p. 21 and ll. 330-58.
[53] Bruce, *Silence and Sign*, p. 35.
[54] Harvey, *The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*; Karl Suso Frank, *With Greater Liberty*, pp. 71-86.
[55] *The Church of the Fathers*, 4th edn (London, 1868), p. 97.

was a life according to Basil's Rule. Whitaker, West, and Weever all describe the social power the Cistercians held from the twelfth century and all three cite Basil as the ultimate forebear of Wordsworth's local monasteries.[56]

Basil lived through a time of religious and political chaos in which the Church was threatened constantly by heresy and schism. Cave presents Basil as the leading figure in the formulation and defence of the Holy Trinity, which came under threat from Arianism shortly after the Council of Nicaea. Indeed, any study of Basil demonstrates that the roots of monasticism are co-extensive with those of the Nicene construction of the Trinity.[57] Basil's articulate definition and defence of the Trinity, I will now argue, had a significant bearing on Wordsworth's understanding of representation.

William Cave's *Apostolici* provides summaries of over four hundred of Basil's letters, a discourse on the life of an anchoret, Basil's Canonical Tracts (including Ascetic Rules and Constitutions), both his Longer and Shorter Rules, and a complete bibliography of his writings.[58] Cave explains that Basil 'not only takes notice of [the doctrine of the Trinity] in his Epistles at every turn, and adds a particular Explication and Enforcement of that Article concerning the Holy Ghost, but penn'd several distinct Tracts about it; especially the famous and elaborate Discourse, *de Spiritu Sancto*'; Basil

[56] Whitaker quotes from Weever in his *History of Whalley*, p. 242 and directs his reader to some 'monkish verses' in *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, p. 645. Weever's volume opens with an account of Basil's life (pp. 31-2). Duncan Wu's suggested date of reading is Nov-Dec 1809: *W's Reading II*, p. 236. Wordsworth could have attained a copy of Weever from Francis Wrangham, with whom he was corresponding at this time, and so may have seen the volume before Wu's suggested date: *The English Portion of the Library of Francis Wrangham* (Malton, 1826).

[57] Simon Jarvis notes the important role played by Basil and Gregory in the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity. He argues that this matters because of Wordsworth's interest in the mediation between the worldly and the other-worldly in terms of economic output. Monks and poets had similar anxieties about their contribution to the world: *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, pp. 112-25.

[58] Cave, *Apostolici*, pp. 470-508. Where the sense is clearer, I quote from Schaff's translation of the letters rather than from Cave: *St Basil: Letters and Select Works*, trans. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, A Select Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd Series, 14 vols. (Oxford, 1886-1900), vol. 8 (1895).

'preach'd upon [the Trinity], and freely declared his Mind about it in all Companies'.[59] Accordingly, Wordsworth described Basil in *The Tuft of Primroses* as:

> An intellectual Champion of the faith,
> Accomplish'd above all who then appeared,
> Or, haply, since victoriously have stood
> In opposition to the desperate course
> Of Pagan rites or impious heresies,
> St Basil, after lapse of years, went forth
> To a station of authority and power[.] (453-9)

Basil was the leading figure behind Homoousion—the doctrine promulgated at the Council of Nicaea that the Son is of one substance with the Father.[60] The 'Pagan' heresy that Wordsworth refers to is that of Arius who, in opposition to Basil, diminished the positions of the Son and the Holy Spirit by asserting that the three Persons of the Trinity are separate and unequal in substance. 'There is a triad, not in equal glories […with] one more glorious than the other in their glories to an infinite degree'.[61] (Basil's eighth letter is a summary of his refutation of Arianism, *De Spiritu Sancto*.) Basil opens *De Spiritu Sancto* with a definition of Arianism:

> There is one nature of Cause; another of Instrument; another of Place. So the Son is by nature distinct from the Father, as the tool from the craftsman; and the Spirit is distinct in so far as place or time is distinguished from the nature of tools or from that of them that handle them.[62]

Basil objected to any understanding of the Trinity that gave precedence to the Father, asserting that all three Persons must be equally co-present and consubstantial. Such a severance between creator, instrument, and place (or Father, Son, and Spirit) was the cause of Michael's heartbreak. For Wordsworth, the best poetry is a genuine emanation of the poet's sentiment, enhanced by his attachment to a specific place: the poet is of

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[59] Cave, *Apostolici*, p. 496.
[60] For a discussion of the history of the Trinity see Basil, *Letters*, vol. 8, lx and *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), ed. by Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering. I do not wish to make any claims about Wordsworth's personal Christian development; rather I seek to establish how he used the Trinity as a means of conceptualising the relationship between poets and their words.
[61] Basil, *Letters*, p. 1.
[62] ibid, p. 5.

one substance with his words which fully incorporate the locality in which they are written.

In the final stage of *The Tuft of Primroses*, Wordsworth refers to the destruction of the monasteries that took place in France between 1803 and 1806:[63]

> "Stay your impious hand,"
> Such was the vain injunction of that hour,
> By Nature uttered from her Alpine throne,
> "O leave in quiet this embodied dream
> This substance by which mortal men have clothed,
> Humanly cloth'd the ghostliness of things,
> In silence visible and perpetual calm.
> Let this one Temple last—be this one spot
> Of earth devoted to Eternity." (535-43)

The Grande Chartreuse suffered the same desecration as the Grasmere fir grove. Nature cries out in protest and the poet hears its plea. The 'flash of arms' (517) resembles Norton's attack on Durham Cathedral (MS 61, 660-3) which exacted violence on the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, and in the form of the spoken words of the Mass. Wordsworth condemns Norton for this verbal intrusion in the way that he condemns the French Revolutionary troops for destroying the silence of the Chartreuse which makes the sanctity of the place visible.

Wordsworth was attracted to St Basil for a particular reason: his love of quietness in community combined with his role in suppressing Arianism. Basil was at the forefront of the fight to establish that Father, Son, and Spirit were consubstantial; not part of any hierarchical, patriarchal relation. In Basil's Trinity there is no vertical line of succession, only a horizontal co-presence. The Son is the 'second father' via shared feeling or incarnation; the Son is not a substitution. When considered in the light of *The Tuft of Primroses*, Emily's meditative silence and severance of the Norton

[63] Germany regulated secularism in 1803; Spain supressed its monasteries in 1809; by 1811 all the great monasteries of Italy were suppressed. 'The revolutionary events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had completely wiped out medieval and early-modern religious life': *With Greater Liberty*, pp. 180-2.

lineage makes sense of Wordsworth's subsequent interest in St Basil. The 1815 version of *The White Doe* states:

> there oft and long
> She sate in meditation strong:
> And, when she from the abyss returned
> Of thought, she neither shrunk nor mourned;
> Was happy that she lived to greet
> Her mute Companion as it lay
> In love and pity at her feet;
> How happy in her turn to meet
> That recognition! the mild glance
> Beamed from that gracious countenance; —
> Communication, like the ray
> Of a new morning, to the nature
> And prospects of the inferior Creature! (1815, 1838-50)[64]

Basil's letters make clear that quietness 'is the first step in our sanctification'.[65] *The White Doe* celebrates the unspoken relationship between Emily and the Doe; it does not exist to represent spoken discourse or written history, as seen in the fact that Wordsworth significantly adapts Whitaker's account of the Norton and Clifford families. Through Emily's silent response to grief, Wordsworth points towards a type of communication that is non-representational just as the Persons of the Trinity are non-derivative. The movement from the banner to the doe is a movement towards silence: from representation to consubstantiality. This is the Trinitarian principle that Basil secured for the Church. Basil's theology eradicated representation or derivation from the structure of the Trinity and his development of monasticism banished verbal communication from the coenobium, where words are, as in Emily's case, the offspring of the speaker.[66] Silence is part of the substance of the listener. The anthropomorphised Vale of Grasmere in *The Tuft of Primroses* issues silent harmonies that signify the

[64] There is no evidence of this passage in the incomplete MSS 61 and 62: *The White Doe*, p. 355. It is not impossible therefore that Wordsworth added this passage after his study of Basil.
[65] Basil, *Letters*, p. 111.
[66] The concept of language as offspring is rooted in Socrates' *Phaedus*: 'Writing, Phaedus, has this strange quality and is very like painting. For the offspring of the painters stand like living creatures, but if one asks a question of them, they remain in august and total silence. It is the same with written words.' Quoted in, Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 1, 94. Notably, Socrates penned none of his own works.

communion of past and future inhabitants, typified in the fir grove, instantiating Basil's approach to monastic silence.

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During composition of *The Tuft of Primroses*, Wordsworth regularly corresponded with Francis Wrangham. Drafts of the poem appear on the reverse of a letter sent to Allan Bank on 7 May 1808, in which Wrangham reported his efforts to help the orphaned Green siblings of Grasmere; Wordsworth had also been reading Wrangham's most recent sermons.[67] In a letter of 5 June, Wordsworth acknowledged Wrangham's *Human Laws Best Supported by the Gospel*, which claims the 'perfect harmlessness' of granting civil equality to Irish Catholics: 'Why can we not be convinced that there may be a grace in giving, when it might be discreditable to yield, though it would be death to refuse?'[68] On 2 October, Wordsworth encouraged Wrangham to write an account of the ecclesiastic, civic, and natural history of one of his local parishes in the style of Thomas Whitaker, claiming it would be profitable to 'give some of [his] leisure hours to a work of this kind'.[69] Wordsworth insinuates that Wrangham had lost touch with his local heritage: by reattaching himself to his roots through a topographical and historical study, perhaps Wrangham's Catholic sympathies would be abated. The correspondence continued on 3 December, by which time Wordsworth had read *The Gospel Best Promulgated by National Schools*, where Wrangham argued that Irish Catholics might legitimately be incorporated into the body of British citizens: 'We may civilise, if we cannot convert: If we cannot make them protestants, we may make them patriots'.[70]

[67] Grasmere, Jerwood Centre, DC MS 172, 1808. I am grateful to Rebecca Turner for help with accessing this manuscript. A facsimile copy appears in *The Tuft of Primroses*, p. 23.
[68] *MY i*., p. 247. Francis Wrangham, *Human laws best supported by the gospel: a sermon preached 6 March 1808* (York, 1808), p 31.
[69] *MY i*., p. 270.
[70] Francis Wrangham, *A sermon preached 31 July 1808* (York, 1808), p. 20.

Wordsworth could no longer contain his indignation: I 'do not go along with you in your sentiments respecting the Catholic question'.[71] Wordsworth's objection to Wrangham's argument is based on his belief that potential Roman Catholic MPs would be incapable of representing national interests. However, Wordsworth also took issue with Wrangham's disparagement of Spanish Catholics during the Peninsular War. The reasoning behind Wordsworth's support of the Spanish cause and his opposition to the Irish Roman Catholic cause would be revealed in a pamphlet he was by then in the midst of writing: *Concerning the Convention of Cintra*.[72]

The Peninsular War began in May 1808 with a revolt in Spain against French invasion. The Convention, signed at Lisbon on 30 August, was negotiated by British and French representatives who arranged the terms on which the French army would withdraw from Spain. Wordsworth was responding to reports of the Convention in *The Times* and *The Courier*; he was not attempting to write an accurate historical account of the war, but used its events to explore the nature of moral responsibility and civic representation. Wordsworth was outraged by the actions of the British army Generals in respect of the Spanish and Portuguese people, and the disproportionate concessions granted to the French who were allowed safe passage out of the peninsular with their plunder. The pamphlet questions how the 'heart of a nation' can adequately manifest in the actions and words of those representing it.[73]

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[71] *MY i*., p. 278.

[72] ibid. Wordsworth's provisional title, reported in this letter, is *The Convention of Cintra brought to the Test of Principles; and the People of Great Britain vindicated from the Charge of having prejudged it*. The tract was written in instalments and published in the *Courier* in December 1808 and January 1809. It was published as a pamphlet in May 1809.

[73] Gordon Kent Thomas, *Wordsworth's Dirge and Promise: Napoleon, Wellington, and the Convention of Cintra* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), pp. 11-29 discusses the press reportage of the Convention. Henry Crabb Robinson was *The Times* correspondent for Spain and Portugal in 1808/9 and Robert Southey was a specialist on Portuguese history and literature. Throughout the pamphlet Wordsworth conflates the names of Spanish and Portuguese people. To avoid confusion, I do the same. All quotation of the pamphlet is from *Prose*, vol. 1, 220–457. Editorial line numbers appear in parenthesis in the text.

Wordsworth distinguished between the representative legitimacy of the Spanish army and that of the British Generals. The Spaniards' patriotism and passion meant that the 'whole people is their army, and their army is the people, and nothing else' (336-7). The army was not a distinct set of co-opted representatives; it was defined by a feeling of communality. For example, five hundred Spaniards were taken prisoner at the battle of Rio Seco and were returned by the French under the title of 'Galician Peasants'. The 'patriots of Galicia were not clothed alike, nor perhaps armed alike, nor had the outward appearance of those bodies, which are called regular troops' (350-1), but the Spanish General maintained that they were genuine soldiers. The appearance and dress of these men did not determine their identity—we should not be 'enslaved by shews and forms' (359) —'The whole Spanish nation ought to be encouraged to deem themselves an army, embodied under the authority of their country and of human nature' (359-61). In other words, Spain was a unified *body* of national feeling; its substance could not be represented by clothes, arms, or signs. Ironically, the outward appearance of the multiform peasants' clothing signalled their rejection of external indications of identity. Spain had no recourse to military representation: 'We affirm, then, that a universal military spirit may be produced' and 'united in one people […] in enduring harmony with each other' (373-6). On the other hand the French troops 'were not soldiers in any thing but the power of soldiers, and the outward frame of an army' (1372-3). They clearly did fight for France but their representation involved detachment and substitution.

In signing the Convention, the Generals of the British army (led by Sir Arthur Wellesley, later The Duke of Wellington), acted on behalf of the British nation and in place of the exiled Spanish government, who, Wordsworth was dismayed to discover, were not even mentioned in the treaty. These 'authors' (912) were guilty of betraying

the Spanish and their guilt was shared with the British government (who appointed the Generals and permitted its terms to be carried out) and with the British public (905-23). The belief that the nation was a single moral entity culpable for the actions of its representatives, was evident in the annual occurrence of days of 'Fast and Humiliation' throughout the Napoleonic Wars.[74]

But does this culpability extend to the public if the British Generals were illegitimate, disconnected representatives? Jeremy Taylor, whose work was popular with Wordsworth and Coleridge, explains the commonplace Christian assumption that the public's duty in respect of the government is an extension of the mutual Christian duties between parents and children. It is the will of God that citizens, like children, follow the wishes of superiors but it is equally un-Christian for the government to act against the wishes of the public.[75] It was assumed that the "parents" of the nation were responsible to and for their children. The Anglican understanding of the familial relationship between government and people meant that members of the public including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey (who attempted to organise a public protest meeting in the Lakes) felt excluded and betrayed in the way that Francis and Emily Norton did. Their wishes were not being represented, but a sense of familial culpability remained.[76]

Shared accountability makes it imperative for nations to act morally and spiritually as one. On these terms, Wrangham's strategy to turn Irish Catholics into patriots without converting them to Protestantism was untenable and dangerous: Roman Catholics could not be adequate parliamentary representatives in a Protestant country.

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[74] On shared culpability, national penitence, and the church liturgies that were produced for national days of fast and humiliation see Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation; or, a Discourse for the Fast, Appointed on April 19, 1793* (London, 1793) and Mary Favret, 'The General Fast and Humiliation', in *Grasmere 2011* (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2011), pp. 128–50.
[75] Taylor, *Holy Living*, pp. 147-57.
[76] W. J. B. Owen outlines the plans for a county meeting at which Wordsworth was prepared to deliver a speech. The meeting was cancelled due to threats from Lord Lonsdale: *Prose*, vol. 1, 224-6.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Wordsworth's opposition to Catholic Emancipation is therefore a consequence of his belief that political representation involves incorporation of all constituents into one substance.

During the Peninsular War, Catholicism was a major factor in Wordsworth's belief that the Spanish nation deserved protection from the French. The 'superstition', 'religious faith' and 'devotional practices' of the Spaniards were their mainstay (2571-5). Wordsworth writes: 'There is (I cannot refrain from observing) in the Catholic religion, and in the character of its Priesthood especially, a source of animation and fortitude in desperate struggles—which may be relied upon as one of the best hopes of the cause' (4158-61). In Spain 'There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise, of all ages' (4235-6). The moral being desires to be part of this spiritual community and makes the subject adhere to duties and obligations. Catholicism was a vital aspect of Spanish nationhood but England's national character had irrevocably changed at the Dissolution. English identity was as threatened in 1808 by Irish Catholics as it had been in 1569 by Norton and the Earls.

> The Spaniards' strength lay in their moral qualities which were more silent in their operation, more permanent in their nature; in the virtues of perseverance, constancy, fortitude, and watchfulness, in a long memory and a quick feeling, to rise upon a favourable summons, a texture of life which, though cut through (as hath been feigned of the bodies of Angels) unites again (400-4).

The moral 'texture' of the Spanish nation is consubstantial with that of its individuals. The 'texture of life' draws together individual bodies into one being. Wordsworth's conception of political representation and culpability extends to linguistic representation. Throughout the four thousand-line pamphlet Wordsworth's lexicon is

one of texts, language, and signs.[77] The Convention itself was a written contract which was tasked with embodying the needs and moral spirit of the Spaniards. And yet it was signed by detached representatives and was therefore void.

The British Generals erred because they acted according to reason when they should have combated for 'strongholds of the imagination' (1406). They mistakenly valued Portugal for its soil rather than the 'human feeling which was there' (1402): 'Lisbon and Portugal, as city and soil, were chiefly prized by us as a *language*' (1408) [Wordsworth's italics]. They mistook the objects or 'counters of the game for the stake played for'. In other words, they mistook the soil for the sentiment of the people and conceptualised Portugal as a language system which values outward signs above fundamental shared passions. For Wordsworth, representative language is the wrong model to use where the heart and passions of a living nation are concerned: 'One man cannot *sign* away the faculty of reason in another; much less can one or two individuals do this for a whole people' (2148-50) [my italics]. Wordsworth's expostulation against the signing of the treaty, as expressed in the metaphorical and imaginative framework of *Cintra,* highlights the shared pitfalls of civil and linguistic representation.

Cintra goes on to offer an alternative form of communication, the material of which is better fitted to the human mind:

> the mind gains consciousness of its strength to undergo only by exercise among materials which admit the impression of its power—which grow under it, which bend under it,—which resist,—which change under its influence,—which alter either through its might or within its presence, by it or before it (2514-8).

The mind's power finds its analogue in living materials, not in linguistic signs or contracts. This recalls Wordsworth's lament in Book V of *The Prelude*: 'Why hath not

[77] The tone and rhythm of the prose is, in places, beautifully poetic; Wordsworth alludes to Virgil, Dante, Petrarch, Milton, and Sidney and presents political events in an imaginative register. On the literary nature of the pamphlet see Simon Bainbridge, 'A Self-defeating Campaign', in *William Wordsworth: Concerning the Convention of Cintra. A Bicentennial Critical Edition*, ed. by Richard Gravil and W. J. B. Owen (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2009), pp. 30–33.

the mind | Some element to stamp her image on | In nature somewhat nearer to her own?' (44-6). The texture of the mind grows in conjunction with its exposure to other malleable substances. These living materials,

> during times of tranquillity, are the objects with which, in the studious walks of sequestered life, Genius most loves to hold intercourse; by which it is reared and supported; ―these are the qualities in action and in object, in image, in thought, and in feeling, from communion with which proceeds originally all that is creative in art and science, and all that is magnanimous in virtue (2518-23).

Creative growth occurs most fruitfully in secluded tranquillity through intercourse with elements which are of one substance with the self, not through interaction with others. However, meditation leads to service of the country. The 'vigour of the human soul' is rooted in:

> breaking down limit, and losing and forgetting herself in the sensation and image of Country and of the human race; and, when she returns and is most restricted and confined, her dignity consists in the contemplation of a better and more exalted being, which, though proceeding from herself, she loves and is devoted to as another (2530-4).

The human soul becomes one with the country and then contemplates God as part of the self. The Spaniards exhibit strength of mind that is achievable through contemplation followed by incorporation into the body of the nation.

In letters to Gregory Nazianzen, which Wordsworth studied immediately before the Peninsular War, St Basil employs the same pattern of seclusion followed by meditation of God followed by service of the community: 'Quiet then, […] is the first step in our sanctification […]. Thus the mind, saved from dissipation from without, and not through the senses thrown upon the world, falls back upon itself, and thereby ascends to the contemplation of God'.[78] Basil began with a hermitage which quickly grew into a coenobium where solitary contemplation is combined with community life. *The Tuft of Primroses* explains that the monks became one: 'Men of all tempers,

[78] Basil, *Letters*, p. 111.

qualities, estates, | Came with one spirit' to settle 'In Harmony and undisturbed repose' (444-9). Basil's retreat only lasted three years before he committed himself to the social concerns of the church; he valued seclusion from the distractions of the world (not from his neighbour) as preparation for social action.

Wordsworth's argument in *Cintra* dictates, after St Basil, that seclusion and public responsibility are not mutually exclusive. Seclusion upholds and feeds the sense of national moral feeling. This is in direct contrast to the position Francis Wrangham indicated in his sermon 'Rome is Fallen' where monasticism and seclusion are antithetical to social responsibility.[79] For Wordsworth, retreat is coextensive with commitment to the country because oneness with the national cause can only come about authentically once the individual mind has been strengthened 'in the studious walks of sequestered life' (2519). Wordsworth's interest in hermits and recluses informs and is a result of his belief in the necessity of incorporative or incarnational representation. A life of retreat is most fruitful in a context where our representatives speak with our voice. If the heart of the nation is truly represented in the civic system, then a type of language that avoids disembodied representation should be the natural outcome.

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Whitaker's histories of Craven and Whalley have two major concerns: the first is the fundamental position monasticism holds in our national history; the second is the secularisation of the language of epitaphs. Memorial inscriptions, often found at monastic sites, became for Whitaker the only remaining means by which monastic values could be glimpsed. Whitaker departs from his impartial presentation of

[79] Wrangham, *Rome Is Fallen*, pp. 236-7.

genealogies only to express his anger at the way the Dissolution was carried out and to convey his disappointment at the deterioration of the Christian sentiment of epitaphs. The *History of Craven* begins thus: 'modern epitaphs offend alike against piety, simplicity and truth. This species of composition in England has at different times put on the form of a prayer, a psalm, an epigram, and an history, specimens of all which will appear in the following work. It is now for the most part a tumid and undistinguished panegyric—*Incredulous odi*.'[80] Epitaphs shifted from declaring hopeful expectation of salvation, towards inflated panegyrics on the intellectual attainments, virtues, or skills of the deceased—as if to regret that so much excellence had perished rather than exclaim the belief that the soul is imperishable. This change 'bears testimony to the general decay of the Christian language, in a species of composition where, above all others, the continuance of it might be expected'.[81] Whitaker raises the question of what constitutes appropriate language for Christian epitaphs. In doing so against the backdrop of the Dissolution, he laid the conceptual roots of Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs*.

The major source for Wordsworth's *Essays* was John Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments* which laments 'the violation of Funerall [sic] Monuments' as the 'foulest and most inhumane action of [the Dissolution]': tombstones were hacked and hewn to pieces, and inscriptions were erased or dismembered.[82] The volume begins with an account of the Dissolution followed by a description of the growth of Christianity and the Rules which governed the orders of Saints. Basil, Augustine, Benet, and Francis. Before the seventh century, it was customary for bodies to be buried outside city walls. After this time, when monks started to offer sacrifice for departed souls, graveyards

[80] Whitaker, *History of Craven*, p. viii.
[81] Whitaker, *History of Whalley*, p. 292.
[82] Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, p. 51.

moved closer to church buildings and were eventually placed inside their grounds.[83] Weever recognised (within a century of the Dissolution) that monastic ruins had themselves become monuments: his discussion of epitaphs takes place firmly in the context of the Dissolution, suggesting that graveyard memorials are iterations of monastic ruins.

In the *Essays*, Wordsworth continues to consider descent and inheritance, and he extends these concepts to the act of writing. Epitaphs exist as a direct result of an innate belief in the immortality of the soul, which dictates men's desire to be remembered: when parents die before their children the natural pattern is disrupted (III. 290-2). Words and ideas are the offspring of their creator; they are the poet's tools. The purpose of Wordsworth's discourse is to 'assist the reader in separating truth and sincerity from falsehood and affectation' (III. 75-6). If the relationship between the feeling of the poet and his language is authentic then that linguistic offspring will be truthful and sincere.

An epitaph is,

> a record to preserve the memory of the dead, as a tribute to his individual worth, for a satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the survivors, and for the common benefit of the living: which record is to be accomplished, not in a general manner, but, where it can, in *close connection with the bodily remains of the deceased*: and these […] are deposited within, or contiguous to, their places of worship [Wordsworth's italics] (I. 156-62).

The communal consolation offered by epitaphs is enhanced by the proximity of the local centre of worship. Moreover, the 'delineation, we must remember, is performed by the side of the grave; and, what is more, the grave of one whom he loves and admires' (I. 332-3). The writer's emotions are intensified by the location in which he works: in turn this ensures that the relationship between his sentiment and his language is intimate and immediate. The writer can also be assured of the context in which his

[83] ibid, p. 8. All quotation of 'Essays upon Epitaphs' is taken from *Prose*, vol. 2, 45–119. Editorial line numbers appear in parentheses in the text. Wordsworth quotes directly from Weever in the first *Essay*, lines 163-5.

words will be read. To write and to read an epitaph is to be part of a community that shares a belief in the soul's immortality. Hence epitaphs are an exemplary paradigm of poetry.

Epitaphs are naturally democratic: they are 'exposed to all' (I. 400) and equalise 'the lofty and the low' (I. 386).[84] Wordsworth wanted graveyards to be the place in which social hierarchy collapsed. Even the passing stranger 'is introduced through [the epitaph's] mediation to the company of a friend' (I. 405-6). Inscriptions often begin with an exclamation such as 'Pause Traveller' inviting the addressee to find both physical refreshment in the shade of the graveyard and spiritual refreshment in the words he reads (I. 172-6).[85] The epitaph 'is concerning all and for all' (I. 406-7): 'a parish-church in the stillness of the country, is a visible centre of a community of the living and the dead' (I. 250-2). Present and past inhabitants of the village—or present and future inhabitants of the graveyard—are united in this central, shared space.[86]

Wordsworth is angry that epitaphs tend to follow 'the faults predominant in the literature of [the] age' (III. 149). By copying works of art 'holden in most esteem at the time' (III. 154) the writer eventually appears insincere. Instead, in a register reminiscent of the concluding phases of *The Convention of Cintra*, Wordsworth states that writers should have recourse to 'solemnity and pensiveness' (III. 167) which results in:

> Energy, stillness, grandeur, tenderness, those feelings which are the pure emanations of nature, those feelings which have the infinitude of truth, and those expressions which are not what the garb is to the body but what the body is to the soul, themselves a constituent part and power or function in the thought (III. 161-65).

[84] The size and ornateness of tombstones did not differ to reflect the social position of the deceased until later in the nineteenth century. Eighteenth-century gravestones were generally small and unassuming. I am grateful to Polly Atkin and Emily Stanback for information about the material aspects of graves in the Romantic period.

[85] See also Wordsworth's 'Lines left upon a seat in a Yew Tree' which begins 'Nay, Traveller! rest | This lonely yew-tree stands': *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 48. The formulation 'Pause Traveller' ('Siste Viator') is Roman in origin. For a discussion see Richard Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

[86] Wordsworth refers to Cintra: 'There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise, of all ages' (4235-6).

Feelings which are 'pure emanations of nature' are connected to their author in the way that the body is connected with the soul. Wordsworth's vocabulary is directly indebted to St Basil in that 'emanation' is the process of flowing forth used specifically to describe the relations between the Persons of the Trinity. Basil used the opening sentence of John's Gospel to explain that Son and Spirit are 'un-begotten' and identical with the Father. 'In the beginning was the Word' means that the Son came forth out of non-existence; He is beyond time and joined with, not begotten of, the Father.[87] Linguistic expressions that relate word and thought in the manner that the garb is related to the body are dangerous because they adopt the Arian model of the Trinity in which the Son is a separate begotten being, not an 'emanation':[88]

> We in accordance with the true doctrine speak of the Son as neither like, nor unlike the Father. Each of these terms is equally impossible, for like and unlike are predicated in relation to quality, and the divine is free from quality. We, on the contrary, confess identity of nature and accepting the consubstantiality, and rejecting the composition of the Father, God in substance, Who begat the Son, God in substance. From this the consubstantiality is proved. For God in essence or substance is co-essential or consubstantial with God in essence or substance.[89]

The central paragraph of the *Essays* uses St Basil's reasoning to explain that a poet's words should be incarnations of his thoughts:[90]

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[87] Basil, *Letters*, p. xxiii.

[88] Milton's treatise, *De Doctrina Christiana*, shockingly revealed his Arianism when it was published in 1825. Consequently, Milton's standing as England's religious poet was shaken and his heterodoxy became apparent in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Wordsworth's commitment to Trinitarianism and his response to the revelation of Milton's Arian bias are evident in the 1845 edition of the *Poetical Works* where Wordsworth changed lines of the *Prospectus* to *The Recluse* (in which he had previously established himself as Milton's great heir). The lines 'So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard | Holiest of Men', became: 'So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard | In holiest mood'. Stephen Gill writes: 'Though the change in phrasing is slight, its significance is not. It is astonishing that, after his particular lifetime's endeavour, Wordsworth's orientation towards Milton can have changed, however slightly'. Gill explains that Wordsworth acted under the influence of his (sometime) Tractarian friend Frederick William Faber: 'Wordsworth and "Catholic Truth": The Role of Frederick William Faber', *The Review of English Studies*, 45 (1994), 204–220 (p. 217).

[89] Basil, *Letters*, pp. 116-7.

[90] Studies of Wordsworth's formulation of incarnational language include Frances Ferguson, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit*; Karen Mills-Courts, *Poetry as Epitaph: Representation and Poetic Language* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); David P. Haney, *William*

> Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not […] an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay-waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve (III. 178-88).

Poisoned vestments are outward emblems (like the French army uniforms or Norton's banner) in which the sign is alienated from the referent: the garb poisons the body; it separates the Son from the Father. Language is 'awful', other-worldly, and uncontrollable but it is also an 'instrument' ―a tool under human control for human use, which is potentially morally dangerous when abused. Language has physical or regal 'power' and 'dominion' but it exerts this authority over intangible thoughts. In the case of epitaphs, the act of inscribing words on to stone is an attempt to permanently secure this physical authority. Words are simultaneously supernatural and human instruments; like the Second Person of the Trinity they have fully mortal and fully divine characteristics.[91]

For Wordsworth, language should actively 'uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet' the thoughts that it embodies. This quietness points to the non-verbal essence of communication which Wordsworth explored in the relationship between Emily and the Doe. Words should behave 'like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe', working silently almost without our noticing. Wordsworth echoes his own lines from

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Wordsworth and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Lorna Clymer, 'Graved in Tropes: The Figural Logic of Epitaphs and Elegies in Blair, Gray, Cowper, and Wordsworth', *English Literary History*, 62 (1995), 347–386, and Deeanne Westbrook, *Wordsworth's Biblical Ghosts* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

[91] In *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822), Wordsworth celebrated the Incarnation as the supreme and eternal reconciliation of form and spirit: 'Glory to God! and to the Power who came | In filial duty, clothed with love divine; | That made his human tabernacle shine | Like ocean burning with purpureal flame[.]' (1-4). The Eucharist within the tabernacle is the sign of the 'filial' vessel of divine Power. The second Person of the Trinity is clothed in such a way that the earthly sign shines with the flame of the Spirit and the love of the Father: *Sonnet Series*, p. 204.

The Tuft of Primroses in which nature cries out against the desecration of the Chartreuse:

> "O leave in quiet this embodied dream
> This substance by which mortal men have clothed,
> Humanly cloth'd the ghostliness of things,
> In silence visible and perpetual calm.
> Let this one Temple last—be this one spot
> Of earth devoted to Eternity." (538-43)

Nature asks the Revolutionary troops to leave its silence intact. Monastic life is an 'embodied dream', part of the substance of the listener, which facilitates a glimpse of eternity. However, silence is clothing and embodiment; it is a dream, not a reality. Wordsworth seems to undercut his own exultation of monastic life in the depiction of this silence as mortal, human, and a type of clothing. It is not eternally sustainable, hence his indication that monastic life was becoming detached from the make-up of the French nation. In 1810, clothing comes to denote separate and separable essences for the sign and the referent (the body and the garb). In *The Tuft of Primroses* therefore, Wordsworth works out the connection between incarnation and clothing, language and silence, which he brings to completion in the *Essays*. After studying Weever more closely, Wordsworth's metaphor changes from embodiment/clothing to incarnation: his fullest expression of the consubstantial relation between poet, word, and place. The graveyard is a progression from the monastery; it facilitates a deeper silence that is fitted perfectly to the community it holds together.

Wordsworth continues: 'thoughts cannot, even upon this *impulse*, assume an outward life without a transmutation and a fall' (III. 198) [my italics]. Language shared the human condition of mortality. Since the Fall, language has been an imperfect means of expression; poems and words are 'shrines so frail' (V. 48) and 'Poor earthly

casket[s]' (V. 164).[92] Basil argues against the formulation of the Holy Spirit as 'place' insofar as it is separate from the Creator and His Word; rather, place must play an equal role. In other words, the material location of the epitaph completes its meaning. Thoughts can have an outward life in the material conditions of the graveyard and in silent patterns of behaviour. Indeed, sentiments which are entirely preserved from expression retain their prelapsarian perfection: 'The sublimity of the sentiment consists in its being the secret possession of the Father' (III. 310-11). This secret possession is an unexpressed sentiment not subject to mortality. Silence is all preserving: it does not risk any form of mortal clothing or embodiment.

Wordsworth admits that the most affecting epitaph he had seen was 'In an obscure corner of a Country Church-yard […], half-overgrown with Hemlock and Nettles […] bearing nothing more than the name of the Deceased with the date of birth and death, importing that it was an Infant which had been born one day and died the following' (III. 471-5). The sentiment was not corrupted or poisoned by garb or expression. The small stone was hidden away in a remote corner and overgrown with poisonous hemlock and nettles. As with the ruins of Bolton Abbey, nature had embraced the stone and protected it from corrupting influences. The best epitaphs are non-linguistic and intimately tied to their physical location.

Wordsworth's research into England's monastic history coincided with his fear that the movement towards Catholic Emancipation was threatening to disrupt English national identity. Local communities are the anchors of the nation. In *Essays upon Epitaphs* he writes: 'Such a frail memorial then is not without its tendency to keep families together; it feeds also local attachment, which is the tap-root of the tree of Patriotism' (III. 495-6). Wordsworth's organic vocabulary dictates that patriotism

[92] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, pp. 163 and 166. On 'fallen' language see Deeanne Westbrook's entry on Wordsworth in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Literature*, ed. by Rebecca Lemon and others, pp. 397–412.

grows out of relationships between people, places, and the history of those places. It is 'to be grievously lamented' when 'the living Inhabitants of a Parish have small knowledge of the dead who are buried in their Church-yards' (II. 111-4). Patriotism (the incorporation of a nation into one spirit) develops from an adequate understanding of memorials, the language of memorials, and reverence for ancestors.

The *Essays* end with a depiction of a world of silence in an epitaph Wordsworth composed in honour of a deaf man who inhabited 'one of the most retired vales among the Mountains of Westmorland' (III. 500-1). The epitaph opens and closes with a description of the pine trees at his grave:

> Beneath that Pine which rears its dusky head
> Aloft, and covered by a plain blue stone
> Briefly inscribed, a gentle Dalesman lies,
> From whom in early childhood was withdrawn
> The precious gift of hearing. (III. 504-8)

> And yon tall Pine-tree, whose composing sound
> Was wasted on the good Man's living ear,
> Hath now its own peculiar sanctity;
> And at the touch of every wandering breeze
> Murmurs not idly o'er his peaceful grave. (III. 583-7)

The deaf man was buried under the 'composing' pine tree because, despite the disability of his 'living ear', he comprehended its silent music. His life was stilled, subdued, and composed, and through the 'touch' of the breeze, which is *felt* not heard, he understood the sense of community and stability that pine trees emit. Stone epitaphs, ruins, and pines therefore all function to tie together present and future inhabitants of the graveyard. With this epitaph, Wordsworth shows that although the best memorial inscriptions contain expressions which are incarnations of thought, silence is the epitome of the genre.[93] Without the capacity to hear, the man lived as if he was

[93] Wordsworth used money from Sir George Beaumont's sale of Loughrigg Tarn to plant yew trees in Grasmere Churchyard, under which he is buried. See Christopher Wordsworth (Jnr), *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, vol. 1, 26-6.

constantly within the quiet of the graveyard. In this way he became well-equipped to interpret the scenes before his eyes and those presented in his books. Consequently, Wordsworth explains that poetic sentiment is comprehended by an emanation or a feeling, not by language.

The deaf man did not move 'from the floor of his paternal home' and had no need to 'plant himself anew' or provide for any offspring (III. 534-6). Like Emily Norton, his silence is a figure of his preservation and wholeness: he promulgated neither children nor words. The life of the deaf man therefore anticipated 'the profounder stillness of the grave' (III. 574), which was so closely connected, in Wordsworth's thinking, with the life of the monastery. The deaf man thus exemplifies the life of silence which St Basil sought and found in Pontus, and which in 1853 the Abbot of Mount St Bernard confessed to Aubrey De Vere that he had found in Wordsworth's poetry.

The purpose of this chapter has been to relocate Wordsworth's thinking about the nature of linguistic representation—which culminates in the central statement of the *Essays upon Epitaphs*—in the study of monasticism and hagiography that he undertook in the years leading up to 1810. Towards the end of the twentieth century when the *Essays upon Epitaphs* became a prime focus of critical attention, the passage on 'language as incarnation' was typically employed as a pivot for deconstructionist arguments.[94] But these were often negative, restrictive, and removed from the actual sentiment that Wordsworth wanted to express. They collapsed meaning, grief, death, sorrow, community affection, and consolation into linguistic events.[95] The purpose of

[94] In addition to the studies listed in footnote 89, see Cynthia Chase, 'Monument and Inscription'; J. Hillis Miller, *The Linguistic Moment*; Andrzej Warminski, 'Facing Language: Wordsworth's First Poetic Spirits', *Diacritics*, 17 (1987), 18–31: J. Douglas Kneale, *Monumental Writing: Aspects of Rhetoric in Wordsworth's Poetry* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

[95] See my Introduction, above. Jonathan Roberts laments the critical trend set by de Man in 'Wordsworth, Epitaph and the Epitaphic', *Literature Compass*, 1 (2004), 1–4.

epitaphs is precisely the opposite: they contain non-linguistic sentiment best captured in silence and best grasped when the reader is intimately incorporated into the living material of the inscription. By recognising this we can reconstruct Wordsworth's *Essays* as the culmination of a long period of research which highlights the centrality of graveyards in his understanding of community. Communities create nations and national identity requires the memorialisation of ruined monasteries as well as ancestors. The epitaph containing the dates of birth and death of the day-old child is the fullest because the sentiment it represents exists within the reader's response to the small, unobtrusive stone. Silence indicates the fullest presence and the type of presentation (not representation) Wordsworth advocates in *The White Doe*, *The Tuft of Primroses*, *The Convention of Cintra*, and the *Essays* is fully incorporated, consubstantial, and given credence by Wordsworth's study of St Basil.[96]

[96] *The White Doe* was eventually published in 1815, shortly after *The Excursion* (1814), which incorporated *The Tuft of Primroses* into its third book and included the first of the *Essays upon Epitaphs* as a note to Books V-VII. Wordsworth revised and drew these works back together when he was thinking seriously about *The Recluse*. Wordsworth anticipated these ideas of consubstantiality and incorporative community in two key pastoral poems of *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Brothers* and *Michael*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pastoral Quietness and *The Excursion*

> Poetry cannot be very charming, if it is as low and clownish as Shepherds naturally are; or if it precisely runs upon nothing but rural Matters. For, to hear one speak of Sheep and Goats, and of the care that ought to be taken of those Animals, has nothing which in itself can please us; what is pleasing is the Idea of quietness, which is inseparable from a Pastoral Life.[1]

John Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics* (1697), prefaced by Addison's 'Essay' which highlighted how Virgil skilfully invested the vulgar subject of husbandry with dignity and nobility, was responsible for the development of an English Georgic tradition in the eighteenth century.[2] The genre incorporated a number of different styles including pastoral and epic, panegyric, topographical, epistolary and meditative verse.[3] Wordsworth's various pastoral and georgic influences between 1806 and 1814 mean that *The Excursion*, encompassing the earlier manuscript work of *The Pedlar* and *The Ruined Cottage*, has been interpreted as an example of such generic miscegenation within the pastoral mode.[4] And yet, there is another context impacting on *The*

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[1] Bernard Le Bouyer de Fontenelle, *Poesis Pastorales* (1688) quoted in J. E. Congleton, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684-1798* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1952), p. 203.

[2] Addison's 'Essay on Virgil's *Georgics*' praises the way Virgil 'breaks the clods and tosses the dung about with an air of gracefulness': *The Works of John Dryden: The Works of Virgil in English 1697*, ed. by William Frost and Vinton A. Dearing, 20 vols. (London: University of California Press, 1956-2000), vol. 5 (1987), 145-53 (p. 151). On the Georgic tradition see John Chalker, *The English Georgic: A Study in the development of a Form* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 10-36.

[3] John Goodridge, *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 4-5. See also Alistair Fowler, 'Georgic and Pastoral: Laws of Genre in the Seventeenth Century', in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England*, ed. by Michael Leslie and Timothy Rayler (London: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 81–90 (p. 87). On the Georgic mode more broadly conceived see Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: literature and social change in Britain, 1700-1830* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[4] Annabel Patterson has persuasively argued that *The Excursion* has its place in this Georgic tradition, in 'Wordsworth's Georgic: Genre and Structure in The Excursion', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 9 (1978), 145–56 and *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Wordsworth's allusions to Virgil have been documented by Bruce Graver: 'Wordsworth's Georgic Pastoral: *Otium* and *Labor* in "Michael"', *European Romantic Review*, 1 (1991), 119–34. See also Graver's letter to Duncan Wu, quoted in *W's Reading II*, p. 231. Wordsworth's attempt to renovate the pastoral began with *The Ruined Cottage*, which was first composed between 1797 and 1804. This experiment with genre led to the pastoral narrations of *Lyrical Ballads* (particularly *The Brothers*, 'The Last of the Flock', and *Michael*)

Excursion that reveals a further dimension of Wordsworth's pastoral renovation. Wordsworth's study of monastic history, and the silence he drew from that tradition, modifies (I will argue) his own, and the Wanderer's, understanding of the power of rural quietness and seclusion, making *The Excursion* an example of a new version of monastically inflected pastoral verse.[5]

This chapter is in three sections. I begin by asking why Wordsworth embarked on a study of monasticism in 1806, identifying two new contexts for silence: Quakerism and gardening. I then offer an analysis of silence in *The Excursion* and the persuasive techniques used by the Wanderer in his attempt to restore the Solitary's faith. These constitute the advocacy of the type of silence-in-community that St Basil's coenobium provided. Finally, I discuss Wordsworth's 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' of his 1815 *Poems* in order to suggest ways in which Wordsworth drew together the imaginative concerns of religion and poetry.

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Excluding the work Wordsworth did towards *The Recluse* before 1804, there are eight stages of *Excursion* composition which are divisible into three main periods.[6] The first is July to September 1806, the second is December 1809 to March 1812, and the third is

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which emphasize the nobility of the shepherd by framing him as a natural poet. See Fiona Stafford, 'Plain Living and Ungarnish'd Stories: Wordsworth and the Survival of Pastoral', *The Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008), 118–33; Mark Jones, 'Double Economics: Ambivalence in Wordsworth's Pastoral', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 108 (1993), 1098–1113; Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, pp. 99-107.

[5] Carl Ketcham notes: 'Nowhere, perhaps, did Wordsworth's willingness to find his own way in poetry express itself more clearly and pervasively than in his reworking of the pastoral mode. Indeed, it is apparent that in a broad sense almost all of Wordsworth's output is, implicitly or explicitly, a new kind of pastoral, just as his awareness of time and memory makes virtually all his poetry to some degree elegiac (and, often, some variant of the pastoral elegy). […] Indeed, though pastoral landscapes continue to haunt the poetry of Wordsworth's middle years, actual rustics and sheep do not.' *Shorter Poems,* pp. 6 and 7. I suggest that sheep and shepherds are replaced, during and after 1807, by naturalised religious solitary figures. On the pastoral see also Fiona Stafford, *Local Attachments: the Province of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[6] *Excursion,* pp. 426-8. All references to *The Recluse* follow Wordsworth's own conception of the poem: before 1814, he did not conceive of or refer to *The Excursion* as separate from *The Recluse*.

January to May 1814. In the previous chapter I showed that between the winter of 1806-7 and the beginning of 1810—precisely the period of intermission between the first and second main spurts of *Excursion* composition—Wordsworth was engaged in a serious study of monastic life, ruined abbeys, epitaphs, and hagiography. I analysed the hermitic and contemplative aspects of *The White Doe of Rylstone* and *The Tuft of Primroses*, and established that Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* and his formulation of poetic language were inflected by his knowledge of St Basil's explication of the Trinity. This intense study of monasticism coincided with the rekindling of Wordsworth's interest in pastoral poetry.[7]

As well as returning to pieces he had known since childhood, Wordsworth sought out pastoral work he had not previously read, such as Sir John Beaumont's *The Shepherdess* (1629) (which he encountered for the first time in 1806) and George Crabbe's anti-pastoral *Poems* (1807).[8] There is a conjunction at this point between Wordsworth's developing knowledge of monastic history and his revaluation of pastoral and georgic poetry. Between 1809 and 1811 Wordsworth returned to James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730), which is the most thorough-going and complex eighteenth-century imitation of Virgil's *Georgics*.[9] During Wordsworth's Hawkshead days, *The Seasons* had been a beloved and influential poem. Duncan Wu has noted that Wordsworth's *Lines Written as a School Exercise* (1785) adopted Thomson's belief that the Dissolution of the Monasteries was necessary for the initiation of the Enlightenment.[10] In 1785, Thomson's disavowal of superstition and monkish reclusion

[7] I therefore disagree with Curran who writes: 'By 1806, with the final version of "Home at Grasmere" complete and *The Prelude* brought to a period, Wordsworth's decade of intensive preoccupation with the pastoral is finished': *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, p. 107.
[8] *W's Reading II*, pp. 18-19 and 67.
[9] Chalker, *English Georgic*, pp. 92-101.
[10] *W's Reading I*, pp. 136-7.

(a prevalent eighteenth-century position), had encouraged Wordsworth to celebrate the Dissolution:

> No jarring monks, to gloomy cell confined,
> With mazy rules perplex the weary mind;
> No shadow form entice the soul aside,
> Secure she walks, Philosophy her guide. (49-52)[11]

But in 1809 Wordsworth's new expertise in monastic life perhaps brought his juvenilia to mind and prompted a much more critical return to *The Seasons*.[12]

Wordsworth's re-reading of georgic poetry continued as he restarted composition of *The Excursion*. In 1811, he returned to John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), which he had known from childhood and which he recommended to Lady Beaumont in a letter of 20 November 1811.[13] *The Fleece* provides agriculturally accurate descriptions of the types of land and dry soil required for sheep, and the opening scene contains the requisite 'lofty elms'. Dyer describes a consciously idyllic pastoral scene that realistically encompasses disease and bad weather, making *The Fleece* a practically informative mixture of pastoral, georgic, and topographical material.[14] As well as praising Dyer and including a copy of his own sonnet, 'Bard of the Fleece', Wordsworth's letter to Lady Beaumont contains a discussion of the development of the Winter Garden he had designed for her at Coleorton in 1806-7. Wordsworth's practical gardening project was an attempt to create his own pastoral idyll, which was 'cloistral'

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[11] *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-49), vol. 1, 259-60. Christopher Wordsworth (Jnr) discusses the context of this poem and prints it in *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, vol. 1, 10-13.

[12] In March 1809 Wordsworth directed Thomas De Quincey to add quotations from Virgil's *Georgics* to the *Convention of Cintra*: *W's Reading II*, p. 232 and *MY i.*, pp. 301-2.

[13] Wu suggests that Wordsworth had reread *The Fleece* only a matter of weeks before he wrote this letter: *W's Reading II*, p. 83 and *MY i.*, pp. 519-22.

[14] Goodridge, *Rural Life*, pp. 103-6. Goodridge quotes the description of 'lofty elms' on p. 106. I adopt Goodridge's conclusion that Dyer's *Fleece* marked the beginning of a period in which poets routinely blended pastoral and georgic modes. Stuart Curran agrees about the inseparability of these two modes: 'the relationship between pastoral and georgic, as between shepherd and farmer, is intimately linked. […] Although the history of attempts to build walls between pastoral and georgic is long and distinguished […] it is inevitably distorting': *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, pp. 86-7.

and 'soothing'.[15] The letter further reveals the connections Wordsworth made between monasticism and pastoral poetry: it contains a transcription of his 'Inscription for a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton', which uses the image of the decaying remains of Grace Dieu Priory to evoke the growth of the garden. Furthermore, the letter contains a recently revised version of the 'Inscription for St Herbert's Island'—which had first appeared in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) —suggesting that Wordsworth's thinking about agricultural poetry and gardening prompted (or at least coincided with) revision of his piece on the hermitage of Derwent Water.[16] In addition to his re-reading of Dyer, Wordsworth returned during the final stages of *Excursion* composition to Thompson's edition of Andrew Marvell's *Works* (1776) and John Gay's *The Shepherd's Week in Six Pastorals* (1714).[17]

The reasons why Wordsworth began a study of monasticism alongside his reading of pastoral poetry in the winter of 1806 emerge on 20 June that year, when the second and third volumes of Thomas Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism* arrived at Dove Cottage. The Wordsworths had been eagerly anticipating this publication and had possibly read manuscript drafts of Clarkson's work from as early as 1803. By 23 July, Dorothy reported to Catherine Clarkson that Wordsworth had read 'most of' her husband's work, which is a comprehensive 'moral history' of the Society of Friends.[18] Clarkson explains that Quakers are naturally suited to life in secluded rural communities because 'that calmness, and quietude, and abstraction from worldly thoughts, to which rural retirement is peculiarly favourable, is the state of mind which

[15] *MY i*., p. 117.
[16] *MY* i., pp. 119-20. In this letter, Wordsworth also recommends the 'meditative morality' of Samuel Daniel's poetry. See Stephen Gill, '"Meditative Morality": Wordsworth and Samuel Daniel', *The Review of English Studies*, 55 (2004), 565–582. The Coleorton inscriptions appeared together with 'Inscription for the Spot where the Hermitage stood on St Herbert's Island, Derwent-water' in 1815: *Shorter Poems*, pp. 100-8.
[17] *W's Reading II*, pp. 91 and 143.
[18] ibid, pp. 52-3. Eventually, after much effort, Wordsworth acquired the first volume of the set. Coleridge had certainly read this volume by the end of 1808: *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 3 (1959), 156, n. 1.

[Quakers] themselves acknowledge to be required by their religion, it would seem that the country was peculiarly the place for their habitations'.[19]

On opening the second volume of Clarkson's trilogy, Wordsworth would have discovered that the major scriptural narrative on which Quakerism is founded is the parable of 'The Sower and the Seed'.[20] Quakers use the parable to explain Man's ability to commune with and understand God through the 'Spiritual Monition', which was sown in human hearts during the act of creation:

> In the same manner as the Divine Being has scattered the seeds of plants and vegetables in the body of the earth, so he has implanted a portion of his own incorruptible seed, or […] the "seed of the kingdom" in the soul of every individual […]. As the sun by its genial influence quickens the vegetable seed, so it is the office of the Holy Spirit, in whom is life, and who resides in the temple of man, to quicken that which is heavenly. And in the same manner as the vegetable seed conceives and brings forth a plant, or a tree with root, stem, and branches; so if the soul, in which the seed of the Kingdom is placed, be willing to receive the influence of the Holy Spirit upon it, this seed is quickened, and a spiritual offspring is produced.[21]

The seed of the kingdom "consists not in words or notions of mind, but as an inward thing, an inward spiritual substance in the heart".[22] Quakers understand the parable of the sower—according to which some men succeed in comprehending the Word of God because the soil of their hearts is good—to indicate that salvation depends on personal cultivation of that seed, undistracted by 'temptations, persecutions, and the cares of the world'.[23] Quiet rural retirement and metaphorical cultivation of seed are the major tenets of Quaker spirituality. In this sense, the religion of the Friends is infused with pastoral and georgic characteristics.

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[19] Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 3 vols. (London, 1806), vol. 2, 49. Clarkson was not a member of the Society of Friends. He became well acquainted with the Quakers during his Abolitionist campaign and afterwards decided to write a 'moral history' of the Society in order to teach their fellow countrymen about this little-known denomination. His account is therefore less biased than it might have been: vol. 1, i.
[20] Matthew 13: 1-23.
[21] Clarkson, *Quakerism*, vol. 2, 203-4.
[22] ibid, p. 204, Clarkson quotes Isaac Pennington.
[23] ibid, p. 216.

The style and function of Quaker preaching, Clarkson explains, is modelled in accordance with the sower-and-seed metaphor. Preaching is 'an address of the man to men, that their attention may be turned towards God, and their minds be prepared for secret and heavenly touches of his Spirit.'[24] The address merely prepares the way for the listener to discover for himself the message that comes to him directly from God via the implanted seed. Quakers believe that 'no words, however excellent, which men may deliver now, will avail, or will produce that faith which is to stand, except they be accompanied by that power, which shall demonstrate them to be of God.'[25] The Wordsworthian dimension of these precepts is clear and Clarkson even quotes from 'Expostulation and Reply' to illustrate his point.[26] Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*—particularly the revisions of 1802—sets the literary precedent for the theory whereby a man speaks to men in order to lead those listeners to an answer that is already implanted in their hearts.[27] The New Testament parable of 'The Sower and the Seed', as Clarkson frames it in Wordsworthian terms, is thus a guide for literary and social, as well as biblical and spiritual, interpretation.

Quakerism, with its emphasis on contemplative exploration of the implanted seed (or "inner light"), applies the principles of hesychasm to congregational worship. Quakerism can be understood as a relocation of the monastic silence that was destroyed by Protestant Reformers. In 1669, the Quaker advocate William Penn wrote in condemnation of reclusive life: 'The Christian Convent and Monastery are within, where the Soul is enclosed from Sin […] True godliness does not turn Men out of the World, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their Endeavours to mend it'.[28]

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[24] ibid, p. 277.
[25] ibid, pp. 277-8.
[26] ibid, pp. 149-50.
[27] In the edition of 1802, Wordsworth also added the subtitle 'With pastoral, and other poems'.
[28] William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown* (1669), quoted in MacCulloch, *Silence: a Christian History*, p. 149.

For my purposes, Quakerism thus includes both an internalisation of monastic values and a shared congregational experience of hesychasm. As such, it combines silent meditation with community engagement, which is the type of Christian life that the Wanderer exemplifies.[29]

Charles Lamb, in his review of *The Excursion* for *The Quarterly Review*, was the first to identify in the Wanderer 'the character of an expanded and generous Quakerism'; Lamb '[ventured] to lay the basis of the author's sentiments in a sort of liberal Quakerism'.[30] William Howitt took this much further in his 1847 discussion of Wordsworth's poetry where he asserted that the poet's fundamental philosophy is 'simply a poetic Quakerism'.[31] Howitt, who was a member of the Society of Friends until 1847, was sure that:

> Of his principal and noblest production, The Excursion, [Quaker spirituality] is the brain, the very backbone, the vitals, and the moving sinews. Take away that, and you take all. Take that, and you reduce the poet to a level with a hundred others. His hero, the Wanderer, is a shepherd-boy grown into a pedlar, or pack-merchant, who has been educated and baptized into this sublime knowledge of God speaking through nature.[32]

Howitt continues: 'The Excursion is a very bible of Quakerism. Every page abounds with it. It is, in fact, wholly and fervently permeated by the soul of Quaker theology.'[33] Biased as Howitt's assessment may be, Wordsworth had been exposed to Quakerism from an early age. A Quaker meeting house was a stone's throw away from Ann

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[29] For my discussion of Wordsworth's domesticized hesychasm see Chapter Two.
[30] Charles Lamb, 'ART. V. The Excursion; a Poem', *The Quarterly Review*, 12 (1814), 100–111 (pp. 104-5).
[31] William Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets* (1847), 3rd edn (London, 1857), p. 542. Wordsworth had known and occasionally talked with Howitt from 1811 onwards: T. W. Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 333.
[32] Howitt, *Homes and Haunts*, p. 545.
[33] ibid, p. 547. Howitt notes that Wordsworth came into contact with the journals of George Fox while at Bristol.

Tyson's Colthouse at Hawkshead and in 1846 Wordsworth recalled having occasionally attended meetings.[34]

However, the channels through which the characteristics of Quakerism found their way into *The Excursion* are more complex than Lamb or Howitt could possibly have known. Wordsworth had begun construction of the character of the Wanderer between 1797 and 1801 in manuscript drafts of *The Ruined Cottage* and *The Pedlar*.[35] In 1806, Wordsworth's renewed knowledge of Quakerism, derived from Clarkson's volumes, did not lead directly into *The Excursion*; rather, it helped Wordsworth to consolidate his thinking about the spiritual importance of silence and propelled the study of monastic history that went hand in hand with his revaluation of pastoral poetry. In Quakerism, georgic poetry, and monastic life, Wordsworth found imagery he had already experimented with in his *Recluse* materials. Thus, when he resumed composition of *The Excursion* in 1810, he did so with enhanced recognition of the convergence of these seemingly disparate subjects.

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Before the cessation of *Excursion* composition was passed, Wordsworth found a practical counterpoint to the metaphysical aspects of Quakerism, which formed an

[34] Isabel Ross, 'Wordsworth and Colthouse Near Hawkshead', *The Modern Language Review*, 50 (1955), 499–501. I discuss the implications of Wordsworth's remembered visits to this meeting house in my essay, 'Presbyterianism and Tractarianism: William Wordsworth and the Nonconformist Meeting House at Hawkshead', *Notes and Queries* (forthcoming, 2013). Wordsworth's brother Christopher married into the Quaker family of the Lloyds. Charles Lloyd had been friend of Coleridge and Lamb at Bristol. Many of the American visitors that Wordsworth received at Rydal Mount after 1815 were Quakers: Alan G. Hill, 'Wordsworth and His American Friends', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 81 (1978), 146–60.

[35] Wordsworth composed the account of the Pedlar's childhood and youth in 1798 alongside the story of Margaret which is contained in MS B. He separated *The Pedlar* from *The Ruined Cottage* in 1799 with the production of MS D. In 1801, Wordsworth further defined and developed the spiritual character of the Pedlar. In late 1803, Wordsworth had brought *The Pedlar* back together with Margaret's tale in MS E. But by 1804, when Coleridge's Malta notebook was being prepared (MS M), Wordsworth had again modified his presentation of the Pedlar. From this point on, the Pedlar became the Wanderer and Wordsworth began to conceive of the first book of *The Excursion*. Stephen Gill provides an invaluable summary of the process in *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 47-55.

equally important part of his renewed understanding of the georgic mode. Wordsworth's reading of Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism* coincided with a growing attachment to his Quaker friend, Thomas Wilkinson.[36] Wordsworth affectionately admired Wilkinson for his modest poems, simple manners, and his gardening acumen to the extent that it made Thomas De Quincey quite jealous.[37] It was Wilkinson's lines about a solitary highland girl that were the impetus for Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper', and his gardening skill that Wordsworth honoured in 'To the Spade of a Friend'.[38] As the inspiration for both of these poems, Wilkinson is the confluence at which the agricultural labour of the reaper and the cultivation of grounds for recreational purposes meet.[39] Within the 'Sower and Seed' context of his Quakerism, Wilkinson's friendship provides Wordsworth with a link between the georgic poetry he was re-reading and his major gardening project at Coleorton, which was Wordsworth's attempt to create a place of quiet retreat.

In October 1805, Wordsworth wrote the first of several lengthy letters to Sir George Beaumont about the development of the grounds at Coleorton. The letter explained that Wilkinson was

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[36] Wilkinson was an Elder at his local Quaker Meeting. He was a correspondent of Thomas Clarkson and Edmund Burke, a friend of Charles Lloyd and an acquaintance of Sir Walter Scott: Mary Carr, *Thomas Wilkinson, a friend of Wordsworth* (London: Headley Brothers, 1905). Dorothy reported to Catherine Clarkson on 15 June 1809 that Coleridge's stay with Wilkinson had a radically positive effect on his drinking habits and general wellbeing: 'A week's residence in Thomas Wilkinson's humble cottage brought about this change, and I believe that Thomas, even at the last, was the Father of *The Friend.* C. was happy in Thomas's quiet and simple way of life, drank no spirits, and was comfortable all the time, and Thomas urged him to the work'. Wilkinson was thus responsible for Coleridge's progression with *The Friend*—as it was aptly named: *MY i.*, p. 356.

[37] H. Rossiter Smith, 'Wordsworth, His Circle and the Quakers', *Friend's Quarterly*, 8 (1954), 117-28.

[38] Wordsworth read of a solitary highland reaper in a manuscript version of Wilkinson's *Tours to the British Mountains*. Both poems relating to Wilkinson were published in Wordsworth's 1807 volumes, prepared for publication at Coleorton. See *MY i.*, p. 104, n. 1 and p. 105, n. 1 where Wordsworth writes to Wilkinson about a copy of the *British Mountains* manuscript, about the Winter Garden, and about the composition of 'To the Spade of a Friend'. In 1806, Wordsworth gave Wilkinson responsibility for negotiating the purchase of a farm in Patterdale on his behalf. He was unsuccessful: *A Life*, p. 253.

[39] J. H. Prynne provides a thorough analysis of the georgic context of 'The Solitary Reaper' but concludes that 'both [pastoral and georgic] modes are present through the effect of their absence or deletion': *Field-Notes*, p. 23.

> a Quaker, an amiable inoffensive man; and a little of a Poet too; who has amused himself upon his own small estate upon the Emont in twining pathways along the banks of the River, making little Cells and bowers with inscriptions of his own writing, all very pretty as not spreading far.[40]

The following year when Beaumont asked Wordsworth to design a Winter Garden, the plans were influenced by Wilkinson's gardening ideas and the Quakers' emphasis on silence.

From 1804 onwards, Beaumont had introduced Wordsworth to key figures within the picturesque movement: Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight were frequent visitors to Coleorton and to Beaumont's London residence at Grosvenor Square.[41] Picturesque scenes included groups of animals and human figures to evoke associations of Arcadian imagery from the Claudian landscape tradition. Through picturesque aesthetics, labour returned to the landscape and by separating out 'the special qualities of wooded valleys, hills and streams, cows and sheep, the characteristics of the Pastoral landscape, and calling them Picturesque', Uvedale Price was responsible for a further stage in the reformulation of the Virgilian pastoral and georgic modes.[42]

Garden designers laboured to emulate landscape art which also often featured monastic ruins or hermitages such as William Westall's engraving of Rievaulx Abbey or Salvator Rosa's 'Landscape with Hermit' (c. 1662).[43] Price in particular advocated dramatic, rugged scenes in the style of Rosa and some gardeners even issued adverts for

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[40] *EY*., p. 626. In the Fenwick note on 'To the Spade of a Friend' Wordsworth describes Wilkinson and states that gardening is one of the most authentic activities a Quaker can engage in: *IF Notes*, pp. 38-9.
[41] Felicity Owen, *Collector of Genius: a Life of Sir George Beaumont* (New Haven and London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1988), and *Memorials of Coleorton*, ed. by William Knight, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1887), vol. 1, xxv.
[42] John Murdoch, 'The Landscape of Labor: Transformations of the Georgic', in *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*, ed. by Kenneth R. Johnston and others (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 176–93 (p. 191). Murdoch discusses the political backdrop to pastoral and georgic development, including the Enclosure Act and the war with France.
[43] On Westall's engraving see Michael Charlesworth, 'The Ruined Abbey: Picturesque and Gothic Values', in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1779*, ed. by Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 62-80.

hermits to inhabit grottos in their grounds.[44] The relationship between landscape painting, gardening and picturesque tourism is complex; yet being inside a garden feels different from looking at landscapes, which ceremoniously took place from an elevated viewing station where popular guidebooks invited the tourist to set up a camera obscura, sketchbook, and Claude Glass.

The Winter Garden at Coleorton is Wordsworth's most comprehensive practical and theoretical engagement with the landscape gardening movement and is acknowledged as a precursor to his most contemporaneously popular prose work, *Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes* (first published with the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire*, 1810).[45] However, the garden itself, which Wordsworth described in 'the longest letter [he] ever wrote', shows him turning away from fashionable forms of picturesque landscaping.[46] He produced an enclosure that was best viewed from the inside and that privileged monastic or hermitic features, taking them more seriously than fashionable Gothic ornaments. Consequently, the garden is a physical example of the type of space Wordsworth tried to evoke poetically in the years that followed.[47]

The Winter Garden is situated to the side of the terraces that stretch away from the front of Coleorton Hall. It is below ground level on the site of an old quarry that had

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[44] Charles Hamilton of Painshill in Surrey hired a hermit for seven years at a cost of 700 guineas. The hermit was required to maintain silence, wear a camlet robe and refrain from cutting his hair and nails: Derek Plint Clifford, *A History of Garden Design* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 147. Gordon Campbell has uncovered several similar advertisements and speculates that at least some of them were printed in jest. Ornamental hermits sometimes took the form of stuffed manikins or the owner of the garden became his own occasional hermit. Hermits and furnished hermitages were sources of amusement during social functions which offered an opportunity to play at pastoral frivolity. Although some ornamental hermits did exist, there is no extant diary of one, Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden*, pp. 55-95.

[45] *A Life*, pp. 254-5. During January 1807 Wordsworth visited the head gardener at Coleorton, Mr Craig, at his work twice a day: *MY* i., p. 128. Dorothy noted, 'My Brother handles the spade with great dexterity': *EY*, p. 163.

[46] *MY* i., pp. 112-20.

[47] For a full account see my 'Prospects of Contemplation: Wordsworth's Winter Garden at Coleorton, 1806-1811', *European Romantic Review*, 24 (2013), 307-15.

been mined in order to rebuild the main house.[48] Wordsworth bounded the garden with a double fence of tall fir trees,

> so as to give it the greatest appearance of depth, shelter, and seclusion possible. This is essential to the *feeling* of the place, with which indeed I ought to have begun: and that is, of a Spot which Winter cannot touch, which should present no image of chillness, decay, or desolation, when the face of nature everywhere else is cold, decayed and desolate [Wordsworth's italics].[49]

The purpose of the tall fence was not privacy since a high wall and the low-level position of the garden meant it was already hidden from the view of anyone at the main house. Instead, the bounded enclosure is an exaggeration of a feature that links all gardens back to Eden.

The primary purpose of 'an enclosed park or garden' (the meaning of the Greek word for 'paradise') is contemplation and spiritual renewal. Wordsworth's main source for the Winter Garden design was an article in Joseph Addison's *Spectator*: 'A Garden was the Habitation of our First Parents before the Fall. It is naturally apt to fill the Mind with Calmness and Tranquillity, and to lay all its turbulent passions at rest. […] It gives us a great Insight into the Contrivance and Wisdom of Providence, and suggests innumerable Subjects for Meditation'.[50] The concept of a Winter Garden is Edenic in its creation of the illusion of immutability or "perpetual spring".[51] The *ver perpetuum*—a medieval theme of which Wordsworth read in Francis Bacon's essay 'Of Gardens'—is a place from which winter, with all its signs of mortality, is banished.[52] Dryden's

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[48] Coal mining was historically the primary industry of the people at Cole Overton. On a history of the village and for a copy of Wordsworth's sketch of the Winter Garden see *Memorials of Coleorton*, vol. 1, ix-x and 211, and Eveleigh A. Eagar, *Cole Orton and the Beaumonts in Art, History and Literature* (Leicester, 1949). I am grateful to current resident of Coleorton Hall, Ms Andrea Rajgor, who provided a tour of the grounds and to Clare Tilbury for valuable observations about the garden.

[49] *MY i*., p. 112.

[50] *The Spectator*, vol. 7: 477 (1712) ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), vol. 4, 188–92 (p. 192).

[51] John M. Prest, *The Garden of Eden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 66-8.

[52] Francis Bacon, 'Of Gardens' in *The Major Works*, ed. by Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 430-5 (p. 431). Wordsworth had recommended Bacon's *Essays* to Catherine Clarkson in 1805. *Wordsworth's Reading I*, p. 8.

translation of Virgil's *Georgics* also included the pastoral trope of the 'perpetual spring', which Thomson and Dyer subsequently imitated.[53]

Margaret's garden in Book I of *The Excursion* is similarly bounded by a fence which the Wanderer pressed the Poet to climb. Once he had seen the garden, the Poet was in a position to comprehend Margaret's plight. He saw 'a plot'

> Of garden-ground run wild, it's [sic] matted weeds
> Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they pass'd
> The gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,
> Or currants hanging from their leafless stems
> In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap
> The broken wall. (I. 485-91)

Margaret's Eden is violated. The passer-by is tempted to transgress the boundary for gooseberries, a fruit that is associated with decay and often found growing amongst ruins. The trail of footprints indicates that, like Eden, the garden has been abandoned. The wall has a 'mortal stillness'; the slow process of deterioration means that the wall seems to be alive whilst appearing fixed like the ruins of Bolton Abbey or the caverns in which the Wanderer mused. But in opposition to Margaret's garden, the Winter Garden's evergreen trees and shrubs—box, holly, fir, yew, and pyracanthus—eradicated all signs of change and decay, making it a place for permanence and stability.[54]

Wordsworth designed features of the Winter Garden to evoke stillness and contemplation: 'This Spot should be as monotonous in the colour of the trees as possible, the enclosure of evergreens, the sky above, the green grass floor'. In another

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[53] Chalker, *English Georgic*, p. 43.

[54] After the death of John Wordsworth, who had been the keenest gardener of the family, the garden at Dove Cottage fell into disarray because tending it during that period of grief was too painful: *EY i.*, p. 597 and 618. But gardening itself is an activity that brings solace, and the Winter Garden was a project intended by Beaumont to help Wordsworth recover from his loss. In accordance with Margaret's sorrow, her garden 'appeared | To lag behind the season, and had lost | Its pride of neatness' (I. 753-55). Thus the Wanderer felt at ease when he 'left [Margaret] busy with her garden tools' (I. 724). John Wordsworth's discussion of gardens in his correspondence with Mary Hutchinson is his means of expressing friendship and affection: 'I cannot express how glad I should be to see thee and thy dear garden with all its improvements'. '[T]hat thy flowers & plants & c may live & prosper will be the constant wish of thine affectionate Friend': *The Letters of John Wordsworth*, pp. 102 and 117 respectively.

section Wordsworth wanted 'the floor not gravelled, but green, which when the Trees overshadow the walk, would become mossy, so that the Whole would be still unvaried, and cloistral, soothing and not stirring the mind or tempting it out of itself'.[55] In the light of Wordsworth's reading of Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism*, the garden is a model of the setting that is necessary to develop the 'seed of the Kingdom' implanted in each person. Quakers are suited to the steadiness of rural life and during their meetings they calmly wait in silence endeavouring to subdue the imagination 'so that [they] can receive and attend to the spiritual language of the Creator'.[56]

The 'cloistral' character of the Winter Garden is significant because in November and December 1806 Wordsworth made two consecutive visits to the ruins of Grace Dieu Priory (just a few miles away from Coleorton), after which his study of monastic retreat accelerated. Quakerism and monasticism might well be construed as opposite ends of the Christian denominational spectrum but the quietude of the Winter Garden reveals their shared characteristics and explains Wordsworth's interest in both.

The most cloistral feature of the Winter Garden, which Thomas Wilkinson had adopted at Emont, was a niche in which a solitary person might sit: 'I had some thoughts that it might be possible to scoop out of the sandy rock a small Cell or Cavern on the stony side of the Quarry'.[57] It was not until 1811 that Wordsworth erected an inscription in this little cell. By this time, his knowledge of inscriptions was coloured by Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments* which established that inscriptions and epitaphs are a legacy of monasticism.[58] Wordsworth composed four inscriptions for the grounds of Coleorton and gave instructions for one of them, 'Oft is the medal', to be placed

> so as to be *visible only to a Person sitting within the Nich*, [sic] which we hollowed out of the Sand-stone in the Winter Garden. I am told that this is,

[55] *MY* i., p. 116-7.
[56] Clarkson, *Quakerism*, vol. 2, 279.
[57] *MY i.*, p. 118.
[58] See Chapter Three.

> in the present form of the Nich, impossible; but I shall be most ready, when I come to Coleorton, to scoop out a place for it, if Lady Beaumont thinks it worthwhile [Wordsworth's italics].[59]

The cell and the careful positioning of this inscription encouraged its reader to adopt the posture of a hermit. Although grottos were standard features of landscape gardens, this reading space was the product of four years of consistent study of monastic life, hagiography and epitaphs; it was not merely an ornament for picturesque effect.

Gardeners such as Lancelot "Capability" Brown had turned away from compartmentalised gardens by hiding partitions in order to create the illusion of unbounded expanse. Wordsworth's Winter Garden went against this trend both practically and ideologically. He modified the thinking behind the ha-ha, which confused the perception of internal and external space, by confining the apprehender inside the niche whilst inviting him to produce his own unconfined prospect of contemplation prompted by the inscription's focus on perceived immutability:

> 'tis a common ordinance of fate
> That things obscure and small outlive the great:
> Hence, when yon Mansion and the flowery trim
> Of this fair Garden, and its alleys dim,
> And all its stately trees, are passed away,
> This little Niche, unconscious of decay,
> Perchance may still survive.—And be it known
> That it was scooped within the living stone, — (3-10)[60]

Wordsworth's phrase 'unconscious of decay' summarises the effect he invoked in the garden. Although the soft 'living stone' erodes and changes, it happens so slowly that the niche will appear immutable. The garden was a perpetual spring or *locus amoenus* that effected consolation, suspended the passage of the seasons, and curtailed signs of decay by appearing evergreen. But 'living stone' is also an image of Jesus; as such, the

[59] *MY i.*, 513-14.
[60] *Shorter Poems*, p. 107.

niche is not just a space that is perfectly adapted for reading, but an enclosure in which a person can develop his implanted seed.[61]

The suitability of rural life to Quakerism, the Quakers' foundational metaphors of implanted seeds and inner cultivation, and their simplicity and quietness bridged the gap for Wordsworth between the pastoral modes he experimented with before the autumn of 1806, and the spiritually inflected quietness that he developed in *The Excursion*.[62] It was Clarkson's volumes and Wilkinson's friendship together with his thinking about the Winter Garden that initiated Wordsworth's study of monasticism in 1806-7. As the following analysis aims to show, this provides a new context in which to read Wordsworth's presentation of the spiritual comprehension of silence by rural figures in *The Excursion*.

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The Excursion opens with a hazy image of a dreaming man lying half asleep at the front of a cave. The Poet-narrator and the Wanderer then meet at noon beneath the shade of a group of elm trees where they shelter from the high sun.[63] They take refreshment from a nearby spring and exchange stories before walking together into a neighbouring rural valley. Wordsworth takes these tropes from the pastoral tradition. In Theocritus's first *Idyll*, the goatherd invites the shepherd to sit 'here beneath the elm' and sing, whilst the sacred springs of the Nymphs run beside them. In Virgil's ninth *Eclogue*, two shepherds

[61] 1 Peter 2: 4-10.
[62] As he composed during the summer of 1806, Wordsworth reported the progress of *The Recluse* to Sir George Beaumont: *MY i.*, pp. 64 and 79. It is most likely that the lines Wordsworth composed that summer were *Home at Grasmere* or parts of Book II of *The Excursion*: 'Material in Book II (and to a lesser extent the first part of Book III) has a distinctive identity within the poem. It seems to be more closely allied with the earlier work on *The Ruined Cottage* and has a much stronger topographical sense than the later books': *Excursion*, p. 10. Appropriately, Wordsworth composed these lines in the Moss Hut at Dove Cottage: 'It is a place of retirement for the eye […] and well suited to my occupations': *MY i.*, p. 64.
[63] All references to the corrected second issue of the poem, as published in 1814 and edited in the Cornell Series, appear in parentheses after quotations.

walk to a neighbouring town whilst discussing social upheavals and reciting fragments of songs.[64] Virgil reconciles agricultural labour with permanence and peace, and considers the validity of rural seclusion by mediating between active and contemplative occupations. Wordsworth similarly brings these issues into contention beginning with the prefatory material of *The Excursion*, where he presents himself as a recluse in retirement with a public task.

Wordsworth's narrator, 'the Poet', describes his first sight of the Wanderer:

> Thither I came, and there—amid the gloom
> Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms—
> Appeared a roofless Hut; four naked walls
> That stared upon each other! I looked round,
> And to my wish and to my hope espied
> Him whom I sought; a Man of reverend age,
> But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.
> There was he seen upon the Cottage bench,
> Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep;
> An iron-pointed staff lay at his side. (I. 28-37)

The Wanderer lies under 'lofty elms' that congregate like a 'brotherhood' or religious company.[65] Later in Book I when these elms return, Wordsworth emphasises their protective capacity: 'Beneath the shelter of these clustering elms' (I. 52); 'Deeper shadows fell | From these tall elms' (I. 783-4). The Wanderer is 'hale', which means

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[64] 'Come then, let's sit beneath yon elm': *A Translation of the Idylls of Theocritus*, trans. by R. C. Trevelan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 3. Paul Alpers notes, 'In the pastorals of Theocritus, Virgil, and their Renaissance imitators, shepherds gather at noon in what is both fictionally and metaphorically a space for exchanging conversation and song.' Alpers quotes Annabel Patterson, "It would have been impossible […] for Wordsworth to write these lines *without* conveying his 'dreaming man' as Tityrus, whose late-eighteenth-century version of *otium* renders everything 'soft and distant'." *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 5 and 263. In 1822, Wordsworth admitted in a letter to Walter Savage Landor: 'My acquaintance with Virgil, Horace, Lucretius, and Catullus is intimate' but he felt he could be no valuable judge of Latin verse: *LY i.*, p. 125. For an account of Wordsworth's classical education at Hawkshead and Cambridge see *W's Reading I*, pp. 162-68. On the books Wordsworth borrowed from Thomas Bowman at Hawkshead see Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead*, pp. 343-7.

[65] In 1804, using money that was a baptism gift for Dora from her godmother, Lady Beaumont, the Wordsworths planned to plant a grove in honour of their new daughter with trees that would be her 'brethren' and 'if sun and wind prosper them they will be a shelter and a shade for her by the time she has lived twenty years, and who knows but they may be the nursery of her tenderest and best thoughts!': *MY i*,. pp. 501-2. In 'Yew-Trees' Wordsworth similarly refers to trees in terms of Christian brotherhood: 'But worthier still of note | Are those Fraternal four of Borrowdale' (14-5): *P2V*, p. 606.

(apart from healthful) a roofed shelter or tent with open sides.[66] His 'hale' body metaphorically completes the ruined structure: he offers the friendship epitomised by the brotherhood of protective elms and imaginatively supplies the missing roof with his narrative about its deceased inhabitants, Margaret and Robert.

The anthropomorphised cottage assumes the faculty of sight, which permeates the Poet's activity in this passage evident in vocabulary such as: 'appeared', 'stared', 'looked', 'espied', 'sought', 'seen'. This recalls the Poet's account of the previous day when he had 'marked' the Wanderer as he stood (like the Discharged Soldier) 'Stationed, as if to rest himself' in the middle of the 'public way' (I. 38-40). As well as describing the Poet's observation, Wordsworth's vocabulary indicates that the Wanderer is 'marked' or sealed as one of God's elect. The Poet had approached with caution and almost did not recognise his old friend, who was 'Detained for contemplation or repose' (I. 43). Wordsworth's use of the disjunction, the passive voice ('There was he seen'), and the Wanderer's posture on the bench ('as if asleep') indicate that bodily inactivity is compatible with active meditative aptitude. Action and contemplation are not mutually exclusive and the Poet does not know which occupies the Wanderer.

The Poet identifies silent poets in rural communities who, like the Wanderer, possess poetic vision without being skilled in, or inclined towards, making that vision tangible through the technical craft of verse:

> Oh! many are the Poets that are sown
> By Nature; Men endowed with highest gifts,
> The vision and the faculty divine,
> Yet wanting the accomplishment of Verse. (I. 81-4)

> All but a scattered few, live out their time,
> Husbanding that which they possess within,

[66] 'hale, n.3' (sense 3. a.), *OED Online* [accessed 5 November 2012].

> And go to the grave, unthought of. Strongest minds
> Are often those of whom the noisy world
> Hears least; else surely this Man had not left
> His graces unrevealed and unproclaimed. (I. 93-8)

Wordsworth's language is agricultural (scattered, sown, and husbanded) but instead of flourishing in the ground and metaphorically emerging in the form of books, the seed of silent poets remains embedded within their souls until the grave. In the second book of *The Excursion* some cottage children unearth a book that had belonged to the old pensioner, and this becomes a memorial to him (II. 474-93). Burial of books is, in this case, an act of preservation, and yet the sowing of poetic seed—as in Wordsworth's own 'Fair seed-time' (I. 306)[67]—is an equally worthy investment. The ecclesiastical diction indicating grace, revelation, and proclamation designates these silent poets as prophets yielding a skill that cannot be taught. In the context of Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism*, the accomplishment of verse—the process of bringing it to completion—happens within the 'strongest minds' and does not necessarily involve writing. Minds endowed with 'the vision and the faculty divine' are able to cultivate inner poetic seed in the peaceful rural communities. Wordsworth thus distinguishes the imaginative process from writing; he needs the Poet-narrator because it is necessary to *record* the Wanderer's wisdom. The Wanderer (like Michael) '[feels] his faith' in the mountains (I. 247) but does not write it down and although he treasured his copy of Milton, 'He had small need of books' (I. 181).

In Books V-VII of *The Excursion*, the Pastor presents spoken rather than written epitaphs; he makes sure that his parishioners do not 'go to the grave unthought of'. In rural communities, the memorialisation of the 'little, nameless, unremembered acts | Of kindness and of love' is oral.[68] This rural practice aligns with that of the Quakers who

[67] ibid, p. 114.
[68] 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', lines 35-6.

have no consecrated ground, sepulchres, or epitaphs. Marked graves are unnecessary because Quakers are not generally buried beside their relatives: 'graves are usually dug in rows, and the bodies deposited in them, not as their relations lie, but as they happen to be opened in succession, without any attention to family connections.'[69] They believe that 'If you wish to honour a good man who has departed this life, let all his good actions live in your memory' and share accounts of their lives, deaths, and memorable sayings within the community. It seems contradictory that during Quaker meetings and funerals the presiding element is silence, while subsequent shared discussion of the lives of the deceased is encouraged. However, Quakers believe that spoken epitaphs have a more forceful moral dimension than written ones because they are living and immediate.[70]

The precedence Wordsworth gives to spoken language is evident in the poem's dramatic form, which is itself a commentary on the distinct roles that combine, in Wordsworth's view, to make a poet: transcendent vision, scribal narration, and didacticism.[71] Counter-intuitively, the immediacy of listening to spoken epitaphs makes them more like the Wanderer's silent communion with nature than the private reading of monuments in a graveyard. Wordsworth gives priority to spoken epitaphs because they help to cultivate careful, receptive listeners.

The 'foundations' (I. 148) of the Wanderer's mind were laid in childhood. His father was a shepherd-farmer and his stepfather was a schoolteacher; metaphorically

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[69] Clarkson, *Quakerism*, vol. 2, 35-9. Wordsworth mentions a disused Quaker burial ground in the Duddon Valley in his 1820 sonnet series: *Sonnet Series*, pp. 35 and 108. *The River Duddon* sonnet 28, 'No record tells of lance opposed to lance' appears on p. 72.

[70] Clarkson, *Quakerism*, vol. 2, 37.

[71] Dialogic or dramatic forms are a particular characteristic of the pastoral mode. A prominent example of such in Wordsworth is *The Brothers*, which has pastoral and elegiac themes and a Priest reciting epitaphs. The Preface to *The Excursion* explains: 'the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted': *Excursion*, p. 39. Sally Bushell has argued from contemporary evidence that *The Excursion* was meant to be read, and was best received, where it was read aloud, multiple times, and in groups: *Re-reading 'The Excursion': Narrative, Response and the Wordsworthian Dramatic Voice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 126.

then, his first father was nature and his substitute father was book-learning. The Wanderer was educated most effectually during his daily journey home from school when he was 'In solitude' (I. 143), 'all alone' (I. 144), 'with no one near | To whom he might confess the things he saw' (I. 146-7):

> In such communication, not from terror free,
> While yet a Child, and long before his time,
> He had perceived the presence and the power
> Of greatness; and deep feelings had impress'd
> Great objects on his mind, with portraiture
> And colour so distinct, that on his mind
> They lay like substances, and almost seemed
> To haunt the bodily sense. (I. 149-56)

The Wanderer communes with a 'perceived presence' in an act of 'pure discourse' (I. 77), which is silent and unmediated. The stimulus is a feeling or power that affects him physically through impressions in the mind, not via external signs. The distinctness of the colours haunts the Wanderer after the images have disappeared; this haunting is reflected in Wordsworth's repetition of 'on his mind'.

The Wanderer 'attained | An active power to fasten images | Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines | Intensely brooded' (I. 162-65):

> many an hour in caves forlorn,
> And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags
> He sate, and even in their fix'd lineaments,
> Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
> Or by creative feeling overborne,
> Or by predominance of thought oppress'd,
> Even in their fix'd and steady lineaments
> He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
> Expression ever varying! (I. 172-79)

He sits alone in hollow crags and perceives the movement of an intelligent designer behind the fixed lines of the rocks. The disjunctive syntax—fixed lines, *or* power of sight, *or* feeling, *or* thought—indicates the semantic indeterminacy of these non-linguistic markings but 'expression' and 'lineaments' recall the 'portraiture' (I. 153) that was impressed on the Wanderer's mind during childhood, indicating

anthropomorphic communication. The rocks have faces and features, and their expressions signify in a way that is both fixed and 'ever varying'. The winter storm inscribes its history 'as with the silence of the thought' (I. 298) on the surface of the rock like wrinkles on the thoughtful old pedlar's face. The markings in the rock become expressive through a combination of nature's erosive power and the animating observation and varying thought of the Wanderer.

Spending long periods of time alone in this way, the Wanderer basked under the joyful stimulation of his passions:

> In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love! (I. 232-9)

Yet the Wanderer was able to glimpse God's presence because, like the Quaker meeting, he provided the conditions in which linguistically uncorrupted communion could take place. Standard forms of worship or prayer, 'imperfect offices', are impure because they interrupt the channel of silence.

The Excursion debates the respective values of solitude and community which, by 1810, Wordsworth seriously began to negotiate in terms of religious reclusion. The Wanderer functions to outline for the Poet and the Solitary the social and religious value of quietude *and* to highlight the relative dangers of different types of rural isolation. In this way, Wordsworth revises Pope's definition of pastoral which made clear that the mode is an illusion representing only the tranquil and innocent side of a shepherd's life.[72] The Wanderer and the Solitary mediate between a life of meditation

[72] Alexander Pope, 'A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry', in *Selected Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. by Paul Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 152–56. Pope had significantly

which can lead back into service of the community, and withdrawal from society altogether which can be permanently detrimental. The Wanderer became a pedlar because:

> he was o'erpower'd
> By Nature, by the turbulence subdued
> Of his own mind; by mystery and hope,
> And the first virgin passion of a soul
> Communing with the glorious Universe.
> Full often wished he that the winds might rage
> When they were silent; far more fondly now
> Than in his earlier season did he love
> Tempestuous nights—the conflict and the sounds
> That live in darkness:—from his intellect
> And from the stillness of abstracted thought
> He asked repose (I. 304-15)

As I explained in Chapter Three, Wordsworth singled out St Basil because the coenobium (like the Quaker meeting) created a space in which monks could keep silence whilst remaining in community. Prolonged isolation overpowers the Wanderer and he is forced to embrace a type of solitude that incorporates openness and receptivity to others (as in the coenobium): 'He could *afford* to suffer | With those whom he saw suffer' (I. 399-400, Wordsworth's italics). The Wanderer appreciates degrees of stillness created through variations of nature because his intellect has been strengthened by bursts of solitude.

The Solitary signifies the danger of absolute pastoral isolation. As the 'Tenant of the Solitude' (II. 422), his valley:

> could not be more quiet: peace is here
> Or no where; days unruffled by the gale
> Of public news or private; years that pass
> Forgetfully (II. 384-7)

The valley is an idyll, a perpetual spring, or a utopian 'no where'. Daily life is uninterrupted by public news or changes of weather such that the years seem not to

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influenced Wordsworth's juvenilia, particularly *Lines Written as a School Exercise* (1785): *W's Reading I*, pp. 112-13.

mark the seasons. But without noise and stimulation, the Solitary becomes numb to the value of repose. He withdrew from society following the deaths of his wife and children, and sunk into despondency after the failure of the French Revolution.[73] It is important therefore that the Wanderer mistakes the Solitary for dead before he eventually meets him in Book II: the mistake is an extension of the fact that the Solitary is cut off from human contact. When the Wanderer realises that the Solitary is in fact alive, Wordsworth prefigures the rebirth that the Solitary gains from the epiphany in the clouds, and the religious renewal the Wanderer hopes to produce at the end of the poem.

The Wanderer's advice is to 'Quit your Couch— | Cleave not so fondly to your moody Cell' (IV. 481-2) and 'Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways |That run not parallel to Nature's course' (IV. 489-90). In fact, the Solitary was immediately able to demonstrate openness:

> "This is my domain, my cell,
> My hermitage, my cabin, what you will.—
> I love it better than a snail his house.
> But now Ye shall be feasted with our best." (II. 676-9)

> In genial mood
> While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate
> Fronting the window of that little Cell[.] (II. 715-7)

> "You have regaled us as a Hermit ought;
> Now let us forth into the sun!" (II. 936-7)

Similarly, Margaret had received passing travellers into her home—'no one came | But he was welcome; no one went away | But that it seemed she loved him' (I. 536-8), and later it is the Pastor's turn to provide a meal for the group. Hospitality, reception, and community are important themes of *The Excursion* because they constitute a *practical*

[73] For a detailed discussion of the Solitary's vision in accordance with various theoretical readings of the religious nature of Wordsworth's poetry, see Jonathan Roberts, *Blake. Wordsworth. Religion.* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 7-23 and 67-94.

analogue of the ability to receive nonphysical presences or silence, which is at the heart of the Wanderer's lesson. This is why the Poet's opening description of the Wanderer as 'hale' (I. 34) is so significant: the Wanderer is homeless and itinerant but is figured as a roof or shelter under which he receives those he meets. The interaction between the Wanderer and nature, or the Wanderer and God, functions in a corresponding way: when he welcomes the spiritual presence into his body (when he '[feels] his faith') he receives God under his roof. The shelter is not fixed like the elm trees but adapts to suit the needs of the encounter, recalling the New Testament narrative in which the paralysed man is cured when Jesus enters his house through an opening in the roof. The man says, 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof', a line that is repeated during the celebration of the Lord's Supper when communicants receive the presence of Jesus.[74]

The shared concerns of pastoral and monastic retreat are evident in Book III where Wordsworth gives the passage from the *Tuft of Primroses*, which is based on St Basil's letters, to the Solitary: 'What motive drew […] The Hermit to his cell […] where on few external things his heart | Was set' (III. 374-97):

> What other yearning was the master tie
> Of the monastic Brotherhood; upon Rock
> Aerial, or in green secluded Vale,
> One after one, collected from afar,
> An undissolving Fellowship? —What but this,
> The universal instinct of repose,
> The longing for confirmed tranquillity,
> Inward and outward; humble, yet sublime:— (III. 399-406)

The 'monastic Brotherhood' mirrors the brotherhood of elms, of which the Wanderer is one. The men arrived 'one after one' and were able to maintain both singularity and

[74] Matthew 8:8.

'undissolving Fellowship'.[75] From his reading of Thomas Whitaker's *History of the Parish of Whalley,* Wordsworth was well aware of the importance of monastic hospitality. The spiritual and economic prosperity of the local region depended on the monastery, and one of Whitaker's aims was to make a clear link between the loss of the monastic way of life and the diminution of rural communities.[76] After establishing coenobitism, St Basil then proceeded to dedicate his life to the service of the poor. [77]

Communication involves mutual participation, giving and receiving. Although Wordsworth values stillness and silence, isolation is unhelpful or even dangerous because it provides no opportunity for practicing skills of reception, including those required for fruitfully receptive reading. Communication involving silence requires meaning to be brought to completion by the reader. One of Wordsworth's methods of creating receptive readers is evident in Book IV where the Wanderer incorporates an interlude of stillness:

> "List! —I heard,
> From yon huge breast of rock, a solemn bleat;
> Sent forth as if it were the Mountain's voice,
> As if the visible Mountain made the cry.
> Again!"—The effect upon the soul was such
> As he expressed; for, from the mountain's heart
> The solemn bleat appeared to come; there was
> No other—and the region all around
> Stood silent, empty of all shape of life.
> —It was a Lamb—left somewhere to itself,
> The plaintive Spirit of the Solitude! —
> He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
> Through consciousness that silence in such place
> Was best,—the most affecting eloquence.
> But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,
> And, in soft tone of speech, he thus resumed. (IV. 404-19)

[75] The Solitary's religious crisis indicates that, for Wordsworth, hermitic life is a sufficient but not a necessary prerequisite of religious faith. The religious elements of hermitic life are not necessary consequents of solitude and quietude.
[76] Whitaker, *History of Whalley*, p. 342. Wordsworth read this volume along with other accounts of the monastic history of the north of England in October 1807. See Chapter Three for details of Wordsworth's monastic reading.
[77] Cave, *Apostolici*, pp. 470-508.

The silence that presides when the Wanderer breaks off his narrative creates the most 'affecting eloquence'. The first nine lines of this quotation fold back on themselves through repetition of 'solemn bleat' and 'as if […] the mountain'. The 'bleat' comes from behind a 'breast' of rock within the 'heart' of the mountain and is then silenced as if the beat of a pulse had stopped: 'all shape of life' disappears. The bleat within the mountain's heart implicitly echoes in the beat felt within the breasts of the tentative listeners. It is unclear whether or not the isolated lamb's life is in danger, and the lamb is, perhaps, a figure for the Solitary whose recovery is similarly uncertain. The Solitary has become his own saviour (i.e. his own Lamb) by disavowing God.

The Wanderer's narrative framing parallels a similar device evident in Book I. When the Poet first approached the Wanderer, he held back for a minute's space and reciprocally the Wanderer left space for the Poet to process Margaret's story:

> He had rehearsed
> Her homely Tale with such familiar power,
> With such an active countenance, an eye
> So busy, that the things of which he spake
> Seemed present. (I. 644-48)

The Poet walks away from his friend and 'turning from the breezy shade, | Went forth into the open air, and stood | To drink the comfort of the warmer sun' (I. 650-2). The Wanderer claims this is 'A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed | In bodily form' (I. 669-70). That is to say, the tale is communicated and grasped not through the form of words, but haptically and internally. Therefore, the pause is a narratological necessity; it facilitates the listeners' comprehension by allowing the narrative to sink into the consciousness (or, as in the example above, the heartbeat) of the listener.[78] The

[78] For a discussion of the eighteenth-century didactic and elegiac influences on *The Excursion* see Judson Stanley Lyon, "*The Excursion": a study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 31-7. Such influences include Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-30), Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-5), and Savage's *The Wanderer* (1729). On the didactic mode in the Romantic period see David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 95-118.

following analysis of Wordsworth's use of the word 'silence' in *The Excursion* reveals several other ways in which the reader, along with the Solitary, is effected by the Wanderer's persuasive techniques.

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In *The Excursion*, the word 'silence' occurs when Wordsworth wants to denote the power of communication or expression, stillness or an acute act of listening, or a sense of faith. In Book II, silence indicates complicity and companionship between the Poet and the Wanderer as they reflect on the Solitary's history and the atmosphere of the secluded valley:

> On these and other kindred thoughts intent,
> In silence by my Comrade's side I lay,
> He also silent: when from out the heart
> Of that profound Abyss a solemn Voice,
> Or several Voices in one solemn sound,
> Was heard—ascending: mournful, deep, and slow
> The cadence, as of Psalms—a funeral dirge! (II. 390-6)

Silence is recognised most forcefully through the sounds that precede or follow it. During the funeral of the old pensioner, the adjacent sound is harmonious psalmody. In the Ode ('There was a time') Wordsworth had referred to God as the 'eternal Silence' and described human life as 'noisy years' (157-8).[79] Psalmody regulates and harnesses mortal language and where it shares characteristics with silence, it demarcates the border between this world and the next. The abyss of silence gains location, temporality, and power through this chanting. Wordsworth's celebration of funerary hymnody and 'the chaunted rite' is an extension of his habit of repeating verses aloud and of perambulatory recitation.[80] The repetition involved in meditation transforms words into sounds and gives the listener control over their semantic value. Psalmody

[79] *P2V*, p. 276.
[80] Chapter Two and Wordsworth's 'Inscription for a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton', in *Shorter Poems*, p. 108, line 6.

thus surmounts what Wordsworth perceived to be the deficiencies of language. In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth locates the boundary between silence and psalmody in the heart. As the Poet and the Wanderer lie in silence, recalling the occasion on which William and Dorothy had reclined in neighbouring trenches in John's Grove, the singing seems to originate in their own physical consciousness (heartbeats, breathing etc.) of that quietness: 'from out the heart | Of that profound Abyss'.[81] Wordsworth's experience of an abyss of idealism, which he had captured in the Ode, provided a glimpse of immortality but he subsequently required a notion of touch to make sense of that disembodied experience. Similarly, without the adjacent psalmody, the abyss of silence would have no situation, extension, or meaning.

At this point in Book II, the Wanderer and the poet believe they are witnessing the Solitary's funeral: 'The Wanderer cried, abruptly breaking silence | "He is departed, and finds peace at last!"' (II. 403-4). The Wanderer's speech in fact breaks into the psalmody, not the silence, confirming the ontological similarity of the two. 'Breaking' silence is a common motif for Wordsworth. It occurs twice more in *The Excursion*: 'He [the Solitary] was it who first broke | The pensive silence' (VI. 1089-90) and 'Thus silence broke' (VII. 318). It also appears in 'The Solitary Reaper' where Wordsworth describes the song of the highland girl as sweeter than that of the chaunting nightingale or the cuckoo who might be heard 'Breaking the silence of the seas | Among the farthest Hebrides' (15-16). The action of 'breaking' suggests the solidity, wholeness, and heaviness of melancholy silence. The reaper's song completely fills or floods the landscape like a sea of sound; it is a vast pervasive body, unbroken, and it is weighed down by her 'plaintive numbers' (19). The 'pensive' silence in Book VI is similarly dense. In phonetics, 'breaking' is also a name for a diphthong, which is a union of two

[81] *DWJ*, 29 April 1802, p. 92.

consonants or vowels pronounced in one syllable.[82] This break or fracture is the point at which two disparate phonetic elements consummate: in Wordsworth's poetry, the break is the point at which song and silence slide into one another. Thus, breaking or slipping between melancholy psalmody and silence does not interrupt the solemnity of either; rather it deepens and enriches that mournfulness at the point of elision.

Silence continues to be a mark of respect for the deceased: 'the Corse is lifted | In silence, with a hush of decency' (II. 583-4). The words that collocate most commonly with 'silence' in *The Excursion* are prepositions. Out of the sixteen occurrences of 'silence', nine are placed with the prepositions 'in', 'of', 'on', or 'by'.[83] Silence is enhanced and given meaning by that which it sits beside: 'in the silence of his face I read | His overflowing spirit' (II. 43-4), 'In silence by my comrade's side' (II. 391), 'the hand | Of silence' (II. 738-9), 'greeted, in the silence' (III. 6), 'silence in such place' (IV. 416), 'in silence hushed' (which appears twice: IV. 1129 and IX. 610), 'silence waited on these closing words' (VII. 311). This may not be surprising since most nouns commonly appear with prepositions. However, 'silence' is different in that it has no immediate physical extension (we cannot be 'in' or 'by' silence in the way we are in a room or by a desk). Wordsworth's prepositions point to the signs, actions, and sounds in which silence is embedded and through which silence gains signification and substance, but they do not actually *locate* it. When the Poet reads silence *in* the Wanderer's face, he refers to the pedlar's meditative disposition, not an actual feature. This is an act of interpretation, not observation. In any case, how does one 'read' such things?

Silence requires a frame and the Solitary creates such when he listens to the landscape in his secluded valley:

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[82] 'diphthong, n.' (sense a.), *OED Online* [accessed 14 August 2013]. 'Diphthong' was in use in grammatical texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
[83] Cooper, *Concordance*, p. 867.

> nor have Nature's laws
> Left them ungifted with a power to yield
> Music of a finer frame; a harmony,
> So do I call it, though it be the hand
> Of silence, though there be no voice; ―the clouds,
> The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,
> Motions of moonlight, all come thither―touch,
> And have an answer―thither come, and shape
> A language not unwelcome to sick hearts
> And idle spirits[.] (II. 735-44)

Silence is a 'hand' with agency and force. Its therapeutic power emanates from nature and actively surrounds and 'shapes' the listener. The 'finer frame' is a delicate musical or prosodic score that provides location for silence as Wordsworth's prepositions do. The clouds, mist, shadows, and light are the architecture of silence; but all of this is the product of the Solitary's imagination: 'So do I call it'. The act of perceiving silence is therefore a locative, creative, and interpretative one; and the product is something resembling a language. The Solitary addresses the atmospheric structure he has helped compose: 'come thither […] thither come'. He physicalizes conventionally intangible substances such that the mist, shadows, and light are able to 'touch' him. By actively engaging with the landscape, its silence becomes responsive ('have an answer') and it *lives* in relation to his mind. But Wordsworth states that this 'language' is accessible and 'not unwelcome' to others. Therefore, silence gains location through its interpretation.

Wordsworth's tentative construction, 'not unwelcome', is indicative of his recurring struggle towards assertion. In the final line of 'Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm', he similarly uses a weakened, indirect phrase to point out the fortitude and moral strength he wants to express: 'Not without hope we suffer and we mourn' (60).[84] This 'not without' conveys the difficulty of immediately recognising the hope of immortality at a time of grief. The phrase is appropriately in

[84] *P2V*, p. 268.

sympathy with the effort to understand the promise of eternal life. The storm is destructive. The silence of the sea has been catastrophically ruined by John's death, not readjusted or modified as in 'The Solitary Reaper'. Wordsworth employs this collocation five times in *The Excursion*: 'not without distinction' (I. 100), 'Not without aspirations' (V. 298), 'Not without such assistance' (V. 1000), 'not without distress' (IX. 171), and 'not without awe' (IX. 460). This is part of his poetics of silence. Wordsworth uses the 'not without' to mediate the tentative promise or presence of intangible sentiments he wants to locate and fix. By evoking, at one remove, that which is in fact present, these phrases function in the same way as his silences. They also demonstrate Wordsworth's acknowledgement of the incompleteness of linguistic communication that leaves no space for silence. This helps make sense of a passage I quoted above:

> He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
> Through consciousness that silence in such place
> Was best—the most affecting eloquence. (IV. 415-7)

The 'as if' is a degree away from decision. It suggests that the Wanderer was in fact willing to proceed; hence the pause is actually integral to the proceeding. In this sense, the pause is not an absence or omission, just as Wordsworth's tentative constructions are not negations: the pause is a type of communication on which the Wanderer specifically draws in order to bring the Solitary back into the presence of God.

In Book III, Wordsworth again (in the voice of the Poet) describes the juxtaposition of silence and sound:

> A humming Bee—a little tinkling Rill—
> A pair of Falcons, wheeling on the wing,
> In clamorous agitation, round the crest
> Of a tall rock, their airy Citadel—
> By each and all of these the pensive ear
> Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,
> When through the Cottage-threshold we had passed,
> And, deep within that lonesome Valley, stood

Once more[.] (III. 1-9)

The voices of conversation have stopped but the Poet notes the enrichment of the silence that takes place through the sounds of insects, streams, and birds. Wordsworth indicates the type of 'pensive' listening that provides space for the imaginative recognition of this conjunction. The 'clamorous agitation' implies that silence articulates a variety of moods that constitute parts of the landscape's natural vocabulary. Given Wordsworth's belief that repetition of words is not necessarily tautology, repetition of silence may also accommodate a variety of meanings.[85] In the Solitary's valley, both silence and the sounds of nature speak of God.

The Wanderer explains the point at which divine layers of meaning develop from silence:

> I have seen
> A curious Child, who dwelt upon a tract
> Of inland ground, applying to his ear
> The convolutions of a smooth-lipped Shell;
> To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
> Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
> Brightened with joy; for murmurings from within
> Were heard,—sonorous cadences! whereby,
> To his belief, the Monitor expressed
> Mysterious union with its native Sea.
> Even such a Shell the Universe itself
> Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
> I doubt not, when to You it doth impart
> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
> And central peace, subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
> Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
> Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
> Devout above the meaning of your will. (IV. 1125-44)

As the child hears intimations of divinity from the Shell, the Solitary will likewise hear God's presence if he listens to the Universe. However, in both cases, the Wanderer explains that the object of the ear's attention is in fact internal. Listening to the silence

[85] See my discussion of Wordsworth's note to 'The Thorn' in Chapter Two.

of the soul—or the implanted seed—reveals meaning beyond intention, devotion above expectation, peace in agitation, the announcement of invisible things, and the omnipresence of that which seems to come and go. The Wanderer implicitly states that sonorous cadences emanating from the heart of the child match the harmonious 'finer frame' that the Solitary heard in nature and the Poet appreciated outside the cottage. The ability to recognise this composition equates to faith in God. The child listens in silence but soon hears joyful murmurings: this passage is therefore about the breaking of silence. The interstice at which the silence of his heart becomes a multitude of 'sonorous cadences', is the moment at which the child sees God. The shell is united with its 'native sea' and knowledge of God floods into the child's consciousness, just as the cuckoo and the solitary reaper break the silence of the Hebridean seas and fill the Highland Vale with a profound song. However, only the practised 'ear of Faith' will be successful in drawing on experience of the world in order to extract religious experience from within. This brings us back to Quakerism. Listening with the 'ear of Faith' is an analogue for the Quaker practice of cultivating the seed that was implanted in the soul by God. Community engagement is necessary to hone the inner auditory faculties.

In describing and recognising God through silence and broken silence, Wordsworth does not make a statement about God but about the experience of being unable to put God directly into words.[86] This practice is analogous to an element of apophatic theology or negative theology, which attempts to describe God by saying what He is not. Apophasis is Greek for 'negation' or 'denial' and is the opposite of 'Kataphasis' or 'affirmation'. Apophasis 'clearly has the same broad logical character

[86] J. G. Finlayson makes this point in respect of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, in 'On Not Being Silent in the Darkness: Adorno's Singular Apophaticism', *Harvard Theological Review*, 105 (2012), 1–32. See also Ilse Nina Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate, eds., *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000) and Oliver Davies and Denys Turners, eds., *Silence and the Word*, pp. 201-22.

as the English "negation", for Lucian tells us that two apophaseis make a kataphasis—two negatives make a positive.'[87] It therefore has a similar descriptive function to the tentative 'not withouts' and 'not unwillings' of Wordsworth's poetry, which point beyond their apparent negativity. This type of construction exists on the border between sound and silence. The Wanderer cannot *make* the Solitary see God; the Solitary must find God's presence for himself through recognition of the breaks between sound and silence. The Wanderer helps him towards this by creating similar fissures through narrative and language.

In the monastic tradition silence is a metaphor for detachment from the world. Pastoral poetry similarly creates quiet tranquil places removed from reality. In *The Excursion*, the Wanderer's task is to bring the Solitary to the realisation that he has failed to see God's existence in the isolated valley. The Solitary has overlooked the divinity of silence, which Wordsworth had come to appreciate in his recent study of monasticism. The Wanderer's primary persuasive technique is to encourage the Solitary to comprehend the contexts and emanations of silence, through which he may see God. In order to so this, Wordsworth develops a poetics of silence that draws attention to the junctions between sound and silence where God resides.

As it was first conceived by Wordsworth and Coleridge, *The Recluse* was intended to mark the creation of a new literary genre, the 'philosophical poem'. Coleridge was confident that Wordsworth would deliver 'the first & finest philosophical Poem, if only it be (as it undoubtedly will be) a Faithful Transcript of his own most august & innocent Life, of his own habitual Feelings & Modes of seeing and

[87] J. P. Williams, *Denying Divinity: Apophasis in the Patristic Christian and Soto Zen Buddhist Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3. Apophasis has its roots in the early Christian period and in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers; it reached its first high point in third-century Neoplatonic philosophy and theology. Although negative theology was a theme of St Basil's writings I do not have evidence that Wordsworth was directly responding to the apophatic tradition.

hearing.'[88] Generic innovation rooted in Wordsworth's unique sensory experience of the world was the aim. Despite Coleridge's later disappointment in the project, I suggest that *The Excursion* is a success in generic innovation, in two ways.[89] First, Wordsworth modifies the pastoral/georgic mode by pointing out of reclusion towards community; this is modelled on his understanding of coenobitism and the monastic interdependence of solitude and hospitality. He shows, through the influence of Quakerism, that rural communities or pastoral idylls are only appropriate places for solitude and silence if this is accompanied by a 'Spiritual Monition' that has been developed through meditative effort and engagement with others. Secondly, Wordsworth develops the function of pastoral quietness. He uses the interchange of sound and silence, and tentative linguistic constructions, to point the reader, alongside the Solitary, towards a serious spiritualised engagement with pastoral landscapes. *The Excursion* is therefore a movement towards the generic renewal that Coleridge expected to see in *The Recluse*.

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Wordsworth composed the 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' in January 1815 when various public and private reviews of *The Excursion* were emerging. The 'Essay' is Wordsworth's response to the reception of that poem and a guide for readers about to encounter his collected volumes of shorter poems and *The White Doe of Rylstone*, published later that year.[90] But it also helps to illuminate the importance of the type of perception that is characteristic of a hermit.

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[88] *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 2, 1034.
[89] For Coleridge's disappointed response to *The Excursion* see *Biographia Literaria*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. in 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 118; and *Table Talk*, vol. 1, 307-8.
[90] For Wordsworth's summary of the mixed reception of *The Excursion* see the letter to Catherine Clarkson of 31 December 1814: *MY ii*., pp. 181-3. The two volumes of Wordsworth's *Poems*, and *The*

The 'Supplementary Essay' assumes, as do the *Essays upon Epitaphs*, that men have an innate belief in the immortality of the soul:

> Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be inclined to settle upon those of eternity; ―the elevation of his nature, which this habit produces on earth, being to him a presumptive evidence of a future state of existence; and giving him a title to partake of its holiness. The religious man values what he sees chiefly as an "imperfect shadowing forth" of what he is incapable of seeing (125-31).[91]

This "shadowing forth" exists in the loci of Wordsworth's poetics of silence; that is, in tentative linguistic constructions, narrative pauses, and the breaking of silence. In the 'Essay', as in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth teaches the reader more about the religious nature of poetry and language than he does about religion. If it exists at all, the doctrinal content of the poem is of diminished importance.

> The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burthen upon words and symbols. The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process whereby much is represented in little, and the Infinite Being *accommodates* himself to a finite capacity. In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry […], between religion―whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry―ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation (131-43) [my italics].

Wordsworth's repeated recourse to silence and unspoken presences is therefore not paradoxically opposed to his dependence on written words. Language cannot fully contain the essence of poetry or religion, but the *mind* needs the support of formal and generic conventions.[92] The 'commerce' between creator and creation is not an exchange

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White Doe of Rylstone were in the press at the same time: *Poems* appeared 27 April 1815 and *The White Doe* followed on 2 June: Reed, *Chronology of the Middle Years*, pp. 599 and 606.

[91] 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface', in *Prose*, vol. 3, 53–107. Editorial line numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

[92] Henry Weinfield argues that blank verse developed as the most suitable poetic form available for the discussion of religious questions because, ontologically, it partakes of the ephemerality, uncertainty, and inconsistency that Romantic poets grappled with. The impulse for freethinking is in sympathy with blank verse because both sit between the poetic and the prosaic registers of experience: *The Blank-Verse Tradition from Milton to Stevens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Nancy Easterlin has produced an interdisciplinary study of how poetic form is able to contain the psychological and emotional experience of religion: *Wordsworth and the Question of 'Romantic Religion'*.

of words; rather it resembles what the Wanderer calls 'conscience', which is 'God's most intimate Presence in the soul, | And his most perfect Image in the world' (IV. 227-28). Wordsworth's and the Wanderer's religious sensibilities are not dependent upon or extracted from texts, nor do they rely on the Bible (for example) to make sense of some emotional or sensory experience.[93] For Wordsworth, the sensation comes first and the Wanderer gives precedence to feelings over words: 'in the mountains did he feel his faith' (I. 247). Consequently, Wordsworth does not use words dogmatically; he uses them to *indicate* that infinite presence to others.

Wordsworth further explains the kinship between religion and poetry in a letter to Walter Savage Landor of 21 January 1824:

> All religions owe their origin or acceptation to the wish of the human heart to supply in another state of existence the deficiencies of this, and to carry still nearer to perfection whatever we admire in our present condition; so that there must be many modes of expression, arising out of this coincidence, or rather identity of feeling, common to all Mythologies […]. I have little relish for any other [books than those treating of religion]— even in poetry it is the imaginative only, viz., that which is conversant [with], or turns upon infinity, that powerfully affects me,—perhaps I ought to explain: I mean to say that, unless in those passages where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspirations are raised, I read with something too much like indifference—but all great poets are in this view powerful Religionists.[94]

The complex relations between language, poetic suggestion, doctrinal concept, and the Christian community are, according to Mark Reed, 'a necessary foundation of any study of religion in Wordsworth's thought and art'.[95] Poets are professionally occupied with religion because the imagination deals with infinite powers of 'suggestion'. Religion lifts man out of the deficiencies of this world and books treating of religion do the same

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[93] Deeanne Westbrook assumes that the substance of the three major monotheistic religions is textually rooted and textually dependent. The 'unknown' or 'unspeakable' has been created and communicated across generations through linguistic and narrative constructions, which help man make sense of life and shape conceptions of "reality": *Speaking of Gods in Figure and Narrative* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[94] *LY i.*, pp. 244-5.

[95] Mark L. Reed, 'Review of Richard E. Brantley, *Wordsworth's Natural Methodism*', *Modern Philology*, 75:1 (1977): 97-101 (p. 101).

because they converse with the imaginative realm. Hence Wordsworth finds non-religious books, where religion is defined as a broad mythological imaginative frame of mind, uninteresting.

'Remember, also', Wordsworth writes in the 'Essay', 'that the medium through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected, is language; a thing subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations' (791-3). Therefore, it is vital that 'every author, so far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed' (692-4) [Wordsworth's italics]. The reader, therefore, is part of the poet's creation. Given the affinities between poetry and religion, the real commerce between the poet and his creation must manifest as a response or state in the reader's mind, not just as words on the page.

In January 1815, as he began to compose the 'Essay', Wordsworth responded to a letter from Catherine Clarkson which reported the objections made against *The Excursion* by her Unitarian friend, Patty Smith. Wordsworth believed that the complaints must be a result of Smith's imaginative deficiency:

> Mere error of opinion, mere apprehension of ill consequences from supposed mistaken views on my part, could never have rendered your correspondent blind to the innumerable analogies and types of infinity, insensible to the countless awakenings to noble aspiration, which I have transfused into that Poem from the Bible of the Universe as it speaks to the ear of the intelligent, as it lies open to the eyes of the humble-minded.[96]

Wordsworth attributes Smith's weak understanding to her Unitarian faith, to 'monotonous' Unitarian hymns, and to a 'soul that has been dwarfed by a course of bad culture'; not to any error of his own.[97] The Unitarian opposition to the Trinity means that, on Wordsworth's terms, Smith is bound to be inept at understanding poetic language and creation, which, as I established in Chapter Three, is influenced by St

[96] *MY ii.*, p. 188.
[97] ibid.

Basil's Trinitarian teaching and monastic life. Smith is unable to enjoy *The Excursion* because she cannot grasp the *emanative* nature of poetic language. The poet must 'transfuse' his words with meaning in the way that the Father transfuses the world with His Spirit.[98]

Wordsworth extends his defence against Smith with a discussion of the process of creation. How does the poet go about making the 'Bible of the Universe' audible and visible? He explains with an anecdote:

> there is nothing in the course of religious education adopted in this country and in the use made by us of the holy scriptures that appears to me so injurious as the perpetually talking about *making* by God—Oh! that your Correspondent had heard a conversation which I had in bed with my sweet little Boy, four and a half years old, upon this subject the other morning. "How did God make me? Where is God? How does he speak? He never spoke to *me*." I told him that God was a spirit, that he was not like his flesh which he could touch; but more like his thoughts in his mind which he could *not* touch.—The wind was tossing the fir trees, and the sky and light were dancing about in their dark branches, as seen through the window—Noting these fluctuations he exclaimed eagerly—"There's a bit of him I see it there!" This is not meant entirely for Father's prattle; but, for Heaven's sake, in your religious talk with children say as little as possible about *making* [Wordsworth's italics].[99]

Willy Wordsworth is perplexed that he has neither seen the face nor heard the voice of God. The child asks intelligently how something invisible created the visible world. While it provides Catherine Clarkson with a little amusement about potentially awkward conversations between parents and children, Wordsworth's narrative carries serious answers about the affinities between poetic and divine creation. Wordsworth explains that God's substance and creative capacity resemble human thoughts. We know God in the way we know our thoughts, which are themselves creative. Poetic making or thinking (written or silent) is therefore a means of comprehending God's act of creation. Wordsworth's ultimate task includes the creation of minds that will

[98] Wordsworth most probably did not hold this opinion in the 1790s when Coleridge was a Unitarian preacher.
[99] *MY ii*., p. 189.

accurately interpret his poetry but Patty Smith's Unitarian beliefs about the Holy Spirit prevent her from reaching that point of understanding.[100] This is potentially problematic since it suggests that only readers with certain religious beliefs can understand Wordsworth's poetry. However, Wordsworth's emphasis is on imaginative rather than doctrinal aptitude.

Wordsworth's appeals to silence and his fascination with hermits indicate that his poetry strives for what Geoffrey Hartman has called 'pure representation'.[101] The phrase itself seems contradictory but its essence is that poetry seeks to facilitate imageless perception. The ideal at the centre of such a vision is 'entirely contemplative, and the hermit its true representative'.[102] Thus, on Hartman's terms, the hermit is the archetypal poet. The hermit has retired to the deserts or the woods (he is 'Fast anchored in the desart' [sic] (III. 379)) in order to 'subdue' his eyes and await the afterlife. Hartman notes that the hermit of 'Tintern Abbey' is an image of transcendence as he sits by the fire, which is a symbol of pure imageless vision. In this steady perception, the hermit is freed from the intermediary forms and signs of the external world.[103] (Perhaps the fact that the reader does not see him epitomises this imagelessness.) Wordsworth names the Wanderer's version of this type of perception 'pure discourse' (I. 77). Hartman explains: 'In pure representation, the poet *represents* the mind as knowing without a cause from perception, and so in and from itself' [my italics].[104] For

[100] And yet there is a problem with Wordsworth's poetry. Stephen N. Bauer explains: 'As the notion became more and more prevalent that Wordsworth was writing for a select group of initiates, the critics' role of necessity became less and less important: the poet, calmly persevering, need not be tutored; the reader, if a Wordsworthian, needed no instruction and if not a Wordsworthian could not be made one by a critic': *William Wordsworth: a Reference Guide to British Criticism, 1793-1899* (Boston: Hall, 1978), p. vii.

[101] *The Unmediated Vision*, p. 129. See especially Hartman's chapter on 'Pure Representation', pp. 127-55.

[102] ibid, p. 33. Hartman states that 'much will eventually have to be said on Wordsworth's use of the hermit figure', pp. 9-10. No such extensive study has previously been written.

[103] ibid, pp. 34-5.

[104] ibid, p. 128. In any case, this has got to involve pretence on the part of the poet in order to avoid the circularity of a 'homunculus fallacy'. The 'homunculus fallacy' states that there must be a little man

Wordsworth, this links poetry with religion because the human substance most similar to God is the mind. Introspection, silence, and unmediated vision are thus religious. Poetic creation is similar to divine creation because, as he explained to his son, it involves the same process of making something visible (words) from something invisible (the mind). The mind is the place in which man's awareness of infinitude develops and it is also where pure perception takes place: both involve communing directly with one's own mind—which climaxes in a state of contemplation—and both are the expertise of the hermit. The imaginative potential of the Solitary is therefore immense.

In the Preface to *The Excursion*, Wordsworth explains that he retired 'to his native mountains' and adopted some of the characteristics of a hermit in order to produce a structure resembling a gothic church.[105] The 'main region' of *The Recluse* was to be the 'Mind of Man' (39) and the poet will sing 'Of the individual Mind that keeps her own | Inviolate retirement, subject there | To conscience only' (19-21). The highest goal of *The Recluse* is the revelation of the 'creation' that the mind and the external world 'with blended might | Accomplish' (70-1). Similarly, at the end of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth presents his ambition to convey 'how the mind of man becomes | A thousand times more beautiful than the earth | On which he dwells' (XIII. 446-8).[106] The mind is the creative impulse; it is the place where the imagination 'turns upon infinity'. It is the only thing that holds Wordsworth's attention in reading and the thing that makes all poets religionists.

In Book V of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth compares the mind to an anchorite's cell:

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inside the brain who perceives or processes the images, inside the brain of the little man there must be another little man who processes those images, and so on ad infinitum.

[105] For the 'Preface' to *The Excursion* and the 'Prospectus' to *The Recluse*, see *Excursion*, pp. 38-41. Editorial line numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

[106] *Thirteen-book Prelude*, p. 324.

> —Knowledge, methinks, in these disordered times,
> Should be allowed a privilege to have
> Her Anchorites, like Piety of old;
> Men, who, from faction sacred, and unstained
> By war, might, if so minded, turn aside
> Uncensored, and subsist, a scattered few
> Living to God and Nature, and content
> With that communion. Consecrated be
> The Spots where such abide! (V. 27-34)

The anchorite is the metaphor Wordsworth chooses to describe the enclosure of the mind in which knowledge is husbanded. The anchorite cultivates and harbours a type of divine creative power. The language of 'The Sower and the Seed' returns in celebration of the blessed mental ground of a 'scattered few'. Quakers do not have holy ground in which to bury their deceased; rather they figuratively bury memories of the dead in the consecrated ground of the mind. The Wanderer's mind similarly communes with divine aspects of itself. That is why he finds so much stimulation when he emulates a hermit in a cave and why, in Book II, he commends the Solitary's ability to create the imaginative vision in the clouds.

Charles Lamb's review of *The Excursion*, with its argument about the Wanderer's 'expanded and generous' Quakerism, was printed anonymously in the *Quarterly Review* in October 1814.[107] Wordsworth was aware that *The Excursion* was likely to be well received by the Quaker community. On 31 December 1815 he asked that Catherine and Mr Clarkson 'give [*The Excursion*] what help you can in the Philanthropist or any well circulated Periodical publication to which you may have easy access. I mentioned the Philanthropist because it circulates a good deal among Quakers, who are wealthy and fond of *instructive* Books'. He continued: 'though I am a professed admirer of the Church of England, I hope that my religious sentiments will

[107] In January 1815, just as Wordsworth was responding to Catherine Clarkson, Lamb wrote to Wordsworth complaining that the editors had substantially changed much of his manuscript: *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903-5), vol. 6 (1903), 452-3.

not be offensive to *them.*'[108] Although Wordsworth's acknowledgement of personal sympathy towards Quakerism was part of an attempt to push the sale of *The Excursion*—which was necessary to repay the expense of his recent Scottish tour—and also a sign of friendliness towards the Clarksons, it was not disingenuous for two reasons.

First, Quakers recognise a receptive inner power that belongs to or resembles God. The implanted 'Spirit of God' is Man's internal means of understanding the Gospel: "There be many that understand the Greek and Hebrew of the Scripture, the original languages in which the text was written, that never understood the language of the Spirit".[109] Knowledge of spiritual things must develop internally and it cannot consist of knowledge of words. Secondly, the Quaker religion does not have the affinity with poetry that Wordsworth explicates in the 'Essay' because Quakers do not rely on words or symbols. Rather, Quakerism is akin to the 'pure representation' that Wordsworth strives for through his hermit figures. The channel between the Quaker and God is kept open by the pastoral simplicity of their lives. The few words spoken at their meetings are supposed to be the direct communication of God because they are the work of the Spirit.

Clarkson's description of Quakerism aligns with the explanation Wordsworth gives to Willy: God is best understood in comparison with the mind because the animating seed gives man the likeness of God. Therefore, the terms under which religion resembles poetry in Wordsworth's 'Essay', determine the need for the purest language and silence, which are the result of the mind's reflection on itself. Wordsworth's recourse to silence is a direct consequence of his understanding of the nature of the imagination, the nature of religion, and his desire for 'pure representation'.

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[108] *MY ii*., pp. 181-2.
[109] Clarkson, *Quakerism*, vol. 2, 130.

In an important sense, Wordsworth did in fact do what he and Coleridge planned for *The Recluse*: he shaped a new genre by reflecting on the unique character of his sensory experience. *The Excursion* is pivotal to an understanding of Wordsworth's recourse to hermits because it unlocks the relations he perceives between religion and language, vision and silence. Wordsworth's understanding of pastoral poetry developed significantly after 1806. The period of intermission in *Excursion* composition between September 1806 and February 1810—during which there is no surviving mention of *The Recluse* in any letters or manuscript notebooks—is generally understood as a result of Wordsworth's deteriorating relationship with Coleridge.[110] However, during this period, the physical and intellectual work Wordsworth undertook was integral to his ambition of developing a new type of poetry.

[110] *Excursion*, p. 10.

CHAPTER FIVE

Inscriptions and Sonnets, the Hermitage and the Church

> Wordsworth was a "high churchman" and also, in his prose mind, strongly anti-Roman Catholic, partly on political grounds; but that it was otherwise as regards his mind poetic is obvious from many passages in his Christian poetry, especially those which refer to the monastic system.[1]

In August 1808 the *Gentleman's Magazine* advertised a competition seeking the best English rendering of a Latin inscription 'Supposed to be found on a Hermitage Door'. Two responses were printed on 13 September and two more followed in November.[2] The fashion for such inscriptions, allegedly discovered in places of retreat and refreshment (Bowers, Grottos, Fountains, Seats and so on), was influenced by eighteenth-century interests in gardens and landscape tourism where an inscription marked a favourable vantage point. The standard picturesque prospect usually contained a carefully placed ruin, and the gypsy, beggar, or hermit was the scenic human equivalent of these run-down buildings. The hermit inscription was a type of loco-descriptive poetry developed as an offshoot of the epitaph, which warned the reader not to disturb the sanctity of the place or the remains of the deceased. Inscriptions generically resemble epitaphs in their supposed or actual attachment to the place of writing and reading, with their vocative openings, and with their provision of moral and spiritual advice.[3] In particular, hermit figures are linked with epitaphs

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[1] Reminiscence of Aubrey De Vere (1876), in *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 491.

[2] *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, vol. 78, pt. II. (1808), pp. 728, 924, 1020. Immediately after the Hermit Inscriptions in the September number, there appeared 'Lines […] on the Ruins of Finchale Abbey' (p. 924). For my discussion of Wordsworth's visit to this place see 'William Wordsworth's visit to James Raine and Finchale Priory, July 1838', *Notes and Queries*, 60 (2013), 248-51.

[3] Hartman's important essay on Wordsworth's inscriptions explains that 'Not only is the graveyard a major locus for the expression of nature sentiment, but Nature is herself a larger graveyard inscribed deeply with evidences of past life. This convergence of graveyard and nature, or of epitaph and loco-descriptive poetry, is consecrated by the success of Gray's *Elegy* (1751), in which the division between

through John Weever's collection of *Ancient Funeral Monuments* which locates the origins of memorial inscriptions in monastic history.

Given the genealogy of the hermit inscription, this competition in the *Gentleman's Magazine* was nothing out of the ordinary. The practice of collecting, translating, and composing epitaphs was a popular pursuit among both antiquarians and dilettanti during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* had 'acquired a reputation as a quasi-official repository for the findings of graveyard fanciers'.[4] The fad, which followed Weever's direction to copy out inscriptions from gravestones in order to save them from oblivion, reached its peak in 1786, the year in which the magazine published a total of fifty-three specimens; between 1800 and 1815 the *Gentleman's Magazine* published approximately four hundred copied, translated, or original epitaphs.[5] Southey's commonplace books contain more than twenty epitaphs collected from various churchyards and he published forty-four inscriptions in his *Collected Edition* of 1837-38; Wordsworth's translations of six of Chiabrera's epitaphs appeared in *The Friend* in 1809, and seventeen original epitaphs are attributed to Coleridge.[6] For Wordsworth, however, the hermit inscription, like the epitaph, was part of his larger renovation of the pastoral mode which also elucidates the critical reception of religious aspects of his poetry.

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countryside and cemetery is hardly felt': 'Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry', in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, pp. 31-46 (p. 34).

[4] Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, 'The Epitaph and the Romantic Poets: A Survey', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 30 (1967), 113–146 (p. 132). Bernhardt-Kabisch provides a comprehensive account of the context and legacies of Wordsworth's *Essays Upon Epitaphs*. He refers to epitaphs and inscriptions interchangeably and lists collections of epitaphs published in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (p. 130).

[5] *The European Magazine and London Review* had a similar reputation: it printed around 140 epitaphs between 1787—when Wordsworth's first published poem 'Sonnet on Seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep' appeared there—and 1800. Bernhardt-Kabisch, 'The Epitaph and Romantic Poetry', pp. 131-3.

[6] ibid, pp. 120-6. Hartman notes the influence of the Greek Anthology on the development of inscriptions and epigrams, and the importance of Mark Akenside on Southey's and Coleridge's inscriptions: *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, pp. 37-8. For Wordsworth's translations of Gabriello Chiabrera's (1552-1617) epitaphs see *Shorter Poems*, pp. 60-8.

Wordsworth announced the connection between epitaphs and loco-descriptive inscriptions in the Preface to his 1815 *Poems*, where he set out his innovative system of poetic classification. The fourth category, 'The Idyllium', is

> descriptive chiefly either of the processes and appearances of external nature, as the Seasons of Thomson; or of characters, manners, and sentiments, as are Shenstone's School-mistress, The Cotter's Saturday Night of Burns, The Twa Dogs of the same Author; or of these in conjunction with the appearances of Nature, as most of the pieces of Theocritus, the Allegro and Penseroso of Milton, Beattie's Minstrel, Goldsmith's Deserted Village. *The Epitaph, the Inscription, the Sonnet, most of the epistles of poets writing in their own persons, and all loco-descriptive poetry, belong to this class* [my italics].[7]

Wordsworth determined his categories by the emotional state aroused or required during composition. He included the epitaph and the inscription in this loco-descriptive category because they grow out of a state of tranquillity in the poet's mind that is matched by the 'processes and appearances of external nature'. For Thomas Dunham Whitaker, monastic life and its decaying remains shaped the social and geographical landscape and became part of the topographical identity of the north of England. Wordsworth's study of this monastic history and his poetic interest in silence amalgamate in *The Excursion* where he transferred the indolence, rural seclusion, and *vita contemplativa* of shepherds to wandering and solitary figures. As I established in Chapter Four, Wordsworth generates a monastic-pastoral mode as situated quietness and the naturalized figure of the hermit move to the centre of Wordsworth's pastoral project after 1810.[8]

The connection between Wordsworth's emphasis on regional history and monasticism helps make sense of why the sonnet also appears in the 1815 Idyllium

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[7] *Prose*, vol. 3, 22–52 (p. 28). In the 1815 volumes Wordsworth has a category of 'Inscriptions' and one of 'Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems'. Manuscript lists of Wordsworth's arrangements are printed in *Shorter Poems*, Appendix II, pp. 608-31. Hartman explains the diversity of the Idyllium group by noting the variety of inscriptions Wordsworth would have come across in anthologies: 'The nature-inscription was an unstable genre, almost a chance product of the multiplication of inscriptions of all kinds in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries': *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 39.

[8] *The Excursion* therefore becomes an extended topographical poem.

class. For Wordsworth, the sonnet form is linked metaphorically with the restricted lives of nuns and hermits who find liberty within enclosure. In the prefatory sonnet of the 1807 Miscellaneous group, 'Nuns fret not', the narrow convent room or hermitic cell is the 'scanty plot of ground' in which the sonneteer labours.[9] With the 'narrow rooms' of 'Nuns fret not' Wordsworth introduced a self-reflexivity to the form that defined the sonnet in terms of monastic life and the cultivation of ground.[10] Religious recluses (like gardeners) are insuperably connected with their place of retreat, and the sonnet, for Wordsworth, frames and preserves a moment that becomes a plot of mental space. The forms within the Idyllium category are related generically through their aptness to capture the quietude and *genius loci* of isolated locations.

Wordsworth employed forms from this class in two of his late volumes: *The River Duddon* (1820) and *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822). The *Duddon* volume celebrates specific places in the Lake District and it includes five 'Inscriptions, Supposed to be found in, and near, a Hermit's Cell'.[11] *Ecclesiastical Sketches* is Wordsworth's most explicitly institutional "Church-and-State" volume of poetry: it is a carefully researched history of Christianity in England and a deliberate reaction against the Catholic Relief Bill of 1820. Wordsworth became increasingly anxious when this

[9] In a letter of November 1802, Wordsworth explained his admiration for Milton's sonnets based on their capacity to produce 'an energetic and varied flow of sound crowding into narrow room more of the combined effect of rhyme and blank verse than can be done by any other kind of verse I know of', *EY*, p. 379. Wordsworth's serious sonnet writing dates from 1802 and those he published in 1807 constitute the most significant recasting of the form since Milton: Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, pp. 29-55. Curran charts the eighteenth-century revival of the sonnet through Charlotte Smith, William Lisle Bowles, Coleridge, Lamb, and Lloyd. Wordsworth's Fenwick note to the Miscellaneous Sonnets explains that he 'took fire' after Dorothy read Milton's sonnets to him one afternoon, *IF Notes*, p. 19.

[10] Lee M. Johnson claims that Wordsworth's interest in landscape gardening and Lake District retreats gradually gave him a metaphor for the sonnet. He also notes that 'During his entire career, [Wordsworth] restricted his use of nuns as an image almost exclusively to his sonnets, presumably because the subject and form share similar spiritual and aesthetic properties', *Wordsworth and the Sonnet*, p. 69. Johnson's study is very useful but he fails to make the link between gardening and monasticism that I discuss in Chapter Four based on silence and the centrality of the hermit/nun to Wordsworth's renovation of the pastoral.

[11] On the overall shape and characteristics of the volume, see Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth and "The River Duddon"', *Essays in Criticism*, 57 (2007), 22-41. My discussion of *The River Duddon* volume refers to the collection of poems that Wordsworth published alongside *The River Duddon* sonnets, which are often discussed independently of the eclectic volume and used to refer to it metonymically.

Bill was brought before parliament, as demonstrated in his correspondence with Lords Lonsdale and Lowther: 'The Catholic Question is indeed momentous, may the wisdom of our ancestors preside over the decision!'; 'God grant that these people may be baffled! […] Good Heavens! […my dear Lowther] I trust that you will not sleep on this momentous occasion'.[12] The Catholic Question (also referred to at times as the 'Irish Question') had been an issue since the Act of Union (1800) which brought four million Catholics within the pale of the United Kingdom. Disagreement over the civil rights of Roman Catholics shaped the political landscape until the Bill was passed in 1829.[13]

Wordsworth's personal opposition to Catholic Emancipation—frequently expressed in his letters and directly stated in the advertisement to *Ecclesiastical Sketches*—seems to be at odds with his poetic interest in hermits, silence, and monastic life. The purpose of this chapter is not so much to disentangle this discrepancy as it is to show that Wordsworth's engagement with the Catholic Question began in 1806—much earlier than is usually assumed; hence I argue that it impinges on his poetry in a more productive and encompassing way. The entanglement marks Wordsworth's hermits as serious Christian figures and it is responsible for drawing together the poetic forms he defined as the Idyllium category. While it is not my wish to codify or systematize Wordsworth's religious beliefs, and since it would be counter-productive (in any case) to separate these beliefs from his poetic identity, I will use Wordsworth's later hermit inscriptions and religious sonnets to explain why critical accounts of Wordsworth's

[12] For further comments on the Lords' debate and rejection of the 1819 Catholic Relief Bill, see *MY ii*., pp. 540, 542, 544. On the 1821 Commons debate of the Bill, see *LY i*., pp. 20, 42, 55, 58, and 98.
[13] Two recent monographs, Michael Tomko, *British Romanticism and the Catholic Question* and Stuart Andrew, *Robert Southey: History, Politics, Religion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) provide detailed accounts of the main political events and literary repercussions of the Emancipation debate. Coleridge's position is explained in Stuart Andrew, 'Coleridge, Gladstone and the Irish Catholics', *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 32 (2008), 25–32 (p. 27). Coleridge insists that Catholics are not excluded from Parliament because of their theology but because of their allegiance to the Pope. In all instances my use of 'Catholic' refers to Roman Catholicism.

particular type of Christianity—both poetic and biographical—have been systematically skewed and remain ultimately inconclusive.

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The River Duddon collection has a broad intellectual and generic scope. Along with the sonnet series the volume contains topographical prose, lyric addresses, odes, translations from Chaucer, and a set of inscriptions creating what Stephen Gill has called 'a highly literary showcase of skill in traditional forms, which draws on classical and historical sources'.[14] The advertisements printed at the back of the 1820 edition list contemporaneous publications by Longman on Botany, Gardening, Agriculture, Geology, Mineralogy, and Philosophy, indicating a wide-ranging intellectual context in which the *Duddon* could comfortably sit.[15] The appeal of this volume opened the way for the public success of Wordsworth's later years, yet criticism of the *Duddon* often entirely neglects the shorter poems printed between the opening sonnet series and the closing 'Guide to the Lakes': studies of the sonnets tend to focus on Wordsworth's 'After-Thought' as a summation of the themes of the sequence.[16] The set of five 'Inscriptions, Supposed to be found in, and near, a Hermit's Cell', composed early in 1818 and consisting of alternate-rhymed quatrains, provide a link between the *Duddon*

[14] Gill, 'Wordsworth and "The River Duddon"', p. 24. The full title is: *The River Duddon, a series of sonnets: Vaudracour and Julia: and other poems. To which is annexed, A topographical description of the country of the lakes* (London, 1820).
[15] Brian R. Bates, *Wordsworth's Poetic Collections, Supplementary Writing and Parodic Reception* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p. 156. Bates provides a comprehensive account of the positive reception of *The River Duddon* in the periodical press, pp. 141-59.
[16] There is no book-length study of the *Duddon* volume as a whole. Critical separation of the sonnet series from the other shorter poems in Wordsworth's 1820 volume is reflected in (and perhaps symptomatic of) their separation in the Cornell Wordsworth series. The sonnets appear in Geoffrey Jackson's, *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845* while the others are scattered within Carl Ketcham's *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*. On the thematic unity of the 1820 sonnet series see Stewart C. Wilcox, 'Wordsworth's River Duddon Sonnets', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 69 (1954), 131–141. On how Wordsworth's later sonnets focused on the visible, external world and on the importance of how the sonnet appeared on the printed page see Peter Simonsen, 'Italic Typography and Wordsworth's Later Sonnets as Visual Poetry', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 47 (2007), 863–880.

volume and *Ecclesiastical Sketches* showing how Wordsworth's use of the sonnet developed alongside that of the inscription.[17]

Work on Wordsworth and epitaphs, inscriptions, or burial naturally comments upon and confirms, to differing extents, the poet's reliance on John Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments*.[18] However, scholars have uniformly neglected to mention that Weever's volume opens with a discussion of monasticism including how eremitism evolved into coenobitism, how hermits and anchorites lived, what characterised the four main monastic orders (of Basil, Augustine, Benedict, and Francis) and how religious houses were established and dissolved. Weever locates the genesis of memorial inscriptions in the monastic practice of praying for the deceased.[19] His comprehensive volume attempts to preserve or memorialise epitaphs, which had become subject to ruination after the dissolution of the monasteries. Keeping Weever's volume in mind maintains the Christian roots of epitaphs and inscriptions; it also prevents the religious identity of hermits from being subsumed or lost within picturesque aesthetics.

The first hermit inscription in the set is just two stanzas long:

> Hast thou seen, with train incessant,
> Bubbles gliding under ice,
> Bodied forth and evanescent,
> No one knows by what device?
>
> Such are thoughts! —a wind-swept meadow
> Mimicking a troubled sea—
> Such is life; —and death a shadow

[17] Similar inscriptions for hermitages by garden fanatics such as William Shenstone were popular throughout the eighteenth century, including Gilbert West, 'Father Francis's Prayer' (which was also published in Latin translation), William Cowper, 'Inscription for a Hermitage in the Author's Garden' and Thomas Warton, 'Inscription in a Hermitage', Campbell, *The Hermit in the Garden*, pp. 46-8. Examples of Wordsworth's early experiments with inscriptions from *Lyrical Ballads* including 'Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree', 'Inscription for the Spot where the Hermitage stood on St Herbert's Island, Derwent-water', 'Inscription for the House (an Out-house) on the Island at Grasmere', and the Matthew poems, which adopt loco-descriptive and epitaphic tropes. Hartman argues that the inscription is 'a genre essential to the rise of the modern lyric', *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, p. 46.

[18] For example, D. D. Devlin, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Epitaphs* (London: Macmillan, 1980); J. Douglas Kneale, *Monumental Writing*; Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, 'Wordsworth: The Monumental Poet', *Philological Quarterly*, 44 (1965), 503–518.

[19] Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, pp. 1-150.

From the rock eternity! (1-8)[20]

The small bubbles delineate transient capsules of empty space but their continuous creation gives the impression of sustainability and continuity. The bubbles make present that emptiness—they are 'bodied forth'—but they are trapped beneath the ice and so remain untouchable and otherworldly. While the trochaic rhythm enacts the falling away of the bubbles, the cross-rhyme pulls the reader back to the 'train incessant'; the push and pull of the balanced form holds together the mimicry and uncertainty with the eternal rock. All five inscriptions contain similar images of transparency, evanescence, and fragility: ether, beads of dew, and spider-webs evoke spaces of untouchable emptiness that are delicately marked or contained. The religious context connects these images with Wordsworth's explanation, provided for his son Willy, that God resembles the mind which we cannot see or touch, not the trees which we can see and touch.[21] Additionally, the inscriptions employ images of reflected moonlight and glistening sunlight: Wordsworth gives the reader glimpses of the momentary effects of light combined with descriptions of physical meteorological processes. The result is similar to that of 'A slumber did my spirit seal' which grounds the immaterial spirit of Lucy in rocks and stones and trees. The hermit inscriptions thus address issues that are central to Wordsworth's poetic concerns: how can the materials of the world contain or even gesture towards the existence of metaphysical entities?

The second inscription begins by explaining what it is inscribed upon. Wordsworth draws attention to the materiality of language and to the pretence that the reader encounters the inscription immediately in a particular physical location. Both the

[20] Variations of these lines appear in the second reading text of 'Inscribed upon a rock', *Shorter Poems*, p. 267. All quotation from the 'Inscriptions, Supposed to be found in, and near, a hermit's cell' is taken from *Shorter Poems*, pp. 262-71. Editorial line numbers appear in parentheses in the text. Ketcham takes reading texts from the 1820 *River Duddon* Volume and the draft variants found in DC MS 83. Wordsworth explains that the spot described in this poem was a place he named 'tadpole slope', a length of smooth rock between Rydal and Grasmere: *Shorter Poems*, p. 548.
[21] *MY ii*., p. 189.

written form of the poem and its contents attempt to bring absent things into view; that is, the rock, the location, and the hermit.[22]

> Pause, Traveller! whosoe'er thou be
> Whom chance may lead to this retreat,
> Where silence yields reluctantly
> Even to the fleecy straggler's bleat;
>
> Give voice to what my hand shall trace,
> And fear not lest an idle sound
> Of words unsuited to the place,
> Disturb its solitude profound. (1-8)

The opening clause and the direction for the reader to respectfully be still is a classical epitaphic trope derived from the Roman '*Siste Viator*!' which Wordsworth replicates in his translations of Chiabrera and employs in 'Lines left upon a seat in a Yew Tree' and 'The Solitary Reaper'.[23] Wordsworth calls the reader to attention by disrupting the iambic rhythm in the first foot of each stanza. Although it begins in the vocative case in the present tense, the speaker slips into the subjunctive future tense at line five by telling the stranger of the lines his hand 'shall trace'. This textual self-awareness heightens the immediacy and subjectivity of the speaker, asking the stranger to give voice to lines that are being composed as they are read. There is a sense in which the reader contributes to or completes the spirit of the place as he approaches and experiences the text reverently: the voice of the hermit merges with that of the reader. The silence Wordsworth evokes collapses the distinction between the two voices.

In November 1811, as he composed the Coleorton Inscriptions, Wordsworth wrote to Sir George Beaumont:

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[22] Paul Fry characterises this as metonymy since aspects of perception are made contiguous but not identical and since inscriptions expose rather than conceal the temporality of written experience, 'The Absent Dead: Wordsworth, Byron, and the Epitaph', *Studies in Romanticism*, 17 (1978), 413-33 (p. 420). Cynthia Chase provides a discussion of the distinction between the material (non-semantic) and immaterial (semantic) elements of inscriptions, and of building and dwelling: 'Monument and Inscription'.

[23] 'Epitaphs and inscriptions, as a genre, incorporate in their content a representation of how they perform as texts: of their interruption, their *stilling*, of the reader', Chase, 'Monument and Inscription', p. 73.

> It did always appear to me that inscriptions […] were never supposed *necessarily* to be the composition of those in whose name they appeared. If a more striking or more dramatic effect could be produced, I have always thought that in an epitaph or memorial of any kind a Father or Husband etc., might be introduced speaking, without any absolute deception being intended, that is, the Reader is understood to be at Liberty to say to himself; these Verses, or this Latin, may be the composition of some unknown Person, and not that of the Father, Widow, or Friend, from whose hand or voice they profess to proceed [Wordsworth's italics].[24]

Beaumont had asked Wordsworth to change the inscription for the Urn ('Ye Lime-trees') to the third person so that it did not seem as if Wordsworth had written it.[25] The poet agreed that the voice of an inscription should not be determined by the writer but by the situation in which it is read. Wordsworth's hermit inscriptions ask the reader to enter into the attitude of the recluse and, by this means, the reading of the inscription does not disturb the silence or 'solitude' of the place. The implicit dialogue between the reader and the hermit collapses as the reader takes on the hermit's voice. This draws attention to the hermit's absence and imitates the pretence of an epitaph written in the first-person.

As in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' where the hermit is identified by silent smoke sent up from within the trees, the reader perceives only signs of the hermit's recent presence, not the hermit himself. This reflects the content of the inscription insofar as the main action goes unnoticed beneath the surface of the rock. The rock had upheld a monument 'as fair | As Church or Abbey furnisheth' (11-12) but the hermit witnessed its ruin: the covert spring beneath the rock, in conjunction with the deceitful sun, caused the collapse of the monument by freeze-thaw weathering. The glistening appearance of the rock concealed the erosion invisibly taking place beneath the surface:

> My fancy kindled as I gazed;

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[24] *MY i*., p. 516.
[25] *Shorter Poems*, p. 103.

> And, ever as the sun shone forth,
> The flatter'd structure glisten'd, blazed,
> And seemed the proudest thing on earth.
>
> But Frost had reared the gorgeous Pile
> Unsound as those which fortune builds;
> To undermine with secret guile,
> Sapp'd by the very beam that gilds.
>
> And, while I gazed, with sudden shock
> Fell the whole Fabric to the ground;
> And naked left this dripping Rock,
> With shapeless ruin spread around! (17-28)[26]

As standard picturesque features, hermitages, piles of rocks and ruined abbeys usually function in the same way. But in Wordsworth's more informed view, the hermitage signifies a rejection of the institutional aspects of monkish life in favour of a more natural existence. Ruined monasteries had long been empty and their destruction was a reminder of abuses of monastic power, yet there was an expectation that a hermitage continued to be inhabited by a committed individual and it appeared as an inconspicuous part of the landscape—the opposite of the garish whitewashed houses Wordsworth abhorred in his 'Guide to the Lakes'. The hermitage and its inscription are aspects of topographical semantics; they are part of the spirit of the place, hence the inscription survives despite the erosion and fall of the church-like monument. The physical ruin does not destroy the *genius loci*. The remaining rock and hermitage are metonymic of the values of monastic life—silence, solitude, peace—that survive *after* the inevitable dissolution of the monument that was 'as fair | As church or Abbey furnisheth' (11-12).

The next inscription in the sequence, 'Hopes what are they?', contrasts the impermanence of hope, fear, glory, pride, friendship, and joy with lasting peace and the eternity of the rock. The rock is representative of the church building and the Church as

[26] Wordsworth's Fenwick Note reads: 'The monument of ice here spoken of I observed while ascending the middle road of the three ways that lead from Rydal to Grasmere. It was on my right hand, and my eyes were upon it when it fell as told in these lines'. *IF Notes*, pp. 29-30.

an institution or body of believers, bringing into play ideas of making, dwelling, and poetic monuments. DC MS 83 contains an additional opening stanza locating the inscription on the stone threshold of the hermit's cell, marking the hermit's acceptance of the distinction between the impermanence of this world and the peace of the next.[27] This poem is not addressed to a traveller but to God:

> Be my purpose one and single,
> Give me the repose to feel
> Of this spring whose waters mingle
> With thy servant's daily meal. (DC MS 83. 53-6)
>
> Thus protected in her station
> Would my life present to Thee,
> Gracious God, the pure oblation
> Of divine Tranquillity! (DC MS 83. 61-4)

The humble, petitionary tone of these two ballad stanzas is reflected rhythmically: the tetrameter lines contain four trochees while the alternate trimeter lines consist of two trochees and a dactyl. Through these unstressed line endings the hermit meekly presents himself as God's servant and gestures towards Jesus as the daily bread whose blood is mixed with holy water. The second stanza explains what the hermit would be if his petition was granted: he incorporates the original meaning of 'oblation' as an offering of a child to the service of the monastery, and the recurrence of iridescent images recalls the purity of Emily Norton and her silent communication with the White Doe.[28]

The spring reappears in the fourth inscription, forming a connection with the *Duddon* sonnets:

> Parching Summer hath no warrant
> To consume this crystal well;
> Rains, that make each rill a torrent,
> Neither sully it nor swell. (9-12)

[27] Hermitages also sometimes doubled as the future grave of their inhabitants.
[28] MacCulloch, *Silence: a Christian History*, p. 95.

The hermit is fixed at his 'station', the spring, which is unthreatened by natural or human forces, and this stasis is what the hermit tries to emulate in his contemplative life. There is no cyclical movement or progression—which Wordsworth does evoke in the *Duddon* sonnets—but a constant offering of prayer. Hermits and hermitages survive the cycles of rising and falling institutions. In the final poem of the set, even the diurnal round of the sun is a sign of its inconstancy. The hermit despises the passage from day to night. He lives for the stability of God:

> But Thou art true, incarnate Lord!
> Who didst vouchsafe for man to die;
> Thy smile is sure, thy plighted word
> No change can falsify!
>
> I bent before thy gracious throne,
> And asked for peace with suppliant knee;
> And peace was given, —nor peace alone,
> But faith, and hope, and extacy! (13-20)

The series moves from an address to the approaching reader, to the threshold of the hermitage, to the spring, and finally inside the mind of the hermit. Ultimately, these inscriptions are petitions for inaction, stillness, and quietude; they aim to suspend and contain space and time in the locations they supposedly mark. The inscriptions offer a complement to the day-long tour down the Duddon Valley, which traces the course of the river from its source to the sea. *The River Duddon* series enacts the life cycle of the river and of the poet's progressive tour, providing the illusion of constant generation and renewal. The hermit inscriptions do the same in an entirely different way: they suggest hidden internal cycles. They are read over and again by a procession of passing travellers who are themselves renewed by the words and refreshed by the spring.

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At the end of the eighteenth century, along with the trend for collecting and translating hermit inscriptions and epitaphs, a number of secular and light-hearted prose accounts of the lives of hermits were popular.[29] In December 1809, Lady Beaumont sent a hand-written copy of Thomas Barnard's 'An account of an English Hermit, by a respectable Clergyman' to Dorothy Wordsworth which was, however, of a more serious nature.[30] In anticipation of the *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, this previously unstudied text is a useful means of establishing the extent to which Wordsworth's interest in hermits and his thinking about the history of Christianity was shared with the Beaumonts. In the context of the Beaumonts' support of Catholic Emancipation, it also elucidates the depth of this point of contention between Wordsworth and his patrons. An account of the context is necessary before my discussion of this manuscript.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Catholic Emancipation issues were often referred to as 'The Irish Question': how could Irish Catholics be loyal to a Protestant throne and how socially dangerous would it be to allow them access to seats in Parliament? Lord Redesdale, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, explained the problem:

> I can consider no man, whatever his profession of loyalty may be, as truly a loyal subject of a King, whom he thus holds up to his people as an object of disaffection, nay of hatred, because that King holds a different opinion on matters of religion. […] Catholic Priests still teach their flocks that all who refuse obedience [to the Pope] are guilty of a wicked rebellion against divine authority.[31]

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[29] Amusing examples include Peter Longueville, *The Hermit: or, The unparalleled sufferings, and surprising adventures, of Philip Quarll, an Englishman* (1727), 7th end (London, 1795); James Buckland and John Fielding, *A Wonderful Discovery of a Hermit* (Springfield MA, 1786) and Thomas Parnell, *The Hermit* (London, 1762). Coleridge recalled reading the story of Philip Quarll during his childhood, noting how it contributed to his tendency to be a dreamer: *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1, 347-8.

[30] Grasmere, Jerwood Centre, WLL/Beaumont, George/30. This two thousand-word manuscript is in an unknown hand, not Lady Beaumont's. I am grateful to Jeff Cowton and Rebecca Turner at the Jerwood Centre for help with accessing the manuscript. Images of the manuscript are accessible via the database *Romanticism: Life, Literature and Landscape* (Adam Matthew Digital, 2011), <http://www.romanticism.amdigital.co.uk/> [accessed September 2012-June 2013]. An annotated transcription of the document appears as Appendix I below, by permission of the Wordsworth Trust.

[31] John Freeman-Mitford (Baron Redesdale) and Arthur James Plunkett (Earl of Fingall), *The Catholic Question: Correspondence Between ... Lord Redesdale ... and ... the Earl of Fingall* (Dublin, 1804), pp. 8 and 21.

In April 1807, Cobbett's *Political Register* concurred in thinking that Catholics could not be trusted: 'a mind capable of giving serious credence to the doctrine of transubstantiation' could be 'no great acquisition' to a Cabinet Council or a British House of Commons.[32]

Wordsworth was exposed to issues surrounding the Irish Question as early as the winter of 1806. Shortly after arriving at Coleorton that winter, Dorothy wrote to Lady Beaumont at Dunmow in Essex noting what she had been reading in the library:

> I have been reading in Fox's [sic] Book of Martyrs—not straight forward; but choice parts, it is a very interesting Book[.] The account of the Deaths of Ridley and Latimer (especially the latter) is most affecting and impressive. There are some sweet passages in them, yet I do not think the whole of such merit that they ought to have been published.[33]

Foxe's work was the site of much debate concerning how prejudice against Roman Catholics became embedded in English national history.[34] He provides a graphic description of the trial and execution of the Oxford Martyrs carried out by commissioners of the papal party on Broad Street, Oxford, on 16 October 1555, and traces a genealogy of anti-Catholic sentiment. Although Dorothy was not impressed with the taste of the whole study, she had reason to turn to the *Book of Martyrs* on this particular occasion. Her letter is dated 15 November 1806, two days before a General Election that was dominated by the Catholic Question.[35] The months that the Wordsworths spent at Coleorton in fact saw two General Elections and a change of government leadership that hinged on George III's refusal to breach his Coronation

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[32] *Cobbett's Political Register, Jan 7, 1804-Dec 28, 1816*, 11 (1807), 614-7 (p. 616). Wordsworth had read Spedding's collection of Cobbett's *Registers* thoroughly before June 1809 as part of his research for *The Convention of Cintra*: *W's Reading II*, p. 56.

[33] *MY i*., pp. 100-101. Wordsworth had read Foxe at Hawkshead and refers to *Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorable* (1563) in *The Pedlar*: *W's Reading I*, p. 59.

[34] William Eusebius Andrews, *A Critical and Historical Review of Fox's Book of Martyrs* (London, 1824) is a refutation of 'the greatest mass of falsehood and calumny ever issued against the social and religious principles of our Catholic fellow-men', p. 1.

[35] Sir George Beaumont had drawn Wordsworth's attention to the controversy of this election in a letter of 6 November: WLL/19. All quotation of the letters of Sir George and Lady Beaumont has been transcribed from Grasmere, Jerwood Centre, WLL/Beaumont, George/ sequence, by permission of the Wordsworth Trust.

Oath, which protected the alliance between the State and the Church of England, and was used to exclude Catholics from positions of political power.

The November election was partly a consequence of the death, on 13 September 1806, of Charles James Fox which Wordsworth had marked with his poem 'Composed 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'.[36] His choice of vocabulary—'dissolution'—indicates a dispersal of power and the poem draws on aspects of the Ode ('There was a time')—'Their glory disappear' (16) and 'A Power is passing from the earth' (17)—suggesting that Fox's death heralded an inevitable transition in the life of the nation with spiritual as well as political implications. In sending a copy of *Lyrical Ballads* to Fox in 1801, Wordsworth had identified in him a 'constant predominance of sensibility of heart' which made him a genuine advocate for the middle and lower classes.[37] But six years later Fox's sensibility had brought him to campaign for the civil rights of Irish Catholics. Wordsworth's emphasis on 'dissolution' implicitly draws on Fox's sympathies and compares the uncertainty of the present political disruption with the dispersal of monastic power after the Reformation.

Fox and Lord William Grenville had expeditiously formed a coalition when William Pitt died in January 1806. The 'Ministry of All the Talents' had immediately promised that equality for Irish Catholics would be a priority, with Fox adopting Pitt's role as champion of Catholic Relief.[38] After Fox's death, Grenville was forced to secure his position with a General Election, attempting to ensure that the House contained a sufficient number of members who were sympathetic towards the Irish Question.

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[36] *P2V*, pp. 265-6.
[37] *EY*, p. 313.
[38] Pitt's first term had ended in 1801 when he resigned over the King's refusal to negotiate over Catholic Relief, William Hague, *William Pitt the Younger* (London, Harper Collins, 2004), pp. 463-84. On the 'Ministry of all the Talents' see Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation; The Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan,1992), p. 285.

Grenville was elected Prime Minister on 17 November. However, before the Wordsworths had left Coleorton, the 'Ministry' had entirely collapsed.[39] In April 1807 the government lost the support of the King and the general public through its attempt to allow Irish Catholics greater capacity for promotion in the armed forces. Grenville was forced to resign. The in-coming Tory-led government and the popular clamour of "no popery" (no doubt expressed loudly by readers of anti-popish histories such as John Foxe's) brought home to the Catholics of England and Ireland the reality that Emancipation was still a long way off.

The Beaumonts' Catholic heritage made Coleorton a poignant place from which to witness this political turmoil. As Wordsworth acknowledged in his Coleorton Inscriptions, the ruined site of Grace Dieu Priory had been owned after the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Beaumont's recusant ancestors. Sir John Beaumont (1583-1627) had grown up in a household that allegedly sheltered Edmund Campion and was related to conspirators in the Gunpowder plot.[40] John Beaumont had been banished to the manor house at Grace Dieu in 1607 after his counter-Reformation poetry made him unpopular at court and his religious poetry was subsequently censored.[41] Wordsworth dedicated his 1815 *Poems* to Sir George, expressing his indebtedness to the time he had spent at Coleorton and Grace Dieu 'where I was animated by the recollection of those illustrious Poets of your name and family'. Wordsworth read Sir John's *Bosworth Field*

[39] In a letter to Daniel Stuart of 24 April, 1809, Coleridge indicates his disapproval of Grenville's party: 'Were there but only *one* man in the Ministry of any thing like commanding Talents, they might set a regiment of such fellows as the present Opposition at defiance': *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 3, 202.

[40] Roger D. Sell, 'Sir John Beaumont and His Three Audiences', *Writing and Religion in England, 1558-1689: Studies in Community-Making and Cultural Memory*, ed. by Roger D. Sell and Anthony W. Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 195-221 (p. 196).

[41] Every known surviving copy of Beaumont's 1629 collection had pages 181-2 removed in order to censor 'On the Death of many Goode People': F. G. Kenyon, 'Some Missing Poems of Sir John Beaumont', *The Athenaeum*, 3244, (1889), 524.

(1629) at Coleorton and assented to help Sir George organise a new publication of it.[42] Sir George believed his persecuted ancestor's poems 'might be of service' in the public domain when the Catholic Question was becoming hot in parliament. He thus appealed to Wordsworth's own confidence—evident when he had sent a copy of *Lyrical Ballads* to Charles James Fox—in poetry's capacity to influence politics.

Although Sir George and Lady Beaumont remained Anglican, their Roman Catholic ancestry was supplemented by on-going relationships. Lady Beaumont's sister, Mrs Frances Fermor, had married into one of the most prominent Catholic families of the English landed gentry.[43] Mrs Fermor was a widow before Wordsworth knew her but she maintained her Catholic beliefs until her death in 1824. Wordsworth remarked that although she was a committed Roman Catholic she did not discuss 'public issues' with him.[44] Since childhood Lady Beaumont had also been friends with Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich, who was one of only two Anglican bishops to defend the rights of Catholics.[45] On coming into office in 1806 he argued: 'it is surely requisite not only to lay aside every emotion of resentment, but to cultivate a cordial good-will towards Christians of every description, who are warmly attached to our civil constitution, and agree with us, moreover, in the great essentials of Christianity'.[46] Another of Lady

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[42] *Prose*, vol. 3, 17. Wordsworth acknowledged the title-poem in a note to *Song, at the Feast of Brougham Castle*, which he composed at Coleorton. The plans for the publication of Sir John Beaumont's poems are discussed in WLL/15, Beaumont to Wordsworth, 10 August 1806: 'I am sure you will be pleased with my ancestor (Sir John's) poems, the more I read of them the more I am pleased, his mind was elevated, pious, & *pure* […]. I wish much to consult you on a new edition of Sir John's poems—I really think they might be of service in these profligate days.' In WLL/17 Beaumont transcribes Sir John's poem, 'An Act of Hope'.

[43] Her husband was descended from the family of Lady Arabella Fermor, whom Pope had celebrated in *The Rape of the Lock*: W. H. Turner, 'The Fermor Pedigree', *Notes and Queries*, 203 (1865), 424.

[44] *IF Notes*, p. 57; WLL/79. Mrs Fermor bequeathed Wordsworth £100 and he composed 'Elegiac Stanzas—addressed to Sir G. H. B. upon the death of his sister-in-law' and 'Cenotaph' in her honour. These poems appear in *Last Poems*, pp. 46-8.

[45] Evelyn M. Howe, 'Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth's Friend', *Studies in Romanticism*, 4 (1965), 143–157 (p. 154). In April 1819 Wordsworth wrote to Lowther: 'I confess I dread the Whigs. There is not much perhaps in toasts at public dinners; but what shall we say to men who on such occasions drink the health of the Bishop of Norwich?' *MY ii.*, p. 529.

[46] *Memoirs of the late Dr. Henry Bathurst, Lord Bishop of Norwich* (London, 1837), p. 71.In January 1809, as part of a series of articles on the developments of the Catholic debate, *The British Critic* printed

Beaumont's later friends, Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle (1809-78), of Grace Dieu Manor, founded the monastery of Mount Saint Bernard at Whitwick in 1835. Lady Beaumont had written to Dorothy about his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1830.[47]

Given the closeness of the friendship between the Wordsworths and the Beaumonts, it is likely that the poet was aware of their Catholic sympathies. The time he spent at Coleorton initiated Wordsworth's interest in Sir John's poetry and saw the beginning of his serious study of monastic history. And yet, while the liberties of Roman Catholics became an increasingly tense issue for Wordsworth, he was not willing at any point, even in the 1820s, to enter directly into a debate that would cause offence to the Beaumonts.[48]

In 1808 Wordsworth expressed concerns about Irish Catholics in response to Wrangham's sermons: '[I] do not go along with you in your sentiments regarding the Catholic Question. I confess I am not prepared to see the Catholic religion as the Established Church of Ireland'.[49] As he had no patronal relationship with Wrangham, he was at liberty to respond directly without causing offence. In March 1809 he stated his determined disagreement:

> I was aware that you would think me fair game upon the Catholic Question—but really I should be greatly obliged to any man who would help me over the difficulty I stated. If the Catholics upon the plea of their being the majority merely (which implies an admission on our part that their profession of faith is in itself as good as ours, as consistent with civil liberty), if they are to have these requests accorded, how can they be refused (consistently) the further prayer, of being constituted upon the same plea, the established Church? I confess I am not prepared for this—with the

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a rather unflattering review of a letter from the Bishop of Norwich questioning the possibility of the King ever breaching his Coronation Oath. Wordsworth's *Poems, in Two Volumes* were reviewed in *The British Critic*, 33 (1809). Wordsworth was possibly reading Charles Lloyd's copies of this periodical at this time: *W's Reading II*, p. 28.

[47] *LY iii*., p. 218, n. 1. See Chapter Three for Aubrey de Vere's report of Wordsworth's visit to Mount St Bernard.

[48] Wordsworth and the Beaumonts avoided, as far as possible, all direct discussion of the Catholic Question in their correspondence. I speculate that Mrs Fermor is used, by both parties, as a substitute for any such discussion. See, for example, WLL/Beaumont, George/ 81, 25 January 1825. On William's and Dorothy's concern for Mrs Fermor: *MY i*., pp. 101, 105, 109, 129.

[49] *MY i*., p. 278.

> Methodists on one side and the Catholics on the other, what is to become of the poor Church and people of England, to both of which I am most tenderly attached, and to the former, not the less on account of the pretty little spire of Brompton Parish Church, under which you and I were made happy men, by the gift from providence of two excellent wives. To Mrs Wrangham present my cordial regards.[50]

Wrangham received an unexpected two-pronged (civic and domestic) rebuttal. Adopting a prejudice that had been hardwired into English consciousness since the Reformation and foregrounded in the current periodical press, Wordsworth asserted that the Catholic faith was inconsistent with 'civil liberty'. Wordsworth's vocabulary ('constituted') draws on the history of the constitution of Church and State established at the Glorious Revolution. Wordsworth then reminds Wrangham that his marriage is a civil as much as a religious contract: his family are protected and nourished within a nuptial union that resembles this alliance between Church and State. Surely Wrangham did not want to threaten that domestic stability.

On receiving 'An account of an English Hermit' from Lady Beaumont in December 1809, Dorothy replied, 'I should not have been so slow to thank you for the most interesting narrative of the life of "an English hermit"', and reiterated her gratitude in the postscript: 'I ought to have said more of the pleasure we received from the interesting history of the Hermit, but I have not room for it—Coleridge wishes it could be published in the Friend—but perhaps this cannot be allowed'.[51] Coleridge corroborated: 'Miss W. will probably have informed your Ladyship, how deeply I was interested with the account of the Hermit. If it had not been published, I should like to publish it in the Friend, with remarks'.[52] While there is no record of Wordsworth's response to Barnard's document, it is clear that it was the subject of some discussion at Allan Bank.

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[50] ibid, p. 313.
[51] Ibid, p. 379.
[52] *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 3, 278. I have found no evidence that the document was ever published.

Barnard's text describes two visits to Thomas Gardiner, a hermit who lived in isolation for fifty years. Gardiner had been

> elected fellow of all souls college [Oxford] about the year 1678, where he continued to reside till the revolution; after which, refusing the oaths to the government, he lost his fellowship, and soon after retired to Amney [Ampney] near Cirencester in Gloucestershire (at that time the seat of the Pleydell family) and he became tutor to Robert Pleydell Esquire, the last male heir of it.[53]

Gardiner's refusal of the oaths and eviction from Oxford, which initiated his movement towards hermitship, indicates that he was a Nonjuror. The Nonjurors were a group of bishops, rectors, and laymen (over four hundred in total) that emerged after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The Nonjurors refused the Oath of Allegiance to William and Mary because it contradicted the pledge they had previously sworn to James II and his rightful heirs. Nonjurors were forced to sacrifice their public and ecclesiastic positions permanently and many went into quiet retirement.[54]

Wordsworth addressed this episode of British history in *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822) where he referred to William of Orange as the 'Hero' who 'comes to liberate, not defy': the Protestant king is 'Conqueror beloved! Expected anxiously!', while

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[53] WLL/30.

[54] The Revolution was prompted by James II, a Roman Catholic convert, who had his son baptized into the Catholic Church and threatened to disrupt the Protestant identity of the nation with his Declaration of Indulgence. William and Mary of Orange took the throne, following which all employees of Church and State were required to take an Oath of Allegiance to the new monarchs. The Declaration of Indulgence granted religious freedom, allowing people to worship as they saw fit. On the Seven Bishops, the Glorious Revolution and the Nonjurors see, J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 66-83. Useful studies of Nonjuring include Thomas Lathbury, *A History of the Nonjurors, Their Controversies and Writings* (London, 1845) and John Henry Overton, *The Nonjurors: Their Lives, Principles, and Writings* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1902). Overton includes Thomas Gardiner in his list of clerical and lay Nonjurors (p. 478). Other notable Nonjurors include Samuel Pepys, William Law, and John Evelyn. Popular satirical plays such as Colley Cibber's *The Non-Juror* (1717) were responsible for reinforcing prejudice against them. By1806 Wordsworth had read Cibber's *Apology*, which explains that 'the satire was chiefly employ'd on the enemies of the Government' and asserts the play's motive to present as 'ridiculous' an English popish priest who was 'lurking under the doctrine of our own church': *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* (London, 1740), p. 551: *W's Library*, p. 54 and *W's Reading II*, p. 50. On the stage history and public reaction to the play see: Dudley H. Miles, 'The Political Satire of "The Non-Juror"', *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915), 281–304 (p. 299).

James II is 'The Vacillating Bondman of the Pope' (III. VIII. 10-14).[55] Wordsworth included a sonnet on the 'Acquittal of the Bishops', relating how seven bishops were imprisoned in the Tower of London for refusing to read the Declaration of Indulgence; five of those seven bishops became Nonjurors. Wordsworth praised the bishops' opposition to the Declaration as a sign of defiance in favour of the English Church but those Nonjurors who went on to refuse the oath of allegiance were guilty, in Wordsworth's eyes, of outdated patriotism.[56] By 1822, Wordsworth had studied Gilbert Burnet's and Lord Lonsdale's accounts of the Glorious Revolution; the resulting sonnets deal with the historical narrative behind 'An Account of an English Hermit' but the Nonjurors are the only group that go unrecognised in the sonnet series.[57] Alan G. Hill has speculated that this omission 'leaves the impression that for [Wordsworth] they represented a blind-alley in the historical process'.[58] Perhaps this also (partly) explains why he made no direct response to Lady Beaumont's gift.

Gardiner was called 'the silly hermit, the popish priest, the mad man' by members of his local community, which is characteristic of the prejudice Nonjurors faced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Like the Caroline Divines of the Restoration era and the Tractarians of the nineteenth century, the Nonjurors' commitment to the Anglican Church was often mistaken for perfidy and popish

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[55] *Sonnet Series*, pp. 191-2.

[56] However, in *Ecclesiastical Sketches* Wordsworth praised the nonconformists (who emerged after the 1662 Act of Uniformity) as people of insurmountable moral integrity: 'As men the dictate of whose inward sense | Outweighs the world; whom self-deceiving wit | Lures not from what they deem the cause of God' (III. VI. 12-14), *Sonnet Series*, p. 191. This, perhaps, implies Wordsworth's preference for Dissenting groups over Roman Catholics.

[57] Burnet was a Presbyterian and has a biased, anti-Catholic tone throughout. He focuses on the barbarity of Catholic Europe and James's inconstancy, in *Bishop Burnet's History of his Own Time*, 2 vols. (London, 1724), vol. 1, 617-826.

[58] Hill writes: 'Wordsworth's treatment throughout [*Ecclesiastical Sketches*] is selective, however, and too much should not be made of their omission. But insofar as they formed a link between the Caroline Church and the Tractarians of the nineteenth century, the poet could have assimilated [the Nonjurors] to his Virgilian perspectives had he wished to do so.' Hill, 'Poetry and Ecumenism: The Legacy of the Wordsworths', *Lambeth Palace Library Annual Review* (1992), 49–64 (p. 54). Barbara T. Gates provides an account of the selectiveness and historical distortions of the sonnets: 'Wordsworth's Mirror of Morality: Distortions of Church History', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 12 (1981), 129-32.

allegiance. Barnard allays these prejudices by dating his first visit to the hermitage during the Jacobite Uprising of August 1745. Barnard assured his readers that the Nonjurors' allegiances were not dangerous by describing Gardiner tranquilly engaged in solitary study and devotion, not involved in the Catholic revolt that attempted to put Charles Edward Stuart on the throne. The visit closed with a careful question about Gardiner's opinion concerning the Church of England:

> it was with some diffidence I asked him his opinion concerning the church of England; but he readily answered, that he believed it the most pure, and apostolick church now in being, though he would not but differ from it in some things, as in particular, that he believed all men would be finally saved[.][59]

For the Nonjurors, the existence of a continuing episcopal government in the national Church was a matter of the highest importance as it linked the contemporary Church with the Apostles themselves and hence to Christ through the unbroken chain of their successors, the Bishops. The essential nature of episcopacy aligns the Nonjurors with only one other theological movement: the Tractarians.[60] Gardiner's conscience forbade him from assenting to the realignment of the throne, regardless of James II's Catholicism. In other words, links between contemporary Church government and the Apostles were of more importance than James II's Roman Catholic allegiances. When Wordsworth read Barnard's text in 1809, the Oxford Movement was not yet in existence, but the prejudicial relations between the Anglican Church and the Roman Church very much were. The Catholic Emancipation Bill would open the way for Tractarianism, in which Wordsworth was later embroiled.

Despite his rank and background, Thomas Gardiner physically resembles Wordsworth's 'Old Cumberland Beggar' and 'The Leech Gatherer': he endured a

[59] WLL/30.
[60] George Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 6-7. For more on Wordsworth and The Oxford Movement see below.

'more than human weight upon his frame' and was a 'Wonder to all who do the same espy':[61]

> When I saw him, he appeared to be of a low stature, of what had been a quick and piercing eye (for he was almost or altogether blind) of a fine, serene, open, reverent countenance, and the greyness of his hair and beard, which was of a great length, gave his face the appearance of something almost more than human.[62]

Like the Leech Gatherer and the Blind Beggar of Book VII of *The Prelude*, Gardiner seemed to have been sent from another world to teach those he met about the nature and value of work and charity. The primary aim of Barnard's piece was to convey how fortunate he had been to meet with 'so wonderful a person' who had lived 'a life of such wonders', and the text ends with an instruction that the reader should emulate Gardiner's Christian qualities: 'Go and do likewise.' Gardiner's life was 'truly exemplary, filled up with acts of charity and munificence above his circumstances'; he is an intelligent committed Christian and a responsible generous citizen whose conscience was unquestionably clear: 'He was not only remarkable for the passive virtues, but also for the active graces of the christian character; his charity in particular was above his station'.[63] Gardiner's actions are generous and forgiving, for example, he refused to condemn a man who had burgled his house. His virtues of cheerfulness and tranquillity did not impinge upon the wishes or rights of others.

For readers of Barnard's work in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the concept of an 'English Hermit' would have seemed contradictory and Nonjurors continued to be characterised as popish. Thus the pamphlet would have raised ideas about the increasingly tense Catholic Emancipation debate. Despite Wordsworth's political opinions, in some ways Wordsworth and Gardiner were similar. Gardiner had

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[61] *P2V*, p. 126.
[62] WLL/30.
[63] Wordsworth explores the exemplary Christian life of Rev Robert Walker in a lengthy note to 'Seathwaite Chapel' in the Duddon series: *Sonnet Series*, pp. 84-97. Walker lived in the secluded Duddon Valley and was an outstanding servant to his parishioners and family.

adopted a monkish way of life because he was loyal to the English throne; he therefore combined royal allegiance with the qualities of quietude and meditation that Wordsworth valued in the monastic tradition.[64] Equally, Wordsworth's approval of the values of monasticism went hand-in-hand with his nationalistic attachment to the Church of England. Poetically, Wordsworth was able to separate the value of hermitic silence and contemplation from its denominational framework. However, with regard to the Catholic Question, Wordsworth could not reconcile the privately held beliefs of Catholic citizens with their status as British subjects.

Lady Beaumont carefully qualified her intention in sending 'An account of an English Hermit' to Allan Bank: 'I send this account for the amusement of your fireside. The relator is a character well known in this neighbourhood and the truth unimpeachable'.[65] She presented the text as a piece of entertainment but the verification of the respectability of the author and the legalistic connotations of 'unimpeachable' imply that the text's content was also of civic importance. Lady Beaumont drew attention to and echoed Barnard's didactic tone and thus indicated her moral approval of Gardiner's position (which is equal to that expressed by the Bishop of Norwich). This civic and moral framing makes the text a vehicle for the promotion of the dignity the Nonjurors demonstrated by remaining loyal to the English Church *and* to James II despite the King's Roman Catholic beliefs and despite their opposition to the Declaration of Indulgence. Gardiner's story therefore aligns with Lady Beaumont's own beliefs by implicitly supporting the Emancipationist proposition that Christian duty requires that Catholics are afforded equal civil rights.

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[64] Nevertheless, *The White Doe of Rylstone* demonstrates that Wordsworth would have objected to Gardiner's allegiance to James II just as he disapproved of Norton's disloyalty to Elizabeth I and the disastrous attempt to restore what had become an invalid Catholic monarchy. Gardiner combined outdated patriotism with virtues of Christian charity and contemplation.

[65] WLL/30.

'An account of an English Hermit' circulated amongst Lady Beaumont's friends in 1809 because the Coronation Oath and the Oath of Allegiance, at that time, formed a substantial barrier to Catholic Relief. Anti-Emancipationists believed that Catholics could not be loyal both to the crown and to their Pope; they believed that submitting to the requests of Catholics would undermine the identity of "Englishmen". In refusing the Oath in 1689 Gardiner had neither committed to the papacy nor forfeited his particular identity as an English Churchman; rather his decision was part of his devotion to the Anglican Church and a demonstration of Christian virtue. The Nonjurors pointed a way out of the Emancipation deadlock: their piety and loyalty went beyond the bounds of the Oath and beyond their own desires for civil appointment. In this light, Barnard's narrative becomes a piece of Emancipationist literature which functioned to promote the Christian dignity required to grant equality to Roman Catholics.

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The impetus for *Ecclesiastical Sketches* was threefold. Firstly, the Advertisement to the volume announced that in December 1820, during a visit to Coleorton, Wordsworth and Sir George Beaumont spent a morning walking about the estate 'with a view to fix upon the Site of a New Church which [Beaumont] intended to erect'.[66] This caused them both to 'look back upon past events with wonder and gratitude, and on the future with hope'. The result was some of the sonnets at the close of the volume which Wordsworth called 'a private memorial of that morning's occupation'. Secondly, the Advertisement refers to the Catholic Question 'which was agitated in Parliament about that time' and which

[66] *Sonnet Series*, p. 137.

'kept [Wordsworth's] thoughts in the same course'.[67] Wordsworth believed that an ecclesiastical history of England, conveyed through a series of sonnets, would strengthen the sense of national identity and help the anti-Emancipationist cause. The third stimulus (not announced in the Advertisement) was Wordsworth's exposure in 1820 to ecclesiastical architecture in Oxford and Cambridge, and his emersion in Catholic practices during his tour of the Continent.[68]

Geoffrey Jackson suggests that Church history had interested Wordsworth since he read his brother Christopher's *Ecclesiastical Biography* in 1810 and that the Catholic Question had been a source of irritation 'at least since it was debated in the House of Lords on May 17, 1819'.[69] Studies of Wordsworth's relationship with Roman Catholicism concur by focusing on the poetry of the 1820s and 30s, and on his contact with prominent figures of the Oxford Movement.[70] However, as I have demonstrated,

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[67] ibid.

[68] Wordsworth's tour of the continent was framed by visits to Robert Jones in Oxfordshire on the way south and to Christopher Wordsworth in Cambridge on the return journey north. *Ecclesiastical Sketches* and *Memorials of a Tour in the Continent* were published together in March 1822: *A Life*, pp. 337-44.

[69] *Sonnet Series*, p. 130.

[70] For example Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth and "Catholic Truth": The Role of Frederick William Faber', *The Review of English Studies*, 45 (1994), 204–220; Manning, 'Wordsworth at St Bees'; Moutray, 'Remodelling Catholic Ruins'. The Catholic Question was raging throughout the 1820s with rival publications including Robert Southey, *The Book of the Church* (1824); Charles Butler, *Book of the Roman Catholic Church* (1825); Joseph Blanco White, *Practical and Internal Evidence Against Catholicism* (1825). Sheridan Gilley provides an overview of the literary exchange: 'Nationality and Liberty, Protestant and Catholic: Robert Southey's Book of the Church', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), 409–32. Michael Tomko notices passages of anti-Catholicism in *The Excursion* and draws on Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* but does not show where, when, or how Wordsworth's opinion developed: *British Romanticism and the Catholic Question*. See also Michael H. Bright, 'English Literary Romanticism and the Oxford Movement', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40 (1979), 385–404. Wordsworth became well acquainted with the Tractarians, including John Keble and John Henry Newman, around the time of his receipt, in 1839, of the honorary degree from Oxford University: *A Life*, p. 397. In a very public way, Faber in particular began to present Wordsworth as the poet of The Oxford Movement. On 6 August 1844, Wordsworth replied to a letter from Faber stating that it would give him great honour if his 'Stanzas suggested in a Steamboat off St Bees' Head' were printed alongside 'The Life of St Bega', which was Faber's contribution to *Lives of the English Saints*. Wordsworth's verse was duly printed at the end of the second part of this fourteen-volume series, together with a note by Faber drawing attention to the date of the poem's composition. Wordsworth had written 'St Bees'' in 1833, the year that marked the beginning of the Oxford Movement; Faber described this coincidence as a 'fresh instance of the remarkable way in which [Wordsworth's] poems did in divers places anticipate the revival of catholic doctrine among us': *Lives of the English Saints*, ed. by John Henry Newman and others, 14 pts. (London, 1844-5), pt. 7, 181-82. Parts 1 and 2 were edited by Newman. Wordsworth owned a copy of the Cistercian Saints volume: *W's Library*, p. 185. Wordsworth severed all contact when Faber converted to Roman Catholicism in November 1845.

Wordsworth's interest in both monastic history and the Catholic Question can be traced to the time of his residence at Coleorton during the winter of 1806. In November 1820, Wordsworth's and Beaumont's joint reflection on the past prompted *Ecclesiastical Sketches*. As I will argue from an analysis of the sonnets, it seems likely that Wordsworth formed ideas for the *Sketches* in the context of the Winter Garden, the grounds of Coleorton, and his knowledge of previous recusant generations of the Beaumont family. The sonnets therefore mark the culmination of a poetic and political entanglement that began much earlier than Jackson proposes and which was intimately connected with Coleorton and the Beaumonts.

In 1822 *Ecclesiastical Sketches* consisted of one hundred and two Petrarchan sonnets chronologically divided into three sections. The first section is largely dependent upon Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; the second covers the period between the reigns of Henry III and Charles I; the third moves 'From the Restoration to the Present Times', ending with sonnets on the prospective church building at Coleorton and the Chapel at King's College, Cambridge.[71] Wordsworth undertook a period of intense study between December 1820 and March 1821, covering sources including Burnet, Foxe, Fuller, Heylin, Stillingfleet, Stowe, Strype, Turner, Walton, Whitaker, the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible. This is the richest and most sustained period of research into religious history he had undertaken since 1807.[72]

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[71] Wordsworth renamed the collection *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* in 1836-7, by which point he had expanded it by thirty sonnets. All of my references relate to the text and ordering of the 1822 volume. A detailed summary of the historical narrative of the series is provided by John Delli-Carpini, *History, Religion, and Politics in William Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets: with an appendix containing the text of the Ecclesiastical sonnets* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), pp. 1-25.

[72] Abbie Findley Potts provides an invaluable account of Wordsworth's sources in *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets of William Wordsworth: A Critical Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), pp. 24-7. Wordsworth placed an order with a bookseller in Charing-Cross in November 1820 for this purpose. Alan G. Hill has argued that *Ecclesiastical Sketches* constitute the materials Wordsworth proposed to include in *The Recluse* under the rubric of 'meditations in the Author's own person', in 'Wordsworth's "Grand Design"', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 72 (1986), 187-204 (p. 194).

Part One contains a set of three sonnets on ‘Seclusion’ in which Wordsworth balances a life of action with one of contemplation:

> LANCE, shield, and sword relinquished—at his side
> A Bead-roll, in his hand a clasped Book,
> Or staff more harmless than a Shepherd’s crook,
> The war-worn Chieftain quits the world—to hide
> His thin autumnal locks where Monks abide
> In cloistered privacy. But not to dwell
> In soft repose he comes. Within his cell,
> Round the decaying trunk of human pride,
> At morn, and eve, and midnight’s silent hour,
> Do penitential cogitations cling:
> Like ivy, round some ancient elm, they twine
> In grisly folds and strictures serpentine;
> Yet, while they strangle without mercy, bring
> For recompense their own perennial bower. (I. XXI)[73]

The commas at the beginning of the first line create an irregular rhythm which defers the introduction of the prevailing iambic pentameter. These disjointed feet express Wordsworth’s disapproval of soldierly activity, but the stalled rhythm is ‘relinquished’ as the Saxon king retreats into a monkish life. Although the sonnet is divided according to rhyme into a Petrarchan octave and sestet, its argument is split into three with the first volta occurring in the second sentence across lines six and seven (‘But’), and a second volta, following a Shakespearean form, at the beginning of line thirteen (‘Yet’). These turns encapsulate the complex combination of work and repose that the hermit-king, as a variant of the pastoral shepherd, embraces. The central sentence consists of five complete iambic feet—‘But not to dwell | In soft repose he comes’—but its division over the line ending indicates the negative undercurrent of the hermit’s quietude. Within the cell, prayer marks the passage of silent hours and the syllabically heavy ‘penitential cogitations’ are stretched along line ten and then suspended by the pause generated with the semi-colon. Penitent meditation does not release the king from

[73] All quotation of *Ecclesiastical Sketches* is taken from *Sonnet Series*, pp. 137-204. Series section, sonnet number and line numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

his guilt but restricts him further and further, recalling Satan in Eden creating 'grisly folds and strictures serpentine'. The elm is an unusual tree for Wordsworth to evoke, particularly in the context of monastic retreat, because it is deciduous. Yet in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth had appropriated the elm as a standard feature of pastoral poetry. The elm as a figure for the king, in this sonnet, is under attack from the satanic evergreen ivy (his prayer), which succeeds in strangling him 'without mercy'. Wordsworth usually associates evergreen trees and plants with shelter and protection but here the combination of monastic and pastoral arboriculture does not work: the ivy (reclusion) attacks the hermit figure because he was already a ruined and 'decaying trunk of human pride'. However, as the second volta comes into play, the conjunction of human weakness with the unnaturally austere and weighty activity of constant meditation results in a 'perennial bower'. What does Wordsworth suggest?

This mixed representation of seclusion is clearer when we notice that Wordsworth was reusing images he had employed in the sonnet to Lady Beaumont on completion of her Winter Garden. In 1807 he had planted 'green unfading bowers, | And shrubs to hang upon the warm alcove, | And sheltering wall' to create a quiet cloistral space.[74] In this context, evergreens were entirely beneficial and the sonnet ends with a celebration of the provision of perfect 'perennial bowers and murmuring pines'. The image also recalls the concluding lines of Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* which narrate the life of the deaf man who is buried beneath murmuring pines that emit a 'composing sound'. The deaf man became a model for how a life of silence creates poetic spirit.[75] In the Winter Garden, as in the deaf man's life, the positive benefits of secluded contemplation are only visible over time through recognition of arboreal

[74] *P2V*, p. 149.
[75] *Prose*, vol. 2, 96.

growth. In this context, the second volta of this *Ecclesiastical* sonnet explains the 'recompense' that comes with time.

The next sonnet of *Ecclesiastical Sketches* is the first in which Wordsworth refers to himself directly (with an italicised '*My*') and he does so, without the usual disruption of an inverted first foot, through a desire to occupy a hermitage. Wordsworth pictures himself lying on a bed of 'yellow leaves', evoking Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 73', while the 'hooting Owl' as 'night-watch' recalls Milton's *Il Penseroso* and Gray's *Elegy*. Wordsworth thus presents himself as a poet keen to enter a state of hermitic retirement in order to write his great work:

> METHINKS that to some vacant Hermitage
> *My* feet would rather turn—to some dry nook
> Scoop'd out of living rock, and near a brook
> Hurl'd down a mountain-cove from stage to stage,
> Yet tempering, for my sight, its bustling rage
> In the soft heaven of a translucent pool;
> Thence creeping under forest arches cool,
> Fit haunt of shapes whose glorious equipage
> Perchance would throng my dreams. A beechen bowl,
> A maple dish, my furniture should be;
> Crisp, yellow leaves my bed; the hooting Owl
> My night-watch: nor should e'er the crested Fowl
> From thorp or vill his matins sound for me,
> Tired of the world and all its industry. (I. XXII)

Wordsworth figures himself as an inhabitant of 'some dry nook | Scoop'd out of living rock' (2-3). This is a reference to the niche he had created in the Winter Garden at Coleorton. In 1811 he had written an inscription, 'In a Garden of the same', specifically to be placed 'so as to be *visible only to a Person sitting within the Nich,*[sic] which we hollowed out of the Sand-stone in the Winter Garden' [Wordsworth's emphasis]. The inscription reads: 'be it known | That it was scooped within the living stone' (9-10).[76] This hermitic reading space was part of Wordsworth's gardening project which helped initiate his study of monasticism and his revaluation of pastoral and georgic poetry. In

[76] *MY i.*, pp. 513-4. *Shorter Poems*, p. 107.

the Fenwick Note to this inscription Wordsworth writes: 'While the labourers were at work, Mrs Wordsworth, my sister, & I used to amuse ourselves occasionally in scooping this seat out of the soft stone. It is of the size, with something of the appearance, of a stall in a Cathedral'.[77] The niche thus resembles a natural pew metaphorically carved into the 'Gothic Church' of Wordsworth's poetry.

The sonnet further conflates the hermit, the poet, and the shepherd by giving himself a beechen bowl and maple dish. The rhyme scheme of the sestet draws attention to this bowl which jars (not as an eye-rhyme, but aurally) with 'Owl' and 'Fowl'. In Book VIII of *The Prelude*, the shepherd's only task is 'to carve a beechen bowl | For Spring or Fountain' (VIII. 344-5), and in *The Excursion*, the Wanderer looks upon the 'useless fragment of a wooden bowl' (I. 525) beside the spring near Margaret's garden. The pastor also describes an isolated plot of ground, apt for cultivation, in which a hermit might have 'dipped his maple dish | In the sweet spring' (V. 689-90).[78] Wordsworth places these wooden props at points in his poetry where he is reflecting on the nature of pastoral poetry. In line with the conjunction of inscriptions and sonnets in the Idyllium category of the 1815 Preface, Wordsworth here draws together these two forms as he replaces the shepherds of his early poetry with monastic figures. The hermit becomes an indolent pastoral figure, 'Tired of the world and all its industry' (14) and, by comparison, so does the poet.

But the third sonnet of this set overturns the impression of hermitic indolence with a meditation on the diligence of Bede, who completed his translation of John's Gospel with his final breath:[79]

But what if One, thro' grove or flowery mead,

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[77] *IF Notes*, p. 29.
[78] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, p. 220. The beechen bowl appears in the first idyll of Theocritus.
[79] See Wordsworth's note to this poem, *Sonnet Series*, p. 152 and Bede, E*cclesiastical History* (1979), p. xxxix. Bede (b. 672 d.735) was admitted to Jarrow Abbey aged seven. He wrote biblical commentaries, hagiography and ecclesiastical history including the *Life of St Cuthbert*.

> Indulging thus at will the creeping feet
> Of voluptuous indolence, should meet
> The hovering Shade of venerable Bede;
> The Saint, the Scholar, from a circle freed
> Of toil stupendous, in a hallowed seat
> Of Learning, where he heard the billows beat
> On a wild coast—rough monitors to feed
> Perpetual industry. Sublime Recluse!
> The recreant soul, that dares to shun the debt
> Imposed on human kind, must first forget
> Thy diligence, thy unrelaxing use
> Of long life; and, in the hour of death,
> The last dear service of thy passing breath! (I. XXIII)

The enjambment that builds into line nine creates an impetus towards the central outstanding message: 'Perpetual industry. Sublime Recluse!' Wordsworth reflects the rigor of Bede's intellectual endeavour and industriousness in the spurt of activity through the sestet. The containment of so many monosyllabic words in the final five lines shows Wordsworth constrained by the imperative to complete his narrative within the limits of the sonnet form, as Bede worked under mortal limitation to finish his translation. It is Bede's unrelaxing diligence that Wordsworth admires and perhaps the poet again had in mind his own laborious task in writing *The Recluse*, which we glimpse at the central point of the poem where the sonnet begins to accelerate with *its* industry.[80] In the context of Bede's friendship with St Cuthbert, the emphasis on Bede's 'last dear service' and 'passing breath' links the sonnet with the inscription for St Herbert's hermitage.

[80] On 28 May 1825, Wordsworth wrote to Beaumont: 'I never had a higher relish for the beauties of Nature than during this spring, nor enjoyed myself more. What manifold reason, my dear Sir George, have you and I to be thankful to Providence! Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will; the Religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure; and Gratitude is the handmaid to Hope, and hope the harbinger of Faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our species, I lean upon my Friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St John; and my creed rises up of itself with the ease of an exhalation, yet a Fabric of adamant. God bless you, my ever dear friend! Kindest love to Lady B.' In this assertion of his attachment to the Bible, particularly John's Gospel (which was central to Basil's formulation of the Trinity), Wordsworth implicitly aligns himself with Bede. As Bede completed the translation of John's Gospel with his final breath, Wordsworth's exhalation on a beautiful spring morning emits his natural creed. *LY i.*, p. 351.

Wordsworth made significant revisions to the Herbert inscription on two occasions: the first was in 1811 when he wrote Inscriptions for the Grounds of Coleorton; the second was in 1827 as he expanded *Ecclesiastical Sketches*.[81] The original version published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) is focused on the friendship between Herbert and Cuthbert; by its republication in 1815, Wordsworth had shifted the emphasis to the site of the hermitage and added an opening section explaining Herbert's motivation, marking him out as a serious religious figure in Basil's tradition; by 1827 Wordsworth had moved the exclamatory address ('Stranger!') to the beginning of the inscription, which brought the poem generically closer to an epitaph. This final version focused on the ruins of the cell as a monument to the prayerful life that was no longer practiced on Derwent Island.[82] However, the final lines of the inscription remained unchanged:

> Nor in vain
> So prayed he:—as our Chronicles report,
> Though here the Hermit numbered his last day,
> Far from St Cuthbert his beloved Friend,
> These holy men both died in the same hour.

Herbert and Cuthbert, who were physically separated in life, were united in prayer and finally in death.[83] This spatial and temporal proximity is an important characteristic of inscriptions and epitaphs which, Wordsworth explained, should exist 'in close

[81] *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 179-81.
[82] Many of the *Ecclesiastical Sketches* also employ the inscriptive trope of an opening imperative exclamation. Anne L. Rylstone provides a list of these: *Prophetic Memory in Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 111. The 1818 hermit inscriptions, like *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, contain an unusually large number of exclamation marks.
[83] In 1816, Southey's nine-year-old son Herbert died of an inflammation on the heart (*MY ii.*, pp. 305-7, 320). Three years later, his wife gave birth to another son. Southey wrote to Sir George Beaumont with the news: 'I mean to call him Cuthbert; you who know Wordsworth's poems so well will understand why. From most people I keep such feelings out of sight, as if I were ashamed of them, and for them it is reason enough that it is a good Saxon name, still in use in Northumberland and Durham'. Southey conveys his belief that his sons, who never had the chance to meet, would be united in heaven as Ss Herbert and Cuthbert were: *Memorials of Coleorton*, vol. 2, 188. On St Herbert's meeting with St Cuthbert in Carlisle, and Herbert's prayer that, 'I beseech you by the Lord not to desert me but to remember your most faithful companion and ask the merciful Lord that, as we served Him together on earth, we may journey together to the skies to behold His grace in heaven.' See: *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, (1979), p. 441.

connection with the bodily remains of the deceased'.[84] This trope of increased proximity is rooted in Weever's theory that graves were placed close to monasteries because the monks' occupation was to pray for the souls of the deceased. In capturing the moment of death, Wordsworth marks the translation of Herbert, Cuthbert, and Bede from specific physical locations into a spiritual timelessness. The final breath collapses the space between Herbert and Cuthbert, while for Bede it signifies the passage of his historical and biblical writings into the hands of his descendants. Bede's work breaks down the spatial distinction between Derwent Water and Lindisfarne (Cuthbert's hermitage), for Wordsworth, by explaining how the Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria was unified through Christianity. In terms of ecclesiastical geography, there was not in fact such a distance between Herbert and Cuthbert.

The four Inscriptions for the Grounds of Coleorton function in a similar way: they draw Wordsworth and Beaumont closer to one another in Wordsworth's absence and they connect the two men, via the spirit of Coleorton, with Beaumont's literary ancestors, Sir John and Francis:

> Here may some Painter sit in future days,
> Some future Poet meditate his lays;
> Not mindless of that distant age renowned
> When Inspiration hovered o'er this ground,
> The haunt of him who sang how spear and shield
> In civil conflict met on Bosworth Field;
> And of that famous Youth, full soon removed
> From earth, perhaps by Shakespeare's self approved,
> Fletcher's associate, Jonson's Friend beloved. (15-23)[85]

By marking spots in the garden that ought to be reverenced, the inscriptions facilitate temporal and spatial connections. Wordsworth's sonnet on Bede therefore reveals, via his relations with Coleorton, deepening connections between inscriptions, sonnets, and epitaphs.

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[84] *Prose*, vol. 2, 53.
[85] *Shorter Poems*, p. 101.

The second section of *Ecclesiastical Sketches* opens with a set of meditations on Cistercian monasteries and Wordsworth incorporated an inscription by St Bernard into the first sonnet. This inscription had been erected on the walls of Cistercian houses to admonish passing travellers who might disturb the monks' silence:[86]

> *"Here Man more purely lives, less oft doth fall,*
> *"More promptly rises, walks with nicer heed,*
> *"More safely rests, dies happier, is freed*
> *"Earlier from cleansing fires, and gains withal*
> *"A brighter crown."*—On yon Cistercian wall
> *That* confident assurance may be read;
> And, to like shelter, from the world have fled
> Encreasing multitudes. The potent call
> Doubtless shall cheat full oft the heart's desires;
> Yet, while the rugged age on pliant knee
> Vows to rapt Fancy humble fealty,
> A gentler life spreads round the holy spires;
> Where'er they rise the sylvan waste retires,
> And aërry [sic] harvests crown the fertile lea. (II. I) [Wordsworth's italics]

The historic Cistercian inscription functions within the sonnet to evoke the monastic building on which it is supposedly inscribed and to alert the reader to a spot of imaginatively sacred ground. Characteristically, Wordsworth's sonnet changes its perspective, arguing that the promise of the inscription would 'cheat full oft the heart's desires' (9). 'Yet', Wordsworth turns again, 'A gentler life spreads round the holy spires' (10-11). The sonnet's formal capacity for voltas allows Wordsworth (in a way that inscriptions formally do not) to convey his contradictory opinions about the relative emptiness and richness of Cistercian life. This conflict continues in the following sonnets.

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[86] This inscription appears in Whitaker, *History of Whalley*, p. 48 and Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, pp. cxxxii.-cxxxiii. Findley Potts provides the original Latin and traces it to St Bernard's writings: Wordsworth, Whitaker and Weever use the same translation: Findley Potts, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, pp. 248-9. Most of the ruined monasteries Wordsworth had visited and studied were of the Cistercian order, which was governed by St Basil's rule. Examples include Kirkstall, Wykeham, Rievaulx, Furness, Fountains, Tintern, Whalley, Salley, Melrose, Jervaux, Whitby, Finchale. Appendix II (below) is a list of Wordsworth's references to these places.

In ‘Monks and Schoolmen’, for example, Wordsworth again undercuts the shirking of worldly responsibility by presenting ‘hooded Cenobites’ in private cells seeking ‘public quiet’ and social justice through intellectual pursuits (II. II. 2-4). A silent, secluded life promotes peace and social harmony. This sonnet is distinctive in that it sustains a positive viewpoint in a single sentence. Implicitly comparing them with poets, Wordsworth makes the case for monks as visionary ‘Counsellors for the world, of piercing ken’ (5). Yet, a few sonnets later, the tables have turned. In ‘Abuse of Monastic Power’ Wordsworth contrasts selfish cloistered monks with ‘The pious, humble, useful Secular’ (II. XII. 6). It is unfair that a monk who lives for himself ‘and struggles with himself alone’ gains the largest share of worldly esteem and heavenly favour. ‘Secular’ here means non-monastic rather than non-religious; the secular clergy are priests of the Roman Church who have charge of parishes; the regular clergy belong to one of the enclosed monastic orders.[87] This conflict between public and reclusive life is at the centre of Wordsworth’s struggle with *The Recluse* and it is linked with the question of what constitutes religious activity or, by extension, religious poetry. Does religious activity best take place in community or in solitude? Is religious poetry introspective and meditative, or public and historical?

The entanglement of Wordsworth’s political opposition to Catholic Emancipation and his poetic interest in solitary quietude, made the hermit a figure in which he expressed contradictory or diverse opinions. Wordsworth chose the sonnet form to convey his history of Christianity because it aligned with the formal metaphor he had established in ‘Nuns fret not’ where he found liberty within restraint. But the sonnet is not the only form he associated with recluses: his use of garden imagery, monastic habits, and the call to silence draws together sonnet, inscription, and epitaph.

[87] *Sonnet Series*, p. 259

These forms sit within Wordsworth's Idyllium group because of their capacity to memorialise a tranquil state of mind or quiet *genius loci* and to facilitate imagined spatial and temporal proximity. Through associations with inscriptions and epitaphs, Wordsworth's sonnets become an extension of the generic mixture of the pastoral and the monastic that began in *The Excursion*.

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The final section of *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, as it stood in 1822, focused on church architecture and the sacred nature of church grounds. This theme became pertinent in 1818 when the government agreed to spend a million pounds building new churches, and several of

Wordsworth's sonnets are memorials to that morning he and Beaumont spent surveying Coleorton for their own suitable building site.[88] The sonnets implicitly ask how a secular 'plot of ground' becomes holy and how the *genius loci* is maintained after a church is emptied and ruined. Wordsworth's 1818 inscriptions sought to mark a revered place in the Duddon Valley and warn strangers against disturbing its silence; St Bernard's inscription was used by the Cistercians and by Wordsworth for the same purpose. But Wordsworth's note to 'Pastoral Character' (III. XI), a response to his visit

[88] Jackson's note to 'New Churches', *Sonnet Series*, p. 273 and Regina Hewitt, 'Church Building as Political Strategy in Wordsworth's "Ecclesiastical Sonnets"', *Mosaic*, 25 (1992), 31–46. In the years following this surge in church construction, the Anglican ecclesiological group, the Cambridge Camden Society, researched and promoted the science, operations, and symbolism of medieval churches. Wordsworth visited the society meeting of 7 November, 1844, and was adopted as one of their founders. Their records state: '[Wordsworth] had sown the seed which was branching out now among them, as in other directions, to the recall of whatever was pure and imaginative, whatever was not merely utilitarian, to the service of both Church and State'. This passage from the society's publication, *The Ecclesiologist*, is quoted in James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: the Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), p. 28. The Camden Society was influenced by The Oxford Movement and by Romanticism: 'The CCS soon found it was impossible to understand the functions of medieval churches without diligent research into service books, visitation articles, parochial records, and the devotional and dogmatic writings of the Middle Ages. […] In addition written materials, funeral monuments, illuminated manuscripts provided important sources' (p. 66). Members were obliged to visit a gothic church every week. Gill discusses Wordsworth's meeting with the Cambridge Camden Society in, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, p. 23.

to the Oxfordshire parsonage of Robert Jones, explains that the boundary between the holy churchyard and its secular parsonage is obscure

> Where holy ground begins—unhallowed ends,
> Is marked by no distinguishable line;
> The turf unites—the pathways intertwine[.] (1-3)[89]

Sacred ground seeps into and colours that which it touches. The 'populous' graveyard with its 'gay' and 'glittering Tombstones', adjacent to Jones's 'humble' parsonage, creates a community between the living and the dead that is sensed and shared by the trees, shrubs, and flowers that it animates. Holy and unhallowed mingle 'like the sound | Of many waters, or as evening blends | With shady night' (7-9). Wordsworth's movement between prose and poetry in this note further reflects the continuum of consecrated and domestic ground. The sonnet ends with an image of light ('Bright as the glimpses if Eternity, | To Saints accorded in their mortal hour' (13-14)) and Wordsworth pinpoints the moment of death (for saints like Bede, Cuthbert, and Herbert) as a confluence at which the mortal and the immortal, the secular and the sacred, consummate. Yet these two states touch one another throughout life.

In 'Mutability', Wordsworth explains that across history, the sacred nature of a monastic site continues to exist at differing pitches. The rise and fall of monasticism thus resembles the movement 'along a scale | Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail; | A musical but melancholy chime' (III. XVI. 2-4). The permanent holy status of church grounds means Wordsworth's objections to Roman Catholicism do not ultimately contradict his poetic interests:

> Why should we break Time's charitable seals?
> Once ye were holy, ye are holy still;
> Your spirit freely let me drink and live! (III. XVII. 12-14)

[89] *Sonnet Series*, p. 232.

Wordsworth regretted that in previous sonnets he had not *lamented* the downfall of the monasteries, indicating that denominational activity does not in fact impinge on the spirit of the place. Rather, the *genius loci* is created through the imposition of 'favourable restraints' which impel the visitor to express 'outward signs of piety and morality'. Church grounds are made permanently sacred through the responses they continue to create based on a transaction of silence between the place and the apprehender.

Inside King's College Chapel, Wordsworth found little cells and alcoves that were designed to be the dwelling places of holiness:

> These lofty pillars—spread that branching roof
> Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
> Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
> Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die,
> Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality. (III. XXIV. 9-14)

Wordsworth celebrates the gothic design of the chapel, referring to the flying buttresses that enabled the apparent 'self-poise' of the high slender pillars.[90] However, the architect is most deserving of praise for the Chapel's acoustic capacity: the tree-like 'branching roof' and scooped cells, are perfect naturalised dwelling places of both music and silence. Echoes and reverberations point out the spaces in which sanctity continually resides. The music is reluctant to pass away even when it reaches the end of its lifespan and is usurped by silence. These hollow cells continue to feature in the following sonnet:

> But, from the arms of silence—list! O list!
> That music bursteth into second life—
> The notes luxuriate—every stone is kiss'd
> By sound or ghost of sound, in mazy strife;
> Heart-thrilling strains, that cast before the eye
> Of the Devout a veil of ecstacy! (III. XXV. 9-14)

[90] E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th edn (1950; repr. London: Phaidon, 1995), pp. 185-6.

The empty spaces are necessary for the ghostly echoes and reverberations that create sound, which is made all the more awe-inspiring by its interchange with silence. Wordsworth underemphasises the visual image of the church, which is obscured by 'a veil of ecstacy', in favour of the sonic and haptic embrace of the 'heart-thrilling' architecture.

The question of how a plot of ground gains and retains its holiness is applicable to poetry. How does the poetic 'plot of ground' become sacred? What constitutes religious poetry? In a letter to Lady Beaumont of 1807, Wordsworth explained that 'to be incapable of a feeling of Poetry in my sense of the word is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God'.[91] The 1815 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' explains the 'affinity between religion and poetry': 'The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burthen upon words and symbols'.[92] In 1824 he claimed 'all great poets are […] powerful Religionists' because imagination and inspiration are by their infinite intangible nature, religious.[93]

In an essay on Wordsworth of 1840, Henry Alford made the distinction between 'religious poetry' and 'versified religion', of which the poet approved:[94]

> The former ranges at a distance from the subject, and brings the mind and feelings into unconscious and comely subjection, clearing the temple, as it were, of intruders, before the solemn music of scriptural truth bursts on the ear of the soul; the latter hitches into doggerel, better or worse, the deepest solemnities of our faith, talks in texts, and descants on doctrines, forbids the gentle and inquiring, disgusts the practiced ear of taste, and furnishes laughing matter for the trifling.[95]

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[91] *MY i*., p. 146.
[92] *Prose*, vol. 3, 65.
[93] *LY i*., p. 245.
[94] *LY iv*., p. 23. Alan G. Hill summarises: '[r]eligion, for Wordsworth, is a natural response of the human spirit, and rooted as much in the feelings as in the intellect': 'Poetry and Ecumenism', p. 62.
[95] Henry Alford, 'Chapters on Poetry and Poets: Wordsworth', in *Dearden's Miscellany* (1840), vol. 3, pt. 2, 93–108, (p. 108). Alford's 'The Abbot of Muchelnaye', which Wordsworth admired, appears on the following pages (pp. 109-111). It narrates a story of a monk separated from his lover and only reunited as she breathes her last breath and is reminiscent of themes in Wordsworth's *Vaudracour and Julia*, 'Inscription for St Herbert's Hermitage', and 'St Catherine of Ledbury'.

Perhaps adopting the imagery of Wordsworth's sonnet on King's College Chapel or of Book IV of *The Excursion,* Alfred states that religious poetry is focused on the reader's capacity to listen.[96] The mind and the emotions are brought by religious poetry to a state of heightened awareness of 'solemn music' bursting on the ear of the soul as a physical experience of something invisible. John Wilson's essay of 1842 also defined 'Sacred Poetry' in terms of the reader's experience, not merely its doctrinal content. But Wilson concluded that while *The Excursion* contains a very high religion, it is not a Christian poem because it is unaided by the inspiration of Revealed Religion: '[Wordsworth] certainly cannot be called a Christian poet' he writes. *Ecclesiastical Sketches* on the other hand 'are sacred poetry indeed': they are both inspired by Christian knowledge and conducive of sacred experience.[97] Wilson's and Alford's comments require further enquiry.

Wordsworth's emphasis on subjective experience, particularly listening, means his readers have often been biased and there has always been critical disagreement over both the religious nature of his poetry and his evolving personal allegiances.[98] Quakers,

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[96] See Chapter Four for my discussion of the Wanderer's practiced 'ear of faith'.

[97] Wilson writes under a pseudonym: Christopher North, 'Sacred Poetry', in *Recreations of Christopher North*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1842), vol. 2, 320–403 (pp. 344-5, 360). In 1802 Wilson had been one of the first people to write to Wordsworth in admiration of his poetry. Wordsworth replied warmly to Wilson's letter in June 1802: *EY*, pp. 352-8. Wilson claimed that he valued *Lyrical Ballads* next to his copy of the Bible.

[98] As I discussed in the Introduction, studies of Wordsworth and religion have been inconclusive because they have had to take into account his privately-held beliefs, public/biographical declarations, and the religious vision of his poetry. For example Nancy Easterlin focuses on Wordsworth's unconscious motivations: *Wordsworth and the Question of 'Romantic Religion'*; Robert M. Ryan emphasises Wordsworth's public articulation of his religious ideas: *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William Ulmer looks at the evolution of Wordsworth's privately held beliefs: *The Christian Wordsworth*. Richard E. Brantley uncovers Wordsworth's possible exposure to Evangelical Anglicanism: *Wordsworth's 'Natural Methodism'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975). M. H. Abrams' is unconcerned with what propositions about God Wordsworth would have been prepared to assert outside the poetry: *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 90. H. N. Fairchild focuses on Wordsworth's direct announcements of faith, biographical evidence, and the religious contents of his poetry: *Religious Trends in English Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), vol. 3, 138-262. Stephen Prickett takes the view that the poet's "ideas" and his "verse" are inseparable: *Romanticism and Religion*, pp. 4-5. John G. Rudy finds Zen Buddhism in Wordsworth's inclusive radical spirituality: *Wordsworth and the Zen Mind: The Poetry of Self-Emptying* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). Similarly, Southey's public

such as William Howitt, claimed Wordsworth's poetics were fundamentally Quaker; members of the Oxford Movement, including Faber and Keble, believed his poetry was Tractarian; by 1885 Charles Forbes Montalembert, a Roman Catholic, was able to say: 'Among the modern poets, no one has celebrated with more feeling and truth the glory of the Monastic Orders, nor more eloquently deplored their ruin, than the English Wordsworth'.[99] In 1844, Wordsworth himself noted the broad religious appeal of his work when he reported to Moxon: 'Within the last week I have had three Letters, one from an eminent High-churchman and most popular Poet [probably John Keble], another from a Quaker, and the third from a Scottish Free-Church-man, that prove together how widely the poems interest different classes of men'.[100]

Wordsworth had warned against such partiality in the 1815 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface':

> men who read from religious or moral inclinations […] are beset with misconceptions and mistakes peculiar to themselves. Attaching so much importance to the truths which interest them, they are prone to over-rate the Authors by whom those truths are expressed and enforced. They come prepared to impart so much passion to the Poet's language, that they remain unconscious how little, in fact, they receive from it.[101]

Wordsworth's statement shares the defensive tone that pervaded the 1815 prose, where he blamed readers' ineptitude for the unfavourable reception of his poetry. But the

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allegiance and private beliefs did not match. The contradiction appears in his writing: 'I write religiously because I write as I feel. *Not* being of the Church, I hold the Church Establishment one of our greatest, perhaps the greatest of our blessings; and conscientiously desire to strengthen and support it. *Not* believing in the inspiration of the Bible, but believing in the faith which is founded upon it, I hold its general circulation as one of the greatest benefits which can be conferred upon mankind': Southey to Grosvenor Bedford, 1814. Quoted in Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), pp. 216-17.

[99] Charles Forbes Montalembert, *The Monks of the West: from St. Benedict to St. Bernard*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh, 1861), vol. 1, 96, n. 2. In 1842 Wordsworth objected to his work being included in Samuel Wilkinson's pamphlet on 'Catholic Truth' because he wished not to be a partisan: *LY iv.*, pp. 370-71. The Tractarian project resembles Wordsworth's in that they wanted to show a direct link with the early church fathers. The Tractarian use of the word 'Catholic' is, of course, not at this point Roman Catholic. For a detailed discussion of Wilkinson's, *Contributions of William Wordsworth to the rival of Catholic Truths* (1842), which attempted to show that Wordsworth was a progenitor of the Oxford Movement see Gill, 'Wordsworth and "Catholic Truth".

[100] *LY iii*, p. 249.

[101] *Prose*, vol. 3, 64-5.

religious bias Wordsworth recognised is a symptom of his own appeal to silence and listening, which open up space for a self-determined response.[102] Taken as a whole, Wordsworth's poetry does not contain systematic religious principles aligned with any particular denomination. Henry Crabb Robinson attributed this to Wordsworth's own indecision: 'Wordsworth is too upright a man to be guilty of any wilful deception; but perhaps he is himself not perfectly clear on the subjects on which his mode of thinking and feeling is anxiously inquired after by his religious admirers.'[103] But wilful deception and indecision both seem inadequate explanations. Wordsworth's poetry shows the reader how to feel, it does not tell him what to think. Critical accounts of Wordsworth's faith and religious poetry are various and undecided precisely because of Wordsworth's *subjective* understanding of that which is sacred.

In epitaphs and inscriptions, as Wordsworth explained to Beaumont in 1811, the identity of the speaker is not fixed: 'the Reader is understood to be at Liberty to say to himself; these Verses or this Latin, may be the composition of some unknown Person, and not that of the Father, Widow, or Friend, from whose hand or voice they profess to proceed.'[104] The first reason why it is difficult to define Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sketches* categorically as either 'religious poetry' or 'versified religion' is because Wordsworth attempted a historically heavy, politically-driven task. The second reason is because the sonnets develop in accordance with the inscriptive genre, which divests them of the richly represented authorial self of (for example) *The Prelude*, and invite the reader to replace it with the voice of his choice. It is then in the hands of the reader whether or not a given sonnet is sacred.

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[102] Alan G. Hill has noted that the historical range of *Ecclesiastical Sketches* and its influence on later generations of the Wordsworth family (notably Christopher Wordsworth Jr.) make the sequence, in part, a forerunner of what became known as the Ecumenical Movement: 'Poetry and Ecumenism'.
[103] *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, 3 vols. ed. by Edith J. Morley (London, J. M. Dent and Sons, 1938) vol. 1, 158.
[104] *MY i.*, p. 516.

Wordsworth's sonnets, inscriptions, and epitaphs are linked through his conception of solitary figures whose experience of and attachment to place is sacred. The ruined monastic ground and the empty hermitage are sacred places insofar as their *genius loci* are sustained by the reverent approach of the stranger: Wordsworth removes his voice and encourages the reader to complete the meaning of these texts by importing his/her own. Wordsworth's work in the forms he categorised as 'The Idyllium' shows that his understanding of the sacred is subjective but this had little to do with the institutional religion he attempts to convey. In addition, Wordsworth's recourse to silence foregrounds his desire for the active participation of the reader. This helps to explain some of the contradictions that arise when attempts are made to describe Wordsworth's faith and present the religious vision of his poetry.

Chapter Four established that the combination of Wordsworth's interest in Quakerism and his gardening project at Coleorton impelled his study of monastic history. The current chapter has shown that from 1806 onwards Wordsworth's interest in monasticism ran parallel to his awareness of the Catholic Emancipation debate. The Catholic Relief Bill of 1820 provoked his second intense period of research into the subject. These two interests continued to be anchored by Wordsworth's memories of Coleorton and his relationship with the Beaumonts. These findings are important insofar as they show that Wordsworth drew on hermit figures, silence, and contemplation in a "sacred" rather than "religious" way; hence his political prejudices do not contradict his poetic interests. Consequently I have been able to offer an explanation of the reasons why religious accounts of his work have been either biased or indecisive. To comprehend Wordsworth's relationship with the Church is to comprehend his complex development of genre and voice.

CHAPTER SIX

'Of silent hills, and more than silent sky'

A VOLANT Tribe of Bards on earth are found,
Who, while the flattering Zephyrs round them play,
On 'coignes of vantage' hang their nests of clay;
How quickly from that aery hold unbound,
Dust for oblivion! To the solid ground
Of nature trusts the Mind that builds for aye;
Convinced that there, there only, she can lay
Secure foundations. As the year runs round,
Apart she toils within the chosen ring;
While the stars shine, or while day's purple eye
Is gently closing with the flowers of spring;
Where even the motion of an Angel's wing
Would interrupt the intense tranquillity
Of silent hills, and more than silent sky.[1]

This chapter is an attempt to understand what Wordsworth means by, and what he gains from, the silence of the hills and the superabundant silence of the sky. In this sonnet, composed in October 1821, the 'volant Tribe of Bards' resemble fitful birds that fly and dance on the wind at the whim of the Zephyrs. Wordsworth implies that their song (or their poetry) is similarly erratic and impermanent; the bards invest in idealised fantasies (as suggested by the classical reference to the god of the west wind) in preference to, for example, the understated reality of the gentle breeze that beat against Wordsworth's cheek in the opening lines of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth uses the distinctive adjective 'volant' in only one other poem, that is, the Italian Memorial 'In Lombardy'.[2] There he depicts the 'volant Spirit' (13) of an old man ascending to heaven after a laborious life. The humble man had faith that he would be lifted 'To bliss unbounded, glory without end' (14). But the volant bards do not partake of the holiness and transcendence offered

[1] The sonnet first appeared in *A Collection of Poems, Chiefly Manuscript, and from Living Authors*, ed. by Joanna Baillie (London, 1823), p. 53. Wordsworth revised it for publication in his *Poetical Works* (1827). My transcription is the 1827 revised version reproduced in *Last Poems*, p. 24.
[2] *Sonnet Series*, p. 784. Cooper, *Concordance*, p. 1067.

to this spirit-filled man: their mortal lives, like their clay nests, disintegrate into dust because they do not trust or invest in the actual realities and hardships of life.

These birds/bards have a collective itinerant identity which Wordsworth had undermined in *The Excursion* where the 'fortune-telling Tribe' (VII. 88) and 'the Vagrants of the Gypsy tribe' find 'little pleasure in themselves' and are 'profitless to others' (VIII. 392-4). The tribal characterisation implies restlessness and lack of connection with any particular place. Wordsworth would have been aware of the French etymological roots of 'volant' (meaning 'to fly'), which he uses to linguistically imply the corruption of the bards' regional attachment. The bards hang their nests on 'coignes of vantage'. This is a Shakespearean phrase (*Macbeth*, I.VI.7) describing a raised position that facilitates observation or action.[3] Wordsworth uses it, perhaps, to evoke Macbeth's violent attempts to elevate himself to power; his greed and egoism become the traps of tragedy. The volant bards similarly adopt a heightened vantage point from which they look down on the hills but, like the tragic hero, they fail to achieve any spiritual tranquillity.[4] 'Coignes' was commonly used in Westmorland to denote chimney pots and Wordsworth was keen to advise local peasants about how best to build them: 'He had his saäy at most of the houses in these parts, and was partic'lar fond of round chimleys'; 'the chimley coignes sud be natural headed and natural bedded, a little red and a little yellar' [sic].[5] According to Wordsworth, the coignes ought to be as homogeneous with the landscape as possible. He encouraged his neighbours to recognise difference in similitude and to not erect chimneys that garishly

[3] Etymology of 'volant': French *volant*, present participle of *voler*, also as a noun; or, Latin *volant-*, *volans*, present participle of *volāre*, to fly. 'volant, adj. and n.', *OED Online* [accessed 1 July 2013]. 'coigne, n.' (sense 1.), *OED Online* [accessed, 1 July 2013].
[4] Although Wordsworth adopts an elevated position in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', he resists any standard picturesque view of the ruins, indeed his actual position is notoriously unclear.
[5] Rawnsley, 'Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmorland', pp. 101 and 93 respectively.

intruded on the horizon. The coignes should participate in the landscape; they should signify the harmony of the community, not the imposition of an itinerant tribe.

The 'Mind' of the true poet wisely builds its nest, as the lark does, on the ground. The true poet is a quiet figure, toiling alone like the old man of Lombardy; he observes the harmonious horizon from the earth and is eventually exulted through a reward of divine stillness. The delicacy of the Angel's wing, unlike the flattering Zephyrs implies the brooding of a Christian rather than pagan Spirit, and perhaps the Frenchified language is similarly indicative of a rejection of Christianity. The creative and interpretative activity of the poetic mind takes place within, building 'for aye' (not for the eye). That internal power is signified by the presence of the Angel. Wordsworth suggests that mental stillness and faith in eternity facilitate the poetic building of images that outlast even the mind that creates them. Silence, for Wordsworth, is never a negation; it is a gathering strength of stillness from within which is in sympathy with the permanence and solidity of nature, yet detached from unpredictable external forces. The sky is empty of birds and 'more than silent' because it is transformed into a mental panorama. The participative mind delighting in the scene adds imaginative weight to the vision; the comparative, 'more than', indicates the addition of a responsive, thinking mind to the description of nature.

Wordsworth's poetics include three different modes of silence: anterior, posterior, and simultaneous. (These modes are separate from the interstitial points between sound and silence in which the listener may, for example, glimpse God, as Wordsworth demonstrates in *The Excursion*.[6]) This thesis has already discussed several instances of the third type, which is evident when certain sounds deepen or enhance the power of silence; for example, when repetition of words promotes a state of meditation

[6] See Chapter Four.

as in some of William's and Dorothy's soothing domestic habits, or when murmuring bees and tinkling streams enrich the silence outside the Solitary's cottage in *The Excursion* (III. 1-6). Simultaneous silence is also present in the psalmody of the coenobitic monastery. The value Wordsworth attributed to monastic silence shaped his understanding of language, inscriptions, and epitaphs, but he was troubled by the isolated austerity of the monastic world and its restriction of passion and joy. This chapter will explore the first and second types of silence; these silences are exemplified in nature and it is from them that Wordsworth drew the materials with which to build 'for aye'.

Anterior silence is the foundation or baseline into which sound breaks. The primary example of this is the 'eternal Silence' (158) of the Ode ('There was a time') which God broke with the first speech of Creation.[7] This is the silence of the hills; it has solidity and completeness until it is interrupted. The posterior form occurs when this eternal silence is restored; it is the restorative silence of the sky that reverberates when, for example, the birds are hushed. The silence of the hills and that of the sky both have the hallmarks of divinity when they work in conjunction with the Mind of the poet. The difference between the two is qualitative as well as a matter of priority. The latter is 'more than silent' because the participative work it requires leads to redemption from the mortal 'aery hold' and the reestablishment of divine silence, which volant bards do not achieve.

This chapter will focus on anterior silence in the fourteen-book version of *The Prelude*, prepared between 1838-9, and posterior silence in Wordsworth's *Memorials of a Tour in Italy 1837*. With particular emphasis on Wordsworth's affinity with St Francis of Assisi and 'The Cuckoo at Laverna', I will ask how Wordsworth interacted with the

[7] See also, 'On the Power of Sound', lines 217-18 in *Last Poems*, p. 123.

silent landscape and conclude by considering how his 'silent hills, and more than silent sky' offer an experience of the natural world that reveals its cycles of joy and repose.

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Wordsworth's earliest poetic inspiration was drawn from nature, not from written words. He explained in *The Prelude* that books are 'impediments' to perception, enabling men merely to 'live | In reconcilement with our stinted powers' (V. 518-19).[8] Books are less 'Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God; | Or His pure Word by miracle revealed' (V. 223-4).[9] The breath of God is congruous with the silent completeness of nature; that is, anterior silence. The Word (or Incarnation) and language entered the world belatedly and function to point a way back to that divine Silence. Wordsworth thus explains the relative communicative reach of silent Breath, and written or spoken Word:

> This is, in truth, heroic argument,
> This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
> With hand however weak, but in the main
> It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
> Points have we, all of us, within our Souls
> Where all stand single: this I feel, and make
> Breathings for incommunicable powers. (III. 184-90)

Wordsworth again expresses the weakness of words in comparison with breath in Book V:

> Yet wherefore speak?
> Why call upon a few weak words to say
> What is already written in the hearts
> Of all that breathe? (V. 185-8)

[8] But Wordsworth saw his own books as performing a very different function. Unless otherwise stated, all quotation of *The Prelude* in this chapter is taken from the main reading text based on MS D and MS E in *Fourteen-Book Prelude*.

[9] On Wordsworth's fascination with the Argument from Design in the *Prelude* see Colin Jager, *The Book of God*, p. 17. Wordsworth points out nature's 'design' to Julian Charles Young as quoted below.

Wordsworth's pluralized 'breathings' draw attention to the foundational presence of the instinctual action of taking a breath. His multiple 'breathings' ring out in search of a corresponding echo whereby another breath might answer the first. This searching aspiration shows Wordsworth seeking recognition of his inexplicable feelings in others. These 'breathings' are measured and regulated (not blowing erratically like an unharnessed wind) yet their ripples reach further than words. It is precisely through his awareness of these limitations of language, and the relative efficacy of breath, wind, and the blessed breeze (I. 1), that Wordsworth recognises how men, via nature, might share some innate knowledge of a divine presence.[10] Breathings are common to all and facilitate shared understanding, yet they simultaneously preserve that divine silence which words would necessarily diminish.

These *Prelude* passages implicitly refer to some of the traditional characteristics of mysticism as contained, for example, in this description of the communicative challenges facing St Teresa of Avila:

> What shall I say? […] Who will give me the words to express adequately the divine ardour which drives her? And even if I can represent it as strongly and as fervently as it is in the heart of Teresa, who will understand what I am saying? And how will our earthbound minds grasp these heavenly transports?[11]

The mystic is confronted with questions of ineffability to which she has no solution. However, Wordsworth answers these questions by acknowledging common access to breathings and the silence of the hills.[12] He *chooses* to invoke silence because it designates both the purity of his vision and his belief in the universality of the instinct

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[10] M. H. Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York: Norton, 1984).

[11] Bossuet, *The Panegyric of St Teresa of Avila*, quoted in Parish, *Catholic Particularity in Seventeenth-century French Writing*, p. 83.

[12] Ineffability is one of the key elements of mystical experience defined by William James. The distinguishing mark of mystic experience is that it is only accessible to an elect few and it 'cannot be imparted or transferred to others'. The other three qualities of mystical experience are noetic quality, transiency and passivity. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902; repr. New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004), p. 329.

towards the divinity. This human predisposition is implied in Wordsworth's reference (in Book V of *The Prelude* quoted above) to the letter to the Romans where Paul explains that all breathing Gentiles have the equivalent of the Jewish law 'written in their hearts'.[13] Wordsworth's emphasis on emotional semantics over written language (executed 'With hand however weak') fits with the notion that the silence of nature is required to make sense of books. Words require nourishment from silent breathings.

Aubrey De Vere recalls that 'it was only among his mountains that Wordsworth could be understood. He walked among them not so much to admire them as to converse with them. They exchanged thoughts with him, in sunshine or flying shadow, giving him their own and accepting his.'[14] There was complicity between the landscape and the poet, a reciprocity, or transaction that animated the mountains as he imbibed their *genius loci*. Wordsworth had participated in this 'drinking in' since childhood, as he recorded in the early books of *The Prelude*:

> even then
> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths[.] (I. 561-4)

> Thus did I steal along that silent road
> My body from the stillness drinking in
> A restoration like the calm of sleep. (IV. 387-9)[15]

This 'drinking in' is a necessary counterpoint to Wordsworth's 'breathings': the one is drawn in, the other is issued. Such gravitational movement is part of his 'great consummation' with 'the speaking face of earth and heaven' (V. 13) and is the ultimate

[13] Romans, 2:15.
[14] *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 498.
[15] *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, MS D, pp. 563-67. This passage is chosen for its interconnection with the passage I discuss in Chapter One, which Wordsworth uses to introduce the Discharged Solider section: 'With an appropriate human centre—Hermit'.

form of non-linguistic epistemological encounter.[16] The process of silent exchange between the poet and nature is a means of preserving the anterior silence of the hills. Wordsworth's reticent interaction with the landscape shows his acknowledgement of, and deference to, the divine character of its silence.

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Wordsworth toured Italy between March and August 1837 with Henry Crabb Robinson. His 'Memorials' of this tour were published in *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842), which was Wordsworth's final collection of original poetry.[17] The two men visited Rome between 25 April and 22 May, where Wordsworth was particularly moved by the beauty of a pine tree and overjoyed to discover that George Beaumont had prevented it from being cut down.[18] The travellers then made their way to Florence with diversions to the 'three great Tuscan Sanctuaries' of Laverna, Camaldoli, and Valombrosa.[19] In a letter to Dora, Wordsworth refers to these three monasteries by the collective title given to them in Lady Charlotte Bury's illustrated travel guide, *The Three Great Sanctuaries of Tuscany*, which Bury had presented to Wordsworth in 1834. Bury describes the history and characteristics of these Italian monastic orders, the literary and artistic treasures they kept, and the landscapes in which the sanctuaries stand. This volume, which Wordsworth found 'on many accounts so interesting', was an important influence on his decision to take uncomfortable journeys on horseback

[16] Such passages are often dismissed as pantheism but Wordsworth's continued silent interaction with the landscape after his period of religious radicalism indicates otherwise. H. W. Piper argues that Wordsworth's pantheism was formed within the radical circles he inhabited between 1791 and 1797: *The Active Universe: Pantheism and the Concept of Imagination* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1962).
[17] Queen Victorian came to the throne in June 1837. Donald E. Hayden provides a summary of the tour in *Wordsworth's Travels in Europe*, vol. 2, 49-110. Edward Moxon travelled with them as far as Paris. Mary Moorman provides a detailed account of the tour and the 1842 collection of poems in *Wordsworth: A Biography*, vol. 2, 522-55.
[18] 'The Pine of Monte Mario at Rome', *Sonnet Series*, pp. 757 and 791.
[19] *LY iii*., p. 405.

through almost impenetrable forests and along steep Apennine tracks to these secluded sites.[20] For example, Wordsworth's trip to the Benedictine monastery of Valombrosa began at 5am and took place without Crabb Robinson: 'I was conducted by a Monk about the Church and the library, and shown a specimen of the chambers of the Monks and everything deemed interesting in the Convent'.[21]

Crabb Robinson joined Wordsworth on the trip to Camaldoli where they dined, walked about the forest, and perused the library: 'We entered the Hermitage, where a few monks reside with greater severity of discipline. When they grow old, they come down to the monastery.'[22] Bury had warned her readers of the severity of the Camaldolise order: the eremites lived in a citadel of hermitages and their founder Romualdo had fled when fellow monks attempted to assassinate him for being too pious. Bury's description of the cell perhaps intrigued Wordsworth:

> That part of each of them appropriated to sleep is lined with planks of fir, as some little defence against the excessive cold; the rest of the walls are of rough-hewn stone. On one side of the entrance there is a recess, which contains a desk for writing; on the other, an altar, at which the hermit addressed his private orisons to Heaven.[23]

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[20] Wordsworth had written to Mrs Hook in May 1834 of 'Lady Charlotte Bury's obliging offer of presenting me a Volume […]. Assure her Ladyship that I shall be proud of receiving her Book.' *LY ii*., p. 712. Lady Charlotte Bury, *The Three Great Sanctuaries of Tuscany: Valombrosa, Camaldoli, Laverna: A Poem, with Historical and Legendary Notices* (London, 1833). Wordsworth refers to this volume in a note to 'The Cuckoo at Laverna': *Sonnet Series*, p. 791. Wordsworth's excursions to these monasteries come in the context of his sympathetic treatment of monastic life in *Ecclesiastical Sketches* and the revival of monastic institutions in England, which John Henry Newman had promoted in *The Church of the Fathers* (1868), chapter XI, pp. 285-322. Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy &c. in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703* (London, 1705) was an extremely popular travel guide. It was still being printed in 1814.

[21] *LY iii*., p. 406. Wordsworth's spelling is variable. Bury writes 'Valombrosa' and '*Valle Ombrosa*'; Wordsworth often prefers 'Vallombrosa'. Wordsworth notes Milton's visit to the place in his poem 'At Vallombrosa'.

[22] *HCR Diaries*, vol. 3, 127. Italian Camaldolise monks were a particularly ascetic order of eremites. They in fact began at the monastery and progressed to life in a severe isolated hermitage at the top of the mountain as they advanced in the Order. I am grateful to Ms Barbara Harvey for this detail. At Camaldoli the eremites had preserved many literary treasures including Greek and Latin manuscripts. Giotto executed many works for them. *The Three Great Sanctuaries*, pp. 45-6, 52, and 55.

[23] ibid, p. 41.

Wordsworth composed three sonnets in disapproval of the 'lean austerities' of Camaldolise monks.[24] The first two sonnets grieve for a man who joined the order after being bereft of his 'lady-love' (4). Wordsworth warns that,

> by Faith, not sight, his soul must live;
> Else will the enamoured Monk too surely find
> How wide a space can part from inward peace
> The most profound repose his cell can give. (11-14)[25]

The type of silence Wordsworth values is not repressive or restrained; it must nourish rather than supress the passions. The imposed silence of the cell does not guarantee the restoration of the internal disposition: it is a silence of sight, not faith (that is, of the eye, not 'for aye'). Conversely, Wordsworth implies that faithful inner peace is not the exclusive privilege of the eremites: it is achievable without such physical hardship. These cells high in the Apennines are 'coignes of vantage'; the monks display the outward signs of moral perfection and position themselves for final elevation, like the volant bards. But Wordsworth is suspicious that their outer silence is not authenticated by the presence of joy. The space that Wordsworth identifies between spiritual purity and carnal stringency is wider than the cell; the minute hermitage cannot metaphorically fill this existential gap.

In the third sonnet, Wordsworth is baffled by the incongruity of the sight of two 'Enormous' (2) monks with 'empurpled cheeks and pampered eyes' (4) dragging themselves up the mountain to reach their harsh cells.[26] The conjunction of these extremes of gluttony and parsimony is apt for mockery. Wordsworth admits that this sight on 'the solid ground of waking life' seemed stranger than the world of dreams (14). The tragedy is that these monks inflict great pain and sorrow on themselves

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[24] 'At the Convent of Camaldoli', 'Continued', and 'At the Eremite or Upper Convent of Camaldoli': *Sonnet Series*, pp. 772-4. All quotation of the 'Memorials of a Tour in Italy, 1837' is taken from *Sonnet Series*, pp. 740-89. Editorial line numbers appear in parentheses in the text.
[25] 'At the Convent of Camaldoli'.
[26] 'At the Eremite or Upper Convent of Camaldoli'

without dignity and sincerity. The lovesick monk's asceticism is futile while that of these obese men is a façade. Bury notes that St Francis of Assisi had occupied one of these cells at Camaldoli before his final removal to Laverna. Immediately before visiting these eremites, Wordsworth had discovered how, at Laverna, Francis had found *genuine* happiness and inner stillness.[27]

Bury promised visitors an emotional and moral experience at *La Verna*: 'I conceive the heart to be hard and insensate which can visit its scared groves, and not confess itself the purer for the influence which its scenes impart'.[28] However, the rendition of a cuckoo's call, which Wordsworth heard on 25 May, 1837, was perhaps the most affecting experience of the Italian tour, and 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' celebrates the affinity Wordsworth felt with Francis through hearing the bird's song.[29]

St Francis of Assisi (b. circa 1182) renounced a comfortable life, gave away all of his possessions, and embraced extreme poverty as a means of serving God. He began to gather followers in Tuscany in 1209 and by 1223 had established the Order of Friars Minor. In 1224 he retreated from his missionary work to *La Verna* for a period of contemplation which climaxed in the nearby forest where he received the stigmata. Franciscan monks were Mendicant Friars who entered an Order not a monastery and spent most of their time travelling in pairs preaching and subsisting as beggars. The Franciscans differed from the Cistercian monks that were dominant in England throughout the Middle Ages via their emphasis on poverty: while the Cistercians

[27] *The Three Great Sanctuaries*, p. 44. Wordsworth's visit to Camaldoli took place on 28 May: *HCR Diaries*, vol. 3, 127.
[28] *The Three Great Sanctuaries*, pp. 112-13.
[29] Crabb Robinson notes that Wordsworth began composition of 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' on 29 May. This was his first attempt at composition during the tour *HCR Diaries*, vol. 3, 134.

embarked on a life of silence and psalmody enclosed within a financially rich monastery, the Franciscans were ascetic itinerant preachers.[30]

In 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' Wordsworth presents two aspects of Francis's character. The first is his perverse austerity: monks were 'garrisoned | In faith and hope, and dutiful obedience' (32-3); among 'these sterile heights of Apennine' (38) they lived in a 'stern society, | Dead to the world and scorning earth-born joys' (34-5); they were bound by 'rules | Stringent as flesh can tolerate' (40-1). And yet, Francis also had a 'milder Genius (thanks to the good God | That made us)' (42) and carried out works:

> By unsought means for gracious purposes;
> For earth through heaven, for heaven, by changeful earth,
> Illustrated, and mutually endeared. (46-8)

Despite his purgative rules, Francis did not forsake every earthly joy in anticipation of heaven; rather he grew closer to an understanding of heaven through appreciation of the natural world.[31]

The cuckoo had long been one of Wordsworth's favourite birds. There are a cluster of references to cuckoos in the 1807 volumes and several celebrations of its call in his later work.[32] The cuckoo is audible in England between April and August; it only remains in Italy until the end of July. The first glimpse of its song heralds the coming of

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[30] John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), pp. 1-72 and Suso Frank, *With Greater Liberty*, p. 110.

[31] John Rudy interprets the poem in terms of Wordsworth's 'homelessness', that is, his inability to be fully present in the present. Rudy argues that the cuckoo song facilitates for Wordsworth a 'unitive' experience of a moment in time: 'Wordsworth's St Francis and the Baptized Imagination', *Renascence* 40 (1988), 268-78. With reference to 'The Cuckoo at Laverna', Peter Larkin similarly discusses Wordsworth's struggle to retain immediacy in his later poetry. Larkin concludes that this is due to Wordsworth's over-emphasis on the power of retention itself. In his later years, Wordsworth is always a disciple of his past-self: 'Wordsworth's "After-Sojourn": Revision and Unself-Rivalry in the Later Poetry', *Studies in Romanticism*, 20 (1981), 409–36. Adam Potkay frames the cuckoo's voice as the voice of the poet, in *Wordsworth's Ethics*, pp. 200-201.

[32] The cuckoo appears in the second sonnet 'To Sleep' (8), 'The Solitary Reaper' (13-16), 'The Sun has long been set', 'To the Cuckoo', and 'Yes! Full surely 'twas the Echo': *P2V*, pp. 140-1, 184-5, 204-5, 213-14, and 255-6 respectively. Wordsworth also celebrates the cuckoo in 'On the Power of Sound' (25-7): *Last Poems*, p. 117. In 1840 Wordsworth contributed his translation of 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale' to Thomas Powell's collection in R. H. Horne's *The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Modernized* (London, 1841). *LY iv*., pp. 19-20. Wordsworth also translated 'The Manciple's Tale' and 'The Prioress's Tale'.

summer and has numerous folkloric associations with good fortune.[33] Wordsworth's initial delight at hearing the bird at Laverna on 25 May, almost two months later than he would have heard it at home, was perhaps due to his homesickness. He missed the affectionate support of the female members of his family, writing to them: 'My anxiety to hear from England had depressed my spirits so that I scarcely enjoyed anything […] I shall never go from home for any time again, without a female companion'.[34] He had been too long without the female company that monastic men renounced. Wordsworth also lamented that he had effectively missed the spring: 'We have had no spring properly speaking, about three weeks since the Summer burst out at once into a profuse heat, and ever since we have been perspiring and drinking cold water from morning to night'.[35] But Crabb Robinson explains that Wordsworth's joy at hearing the cuckoo was partly the result of the poet's concerns about losing his hearing in old age: 'I recollect perfectly well that I heard the cuckoo at Laverna twice before he heard it; and that it absolutely fretted him that my ear was first favoured; and that he exclaimed with delight, "I hear it! I hear it!"'[36]

In the epitaphs of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth had celebrated the silent life of the deaf dalesman but lamented that the man had never heard the cuckoo:

> not for his delight
> The vernal cuckoo shouted; not for him
> Murmured the labouring bee. (VII. 424-6)[37]

For Wordsworth, murmuring bees enhance quietness just as attunement to the cuckoo provides access to a particular type of posterior silence that a deaf person would never

[33] James Hardy, 'Popular History of the Cuckoo', *The Folk-Lore Record*, 2 (1879), 47–91.
[34] *LY iii*., pp. 409 and 411. Wordsworth wrote: 'I think of you all a thousand times a day and often wish I were back again at dear Rydal' (p. 404).
[35] ibid, p. 416.
[36] *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 434.
[37] This is the epitaph Wordsworth singled out and printed at the end of *Essays upon Epitaphs*, which I discuss in Chapter Three.

perceive without the interchange of sound.[38] Wordsworth was anxious not to lose this variety of silence and overjoyed to keep pace with Crabb Robinson's younger ear:

> List—'twas the Cuckoo.—O with what delight
> Heard I that voice! and catch it now, though faint,
> Far off and faint, and melting into air,
> Yet not to be mistaken. Hark again!
> Those louder cries give notice that the Bird,
> Although invisible as Echo's self,
> Is wheeling hitherward. Thanks, happy Creature,
> For this unthought-of greeting! (1-8)

The cuckoo's call is peculiarly adapted to produce a succession of posterior silences. The second call is more than an echo of the first: as the bird gets closer and its shout becomes clearer, its ability to break and then re-establish the silence increases. On a more minute scale, the phonetic balance of 'cuckoo' means that the word contains a repetitious echo of itself.[39] There is an exchange between the 'cuck' and the 'koo' in which the sound seems to reverberate. This space anticipates the pause of expectation that occurs before the reprise: 'Hark again!'[40]

This pattern of breaks and echoings is evident in 'There was a boy', which begins with Wordsworth's address to the cliffs and islands of Winander, acknowledging their intermittent participative role in the boy's exchange across the lake.[41] The child disturbs the initial silence of the hills with 'mimic hootings' (10) and within the first posterior silence he awaits a reply. A combination of three potential layers of response follows, each with their own intermediate moments of cessation: the boy hears perhaps the echoes of his own mime, the owls' replies to his hoot, and the resonances of the owls' calls. Echoes are an important shade of silence: they cannot quite be defined as

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[38] Wordsworth's references to murmuring bees are perhaps an allusion to Book IV of Virgil's *Georgics* and thus part of his pastoral revisions. Another example of such bees occurs in 'Nuns fret not' (5-7).
[39] The phonetics of the bird's name is the same in all European languages: Hardy, 'Popular History of the Cuckoo', p. 76.
[40] This is the case in 'The Sun has long been set' where 'the Cuckoo's sovereign cry | Fills all the hollow sky' (8-9). *P2V*, p. 204.
[41] *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 139-41.

sounds because they possess a degree of distinctness below that which they imitate. When the mountains are responsive, these echoic exchanges across the hollow vale result in 'a wild scene | Of mirth and jocund din' (15-16). Without this furore, the subsequent 'pauses of deep silence' (17) would not have had the power to draw the boy into the state of acute attentiveness that enabled the mountains to carry 'far into his heart' (20) their 'solemn' (23) lessons. This reconnaissance of the 'silent sky' anticipates the narrator's muteness beside the boy's grave. The poem's final reestablishment of the evening silence, with which the lyric began, is a figure for the assumption of the deceased boy back into the eternal silence. The narrator uses his muteness to discern and evaluate the certainty of this redemptive silence.

Wordsworth expresses a similar profusion of silences in his poem 'The Cuckoo-Clock', where he explains that when one struggles to sleep at night,

> Better provide thee with a *Cuckoo-clock*,
> For service hung behind thy chamber door;
> And in due time the soft spontaneous shock,
> The double note, as if with *living* power,
> Will to composure lead—or make thee blithe as bird in bower. (7-11)[42]

The hourly routine consists of an initial shock that interrupts the quietness, followed by an expectant pause before the sound recurs with its 'double note' or 'Repeater's stroke' (4). It was a similar 'gentle shock of mild surprise' (19) that humanised the Winander Boy. This 'gentle' or 'soft' shock marks the delightful collision of sound and silence; rather than create a symphony to be listened to, the cuckoo's task is to quickly announce a shift between silences. The '*living* power' of the clock, which mimics the cuckoo's song, is not intrinsic to the object but exists in the ability the sound has to move the listener to repose or joy.

[42] Quotation is taken from the version published in 1842: *Last Poems*, pp. 342-3. Mary Wordsworth transcribed the first draft of this poem to Isabella Fenwick in a letter of 24 March 1840. *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth, 1800-1855*, ed. by Mary E. Burton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 240-1. The clock was a gift from Fenwick, *LY iv.*, p. 30.

Mary Wordsworth explained to Isabella Fenwick that 'The Cuckoo Clock' was:

> a work of real pleasure—and well it may—for no children were ever more delighted with a new toy than we are with the subject of it. Dear Miss Wordsworth was seated before it upon the top of the stairs the other day—and when the bird had performed its office, and the little door flopped to, I thought she would have dropped from her chair, she laughed so heartily at the sudden exit of the little Mimic.[43]

In writing poems on the cuckoo, Wordsworth reiterates the processes of mimicry and repetition that the clock encapsulates. Imitation, which might be understood as an aspect of repetition, is integral to the transmission of passion, as Wordsworth explained in the Note to 'The Thorn'.[44] The cessation between iterations is integral to this function:

> The mimic notes, striking upon his ear
> In sleep, and intermingling with his dream,
> Could from sad regions send him to a dear
> Delightful land of verdure, shower and gleam,
> To mock the *wandering* Voice beside some haunted stream. (29-33)[45]

The cuckoo is called the wandering bird because it does not build its own nest; it builds neither on 'coignes of vantage' nor on the 'solid ground' but is a homeless itinerant. It has the ability to convert the listener into a traveller by transporting him/her between real and imagined states. The cuckoo at Laverna allowed Wordsworth to tap into the principles of St Francis and similarly become (like the saint) temporarily nomadic.

Wordsworth was struck by Francis's unique form of communication with birds, which gave the saint a means of creating the silence of the sky:

> with beast and bird
> (Stilled from afar—such marvel story tells—
> By casual outbreak of his passionate words,
> And from their own pursuits in field or grove
> Drawn to his side by look or act of love
> Humane, and virtue of his innocent life)

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[43] *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, p. 242. Mary explains that 'The Cuckoo Clock' is connected with 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' through Wordsworth's sonnet 'Before the picture of the Baptist, by Raphael, in the Gallery at Florence'.
[44] *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 351.
[45] 'The Cuckoo Clock', *Last Poems*, p. 343.

> He wont to hold companionship so free,
> So pure, so fraught with knowledge and delight,
> As to be likened in his Followers' minds
> To that which our First Parents, ere the fall
> From their high state darkened the Earth with fear,
> Held with all Kinds in Eden's blissful bowers. (54-65)

Francis managed what Wordsworth desired in 'A volant Tribe of Bards': he drew delight and wonder from an intelligential participation in the stillness of nature. Francis's engagement with beast and bird was a revival of prelapsarian activity. For Wordsworth, the cuckoo is a signal of the possibility of transcendence; the bird gives him a glimpse of the Edenic world of his childhood: 'Thou tellest, Cuckoo! in the vale | Of visionary hours' (11-12):

> And I can listen to thee yet;
> Can lie upon the plain
> And listen, till I do beget
> That golden time again.
>
> O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
> Again appears to be
> An unsubstantial, faery place;
> That is fit home for Thee! (25-32)[46]

As in 'To the Cuckoo', the sound of bird-call at Laverna recalled the happy days of Wordsworth's childhood. The child is the poet's innocent forebear, as Adam and Eve are the prelapsarian predecessors of Francis. In a sense, the child that the cuckoo evokes resembles these 'First Parents' and becomes 'Father of the Man'.[47] The child helps to guide Wordsworth to his comprehension of Francis. Wordsworth imagines that, for the monks of Laverna, Francis is that First Father. The shared appreciation of the cuckoo's call connects Wordsworth and Francis, making them joint offspring of Eden. Moreover, Wordsworth believes that he is more directly the 'spiritual Progeny' (40) of Francis

[46] *P2V*, p. 214.
[47] In 1815 Wordsworth added the epigraph 'The Child is Father of the Man; | And I could wish my days to be | Bound each to each by natural piety' to the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality'. The lines are taken from 'My heart leaps up' which Wordsworth composed on the same day, 26 March 1802, as he composed 'To the Cuckoo'. *DWJ*, p. 82; *P2V*, p. 271.

than the current monks of Laverna and that those monks would benefit from following Wordsworth's example:

> If they received into a conscious ear
> The notes whose first faint greeting startled me,
> Whose sedulous iteration thrilled with joy
> My heart—may have been moved like me to think
> […]
> On the great Prophet. (88-93)

Wordsworth felt he had achieved direct communion with Francis through listening carefully to the cuckoo and he asks the monks, and (implicitly) the reader, to do the same.

Edith Batho claims that Wordsworth's conception of St Francis's wisdom and gentleness with regard to the natural world was far removed from any that had been current for three centuries: 'it is so usual now that we have difficulty in realizing its distance from the usual contemporary idea, formed out of condescending pity, or disgust for dirty and fanatical friars, of whom St Francis was looked upon as the chief'.[48] Batho proposes, 'Wordsworth seems to be the first Englishman—we might say with little exaggeration, the first modern European—to understand St Francis, and he got his understanding not from books but from less than a full day's visit. […] There seems to be no reasonable doubt that Wordsworth was original in his discovery'.[49]

As I established in Chapters Two and Three, Wordsworth had, since the first decade of the nineteenth century, adopted a view of monastic life that was distinct from those derisive portrayals offered by (for example) Gibbon, Bayle, Wrangham, and Southey. In this context, Batho's assessment is not so surprising. St Francis was indeed presented negatively in the nineteenth century: Henry Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818) depicts Francis as 'a harmless enthusiast, pious

[48] Edith Batho, *The Later Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 296.
[49] ibid, p. 297.

and sincere, but hardly of sane mind' and 'much rather accessory to the intellectual than to the moral degradation of his species'.[50] James Stephen concurred in his 1849 biography, concluding that Francis was an 'unlearned, half-crazy fugitive'; 'Not even the idolaters of his name ascribe to him any profound foresight, or intuitive genius, or bold originality of thought'.[51] Yet Charlotte Bury had quoted Forsyth's *Italy* which was more forgiving in its description of Francis as 'a genuine hero; original, independent, magnanimous, incorruptible—his powers seemed designed to regenerate society; but, taking the wrong direction, they sank men into beggars'.[52] Forsyth's appraisal is more sensitive than those of Hallam and Stephen who ridiculed Francis as a crazed idiot. The Franciscans considered book-learning and academic knowledge as possessions; in embracing absolute poverty, Francis and his followers renounced the pursuit of intellectual assets. In place of bookish endeavour, Francis allowed his passions to be instructed by the impulses of nature and thus demonstrated a type of astuteness that was more akin to Wordsworth's 'wise passiveness'. Forsyth ultimately underestimated the Franciscan intellect by measuring value in terms of possessions.

In 1838 Wordsworth explained to John Kenyon how striking he had found the story of Francis; he had sought in vain for Bonaventura's thirteenth-century account of the saint's life and had attempted to write a poem on that subject.[53] Had he found Bonaventura's volume, Wordsworth would have read descriptions of birds stretching out their necks to listen to Francis's sermons and of a wolf placing its paw in Francis's

[50] Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (London, 1818), vol. 2, 67.
[51] James Stephen, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, 2 vols. (London, 1849), vol. 1, 89-153 (p. 150). Also, John Weever describes the arrival of the Franciscans in England and explains the main tenets of the Order. His assessment is impartial: *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, pp. 133-4.
[52] Bury quotes Joseph Forsyth's *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters during an Excursion in Italy, in the years 1802 and 1803* (London, 1813) in *The Three Great Sanctuaries*, p. 91.
[53] *LY iii.*, pp. 616-17. A letter from Faber to Keble of 12 November 1842 (currently in Keble College Library, Oxford) explains that Wordsworth continued to pursue his interest in St Francis years after the Italian tour. Brian W. Martin reproduces the letter in 'Wordsworth, Faber, and Keble: Commentary on a Triangular Relationship', *The Review of English Studies*, 26 (1975), 436–442 (p. 436).

hand as a pledge of future good behaviour after being rebuked for carnivorous habits.[54] Even without this volume Wordsworth would have gleaned something of Bonaventura's standard Roman Catholic conception of Francis from the monks he met at Laverna: Wordsworth and Crabb Robinson were received by 'dull-looking' and 'very dirty but humble and kind men'. They dined with these monks and spent a night in cells at Laverna which 'were small and cold, and our beds hard, but we slept well'.[55] In addition to discussions with the monks, Wordsworth met Johann von Görres in Munich on his return journey from Italy and they may well have conversed about Görres's pamphlet, *Der heilige Franciskus von Assisi ein Troubadour*.[56]

Batho was right to say that Wordsworth did not get his interpretation from books, even if his conclusions were shared with and indirectly drawn from Bonaventura.[57] Batho was right, not primarily because of Wordsworth's departure from the commonplace negative valuations of Francis, but because it was the cuckoo that taught Wordsworth the most powerful lesson. The originality Batho attributes to Wordsworth is symptomatic of the poet's "Franciscan" disposition, that is to say, Wordsworth's uniqueness comes via his 'wise passiveness' which allowed the cuckoo to work on him in conjunction with the spirit of the place. Wordsworth formulated his notion of Francis within his personal emotional response to the cuckoo at Laverna. He did so, as Francis had done, by discarding history books and allowing the birds to be his

[54] Bonaventura is quoted in Stephen, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, vol. 1, 142-3.
[55] *HCR Diaries*, pp. 126-7
[56] Alan G. Hill, 'Wordsworth's Reception in Germany: Some Unfamiliar Episodes and Contacts, 1798–1849', *The Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008), 568–581 (p. 571).
[57] Frederick William Faber had composed a poem containing details of the life of Francis in 1832 but had focused mainly on the episode of the stigmata. Faber's main protagonist, Sir Lancelot, attempts to achieve the wounds of Christ by meditating on the Passion. *Sir Lancelot: A Legend of the Middle Ages* (London, 1844). Faber describes Francis's meditation in Book II (p. 66) and Book IV (p. 139). Wordsworth read the poem in September 1844 and explained his dislike of its style to Isabella Fenwick: it is 'too minute and diffusive, and disproportioned; and the workmanship very defective': *LY iv*., p. 613. Faber's translation from the French life of Francis by Cardide Chalippe was not published until 1853: Faber, *Modern Saints and Servants of God: The Life of S. Francis of Assissi, with an Essay on the Characteristics of the Lives of the Saints*, 2 vols. (London, 1853-4).

primary instructors. The poem therefore accords with Wordsworth's preference for 'breathings' over books in *The Prelude* and shows Wordsworth practicing what his earliest poetry had preached:

> Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,
> Come, hear the woodland linnet,
> How sweet his music; on my life
> There's more of wisdom in it.
>
> And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
> And he is no mean preacher;
> Come forth into the light of things,
> Let Nature be your teacher. (9-16)[58]

This is the lesson that Wordsworth attempted to teach his earliest readers.

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Nineteenth-century readers developed a stereotyped image of Wordsworth's persona which is succinctly captured in Julian Charles Young's 1871 description of the 'Rasselas-like mind of the recluse of the Lakes […] who "loved the life removed"'.[59] Young presents Wordsworth as taciturn, frugal, peripatetic, a contemplative thinker, and an acute observer of nature. Similar accounts of Wordsworth's character were readily available in advance of Christopher Wordsworth's authorised *Memoir* of 1851, and the reminiscences of Wordsworth's neighbours and friends continued to be collated and published after the poet's death.[60] Wordsworth's reticence, frugality, and righteousness (which often made him disagreeable in public) may have been partly a Victorian construction fuelled by Wordsworth's conscious self-projection, especially

[58] 'The Tables Turned', *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 109.
[59] Julian Charles Young, *A Memoir of Charles Mayne Young, Tragedian, with Extracts from His Son's Journals*, 2nd edn (London, 1871), p. 120.
[60] Walter E. Swayze, 'Early Wordsworthian Biography: Books and Articles Containing Material on the Life and Character of William Wordsworth That Appeared Before the Publication of the Official Memoirs, by Christopher Wordsworth, in 1851', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 64 (1960), 169–95. Swayze provides an annotated list of some 90 published items of Wordsworth biography. See also Rawnsley, 'Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmorland' in *Wordsworthiana* and 'Conversations and Personal Reminiscences' in *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3. 405-504.

during the 1840s when his public role as a Christian poet with a humanitarian manifesto was prominent.[61] But this persona was appealing because it matched Wordsworth's poetic style.

Wordsworth's poetry balances didacticism with an honest confession that there is no way to explain how 'We feel that we are greater than we know'.[62] In the struggle to reconcile his exalted vocation with a humble recognition of the limits of language, Wordsworth depends on silence. His plain style and quietude encouraged readers to feel this conflict for themselves whilst sharpening their skills of observation which he believed had been blunted in the previous generation by the 'gross and violent stimulants' of 'sickly and stupid German tragedies'.[63] Wordsworth's silences hang between that which he is confident he can know and communicate completely, and that which he feels he could only ever glimpse. The Wordsworthian persona—reclusive, introspective, and observant of small happenings—was seized and emulated by those seeking a model for how to read poetry and how to find meaning in the world.

Stephen Gill has examined a catalogue of nineteenth-century testimonies demonstrating the profound emotional and spiritual impact Wordsworth's poetry had on many of its earliest readers.[64] The influence was such that readers venerated him, his possessions, and even the ground he walked on. John Stuart Mill famously confessed that Wordsworth taught him how to find happiness while John James Taylor, Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Biblical Theology at Manchester New College, London,

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[61] Stephen Gill, 'England's Samuel: Wordsworth in the "Hungry Forties"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 33 (1993), 841–58.
[62] *The River Duddon*, 'Conclusion', line 14 in *Sonnet Series*, p. 75.
[63] Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in *Prose*, vol. 1, 148 and 150. Wordsworth retained the phrases until the 1850 edition.
[64] Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, pp. 40-80.

described himself as a 'convert' when Wordsworth's poetry eradicated his melancholic fear of death.[65]

Testimonies from Wordsworthians often involve an acute sense of place; the 'conversion' happens not during reading but afterwards when Wordsworth's silences have been absorbed and the subject is outdoors observing nature.[66] The poetry heralds the renovation of the subject's interaction with commonplace natural objects, which modifies religious thinking. William Hale White described Wordsworth's God as 'the God of the hills, the abstraction Nature' and recorded how Wordsworth's statement in 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' ('Nature never did betray | The heart that loved her' (123-4)) was:

> a signal of the approach of something which turned out to be of the greatest importance, and altered my history. […] There arose in me an aptness for the love of natural beauty, a possibility of being excited to enthusiasm by it, and of deriving a secret joy from it, sufficiently strong to make me careless of the world and its pleasures. Another effect which Wordsworth had upon me, and has had upon other people, was the modification, altogether unintentional on his part, of religious belief.[67]

A visit to Rydal Mount became the apex of any tour of the Lakes: the enthusiast Valentine Le Grice did so and brought away Wordsworth's walking-stick, venerating it as if it were a religious relic.[68] A new form of tourism developed as devotees were compelled to visit the poet, to walk in his footsteps, and become his disciples. The importance of these pilgrimages continued to evolve in the early days of the

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[65] 'I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation'. Mill described Wordsworth as 'the poet of unpoetical natures, possessed of quiet and contemplative tastes': *Autobiography and Literary Essays* (1873), ed. by John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 153. Taylor's testimony appears in *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 502-3.

[66] On Wordsworth and various types of subjective experience see Jonathan Roberts, *Blake. Wordsworth. Religion.*, pp. 49-94.

[67] Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, pp. 53.

[68] ibid, p. 15. Many visitors travelled from America. Mary Wordsworth wrote: it seemed 'as if America had broken loose, so many, especially from New York, of that country make their way to the poet'. *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth*, p. 299. See Alan G. Hill, 'Wordsworth and His American Friends' for an annotated list of American visitors after 1815, including many theologians, philosophers, scientists and academics, and Elis Yarnall's reminiscence of his visit to Rydal Mount in 1849: *Wordsworth and the Coleridges*, pp. 33-51.

Wordsworth Society as William Knight 'felt that Wordsworth could not be properly appreciated without some knowledge of the Lake Country'.[69] Thus, Wordsworthians recognised the mutual value of the poetry and the silent hills. Moreover, the first stated purpose of the Society was to cultivate and protect 'a bond of union amongst those who are in sympathy with the general teaching and spirit of Wordsworth'; that is to say, the process of learning from Wordsworth's poetry and his landscape had a spiritual dimension.

Aubrey De Vere recalled Wordsworth's admiration for one particular observer of nature:

> Indeed I have hardly ever known any one but myself who had a true eye for Nature, one that thoroughly understood her meanings and her teachings—except […] one person. There was a young clergyman, called Frederick Faber, who resided at Ambleside. He had not only as good an eye for Nature as I have, but even a better one, and sometime pointed out to me on the mountain effects which, with all my great experience, I had never detected.[70]

Frederick William Faber (1814-67), a prominent member of The Oxford Movement, met Wordsworth in 1830 and the two men grew close when Faber moved from Oxford to the Lakes.[71] On arrival in Ambleside in June 1837 Faber wrote to a friend:

> Well, here I am among my native mountains with [Wordsworth's] cottage in view (the great man is unfortunately in Italy) and most delightful it is to familiarize myself once more with those forms of grandeur and of beauty which left such abiding impressions on me in early times.[72]

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[69] Knight, *Wordsworthiana*, pp. 1-2.

[70] *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 488. Wordsworth and De Vere met in 1842 and this reminiscence dates from 1876. Wordsworth severed all contact with Faber after the conversion to Roman Catholicism in November 1845. This possibly explains De Vere's memory of Wordsworth speaking of Faber in the past tense.

[71] For a detailed account of the relationship between Wordsworth and Faber see Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, pp. 70-80 and 'Wordsworth and "Catholic Truth": The Role of Frederick William Faber'. On The Oxford Movement see S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (London: Mowbray, 1915) and Herring, *What Was the Oxford Movement?*.

[72] *Faber: Poet and Priest. Selected Letters by Frederick William Faber, 1833-1863*, ed. by Raleigh Addington (Cowbridge: Eastgate, 1974), p. 60.

Faber here reconstructs Wordsworth's Preface to *The Excursion* and *Prospectus* to *The Recluse*.[73] The effect is that he announces (albeit privately) that he has retreated in order to execute some great work, just as Wordsworth had declared in 1814. The *forms* of grandeur and beauty that Faber recalled from childhood and hoped to experience again were not just those of the landscape but also those of Wordsworth's poetry.[74]

Faber's travelogue, *Sights and Thoughts in Foreign Churches* (1842), offers descriptions of a variety of European sites (such as Notre Dame) punctuated by conversation with an imaginary companion joining him from the Middle Ages.[75] Through this imagined dialogue Faber compares the religious practices of the English Church in the nineteenth century with those of medieval times, always biased towards the latter. Faber encounters the past through observation of architecture and landscape in precisely the manner that De Vere described Wordsworth conversing with his mountains: Faber's fictional companion highlights the fact that his dialogue is in essence an imaginative exchange with the scenery. Aside from Faber's Tractarian agenda, his encounter with the landscape helps establish that Wordsworthians in the 1840s were not only those who made pilgrimages to Rydal Mount, but also those who, like Faber, looked on the world with the poet's eyes.

Julian Charles Young met Wordsworth in July 1828 while they were residing in the same château in Godesberg, Germany. Wordsworth's companions on this German tour, Coleridge and Dora, had declined joining him on a day trip to the ruins of the old

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[73] Wordsworth's preface reads: 'when the Author retired to his native Mountains […] it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own Mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him'. The Prospectus to *The Recluse* follows: 'Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope […] I sing': *Excursion*, pp. 38-9. Faber was born in Yorkshire but spent most of his childhood in Westmorland.

[74] At the age of 19 Faber planned to read *The Excursion* through twice, *Faber Letters*, p. 46.

[75] Frederick William Faber, *Sights and Thoughts in Foreign Churches and Among Foreign Peoples* (London, 1842). The volume was dedicated to Wordsworth, 'in affectionate remembrance of much personal kindness, and many thoughtful conversations on the rites, prerogatives, and doctrines of The Holy Church'. Faber's actual trip to Europe and the Middle East took place with his pupil, Matthew Harrison, between February and September 1841. For descriptions of this journey: *Faber Letters*, pp. 84-92. During the trip Faber corresponded with Wordsworth: *A Life*, p. 417, n. 91.

Cistercian Abbey of Heisterbach, situated on the opposite bank of the Rhine. Wordsworth therefore invited Young to join him for the expedition.[76] Young recalled: 'In that same stroll to Heisterbach, he [Wordsworth] pointed out to me such beauty of design in objects I had used to trample under foot, that I felt as if almost every spot on which I trod was holy ground, which I had rudely desecrated'.[77] Although the Cistercian ruins were the motivation for the walk, Young implied that it was not only the religious history that determined the reverence of Wordsworth's step. For Wordsworth, all aspects of the landscape commanded a respect that gave the ground spiritual significance.

De Vere used a similar frame of expression in 1853 when he reported his visit to the ruins of Grace Dieu Priory in Leicestershire to Isabella Fenwick: 'I really cannot help writing you a few lines to tell you of the great pleasure I have had in treading again Wordsworthian ground'.[78] The ground was 'Wordsworthian' because Grace Dieu features in Wordsworth's Coleorton Inscriptions, but it was particularly esteemed by De Vere because Wordsworth himself had visited that place. Moreover, by following the footsteps and emulating the spirit of the poet, De Vere became a Wordsworthian pilgrim, venerating the ground at Grace Dieu as Wordsworth had instructed Young to do at Heisterbach. The ground was Wordsworthian because of the demeanour with which De Vere perceived it and it had a spiritual character similar to that which Wordsworth had attributed to his own work in *The Prelude* where, with reference to *The Recluse,* he proclaimed: 'it shall be my pride | That I have dared to tread this holy ground' (250-1).[79]

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[76] For an account of the tour see Hayden, *Wordsworth's Travels in Europe*, vol. 2, 19-48. Hayden notes the excursion to Heisterbach at p. 32.
[77] Young, *A Memoir of Charles Mayne Young*, p. 120.
[78] De Vere, *Memoir*, p. 223.
[79] *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, p. 252.

In ‘The Cuckoo at Laverna’ Wordsworth found qualities of discipleship in the few monks that followed Francis most carefully:

> Then question not that, ’mid the austere Band,
> Who breathe the air he breathed, tread where he trod,
> Some true Partakers of his loving spirit
> Do still survive, and, with those gentle hearts
> Consorted, Others, in the power, the faith
> Of a baptized imagination, prompt
> To catch from Nature’s humblest monitors
> Whate’er they bring of impulses sublime. (66-73)

They breathe the air and tread the ground as Francis had done and thus become ‘Partakers of his loving spirit’ in precisely the way that Faber, De Vere and Young became Wordsworthians. Their searching ‘breathings’ reach beyond the limitations of words and find responsive counterparts in the impulses of nature.

When followers tread (in spirit) in Wordsworth’s footsteps, they become his descendants, the ‘second selves’ he described in *Michael*. The creation of Wordsworthians completes the process I explained in Chapter Two, where, through the practice of hesychasm, the reader cultivates a meditative disposition and gains access to the poet’s emotions. The true offspring of the poet resemble the ideal political representatives he desired in *The Convention of Cintra* and the silent progeny Emily produces in *The White Doe of Rylstone*. In effect, these ‘second selves’ are not representatives at all but incarnations, the type of primogeniture for which St Basil fought.[80] According to Wordsworth’s example in ‘The Cuckoo at Laverna’, this kinship is achieved when the reader feels those spiritual impulses and ‘sedulous iterations’ of joy as his/her own. The process differs from the disingenuous tourism that is described (for example) by the Priest of Ennerdale in ‘The Brothers’, where tourists look at a

[80] See Chapter Three.

scene in order to take a sketch of it without the participative engagement of the 'Mind' of a poet.[81]

Wordsworth interprets the cuckoo's call as a symbol of the 'baptized imagination'; he is involved in a process whereby ordinary experience becomes sacramental or religious in character. The sound of the cuckoo's voice releases Wordsworth into an imageless realm and the effect is congruous with that which the *imagined* tones of the Solitary Reaper had on him in 1805. Wordsworth was the *reader* of Thomas Wilkinson's tour guide but responded as if he had in fact witnessed the girl's Gaelic song. Those readers who follow Wordsworth's example, as he hoped the monks at Laverna would, are able to perceive the transformative power of commonplace events. How does this work? The theologian Nicholas Lash offers a definition of sacramental experience that is helpful at this point. He describes a type of religious experience that is aesthetic in character: it is 'not surprising that many people suppose that the difference between religious people and the rest of us is not unlike the difference between those who are "musical" and those who are (in varying degrees) "tone-deaf"'.[82] Sacramental attunement is a method of interpreting the ordinary as sacred. Wordsworth offers what Lash describes as 'a *sacramental* account of the relationship between human experience and a tradition of discourse and behaviour which, in interpreting that experience, contributes effectively to its transformation'

[81] *The Brothers*, lines 1-12, in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 142-3. Aubrey De Vere recalled Wordsworth's pronouncement about tourists: 'Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! [The tourist] should have left his pencil and note-book at home; fixed his eye, as he walked, with a *reverent* [my italics] attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Then, after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. […] [T]he picture surviving in his mind—would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so, in a large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic.' *Grosart Prose*, vol. 3, 487.

[82] Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1988), p. 290.

[Lash's italics].[83] In order to reproduce this effect Wordsworth asks his readers to listen to the world with 'a conscious ear'. Regina Hewitt provides an explanation:

> Wordsworth's readers themselves embrace his ideal most fully when they […] value his cooperative goal. When they practice some myth-making of their own and establish a functional relationship with their literary heritage, they sort and safeguard a true kernel of spiritual value from the chaff of Wordsworth's politics.[84]

The practice of interpreting Wordsworth's poetry is a matter of cooperation with the hermeneutic methods he exhibits. Such active heuristic engagement infuses the poetry with spiritual value and possibly contributed to the religious colouring of the testimonies that Gill has attentively analysed.

'The Cuckoo at Laverna' culminates in the evening. Wordsworth addresses the cuckoo as if it were a missionary dove heralding the descent of the Holy Spirit:

> Till night, descending upon hill and vale,
> Grants to thy mission a brief term of silence,
> And folds thy pinions up in blest repose. (110-12)

The effect is almost the same as that which Wordsworth produced at the end of 'A volant Tribe of Bards':

> Apart she toils within the chosen ring;
> While the stars shine, or while day's purple eye
> Is gently closing with the flowers of spring;
> Where even the motion of an Angel's wing
> Would interrupt the intense tranquillity
> Of silent hills, and more than silent sky. (9-14)

Wordsworth closes both poems with 'a brief term of silence', knowing that daylight will soon return to break the tranquillity. In nature, as in poetry, silence cannot be a permanent state; rather it is a fertile intermission. These 'terms of silence' are present on a more acute scale in cuckoo calls and echoes; their supralinguistic intermittent spaces allow the listener to enter a state of wise passiveness. The 'more than' silence is

[83] ibid, p. 294.
[84] Hewitt, 'Church Building as Political Strategy', p. 44.

an intermediate pause within which sacramental interpretation is able to flourish. This is not separate from ordinary experience but part of its cyclical patterning. By ending these poems in silence, Wordsworth betrays neither an inability to speak nor refusal to speak; nor is he commenting on the inadequacy of words. At this point, silence is not a substitute or replacement for language; it is both anterior and posterior to it. Wordsworth's task as the Recluse was to compose poetry that harnessed that primal form of communication as a means of achieving transcendence: he drew upon and cultivated divine anterior silence in order to re-establish it when the skies had been stilled. Anterior and posterior silences are rooted in cycles. The diurnal course necessitates the interchange of silence and sound, night and day, just as the monks at Camaldoli needed joy as well as quietude. Without one, the other is diminished.

In the preface to the Clark Lectures delivered at Cambridge in 1949, Helen Darbishire explained that after spending three years immersed in the manuscripts of Dove Cottage and surrounded by the Grasmere landscape, she had thought, 'I should never again talk or write about Wordsworth (so thoroughly had I learnt among the hills his lesson of silence)'.[85] All Wordsworth criticism proceeds from, and necessarily subtracts from, the silence of the hills. The ability to comprehend this silence is the perceptive skill Wordsworth teaches us. And this perceptive skill is different from any literary critical skill. Wordsworth's poetry proclaims this lesson of silence; he was at his most characteristic and expressive when, like the Wanderer,

> He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
> Through consciousness that silence in such place
> Was best,—the most affecting eloquence. (IV. 414-16)[86]

[85] Helen Darbishire, *The Poet Wordsworth: The Clark Lectures, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1949* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), Preface (no page number).
[86] *Excursion*, p. 142.

APPENDIX I

Thomas Barnard, 'An account of an English Hermit, by a respectable Clergyman'[1]

Thomas Gardiner was born in London in or about the year 1657, educated at Charterhouse school, and sent from thence to Oxford, with the allowance of twenty pounds a year from the governors of that school, to be elected fellow of all souls college about the year 1678, where he continued to reside till the revolution; after which, refusing the oaths to the government, he lost his fellowship, and soon after retired to Amney [Ampney] near Cirencester in Gloucestershire (at that time the seat of the Pleydell family) and he became tutor to Robert Pleydell Esquire, the last male heir of it.[2]

To the family of the Pleydell he was related and attended and attended [sic] his pupil to the university of Oxford, who died when young; it was perhaps owing to this accident, and the removal of that family from that neighbourhood, that he first thought of living a recluse and solitary life, which he did, in a little house situated in Amney Park, quite alone, and without conversing almost with anyone for about forty years, intirely [sic] giving himself up to the studies of religion, to contemplation, and [MS torn] servant and suffered no person to come about him, till [MS torn] increase of his age and an accident of breaking his thigh, which happened about nine years before he died, made it necessary for an old woman to attend him at particular times.

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[1] Grasmere, Jerwood Centre, DC MS WLL/Beaumont, George/30, transcribed by permission of The Wordsworth Trust. The manuscript is not divided into paragraphs. For clarity, I have given each sentence its own paragraph. I have retained all original punctuation and capitalisation.

[2] At Pleydell's death, the estate passed to his daughter Charlotte Louisa, who married Sir John Dawnay (1686-1740). Dawnay became Lord Downe, Gardiner's patron and owner of the land on which his hermitage stood. The Downe family were members of the Church of England, many generations of which included MPs: The National Archives, 'Access to Archives', <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx> [accessed 13 September 2012]. I am grateful to Norma Aubertin-Potter at the Codrington Library, Oxford, for confirming that Thomas Gardiner was a member of All Souls' College between 1680 and 1691.

His life during this long period, was truly exemplary, filled up with acts of charity and munificence much above his circumstances, and very remarkable for his constant attendance at Church, even to the frequenting of the extraordinary offices of it, such as christenings and burials; this, neither distance of way nor weather, ever suffered him to dispense with, till providence by the accident above mentioned entirely disabled him.[3]

A life of such wonders, and so very different from the generality of mankind, made me very inquisitive concerning it, and when I happened to be in Gloucestershire in the month of August 1745,[4] I was very desirous of the sight of so wonderful a person; and this happiness, which had been denied to thousands, by a concurrence of fortunate circumstances fell to my share; I was introduced to him by a lady, whose care and tenderness for him (expressed at the time of his breaking his thigh) made him deny her nothing, except that of introducing any other person to him, and even that he was pleased to grant me, on being told I was a stranger, not likely to trouble him often, that I was a fellow of a college, and a clergyman. —

At my visit to him, I found him almost sunk under the weight of years and poverty, but with a serene and cheerful countenance, and blessed with understanding; and speech as little impaired as could be, in one who had lived even without conversation so many years.

After some few compliments upon the rudeness I was guilty of; in intruding myself upon him, which he answered, with a gravity and majesty peculiarly becoming him, I began to enquire after his manner of spending his time, and learned from him, that it had been spent entirely during his long solitude, in the affairs of learning and religion.

[3] As a rule nonjurors preferred services of their own in separate places of worship sometimes called 'oratories' or 'chapels'. These services had to be conducted in secret. If they were discovered, they would be interrupted by authorities, forced to accept the oaths and, on refusal, imprisoned. See Overton, *The Nonjurors*, p. 280.

[4] The date of Barnard's visit is pertinent since August 1745 was the most tumultuous month of the second Jacobite uprising. The first uprising occurred in 1715.

He had a very competent knowledge of the greek, latin, french, spanish, and italian tongues, all of which he had made subservient to what he called his chief employment, that of the study of mystic divinity, which he had given himself up to for about fifty years. —

His principal, his most favourite author was Jacob Behmen whose works he had read over and over, and whose *Aurora* (one of his famous performances) he had by him interleaved, and full of his own notes and observations; concerning it he had added numerous observations to this book from all kind of writers, both mystical and others, such as Plato, Hierocles, Thanler, Jane Lead (an english woman) Poiset, but particularly Dionysius the Areopagite. —

He had moreover digested and methodized the principles of this difficult and surprising german Author, in order to make him more familiar and easy to common capacities, and had endeavoured to confirm his doctrines by the application of vast numbers of texts from the Septuagint version of the bible, beginning [MS torn] Genesis and ending at the Psalms; to the book that contains [MS torn] prefixed this title — Expressions in holy scripture containing and explained by this heavenly taught philosophy and divinity of Jacob Behmen.

Upon my being desirous to know his sentiments concerning this wonderful writer, his answer was that he deserved the title of 'The Father and Founder of all true ~~religion~~ knowledge'; and that he believed him to be dispensed by the Spirit of God, in a degree little less than of the sacred writers. —

To the works of Jacob Behmen he joined those of the great german divine Thanler, Jane Lead and monsieur Poiset, whose book of divine oeconomy he himself had translated, and printed in London the beginning of this century.

As his speculative studies had laid so much out of the common road, it was with some diffidence I asked him his opinion concerning the church of

England; but he readily answered, that he believed it the most pure, and apostolick church now in being, though he would not but differ from it in some things, as in particular, that he believed all men would be finally saved; this [?] on a question concerning predestination, but I found that he was not all inclinable to the doctrines and opinions of Calvin.

It was necessary to put an end to a visit which had in some measure been forced upon him, and I went away having first obtained permission to visit again. —

At my second, visit I asked him if he thought any thing was in my power by which I could be serviceable to him; his answer was, that a man who had for fifty years lived in perfect resignation to the will of God, had little to do at this time of life; that he had been many years in readiness to receive his call, and could meet death the next moment with the greatest satisfaction. —

I then explained in some measure my former question by asking him, if he had any thing to give the world, for the information of posterity, which I might be in some measure useful by conveying to them, he answered that they needed none from him; that the present and all succeeding generations, must learn their duties from their bibles, or it would be vain to seek it elsewhere.

It is to be observed of him, that during the strength of his understanding, and in the time of his health, he never addmitted [sic] any visitors, and if any out of curiosity could force himself upon him, he took care in a few minutes to express some signs of uneasiness, that he might sooner return to his books and his devotion; to those he dedicated all his solitude, except some little time which he bestowed in weeding and keeping clean a small inclosure adjoining to his house, and in doing the same to a pathway, of about the length of a mile, which led from his house across the park to the Church.

When I saw him, he appeared to be of a low stature, of what had been a quick and piercing eye (for he was almost or altogether blind) of a fine, serene, open, reverent countenance, and the greyness of his hair, and beard, which was of a great length, gave his face the appearance of something almost more than human.

The cheerfulness of his disposition, and that divine tranquillity which was diffused about him, made me tell him he was an happy man; he made no direct answer to this, but said he was convinced that they were the most so who had the least to do with the World. —

He was not only remarkable for the passive virtues, but also for the active graces of the christian character; his charity in particular was above his station, and had raised some curiosity concerning the means of supporting it; no object for many miles round, who did not watch his going to or from church, and no object ever left him unrelieved.

Envy follows great merit as [MS torn] and by many, to whom the exemplariness of his conduct was a [MS torn] as called the silly hermit, the popish priest, the mad man; [MS torn] are we to censure what differs from ourselves.

The decline of life now in some measure, the streams of his bounty dried up; for a friend in Wales being dead, from whom he received a bounty of twenty pounds a year, he could give little to others who had nothing left for himself: and he long subsisted upon provisions sent him ready dressed [?] by the care of my Lord Down's steward who in right of his mother was heir to the estate upon which he lived.

His known meek and peaceable disposition, had exposed him to many misfortunes; the bad people of his neighbourhood, taking opportunities while he was at church, to break into his house, in particular at one time he lost [MS damaged] one hundred pounds, all he had in the world, at which he expressed no other concern, than what arose from duty to the person who

did it; and for being deprived of employing it to the purposes of charity, for which he had put it apart.

At another time, word was brought him, while at church, that a villain was discovered robbing his house, but he refused to send his key, on purpose, as was supposed, to facilitate his escape.

No one appeared to have greater aversion to a state of dependence, + therefore the family who were his patrons, and lived near him, would send him meat from their own table, but to prevent that as much as possible, he would give the servant half a crown; and when another lady did the same, when it was not in his power to bestow such large gifts, he would take what was sent, and after an hour or two carry it back again, and say it was too good for him, it might be better disposed of.

Among other things which he lost by his house being broke open, was a watch, which being for many years, his almost only companion, his generous benefactors sent him another, but he returned it again shortly, saying, that by keeping it, he might be accessory to other peoples sin, in tempting them to rob him a second time.

The scriptures had been his chief study, and he read them with such care, that not the least mistake was made by a clergyman in any part of the service, but he found it out, and was soon to mention it; and in a sermon, if anything was said that he understood not, or disliked he always gave tokens of disapprobation before the congregation; and this singularity the people readily forgave him, on account of his other great and extraordinary virtues.

These were the particulars I was able to pick up concerning this venerable old man; from about an hours [sic] conversation with him, and enquiries that I made in the place where he lived, and howsoever trifling and unsatisfactory they may appear, yet when I read them to the clergyman who was many years vicar of the parish, he declared they were more than either he or any other man whatever knew concerning him.

This holy venerable man lived in the manner I have described a year or two after I saw him, and at last was removed from his solitary hut, to an immensurable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, and to the spirits of the just men made perfect, full of years in 1746•7.

I cannot conclude this imperfect account of the life of this christian hermit without wishing (that, allowances being made for sequestering himself from the world and some little peculiarity of sentiment and behaviour) both myself, + those who read the relation of a life of such wonders, would, in regard of his great indifference to worldly matters, his true piety his extensive charity, his entire resignation to the will of God — Go and do likewise.

N.B. It appears by the list of the Oxford Graduates, that Thomas Gardiner of Allnock, took his master of arts degree, May 5th 1685.

This account of an English Hermit, was copied from the original copy of Thomas Barnard of Withersfield, who paid him the visit.[5]

[5] Thomas Barnard graduated from St John's College, Cambridge, in 1742 and was made rector of Newmarket St Mary in 1752. From 1756 he was also rector at Withersfield, Suffolk, where he remained until his death in 1781. He became chaplain to the King in 1761: *The Clergy of the Church of England Database* (King's College London), <hppt://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk> [accessed 13 September 2012].

APPENDIX II

A List of Monastic Sites Visited by Wordsworth

This chronological list of the monasteries visited and/or studied by Wordsworth is not exhaustive. It is included here to demonstrate Wordsworth's life-long interest in monastic sites in Britain and Europe. The most frequent monastic order Wordsworth came across was Cistercian, which is the order governed by St Basil's Rule. Monasteries in bold were inhabited when Wordsworth encountered them.

Name	Date visited/studied	Source	Notes
Furness *Cistercian*	1780s	*MY ii*., p. 39.	West, *Antiquities of Furness*. *Thirteen-Book Prelude* (II. 104). *The Tuft of Primroses*, (365-7). 'At Furness Abbey' ('Here, where, of havoc' and 'Well have yon railway labourers').
Grande Chartreuse ***Carthusian***	**August, 1790**	***EY*, p. 32**	***Descriptive Sketches* (53-79).** ***Fourteen-Book Prelude* (VI. 414-88).** ***The Tuft of Primroses* (508-92).**
Tintern *Cistercian*	1793, July 1798		'Lines Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey'
Rievaulx *Cistercian*	July 1802, October 1802	*DWJ*, pp. 157-8, 128.	*P2V*, 'Miscellaneous Sonnets', 3 and 4 ('Hamilton Hills')
Wykeham *Cistercian*	July 1802	*DWJ*, pp. 122.	
Whitby *Benedictine*	Before October 1802	*DWJ*, p. 128.	
Dunkeld, Scotland	September 1803	De Selincourt *Journals*, vol. 1, 358.	
Melrose Scotland	September 1803 September 1807	De Selincourt *Journals*, vol. 1, 394-5.	Sir Walter Scott gave Wordsworth and Dorothy a tour of the

Cistercian	August 1814	*MY i*., p. 164, *SL*., p. 152, n. 4.	ruins of Melrose Abbey on 19 September 1803.
Grace Dieu *Augustinian*	November 1806, December 1806	*MY i*., pp. 108-9, 121-2.	'Inscription for a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton'
Kirkstall (previously Bernoldswick) *Cistercian*	July 1807	*MY i*., pp. 157-8.	
Bolton *Augustinian*	July 1807	*MY i*., pp. 157-8.	'The Force of Prayer' *The White Doe of Rylstone*
Fountains *Cistercian*	September 1807	*LY i*., p. 92.	Whitaker, *History of the Original Parish of Whalley* (1801). *The Tuft of Primroses*, l. 492-6.
Roslin Scotland	By September 1807	*MY i*., p. 164.	
Salley *Cistercian*	September 1807		Whitaker, *History of the Original Parish of Whalley* (1801)
Whalley *Cistercian*	September 1807		ibid.
Bury St Edmunds *Benedictine*	1808	*SL*, p. 40	Dorothy visited the ruins while staying with Catherine Clarkson.
Dryburgh, Scotland	August 1814	*SL*, p. 152, n. 4.	
Scone Palace, Scotland	August 1814	*SL*, p. 150, n. 3	
Engelberg, Switzerland	July 1820	*MY ii*., p. 634.	
Jervaulx *Cistercian*	November 1821	*LY i*., p. 92,	*Guide to the Lakes*, *Prose*, vol. 2, 155.
Lincluden Scotland	August 1822	*LY i*., p. 143.	
Heisterbach Germany *Cistercian*	July 1828	*Memoir of Charles Mayne Young*, pp. 115-26.	
Boyle, Ireland *Cistercian*	September 1829	*LY i*., p. 143.	
Killaloo, Ireland	September 1829	*LY i*., p. 141.	

Lough Derg, Ireland	September 1829	*LY i*., p. 141.	
Askeaton, Ireland *Franciscan*	Before December 1829	*LY i*., 186.	
St Bees	Before 1833		'Stanzas suggested in a Steamboat off St Bees' Heads'
Valombrosa, Italy ***Benedictine***	**May 1837**	***LY ii*., pp. 405-6.**	**'At Vallombrosa'**
Laverna, Italy ***Franciscan***	**May 1837**	***Ibid.***	**'The Cuckoo at Laverna'**
Camaldoli, Italy ***Camaldolise***	**May 1837**	***Ibid.***	**'At the Convent of Camaldoli', 'Continued', 'At the Eremite or Upper Convent of Camaldoli'**
Mount St Bernard **Cistercian**	**July 1841**	***LY iii*., p. 217-18.**	**Established in 1841 close to Coleorton Hall**

Wordsworth's Monastic Reading

The following is a list of books on monastic history that were owned by Wordsworth as listed by Chester L. Shaver and Alice C. Shaver in *Wordsworth's Library: a Catalogue*. They lie outside the scope of my study.

Discourses of all the religious orders which have been in the world unto this day (unidentified)

Durham Cathedral (This is an unidentified volume but Shaver speculates that it was either, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of Durham; Illustrative of the Plans, Elevations, and Sections of That Building* (London, 1801), elephant folio of prints displaying floor plans and architectural details; or, Christopher Hunter, *Durham Cathedral, as It Was before the Dissolution of the Monastery* (Durham, 1733), an octavo descriptive volume.)

Card, Henry, *Dissertation on the Priory of Great Malvern* (1834)

Holme, James, *Mount Grace Abbey, a poem* (1843)

Hunter, Joseph, *Ecclesiastical Documents: A brief history of the bishoprick of Somerset from its foundation to the year 1174* (1840)

Raine, James, *A brief account of Durham Cathedral* (1833)

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