Wordsworth, Creativity, and Cumbrian Communities

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Wordsworth interacted with non-literary communities within Cumbria, his impact on these communities, and their impact on his work. Analysing texts from across Wordsworth's lifetime, including published poetry and prose, manuscripts, and personal writing, my study charts how his engagement with Cumbrian communities changed and his portrayals of local life developed. It argues that there are three phases to his writing about local communities: 'remembering' (1790s), 'experiencing' (1800-8), and 'determining' (1808 onwards). In the first phase, his writing about communities is defined by a sense of nostalgia and detachment; in the second phase he is immersed in the locale, writing with a vivid sense of exploration and discovery; in the third phase he writes from a more authoritative position, seeking to prescribe the ideal model for Cumbrian communities. The study reveals that although he was drawn to an attractive ideal of community cohesion, he also responded to local tensions and divisions, and ambivalence can also be read within his portrayals of the locale. The unresolved disjunctions between ideal and reality, cohesion and division, provide a significant motivation for his creativity.

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Introduction

Conceptualising Community

This thesis proposes that the people that Wordsworth lived amongst in the Lake District had a significant influence upon his writing and that examining his portrayals of his Lakeland neighbourhood reveals his changing ideas of community. During the long eighteenth century, the word ‘community’ expanded to include a number of new meanings. New usage from this period includes: the civic body to which all belong (1737), a group of plants and animals (1746), life in association with others (1745), a legal term for shared goods and property upon marriage (1810), and communal living on ideological or political terms (1813). Prior to Wordsworth’s writing, a number of negative definitions of community (referring to commonness, baseness, or slang for a prostitute) became obsolete, demonstrating a shift towards more neutral and even positive definitions of the term.[1] The current positive definition of the term did not formally exist in Wordsworth’s lifetime. It was not until 1891 that ‘community’ was first recorded to refer to social cohesion: the mutual support and affinity that is derived from living in a community. However, the movement towards that definition can be traced from the latter part of his career. During the Victorian period, the word ‘community’ acquired a number of compounds such as hospital, relations, school, group, education, church, spirit, and tax. This demonstrates the growing prevalence of the term within social thinking, and an increasingly formal connection between community and institutions. This thesis reveals that Wordsworth himself participated in the linguistic, social, and conceptual transformation of the term ‘community’.

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[1] See ‘community’ meaning 13: ‘a. Frequent occurrence, prevalence, commonness (last recorded usage 1788); b. Ordinary character, baseness, vulgarity (last recorded usage 1605); c. *slang*. A prostitute. Also: an act of prostitution (last usage 1642)’. ‘community, n.’, *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, http://dictionary.oed.com/ [Accessed 11 January 2017].

Although Wordsworth rarely used the word community in his writing, he was certainly concerned with the concept as it refers to a socially-cohesive grouping. He most frequently considers community as a commonwealth, nation or state, a group of people who live in the same place (i.e. a rural community), or a group of plants or animals. These different types of community can be seen throughout his writing. For instance, in his discussion of ideal societies in *Guide to the Lakes*, his varied portrayals of the rural community in Grasmere (*Lyrical Ballads, Poems in Two Volumes, Home at Grasmere, The Excursion*), and the connections he explores between people and environment in all of these texts. Yet community is not only a thing in his writing, but it also exists as a quality. This emerges where Wordsworth describes life in association with others; people having traits in common; and people being in fellowship or social intercourse. Community therefore is a diverse, fluid concept for Wordsworth, which reflects the general form of the word itself at the time. It is also apt to our understanding of the term today as it has become a popular buzzword to denote both groups of people and feelings of togetherness.

This thesis argues that there are three major stages to Wordsworth’s writing about Cumbrian communities. The first I call ‘remembering community’ where the writing is defined by a sense of nostalgia and detachment, and there is a distance from his poetic subjects. This phase incorporates the evocative portrayals of people and places in Wordsworth’s writing from the 1790s (*Lyrical Ballads* and the two-part *Prelude*). In this period, Wordsworth lived away from the Lake District (in Somerset and Germany) and so his creativity was based upon recalling communities from his youth. The second phase is ‘experiencing community’ (1800-1808). This phase began after Wordsworth returned to the Lake District and settled in Grasmere.[2] It includes poems added to *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, as well as ‘Home at Grasmere’ (1800-6), *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807), ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ (1808) and responses to the Green family tragedy (1808). The phase is defined by a vivid sense of exploration and discovery. The texts observe, record, and respond to a variety of figures and stories from the locale, including vagrants, yeomen, and village children. The third phase is ‘determining community’ (1808 onwards). I argue that after Wordsworth had gained a certain amount of knowledge and experience of local communities, he was determined to prescribe the ideal model for community. Texts from this phase (*The Excursion* (1814), *Duddon Sonnets* (1820), *Guide to the Lakes* (1810)) are more authoritative in tone, and place individual community members into larger literary frameworks. For instance, the graveyard section of *The Excursion* assembles a number of local narratives, and holds them together within a superstructure, framing the text itself as a community repository. Other texts explicitly outline the ideal community model, such as *Guide to the Lakes* and the Bowness speech (1836). These phases are not entirely exclusive: there are moments where Wordsworth is prescriptive in his early work, and in the later phase he also writes in the remembering and experiencing mode. Overall, however, the phases chart a broad trajectory within Wordsworth’s creativity.

The thesis challenges the critical orthodoxy that prioritises Wordsworth’s earlier poetry over ‘later’ work, as demonstrated through the quantity of studies that focus solely on the 1790s.[3] I expose a surprising irony: as Wordsworth became more conservative, and his work less palatable to the modern liberal reader, he also became more engaged with local communities, suggesting that he came to appreciate direct involvement with local people, a value that is seemingly in sympathy with the modern liberal regard for community. Of course, this irony highlights the importance of nuance: the benefits derived from engaging with and supporting communities depends upon the nature of that engagement and the ideology behind it. For example, Wordsworth's speech to a crowd of local adults and children at a school ceremony in 1836, which lauds a wealthy benefactor/former slave trader and endorses traditional social hierarchies, is unlikely to be viewed as unequivocally 'positive' community engagement by modern readers. However, it demonstrates a level of immersion in local networks that some critics find wanting in Wordsworth.[4]

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[2] Polly Atkin describes a dynamic and multi-faceted ‘homing process’ that occurred at this time, in which Wordsworth ‘self-consciously names and claims Grasmere and its places as his home, his dwelling-place, and home also of his family, friends, memories and creativity.’ ‘Paradox Inn: Home and Passing Through Grasmere’, in *Romantic Localities: Europe Writes Place*, ed. by Christopher Bode and Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), pp. 81-89 (p. 84).

As well as reconsidering Wordsworth's later writing, this thesis also critiques the concept of 'community'. As Williams observes, 'community' is a 'warmly persuasive term' and similarly, Zygmunt Bauman writes, 'The word "community" […] feels good' because it describes a warm, cosy, safe place.[5] For Bauman, community is a utopian fantasy: '"community" stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess.[6] Yet he observes that this evocative nostalgia overlooks the cost of community: 'Missing community means missing security; gaining community […] would soon mean missing freedom.'[7] Bauman thereby highlights a paradox within the term: while it often alludes to an ideal (the warm, cohesive, supportive community), it is also problematic. Too much community can be suffocating, since its shared, collaborative nature might restrict individual freedoms. Reading Derrida, John Caputo identifies another irresolvable internal contradiction within the concept of 'community'. He writes that the togetherness it describes is both an 'unavoidable necessity' and an 'undeniable violence'.[8] The violence occurs through the act of constructing a communal 'we', which then throws up a wall of defence against the other.[9] Community thereby can create a hard-edged, hostile boundary that defines a group by distinguishing them from those who are different.[10]

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[3] For instance: David Bromwich, *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); David Fairer, *Organizing Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Susan Manly, *Language, Custom and Nation in the 1790s: Locke, Tooke, Wordsworth, Edgeworth* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[4] For example, Scott Hess writes, 'Instead of constructing his relation to place through the everyday, intimate tasks and relationships of the inhabitant, Wordsworth presents […] the Lake District through the detached, primarily visual subjectivity of the traveller.' *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p. 188.

[5] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 75-6; Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Making and Unmaking of Strangers' in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (London: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 1-3. See also Vered Amit (ed.), *Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments* (London: Routledge, 2002).

There can also be tensions and rifts within a community. For instance, the entire population of Grasmere could be seen as a single neighbourhood or community. Yet within that group divisions can be drawn out, as illustrated by the book compiled by Hardwick Rawnsley, *Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmorland* (first read as a paper in 1882).[11] The anecdotal accounts portray Wordsworth as distant and reserved: 'he'd pass you, same as if yan was nobbut a stean'; 'He'd gang t'other side o' t'road rather than pass a man as exed questions a deal.'[12] He is often unfavourably compared to Hartley Coleridge (who also lived locally):

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[6] Bauman, pp. 2-3.
[7] Bauman, p. 4.
[8] John Caputo, 'A Community without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community', *Research in Phenomenology* 26 (1996), 25-37, pp. 25-6.
[9] Caputo, pp. 25-6.
[10] K. D. M. Snell describes the culture of local xenophobia that persisted in parishes. K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 49.
[11] Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, *Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmorland* (London: Dillon's, 1968)
[12] Rawnsley, p. 14, 36.

'Wudsworth nevver said much to t' fowk, quite different fra lile Hartley, as knawed t' inside o' t' cottages for miles round, and was welcome i' them a'.'[13] This relates partly to lifestyle and hobbies: whereas Hartley was a sociable drinker, Wordsworth did not drink ('[I] niver knew him with a pot i' his hand'); and Wordsworth did not show much interest in other local pursuits, such as wrestling, hunting, fishing, and card playing.[14] However, the fundamental difference is class. Rawnsley specifically interviews the local 'peasantry': butchers, gardeners, builders, wallers, and servants; but Wordsworth and his family were middle class. They were highly conscious of those who were above and below them: in Dorothy's early accounts of Grasmere (1800-1802), they socialise with few local families other than the Sympsons, another middle-class professional family (father and son were clergymen).[15] When De Quincey married Margaret Simpson (a local farmer's daughter), Dorothy scathingly wrote: 'De Quincey is married; and I fear I may add he is ruined. […] He utter'd in raptures of the beauty, the good sense, the simplicity, the 'angelic sweetness' of Miss Sympson, who to all other judgements appeared to be a stupid, heavy girl, and was reckoned a Dunce at Grasmere School'.[16] Geographic proximity and small population therefore does not ensure a single cohesive community. While Rawnsley's text leads some critics to view Wordsworth as remote and disconnected from 'his community',[17] this study will consider community as a complex, composite entity, which combines multiple social groups that coexist with varying degrees of affinity and cohesion.[18]

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[13] Rawnsley, p. 26.

[14] Rawnsley, pp. 24, 32.

[15] See Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (2002).

[16] Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 2 March 1817, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth III: The Middle Years, 1812-1820*, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 372.

[17] Lucy Newlyn writes: 'Locals in the neighbourhood of Rydal Mount were later to remember William as a remote figure, somewhat disconnected from his community, and Dorothy as a clever, communicative woman to whom her brother always deferred.' Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: "All In Each Other"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 309.

If local community is to be considered broad, diverse and multifaceted, it is necessary to define the scope of the locale to structure the study. As the title suggests, this thesis will examine specifically ‘Cumbrian’ communities, referring to the county of Cumbria.[19] While this is an anachronistic term (Cumbria county was formed in 1974 from Cumberland, Westmorland, and part of Lancashire) it is a useful way to define the region. Since Wordsworth was from Cumberland (Cockermouth), but mostly lived and worked in Westmorland (Hawkshead, Grasmere, Rydal), it is necessary to address both of these areas; and although ‘Lake District’ encompasses the central area in which Wordsworth generally lived, it is too restrictive. It is a touristic term for the picturesque area and national park within the centre of Cumbria, which excludes lower lying areas around the edge that contain larger urban and industrial towns (Cockermouth, Kendal, Whitehaven, Ulverston etc.). These areas are important for understanding Wordsworth’s relationship with local communities: he was born in Cockermouth, he frequently travelled to and through Kendal, and work for the Lowthers took him to Whitehaven. ‘Cumbria’, therefore, helpfully encompasses diverse parts of the region.

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[18] In Rawnsley’s account, Wordsworth’s servant lists several wealthy middle to upper class male intellectuals as his local friends (Thomas Arnold, Robert Southey, John Wilson, and Hartley Coleridge). Rawnsley, p. 37.

[19] For the history, geography, and culture of the region, see: John Walton, *The Making of a Cultural Landscape: The English Lake District as Tourist Destination, 1750-2010* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Saeko Yoshikawa, *William Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism, 1820-1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); C. M. L. Bouch, A *Short Economic and Social History of the Lake Counties, 1500-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961); William Rollinson, *Life and Tradition in the Lake District* (London: Dent, 1974).

Wordsworth and Community

Wordsworth had a defined ideal for what the Cumbrian community should look like. It is most clearly articulated in *Guide to the Lakes* (1810), where he describes the 'perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturalists' that existed in the region as an 'ideal society or an organised community'.[20] He states that this is 'the face of this country as it was, and had been through the centuries, till within the last sixty years.'[21] His ideal is therefore a nostalgic, vanished community. Michael Friedman argues that Wordsworth's idealisation emerged from his strong need for community: 'He looked to community to provide stability'.[22] He suggests that Wordsworth's ideal model for community is based on traditional social structures, and underpinned by 'the Tory humanist ideology of exchange based upon duty and reciprocity'.[23] This community structure gains urgency, Friedman writes, because it was threatened by the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism.[24] He concludes that Wordsworth became preoccupied with defending traditional community models, and as a result, his poetry declined in quality after 1808 because he was 'distracted' from his true poetic vocation.[25] Simon White also suggests that Wordsworth was frustrated by the rise of capitalism and industrialism, which caused a decline of cottagers (the leaseholders of land who benefitted from access to common land).[26] He writes, ‘Wordsworth has long been celebrated as the champion of the cottager […] the group most affected by agrarian reform.’[27] Unlike Friedman, White suggests that in *The Excursion* and ‘Michael’, Wordsworth presents a ‘harsh way of life […] as a counter to the idealised versions of cottagers elsewhere.’[28] While White’s readings of *The Excursion* and ‘Michael’ are persuasive, overall I agree with Friedman that a powerful ideal of community is present within Wordsworth’s writing. Diverging from his study, however, I propose that analysing Wordsworth’s later writing about community (post 1808) is central to a thorough understanding of his ideas of community in general, and his relationship with local Cumbrian communities in particular.

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[20] William Wordsworth, 'A Guide though the District of the Lakes', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* II, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 151-254, (p. 206).

[21] Ibid.

[22] Michael Friedman, *The Making of a Tory Humanist* (Columbia: University Press, 1979), p. 295.

[23] Friedman, p. 169.

[24] Other studies that examine Wordsworth's responses to social and political changes more generally include: James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Gary Harrison, *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty, and Power* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994).

[25] Friedman, p. 297.

Sympathy is an important and troubled principle within Wordsworth’s concept of the ideal Cumbrian community. Sympathy shapes the content of the vagrancy poems in *Lyrical Ballads* and *Poems in Two Volumes*, which explore sympathetic exchanges between settled community members and strange others. Later texts concerned with regional issues – such as poetry and prose written in response to the Green family tragedy (1808) and the 1818 Westmorland election – call for sympathy, yet they also reveal the limits of compassion, through persistent tensions. A number of scholars have discussed the importance of sympathy to Wordsworth. Lucy Newlyn views Wordsworth’s sympathy to be empathy: the endeavour to identify with and share the experiences of diverse people. For instance, she writes about ‘Michael’ and ‘The Brothers’ that ‘As acts of imaginative empathy, they reach across the divides created by class and education to identify with the plight of local families, scattered (as the

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[26] White also suggests that small rural communities were ‘the principal battleground’ for debates on social models and reforms between both radical and conservative writers following the revolutionary controversy. Simon White, *Romanticism and the Rural Community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1-7.

[27] White, p. 9.

[28] White, p. 77.

Wordsworths themselves had been) by adverse circumstances.'[29] She describes this as a 'consoling web of connections'.[30] Yet Wordsworth's exploration of sympathy does not simply create and strengthen connections between people. It is more complex, responding to inherent differences and irresolvable tensions. David Bromwich understands Wordsworth's sympathy less as empathy ('feeling in or as another person'), and more as a social mechanism that enables one to recognise another 'under the aspect of a common humanity.'[31] For Bromwich, sympathy has a 'humanizing power', and, examining Wordsworth's poetry of the 1790s, he argues that he writes from a 'sense of radical humanity' to defend community.[32]

The relationship between sympathy and community is more complicated than Bromwich and Newlyn allow for, because sympathy is a complex term. In the *Evolution of Sympathy*, Jonathan Lamb describes how the concept developed over the long eighteenth century.[33] Sympathetically identifying with other people or species could facilitate personal growth, charitable acts, and social reform (for instance against slavery or animal cruelty). However, Lamb also highlights a disconcerting aspect of sympathy: identifying with another can cause a painful or disorienting loss of self.[34] Along these lines, sympathy could also be seen to go 'too far', by crossing boundaries between individuals or species.[35] Mary Fairclough also examines the dangerous qualities of sympathy, focussing on 'collective sympathy', which in the aftermath of the French

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[29] Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: "All In Each Other"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 132

[30] Ibid.

[31] Bromwich, pp. 19, 24.

[32] Bromwich, pp. 40, 7. By contrast, Kurt Fosso does not perceive sympathy to be the crucial catalyst for 'social possibilities' in Wordsworth's writing. Instead, he suggests that mourning is more important, arguing that the 'insufficiency' of mourning – which produces a troubled, incomplete grieving process – provides the impulse towards conversation, communication and community within Wordsworth's poetry. Fosso, p. 19.

[33] Jonathan Lamb, *The Evolution of Sympathy in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009).

[34] Lamb, p. 70.

[35] Lamb, p. 114.

Revolution, 'was understood as a disruptive social phenomenon which functioned to spread disorder and unrest between individuals and even across nations like a "contagion".'[36] This study will explore the problems of sympathy by analysing whom sympathy is extended to across Wordsworth's writing, how this act is performed, and where sympathy fails or is lacking.

To consider Wordsworth's portrayals of Cumbrian communities, it is necessary to also consider the locale more generally. He portrays local people as grounded within a particular environment, and explores the connections between human inhabitants and non-human surroundings. These connections are often formed between a particular individual and a natural entity, such as a stone, tree, or plant. This type of relationship often reveals more about the Cumbrian person to whom the entity is attached, for example, their marginality. Broader networks of connection also emerge between plants and communities, as portrayed in *The Excursion* for instance. These act as symbols for community structure, endorsing a relational model of society that emphasizes continuities between different beings. This thesis thereby contributes to discussions Wordsworth's concept of social ecology (the relationship between human communities and the wider environment).[37]I consider both how Wordsworth conceptualises a social ecology, and how he attempts to direct relationships between communities and environments. James McKusick suggests that Wordsworth was 'one of the first inventors of "human ecology"', a phrase that he defines as, 'the study of the complex relationships between human communities and their dwelling-places.'[38] He identifies 'Home at Grasmere' as the 'fullest exemplification' of Wordsworth's concept of human ecology. According to McKusick, Wordsworth was deeply concerned with the relationship between Grasmere inhabitants and the surrounding environment. Ultimately, he sees Wordsworth putting forward an expansive environmental ethic: wishing to extend the bonds of kinship beyond the human to include the animal and ecological.[39]

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[36] Mary Fairclough, p. 1.

[37] For studies of Romanticism and ecology see: Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environment Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991) and *The Song of the Earth* (London: Picador, 2000); Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Peter Heymans, *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species* (London: Routledge, 2012); Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012)*;* Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010) and *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007); Kenneth R. Cervelli, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

However, Scott Hess disagrees with McKusick. He writes: 'The Wordsworthian ecology of authorship presents nature as an imaginative refuge and escape from the everyday. An ecology of community and place, in contrast, encourages the everyday's full reinhabitation.'[40] Hess argues that Wordsworth strives to compose his self as autonomous rather than relational, and therefore his writing about community is characterised by a sense of distance, detachment and authority. He proposes that 'Home at Grasmere' is written from the perspective of a traveller, not an inhabitant:

> While the inhabitant is immersed and defined within various overlapping networks of relationship – home, family, work, neighbourhood or village, physical and biological environment, and so on – the traveller's relationships tend to be fleeting and superficial. Travel decontextualizes the self, removing it from the social matrix of identity in a way that enables claims of imaginative self-definition.[41]

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[38] James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), p. 70.

[39] McKusick, pp. 71-3.

[40] Hess, p. 16.

[41] Hess, p. 208.

While I agree that Wordsworth does establish himself as an authority within the locale, I see this as something that is more marked in later texts, such as *Guide to the Lakes* and *The Excursion*, when Wordsworth is in what I term the 'determining community' phase. I also identify moments where Wordsworth did become immersed in local networks. For instance, some writing from the later phase – such as the 1818 election texts, and the Bowness speech – directly issues from his involvement with local networks, and is concerned with further shaping those networks. By analysing texts from different periods in Wordsworth's career, I elucidate the changing degree and types of involvement that he had with various Cumbrian communities.

Wordsworth, Authorship and Collaboration

This thesis examines various aspects of Wordsworth's creativity to establish how Cumbrian people influenced his writing, and how his ideas of community changed over his lifetime.[42] His compositional process, cultural production, and published output, all demonstrate his varied and changing response to the locale, so this study will examine manuscripts, drafts, and accounts of composition. In particular, Wordsworth's revisions – the places where he returns to modify earlier texts – reveal the ways that his ideas developed as he adapts or writes in new versions of community. Sally Bushell argues that the revision process is fundamental to Wordsworth's creativity. For him, 'there is no such thing as absolute completion: even a completed state is always contingent.'[43] As a 'process centred' writer, she suggests that his compositional method involves drafting and redrafting, and therefore it is important to consider how his texts build, rather than attempting to unearth their original genesis.[44] Further to this, Andrew Bennett describes the challenge that this contingent composition style presented to Wordsworth's self-identity as a writer. Focussing on the popular notion that Wordsworth composed his poetry orally while walking outdoors, he argues that this is a 'narrative promulgated' by the poet and others.[45] While this highlights a disjunction between Wordsworth's ideal of oral, spontaneous, flowing composition, and the reality of writing, revision, and stoppages, Bennett argues that the tension is productive. He suggests it facilitates the unhinging perplexities within the texts themselves.[46] Developing on Bushell and Bennett's work, I consider Wordsworth's layers of text in relation to the local subjects portrayed within them. I study different textual versions and stages to reveal how Wordsworth's ideas and portrayals of community emerge, shift, and develop.

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[42] See David Higgins and John Whale (ed.), 'Contesting Creativity', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 34 (2011).

[43] Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 79.

It is important to note that although local people are the subjects of many of Wordsworth's texts, generally, they did not contribute to his work. The people that he primarily collaborated with when writing of Cumbrian communities was his family.[47] His sister Dorothy, wife Mary, sister-in-law Sara Hutchinson, and later on daughter Dora, were all involved in preparing fair copies of texts, suggesting edits, and contributing words and phrases to texts.[48] While his family were important to his creativity, and sympathy was integral to that collaborative dynamic, the relationships were not straightforward. Wordsworth required his readers to approach his work sympathetically – this included his family, who often read undeveloped first drafts – and tensions could emerge if they criticized a text. His household has been a major site for discussing his communal composition, and there is a stimulating debate regarding how far the household collaboration process was cohesive and congenial, or contained underlying tensions. On the one hand, Lucy Newlyn proposes that a household 'gift economy' informed Wordsworth's writing, with each family member contributing to his published output.[49]

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[44] Bushell, pp. 77-82.

[45] Andrew Bennett, *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 31.

[46] Bennett, pp. 87, 139.

[47] This fits into a broader critical movement that challenges the traditional view of the Romantic writer as solitary genius, by focusing on creative sociability, collaboration, and networks. See also: Tim Fulford, *Romantic Poetry and Literary Coteries: The Dialect of the Tribe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Richard E. Matlak, *The Poetry of Relationship: The Wordsworths and Coleridge, 1797-1800* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998).

[48] Famously, according to Wordsworth, Mary contributed the two best lines to 'I wandered lonely as a cloud': 'The flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude'. (ll. 21-2)

> In the Wordsworth household, collaborative writing was at no stage seen as a species of property in which each contributor held a share but as a commerce of the spirit in which creative artefacts circulated as tokens of kinship, love and gratitude to the natural world.[50]

This rather idealised description of the creative process nonetheless captures an important dynamic within the Wordsworths' collaborative writing: that within the household domain, the various texts (letters, journals, prose and poetry) were part of the family dialogue, and they contributed to the overall sense of cohesion within the household. On the other hand, Susan Wolfson suggests that the intimacy between Wordsworth and Dorothy could be unsettling. She proposes:

> As *alter* ego, his 'Sister' can pose an 'other' to the point of inaccessibility, vexed by gender-difference; or, in the reciprocal relay as alter *ego*, she can pose

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[49] Newlyn, p. 104. See also 'Confluence: William and Dorothy Wordsworth in 1798', *Journal for 18th Century Studies,* 34 (2011), 227-245; *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[50] Newlyn, p. 313.

> (sometimes impose) disquieting proximity against the poet's mode of self-defining masculine difference. The consequences are potent, at once personal, domestic, and – not the least – vocational.[51]

While Newlyn provides a detailed biographical account of Wordsworth and Dorothy's changing relationship and influence upon one another, Wolfson usefully highlights difficulties within their creative relationship. Wolfson identifies the problem of too much sympathy, wherein Wordsworth could be too close to Dorothy, and accordingly, his work too close to hers, which posed a distinct challenge to both his identity and creativity. This study considers the disputed nature of Wordsworth's collaborative creative process, analysing how far it can be considered harmonious (a generous exchange between self and other), and where points of tension, difficulty and fracture exist. Departing from the subject of Newlyn and Wolfson's studies, I also look beyond the household to read the creative role of the wider communities in which Wordsworth lived and wrote.

Although Wordsworth did not directly collaborate with other Cumbrians beyond the family, his sociability with local people influenced his writing.[52] His poetry often portrays interactions between a first-person narrator and other Cumbrians. He also writes about personal friends and acquaintances from the locale (such as the Sympson family, Barbara Lewthwaite, John Bolton, and Lord Lowther). His descriptions of local interactions and relationships often explore tensions, or contain underlying divisions, challenging his idealisation of the region. Felicity James considers both the creative benefits and difficulties that emerge from friendships. She reads the friendship between Wordsworth, Lamb and Coleridge as a key influence upon each writer's output in the 1790s.[53] Through sympathy and identification, an exchange of ideas and identities took place, leading to a creative process of mutual reading and writing. But she also considers the disintegration of these friendships – associated with the negative emotions of loss and betrayal – that produced a need to find replacement sources for intimacy and affection. Wordsworth, she argues, found a 'nourishing ideal of nature' in the rural landscape.[54] This approach – of considering friendship to present both opportunities and challenges to creativity – will be useful for addressing Wordsworth's portrayals of relationships and interactions in Cumbria. However, rather than exploring Wordsworth's interactions with other writers, I explore how non-literary people in Cumbria influenced his writing. Jon Mee addresses the literary portrayal of conversations with others, including non-literary people.[55] He argues that in *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explores 'the problem of how to negotiate the risky space of social mediation': while there is often a dialogue, mutual comprehension is rarely the outcome since 'interiorities resist disclosure'.[56] Mee considers the significance of tension, conflict, and misunderstandings within literary dialogues, which will be helpful to this study. Building on his approach, I will examine Wordsworth's portrayal of sociability with or between Cumbrian people. By highlighting the types of local voices and conversations that Wordsworth depicts, I will reveal how Wordsworth creatively engaged with his neighbourhood. In turn, this will illustrate how Wordsworth conceptualised the various identities of Lakeland communities.

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[51] Susan Wolfson, *Romantic Interactions: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 152-3.

[52] Taking a different approach, David Fairer describes Wordsworth's compositional sociability. He suggests that 'Tintern Abbey' is a text in 'friendly converse with others', since it responds to the work of Thomas Wharton and other associated poets who form the 'Wharton school'. Fairer, pp. 96-101.

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[53] Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[54] James, p. 140.

[55] Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762 to 1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[56] Mee, pp. 171, 192.

To analyse these three aspects of Wordsworth’s writing – creative process, collaboration, and ideas of community – I will use a mixed methodology. I will close read a number of texts, including poetry, prose, and personal correspondence. I examine texts that span his lifetime, as well as drafts and revisions to explore how his ideas of community and creativity develop intertextually. I contextualise these readings and situate them within the locale in which Wordsworth lived, worked, and wrote. I also present ecocritical readings, examining relationships between humans and non-human environments to disclose the ecological ideas and concerns within his writing about community. The thesis consists of four chapters exploring various aspects of community. The introductory chapter examines the vagrancy poems, including, ‘Beggars’, ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’, ‘Resolution and Independence’, as well as the character of the Wanderer from *The Excursion*. It considers people at the edges of settled communities to reveal how Wordsworth conceptualises the limits of community. The second chapter analyses Wordsworth’s engagement with Cumbrian schools, revealing how these were a stimulating source for his creativity. It first examines Wordsworth’s ‘autobiographical’ descriptions of Hawkshead in *The Prelude*, before discussing his experiments with the schoolteacher figure in the *Mathew* poems, and concludes by reading a seldom-discussed text, ‘Speech at the Laying of the Foundation Stone for the New School of Bowness’. This chapter chronologically charts Wordsworth’s developing ideas of education, arguing that he increasingly comes to value the institution as part of a local social hierarchy. It illuminates how this shift informs and reflects his creativity and sense of community.

I examine another village institution in the third chapter: the church. Reading Wordsworth’s biography of a Cumbrian vicar (‘Memoir of the Rev. Robert Walker’), the churchyard sections of *The Excursion* (Books VI-VII), ‘The Tuft of Primroses’, and a sonnet from *Ecclesiastical Sketches,* I argue that in his later writing, Wordsworth comes to value reconciliation. This principle is associated with the parish church, and plays a pivotal role in organising people into harmonious groups. The fourth chapter examines Wordsworth's response to local community crises. It analyses personal letters, poems and prose texts regarding the Green family tragedy in 1808, the Westmorland election in 1818, and the proposed railway scheme for Windermere in 1844. The chapter reveals the darker side to community, highlighting the tensions and hostility that can lie beneath or – in the case of the Westmorland election – motivate cohesive groups. It also demonstrates how Wordsworth composed community, arguing that in each piece of writing he portrays the locale in a distinct way to appeal to particular readers and create the version of community that he deems threatened in each episode. For instance, in 1808 he writes to wealthy and benevolent acquaintances to raise funds to support the Green orphans. He draws these individuals into the locale by familiarising them with the area and its inhabitants, encouraging them to imaginatively and then economically participate in the local community by donating money to support the orphans. This both helps to safeguard the children's future within the community and preserve his idea that in Grasmere community, 'they who want are not too great a weight / For those who can relieve.'[57] This thesis then aims to provide a new and thorough insight into the ways that Wordsworth thought, wrote and engaged with local communities across his lifetime. Instead of accepting the persuasive ideal that he variously puts forward, it examines the tensions within his portrayals of local life. By examining the range of texts and styles that describe Cumbrian society, I reveal the significance of rural sociability to his writing.

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[57] William Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First of 'The Recluse'*, ed. by Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), MS. B, ll. 447-8.

Chapter One: Vagrancy

The problem of how to respond to the itinerant people passing through Grasmere bothered both William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Dorothy's journal records people encountered on the road, or knocking at their door, some of whom begged for money or food. Sometimes she provides a lengthy account, describing their appearance and background. At other times she offers a brief note of the beggar and the amount given. Wordsworth adapted a number of these vagrants and interactions into poetry. These texts explore the edges of a community. They confront insistent questions: who are the vagrants? How do we respond to them? A number of critical studies have sought to address these questions, with approaches that range from exploring biographical elements in the poems, to social and economic concerns, and ecocritical perspectives.[1] This study views sympathy as integral to the vagrant poems – in terms of thinking about how to respond to and interact with vagrants – but I argue that it plays a peculiarly complex role. New Historicists such as Robin Jarvis and Gary Harrison have rebuffed the significance of sympathy within Wordsworth's vagrant poems, instead arguing that they perpetuate an unequal, hierarchical class structure, and mythologize the harsh social and economic reality that the vagrants faced.[2] More recently, David Bromwich suggests that because Wordsworth was 'isolated and bewildered' in the 1790s, 'he was drawn to sympathize with the isolated or bewildered, and to make his feeling for them a primary index of humanity.'[3] He makes an important distinction that in early poems such as 'The Old Cumberland Beggar': 'Feeling […] is defined […] as a sensation *concerning* someone, not to be confused with feeling *in* or *as* another person. Sympathy, on this understanding of it, is intense in proportion to its distance from its object. It does not presume, or aim to produce, a reading of an inward state of mind.'[4] While I agree with Bromwich that Wordsworth's earlier poems are primarily concerned with sympathy rather than empathy, I examine a longer period of Wordsworth's writing and argue that in his later 'determining community' phase, he does develop a concern with empathy, or 'complete sympathy'.[5] This term is coined by Jonathan Lamb who suggests that complete sympathy is the dream that 'an interplay and interchange of places, positions, persons and sentiments and points of view' is possible.[6] Although Wordsworth's earlier poems are not explicitly concerned with complete sympathy, I suggest that his writing from the 'experiencing community' phase explores a troubled sympathy, as interactions with vagrants include physical exchange, as well as frustration and resistance. David Simpson describes a more complicated sympathy at play within Wordsworth's descriptions of homeless people.[7] He argues that Wordsworth portrays beggars and deprived people as 'ghostly apparitions, figures of death-in-life' who open uncertainties that are not resolved, and so in turn, questions of suffering and sympathy are also unresolved.[8] Simpson links the presence of spectral figures and unresolved sympathy to Wordsworth's concern with modernity – arguing that he explores changes brought about by increasingly abstract economic and social exchanges – but I suggest that the troubled sympathy within the vagrant poems reflects Wordsworth's ideas of community. In particular, tracing Wordsworth's changing portrayal of vagrants and interactions across the three stages of his writing about community – 'remembering', 'experiencing', and 'determining' – reveals how his ideas of community developed.

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[1] See: Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995); Arnold Schmidt, 'Identity and Difference: The Meaning of Community in Wordsworth's Early Poetry', *Atenea Revista,* 2 (2004), 147-163; Alex Dick, 'Poverty, Charity, Poetry: The Unproductive Labours of "The Old Cumberland Beggar"', *Studies in Romanticism,* 39 (2000), 365-396; Quentin Bailey, *Wordsworth's Vagrants: Police, Prisons, and Poetry in the 1790s* (London: Routledge, 2016); Gwen Harrison, *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty, and Power* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994).

[2] Gary Harrison, 'Wordsworth's "The Old Cumberland Beggar": The Economy of Charity in Late Eighteenth Century Britain', *A Quarterly Review for Literature and the Arts*, 30 (1988), 23-43; Robin Jarvis, 'Wordsworth and the Use of Charity' in *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts 1780-1832*, ed. by Stephen Copley and John Whale (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 200-217.

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[3] Bromwich, p. 15.
[4] Bromwich, p. 19.
[5] Lamb, p. 67.
[6] Here Lamb quotes David Marshall, p. 68.
[7] David Simpson, *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[8] Simpson, pp. 1-5.

'Complete sympathy' (and its troubles) is also pertinent to the composition of vagrant poems between 1800 and 1802. Lucy Newlyn suggests that a 'highly developed system of gift-exchange' existed between William and Dorothy Wordsworth, and was central to their creative collaboration.[9] She writes that Dorothy's journal acted as a gift for her brother – capturing memories and providing source material for his poetry – and, in exchange, Wordsworth's poems were also a gift for Dorothy, variously enacted through a recital, or an explicit expression of gratitude. Newlyn posits that their gift-exchange had a strong therapeutic dimension, serving to strengthen their kinship bonds following their childhood separation and the death of family members.[10] This implies that a supportive and empathetic relationship between the siblings shaped their collaboration. However, Susan Wolfson suggests that their 'intimacy could also unsettle' through the dynamic of 'alter-ego poetics'.[11] She notes that Wordsworth had a certain 'anxiety of influence' regarding Dorothy, as he struggled to differentiate himself from her, and his writing from hers.[12] This approaches the unsettling dimension of complete sympathy: the anxiety that another soul is attached to your own, and consequently your individual identity is overwhelmed or transformed.[13] I suggest that Wordsworth's vagrant poems in the 'experiencing community' phase are shaped by a troubled sympathy that occurred during composition. It manifests as a movement into and away from complete sympathy, a varying attraction to distance and familiarity, which can also be traced within the poems.

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[9] Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: All In Each Other* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), p. 8, 306.

[10] Newlyn, p. 8.

[11] Wolfson, p. 152.

[12] Wolfson, p. 170.

[13] Lamb, pp. 67-73.

This chapter contains three sections. The first explores Wordsworth's portrayals of vagrants. I compare texts from two phases – 'remembering' and 'experiencing' community – to demonstrate how Wordsworth's portrayal of vagrants developed. I argue that the interactions become more complex, as sympathy is troubled in 'Alice Fell', 'Beggars' and 'Benjamin the Waggoner'. Unlike the established process of sympathy depicted in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', in these poems Wordsworth is preoccupied with the difficulties of meeting, knowing, and interacting with other people. The next section explores how these complex poems in the 'experiencing community' phase were composed. It examines the role of complete sympathy within communal composition. The final section considers the portrayal of the Wanderer in *The Excursion*. I demonstrate how the vagrant figure develops in this later text, denoting some of the shifts within Wordsworth's ideas of community: he increasingly seeks to define people's roles and relations to one another, resolving earlier tensions, uncertainties, and contradictions. However, while I argue that the Wanderer becomes an advocate for 'complete sympathy', I reveal that sympathy remains a troubled quality within interactions between vagrants and community, and social relations more generally.

Representations of Vagrants

Wordsworth's representations of vagrants and their relationship with communities notably changes across two writing phases. In the 'remembering community' phase, 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' (composed 1796-1798) describes an ideal community process of supporting destitute people. The process is portrayed as self-contained and self-sustaining, and yet it faces an external threat: the welfare reforms that, according to

Wordsworth, will trap the beggar within a 'house, misnamed of industry' (i.e. a workhouse).[14] In the 'experiencing community' phase, the relationship between vagrants and communities becomes more complex. Poems such as 'Beggars' (1807), 'Alice Fell' (1807), and 'Benjamin the Waggoner' (composed 1806, published 1819) explore problems within the locale and the world of the poem that frustrates interactions: the narrator refuses to give alms in 'Beggars' when the boys lie to him, Alice variously resists the narrator's attempts to comfort her, and Benjamin's employer dismisses him following a 'complicated provocation', which means that vagrants travelling through Grasmere no longer benefit from his help.[15] The shift towards more 'complicated' interactions between community and vagrants is reflected in the changing role of the first person narrator: in the earlier phase, the narrator observes the interactions but does not participate in them, whereas in the second phase, the narrator participates (both interacting and providing types of support) and so he is entangled within the process. The model of community that Wordsworth describes gains an intrinsic tension, as meetings with vagrants become more immediate, involve difficult decisions, and the interactions are variously frustrated. This presents a troubled sympathy. In this section I will compare poems from 'remembering' and 'experiencing' community phases to reveal how Wordsworth's portrayal of interactions between vagrants and community developed, reflecting on the role of surprise, otherness, and conflict.

'The Old Cumberland Beggar' depicts the charity that the beggar receives as part of a conventional process within the local community:

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[14] William Wordsworth, 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', in *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 228-234, l. 179.

[15] William Wordsworth, *Benjamin the Waggoner*, ed. by Paul Betz (London: Cornell University Press, 1981), l. 755.

> Among the farms and solitary huts
> Hamlets, and thinly-scattered villages,
> Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,
> The mild necessity of use compels
> To acts of love; and habit does the work
> Of reason; yet prepares that after-joy
> Which reason cherishes. (ll. 88-94)

The difference between habit and reason is curious; and likewise, the relationship between habit and love. The gifts of subsistence are called 'acts of love' and are provided out of a paradox: when the locals are *compelled* by a *mild* custom, which afterwards generates compassion. Without this habitual process, one can infer that the sympathy would cease to exist, and the beggar's network of support would collapse, leaving him utterly destitute. The mind's conscious decisive power, the 'reason', is active only at the end stage, when it cherishes 'after-joy'. The intellect is thereby engaged with the experience of giving once it becomes a delight it can lovingly recall. Wordsworth elaborates upon this process, perceiving how the soul becomes 'insensibly dispose'd / To virtue and true goodness' (ll. 96-7) through these acts. In this way the beggar's 'gifts' are part of a self-perpetuating process of developing sympathy.

This could be a process of gift-exchange, resembling the system of 'household gift economy' that Newlyn suggests is central to the Wordsworths' collaborative composition.[16] However, Alex Dick usefully reflects on the complex nature of a gift, suggesting that 'a "pure gift" is impossible' since 'they are always already implicated in a discursively constructed nexus of conventions and hierarchies'.[17] In itself, an 'act of love' might be seen as a 'pure gift', yet Wordsworth's observation of the intertwined processes of habit, reason and love complicates that notion of pure charity, making manifest the complexities within the local nexus of giving. This process is further illustrated in the later description of a neighbour's interaction with the beggar:

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[16] Newlyn, p. 238.

> Duly as Friday comes, though press'd herself
> By her own wants, she from her chest of meal
> Takes one unsparing handful for the scrip
> Of this old Mendicant, and, from her door
> Returning with exhilarated heart,
> Sits by her fire and builds her hope in heav'n. (ll. 149-54)

Her act of giving, initially prompted by routine charity, engenders an 'unsparing' generosity in spite of 'her own wants'; and afterwards, that stage when reason is roused, gives her an 'exhilarated heart'. Crucially, her reason is not located in her mind or thoughts, in the first instance, but acts from her heart; the emotional core. The heart is elated and cheerful, enabling her to build dreams of 'her hope in heaven'. Wordsworth thereby gives a full depiction of the emotional and intellectual processes that an individual member of the Cumberland community is engaged with as she provides her part of the nexus of support. Sympathy is portrayed as a process, begun by routine charity which produces an emotional response before it stirs the intellect.

By contrast, however, we see nothing of the impact of this charity upon the Cumberland beggar. The stanza that follows the description of Wordsworth's neighbour's spiritual enrichment opens with an exclamation: 'Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!' (l. 155). This sanction recurs throughout the stanza, 'let him bear' (l. 159), 'let him pass' (l. 164), 'let him breathe' (l. 165), and so on. His role within the sympathy-engendering process seems to merely be that of a passive recipient who enables the process to occur. Beyond the fact that it allows his life to continue (through providing a vital, basic level of subsistence), it offers him no significant spiritual, economic or social improvements. Harrison criticizes the one-sidedness of this approach to charity and compassion, stating that, 'Under the aegis of mutual good "The Old Cumberland Beggar" reconstructs paternalistic attitudes towards the poor that constitute certain individuals as other in order to legitimise a system of social disequilibrium. The exchange of gifts within that system is nonreciprocal and imbalanced.'[18] The lack of a reciprocal return from the Cumberland beggar, indeed the very absence of insight into his part in the process of giving, problematizes the structure of charity that Wordsworth advocates in this poem. However, David Bromwich defends the integrity of Wordsworth's humanizing sympathy, identifying that he 'hated [...] prudent commercial morality.'[19] Bromwich links this commercial morality, the exchange of 'good for good', to Adam Smith's text, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), and suggests that Wordsworth wrote to counter such a calculated approach to sympathy: 'He is so sure that the humanizing power of sympathy has nothing to do with reciprocal feeling that he takes no interest at all in the inward state of the beggar.'[20] Like Bromwich, I suggest that Wordsworth explores a complex system of sympathy which is challenging because of its paradoxical nature. A balanced, reciprocal system cannot exist in the straightforward way that Harrison demands. The Cumberland beggar is established with a distinct sense of otherness, and this quality is essential to his role within the poem.

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[17] Alex Dick, 'Poverty, Charity, Poetry: The Unproductive Labours of "The Old Cumberland Beggar"', *Studies in Romanticism,* 39 (2000), 365-396 (p. 382).

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[18] Harrison, p. 34.

[19] David Bromwich, *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 40.

[20] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) (first published 1759); Bromwich, p. 40.

Wordsworth also portrays vagrants in 'Alice Fell' and 'Beggars' as distinctly other. Unlike familiar community members who are known in the everyday by their connections to people and place through family, home, and land, wandering vagrants are experienced without such links of familiarity.[21] While the Cumberland beggar does have some links of familiarity – his rounds bring him into contact with routine people and places – in the poem he lacks the internal workings that make him a recognisable human. This makes him a version of Timothy Morton's strange stranger.[22] These are beings that defy us with their otherness.

> Our intimacy is an allowing of and a coming to terms with the passivity and void of the strange stranger. And since the strange stranger is us, the void is us, too. This is very good news. We have a platform for compassion rather than condescending pity […] The inbuilt uncanniness of strange strangers is part of how we can be intimate with them [23]

Condescending pity describes a hierarchical relationship that produces distance and detachment. Given the inferior economic status of vagrants, they could easily become the subjects of a patronising perspective. Yet Morton suggests that otherness (the 'passivity and void' that can be unsettling and difficult to deal with) in fact reflects an important aspect of ourselves (the 'passivity and void' within our own being), and so it disturbs the distance between separate beings. Compassion is therefore based on recognising the affinity between the void in other people and yourself. Morton continues to explain why meetings with strange strangers are fundamentally unequal:

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[21] See Wordsworth's poems 'Michael' and 'Repentance' for the importance of land to identity in Cumbria.

[22] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 80.

[23] Morton, p. 80.

> Democracy is based on reciprocity – mutual recognition. But since, at bottom, there is no way of knowing for sure – since the strange stranger aspect of personhood confronts me with a terrifying darkness – the encounter at its zero level is a pure, absolute openness and is thus asymmetrical, not equal. The stranger is infinity.[24]

The 'terrifying darkness' of another person corresponds with the unsettling qualities of sympathy. The unfamiliar and unknowable nature of Wordsworth's vagrants thereby allows for the discomforting, and compassionate effect of meeting strange strangers.

'Beggars' describes one such estranged meeting with a group of 'other' vagrants. It contains more contradiction than 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'. Thomas Frosch writes that Wordsworth develops numerous conflicts within the poem: the contradiction 'between elements of the beggars' characters, […] the conflict between the speaker and the beggars, and the inner conflict between the speaker's positive and negative feelings' towards the beggars.[25] Furthermore, emerging from the narrator's efforts to understand the beggar woman is a complex concept of otherness. The striking appearance of the mother, who is met first, alone, prompts many conjectures in the narrator's mind. In the first stanza he acknowledges the limits of his perspective – 'What other dress she had I *could not know*' (l. 4) – which leads into an elaborate fantasy of her origins:

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[24] Morton, pp. 80-1.

[25] Thomas Frosch, 'Wordsworth's "Beggars" and a Brief Instance of "Writer's Block"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 21 (1982), 619-36, p. 625.

In all my walks, through field or town,
Such Figure had I never seen:
Her face was of Egyptian brown:
Fit person was she for a Queen,
To head those ancient Amazonian files:
Or ruling Bandit's Wife, among the Grecian Isles. (ll. 7-12)

Since the mother's looks are unfamiliar, unlike anyone encountered on walks 'through field or town', she becomes linked to divergent foreign legends. In an effort to comprehend her, Wordsworth connects her to an array of cultures and distant countries – Egypt, the Amazon, and Greece – cohering only in the sense of her regal aura which is translated into each different settings. Deborah Epstein Nord, writing on the history of Gypsies within British art and literature, suggests the adjective 'Egyptian' makes 'overt the woman's Gypsy identity.'[26] She argues that the British fascination with Gypsies is a form of Orientalism: 'The Orient, as a place and idea, provided Westerners with careers […], scholarly pursuits, opportunities for masquerade and the refashioning of identity, and an escape from the strictures of European bourgeois culture.'[27] In this light the woman represents for Wordsworth an *idea* of the exotic: she is someone distinct from British culture, which by contrast appears more familiar and staid. By borrowing from the trend that mythologizes Gypsy culture, Wordsworth creates a compelling and evocative character, whose unfamiliarity is attractive.

Yet the attractiveness of her unfamiliarity alters during the dramatic shift in the third stanza, where she begs from the narrator. In contrast to the routine process of charity that is observed by the narrator in ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’, here an unexpected incident occurs, transforming the relationship between different characters:

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[26] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination: 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 51.

[27] Nord, p. 3.

> Before me begging did she stand,
> Pouring out sorrows like a sea;
> Grief after grief: – on English Land
> Such woes I knew could never be;
> And yet a boon I gave her; for the Creature
> Was beautiful to see; a Weed of glorious feature! (ll. 13-18)

There are several different moves in this stanza. Just as Wordsworth fantasizes about her exotic identity, the mother herself also constructs a fantastic self-portrait, ‘pouring out sorrows like a sea’. Yet here, the narrator recalls ‘English land’ to perform a grounding role and assert the fallacy of the mother’s narrative, implicitly criticizing her, which ironically contrasts with his previous act of speculation. The gift she receives is then given despite this deceit: ‘and *yet* a boon I gave her’; justified by her beautiful appearance. Her appearance, however, also undergoes a change in the narrator’s perception. Before she was a ‘fit person [...] for a Queen’; here she is ‘a *Weed* of glorious feature!’ This line is a quotation from Spenser’s ‘Muiopotmos, or the Fate of the Butterflie’. As Frosch notes, this allusion links to the butterfly that the boys chase later in the poem.[28] But Frosch does not observe that in Spenser’s poem, the butterfly feeds on ‘flowres and weeds of glorious feature’.[29] Within this metaphor and allusion, the narrator becomes the butterfly that feeds on the mother, gaining creative sustenance from her. Significantly, Wordsworth does not cast her as a flower: as a weed, a common plant growing wild, the mother is not valuable. She might be seen as a pest that grows against a gardener's will, preventing the growth of other more useful or beautiful plants. But in contradiction to the rank ugliness of a 'weed', she has glorious features, and so possesses some surprising merit. Tracing the etymology of 'weed' reveals that the definition of 'an unprofitable, troublesome or noxious growth' was formerly often applied to people, fitting this reading of the text. Interestingly, 'weed' has also been the name for an item of clothing, which can be linked to a person's body (our 'garment' of flesh) and a garb which is 'distinctive of a person's sex, profession, state of life'.[30] Aside from these pejorative links between weeds and the deprived, 'unproductive' class in Britain, Richard Mabey presents a more radical reading of humanity's relationship with weeds. Of the poppy, he writes:

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[28] Frosch, pp. 624, 628.

[29] Edmund Spenser, ‘Muiopotmos’, in *The Shorter Poems,* ed. by Richard McCabe (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 289-304 (l. 213).

> The characteristics that make it a survivor are common to all successful weeds. As a type they are mobile, prolific, genetically diverse. They are unfussy about where they live, adapt quickly to environmental stress, use multiple strategies for getting their own way. It's curious that it took so long for us to realise that the species they most resemble is *us*.[31]

The mother compounds these diverse survival characteristics in her mobile, adaptive, attractive nature. Mabey's understanding of humanity's resistance to their weed resemblance highlights the tension between attraction and disdain within Wordsworth's ambiguous metaphor. The shifts, whereby she transforms from one type of being to another, challenges easy familiarity and sympathy.

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[30] 'weed, a., n.' *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 28 February 2014].

[31] Richard Mabey, *Weeds: How Vagabond Plants Gatecrashed Civilisation and Changed the Way we Think About Nature* (London: Profile Books, 2010), p. 37.

The ambivalence of this perception of the begging mother, at once a queen and a weed, beautiful and useless, a muse and a liar, complicates the narrator's relationship to the woman and his motivation for giving her alms. Wordsworth has been charged with imposing 'story barter' upon the vagrants he encounters; demanding a narrative before giving money.[32] The narrator clearly does not value the *truth* of the woman's story, since he denounces it as a wild exaggeration. However, her elaborate story is in keeping with his impossible fantasy upon her origins. If we recall Nord's argument, that Gypsies often represent an idea of the Orient, then the woman's 'exotic' story can be seen to possess a distinct value for the poet's imagination. This notion of her providing creative material is borne out by his allusion to Spenser, which casts her into the role of providing sustenance for butterflies. From this perspective, the woman could be perceived as a subject whom Wordsworth uses to meet his creative needs. Yet Isabel Fonseca offers a different insight into the Gypsy perspective.[33] She writes of the ways in which Gypsies lie or 'embellish' as a 'cheerful affair' 'to give pleasure' to non-Gypsies. It is part of a mutual process wherein they 'long to tell you what they imagine you want to hear. They want to amuse you; they want to amuse themselves; they want to show you a good time. This is beyond hospitality, this is art.'[34] This suggests that rather than being a subject oppressed by Wordsworth's fanciful expectations, the mother practices her own creative talent. She elaborates upon his fancies, 'pouring out sorrows like a sea', continuing to evade a fixed identity and sustaining his exotic image of her roots; a being from everywhere and nowhere. The imaginative interaction Fonseca describes is seen in action as both the poet and the tinker practice their creative art upon the mysterious other. They therefore complement one another: a balance of difference.

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[32] Jarvis, 'Wordsworth and the Use of Charity', p. 205.
[33] Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing* (London: Vintage, 2006).
[34] Fonseca, p. 15.

Yet later on in ‘Beggars’ there is another unexpected movement which re-establishes the problems of meeting unfamiliar vagrants. When the narrator meets the woman’s children, the complementary creative process collapses because the boys are difficult figures who challenge the narrator’s generosity. They demand alms from him on the pretext that their mother is dead, but he resolutely contests their story because he can affirm it is false:

“She has been dead, Sir, many a day.”
“Sweet Boys, you’re telling me a lie;
“It was your Mother, as I say – ”
And in the twinkling of an eye,
“Come, come!” cried one; and without more ado,
Off to some other play they both together flew. (ll. 37-42)

While the boys’ story resembles the account their mother gives in its fictitious nature, inventing ‘grief after grief’, the story that the narrator insists upon conflicts with the one they want to give. The interaction has an explicit tension as he denies the ‘truth’ of their story, rendering the boys’ efforts ‘to tell you what they imagine you want to hear’ unsuccessful; so their art fails. Yet just as they resist the narrator’s demand for truth, they also defy their own definition within the poem: they are termed ‘beggars’ (suggesting that their interaction with the narrator is a profession to gain their livelihood), but at the narrator’s refusal they do not present the anxious insistence of a dependent and instead they return to another form of play. The separateness of their worlds is reasserted. As at the beginning of the poem, the narrator is conscious of what he ‘could not know’ about the mother; so here it is ‘*some* other play’ they run towards. The pun, ‘play’, foregrounds the mischievous fluidity of their lives, in which performance and amusement merge, so their former sincerity appears more dubious. The poem therefore concludes with an enduring image of their unknowable otherness.

A notably different approach to portraying the beggar boys is apparent in Wordsworth’s later writing: ‘Sequel to the Foregoing, Composed Many Years After’ (composed 1817, published in *Collected Poetical Works* 1827). While the poem muses on the unknown ‘dark between’ his earlier poem and his reflections ‘now’, and the uncertainties about the boys’ fate, overall it portrays the boys in more determined terms. It defines their characters and behaviour:

> Where are they now, those wanton Boys?
> For whose free range the daedal earth
> Was filled with animated toys
> And implements of frolic mirth;[35]

Instead of describing the objects that the boys play with (the wreath and butterfly), Wordsworth categorises the objects as ‘animated toys’ and ‘implements’ of mirth. He also resolves their ambiguous characters: here they are ‘wanton Boys’. In this later phase Wordsworth writes from a more determined perspective, resolving ambiguities to define the character of the boys. This is distinct from vagrant poems written during the ‘experiencing community’ stage, where Wordsworth describes more unexpected, uncertain encounters.

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[35] William Wordsworth, ‘Sequel to the Foregoing, Composed Many Years After’, in *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*, ed. by Carl Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 231-233 (ll. 1-4).

‘Alice Fell’ describes one such meeting. Unlike the family in ‘Beggars’, Alice is isolated and exists in a more vulnerable state, so the meeting is more tragic. The poem captures three disparate travellers on a post-chaise: a post-boy, the narrator (a passenger), and Alice (a child vagrant who has stowed away). There are important differences between these characters that gives them all a distinct experience of travelling. The post-boy travels with a sense of urgency: ‘The Post-boy drove with fierce career, / For threat’ning clouds the moon had drown’d’.[36] He is a professional traveller: a post-boy employed to deliver post and/or drive a private carriage. The pun on ‘career’ (to travel at full speed, and the route one follows through life) also implies that he is single-minded and driven. Yet his haste seems necessary given the menacing surroundings: the clouds that violently ‘drown’d’ the moon remove the light source, and forewarn that rain, sleet or snow may impede their journey. By contrast, the vagrant Alice is interruptive. She disturbs the verse, the narrator’s consciousness and the chaise: ‘When suddenly I seem’d to hear / A moan, a lamentable sound.’ (ll. 3-4) Her humanity is difficult to recognise: the noise appears within the narrator’s consciousness as something he *‘seem’d* to hear’, but perhaps imagined. Over the following four stanzas he investigates these sounds, variously describing them as a ‘moan’, ‘a lamentable sound’, and like the wind (‘As if the wind blew many ways / I heard the sound’ (ll. 5-6)). It is not until the end of the fourth stanza that he calls it a ‘voice’ (l. 16), and in the fifth stanza he establishes that the sounds are coming from ‘a little girl […] / Sitting behind the Chaise, alone.’ (ll. 19-20) The narrator’s struggle to discern the human behind the sounds construes Alice as other. Her uncanniness, first established through the strange sounds, and continued in the poem with her incessant grief that the narrator cannot appease (until the final stanza) makes her another strange stranger.

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[36] Wordsworth, ‘Alice Fell’, in *Poems in Two Volumes, and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 39-41 (ll. 1-2).

Alice thus appears within the poem as a shadowy presence, on the verge between the human world and another. The contrast between Alice and the post-boy is marked: where he uses the public road productively to pursue his income, she is defined by an unproductive mobility, as it is unclear why she is travelling, and she literally disrupts his journey. By comparison, in ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’ the meeting between post-boy and vagrant is different. There, the post-boy anticipates the obstruction the beggar might present on the road, and so he considerately ‘Turns with less noisy wheels to the roadside, / And gently passes by’ (ll. 41-2). This meeting ground moderates the post-boy’s headlong way of using the road: the carriage wheels are subdued in this gentler approach to encounter. Similarly, in ‘Benjamin the Waggoner’, Benjamin immediately responds to a ‘female voice’ (l. 215) that calls through a storm: ‘“Stop,” it exclaimed, “and pity me.”’ (l. 216) ‘Without further question’ (l. 230) Benjamin settles the woman and her baby under the cover of his wagon, and leads her husband and his cart from the exposed land on Dunmail Raise to shelter at the Cherry Tree inn in Wythburn. By contrast, in ‘Alice Fell’ the narrator must act as an intermediary between the post-boy and vagrant, insisting he stops to try and uncover the source of the incorporeal sounds.

The significance of the contrast between the post-boy and Alice – which adds to the difficulty of meeting the vagrant – is revealed by Wordsworth’s redrafting of the poem. In an earlier manuscript version from 1802 (DC MS. 41) the post-boy is absent from the opening stanza:

> The sky grows wild – a storm is near
> Clouds gather and the moon is drown’d –
> What is that strange sound I hear?

What is the meaning of that sound?[37]

Here non-human elements – sky, storm and clouds – are the sole threatening presence. The stanza has a supernatural quality, with the 'I' isolated in a mysterious and unknown world which he uncertainly questions; whereas the opening stanza of an 1804 version (DC MS. 44) resembles the published text and begins with the post-boy. This locates the poem in a world of humans *and* elements, establishing a more complex network of relationships between different but linked entities.

Within the placeless setting of 'Alice Fell', which provides no centre for community (the speaker refers to their location as 'lonesome ways' (l. 34)), the chaise is an important nucleus. As well as providing the place in which meetings happen, the vehicle can also be seen as an agent. Thomas De Quincey elaborates upon the dynamic agency of horse-drawn carriages in 'The English Mail-Coach' (1849). He writes of their hold on his imagination:

> an agency which they accomplished, first, through velocity, at that time unprecedented; they first revealed the glory of motion […]; secondly, through grand effects for the eye between lamp-light and the darkness upon solitary roads; thirdly, through animal beauty and power so often displayed in the class of horses selected for this mail service; fourthly, through the conscious presence of a central intellect, that, in the midst of vast distances, of storms, of darkness, of night, overruled all obstacles into one steady co-operation in a national result.[38]

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[37] William Wordsworth, 'DC MS. 41' in *Poems in Two Volumes, and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 120.

[38] Thomas De Quincey, 'The English Mail-Coach', in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop, 21 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), XVI, pp. 401-428 (p. 409).

De Quincey celebrates the mail-coach as an unparalleled form of transport within England at that time. Speed, grandeur, power and determination are its striking features, which together invokes personal and national sentiments. In this light, the post-boy in ‘Alice Fell’ participates in a national phenomenon. His ‘fierce career’ is not a selfish drive, but part of a ‘service’ and ‘central intellect’ that functions beyond the level of an individual self, to unite different participants towards co-operation on a ‘glorious’ scale. Accordingly, the vagrant Alice is an insignificant obstruction. Similarly, in ‘Benjamin the Waggoner’, Benjamin gains his income through transporting goods on his waggon, and so he is part of a larger economic process. But unlike the post-chaise, the waggon is slower and Benjamin shows greater compassion for humans and animals. When straining uphill on Dunmail Raise, the horses ‘do not dread’ (l. 105) his whip: ‘To stand or go is at *their* pleasure’ (l. 107). Yet ultimately he is punished for being too slow and compassionate: he arrives late and his master dismisses him. While Benjamin therefore takes the time to practice sympathy and help others, Wordsworth does not portray it to be an uncomplicated act: his interactions with vagrants are frustrated by the command of other community members (his boss).

The authoritarian figure in ‘Alice Fell’ does not take on such a penal role as Benjamin’s boss. The narrator, a middle to upper-class paying passenger, acts as an intermediary between the post-boy and vagrant in ‘Alice Fell’, insisting he stops to try and uncover the source of the incorporeal sounds:

> At length I to the Boy call’d out,
> He stopp’d his horses at the word;
> But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,
> Nor aught else like it could be heard.

> The Boy then smack'd his whip, and fast
> The horses scamper'd through the rain;
> And soon I heard upon the blast
> The voice, and bade him halt again. (ll. 9-16)

Unlike Alice's sounds, the narrator's call takes the form of a word. The post-boy immediately responds to this linguistic command, but he cannot hear and does not listen for Alice's altogether more wild noises. The narrator's position as the intermediary is physical as well as linguistic: he literally occupies the ground in-between Alice and the post-boy. The post-boy is stationed at the front of the chaise, driving the horses forward; Alice is sat out of sight behind the carriage, within the narrator's earshot; and the narrator is between the two, inside the chaise. One reading of the significance of these positions can be gleaned from Rebecca Solnit's *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2006). She reflects on the different perspectives one has when facing backward or forward:

> Imagine yourself streaming through time, shedding gloves, umbrellas, wrenches, books, friends, homes, names. This is what the view looks like if you take a rear-facing seat on the train. Looking forward you constantly acquire moments of arrival, moments of realization, moments of discovery. The wind blows your hair back and you are greeted by what you have never seen before.[39]

Alice's position on the chaise thereby represents an outlook characterised by loss. She is desperately conscious of the things that have fallen away from her, referring to her lost parents and becoming overwhelmed by the loss of her cloak. When the narrator invites Alice into the carriage she could be sat facing ahead or behind, and with that ambivalent positioning, her emotional state remains little changed. By contrast, the post-boy constantly faces forward, looking to find and reach new places; although perhaps, since the moon is obscured and his career is so determined, he is not particularly attentive to his route and fails to observe any ‘moments of discovery’.

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[39] Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), p. 23.

Class also plays an important role in different seating positions. ‘The English Mail-Coach’ provides further insight into the class distinctions signified by the respective positioning of individuals upon the mail-coach:

> Up to this time, it had been the fixed assumption of the four inside people [...] that they, the illustrious quaternion, constituted a porcelain variety of the human race, whose dignity would have been compromised by exchanging one word of civility with the three miserable delf ware outsides. Even to have kicked an outsider might have been held to attaint the foot concerned in that operation; so that, perhaps, it would have required an act of parliament to restore its purity of blood. What words, then, could express the horror, and the sense of treason, in that case, which *had* happened, where all three outsides, the trinity of Pariahs, made a vain attempt to sit down at the same breakfast-table or dinner-table with the consecrated four? I myself witnessed such an attempt; and on that occasion a benevolent old gentleman endeavoured to soothe his three holy associates, by suggesting that, if the outsides were indicted for this criminal attempt at the next assizes, the court would regard it as a case of lunacy (or *delirium tremens*) rather than of treason. [...] The course taken with the infatuated outsiders […] was, that

> the waiter, beckoning them away from the privileged *salle-à-manger*, sang out, “This way, my good men;” and then enticed them away off to the kitchen.[40]

In contrast to Morton’s proposal for open-minded meetings with strange strangers, De Quincey outlines meetings that are characterised by intolerance towards those who are different. The ceramics metaphor – ‘porcelain’ insiders and ‘miserable delf ware’ outsiders – playfully articulates social differences and the hierarchical link between wealth and quality. While both ceramics were imported – porcelain from China and delf-ware from Holland – the former was considered exotic, and was celebrated for its pure, fine quality, whereas the latter was mass-produced earthenware, renowned for its common, coarse style.[41] Since the narrator rides within the carriage, he belongs to a class that typically perceives itself to be superior to those who ride outside of it. In De Quincey’s account, the insiders strive to maintain a formal separation from the outsiders, experiencing horror when the possibility of encounter arises as the physical barriers of the coach walls are lost in the dining room. The narrator’s determination to uncover Alice’s mysterious life outside of the chaise therefore marks a radical disregard for the social norm that segregates insiders from outsiders.

A clear insight into the humane interactions that Wordsworth creates in the poem can be seen though a comparison of the interventions that occur in ‘The English Mail-Coach’ and ‘Alice Fell’. The waiter intervenes at a tense moment between the insiders and outsiders, and restores the crucial class segregation. He returns the outsiders to the lowly kitchen and enables the insiders to enjoy their meal in the *‘salle-à-manger’* (the French signifies the room's refined nature – superior to a mere ‘dining room’). In ‘Alice

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[40] De Quincey, p. 410.

[41] ‘delf, n.’ and ‘porcelain, a., n.’, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 10 March 2014].

Fell’, the narrator likewise intervenes at a painful moment, but his move is to reject the separation between inside and out in order to establish a humane unity between the travellers. Yet this unity proves difficult to attain. Whilst the narrator, the insider, endeavours to transcend the boundaries of his position and communicate with those outside, the post-boy and Alice are difficult to address and an interchange between those two appears impossible. He must insist twice that the post-boy stops to listen and discern Alice’s strange noises, and just as the endeavour to recognise Alice’s existence is challenged by the post-boy’s furious pace (which must produce loud ‘rattling wheels’ that obscure the sound of her wails), so Alice also frustrates that process. Her wordless wails do not resemble a language that the post-boy can recognise, and even the narrator struggles to identify whether her sounds belong to a human voice. Indeed, when they first stop to listen, she falls silent, presumably preoccupied with freeing her cloak, but this baffles the narrator’s endeavour to ascertain what the sounds are, so no one intercedes to end her suffering at the wheels of the mail-coach.

The difficulties of participating in community is apparent through the different role that narrators play in ‘Alice Fell’ and ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’. Whereas in the earlier poem, the interaction between vagrant and working community occurs unmediated and produces safe, enriching outcomes, the position that the narrator occupies in ‘Alice Fell’ – mediating between these two dissonant figures – is difficult to uphold. His repeated appeal to the post-boy to stop is succeeded by repetitive attempts to comfort Alice. The violent speed that the post-boy returns to, smacking his whip after the narrator’s first interjection, is mirrored by Alice’s grief which recurs after the narrator’s interventions to comfort her. He responds to her ‘half wild’ speech by inviting her ‘into the chaise’, offering warmth, comfort and company. However, in the following stanza:

> She sate like one past all relief;
> Sob after sob she forth did send
> In wretchedness, as if her grief
> Could never, never have an end. (ll. 37-40)

The repetition – ‘sob after sob’, ‘never, never’ – expresses the totality of Alice’s experience of grief. It consumes her present in a measureless anguish. However, the descriptions of her suffering are prefixed as similes: she is ‘*like* one past all relief’ and sobs *‘as if’* her grief will never end. While the narrator’s perspective enables him to narrate the totality of Alice’s wretchedness, it also includes a space to hope that relief might occur. The pattern is repeated when he kindly enquires into her life (calling her ‘My child’), which temporarily ceases Alice’s sobbing: ‘She check’d herself in her distress’ (l. 42). However, once again her grief returns, overwhelming her: ‘And then, as if the thought would choke / Her very heart, her grief grew strong; / And all was for her tatter’d Cloak.’ (ll. 46-8) The separateness of Alice and the post-boy, and the narrator’s struggle to reconcile these dissonant and conflicting existences, can be understood by this sense of the ‘all’. Alice loses the ability to see or know anything beyond the immersive experience of her own grief, amounting to an oblivion. Similarly, the post-boy is oblivious to beings that are not immediately apparent, but require a level of discernment and compassion. While ultimately in ‘Alice Fell’ the narrator successfully improves Alice’s state, providing the means for a new cloak which makes her ‘proud’, the settlement follows a difficult process between distant and dissonant figures. The narrator struggles to offer sympathy in this territory. Although Alice finally accepts a gift, alleviating her grief and establishing a connection between her and another, the ambiguity of her ‘proud’ feeling leaves the poem ambivalent. Rather than achieving the contentment of ‘happiness’ or expressiveness of ‘joy’, ‘pride’ maintains a certain sense of isolation and disconnection from other creatures, because it is primarily focussed upon the self.

The distinction between dissonance (a lack of harmony) and difference (the ways that people are dissimilar) is crucial to understanding the various types of community and interaction that Wordsworth portrays in the vagrant poems. ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’ describes difference through the strangeness of the beggar, but the community’s response is coherent and supportive. In a more complex way, ‘Beggars’ also focusses on difference: while there is an element of dissonance in the disconnection between the speaker and the family, overall, the cohesiveness of the family reduces the discord within the poem. However, there is a marked lack of harmony between people in ‘Alice Fell’, which prompts the narrator to make numerous, often frustrated attempts to meet and understand the vagrant. James McKusick considers a similarly problematic relationship in ‘Home at Grasmere’, between the local community and its surrounding environment. He argues that Wordsworth asserts an ‘avowal of love’ to heal its tension.[42] This love:

> must extend beyond a limited affection for individual creatures, to encompass all living things that dwell in the entire regional ecosystem. This is one of the most expansive affirmations of an environmental ethic to be found anywhere in Wordsworth’s writings.[43]

I agree that Wordsworth strives to apply an expansive, affectionate principle to his interactions with other living things, yet to call this ethic ‘love’ is problematic because it is a broad and general term. Rather, I believe that in exploring challenging relationships between communities and external groups (vagrants or environments),

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[42] McKusick, p. 72.
[43] McKusick, pp. 72-3.

Wordsworth is concerned with sympathy. But in these poems, Wordsworth does not present a straightforward expansionist sympathy: instead, the types of interactions and role of sympathy varies between texts and different phases.

'The Old Cumberland Beggar' explicitly addresses sympathetic relations between people. Alongside its description of the 'first mild touch of sympathy' (l. 106) upon villagers, Wordsworth puts forward a theory of 'Nature's law':

> That none, the meanest of created things
> [...] should exist
> Divorced from good, a spirit and pulse of good,
> A life and soul to every mode of being
> Inseparably link'd. (ll. 73-9)

The central moral virtue is not named 'sympathy', but 'good', making it appear more simple and general. Yet it exists in relation to the poem's other formations of sympathy. The 'spirit and pulse' invokes examples of individual people's 'acts of love', which made their hearts 'kindly' and 'exhilarated', performing the 'good' act of linking different beings. This type of sympathy, defined by a unifying agency that encompasses even 'the meanest of created things' (the other: those who are poor and deprived like the beggar), becomes more complex within 'Beggars' and 'Alice Fell'. Whereas in the earlier poem the narrator observes the process of charity between the beggar and the community that produces sympathy, later on he becomes an active participant within that interaction. The instinct to link remains, as demonstrated by his concern to unite the disparate figures in 'Alice Fell'. Yet while he gives her a cloak, ultimately each figure remains independent from one another. In another significant move, 'Beggars' concludes with the narrator's refusal to give to a vagrant. While the narrator in

'Benjamin the Waggoner' observes but does not participate in efforts to support vagrants, that poem also describes a challenge that frustrates sympathetic interactions between community and vagrant. The sympathetic principle thereby becomes an increasingly complex basis for action.

These texts reveal changes in Wordsworth's ideas of community in relation to impoverished outsiders across two different phases. In the first, Wordsworth creates a distant, detached narrator who observes the process of charity and is assertively able to define them as 'acts of love' ('The Old Cumberland Beggar'). In the 'experiencing community' phase this becomes more complicated. The narrator participates in the process of interaction and charity: he refuses to give in 'Beggars', he struggles to unite people in 'Alice Fell', and in 'Benjamin the Waggoner', Benjamin's process of helping vulnerable vagrants is stopped. I agree with Bromwich that in these poems Wordsworth is concerned with exploring and finding ways to recognise 'common humanity'. However, the second phase of poems also illustrate how difficult that process can be. In the next section I explore how Wordsworth composed vagrant poems during the more complex 'experiencing community' stage (1800-1808), examining how sympathy variously troubles communal composition.

Composing Vagrants

Vivid accounts in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal and personal correspondence reveal how Wordsworth composed the vagrant poems in the 'experiencing community' phase. Reading the poems alongside these compositional accounts shows that an intriguing tension between familiar and unfamiliar perspectives, and a troubled sympathy, informed both the composition process and the texts produced. Unlike the poems that describe meetings with strange, unfamiliar people, the composition process came out of an extremely close, familiar relationship: the sibling partnership between William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Lucy Newlyn writes: ‘Creativity in their household was a form of symbiosis, fostered by mutual affection and responsiveness to environment.’[44] She describes how the siblings shared memories and texts (Wordsworth’s poetry and Dorothy’s prose) to create an interdependent process of composition that was central to household cohesion. By contrast, Susan Wolfson describes an anxious relationship between Wordsworth and Dorothy. Wolfson’s notion of Dorothy’s unsettling proximity and similarity to the poet will be useful to this study.[45] However, where Wolfson is concerned with ‘a writer coming to a self-definition as “author” in connection with other authors’, I read their anxious creative relationship in order to explore the effect of the compositional community upon the ideas of community explored within the vagrant poems.[46] I consider how Wordsworth engaged with other people to compose the poems, and how this influences his portrayal of vagrants, interactions, and sympathy.

I argue that the intense familiarity between Wordsworth and Dorothy contained elements of the uncanny, or too much sympathy, and this troubled Wordsworth’s composition. I contrast their collaborative relationship to that with the slightly more distant Hutchinsons (before the two households combined in 1802). In a significant moment, a conflict emerged between the Wordsworth siblings and another collaborator, when Sara Hutchinson offered critical feedback and was accused of reading ‘Resolution and Independence’ with too little sympathy. Despite this clash, the conflict was productive, and prompted revisions that reveal the interplay between familiarity, sympathy, and creativity: as Wordsworth incorporated a less familiar and sympathetic perspective, the leech gatherer adapted into a less familiar strange stranger.

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[44] Newlyn, p. 159.

[45] Wolfson, p. 152.

[46] Wolfson, p. 2.

From 11-17 March 1802 an intense period of composition brought out a series of poems concerning vagrants, including, ‘The Sailor’s Mother’, ‘Alice Fell’, ‘Beggars’, ‘To a Butterfly’, and ‘The Emigrant Mother’.[47] Dorothy’s *Grasmere Journal* entries demonstrate the communal creative activity that produced ‘Alice Fell’ and ‘Beggars’:

> *[March 12th]* In the evening after tea William wrote *Alice Fell* – he went to bed tired, with a wakeful mind and a weary body. A very sharp clear night.
>
> *[March 13th] Saturday Morning.* It was as cold as ever it has been all winter, very hard frost. I baked pies bread and seed cake for Mr Simpson. William finished *Alice Fell*, and then he wrote the poem of *The Beggar Woman* [‘Beggars’], taken from a woman whom I had seen in May (now nearly 2 years ago) when John and he were at Gallow Hill. I sate with him at intervals all the morning, took down his stanzas, etc. After dinner we walked to Rydale […] After tea I tried to read William that account of the little boy belonging to the tall woman, and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem. He left it unfinished, and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydale he had got warmed to the subject, and had half cast the poem.
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> *[March 14th] Sunday Morning.* William had slept badly – he got up at nine o’clock, but before he rose he had finished *The Beggar Boys* [48]

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[47] Notably ‘To a Butterfly’ is not a ‘vagrant poem’, but it connects to the description of the boys in ‘Beggars’ ‘chasing a crimson butterfly’ and explores the poet’s and his sister’s different approaches and attitudes towards wild creatures.

[48] Dorothy Wordsworth, pp. 77-8. Frosch also quotes this extract to exemplify ‘the Wordsworthian process of composition at an embattled moment’. Here, I offer a more detailed reading of the Wordsworths’ process of collaborative composition. Frosch, p. 620.

Dorothy provided practical support for Wordsworth's composition as she 'sate with him at intervals all the morning, took down his stanzas, etc.' The 'etc.' implies a variety of ways she might have participated in the compositional process: as well as writing down the poetry he composed, she might have edited this work as he revised it, and perhaps also offered rhymes, suggestions for content, and a critical perspective. This process, of female household members transcribing poetry and providing fair copies, continued throughout Wordsworth's career (later on it included his wife Mary, sister-in-law Sara Hutchinson, and daughter Dora).[49] At this time it was based on a peculiarly intense relationship between Wordsworth and Dorothy who lived alone together: an intimacy that contrasts with the distanced vagrants portrayed by Wordsworth.

Dorothy's journal also provided the source for 'Beggars'. As Dorothy writes, 'Beggars' was 'taken from' an account in her journal, dated 27 May 1800, in which she describes meeting a family of tinkers. Although not stated in her journal, the source for 'Alice Fell' can similarly be attributed to an account from 16 February 1802. Since 'Alice Fell' was written first, and relates to a more recent account, it suggests that the subject inspired Wordsworth to look up a related vagrant encounter, which took place over two years previously. This part of the process is not described in Dorothy's journal, but it indicates that either he knew Dorothy's writings so well he immediately made the association with that other encounter; or discussing 'Alice Fell' with Dorothy led her to suggest the more historic account. Either way, the siblings' writing is closely connected, and in this instance, Wordsworth's creativity was informed by an intimate knowledge of Dorothy's prose. Examining Dorothy's journal entry on 27 May 1800 reveals some of the ways in which the siblings' creativity interacted. The episode is described in lengthy detail, and there are many similarities between the siblings' language. She opens the description with:

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[49] See Newlyn's *All in Each Other* for a full account of the Wordsworth household creative collaboration.

> a very tall woman, tall much beyond the measure of tall women, called at the door. She had on a very long brown cloak, and a very white cap, without a bonnet; her face was excessively brown, but it had plainly once been fair.[50]

The woman's striking singularity is part of the texture of Dorothy's prose. She is '*very* tall', 'tall *much beyond*' other tall women, her cloak is '*very* long, her cap '*very* white, and her face '*excessively* brown'. As Frosch notes, Wordsworth develops this description, intensifying 'the contradictory quality of the woman's appearance'.[51]

Dorothy also recorded direct speech. Her response to the boys has a more pronounced edge than the speaker's in the poem:

> they addressed me with the begging cant and the whining voice of sorrow. I said 'I served your mother this morning'. (The Boys were so like the woman who had called at the door that I could not be mistaken.) 'O!' says the elder, 'you could not serve my mother for she's dead, and my father's on at the next town – he's a potter.' I persisted in my assertion, and that I would give them nothing. Says the elder, 'Come, let's away', and away they flew like lightning.[52]

'The begging cant' and 'the whining voice' imply a critical or dismissive valuation of the boys' begging, and when compared to Wordsworth's version ('a plaintive whine') it appears harsher. Moving from the definite to an indefinite article and from continuous verbs (begg*ing*, whin*ing*) to an adjective, the poem moderates Dorothy's brusque response to the beggars. Wordsworth's poetic adaptation of Dorothy's prose also performs some selective omissions; so the woman's husband, who 'did not beg', and further sightings of the family along the road into Ambleside are removed from the poem. The poem thereby portrays the encounter as a fleeting glimpse of different lives, without the pejorative sense of 'wantonness' that concludes Dorothy's narrative of the family. Frosch describes this as Wordsworth's effort to adapt the encounter so that it is not merely an imitation of Dorothy's prose, but it speaks from his own original poetic voice and identity.[53] He suggests that since the poem remains beset by conflict and contradictions it 'lacks the clarity and decisiveness, the autonomy' of other poems such as 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' and 'Resolution and Independence'.[54] However, I suggest that these unresolved conflicts and contradictions are key to understanding a particular quality of Wordsworth's 'experiencing community' phase. The open ambiguity within 'Beggars' suggests that the poet was responding to unfamiliar, difficult to understand people, and at this stage, he did not seek to categorise them. By contrast, when he later returned to the poem in 1817 ('determining community' phase) and added a sequel, he closed the meaning of the poem, defining the children as 'those wanton Boys'.[55]

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[50] Dorothy Wordsworth, pp. 9-10.
[51] Frosch, p. 624.
[52] Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 10.

A further important aspect of the communal composition process that signifies the close familiarity between the siblings is the emotional support that Dorothy provided to Wordsworth. This is apparent through her concerned record of his state of health: 'he went to bed tired, with a wakeful mind and a weary body', he 'went tired to bed',

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[53] Frosch, pp. 624-6.
[54] Frosch, p. 625.
[55] William Wordsworth, 'Sequel to the Foregoing' (l. 1).

'William had slept badly'. On the day when he struggled to write 'Beggars', she 'sate with him at intervals all the morning'. Sitting *with* Wordsworth intimates the togetherness of the creative process as the siblings share the mental exertion, emotional strain and physical exhaustion of intensive composition. She then 'tried to read William' the original account, and shared in its harmful effect as her support became 'an unlucky thing […], for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem.'[56] Here some of the problems of the Wordsworths' communal composition are apparent. Lucy Newlyn proposes that this instance of 'writer's block' 'stemmed from the feeling that on this occasion Dorothy's narrative provided a *surplus* of the authenticity he was aiming for in poetry, leaving no room for his imagination.'[57] Frosch sees the problem as more significant, writing that here Dorothy ceases to be the 'liberating influence' described in *The Prelude*, and becomes an 'impediment' to Wordsworth.[58] Taking the matter further, Susan Wolfson describes this as a 'disquieting proximity': 'Her [Dorothy's] historical and domestic intimacy with her brother is complex: she is mirror for his self-affirmation and self-completion, but also a similitude compelling him to differentiate himself, and not always securely.'[59] I agree that there is a disturbing quality to the proximity between the siblings, but rather than exploring the relationship between self-identity and writing (as Frosch and Wolfson do), I am concerned with how familiarity and sympathy informed the composition of the vagrant poems.

A different problem (not explored by Newlyn or Wolfson) that emerges from the intense familiarity and sympathy between the siblings is contagion. Mary Fairclough, examining Romantic crowds suggests that 'collective sympathy' prompted anxieties that social disorder and unrest could be spread between individuals like a 'contagion'.[60] On a smaller scale, the spread of anxiety and related illness can be seen between the Wordsworth siblings. When Wordsworth was writing 'Resolution and Independence', Dorothy wrote:

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[56] Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 77.
[57] Newlyn, pp. 150-1.
[58] Frosch, p. 629.
[59] Wolfson, p. 153, 170.

> William worked at *The Leech Gatherer* almost incessantly from morning until tea-time. I copied *The Leech Gatherer* and other poems for Coleridge. I was oppressed and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death.[61]

Here, the familiarity and sympathy between the siblings causes a shared sickness, as Dorothy suffers with Wordsworth. An interesting contrast can be drawn between this composition process and the content of the poem being produced. Within the poem, the first person speaker describes feelings of dejection and the fear that poets end up suffering 'despondency and madness' (l. 49): recalling the psychosomatic affliction that Wordsworth experienced while writing. The poet-speaker then meets the leech gatherer, who inadvertently resolves his crisis. The leech gatherer's healing role is implicitly anticipated by the fact that he gathers leeches: creatures that are used medicinally to draw sickness out of the body. The leech gatherer reports that they have grown scarce, and so he plays the role of the leech: removing the poet's fears by providing comfort and admonishment. Unlike Dorothy, who in the days of intensive composition appeared to absorb Wordsworth's suffering without alleviating it ('he will be tired out I am sure – My heart fails in me'), the leech gatherer successfully draws out the poet-speaker's affliction.[62] The unfamiliar, strange figure thereby surprises the poet, jolting him out of his state of dejection, which Dorothy could not do because of her proximity to Wordsworth.[63]

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[60] Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy, and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.

[61] Dorothy Wordsworth, pp. 97-8.

[62] Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 98.

While the unfamiliar figure could thus usefully offer a shock of surprise and a healthy new perspective, there is nonetheless also a resistance to vagrant subjects in both Wordsworth's poetry and Dorothy's prose. The conflict that Wordsworth describes around the decision to give charity in 'Beggars' emerges more fully in Dorothy's journal. While she gave food and money to some of those whom she met, she does not address their plight so explicitly, and they do not receive the same benevolent, indulgent tone that she reserves for Wordsworth. Yet 4 May 1802 offers an exception, when Dorothy describes an encounter with a destitute mother of two: 'She was a Cockermouth woman, thirty years of age – a child at Cockermouth when I was. I was moved, and gave her a shilling – I believe 6d. more than I ought to have given.'[64] Unlike her brusque meeting with the beggar boys, Dorothy is moved because she recognises the connection between herself and this woman. Yet her emotional response is conflicted: the dashes separate different factors that Dorothy recognises within her response. While the woman's condition is linked to their shared childhood in Cockermouth, Dorothy measures her generous response against a subsequent practical reflection that she gave too much. She is aware of a tension between emotional and practical responses to vagrants. She resolves this conflict by applying her own discerning system of valuation to decide how much she *ought* to give. This demonstrates the disparity within Dorothy's journal: people who exist beyond the family nucleus are conferred a shrewder, less devotional level of service.

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[63] Dorothy writes gratefully of a neighbour visiting their household while Wordsworth is obsessively writing the poem: 'Miss Simpson came in to tea which was lucky enough for it interrupted his [William's] labours.' Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 98.

[64] Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 95.

Further resistance to less familiar people can be seen in the compositional history of 'Resolution and Independence.' It emerged from a similar communal composition process to other vagrant poems (source material appears in Dorothy's journal, and she also provided practical and emotional support), but prospective family members also became involved.[65] A letter from Wordsworth and Dorothy to Sara Hutchinson reveals her role in the poem. Dated 14 June 1802, the letter was written in the interim between Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson's engagement (April 1802) and marriage (October 1802). It is part of a collection of regular correspondence that anticipates and prepares for the merging of two households into Dove Cottage, yet in contrast to this cohesive movement, the letter demonstrates a conflict between the Wordsworths and Sara regarding 'Resolution and Independence'. Her letter to the Wordsworth siblings has not survived, but their responses reveal that she criticized the poem. Wordsworth explains 'my feeling in writing that Poem' so 'then you will be better able to judge whether the fault be mine or yours or partly both':

> You speak of his speech as tedious: everything is tedious when one does not read with the feelings of the Author […] It is in the character of the old man to tell his story in a manner which an *impatient* reader must necessarily feel as tedious. But

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[65] On 3 October 1800 Dorothy writes: 'N.B. When Wm. and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double […] His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they had been scarce – he supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth'. In the poem, the encountee is simplified to be the single poetic 'I'; certain details are kept and elaborated ('his body was bent double, feet and head / Coming together in their pilgrimage'); and other details are altered (the poem's old man still gathers leeches and does not explicitly beg, but he does find 'housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance'). Dorothy Wordsworth, pp. 23-4

> Good God! Such a figure, in such a place, a pious self-respecting, miserably infirm, and [ ] Old Man telling such a Tale![66]

Wordsworth both appeals to and admonishes Sara for her response to 'Resolution and Independence'. Addressing her charge that the leech gatherer's speech is 'tedious', he implies that the fault lies with her for reading the poem with the wrong approach – that she has not 'read with the feelings of the Author' and was an '*impatient* reader'. Here Wordsworth moves towards 'complete sympathy', in requiring Sara to imagine his feelings and read from within his perspective, not her own. Yet as he begins to criticize Sara's reading, he then abandons the rationale for impassioned phrases. The exclamation, 'Good God!' and repetition of 'such' ('Such a figure, in such a place') to highlight the distinct power of the encounter, suggests that the poem emanated from a strong emotion, recalling his statement in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'.[67] As he approaches the 'powerful feelings' that produced the poem, he switches mode and appeals to Sara's sympathy, calling on their familiarity:

> My dear Sara, it is not a matter of indifference whether you are pleased with this figure and his employment; it may be comparatively so, whether you are pleased or not with this Poem; but it is of the utmost importance that you should have

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[66] William Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson, 14 June 1802, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805),* ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. 367-368 (p. 366).

[67] 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a similar mood to this it is carried on'. I discuss this passage in detail in Chapter Four. Wordsworth, 'Preface', in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 740-759 (p. 756).

> had pleasure from contemplating the fortitude, independence, persevering spirit, and the general moral dignity of this old man's character. Your feelings about the Mother, and the Boys with the Butterfly, were not indifferent: it was an affair of whole continents of moral sympathy. I will talk with you on this when we meet [68]

The shifts – from criticising Sara, to passionately proclaiming the feeling of the poem, to appealing for sympathy – demonstrates the connection that Wordsworth draws between sympathy and poetry. For him, a deep-felt, emotional sympathy is integral to reading his work. He posits 'indifference' as the crucial problem in Sara's reading of 'Resolution and Independence', and contrasts it with her response to 'Beggars', which was 'an affair of whole continents of moral sympathy'. This extraordinary image – of sympathy so vast it incorporates multiple land masses – entreats Sara to employ a like approach and extend her sympathy in this case. While he demands a more sympathetic reading, the hyperbole and call for further discussion betrays an unsettled undertone. He takes her criticism seriously and reveals a strong desire to align their different opinions.

By contrast, Dorothy's response to Sara is less tolerant. She does not appeal to Sara to draw her into the familiar, sympathetic Wordsworth circle. Instead, Dorothy reprimands Sara, criticizing her reading of the poem:

> When you happen to be displeased with what you may suppose to be the tendency or moral of any poem which William writes, ask yourself whether you have hit upon the real tendency and true moral, and above all, never think that he writes for no reason but merely because a thing happened – and when you feel

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[68] Wordsworth, *Letters* I, p. 367.

> any poem of his to be tedious, ask yourself in what spirit it was written – whether merely to tell the tale and be through with it, or to illustrate a particular character or truth.[69]

Dorothy's forceful use of the second person pronoun distinguishes Sara as an isolated individual. She trivializes Sara's perspective as a thoughtless reading – something she 'happens' upon or 'supposes'. In counter, Dorothy recommends a harsh level of self-enquiry, repeating 'ask yourself'. This letter demonstrates the difficulties of incorporating less familiar people into an intimate compositional core. According to the Wordsworths, Sara's reading of the poem is the result of her own failed sympathy. Ironically, their frustrated and disparaging responses to this less familiar person mirrors the very problem that she is accused of: a lack of sympathy.

However, despite Dorothy's staunch defence of the poem, Wordsworth responded to Sara's criticism and spent almost a month (14 June - 4 July 1802) revising the poem. This demonstrates an underlying openness to her perspective, and a will to extend the collaborative circle beyond the siblings to include new members. Unlike 'Beggars' – which apparently Sara sympathised with and so it was not significantly revised – 'Resolution and Independence' was subject to a significant reworking. Adaptations can be traced through the poem's manuscripts, of which two exist: an 1802 version (DC MS 41); and a later one transcribed for Coleridge in March 1804 (DC MS 44).[70] The later text closely resembles the published text, with minor changes to a number of words. The earlier text shows significant differences to the final version. While the first eight and last stanzas of the 1802 version closely resemble the published text, from line 55, when the leech gatherer is introduced, the verse is completely different to the final text. Notably, the central section of the poem is missing. A page is torn out of the notebook, leaving a stub that indicates approximately sixty lines are missing: suggesting that Wordsworth significantly revised the latter half of the poem, the section that Sara criticized.[71] The stanzas that remain on either side of the missing section describe the leech gatherer in greater detail, implying that Wordsworth revised the poem to depict the leech gatherer as an uncanny figure:

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[69] Dorothy Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson, 14 June 1802, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805),* ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 367.

[70] 'Resolution and Independence', *Romanticism: Life, Literature and Landscape,* Wordsworth Trust, <http://www.romanticism.amdigital.co.uk> [Accessed 11 April 2014].

> He seem'd like one who little saw or heard
> For chimney-nook, or bed, or coffin meet
> A stick was in his hand wherewith he stirr'd
> The waters of the pond beneath his feet
>
> [Missing section]
>
> I yet can gain my bread tho' in times gone
> I twenty could have found where now I can find one
>
> Feeble I am in health these hills to climb
> Yet I procure a Living of my own
> This is my summer work in winter time
> I go with godly Books from Town to Town
> Now I am seeking Leeches up & down

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[71] In William's letter to Sara, he wrote 'You say and Mary (that is you can say no more than that) the Poem is *very well* after the introduction of the old man; this is not true, if it is not more than very well it is very bad, there is no intermediate state.' *Letters* I, p. 367.

From house to house I go from Barn to Barn
All over Cartmell Fells & up to Blellan Tarn [72]

This contains more direct speech from the leech gatherer, outlining the physical and financial hardships he must cope with as he ekes out his living. By removing his speech in the published text, Wordsworth makes his way of life less accessible. The leech gatherer's mixed income (selling books over winter) does not appear in the final text, making him appear more singular and vulnerable. Also, the description of the leech gatherer's homely locations (chimney-nook and bed) – even though they are prefixed as places that he 'little saw or heard for' – gives the impression that he does have some indoor existence. Again, the published text removes this description, to portray the leech gatherer as a being who is only seen outdoors, removed from community and society, and so he is isolated and distinct. Newlyn suggests that through these changes, Wordsworth sacrificed an important 'matter-of-factness' that was present in the original encounter.[73] However, I suggest it transforms the leech gatherer into a strange stranger, which allows Wordsworth to explore the troubled relationship between strangeness and sympathy.

In responding to Sara's less familiar perspective and criticism, Wordsworth incorporates a new stanza that renders the leech gatherer more unfamiliar. He becomes a being that shifts between different types of existence:

As a huge Stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couch'd on the bald top of an eminence;

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[72] William Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes, and Other Poems 1800-1807* (London: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 319-323.
[73] Newlyn, pp. 153-4.

> Wonder to all who do the same espy
> By what means it could thither come, and whence;
> So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
> Like a Sea-beast crawl'd forth, which on a shelf
> Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself. (ll. 64-70)

The analogies used to describe the leech gatherer are odd, and Wordsworth's method becomes progressively bizarre, as he uses a simile to explain a simile. To describe the vagrant leech gatherer as 'a huge stone' would seem to conform to the problematic system of giving between the privileged poet and deprived vagrant, fulfilling the New Historicist criticism that Wordsworth renders the beggar an 'object for contemplation', representing 'no centre for conscious life'.[74] But the object is the poet-speaker's starting point for contemplation, and as he proceeds to 'wonder' and speculate upon its existence, the stone 'seems a thing endued with sense'. The stone then becomes 'like a Sea-beast'. As the speaker focuses his vision, much as one might when watching seals, objects which initially appear inanimate become evolving centres for conscious life. Wordsworth does not specify the type of beast the leech gatherer calls to mind, it could be a fish, seal, whale or mythical creature. It is mysterious and defies the observer's expectations because he has 'crawl'd forth' from his habitat, the sea, to the land. The leech gatherer thereby challenges instinctive, ready sympathy, because it is difficult to recognise what type of being he is and comprehend where he belongs. Wordsworth's revisions and redrafting transform the leech gatherer into a strange stranger.

In the 'experiencing community' stage, Wordsworth composed poems that portray vagrants with a compelling strangeness. The poems capture troubled sympathetic interactions between characters, as tension, conflict and contradictions abound. This is because of the troubled sympathy that shaped the interactions between Wordsworth and his collaborators. While the intense intimacy between Wordsworth and Dorothy helped him to produce these poems (with Dorothy providing source material, and practical and emotional support), it also caused problems. At times he struggled to distinguish his writing from hers, and their emotional affinity also led to shared afflictions. By contrast, the more distant collaborator, Sara Hutchinson, was accused of approaching his writing without enough sympathy. However, her slightly more detached perspective enabled ‘Resolution and Independence’ to develop into a complex portrayal of strangeness and sympathy. Building on Wolfson and Newlyn’s work on the Wordsworths’ collaboration, I have explored the troubled role of familiarity and sympathy in the composition of poetry. The paradox of sympathy – that too much can be unsettling, and not enough can cause frustration and conflict – mirrors the ambiguity of the unfamiliar vagrants in Wordsworth’s poetry. In the next section I will examine a text from the ‘determining community’ phase to reveal how Wordsworth’s ideas of community and portrayals of vagrants shifted.

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[74] Jarvis, p. 208

The Wanderer’s Toil

The Excursion depicts a different type of vagrant who plays a pivotal role in determining community. Unlike the vagrants that feature in his earlier writing (Alice Fell, the Cumberland beggar, the family of beggars), the Wanderer is not an impoverished beggar. He is financially independent. The Poet’s meeting with the Wanderer is not a surprise encounter, but part of a planned meeting. Their familiarity dates back many years, and in contrast to the Cumberland beggar, the two regularly converse and interact. The Wanderer is also given greater authority. He organises meetings between people, bringing them together and instructing them on how to respond to each other. While there are these distinct differences between *The Excursion* and earlier vagrant poems, sympathy continues to play a pivotal and contentious role within the interactions between vagrant and community. The problem of empathy – too much sympathy and identification – emerges in the Wanderer's relationship with Margaret. A striking failure of sympathy also occurs in the Wanderer's interaction with the Solitary. I examine the ways that the vagrant figure develops in the Wanderer before reflecting on his approach to sympathy.

In contrast to the shorter vagrant poems I have previously explored, *The Excursion* was Wordsworth's most ambitious and significant achievement towards the epic project of *The Recluse*. Jonathan Bate, in an early ecocritical study of the text, writes that some passages contain 'a summation of the Wordsworthian "philosophy" of the "one life" and the "active universe" – the theory that there is animation in and unity between all things'.[75] Writing after Bate, a number of critics have expressed the contradictory view that far from advocating a cohesive 'philosophy', *The Excursion* is inconclusive and unresolved. Alison Hickey writes that Wordsworth 'does and undoes' questions of social vision and individuality.[76] She suggests the text contains both an impulse towards and a resistance to 'system'.[77] Simon White describes *The Excursion* as 'a dialogic investigation of the importance of human interaction in the development of properly balanced individuals and communities.'[78] Like Hickey, he suggests that Wordsworth finds no 'definite conclusion' or solution for the social problems addressed in *The Excursion*.[79] Sally Bushell also reflects on the importance of dialogue to *The*

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[75] Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 66.

[76] Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's 'Excursion'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 7.

[77] Hickey, p. 19.

[78] Simon White, *Romanticism and the Rural Community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 66.

[79] White, p. 102.

Excursion, which, she argues, results in there being no absolute answers or solutions.[80] Instead the text is concerned with portraying an interactive, performative process of teaching, learning and communicating. I agree that the text opens up many questions and uncertainties. However, unlike these approaches, I am concerned with exploring how this inconclusiveness relates to Wordsworth's ideas of community and sympathy. By examining the differences between the Wanderer and earlier vagrant figures, I demonstrate how the changed vagrant figure reflects Wordsworth's creative impulse to determine community, by portraying model interactions and relationships.[81] Yet since the text does not entirely resolve the issue of sympathetic interactions between settled community members and wandering vagrants, I reveal the tensions that continue to motivate and unsettle portrayals of community in the 'determining' phase.

The Wanderer first appears within *The Excursion* in similar circumstances to figures in other vagrant poems. A speaker – the Poet – is walking away from home: 'Across a bare wide Common I was toiling'.[82] Like the moor in 'Resolution and Independence', the common prompts contradictory physical and emotional responses in the speaker. The narrator is tormented by 'Dim sadness and blind thoughts' before he meets the leech gatherer, obscuring the delight he had previously felt 'in the morning's birth' (l. 9). Similarly in *The Excursion*, the Poet cannot partake in 'the most pleasant' enjoyment of the scene: instead of dreaming on the 'soft cool moss' he must take 'languid steps'. Also recalling 'Resolution and Independence', the place where the Poet and the Wanderer meet is a desolate spot:

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[80] Sally Bushell, *Re-Reading the Excursion: Narrative, Response, and the Wordsworthian Dramatic Voice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

[81] Celeste Langan also considers *The Excursion*'s representation of vagrancy in relation to ideas of political and individual freedoms, and the right to walk.

[82] William Wordsworth, *The Excursion,* ed. by Sally Bushell, James Butler, and Michael Jaye (London: Cornell University Press, 2007) Book I, l. 21.

> Upon that open level stood a Grove,
> The wished-for Port to which my steps were bound.
> 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, ll. 26-31)

Before he sees his human friend, the Poet is bewildered by this ambiguous spot. The ‘wished-for Port’ is not a comforting harbour, but is pervaded by a gloom caused by a ‘brotherhood of lofty elms’. Yet this image of kinship does not accompany a home, but ‘a roofless Hut’. Its ‘four naked walls / That stared upon each other!’ emphasize the spot’s dearth and exposure – far from the security and safety a ‘wished-for port’ seemed to offer. The ‘naked walls’ recall the ‘naked wilderness’ in which the leech gatherer was found:

> My course I stopped as soon as I espied
> The Old Man in that naked wilderness:
> Close by a Pond, upon the further side,
> He stood alone (ll. 57-60)

Beside this pond the humans are likewise isolated and alone; separated from village communities by the moor and from one another by the stretch of water. Yet whereas the speaker is arrested by the unexpected sight of the leech gatherer, the Poet deliberately seeks the Wanderer:

> I looked round,

> And to my wish and to my hope espied
> The Friend I sought; a Man of reverend age,
> But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired. (I, ll. 31-34)

In response to the potentially overwhelming desolation that pervades the spot, he ‘looked round’. The Wanderer interrupts the barren feeling of the place and is imbued with the Poet’s optimistic desires. Within this disconcerting place, the Wanderer offers the immediate warmth and comfort of an established friendship. This differs from the other stranger-vagrants with whom Wordsworth describes more frustrated interactions and uncertain relationships. The Wanderer’s immediately recognisable qualities of strength and wisdom (reverend, stout, hale) give him further authority within that uncertain location.

The familiarity between the Poet and the Wanderer is an important aspect of their relationship. Their shared history sets the Wanderer further apart from other vagrants: ‘We were tried Friends: I from my Childhood up / Had known him.’ (ll. 53-4) There are parallels with Wordsworth’s childhood familiarity with the Cumberland beggar: ‘Observed, and with great benefit to my own heart, when I was a child’.[83] Yet whereas the Wanderer is a friend, the beggar has a more detached relationship with the villagers that he depends upon. He encounters them in his daily rounds, but is twice called ‘a solitary Man’. The second time it is explained, ‘his age has no companion’ (l. 45). His isolated existence is not the result of other people’s aversion: many figures within the poem see the beggar, and then *turn* to look at him again. When the ‘sauntering horseman-traveller’ gives the beggar a coin: ‘But still when he has given his horse the rein / Towards the aged Beggar turns a look, / Sidelong and half-reverted.’ (ll. 29-32) The traveller is arrested by the beggar, who rouses his generosity followed by his curiosity. 'But still' performs the action of pausing – the conjunction 'but' indicates a contradictory movement, and the two meanings of 'still', as an adverb and an adjective, prolong the time suspended whilst the horseman-traveller turns around. In return, the beggar shows no interest in the people he meets. He perpetually travels with his eyes upon the ground, 'seeing still, / And never knowing that he sees, some straw, / Some scatter'd leaf' (ll. 53-55). This 'still' extends the beggar's oblivious sight into a monotonous existence, where insignificant items are simultaneously seen and overlooked.

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[83] William Wordsworth, *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p. 56.

Both the Wanderer and the beggar are portrayed as having a transient existence at the edge of Lake District villages. Yet whereas the beggar travels around the neighbourhood to collect alms, the Wanderer is free from such dependence:

> – In a little Town obscure,
> A market-village, seated in a tract
> Of mountains, where my school-day time was pass'd
> One room he owned, the fifth part of a house,
> A place to which he drew, from time to time,
> And found a kind of home or harbour there. (ll. 54-9)

He reappears 'from time to time', whereas the beggar is restricted to rounds that are structured by 'day to day'.[84] Wordsworth does in fact credit the beggar with a type of freedom, but it depends upon him remaining in a state of privation. At the end of the poem, Wordsworth asserts that we should ‘let his blood / Struggle with frosty air and snows’ (ll. 166-7), rather than the alternative:

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[84] Wordsworth, 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', l. 50.

> May never House, misnamed of industry,
> Make him captive; for that pent-up din,
> Those life consuming sounds that clog the air,
> Be his the natural silence of old age. (ll. 172-5)

The only habitation available to the beggar is the workhouse, which far from offering a comfortable home, is a place of work and captivity. Sound and life, pent-up together in this place would destroy his remaining existence, ‘the natural silence of old age.’ The Wanderer, on the other hand, owns a room which provides ‘a kind of home or harbour’. He therefore has greater independence – the freedom to come and go, and the security of having a base. Yet his position within the market-village is equivocal. As a ‘home’, the room acquires the domestic, settled quality of a permanent residence, but a ‘harbour’ is a rather more temporary retreat and place of refuge. He converges with village life, but is not a full everyday participant.

Unlike the beggar, the Wanderer is portrayed as interacting with the people he encounters. His familiarity with the Poet is further described:

> He loved me; from a swarm of rosy Boys
> Singled out me, as he in sport would say,
> For my grave looks – too thoughtful for my years.
> As I grew up it was my best delight
> To be his chosen Comrade. Many a time,
> On holidays, we wandered through the woods,

> A pair of random travellers; we sate –
> We walked; he pleas’d me with his sweet discourse
> Of things which he had seen (I, ll. 60-68)

Here the speaker confidently asserts his relationship with the Wanderer: ‘he loved me’. No other vagrant poems describe such an intimate relationship, instead connections with vagrants remain ambiguous. Further hints of the sympathy that the Wanderer extended to the Poet is demonstrated by the fact that he was ‘singled out’ for his ‘grave looks’ that differentiate him from his peers, implying that the Wanderer sought to offer him sympathetic companionship.[85] Indeed, the relationship is portrayed as fulfilling for the poet: their time together was his ‘best delight’ and he was ‘pleas’d […] with his sweet discourse’. Since they are ‘comrades’ and ‘a pair of random travellers’ it is a friendship defined by a liberal equality. This emotionally-engaged, meaningful relationship distinguishes the Wanderer from Wordsworth’s other vagrant figures. Alice, the family of beggars, the Cumberland beggar and the leech gatherer are each marked by a separation from the poet and local communities. The encounters contain various efforts to communicate with other people, but these interactions are often frustrated. Alice does not stop crying in the narrator’s company, the beggar boys lie, and the Cumberland beggar is seemingly mute and oblivious. Yet it is not merely the vagrants that frustrate these interactions. The speaker also causes difficulties: refusing to give the boys money and failing to hear the leech gatherer’s narrative contributes to the distance and frustration within the interactions. The Wanderer’s ability to form such relationships can partly be attributed to his authority. The age difference between him and the child Poet suggests that the Wanderer has an implicit power: he is the decisive adult who 'singled out' the child, made him his '*chosen'* companion, and informs the less knowledgeable boy about his experience ('things which he had seen'). This approaches a more patronising sympathy.

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[85] It is possible that the ‘grave looks’ may not merely indicate a solemn manner, but that the boy is preoccupied with a literal grave. Wordsworth was orphaned by the age of thirteen, so there may be a biographical element to this suggestion of childhood grief.

The Wanderer's sympathetic patronage differentiates him from other vagrants in Wordsworth's poetry. Unlike the vagrants whose state of deprivation causes them varying degrees of suffering (Alice is distraught when her cloak is destroyed, and the family in 'Benjamin the Waggoner' are exposed to the elements), the Poet states: 'He could *afford* to suffer / With those whom he saw suffer.' (I, ll. 399-400) Here, sympathy is part of a transaction, something the Wanderer can spare so he gives it to others. However, it is not formulated as a process of physical exchange, wherein something is given to someone else (as we see when the poetic speaker gives a beggar alms or Benjamin gives vagrants a ride in his waggon), but rather the Wanderer enters into the emotional state that others experience, participating '*with*' their pain. This is a version of Lamb's 'complete sympathy': 'the possibility of two selves lodged in one person' enabling you to share in and feel the experience of another person.[86] Lamb also illuminates the concept's fundamental paradox: 'Although complete sympathy seems to be the natural and most humane and loving telos of all exchanges of feeling, the closer we approach it, the more disconcerting it seems to be.'[87] This is because complete sympathy is often linked to pain: 'the inlet into another creature's feelings is opened by means of agony', or the sympathising relationship between people can produce a destructive metamorphosis of character (as happens between Caleb and Falkland in

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[86] Lamb, p. 67.

[87] Lamb, p. 70.

Caleb Williams).[88] The sympathetic relationship between the Wanderer and the Poet does not have such harmful consequences because neither character particularly suffers, which means that the other is not drawn into a shared anguish.

The dangers of complete sympathy become apparent in the Wanderer's account of Margaret. In describing his response to her, he suggests his being is enmeshed with hers:

> my spirit clings
> To that poor Woman: – so familiarly
> Do I perceive her manner, and her look,
> And presence, and so deeply do I feel
> Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks
> A momentary trance comes over me (I, ll. 814-819)

The intense sympathy is founded upon familiarity and depth of feeling. His 'spirit' – referring to his soul or vital principle of life – is removed from his own being and has latched onto Margaret. This act impedes the Wanderer's life, creating a 'momentary trance'. This could be an overwhelming, out-of-body experience. But a trance can also be a positive experience: the mental abstraction from external things can produce an absorption, exaltation, rapture of ecstasy. Indeed, he continues, that trance leads him to reflect:

> on One

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[88] 'Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) is a story of sympathy so entire between a gentleman and his servant that it leads not to love, admiration or even mutual narcissism, but the grimmest persecution and deadliest hatred.' Lamb, pp. 70-76.

> By sorrow laid aslep; – or borne away,
> A human being destined to awake
> To human life, or something very near
> To human life, when he shall come again
> For whom she suffered. (I, ll. 820-825)

He reconceives her death within the Christian framework of afterlife and resurrection. This Christian interpretation of Margaret's fate is markedly different to Wordsworth's earlier poems about deprived people. The Wanderer suffers with her – an experience of complete sympathy that does not occur in other vagrant poems – and in doing so, he transforms her suffering into an opening for faith and hope. This is part of Wordsworth's creative impulse to determine community: Margaret's existence is resolved by the Wanderer, who commands her narrative and directs audience responses to her. The impulse to organise and contain individual lives happens more extensively in Books VI-VII where the Pastor relates a number of narratives from the graveyard community (see Chapter Three).

Another significant difference between this complete (or spiritual) sympathy that the Wanderer offers Margaret, and the sympathetic interactions in the earlier vagrant poems, is the physical exchange. The exchange of items is central to the earlier poems: the narrator gives a cloak to Alice, he gives money to the beggar woman, and Benjamin gives vagrants rides in his waggon. The absence of any physical exchange between the Wanderer and Margaret is addressed by Thomas De Quincey in a well-known criticism:

> it might be allowable to ask the philosophic wanderer; who washes the case of Margaret with so many coats of metaphysical varnish, but ends with finding all

> unavailing; ‘Pray, amongst your other experiments, did you ever try the effect of a guinea?’ [89]

De Quincey highlights another problem with complete sympathy: affective responses are prioritised over pragmatic ones. Or, as David Simpson phrases it: ‘the pedlar’s accommodationist metaphysics helps him to come to terms with the pain of others but does nothing to prevent it.’ [90] Simon White counters De Quincey and Simpson’s arguments, by reconsidering the problem that Margaret faces: ‘money is not the problem. […] her obsession with loss – in Margaret’s case the loss of her husband – constitutes monomania.’[91] According to White, Margaret’s isolation is central to her suffering: ‘one does not sense that, had she been able to choose, she would have chosen a socially embedded existence, and she gives up on life’.[92] Indeed, Margaret recalls earlier destitute figures such as Alice Fell, who is devastated when she loses her cloak. Yet in that poem, the speaker provides Alice with a new cloak, restoring her relative contentment.

In this phase, Wordsworth looks for different solutions. As the grand ambition of *The Recluse* suggests, he is not concerned with the exchange of small objects between individuals, but with finding a general principle of sympathy.[93] Celeste Langan reflects on the Wanderer’s broad sympathetic scope. She defines his sympathy as ‘a product of surplus’ which relates to the counterbalanced stories of the Wanderer’s growth and

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[89] Thomas De Quincey, ‘On Wordsworth’s Poetry’, in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop, 21 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), XV, pp. 223-242 (p. 231).

[90] Simpson, p. 51.

[91] White, p. 70.

[92] White, p. 70.

[93] He famously declares the subject of *The Recluse* to be ‘On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life’. William Wordsworth, ‘MS. D’, in *Home at Grasmere*, ed. by Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), l. 754.

Margaret's decline.[94] She identifies Margaret's as 'the narrative of "becoming-vagrant", whereas the Wanderer's is 'the Pedlar "becoming-Wanderer"':

> [he] is defined partly by his distance from the bonds of family and community affiliation. […] Without specific affiliations or local attachments, the Wanderer is able to generate a philosophy that is aptly described as "general welfare," in that the analogical family he constructs is infinitely expandable.[95]

This contrasts with White's argument: while he posits that Margaret's decline is because she is too isolated, Langan states that the Wanderer's distance from others is key to his life-affirming philosophy. The contradiction opens the question, within *The Excursion*, of what is the right proximity to other people? The Wanderer's itinerant existence does indeed enable him to develop long-standing relationships with many people of different ages and backgrounds. We see this in the warm familiarity with which he is greeted by the Poet, Margaret, the Solitary, the Pastor and his daughter, who rushes forward 'a radiant Girl; / For she hath recognised her honoured friend, The Wanderer ever welcome!' (VIII, ll. 493-5). Developing Langan's argument, I suggest that paradoxically, distance is also important to complete sympathy, as is demonstrated by the fact that the Wanderer physically withdraws from Margaret (leaving her suffering to pursue his income). The strange dynamic between complete sympathy and distance becomes further apparent in the Wanderer's relationship with the Solitary.

The Wanderer's difficult relationship with the Solitary challenges his complete sympathy, introducing ambivalence regarding that version of sympathetic exchange. Their interactions contain numerous conflicts and resistances. In contrast to the

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[94] Langan, p. 253.
[95] Langan, p. 253.

Wanderer’s deep-reaching empathy for Margaret, he shows frustration with the Solitary. When he believes the Solitary is dead and finds his copy of Voltaire’s *Candide*, he exclaims:

“How poor,
“Beyond all poverty how destitute,
“Must that Man have been left, who, hither driven,
“Flying or seeking, could yet bring with him
“No dearer relique, and no better stay,
“Than this dull product of a Scoffer’s pen,
“Impure conceits discharging from a heart
“Hardened by impious pride!” (II, ll. 505-512)

Far from the loving generosity the Wanderer expressed for ‘poor’ Margaret’s state – championing her goodness – here he condemns the Solitary to further poverty and destitution. He does not sympathize with the Solitary’s plight, but denounces his book. The stream of adjectives emphasize his impassioned, condemnatory response. Alison Hickey writes of this: ‘The Wanderer’s fierce reaction to *Candide* is startling because it departs from his usual accommodating mode, which seems, quite suddenly, to have been shut down by an inflexible authoritarianism that was fairly well hidden till now.’[96] She explains that the ‘accommodating mode’ disappears because the Solitary is a ‘powerful counterforce to the Wanderer’ who can awaken his ‘radical insecurity’.[97] While I agree that the Wanderer has a certain authority, and that the Solitary does indeed unsettle the

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[96] Hickey, p. 59.
[97] Hickey, pp. 54-5.

Wanderer's usual sympathetic approach, I suggest that rather than exposing hidden aspects of his personality, the relationship between the Wanderer and the Solitary reveals the challenging nature of complete sympathy. The Wanderer's response to the Solitary parallels the relationship between Caleb Williams and Falkland (as described by Lamb) since the sympathy between the Wanderer and the Solitary produces a destructive transformation in the Wanderer.[98]

Part of the difference between Margaret and the Solitary, which affects the Wanderer's sympathetic response to each of them, is that her death concludes her relationship with the Wanderer and confines her role within *The Excursion* to Book I. By contrast, the living Solitary challenges the Wanderer over eight books of *The Excursion*. Following the Wanderer's tirade against *Candide*, he returns the book to its owner:

> courteously, as if the act removed,
> At once, all traces from the good Man's heart
> Of unbenign aversion or contempt,
> Restored it to its owner. "Gentle Friend,"
> Herewith he grasped the Solitary's hand,
> "You have known lights and guides better than these – " (IV, ll. 1009-1014)

Although it might seem perverse for the Wanderer to return the reviled book to his vulnerable friend, the gift performs a dual act of restoration: as the Solitary's book is returned, disgust leaves the Wanderer's heart (the sympathetic centre of his 'good' being). He respects the Solitary's right to possess something he disagrees with, but he also shares his own opinion, the advice that better ‘lights and guides’ exist. At this moment, the Wanderer steps back from complete sympathy to establish distance between himself and the Solitary, physically and intellectually defining their separate selves. Interestingly, this withdrawal from complete sympathy restores the friendship between the Wanderer and the Solitary. It signifies the difficulty of sustaining complete sympathy with another, as the Wanderer must return to the tangible act of gift-exchange that is typical of Wordsworth’s earlier vagrant-encounters.

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[98] Lamb, p. 76.

The vagrant continued to be an important figure for Wordsworth’s explorations of community, interactions, and sympathy. However, in *The Excursion* he adapted the vagrant in several significant ways: the Wanderer is more authoritative and assertive than earlier vagrants, and he participates in sustained interactions founded on familiar relationships. Unlike the surprise encounters of the ‘experiencing community’ phase, a sense of continuity and connection is important, as the Wanderer returns to build his relationships with and between other people (Margaret, the Poet, the Solitary, the Pastor and family). While in some ways this resembles the process of habit portrayed in ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’, it is also different: the beggar is a routine figure whose bonds with the community are formed through habit (that subsequently forms sympathy), whereas the Wanderer’s schedule is less predictable. Instead, this vagrant figure exercises an active sympathy that he extends from himself to others. Wordsworth uses the Wanderer to explore complete sympathy as a means to resolve interactions between different and distant people. While this version of sympathy has a strong advocate, it remains troubled. The Wanderer returns to the physical exchange of objects to restore distance and amity between himself and the Solitary. In this phase Wordsworth sought to determine community by outlining the roles that people should have and the relationships that should exist between them. But through the character of the Solitary, these sympathetic relationships remain unresolved.

Conclusion

The meetings between settled community members and outsiders are central to the vagrant poems. Here, the question of how to respond to strange others emerges, initiating the exploration of various concepts of sympathy. I have explored the uncanny nature of the vagrants that Wordsworth portrays in his earlier poetry, and demonstrated that they prompt a variously troubled sympathy. However, rather than argue that the vagrants and troubled sympathy are Wordsworth's response to modernity (as Simpson does), I have revealed how the strange vagrants relate to both Wordsworth's developing ideas of community and his creativity. There is a shift from the ideal process of habit and exchange producing sympathy (as portrayed in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' in the 'remembering community' phase) to the more troubled exchanges of 'experiencing community', that occur both within the texts and the process of their composition. Finally, in the 'determining community' phase, a vagrant figure leads the exchanges, advocating sympathy without physical exchange. While this creates sustained interactions and familiar relationships, the approach is also depicted with a certain ambivalence, since the Wanderer's complete sympathy fails with the Solitary. Ultimately, Wordsworth remains ambivalent about the role of sympathy in facilitating interactions and relationships between vagrants and community members.

Developing Newlyn and Wolfson's work on Wordsworth's collaborative composition, I have illustrated the significance of the tension – the appeal and repulsion – of familiar and unfamiliar perspectives. The intimacy between Wordsworth and Dorothy was mutually productive, but it also unsettled Wordsworth, and occasionally inhibited his writing. By contrast, the 'unsympathetic', less familiar perspective of Sara Hutchinson was initially rejected, but then incorporated, causing the strangeness of the unfamiliar vagrant figure to be developed in 'Resolution and Independence'. Like the vagrant poems, Wordsworth's collaborative creativity explores the challenge of responding to and incorporating other perspectives. The vagrant poems therefore are composed from and describe a productive tension that is never fully resolved. This is why he returned to describe various types of vagrants, but also why he came to explore other facets of community in different texts. His shift in focus from the 'experiencing' to the 'determining community' phase, wherein he began to consider and value the role of institutions, was part of an effort to find a better solution to determine community. In the next chapter I will consider the role of schools; institutions that are more central to village life.

Chapter Two: The Village School

‘Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing.’ [1]

For Wordsworth, the subject of education was a lifelong concern, and in 1811 he became a teacher at his local school in Grasmere. Sara Hutchinson vividly narrates Wordsworth’s hectic enthusiasm for teaching through several entries in a single letter:

> William who is busy teaching at the School, after Dr Bell’s fashion, is just come in […] William is off again – he has attended regularly 2 or 3 hours every morning and Evg since monday. […] Wm rushed Dr B off instantly to the School to hear the Bairns their Lessons & to give the Masters instructions [2]

While this demanding practical phase appears to have captivated Wordsworth, it was short-lived. As has been discussed by other critics, his passion was focussed on improving the school by introducing Andrew Bell’s Madras system, a monitorial model of education.[3] The following month, he wrote to Sir George Beaumont, ‘I have been the means of *introducing* the plan here, that is, we are trying to have it adopted’.[4] This is one of the few references in Wordsworth’s writing to his time at Grasmere school, and tellingly he does not describe himself as a ‘teacher’, but the catalyst for systematic reform. If Wordsworth did not consider himself to be a teacher at Grasmere school, then when, where and how does he teach? While other critics have focussed on the morality Wordsworth presents within his poems, reading them as philosophical 'lessons', this chapter explores texts that capture Wordsworth's engagement with Cumbrian schools. [5] It examines his fluctuating relationship with schools, teachers and education, returning to address the question of poet as teacher in the conclusion.

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[1] Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, February 1808, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth II: The Middle Years, 1806-1811,* ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 317.

[2] Sara Hutchinson, 27 October 1811, *The Letters of Sara Hutchinson 1800-1835*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), pp. 28-30.

[3] See Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth’s ‘Excursion’* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); and Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[4] Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, November 1811, *Letters* II, pp. 514-5.

Many critics have picked up on the importance of education to Wordsworth, and argue that he advocates a natural education. As Alan Hill writes: 'The theme of "education", in the widest sense of the term, is […] central to much of Wordsworth's major poetry. So is the poet's own role as "teacher", a power allied to Nature's'.[6] Similarly, Jonathan Wordsworth argues that Wordsworth's 'discussion of education through nature' is central to all versions of *The Prelude*.[7] In contrast, Richard Clancey examines Wordsworth's poetry to reveal its classical underpinning from his education at Hawkshead grammar school.[8] Alan Richardson's definitive overview, *Literature, Education and Romanticism,* offers a thorough analysis of Wordsworth's conceptualization of childhood and ideas on education. Richardson places this within the context of an emerging national obsession with education that had significant political ramifications so that childhood became 'a primary locus for establishing and adjusting relations of social dominance'.[9] These diverse studies usefully capture different impulses within Wordsworth's creative participation with schooling; however, in focussing on natural, classical or political tenets, they overlook the social strand that runs throughout the education-centred texts. This chapter reappraises the sociability of Wordsworth’s school writing by examining the people and interactions that inspired his composition, alongside the social model implicitly or explicitly advocated in each text.

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[5] See Willard Spiegelman, *The Didactic Muse: Scenes of Instruction in Contemporary American Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 3; M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1971), p. 329.

[6] Alan Hill, 'Wordsworth, Cormenius, and the Meaning of Education', *The Review of English Studies,* 26 (1975), 301-312 (p. 301).

[7] Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Introduction', in *The Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. xxvi.

[8] Richard Clancey, *Wordsworth's Classical Undersong: Education, Rhetoric, and Poetic Truth* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000).

[9] Richardson, p. 42.

The chapter first examines Wordsworth’s ‘autobiographical’ portrayal of his school years in *The Prelude* (1798; 1805; 1818-20; 1850). It then considers the *Mathew* poems (1798; 1800; 1842) to explore the interplay of autobiography and creative experiment that revolves around a complex character, the ‘schoolmaster’ Mathew. Finally, it examines a little-studied text, ‘Speech at the Laying of the Foundation Stone for the New School in the Village of Bowness’ (1836), to reveal Wordsworth’s later ideas on education and their relation to a particular school institution. Each of these sections investigates the notion of formative experience, contrasting that which is gained through a rigorous institutional model with more subversive, alternative educational encounters. They reveal the educational model that Wordsworth endorsed or contested at different stages in his life, questioning their implications for both individual inhabitants’ lives and local community social structures. I argue that in the ‘remembering community’ phase, school is not portrayed as a structured institution, but rather the facilitator for formative interactions between Wordsworth and strange others. Later on, in the ‘determining community’ phase, Wordsworth conceptualises school differently: he defines its role within the locale as an institution that is instrumental to paternal hierarchies. To endorse this prescriptive model of Cumbrian schools, Wordsworth became more engaged with the locale than in the ‘remembering’ phase, addressing his writing to the community so they could share his ideas.

Wordsworth's Schooling

Wordsworth's schooldays in Hawkshead are central to the various versions of *The Prelude,* as is apparent from the subtitles of the first two books of both the 1805 and 1850 text: 'Introduction – Childhood and School-time' and 'School-time (Continued)'.[10] Yet these school-day accounts make an odd omission: there are no classroom scenes in *The Prelude* and the institution of Hawkshead Grammar School is completely absent. Some critics make sense of this absence by arguing that Wordsworth is concerned with a 'natural' education.[11] Clancey contradicts this approach by examining *The Prelude*'s classical elements to demonstrate the influence of Wordsworth's formal education at Hawkshead Grammar School. While this study provides a useful insight into Wordsworth's schooling (including details of his school hours, lessons, and teachers), Clancey too is persuaded by Wordsworth's narrative in *The Prelude*, celebrating his classical 'ethos' and failing to explore the poem's doubts, confusions and contradictions. Taking a different focus, Richardson explores the trajectory of the child figure within *The Prelude*, arguing that Wordsworth initially presents in the 1798 *Prelude* an unusual and paradoxical image of the child as having innate power that is lost by socialization and education, but in 1805 he returns to the 'nostalgic' 'angelic infant' image of childhood from the 'officially dominant, but ever more fragile and defensive, alliance of church and state for managing childhood along traditional religious lines.'[12] While Richardson's study astutely captures the changing role of the isolated child image in *The Prelude*, it fails to consider the community-based aspect of the poem that places the child within a vivid social sphere. In contrast to these approaches, I examine the role that local social interactions played in his poetic development. Alongside Wordsworth's descriptions of solitary rambles in Esthwaite and reflections upon the role of 'nature', there are many passages that suggest he was a ready participant in the rich social life of the 'market-village'. I examine the people that Wordsworth depicts within *The Prelude* to trace the way that his creativity emerged from and responded to Hawkshead's complex social dynamics. While *The Prelude* is concerned with memories – from a nostalgic distance, the poet-speaker captures interactions and relationships from his school days in Hawkshead – the work spans all three phases of Wordsworth's writing about community. The first draft was written in 1798-9 when Wordsworth was in Goslar, remembering the communities of his childhood. The 1805 text was largely written when he lived in Grasmere and was experiencing community. Finally, the text was revised for the C stage (1818) and published text (1850) during his 'determining community' phase. Focussing primarily on passages from the 1798 and 1805 texts, I demonstrate how the 'remembering' and 'experiencing' phases informed Wordsworth's descriptions of community and the role of the school.

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[10] William Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by Mark Reed, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), I; *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); *The Prelude, 1798-1799,* ed. by Stephen Parrish (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977). Unless otherwise stated, all references to *The Prelude* refer to the 1805 AB-Stage text from *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* I.

[11] See Alan Hill and Jonathan Wordsworth.

[12] Richardson, pp. 34-43.

Freedom is integral to Wordsworth's depiction of his school years in the 1798 *Prelude*, where authority is absent. Instead of describing teachers and classroom scenes, Wordsworth recounts schoolboy escapades. They were a 'tumultuous throng' (I, l. 172) whose 'boyish sports' (I, l. 192) included ice-skating, nutting, and 'home amusements' (noughts and crosses, loo, and whist, I, ll. 206-225):

> From week to week, from month to month, we lived
> A round of tumult: duly were our games
> Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed;

> No chair remained before the doors, the bench
> And threshold steps were empty, fast asleep
> The labourer, and the old man who had sate
> A later lingerer, yet the revelry
> Continued, and the loud uproar (II, ll. 6-13)

Here, the rigour of grammar school education is non-existent. The school-boys' way of life is depicted in surprisingly similar terms to the old Cumberland beggar: like the beggar they live in habitual rounds, orbiting local villagers; yet whereas the beggar is dependent upon the villagers for his subsistence and his rounds are a laborious 'day to day' occupation, the schoolboys are seemingly unrestricted by any adults, and live in a state of exuberant festivity.[13]

The anarchic nature of Wordsworth's school-days is apparent when contrasted with Charles Lamb's description of Foucauldian discipline in 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital' (1813). Whereas Wordsworth does not mention his school-master Taylor's death in the 1798 *Prelude* (Taylor first appears in Book X of the 1805 *Prelude,* when Wordsworth describes visiting his grave), the death of Lamb's 'old and good steward' Mr Perry is described in great detail.[14] While a steward is an administrative role – concerned with pastoral care rather than education – Lamb portrays the impact of his death as an example of 'the *public conscience* of the school, the pervading moral sense':

> out of five hundred boys, there was not a dry eye to be found among them, nor a heart that did not beat with genuine emotion. Every impulse to play, until the

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[13] Wordsworth, 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', in *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800,* ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 228-234, l. 51.

[14] Charles Lamb, 'Recollections of Christ's Hospital', in *The Life, Letters, and Writings of Charles Lamb*, ed. by Percy Fitzgerald, 6 vols (London: Navarre Society, 1924), IV, pp. 170-186 (p. 175).

> funeral-day was past, seemed suspended throughout the school. […] The time itself was a time of anarchy, a time in which all authority (out of school hours) was abandoned. The ordinary restraints were for those days superseded; and the gates, which at other times kept us in, were left without watchers. Yet, with the exception of one or two graceless boys at most who took advantage of that suspension of authorities to *skulk out*, […] the whole of the body of that great school kept rigorously within their bonds, by a voluntary self-imprisonment[15]

Lamb celebrates the moral integrity of his fellow schoolboys, felt and shown through 'genuine emotion'. Sympathetic faculties inform individual actions, so that the 'time of anarchy' contrarily becomes a time of severe self-government. The minority who do not conform to this 'self-imprisonment' are disdainfully portrayed as 'graceless' – moving in a stealthy 'skulk' in contrast to the other boys' rigorous decorum. Perry's death therefore epitomizes, for Lamb, the excellence of Christ's Hospital: a 'great school' made up of a united body of students. Wordsworth offers no corresponding image of his own school institution; throughout *The Prelude*, Hawkshead Grammar School seems merely incidental to his poetical growth. Whereas the hierarchical governance of Lamb's school days is so deeply inscribed that the 'bonds' are maintained even in the absence of normal hierarchy – an example of institutional Foucauldian discipline – Wordsworth and his schoolfellows display no corresponding sense of restriction. This contrast captures the remarkable lack of hierarchy and formal structure that Wordsworth portrays in his school days. In this 'remembering community' phase, social interactions operate without the strictures of hierarchy (as seen in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'). He practices the poetic ideal stated in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: that a poet is a ‘man speaking to men’.[16]

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[15] Lamb, pp. 177-8.

However, within the seemingly egalitarian realm of Wordsworth’s school days, there is the potential for tension. When the adult villagers retire to bed, the boys continue playing with ‘loud uproar’. This identifies two distinct groups that cohabit the village but have different concepts of time, which could cause conflict. Like a mob, the schoolboys are described as a ‘noisy crew’ (I, l. 202): a loud, disorderly, indistinguishable mass. But the culture of sociable mingling in public spaces extends to the adult villagers: before they slept, the villagers were stationed outdoors on chairs, benches and threshold steps. Wordsworth writes of these interactions in draft material for *Guide to the Lakes*:

> Along the eastern end of the Church runs a stone seat, a place of resort for the old people of the Town for the sickly & those who have leisure to look about them, here sitting in the shade or in the sun they talk over their concerns – a few years back were amused by the gambols & exercises of more than a 100 Schoolboys some playing soberly on the hill top near them while others were intent upon more boisterous diversions in the fields beneath.[17]

This provides a detailed description of the co-existence between Hawkshead’s inhabitants – here specifically the old, sickly, or leisured – and the schoolboys. Rather than disturbing the people’s ‘resort’ and chance to ‘talk over their concerns’, the boys appear in an additional clause, separated by the dash, as an amusing entertainment. The different types of play and their proximity to the villagers indicates a subtle influence: the boys respect the older people's sociable retreat, which engenders calmer play; whereas in more distant fields they release their energy for wilder play. Both the boys and the villagers gain from this interaction: the one group has an amusing entertainment, the other, different types of play. Yet while the schoolboys and the town-folk seem to cohabit Hawkshead without problems, there is a marked sense of separation between the two groups, and beyond the nuances of co-influence there is no explicit communication or conversation.

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[16] In the Preface, Wordsworth notes that the Poet’s language ‘will fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions’ that the Poet attempts to produce. William Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’, in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 740-760 (p. 751).

[17] Wordsworth, ‘DCMS 68.6’, *Romanticism: Life, Literature and Landscape*, Wordsworth Trust, <www.romanticism.amdigital.co.uk> [Accessed 22 May 2015].

The distinction between the school-boys and the villagers is not only informed by age and lifestyle. The boys came from the greater north-west region – the counties of Lancashire, Westmorland, Cumberland and Yorkshire that now make up Cumbria. However, some of the boys were locals from Hawkshead (such as Wordsworth's friend Tom Park, whose father was the town saddler), so there may have been familial ties between the schoolboys and the town, reducing the overall 'foreignness' of the group.[18] But the boys mostly belonged to a distinct class: 'the sons of professional men or small landowners and were intended for the law, the Church, the army, the navy, or […] the East India Company. The cleverer boys were expected to enter these careers after university'.[19] The group therefore had professional prospects that would take them from Hawkshead into the wider nation. Economic differences also marked the boys from the villagers while they lived in Hawkshead. They lodged in local people's homes (Wordsworth and his brothers lived with a dame called Ann Tyson), where Wordsworth states that they received 'frugal, Sabine fare' (II, l. 81) and effectively lived 'In pennyless poverty' (l. 84); however, this poverty is a conditional state that exists if you 'exclude / A little weekly stipend' (ll. 81-2). Unlike the locals:

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[18] Juliet Barker, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (London: Viking, 2000), p. 20.
[19] Barker, p. 20

> We came with purses more profusely filled,
> Allowance which abundantly sufficed
> To gratify the palate with repasts
> More costly than the Dame of whom I spake,
> That ancient woman, and her board, supplied,
> Hence inroads into distant vales, and long
> Excursions far away among the hills;
> Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,
> Or in the woods or by a river-side,
> Or fountain (II, l. 86-95)

The inclusive ‘we’ implies a general culture in which the schoolboys use their extra funds to supplement their ‘frugal’ diet. Their wealth enables them to ‘gratify the palate’ with more delicate, tasty, and ‘costly’ food, and to afford the leisure of excursions. Wordsworth also reveals the tension between this idyllic lifestyle and other local inhabitants, for example when hiring horses:

> And with the good old Innkeeper in truth,
> I needs must say that sometimes we have used
> Sly subterfuge, for the intended bound
> Of the day’s journey was too distant far
> For any cautious man (II, l. 103-7)

The innkeeper is portrayed as an upstanding individual – ‘good’, ‘old’, and ‘cautious’ – and in contrast, the boys are carefully deceptive to achieve their desired goal. In the later

C-stage (1818-20) revisions the boys' mischief becomes brazen deceit: the confessional aside, 'in truth', is replaced with a further sympathetic description of the innkeeper ('that *Friend* / Whose unambitious Stud supplied our want'); and 'sometimes' becomes 'full oft'.[20] Recalling Wordsworth's revisions to 'Beggars' (the sequel that brands the boys 'wanton'), here he clarifies the boys' deception, determining their devious role within the community. Neither text registers the consequences of these transgressions for the innkeeper; instead they proceed to describe the 'uncouth race' (l. 124) of the schoolboy excursions, implying that no harm is caused by the deception. Since the innkeeper never realises the full extent of his benevolence towards the schoolboys, who deliberately exploit him, he appears to be a convenient dupe. The amicability between the schoolboys and this local supplier is delicately established upon measures of good-nature and deceit.

In the 1805 text, Wordsworth adds to the portrayal of formative childhood experiences. He credits two Cumbrian figures with a key role in his early creativity: his schoolmaster William Taylor and his dame Ann Tyson's dog.[21] While both descriptions are reminiscences, they are also influenced by Wordsworth's 'experiencing community' phase: they describe complex, uncertain interactions, unlike the more distanced and removed interactions portrayed in the earlier version. The schoolmaster Taylor is typically seen as a key influence on Wordsworth's early creativity. His inclusion within the 1805 *Prelude* suggests that, in this text, Wordsworth approaches the school institution and begins to portray its formal influence. Taylor appears within Book X, when Wordsworth visits his grave and reflects:

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[20] William Wordsworth, 'C-Stage Reading text', in *The Thirteen Book Prelude,* ed. by Mark Reed (London: Cornell University Press, 1991), II, ll. 106-110.

[21] See Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book X, ll. 490-514; Book IV, ll. 84-120. Since Taylor is the only Hawkshead schoolmaster that Wordsworth mentions – he disregards James Peake (1766-81), Edward Christian (1781-2), and Thomas Bowman (1786-1829) – some critics suggest that other schoolmaster figures in Wordsworth's poetry (such as Mathew from the *Mathew* poems) are another portrayal of Taylor. See Fiona Stafford, *Lyrical Ballads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 357, note; Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch 'Wordsworth's Expostulator: Taylor or Hazlitt?', *English Language Notes* 2 (1964), 102-5. I will address the accuracy of this in the next section.

He lov'd the Poets, and if now alive
Would have lov'd me, as one not destitute
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
Which he had form'd, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, at first, my toilsome Song. (X, ll. 510-4)

Reading this passage, Clancey (who describes how Taylor first encouraged the young Wordsworth to write) concludes that Taylor's 'vivid' presence heartens Wordsworth to make vows for his poetic vocation: 'Taylor reconfirms [Wordsworth] as a poet'.[22] However, Wordsworth's description of the poetic process is somewhat awkward. Taylor *commanded* him to compose, yet Wordsworth does not merit these attempts as 'poetry': it is a 'Song' (suggesting his writing was reliant on regular rhyme and verse-form) that is spun rather than articulately composed. Figuratively, to 'spin' is to draw something out, perhaps unnecessarily prolonging it, and it can also imply the social act of 'spinning a yarn' to entertain one's companions.[23] It speaks of Cumbrian cottage industry, and the culture of singing at the spinning wheel (which Wordsworth advocated in 1820 by publishing 'Song for the Spinning Wheel' in both *Miscellaneous Poems* and *The River Duddon* series).[24] Despite Wordsworth's self-deprecation towards his amateur verse, they nonetheless captured Taylor's 'hope', and at this later revisiting, Wordsworth has the confidence to link his current poetic promise with esteemed poets such as Thomas

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[22] Clancey, p.157.

[23] 'spin, v.', *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 19 July 2015].

[24] William Wordsworth, 'Song for the Spinning Wheel', in *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*, ed. by Carl Ketcham (London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 108-9.

Gray, whose verse appears on Taylor's grave.[25] Taylor thereby becomes a gauge for Wordsworth to reflect upon his progress and assess his poetic value.

Yet there is an underlying awkwardness to this passage that is missed by critics such as Clancey who read it as a 'heartening' experience. Firstly, there is its placing: if Taylor was so significant to Wordsworth, why was he not mentioned earlier, in Book I ('Introduction – Childhood and School-time') or Book II ('School-Time (continued)', which focus on his school-days? In particular, his death aged only thirty-two must have been a shocking event for Hawkshead School, but this is not touched upon. A second peculiarity is the speech. It is prompted by the grave visit and Taylor's *implicit* presence, yet Taylor is dead, so Wordsworth is alone, 'saying to myself' (l. 509). A two-way conversation could have taken place in the earlier books, but in this passage, Taylor's only recorded speech are the words he uttered before death, 'My head will soon lie low!' (l. 501) Taylor is thereby bound to his grave in *The Prelude*, appearing as an emotive memorial rather than a dynamic or inspirational teacher. Thirdly, Wordsworth obscures the intentionality of his visit to Taylor's grave: the 1805 text first states he 'had *chanced* to find' the grave (l. 489), before revealing that he had been 'ranging through the churchyard graves' (l. 490), and subsequently that he 'knew' Taylor had been laid to rest there (l. 494). Wordsworth rewrote this preamble for the 1850 text, clarifying his deliberate purpose:

> not in vain
> That very morning I had turned aside
> To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves
> An honoured teacher of my youth was laid (X, ll. 531-4)

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[25] Stephen Gill states this visit took place in 1794, seven years after Wordsworth left Hawkshead School in 1787. Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 87.

This revision demonstrates Wordsworth's uneasiness with his earlier placing of the passage: 1805's 'chance' gives way to a conscious turning aside, which is pre-defined as worthwhile ('not in vain'). It articulates Wordsworth's revised approach to community: in the 'determining' phase he confidently asserts the purpose of his visit to Taylor's grave, clarifying the relationship between the two figures.

By contrast, Ann Tyson's dog is a more vivid presence within the text. The dog is recalled in an earlier Hawkshead revisiting, Book IV ('Summer Vacation' from Cambridge), where Wordsworth pays tribute to 'a rough terrier of the hills' (l. 86) that accompanied him when his veins began to be 'kindled with the stir, / The fermentation and the vernal heat / of Poesy' (ll. 93-5). The fiery energy that Wordsworth associates with his first creativity also has the potential to be self-destructive: he went to 'private shades / Like a sick lover' (ll. 95-6). The dog, however, countered his unhealthy impulse towards isolation, and watched him, 'an attendant and a friend' (l. 97). As well as providing emotional support and companionship during the inception of Wordsworth's creativity, the dog is credited with fulfilling another practical task that supported composition:

> And when, in the public roads at eventide
> I saunter'd, like a river murmuring
> And talking to itself, at such a season
> It was his custom to jog on before;
> But duly, whensoever he had met
> A passenger approaching, would he turn
> To give me timely notice; and straightway,
> Punctual to such admonishment, I hush'd

> My voice, compos'd my gait, and shap'd myself
> To give and take a greeting that might save
> My name from piteous rumours, such as wait
> On men suspected to be craz'd in the brain. (IV, ll. 109-120)

The dog acts like the leech gatherer, who also gives the poet-speaker 'apt admonishment'.[26] Yet here, Wordsworth is a version of the strange vagrant figure who, when encountered on public roads, puzzles those that meet him. Building on my analysis of strange vagrants from the previous chapter, this passage reveals how strangeness and alienation are integral to creative composition.[27] Wordsworth's method of composition estranges him from humanity in two ways: in the first he departs from his own humanness to compose by becoming 'like a river'; in the second, this river-chatter separates him from other people, who would fail to pick up on his creative state and dubiously perceive him to be a man 'craz'd in the brain'. Other humans therefore disrupt Wordsworth's creativity, and in their presence he must hush his voice and assume a socially acceptable mien (a different type of composition). '*Piteous* rumours' perhaps hints at Wordsworth's condescending opinion of local gossip, but otherwise, he does not express frustration or irritation at the people who interrupt his composition. Instead, he is closest to the dog, whose remarkable understanding of Wordsworth's creative state, demonstrated through the dog's act of giving space and warning of company, is a key aid to both poetic and social composition.

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[26] Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence', l. 112.

[27] Andrew Bennett states this passage is often read to illustrate Wordsworth's 'perambulatory and oral composition practice', although Bennett complicates the idealized view of Wordsworth's walking and writing as a fluid, forward movement, by emphasizing the halts and stoppages in the passage that highlight the *work* of composition. Andrew Bennett, *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 31-2.

Laura Brown's study of literary dogs and apes from the early modern period to the present provides valuable insight into human-animal relationships that can inform our understanding of Wordsworth's relationship with the dog.[28] Rather than accept 'the two main positions advanced by critics […] anthropomorphism or alterity', Brown outlines the development of animal literature as a genre and its mixed, contradictory and complicating stance towards animals. Wordsworth's dog fits into a Romantic period shift in the portrayal of companion species, as the satirical depiction of ladies with their lapdogs came to be replaced with an identification of dogs with solitary male characters.[29] This suggests that Wordsworth's dog portrayal is conventional, but Brown continues to reveal the radical potential of associating dogs with unusual humans. The dogs can:

> make visible and even […] celebrate the existences of those human beings whose lives are conducted outside the regulated and accepted structures of society. And both represent the imposition of that regulated structure on these unaccepted human beings as an occasion to contemplate a transcendence of boundaries and of difference.[30]

The intimacy between Wordsworth and the dog certainly challenges traditional species boundaries and concepts of difference (recalling the affinity between the poetic-speaker and vagrants discussed in Chapter One); however, 'transcendence' is a reductive term for the new understandings that emerge from these contradictory relationships. The paradox, that Wordsworth is estranged from his own species and more familiar with a strange one, can be understood in relation to Timothy Morton's concept of 'strange strangers'.[31] The strangeness – the difference – between Wordsworth and the dog enables their cross-species friendship. Whereas the fear of misunderstanding urges him to conceal the uncanniness of his creative estrangement from other people (avoiding the pity or aversion directed at one 'suspected to be craz'd in the brain'), the dog remains present at that pivotal creative moment, demonstrating an unusual and productive intimacy. This is akin to other encounters portrayed in the 'experiencing community' phase, such as the leech-gatherer, who bizarrely alleviates the speaker's poetic anxiety.

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[28] Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010).
[29] Brown, p. 77.
[30] Brown, p. 140.

Despite the dog's strangeness, like the leech-gatherer, it provides a grounding familiarity to Wordsworth. An earlier poem, 'The Dog: An Idyllium' (composed 1786-8), describes their creative and social exchange:

> If, while I gazed (to Nature blind)
> On the calm Ocean of my mind,
> Some new-created Image rose
> In full-grown beauty at its birth,
> Lovely as Venus from the sea;
> Then, while my glad hand sprung to thee,
> We were the happiest pair on earth![32]

Wordsworth's creative estrangement is striking: he becomes blind to 'nature' (the immediate, physical world) and draws on images that arise from the depths of his oceanic mind. Once again, the dog reconnects the poet to the immediate world: through a 'glad hand' patting the dog, Wordsworth re-joins their happy companionship and communicates his creative joy with another being. Wordsworth describes this peculiar action of creative distance and return in a note on 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1807). Looking back from 1843 to the childhood feelings and experiences that precipitated the ode, he states:

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[31] See Chapter One for a more detailed discussion of the concept. Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 80.

[32] William Wordsworth, 'The Dog: An Idyllium', in *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, ed. by Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 398, ll. 18-24.

> I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.[33]

Wordsworth's idealist notion of the spiritual connections between himself and other 'things' is not depicted as a visionary gift, but rather an abyss. Variously, an abyss can be: the formless chaos from which the world and heavens were made; the bottomless gulf below earth (such as hell); any bottomless chasm or void; or, figuratively, the extremity of a negative condition from which a return is unlikely.[34] These meanings enhance the sense of infinite space that terrifies Wordsworth, but also the minute speck of creative potential it might offer, since heaven and earth were supposedly made from such formless spirit. Yet the abyss is conceived as a void that separates Wordsworth from reality. The boat stealing passage in the 1798 *Prelude* (Book I, ll. 81-129) provides a further example of Wordsworth's contradictory experience of the creative abyss: 'A dim and undetermined sense / Of unknown modes of being' (ll. 121-2) lingers in his thoughts, which is also felt as 'a darkness – call it solitude / Or blank desertion.' (ll. 123-

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[33] William Wordsworth, *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p. 61.

[34] 'abyss, n.', *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 19 May 2015].

4) These two are curiously coupled: the first describes the presence of unfamiliar ways or types of being; the second, a sense of isolation and abandonment. The loss of the familiar presents Wordsworth with a gaping sense of void, but within that void is the freedom to behold beings in a different way. Like the meetings with vagrants, this is an unsettling opportunity for new insight and understanding.

Wordsworth drew upon ‘The Dog: An Idyllium’ for his passage in *The Prelude*, further demonstrating the dog’s poetic significance. Tracing Wordsworth’s revisions to the passage, and considering them alongside the note on the ‘Immortality Ode’, reveals his developing creativity. In every text, Wordsworth uses the conventional trope of Venus rising from the sea to describe the emergence of creative images, but the compositional process changes across the texts. The note describes an experience on Wordsworth’s journey to school (at an undefined point in childhood, possibly before he began writing), when he is distressed by the abyssal sense and must recover by grasping an inanimate wall. In his adolescent days of early composition (Wordsworth’s first recorded poem dates around his fifteenth birthday in 1785), Wordsworth explores the ‘calm Ocean of my mind’ – a more tangible and serene creative mass than an abyss – returning with images ‘lovely as Venus’ and interacting with another being.[35] In the later 1805 version of the passage, Wordsworth replaces the ocean metaphor for his mind with a milder simile: images rose within it ‘like Venus from the sea’ (l. 105). In the 1850 text, the images still rise in these terms, but instead of coming from his mind, they originate within ‘the song’ (l. 123). Wordsworth thereby progressively comes to distinguish his creative output from his inner world, containing the overwhelming, inarticulate sense of abyss within his poetry. He also lessens the identification between himself and the dog: they cease to be ‘the happiest *pair* on earth’, and instead have separate roles (Wordsworth was ‘caressing *him* again and yet again.’ (l. 108)). This change marks the increased distance of time separating Wordsworth from his former companion, as well as the different styles and subjects of the texts: whereas ‘The Dog: An Idyllium’ is principally concerned with the dog and the poet’s memory of it, *The Prelude* is the ‘poem to Coleridge’, relating ‘the growth of a Poet’s mind’.[36]

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[35] Wordsworth, ‘The Dog: An Idyllium’, ll. 19, 22.

In contrast to Taylor, whom Wordsworth later credits with motivating his first efforts of poetry but does not portray as a full poetic subject, the dog is depicted as both a poetic subject and a creative aid to Wordsworth’s earliest composition. He gives a precise image of the support and companionship that the dog offered in those early years, returning to and developing upon an earlier poem. A telling difference between Taylor and the dog is the type of composition Wordsworth performs in their company: at Taylor’s grave, Wordsworth composes himself with an articulate declaration of his own poetic prowess; whereas with the dog, Wordsworth focuses on composing verse, to the loss of his own social composure. Paradoxically therefore, in his earlier years, Wordsworth’s creativity (and its ensuing poetic composition) was apparently most dynamic when he was at his most discomposed. As with the process of writing ‘Resolution and Independence’, in which Sara Hutchinson’s advice unsettled Wordsworth, but led him to heighten the strangeness of the leech gatherer (see Chapter One), so here a strange other jolts Wordsworth’s creativity. Taylor may have commanded him to compose verse, but the presence of the dog – a being who is different, uncanny, a strange stranger – proves more freeing and stimulating.

This rich creative material – Wordsworth’s schoolboy activities, encounters, and excursions – seems to be implicitly concentrated around the grammar school institution.

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[36] The first published edition of *The Prelude* was titled: *The Prelude or, the Growth of a Poet’s Mind; An Autobiographical Poem* (London: Edward Moxon, 1850).

Yet in fact, Wordsworth does not merely omit the institution, he identifies an alternative centre to his school years. In the 1798 *Prelude* he writes:

A grey stone
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market-village, was the home
And centre of these joys (II, ll. 31-34)

An inanimate stone is an unusual home and centre for ‘joys’, since it lacks the human qualities to make it hospitable or forthcoming. It is a peculiar feature in itself: as ‘native rock’, it is local, of the place, and yet somehow it has been moved and abandoned ‘midway in the square’. T. W. Thompson suggests it is a ‘rocking stone’ or erratic boulder: a perched block left behind by a glacier.[37] Alan Bewell reads the presence of these stones in Wordsworth’s poetry as evidence that he engaged with contemporary diluvial-geology debates and ‘sides imaginatively with the diluvianists.’[38] Wordsworth thereby had some knowledge of the vast timescales and different geologies pertaining to the market-village, yet the layers of meaning attached to this rock extend beyond the geological. He returns to this object on a later revisiting (Gill suggests it is the Lake District tour with Coleridge in 1799[39]), when he encounters changes to the town:

and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
I found that it was split, and gone to build

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[37] T. W. Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 256.
[38] Alan Bewell*, Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 265.
[39] Gill, p. 167.

> A smart assembly-room that perked and flared
> With wash and rough-cast, elbowing the ground
> Which had been ours. But let the fiddle scream,
> And be ye happy! (II, ll. 34-40)

Here, the contrast between human building and the older geological form is marked. The new 'smart assembly-room' obtrusively stands out: the verbs 'perked' and 'flared' personify the building, suggesting that it displays itself conspicuously from an elevated, conceited position. The artifice of its rendering is prominent: the whitewashed pebbledash which encases the building hides the split native rock; and Wordsworth puns on '*rough*-cast' by describing its aggressive act of 'elbowing' out their own play space. Conversely, the new gathering place for social entertainment such as balls, concerts and general meetings, encroaches on another meeting space: 'the ground / Which had been ours'. The undeveloped earth provided a place that was communally occupied by a group (presumably Wordsworth and his school-friends at play). It marks a different dynamic, in which the schoolboy romp finally encounters resistance from the town-folk, and the boys are excluded from a former play space. However, this change takes place in Wordsworth's absence, and is noted when he returns as an adult, so it does not directly affect him and his comrades. His comment, 'let the fiddle scream / And be ye happy!' is ambiguous: it could imply he accepts the change and restores the equilibrium of co-existence that prevailed in his schooldays; or it may contain a bitter inflection, dismissing the new entertainment as frivolous and grating, and ironically mocking it. Notably, Wordsworth does not allow himself to be associated with those ('ye') who now enjoy the assembly room, and so the sense of distinct groups within Hawkshead remains. In a further exclusion, Wordsworth ignores the trade-oriented aspect of the building – it was not merely an assembly room, but the entire ground floor was a market hall – rendering it a site for glib entertainment.[40]

In a move that increases the distance between Wordsworth's experiences of Hawkshead and the formal institution, the stone is associated with a marginal woman.

yet I know, my Friends,
That more than one of you will think with me,
Of those soft starry nights, and that old dame
From whom the stone was named, who there had sate
And watched her table with its huckster's wares
Assiduous, for the length of sixty years. (II, l. 40-45)

The 'old dame' was Nanny Holme, after whom the rock was named 'Nanny's stone'.[41] Upon it she laid 'gingerbread and parkins, small cakes and pies, and other confections' for sale.[42] Wordsworth's appeal to his school-friends to 'think with me' of Nanny is an odd social injunction that breaks with *The Prelude*'s usual addressee, Coleridge. It belongs to a different type of poem, in which Wordsworth reveals the assiduousness of marginal Cumbrian people, and protests for their right to independence, such as 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' and 'Resolution and Independence'. All three of these texts share a trope that has been insufficiently noted by critics: the association between people struggling to maintain their existence, and stones. 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' begins with the beggar sat on 'a broad smooth stone' (l. 7); and 'Resolution and Independence' contains a peculiar comparison of the leech gatherer to 'a huge stone' (l. 63). Mark

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[40] Thompson, p. 251.
[41] Thompson, p. 256.
[42] Thompson, p. 253.

Hewson considers ‘memorial objects’, such as stones and trees, as points of departure in Wordsworth’s poetry.[43] For him, these objects become a site for contemplation, in which one encounters a number of resistances: the object’s resistance to time, the resistance of characters to their plight, and the resistance of the poem to understanding. Yet whereas Hewson focuses on epitaphic objects and poems, such as the sheepfold in ‘Michael’ and ‘The Ruined Cottage’, linking them to Wordsworth’s ‘Essay on Epitaphs’, I am concerned with the dynamic social relations between impoverished people and stones.

Mary Jacobus places a different emphasis upon Wordsworth’s rocks: that their obduracy challenges our efforts to internalize, sympathise, and otherwise understand another being.[44] She concludes by noting the affinity between poetry and rocks, contending that both exist at the ‘elusive margin where meaning comes and goes’.[45] This is an astute insight into the strangeness of these rocks; yet further analysis is necessary to consider the effect of linking rocks to marginal people. Primarily, it enhances their otherness, as when the leech gatherer becomes so closely identified with a stone that he resembles one. Wordsworth observes that the leech gatherer’s stone has an odd shape and structure, which leads to a sense of:

> Wonder to all who do the same espy
> By what means it could thither come, and whence;
> So that it seems a thing endued with sense: (ll. 66-68)

Human curiosity thereby invests this object with life, and so the simile itself is also upset, and the stone mutates to become ‘like a sea-beast’. The metamorphosis of these analogies enhances the unfamiliarity of the original man, who, like a strange stranger, possesses unknown quantities and qualities of life. These large stones interrupt the viewer and the reader, disrupting one's consciousness with their resistance, as Hewson observes. But rather than the static image of memorial, or commemoration, there is a dynamic movement here, when Wordsworth associates a disturbing object that is apparently void of existence (the stone) with a marginal human being. The association between human and stone renders the human less familiar and easy to sympathise with, preventing the easy assumption of mutual recognition and the ensuing 'condescending pity' that Morton cautions against.[46] As such, Wordsworth's injunction to his school-friends does not take the patronizing, distancing form of '*remember* with me', but rather the more vital and ambiguous '*think* with me'; and the inclusive form re-establishes their former camaraderie, which is implicitly extended to the reader. The challenging nature of Wordsworth's stone-existences gives the impoverished, marginal people with whom they are identified an insistent presence within both a distinct social locale and the poetic imagination.

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[43] Mark Hewson, ‘The Scene of Meditation in Wordsworth’, *The Modern Language Review,* 106 (2011), 954-967, p. 954.

[44] Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 164.

[45] Jacobus, pp. 174-5.

The blending of humans and stones, confusing the definitions and boundaries of each being/entity is playfully explored in 'Rural Architecture'.[47] The poem describes 'three rosy-cheek'd School-boys' (l. 2) climbing Great How. At its summit 'they built up without mortar or lime / A Man on the peak of the crag.' (ll. 4-5) It centres on a pun: in Cumbrian dialect, 'man' derives from the Welsh 'maen' (stone), so as well as 'human', and adult male, it also means a pile of rocks or summit cairn. Wordsworth develops the personification of the cairn in the following stanza: the boys 'built *him* and christen'd him', after which he became 'an urchin both vigorous and hale'. 'Urchin' contains a similar interplay of human and animal qualities to that which co-exists within the leech-gatherer: it originally meant hedgehog, and then came to refer to sea-urchins, as well as deformed humans, and mischievous or ragged youngsters.[48] The phrase captures the qualities of strength, hardiness and energy that characterise Wordsworth's marginal human-animal-stone forms.[49] The 'man' of 'Rural Architecture' acquires further human qualities when the boys name 'him' Ralph Jones, and he becomes a model of perseverance: when the first 'Giant' is blown away, the boys swiftly build another. Wordsworth compares this to destructive forces in Paris and London, 'at remembrance whereof my blood sometimes will flag' (ll. 22) and resolves: 'Then light-hearted Boys, to the top of the crag! / And I'll build up a Giant with you' (ll. 23-4). The boys' action of creating and maintaining this structure transforms the near-human 'man' into a source of physical strength and creative inspiration for Wordsworth. As an 'experiencing community' text, this poem places the poetic speaker within a present tense world (the poem begins, 'There's George Fisher' (l. 1)). He is not a former school-boy, who recalls childhood experiences: he participates in the social-creative process of the poem's action.

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[46] Morton, p. 80.
[47] William Wordsworth, 'Rural Architecture', in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 234-5.

The stone that Wordsworth identified as the home and centre of his schoolboy joys lay at the heart of market-village life. It was a place where the tension and pressures of at least three competing groups was tantamount, and it demonstrates the complex social nexus that Wordsworth both observed and participated in. In contradiction to the conventional view that Wordsworth constructed an image of his childhood as an isolated period of learning through nature, this section has revealed the significance of social interactions for Wordsworth's childhood and creativity. It has examined the paradoxical absence of the school from *The Prelude*'s school-day reminiscences and revealed that, rather than simply replacing the institution with nature, Wordsworth in fact tied his boyhood joys to a marginal local woman through her rocking-stone. Accordingly, Wordsworth's stone-existences have gained a new import – far from static memorial objects – they also indicate and explore dynamically vexed social affiliations. Comparing different versions of *The Prelude* also reveals the influence of Wordsworth's changing ideas of community on his creativity. The 1798 text remembers former communities from a distanced, nostalgic perspective. The 1805 text builds upon these portrayals of community, adding complex figures and interactions such as Taylor and Tyson's dog, who play unconventional and influential roles in the poet's early creativity. Later revisions clarify and distinguish the relationships between people. Overall, there is little sense of hierarchy and strictures: in each text interactions flow unmediated between diverse people, and the institution is absent. In the next section I will examine in further detail Wordsworth's portrayal of remembered interactions.

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[48] 'urchin, *n*.', *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 31 July 2015].

[49] Nanny Holme was an obstinate figure not just within Wordsworth's poetry, but also within Hawkshead's local history. Further to Wordsworth's account, when the stone was removed and split to build the new Market Hall in 1790, Nanny demanded compensation for the business she would lose, and as a result Thomas Rigge (a wealthy slate miner and trustee for the new Market House) compensated her 6d. a week for the rest of her life. This became something of a local joke, because Rigge offered it knowing that 'she was very old, and he thought it would save further trouble, at no great cost to himself', yet she went on to live until 1805, aged ninety-five. Thompson, pp. 253-4.

The *Mathew* Poems

Wordsworth depicts a schoolmaster figure named Mathew in a number of poems composed from 1798-9: 'Expostulation and Reply', 'The Tables Turned', 'Lines Written on a Tablet in a School', 'The Two April Mornings', 'The Fountain, A Conversation', and five fragments known as the 'Mathew Elegies'; collectively known as the *Mathew* poems (see Figure 1, p. 110).[50] The first two poems were published in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, the next three were added to the 1800 two volume *Lyrical Ballads*.

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[50] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* pp. 107-9, 211-7, 297-302.

The final five elegies remained unpublished in notebook form until 1841 when Wordsworth revised them into 'Address to the Scholars of the Village School of –', published in his 1842 volume, *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years*.[51] Since Mathew is a schoolmaster, these poems portray a more conventional facet of schooling than *The Prelude*, which contains few descriptions of teachers or schools. However, Wordsworth explains that Mathew is not a straightforward character: 'Like the Wanderer in the Excursion, this Schoolmaster was made up of several both of his class & men of other occupations.' [52] This intriguing biographical hint has provoked different critical responses: Mary Moorman speculates that Wordsworth's headmaster Taylor was a key influence on Mathew; Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch questions whether Hazlitt played a part alongside Taylor; whereas Thompson considers other Hawkshead inhabitants, matching biographical details and character traits to aspects of Wordsworth's Mathew.[53] Yet Wordsworth was deeply resistant to this type of historical investigation and refused to offer further information: 'This and other poems connected with Mathew would not gain by a literal detail of facts.'[54] Instead he identifies different versions of 'truth', 'matters of fact' and poetry: 'I do not ask pardon for what there is of untruth in such verses, considered strictly as matters of fact. It is enough, if, being true & consistent in spirit, they move & teach in a manner not unworthy of a poet's calling'.[55] As long as the world of the poem (its meaning and sentiment) has a convincing reality, then its correspondence to external 'matters of fact' is unimportant. Associated with this consistent 'spirit', is sympathy: Wordsworth stresses that a poem should 'move & teach', recalling his criticism of Sara Hutchinson's unsympathetic 'misreading' of

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[51] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads,* pp. 808-11.

[52] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 38.

[53] Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography*, II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 49-52; Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, 'Wordsworth's Expostulator: Taylor or Hazlitt?', *English Language Notes*, 2 (1964), 102-105; Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead*.

[54] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 38.

[55] Ibid.

‘Resolution and Independence’. Accordingly, recent biographers approach the *Mathew* poems with greater reticence. Barker succinctly states, ‘there is no reason to believe that […] Mathew, or the Pedlar, was anything other than an imaginary, composite figure.’[56]

The struggle to grasp these poems extends beyond biographical quibbles: *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* briefly refers to them as ‘the bizarrely poignant *Mathew* poems’, but does not expand upon what is bizarre or poignant.[57] Yu Liu argues that the poems’ unusual narrative structure relates to Wordsworth’s ‘radical poetics and radical politics’, forcing the reader into self-reflection; whereas James McKusick contends that ‘Expostulation and Reply’ and ‘The Tables Turned’ articulate Wordsworth’s radical environmental perspective.[58] These scattered approaches often base their analysis on only a couple of the *Mathew* poems, which perhaps accounts for their different insights, but to be so selective neglects the creative significance of the series. Admittedly, it is difficult to identify these poems as a cohesive whole because there are marked differences between them: the earliest two are conversational poems that consider education on a philosophical level; the three additions to *Lyrical Ballads* 1800 are elegiac, but where one is an inscription, the other two are conversational; the five elegiac fragments contain inscriptions and a dirge (or ‘memorial song’); and the 1842 poem is an ‘address’ to school children. Furthermore, the character of Mathew varies throughout the poems. However, exploring the variations across the series offers a new insight into the connection between Wordsworth’s ideas of community and his creativity. The majority of the poems were written in Alfoxden and Goslar, when Wordsworth was away from Cumbria and remembering the distant communities of his youth. In these poems, Mathew is a fluid, composite character, who incorporates multiple remembered individuals. Rather than portraying a conventional school institution, the poems describe transgressions and allude to marginality. By contrast, in the later poem ('Address to the Scholars') revised at Rydal Mount, the poetic speaker becomes more authoritative, and Mathew is portrayed as a conventional school-master, who upholds local hierarchies. As Wordsworth comes to determine community, he ceases to explore the creative fluidity of formative interactions, and instead focuses on the bounded role of the school-master within a community.

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[56] Barker, p. 232.

[57] Nicola Trott, ‘Wordsworth: The Shape of the Poetic Career’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth,* ed. by Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 5-21 (p. 12).

[58] Yu Liu, ‘Revaluating Revolution and Radicalness in the *Lyrical Ballads*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 36 (1996), 747-761; James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Figure 1: The Mathew Poems

Poem	**Composed**	**First published**	**Type of Mathew**
'Expostulation and Reply'	May-June 1798, Alfoxden	*Lyrical Ballads* (1798)	Interlocutor, reprimands 'William'
'The Tables Turned'	May-June 1798, Alfoxden	*Lyrical Ballads* (1798)	As before
'Lines Written on a Tablet in a School'	Oct-Dec 1798, Goslar	*Lyrical Ballads* (1800)	Deceased: merry, sociable
'The Two April Mornings'	Oct-Dec 1798, Goslar	*Lyrical Ballads* (1800)	Deceased: mourns lost daughter
'The Fountain, a Conversation'	Oct-Dec 1798, Goslar	*Lyrical Ballads* (1800)	Older man who reflects on life, makes rhymes
'Address to the Scholars'	Revised in 1841-2 from earlier material (Five 'Mathew elegies', composed Oct 1798-Feb 1799, Goslar)	*Poems Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842)	Deceased: schoolmaster

As we saw in *The Prelude*, the school institution is absent from the initial *Mathew* poems. ‘Expostulation and Reply’ begins with a stone, recalling the ‘native rock’ in Hawkshead:

> “Why William, on that old grey stone,
> “Thus for the length of half a day,
> “Why William, sit you thus alone,
> “And dream your time away?” (ll. 1-4)

It is unclear whether this ‘old grey stone’ is the same ‘native rock’ that represented the ‘centre’ of Wordsworth’s school days, but the resemblance is significant. Here, Wordsworth links himself (‘William’) to the rock, and like Nanny, the Cumberland beggar and the leech gatherer, he is there alone. Just as their productivity is equivocal (Nanny spreads ‘huxters wares’, the beggar ‘scraps and fragments’, and the leech gatherer pursues dwindling leeches), William’s seemingly wasteful daydreaming is questioned. He thereby appears to affiliate himself with the marginality of stone-existence.

In this poem Mathew is assertive and interrogative. William’s attitude conflicts with him, as becomes apparent in the second stanza’s remonstrations:

> “Where are your books? that light bequeath’d
> “To beings else forlorn and blind!
> “Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath’d
> “From dead men to their kind.” (ll. 5-8)

The reference to ‘beings else forlorn and blind’ gains further substance when considered alongside Wordsworth’s other marginal stone-existences. Each of the other three are observed looking downwards (a ‘forlorn’ posture?) at natural surfaces connected with their livelihood: Nanny ‘sat / And watched her table’ (ll. 45-6); the Cumberland beggar ‘scanned [his scraps] with a fixed and serious look / Of idle computation.’ (ll. 11-2); and the leech gatherer ‘fixedly did look / Upon the muddy water’ (l. 86-7). A series of surprising transformations occur through these visions: Nanny converts the stone into a table; the beggar demonstrates the capacity for simultaneous idleness and computation; and the leech gatherer’s stare renders the dirty water a quasi-literary object (‘As if he had been reading in a book’ (l. 88)). These transformative perceptions challenge the sweeping assumption that one cannot have vision without books; similarly, the leech gatherer’s strong, ‘chearful’ nature runs contrary to the theory of forlornness. William’s challenge to Mathew in ‘Expostulation and Reply’ expounds the belief suggested by his marginal characters: ‘The eye it cannot chuse but see, / We cannot bid the ear be still’ (ll. 17-8); and so he takes on the role of a marginal other.

As an ‘other’, William presents an assertive resistance, unlike the Cumberland beggar who is resistant through his blank inner world, or the leech gatherer whose resistance is marked in his stoical response to suffering and strangely unknowable existence. In ‘The Tables Turned; An Evening Scene Upon the Same Subject’, William becomes the sole speaker and addresses his ‘friend’ with a series of imperatives, abandoning the conversational dynamic of the preceding poem. The imperatives first mirror Mathew’s incursion, ‘Up! up! my friend, and quit your books’ (l. 3), with a less serious, more playful tone (the second ‘up’ is not capitalised and the ensuing two words describe an amicable relationship). Then follows three dynamic instructions, ‘Come, hear the woodland linnet’ (l. 10); ‘Come forth into the light of things’ (l. 15); ‘Come forth, and bring with you a heart / That watches and receives.’ (ll. 31-2). The refrain is striking: William urges Mathew to accompany him away from his books to attend to the natural environment. If the poem's reference to 'books' and intellectual subjects ('science and art' (l. 29)) gesture to the school institution, then its role, housing knowledge, is swiftly disparaged by William who, favouring the outdoors, endorses an informal model of learning. This recalls the 'School-time' sections of *The Prelude* (Books I-II), which focus on the activities that Wordsworth and his school fellows did outside of Hawkshead school institution. James McKusick suggests that the conceptual attitude of these two poems makes them 'a telling manifesto for [a] new kind of poetry' in which Wordsworth radically 'turns the tables upon the entire Western tradition of scientific knowledge'.[59] However, the process behind the poems does not support the notion that Wordsworth asserted them as a 'manifesto': they were first published towards the rear of the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* with an explanatory note in the 'Advertisement' (this justification suggests a cautious, diffident approach), before his confidence increased in 1800, when they were moved to the front of the two volumes, with no explanatory note. McKusick also fails to consider the other *Mathew* poems that were composed after these two, which demonstrate the direction of Wordsworth's related poetry – not towards poetic and philosophic manifesto, but to experiment with portraying a composite character and his role in a Cumbrian village community.

Both 'The Two April Mornings' and 'The Fountain' seem to follow the trajectory of the former two: they are conversational poems set outdoors. Mathew and the speaker have obeyed the command to 'come forth': in the former they 'travell'd merrily, to pass / A day among the hills' (ll. 11-2); and in the latter, the 'pair of friends' 'lay beneath a spreading oak' (ll. 3, 5). As before, the school institution and its instruments are absent. However, 'Lines Written on a Tablet in a School' is not only located within a school, but is concerned with a particularly formal facet of the institution, a tablet that commemorates former schoolmasters:

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[59] McKusick, pp. 57-61.

> *In the School of ---- is a Tablet, on which are inscribed, in gilt letters, the names of the several persons who have been Schoolmasters there since the foundation of the School, with the time at which they entered upon, and quitted their office. Opposite one of those names the Author wrote the following lines.* (*Lyrical Ballads*, p. 211)

The poem responds to an institutional tradition and is added to a formal commemoration of historic lineage. Yet while the 'gilt' lettering points to the privileged honour of this tradition, it also highlights the subversive nature of Wordsworth's poem: the names are formally 'inscribed', whereas the speaker's 'lines' are written. They appear 'opposite', simultaneously revealing both connection and antagonism because, in a sense, the verse is an act of defacement. This seemingly straightforward description contests the concept of authorisation: gilt letters represent official sanction; yet, by naming himself 'the Author', the vandal appeals to a different type of authority – creative inspiration. Bennett points out a further complexity in the fact that the words were never actually written on the tablet, making the poem 'a fiction of inscription':

> the effect of the poem revolves around an impossible presencing of the reader in the scene of the poem's composition. This […] impossibility, this disjunction between rhetoric and reading, is an important part of its force and effect.[60]

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[60] Bennett, p. 87.

'Lines Written on a Tablet' therefore presents multiple unresolved disjunctions regarding inscription and commemoration. It forces the reader to contemplate: which text is privileged? What does it mean for something to be authorised? Where and when did the composition take place? Significantly, the first poem of the series to consider the school institution both invokes and challenges part of its practice.

The institution presented within the poem is also inconsistent and contradictory. Although the school is not identified in 'Lines Written on a Tablet', in the *Fenwick Notes* Wordsworth states, 'Such a tablet as is here spoken of continued to be preserved in Hawkshead School, though the inscriptions were not brought down to our time.'[61]. Likewise, the proclamation of the school's 'history of two hundred years' (l. 8) fits with Hawkshead Grammar School, which was founded in 1585. Yet the poem expresses regret for 'Poor Mathew' who is now 'far from' the 'murmur of the village school' (ll. 17-20). Unlike the grammar school, Hawkshead village school did not have a building of its own, but moved around different houses in the village, teaching lower-class children more basic literacy skills.[62] Wordsworth compounds the grandeur and commemorative history of Hawkshead Grammar School with its humbler village counterpart, creating a composite school for his composite schoolmaster.

Like 'Lines Written on a Tablet', the final poem of the series, 'Address to the Scholars of the Village School of ---', similarly locates itself within an unidentified village school. Yet the relationship between speaker and school is more conventional, as the speaker respects the institution's hierarchy and mechanisms. Whereas 'Lines Written on a Tablet' describes an act of transgression that the speaker performs in the school (inscribing the graffiti-poem), in the later poem the speaker appears in an official capacity, addressing the school children. The speaker's authority also contrasts with

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[61] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 38.
[62] Thompson, pp. 155-7.

‘Expostulation and Reply’, where ‘William’ urges Mathew to ‘come forth’ away from books, because here the speaker enters the school institution: ‘I come, ye little noisy Crew / Not long your pastime to prevent’ (ll. 1-2). This ambivalent opening could reveal an educational perspective that does not emphasize discipline (the speaker is tolerant of their ‘noise’ and playful ‘pastime’), or the speaker criticizes the children. He explains, ‘I *heard* the blessing which to you / Our common Friend and Father sent’ [my italics] (ll. 3-4). By contrast, the 1798 fragment is less aural:

> I bring, ye little noisy crew!
> Fulfilling a most kind intent,
> The pious blessing which to you
> Our common friend and father sent[63]

Here, the speaker is an agent ‘fulfilling’ an explicitly caring ‘intent’. Since there is no pronoun identifying who the ‘intent’ belongs to, it could either refer to the speaker’s intention to bring Mathew’s blessing, or Mathew’s purpose for giving that blessing. In contrast, the 1842 text explicitly states that ‘I’ heard the blessing, giving the speaker principal ownership. The later text also stresses the speaker’s physical presence: ‘I come’ appears in place of ‘I bring’ (which foregrounds the message that accompanies the speaker). In these revisions, Wordsworth adapts the poetic speaker to become assertive, assuming authority within an imagined institutional establishment; determining community.

This comparison usefully highlights a difference between the stages of Wordsworth’s writing about community in terms of how he positions the school institution, which becomes more central in the shift from ‘remembering’ to ‘determining’. However, to grasp Wordsworth’s creativity and ideas of community, interactions, and schools in the earlier phase it is essential to examine the school-master figure Mathew, because the school is mostly absent from the earlier texts. Throughout the poems, Mathew is rarely depicted in a classroom or described teaching. The exceptions appear in the *Mathew* elegies, one of which contrasts Mathew’s teaching with learning:

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[63] Wordsworth, ‘Dirge’, in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 300-302, ll. 1-4.

> Learning will often dry the heart,
> The very bones it will distress,
> But Mathew had an idle art
> Of teaching love and happiness.[64]

The process by which ‘learning’ drains corporeal life, drying the heart and distressing bones, recalls the ‘barren leaves’ of books, condemned in ‘The Tables Turned’. By contrast, Mathew’s ‘idle art’ successfully teaches positive, inspiriting qualities. Wordsworth puts the adjective ‘idle’ to work, away from its usual usage as a pejorative word for laziness, to describe an easy, ready, unassuming art. This challenging oxymoron recalls William’s subversive retaliation in ‘Expostulation and Reply’ and ‘The Tables Turned’, where he asserts that learning can happen in informal settings through unconventional methods. This version of learning also relates to the process of developing compassion described in ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’. In that poem, when a neighbour gives to the beggar, she gains an ‘exhilarated heart’ (l. 153), and similarly, through meeting the beggar, other ‘minds’:

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[64] Wordsworth, ‘ii. “Just as the Blowing Thorn Began”’, in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 297-8, ll. 13-16.

have perchance receiv’d,
(A thing far more precious far than all that books
Or the solicitudes of love can do!)
That first mild touch of sympathy and thought (ll. 103-6)

These ‘remembering community’ texts conceive learning, in its most valuable form, to occur through informal methods, affecting one’s heart and producing sympathetic knowledge. The 1842 text ‘Address to the Scholars’ also portrays the classroom to be a restrictive domain for Mathew: ‘Here did he sit confined for hours / But he could see the woods and plains’ (ll. 16-7), recalling the value and freedom of outdoors in the earlier poems. However, later in the poem, Mathew’s role as a teacher is more conventional. He was:

the Guide
Who checked or turned thy headstrong youth,
As he before had sanctified
Thy infancy with heavenly truth. (ll. 41-4)

Defining Mathew as a ‘Guide’ rather than teacher or school-master suggests that he had a holistic role, directing moral and spiritual learning. The subsequent references to sanctifying and ‘heavenly truth’, confirm that this is a Christian approach. Mathew’s earlier paradoxical and subversive ‘idle art’ is revised into a rigorous role that upholds conventional Christian values.

His role in the local community hierarchy, supporting inheritance and tradition, is also outlined in the later text:

Long time his pulse hath ceased to beat
But benefits, his gift, we trace –
Expressed in every eye we meet
Round this dear Vale, his native place.

To stately Hall and Cottage rude
Flowed from his life what still they hold,
Light pleasures, every day, renewed;
And blessings half a century old. (ll. 57-64)

This text captures his extensive influence upon ‘every eye’ – all of the diverse inhabitants of the locale. Yet the unity between inhabitants in the ‘dear Vale’ denies difference: those who live in the ‘stately Hall’ belong to a class distinct from those in the ‘Cottage rude’. The ‘light pleasures’ therefore are different for the two classes, but importantly, this image of docile contentment does not threaten the established social order. Similarly, the implication that the two different types of houses ‘still’ hold something that they formerly possessed inscribes the values of tradition and inheritance. The seemingly egalitarian ‘benefits’ that Mathew provided are central to this process of inheritance and tradition. In this later poem, Wordsworth portrays the school-master as a figure who upholds the local community hierarchy.

By contrast, the earlier *Mathew* poem that is also located within a school, ‘Lines Written on a Tablet’, does not portray Mathew as instrumental to local hierarchies. He is hardly an earnest schoolmaster. Although the poem briefly regrets his distance from the ‘murmur of the village school’ (suggesting the quiet diligence of pupils under his tutelage), he is more persistently depicted as a playful prankster who had ‘frolics’. He is linked to 'the chimney's merry roar' (l. 19): the warm, sociable nook, where one might find a 'chimney-tale', 'chimney-talk', or even a 'chimney preacher'.[65] Accordingly, Wordsworth reveals his sober moods, or 'sighs' did not arise from any serious thought or incidents, but rather they were 'sighs / Of one tir'd out with fun and madness' (ll. 21-2). These are peculiar attributes and practices for a schoolmaster. Thompson explains this discrepancy by arguing that the source for this character was not a schoolmaster, but an attorney named John Gibson, whose 'quips and pranks had delighted generations of Hawkshead schoolboys to whom he was known familiarly as "Little John".'[66] Gibson appears within a lengthy, comical footnote to the third edition of *A Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes* (1810). Lost *en route* to Hawkshead, Joseph Budworth describes meeting Gibson, who was singing loudly, and together the two proceed to the Salutation Inn, Hawkshead: 'His company was for a short time sparkling; but, as grog was the only part of supper he tasted, and that as copiously as his glass could be replenished, he was soon put to bed.'[67] Thompson also notes other instances that demonstrate Gibson's thirst for the tavern scene of raucous social entertainment, which offers insight into the strange metaphor that Wordsworth uses to describe Mathew's occasional reflective faculty:

> Yet, sometimes, when the secret cup
> Of still and serious thought went round,
> It seem'd as if he drank it up –
> He felt with spirit so profound. (ll. 25-28)

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[65] 'chimney, a, n.', *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com> [Accessed 10 April 2015].

[66] Thompson, p. 182.

[67] Joseph Budworth, *A Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes*, 3rd edn (London: John Nichols and Son, 1810), p. 171.

Partaking in the ‘secret cup’, Mathew appears to step back from ‘the chimney’s merry roar’, the noisy public social scene, to indulge privately and furtively in this reflective elixir. However, the cup ‘went round’, suggesting that either it was an inevitable part of the cycle of Mathew’s being, or, it was passed around between people, and so his philosophical meditation is still a social act. Paradoxically, the Mathew of ‘Lines Written on a Tablet’ that emerges from formal, gilt lettering is a figure who belongs to informal local social assemblies. Unlike the conservative role that Mathew has in the later text, in the ‘remembering community’ phase, this school-master provides entertaining company.

‘The Two April Mornings’ also portrays Mathew as a school-master who is familiar rather than distant and authoritative. Yet while he is distinct from the Mathew of the ‘determining community’ phase (‘Address to the Scholars’), he also differs from other contemporaneous Mathews. Unlike the former Mathew’s ‘fun and madness’, this Mathew is ‘blithe’ (l. 7) – a happy man – which is established in relation to the time of year, ‘a spring holiday’. He is located outdoors, ‘among the hills’ (l. 12), rather than in rowdy social settings (‘the chimney’s merry roar’) amongst the village folk. His wildness is different: he stands ‘with his bough / Of wilding in his hand.’ (ll. 59-60) ‘Wilding’ is the name for either a wild apple or crab-apple tree. This bough contrasts with the ‘cup’ that the former Mathew holds (made by humans and part of social act), placing this Mathew’s contemplations in a more rugged, outdoor domain. ‘The Two April Mornings’ also explores a personal tragedy behind Mathew’s ‘blithe’ public exterior. Unlike the former Mathew’s sighs of tiredness, this Mathew’s sighs relate to sorrow: ‘so sad a sigh’ (l. 16) is followed by ‘a sigh of pain’ (l. 53), when he recalls visiting his daughter Emma’s grave. Thompson links this to John Harrison, the village schoolmaster at Hawkshead, whose daughter Emmy died aged around eight (‘nine summers had she scarcely seen' (l. 33)), on 9 April 1746.[68] In the 'remembering community' phase, Wordsworth explores diverse Hawkshead characters through Mathew.

Another type of figure is portrayed in 'The Fountain, a Conversation' (which does not make any explicit link between Mathew and schools). This Mathew is remarkable for his poetic skills, as revealed when the speaker requests 'some old Border-song, or Catch':

> 'Or of the Church-clock and the chimes
> 'Sing here beneath the shade,
> 'That half-mad thing of witty rhymes
> 'Which you last April made!' (ll. 13-16)

Thompson identifies a third Hawkshead local as the inspiration for this Mathew – an ironmonger named Thomas Cowperthwaite, who was well known in the area as a rhymester. One of his recorded verses describes 'the crazy old church-clock / And the bewilder'd chimes.' (ll. 71-2):

> True time I tell, the Sundial said,
> When Sol his Rays sends from the Sky.
> If he's a Bed, the Clock replied,
> You cannot even Tell a Lie.[69]

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[68] Thompson, p. 161. This fits with the poem's time frame: Mathew recalls visiting Emma's grave thirty years previously, and Emmy would have been dead for thirty three years when Wordsworth moved to Hawkshead.

[69] Thompson, p. 172.

The dispute between the clock and sundial personifies a historical difficulty within Hawkshead: during the eighteenth century the church clock was often repaired because it kept poor time. This is captured in two further lines, 'Full well we know the clock tells Lies; / To mend its Ways they've tried in vain.'[70] Cowperthwaite playfully articulates a local problem in these 'witty rhymes', using the plural pronoun to speak for the wider community. This Mathew acts as a village bard: he composes and recites poetry about local stories, sometimes at the request of community members. He can be aligned with Ann Tyson's dog and Taylor, as another formative creative influence upon Wordsworth.

At the heart of all of these diverse poems is the relationship between the speaker and Mathew. Each poem variously contemplates the tension between Mathew's professional role and his friendship with the speaker. The companion poems that initiated the rest of the series, 'Expostulation and Reply' and 'The Tables Turned', are the most antagonistic manifestation of their relationship. Mathew's remonstrations intrude upon the image of William's meditative stillness on the 'old grey stone'. With urgent questions and insistent exclamation marks, Mathew creates a fast, irregular pace. Although Mathew is not defined a schoolmaster in these two poems, the tone, authority and subject of his expostulation resembles a schoolmaster's remonstration of a wayward pupil. However, as Wordsworth responds, he calls Mathew 'my good friend' – an audacious response for a pupil, or an amicable effort to ease the tension. Similarly, his 'reply' is bold and daring, and its mirrored language almost mocks Mathew. The peculiarity of this amicably confrontational dynamic is explained in part by the advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads*, where Wordsworth writes that 'Expostulation and Reply' and 'The Tables Turned' 'arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy.'[71] This account separates Mathew from the role of schoolmaster, suggesting the dispute took place on more equal terms – between two peers. Stephen Gill identifies Wordsworth's 'friend' as William Hazlitt.[72] Hazlitt visited Wordsworth in Alfoxden in 1798, and his essay, 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' (published 1823 in *The Liberal*), states that he 'got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth […] in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible'.[73] This 'metaphysical argument' could be the same discussion that Wordsworth describes as a 'conversation'. Both writers describe an unresolved ideological dispute, but whereas Wordsworth suggests the discussion was equable but hinged on a fundamental disagreement, Hazlitt openly calls it an 'argument' founded on a mutual failure to communicate. David Higgins explains that Hazlitt's essay grapples with his nostalgic 'youthful belief in the signs of genius exhibited in Wordsworth and Coleridge' and disappointment at their later apostasy.[74] Given that Hazlitt's account is thus influenced by a struggle between nostalgia and cynicism, it is difficult to assess the true origin of the poems. The crucial movement in the poems is Wordsworth's decision to locate them, not in Alfoxden where he met Hazlitt, but 'by Esthwaite lake' (l. 13), leading him to compose the other *Mathew* poems, all set in Hawkshead.

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[70] Thompson, p. 173.
[71] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 739.

In the subsequent *Mathew* poems from the 'remembering community' phase ('The Two April Mornings', 'The Fountain' and 'Lines Written on a Tablet'), Mathew is portrayed as an older man, elegised by the speaker who knew and misses him. While in these poems Mathew does not teach the speaker in any formal, conventional sense, his perspective is instructive to the younger speaker. Each poem reveals Mathew's emotional life and personal experiences of grief. 'The Two April Mornings' and 'The

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[72] Gill, p. 139.

[73] William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,* ed. by P. P. Howe (London: Dent, 1930-34), Vol. XVII, p. 119.

[74] David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 118-123.

Fountain' explore contradictory experiences of the same day: the speaker's merry enthusiasm 'on a spring holiday' and 'a summer's noon' is contrasted with the heavy associations Mathew brings, recalling his daughter's grave, and his own mortality. The factual basis to these poems (demonstrated through the *Fenwick Notes* and Thompson's historical investigations) suggests that Mathew's various regrets were genuinely experienced by Wordsworth's sources. The poems therefore retrospectively explore formative encounters and relationships, and, although Mathew is older than the speaker, Wordsworth does not portray him as explicitly paternal. When the speaker responds to Mathew's sorrow in 'The Fountain' by offering to strengthen their relationship from good friends to father and son: 'Mathew, for thy Children dead / I'll be a son to thee!' (ll. 61-2); he is rebuffed by Mathew, 'Alas! that cannot be' (l. 64). This rebuttal concludes the Mathew-speaker relationship in *Lyrical Ballads*, leaving it an open, unusual, and uncertain bond. By contrast, in 'Address to the Scholars', the speaker defines Mathew as 'our common Friend and Father' (l. 4). The plural pronoun incorporates the village school children into the paternal relationship. Given Mathew's more conventional associations with the school institution and his part in upholding the established local social hierarchy, the role of father is not merely an expression of affection, but it also advocates paternalism. Where this relationship is clear and defined, in the earlier poems the familiarity between the speaker and Mathew fluctuates. Incorporating conflict, tension, affection, and veneration, the dynamic and challenging nature of the relationship makes it creatively stimulating.

The *Mathew* poems explore diverse facets of community and creativity. The character Mathew's fluid nature – composed from various real sources and additional imaginative details – is crucial to Wordsworth's creative engagement with the series. This openness enabled him to return at least twice to the material, composing more poems later in 1798-9 after the initial two in early 1798, and then again in 1841-2 to revise old draft material into a single cohesive poem. The experimental technique of grafting different sources and character traits onto a single poetic figure is a precursor to an altogether more developed character, the Wanderer in *The Excursion*. Yet, as I have illustrated, these poems possess their own interest and should not be read merely as a forebear to *The Excursion*. They reveal more about Wordsworth's school years in Hawkshead than is gleaned from *The Prelude*, in particular, demonstrating further formative social experiences and unusual relationships. In the 'remembering community' phase, the act of teaching and the idea of a school is evocative and provocative. The early texts variously approach and challenge the institution. Across the poems, Mathew changes and adapts, representing diverse views and experiences. By contrast, in the later text the school and its teacher have distinct structural roles: instilling and maintaining local social hierarchies. Since, in this text, the speaker enters the school to address the children, he participates in the conservative concern to safeguard community posterity. The next section explores this movement in more detail.

The Bowness School Speech

On Wednesday 13 April 1836 Wordsworth delivered his first public speech to a crowd of seven to eight hundred spectators, at the laying of the foundation stone for the new school in Bowness.[75] It was a wet and stormy day, so Wordsworth 'briefly addressed the assembled throng – compressing into a very narrow compass what he had intended to say had the weather been more propitious.'[76] Three days later, the full speech was published in *The Westmoreland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser*. Unlike *The Prelude*, which was published posthumously, and the *Mathew* poems, which were presumably seldom read by local lower class people, the Bowness speech reached a large local audience.[77] In it, Wordsworth outlines the plans for the new school building, before reflecting on how to turn the institution 'to the best possible account', which leads into a lecture about education in response to three phrases taken from the original school's trust deed. Despite the text's focus upon the subject of education, it has not been analysed by critics. Richardson's definitive study, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, describes the trajectory of Wordsworth's ideas of childhood and education through lyric poems (such as 'We Are Seven'), *The Prelude*, *The Excursion*, and Wordsworth's letters.[78] He outlines Wordsworth's passion for the Madras system (viewed in 1815 as 'the noblest invention for the improvement of the human species'[79]) and his later disenchantment, 'motivated by the same complex of libertarian ideals and reactionary fears that led him to support it in the first place'; but he offers little account of what followed afterwards.[80] Alison Hickey likewise explores the links between the Wanderer's speech in Book IX of *The Excursion* and Wordsworth's endorsement of the Madras system, contending that it is 'a central episode in his on-going concern with the relation between imagination and education'.[81] She does not offer any insight into the subsequent episodes that follow this 'central' point; rather, she concludes with the (arguably inconclusive) perspective that Wordsworth's support of the Madras system should not be categorized as a movement from the concerns of one era to another (Romantic to Victorian), but that it demonstrates a wavering, back and forth motion between different ideas.[82] I argue that Wordsworth's speech at Bowness is an important text that reveals his later thoughts on education, and the ways that these ideas are informed by and interact with members of the local community.

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[75] William Wordsworth, 'Speech at the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the New School in the Village of Bowness, Windermere' in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* III, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Smyser (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 283-299, 287.

[76] Wordsworth, *Prose Works III*, p. 288.

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[77] In *Reminiscences of Wordsworth Among the Peasantry of Westmorland,* Wordsworth's former gardener states that his poetry was 'not for sec as us', yet he had been present at the opening of Bowness School, when Wordsworth 'talked lang and weel eneuf'. H. D. Rawnsley, *Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmorland* (London: Dillon's, 1968), p. 16.

[78] Richardson, pp. 68-114.

[79] Wordsworth, *Letters* III, p. 210.

[80] Richardson, p. 103.

[81] Hickey, p. 111.

Written during the 'determining community' phase, the Bowness speech stresses the structural role of the school institution within the local community. It is a centre that instils hierarchy, tradition, and paternalism. Wordsworth is also more engaged with the local community than in the earlier phases: unlike the poems, which were shared with a middle to upper class readership (friends, family and the public), the speech was written at the request of a Cumbrian for a local audience. The Bowness speech therefore represents an occasion when Wordsworth's relationship with the local community was less detached and distant than scholars typically perceive it to have been. For instance, Scott Hess proposes that Wordsworth presents an 'abstracted and autonomous self' in his writing that allows him to develop an 'ecology of authorship [that] presents nature as an imaginative refuge and escape from the everyday'.[83] Hess contrasts this approach with the 'relational and environmentally immersed self' of other writers, such as Dorothy Wordsworth and John Clare.[84] Their 'ecology of community and place encourages the everyday's full reinhabitation.'[85] While overall, I agree that much of Wordsworth's writing is detached from the everyday life of community and place, the Bowness speech (and other texts that I discuss in the fourth chapter), offer peculiar moments in which Wordsworth became actively engaged with his neighbourhood, participating in and shaping the social structure.

A family letter reveals that Wordsworth experienced similar compositional difficulties when he wrote the speech, to those which occurred when he composed other texts. As with the vagrant poems (see Chapter One), Dorothy tries to support her brother. She writes to their nephew Christopher Wordsworth:

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[82] Hickey, p. 130.
[83] Hess, pp. 12, 16.
[84] Hess, p. 28.
[85] Hess, p. 16.

> the Poet of the Lakes, has been deputed by John Bolton Esq of Storrs Hall to lay the first stone of an Edifice to be erected at Bowness – a seminary for the youth of all generations to come – but alas! The poet is no Orator and he knows not what to say on this important occasion. I therefore request *you* the first Orator of the Nation to make a speech for him which I will answer for it he will pronounce verbatim, his diffidence of his own powers being so overwhelming.[86]

This letter emphasizes the significant role that Wordsworth's family played in aiding his recurring compositional crises: here Wordsworth's sister appeals for help from another family member. The technique that Dorothy suggests – a trusted and eloquent family member ghost-writing the text – was also used by Wordsworth, but not for this speech.[87] Sally Bushell outlines other techniques that Wordsworth used to help his composition: evasion ('creativity in one area is partly stimulated by evasion of another'), building a text up from blocks, and continual revision.[88] These signature techniques both assisted and shaped Wordsworth's writing. Evidence of block building can be seen within the speech's structure (the latter two thirds form around subheadings taken from the trust deed), and revision occurs where passages echo earlier writing (as I will demonstrate). But this enthusiasm for revision is also complicated by the fact that Bolton's request was sent only three weeks before the ceremony, leaving Wordsworth little time to revise and redraft the text before it would be presented to an audience and printed within a newspaper.[89] Similarly, accepting the commission might have been an act of evasion from other writing tasks, but the emotional and intellectual difficulties that Dorothy describes suggests that Wordsworth committed himself creatively to the speech.

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[86] Dorothy Wordsworth to Christopher Wordsworth, late March 1836, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth VI: The Later Years, 1835-1839*, ed. by Alan Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 188-9.

[87] Edward Quillinan wrote 'first drafts' of 'The Eagle and the Dove' (1842) and 'Installation Ode' (1847), which Wordsworth revised, corrected and passed as his own. Barker, pp. 732, 783.

[88] Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), pp. 77-117.

According to Dorothy, Wordsworth's challenge lies in the leap from one identity associated with a particular writing form – 'Poet of the Lakes' – to another, 'Orator'. Given some of the differences between poetry and speeches – the need for an articulate and persuasive argument in a speech, where poetic characters enable distance, ambivalence and irony; and the live recital to a potentially vast and varied audience – it is unsurprising that Wordsworth found the prospect of this new genre daunting. However, the subsequent sections of the same letter, written by Mary and Wordsworth, make no further appeals for help, references to compositional struggles, or even any mention of the speech. Wordsworth contextualises Dorothy's section with an explanation of her poor, but improving, physical and mental health: 'Pray keep your Aunt's letter, for if you had witnessed what we have done you would reckon it a great curiosity. Yet it would not be sent at present if I had not occasion to write to you upon business of my own'; and then follows a list of instructions for Christopher to take to Wordsworth's publisher in London.[90] On one level this discredits Dorothy's account: as part of her health condition, it is 'a great curiosity' and not a serious letter to be sent with urgency. On another, since Wordsworth relates it to an *improvement* in Dorothy's health, and she demonstrates a pertinent awareness of his recent writing commission, it is likely that Dorothy's description of Wordsworth's creative dismay is accurate. This troubled composition and new form makes the text a significant point within Wordsworth's later writing: a moment in which the poet was exposed to new styles, audiences and vulnerabilities – a creatively potent mix.

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[89] John Bolton to William Wordsworth, 20 March 1836, 'WLMS A / Bolton, John / 1', *Romanticism: Life, Literature and Landscape*, Wordsworth Trust, <www.romanticism.amdigital.co.uk> [Accessed 10 June 2015], p. 1.

[90] Wordsworth, *Letters* VI, p. 190.

Unlike earlier texts, where the school is absent or implied (*The Prelude* and *Mathew* poems), in this 'determining community' phase text, Wordsworth defines the structure and value of the school building:

> The structure, which is to supersede the old school-house, will have two apartments, airy, spacious, and lofty, one for boys the other for girls, in which they will be instructed by respective teachers, and not crowded together as in the old schoolroom, under one and the same person; each room will be capable of containing at least 100 children; within the enclosure there will be spacious and separate playgrounds for the boys and girls, with distinct covered sheds to play in in wet weather. There will also be a library-room for the school, and to contain books for the benefit of the neighbourhood; and, in short, every arrangement that could be desired. It may be added, that the building, from the elegance of its architecture, and its elevated, conspicuous situation, will prove a striking ornament to the beautiful country in the midst of which it will stand.[91]

There are two cooperating 'structures' here: the building itself, and the system of education it will house. In contrast to *The Prelude*, the institution is paramount. The seemingly boundless range and diverse social meetings of Hawkshead give way to a restricted version of play that is enclosed and segregated within the school grounds. The school building is first described in precise, quantitative detail ('each room […] capable of containing 100 children') and then celebrated for its aesthetic qualities ('a striking ornament'). In a shift from his earlier writings, Wordsworth portrays the school as a commanding presence within the neighbourhood.

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[91] Wordsworth, 'Speech', pp. 291-2

While Hawkshead School building is virtually absent from *The Prelude*, a different building, which belongs to another institution, has dominion over the village:

> I saw the snow-white Church upon its hill
> Sit like a throned Lady, sending out
> A gracious look all over its domain. (IV, ll. 13-15)

Unlike the school, the church does not attract attention through its picturesque 'elegance'. Instead, it looks 'out' over the locale, and is anthropomorphised into a member of the local community. Wordsworth continues, 'she' is 'forgetful':

> Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
> And listening only to the gladsome sounds,
> That, from the rural School ascending, play
> Beneath her, and about her. (V, ll. 428-31)

Through this agency (selectively attending to certain aspects of the neighbourhood), the church becomes a participant of the living community. Like the Cumberland beggar, she has an unknown inner life (what motivates her to listen to only particular aspects of her surroundings?). By contrast, Bowness school is both an embellishing object and a building with a specified structural interior: the classrooms, playgrounds and library purposefully exist 'for the benefit' of children and adults in the area.

Yet Wordsworth complicates the image of Bowness school as a distinct authoritative centre in the community. Distinguishing between ‘school tuition’ and ‘education’, which are mistakenly ‘confounded’, he writes:

> Education […] comprehends all of those processes and influences […] that conduce to the best development of the bodily powers, and of the moral, intellectual and spiritual faculties which the position of the individual admits of. In this just and high sense of the word, the education of a sincere Christian, and a good member of society upon Christian principles does not terminate with his youth, but goes on to the last moment of his conscious earthly existence – an education not for time but for eternity. To education like this, is indispensably necessary, as co-operating with schoolmasters and ministers of the gospel, the never-ceasing vigilance of parents [92]

Education, for each individual scholar, is a broad concept: it targets an encompassing list of faculties (bodily, moral, spiritual and intellectual); and continues after one’s school years ‘to the last moment of his conscious earthly existence’. The school is placed alongside other institutions, church and family, which together oversee and support this lifelong, total education. In this ‘determining community’ vision, Wordsworth advocates the union of different authority figures from various institutions in order to better oversee and shape community members into obedient Christians.

This marks a significant repositioning from Wordsworth’s endorsement of the Madras system, which imagines education to offer the unique solution to various social and economic problems. The Wanderer's speech in *The Excursion* (Book IX) famously calls for a national system of education in order to achieve 'change wide, and deep':

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[92] Wordsworth, ‘Speech’, p. 295.

> From Education, from that humble source,
> Expect these mighty issues; from the pains
> And quiet care of unambitious Schools
> Instructing simple Childhood's ready ear:
> Thence look for these magnificent results! (IX, 396-400)

This posits education as an unassuming and simple origin for brilliance through the repeated adjectival movement, from 'humble' to 'mighty', then 'unambitious' to 'magnificent'. By contrast, the Bowness speech does not associate education with summits of achievement. Instead, the outcome is a 'sincere Christian' and 'a good member of society upon Christian principles': affirming the individual's position within the established moral and spiritual framework of Christianity. Wordsworth's changed view of education from *The Excursion* to the Bowness speech demonstrates that during his 'determining community' phase, he did not have a single, stable concept of the best approach to resolve social and political problems. Rather, he continued to explore different practices and ideas that he felt might improve issues pertinent to both the locale and the nation.[93]

While overall Wordsworth places education alongside other institutions – recommending an alliance that safeguards individual and community life – he also discusses the unique opportunities that arise from a good education. He outlines the particular advantages that pupils from the 'northern counties' gained in a national workplace from the wealth of free schools in the north:

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[93] I address this in Chapter Four, examining Wordsworth's engagement with several local crises.

> The learned professions derived many ornaments for this source; but a more remarkable consequence was that till within the last 40 years or so, merchants' counting-houses and offices, in the lower departments of which a certain degree of scholastic attainment was requisite, were supplied in a great measure from Cumberland and Westmorland. Numerous and large fortunes were the result of the skill, industry, and integrity, which the young men thus instructed, carried with them to the Metropolis. That superiority no longer exists; not so much, I trust from a slackening on the part of the teachers, or an indisposition of the inhabitants to profit by their free schools, but because the kingdom at large has become sensible of the advantages of school instruction; and we of the north consequently have competitors from every quarter. (p. 293)

The 'remarkable' regional movement, from two northern counties to the Metropolis, relates to the idea that a good education offers local people the opportunity to compete and excel within a national workplace, but it is not part of clear-cut vision of social mobility. Following this optimistic view, Wordsworth states that 'worldly advancement and preferment neither are, nor ought to be the *main* end of instruction', and cautions against social mobility: 'It is the order of Providence, as we are all aware, that *most* men must end their temporal course where they began it' (p. 293). In advocating strict, bounded social roles for individuals, Wordsworth uses a plural pronoun to coerce the audience into sharing his views.

Furthermore, these curbed educational opportunities are only available to men. Female education is addressed separately in severe terms. Wordsworth applauds local parents' judgements 'respecting the instruction of their daughters':

> which *I know* they would wish to be confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and plain needlework, or any other art favourable to economy and home-comforts. Their shrewd sense perceives that hands full of employment, and a head not above it, afford the best protection against restlessness and discontent, and all the perilous temptations to which, through them, youthful females are exposed. (pp. 295-6)

The judgement that Wordsworth ascribes to parents (wishing to see their daughters grounded by filling their hands with work) appears almost identically in an earlier letter from January 1829: ‘A hand full of employment, and a head not above it, with such principles and habits as may be required without the Madras machinery, are the best security for the chastity of wives of the lower rank.’[94] This demonstrates a further instance of how Wordsworth imposes his own opinions upon the audience: rephrasing his values as their own. Comparing these passages reveals the ways that Wordsworth softened his views for the speech: the nuanced reference to ‘experimental novelties’ in the speech is here the condemned ‘Madras machinery’; and the foibles of ‘restlessness’, ‘discontent’ and ‘perilous temptation’ in the speech, are here an explicit concern about working class ‘chastity’.

Wordsworth’s opinion about female education changed across his lifetime. The transition from ‘experiencing’ to ‘determining community’ phase thinking can be traced in the history of ‘The Pet Lamb, A Pastoral’ (1800). A dramatic shift occurs in the poet’s stance towards its principal character: from poetic generosity to embittered creative denial. The poem describes ‘little Barbara Lewthwaite, a Child of beauty rare’ (l. 13) caring for her pet lamb.[95] It is one of the few poems in which Wordsworth used the real name of a living person: Barbara Lewthwaite (born 1792) lived near Town End, Grasmere.[96] In the poem, the poet-speaker is so charmed that he composes a ballad, imagining what Barbara might sing to the lamb, and it concludes with a curious act of creative reckoning, 'And it seem'd as I retrac'd the ballad line by line / That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was mine.' (ll. 63-4) Upon repeating the ballad twice more, he adjusts the creative balance sheet again in her favour:

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[94] Wordsworth to Hugh James Rose, 11 December 1828, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, V: The Later Years, 1929-1834*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 686.

> "Nay", said I, "more than half to the damsel must belong,
> "For she look'd with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
> "That I almost receiv'd her heart into my own." (ll. 66-8)

This is a text from the 'experiencing community' phase: it was composed in 1800 when Wordsworth was a new resident in Grasmere, the first person poet speaker is charmed by his surprising discovery of Barbara, and he participates in the interaction. Like Wordsworth's childhood reminiscences in *The Prelude*, Barbara is also portrayed outdoors, free from the institutions that govern childhood (school, church, and family). By contrast, in 1843, when Wordsworth denies Barbara's role in the poem, he associates her with Grasmere School:

> Barbara Lewthwaite was not in fact the child whom I had seen and overheard as engaged in the poem. I chose the name for reasons implied in the above; and will here add a caution against the use of names of living persons. Within a few months after the publication of this poem, I was much surprised and more hurt

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[95] Wordsworth, 'The Pet Lamb', *Lyrical Ballads,* pp. 222-5.

[96] Her younger sister Hannah worked as a nurse maid for the Wordsworths from 1803-6.

> to find it in a child's School-book, which having been compiled by Lindley Murray, had come into use at Grasmere School where Barbara was a pupil. And alas, I had the mortification of hearing that she was very vain of being thus distinguished; and, in after-life she used to say that she remembered the incident and what I said to her upon the occasion.[97]

Ironically, the final clause describes the real Barbara Lewthwaite performing her own act of creative ownership – stating she remembered the conversation – but outside the poem Wordsworth refutes both her memory and role in his creativity.[98] A key detail within Wordsworth's changed attitude towards Barbara, is that she learnt of the poem in school. He ceases to portray her as an innocent pastoral child, and she becomes a school pupil who has access to inappropriate material (ironically, this material is his own poem about her). Apparently, this knowledge made her 'very vain', and so this instance of female education fulfils Wordsworth's later anxieties: instead of filling Barbara's hands with employment, Grasmere school opened ideas that caused her head to rise above her rank. Barbara's alleged vanity can also be linked to 'perilous temptation' and promiscuity: in 1817 (aged fifteen or sixteen) Barbara Lewthwaite buried her own illegitimate child.[99] Wordsworth revised his portrayal of Barbara across two phases, and this reflects key changes in his ideas of community. In the 'experiencing community' phase the poet-speaker is delighted to capture a glimpse of her life, whereas in the 'determining community' phase, he denies her poetic distinction because of her presumptuous attitude. He thereby contests Barbara Lewthwaite's claim that she is a notable individual in an effort to return her to a lowly, obscure, and insignificant social position.

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[97] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 5.

[98] Wordsworth's disdain for Barbara Lewthwaite may also be connected to his difficult relationship with Thomas De Quincey. Lewthwaite become De Quincey's servant in 1813 after his housekeeper Mary Dawson fell pregnant (also out of wedlock). De Quincey contradicts Wordsworth, stating that the real Barbara Lewthwaite *was* 'the chief speaker in a little pastoral poem of Wordsworth's, and that she was unconscious of that 'poetic distinction'. De Quincey, 'Barbara Lewthwaite', in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop, 21 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), II, pp. 274-8 (p. 274).

[99] Edward Wilson's (joiner, Grasmere) account book includes an entry: '1817, Miss Barbara Lewthwaite, For a childs coffin, 4.6' Eleanor Rawnsley Local History Scrapbook c. 1858-1966, bequest of Phoebe May-Johnson, 2005, Wordsworth Trust, p. 5.

Unlike the antagonistic relationship that developed between Wordsworth and Barbara, the speech suggests that he seeks a congenial role in the community. He constructs a common regional identity – 'we of the north' – uniting himself and the crowd by incorporating two counties, Westmorland and Cumberland (Wordsworth was born in Cumberland, and a pupil and resident of Westmorland). This places Bowness within a wider region. The use of first person plural pronoun is exceptional: much of Wordsworth's poetry is written with first person singular pronoun. Hess picks up on the significance of Wordsworth's pronouns through a critical comparison of 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' and Dorothy's related journal extract. He links Wordsworth's use of 'I' with the author's physical separation from and detached possessiveness of environment, in contrast to Dorothy's combination of 'I' and 'we', which, Hess contends, emphasizes community by describing relationships and connections.[100] The speech challenges this dichotomy by capturing Wordsworth in a relational dynamic, participating in community life. Conventions of form play a key role in this community participation: unlike the lyric which is concerned with subjective, personal experiences, Wordsworth engages with his audience to gain their esteem for his speech. Furthermore, while 'we' expresses a consciousness of community, the form of cohesion that Wordsworth pursues in the text is coercive: he variously persuades and instructs the crowd to share his views.

Wordsworth assumes a didactic, paternal relationship to the crowd. Addressing the parents of the future school's pupils, he states: 'The privilege of the School being free, will not, I trust, tempt parents to withdraw their children from punctual attendance upon slight and trivial occasions' (p. 292). He places responsibility for school attendance upon parents – who must not break his trust. He prescribes another duty upon parents:

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[100] Hess, p. 28.

> It is through the silent operation of example in their own well-regulated behaviour, and by accustoming their children early to the discipline of daily and hourly life […] that parents become infinitely the most important tutors of their children, without appearing, or positively meaning to be so. (p. 295)

Discipline is both a description and an injunction: parents are subtly directed to provide 'well-regulated behaviour' to support their children's education, of which 'the discipline of daily and hourly life' is a crucial facet. Both of these statements implicitly criticize the parents, by adverting to the ways they might impede education. In more positive terms, Wordsworth praises parents' 'shrewd sense' 'respecting the instruction of their daughters'. Yet, as we have seen, the 'shrewd' judgement that Wordsworth ascribes to local parents was articulated in an earlier letter, which makes no reference to local people, but rather presents the opinion, 'that hands full of employment and a head not above it' is the best means of safeguarding young women, as exclusively Wordsworth's own.[101] His understanding is not informed by discussion with parents: it is imposed upon them. When he draws parents into the speech, they are not offered advice in open, democratic terms that empower and encourage them to support their child's learning; rather, it is issued as a series of mandates that demand obedience. Community cohesion is therefore created through a top-down model in which the poet instructs the crowd.

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[101] Wordsworth, *Letters* V, p. 686

But Wordsworth is not the highest figure within this social hierarchy. He identifies John Bolton, the benefactor who funded the school, as the person whom the crowd should venerate. Parents should ‘take care, as far as depends upon themselves, that the wishes of the present benefactor may be met, and his intentions fulfilled.’ (p. 292) The benefactor’s aims come to signify and encapsulate the values of the school. Wordsworth places himself below Bolton within this hierarchy: ‘Standing here as Mr Bolton’s substitute, at his own request, an honour of which I am truly sensible’ (p. 291). He frames his status as a temporary role bequeathed by the higher authority. The ‘honour’ gestures to Wordsworth’s own relationship of respect and gratitude towards Bolton (although the two men were friends: in private correspondence Bolton calls Wordsworth ‘my good friend’).[102] This individual who commissioned Wordsworth to compose the text is a different type of Cumbrian to the figures that Wordsworth writes about in his earlier phases. Unlike the yeoman farmers and villagers (such as Michael, Barbara Lewthwaite, and Mathew), Bolton was wealthy and influential. Wordsworth lists Bolton’s ‘good work’ in a wide region:

> The public spirit of Mr Bolton has ever been remarkable both for its comprehensiveness and the judicious way in which it has been exerted. Many years ago when we were threatened with foreign invasion, he equipped and headed a body of volunteers, for the defence of our country. Not long since the inhabitants of Ulverston (his native place I believe) were indebted to him for a large contribution towards erecting a church in that town. His recent munificent donations to the public charities of Liverpool are well known; and I only echo

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[102] John Bolton to William Wordsworth, 20 March 1836, ‘WLMS A/Bolton, John/1’, *Romanticism: Life, Literature and Landscape*, Wordsworth Trust, <www.romanticism.amdigital.co.uk> [Accessed 11 June 2015].

> the sentiments of this meeting, when I say that every one would have rejoiced to see this gentleman (who has completed his 80th year) taking the lead in this day's proceedings, for which there would have been no call, but for his desire to permanently benefit a district in which he has so long been a resident proprietor. (p. 291)

As well as demonstrating Bolton's diverse acts of benevolence it indicates his ties to three locales: Bolton was born and educated in Ulverston (then part of Lancashire, now in Cumbria), conducted his business from Liverpool, and became a 'resident proprietor' (p. 287) of Storrs Hall, Bowness in 1806. He was an exemplary model of the regional movement from northern school to success in the metropolis (as described by Wordsworth): his father was an apothecary, but following a good education at a northern grammar school (Town Bank in Ulverston), Bolton moved to Liverpool and amassed a fortune, leaving at his death in 1837 a legacy of £180,000.[103] Tellingly, Wordsworth does not convey this specific example of social mobility in the speech, and disregards both Bolton's humble origins and the process by which he acquired his wealth. But it was commonly known: in an account of a lavish party at Storrs Hall in 1825 (guests included members of the Lowther family, Walter Scott, John Gibson Lockhart, Wordsworth, Robert Southey and John Wilson), Lockhart describes Bolton as 'a plain English merchant, wholly the architect of his own fortunes'.[104] While the juxtaposition between the 'plain' (common or unexceptional) host and the party accentuates the 'dazzling' magnificence of the gathering, it also indicates the disdain that people felt towards a parvenu. Unlike Lockhart, Wordsworth portrays Bolton as the architect of public beneficence and obscures the construction of his wealth.

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[103] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 168, 195; 'Storrs Hall', *Historic England Database,* <www.historicengland.org.uk> [Accessed 22 September 2015].

[104] Barker, p. 579; John Gibson Lockhart, *Narrative of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadill, 1848) p. 173.

Bolton is further distanced from Wordsworth's earnest Cumbrian characters because he had a questionable moral background. He made his fortune in Liverpool through a 'substantial' investment in the slave trade, particularly in the last two decades before abolition: 'The slave ship *Bolton's* ten African voyages between 1792 and 1803 seem to epitomize his prominence and success in the trade.'[105] *The Transatlantic Slave Database* reveals that over ten voyages, the slave ship *Bolton* embarked with a total of 3,688 slaves from Africa for the West Indies and British Guiana.[106] Between 1801 and 1807 (the year the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was enforced) Bolton is identified as the owner of another eighteen ships, which together undertook another sixty voyages.[107] When Wordsworth wrote the speech, Bolton was pursuing compensation claims for the loss of slaves on estates in British Guiana. In all, four claims were made between 1836-7 for a total of 781 slaves, and altogether, the three successful claims brought Bolton £25,354.[108] Alongside this significant role in the slave trade, Bolton was involved in controversial affairs within the merchant community. In 1805 he fought a duel with one of his 'beneficiaries', Major Edward Brooks.[109] Bolton recommended Brooks for his position with Liverpool customs, but then used his influence to prevent Brooks' from gaining a salary increase. Brooks challenged Bolton to a duel, and died when Bolton shot him through the eye. Bolton was subsequently acquitted, 'despite a verdict of wilful murder at the inquest, no prosecution was brought, public opinion being so heavily in Bolton's favour.'[110] A pamphlet published in 1809, *Interesting Letters Addressed to John Bolton*, describes numerous financial and personal grievances against Bolton, written by his former friend and business partner, George Baillie.[111] Baillie writes 'to vindicate [my] character' by disclosing 'such facts to the public as shall tend to shew the sources from which [my] misfortunes have chiefly sprung.'[112] He charges Bolton with betraying their business partnership and friendship, pursuing an 'endeavour to crush me, in order to raise yourself upon my ruin.'[113] He undermines Bolton's public acts of benevolence by juxtaposing them with his treatment of his 'West India family' (a Negro woman with whom he had a son and daughter):

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[105] David Pope, 'The Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool's Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', in *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery,* ed. by David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 164-226 (p. 216).

[106] *The Transatlantic Slave-Trade Database,* <www.slavevoyages.org> [Accessed 8 September 2015].

[107] *The Transatlantic Slave-Trade Database,* <www.slavevoyages.org> [Accessed 8 September 2015].

[108] 'John Bolton', *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership Database* <www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs> [Accessed 6 October 2015].

[109] Frank Howley, *Slavers, Traders and Privateers: Liverpool, the African Trade and Revolution, 1773-1808* (Birkenhead: Countryvise Limited, 2008), p.272.

> While you refuse the necessary supplies to your West India family, you spare no expense to entertain men of rank. You raised a volunteer rank (although no one was more unfit for military command): of this you boasted much; and you subscribe to public institutions, from the idle vanity of finding your name [ ]ted and circulated as a generous and charitable character. Of such pride of heart and burlesque piety I have seen by far too much.[114]

The familiar, direct pronoun 'you' hammers out the accusatory tone in a text that attempts to breach a communicative impasse through publication. Baillie's bitter retaliation suggests that Bolton's charitable motivations are part of his aggressive social climbing: his selective generosity (lavishly entertaining 'men of rank' rather than supporting Baillie or his own illegitimate family) is calculated towards a public image of munificence.

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[110] Ibid.

[111] George Baillie, *Interesting Letters Addressed to John Bolton Esq. Of Liverpool, Merchant, and Colonel of a Regiment of Volunteers* (London: J. Gold, 1809).

[112] Baillie, p. 4.

[113] Baillie, p. 16.

[114] Baillie, p. 40.

By contrast, Wordsworth unequivocally celebrates Bolton, obscuring his social mobility, and overlooking his controversial history. He advocates paternalism as the basis for the relationship between the crowd and benefactor. Quoting a section of the school trust deed, he denies the possibility that vanity motivated Bolton’s benevolence:

> “*The perpetual and thankful remembrance of the founders and authors of so good a work.”* Do not let it be supposed that your forefathers, when they looked onwards to this issue, did so from vanity and love of applause, uniting with local attachment; they wished their good works to be remembered principally because they were conscious that such remembrance would be beneficial to the hearts of those whom they desired to serve (p. 292)

Wordsworth extends the paternalist lineage from the benevolent founders of the original Bowness school to include Bolton. Hiding Bolton’s social climbing, Wordsworth places him within an ancient tradition of hierarchy and dependence. The homage owed to these wealthy forefathers renews feudalistic values.

To comprehend the significance of the speech and Wordsworth’s relationship with Bolton to his creativity and ideas of community, a comparison can be drawn between the foundation stone of Bowness school and the ‘grey stone / Of native rock’ (*Prelude*, II, ll. 31-2) that Wordsworth celebrated as ‘the home / And centre’ (II, ll. 33-4) of his school days in Hawkshead. Where the native rock was a geographical anomaly, prominently left in an awkward position, the foundation stone structurally and symbolically underpins a new institution. The native rock became associated with a marginal Cumbrian woman, whose defiance and strength was creatively imprinted into

Wordsworth's autobiography. By contrast, Wordsworth consecrates the foundation stone for Bolton: a wealthy Cumbrian who derived his fortune through strategic, legally sanctioned human exploitation. It is tempting to imagine that Wordsworth delivered this speech from an elevated platform to the assembled crowd, but he was also pragmatically concerned with the relationship between crowd, institution and benefactor. Significantly, after he creatively inscribed the bond of gratitude and duty between the locals and their wealthy benefactor, Wordsworth descended a ladder into the excavations to deposit a time capsule, spread mortar, and handle building tools as another stone was laid on top; physically cementing the lasting symbol of that relationship, the new school institution.

In the 'determining community' phase, the institution is significant to Wordsworth. It is not only a creative focal point (the explicit basis for the speech) but also a social centre that inscribes and maintains the local class hierarchy. Yet he values the institution so far as it collaborates with others, including the church and family, modifying his earlier confidence in education alone (as expressed by the Wanderer in *The Excursion*). The network of social organisations are placed to guide the development of individuals and shape the overall community. As an instance where Wordsworth directly engages with local people and processes of community, the speech contradicts the notion that Wordsworth was completely detached and removed from his local community. Here, he participates in the process of affirming hierarchical social bonds. 'Determining community' therefore is concerned with maintaining and strengthening the established social model in which privilege and poverty, benevolence and subservience co-exist, with each class congenially complementing one another. Accordingly, Wordsworth's creative engagement with Cumbrians is also distinct from his earlier stages. Instead of exploring the strange existence of people living on the margins, here Wordsworth uses this creative opportunity to distinguish and enshrine a member of the local elite.

Conclusion

The variety of texts examined over this chapter demonstrates the dynamic significance that school and education possessed for Wordsworth. Over his lifetime, the institution gained importance within his thinking and writing. It is difficult to compare the institution across these works because it is often absent from earlier texts. However, the stones that appear in each text can offer a parallel insight into the trajectory and interaction of Wordsworth's educational thoughts, social affiliations and role within the locale. The stones' commanding physicality captures Wordsworth in a distinct position and attitude. His school-day reminiscences in *The Prelude* centre around a stone associated with an impoverished local woman; 'Expostulation and Reply' places William, the rebellious pupil, upon a similar stone; whereas the Bowness speech endorses traditional institutions and established hierarchies, and as such Wordsworth formally lays an official stone in honour of the school's wealthy founder. Here we can return to Wordsworth's oft quoted statement to George Beaumont, 'Every great Poet is a Teacher', and gain a new insight through the different texts we have examined.[115] While each explores teaching and learning in various ways, Wordsworth employs two distinct teaching strategies: poetic and didactic. *The Prelude* and *Mathew* poems use a poetic approach to explore formative experience. The surprising links between different ideas, entities and beings amount to a rich, fluid poetic portrayal that suggestively endorses unconventional experiences of learning. By contrast, the didactic Bowness speech issues explicit instructions to the assembled crowd (and subsequent readers of the newspaper article), affirming local conformance to an overarching hierarchical social structure. Poetic teaching is characterised by allusive suggestion, which the trusted reader is granted the freedom to interpret, whereas didactic teaching authoritatively dictates its meaning. Wordsworth engages directly with large numbers of the local community in the Bowness speech but, paradoxically it is his poetry, which was perhaps scarcely read locally, that is more creatively immersed in a diverse portrayal of local people.

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[115] Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, February 1808, *Letters* II, p. 317.

Chapter Three: Wordsworth's Church

Wordsworth's involvement with religion and the Anglican Church varied throughout his lifetime. In his early career there is little evidence that he attended church regularly, and poetry from that period, such as 'Tintern Abbey', is frequently read as expressing pantheistic beliefs. This changed in 1805, when Wordsworth's brother John died. The tragedy forced Wordsworth 'to re-examine his spiritual beliefs', and, from that same year, Juliet Barker finds the 'first explicit statement of belief in God in William's poetry'.[1] Although, Robert Ryan identifies an earlier date for Wordsworth's 'renewed commitment to the Christian religion': 15 July 1803, when Wordsworth had his son baptized and his wife 'churched'.[2] Ryan writes, this 'served to announce publically his reintegration into the religious life of his community as it was centred in Grasmere church.'[3] Yet it was not until the family stayed in Coleorton in 1807 that they began to attend church regularly. Before this, Wordsworth had visited an eclectic mix of churches, including Quaker meetings in Hawkshead; the dissenting chapel in London; and even in 1809, when staying with friends in Kendal, a Unitarian chapel.[4] The threat of Catholic emancipation in 1821 spurred Wordsworth to compose a defence of the established church, *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822). This text celebrates 'the Church of England as a unifying force for moral good and its clergymen […] as a civilising and elevating influence, particularly in rural communities.'[5] Yet, as Barker points out, 'Even in old age […] he remained unimpressed by most village sermons'.[6] Crucially, Wordsworth supported the Anglican Church as an institution that was both a 'bulwark against sectarianism and factionalism', and 'a focal point and exemplar for benevolence'.[7] Following this line, this chapter will not examine Wordsworth's religious faith or doctrine, but rather, his creative engagement with the church as an institution that informs Cumbrian community life.

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[1] Juliet Barker, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (London: Viking, 2000), p. 333.
[2] Robert Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 96.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Barker, p. 389.
[5] Barker, p. 545.
[6] Barker, p. 545.

Unlike the school, which in Wordsworth's earlier writing is an implicit presence primarily associated with informal formative experience, the church is foremost in his later writing, where it is connected with formal structures and the organisation of community. Kurt Fosso examines the role that grief plays within Wordsworth's poetry and his ideas of community, suggesting that the insufficiency of mourning – 'the underlying inefficacy and interminability of past and present mourning' – creates social possibilities.[8] He charts the development of grief and death in Wordsworth's writing, from juvenilia (1787) to *The Excursion* (1814): a text that he describes as a 'culminating work' because afterwards, 'Wordsworth writes much less of grief and death […] and much more on the State, the Church, and other less troubling topics and concerns.'[9] I agree with Fosso that Wordsworth's poetic preoccupations, style, and attitude towards the church underwent a change in his later years and so I pick up where he leaves off, and examine this change in focus. I read *The Excursion, Guide to the Lakes*, the *Duddon Sonnet Series*, and *Ecclesiastical Sketches* as demonstrating the ideal model for community that Wordsworth advocates in the 'determining community' phase. I also address 'The Tuft of Primroses' (1808) to reveal the transition in Wordsworth's portrayal of village life from the 'experiencing' to 'determining community' phase. For Wordsworth, the church institution epitomises values that were central to his ideal community: reconciliation, continuity, and structure.

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[7] Barker, p. 390.

[8] Kurt Fosso, *Buried Communities: Wordsworth and the Bonds of Mourning* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 109.

[9] Fosso, p. 217.

In some ways, the compositional value that Wordsworth places on the church can be read as organicism; the coordination of parts into an organised, harmonious whole. For Charles Armstrong, the gothic church metaphor for *The Recluse* shows the church becoming a central structure within Wordsworth's poetic imagination.[10] Armstrong also notes that there are unresolved tensions between 'the organic principles of hierarchical totalisation and interdependence', which means that Wordsworth's organic structure of the church is never autonomous and 'always incomplete'.[11] David Fairer and Alan Richardson both observe the shift in the meaning of the term 'organic' during the Romantic period: in the eighteenth century it referred to the parts of the body (the organs), rather than the body itself.[12] This changed with Coleridge, who introduced a more idealist concept of the organic that emphasizes structure, unity and holism.[13] The concept of organicism was therefore fluid – even contradictory – since it could refer to either fragmentary parts or a united whole. While I agree with Armstrong that the church does become a more important structure for Wordsworth to organise poetry and community, I propose that the concept of reconciliation is more apt to describe its role than organicism. Wordsworth's approach to the church does not fit into Coleridge's binary definitions of the organic ('the whole is everything and the parts are nothing') and the inorganic ('the whole is nothing more than the sum of its parts'), since he stresses the two-way relationship between the whole and the parts.[14] In the churchyard narratives, the graveyard is a whole that contains local lives (people resting in the graves and stories related by the Pastor), yet the parts remain distinctive. The Pastor who narrates these tales performs the act of reconciliation: bringing different things into agreement, to make them consistent and compatible. This approach to the relationship between individuals and organisations occurs across Wordsworth's later writing about church and community.

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[10] Charles Armstrong, 'On the Threshold: Wordsworth's Architecture of the Absolute', in *Romantic Organicism: From Idealist Origins to Ambivalent Afterlife* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 107-129.

[11] Armstrong, pp. 116, 129.

[12] David Fairer, *Organizing Poetry: The Coleridge Circle, 1790-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 70.

[13] Coleridge's *Literary Biographia* (1817) is the first recorded instance in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of the word 'organic' referring to an organized structure that connects and coordinates parts into a single harmonious whole. 'organic, n.' *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 16 February 2016].

[14] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, quoted in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 228.

In this chapter, I argue that Wordsworth's endeavour to create structural wholes – such as the churchyard that unites community members, and *The Recluse* that contains diverse pieces of writing – reflects his ideal for 'determining community'. The ideal is a process that finds affinities between people, reconciles disparate lives and unites distinct aspects of a locale, without resolving or disregarding difference. The first section explores Wordsworth's biographical depiction of the Cumbrian curate, Robert Walker. I examine the ideal version of community he constructs through selective use of source material, arguing that he creates an ideal vicar figure to complement a model for community described in *Guide to the Lakes*. The second section looks at the churchyard narratives in Books VI-VII of *The Excursion*, to reveal Wordsworth's approach to organizing communities. I consider the broader structural relationships between different narratives, demonstrating the carefully crafted nature of particular characterisations, and revealing the ways that different characters and narratives speak to one another. The final section examines how the church is placed within a wider, connected environment. I compare two versions of the Sympson narrative – *The Excursion* (VII, ll. 39-309) and 'The Tuft of Primroses' – which signify Wordsworth's later movement to naturalise death, promoting reconciliation between church, environment and parishioners. Across these case studies, the church emerges as a tacit, benevolent presence that manages and improves community relationships.

Wordsworth's Walker: The Ideal Cumbrian Pastor

> Towards the head of these Dales was found a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturalists, among whom the plough of each man was confined to the maintenance of his own family, or to the occasional accommodation of his neighbour. Two or three cows furnished each family with milk and cheese. The chapel was the only edifice that presided over these dwellings, the supreme head of this pure Commonwealth; the members of which existed in the midst of a powerful empire like an ideal society or an organized community, whose constitution had been imposed and regulated by the mountains which protected it.[15]

This famous passage from *Guide to the Lakes* (1820) outlines Wordsworth's concept of ideal Cumbrian communities. The locale is conceived as a former pristine independent state, 'a perfect Republic' and 'pure commonwealth', but there is an underlying tension between the description's different scales. On the one hand, it is extremely small: the simple agrarian economy has only two types of workers, 'shepherds and agriculturalists' (by eschewing the word 'peasant', Wordsworth avoids the term's derogatory associations, and emphasizes the people's dignified independence). He further particularises them through the image of individual men supporting their family with a single agricultural tool (the plough) and 'two or three cows'. On the other hand, references to the locale's state-like qualities and position 'in the midst of a powerful empire', look outwards to broader social and political contexts. The empire (which tends to be ruled by a single authority, and here is 'powerful') and the republic (where the people have the power to elect their official) coexist because they operate on different scales, and so the republic comfortably fits *within* the empire. Tim Fulford states that Wordsworth presents the 'rustic society of the Lakes as a moral exemplar for the nation', and indeed, this Cumbrian community is a model for the nation, a structure to recognize and replicate.[16]

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[15] William Wordsworth, 'A Guide though the District of the Lakes', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* II, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 151-254 (p. 206).

The 'ideal society' is also an 'organized community': it has been arranged into a structured whole, and two authorities do this shaping, the mountains and the chapel. The relationship between these two can be likened to a constitutional monarchy. The mountains act as a parliament, imposing, regulating and protecting the community's 'constitution' (the way the society is composed and its system of principles). By contrast, as a 'supreme head', the chapel plays the role of the monarch: it has power and authority, but cannot independently change the constitution. Rather, it acts as a visible focal point for social identity, uniting its members, and creating stability by reinforcing inherited traditions and hierarchies. While the chapel is an unobtrusive prominence that does not have the size or significance of a church, it is nonetheless conspicuous within its surroundings. The defined structure places the church at the centre of village life, but it also interacts with its surroundings (the mountains). This is the crux of Wordsworth's later notion of the role of the church: it is an important local structure that helps to unify the locale; however the church is not a cohesive, organic whole. Rather, Wordsworth imagines it to be a centre for reconciliation, a place that builds connections and agreement between the diverse parts that fall within its area. In this section I explore how Wordsworth depicts this concept of the ideal Cumbrian community – the reconciliation between church and parish – in his prose biography of Robert Walker (a curate from Seathwaite, Duddon). Reading this seldom-discussed text, I reveal the idealisation that shapes Wordsworth's portrayal of Walker, and argue that this demonstrates the importance he attaches to clergymen, and the Christian value of reconciliation for the ideal society in the 'determining community' phase.

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[16] Tim Fulford, *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets: Romanticism Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 249.

Wordsworth's model of the ideal community in *Guide to the Lakes* is nostalgic. He prefaces the description as 'the face of this country as it was, and had been through the centuries, till within the last sixty years.'[17] This date varies between different versions: the 1810 text reads 'forty years', 1820 'fifty years', and 1835, 'sixty years'; placing the locale's change at around 1770 (the year that Wordsworth was born).[18] In some ways, this resembles Wordsworth's earlier 'remembering community' phase, where he recalls significant people and places from his youth in the Lake District. However, the dominance of the church and consciousness of empire creates a different model of community to that espoused in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', where habit is central to community structures. The passage belongs to a different type of text: a prose guidebook that provides a cohesive and authoritative overview of the area. Stephen Gill suggests that Wordsworth's chronological specificity is 'poignantly revealing', because it reflects changes to the area brought about by mechanisation and tourism.[19] Yet in *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams reveals a general movement within literature to describe great changes in rural life which are contrasted to an 'Old England' of the writer's childhood.[20] He traces this 'escalator' back from twentieth-century writers to Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, William Cobbett, John Clare, George Crabbe and the Middle Ages, and then speculates further again about Celtic civilization before the Saxons, and the Iberian world before the Celts. Rather than a problem of historical error, he stresses the role of historical perspective in this nostalgic, retrospective movement, and the importance of examining each individual text for its own definitions of ideal, loss and change. Wordsworth's ideal community model therefore utilises a conventional literary trope, making his concept accessible and evocative. This is how Wordsworth's nostalgic perspective differs from his earlier 'remembering community' texts: *Guide to the Lakes* creates a coherent vision and timing for the perfect community, whereas the earlier texts contain less defined models of community.

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[17] Wordsworth, *Guide to the Lakes*, p. 206.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth and the River Duddon', *Essays in Criticism*, 57 (2007), 22-42 (p. 35).

[20] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp. 9-12.

Wordsworth's portrayal of Walker is a counterpart to the model of the 'perfect Republic', exemplifying that ideal community in action. The twenty page prose essay, 'Memoir of the Rev. Robert Walker', describes the remarkable life of a Seathwaite curate who lived from 1710-1802.[21] It was published alongside *Guide to the Lakes* in: *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, in the North of England* (1820).[22] According to Gill, 'Local specificity, local pride, loving attention to the unsung and little known are the keynotes not just of the sonnet sequence but of the whole volume.'[23] Christopher Donaldson describes the impact of this local focus on Wordsworth's national literary status, suggesting that '*The River Duddon* was the publication that first established Wordsworth's reputation as the pre-eminent poet of the

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[21] William Wordsworth, 'Memoir of the Rev. Robert Walker', in *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 86-98.

[22] William Wordsworth, *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845*, ed. by Geoffrey Jackson (London: Cornell University Press, 2004). Robert Walker also features in the *Duddon Sonnets* ('XVIII Seathwaite Chapel') and *The Excursion* (Book VII), where he is described as Walker 'the WONDERFUL' (*The Excursion*, VII, l. 345).

[23] Gill, p. 24.

Lake District.'[24] The variety of texts within the volume complement one another, building layers of text that attest to the author's authority on the subject of his locale. Donaldson describes Wordsworth's authority as the competence to act 'as guide to the fells and vales of his native region.'[25] Further to this view, I suggest that Wordsworth also presents within the volume his authority to comment on and define perfect models for community.

In some ways, Walker resembles the Mathew character from Wordsworth's earlier poetry. Like Mathew, who is associated with schools, Walker is linked to another village institution: the church. Both figures appear in a range of texts: Mathew is described in a number of poems; and Walker is in *The Excursion* (Book VII, ll. 334-411), the sonnet 'Seathwaite Chapel' (from *Duddon Sonnets*), and the prose biography. However, unlike Mathew, Walker is not a composite figure. He is also distinct from other striking figures in Wordsworth's earlier poetry, such as Nanny Holme, and the leech-gatherer because he is not portrayed as a fragmentary strange stranger. In the accompanying notes to *Duddon Sonnets*, Wordsworth provides a prose account of the Duddon valley before 'returning' to Seathwaite Chapel and describing Robert Walker's grave and inscription. He states: 'This individual is the Pastor alluded to, in the eighteenth Sonnet, as a worthy compeer of the Country Parson of Chaucer, &c.' (p. 86) The unequivocal identification of a single source runs counter to the composite approach of using multiple sources that Wordsworth often applies to 'local' characters. It is closer to 'The Pet Lamb', where he uses the full name of a real local person (Barbara

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[24] Christopher Donaldson, 'Down the Duddon: Wordsworth and his Literary Pilgrims', *Literary Imagination*, 15 (2013), 186-209, p. 189.

[25] Donaldson, p. 201. Daniel Robinson suggests that in the 'Duddon Sonnets' Wordsworth pursues a different type of distinction: he revives the river sonnet tradition inherited from literary forebears (Milton, Charlotte Smith and Thomas Warton), while he also seeks to distinguished himself from his predecessors. Daniel Robinson, '"Still Glides the Stream": Form and Function in Wordsworth's River Duddon Sonnets', *European Romantic Review*, 13 (2002), 449-464.

Lewthwaite). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Wordsworth regretted this creative decision, and in a later note on the poem he added ‘a caution against the use of names of living persons’.[26] One important difference here is that Walker is already dead, and so he cannot respond to, challenge or contradict Wordsworth’s portrayal (unlike Barbara Lewthwaite). Another difference is that Wordsworth was not personally acquainted with Walker. Although some critics believe that Wordsworth knew Walker – both Tom Clucas and the editors of *The Excursion* briefly describe Walker as Wordsworth’s ‘friend’ – Felicity Hughes demonstrates that the two never met or corresponded.[27] Instead, Hughes suggests that Wordsworth heard of Walker when he visited the Duddon valley in 1804, *after* Walker had died.[28] This is a critical distinction for understanding Wordsworth’s relationship with Walker and his literary portrayal: the Walker passages in *The Excursion, Duddon Sonnets*, and the memoir, are not the result of a friendship, but a writer’s curiosity and research into an unfamiliar life.

To comprehend the type of creative interaction that informed Wordsworth’s portrayal of Walker, Lucy Newlyn’s analysis of the collaboration between Wordsworth and Dorothy is useful. She identifies two approaches for taking artistic inspiration from others: influence and confluence. She complicates the notion that Dorothy was a mere ‘source’ or ‘inspiration’ for William, by highlighting the role that shared observations, conversations and writing played in their output.[29] Newlyn argues that this constitutes a creative ‘confluence’, but does not fully explain how this is distinct from ‘influence’. To clarify, a confluence is an assemblage of people and a flowing *together* of different things, whereas an influence is a flowing *in* of things that can be invisible.[30] While both contain this notion of 'flow', 'confluence' is derived from the meeting of streams or rivers; by contrast, 'influence' is linked to the streaming of stars, and its effect on humans. The one is earthly and tangible; the other refers to a distant or intangible force. Unlike Dorothy, Walker's relationship to Wordsworth is that of influence: he is a distant figure from whom the poet draws certain qualities; and as Wordsworth puts pen to paper, he composes a figure who is subject to an unconscious or semi-conscious process of selection. In writing about Duddon valley instead of Grasmere, Wordsworth also avoids engaging with the complex network of everyday on-going relationships that he had in Grasmere. Both Donaldson and Gill claim that through the *Duddon* volume, Wordsworth endeavoured to distinguish himself from other guides and proclaim his authoritative 'local knowledge' by presenting original, detailed material.[31] Further to this, I suggest that Wordsworth gains a certain creative freedom from describing a valley and pastor with whom he does not have a familiar everyday acquaintance. This is different to his previous phases. In the 'remembering community' phase, Wordsworth lived away from the area and so writes from an unavoidably distanced perspective; when he moved to Grasmere and experienced Cumbrian communities again, his writing concerned immediate encounters; here, he deliberately seeks to portray a distant life that is not entangled in his own everyday experience. Wordsworth's Walker thereby reveals more about the poet's own preoccupations and interests than the original source.

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[26] William Wordsworth, *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p. 5.

[27] Tom Clucas, ‘Plutarch’s Parallel Lives in *The Excursion’*, *Wordsworth Circle* 45 (2014), 126-130, p. 129; Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye, ‘Editors Notes’ in *The Excursion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 373-422 (p. 413); Felicity Hughes, *William Wordsworth and Wonderful Walker* (Ulpha: Duddon Valley Local History Group, 2004), p. 4.

[28] Hughes, p. 37.

[29] Lucy Newlyn, 'Confluence: William and Dorothy Wordsworth in 1798', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 34 (2011), 227-245.

In composing this distanced memoir, Wordsworth presents himself as a historian rather than a poet. To describe Walker, he quotes from a range of texts, demonstrating wide research. The memoir begins with a series of lengthy quotations from seven letters, which either discuss, address, or are written by Walker. Wordsworth explains that some of the material was published 'in the Annual Register for 1760', and others were 'among his papers' (p. 87). He emphasizes his role as researcher by frequently using the verb 'find' ('to be found in', 'I find in'), and in an evocative parenthesis he describes his privileged access to Walker's personal papers: 'in a letter to the Bishop (a copy of which, in his own beautiful hand-writing, now lies before me)' (p. 89). The present tense authenticates Wordsworth's account by demonstrating the immediacy of his research. As a historian, Wordsworth enacts what Fulford describes as his later concept of 'Englishness': 'a matter of knowing oneself to be in a relationship with deep history that is embodied in the places where past events are still marked in the everyday landscape'.[32] Adding to Fulford's argument, the particular type of history that Wordsworth evokes here is a selective, idealised, local history. The accounts that Wordsworth quotes from celebrate Walker's life by emphasizing his frugality, labour, and integrity. The first extract illustrates Walker's involvement with traditional local cottage industry through evocative images. He is described at breakfast, sat in the midst of a busy scene of family industry, some children 'employed in waiting on each other, the rest in teasing and spinning wool' (pp. 87-8). The extract then highlights Walker's role in the next stage of wool production: 'moreover, when it is made ready for sale, [he] will lay it by sixteen, or thirty-two pounds weight, upon his back, and on foot, seven or eight miles will carry it to the market, even in the depth of winter.' (p. 88) While the writer states he was 'not much surprised by all this […] having heard a great deal of it related before', he then 'confesses' himself 'astonished […] with the sense and ingenuity of the clergyman himself.' The second extract focuses upon Walker's role as a talented and valued clergyman:

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[30] 'influence, n.', and 'confluence, n.', *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 16 February 2016].

[31] Gill, p. 27.

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[32] Fulford, p. 244.

> I believe, the minister and people are exceedingly satisfied with each other; and indeed how should they be dissatisfied, when they have a person of so much worth and probity for their pastor? A man, who, for his candour and meekness, his sober, chaste and virtuous conversation, his soundness in principle and practice, is an ornament to his profession, and an honour to the country he is in; and bear with me if I say, the plainness of his dress, the sanctity of his manners, the simplicity of his doctrine and the vehemence of his expression have a sort of resemblance to the pure practice of primitive Christianity. (p. 88)

The passage elaborates upon Walker's virtues in a subordinate clause that lists his strengths (candour, meekness, etc.), before reaching the main clause that describes him as an exemplary pastor ('an ornament to his profession') and a national treasure ('an honour to the country'). His 'resemblance to the pure practice of primitive Christianity' implies an earlier form of Christianity (linked to 'plainness', 'sanctity' and 'simplicity') that is portrayed as a wholesome and pious religious practice. The harmonious local relationship between the pastor and his congregation is placed alongside his value within the nation (he is 'an honour to the country'), resembling Wordsworth's description of the 'perfect Republic'.

The creative impulse to idealise Walker is further apparent through the details that Wordsworth downplays or misinterprets from the source material. Both extracts quoted above are from *The Annual Register* and *The Gentleman's Magazine* (which Wordsworth fails to reference), and were published with two objectives: 'to shame the church into speeding up the eradication of clerical poverty'; and to aid a campaign to secure Walker further income through grants and bequests that aimed to augment poor livings.[33] As well as benefitting from Queen Anne's Bounty (£5 per annum), the Seathwaite curacy secured a further £800 (£200 from the Stratford bequest, £200 from 'well-wishers', and match funding of £400 from Queen Anne's Bounty), which in 1760 was spent on land that would yield rent to augment Walker's income.[34] The articles therefore aimed to convey that Walker was both 'a worthy subject of the benefaction and credit to his profession', and 'that his poverty drove him to supplement his miserable stipend by work liable to bring the clergy into contempt.'[35] While the Queen Anne award is mentioned within a letter from Walker, Wordsworth does not engage with the controversy of vicar's incomes, and presents Walker's extra work as integral to his assiduous personality. He misreads the reason that Walker rejected joining Seathwaite with the curacy of Ulpha, writing: 'Scanty as was his income, the frequent offer of much better benefices could not tempt Mr. W. to quit a situation where he had been so long happy, with a consciousness of being useful.' (p. 90) He quotes letters in which Walker states: '[I was] always apprehensive it might be disagreeable to my auditory at Seathwaite […] and the inhabitants of Ulpha despair of being able to support a schoolmaster, who is not curate there also; which suppressed all thoughts in me of serving them both.' (p. 89) Yet Hughes demonstrates that these letters from Walker to the Bishop were written after Walker's negotiations to gain the Ulpha curacy fell through. When the Millom vicar (Mr Postlethwaite) presented the opportunity of combining the two curacies to Walker, Walker immediately approached the Bishop; so, when Postlethwaite changed his mind, Walker had to withdraw his application to the

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[33] Hughes, p. 19.
[34] Hughes, pp. 17-19.
[35] Hughes, p. 19.

Bishop, carefully phrasing it as a change of mind to avoid embarrassment.[36] By missing this part of the discussion, Wordsworth presents Walker as an altruistic pastor, disinterestedly promoting the needs of parishioners from both Seathwaite and Ulpha over his own financial interests.

When Wordsworth does discuss Walker's finances, he makes a further significant omission that continues his idealisation of Walker. He writes, 'At his decease he left behind him no less a sum than £2000; and such a sense of his various excellences was prevalent in the country, that the epithet of WONDERFUL is to this day attached to his name.' (p. 91) Wordsworth acknowledges the sensationalism of this claim, and so the final part of his biography provides 'further *explanatory* details'. He lists the range of industries that Walker was employed in, including work as a teacher, scrivener, spinner, gardening, keeping a small-holding, helping neighbours with hay-making and shearing, cutting peat to fuel his own fires, and making tallow candles. The labour supplements his income in diverse ways, from practical activities that keep personal household costs down (making candles, clothing, producing heating), to favours that invite recompense (in return for help with hay and shearing, neighbours 'complimented him with a present of a hay-cock, or a fleece'), and those that produce a capital income (scrivening and spinning). He does not mention the land he had rented out from 1760, instead portraying Walker as 'incessantly occupied in work of hand or mind' (p. 92). Wordsworth also omits a huge source of Walker's income: selling alcohol from the chapel house. The impropriety of this is made apparent by the fact that the Anglican Church frequently (and ineffectually) forbade curates from selling alcohol, and so Walker licensed the premises through his daughter's name.[37] Wordsworth's omission is probably not due to a lack of information: in 1804 Wordsworth and Dorothy met and questioned Walker's granddaughter, Mary, about her grandfather, while she was working at the Newfield Inn in Seathwaite (she married John Casson, the innkeeper). Indeed, Hughes writes, 'It is hard to credit that they did not learn on that occasion of the selling of ale at the chapel house just two hundred and fifty yards down the road.'[38] Walker's work as a publican also featured in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1802. The correspondent, responding to Walker's obituary, argues that Walker's ale selling was compatible with his clerical duties:

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[36] Hughes, p. 21.
[37] Hughes, pp. 26-7.

> by this *calling*, I do really believe, he did more good than he was able to do by precept. No late hours, no tippling, no immorality, or indecency of any kind, would he suffer; though mild and gentle, he would shew his authority when he pleased. By persevering in this plan, when there was not another public-house of a contrary description to counteract his benevolent designs, he would have it in his power, with a few exceptions, to train up the rising generation in religion and virtue.[39]

The list of restrictive rules portrays Walker as a publican with firm moral boundaries. Alongside this moral code, by describing his role as a 'calling' that instils a certain 'power' and 'authority' over the populous, the work of an innkeeper becomes a vocation akin to a vicar's. By contrast, Wordsworth consistently emphasizes Walker's 'temperance'. *The Excursion* states, 'In this one Man is shown a temperance – proof / Against all trials;' (VI, ll. 342-3). This 'temperance' refers to Walker's self-restraint and moderation, amounting to a forbearance that is strong enough to withstand ‘all’ difficulties or challenges. The ‘Memoir’ locates the quality of temperance differently: ‘The frugality and temperance established in his house, were as admirable as the industry.’ (p. 92) Here it is the household, rather than the individual, who possesses the quality. While this refers to a general culture of moderation, it becomes distinctly ironic when one considers the fact that Walker sold ale within the chapel house.

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[38] Hughes, pp. 27-8.
[39] Quoted in Hughes, p. 101.

Wordsworth’s decision to conceal Walker’s alehouse reveals his drive to idealise Walker. It contrasts with his description of Grasmere’s curate, Edward Rowlandson: ‘Two vices used to struggle in him for mastery, avarice & the love of strong drink: but avarice as is common in like cases always got the better of its opponent, for though he was often intoxicated it was never I believe at his own expense.’[40] Rowlandson’s miserliness and inebriation are opposite qualities to the generosity, independence and temperance that Wordsworth portrays in Walker. The account is corroborated by Dorothy Wordsworth, who describes Rowlandson’s inappropriateness at a funeral: ‘The priest met us – he did not look as a man ought to do on such an occasion – I had seen him half drunk the day before in a pot-house.’[41] While the local curate’s defects are immediate and emphatic, Wordsworth’s distance from Walker enables him to celebrate his virtues: Rowlandson and Walker therefore complement each other. Yet although Wordsworth disparages Rowlandson, he also suggests that the parish does not disintegrate as a result of their incompetent curate:

> Notwithstanding all that has been said, this man on account of his talents and superior Education, was looked up to by his parishioners who without a single

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[40] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 167.
[41] Dorothy Wordsworth*, The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 20-1.

> exception lived at that time (& most of them upon their own small inheritances) in a state of Republican Equality, a condition favourable to the growth of kindly feelings among them & in a striking degree exclusive to temptations to gross vice & scandalous behaviour. As a Pastor their curate did little or nothing for them, but what could more strikingly set forth the efficacy of the Church of England thro' its Ordinances & Liturgy than that in spite of the unworthiness of the Minister his Church was regularly attended, &, tho' there was not much appearance in his flock of what might be called animated piety, intoxication was rare & dissolute morals unknown.[42]

This is a late time for Wordsworth to identify 'Republican Equality' within Cumbria: Rowlandson officiated in Grasmere from 1770 to 1810, which dates the ideal republic community many years later than *Guide to the Lakes* (pre-1770). It is also conflicts with the narrative of Wordsworth's increasing conservatism: it is strange for him to celebrate 'Republican Equality' in 1843. However, like the *Guide to the Lakes* model where the chapel is the 'supreme head', this republican society also contains hierarchy: while the parishioners are all equal, they look up to their curate who, as the agent of the church, is superior to them. Notably, it is not a '*perfect* Republic' but 'a state of Republican Equality': the flawed curate, and his uncritical parishioners, prevent it from being 'perfect'. However, these problems also reveal the process by which republicanism improves the general quality of life: it is a 'condition' that favours compassionate relationships, and hinders 'gross vice and scandalous behaviour'. But whereas republicanism is merely 'favourable' to that improvement, the Church of England has a distinct 'efficacy' to maintain piety and morality, achieved through its rituals. The national institution thereby upholds its desired ends, despite the flaws of a human minister. So, although a corrupt pastor challenges the ideal society, revealing some of its flaws (the people uncritically admire Rowlandson for his ‘talents’ and education), ultimately he does not have sufficient sway to undermine the locals’ good qualities. Just as the ‘perfect Republic’ is celebrated at a local level because it is compatible with the larger empire, so here, the community is acceptable because the Church of England institution provides a larger context and safeguard. This is key to Wordsworth concept of the ideal Cumbrian community: it is small, organized and egalitarian, but it must also fit harmoniously within a larger model of society, formed around nation and empire.

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[42] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 168-9.

The reconciliation of diverse entities is also central to Wordsworth’s idealisation of Walker. Unlike the writers in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* and *The Annual Register,* Wordsworth does not express any concern about the potential conflict between Walker’s prolific work and his clerical duties. He approves of Walker’s multi-tasking approach to religious teaching: ‘His seat was within the rails of the altar; the communion-table was his desk; and, like Shenstone’s school-mistress, the master employed himself at the spinning-wheel, while the children were repeating their lessons by his side.’ (pp. 91-2) His tripartite employment (vicar-teacher-spinner) is sanctified through both religious and literary imagery. He is seated within the most sacred part of the chapel, allowing the different aspects of his professions to commingle. The reference to William Shenstone’s poem *The Schoolmistress* (1742) – another nostalgic poem that describes an aspect of ‘obscure’ village life (in turn recalling an earlier poet, Edward Spenser) – places Walker within an English literary and historical tradition. The spinning wheel, which enables the master to ‘employ himself’, is thereby not a distraction, but a productive entity that is ‘constantly in readiness to prevent the waste of a moment’s time.’ (p. 92) Whereas Rowlandson’s vices (drink and avarice) are in conflict (they are opponents that ‘struggle’ for ‘mastery’) and are incompatible with his religious duties, Walker’s activities are all commensurate.

When Wordsworth does express concern for the development of Walker’s intellectual faculties, he notes how Walker manages his diverse duties:

> How could the powers of intellect thrive, or its graces be displayed in the midst of circumstances apparently so unfavourable, and where, to the direct cultivation of the mind, so small a portion of time was allotted? But, in this extraordinary man, things in their nature adverse were reconciled (p. 93)

The extended metaphor establishes ‘the powers of intellect’ as akin to a plant: something that should ‘thrive’ and ‘be displayed’, that needs ‘direct cultivation’ and is hindered by ‘unfavourable’ surroundings or a lack of space (in this instance the expanse of ‘time’ rather than ground). This quasi-horticultural trope complements Walker’s other practical employments (gardening), suggesting that the development of intellect requires similar processes. The movement between these different modes of labour is confirmed in the answer, ‘things in their nature adverse were reconciled’. Walker’s ability to make different ‘things’ (an extremely general term that can be applied to many aspects of his existence) compatible or consistent is hailed as an achievement because they are pre-defined as ‘adverse’ (both contrary, opposing, or hostile; and unfavourable or inhibiting to success). To ‘reconcile’ also has religious significance, referring specifically to humanity’s restoration to God through the sacrifice of Christ, returning to God’s favour through prayer, or to cleanse, purify, or re-consecrate a place through a religious ceremony.[43] Many of these definitions pivot on the prefix ‘re-’, emphasizing a return to a previous state. The ‘things’ that Walker makes consistent therefore have a prior connection that has been lost or forgotten, and their re-union is a pious act. The value that Wordsworth places on reconciliation is explained in ‘Essay on Epitaphs’:

> Each of these Sages was in sympathy with the best feelings of our nature; feelings which, though they seem opposite to each other, have another and a finer connection than that of contrast. — It is a connection formed through the subtle process by which, both in the natural and the moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other.[44]

This privileged perspective sees past the obvious appearance – that feelings ‘*seem* opposite to each other’ – to discover the ‘*finer* connection than that of contrast’ which is formed through a ‘subtle process’ of things imperceptibly moving into and orbiting one another. The connection is live: an active and on-going process rather than a determined state. The ‘Sages’ that Wordsworth alludes to are Simonides (556-468 B.C.) and ‘another ancient philosopher’ (presumably also Greek), highlighting the exceptional and profound nature of reconciliation. Walker is therefore ‘extraordinary’ because he performs the complex process that Wordsworth identifies with Greek sages, and so the Cumbrian curate is attributed classical abilities.

Wordsworth portrays Walker as an ideal figure. When he quotes from sources that celebrate Walker’s life, he obscures the financial rationale behind those texts (they were written to highlight the critical lack of income given to clergy). He also conceals

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[43] ‘reconcile, v.’, *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, <http://dictionary.oed.com/> [Accessed 16 February 2016].

[44] William Wordsworth, ‘Essays upon Epitaphs’, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* II, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 45-120 (p. 53).

Walker's ale selling. Unlike earlier poetic figures, Walker is not a strange stranger (like Nanny Holmes and the Cumberland beggar) or a composite figure (like Mathew). Instead, he is a character that Wordsworth researched through various sources: personal letters, published documents, and oral history. While there is this historical component, it is important to recognise that Walker is a literary character: Wordsworth never met him, and selectively composed his history, removing certain details and emphasizing others. Walker's exemplary nature is connected to Wordsworth's concept of the ideal Lakeland community: the 'perfect Republic' from *Guide to the Lakes*. This model places the church at the head and centre of the locale. Since this republic comfortably fits into the nation, it is not radical or subversive. Within the 'determining community' phase, Wordsworth's republicanism is not particularly republican: it is not the people, but the chapel that acts as sovereign, and beyond the locale, the empire continues. The description of Grasmere's curate reveals that Wordsworth's dating of the ideal republic is less rigid than appears in *Guide to the Lakes*. This illustrates that Wordsworth did not identify any particular moment or occurrence that instilled the change from one type of community to another. Rather, the ideal community is a nostalgic conceit that variously contrasts a present with a past. Yet this is a different type of nostalgia to his earlier 'remembering community' phase: he writes the texts from within Cumbria and, rather than depicting vivid fragments of community, he constructs a precise ideal model. The writing also differs from the stimulating phase of meetings and encounters ('experiencing community'): here he has decided what a Cumbrian community should look like, and so draws on distant sources that he can describe objectively, overlooking flaws and tensions that challenge the unity of his portrayal. Reconciliation is central to Walker's exemplary nature and extraordinary skills: his ability to enable contrasting qualities to pass into one another, and become consistent and compatible makes a model vicar and community member. In the next section I examine in further detail how this reconciliation is practiced in a community and text.

The Churchyard among the Mountains

> the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, […] as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he [the author] may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, 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.[45]

Here Wordsworth famously describes the relationship between *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*: the two works that form his epic project, *The Recluse*. *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's autobiographical work is the Ante-chapel (a small chapel that leads into the larger church), and *The Excursion* is the Gothic church, a majestic structure. Wordsworth's 'minor pieces' also fit into this metaphorical structure: the smaller pieces act like 'little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses'; distinct enclaves that nonetheless belong within and shape the larger structure. This grand structure, which contains and organises distinct texts, parallels Wordsworth's approach to community in *The Excursion*. The churchyard narratives (Book VI-VII) organise individual lives into the bigger textual structure of *The Excursion*. This reflects Wordsworth's concern to organise and structure communities in the 'determining' phase: he seeks to assimilate individual community members into a larger cohesive whole, so that they form a harmonious body of people, or an ideal community. The creative process of organising communities is designed and managed by single authorities: the Pastor organises the diverse stories of local people into a cohesive whole, and similarly, Wordsworth organises a number of texts to form *The Recluse*. While this is organising, it is not organicism according to the Coleridgean definition, of connecting parts into a single, harmonious whole. As a later text, concerned with ‘determining community’, *The Excursion* aspires to a greater level of structure and organisation than earlier texts. Yet it does not create transcendent structures of community or text. Instead, Wordsworth seeks to reconcile fragmented parts by organizing them into an encompassing receptacle that promotes cohesion and continuity, but also contains diversity.[46] This develops on Ryan’s study of Wordsworth’s religion. Ryan suggests that *The Excursion* ‘comes to no theological resolution’.[47] Instead, ‘The mountain chapel, as much a part of the English landscape as it is of the lives of believers, represents the vision that Wordsworth came to have of the Church of England, a national religion naturalized by time to become an integral part of English life, a broad church providing space for a variety of spiritual and political viewpoints.’[48] I examine how the church in *The Excursion* serves as a model for the ‘broad church’ that Wordsworth envisaged could provide space for social, political, and spiritual variety.

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[45] Wordsworth, 'Preface', in *The Excursion*, pp. 38-41 (p. 38).

In *The Excursion*, Books VI-VII, the churchyard is the receptacle that contains various community members. Unlike the Walker biography, the churchyard narratives have received much critical attention. Fosso reads *The Excursion* as a shift in

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[46] Alan Richardson clarifies how this concept of the ‘organic’ contrasts with Coleridge’s. Richardson quotes Henry Crabb Robinson describing Dr Gall’s organic theory – ‘the brain is not *one* organ of the soul … but a receptacle for distinct organs’ – and writes that Coleridge criticized this fragmentary notion of the organic. Richardson, p. 70.

[47] Ryan, p. 114.

[48] Ryan, p. 98.

Wordsworth's representations of grief, mourning and community: whereas the earlier poetry emphasizes the 'communitarian powers of mourning' through a 'paradigm of dead-oriented community', after 1804 the poetry seeks to find 'the end of mourning'.[49] He suggests that 'the grieving solitary self is to be […] subsumed or transcended, not by the dead but by cultural tradition and institutionalism: by the consecrated ground of the churchyard mediated by the Parsonage.'[50] I agree that Wordsworth seeks to resolve tensions within his portrayal of community in *The Excursion*.[51] Here I depart from Fosso's study, by focussing on how Wordsworth organises community through the narratives. In *Re-Reading The Excursion*, Sally Bushell suggests that the structural aim of churchyard narratives is to 'represent at a dramatic level the poem's attempt to communicate more interactively, fully employing the dynamics of the epitaph to create a communal response to a "communal" narrative structure.'[52] She usefully highlights the contrast that emerges between the Wanderer and the Pastor in relation to this interactive or 'communal' dialogue: while the former requires closed narratives with unambiguous moral meanings, the latter unfolds open tales that amass into a 'narrative conglomerate'.[53] This leads to her suggestion, that 'the effect of the Pastor's narratives is, ultimately, not to give a series of points in an argument (as the Wanderer desires) but to create a structure which unites the dead into one communal whole, and unites the minds of the living in response to this.'[54] Taking Bushell's argument further, I read the 'communal whole' that the Pastor creates in the churchyard narratives as a model for

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[49] Fosso, p. 193.

[50] Fosso, p. 215.

[51] Connected to this is Tim Fulford's concept of Wordsworth's later revising of texts 'until he had resolved to his own satisfaction tensions, that, when younger, he had lacked the perspective to overcome.' p. 266. I suggest that *The Excursion* seeks to resolve tensions within communities by organizing individual members into distinct places.

[52] Sally Bushell, *Re-Reading the Excursion: Narrative, Response, and the Wordsworthian Dramatic Voice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 181.

[53] Bushell, p. 208.

[54] Bushell, p. 208.

Wordsworth's ideal community in the 'determining' phase: one that seeks to find cohesion and unity between different people. Bushell also touches upon narratives where the Pastor fails to achieve the ideal of epitaphic communication (translating 'personal feeling into an expression accessible to others').[55] For instance, she suggests the narrative of 'The Unamiable Woman' (Book VI, ll. 690-793) fails because it 'remains a subjective expression of the Pastor's feelings.'[56] However, I observe a broader fracture within the overall structure of the churchyard narratives. I argue that the narratives are split into two groups: one describes cohesive community members, and the other describes defiant people (see Figure 2, p. 175). This differs from the systematic structure that Kenneth Johnston describes in the churchyard narratives. He suggests that the sixteen narratives are split into four quartets, each of which have a shared theme, and that the stories are paired through complements and contrasts to enhance the respective meanings.[57] While this formalist approach is useful, the structure that I observe is more pertinent to Wordsworth's ideas of community. Each narrative is based on real source material – people who lived in Grasmere and Cumbria – and so, continuing the approach I took with Walker, I analyse how Wordsworth composes and organises this diverse material. I suggest that the tales of continuity are effectively communicated, creating cohesive, united responses in the listeners (the Wanderer, Solitary and Poet); whereas the tales of deviance produce fragmentary, troubled responses. By analysing Wordsworth's ordering of different narratives, and how he writes the transitions between them, I reveal how these contrary modes are balanced within the text.

The Pastor is the central authority within the churchyard narratives. He recounts the tales of the community members interred within the churchyard. Bushell likens the

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[55] Bushell, p. 202.
[56] Bushell, p. 202.
[57] Kenneth Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 296-9.

Figure 2: The Churchyard Narratives in 'The Excursion'

Book	**Narrative**	**Line numbers**	**Local source**	**Type of narrative**
VI	The Unrequited Lover	96-218	School fellow from Hawkshead	Divergence from community
	The Persevering Miner	219-264	Man from Patterdale	
	The Prodigal Son	285-390	Older Dawson brother, Grasmere	
	The Jacobite and the Hanoverian Whig	421-537	Ann Tyson story of people retired to Hawkshead	
	The Unamiable Woman	690-793	Aggy Fisher, Grasmere (died 1804)	
	Ellen	805-1073	Woman from Hawkshead, story told to MH and DW	
	Wilfred Armathwaite	1100-1154	Unknown	
	Widower and his six daughters	1155-1232	Unknown	Concord with community Continuity
	Widower and his second marriage	1233-1308	Unknown	
VII	The Clergyman and his family	31-309	Sympson family, Grasmere (Joseph died 1807)	
	Another Clergyman	334-411	Robert Walker, Duddon valley (1710-1802)	
	The Deaf Man	412-498	Thomas Holme, Chapel Hill (1706-1773)	
	The Blind Man	499-553	John Gough, Kendal (1757-1825)	
	Infant Grave	665-719	Green family (butchers), Grasmere	
	Oswald, the Volunteer	720-912	George Dawson, Grasmere (died 1807)	
	Sir Alfred Irthing, the Knight	945-980	Gentleman from Knott Family, Grasmere	

Pastor to the priest in ‘The Brothers’ (1800): ‘In both poems the religious figure is primarily important for his ability to voice the stories of the valley.’[58] However, the priest in ‘The Brothers’ is a flawed storyteller: he is a figure from the ‘experiencing community’ phase who struggles to comprehend the person that he meets. This is typical of Wordsworth’s earlier conversational poems where, as Jon Mee writes, mutual comprehension is rarely the outcome of dialogue because ‘interiorities resist disclosure’.[59] Indeed, the Priest fails to recognise Leonard, and their dialogue is beset by breaks and interruptions in which the characters mistakenly pre-empt one another and struggle to assert their different perspectives. The Pastor’s authority in *The Excursion* resembles the speaker’s command in ‘Address to the Scholars’ (1842): both relate their narratives without dispute or challenge from their listeners; the Pastor is rarely interrupted by his listeners, and of the sixteen narratives, only five are recounted at the request or direction of other characters.

While the Pastor differs from the insensitive Priest in ‘The Brothers’, he is also distinct from Walker, who is portrayed as an ideal Cumbrian clergyman. Walker is composed from detailed source material, whereas the Pastor is anonymous and is not based on any real source material. This also distinguishes him from other characters in *The Excursion*.[60] The Fenwick Note on the Pastor describes his upper class origin:

> I have little to add but what may be deemed superfluous. It has ever appeared to me highly favourable to the beneficial influence of the Church of England upon

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[58] Bushell, p. 189.

[59] Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 192

[60] The Wanderer is linked to two people that Wordsworth knew in his childhood (a Scottish pedlar named Patrick, and a packman who occasionally lived in Hawkshead), and the Solitary is connected to a ‘Scotchman’ who retired to Grasmere, as well as elements from ‘several persons with whom I had been connected […] during frequent residences in London at the beginning of the French Revolution.’ *Fenwick Notes*, pp. 79-80.

> all gradations & Classes of Society that the patronage of its benefices is in numerous instances attached to the estates of noble families of ancient Gentry, & accordingly I am gratified by the opportunity afforded me in the Excursion to pourtray the character of a country clergyman of more than ordinary talents, born & bred in the upper ranks of society so as to partake of their refinements, & at the same time brought by his pastoral office & his love of rural life into intimate connection with the peasantry of his native district.[61]

Like Walker, the Pastor is conceived as a 'country clergyman of more than ordinary talents'. But the Pastor's talent differs from Walker's: Walker was born in Undercragg Farm, a modest farmhouse near Seathwaite, and the Pastor is 'born & bred in the upper ranks of society'.[62] He is an anonymous character type that provides a valuable point of convergence between the upper classes, the Church of England, and the 'peasantry'. The Pastor's role – recounting former parishioners' stories – leads some critics to liken his role to a historian.[63] Esther Schor suggests that he upholds the dead by carrying and relating their stories through oral epitaph.[64] Scott Hess reads further into the cultural implications of *The Excursion*'s historicism, viewing its portrayal of the Lake District in general and the churchyard in particular, as akin to a museum.[65] According to this perspective, the Pastor is an 'idealized version of the museum professional' (an anachronistic term, given that the popularising of museums occurred through the nineteenth century) and the graves are 'central exhibits in the poem's project of cultural and aesthetic instruction'.[66] While the Pastor certainly presents the history of the region, I suggest that his role is different to the historian. Wordsworth's description reveals some striking resemblances between himself and the Pastor: both belong to a superior class to the people they live among; both observe and record the lives of local people; and both are local authorities.

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[61] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 80.

[62] Hughes, p. 6.

[63] Indeed, in Book VII he is named 'a historian' (l. 1).

[64] Esther Schor, '"This Pregnant Spot of Ground": Bearing the Dead in *The Excursion*', in *Bearing the Dead: the British Culture of Mourning from Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 151-195.

[65] Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth Century Culture* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p. 169.

The resemblance between Wordsworth and the Pastor goes further than parallel lifestyles: they are both creative authorities for different texts. As with Wordsworth's portrayal of Walker, which drew on and selectively presented historical material to portray a particular character, the Pastor also structures his tales for narrative effect. He creates two different types of story: divergent and continuous. The tales of divergence describe characters that follow a 'more forbidding way' (VI, l. 678), 'the perverseness of a selfish course' (VI, l. 684). The tales of continuity 'excite / Feelings with these accordant; love, esteem, / And admiration' (VI, ll. 663-5). The narrative of Walker in *The Excursion* is one of continuity, which produces mutual understanding and harmony within the listening group. He is introduced by the Wanderer, framing him as a figure of communal understanding: 'in a neighbouring Vale / A Priest abides […] whose gifts of nature lie / Retired from notice' (VII, ll. 334-6). Following on from the Wanderer's regal portrayal of Walker ('A Labourer, with moral virtue girt / With spiritual graces, like a glory, crowned.' (ll. 357-8)), the Pastor responds:

> Doubt can be none […] for whom
> This Portraiture is sketched. – The Great, the Good,
> The Well-beloved, the Fortunate, the Wise,
> These Titles Emperors and Chiefs have borne,

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[66] Hess, p. 170.

> Honour assumed or given: and Him, the Wonderful,
> Our simple Shepherds, speaking from the heart,
> Deservedly have styled. (VII, ll. 359-365)

The Pastor develops Walker's majestic qualities, equating him to 'Emperors and Chiefs'. He adds his own local knowledge: that 'our simple Shepherds' have given Walker the title, 'the Wonderful'. The Wanderer and Pastor thereby work in sympathy, responding to one another's 'portraiture' by continuing and developing a shared language and adding further details – an 'ideal of poetic communication'.[67] Significantly, this moment of mutual understanding is based around a heroic local figure who is celebrated and idealised elsewhere in Wordsworth's writing.

The difference between the Pastor's two types of narrative is marked when comparing two characters who appear in separate books: the Prodigal (Book VI, ll. 285-390) and Oswald (Book VII, ll. 720-912). According to Wordsworth's later notes, they were based on brothers 'born and bred in Grasmere'.[68] The Prodigal was the elder (his Christian name is unknown), and Oswald was the younger (taken from George Dawson who died in 1807).[69]

> The Father of the family I knew well: he was a man of literary education, & [ ] experience in society much beyond what was common among the inhabitants of the Vale. […] The two sons of this person had no doubt been led by the knowledge of their Father to take more delight in Scholar ship & had been

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[67] Bushell, p. 191.
[68] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 86.
[69] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, pp. 190-1.

> accustomed in their own minds to take a wider view of social interests than was usual among their associates.[70]

Like Walker, the Dawson brothers are another instance of exceptionality: they stand out from the general Grasmere population because of their superior education and broad world-view. Yet it is only Wordsworth's notes that reveal this connection between the two characters: *The Excursion* divides the brothers into separate books and does not suggest any familial link or resemblance between them. This contrasts with 'The Brothers', in which Wordsworth adds the fraternal relationship between Leonard and Walter to the original source material.[71] It also differs from the composite Mathew figure (discussed in the previous chapter) who was composed by combining and blending details from numerous sources. By deliberately suppressing any connection between the two characters and consigning them to distinct types of tales, Wordsworth classifies them as contrasting types of community members. This approach to organising community is resolute and authoritative.

The Prodigal is portrayed as a disappointing aberration. He was a talented individual: a 'Favourite lavishly endowed / With personal gifts, and bright instinctive wit' (ll. 317-8); but he failed to live up to his potential. Like Luke from 'Michael', the Prodigal left the valley as a prospective 'Adventurer', then similarly departed from 'all hopes, / Cherished for him' (ll. 326-7), and fell into a state of ruin. Unlike Luke however, the Prodigal returned, and repeated this sequence three times: 'Thrice he rose, / Thrice sunk as willingly.' (ll. 348-9) The Pastor suggests that this perplexing behaviour was due to his 'dividual' nature: 'as if within his frame / Two several Souls alternately had lodged' (ll. 297-8). The significance of this contradictory nature to the character and the narrative is later clarified:

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[70] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, pp. 88-9.

[71] 'The Brothers' is based on two separate people: Jerome Bowman who died after breaking his leg near Scalehow Force, and another man who sleep-walked off Pillar. Wordsworth, 'Editors Notes', in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 379-382.

> he had lived, and could not cease to live,
> Distracted in propensity; content
> With neither element of good or ill;
> And yet in both rejoicing; man unblest;
> Of contradictions infinite the slave,
> Till his deliverance, when Mercy made him
> One with Himself and one with those who sleep. (VI, ll. 384-390)

His conflicted nature produces an inevitable, restless wandering: he swings from 'good' to 'ill', and with exhilaration he delights in each 'element', but neither state brings a satisfied state of contentment. This makes him a slave to his own inner contradictions: a suffering figure of pity, who can only be saved from his contradictions by death, here portrayed as 'Mercy'. Through death, the Prodigal finds oneness with himself and other dead people, achieving a sense of community. Significantly, this does not make him 'one' with the living community.

The Prodigal's troubled relationship with living communities is apparent through his conflict with his family, the primary foundation for community. The Pastor says: 'he had long existed in the state / Of a young Fowl beneath one Mother hatched, / Though from another sprung – of different kind' (VI, ll. 381-3). Again, the Prodigal's conflicted nature is evident – while he was a 'young Fowl' 'he had long existed' in that state (implying that he has somehow failed to grow, mature or develop, and is trapped in a regressive state). But also, a mother from a different species raised this 'Fowl'.

According to the analogy, the Prodigy is a cuckoo: a bird that lays its eggs in the nest of another species. *Birds Britannica* unfolds the cuckoo's historic 'public-image problems': Pliny, Chaucer and Shakespeare claimed that the 'unkynde' cuckoo eats its foster-mother once it has grown; Gilbert White described the cuckoo as a 'monstrous outrage on maternal affection'; and in 1788 Edward Jenner prompted new affront when he discovered that the new-born cuckoo chick has a special hollow in its back so that it can heave the other eggs out of the nest.[72] These negative responses to the cuckoo signal the prejudice and contempt that was popularly applied to such brood-parasite birds. Indeed, the dash which separates the phrase, 'of different kind', creates a distance between the Prodigal and his foster mother. In an earlier manuscript the phrase reads 'of different *race*' (my italics), emphasizing his distinct ancestral lineage, ethnicity, or species.[73] While 'kind' similarly refers to a race or species, it also plays off the caring maternal image, suggesting its opposite, unkindness. The Prodigal's existential conflict therefore both differentiates and isolates him from his family. This illustrates how the Prodigal is established in fundamental opposition to community: since he is alienated from the prototypical community (family), by extension he is incompatible with the broader parish community. He differs from the strange vagrants discussed in the first chapter: unlike them, the Prodigal is the inhabitant of a settled community, yet even while he resides there, he becomes estranged from others. This also contrasts with Wordsworth's estrangement when he was out walking and composing poetry (described in *The Prelude*, IV, ll. 109-20): whereas Wordsworth was an odd, alienated figure while he composed, when the dog alerted him to the presence of other people, he gathered himself into a socially-acceptable form. The Prodigal does not practice similar creative movements between estrangement and sociability. He is inherently distanced from his locale.

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[72] Mark Cocker and Richard Mabey, *Birds Britannica* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005), pp. 277-8.
[73] Wordsworth, plate [58r], DC MS. 73, in *The Excursion*, pp. 819-914 (p. 890).

By contrast, Oswald is portrayed as the hero of his local community, and a member of older literary communities:

> As old Bards
> Tell in their idle songs of wandering Gods,
> Pan or Apollo, veiled in human form;
> Yet, like the sweet-breathed violet of the shade,
> Discovered in their own despite to sense
> Of Mortals, […]
> So, through a simple rustic garb's disguise,
> And through the impediment of rural cares
> In him revealed a Scholar's genius shone;
> And so, not wholly hidden from men's sight,
> In him the spirit of a Hero walked
> Our unpretending valley. (VII, ll. 751-763)

Where the Prodigal is a hidden parasite, Oswald is like the 'wandering Gods' of ancient Greek literature, whose divinity, even when they are disguised as humans, is still discernible. Oswald's affinity with Classical forebears places him into another community, showing his adaptable sociability and general congruence with worthy people. It also recalls the likening of Walker to 'Emperors and Chiefs', placing Oswald within a third group of idealised local people. This invites another contrast with the Prodigal, who corrupts the tradition of noble poetic lineage. His is depicted as a base travelling performer: a 'Hired Minstrel of voluptuous blandishment' (l. 369). This minstrelsy is a form of prostitution: he is ‘hired’ (performing for money rather than artistic integrity) and intentionally performs sensual music to please his patrons. This not only conflicts with Oswald, but also the Wanderer. In the opening to Book II the Poet compares the Wanderer to a minstrel:

> In days of yore how fortunately fared
> The Minstrel! wandering on from Hall to Hall,
> Baronial Court or Royal; cheered with gifts
> Munificent, and love, and Ladies’ praise
> [….] Yet not the noblest of that honoured Race
> Drew happier, loftier, more empassioned thoughts
> From his long journeyings and eventful life,
> Than this obscure Itinerant (an obscure,
> But a high-souled and tender-hearted Man)   (II, ll. 1-23)

This romanticised view of minstrels from the ‘days of yore’ has two distinct genealogies within *The Excursion*: the Wanderer takes it forward in the direction of improvement and development, with ‘happier, loftier, [and] more empassioned thought’; and the Prodigal corrupts it by prostituting his skills within the city. The compositional history of this passage shows a further lineage. It was reworked from material originally intended for *The Prelude*. As he revised it, Wordsworth changed it from first to third person, so the Wanderer became his own descendant; a natural poet.[74] This demonstrates the Prodigal’s manifold deviancy: as well as his character’s ‘dividual’ nature, he is foreign to his family, corrupts the historic minstrel tradition, and counters the romanticised poetic lives of Wordsworth and the Wanderer.

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[74] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, p. 430.

The contextual positioning of Oswald and the Prodigal's narratives heightens their respective senses of continuity or aberration. The Prodigal's commences from a contradiction. Unlike the sympathetic, harmonised agreement through which the Pastor and the Wanderer relate Walker's tale, the Pastor introduces the Prodigal's tale with a conjunction that describes contrast:

> Yet the sigh,
> Which wafts that prayer to Heaven, is due to all,
> Wherever laid, who living fell below
> Their virtue's humbler mark; a sigh of *pain*
> If to the opposite extreme they sank. (VI, ll. 272-280)

A further movement of estrangement emerges in the notion that the Prodigal progressed to an 'opposite extreme'. Likewise, after the narrative, there is no sense of mutual understanding between the characters. The Solitary responds: 'Tis strange […] strange / It seems' (ll. 391-2). The repetition of 'strange' captures the listeners' struggle to grasp the story – they can neither comprehend nor express it – leaving it outside of their continuity of understanding. The Prodigal is not a version of the 'strange stranger' figure from Wordsworth's earlier poetry (such as the leech gatherer and Nanny Holme): whereas they have the valuable effect of challenging the person they encounter, leaving lingering, evocative traces, the Prodigal remains an alienated figure whose story cannot be processed. The importance of the Solitary's response is demonstrated in a manuscript version of this passage.[75] There, Wordsworth plans the placement and linking of different passages. The Prodigal's narrative appears after two blank pages (space left for the Miner's tale), and begins with the Pastor pointing to a grave ('Near the Turf'). The blank pages suggest that, at this point, Wordsworth was uncertain how to link this narrative to the previous one. The end of the passage however, is clear: as with the published text, the Solitary responds, 'Tis strange […] strange / It seems'.[76] Wordsworth therefore carefully positioned the Prodigal's narrative through an introduction and conclusion that, like the Prodigal's character, makes it stand out as an obtrusive aberration.

By contrast, Oswald's tale is positioned more fluidly within its context. The Pastor does not introduce it with an intrusive rationalisation; rather, it flows on from the previous tale without any interjection by the other characters: 'On a bright day, the brightest of the year' (VII, l. 720). This is a process of reconciliation: different lives are recalled, linked and processed by the listeners. The same movement appears in the earlier manuscript draft: following the last line of the preceding tale ('a peaceful grave'), Wordsworth writes 'On a bright day the brightest of the year &c'.[77] Oswald's tale is thereby registered ('&c'), although the body of the narrative does not follow there (the next page leaps to a passage from Book IX), demonstrating that at this compositional stage, Wordsworth was concerned with the structural links between different narratives: an important aspect of their style and effect. While Oswald's tale is contextually positioned with greater fluidity than the Prodigal's, there is an interruption within Oswald's tale: 'the Pastor rose, / And moved towards the grave; – instinctively / His steps we followed' (VII, ll. 839-841). This interruption is, paradoxically, continuous with the tale. Narrating Oswald's tale leads the Pastor to move closer to his grave – a physical act that brings physical proximity – augmenting the emotional connection that he forges between himself, his listeners, and Oswald. Since the listeners follow 'instinctively', they also spontaneously participate in the process of understanding Oswald: demonstrating an intuitive, sympathetic communal response. Indeed, the Poet then contributes 'involuntary words' (l. 853) to the narrative. He does not consciously express himself, but passively states that 'my voice exclaimed' (l. 841). His speech operates distinctly from the thinking, conscious, premeditative aspect of his individual self; instead becoming an instinctive movement that continues from the physical impulse to follow the Pastor, and demonstrates the united mutuality between the Pastor and his listeners. This resembles the process of sympathy in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' whereby, after giving to the beggar, 'the soul [….] Doth find itself insensibly dispos'd / To virtue and true goodness.' (ll. 94-7). In both of these texts, sympathy is an insensitive, instinctive response that moves one towards a new perspective. The unconscious responses can also be seen as moments of 'internalised dialogue, or holding more than one of seeing within oneself', which Bushell suggests is a central principle within *The Excursion*, and key to the Solitary's development.[78] This 'communal response', is certainly brought about through the poetic communication that is internalised by others.[79]

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[75] The text is a fair copy (it begins in Mary Wordsworth's handwriting), and since no rough draft copy exists, it is assumed that an earlier manuscript has been lost.
[76] Wordsworth, DC MS. 73, p. 891.
[77] Wordsworth, DC MS. 74, in *The Excursion*, pp. 915-1104 (p. 1091).

Oswald's tale also continues to work within the Wanderer: he 'victoriously upraised his clear bright eye' and has a sublime 'still response' (VII, ll. 913, 916). Yet it has a different effect upon the Solitary. He does not interject to comment on the strangeness of the narrative, instead, he merely 'turned aside' (l. 925). The Poet speculates on whether this is an effort ‘to conceal / Tender emotions’ (ll. 926-7) or due to an ‘uneasy shame’ (l. 928) at his own past behaviour. But even the Solitary’s turning aside draws out further connections, since ‘Right tow’rds [a] sacred Edifice his steps / Had been directed’ (VII, ll. 933-4). He mirrors the Pastor, whose steps led the group closer to Oswald’s grave, although here the Solitary’s steps approach a different grave, a ‘monumental stone’. While it initially appears to be an ‘uncouth form’, its continuities and connections soon become apparent:

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[78] Bushell, p. 108.
[79] Bushell, pp. 181, 191.

> grafted on the wall
> Or rather seemed to have grown into the side
> Of the rude Pile; as oft-times trunks of trees,
> Where Nature works in wild and craggy spots,
> Are seen incorporate with the living rock;
> To endure for aye. (VII, ll. 936-941)

This describes a different type of stone to those discussed in the previous chapter. The stones associated with Nanny Holme, the Cumberland beggar, and the leech gatherer, are all distinctive: the stones are prominent and isolated, reflecting and enhancing the assiduous defiance of the marginal human that it is associated with. By contrast, this ‘monumental stone’ has grown into the church, mirroring the combining of trees and ‘living rock’. This stone therefore emphasizes unexpected growth, continuity and connections. The images of grafting and continuity – the stone growing *into* the church, likened to trees that ‘incorporate *with*’ rock – both describe a process of continuity and mingling, whilst they also, structurally, perform that act of linking. The analogies emerge from one another and develop the meaning conveyed from the previous image.

Similarly, on a bigger scale, this section of text performs the same role, linking Oswald's tale to the next. Bushell describes this narrative process (Geoffrey Hartman's 'heaping up' of tales) as 'the creation of a communal structure, a kind of "narrative conglomerate" […] which unites the tales of the dead into one communal whole, and unites the minds of the living in response to this.'[80] I agree that the text is compelled towards this ideal 'communal' structure, but, as I have demonstrated, there are also complications, deviations and tensions that prevent the narrative community from achieving a harmonious unity.

The division between different types of community members is further apparent through another aspect of contextual positioning of narratives: the tales that proceed them. The Prodigal's narrative is followed by the tale of two men of opposite principles – a Jacobite and Hanoverian Whig – who found solace together in the Lake District. The movement from a character who is figuratively split into two opposing instincts, to two characters who literally embody opposing principles is of progressive divergence. In both the manuscript and the published text this movement is initiated by the Solitary's question: are there some who 'would rather shun than seek the fellowship / Of kindred mold'? (VI, ll. 406-7) The Solitary's request for an anti-community narrative clarifies the status of these tales as part of a textual movement of divergence. By contrast, Oswald's tale leads into the story of Sir Alfred Irthing, an Elizabethan knight, who, similarly to Oswald (leader of the Grasmere volunteer militia), is depicted as a heroic 'Warrior' and 'Champion'. Wordsworth's poetic name for George Dawson – Oswald – links him to St Oswald, the namesake of Grasmere Church, and Oswald the King of Northumbria (603-642 AD) who was famed for the battles he fought and for converting people to Christianity; creating a sense of historic lineage and continuity.[81] Similarly, Irthing is an elaborated figure: Wordsworth later revealed he was in fact a 'Gentleman' (not a knight), and 'the Ancestor of the Knott family formerly considerable proprietors in the district'.[82] The transition between these two narratives is planned in DC MS 74, where Oswald's tale does not appear in full, but the concluding passage appears (the prospective view of his funeral), which then leads into the Wanderer's response, followed by the Solitary's, and then the knight's tale.[83] The churchyard narratives therefore hold two distinct types of characters and tales that each engage with and enable different versions of community.

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[80] Bushell, p. 208.

The narrative divide reveals Wordsworth's desire to organise community into two distinct types – the divergent and the continuous – in order to present contrasting groups that can then be reconciled. He does not transcend difference, but establishes a community model that emphasizes the reconciliation of different people. Coleridge's criticism of *The Excursion* helps to reveal how Wordsworth sought to manage these two contrasting realities. In 1815, after *The Excursion* was published, Coleridge responded to Wordsworth's request for feedback, largely expressing his disappointment that it had not met his expectations. Among other things, he had hoped it would demonstrate: 'true Idealism necessarily perfecting itself in Realism, & Realism refining itself into Idealism'.[84] For Coleridge, this is a key part of the philosophical basis for the poem.[85] Seamus Perry further explains why Coleridge felt that *The Excursion* did not achieve the 'metaphysical resolution of realism and idealism': 'The Coleridgean problem here lies in the relationship between the profound universality of the wisdoms that the poem sets out to enunciate and the highly particularised representation of their contingent spokesman [the Wanderer].'[86] For Coleridge then, *The Excursion*'s dramatization – the use of multiple voices and distinctive characters – disrupts the 'grandeur and unity of imagination'.[87] Resolving the tension between idealism and realism therefore is a matter for form and style, not simply narrative content. Coleridge proposes that the contrasting concepts of realism and idealism should not merely be reconciled, but their differences should be resolved. He conveys this through verbs that create an image of mutual improvement, as each noun is 'perfecting itself', and 'refining itself' into the other. This recalls Wordsworth's concept that qualities have 'a finer connection than that of contrast', but there is an important distinction between the two authors' approaches: for Wordsworth the connection is construed as a 'subtle process' in which things commingle; for Coleridge, the connection demands a clear system of improvement.[88]

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[81] 'St Oswald', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, <www.oxforddnb.com> [Accessed 21 April 2016].
[82] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 89.
[83] Wordsworth, DC MS. 74, pp. 916-9.
[84] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* IV: 1815-1819, ed. by Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 969.
[85] Also described elsewhere as 'to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy'. Coleridge, p. 969.

In the churchyard narratives, Wordsworth aspires to reconciliation rather than resolution. He contains individual lives by categorising them into contrary states, presenting Cumbrian community members within a more thorough system of organisation than his earlier work. In this ideal community model, flaws and problems are not ignored (as occurs in the Walker narrative) but organised into sections. In presenting these contrary states side by side, contained within a particular setting (the churchyard) and a distinct section of text (Books VI-VII), the listeners and readers are invited to draw links between different people. The finer connections or reconciliation that Wordsworth seeks between contrasting individuals is the harmonising structure of community. At the narrative level in Books VI-VII, reconciliation is performed by the

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[86] Seamus Perry, 'Coleridge's Disappointment in *The Excursion*', *Wordsworth Circle* 45 (2014), 147-151.
[87] Perry, p. 148.
[88] Wordsworth, 'Essay on Epitaphs', p. 53.

Pastor. This clergyman, like Walker, seeks to make adverse things coherent and consistent, making the churchyard narratives a model for ideal community, since the organisation of the tales also leads to a sense of reconciliation and cohesion. This enables a textual transition – an expansion outward – as the characters leave the churchyard in Book VII, and the Wanderer proclaims his vision for Britain's role within the empire. This harmonious shift in perspectives, from the local to the empire, enacts the model of the 'perfect Republic' that Wordsworth presents in *Guide to the Lakes*. Similarly, the churchyard narratives are also part of another structure: they sit within *The Excursion*, which sits within *The Recluse*, and Wordsworth harmonises and contains these different parts of work through the analogy of a church structure. Reconciliation is therefore integral to the harmonious coexistence of structures of community and text.

'Chapels lurking among trees'

Wordsworth's concept of the relational nature of the Anglican Church is apparent in the sonnet, 'Places of Worship', within the *Ecclesiastical Sketches*. It describes the Church within a strange series of similes:

> As star that shines dependent upon star
> Is to the sky while we look up in love;
> As to the deep fair ships which though they move
> Seem fixed, to eyes that watch them from afar;
> As to the sandy desert fountains are,
> With palm groves shaded at wide intervals,
> Whose fruit around the sun-burnt Native falls
> Of roving tired or desultory war;

> Such to this British Isle her Christian Fanes,
> Each linked to each for kindred services;
> Her Spires, her Steeple-towers with glittering vanes
> Far-kenned, her Chapels lurking among trees,
> Where a few villagers on bended knees
> Find solace which a busy world disdains.[89]

The three similes in the octave create a process of allusion that draws connections between the church and a range of different objects. Each of these objects (the star, ship and fountain) are described within a particular setting and series of relationships, adding to the breadth of connections. For instance, according to the third simile, churches are akin to fountains in their relationship with the desert. The simile then expands, to reveal that the fountains bring ‘palm groves’ and shade, which in turn produces ‘fruit’ that then falls around a troubled human (a ‘sunburnt Native’ who is ‘tired’ of wandering or ‘desultory war’). While this is the most complex simile, the other two also expand and develop, creating an elaborate series of connections and continuities. The similes extend the domain of ‘places of worship’, illustrating the encompassing nature of the church. When the sestet shifts the focus onto the object of the similes, ‘Such to this British Isle her Christian Fanes’, two types of church are described. The first has grand, dominating spires and steeples that glitter and are seen from afar; the second is the lowlier image of ‘Chapels lurking among trees’. These two types of church seem contradictory: the first describes prominent buildings that tower over the locale; the second suggests that smaller chapels furtively hide within their surroundings. The grandeur of a ‘place of worship' or 'Fane' is thereby dismantled into the image of a humble, hidden building. Yet the last image is specifically concerned with the small, local community chapel, and it recalls the Cumbrian ideal, celebrated in *Guide to the Lakes*.

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[89] William Wordsworth, ‘X. Places of Worship’, *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845,* ed. by Geoffrey Jackson (London: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 192-3.

The sonnet depicts the church as both a hierarchical centre and an institution that exists in interdependence with a wider environment of people and plants, touching on organicism. As this chapter has demonstrated, Wordsworth's organicism differs from Coleridge's: he seeks to reconcile differences between parts, rather than resolving them through a transcendental whole. Armstrong's study of Romantic organicism is concerned with the later Coleridgean version, which he defines as 'a grounding systematics for understanding all holistic structures [and] a way of thinking meaningfully about wholes.' [90] He examines Wordsworth's later writings (*The Excursion* and *Ecclesiastical Sketches*) and argues that the church becomes the central metaphor for organicism in Wordsworth's poetry.[91] He suggests that the tensions within the concept of organicism (between hierarchical totalisation and interdependence) are manifested in Wordsworth's efforts to reconcile the church (as an architectural and textual structure) with the world beyond it (nature).[92] Fairer takes a different approach, and examines two versions of 'organic': the earlier is an eighteenth-century organic that holds 'two ideas simultaneously in play and appreciate similarity, difference, and variety'. This organic concerned with organisation as oppose to structure, and does not seek to impose stability or order.[93] By contrast, the post-1800 Coleridgean organic is an idealist organic tradition that emphasizes structure, unity and holism. Fairer suggests that Wordsworth engages with the earlier organic in the 1790s, because he is 'not afraid to mix together what Coleridge and his critics want to keep apart.'[94] I agree with Armstrong, that Wordsworth's post 1810 writing ('determining community' phase) is concerned with finding an organic structure that connects different parts. However, he does not create a full, systematic 'organic' according to Coleridge's terms, where 'the whole is everything and the parts are nothing'.[95] While there is a movement to organise parts into a whole – so the community members in *The Excursion* are organised into a cohesive community and a larger textual structure – the parts remain significantly distinctive, and help to shape the whole. Developing Armstrong's insight, and adding to Fairer's study, I reveal how Wordsworth's organicism informs his portrayals of Cumbrian communities in particular, and, more generally, his concept of the ideal structure for small communities. Reading *The Excursion* and 'The Tuft of Primroses', I demonstrate how Wordsworth creates connections between the church, community and wider environment, to make various aspects of the Cumbrian locale consistent and harmonious.[96] I examine the transition from Wordsworth's 'experiencing' to his 'determining community' phase by comparing 'The Tuft of Primroses' and *The Excursion*.[97] I argue that in Wordsworth's later work, the church is central to the 'determining community' ideal because, for Wordsworth, it epitomises the principles of reconciliation, continuity, and organisation.

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[90] Armstrong, p. 2.
[91] Armstrong, p. 118.
[92] Armstrong, pp. 116, 129.
[93] Fairer, p. 20.

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[94] Fairer, p. 20.

[95] Quoted in Williams, *Keywords*, p. 228.

[96] Jessica Fay links the shift in Wordsworth's poetry from 1806 to his preoccupation with gardening. She reveals how his 'deepening fascination with hermitism, monasticism, and immutability', was informed by his work on the design of the Beaumont's garden at Coleorton. He particularly focussed on creating small, enclosed spaces that would assist inward contemplation, and so gardening provided both 'a vehicle for memorialisation and poetic inspiration'. Rather than relating Wordsworth's poetic changes to the isolating religious practices of monasticism and hermitism, I link it to the spiritual centre of the parish – the church or chapel – which can also be seen as a social hub for the local community. Jessica Fay, 'Prospects of Contemplation: Wordsworth's Winter Garden at Coleorton, 1806-1811' *European Romantic Review,* 24 (2012), 307-315.

[97] Armstrong briefly suggests that in the transition from 'Home at Grasmere' to 'The Tuft of Primroses', 'the home is superseded by the church as a central metaphor in Wordsworth's poetry.' Armstrong, p. 118.

In *The Excursion* Wordsworth uses plant analogies to explain characters. This contributes to the process of interpreting and organising community members: the analogies arrange individuals into a cohesive whole through a shared metaphor of flora; yet they also differentiate between individuals, highlighting particular characteristics. The Pastor and the Wanderer are likened to two large trees, an oak and a sycamore:

> Nature had framed them both, and both were marked
> By circumstance with intermixture fine
> Of contrast and resemblance. To an Oak
> Hardy and grand, a weather-beaten Oak
> Fresh in the strength and majesty of age,
> One might be likened, flourishing appeared,
> Though somewhat past the fullness of his prime
> The Other – like a stately Sycamore,
> That spreads, in gentler pomp, its honied shade (V, ll. 448-456)

Some of the key features associated with each tree connect them to a particular character: the ‘weather-beaten Oak’ corresponds with the Wanderer’s itinerant life as a packman, whereas the ‘stately sycamore’, with its ‘gentler pomp’ is more consistent with the Pastor’s role as a senior figure within an established institution (the Anglican Church). However, Wordsworth uses the non-specific pronoun ‘one’, and does not define which tree is associated with which particular character. He emphasizes his resistance to linking these trees to specific characters in the Fenwick Note:

> To illustrate the relation which in my mind this Pastor bore to the Wanderer & the resemblances between them, or rather the points of community in their nature, I likened one to an Oak & the other to a Sycamore &, having here referr'd to this comparison, I need only add I had no one individual in my mind, wishing rather to embody this idea than to break in upon the simplicity of it by traits of individual character or any peculiarity of opinion.[98]

The oak-sycamore simile therefore is a general symbol that delineates the broader relationship between the two characters, rather than two particular analogies that provide insight into each individual. For Wordsworth, the 'idea' – that while there are differences between the two in terms of type, age, and circumstance, ultimately they share 'points of community' – is most significant. Since they harmoniously combine 'contrast and resemblance', they model the process of reconciliation. The two characters are paragons for the ideal community model of unity, cohesion, and continuity. The third object within the analogy – the trees – demonstrates how Wordsworth imagines a broader local cohesion between church, community and environment through the three respective figures, the Pastor, the Wanderer and the trees.

By contrast, the 'Unamiable Woman' (based on Wordsworth's former neighbour Aggy Fisher) is differentiated from her community through a plant analogy. Like the Prodigal, she is a character who exists at odds with community:

> While yet a child,
> She, mid the humble Flowerets of the vale,
> Towered like the imperial Thistle, not unfurnished

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[98] Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, p. 121.

> With its appropriate grace, yet rather framed
> To be admired, than coveted and loved.
> Even at that age she ruled, a sovereign Queen,
> Among her Play-mates; (VI, ll. 702-7)

Whereas the local children are ‘humble flowerets’ (suggesting the parish is an idyllic pasture or meadow in which commonplace flowers grow), Aggy ‘towers’ above them. She has the commanding presence of an ‘Imperial thistle’: a prickly, tall plant that is both majestic and domineering. Her plant analogy therefore signifies both her divergence from her peers and her difficult nature, unlike the Wanderer and the Pastor, whose plant analogy gestures to their openness to community (they are neighbouring trees that, despite their differences, also have an equivalence, and stand together). While plants therefore express different types of community members – highlighting respective virtues and vices – they also unite the locale by providing a shared metaphor. This is integral to Wordsworth’s organicism: without erasing difference, community members are reconciled with each other, their environment, and by extension the church, since the stories are narrated by the Pastor within the churchyard.

In these examples, the relationship between the individuals and the church is implicit. It becomes more explicit in Wordsworth’s portrayal of the Sympson family, who feature in both ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ and *The Excursion*. The Sympsons swiftly became the Wordsworth’s closest friends in Grasmere. They were one of the few middle class families in the vale in 1800, and the two households shared numerous cultural practices and values. This included regular meetings for tea or dinner, the exchange of plants, fruit and vegetables, walks and fishing trips together, and conversations about poetry. ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ and *The Excursion* reveal how Wordsworth’s organicism – specifically focussed on a reconciliation between church, community members, and environment – developed. The earlier text portrays the death of the Sympson family as a devastating loss that troubles the entire vale with a sense of absence and suspended community. By contrast, *The Excursion* naturalises the loss, contextualising the family's death alongside other local deaths to find solace through commonality and community. In 'The Tuft of Primroses', the church observes the loss of the Sympsons:

> What sees the old grey Tower through high or low
> Of his domain, what injury doth he note
> Beyond what he himself hath undergone,
> What other profanation or despoil
> Of fairest things that calls for more regret
> Than that small cottage? (ll. 130-5)

Like Hawkshead church in *The Prelude*, St Oswald's similarly looks out over 'his domain'. But whereas Hawkshead church was female ('like a throned lady') and sent out 'a gracious look', here, the tower is male and 'he' attentively assesses his parish for other instances of 'injury', 'profanation or despoil'. Then 'he' discovers a place that 'calls for more regret' – 'that small cottage'. The Sympsons' former home thereby appears as a vulnerable domestic sphere. The church tower has also suffered a loss: its neighbouring trees were cut down and so it 'Now stands […] naked and forlorn' (l. 126). While there is thus a sense of shared suffering and loss (the tower searches for injuries 'beyond what he himself hath undergone' (l. 132)), the church also appears militarised and defensively prepared to observe incursions. 'The Tuft of Primroses' foreshadows the Sympson tale with a sense of loss and suffering that connects the church to other community members and trees.

By contrast, in *The Excursion*, it is a human who initiates the Sympson story by drawing attention to their graves. The Poet points to five ‘grassy heaps’ which ‘lie amicably close’ (l. 31): a gentle, naturalised euphemism for the family’s graves that emphasizes their harmonious togetherness, unlike the church tower’s anticipation of assault and victimhood. The Pastor continues this language of vegetation and regrowth when he introduces the family by pointing towards ‘a little tuft of trees’ (VII, l. 46):

> – That little shady spot, that sylvan tuft,
> By which the road is hidden, also hides
> A Cottage from our view – though I discern,
> (Ye scarcely can) amid its sheltering trees,
> The smokeless chimney top. (VII, ll. 51-5)

The tone has completely changed from ‘The Tuft of Primroses’: the tower’s anticipation of ‘profanation or despoil’ is replaced with an image of benign surroundings. The cottage is hidden (not despoiled) and the text enacts that process of hiding, repeatedly describing the screen of trees that obscures it, then identifying a different thing hidden by the screen (the road), before finally naming the cottage. When the cottage is discerned, it is not a stark, decaying ruin like Margaret’s in Book I (‘a roofless Hut; four naked walls / That stared upon each other!’), but mildly described as having a ‘smokeless’ chimney – an image of emptiness, not irrevocable decay. It resembles the ‘lurking chapel’ motif from *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, similarly suggesting that the cottage has a rare and obscure value: something to be discerned only by the observant or knowledgeable. The Pastor contrasts with the isolated, embittered church figure from 'The Tuft of Primroses'; he acts as mediator, drawing connections between the church, its environs and the wider community, for an assembled group.

In both texts, the Sympson family are portrayed in relation to their garden, furthering the links between community and environment. 'The Tuft of Primroses' initially provides a positive description of plants and management:

> The Cottage-Court,
> Spread with blue-gravel from the torrent's side
> And gay with shrubs, the garden, bed and walk,
> His own creation, that embattled Host
> Of garish tulips, fruit trees chosen and rare,
> And roses of all colours, which he sought
> Most curiously, as generously dispers'd
> Their kinds, to beautify his neighbours' grounds;
> Trees of the forest, too, a stately fence
> Planted for Shelter in his manhood's primes,
> And Small Flowers watered by his wrinkled hand (ll. 204-216)

The text lists the various plants that form the carefully planned and crafted garden. The plants combine food (fruit trees), shelter (hedges), and aesthetic pleasure (shrubs, tulips, roses). The exchanges between the garden and the world beyond mitigates the garden boundaries: the gravel is taken from a local stream – mixing the tranquillity of a garden with the wild torrent; and the roses are varieties that easily produce cuttings and offshoots that can be shared with neighbours. The sharing of plants reflects a significant part of the Wordsworths' relationship with the Sympsons. Dorothy's journal contains many references to the exchange of fruit and plants between the two households. For instance, between June and August 1800, some examples include: 'Miss Simpson brought gooseberries *& cream*'; 'Mr and Miss Simpson called – […] we went to the waterfall at the head of the valley […] I brought home lemon thyme & several other plants'; 'I walked up to Mr Simpsons to gather gooseberries'; 'W & I drank tea at Mr Simpsons, brought down Lemon Thyme, greens &c'; 'Gathered peas for Mrs Simpson'.[99]

Alongside the harmonious description of agreeable exchange, the passage also contains the troubled image of the 'embattled Host / Of garish tulips'. This creates an underlying sense of threat. In the following section, the verb tense shifts from past to present, and the garden suddenly becomes a scene of 'ravage':

> – that his Daughter's Bower
> Is creeping into shapelessness, self-lost
> In the wild wood, like a neglected image
> Or fancy which hath ceased to be recalled.
> The jasmine, her own charge, which she had trained
> To deck the wall, and of one flower spray
> Had made an Inmate, luring it from sun
> And breezes, and from its fellows, to pervade
> The inside of her chamber with its sweet,
> And be the Comrade of her loneliest thought,
> I grieve to see that Jasmine on the ground

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[99] Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journal*, pp. 6, 7-8, 13, 15.

Stretching its desolate length, mourn that these works
Of love and diligence and innocent care
Are sullied and disgrac'd (ll. 217-230)

Accompanying the change in verb tense and tone, the focus shifts from the broad area of Joseph Sympson's garden, to centre on his daughter Margaret, her personal garden bower, and chamber within the cottage. This movement of increasing feminine intimacy is juxtaposed with the ravage of neglect: as we gradually discover more of her careful labour to cultivate and train the jasmine, we also learn of its counter-fate, 'stretching its desolate length'. This juxtaposition of former care and domestication with the present 'shapelessness' and loss, presents their garden as the site of a catastrophic interruption. The contrast between the feminine image 'of love and diligence and innocent care' and the concluding verbs, 'sullied and disgrac'd', suggests the jasmine has been subject to a violent sexual betrayal. An irrevocable process of loss and decay has been set in motion.

The Excursion portrays the Sympsons' garden differently. No single block of text focuses exclusively on the garden, and the structure of contrasts (present and past, glory and decline) is also absent. Instead, references to plants, gardening and domestication are spread throughout the narrative. Also, *The Excursion* clarifies that Joseph Sympson was a vicar ('The Tuft of Primroses' makes no reference to Sympson as a clergyman). *The Excursion* thereby portrays pastoral care as a holistic role that combines both care for the land and care for parishioners. The cottage's earlier unkempt state is described:

Bleak and bare
They found the Cottage, their allotted home:

> Naked without and rude within; […] and far remote
> The chapel stood, divided from that House
> By an unpeopled tract of mountain waste. (VII, ll. 138-144)

Whereas 'The Tuft of Primroses' defines the Sympson's garden as a lost paradise, this text prefigures it as a wilderness: a place that was 'bleak and bare', 'naked' and 'rude', geographically and symbolically 'far remote' from the chapel. The subsequent efforts to tame and domesticate the garden becomes a practical process of reclaiming the wastes. This shift in perspective – looking further back in time – emphasizes the family's achievements in their lifetime, suggesting that they created a moment of reprieve within a broader history of wilderness. Given Sympson's role as a curate, this literal process also carries spiritual nuances. Metaphorically, this creates a figure like Walker, whose labour beyond the Anglican Church is not merely compatible with his role as a clergyman, but enhances his moral and spiritual abilities. Both Walker and Sympson reconcile different aspects of parish life, and so become comprehensive authority figures.

Furthering this sense of virtuous labour, *The Excursion* places a different emphasis upon the garden. Instead of listing specific plants, it describes the family's work within the garden and home. Sympson's hands were busy 'with his task, to rid, to plant, / To rear for food, for shelter, and delight; / A thriving covert!' (ll. 194-7) The process reiterates the garden's former unkempt state, and the important role the clergyman plays in transforming the ground from unkempt waste to productive, fertile land. The daughter's efforts to domesticate a jasmine plant are replaced with a passage on Sympson's wife's work:

> Tough moss, and long-enduring mountain plants,
> That creep along the ground with sinuous trail,
> Were nicely braided, and composed a work
> Like Indian mats, that with appropriate grace
> Lay at the threshold and the inner doors. (ll. 182-6)

Here the image of a creeping plant recurs, but unlike the delicate, exotic jasmine flower, these trails belong to hardy local plants: ‘tough moss’ and ‘long enduring mountain plants’. When these plants are brought into the home, they fulfil a different role to the jasmine plant. The jasmine, like a pet, was trained to grow indoors as ‘an Inmate’ and ‘Comrade’, whereas the rugged local plants are adapted into ‘nicely braided’ mats, combining the artistic and functional. Unlike the romanticised image of the daughter in ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ training a delicate, exotic plant, here, local plants are carefully developed into practical furnishings. Yet while this work seems parochial (it uses local materials and is produced by the traditional labour of cottage industry) it also gestures to the empire: the rugs are ‘Like Indian mats’. Once more, Wordsworth creates an image of the ‘perfect Republic’ Cumbrian community that comfortably exists within the wider British Empire. While the individually identified plants create further figures of loss in ‘The Tuft of Primroses’, *The Excursion* foregrounds the family’s labour of shaping and domesticating their small locale, implicitly making it coherent with the wider nation. *The Excursion* therefore harmonizes the loss of the Sympson family by positioning them within a wide realm that is connected and coherent – not like the fragmented, troubled sphere of Grasmere vale depicted in ‘The Tuft of Primroses’.

The vulnerable, disjointed nature of Grasmere vale in ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ is consolidated by the symbol for solace and continuity that the text centres on.

Following the tragic description of the loss of the Sympsons, the text returns to the primrose:

> Meanwhile the little Primrose of the rock
> Remains in sacred beauty, without taint
> Of injury or decay, […] and may be seen
> Long as the fullness of her bloom endures,
> With one short instantaneous chear of mind (ll. 235-243)

This wild flower offers an image of purity, beauty and vitality, the antithesis to the story of the Sympsons' decay and death. Although it is not as reliant upon attentive cultivation as Margaret Sympson's jasmine, it is nonetheless a delicate plant: Wordsworth acknowledges the plant is 'frail' (l. 11), and states the primrose 'will be seen / Long as the fullness of her bloom endures' (ll. 241-2). The small, isolated flower is therefore an ephemeral symbol: it cannot offer a substantial, enduring sense of continuity and reconciliation. *The Excursion* abandons this temporary delicate symbol in order to create a greater harmony between people and place. The Pastor concludes the tale by relating Joseph Sympson's death as a natural process:

> Like a shadow thrown
> Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,
> Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay
> For noon-tide solace on the summer grass,
> The warm lap of his Mother-Earth: and so,
> Their lenient term of separation past,

> That family (whose graves you there behold)
> By yet a higher privilege, once more
> Were gathered to each other. (VI, ll. 302-310)

Here, Sympson's death is not a devastating interruption that damages his garden – it is a naturalised process. It gently 'fell upon him', while he lies 'on the summer grass', which is also maternally figured as 'the warm lap of his Mother-Earth'. This benign image of nature does not perpetuate the garden/wild dichotomy, as occurs in the description of the garden's decay into wildness in 'The Tuft of Primroses'. Instead it extends the garden's scope, placing it within the broader sphere of 'Mother Earth', which ties into the graveyard. Sympson's naturalised death renews old continuities (the Sympson family are 'once more' together) and creates new ones (the garden is linked to nature and the graveyard). Structurally, the family are also placed within the broader community of churchyard narratives, so instead of the isolation, vulnerability and decay that marks 'The Tuft of Primroses', *The Excursion* establishes reconciliation and continuity.

These differences in turn reflect the respective texts. While both are part of *The Recluse* project, 'The Tuft of Primroses' is a fragment that Wordsworth could not complete, whereas *The Excursion* is developed and sustained. The principles of reconciliation, harmony and unity are integral to both Wordsworth's model of community and his poetic style in the 'determining community' phase. The principles enable Wordsworth to place disparate parts (people, narratives and texts) into a cohesive whole. Yet this is organizing rather than organicism: the parts remain distinctive and significant. He focusses on the process of connection and bringing things into harmony, not the unifying form that provides holism. In *The Excursion*, the church is an important centre – a focal point that provides a local authority (the clergyman) who can further unify disparate individuals – but it is not a dominant presence. The individual lives and places that exist beyond the church are significant in their own right, and the Pastor's role is to help forge connections and continuities between different entities. The *Ecclesiastic Sketches* continues this strain of organised contextualisation: Wordsworth places the church within a broad social, political and spiritual history.

The movement from 'experiencing' to 'determining community' is apparent in Wordsworth's changed portrayal of the Sympson family from 'The Tuft of Primroses' to *The Excursion*. The former text conceives their death as a devastating interruption that disrupts both human and plant life, causing a resonating trauma that chimes with the local church. The church sits like a defensive warden surveying and lamenting destructive changes to its parish. The later text moderates this violent grief into a loss that fits within a broader continuity of other losses. This naturalises the deaths by placing them into a bigger group: a community of the dead and the living. The family's life and death is further naturalised by the changed depiction of their associate plants: in 'The Tuft of Primroses' the plants are individuals that are also lost and mourned; in *The Excursion* the plants continue to live alongside humans and their places of worship. However, during the churchyard narratives, the Pastor also interrupts his discussion of the dead to disparage a living inhabitant, 'a keen Destroyer' (VII, l. 654), who makes his income from felling trees. This peasant travels past them with a 'giant Oak / Stretched on his bier!' (VII, ll. 563-4). While this introduces the loss of plants, it is framed differently to 'The Tuft of Primroses'. In 'The Tuft of Primroses', a significant number of trees had 'vanish'd like a cloud' (l. 100), while a vulnerable few remained: 'here and there a straggling Tree was left / To mourn in blank and monumental grief, / To pine and wither for its fellows gone.' (ll. 101-3) By contrast, in *The Excursion*, the felling of trees is an action performed by one living person. By identifying the perpetrator, his impact is contained and the threat he poses to other trees is addressed ('the Joyful Elm / […] And the Lord's Oak; – would plead their several rights / In vain, if He were master of their fate.' (VII, ll. 639-42)). The later text therefore mitigates the loss of trees by focussing on the individual who fells them rather than the scenes of damage and destruction left in his wake.

Trees and plants, particularly in their relationship with both humans and churches, become important symbols of continuity. Unlike the place of worship that occupies a fixed site within the locale, these plants extend outwards, connecting the church to the parish, and also fulfil the inverse movement, drawing the parish back into its bounds. Wordsworth's portrayal of cohesion and continuity through plant metaphors parallels Edmund Burke's description the English constitution as a 'British oak'.[100] Likening political agitators to grasshoppers, Burke commends the quiet population of cattle that repose under the oak:

> Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number, or that, after all, they are other than the little, shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour.[101]

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[100] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* ed. by J. C. D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 248.

[101] Ibid.

Whereas the agitating grasshoppers dwell beneath a small, delicate fern, the oak is a large tree that offers shelter to many. For Burke, the British constitution is a broad, organic entity that stretches above the citizens of the nation. This constitution provides stability and protection, enabling inhabitants to live in contented peace.[102] Similarly, Wordsworth's image of 'chapels lurking among trees', is a distinct symbol of continuity that endorses a relational version of community – a coexistence that links the spiritual, the natural, and the human – under the vast umbrella of the Church of England.

Conclusion

Wordsworth's writing in the 'determining community' phase seeks to resolve tensions by finding and prescribing a model for the ideal community. This model emerges most coherently in *Guide to the Lakes*, where he describes the 'perfect Republic' that formerly existed in Cumbria. This ideal is a self-contained, cohesive locale. It is independent and republican, yet it contains some hierarchy through the church institution. The ideal connects three significant aspects of the locale – the church, people, and environment – harmonising them into a consistent group. It also fits comfortably within the wider nation and empire. As I have demonstrated, Wordsworth composed examples of community members who exemplify this ideal, such as Walker and the Sympson family in *The Excursion*. Furthermore, to instil the model of cohesive community, he organises community members into structures: the churchyard narratives in *The Excursion* distinguish individuals into two types, who are placed into the shared and unifying space of the graveyard. In turn, the churchyard narratives sit within a larger text – *The*

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[102] When Wordsworth pays honour to the 'Genius of Burke' (VII, l. 512) in *The Prelude* he describes Burke as an oak: 'I see him, […] /Stand, like an Oak whose stag-horn branches start / Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe /The younger brethren of the grove.' (VII, 519-522) Here, Burke is the sturdy, impressive oak tree, which provides an imposing example to those who follow after him.

Excursion – which itself is placed into a bigger structure, *The Recluse*. Central to both of these movements is a single creative authority. In the churchyard narratives, this figure is the Pastor, who organises, manages and delivers the narratives. Beyond the text, it is Wordsworth, who composed the churchyard tales from real local narratives, editing, structuring and arranging them to fit within the bigger textual structures of *The Excursion* and *The Recluse*. For Wordsworth, organicism is a means of connecting different parts in order to ensure continuity.

Yet I also contest the use of the term organicism to describe Wordsworth's efforts to unite different people and texts. This chapter has revealed that Wordsworth does not assert an organic model, in which 'the whole is everything and the parts are nothing'.[103] Instead, he explores the value of reconciliation: bringing different and contrasting things into agreement, making them compatible. Compositionally, this produces texts that are concerned with networks, relationships, and connections. They seek to find continuities between disparate entities and existences, incorporating the human, natural, and religious alongside one another. This is distinct from the eighteenth-century organicism that Fairer observes in Wordsworth's earlier writing. While he still explores a 'living history' and 'endless process of life', he becomes increasingly resistant to that which appears disorganised, uncertain, or deviates from an overarching structure of strict moral and spiritual codes.[104] Individual lives are simplified in the later texts to enable effective categorisation, hence the two types of narrative in *The Excursion* Books VI-VII, and the idealisation of Walker. This system of local, complex relationships exists because it sits comfortably within a larger structure: the 'perfect Republic' is consistent with the 'powerful empire'; and the Cumbrian communities are consistent with their local church. The church and the chapel become important figures, within Wordsworth's poetry and his models of community, because they are given the task of restoring and maintaining continuity between different classes, generations, and ways of life. Ultimately, for Wordsworth, the place of worship is increasingly the facilitator for myriad conversations, connections and continuities.

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[103] Coleridge, quoted in Williams, *Keywords,* p. 228.
[104] Fairer, p. 284.

Chapter Four: Community in Crisis

Wordsworth's desire to shape communities into ideal structures was important in his 'determining community' phase. His efforts to influence Cumbrian society are apparent in a number of texts that address a critical local concern. His engagement with the deaths of George and Sarah Green (1808), the Westmorland election (1818), and the proposed Kendal and Windermere railway (1844) reveals how he adapted his ideal of community in response to local crises. At these moments, he does not allude to the church to highlight its beneficent influence upon society. Instead, he focusses on the particular issue at hand, directing how people should respond to it, which in turn reveals his concept of Cumbrian community. The Green tragedy was a crisis in two ways: it caused the whole village of Grasmere great distress and raised concerns about how to support their eight destitute children; it also undermined Wordsworth's belief that Grasmere was a perfect community in which 'extreme penury' was unknown. The 1818 election was the first contested election in Westmorland for forty-four years. Previously, the Lowther family had returned both Tory Members, yet in 1818 a Whig candidate challenged their supremacy. This created a heated election campaign in which Wordsworth was an active advocate for the Lowther family. Finally, the prospect of a railway in the Lake District was viewed by Wordsworth as a decisive change which would have a catastrophic effect upon the locale. Each of these crises prompted a flurry of creativity. Wordsworth composed a poem and wrote a number of letters to promote the Green family subscription; he wrote many letters to the Lowthers and a number of propaganda prose pieces in response to the election challenge; and he similarly wrote polemical poetry and prose to contest the railway.

The chapter has a twofold aim: to reveal how Wordsworth's ideas of community were affected or challenged by these critical moments, and to demonstrate how

Wordsworth variously portrays Lakeland communities to advance his polemic. I argue that the Green tragedy was a turning point for Wordsworth's idealist concept of Grasmere, and that after 1808 he increasingly advocated a hierarchical model of community support that privileged wealthy patrons. This is a decisive moment in his creative shift from exploring the experience of life in Cumbrian communities to seeking to determine the ideal form. His endorsement of the Lowthers in the 1818 election exemplifies his growing partiality for defining community structures by wealth and hierarchy. I suggest that he promotes a defined community of Lowther supporters that he contrasts with the opposition, creating polar groups that, unlike the churchyard narratives in *The Excursion*, are not reconciled. Finally, in 1844, Wordsworth subsumes the voices, opinions, and identities of other inhabitants – both rich and poor – to form a single community. In each of these cases, Wordsworth creates a cohesive version of community that he can then place in opposition to, or portray as under threat from, the crisis in question. His direct engagement with local issues brings the dual nature of 'community' to the forefront. While the term often describes an attractive, warm, inclusive environment, it also has a darker, potentially hostile edge through its exclusion of outsider-others. In contrast to the approach to community that emerged in the content of poems analysed in the first chapter, where Wordsworth attempts to reach out to and understand strange others, in the texts studied in this chapter he performs the opposite sympathetic movement: he seeks to draw other people into agreement with him. While this emphasis diverges from the content of earlier poems, it corresponds with his approach to readership throughout his career: that readers should 'read with the feelings of the Author'.[1] Lucy Newlyn defines this as Wordsworth's poetic aim, 'to transform an anonymous public into a sympathetic readership'.[2] Yet as I shall reveal, the effort to portray a cohesive community in order to persuade his readership to participate in that group, is a demanding creative act and the texts contain many unresolved problems and tensions.

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[1] William Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson, 14 June 1802, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805),* ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. 367-368 (p. 366).

The Green family: a Grasmere Tragedy

The deaths of George and Sarah Green was a tragedy that had broad repercussions. The devastating effects were felt by the Green family, Grasmere valley as a whole, and Wordsworth, who suffered a crisis in confidence, as Grasmere ceased to be 'A whole without dependence or defect'.[3] On 19 March 1808 the husband and wife got lost in a snowstorm and died on their journey home to Grasmere from Langdale. They had left at home six children aged between one and eleven, who waited for two days before they raised the alarm with a neighbour. The Greens' bodies were found on 23 March and they were buried in Grasmere churchyard on 25 March. Dorothy swiftly reported to William that the tragedy threw the entire vale into 'the greatest consternation'.[4] Many local men were involved in searching the fells, and after the bodies were found, the concern shifted to the care of eight orphaned children. A subscription was quickly established to raise funds to help house, school and support the children, ensuring that they could stay in the vale and remain close to one another. This was hugely successful: by May 1808 over £300 had been raised, and by September the fund stretched to nearly £500. A committee of local residents took on roles to oversee the distribution of the funds and care of the children: six local women (Mary Wordsworth, Susannah Knott, Mrs Watson, Mrs Lloyd, Mrs King, Mrs North) were responsible for the trust's daily operation; Grasmere's vicar (Thomas Jackson) was the trustee; and the parish clerk (George Mackereth) was the official collector of funds.[5] As well as Mary's role on the committee, the Wordsworths played an active part in raising funds and caring for the Green children: William wrote to a number of influential friends and acquaintances to solicit funds for the subscription; Dorothy wrote a detailed account of the Green family; Mary kept the day-to-day accounts for the subscription fund; they housed Sally Green (who had been their servant) until 1810 when she was sent to boarding school; and at Rydal Mount in 1829 they hosted an event which saw the final distribution of the remaining funds among the children.

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[2] Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 105.

[3] William Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First of 'The Recluse'*, ed. by Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), l. 167.

[4] Dorothy to William Wordsworth, 23 March 1808, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth II: The Middle Years, 1806-1811,* ed. by Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 200.

Michelle Levy offers a significant study of the Wordsworths' involvement in the Green family tragedy.[6] She analyses Dorothy's unpublished text, *A Narrative Concerning George and Sarah Green* (composed 1808), to demonstrate the Wordsworth siblings' varying attitudes towards the poor, charity and sympathy. She reveals Dorothy's reservations and misgivings about human responses to poverty, which she contrasts with Wordsworth, who, she suggests 'thought that poverty was useful to the moral economy of the community'.[7] While Levy particularly focuses on Dorothy's writing, I analyse Wordsworth's texts to reveal how the tragedy affected his ideas of community. As well as revealing his attitudes towards the poor, I suggest that the texts demonstrate the ways that local people influence his creativity. I first examine letters and the poem 'Who Weeps for Strangers' to consider how Wordsworth used different forms and approaches to engage various audiences with the subscription. I then demonstrate how the tragedy influenced Wordsworth's major poetic project, *The Recluse*. Developing James Butler's comparative study of 'Home at Grasmere' (1800-1806) and 'The Tuft of Primroses' (1808), I illustrate how the marked change in tone and outlook (from optimism to despair and disillusionment) can be linked to the Green family tragedy.[8] I argue that Wordsworth portrayed Grasmere differently after the tragedy: while on the one hand he was concerned with engaging outsiders with the community for the subscription; on the other, he ceased imagining the Grasmere community as a vital, cohesive society. It is a pivotal moment in his shift from 'experiencing' to 'determining community'.

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[5] Michelle Levy, 'Social History, Manuscript Remains: The Wordsworths and the Greens', in *Remembering the Greens of Grasmere: A Village Bicentenary, March 2008* (Kendal: Wordsworth Trust, 2008), pp. 5-9.

[6] Michelle Levy, 'The Wordsworths, the Greens, and the Limits of Sympathy', *Studies in Romanticism,* 42 (2003), 541-63.

[7] Levy, p. 554.

i. The Green Family and 'Who Weeps for Strangers'

Wordsworth's immediate response to the Green family tragedy produced two different types of text: letters to wealthy friends and acquaintances, and a poem, 'Who Weeps for Strangers'. These texts reveal Wordsworth's role in the local community, his part in the campaign, and his concept of Grasmere community. The letters inform the recipient about the tragedy, and use various techniques to engage them with the campaign and Grasmere village life more generally. The first, dated 13 April 1808 is addressed to Richard Sharp, a wealthy merchant, Dissenter, and Whig politician who had been part of the abolition movement.[9] Wordsworth first appeals to 'your general humanity', and then also 'the particular interest you take in this part of the country'. This twofold appeal links humanitarian and regional concerns. Wordsworth further compounds these two strands when he addresses the specific purpose of the letter:

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[8] James Butler, 'Wordsworth's "Tuft of Primroses": "An Unrelenting Doom", *Studies in Romanticism*, 14 (1975), 237-248, p. 242.

[9] William Wordsworth to Richard Sharp, 13 April 1808, *Letters* II, pp. 210-211.

> Let me beg of you for the sake of the children of whom you will read in this Paper, and of the pleasant remembrances which you will have in common with me, of Easedale, that part of Grasmere Vale of which the unfortunate Persons you will read of were inhabitants, that you would procure among your friends, Mr Boddington for example and Mr Philips (I mention these more particularly) and any other of your Friends, unknown to me, a contribution however small for the purposes specified in the Paper.[10]

Sharp's humanity is drawn upon with the imploring verb phrase 'let me *beg* of you' and its explanation, 'for the sake of the children', inviting him to consider and help their cause. The following clause links the request to the locale, familiarising Sharp with the appeal by reminding him of his fond memories of Easedale, before explaining how the valley is associated with 'the unfortunate Persons'. Wordsworth thereby creates a connection between Sharp and the Greens that draws on personal experience. Wordsworth also constructs Sharp's familiarity with Easedale as a shared ('in common') experience with himself. The associative process of drawing personal links between people and places continues, as Wordsworth then appeals to Sharp's own familiar circles, drawing in his 'friends' to the campaign.[11] This resembles the process of reconciliation described in Chapter Three: he seeks to bring the distant recipient into harmony and accord with Grasmere society. While this extending circle of familiarity seems fluent, it develops within a complex, lengthy sentence. The opening verb phrase ('let me beg of you') is completed with the noun phrase, 'a contribution', after many intervening clauses. The awkward structure demonstrates Wordsworth's uneasiness with the request: he not only delays the object of the sentence, but, when it finally appears, it is immediately followed with the qualifying phrase, 'however small'. The effort to draw Sharp into Grasmere village concerns is therefore a hesitant, awkward process.

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[10] Ibid.

[11] The two friends that Wordsworth specifies are Samuel Boddington and George Philips who were also Dissenters and business partners with Sharp in a West India merchant firm.

By contrast, Wordsworth's appeal to Francis Wrangham (then a vicar in Folkton, Yorkshire) on 17 April is altogether more succinct and direct because he knew him better:

> Your last letter arrived just in time viz, while I was busy in stirring among my more rich and powerful Friends, among whom you yourself are to be ranked, to promote the interest of a cluster of little orphans, who have been left such in a most afflicting manner. Pray read the account, and do exert yourself among your humane and affluent friends to promote the benevolent design we are setting on foot.[12]

It is framed as a happy coincidence in which two purposes for writing – to reply to Wrangham's letter and 'to promote the interest' of the Green family – punctually coincide. Here, the flattery is more overt, with Wordsworth explicitly classifying Wrangham 'among my more rich and powerful Friends'. This image of power and affluence is juxtaposed with the Green children who are portrayed as a small, vulnerable group: 'a cluster of little orphans'. Wordsworth instructs Wrangham more directly than

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[12] Wordsworth to Francis Wrangham, 17 April 1808, *Letters* II, pp. 211-4.

Sharp, using commanding verbs: '*read* the account', '*do* exert yourself', '*promote* the benevolent design'. This different approach reflects the level of intimacy the writer and recipient share: whereas Wordsworth sought to familiarise Sharp with the Grasmere locale to gain his support for the campaign, here, the letter is part of an on-going correspondence, and so Wordsworth can afford to be more direct.

Wordsworth's letter to Coleridge on 19 April makes his role in the local community clear, demonstrating how the letters to Sharp and Wrangham are part of a concerted campaign. Unlike his attempt to compose connections with Sharp, or brief instructions to Wrangham, Wordsworth immediately draws Coleridge into the work behind the campaign:

> considerable exertions have been made to serve the orphan Greens; a paper which I drew up has been circulated, and a subscription solicited with good success. I sent an abridgement of this paper to Sharp, to Montagu, to Wrangham, and even to Lady Holland, and mean to send one to Rogers. One shall be sent to you, to which you may add such particulars from Dorothy's Letters as you may think serviceable in making up a moving story, and I think you will be able effectually to aid us.[13]

Whereas Wrangham was informed that he was part of a general circle of 'rich and powerful friends', Wordsworth names the group's members to Coleridge. This acts on two levels: to inform Coleridge of the campaign to date (avoiding repeat appeals to the same people), and to impress its ambitious scope upon him as he is invited 'to aid us'. Most significantly, the letter sets forth Wordsworth's shrewd approach to gaining these funds. He authorises Coleridge to combine various sources of the Green narrative (Wordsworth's letters, paper, and Dorothy's letters) to '[make] up a moving story'. This reveals the creative rationale that informed Wordsworth's writing about the Green family: the desire to create a 'moving story' to encourage fund subscriptions. It recalls Robin Jarvis' concept of William and Dorothy's story barter: demanding a narrative from vagrants before giving them money.[14] However, while Wordsworth deems the Greens deserving of charity, it is not due to the quality of their story. Unlike the examples that Jarvis gives – encounters that produce poems published under Wordsworth's name (such as 'Beggars') – here, Wordsworth does not re-frame their personal history to benefit his own individual literary career. Rather, he is acting as part of a group: 'you will be able effectually to aid *us*.' It is unclear whom 'us' refers to: it could be Dorothy, his family, the charity committee, the Green children, or the whole village of Grasmere; yet, however far this group extends, the plural pronoun demonstrates that Wordsworth is conscious of his role within a larger, communal whole that works together to support the Green children.

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[13] Wordsworth to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 19 April 1808, *Letters* II, pp. 217-224.

However, Wordsworth also distinguishes himself from the group when he introduces 'Who Weeps for Strangers', a poem he composed about the Green tragedy. While this shifts the focus towards individual authorship, Wordsworth's convoluted introduction to the poem also complicates and contests his creative authority:

> Within a day or two of my return home, when my mind was easier than it has been since, in passing through the churchyard I stopped at the grave of the poor Sufferers and immediately afterwards composed the following stanzas;

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[14] Robin Jarvis, 'Wordsworth and the Use of Charity', in *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts 1780-1832*, ed. by Stephen Copley and John Whale (Routledge: London, 1992), pp. 200-217 (pp. 204-6).

> *composed* I have said, I ought to have said effused, for it is the mere outpouring of my own feeling; but if you can turn these verses to any profit for the poor Orphans in any way, either by reciting, circulating in manuscript, or publishing them, either with or without the name of the Author, pray do so.[15]

There is a marked change in sentence structure: the shorter, focussed descriptions and directions that appear earlier in the letter give way to a lengthy and complex structure, which resembles Wordsworth's appeal to Sharp. Similarly, the passage contains multiple clauses that encompass a variety of content, including a description of composition, his state of mind, a linguistic quibble, instructions for Coleridge, and possibilities for circulating the poem. As with the letter to Sharp, this syntactical labyrinth betrays Wordsworth's uncertainty about the subject he is introducing (the poem). Wordsworth's poetic uncertainty is further apparent in his correction of '[I] composed the following stanzas', to 'I ought to have said effused'. In one sense, this lessens the poem's creative authority: while 'composed' suggests a calm, formal, and confident approach, 'effused' implies the poem emerged from a wild, emotional process.[16] It recalls Wordsworth's description of his first composition in *The Prelude* (see Chapter Two). There, he describes himself muttering poetry ('like a river murmuring' (IV, ll. 110)) before having to collect himself to meet other people ('I hushed / My voice, composed my gait, and shaped myself / To give and take a greeting' (IV, ll. 116-118)), and so, similarly, this passage construes the creative act as an unrestrained 'outpouring'. The description has the immediacy of Wordsworth's 'experiencing community' phase. But he also moderates its fervour by prefixing it as a

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[15] Wordsworth to Coleridge, *Letters* II, p. 219.

[16] Wordsworth's effusions could also be formal elegies. See 'Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg' (1835): a refined, revised, published text.

'*mere* outpouring of my own feeling', indicating a tension between emotion and composition. The relationship between these two entities is explained in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*:

> Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a similar mood to this it is carried on [17]

The 'successful' compositional process depends upon a reflective interlude between the original emotion that inspires the poem, and the reproduced emotion that enables the poem to be written. Yet, according to Wordsworth's account, he composed 'Who Weeps for Strangers' before he had time to reflect and calmly recollect the emotion: the poem was written 'immediately afterwards', and on the following days his mind was less 'easy', removing the opportunity for 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. This reflects a tension between two different modes of writing and phases of thinking about community: in the 'remembering' phase, there is a distance between the poet and his subject, which enables 'successful composition'; yet when he responds to immediate experiences, he does not have the luxury of distance, and so produces a different type of text. His process of composing 'Who Weeps for Strangers' recalls the difficulties he encountered writing 'Resolution and Independence': Sara Hutchinson's criticism of the 'tedious' early draft reflects the unrefined nature of Wordsworth's first poetic response to the leech-gatherer; his revisions to the poem add greater distance between the poet and the subject matter (in terms of time and layers of interpretive text) producing a more sophisticated final text. Like the first draft of ‘Resolution and Independence’, ‘Who Weeps for Strangers’ is also an unrevised text that describes Wordsworth’s experience in a rougher, more immediate form.

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[17] Wordsworth, 'Preface', in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 740-759 (p. 756).

Wordsworth’s uneasiness about the poem is further apparent in his suggestion that Coleridge can distribute the verses ‘either with or without the name of the Author’; and by any method, ‘either by reciting, circulating in manuscript, or publishing them’. Such reluctant authorial-authority stands in contrast to Wordsworth’s direction to Coleridge: ‘turn these verses to any profit for the poor Orphans’. It points to his anxious relationship with print culture, which Newlyn describes as an ‘almost paranoid fear that poets were at the mercy of a hostile reading public.’[18] She explains how he frequently circulated manuscripts among ‘small interpretative communities’ (sympathetic friends and family) due to his ‘reticence about emerging into the public sphere.’[19] Wordsworth’s presentation of ‘Who Weeps for Strangers’ to Coleridge certainly fits with this model. Yet while Newlyn suggests that Wordsworth aimed to persuade his readers to empathetically agree with the ‘emotional world’ he creates within his poetry, in this instance, he does not attempt to coerce Coleridge into agreeing with the poem. He does not invite Coleridge to view the poem as a complete whole, but as ‘verses’ that can be turned or manipulated to support the campaign, continuing his previous instruction to Coleridge to take ‘particulars’ from the Green family account to ‘[make] up a moving story’. In permitting Coleridge to manipulate the poem, Wordsworth does not pursue his usual tactic of masking his need for approval by demanding the reader's obedience.[20] Instead he discloses a profound uncertainty about the text.

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[18] Newlyn, ‘Case Study 2: Wordsworth’, in *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: the Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 91-133 (p. 92).

[19] Newlyn, p. 102.

Given these manifold tensions within Wordsworth's account of the poem and its composition, it is interesting that Dorothy identifies a different quibble. Rather than picking up on the 'composed' / 'effused' dispute, in a letter to Lady Beaumont she disputes where he says it was written: 'It was *begun* in the churchyard, when he was looking at the grave of the husband and wife, and is, in fact, *supposed* to be entirely composed there.'[21] [My italics] Although Wordsworth does not explicitly define where he composed the poem to Coleridge (he ambiguously states it was written 'immediately' after stopping at the Greens' graves), the poem's lengthy title situates the composition exclusively in the churchyard: 'Elegiac Stanzas composed in the Churchyard of Grasmere, Westmorland, a few days after the Internment there of a Man and his Wife, Inhabitants of the Vale, who were lost upon the neighbouring Mountains, on the night of the nineteenth of March last.' By exposing the story behind Wordsworth's siting of the poem's composition, Dorothy's statement highlights the poem's central poetic conceit. 'Who Weeps for Strangers' should be understood as an inscription poem, the point of which, according to Andrew Bennett, 'is the historically and temporally specified performance of writing'.[22] Bennett notes of inscription poems, 'the very act of inscription becomes the fulcrum around which the poem's energies gather.'[23] This is certainly apparent in 'Who Weeps for Strangers', as the poem, on the page and according to its 'history', is founded on the temporal and spatial link between the author and the subjects' graves. The compositional narrative resembles the associative technique Wordsworth employed in his letter to Sharp, articulating connections between people and places in order to justify his request, and to persuade Sharp to engage with the campaign. Building on Bennett's analysis of inscription poetry, I suggest that in this instance, Wordsworth uses the conventions of the form to handle a deeply sensitive subject. The inscription poem enables Wordsworth to signal an irrefutable connection between the author and subject, establishing the poem's persuasive integrity.

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[20] Newlyn, p. 104.
[21] Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, 20 April 1808, *Letters* II, pp. 224-5.
[22] Andrew Bennett, *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 80.
[23] Bennett, p. 81.

Yet, as Thomas Schmid and Levy have noted, Wordsworth's poem is an awkward and uncomfortable text.[24] Levy's thorough analysis of Dorothy's *Narrative* and the Wordsworths' concept of sympathy offers a brief comparison of Dorothy's text and 'Who Weeps for Strangers'. She finds Wordsworth's retelling to be 'infused with sensibility', adding (in footnotes) further criticism of the poem's sublime setting, gruesome moments, and 'pathetic and unsettling' details, such as: 'the children have immediately forgotten their parents […] Dorothy, by contrast, describes the acute grief felt by all the children long after the shock of the first few days, and the anguish they feel when they are taken from their home, separated from each other, and dispersed to their new homes.'[25] While I agree that Wordsworth's poem is an awkward text that includes unsettling details, I disagree with the terms of Levy's criticism and the contrast she draws between Wordsworth and Dorothy's texts. It is important to reassess the poem by considering its particular context. Firstly, it was written before Dorothy's account, and must have been composed sometime between 6 and 19 April. This means the tragedy was altogether more recent and affecting, and the success of the public subscription was still unconfirmed when Wordsworth composed the poem, whereas Dorothy's account was written at a slightly greater distance from the tragedy (dated 4 May 1808), and so she describes the success of the subscription, the establishment of a committee, and the children's new homes. Secondly, the poem was written for a distinct purpose and uses the conventions of a particular form: to provide 'a moving story' that encourages subscriptions from those it was circulated amongst. Accordingly, the poem contains many emotive images and devices. By contrast, Dorothy's prose narrative is altogether more detailed and was not intended to elicit subscriptions (on 22 April Dorothy wrote to Catherine Clarkson that they had received sufficient donations for the fund).[26] Thirdly, while Wordsworth suggested circulating or publishing 'Who Weeps for Strangers', ultimately the poem was never seriously prepared for publication by Wordsworth.[27] There is no record of him revising and redrafting the poem, making it an altogether less worked piece than his published poetry, which was typically subject to on-going revision. Taking a different approach, Dorothy suggested to Catherine Clarkson that she would be prepared for her text to be published in the future: 'Thirty or forty years hence when the Characters of the children are formed and they can be no longer objects of curiosity if it should be thought that any service would be done, it is my present wish that it should be then published whether I am alive or dead'.[28]

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[24] See Michelle Levy; and Thomas Schmid, 'Bearing Witness: The Green Tragedy', *Wordsworth Circle* 44 (2013), 148-52.

[25] Levy, p. 550.

I suggest that while certain fundamental compositional anxieties shaped 'Who Weeps for Strangers', Wordsworth's uneasiness about the text reflects a particular tension. The poem relates to two distinct styles: it is both an 'experiencing community' poem, and a campaign text; making it both a lyrical elegy that describes fresh, vivid experiences, and a piece of persuasive rhetoric, concerned with engaging a wider audience with a specific, urgent concern. Thus the poem should be understood not as a refined piece of poetry, but a creative effort towards the campaign. It was written in an emotionally charged environment defined by various concerns: how to raise funds, how to support the children, and how to portray the tragedy to others. As Wordsworth's letter to Coleridge demonstrates, his motive for the poem was to promote subscriptions and to create a moving story. Accordingly, his sense of creative ownership is ambivalent: he carefully constructs a particular narrative of composition, but equally, he resigns the poem and its authorship to Coleridge's discretion. It is therefore critical to view the 1808 poem alongside the campaign letters which reveals that it is a further piece of persuasive rhetoric – one of the many techniques that he employed to engage a wider audience with the subscription. In these texts, Wordsworth responds to immediate experiences of community without seeking to define an ideal model of community, as he does in later writing. A change occurs after he acknowledges the challenge that the tragedy poses to his concept of Grasmere as an ideal community, which forces him to consider the structures that support vulnerable inhabitants and shape Cumbrian society.

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[26] Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 22 April, 1808, *Letters* II, pp. 228-9.

[27] There are only three surviving manuscript versions of 'Who Weeps for Strangers', all of which date from 1808 and contain only small grammatical and linguistic variations: one sent to Coleridge on 19 April, another to Lady Beaumont on 20 April, and a third written by Dorothy onto the flyleaf of the copy of *Poems in Two Volumes* presented to the Beaumonts. A fourth, radically different version of the text exists from 1839: the version that Thomas De Quincey published in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*. While this text resolves a number of the issues that Schmid and Levy have with the original poem (it removes stanzas that they object to, and overall has a less emotionally charged tone), the Cornell editors find no evidence that Wordsworth made these changes. Carl Ketcham, *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 47.

[28] Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 9 December 1810, *Letters* II, pp. 453-54.

ii. The Green family and *The Recluse*

While I have argued that the 1808 version of 'Who Weeps for Strangers' is not a full, developed, or finished poem, from April 1808 Wordsworth was engaged in another, more serious poetic project: work towards *The Recluse*. 'The Tuft of Primroses' (1808) registers the collapse of community in Grasmere, as the ideal society presented in 'Home at Grasmere' (1800-6) is fragmented and ruined (see also Chapter Three). No critic has explored the relationship between these texts and the Green family tragedy. However some of the changes between the two are linked to the tragedy and provide insight into

Wordsworth's changing relationship with Grasmere. James Butler outlines the marked difference in tone and outlook between the two texts. While the earlier one describes the promise of the vale as the fitting location for the poet to retire and compose his great work (*The Recluse*), the later text portrays the vale as a scene of decay and disillusionment. In 'Home at Grasmere', Butler writes: 'together the place and the people enabled him to construct the symbol of a Vale of repose and security. In "The Tuft of Primroses", however, there is the odour of decay and death in the diction.'[29] Butler links the tone of decline within 'The Tuft of Primroses' to various biographical details: John Wordsworth's death (1805), Sara Hutchinson's illness, Wordsworth's cooling relationship with Coleridge, and changes to Grasmere that Wordsworth discovered when he returned from Coleorton in July 1807 (including the death of Joseph Sympson, and prominent trees felled). Building on Butler's analysis of the two texts, the Green family tragedy was also a prominent concern when Wordsworth composed 'The Tuft of Primroses'. Although the Green tragedy is never explicitly addressed within the poem (unlike Sara's illness, Joseph Sympson's death, and the felled trees), Wordsworth's changed portrayal of the local inhabitants reflects the effect of the tragedy on his relationship with the village.

The elegiac tone that is established early within 'The Tuft of Primroses' recalls the opening of 'Who Weeps for Strangers':

> Alas how much,
> Since I beheld and loved Thee first, how much
> Is gone, though thou be left; I would not speak
> Of best Friends dead, or *other deep heart loss*

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[29] Butler, p. 243.

> *Bewail'd with weeping* [my italics] [30]

The euphemism 'other deep heart loss' is ambiguously open: it refers to a profound loss (or losses) as distinct from 'best Friends dead' (Joseph Sympson and John Wordsworth?), but otherwise the source of grief is unclear. The odd syntax either describes a loss *of* the heart, making 'heart' a compound noun (heart-loss), or a loss *to* the heart (heart's loss), making 'heart' a possessive noun. The following line is similarly imprecise due to its near tautology, 'Bewail'd with weeping'. However, it recalls Wordsworth's description of the communal weeping for the Greens: 'Who weeps for Strangers? – Many wept / For George and Sarah Green; / Wept for that Pair's unhappy end' (ll. 1-3). In these three lines the word 'weep' is repeated three times (in present and past tense); 'The Tuft of Primroses' also uses the same verb ('weeping'), but rather than repeating that word, it is placed within a consonance of 'w' sounds. The iambic pentameter stresses these 'w' sounds: the emphasis falls on 'wail'd' and 'weep', while 'with' slides between the two words, linking their sounds and meanings into an encompassing, repetitive phrase. The passage is a more sophisticated version of 'Who Weeps for Strangers', that develops the description of repetitive weeping into an evocative sound phrase, as the source of grief becomes more ambiguous ('deep heart loss' rather than 'For George and Sarah Green').

By contrast, 'Home at Grasmere' generally constructs Grasmere vale as 'A whole without dependence or defect / Made for itself and happy in itself, / Perfect Contentment, Unity entire.' (ll. 167-170) However, violence intrudes upon the scene when the speaker speculates that an inhabitant may have killed a pair of swans: 'The Shepherd may have already seized the deadly tube / And parted them, incited by a prize'

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[30] Wordsworth, 'The Tuft of Primroses', in *The Tuft of Primroses, with Other Late Poems for 'The Recluse'*, ed. by Joseph Kishel (Ithaca: Cornell, 1986), pp. 39-56, ll. 70-4.

(ll. 352-3). The local's action is defined through objects – the weapon ('the deadly tube') and its motivation ('a prize') – making the act brutally crude. Yet the speaker flips the paradigm of suspected violence when he recalls that it is his own conjecture, making himself the aggressor: 'I cannot look upon this favoured Vale / But that I seem, by harbouring the thought, / To wrong it' (ll. 358-360). In recognising the true perpetrator of violence, Wordsworth constructs the 'Vale' as a benign setting that is vulnerable to assault through misconception. Following this brief transgression, the speaker proceeds to reckon Grasmere's social worth in more precise and objective terms. This serves to substantiate and reinforce earlier positive generalisations about the vale:

> extreme penury is here unknown,
> And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness,
> Mortal to body and the heaven-born mind;
> That they who want are not too great a weight
> For those who can relieve. (MS. B, ll. 444-448)

The opposition between need and charity, or 'want' and 'relief', is deemed to be in good balance. The poor are not referred to as a 'burden', but the more euphemistic 'not too great a *weight*' (implying both individual depths of poverty and the total quantity of impoverished people). The locale's social economy is predicated upon a mathematical logic, which, like account sheets or weighing scales, effectively manages poverty through offsetting. As a result, Wordsworth states, 'Here may the heart / Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering / Dreadless' (ll. 448-450). While the sentence means that the heart can breathe in a 'fresher breeze' (l. 450) without the dread of 'fellow-suffering', the position of the adjective ('dreadless') defers the actual meaning. This allows the negative state of 'fellow-suffering' to temporarily exist before it is refuted. Although the sentence has this complexity, the noun 'heart' exists in a simpler phrase than in 'The Tuft of Primroses': 'deep heart loss' does not explain whether 'heart' exists in a possessive or compound relationship with the noun 'loss', obscuring the meaning, whereas in 'Home at Grasmere' the heart performs a simple verb action ('Breathe'). In a number of the texts discussed in this thesis, Wordsworth refers to the heart to outline how one instinctively learns and develops sympathy: this occurs in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', 'The Tables Turned', and one of the 'Mathew' elegies.[31] By contrast, he also marks the damaging effects of a blocked heart: in 'Alice Fell', her heart was 'choked' by grief, inhibiting her ability to interact with other people; and in *The Excursion*, when the Wanderer was critical of the Solitary, he then had to perform an act that 'removed' all 'unbenign aversion or contempt' from his heart (Book IV, ll. 1009-11). For Wordsworth therefore, an open and responsive heart is a prerequisite for his ideal of compassionate interactions between people. Since 'Home at Grasmere' frees the heart to perform an essential function, whereas 'The Tuft of Primroses' constrains it within a knotty phrase, there is a significant change in outlook between the two texts.

The basis for Wordsworth's emancipated heart in 'Home at Grasmere' – that 'extreme penury' is unknown in the vale – was disproved by the Green family tragedy. George and Sarah Green's deaths revealed severe poverty within the vale. Dorothy writes: 'when the neighbours went to look after the Children they found nothing in the house but two boilings of potatoes, a very little meal, a little bread, and three of four legs of lean dried mutton. The cow at that time did not give a quart of milk in the day. You will wonder how they lived at all; and indeed I can scarcely tell you.'[32] Levy describes Dorothy's *Narrative* as both an 'account of the community's *failure* to come to the Greens' aid', and an 'observation that the mixed economy of private charity and public relief administered through the parish did little to relieve quotidian suffering.'[33] Although Wordsworth himself does not explicitly register or discuss the problem that the Greens' extreme poverty presented to his ideal of the local mixed economy, it can be read through a shift in emphasis from 'Home at Grasmere' to 'The Tuft of Primroses'. There is no like effort in 'The Tuft of Primroses' to address Grasmere's social model, or society more generally. Whereas the vale's inhabitants are prominent, active participants in 'Home at Grasmere', the villagers are withdrawn from 'The Tuft of Primroses'. Instead, buildings become the significant local figures, and they note harmful changes to the vale: the church passively stands watching 'his domain', noting 'injury', 'profanation or despoil' (ll.131, 133), but is unable to intervene or help; and 'that small cottage' 'calls for more regret' (ll. 134-5).

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[31] In 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', the neighbour gains an 'exhilarated heart' (l. 153) when she gives; the speaker in 'The Tables Turned' instructs Mathew to 'Come forth, and bring with you / A heart that watches and receives.' (ll. 31-2); and the second Mathew elegy suggests 'Learning will often dry the heart […] But Mathew had an idle art / Of teaching love and happiness.' Wordsworth, 'ii. "Just as the Blowing Thorn Began"', in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 297-8, ll. 13-16.

While the cottage described in 'The Tuft of Primroses' belonged to the Sympsons, there is also a parallel between that cottage and the Greens' home. Both are situated 'aloft' (approximately 100m elevation), at similar distances from the centre of the village: the Sympsons' was at High Broadraine, near 'the vale's northern outlet' (l. 138) (1.75 km from the church as the crow flies), and the Greens' Blindtarn Cottage is in Easedale (1.5km from the church). When Wordsworth wrote to thank Sharp for his contribution to the subscription, he describes the Greens' cottage, like the Sympsons', as a 'lonely and now deserted house':

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[32] Dorothy Wordsworth, 'A Narrative Concerning George and Sarah Green', in *Remembering the Greens of Grasmere: A Village Bicentenary, March 2008* (Kendal: Wordsworth Trust, 2008), pp. 11-27 (p. 13).

[33] Levy, pp. 549-551.

> The House, in its appearance and situation, strikingly accords with the melancholy catastrophe; a brawling Brook close by, with huge stones and scattered rocks on every side. The house itself is of grey mountain stone, as if it had grown out of the mountain, an indigenous Dwelling, for indigenous Inhabitants.[34]

The association, or 'accord', between the 'melancholy catastrophe' and the house resembles the description of the Sympsons' 'long privileg'd House left empty, swept / As by a plague' (ll. 155-6). Yet whereas 'The Tuft of Primroses' dwells on the Sympsons' efforts to cultivate their garden, bringing in exotic plants and flowers (including shrubs, tulips, fruit trees, roses, and jasmine), Wordsworth portrays the Greens' cottage as 'an indigenous Dwelling', that is defined by its crude, rugged local features: 'huge stones', 'scattered rocks' and 'grey mountain stone'. This partly describes a difference in class: the Sympsons were wealthier, and belonged to the genteel middle class (meaning they could afford to share numerous cultural practices with the Wordsworths, such as walking, poetry, and gardening); the Greens were impoverished farmers who 'were in the habit of carrying any trifles they could spare out of the house or stable to barter for potatoes or meal.'[35] It reveals Wordsworth's construction of different types of Grasmere resident: the Greens were small landowners whose farm in Grasmere had been passed down the generations, and so the repeated adjective, 'indigenous', defines both the Greens and their home as natives; by contrast, the middle-class professional Joseph Sympson moved to Grasmere to begin his curacy in Wythburn, and so the family are portrayed as having a civilizing influence on the locale – they are people who bring in new, exotic, and attractive ways of life.

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[34] Wordsworth to Richard Sharp, 25th April 1808, *Letters* II, pp. 229-230.

[35] Dorothy Wordsworth, *A Narrative*, p. 13.

Clearly, there are differences between the two cottages and their former inhabitants, but in 1808 Wordsworth portrays both cottages as isolated and decaying: sites that recall melancholy events. This contrasts with the depiction of buildings within 'Home at Grasmere'. There, Wordsworth similarly describes the 'Church and Cottages' as built 'of mountain stone' (l. 140), yet they are either 'clustered like stars' (l. 141), or 'Like separated stars with clouds between' (l. 144). As stars, the cottages are points of illumination that shine in the vale like Michael's cottage, 'The Evening Star' – although Michael's cottage stands out as a single example, while 'Home at Grasmere' suggests that every cottage in the valley has the quality of a star. This sense of local unity is developed in Wordsworth's grand affirmation of Grasmere's society:

> Society is here:
> The true community, the noblest Frame
> Of many into one incorporate;
> That must be looked for here; paternal sway,
> One household under God for high and low,
> One family and one mansion; to themselves
> Appropriate and divided from the world
> As if it were a cave, a multitude
> Human and brute, possessors undisturbed
> Of this recess, their legislative Hall,
> Their Temple, and their glorious dwelling-place. (ll. 818-828)

In striking contrast to the fragmented buildings within 'The Tuft of Primroses' which stand as symbolic markers of Grasmere's collapsed community, here Wordsworth advances a vision of philosophic unity. ‘The many’ are incorporated into ‘one’, creating a cohesive organicism. This is distinct from the harmonised community that Wordsworth imagines in later texts such as *The Excursion*. Here, he optimistically projects various conceptions of a single building that instils village unity: ‘one household’; ‘one mansion’; ‘their legislative Hall’; ‘their Temple; ‘their glorious dwelling-place’. The metaphors heighten the sense of grandeur and worth of Grasmere’s community to such an extent that Wordsworth can then return to a more humble description of their home as a ‘dwelling-place’, but is justified in prefixing it with the effusive adjective, ‘glorious’. He revises this organic community model in his later writing. Charles Armstrong suggests that ‘the home is superseded by the church as a central metaphor in Wordsworth’s poetry.’[36] Yet Armstrong does not observe the different ways that Wordsworth uses these buildings across his writing: in ‘Home at Grasmere’, the household is a whole that incorporates ‘many into one’; by contrast, in *The Excursion*, the church is a fulcrum – a centre that facilitates reconciliation between diverse aspects of the locale. This signifies Wordsworth’s changing ideas of community: in the shift from ‘experiencing’ to ‘determining community’, his confidence in a holistic, organic Cumbrian community falters. Instead, he conceptualises a community harmony that derives its structure from an established institution, the Anglican Church. Community thereby ceases to be an absolute that the poet encounters and seeks to understand: in the ‘determining’ phase it becomes something that requires organisation, and the poet’s role is to contribute and help to build that structure.

The growing fervour within ‘Home at Grasmere’ concludes with the Prospectus, ‘On Man, on Nature, and on human life’ (l. 959), making the Grasmere community a paradigm for society more generally. While the optimistic tone of Wordsworth’s grand proclamation for *The Recluse* is far removed from the disillusionment of ‘The Tuft of Grasmere’ and the crisis of the Green family tragedy, in fact, a connection can be drawn between the three through DC MS 45.[37] At the front of this notebook is a fair copy of the Prospectus. Blank pages face the text: space either for revisions and insertions, or, to confidently assert the importance of these lines. The Prospectus concludes with two lines at the top of leaf 5 (p. 10): ‘My heart in genuine freedom: all pure thoughts / Be with me and uphold me to the end’. The rest of the page is left blank. On the following page (leaf 6) an entirely different entry begins, dated 18 October 1808: the accounts for the Green children. It includes meticulously recorded details, such as ‘4 pairs of stockings for the 2 little boys 4-6’. The contrast between the two texts held within DC MS 45 highlights the creative crisis that Wordsworth experienced with *The Recluse* in 1808. He could not fulfil the promise that he set forth at the conclusion of ‘Home at Grasmere’. Instead of following up the Prospectus within DC MS 45 with more work towards *The Recluse*, the notebook was used to keep a different account of the relationship between the Wordsworths and Grasmere community: the payments made to villagers such as Mrs Dawson, who housed William and Thomas Green. DC MS 45 therefore captures the rupture that occurred within Wordsworth’s creativity in 1808. Just as he could not follow up the Prospectus then, nor could he finish ‘The Tuft of Primroses’.

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[36] Charles Armstrong, *Romantic Organicism: From Idealist Origins to Ambivalent Afterlife* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 118.

The Green family tragedy was a crisis for Wordsworth’s poetic ideas of community. Grasmere ceased to be portrayed as the self-sufficient, cohesive whole that appeared in ‘Home at Grasmere’. Instead, ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ presents the village as fragmented, dominated by loss and decay. However, in other writing, Wordsworth describes a different Grasmere. The campaign letters evoke a cohesive community that unites together in response to the tragedy to support the orphaned children. Yet the letters also demonstrate a change in Wordsworth's ideas of community: community becomes a process in which he has a responsibility and takes an active role. This is the beginning of a shift in his writing, as he comes increasingly to favour charitable organisations as the providers of social support for lower class people (as seen in the Bowness speech), a movement that I shall return to later in the chapter. In recognising that sufficient support for the Green orphans could not be obtained from Grasmere alone, Wordsworth appealed to wealthy individuals outside of the village. This revises the notion from 'Home at Grasmere': 'That they who want are not too great a weight / For those who can relieve' (MS. B, ll. 446-448). Reaching beyond the parish boundary, Wordsworth appeals to a benevolent national community.

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[37] Wordsworth, ‘DC MS 45’, *Romanticism: Life, Literature and Landscape*, Wordsworth Trust, <www.romanticism.amdigital.co.uk> [Accessed 20 May 2015].

Partisan Community in the 1818 Westmorland Election

Wordsworth's engagement with community is markedly different during the frenzied build up to and aftermath of the Westmorland election in 1818. He still wrote to create and strengthen bonds between people, yet this community has a distinct character: it is partisan, made up of zealous supporters of a particular party.[38] Thus a 'partisan community' is a group of committed followers of one cause, who thereby become (potentially violent) adversaries to the opposing cause. This duality of cohesion and opposition is pertinent to Wordsworth's engagement with the 1818 election: to promote the Lowthers, Wordsworth created and strengthened a community of Lowther supporters, and accordingly he also attacked the opposition. In some ways, this divided community recalls the churchyard narratives in *The Excursion*, where individuals are categorised into different types of community members: those that diverge from and those that conform to local society. Yet those two groups are reconciled through the Pastor's narratives, which unites them into a collective whole within the churchyard. By contrast, Wordsworth denounces oppositional people in the 1818 election texts, denying points of community between the two opposing groups. These texts highlight an extreme within Wordsworth's 'determining community' phase: they articulate a rigid social model that divides Cumbrian inhabitants into opposing groups, and the author assumes a domineering authority.

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[38] Kenneth Johnston examines Wordsworth's description of himself as an 'active partisan' (*Prelude* X, l. 735). Johnston looks at a different period: the 1790s, and Wordsworth's change from radical support of the French Revolution to humanitarian liberalism in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Kenneth Johnston, 'Philanthropy or Treason? Wordsworth as "Active Partisan"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 25 (1986), 317-409.

The 1818 election was the first contested election in Westmorland for 44 years. Before this, the Lowther family had returned both Members unchallenged, but in December 1817, a committee in London launched a manifesto calling for the political emancipation of the county.[39] Henry Brougham became the Whig candidate in January 1818, and then both parties began a heated election campaign. While Brougham gained much popular support and aroused political fever in Westmorland, ultimately he was not successful in the elections of 1818, 1820 or 1826. In 1830 he became Member of Parliament for Knaresborough, Yorkshire, leaving no opposition to the Lowthers in Westmorland.[40] In 1818, Wordsworth immediately took a significant role in the Lowther campaign to defend their political dominance. He wrote a number of propaganda texts, including letters to local newspapers, handbills, pamphlets, and a poem, as well as over forty personal letters to the Lowthers. Surprisingly, despite the quantity of material that

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[39] 'Westmorland', *The History of Parliament: British Political, Social and Local History,* <www.historyofparliamentonline.org> [Accessed 28 September 2016].
[40] Juliet Barker, *Wordsworth: A Life*, pp. 530, 587, 623.

Wordsworth produced, critics seldom discuss the 1818 election.[41] William Hay describes the 1818 Westmorland election as ‘perhaps the most spectacular case in which party rivalry shaped an election before 1832’.[42] He notes each party’s engagement with local and national propaganda: ‘Extensive use of the printed word familiarised people with men and issues, while it also politicised voters and observers by drawing them into the drama of the election.’[43] This corresponds with the broader context: between 1816 and 1819 Britain was agitated by social unrest and campaigning for political reform, and the periodical press was used to advance diverse political views. During this period of unrest, Wordsworth was highly active and used a variety of printed forms to engage readers with the Lowther campaign.

Wordsworth’s relationship with the Lowthers is an important facet of the 1818 election. He became closer to the family, addressing many letters to Lord Lonsdale, Viscount Lowther, and Colonel Lowther that year. By contrast, in the previous year (before Wordsworth heard the rumour of an election challenge in December 1817) he had sent no letters to the Lowthers, and only one to Lord Lonsdale in 1816. The letters show a growing familiarity and include reports about the local political situation, conversations overheard, named people who can or cannot be trusted, the opposition’s activities (such as buying houses for enfranchisement), as well as personal information about Wordsworth’s family and enquiries about the health of Lonsdale’s wife.[44] While

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[41] See L. Broughton, ‘Wordsworth and De Quincey in Westmorland Politics 1818: Addendum’, *PMLA,* 56 (1941), 597; Wallace Douglas, ‘Wordsworth in Politics: The Westmorland Election of 1818, *Modern Language Notes* 63 (1948), 437-449; John Edwin Wells, ‘Wordsworth and De Quincey in Westmorland Politics, 1818’, *PMLA,* 55 (1940), 1080-1128.

[42] William Anthony Hay, ‘Henry Brougham and the 1818 Westmorland Election: A Study in Provincial Opinion and the Opening of Constituency Politics’, *Albion,* 36 (2004), 28-51 (p. 29).

[43] Hay, p. 35.

[44] For instance, on 28 November 1818, Wordsworth wrote to Lord Lonsdale: ‘It is not easy to know whom we trust, but Mr Jackson or myself would do our best for this neighbourhood. […] This neighbourhood, I am sorry to say, continues in an agitated and disorderly state, which is not a little owing to Mr King and Mr Dixon.’ (Dixon was a Grasmere farmer) Wordsworth to Lord Lonsdale, 28 Nov 1818, *Letters* III, pp. 507-8.

Wordsworth's engagement in the 1818 election is seldom discussed, several critical studies examine his relationship with the Lowthers and focus on heightened episodes when the Lowthers' supremacy or integrity was challenged. Tim Burke suggests that Wordsworth was a protégé to Lord Lonsdale.[45] He reveals Wordsworth's significant role in giving evidence for the 1833 libel trial by the Lowthers against the anti-Lowther newspapers, the *Kendal Chronicle,* the *Carlisle Journal,* and the *Whitehaven Herald*. Burke describes two sonnets published after the trial's conclusion not as 'routine poems of praise, but rather studied attempts by Wordsworth to shore up his patron's challenged integrity and authority.'[46] Similarly, Peter Manning outlines Wordsworth's role in supporting his patron through the St Bees scandal, when it was revealed that St Bees' school had been leasing its mineral rights to local coalfields to the Lowther family for a meagre annual sum.[47] Manning argues that Wordsworth's 1833 poem, 'Stanzas Suggested in a Steamboat off St Bees' Heads' is 'a writer's compliment to his patron'.[48] There, he 'presents his patron as the restorer of a lost harmony': the benevolent lord who represents a stable, traditional social order in opposition to the social divisions produced by capitalism.[49] Tim Fulford, who also explores Wordsworth's changing relationship with the Lowthers, suggests that he comes to see 'the landed gentleman, as he had once seen the Lakeland "statesman", as a defence against ministerial corruption and a national culture of commercial self-interest.'[50] Similarly, Wordsworth's 1818 texts portray the Lowthers as a harmonious force within the region. I explore how he conceptualises community in 1818, examining the tensions and contradictions that trouble his effort to portray the Lowthers' as the locus for community harmony and social cohesion. I argue that on the one hand, Wordsworth wrote to create community, encouraging people to sympathise with him and support the Lowthers. On the other hand, he repelled the opposition, condemning their stance, and highlighting points of difference between the two groups. This dichotomy connects with what John Caputo describes as the 'aporetics of community'.[51] For Caputo, reading Derrida, the word 'community' contains an irresolvable internal contradiction, since the togetherness it describes is both an 'unavoidable necessity' and an 'undeniable violence'. The violence occurs through the act of constructing a communal 'we', which then throws up a wall of defence against the other. Generally, the word 'community' describes the togetherness or commonality of people, focussing on shared characteristics, rather than the differences or divisions from other groups. While the vagrancy poems explore tensions between people, Wordsworth generally portrays vagrants as attractive and compelling strange others, whereas in the 1818 texts, the other is repellent: Brougham and his supporters are opposed and disparaged. Wordsworth's involvement with the 1818 election is a peculiar moment in which the hostile aspect of 'community' becomes manifest.

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[45] Tim Burke, 'Lord Lonsdale and his Protégés: William Wordsworth and John Hardie', *Criticism* 47 (2005), 515-529.
[46] Burke, p. 521.
[47] Peter J. Manning, 'Wordsworth at St. Bees: Scandals, Sisterhoods, and Wordsworth's Later Poetry', *ELH,* 52 (1985), 33-58, p. 45.
[48] Manning, p. 45.
[49] Manning, pp. 48-9.
[50] Tim Fulford, 'Wordsworth: the Politics of Landscape', in *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 157-213 (p. 212).

In the 'Two Addresses' Wordsworth creates a sympathetic community of readers. He uses the inclusive pronoun 'we': 'Freeholders, we must wait'; 'We are, have been, and will remain, independent'.[52] This presents his opinion as part of a shared community, portraying the author as a concerned participant rather than a domineering individual. He also uses a language of fraternity, addressing the reader as 'my Brother Freeholders'.[53] Again, in using the plural, Wordsworth appeals to his readers as a collective, denoting their familial group identity. His concept of fraternity becomes apparent in the second address, when he distinguishes it from paternal authority: ‘among Freemen […] authority like the parental, from a sense of community of interest and the natural goodness of mankind, is softened into brotherly concern.’[54] While the Freeman therefore starts with a superior ‘parental’ authority, through a sympathetic sensibility, that dominance is diminished into a more egalitarian relationship of mutual interest and responsibility: a model social structure. It recalls Wordsworth’s concept of pre-1770 Lake District society as a ‘perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturalists’ (see Chapter Three).[55] However, a crucial difference is that in the later version the ‘Freemen’ inherently possess a superior authority, whereas in the earlier ideal, Wordsworth implies that there is no local human hierarchy: only the chapel presides over the local houses.

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[51] John Caputo, 'A Community without Truth: Derrida and the Impossible Community', *Research in Phenomenology* 26 (1996), 25-37, pp. 25-6.
[52] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, pp. 170-1.
[53] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, pp. 163, 182.

In the ‘Two Addresses’ there is an odd slippage between the terms ‘Freeholder’ and ‘Freeman’. Overall, as the title suggests, the texts are addressed to ‘The Freeholders’, yet in the above quotation Wordsworth also refers to ‘Freemen’. ‘Freeholder’ denotes a person who holds land rights and is therefore eligible to vote; ‘freeman’ means a man who is personally free or one who enjoys the liberties of a free society.[56] While the texts principally target those who can vote in Westmorland, Wordsworth conflates the terms to emphasize the attractive position that the freeholder has, commenting on their existing rights and privileges, rather than suggesting grounds for discontent. It thereby counteracts the Brougham campaign which, according to Wordsworth, ‘court[s] the discontented’.[57] This ‘free’ figure is an intriguing development of Wordsworth’s earlier literary portrayal of the Lakeland ‘freeman’, as described by Fulford. He identifies Wordsworth's 'freeman' of *Lyrical Ballads* and 'Home at Grasmere' as 'the freeholding small farmer' rather than the landed gentleman.[58] According to Fulford, these small farmers 'possess a language the moral depth of which stems from their independence – they are freemen in that they are free from wage labour and from the landlord's coercion.'[59] This is a useful definition of Wordsworth's 'freeman' concept, but I suggest that the 'freeman' should be analysed alongside another term that Wordsworth uses for the small farmer: 'statesman'. Bringing these two together highlights the way that Wordsworth employs language to place the figure within a particular literary tradition.

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[54] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 186.

[55] William Wordsworth, ‘A Guide though the District of the Lakes’, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* II, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 151-254, (p. 74).

[56] ‘freeholder’, n.,; ‘freeman’, n., *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, http://dictionary.oed.com/ [28 September 2016].

[57] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 160.

Essentially, Wordsworth's 'statesman' is synonymous with the early Lakeland 'freeman': writing to Charles James Fox in 1801 he describes the 'small independent proprietors of land here called Statesmen'.[60] Yet while Wordsworth claims 'statesman' is a local term, John Marshall reveals that it was rarely used in Cumbria.[61] Instead, Marshall suggests it was a romantic word that evocatively describes an antiquated type of farmer. Indeed, Wordsworth warns: 'This class of men is rapidly disappearing'.[62] The nostalgic farmer-figure gains further emotive force because Wordsworth suggests their land is profoundly connected to their emotions: the 'little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten.'[63] By contrast, in 'Two Addresses', Wordsworth defines the freeholder in loose, inclusive social and economic terms: 'Gentry or Yeomanry, rich or poor'.[64] Yet Wordsworth contradicts this inclusive appeal in private correspondence to Lonsdale, where he describes the 'Two Addresses' as written for the 'upper Ranks of society'.[65] Accordingly, he shifts from emphasizing the value of small estates to proclaiming the benefits of large estates: 'Men of large estates cannot but be men of wide concerns […] Extensive landed property entails upon the possessor many duties, and places him in divers relations, by which he undergoes a public trial.'[66] Where the statesman's land is associated with an enhanced emotional sensibility, the freeholder's land enriches their social conscience.

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[58] Fulford, p. 176.
[59] Fulford, p. 176.
[60] Wordsworth to Charles James Fox, 14 January 1800, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, I: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), pp. 312-315.
[61] John Marshall, 'Statesmen in Cumbria: The Vicissitudes of an Expression', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society,* 72 (1972), pp. 248-273.
[62] Wordsworth, *Letters* I, p. 315.
[63] Ibid.

Wordsworth also describes different relationships between himself and the two figures: he observes the 'statesman' (like an anthropologist studying a different way of life), whereas in 1818 he signs off 'A Freeholder', identifying himself as part of that group. This signifies a shift in his approach to community: in the election texts he is actively engaged in determining the shape of community, and therefore positions himself as part of that locale. It also reveals a different concept of Cumbrian landowners: Wordsworth became a freeholder in 1803, when George Beaumont gave him a small estate (Applethwaite, near Keswick, Cumberland), and in 1807, Lord Lonsdale also helped him to purchase a small estate in Patterdale, Westmorland.[67] In contrast to the statesman – people 'who daily labour on their own little properties' – Wordsworth never lived on or personally farmed either estate.[68] The differences between these two versions of the Westmorland 'freeman' can be understood by the texts they belong to: the deep-feeling 'statesman' is a figure from Wordsworth's poetry; whereas the socially authoritative 'freeholder' is written for a prose essay. The first appeals to a national readership; the second to local inhabitants. Crucially, the poetry describes a community, whereas the prose implores a community, and to do so, Wordsworth invokes a particular type of local inhabitant who is distinct from his earlier poetic figures.

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[64] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 169.
[65] Wordsworth to Lord Lonsdale, 6 April 1818, *Letters* III, p. 461.
[66] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 176.
[67] Barker, *Wordsworth: A Life*, pp. 309, 346.
[68] Wordsworth to Fox, *Letters* I, p. 314

As an author, however, Wordsworth stands in a peculiar relationship to the 1818 political prose and its readership, since all of the texts were published under pseudonyms. He wrote anonymously because, as Distributor of the Stamps, he was supposed to be impartial and, furthermore, Lord Lonsdale had helped him to obtain that position. Rather than create a single alias (which might have made his true identity more vulnerable) Wordsworth used a variety of pseudonyms. Each alludes to a sympathetic community of readers. As previously stated, the 'Two Addresses' are signed off 'A Freeholder': a simple title that places him within the group that he addresses. In a similar pamphlet, titled 'An Address to the Freeholders' (published between 17 May 1818 and the election), Wordsworth calls himself, 'A Friend to the Constitution of England'.[69] This connects with the motto Wordsworth urged the Lowthers to adopt – 'Lowther and Loyalty – King and Constitution' – rather than 'Church and King', which he feared might 'exclude or give offense to Dissenters, who are very powerful in Kendal'.[70] In letters to the *Kendal Chronicle*, Wordsworth wrote as: 'A Friend to Consistency' (31 January), and 'A Friend to Truth' (21 February and 14 March). Whilst this is a common form of pseudonym (the *Dictionary of Literary Pseudonyms* demonstrates that 'A Friend to ___' or 'A Friend of ___' are extremely popular), it defines the author to be motivated by affection rather than hostility, and, in each version he is attached to a particular principle, rather than a person or political party.[71] They also implicitly appeal to the

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[69] Mark Reed, *A Bibliography of William Wordsworth: 1787-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 50-1.

[70] Wordsworth to Lord Lonsdale, 10th February 1818, *Letters* III, p. 425.

[71] T. J. Carty, *A Dictionary of Literary Pseudonyms in the English Language* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), pp. 79-80.

Quaker Society of Friends: a group whom Wordsworth was anxious to persuade. He thereby attempts to eschew partisanship to claim an unprejudiced perspective.

However, Wordsworth used a contrasting pseudonym in December 1819: 'An Enemy to Detraction'.[72] This is partly due to the platform: where the earlier pseudonyms appeared in broadsides and the *Kendal Chronicle*, an increasingly pro-Brougham newspaper, the later one was placed in the *Westmorland Gazette*, the newspaper established by the Lowther family in May 1818.[73] Wordsworth was intimately involved in the *Westmorland Gazette*: he advised the Lowthers to set it up, helped them to establish it, and backed De Quincey to become the editor.[74] After the election, Wordsworth was also active in suppressing combative material from the newspaper, personally visiting his old friend John Fleming to discourage him from submitting abusive letters about Brougham.[75] The timing may also influence Wordsworth's tone: he wrote the text after the Peterloo Massacre (August 1819) which caused public outrage and an explosion of responses by the radical press.[76] The earlier texts therefore attempt to appeal to readers with various political sympathies, whereas the later pseudonym assumes a condemnatory attitude towards the opposition. This points to a tension that emerges within Wordsworth's ideas of community in response to the election. While he reaches out to other people in an effort to draw them into a sympathetic group of shared political beliefs, he also condemns the opposition, demarcating distinct social boundaries and highlighting differences between groups. This determines community in a similar manner to the churchyard narratives of *The Excursion*, by categorising people to enhance understanding of the locale, but here Wordsworth does not seek to reconcile the polarised parts.

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[72] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, pp. 202-4.
[73] Notes, *Prose Works* III, p. 205.
[74] Barker, pp. 516-8.
[75] Barker, p. 518.
[76] Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 152.

These two tendencies – to affiliate and to distance – are brought together in Wordsworth's criticism of Brougham's campaign. The introductory note to 'Two Addresses' acknowledges Brougham's recent canvassing in Westmorland:

> The new Candidate has appeared amongst us, and concluded, for the present, his labours in the County. They require no further notice here than an expression of thanks for the success with which he has cooperated with the Author of these pages to demonstrate, by the whole of his itinerant proceedings, that the vital principle of the Opposition ostensibly headed by him, is at enmity with the bonds by which society is held together, and Government maintained.[77]

Wordsworth slights Brougham (he does not name him and dismisses his canvassing), but he also describes a peculiar cohesion between the two men: thanking Brougham for his cooperation. This further belittles Brougham, suggesting he has unwittingly supported his opposition. Wordsworth's paternalist gratitude establishes his superiority, but it also portrays him as amicable because he is apparently willing to find alliance with the opposition. This propensity for cooperation (albeit ironic) becomes a marked strength and notable point of difference to Brougham's 'vital principle' which is 'at enmity with the bonds by which society is held together'. Thus, Wordsworth demonstrates his ability to create bonds with the opposition in contrast to their hostility to social cohesion.

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[77] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 152.

Wordsworth's concern about social cohesion is pronounced in his summary of the principles that unite opposition parties in government: 'Conscience regulated by expediency, is the basis; honour, binding two men to each other in spite of temptation, is the corner-stone; and the superstructure is friendship, protecting kindness, gratitude, and all the moral sentiments by which self-interest is liberalized.'[78] Honour acts as a 'bind' that defies divergent tendencies, and friendship is a bastion against self-interest. It recalls Edmund Burke's concept of chivalry as a harmonizing moral and social force that 'subdued the fierceness of pride and power; […] obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners.'[79] As Manning suggests, this version of social interconnectedness, for Wordsworth, became associated with the traditional feudal order and was threatened by the emerging capitalist society.[80] It also relates to the value of reconciliation, that Wordsworth linked to the church and its beneficial role in small communities: here he outlines another structure that similarly organises people by compelling them into coexistence. Yet Wordsworth evokes this concept of cohesion in order to criticise Brougham and his supporters. He charges them with employing the opposite approach: 'they are not communing for the sake of mutual sympathy, but to induce others to participate a sentiment which they probably are strangers to.'[81] Their process is conceived as one of communal alienation: shunning broad-scale cooperation to create a new group distinguished by its strange 'sentiment'. Yet the process also requires persuasion and participation. While Wordsworth distinguishes it from 'mutual sympathy', he describes another version of sympathy, as identified by Fairclough, that which functions as a disruptive social force, transmitting disorder between individuals.[82] This disruptive sympathy is associated with crowds (when De Quincey was concerned about popular uprisings, he portrayed sympathy as an ‘agent of crowd violence’), and similarly Wordsworth differentiates the ‘strangers’ that emerge here from the friendship created by ‘mutual sympathy’.[83] As I demonstrated in the first chapter, Wordsworth did not always see strangers as problematic: his portrayals of vagrants reflect upon their distinctive singularity. The difference is scale. Whereas the vagrant others (such as the Cumberland beggar, the leech gatherer and Nanny Holme) are isolated, marginal individuals – people with whom one can interact, give to, and think about – the alienated crowd produces strangers that form a dangerous mass. Wordsworth therefore criticizes the opposition for their social approach, which opposes the individualised processes that form compassionate communities.

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[78] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 157.
[79] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* ed. by J. C. D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 238-9.
[80] Manning, p. 49.
[81] Wordsworth, *Prose Works III*, p. 154.

Ironically, however, in criticising others for their anti-social outlook, Wordsworth performs the same action of alienating and condemning a group of people. Generally, he does not personally attack or criticise Brougham, and following the election he suggests ‘*we* ought to lay down’ rules for the *Westmorland Gazette*:

> *never* to retort by attacking private character; and never to notice the *particulars* of a personal calumny; or any allegation of a personal nature proceeding from an anonymous quarter. We ought to content ourselves with protesting in the strongest terms against the practise, and pointing it out to indignation and contempt.[84]

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[82] Fairclough, p. 5.
[83] Fairclough, p. 2.
[84] Wordsworth to Viscount Lowther, 6 October 1818, *Letters* III, p. 489.

Wordsworth's concern about periodical press becoming embroiled in personal character attacks relates to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Following the *Blackwood's* re-launch in October 1817, the magazine quickly became infamous for attacking writers and expressing extremely partisan politics.[85] The magazine was banned from Wordsworth's household after *A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns* was subject to harsh criticism.[86] But Wordsworth was himself willing to make personal attacks when it came to the election. He composed a satirical poem in order to expose the information that in 1806, Brougham had written to Lord Lonsdale about the possibility of representing Westmorland with his support:

> The Scottish Broom on Bird-nest brae
> Twelve tedious years ago,
> When many plants strange blossoms bore
> That puzzled high and low,
> A not unnatural longing felt,
> What longing, would ye know?
> Why, Friend, to deck her supple twigs
> With *yellow* in full blow.
>
> To Lowther Castle she addressed
> A prayer both bold and sly,
> (For all the Brooms on Bird-nest Brae
> Can talk and speechify)

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[85] David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp.16-7.
[86] Higgins, pp. 100-1.

That flattering breezes blowing thence
Their succour would supply;
Then she would instantly put forth
A flag of *yellow* die.

But from the Castle turret blew
A chill forbidding blast,
Which the poor Broom no sooner felt
Than she shrank up as fast:
Her *wished*-for yellow she foreswore,
And since that time has cast
Fond looks on colours three or four,
And put forth *Blue* at last.

But now my Lads, the Election comes
In June's sunshiny hours
When every field, and bank, and brae
Is clad with yellow flowers;
While factious Blue from Shops and Booths
Tricks out her blustering powers,
Lo! smiling Nature's lavish hand
Has furnished wreathes for ours.[87]

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[87] Wordsworth, 'The Scottish Broom on Bird-nest Brae', in *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820,* ed. by Carl Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 272-3.

The poem variously portrays Brougham as an interloper. He is denounced as Scottish, rather than a native of Westmorland, as he had claimed and, in residing 'on Bird-nest brae' Wordsworth uses the popular name for Brougham Hall that refers to its former owners, the Bird family.[88] He puns on Brougham's name, casting him in the figure of a broom (the yellow flowering shrub). The plant is depicted as female – perhaps a further jibe – but it also corresponds with the gender assigned to the same plant in Wordsworth's earlier poem 'The Oak and the Broom'.[89] The poem develops a further pun on the colours associated with each political party: the Lowther Tories were yellow, Brougham's Whigs blue. In renouncing her innate yellow colour, trying 'three or four' colours, and then settling for blue, the broom is portrayed as fickle, indecisive, and artificial. Wordsworth enhances the distinction between yellow and blue in the final stanza. Where yellow is associated with nature – the yellow flowers grow profusely and are provided by 'smiling Nature' – blue is artificial and emerges from 'Shops and Booths', connecting Brougham to new money, in contrast to the Lowther family's inherited wealth. Blue is 'factious': an adjective that either describes speech or action that emerges from a conflict and is characterised by dissent or partisanship, or a person who is inclined to form factions, to be mutinous, dissenting, or partisan. Partisanship is therefore a negative quality associated with Brougham and the Whigs. It recalls the distinction between Whigs and Tories in Samuel Johnson's dictionary: 'Whig' is 'the name of a faction', whereas a 'Tory' is 'One who adheres to the ancient constitution of the State and the apostolical hierarchy of the church of England, opposed to a whig.'[90] Both Johnson and Wordsworth thereby portray the Whigs as a trivial, ill-founded political group, in contrast to the Tories who are variously legitimised by tradition, establishment, and nature. The poem thus slights Brougham in numerous ways: he is both an outsider with fickle views; and a member of a dubious, artificial party.

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[88] Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 30 March 1818, *Letters* III, p. 454.
[89] Wordsworth, 'The Oak and the Broom', in *Lyrical Ballads*, pp. 166-9.
[90] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Bathurst, 1798), pp. 889, 970.

Alongside the mockery of Brougham, Wordsworth also seeks to create community through similar linguistic features to those used in his prose texts. The poem concludes with the inclusive pronoun 'ours', leaving a lasting sense of unity. It also contains a familiar form of address, appealing to a 'Friend' and 'my lads'. The poetic form – ballad stanza with common metre – is often used in hymns, making the rhythm familiar and memorable. Although Wordsworth never titled the poem, in one copy it is named (in different handwriting) 'Election Song', and in another, 'A help for the memory of the / Grand Independent / A New Song'. [91] While 'song' can mean poem, the word also suggests the musicality of the verse, which would be suited to popular dissemination. However, Wordsworth never published the poem. Instead, Carl Ketcham suggests the manuscript was widely circulated among friends and family: a selective, familial community of readers.[92]

Just as this poem contains devices that create community and jibes that condemn the opposition, so the 'Two Addresses' has a similar dichotomy. But whereas the poem principally denounces Brougham, the addresses also condemn the larger social group that supports Brougham. They are 'mob-exciting patriots' (p. 169): an alienating phrase that generalises the opposition's supporters as an unruly crowd rather than individuals. Wordsworth does not use the word 'patriot' to refer to a person who loves his country, but rather, the ironic and derogatory sense of a false patriot: one who claims to be disinterestedly devoted to his country, but whose actions are detrimental to the country.[93] They are therefore either misguided or deceived. Wordsworth describes the crowd in terms of illness: ‘What a pity Westmorland has not a Lunatic Asylum for the accommodation of the whole Body!’ He puns on Brougham’s supporters as a ‘whole Body’: referring to the people as a group (a body of people), but also as a single physical form (a human body) that needs treatment for sickness of the body politic: ‘As soon as the petty Artizans, Shop-keepers, and Pot-house Keepers, of our over-grown Manufacturing Towns and our enormous Cities, had each and all been invested with the right of voting, the infection would spread like a plague.’ (p. 180) Whereas Brougham’s supporters in Westmorland are lunatics – foolish or mad men that need treatment and refuge – this portrays suffrage as a national malaise that is contagious and potentially fatal. Fairclough explains that the conservative press often condemned ‘the spread of agitation for reform […] as a pernicious contagion’.[94] Wordsworth thereby writes in accord with fellow conservatives, such as Robert Southey.[95] While Wordsworth associates the disease with seemingly non-Lakeland urban areas – ‘over-grown Manufacturing Towns’ and ‘enormous Cities’ – it also has a local relevance: in 1818, Kendal, the largest town in Westmorland, became a pivotal site for the election contest. Kendal highlights the boundary to Wordsworth’s partisan community.

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[91] Notes, p. 272.

[92] Ketcham, 'Editors Notes', in *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 548.

[93] 'patriot', *OED Online,* Oxford University Press. 17 November 2016 <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

Early in the campaign, he expresses a suspicion of Kendal: ‘I do not like the look of things in this town. […] If your Lordship fails, it will be owing to the hostility of little people; blind in their prejudices and strong in their passions.’[96] It is unclear whether the ‘little people’ refers to the labouring class populace who influenced popular feeling but could not vote, a lower class of freeholders who were eligible to vote, or small-minded people in general. Whilst Wordsworth accuses them of ‘hostility’, he mirrors that sentiment in his own condemnatory assessment of the group, demonstrating a perspective that does not endeavour to understand them. Wordsworth reveals that his suspicion of people in Kendal is reciprocated:

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[94] Fairclough, p. 135.
[95] Fairclough, p. 135.
[96] Wordsworth to Lord Lonsdale, 29 January 1818, *Letters* III, pp. 417-8.

> A great dinner of the Blues, at which B. is to be present, takes place this day at Kendal; or I should have gone over in consequence of yours received last night. My presence in the Town would have been noticed; and it would have been thought that I had gone as a Spy upon their proceedings – a Compliment, I would not willingly give them the opportunity of paying themselves. I therefore defer my visit till Monday.[97]

In this account, he is a conspicuous figure in Kendal. It recalls his poetic portrayal of Brougham as an interloping-outsider, but here, Wordsworth is the intruder. As a spy, Wordsworth believes the opposition view him as an agent who performs secretive work, obtaining information through observation and then reporting back to another organisation (the Lowthers). It recalls the infamous 1797 ‘spy nozy’ affair, when local residents reported some suspicious newcomers – Wordsworth and Coleridge – and government agent James Walsh came to investigate.[98] Yet whereas the earlier instance is characterised by unfamiliarity (the Wordsworth circle were mistaken for French spies because they were not known locally and they seemed strange), Wordsworth believes he would be identified as a spy in Kendal because people recognise him. This highlights his changed engagement with community: in 1797 – the year he wrote ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’, an evocative, nostalgic portrayal of Cumbrian communities – he was a stranger to the community of Nether Stowey; in 1818 he is a known, recognisable figure to people in Kendal. He has a marked antagonistic relationship with a group of people and a town. Whilst on the one hand he nonchalantly jokes about the risk, on the other, he responds to the threat, and defers his visit to Kendal. Unlike in 1797, he is aware that he is the subject of community mistrust.

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[97] Wordsworth to Viscount Lowther, 10 October 1818, *Letters* III, p. 491.
[98] Barker, pp. 188-9.

So far, I have examined an inter-community antagonism that is characterised by avoidance and separation, but there were also violent physical clashes. On 11 February 1818 a riot began in Kendal when the Lowthers arrived to begin their canvass. It was provoked by a pamphlet distributed among the crowd accusing the Lowthers of funding their election dinner with tax money, and further fuelled by the ale the Lowthers distributed among the crowd. The crowd threw dirt and paving stones at the Lowther carriages, and continued to demonstrate outside their inns. Writing from Kendal two days afterwards, Wordsworth states:

> Three times have I begun to write to your Lordship, since Wednesday afternoon, and have thrown the sheets into the fire, lest if I wrote with due regard to truth, I should alarm you and your family unnecessarily. Things seem now settled long enough to remove all apprehension. Lord Lowther has been walking about the Town without anything occurring to his annoyance. On the frightful subject of the conduct of the Mob, I shall not enter at present. Thanks to a merciful Providence no lives were lost; the persons most severely hurt belonged to their own Party, with the exception of Mr Fleming of Rayrigg, whom I have seen this morning; and I am sorry to say he remains confined to his bed and Sofa at the King's Arms, suffering considerably. – A Stone, the size of a Man's hand struck him on the back, and caused a spilling of blood; but which appears to have ceased.[99]

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[99] Wordsworth to Lord Lonsdale, 13 February 1818, *Letters* III, pp. 426-7.

Wordsworth conveys the gravity of the situation through its indescribable nature: he has rejected three draft letters, and finally states he 'shall not enter' the 'frightful subject'. He briefly acknowledges 'the persons most severely hurt belonged to their own Party': decisively dismissing the injured people who are part of the opposition and so do not merit individual concern. By contrast, he describes in precise detail the assault suffered by Reverend John Fleming (an active member of the Lowther committee), including the weapon, the injury and its aftermath. Yet five days later, when Wordsworth's shock abated, he perceived how the riot might be of 'use': 'The outrages committed at Kendal, will surely be of great use to our cause. – I am inclined to think that we shall gain ground at Kendal'.[100] In suggesting they could increase support in Kendal, the phrase 'gain ground' implies a hawkish approach in which Kendal is a frontline territory.

Wordsworth's language of planned confrontation continued after the election, for instance, when he suggested a new approach for the Lowther campaign:

> We are *much* stronger than before the Election; many who *voted* for you with leanings the other way have been warned by the election and are become zealous Partizans, and Numbers have had their opinion of Brougham much lowered. – Nonetheless it seems indispensible that the enemy should be met in their avowed intentions of purchasing and creating new freeholds.[101]

Here, the opposition are unambiguously referred to as 'the enemy', and a quasi-military tactic is proposed: meeting them in their effort to gain new ground. The terms have changed, from persuading the populace, to literally grabbing land to increase the vote share by creating new freeholds for sympathetic freeholders. Wordsworth organised the purchase of land in Langdale for a syndicate of Lowther supporters, squeezing eight freeholds out of the land.[102] The syndicate included a number of family members: Christopher Wordsworth; Jack, Tom and Henry Hutchinson; Tom and John Monkhouse; and two non-family members, Eldred Addison and Wordsworth's neighbour, George Gee.[103] This familial circle is a further level of exclusivity within the broader partisan community.

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[100] Wordsworth to Lord Lonsdale, 18 February 1818, *Letters* III, p. 431.
[101] Ibid, p. 476.

Wordsworth's written responses to the 1818 election demonstrate a different concept of local freeholder. The evocative 'statesman' figure is not central to the campaign. Instead, the voting freeholder is of paramount concern. The freeholder's relationship with his land is conceived in terms of social responsibility rather than an abiding emotional connection. In 1818 small freeholders are valued, not as people who 'daily labour' their land, but as people who have rights to vote, regardless of their involvement with the land. The absentee landlord is therefore not merely condoned, but encouraged, provided they support the right political party. In the texts, Wordsworth employs various techniques to form and build a partisan community. This includes frequent use of the plural pronouns 'we' and 'ours'. Yet in creating this 'we', he necessarily alienates 'them'. Despite his professed anxieties about the deterioration of social bonds, he fervently participates in the aporia of community, distancing and condemning one group as he invites and unites another. This approach to 'determining community' is not as inclusive or harmonised as the version that appears in *The Excursion*. The community that emerges within Wordsworth's 1818 writing gains its power from hostility.

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[102] Barker, p. 519.
[103] Barker, p. 519.

The Kendal and Windermere Railway Protest

Wordsworth anticipated another local conflict when he protested against the Windermere and Kendal railway. 'Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway' (1844) variously composes the railway as a 'rash assault', 'blight', 'ruthless change', 'threat', and it demands that the voices of winds and torrents 'protest against the wrong' (l. 14).[104] Like Brougham, the railway is portrayed as an outsider that threatens life within Cumbria. Yet while Brougham gained popular support within the region, which meant that Wordsworth had to engage with local division and conflict, in 1844 Wordsworth does not address any local support for the railway. He presents the locale as a cohesive group that is united against the external threat. Accordingly, he mythologises the violence of railways by alluding to the past. The second sonnet refers to 'times of old' when the mountains were surrounded by soldiers, there 'to stem invasive war', and so the mountains 'gloried in each scar'.[105] This war is glorified as a patriotic act defending the sovereignty of the region and nation. By contrast, the railway movement is a source of 'shame'; and by analogy, introducing railways is a corrupt act of violence since they intrude upon the region for economic gain ('your beauty, shall be sold').

Ecocritics have been interested in Wordsworth's railway texts as early examples of environmentalism. In particular, Wordsworth's elitism has been fiercely debated. Jonathan Bate's call for 'green criticism' defends the railway protest, which 'has often been put down to a selfish desire to keep away artisan day trippers from Manchester'.[106]

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[104] William Wordsworth, 'Sonnet On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway', in *Prose Works* III, p. 339.

[105] Wordsworth, 'Proud were ye, Mountains', in *Prose Works* III, p. 356, ll. 1-3.

[106] Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 50-1.

He argues instead that 'Wordsworth's principal objection was to large-scale organised Sunday outings', or '*mass* tourism'.[107] Paul Fry responds to this claim by contending that we need a demystification of 'green' values, since, in his view, Bate overlooks the social exclusivity of Wordsworth's argument: 'Keep "nature" hard to reach, and only the right people will make themselves at home in it'.[108] In response, James McKusick defends Wordsworth's stance towards the working-class:

> In his resistance to the railroad scheme, Wordsworth is not primarily concerned to exclude the working class. Although modern readers may wince when he depicts the urban 'artisans' as lacking in aesthetic appreciation, such a distressing class prejudice must be balanced by his sincere concern for the wellbeing of the rural poor among whom he lives.[109]

Yet Scott Hess criticises McKusick's argument by countering that Wordsworth's concern for the local poor was not an 'egalitarian concern', but rather, 'it depended on subordinating their social and cultural agency to his own.'[110] Hess also challenges the notion that Wordsworth's environmental protest was 'ecological', demonstrating instead how it was 'aesthetic, social, and cultural'.[111] He posits that Wordsworth presents himself as a patriarchal authority on the Lake District, and constructs the region as 'high culture'. I agree that the railway protest is not ecological and, developing Hess's work,

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[107] Bate, p. 51.

[108] Paul Fry, 'Green to the Very Door? The Natural Wordsworth', *Studies in Romanticism,* 35 (1996), 535-551, p. 550.

[109] James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 75-6.

[110] Scott Hess, 'Wordsworth's Environmental Protest: The Kendal and Windermere Railroad and the Cultural Politics of Nature', in *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth Century Culture* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2012), pp. 116-155 (p. 149).

[111] Hess, p. 117.

I further examine the social concerns behind Wordsworth's protest against the railway. I argue that Wordsworth subsumes both rich and poor inhabitants to create a cohesive version of community to support his protest against the railway. In these texts therefore he approaches the holistic version of 'organic': the coordination of parts into a single, harmonious whole. However, as I shall demonstrate, there are tensions that trouble his portrayal of social unity in the region.

A tension emerges within these texts through the fact that Wordsworth presents himself as living in 'retirement' (withdrawn from society, seeking solitude and privacy) but also a participant and representative of an active, complex, threatened community. In the sonnet, Wordsworth complains:

> Schemes of retirement sown,
> In youth, and mid the busy world kept pure
> As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown
> Must perish; – how can they this blight endure? (ll. 2-5)

The pun 'schemes of retirement' plays on the language of railway 'schemes', suggesting that 'retirement' likewise involves strategic planning and organisation. Whereas the retirement scheme is portrayed as an organic process (it is 'sown' and bears 'flowers') that is nurtured over a lifetime, the railway is an aggressive 'blight'. The enjambment followed quickly by a caesura ('Must perish; –') creates a harsh interruption that terminates the expansive description of how the retirement schemes grew. It develops a similar metaphor for community to that outlined in the churchyard narratives in *The Excursion* where the reconciliation between individuals and locale is figured through plant growth. Like Wordsworth's later concept of community, the retirement schemes are vulnerable, and are developed through organisation and structure – they are planned and worked at, not merely enjoyed. Here he writes on behalf of a distinct group: the gentry whom he later describes as having a 'love of retirement'.[112] Retirement is, of course, a class-based concept: it is a privilege available only to wealthier middle to upper class individuals. Wordsworth distinguishes retirement from social life, since it must be 'kept pure' in 'the busy world', giving it an essential pristine quality that is threatened by crowds or sociability. The association between retirement and the Lake District is pushed further in the prose letters, where retirement is framed as a fundamental attribute of the region: 'the staple of the country is its beauty and its character of retirement. Let then the beauty be undisfigured and the retirement unviolated'.[113] In one sense, this can be read, in Hess's terms, as another example of Wordsworth presenting 'a high-cultural, aesthetic version of nature associated with visual landscape'.[114] Retirement is also connected to Wordsworth's own experience. The preface to *The Excursion* describes retirement as a personal undertaking: 'Several years ago, […] the Author retired to his native Mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live'.[115] The move to Cumbria is thereby construed as a retreat that will foster creativity. He does not refer to the village of Grasmere, or the administrative region of Westmorland, obscuring the social aspects of the area to present it as a lonely region of 'Mountains'. Departing from Hess' approach, if we consider 'the country' that Wordsworth refers to not exclusively as 'nature', but a more general term for the district or region, it becomes necessary to further analyse how Wordsworth presents the Lake District. If the region is defined by a quality of seclusion, how do the local inhabitants fit in?

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[112] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 352.
[113] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 347.
[114] Hess, p. 120.
[115] Wordsworth, 'Preface', *The Excursion*, pp. 38-41.

While community members are not prominent within the texts, they form a distinct aspect of Wordsworth's argument against the railway. He describes three individuals, who cover two distinct types of Cumbrian inhabitants: the indigenous lower class, and the retirement loving gentry. The first inhabitant, who appears in the footnote to the 'Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway', is the former type. Within Hess's analysis of the railway protest, he briefly addresses this figure when he writes: 'The railway threatens to disturb […] the piety of "paternal fields", or family property, through forced land appropriation'.[116] However, Hess does not expand upon Wordsworth's discussion of local people, which is developed in the supplementary note to the sonnet. Wordsworth writes:

> The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be over-rated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. "Fell it," exclaimed the yeoman, "I had rather fall on my knees and worship it." It happens, I believe, that the intended railway would pass through this little property, and I hope that an apology for the answer will not be thought necessary by one who enters into the strength of the feeling.[117]

In contrast to Hess's account of Wordsworth's argument – which primarily identifies the assault to be on Wordsworth's poetic identity and a high-culture, aesthetic 'nature' – the note directs the focus to a local social concern: that the railway will sever long-standing emotional connections between local people and the land. It outlines a different version of Lakeland landowner to the 'freeholder' figure who is prominent in

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[116] Hess, p. 119.

[117] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p 339.

Wordsworth’s 1818 election texts. Where those texts emphasize the value of large ‘estates’– either a legal term for property in general, or landed property in particular – here the land is a ‘small inheritance’, invoking its hereditary lineage, a ‘small’ plot with a concentrated depth of personal family history. In doing so, Wordsworth recurs to his literary ideal of the small farmer who has emotional attachments to his land: as depicted across his career, in ‘Michael’ (1800), ‘Repentance’ (1804), and the Lakeland ‘statesman’ from *Guide to the Lakes* (1810). He also directs the reader’s response to the portrayal. They should enter ‘into the strength of the feeling’ described, recalling his appeal to Sara Hutchinson to ‘read with the feelings of the Author’.[118] He therefore frames this text, like his poetry, as an emotive text that requires sympathetic reading.[119] Yet importantly, he refers to the farmers as ‘yeomanry’, not ‘statesmen’. As previously stated, ‘statesman’ is a romantic term that featured in guidebooks and literary texts and describes an antiquated, disappearing figure.[120] By contrast, ‘yeoman’ does not have the same nostalgic connotations and was commonly used in Cumbria.[121] He thereby alludes to an evocative literary figure but favours the local, everyday term for that individual. In this instance where he actively seeks to shape local life, he uses regional precision.

In the note, the yeoman is anonymous, enabling him to represent a universal Lakeland ‘yeoman’ rather than a particular individual. However, he has been identified as Mr Birkett, who featured in James Clarke’s guidebook, *A Survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire* (1789). Clarke writes: ‘There is an oak tree growing at Mr Birkett’s of Low-Wood […] which he himself planted, and which is a real curiosity, on account of its beauty, magnitude, and quick growth.'[122] Birkett and the oak therefore had already been distinguished from the general Lake District population and become literary figures. Wordsworth was well acquainted with Clarke's text: he read it in 1796, 1804-5, 1811-12, and was given a copy in 1843.[123] Yet Birkett is a shared character, not a borrowed one: whilst he appears in both texts, Wordsworth relates a different anecdote to Clarke (Birkett and a neighbour who suggests he fells the tree, rather than Birkett and a visitor who measures the tree). Wordsworth also uses direct speech, suggesting he has a personal acquaintance with Birkett, increasing the authority of his account. This recalls Wordsworth's biography of Walker, a well-researched piece of writing that creates such a vivid account of the subject that critics have been misled into thinking the two men were friends.[124] The presence of Birkett within Clarke's guidebook gives Wordsworth an additional implicit source of authenticity. Since Birkett has already been translated into a literary figure, he appears to be an archetypal Cumbrian.

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[118] William Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson, 14 June 1802, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805),* ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. 367-368 (p. 366).

[119] See Newlyn’s *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism* for a thorough account of Wordsworth’s anxiety around readership, and his methods for achieving a sympathetic audience.

[120] Marshall, ‘Statesmen in Cumbria’: The Vicissitudes of an Expression’, pp. 260-2.

[121] Marshall, p. 269.

The second inhabitant, who appears in the prose letter, is similarly a labouring class Cumbrian who is portrayed as an authentic, rustic local. She is also anonymous and is portrayed through direct speech:

> In my youth, I lived some time in the vale of Keswick, under the roof of a shrewd and sensible woman, who more than once exclaimed in my hearing, 'Bless me!

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[122] James Clarke, *A Survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire* (London, 1789), p. 152.

[123] Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading: 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 29; Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading: 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 51-2.

[124] As discussed in Chapter Three, Tom Clucas and the editors of *The Excursion* suggest that Wordsworth and Walker – who never met – were friends. Tom Clucas, 'Plutarch's Parallel Lives in *The Excursion*', *Wordsworth Circle* 45 (2014), 126-130, p. 129; Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye, 'Editors Notes' in *The Excursion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 373-422 (p. 413).

> folk are always talking about prospects: when I was young there was never sic a thing neamed.'[125]

Unlike the yeoman, this woman does not appear to have been adapted from any other literary texts. Wordsworth composes her regional authenticity through colloquial speech: the exclamatory phrase 'Bless me!' and dialect spellings ('sic' and 'neamed'). A note that Wordsworth added to his printed copy of the text reveals the conceit that informs her characterisation. The note relates a similar anecdote that also illustrates the earlier lack of appreciation for the sublime or picturesque in the Lake District: 'A Relative of mine, about 30 years older than myself, being congratulated on the great advantage she must have had in being brought up in the romantic Country of Cumberland said don't think about it, when I was young there were *no* Lakes and Mountains.'[126] Since this account describes a relative and contains no dialect, it appears to be a middle class perspective. By using the dialect-speaking, anonymous, unrelated example in the published text, Wordsworth portrays an authentic Cumbrian character. Birkett and the Cumbrian woman are both distinctive natives: a small farmer with a deep emotional and spiritual connection to his land, and a pragmatic dialect-speaker who has a perceptive understanding of the locale; significantly, they resemble his own poetic native characters, such as Michael and Nanny Holme. Like the *Duddon Sonnets* miscellany volume that incorporated complementary poetry and prose texts, boosting the scope of Wordsworth's local authority, here he adds weight to the protest against the railway by alluding to his other portrayals of authentic, marginal Cumbrian people.

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[125] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 342.

[126] W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 'Commentary', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth III*, pp. 357-366, (p. 360).

The third resident is a different type of Cumbrian. ‘Professor Wilson’ is the only one to be named.[127] Unlike the former examples of working-class people presented with a distinctive local authenticity, John Wilson commands a different type of authority. His title signifies his distinguished position within academia, and his name was known in national literary circles through his poetry and contributions to *Blackwood’s Magazine*. He was a non-native resident who alternated between his Lake District estate (Elleray, Windermere), and Edinburgh where he worked. Wordsworth had an ambivalent relationship with Wilson: they became good friends after Wilson wrote him a fan letter in 1802 and moved to the Lakes in 1807; however, the relationship soured when Wilson attacked Wordsworth in *Blackwood’s* (in 1817 and 1825), and published details of his personal life in ‘Letters from the Lakes’ (1819); yet Wordsworth still wrote a letter of recommendation for Wilson to become a Professor in 1820.[128] In parenthesis, Wordsworth alludes to the conscious decision to name him ‘(him I take the liberty to name)’. He therefore solicits the authority of Wilson’s reputation to corroborate his protest against the railway. Yet, in taking a ‘liberty’, Wordsworth reveals the audacity of his reference to Wilson: he has not consulted him, but nonetheless uses him as an illustrative example to support his argument. In part, this reflects the troubled relationship between the two men, both of whom used each other’s names to achieve desired ends. Yet, like the yeoman and the Cumbrian woman, Wilson similarly does not articulate his own complaint against the railway, and so all three function as passive exemplars rather than active protestors. This is key to Wordsworth’s determining community in the railway texts: he composes a united locale by presenting different voices that are in agreement and assist his argument.

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[127] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 351.

[128] Higgins, p. 93; Barker, p. 579.

Although these different characters harmoniously coexist within Wordsworth's text, he suggests that in the region, the cohesion between these distinct inhabitants is delicately balanced, and is threatened by the railway. He outlines a benevolent system of charity between rich and poor inhabitants:

> of Ambleside, Grasmere, and the neighbourhood, I can testify from long experience, that they have been favoured by the residence of a gentry whose love of retirement has been a blessing to these vales; for their families have ministered, and still minister, to the temporal and spiritual necessities of the poor, and have personally superintended the education of the children in a degree which does those benefactors the highest honour and which is, I trust, gratefully acknowledged in the hearts of all whom they have relieved, employed and taught.[129]

This informal localised system of poor relief recalls 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', which also describes the valuable social bonds produced by charity; and so Wordsworth appears to recur to an earlier poetic ideal of community harmony. In both texts, the value of charity is portrayed by the effect of almsgiving upon the heart. But whereas the poem describes the impact of charity on the hearts of those who *give*, here Wordsworth addresses the hearts of those who *receive*. Accordingly, the texts depict the hearts' response in different ways: the poem elaborates on the process by which habit produces emotion and nurtures morality; and the letter contains a moral imperative that the poor should 'gratefully' acknowledge their benefactors. In the letter therefore, a later text that belongs to his 'determining community' phase, Wordsworth appears to prioritise and celebrate the gentry over the poorer inhabitants.

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[129] Wordsworth, 'No. II. To the Editor of the Morning Post', *Prose Works* III, p. 352.

However, both texts centre on the lower class of Cumbrian society, suggesting the continuity between Wordsworth's early and later phases of writing about community. 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' describes the labouring class (such as the woman who works toll-gate, post-boy, villagers), and 'the poorest poor' who derive moral benefits from giving to the beggar.[130] Similarly, in the letter Wordsworth expresses a concern for the poor in Westmorland should the railway come:

> Many of those friends of our poor would quit this country if the apprehended change were realised, and would be succeeded by strangers not linked to the neighbourhood, but flitting to and fro between their fancy-villas and the homes where their wealth was accumulated by trade and manufactures. It is obvious that persons, so unsettled, whatever might be their good wishes and readiness to part with money for charitable purposes, would ill supply the loss of the inhabitants who had been driven away.[131]

Just as Wordsworth cautions against placing the Cumberland beggar in a house of industry because of the loss to the 'poorest poor' who gain moral virtue from feeding him; so here he protests against the railway because it will drive out the gentry who currently support the local poor. While there is this similarity in the focus of Wordsworth's concern, there are notable differences in how he constructs the process of charity. In the letter there is a marked hierarchy between those who give and receive.

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[130] William Wordsworth, 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', in *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 228-234, l. 140.

[131] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 352.

The givers – the gentry – occupy a privileged position. Their aid is 'ministered': a word linked to religious practice, suggesting their charity is part of an institutional process. In 'superintending' education, they oversee and supervise. Their charity is not described through precise details (for instance funding food, clothing, or a particular aspect of schooling), and so they are portrayed as detached, watchful superiors. By contrast, in the poem, Wordsworth lists individual acts of kindness: his neighbour 'Takes one unsparing handful' of meal; the woman on the toll-gate 'lifts the latch' for the beggar; and the post-boy 'turns' his wheels to avoid colliding with the beggar; creating a tangible image of the physical exchange between givers and receivers. 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' therefore creates an ideal of peasant self-sufficiency grounded in physical acts, in which charity is provided through habit rather than organised institutions. The letter also advocates an informal system of poor-relief, but it contains traces of the institutional: the rich 'minister' and support schools that educate the local poor. William Blake highlights the problem of this approach: 'He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars; / "General Good" is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer.'[132] This maxim identifies the potential for dishonesty, hypocrisy and deception within systematic benevolence: falsifications that are impossible in direct, individual acts. Wordsworth advocates a kind of utilitarianism in the later text, abandoning the 'minute particulars' of peasant self-sufficiency to honour the contributions that wealthy inhabitants make towards supporting the local poor. This is a profound shift: the egalitarian idealisation of 'remembering community' texts gives way to a hierarchical model of charitable support in the 'determining' phase.

The importance ascribed to wealthy inhabitants is partly due to where the text was published. As Hess observes, the *Morning Post* was a London paper popular with the aristocracy: ‘Publishing in a London rather than a local newspaper […] demonstrates Wordsworth’s attempt to frame the Lake District in terms of national culture rather than local economics and politics, as he tries to fashion a political alliance between Lake District gentry and a national cultural elite who often visited the area.’[133] He thereby seeks to further the campaign by appealing to people who have national influence, and in order to do so, he portrays the area through a high culture aesthetic. But the model of charitable community that Wordsworth advocates in 1844 can be also traced through his earlier writings, revealing it to be a significant conceptual preoccupation that Wordsworth frequently returns to and revises after ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Green family tragedy in 1808 shattered his ideal from ‘Home at Grasmere’ that ‘extreme penury is here unknown’ (l. 439): ‘That they who want are not too great a weight / For those who can relieve’ (ll. 443-4). In response to the tragedy, he wrote letters and a poem to raise funds for the subscription. These texts include direct questions (‘Let me beg of you’) and evocative accounts that invite sympathy and association between the readers and the Green family. They demonstrate Wordsworth revised his model of the self-sufficient Lakeland community when he became better acquainted with daily life in Cumbria, contrasting with the distanced nostalgic perspective that informed earlier texts. Since the Green children were placed with working-class Grasmere families and the charitable committee consisted of local inhabitants, the charity can still be seen as a version of local self-sufficiency. However, it also drew on external aid, and relied on a formal, organised system of poor relief that included a supervisory committee of middle to upper class inhabitants. The model of local self-sufficiency thereby remains, but is adapted into a more fragmented, hierarchical and formal version, as Wordsworth begins to form a defined structure for the ideal Cumbrian community.

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[132] William Blake, 'Jerusalem', in *The Complete Poetry of William Blake* (London: University of California Press, 2008), (Chapter 3, Plate 55, ll. 61-2).

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[133] Hess, p. 120.

Wordsworth also proclaims the importance of a wealthier class supporting poorer locals in his 1818 ‘Address to the Freeholders’: ‘Men of large estates cannot but be men of wide concerns […] Extensive landed property entails upon the possessor many duties, and places him in divers relations’.[134] Like the 1844 railway text, this describes an ideal benevolent dynamic, in which those with the greatest wealth and most extensive land accordingly have ‘wide concerns’ and ‘divers relations’. He condones the ‘respectful attachment’ that forms between poor recipients and these wealthy benefactors. The connection, ‘greatly enriches the heart: such are the sentiments with which Englishmen of the humblest condition have been accustomed to look up towards their Friends and Benefactors.’[135] While this parallels the benevolent community model that Wordsworth describes in the railway letter, here he describes it in general terms (in relation to ‘Englishmen’) rather than as specific to the Lake District. This ties into the community model that Wordsworth expounds in *Guide to the Lakes*: a ‘perfect Republic’ that can comfortably fit within the nation. His confidence in the beneficial relationship between rich and poor inhabitants in the Lake District is marked in 1836. ‘Speech at the Laying of the Foundation Stone’ commemorates John Bolton’s benevolent act of funding a new school building in Bowness (see Chapter Two). Wordsworth emphasizes both the benefits the district will derive from the school and Bolton’s benevolent generosity in order to insist that the crowd should develop a significant sense of gratitude towards their benefactor. In that instance Wordsworth endorses a version of local community that contains two distinct classes – the poor and the wealthy – who are connected through benevolent, charitable acts. This is a hierarchical model of community that relies on the institution to act as an intermediary between the two groups. It conforms to the ideal that Wordsworth describes as threatened within the railway letter. However, Bolton can also be seen as an example of the 'unsettled' residents who flit 'to and fro between their fancy-villas and the homes where their wealth was accumulated […] by trade and manufactures': he frequently travelled between his luxurious Lake District villa (Storrs Hall) and another home in Liverpool, where he conducted his trade. Wordsworth's concern about villa owners is therefore inconsistent: he bewails their transience, but also celebrates the instances where they contribute to the local community, and form attachments to the locale. After 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' and 'Home at Grasmere', Wordsworth increasingly advocates inter-dependency between wealthy and poorer inhabitants within the locale. The advantage of this system is not construed in social, economic or cultural terms, but that it improves the morality of poor people.

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[134] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, p. 176.
[135] Wordsworth, *Prose Works* III, pp. 186-7.

In the tract, Wordsworth asserts that concern for other locals is a significant aspect of his protest: 'I could dwell, with much concern for other residents, upon the condition which they would be in if that outrage should be committed' (p. 351). Tellingly, Wordsworth states he is concerned *for* other residents. By worrying on their behalf, he positions himself as the representative spokesman for local residents. Hess observes that in the description of a rural fair in *The Prelude*, 'labouring class people […] are safely contained, both within the landscape and within a corresponding patriarchal social order. Their recreation takes place under the presiding, paternalistic eye of Helvellyn, associated with the poet himself'.[136] In Wordsworth's 'determining community' phase, not only labouring class inhabitants, but also wealthier residents are 'contained' within the railway texts. This enables him to assert his authority as a spokesman for the region, but crucially, it is not ‘the landscape’ that holds the inhabitants. Instead, it is the community. In particular, the portrayal of the community as a cohesive whole – which contains a variety of local voices and is underpinned by charitable exchanges between rich and poor – subsumes other voices that might challenge Wordsworth’s. His status in these texts contrasts with the 1818 election texts in which he engages with a politically divided region. In 1818, he cannot describe a united, cohesive community, and consequently writes from a polarised perspective, striving to assert his authority. Unlike this internal tension, the source of conflict in the railway texts is external, and so he assimilates all local people into his version of the Lake District. He presents this cohesive whole in opposition to the external threat, and so he composes the region into a unified form that corroborates his point of view. This is closer to the model of community that Wordsworth constructs in the churchyard narratives, where the Pastor and the churchyard unite different types of individuals into a cohesive group.

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[136] Hess, p. 126.

Returning to the earlier question about the compatibility of retirement and community, for Wordsworth, these two concepts were compatible because of his version of the local society: when there was no outright local conflict (as in the 1818 elections), he portrayed the region as self-governing, cohesive, and virtuous. Unlike the tumultuous social and political upheaval that concerned Wordsworth in 1818, at this later date the poet could enjoy his own form of retirement. Since, from his perspective, the community generally conforms to his ideal, he did not need to be particularly active within the region. This late ideal of Lake District society maintains elements from his earlier phases of writing: like ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’ (‘remembering’), and ‘Home at Grasmere’ (‘experiencing’), he still defines the region by its independent outlook and a system of benevolent exchange between inhabitants. In 1844, however, Wordsworth is less concerned with detailing the complex inner lives or blank strangeness of individual inhabitants. Instead, local people feature as examples, a shorthand for the earlier developed characters. They are easily subsumed within a cohesive vision of community that, like an army of tin soldiers, can be readily placed to defend or attack at the poet's bidding.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated Wordsworth's various responses to Cumbrian communities in crisis. The tragic deaths of George and Sarah Green prompted campaign writing and also informed Wordsworth's major poetic project, *The Recluse*. The 1818 political crisis triggered extensive writing to promote conservative ideals and the Lowther family. The prospect of a railway also motivated Wordsworth to produce polemical texts in an attempt to sway public opinion against the plan. The texts show an intriguing dialogue between local and national concerns. The local Green tragedy is carefully publicised to a wider national audience – individuals who are invited to sympathise and associate with the Green family – in order to obtain sufficient funds. While the 1818 texts primarily focus on concerns specific to Westmorland, they can also be placed within a broader context of general social unrest, and Wordsworth is seen to use similar platforms (the press) and literary techniques (such as the contagious body politic metaphor) to his contemporaries in order to advance the conservative cause. Notably, the railway protest was published in a national newspaper, and so it advocates what the nation should value in that locale: specific local characters and the socio-economic system of welfare.

The texts that address the Westmorland election and the railway express a clear ideal of Cumbrian community – a hierarchical structure in which rich and poor contentedly coexist. Unlike Wordsworth's approach to 'determining community' in poetical texts such as *The Excursion*, and the *Duddon Sonnets*, where the poet portrays his creative ideal of a reconciled and harmonious community, in the texts examined in this chapter he is directly engaged with shaping Cumbrian society. He does not emphasize the role of the church, and instead focusses on the civilizing, benevolent influence of the wealthy over poorer inhabitants. The texts also reveal some of the problems of the term 'community', demonstrating how it is not simply a warm, inclusive term, but that it can also create exclusion, hostility, or be a means for manipulation. Despite Wordsworth's efforts to subsume diverse voices and perspectives within his portrayal of Lakeland communities to establish the authority of his arguments, tensions and problems remain. In every instance where Wordsworth alludes to a cohesive local community – Grasmere's communal response to the Green tragedy, the Lowther partisans, or a vulnerable way of life in 1844 – fractures and points of strain are apparent. The Green tragedy undermines Wordsworth's belief in the region's internal self-sustainable economy, the 1818 election exposes rifts and animosity between different groups of people, and community in 1844 is portrayed through limited examples, suggesting another biased perspective that overlooks or ignores other dissenting views. At these moments of crisis, community is depicted as an evocative symbol, yet the underlying complexities and tensions that challenge its hegemony are always close to the surface.

Conclusion

For Wordsworth, community was a lifelong preoccupation that opened numerous possibilities for creative inquiry. His locale provided the grounds for him to explore various social, philosophical, political, and economic ideas, on how people live, the relationships that exist between people, and how life might be improved. Living in Cumbria, his involvement with his neighbours, and people within the wider region, was hugely influential on his ideas of community, and his writing. Cumbrian villagers provided formative experience: *The Prelude* and the *Mathew* poems recall the diverse local people who influenced the young poet when he was at school in Hawkshead. The locale also presented demanding crises. The Green family tragedy, the Westmorland election, and the Kendal and Windermere railway threatened the local way of life that he valued. He often portrays Cumbrian communities through the distinctive individuals that, in his view, typify the locale. Natives such as the Cumberland beggar, Michael and Robert Walker are celebrated for their individuality and tenacity. Yet even during settled periods, when there is no distinct threat to communities, Wordsworth can be perturbed by the people that he meets. His depictions of vagrants explore a troubled sympathy, in which the first person narrator struggles to interact with and comprehend the strange others that he meets. Later on, Wordsworth evades this awkwardness by emphasizing the value of reconciliation: a principle associated with the parish church that enables diverse people and aspects of a locale to become coherent.

This thesis has argued that there are three main stages to his writing about community: ‘remembering’ (1790s), ‘experiencing’ (1800-1808), and ‘determining’ (1808 onwards). These phases chart a broad trajectory, enhancing knowledge of how Wordsworth’s early and late ideas of community relate to one another. His distance from the lived experience of Cumbrian communities during the 1790s created a nostalgic perspective, in which he idealised the radical independent way of life that he remembered from his childhood. Following his move to Grasmere in December 1799, his relationship with the locale dramatically changed. He entered an intense phase of ‘experiencing community’, in which he observes, responds to, and records diverse local people. After he established a certain familiarity with the locale another shift occurred in 1808. Alongside a number of other matters that changed his outlook (including increasing political conservatism and religious belief, a cooling relationship with Coleridge, the move from Dove Cottage to Allan Bank, and the death of John Wordsworth in 1805) the Green family tragedy undermined his optimistic ideal – that Grasmere vale is self-sustaining. ‘The Tuft of Primroses’ articulates the fragmentation and collapse of Wordsworth’s earlier ideal. However, in subsequent writing he formulates a revised ideal, which values the hierarchies and institutions that protect the region from change by maintaining traditional values. This reflects the cultural shift in the concept of community in the nineteenth century, as the term developed a formal connection with institutions, through a growing number of compounds, such as community hospital (1843), community school (1847), community tax (1850), and community church (1866). This led to the notion of a ‘community spirit’ (1870), and the term becoming synonymous with social cohesion in 1891. In emphasizing cohesion, structures, and institutions, Wordsworth’s ideas of community in the ‘determining’ phase thus anticipate the zeitgeist. His writing illustrates how the earlier concept of community – referring to qualities in common or groups of people – developed into the later one, which focusses on the structures and ideals that hold people together.

Wordsworth’s revisions are highly revealing of how his changing ideas of community affected his output. The 1798 *Prelude* recalls his schooldays from a distanced perspective. The 1805 version develops his portrayals of community, adding more complex figures and interactions. Both of these texts focus upon marginal and unconventional figures – people like Nanny Holme, or Ann Tyson's dog. Later revisions, revealed in the 1818-20 C-Stage text and the 1850 published text, clarify and distinguish relationships between people: the schoolboys' dishonesty with a local innkeeper becomes brazen deceit. Similarly, 'Address to the Scholars' – a poem that he composed in 1841-2 from fragments written between 1798-9 – transforms Mathew. He ceases to be an eccentric, composite figure, a schoolmaster in name only, and becomes a distinct authority who upholds the local hierarchy. In these later texts, Wordsworth's depiction of characters enables him to place them with greater precision and authority within a local social structure.

Wordsworth's changing concept of community is also apparent through the mode in which he writes about local subjects. While he became closer to the people after he returned to the area in 1800, he tends to describe the community as a detached observer. He writes about local people. He does not write with them, for example by using local proof readers or editors, publishing collaborative volumes, or writing in dialect. But occasionally, particularly in his late 'determining' phase, he writes *for* local people. The Bowness speech and the 1818 Westmorland election texts address Wordsworth's fellow Cumbrians. They were also written on behalf of local individuals: the Bowness speech was commissioned by John Bolton, and the election texts forward the Lowther family cause. These texts show Wordsworth becoming directly engaged in local issues: creating texts that have local significance and address common concerns. This touches on one of the real challenges to writing this thesis: moving between Wordsworth's different approaches to community; his ideas of community and his practical engagement with local people.

I explored this challenge directly through a different aspect of the project. The relationship between the University of Leeds and the Wordsworth Trust has been a key influence that has shaped the way that this thesis approaches Wordsworth's relationship with Cumbrian communities. Through reading groups, I probed the responses of the present day inhabitants to Wordsworth's poetry, which gave me a nuanced insight into the complicated two-way relationship between poet and locale. When I was based at Dove Cottage during the second year of my research, I read Wordsworth's poetry with a variety of people, including primary school children from Ambleside, Grasmere and Langdale; older people living in a care home in Windermere; adult Grasmere residents; young adults from Kendal; general members of the public; and tourists. Given the variety of ages, backgrounds, and contexts, their responses were wide-ranging. But common themes also emerged. Children and adults alike were keen to learn the history behind each poem. Typical questions included: was it based on a true story? Did Dorothy help Wordsworth to compose it? Does it reflect some aspect of Wordsworth's biographical life, like relationships within the family, or the loss of his parents? Such questions encouraged me to delve deeper and read up on Wordsworth's sources in anticipation of the sessions. The readiness of this information – which I often found meticulously recorded in the *Fenwick Notes* – highlighted the importance that the poet attributed to his local sources. It also suggested the importance of history to community: to explore, process and respond to Wordsworth's poetry, people wanted to discover narratives of communal identity by finding real experiences that they could relate to.

Reading group members also responded with a certain ambivalence. Some were suspicious of Wordsworth's perspective. They distrusted the authoritative first-person speaker that unsympathetically interrogates the child in 'We Are Seven'; one child asked the telling question, 'was Wordsworth nice?' When we examined 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' alongside Dorothy's journal extract, people questioned why Wordsworth removed Dorothy from the poem. Some were critical because they felt it showed an arrogant egotism, others defended it, viewing it as a poetic technique that adds to the poem. A number of people were uncomfortable with 'Who Weeps for Strangers', the poem that he wrote in response to the Green family tragedy. Over group discussion, they expressed the view that Wordsworth had made the right decision not to publish the poem. Reasons for this included, it is not as polished as his other poetry, it makes a private family's grief public, and, through the poem, he could profit from their misfortune. Women in Grasmere also challenged the negative portrayal of Aggy Fisher in *The Excursion* ('The Unamiable Woman'). They disregarded the critical tone with which Aggy is described, and declared they felt sorry for her. They saw her as an intelligent woman who had suffered what might have been a common tragedy in rural communities: the lack of opportunities to use and develop her talents, resulting in bitter frustration. The groups thus extended my understanding of Wordsworth's portrayal of various Cumbrian characters. They highlighted the challenging crossover between ideas and engagement: local readers had a distinctive critical lens, and many presented informed reasons to dispute his representation of local life.

For comparison, I also delivered two weekly reading groups in Leeds: one with primary school children, and another with older people, some of whom had dementia. Unlike the groups in Cumbria, where attendees had all heard of Wordsworth, knew the area and almost all had visited Dove Cottage museum, most of the participants in Leeds had never heard of him. While in one sense this was a barrier, it also meant that they approached Wordsworth's poetry without preconceptions, and they responded with great enthusiasm. Many group members were surprised to discover how much they enjoyed poetry, particularly the older people who had not read any since school. They were also surprised by some of the subject matter of Wordsworth's poetry. When we read 'Beggars', one woman was shocked to observe, 'he's writing about poverty'. She thought that poems were generally descriptions of beautiful things. Like the Cumbrian readers, the Leeds groups also expressed ambivalence, for instance, another woman was indignant that in 'Beggars' the male speaker gives the beggar woman money because of her beauty ('for the creature / Was beautiful to see' (ll. 17-8)). Overall, however, they tended to seek to draw connections between their own everyday experience, and the Cumbria that Wordsworth portrays in his poetry. After reading 'Expostulation and Reply' and 'The Tables Turned', we had a stimulating discussion about nature. At first there was a sense of distance: how can we relate to the nature that Wordsworth values when we live in the city? What do we have here that compares to his mountains, lakes, trees and rivers? Yet gradually people began to share their own little patches of nature. One woman in a wheelchair said she likes to watch the sun rise through the trees out of her window and see how the whole sky changes. Another woman who lives in a back-to-back terrace transforms her yard by filling it with potted plants and flowers, making 'a little oasis' among the brick and tarmac. A third woman talked about two trees that grow near her doctor's surgery. She sees them at the bus stop, and people talk about them as they change to amazing colours in autumn. Thus, in Leeds, the divide between ideas and engagement was less contested: people sought to make the poetry relevant, partly seeing it as a means to explore a different 'world' (in terms of the environment, time period, and types of people portrayed), and partly as a tool for reflecting on aspects of their own life in new ways.

As well as exploring Wordsworth's portrayals of Cumbrian village life, these groups became miniature communities in themselves. They typically ranged in size from four to sixteen members. During each session, communal creativity took place. To understand a poem, we read it aloud, sometimes two or three times. This meant that different voices read the poem, and each person brought a new emphasis, modifying the sound and meaning of the words. We then discussed the poem: everyone shared their own ideas, questions and experiences, building a communal knowledge of the poem. Group members were conscious of the uniqueness of this process: ‘We’re getting twelve different perspectives on the same thing.’ Or, as one man enquired, ‘is poetry better read in a group so you interact and get lots of viewpoints? Is it the same alone?’ While this process is valuable, providing all group members with new insights and ways to understand Wordsworth’s poetry, it is relatively transient. The communal explorations cease once the groups end. In order to capture the reading groups’ creative responses to Wordsworth’s poetry, I encouraged everyone to contribute material towards exhibitions that translated their engagement into ideas accessible to other people. I curated two exhibitions: ‘Wordsworth’s Neighbours’ in Grasmere, and ‘Creative Communities: Wordsworth in Leeds’. The Grasmere exhibition focussed on the live process of reading and responding through audio recordings that captured local voices reading and discussing poetry, and children’s drawings of the poems. The Leeds exhibition explored different types of community and how they are portrayed: the Wordsworth Trust provided black and white photographs of Grasmere, older people brought in photos that capture Leeds’ communities, and the children created art work expressing their own ideas of community. The process of curating these exhibitions made me aware of the challenge of organising many different perspectives and presenting them in an accessible coherent manner. This intuitively informed my reading of Wordsworth’s own collection of local stories in the churchyard narratives from *The Excursion*. It highlighted the significance of structural elements – ordering narratives, transitions between them, and contextualising them – to make the stories a cohesive collection.

While the project has thus extensively explored Wordsworth's role in Cumbria both on and beyond the printed page, there remain further avenues to explore. In particular, the impact of his legacy on Cumbrian communities.[1] Since his death in 1850, the poet has continued to have a huge influence upon the region. A study might start with his funeral, exploring how his posthumous authority was established and became entrenched within the locale.[2] The role that Dove Cottage and the Wordsworth Trust museum play within the region is also significant. Polly Atkin discusses the process of 'musealisation' whereby the historical content of a museum goes beyond the building to incorporate an 'extensive archiving of everyday things and places, even of whole towns.'[3] She sees Dove Cottage 'as the epicentre of a broader musealisation of the whole of Grasmere, and even of the whole Lake District.'[4] Accordingly, the local inhabitants become part of the tourist re-experiencing of Wordsworth.[5] To develop Atkin's work further – with specific reference to Cumbrian communities – one could examine how the local people respond to this musealisation: are they conscious of it, resistant, or do they embrace it? This connects to the ambivalent relationship that exists between Wordsworth and Cumbrian inhabitants in the present day.[6] While some local people welcome Dove Cottage and the poet (for example, attending regular events at the museum), others maintain a certain distance. One resident – who has lived in Grasmere his whole life and walks past Dove Cottage daily – has never been inside. He refuses the offer of a free glance around. His resistance to Wordsworth's presence within the locale resembles the descriptions that Rawnsley gathered in the 1870s, where people suggest that 'Wudsworth's [poetry] was not for sec as us.'[7] A detailed analysis of Rawnsley's text and other sources (such as the local press and the Phoebe Johnson scrapbooks) would offer a valuable approach for exploring the ongoing distance between Wordsworth and local people.

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[1] For studies of Wordsworth's legacy more generally, see: Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Saeko Yoshikawa, *William Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism, 1820-1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). Some ecocritical studies examine Wordsworth's influence upon environmentalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century: Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991); Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth Century Culture* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2012). For an overview of the Lake District as a cultural tourist destination, see: John K Walton and Jason Wood (eds), *The Making of a Cultural Landscape: the English Lake District as Tourist Destination, 1750-2010* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

[2] Sources for this include articles in the local press and the scrapbooks within the Phoebe Johnson bequest in the Wordsworth Trust archive.

[3] Polly Atkin, 'Ghosting Grasmere: the musealisation of Dove Cottage', in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. by Nicola Watson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 84-94 (p. 85).

[4] Atkin, p. 85.

[5] Atkin, p. 87.

[6] Interestingly, the children in Leeds who had no prior acquaintance with Wordsworth responded more positively to the reading groups. In Leeds 96% gave positive feedback, with 78% reporting they 'loved it'. Only 4% found it 'a bit hard'. By comparison the schools in the Lake District were slightly less positive: 88% responded positively, and 55% said they 'loved it'. This is perhaps due to 'Wordsworth fatigue' that children in the Lake District may have.

Further insight could be gained by comparing Wordsworth's portrayals of society in Cumbria to other rural places, such as Somerset ('Salisbury Plain', 'The Borderers'); the Alps ('Descriptive Sketches', *The Prelude*); Scotland (*Poems in Two Volumes*, *Yarrow Revisited, Sonnets Composed or Suggested During a Tour in Scotland in the Summer of 1833,* and Dorothy's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*); and Yorkshire (extracts from *Guide to the Lakes*, *Peter Bell*, *The White Doe of Rylstone*). This would enhance knowledge of his ideas of community in general and, through comparison, how he creatively conceptualises Cumbria in particular, highlighting what is distinctive and universal in his descriptions of Cumbria. These avenues for new research demonstrate the significance of community to Wordsworth. This thesis has established the importance of Cumbrian people to Wordsworth's writing and his ideas of community. Reading a range of texts from across his lifetime, it has revealed the wealth of material that engages with local lives and issues. It explores the complicated two-way process, in which Cumbrian communities influenced his writing, and in turn, his writing sought to influence those communities.

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[7] H. D. Rawnsley, *Reminiscences of Wordsworth Among the Peasantry of Westmorland* (London: Jackson Son & Co, 1968), p. 16.

Throughout his career, Wordsworth's motivations for engaging with local life were diverse, encompassing personal, political, social, and creative concerns. A letter from Wordsworth to his American editor, Henry Reed, captures this fusing of experience, inspiration, and ideology, in response to Cumbrian communities. He describes the fete that Isabella Fenwick organised at Rydal Mount to celebrate his seventy fourth birthday:

> It would have delighted you to see the assemblage in front of our House, some dancing upon the gravel platform, old and young […] There were present upward of 300 children, and about 150 adults of both sexes and all ages – the children in their best attire and of that happy and I may say beautiful race which is spread over this highly favoured portion of England. […] I must own I wish that little commemorations of this kind were more common among us. It is melancholy to think how little that portion of the community which is quite at ease in their circumstances have to do in a *social* way with the humbler classes. They purchase commodities of them, or they employ them as labourers, or they visit them in charity for the sake of supplying the most urgent wants by alms-giving. But this alas is far from enough – One would wish to see the rich mingle with the poor as much as may be upon a footing of fraternal equality.[8]

This experience of community brings pleasure, and Wordsworth's passion for his locale is expressed as staunch pride: the local people are a 'beautiful race', and the region is a 'highly favoured portion of England'. Here, as throughout his career, Wordsworth is devoted to the region and its inhabitants. He is concerned about meetings between people, delighting in the mix of ages, genders, and classes that come together for the party. This upholds the focus of earlier texts – from the vagrancy poems to *The Prelude* – that are preoccupied with capturing and exploring interactions between diverse people. In 1844, Wordsworth still notes scope for improving community life. He feels that the capitalist exchanges between classes (purchasing goods, employing people, giving charity) are inadequate: there should be more social interactions between the rich and the poor. The ideal that he aspires to here is 'fraternal equality', which evokes his early radical republicanism. However, at this point he is influenced by the conservative 'Young England Movement', and so he advocates, as a substitute for 'feudal Paternity', a 'christianized humanity' [sic] that unites all 'under one head'.[9] This therefore is another articulation of his 'determining community' phase thinking: encouraging a broad structure for communities, that includes all, and is headed by a single, religious authority. While this is distinct from the non-hierarchical formations of community advocated in his earlier writing, a line of continuity exists between the three phases. For Wordsworth, sympathy and reconciliation are integral to community. Through these concepts, across his career, he explores connections between people, discovering ways to respond to and incorporate difference.

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[8] Wordsworth to Henry Reed, 5 July 1844, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* VII*: The Later Years, 1840-53*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 560-1.

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[9] 'The old Feudal dependencies and relations are almost hone from England, and nothing has yet come adequately to supply their place. […] Why should not great land-owners look for a substitute of what is lost of feudal Paternity in the higher principles of christianized humanity, and humble-minded Brotherhood. And why should not this extend to those vast communities which crowd so many parts of England, under one head, in the different sorts of manufacture which for the want of it are too often the pests of the social state?' Wordsworth to Reed, *Letters* VII, p. 561. The 'Young England Movement' (c. 1842-1847) was a conservative social movement led by George Smythe, Lord John Manners, Henry Thomas Hope, and Benjamin Disraeli.

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