

WILLIAM AND DOROTHY: THE POET AND LUCY  
A READING OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S "LUCY" POEMS

by

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Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

WILLIAM AND DOROTHY: THE POET AND LUCY

A READING OF WORDSWORTH'S 'LUCY' POEMS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an exegesis of each of Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems in the context of the poet's frame of mind during two of the most painful periods in his life. The first is the winter he and his sister Dorothy spent in Germany in 1798-1799, when he composed "Strange fits of passion I have known," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "A slumber did my spirit seal" and "Three years she grew in sun and shower." The second is the unproductive period that began in the autumn of 1800 and lasted until the end of 1801, when the only new poem Wordsworth is known to have composed is "I travell'd among unknown men."

My discussion of the poems' biographical background focuses upon the complex nature and origins of Wordsworth's relationship with his sister. During the winter of 1798-1799 Wordsworth was intensely dependent upon Dorothy; the "Lucy" poems probably emerged out of a fantasy about Dorothy's death. The same melancholy introspection that produced Part One of the two-part Prelude of 1798-1799 also produced the "Lucy" poems. Similarities between the early part of The Recluse, Home at Grasmere, which Wordsworth began in the spring of 1800, and "I travell'd among unknown men" suggest that the latter was generated by Wordsworth's attempts to proceed with the long poem. "I travell'd among unknown men" expresses feelings that Wordsworth could not turn into a discourse on pastoral life in the spring of 1801. Wordsworth's return to the "Lucy" series at this time suggests that his relationship with his sister was on his mind, as it had been in the winter of 1798-1799 and in the spring of 1800. "I travell'd among unknown men" is simultaneously a love poem to Dorothy and a declaration of independence.

The "Lucy" poems explore the effect of the death of a girl upon her lover. The central meaning of the poems is contained in the speaker's response

to Lucy's death. The speaker's sorrow colours his perception of the external universe. The joyous vision of the unity of the universe that Wordsworth celebrated in "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey" is obscured in the "Lucy" poems by the speaker's self-centred grief. Wordsworth's concern with mutability in the "Lucy" poems foreshadows the increasing reliance upon God and "the faith that looks through death" that he expressed in poems such as the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" and "Resolution and Independence" after 1802.



## Song

She dwelt among th'untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,  
A Maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love.

A Violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the Eye!  
--Fair, as a star when only one  
Is shining in the sky!

She liv'd unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceas'd to be;  
But she is in her Grave, and, oh!  
The difference to me.

(1800)

*— from "The Time"*

A slumber did my spirit seal,  
I had no human fears:  
She seem'd a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force  
She neither hears nor sees  
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees!

(1800)

Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
 Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower  
 On earth was never sown;  
 This Child I to myself will take,  
 She shall be mine, and I will make  
 A Lady of my own.

Myself will to my darling be  
 Both law and impulse, and with me  
 The Girl in rock and plain,  
 In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
 Shall feel an overseeing power  
 To kindle or restrain.

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She shall be sportive as the fawn  
 That wild with glee across the lawn  
 Or up the mountain springs,  
 And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
 And hers the silence and the calm  
 Of mute insensate things.

The floating clouds their state shall lend  
 To her, for her the willow bend,  
 Nor shall she fail to see  
 Even in the motions of the storm  
 A beauty that shall mould her form  
 By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear  
 To her, and she shall lean her ear  
 In many a secret place  
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
 And beauty born of murmuring sound  
 Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight  
 Shall rear her form to stately height,  
 Her virgin bosom swell,  
 Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
 While she and I together live  
 Here in this happy dell.

Thus Nature spake -- the work was done --  
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!  
 She died and left to me  
 This heath, this calm, and quiet scene,  
 The memory of what has been,  
 And never more will be.

I travell'd among unknown Men,  
In Lands beyond the Sea;  
Nor England! did I know till then  
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!  
Nor will I quit thy shore  
A second time; for still I seem  
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel  
The joy of my desire;  
And she I cherished turn'd her wheel  
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings shew'd -- thy nights conceal'd  
The bowers where Lucy play'd  
And thine is, too, the last green field  
Which Lucy's eyes surveyed!

(1807)

The texts of Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems that are included here are from Lyrical Ballads (1800) and Poems, in Two Volumes (1807). Unless otherwise noted, all other poems quoted in this essay are taken from The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-1949, vol. I & II rev. 1952).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

'To see the object as in itself it really is,' has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly. . . . What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me?

-- Walter Pater, Preface to Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873)

This thesis presents a reading of the "Lucy" poems in the context of Wordsworth's frame of mind during two of the most painful periods in his life: the lonely winter that he and his sister Dorothy spent in Germany in 1798-1799, when he composed "Strange fits of passion I have known," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "A slumber did my spirit seal" and "Three years she grew in sun and shower," and the unproductive period from the autumn of 1800 until the end of 1801, when the only new poem Wordsworth is known to have composed is "I travell'd among unknown men."<sup>1</sup>

I will argue that the first four "Lucy" poems are the product of Wordsworth's deep dependence upon his sister and of his inability during the winter of 1798-1799 to sustain the joyous perception of an organic universe which he had expressed in "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey" only six months earlier.<sup>2</sup> They probably emerge out of fantasies about Dorothy's death that are rooted in Wordsworth's childhood memories of the deaths of his parents. Wordsworth's vision of a fading away of the self into a "sense sublime" of "A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things" in "Tintern Abbey" is overshadowed in the "Lucy" poems by the speaker's grief. These poems explore a confrontation with death, the end of physical being.

They express the dilemma of mutability and suggest a need in Wordsworth that was later met by a strong Anglican faith. Thus they foreshadow Wordsworth's anguished desire for the assurance offered by an orthodox Christianity of <sup>3</sup> "another and a better world" upon the death of his brother John in 1805.

As a group of poems about the effect of the death of a girl upon her lover, the "Lucy" poems may be said to "follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature." <sup>4</sup> The poems echo and illuminate each other and this cumulative effect is enhanced by their arrangement as a group. The first four "Lucy" poems were originally published in Volume II of the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, where "Strange fits of passion," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" and "A slumber did my spirit seal" are placed together, in that order. "Three years she grew" follows more than eighty pages later, where it is placed after "Ruth," three of the "Mathew" poems and "Nutting" (these poems were also composed in Germany). The sequence of these poems creates a mounting sense of loneliness and loss; set against the backdrop of nature, in which "Three years she grew" participates. This arrangement suggests that Wordsworth was aware of the thematic unity of much of the poetry he composed during this period, and prefiguring the group of poems classed as "Moods of My Own Mind" in 1807 in Poems, in Two Volumes, also suggests that he was already beginning to think of his short poems as parts of <sup>5</sup> a larger work. The 1800 arrangement of the first four "Lucy" poems follows their probable order of composition and it will, therefore, be the order that is followed in this exegesis of the poems.

In April, 1801, Wordsworth included a copy of "I travell'd among unknown men" in a letter to Mary Hutchinson with the instruction that this poem was to <sup>6</sup> be read after "She dwelt among the untrodden ways." We may conclude, therefore, that this poem was composed two years after the other "Lucy" poems, in Grasmere. Such an assumption is supported by the text of "I travell'd

among unknown men": the poem is written in retrospect, seemingly recalling Wordsworth's stay in Germany, and the mood in which he wrote the other "Lucy" poems, as a "melancholy dream" that is now past. In this poem Wordsworth offers a tribute to his love for Dorothy, the source of much of his feeling for the English landscape, but at the same time he declares his independence from her. At home in Grasmere, Wordsworth's need of Dorothy became less intense than it had been in Germany. When they first arrived in Grasmere at the end of 1799, Wordsworth was wholly committed to a life shared with his sister and he gave voice to this commitment in the early part of The Recluse, Home at Grasmere which he began to compose in the spring of 1800. But by 1801, Wordsworth had begun to turn away from Dorothy, and perhaps to already entertain thoughts of marrying Mary Hutchinson.

"I travell'd among unknown men" was not published until 1807 when it appeared in Poems, in Two Volumes together with another poem about Lucy, "Among all lovely things my Love had been."<sup>7</sup> "I travell'd among unknown men" appeared with the other "Lucy" poems for the first time in 1815 in Poems, where it followed "Strange fits of passion" and "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" in the class called "Poems on the Affections." This is the position in which Wordsworth suggests that this poem be read in his letter to Mary Hutchinson. "Three years she grew" and "A slumber did my spirit seal" appear in that order, in "Poems of the Imagination" in Poems. I will discuss "I travell'd among unknown men" in a separate chapter from the other "Lucy" poems, in the context of Wordsworth's life in Grasmere.

I have taken a biographical approach to the "Lucy" poems because of the emotional chord that they strike in me. The poems seem to be deeply personal and as my interest in them grew I found that my interest in the man behind them also grew: I wanted to know more about the voice I heard speaking to me

through these poems. The "Lucy" poems are, for me, associated with a very powerful and disturbing dream I recently had in which I was wrapping my mother in her shroud. My mother, who was still conscious, was helping me by telling me what to do as I wrapped the material around her. Most vivid were my feelings of anguish and dread as I got closer to the moment at which I would have to cover her face, when she would no longer be able to speak to me and to comfort me. I perceive similar bereft and anxious feelings in Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems. Although I have tried to document any assertions I make about Wordsworth's feelings or personality, I have had to read between lines and my argument finally rests upon interpretation. Because the poems mean certain things to me, I have perhaps tended to look for corresponding meanings in Wordsworth's life. It may be that this thesis ultimately reveals more about me than it truly illuminates Wordsworth's life and poetry.

In Literary Biography Leon Edel points out that "a biographer can set forth the data he has gathered and studied only in the light of his own understanding. . . . He had taken into his consciousness a great many documents about another's life. And the book that will emerge will be his vision, his arrangement, his picture."<sup>8</sup> In prefacing my thesis with these observations I have been influenced by David Bleich's warning in his book Subjective Criticism that "No matter how full. . . a portrait may seem. . . and no matter how certain one is of the supporting artifacts, there is no final way to decide that a particular biographical formulation of an author's life or personality is objectively true."<sup>9</sup> The Wordsworth I now feel I know may or may not bear a profound resemblance to the historical Wordsworth. However, my appreciation of the "Lucy" poems has been markedly enhanced by familiarity with the circumstances in which they were written. My understanding of the poems and of my own responses to them have been clarified by learning about the poet's life.

Because I agree with David Bleich's stance that all explanations of literary works are interpretative and subjective, I do not deny the validity of other critical approaches to the "Lucy" poems. Instead, I would observe that each critic finds and brings out in his readings that which is most important to him or to her. For example, Geoffrey Durrant finds it significant that "Strange fits of passion" should be sent "by a mathematician-poet to a philosopher-poet, in the hope that it might 'amuse' him." In his article "Zeno's Arrow: Time and Motion in Two of Wordsworth's Lucy Poems," Durrant discusses "Strange fits of passion" and "A slumber did my spirit seal" in a philosophical and historical context and he stresses the influence of Newtonian physics on Wordsworth which he perceives in both of these poems.<sup>10</sup> In Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814 Geoffrey Hartman finds that "Strange fits of passion" is concerned with the growth of the Wordsworthian imagination, which Hartman defines as "consciousness of self raised to an apocalyptic pitch."<sup>11</sup> In his discussion of the poem Hartman identifies Lucy with the moon -- for him, this is the centre of the poem: "Lucy, by the very fact of being loved, is something more than herself, becomes a landscape even. . . and may not appear as only a person. The unconscious yet natural transfer from Lucy to the moon. . . denotes the power of love to draw the self out of itself. . . ."<sup>12</sup> In my exegesis of this poem, on the other hand, I suggest that the moon represents the power of nature over man. Throughout my discussion of the "Lucy" poems I emphasize the speaker's perception of the external world, which is coloured by his response to the death of Lucy. I feel that these poems are about loss and grief: for me, their meaning is contained in the speaker's feelings about Lucy's death.

Hartman begins his discussion of Wordsworth's imagination by referring to the Preface to the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads in which Wordsworth emphasizes that it was his intention that in these poems the feeling should

"give importance to the action and the situation and not the action and the situation to the feeling."<sup>13</sup> Hartman goes on to suggest that we consider the Romantic lyric "as a development of the surmise which turned all terms descriptive of mode into terms descriptive of mood."<sup>14</sup> Feeling and mood are words that I use often in this thesis. For me as well as for Hartman, the "Lucy" poems are about feeling. My inclination has been to look for the source of that feeling by turning to the personal details of the poet's life.

CHAPTER 2: GERMANY, 1798-1799

Wordsworth composed the first three "Lucy" poems -- "Strange fits of passion," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" and "A slumber did my spirit seal" -- during his stay in Goslar, Germany, from October 6, 1798, until February 23, 1799.<sup>15</sup> Early versions of "Strange fits of passion" and "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," together with a draft of "Nutting" and two fragments that were later integrated into The Prelude, the episodes about the stolen boat and "skaiting" (I: 81-129 and 150-185, 1798-1799 text), were included in a letter sent to Coleridge from Goslar by William and Dorothy Wordsworth in either December 1798 or January 1799.<sup>16</sup> Although no letter survives, another was presumably sent to Coleridge around the same time containing "A slumber did my spirit seal." A letter from Coleridge to Thomas Poole dated April 6, 1799, included the text of this poem which Coleridge described as "a most sublime epitaph" received from Wordsworth "some months ago."<sup>17</sup> The image of "earth's diurnal course" in "A slumber did my spirit seal" is reminiscent of Wordsworth's recollection of the cliffs continuing to wheel by his boyhood self after he comes to a sudden stop in the "skaiting" fragment. Wordsworth also refers to the earth's "diurnal round" in that fragment. These similarities suggest that the two pieces of poetry were composed concurrently and therefore allow a more definite dating of "A slumber did my spirit seal" than could otherwise be made from Coleridge's vague reference.

According to a note which Wordsworth dictated to Isabella Fenwick in 1842-1843,<sup>18</sup> "Three years she grew" was composed in the spring of 1799, after he and Dorothy had left Goslar on a walking tour of the Hartz Forest, around February 23-27, 1799.<sup>19</sup> The lavish imagery of this poem, in contrast to the

spareness of the first three "Lucy" poems, does indeed evoke the relief the Wordsworths felt at the end of the bitterly cold winter they had experienced at Goslar: Dorothy wrote to Coleridge about their walking tour, "We observed that the brilliant green of the earth-moss under the trees made our eyes ache after being so long accustomed to the snow."<sup>20</sup> However, the melancholy mood in which Wordsworth wrote the other poems still dominates "Three years she grew." This poem emphasized man's powerlessness against the forces of "Nature."

The Goslar experience had been an unhappy one: as well as suffering from the intense cold, the Wordsworths felt isolated from their friends and family and increasingly alienated from their German neighbours. Dorothy described their situation in a letter to her brother Christopher sent at the beginning of February 1799:

For more than two months past we have intended quitting Goslar in the course of each week, but we have been so frightened by the cold season, the dreadful roads, and the uncovered carts that we needed no other motives. . . to induce us to linger here. We have had a succession of excessively severe weather. . . and the cold of Christmas day has not been equalled even in this climate during the last century. It was so excessive that when we left the room where we sit we were obliged to wrap ourselves up in great coats etc. in order not to suffer much pain from the transition, though we only went into the next room or downstairs for a few minutes. . . Goslar is not a place where it is possible to see anything of the manners of the more cultivated Germans, or of the higher classes. Its inhabitants are all petty tradespeople: in general a low and selfish race; intent upon gain, and perpetually of course disappointed. They cannot find it in their hearts to ask of a stranger a fair price for their goods. . . Be very particular in your accounts of what you are, and have been doing. Every thing is interesting at this distance.<sup>21</sup>

Wordsworth's assessment of his stay abroad as a "melancholy dream" in "I travell'd among unknown men" echoes a description of his physical and emotional condition sent to Coleridge from Goslar with the copies of "Strange fits of passion" and "She dwelt among the untrodden ways":

As I have had no books I have been obliged to write in self-defense. I should have written five times as much as I have done but that I am prevented by an uneasiness at my stomach and side, with a dull pain about my heart. I have used the word pain, but uneasiness and heat are words which more accurately describe my feeling -- at all events it renders writing unpleasant. Reading is now become a kind of luxury to me. When I do not read I am absolutely consumed by thinking and feeling and bodily exertions of voice or of limbs, the consequence of those feelings.

Wordsworth's description of his condition and its relation to his work in this letter suggests that he endeavoured to find a release for the thoughts and feelings that consumed him during this time by turning them into poetry. Several years later, Wordsworth described the calming effect of his poetry on his feelings in the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (composed 1802-1804):

To me alone there came a thought of grief;  
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And I again am strong.

Similarly, in 1798 Wordsworth's writing seems to have acted as a catharsis, although he says that he was often so overcome by "uneasiness" and pain that he was unable to work. Nevertheless, this was a very productive time for Wordsworth. During the winter and spring of 1798-1799 he composed numerous short poems including "Lucy Gray," "Ruth," "A Poet's Epitaph," "The Fountain," "The Two April Mornings," "Matthew," "To a Sexton," "Nutting," "There was a Boy," "Written in Germany on one of the coldest days of the century," and the four "Lucy" poems. He also composed Part One of the two part Prelude of 1798-1799.

The isolation at Goslar seems to have flooded Wordsworth's mind with memories: instead of continuing with The Recluse, the great work he and Coleridge had mapped out earlier in 1798 at Alfoxden,<sup>22</sup> Wordsworth began to compose a preface to it, The Prelude, in which he used these memories to trace "the growth of mental power / And love of Nature's work" (I: 257-258,

1798-99). Stephen Parrish views the isolation at Goslar as vital to the composition of The Prelude in his introduction to the 1798-1799 text.<sup>23</sup> However, the "wondering and thankful tones" Parrish perceives in the poem seem to me to be imposed upon memories that are disturbing and terrible. At the conclusion of Part One, Wordsworth asks

need I dread from thee  
Harsh judgements if I am so loth to quit  
Those recollected hours that have the charm  
Of visionary things, and lovely forms  
And sweet sensations that throw back our life  
And make our infancy a visible scene  
On which the sun is shining? (I: 448-464)

But this summing up seems at odds with the memories that have actually surfaced in the course of the poem.

At the climax of Part One, the "spots of time" passage (I: 258-374), Wordsworth recalls three childhood experiences that had profound and lasting effects upon him. In the first episode an atmosphere of foreboding or of "breathless stillness" is broken by the sudden appearance of the drowned man from beneath the surface of Esthwaite Lake. In the episode of the mouldered gibbet the young Wordsworth is parted from his adult companion and his fear seems to lead him to the gibbet mast and "a long green ridge of turf. . . / Whose shape was like a grave" (312-313). Turning to leave this spot, he sees a girl struggling against the wind to reach the "naked pool that lay beneath the hills." The poet comments,

It was in truth  
An ordinary sight but I should need  
Colours and words that are unknown to man  
To paint the visionary dreariness  
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,  
Did, at that time, invest the naked pool,  
The beacon on the lonely eminence,  
The woman and her garments vexed and tossed  
By the strong wind. (312-327)

In the third scene Wordsworth recalls watching for the horses that were to take him and his brothers home from school for the Christmas holidays:

Thither I repaired  
 Up to the highest summit, 'twas a day  
 Stormy and rough, and wild, and on the grass  
 I sate, half-sheltered by a naked wall;  
 Upon my right hand was a single sheep,  
 A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,  
 Those two companions at my side, I watched  
 With eyes intensely straining as the mist  
 Gave intermittent prospects of the wood  
 And plain beneath (340-349)

During the holidays Wordsworth's father died, and in his grief and bewilderment the boy concluded that his father's death was a "chastisement" for his selfish anticipation of the holidays:

when I called to mind  
 That day so lately passed when from the crag  
 I looked in such anxiety of hope,  
 With trite reflections of morality  
 Yet with the deepest passion I bowed low  
 To God, who thus corrected my desires. . . .  
 (355-360)

Each of these gloomy episodes is concerned with the effect of an encounter with death upon Wordsworth's childhood self. They are filled with terror, loneliness and guilt. The episodes build in force as the narrator's involvement increases: the third and most powerful memory combines the atmosphere of foreboding and the lonely "visionary dreariness" of the other scenes to give these feelings a direct, personal meaning. The narrator is no longer an onlooker; instead of a stranger, it is his father who is dead. The memory of "the wind and sleety rain. . . the bleak music of that old stone wall," Wordsworth tells us, was one that he often returned to, to "drink / As at a fountain" or to refresh his sense of guilt about his father's death. This memory, he believes, has continued to reverberate in his subconscious mind and has deep connections with the growth of his mental or imaginative power:

I do not doubt  
 That in this later time when storm and rain  
 Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day  
 When I am in the woods, unknown to me  
 The workings of my spirit thence are brought.  
 (370-374)

Wordsworth's apparently idyllic early childhood was tragically disrupted by the death of his mother in 1778, when he was less than eight years old. The young Wordsworth family was subsequently broken up when Dorothy was sent to live with her mother's cousin and her brothers were placed under the rigid, unsympathetic care of their maternal grandparents, only returning to their father's home for holidays. Wordsworth's father, John Wordsworth, had been a busy man who does not seem to have had much time to spend with his children. In her biography of Wordsworth, Mary Moorman suggests that when John Wordsworth died five years later, in 1783, "The real loss sustained by the Wordsworth children. . . was perhaps less that of a beloved person than of a happy home. . . . During the two or three following years the contrast between life at Cockermouth and life with their unloved grandparents at Penrith was bitter. . . ." <sup>24</sup> The guilt feelings Wordsworth describes in The Prelude perhaps derived from a sense of resentment towards a father who seemed to have abandoned him.

Dorothy and her brothers were reunited in the summer of 1787 when she too came to live with their grandparents. At this time she and William rediscovered the loving affinity they had shared as small children. A poem from this period, "The Vale of Esthwaite," celebrates Wordsworth's renewed love for his sister in a passage which begins with a recollection of his father's death that seems an early version of the "spots of time" passage from the 1798-1799 Prelude. <sup>25</sup> The poet then moves to romantic speculations about his own death. Imagining himself upon his deathbed without the comfort of "a mother's arm," he turns to his sister:

For I must never share  
 A tender parent's guardian care;  
 Sure, from the world's unkind alarm,  
 Returning to a mother's arm,  
 Mist-eyes awhile upraise the head  
 Else-sinking to Death's joyless bed,  
 And when by pain, by Death depressed  
 Ah! sure it gentler sinks to rest.  
 As when a Ball, his darling toy,  
 Tossed upward by some watchful boy  
 Meets in its quick declining course  
 The well-known hand that gave it force,  
 Springs up again with feeble bound  
 Then softer falls upon the ground.  
 Sister, for whom I feel a love  
 What warms a Brother far above,  
 On you, as sad she marks the scene,  
 Why does my heart so fondly lean?  
 Why but because in you is given  
 All, all my soul would wish from Heaven?  
 Why but because I fondly view  
 All, all that Heaven has claimed, in you?

I have strong reservations about F.W. Bateson's hypothesis of an incestuous love between William and Dorothy Wordsworth. His argument that they were well aware of the dangerous nature of their relationship does not convince me, but some of his points are well-taken: the intensity of the feelings the Wordsworths had for each other is readily apparent from William's poetry and from Dorothy's journals.<sup>26</sup> However, their love for each other is, I feel, expressed with an innocence that is perhaps no longer possible in this post-Freudian age. There may very well have been a sexual element in their relationship -- after being parted in childhood, they met again as adults and almost as strangers -- like the legend of the hermaphrodite in Plato's Symposium, two halves to make the perfect whole. But I do not think that such an attraction between them was ever admitted or even that they were consciously aware of it. Wordsworth's marriage to Mary Hutchinson in 1802 seems a repudiation of the relationship he had with his sister, for Dorothy and William Wordsworth's relationship was in many ways like a marriage: the sense of closeness and companionship they shared, their commitment to a life together

and to William's poetry suggest Shakespeare's "marriage of true minds." But in contrast to his affair with Annette Vallon and the anxiety and frustration Wordsworth must have felt at being prevented, ostensibly by circumstances, from taking any responsibility for their child,<sup>27</sup> his relationship with Dorothy allowed Wordsworth to recover something of the blissful security of his early childhood. The intensity of his love for his sister probably had its source in Wordsworth's grief at the deaths of his parents while he was a child: the void that their deaths left, especially his mother's, was now filled by Dorothy.

In the letter to Thomas Poole in which Coleridge enclosed a copy of "A slumber did my spirit seal," Coleridge commented that the poem likely originated in a fantasy about the death of Dorothy Wordsworth:

Oh! this strange, strange Scene-shifter,  
Death! that giddies one with insecurity, and so  
unsubstantiates the living Things that one has  
grasped and handled! / Some months ago Wordsworth  
transmitted to me a most sublime Epitaph / whether  
it had any reality, I cannot say.-- Most probably,  
in some gloomier moment he had fancied the moment  
in which his sister might die.<sup>28</sup>

Many critics are inclined to discount this remark, arguing that to insist upon a real identity for Lucy as Dorothy -- or as Annette Vallon or a childhood sweetheart -- is to be reductive and irrelevant.<sup>29</sup> But given Coleridge's close friendship with the Wordsworths and his awareness of their situation in Goslar, his remark does seem to me to provide a valuable insight into the mood in which Wordsworth might have begun the "Lucy" series. In Wordsworth's depressed state during that terrible winter, nightmares about the death of the sister whose companionship he relied upon so heavily might very well have preyed upon his mind: without Dorothy's saving presence, Wordsworth would have been alone in a cold, hostile world. His life would be like that of the desolate Fly whose existence he describes in "Written in Germany on one of

the coldest days of the century":

His spindles sink under him, foot, leg, and thigh!  
 His eyesight and hearing are lost;  
 Between life and death his blood freezes and thaws;  
 And his two pretty pinions of blue dusky gauze  
 Are glued to his sides by the frost.

No brother, no mate has he near him -- while I  
 Can draw warmth from the cheek of my love;  
 As blest and as glad, in this desolate gloom,  
 As if green summer grass were the floor of my room,  
 And woodbines were hanging above.

In support of his identification of Lucy with Dorothy, F.W. Bateson cites a fragment of "Nutting" which addresses Lucy:

Ah! what a crash was that! with gentle hand  
 Touch these fair hazels -- My beloved Friend!  
 Though 'tis a sight invisible to thee  
 From such rude intercourse the woods all shrink  
 As at the blowing of Astolpho's horn.  
 Thou, Lucy, art a maiden 'inland bred'  
 And thou hast known 'some nurture'; but in truth  
 If I had met thee here with that keen look  
 Half cruel in its eagerness, those cheeks  
 Thus [word illegible] flushed with a tempestuous bloom,  
 I might have almost deem'd that I had pass'd  
 A houseless being in a human shape,  
 An enemy of nature, hither sent  
 From regions far beyond the Indian hills. . . . 30

A version of "Nutting" was also included in the letter to Coleridge from Gosler that contained "Strange fits of passion," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" and the Prelude fragments. Like the published text, and unlike the fragment quoted above, this version of "Nutting" does not address Lucy. But there is a strong echo of "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" in these lines:

The violets of five seasons re-appear  
 And fade, unseen by any human eye. . . .

The concluding admonition to a "dearest Maiden" in "Nutting" is reminiscent of Wordsworth's address to his sister at the end of "Tintern Abbey." As in "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth draws on the past in "Nutting" to illuminate the

present for his companion. Wordsworth had intended "Nutting" as part of The Prelude, but subsequently decided not to use it in that poem.<sup>31</sup> The Prelude is addressed to Coleridge. Perhaps we may reasonably suppose that the Maiden addressed in "Nutting" -- who is called Lucy in the fragment quoted above -- is Wordsworth's other "beloved Friend" and confidante, Dorothy.

Further evidence for an identification of Lucy with Dorothy is provided by "Among all lovely things my Love had been." Wordsworth composed this poem in 1802 about an incident that "took place," he told Coleridge, "about seven years ago between Dorothy and me."<sup>32</sup> In 1802 he called the girl in the poem "Emma," a pseudonym he frequently used for Dorothy. When he published the poem in 1807, "Emma" was changed to "Lucy" and the poem was placed beside "I travell'd among unknown men." At least in retrospect, there was an association in Wordsworth's mind between the "Lucy" poems and his feelings for Dorothy.

In the preceding pages I have suggested that the "Lucy" poems emerged out of a terrible and perhaps recurrent fantasy about Dorothy's death, and out of the complex nature and origins of Wordsworth's love for her. By exploring the effect of Lucy's death upon her lover, Wordsworth spoke his own feelings and fears. However, since, unlike The Prelude, the "Lucy" poems are not explicitly autobiographical, I will refer to the "I" of these poems as the speaker instead of as Wordsworth.

A pattern of "blindness" to Lucy's mortality, followed by a tragic awareness emerges in the first three "Lucy" poems. Each sets prior heedlessness and subsequent knowledge in opposition, but by means of this repetitive structure Wordsworth demonstrates a "growth of mental power." In "Strange fits of passion I have known" the speaker apprehends the possibility (and by implication, the inevitability) of Lucy's death, but backs away from the

knowledge that overtakes him. In "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" he tries to express the "difference" Lucy's death has meant to him: now that she is dead the speaker tries to evoke her living presence, but he can only re-capture an elusive impression of her. "A slumber did my spirit seal" places the speaker's painful personal feelings about Lucy's death in the context of man's place in nature's universe. The living Lucy was part of a universe governed by time; it is only after she is dead that Lucy need not suffer change, because she has become part of an inanimate and unfeeling realm of "things."

The pattern of epiphany is less explicit in "Three years she grew," but there is still a strong sense of "before and after" in the speaker's evocation of the past time of Lucy's life, which is set against the present moment from which she is absent in the last stanza:

Thus Nature spake -- the work was done --  
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!  
 She died, and left to me  
 This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;  
 This memory of what has been,  
 And never more will be.

In "Three years she grew" Lucy's life is recalled in the context of her relationship with "Nature." The wider focus of this poem and of "A slumber did my spirit seal" perhaps explains Wordsworth's placing them in "Poems of the Imagination" in 1815 while assigning the other "Lucy" poems to "Poems of the Affections".

"STRANGE FITS OF PASSION I HAVE KNOWN"

Of all the "Lucy" poems, only "Strange fits of passion" is recognizeably a lyrical ballad. Although unlike most traditional ballads nothing actually happens, the atmosphere of the poem arouses an expectation of tragedy.<sup>33</sup> The speaker introduces his tale by describing his experience as "Strange fits of passion I have known. . . .": using the word "Strange" evokes the traditional ballad world of the supernatural or the mysterious. This effect is heightened as he goes on to confide that he "will dare to tell/ But in the Lover's ear alone,/ What once to me befell." These lines intimate that it is dangerous to speak of this experience. Perhaps the narrator fears that by speaking of his premonition of Lucy's death he will make it happen. In the early version sent to Coleridge from Goslar, the poem has a final stanza in which we are told that the narrator's fears have come to pass:

1

Once, when my love was strong and gay,  
And like a rose in June,  
I to her cottage bent my way,  
Beneath the evening Moon.

2

Upon the moon I fixed my eye  
All over the wide lea:  
My horse trudg's on, and we drew nigh  
Those paths so dear [to] me.

3

And now I've reached the orchard-plot,  
And as we climbed the hill,  
Toward's the roof of Lucy's cot  
The moon descended still.

4

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,  
Kind nature's gentlest boon,  
And all the while my eyes I kept  
On the descending moon.

## 5

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof  
 He raised and never stopped,  
 When down behind the cottage roof  
 At once the planet dropp'd.

## 6

Strange are the fancies that will slide  
 Into a lover's head,  
 "O mercy" to myself I cried  
 If Lucy should be dead!"

## 7

I told her this: her laughter light  
 Is ringing in my ears;  
 And when I think upon that night  
 My eyes are dim with tears.

A "fit of passion" is generally used to describe an act committed in a moment of abandon or during a momentary loss of self control. The speaker tells us he has had "fits" of passion, which suggests that he has felt this way more than once, although he goes on to describe a single occasion.

The second word of the opening phrase, "fits," possesses a number of connotations which bear upon the meaning of the poem. A "fit" commonly denotes a transitory affliction or paroxysm of hysteria or lunacy. The major effect of "fits", therefore, is to reduce the intense emotional experience suggested by the use of "passion" (which "Strange fits" modifies) to a momentary attack of madness or a loss of self-control that has since been thrown off, or so the speaker endeavours to persuade us. A "fit" may also describe a bodily state or affliction that presages death, although this use of the word is, and was in Wordsworth's time, archaic: <sup>34</sup> as he goes on with his story, the speaker's "fits" are revealed to be a mental crisis that is grounded in or foreshadows the physical fact of death. This archaic

usage suggests the language of the old traditional ballads. A "fit" is also a part of a poem or a song -- a stanza or a canto. This meaning suggests the speaker's effort to regain control over his feelings; he admits his "passion" to us a bit at a time, in stanzas, or in "fits and starts". If his telling of his "passion" is structured, perhaps it may be controlled.

"Passion" is used by the speaker to define a disturbing premonition of his sweetheart's death, and is thus set against his love for Lucy: death, not Lucy, fills her lover with "passion". Although we commonly use "passion" to imply sexual love, and the close proximity of "passion" and "Lover" in this stanza tends to bring this usage to mind, the word has its origins in "suffering," especially the suffering of Christ on the cross, and is closely tied, therefore, to life and death, and to life after death or redemption. But in the course of the "Lucy" poems, Lucy's death reveals her to be a creature of a physical universe. The lover's "passion" is indeed an anticipation of eternity, but it is the cyclical realm of earth's "diurnal course" ("A slumber did my spirit seal") that he is ultimately confronted with, rather than the spiritual realm of God.

"Passion" is closely linked with passivity: one suffers passion, or is acted upon by it. Thus, the speaker introduces his story in the passive voice or tells us what "once to me befell". Lucy's lover endeavours to repress his "passion," but it becomes clear in this poem and in the others that this is a "passion" that cannot be overcome or ignored -- man must be passive in the face of death, in the end he can be nothing else

In the opening lines of the second stanza the speaker recalls how Lucy seemed to him as he set out for her cottage: "When she I lov'd was strong and gay/ and like a rose in June. . . ." The use of the past tense here ("When she I lov'd was. . . .") implies that Lucy is no longer "strong and gay." This suggestion that Lucy's youth, if not her life, is now over is strengthened by her equation with "a rose in June". The association of transience and decay with roses is (and was in 1798) a common poeticism. Wordsworth's opinions about "poetic diction" expressed in the 1800 Preface suggest that he anticipated a particular response from his reader by using such a phrase: the use of such ready or uninspired (and hence "unpassionate") words to describe Lucy reinforces my impression that in telling his story the narrator is attempting to diminish the effect of his experience. But when the association of roses and June with transience is coupled with the implications of the past tense, this apparent complacency is undercut. The lover's tranquility is exposed as false. He inadvertently reveals the truth of his "fond and wayward thoughts": if Lucy is not dead now, she is at least changed from what she was, and at some time in the future she will die.

Because I have argued that the "Lucy" poems express Wordsworth's own feelings or fears, some comment about the poet's conscious intent versus his empathic involvement with his narrator seems called for here. Wordsworth's identification of poetry with passion in the Preface to the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads suggests that each of his poems expresses a projection of his own responses if he were to be placed in a particular situation of circumstance. At least at the moment of writing, Wordsworth seems to claim in the Preface, the feelings expressed in all of his poems are his own. On the other hand, Wordsworth's note to "The Thorn" in the

the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads about his use of a first person narrative "to show the manner in which men cleave to the same idea; and to follow the turns of passion, always different yet not palpably different, by which their conversation is swayed", suggests a precedent for distinguishing between poet and narrator in the "Lucy" poems. As well, these poems have been very carefully crafted. Wordsworth's penchant for revision is apparent from Dorothy's journals in which she frequently remarks upon the pain Wordsworth suffered as a consequence of revising his poems.<sup>38</sup> As well, Coleridge complained in his notebook in 1803 that Wordsworth's "corrections, coming of necessity so often, at the end of every 14 or 20 lines -- or whatever the poem might chance to be -- wore him out. . . ." Separating Wordsworth's conscious intent and empathic involvement in the "Lucy" poems, which (in contrast to "The Thorn") are much more "lyrical" than they are "ballads", seems neither entirely possible nor desirable. However, I will assume that the finished or published poem may be distinguished from the initial spontaneous outpouring and that Wordsworth was well aware of the implications of using a phrase such as "like a rose in June" to describe Lucy.

The foreboding equation of Lucy with the brief flowering of roses is echoed in her lover's ride to her cottage "beneath an evening moon," or beneath a moon that is setting.<sup>40</sup> The moon is one of the major images man has of the cycles of nature: birth, death and renewal. The moon waxes and wanes, and then waxes again. The moon, however, remains unchanged throughout its cycle: the change occurs in our perception of the moon, rather than in the moon itself. But once Lucy is dead, like

the rose she will be gone forever as a particular or individual entity.

Or as Ben Jonson wrote,

Suns that set, may rise again:  
 But if once we lose this light  
 'Tis with us perpetual night. 41

The use of "bent my way" to describe the rider's setting off towards Lucy's cottage suggests that his journey is going to be a difficult one and that he will have to struggle to reach the cottage. The rider seems to bear the great weight of the moon upon his back, just as he later bears the burden of his anxiety about Lucy's death. Juxtaposing the rider's movement with that of the moon's each of the four middle stanzas slows down or impedes the rider's progress. The moon moves always ahead of the rider; he is unable to catch up. Looking back upon his journey, it seems to the speaker that if only he could have reached Lucy's cottage before the moon dropped behind it, he might have escaped the shocked awareness of Lucy's mortality that the moon's movement triggered - and thus, perhaps, saved Lucy. But as he relives his journey, he knows he could not move quickly enough, just as he is now unable to evade his fear. He rides towards Lucy as though he were moving in a dream:

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,  
 Kind Nature's gentlest boon!

The effect of endless movement, as if in a dream or a trance, is increased by the repetition of the word "and" as the narrator describes his journey, together with the repeated references to the moon's "descending" and such phrases as "my horse trudged on", "my horse moved on" and "hoof after hoof/ He rais'd and never stopp'd. . . ." The running-on of a thought from one line to the next, a device used

throughout the poem (for example, "And all the while my eyes I kept/ On the descending moon") also slows down the poem's rhythm in sympathy with the rider's slow progress.

The lines "I to her cottage bent my way/ Beneath an evening moon" also suggest that the rider bows down to the moon. This impression becomes stronger two stanzas later, when the speaker refers to "Kind Nature's gentlest boon" (my italics): "Nature's" power to grant "boons" implies that man is her vassal. The "boon" Nature grants is the "sweet dream" of heedlessness. The rider is jolted out of this dream by a sudden fear for Lucy's life when the moon, Nature's representative, drops behind Lucy's cottage. He is made suddenly and painfully aware of death, the power that Nature holds over man.

The man and the moon converge upon Lucy's cottage and they also seem to merge into one another in the distorted syntax of "Upon the moon I fix'd my eye,/ All over the wide lea" in stanza three. Does "All over the wide lea" refer to the moon's light, or to the speaker's eye? Although the speaker's premonition of Lucy's death seems to be triggered by an outside agency, the moon, his fear for Lucy actually emerges out of the depths of his own subconscious, to change his "sweet dreams" into nightmare and to thereby shock him awake. The rider does not race against the moon but against his own mind. His inability to reach Lucy's cottage before the moon drops behind it suggests that he is no longer able to control or repress his fear.

The word "fix'd" in the first line of stanza three ("Upon the moon I fix'd my eye!") suggests a mesmerized concentration upon the moon: Lucy's lover rides towards her cottage staring "fixedly" at the foreboding

moon. But in spite of the rider's close attention to the moon's relentless movement towards Lucy's cottage, it nevertheless seems to drop suddenly, or "at once" behind the cottage roof. The prospect of Lucy's death seems sudden and unexpected because although the speaker has presumably bestowed the close attention of a lover upon Lucy -- or perhaps because he has so lovingly doted upon her -- he has blinded himself to the effect of the passage of time.

The slow-moving regularity that characterizes the rider's journey comes to an abrupt stop as the moon drops behind Lucy's cottage:

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof  
 He rais'd and never stopp'd  
 When down behind the cottage roof  
 At once the planet dropp'd.

The rider is jolted out of his "sweet dreams." Yet in the lines that immediately follow, his sudden epiphany is labelled "fond and wayward thoughts" that "slide/ into a Lover's head" (my italics): desiring to return to his former dream-like state, the speaker seems to deny his rude awakening. Hence, the slow, gentle rhythm of the rest of the poem is kept up in the final stanza:

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide  
 Into a Lover's head --  
 "O mercy!" to myself I cried,  
 "If Lucy should be dead!"

The speaker's reference to himself in the third person in the second line of this stanza ("Into a Lover's head"), in contrast to his use of the first person throughout the rest of the poem, suggests that he is trying to distance himself from this experience or to repress these "fond and wayward thoughts." With his rather mechanical response of "O mercy!" the speaker seems to attempt to contain his experience by expressing his

response to it in familiar and therefore "safe" terms. At the same time, however, "O mercy!" evokes an association with prayer, suggesting the serious nature of these thoughts. This association with prayer suggests in retrospect that "the Lover" to whom the speaker says that he will "dare to tell" his "passion" in stanza one is Christ, who alone will listen to and understand the speaker's suffering. Similarly, the speaker's description of his "fond and wayward thoughts" or his "Strange fits of passion" evoke an association with Henry Vaughan's vision of heaven in "They are all gone into the world of light":

And yet, as angels in some brighter dreams  
 Call to the soul when man doth sleep,  
 So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,  
 And into glory peep. 42

But God's presence is not felt in the universe of the "Lucy" poems. Nature is the controlling force here: "boons" are granted or refused at her pleasure. If the speaker's cry is read as a prayer to God, it seems doomed to remain unanswered. If it is a prayer to Nature, it seems doomed to rebuff, for death is an undeniable and unavoidable fact of life in Nature's universe. "O mercy!" to myself I cried" may be read as a plea to a greater power, soundlessly expressed, but it also implies that the speaker asks for mercy from himself, or from his imagination -- the source, for Wordsworth, of "deep feelings" such as these. But the poem ends with the unremitting line "'If Lucy should be dead!'" These words, towards which the poem has been always moving, overshadow all that has been said before.

"SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS"

The use of flower imagery to evoke one's beloved is a traditional technique of English love poetry which Wordsworth makes use of in "Strange fits of passion." He also uses it in "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," comparing Lucy to "A violet by a mossy stone." Frances Ferguson suggests that by avoiding "the specifics of cheeks and roses" and likening Lucy to an entire flower, Wordsworth increases Lucy's anonymity. These "specifics" were, in fact, used by Wordsworth to describe Lucy in the early version of "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" sent to Coleridge from Goslar:

My hope was one, from cities far  
Nursed on a lonesome heath:  
Her lips were red as roses are,  
Her hair a woodbine wreath.

She lived among the untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,  
A maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love;

A violet by a mossy stone  
Half-hidden from the eye!  
Fair as a star when only one  
Is shining in the sky!

And she was graceful as the broom  
That flowers by Carron's side;  
But slow distemper checked her bloom,  
And on the Heath she died.

Long time before her head lay low  
Dead to the world was she:  
But now she's in her grave, and Oh!  
The difference to me!

Wordsworth subsequently removed some significant details from this version of "She dwelt among the untrodden ways": the published poem no longer tells us that Lucy suffered from "distemper" or that she was a long time dying. What are left are the bare bones. Lucy lived, and she

died. Beside the terrible fact that Lucy is dead, the circumstances surrounding her death seem unimportant. The result of removing these details from the poem is increased poignancy: Lucy's absence is much more felt. The comparisons of Lucy to a violet and to a star are now set at the centre of the poem; rather than being part of a catalogue of her beauty, they now seem to express her essence. The image of Lucy is at once less superficial than the "specifics" of her lips and hair and harder to grasp. Now that she is dead, Lucy's lover tries to "praise" her living presence, but he can only evoke an elusive impression of what she once was.

In the first stanza Lucy's way of life is evoked with images of quiet and tranquillity, but these recollections of Lucy are coloured by her death. The effect of using "dwelt" (instead of "lived", for example) is to emphasize her impermanence -- Lucy resided or lingered for a time among "Th' untrodden ways." This latter phrase conjures up images of a rural remoteness or of a solitary, unhurried way of life. We are also told that Lucy dwelt "Beside the springs of Dove. . . ." Because the Dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, Lucy's dwelling beside "the springs of Dove" suggests that she, too, was pure and virtuous. The phrase suggests that Lucy dwelt near God, the source or the "springs" of the Holy Spirit and that Lucy's quiet, rural life was therefore purer and holier than it could have been if she had lived among the well-trodden ways of town. Lucy's dwelling beside the "springs" or the beginnings of the River Dove also suggests her youth. Lucy's innocence, simplicity and virtue, as well as her youth, are also implied by the one reference to her as a "Maid" in the third line of this stanza. This impression of Lucy's

virtue or godliness conjures up the old maxim, she died young because she was too good for this world -- usually used in retrospect, after the death of a child or a young person. Because of her youth, Lucy's death is unexpected and all the more shattering for her lover: the promise contained in "the springs of Dove" of a calmly flowing river is not mirrored in Lucy's life, which ends just as it is beginning.

The rather circuitous lines "A Maid whom there were none to praise/  
And very few to love" also hint at Lucy's situation in life, telling us that Lucy lived in isolation, with a small circle of intimates who loved her. More significantly, these lines imply a distinction between the feelings the speaker had for Lucy when she was alive and the feelings he is left with now that she is dead: when Lucy was alive, her family and friends did not "praise" her, they loved her. "Praise" suggests worship or the offering of hymns to a remote divinity and the speaker seems to distinguish this from the love he and a few others felt for Lucy. But now that Lucy is dead, she can no longer be loved; she can only be praised. This poem was given the title of "Song" in the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, perhaps because it is a hymn of praise to Lucy. Now that she is dead, the speaker remembers Lucy as more than the simple "Maid" he loved. He worships her as

A violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the Eye!  
-- Fair, as a star when only one  
Is shining in the sky!

These two images represent Lucy as simultaneously lowly and delicate, glorious and remote. Lucy's beauty spans the near and the far and expresses the unity of the universe: her beauty encompasses the antipodes  
45  
of the universe and shows them to be mirror images of each other. The

violet is half hidden by the stone; the glory of the single star is about to be obscured by countless others. The star shows up against the darkened sky; the violet is contrasted against the mossy stone. But although these images of the violet and the star seem intended as a tribute to Lucy, this "praise" has a hollow ring. It is undercut by the associations with mutability that both images evoke: trying to recapture Lucy's beauty, her lover can only express it in terms that suggest her death. A violet blooms, and then shortly afterwards withers away. The "mossy stone" that half hides the violet serves to emphasize the frailty of the flower, and of Lucy's life. Like a star, a stone is a relatively permanent object, in contrast to a violet. The moss that grows on the stone suggests a cool, moist greenness, such as one might find by a spring, but as Geoffrey Durrant points out, it also suggests a gravestone.<sup>46</sup> The special beauty of a star "when only one/ Is shining in the sky" lasts only a short time, before there are countless others. Placed within the context of the eternal vastness of the universe, like the violet by the stone, the image of the single shining star emphasizes the quick passage of Lucy's life.

The circuitousness of the first stanza of the poem is mirrored in the last stanza: if Lucy "liv'd unknown", how could even a "few" know when she "ceas'd to be"? The effect of these lines is to suggest a reluctance on the speaker's part to state directly that Lucy is dead. The description of Lucy's dying as her ceasing to be also echoes the quiet anonymity of Lucy's life that is evoked in the first stanza; Lucy does not die so much as slip out of life. "Few could know", perhaps, because Lucy's death is such a quiet diminishing of life. By italicizing "liv'd" (this is only done in the 1800 version of the poem), her lover stresses that Lucy will not remain unknown now that she is dead: his poem or song of "praise" to her is to ensure that more than a few will

know about Lucy.

The obliqueness of these lines contrasts sharply with the flat statement that follows: "But she is in her Grave. . . ." The speaker seems to steel himself to admit this terrible reality. In his grief at Lucy's death, the speaker has set himself apart -- only a "very few" even notice that Lucy has "ceas'd to be". The loneliness he feels now that Lucy is dead is emphasized by this and also by the restraint of the final words of the poem: "and, Oh!/ The difference to me." Leaving so much unsaid in these lines has the paradoxical effect of conveying the speaker's anguish and desolation in a very powerful and convincing way. Defining the effect of Lucy's death on his life as simply the "difference" it has made to him suggests a pent-up emotion or grief that is too profound or too devastating to be described, although as I have tried to demonstrate, this "difference" affects the speaker's memory of Lucy and interferes with his evocation of her in this elegy.

#### "A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL"

In "A slumber did my spirit seal" the speaker looks back upon the "sweet dream" of heedlessness to Lucy's mortality from which he was first awoken by his premonition of her death in "Strange fits of passion." The first stanza of "A slumber did my spirit seal" suggests the speaker's repression of his awareness of Lucy's mortality in the other poem. While Lucy was alive, he was able to ignore the effects of the passage of time or to deny that Lucy could feel "The touch of earthly years." In "A slumber did my spirit seal" this knowledge is called "human fears."

These fears are only admitted after Lucy's death by the speaker's awakened "spirit," the faculty that makes him human or distinguishes him from animals and from "things" which do not feel time or change. Wordsworth also makes this distinction in one of the "Matthew" poems, "The Fountain" (also composed at Goslar in 1798-1799). In this poem Matthew contrasts men's misery with the unchanging nature of a stream and with the birds' blithe ignorance of the effect of time:

'No check, no stay, this Streamlet fears;  
How merrily it goes!  
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,  
And flow as it now flows.

'And here, on this delightful day,  
I cannot choose but think  
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay  
Beside this fountain's brink

'My eyes are dim with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirred,  
For the same sound is in my ears  
Which in those days I heard.

. . .

'The blackbird amid leafy trees,  
The lark above the hill,  
Let loose their carols when they please,  
Are quiet when they will.

'With Nature never do they wage  
A foolish strife; they see  
A happy youth, and their old age  
Is beautiful and free;

'But we are pressed by heavy laws;  
And often glad no more,  
We wear a face of joy, because  
We have been glad of yore.

The speaker's "spirit" in "A slumber did my spirit seal" may be defined as his understanding or his imagination which, as Wordsworth tells us in *The Prelude*, is most often "unsealed" by pain and fear. After the "stolen boat" episode (I: 80-129, 1798-99) the poet concludes:

Ah! not in vain ye Beings of the hills!  
 And ye that walk the woods and open heaths  
 By moon or star-light, thus from my first dawn  
 Of childhood did ye love to intertwine  
 The passions that build up our human soul,  
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
 But with high objects, with eternal things,  
 With life and nature, purifying thus  
 The elements of feeling and of thought,  
 And sanctifying by such discipline  
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize  
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

(I: 130-142)

Similarly, the glorious vision described in "Tintern Abbey" only follows the poet's apprehension of "The still, sad music of humanity":

For I have learned  
 To look on nature, not as in the hour  
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; A sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things.

The last three lines of this excerpt from "Tintern Abbey" are echoed in "A slumber did my spirit seal." However, in "Tintern Abbey" the landscape is alive with a "presence" or with "A motion and a spirit, that impels. . . and rolls through all things" whereas in "A slumber did my spirit seal," because Lucy is dead, the landscape also seems to be dead: the "things" that this landscape contains are inanimate and inert. They are "Rolled around in earth's diurnal course," but no motion or spirit rolls through them. In "Tintern Abbey" the poet defines himself as a "thinking thing"

and feels a close harmony between himself and all other things. Instead of this "sense sublime" of the unity of men's minds with the inanimate universe, the speaker of "A slumber did my spirit seal" finds himself shut out from the universe of things with which Lucy has merged. Because Lucy is remote, the landscape also seems remote. His lonely spirit awakens in a seemingly empty universe.

The speaker's imagination is "unsealed" or released by his grief, but Lucy's spirit, on the other hand, has been sealed by the endless slumber of death. There is no suggestion in the poem that Lucy's soul lives on after the death of her body: Lucy "seem'd a thing" when she was alive; now that she is dead she is a thing. There is no trace of the divine in the universe of "A slumber did my spirit seal." Instead of ascending to a spiritual plane of being after death, Lucy has descended down the chain of being, to the level of vegetable and minerals or of "rocks and stones and trees." Because the effect of Lucy's death upon her lover is a terrible loss, his vision of death's consequences for Lucy is also a bleak one. The repeated negatives of the first two lines of stanza two emphasize that dying represents a loss for Lucy as well as for her lover: "No motion has she now, no force/ She neither hears nor sees. . . ." Like the "rocks and stones and trees," Lucy no longer walks or runs now that she is dead; nor does she breathe or speak or laugh. Lucy has no "force" anymore: she is without vitality or "spirit." She no longer hears or sees or feels.

Lucy no longer has motion or force because she is no longer affected or "touched" by "earthly years." Lucy's corpse is "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course" but this motion no longer impels Lucy. The earth still turns, but Lucy is still. The image of the earth's regular movement

contrasts with and emphasizes the stillness or permanence of the inanimate objects it carries along with it. Now that Lucy is dead, the speaker is compelled to recognize that she is also part of this eternal repetition.

The correspondence between the "thing" Lucy seemed to be in life, described in the first stanza, and the thing she actually is now that she is dead, described in the second stanza, is emphasized by the parallel structure of the two stanzas. Each stanza begins with two short statements, and each stanza builds towards the third and fourth lines, which are enjambed. The corresponding observations about Lucy that the third and fourth lines contain are given added weight because of their length, in contrast to the brief statements that come before. Aided by the regularity of the poem's rhyme scheme, the repetitive structure of the two stanzas imparts a sense of an inexorable proceeding towards the final lonely vision of Lucy's kinship with "rocks and stones and trees."

Using "diurnal" rather than the simpler word "daily" to describe the earth's course creates an impression of majesty and power which contrasts with the gentle image in stanza one of "The touch of earthly years." Because the effect of time was so imperceptible or gentle, the speaker was able to ignore it. By ignoring time the speaker seems to pit the puny powers of his wishes against it or to try to halt the "earth's diurnal course." The foolishness of his former state of mind is therefore emphasized by this final image of the earth's regular and relentless revolutions. Counting time in years in stanza one and in days in stanza two suggest both the speaker's increased awareness of time's passage and his unhappiness and loneliness now that Lucy is dead. Time hangs more heavily on his hands now. When Lucy was alive, the years passed quickly and imperceptibly; now that she is dead, he is aware of the passage of

each day.

The stately majesty suggested by "earth's diurnal course" is echoed in the rhythm of this line. The long vowel sounds, the diphthong in "round", the separation or pause between the "i" and the "u" in "diurnal", the repetition of "r", "l" and "s" sounds and the pause one tends to make between "earth's" and "diurnal" all slow the reader down and add force to the image that this line contains. The dominant sounds of this line -- "r", "s" and "n" -- are repeated in the poem's last line. This repetition of sound unifies the last two lines and therefore increases the force of the image of Lucy's unity with the universe of "things." For the Poetical Works of 1832 Wordsworth inserted commas into this line -- "rocks, and stones, and trees." These pauses give the line a weighted emphasis which imparts a terrible finality to this image.

Lucy's having taken her place with the "rocks and stones and trees" reminds us that she is now in the ground -- in her grave. The lexical repetition of "rocks and stones" emphasizes that Lucy's corpse is an inanimate "thing." But unlike a rock or a stone, Lucy's corpse will not remain virtually unchanged by time: it will decay and turn to dust, to become part of the earth from which trees can grow. Extending the phrase "rocks and stones" to include "trees" has the effect of lessening the bleakness of this image since although they do not "feel," trees are nevertheless living things. They grow and change. Trees also "die" every winter, to be reborn in the spring. They belong to the seasonal cycles of nature, which are as permanent in their repetition as are rocks and stones. Lucy's death awakens her lover's imagination or "spirit" by forcing him to recognize that Lucy is part of this endless cycle, but this

understanding is overshadowed by the knowledge that she is lost to him.

"THREE YEARS SHE GREW IN SUN AND SHOWER"

While the focus of "Three years she grew in sun and shower" is ostensibly upon the relationship of Lucy and "Nature," the details of this relationship are presented by her lover, from his point of view. Like the first three Lucy poems, this poem is concerned with the speaker's feelings about Lucy's death: the bitterness of his grief is revealed by his characterization of Nature as a domineering and powerful being. In the Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800) Wordsworth singles out personification as a particularly deplorable literary device:

In these Poems I propose to myself to imitate and, as far as it is possible, to adopt the very language of men, and I do not find that such personifications make any regular or natural part of that language. I wish to keep my reader in the company of flesh and blood. 47

By personifying Nature in "Three years she grew," therefore, Wordsworth seems to have gone against his own creed. However, like the narrator's rather mechanical comparison of Lucy to a "rose in June" in "Strange fits of passion," the speaker's use of "poetic diction" in this poem reveals much about his state of mind.

The lovely images of Lucy's life with Nature are simultaneously used to demonstrate Nature's imperiousness: "The floating clouds their state shall lend/ To her, for her the willow bend"; "The stars of midnight shall be dear/ To her. . . ." Nature commands and it is so. This is a power that cannot be denied:

Three years she grew in sun and shower,  
 Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower  
 On earth was never sown;  
 This Child I to myself will take,  
 She shall be mine, and I will make  
 A Lady of my own.

Nature's possessiveness is emphasized in these lines by the first person pronouns Nature uses while claiming Lucy. The greedy, demanding power of Nature overrides the futile claim that the speaker makes to Lucy in the last stanza of the poem:

Thus Nature spake -- the work was done --  
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!

These lines from the last stanza are reminiscent of Genesis: "And God said, let there be light: and there was light." (1:3) They suggest that Nature's power is as great as God's, or that in the universe of these poems Nature is the governing force. And Nature is everywhere: "In earth and heaven, in glade and bower. . . ." Instead of God's, Nature's will is to "be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew VI:10).

The opening lines of "Three years she grew in sun and shower" tell us that Lucy had been nurtured by the natural world from her birth or for the three years before Nature noticed and desired her: "Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower/ On earth was never sown. . . ." Lucy becomes Nature's "Lady": she is raised in station, from one flower among many to Nature's consort. Lucy is singled out by Nature for particular attention:

Myself will to my darling be  
 Both law and impulse, and with me  
 The Girl in rock and plain,  
 In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
 Shall feel an overseeing power  
 To kindle or restrain.

All Lucy's desires or "impulses" will originate with or be "kindled" by Nature's "overseeing power." Her ability to govern or to "restrain" them will also come from Nature. Lucy will be wholly influenced by Nature and Nature will bestow his kingdom upon her, to serve her: "The floating clouds their state shall lend/ To her, for her the willow bend . . . ." Nature's promises are reminiscent of pastoral love poetry such as Marlow's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," in which the shepherd offers his sweetheart "all the pleasures. . . / That valleys, groves, hills, and fields, / Woods or steepy mountain yields." All the beauty of the natural world is given to Lucy because Lucy belongs wholly to Nature, and her own beauty derives entirely from sensory experience:

Nor shall she fail to see  
 Even in the motions of the storm  
 A beauty that shall mould her form  
 By silent sympathy. . . .

And beauty born of murmuring sound  
 Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight  
 Shall rear her form to stately height,  
 Her virgin bosom swell. . . .

(my italics)

Lucy's death forces her lover to an understanding of her physical nature or to a realization that Lucy belonged to Nature, who will not share her with her human lover. As he looks back upon Lucy's life, it seems to the speaker that he lost Lucy to Nature: the poem is not unlike a lover's complaint with Nature represented as a more powerful and therefore victorious rival who has taken Lucy from the speaker. But by possessing Lucy, Nature destroys her. At the same time that she is endowed with the

beauty of the natural world, Lucy also receives her doom: the end-result of Nature's love for Lucy seems to be that Lucy's "race" is the sooner run. Although everyone belongs to Nature -- everyone dies eventually -- death seems to have come sooner for Lucy because her relationship with Nature was especially close. If Lucy had been less lovely, the speaker implies, she might have escaped Nature's notice and still be alive.

Nature's reference to Lucy as a flower in stanza one recalls the comparisons of her with a rose in "Strange fits of passion" and with a violet in "She dwelt among the untrodden ways." As in the other poems, the common association of flowers with transience foreshadows the brevity of Lucy's life in "Three years she grew." Like the beauty of flowers, the beauty bestowed on Lucy was fleeting. Later in the poem, the ominous lines "While she and I together live/ Here in this happy dell" (stanza six) also suggest the transience of Lucy's life, as well as providing a bitter contrast with the final image of the speaker alone on the heath. Many of the images of Lucy's life with Nature are images of motion: these images culminate in the speaker's reference to Lucy's life as a "race" in the last stanza and they emphasize, therefore, that even while Lucy was so vibrantly alive, her life was quickly passing:

She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn  
Or up the mountain springs. . . .

The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her, for her the willow bend,  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
A beauty that shall mould her form  
By silent sympathy.

. . . and she shall lean her ear  
 To many a secret place  
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
 And beauty born of murmuring sound  
 Shall pass into her face.

Lucy's tireless motion also suggests her youthfulness and echoes the description of the poet's boyhood in "Tintern Abbey":

When like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
 Where ever nature led. . . .

Unlike most of the other images of Lucy, she is also described in stanza three as possessing "the breathing balm,/ . . . the silence and the calm/ Of mute insensate things." These lines contrast with the image of Lucy as "sportive as the fawn" in the same stanza and therefore suggest a range of loveliness that is reminiscent of the images of the violet and the star in "She dwelt among the untrodden ways." The image of Lucy's possessing "the silence and the calm/ Of mute insensate things" also foreshadows her death and the "calm, and quiet scene" she bequeaths to her lover. The description of Lucy as "the breathing balm/ . . . Of mute insensate things" suggests that she was the living embodiment of their soothing qualities. Like the mountains or trees or clouds, Lucy's presence could calm and quieten her lover's spirit. But after her death, Lucy is no longer "the breathing balm. . ./ Of mute insensate things" (my italics) -- she has become one of them. To the speaker, "This heath, this calm, and quiet scene" seems a sad reminder "of what has been,/ And never more will be."

In contrast to the images of movement and of sensory life that fill the rest of the poem, we are finally told that Lucy's "race was run": Lucy has stopped running, she is dead, and, because Lucy is still, the landscape

also seems still, a "calm and quiet scene." Like the first line of the last stanza, "Thus Nature spake -- the work was done --," the image of Lucy's "race" being "run" has a biblical tone. It is reminiscent of this famous passage from Ecclesiastes:

I returned, and saw under the sun that the race is  
not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,  
neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to  
men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;  
but time and chance happeneth to them all. (IX:11)

The tranquil acceptance of the bounds of time that I sense in this passage is not achieved by the speaker of "Three years she grew," however. Although the reference to the "calm and quiet scene" that Lucy leaves her lover suggests that the speaker's attitude to her death is one of acceptance and repose, as does his simple straightforward statement, "She died," this impression is undercut by the nostalgic last lines of the poem. Lucy leaves the speaker alone on the heath with "The memory of what has been/  
And never more will be."

I have argued that because Lucy is dead, the landscape of "A slumber did my spirit seal" also seems dead: it is unfeeling, unresponsive and inanimate. In "Three years she grew" the speaker describes the world in which Lucy lived and, like the landscape of "Tintern Abbey," that world is filled with motion and spirit. The kingdom that Nature bestows upon Lucy is full of movement and delight. Perhaps the contrast between the landscapes of these two "Lucy" poems may be attributed to the changing circumstances in which Wordsworth composed the poems: "A slumber did my spirit seal" was composed during the bitterly cold winter at Goslar; "Three years she grew" was composed in the spring, after the Wordsworths

had left Goslar. However, in spite of the warm promise of spring and the knowledge that he was on his way home to England, Wordsworth's mood does not seem to have appreciably lightened. The figure of Nature in "Three years she grew" is domineering and possessive, and although this poem does not end on so desolate a note as "A slumber did my spirit seal," the tone of the last stanza is not dissimilar.

CHAPTER 3: GRASMERE

"I travell'd among unknown men" was probably composed in April, 1801: Wordsworth included this poem in a letter he wrote to Mary Hutchinson on April 29, 1801, with the instructions that it should be read after "She dwelt among the untrodden ways." Like "She dwelt among the untrodden ways", "I travell'd among unknown men" emphasizes the importance of place: the speaker's description of where Lucy dwelt in both poems colours his evocation of Lucy. Reading the poems in this sequence, the love for England that the speaker expresses in "I travell'd among unknown men" grows out of the relationship between Lucy and the landscape that is suggested in "She dwelt among the untrodden ways". "I travell'd among unknown men" was first published in 1807 when it appeared with another poem about Lucy, "Among all lovely things my Love had been," in Poems, in Two Volumes, although there is evidence that Wordsworth had intended to publish it in the 1802 edition of Lyrical Ballads after "A slumber did my spirit seal" and then changed his mind. "I travell'd among unknown men" eventually appeared with the other "Lucy" poems in the Poems of 1815 in the position Wordsworth had designated in 1801, after "She dwelt among the untrodden ways."

In "I travell'd among unknown men" Wordsworth seems to look back upon the terrible winter he and Dorothy spent in isolation in Germany and to contrast that melancholy time with a present that is happy and serene.

"I travell'd among unknown men" expresses a confidence that is similar to the optimism with which Wordsworth concluded "Tintern Abbey" in July, 1798. The theme of the continuity of the landscape or of place as a bridge between past and present in "I travell'd among unknown men" is reminiscent of Wordsworth's admonition to his sister at the end of the earlier poem:

Nor, perchance --  
 If I should be where I no more can hear  
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
 Of past existence -- wilt thou then forget  
 That on the banks of this delightful stream  
 We stood together; and that I, so long  
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
 Unwearied in that service . . . .

Nor wilt thou then forget,  
 That after many wanderings, many years  
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

However, "I travell'd among unknown men" also looks back on a time of creative success from one filled with frustration. The winter of 1798-1799 was a highly productive time for Wordsworth; "I travell'd among unknown men" is the only new poem he is known to have completed during a long silence that began in the summer of 1800 and lasted until November, 1801. By comparing his present situation with the past, Wordsworth seems, therefore, to seek to reassure himself about his life in Grasmere and to thus overcome the malaise that gripped him in the spring of 1801.

I have suggested that the first four "Lucy" poems were an expression of Wordsworth's intense love for Dorothy and reflect their situation during the winter of 1798-1799. These poems seem to me to emerge out of the same introspection that produced Part One of the two part Prelude. Similarities

between the beginning of the first part of The Recluse, Home at Grasmere,  
 51  
 which was written in the spring of 1800, and "I travell'd among unknown  
 men" suggest to me that this lyric was generated by Wordsworth's attempts  
 to proceed with Home at Grasmere in the spring of 1801. In a book about  
 Wordsworth's poetry of 1800 John Dings described Home at Grasmere as "a  
 divided poem." He suggests that two impulses lay behind Wordsworth's  
 composition of the poem: to write about himself and to describe the  
 52  
 pastoral life. A number of short pastoral poems such as "Michael" and  
 "The Brothers" seem to have grown out of Wordsworth's intention, stated  
 at the end of the early section of Home at Grasmere, to "look for man"  
 but the lines written in the spring of 1800 are chiefly a lyrical  
 overflowing of powerful and intimate feeling. Wordsworth begins his  
 "great argument" of the harmony between the Mind of Man and the external  
 53  
 World with a celebration of his love for Grasmere and for Dorothy. The  
 impulse to write about himself in Home at Grasmere seems to have been  
 54  
 stronger than the impulse to "give pictures of Nature, Man and Society."  
 Wordsworth also gave way to the urge to write about himself in "I  
 travell'd among unknown men": this poem seems to give expression to  
 feelings that Wordsworth could not turn into philosophy in the spring of  
 1801, Wordsworth's return to the "Lucy" series at this time suggests that  
 his relationship with his sister was on his mind, as it had been in the  
 winter of 1798-1799 and in the spring of 1800.

But that relationship was not the same as it had once been. In  
 Germany and during the early months at Grasmere, Dorothy had been the  
 centre of Wordsworth's life. In the spring of 1801 Wordsworth was at  
 home in Grasmere and in close contact with friends such as Coleridge and

the Hutchinson sisters and he was less dependent upon his sister's love and support. Wordsworth did not formalize his engagement to Mary Hutchinson until April, 1802, but that relationship had probably begun to establish itself in the spring of 1801. When he married Mary in October, 1802, Wordsworth grew up: he stepped out of the childhood world he had regained in his relationship with his sister and assumed the role of an adult. In "I travell'd among unknown men" Wordsworth seems to offer simultaneously a love poem to Dorothy, the source of so much of his feeling for the English landscape, and a declaration of his independence.

During the idyllic months following William and Dorothy Wordsworth's arrival in Grasmere at the end of 1799, Wordsworth composed numerous short poems and also made a jubilant start upon Home at Grasmere. But during the summer of 1800 Wordsworth found himself increasingly frustrated in his attempts to compose poetry. In July he wrote to Josiah Wedgewood that "ill health has for some time rendered literary labour not adviseable for  
55  
me." In September Dorothy described Wordsworth's poor health and its relation to his work in a letter to a friend:

William's health is by no means strong, and he has written a great deal since we first went to Alfoxden, namely during the year preceding our going into Germany, while we were there, and since our arrival in England, and he writes with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain and internal weakness about his left side and stomach which now often makes it impossible fo[r]him to [write]when he is in mind and feelings in such a state that he could do it without difficulty. 56

During the summer and autumn of 1800, Wordsworth busied himself preparing the second edition of Lyrical Ballads for publication. He wrote the Preface to the second edition at this time. Wordsworth's definition of "good poetry" as "the overflow of powerful feelings" in the Preface suggests that he believed that the source of his poetry lay

in the disturbances of "feeling and agitation" that Dorothy described in her letter, but by courting such a state of mind Wordsworth trod a razor's edge. Overwhelmed by pain and weakness, Wordsworth is nonetheless said to be "in mind and feelings in such a state that he could [write] without difficulty." Ironically, the state of mind that was supposedly most conducive to composing poetry could also make composition impossible.

Ill health continued to oppress Wordsworth throughout the autumn of 1800. References in Dorothy's journal to Wordsworth's attempts to work are interspersed with references to his not feeling well:

(October 19) Wm worked all morning at the sheepfold, but in vain. He lay down in the afternoon till 7 o'clock, but could not sleep. I slept, my head better -- he unable to work.

(October 21) Wm had been unsuccessful in the morning at the sheepfold.

(October 23) Wm was not successful in composition in the evening.

(October 27) Wm could not compose much, fatigued himself with altering.

(October 31) Wm very sick and very ill.

(November 1) Wm better.

(November 4) Wm sadly tired.

(November 7) Wm still unwell.

(November 23) Wm not well.

(November 26) Wm very well and highly poetical

(December 6) Wm was not well, had laboured unsuccessfully..  
Wm tired and not well. <sup>57</sup>

No regular record of the events of 1801 survives. Dorothy's journal breaks off on December 22, 1800, and does not resume until October 10, 1801.

However, there are references in family letters to Wordsworth's problems with his health and his work which suggest that the pattern of frustration and depression recorded by Dorothy in her journal continued. In a letter

to Anne Taylor dated April 9, 1801, Wordsworth wrote, "I have taken a house in the Vale of Grasmere, . . . and I live with my sister, meaning, <sup>58</sup> if my health will permit me, to devote my life to literature." At the end of April, in the same letter in which Wordsworth sent Mary Hutchinson a copy of "I travell'd among unknown men," Dorothy wrote [William] is always very ill when he tries to alter an old poem, but new composition does not hurt him so much. I hope he will soon be able to work without hurting himself." However, the next month Dorothy wrote to Coleridge: "Poor William! We have put aside all the manuscript poems, and it is agreed between us that I am not to give them up to him even if he asks for <sup>59</sup> them."

Dorothy's letters tell us that Wordsworth was preoccupied with revision in the spring of 1801. We know from a letter sent in April, 1801, to Thomas Poole that Wordsworth had added some lines to "Michael." <sup>60</sup> A series of letters from John Wordsworth to Dorothy suggests that Wordsworth was also working on The Recluse and The Prelude. At the end of March John <sup>61</sup> wrote that he was "glad to hear that Wm [was] going on with the recluse." A month later he thanked Dorothy for sending him copies of Wordsworth's <sup>62</sup> poems, especially "the corrections in the . . . poem to Coleridge."

Critical opinion is divided as to whether by "the recluse" John Wordsworth actually meant The Prelude since his reference in the second letter to the "poem to Coleridge" probably refers to The Prelude. The editor of John Wordsworth's letters, Carl Ketcham, argues that "WW, DW, and Coleridge thought of The Prelude as part of The Recluse, though not <sup>63</sup> the main part." Ketcham's opinion is supported by a letter sent from Coleridge to Wordsworth in October, 1799, in which Coleridge confused The Recluse and The Prelude:

I long to see what you have been doing. O let it be the tail-piece of 'The Recluse!' for of nothing but 'The Recluse' can I hear patiently. That it is to be addressed to me makes me more desirous that it should not be a poem of itself. To be addressed, as a beloved man, by a thinker, at the close of such a poem as 'The Recluse'. . . is the only event, I believe, capable of inciting in me an hour's vanity. <sup>64</sup>

Coleridge seems to be referring here to Part Two of The Prelude of 1798-1799, which Wordsworth completed in the autumn of 1799. At the end of Part Two Wordsworth addresses Coleridge as "My Friend" and "My brother . . . in this my deep devotion" (496, 508-9).

However, in October 1799 Wordsworth had not yet begun Home at Grasmere: The Prelude or the preface to The Recluse was all that he had so far produced. The two poems were less likely to be confused after Wordsworth had started The Recluse proper, Home at Grasmere, in the spring of 1800. Mark Reed argues, therefore, that if John Wordsworth's remark about 'the recluse' was a reference to The Prelude, it "represents a confusion of the 'recluse' and the poem on Wordsworth's own life uncharacteristic of the family's usual terms for discussion of the works." Reed suggests that Wordsworth probably worked on The Recluse and on The Prelude in the spring of 1801, and he uses a third letter from John to Dorothy, in which John said that he liked "the additions and corrections in the long [poem]," to speculate that The Prelude I, 55-271 (1805) may have been written at this time. <sup>65</sup> Jonathan Wordsworth and Stephen Gill also feel that John Wordsworth would not have confused The Recluse and The Prelude and argue that Wordsworth was probably "attempting to get [on] with Home at Grasmere but allowed himself to be sidetracked into revision of 1799 [The Prelude, <sup>66</sup> 1798-1799], part of which Sara Hutchinson was engaged in writing out." <sup>67</sup> <sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup>

Support for believing that Wordsworth was at work on Home at Grasmere, a part of The Recluse, in the spring of 1801 seems to me to be provided by a comparison of Home at Grasmere with the one poem Wordsworth is known to have written in the spring of 1801, "I travell'd among unknown men". In an analysis of the relationship of Wordsworth's short poems to his long poem, Jared Curtis suggests that frequently for Wordsworth "the short poems became a remedy, a release, a refreshing and pleasure-giving employment arising almost in recompense for the poet's discouragement and irresolution over the 'work of length and labour.'" Curtis goes on to point out that the typical short poem deals with "the very same concerns that had generated the larger work." This is true of the relationship between Part One of the two-part Prelude and many of the short poems written at Gosler. Much the same relationship exists between those parts of Home at Grasmere written in the spring of 1800 and the short poems written at that time, and also between the early Home at Grasmere and "I travell'd among unknown men."

In the lines of Home at Grasmere that were composed in 1800 Wordsworth's love for Grasmere is intertwined with his love for Dorothy. The joy he feels in Grasmere reflects his love for Dorothy and his commitment to the life they will share there. Home at Grasmere opens with the poet's solitary reflections upon his boyhood discovery of the Vale of Grasmere but his description of his present happiness there emphasizes that it is a shared happiness. His tribute to Grasmere starts with a tribute to "Emma" (the name he gives to Dorothy in the poem):

Mine eyes did ne'er  
 Rest on a lovely object, nor my mind  
 Take pleasure in the midst of happy thought,  
 But either She whom now I have, who now  
 Divides with me this loved abode, was there  
 Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,  
 Her voice was like a hidden Bird that sang;  
 The thought of her was like a flash of light  
 Or an unseen companionship, a breath  
 Or fragrance independent of the wind:  
 In all my goings, in the new and old  
 Of all my meditations. . . . (85-115)

Wordsworth then compares Grasmere to Eden and invites us, therefore, to identify him and his sister with Adam and Eve (117-128). Later, he describes himself and Emma as birds, echoing the comparison of Emma's voice to a "hidden Bird that sang" in the lines quoted above. They are "Two of a scattered brood that could not bear/ To live in loneliness." and he recalls how "Remembering much and hoping more, [they] found means/ To walk abreast, though in a narrow path,/ With undivided steps" (177-179). After describing their journey together to Grasmere and Dove Cottage, "a home within a home. . . our love within a love," the poet uses a pair of swans as an emblem of his relationship with his sister and of their love for each other:

-- two, a lonely pair  
 Of milk-white Swans. Ah, why are they not here?  
 To share in this day's pleasure? From afar  
 They came, like Emma and myself, to live  
 Together here in peace and solitude,  
 Choosing this Valley, they who had the choice  
 Of the whole world. . .

but to us

They were more dear than may be well believed,  
 Not only for their beauty and their still  
 And placid way of life and faithful love  
 Inseparable, not for these alone,  
 But that their state so much resembled ours;  
 They also having chosen this abode;  
 They strangers, and we strangers; they a pair,  
 And we a solitary pair like them. (322-341)

An ominous note creeps into the poem here, for the swans are missing. Wordsworth fancies that a shepherd may have shot one of them and he uses this possibility to emphasize the depth of his love for his sister and their commitment to each other: "haply both are gone, / One death, and that were mercy given to both" (356-357).

Dorothy's Grasmere journal provides us with a vivid and intimate sense of her relationship with her brother and of the emotional closeness in which they lived. Her dependence upon him and the intensity of her love for him is revealed by her depression when Wordsworth was away from home in the spring of 1800:

(May 4) My heart was so full that I could hardly speak To W. when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound.

(June 4) I lingered out of doors in the hope of hearing my Brother's tread.

(June 5) I would not go far from home, expecting my Brothers.

(June 6) No William! I slackened my pace as I came near home, fearing to hear that he was not come. I listened till after one o'clock to every barking dog, cock-fighting and other sports: it was Mr. Rowrick's opening.

(June 7) I did not leave home, in the expectation of Wm. and John, and sitting at work till after 11 o'clock I heard a foot go to the front of the house, turn round and open the gate. It was William! 71

F.W. Bateson speculates that "some sort of understanding" had probably been reached between Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson during the Wordsworth's stay at the Hutchinson family farm between May and December, 1799,

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"presumably with Dorothy's consent." However, Wordsworth's description of his relationship with Dorothy in Home at Grasmere, especially his comparison of them to a pair of swans, suggests that his deepest commitment

at that time was to Dorothy and therefore that marriage to Mary Hutchinson cannot have been anything more than a very vague possibility. In the only other section of Home at Grasmere that can be confidently dated the spring of 1800, Wordsworth describes John Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Mary and Sara Hutchinson as the brothers and sisters of "our hearts" (859-874). These words would seem oddly chosen if they described Wordsworth's feelings for his future wife. In 1805 Wordsworth recalled that he had "no thoughts of marrying" in the spring of 1800.

Mary Hutchinson visited Dove Cottage in March, 1800. John Wordsworth was also there at that time and he seems to have formed an attachment to her. It seems unlikely that he would have been kept in ignorance of any spoken arrangement between Mary and his brother. Recalling that spring visit after John's death in 1805, Mary wrote to Catherine Clarkson "John was the first who led me to everything that I love in this neighbourhood." Dorothy recalled "John used to walk with [Mary ] every where and they were exceedingly attached to each other." Dorothy also remembered "tender love of John and. . . intimate knowledge of his virtues." Even William wrote to his brother Richard "Mary. . . loved John with her whole soul." John Wordsworth left Grasmere on a sea voyage in January, 1801. He wrote frequently to Mary until he received a letter from her in September, 1802, presumably telling him of her engagement to his brother William. Although John's letters to Mary were very often about his brother's poetry, which suggests that the bond between them may have been their mutual interest in William, the tone of his letters was deeply affectionate. John did not write so warmly even to his sister Dorothy. In his introduction to The Letters of John Wordsworth Carl Ketcham observes that only Mary was "thou" to John. In February 1801 John wrote, "my dear

Mary there is nothing that thou canst write but what will give  
 me pleasure and to be with thee I read they letters over a dozen times  
 78  
 in a day. . ." In John's last surviving letter to Mary Hutchinson,  
 dated September 12, 1802, he used lines from his brother's poem  
 "Michael" to express his feelings:

I have been reading your Letter over and over again  
 My dearest Mary till tears have come into my eyes and I know  
 not how to express my self thou ar't kind and dear  
 creature But what ever fare Befal me I shall love thee to  
 the last and bear thy memory with me to the grave. 79

Although an understanding may have been reached during Mary's  
 visit to Grasmere in November and December, 1801, a sequence of entries  
 in Dorothy's journal suggest that Wordsworth's decision to marry Mary  
 was not finally resolved until March, 1802. These entries are also  
 relevant here for the insight they offer into the Wordsworths'  
 relationship and Dorothy's feelings:

(March 17) I went and sate with W. and walked  
 backwards and forwards in the orchar till dinner time. He  
 read me his poem. . . After dinner we made a pillow of my  
 shoulder -- I read to him and my Beloved slept.

(March 21) William was very unwell this evening. We  
 had a sweet and tender conversation. I wrote to Mary and Sara.

(March 22) We talked a good deal about C. and other  
 interesting things. We resolved to see Annette, and that Wm  
 should go to Mary. 80

William left to go to Mary on April 7. On April 12 Dorothy received  
 a joint letter from Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson, presumably  
 telling her that they were officially engaged:

(April 12) Walked to T. Wilkinson's and sent for  
 letters. The woman brought me one from William and Mary. It  
 was a sharp, windy night. Thomas Wilkinson came with me to  
 Barton, and questioned me like a catechizer all the way. Every  
 question was like the snapping of a little thread about my  
 heart - I was so full of thought of my half-read letter and  
 other things. I was glad when he left me. Then I had time to

look at the moon while I was thinking over my own thoughts . . .  
 At this time William, as I found the next day, was riding by  
 himself between Middleham and Barnard Castle, having parted  
 from Mary. I read over my letter when I got to the house. 81

While Wordsworth was riding between Middleham and Barnard Castle  
 he composed a poem about Dorothy, "Among all lovely things my Love had  
 been." Upon his return to Dove Cottage, Wordsworth sent this poem in  
 a letter to Coleridge, adding that "The incident of this poem took  
 place about seven years ago between Dorothy and me." After he left  
 Mary Hutchinson, Wordsworth's mind had been on his sister:

Among all lovely things my Love had been,  
 Had noted well the stars, all flow'rs that grew  
 About her home, but She had never seen  
 A Glow-worm, never once -- and this I knew.

While I was riding on a stormy night,  
 Not far from her abode, I chanced to spy  
 A single Glow-worm once; and at the sight  
 Down from my Horse I leapt -- great joy had I.

I laid the Glow-worm gently on a leaf,  
 And bore it with me through the stormy night  
 In my left hand -- without dismay or grief  
 Shining, albeit with a fainter light.

When to the Dwelling of my Love I came,  
 I went into the Orchard quietly,  
 And left the Glow-worm, blessing it by name,  
 Laid safely by itself, beneath a tree.

The whole next day I hop'd and hop'd with fear:  
 At night the Glow-worm shone beneath the tree;  
 I led my Emma to the place, -- 'Look here!' --  
 O joy it was for her, and joy for me! 82

Given the circumstances in which it was composed, "Among all  
 lovely things" seems intended to offer Wordsworth's assurance of his  
 continued love to Dorothy after his marriage. The poem is not a very  
 good one: It has a plodding quality that reduces the experience that

is described to unintended self-parody. The best lines are the first and the last, which have a nostalgic tone suggesting that the speaker recalls a bittersweet memory of a love now lost. Wordsworth published this poem only once, in 1807 in Poems, in Two Volumes, where he placed it beside "I travell'd among unknown men," having changed "Emma" to "Lucy". The nostalgic effect of "Among all lovely things" is heightened by its association with Lucy.

"Among all lovely things" and "I travell'd among unknown men" frame the period during which Wordsworth probably made up his mind to marry Mary Hutchinson. It is unlikely that this decision was a sudden one. Although Wordsworth included Sara Hutchinson in almost everything he said to Mary in the letter of April 29, 1801, the affectionate tone of the letter suggests that their friendship was deepening:

We are very happy to have such good news of your health mind you take care of yourself and contrive to grow fat not as Dorothy does fat one day and lean another, but fat and jolly for half a year together. Dorothy and I sat two hours in John's firgrove this morning, 'twas a burning hot day but there we had a delicious cool breeze. How we wished for our dear friends, you and Sara! You will recollect that there is a gate just across the road, directly opposite the firgrove; this gate was always a favourite station of ours; we love it far more now on Sara's account. You know that it commands a beautiful prospect; Sara carved her cypher upon one of its bars, and we call it her gate. We will find out another place for your cypher, but you must come and fix upon the place yourself. How we long to see you my dear Mary.

Dorothy's assurance to Mary in the same letter that Mary did not intrude into their life also suggests that Mary's relationship with Wordsworth was growing closer: "Do not fear dear Mary," Dorothy told her, "That you ever write too often; or can write too often." Wordsworth's marriage was bound to affect his close relationship with his sister. Dorothy's

remark to Mary suggests that they were already aware of this and were endeavouring to overcome any constraints that they might have felt. Although Dorothy accompanied William and Mary on their honeymoon and afterwards lived with them in Dove Cottage, her description of the wedding day implies that she perceived her brother's marriage as a separation for them. Dorothy's account of her own distraught behaviour reveals that she was deeply upset by the marriage:

On Monday, 4th October, 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night and rose fresh and well in the morning. At a little after 8 o'clock I saw them go down the avenue towards the church. William had parted from me upstairs. When they were absent my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us that it was over, I could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing anything till Sara came upstairs to me, and said, 'They are coming'. This forced me from the bed where I lay, and I moved, I knew not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could 84 carry me, till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom.

Placed in this context, the confident tone of "I travell'd among unknown men," in contrast to the desolation of the earlier "Lucy" poems, suggests that Wordsworth had already begun to turn away from his intense relationship with Dorothy in the spring of 1801. It seems to me ironical that Wordsworth should send this poem to his future wife. By marrying Mary Hutchinson Wordsworth "snapped the threads" that bound Dorothy's heart to his, but Dorothy's place was not taken by Mary. "I travell'd among unknown men" seems to me to be a tribute to Dorothy in which Wordsworth declares that his love for Dorothy is the source of much of his feeling for the landscape, and at the same time a declaration of self-reliance. In Home at Grasmere the poet states that if one of the swans that emblemize himself and "Emma" is dead, then "haply both are gone,/"

One death and that were mercy to them both" (356-357). The speaker of "I travell'd among unknown men" looks forward confidently to a future without Lucy, in which he will love England "more and more." As he had once committed himself to Lucy, so he now commits himself to the English landscape.

As in Home at Grasmere, love for a woman and love for a place are intertwined in "I travell'd among unknown men." The speaker's love for England grows from his love for Lucy; Love of Lucy forms a bond between him and England. The solitary speaker is not lonely among England's mountains and green fields because the landscape offers a link with the past. The joy he had felt with Lucy has been transformed into joy in the place where Lucy dwelt. Love of place has replaced his love for Lucy.

#### "I TRAVELL'D AMONG UNKNOWN MEN"

In a reversal of the first four "Lucy" poems in which the speaker looks back upon an idyllic past when he was undisturbed by "human fears" for Lucy, "I travell'd among unknown men" opens with the speaker's recollection of his lonely travels abroad after Lucy's death, which led him to realize the love he feels for England. The image of the solitary traveller among "unknown men" emphasizes the speaker's sense of isolation and anonymity while he was away from England. Although he was among men, the speaker felt alone, for these men were "unknown" to him and likewise, he was a stranger to them. After travelling through these unnamed "Lands beyond the Sea," the speaker returns to England, the one place that is home.

His loneliness, he discovers, can be eased by a place rather than by men's company.

These lines emphasize the importance of "knowing" or of familiarity: the unknown Men and Lands cause the speaker to realize or to "know" the depth of his love for England. A strong sense of homecoming is created in this stanza and this becomes the dominant mood of the poem. In the last line of stanza one the speaker refers to his love for England as the love he "bore to" England or both felt and carried with him from beyond the sea. The speaker returns to familiar places which remind him of Lucy and should, therefore, also remind him of his loss. Instead, the landscape offers comfort; its continuity is a bridge between the present and the past.

The speaker's description of his wanderings abroad as a "melancholy dream" in the first line of stanza two echoes the references to the past as a "sweet dream" and as a "slumber" in "Strange fits of passion" and "A slumber did my spirit seal." However, in the earlier poems the speaker was shocked out of a "slumbering" heedlessness by the harsh reality of Lucy's death. In "I travell'd among unknown men" he recovers from the mood of lonely grieving that dominates the earlier poems, as if it had been a dream. Now that he has returned to England, the recent past has faded away like a "melancholy dream." The love he felt for Lucy awakens within him, transformed into love for Lucy's home.

In modern English the familiar form, "thee," is usually used in prayers or in love poetry. "I travell'd among unknown men" is a love poem, addressed in a tone that suggests worship, to a place instead of a woman. The speaker declares that his wandering, or philandering, among other Lands has only caused him to realize the depth of his love for England. Just as he may once have pledged his love to Lucy, now he pledges it to

England. "Nor will I quit thy shore/ A second time," he vows, "for still I seem/ To love thee more and more."

The speaker's declaration of his love for England seems a variation of the relationship between Nature and Lucy in "Three years she grew." Instead of a love triangle consisting of Lucy, the speaker and his rival, Nature, in "I travell'd among unknown men" the speaker replaces Lucy with England in his affections. The figure of England in "I travell'd among unknown men" is roughly parallel to the powerful figure of Nature in "Three years she grew." The mountains and the "green field(s)" belong to England; England directed the morning light to reveal and the darkness of night to conceal "the bowers where Lucy play'd. . ." Unlike Nature, England was not "law and impulse" to Lucy. In the earlier poem the speaker presents Nature as a demanding, imperious figure who takes Lucy from her lover, leaving him alone on an empty heath with "The memory of what has been, / And never more will be." England, on the other hand, is a place, not a force or a power. Instead of associations with time and chance, England suggests home and comfort. The image of Lucy spinning "Beside an English fire" evokes a simple, rural existence and suggests warmth and cheer, in contrast to the speaker's lonely travels abroad. The speaker finds solace for Lucy's death in his love for England, Lucy's home. Because he once felt "The joy of. . . desire" among England's mountains, he associates that joy with the mountains. Because he had once "cherished" Lucy by an English fireside, it seems to him that England must also have cared for Lucy: Lucy was sheltered among England's mountains; England's mornings showed and England's nights concealed or protected Lucy's bowers.

"I travell'd among unknown men" presents a much less ethereal but no less ambiguous image of Lucy than the other "Lucy" poems. This is partly the result of the ambiguous syntactical structure of the third stanza. "The joy of my desire" may refer to the speaker's feelings for Lucy, or it may refer to a more generalized feeling of joy that he had experienced as a solitary wanderer among England's mountains. The speaker seems to turn from his recollection of "the joy of my desire" to recall his gentler cherishing of Lucy. Lucy may have been the original object of the speaker's desire, but the passion he recalls seems diffused or unfocused and embraces the landscape as well as Lucy. The cozy domestic image of Lucy spinning beside the fire seems at variance with the wild sensual feelings that the speaker experienced among the mountains.

At the same time, the possibility of sexual fulfillment in the speaker's relationship with Lucy is hinted at by Lucy's domesticity and by the echo of the marriage vow in his use of "cherished" to describe his relation to Lucy. Similarly, in stanza four the reference to the concealing nights has a sexual connotation, but this impression is dispelled in the next line in which we are told that Lucy used her bowers for play. Like the speaker's love, England's concealing nights were to protect and to nurture Lucy and thus to "cherish" her.

The nature of the speaker's relationship with Lucy is, therefore, rather ambiguous: the sensuous side of his feelings seems set apart from Lucy, who seems an innocent child-wife. If the poem emerged, as I have argued, out of Wordsworth's feelings for his sister, this ambiguity perhaps derives from the sexual taboos of a sister-brother relationship which was, nonetheless, in so many ways like a marriage. The result of this ambiguous avocation of the speaker's love for Lucy in "I

travell'd among unknown men" is to suggest that his relationship with Lucy was one of promise that ended in Lucy's death rather than fulfillment. Promise is suggested by the speaker's desire, by Lucy's innocence and by the reference in the last stanza to the "last green field/ Which Lucy's eye surveyed." Returning to England, the speaker returns to the home he shared with Lucy and although Lucy is dead, he can feel himself still connected to her by the continuing succession of mornings and nights and whenever he looks upon England's green fields. The continuity of the landscape provides a link with the past, but the promise of spring that is suggested by the final image of the green field also offers hope for the future. The promise the speaker's love for Lucy once held is now contained in his love for the country Lucy knew.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUDING REMARKS

By the early spring of 1802 Wordsworth had begun composing poetry again, after the long silence of 1800-1801. At this time he wrote a number of short nature lyrics such as "To a Cuckoo," "To a Skylark," the celandine and the daisy poems and the two butterfly poems. Like "I travell'd among unknown men," most of these poems are concerned with the continuity of past and present and several of them, including "Among all lovely things my Love had been," are nostalgic tributes to Dorothy's role in the poet's relationship with nature. For example, in one of the butterfly poems, "Stay near me," the sight of the butterfly reminds Wordsworth of the past and brings his memories of early childhood once more to life:

Thou bring'st, gay Creature as thou art!  
A solemn image to my heart,  
My Father's Family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,  
The time, when in our childish plays  
My sister Emmeline and I  
Together chased the Butterfly!  
A very hunter did I rush  
Upon the prey: -- with leaps and springs  
I follow'd on from brake to bush;  
But She, God love her! feared to brush  
The dust from off its wings. 86

Two other poems that Wordsworth began to compose in the spring and summer of 1802, the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" and "Resolution and Independence," cast doubt upon the "answer" that the poet had found in "I travell'd among unknown men" to the feelings expressed in the Lucy

poems. In contrast to the closeness or intimacy with the landscape that is suggested by the speaker's lover-like address to England in "I travell'd among unknown men," in the "Ode" and in "Resolution and Independence" the poet feels alienated from nature, no longer certain of the imaginative power that had once allowed him to "see into the life of things." It is not my purpose to enter into a full discussion of these two very complex poems. I will use them in this chapter to suggest the direction that Wordsworth's thoughts had now begun to take.

According to Dorothy's journal, on the evening of May 4, 1802, her brother had been distraught and unable to sleep. She had soothed him by repeating verses: "This is the spot" over and over again.<sup>87</sup> Wordsworth's desire to hear this particular poem suggests that he needed reassurance from Dorothy about their love for each other. Wordsworth's impending marriage and its effect upon his relationship with his sister seems, naturally enough, to have been on his mind at this time. The confidence expressed in "I travell'd among unknown men" was not undisturbed by doubts and uncertainties:

This is the spot: - how mildly does the Sun  
Shine in between these fading leaves! the air  
In the habitual silence of this wood  
Is more than silent: and this bed of heath  
Where shall we find to sweet a resting place?  
Come! -- let me see thee sink into a dream  
Of quiet thoughts, -- protracted till thine eye  
Be calm as water, when the winds are gone  
And no one can tell whither - My sweet Friend!  
We two have had such happy hours together  
That my heart melts in me to think of it. 88

In this poem Wordsworth expresses a desire for the peaceful sleep of death. According to Dorothy's journal, he had expressed a similar wish less than a week earlier, on April 29:

William lay, and I lay, in the trench under the fence -- he with his eyes shut, and listening to the waterfalls and the birds. There was no waterfall above another -- it was a sound of waters in the air -- the voice of the air. William heard me breathing and rustling now and then, but we both lay still, and unseen by one another; he thought that it would be as sweet thus to lie so in the grave, to hear the peaceful sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near.

89

As in "This is the spot," in this episode Wordsworth finds the peace of the grave desirable for both himself and his sister, and from the tone of her recounting of the occasion, Dorothy as well as Wordsworth seems to have found pleasure in his cozy fantasy of how it would be to lie side by side in their graves. They would be together in death, and the closeness they now shared need never be disrupted.

For whatever cause or causes, a desire for the refuge of the grave seems to have been frequently on Wordsworth's mind in the spring of 1802. He also expresses these feelings in a poem composed in late April:

These chairs they have no words to utter  
 No fire is in the grate to stir or flutter  
 The ceiling and floor are mute as a stone  
 My chamber is hush'd and still

And I am alone  
 Happy and alone

Oh! who would be afraid of life  
 The passion the sorrow and the strife  
 When he may lie  
 Shelter'd so easily  
 May lie in peace on his bed  
 Happy as they who are dead

Half an hour afterwards

I have thoughts that are fed by the sun  
 The things which I see  
 Are welcome to me  
 Welcome every one  
 I do not wish to be  
 Dead, Dead

Dead without any company  
 Here alone on my bed  
 With thoughts that are fed by the sun  
 And hoped that are welcome everyone  
 Happy am I.

O life there is about thee  
 A deep delicious peace  
 I would not be without thee  
 Stay oh stay  
 Yet be thou ever as now  
 Sweetness and breath with the quiet of death  
 Peace, peace, peace 90

Although the poet concludes in the course of this poem that he does not really wish to give up life and the "thoughts that are fed by the sun", nonetheless he continues in a rather ambiguous fashion to wish for "the quiet of death" or for "Peace, peace, peace": wishing to retreat from the emotional turmoil of life which he alludes to in stanza one, he desires a state of life which is comparable to death, although without death's obliviousness.

On March 27, 1802, Dorothy tells us in her journal, Wordsworth began his great "Ode": "A divine morning. At breakfast William wrote part of an ode." However, the tone of the first four stanzas of the "Ode," the part of the poem probably composed in March, 1802, contrasts with Dorothy's memory of that "divine morning." The new poem begins with the poet's recollection of how things once were: the first four stanzas state and re-state the loss that he now feels when he looks upon nature's glories.

These stanzas suggest a mind struggling and failing again and again to recapture that which is lost:

-- But there's a Tree, of many one,  
A single Field which I have look'd upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone:  
The pansy at my feet  
Doth the same tale repeat:  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Dorothy's journal records that Wordsworth was working on the "Ode" in June, 1802. Stanzas five to eight may have been composed at this time, although in 1843 Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick that only the first four stanzas were composed in 1802. Jared Curtis argues that the plausibility of Wordsworth's forty-year old memory "seems suspect."<sup>92</sup> In stanza five Wordsworth returns to the image of life as a dream or a slumber that he had used in the "Lucy" poems. In the "Ode" Wordsworth uses this image to suggest that earthly life is only an inglorious interlude to the soul's existence:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar. . . .

Like the figure of Nature in "Three years she grew," in the "Ode" Nature lays claim to "the growing Boy." Although the child acts as "Nature's Priest" or as an intermediary between Nature and God, the "shades of the prison-house" earth "begin to close" upon him as soon as he is born. Earth, Nature's warden, is depicted as a "homely Nurse" who, like a possessive mother, wishes to direct and influence the child she loves:

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
     And no unworthy sin,  
     The homely Nurse doth all she can  
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
     Forget the glories he hath known,  
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

In stanza eight the poet uses images of death to describe man's earthly life. In this stanza he addresses "the Child among his new-born blisses" whom he introduces in stanza seven:

Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
 On whom those truths do rest,  
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,  
 A Presence which is not to be put by;  
 . . .  
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight  
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life! 93

In the "Lucy" poems, Lucy's unity with the natural world is completed by her death. Lucy remains with the earth after she dies; her body is "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course/ With rocks and stones and trees." In the "Ode", on the other hand, the poet looks towards death as an awakening or a release from the "prison-house" earth. After death the soul presumably sheds "her earthly freight" and returns to "God who is our home." Thus the poet finds the strength to bear the loss of the "visionary gleam"

In the faith that looks through death;  
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Although he declares that he will continue to "love the Brooks which down their channel fret,/ Even more than when I tripped lightly as they," nature's loveliness is coloured for the "philosophic mind" by "Intimations of Immortality":

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
 That Hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;

. . . .  
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live  
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

"Resolution and Independence", which Wordsworth began in May and completed in July, 1802, follows a pattern similar to the "Ode." This poem also opens with the poet's depression in the midst of a joyous natural scene:

## iii

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;  
 I saw the hare that raced about with joy;  
 I heard the woods and distant waters roar;  
 Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:  
 My old remembrances went from me wholly:  
 And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

## iv

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
 Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
 As high as we have mounted in delight  
 In our dejection do we sink as low;  
 To me that morning did it happen so;  
 And fears and fancies thick upon me came;  
 Dim sadness -- and blind thoughts, I knew  
 not, nor could name.

In such a mood the poet comes upon the old Leech-gatherer who seems, in contrast to the noise, the motion and the brightness of nature, "not all alive nor dead,/ Nor all asleep -- in his extreme old age. . . ." Neither alive nor dead, the old man is without vitality; he is inert -- like a huge stone, or a sea-beast who has crawled forth onto the shore.. The old man's situation, the difficulties he faces collecting

leeches from an ever-dwindling supply, parallels the poet's own condition:

## xvii

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;  
 And hope that is unwilling to be fed  
 Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;  
 And mighty Poets in their misery dead.  
 -- Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,  
 My question eagerly did I renew  
 'How is it that you live, and what is it you do?'

The old man who wanders the "weary moors" suggests to me the medieval legend of the wandering Jew. The poet's question -- "How is it that you live . . . ?" -- therefore seems tinged with irony. The old man does not live, if life is to be perceived in the terms presented in the poem's opening stanzas, he endures. At the close of the poem, the poet turns to God, praying that he, too, will achieve the Leech-gatherer's stoicism or "demeanour kind,/ Yet stately in the main" in the face of terrible adversity and frustration:

'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure;  
 I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor.'

In "Resolution and Independence" the old Leech-gatherer to whom the poet compares himself seems as one awaiting release from life. In the "Ode," also, the poet looks towards death as an escape from the "prison-house" earth. Between 1802, when Wordsworth composed "Resolution and Independence" and began the "Ode," and 1804, when he completed the "Ode," Wordsworth began to rely more and more upon the promise of "another and a better world" beyond the grave.<sup>94</sup> This inclination was mirrored in the state of repose Wordsworth now seemed to long for in life. The desire for tranquillity expressed in "These chairs they have no words to utter" is echoed in the "Ode to Duty," which Wordsworth began to compose in 1804:

Through no disturbance of my soul,  
Or strong compunction in me wrought,  
I supplicate for thy control;  
But in the quietness of thought;  
Me this unchartered freedom tires;  
I feel the weight of chance-desires:  
My hopes no more must change their name,  
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

NOTES

1 Poems probably composed by Wordsworth in Germany during the winter and spring of 1798-1799: "The Danish Boy", "Ruth", "To a Sexton", "Lucy Gray", "Written in Germany on one of the Coldest Days of the Century", "A Poet's Epitaph", "Matthew", "The Fountain", "The Two April Mornings", "Ellen Irwin", "Nutting", "There was a boy", "Strange fits of passion I have known", "She dwelt among the untrodden ways", "A slumber did my spirit seal", "Three years she grew in sun and shower", and Part One of The Prelude of 1798-1799. Mark L. Reed, Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Early Years, 1770-1799 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967) pp. 29, 34-35, 255-263. For the text of the two-part Prelude see The Prelude, 1798-1799 by William Wordsworth, ed. Stephen Parrish (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977).

During the first half of 1801 Wordsworth seems to have been working on The Prelude and/or The Recluse: whether he was at work on one or both of these poems is discussed in Chapter 3 of this essay, pp. 49-51. Between early February and April 9, Wordsworth composed a passage for "Michael", quoted by Dorothy Wordsworth in a letter to Thomas Poole, April 9, 1801. Around April 29 Wordsworth composed "I travell'd among unknown men." In November he began to compose "Repentance", and in December he began translating some of Chaucer's poetry and commenced work on Book III of The Prelude. Mark L. Reed, Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Middle Years, 1800-1815 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975, pp. 1-4, 6-8, 27-41, 107-139. William and Dorothy Wordsworth to Thomas Poole, April 19, 1801, The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (1935 revised by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) p. 324.

2 "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey" was composed in July, 1798.

3 W.W. to Sir George Beaumont, February 20, 1805, Letters, p. 556.

4 William Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads (1800) 2 vols., vol. I, Preface p. xv. (See also: The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed: W.J.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3 vols. 1974, I, p. 126.)

5 In response to criticism of his 1807 collection, Poems in Two Volumes, Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont on May 21, 1807, about the poems that make up "Moods of My Own Mind": "There is scarcely a poem here of above thirty lines, and very trifling these poems will appear to many: but, omitting to speak of them individually, do they not, taken collectively, fix the attention upon a subject eminently poetical, viz., the interest which objects in nature derive from the predominance of certain affectations more or less permanent, more or less capable of salutary renewal in the mind of the being contemplating these objects?" The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2 vols. 1969-1970, I, p. 147)

6 D.W. and W.W. to Mary Hutchinson, April 29, 1801, Letters, pp. 331-333.

7 "Among all lovely things my Love had been" was never republished by Wordsworth after 1807. For the text and a brief discussion of this poem see Chapter 3 of this essay, pp. 56-57.

8 Leon Edel, Literary Biography: The Alexander Lectures, 1955-1956 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957) pp. 9-10

9 David Bleich, Subjective Criticism (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978) p. 259.

10 Geoffrey Durrant, "Zeno's Arrow: Time and Motion in Two of Wordsworth's Lucy Poems," Mosaic 2/3 (Spring, 1969) pp. 10-24.

11 Geoffrey H. Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964) p. 17.

12 Hartman, p. 24

13 1800 Preface, p. xvii. (Owen and Smyser, vol. I, p. 127).

14 Hartman, p. 11.

15 Reed, Chronology of the Early Years, pp. 255-263.

16 D.W. and W.W. to S.T. Coleridge, December 14 or 21, 1798, Letters, pp. 235-243.

17 Coleridge to Thomas Poole, April 6, 1799, Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 4 vols, 1956) I, pp. 273-274.

18 Isabella Fenwick manuscript: note regarding "Three years she grew": "Composed in the Hartz Forest." The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. A.B. Grosart (1876) (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 3 vols. 1967) III, p. 39.

19 Chronology of the Early Years, p. 263.

20 D.W. and W.W. to Coleridge, Nordhausen, February 27, 1799, Letters, p. 251.

21 D.W. to Christopher Wordsworth, Goslar, February 3, 1799, Letters, p. 243-246.

22. A history of The Recluse and Coleridge's role in its conception are discussed by Beth Darlington in her Introduction to Home at Grasmere, Part First, Book First of The Recluse by William Wordsworth, ed. Darlington (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977). On March 6, 1798, Wordsworth wrote to James Webbe Tobin from Alfoxden

(Letters, p. 212): "I have written 1300 lines of a poem in which I contrive to convey most of the knowledge of which I am possessed. My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man and Society."

23 The Prelude 1798-1799, Parrish, Introduction: The Growth of the Two-Part Prelude," p. 3: "When [Wordsworth] settled at Goslar, in October, 1798, where he was to spend the winter, he entered an isolation -- shared with his sister, Dorothy -- as intense as any he had ever known. Following close upon the year of creative intimacy he had just shared with Coleridge, this isolation drove Wordsworth back to the sources of memory and led him to travel in wondering the thankful tones the beginnings of the growth of a poet's mind."

24 Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2 vols. 1957, 1965) I, pp. 70-71.

25 No sport but claims the tender tear  
By joy or grief to memory dear.  
One Evening when the wintry blast  
Through the sharp Hawthorn whistling passed  
And the poor flocks, all pinched with cold  
Sad-drooping sought the mountain fold  
Long, long upon yon naked rock  
Alone I bore the bitter shock;  
Long, long my swimming eyes did roam  
For little Horse to bear me home,  
To bear me -- what avails my tear?  
To sorrow o'er a Father's bier  
Flow on, in vain thou hast not flowed,  
But eased me of a heavy load;  
For much it gives my heart relief  
To pay the mighty debt of grief,  
With sighs repeated o'er and o'er,  
I mourn because I mourned no more.

"The Vale of Esthwaite" was probably composed in the spring and summer of 1787. Wordsworth may have continued to work on it in early 1788. It was first published by de Selincourt (Poetical Works, I, pp. 270-283).

26 F.W. Bateson, Wordsworth: A Reinterpretation (London: Longman's Green and Co. Ltd., 1954, 1956) pp. 148-162.

27 William Wordsworth's and Annette Vallon's daughter, Caroline, was born on December 15, 1792, in France. Shortly afterwards, Wordsworth returned to England, intending to find a position in the Church and to establish a home for Annette and the baby. War broke out between France and England in February, 1793. Wordsworth may have returned to France for a short time in October of that year. He did not see Annette again until August, 1802, when he made a financial settlement with her and their daughter, freeing himself to marry Mary Hutchinson in October of the same year.

28 Coleridge to Thomas Poole, April 6, 1799, Griggs, I.

29 Geoffrey Durrant (pp. 10-24) finds it odd that Dorothy would be involved in sending Coleridge a poem about her own death and even odder "that she could have been party to so unflattering and unfeeling a comment on her looks" as is suggested by the implication that Lucy is no longer "fresh as a rose" in "Strange fits of passion". He believes that it is most likely that Lucy "is merely a more natural and English version of the 'Chloes', 'Lucindas' and 'Celias' of earlier poets -- a name for any 'beloved'." In Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems, Studies in Romanticism, 10, no. 3 (Summer, 1971) pp. 159-175, Spencer Hall dismisses attempts to pinpoint the identity of Lucy as "irrelevant". James Taaffe also dismisses the question of Lucy's identity in his article "Poet and Lover in Wordsworth's 'Lucy' Poems," The Modern Language Review, 61 (1966) pp. 175-179, as does Herbert Hartman, "Wordsworth's 'Lucy' Poems: Notes and Marginalia," PMLA 49 (1934), p. 141, who identifies the name as "a neo-Arcadian commonplace, and eighteenth century elegiac fixture". Neither Frances Ferguson nor Roger Slakey give any consideration at all to the identity of Lucy in their articles about the poems. (Ferguson, "The Lucy Poems: Wordsworth's Quest for a Poetic Object," English Literary History, 40, no. 4 [Winter, 1973] pp. 532-548; Slakey, "At Zero: A Reading of Wordsworth's 'She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways,'" Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 12, no. 4 [Autumn, 1972] pp. 629-638.

Mary Moorman (pp. 423-425) feels that the idea that Lucy represents some early and unknown love of Wordsworth who died has been rejected "perhaps too hastily" for lack of evidence. She does not think Lucy is Dorothy because "it is not habitual with Wordsworth when writing to or about Dorothy to think of her as dead or going to die." Richard Matlak, on the other hand, identifies Lucy with Dorothy in his article, "Wordsworth's Lucy Poems in Psychobiographical Context", PMLA, 93 (January, 1978) pp. 46-65. Matlak argues that the "Lucy" poems emerge out of feelings of resentment toward Dorothy that were caused by Wordsworth's separation from Coleridge in Germany: the poems are a death-wish, Matlak argues, directed at Dorothy because she prevented Wordsworth from being near Coleridge. Bateson also argues that in the "Lucy" poems Wordsworth symbolically killed his sister: "the dangerous relationship with Dorothy was not solved, subconsciously. . . . The guilty possibilities were evaded by the removal, subconsciously, of the guilty object." He adds that "Lucy's sexlessness also becomes intelligible once the identity with Dorothy is recognized. The emotional intimacies must not have a physical basis, even subconsciously" (pp. 153-154).

30 Bateson, p. 152. The "Nutting" fragment was first published by de Selincourt (Poetical Works, II, pp. 504-506).

31 Grosart, Vol. III, p. 39. Isabella Fenwick note re. "Nutting": written in Germany: intended as part of a poem on my own life, but struck out as not being wanted there."

32 W.W. to Coleridge, April 16, 1802, Letters, pp. 287-8.

33 In the 1800 Preface Wordsworth emphasizes that it was his intention that in these poems the feeling should give importance to the

action and the situation and not the action and situation to the feeling" (p. xvii).

34 This usage of "fit" appears frequently in Spenser's Faerie Queene -- it was probably an archaic usage even in Spenser's time. Wordsworth's awareness of this connotation of "fit" is suggested by his admiration of Spenser, expressed in his 1815 Preface to Poems (p. xxix): "The grand store-house of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination, of poetical, as contradistinguished from human and dramatic Imagination, is the prophetic and lyrical parts of the holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton, to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser." (Owen and Smyser, III, p. 34).

35 Wordsworth discusses the relation of passion to suffering in the "Essay Supplementary to the Prefare" (1815) I, p. 370: "Passion, it must be observed, is derived from a word which signified suffering: but the connection which suffering has with effort, with exertion, and action is immediate and inseparable. . . . To be moved, then, by a passion, is to be excited, often to external, and always to internal, effort; whether for the continuance and strengthening of the passion, or for its suppression . . ." In the context of my discussion of passion and passivity in "Strange fits of passion," Wordsworth's remarks suggest that the speaker was "excited" into an internal effort of suppression or repression, but his effort was without success.

36 1800 Preface, p. xxi: "There will also be found in these Volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it." (Owen and Smyser, I, p. 130.)

37 Wordsworth describes the process of composition and its relation to passion or feeling on p. xxxiv of the 1800 Preface: "I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from the 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 mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind and in whatever degree, from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment." (Owen and Smyser, I, p. 148).

38 For example, Dorothy records that on March 14, 1802, "William rose without having slept -- we sate comfortably by the fire till he began to try to alter The Butterfly, and tired himself." Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 2 Vols. 1959) I, p. 123.

- 39 The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2 Vols. 1957) I, 1794-1804, Text, entry #1546 (Oct., 1803). Jared Curtis discusses Coleridge's negative attitude to Wordsworth's short poems in his book, Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971) pp. 8-10.
- 40 Durrant, pp. 12-13.
- 41 Ben Jonson, "To Celia" (Come my Celia, let us prove") The Works of British Poets, ed. Robert Anderson (London, 13 Vols. 1795) Vol. 4, p. 554.
- 42 Henry Vaughan, "They are all gone into the World of Light," Renaissance England: Poetry and Prose from the Reformation to the Restoration, ed. Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1942, 1956) p. 1032
- 43 Lyrical Ballads (1800), note to "The Thorn": "Superstitious men are almost always men of slow faculties and deep feelings; their minds are not loose but adhesive; they have a reasonable share of imagination, by which work I mean the faculty which produces impressive effect out of simple elements."
- 44 Ferguson, p. 534.
- 45 Slakey makes a similar analysis of the violet and star images, pp. 632-633.
- 46 Geoffrey Durrant, William Wordsworth (Cambridge University Press, 1969) pp. 70-71.
- 47 1800 Preface, p. xx. (Owen and Smyser, I, p. 130.)
- 48 Christopher Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love," Renaissance England, p. 393.
- 49 Jared R. Curtis, "A Note on the Lost Manuscripts of William Wordsworth's 'Louisa' and 'I travell'd among unknown men,'" The Yale University Gazette, Vol. 53, No. 4 (April, 1979) pp. 196-201.
- 50 Reed, Chronology of the Middle Years, pp. 1-4, 6-8, 107-139. The only other piece of poetry Wordsworth is known to have composed during this period is a section to be added to "Michael" which Dorothy Wordsworth included in a letter to Thomas Poole, April 9, 1801, Letters, p. 325.
- 51 The lines Wordsworth is believed to have composed during April and May, 1800, are Manuscript B, 1-457, 859-874 (Darlington, pp. 38-66, 92-93) and possibly "The Prospectus," Ms. B, 959-1048 (Darlington, pp. 100-106).

- 52 John Garetson Dings, The Mind in Its Place: Wordsworth's 'Michael' and the Poetry of 1800 (University of Buffalo, 1973) p. 38.
- 53 " Prospectus", 1006-1014.
- 54 W.W. to James Webbe Tobin, March 6, 1798, Letters, p. 212
- 55 W.W. to Josiah Wedgewood, July 13, 1800, Letters, p. 284.
- 56 D.W. to Jane Marshall, September 10 and 12, 1800, Letters, p. 298.
- 57 Journals of D.W., I, pp. 67-75
- 58 W.W. to Anne Taylor, April 9, 1801, Letters, p. 327
- 59 W.W. and D.E. to Coleridge, May 22, 1801, Letters, p. 335
- 60 W.W. and D.W. to Thomas Poole, April 9, 1801, Letters, p. 324.
- 61 John Wordsworth to D.W., March 28 and 29, 1801, The Letters of John Wordsworth, ed. Carl Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969) p. 110.
- 62 J.W. to D.W., April 22 and 23, 1801, Letters of John Wordsworth, p. 119
- 63 Letters of John Wordsworth, footnote 24-4, p. 207.
- 64 Coleridge to W.W., October 12, 1799, Griggs, I. p. 538.
- 65 Reed, Chronology of the Middle Years, p. 631.
- 66 J.W. to D.W., May 3 and 4, 1801, Letters of John Wordsworth, p. 124
- 67 William Wordsworth, the Prelude: A Parallel Text, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971,1972).
- 68 Reed adds, however, that "these lines cannot confidently be supposed to have been in existence until early 1804." Chronology of the Middle Years, p. 632.
- 69 Jonathan Wordsworth and Stephen Gill, "The Two-Part Prelude of 1798-1799," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. 72 (1973) p. 522.
- 70 Curtis, Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition, p. 12.
- 71 Journals, I, pp. 37-46.

- 72 Bateson, p. 154.
- 73 W.W. to James Losh, March 16, 1805, Letters, p. 563
- 74 Mary Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, March 7, 1805, The Letters of Mary Wordsworth, 1800-1855, ed. Mary E. Burton (Oxford, 1958) p. 3.
- 75 D.W. to Jane Marshall, March 15, 17, 1805, Letters, p. 560.
- 76 W.W. to Richard Wordsworth, March 19, 1805, Letters, p. 571.
- 77 Letters of John Wordsworth, p. 25.
- 78 J.W. to Mary Hutchinson, February 25 and 26, 1801, Letters of John Wordsworth, pp. 125-126.
- 79 J.W. to M. Hutchinson, September 12, 1802, Letters of John Wordsworth, pp. 125-126.
- 80 Journals, I, pp. 125-128.
- 81 Journals, I, p. 130.
- 82 W.W. to Coleridge, April 16, 1802, Letters, p. 348.
- 83 Letters, pp. 331-333.
- 84 Journals, I, p. 176.
- 85 Book of Common Prayer (1559), Church of England: "I, (N.) take thee (N.) to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us depart. . .'
- 86 "To a Butterfly" ("Stay near me") was first published in 1807 in Poems, in Two Volumes under the heading "Moods of My Own Mind." The poem grew out of a conversation with Dorothy on March 14, 1802, recorded by her in her journal (I, p. 123).
- 87 Journals, I, p. 143.
- 88 Lines 6-9 of this poem were written between December 1798 and June 1800 as part of "Nutting," and eventually published as part of the sequel to the "Ode to Lycoris." This is the spot" appears as "a freestanding poem" in "Sara Hutchinson's Poets" -- a notebook of 1802 and after. Curtis, Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition, p. 196; Reed, Chronology of the Early Years, pp. 331--332.

89 Journals, I, pp. 139-140

90 D.W. notes W. "repeating the poem: 'I have thoughts that are fed by the sun'" on April 22, 1802 (Journals, I, p. 136). The two parts of the poem may have been composed separately and then joined as one poem. First published by de Selincourt (IV, 365-6). Curtis, Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition, p. 176.

91 Journals, I, p. 129.

92 J. Curtis in an unpublished paper, "The Composition of Wordsworth's Intimations Ode."

93 These lines were followed in the 1807 and 1815 editions of the poem by four lines describing what the grave means to a child:

To whom the grave  
Is but a lonely bed without the sense of sight  
Of day and the warm light,  
A place of thought where we in waiting lie;

These lines imply that the boy's perception of the grave is different from the adult's -- instead of the deprivation the boy is said to perceive, the last lines suggest that the poet looks to the grave as a way-station, "a place of thought" where he will start to recover the "truths" that growing older had caused him to lose.

94 W.W. to Sir George Beaumont, February 20, 1805, Letters, p. 556.

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