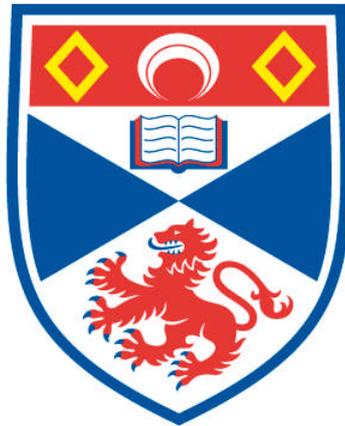


**DOROTHY WORDSWORTH AND HARTLEY COLERIDGE:
THE POETICS OF RELATIONSHIP**

Nicola Healey

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



2009

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Dorothy Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge: The Poetics of Relationship

Nicola Healey

PhD, May 2009

My thesis studies Hartley Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth to redress the unjust neglect of Hartley's work, and to reach a more positive understanding of Dorothy's conflicted literary relationship with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. I provide a complete reassessment of the often narrowly read prose and poetry of these two critically marginalized figures, and also investigate the relationships that affected their lives, literary self-constructions, and reception; in this way, I restore a more accurate account of Hartley and Dorothy as independent and original writers, and also highlight both the inhibiting and cathartic affects of writing from within a familial literary context.

My analysis of the writings of Hartley and Dorothy and the dialogues in which they engage with the works of STC and William, argues that both Hartley and Dorothy developed a strong relational poetics in their endeavour to demarcate their independent subjectivities. Furthermore, through a survey of the significance of the sibling bond – literal and figurative – in the texts and lives of all these writers, I demonstrate a theory of influence which recognizes lateral, rather than paternal, kinship as the most influential relationship. I thus conclude that authorial identity is not fundamentally predetermined by, and dependent on, gender or literary inheritance, but is more significantly governed by domestic environment, familial readership, and immediate kinship.

My thesis challenges the longstanding misconceptions that Hartley was unable to achieve a strong poetic identity in STC's shadow, and that Dorothy's independent authorial endeavour was primarily thwarted by gender. To replace these misreadings, I foreground the successful literary independence of both writers: my approach reinstates Hartley Coleridge's literary standing as a major poet who bridged Romanticism and Victorian literature, and promotes Dorothy Wordsworth as one of the finest descriptive writers of nature and relationship.

Declarations

I, Nicola Healey, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 95,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in October 2005 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in October 2006; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2006 and 2009.

date signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of St Andrews School of English for funding my general research year, where I began my thesis, and The Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for funding my PhD study.

I am most indebted to Jane Stabler: I am extremely grateful for, and fortunate to have had, her supervision. Jane's expertise, guidance, enthusiasm, and support at every stage of my work's progression enabled its completion, and also made my PhD experience much more enjoyable. I would particularly like to thank Jane for acquiring a copy of every edition of Hartley Coleridge's verse for me in the first year of my research, which greatly contributed to both the groundwork of my thesis, and my personal appreciation of Hartley. I'm also very grateful to Jane for her continual moral support, patience, and encouragement. I am indebted to Susan Manly for reading and commenting on many drafts of my work and for her guidance, and I'm especially grateful to both Susan and Jane for their faith in me and for inspiring me into postgraduate study. My thanks also go to Nicholas Roe for his encouragement, Peter Anderson for kindly reading my thesis and for his illuminating comments, Kristin Ott and Lexi Drayton for their helpful proofread of the final draft of my thesis, Graham Davidson for his comments on a paper I gave on Hartley Coleridge at the 2008 Coleridge Conference, and David Taylor for his early encouragement and feedback on my work.

I would like to thank the St Andrews Library ILL service, on which I was frequently reliant, and Jeff Cowton for allowing me to consult manuscripts concerning Hartley Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth at The Wordsworth Trust Jerwood Centre. I'm also grateful to The Wordsworth Trust for their permission to reproduce the David Wilkie portrait of Hartley Coleridge, Andrew Keanie for kindly alerting me to the unpublished daguerreotype portrait of Hartley, and Priscilla Coleridge Cassam for her permission to reproduce this and a second 1845 portrait of Hartley.

Finally, I am most grateful to Lexi Drayton, Rose Pimentel, Nicola Searle, Kristin Ott, and Alicia Healey for their friendship and interest: my thesis is indebted to them for the invaluable support they provided during my PhD.

In memory of my grandparents

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Abbreviations

Works by Hartley Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth

- Poems* Hartley Coleridge, *Poems, Songs and Sonnets* (Leeds: F. E. Bingley, 1833).
- Memoir* *Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: E. Moxon, 1851).
- EM* *Essays and Marginalia*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: E. Moxon, 1851).
- LHC* *Letters of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Grace Evelyn Griggs and Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).
- CPW* *The Complete Poetical Works of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Ramsay Colles (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1908).
- NP* *New Poems: Including a Selection from his Published Poetry*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).
- MF* *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford*, intr. Hartley Coleridge (London: Edward Moxon, 1840).
- AJ GJ* *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- SJ* *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ed. Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).
- LWDW* *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, arranged and edited by the late Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Alan G. Hill, Mary Moorman and Chester L. Shaver, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-1988).

Works by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- EP* *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797, by William Wordsworth*, ed. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).
- TV* *Poems in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807, by William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983).

- LB* *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800, by William Wordsworth, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).*
- SS* *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845, by William Wordsworth, ed. Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).*
- HG* *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First of 'The Recluse', by William Wordsworth, ed. Beth Darlington (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), MS. B (earliest full version of the poem).*
- Prelude* *The Thirteen-Book Prelude, by William Wordsworth, ed. Mark L. Reed, vol. II (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).*
- LP* *Last Poems, 1821-1850 by William Wordsworth, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).*
- CCL* *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971).*
- CN* *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vols. I-III, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957-73); vol. IV, ed. Kathleen Coburn and Merton Christensen (London: Routledge, 1990).*
- PW* *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. J. C. C. Mays, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).*

Periodicals

- AQR* *American Quarterly Review*
- BQ* *British Quarterly*
- CB* *Coleridge Bulletin*
- CEJ* *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*
- CR* *Christian Remembrancer*
- ECR* *Eclectic Review*
- ER* *Edinburgh Review*
- ERR* *European Romantic Review*
- FM* *Fraser's Magazine*

<i>LLA</i>	<i>Littell's Living Age</i>
<i>LW</i>	<i>The Literary World</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Macmillan's Magazine</i>
<i>MR</i>	<i>The Massachusetts Review</i>
<i>NMM</i>	<i>New Monthly Magazine</i>
<i>QR</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>TEM</i>	<i>Tait's Edinburgh Magazine</i>
<i>TLS</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>
<i>WC</i>	<i>Wordsworth Circle</i>

Introduction: Dorothy Wordsworth, Hartley Coleridge, and the Poetics of Relationship

After the publication of Hartley Coleridge's *Poems* in 1833, the *Quarterly Review* heralded him as the most promising poet of his day: 'we are not afraid to say that we shall expect more at his hands than from any one who has made his first appearance subsequent to the death of Byron'.¹ In Robert Housman's *A Collection of English Sonnets*, published two years later, seven of Hartley's sonnets are considered worthy of inclusion.² By 1891, in *The Poets and the Poetry of the Century*, having alluded in his introduction to the sonnets of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and William Wordsworth, Samuel Waddington concludes: 'the fact must be recorded that after Shakespeare our sweetest English sonneteer is Hartley Coleridge'.³ During the course of the next century, however, most examinations of Hartley's work open with the words 'wasted' or 'unfulfilled potential', while the image of Hartley as a childlike or 'elfin' figure has stuck in modern consciousness. Twentieth-century accounts of Hartley often forgo examination of his poetic merit altogether, preferring to dwell on his private life, and on the suggestion that he was psychologically and creatively stifled by his famous father's poetic presence.⁴ Consequently, what Hartley *did* write has not received adequate critical attention. Hartley Coleridge produced hundreds of poems (of which three hundred and ninety are now published), including sonnets, satire, blank verse, and

¹ Anon, 'Hartley Coleridge', *QR* 98 (July 1833): 521.

² See Appendix I(a) for list of anthologies showing those poems by Hartley which are most frequently published.

³ Samuel Waddington in *The Poets and Poetry of the Nineteenth Century: John Keats to Edward, Lord Lytton*, vol. III, ed. Alfred A. Miles (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1905), 136.

⁴ Distinguishing Hartley and Samuel Taylor Coleridge without colluding in the relative diminution of Hartley Coleridge is a problem that confronts this study too. The elder Coleridge's seniority secures him the priority of a scholarly address, simply as 'Coleridge'; his son, in consequence, is distinguished from his father by the potentially condescending address of his Christian name. The same is true of Dorothy and William Wordsworth. As I am often referring to all five writers at once (William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Hartley, Derwent and Samuel Taylor Coleridge) in most cases I will be using first names to refer to the Wordsworths and Derwent – for equality and in order to avoid confusion – and the initials STC to refer to the elder Coleridge. Where it is a necessity for clarity, both first and surname will be used.

short lyric pieces; he wrote extensively for literary magazines of his day, and was commissioned to write *Biographia Borealis; or Lives of Distinguished Northerns*, and an introduction to *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford*. As Lisa Gee asserts in her introduction to *Bricks Without Mortar: Selected Poems of Hartley Coleridge*: ‘he persisted in his vocation, even though no one was listening’.⁵

Though unpublished under her own name in her lifetime, Dorothy Wordsworth too has since been recognized as having excelled in her particular genre: Russel Noyes, writing in a twentieth-century anthology of Romantic poetry and prose, calls her ‘one of the finest of English descriptive writers’.⁶ Since the 1970s Dorothy has received more attention than Hartley as a significant Romantic writer, but her independent abilities are still often undervalued. With the exception of Elizabeth Fay’s *Becoming Wordsworthian: A Performative Aesthetics* (1995) and recent invigorating and revisionary criticism by Anca Vlasopolos (1999), Clifford J. Marks (2004), and Kenneth Cervelli (2007), analysis is usually all too ready to subordinate Dorothy to her brother, William Wordsworth, while the extent of her contribution to his poetics also remains overlooked. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar recognize that Dorothy’s situation is one that demands more careful examination and is not simply a case of female suppression: ‘why she did not produce more poetry than she did is thus a troublesome question, for, as her journals reveal, she was never merely her brother’s literary handmaiden, though critics have often defined her that way’.⁷ Surprisingly, critics have rarely considered in depth how Dorothy’s position as *sister* affected her literary identity, more often presenting her as an archetypal figure of female repression. An important departure from standard accounts of Dorothy’s relationship with the

⁵ *Bricks Without Mortar: Selected Poems of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Lisa Gee (London: Picador, 2000), xi.

⁶ *English Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. Russell Noyes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 448-49.

⁷ *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 319.

phenomenal world, such as those by Anne K. Mellor, Susan Levin, and Margaret Homans, is Kenneth Cervelli's recent *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology* (2007), where Cervelli does not foreground gender significance: 'while I do – and indeed must – consider the role gender plays in Dorothy's life and work, I am finally most interested in examining [...] the "relationship of the human and the non-human"'.⁸ My approach, like Cervelli's, avoids feminist identification of the female figure and nature. My foregrounding of sibling influence liberates Dorothy from what Cervelli terms the 'nexus of anxieties' which an approach such as Levin's involves (Cervelli 2007, 5). Hugh l'Anson Fausset suggests in the *TLS* that to diagnose Dorothy with pathological self-conflict would be 'fruitless', but this thesis argues that such a diagnosis gives us crucial insight into the struggles Dorothy faced in writing as a sibling, and those posed by the poetics of relationship itself.⁹

Challenging the notion that Hartley was unable to achieve a strong poetic identity in STC's overbearing shadow, and also the limited feminist reading that Dorothy's independent authorial endeavour was primarily obstructed by gender, my research examines familial, particularly sibling, influence and as such significantly modifies existing knowledge of influence and intertextuality, such as Harold Bloom's notion of a patriarchal 'anxiety of influence'. This approach illuminates our understanding of the experience of writing within the dynamics of a family context, rather than restricting our theories of literature to gender-based or one-way oedipal paradigms. Furthermore, one of the main issues that my study of the reception of Hartley and Dorothy's work raises (see Appendix I) is how the literary worth of both

⁸ Kenneth Cervelli, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2007), 4-5. Cervelli is here quoting Greg Garrad's definition of ecocriticism in *Ecocriticism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004). Cervelli's study is a development of the feminist work of Mellor and Levin; as Cervelli notes, 'Mellor's sense of the female self as being "profoundly connected to its environment" represents a kind of incipient ecocriticism' (5).

⁹ Hugh l'Anson Fausset, 'Dorothy Wordsworth', review of *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography*, by Ernest De Selincourt, *TLS* 1661 (30 November 1933): 853.

writers *was* recognized from their first publication. They have been consistently valued as writers but have suffered neglect and misrepresentation due to familial association and comparison. My thesis reinstates their correct literary standing whilst illustrating the extent to which this recognition has been hindered by biographical affiliation.

My point of departure was a study of Hartley's reception from 1833 to the present day (see Appendix I(a)). One of the most significant findings of this assessment was how influential Hartley's brother, Derwent Coleridge, was in Hartley's infantilization, as first depicted in *Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother* (1851). Derwent's *Memoir* immediately reveals the complexity of biographical representation in the Coleridge family and the invidious attractions of family myth. Derwent, influenced by his father's child portrait of Hartley, laid the foundation of the concept of Hartley as an unfulfilled, immature genius, a myth which we see reproduced and embellished throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism. My examination of Derwent's *Memoir* in conjunction with STC's notebooks reveals the conflicted familial loyalties that complicated Derwent's view of Hartley. Derwent was, I argue, unable to extricate his reading of Hartley's work from his memories of their father. Hartley's relationships with STC and William Wordsworth also conditioned his self-representation, reception, and subsequent literary reputation, an argument which I develop further in Chapter Two. By tracing the rare lines of reception that *did* recognize Hartley's original poetic merits, the extent to which Hartley's independent achievements have been occluded or distorted by STC's mesmeric presence and casually inherited critical assumptions becomes clear: nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics often prefer to focus attention on Hartley the man (or child), rather than poet. While Derwent presented Hartley's verse as fragmentary and derivative, an opinion which becomes internalized by many reviewers,

a more plausible and text-based strand of criticism finds the opposite to be true: *Macmillan's*, for example, labels Hartley's verse 'that kind of poetry which is wrung by sorrow from the soul of genius'.¹⁰ As Edmund Blunden, in reviewing Griggs's biography, *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work* (1929) states: 'Incomplete, eccentric, confused, interrupted as the story of Hartley Coleridge must be, to adventure into his poems is to pass into a sphere of completeness, and method, and continuity'.¹¹

Coming to Hartley's verse through Lisa Gee's selection of his sonnets (2000), I found him to be a poet fundamentally preoccupied with relationship and community, which led me to question the critical stereotype of Hartley as a self-absorbed, childlike figure. Chapter One is one of the first attempts to explore this new view of the poet. Andrew Keanie's recent work, *Hartley Coleridge: A Reassessment of his Life and Work* (2008), is the only modern study of Hartley as a literary figure in his own right. My thesis develops Keanie's positive approach as I define what makes Hartley a distinctive and significant poet. Focusing on Hartley's largely neglected writings on nature and children, I explore his theories of solitude and community in relation to William Wordsworth's and show how Hartley's verse embodies a relational subjectivity which counters the William Wordsworthian egotistical sublime. By comparing Hartley's intense envisioning of the subjective experience of that which is external to him with writers such as John Clare, D. H. Lawrence and Elizabeth Bishop, I show how Hartley partakes in a reinvention of the sublime, what Patricia Yaeger terms the 'sublime of nearness'.¹² I also reveal that sensory receptivity, especially the power of hearing, states of silence, and hidden, suppressed, or unnoticed 'voices', is a defining characteristic of Hartley's work. My approach frees Hartley from the shadow of his

¹⁰ 'Reminiscences of Hartley Coleridge', *MM*, in *LLA* 87: 1123 (9 December 1865): 435.

¹¹ Edmund Charles Blunden, 'Coleridge the Less', review of Earl Leslie Griggs, *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work*, *TLS* 1449 (7 November 1929): 882.

¹² Patricia Yaeger, 'Toward a Female Sublime', *Gender and Theory: Dialogues in Feminist Criticism*, ed. Linda Kauffman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 191-212.

literary and familial forefathers and places him within very different traditions of Romantic writing. Drawing on the work of female Romantic writers, most notably Dorothy Wordsworth, I argue that Hartley, particularly in his understanding of the self-in-relation concept, displays a powerful development of what Anne Mellor defines as ‘feminine Romanticism’.¹³

Having demonstrated in Chapter One that relationship is fundamental to Hartley’s poetics, Chapter Two addresses the relationships that were formative to his life and literary identity. I propose that it was the combination of literary and familial pressures that, in Hartley’s case, created an identity and a literature that realized selfhood in relational terms, which suggests that gender is only one of several complex factors that inflect the writing of relationship. This chapter engages with and builds on current theories of influence, authorship, and kinship, such as Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973), W. Jackson Bate’s *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (1970), and Lucy Newlyn’s *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (2000). More recently, Jane Spencer’s *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon 1660-1830* (2005) is built around the thesis that kinship relations – real and metaphorical – played a fundamental role in the construction of a national literary tradition, and in the creation of individual authors’ identities and careers: my study builds on this approach. However, though Spencer addresses father-son kinship, she overlooks that between William, STC, and Hartley, one of the most potentially rewarding triadic paternal relationships of the Romantic period. My thesis seeks to redress this omission: my study of Hartley reveals his growing awareness that he was fighting against a textualized version of his self (constructed by STC and William). However, I modify existing paradigms of literary relation studies – most notably Bloom’s idea of a patrilineal ‘anxiety of influence’ – by

¹³ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 171.

arguing that Hartley was uniquely liberated by his position as son of STC. Janet Todd, writing on the damaging relationships between the young Fanny Wollstonecraft and her famous writing family, observes how writers at this time showed a ‘refusal to separate life and literature’, an interchange of life and text which, Todd states, occurred to ‘a perhaps unprecedented degree’ in the lives of the Shelley circle: ‘The younger generation had their lives turned into texts almost as they were living them’.¹⁴ A precedent for this engulfing danger does, however, exist in Hartley’s situation: like Fanny, Hartley had to come to terms with a textual life beyond his own real existence, and he too has been subject to a posthumous and unfair labelling by critics as fatally rootless and weak. Unlike Fanny, though, Hartley possessed the consolations of literary industry which allowed him to mount a defence against his textualized self and validate and fortify his independent existence – something that Fanny could not do. While Fanny was driven to suicide, I argue that Hartley found strength in his position of so-called weakness and created a poetic identity very different to that conventionally associated with the masculine Romantic tradition – a battle and achievement which has, hitherto, been ignored.

Specifically, Hartley’s frequent and explicit challenges to fundamental William Wordsworthian principles have received little attention – critics usually prefer to see him as an ardent supporter of William’s poetics. The need to disprove the *Quarterly*’s misrepresentation of Hartley in 1833 as displaying an ‘overweening worship of Wordsworth’ became, it seems, a central motivating force in Hartley’s work and self-representation (*QR* 98 (July 1833): 521). I aim to show that it was the readership, and not Hartley, which was unable to extricate his identity from STC’s and William’s. My

¹⁴ Janet Todd, *Death and the Maidens: Fanny Wollstonecraft and the Shelley Circle* (London: Profile Books, 2007), xiv, 10. Fanny Wollstonecraft was immortalized in her famous mother’s *Letters from Sweden* which, when published by Godwin along with his memoir of Wollstonecraft, revealed to the public that Fanny was an illegitimate child, her mother had twice attempted suicide, and that Fanny’s biological father, Gilbert Imlay, had abandoned her.

analysis of Hartley's letters also reveals that it was Hartley's fraternal relationship with Derwent that was the most inhibiting factor in Hartley's self-construction, an influence which has not yet been recognized. This significant revelation paves the way for my further analysis of sibling theory and identity formation in my study of the literary relationship between Dorothy and William Wordsworth.

I began my study of Dorothy Wordsworth with a critical reassessment of her reception from the first informal accounts of her writing, through to her earliest editors and up to the present day (see Appendix I(b)). Focusing on the different theoretical interpretations that have been placed on the idea of relationship, my aim was to ascertain to what extent Dorothy's authorial independence was recognized before feminist criticism, and how critics have perceived her writing relationship with her brother. Both investigations determine how far her position as sister of a more established publishing figure has conditioned her reception as an independent writer. Although Dorothy is now widely accepted as a master of natural description, my study highlights the extent to which perception of familial literary relationship has stalled this recognition. There have been persistent acknowledgements of Dorothy's individuality which – as in Hartley's case – have become drowned out by the more popular notion of her in affiliation, rather than as independent author. A significant finding from my study was the surprisingly potent effect that Thomas De Quincey's portrait of Dorothy has had on modern criticism: his presentation of her as a fundamentally and permanently obstructed writer has dominated subsequent biographical and critical accounts of Dorothy and has impeded engagement with her writings.

How Dorothy viewed her own selfhood in this developing literary partnership forms the subject of Chapter Three, a reassessment of relations between Dorothy, William, and STC, where I highlight the tension in Dorothy's prose between the desire to realize her own authorial autonomy and the conflicting need to achieve self-

affirmation through investment in her brother's poetic identity. While critics such as Jane Spencer and Richard E. Matlak have assessed this triadic relationship, mine is the first to focus on Dorothy as pivotal member. I trace the evolution of Dorothy's constructions of self through an examination of the sibling bond in her first explorations of self-formation in her early letters. I then illustrate how she negotiates different theories of self-construction in her *Alfoxden* and *Grasmere Journals* through the figuring of her self both independently, and in relationship to the natural world and STC. Such figurations, I argue, are symbolic attempts at mediating, validating, and understanding her identity in the shadow of, and through, her brother. I also provide an extended analysis of Dorothy's distinctive descriptive aesthetic, which is characterized by relationship and acute sensory perception, in opposition to William's.

My study draws attention to Dorothy's poetic ability and technique with a close analysis of the luminous natural descriptions which make up the *Grasmere* and *Alfoxden Journals*. My particular aim is to encourage a more accurate understanding of Dorothy's poetic vision; how she makes, in D. H. Lawrence's words, a 'new effort of attention, and "discovers" a new world within the known world'.¹⁵ As I have mentioned above, Kenneth Cervelli, in *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology*, is the first critic to analyse Dorothy primarily for her relationship to the phenomenal world, rather than foregrounding gender significance, and makes a case for the centrality of environments to Dorothy in the *Grasmere* and *Alfoxden Journals*. Though her talent for natural description has been frequently noted, critics have neglected her profound connection to the natural world, and what this connection signifies. My analysis of Dorothy's figuring of selfhood and relationship through close identification with nature advances the positive ecocritical perspective begun by Cervelli. Approaching

¹⁵ D. H. Lawrence, 'Chaos in Poetry' (Introduction to Harry Crosby's *Chariot of the Sun*) in *D. H. Lawrence: Selected Poems*, ed. Mara Kalnins (London: J. M. Dent, 1992), 271.

Dorothy's journal writings in the light of my work on Hartley – specifically the destructive and cathartic potential of his sibling and paternal influences and his resultant self-in-relation realization – this thesis argues that authorial identity is not fundamentally predetermined by gender, but is more significantly vulnerable to, and governed by, immediate kinship.

This focus on the importance of the fraternal bond to the realization of Dorothy's selfhood and authorial identity forms the foundation of Chapter Four, the crux of my analysis of the Wordsworth sibling relationship. Valerie Sanders rightly observes in *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-century Literature: From Austen to Woolf* (2002) that the 'full significance of sibling relationships to English writers [...] has never been properly addressed and understood'.¹⁶ Marlon B. Ross proposes in *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* that the threat posed by the writing sibling – literal or figurative – is greater than the 'power of the dead father', while Lucy Newlyn also recognizes, in *Reading, Writing and Romanticism*, that pre-existing authorial tensions are exacerbated when living in close proximity to a more established writer.¹⁷ Jane Spencer's *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon* is one of the only studies to address sibling literary kinship directly, but her study aims to survey almost two centuries of literary tradition and so sacrifices depth for breadth. The complexity of specific familial literary conflicts – such as that between Dorothy and William Wordsworth – is not fully addressed. Chapter Four seeks to correct this omission and extends the theoretical interpretation of the Wordsworth writing partnership, championed by Elizabeth Fay, which views the construction of William, the poet, as a dual vocation, Dorothy being a vital and

¹⁶ Valerie Sanders, *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-century Literature: From Austen to Woolf* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 2.

¹⁷ Marlon B. Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 92.

empowering collaborator rather than subsumed victim. I also begin to trace the fault-lines that emerge from the heart of Dorothy's self-displacement endeavour by tracing the tensions which the journals embed.

The sibling bond connected more than two members of the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle: in Chapter Four my survey of the wider significance of the sibling bond in the work of both the Wordsworths and STC shows that their collective use and understanding of this lateral tie interweaves their work both intertextually and ideologically. My analysis of the textual presence of Dorothy in William's work, and also Dorothy's textual representation of William – an area which has, until now, been overlooked – supports my developing theory that this interdependence was, in the psyche of both writers, a collaborative enterprise which constantly inflected their evolving authorial identities. It is intriguing that William's greatest lyric poetry and his most memorable poem 'Tintern Abbey', all pivot around Dorothy. Examination of William's verse reveals that his dependence on Dorothy was not just personal and textual but imaginative – she forms a part of his writing self. My thesis argues that William's poetic stability and identity, was, in turn, more deeply grounded in his sister's identity and poetics than has previously been recognized. Implicit also within this premise is a destabilization of Wordsworthian critical stereotypes: my approach encourages a moderation of the extreme classifications of William as male egotistical poet; Dorothy as thwarted female writer, and a move towards a more nuanced consideration of their different, but always mutually interdependent, poetics.

Kenneth Cervelli and Susan Levin are among the few critics who have examined Dorothy's poetry in depth. Some feminist critics, such as Homans and Levin, interpret Dorothy's relational self as a fragmentation of her own identity; as with Hartley, I seek to offer a more nuanced view of poetic selfhood in dialogue with the poet-sibling. Chapter Five completes my encounter with the challenges to Dorothy's

poetic identity, and to the poetics of relationship itself – what Susan J. Wolfson terms ‘spectres of defeat’.¹⁸ I utilize recent sibling theory in my analysis of Dorothy’s poetic dialogue with William in order to support the case for the significance of lateral literary relations; most notably, Juliet Mitchell’s argument, in *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, that the greatest threat to identity formation comes from sibling peers rather than paternal relations. In *Dorothy Wordsworth’s Ecology*, Kenneth Cervelli examines Dorothy’s poems as ‘fruits of her ecological maturation’, ‘miniature ecosystems – textual extensions of the Grasmere environment’ (Cervelli 2007, 9, 48). Cervelli makes an important case for Dorothy’s poetry as ‘genuinely ecological poetry’ that must be understood for a holistic appreciation of her self and her poetics (67), an argument which my thesis also endorses: by overlooking the self-conflict of Dorothy’s poetic methodology we ignore a vital stage of the evolution of her authorial subjectivity, and thus we misread her identity. It is in Dorothy’s poetry that the dialectic between self-subordination and self-expression finds fullest articulation, and she, like Hartley, asserts an independence from William, his literature, and poetic agenda.

My thesis shows that sibling and child identity-construction shapes poetics and the making of poets, and that this can affect male as well as female poets. My study of the familial self thus uses and significantly supplements feminist work on the notion of self-in-community, and seeks to overturn the persistent debilitating myths of Dorothy Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge to restore a more accurate understanding of two significant Romantic writers.

¹⁸ Susan J. Wolfson, ‘Individual in Community’, in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 162.

Chapter I

Hartley Coleridge and the Poetics of Relationship

The poems most often associated with Hartley Coleridge are those which reveal a self-pitying outlook on his own existence; the phrases ‘No hope have I to live a deathless name’, ‘For I have lost the race I never ran’, and ‘Long time a child’ have subsequently become inextricably linked with his poetic reputation.¹⁹ While such mournful phrases offer glimpses into the psychological complexity of Hartley’s endeavour to realize his identity, both personally and poetically (to which I will pay more attention in Chapter Two), such pessimistic introspection forms only a small part of his literary output. And, as Don Paterson recognizes, it is Hartley’s poetic proficiency that has caused such fatalistic phrases to be taken literally by critics: ‘[Hartley] was so eloquently convincing on the matter of his own literary inferiority that he managed to be partly complicit in his own oblivion’.²⁰ Many poets succumb to self-doubt, rigorous self-criticism, and admissions of personal and poetic failure, yet Hartley’s confessions have been taken by critics as his *only* legacy. He has been accepted as an immature, self-concerned poet largely because this accords with the ‘little Child’, ‘limber Elf’ figure of STC’s ‘Christabel’ and the eternal child-figure of William Wordsworth’s ‘Immortality Ode’.²¹

The greater proportion of Hartley’s verse does not veer towards such solipsism. Rather, a preoccupation with relationship and community is a fundamental Hartley Coleridgean characteristic. This chapter examines relationship as a theme and a

¹⁹ See ‘Poietes Apoietes’ and ‘Long time a child’ in *The Complete Poetical Works of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Ramsay Colles (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1908), 91, l. 1; 7, ll. 11, 1. All further references to Hartley’s poems will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated. Titles are as they appear in *Complete Poetical Works*; where a poem is untitled, the poem is referred to by its first line. As Hartley did not always date his compositions, it is difficult to consistently date his work; dates are, when given, as they appear in *CPW* (which follows Derwent Coleridge’s transcriptions in his 1851 edition), and Earl Leslie Griggs’ *New Poems*, for those poems unpublished by Derwent and Colles.

²⁰ Don Paterson, ‘Enthusiasms: Hartley Coleridge’, *Poetry* CLXXXVII, no. 6 (March 2006): 491.

²¹ *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poetical Works* (Reading Text), vol. I, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 503, ll. 656-9: ‘A little Child, a limber Elf / Singing, dancing to itself; / A faery Thing with red round Cheeks, / That always *finds*, and never *seeks*’.

dynamic in Hartley's verse. I focus on Hartley's largely neglected writings on nature and children which offer the strongest assertion of his independence from William and STC: here, I argue, is where Hartley's distinctive poetic voice can be found. Hartley's poems are more often characterized by human connection, intense sensitivity, and philanthropy; by providing a close analysis of these traits I will modify the misrepresentative critical stereotype of Hartley and show that his verse reveals a relational subjectivity which counters the typical William Wordsworthian egotistical sublime. Moreover, I argue that this does not indicate a lack of mental centrality or sense of self – accusations which are implicit in Derwent Coleridge's *Memoir* of his brother (as I show in my study of Hartley's reception in Appendix I(a)) – but rather a more intense, albeit fragile, sensibility that finds its strongest expression through community rather than solitude. Drawing on the work of female Romantic writers, notably Dorothy Wordsworth, I show how Hartley's poetics of relationship, particularly his understanding of the self-in-relation concept, display aspects of what Anne Mellor defines as 'feminine Romanticism' (Mellor 1993, 171).²²

'Man is more than half of nature's treasure': Solitude, Community, and the Relational Self

Hartley's trilogy of sonnets addressed 'To a Friend' offers a countercontext to William's 'Tintern Abbey' and forms the opening three poems to Hartley's 1833 volume – a significant placement which indicates Hartley's intention to challenge William Wordsworthian poetics. While these poems inherit William Wordsworthian themes – remembrance of an experience within nature; the pantheistic One Life; an experience

²² Mellor argues that the two Romanticisms which she defines as masculine and feminine 'should not be identified with biological sexuality': 'Some romantic writers were "ideological cross-dressers."' It was possible for a male Romantic writer to embrace all or parts of feminine Romanticism, just as it was possible for a female to embrace aspects of masculine Romanticism'. Mellor cites John Keats and Emily Bronte as two such 'ideological cross-dressers' (Mellor 1993, 171).

becoming heightened due to the presence of a companion; and the idea of the mind's 'inward eye'²³ providing spiritual sustenance – Hartley's main objective is to counter William's emphasis on solitude as a positive state, and also his notion that the bond which connects man to nature supersedes the human tie of kinship.

William's writings emphasize the educative power of nature, which often seems to take on a human embodiment. The symbol of the river, in particular, is presented as a constant companion and guiding force throughout his life: in Book I of *The Prelude*, William states that the River Derwent gave him 'A knowledge' 'of the calm / Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves'.²⁴ In 'To a Friend', Hartley admits that during youth he too felt a strong bond with nature:

When we were idlers with the loitering rills,
The need of human love we little noted:
Our love was nature; [...]

(CPW, 3, ll. 1-3)

Retrospectively, however, Hartley realizes that nature does not have the strongest hold over him: 'But now I find, how dear thou wert to me; / That man is more than half of nature's treasure' (ll. 9-10). Here Hartley echoes William's 'Tintern Abbey' belief that nature is 'More dear' to him due to his sister's presence.²⁵ But whereas William is re-experiencing a landscape and realising that his affinity with nature is heightened because he is sharing the experience with another, Hartley's change is taking place in his mind and in history. He is revisiting and revising a memory and recognising that the initial joy he felt within nature, 'when we were idlers' (l. 1), was *not* attributable to

²³ 'I Wandered lonely as a Cloud', *Poems in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807, by William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 208, l. 15.

²⁴ *The Thirteen-Book Prelude, by William Wordsworth*, ed. Mark L. Reed, vol. II (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), I, 21, ll. 284-5. Hereafter, references will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated.

²⁵ *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800, by William Wordsworth*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 120, l. 160.

nature, but because of human connection – his friend. This leads Hartley on to the realization – in the second reference to ‘Tintern Abbey’ – ‘That man is *more* than half of nature’s treasure’ (l. 10; my italics). Whereas William attributes equal power to nature and man – ‘what they half create, / And what perceive’ (*LB*, 119, ll. 107-8) – Hartley finds that intense emotional experience comes more from the bonds of human connection than solitary contemplation. For Hartley, nature is a conduit that facilitates human connection, and, in doing so, appreciation of nature in turn becomes enhanced. The final lines of ‘To a Friend’ suggest that in solitude nature loses its meaning: community allows a full translation of nature’s impact. Without such company, the ‘voice’ of nature becomes unintelligible to Hartley and only ‘speaks’ to others: ‘And now the streams may sing for others’ pleasure’ (l. 13). Thus Hartley counters the ‘Tintern Abbey’ requirement of solitude to ‘see into the life of things’ (117, l. 49).

Hartley’s treatment of nature accords with his father’s developing psychological argument, which STC asserts in ‘Letter to Sara Hutchinson’ and ‘Dejection: An Ode’, that a beautiful scene can be observed without necessarily affecting the observer’s emotional state. Such a claim opposes William’s belief in the overwhelming restorative power of nature and emphasizes the paramount importance of the role of the perceiver in the communion between nature and self. As John Beer states, ‘[Coleridge] has been standing out of doors on a beautiful evening when he himself is in a state of depression – and the beauty of the scene has not helped him at all’.²⁶ STC makes this distinction clear in ‘Dejection’ (composed c. July 1802), where a full translation of nature’s potency is disallowed by his suppressed emotional state and subsequent loss of connection with his surroundings: ‘And still I gaze – and with how blank an eye!’, ‘I see them all so excellently fair, / I see, not feel how beautiful they are!’ (*PW* II, 698-9, ll. 30, 37-8). STC here sets a precedent for Hartley’s belief in the significance of

²⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems*, ed. John Beer (London: J. M. Dent, 1995), 333.

human imaginative creation in comprehending nature, and the corresponding pantheistic notion that the essence of nature exists only within the observer: ‘O Lady! we receive but what we give, / And in our life alone does nature live’ (699, ll. 47-8). As Hartley suggests in ‘On Parties in Poetry’, ‘Nature, as presented to the senses, is mere chaos’: ‘It is the mind that gives form, and grace, and beauty, and sublimity’.²⁷

In the second poem of Hartley’s ‘To a Friend’ series, ‘To the Same’, Hartley is reunited with his fellow ‘idler’ in the city. In ‘Tintern Abbey’, William’s ‘inward eye’ allows him to recall the vivifying powers of nature’s ‘forms of beauty’ ‘mid the din / Of towns and cities’: ‘I have owed to them, / In hours of weariness, sensations sweet’ (*LB*, 117, ll. 24, 26-8). Hartley, however, associates the harmonising power of nature with external human emotion rather than visual introspection. Nature is presented as a social force rather than a visual presence – a force that drives our emotions:

And what hath nature, but the vast, void sky,
And the throng’d river toiling to the main?
Oh! say not so, for she shall have her part
In every smile, in every tear that falls; [...]

(3, ll. 7-10)

Within each smile and tear Hartley finds ‘nature’s potency’ (l. 3); thus Hartley provides a concrete embodiment of William’s early pantheism. Indeed, much of Hartley’s poetry corresponds with William’s pantheistic doctrine that one life-force drives and connects man, nature, and God. While William’s presentation of this ideology can often seem abstract (a ‘something far more deeply interfused’), Hartley strives to materialize the One Life. William’s pantheistic faith often ensures that nature itself is a companion; the idea of the One Life both sustains him in his solitude, and facilitates closeness to God. For Hartley, nature does not take on such a humanized and powerful

²⁷ *Essays and Marginalia*, ed. Derwent Coleridge (London: E. Moxon, 1851), I, 17.

presence – there must be another individual present in order for *human* connection and interaction to take place, which he presents as vital and distinct from communion with nature.

Hartley reiterates in ‘To the Same’ that company is life-giving: ‘But worse it were than death, or sorrow’s smart / To live without a friend within these walls’ (ll. 13-14). By equating solitude with death Hartley suggests that human interaction is an embodying and life-giving experience – it brings his self into being. Hartley’s emphasis on the self-liberating potential of human interaction is characteristic of female Romantic writers: the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley, for example, highlight both the dangers of social isolation and emotional deprivation, and the educative and vivifying powers of human love, dialogue, and empathy. In *Maria*, Wollstonecraft’s Jemima is shown to be emotionally damaged due to her loveless upbringing – ‘virtue, never nurtured by affection, assumed [within Jemima] the stern aspect of selfish independence’.²⁸ While in *Matilda*, Shelley’s heroine becomes consumed within a precarious fantasy world as her familial supporting structure disintegrates. When Matilda is reunited with her father, she declares: ‘And now I began to live’.²⁹ Matilda also later comes to realize that ‘the best gift of heaven [is] – a friend’ (Todd 2004, 190).³⁰ Similarly, Jemima’s emotions, humanity, and self become awakened through Maria’s companionship: ‘[Jemima] seemed indeed to breathe more freely; the cloud of suspicion cleared away from her brow; she felt herself, for once in her life, treated like a fellow-creature’ (Todd 1994, 79). Like Hartley, both Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley acknowledge the sustaining and educative powers of nature, but these writers foreground the vital necessity of human discourse, which is

²⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin, 2004), 66.

²⁹ Mary Shelley, *Matilda*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin, 2004), 161.

³⁰ For the importance of friendship in STC’s writings, in the context of late-eighteenth-century ideas about friendship, see Gurion Taussig, *Coleridge and the Idea of Friendship, 1789-1804* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002).

lacking in ‘silent’ nature. As in the case of the orphaned Lionel Verney in Shelley’s *The Last Man*, nature alone is not enough: ‘There was a freedom in it, a companionship with nature, and a reckless loneliness; but these, romantic as they were, did not accord with the love of action and desire of human sympathy’.³¹

This notion of solitude as a form of self-imprisonment is most forcefully conveyed in ‘From Country to Town’ (‘Continued’), which contains Hartley’s most explicit expression of the theory that the self is created, and sustained, in others.³² Like the ‘To a Friend’ sonnets, Hartley continues the theme of isolation when displaced from a natural environment, but suggests that his alienation springs more from his separation from familiar people than from the ‘country’ of the poem’s title:

’Tis strange to me, who long have seen no face,
That was not like a book, whose every page
I knew by heart, a kindly common-place,
And faithful record of progressive age – [...]

(15, ll. 1-4)

By comparing friends to well-read books Hartley indicates both the reassuring constancy of familiarity, and the depths of human kinship. Though the ‘face’ is a physical element viewed in the immediate present, what Hartley reads in this face collapses the boundaries of time and tangibility: each face is read as a history book – a ‘faithful record of progressive age’ (l. 4). Hartley is elaborating on the idea of the book as a metaphor for personal history and familiarity which William presents in *The Prelude* upon his return home from Cambridge: ‘The face of every neighbour whom I met / Was as a volume to me’ (IV, 63, ll. 70-1). Hartley’s sense that social isolation threatens identity also corresponds with the disharmony experienced by Dorothy Wordsworth in ‘Grasmere – A Fragment’:

³¹ Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Morton D. Paley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 14.

³² ‘From Country to Town’ (‘Continued’) was written in Leeds, July 1832.

A Stranger, Grasmere, in thy Vale,
 All faces then to me unknown,
 I left my sole companion-friend
 To wander out alone.³³

Dorothy's alienation within freedom parallels Hartley's conviction that relationships liberate the self. She initially feels imprisoned due to the unfamiliarity of the land and people – she labels herself an 'Inmate of this vale' (187, l. 87)³⁴ – which suggests that identity only becomes fully realized through connection with the external world. Like STC in 'Frost at Midnight' ('The inmates of my cottage, all at rest'), Dorothy's usage of the word 'inmate' is, however, ambiguous, or rather mirrors the ambiguity of the home or domesticity, which both writers suggest can be both a haven and a prison. Dorothy's poem nevertheless implies temporary lodging – a perhaps necessary period of confinement to allow discovery through stability – rather than an interminable captivity.

Importantly, Hartley does not only read other people's history in these faces; he reads (or does not read) his own past:

To wander forth, and view an unknown race;
 Of all that I have been, to find no trace,
 No footstep of my by-gone pilgrimage.

(15, ll. 5-7)

This sentiment again echoes *The Prelude*, where William finds himself similarly isolated and bewildered amongst a sea of strangers in London:

How often in her overflowing Streets
 Have I gone forwards with the Crowd, and said

³³ Susan Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 185-6, ll. 49-52. Susan Levin has collected thirty of Dorothy's poems in an appendix to this study. All further references to Dorothy's poems will be to Levin's appendix.

³⁴ While 'Inmate' did not denote imprisonment in nineteenth-century usage, it was applied to mental asylum patients, or used to describe a person who does not entirely belong to the place where they dwell (*OED*).

Unto myself, the face of everyone
That passes by me is a mystery!

(VII, 129, ll. 592)

Hartley goes further than William by implying that his past, and therefore his self, becomes dissolved when amongst strangers. The pivotal phrase ‘Of all that I have been, to find no trace’ implies that when displaced from friends Hartley’s sense of his own identity becomes weakened because his past self was grounded, and grew, within others (l. 6). Companions fortify him both through their reassuring familiarity, and also by their recognition of him which serves to both validate and strengthen his sense of selfhood; in short, loss of relationship leads to loss of self. In *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Jean Baker Miller asserts that this strong relational self is particularly associated with women: ‘women’s sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships’.³⁵ Miller stresses how important relationships are to the construction of selfhood by suggesting that disruption of human affiliation leads to a self-dissolution akin to Hartley’s isolation in ‘From Country to Town’ (‘Continued’): ‘Eventually, for many women the threat of disruption of connections is perceived not as just a loss of a relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self’. Such detachment, Miller continues, can lead to depression, ‘which is related to one’s sense of the loss of connection with another’ (83). While Miller asserts that women are more susceptible to forming self-defining relationships, and, therefore, more vulnerable when such relationships are lost, she also recognizes that affiliation allows access to ‘an entirely different (and more advanced) approach to living and functioning’:

³⁵ Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1986), 83.

[...] For everyone – men as well as women – individual development proceeds *only* by means of connection. At the present time, men are not as prepared to *know* this (83).

Miller goes on to examine how women's desire for affiliation is both 'a fundamental strength, essential for social advance', but also 'the inevitable source of many of women's current problems', a dilemma which I will examine further in my later analysis of Dorothy and William Wordsworth's relationship (89). It is evident, though, that Hartley's writings qualify Miller's biological determinism and are characterized by what Miller labels a female awareness that 'individual development proceeds *only* by means of connection' (83).

The deep-set anxiety of 'From Country to Town' ('Continued') is due to the lack of any form of relationship: the entire poem concentrates on separation, disjunction, and isolation, rather than connection: 'Thousands I pass, and no one stays his pace' (l. 8). Hartley questions the fact that each individual in the town is consumed with independent ambition, rather than human compassion and affiliation: 'Each one his object seeks with anxious chase, / And I have not a common hope with any' (ll. 10-11), a reflection which recalls William's poem 'The world is too much with us': 'Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers: / Little we see in nature that is ours' (TV, 150, ll. 1-3). Whereas William is lamenting the lack of attention we pay to nature, Hartley is regretting man's tendency, particularly in the city, to overlook the sustaining and vital power of human friendship. Hartley's desire for a '*common* hope' adds a democratic charge to his statement and suggests that power is literally realized through mutual connection and shared ambition (l. 11; my italics).

The concluding image of 'From Country to Town' ('Continued') is striking in its distillation of Hartley's absolute isolation:

Thus like one drop of oil upon a flood,
 In uncommunicating solitude,
 Single am I amid the countless many.

(15, ll. 12-14)³⁶

In the image of the impermeable drop of oil Hartley compounds the sense of impenetrability which pervades his entire poem. Like the drop of oil, which is not only a different element from water but is destined never to mix, so Hartley believes a friendless ‘uncommunicating’ existence to be an ostracism from humanity, even a violation of the laws of nature. The repetition of his solitude – ‘one drop’, ‘uncommunicating solitude’, ‘Single am I’ – consolidates the stark sense of exclusion which he feels and develops the notion that, in essence, he ceases to exist when not part of a familiar community (ll. 12, 13, 14). In this way, the drop of oil comes to symbolize his unnatural separation from humanity. Hartley proposes that humanity (the ‘flood’ (l. 12)) is fundamentally cohesive – he returns to water imagery repeatedly as it offers an ideal symbol for the diffusive nature of the relational self. Hartley’s ultimate suggestion is that the human self is not destined to be as ‘one drop of oil’ – that is, an independent, insular, entity – but rather analogous to a drop of water; distinct in itself, but also able to form part of a larger, changeable but eternal source (l. 12).

In ‘Fragment’,³⁷ a poem which seeks to comprehend the origin of ‘The living spark’, Hartley compares the essence of life, before it is claimed and regulated within

³⁶ This state of solitude amongst strangers recalls William’s depiction of incommunicative isolation amongst the ‘countless many’ in ‘Home at Grasmere’:

[...] he truly is alone,
 He of the multitude, whose eyes are doomed
 To hold a vacant commerce day by day
 With that which he can neither know nor love –
 Dead things, to him thrice dead – or worse than this,
 With swarms of life, and worse than all, of men,
 His fellow men, that are to him no more
 Than to the Forest Hermit are the leaves
 That hang aloft in myriads [...]

See *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First of 'The Recluse'*, by William Wordsworth, ed. Beth Darlington (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 88, 90, ll. 808-816.

bodily existence, explicitly to a drop of water: ‘A drop of being, in the infinite sea, / Whose only duty, essence, was to be’ (74, ll. 19, 21-2). Here Hartley recognizes STC’s notion that ‘Change and Permanence [can] co-exist’.

The quiet circle in which Change and Permanence *co-exist*, not by combination or juxtaposition, but by an absolute annihilation of difference / column of smoke, the fountains before St Peter’s, waterfalls / God! – Change without loss – change by a perpetual growth, that [at] once constitutes & annihilates change the past, & the future included in the Present // oh! it is awful.³⁸

Such a contradictory fusion is beyond comprehension for STC as it appears to collapse the boundaries of time and logic. Hartley’s use of water imagery is particularly significant as water metaphors pervade Derwent’s *Memoir* as an analogy for Hartley’s supposedly undirected, uncontrollable self, while STC also uses water imagery to suggest the weakness – ‘streaminess’ – of his and Hartley’s character (*CN I*, 1833; see Appendix I(a)). Depictions of a floating or divided self recur throughout STC’s notebooks and he often seems bewildered by the realization that his identity may be grounded externally rather than internally. For example, in December 1804 he expresses how part of his identity is deeply grounded in his children:

have I said, when I have seen certain tempers & actions in Hartley, that is *I* in my future State / so I think oftentimes that my children are my Soul. / that multitude & division are not (o mystery) necessarily subversive of unity. I am sure, that two very different meanings if not more lurk in the word, *one* (*CN II*, 2332).

³⁷ This poem’s concentration on the nature and origin of life has many echoes of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, which also studies the creation and secret of life. In Hartley’s poem, the child wonders from where his life originated: ‘The child, through every maze of wakening lore, / Hunts the huge shadow of what was before’; ‘Yet wishing, hoping nought, but what has been. / But what *has* been? But *how*, and *when*, and *where*?’ (*CPW*, 74-5, ll. 9-10, 16-17). Likewise, Shelley’s monster (who is also a ‘child’) exhibits existential confusion over his past, present, and future: ‘My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them’; *Frankenstein*, ed. Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin, 2003), 131. Hartley’s diction of hunting and epic size – the child ‘Hunts the huge shadow’, sees ‘misty phantoms glide’, and ‘huge spectres run’ which ‘stalk gigantic from the setting sun – / Still urging onward to the world unseen’ (*CPW*, 74-5, 10, 11, 13-15) – also strongly suggests identification with Frankenstein’s ‘gigantic’ and hunted creation.

³⁸ *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, vol. II, 1804-1808 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 2832.

Similarly, in a confused and passionate entry on Sara Hutchinson, STC explores the theory that his self is created through a kindred soul and presents life ‘deprived of all connection with her’ as a state of death-in-life:

I am so feeble that I cannot yearn to be perfect, unrewarded by some distinct soul – yet still somewhat too noble to be satisfied or even pleased by the assent of the many – myself will not suffice – & a stranger is nothing / It must be one who is & who is not myself – not myself, & yet so much more my Sense of Being [...] than myself that myself is therefore only not a feeling for reckless Despair, because she is its object / Self in me derives its sense of Being from having this one absolute Object, including all others that but for it would be thoughts, notions, irrelevant fancies – yea, my own Self would be – utterly deprived of all connection with her – only more than a thought, because it would be a Burthen – a haunting of the daemon, Suicide (CN II, 3148).

STC recognizes that part of his identity is not self-created, but he battles with this notion and simultaneously fears this relational self: ‘I would make a pilgrimage to the Deserts of Arabia to find the man who could make [me] understand how the *one can be many!*’ (CN I, 1561). Hartley does not view this self-in-relation concept in the same troubled light as STC and more readily accepts that each self can become bound to another to become part of a stronger and more meaningful universal entity. As William states in ‘Home at Grasmere’, the ‘noblest’ state-of-being, though ‘divided from the world’, incorporates the one into many: ‘The true community, the noblest Frame / Of many into one incorporate’ (HG, 90, ll. 824, 819-20).

When Hartley compares man to a pin in his essay ‘Pins’, he gives his most striking representation of the self-in-relation by exploring the essential atomic structure and mercurial form of the metallic pin. The essence of matter, he suggests, is paradoxically at once eternally present, yet in an unclassifiable state of constantly becoming, never in existence save in the form it temporally inhabits: ‘forms are all fleeting, changeable creatures of time and circumstance, will and fancy: there is nothing that abides but a brute inert mass, and even that has no existence at any time, but in the

form which then it bears' (*EM I*, 81). Hartley's description of the gold fishes' incessant movement in 'Address to Certain Gold Fishes' – their 'flitting, flashing, billowy gleams' – captures this perpetual restlessness and elusiveness of integral structure as the vibrant fish flash into and out of a perceptible form:

Restless forms of living light
 Quivering on your lucid wings,
 Cheating still the curious sight
 With a thousand shadowings; [...].

(86, ll. 8, 1-4)

It is a description that echoes STC's perception of starlings in November 1799, which he likewise perceives as being one force-field of matter with a constantly un-fixed and volatile outline: 'Starlings in vast flights drove along like smoke, mist, or any thing misty [without] volition [...] some [moments] glimmering & shivering, dim & shadowy, now thickening, deepening, blackening!' (*CN I*, 582). On an even more microscopic level, Hartley applies this same sentiment with regard to an atom – the building block of all creation, and (then) the only entity that could not be broken down further. An atom, Hartley argues, is still governed by this same condition of perpetual flux and essential loss: 'an atom, motion, air, or flame, / Whose essence perishes by change of form' ('Lines written by H. C. in the fly-leaf of a copy of Lucretius presented by him to Mr Wordsworth', 203, ll. 21-2). Hartley's ability to divine essential truths about the nature of creation through an imaginative probing and expansion of the minutest form of matter is analogous to Blake's endeavour to 'see a World in a Grain of Sand' ('Auguries of Innocence', l. 1). In his essay 'Pins', Hartley concludes that 'Just like this pin is man. Once he was, while yet he was not' (*EM I*, 81). Andrew Keanie recognizes such 'extraordinarily condensed insights' within Hartley's work, but it is a

distinctive trait that has usually gone unnoticed.³⁹ This pin metaphor encapsulates the tension between intensely felt existence and the cancellation of identity, a problematic fault-line which the relational self exists by, and which Hartley's 'To a Friend' series expounds further.

In the third poem of the 'To a Friend' series, 'To the Same', William Wordsworthian imagery and symbolism resonate powerfully as Hartley adopts William's characteristic symbol of the stream as a metaphor for life's passage. Hartley suggests that the course of the two friends' respective streams, and lives, diverged while they were pursuing individual ambition, but now, as they meet again later in life, their end is the same: 'Yet now we meet, that parted were so wide, / O'er rough and smooth to travel side by side' (4, ll. 13-4). This holds an allusion to STC's 'Time, Real and Imaginary: An Allegory' (1806) which depicts the race between two siblings, where the blind brother is lagging behind but does not know his position in the race: 'O'er rough and smooth, with even step he pass'd, / And knows not whether he be first or last' (*PW* II, 800, ll. 10-11). Hartley's lines also echo William's 'Lucy Gray' (1798-9), where Lucy (most likely a symbol of Dorothy) is solitary – 'sings a solitary song' – and oblivious to what is 'behind': 'O'er rough and smooth she trips along, / And never looks behind' (*LB*, 172, ll. 63, 61-2). Hartley's poem, though, holds a more democratic emphasis of lateral kinship – his travellers 'travel side by side' (4, l. 14)', unlike the implied hierarchy and disconnection which characterize the 'journeys' of the speakers in William and STC's poems.

Hartley's poem 'To the Same' also contains a powerful analogy for the idea of human mortality and the Wordsworthian faith in the eternal biological regeneration of nature. The fact that Hartley refers to his self and his friend as streams in this final

³⁹ Andrew Keanie, *Hartley Coleridge: A Reassessment of His Life and Work* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

sonnet points to the assimilation into nature that will occur posthumously – a motif which also recalls William’s ‘Lucy’ poems. Like the Lucy poems, the detached tone of Hartley’s poem evokes an omnipresent identity beyond the subjective self. Hartley’s fluid conception of identity is, however, more akin to that presented in Dorothy Wordsworth’s poem ‘Floating Island at Hawkshead’, which oscillates between a unified and fragmented presentation of identity as the subject moves from ‘Nature’ to ‘I’ to ‘we’ to ‘you’, and back to a non-specified ‘other ground’ (208, ll. 1, 5, 19, 21, 28). Susan Wolfson’s positive reading of ‘Floating Island’ suggests that the poem offers an ‘expansion of individual subjectivity into visionary community’ (Mellor 1988, 145). If we apply Wolfson’s reading to Hartley’s poem we can see that his exclusion of self is a conscious denial of William Wordsworthian egotism. Like Dorothy, Hartley fundamentally recoils from the elevation of individual subjectivity over nature and community.

Elizabeth Fay recognizes that such an ‘extensive decentring process’ causes Dorothy to ‘renounce [...] the male romantic project’ – a recognition that could equally be applied to Hartley’s ‘decentring’ endeavour.⁴⁰ The characteristic self-effacement of Dorothy’s writings accords with the self-in-relation school of psychology, such as Chodorow’s psychoanalytical theory of the development of masculine and feminine identity: while the male is driven to separate and differentiate from the mother, the feminine self develops a more relational sense of identity.⁴¹ Thus we can see that Hartley’s representation of the self accords with notions of feminine identity. Hartley’s treatment of the self, then, follows on from Keats’s, which, Mellor recognizes, might be mapped using the French psychoanalytic theory inspired by Lacan and Kristeva:

⁴⁰ Elizabeth A. Fay, *Becoming Wordsworthian: A Performative Aesthetics* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 124.

⁴¹ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (London: University of California Press, 1978).

Keats images the self as unbounded, fluid, decentred, inconsistent – not ‘a’ self at all. Keats – like the Poet he describes – ‘has no identity – he is continually in for[ming] and filling some other Body’ (Mellor 1993, 175).

Hartley admires his friend whose course has been more glorious, free, and open than his own ‘lazy brook’, which, ‘close pent up within [his] native dell’, ‘crept along from nook to shady nook’ (4, ll. 9, 10, 11). Hartley is replying to his father’s ‘Frost at Midnight’ (1798), where STC prayed that Hartley would enjoy the freedom of nature, rather than suffering the claustrophobia of the city which he had endured as a child, ‘pent ‘mid Cloisters dim’ (*PW* I, 455, l. 52). But Hartley depicts STC’s forecast as illusory and misguided. He corrects his father, arguing that the native dell might also hold a life ‘pent’ – a life deprived of human companionship. For Hartley, psychic freedom occupies a third space that is not dependent on environment. Without connection, the wide open countryside, where Hartley was raised, as promised by his father, becomes just as much of a mental prison to Hartley as the city was to STC. Hartley’s concluding sentiment, however, is not one of self-pity for his ‘limited’ passage in life, but one of hope and equality. Thus Hartley concludes this trilogy with a modest assertion of his belief in the value of the unremarkable and the quotidian, and a democratic expression of the value of every life.

We can see, then, that Hartley’s treatment of the self suggests that there is one universal relational life-force, yet he is also acutely aware of, and values, the individuality and distinct separateness of each life. Hartley’s enthusiasm for the word ‘myriad’ encapsulates this awareness whilst also indicating the impossibility of quantifying such human diversity. In ‘De Animabus Brutorum’ he highlights the ‘myriad millions’, ‘The multitudes of lives’ that live in the sea (276, l. 112, l. 110); while in ‘Lines’ (‘Oh for a man, I care not what he be’), Hartley reveals his awe at the diversity of natural creation:

I love my country well, – I love the hills,
 I love the valleys and the vocal rills;
 But most I love the men, the maids, the wives,
 The myriad multitude of human lives.

(211, ll. 29-32)

Such an image indicates the sheer joy Hartley takes in human life, which reverses the popular conception of Hartley as a sorrowful poet. The word ‘myriad’ (which the *OED* defines as countless) illustrates Hartley’s appreciation of the importance of every individual life, whilst also acknowledging that each life forms part of an incalculable whole. It is a word that suggests individual value, but a value which is at once diluted through the innumerable quantity of that which the term also defines. Hartley is attracted to the idea of the illimitable, which illustrates his notion that subjectivity is shifting and not confined to the limits of the individual self. His use of the word ‘myriad’ firmly consolidates the distinction between Hartley’s style of poetry and that of STC and William. While ‘myriad’ appears in Hartley’s (published) verse at least seven times, STC uses it only once, although STC’s awareness in ‘Frost at Midnight’ of ‘the numberless goings on of life, / Inaudible as dreams!’ does parallel Hartley’s wonder at the incalculable busyness of the world (*PW* I, 454, ll. 12-13). Though William does use the word ‘myriads’ in his verse, he does not use it in its adjectival form; his usage does not, therefore, carry the mental mystification that Hartley’s does. ‘Myriads’ merely denotes the numberless in William’s work (‘The leaves in myriads jump and spring’; *LB*, 189, l. 19); Hartley, on the other hand, relishes the pictorial possibility of the word.

Like Keats, Hartley’s poems often centre on the desire to achieve poetic immortality, and the relevance and relationship of the poet to the larger world. Both poets hold a self-deprecating belief that their poetic identity is transient, an anxiety that is epitomized in Hartley’s statement, ‘No hope have I to live a deathless name’

(‘Poietes Apoietes’, 91, l. 1) and Keats’s proposed epitaph: ‘I have written my name on water’, which provides an ideal water-self metaphor for Hartley. In a poem dedicated to Keats, which takes this epitaph for its title, Hartley transforms Keats’s negative image – that his name and identity will disperse and be forgotten – into a positive message of hope, regeneration, and immortality:

I HAVE WRITTEN MY NAME ON WATER

The proposed inscription on the tomb of
John Keats

And if thou hast, where could’st thou write it better
Than on the feeder of all lives that live?
The tide, the stream, will bear away the letter,
And all that formal is and fugitive:
Still shall thy Genius be a vital power,
Feeding the root of many a beauteous flower.

(212, ll. 1-6)

By reminding Keats that water is ‘the feeder of all lives that live’, Hartley proposes, through the notion of a diffusive relational self, that his ‘Genius’ will be reincarnated through spiritually and intellectually nourishing man; ‘Feeding the root of many a beauteous flower’ (ll. 2, 5, 6). By focusing on the biological idea of feeding Hartley implies that the self is an immortal transfusive entity that partakes in the organic regeneration of nature. Such a concept again recalls Dorothy’s ‘Floating Island’ where she too, through the language of feeding and regeneration, shows that individual subjectivity, as symbolized by the island fragments, can never be entirely ‘lost’ but will fuel new creation: ‘Yet the lost fragments shall remain, / To fertilize some other ground’ (208, ll. 27-8). Hartley’s emphasis on the dynamics of water as representative of both rigid structure and freedom – ‘The tide, the stream, will bear away the letter, / And all that formal is and fugitive’ (ll. 3-4) – also recalls William’s ‘The River

Duddon: Conclusion’, where he alludes to the constancy of the Duddon’s structure, dynamics and purpose: ‘The Form remains / the Function never dies’.⁴²

By embracing both the containable and that which defies constraint (the ‘fugitive’), Hartley’s poem could also suggest that he is recognising Keats’s ability to conform to poetic tradition, and also escape these limitations and ‘crossover’ to different writing conventions. Such dual creativity will not be lost (as Hartley’s verse itself symbolizes); no dimension of his poetic identity, Hartley argues, *should* escape literary ‘transfusion’. ‘Conclusion’ holds a realization of the transience of the individual ego against the constancy of nature, and the understanding that man cannot, ultimately, defy or supersede dominant nature: ‘We Men, who in our morn of youth defied / The elements, must vanish; – be it so!’ (ll. 8-9). William’s poem concludes with a more abstract assertion of Hartley’s conviction that individuality can ‘feed’ into and live through the next generation: ‘Enough, if something from our hands have power / To live, and act, and serve the future hour (ll. 10-11).⁴³ While ‘Conclusion’ corroborates Hartley’s emphasis on regeneration and hope, conveyed with an uncharacteristically humble tone, William’s poem is still predominantly about the importance of the individual poetic self: ‘We feel that we are greater than we know’ (l. 14). Hartley’s poetics, however, foreground community over the egotistical self as he illustrates more vividly how the self can be perpetuated through, and benefit, others. Hartley’s poem to Keats reassures all poets that their work is the ‘vital power’ that by spiritually nourishing man allows a transfusion and continuance of the poet’s self. Hartley thus counters the notion of the egotistical poet through his focus on the *relation* of poets to mankind, rather than asserting their separateness and superiority.

⁴² *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845, by William Wordsworth*, ed. Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 75, l. 6.

⁴³ Denise Gigante discusses William Wordsworth’s ‘feeding mind’ extensively in *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 68-88.

Hartley dedicates two poems to William which claim that the poet is immortal not only because he lives on through a verse of spiritual sustenance – as the poem to Keats suggests – but, more actively, that poetry allows a transmutation of the poet into a deepened kinship: ‘Friends, husbands, wives, in sadness or in glee, / Shall love each other more for loving thee’ (‘To William Wordsworth’, 118, ll. 13-14). Moreover, in ‘To the Same [Wordsworth]’ Hartley implies that love of the poet leads to love of humanity: ‘many thousand hearts have bless’d [Homer’s] name, / And yet I love them all for Homer’s sake’ (119, ll. 10-11). Hartley suggests that William likewise has the power to not only deepen immediate relationships but to collapse the divisions of time and unite all of humanity: ‘And thine, great Poet, is like power to bind / In love far distant ages of mankind’ (119, ll. 13-14). In this way, Hartley uses the notion that great poetry is timeless to support his own theory of the one mind. Significantly, in a letter to Derwent, Hartley points to the diffusive and influential power of poetry beyond the boundaries of the text and the immediate poem-reader relationship. He suggests to Derwent, on 30 August 1830, that poetry acts as a meliorating social force, an omnipresent but elusive influence that participates in human perfectibility: ‘it must delight every lover of mankind to see how the influence of Wordsworth’s poetry is diverging, spreading over society, benefitting the heart and soul of the Species, and indirectly operating upon thousands, who haply, never read, or will read, a single page of his fine Volumes’.⁴⁴ Hartley is intent on eradicating the notion of poetry as an exclusive, or even exclusively literary, arena. He goes further than William’s statement that poetry should be accessible to the ‘common man’ by imitating and representing real lives: Hartley argues that poetry exists *in* the actions and relationships of everyday

⁴⁴ *Letters of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Grace Evelyn Griggs and Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 112. Hereafter abbreviated to *LHC* and cited in the main text.

lives, through what William terms in ‘Tintern Abbey’, their ‘little, nameless, unremembered, acts / Of kindness and of love’ (*LB*, 117, ll. 35-6).

Hartley’s awareness of the relational self and the incalculable diversity of creation converges with his notion of water as the ideal self-metaphor in ‘Let me not deem that I was made in vain’, where even a drop of rain is ‘not idly spent / ’Mid myriad dimples on the shipless main’, but has a unique purpose and value:

Each drop uncounted in a storm of rain
Hath its own mission, and is duly sent
To its own leaf or blade, [...]

(112, ll. 7-8, 5-7)

If every drop of water has an individual destiny, then, Hartley hopes, so must every human. Again, as with the drop of oil image, Hartley compares the human self to a fluid entity that has a distinct independent ‘mission’, but, this time, is permeable and will ultimately lead to the ‘shipless main’ – the sea . If the human race is analogous to a ‘storm of rain’, then, Hartley suggests, most humans endure an unnoticed – ‘uncounted’ – existence. He asserts, however, that a higher entity directs their passage and fate: the drops are ‘sent’ to their ‘own leaf or blade’ rather than falling haphazardly. In this way, Hartley suggests that our unique value is visible only to our Creator. Hartley uses the sea, or any vast mass of water, as a metaphor for the self and, by extension, for humanity: apparently shifting and changeable, but ultimately cohesive, eternal, and guided by God.

In ‘De Animabus Brutorum’ Hartley again draws attention to ‘uncounted’ life: ‘But who may count, with microscopic eye, / The multitudes of lives that gleam and flash’ in the ocean (276, ll. 109-10). Hartley identifies and classifies matter in order for it to be realized – he remarks that much of creation has gone unnoticed, but that it could have been immortalized within art if it had been named: ‘Then many a plant, that yet

has not a name, / Had won a story and a deathless fame' (277, ll. 119-20). Within Hartley's verse, then, we see a curious tension between the urgent need to itemize and, therefore, stress the separateness of the individual self – as represented in the drop of oil and the drop of water – and the awareness that identity is *not* discrete but dependent on, and realized through, others. These poems on solitude and community show that Hartley's typical process of self-realization is articulated through others. His sense of the non-existence of solitude, epitomized in the image of the impenetrable drop of oil, is paramount. As we will see from a closer examination of his nature poems, individual subjectivity is brought to life vividly through Hartley's emphasis on the dynamics of relationship within communities. In this way, objects become defined through connection and interaction with others, rather than through the limits of their corporeal being. It is Hartley's resolute belief in a relational self, combined with his acute sensitivity – his 'microscopic eye' ('De Animabus Brutorum', l. 109) – which fuels his endeavour to monumentalize all creation, from the minute – 'The very shadow of an insect's wing' ('Let me not deem that I was made in vain', l. 9) – to the literary giants, Homer and Shakespeare.⁴⁵

'For there is beauty in the cowslip bell / That must be sought for ere it can be spied': The Dynamics of Relationship within Hartley Coleridge's Nature Poems

Hartley is frequently drawn to the microscopic natural image in his mission to highlight hidden or humble forms of creation. Judith Plotz reads this preoccupation negatively, believing it to be a reflection and manifestation of his self-perceived poetic and personal inferiority: 'Hartley is able to write only by positioning himself as a "small poet". [...] both formally and thematically [he] stakes out the territory of the miniature,

⁴⁵ See 'To Shakespeare', 'Homer', 'Homer', and 'Shakespeare' (CPW, 16, 102, 117, 319).

the youthful, and the minor'.⁴⁶ But Hartley's 'commitment to miniaturism', as Keanie argues, demands more attention – it crucially enlightens his unique poetics in relation to literary history: 'his commitment to miniaturism is the key to our recognition of a figure who both transcended the prevailing modes and concerns of his period and most significantly anticipated the aspects of Modernism' (x).⁴⁷ In 'Let me not deem that I was made in vain', through a close analysis of the interrelationship between the insect, the violet and sun, Hartley shows how the presence of all life is noticed by something else, which signifies, therefore, its relevance and meaning in the larger scheme of creation:

The very shadow of an insect's wing,
For which the violet cared not while it stay'd,
Yet felt the lighter for its vanishing,
Proved that the sun was shining by its shade: [...]

(112, ll. 9-12)⁴⁸

The movements of the insect actualize the relationship between the violet and the sun; thus this seemingly insignificant creature is shown to be a mediator of the driving force of all creation. It is this microscopic and Darwinian vision of nature's web of interrelationship that sets Hartley apart from Keats, who, Mellor claims, typifies the cross-over from masculine to feminine Romantic conventions.⁴⁹ As Keanie notes, Hartley's 'appetite for beauty' was stimulated by the sights and sounds 'unseen and unheard by the more prominent poets' (Keanie 2008, 182). In 'The Sabbath-Day's

⁴⁶ Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 205.

⁴⁷ See Appendix I(b) where I also link Dorothy's style to Imagism.

⁴⁸ Hartley's 'drop of the eternal spring' in 'Let me not deem that I was made in vain' is most likely inspired by William's dew-drop motif which figures in an epigram in Rotha's book, written in July 1834: 'The Daisy, by the shadow that it casts, / Protects the lingering Dew-drop from the Sun' (WLMS 11/57-60/57.25).

⁴⁹ Hartley's inclusion of the most minute of creation into the biological interconnectedness of all living things parallels Charles Darwin's awareness of 'how plants and animals, most remote in the scale of nature, are bound together by a web of complex relations'; see *The Origin of Species*, ed. Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was first published in 1859, ten years after Hartley's death, but Hartley was most likely inspired by Darwin's theories, which were published and made famous from 1835 onwards.

Child' Hartley notes the quiet interrelationship between 'A star' and its reflection in a 'dimpling rill'; 'a white-robed waterfall' and the shadow it casts 'in the lake beneath'; a 'wandering cloud' which 'Whitens the lustre of an autumn moon'; and a 'sudden breeze that cools the cheek of noon', which, like the 'shadow of [the] insect's wing', is 'Not mark'd till miss'd' (69, ll. 45, 47-52). Furthermore, in 'May Morning' Hartley describes the 'delicate foot-mark' left by 'Fair nymphs', 'Tinting the silvery lawn with darker green' (146, ll. 6, 2, 7); while in 'I saw thee in the beauty of thy spring', Hartley records the mesmeric effect of not just a woman's presence, but of her absence – what she leaves behind:

I thought the very dust on which thy feet
Had left their mark exhaled a scent more sweet
Than honey-dew dropt from an angel's wing.

(127, ll. 6-8)⁵⁰

Hartley is drawn to the ephemera which surround the material and inflect its appearance; that which almost escapes sensory perception – reflections, shadows, dust, foot-marks – in order to define the object and its relationship to the external world. Hartley's acute visualizations not only describe the appearance of physical objects, but their movement too: he notices their influence or legacy – 'their mark' – on the world. Hartley provides tiny 'records' of the passing of the nymph, the insect, and the woman which trace, strengthen, and validate their existence. This earnest endeavour also reveals Hartley's anxiety, as highlighted above in 'From Country to Town' ('Continued'), that he may leave no trace of his own existence: 'Of all that I have been, to find no trace, / No footstep of my by-gone pilgrimage' (15, ll. 6-7). Hartley's

⁵⁰ Griggs notes the following with regard to this poem: 'This sonnet was addressed to Mrs. Isaac Green. While she was still Caroline Ibbetson, Hartley Coleridge had been deeply attached to her and he continued to admire her after her marriage'. See *New Poems: Including a Selection from his Published Poetry*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 41n.

visualization of the flimsy nature of these lives points to the fragility of their existence and subsequent posterity.

In ‘There was a seed’ – a poem which, like ‘Let me not deem that I was made in vain’, deals with existential anxiety – Hartley changes tack by comparing a hypothetical self to an abandoned seed whose mission is never realized. The seed

Wafted along for ever, ever, ever.
It saught to plant itself; but never, never,
Could that poor seed or soil or water find.

(137, ll. 6-8)

Hartley’s implication is that perhaps some humans, like some misdirected seeds, are merely accidents – ‘The loved abortion of a thing design’d’ (137, l. 4), an echo of the dismay of Frankenstein’s ‘monster’ at his isolated, *unloved*, and meaningless existence: ‘I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion’ (Hindle 2003, 224). Indeed, Hartley often utilizes obstetric metaphors to image his anxiety over the notion of wasted existence: ‘It were a state too terrible for man’ suggests that man becomes ‘an embryo incomplete’ if he finds his life has ‘no precedent, no chart, or plan’ (116, ll. 5, 4). In this way, Hartley strongly suggests Mary Shelley as an influence, whose work *Frankenstein* pivots on one of the most infamous obstetric metaphors in literature.

Importantly, in ‘There was a seed’ Hartley suggests that it is *external* environment – which is accidental – rather than an inherent fault which can impede an individual’s survival:

And yet it was a seed which, had it found,
[...]
A kindly shelter and a genial ground,
Might not have perish’d, quite of good bereft; [...]

(137, ll. 9, 11-12)

Thus Hartley illustrates the notion that environment is fundamental to making us who we are. Similarly, In ‘A lonely wanderer upon earth am I’ Hartley compares the sense of an ungrounded self with the fate of an ‘uprooted weed / Borne by the stream’, or a ‘shaken reed, / A frail dependent of the fickle sky’ (114, ll. 2-3, 3-4). Like the weed, Hartley feels ‘Far, far away’, both temporally and physically, from his ‘natural kin’; specifically, his ‘sister’s smile’ and ‘brother’s boisterous din’ (ll. 5, 8).⁵¹ Hartley asserts the importance of establishing external relationships in order for growth and survival. Such an implication accords with Derwent’s remark in the *Memoir* that it was those around Hartley, rather than Hartley himself, who were to blame for any inaptitude in Hartley’s self and creativity: ‘He was not made to go alone; he was helped through life as it was: perhaps, under altered circumstances, he might have been helped more’.⁵² As Griggs rightly reminds us, far from being constitutionally incapable of great productivity, an impression which has wrongly caused Hartley’s name to become a byword for aimlessness, Hartley *was* inherently capable, under the right conditions, of great work: ‘It is a curious fact that Hartley Coleridge, whose name is almost synonymous with desultoriness, should have been able, under the right circumstances, to produce such a quantity of literary work in scarcely a year’ (*LHC*, 139).

By identifying with the endurance of the solitary natural object Hartley also naturalizes and defines his own subjectivity, a process that is in keeping with his sense of altruism and affiliation with community and nature. In ‘Continuation’, he juxtaposes an image of natural isolation – ‘That flower recluse’; ‘balm breathing anchorite’; ‘lone flower’ – with one of harmonious and loving community: a ‘happy nest of Doves’ (*NP*,

⁵¹ This theme of familial alienation also surfaces in a letter to his mother, dated 1829, where Hartley again identifies with an isolated natural image: ‘My Brother gets a wife – well – my Sister is to have a Husband – well – I remain alone, bare and barren and blasted, ill-omen’d and unsightly as Wordsworth’s melancholy thorn on the bleak hill-top’ (*LHC*, 99). For further discussion of the effect of marriage on siblings see Eric C. Walker’s chapter ‘Marriage and Siblings’ in *Marriage, Writing and Romanticism: Wordsworth and Austen after War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 97-129.

⁵² *Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother*, vol. I, ed. Derwent Coleridge (London: E. Moxon, 1851), clxii.

73, ll. 2, 4, 11, 6). Such an identification points to the emotional conflict endured by the isolated human, who, unlike the ‘blest’ ‘sweet inmates of the homely nest’, both ‘craves’ and ‘fears’ their ‘goodness’ to be exposed and known (ll. 12-14). This sense of being caught between natural withdrawal and connection echoes William’s visualization of Dorothy’s conflict in ‘The Sparrow’s Nest’: ‘She look’d at it as if she fear’d it; / Still wishing, dreading to be near it’ (*TV*, 213, ll. 11-12). Hartley’s identification becomes complicated by familial symbolism in ‘Full well I know’ where Hartley views himself as ‘one leaf trembling on a tree’ (the tree being STC) (*NP*, 69, l. 4), a practice which recalls Dorothy’s more oblique symbolism of the self in her continual presentations of the isolated natural object. Though Hartley’s awe at the ‘myriad multitude’ of creation causes him, like Dorothy, to seek out hidden nature for its own sake, he goes further than Dorothy in his use of the solitary natural image to figure and contemplate the nature of existence (211, l. 32).

One of the most distinguishing elements of Hartley’s nature poems is his desire to provide not just an intensely accurate visual scene for the reader, but to attempt to comprehend the experience of creatures he is describing – a highly distinctive endeavour, comparable in his time only to John Clare. In ‘Address to Certain Gold Fishes’ Hartley captures both the visual vibrancy of the fish and, unusually, its *internal* experience. In a note to a second poem on fish in his 1833 *Poems*, ‘To the Nautilus’, Hartley alludes to a poem on fish by William:

It is saying far too little to say, that he makes you *see* the gold-fish – that they flash, in all their effulgence of hue, and complicity of motion, ‘on that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude.’⁵³ He makes you feel as if you were a gold fish yourself.⁵⁴

⁵³ The line that Hartley quotes from ‘I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’ – ‘on that inward eye that is the bliss of solitude’ – was, in fact, a contribution from Mary Wordsworth (William’s wife).

⁵⁴ Hartley Coleridge, *Poems, Songs and Sonnets* (Leeds: F. E. Bingley, 1833), 153n.

Despite Hartley's praise of William's poem, it is Hartley who, in 'Address to Certain Gold Fishes', allows the reader to enter the fish's subjectivity. Through his acute visualization of their incessant movement, accompanied by an urgent pace that mirrors that of the fish, he captures their characteristic darting motion precisely: 'Your wheelings, dartings, divings, rambles, / Your restless roving round and round' (87, ll. 11. 37-8). The immediacy of this manner of representation, strengthened by the lack of third-person reference, vitalizes the fish and intensifies the relationship between the poem's subject and reader. Such a practice anticipates the work of D. H. Lawrence who also shows a fascination with the subjectivity of natural objects – Hartley's 'Address to Certain Gold Fishes' is particularly analogous to Lawrence's 'Fish'. Lawrence's insistence on conveying the immediacy of the fish, through sensitive engagement with, and description of, their movement, appearance, and experience, together with his direct form of address – 'Your', 'You' – makes the reader feel as though he/she is the subject of the poem. Mara Kalnins notes that 'Lawrence selects and closely observes aspects of an object in a strenuous attempt to convey its essence, as Cezanne was concerned to render the aplyness of an apple' (Kalnins 1992, 10). Like Lawrence and Cezanne, Hartley is intent on conveying the defining essence of his subject through acutely detailed perception and description.

Both Hartley and D. H. Lawrence are drawn to the sense of isolation and monotony that the fish embodies: Hartley wonders if the 'restless roving' of the fish is 'An endless labour, dull and vain' and fears that their 'little lives are inly pining!' (ll. 38, 41, 43). Likewise, Lawrence pities the solitary nature and limited sensory experience of their watery enclosure: 'oh, fish, that rock in water, / You lie only with the waters' (Kalnins 1992, 115, ll. 20-2). Hartley monumentalizes and mythologizes the 'armoured' fish and its endeavour through life – 'Harmless warriors, clad in mail /

Of silver breastplate, golden scale' (86, ll. 9-10)⁵⁵ – in the same manner that Lawrence does in 'Baby Tortoise': 'All animate creation on your shoulder, / Set forth, little Titan, under your battle-shield' (132, ll. 58-9). Thus both poets present the creature's life as a courageous battle. In this way, Hartley penetrates the subjectivity of the fish in an attempt to understand its individuality, and by extension, life itself.

Lawrence's intense confrontation with the dying fish that has been caught by man leads him to a humbling realization of man's inferiority in the face of the vastness of creation:

And my heart accused itself
Thinking: *I am not the measure of creation.*
This is beyond me, this fish.
His God stands outside my God.

(119, ll. 138-41)

Lawrence's epiphany of wonder at universal creation is exactly the impetus that drives Hartley in his natural descriptions. Hartley's focus on externalising the fish also pre-emptly Elizabeth Bishop's presentation of 'The Fish', which Jeredith Merrin sees as a refutation of William Wordsworthian egoism:

Bishop avoids Wordsworth's egocentric, centripetal action by externalizing, focusing outward, as the title of her poem tells us, on "The Fish." Whereas Wordsworth internalizes and subsumes a naturalized human being (the almost moss-covered leech-gatherer), Bishop attends to a separate, natural creature [...] Her perceptions lead not merely to imaginative conquest or introspection, but to a sense of mutual "victory" and a specific action. She saves the creature's life.⁵⁶

Patricia Yaeger calls such mutual experience – which is shared by both Bishop and Hartley – 'the sublime of nearness', or the horizontal sublime: 'Bishop wants to re-

⁵⁵ Hartley's description of the fish is a direct allusion to William Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Book VIII, 338, ll. 736-38: 'some type or picture of the world: forests and lakes, / Ships, rivers, towers, the warrior clad in mail'.

⁵⁶ Jeredith Merrin, *An Enabling Humility: Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and the Uses of Tradition*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 100-101.

invent the sublime – not as a genre of empowerment based on the simple domination of others, but as a genre that can include the sociable, the convivial, as well as the grandiose and empowering, and she comes close to inventing a new mode of the sublime (Kauffman 1989, 195). Hartley identifies with a female sublime because he allows for the otherness of the subject. He provides his own explicit definition for this notion of the sublime in the sonnet ‘What is the meaning of the word “sublime”’: ‘That is the true sublime, which can confess / In weakness strength, the great in littleness’ (117, ll. 13-14). Hartley confronts Burke’s gendered classification of the sublime as a masculine realm of immensity, and his corresponding association of the beautiful with the feminine and smallness.⁵⁷ Judith Plotz recognizes that Hartley’s leading theme was ‘the greatness of littleness’ (Plotz does not signal that her allusion is a clear paraphrase of Hartley’s poem), but does not identify the greatness in littleness, as Hartley did (Plotz 2001, 206). In doing so, Plotz’s reading overlooks what was Hartley’s central poetic mission: to celebrate life which, Hartley indicates, inhabits its purest and most emblematic state in the humblest forms of creation: ‘the very meanest child of Adam – a labourer bowed to earth with daily toil – an infant at the breast – a little lassie singing as she carries her eggs to market – is a more express image of the great Creator than all the innumerable orbs of lifeless matter that throng infinity’ (*EM* I, 238). Plotz’s preoccupation with Hartley as son of STC compromises her critical reading of the ‘facts of his being’.⁵⁸ In the monumentalization of creatures by Hartley, Lawrence, and Bishop there is a simultaneous self-effacement which recognizes the ultimate insignificance of the human ego. Lawrence is often considered to be the first poet to attempt such an immediate portrayal of an external subjectivity, the relationship

⁵⁷ See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ William Tirebuck uses this phrase in reference to Hartley’s poems in his introduction to *The Poetical Works of Bowles, Lamb, and Hartley Coleridge* (London: Walter Scott, 1888), xxxii; for further discussion see my Appendix I(a), 312-13.

between man and nature, and the relationship between the subject and reader; but within Hartley's work there is a precedent.⁵⁹

One of Hartley's favourite natural images is the flower to which, within his published verse, he dedicates fifteen poems. For Hartley the diversity of flowers combined with their transience, which belies formidable intrinsic strength and capacity for regeneration, offers an ideal metaphor for the different facets of humanity. His empathy with flowers again aligns him with feminine Romanticism. Stuart Curran notes that 'if a woman's place is in the home [...] then the particulars of those confined quarters are made the impetus of verse':

Thus a characteristic subgenre of women's poetry in this period is verse concerned with flowers, and not generally of the Wordsworthian species. Merely to distinguish texture, or scent, or a bouquet of colors may seem a sufficient end in itself, enforcing a discipline of particularity and discrimination that is a test of powers.⁶⁰

Just as Hartley naturalizes the human self, so he personifies and vivifies these flowers, paying particular attention to flowers that are commonly overlooked. Like John Clare, Hartley is drawn to the humble cowslip which is the subject of three of his poems.⁶¹ Importantly, Hartley heralds flowers that do not have an overt beauty – those that do not 'rear their heads on high' – and flowers that exist in abundance: 'I love the flowers that Nature gives away / With such a careless bounty' ('The Celandine and the Daisy', 165, ll. 1-2). He imagines a past life for many of these plants, which supports a continuing theory of pantheism that pervades his verse (as opposed to William's early

⁵⁹ Mara Kalnins writes: 'As Graham Hough has pointed out, their [Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* poems] highly original and idiosyncratic free verse shape has no literary antecedents' (Kalnins 1992, 10). Kalnins is commenting on Graham Hough's observation in *The Dark Sun* that, in Lawrence's work, 'fragments of external reality – things, people, places – appear, and the effort is to present them with the maximum of objectivity and vividness – yet to offer them as objects of contemplation in themselves, not as elements in a narrative or exercises in self revelation'; see *The Dark Sun: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Duckworth, 1956), 205-6. This trait of sympathetic representation of 'external reality' without 'self revelation', which Hough thinks is unprecedented, is evident in Hartley's writings.

⁶⁰ Stuart Curran, 'The I Altered' (Mellor 1988, 190).

⁶¹ John Clare wrote fifty-five poems concerning the cowslip.

use of it). For example, the unassuming simple beauty of the lily-of-the-valley is viewed as the embodiment of a modest shy maiden, whose life, like Viola's sister in *Twelfth Night*, was 'a blank' – 'she never told her love':⁶²

We might believe, if such fond faith were ours,
As sees humanity in trees and flowers,
That thou wert once a maiden, meek and good,
That pined away beneath her native wood
For very fear of her own loveliness,
And died of love she never would confess.

('The Lily of the Valley', 167, ll. 7-12)

Similarly, he feminizes the cowslip, a 'coy' flower 'refined in her simplicity', whose potential is awakened through external perception: 'For there is beauty in the cowslip bell / That must be sought for ere it can be spied' ('The Cowslip', 162, ll. 13, 6, 19-20). Hartley points to the superficiality and deception of external appearances, and, once again, suggests that communion and interaction are needed for identity to be realized fully.

Such awareness becomes explicit in 'The Man, whose lady-love is virgin Truth' through Hartley's attempt to understand female subjectivity: 'Her very beauty none but they discover, / Who for herself, not for her beauty, love her' (4, ll. 13-14). Like Thomas Gray's meditation on wasted potential – 'Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, / And waste its sweetness on the desert air'⁶³ – Hartley recognizes the unheralded merit of much of creation; a sentiment which recalls the 'Half-hidden' 'violet' of William's 'Song', emblematic of the undervalued Lucy: 'She *liv'd* unknown' (*LB*, 163, l. 9). Hartley's use of flowers as a symbol of hidden potential also recalls

⁶² Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II, iv, ll. 117-22: 'A blank, my lord. She never told her love, / But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, / Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought; / And with a green and yellow melancholy / She sat like patience on a monument/ Smiling at grief'.

⁶³ 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray*, ed. H. W. Starr and J. R. Hendrickson (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1966), 39, ll. 55-6.

Clare's 'Address to an Insignificant Flower obscurely blooming in a lonely wild', which itself echoes William's 'Song':

So like to thee, they live unknown
 Wild weeds obscure – & like to thee
 Their sweets are sweet to them alone
 – The only pleasure known to me⁶⁴

But it is Hartley's unusually empathetic awareness of the female condition that sets him apart from John Clare's nature poetry: Hartley's poetic voice identifies with meek, hidden, unappreciated female identity – as epitomized in the beautiful, but fragile and often unseen flower. Clare, on the other hand, while sharing Hartley's sensitive portrayal of the particular in nature, does not present such a sympathetic portrayal of women. Clare uses the flower much as William uses the child symbol – to illuminate his own condition. In 'To a Cowslip Early', Clare envies the flower: 'I'd most wish that's vain repeating / Cowslip bud thy life were mine';⁶⁵ while in 'To the Cows Lip', like William, Clare mourns the loss of a childish affinity with nature:

But Im no more a kin to thee
 A partner of the spring
 For time has had a hand with me
 & left an alterd thing⁶⁶

Hartley, on the other hand, uses the flower to symbolize and attempt to comprehend humanity more fully. Don Paterson draws a connection between Hartley Coleridge and John Clare by noting that while Hartley's sonnets 'are as spectacularly uneven as John Clare's, they are also, on occasion, just as moving, just as brilliant'; Paterson concludes that 'flawed as it is, we should at least make the same allowances we make for Clare's'

⁶⁴ John Clare, *The Early Poems of John Clare, 1804-1822*, vol. I, ed. Eric Robinson, David Powell and Margaret Grainger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 218, ll. 33-6.

⁶⁵ *The Early Poems of John Clare, 1804-1822*, vol. II, ed. Eric Robinson, David Powell and Margaret Grainger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 52, ll. 15-16.

⁶⁶ John Clare, *Poems of the Middle Period, 1822-1837*, vol. I, ed. edited by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P.M.S. Dawson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 323, ll. 9-12.

(Paterson 2006, 493). While we take Clare's best work as proof that he is a fine poet, it is unfair that critics often focus on Hartley's weaker verse and bypass the evidence that would modify Clare's current critical monopoly on the label 'poet of nature'.

Hartley's tendency to humanize flowers recalls Dorothy's distinctive use of personification in her *Grasmere Journal* daffodil description on 15 April 1802: 'some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness', an entry which forms the basis for William's famous poem.⁶⁷ By focusing on the 'ever changing' nature of the daffodil's movement and interaction with the wind, Dorothy imparts a vitality and emotional life to the flower: 'the rest tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing' (*GJ*, 85). The communion she notes between the flower and the wind is enhanced by the sense of unified community that she perceives amongst these flowers: the 'unity & life of that one busy highway' (85). Hartley also often notes relationships within nature's different living spheres, which suggests that he views such communities as microcosms of diverse humanity. In 'The Cowslip and the Lark' he describes the flower and bird separately and then connects the two organisms by imagining a romance between them: 'What if there be mysterious love between / The brave bird of the sky and flow'ret of the green!' (163, ll. 13-4). Similarly, in 'On a Bunch of Cowslips', by comparing the flower to a nun Hartley describes a state of solitude-in-company; a state where independence and community are mutually symbiotic:

Thou art not lonely in thy bashful mood,
But rather, like a sweet devoted Nun,
Fearing the guile of selfish solitude,
Content of many sisters to be one.

(163, ll. 9-12)

⁶⁷ *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 85.

By presenting complete isolation as selfish, Hartley implies that becoming part of some sort of community is a human duty. Hartley and Dorothy see each flower as representative of an individual life and as part of a larger community, an identification which eludes William's more distant presentation of the daffodil: though the daffodils are a 'they' in William's 'I wandered lonely as a Cloud', his appropriation of the daffodils in his state of imaginative, introspective contemplation in the poem's final stanza does not share Dorothy and Hartley's level of respect for the object's separateness (*TV*, 208, l. 15). The central message of William's poem is the pleasure the daffodils give him in isolation retrospectively.

Most of all Hartley is drawn to the resilience of flowers which, he believes, is an ideal metaphor for the human character and spirit. In 'The Anemone' he emphasizes the vulnerability of the flower – the anemone is 'so slight', 'So frail', 'weak', 'delicate', and 'slender' – and asks, 'What power has given thee to outlast / The pelting rain, the driving blast' (159, ll. 1, 2, 3, 6, 16, 14-15). Hartley then compares the fragility of his religious faith to the precariousness of a flower's existence – both, he finds, have 'yet outlived the rude tempestuous day' (l. 33). Above all, Hartley uses the flower as a symbol of hope: if such a humble aspect of creation is constituted to withstand the overwhelming elements, then, he proposes, humans must have an analogous defence system. In this respect, Hartley parallels Keats's use of the flower-metaphor to exemplify his theory on 'Soul making' and development. In a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated 14 February-3 May 1819, Keats describes how a flower cannot choose to shirk the hazardous elements, an obligatory endurance which suggests that human pain is likewise strengthening, self-creating, and prepares us for inevitable death:

[...] suppose a rose to have sensation, it blooms on a beautiful morning it enjoys itself – but there comes a cold wind, a hot sun – it can not escape it, it cannot

destroy its annoyances – they are as native to the world as itself: no more can man be happy in spite, the world[l]y elements will prey upon his nature [...] ⁶⁸

In contrast, William's presentation of the link between the 'human soul' and nature's 'fair works', is less assured than Keats's and Hartley's visualization of the dynamic ('Lines Written in Early Spring'; *LB*, 76, ll. 6, 5). In 'Lines Written in Early Spring', William, with mounting urgency, wills himself to feel a vitalism within nature: 'And 'tis my faith that every flower / Enjoys the air it breathes'; 'And I must think, do all I can, / That there was pleasure there' (ll. 11-12, 19-20). The intense relationship that Hartley builds between the poet, flower-subject, and reader, through meticulous observation, rigorous description, and his tendency to humanize and monumentalize, is an attempt to fortify the reader through the recognition of structured and constant communities outside of mankind.

As with Hartley's constant use of the word 'myriad', Hartley's flower poems balance his assertion of uniqueness and separateness with the belief that man, as represented by the flower, should recognize his humble insignificance and be driven by principles of honesty and simplicity rather than overreaching. Egoism is symbolized by the 'superbly drest', 'solitary, grand' Azalea in 'Azalea':

Yet when I think of her whom I love well,
 I do not think of such luxurious flowers.
 Ill suited to a humble home like ours,
 [...]
 Better for us the plant that feels the showers
 And the sweet sunshine, – by our mossy well.

(173, ll. 5, 18, 7-9, 13-4)

⁶⁸ *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 101.

For Hartley, however, the buttercup – an abundant, simple flower – is a better representative of the self and humanity: ‘Better be like the buttercups so many, / That in good England no one thinks of any’ (173, ll. 15-6). Significantly, ‘The Celandine and the Daisy’, which contains a bold attack on William’s poetic ‘ownership’ of the celandine and the daisy – a conflict which I analyse more closely in Chapter Two – argues that the common daisy, which is emblematic of both childhood (daisy-chains) and democracy, cannot be appropriated by art, and must remain the children’s and the people’s flower: ‘The Celandine one mighty bard may prize; / The Daisy no bard can monopolise’ (165, ll. 13-4).⁶⁹

‘Five senses hath the bounteous Lord bestow’d’: Sensory Receptivity, Relationship, and Identity

While Hartley’s verse is characterized by alertness to the discrete components of nature, he often constructs a harmonious visual and aural scene that illustrates the relationship between nature’s different elements and the importance of the senses to this interactive process. In ‘May, 1840’, through the depiction of the praying nun Hartley conveys, with Miltonic overtones, the pantheistic connection between man, God (as symbolized by the prayer), and nature: ‘And the sweet Nun, diffused in voiceless prayer, / Feel her own soul through all the brooding air’ (145, ll. 13-14), an echo of the ‘voiceless flowers’ in Hartley’s ‘Night’ (*Poems*, 18, l. 5). The lines are reminiscent of Keats’s ability to detect sound within a silent scene: in ‘I stood tip-toe’, he hears a ‘little noiseless noise among the leaves, / Born of the very sigh that silence heaves’.⁷⁰ Hartley’s depiction of the ‘voiceless’ nun also recalls William’s presentation of the nun in ‘It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free’: ‘The holy time is quiet as a Nun /

⁶⁹ William Wordsworth wrote four poems in praise of the daisy and three dedicated to the celandine.

⁷⁰ *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Jack Stillinger (London: Heinemann, 1978), 79, ll. 11-12.

Breathless with adoration' (*TV*, 150-1, ll. 1-3).⁷¹ William deploys the nun as an abstract symbol and idealizes her solitary life, as he does with the hermit – a figure who also renounces conventional society. In his expanded epitaph to Charles Lamb, William suggests that the hermit is 'happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves / To life-long singleness'.⁷² In contrast, Hartley's fascination with the image of the 'devoted Nun' (three poems figure a praying nun) suggests that he views her renunciation of society and luxury, and dedication towards the internal relationship between herself and God, as a sensory deprivation and limitation of life analogous to that endured by the deaf and dumb girl in 'To a Deaf and Dumb Little Girl', whose only companion is God. In 'On a Picture of a Very Young Nun, *Not* reading a devotional book, and *not* contemplating a crucifix placed beside her', Hartley dwells on the rejection of the physical world that the young nun's vocation demands. Hartley presents this renunciation as an imprisonment – 'Thou wert immured, poor maiden, as I guess' – and, by concentrating on the nun's 'face', 'eyes', and 'closed lips', which, Hartley believes, 'prove / Thou wert intended to be loved and love', he portrays her life as an unnatural denial of the body's capacity for emotional and physical interaction (213, ll. 7, 23-4). Ultimately, Hartley views her life of youthful seclusion as wasted and unfulfilled: 'what thou should'st have been, and what thou art!' (l. 30).

The spiritual assimilation of the nun into nature in 'May, 1840' is analogous to William's sublime experience where, with an 'eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony' he 'see[s] into the life of things' (*LB*, 117, ll. 48-50). But whereas William's method in 'Tintern Abbey' arguably suggests domination over nature, Hartley more definitely indicates diffusion into nature – a form of self-effacement, rather than self-aggrandizement. Hartley presents nature as something external to his being which is to

⁷¹ See also William's 'Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room' (*TV*, 133).

⁷² *Last Poems, 1821-1850 by William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 304, ll. 124-5.

be meticulously described and connected with but not absorbed by the self; a selfless receptivity which recalls Keats's notion of '*Negative Capability*'.⁷³ Hartley's method of receptivity and creativity parallels Keats's elevation of the immediate senses over the creative power of the imagination; as Keats declared, 'I live in the eye; and my imagination, surpassed, is at rest' (Rollins 1958, I, 301). However, Hartley, more than Keats and Dorothy, also 'lives' in the ear. Hartley's enthrallment with the sounds of nature was evident in his infancy, as *STC* depicts in 'The Nightingale'. Hartley remained alert to the aural nuances of nature, a power which heightens his discrimination between nature's diverse elements: in 'The Cuckoo' he recognizes that its sound is 'never blending / With thrush on perch, or lark upon the wing' (159, ll. 7-8). Similarly, Dorothy consistently attempts to trace the discrete components of one aural impression:

The trees almost *roared*, and the ground seemed in motion with the multitudes of dancing leaves, which made a rustling sound distinct from that of the trees (*GJ* 143).

This manner of acute perception and meticulous natural description is often attributed to female Romantic writers, who frequently used external description as a way of defining the boundaries of their own identity; Stuart Curran argues that 'the 'fine eyes' of female writers 'are occupied continually in discriminating minute objects or assembling a world out of its disjointed particulars' (Mellor 1988, 189). Curran promotes this mode of writing by recognising that acute literal vision intensifies our understanding of external constant truths: 'it exists for its own sake, for its capacity to refine the vision of the actual' (190). Thus a feminine approach is as valuable as the conventionally masculine visionary perspective. Curran, however, stresses that this

⁷³ *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 193.

type of vision is dictated by gender: ‘this category of seemingly occasional verse, from whose practice men are all but excluded’ (190). He believes this to be largely due to the female writer’s sense of exclusion in a male-defined society: ‘the void at the center of sensibility should alert us to a profound awareness among these poets of being themselves dispossessed, figured through details they do not control, uniting an unstructurable longing of sensibility with the hard-earned sense of thingness’ (205). But Hartley’s intense sensibility and vision would suggest that it is dispossession itself, rather than a perceived female inferiority, which intensifies the perception of discriminating ‘fine eyes’. Hartley explains, in ‘The Books of My Childhood’, that he possessed this ‘fine’ vision for the particular, isolated image from a very early age:

I had always an intense feeling of beauty. I doted on birds, and kittens, and flowers. I was not able to take in and integrate an extensive landscape, but a mossy nook, a fancy waterfall, an opening in a wood, an old quarry, or one of those self-sufficing angles which are a dale in miniature, filled me with inexpressible delight (*EM I*, 346).

Here Hartley is remembering within his childhood the instinctive acute sensibility which became the foundation of what he perceives to be his mature poetic persona. The portrait that critics such as Judith Plotz, and, indeed, Derwent Coleridge, paint of Hartley encapsulates only this early juncture of his life – he is presented as the child who was ‘not able to take in’ larger visions and concepts, and identified only with the ‘miniature’. But, as we will see in Hartley’s use of the child-figure, there is a sublime interpretation, counteractive to the conventional masculine sublime experience, in finding ‘the great in littleness’ (*CPW*, 117, l. 14).

Like Keats, Hartley’s poetics focus on the senses and how they enable us to form relationships with other humans and with the natural world; in this way, Hartley suggests that we exist through our senses. With this focus, Hartley is continuing John Locke’s belief, expounded in Book II of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,

that sensation and experience are vital to man's connection to, and understanding of, the external world. Hartley's 'Five senses hath the bounteous Lord bestow'd' (unpublished until 1942) is a poem entirely dedicated to the human senses and the idea that they conduct enlightenment and emotion: they become 'Inlets of knowledge, and free ports of joys' (*NP*, 71, l. 2). Other poems that focus explicitly on the senses, particularly hearing, include 'Music', 'Heard not seen', 'To a deaf and dumb little girl', 'To K. H. I. The infant Grandchild of a Blind Grandfather', 'On an Infant's Hand', 'Hidden Music', 'The Blind Man's Address to his love', 'The Solace of Song', 'What was't awaken'd first the untried ear', 'Whither-oh Whither, in the Wandering Air', 'Sense if you can find it', and 'What I have heard'. Hartley's focus on sensory receptivity develops Keats's exhortation to 'open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive – budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favors us with a visit' (Rollins 1958, I, 232). Though William's poetics stress the importance of an active 'feeding' of the mind through intellectual meditation, in 'Expostulation and Reply' he too recognizes the constant and involuntary power of bodily feeling: "The eye it cannot chuse but see, / We cannot bid the ear be still" (*LB*, 108, ll. 17-18). William admits, then, that the mind can be 'fed' passively through the senses: "we can feed this mind of ours, / In a wise passiveness" (ll. 23-4).

Hartley is fascinated by those that are deprived of their senses and frequently focuses on the isolation that sensory deprivation causes. In 'To a Deaf and Dumb Little Girl' he strives to comprehend a 'senseless' existence and suggests that a denial of sensory life – where 'Herself [becomes] her all' – can obstruct the development of a relational self (179, l. 3).⁷⁴ By comparing the girl to 'a loose island on the wide

⁷⁴ Interestingly, in the essay 'Remarks on Old Age', Hartley suggests that excess artificial sensory stimulation can have the reverse effect of a natural engagement of the senses, and be analogous to sensory deprivation; he remarks that the effects of alcohol or opium can lead to a loss of connection with

expanse, / Unconscious floating on the fickle sea' (ll. 1-2), Hartley again draws on water as representative of a universal life; while her 'loose island', which is presented as stalled and vulnerable, recalls the suspended nature of the 'drop of oil' in 'From Country to Town, Continued' (15, l. 12). The image of the floating island as emblematic of an unstable, confused, or fragile identity also recalls Dorothy's 'Floating Island at Hawkshead'. Unlike Dorothy's poem, however, Hartley's stress on the inaccessible insularity of the little girl's existence gives an overriding sense of numbness and mirrors the 'incommunicable solitude' of the impermeable drop of oil. The word 'incommunicable' also assumes its second meaning in this poem as the 'dumb' girl's isolation is literally beyond words.

Similarly, in 'Twins', Hartley presents the self-internment of sensory deprivation: the only form of relationship that the twins make with the external world is a brief touch of the air – 'But born to die, they just had felt the air' (180, l. 1).⁷⁵ Their whole life amounts to 'A brief imprisonment within the womb' (l. 3). Like Lawrence's pity for the 'imprisoned' goldfish, whose sense of touch is constantly obstructed by water (and glass), Hartley points to the liberty and life to which sensory awareness allows access. Ultimately, Hartley cannot conceive of an entirely independent existence; for him the deaf and dumb girl's poise has to be indicative of a heightened internal spiritual relationship with God: 'And yet methinks she looks so calm and good, / God must be with her in her solitude' (179, ll. 13-4). In this way, Hartley is perhaps

the external world: 'the communication with the outer world is sealed up, and the imagination is left, like an unfed stomach, to work upon itself' (*EMI*, 340).

⁷⁵ The original title of this poem is 'On my Twin Niece and Nephew, Dying within an Hour after Birth' and was included in a letter to his sister, Sara Coleridge, composed on the death of her twins, Florence and Berkley (*LHC*, 170). The sonnet as given in Hartley's letter (and in Griggs 1942 edition; *NP*, 26) differs slightly from that published in Derwent's edition, which Colles's *CPW* is dependent on. In the original version Hartley talks of their brief life as their 'destined share' (later becomes 'all but all their share') and calls the twins 'Sweet buds that not on earth were meant to bloom' (later becomes 'Twin flowers that wasted not on earth their bloom'). Hartley's original version thus pivots more around a sense of fatalism which he felt governed his destiny; Derwent, however, chooses to include the version that is free of this presentiment. Interestingly, Dorothy Wordsworth also refers to the death of twins in Catherine Clarkson's family in a description that mirrors Hartley's sensitivity to the twins' companionship in death (*LWDW* II, 216).

attempting to understand STC's belief in 'English Hexameters' that literal sight is 'only a language':

O! what a Life is the Eye! what a fine & inscrutable Essence!
 Him that is utterly blind, nor glimpses the Fire than warms him,
 Him that never beheld the swelling breast of his Mother,
 Him that smil'd at the Bosom, as Babe that smiles in its slumber –
 Even to him it exists! it moves & stirs in it's [sic] Prison,
 Lives with a separate Life: '& is it the Spirit?' he murmurs –
 'Sure it has Thoughts of it's [sic] own, & to see is only a language'.

(*PW I*, 529-30, ll. 1-7)

Hartley follows his father's belief that even within the blind, the eye seems to perform an essential role and function.

'What was't awaken'd first the untried ear'⁷⁶ – a poem entirely dedicated to sound – demonstrates Hartley's absorption in the sense of hearing as he wonders what was the very first sound heard by man. Hartley's more sustained preoccupation with sound builds upon William's enthrallment with the 'Invisible Spirit' of sound in his 1828 poem 'On the Power of Sound' (*LP*, 117, l. 18). Significantly, 'To a Deaf and Dumb little girl' presents hearing, not vision, as the most vital of the senses, and the sense which allows most direct access to the sublime:

In vain for her I smooth my antic rhyme;
 She cannot hear it, all her little being
 Concentred in her solitary seeing –
 What can she know of beaut[eous] or sublime?

(179, ll. 9-12)⁷⁷

⁷⁶ In a letter to Derwent, August 1842, Hartley declares this sonnet to be his most accomplished: 'I think myself the Sonnet "What sound awakened first the untried ear?" the best' (*LHC*, 258).

⁷⁷ The phrase 'In vain for her' could be an allusion to Thomas Gray's 'Sonnet on the Death of Richard West', which William refers to in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. Gray describes how the sights and sounds of nature cannot reach him in his grief: '*In vain to me the smileing [sic] Mornings shine / [...]* 'These Ears, alas! for other Notes repine' (Starr and Hendrickson 1966, 92, ll. 1, 5; my italics).

This elevation of hearing over seeing is developed further in 'Heard, Not Seen', where Hartley describes a transcendental experience analogous to William's spiritual engagement with one life force, epitomized in 'Tintern Abbey'. But whereas William's power of sight is replaced by an inner vision – 'with an eye made quiet' (l. 48) – Hartley's experience moves from the eye to the higher appreciation of the ear: 'Mine ear usurps the function of mine eye' (138, l. 11). Hartley's sublime experience remains grounded externally, whereas William's suggests an appropriation of nature that leads on to sensory cessation and *internal* contemplation. Hartley claims that the power of hearing allows him to withdraw from the inescapable harshness of both visual reality and time: he becomes 'coolly shaded from the maddening beam / Of *present* loveliness' as he accesses one sound – 'the stream / Unseen of happiness that gurgles by' (ll. 12-14; my italics); a sound which is both eternal in itself, and links him to the constancy of the river – Hartley's emblem for the relational, universal self: 'The quiet patience of a murmuring rill / Had no beginning and will have no ending' ('The Cuckoo', 159, ll. 5-6). Thus the fluidity and constancy of sound becomes a symbol for identity and life that mirrors William's River Duddon metaphor ('Still glides the Stream, and shall forever glide', l. 5).

Hartley often describes sound itself with water terminology; he is attracted to the diffusive nature of sound which accords with his idea of fluidity within constancy. In 'Hidden Music' sound becomes visionary: the 'stream of music' which comes upon his ear has a 'never-ending flow' that allows him access to the sublime – '[Sustain'd] my soul in such sublime content' (211-12, ll. 1, 7-8). As in 'Heard not seen', this sound eludes the boundaries of time and place: 'Twas the united voice of everywhere, / Past, present, future, all in unison' (ll. 11-12). Hartley's correlation of music with water mirrors *The Prelude* where the river, which is presented as a constant guiding and grounding force throughout William's life, makes 'ceaseless music' (I, 21, l. 279).

Hartley's tranquillity also parallels the passage in Dorothy's *Alfoxden Journals* where, at moments of heightened emotion, William suppresses visual stimulation ('eyes shut'; 'unseen') which allows access to one universal sound of nature:

Afterwards William lay, & I lay in the trench under the fence – he with his eyes shut & listening to the waterfalls & the Birds. There was no one waterfall above another – it was a sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air. William heard me breathing & rustling now & then but we both lay still, & unseen by one another [...] (*AJ* 92).

Dorothy goes on to express William's association of this aural connection with temporal transcendence by fantasizing that this one sound could be accessible beyond death, and would, therefore, maintain a connection between the dead and living friends: 'he thought that it would be as sweet thus to lie so in the grave, to hear the *peaceful* sounds of the earth & just to know that ones dear friends were near' (92). Thus Hartley and Dorothy associate the physical senses, particularly hearing, with the undying and companionship.

Sound forms one of the main galvanizing impulses of Hartley's poetry – and, Hartley implies, of life itself – but he also tentatively explores whether the negation of sound – silence – can offer fortification. In 'Night' the different elements of nature and home are connected through their absence of sound: 'all the garrulous noises of the air / Are hush'd in peace (11, ll. 10-11). 'The indoor note of industry is still'; 'The voiceless flowers' 'quietly they shed / their nightly odours'; and 'the soft dew silent weeps' (11, ll. 2, 5-6, 11). Silence is shown to be a medium which carries these negations of sound and gives rise to an image of protection – the 'indoor' inhabitants, the 'voiceless flowers' and the 'soft dew' are connected through their shared mute activity. The murmurs of the 'household rill', like the film of ash fluttering on the grate in 'Frost at Midnight' – 'the sole unquiet thing' (*PW* I, l. 16) – is the only sound that disturbs the

entire silence and is the sound, therefore, within which Hartley also finds dim ‘sympathies’:

[...] the household rill
Murmurs continuous dulcet sounds that fill
The vacant expectation, and the dread
Of listening night.

(11, ll. 6-9)

However, while Hartley counts the silence in this harmonious scene as being conducive to a state of quiet ‘peace’ which enables the poem’s subject to sleep and ‘dream’ – ‘And haply now she sleeps’ – silence is also presented as a fearful abyss of nothingness – a state of ‘vacant expectation’ which the ‘listening night’ ‘dread[s]’ (11, ll. 11, 13, 9, 8). It is the permanence of the rill’s unbroken ‘continuous dulcet sounds’ (l. 7) that, as in ‘May, 1840’ – ‘the woodland rill / Murmurs along, the only vocal thing’ (145, ll. 5-6) – is a necessary stabilizer in the scene of aural emptiness. In ‘Frost at Midnight’ there is a comparable silent dialogue of visual reflection and harmony between the icicles and the moon – the ‘silent icicles, / Quietly shining to the quiet Moon’ (456, ll. 73-4). Hartley does not have this level of security in silence. In Hartley’s poem ‘Prayer’, silence signals disharmony rather than connection:

There is an awful quiet in the air,
And the sad earth, with moist imploring eye,
Looks wide and wakeful at the pondering sky,
Like Patience slow subsiding to Despair.

(137, ll. 1-4)

Because of the ‘awful quiet in the air’, Hartley’s poem speaks of a disabled connection between the ‘sad earth’ and ‘pondering sky’ that antithesizes William’s landscape connecting with the ‘quiet of the sky’ in ‘Tintern Abbey’ (l. 8).

‘Whither – Oh – whither, in the wandering air’ again presents silence as a medium through which sound is diffused and vivified: ‘The self-unfolding sounds, that every where / Expand through silence’ (12, ll. 4-5). But, once again, Hartley cannot quite accept the loss of sound – he asks in earnest what happens to each individual tone after it has been voiced and charts its utterance as marking the beginning of its loss: ‘Gone it is – that tone / Hath pass’d for ever from the middle earth’ (12, ll. 9-10). Like the mercurial shifting form of the metallic pin, the atom, and flame, Hartley is attracted to the lack of boundaries, temporal and physical, that the ‘structure’ of sound embodies – he strives to find

A point and instant of that sound’s beginning,
 A time when it was not as sweet and winning,
 As now it melts amid the soft and rare
 And love-sick ether?

(12, ll. 6-9)

Hartley’s suggestion is that sound, like atomic matter, is permanently in existence and temporally inhabits a functional life before melting back into a more diffuse state. It is never born, nor ended, but realized in different states of expression: ‘Yet not to perish is the music flown – / Ah no – it hastens to a better birth!’ (12, ll. 11-12). Here Hartley echoes Keats’s ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ where the nightingale’s song is never lost but constantly reborn: ‘The voice I hear this passing night was heard / In ancient days by emperor and clown’ (Stillinger 1978, 371, ll. 63-4). Hartley’s envisagement of where the sound may now be – ‘Then joy be with it – wheresoe’er it be, / To us it leaves a pleasant memory (ll. 13-14) – also parallels the concluding lines of Keats’s Ode, where the bird’s ‘anthem’ is likewise depicted as not lost, but passed on:

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now ’tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades [...]

(ll. 75-8)

Hartley's more abstract poem – it is never stated from where the 'sweet notes' come – meditates on the states of sound and silence as something that pervade and connect all. He suggests that sound connects our sensory body with our spiritual harmony: 'the sweet notes that 'twixt the soul and sense / Make blest communion' (12, ll. 2-3). While Hartley follows STC and William's linking of silence with spiritual harmony, his obsession with sound as a life-giving force leads him to be more fearful of the state and power of silence and the disconnection that such a state can also portend.

'That is the true sublime, which can confess / In weakness, strength': Hartley Coleridge, Sensibility, and Relationship

In the *Memoir* Derwent recalls the emotional fragility of the young Hartley:

His sensibility was intense, and he had not wherewithal to control it. He could not open a letter without trembling (lxiv).

Dorothy noted, on 20 June 1804, that the seven year old Hartley had 'so much thought and feeling in his face that it is scarcely possible for a person with any tenderness of mind and discrimination to look at him with indifference'.⁷⁸ In the essay 'The Books of My Childhood', Hartley reveals a mental fragility that manifested itself by an absolute self-engagement and commitment that bordered on the incapacitating: 'If I was deeply interested in the course of a story, the interest was so violent as to be painful; I feared – I shrunk from the conclusion, or else I forestalled it' (*EM* I, 345). STC likened Hartley's acutely calibrated sensitivity, which could not be regulated, to the passive

⁷⁸ *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, vol. I, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 482.

receptivity of the Eolian Harp; ‘a child whose nerves are as wakeful as the Strings of an Eolian Harp, & as easily put out of Tune!’.⁷⁹ In a note to ‘Evening Voluntary, VI’, William noted a similarly unusually sensitive sensibility in Dorothy’s intense and instinctive relationship with nature:

My Sister when she first heard the voice of the sea [...] and beheld the scene spread before her burst into tears. Our family then lived at Cockermouth and this fact was often mentioned among us as indicating the sensibility for which she was so remarkable (*LP*, 457n).

Caroline Fox suggested that Hartley’s extreme sensitivity led to a synaesthetic reception: she records his ‘little black eyes twinkling intensely, as if every sense were called on to taste every idea’.⁸⁰ Likewise, STC noted Dorothy’s penetrating and discriminative observational and descriptive powers:

Her information various – her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature – and her taste a perfect electrometer – it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults (*CCL* I, 330-1).

Though Derwent reads Hartley’s emotional fragility negatively – ‘He shrank from mental pain – he was beyond measure impatient of constraint’ (*Memoir*, lxiv) – for both Hartley and Dorothy it was exactly this intense and instinctive relationship with their external environment that enabled their extraordinary powers of perception and empathy.

John Mullan highlights this link between acute sensitivity and intelligence in *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, which focuses on two seventeenth-century texts: Richard Blackmore’s *A Treatise of the Spleen*

⁷⁹ *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, vol. II, 1801-1806 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 909.

⁸⁰ *The Journals of Caroline Fox, 1835-71*, ed. Wendy Monk (London: Elek, 1972). 43.

and Vapours, and George Cheyne's *The English Malady; or, a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of all Kinds*. Mullan finds that Blackmore and Cheyne

produce the types of 'Malady' or 'Distemper' about which they write as symptoms of a peculiar privilege, of heightened faculties or unusual intelligence. It is this appearance of weakness and strength together⁸¹ – of special faculties which are manifested in illness – which is the most important description common to the medical text and the novel of sentiment.⁸²

Blackmore argues that 'Men of a splenetick [sic] Complexion [...] in whom no great and considerable Symptoms appear, are usually endowed with refined and elevated Parts [...] and in these Perfections they are superior to the common level of mankind'.⁸³

Cheyne alludes to the almost disabling empathy that such intense sensibility can allow access to:

You need not question that I am sufficiently apprized of and have felt the Grief, Anguish, and Anxiety such a Distemper must have on a Mind of any degree of Sensibility, and of so fine and lively an Imagination as yours, and it is happy for Mankind that they cannot feel but by Compassion and Consent of Parts (as one Member feels the Pain of another) the Misery of their Fellow Creatures of their Acquaintance; else Life would be intolerable.⁸⁴

Cheyne's comment prefigures George Eliot's speculation that 'If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence'.⁸⁵ Cheyne states that this intense sensibility does, in fact, enable a heightened state of appreciation between two similar individuals; as Mullan notes:

⁸¹ Cf. Hartley's 'What is the meaning of the word "sublime": "That is the true sublime, which can confess / In weakness, strength' (117, ll. 13-14).

⁸² John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 205.

⁸³ Richard Blackmore, *A Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours* (London: J. Pemberton, 1725), 90.

⁸⁴ George Cheyne, *The Letters of Doctor George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson*, ed. Charles F. Mullett (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1943), 94.

⁸⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. David Carroll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 182.

[Cheyne and Richardson's] shared 'sensibility' renders them liable to the 'distemper' of which Richardson complains, but also allows them to communicate their 'feeling' to each other. Such communication is only possible between those who are properly sensitised (Mullan 1988, 207).

Thus Mullan suggests that sensitivity is a conduit that facilitates reciprocal exchange of intellect and feeling; if one party lacks this capacity for receptivity then this productive connection is lost. Mullan's analysis of sentiment and sociability helps us understand how Hartley's emotional sensitivity was not, as Derwent and STC propose, debilitating to his life and creativity; rather, through enabling empathy and connection, this characteristic is key to Hartley's poetics of relationship.

Hartley's preoccupation with sensory perception, which forms the most fundamental characteristic of his work, complicates the assumption that he inherits the legacy of William Wordsworth and STC, placing his poetics more in line with the sensationalism of the later Romantics, such as Keats, Leigh Hunt, Byron, and the Shelleys. In the Preface to *Foliage*, for instance, Hunt stresses the importance and benefits of sociability and argued that 'we should consider ourselves as what we really are – creatures made to enjoy more than to know';⁸⁶ Keats exclaimed 'O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!'(Rollins 1958, I, 185); and Byron declared that 'The great object of life is Sensation – to feel that we exist – even though in pain –'.⁸⁷ Hartley explicates Byron's connection of pain with existence in 'Pains I have known, that cannot be again':

For loss of pleasure I was never sore,
But worse, far worse it is, to feel no pain.
The throes and agonies of a heart explain
Its very depth of want at inmost core;
Prove that it does believe, and would adore,

⁸⁶ From Preface to *Foliage* 1818, *Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt: Poetical Works 1801-21*, vol. V, ed. John Strachan (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), 212.

⁸⁷ Extract from letter to Annabelle Milbanke, 6 September 1813, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, vol. III, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1974), 109.

And doth with ill for ever strive and strain.

(113, ll. 3-8)⁸⁸

Pain, Hartley suggests, reveals a human's essential capacity to feel, and, therefore, to exist, more acutely. What he describes and fears is a sensory and emotional numbness that signals disconnection from the rest of human life. It is a poem that mirrors Byron's 'Stanzas for Music' (1815): 'Oh could I feel as I have felt, – or be what I have been, / Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanished scene'.⁸⁹ Likewise, Hartley laments 'for the pain I felt, the gushing tears / I used to shed when I had gone astray' (113, ll. 13-14). While Hartley does not quite partake in the aesthetic luxury and sensory excess that Keats advocates – in 'I Stood Tiptoe' and 'Sleep and Poetry', which focus on the senses of touch, smell, and taste rather than hearing – Hartley's depiction of the relationships enabled by sensory expression, together with his equation of sensation with freedom, illustrates and develops the Keatsian notion that identity and liberty can be founded through sensation, rather than intellectual and philosophical meditation.

In *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work*, Griggs argues that Hartley could not find identity or poetry in the physical, real, sensual world, and so withdrew to the isolated realm of imagination:

Weak of will, not against moral obligations, not against personal actions, but against the unceasing demands of life, Hartley Coleridge ran his strange race, unadjusted to the last to the world about him. He could not find pleasure in the senses and in a successful combat with the world, but, introverted as he was, he sought his pleasure in the realm of his imagination. And there we must leave him.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ See also Hartley's Sonnet IX: 'Time was when I could weep; but now all care / Is gone [...] My heart is tranquil; sunk beyond the Call / Of Hope or Fear' (*NP*, 74, ll. 1-2, 12-13).

⁸⁹ *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, vol. III, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 286, ll. 17-18.

⁹⁰ Earl Leslie Griggs, *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work* (London: University of London Press, 1929), 227.

A thorough engagement with the entire spectrum of Hartley's verse reveals the complete reverse of Griggs's statement to be true: Hartley sought and found pleasure and life not through introspection and imagination, but through connection and relationship, which the senses – 'Inlets of knowledge, and free ports of joys' – facilitated ('Five Senses', *NP* 71, l. 2).

'Sweet baby, little as thou art, / Thou art a human whole': Children, Relationship, and Identity

Hartley's theories on identity, the powers of the senses, and the role and function of relationship are most vividly conveyed within his verse on and to children. Out of the three hundred and ninety published poems, sixty concern infancy and childhood, while around half of the unpublished manuscript poems also deal with these themes. Hartley has been hailed the children's Laureate by Edward Dowden: 'And who has been laureate to as many baby boys and "wee ladies sweet" as Hartley Coleridge?',⁹¹ while Plotz recognizes that this endeavour distinguishes Hartley as the true Romantic poet of childhood:

Hartley's poems represent the most unqualified and extravagant vision of the beatitude of childhood to be found in all Romantic literature. Only Swinburne and Francis Thompson rival Hartley Coleridge in their longing to lounge about what Thompson calls 'the Nurseries of Heaven' (Plotz 2001, 206).

Much of Hartley's verse on children follows the traditional perception of a child as a symbol of purity, immortality, and closeness to God, as epitomized in William's passage on pre-existence in the 'Immortality Ode'. But the child is more than just an abstract symbol for Hartley. Many of his poems are addressed to specific children: 'To K. H. I', 'To Jeanette', 'To Margaret', 'To dear little Katy Hill', 'To Christabel Rose

⁹¹ Edward Dowden, 'Hartley Coleridge', in *The English Poets, The Nineteenth Century: Wordsworth to Tennyson*, vol. IV, ed. T. H. Ward (London Macmillan & Co., 1912), 519.

Coleridge'. In the simple act of naming the child, the poem is made more immediate and particular, while the connection between poet, subject, and reader, deepens. It is clear that Hartley loves children for their own sake, rather than for what they represent; as he explains in 'Fain would I dive to find my infant self': 'We love, because we love thee, little lad' (183, l. 11).

Judith Plotz argues that Hartley is attracted to children as a poetic subject because they represent to him undifferentiated humanity; their apparent lack of self is a refuge for the self-divided poet: 'In their beautiful lack of individuality, their similarity to each other, in their monotony of burbled sounds and needs and affection, in their unity of mind and body – a quality that endeared infancy to STC as well – Hartley Coleridge sees the embodiment of pure Being, life without the self-division that so tormented him' (Plotz 2001, 208-9). This suggestion wrongly aligns Hartley with William's appropriation of the child-figure. It also labels Hartley with the so-called tormenting self-division that was surely more characteristic of his father, whom Plotz also explicitly aligns Hartley with here. The purity of childhood and the child's unselfconsciousness is clearly emblematic to Hartley of pure being and his ideal state of a One Life that integrates humanity. 'To an Infant', for instance, presents the child as 'Thou purest abstract of humanity' (178, l. 3). But much of Hartley's verse is characterized by an awareness of the individuality of each child, rather than viewing him/her emblematically. In 'The Infant's Soul', a poem which recalls the simple, childlike style of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence',⁹² Hartley stresses the completeness of the new-born child rather than viewing it as a symbol of pre-existence or pure promise:

Sweet baby, little as thou art,
 Thou art a human whole;
 Thou hast a little human heart,

⁹² The repetition of 'Thou' and the reverence for the child recalls in particular Blake's 'The Lamb', and 'Infant Joy'.

Thou hast a deathless soul.

(190, ll. 1-4)

Similarly, the child of ‘Thou, Baby Innocence!’ is ‘A bud of promise – yet a babe *complete*’ (182, l. 21; my italics). Plotz’s reading, which focuses upon the line ‘But then all babies are so much alike’ in ‘To Dear Little Katy Hill’ (a rhetorical gesture which Hartley does, in fact, go on to counter), overlooks the rest of the poem which stresses Katy Hill’s *presence* of self (191, l. 5). Hartley suggests that it is love imparted through another that brings the infant’s self into being: ‘And lynx-eyed Love, my little Catherine, / Perceives a *self* in that smooth brow of thine’ (191, ll. 35-6). Hartley then proceeds to realize Katy Hill’s subjectivity through engagement with her physicality, movement, faculty of thought, emotions, and senses: he finds ‘*self*’ in ‘Thy small sweet mouth’, which ‘Moves, opes, and smiles with something more than life’ (192, ll. 36, 37, 38); ‘The lucid whiteness of the flower-soft skin’ which ‘Transparent, shows a wakening soul within’ (ll. 39, 40); the ‘fitful movement of the dewy lid’ (l. 46); and ‘E’en in the quivering of thy little hands / A spirit lives and almost understands’ (ll. 47-8). Plotz argues that Hartley is attracted to the child’s absence of individuality; that ‘Hartley’s vision of beatitude is a return to this state of infant uniformity’, and that he does not ‘distinguish one beautiful baby from another’ (209). I believe, however, that Hartley seeks out and glories in distinct identity; indeed, it is exactly this awareness of the unique individuality of every child – the ‘myriad multitude of human lives’ – that is a central driving force of his poetic endeavour.

Plotz argues that Hartley himself sought refuge in maintaining a childlike existence, using quotations such as ‘Stay where thou art, thou canst not better be’ to support her case (‘Stay where thou art’, 351, l. 1). Her book’s objective is to propose that Hartley merely wanted to be approved of and liked – as a child – rather than to

succeed as an adult writer. This claim that Hartley's development was somehow arrested is a contention that has been repeatedly asserted by both his contemporaries and critics. Yet Hartley himself specifically denies that such regression should be wished for or could be achieved:

It is too often forgotten, moreover, that neither states nor men can return to infancy, [sic] They may, indeed sink back to its ignorance and impotence; but its beauty, its innocence, and docility, once past, are flown for ever. It is a paradise from which we are quickly sent forth, and a flaming sword prohibits our regress thither. Those who cry up the simplicity of old times ought to consider this. Human nature, and entire human nature, is the poet's proper study (*EM* I, 16-17).

This is surely not the voice of someone cocooning themselves within perennial childhood. Hartley's mature recognition that 'entire human nature' is the poet's study, and that the sanctuary of childhood cannot be returned to – and moreover, that this would be a regression – contradicts the many accounts which assert that Hartley desired never to grow up. Through his total engagement with children he is not hiding from adulthood, but seeking essential truths and illuminating 'entire human nature' through them. Hartley's imagery and diction would also suggest that he is boldly attacking William's famous 'Immortality Ode' sentiment that the glory of pre-childhood *could* be returned to, as I discuss further in Chapter Two. Plotz goes on to examine Hartley's relationship with his father in order to substantiate her claim that Hartley was immature as a man and poet, a contention which I will repudiate in Chapter Two.

The image of the child endeavouring to realize their identity is most vividly conveyed in 'On an Infant's Hand', a poem which bridges Hartley's fascinations with both sensation and children. Hartley focuses on the dynamism within the child: their joy 'is ever creeping / On every nerve', while he presents the soul as being the 'Electric' force which drives the baby's movement (183-4, ll. 15-16, 27). Hartley

shows the sense of touch as being vital to the child's realization of their own identity, and the external world:

Electric from the ruling brain
 Descends the soul to stir and strain
 That wondrous instrument, the hand,
 By which we learn to understand; [...]

(184, ll. 27-30)

In this way, Hartley intensifies our understanding of the hand's form and purpose; the physical hand is shown to be the mediating instrument that connects the soul with the external world. Though Hartley states that 'Alone with God the baby lies' (l. 24),⁹³ he immediately follows this statement of isolation with a strikingly intimate and vivid image of both the baby's physical presence, and its connection with the poet-speaker: 'How hard it holds! – how tight the clasp! / Ah, how intense the infant grasp!' (ll. 25-6). In this emphasis on the child's sensory experience, Hartley accesses the subjectivity of the child, stressing the importance of sense to the formation of both relationships and the child's identity.

Significantly, although Hartley's view of the physical being of the child is extraordinarily maternal, he shares his father's fascination with the child's developing subjectivity. STC's notebooks are full of observations on children which he uses in three ways: to note the child's developing relationship with the external world (especially Hartley's); to observe the reciprocal relationship between mother and child; and to record the relation of the child to his self. STC's entries show an acute sensitivity to the child's experience, such as his record of the 'Infant playing with its Mother's Shadow', and observation that 'A child scolding a flower [...] is *poetry*' (CN

⁹³ Cf. William Wordsworth's letter to John Wilson, 7 June 1802, talking on 'Idiots': 'I have often applied to Idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of scripture that, "*their life is hidden with God*" (LWDWI, 357).

I, 786). There is often, however, the sense that STC is in awe of children from an aesthetic standpoint: many of his notebook entries capture fleeting, intense images of purity and delight, such as his list ‘Infancy and Infants’ where the child is observed ‘Asleep with the polyanthus held fast in its hand, its bells drooping over the rody face [sic]’, and ‘Seen asleep by the light of glowworms’ (*CN I*, 330). Hartley’s presentation of the child is more akin to STC’s prose curiosity in the child’s experience rather than William’s more abstract poetic presentation of childhood, but there is a scientific and slightly detached element to STC’s approach which Hartley’s selfless engagement with the child-subject manages to avoid.

There are striking similarities between STC’s ‘To an Infant’ – where the sobbing child-subject is possibly Hartley himself – and Hartley’s ‘To an Infant’. Both poets view the child as a miniature emblem of its future self. But STC’s perspective is retrospective while Hartley’s is prospective; STC’s vision of the child becomes, then, more pre-determinate and limiting: he views the child as ‘Man’s breathing Miniature!’ (*PW I*, 196, 13), whereas Hartley’s representation of ‘This tiny model of what is to be’ (177, l. 2) embraces the freedom and potentiality of the child’s future life. In STC’s poem the speaker snatches away a knife from the child, replacing it with ‘Some safer Toy’, and observes the swift change in the child’s emotion from ‘Tears and Sobs’ to ‘quick Laughter’ (ll. 3, 1, 4). Intriguingly, there is an undertone of the knife of STC’s poem in Hartley’s use of a metallic simile:

And yet as quickly wilt thou smile again
After thy cries, as vanishes the stain
Of breath from steel.

(177, ll. 11-13)

Once again Hartley uses the transient image – ‘the stain / Of breath’ – to record and trace the child’s experience of its surroundings. The ephemeral nature of the vanishing

breath perfectly encapsulates – and with greater sensitivity, visual accuracy, and economy of language – both the relationship of the child with its external environment, and the emotional rapidity of the child’s response that STC seeks to express.

Hartley’s emphasis on the physicality of the child, his acute delineations of the child’s body, and his evident wonder and excitement at the child’s presence, are conventionally considered to belong to a feminine perspective. His child poems are more akin to those by female Romantic writers, such as Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s ‘To a Little Invisible Being who is expected soon to become Visible’, where the poem figures the intense emotional connection between the mother and the unborn child.⁹⁴ Interestingly, Hartley shares his father’s unusual perception of the child as an extension of his own identity, a confusion which, Mellor argues, is usually the result of pregnancy:

A self that continually overflows itself, that melts into the Other, that becomes the other, is conventionally associated with the female, and especially with the pregnant woman who experiences herself and her child as one. Such a self erases the difference between one and two, and by denying the validity of logical, Aristotelian distinctions, has seemed to many rationalists to embrace irrationality and confusion (Mellor 1993, 175).

According to Mellor, the maternal figure itself is frequently absent in William’s verse; William often, instead, appropriates nature to assume the educative and nurturing maternal role. In the ‘infant Babe’ passage of *The Prelude* William does note the importance of the mother to the child’s earliest experience, describing an interaction of emotion between mother and child which is formative in initiating development of self: ‘Such feelings pass into his torpid life / Like an awakening breeze’ (II, 38, ll. 247-8). But the mother assumes a passive role in this scene and becomes replaced by nature: with the exception of offering physical comfort from ‘his Mother’s arms’ and ‘his

⁹⁴ *Anna Laetitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), 147.

Mother's breast', and imparting the 'discipline of love' which gives rise to the great faculty of the child's 'virtue', she remains somewhat remote from the spiritual exchange which occurs between the child and nature (ll. 243, 244, 255, 262).

In the manner of his father, Hartley reinstates the importance of the maternal role: 'On an Infant's Hand' refers to 'the wee sleeper in the mother's lap' (183, l. 14), while 'To K. H. I. (The infant grandchild of a blind grandfather)' records: 'thy present mother press'd / Thee, helpless stranger, to her fostering breast' (181, ll. 5-6). Such images offer a much more sympathetic presentation of the mother to that provided by STC in 'To an Infant', which borders on disgust at the mother's desperate attempts to calm the child, which STC describes in terms of uncomfortable and visceral animal instinct:

Thou closely clingest to thy Mother's arms,
Nestling thy little face in that fond breast
Whose anxious Heavings lull thee to thy rest!

(*PW I*, 196, ll. 10-12)

Elsewhere, though, STC does assert that maternal intimacy benefits not only the child and mother, but strengthens the entire family unit. STC's 'Sonnet: To a Friend, Who Asked How I Felt when the Nurse First Presented my Infant to Me' presents a triadic relationship of reciprocal benefit and growth. His instinctive feeling on hearing he is a father is one of sadness: 'my slow heart was only sad, when first / I scann'd that face of feeble infancy' (*PW I*, 275, ll. 1-2). It is only when STC witnesses the connection between mother and son that he is able to overcome the fear of 'All I had been, and all my babe might be!' (l. 4), and becomes awakened to the unique potentiality of this child's spirit, as distinct from his own:

But when I saw it on its Mother's arm,
And hanging at her bosom (she the while

Bent o'er its features with a tearful smile)
Then I was thrill'd and melted, [...]

(ll. 5-8)

Love from the mother triggers an emotional exchange between mother and child, husband and wife: 'So for the Mother's sake the Child was dear, / And dearer was the Mother for the Child' (ll. 13-14). Nevertheless, STC's poem points to an ominous lack of immediate connection between father and son: the child does not appear to be loved for its own sake.

In 'The Sabbath-Day's Child (To Elizabeth, Infant Daughter of the Rev. Sir Richard Fleming, Bart.)', Hartley gives a more sensitive image of emotional reciprocity between child and mother, 'Whose voice alone can still thy baby cries' (68, l. 28):

And the mute meanings of a mother's eyes
Declare her thinking, deep felicity:
A bliss, my babe, how much unlike to thine,
Mingled with earthly fears, yet cheer'd with hope
divine.

(68, ll. 30-33)

Again, it is the senses that are presented as vital in facilitating exchange, connection, and growth: the mother's voice and 'mute' eyes connect the child to the mother and to the external world, leading to the formation of its identity. Equally, through its peacefulness, the child imparts a blissful 'felicity' and 'divine' hope to the mother.

Hartley's poem entitled 'To My Unknown Sister in Law', which Hartley includes in a letter to Derwent, elevates the mother's role as divine and above all others:

And all we reverence is exprest at once,
In Husband, Father, Minister of Christ;
Or if a holier title yet there be,
That word is Mother.

(LHC, 122, ll. 27-30)

In his essay 'De Omnibus et Quibusdam Aliis', first published in *Blackwood's* in July 1827, Hartley explains that he reveres women because of the position and duty they hold in relation to men and children: 'I think a wife and mother the most venerable thing on earth' (*EM I*, 102). He thus sees a sublimity in representing them in their social roles – as 'sisters, mothers, lovers, wives' (*EM I*, 130) – rather than idealising them, a practice which is in keeping with, as we have seen, 'the sublime of nearness' with which he treats the natural object (Patricia Yaeger in Kauffman 1989, 191-212). Hartley explains that his model for female portrayal was Shakespeare:

Shakespeare's women are very women – not viragoes, heroines, or tragedy-queens, but the sweet creatures whom we know and love, our sisters, mothers, lovers, wives. They seem to think and speak as the best women with whom we are acquainted would think and speak, could they talk in poetry as beautiful as themselves (*EM I*, 'Shakespeare, a Tory and a Gentleman', 130).

Again, Hartley is writing in opposition to his father's theories. STC believed that Shakespeare's characters were ideal embodiments of humanity rather than representations of individual, real-life people:

Shakespeare's characters, from Othello and Macbeth down to Dogberry and the Grave-digger, may be termed ideal realities. They are not the things themselves, so much as abstracts of the things, which a great mind takes into itself, and there naturalises them to its own conception.⁹⁵

Hartley believes that poetry lies in women's lives, rather than in the imaginative, contorting sphere of the poet, and that reverence to the female is shown 'by subliming to poetry the actual, or at least possible, qualities of real women' (*EM I*, 130). Nowhere does Hartley express this belief more than in the poem 'On the Late Mrs. Pritt, Formerly Miss Scales', where, on describing the moving death-scene of this mother and wife, who now feels the bond of motherhood and marriage more than ever – she 'never felt till now, the golden ring / So strict a bond' – Hartley refuses to appropriate and

⁹⁵ STC, *Lectures 1808-1819, On Literature*, vol. II, ed. R. A. Foakes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 513-14.

ventriloquize the mother's voice: 'Her words I will not try to put in verse; / To change them, were to change them for the worse' (*NP*, 81, ll. 13-14, 15-16). Hartley humbly elevates the mother's role and actions above those of the poet, who is presented as a mere reporter. By not putting words in Mrs. Pritt's mouth, he gives her a voice. In this way, Hartley suggests that each individual relationship contains a specificity that eludes the dominion of the poet and which cannot be distilled into verse.

Hartley's acute awareness of family dynamics stretches beyond parental significance in 'To K. H. I.' and 'The Godfather', both of which focus on the mutuality and exchange between a child and an adult other than parent. Again focusing on sensory deprivation, in 'To K. H. I.' Hartley suggests the timeless delight that the child's voice gives to the blind Grandfather:

thy voice, so blithe and clear,
Pours all the spring on thy good grandsire's ear,
Filling his kind heart with a new delight,
Which Homer may in ancient days have known, [...]

(181-2, ll. 26-9)

Hartley proposes that love imparted from the child can vitalize the grandfather and unlock his inner vision: 'Till love and joy create an inward sight, / And blindness shapes a fair world of its own' (ll. 30-1). Thus it is the bliss of company which gives rise to Hartley's understanding of 'inward sight', in contrast to the 'inward eye' that for William 'is the bliss of *solitude*' ('I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud', (*TV*, 208, l. 15-16; my italics). Hartley shows relationship to be crucial to the fulfilment of sensory and life potential. 'The God-Child' continues this sentiment and typifies Hartley's belief that adult identity can be reinforced through close kinship with a child: 'Would I might give thee back, my little one, / But half the good that I have got from thee' (179, ll. 13-4). Hartley's belief in the creative power of the child mirrors both William's reverence

for the child figure, epitomized in the phrase ‘The Child is father of the Man’,⁹⁶ and also STC’s anxiety that his children have not only sustained him, but have created him; part of his identity would, therefore, cease to exist if they were to die: ‘ – O my Children, my Children! I gave you life once, unconscious of the Life, I was giving / and you as unconsciously have given Life to me’ (CN II, 2860).

Hartley’s fondness for and affinity with children distinguishes him from William who, C. T. Winchester argues, ‘always had a wondering, questioning interest in the child mind [but] never showed much sympathy for the childishness of childhood’.⁹⁷ Interestingly, in Rawnsley’s ‘Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the peasants of Westmoreland’, an anecdote from a Dalesman, who as a boy used to deliver meat to William at Rydal Mount, corroborates this judgement that William maintained a distance from children, in contrast to Hartley’s immersion into ‘childishness’:

He niver cared for childer, however; yan may be certain of that, for didn’t I have to pass him four times in t’week, up to the door wi’ meat? And he niver oncs said owt. Ye’re well aware, if he’d been fond of children he ’ud ’a spoke.⁹⁸

William was more interested in childhood than children, his principal subject being himself rather than the child. Hartley’s verse, like Dorothy’s children’s verse, offers a maternal, more physical view of the child which, while encompassing the purity and hope that the child symbolizes, embraces the role of the mother and focuses on the child’s developing subjectivity rather than the poet’s. Griggs distils this fundamental divergence between the two poets’ respective understanding of children and, by extension, the human condition: ‘Wordsworth loved his fellow-men, but he brooded

⁹⁶ See ‘My heart leaps up when I behold’ (1802), l. 7; see also William Wordsworth’s ‘Anecdote for Fathers’.

⁹⁷ C. T. Winchester, *William Wordsworth: How to know Him* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1916), 152.

⁹⁸ Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, *Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmoreland*, intr. Geoffrey Tillotson (London: Dillons, 1968), 14. At this time (1813), however, William’s eye-sight had deteriorated, which could, in part, explain his inward-looking nature, as opposed to Hartley’s revelling in the senses. Interestingly, Denise Gigante notes that William also always lamented his weak sense of smell (and with this, taste). Such sensory limitation would cause a lack of connection with the outside world and a focus on introspection – in this instance, decreasing his empathy with children.

over human misery without fully sharing it. [...] Wordsworth asked the child questions; Hartley danced with her on the green' (*NP*, ix).⁹⁹

Hartley's interest in the reciprocity of relationship, as demonstrated in his depiction of the symbiotic relationship between grandparent and child, is also evident in his love poetry. Hartley's most sorrowful and frustrated verse centres on the notion of unrequited love, epitomized in 'Song':

And still it lasts; – the yearning ache
No cure has found, no comfort known:
If she did love, 'twas for my sake,
She could not love me for her own.

(25, ll. 5-8)

This sentiment recalls Derwent's suggestion in the *Memoir* that Hartley's fascination with children and animals is due to their unconditional love and desire for his affection:

A like overflowing of his affectionate nature was seen in his fondness for animals – for anything that would love him in return – simply, and for its own sake, rather than for his (cxxxvi).

Hartley saw all truly fulfilling relationships as a desire of another being to complete the self; relationships built upon pity do not, therefore, constitute the equality of emotional interdependence that he needed. Similarly, in 'To –' ('I love thee – none may know how well'), he does not want to be mourned in death, but loved in life, which he presents as a form of re-birth and self-realization: 'And if I die, oh, do not mourn, / But if I live, *do new create me*' (74, ll. 11-12). However, 'To –' also complicates Hartley's respect for the relational identity – he suggests that such a notion can endanger an individual's essential otherness. Love can be a form of narcissism; if his love is

⁹⁹ Griggs's praise, nonetheless, still does not recognize Hartley's poetic stature fully as it plays into the perpetual infantilization of his selfhood, led by STC: 'A little Child, a limber Elf / Singing, dancing to itself' (*PWI*, 503, ll. 656-7).

returned it is, he fears, only because another being recognizes that he or she exists through him – he exists only as a mirror of another self: ‘Whate’er thou lov’st it is not *thine*, / But ’tis *thyself*’ (74, ll. 5-6), an awareness which recalls Goethe’s statement that ‘The great majority love in another only what they lend him, their own selves, their version of him’.¹⁰⁰ In short, Hartley wanted to be needed for *his* self, which he presents as the culmination of true existence. Such an emotional connection would ensure that his selfhood would become grounded, and, therefore, strengthened within another external being – he suggests that the greatest self-fulfilment comes from this fusion of identities. Such a desire recalls Mary Wollstonecraft’s need to be, as Janet Todd notes, ‘*first* with someone’ in order to exist: Wollstonecraft writes ‘without some one to love This world is a desert [sic] to me’.¹⁰¹ Thus Hartley Coleridge and Mary Wollstonecraft, point to the fragility and barrenness of the isolated self.

*

I would make a pilgrimage to the Deserts of Arabia to find the man who could make [me] understand how the *one can be many!* Eternal universal mystery! It seems as if it were impossible; yet it *is* – & it is every where! – It is indeed a contradiction *in Terms*: and only in Terms! – It is the co presence of Feeling & Life, limitless by their very essence [...] (CNI, 1561).

As we have seen, Hartley’s depiction of a self that is realized in relational terms exactly supports his father’s realization that ‘multitude and division are not [...] necessarily

¹⁰⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wisdom and Experience*, ed. Hermann J. Weigand (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1949), 161.

¹⁰¹ Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000), 19, 66, where the full quotation reads: ‘insufficiently loved, she competed relentlessly for affection and, lacking self-worth, desperately desired to be *first* with someone – anyone except her parents or herself’ (19). Hartley’s desire also echoes the one and only desire of Frankenstein’s ‘monster’ in order to feel he existed – a mate: ‘You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being’ (Hindle 2003, 147). Only then would his creation ‘become linked to the chain of existence and events from which [he is] now excluded’ (150). Hartley Coleridge, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Frankenstein’s Creation are, in a sense, all rejected children, which may have led to this mutual desire to be ‘first with someone’.

subversive of unity' (*CN II*, 2332). Hartley explores individuality and separateness as a route to ultimate connection and unity; thus his identification of the self externally is not a form of self-division or fragmentation of identity, but a recognition of, and participation in, a larger 'wholeness' – a relational self-realization which supports Mellor's understanding that there is not only one type of 'authentic' Romantic self (Mellor 1993, 168). Hartley's emphasis on relationship as being fundamental to the creation of selfhood illuminates his father's 'eternal universal mystery' over 'how the one can be many'. The dialectic between individuality and universality that Hartley's work shows corroborates *STC*'s recognition of a 'contradiction' and confusion. But Hartley's emphasis on sensory power and feeling, and that life is most fully realized through relationships, redeems what was a philosophical impasse in his father's writing. Hartley animates *STC*'s awareness that the relational self is 'the co presence of Feeling & Life, limitless by their very essence', thus freeing it from the domain of metaphysical puzzle into a world of myriad existence.

My analysis of Hartley's reception from 1833 to the present day (Appendix I(a)) revealed two antithetical perceptions of Hartley's works: his concentration on the minute image, together with his self-pitying poems, either indicated a fragmentation of identity – epitomized in Derwent's argument that Hartley was incapable of realising 'the conception of any great whole' (*Memoir*, clxi) – or he was received as a poet characterized by wholeness; whose works were 'wrung by sorrow from the soul of genius'.¹⁰² Hartley's intense engagement with the most minute elements of creation – he even wrote a poem honouring an atom: ('an atom, motion, air, or flame / Whose essence perishes by change of form' (203, ll. 21-2)) – suggests an incisive vision and entire engagement of being that undermines Derwent's presentation of his brother's

¹⁰² Anon, 'Reminiscences of Hartley Coleridge', *MM*, in *LLA* 87: 1123 (9 December 1865): 434-5.

power as fundamentally fragmented. Moreover, Hartley's consistent emphasis on sociality as a means of self-fulfilment, -expression and -realization, throughout his poems on nature and children, illustrates the 'wholeness' of his poetic endeavour further.

In my study of Hartley's reception I revealed how his relationships with his father and William Wordsworth have conditioned his reception and subsequent literary reputation. In the following chapter, through an analysis of the intertextual dialogue between Hartley, STC, William, and Derwent, I examine Hartley's conflicted literary relationship with both figurative and literal father-figures more closely in an attempt to highlight the psychological complexity of Hartley's endeavour to achieve poetic autonomy – an intersection of literary and familial interests which, I propose, contributes to the development of a relational identity.

Chapter II

Hartley Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth: Influence, Identity, and Representation

Many examinations of literary relations follow Harold Bloom's notion of a patriarchal 'anxiety of influence', which proposes that each writer engages in an oedipal battle with his literary predecessors.¹⁰³ In *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Bloom focuses on the inhibiting presence of Milton for the Romantics. Similarly, in *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*, W. Jackson Bate states that 'the remorseless deepening of self-consciousness, before the rich and intimidating legacy of the past, has become the greatest single problem that modern art [...] has to face'.¹⁰⁴ An area that has been comparatively ignored is the conflict endured by a writer who is biologically rather than just metaphorically related to a more established literary father, whereupon the burden of influence becomes much more complex. Lucy Newlyn does argue in *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* that the anxiety of authorship is exacerbated when a woman is living in close proximity with a more successful male writer, but the difficulties of a male writer writing in the shadow of his biological father remain critically overlooked.

More recently, Jane Spencer examines the significance of kinship to the formation of a literary canon in *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon, 1660-1830* (2005). However, though Spencer claims she is particularly interested in the intersection of metaphorical and biological kinship, she examines only one father-son writing relationship in the chapter 'Fathers and Mentors' (that between Dryden and his son) and does not engage in any extensive analysis of the intertextuality of their work.

¹⁰³ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹⁰⁴ W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 4.

My examination of literary kinship modifies Spencer's study. Spencer does not address the complexity of a specific familial literary conflict: as she admits, her book is more concerned with breadth than depth and is intended to pave the way for further investigation and understanding of 'generation, kinship, and inheritance'.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Spencer fails to acknowledge the germinative and cathartic potential of the biological father-son bond fully, concluding that it is better to be a metaphorical son of a more successful writer, a judgement which my study of Hartley's relationship with STC and William Wordsworth does not support.

Through an analysis of the writings of Hartley Coleridge, STC, and William Wordsworth, I will examine to what extent the intersection of familial (biological and figurative) and literary interests challenged the realization of Hartley's poetic identity. As I have demonstrated in Chapter One, Hartley may display aspects of what Mellor terms a 'feminine Romanticism' in order to individuate himself from the writing father(s) (Mellor 1993, 171). The prevailing view of gender-oriented criticism is that gender dictates the realization of identity; I suggest, however, that the unique combination of authorial and familial pressures creates an identity and a literature that realizes the self in relational terms. In the light of this approach, I will show that Hartley does not consistently suffer from the oedipal struggle that is alleged to affect writers who succeed more distant forefathers – in Hartley's case, this conflict is uniquely enabling. Hartley's writings reveal a growing awareness that he was fighting against a textualized version of his self, created by STC and William – a battle which has, hitherto, been ignored.¹⁰⁶ Hartley achieves what Marlon Ross calls a 'tragic heroism in marginality' through exploiting his perceived weakness, a manipulation of

¹⁰⁵ Jane Spencer, *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon 1660-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 230.

¹⁰⁶ In the most recent study of Hartley's life and work Andrew Keanie also recognizes that Hartley's identity realization in the shadow of his father is more complex than previous critics have noted: 'while some children of famous fathers are destroyed and others empowered, Hartley is both, and subsequent historians have not read and identified the power' (Keanie 2008, 132).

self which, Ross argues, signals the ultimate poetic achievement: ‘the most successful poet is the one who best sublimates the fear of his own weakness [...] is able to exploit his own perceived weakness as a point of leverage’ (Ross 1989, 92). As Hartley declares in ‘What is the meaning of the word “sublime”’: ‘That is the true sublime, which can confess / In weakness, strength’ (117, ll. 13-14).

‘A living spectre of my Father dead’: Hartley Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Literary Representation

In *Literary Relations*, Spencer highlights the rarity of a son inheriting his father’s poetic vocation: ‘The literary efforts of Dryden’s sons are in fact one of a remarkably small number of examples of the son following his literal father into the literary profession, and they were immediately seen as significant’ (Spencer 2005, 30). The relationship between Hartley and STC is not discussed by Spencer, but Hartley himself considers paternal literary inheritance in his own study of Dryden’s Sons. Hartley is not convinced that the Dryden sons form ‘almost the only poetical sons of poets’ (*EM II*, 33). He is more positive than Spencer in his belief that sons are *not* inhibited by the poetic father and argues for the critic to be thorough in his assessment of literary genealogy:

The ‘Quarterly Review’ carelessly instances the sons of Dryden, as almost the only poetical sons of poets.¹⁰⁷ Has he forgotten Bernado and Torquato Tasso? It is, however, pretty remarkable that no English poet has made a family. It is said indeed, that there are descendants of Spenser in existence (*EM II*, 33-4).

The publication that Hartley criticizes here is the December 1836 *American Quarterly Review*, which, in fact, included a review of Hartley’s 1833 *Poems*, where the reviewer proposes that the creative spirit of the poet-father becomes somehow stunted in the

¹⁰⁷ See *AQR* 20 (December 1836): 20 – ‘Two of Dryden’s sons attempted to follow in their father’s path, but the spirit of “glorious John” had fled and what they wrote the world has willingly let die’.

transmission from father to son: ‘Poetic genius especially is so delicate a combination, that it is likely to be destroyed by any change in its constitution’ – a proposition with which Hartley clearly takes issue (*AQR*, December 1836, 20):

Genius is certainly not hereditary, though a certain degree of talent sometimes descends, – oftener in the female than the male. Scribbling is very infectious, and authors have a habit of warning their sons against the trade, which is most wise (*EM II*, 34).¹⁰⁸

It is remarkable that in talking on fathers, sons, and poetry in this essay Hartley makes no reference to his own situation, especially when the review in question was of his own work. The wry advice that sons should be ‘warned against’ the [poetic] trade is the only implicit reference to himself.

Spencer finds that Dryden’s son was more restricted than enabled by his father’s influence, as it implied that ‘the son would be always junior, worth reading only because of the indulgence of his father and a readership of fathers and potential fathers’ (Spencer 2005, 33). She concludes that ‘John Dryden, junior could be forgiven if he reflected that it was much better for a writer to be John Dryden’s metaphorical son than his literal one’ (33). My analysis suggests that Hartley would not have supported this view. Hartley frequently and emphatically confessed that he owed the inspiration and health of his verse to *STC*: ‘but for him, my things would either not have been conceived, or would have been still-born and would have perished in the infancy of neglect’ (*EM II*, 266).¹⁰⁹

With the exception of Andrew Keanie, critical accounts that pay specific attention to the relationship between Hartley and *STC* usually suggest that Hartley was

¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere, Hartley declares that it is his sister Sara who is ‘the inheritrix of his [*STC*’S] mind and genius’ and confesses modestly that he has not ‘much more than the family cleverness, which with hardly an exception accompanies the name of Coleridge’ (*LHC*, 275).

¹⁰⁹ Hartley here uses an obstetric metaphor, as he often does in his verse, to figure the notion of wasted existence.

unable to achieve a strong poetic identity because of his father's overbearing shadow, and that he adopted a permanent childlike persona to withdraw from the world and to fulfil STC's celebration of his son's childhood as an ideal state. Judith Plotz dedicates the final chapter of her book *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* to a study of Hartley: 'The Case of Hartley Coleridge: The Designated Genius', asserting that, both biographically and poetically, he 'stakes out the territory of the miniature, the youthful, and the minor' (Plotz 2001, 205). Plotz's central premise is that the mythical Hartley portrait, created by STC and William Wordsworth, and continued by Derwent (as I show in Appendix I(a)), together with a too intense identification with his father's weaknesses, created an insurmountable obstacle to Hartley's personal and poetic development. My reading of Hartley's 'territory of the miniature', however, develops Keanie's view that Hartley's 'commitment to miniaturism' is key to his strong relational poetics: 'Hartley stood in awe before the minute', Keanie writes, 'because it contained the sort of scattered wisdom and power that only he could – or would – assimilate and synthesize (Keanie 2008, 19). The great weakness of Plotz's analysis is that her chapter recycles clichés about Hartley as stifled child and foregoes an independent engagement with his writings. For example, Plotz calls him 'the elfin Hartley' and cites an Aubrey de Vere quotation as a realistic representation of Hartley when it is, in fact, an elaboration of William's ethereal description of Hartley in 'To H. C., Six Years Old' (Plotz 2001, 196). Furthermore, the title of Plotz's essay implies that Hartley is a mere psychological curiosity – 'The Case of Hartley Coleridge' – and that his genius was projected by his father, her suggestion being that he failed because he could not live up to STC's expectations. Thus she repeats STC's practice of objectifying the child as a scientific experiment, rather than a multi-faceted and autonomous, but also necessarily dependent, evolving identity. Such analysis fails to address the full complexity of Hartley's endeavour to realize his own authorial identity.

The dialogue with STC in Hartley's verse provides no evidence of an overriding Bloomian 'anxiety of influence'. A closer analysis of the four key poems which Hartley addresses to STC reveals that Hartley's battle was more with his public image than directly with his father. The strongest emotion in these poems was directed towards his readership and its inability to differentiate between the poet's public and private identity.

The 'Dedicatory Sonnet to S.T. Coleridge' forms the introductory poem to Hartley's 1833 *Poems* and hails STC as the enabling influence and inspiration of his authorial life. Hartley prefaces his volume with a dual deference: 'Father, and Bard revered! to whom I owe, / Whate'er it be, my little art of numbers' (2, ll. 1-2). Though Hartley miniaturizes his own 'little art' in the self-deprecating manner that was common in nineteenth-century female writers, this poem, in reply to STC's 'Frost at Midnight', also gives thanks for the creation of his poetic identity. Hartley alludes to the infant self depicted by STC in 'Frost at Midnight' and declares that his father's prophecy came true:¹¹⁰

The prayer was heard: I 'wander'd like a breeze',
By mountain brooks and solitary meres,
And gather'd there the shapes and phantasies
Which, mixt with passions of my sadder years,
Compose this book.

(2, ll. 9-13)

Hartley asserts a positive interpretation of the 'wandering' label that has so often been attached to him by stating that it is exactly this sense of rootlessness which allowed him to 'gather' the shapes of his verse and understand human nature and identity in relational terms and in terms of the natural world, an understanding which shapes his

¹¹⁰ See also ll. 3-4: 'Thou, in thy night-watch o'er my cradled slumbers / Didst meditate the verse that lives to shew'; and 'Poietes Apoietes' (92, ll. 31-2): 'Thou wreath'dst my first hours in a rosy chain, / Rocking the cradle of my infancy'.

own poetics of relationship. A great proportion of Hartley's nature verse illustrates his identification with the necessity and validity of peripatetic and transitory modes of existence – this is a fundamental Hartley Coleridgean characteristic. In these poems a drifting, apparently whimsical, existence is frequently presented as an imaginative positive; for example, his recognition of the insect's influence in 'Let me not deem that I was made in vain', as we have seen in Chapter One. The phrase 'sadder years' also has a William Wordsworthian trajectory: the 'Immortality Ode' contemplates the 'years that bring the philosophic mind' (*TV*, 277, l. 189). Hartley's statement, though, offers the important qualification that his 'sadder years' – such as his dismissal from Oxford University – can be mixed with youthful 'passions' conducive to poetic creativity. That is, Hartley does not separate youth off from maturity in the way that the William of the 'Immortality Ode' does.

Critics have often seen within 'Frost at Midnight' a prophecy of Hartley's predilection for disappearing and wandering, a tendency which first manifested itself after his exclusion from Oxford. In 1820 Hartley's fellowship at Oriel College was not renewed due to grossly exaggerated accusations of 'frequent sottishness' and keeping 'low company' (*LHC*, 303).¹¹¹ Hartley was subsequently thrown into confusion and withdrawal. But in a footnote to the 1833 publication of Hartley's 'Dedicatory Sonnet to S.T. Coleridge', and specifically with regard to the 'Frost at Midnight' 'thou, my babe!' prophecy, Hartley attempts to escape his father's poem (*PWI*, 456, l. 54). While he did become the child of nature that STC hoped for, we must not assume, Hartley asserts, that he was either 'written' into being by his father, nor that he succumbed to a usurpation of his own independently managed growth (as opposed to his textual construction):

¹¹¹ Extracts on Hartley's behaviour at Oxford are taken from a letter by John Keble, Fellow of Oriel, to John Taylor Coleridge, 19 June 1820 (*LHC*, 303-4).

As far as regards the *habitats* of my childhood, these lines, written at Nether Stowey, were almost prophetic. But poets are *not* prophets (*Poems*, 145n).

Hartley declares that he will *not* allow his future to be determined by a myth. Though Hartley was deeply affected by his treatment at the hands of the Oxford University officials in 1820, there has been a tendency from this point on for him to be written off (metaphorically and literally) by STC, the Wordsworths, and later nineteenth and twentieth century critics.¹¹² In 1822 STC disowned all responsibility for Hartley's misfortune and urged him to stand on his own: 'While I live, I will do what I can – what & whether I can, must in the main depend on yourself not on your affectionate Father' (*CCL V*, 245). Griggs surmises that, at this time, 'Despondency and self-reproach overwhelmed [Hartley], and he found refuge in fatalism' (*CCL V*, 78). But Hartley himself alludes to his independent resilience: 'I must have had a hard heart and an indomitable spirit not to despair and die in that dark September' (*CCL V*, 229). Thus the self that Hartley retrospectively describes is at odds with the weak persona created by STC, and affirmed by Griggs.

Far from being creatively stifled by STC's poetic presence, Hartley repeatedly indicates that, in the words of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 'as a poet, [he] did, in fact, gain more than he lost by his infirmity'.¹¹³ In a letter to Derwent dated 1 August 1834, seven days after STC's death, Hartley indicates that whether obtrusive or enabling, the presence of STC was critical to his self-realization: 'what but for him I might have been, I tremble to think' (*LHC*, 163). Hartley reveals that a tremendous amount of his motivation, and, indeed, identity as a writer sprang from the desire for his father's approval: 'I shall – D. V. soon put forth a second volume; though half, more than half,

¹¹² STC later admitted to William Sotheby in 1829 that Hartley's dismissal from Oxford was undeserved: 'Poor dear Hartley! – He was hardly – nay, cruelly – used by the Oriel men' (*CCL VI*, 797). After the Oriel episode, STC frequently begins to refer to his son as 'Poor' Hartley, just as Dorothy and others had referred to STC as 'Poor Coleridge'.

¹¹³ Anon, 'Hartley Coleridge', *TEM* 18 (1851): 267.

the pleasure I expected from its publication is departed' (*LHC*, 164). Likewise, he fears that his 'Prometheus' will suffer as a result of STC's death: 'I shall finish Prometheus half as well as if he, who praised the commencement so far beyond its deserts, had been alive to judge it' (*LHC*, 164).

Hartley's 'Dedicatory Sonnet to S.T. Coleridge' ends by reiterating his poetic debt to his father, a deferral which, like the poem's opening couplet, is again qualified by a very Wordsworthian cautious and self-conscious conditional phrase: '*If* good therein there be, / That good, my sire, I dedicate to thee' (2, ll. 13-14; my italics). Gavin Hopps suggests that William Wordsworth's 'language of seeming' is a paradoxical signal of strength and defence, rather than indication of self-doubt or uncertainty: 'the language of seeming might [...] be seen as a way of subtly protecting, even as it weakens the force of, that which is posited'.¹¹⁴ Thus, although Hartley's meditation on his poetic origins, inspiration, and influence is framed by indebtedness to his father, Hartley's conditional phrases could, like William's, be read as a sign of his quietly confident belief in the 'good' within his work. The dedicatory poem prefaced Hartley's first published work and the cautious and self-deprecating tone is understandable when we consider his anxieties over publication; as Hartley reveals in his essay 'Books and Bantlings', 'Is there any anxiety greater than that of a young poet on the eve of appearing in print, when his darling effusions are to throw off their nursery-attire of manuscript?' (*EM I*, 86).¹¹⁵ The poems Hartley subsequently wrote on or to STC after his death reveal a growing conflict of identities as Hartley asserts his

¹¹⁴ "'Je sais bien, mais quand meme...': Wordsworth's Faithful Scepticism', in *Romanticism and Religion from William Cowper to Wallace Stevens*, ed. Gavin Hopps and Jane Stabler (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 62

¹¹⁵ Hartley continues 'no soul that is innocent of inkshed, can conceive the unimaginable throes, the solitudes, the eager anticipations, the nervous tremors, the day thoughts wild as dreams, the nightly visions, vivid and continuous as wakeful life, of a fresh candidate for literary fame' (*EM I*, 86). Cf. Mary Tighe, Preface to *Psyche; or The Legend of Love*, 1805: 'The author, who dismisses to the public the darling object of her solitary cares, must be prepared to consider, with some degree of indifference the various receptions it may then meet'. See *The Collected Poems and Journals of Mary Tighe*, ed. Harriet Kramer Linkin (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 53.

difference from STC in his continued attempt to disentangle his selfhood from his father's imagined version of Hartley's being. In this series of poems, STC is the constant imaginary interlocutor.

The sonnet 'Coleridge the Poet' was intended to form part of an essay by Hartley to prefix a new edition of STC's *Biographia Literaria*.¹¹⁶ In his letters from October 1836 until January 1846, Hartley repeatedly speaks of the essay as being near completion, but this edition of *Biographia* was finally published in 1847 without his essay.¹¹⁷ The version of Hartley's sonnet (composed 28 October, 1836) that Derwent eventually published in 1851 reveals Hartley's trepidation over the formidable task of representing STC in print:

[...] how shall I dare
Thy perfect and immortal self to paint?
Less awful task to 'draw empyreal air'.

(111, ll. 12-14)

The phrase 'empyrean air' could allude to STC's *Religious Musings* – 'Soaring aloft I breathe th' empyreal air / Of LOVE, omnific, omnipresent LOVE' (*PW I*, ll. 415-16).¹¹⁸

Thus Hartley implies that the task of representing his father – and of literary representation itself – is more complex than even STC's poetic composition; an

¹¹⁶ A letter from William to Thomas Noon Talfourd, 8 April 1839, reveals that Hartley desired William's input or approval for this essay: 'Hartley Coleridge sent me a petition of his own on behalf of his father' (*LWDW VI*, 678). For fragments of this essay see Earl Leslie Griggs, 'Hartley Coleridge on his Father', *PMLA XLVI* (December 1931): 1246-52.

¹¹⁷ A considerably different version of this sonnet is included in a letter to Hartley's mother, dated October 1836 (*LHC*, 198). See Appendix III for full text of this version. Both versions profess Hartley's anxiety over the awesome task of having to represent his father, but the version that Derwent chooses to publish, especially the final four lines, expresses Hartley's sense of inferiority more explicitly than the sonnet which is sent to his mother.

¹¹⁸ The phrase 'empyrean air' also figures in William's *The Excursion*, IV, l. 232; see *The Excursion by William Wordsworth*, ed. Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 137. The entire phrase that Hartley quotes is more likely, however, to refer to the poem by Richard Mant, 'To the Rev. Coplestone' (1806): 'And he, who durst from earth aspire / Into the heav'n of heav'ns, and draw empyreal air' (ll. 15-16; my italics). Edward Coplestone was the Provost of Oriel from 1815-28, where Hartley was elected a fellow in 1819, and was largely responsible for determining not to renew Hartley's fellowship at Oriel. For letters concerning Dr. Coplestone and the Oriel affair see *LHC*, 22, 32 and n., 34, 35, 36, 41, 49, 50, 53, 54, 301, 319, 323. Richard Mant was a fellow of Oriel from 1798-1804.

indication that he is not overawed by his father's poetry. Though Hartley finds himself 'unequal to the task' of literary representation, and believes STC's 'great Idea was too high a strain / For [his] infirmity', Hartley's letters from 1836 until 1846 reveal that his resistance springs not from a sense of filial inferiority, but from his reluctance to compromise his perfectionism (111, ll. 2, 11-12). In a letter to John Taylor Coleridge in October 1836, Hartley cites the impossibility of representing Coleridge, the *whole* man, as his primary obstacle:

I should not shrink from the task, were [it only] my father's character as a poet, a Critic, and in general a literateur [...], but I am hardly capable of arguing his philosophy at present. Indeed my opinion is that no view of it should be attempted, till his remarks are all before the public (*LHC*, 198).

Similarly, in a letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge, 27 March, 1837, Hartley writes: 'My dear Father's greatness is not only too large for my comprehension, but in some parts too high for my apprehension – not that I cannot understand him, but I cannot realize many of his ideas' (*LHC*, 210). Hartley had spoken of William Wordsworth in an almost identical fashion in 1833 when the *Quarterly* accused him of an 'overweening worship' of the elder poet; Hartley defended himself by stating simply: 'no man but himself could *realize his ideas*' (*LHC*, 157; my italics). So, as with his poetry, Hartley reveals a scholarly preoccupation with truly knowing his subject; he is extremely reluctant to be seen to be speaking for his father, so central is faithful representation to his own literary endeavour. Hartley, who has endured sustained literary misrepresentation, worried that by trying to elucidate his father's reputation, he would distort it.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Hartley summarizes the vast discrepancy between the representative written word and actuality when discussing his father's conversational powers in his introduction to *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford* (London: Edward Moxon, 1840), xlv: 'My revered father [gave] a lecture which I shall never forget, with an eloquence of which the Notes published in his Remains convey as imperfect an impression as the score of Handel's Messiah upon paper compared to the Messiah sounding in

Hartley's reluctance to represent the father-poet is analogous to the self-conflict suffered by Frances Burney, which Spencer analyses in her Chapter 'Fathers and Mentors' in *Literary Relations* (Spencer 2005, 49-50). In the dedicatory poem to *Evelina*, Burney reveals a tremendous sense of inferiority that parallels Hartley's frustration over his inability to capture the full merit of the author-father: 'Obscure be still the unsuccessful Muse, / Who cannot raise, but would not sink, thy fame'.¹²⁰ Like Hartley, however, Burney alternates between tremulousness and confidence: Spencer notes how, in the preface to *Evelina*, 'Burney looks quite calmly to a patrilineal tradition of writers [...]. The original anonymity of the preface and the reference to "men"¹²¹ make this appear as a typical claim by a putative literary son to join his chosen fathers' (50). As Spencer points out, the act of becoming part of a literary tradition 'seems to have been enabling to her, helping her to overcome the sense of unworthiness her father inspired' (49).

While Spencer does not look for signs of this 'enabling' process in her father-son analysis, my assessment suggests that both Hartley and Frances Burney escape the intimidation of the author-father by first displacing themselves from biological affiliation, and then attempting to project their own identities as part of a continuing literary tradition. Like Hartley's preoccupation with poetic originality ('no man but himself could realize his ideas'), Frances confidently argues against literary imitation. While Frances is enlightened by her poetic predecessors, she believes that she must follow her own path, stating, in her preface, that if a poet follows the track of another he will find it 'barren':

multitudinous unison of voices and instruments beneath the high embowered roof of some hallowed Minster'.

¹²⁰ Frances Burney, *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, ed. Stewart J. Cooke (London and New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 3, ll. 15-16.

¹²¹ In reference to 'our predecessors' 'Rousseau, Johnson, Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollet' Burney writes: 'no man need blush at starting from the same post, though many, nay, most men, may sigh at finding themselves distanced' (Cooke 1998, 6).

[...] however zealous, therefore, my veneration of the great writers I have mentioned [...] I yet presume not to attempt pursuing the same ground which they have tracked; whence, though they may have cleared the weeds, they have also culled the flowers, and though they have rendered the path plain, they have left it barren (Cooke 1998, 7).

Frances' assertion that nature will be her inspiration – her novel will 'draw characters from nature', while the heroine will be 'the offspring of Nature, and of Nature in her simplest attire' (6, 7) – is read by Spencer as a 'coded reference to the anonymous author's female difference, rejecting a literary inheritance in favour of one from (feminine) nature' (Spencer 2005, 50). Frances' statement corroborates Hartley's belief in the inexhaustible muse of nature: Hartley proposes that we love nature 'Thanks to the great men of old [poets]', but reasserts the power and right of the individual – 'Our affection is hereditary, but it is original also' (*EM I*, 76). Hartley's situation resonates with that of a father-daughter identification and feminine writing conventions: like Burney Hartley wants to claim his place in a continuing patrilineal literary tradition, whilst also breaking free and staking out the less conflicted position as son/daughter of maternal nature.

In the fragments of Hartley's *Biographia* prefatory essay, with a touching and simple honesty, Hartley declares that he is unfit to represent STC but for one respect – love.¹²² With the language of relationship that permeates his verse, he argues that his position as son of STC allows him access to an aspect of 'Coleridge' the writer that is impenetrable to the public:

I have undertaken it – because no more competent person has volunteered the duty – and because I have certain advantages towards its performance of which my mere equals in interest are necessarily destitute; for to understand a great

¹²² See also Hartley's introduction to *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford*, where he again equates true knowledge and faithful representation with love: 'Good people in a private station should be thankful if their lives are not worth writing. [...] They can be *understood* by none, and *known* only to those who love the good beings whom they actuate, – and by loving them know them. For in the spiritual world there is no knowledge but by love' (*MF*, xx).

man, it is necessary to love him. Affectionate admiration is the electric chain that connects the lower with the mightier minds. It is impossible for any man to understand what he does not love, and I will venture to say that if I understand the writings of Coleridge better than the million, it is not because I partake in larger measure of his genius, but because I have loved him more (Griggs 1931, 1246-7).

In this way, Hartley suggests that ‘affectionate admiration’ is both a conductor and a galvanizing impulse that facilitates exchange between father and son. Hartley’s declaration is implicitly possessive and defensive, expressing doubt that any man could presume to know ‘Coleridge the Poet’ more than the son can, who understands STC ‘better than the million’.

The literary and personal protectiveness that Hartley directs towards STC is developed into a larger meditation on the different facets of identity and representation in ‘Still for the world he lives, and lives in bliss’, composed in 1847, thirteen years after STC’s death and two years prior to Hartley’s own death.¹²³ The poem is painfully personal and alternates between the public perception of STC, with phrases such as ‘Still for the world he lives’ (139, l. 1); ‘The Sage, the poet, lives for all mankind’ (l. 9), and Hartley’s private perspective:

Ten years and three
Have now elapsed since he was dead to me
And all that were on earth intensely his.

(ll. 2-4)

In these lines Hartley outlines the essential disjunction between artistic immortality and human mortality. Moreover, he narrates the fault-lines resultant from living in the shadow of – and grieving for – a father who was, and remains, a poet: STC’s still palpable poetic legacy creates an obstacle both to the acceptance of Hartley’s personal

¹²³ Hartley’s early awareness of the nuances of variable identity was recorded by STC in a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth: ‘[Hartley] pointed out without difficulty that there might be five Hartleys, Real Hartley, Shadow Hartley, Picture Hartley, Looking Glass Hartley, and Echo Hartley’ (*CCL* II, 673).

loss, and the growth of his own public identity. The poem enforces the realities of death rather than the consolation of poetic immortality that drives a poem such as his epigraph to Keats. In a letter to his mother, dated August 1834, Hartley corroborates this sense of finality with which he views STC's death: 'When we mourn for the dead, we mourn but for our own bereavement. We believe, or strive to believe, that they live for themselves and for God, but for us the dead are dead' (*LHC*, 165). It is also the magnitude of STC's public identity during Hartley's life that generates conflict within Hartley: because STC was predominantly absent as a father, Hartley is engaging with an insubstantial father figure who is more poet than father. Just as STC creates the myth of the child-Hartley, so too does STC appear shadowy as a literal paternal presence, eclipsed by his more dominant public persona.

The poem 'Anniversary' ends with a call for privacy delivered with an implicit attack upon both the public, and his father – it is the only published poem to direct blame overtly at STC: 'Yet can I not but mourn because he died / That was my father, should have been my guide' (139, ll. 13-14). There are frequent references in the letters of the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle to the view that Hartley lacked support and guidance during his life. As we have seen, in the *Memoir*, Derwent concedes that Hartley's sensitive disposition needed and deserved more careful parental attention and guidance: 'He was not made to go alone; he was helped through life as it was: perhaps, under altered circumstances, he might have been helped more' (*Memoir*, clxii).¹²⁴ Dorothy identified Hartley's behaviour with STC's neglect: 'He [STC] *ought* to come to see after Hartley [...] for his oddities increase daily, and he wants other Discipline' (*LWDW* III, 124). STC left his children largely in the care of their mother, Robert Southey, and the Wordsworths; indeed, the letters of Dorothy and William Wordsworth

¹²⁴ STC recognized this neglect of his children to some extent: see *CCL* II, 767 and III, 61, where he thinks of his children as orphans.

detail their growing anxiety over how STC intended to finance his sons' education – in April 1814 William criticizes STC's inability to 'look this matter fairly in the face' (*LWDW III*, 145). It was ultimately contributions from Southey, William Wordsworth, and Lady Beaumont that funded Hartley's University education. As William states: 'it is therefore incumbent on his Friends to do their best to prevent the father's weaknesses being ruinous to the Son' (*LWDW III*, 145).¹²⁵ In a letter concerning the Oriel dispute written to STC in September 1820, Hartley indicates a strong desire for guidance whilst he was at Oxford: 'I was placed, by no choice of my own, in a college not famous for sobriety or regularity, without acquaintance with the world, without introductions, and after the first term, without any to guide or caution me', a sentiment which anticipates his rebuke to STC in the 1847 poem (*CCL V*, 61).

In 1822 STC urged Hartley to abandon his literary career in London and return to the Lake District to become a schoolmaster (despite the misgivings of the Wordsworths, Southey, and Hartley himself) after which time Hartley never saw his father again. Hartley later reveals in a note-book that the separation from his natural 'kin' that this move brought about instigated the suppression of his true self: 'I am far from all my kindred – not friendless indeed – but loveless and confined to a spot beautiful indeed – and dear – but where I am not what I might be elsewhere – where much that was dearest to me has been taken away' (*LHC*, 96). Interestingly, it was only after STC's death that Hartley committed to print the neglect that he felt.¹²⁶ It is likely that the loss of his father in the year after the publication of Hartley's first volume

¹²⁵ Dorothy had earlier expressed the need for STC to fulfil his parental responsibility towards Hartley in a letter to Catherine Clarkson, 6 April 1813: 'William will now be enabled to assist in sending Hartley to college; but of course this must not be mentioned; for the best thing that can happen to his Father will be that he should suppose that the whole care of putting Hartley forward must fall upon himself' (*LWDW III*, 91).

¹²⁶ Dorothy's perception, however, indicates that Hartley was aware of his paternal neglect from a very early age. She writes on 5 January 1805 (when Hartley was eight): 'Dear little creature! he said to me this morning on seeing Johnny cry after his Father who was going to take a walk "If he had the sense to know where *my* Father is he would not cry when his is going such a little way"' (*LWDWI*, 526).

intensified his vulnerability: first his ‘darling effusions’ had, as Hartley puts it, ‘throw[n] off their nursery-attire of manuscript’ and been exposed to the public, thus losing their exclusive guardianship and protection, and then he too became detached from his grounding source and creator (*EM* I, 86). Hartley makes it clear that he was floundering for lack of guidance in this pivotal 1833-4 period, which saw the birth of his poetry and the death of his father.

Hartley’s frustration at the popular tendency to merge a poet’s public and private life, and his keen awareness of the fragility of his own literary reputation, is clarified in a key letter to his mother, dated November 1836, two years after STC’s death, where he defends his own character confidently: ‘it is very cruel in people whom I never injured to publish my father’s natural complaints of my delinquencies to the million whom they concern not – still worse to promulgate what can do no credit either to the living or to the dead, and must convey very false impressions to the public, (What the Devil have the public to do with it?)’ (*LHC*, 203). Hartley is referring to Thomas Allsop’s *Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge*, which included personal references to Hartley and Derwent.¹²⁷ William Wordsworth supported the view that exposures such as Allsop’s were injurious to those closest to the deceased poet: ‘This distinction also has escaped his sagacity and ever will escape those of far superior talents to Mr A. who care not what offence or pain they give to living persons provided they have come to a conclusion, however inconsiderately, that they are doing justice to the dead’ (*LWDW* VI, 148).¹²⁸ It is likely that Hartley’s humiliation at Allsop’s insensitive exposure – published in the 1835-6 period when Hartley was

¹²⁷ Allsop’s *Letters* were criticized also by Wordsworth: ‘The Editor is a man without judgement, and therefore appears to be without feeling’; and Moxon: ‘He is a very amiable Man, but sadly deficient in tact as an Editor’ (*LWDW* VI, 148, 148n).

¹²⁸ William had expressed a similar belief over both Allsop’s publication and Henry Nelson Coleridge’s already published *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* in a letter to Edward Moxon in December 1835: ‘it gives me great pain to learn that any such publication [Allsop’s] is so *speedily* intended: the mischief which I am certain will in many ways accompany the work, will not be obviated, or even abated, by suppressing names’ (*LWDW* VI, 134).

planning to publish his second volume of poems – also contributed to his mounting reluctance to publish again.

After STC's death, Hartley became increasingly aware that he was being viewed as a relic of his deceased father, a fear which he confronts explicitly in 'Full well I know – my Friends – ye look on me', which, significantly, Derwent did not include in his 1851 volume and which remained unpublished until 1929.¹²⁹ 'Full well I know' epitomizes the familial association that has blighted public perception of Hartley. The poem forms a desperate plea for all that *he* has endeavoured to achieve to be recognized. Importantly, Hartley declares that it is an *external* perception ('ye look on me') which finds him to be derivative and dependent – merely 'A living spectre of my Father dead' (*NP*, 69, ll. 1, 2).¹³⁰ Hartley is surely alluding to this poem's self-portrayal, together with William's representation of him in 'To H. C.', when he states with regard to 'R. West': 'Some writers maintain a sort of dubious, twilight existence, from their connection with others of greater name' (*EM II*, 109).¹³¹

The abiding image of the dependent and fragile leaf in 'Full well I know' represents the precariousness of identity and its symbiotic nature: while the tree eclipses our perception of the leaf's independence, the leaf only flourishes whilst attached to the tree. Likewise, Hartley feels his identity has been perceived exclusively through another (STC) and his poetic output misjudged as a consequence:

Had I not borne his name, had I not fed
On him, as one leaf trembling on a tree,
A woeful waste had been my minstrelsy –

¹²⁹ 'Full well I know' was first published in 1929 in Griggs's biography *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work*.

¹³⁰ Similarly, 'I have been cherish'd, and forgiven' professes that he has been pitied only for his father's sake: "'Twas for the sake of one in Heaven / Of him that is departed' (*NP*, 93, ll. 3-4).

¹³¹ In a characteristic moment of modesty, Hartley goes on to predict that he will only be remembered for his literary affiliations: 'If aught of mine be preserved from oblivion, it will be owing to my bearing the name of Coleridge and having enjoyed, I fear with less profit than I ought the acquaintance of Southey and of Wordsworth'. – 27 November 1843 (*EM II*, 109-10).

(*NP*, 69, ll. 3-5)

Here Hartley gives thanks for his Coleridge name and connection, believing that without such a bond, however precarious, his ‘minstrelsy’ would have been entirely squandered. But Hartley alludes to the state of inescapable fragility that his paternal affiliation condemns him to in his use of the word ‘tremble’ to express both paternal connection, as here, and separation: ‘what but for him I might have been, I tremble to think’ (*LHC*, 163). We can see, then, that the trembling leaf-tree motif is used to figure Hartley’s ambiguous understanding of his paternal relationship, which is characterized alternately by dependence, represented by the clinging leaf, and independent survival, as imaged by the leaf battling with the external elements. In this way, Hartley’s tenuous existence parallels the relationship between *STC* and the quivering but persistent film of flame in ‘Frost at Midnight’, the ‘sole unquiet thing’, within which *STC* finds ‘a companionable form’: ‘Only that film, which fluttered on the grate, / Still flutters there’ (*PW I*, ll. 19, 15-16).

The tree or tree-leaf motif is significant. It recurs throughout *STC*’s notebooks and letters, most notably when *STC* figures himself as an ‘Oak’, a pre-occupation which has influenced Hartley (*CN III*, 3324). In the essay ‘On the Imitators of Pope’, Hartley uses the tree metaphor to illustrate the difficulty of ‘aspirants for fame or popularity’ that succeeded Pope: ‘He was not a banian, whose suckers derived and communicated strength and beauty; but a yew-tree, in whose shade nothing could grow to maturity’ (*EM II*, 120). In a poem included in a letter to his sister, written in April 1835, a year after *STC*’s death, Hartley represents their family as an ‘old and thunder-stricken tree’, depicts the remaining siblings as ‘A few leaves clinging to the age-warp’d boughs’, and once again identifies himself as the isolated, most vulnerable leaf, ‘High in a bare and solitary branch’: ‘one poor leaf, that ventures to put forth / In the

chill aspect of the boisterous north' (*LHC*, 169, ll. 3, 5, 11, 9-10). With this image Hartley could be influenced by William's depiction of sibling separation in 'The White Doe of Rylstone' (1807): 'But thou, my Sister, doomed to be / The last leaf on a blasted tree' (ll. 566-7). Significantly, on 7 March 1798, Dorothy's observation of the interrelationship between the leaf, the tree, and the 'boisterous' wind, could also be viewed as a reflection on the insecure and vulnerable nature of a dependent relationship (in this case, most likely, between her and her brother): 'One only leaf upon the top of a tree – the sole remaining leaf – danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind' (*AJ*, 149). In both cases the raging elements ('boisterous north'; 'wind') which threaten to detach the solitary leaf could represent the public domain, which is inhospitable, yet also offers liberation from that which secures and limits the leaf's experience.¹³² Interestingly, Hartley's combat with the external environment seems more courageous, chosen, and determined – he 'ventures to put forth'.

Dorothy's presentation of the leaf-tree motif echoes *STC's Christabel*, Part I (February-April 1798) which, in turn, is a portrait that has clearly influenced Hartley:

There is not Wind enough to twirl
The One red Leaf, the last of its Clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light and hanging so high
On the topmost Twig that looks up at the Sky.

(*PW* I, ll. 48-52)

STC also repeatedly identifies the infant Hartley with an isolated leaf in his 1800-1801 letters. He remarks to Humphry Davy, Samuel Purkis, and John Thelwall, respectively, that Hartley is 'a spirit that dances on an aspin leaf'; 'all Health & extacy – He is a Spirit dancing on an aspen Leaf'; and 'a fairy elf – all life, all motion – indefatigable in joy – a spirit of Joy dancing on an Aspen Leaf' (*CCL* I, 612, 615; II, 668). This

¹³² See also 'A frail dependent of the fickle sky' (*CPW*, 114, l. 4).

association isolates the trembling leaf image – and Hartley – from its grounding source, leaving it free-floating and independent. Similarly, in a letter to William Godwin, dated September 1800, STC identifies Hartley as an independent child of nature as opposed to man: ‘he moves, he lives, he finds impulses from within & from without – he is the darling of the Sun and of the Breeze! Nature seems to bless him as a thing of her own’ (*CCL* I, 625). In a related image, a letter from STC to Thomas Poole dated October 1803 presents the seven-year-old Hartley as an ‘utter Visionary! like the Moon among thin clouds, he moves in a circle of Light of his own making – he alone, in a Light of his own’ (*CCL* II, 1014).¹³³ Plotz points out that by presenting such images of apparent natural independence, STC represented Hartley as ‘virtually autonomous, as one whose self-sufficiency needed no others’ (Plotz 2001, 223). But STC’s notebooks record how the baby Hartley did not have a ‘light of his own making’: like a normal growing child, Hartley would beg for candles at night to cure his nightmares – ‘the *Seems*’ – yet STC seems coolly detached from the reality of Hartley’s childhood experience (*CN* I, 1253).¹³⁴ It could be, then, that with this enduring trembling leaf motif Hartley is reproaching STC for this misguided inattentiveness – ‘That was my father, should have been my guide’ (139, l. 14).¹³⁵

Most importantly, in ‘Full well I know’, Hartley is striving to say ‘look at what *I* have done’:

¹³³ STC’s practice of presenting his inspiration as thoroughly assimilated into nature was also projected by William Wordsworth onto Dorothy, when, for example, he calls her ‘Nature’s Pupil’ (*Prelude*, XI, l. 199).

¹³⁴ The full notebook entry reads: ‘October, 1802. Hartley at Mr. Clarkson’s sent for a Candle – the *Seems* made him miserable – what do you mean, my Love! – The *Seems* – the *Seems* – what seems to be & is not – Men & faces & I do not [know] what, ugly, & sometimes pretty & then turn ugly, & they seem when my eyes are open, & worse when they are shut – & the Candle cures the *SEEMS*’ (*CN* I, 1253).

¹³⁵ Though Hartley is reproaching STC for parental neglect, it seems STC was far more attentive to his daughter’s needs. Sara Coleridge’s apprehension of her father, as detailed in a letter to her daughter, September 1851, portrays a much more caring and sensitive STC. While Sara explains that neither her mother nor Southey fully understood her ‘night-fears’, her father was entirely sympathetic: ‘My Uncle Southey laughed heartily at my agonies. I mean at the cause. He did not enter into the agonies. Even mamma scolded me for creeping out of bed [...]. But my father understood the case better. He insisted that a lighted candle should be left in my room [...]. From that time forth my sufferings ceased’; see *Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge*, ed. Edith Coleridge (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1874), 49.

Yet have *I* sung of maidens newly wed
 And *I* have wished that hearts too sharply bled
 Should throb with less of pain, and heave more free
 By my endeavour.

(*NP*, 69, ll. 6-9; my italics)

Hartley is reminding us of his own poetic manifesto which prefaced the 1833 *Poems* in the form of the epigraph to this volume. The epigraph is taken from Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseide*, and likewise asserts that the author's intention is to alleviate the sufferings of love:

For I, that God of Lov'is Servantes serve,
 Ne dare to love, for mine unlikeliness,
 Prayin for spede, al should I therefore sterve,
 So ferre am I fro his help in darknesse;
 But nathelesse, if this may doe gladnesse
 To any lovir, and his cause aveile,
 Have he the thanke, and mine be the traveile.

(*CPW*, 1)

In short, Hartley declares that his central aim was to celebrate the pleasures and pains of life and for his poetry to exist as a very real and active social force that could provide solace and liberty (he wishes his reader's hearts to 'heave more free / By [his] endeavour' (ll. 8-9). Hartley thus shares Keats's foregrounding of 'the great end / Of poesy': 'that it should be a friend / To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man ('Sleep and Poetry', Stillinger 1978, 75, ll. 246-7).

A monetary simile that Hartley employs to express his disillusionment in 'Full Well I Know' is strikingly effective in its evocation of a mental richness: 'Still alone I sit / Counting each thought as Miser counts a penny' (ll. 9-10). Hartley's protective hoarding of his thoughts is as painfully inescapable as the slow monotony of time which he now finds himself in, a realization which echoes Shakespeare's *King Richard II*: 'For now hath time made me his numbering clock. / My thoughts are

minutes'.¹³⁶ Hartley believes his mental wealth has not been fully shared and bemoans a frustrating miscommunication of his work's full meaning and purpose. Likewise, in 'Followed by Another' – written in the final year of Hartley's life, and first published in Derwent's 1851 volume – Hartley indicates that his inability to submit another volume of poetry to print was because the value of his poetic ministry was being ignored: he talks of losing 'aim', 'hope', desire and ultimately resigning his 'unregarded ministry' (*NP*, 87, ll. 5, 6, 9). He thus aligns himself with the silent and unregarded service of the frost in 'Frost at Midnight', which 'performs its secret ministry / Unhelped by any wind' (ll. 1-2). In this manner, Hartley places the blame for any alleged under-achievement on to the public rather than admitting to an inherent personal incapacity. A letter to Mary Stanger by Hartley's sister Sara, written in 1847 – the year before 'Followed by Another' was written – supports the view that Hartley was in desperate need of guidance and encouragement to publish at this time of disillusionment, and also indicates her continued faith in her brother and his work:

He is nervous, in spite of his general good health, and the sense that his situation is peculiar produces in him a sort of touchiness. Were I near him I might do him good in many ways - & perhaps might as it were enforce the collection of his poems, & induce him in one way or another to publish again.¹³⁷

The debasing self-portrayal in 'Full well I know' suggests a self-deprecation that Hartley has been driven into; an ironic admission of his insignificance. As Keanie asserts, 'From Hartley's "failure" flowed his humiliation, his corroding awareness that he has been unable to convince the world of his value' (Keanie 2008, 178). Though Hartley demeans his intelligence by labelling it a 'penny-worth of wit', he believes himself to be greater than he is typically portrayed (69, l. 11). By comparing his life to

¹³⁶ *King Richard II*, ed. Andrew Gurr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Act V, Scene 5, ll. 50-51.

¹³⁷ Letter addressed to Mary Stanger, dated 31 May 1847 (WLMS 55/1/53).

a 'wheel of fortune' (l. 12), Hartley sardonically criticizes the absurdity of life, lamenting, as he does in poems such as 'There was a seed' (*CPW*, 137), that life is a gamble, and success dependent on circumstance and chance. He points to the exposure and degradation he has endured in his authorial life and implies that any further publicity would be intellectually humiliating and pointless. By identifying with a 'Zany' Hartley communicates the notion that his public identity is not only dependent on his father's but results in a grotesque distortion and debasement of his true self (l. 12). As Hartley's essays reveal, originality and independence of thought are central to his poetic methodology. By casting himself as a zany, which also connotes imitation, Hartley exposes how deeply at odds this enforced parasitic poetic identity is with his own poetic ideals. Furthermore, the words 'zany' and 'spectre' imply a shadowy insubstantiality which goes against the integrity of being that is fundamental to Hartley's poetic drive. The phantasmal connotation of these words hints that the mythologization of Hartley's character gained pace as the public's way of preserving his father's life and work. Hartley sees with startling clarity that any further exposure of his 'wit' is a gamble and that he can only achieve recognition by playing into his alternative and irritatingly persistent identity as 'A living spectre of [his] Father dead'.

The final couplet of 'Full well I know' – 'You love me for my Sire, to you unknown, / Revere me for his sake, and love me for my own' (ll. 13-14) – continues the central theme of the dedicatory poems to STC – the disjunction between public and private identity – and levels a bitter attack at the public and their presumptive attempts to 'know' and possess the poet: 'my sire, *to you unknown*' (l. 13; my italics). Most importantly, 'Full well I know' critiques the incongruity of public perception and private authorial endeavour. Hartley argues that idolatry and immortality of the poet-father cannot preclude the development of the poet-son, but certainly impede public recognition of his independence. Hartley is asking for a moratorium on the traditional

reception of STC – implicit in his continual assertion that the public cannot truly know his father – in order that a true connection can be achieved with his own self and work – a counter-measure which Hartley demands in the poem’s final line.

Plotz’s study typifies the critical commonplace tendency to under-read the conflicted relationship between Hartley and STC: she ignores the instances of defiance on Hartley’s part and presents him as a doomed, entranced, eternal child-figure who never managed to achieve independence from his father: ‘the eloquence of [STC’s] representation so fixed the boy that he could not separate an independent adult self off from the gorgeous creation his father had made’ (Plotz 2001, 233). But it is the ‘eloquence’ of STC’s representation that has also fixed Plotz, and other critics, who become seduced by this ‘gorgeous creation’ myth. Plotz’s argument is clearly at odds with Hartley’s steadfast belief in his own individuality, stated most notably, as we have seen, in his essays, and, as I show below, in Hartley’s argument that STC is just one of many poetic influences. Plotz’s most unjust claim is that Hartley was an insubstantial echo of his father: ‘All his life he remained a text inscribed by the father, a hollow dummy, a literal child *persona* amplifying his father’s voice’; ‘a ventriloquized dummy of a praeternaturally eloquent adult’ (233, 249). But, as I have shown in my study of Hartley’s reception and in Chapter One, both of which highlight how engagement of the entire self is fundamental to Hartley’s poetic methodology, Hartley is none of these things. Plotz reads Hartley as his worst nightmare: she presents him as what he most feared being in ‘Full well I know’ – an imitative zany. She confirms the sense of Hartley as an echo by herself echoing inherited phrases.

In ‘The Poet’ Hartley recognizes that immortality only becomes conferred on the poet if the original voice is resurrected through others: the poet will ‘be a nothing, save a voice, a name, / Which lives, when other voices give it birth’ (*NP*, 91, ll. 9-10). Throughout Plotz’s story, she remains unaware that the biographical Hartley is

constantly grappling with the superimposed Hartley myth and so does nothing to preserve *his* true ‘voice’ and ‘name’. Plotz argues that Hartley only lived a ‘textualized existence’ and succumbed to having his life written into being: ‘Alone among the instances of Romantic childhood I have examined, Hartley is *written* rather than *writing*, the created text rather than the creator’, an unfair and insubstantial judgement (235, 249). As I have shown, Hartley does *not* accept his father’s definition of him; as he professed in a letter to his mother, far from being passively ‘written rather than writing’, writing was central to his identity and agency: ‘I am nothing without the pen’ (*LHC*, 269).¹³⁸ Plotz argues that ‘Hartley took for granted both his father’s love and his father’s knowledge, assuming that his identity was completely known, completely understood, and completely constructed by Coleridge and Wordsworth’ (Plotz 2001, 250). This assessment is wrong. Likewise, Plotz’s belief that ‘The Hartley constructed by Coleridge and Wordsworth has proved metaphorically irresistible to the readers of Romantic poetry as it proved literally irresistible to Hartley himself’ is a misreading of Hartley’s work and suggests that she too has found the mythical construction of Hartley ‘metaphorically irresistible’ (250). In a typically self-knowing statement, Hartley reveals that not living up to his father’s ideals was not a failure, but a natural choice:

If I might judge myself, I should say my sort of talent had more of Southey than of S. T. Coleridge. I have the sure fondness for historical research, and antiquities and pantagruelist oddities, and some thing perhaps of the same matter-of-fact invention, but I cannot follow S. T. Coleridge – either to the height of his imagination – or the depth of his philosophy (*LHC*, 275).

A long tradition of Coleridgean criticism has been entrapped by the mythical construction of Hartley as an elfin, childlike figure; Hartley himself consistently rejected this myth, and always sought to be read as an independent adult.

¹³⁸ Hartley continues with characteristic modesty: ‘and but little, I fear, with it’ (*LHC*, 269).

‘It looks too like a family concern’: Getting Away From the Coleridge Name

We have seen that Hartley emphatically maintained that he held a personal and professional debt to his father, but that he also wished to be viewed independently of STC. This conflict is evident throughout Hartley’s writings and forms part of his discourse on the nature of identity, fame, and posterity. In a letter to his mother with regard to a favourable review¹³⁹ of his own *Northern Worthies* by his cousin Henry Nelson Coleridge, Hartley is keen to relinquish association with the Coleridge name and reputation, and be presented to the public as his own person:

I am, of course obliged to the author; but I really think if he had been rather less brotherly, or cousinly, or call it what you will, it would have been all the better. He lets the cat out of the bag. It looks too like a family concern. I think the praise excessive but let that pass. I should have wished him to treat the sentiments, which you said gave him pain, with no more ceremony than if the name Dan O’Connell instead of Hartley Coleridge had been on the title page (September 1835, *LHC*, 177).

Hartley would rather be criticized than receive effusive praise from family which might make the public think that he was receiving unfair privileges due to his heritage, so aware was he that only through being presented to the public as an independent writer would his readership truly appreciate his authorial autonomy.¹⁴⁰ Getting away from his name is a continuing theme in Hartley’s writings and ties in with his theories on the emptiness of fame, and also his belief in the importance of humility. Hartley alludes to the emptiness and transitory nature of reputation in ‘The Forsaken to the faithless’:

¹³⁹ Hartley is referring to Henry Nelson Coleridge’s review of the *Northern Worthies* in the *Quarterly* (September 1835): 330.

¹⁴⁰ When STC was publicly accused of plagiarism by De Quincey and Ferrier, Hartley showed a remarkable impartiality. Hartley does not just rely on his personal judgement of his father, rather he goes on to list ‘the facts’ which he believes have led to this confusion and allegation; namely that Ferrier ‘has greatly exaggerated the identity of thought and expressions in the two authors’ [STC and Schelling], and that his father had ‘copied not from Schlegel [Schelling] – but from his own memorandum-books – and had literally forgotten what was his own, and what was translation’ (*LHC*, 242). In this way, Hartley is demonstrating his belief in the paramount importance of honesty and independence of thought – as expressed in the sentiment ‘We should judge better and dispute less if every one of us thought for himself’ (*EM* II, 30) – and setting an example for how he wished to be treated, showing himself to be acutely aware of the danger of family bias to the integrity of literary representation.

For what is reputation but a bubble,
 Blown up by Vanity's unthinking breath, –
 A thing which few, with all their toil and trouble,
 Can carry with them to their home, the grave.

(104, ll. 7-10)

In his continued attempt to get away from the Coleridge name, Hartley begins to question the value of print. The despondent and irritated tone of his poem 'I have been cherish'd, and forgiven', bemoans the fact that he is recognized only because of his namesake, and fears for how tenuous his posthumous fame will be as a consequence:

Because I bear my Father's name
 I am not quite despised,
 My little legacy of fame
 I've not yet realized.

(*NP*, 93, ll. 5-8)

Rather than personal notoriety, Hartley's only goal is for the products of his own endeavour to have independent meaning for others: 'The world were welcome to forget my name, / Could I bequeath a few remembered words' ('Could I but harmonise one kindly thought', 139, ll. 9-10). He encapsulates the meaninglessness of fame epigrammatically in 'Album Verses': 'I own I like to see my works in print; / The page looks knowing, though there's nothing in't' (64, ll. 22-3), an allusion to Byron's meditation on the vanity of fame in 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, A Satire': 'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print; / A Book's a Book, altho' there's nothing in't' (McGann 1980 I, 230, ll. 51-2). Hartley continues this focus on his readership rather than self in "'Twere surely hard to toil without an aim', where he argues that the strongest manifestation of a poet's immortality is not just the 'empty fame' of their 'echoed name' – 'Dear though it be – dear to the wafting wind, / That is not all the poet leaves behind' (118, ll. 4, 5-7) – but that which reveals 'To mortal man

his immortality' (l. 12); that is, the heightened emotional response of man to the world around him, as a result of poetry:

It is a happy feeling
 Begot by bird, or flower, or vernal bee.
 'Tis aught that acts, unconsciously revealing
 To mortal man his immortality.

(ll. 9-12)

It is the diffusive self-in-relation concept that allows Hartley to recognize that poetic immortality can be conferred in more ways than the comparatively egotistic remembrance of the poet's name. In this respect, Hartley mirrors George Eliot's conception of the diffusive influence of identity:

But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas [...]. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth.¹⁴¹ But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs (*Middlemarch*, Finale, 620-21).

Just as identity in life is realized through others, so Hartley stresses the shifting nature of posthumous identity which, he suggests, can be realized not simply through the immortality of the poet's solitary ego, but sporadically, and anonymously, through mortal man's daily interactions with external nature.

A central way in which Hartley defines his own poetic identity against his father's is through depicting STC as one of many poetic influences, rather than the sole dominating presence. 'What I Have Heard', first published in 1833, provides one of the

¹⁴¹ George Eliot's identification of hidden life with humble rivers is similar to Derwent's more negative depiction of Hartley as an insignificant 'lost' river: 'an Australian river, wide at first, a flow of hopeful waters, which speedily contract into a feeble narrow stream and are insensibly lost in the sand' (*Memoir*, xlix).

most assured indications that Hartley's creativity was not debilitatingly inhibited by STC's presence. Using the symbol of the river (in the same manner as he does for the self) Hartley proposes that poets likewise all work towards the same end. In this way, Hartley acts to neutralize the familial conflict of his unique position – he diminishes his father's role in order to see his own more clearly. Hartley describes the shifting states of different rivers and seas, the dynamics of which are all various, yet each strain is uniquely heard. The diction, urgency of pace, and imagery of the first half of the poem are heavily influenced by STC's 'Kubla Khan'. The antiquity of the caves and the mournful sound of the sea in Hartley's poem – 'The howl and the wail of the prison'd waves / Clamouring in the ancient caves' (88, ll. 13-14) – merges two of the most memorable images of 'Kubla Khan': the 'caverns measureless to man', and the 'woman wailing for her demon-lover' (*PW* I, 513, ll. 4, 16). Hartley's impossible image of water shattering, 'The rush of rocky-bedded rivers, / That madly dash themselves to shivers' (ll. 22-3), likewise echoes STC's more violent depiction of fragmenting water: 'A mighty fountain momentarily was forced: / Amid whose swift half-intermitted Burst / Huge fragments vaulted' (ll. 19-21). Both writers liken the water's irrepressible movement to dance, and both focus on the maze-like motion of the river, Hartley visualising this dynamic in a more interconnected fashion – 'Labyrinthine lightning dances, snaky network intertwining' (ll. 33-4) – than STC: 'And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever / It flung up momentarily the sacred river. / Five miles meandering with a mazy motion' (ll. 23-5). After the turning point of Hartley's poem – "'Tis gorgeous as a prophet's vision' (l. 41) – the descriptions of a 'sweet' tinkling 'brook' seem to refer to his own style of poetry (l. 42). The brook is 'heard, not seen' (l. 44), which is the title of a poem by Hartley (*CPW*, 138), while topics and images that he refers to – the pain of love conjured up by the mournful sound of the wind: 'It seem a very sigh, whose tone / Has much of love, but more of grief' (ll. 50-51); the music of

the wind: ‘That music which the wild gale seizes’ (l. 54); the ‘shrill November blast’ (l. 56); and the playful ‘sport a-weary child’ (l. 64) – all find reference points in his own verse. Through this elaborate intertextuality Hartley proposes that the rich network of words which forms ‘Kubla Khan’ is analogous to the glimmering ‘thousand molten colours’ of the ‘rush of rocky-bedded rivers’ (ll. 35, 22). Hartley finds that STC’s poem shares the organic dynamism of the river and, likewise, forms a vital ‘mosaic’ pathway of ‘rainbow jewels’ (ll. 36-7):

Such pavement never, well I ween,
Was made, by monarch or magician,
For Arab, or Egyptian queen;
'Tis gorgeous as a prophet's vision; [...]

(ll. 38-41)

The importance of juxtaposing the father’s fantastical and mythic poetic style with Hartley’s more sensitive approach, as exemplified by the little brook, is that Hartley stresses that the quieter voice is not smothered:

I've heard the myriad-voiced rills,
The many tongues, of many hills –
All gushing forth in new-born glory,
Striving each to tell its story –
Yet every little brook is known,
By a voice that is its own, [...]

(ll. 67-72)

In ‘How many bards gild the lapses of time’, Keats similarly presents the ‘throngs’ of past poetic voices as ultimately harmonious and enabling: ‘But no confusion, no disturbance rude / Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime’ (Stillinger 1978, 63-4, ll. 7-8). Hartley asserts with confidence that the integrity of his creativity and voice, as one of the ‘many tongues’ of poetry, was not ‘drowned out’ by what Lisa Gee terms the ‘Niagara of his father’s virtuosity’ (Gee 2000, xi). Moreover, he expresses enjoyment

in the richness and joy of his productivity: ‘Each exulting in the glee, / Of its new prosperity’ (ll. 73-4).

‘Who is the Poet?’: Hartley Coleridge and William Wordsworth

We have seen that Hartley Coleridge’s relationship with STC drove him to investigate the importance of name, fame, and humility. I will now turn to his relationship with William Wordsworth to see how Hartley explores these themes in his life-long attempt to demarcate his own literary identity and, thereby, enable him a better understanding of the role of the poet in general. Hartley had a deep respect for William as a poet, to whom he dedicated five published poems. These poems celebrate William’s ability to capture the essence of nature – ‘Of Nature’s inner shrine thou art the priest / Where most she works when we perceive her least’ (‘To Wordsworth’, 10, ll. 13-14) – and his ability to knit together mankind through mutual appreciation of his verse:

For long as man exists, immortal Bard,
Friends, husbands, wives, in sadness or in glee,
Shall love each other more for loving thee.

(‘To William Wordsworth’, 118, ll. 12-14)¹⁴²

Importantly, Hartley also saw merit in William’s later poetry, disagreeing with Derwent’s assessment of this work as ‘*poor* and *degenerate*’: ‘they are as perfect, perhaps more perfect, in their kind than any of their predecessors: but the kind is less intense, and therefore, incapable of that unique excellence which the disciples adore’ (LHC, 196).

¹⁴² For further praise of William Wordsworth see: ‘thy Genius were a potent star’ (‘To the Same’, 119, l. 3); ‘prose and rhyme / Too strong for aught but Heaven itself to tame, / Gush’d from a mighty Poet’ (‘Rydal’, 119, ll. 7-9); and ‘may the world rejoice to find alive / So good, so great a man, at seventy-five’ (‘To W. W. on his seventy-fifth birthday’, 206, ll. 18-19). Hartley also declared William’s ‘Ode on Immortality’ ‘decidedly the finest in any language’ (EM II, 101).

However, despite this apparent protection of William, throughout Hartley's writings there runs a subterranean counter-attack on his early poetics. While Hartley revered what William achieved through poetry, he thought less of him as a prose writer and objected to many of his principles. In my study of Hartley's reception in Appendix I(a), I highlighted Hartley's attempts to disentangle himself from the label of Wordsworth imitator, most notably in response to the 1833 *Quarterly* review: 'I know nothing of that "overweening worship of Wordsworth" which I am warned against. [...] I am not, and never was a convert to his peculiar sect of poetry' (*LHC*, 157).¹⁴³ So, while on the one hand Hartley hails the poet William as a 'mighty genius', on the other, like Byron, he deploys the hostile language of the periodical reviews to suggest that the prosaic William is part of an inward-looking cult.¹⁴⁴ The danger of the 'sect', from Hartley's point of view is that it detaches William from communion with his human subject matter and turns him into a slavish follower of arcane abstract principles. Hartley strongly resists being bracketed with such 'narrowness', as Byron terms it in *Don Juan* (McGann 1986, V, 4, l. 39). Hartley also uses William to criticize the egotistical tendencies of a poet: his attack on William's 'ownership' of the celandine, as we have seen in Chapter One – 'The Celandine one mighty bard may prize; / The Daisy no bard can monopolise' (165, ll. 13-4) – forms part of Hartley's larger discourse on the necessary humility of the poet.

The most cutting and irreverent criticism of William's prose style comes in a letter by Hartley to Derwent in 1826:

¹⁴³ Cf. Hartley's critique is evidently influenced by Francis Jeffrey's review of *The Excursion* in the *Edinburgh Review*; Jeffrey criticizes William Wordsworth's 'Long habits of seclusion' and belief in his own 'peculiar system', recommending that the 'inward transport' of poets 'should be tempered by an occasional reference to what will be thought of them by those ultimate dispensers of glory'; *ER* XXIV (November 1814): 3-4.

¹⁴⁴ William and STC were very offended by Jeffrey's accusation that they were part of a 'school' (see STC in *Biographia*, Chapter 3) so it is significant that Hartley joins the side of the reviews here.

As you do allude to defects in W[ordsworth]. you might as well have had a rap at his gasconading¹⁴⁵ prefaces, and that illtimed blundering Supplement, which is as full of sophistry and unfounded assertion as an egg's full of meat. Wordsworth's prose has done more to retard his fame, than the *simplest* of his poems. Why do you say nothing of the 'White-Doe' – so sweet, so beautiful? What a mighty genius is the Poet Wordsworth! What a dull proser is W. W. Esqre. of Rydal Mount, Distributor of stamps and brother to the Rev'd. the Master of Trinity! (*LHC*, 92-3).

Hartley's hostility to William's prose as extravagant and boastful reflects STC's attack in *Biographia Literaria*: STC states he objected to 'many parts of the Preface' as 'erroneous in principle, and as contradictory [...] both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves'.¹⁴⁶ At the time of Hartley's powerful mockery of William, cracks were developing in the relationship between Hartley and the Wordsworths. The same 1826 letter to Derwent details how Hartley had been avoiding Rydal Mount:

I have good, sufficient reasons for not being so intimate there as might *seem* advisable. What they are, I may some time tell you – I cannot tell my mother. N. B. You will see the propriety of not mentioning this in your letters to Greta-hall (*LHC*, 93).

The fact that Hartley is reluctant to tell his mother of the reasons for this rift suggests that it is the estrangement between STC and William, which began in 1821, that is the likely cause.

In the same year (1826), letters from Mary and William Wordsworth indicate the lack of sympathy with which they viewed Hartley's predicament. In June 1826 William writes to Alaric Watts: 'A son of Mr Coleridge lives in the neighbourhood of Ambleside, and is a very able writer; but he also, like most men of genius, is little to be depended upon', a comment which reveals that William is starting to criticize STC

¹⁴⁵ The *OED* defines the term to 'gasconade' as 'to boast extravagantly'.

¹⁴⁶ *Biographia Literaria*, vol. II, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 9-10.

through Hartley (*LWDW IV*, 455).¹⁴⁷ In a letter to John Kenyon, dated July 1826, Mary Wordsworth implies that Hartley is an embarrassment to his friends and to himself: ‘I wish I could give a good report of Hartley for whom you kindly enquire – but we have no hope that he will ever act worthy of himself or of his friends – he is at Ambleside, but doing nothing’ (*LWDW IV*, 473). This is exactly the manner in which Dorothy had described STC’s (in)activity twelve years earlier, on 24 April 1814: ‘Coleridge is at Bristol doing nothing – and how living I cannot tell’ (*LWDW III*, 143). In turn, Hartley’s criticisms of William in the 1826 letter to Derwent levy an attack not just on William’s prose style, but on his falling into, and judging by, arbitrary societal values and status ideals – a slump into banal convention which, Hartley argues, signals an abandonment of independent thought and judgement, and a betrayal of what William used to be – the ‘mighty genius’, ‘the Poet Wordsworth’.

Hartley offers an extensive delineation of his own poetic philosophy in the essay ‘Shakespeare and his Contemporaries’, first published in *Blackwood’s* in November 1828, which forms one of Hartley’s most convincing definitions of his poetic identity in opposition to William’s. The similarities in diction and thought between this essay and William’s own poetic manifesto, as outlined in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, suggests that Hartley is confronting William’s poetics directly. Both poets quote Aristotle’s definition of poetry: in the 1802 *Preface*, William recalls Aristotle’s statement that ‘Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing’; Hartley paraphrases: ‘according to Aristotle, poetry is the most catholic, the most universal, and therefore the most philosophical and prominent of all concrete compositions’ (*EM I*, 359).¹⁴⁸ Hartley states that poetry is ‘the common offspring of the heart and head in their highest state of

¹⁴⁷ For example, as we have seen, on 28 April 1814, in a letter to Thomas Poole, William criticizes STC’s reliability with regard to Hartley’s education: ‘I do not expect that C[oleridge] will be able to do anything himself’ (*LWDW III*, 145).

¹⁴⁸ *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Routledge, 2005), 301. All further reference to the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* will be to this edition.

improvement, emanating from the whole and common human nature' (359); while William less emphatically writes: 'Poetry is the image of man and nature' and 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (Brett and Jones 2005, 301, 291). It is Hartley's usage of the word 'common' which indicates the central divergence of his statement from William's: Hartley is placing the emphasis on commonality and stressing that 'human nature' and its 'offspring', poetry, are not peculiar to poets but shared by all – poetry is a reflection of all men, not just one, though it may spring from one creative mind. Thus Hartley asserts that a poet should not separate himself off from his fellow men and that the only power he has above others is that of refining his feelings.

In Hartley's counter argument to William's *Preface*, Hartley stresses that verse should be neither esoteric, nor transparent or whimsical:

[...] can that be poetry which confessedly has no other direction than to the temporary passions of the many, or to the peculiarities of a few? Yet such will ever be the productions of those who write for a multitude whom they despise (*EM I*, 359).

The crux of Hartley's statement is explicitly William Wordsworthian in diction, loaded with a democratic emphasis: 'The first duty of a poet, who aims at immortality, is to compose for men, as they are men, [...] as they are endued with common feelings, common faculties, a common sense of beauty and fitness, and a common susceptibility of certain impressions under certain conditions' (360), a sentiment which echoes William's famous declaration: 'What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected of him? He is a man speaking to men' (300). In the poem 'Who is the Poet?', Hartley likewise asks: 'Who is the Poet? Who the man whose lines / Live in the souls of men like household words?' (106, 1-2). Hartley

pinpoints the cause of neglect of poetic duty as being the poet's arrogant belief that the world is 'out of tune' with his superior intellect:

But this duty will almost always be neglected by him who sets out with a despair or a contempt of general sympathy. He feels that his own mind is not in accord with that of his fellow-creatures; he therefore is afraid, not without cause, of being unintelligible, for sympathy is the ground of all mutual understanding. But, unwilling to condemn that in himself which seems to be more exclusively his own, he attributes his difference to superiority. He would have the tone of his peculiar feelings to serve as the key-note of the world, and failing of this, he modestly concludes that the world is out of tune (*EM I*, 360-1).

Hartley could be alluding to William's 'The world is too much with us', which laments that humanity has lost touch with nature: 'Little we see in nature that is ours; / [...] For this, for every thing, *we are out of tune*' (*TV*, 150, ll. 3, 8; my italics). Hartley finds that too high a self-regard leads to a greedy intellectual vanity and solipsism which takes the poet further away from his duty as diviner and sharer of knowledge:

A presumptuous selfishness of intellect is the inevitable consequence of this conviction; the man becomes his own ideal excellence; he seeks for all things in himself; and in himself too, not as a partaker of the discourse and communion of reason, but as he is A. B. C, a gentleman possessed of such and such sensibilities and humours, quite as likely to proceed from bile as from inspiration (*EM I*, 360-1).

Hartley's 'out of tune' criticism also implicitly attacks William's elaborate description of the poet's superiority over 'common' man. Much of William's *Preface* elevates himself above mankind, an exposition which undermines his democratic statement in 1802 that he is a 'man speaking to men' in the 'language really used by men' (244, 289n). In the 1800 *Preface*, William states that it is the 'incidents of common life' which interest him, rather than each common life in and for itself (289). Within these 'incidents' can be traced the 'primary laws of our nature'; the essence of humanity (290). The 1802 version of the *Preface*, in which William inserts a passage of over

three hundred and fifty lines on ‘What is a Poet?’, separates William even more from the common man: while he places himself with ‘the people’ by stating (twice) that he will use the ‘language really used by men’ (289n, 299n), he segregates himself from them further by stating that these natural, common situations need moulding in order to be appealing and insightful – he will ‘throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; [...] to make these incidents and situations interesting’ (289n).¹⁴⁹

Elsewhere in the *Preface*, rather than elaborating on the shared power of feeling between man and poet, as Hartley does, William repeatedly uses the word ‘more’ to distinguish poets from other men: a poet is ‘possessed of more than usual organic sensibility’, ‘endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness’, has a ‘greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind’, ‘rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him’, is ‘affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present’, and has ‘acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels’ (this last attribute is repeated in the 1802 *Preface* but is more democratically charged: William admits that ‘these passions and thoughts and feelings are the *general* passions and thoughts and feelings of men’ (291, 300, 303n; my italics). Labouring the Poet’s superiority in this way betrays William’s latent anxiety over his own poetic selfhood; that by positioning himself with the people he might be belittling his own ego. Hartley would ask how William *knows* that the poet ‘rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him’?

¹⁴⁹ Susan Manly, in *Language, Custom and Nation in the 1790s: Locke, Tooke, Wordsworth, Edgeworth* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007) also notes this ambivalence in William’s understanding of common language and people: ‘Wordsworth’s frequent references to selection and modification of ordinary language [...] betray a real ambivalence about common language and the intellectual capacities of common people’ (212).

Hartley's focus is more on the concept of hidden life; the idea that many humans, even Hartley himself, are not always allowed the opportunity to access – or the voice to speak of – ‘the spirit of life that is in [them]’. While Hartley's verse, often about specific named individuals and children, displays an interest in them primarily for their own sake, it becomes clear as the 1802 *Preface* continues that William is using ‘common incidents’ to learn more about *himself* and humanity. He describes a compositional experience that is analogous to method acting in its appropriative immersion of creator in subject: ‘it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion and identify his own feelings with theirs’ (300). William comes closer and closer to his subject (the common man) until he usurps it and replaces it with his own self. Common, shared experience, William states, lies at the core of all accessible Art and is the ‘chief feeder’ of our minds (307). It is the mind's ‘perception of similitude in dissimilitude’ which recognizes self in other and so links us all through feeling and reaction, thus striving nearer towards his goal that poetry should contain universal truths and the essence of what it is to be human (307). While William's *Preface* is deeply committed to this more abstract notion of commonality as shared feeling, it also firmly asserts in more practical terms that ‘common’ people are not, and cannot be, poets, a statement which Hartley's writings would not support. Hartley's essay quietly corrects William's manifesto: William sets out to separate himself from ordinary man *and* speak to mankind; Hartley argues that the poet can only speak to man if he humbly professes himself to be a man like other men. As Susan Manly notes, William ‘preaches relationship’, as a fundamental poetic and societal principle, but he himself is out of tune with the majority of the subject and audience for whom he is trying to speak (Manly 2007, 136).

Hartley's vision of poets as being part of the human race, rather than spiritually superior beings, causes him to question the meaning and value of great intellect. In 'To Soaring Souls', Hartley outlines the dangers of intellectual ambition and over-reaching. The observation of a butterfly – a symbol of Psyche and the suffering soul – near the summit of Mont Blanc causes the poet-speaker to muse on the spiritual remoteness that highly developed intellect can impose.¹⁵⁰ He asks the creature, and implicitly asks man, 'What art thou seeking? What hast thou lost?'; 'Art thou too fine for the world below?' (157, ll. 11, 15):

Or dost thou fancy, as many have done,
That, because the hill-top is nearest the sun
The sun loves better the unthaw'd ice,
That does nothing but say that he is bright,
And dissect, like a prism, his braided light –

(ll. 21-5)

Hartley's reference to 'unthaw'd ice' alludes to the unreachable imagination that is the Poet's region. This may be a response to William's 1802 *Preface* where he states that 'the Poet must descend from this supposed height, and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves', a 'descent' that the rest of William's *Preface*, and his poetry, does not, however, fully endorse (Brett and Jones, 303n).¹⁵¹ Hartley suggests that the humble man's mental climate is more

¹⁵⁰ In 'Butterfly', D. H. Lawrence uses a completely reverse butterfly motif to Hartley's depiction of the 'over-reaching' butterfly. Lawrence's incredulity springs from why the butterfly is content to settle on his lowly shoe: 'Butterfly, why do you settle on my shoe, and sip the dirt on my / shoe' (Kalnins 1992, 138, l. 2). It is implicit through Lawrence's repetition of the strong blowing wind that he is anticipating, indeed, imploring the creature 'content on my shoe' to fly higher. In Lawrence's poem, the butterfly is a symbol of resurrection, immortality of the soul and the transmutation from one life to the next. The butterfly's movement is from the known physical world of the shoe and the garden into the ethereality of the unknown. While Lawrence lets the butterfly leave the known world – beseeches him to – Hartley's poem beckons the butterfly down and as such could also be read as betraying a comparative fear of the unknown and anxiety over the notion of resurrection.

¹⁵¹ In a letter to John Prior Estlin, STC refers to his own occasional silliness ('Puns and Conundrums') as a mere 'Avalanche', 'loosened by sudden thaw from the Alps of my Imagination' (*CCL* I, 223). Andrew Keanie cites this letter when distinguishing between the imaginations of father and son in 'Hartley Coleridge: Son of the Mariner, King of Ejuxria', *CB* 28 (Winter 2006): 57-8. Hartley's imagination, as Keanie remarks, 'is more consistently, or, one might say, more thoroughly, thawed through' (58).

hospitable and endurable and that egotistical over-reaching leads only to isolation and emotional dissatisfaction:

And 'tis better for us to remain where we are,
 In the lowly valley of duty and care,
 Than lonely to stray to the heights above,
 Where there's nothing to do, and nothing to love.

(158, ll. 39-42)

Hartley is writing against STC's elitist philosophy as laid down in Chapter XII of *Biographia Literaria* where he figures the difference between 'transcendental' and 'spontaneous' consciousness as the difference between the view from a mountain-top and that from the 'scanty vale' below (*BL* I, 235-9). While STC in these terms dismisses the idea that the common man can be a philosopher, Hartley's stance is an advancement of William's belief that men in 'Low and rustic life' possess a 'more permanent and [...] far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets' (245).

In this way, Hartley displays a withdrawal from philosophical searching in favour of the known sensory world, as in 'Humming Birds':

I may not feel:- I never may behold
 The spark of life, [...]
 Yet am I glad that life and joy were there,
 That the small creature was as blithe as fair.

(155, ll. 13-14, 17-18)

Hartley thus reveals his poetics to be akin to the young Keats's theory of the 'end and aim of poesy':

[...] though no great minist'ring reason sorts
 Out the dark mysteries of human souls
 To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls
 A vast idea before me, and I glean

Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen
The end and aim of Poesy.

(‘Sleep and Poetry’, Stillinger 1978, 76, ll. 288-93)

Hartley is likewise not dissatisfied with the obscurity of life, although he believes poetry should not mirror this obscurity but be as accessible as possible. Here Hartley conforms to Keats’s definition of ‘*Negative Capability*’ which, Keats argues, applies ‘when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason’ (Rollins 1958, I, 193). Keats goes on to argue that STC did not have such a capability:

Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration (193-4).

Hartley, on the other hand, *is* content with half knowledge. Like Keats, Hartley prioritized ‘a fine isolated verisimilitude’ – as I have shown in Chapter One, Hartley’s preoccupation with revealing the essence of nature through rigorous description shows him to be preoccupied with a ‘sense of Beauty’ and truth above all else, a fixation which enables the ‘sublime of nearness’ (Kauffman 1989, 195).

Hartley’s fundamental belief is in the equality of all men – the poet cannot escape the limits of mortal knowledge and is thus seeking for truths that can never be found: ‘Flutter he, flutter he, high as he will, / A butterfly is but a butterfly still’ (158, ll. 37-8). Hartley points to the essential insignificance of the butterfly and alludes to the ultimate fragility of all human life. He confronts the value of intellect explicitly when discussing Dorothy Wordsworth’s mental deterioration in a letter to his mother, where he muses on the deceptively elevating nature of intellect and the reality that, in the eyes of God, all are equal: ‘the very fact that the All good should have permitted such an

intellect [Dorothy's] to fall into confusion, proves how little we ought to value ourselves on intellectual endowments' (*LHC*, 202).

Hartley's discourse on humility and the emptiness of fame is fundamental to his poetics. Commenting on Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard', he adds that 'Men as lowly as any in the "country churchyard" have played the part of Cromwells' (*EM* II, 108). Hartley thus prefigures George Eliot's elevation of those who 'rest in unvisited tombs', and takes Gray's recognition of unsung heroes even further by suggesting not that these dead men had the potential to be Cromwell figures, but that within the limits of their own life, rather than a wider public arena, they *did* fulfil a grand role.¹⁵² In his introduction to *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford*, Hartley argues that posterity is not an infallible record of high achievement: 'high intellectual celebrity does not always confer personal notoriety, or preserve the events of a life from oblivion' (*MF*, xix-xx). Hartley offers the consolation that fame is empty and illusory and, after quoting 'Tintern Abbey', asserts that true existence lies in our private everyday lives, known only to ourselves: 'the virtues of home; the hourly self-denials':

'That best portion of a good man's life, –
His little daily unrecorded acts¹⁵³
Of kindness and of love,'

the virtues, which, in either sex, are inherited from the mother, and consist in *being* rather than in *doing*, permit no stronger light than gleams from the fireside. They flourish best when unobserved [...] (*MF*, xx).

In this way, Hartley endorses the unquantifiable significance and influence of what George Eliot terms 'unhistoric acts'. It is also a revision of his lamentation that his poetic 'ministry' was 'unregarded' (*NP*, 87, l. 9). Under this definition, Hartley

¹⁵² Interestingly, Dorothy's late journals show that she shared Hartley and George Eliot's awareness of the importance of hidden lives: she visited 'unvisited tombs' and recorded in her journals the epitaphs of people that were unknown to her (DCMS 104.4 September 25–November 1, 1826).

¹⁵³ Hartley is paraphrasing William's 'Tintern Abbey' sentiment which actually reads: 'His little, nameless, unremembered, acts' (*LB*, 117, ll. 35-6). While William focuses on that which is forgotten, Hartley once again highlights that which is never even noticed – 'unrecorded'.

suggests that his poetry ‘flourish[ed] best when unobserved’, something that Dorothy Wordsworth, as I will later show, also implies in her *Journals*. It is significant that Hartley recognizes that the heroism of private, unsung life is an inherently feminine characteristic: it is ‘inherited from the mother’. His argument for hidden life is important to our understanding of his own life and literary relationships as Hartley is implicitly stating that he wants to be judged not in the realm of poets, but that of common man, accountable to himself and God only. For Hartley, equality and humility are central to his existential philosophy – he *has* to believe that every being is created for a purpose:

All occupations cannot be equally honourable, but all should be equally respectable. Sir Joshua’s retort is not very profound.¹⁵⁴ Arts and sciences are no more an end than mechanics or agriculture; an enjoyment necessarily confined to a few cannot be the final cause of human existence. I would rather adopt the heresy of Dean Tucker than admit that any human being is created for an end in which himself has no part (*EM* II, 253).

Thus we can see that it is Hartley’s belief in the necessary value of all men, rather than a sense of personal failure, which fuels such seemingly introverted and pessimistic poems as ‘Let me not deem that I was made in vain’.¹⁵⁵

Hartley’s parodies of William and his poetry, which are rarely quoted, reveal Hartley’s irreverence for the elder poet even more overtly. ‘He lived amongst th’ untrodden ways’, first published in *Notes and Queries*, 19 June 1869, parodies William’s ‘She dwelt among th’ untrodden ways’. Hartley’s poem details William’s decline in popularity during the Rydal Mount years: ‘A bard whom there were none to praise, / And very few to read’; ‘Unread his works – his “Milk-white Doe”’ (*NP*, 98, ll.

¹⁵⁴ Hartley is referring to the following anecdote: ‘When Dr. Tucker the famous Dean of Gloucester, asserted before the Society for encouraging Commerce and Manufactures, that a pin-maker was a more useful and valuable member of society than Raphael, Sir Joshua was nettled, and replied with some asperity’ (*EM* II, 252).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. STC: ‘To have lived in vain must be a painful thought to any man, and especially so to him who has made literature his profession’ (*BL* I, 219).

3-4, 9). Crucially, Hartley criticizes William's brand of intellect as obscure, selfish, and impenetrable:

Behind a cloud his mystic sense
 Deep-hidden, who can spy?
 Bright as the night, when not a star
 Is shining in the sky.

(NP, 98, ll. 5-8)

A further parody by Hartley of William's 'Peter Bell' was not even committed to paper, so fearful was Hartley that it would be discovered by William.¹⁵⁶ A friend of Hartley's, Joseph Burns, details how he persuaded the reluctant Hartley to dictate the poem: 'I prevailed on him however not long ago to repeat it slowly so that I might transcribe it to paper, under a promise it should never be made use of during his life time' (NP, 99n). When Burns threatened to publish the poem after Hartley's death, Derwent and Sara Coleridge intervened, fearing what the public would make of Hartley's often severe satirical treatment of his so-called poetic 'father'. In a letter to Burns, Derwent dismisses Hartley's irreverence as a meaningless '*jeu d'esprit*', 'which however harmless when recited in the *safe* retirement of a domestic circle for the amusement of his friends, no real friend of my Brother would for obvious reasons permit to see the light' (NP, 99n). Burns, however, rightly felt that the parody would 'rivet the attention of Men of letters' and significantly add to our comprehension of their literary relationship, pointing out that the only obstacle to its publication in Hartley's lifetime was Hartley's anxiety that William would hear of the parody second-hand: 'a Ballad of Peter Bell, a severe satire on Wordsworth's *precious effusion* under the same name, which was never committed to paper by my friend, fearful it should meet the eye of some mutual acquaintance' (99n). Once again, Derwent's attempts to 'edit' Hartley

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix III for full text of Hartley's parody of 'Peter Bell'.

result in misrepresentation: it is clear from Hartley's letters and essays that Hartley's criticisms of William are sincere and that he was not intimidated by the 'mighty genius [...] the Poet Wordsworth', 'W. W. Esqre. of Rydal Mount' (*LHC*, 93).

In parodying 'Peter Bell', Hartley was joining an honourable tradition: many poets, including John Hamilton Reynolds and Percy Shelley, satirized William's poem.¹⁵⁷ Hartley's wry parodies carry, for example, a flavour of Byron's humorous criticism of, and irreverence towards, William in Byron's 'Epilogue' ['A Parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*' (1820)]:¹⁵⁸

And now I've seen so great a fool
As William Wordsworth is for once;
I really wish that Peter Bell
And he who wrote it were in hell,
For writing nonsense for the Nonce.–

(McGann 1986, IV, 286, ll. 6-10)

Just as Hartley criticizes William's secluded 'mystic sense' in 'He lived amidst th' untrodden ways', and also in his counter-argument to William's *Preface* to the *Lyrical Ballads*, so Byron criticizes, in the 'Dedication' to *Don Juan*:

You, Gentlemen! by dint of long seclusion
From better company have kept your own
At Keswick, and through still continued fusion
Of one another's minds at last have grown
To deem as a most logical conclusion
That Poesy has wreaths for you alone;
There is a narrowness in such a notion
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for ocean.

(McGann 1986, V, 4, ll. 33-40)

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, John Hamilton Reynolds 'Peter Bell' (1819), 'Peter Bell v Peter Bell' (1820) and 'Benjamin the Waggoner' (1819); Shelley's 'Peter Bell the Third' (October 1819); William Maginn, 'A Lyrical Ballad' (1819); Robert Montgomery, 'The Age Reviewed' (1828).

¹⁵⁸ See also 'English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers, A Satire': 'Let simple WORDSWORTH chime his childish verse' (McGann 1980, I, 258, l. 917); and 'Versicles': 'I looked at Wordsworth's milk-white "Rylstone Doe" / Hillo!' (McGann 1986, IV, 114, ll. 11-12).

Hartley shares Byron's wider scope of vision and a similar contempt for the 'narrowness of notion' involved in the assertion that poetry is an exclusive sphere. Interestingly, in spite of his affiliation with William and STC, Hartley does not see himself as part of the 'Lake School' in an age which defined poetic movements and allegiances. Writing on 'Modern English Poetesses' in September 1840, Hartley indicates his admiration for Byron as a man and poet in contrast to William; for Hartley, Byron held a more immediate and personal connection with humanity than William's more abstract 'communion':

[Caroline Norton] is the Byron of our modern poetesses. She has very much of that intense personal passion by which Byron's poetry is distinguished from the larger grasp and deeper communion with man and nature of Wordsworth. She has also Byron's beautiful intervals of tenderness, his strong practical thought, and his forceful expression.¹⁵⁹

Hartley's essays are rarely analysed in depth. Close analysis of the dialogue they set up with William significantly modifies the prevailing assumption that Hartley was artistically threatened by his metaphorical father. In a subversive letter to a Mrs. Green, Hartley goes so far as to imagine himself usurping the Poet Laureate. Hartley claims that if he were to assume this position he would relish it and hints that William was ignoring a time of rich poetical potential: 'No doubt you have heard of Mr. Wordsworth's accession to the vacant laureateship – He is to hold it as a sinecure – I wish he would appoint me his Deputy – No Laureate ever attained the wreath under more propitious circumstances – The Queen was delivered of a Daughter – The duke of Sussex died – He should have composed a pastoral dialogue of alternate lamentation and rejoicing' (*NP*, 96).

¹⁵⁹ Hartley Coleridge, 'Modern English Poetesses', *QR* 66 (1840): 376.

The testimony of the local dalesmen who lived amongst the two poets suggests that it was Hartley who was the real poet of the people: they perceived William as a remote figure, but accepted Hartley as one of them, and as speaking for them. In *Reminiscences of Wordsworth Among the Peasantry of Westmoreland*, Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley sought to gather local perceptions of William, yet *all* of the testimonials he collates mention Hartley. As Rawnsley observes, it was seemingly impossible for the locals to talk of William or poetry without Hartley's name arising: 'I had considerable difficulty here, as in almost all of my interviews with the good folk, of keeping to the object or subject in hand. For li'le Hartley's ghost was always coming to the front' (Rawnsley 1968, 22).¹⁶⁰ It is doubly ironic that William and Mary would accuse Hartley of 'doing nothing' when William himself held the position of poet laureate as sinecure (the only poet to request such a condition) and when it is clear that Hartley was very active amongst his local community and remembered by all with whom he came in contact (*LWDW* IV, 473). Rawnsley's *Reminiscences* reveal that Hartley's social interaction and poetic agency embodies the very type of silent work that Hartley's own writings often seek to elevate.

'For I have lost the race I never ran': Reclaiming Identity from William Wordsworth's 'To H. C., Six Years Old'

According to Derwent, William's grief upon hearing of Hartley's death was that of a father: Derwent states simply, 'He was deeply affected' (*Memoir*, ccii-cciii). William wanted Hartley to be buried in the Wordsworth family plot of Grasmere churchyard, a request which indicates Hartley's position as part of the Wordsworth, rather than the

¹⁶⁰ Many of these testimonials indicate that the locals preferred Hartley, as a man and poet, over William, and also that Hartley was unfairly treated by William: 'Nay, nay, I doant think li'le Hartley ever set much by him, never was verra friendly, I doubt. Ye see, he [Mr. Wordsworth] was sae hard upon him, sae verra hard upon him, gev him sae much hard preaching about his ways' (23). This account, given by Hartley's landlord at Nab Cottage, also asserts that Hartley, like Dorothy, contributed much to William's verse: 'Hartley helped him a deal, I understand, did t'best part o' his poems for him, sae t' sayin' is' (23).

Coleridge, family: ‘Let him lie by us – he would have wished it’ (cciii).¹⁶¹ Griggs remarks that before Hartley’s funeral ‘Wordsworth was too overwrought to enter [Hartley’s] room’ (*LHC*, 299). Derwent goes on to imply that the intensity of William’s grief was due, in part, to feelings of guilt that his ‘To H. C.’ prophecy had come true:

Perhaps he remembered that the fear which he had so beautifully expressed had proved more prophetic than the hope by which he had put it from him, – that ‘the morrow’ had come to him, and many a morrow with a full freight of ‘injuries’ – from which he had not been saved by an early, a sudden, or an easy death. He dropt some hint of these thoughts, but his words were few (*Memoir*, cciii).

‘Long time a child’, Hartley’s poetic response to William’s ‘To H. C., Six Years Old’ (1802), challenges his mythologization in *STC*’s and William’s verse. The poem finds Hartley attempting to wrest back his identity from a liminal position: he balances the startling realization of the physical reality of his ageing mortal self – ‘years / Had painted manhood on my cheek’; ‘I find my head is grey’ (7, ll. 1-2, 10) – with the boundless but illusory freedom of his immortal self – ‘For yet I lived like one not born to die’; ‘No hope I needed, and I knew no fears’ (ll. 3, 5). Hartley suggests that he spent his life fighting the mythical version of his child self which was immortalized in some of the most famous poems of the Romantic period: the ‘Dear Babe’ in *STC*’s ‘Frost at Midnight’ and ‘The Nightingale’; the ‘little Child’ and ‘limber Elf’ of ‘Christabel’; ‘my babe’ in ‘Fears in Solitude’, and the ‘Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!’, ‘little Child’ of William’s ‘Immortality Ode’.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Hartley’s brother and sister, Derwent and Sara, were, however, responsible for erecting the footstone to Hartley’s grave.

¹⁶² ‘Frost at Midnight’, l. 44; ‘The Nightingale’, l. 91; ‘Christabel’, Part II, l. 656; ‘Fears in Solitude’, l. 226; ‘Immortality Ode’ ll. 114, 124. Roger Robinson notes: ‘Surely no particular child, not even the child whose birth is celebrated in Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue, ever had so much beautiful and genuinely great poetry written about him as did Hartley before he was seven years old’; see ‘Hartley Coleridge’, *CB* 8 (Autumn 1996): 2.

William's 'To H. C.' shares STC's tendency – as we have seen in the aspen leaf allusions – to present Hartley as an ethereal creation, ungrounded and floating:

The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;
 Thou Faery Voyager! that dost float
 In such clear water, that thy Boat
 May rather seem
 To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
 Suspended in a stream as clear as sky [...]

(*TV*, 100, ll. 4-9)

STC's letters and notebooks abound with otherworldly presentations of Hartley, rather than viewing him as a physical child: he tells Southey in 1801 that 'little Hartley' 'uses the air & the Breezes as skipping Ropes', and remarks to John Thelwall in the same year that 'From morning to night' Hartley 'whirls about and about, whisks, whirls, and eddies, like a blossom in a May-breeze' (*CCL* II, 746; 668). As we have seen in Chapter One, in 'From Country to Town' ('Continued') Hartley highlights the dangers of an isolated selfhood and argues that the self should, and must, be strengthened and grounded through becoming a constituent part of a more meaningful whole:

Thus like one drop of oil upon a flood,
 In uncommunicating solitude,
 Single am I amid the countless many.

(15, ll. 12-14)

Here Hartley modifies William and STC's favoured view of the free-floating self; William's 'Thou Faery Voyager!', and STC's 'Spirit dancing on an aspen Leaf' (*TV*, 100, l. 5; *CCL* I, 615). Hartley implies that such extreme independence stultifies self-expression and –development. William prophesies that Hartley will remain an eternal child: nature will 'Preserve for thee, by individual right, / A young Lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks' (*TV*, 101, ll. 23-4). But the bleakness that permeates Hartley's response implies that the 'season of delight' (childhood) cannot be continued into

adulthood: ‘Long time a child, and still a child’; ‘And still I am a child, tho’ I be old’ (7, ll. 1, 13). Hartley bemoans the fact that public perception of him as an eternal child-figure obstructs what he perceives to be his adult personal and poetic identity. Thus Hartley exposes the fallacy and danger of the idealized Wordsworthian eternal childhood.¹⁶³ Hartley’s exposition is doubly bold, for Hartley criticizes not only William’s projection of an ‘eternal child’ label onto him. More significantly, he overrides William’s belief in the sustaining continuity of childhood, a principle which lies at the core of William’s poetic ideology. As I first suggested in Chapter One, Hartley asserts that childhood

is a paradise from which we are quickly sent forth, and a flaming sword prohibits our regress thither. Those who cry up the simplicity of old times ought to consider this. Human nature, and entire human nature, is the poet’s proper study (*EM I*, 16-17).

Hartley’s imagery and diction – the phrase ‘regress thither’ in particular – suggests that he is boldly attacking William’s ‘Immortality Ode’ sentiment that the glory of childhood and pre-existence *is* accessible:

Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither –
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

(*TV*, 276, ll. 165-70)

While William believes that we ‘Can in a moment travel thither’, Hartley asserts that a ‘flaming sword prohibits our regress thither’ to this ‘paradise’; a probable allusion to the ‘flaming sword, / Which chased the first-born out of Paradise’ in Byron’s ‘Heaven

¹⁶³ Hartley’s criticism of the William Wordsworthian emphasis on childhood as the ideal state is also noted by Plotz, which she describes in more negative terms: according to Plotz, Hartley’s so-called ‘failure’ both ‘embodies and judges the Romantic discourse of essential childhood’ (Plotz 2001, 249).

and Earth, A Mystery' (McGann 1991, VI, 376, ll. 785-6). Moreover, the word 'regress' implies that for Hartley such a journey would entail degeneration, rather than self-improving growth. Hartley's controversial suggestion is that the 'proper' poet should not place such emphasis on the bliss of childhood and that 'entire human nature' is the mature poet's study. Interestingly, unlike William, Dorothy was a keen observer of the *reality* of Hartley's growth: she observes on 20 June 1804 (when Hartley was seven), 'It seemed to me that all that was left of the *Child* was wearing out of his face' (LWDWI, 483).

The concluding image of 'To H. C.' portrays Hartley's purity tempered by an external fragility and deep sensibility:

Thou art a Dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,
Not doom'd to jostle with unkindly shocks;
Or to be trail'd along the soiling earth;
A Gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives;
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
Slips in a moment out of life.

(TV, 101, ll. 27-33)

Lucy Newlyn notes that William's depiction of Hartley as a 'Dew-drop' invokes Andrew Marvell's 'Orient Dew', 'Trembling lest it grow impure'.¹⁶⁴ A dew-drop epitomizes freshness, purity, and also both the transience and biological renewal of life; each dew-drop is a distinct entity, but all are destined to vaporize and so return to one original source. Dew-drops represent the understanding of individual identity as both distinct and conglomerate that so perplexed STC – 'I would make a pilgrimage to the Deserts of Arabia to find the man who could make [me] understand how the *one can be many!*' (CN I, 1561) – and which Hartley sought to define in his verse through the

¹⁶⁴ Lucy Newlyn, *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1986), 146.

notion of a relational self. The trembling nature of dew perfectly embodies the fragile ego; one knock and the integral stability of both are destroyed. Vaporization (or death) is the only salvation for its insecurity; a process which will end its ‘pain’, but in doing so will extinguish its independent existence.¹⁶⁵ Likewise, William believes that nature will just as suddenly reclaim the mercurial Hartley – ‘end thee quite’, a phrase which recalls the sinister abruptness of ‘Lucy’s’ death in ‘A slumber did my spirit seal’: ‘No motion has she now, no force’, and ‘Three years she grew in sun and shower’: ‘She died’ (*LB*, 164, l. 5; 222, l. 39).¹⁶⁶ William’s dew-drop motif is significant: we have seen that Hartley frequently figures the self as a drop of water in his verse. But Hartley may also be drawing on Keats’s representation of dew as a positive metaphor for the transience and precariousness of life’s passage in ‘Sleep and Poetry’: ‘Stop and consider! life is but a day; / A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way’ (Stillinger 1978, 71, 85-6).

The famous line, ‘For I have lost the race I never ran’ (7, l. 11), on which ‘Long time a child’ pivots, is often used as proof of Hartley’s defeatist admission of his inherent poetic inhibition and weakness. Don Paterson diagnoses Hartley’s fundamentally pessimistic and weak outlook in the equally disillusioned line ‘No hope have I to live a deathless name’: ‘a spineless edition of poor Hartley Coleridge: / *No hope have I to live a deathless name...*’.¹⁶⁷ But the central engagement with, and critique of, William’s mythical representation of the child-Hartley in ‘Long time a child’, would suggest that this phrase is *not* self-condemnatory, but critical of his poetic parents, who, Hartley suggests, displaced his identity and poetry from the ‘race’ of life. Moreover, Hartley criticizes the public: he suggests he has been judged indiscriminately

¹⁶⁵ The trembling dew-drop is also analogous to the trembling leaf image which Hartley identifies with in ‘Full well I know’ (*NP*, 69, l. 4).

¹⁶⁶ STC also recognizes in ‘Album Verses: “Dewdrops are the Gems of Morning”’ that the dew-drop is a harbinger both of hope and of potential loss: ‘Dew-drops are the Gems of Morning, / But the Tears of mournful Eve’ (*PWII*, ll. 1-2).

¹⁶⁷ Don Paterson, ‘The Alexandrian Library’, ll. 161-2, in *Nil Nil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 30.

as having lost a race which he was not even in – his verse was never ‘in the running’ because it was not looked at independently, critics preferring, instead, to latch on to the entrancing child portrait of him presented in the verse of STC and William. Keanie’s more positive assessment of Hartley rightly recognizes that only in the light of unreasonable expectations did Hartley ‘fail’: ‘Labouring under the conflicting demands of society’s expectations (of the son of STC) and his own unique individuality, Hartley “failed” ’ (Keanie 2006, 61).

The important phrase, ‘time is my debtor for my years untold’ (7, l. 14), like ‘Full well I know’, points to Hartley’s state of overwhelming frustration that his poetic voice was not being heard – not being ‘told’. As in ‘Full well I know’, this frustration is also temporally related – that his lifetime has not been noted in real time, his years being literally not counted, so often is Hartley’s age stalled at the six years of William’s ‘To H. C.’. The desultory enforced idleness which Hartley’s lament speaks of, and his recognition that he is now trapped as time’s victim, again has shades of Shakespeare: ‘I wasted time, and now doth time waste me’ (*King Richard II*, V.v, l. 49). But Hartley is regretting a failure of transmission rather than a personal and poetic degeneration. As in ‘What can a poor man do but love and pray?’ – ‘I am a debtor, and I cannot pay’ (17, l. 4) – Hartley fears that his poetic productivity has not been viewed as a viable ‘currency’; these poems replete with monetary allusions suggest a frustrated search for a medium through which to speak and so repay the debt of life, and, moreover, his fear that he is now impotent to do so. No critic has as yet, engaged in a serious analysis of ‘Long time a child’ – critics usually isolate and decontextualize the most pitiful statements in order to present Hartley as a figure of pathos and substantiate their claims that he was an immature and failed poet. Yet the sense of failure that Hartley expresses here springs only from disappointment that his attempts to liberate himself from his conflicted position as son of STC have not been recognized. As I have shown in my

analysis of the four key poems on STC at the beginning of this chapter, Hartley did not accept that he was written into being by STC and William Wordsworth. Furthermore, his relational poetics embody the liberation of self in enforced marginality which, Hartley proclaims in ‘Long time a child’, has not been recognized by the public.

Lucy Newlyn argues that ‘Long time a child’ proves that Hartley was ‘trapped by the myth of himself’ (Newlyn 1986, 164). While Hartley does play into the preordained childlike persona ironically – in this poem and elsewhere – it is never to the extent that his independent poetic voice is stifled. This realization can only be achieved if we look at Hartley’s entire literary output – as I have shown in Chapter One, Hartley is predominantly a poet of the ‘myriad multitude of human lives’ rather than the solipsistic self. Newlyn is right to proclaim the sonnet ‘Long time a child’ a ‘protest against being embalmed’, but then she reveals that she, like Plotz, finds the myth of Hartley irresistible by concluding: ‘He is metaphorically still a “child”, retarded in his growth, and mocked by a potential he will never be able to fulfil. [...] There is pathos both in his acceptance of a symbolic role, and in his not growing beyond it’ (Newlyn 1986, 164). But Hartley *does* grow ‘beyond his symbolic role’, as I have shown above. Newlyn undermines her sensitive analysis of the intertextual dialogue between Hartley’s sonnet and William’s dedicatory poem by falling back on the cliché of arrested development. Hartley has become ‘embalmed’ in this sonnet because critics do not engage with the many companion poems which reveal community and relationship, rather than his own personal misfortunes, to be the central drive of his poetics. Hartley embraces and develops Wordsworthian themes of childhood, the past, memory, and humility, but analysis of their poetic and prose dialogues shows how fundamentally divergent Hartley and William’s poetic agendas were. Hartley was both boldly defying his literary heritage and actively attempting to revise William’s poetics, a view which deflates the critical convention that William was Hartley’s poetic father.

The dialogue between Hartley and his publisher Edward Moxon in the latter years of Hartley's life reveals the high regard in which Hartley was held, and confirms that the widespread perception of him as a meek and fatalistic 'loser' in the 'race' of life is a fallacy. In August 1841 Hartley writes:

Did you see the abuse of me in the 'Atlas'? I am glad of it; I find I can stand fire. I am like a soldier who has been in battle (*LHC*, 250).

In a letter to Moxon written seven years later in January 1848, Hartley repeats the war metaphor to figure his battle against the critics:

I am not angry with my critics. Rather, I am glad of the experience they have afforded me. I feel like a soldier that has smelt gunpowder, and found that he can stand fire (*LHC*, 297-8).

This 1848 letter to Moxon was written in the final year of Hartley's life which proves that his authorial enthusiasm and self-belief remained steadfast until death. Such evidence does not accord with the popular understanding that Hartley died a self-pitying, dispirited and defeated writer.

'We grappled like two wrestlers': Derwent Coleridge, Hartley Coleridge, and Sibling Rivalry

Hartley Coleridge's successful construction of authorial identity in the shadow of William Wordsworth and STC suggests that Bloom's focus on patrilineal influence is not the only, or even the most extreme, pressure that a writer has to face. Marlon Ross argues in *The Contours of Masculine Desire* that while 'the posthumous rivalry with the progenitor is more or less settled before it begins', conflict between contemporaries also presents a different, possibly *greater*, threat to self: 'competition that ensues between the poet and his contemporaries [...] represent as much a threat to his self-creation and

self-possession as his progenitors' (Ross 1989, 92). This would suggest that it is not, as Bate argues, the past that is the 'greatest single problem', but the present (Bate 1979, 4). My analysis of the Derwent and Hartley Coleridge fraternal relationship supports this theory of influence which recognizes the lateral – particularly sibling – bond, as the most influential and potentially inhibiting relationship.

Hartley suffers the strongest identity struggle in relation to his brother Derwent, which elucidates Ross's theory of sibling competition, a rivalry that is intensified when we consider that Hartley is grappling with a contemporary who is also a biological brother. While I have shown that Hartley's letters, essays, and prose show a deep gratitude to his father, when Hartley talks of, or to, Derwent there is often a painful mixture of fear, guilt, shame, and worthlessness. Derwent did not understand his brother's eccentricities and, in an outburst, reveals that he viewed Hartley as an immature embarrassment:

Would not this be playing a part, justifiable only toward a child, or a lunatic? My dear, dear Brother, there are those who regard you in one or both of these lights – some with kindly feelings, that they may excuse, that which they must else condemn...And would you shelter *yourself*, would you wish *me* to shelter you under such a plea?¹⁶⁸

Hartley saw Derwent only twice between 1822 and Hartley's death in 1848. The 1843 encounter was fraught with tension and dissatisfaction and induced a 'nervous feverishness' within Hartley (*LHC*, 269). Hartley's writings after this visit make clear that he sorely missed Derwent, yet when they are reunited their understanding of one another appears to be fundamentally blocked.¹⁶⁹ A poem composed on the occasion of

¹⁶⁸ Taken from an unpublished manuscript, ALS September 28, 1846, amongst the *Hartley Coleridge Papers*, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (Quoted in Plotz 2001, 200).

¹⁶⁹ Hartley's disappointment at his brother's departure is recorded in a letter to his mother: 'I wish he could have stayed longer. He was so much sought after, that we had very little quiet time together, and besides, the meeting after so long an interval in which so much to regret and on my part, so much to blame had taken place, produced a degree of nervous feverishness, which was only just subsiding, when his leave of absence expired' (*LHC*, 269).

their meeting, 'To Derwent Coleridge', communicates the inferiority Hartley felt in Derwent's presence vividly: Hartley figures himself as a vulnerable 'reed' whose superficially strong exterior – 'seeming stanch, by might of brittle frost' – belies an inherently 'flaccid' and 'lank' centre (263, ll. 5, 8, 7). Derwent, meanwhile, is portrayed as possessing the deep inner strength of a 'pine' (l. 9). Thus it is *only* when in the company of his brother that Hartley falls for any time into the 'spineless' weak persona with which he has so often been associated. Interestingly, this image of Hartley as lacking a strong core identity is a trait that Derwent picks up and emphasizes in the *Memoir* (see Appendix I(a)). Though the poem depicts the brothers as two independent plants fighting against nature's external elements, the poem's opening line – in the most Bloomian of Hartley's assertions – indicates that the battle for survival was also with each other: 'We grappled like two wrestlers, long and hard' (l. 1). In a letter to Derwent dated August 1830, in which Hartley includes a sonnet on Derwent and his wife, Hartley indicates how sensitive he was to his brother's criticism: 'I will give you a Sonnet – but mind – not to be so severely criticized as you used to criticize my poor efforts' (*LHC*, 119). Most tellingly, Hartley gives his strongest sign of poetic inhibition when talking of his 'fear' of his brother. In a letter to Derwent, Hartley once again employs the childbirth metaphor he had used to describe his poetic relation to his father, but this time it is darkened with connotations of abortion and infanticide:

Many are the Sonnets, Songs, Epistles, Elegies, *jeux d'esprit*, humourous and sentimental articles, that I have either strangled in the birth, and murder'd as soon as born, for fear of you. Verily you were the most merciless, perhaps because the honestest critic I ever met with (*LHC*, August 1830, 119).

Compare the above quotation with Hartley's view of his paternal influence: 'but for [STC], my things would either not have been conceived, or would have been still-born and would have perished in the infancy of neglect' (*EM* II, 266). While STC exerts a

germinating and nurturing influence, it was Derwent who presented the primary obstacle to exposure of Hartley's work.

However, despite Derwent's evident inhibiting influence, Hartley also longed for his approval. At the end of a grief-stricken letter to Derwent on STC's death, dated 1 August 1834, the letter's closing line states simply: 'You have never told me what you thought of my Poems' (*LHC*, 165). In a letter to Derwent eight years later, Hartley again points to his brother's apparent obliviousness to Hartley's authorial identity, his self-deprecating phrasing suggesting that Derwent still has not engaged in a dialogue with him on his poetic endeavours: 'I know not whether you possess my little volume. Few of the pieces in it would satisfy your ear' (*LHC*, 258). Hartley also often indicates a deep desire to be physically reunited with his brother. In an earlier poem, Hartley outlines the torment, emptiness, and isolation that prolonged separation from Derwent has induced:

Oh – why, my Brother, are we thus apart
 Never to meet, but in abortive dreams,
 That ever break away, in shuddering screams,
 Leaving a panting vacancy of heart?

(*NP*, 71, ll. 1-4)¹⁷⁰

In a letter to his mother, dated May 1835, Hartley relays the frequency of his dreams that are haunted by his brother: 'I dream of Derwent, ([...] almost every night)' (*LHC*, 172). Writing to Derwent in August 1842, Hartley reiterates this subliminal obsession with his brother – 'Derwent, you are in my daily thoughts – my nightly dreams' (*LHC*, 255). In a poem addressed to Derwent's wife, 'To my Unknown Sister-in-Law',

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix III for full text of Hartley's poem on his brother. The dreams that terrorize Hartley, and the longing for company that such dreams signify, echo STC's 'The Pains of Sleep'. Hartley's nocturnal longing for fraternal solicitude, evident from his frequent reiteration of his desire to be with Derwent, also echoes STC's address to William and Dorothy, who he apostrophizes as 'sister!', in 'English Hexameters': 'But O! my friends, my beloved! / Feverish and wakeful I lie' (*PWI*, ll. 16, 20-21).

included in a letter to Derwent, dated 30 August 1830, Hartley's vision of his brother and sister-in-law's domestic bliss is laced with fraternal jealousy:

Perhaps thou art sleeping by my brother's side,
Or listening gladly to the soft, sweet breath
Of thy dear Babe [...]

(*LHC*, 122, 42-4)

This image is reminiscent of the 'Dear Babe' scene in 'Frost at Midnight' where it was Hartley who was depicted in a moment of familial harmony with STC ('Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side, / Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm', *PW* I, ll. 44-5). Hartley indicates that he has been displaced from the familial supporting structure and it is thoughts of his brother – and his brother's new and separate familial harmony – which magnify to Hartley the fact that he is now alone. In contrast to Derwent, Hartley 'must seek a couch', 'Lonely, and haunted much by visions strange, / And sore perplexity of roving dreams' (44, 45-6).¹⁷¹

Hartley also points to the complexity of the seemingly irresolvable fraternal conflict: although he exhibits a deep sense of inferiority to his brother, which leads to a trembling anxiety in his presence, this is not an act of simple subordination to the brother. Hartley defiantly suggests that he is fundamentally in opposition to the sort of individual that Derwent is and represents:

But in truth, I fear to address, as I should fear to meet you. I should tremble in your presence, and yet more in your wife's, not only because, for manifold derelictions I am unworthy to be call'd your brother; but because, even in my best of hours, in my wishes, hopes, and prayers, I am not as you are. I feel that there are possible cases in which I should think it my duty to oppose you (*LHC*, 255).

¹⁷¹ This also contains an echo of the pivotal and restorative couch vision in William's Daffodil Poem; while memory is a source of comfort – 'bliss' – for William in solitude – 'when on my couch I lie / In vacant or in pensive mood' (*TV*, 208, ll. 16, 13-14) – in this poem, for Hartley it becomes a form of tyranny.

Again, in a letter to his mother written two years later in January 1844, Hartley indicates that there are certain traits within Derwent which Hartley finds do not accord with his own notion of human idealism; namely, that Derwent's elevated public standing is an obstruction to his 'human humility' (*LHC*, 273). In this way, Hartley is bracketing Derwent with William and criticising their need for society's approval:

[Derwent] has no fault but a certain measure of, I will not call it presumption but assumption, probably owing in part to his habits of command and a little to the worship universally paid him – which is greater than either his father, or W[ordsworth]. or S[outhey]. obtained at his age. A man must be weak indeed if after twenty he is elated by praise of his talents, his genius, or even his poetry; but to be at once loved and admired, to be look'd up to as an oracle by his equals, and set forth as an example by his superiors, is a severe trial for any human humility (*LHC*, 273).

Though Hartley's attack is not direct, he is implicitly labelling Derwent as the weaker character. It is this desire for brotherly approval tempered by the fact that their characters have developed in fundamentally different directions which blocks the siblings' complete understanding of one another. Though Hartley is claiming inferiority by the standards of societal laws, against Hartley's own personal ideals and philosophy, Hartley is subliminally staking out his identity, fighting back, and asserting his superiority over Derwent.

Revealingly, the sonnet that Hartley includes in the August 1830 letter, quoted above, shows that Hartley fantasized about being part of Derwent's marriage, so intense was his need to be with his brother: 'My naked thoughts by you are fresh arrayed / In wedding garments' (*LHC*, 119, ll. 12-13). 'A lonely wanderer upon earth am I', a poem on Hartley's separation from the Coleridge family nucleus, demonstrates the paradox and constancy of the sibling bond further – though he is wary of Derwent, he also longs for his society: 'Almost I fear, and yet I fain would greet' (114, l. 13). Hartley cites the fact that his life has developed in such a different direction to Derwent's as being both

the reason for his fear of their union, and, paradoxically, the reason *for* such a meeting: ‘So far astray hath been my pilgrimage’ (ll. 14). This tension between seeming subordination and voluntary subsumption into the brother finds a parallel in the Dorothy and William sibling relationship. Dorothy, who implicitly cites her brother’s presence as being the primary obstacle to the development of her poetic identity,¹⁷² exhibits a similar behaviour at the prospect of William’s marriage to Mary Hutchinson: the night before William’s wedding Dorothy wore his wedding ring thus implying that marriage would not dissolve the strength of the existing Wordsworth sibling bond.¹⁷³

My analysis of the relationships which conditioned Hartley’s authorial identity has shown that Hartley’s theory of poetry is one that stresses influence as an enabling force. Hartley protects his poetic ego by dissolving the boundaries that distinguish the identities of poets into one collective identity. By recognising the state of poetry as distinct from and above any individual, Hartley implies that there is a state of poetic perfectibility to which each poet strives to contribute. This, Hartley suggests, can only be realized if the poetic predecessor is embraced. As Hartley states in ‘Whither is gone the wisdom and the power’, a poem which decries the state of modern poetry, ‘The sweetness of old lays is hovering still’ (6, l. 6). Thus Hartley echoes but qualifies the disillusionment of William’s ‘Immortality Ode’ (‘Whither is fled the visionary gleam?’, *TV*, 272, l. 56).¹⁷⁴ Such a perspective anticipates T. S. Eliot’s belief that a writer should have a ‘perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; [it] compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that

¹⁷² See ‘Irregular Verses’ (Levin 1987, 202, l. 60): ‘I *reverenced* the Poet’s skill’.

¹⁷³ See *GJ*, October 1802, 126.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Hartley’s embrace of his literary heritage with Bloom’s summary of Nietzsche’s denial of an ‘anxiety of influence’: ‘Nietzsche [...] was the heir of Goethe in his strangely optimistic refusal to regard the poetical past as primarily an obstacle to fresh creation [...]. ‘Nietzsche, like Emerson, did not feel the chill of being darkened by a precursor’s shadow. “Influence”, to Nietzsche, meant visualization’ (Bloom 1975, 50). See also Keats’s dedicatory poem in *Poems* 1817.

the whole of [...] literature [...] has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order'.¹⁷⁵ Newlyn notes that 'In [Eliot's] invocation of a canon that is both diachronic and synchronic, temporality itself seems suspended' (264). The suspension from time is a trait that Plotz reads negatively in Hartley – 'Always temporally dislocated, he alternately impersonates premature age and superannuated youth' (Plotz 2001, 199). But Hartley's continuing idea of one collective poetic identity and diffusive theory of a poetic 'family' does not signify loss and dislocation, but rather, like T. S. Eliot, invokes a positive and strong 'diachronic and synchronic' identity and canon.¹⁷⁶ Eliot writes: 'We shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of [a writer's] work, may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously' (Eliot 1932, 14), a view also shared by Geoffrey Hartman: 'The presence of greatness is what matters, a beforeness which makes readers, like poets, see for a moment nothing but one master-spirit'.¹⁷⁷ Hartley's poetry and discourse on literary relationship exactly captures and preserves this 'one master-spirit'. It is this vision of an omnipresent poetic collective identity which allows Hartley to evade the Bloomian prediction of authorial inferiority and identity struggle with regard to STC and William Wordsworth, and which strengthens his own relational poetics – a victory through exploitation of perceived weakness which illustrates Marlon Ross's notion of a 'tragic heroism'.

¹⁷⁵ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 14.

¹⁷⁶ In this way, Hartley's theory of relationship allows him to recognize and become part of an adoptive 'family' to replace that which was so lacking in his own life.

¹⁷⁷ Geoffrey Hartman, 'War in Heaven: A Review of Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, in *The Fate of Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 51.

Chapter III

Dorothy Wordsworth and the Poetics of Relationship

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar recognize in *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* that Dorothy Wordsworth's writing situation is one that demands more careful examination and is not simply a case of female suppression: 'she may well have had considerable poetic ability of her own: why she did not produce more poetry than she did is thus a troublesome question, for, as her journals reveal, she was never merely her brother's literary handmaiden, though critics have often defined her that way' (Gilbert and Gubar 1996, 319). Critics often assert that Dorothy was either a stifled and repressed writer, or that she had no authorial desire and happily absorbed herself in her brother's life and identity. I argue, however, that her concept of herself as an author was a constantly evolving battle that was never decisively lost or won. Hugh l'Anson Fausset concludes in the *TLS* that to diagnose Dorothy with 'pathological self-conflict' would be 'fruitless'; however, it is only through proper investigation of this self-conflict, which I provide in the next three chapters, that we gain greater insight into the struggles she faced in writing as a sibling, and those posed by the poetics of relationship itself (*TLS* 1661 (30 November 1933): 853).

'The building up of my being, the light of my path': Fraternal Affection in Dorothy Wordsworth's Early Life, 1778-1798

My first approach to analysing the Wordsworth-sibling authorial collaboration is an assessment of how central fraternal affection was to Dorothy's early awareness of her selfhood. Dorothy was first separated from William at age six (when William was seven) following the death of their mother in March 1778, after which Dorothy endured a peripatetic childhood: she was sent to live first with her mother's second cousin,

Elizabeth Threlkeld, at Halifax until May 1787, during which time, in 1783, Dorothy's father died leaving the Wordsworth siblings orphans.¹⁷⁸ Dorothy then spent a very unhappy eighteen months with her grandparents at Halifax, Penrith. Finally, in October 1788, she moved to live with her Uncle, William Cookson, at Forncett rectory near Norwich until February 1794. After Dorothy was sent to Halifax, William and Dorothy did not meet again for nine years when, in the summer of 1787, they were reunited briefly. Apart from sporadic meetings during William's school holidays, Dorothy and William were not reunited properly until 1794: sixteen years after their first separation, they temporarily set up home at Windy Brow, Keswick.¹⁷⁹

Dorothy's parents' death had a formative influence on her life and disposition as loss of the family home meant premature disconnection of the fraternal bond. Though Dorothy felt the sibling tie more deeply than ever, she sensed with equal intensity that the siblings were only moving further apart:

[...] we have been compelled to spend our youth far asunder. 'We drag at each remove a lengthening Chain' this Idea often strikes me very forcibly (*LWDW I*, 16 February 1793, 88).¹⁸⁰

Dorothy had a keen awareness of the waste inherent in this dissipation of siblinghood, writing to a friend: 'How we are squandered abroad!' (*LWDW I*, 27 January 1788, 16). It was a separation that was felt more acutely by Dorothy than her siblings as she was the only one who was sent away from the family home after the death of the mother.

¹⁷⁸ Dorothy did not attend her father's funeral.

¹⁷⁹ William recounts this separation in *The Prelude* (VI, 98, ll. 208-211):

Of that sole Sister, she who hath been long
Thy Treasure also, thy true Friend and mine,
Now, after separation desolate
Restored to me [...].

¹⁸⁰ Dorothy is here quoting Oliver Goldsmith, *The Traveller, or A Prospect of Society*, ll. 7-10:

Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.

Christopher, John, Richard, and William all shared another six years with their father, a fact which Dorothy recalls with envy and despair to Jane Pollard on 16 February 1793:

I cannot help heaving many a Sigh at the Reflection that I have passed one and twenty years of my Life, and that the first six years only of this Time was spent in the Enjoyment of the same Pleasures that were enjoyed by my Brothers, and that I was then too young to be sensible of the Blessing (*LWDW I*, 88).

Dorothy's lament for the loss of fraternal love is strikingly similar to Jemima's mourning of maternal affection in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria*: 'Now I look back, I cannot help attributing the greater part of my misery, to the misfortune of having been thrown into the world without the grand support of life – a mother's affection' (Todd 2004, 82). Unlike Jemima, however, Dorothy constantly suggests that it is the sibling rather than the parental bond which is the 'grand support of life'. Writing to Lady Beaumont on 25-26 December 1805, Dorothy's thirty-fourth birthday, Dorothy again stresses the formative nature of fraternal experience by lamenting that her faculty of memory has been deprived of sibling company:

The Day [her birthday/Christmas day] was always kept by my Brothers with rejoicing in my Father's house, but for six years (the interval between my Mother's Death and his) I was never once at home, never was for a single moment under my Father's Roof after her Death, which I cannot think of without regret for many causes, and particularly, that I have been thereby put out of the way of many recollections in common with my Brothers of that period of life, which, whatever it may be actually as it goes along, generally appears more delightful than any other when it is over (*LWDW I*, 663).¹⁸¹

Dorothy regrets the doubly felt injustice that as a young child she did not spend her birthday and Christmas Day with her loved ones, a day which, she remarks, is usually a time when 'all persons, however widely scattered, are in their thoughts gathered together at home', and is bitter and resentful that her brothers and father celebrated this

¹⁸¹ See also July 1793: 'I am now twenty two years of age and such have been the circumstances of my life that I may be said to have enjoyed his company only for a very few months' (*LWDW I*, 117).

day without her (663).¹⁸² She articulates the dawning of her realization that she has been denied not only the company of her brothers, but childhood experience shared with them – she is thus mourning a thwarting of access to the central Wordsworthian faculty of recollected memory. It is, perhaps, this fact which causes Dorothy's avoidance of the mother in her writings, as it is the mother's death which separated her from her brothers: she does not mourn the loss of her mother in her letters and, in her poem 'Irregular Verses', she curiously cites the 'mild maternal smile' as one of the main obstacles that prevented her from attempting to become a poet (Levin 1987, 203, l. 70).

The brother-sister culture held a different significance in the nineteenth century than it commonly does today. Valerie Sanders' book *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature: From Austen to Woolf* traces this phenomenon and the consequences of the 'intense emotional significance' that the brother-sister relationship assumed in 'English literary and cultural history' (Sanders 2002, 2). But for the orphaned Wordsworths the sibling bond became sacred as it was their only way of grounding their place in the world:

We have been endeared to each other by early misfortune. We in the same moment lost a father, a mother, a home, we have been equally deprived of our patrimony by the cruel Hand of lordly Tyranny. These afflictions have all contributed to unite us closer by the Bonds of affection (*LWDW I*, 16 February 1793, 88).

¹⁸² Dorothy never seems to enjoy Christmas Day/her birthday and it is likely that it became tainted by painful memories of familial separation. In her *Grasmere Journals*, on 25 December 1801 she records 'Christmas day – a very bad day'; in 1802 she writes 'It is today Christmas-day Saturday 25th December 1802. I am 31 years of age. – It is a dull and frosty day' (*GJ*, 52, 135). The fact that she states she can remember almost every birthday of her life to the age of thirty four is indicative of early emotional trauma which caused the day to become a 'touchstone' in her memory, more so than is normal for birthdays or Christmas Day: 'I can almost tell where every Birth-day of my life was spent, many of them even *how* from a very early time' (*LWDW I*, 25 and 26 December 1805, 663). Dorothy writes a poem entitled 'Christmas day' which celebrates her ideal vision of a family reunited at Christmas – one which she did not experience: 'This is the one day when kindred meet', Dorothy writes, 'Now is their happiness complete' (Levin 1987, 234, ll. 1, 10).

In a letter to Jane Pollard, Dorothy reiterates that parental loss increases sibling affection: ‘till you feel that loss you will never know how dear to you your Sisters are; till you feel that loss! [...] ’tis the greatest misfortune that can befall [sic] one’ (*LWDW I*, July 1787, 5). These letters reveal the insecurity of the young Wordsworths and their earnest desire to regain a sense of rooted dwelling and belonging: ‘[we] always finish our conversations which generally take a melancholy turn, with wishing we had a father and a home’ (5). Like Hartley’s insecurity in the face of paternal neglect, the Wordsworth siblings are vulnerable and floundering without familial support: ‘we have no father to protect, no mother to guide us’ (*LWDW I*, 27 January 1788, 16). At the young age of sixteen, when Dorothy was living with her grandparents, bereft of familial affection she mourns parental loss afresh: ‘Never, till I came to Penrith, did I feel the loss I sustained when I was deprived of a Father’ (*LWDW I*, November 1787, 9). At this same time, William seemed to realize how much Dorothy, more than his other siblings, had lost when their father died: ‘Nor did my little heart foresee / – She lost a home in losing thee’.¹⁸³

Dorothy’s correspondence to Jane Pollard while she was living with her grandparents reveals how deeply this lack of familial attention, in Dorothy’s case, led to self-suppression – she becomes a dumb shell of her former self that would be unrecognizable to her friend: ‘You cannot think how gravely and silently I set with her [Dorothy’s grandmother] and my Grandfather, you would scarcely know me’ (*LWDW I*, 10).¹⁸⁴ The young Dorothy was vivacious, chatty, and expressive, not as docile and contained as popular representation would have as believe; as Dorothy remarks to Jane, reserve was never her hallmark: ‘You are well acquainted that I was never remarkable

¹⁸³ ‘The Vale of Esthwaite’, *Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797*, by William Wordsworth, ed. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 446-7, ll. 292-3.

¹⁸⁴ Dorothy also remarks to Jane Pollard, ‘While I am in her [Dorothy’s grandmother’s] house I cannot at all consider myself as at home, I feel like a stranger’ (*LWDW I*, 9).

for taciturnity' (*LWDW I*, 10). It is only when deprived of affection that Dorothy becomes silent and withdrawn – she needs people in order to be the best version of her self. Dorothy's introversion prefigures her later sensory withdrawal in the *Grasmere Journals* at periods when William is absent, as I show below. It is likely that this lack of familial attention in Dorothy's youth contributed to her morbidly self-deprecating sensibility; a deep 'problem with her self-image' which, as Norman Fruman remarks, went beyond that which would be expected from living 'in the presence of such giants as Coleridge and her brother William'.¹⁸⁵

In contrast to this emotional withdrawal, Dorothy reveals that affection from William literally brings her self into being – her gushing letters to Jane Pollard show the twenty-one year old Dorothy relishing a new-found confidence stirred by fraternal appreciation. She talks of her brother in the language of eighteenth-century romance:

[...] he is so amiable, so good, so fond of his Sister! Oh Jane the last time we were together he won my Affect[ion] to a Degree which I cannot describe; his Attentions to me were su[ch] as the most insensible of mortals must have been touched with, there was no Pleasure that he would not have given up with joy for half an Hour's Conversation with me (*LWDW I*, 16 June 1793, 95).

Similarly, on 10 July 1793: 'he was never tired of comforting his sister, he never left her in anger, he always met her with joy, he preferred her society to every other pleasure' (*LWDW I*, 98). Dorothy's references to herself in the third person and her rapturous tone indicate that William has enabled an awakening of her selfhood and not just sibling communion – she becomes more aware of her own identity and reconfigures the way she sees herself.¹⁸⁶ When Dorothy dreams of being reunited with her brothers,

¹⁸⁵ Norman Fruman, 'The Sister's Sacrifice', a review of *Dorothy Wordsworth*, by Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, and *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Alan Hill, *TLS* 4291 (28 June 1985): 711.

¹⁸⁶ Juliet Mitchell makes the point that everything is suddenly brought into relief when the child-sibling is confronted with sibling removal or introduction; see *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Oxford: Polity, 2003), 28, where Mitchell quotes Donald Winnicott's *The Piggle* to support her view. In Winnicott's account, after the birth of a new sister, the older sibling 'is suddenly very conscious of her relationships and especially of her identity'; see D. W. Winnicott, *The Piggle: An Account of the Psychoanalytic Treatment*

she writes to Jane Pollard that sibling companionship has transformed and fortified her and has alleviated her former troubles:

You know not how happy I am in their company, I do not now want a friend who will share with me my distresses. I do not now pass half my time alone. I can bear the ill nature of all my relations, for the affection of my brothers consoles me in all my Griefs (*LWDWI*, July 1787, 2-3).¹⁸⁷

The power of siblingship preserves her personal equilibrium in the same way that the force of nature – accessed in the company of sibling support (Dorothy) – upholds William in ‘Tintern Abbey’: Nature can ‘so inform / The mind that is within us’

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

(*LB*, 119, ll. 126-7, 129-33)

For Dorothy, sibling company precludes the need for friendship in its power to erase the soul-destroying element of solitude and provide what William calls a self-sufficient ‘Whole without dependence or defect’ (*HG*, 48, l. 168). Dorothy elevates the fructifying virtue of sibling communion above that of romantic love:

Ah! Jane! I never thought of the cold when he was with me. I am as heretical as yourself in my opinions concerning Love and Friendship; I am very sure that Love will never bind me closer to any human Being than Friendship binds me to you my earliest female Friend, and to William my earliest and my dearest Male Friend (*LWDWI*, 16 June 1793, 96).

of a Little Girl (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1978), 6 (Mitchell’s italics). This sudden consciousness happens to Dorothy when first re-introduced to William as a teenager, and then throughout her adult life.

¹⁸⁷ See also July 1787: ‘for me, while they [her brothers] live I shall never want a friend’; and 6-7 August 1787: ‘I often say to myself “I have the most affectionate Brothers in the world, while I possess them [...] can I ever be entirely miserable?”’ (*LWDWI*, 5, 7).

Here Dorothy anticipates Mary Shelley's emphasis on the importance of early fraternal affection; in *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein asserts that 'the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds, which hardly any later friend can obtain' (Hindle 2003, 215). Austen too provides an extended analysis of this early bliss in *Mansfield Park*, suggesting, as Eric C. Walker notes, that 'early sibling relationships supply the tutorial template for later spousal pairing' (Walker 2009, 101): 'even the conjugal tie is beneath the fraternal. Children of the same family, the same blood, with the same first associations and habits, have some means of enjoyment in their power, which no subsequent connections can supply'.¹⁸⁸ Dorothy's statement, like Austen's, echoes Wollstonecraft's privileging of friendship over love:

Friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time. The very reverse can be said of love.¹⁸⁹

Dorothy's brothers thus form her entire emotional and psychological support network. When she is separated from them after a brief reunion in the summer of 1787, a sense of terror at the vacancy that solitude creates, and thus the fragility of her independence, comes crashing down on her consciousness: 'I cannot paint to you my Distress at their departure, I can only tell you that for a few hours I was absolutely miserable, a thousand tormenting fears rushed upon me' (*LWDW* I, 6 and 7 August 1787, 6). This panic presages, as we will see, Dorothy's 'melancholy reflections' at the moments when William leaves her in the *Grasmere Journals*. These emotional oscillations from intense joy to depression also signal a tension inherent in Dorothy's identity which needs a constant other on which to anchor and stabilize itself.

¹⁸⁸ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (London: Penguin, 2003), 217.

¹⁸⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Janet Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 145.

Importantly, fraternal presence is also fundamental to Dorothy's understanding of her *intellectual* self and growth. The prospect of setting up home with William at Racedown, Dorsetshire in 1795 gives her a longed-for reason-for-being and direction:

[...] it will greatly contribute to my happiness and place me in such a situation that I shall be *doing something*, it is a painful idea that one's existence is of very little use which *I* really have always been obliged to feel; above all it is painful when one is living upon the bounty of one's friends, a resource of which misfortune may deprive one and then how irksome and difficult it is to find out other means of support, the mind is then unfitted, perhaps, for any new exertions, and continues always in a state of dependence, perhaps attended with poverty (*LWDWI*, 2 and 3 September 1795, 150).

Like Hartley's poetic discourse on the apparent pointlessness of life, epitomized in his use of obstetric metaphors to figure life's continual struggle for acclimatization – 'The loved abortion of a thing design'd' which 'sought to plant itself; but never, never, / Could that poor seed or soil or water find' ('There was a seed', *CPW*, 137, ll. 4, 7-8) – Dorothy meditates on the meaninglessness of a totally dependent life. Here Dorothy follows Wollstonecraft's views on the importance of female industry and independence of body and mind for self-respect, and on the psychologically detrimental effects that a dependent relationship can produce.¹⁹⁰ For Dorothy, at this stage, their sibling relationship is one of complete equality and independent growth. In contrast with her 'Irregular Stanzas' poem, where she fears ridicule from the maternal figure or her peers, in her brother's presence she feels personally and intellectually at ease: she writes to Jane Pollard, 'at Intervals we lay aside the Book and each hazard our observations upon what has been read without the fear of Ridicule or Censure' (*LWDWI*, 16 February 1793, 88). A letter to her Aunt, Mrs Christopher Crackanthorpe, reveals that Dorothy is

¹⁹⁰ Dorothy's journals show that she was a reader of Wollstonecraft – on 14 April 1798 Dorothy records: 'Mary Wollstonecraft's life, etc., came' (*GJ*, 152). Dorothy is referring to Godwin's *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft which had been published in January 1798; the 'etc' probably refers to the *Posthumous Works*, which included *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, edited by Godwin and also published in early 1798. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was first published in 1792 when Dorothy was twenty. *Mary* was published in 1788; *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in 1790.

often considering her autonomous intellectual development under William's influence: 'I not only derive much pleasure but much improvement from my brother's society', a remark which suggests that this is much more than a relationship of passive devotion (*LWDW I* 21 April 1794, 117). These letters show that far from stifling Dorothy, William's presence facilitates her confidence and intellectual ambition. In a rare instance of literary pride, Dorothy even suggests that her skills in translating literature place her 'almost' within her brother's league: she writes to Mrs William Rawson that 'translating from the German' is 'the most profitable species of literary labour, and of which I can do almost as much as my Brother' (*LWDW I*, 13 June 1798, 221). As Phillip Tomlinson concludes in a 1942 review of Ernest De Selincourt's edition of Dorothy's *Journals*, those who perceive an unequal power relationship of imprudent devotion and selfish exploitation 'misapprehend the nature of Dorothy's ardency' and her self-development: '[William] Wordsworth's acceptance fulfilled the strongest need of her life'.¹⁹¹

Dorothy Rowe in *My Dearest Enemy, My Dangerous Friend: Making and Breaking Sibling Bonds* states that 'Our parents validate and invalidate us, but even more so do our siblings'.¹⁹² Analysis of Dorothy's early letters shows that William formed a saviour figure for the orphaned Dorothy: re-connecting with her brother healed the emotional fractures that the siblings had experienced during their unsettled lives, both by offering longed-for familial affection and grounding, and by providing a conduit to severed childhood and parental memories. Before Dorothy was aware that her dream of recreating a domestic idyll with her brother could be made real she writes to Jane Pollard:

¹⁹¹ Philip Tomlinson, 'Dorothy's Journals', review of *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, *TLS* 2108 (27 June 1942): 319.

¹⁹² Dorothy Rowe, *My Dearest Enemy, My Dangerous Friend: Making and Breaking Sibling Bonds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 27.

I cannot foresee the Day of my Felicity, the Day in which I am once more to find a Home under the same Roof with my Brother; all is still obscure and dark, and there is much Ground to fear that my Scheme may prove a Shadow, a mere Vision of Happiness (*LWDW* I, 16 June 1793, 93).

Twelve years later Dorothy reflects that ‘fraternal affection [...] has been the building up of my being, the light of my path’: William enables her identity and gives her life illumination, purpose, and guidance (*LWDW* I, 18 and 19 March 1805, 568).¹⁹³ Put simply, committing her life to William makes sense out of her own ‘obscure and dark’ life, bringing her into a realm of intellectual and personal possibility, growth, and freedom. William also uses a trope of light and darkness to figure his relationship with Dorothy, writing to Henry Crabb Robinson: ‘Were She to depart the Phasis of my Moon would be robbed of light to a degree that I have not courage to think of’ (*LWDW* V, April 1829, 69). And, in ‘Home at Grasmere’, ‘The thought of her was like a flash of light’ (*HG*, 44, l. 111). As Edmund Lee remarks, Dorothy was William’s pivotal guiding source too: ‘She became, and for many years continued to be, the loadstar [sic] of his existence’.¹⁹⁴ As I will demonstrate further in my analysis below of William’s poetics, this was a symbiotic relationship and not one of passive female dependence/devotion – both siblings bring each other into being. But it is also this mutually dependent nature of their relationship that delivers a detrimental *negative* reinforcement of their identities: collaboration causes Dorothy anxiety over the fruition of her independent self, while the dissolving effect of influence causes William to fear a loss of control of his more centralized and independent ego.

¹⁹³ Interestingly, Cassandra Austen also uses a trope of light, similar to Dorothy’s, to figure the closeness of her relationship with her sister, Jane, writing to Fanny Knight, 20 July 1817: ‘She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow, I had not a thought concealed from her, & it is as if I had lost a part of myself’; see *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deidre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 344.

¹⁹⁴ Edmund Lee, *The Story of a Sister’s Love* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1894), 17. In May 1832, when preparing himself for the prospect that Dorothy might die, William twice states that Dorothy ‘has lived with me for the last 35 years’ indicating that he cannot envisage life without her (*LWDW* V, 520). In his late letters, William also twice refers to his sister as ‘the only one I ever had’, which emphasizes how important a sister-figure has been to his life (*LWDW* V, 520; VI, 87).

‘It was a creature by its own self among them’: Solitude and Community in the *Grasmere* and *Alfoxden Journals*

Patricia Comitini states that Dorothy’s journals are ‘not a record of self-revelation, conflict resolution, subjective development or aesthetic contemplation’; I would argue, however, that this is *exactly* what the *Journals* are.¹⁹⁵ The theories of relationship and dependence which pervade Dorothy’s *Journals* show that her interest in, and relationship with, nature goes far beyond the visual aesthetic; as Mary Ellen Bellanca argues, ‘These qualities of rootedness and relationship explode the characterization of the journals’ landscape writing as picturesque’.¹⁹⁶ Margaret Homans puts Dorothy in far too meek a role in her belief that ‘for Dorothy there is a crucial distinction between identification with nature, which she avoids, and observation, which she carefully cultivates’.¹⁹⁷ In the *Grasmere* and *Alfoxden Journals* Dorothy habitually identifies with nature to envision her place in the world, to comprehend the development of her subjectivity in relation to William and STC, and to find strength, self-knowledge, and growth. We see her negotiating theories of community and independence and, like Hartley, identifying analogous support structures within nature which serve to validate or undermine her own life choices and relationships. Her journals thus form a protracted (but always oblique) meditation on the nature and development of identity, both as an independent woman, and in relation to brother.

¹⁹⁵ Patricia Comitini, “‘More than half a poet’: Vocational Philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journals*’, *ERR* 14 (September 2003): 316. Comitini also wrongly refers to the *Grasmere Journals* throughout her article as the *Grasmere Journal*, singular (as does Pamela Woof, and also Colette Clark in her 1960 collection *Home at Grasmere*), when they should be pluralized – they exist as four separate notebooks. Comitini states that the ‘*Journal*’, by the nature of journal writing, does not have a particular narrative to it, but by singularizing the title Comitini gives the impression of a more formal autobiography, which suggests that critics often try to impose an artificial order onto Dorothy’s writings.

¹⁹⁶ Mary Ellen Bellanca, *Daybooks of Discovery: Nature Diaries in Britain, 1770-1870* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 130.

¹⁹⁷ Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 102.

Dorothy's first experiments with arrangements of individuality and dependence occur in the *Alfoxden Journal* under the germinative influence not of William, but of STC. In a letter to Mary Hutchinson dated 14 August 1797, Dorothy writes that their 'principal inducement' for moving to Alfoxden 'was Coleridge's society' (*LWDW I*, 190).¹⁹⁸ Though earlier entries record Dorothy's visits to Nether Stowey, the home of STC, her first explicit mention of STC occurs on 3 February 1798 in a rapturous entry notable for its subjective reflection on the harmony of nature's three spheres: 'I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea' (*AJ*, 144), an anticipation of William's visualization, on 13 July 1798, of the 'steep and lofty cliffs' which 'connect / The landscape with the quiet of the sky' in 'Tintern Abbey' (*LB*, 116, ll. 5, 7-8). In a later entry, where STC 'stayed all night' and they 'walked in the wood, and sat under the trees', Dorothy is again, in his company, drawn to observe the interrelationship between the trees and the surrounding elements: 'The still trees only gently bowed their heads, as if listening to the wind' (*AJ*, 2 April 1798, 150-1). Dorothy's gentle animism of the trees reflects the intimacy of her relationship with STC, both of whom we assume are likewise 'listening' to each other, and integrates them further within the sheltering 'listening' wood, heightening the sense of connection and protection which pervades this entry.

An analogous passage which anthropomorphizes surrounding nature is the famous *Grasmere Journal* daffodil description, composed in the company of William, which Kenneth Cervelli reads as 'poised to spring forth as a full-blown metaphor for human community' (Cervelli 2007, 24): 'some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness & the rest tossed & reeled & danced & seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the Lake, they looked so gay

¹⁹⁸ See also 5 March 1798: 'We have no other very strong inducement to stay but Coleridge's society, but that is so important an object that we have it much at heart'; and 3 July 1798: 'Coleridge's society, an advantage which I prize the more, the more I know him' (*LWDW I*, 199-200, 223).

ever glancing ever changing' (*GJ*, 15 April 1802, 85). While the use of metaphor can distance the human from the non-human and approximate their interconnectedness, Dorothy, as Susan Levin observes, writes metonymically rather than metaphorically: 'Dorothy at her best [...] refuses metaphor. She writes in a lateral sequence of associations' (Levin 1987, 33).¹⁹⁹ This technique is so continual in her journals that it has the effect of bringing the two spheres of living, human and non-human, on to a level plane – elsewhere in the journals Dorothy presents nature's 'pillows' which offer the daffodils rest as her bed also: 'When W went down to the water to fish I lay under the wind my head pillowed upon a mossy rock & slept (*GJ*, [23] June 1800, 13).²⁰⁰

We can see, then, that in STC's presence Dorothy's awareness of the harmony within nature is enhanced; she is also more aware of her self. The diction of melding and union which she employs frequently in the *Alfoxden Journal* – the landscape she gazes on with STC 'melted into more than natural loveliness'; they watch the moon 'melting into the blue sky' (*AJ*, 26 February 1798, 147-8) – might support the theory that Dorothy and STC were romantically attracted to one another.²⁰¹ Again, in the *Grasmere Journals*, when Dorothy is anxiously awaiting news of STC, she writes: 'Grasmere looked so beautiful that my heart was almost melted away'; and, 'I lay upon the steep of Loughrigg my heart dissolved in what I saw' (*GJ*, [21] and 1 June 1800, 12, 6). This speculation gains further credence when we consider Dorothy's concentration on the movements and interrelationship of Jupiter, Venus, and the moon in the *Alfoxden*

¹⁹⁹ Levin notes that a lack of appreciation of this distinctive technique has contributed to a limited reading of Dorothy's work: 'Part of the trouble with reading Dorothy Wordsworth has been a failure to deal with this metonymic quality of her writing' (Levin 1987, 33).

²⁰⁰ See also William's 'Nutting': 'with my cheek on one of those green stones / That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees / Lay round me', ll. 35-7. Other instances of Dorothy treating nature as a home/bed include the following: 'C & I sate down upon a rock Seat – a Couch it might be under the Bower of William's Eglantine' (*GJ*, 23 April 1802, 90); 'After dinner we went again to our old resting place in the Hollins under the Rock' (1 May 1802, 94); 'We came down & rested upon a moss covered Rock, rising out of the bed of the River' (4 May 1802, 95).

²⁰¹ STC spoke of his initial love for his wife Sara in a similar manner: 'I certainly love her. I think of her incessantly & with unspeakable tenderness – with that inward melting away of Soul that symptomatizes it' (*CCL* I, 103).

Journal, and also the fact that these are often solitary walks with STC, with no mention of William. In a letter to Mary Hutchinson, dated June 1797, Dorothy reveals that she was certainly drawn to STC's charismatic company: 'He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit' (*LWDW*, I, 188). Dorothy's description of STC's animated appearance implies that she elevates his 'poet's eye' above even William's: 'His eye is large and full [...] it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of the "poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling" than I ever witnessed' (189).²⁰² Dorothy is here quoting Theseus' speech in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which continues:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.²⁰³

Dorothy's use of this quotation is particularly apt as her perception of nature, as I show below, precisely 'gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name'.

It is important that Dorothy depicts herself and STC viewing nature together: 'We lay sidelong upon the turf, and gazed on the landscape till it melted into more than natural loveliness' (*AJ*, 26 February 1798, 147). Eight years later, now resident in Grasmere, Dorothy reveals in a letter to Lady Beaumont that she and STC also frequently delighted in co-viewing the minute image in nature:

²⁰² Dorothy's choice of quotation is interesting in terms of supporting the suggestion that STC and Dorothy were romantically attracted to one another as the quotation from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* begins: 'The lunatic, the lover, and the poet, / Are of imagination all compact' (V, I, ll. 1122-3). STC's later poem 'O the Poet's eye' (August 1800) has shades of both Shakespeare and Dorothy's description of the 'poet's eye' (see *PWII*, 639).

²⁰³ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.1, ll. 12-17.

[...] we have often stood for half an hour together at Grasmere, on a still morning, to look at the rain-drops or hoar-frost glittering in sunshine upon the birch twigs; the purple colour and the sparkling drops produce a most enchanting effect (*LWDW II*, 23 December 1806, 121).

Fay suggests that it is the act of co-viewing, as William and Dorothy do in ‘Tintern Abbey’, which signifies Dorothy’s performative ‘making’ of the poet, with her ‘kindred gaze, her sympathetic memory, her activity as *witness*’ (Fay 1995, 79). Dorothy is similarly empowered through this act of doubled poetic viewing with STC. The sibling bond can thus be understood as an adoptive one: the *Alfoxden Journal* depicts Dorothy and STC as a figurative sibling-couple, an early version of the doubled Wordsworth poet that is so evident in the *Grasmere Journals*. STC would have been particularly receptive to Dorothy’s company and support at this time as his poems written on the death of his own sister, before he had met Dorothy, show how deeply he esteemed sororal love. In ‘Sonnet: On seeing a Youth Affectionately Welcomed by his Sister’ (1791) and ‘To a Friend’ (1794), STC betrays envy of the sisterly affection he witnesses amongst others, exclaiming ‘*I too a Sister had! Too cruel Death!*’ and ‘*I too a SISTER had, an only Sister*’ (*PW I*, 39, l. 1; 170, l. 12). It is likely that Dorothy instantly filled this vacancy for him, a satisfaction which later turns to pain and envy when STC realizes that Dorothy is the sister of William’s soul, not his, thus deepening his felt absence of sibling affection, and his jealousy of William.

Dorothy’s experiments with representations of fusion and dispersal of the self into nature border on William’s manner of envisioning the sublime. But her dependence on the melting motif to figure both visual and auditory harmony more strongly suggests STC as a dominant influence, whose notebooks explore ideas of fusion, alchemy, and synaesthesia. STC’s melding of emotional feeling with sight when viewing the sky is particularly analogous to Dorothy’s mode of envisioning skylines: ‘deep Sky is of all visual impressions the nearest akin to a Feeling / it is

more a Feeling than a Sight / or rather it is the melting away and entire union of Feeling & Sight' (*CN II*, 2453). Dorothy's perception of beauty also has clear reference points in STC's meditation on 'Intellectual Beauty or Wholeness', and how 'the whole is made up of parts, each part referring at once to each & to the whole':

[...] – whatever effect distance, air tints, reflected Light, and the feeling connected with *the* Object (for all Passion unifies as it were by natural Fusion) have in bringing out, and in melting down, differences & contrast, accordingly as the mind finds it necessary to the completion of the idea of Beauty, to prevent sameness or discrepancy (*CN II*, 2012).

Dorothy's habit of perception is characterized by defining the discrete elements of the scene: she talks of 'feed[ing] upon the prospect' which is '*curiously* spread out for even minute inspection' (*AJ*, 26 February 1798, 147). Elsewhere, though, she remarks on the contradiction between uniform amalgamation and discrete particularity that the natural scene poses to the mind and senses: 'nothing else in colour was distinct & separate but all the beautiful colours seemed to be melted into one another, & joined together in one mass so that there were no differences though an endless variety when one tried to find it out' (*GJ*, 31 October 1802, 133). Dorothy's ultimate allusion to the incomprehensibility of sublime nature is an example of Susan Wolfson's notion of 'spectres of defeat'; the prospect is 'so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate its bounds' (*AJ*, 147).

Dorothy's walks with STC make her more courageous in her sublime descriptive attempts, but she is more at ease when domesticating the sublime through the use of simile, visualising 'the sea, [as] like a basin full to the margin' (*AJ*, 24 February 1798, 147). This effect is, however, comparable to William's egotistical sublime as inherent within both visions is an attempt to contain the natural scene mentally. Dorothy's treatment of the sublime, though, privileges assimilation into, rather dominance over, nature; she demonstrates what Stuart Curran describes with

regard to Charlotte Smith, ‘an alternate Romanticism that seeks not to transcend or to absorb nature but to contemplate and honour its irreducible alterity’.²⁰⁴ Dorothy’s avoidance of masculine sublime attempts, which are epitomized in the work of her brother, has often been viewed as a failure of poetic imagination. We should, however, understand her resistance in terms of sibling competition and autonomous authorial desire – Dorothy wishes to stake out her own mode of descriptive rhetoric rather than encroach on William’s.²⁰⁵ In a particular striking juxtaposition of sublime reverie and domestication, Dorothy brings the human and non-human world closer by likening a lamb to a child:

I lay upon the steep of Loughrigg my heart dissolved in what I saw when I was not startled but recalled from my reverie by a noise as of a child paddling without shoes. I looked up and saw a lamb close to me – it approached nearer & nearer as if to examine me & stood for a long time (*GJ*, 1 June 1798, 6).

This convergence of separate but parallel living spheres is concentrated further by Dorothy’s sensitive depiction of the *animal’s* reaction to the human world. Dorothy suggests that the quizzical pondering of that which is beyond the subjective self is experienced by animals too; just as she finds the natural prospect ‘spread out for even minute inspection’, so the lamb approaches Dorothy’s space to ‘examine [her]’.

Dorothy’s scheme of observing the unity of relationships which surround her is typified in an entry detailing a walk to Stowey with STC on 4 February 1798. She observes the ‘young lasses’ playing, ‘Mothers with their children in arms, and the little ones that could just walk, tottering by their sides’, ‘the songs of the lark and redbreast’, even the ‘Midges or small flies spinning in the sunshine’, and the ‘daisies upon the turf’

²⁰⁴ *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Stuart Curran (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xxviii.

²⁰⁵ Elizabeth Fay concurs with this view: ‘if Dorothy’s relative silence in the face of the sublime is a cooperation with masculine transcendence, it is also avoidance of competing on the rhetorical front of the sublime’ (Fay 1995, 189).

(*AJ*, 144). Dorothy here builds a picture of harmony and interrelationship which goes from the human to the minute: from her and STC, to the communal image of children playing, to a maternal image of mother and child, but also sibling (the mother has a babe in arms and a smaller child ‘tottering by their sides’), to the movements of the insects, birds, and flowers. It is interesting that Dorothy here privileges the dynamism and intricate developmental strata of the human and phenomenal world, rather than its aesthetics: the children are ‘tottering’, the midges ‘spinning’, the hazels ‘in blossom’, and the honeysuckles ‘budding’ (*AJ*, 144). This reflects and imparts the energy of the scene which unites all its players – from human to insect, and to the earth. A comparable scene during a walk with STC and William, dated 10 March 1798, polarizes two ‘interesting groups of human creatures’: the ‘young frisking and dancing in the sun’ and the ‘elder quietly drinking in the life and soul of the sun and air’ (*AJ*, 149), an image which parallels William’s ‘Lines written at a small distance from my house’ (composed 1-9 March, 1798), addressed to Dorothy imploring her to ‘Come forth and feel the sun’: ‘Our minds shall drink at every pore / The spirit of the season’ (*LB*, 63-4, ll. 12, 27-8). In both these entries, Dorothy constructs a more realistic illustration of William’s theoretical pantheism: ‘A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things’ (*LB*, 119, ll. 101-103). But it is Dorothy’s characteristic use of verbal adjectives and the participle ‘-ing’ which more effectively captures the act of mobility and the immediate evolving present, but not static, moment.

A concluding image of the 4 February 1798 journal entry is striking in its solitariness, embedded, as it is, within such images of harmony and connection: ‘I saw one solitary strawberry flower under a hedge’ (*AJ*, 144). I would suggest that Dorothy is drawn to the solitary image as it evokes alternative modes of being to the life which she is endeavouring to build with her brother. The isolated image grounded within a

definite community signifies independent strength and beauty achieved through company; as she observes elsewhere, ‘The whole appearance of the wood was enchanting; and each tree, taken singly, was beautiful’ (*AJ*, 17 February 1798, 146). But Dorothy may also use the isolated image to figure the fragility of her own independence: such images point to the ‘spectres of defeat’ of her own relational identity and poetics. When STC is ill on 6 March 1798, Dorothy’s close observation of, and integration into, the landscape becomes less assured, so invested was it in his company:

Observed nothing particularly interesting – the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree – the sole remaining leaf – danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind (*AJ*, 149).

This seeming obscuration of her awareness points to the uncertainty of Dorothy’s relational identity when dislodged after a period of intense communal living and perception – they were seeing STC every day at this point. Though she believes she sees ‘nothing particularly interesting’, she does go on to depict a characteristic nature-self identification. The fact that the leaf-tree motif which she uses to signify her isolation (as referred to in Chapter Two) is a clear echo of STC’s ‘Christabel’ (or the other way round?) reinforces the depth of their personal and artistic interdependence at this stage.²⁰⁶ Part I of *Christabel*, which figures the dancing leaf image, was composed in around February 1798, just prior to this journal entry, but Dorothy may still have been the prime generator of the image. The leaf-tree relationship figures the fragility of her independent self – the fact that it is the last remaining leaf suggests that it is on the

²⁰⁶ There is not Wind enough to twirl
The One red Leaf, the last of its Clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost Twig that looks up at the Sky.

(*Christabel*, *PWI*, 484-5, ll. 48-52)

brink of detachment but retains a tentative hold onto its grounding source (the tree: her brother). As I first proposed in Chapter Two, the ‘wind’ which threatens to detach the leaf could represent the inhospitable public domain, which is inhospitable, but nonetheless liberates the leaf. Dorothy’s conflict with the external environment is depicted as involuntary with a sense almost of renunciation – giving herself up to the external forces. Though there is an implication of being used, the vulnerable leaf nonetheless ‘danced’, which implies a relishing of its abandon. The leaf-tree depiction is different from the solitary flower, which is a greater symbol of her independence and potential; its symbiotic nature would more readily have suggested to Dorothy the nature of her dependent relationship with her brother and thus the fragility of her independence. This vulnerability and ambiguity of self foretells Dorothy’s later struggle to remap her identity independent of William, as I show below, both sporadically in the *Grasmere Journals*, and then permanently in her verse.

Dorothy experiences greatest self-conflict in the *Grasmere Journals* in periods when William is absent, anguish which then becomes repressed upon his return. She tells herself that she will keep a journal to assuage this psychological and emotional struggle: ‘I resolved to write a journal of the time till W & J return, & I set about keeping my resolve because I will not quarrel with myself’ (*GJ*, 14 May 1800, 1). This practice of easing conflict through the act of writing parallels the emotional fluctuations experienced by Mary Wollstonecraft through her letter writing, as Janet Todd describes: ‘She stimulated passion with her words, then, still writing, helped it subside’; she ‘wrote as if therapeutically communing with herself’ (Todd 2000, 362, 359). Through writing Dorothy both re-connects with William, as one of the main purposes of writing the journal was to ‘give Wm Pleasure by it when he comes home again’, and realizes her autonomous self, its weaknesses and strengths (*GJ*, 1). Fay understands such periods of solitude and self-doubt as forming part of ‘the process of endlessly becoming

who one *is*: the subject in question' (Fay 1995, 8). Dorothy's confrontations with her autonomous self through writing signal a growing and strengthening of her selfhood.

As with the STC scene noted above, nature both reflects and reinforces Dorothy's melancholy mood when William leaves her in the opening pages of the *Grasmere Journal*:

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, & after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me I knew not why dull and melancholy, the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound (*GJ*, 14 May 1800, 1).

When Dorothy is separated from William, further seclusion dulls her connection to nature; as she remarks to Jane Pollard on 10 July 1793, 'my eye is gratified by a smiling prospect [...]. But oh how imperfect is my pleasure! I am *alone*; why are not you seated with me? and my dear William why is not he here also?' (*LWDW* I, 97). Dorothy's identity is so grounded in William that when rupture occurs in this self-in-relation chain, normal interaction and self-realization becomes occluded; like Hartley's oil-water motif of incommunicable solitude, the self becomes suspended. Whereas William's more centralized ego allows the 'visionary gleam' which he mourns to become intermittently refracted back, Dorothy's relational self is offered no such protection or continuity. Her separation from William is so keenly felt that she almost fetishizes any object that is associated with him, such as his half-eaten apple:

I *will* be busy, I *will* look well & be well when he comes back to me. O the Darling! here is one of his bitten apples! I can hardly find in my heart to throw it in the fire (*GJ*, 4 March 1802, 74).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ See also: 'Sate down where we always sit I was full of thoughts about my darling. Blessings on him' (*GJ*, [4] March 1802, 74).

Whereas William needed Dorothy imaginatively – he states in ‘Poems on the Naming of Places’ III that ‘no place on earth / Can ever be a solitude’ to him because of their intense ‘communion’ – she needed more his *physical* presence (*LB*, 247, ll. 15-16). Daily, she anxiously hopes for re-connection with him through the form of letters, frequently exclaiming ‘No letters!’ (*GJ*, 5 March 1802, 75). In William’s absence, she also tries to reconnect with him through reading the *Lyrical Ballads* – a symbol of their collaborative textual union – before she goes to bed: ‘Read the LB, got into sad thoughts, tried at German but could not go on – Read LB. – Blessings on that Brother of mine!’ (*GJ*, 5 March 1802, 75). Her anguish over the stability of her independent self is thus constantly near the surface and breaks through intermittently:

Grasmere was very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight it calls home the heart to quietness. I had been very melancholy in my walk back. I had many of my saddest thoughts & I could not keep the tears within me (*GJ*, 16 May, 2).

An entry on 19 May again articulates Dorothy’s ‘quarrel with [her]self’ where the previous consolations of nature now only compound her solitude: ‘The quietness & still seclusion of the valley affected me even to producing the deepest melancholy – I forced myself from it’ (*GJ*, 19 May 1800, 4). These are what Elizabeth Hardwick calls ‘desperate hints of vulnerability’; in William’s absence, emptiness, panic, and the meaningless of her isolated life threaten to overwhelm her.²⁰⁸

In another instance of this melancholia which threatens her identity and creativity, Dorothy fills the emerging fissures of her text and self with an allusion to William’s verse:

Two or three different kinds of Birds sang at intervals on the opposite shore. I sate till I could hardly drag myself away I grew so sad. ‘When pleasant thoughts &c–’ (*GJ*, 26 May 1800, 5).

²⁰⁸ Elizabeth Hardwick, *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 146.

Dorothy is here part-quoting the first stanza of William's 'Lines Written in Early Spring' (composed c. 12 April 1798), where birdsong induces a comparable bittersweet mood in William:

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

(LB, 76, ll. 1-4)

The predominant mood in William's poem is, however, still 'sweet'; Dorothy is not so capable of preventing the sink into melancholy. In *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, an account of her late summer and early autumn tour of 1803, Dorothy's textual reliance on William peaks after the death of their brother, John, when she is most emotionally fragmented. She falls back on William's poetry to fill these gaps with such defeatist prefaces as 'My description must needs be languid', and 'I have nothing here to add, except the following poem which it suggested to William'.²⁰⁹ In moments of grief and depression Dorothy confronts the impotence of her creativity and renounces her authorial independence more readily.

This sense of self-renunciation is not present in the earlier parts of *Recollections* where Dorothy strives for an independent authorial persona and enjoys her personal and creative independence from STC and William. Dorothy stresses her own solitary endeavour amongst them:

We walked cheerfully along in the sunshine, each of us alone [...]. I never travelled with more cheerful spirits than this day. Our road was along the side of a high moor. I can always walk over a moor with a light foot; I seem to be drawn more closely to nature in such places than anywhere else; or rather I feel more strongly the power of nature over me, and am better satisfied with myself

²⁰⁹ *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ed. Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 144, 187.

for being able to find enjoyment in what unfortunately to many persons is either dismal or insipid (Walker 1997, 55).

Here Dorothy re-iterates her autonomy in relation to her companions – ‘each of us alone’ – emphasising her freedom, heightened relationship with nature, and acknowledgement of its power. Her obsession with walking, especially alone, as above, where she feels ‘nature’s power over [her]’, is a mark of her independence, confidence, and indifference to the physical and mental infringement of social standards.

In this respect, Dorothy shows the feminist influence of Mary Wollstonecraft. Fay argues that Dorothy ‘refuses a Wollstonecraftian independence and sexuality’ (Fay 1995, 49); I believe, however, that Wollstonecraftian principles permeate Dorothy’s entire way of being – she is often proud of how different she is from other women, writing to Catherine Clarkson that she is ‘one of the best travellers of my Sex’ (*LWDW* IV, 15 February 1821, 32). Dorothy’s encounters with various women on her Scottish tour show a Wollstonecraftian anger verging on disgust at women who do not attempt to improve themselves or make the best of their disadvantaged situation. In Wollstonecraft’s account of her Scandinavian travels she too expresses her sense of difference from other women, but also, like Dorothy, has moments of self-negation and –doubt: Wollstonecraft is at once proud of the ‘solitariness of [her] situation’, as seen through the eyes of the Norwegian women she encounters, who ‘seem a mixture of indolence and vivacity’, ‘scarcely ever walk out, and were astonished that I should, for pleasure’; yet, upon leaving Norway, she is torn between solitude and society: ‘I bury myself in the woods, but find it necessary to emerge again, that I may not lose sight of the wisdom and virtue which exalts my nature’.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, ed. Richard Holmes (London: Penguin, 1987), 113, 122.

Dorothy presents herself as a spirited, enlightened, and brave woman, liberated from the shackles of her sex and relishing a bohemian and unconventional freedom – quite opposite to the woman described by De Quincey as struggling and confined by the proprieties of her sex, age, and custom. He writes of her ‘subtle fire of impassioned intellect’ becoming ‘immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition’.²¹¹ Dorothy’s uncle, Christopher Crackanthorpe, writing in July 1793, criticizes Dorothy’s ‘rambling about the country on foot’ (Dorothy quotes this phrase in her reply). Dorothy delivers a terse and rational retort:

I rather thought it would have given my friends pleasure to hear that I had courage to make use of the strength with which nature has endowed me, when it not only procured me infinitely more pleasure than I should have received from sitting in a post-chaise – but was also the means of saving me at least thirty shillings (*LWDWI*, 21 April 1794, 117).

With this view, Dorothy echoes Wollstonecraft’s belief, expressed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, that a sedentary life was debilitating to mind and body: ‘dependence of body naturally produces dependence of mind’ (Todd 1999, 111). By striving against convention to have physical and mental power over herself, Dorothy answers Wollstonecraft’s call for a ‘revolution in female manners’ (Todd, 1999, 113).²¹² Fay claims that ‘D. Wordsworth does not want to change women’s role as Wollstonecraft or Hays strive to do but wants to redesign it to suit her self-production’; an assessment which my analysis reveals to be inaccurate (Fay 1995, 48). Though Dorothy’s approach is not as overt as Wollstonecraft’s, her concern with her own intellectual independence, and her interest in the development and thwarted potential of

²¹¹ *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. Julian North, vol. XI (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), 52.

²¹² See footnote 13 where I state that Dorothy’s journals show that she was a reader of Wollstonecraft.

most of the women that she comes across, demonstrates that she *is* influenced by Wollstonecraft's revolutionary ideas about women and social reform.²¹³

While there are instances of Dorothy enjoying solitude amongst nature in William's absence – 'God be thanked I want not society by a moonlight lake' (*GJ*, [2] June 1800, 7) – more usually, she seeks and receives the benefits of solitude when already grounded in a community. A more definite realization of herself is born out of the strengthening security of community:

When we came to the foot of Brothers water I left William sitting on the Bridge & went along the path on the right side of the Lake through the wood – I was delighted with what I saw – the water under the boughs of the bare old trees, the simplicity of the mountains & the exquisite beauty of the path. There was one grey cottage. I repeated the Glowworm as I walked along – I hung over the gate, & thought I could have stayed forever (*GJ*, 16 April 1802, 86-7).

Dorothy's strong subjective vision (there are seven uses of the first-person pronoun here) becomes more pronounced, as in her Scottish tour, *after* she has 'left William'. A reference to William's 'Glowworm' poem binds her to William in her solitary walk, a connection which is loaded with significance for Dorothy: 'Among all lovely things my Love had been' was composed the previous week when William was visiting Mary in Middleham, and was given to Dorothy upon his return to reassure her that his love for her would not be altered by his impending marriage. William's poem refers to the finding of a glow-worm for 'Lucy' (Dorothy), an incident which, William remarks to STC on the 16 April 1802, 'took place about seven years ago between Dorothy and me', when the two siblings were settling at Racedown (*LWDW* I, 348). In Dorothy's moment of solitude she clings to the hope of continuing sibling union that William's offering promises.

²¹³ As Pamela Woof states: 'D[orothy] as a reader, conversationalist, and writer, was in fact an example of the intelligent educated woman who could be a real companion to educated men, such as Mary Wollstonecraft hoped for in society' (*G&AJ*, 296n).

Dorothy is alert to the possibility of integrity of independence within a community: ‘The other Birch trees that were near it looked bright & cheerful – but *it was a Creature by its own self among them*’, but this awareness is not constant (*GJ*, 24 November 1801, 40; my italics). The reading that the strawberry plant image figures Dorothy’s confusion over her own development becomes more convincing when we consider that earlier on in the entry, Dorothy reflects not just on the present company of STC and William, as they walk together around the Grasmere and Rydale lakes, but on past recollections of their first arrival in Grasmere: ‘I always love to walk that way because it is the way I first came to Rydale & Grasmere, & because our dear Coleridge did also’ (*GJ*, 31 January 1802, 60). Recollecting and envisioning her past and present with STC and William in Grasmere provokes contemplation of her subjective self, development, and future. Confrontation with the solitary strawberry blossom leads her to question the fruition of the self-in-community:

I found a strawberry blossom in a rock, the little slender flower had more courage than the green leaves, for *they* were but half expanded & half grown, but the blossom was spread full out. I uprooted it rashly, & I felt as if I had been committing an outrage, so I planted it again – it will have but a stormy life of it, but let it live if it can (*GJ*, 31 Jan 1802, 61).

The isolated strawberry flower represents to Dorothy a greater level of development: its blossom is ‘spread full out’, while the green leaves, with their more communal connotations, are only ‘half expanded & half grown’. Within this entry we could read a questioning of whether she felt her individuality and growth was being stifled through being part of such an intense relationship with STC and William; she is exploring the notion that full glory is only noticed when the object is considered alone, rather than in relationship.

Dorothy’s envy of the blossom’s audacious ‘courage’ and independence leads to an uncharacteristic destruction of the scene which echoes William’s ‘Nutting’

(Composed between 6 October and 28 December 1798) where he violates a ‘virgin scene’ of nature:

Then up I rose,
And dragg’d to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage [...]

(*LB*, 220, ll. 41-3)

Dorothy’s remorse (‘outrage’) over her destructive act parallels the guilt that William feels after nature’s reproach: ‘I felt a sense of pain when I beheld / The silent trees and the intruding sky’ (ll. 50-51). Interestingly, the 1800 version of ‘Nutting’ concludes with a turn to Dorothy imploring her to respect nature, advice to which, in the above entry, she does not adhere:

Then, dearest Maiden! move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch, – for there is a Spirit in the woods.

(ll. 54-6)

Dorothy’s uprooting of the strawberry flower jars with the recollection that she later presents of her early reverence for the plant: ‘I happened to say that when I was a Child I would not have pulled a strawberry blossom’ (*GJ*, 28 April 1802, 92).²¹⁴ That same day, Dorothy reveals that William appropriates her recollection of the strawberry flower for his poem ‘Children gathering flowers’ (later published as ‘Foresight’, 1807).²¹⁵ In the original poem the child-speaker implores the children to pick the primroses, daisies, pansies, daffodils, but ‘Strawberry-blossoms, one and all, / We must spare them’ (*TV*, 251, ll. 3-4). While the other flowers have a more transient life – the ‘Daisies leave no

²¹⁴ We are also reminded of the isolated strawberry flower that Dorothy noted with *STC* at Alfoxden: ‘I saw one solitary strawberry flower under a hedge’ (*AJ*, 144). Elsewhere in the journals Dorothy observes: ‘I saw a solitary butter flower in the wood’ (41).

²¹⁵ The full title of this poem, in the editions of 1807 to 1832, was ‘Foresight, or the Charge of a Child to his younger Companion’, but it was originally known in the Wordsworth household as ‘Children gathering Flowers’.

fruit behind / When the pretty flowerets die' (ll. 21-2) – the strawberry flower intrigues

William because of the fruit it promises to yield:

God has given a kindlier power
To the favoured Strawberry-flower.
When the months of spring are fled
Hither let us bend our walk;
Lurking berries, ripe and red,
Then will hang on every stalk,
Each within its leafy bower;
And for that promise spare the flower!

(ll. 25-32)

Viewing Dorothy's uprooting of the strawberry blossom in the light of William's later poem we may argue that she identifies with the potential (fruit) that the flower conceals, an association which aggravates her anxiety over her independent productivity. Interestingly, the uprooted strawberry flower passage is written when William is struggling to write 'The Pedlar' – perhaps Dorothy's anxiety over his lack of creativity induced a fear also for the fruition of her collaborative stake in William's poetic identity.

Dorothy's shifting responses to the solitary and communal natural image betray an ambiguity over her own identity and development. She is sceptical as to her intrinsic independent strength – implicit in the conditional phrase 'it will have a stormy life of it, but let it live if it can', and in the knowledge that independent living brings greater unknown threats from without (*GJ*, 31 January 1802, 61). This fear of environmental exposure is also shown in her depiction of the 'sole remaining leaf' dancing like a 'rag blown by the wind', noted above, and her observation of a young bird's shaky introduction to the inhospitable outside world:

It was a little young creature, that had just left its nest, equally unacquainted with man & unaccustomed to struggle against Storms & winds. While it was

upon the apple tree the wind blew about the stiff boughs & the Bird seemed bemazed & not strong enough to strive with it (*GJ*, 16 June 1802, 110).

Such explorations nonetheless give us glimpses of her desire for a secure identity independent of her brother.

A more explicit meditation on female identity occurs two months after the strawberry blossom passage, in an entry where William and STC are again both present:

The Columbine was growing upon the Rocks, here & there a solitary plant – sheltered & shaded by the tufts & Bowers of trees it is a graceful slender creature, a female seeking retirement & growing freest & most graceful where it is most alone. I observed that the more shaded plants were always the tallest (*GJ*, 1 June 1802, 103).

This time Dorothy suggests that solitude within a protected environment is a source of freedom and growth; a very Wordsworthian principle. Living ‘sheltered & shaded’ in the shadow of William allows Dorothy a form of development that she would not have access to without his protection, as represented by the shade of ‘the tufts & Bowers of trees’. This illustration of solitude-in-relationship argues for the viability of the reclusive female figure: her observation that ‘the more shaded plants were always the tallest’ is her most confident and comfortable assertion that a unique outlet of creativity and development is allowed in her brother’s shadow. A link could be drawn here with Hartley’s contrary depictions of female subjectivity where he depicts a nun’s self-enforced seclusion as unnatural and life-depriving. Written at the apprehensive time in the run-up to William’s wedding (three days earlier she had written out the poem ‘Going for Mary’ for William), Dorothy reveals anxiety over her role in William’s life and whether she will lose his protection.

Dorothy oscillates between representing images of struggle for survival, as we have seen, and identifying images of dwelling, protection, and security; elsewhere she

singles out the one honeysuckle bud that is ‘retired’ hidden and sheltered: ‘There are I do believe a thousand Buds on the honeysuckle tree all small & far from blowing save one that is retired behind the twigs close to the wall & as snug as a Bird’s nest’ (*GJ*, 3 June 1802, 104). Thus, like Hartley, she observes that some natural forms are protected whilst others are forced to weather the storm – a protracted metaphor for the trials of all forms of human life. Again, as with the ‘full-blown’ strawberry blossom depiction, and the motif of the solitary leaf blown by the wind, Dorothy reveals an aversion for independent publicity. Though there is a sense of autism involved in her depictions of dependence – a shutting down of some sensory capability, accompanied by a heightening of connection to something for a more self-validating, less fracturing existence – Dorothy posits the very real fear that public life can be more detrimental than a quiet, but less noticed, growth in seclusion.

Dorothy’s strongest indication that a sense of domestic security and familial support is vital to her stability of self is shown by her dramatic grief-stricken reaction to the collapse of a swallow’s nest outside her bedroom window:

I looked up at my Swallow’s nest & it was gone. It had fallen down. Poor little creatures they could not themselves be more distressed than I was I went upstairs to look at the Ruins. They lay in a large heap upon the window ledge; these Swallows had been ten days employed in building this nest, & it seemed to be almost finished – I had watched them early in the morning, in the day many & many a time & in the evenings when it was almost dark I had seen them sitting together side by side in their unfinished nest both morning & night (*GJ*, 25 June 1802, 115).

This elaborate preoccupation with the swallows’ activity – she reiterates that she has been observing their movements day and night – suggests not only that she identifies with their plight, but that the swallows have connected with her life and sustained her during periods of solitude: she ‘watched them one morning when William was at Eusemere, for more than an hour’ (115). For Dorothy they form an analogy for her

endeavour to recreate the home and for the precarious nature of such attempts. Her recollection of their daily life leads her to recall a nervousness in their being which seemed to portend an uncertain fate: ‘Every now & then there was a feeling motion in their wings a sort of tremulousness & they sang a low song to one another’ (115). It is significant that while she is so keenly observing the construction and collapse of the swallows’ home she is also anticipating the potential dissolution of her own ‘nest’ with William due to his forthcoming marriage (which occurred four months later). Dorothy’s subsequent entries trace the swallows’ struggle for re-habitation (29 June, [6] July, [8] July, 1802). On the evening of 8 July, as she is preparing to leave the following morning with William for his wedding, Dorothy speaks as though she is leaving her home indefinitely:

I must prepare to go – The Swallows I must leave them the well the garden the Roses all – Dear creatures!! they sang last night after I was in bed – seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well I must go – Farewell. – – – (*GJ*, 7 [8] July 1802, 119).²¹⁶

The harmony of the swallows, who have managed to reconstruct their dwelling, represents to Dorothy the domestic security which she will renounce for an uncertain fate. That the swallows suffered a collapse of their home but recreate it – in the same spot – does, however, signify Dorothy’s latent optimism that she can do the same.

Dorothy’s anxiety over William’s forthcoming marriage is made clear in a letter to Mrs. John Marshall on 29 September 1802: ‘happy as I am, I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings, past, present, and future which will come upon me on the wedding morning’ (*LWDW* I, 377). Dorothy’s identification with the configuration of the moon and stars upon receiving a much anticipated letter from

²¹⁶ Cf. Hartley’s poem ‘Continuation’ (as analysed in Chapter One), where he juxtaposes an image of natural isolation – ‘That flower recluse’; ‘balm breathing anchorite’; ‘lone flower’ – with one of harmonious and loving community: a ‘happy nest of Doves’ (*NP*, 73, ll. 2, 4, 11, 6).

William and Mary shows her questioning how the marriage would displace her identity. The fluctuating prominence of the two stars in the shadow of the moon represents her uncertainty over the shifting positions of importance that she and Mary will assume in William's life:

Thomas Wilkinson came with me to Barton, & 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 thoughts of my half-read letter & 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 – the moon travelled through the clouds tinging them yellow as she passed along, with two stars near her, one larger than the other. These stars grew or diminished as they passed from or went into the clouds. At this time William as I found the next day was riding by himself between Middleham & Barnard Castle having parted from Mary. I read over my letter when I got to the house (*GJ*, 12 April 1802, 84).

Dorothy had previously envisioned the moon as a 'gold ring snapped in two' in an entry which again imagines what William is doing at the exact time that she gazes on the moon (*GJ*, 8 March 1802, 76). The moon, because it can be viewed by everyone at the same time irrespective of physical separation, links her to her brother. Thus, in these entries, the moon both reinforces her connection with William and threatens it, through the awareness that he is viewing this same scene elsewhere, but with someone else.

Before the marriage, William makes clear that by putting the ring back on to Dorothy's finger she will continue to be a part of this union:

I gave him the wedding ring – with how deep a blessing! I took it from my forefinger where I had worn it the whole of the night before – he slipped it again onto my finger and blessed me fervently (*GJ*, 4 October 1802, 126).²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Anne D. Wallace also notes this as a positive exchange in 'Home at Grasmere Again: Revising the Family in Dove Cottage': 'the power of William and Dorothy's ring exchange must flow both ways: their enactment of sibling commitment in marital terms demonstrates a linkage of the sibling and spousal bonds, validating the approaching marriage as much as the brother's and sister's continuing importance to each other'; see *Literary couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship*, ed. Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 106.

It is important to note – as this fact is often overlooked – that Dorothy blesses the ring deeply, signalling her approval of the match. Pamela Woof disputes the traditional reading of the (heavily deleted) words ‘blessed me fervently’ which, she believes, could more convincingly be read ‘as I blessed the ring softly’, a reading which significantly modifies the long-standing interpretation of the text which has frequently been taken as proof of incestuous feelings between William and Dorothy (*GJ*, xxvii). After the wedding, however, (which Dorothy did not attend) she is grief-stricken:

I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer & threw myself on the bed where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing any thing, till Sara came upstairs to me & said ‘They are coming’. This forced me from the bed where I lay & I moved I knew not how straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me till I met my beloved William & fell upon his bosom. He & John Hutchinson led me to the house & there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary (*GJ*, October 1802, 126).

Dorothy experiences a bodily and sensory paralysis: she ‘lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing’ – an eerie echo of William’s ‘A slumber did my spirit seal’: ‘She neither hears nor sees’ (*LB*, 164, l. 6; composed between 6 October and 28 December 1798) which, Coleridge remarks, was composed ‘in some gloomier moment [when] he had fancied the moment in which his Sister might die’ (*CCL* I, 479). Like Lucy – ‘No motion has she now, no force’ (ll. 5) – Dorothy cannot will the movements of her own body: she flings herself on to William, the grounding source of her identity, and has to be physically led to the house by both him and John Hutchinson.

Considering the parallels to William’s Lucy poem, it is likely that Dorothy constructed this passage for William’s eyes as a warning reminder that life without him would be equivalent to death for her. As Anca Vlasopolos remarks, Dorothy’s journals, written primarily for William, are self-consciously created with the audience in mind: ‘the self-construction at work in a love lyric is artful, as artificial, as created as

Dorothy's *Journals* self.'²¹⁸ I agree with Vlasopolos' view that Dorothy's journals are always about representing and communicating her self to William (and to herself) and speak of victory of self rather than 'defeat': Vlasopolos reads the journals as a 'love story', but regards the text as a 'qualified triumph of self-representation rather than a record "spelling defeat"' (Vlasopolos 199, 121). As such, I do not think this passage signals the psychic suicide that critics such as Lionel Trilling have stated, nor that it hints at incestuous desire for William.²¹⁹ It is implicit that Dorothy's bereavement is for the loss of her secure past-self: the potential redundancy from William's life would sever not only their personally dependent relationship, it would signal the cessation of Dorothy's collaborative authorial identity realized through the creation of the poet Wordsworth, into whom Dorothy has channelled her authorial energy.²²⁰ The intensity of her anxiety in the face of possible self-dissolution informs us how deeply her authorial and personal identity was invested in her brother; as Frances Wilson remarks, 'It is a moment of terror; separation from William, [Dorothy] says, has the power to extinguish her being'.²²¹ Dorothy's journal entry signalling her temporary 'death' of self is thus another sign – written for William – designed to forestall potential abandonment.

Hartley, as we have seen, also lamented the drifting detachment from the family unit that his siblings' marriages brought him: 'Where is my sister's smile? my brother's boisterous din? / Ah! nowhere now' ('A lonely wanderer upon earth am I', *CPW*, 114, ll. 8-9). The unmarried sibling, with no family of his or her own, takes up an

²¹⁸ Anca Vlasopolos, 'Texted Selves: Dorothy and William Wordsworth in *The Grasmere Journals*', *Auto/Biography Studies* 14: 1 (1999): 122.

²¹⁹ Lionel Trilling says of Dorothy's reaction to William's wedding: 'We cannot read her account of her brother's wedding day without concluding that for her it was a kind of death'; see head-note to his selections from the *Grasmere Journals* in vol. II of *Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Frank Kermode and John Hollander (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 613.

²²⁰ Fay also argues this view: 'The possibility of exclusion from William's life meant loss or diminishment of that intimate collective poetic effort, as well as possible loss of mythic status and importance in William's schema' (Fay 1995, 106-7).

²²¹ Frances Wilson, *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), 212.

anomalous and peripheral position, an alienation which is exacerbated in Dorothy's case of unusually close sibling intimacy. There is, however, a tendency, implicit also in Wilson's biography, to read this paralysis passage, quoted above, as the beginning of an identity collapse rather than just a 'moment of terror'. This identity crisis – albeit the zenith – constitutes only one passing stage of Dorothy's conflict over self and relationship that pervades the journals, as I have shown. Levin states that Dorothy's journals can be 'seen as a story – the story of William Wordsworth's courtship and marriage' (Levin 1987, 30). But the Wordsworth marriage is *not* the central narrative of the journals; rather it is a single, albeit significant, instance of self-doubt in Dorothy's 'process of endlessly becoming who one *is*: the subject in question' (Fay 1995, 8).²²² Dorothy's reaction to her brother's wedding is often quoted; what has rarely been commented on is Dorothy's immediate parallel reflection: 'Poor Mary was much agitated when she parted from her *Brothers & Sisters* & her home' (*GJ*, October 1802, 126; my italics).²²³ Crucially to my argument, Dorothy retains the sensory resources and extraordinary empathy, in this so-called 'psychic suicide', to recognize that the severing pain which she experiences is felt by Mary too. This provides the strongest evidence that this passage is primarily about sibling and identity bereavement, rather than jealousy or incestuous desire.

After the wedding the detail of Dorothy's journal entries does diminish temporarily, and her loneliness and uncertainty over her new role in this trio is initially

²²² Vlasopolos accords with my view of the relative insignificance of the Wordsworth wedding to the journals as a whole: 'It has been remarked that the plot of the *Journals* centers on Williams engagement and marriage, but the narrative allows these momentous events to enter only on the slant if at all' (Vlasopolos 1999, 122).

²²³ To my knowledge, the only account of the Wordsworth marriage that has noticed Mary's subsequent reaction as well as Dorothy's, and thus realized that the passage is primarily about 'Romantic marriage' and sibling 'diaspora', is that by Eric C. Walker in his chapter on 'Marriage and Siblings' in *Marriage, Writing and Romanticism*: 'this hyperventilated scene between one pair of siblings [Dorothy and William] has itself overscored a duplicate nuptial separation that occurs in Dorothy's journal several sentences later, the leave-taking of Mary Hutchinson from her large family of siblings' (Walker 2009, 97-8).

palpable. Dorothy seems envious that Mary has retained emotional equilibrium since the wedding while she has not: ‘Mary slept. I *could* not for I was thinking of so many things’ (*GJ*, 31 October 1802, 134). When the three Wordsworths go for a walk, Dorothy’s solitude is emphasized by the ‘solitary mountains’ amongst which William and Mary ‘leave’ her: ‘Wm & Mary left me sitting on a stone on the solitary mountains & went to Easedale Tairn’ (*GJ*, 11 October 1802, 132). But Dorothy’s identification with the sublime mountains also signals a private summoning of strength and power. What adds weight to this positive interpretation is that upon seeing a ‘tuft of primroses three flowers in full blossom & a Bud’ with William (*GJ*, 30 December 1802, 135) Dorothy gives a final and lingering impression of female independence and fortitude: ‘We debated long whether we should pluck & at last left them to live out their day, which I was right glad of at my return the Sunday following for there they remained uninjured either by cold or wet’ (136). Equally, Dorothy is left to ‘live out [her day] with William and Mary, hopefully likewise ‘uninjured’ by her own external changeable climate. Moreover, the primroses ‘reared themselves up among the green moss’ (135), which could allude to William’s final Lucy Poem, ‘Three years she grew in sun and shower’ (composed February 1799), where Lucy (Dorothy), like the primroses, rears up defiantly: nature ‘Shall rear her form to stately height’ (*LB*, 222, l. 32). Dorothy’s feeling celebration of the hardy surviving flowers implies that she too is poised to cope and not defeated.

Critics frequently want to believe that neither Dorothy’s closeness with William nor her literary productivity were ever the same again after the wedding; Pamela Woof, for example, states that with ‘the wedding over and the domestic adjustments made, there was probably not the former physical closeness of William and his sister – Dorothy’s making a pillow of her shoulder as she read, or sitting with him “in deep

silence at the window [...] deep in Silence & Love, a blessed hour”²²⁴ But Dorothy’s writings do not corroborate this surmise: there *are* entries which resume her detailed perception of her surroundings and which assert her continued closeness with William. On Christmas Eve 1802 – one of the final entries of the *Grasmere Journal* – Dorothy boasts how long she has been sitting with William while Mary is elsewhere:

William is now sitting by me at ½ past 10 o’clock. I have been beside him ever since tea running the heel of a stocking, repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating [...]. Mary is in the parlour below attending to the baking of cakes & Jenny Fletcher’s pies. Sara is in bed in the tooth ache, & so we are – beloved William is turning over the leaves of Charlotte Smith’s sonnets (*GJ*, 24 December 1802, 134-5).

This suggests, contrary to critical assumption, that for Dorothy their psychic unison is unbroken. The passage evokes moments of blissful harmony from earlier on in the *Grasmere Journals* where Dorothy describes a synchronization of emotion and psyche so complete that she is unaware of their corporeal being or division. It recalls, in particular, the passage which again figures ‘beloved’ William, Dorothy, and the ‘leaves’ of a book: ‘The fire flutters & the watch ticks I hear nothing else save the Breathings of my Beloved & he now & then pushes his book forward & turns over a leaf’ (*GJ*, 23 March 1802, 82). Literary industry and pleasure – ‘repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating’ – unites the siblings, and Mary’s presence cannot dissolve that bond. While Dorothy presents Mary as performing domestic or amanuentic acts elsewhere, it is *Dorothy* whom William works beside: ‘Since Tea Mary has been down stairs copying out Italian poems for Stuart – Wm has been working beside me, & here ends this imperfect summary’ (*GJ*, 11 January 1803, 137).

²²⁴ Pamela Woof, ‘Dorothy Wordsworth as a Young Woman’, *WC* 38: 3 (Summer 2007): 138.

The facts of Dorothy's writings thus reveal that she recovered from this emotional trauma, adapted to William's new life – she was a virtual second mother to his children – and held a great love for Mary, who was her childhood friend.²²⁵ As such, I am not in sympathy with critical attempts to trace Dorothy's envy of William and Mary's relationship or to analyse evidence for incestuous desire and guilt.²²⁶ The depth of Dorothy's temporary identity crisis points to another 'spectre of defeat' of the relational self – when that which grounds the self changes its own make-up, the fragility of the relational self becomes exposed and deeply vulnerable.

'A perfect electrometer': Dorothy Wordsworth's Aesthetics of Relationship

In addition to more overt demonstrations of the problems of dwelling and familial security, as I have examined above, the significance of the home and changeable environments pervades Dorothy's whole mode of seeing and writing aesthetic. Marjorie M. Barber recognizes that the 'something new in the writing of the [Alfoxden] journal' is Dorothy's 'impressionistic' style (Barber 1965, xv). Dorothy's enthrallment with not only the minutiae of life and natural ephemera but the changeable effect of external phenomena on objects in different times and spaces is a concern which sets her apart from other writers of feminine Romanticism. Her distinctive method anticipates the style adopted by the impressionist group of artists, in particular the series of paintings created by Monet in the 1880s-90s, where he would repeatedly depict the same subject (such as Haystacks and Water-lilies) under changing light and weather

²²⁵ A letter to Mrs. John Marshall, written just before the wedding, should dispel any accusation that Dorothy seriously resented Mary's presence: 'I have long loved Mary Hutchinson as a Sister, and she is equally attached to me this being so, you will guess that I look forward with perfect happiness to this Connection between us [...]. There never lived on earth a better woman than Mary H. and I have not a doubt that she is in every respect formed to make an excellent wife to my Brother' (*LWDW* I, 29 September 1802, 377).

²²⁶ I do, however, agree with Valerie Sanders' view that 'Either Dorothy's conscience was clear on the subject of incest, or she was unconcerned about the comments of other people' with regard to her relationship with William (Sanders 2002, 42).

conditions.²²⁷ Dorothy also anticipates and fulfils Thomas Hardy's understanding of the ultimate aim of poetry, in a manner in which, Hardy believed, William Wordsworth did not: 'the mission of poetry is to record impressions, not convictions. Wordsworth in his later writings fell into the error of recording the latter'.²²⁸ In the Fenwick note to 'An Evening Walk' William talks of the 'infinite variety of natural appearances' which, he feels, has gone unnoticed by previous poets.²²⁹ By this W. J. B. Owen takes William to mean 'the infinite variation of natural appearances under various environmental circumstances of the one object'.²³⁰ Owen gives the label 'time-notes' to the record of such 'variation in natural appearances which ensues from variations in the light-source, as the day drifts towards evening and night' (Owen 1987, 3). Richard E. Matlak states that 'An Evening Walk' indicates Wordsworth's ability to value these 'time-notes' and is a 'telling point of imaginative discrimination for Wordsworth'.²³¹ Neither Owen nor Matlak indicate Dorothy's influence here, which is surprising as it is surely Dorothy who more effectively records nature's 'time-notes'.

The *Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* demonstrate Dorothy's deep intuition of the variable phenomena which surround the natural object and how such influences alter our perceptions. In a particularly striking passage, Dorothy describes the incessant vibrancy and motion of that which transforms the surface of the heath – an ephemeral, barely discernable dimension of 'withered grass', 'spiders' threads', and 'insects passing':

Sat a considerable time upon the heath. Its surface restless and glistening with the motion of the scattered piles of withered grass, and the waving of the

²²⁷ Pamela Woof compares Dorothy's 'precise arrestings of the changing moment' to Constable (Woof 1988, 68).

²²⁸ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 408.

²²⁹ *An Evening Walk by William Wordsworth*, ed. James Averill (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 301.

²³⁰ W. J. B. Owen, 'The Poetry of Nature', *WC* 18: 1 (Winter 1987): 3.

²³¹ Richard E. Matlak, *The Poetry of Relationship* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 75.

spiders' threads [...]. In the deep Coombe, as we stood upon the sunless hill, we saw the hills of grass, light and glittering, and the insects passing (*AJ*, 8 February 1798, 145).

Dorothy is drawn to the existence and *passage* of the transitory world and frequently describes these elusive 'surfaces' of nature as shimmering and glistening. She is particularly entranced by the effects of light dancing on cobwebs and dewdrops: she notices 'the sheep glittering in the sunshine', 'locks of wool still spangled with the dew-drops', 'the invisible veil which enveloped [the moon]',²³² 'the shadows of the oaks', the 'hawthorn hedges black and pointed, glittering with millions of diamond drops',²³³ and the 'withered leaves danc[ing] with the hailstones', a minute vision which aligns her with Hartley's way of seeing things (*AJ*, 142, 143, 149). In this way, Dorothy registers the essential volatility within nature – its chaos. Her identification with this restlessness is itself a metaphor for self-perception and self-realization: different adaptations of Dorothy's, or any, self vary through time, dependent on the observer and the changes in the external environment. Our constructions of the self are governed by that which surrounds the subject; be it elemental physical phenomena, or social and cultural change, which gradually inflect the way we see things. In this manner, Dorothy's work, like Hartley's, illustrates the enlightenment notion adopted by William Godwin and Percy Shelley that environments determined what people were; as Godwin

²³² In his notebooks, STC similarly describes a cloud circling the moon as 'not larger than a floating Veil' (*CN II*, 2453).

²³³ William's later description in 'Home at Grasmere' is surely influenced by Dorothy's minute 'diamond drop' description:

The birch-tree woods
Are hung with thousand thousand diamond drops
Of melted hoar-frost, every tiny knot
In the bare twigs, each little budding-place
Cased with its several bead [...]

(*HG*, 86, 784-8)

wrote, ‘The human intellect is a sort of barometer, directed in its variations by the atmosphere which surrounds it’.²³⁴

Indeed, Dorothy’s descriptions often meditate on how environment contains and bestows more of the essence of life – what Hartley terms the ‘living spark’ (*CPW*, 74, l. 19) – than the subject itself: ‘The shapes of the mist, slowly moving along, exquisitely beautiful; passing over the sheep they almost seemed to have more of life than those quiet creatures’ (*AJ*, 1 March 1798, 148).²³⁵ And again, in the *Grasmere Journals*:

We amused ourselves for a long time in watching the Breezes some as if they came from the bottom of the lake spread in a circle, brushing along the surface of the water, & growing more delicate, as it were thinner & of a *paler* colour till they died away – others spread out like a peacocks tail, & some went right forward this way & that in all directions. The lake was still where these breezes were not, but *they made it all alive* (*GJ*, 31 January 1802, 61; my italics).²³⁶

In this way, Dorothy discerns William’s ‘sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused’ (‘Tintern Abbey’, *LB*, 118-19, ll. 96-7). Maurice Hewlett believes that this mode of penetrating perception makes Dorothy a visionary writer: ‘She tells us much but implies more. We may see deeply into ourselves, but she sees deeply into a deeper self than most of us can discern’, a view with which Catherine Macdonald Maclean, in her biography of Dorothy, concurs:

²³⁴ ‘Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr’s Spital Sermon’, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, vol. II, ed. Mark Philp (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1993), 170.

²³⁵ Viewing nature’s elements as animated by an underlying spiritual power or identity echoes STC’s ‘The Eoelian Harp’ (1795-6):

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of All?

(*PWI*, 234, ll. 44-8)

²³⁶ See also *GJ*, [2] June 1800, 7: ‘I sate a long time to watch the hurrying waves & to hear the regularly irregular sound of the dashing waters. The waves round about the little [Island] seemed like a dance of spirits that rose out of the water, round its small circumference of shore’.

There was infinity in her gaze. But he could not learn her secret. Her directness and simplicity eluded him. What did she see when she looked at a flower or a plant? Did her eyes pierce to the mystery of life itself?²³⁷

Such conjecture posits Dorothy within masculine Romanticism rather than feminine notions of writing – William’s sense, in particular, of seeing ‘into the life of things’ (‘Tintern Abbey’, l. 50). Jane Spencer is too extreme in her polarization of the Wordsworths when she states that because Dorothy still possesses William’s ‘visionary gleam’ (‘Immortality Ode’), ‘she herself cannot share the “sense sublime” of the oneness of all life’ (Spencer 2005, 168). Homans likewise argues that Dorothy’s ‘faculties are collectively opposed to visionary powers’ (Homans 1980, 103). But Dorothy is a visionary writer in the sense that D. H. Lawrence has been assigned the title – like D. H. Lawrence, who stated that it is essential that poetry makes a ‘new effort of attention, and “discovers” a new world within the known world’, Dorothy contrasts the minute with the vast in an attempt to unite the material physical world with the infinite and the eternal, a juxtaposition which is reminiscent also of William Blake’s vision of ‘Heaven in a Wild Flower’ (‘Chaos in Poetry’, Kalnins 1992, 271).²³⁸

In his essay ‘Chaos in Poetry’, Lawrence writes of man ‘putting up an umbrella between himself and the everlasting chaos’ and comments that a poet ‘makes a slit in the umbrella; and lo! the glimpse of chaos is a vision, a window to the sun’ (Kalnins 1992, 271). Lawrence cites William Wordsworth as one such poet:

The joy men had when Wordsworth, for example, made a slit and saw a primrose! Till then men had only seen a primrose dimly, in the shadow of the

²³⁷ Maurice Hewlett, ‘The Other Dorothy’, in *Last Essays of Maurice Hewlett* (London: William Heinemann, 1924), 229; Catherine Macdonald Maclean, *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932), 52.

²³⁸ William Blake, ‘Auguries of Innocence’, in *Blake’s Poetry and Designs*, ed. Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), 209. Arthur Quiller-Couch also aligns Dorothy with Blake implicitly when, talking on Dorothy, he notes Blake’s marginal observation on Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *Discourses*: “‘To generalise is to be an idiot. To particularise is the great distinction of merit’”; see *Studies in Literature, Third Series* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 90.

umbrella. They saw it through Wordsworth in the full gleam of chaos (Kalnins 1992, 272).

But it is *Dorothy's* registering of nature's inherent chaos that constitutes her contribution to what Fay terms the 'Wordsworthian world view':

Whereas William Wordsworth looked inward to see the order of things, Dorothy looked outward to see how things escape order. That is, the Wordsworthian world view was a product of both their imaginations working together (Fay 1995, 15).

This awareness of a chaotic energy source from without makes STC's labelling of Dorothy's 'taste' as a 'perfect electrometer', which measures minute fluctuations in electrical energy, particularly fitting (*CCL* I, 3 July 1797, 331). As Levin remarks, Dorothy's descriptive technique was unrivalled in her time: 'Her descriptions capture the organic process of natural life in a way unequalled by any other prose writer of the period and perhaps by any other early nineteenth-century writer at all, save her brother or her friend Coleridge'.²³⁹

The breeze which Dorothy finds makes the lake 'alive' has resonances in particular with 'the intellectual breeze' of STC's 'The Eolian Harp' (1795-6), where STC compares the breeze that plays the harp to a pantheistic spiritual breeze which unifies God, nature, and man (*PW* I, l. 47). The wind was a major symbol in Romantic poetry, particularly with William and STC; in the first book of William's *Prelude*, a personified breeze symbolizes his poetic inspiration and subsequent creation: a 'sweet breath of Heaven' surrounding his body induces 'A corresponding mild creative breeze' (I, 14, ll. 41, 43). The animating and unifying force of the breeze or wind appeals to Dorothy as it perpetually envelops and stirs all of creation and is a dynamic power which runs in parallel existence to the intangible pantheistic life-force which 'rolls

²³⁹ Susan M. Levin, 'Subtle Fire: Dorothy Wordsworth's Prose and Poetry', *MR* 21 (1980): 356.

through all things' ('Tintern Abbey', l. 103).²⁴⁰ Dorothy's emphasis on the wind's literal external nature and influence, rather than suggesting it flows through her, or using it metaphorically, as Percy Shelley does, is more akin to STC's representation of this dynamic. Her interest in weather in general is a sign of her awe at sublime nature's ultimate strength and man's comparative weakness; as Maureen Perkins remarks in *Visions of the Future: Almanacs, Time, and Cultural Change*, 'the weather is one important and highly visible factor that has escaped human domination'.²⁴¹

As we have seen in Chapter One, Hartley is also drawn to the elusive and volatile ephemera which frame the object – shadows, dust, foot-marks, 'an angel's wing' ('I saw thee in the beauty of thy spring', *CPW*, 127, l. 8). Such visualizations describe the object's mobility and transitory presence and provide tiny records which trace and validate their existence. Dorothy's writings display a similarly acute awareness that we are defined by our relationship with the outside world – and, moreover, the record of this relationship – and not just by ourselves. This mode of seeing could itself be the product of the anxiety that Hartley and Dorothy feel that there is no free-standing record of their existence – their 'silent ministries' – other than through their father/sibling. It could thus be argued that the familial bond provokes this poetic dynamic in Dorothy and Hartley's work: their concern with changeable environments indicates a heightened anxiety over the instability of their lives and identities. I have stated that Hartley's faults and enforced subordination did, in fact, hone his poetic vision; likewise, as Meena Alexander states, 'writing without any place' Dorothy 'was able to exploit her enforced marginality'.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ See also William's 'Airey-Force Valley', where his more sensitive depiction of 'a little breeze' is more akin to Dorothy's presentations of its literal force. In William's poem, the breeze is 'unfelt' by the 'sturdy oaks', but 'to its gentle touch how sensitive / Is the light ash!' (*LP*, 285, ll. 8, 11-12).

²⁴¹ Maureen Perkins, *Visions of the Future: Almanacs, Time, and Cultural Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 206.

²⁴² Meena Alexander, *Women in Romanticism* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 80. Lucy Newlyn also argues this point: 'It was frequently the case in this period that creative identities were constructed from

Dorothy's concern with environments parallels, as we have seen, Hartley's stress on contingency for survival and could be viewed as a protracted attempt to restore a secure sense of belonging and home. In *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology*, Kenneth Cervelli examines Dorothy's treatment of dwelling and travel and notes her habit of gravitating towards and describing domestic environments when travelling through Scotland. He attributes this to the fact that she was uprooted from her family home at an early age and spent the rest of her youth longing for a settled dwelling: 'Dorothy's need to write her surroundings suggests her desire to heal a gap she experienced very early in life' (Cervelli 2007, 43). As Dorothy remarks to Jane Pollard in September 1795, 'You know the pleasure which I have always attached to the idea of home, a blessing which I so early lost' (*LWDW I*, 146). Dorothy identifies with the 'ceaseless motion' and changeability that touring offers because it is a defining and formative characteristic of her life (Cervelli 2007, 43). Though Cervelli is referring in particular to Dorothy's tendency to domesticate foreign lands, his key proposition that her acute powers of perception are the result of displacement from home illuminates our reading of how central environments are to Dorothy in the *Grasmere* and *Alfoxden Journals*. Dorothy's awareness of the flux of elemental natural environments could be viewed as a meditation, on a microscopic level, of the human dislocation which she acutely experienced, and the ensuing perpetual search to be reacclimatized to the home, and her natural and social environment.

Interestingly, the volatility which Dorothy and Hartley notice within nature has actually become superimposed onto their personal reputation – in Hartley's case this practice is epitomized in William's 'To H. C., Six Years Old', where Hartley is figured as a transitory 'Dew-drop' which 'trail'd along the soiling earth' and who 'Slips in a

positions of apparent weakness – or rather, that identity was itself reconfigured, so as to make apparent weaknesses into strengths' (Newlyn 2000, 232).

moment out of life' (*TV*, 101, ll. 27, 29, 33). And, in Dorothy's case, in De Quincey's notion of her 'excessive organic sensibility' (North 2003, 52) which could find no controlled outlet, and also in our superimposing of the Lucy figure onto Dorothy, which, as Fay describes, is 'indefiniteness itself, the spirit of the flower or butterfly, the thing each object repeats in an endless transformative cycle' (Fay 1995, 195). Subsequent critics, as we have seen, are heavily influenced by both William's and De Quincey's portraits. Strangely, rather than recognising their aesthetic vision, critics read only the indefinite 'spirit' of them: the fluctuating and hidden energy which Hartley and Dorothy notice within nature becomes negatively transposed onto their personal reputation in order that the critic can endorse their presumed artistic occlusion. Again a merging of biography and poetry occurs. By failing to separate aesthetic value from biographical interpretation, original artistic effort is overlooked and an erroneous identity is established. This misconstruction of their life and work occurs because of the need to see Dorothy and Hartley as primarily sister and son respectively of William and STC.

Susan Levin's description of Dorothy's independence as 'symbiotic' captures the contradictory nature of Dorothy's writing: paradoxically, her independence is often defined through dependence on others, particularly William (Levin 1987, 112). Though this reliance is sporadically perceived as a threat to the growth of her identity, Dorothy shows that William was vital to her construction and direction of self ('the building up of my being, the light of my path'; *LWDW I*, 568). Our acceptance of this key structural and imaginative lateral dynamic in Dorothy's writing informs our understanding of the notion, which I examine below, that Dorothy willingly contributed to building William's career rather than forging an independent public niche. With the exception of periodic lapses in her confidence, the *Journals* embed a belief that it is a higher and more secure ideal to serve William. It is important to keep in mind that these journals

were written for William – they provide a channel for catharsizing her anxieties and every feeling she expresses would have been read by William, who could have come to understand that she maintained a precarious equilibrium of self through connection with nature and his life and work. Through an examination of William’s verse I want to stress that his dependence on Dorothy was not just personal and textual but imaginative – she forms a part of his writing self. My reading suggests that William’s poetic stability and identity, was, in turn, more deeply grounded in his sister’s identity and poetics than has previously been recognized.

Chapter IV

Dorothy Wordsworth, William Wordsworth, and the Construction of Authorship

In *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, Lucy Newlyn argues that the anxiety of authorship became exacerbated when a woman with literary aspirations was intimately associated with a more established writer:

Anxiety was accentuated [...] when a woman who lived in close proximity with a male role model began to experiment with writing, thus entering a terrain that was seen, both professionally and privately, as his own. This was especially so when the role model happened also to be a father, husband, or brother (Newlyn 2000, 226).

As I have shown in Chapter Three, Dorothy's understanding of herself as an independent artist was conflicted. I want to argue that Dorothy diffuses this anxiety by imaginatively 'setting [her]self up' as co-author of William's work, a playing into the very source of her self-conflict, the resultant tensions of which become progressively apparent. In their introduction to *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship*, Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson argue that 'coupled and collaborative partnerships can be harmonious', citing the Wordsworth sibling relationship as one such example of 'productive harmony' (Stone and Thompson 2007, 23-4). Though Stone and Thompson are alert to the tensions that such union provokes – 'writing relationships, like authors, are living entities, and conflicts are often integral to creative growth' – these difficulties are not addressed fully in the essay by Anne Wallace on Dorothy and William that Stone and Thompson include in their collection, an omission which I seek to correct.

Juliet Mitchell notes in *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effect of Sibling Relationships on the Human Condition* that sibling relationships

remain ‘the great omission in psychoanalytic observation and theory’.²⁴³ Valerie Sanders goes on to argue that ‘Within literary criticism and history, too, this is an oddly neglected area’ (Sanders 2002, 1). Sanders rightly observes that while ‘many have wondered about Wordsworth’s precise relationship with his sister Dorothy, [...] the full significance of sibling relationships to English writers [...] has never been properly addressed and understood’ (2). It is likely that it is our difficulty in comprehending the nineteenth-century notion of the brother-sister bond, Sanders argues, which has led to a preoccupation with the personal rather than textual relationship between the Wordsworth siblings: ‘Close brother-and-sister bonds provided a supportive alternative to marriage in a way that we tend to have difficulty comprehending: hence the prurient speculation as to whether the Wordsworth relationship was incestuous’ (33). *Literary Couplings* also notes that ‘attention has traditionally been focused on the *lives* of literary couples, not their texts’ (Stone and Thompson 2007, 4). This observation is key to my study, for though Dorothy and William have often been recognized as possessing a collaborative writing partnership, an obsession with their private lives has precluded an extensive delineation of their textual and imaginative co-dependence. Sanders rightly notes that the work of brother-sister collaborations must be analysed sufficiently in order to enlighten our understanding of family literary dynamics, rather than just restricting our theories of literature to gender-based paradigms; such study will enable us to discover ‘imaginative projections of male/female roles which are commentaries on the experience of writing from a family basis’ (Sanders 2002, 33).

Inherent within an approach which focuses on Dorothy’s collaborative notion of authorship is a corresponding deflation of the image of William as egotistical solitary poet; as Fay argues, the notion of a “‘Wordsworthian performance”’ ‘challenges our

²⁴³ Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effect of Sibling Relationships on the Human Condition* (London: Penguin, 2000), 23.

received notions of who “Wordsworth” is and the very stability by which he presents himself in his poetry’ (Fay 1995, 2). Wordsworthian studies, even those that significantly incorporate Dorothy, inevitably view their relationship from William’s perspective. Fay recognizes the need to turn the tables on this relationship and view it as one characterized primarily by influence rather than defeat:

We allow that Dorothy Wordsworth wrote in her journals with a poetic voice but tend to conclude that she was unable to grasp the largeness of William’s imaginative meditations or to follow his poetic sublimity. [...] we do not allow ourselves to consider that influence could go the other way: that Dorothy’s imagination and poetic voice could at all have influenced her brother (Fay 1995, 14).

Why do we disregard the many indications that William leaves of his sister’s influence, immortalized in some of his most memorable verse?²⁴⁴ Jane Spencer in *Literary Relations* and Stone and Thompson in *Literary Couplings* both indicate that critical fascination with the figurative fraternal collaboration of William Wordsworth and STC may have caused Dorothy’s influence to have become critically sidelined.²⁴⁵ Spencer gives an extensive summary of twentieth-century criticism that focuses on the William Wordsworth-Coleridge relationship and singles out only Richard E. Matlak’s *The Poetry of Relationship* as giving considerable ‘weight to Dorothy Wordsworth’s relationship to the two men’ (Spencer 2005, 135n). Jack Stillinger’s *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of the Solitary Genius* does much to allay the myth of William as solitary artist, but Stillinger only refers in passing to William’s textual borrowing from Dorothy: he lists Dorothy as primarily an amanuensis, while his chapter on William Wordsworth and multiple authorship focuses on William’s lyrical symbiosis

²⁴⁴ Fay also notes this oversight: ‘The traces [William] leaves of Dorothy’s impress we [...] overlook’ (Fay 1995, 14).

²⁴⁵ Stone and Thompson accuse Koestenbaum, writing in 1989, of being ‘disturbingly dismissive of the female partners in mixed-sex couples of various kinds. [...] while he analyses “Wordsworth’s collaboration with Coleridge” he does not “consider the two men’s use of Dorothy, in whose journal they found material”’ (Stone and Thompson 2007, 18).

and dialogue with STC. More promisingly, Anca Vlasopolos highlights how Dorothy's role in this collaboration has been concealed by questioning 'a chief construction of the Romantic ideology – the myth of the solitary genius, a myth which obscures the shared textual production in a household of literate people' (Vlasopolos 1999, 121). *Literary Couplings* suggests that we are only just starting to realize the significance and influence of multiple authorship: 'we may currently be at the cusp of a paradigm shift in conceptions of authorship, as Romantic conceptions of "egotistically sublime" authority yield before the recognition that literary creation has historically been much more collaborative than models of the solitary genius imply' (Stone and Thompson 2006, 9). As Stillinger states, the phenomenon of multiple authorship is vital to our understanding of not just the writer who is influencing (Dorothy) but to the work being influenced (William's), and vice versa: he calls for a paradigmatic shift arguing that 'interpretive and editorial theorists ought to rethink their theories in order to accommodate a plurality of authors'.²⁴⁶

Elizabeth Fay's *Becoming Wordsworthian* is the most advanced analysis of the Wordsworth imaginative collaboration to date in its fundamental championing of Dorothy as a central and *active* part of her brother's poetic identity:

[...] the poet, as opposed to the man, is more than William Wordsworth and more than 'a man speaking to men'. He is at once a performance of himself and two enacting selves: William and Dorothy Wordsworth combined (Fay 1995, 3).

Fay tells the Wordsworthian story 'in such a way as to resituate siblinghood as twinship, or twinned souls' (17). My study develops Fay's endeavour to show that highlighting Dorothy's *collaborative* identity, as well as her independent persona, 'resituates Dorothy Wordsworth within the exclusionary terrain of High Romanticism

²⁴⁶ Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 202.

as a partner in her brother's poetic project' (4). It is this achievement which has been overshadowed by the predominant notion of Dorothy as thwarted female writer. Like Fay, I will highlight the performative nature of Dorothy's role in this collaboration and in bringing William Wordsworth, the poet, into being. However, while Fay does recognize that 'slaveship' as well as 'twinship' characterizes the Wordsworth partnership, I identify the extent and interaction of these two relationship modes more accurately in order to reach a more comprehensive assessment of the deep and continual psychological unrest present in Dorothy's autobiographical texts.

'My office upon earth': Dorothy Wordsworth's Understanding of the Poet

In an early letter to Jane Pollard on the publication of William's *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk* (29 January 1793), two years before the Wordsworth siblings had even set up home together, Dorothy lays out her vision of authorial collaboration and indicates that her vocation with regard to William's work and life will far exceed the passive role of amanuensis and poetic muse.²⁴⁷ She seeks objective and unbiased critique of her brother's poems: 'I should be very glad if you would give me your opinion of them with the same Frankness with which I am going to give you mine' (*LWDW I*, 16 February 1793, 88-9). Dorothy then submits to an impartial and detailed four-hundred word critique of William's poetic style and practice. She criticizes, in particular, William's 'many Faults, the chief of which are Obscurity, and a too frequent use of some particular expressions and uncommon words' such as '*moveless*' and '*viewless*' (89).²⁴⁸ Dorothy writes with confidence and authority on the importance of

²⁴⁷ This letter is written whilst Dorothy was living with her Uncle, William Cookson, at Fornsett rectory, near Norwich.

²⁴⁸ All the words ('moveless' and 'viewless') which Dorothy criticizes were discarded in later versions of *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. Dorothy's criticisms anticipate STC's view of his own poetic 'defects' in *Biographia Literaria*. STC, on his juvenile poems, refers to critics who objected to his 'obscurity, a general turgidness of diction, and a profusion of new coined double epithets', and also states

William involving an external editor in his poetic practice, thus immediately deflating the notion of the poet as ‘solitary genius’, and it is implicit that William has submitted to her wisdom: ‘I regret exceedingly that he did not submit the works to the Inspection of some Friend before their Publication, and he also joins with me in this Regret’ (89). She reiterates, with the voice of someone more experienced than the ‘young Poet’ William, that the editorial eye of ‘a Friend’ – and it is assumed that this ‘Friend’ is Dorothy – would have significantly improved his work: ‘Their faults are such as a young Poet was most likely to fall into and least likely to discover, and what the Suggestions of a Friend would easily have made him see and at once correct’ (89). Dorothy assures Pollard that as long as she has influence over William’s poetic process, he will never again be accused of such faults: ‘It is however an Error he will never fall into again, as he is well aware that he would have gained considerably more credit if the Blemishes of which I speak had been corrected’ – a striking declaration which reveals great self-confidence in her own abilities (89).

This letter is important. It reveals that Dorothy was not critically blinded by her reverence for William and his art, as critics have often surmised. Jonathan Wordsworth, for example, claims that the William of 1802 was complacent because of Dorothy’s unconditional acceptance: ‘She was a force for good in that her responsiveness was a stimulus to the outgoing poetry [...] but she did nothing to allay the self-regard’.²⁴⁹ This assessment is wrong, as the letter discussed above proves.

that ‘the three or four poems, printed with the works of a friend, [William Wordsworth] [...] were charged with the same or similar defects, though I am persuaded not with equal justice: with an EXCESS OF ORNAMENT, in addition to STRAINED AND ELABORATE DICTION’ (*BL I*, 6-8).

²⁴⁹ Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: Borders of Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 158. Dorothy was, however, blinded in her personal reverence for William when they were reunited after their long childhood separation: she writes to Jane Pollard, July 1793, ‘Perhaps you reply “but I know how *you* are blinded”. Well my dearest Jane, I plead guilty at once. I must be blind, he cannot be so pleasing as my fondness makes him. I am willing to allow that half the virtues with which I fancy him endowed are the creation of my Love’ (*LWDW I*, 98). Dorothy says herself that she is launching into panegyric. But the strength of this partiality for his personal attributes never corrupts her critical assessment of his work.

Though Dorothy ‘*reverenced* the Poet’s skill’ (‘Irregular Verses’, Levin 1987, 202, 1. 60), she is not afraid of indulging in mockery at the expense of William’s ego, nor does she fear exposing his verse to the scrutiny and criticism of her other brother and his undergraduate friends: ‘My Brother Kitt and I, while he was at Forncett, amused ourselves by analysing every Line and prepared a very bulky Criticism, which he was to transmit to William as soon as he should have [ad]ded to it the [remarks] of his Cambridge Friends’ (89).

Towards the end of the February 1793 letter to Jane Pollard, Dorothy returns to her aim of independent, unbiased critique:

Pray tell Mrs R. that I wish to hear from her and to have her opinion of my Brothers Poems. If she *has* already read them, I wish you would tell her what I have said of them – if not wait till she has formed her own judgement (90).

Dorothy’s stress on the importance of uninhibited criticism suggests that she put the integrity of the work above the ego of the poet and believed that having the strength to give and receive criticism was essential to the poetic process, the growth of the work and the poet. In this respect she anticipates Hartley Coleridge, who revered the act of poetic creation more than the poet; likewise Dorothy reveres ‘the poet’s *skill*’ (my italics) more than the poet himself. Dorothy’s poetic philosophy also parallels, as my study of Hartley’s reception discovered, Hartley’s fundamental principle that independence of thought and totality of engagement must be adopted by artist and critic alike in order to avoid misrepresentation. As Dorothy remarks to Jane, ‘If you have not yet seen the Poems pray do not make known my opinion of them – let them pass the fiery ordeal’ (89), a joking but hard-headed statement which reminds us of Hartley’s bravery in the face of critical abuse – ‘I am glad of it; I find I can stand fire’ (*LHC*, 250). Dorothy suggests that she *wants* William to receive criticism in order to abate his growing ego and remind him of the fundamental ministering role of a poet; in a move

that William later eulogizes in *The Prelude*, Dorothy not only ‘preserved [him] still / A Poet’ but reminded him what that role constituted in humble public beneficiary terms: she ‘made me seek beneath that name / And that alone, my office upon earth’ (X, ll. 953-5). Dorothy’s letter to Jane Pollard proves that not only was she a stringent critic but that she intended to take control of this poetic enterprise and, moreover, to submit William to as much criticism as possible, her primary intention being, contrary to Jonathan Wordsworth’s conjecture, to ‘allay [his] self-regard’ (J. Wordsworth, 1982, 158).

‘William wore himself & me out with Labour’: The Problems of Literary Industry and Domestic Labour in Dove Cottage

In the *Alfoxden Journal* the first and only specific reference to William’s composition occurs on 20 April 1798: ‘William all the morning engaged in wearisome composition. The moon crescent; “Peter Bell” begun’ (*AJ*, 152). Previous mentions of composition are simply portrayed thus: ‘William wrote a description of the storm’; ‘William wrote some lines describing a stunted thorn’ (*AJ*, 18 and 19 March, 149). Interestingly, in the *Alfoxden Journal* Dorothy does not mention the considerable amount of composition that occurred throughout early 1798. This suggests that Dorothy solidified her role in the Wordsworthian ‘project’ during the transition between Alfoxden and Grasmere, started to take a greater interest in every step of the literary process, and set herself up as a more active participant – this is evident from the increased frequency of comments on ‘wearisome composition’ in the *Grasmere Journals*. A typical *Grasmere Journal* entry comprises natural observations, health, visits or letters, walking, domestic labour, and literary activity; but in the Grasmere early years, literary composition and William dominate her outlook in the way that seascapes, weather visions, and STC characterize her Alfoxden experience.

The way Dorothy presents their literary labour is key to the notion that Dorothy understood herself as half of the Wordsworthian enterprise. Her manner of referring to the process of writing, copying, and composition is often ambiguous. When she is performing simply the role of amanuensis Dorothy will use the word ‘copied’; for example: ‘I copied a part of *The Beggar* in the morning’ (8 October 1800, 25); ‘copied poems for the LB’ (12 October 1800, 26); ‘I copied poems on the naming of places’ (13 October 1800, 26-27).²⁵⁰ But there is often ambiguity over her ‘copying’ as a passive activity: ‘I almost finished writing *The Pedlar*’ (12 February 1802, 67); ‘After Tea I wrote the first part of *Peter Bell*’ (20 February 1802, 70); ‘I wrote the 2nd prologue to *Peter Bell* [...]. After dinner I wrote the 1st Prologue (21 February 1802, 71); ‘I wrote the *Pedlar* & finished it before I went to Mr Simpsons to drink tea’ (6 March 1802, 75). This technique of presenting the work more assertively as hers (although it is implicit that she is performing the task of copying) betrays a subliminal control and possession of William’s work.

Beyond her work as amanuensis, Dorothy constructs herself as primary editor of William’s compositions-in-progress: when William is successful in composing, he always presents or recites his work to her and is heavily influenced by her suggestions: ‘William read parts of his *Recluse* aloud to me’ (13 February 1802, 68); ‘I stitched up the *Pedlar* – wrote out *Ruth* – read it with the alterations’ (7 March 1802, 75); ‘We sate reading the poems [‘*To a Butterfly*’ and others] (15 March 1802, 78); ‘I found William at work, attempting to alter a stanza in the poem on our going for Mary which I convinced him did not need altering’ (17 June 1802, 110-11). On the 17-18 April 1802 Dorothy gives a revealing summary of the entire collaborative literary process. First

²⁵⁰ See also: ‘Writing all morning for William’ (*GJ*, 17 October 1801, 35); ‘I copied out sonnets for him’ (27 January 1802, 58); ‘I copied the 2nd part of *Peter Bell*’ (17 February 1802, 70); ‘I copied third part of *Peter Bell* in his absence’ (18 February 1802, 70).

she presents William with the raw material for the poem: ‘I saw a Robin chasing a scarlet Butterfly this morning’ (17 April 1802, 88); the next day William quickly writes a poem inspired by the event: ‘William wrote the poem on the Robin & the Butterfly’ (18 April 1802, 88); and the same day they co-edit the composition: ‘We sate up late. He met me with the conclusion of the poem of the Robin. I read it to him in Bed. We left out some lines’ (88).²⁵¹ Elsewhere, Dorothy presents herself overtly as instrumental co-author of William’s work, announcing his literary endeavour as a shared industry and vision: ‘still at work at the Pedlar, altering & refitting’ (13 February 1802, 67); ‘William left me at work altering some passages of the Pedlar’ (14 February 1802, 68); ‘we read the first part of the poem & were delighted with it – but Wm afterwards got to some ugly places & went to bed tired out’ (10 February 1802, 65); ‘Wm & I were employed all the morning in writing an addition to the preface [to the *Lyrical Ballads*]’ (5 October 1800, 24). Her use of the collective pronoun, or the lack of personal pronoun altogether, enhances the impression that Dorothy has assumed an editorial influence over William’s work: ‘Determined not to print Christabel with the LB’ ([6] October 1800, 24). These instances show the Wordsworth collaboration at its peak: Dorothy is actively composing, writing, and altering William’s work.

It is well known that Dorothy was William’s primary muse: she provided him with raw material in the form of her journal observations, which he then moulded into poetic form. A letter to Catherine Clarkson reveals Dorothy’s dismay when one of her journals is lost, so important were they to William’s practice of composition: ‘Indeed for other reasons William values it [the journal] so highly that I can scarcely say what I

²⁵¹ Paula R. Feldman also notes Dorothy as a significant influence on William and the *Lyrical Ballads* in *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era, an Anthology*, ed. Paula R. Feldman (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 826: ‘She was an active participant in the collaboration that led to the publication in 1798 of the *Lyrical Ballads*, by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Both for this project and on other occasions, the two male poets mined her journal for poetic images and ideas and liberally borrowed from her verbal observations of the natural world. For both men, she was a sounding board, a critic, an amanuensis, and a significant literary influence’.

would not have given rather than lose it entirely' (*LWDWI*, 659). Comparatively little attention is given to the fact that Dorothy played a key role in every step of the literary process. It seems extraordinary that Dorothy's authorial and editorial influence on William's poetry – which she provides detailed records of – has not been treated extensively by critics if we consider that collaborative authorship and issues of textual variants and influence are so prevalent in current criticism. Vlasopolos finds this oversight incredible:

In an era in which we interrogate the existence of the unitary self and, more significantly in this case, the process from initial draft to publication as the property and single intention of one author, it is nothing short of astonishing that a reevaluation of the Romantic Ideology within the domestic economy of Dove Cottage still meets with resistance, particularly given Dorothy's insistent recordings of her critical intervention in the composition of what would become Wordsworth's most famous lyrics (Vlasopolos 1999, 131-2).

It is highly likely that if Dorothy had not been William's sister, much more serious and continued attention would be devoted to tracing this textual influence on William's verse.

As well as constructing an authorial persona for herself as writer, editor, and significant influence, even when Dorothy is not contributing to William's composition directly she positions herself within the scene of literary labour by performing her domestic work alongside him: 'William worked at the Cuckow poem. I sewed beside him' (23 March 1802, 82). Anne Wallace argues that this is a form of self-aggrandizement: 'the juxtapositional rhetoric of the *Grasmere Journals* draws indoor domestic labor into the valorized categories of the "everyday" and "commonplace" so that housework appears of a piece with literary authorization' (Stone and Thompson, 2007, 109). While this is true, Wallace does not examine the tension inherent in this competitive strategy. Fractures occasionally surface in the harmonious appearance of

their respective activities with Dorothy's jarring juxtaposition of literary industry and domestic labour:

Wm was composing all the morning – I shelled peas, gathered beans, & worked in the garden till ½ past 12 then walked with William in the wood. [...] I was not well, & tired [...] mended stockings – & W read Peter Bell (22 [23] August 1800, 17).

Elsewhere Dorothy writes: 'he fell to work at the Leech gatherer – he wrote hard at it till dinner time, then he gave over tired to death – he had finished the poem. I was making Derwents frocks' (7 May 1802, 97); 'William did not meet me he completely finished his poems I finished Derwents frocks' (11 May 1802, 98). In a letter to Catherine Clarkson, Dorothy betrays feelings of envy and despair more explicitly: 'there is much to do for Henry and me, who are the only able-bodied people in the house except the servant and *William*, who you know is not expected to do anything' (*LWDW* II, 5 June 1808, 252). It is hard not to read these muted complaints as indications of repressed frustration that she is so near the crux of literary creativity and yet forced into a life of relentless domestic labour a world apart from William's; while they do not necessarily form an attack on William himself, they more definitely question the intellectual limitation that she has, in fact, imposed upon herself – such ruptures represent the heart of her self-conflict.²⁵² As Catherine Macdonald Maclean accurately describes Dorothy's veiled emotional discomfort, 'the pitiless chiselling of suffering [...] shows in the delicate lines of her work' (Maclean 1932, vii).

Such juxtapositions pinpoint the tension Fay highlights between 'twinsip' and 'slaveship', each act being the inversion of the other (Fay 1995, 53). Fay argues that during the Alfoxden and Grasmere years Dorothy is 'most influenced by the fictional

²⁵² Fay recognizes this conflict in Dorothy: 'Women who through "freewill" choose to embrace interpellation and, indeed, literalize it by being "such a Slave" may be conflicted in their complicity by subversive impulses; eventually such conflict must take its toll' (Fay 1995, 112).

paradigm of collaborative twinship' and only identifies with martyrdom before her adult life with William and after his marriage (53). While this may seem a convincing theory, in practice Dorothy's writings suggest that the two relationship modes co-exist and cannot be so neatly separated: the intermittent glimpses of suppressed suffering that Dorothy's texts reveal suggest that an undercurrent of slavish masochism is perpetually bound up with her altruistic acts of self-displacement. While the desire to self-harm is a reaction to self-hatred or the prospect of self-annihilation, fusion with William, whilst temporarily self-validating, ultimately consolidates the initial self-abnegation/ -abjection further (I will develop this view in my analysis below of her late journals and poems). As Fay states, such submersion of self 'refigures twinship' and 'looks distressingly like sublimation and abjection, an emptying out rather than a gaining of self' (Fay 1995, 212). As such, the view asserted by Gittings and Manton that Dorothy 'refused to admit conflict between her duties as housekeeper to William and any social or intellectual interests' is a somewhat limited reading of the deep psychological unrest that proper study of Dorothy's autobiographical texts reveals.²⁵³

This subversive undercurrent gains momentum in Dorothy's obsessive interest in the intricacies of literary composition. When William is composing, Dorothy displays an almost forensic interest in the creative process and its physical and mental effects on William, a preoccupation which peaks during the composition of 'Michael' in October 1800, when Dorothy takes a daily interest in the stages of composition: 'Wm

²⁵³ Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 109. Frances Wilson in her recent biography of Dorothy suggests that there is evidence that Dorothy's pathological self-denial also manifested itself physically in 'anorexic tendencies'. Wilson's point that 'she responds with less pleasure to what she puts into herself than to what she takes out of herself' fits in with the notion I describe above that Dorothy's intellectual service to William bordered on the masochistic (Wilson 2008, 115). Wilson states that 'watching the body shrink is a way of experiencing consciousness without the encumbrance of corporal presence' and believes that this is what Dorothy attempted to achieve. It is a credible reading as it forms a physical counterpart to Dorothy's mode of feeling mentally alive through an analogous emptying out of self and avoidance of the 'encumbrance' of intellectual presence; i.e. the accountability necessitated by public independent authorial effort. Both self-destructive behaviours suggest a denial of realistic existence and consequence.

had been unsuccessful in the morning at the sheep-fold' (21 October 1800); 'Wm composed without much success at the Sheep-fold' (22nd); 'Wm was not successful in composition in the Evening' (23rd); 'we walked before Wm began to work [...]. He was afterwards only partly successful in composition' (24th); 'Wm again unsuccessful' (25th); 'Wm composed a good deal – in the morning' (26th); 'Wm could not compose much fatigued himself with altering' (27th); 'William working at his poem all the morning' (29th) (21-28 October 1800, 28-30).²⁵⁴ Dorothy repeats this mode of compulsive recording from 30 January–14 February 1802 (*GJ*, 60-68) with regard to the composition of 'The Pedlar'. Dorothy thus explodes the 'myth of the solitary genius' both by revealing this to be a consistently collaborative literary effort, and also in her undermining of the image of the poet as divinely inspired: she demystifies poetry-making, showing it to be physically and mentally debilitating – anything but the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' or 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' (Brett and Jones, 307). William is presented as being consumed with writer's block and dissatisfaction with his work:

William had had a bad night & was working at his poem. We sate by the fire & did not walk, but read the pedlar thinking it done but lo, though Wm could find fault with no one part of it – it was uninteresting & must be altered. Poor William! (7 February 1802, 63).²⁵⁵

The pains of composition frequently make William neglect eating and sleeping: 'At dinner-time he came in with the poem of "Children gathering flowers"– but it was not quite finished & it kept him long off his dinner' (28 April 1802, 92); 'William is still at work though it is past 10 o'clock – he will be tired out I am sure – My heart fails in me'

²⁵⁴ William finally finishes 'Michael' on 9 October 1801: 'Wm finished his poem today' (*GJ*, 35).

²⁵⁵ In a letter to Henry Taylor, William describes why he became so obsessed with his work, and its adverse effect on his health. He could not perform and would sink into apathy unless the activity consumed his entire being: 'my eyes are well and would be useful to me for reading and writing if I could keep my mind quiet – but the worst part of my case is that mental labour, *if persisted in*, is always injurious to them; and, unfortunately for me, if I am not *possessed* by my employment, I cannot work at all' (*LWDW* VI, 6 January 1835, 6).

(10 May 1802, 98).²⁵⁶ His anxiety and addiction to work are so overpowering that they give rise to psychosomatic illness: ‘William worked at The Ruined Cottage & made himself very ill’ (23 December 1801, 52); ‘William wished to break off composition, & was unable, & so did himself harm’ (2 February 1802, 62); ‘Wm went to bed very ill after working after dinner’ (5 October 1800, 24); ‘Wm wrote out part of his poem & endeavoured to alter it, & so made himself ill (26 January 1802, 58). Dorothy too becomes infected by this corrosive process: ‘I almost finished writing The Pedlar, but poor William wore himself & me out with Labour. We had an affecting conversation’ (12 February 1802, 67). This admonishment prefigures a letter Dorothy writes to William and STC six years later (analysed below): ‘we *cannot* go on so another half-year [...] and work the flesh *off our poor bones*’ (LWDW II, 31 March 1808, 207).²⁵⁷

Dorothy has to read to William in bed to calm him and alleviate the pressures of literary endeavour as though to a child to calm night terrors: ‘William was very unwell, worn out with his bad nights rest – he went to bed, I read to him to endeavour to make him sleep’ (29 January 1802, 59); ‘I repeated verses to William while he was in bed – he was soothed & I left him. “This is the Spot” over & over again’ (4 May 1802, 96); ‘I read The Lover’s Complaint to Wm in bed & left him composed’ (5 May 1802, 96); ‘After dinner we made a pillow of my shoulder, I read to him & my Beloved slept (17 March 1802, 79). Sometimes Dorothy’s assuaging attempts fail and William becomes further haunted by words: ‘I read to him [...] some short Poems of his which were too *interesting* for him, & would not let him go to sleep (11 February 1802, 66). The act of reading to William also reasserts Dorothy’s performative role in this cycle of creativity – she is mirroring his act, as we have seen, of reading to her for editorial advice;

²⁵⁶ See also: ‘he came to me, & walked backwards & forwards. We talked about C – Wm repeated the poem to me [‘the Cuckow poem’] – I left him there & in 20 minutes he came in rather tired with attempting to write’ (23 March 1802, 82).

²⁵⁷ Vlasopolos also notes Dorothy’s ‘clinical’ interest in the effects of William’s composition on his body (Vlasopolos 1999, 126-34).

refracting back words of their collaboration for his comfort, and hers. We are reminded of the phrase used in one of the final *Grasmere Journal* entries, where, since the sonnets are created by them both, sibling harmony for Dorothy is figured by their mirrored imaginative, verbal, and auditory literary activity: ‘repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating’ (24 December 1802, 134). As in ‘Tintern Abbey’, where both William and Dorothy are listeners to each other – ‘in thy voice’ William catches ‘The language of [his] former heart’, while he implores Dorothy to remember ‘these my exhortations!’ (*LB*, 119-20, ll. 117-18, 147) – the act of listening is performative and self-validating. Fay states that Dorothy thrives on the intertextuality, the literal textual borrowing which twins the siblings: Dorothy ‘celebrates the exchange of words between siblings as a performative act that crosses gendering to act as literary accomplice to self-creation and twinship. The exchange of words in its simplest form is the basis of Wordsworthian Life’ (Fay 1995, 49-50). But it is also the act of reading aloud itself, and listening, that cements Dorothy’s secure version of her collaborative self in this mutual ‘exchange of words’.

Dorothy’s study of the deleterious effects of literary industry does, however, amount to an emasculation and infantilization of William – she is reminding William that he is a mortal man with limitations, as Vlasopolos remarks: ‘her minute, unforgiving recordings of his nearly daily indispositions revise the traditional view of masculinity as mind above the materiality of the body’ (Vlasopolos 1999, 130-1). Dorothy’s exposure of William’s incapacities becomes even more uncompromising when we consider that the journals would be read by William – it amounts to a harsh confrontation with his own weaknesses. Dorothy’s motivation for this exposure could be simply to show her genuine anxiety for his, and her, physical and economic health; viewed from another angle, however, it amounts to exposure of his incompetence and her comparative strength, which suggests latent authorial envy and desire. The most

subversive revelation of the *Journals* is thus ‘William as the masculine body scrutinized by the female gaze and inscribed by her pen’ (Vlasopolos 1999, 127).²⁵⁸

This mode of enumerating William’s so-called feminine weaknesses through daily textual record is also evident in Dorothy’s criticism of his reluctance to publish, where she again shows aggravation at the poet’s self-protective instinct. In a letter addressed to William and STC, dated 31 March 1808, Dorothy suggests that her interest in the success of this literary enterprise is pecuniary and pragmatic as well as artistic and intellectual. She admonishes William for intending not to publish ‘The White Doe of Rylstone’, reproaching him for not realising fully that his art, in which she feels fully invested, is their business and livelihood. Coming from a woman who is traditionally so averse to publication it is surprising to see how hard-headed and intolerant Dorothy is in her condemnation of William’s fear of publication:

We are exceedingly concerned, to hear that you, William! have given up all thoughts of publishing your Poem. As to the Outcry against you, I would defy it – what matter, if you get 100 guineas into your pocket? [...] without money what *can* we do? [...] we *cannot* go on so another half-year [...] and work the flesh *off our poor bones*. Do, dearest William! do pluck up your Courage – overcome your disgust to publishing – It is but a *little trouble* (LWDW II, 207).²⁵⁹

This is one of Dorothy’s most vehement letters to her brother and is revealing on three counts. Firstly, her demeaning of William reverses authorial gender stereotypes: here Dorothy displays masculine bravado with regard to publicity, while William is presented in the conventionally feminine role of a private writer with a ‘disgust to publishing’. Secondly, Dorothy knew the letter would have been read by STC (it is

²⁵⁸ Vlasopolos’ account of Dorothy’s journal is notable for its unusually sensitive understanding of the issues of identity, displacement, repression, transgression, and the ambiguities of identity. It is the only study, to my knowledge, to analyse Dorothy’s representation of William rigorously. Interestingly, Vlasopolos’ memoir, *No Return Address: A Memoir of Displacement*, traces similar themes of displacement, identity, home, and exile in her own immigrant life.

²⁵⁹ This letter is also interesting for its suggestion that William is weaker than Hartley, who claimed that he could stand the ‘fire’ of criticism.

addressed to William and STC while William was visiting STC in London); her belittlement of her brother is thus all the more intriguing – and humiliating for William – as it amounts to emasculation written for the eyes of his friend but literary rival STC.²⁶⁰ Lastly, Dorothy reveals how heavily she has invested in her brother's work in her use of the collective pronoun – 'we cannot go on so [...] and work the flesh *off our poor bones*' (LWDW II, 31 March 1808, 207; underlining mine) – and that she cannot continue to work so if he will not fulfil his side of the literary enterprise and submit 'their' work to print.²⁶¹

I referred above to the fact that Dorothy reveals William's poetic methodology to be anything but the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. This is an interesting exposure as Dorothy's mode of prose expression is, in fact, exactly the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. This could, therefore, be a reactive appropriation of that which William cannot achieve. Reference to D. H. Lawrence's poetics regarding order and discipline in poetry can illuminate our understanding of Dorothy's unique style.²⁶² Lawrence wanted his poems to pulsate on the page with the energy of real, instant life: with the 'insurgent throb of the instant moment' and to become as 'spontaneous and flexible as flame' ('Poetry of the Present', Kalnins 1992, 270, 269). He sought to represent emotion as it was, unadulterated by the intrusion of thought and rationality: 'I have always tried to get an emotion out in its own course, without altering it. It needs the finest instinct imaginable, much finer than the skill of

²⁶⁰ Interestingly, Dorothy writes to STC at the beginning of the letter that she fully expects STC to be the first to read this letter: 'This letter is intended for William, tho' I have little hope that he will be in town when it arrives' (LWDW II, 207). The letter did indeed arrive after William had left to return to Grasmere, and it is quoted in a letter from STC to William on 21 May 1808.

²⁶¹ Seven years later Dorothy had resigned herself to the fact that their literary industry would never be lucrative in her brother's lifetime: 'I now perceive clearly that till my dear Brother is laid in his grave his writings will not produce any profit. This I now care no more about and *shall never more* trouble my head concerning the sale of them' (LWDW III, 15 August 1815, 247).

²⁶² My reading of the link between D. H. Lawrence, Dorothy Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge is enlightened by Mara Kalnins' introduction to Lawrence's *Selected Poems* (Kalnins 1992, 1-19).

the craftsmen'.²⁶³ This immediacy and reverence for the instant moment and raw feeling is captured in a similar way by Dorothy's journals. Lawrence's desire to portray the real emotion in its pure state is a departure from the William Wordsworthian concept of 'kindred' 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. But this method does not imply a complete rejection of form; the emotional pattern of Lawrence's poems actually constitutes in itself a formal element: 'it is the hidden *emotional* pattern that makes poetry, not the obvious form' (*Letters* II, 104). What Lawrence refers to in his essay 'Poetry of the Present' as the inevitable 'confusion' and 'discord' of free verse mirrors the confusion and discord of the present moment, and of real life: 'But the confusion and the discord only belong to the reality, as noise belongs to the plunge of water' (Kalnins 1992, 269). Dorothy exhibits a similar strategy in her prose descriptions where, as Pamela Woof states, 'coherence comes not from mental structures but from feeling'.²⁶⁴ This is not the *undisciplined* 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' or perceptions but more akin to T. S. Eliot's idea of '*significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem' rather than in the poet's life.²⁶⁵ There is a lateral organization of natural thought, feeling, and expression throughout the journals which meshes the work together as a cohesive whole, and which retains for Dorothy an independent authorial integrity in combat with her brother's.

Dorothy's partial revelations of William's weaknesses present her as the stronger of the two siblings. Her anxiety over her position in William's life after his wedding has been consistently analysed; through her *Journals*, Dorothy informs William that he is fundamental to her sense of self. What has received little attention is Dorothy's textual construction of William: Dorothy astutely constructs herself as a vital

²⁶³ *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. James T. Boulton *et al.*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61. This will hereafter be referred to as *Letters*.

²⁶⁴ Pamela Woof, *Dorothy Wordsworth, Writer* (Grasmere: The Wordsworth Trust, 1988), 40.

²⁶⁵ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Essays* (London: Faber, 1951), 22. Kalnins notes this with regard to Lawrence (Kalnins 1992, 5).

support for William's precarious identity. The picture we get is of a William who would literally be unable to survive without Dorothy's ministry of care. It is this practice – a subterranean current throughout her *Journals* – which Vlasopolos cites as striking at the core of Romantic ideology:

What is of importance to us as readers of texts is Dorothy's creation of a text that through its representation of threatened domestic safety and of a self that fights for her centrality in her brother-keeper's life offers a masterly critique of male Romantic, especially Wordsworthian, figurations of poetic identity at the very time when Wordsworth himself was still in the process of articulating the identity that we now regard as fixed (Vlasopolos 1999, 126).

This understanding is key to Marlon Ross's theory of anxiety of influence – that literary competition is greater when the defining strength of that which you are competing with is as yet unknown: 'the potential of the fellow poet, as opposed to the actual power of the dead father, is itself unsettling because its claims are unpredictable and its territory always renegotiable' (Ross 1989, 92). To each other, both Wordsworths were in a state of constant becoming; their identities in a state of flux.²⁶⁶ This is why Fay's approach to their collaboration is most relevant: 'the performative is taken as an ongoing moment of "becoming", reconstruct[ing] the poetic moment of William and Dorothy's collaborative experience, and of their textual as well as their self-composition' (Fay 1995, 4). Dorothy's tackling of that egoistic aspect of William's character which we now take as fixed could thus be viewed as a competitive effort to stake out her own divergent identity – this struggle is exactly analogous to the identity battles figured by Derwent and Hartley Coleridge. Out of the nexus of her own anxieties she subverts a fundamental principle of masculine romanticism.

²⁶⁶ Vlasopolos also argues this: 'In reading Dorothy's *Journals*, we must remind ourselves that William at that period was in possession of a far-from-established poetic identity and was deeply insecure about most aspects of his life' (Vlasopolos 1999, 126).

STC demonstrates this identity race effectively in ‘Time, Real and Imaginary: An Allegory’ (1806) where he points to the liberty of siblinghood by likening two siblings to birds in flight: ‘Their pinion, ostrich-like, for sails outspread’ (*PW II*, 800, l. 3). He figures the equality of siblinghood and the fact that their ultimate outcome in relation to one another is always unknown by brilliantly representing one of the siblings as blind – though the sister is ahead in the ‘endless race’ (l. 4), the brother does not know this:

Two lovely children run an endless race,
 A sister and a brother!
 This far outstript the other;
 Yet ever runs she with reverted face,
 And looks and listens for the boy behind:
 For he, alas! is blind!

(ll. 4-9)

The boy’s blindness makes him bolder in the knowledge that he is unaware of his position in the race: ‘O’er rough and smooth, with even step he pass’d, / And knows not whether he be first or last’ (ll. 10-11). STC’s poem is also an explicit allusion to William’s ‘Lucy Gray’ (1799) where Lucy (most likely a symbol of Dorothy) is, unlike the girl of STC’s poem, solitary and oblivious to what is ‘behind’: ‘O’er rough and smooth she trips along, / And never looks behind’ (*LB*, 172, ll. 61-2). STC’s poem, by inserting a brother into the allegory, corrects William’s presentation of the sister (Lucy) as a solitary figure immortalized in the present, and reconnects her to the William Wordsworthian sustaining faculty of memory – the sister in his poem has a constant eye on the past: ‘ever runs she with reverted face, / And looks and listens for the boy behind’ (*PW II*, 800, ll. 7-8). STC’s allegory suggests that siblinghood is an ‘endless race’ through life which allows freedom, strength and confidence, not competition, envy, anxiety, and self-doubt. If this poem is about the Wordsworths – and the motif of

blindness would suggest it is, as William states in ‘The Sparrow’s Nest’ that ‘[Dorothy] gave me eyes’ (*TV*, 213, l. 17) – then *STC* actually allows for the possibility that Dorothy ‘far outstript’ William and carried him through his personal and literary life. *STC* does not, however, tackle the tensions inherent within siblinghood and the notion of the unfixed identity and unpredictable fate; he idealizes the sibling bond just as he idealizes and envies the Wordsworth-sibling relationship.

It is not just Dorothy who suffered an anxiety of influence. There are indications that William’s mental anguish over composition could be due, in part, to Dorothy’s literary presence – Dorothy states this explicitly with regard to his composition of ‘Beggars’, inspired by her own account of the subject: ‘After tea I read to William that account of the little Boys belonging to the tall woman & an unlucky thing it was for he could not escape from those very words, & so he could not write the poem, he left it unfinished & went tired to Bed’ (13 March 1802, 77). It is plausible that William often suffered an inability to ‘escape from [Dorothy’s] very words’ in those instances where he becomes so incapacitated he has to retire. Marlon Ross articulates how William’s acceptance of Dorothy’s literary ministering is both damaging and enabling: ‘Influence always offers the promise of unbounded subjectivity, but a troubled subjectivity threatened always by the objects it needs in order to exist’ (Ross 1989, 103). Influence could thus be viewed as a form of addiction for William – it superficially strengthens him whilst insidiously eroding the core of his subjective self until he is on the verge of creative disintegration without it.

It is highly significant that at this time in the *Grasmere Journals* when William’s confidence in the strength of his independent creativity is at its lowest, usurped, as Dorothy shows, by the power of her own words, Dorothy unexpectedly and uncharacteristically proclaims herself to be ‘more than half a poet’:

But as I climbed Moss the moon came out from behind a Mountain Mass of Black Clouds – O the unutterable darkness of the sky & the Earth below the Moon! & the glorious brightness of the moon itself! There was a vivid sparkling streak of light at this end of Rydale water but the rest was very dark & Loughrigg fell & Silver How were white & bright as if they were covered with hoar frost. The moon retired again & appeared & disappeared several times before I reached home. Once there was no moonlight to be seen but upon the Island house & the promontory of the Island where it stands, ‘That needs must be a holy place’ &c m – &c. I had many many exquisite feelings when I saw this lowly Building in the waters among the dark & lofty hills, with that bright soft light upon it – it made me more than half a poet. I was tired when I reached home I could not sit down to reading & tried to write verses but alas! I gave up expecting William & went soon to bed (18 March 1802, 81).

Written five days after the entry on William’s creative inhibition, there is a victorious tone to Dorothy’s inner discovery as though she gains an element of private satisfaction and authorial independence from William’s creative misfortune. This comes at a time when she has been reading and writing for William almost every day: ‘Poem of the Beggar woman’ on 13 March 1802, ‘The Butterfly’ on 14 March 1802, and the ‘Beggars’, as stated above, on 13 March 1802 (77, 78). In all three of these cases Dorothy explicitly states that the poems are inspired by stories she has told William.²⁶⁷ In this entry of 18 March 1802, Dorothy makes use of the rhetoric and aesthetic of the sublime and its connotations of reaching, simultaneous obscurity and illumination, joy, dominance and weakness: ‘I climbed’, ‘Mountain Mass of Black Clouds’, ‘O the unutterable darkness’, ‘glorious brightness’, ‘vivid sparkling streak of light’, ‘the rest was very dark’, ‘white & bright’, ‘many many exquisite feelings’, ‘lowly Building in the waters among the dark & lofty hills’. Such self-expression forms an analogue to

²⁶⁷ The influence can be traced thus: ‘he wrote the Poem of the Beggar woman taken from a Woman whom I had seen in May’ (13 March 1802, 77); ‘he wrote the poem to a butterfly! [...] The thought first came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always feel at the sight of a Butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings, & did not catch them’ (14 March 1802, 78); see above for inspiration for Beggar Boy poem. When Dorothy has inspired a poem directly, she always states this in her journals – inscribing the idea, though only for her eyes and William’s, is her way of reclaiming ownership of her idea. For example, on 28 April 1802: ‘I happened to say that when I was a Child I would not have pulled a strawberry blossom. I left him & wrote out the Manceple’s Tale. At dinner-time he came in with the poem of “Children gathering flowers”’ (92).

what amounts to a sublime dominance over her brother's power on 13 March 1802 in this, once again, temporary reversal of authorial gender stereotypes: William is made creatively impotent by a paralysing anxiety of influence whilst Dorothy experiences sublime raptures. Her reaction signals a reversal of control in the sibling power balance as William struggles to retain control over his independent vision in Dorothy's presence. Marlon Ross argues:

Perhaps the easiest way to lose control, to be made impotent, is to have one's own vision wrenched from one by another whose presence is palpable. The anxiety of influence is exactly this kind of fear of the needed other (Ross 1989, 87).

William is experiencing exactly this 'fear of the needed other' – the fear that he cannot write without Dorothy. At this period of complete and intense dependence on his sister, Dorothy finds the imaginative space and confidence to declare herself 'more than half a poet' (81). Even the wording of this phrase is interesting – it suggests that Dorothy has already accepted herself as 'half a poet', meaning that she considers her contributions to William's art, and his reliance on her, to be significant enough to confidently assign herself 'half' of his poetic identity. In this sublime reverie Dorothy searches beyond that stake to assign independent poetic worth above her collaborative self.

Dorothy does, however, admit her own poetic defeat at the close of this 18 March entry when she tries to transfer her day's experience to print: 'tried to write verses but alas! I gave up expecting William & went soon to bed' (18 March 1802, 81). Pamela Woof, in her editorial notes to this entry, observes that there is ambiguity in the manuscript itself as to whether Dorothy 'gave up' writing verses, or 'gave up' expecting William's return home, and that this piece was subject to much revision: 'Writing against her fatigue D at first wrote "it made me more than half I was tired a poet. I was tired ..." The word "expecting" is an insertion' (*GJ*, 228). My reading of

the line in the context of the preceding passage suggests that she is using William implicitly as synonymous with poetic creativity and is giving up ‘expecting’ to be like him. Ultimately, Dorothy’s poetic impotence mirrors William’s. Dorothy’s creative impasse occurs when she tries to compose poetry by mimicking her brother’s mode of envisioning the sublime and poetry-making. Her reaction to the prospect – “‘That needs must be a holy place’ &c – &c.’ – is a reworded allusion to William’s ‘Home at Grasmere’: ‘They who are dwellers in this holy place / Must needs themselves be hallowed’ (*HG*, 60, ll. 366-7). Thus Dorothy fills the gap in her experience with William’s text and does not have the confidence, or is unable, to construct an entirely independent response. The very fact that she paraphrases his words rather than quoting them directly – when she was known to have an infallible memory for reciting verse – is proof further that Dorothy is attempting independent composition but is creatively inhibited by his verse and cannot ‘escape from [*his*] very words’ in her search for her own mode of poetic expression (my italics).²⁶⁸ This comparison is an example of the negative reinforcement of their symbiotic psyches – in these imaginative and compositional experiences they are both textually inhibiting each other. Valerie Sanders states that ‘While Wordsworth needed to erase or control Dorothy [...] she appears to have felt no anxiety as to his influence over her, and wanted only more of it’ (Sanders 2002, 43). This is a significant under-reading of the complex authorial conflict which pervades Dorothy’s writings and is a point of contention to which I will return in Chapter Five in my analysis of Dorothy’s verse.

²⁶⁸ In a letter to Samuel Rogers, William notes that even when Dorothy’s mental health was deteriorating seriously she was still able to recite verse perfectly: ‘Her case at present is very strange; her judgement, her memory, and all her faculties are perfect as ever [...]. If I ask her opinion upon any point of Literature, she answers with all her former acuteness; if I read Milton, or any favourite Author, and pause, she goes on with the passage from memory; but she forgets instantly the circumstances of the day’ (*LWDW VI*, 7 June 1835, 98).

‘She, in the midst of all, preserv’d me still / A Poet’: The Figure of Dorothy and the Sibling in ‘Tintern Abbey’, 1798

We have seen that Dorothy suffered conflict between her two roles as pivotal literary agent and domestic servant. Both Dorothy’s *Journals* and ‘Tintern Abbey’, as Fay argues, show that Dorothy ‘agreed to her secondary role and secondary self’ but viewed her voice as ‘collaborative rather than subsumed, as productive rather than repetitive’ (Fay 1995, 26). I will now turn to William’s poetry to illustrate the extent to which Dorothy’s ‘voice’ was a positive force that generated William’s poetics, rather than a passive or static presence that was appropriated by him. This approach proposes that William’s works must be viewed, in part, as a vehicle of Dorothy’s self-representation.

‘Tintern Abbey’, composed 11-13 July 1798, is the poem by William most often associated with Dorothy. But in the same way that critics read Hartley through his father’s verse, Dorothy has often been (mis-)read primarily, or even exclusively, through this poem, an extraordinary narrowing of her life, work, and relationships. Scholars such as David Simpson, Marjorie Levinson, Morris Dickstein, and John Barrell have variously accused William of narcissism, solipsism, and the silencing and appropriation of Dorothy in ‘Tintern Abbey’. David Bromwich, for example, calls ‘Tintern Abbey’ William’s ‘most self-centred poem’.²⁶⁹ Such hostile critique is

²⁶⁹ See David Bromwich, ‘The French Revolution and “Tintern Abbey”’, *Raritan X* (Winter 1991): 1-23. See also David Simpson, *Wordsworth’s Historical Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 110-13; Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth’s Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 45-6, 48-9, 53, 56; Morris Dickstein, ‘“The Very Culture of the Feelings”: Wordsworth and Solitude’, in *The Age of William Wordsworth*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 326-8. For more positive readings of Dorothy’s role in ‘Tintern Abbey’ see Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth’s Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 250-51, 257-58, 331; and James Soderholm, ‘Dorothy Wordsworth’s Return to Tintern Abbey’, *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 26:2 (Spring 1995): 309-22. James Soderholm’s article is particularly useful as he is one of the few critics to search for a response to what Richard Matlak refers to as a ‘dialogue of one’ by focusing his analysis on Dorothy’s ‘Thoughts on my Sick-bed’, her reply to ‘Tintern Abbey’. Soderholm rightly asks ‘Why do so many recent critics insist, contrary to all biographical evidence, that William secretly has it in for Dorothy when he writes a poem including and even celebrating her?’ (315).

primarily founded on the passage where William reads Dorothy's instinctive vision in terms of his former self:

[...] in thy voice I catch
 The language of my former heart, and read
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
 May I behold in thee what I was once,
 My dear, dear Sister!

(LB, 119, ll. 117-22)

Rather than respecting the otherness of Dorothy, and her independent, mature response to nature, William seemingly infantilizes it. Because he has lost his 'visionary gleam', his only point of reference for such an intense response to nature is his youth. Thus, these critics argue, in a rush of envy, William arrests her development. But William sees his child self in Dorothy only for 'a little while', an identification which serves to revive his imagination and reinforce his faith in the regenerative power of nature (l. 120).²⁷⁰ Spencer states that Dorothy represents 'that which [William] needed to outgrow to become the poet of nature' (Spencer 2005, 168). Similarly, John Barrell argues in 'The Uses of Dorothy' that 'Dorothy belongs for Wordsworth in a category which includes childhood, including his own'.²⁷¹ This is a misreading not only of Dorothy but of William's presentation of their relationship. Dorothy, and the figure of the sibling, represent for William a vital link to his youth, but not childhood itself; as William remarks in *The Prelude*, she 'Revived the feelings of my earlier life' (X, l. 961). A reading such as Barrell's, which borders on the patronizing, endangers a nuanced portrait of Dorothy's life and writings: in reference to Dorothy he uses the

²⁷⁰ Clifford J. Marks also points out that William recognizes Dorothy's active role in his poetry-making: 'when he sees his ideal former self in his sister's eyes, he does not reduce her to some kind of Wordsworthian self-repository. Alternatively, her virtue and consistent responses to the natural world rekindle his imagination. This imagination helps William realize his poetic and philosophical ideals'; "My dear, dear Sister": Sustaining the "I" in "Tintern Abbey", *CEA Critic* 66: 2/3 (2004): 56.

²⁷¹ John Barrell, 'The Uses of Dorothy': "The Language of the Sense" in "Tintern Abbey", *Poetry, Language, and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 162.

phrase ‘grow up’ or ‘growing up’ four times and alludes frequently to her immaturity. Fay avoids such a reductive reading by emphasising Dorothy’s role as active and performative, enabling the poet into being: ‘what is more fundamentally important is that they stand together gazing. This act of doubled viewing/envisioning is what transports Dorothy from the role of object/other [...] to the shared role of poet making’ (Fay 1995, 79).

It is interesting that both Dorothy and Hartley have repeatedly been accused of never fully developing to maturity – artistically and personally – a parallel which is not a coincidence. Because critics engage with the myth of Dorothy as, they believe, it is epitomized in ‘Tintern Abbey’, a critical engagement with her real self and texts is thwarted in the same way that the textual myth of the child-Hartley has monopolized his critical representation. Critics arrest the development of these writers because they engage only with a static myth of the author rather than rigorously tracing the evolution of their respective authorial identities. The critical oversight in Dorothy’s representation is, however, doubly wrong as critics are engaging with a pseudo-myth more of their own creation than William’s – William does *not* mythologize Dorothy to the extent to which Hartley was idealized by both William and STC. Morris Dickstein argues that in ‘Tintern Abbey’ William treats Dorothy as a ‘kind of Lucy who survives, static and unchanging in her intimacy with nature – less an autonomous being than a reflection of his former self’.²⁷² William does idealize Dorothy as being exempt from the ageing process in ‘A slumber did my spirit seal’ (if ‘Lucy’ is Dorothy), writing that ‘She seem’d a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years’, in the same way that Hartley is immured in childhood in ‘To H. C., Six Years Old’: ‘Nature’ will ‘Preserve for thee’ ‘A young Lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks’ (*LB*, 164, ll. 3-

²⁷² Morris Dickstein, “‘The Very Culture of the Feelings’: Wordsworth and Solitude”, in *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 326.

4; *TV*, 101, ll. 21, 23-4). But Dickstein's assessment that William retards Dorothy's growth and sees her exclusively in terms of his solipsistic self is wrong – the remaining forty-five lines of 'Tintern Abbey' turn to address the nature and development of Dorothy's autonomous *adult* self.

This famous address to Dorothy signals the abating of William's ego and the elevation of another above his poetic self.²⁷³ William refers to Dorothy explicitly twenty times in this section (ll. 115-160): he uses the second person pronoun (thou, thee, thy) seventeen times, and refers to Dorothy as 'friend' or 'sister' three times. He also manifests Dorothy's physical and sensory presence and her philosophical and emotional being which connects her concretely and metaphysically to him, the landscape, the poem, and the reader: he alludes to both her 'voice' and 'wild eyes' twice and describes her 'solitary walk', where the physicality of her presence is suggested further by the invocation 'let the misty mountain winds be free / To blow against thee' (ll. 117, 120, 149, 136, 137-8). This blessing also suggests that William is praying for Dorothy's continued sensory receptiveness: in *The Prelude*, when William had felt 'the sweet breath of Heaven' 'blowing on [his] body', he had 'felt within / A corresponding mild creative breeze' (I, ll. 41-3). William concludes with a probing projection into Dorothy's 'mind', 'memory', and emotional capacity for 'fear', 'pain', 'grief' and 'joy' (ll. 144, 146). This is far more than what Marjorie Levinson describes as a 'decidedly feeble gesture towards externality' (Levinson 1986, 38). As Marks

²⁷³ Marks's interpretation accords with my reading that William ultimately comes to a humbling realization of his comparative insignificance: "'Tintern Abbey' depicts William's inconsequentiality (compared to Dorothy) at the end; ironically, this insignificance is necessary and uplifting. [...] Dorothy, who represents friendship, community, and family, emerges as the most significant individual in "Tintern Abbey"' (Marks 2004, 47).

asserts, ‘Both in subject and grammar, the poem magnifies Dorothy’s importance’ (Marks 2004, 56).²⁷⁴

‘Tintern Abbey’ was written two months before the Wordsworths left Alfoxden in September 1798. As I show below, the Lucy poems written at this time address fractures in the security of William’s own subjectivity; in ‘Tintern Abbey’, however, William is addressing his concerns for Dorothy’s independent survival. For instance, whereas in the Lucy poems William is said to imagine Dorothy’s death, here he imagines his own: ‘If I should be, where I no more can hear / Thy voice’ (ll. 148-49). He foregrounds Dorothy’s independence within nature: ‘let the moon / Shine on thee in thy *solitary* walk’ (ll. 135-6; my italics), a summons which reveals that while the siblings are communing with each other in this poem, they are also both enjoying their independent solitude at Tintern Abbey. Though William does use Dorothy in an attempt to self-rejuvenate, he also allows *himself* to be objectified by inscribing himself into a memory for Dorothy – ‘food / For future years’ (ll. 65-6) – in the hope that she will repeat his experience of revisiting, restoration, and renewal within nature. Thus, William’s egotistical sublime experience becomes only a part of a larger cyclical process of imaginative insight and self-development experienced, he hopes, by others beyond himself. In ‘Tintern Abbey’, nature is ‘More dear’ to William because of Dorothy: for ‘*thy* sake’, as the closing two words of the poem state prominently (l. 160; my italics). Moreover, the benedictory cadences of this final sentiment suggests that the entire poem was written for ‘thy sake’; and, when we consider that ‘Tintern Abbey’ was positioned as the final poem in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* – allowing

²⁷⁴ See also M. H. Abrams’s positive assessment of Dorothy’s role in ‘Tintern Abbey’: ‘It is hard to imagine how William could have made it more patent that, in the poem, Dorothy is both a real and a crucially functional “other”. He startles us into awareness of the presence, devotes the last fifty lines to her, and gives her the salient role of concluding the poem’ (Abrams 1990, 315).

the final two words of the collection to be ‘thy sake’ – it could be argued that the entire *Lyrical Ballads* closes on a note of fraternal devotion.

The extensive address to Dorothy is an unexpected ending for a poem that traces William’s private communion with nature, past and present, but this surely confirms that Dorothy is integrally bound up in William’s imaginative association with nature; without her influence and motivation he would not feel such ‘abundant recompense’ for the loss of his youthful vision.²⁷⁵ As Marks notes, ‘the poet cannot claim authorship’ for the elevated thoughts which nature bestows; the ‘lines insinuate that philosophical, if not transcendent, observations can only occur within a trusted human community’ (Marks 2004, 53). Dorothy is present in ‘Tintern Abbey’ (unbeknownst to the reader) from the very beginning of the poem when William is drawn to describe the hermit’s solitude; while ‘The hermit sits alone’, William does not, as the poem goes on to reveal (l. 23). In the expanded version of the ‘Epitaph written on Charles Lamb’ (1836), William more explicitly juxtaposes the hermit’s life of chosen isolation to the natural ‘*dual* loneliness’ of the Lamb siblings:

The hermit, exercised in prayer and praise,
And feeding daily on the hope of heaven,
Is happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves
To life-long singleness; but happier far
Was to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness.

(LP, 304, ll. 122-28)

²⁷⁵ Marks also recognizes that there is a triadic relationship between nature, William, and Dorothy developing throughout the poem before Dorothy is addressed explicitly, a relationship which significantly alters our understanding of William’s egotistical sublime experience: ‘Despite the poem’s repeated attempts to associate William’s consciousness with the transcendent forces of nature, these forces, and moreover his sister’s support, minimize the significance of the poet’s ego. Ultimately, “Tintern Abbey” celebrates how human influences, particularly Dorothy’s, profoundly motivate the poet’s emotional state’ (Marks 2004, 47).

William's transcendental vision in solitude is enabled through the anticipation of his analogous 'dual loneliness' with his sister Dorothy. In 'Lines Written at a Small Distance From my House',²⁷⁶ composed just before 'Tintern Abbey' (1-10 March 1798) William demonstrates this sororal need further: he feels a 'blessing in the air' and 'The spirit of the season' but needs his sister's presence to help him truly engage with this life-essence (*LB*, 63-4, ll. 5, 28). He urgently implores her 'with speed' to 'come, my sister! come, I pray', 'Come forth and feel the sun' (ll. 14, 37, 12), an invocation which anticipates William's desire in 'Tintern Abbey' for Dorothy to feel the moon and the wind's illuminating and invigorating power: 'let the moon / Shine on thee', and 'let the misty mountain winds be free / To blow against thee' (ll. 135-8). William needs *shared* moments such as this, which encapsulate nature's educative and restorative power, in order to sustain his ongoing fructifying relationship with nature. In 'Lines Written at a Small Distance From my House', it is the collective 'us' which William chooses to describe his state of receptivity: 'One moment now may give us more / Than fifty years of reason' (ll. 25-6). Both poems, in which Dorothy is a vital presence, communicate many of the fundamental principles upon which the whole of William's poetics are founded: the pantheistic One Life which unifies God, nature, and man; a Rousseauian receptivity to nature as an educative force; and the fundamental 'spots of time' concept which asserts the power of the memory alongside the fructifying virtue of nature. Thus Dorothy and the figure of the sister are intimately bound in William's poetics.

Clifford J. Marks is the only critic to date to recognize Dorothy's active role in 'Tintern Abbey' fully. Even the language he uses to describe her is empowering, proactive, and determined, which subverts the traditional rhetorical presentation of Dorothy as passive and existing only textually: he states that William 'submits to Dorothy's power and authority' and describes her face as 'the seat of possibility'

²⁷⁶ From 1845 onwards 'Lines Written at a Small Distance From my House' is entitled 'To My Sister'.

(Marks 2004, 55, 53). Dorothy, Marks asserts, determined and drove William and was central to his poetic agency: ‘Dorothy chooses to establish William’ (53). A picture of Dorothy as the more powerful presence in ‘Tintern Abbey’ who brings William into being is thus built, a reading which accords with my analysis above of Dorothy’s supportive role in the *Journals*, and my reading below of William’s latent envy of Dorothy in the Lucy poems. Marks believes that the concluding concentration on Dorothy in ‘Tintern Abbey’ suggests that her power surpassed even that of nature in William’s eyes: ‘Though the emphasis on Dorothy’s presence remains relatively hidden until the end of the poem, her ultimate poetic apotheosis eclipses all of the other factors William mentions that contribute to his inspired state’ (48). I would adjust Marks’s assessment by asserting that it is the triadic interdependent relationship of nature, Dorothy, and William which inspires and inflects his own imaginative response. Through the composition of ‘Tintern Abbey’, William realizes that it is relationship, through Dorothy, that ‘anchor[s]’ his ‘purest thoughts’, and not, as he had supposed, nature alone (l. 110). By attending to the evidence of the poem rather than allowing preconceived ideas of the Wordsworth sibling partnership to condition our reading, we can see that William has a more relational understanding of his selfhood than he is often credited with. As Stillinger states, ‘the particulars of multiple authorship can frequently be illuminating, even when one is pursuing the meanings of a mythical single author’ (Stillinger 1991, 187).²⁷⁷ Consideration of the significance of Dorothy in William’s imaginative vocation gives us fresh readings of ‘Tintern Abbey’, and much of William’s verse.

‘Thoughts on my sick-bed’ (composed 1832, thirty-four years after ‘Tintern Abbey’) forms Dorothy’s poetic reply to ‘Tintern Abbey’ and surveys both the natural

²⁷⁷ Stillinger stresses that the understanding of multiple authorship poses ‘no threat to the continuing existence of the myth’; rather it enables us to take ‘advantage of [a] sharper grasp of the complex processes by which the works came into being’ (187, 188).

world of the Grasmere and Alfoxden years and the collective literary output of brother and sister. The poem recalls Dorothy's subjective independent perception of nature: 'I pierced the lane / In quest of known and *unknown* things', an image which recalls William, De Quincey, and STC's respective observations of her literal visual powers (Levin 1987, 219, ll. 13-14).²⁷⁸ The 'known' 'things' which Dorothy names, the 'Celandine', the 'primrose', the 'silent butterfly', the 'violet', the 'daffodil' and the 'carolling thrush', all find reference points in William's poems (219-220, ll. 15-19).²⁷⁹ Levin suggests that Dorothy's use of William's verse in this poem is in order to 'reassure her brother that she still remembers his vision and finds it worthy of her consideration' (Levin 1987, 136). But Dorothy's move from first person to collective pronoun strongly indicates that William gave a collective voice to her personal findings – 'To all *we* gave our sympathy' – and that she is now reclaiming her textual contribution to William and asserting her previously ventriloquized voice (l. 24; my italics). Nevertheless, what begins as a declaration and affirmation of autonomous existence is eventually usurped by a conflicting desire to share and to belong, just as 'Tintern Abbey' moves from William's subjective 'I' to encompass Dorothy's presence.

Dorothy offers a counterpart to the 'sublime' 'blessed mood' section of William's poem by suggesting that memories of nature induced by the flowers which are brought to her provoke an imaginative reverie whereby she transcends her present bodily discomfort: 'No need of motion, or of strength, / Or even the breathing air' (220, ll. 49-50), a contraction of William's 'No motion has she now, no force' from the Lucy

²⁷⁸ William observes 'the shooting lights / Of thy wild eyes' in 'Tintern Abbey' (ll. 119-20); Thomas De Quincey describes her eyes as: 'wild and starling, and hurried in their motion'; North 2003, 52; STC: 'her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature' (*CCL* I, 3 July 1797, 330-1).

²⁷⁹ See 'To the Small Celandine' (composed 1802), 'The Primrose of the Rock', 'To a Butterfly (April 1802).
'To a Butterfly' (March 1802), 'Song' (late 1798-early 1799), 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' (March 1804-April 1807).

poem 'A slumber did my spirit seal' (*LB*, 164, ll. 5). Just as William dedicates the final part of 'Tintern Abbey' to his sister, so Dorothy offers a tribute to her brother confirming his 'prophetic words' (220, l. 47) that remembrance of their shared communion with nature would offer her 'healing thoughts', 'If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief, / Should be thy portion (ll. 144-5):

No prisoner in this lonely room,
I *saw* the green Banks of the Wye,
Recalling thy prophetic words,
Bard, Brother, Friend from infancy!

(ll. 45-8)

Dorothy thus offers William the relief that she *can* exist independently, whilst also validating his belief in the regenerative and creative powers of nature, and poetry. Dorothy's poem does not address William fully as the poem's main subject and only refers to him in the penultimate stanza, an avoidance which Fay reads negatively. But the very fact that Dorothy attempts a dialogue with one of William's most important poems is indicative of mounting poetic identity and confidence. Analysis of this sister-poem is important as it significantly alters our understanding of Dorothy's role in 'Tintern Abbey'. 'Tintern Abbey' was primarily intended – and was accepted – as a poem for Dorothy. As Soderholm remarks:

[...] critics do not want to consider the possibility that Dorothy and William were making each other a gift of their own experience [...]. If these critics paid more attention to Dorothy's life and writings they would see that this was a gift she accepted, just as her brother accepted the gift of her journals to recall certain persons and images for his poetry (Soderholm 1995, 315).

Soderholm's point draws attention to the fact that this was very much an evolving dialogue in, and on, poetry throughout the Wordsworths' lives. Richard E. Matlak, in his analysis of the Wordsworth-Coleridge symbiosis, does not, however, look for any

sustained response in Dorothy; Matlak does not engage in an examination of her reply to 'Tintern Abbey', stating merely 'it affected her deeply' and then quoting without further comment a large section from 'Thoughts on My sick-bed' (Matlak 1997, 136). The reason 'Tintern Abbey' is so often read as, in Matlak's words, a "'dialogue of one" point of view' is because critics do not allow Dorothy a serious poetic response, silencing her and then attributing the silence to William's appropriation (137).

Furthermore, it is possible that Dorothy influenced the genesis of 'Tintern Abbey' rather than being influenced by the poem. In a letter to Jane Pollard dated 16 June 1793, five years pre-'Tintern Abbey', Dorothy expresses the pivotal 'Tintern Abbey' principle that recollections of past experience fortify the present:

Often have I gone out when the keenest North Wind has been whistling amongst the Trees over our Heads. I have paced that walk in the garden which will always be dear to me from the Remembrance of those long, long conversations I have had upon it supported by my Brother's arm (*LWDW I*, 96).

This is the exact sentiment, even similar diction – 'dear to me'; 'Remembrance' – that William expresses in 'Tintern Abbey'. In these 'long conversations' which the siblings had 'every Day [...] from Dinner [...] *till six o'clock*' it is possible that Dorothy helped generate this fundamental Wordsworthian imaginative principle (*LWDW I*, 95-6).²⁸⁰

'Your *dual* loneliness': Sibling Desire and Resistance in William Wordsworth's Poems, 1798-1805

William composed the 'Lucy' series of poems soon after the Wordsworths had moved from Alfoxden and had embarked on a trip to Germany with STC in September 1798. 'A slumber did my spirit seal', 'Song', 'Strange fits of passion I have known', 'Lucy Gray', and 'Three years she grew in sun and shower', all written between 1798 and

²⁸⁰ Dorothy is talking of William's visit to Forncett the previous Christmas.

1799, mark a crisis in William's own identity at the height of this period of intense collaboration, interdependence, and creativity for all three writers when Dorothy is most actively contributing to their poetic enterprise.²⁸¹ William knows that Dorothy is central to his poetic agency, as Dorothy demonstrates in her *Journals* and as William reveals in 'Tintern Abbey', written just a few months before the first Lucy poem. This reliance induces him to fantasize on his devastation were Dorothy to die.²⁸² But implicit within this imagining is also a subversive desire for her death; as Juliet Mitchell states, 'being psychically annihilated creates the conditions of a wish to destroy the one responsible for the apparent annihilation' (Mitchell 2003, xv). Admitting that Dorothy contributes to a significant part of his creativity is intensely threatening to William's centralized sense of self and the Lucy poems could, therefore, be partly driven by envy and a repressed desire to extinguish this threat – the threat epitomized, as I highlighted above, in the anxiety of influence passage in Dorothy's *Journals*.²⁸³

In 'Song' William recognizes the silence of Lucy's ministry: there were 'none to praise / And very few to love'; 'She *liv'd* unknown' (*LB*, 163, ll. 3-4, 9), which could be an allusion to how publicly unrecognized Dorothy's artistic role was. Though 'few could know / When Lucy ceas'd to be', the loss for William is overwhelming: 'But she is in her Grave, and oh! / The difference to me' (ll. 9-10, 11-12). In the final Lucy Poem, 'Three years she grew' (composed February 1799), Dorothy's presence is monumentalized: nature 'Shall rear her form to stately height', an image which suggests that William is both threatened by and in awe of Dorothy's power (*LB*, 222, l. 32).

²⁸¹ During this time, 1797-1800, William composed the poems that would be published in the 1798 and 1800 editions of *Lyrical Ballads*.

²⁸² STC has a similar fantasy on the death of his children whom he loves, but also perceives as a threat to his identity.

²⁸³ See the following journal entry, 13 March 1802: 'After tea I read to William that account of the little Boys belonging to the tall woman & an unlucky thing it was for he could not escape from those very words, & so he could not write the poem, he left it unfinished & went tired to Bed' (*GJ*, 77).

William is imagining that divine nature has selected Dorothy to perform a service; a notion which parallels Paul Hamilton's elevation of Dorothy's poetic ministry: 'Dorothy's practical conception of her own role then becomes as Miltonic as her poet brother's. Her service couldn't be more poetically high'.²⁸⁴ After the phrase 'She died', nature becomes impenetrable to William in a stark contrast to the preceding stanzas, where the secrets of nature are unlocked through Lucy (l. 39). Now she bequeaths only 'This heath, this calm and quiet scene' (l. 40). The solitary barrenness of his description of nature without 'Lucy' is reminiscent of the 'Immortality Ode' (composed between 27 March 1802 and 6 March 1804) where the solitary image in nature compounds the loss of his 'visionary gleam':

– 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

(TV, 272, ll. 56, 51-3)

For the William of the 'Immortality Ode', 'The things which I have seen I now can see no more' (l. 9). Likewise, the speaker of 'Three years she grew' is left with 'The memory of what has been, / And never more will be' (ll. 41-2). The heath for William becomes a 'calm, and quiet scene', echoing Lucy who had appeared to possess the 'silence and the calm / Of mute insensate things' (ll. 17-18). In 'To a Friend' (1794), STC indicates that fraternal closeness is the only bond that can give rise to full self-translation and communication: he remarks that he could confess to his sister 'those hidden maladies / That shrink asham'd from even Friendship's eye' (PW I, 171, ll. 16-17). After his sister's death, STC states that he now has 'mute thoughts', which

²⁸⁴ *Selections from the Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Paul Hamilton (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992), xii. The biblical overtones of the Lucy poem also suggest that Dorothy has been chosen by God, in the same way that William believes himself to be divinely chosen in *The Prelude*. The line 'Thus nature spake – the work was done –' (l. 37) parallels the creation of the world in Genesis, 1.11: 'And he said: Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth. And it was so done'.

suggests that the sister enabled his voice and allowed a conduit for full self-expression (l. 29).²⁸⁵ As William later eulogizes Dorothy, ‘She gave me eyes, she gave me ears’ (‘The Sparrow’s Nest’, *TV*, 213, l. 17). William’s poem speaks of the loss of sensory connectivity that Dorothy’s death would bring him.

F. W. Bateson argues that ‘after the Lucy poems, in which [Dorothy’s] symbolic death was recorded, there was no place for her in the organs of Wordsworth’s poetic imagination, and she was cut out like so much decayed tissue’.²⁸⁶ I would disagree with Bateson strongly and suggest that it was exactly at the point of writing the Lucy poems that William realized that the adult Dorothy was an integral part of his imaginative endeavour. It is interesting to note that while Emma/Emmeline is the childhood pseudonym utilized by William for Dorothy in the 1802 poems analysed below (‘To the Butterfly’ and ‘The Sparrow’s Nest’), in the Lucy poems, it is the *adult* Dorothy that William needs. Juliet Mitchell states that ‘Our ignoring of siblings is, paradoxically, part of our emphasis on childhood at the expense of adulthood as the formative part of human experience’ (Mitchell 2004, x). It is a fundamental Wordsworthian principle that childhood experience is formative to adult identity, yet William’s writings also suggest that what preserves and creates his adult self is his *adult* sister, a realization that Mitchell’s theory supports. It is significant that the Lucy poems were all written in this important transitional period in Germany between leaving Alfoxden in September 1798 and settling at Dove Cottage, at Town End, Grasmere by December 1799. The ‘three years she grew’ could allude, therefore, to the three years that William has co-habited with Dorothy and has witnessed, and been influenced by, her development within nature: it is exactly three years from the time William and Dorothy settled at Racedown

²⁸⁵ In ‘Sonnet: On Receiving an Account that my Sister’s Death was Inevitable’ (1791), STC again selfishly mourns what this sibling loss means to his self-expression: ‘My woes, my joys unshar’d?’ (*PW* I, 39, l. 12).

²⁸⁶ F. W. Bateson, *Wordsworth: A Re-interpretation* (London: Longman, 1965), 202.

Lodge in Dorset in September 1795 to the time the Wordsworths set off for Germany with Coleridge in September 1798 (from 1797-8 they lived at Alfoxden House, near Nether Stowey). Through this cathartic cycle of poems at this pivotal junction in their lives, William scrutinizes the nature of their interdependent psyches, and what this means to his understanding of his own identity. William comes to the realization that he would be sensorily and creatively weakened without her presence; a discovery which both destabilizes and reassures him. This reading fits in with Dorothy Rowe's argument that all sibling relationships are based on 'the overarching need to preserve our sense of being a person and our terror of being annihilated as a person' (Rowe 2002, xi). Furthermore, it is also likely that William wrote the poems for Dorothy, in the same way that Dorothy writes her journals for William to read: to inform her that his selfhood is likewise grounded in her. Inscribing her death as a death of their joint poetics is a tactic that would ensure Dorothy remains in the role which she has willingly assumed. Both authors use writing as a channel to voice their need for each other.

'Home at Grasmere', composed in 1800 after their arrival in Grasmere on the 20 December 1799, forms a significant advance from the Lucy poems in its inclusion of Dorothy into William's life, imaginative understanding, and self-knowledge.²⁸⁷ This benedictory celebration of home and the Wordsworths' integration into the Grasmere community is also a celebration of the powers of siblinghood. The domestic idyll which they have finally constructed together to replace the paternal home is one that is built around the lateral structural bonds of fraternity, symbolising freedom, equality, and strength. William initially exerts his masculine egotism by claiming sole ownership and domination of nature: he reiterates the description of this valley as 'my home', 'my World', and declares 'This solitude is mine'; 'The unappropriated bliss

²⁸⁷ 'Home at Grasmere' was not published by William, although ll. 959-1048 were published in the preface to *The Excursion* (1814) as a 'prospectus' to *The Recluse*. A revised version of the whole poem was published in 1888 as *The Recluse*.

hath found / An owner, and that owner I am he' (*HG*, 41-2, ll. 43, 83, 85-6). But with the introduction of 'Emma' and domesticity in line ninety-eight – 'behold / Yon Cottage, where with me my Emma dwells' (ll. 97-8) – comes the expansion of his subjectivity to encompass the recognition that his security is conferred through sibling communion. There follows a suspension in William's rapture as he reflects on the significance of Dorothy's inclusion in this 'blissful eden' (l. 124):

Aye, think on that, my Heart, and cease to stir;
Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.

(ll. 99-101)

In 'Tintern Abbey', composed two years earlier, William proposes that recollection of nature's 'beauteous forms' leads to a 'sublime' and 'blessed mood' that induces a comparable cessation of bodily awareness and struggle, and corresponding harmonious imaginative awakening:

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul: [...]

(*LB*, 117, ll. 44-7)

Unlike 'Tintern Abbey', however, in 'Home at Grasmere' Dorothy is introduced more prominently before the climax of the sublime reverie; indeed, the meditation 'with me Emma dwells' is the final trigger for his ultimate satisfaction of 'Heart', body, and mind (ll. 98-9). William believes that such insight 'be not thanks to God', but to his sister (l. 102). His perception of beauty and concept of happiness is integrally bound with either the presence of Dorothy or the thought of her:

Mine eyes did ne'er

Hartley Coleridge's poem 'A Brother's Love to his Sister' illuminates this reading of William's understanding of siblinghood as an ideal state. Hartley complains that language tainted 'by worldly use' is not pure enough to describe 'The strength divine' and 'secret spell, / Of brother's love' and presents fraternal love as a self-sufficing emotional sanctity analogous to William's arrival at a 'Unity entire' (*CPW*, 27, ll. 8, 10, 11). A 'brother's love'

exists apart
 From passion, vain opinion, hopes and fears,
 And every pregnant cause of smiles and tears.²⁸⁹
 A life that owes no fealty to the will,
 Nor takes infection of connatural ill;
 That feels no hunger and admits no doubt,
 Nor asks for succour of the world without,
 But is, itself, its own perfected end, [...]

(ll. 12-19)

With this notion that sibling affection is 'itself, its own perfected end, / The one sole point to which its workings tend' (ll. 19-20), Hartley argues that it is within siblinghood, and not just childhood, where 'those truths do rest, / Which we are toiling all our lives to find' ('Immortality Ode', *TV*, 274, ll. 115-17); that is, that such pure and early ideal affection is the foundation of human perfectibility, a divine message that we are born with but from which we grow further away (as Dorothy remarks, "'We drag at each remove a lengthening Chain'", *LWDW* I, 88).²⁹⁰ Fraternal affection, Hartley concludes, is constant, ungovernable, and, as *STC* also demonstrates, offers the greatest liberation of self-through-relationship that man can hope for:

²⁸⁹ Cf. Hartley's 'Multum Dilexit' (1848): 'I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears, / Make me a humble thing of love and tears' (*CPW*, 359, ll. 13-14).

²⁹⁰ In this way, Hartley and William are also invoking Edmund Burke's idea of 'domestic ties' as being the ideal political model and his belief in the fundamental importance of 'family affections' to the strength, prosperity, and continuity of the nation: 'In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections'; see *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 120.

A good it is that cannot cease or change
 With man's desire, or wild opinion's range:
 A law it is, above all human state,
 A perfect freedom, and an absolute fate.

(28, ll. 36-39)

Hartley's concurrent underlying thought, however, is that such purity of affection cannot be replicated in the social world: 'A love like this so pure of earthy leaven, / That hath no likeness in the earth or heaven' (27, ll. 21-2). In this way, Hartley, like Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen, as we have seen in Chapter Three, asserts that the sibling bond is irreplaceable.

William writes a similar poem to Hartley's on the sanctity of sibling affection upon being asked by Mary Lamb to compose an epitaph for her brother: 'Epitaph written on Charles Lamb'.²⁹¹ William's letters of this time reveal his fascination with the Lambs' relationship and his anxiety over sufficiently representing their unusually close fraternal bond within the limits of an epitaph: 'But for seeing and feeling the sanctity of that relation as it ought to be seen and felt, lights are required which could scarcely be furnished by an Epitaph, unless it were to touch on little or nothing else' (*LWDW VI*, 20 November 1835, 114-15).²⁹² In a letter to Edward Moxon, which includes editorial revisions for the first version of his completed epitaph, William speaks of his regret at not addressing Mary and Charles Lamb's relationship in his original version to the extent which he would have wished: 'I cannot *put* aside my

²⁹¹ Interestingly, when William is struggling with the task which Mary has requested of him he asks Hartley Coleridge to 'try his powers' at writing the epitaph: 'as he is very ready, and has *great* powers [...] we expect something good and appropriate and suitable' (*LWDW VI*, December 6 1835, 130). The task of writing the actual epitaph eventually fell to Rev. Henry Francis Cary, translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and a close friend of Charles Lamb.

²⁹² Both Dorothy and William identified with the closeness of the Lamb siblings and admired Charles Lamb's unstinting protection of his sister. On 22 September 1796, Mary Lamb, in a fit of insanity, killed her mother with a knife stab to the heart. The care of Mary's brother Charles, acting against the wishes of his family, ensured that his sister was not incarcerated in a mental asylum. Mary and Charles lived together until Charles's death in 1834, neither of them ever marrying. Charles referred to their relationship as a 'double singleness', a phrase which William, in his epitaph on Charles Lamb, moulds into the more ambiguous '*dual* loneliness'.

regret in not having touched upon the affection of the Brother and Sister for each other' (*LWDW VI*, 23 November 1835, 119-20). Two days later, William informs Henry Crabb Robinson that he will expand the epitaph into a 'Meditation supposed to be uttered by his Graveside', which, he states, 'would give me an opportunity of endeavouring to do some little justice to a part of the subject, which no one can treat *adequately* – viz – the sacred friendship which bound the Brother and sister together' (*LWDW VI*, 25 November 1835, 122). Likewise, writing to Edward Moxon, William talks of his need to address fully 'the most striking feature of our departed friend's character and the most affecting circumstance of his life, viz, his faithful and intense love of his Sister' (*LWDW VI*, 20 November 1835, 114). By 4 January 1836, William had expanded the original thirty-eight line epitaph into a poem of one-hundred and thirty-one lines, the final fifty-four lines forming an elegy paying tribute to Charles Lamb's love for his sister, Mary.²⁹³

The epitaph on Charles Lamb itself has reference points with both William's 'Home at Grasmere' and Hartley's 'A Brother's Love to his Sister'. William remarks on the indelible nature of the Lambs' bond: their 'filial tie / Was undissolved' and 'Remained imperishably interwoven / With life itself' (*LP*, 303, ll. 91-4). Like Hartley, William is deeply drawn to the constancy of the sibling relationship "mid a shifting world' (l. 94), and provides a powerful metaphor for their unified source, secure being, and growth, presenting them as 'a double tree / With two collateral stems sprung from one root' (ll. 96-7), a probable allusion to Ovid's couple, Baucis and Phileomon (who were married), who, after death, were changed into a pair of intertwining trees. William's use of a 'double tree' contrasts with the lone 'tree' 'of many, one' and single field that signal loss of creative power in the 'Immortality Ode', which suggests that he

²⁹³ Ernest De Selincourt notes that 'Moxon continued to print off copies incorporating W. W.'s corrections until the final version [of the epitaph] was established early in February and the poem was ready for distribution among W. W.'s friends' (*LWDW VI*, 147n).

is creatively renewed by his sister's presence in a way that nature can no longer achieve alone (ll. 51-2). As in 'Home at Grasmere' (where the wind 'drove us onward like two Ships at sea', *HG*, 50, l. 226), William employs a ship simile to describe the siblings' independent but shared journey through, and dominance over, sublime nature: they are 'like two vessels launched / From the same beach one ocean to explore' (ll. 102-103).²⁹⁴ His depiction of the siblings' state of solitude-in-company epitomizes William's notion of siblinghood as the ideal convergence and fulfilment of the Romantic paradox of the necessity of both solitude and community encapsulated in the phrase: 'Your *dual* loneliness' (128).

[...] but happier far
Was to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness.

(304, ll. 125-8)

Charles referred to his relationship with his sister Mary as a 'double singleness', a phrase which William moulds into the more ambiguous '*dual* loneliness'. William presents siblinghood, conversely (and problematically, as I suggest below) as both lonely, but as a state of being permanently never alone – because their 'loneliness' is shared, and so halved. Charles' phrase, in contrast, does not so effectively communicate this state of sibling merging and union; Charles' phrase still hangs on to their mirrored separateness.

Fay recognizes that Dorothy inhabits the role of 'sister-self' which reconfigures the poet's self-negotiations: 'Part of W. Wordsworth's innovative amelioration of the solitary poet's mythos, and part of his textual entrance into the fiction of self, was to use romantic siblinghood to redress the nature of the subjective trial' (Fay 1995, 35).

²⁹⁴ William also refers to a sibling as a ship in 'The White Doe of Rylstone', where the doe symbolizes one half of siblinghood.

Intense connection with the sibling, whom William identifies with as both other and self – both his earlier child self, and present adult self – quells the societal or familial alienation experienced by other Romantic poets. Embracing the sister allows William the unique possibility of spanning the self-other separation; a bolstering counterpoint, rather than completion, of self. Mitchell states with regard to twins that ‘though there can be an intensified struggle for survival between the two, the other can also be used additively: “I am a we”, “there’s two of us and only one of you”’ (Mitchell 2003, 64). Both Dorothy and William exploit the strengthening notion of twinned souls, but William’s confidence in the positive aspect of what the other brings is not absolute – his description of the Lambs’ union as seemingly ideal is nonetheless described as lonely. Similarly, Mitchell refers to a twin who, imprisoned for political reasons ‘could not bear solitary confinement’, and who, in endeavouring to understand this ‘beyond-average despair’, stated: ““I was not born alone”” (77). Quoting Emily Balint’s analysis of patients ‘who are empty of themselves’, and their ensuing battle between societal withdrawal and necessary dependence, Mitchell continues that ‘One could even argue that at the beginning of life a twin, in Balint’s words, “is not alone, but not actively with anyone”’ (Mitchell 2004, 76-7), an understanding which illuminates William’s anxiety over the positivity of the sibling bond. Though William writes an epitaph celebrating siblinghood, he is also critiquing such a state, as he does in ‘Home at Grasmere’ with the image of the ‘divided’ vale. He is suggesting that the sibling bond enacts a retraction from society that can stultify self. Thus, undercutting the unquestionable notion that both the Wordsworths derived great creativity and self-growth from their collaboration is the subversive tension – in the writings of both siblings – that their potential as individuals was being impeded by such fraternal intimacy.

It is interesting to compare Hartley’s depiction of the sibling dynamic to STC’s portrayal of the bond, as both representations have a bearing on our understanding of

the importance of figurative and literal sibling relations in the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle. Hartley, as noted above, contrasts sibling love with sexual attraction, which, he suggests is polluted by the self-centred and -destructive pangs of ‘hunger’ and ‘doubt’ (‘A Brother’s Love to his Sister’, l. 17). In STC’s writings, however, the rhetoric of sibling love and romantic love become confused. ‘English Hexameters’, written in 1798-9, at the time when Dorothy and William were closest, betrays great anguish, loneliness, desire, and jealousy over their intimacy. STC apostrophizes Dorothy as ‘eager of soul, my most affectionate sister!’, as he does too in ‘The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem’: ‘My Friend, and thou, our Sister!’ (*PW* I, 528, l. 16; 518, l. 40). STC’s anguish is manifested in ‘Feverish and wakeful’ nightmares (l. 21), while the closing fragment of ‘Hexameters’ reveal that STC covets what Dorothy brings William, personally and poetically: ‘William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear Dorothea! / You have all in each other; but I am lonely, and want you!’. Thus, STC betrays the exact ‘hunger’ and ‘doubt’ that Hartley says sibling love precludes. STC’s anxiety of authorship is due to the influence of the Wordsworth sibling-collaboration; he believes he cannot be as good a poet as William because he does not share in the intensity of their sibling interrelationship – this surely points to the fact that STC viewed an intimate sibling bond as immensely creatively beneficial.²⁹⁵

The interpretation that William shares Hartley’s association of siblinghood with human perfectibility and freedom gains weight from the fact that immediately after William’s expression of absolute satisfaction with this ‘Spot’ in ‘Home at Grasmere’, William turns to recount the re-introduction of Dorothy into his life. ‘We will be free’ William says – his ‘I’ now becomes a ‘we’ for the remainder of the poem (l. 192) – as he describes this union with the rhetoric of lateral connection, partnership, equality,

²⁹⁵ On ‘Hexameters’, which STC sent to William and Dorothy, William writes: ‘I need not say how much the sentiment affected me’ (*LWDW* I, December 1798, 236).

strength, and liberty and reinforces the structural importance of the sibling bond: they now ‘walk abreast’, ‘With undivided steps’ (ll. 178, 179). William reveals that their biological brother, John Wordsworth, is present: ‘Our beautiful and quiet home, enriched / Already with a Stranger whom we love’²⁹⁶ (ll. 863-4), and introduces Mary, Sarah, and Joanna Hutchinson as ‘Sisters of our hearts’, and STC as ‘Brother of our hearts’, labelling them all collectively as ‘a happy band!’ (ll. 869, 870, 874).²⁹⁷

William likens his and Dorothy’s course to that of ‘a lonely pair / Of milk-white Swans’, who came ‘like Emma and myself, to live / Together here in peace and solitude’ (ll. 322-3, 326-7):

[...] 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.

(ll. 338-41)

William’s distress over the swans’ disappearance, though, veils an underlying anxiety over the stability of his domestic union with Dorothy and, indeed, the sibling bond itself; a tension comparable to Dorothy’s concern with the fragility of dwellings throughout the *Grasmere Journals*:

Shall we behold them yet another year
 Surviving, they for us and we for them,
 And neither pair be broken?

(ll. 348-50)

²⁹⁶ The introduction of their brother, John, as ‘a stranger’ is interesting as it immediately sets him apart from the Dorothy-William sibling union.

²⁹⁷ See also Anne D. Wallace in ‘Home at Grasmere Again: Revising the Family in Dove Cottage’: ‘The double metaphor of John Wordsworth, the blood brother, as roving outsider and of the Hutchinson sisters and Coleridge as siblings underscores the fundamental importance of sibling ties in constituting “household” and “family”’ (Stone and Thompson 2007, 108).

This outward questioning subverts William's earlier optimism of his new sibling co-habitation as being 'A Whole without dependence or defect' (l. 168) – he is still earnestly searching for an external sign to portend his security. In William's envisioning of the swans' death he indicates fear of mortal separation from his sister, and his hope for 'One death' to reflect their 'one' life together: 'haply both are gone, / One death, and that were mercy given to both' (ll. 356-7), a fear that was likewise shared by Dorothy in a letter to Catherine Clarkson on the death of twins in her family:

I should have had a dreary comfort in the thought that if two *were* to go the Twins had not been divided, but were companions in the Grave as they had been from the first opening of their existence. And the one living twin child must oftener be, I should think, an object of melancholy and painful thoughts than any other of the Family, as if it had almost lost one half of its being (*LWDW II*, 216).²⁹⁸

Similarly, Dorothy has an acute perception of Mary Lamb's fraternal loneliness:

His Sister still survives – a solitary twig, patiently enduring the storm of life. In losing her Brother she lost her all – all but the remembrance of him – which cheers her the day through (*LWDW VI*, 8 October 1837, 472).

This is a reference which recalls, as we have seen, the tree-leaf metaphor that both Dorothy and Hartley use to figure the vulnerability of their own respective sibling identities. In 'The White Doe of Rylstone' (composed in 1807) William again exhibits fear that death will break the sibling tie and summarizes the equality of the edenic sibling imaginative and philosophical communion in a clear echo of both Dorothy's *Alfoxden Journal* – 'One only leaf upon the top of a tree – the sole remaining leaf' (6 March 1798, 149) – and Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

– But thou, my Sister, doomed to be
The last leaf which by heaven's decree
Must hang upon a blasted tree;

²⁹⁸ See also William's 'Maternal Grief', a poem also on the death of one twin.

If not in vain we have breathed the breath
 Together of a purer faith –
 If hand in hand we have been led²⁹⁹
 And thou, (O happy thought this day!)
 Not seldom foremost in the way –
 If on one thought our minds have fed,
 And we have in one meaning read –³⁰⁰

Dorothy and William both evidently battled with the notion that death could sever the sacred sibling bond, their only link to the early loss of the secure parental home, and both siblings look to the child's incomprehension of sibling death for reassurance.

In 'We are Seven', despite the adult poet-speaker's rational argument that "if two are in the church-yard laid, / Then ye are only five", the child-speaker insists that death has not altered the sibling tie: "Nay, we are seven!" (*LB*, 74-5, ll. 35-6, 69). Dennis Klass in *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief* states that 'The grave does not obliterate the place of the sibling in the family' and actually refers to 'We are Seven' to illustrate this point.³⁰¹ In 'We are Seven' the child-speaker asserts the lateral permanence of the sibling in the family structure: the graves are "side by side", and John "lies by her side" (ll. 40, 60). The 'cottage girl' continues to share her daily activities of sewing, knitting, eating, and playing with her deceased brother and sister, by the graveside, and verbally connects with them through song: "there upon the ground I sit – / I sit and sing to them" (ll. 43-4). For the child-speaker it is only their physical presence which is absent; her emotional and psychological connection with her dead siblings, and understanding of their place in the family, remains unchanged. While the child is not accepting reality, she is leading William to the possibility of a

²⁹⁹ Cf. *Paradise Lost*, XII, ll. 648-49: 'They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow, Through Eden took their solitary way'.

³⁰⁰ *The White Doe of Rylstone; or The Fate of the Nortons by William Wordsworth*, ed. Kristine Dugas (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 99, ll. 566-74. Elsewhere in 'The White Doe of Rylstone' William refers to the sister-figure as a 'prattler on the knee' (l. 1041) which recalls his memory of the child Dorothy as a 'prattler among men' in 'The Sparrow's Nest' (l. 14).

³⁰¹ *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*, ed. Dennis Klass, Phyllis R. Silverman and Steven Nickman (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996), 233.

higher reality. In 'We are Seven' the child's attempt to maintain a physical link to the dead by playing near their graves parallels Dorothy's description of William's fantasy of retaining a connection to earth and 'dear friends' in death:

Afterwards William lay, & I lay in the trench under the fence – he with his eyes shut & listening to the waterfalls & the Birds. There was no one waterfall above another – it was a sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air. William heard me breathing & rustling now & then but we both lay still, & unseen by one another – he thought that it would be as sweet thus to lie so in the grave, to hear the *peaceful* sounds of the earth & just to know that ones dear friends were near (*GJ*, 29 April 1802, 92).

The lack of corporeal presence and the idea of consciousness-in-death in this entry, which seems to enact a mock-death, all points to the belief that death will not break the sibling bond. Like the girl of 'We are Seven', William envisages a physical and spiritual connection with the dead sibling through the medium of nature.

In a letter to Catherine Clarkson, 23 June 1812, Dorothy observes how her niece Dorothy (Dora) Wordsworth has been praying for her dead sister, Catherine, and more forcefully than William explains the realities of death, actually checking this practice of clinging to the dead sibling:

She came home last Thursday and we were surprized at her joyfulness, but at night when she went to bed she knelt down before me to say her prayers, and as usual prayed for her Brothers and sister, I suppose without thinking of her. I said to her when she had done – My dear child you have no Sister living now – and our Religion does not teach us to pray for the dead. We can do nothing for them – our prayers will not help them – God has taken your Sister to himself (*LWDW III*, 33-4).

Like the girl of 'We Are Seven', even in the immediate aftermath of the sibling death Dora is emotionally unaffected. Dorothy's cold confrontation with reality – 'you have no Sister living now' (*LWDW III*, 33) – recalls William's futile cry, "'But they are dead; those two are dead! / Their spirits are in heaven!'" (ll. 65-6). But while for William 'Twas throwing words away' (l. 67), Dorothy's words unlock Dora's grief:

‘She burst into a flood – an agony of tears – and went weeping and silent to her bed – and I left her after some time still weeping – and so she fell asleep’ (*LWDW* III, 34). However, when Dorothy’s brother, John, died in 1805, Dorothy reveals that she does, in fact, like the child, cling to a bond of sibling union: ‘I shall never forget him, never lose sight of him, there is a bond between us yet, the same as if he were living, nay far more sacred’ (*LWDW* I, 23 February 1805, 547). Dorothy’s grief makes nature impenetrable: she writes on 18-19 March 1805, ‘this Vale is changed to us, it can never be what it *has been*’ (*LWDW* I, 567), an echo of William’s ‘Immortality Ode’ – ‘the things which I have seen I now can see no more’ (l. 9) – and ‘Three years she grew’:

She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene,
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be.

(*LB*, 222, ll. 39-42)

But Dorothy comes to realize that she can, in fact, revive this ‘sacred’ ‘bond’ through nature. She utilizes the ‘Tintern Abbey’ and ‘Immortality Ode’ principle of future ‘Abundant recompense’ to abate ‘such loss’ (‘Tintern Abbey’ ll. 87-9; the death of Dorothy’s brother being analogous to the death of William’s youthful vision) in order to re-connect with her dead brother:

I know it will not always be so – the time will come when the light of the setting Sun upon these mountain tops will be as heretofore a pure joy – not the same *gladness*, that can never be – but yet a joy even more tender. It will soothe me to know how happy *he* would have been could he have seen the same beautiful spectacle. I shall have him with me (*LWDW* I, 15 and 17 March 1805, 559).

While nature is ‘More dear’ to William in the present moment because he is sharing it with Dorothy physically, it is ‘more tender’ to Dorothy because nature has the power to resurrect her brother’s emotional presence, assuage her grief, and thus heal the fractured

sibling bond: 'I shall have him with me'. Dorothy is learning from William's 'exhortations' on the therapeutic power of nature: 'with what healing thoughts / Of tender joy wilt thou remember me' ('Tintern Abbey', ll. 145, 143-4).

William's lyrics of March-May 1802 which examine the relationship between his child and adult self are stimulated by Dorothy's presence – a link to his childhood past. The poems are, therefore, integrally wrapped up with his relationship with his sister and her influence on him textually, imaginatively, and personally. These poems are written in the company of Dorothy – she galvanizes his power of memory and frequently participates in the act of remembering, her version of events then being generated into verse. William's verse also forms a thanksgiving for the vision of the world and of nature which Dorothy has enabled him to have. As Spencer points out, while in the *Lyrical Ballads* William advocates a theory of 'wise passiveness', Dorothy's journals from this period demonstrate 'what wise passiveness looks like in practice' (Spencer 2005, 170).

In 'To a Butterfly', composed 14 March 1802, William's communion with the butterfly offers access to his childhood. The butterfly holds the story of his past self, 'Much converse do I find in Thee, / Historian of my Infancy!' (*TV*, 203, ll. 3-4),³⁰² and is a harbinger of the past – 'Dead times revive in thee' – a blessed but mourned-for time that was spent with his sister: 'Thou bring'st [...] / A solemn image to my heart, / My Father's Family!'; 'My Sister Emmeline and I / Together chaced the Butterfly!' (ll. 6, 7-9, 12-13). The butterfly, a symbol of resurrection, suggests William's hope that the sacred time of youth spent with Dorothy can be reborn. The closing couplet emphasizes Dorothy's acute and innate powers of sensitivity, empathy, and reverence

³⁰² 'To a Butterfly', composed 20 April 1802, also recalls their shared childhood: William's use of the collective pronoun – 'we', 'our' – imports the intimacy of their shared childhood experience.

for all forms of natural life: ‘But She, God love her! feared to brush / The dust from off its wings’ (ll. 17-18). In her *Grasmere Journal* entry for the same day of William’s composition, Dorothy is keen to show that her recollection of the event is the prime generator of William’s poem:

The thought first came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always feel at the sight of a Butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings & did not catch them’ (*GJ*, 14 March 1802, 78).

The exquisite image of Dorothy’s child self ‘fear[ing] to brush / The dust from off its wings’ is a minute impression not usually seen in William’s verse; by inscribing her version of the events in her journal Dorothy reclaims ownership of both the memory and the exact wording of his poem.

‘The Sparrow’s Nest’, composed March–April 1802, again recalls a shared encounter between the child-siblings and vulnerable dwellers of nature.³⁰³ As with the butterfly poem, William explores the conflict inherent in the ambiguous hold that nature has over Dorothy: she is both drawn to nature, represented by the fragile world of the ‘sparrow’s dwelling’, and terrified of interfering with this awe-inspiring realm: ‘She look’d at it as if she fear’d it; / Still wishing, dreading to be near it’ (*TV*, 213, ll. 11-12). These poems illustrate William’s growing realization that Dorothy, the woman who has so influenced his adult life, has always been performing a ‘secret ministry’: ‘The Blessing of my later years / Was with me when a Boy’ (ll. 15-16). Unbeknownst to him in his youth, it was not just nature that was educating William, but Dorothy too: the seed of his understanding of the relationship between self and nature lay in his child-observations of Dorothy’s nature interactions which, he is now suggesting,

³⁰³ Dorothy’s later intense identification with the trials of the swallows’ nest shows that her concern with the fragility and importance of the ‘nest’ and home continues into adulthood.

subconsciously inflected his mode of seeing and feeling. William's epiphanic revelation leads him into panegyric:

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

(ll. 17-20)

Dorothy opened up his literal vision and hearing, humbled him to the outside world, awakened his emotional receptivity, and allowed him greater access to love, philosophy, and happiness.³⁰⁴ In short – both in childhood and adulthood – Dorothy has feminized him, attuned his senses, and brought him into the feeling, social world.

In *The Prelude* William develops this awareness of Dorothy's feminizing and domesticizing influence. Formerly he had been searching beyond the earthly world; his soul 'not studious of mild grace' had kept company with all that is obscure and unreachable: 'with the clouds / Familiar, and a favourite of the Stars' (XIII, 226, ll. 237, 240-41). Dorothy's influence tamed his fearsome overreaching soul:

But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers.

(XIII, 226, ll. 242-5)³⁰⁵

Dorothy facilitated an interactive ameliorative relationship with more humble forms of nature – the 'flowers', 'breeze', and 'birds' – thus liberating him from the relationship

³⁰⁴ Jack Stillinger remarks, in reference to 'The Sparrow's Nest', that William should have acknowledged his literal textual debt to his sister more: 'he should have added that she gave him recollections, words, phrases, and images as well' (Stillinger 1991, 72).

³⁰⁵ Cf. *Frankenstein*, where Victor Frankenstein, like William, emphasizes the sensitizing influence of his adoptive sister, Elizabeth: 'Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract: I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness' (Hindle 2003, 39-40).

of antagonistic friction with sublime nature, to a recognition of domesticity, home, and what Patricia Yaeger terms the 'sublime of nearness' (Kauffman 1989, 195). Like the river which William apostrophizes throughout his life, Dorothy has been a constant and guiding source: the thought of her was 'like a brook', 'Seen, heard, and felt, and caught at every turn, / Companion never lost through many a league' (X, 197-8, ll. 945, 947-8). Most of all, William states, Dorothy brings him equilibrium of self and greater self-knowledge: she 'Maintain'd for me a saving intercourse / With my true self' (X, 198, ll. 949-50).

William Hazlitt said of William Wordsworth: 'An intense intellectual egotism swallows up everything' and accused him of seeing 'nothing but himself and the universe'.³⁰⁶ Thomas McFarland argues, on the other hand, 'and by what seems, thus, a radical paradox, Wordsworth presents himself, both in his own life and in his poetic stance, as a deeply social being'.³⁰⁷ McFarland notes that William was an 'exemplary and deeply devoted husband and father', as he was too a steadfastly loyal brother – he and Mary looked after Dorothy devotedly for the final twenty years of her life (McFarland 1981, 138). William's theories were not, therefore, so divorced from his practice as, for example, STC, who could never sufficiently admit moral obligation to his family, or Percy Shelley, who was manipulative, exploitative and self-absorbed in his personal life. McFarland criticizes the tendency to magnify William's egotism as though under a microscope, until that becomes all by which he is characterized. It is perhaps because insufficient attention has been paid to understanding the true extent and nature of Dorothy's influence upon her brother that William's true self as a 'deeply social being' has been undervalued (McFarland 1981, 138). In turn, recognising

³⁰⁶ *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, vol. IV (London and Toronto: Dent, 1930), 113.

³⁰⁷ Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge and Modalities of Fragmentation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 138.

William's poetic persona as less egotistical corroborates the notion that this was a dual collaborative endeavour, of two enacting selves. Susan Wolfson too modifies the dominating egotistical stereotype of William by reminding us that he would insist on publishing Dorothy's 'Floating Island' in his 1842 edition of poems in order to incorporate its relational poetics into his own. Wolfson rightly states that William Wordsworth 'is not the secure figure of logocentric performance and egocentric confidence ascribed to him in some feminist (and older masculinist) readings of Romanticism' (Mellor 1988, 146).

Jane Aaron argues with regard to Charles Lamb that, while it is traditionally thought that women develop a subjectivity which is more permeable than the male's separate sense of self, as stated by, for example, Nancy Chodorow, the Lambs' close sibling relationship shows a male writer gaining access to a more fluid sense of ego: 'the brother also, closely bound as he was to his sister throughout his life, reveals in his writings that he shared in her unusually pronounced capacity to identify with others'.³⁰⁸ What is fundamental here is Aaron's stress on the power of the sibling bond to the male writer's understanding of his self; a dynamic which would flow both ways, as I have shown to be the case in the Wordsworth sibling relationship. Valerie Sanders poses the very interesting question as to whether 'their sense of writing from within a mixed sex group affected their ability to transcend gender barriers, or whether they simply reinforced conventional codes' (Sanders 2002, 33-4). My analysis of the Wordsworth's interdependent writings and psyches suggests that Dorothy's influence on William *did* allow a dissolution of 'gender barriers': they are writing out of the nexus of familial closeness and its subsequent tensions, and not gender difference. This allowed for the feminization of William's poetic self, and for the acuteness of vision and environmental

³⁰⁸ Jane Aaron, *A Double Singleness, Gender and the Writings of Charles and Mary Lamb* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 5.

awareness that is so evident in Dorothy's writings. Family dynamics, particularly the sibling lateral bond, become a fundamental structural element of both writers' understanding of self, environment, connection to place, and thus their poetics.

This analysis of the sibling figure in William's verse shows how central Dorothy and the notion of siblinghood, as a symbol of purity, strength, security, freedom, and companionship, was to his imaginative endeavour and to his personal and authorial identity. William later called STC, his figurative sibling, and Dorothy, his 'beloved Sister', 'the two Beings to whom my intellect is most indebted' (25 June 1832, *LWDW V*, 536). Figurative use of the sibling bond is wrapped up in literal significance and poetic origin. Though it is often assumed that the sister-figure exists on the margins of invisibility in William's work, as a figure to be apostrophized or appropriated, the sister-figure is, in fact, integral to his entire poetic imaginative vocation. As Rachel Crawford states, she is 'locked into the metaphor for the growth of the poet's mind, representing both its aboriginal state and the catalyst that provides for its transformation into subjecthood'.³⁰⁹ Juliet Mitchell writes that in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* 'Catherine's famous description of their relationship could be taken as an account of the ecstasy of sibling unity: "He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, Heathcliff's and mine are the same"' (Mitchell 2003, 64).³¹⁰ Catherine Earnshaw continues, 'I *am* Heathcliff,'³¹¹ echoing this phrase, Elizabeth Fay writes: 'Together, William and Dorothy are "Wordsworth"' (Fay 1995, 51). As William proclaims in *The Prelude*, Dorothy is 'Sister of my Soul!' (XIII, 226, l. 220). But as Fay goes on to suggest, Dorothy's act of imaginative investment in Wordsworth

³⁰⁹ Rachel Crawford, 'The Structure of the Sororal in Wordsworth's "Nutting"', *Studies in Romanticism* 31 (1992): 211.

³¹⁰ Interestingly, Frances Wilson believes Emily Brontë's depiction of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff's relationship was inspired by the Wordsworths: 'Powerful in both cases is the elusive, visionary nature of what each woman is straining to define, her hunger for twinship with the one she loves, her desire to repeat herself in him and to have him repeated in her, her drive to erase any difference between them, her confusion about where she ends and he begins' (Wilson 2008, 150).

³¹¹ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Pauline Nestor (London: Penguin, 2003), 82.

looks worryingly like an ‘emptying out rather than a gaining of self’ (Fay 1995, 212). While I have traced the positive aspect of Dorothy’s collaboration – the ‘gaining of self’ through the creation of Wordsworth the poet – in Chapter Five, through an analysis of Dorothy’s poetry, I will assess the extent to which this project also inevitably involved an ‘emptying out’ of self.

Chapter V

'Why should I inscribe my name / No poet I': Poetic Desire and Resistance in the Poetry of Dorothy Wordsworth

Dorothy's letters from 1820 onwards record the decline in William's poetic career; she informs Henry Crabb Robinson, in December 1822, '[William] has done nothing. [...] He is now giving his mind to Poetry again, but I do not think he will ever, in his lifetime – *publish* any more poems' (LWDW IV, 178). In November 1829 she writes to John Wordsworth: 'He has, however, promised that he will write no more' (LWDW V, 169). And, as in her *Grasmere Journals*, she retains a keen and discriminating interest in the effects of the composition process on William, telling Mary Lamb in January 1830:

In composition I can perceive no failure, and his imagination seems as vigorous as in youth; yet he shrinks from his great work, and [...] has been employed in writing small poems. Do not suppose, my dear Friends, that I write the above boastingly. Far from it (LWDW V, 191).

This defensive disclaimer suggests anxiety or guilt on Dorothy's part that she may be welcoming William's poetic decline. At this time, Dorothy had turned to poetry as her favoured and most fulfilling mode of expression – strong evidence that Dorothy, whose collaborative role in William's work would, therefore, also be waning, now had the imaginative space to reclaim poetic autonomy independent of her brother.³¹² In a letter to Hannah More, dated September 1837, Dorothy includes a short poem addressed to her 'Friend and medical Attendant T. Carr' stating 'I will give you some of the many verses which have slipped from me I know not how – since I cannot now so well

³¹² Catherine Macdonald Maclean suggests that Dorothy's powers were the longer lasting of the two siblings: 'as Wordsworth's faculty decayed, he ceased to receive inspiration even from Dorothy, who retained her powers as long as she wrote'; see *Dorothy and William Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 41.

express my thoughts and feelings to you' (*LWDW VI*, 455). In a letter to her cousin Edward Ferguson a month later, October 1837, Dorothy indicates how productive her poetic creativity now was: 'I *must* send you some of My Many Verses' (*LWDW VI*, 473). In the same year it is also evident, contrary to popular assumption, that Dorothy *did* have an eye on her independent poetic posterity: Mary Wordsworth writes to Dora Wordsworth (Dorothy's niece) in September 1837 that '[Dorothy] has been preparing a book *with all her Poems* for Jane Arnold – she began it the day Mrs. A. saw and thanked her for the letter and the Poem she had sent to Jane at Xmas, when she told her "she would send her a book that would be valuable when she was gone"³¹³. Dorothy's mounting poetic confidence suggests that she no longer fears authorial presumption and the pressures of comparison or failure. That she has come close to death is also likely to be a factor in her need to finally embrace her poetic capability: the letter quoted above to Hannah More states that on the night that the poem describes, her medical attendant Mr Carr 'left me because he could do no more for me, and my poor Brother went to lie down on his bed thinking he could not bear to see me die' (455).

While Dorothy's journals show her coming to terms with the Wordsworthian dual vocation, her poems, often on the act of writing itself, see her questioning the very foundation and ramifications of this collaborative enterprise. This, of course, turns into a question of her whole being and life-force, which carries a shattering potential. Separation from nature, through illness, and from William, through diminishment of his need for her, instigates a severe identity crisis. Writing to her cousin, Edward Ferguson in October 1837, Dorothy describes with terror her transformation from free inhabitant of nature to suffering imprisonment within her own mind: 'A Madman might as well attempt to relate the history of his doings and those of his fellows in confinement as I to

³¹³ *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth, 1800-1855*, ed. Mary E. Burton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 181.

tell you one hundredth part of what I have felt, suffered and done' (*LWDW VI*, 472). She suffers what amounts to a betrayal at the hands of nature and her brother; but while William's more centralized ego can withstand the shock of reduced literary productivity, Dorothy, who has always been in the role of literary agent, has lost the goal she lived and worked for and faces a greater struggle to relocate her identity. As I have shown, Dorothy's journals reveal that she suffered from melancholic episodes throughout her life when separated from her brother, therefore the final realization that she was no longer artistically needed by him would bring about a terminal separation of sorts which would have been mentally hard to bear. This reveals the greatest danger of the relational self: as the loci on which she has mapped her existence disappears, Dorothy struggles to ground and reassert herself. It is interesting that Dorothy writes poetry to the end of her life – it becomes her only means of connection with nature, the world, her brother, and with maintaining a precarious equilibrium of self.

William hints at Dorothy's growing awareness of an 'emptying out of self' when he writes to Henry Crabb Robinson in 1833, two years before her period of serious mental decline began, that she had been complaining of 'faintness & hollowness & has an incessant craving for something to support her'.³¹⁴ Dorothy's poems are born out of this widening abyss in an attempt to reconnect with the world and with herself, whilst also serving to build up an independent identity in opposition to William's. She needs to find poetic origin within herself in order to counter the prospect of self-annihilation and she does this by building an alternative to William's poetics. In doing so Dorothy is, of course, obliquely attacking her past self, but she is also demarcating her own subjectivity, really for the first time, through finally and more forcefully renouncing those aspects of Wordsworthianism which she does not fully endorse.

³¹⁴ *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle (1808-1866)*, vol. I, ed. Edith J. Morley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 278. (Letter also cited, but not referenced, in Wilson 2008, 247).

Despite Dorothy's pursuit of a poetic identity, she habitually laments in her letters and poems that she cannot write verse. In a letter to Lady Beaumont, dated 20 April 1806 (at the time when William was writing *The Prelude*) Dorothy infantilizes and stunts her authorial identity by exiling herself from the adult realm of writing:

Do not think that I was ever bold enough to hope to compose verses for the pleasure of grown persons. Descriptions, Sentiments, or little stories for children was all I could be ambitious of doing, and I did try one story, but failed so sadly that I was completely discouraged (*LWDW II*, 24).

Dorothy insists to Lady Beaumont that her poetic ability is not accomplished enough to perform for adults: 'And you would persuade *me* that I am capable of writing poems that might give pleasure to others beside my own particular friends!! indeed, indeed you do not know me thoroughly; you think far better of me than I deserve' (24). In a separate letter to Lady Beaumont, Dorothy brackets her self-perceived poetic weakness with her quality of devotion and care:

I have not those powers which Coleridge thinks I have – I know it. My only merits are my devotedness to those I love and I hope a charity towards all mankind.³¹⁵

Dorothy's implication is that such altruistic qualities cannot properly co-exist with the ego-centricity which, she assumes, is required to become a published poet.³¹⁶ In Dorothy's mind she knows the poet to be egotistical – a central part of her ministry, as we have seen, was to abate William's ego. She believes, therefore, that she fundamentally does not have the correct constitution to be a poet. This conflict between authorial desire and refusal is analogous to the self-conflict of Letitia Elizabeth Landon

³¹⁵ *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Selection*, ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), xiii.

³¹⁶ Patricia Comitini also suggests this in "More than half a poet": Vocational Philanthropy and Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals': 'She clearly perceives authorship, and the notoriety it brings, to be a display of vulgar productivity, complicit with motivations of profit – a clearly masculine domain in her view, rather than one of middle-class vocation', *ERR* 14 (September 2003): 311.

in 'Lines of Life'. Landon expresses a strong desire to encroach on the 'high' terrain of masculine egotistical achievement:

Surely I was not born for this!
I feel a loftier mood
Of generous impulse, high resolve,
Steal o'er my solitude!³¹⁷

Dorothy, too, secretly harbours authorial desire: in 'Irregular Verses' she confesses that she 'nursed a mounting will' to compose poetry (l. 61). In Dorothy's self-deprecating manner, Landon undermines her poetic power believing this lofty mood to be at odds with her innate sense of humility: 'Oh! not myself, – for what am I? – / The worthless and the weak' (ll. 81-2).

Like Landon, Dorothy's letters reveal a painful emotional conflict and longing to write poetry. In the letter to Lady Beaumont cited above, Dorothy details how the desire to compose plagues her solitary moments:

Believe me, since I received your letter I have made several attempts (could I do less as you requested that I would *for your sake?*) and have been obliged to give it up in despair; and looking into my mind I find nothing there, even if I had the gift of language and numbers, that I could have the vanity to suppose could be of any use beyond our own fireside, or to please, as in your case, a few partial friends; but I have no command of language, no power of expressing my ideas, and no one was ever more inapt at molding words into regular metre. I have often tried when I have been walking alone (muttering to myself as is my Brother's custom) to express my feeling in verse; feelings, and *ideas* such as they were, I have never wanted at those times; but prose and rhyme and blank verse were jumbled together and nothing ever came of it (*LWDW II*, 24-5).

Dorothy's explanation of the difficulties of composition reveals that William's mode of composing impinges on her own: in mimicking his style of composing ('muttering to myself as is my Brother's custom') she stifles her attempts. Her guilt and sense of

³¹⁷ *Women Romantic Poets: An Anthology, 1785-1832*, ed. Jennifer Breen (London: J. M. Dent, 1992), 152, ll. 49-52.

inferiority become, therefore, more concentrated than that experienced by a poet such as Landon. Dorothy states that she has feelings and ideas in abundance but cannot translate them into poetry, never considering that her so-called ‘jumbled together’ writings could be an art form in themselves. In Dorothy’s later journals she experiments with arranging passages of journal into verse form but, with William as the benchmark of ‘proper’ poetry, she would never have thought of these experiments as serious attempts at verse, nor had the confidence to present them to a public audience. As we have seen in the *Grasmere Journals*’ passage where Dorothy comes closest to declaring herself to be a poet, but ultimately falls short, she is again attempting to compose in the manner of William. This sense of inferiority was such that she was embarrassed by the prospect of putting her poetry alongside William’s: ‘As to those two little things which I did write, I was very unwilling to place them beside my Brother’s poems, but he insisted upon it, and I was obliged to submit’ (*LWDW II*, 25).³¹⁸ When William recites her poems she believes that any pleasure they give is due to his delivery rather than her own skill: ‘though you have been pleased with them I cannot but think that it was chiefly owing to the spirit which William gave them in the reading and to your kindness for me’ (*LWDW II*, 25). Thus Dorothy is unable to disassociate her independent creations – or, indeed, the art of poetry itself – from William, constantly inscribing him into her own act of poetic composition and performance, which has crippling consequences for her understanding of herself as a writer.

‘Irregular Verses’, composed 1827, is the poem which confronts the reasons as to why Dorothy did not follow an independent poetic career most explicitly. Written to her goddaughter, Julia Marshall, the daughter of Dorothy’s childhood best friend, Jane Marshall, ‘Irregular Verses’ cites six reasons as to why she did not ‘in jingling rhyme’

³¹⁸ The two poems Dorothy refers to are ‘Address to a Child’ and, most likely, ‘The Cottager to her Infant’.

‘Display those pleasant guileless dreams / That furnished still exhaustless themes’ (Levin 1987, 202, ll. 57, 58-9).³¹⁹ Firstly, Dorothy states, ‘ – I *reverenced* the Poet’s skill’ (l. 60). This is cited as the most prominent reason: it comes first in her list, while both the caesura imparted by the preceding dash and her emphasis of the term ‘reverenced’ isolate and concentrate the statement. This confession encapsulates Dorothy’s self-conflict: she has an intense desire to share ‘the Poet’s skill’, but her reverence impedes her as it immediately excludes her from the poet’s realm. It is, however, interesting that she reverences the ‘Poet’s skill’ rather than the poet himself. David Perkins in *English Romantic Writers* argues that ‘Having idolised William to the degree that she had, Dorothy could hardly place herself in competition with him’ (Perkins 1995, 479). Like Jonathan Wordsworth, Perkins puts Dorothy in too blindly subservient a role. While Perkins is right to recognize William at the core of Dorothy’s self-conflict, it was Dorothy’s reverence for poetry-making, and her closeness to William as an artist, rather than an unhealthy idolization of William himself, that prevented her from entering this ‘competition’. As I have shown in my analysis above of Dorothy’s surreptitious underminings of William’s poetics, the psychological and artistic conflict at play is more complex than sibling idolatry.

The succeeding seventeen lines of ‘Irregular Verses’ detail why this reverence became a self-imposed exile from ‘the Poet’s domain’. Dorothy states that she ‘*might have nursed a mounting Will / To imitate the tender Lays*’ of poets, a guarded and tentative admission which nonetheless declares that she had definite and growing poetic ambition (ll. 61-2). The second and third reasons which she gives are her inherent shyness, self-conflict, and low self-esteem – the fear that her poetic ambition was not appropriate and lay outwith her ability: ‘But bashfulness, a struggling shame / A fear

³¹⁹ Likewise, in ‘Line’s intended for my Niece’s Album’, Dorothy asks: ‘But why should *I* inscribe my name / No poet I’ (Levin 1987, 210, ll. 37-8).

that elder heads might blame' (ll. 64-5), a cause which also links with her sixth, final, and longest reason – that the presence of the mother repressed her ability:

– Nay even the mild maternal smile,
That oft-times would repress, beguile
The over-confidence of youth,
Even that dear smile, to own the truth,
Was dreaded by a fond self-love;
' 'Twill glance on me – and to reprove
Or,' (sorest wrong in childhood's school)
'Will *point* the sting of ridicule.'

(ll. 70-77)³²⁰

Curiously, Dorothy links tyrannical maternal control with stifled childhood confidence; she fears setting herself up as an author under her mother's critical gaze. As Dorothy's mother died when she was six it is improbable that she is referring to her own mother; more likely she is alluding to the maternal care given by her grandparents in 1787, when, as her letters from this time show, her independent and intellectual growth was not encouraged. The fifth reason for 'stifled ambition' which Dorothy cites as 'something worse' comes from her peers – perhaps even William himself:

– Or something worse – a lurking pride
Whispering my playmates would deride
Stifled ambition, checked the aim
If e'er by chance 'the numbers came' [...].

(ll. 66-9)

Again Dorothy shows an obsession with the metrical demands of composition, a fixation which is brought about by the presence of William: 'the numbers came' is an allusion to William's 'spontaneous' poetic inspiration in *The Prelude* – 'to the open fields I told / A prophesy: poetic numbers came / Spontaneously' (I, 14, ll. 59-61). Once

³²⁰ See also Landon's 'Lines' which expresses embarrassment over writing which required such a concentration on self: 'Whose every thought of self should raise / A blush to burn my cheek' (Breen 2000, 153, ll. 83-4).

again, as in the *Grasmere Journals*' 'more than half a poet' passage, Dorothy inscribes William's own words – and becomes creatively imprisoned by them – into her protestations of artistic inability. Thus, Dorothy suggests that the factor which most significantly 'stifled' and 'checked' her poetic ambition came from lateral relations and a fear that her peers would sense and decry a misguided sense of self-importance. Most forcefully the poem suggests that identify formation amongst a peer group is a minefield of potential destruction.

In her study of sibling theory, *Siblings: Sex and Violence*, Juliet Mitchell argues for greater recognition of this sibling threat – literal or figurative – to identity formation. Mitchell argues that the 'ego-ideal', that which for humans is an 'internalization of someone to whose status (both real and embroidered) the subject (ego) aspires', is primarily based upon 'sibling-peers' as opposed to paternal relations:

Classically in the theoretical explanation, this ideal is postulated as being modelled on the real object of the father. It is his approval or censorship that the child takes in (internalizes) so that a representation of the father is set up inside the mind as an aspect of the subject's own personality. This is almost certainly the case. But isn't it also likely that the original model may be another child, a heroic or critical older (or other) sibling? (Mitchell 2003, 12).

Mitchell's theory suggests that inferiority felt in adulthood has more significant links with past criticisms from childhood peers than with relations to superiors: 'For most of us, when our conscience is putting us down, making us feel inferior, the voice we hear is reminiscent of the tauntings not of adults but of other children', a conjecture which is expounded by Dorothy's remembered fear of her 'whispering' playmates (12). Mitchell thus raises 'the possibility that a child is forming its ego-ideal not so much on the Oedipal father as on the peer' and that 'not enough has been made' of this correlation (13). Mitchell distinguishes this notion of an ego-ideal from a superego, which is the 'internalization of the authority of the father-figure', arguing that in

Freud's analysis 'the notion of an ego-ideal became subsumed in the concept of a superego' (16). These two ego concepts, Mitchell stresses, must be separated in order to understand group psychology more acutely, an observation that is key to my study of group familial literary dynamics: 'The notion of an ego-ideal should be resurrected as it is not identical with the superego' (16). Mitchell thus points to a more intense internalization of a perceived inferiority due to a lateral identification which can unsettle or fragment the composite ego. The superego, or father-figure, can be more easily confronted because, as Marlon Ross states, the limits of their identity and achievements are already more fully known. William is Dorothy's 'ego-ideal': that which she most wants to become, and who is not only her peer but her brother, who shares her childhood, memories, parents, adult home, vocation, and, more importantly, her present life. William becomes internalized as part of Dorothy's self, an anxiety of influence with which she is consciously or subconsciously identifying, and from which she is attempting to disentangle herself.

Dorothy's self-perceived poetic inferiority suggests a pathological lack of confidence in herself as a writer. But it is also evident that she feels her so-called flaws more deeply because she is constantly comparing herself to William, a discrimination which she believes the public will also abide by. Her vision of what the poet should be, and her reverence for this skill, are thus exacerbated by her close proximity to her brother, an anxiety of influence which undoubtedly inhibits her poetic growth and prevents her from 'setting [her]self up as an author'.³²¹ Not only was she biologically and spatially too close to this overwhelming source of creativity, she had actually played into the Wordsworthian creative identity from which she now wants to be

³²¹ Lucy Newlyn finds much evidence in the 'painful sense of inferiority with which she described her own attempts at poetry' that Dorothy 'suffered from an anxiety of both influence and reception in relation to her brother' (Newlyn 2000, 231).

distinct. Dorothy's poetry allows her a way of navigating and resolving the tensions at the heart of this struggle for identity.

'Yet the lost fragments shall remain, / To fertilize some other ground': Dorothy Wordsworth, William Wordsworth, and the Anxiety of Influence

Susan Levin notes that Dorothy's poems form a dialogue with William's verse that projects a revisionary agenda for his own work: 'Existing in an intertextual relationship with the work of the men around her, Dorothy's writing explores these texts at the same time as it revises them' (Levin 1987, 7).³²² I have shown above that Dorothy was affected by a severe anxiety of influence with regard to her brother. However, through her dialogic poetic response to his verse she liberates herself from authorial conflict. As well as questioning the problems of poetic composition, authorial desire, and refusal, Dorothy's verse shows her examining Wordsworthian themes of childhood, memory, nature, and identity, offering her alternative, more social and relative investments in these themes in a probing exploration of the validity of her brother's poetics, and a demarcation of her own.

Dorothy's poem 'The Mother's return', like the 'Immortality Ode', explores the state and significance of childhood. But whereas William believed in the fundamental importance of *his* childhood experience and its bearing on his adult life, Dorothy focuses on the experience of other children. The only penetration of her own past comes at the end of the poem in a wistful envy of their joy and vigour: 'I, too, infected by their mood, / I could have joined the wanton chace' (182, ll. 51-2). Close proximity to the children leads her almost to inhabit their childhood (which she knows is only a fantasy) and also refreshes negative memories of her own fragmented childhood, which

³²² Susan Wolfson also examines Dorothy's dialogic poetic response to William; see 'Individual in Community' (Mellor 1988, 139-67).

she now perceives as an absence. On the borders of their childhood, she is also on the borders of motherhood itself. Her reiteration of the fact that the children preserve their stories to relay to their mother once again puts Dorothy on the margins of this domestic idyll: ‘To *her* these tales they will repeat, / To *her* our new-born tribes will shew’ (ll. 41-2; my italics). When the mother returns, absence will again present itself as Dorothy will no longer be needed in their familial nucleus. Both these examples hint at alienation and a need to classify herself: in emulating William’s methodology of creating poetry out of remembered childhood experience, Dorothy unlocks a sense of absence and confused identity.

But Dorothy does not fatalistically accept that there is no alternative to William’s myth of poetry composition. Margaret Homans suggests that ‘Accepting William’s myth that imagination originates in the past, yet lacking the requisite confidence in the continuity between childhood and adulthood, Dorothy leaves herself out of every center she proposes’ (Homans 1980, 70). While this manner of de-centring does happen in ‘The Mother’s Return’, it is not a failure of poetic ability or ‘dissolution’ of self. Dorothy is narrating her autobiographical past, just as William does in *The Prelude*, but for Dorothy the notion of the relational self helps unify her fragmented past. Homans’ argument that Dorothy ‘experiences an imposed separation from origins that her brother does not experience in the same way and that deprives her of the strong sense of identity necessary to writing Romantic poetry’ is an unfair and limited assessment that does not allow for more than one type of Romantic identity (Homans 1980, 70). Anne Mellor, on the other hand, states that Dorothy is the most Romantic of writers – because she wrote without the intention to publish, her work is, ironically, representative of a strong subjectivity, unfettered by artistic artifice or self-consciousness: ‘The life-writing of [Dorothy’s] Journals linguistically constructs a subjectivity that in its detail, physical embodiment, energetic activity, and *enacted*

consciousness [...] is one of the most convincing recorded subjectivities of the Romantic era' (Mellor 1993, 166). As Susan Wolfson argues, Homans does not appreciate Dorothy's attempts to question her brother's poetics: 'readers such as Homans [...] miss the alternation in Dorothy's own writing between her self-baffling attempts to write William's kind of poetry and her tactful departures from, or equivocations about, some of the imaginative values associated with his agenda' (Mellor 1988, 144). Like Hartley's critics, Homans listens to the author's protestations of failure more than the work itself, a critical flaw which Wolfson also notices: '[Dorothy's] implicit equation of poetry with formal regularity [...] derives from exercises William has perfected, and, not coincidentally, these are the terms in which critics tend to dismiss Dorothy's poetic ability' (Mellor 1988, 141).

In 'A Holiday at Gwerndovennant' (1826), Dorothy's identity crisis and sense of alienation becomes even more apparent as the poem-subject wavers uncertainly between 'we' (Dorothy) and 'you' (the children). As in 'The Mother's Return', Dorothy tries to share in the children's joy, but, in the same way that William attempts to be revitalized by the 'shouts' of the 'Child of Joy', 'thou happy Shepherd Boy!' in the 'Immortality Ode' (*TV*, 272, ll. 34, 35), Dorothy's attempts to be energized by the children are in vain:

So vanishes my idle scheme
That we through this long vernal day,
Associates in their youthful play
With them might travel in one stream.
Ah! how should we whose heads are grey?

(ll. 48-52)

Dorothy's reference to travelling back to childhood 'in one stream' is a more disillusioned revision of William's fundamental belief that we can 'travel' back to the origin of childhood:

Though inland far we be,
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

(ll. 165-70)

Like Hartley – ‘years / Had painted manhood on my cheek’; ‘I find my head is grey’ (‘Long time a child’, ll. 1-2, 10) – Dorothy asserts her physical, mortal, ageing, self – ‘Ah! How should we whose heads are grey?’ (l. 52) – challenging William’s promise of the immortal child self. Dorothy implies that the ‘season of delight’ (childhood) cannot be continued into adulthood, thus she, like Hartley, critiques the fallacy of the idealized Wordsworthian eternal childhood, revealing it to be illusory. Dorothy suggests that her previous acceptance of William’s theory has been an ‘idle scheme’, a dream which has now vanished, usurped by the power of her own experience.

Dorothy’s insistence on the importance of familial structure is tinged with regret, sadness, and the reality of separation and isolation: when she is describing the children sleeping, she ominously declares ‘And silently we all depart’ (193, l. 89). She then juxtaposes the comfort and security of childhood with the inevitable exposure to the outside world that will force the children to forge their own identity:

Ah Children! happy is your lot,
 Still bound together in one knot
 Beneath your tender Mother’s eye!
 – Too soon these blessed days shall fly
 And Brothers shall from Sisters part.³²³

(195, ll. 143-47)

³²³ Cf. Hartley’s ‘A lonely wanderer upon earth am I’ where Hartley likewise feels ‘Far, far away’, both temporally and physically, from his siblings: ‘Where is my sister’s smile? my brother’s boisterous din?’ (114, ll. 5, 8).

Here Dorothy is referring not only to her premature separation from William when she was six, but the inevitable dissolution of the close family structure which ageing brings. While in the 'Immortality Ode' William mourns the tainting effect of society on the growth of the natural child, which distances the child still further from God – 'Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing Boy' (ll. 67-8) – Dorothy continually mourns the 'lengthening chain' which takes the child away from their immediate family (*LWDW* I, 16 February 1793, 88). 'Holiday at Gwerndovvenant' concludes with a reworked domesticated version of William's 'spots of time' concept from *The Prelude* – that momentous events of childhood should be cherished in our minds in order to sustain our adult years:

And every day of *Festival*
 Gratefully shall ye then recal,
 Less for their own sakes than for this
 That each shall be a resting-place
 For memory, & divide the race
 Of childhood's smooth & happy years,
 Thus lengthening out that term of life
 Which, govern'd by your Parents' care
 Is free from sorrow & from strife.

(195, ll. 156-64)

Within this fundamental Wordsworthian concept, it is family that provides the basis of Dorothy's memories. Dorothy uses nature to illumine her message but remains distinct from it, whereas William's connection with childhood is entirely bound up with nature which he presents as more of a guiding force than his own family. While Dorothy is adhering to William's belief in the importance of maintaining a spiritual connection with our childhood, Dorothy reworks these fundamental Wordsworthian concepts of memory, childhood, and identity into a more realistic and relational form of sustenance and adult comfort.

The theme of absence which ‘Holiday at Gwerndovvenant’ addresses gains momentum in ‘Grasmere – A Fragment’ (1829), a poem which reveals Dorothy’s growing awareness that dedicating herself to William’s career has created a void in her identity. This poem initially conveys an idyllic scene of harmonious living. However, though the poem is imbued with a deep sense of community and collaboration, drawing, as it does, upon William’s ‘Poems on the Names of Places’, which associates different rural objects with William’s friends and relatives, the overriding sense is one of confusion and solitude. Dorothy’s recollection of her solitary exploration of the Grasmere vale when she had first arrived there with William could be read metaphorically as paralleling the journey of her literary life and her vocation to serve William:

Lured by a little winding path,
I quitted soon the public road,
A smooth and tempting path it was,
By sheep and shepherds trod.

(186, ll. 53-6)

The word ‘lured’ has connotations of seduction, entrapment and deceit, the suggestion being that she has quit a chance of public independent authorial life in order to serve her brother. It is ambiguous as to whether this passage is one of self-deception or whether she is apportioning blame to William for enticing her into this journey. That the ‘smooth’ and ‘tempting’ path has been trod by ‘sheep’ and ‘shepherds’ could also be an allusion to their sibling dynamics – does she view herself as a sheep-follower of William, or in the caretaker role of the shepherd? The pastoral path is (or rather, was) evidently more attractive to her than the anonymous ‘public road’ and is representative of poetic service. Dorothy may also be alluding to *The Prelude* where, during his Cambridge vacation, William compares his retraction from social life to a ‘shepherd on

a promontory' who 'lacking occupation' looks 'Into the endless sea, and rather makes / Than finds what he beholds' (III, 58, ll. 521-19). This reading would suggest that Dorothy finds herself similarly 'lacking occupation' and thus devotes her energies towards 'making' William.

The 'winding path' leads Dorothy to a 'stately Rock' (l. 59), an oblique symbol of William: William reveals in 'Poems on the Naming of Places' that Dorothy associates hills with her brother: 'She who dwells with me [...] / Hath said, this lonesome Peak shall bear my name' (*LB*, 247 ll. 14, 17). Dorothy gives an elaborate detailed description of the Rock's (Williams's) surface appearance:

With russet oak and tufts of fern
 Its top was richly garlanded;
 Its sides adorned with eglantine
 Bedropp'd with hips of glossy red.

There, too, in many a sheltered chink
 The foxglove's broad leaves flourished fair,
 And silver birch whose purple twigs
 Bend to the softest breathing air.

(186, ll. 61-68)

This recalls *The Prelude* passage where William gives thanks to Dorothy for attuning him to nature and the human social world, as we have seen in Chapter Four:

But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
 And teach the little birds to build their nests
 And warble in its chambers.

(XIII, 226, ll. 242-5)

Thus Dorothy may be alluding to the part that she has played in developing William's poetic identity, as I have described above. She goes on to state that the 'splendid moss' which counterpanes the Rock represents part of the beauty of winter: "'Thou wear'st,"

said I, “a splendid garb, / Here winter keeps his revelry” (ll. 77-8). Dorothy implies that she is the ‘splendid garb’ that William ‘wears’ which allows him greater appreciation of the ‘pleasure gardens’ of winter.³²⁴ Dorothy provides a symbolic image of what we could read as her willing concealment of self and silent reverence: ‘Beneath that Rock my course I stayed’ (l. 69). But her vocalization of the ‘foaming streamlet’, which ‘Beside that gay and lovely Rock’ ‘seemed to say “Rejoice!”’ (ll. 83, 81, 84), ventriloquizes Dorothy’s uncertainty over her satisfaction: the ‘streamlet’ is surely Dorothy as, in *The Prelude*, William describes her as ‘like a brook’, ‘Seen, heard, and felt, and caught at every turn, / Companion never lost through many a league’ (X, 197-8, ll. 945, 947-8). Her hesitancy as to whether her anticipation of an idyllic life with William accords with present actuality continues into the poem’s conclusion:

My youthful wishes all fulfill’d,
Wishes matured by thoughtful choice,
I stood an Inmate of this vale
How *could* I but rejoice?

(186-7, ll. 85-9)

While ‘Inmate’ did not denote prisoners in nineteenth-century usage, it was applied to mental asylum patients or used to describe a person who does not entirely belong to the place where they dwell. Again Dorothy alludes to the alienation that still pervades her seemingly harmonious domestic life. Ending the poem with a question epitomizes her self-baffling feelings; she recognizes that the dream of living with William has been fulfilled, a wish that was not naive or rashly taken, but reasoned and ‘matured by thoughtful choice’, yet she continues to probe a void in her independent identity.

³²⁴ Like Keats, Dorothy is frequently drawn to the overlooked beauty of autumn and winter, as opposed to spring and summer in her Journals. See *GJ*: ‘O thought I! what a beautiful thing God has made winter to be by stripping the trees & letting us see their shapes & forms. What a freedom does it seem to give to the storms!’ (14 May 1802, 99); ‘it is a pleasure to a real lover of Nature to give winter all the glory he can, for summer *will* make its own way, & speak its own praises’ (October 1802, 130).

Dorothy's handling of the diffusive rather than egotistical self is most effectively conveyed in 'Floating Island at Hawkshead' (composed late 1820s). Like William's Lucy poems, 'Floating Island' is deliberately evasive of the poem-subject's identity. Homans reads the 'dissevered' fragmented island as symbolic of William's appropriation of Dorothy and the dissolution of her subjective self. But Dorothy is offering a complex counterpart to poems such as 'A slumber did my spirit seal' which, while acknowledging an individual self, foregrounds the significance of community.³²⁵ The poem moves from 'I' to 'we' to 'you', to an unspecified 'other ground':

Buried beneath the glittering Lake!
 Its place no longer to be found,
 Yet the lost fragments shall remain,
 To fertilize some other ground.

(208, ll. 25-8)

This concluding striking image recalls the Lucy poem 'A slumber did my spirit seal' where the poem's final image is also one of dissolution tempered by the ultimate unity inherent in the biological regeneration of nature:

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!

(ll. 5-8)

Dorothy's dominant trope of fertilization does, however, give a more positive and active impression of spiritual regeneration and hope; William's image of the disembodied self, in contrast, appears stalled or trapped within the cyclical monotony of nature with less hope of progression. The fragmented island as a representative of

³²⁵ Wolfson's positive reading of 'Floating Island' suggests that the poem offers an 'expansion of individual subjectivity into visionary community' (Mellor 1993, 145).

Dorothy's self enriches the surrounding community – an expression of strong identity rather than weakness; the self is becoming part of a larger and continued state of being. As Kenneth Cervelli argues '[Dorothy's poem] ultimately exists beyond itself. It is not a self-contained lyrical effusion (like, say, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"), but rather a textual *environment*' (Cervelli 2007, 67). The poem wavers between representations of unity and fragmentation, but the ultimate message is one of harmony and growth excluding the egotistical self, which could be read as a conscious denial of Wordsworthian egotism.³²⁶ Dorothy fundamentally objects to the elevation of self over nature, which she revered as being separate from herself. William's belief in the mutually interdependent relationship between man and nature epitomizes the difference between the brother and sister's respective imaginative investments. William believed in the creative power of the mind as being at least equal to nature's dominance:

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

(LB, 119, ll. 103-108)

Dorothy, however, believed in nature's absolute power and disallows a conscious fusion of mind with nature; as Virginia Woolf observed, 'Dorothy never confused her own soul with the sky'.³²⁷

Dorothy's mode of poetry and its difference from William's should be celebrated more for what it achieves rather than lacks in comparison. Dorothy's life, self, and poetics were grounded, and grew, in her local community and natural

³²⁶ Elizabeth A. Fay also discusses Dorothy's denial: 'The cost of such an extensive decentring process, for Dorothy, is to renounce [...] the male romantic project' (Fay 1995, 124).

³²⁷ Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader, Second Series* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935), 164.

environment, and not just in William. Though she has been consistently recognized as an unrivalled writer of natural description, Cervelli is the first critic to commit to such an extended analysis of Dorothy's connection to the natural world. Cervelli's approach amply proves that Dorothy is an ecopoet under Johnathan Bate's definition: 'Ecopoetry is not a description of dwelling with the earth, not a disengaged thinking about it, but an experiencing of it'.³²⁸ Thus an ecocritical perspective is the first to value Dorothy's work on an equal standing to that of her brother.

Fragments of poetry from the final page of Dorothy's unpublished 1833 journal expose the final stages of her identity conflict and her attempts to harmonize her present self with the sense of vacancy which, as her poetry reveals, investment in her brother has created:

But joy it brought to my hidden life
 My *hidden* life
 To my inner self no longer hidden
 To my consciousness no longer hidden

(Levin 1987, 222)

Ironically, Dorothy lucidly describes an epiphanic state of self-realization, a poetic and self-awakening, when her sense of self is most threatened due to mental illness. In her poem 'Thoughts on my sickbed', which contains a version of this fragment, Dorothy's reference to her '*hidden* life' represents the revival of her memories of the Wye valley and her brother's 'prophetic words' (ll. 39, 47). The emphasis on the word 'hidden' in this fragment, her most rigorous questioning and examination of her own identity, suggests a realization of the self-suppression of her independent poetic life – her 'hidden life' – the life which William refers to in 'She dwelt among th' untrodden ways': 'A Violet by a mossy Stone / Half-hidden from the Eye!' (*LB*, 163, ll. 5-6).

³²⁸ Johnathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (Oxford: Picador, 2000), 42.

Though Dorothy realizes her mission to serve her brother's work has involved an emptying out of self, this fragment, and her poetry as a whole, also shows a resolution of her anxiety of influence and her ultimate gaining of self.³²⁹

³²⁹ Rachel Mayer Brownstein concurs with De Quincey's opinion that Dorothy's 'relationship with her brother must have been involved in her lack of productivity and perhaps also in her decline', 'because she had lived so dependently, making – and indeed having – little that was specifically hers'; see 'The Private Life', *Modern Language Quarterly* 34 (1973): 62n. Though I do not want to encourage the notion that the protracted and unusual nature of Dorothy's mental illness was a manifestation of her frustrated authorial life, Frances Wilson's recent suggestion that she suffered from 'depressive pseudodementia', is a convincing summation of her decline, a condition in which 'severe depression mimics the symptoms of dementia such as cognitive impairment, confusion, forgetfulness, and lack of self-care' (Wilson 2008, 247). It is interesting that Dorothy retains lucid periods, which go against the progressive nature of senile dementia, where she is able to recite poetry perfectly.

Conclusion

Dorothy Wordsworth's poetic development, like Hartley Coleridge's, shows her finding out of 'weakness, strength' ('What is the meaning of the word "sublime"', *CPW*, 117, ll. 13-14). Susan Wolfson remarks with regard to Dorothy's 'Floating Island' poem that 'Dorothy avoids elegy by blending the passing of her vision into a suggestion that what has passed away from one may be renewed by others: the isle is not so much lost as invisible' (145). Wolfson's argument is that the relational self, in its faith in the continuity and regeneration of self through others, is a stronger representation of poetic identity than William Wordsworth's manifestation of the more centralized ego. This belief parallels, as we have seen, Hartley's understanding of poetic identity; moreover, it anticipates Virginia Woolf's notion that the potential of the unappreciated poet lives on through the latent promise of later generations and, importantly, that human identity should be perceived, as Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own*, 'not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality', a reality which lies only in awareness of 'the common life'.³³⁰

A Room of One's Own, which analyzes the fate of Shakespeare's hypothetical sister, concludes with a belief that matches Dorothy's faith that her 'lost fragments shall remain, / To fertilize some other ground' (ll. 27-8):

I told you in the course of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sidney Lee's life of the poet. [...] Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the cross-roads still lives. She lives in you and me, and in many other women who are not here tonight [...]. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences (Shiach 1998, 148).

³³⁰ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 149, 148.

This transfusion of self that Woolf describes echoes Hartley's understanding of one relational identity into which each self contributes; it recalls, in particular Hartley's belief that artistic intention can exist in, and be transmitted through, the actions and relationships of everyday lives, and not just through the text itself: 'it must delight every lover of mankind to see how the influence of Wordsworth's poetry is diverging, spreading over society, benefiting the heart and soul of the Species, and indirectly operating upon thousands, who haply, never read, or will read, a single page of his fine Volumes' (*LHC*, 112). Woolf questions the importance of the individual poetic self: 'I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals' (148-9), a practice which allows her to suggest that in the larger scheme of things, rather than in the comparatively ego-centric realm of temporal poetic achievement, missed public opportunities, such as Dorothy's, will eventually be realized, 'if we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view':

[...] then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born (Shiach 1998, 149).

With its independence from the identity and subjectivity of the individual author, this macro-perspective, shared by Dorothy and Hartley alike, complicates what has been seen as a core Romantic article of faith. But its ultimate emphasis on common life and rebirth allows both writers liberation from any Bloomian 'anxiety of influence' – it allows them to 'look past Milton's bogey' – and also reconciles a major William Wordsworthian and S. T. Coleridgean anxiety; STC's struggle to understand how the 'one can be many!', and William's wavering pantheistic hope for the One Life (*CN I*, 1561).

My analysis of Hartley's 'feminine' sensibility through enforced marginality, and my assessment of the Wordsworths' mutually interdependent relationship, reveals that gender alone is not the predominant force that dictates authorial identity and authorial difference. Jane Aaron argues that the Lamb sibling relationship reveals that 'differences generally attributed to gender are the consequence not of biological sex but of social patterning, and in particular of each subject's relation to the sources of power in his or her society', an observation which is key to my study and which my analysis supports (Aaron 1991, 16). The identity formations of both Hartley Coleridge in the shadow of his father, and Dorothy Wordsworth writing through and apart from her brother show these writers developing a relational poetics in their endeavour to demarcate a strong and independent subjectivity and resolve their personal authorial conflict – Hartley's battle being more with his readership; Dorothy's with her volatile and more indeterminate conception of herself. Both these writing relationships suggest, therefore, that authorial identity is not fundamentally predetermined by, and dependent on, gender, but is more significantly governed by the infinitely complex pressures of domestic environment, familial readership, and immediate kinship.

Appendix I(a): The Reception of Hartley Coleridge's Poetry, 1833–the Present Day

Nineteenth-Century Reception: *Poems, Songs and Sonnets*, 1833

In Hartley Coleridge's Preface to his 1833 *Poems*, the only volume which he published in his lifetime, Hartley is anxious and defensive in his attempt to disarm criticism and comparison. He is reluctant to call himself a poet, asserting that such classification can only be qualified by others: 'No man can know, of himself, whether he is, or is not, a poet' (*Poems*, v). This self-deprecation is continued in his meticulous safeguarding against accusations of literary plagiarism: 'Wherever I have been conscious of adopting the thoughts or words of former, especially of living writers, I have scrupulously acknowledged the obligation' (vi). Hartley goes on, however, to pose the problematics of poetic 'ownership' – an area which becomes particularly muddled due to the intimate literary and personal exchange within the Wordsworth-Coleridge circle: 'It is not always easy to distinguish between recollection and invention' (vi).³³¹ And, in a manner that is characteristic of Hartley's verse, which often alternates between reverence for and opposition to William Wordsworthian poetics, he immediately follows his deference to 'living writers' with a decisive assertion of his authorial autonomy: 'At the same time, be it remembered, that close resemblance of phrase or illustration, or even verbal identity, may arise from casual coincidence, in compositions that owe nothing to each other' (vi). Positioned as it is between the 'Dedicatory Sonnet, To S. T. Coleridge' and Hartley's solitary volume of verse, Hartley's Preface symbolizes the struggle that his poetic voice faced: forever imprisoned by both poetic and familial debt, while attempting to break away and forge an independent identity.

³³¹ Hartley's awareness of the complexity of poetic ownership parallels STC's somewhat confused account of the genesis of *Lyrical Ballads* in *Biographia Literaria*.

Despite having articulated his poetic manifesto so openly, comparison was inevitably drawn between William Wordsworth and Hartley: the *Quarterly* demanded that Hartley should ‘drop somewhat of that overweening worship of Wordsworth which is so visible’ (*QR* 98 (July 1833): 521). But the *Quarterly* also recognized Hartley’s debt to an earlier age, finding his sonnets Shakespearean in merit and execution: ‘We remember no sonnets so nearly resembling the peculiar and unaccountable sweetness of Shakespeare’s’ (518). This quality of ‘sweetness’, which connotes both a ‘pleasantness to the mind and feelings’ and a certain ‘musical, melodious, harmonious’ quality’ (*OED*), is a defining characteristic of Hartley’s verse and forms one of the most prevalent observations throughout the reception of his poetry. The *Quarterly* finds ample proof within *Poems* that Hartley is capable of relying ‘solely upon himself’, concluding that he occupies a prime position in the poetry market: ‘we are bound to say that we consider its author as having already placed himself on high vantage-ground, as compared with any of the rhymers of these latter years’ (521, 517).

At this time, William Wordsworth considered Hartley’s sonnets as being amongst the best examples of their genre. In a letter dated 4 December 1833 addressed to Alexander Dyce, who had recently published *Specimens of English Sonnets*, the object of which was to ‘exhibit specimens of our best Sonnet-writers’, William writes: ‘It is a pity that Mr Hartley Coleridge’s Sonnets had not been published before your collection was made – as there are several well worthy of a place in it’ (*LWDW* V, 665).³³² When William was asked to write an epitaph on the death of Charles Lamb two years later, he defers the duty to Hartley, writing to Edward Moxon that Hartley ‘has *great* powers [...] we expect something good’ (6 December 1835, *LWDW* VI,

³³² *Specimens of English Sonnets*, sel. Alexander Dyce (London: William Pickering, 1833), vi. ‘It was [Dyce replied] unfortunate that the Sonnets of Hartley Coleridge were unknown to me, till the Collection was printed’ (*LWDW* V, 665n).

130). At this stage, then, William was viewing Hartley as an independent writer and not allowing his own conflicted relationship with STC to cloud this perception.

Hartley's own response to the reception of *Poems* focuses on the public's inability to respect his authorial integrity and independence. In a letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge, dated 29 September 1833, with his characteristic blend of self-deprecation and authorial assertiveness, Hartley is irritated that his work is not being viewed independently of William's:

The Poems, I believe, have not done so far amiss. The Review in the *Quarterly* I must thank you for. It is far too laudatory for my stomach, and I have a pretty strong digestion. But why, in the Devil's name cannot they review my book, gentle or simple [sic], without a fling at poor Wordsworth, who by the way is sadly afflicted in his eyes? (*LHC*, 153-4)

A letter to his mother the following month, 7 October 1833, contains one of Hartley's most confident statements regarding authorial autonomy and the originality which, he believes, all poetry must possess. In response to the *Quarterly*, Hartley vehemently refuses to be classed as a mere follower of William:

I received the *Quarterly* from Mr. Murray. If praise could do me any good, there is enough of it: but I know nothing of that 'overweening worship of Wordsworth' which I am warned against. I admire, nay revere, what is great, excellent and beautiful. And excellent in Wordsworth – that is five sixths of his works – but I am not, and never was a convert to his peculiar sect of poetry. At all events, no man but himself could realize his ideas (*LHC*, 157).

Hartley expresses a similar belief in his essay 'On the Imitators of Pope': 'It is easy to mimic the peculiarities [...] of any writer [...]. But to compose in the spirit of a great master is quite another affair' (*EM* II, 117-8). We can see, then, that what Hartley feared most was not criticism of his verse, but rather accusations of imitation, which were a threat to both his sense of himself as a poet and, indeed, the art of poetry itself

(Hartley revered the act of poetic creation, which forms the subject of much of his verse).³³³

Hartley's essay 'A Preface That May serve for all Modern Works of Imagination' contemplates the notion of originality extensively and proposes that nothing is ever entirely new but only a composite of what has gone before, 'a quilted counterpane' of past ideas (*EM* I, 69), a remark which prefigures Julia Kristeva's understanding of intertextuality: 'Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another'.³³⁴ Hartley asserts the fundamental originality of an individual's deeply felt thoughts passionately: 'In truth, every sentiment that proceeds from the heart, every thought that emanates from the individual mind, or is suggested by personal observation, is original, though, in all probability, it has been thought and felt a thousand times before' (70). Hartley is attacking the notion that poets can secure a monopoly over ideas and thought. He presents the more empowering notion that every individual has the ability to be original and it is the depth of faith in the initial idea, and commitment to its expression, which determines the communication of the thought in its pure state. Hartley speaks against the poetic appropriation of the natural object – the 'moon', 'rose', 'lily', 'dove', and 'nightingale' – and reminds the reader that nature is ours too: these sources are inexhaustible (75). While poets have the power to enlighten man's relationship with nature – we love nature, Hartley says, 'Thanks to the great men of old [poets]' – he reasserts each individual's power and right to form their own unique relationship with nature: 'Our affection is hereditary, but it is original also' (76). In this way, Hartley antithesizes Keats's despondency over the state of modern poetry: Richard Woodhouse indicates in a letter to Keats, dated 21 October 1818, that Keats had remarked that 'there was now

³³³ See, for example, 'Who is the Poet?', and 'The Use of a Poet' (*CPW*, 106-7).

³³⁴ *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 37.

nothing original to be written in poetry; that its riches were already exhausted – & all its beauties forestalled’ (Rollins 1958 I, 380). Considering Hartley’s steadfast belief in his own originality, it is likely that it is the fear of being labelled an imitator which, ultimately, aggravated his anxiety over publication.

In 1836, an extensive and laudatory review of *Poems* in the *American Quarterly* hails Hartley’s promise as the exception to the trend that poetical genius is rarely inherited: ‘enough, we think, has been done to show that the Coleridge name has not yet reaped the whole harvest of its fame’.³³⁵ Indeed, the reviewer believes that Hartley’s work will ensure the continuity of great English poetry: ‘This volume of poems has given us assurance against a misgiving that has occasionally insinuated itself into our minds – a fear that the great stream of English poetry may for a time be intermitted’ (486-7).³³⁶ Hartley’s sonnets are singled out for their excellence: ‘The sonnets, of which there are a considerable number, are of the first order of that difficult form of composition’, an art in which, the reader is reminded, ‘comparatively very few [writers] have been successful’ (491-2), and Hartley’s skill is once again equated with that of Shakespeare:

The reader familiar with Shakespeare’s sonnets [...] will not unfrequently find them recalled to his mind by the sonnets scattered through this volume, for, without the slightest appearance of imitation, there is a similarity in the vein of feeling – in the expression of a desponding love – of self-reproach and regrets – and in the play of fancy – which redounds greatly to the honour of our contemporary (492).

³³⁵ ‘Art. IX.- *Poems* by Hartley Coleridge’, *AQR* 20 (December 1836): 484.

³³⁶ This is a fear that Hartley himself articulated upon the publication of William’s *Poems, chiefly of early and late years; including The Borderers*, 1842: ‘He is the last of the Poets, I mean, the last of the men who were Poets when I was born, for Rogers does not write now. One by one, our lights go out. Byron burn’d dim soon and went out early; Scott went out at last; Southey is a Poet no more; Wordsworth and Campbell are the sole survivors of the Poets of my youth. They are not likely to have any successors. We have now plenty of clever men, but no great men and no promise of greatness’ (*LHC*, 258n). The *AQR* suggests it was Hartley himself who held that ‘promise of greatness’; Hartley’s own interest in the chronology of eminent writers suggests that he hasn’t been allowed to assume his rightful place in the ‘great stream of poetry’.

Hartley's sonnet 'Is love a fancy or a feeling?' is singled out as being worthy of standing alongside Shakespeare's famous sonnet, 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds' (492).³³⁷

The *American Quarterly* applauds Hartley's democratic spirit in 'Liberty' and hints that his poetry has the potential to diffuse a much needed spirit of philanthropy and benevolence throughout the nation: 'The times are in need of writers to sustain a lofty tone of public sentiment – to depict, if it be only in fancy, a love of the common good, unqualified by private interest – to perpetuate, at least, the memory of the hardihood and simplicity of ancient patriotism' (493). Hartley is admired further for his honesty of feeling, a new and unusual trait for the time: his sorrow exudes an 'air of sad reality' as opposed to 'the old *fashion* of melancholy that may be traced from the days of Ben Jonson's "Master Stephen" down to the times of Lord Byron' (502). This contemporary review establishes Hartley's position within literary history rather than viewing him as a lesser version of William Wordsworth and STC. Consequently, an illustrious future is anticipated for him: 'we have no fear but that at some future day we shall behold him on higher ground than the beautiful effusions in the present volume' (502).

After the publication of *Poems*, and despite confident indications throughout his letters that he intended to publish a second volume, Hartley seemed to undergo a gradual withdrawal from the nineteenth-century poetry market. A letter to the publisher E. Moxon in 1841 makes clear that, in private, Hartley's poetic enthusiasm was unabated: 'In three weeks' time I could, if you were disposed to publish, produce a volume, as large as the last, of sonnets or miscellanies; and before Christmas,

³³⁷ In the 1996 film of 'Sense and Sensibility', scripted by Emma Thompson, Hartley's sonnet 'Is love a fancy or a Feeling' features prominently, as noted in *A Century of sonnets: the Romantic-Era Revival, 1750-1850*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Daniel Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 262n.

“Prometheus”, whom I think we shall do better to introduce to the public alone’ (*LHC*, 250). While poems by Hartley were published sporadically in various literary magazines of the day, he did not submit a second volume to publication, despite the favourable reception that *Poems* had received and despite his publisher, Bingley, indicating in 1836 that he would publish anything that Hartley produced: ‘I shall consider myself both honoured and obliged by the offer of any of your MS., either now ready or in embryo, for publication’ (*LHC*, 183n). It is important to consider, as we have seen, that it was not fear of criticism itself that led to Hartley’s anxiety over publication, but rather a growing awareness that his sense of his own poetic identity was vastly at odds with that formed by the public; a conception which, for the most part, never really attempted to disentangle him from Wordsworth-Coleridge associations in order to fully comprehend his independent poetic endeavour (as I show in Chapter Two). In a letter to Moxon in 1848, Hartley reveals tremendous poetic confidence and integrity which points to the strength of his poetic resolve, notwithstanding familial pressures: ‘I will never be snuffed out with an article, I assure you’ (*LHC*, 298). This statement, which alludes to Byron’s judgement of Keats’s tremulousness and self-doubt in the face of critics – ‘Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle, / Should let itself be snuffed out by an Article’ – suggests that Hartley considered his poetic confidence and identity to be stronger than those of Keats, who, Byron proposes, was ‘killed off by one critique’ (McGann 1986, *Don Juan*, Canto XI, 483, ll. 479-80, 473).

It is also likely that William Wordsworth’s heavy criticism affected Hartley’s withdrawal from publication, an interference which is bound up with William and STC’s turbulent relationship. William initially encouraged and facilitated Hartley’s poetic endeavour: on 23 October 1835, writing to his nephew, Christopher Wordsworth, William indicates a subtle respect for Hartley’s literary efforts: ‘[Hartley] is going to

publish another Vol: of Poems – he writes a good deal’ (*LWDW VI*, 108). A letter to the publisher Edward Moxon, dated February 1836, shows William mediating publication negotiations for Hartley’s second volume: ‘He is preparing for the Press another Vol. of Poems, as I understand, and I shall recommend to him to publish with you if you will undertake the work’; ‘he has Poems and other works which he would be glad to publish with you’ (*LWDW VI*, 163). At this time, Moxon indicates great faith in Hartley and is prepared to publish at his own risk, writing to William on 24 February 1836: ‘I shall at any time be glad of either Prose or Verse from him, but if the latter I should not I fear be able to do more than print it at my own risk and divide the profits with him’ (*VI*, 163n). However, William soon becomes exasperated with Hartley’s erratic behaviour and, most likely, embarrassed that he had so confidently recommended Hartley to Moxon when Hartley had not finished his introduction to *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford* on time. From June 1839 onwards William begins to use his intermediary position to defame Hartley’s reputation and reliability.³³⁸

In December 1839, for example, William writes to Moxon:

I have done all that can be done for you in Hartley’s case, both directly, and through the medium of a common friend; but he now avoids us both [...]. It is, therefore, evident that you must trust nothing to him in future. He cannot be relied on for unperformed work that is to be done in a limited time. This is a great pity, for both his genius and talents are admirable (*LWDW VI*, 746).

Despite William’s invective, in an unpublished letter to William, dated 16 December 1839, Moxon reveals that his confidence in Hartley’s ability is such that he is prepared to overlook Hartley’s faults and that he will not be dissuaded by anything that William has to say against the young poet:

Many, many thanks for your kindness in looking after Hartley, [...] I will say nothing, but that he should try the patience of Job himself, and that I should be

³³⁸ See, for example, *LWDW VI*, 711, 721, 732.

very angry with him but that he writes so well and there is something so good-natured and self-condemnatory in his letters that I cannot help liking the rogue. In fact I would rather wait a year for him than six months for any other writer with whom I am acquainted with the exception of Mr Southey and yourself (WLMS 6/2/1).

In February 1840, upon being asked by Moxon to influence Hartley into completing his proposed introduction, William delivers a final condemning judgement of Hartley's character and will:

And now let me give you in respect to him a piece of advice once for all, viz, that you *never* engage with him for any *unperformed* Work, where either time or quantity is of importance. Poor fellow he has no resolution; – in fact nothing that can be called rational volition, or command of himself, as to what he will do or not do [...]. I have lately begun to think, that he has given himself up so to his own notions, fancies reveries, abstractions, etc that he is scarcely in his right [mind] at all times. I admire his Genius and talents far more than I could find words to express, especially for writing prose,³³⁹ which I am inclined to think, as far as I have seen, is more masterly than his Verse. The *workmanship* of the latter seems to me not infrequently too hasty, has indeed too much the air of Italian improvizatore production (LWDW VII, 19).³⁴⁰

By mid-November 1841 it appears that Moxon's confidence in Hartley has finally been undermined. William reveals in a letter to Dora Quillinan that Hartley's second volume of poems has been rejected by Moxon: 'M[oxon] has declined printing Hartley's Vol: of Poems on account of the wretched state of the Book Trade, and the heavy stock he has on hand' (LWDW VII, 261).³⁴¹ Though William cites the reasons for this rejection as the 'wretched state of the book trade', it is likely that William's persistent criticisms of Hartley's reliability would ultimately have weathered Moxon's faith in Hartley.

³³⁹ William's praise of Hartley's prose does not accord with the impression gleaned by Hartley, as he remarks to Derwent: 'Mr. Wordsworth thinks my prose stiff and elaborate' (LHC, 258).

³⁴⁰ William's critique of Hartley's 'hasty', 'improvizatore' style veils an oblique attack at Byron who was famous for this style. Griggs goes as far as to implicate William's intervention in Hartley's withdrawal from publication: 'Wordsworth's letter on this occasion [February 1840, quoted above] certainly did not reassure the publisher; and perhaps the failure of Moxon and Hartley to come to terms over other works may have emanated from the unsatisfactory experience in the case of the Massinger and Ford' (LHC, 230).

³⁴¹ Moxon must reject Hartley's volume between 12 August 1841 (when Hartley writes to Moxon that he is in a position to submit his work to him; see LHC, 250) and mid-November 1841.

William's letters from this time reveal that Hartley is 'wandering again', the cause of which most likely being the rejection of his verse. Hartley did not, however, immediately withdraw from the publishing market, which proves his strength and perseverance in the face of rejection. A fragment written on 18 December 1841 epitomizes his unrelenting hope and fortitude: 'With much of fear, yet not without / Enough of hope to strive with doubt' (*NP*, 87). Moreover, a letter to his mother in May 1842 reveals that Hartley is still trying to secure Moxon to publish his work: Hartley writes 'I shall send Moxon a large parcel of essays soon, and then await his ultimatum' (*LHC*, 254). A year later Hartley writes to his mother on 25 October 1843 that he is awaiting Moxon's judgement:

You are aware I sent a pacquet by Derwent, which he gave to Moxon. As I have not heard, I suppose he wants more to make up a volume. It shall be sent forthwith (*LHC*, 269).

It is also apparent that Hartley is eager to publish quickly: 'I wish I could get out a Vol. of Sonnets, etc. before the New Year' (*LHC*, 269). Five years later, writing on 1 January 1848 – the year of his death – Hartley is still in correspondence with Moxon and has hopes of regaining the publisher's confidence: 'Concerning essays and poems, I will write when my performance of the work in hand has secured your confidence' (*LHC*, 298). However, Hartley's poem 'Followed by Another' reveals Hartley's fundamental disillusionment with the literary and publishing industry, that these (above quoted) lines written to Moxon have been 'Recorded rashly to the writer's shame' and that his 'oft neglected purpose' to publish 'is los[ing] aim' (*NP*, 87, ll. 2, 5).

William's letters to Moxon reveal that William perceived within Hartley a repeat of *STC*'s paradoxical blend of genius and defect and unjustly displaced the hurt and annoyance which *STC* had suffered the Wordsworths back on to Hartley. If we compare these letters on Hartley to those William and Dorothy write on *STC*'s faults,

they could be writing about the same person, so similar is the diction and annoyance delivered with pity, disapproval, and fatalistic resignation. The phrases ‘poor fellow’ and ‘he has no resolution’, with which William condemns Hartley in his 1840 letter to Moxon, are particularly reminiscent of the Wordsworth judgement of STC from 1812 onwards.³⁴² Intense associations with both William Wordsworth and STC affected the way in which Hartley was being received by the public and his publishers, which, in turn, affected Hartley’s confidence in submitting himself to print. What we can gather from Hartley’s carefully worded preface to the 1833 *Poems*, his meticulous notes to this volume indicating his debts to other authors, and his repeated assertions of his authorial autonomy, is that above all Hartley valued poetic originality. To be labelled an imitator of one poet (William Wordsworth) and inferior to another (his father) did, perhaps, stymie not Hartley’s creative power, but his ability to publish and expose his work. Hartley’s withdrawal from the poetry market could thus be perceived as a defence mechanism, aggravated by his increasing awareness of a readership’s – including William – inability to recognize his independent merits.

Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of his Life by his Brother, 1851

The bulk of Hartley’s work was finally published in 1851, two years after Hartley’s death, when his brother Derwent collected and published two hundred and thirty-four unpublished poems, together with a reprint of *Poems* and a memoir of Hartley. Although Derwent finds ‘most’ of Hartley’s verse ‘slight and occasional’ he nonetheless dedicates nine pages (clxxii-clxxx) to the discussion of what makes Hartley

³⁴² For example, in April 1814 William writes to Thomas Poole: ‘I cannot learn that poor C has mustered courage to look this matter [of Hartley’s education] fairly in the face’ (*LWDW III*, 145); Dorothy writes to Catherine Clarkson, 5 January 1813: ‘Poor soul! I only think of him now with my wonted affection, and with tender feelings of compassion for his infirmities’; and 6 April 1813: ‘as to Coleridge you have done all that can be done, and we are grieved that you have had so much uneasiness, and taken so much trouble about him. He will not let himself be served by others’ (*LWDW III*, 65, 90).

a distinctive poet, and believes that he *will* achieve lasting recognition: ‘He has done quite enough, in bulk, to earn a permanent place in the poetic literature of his country’ (*Memoir*, clxxii). However, though Derwent initially gives a loving and generous account of his brother, his ultimate judgement of Hartley as a sorrowful and unfulfilled genius is myopic and relentless: three pages of the *Memoir* (clx-clxii) present Hartley as an incomplete individual and poet, using diction and metaphors that suggest division, fragmentation, and waste. Derwent consolidates the idea that Hartley is a lesser version of STC, a comparison that then infiltrates many of the 1851 reviews. Derwent’s most condemning suggestion is that Hartley’s mind was somehow undeveloped and so precluded imaginative power and serious poetic endeavour: ‘There may have been – I think there was – some faculty wanting in his mind necessary for the completion of any great whole’ (clx). Hartley, according to Derwent, had no sense of order, cohesion, wholeness, or continuity: ‘His thoughts did not arrange themselves within artificial limits; the tendency of his genius was to break off, as it were, fragments from the universal, not referable to any particular whole’ (clx). Interestingly, the diction and imagery with which Derwent describes this so-called imaginative ineptitude is remarkably similar to Hartley’s description of the psychosis that can result from artificial sensual excess in his essay ‘Remarks on Old Age, Passive Imagination, and Insanity’. When describing this state of mental disintegration, Hartley employs an elaborate and brilliant metaphor of a fragmenting thundercloud: the mind ‘overstrains and snaps itself, and leaves nothing but disjointed fragments of the tyrannic idea, as we sometimes see a huge black thundercloud shivered into a myriad flaky portions, all impregnated and reddened with the electric fire, yet each assuming some fantastic shape of its own’ (*EM*, I, 340). The fact that Hartley cites alcohol, opium, and thwarted passion as triggers of this mental ‘explosion’ suggests that he is alluding to his father’s poetic creations, but also to his own. Crucially, Hartley recognizes an essential

integrity – an ‘electric fire’ – to each ‘fantastic shape’, whereas Derwent does not; as quoted above, Derwent found that Hartley’s genius manifested itself in ‘fragments from the universal, not referable to any particular whole’. Furthermore, it seems doubly unjust that Derwent is paraphrasing Hartley’s own metaphor, without crediting him, in order to bolster his (inaccurate) critique of his brother.

After praising the imaginative power of STC by stating that ‘the centrifugal and centripetal parts of his mind were well balanced’, Derwent finds that

No such power was ever exhibited by his son [Hartley]; he does not appear ever to have realised even the conception of any great whole. His stream was copious, but it had no banks; it took therefore no certain course, and preserved no body of water; it divided itself into rills, or lost itself in pools, and instead of moving powerful machinery for the benefit of mankind, it might have seemed as if its use and purpose were to move the water-mills of a child (clxi).

This key passage from Derwent’s memoir reveals the complexity of biography and representation in the Coleridge family, a tension which has contributed to the distorted representation that has dominated Hartley’s reputation. Derwent lays the foundation of the concept of Hartley as an unfulfilled, immature genius, a myth that is reproduced and embellished throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism. Aubrey de Vere, for example, inherits Derwent’s memorable phrase that there was ‘some faculty wanting in his mind’: de Vere writes ‘There was some element wanting in his being’.³⁴³ Having praised his father as the archetypal and ‘whole’ genius, Derwent presents Hartley as fundamentally and psychologically ‘divided’, ‘lost’, and incapable of realising ‘the conception of any great whole’ (clxi). But not only does Derwent compare Hartley to his father, he measures him against an imaginary ideal: STC might

³⁴³ Aubrey de Vere, *Recollections of Aubrey de Vere* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1897), 134.

Aubrey de Vere’s account is also heavily influenced by William Wordsworth’s portrait of Hartley in ‘To H.C.’ where William immortalizes the idea of Hartley as a mercurial and almost insubstantial drifter, a ‘faery voyager’; likewise de Vere depicts Hartley ‘fluctuating about the room’: ‘it was easier for him to fly than to walk, and to walk than to stand. There seemed to be no gravitating principle in him. One might have thought he needed stones in his pockets to prevent his being blown away’ (133-4).

also be accused of ‘dividing’ and losing his self.³⁴⁴ STC’s notebooks repeatedly show that he was acutely aware of an absence of strength within himself. His use of a tree metaphor to articulate the distinction between his ‘Strength and Power’ is particularly analogous to Derwent’s metaphorical descriptions of Hartley:

My inner mind does not justify the Thought, that I possess a Genius – my *Strength* is so very small in proportion to my Power – I believe, that I first from internal feeling made, or gave light and impulse to this important distinction, between Strength and Power – the Oak, and the tropic Annual, or Biennial, which grows nearly as high and spreads as large, as the Oak – but the *wood*, the *heart* of Oak, is wanting – *the vital* works vehemently but the *Immortal* is not with it (CN III, 3324).

The self-criticism with which STC regards himself here – wanting ‘the heart of Oak’ – is the same perceived notion of missing strength and wasted potential that is then imposed onto Hartley by Derwent (‘some faculty wanting in his mind’). Derwent – as William Wordsworth had done – is projecting STC’s self-perceived failure onto Hartley.

Derwent fails to recognize that the ‘rills’ and ‘pools’ of Hartley’s verse should be viewed as creations in their own right, rather than examples of poetic failure purely because they do not follow the more overt magnitude of his father’s poetic scheme. Furthermore, Derwent’s representation of STC’s ‘stream’ as directed, forceful, and productive does not, in fact, correlate with STC’s own admission of the ‘streaminess’ of his character, a fault which he also inflicts upon Hartley: in his notebooks he refers to those ‘who are most reverie-ish & streamy – Hartley, for instance & myself’ (CN I, 1833). Ignoring the positive interpretation of Hartley’s prolificity, Derwent views his ‘copious stream’ as chaotic, undirected and, therefore, wasted. Such belittlement continues with Derwent’s stream metaphor of the mind and poetry as forces which

³⁴⁴ For an extensive study of STC and this characteristic of ‘division’, see Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999). Perry argues that STC’s double-mindedness was a virtue rather than an incapacity.

drive the workings of mankind: whereas STC's poetic power was capable of 'moving machinery for the benefit of mankind', Hartley's 'stream', according to Derwent, merely moved the 'water-mills of a child'. In this way, Derwent infantilizes Hartley's verse, and, indeed, Hartley's character, a stigma that has tainted all subsequent considerations of Hartley's poetry, which often overlook the fact that Hartley reached middle-age and was a prolific and diverse writer. Many studies of Hartley open, in the manner of Derwent's edition, with the David Wilkie child portrait of Hartley which, though charming, perpetuates the illusion of Hartley as an immature individual and poet.³⁴⁵ Derwent's tendency to describe Hartley and his verse metaphorically as somehow incomplete and dysfunctional – a 'copious' stream with 'no banks' – has also been infectious: in *The Poetical Works of Bowles, Lamb, and Hartley Coleridge*, Tirebuck calls Hartley 'an exquisite machine with insufficient steam' (Tirebuck 1888, xxiii), which echoes Derwent's assessment of STC: 'there was always some defect – some screw loose in the marvellous and on the whole admirable machine.'³⁴⁶ Gee's title to her *Selected Poems of Hartley Coleridge – 'Bricks Without Mortar'* – gives a similarly inoperative impression. The fundamental danger, then, of Derwent's metaphorical comparisons is that he forces Hartley into following what he perceives to be his father's so-called 'balanced' – but, in fact, illusory – poetic ideal. Finding Hartley unlike his father – though, implicitly, Derwent is finding him *too* like his father – this difference is classified as failure rather than accepted as the hallmark of a distinct and separate poet.

Derwent's reverence for STC and his work prevents him from viewing his brother as an independent poet. He unfairly compares Hartley to STC's greatest works

³⁴⁵ See Appendix II for the child portrait of Hartley by David Wilkie and the two 1845 adult portraits.

³⁴⁶ Quotation as cited in a British Library press release, 'A Poet in the Family: The Coleridge Archive 27 February to 27 April 2007', and taken from a letter by Derwent Coleridge held by the British Library. See <http://www.bl.uk/news/2007/pressrelease20070226.html>, consulted on 15 May 2009 at 12.33.

– ‘Ancient Mariner’, ‘Christabel’, ‘Ode to France’ – and consistently finds the elder Coleridge superior (clxxv). Here, however, Derwent reveals a critical double stand: when Hartley had made an analogous comparison between William Wordsworth and Milton in his ‘Notes on British Poets’, Derwent rebukes Hartley by interjecting with the footnote: ‘but where there is no competition, there is, properly speaking, no comparison’ (*EM* II, 19). Derwent’s account of Hartley is essentially not consistent and falls into a pattern of strange and disjunctive oscillation between high praise and relentless condemnation. When he attempts to analyse Hartley’s work independently, on several occasions he elevates him amongst the great poets. He finds that Hartley’s sonnets not only ‘sustain a comparison with those of [Wordsworth]’, but rank among the best in English Literature: ‘Indeed, if I am not wholly mistaken, there will be found among these sonnets models of composition comparable to those of the greatest masters’ (clxxvi). Derwent also admits that Hartley’s ‘poetic faculty’ was ‘by no means limited to the sonnet, or to the poetry of sentiment’: ‘He managed the so-called heroic couplet with so much skill, and has displayed so much power in vigorous and witty description, that I cannot but regret that he has not done more in this way’ (clxxvi). Praising Hartley’s series of poems on the principal authors of ‘Anderson’s British Poets’, Derwent finds his brother’s poems ‘far superior both in style and conception’ to the work of Addison, and ‘equal to the best examples in this species of composition’ (clxxvii). Derwent sees, then, an element of poetic genius within Hartley, but the manner in which he frequently compares him to STC has the ultimate effect of constraining and undermining the positive assessment of his brother that is present in the *Memoir*. As the *Examiner* suggests, ‘a quiet and unaffected memoir of that strange and sorry career, and of those noble nor wholly wasted powers, remains still to be written’.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Review of *Poems by Hartley Coleridge, With a Memoir of his Life by his Brother*, ed. Derwent

Towards the end of the *Memoir*, Derwent confesses an editorial anxiety over how his edition will be received, fully aware of its potential to mould Hartley's reputation:

[...] for although it will be seen that in publishing these remains I am only fulfilling my brother's long-cherished intentions, yet they were not prepared in a collective form for the press, and I have no guide but my own judgement in making the selection (clxxx-clxxxix).

It is important to bear in mind Derwent's apprehensions over the reception of Hartley's work as we will see that many reviewers do indeed attribute the faults of the editor to the poet – by, for example, singling out Hartley's poorest verse for judgement. Many of the shorter verses included in Derwent's 1851 edition could be labelled occasional and trivial, but this is not, as *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* concludes, the fault of the poet: 'we cannot be surprised to find them very unequal in point of execution; especially when we remember that the *selection* was not made by himself'.³⁴⁸ As George Douglas Bart asserts, for this 'the editor rather than the author is to blame'.³⁴⁹ It is also important to remember that Derwent did not know his brother for the final thirty years of Hartley's life, a shortcoming that surely colours the accuracy of Derwent's assessment. Hartley's tremendous poetic aspiration was tempered by an acute anxiety over how the 'expectant public', as he terms them in his essay 'Books and Bantlings', would receive his work, a fear which he communicates effectively through a child-birth metaphor:³⁵⁰ 'Is there any anxiety greater than that of a young poet on the eve of appearing in print, when his darling effusions are to throw off their nursery-attire

Coleridge, from *The Examiner*, in *LLA* 29: 363 (3 May 1851): 235.

³⁴⁸ 'Hartley Coleridge', *TEM* 18 (1851): 270.

³⁴⁹ George Douglas Bart, 'The Child of Genius', *The Hibbert Journal*, vol. XVIII, ed. L. P. Jacks and G. Dawes Hicks (London: William and Norgate, 1919-1920), 578.

³⁵⁰ This essay was first published in *Blackwood's*, November 1826. The *OED* defines 'bantlings' as 'A young or small child, a brat. (Often used depreciatively, and formerly as a synonym of *bastard*.)' Interestingly, Byron deprecates his work in a similar fashion in a letter to Rev. John Becher on 26 February 1808: 'I must return my best acknowledgements for the interest you have taken in me and my poetical Bantlings' (Marchand 1973, 158).

of manuscript?’ (*EM* I, 86). In a statement that indicates Derwent’s respectful awareness of his brother’s extreme trepidation, Derwent introduces the 1851 poems by declaring: ‘The author has no longer anything to hope or to fear from the result. The responsibility, and it is not a light one, rests with the editor’ (clxxx).

Nineteenth-Century Reception: Derwent Coleridge’s *Memoir*

The response of the ‘expectant public’ to Derwent’s edition is mixed. Many view Hartley’s poetry as possessing a singular excellence, a pervasive humanity, and a sense of truth and beauty that will ensure the survival of *his* name, independent of STC’s. An equal proportion of reviews, however, take a greater interest in Hartley’s bleak personal life, as portrayed in Derwent’s *Memoir*, and seem unable to discriminate between Hartley the poet, and Hartley the man (or child). Positive reception includes the *Edinburgh Review*, which draws attention to Hartley’s diversity by selecting extracts that ‘illustrate the compass and variety of his powers’.³⁵¹ Similarly, *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* argues that Hartley is by no means a poet of limited scope: after classifying poetry as ‘epic, dramatic, descriptive, sentimental, humorous, didactic, satirical, and so forth’, *Tait’s* believe they could find within Hartley’s volumes ‘a specimen of every class (the epic and dramatic only excepted) which should rank with the best of them’ (*TEM* 18 (1851): 268).

In addition, Walter Bagehot argues in *The Prospective Review* in 1852 that Hartley *does* hold a claim to the classes of poetry from which he had been excluded by *Tait’s Magazine* – the ‘epic and dramatic’. Bagehot describes a new species of ‘self-delineative’ poetry which, in the gravity of its honest distillation of the poet’s *whole* character, is ‘analogous to the narrative or epic’:

³⁵¹ Review of *Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother and Essays and Marginalia*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, *ER* 94 (1851): 78.

The advance of ages and the progress of civilisation appear to produce a new species of poetry which is distinct from the lyrical, though it grows out of it, and contrasted with the epic, though in a single respect it exactly resembles it. This kind may be called *self-delineative*, for in it the poet deals not with a particular desire, sentiment, or inclination in his own mind [...] but with his mind viewed as a whole, with the entire essence of his own character [...].³⁵²

It is likely that Bagehot's description is influenced by William Wordsworth's exhaustive depiction of 'the growth of a poet's mind', *The Prelude*, published posthumously two years prior to Bagehot's review. Bagehot believes that 'the first requisite of this new species of poetry is truth' – a quality that the *American Quarterly* had immediately recognized in Hartley's *Poems*, a requisite that is 'in Plato's phrase the soul "itself by itself" aspiring to view and take account of the particular notes and marks that distinguish it from all other souls' (St John-Stevas 1965, 160). While epic and self-delineative poetry appear to be contrary forms – the former deals with external events, the latter is entirely introspective – Bagehot argues that 'still in a single characteristic the two coincide': they both describe character 'in mass' (161). It is Hartley's ability to exhibit his entire character 'alone by itself' that Bagehot believes is comparable to the grandeur of epic poetry (161). Having delineated the terms of this 'new species' of poetry, Bagehot heralds Hartley's mastery of the form: 'Now it is in this self-delineative species of poetry that, in our judgement, Hartley Coleridge has attained to nearly, if not quite the highest excellence; it pervades his writings everywhere' (161). As such, Bagehot counters every review that labels Hartley a mere lyrical, occasional poet. Unlike Richard Horne's account of Hartley in *The New Spirit of the Age* (1844), which consistently defers to the elder Coleridge, Bagehot, writing eighteen years after STC's death, is less inhibited in his analysis of Hartley as an independent being. Bagehot rightly concedes that 'it would be absurd, on a general

³⁵² Walter Bagehot, 'Hartley Coleridge', *The Prospective Review* (October 1852) in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, vol. I, ed. Norman St John-Stevas (London: The Economist, 1965), 161, 160.

view, to compare the two men' (St John-Stevas 1965, 165). Indeed, Bagehot reverses the subordinating comparison that Horne subjects Hartley to: 'In the execution of minor verses, we think we could show that Hartley should have the praise of surpassing his father' and is convinced that 'Hartley possessed, in a considerable degree, a species of sensibility to which the former [his father] was nearly a stranger' (165-6).

A pervasive line of thought throughout the 1851-2 reviews is that Hartley's sonnet work is unrivalled. The *Edinburgh Review* finds that his sonnets 'possess a charm almost peculiar to themselves' surpassing those poets whom we would now view as canonical: 'Many of our most popular poets, such as Byron, Shelley, and Southey, have attempted [the sonnet form] with little success' (*ER* 94 (1851): 79). The *Examiner* too finds Hartley's sonnets to be technically unrivalled: 'In the sonnet Hartley Coleridge was a master unsurpassed by the greatest. [...] here he may claim no undeserved companionship even with Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth' (*LLA* 29, No. 363 (3 May 1851): 237). Commending Hartley's ability to penetrate the depths of subjectivity while remaining free from egoism – a characteristic which we would now consider to be a masculine Romantic trait – the *Edinburgh Review* praises Hartley's ability to liberate his poetic style from the conventions of masculine Romanticism without falling into effeminacy:

Many of them possess a certain indescribable sweetness (a quality wholly distinct from softness), which reminds us more of the Elizabethan poetry than of those modern writers whose attempts at tenderness result commonly but in effeminacy. In this respect they resemble the best among old Daniel's Sonnets, but Shakespeare's yet more, from their union of pathos with imaginative subtlety. Like Shakespeare's, too, they are at once steeped in personal interest, and free from all offensive egotism (80).

Importantly, the *Edinburgh Review* views Hartley's life and 'unalloyed' output positively, and, by mentioning his actual age, resists the tendency to diminish and

infantilize his status. Rather, he is perceived as a man and poet who ‘put forth [all that] was in him’:

He had a high training as well as a high gift, the helps as well as the hindrances of a poetic age, the benefits, as well as the disadvantages, which proceed from the absence of contemporary fame; he had nature, books, friends, and leisure. A man with these advantages, and fifty-two years of life, may generally be considered to have put forth what was in him and was accessible. So large a bequest as he has left us is seldom so unalloyed a one (97).

Similarly, *Tait's* argues that Hartley cannot be classified as merely a ‘small poet’: ‘His style, both of thought and expression, is decidedly large and grand; and in short pieces of every kind [...] he may rank almost with the greatest’ (*TEM* 18 (1851): 267-8).

In terms of Hartley’s literary legacy, in 1851 the *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* predicts that his work *will* attain artistic immortality: ‘The literary productions which he has left have, notwithstanding, high claims to consideration, and are likely to survive and be admired when many a noisier reputation is forgotten. [...] we are altogether of opinion that his is poetry which the world will “not willingly let die”’.³⁵³ Likewise, the *Examiner* finds Hartley’s verse should ‘largely and lastingly contribute to the rare stories of true poetry’ (*LLA* 29, No. 363 (3 May 1851): 237), and *Fraser's Magazine* predicts that ‘while his personal memory will long linger among the hills of Westmoreland, his literary fame will have a wider range, and a more lasting existence’.³⁵⁴ Many reviews, however, reproduce Derwent’s assessment of Hartley as being somehow incomplete and are consumed with hypothesizing over what Hartley *could* have been, which has the danger of further romanticising Hartley himself as a ‘fragment’: *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* finds that Hartley ‘left in a great measure

³⁵³ ‘Hartley Coleridge’, *CEJ* 16 (22 November 1851): 327, 330. The phrase ‘willingly let die’ appears in the *AQR* review of Hartley’s *Poems* in reference to the work of Dryden’s sons: ‘Two of Dryden’s sons attempted to follow in their father’s path, but the spirit of “glorious John” had fled, and what they wrote the world has willingly let die’; *AQR* 20 (December 1836): 481

³⁵⁴ ‘Hartley Coleridge as Man, Poet, Essayist’, from *FM*, in *LLA* 30: 375 (26 July 1851): 152.

unfulfilled the brilliant promises of his genius' and that his work 'must be regarded as being only fragments of his genius' (*CEJ* 16 (22 November 1851): 327, 330). *Fraser's* also seems to enjoy the Romantic notion that Hartley's poems should be viewed as fragments – 'disjointed tokens of undeveloped powers' – rather than 'combining portions of an accomplished whole': 'glittering fragments of Venice Crystal, showing what the vase might have been ere it was burst and shattered by the poison' (*LLA* 30, No. 375 (26 July 1851): 149-50). The *Spectator* finds Hartley's poems 'of a slight and occasional character [...] chiefly interesting as a testimony to the struggle that was to the last going on within him'.³⁵⁵ The *New Monthly Magazine* dismisses all Hartley's poems as possessing a 'slight or fragmentary nature',³⁵⁶ while the *Eclectic* finds them 'fragmentary', 'derivative' and believes they will not achieve 'immortality, or even long life, or even the prosperity of a few years', branding them 'neither more nor less than the elegant amusements of an accomplished and unhappy man'.³⁵⁷

An alternative view asserts that Hartley achieved more *because* of his shortcomings; as *Tait's* proposes, 'we are almost inclined to think that, *as a poet*, Hartley Coleridge did, in fact, gain more than he lost by his infirmity' (*TEM* 18 (1851): 267). Lucy Newlyn notes in *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism* that 'It was frequently the case in this period that creative identities were constructed from positions of apparent weakness – or rather, that identity was itself reconfigured, so as to make apparent weaknesses into strengths' (Newlyn 2000, 232). As Hartley himself proclaims, therein lies the strength of the poet: 'That is the true sublime, which can confess / In weakness strength' (*CPW*, 117, 13-14). Indeed, it is likely that it was exactly Hartley's misguided harsh self-judgement, together with his intense sensitivity

³⁵⁵ 'Hartley Coleridge', from the *Spectator*, in *LLA* 29: 370 (21 June 1851): 557.

³⁵⁶ 'Hartley Coleridge', *NMM* 92 (July 1851): 283.

³⁵⁷ Review of *Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother and Essays and Marginalia*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, *ECR* (June 1851): 657, 659.

to feelings, thoughts, and the world around him, which allowed him to write such strikingly incisive and illuminating verse. Nonetheless, his so-called personal ‘weaknesses’ are often held up by critics as a reason for poetic incompleteness and failure.

William Wordsworth died a year prior to the publication of Derwent’s edition, and there is much comparison between the two deceased poets in these 1851-2 reviews: the *Eclectic* unfairly accuses Hartley of an overwhelming obsession with William and his poetry (*ECR* (June 1851): 657). Derwent’s decision to divide his volume up in the manner of Wordsworth’s 1815 *Poems*, with headings such as ‘Sonnets and Other Poems Referring to the period of Infancy and Childhood’ is an editorial choice which could also have invited comparison between William and Hartley. Nonetheless, the impression gleaned from the positive 1851-2 reviews is that Hartley’s verse was entirely distinctive and original, as opposed to imitative, and that he was, in fact, writing the best poetry of his day; as the *Christian Remembrancer* remarks, ‘They form, not only in the beauty and simplicity of their style, but in higher qualities more closely allied to these than perhaps at first sight appears, a happy contrast to the inflated, ambitious, chaotic compositions, which by their number would seem to represent the poetry of the present day’.³⁵⁸

‘Disjointed tokens’ or ‘Productions of high poetic genius’: The legacy of Derwent’s *Poems of Hartley Coleridge and Memoir* in the late Nineteenth Century

Despite the negative judgement of Hartley Coleridge in reaction to the *Memoir*, a thread of belief in the fundamental ‘wholeness’ of Hartley’s poetics remains strong: fourteen years after the publication of Derwent’s edition, a laudatory account of Hartley’s poetry

³⁵⁸ Review of *Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, *CR* 22 (July 1851): 134.

appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1865. *Macmillan's* finds Hartley's natural genius unquestionable: 'few ever exemplified more strongly the inborn difference between genius and talent'.³⁵⁹ Though the critic recognizes that 'sadness was a prevailing feature in Hartley Coleridge's mind' (434), they find that it is Hartley's sense of entire honesty and willingness to withhold nothing which elevates him as an artist – his mastery of self-delineation which Bagehot had noted, and which accords with D. H. Lawrence's definition of 'thought' as being 'a man in his wholeness wholly attending' (Kalnins 1992, 226, l. 9). It is this 'wholeness' of thought and effort which, *Macmillan's* believes, marks Hartley out as a distinct poet:

Few poets have left a more distinct impress of their mind and heart upon their works than Hartley Coleridge. Much of them belongs to that kind of poetry which is wrung by sorrow from the soul of genius (434-5).

Such an argument accords with, as we have seen, Hartley's definition of poetic originality – 'every sentiment that proceeds from the heart, every thought that emanates from the individual mind, or is suggested by personal observation, is original' (*EM* I, 70) – and contradicts entirely the many 1851 reviews which had viewed both Hartley and his work as fragments, 'disjointed tokens of undeveloped powers' (*FM*, 150). It is clear from Hartley's own critical writings that dedication of one's entire being is central to his poetic methodology: when analysing the poetry of Lyttleton, Hartley remarks that 'He never rhymed with his whole mind, – very seldom with his whole heart', and that 'there must be an intense, and sincere, and integral *evepyeia* of the whole man' (*EM* II, 111). According to Monte Ransome Johnson, in *Aristotle on Teleology*:

Aristotle asserts that '*evepyeia*' means activity, because it is connected with action and motion – the word '*epyov*' indicating 'work' or 'job' but essentially 'active functioning' (whether the function is in fact a product of action, like shoes, or the action itself, like shoemaking). The term *evepyeia* thus literally

³⁵⁹ 'Reminiscences of Hartley Coleridge', *MM*, in *LLA* 87: 1123 (9 December 1865): 434.

means something like ‘being in action’ i.e. ‘doing work’ or ‘exercise’. Aristotle typically uses it in a somewhat enriched sense, meaning ‘internally functioning’ (i.e. of an organism) [...].³⁶⁰

Johnson highlights Aristotle’s suggestion that craftsmen reveal who they are through their creations; Aristotle states ‘and this is how it is in nature: what a thing is potentially, its function (*to epyon*), reveals in activity’ (Johnson 2005, 87). It appears that Hartley is drawn to Aristotle’s linking of activity and function with capacity for that function: as long as Hartley feels he has given the ‘*evepyeia*’ of his entire self to his poetic industry (that is, fulfilled his personal creative potential), whether or not the product of that action is appreciated, he is beyond self-reproach.

Macmillan’s accords with the general view that Hartley’s sonnets ‘come nearer to Shakespeare’s than those of any modern poet, not excepting Wordsworth’: ‘The English language contains few more exquisite [sonnets] than [Hartley’s]’ (435). George Saintsbury, writing in 1896, consolidates this view: the sonnet ‘to Shakespeare (“The soul of man is larger than the sky”’, that on himself (“When I survey the course that I have run”’), and not a few others, rank among the very best in English’.³⁶¹ But *Macmillan’s* finds excellence beyond Hartley’s sonnets in his ‘Prometheus’ fragment, written ‘in or about the year 1820’, according to Derwent (*Memoir*, 257). ‘Prometheus’ is often disregarded, suffering from unfair comparisons with Shelley’s ‘Prometheus’, published in 1820. (More recently, however, Don Paterson suggests that ‘Hartley’s unfinished *Prometheus* is a more politically sophisticated and thoughtful affair than Shelley’s’).³⁶² In the ‘Advertisement’ to ‘Prometheus’, Derwent suggests that Shelley’s publication did, perhaps, inhibit Hartley’s endeavour: ‘a poem was produced [Shelley’s] which might well have disheartened a young contemporary from the

³⁶⁰ Monte Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87-8.

³⁶¹ George Saintsbury, *Nineteenth Century Literature* (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, Limited, 1896), 202.

³⁶² *Poetry* CLXXXVII, no. 6 (March 2006): 491.

semblance of competition' (*Memoir*, 259). Derwent also hints that STC's interest in Hartley's 'Prometheus' could, conversely, have hindered its development: 'This [interest] may, however, have operated as a virtual discouragement (257).³⁶³ But Derwent's sympathetic consideration of the problems of authorship which surrounded Hartley is then undermined by his own assessment of his brother: Derwent continues to question Hartley's intrinsic strength – as in the *Memoir* – by punctuating the 'Advertisement' with insinuations of poetic instability and weakness, suggesting that, even without the pressures of competition and comparison, Hartley could never have achieved greatness with his 'Prometheus': 'Fully to master the idea, required a tension of mind which, it may be, the younger poet did not bring to the task' (257). Continuing his use of the water metaphors which pervade the *Memoir*, Derwent declares with rigidity that his brother's 'waters of inspiration' ran from a superficial depth, as opposed to the 'Artesian Well' from which, he implies, STC's muse was drawn (259). Consequently, Derwent finds Hartley inherently incapable of producing a great work:

But to embody so profound an idea [...] was a design more easy for the father to conceive than for the son to execute. Sooth to say, the latter was not disposed to bore so deep for the waters of inspiration (259).

Macmillan's, however, applauds Hartley's 'Prometheus' fragment as his greatest achievement – 'a gem of exquisite beauty' – and, quoting an extended section from

³⁶³ Hartley's letters from 1820-1832 show his absorption in the composition of 'Prometheus'; see *LHC*, 29, 59, 65, 76, 148, 164. See also *The Hartley Coleridge Letters: A Calendar and Index* (Austin, Texas: Humanities Research Center, 1978), 55, 79. Interestingly, there is no indication from Hartley that he felt threatened by either Shelley's or Coleridge's 'Prometheus' attempts. In a letter to Derwent, Hartley even suggests that his 'Prometheus' would have been better had his father survived: 'I shall finish Prometheus half as well as if he, who praised the commencement so far beyond its deserts, had been alive to judge it' (*LHC*, 164). It is difficult to know how much the pressures of competition would have inhibited Hartley's own attempt as his attitude towards STC in the letters – as with the poems – alternates between a sense of thriving off his father, and the regret that his poetic pathway is occluded by this overshadowing presence. We should also take into consideration that the letter to Derwent was written at a time of high emotion after STC's death. Judging by Hartley's disdain for critical comparison over individual regard, together with his many protestations of poetic unworthiness, it is likely that he *did* feel the pressure of great expectation, especially in the light of his father's comment to Derwent, in a letter dated May 16, 1821, that 'H[artley]. has the noblest subject that perhaps a Poet ever worked on – the Prometheus' (*LHC*, 29).

‘Prometheus’, declares that ‘In no modern poet can we point to a more beautiful passage’ (435). Refuting those claims which find Hartley’s verse trivial, and, indeed, Derwent’s assertion that Hartley lacked profundity and depth, *Macmillan’s* discerns a subtly displayed magnitude of thought: ‘There is throughout this beautiful poem a classic grace embodying deeper than classical thoughts, a music as of the songs of the sylphs, and occasionally a grandeur not unlike that of Keats’ (436). Furthermore, *Macmillan’s* acknowledges the unjust obscurity that Hartley’s verse has suffered and suggests that his brilliance is concealed by another overshadowing presence – Tennyson’s monopolising of the literary spotlight: ‘The blaze of glory around Tennyson dims for the present the lustre of contemporary poets’ (436). Thus Hartley becomes marginalized during the formation of a second literary canon. Having attempted to contest the popular image of Hartley as a flawed and incomplete poet and individual by highlighting his distinctiveness and grandeur, *Macmillan’s* shrewdly concludes with a description of what it believes constitutes lasting poetry: ‘grace’, ‘pathos’ and ‘tenderness’, ‘clothed in an expression of simple but finished beauty’; ‘purity and tenderness of feeling’, and ‘melody of exquisite verse’ (436). Finding all of these qualities within Hartley’s poems, *Macmillan’s* declares that ‘his works deserve a place among the genuine productions of high poetic genius’ (436).

Interestingly, in a letter to Hartley’s mother written eighteen years after his composition of ‘Prometheus’, Hartley speaks of the immense difficulty of recommencing ‘Prometheus’, so central was poetic ‘wholeness’ to his integrity as a poet: ‘so difficult is it to recommence any work of imagination after any interval’ (*LHC*, 220). Hartley refers to *STC’s* continuation of *Christabel* and is acutely apprehensive of the potential dangers of poetic division and fragmentation, showing his fundamental commitment to wholeness and continuity for the creation of successful poetry:

He [Samuel Taylor Coleridge] might, indeed, have written a great deal more about Christabel and what he wrote could not but have been valuable, but it would not have harmonized with the fragment – the joinery would have been too apparent. I never knew a work, in which there was any continuity at all, that was successfully continued (*LHC*, 220).

Hartley thus refutes those claims which view himself and his work as lacking the drive, mental centrality, and dedication of his whole being necessary for the completion of great work; to give anything less would, it seems, be a betrayal of himself and of the act of poetic composition. As with the *Memoir*, Derwent's presentation of Hartley in the 'Prometheus' advertisement does not correlate with the impression of intensity and completeness that is evident from rigorous engagement with Hartley's verse, which, as *Macmillan's* argues, is 'wrung by sorrow from the soul of genius' (435).

Thirty-six years after Derwent's edition, William Sharp's *Sonnets of This Century* (1887) includes five of Hartley's sonnets and only one contribution from STC. Sharp's selection displays Hartley's diversity, revealing his characteristic powers of acute sensory awareness, religious intensity, romantic longing, introspection, and intense awareness of the natural world. In his introduction, Sharp further cements Hartley's reputation as an unrivalled sonneteer, although he defers to STC and William Wordsworth by seeing Hartley as coming 'between' the two elder poets: 'Born a year later than Keats, Hartley Coleridge, the poetic son of a greater father, finely fulfilled the impulse that had come to him from Wordsworth, making an abiding name for himself through his sonnet work alone'.³⁶⁴

Even more positively, William Tirebuck, in *The Poetical Works of Bowles, Lamb, and Hartley Coleridge* (1888), does not draw the conclusion that ineffectual poetry springs from an ineffectual personal life. Instead, Tirebuck paints a

³⁶⁴ *Sonnets of This Century*, ed. William Sharp (London: Walter Scott, 1887), lv.

metaphorical image of two distinct Hartley's – the inner, pure poetic creations, surrounded but untainted by the outer human 'vessel' which constitutes his psychological frailty: 'They are as the clarified draughts of literature; pure, direct, not contaminated, not even by the weakness of the vessel' (Tirebuck 1888, xxix). Tirebuck frees Hartley from the unfair label of imitator, which many of the 1851-2 reviews, written in the aftermath of Wordsworth's death, had been unable to do. Tirebuck rightly recognizes that Hartley's honesty, together with his essential love of writing poetry, meant that he simply could not have been driven to write imitative poetry: 'It was the sparkle of originality that gave him the impetus' (xxx). Importantly, Tirebuck recognizes within Hartley the trademarks of a distinct and unique poet, noting his ability to blend introspection with communal comment: 'His mastery of confession was remarkable. He could speak the innermost as if it were a common subject' (xxx), a trait which has been recently rediscovered by Andrew Keanie: 'In Hartley's poetry the personal gives immediacy to the universal, which in turn gives meaning and eminence to the personal (Keanie 2008, 18). This ability marks Hartley out as a poet of the common people rather than the solipsistic self, a label with which he is more often associated.

Just as Dorothy Wordsworth's power of description has been heralded as visually penetrating, so Tirebuck recognizes Hartley's unique ability to penetrate the audible world; as Lisa Gee states, 'He wants to make us *listen* differently: to encourage us to appreciate silence' (Gee 2000, xii). Indeed, it is the auditory power of Hartley's verse – both his acute awareness and portrayal of sounds, and the auditory quality of his actual poems – that Tirebuck believes is enough to grant Hartley higher praise and status:

From the first word to the last they sing themselves into a natural and gratifying silence. No more was intended by the writer; no more is needed by the reader (Tirebuck 1888, xxxi).

Likewise, Saintsbury, in *Nineteenth Century Literature* (1896), recognizes the distinctive auditory resonance of his sonnets: 'In the "Posthumous Sonnets" especially, the sound – not an echo of, but a true response to, Elizabethan music – is unmistakable' (Saintsbury 1896, 202).

Hartley felt the power of the silent within nature: in the note to Sonnet 18 in *Poems*, which contains the phrase 'The voiceless flowers', Hartley refers to a line from Thomas Beddoes's 'Bride's Tragedy': 'Like flower's voices – *if they could but speak*', concluding that 'whoever feels the beauty of that line, has a soul for poetry' (*Poems*, 148).³⁶⁵ Hartley's confident assertion of what constitutes true poetry anticipates Matthew Arnold's theory of poetic touchstones by fifty years: 'Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry'.³⁶⁶ Hartley's preoccupation with the sensory power of hearing, states of silence, and hidden, suppressed, or unnoticed 'voices' is a defining characteristic of his work, to which I pay further attention in my discussion of his individual poems in Chapter One. Tirebuck's introduction to Hartley's verse, which is more ardent and emotional than both the preceding accounts of Bowles and Lamb, concludes by condemning the

³⁶⁵ Under Hartley's classification, Dorothy has 'a soul for poetry' as she makes a comparable observation to Hartley's 'voiceless flowers', noting that 'noiseless noise which lives in the summer air' (January 23, 1798, *AJ*, 141). Dorothy's phrase, in turn, echoes Keats's 'I stood tip-toe', where he detects a 'Little noiseless noise among the leaves, / Born of the very sigh that silence heaves' (ll. 11-12).

³⁶⁶ Matthew Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry', in *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1978), 247. See also Arnold's statement on 'poetical quality' which recalls Hartley's appreciation of true poetry: 'The specimens I have quoted [...] have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality. If we are thoroughly penetrated by their power, we shall find that we have acquired a sense enabling us, whatever poetry may be laid before us, to feel the degree in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there' (249). Hartley's essays 'Notes on British Poets' and 'Notes on Shakespeare', collated by Derwent Coleridge, are full of similar observations on what constitutes true poetry (*EM* II, 13, 25, 76, 105).

mystical public image of Hartley as an ineffectual ‘barren’ writer, a perception which does not correlate with his life’s work: ‘His poems alone, if we but view them rightly, are, after all, *the* facts of his being, the prime outcome, the redeeming residue of a life’s estate that appeared so barren in the eyes of the world’ (xxxii-ii).

James Ashcroft Noble’s judgement, in *The Sonnet in England and other Essays* (1893), that ‘Poor Hartley Coleridge [...] promised so much and performed so little’ is typical of the indiscriminate phraseology that characterizes many critical accounts of Hartley around the close of the nineteenth century.³⁶⁷ Such judgements are casually inherited, wrongly accepted as indisputable, and lead the author to forego a rigorous independent engagement with Hartley’s actual texts. Edward Dowden misguidedly subscribes to this practice in *The English Poets, 1894-1903*, published in 1912. While Dowden praises Hartley’s verse for having ‘a melodious life and a freshness of its own’, Dowden perpetuates the myth of Hartley as a pitiful, weak, childlike figure by punctuating his account with such diminishing phrases as ‘elvish figure’ and ‘fairy voyager’ – both explicit allusions to the mythical portrait of Hartley painted by STC’s ‘Christabel’ (‘limber elf’), and William’s ‘To H. C., Six Years Old’ (‘Faery Voyager’) – and aligning him with the ‘lives of all little children and all helpless things’.³⁶⁸ What we can see, then, is that towards the close of the nineteenth century, Hartley’s sonnets are still being recognized as significant works, but the rest of his poetic oeuvre has all but been forgotten, while his stature as a significant and original contributor to nineteenth century literature is being steadily undermined.

³⁶⁷ James Ashcroft Noble, *The Sonnet in England and other Essays* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1893), 43.

³⁶⁸ Edward Dowden, ‘Hartley Coleridge’, in *The English Poets, The Nineteenth Century: Wordsworth to Tennyson*, vol. IV, ed. T. H. Ward (London Macmillan & Co., 1912), 518-19.

Twentieth-Century Reception and the Merging of Biography with Poetry: *Poetical Works*, 1908; *New Poems*, 1942

In Ramsay Colles's *The Complete Poetic Works of Hartley Coleridge* (1908), Colles elevates Hartley above the rank of minor poet, stating that 'his position among English poets is by no means a lowly one', and brackets him with STC in terms of technical merit and posterity: '[his] best work will rank beside all but the very best of his father's' (*CPW*, xlii-iii). Like Bagehot, Colles identifies Hartley's poetic sensitivity as far superior to that of his father: 'In S. T. Coleridge's minor poems there is nothing so subtly beautiful' (xlii). Following Colles's important edition, biographical interest in Hartley is at its peak with three biographies published in the first three decades of the twentieth century: Eleanor Towles's *A Poet's Children: Hartley and Sara Coleridge* (1912), Earl Leslie Griggs's *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work* (1929), and Herbert Hartman's *Hartley Coleridge: Poet's Son and Poet* (1931). It is apparent, though, that it is Hartley's heredity which is attracting more interest than his independent merit: both Towles and Hartman diminish Hartley's status in their subordinating titles, *A Poet's Children* and *Poet's Son*. The *TLS* review of *A Poet's Children* continues this belittling practice with its title 'Two Minor Coleridges', although the sympathetic review does set out to explain Hartley's difficulties in life, stating that he suffered from '*impuissance de vivre*': 'a certain incapacity to face the facts of life and adapt oneself to its hard unalterable conditions'.³⁶⁹

Griggs's biography provokes a similarly reductive title from Edmund Blunden in the *TLS* – 'Coleridge the Less'.³⁷⁰ Blunden does, however, recognize that Hartley was enormously productive, an achievement which usually escapes the attention of critics: 'Like his father, Hartley in fact did a great deal without giving himself the credit

³⁶⁹ Francis Henry Gribble, 'Two Minor Coleridges', *TLS* 533 (28 March 1912): 127.

³⁷⁰ 'Coleridge the Less', review of Earl Leslie Griggs, *Hartley Coleridge: His Life and Work*, *TLS* 1449 (7 November 1929): 881-2.

for it' (882). The important point here is that the harsh self-judgements which pervade much of Hartley's verse are often founded on a pathological misguided sense of himself and his faults. Critics then take his self-analysis – at its unforgiving peak in 'Long time a child' – as concrete evidence of Hartley's failure. By highlighting the incongruities between the facts and public and self-perception, Blunden reminds us of the danger of adhering too closely to what the poet says of himself. And as Hartley himself reminds us in a note to *Poems*: 'I am only *dramatically* answerable. *I*, does not always mean myself' (155).³⁷¹

Importantly, Blunden supports the impression of poetic *wholeness* which springs from Hartley's verse – advocated forcefully by Bagehot – as distinct from, and at odds with, Hartley's irregular life: 'Incomplete, eccentric, confused, interrupted as the story of Hartley Coleridge must be, to adventure into his poems is to pass into a sphere of completeness, and method, and continuity' (*TLS* 1449 (7 November 1929): 882). The publication of Griggs's *Letters of Hartley Coleridge* in 1936 provokes a similar incredulity from Philip Tomlinson in the *TLS*, who again highlights the incongruity between the public perception of Hartley and the identity which emerges through serious engagement with his writings: 'The effect of reading commentaries on Hartley is of eccentricity and incompleteness; that of reading his own work in poetry, essays and now in these letters is the opposite'.³⁷² Tracing the publication history of Hartley's verse, Blunden is at a loss as to why Hartley's work has been so unjustly ignored: 'the poet remains neglected, and to us the reason is obscure' (882).

³⁷¹ Cf. Emily Dickinson's identical disclaimer on the poem-subject being read as the poet him/herself: 'When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse – it does not mean – me – but a supposed person'; see *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, vol. II. ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 412.

³⁷² Philip Tomlinson, 'Elfin Visits to the Lake Poets: Coleridge the Less on his Guardians', *TLS* (9 January 1937): 24.

Most significantly, Blunden is one of the few voices to recognize within Hartley's verse something more than self-indulgent introspection – his penetrating, but virtually ignored, power of natural description:

But many times Hartley's poetry looks away from his circumstances to topics great and small for their own sake. It is odd that his nature poetry remains so scantily honoured, for he has some of the most delicate and apt evocations of scene and season that will be found anywhere (882).

Ironically, it is a review of a biography of Hartley that engages in one of the most illuminating considerations of his actual poems and argues for the revaluation and recognition of his 'masterly' verse, as opposed to his troubled life. Concluding that a combination of internal and external conflict conspired to silence Hartley's independent voice – namely Hartley's self-deprecation, the literary conventions of the time, and the now impregnable Romantic canon – Blunden has hopes that Griggs's biography 'should attract for Hartley Coleridge some of that attention which his modesty, the period at which his work appeared, and the shadow of genius towering above him, have chanced to keep away' (882).

In *New Poems*, published in 1942, Griggs attempts to disentangle Hartley further from the presumption that he simply adhered to the William Wordsworthian poetic mould, rightly recognising that their respective poetic agendas are, in fact, vastly different: in short, introspection leads William away from the problems of general humanity into an absorption into *his* mind and self; Hartley's meditative introspections lead to an immersion of the poet and reader into the *communal* griefs and joys of humanity. Griggs, as we have seen, distils this fundamental divergence between the two poets' explorations of the human condition: 'Wordsworth loved his fellow-men, but he brooded over human misery without fully sharing it. [...] Wordsworth *asked* the child questions; Hartley danced with her on the green' (*NP*, ix). *New Poems*

incorporates *Poems*, a selection from Derwent's edition, and an additional sixty-one previously unpublished and uncollected poems. Griggs also takes the important step of preceding his selection with an adult portrait of Hartley, rather than the ubiquitous child portrait – an inclusion which powerfully challenges the readers' pre-conceptions of Hartley as childlike.³⁷³

New Poems was not well received: R. C. Bald, in *Modern Language Notes*, argues that Hartley squandered his poetic 'inheritance'; considering his heredity and environment, Bald argues, Hartley should have been a poet, but 'what he inherited was little more than facility of expression'.³⁷⁴ Bald classifies Hartley as a 'Victorian rather than a Romantic, and a very minor Victorian at that' (646). Thus two canons and periods have become hardened and Hartley is ostracized from both. Hartley's appreciation of conventions and themes which we now see as typically belonging to female Romantic writers – domesticity, the feminine, family and community, as opposed to egocentricity, solitude, and the power of imagination – means that his reputation as a poet does not seem to fit into the evolving sense of a masculine Romantic canon; as a result, he suffers the same marginalization that has been imposed upon female Romantic writers. But while there has been a resurgence of interest in female writers due to the feminist wave of criticism in the 1970s-80s, Hartley, this time because he is not female, again escapes the critical spotlight. Certainly, if Hartley was a woman we would be studying his work today; as Don Paterson conjectures: 'The truth, if we're honest, is that the poems of Harriet Coleridge (if there were such a person) would by now be an unforgivable omission in every anthology' (*Poetry* CLXXXVII, 6 (March 2006): 491). Rather than valuing Hartley for his divergence from and contribution to Romantic literature, Bald unjustly ridicules him as a facile and

³⁷³ See Appendix II for the adult portrait of Hartley.

³⁷⁴ R. C. Bald, review of *New Poems, Including a Selection from his Published Poetry*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, *MLN* 58: 8 (December 1943): 645.

indifferent poet. Finding his verse to be the ‘product of a vague desire to express himself rather than of a precise awareness of what he wanted to express’, Bald seems to be attacking Hartley for his evident love of writing poetry, a motive which Bald finds fatuous during wartime (645). Bald singles out Hartley’s worst verse for criticism – poems which Hartley himself would probably never have published – and so wrongly assigns the faults of the editor to the poet. Similarly, P. L. Carver in the *Review of English Studies* declares that it is only as ‘revelations of himself that [Hartley’s] poems are worth preserving’.³⁷⁵ Carver is more critical of Griggs than Hartley and even criticizes Griggs for the uneconomical use of paper that his edition employs, considering ‘the conditions of to-day’ with its ‘restrictions on the use of paper’: ‘there is an air of spacious amplitude about these half-filled pages, reminiscent of a more sumptuous age’ (361). It appears, then, that the impatience and intolerance with which these critics treat Hartley, his verse, and his editor in 1942 is due to the tensions and restrictions that war time imposes, rather than an integral weakness in Hartley’s verse.

Post-1942, Hartley’s popularity is generally at its lowest ebb. While Hartley’s sonnets are anthologized, they are often imprudently selected with regard to his independent literary persona. W. H. Auden’s *Nineteenth-Century Minor Poets*, published in 1966, includes three sonnets which perpetuate the childlike image of Hartley wilting in parental and literary shadows. ‘Long time a child’, while arguably one of Hartley’s most technically accomplished sonnets, is also possibly Hartley’s most bleak (his pessimism reaches its peak in the line ‘For I have lost the race I never ran’). By frequently anthologising this sonnet – particularly when it is the only poem anthologized – the editor compounds and validates the idea of Hartley as an eternal child, a misjudgement of his work. The third sonnet that Auden includes is similarly

³⁷⁵ P. L. Carver, *Review of New Poems, Including a Selection from his Published Poetry*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, *RES* 18: 71 (July 1942): 361.

misrepresentative: ‘Lines: *I have been cherished and forgiven*’ articulates Hartley’s struggle to realize personal happiness and authorial fame in the shadow of his father. Auden thus maintains the myth of Hartley rather than attending to the evidence of fully achieved poetic autonomy. The erosion of Hartley’s autonomous identity gains pace in Bloom and Trilling’s 1973 anthology. Hartley is listed under the secondary title ‘Other Romantic Poets’, rather than the main heading ‘Romantic Poetry’; and, despite having over three hundred of Hartley’s published poems open for selection, Trilling and Bloom choose only the ‘Dedicatory Sonnet, To S. T. Coleridge’. Duncan Wu shows the same tendency as Auden, Bloom, and Trilling in overlooking Hartley’s diversity: in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, first published in 1994, Wu gives a brief and bleak biographical sketch of Hartley and includes only those poems which portray Hartley as a failure, or those which defer to his intimidating predecessors (Wu selects ‘Long time a child’, ‘When I review the course that I have run’, and ‘To Wordsworth’). A preconception of personal failure leads editors to select only those poems which confirm these impressions of inadequacy, and so the cycle of misrepresentation continues while much of Hartley’s best verse remains overlooked.³⁷⁶ As Hartley himself asserts, with regard to how a canon can become hardened and impenetrable due to inherited assumptions on what constitutes ‘the legitimate succession of poets’: ‘We should judge better and dispute less if every one of us thought for himself’ (*EM* II, 30).³⁷⁷

A counter-argument championing the singularity of Hartley’s verse is nonetheless maintained in the twentieth century. Robert Nye’s *Faber Book of Sonnets*

³⁷⁶ This distortion of Hartley’s reputation has recently been recognized by Don Paterson: ‘[Hartley] is generally represented by one of the same two poems the anthologists have found in the other anthologies, and the myth of his mediocrity is thus smoothly perpetuated’ (*Poetry* CLXXXVII, no. 6 (March 2006): 491).

³⁷⁷ Though Hartley is referring to some of the ancient classics which have been overlooked due to inherited ‘rules’ on what should be read, independence of thought, with regard to literary appreciation, is clearly very important to him; see also *EM* II, 54: ‘No man can think correctly who does not think for himself and by himself’.

(1976) offers one of the most positive twentieth-century presentations of Hartley by including eight of his sonnets, compared with seven by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, two by Robert Browning and only two by Tennyson – the poet who had been accused by *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1865 of monopolising the literary marketplace; 'dim[ming] for the present the lustre' of Hartley's work (*MM*, 436). James Reeves also hails Hartley as a significant poet in *Five Late Romantic Poets* (1974).³⁷⁸ Reeves, a poet and educationalist, groups Hartley with George Darley, Thomas Hood, Thomas Lovell Beddoes and Emily Bronte, and proposes that, while all five poets were in a sense unfulfilled (all died in middle-age), 'they were no mere occasional poets'.³⁷⁹ While Reeves acknowledges the psychological complexity of Hartley's case, and the possible privation that this led him to endure, he believes that Hartley strived for, and indeed achieved, poetic independence in the face of overwhelming external and internal conflict, a feat which has not been sufficiently appreciated:

Hartley Coleridge, conscious of writing in the shadow of his father and of Wordsworth, also had his personal contribution to make, his own sensibility to explore. His positive achievement, slender as it was and still undervalued, lifts him above the common run of nineteenth-century poetry (x).

Importantly, Reeves makes the rare observation that 'the sonnet was not the only form in which Hartley excelled', and reminds us that he wrote 'lyrics of unique poignancy', 'a few pieces of excellent satire', and 'short and most intense poems [which] are unduly neglected' (142-3).

Reeves is also one of the few critics to recognize Hartley's intrinsic *maturity* and originality, rather than pivoting his assessment around the child-myth of Hartley.

³⁷⁸ James Reeves was the pseudonym of John Morris (1909-1978), an English writer best known for his contributions to children's poetry.

³⁷⁹ *Five Late Romantic Poets: George Darley, Hartley Coleridge, Thomas Hood, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Emily Bronte*, ed. James Reeves (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974), x.

Such poetic maturity, Reeves finds, is particularly evident in the poem ‘November’ (see *CPW*, 10):

The cadences are beautifully modulated, and the observation is exquisite. It is the mark of maturity in a minor poet that he can say the obvious with a delicate and unforced originality (143).

Hartley is rarely credited with being capable of handling the dramatic; Reeves, however, like Bagehot writing over a century earlier, notes his characteristic and unusual ability to ‘distil the essence of great drama, as his poem *Death-bed Reflections of Michelangelo* reveals’ (143). Concluding that Hartley excelled in the portrayal of simple domesticity, Reeves cautions against dismissing Hartley’s work purely because it does not share the imaginative style of his father’s, stating simply: ‘He has been too much neglected’ (144). Similarly, Jonathan Wordsworth’s facsimile edition of Hartley’s *Poems* (1990), presents Hartley as an independent poet with ‘extraordinary facility, and a quiet strength that is his own’.³⁸⁰ Jonathan Wordsworth also rightly rebukes the 1833 *Quarterly* review which had attacked Hartley as ‘slavishly Wordsworthian’: Hartley, according to Jonathan Wordsworth, ‘shows himself too good a poet to be guilty of pastiche’. Despite such revisionist approaches, the pervasive line of thought in the latter half of the twentieth century presents Hartley’s work as a marginal literary achievement.³⁸¹

Twenty-first Century Reception and Beyond: *Bricks Without Mortar*, 2000

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, steps toward renewed interest in Hartley’s work began with the Picador selection of Hartley’s verse, *Bricks Without Mortar*, edited

³⁸⁰ Hartley Coleridge, *Poems, 1833*, intr. Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990).

³⁸¹ See end of this appendix which shows those anthologies that choose the most pessimistic sonnets, or those which relate to STC.

by Lisa Gee in 2000. With a critical essay, and a biographical sketch *after* the poems, Gee argues that during Hartley's lifetime his verse was 'drowned out by the Niagara of his father's virtuosity', while since Hartley's death he has been 'overshadowed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's seemingly unassailable centrality to the poetic canon' (xi). Gee recognizes the visual and auditory sensitivity of Hartley's verse, but goes further than many previous critics by suggesting that his position amongst his contemporaries was incomparable: 'What Hartley gives us is an unadulterated appreciation and celebration of the domestic and the feminine, surprising – if not unique – in a nineteenth-century male writer' (xiii). While Gee acknowledges that Hartley's poetic sensibility is akin to William's, she continues the belief that Hartley maintains a definite originality of voice: 'the sheer delicacy of description is entirely his own' (xiv).

Gee's edition sparked renewed interest in Hartley together with incredulity at his undeserved neglect. John Mole in the *TLS* heralded it as a 'revelatory selection', edited to 'encourage a reading unencumbered by preconception or scholarly detail'.³⁸² Gee, Mole asserts, 'has demonstrated beyond any doubt that '[Hartley] is a fine, unjustly underrated [poet]' (25). Robin Schoefield in the *Coleridge Bulletin* recognizes that the prudent editing, presentation, and accessibility of *Bricks Without Mortar* constitute significant steps towards rescuing Hartley's literary reputation:

That this obscurity is wholly unwarranted, Lisa Gee's new and ground-breaking selection emphatically demonstrates. It is all the more admirable that such an important and stimulating volume should be so accessibly presented in paperback, inviting the wide readership and recognition which Hartley deserves.³⁸³

Noting Hartley's 'delicately minute' description, his 'meticulous precision' and his masterful use of sound patterns, Schoefield pinpoints Hartley's distinct style: 'There are

³⁸² John Mole, 'Great nature's waif', review of *Bricks Without Mortar: Selected Poems of Hartley Coleridge.*, ed. Lisa Gee, *TLS* 5126 (29 June 2001): 25.

³⁸³ Robin Schoefield, review of *Bricks Without Mortar*, ed. Lisa Gee, *CB* 18 (2001): 61.

aspects of Hartley's poetic manner, his sensibility and descriptive style, which are unique' (65). Schoefield recognizes that Gee's edition has the potential to overturn the outdated and inaccurate misrepresentation of Hartley: 'Ultimately, Lisa Gee's book provokes a fundamental revaluation of Hartley's work, and his distinctive qualities and status as a poet' (65). In 1851, Hartley was hailed as one of the finest sonneteers of his time – 'In the sonnet Hartley Coleridge was a master unsurpassed by the greatest' (*The Examiner*, in *LLA* 29, No. 363 (3 May 1851): 237). A recent essay by Don Paterson, who was responsible for bringing Hartley's poems to the attention of Lisa Gee, resurrects this forgotten recognition: 'he can turn couplets of such weightless strength as to take your breath away; and – Keats excepted – he was probably the most gifted sonneteer of the age' (*Poetry* CLXXXVII, 6 (March 2006): 491).

Gee's edition proves the paramount importance of the way in which Hartley's poems are presented to a readership. Though Gee uses the Wilkie portrait of the child Hartley as the front cover for her book – an oversight which could condition the reader's response – her fresh editorial approach is entirely antithetical to that of Derwent's in 1851. By including an elucidatory and stimulating introduction, a diverse selection of his verse, and a biographical sketch free from the complexity of familial tensions which can taint such accounts written by a relative, Gee immediately breaks down the oppressive barrier of history, family, and myth, allowing the reader clearer access to what Tirebuck termed '*the facts of his being*' – the poems (Tirebuck 1888, xxxii). Gee recognizes the vital necessity of disassociating Hartley from both his heredity and casually inherited critical assumptions before an accurate appraisal of his work and its position within literary history can take place. Her selection, aimed at a wide readership, reforms Hartley's literary reputation more than any previous edition. But there is still much to be done if we are to fully comprehend Hartley's actual poetic achievement. Many poems in Derwent's edition, for example, together with those that

remain unpublished, reveal a side of Hartley entirely contrary to the conventional masculine Romantic tradition, and which are yet to be fully explored, a hiatus which I seek to correct in my analysis of Hartley's writings in Chapters One and Two.

Andrew Keanie's recent reassessment of Hartley, *Hartley Coleridge: A Reassessment of His Life and Work* (2008), is the first full-scale modern study of the poet and continues Gee's positive reappraisal. Keanie highlights and seeks to end the unjust critical stereotype of Hartley as a 'wistful, half-made creature' which 'has lingered for 175 years' (Keanie 2008, 110). While other so-called 'minor' and overlooked Romantics have since received critical attention, Keanie notes, Hartley has not: 'Unlike Clare or Southey, Hartley Coleridge has remained the literary equivalent of undeveloped real estate' (110). Keanie re-evaluates Hartley's work, life, and writing circumstances and offers new insight into the poet, showing that far from being a lesser version of STC and William Wordsworth, he was writing in an altogether different vein: Hartley departed from the conventions of his literal and figurative forefathers and pre-empted aspects of Imagism and Modernism. Keanie shows how Hartley's strengths are immediately apparent if his work is read independently – both from STC, and from the preconceptions of other critics. In this way, Keanie undermines all negative interpretations of Hartley's work, while the proposition that Hartley's merits are consistently overlooked because critics don't actually read his work becomes clear. Keanie's work is more biography than critical study, but he successfully lays inroads for further study of Hartley's poetry and prose. More so than all previous accounts, his argument is text based, insightful, and convincing. His most salient observation is this: 'when Hartley anatomized his own psychology, he achieved what STC and Baudelaire could not: he documented the common psychology of the individual whose sorrows are not Olympian, which is in itself a significant reason for studying his writings' (Keanie 2008, 171).

What we can glean from the study of Hartley Coleridge's reception from 1833 to the present day is that far from being perceived consistently as an insular, immature, restricted, and minor poet, he has variously been heralded as a poet of immense stature who effortlessly blends Shakespearean technique with Romantic theme, whilst also managing to pre-empt the best part of later Victorian verse. The effusive and widespread praise that Hartley's sonnet work received from 1833 until 2000 is not matched by his literary representation and his strengths as a sonneteer have been comparatively undervalued in modern times: while his sonnets do infiltrate modern anthologies, there is no modern edition of his collected sonnets, a startling oversight when we consider that he has been consistently praised as one of the finest sonneteers in English literature. Critics have begun to concede that Hartley's popularity as a writer is disproportionate to his intrinsic merit. The division between Hartley the poet and Hartley the man has become blurred in modern consciousness because of the popular clichéd classification of him as being a pale imitation of his father, who inherited more of STC's weakness than his genius. This assessment has sprung from disproportionate absorption in Hartley's life and relationships rather than his work. As Hartley stated with regard to the poet Samuel Boyce, he has become a 'sad example of the poet's lot / His faults remember'd and his verse forgot' (*CPW*, 325, ll. 35-6). In order to rectify this confusion, we should heed the sentiments and assurance of Hartley's very first review:

We have no desire to penetrate the mystery in which this unfortunate shrouds his sorrow. Let us rather afford our readers some evidence, that whatever may have been his errors, he has the gentle heart, as well as the power and music of a poet (*QR* 98 (July 1833): 518).

Hartley Coleridge's creative powers were acknowledged and simultaneously obscured by Charlotte Brontë's comment: 'I did not suspect you were your Father', a comment

which encapsulates his ‘imprisonment’ behind the Coleridge name.³⁸⁴ By scraping away the layers of reception and criticism which have often served only to cement Hartley’s voice further beneath that of the literary canon, we can look at his poems afresh and begin a necessary reassessment of his verse – ‘*the facts of his being*’ – both in the context of his contemporaries, but also as a forward-thinking, original and independent poet.

Publication History, Including Anthology Representation

(Titles in bold are significant editions of Hartley Coleridge’s texts)

Hartley Coleridge, *Poems, Songs and Sonnets* (Leeds: F. E. Bingley, 1833).

A Collection of English Sonnets, ed. Robert Fletcher Housman (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1835).

‘To a Friend’, ‘To the Same’, ‘What was’t awakened first the untried ear’, ‘Long time a child’, ‘To Wordsworth’, ‘To Love’, ‘Young Love’.

***Poems by Hartley Coleridge with a Memoir of His Life by his Brother*, ed. Derwent Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: E. Moxon, 1851).**

Sonnets of This Century, ed. William Sharp (London: Walter Scott, 1887).

Includes five of Hartley’s sonnets and only one contribution from STC.

***The Poetical Works of Bowles, Lamb, and Hartley Coleridge*, ed. William Tirebuck (London: Walter Scott, 1888).**

The Poets and Poetry of the Century: John Keats to Edward, Lord Lytton, vol. III, ed. Alfred H. Miles (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1891-7).

Miles includes sixteen poems: ‘She was a Queen’, ‘Summer Rain’, ‘Address to Certain Gold Fishes’, ‘Song: ‘She is not Fair’, ‘Dedicatory Sonnet to S. T. C’ ‘To a Friend’, ‘To the Same’, ‘Long time a child’, ‘The Sense of Hearing’, ‘To a Deaf and Dumb Little Girl’, ‘To a Lofty Beauty’, ‘Homer’, ‘November’, ‘Night’, ‘Prayer’, and ‘A Lovely Morn’. In his short essay included in this volume, Samuel Waddington dismisses much of Hartley’s work save his sonnets which, he argues, ‘will sustain comparison with those of Wordsworth’ (136).

Sonnets of This Century, ed. William Sharp (London: Walter Scott, 1887).

‘The Birth of Speech’, ‘Prayer’, ‘Night’, ‘Not in Vain’, ‘November’.

³⁸⁴ Bronte wrote this remark in response to Hartley’s query as to ‘how I came to hear of you [...] or to think of applying to you for advice’; see Fran Carlock Stephens, ‘Hartley Coleridge and the Brontes’, *TLS* 3559 (14 May 1970): 544.

The English Poets, The Nineteenth Century: Wordsworth to Tennyson, ed. T. H. Ward, vol. IV (London Macmillan & Co., 1912).

Includes seven of Hartley's poems.

Poems, ed. William Bailey-Kempling (Ulverston: W. Holmes, 1903).

Bailey-Kempling's edition is more an attempt at autobiography than serious consideration of Hartley's verse: in his preface, he confesses that his 'prime object' was to choose 'those Poems which appear to bear the more directly on their author, his family, his circle [...] to leave the poet to "write himself"' (viii).

Poems (London: S. Wellwood, 1907).

***The Complete Poetical Works of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Ramsay Colles (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1908).**

Colles's edition is the first attempt to collect and appraise Hartley's work since Derwent's edition, fifty-six years earlier.

The Cambridge History of English Literature: The Nineteenth Century, vol. XII, ed.

Ward, A.W. Waller, A. R., eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915.

'Sonnet', 'To a Lofty Beauty from her Poor Kinsman', 'May, 1840', 'To a Deaf and Dumb Little Girl', 'Stanzas', 'Song', 'Summer Rain'.

The Century's Poetry, 1837-1937: Hood to Hardy, vol. I, ed. Denys Kilham Roberts (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1938).

'To a Friend', 'Liberty', 'Is love a fancy or a feeling', 'Long time a child'.

The Century's Poetry 1837-1937: Hood to Hardy, vol. II, ed. Denys Kilham Roberts (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1938).

Includes four sonnets by Hartley.

***New Poems: Including a Selection from his Published Poetry*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).**

The Oxford Book of Nineteenth-Century English Verse, ed. John Hayward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

'To a Friend', 'Long time a child', 'November', 'Poietes Apoietes'.

Nineteenth-Century Minor Poets, ed. W. H. Auden (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

'Long time a child', 'Friendship', 'Lines: "I have been cherished and forgiven"'.

The Oxford Book of English Verse of the Romantic Period, 1798-1837, ed. H. S. Milford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

'To a Friend', 'To the Same', 'Whither is gone', 'Long time a child', 'November', 'From Country to Town', 'Song', 'Reply'.

'Romantic Poetry and Prose', vol. II, ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, ed. Frank Kermode and John Hollander (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

'Dedicatory Sonnet, To S. T. Coleridge'.

Five Late Romantic Poets: George Darley, Hartley Coleridge, Thomas Hood, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Emily Bronte, ed. James Reeves (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974).

The Faber Book of Sonnets, ed. Robert Nye (London: Faber and Faber, 1976).
 'If I have sinned in act', 'To a Friend', 'Long time a child', 'Let me not deem that I was made in vain',
 'Prayer', 'Full well I know', 'Night', 'Think upon Death'.

Hartley Coleridge, *Poems, 1833*, intr. Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990).

***Bricks Without Mortar: Selected Poems of Hartley Coleridge*, ed. Lisa Gee (London: Picador, 2000).**

Romanticism: An Anthology, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).
 'Long time a child', 'When I review the course that I have run', 'To Wordsworth'.

A Century of Sonnets: The Romantic-era Revival, 1750-1850, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Daniel Robinson (York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
 'Long time a child', 'Dedicatory Sonnet, To S. T. Coleridge', 'To a Friend', 'Is love a fancy or a feeling',
 'November', 'The First Birthday', 'If I have sinned in act', 'All Nature ministers to Hope'.
 A more sympathetic representation of Hartley's verse, Feldman and Robinson include eight of Hartley's
 sonnets, but no mention is made of Hartley in their introduction, which concentrates heavily on William
 Wordsworth, as does the anthology: fifty-six of William's sonnets are included.

101 Sonnets: from Shakespeare to Heaney, ed. Don Paterson (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).
 Don Paterson includes one of Hartley's sonnets.

The Oxford Book of Sonnets, ed. John Fuller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
 'Long time a child', 'Night'.

*Appendix I(b): The Reception of Dorothy Wordsworth's Writings, 1815–
the Present Day*

Contemporary Reception: Dorothy Wordsworth's Poems and the 1803 Scottish Tour

While Dorothy Wordsworth's work remained unpublished under her name during her lifetime, several of her poems were published in various editions of her brother's verse.³⁸⁵ Consequently, her poetic ability was brought to the attention of Charles Lamb, who felt that William should have credited Dorothy with the poems' authorship:

We were glad to see the poems 'by a female friend'. The one of the wind is masterly, but not new to us. Being only three, perhaps you might have clapt a D. at the corner and let it have past as a print[e]rs mark to the uninitiated, as a delightful hint to the better-instructed. As it is, Expect a formal criticism on the Poems of your female friend and she must expect it.³⁸⁶

Many other notable authors of the day recognized Dorothy's unusual capabilities: Hazlitt found her 'incomparable',³⁸⁷ Thomas De Quincey was struck by her 'excessive organic sensibility' (North 2003, 52), and STC noted her acutely calibrated powers of perception:

Her information various – her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature – and her taste a perfect electrometer – it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults (*CCL* I, 330-1).

Such a finely tuned sensibility parallels that which, as we have seen, STC observed in Hartley, but which STC associated negatively with discord and unrest.³⁸⁸ Interestingly, STC also held Dorothy's critical powers in high esteem. A letter to the editor of the

³⁸⁵ See end of this Appendix for poems by Dorothy included in editions of William's verse.

³⁸⁶ Edwin W. Marris, *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, vol. III, 1809-1817 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975), 141. Lamb's D is underscored twice.

³⁸⁷ Arthur Quiller-Couch quotes Hazlitt in his essay 'Dorothy Wordsworth' (Quiller-Couch 1933, 83).

³⁸⁸ See STC on HC: 'a child whose nerves are as wakeful as the Strings of an Eolian Harp, & as easily put out of Tune!' (*CCL* 2, 909).

Quarterly Review dated April 1828 reveals the deep and lasting impact of unexpected criticism from Dorothy on his review style: ‘a Remark made by Miss Wordsworth, to whom I had in full expectation of gaining a laugh of applause read one of my Judgements occasioned my committing the whole Batch [of reviews] to the Fire’ (*CCL* 6, 733).³⁸⁹ The diarist Henry Crabb Robinson refers to Dorothy frequently in his journals and even makes reference to her poetry, which indicates that she *was* willing for her verse to be circulated amongst a select group: Robinson notes on 30 September 1836 that ‘she has made some pretty verses’, while on 28 December 1838, he records that ‘she repeated some of her own poems very affectingly’.³⁹⁰ Her poetic ability was also recognized by Reverend Alexander Dyce: he includes Dorothy’s ‘Address to a Child, during a Boisterous Winter Evening’ (though the poem is attributed to an ‘Anonymous Authoress’) in the pioneering *Specimens of British Poetesses*, 1827, one of the first volumes, as Dyce notes, to be ‘entirely consecrated to women’ and intended to ‘exhibit the growth and progress of the genius of our country-women in the department of Poetry’.³⁹¹

As I show in Chapter Five, where I analyse the conflict between authorial desire and refusal in Dorothy’s poetry in more depth, such acknowledgement and encouragement only intensified Dorothy’s authorial anxiety. However, despite Dorothy’s protestations against authorship there *are* indications that she did reconcile herself to the prospect of publishing. Dorothy received most attention in her lifetime for her journal of the 1803 Scottish tour, of which five manuscripts are in existence – proof that it was widely circulated amongst her friends. Dorothy mentions the writing

³⁸⁹ Griggs notes another anecdote by John Anster in a letter of 1835, which cites Dorothy as the reason for STC’s withdrawal from writing reviews: ‘Coleridge described himself as so affected [by Dorothy Wordsworth’s reaction] that he never afterwards wrote a review, and he appeared to me to have even a morbid feeling on the subject’ (*CCL* VI, 733n).

³⁹⁰ *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, vol. II, ed. Edith J. Morley (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1938), 505, 559.

³⁹¹ *Specimens of British Poetesses*, sel. and arr. by Alexander Dyce (London: T. Rodd, 1827), iii, v.

up of the Scottish journal repeatedly in her letters to Catherine Cookson, STC, and Lady Beaumont, while William refers to the journal in his correspondence to Sir George Beaumont. STC was keen to have a copy of the Scottish journal – he writes to the Wordsworths on 4 April 1804, ‘of all things I most eagerly wish to have my beloved Dorothy’s Tour’ (*CCL II*, 1117). Samuel Rogers, who met Dorothy during this tour, held her journal in high regard as an independent piece of authorship: ‘I do indeed regret that Wordsworth has printed only fragments of his sister's *Journal*: it is most excellent, and ought to have been published entire’.³⁹² In a letter to Rogers, dated 16 September 1822, William procures his help in getting the journal to print and it is clear that Dorothy has been convinced that its publication would be favourably received:

Some time ago you expressed [...] a wish that my Sister would publish her Recollections of her Scotch Tour, and you interested yourself so far in the scheme, as kindly to offer to assist in disposing of it to a Publisher for her advantage. [...] she is now disposed to profit by them provided you continue to think as favorably of the measure as heretofore (*LWDW IV*, 152).

Dorothy herself writes to Rogers concerning the matter in a letter, dated 3 January 1823, that gives us greater insight into her feelings on publication: she did not wish to ‘part with all power over’ her journal but wanted, in the first instance, for Rogers to ‘induce a Bookseller to give a certain sum for the right to publish a given number of copies’ (*LWDW IV*, 181). She defers self-motivation as a cause for publication and, with characteristic self-deprecation and self-evasion, implies that her reasons are monetary – to allow her the means to fund another ‘ramble’ of Switzerland and of Italy (181). Dorothy’s request reveals that she fully expected notoriety and, moreover, that a sufficient fee would be enough to assuage the ‘unpleasantness of coming before the public’: ‘I find it next to impossible to make up my mind to sacrifice my privacy for a

³⁹² *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, ed. Alexander Dyce (New York: D. Appleton and Co.), 206.

certainty *less* than two hundred pounds' (181). Dorothy even concedes that she would 'willingly share' Rogers' expectations of further profits if her volume were to be received well; that is, she *is* willing to 'set herself up' as an author (181). She confesses how much she has battled with herself in order to reach this decision: 'If you knew how much it has cost me to settle the affair of this proposed publication in my mind, as far as I have now done' (182), but nevertheless reiterates that she is fully prepared to commit herself to print: 'I have still to add that if there be a prospect that any Bookseller will undertake the publication, I will immediately prepare a corrected copy to be sent to you' (182).

Dorothy concludes the publication topic with a 'superfluous' aside on her 'scruples' and 'fears' over publication, which is, in fact, a loaded oblique attack on the publication market that she is apprehensive about entering: she fears that 'a work of such slight pretensions will be wholly overlooked in this writing and publishing (especially *tour*-writing and *tour*-publishing) age – and when factions and parties literary and political are so busy in endeavouring to stifle all attempts to interest, however pure from any taint of the world, and however humble in their claims' (181). Dorothy's forthright condemnation is important: it reveals that she *did* have confidence in her work but believed that the literary age in which she lived was hostile to her 'pure' and 'humble' aims. Far from treating the literary market with uninterest, she is openly attacking its nature. This exchange with Rogers, not often quoted by critics, reverses the popular assumption that Dorothy was consistently and morbidly self-deprecating throughout her life.

The history behind *The Greens of Grasmere* publication is also significant in dispelling the notion that Dorothy was entirely averse to publication. On 19 March 1808, George and Sarah Green, a local Grasmere couple, lost their lives in Langdale Fell, leaving behind eight young children. Dorothy and Mary took charge of initiating a

welfare scheme for the orphaned Green children in order to prevent them, as Dorothy writes to Catherine Clarkson, from ‘falling into the hands of persons who may use them unkindly’ (*LWDW II*, 28 March 1808, 206). They sought donations for this cause, and wrote a brief account of the tragedy which they circulated in order to raise funds for the children’s rehabilitation. William urged Dorothy to write the account ‘to leave behind a record of human sympathies and moral sentiments’ and many of her friends, particularly the Clarksons, urged her to publish the narrative.³⁹³ In a letter to Catherine Clarkson dated 9 December 1810, Dorothy reveals that her refusal to publish is *not* due simply to modesty:

I cannot have that narrative published. My reasons are entirely disconnected with myself, much as I should detest the idea of setting myself up as an Author (*LWDW II*, 453-4).

This letter to Catherine Clarkson is of great significance in order to gain a more accurate understanding of Dorothy’s conception of herself as a writer. Most critical accounts – especially anthology inclusions and reviews, but also editions and critical essays – isolate the quotation ‘I should detest the idea of setting myself up as an Author’ as evidence that Dorothy never had publishing ambitions.³⁹⁴ In the context of this letter, however, this phrase reveals exactly the opposite to be the case. The statement is an aside which forms the passive part of the sentence, rather than the central thrust of her reasoning. The first part of the sentence states that Dorothy’s reasons for refusing to publish are ‘*entirely* disconnected with myself’ (my italics). By decontextualising this phrase, critics give it disproportionate and mythical force as a

³⁹³ See Ernest De Selincourt’s Preface in *The Greens of Grasmere*, ed. Hilary Clark (Wolverhampton: Clark and Howard Books, 1987), 34.

³⁹⁴ See, for example, Norman Fruman’s review of *Dorothy Wordsworth*, by Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, and *Letters of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Alan Hill in *TLS* 4291 (28 June 1985): 711; ‘she wrote very little, and except for a few poems scattered about in collections of her brother’s verse, published nothing. “I should detest the idea of setting myself up as an author”, she declared, when friends urged her to publish’.

declaration of authorial denial in order to fit in with their readings that Dorothy had no authorial ambition. Moreover, Dorothy is objecting to the ‘*setting [her]self up* as an author’ (my italics), not the act of being an author itself. As with ‘Irregular Verses’, where Dorothy expresses feelings of ‘shame’ and ‘bashfulness’, which lead her to fear accusations of misguided ‘pride’ and the ‘ridicule’ of her mother’s gaze if she were to attempt to write poetry, it is the presumptuousness that goes with publicly announcing yourself to be an author that troubles Dorothy (Levin 1987, 203, ll. 64, 66, 77). Such a relocation of self would entail an explicit declaration of self-confidence, together with the definite assertion that she is encroaching on her brother’s territory and competing with him – it is this conception of her self that Dorothy is in conflict with.³⁹⁵

Dorothy shows an acute awareness of how a young individual’s (and her own) development can be affected by notoriety and is keen to allow the children to grow up without the exposure that publication of her work would inevitably bring: ‘on account of the Family of the Greens I cannot consent. [...] by publishing this narrative of mine I should bring the children forward to notice as Individuals, and we know not what injurious effect this might have upon them’ (*LWDW II*, 454).³⁹⁶ Dorothy concedes that her text can be published ‘when the Characters of the children are formed and they can be no longer objects of curiosity’ (454). The fact that Dorothy was willing to publish anonymously – ‘I should not object on that score as if it had been an invention of my own it might have been published without a name, and nobody would have thought of me’ (454) – implies that labelling herself as an author was, for Dorothy, a conceptual impasse, a tension which she defers by displacing her authorial energies, and thus her

³⁹⁵ For further discussion of the ideas of privacy and publication see Emma Clery, ‘Out of the Closet: Richardson and the Cult of Literary Women’ in *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 132-170; and also *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁹⁶ Maria Edgeworth is similarly anxious about exhibiting the children whose sayings and actions she uses in *Practical Education*.

name, identity, and attention, either by publishing anonymously, or by investing in William's identity. Dorothy wants to write and publish, but does not want to be 'thought of' as a writer and felt herself to be insecure in the face of publication: she was afraid of how notoriety would affect the development of her own identity, William's identity, and, indeed, her share in their dual identity. But, as Susan Levin notes, the very fact that she allowed some of her verses to be published, albeit anonymously, is further proof that 'she must have felt she had something of worth to say' (Levin 1987, 113).

Nineteenth-Century Reception: Thomas De Quincey's Portrait of Dorothy Wordsworth; *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland, 1874*; *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, 1897*

The publishing negotiations with Samuel Rogers fell through and *Recollections* remained unpublished until J. C. Shairp's edition in 1874, nineteen years after Dorothy's death (going through three editions by 1894). In his biographical preface, Shairp praises the work for its demystification of the life of William: it offers, he writes, 'a faithful commentary on the character of the poet, his mode of life, and the manner of his poetry'.³⁹⁷ Shairp insists, however, that *Recollections* has the strength to stand as an independent work of authorship:

The Journal now published does not borrow all its worth from its bearing on the great poet [Wordsworth]. It has merit and value of its own, which may commend it to some who have no heart for Wordsworth's poetry (Shairp 1874, x).

As one of the first editors of Dorothy's work, Shairp recognized the importance of stressing her independent potential at the very beginning of her posthumous publication

³⁹⁷ *Recollections of a tour made in Scotland AD 1803*, ed. J.C. Shairp (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1874), ix.

history. He asserts that Dorothy did not have independent success in her lifetime because she held the work and reputation of her brother as a higher aim: 'For the writer of it [*Recollections*] was in herself no common woman, and might have secured for herself an independent reputation, had she not chosen rather that other part, to forget and merge herself entirely in the work and reputation of her brother' (x). A point which Shairp reiterates later on in his Preface:

With original powers which, had she chosen to set up on her own account, might have won for her high literary fame, she was content to forget herself, to merge all her gifts and all her interests in those of her brother. She thus made him other and higher than he could have been had he stood alone, and enabled him to render better service to the world than without her ministry he could have (xxxiii).

In this way, Shairp accords with De Quincey's assessment of Dorothy, whom Shairp later quotes. With this extended idea of self-displacement – 'might have', 'forget', 'merge' – Shairp is picking up on the exact diction and implication of De Quincey's account of Dorothy, first published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1838-41:

Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children,) gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict, that was sometimes distressing to witness (North 2003, 52).

Shairp also mirrors De Quincey's accompanying notion that she helped 'create' the Poet William, which De Quincey implies throughout his essay on Dorothy. STC delivers an almost identical verdict to Shairp's on Dorothy's artistic potential and 'surrender' of self in a letter to Anne R. Scott in 1833:

Dorothy Wordsworth, the Sister of our Great Poet, is a Woman of Genius, as well as manifold acquirements; and but for the absorption of her whole Soul in her Brother's fame and writings would, perhaps, in a different style have been as great a Poet as Himself (*CCL VI*, 959).

In 1886, thirty-one years after Dorothy's death, Edmund Lee, in *The Story of a Sister's Love*, more negatively utilizes the descriptive trope of sinking her identity within William's:

With a mental capacity and literary skill which would have enabled her to carve out for herself an independent reputation and position of no mean order, she preferred to sink herself, and her future, in that of her brother, with whom she has thus become, for all time, so indelibly associated (Lee 1894, 71).

A contemporary reviewer of *Recollections* also acknowledges Dorothy's self-sacrificial dedication of her mind to William's work:

Again and again she expressed the thought, which he uttered afterwards in song; and in prose as well as poetry Wordsworth used Dorothy's mind as if it were a portion of his own. She might have earned a literary reputation of no common order, but all her ambition was centred upon William, and her faith in his genius was unbounded.³⁹⁸

All five male writers are anticipating the statement of collaborative identity which Elizabeth Fay demarcates in *Becoming Wordsworthian: A Performative Aesthetics*, where Fay argues that William Wordsworth the poet was the product of a dual vision – Dorothy being a vital and empowering collaborator, rather than subsumed victim. We can see that the seeds of Fay's twentieth-century assessment lie in the judgement of those nineteenth-century critics who truly attended to Dorothy's investment in William. It is this theoretical interpretation of their relationship that I develop in my analysis of her writings in Chapters Three and Four.

³⁹⁸ Anon, 'Dorothy Wordsworth', from *The Leisure Hour*, in *LLA* 184: 2375 (4 January 1890): 124.

De Quincey and STC do not go so far as to say that William's output should be recognized as a vehicle of Dorothy's self-representation, but other contemporary writers did. A poem published in the *Spectator* claims that we can read Dorothy's name and thus her identity in William's verse: 'But when we read his page with grateful heart, / Between the lines we'll spell out Dora's name'.³⁹⁹ Similarly, a writer in *Blackwood's* magazine recognized that the Wordsworth-sibling relationship was one of personal and imaginative mutual interdependence – they wrote each other into being:

Without taking his sister into consideration, no just estimate can be formed of Wordsworth. He was, as it were, henceforward, the spokesman to the world of two souls [...] she *was* him – a second pair of eyes to see, a second and more delicate intuition to discern, a second heart to enter into all that came before their mutual observation. This union was so close, that in many instances it becomes difficult to discern which is the brother and which the sister. She was part not only of his life, but of his imagination. [...] Her journals are Wordsworth in prose, just as his poems are Dorothy in verse (Lee 1894, 20-21).⁴⁰⁰

This is a view which accords again with Fay's notion that the Poet William was an imaginative projection inhabited by both of the siblings.⁴⁰¹ Such descriptions call into question whether authorial identity springs from and is anchored to an independent internal locus. Reading these comments in the light of Hartley's belief in the one omnipresent poetic identity, we can see that Dorothy likewise believed she was contributing to literary history by dedicating her efforts to her brother's artistic goals. What these nineteenth-century writers are assessing is Dorothy's intellectual capability and creative potential as well as highlighting, more than we currently do, her contribution to the authorial productivity of two of the most significant poets of

³⁹⁹ Anon, A Poem: 'Dora Wordsworth', from the *Spectator*, in *LLA* 122: 1578 (5 September 1874): 578.

⁴⁰⁰ The writer Lee refers to is 'Mrs. Oliphant'.

⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, an 1871 article on William and the generation of the *Lyrical Ballads* makes the rare recognition that Dorothy was on equal standing with her brother and STC: the writer refers to the 'three young originators of it [*Lyrical Ballads*] – for it is impossible to deny Dorothy Wordsworth her share in the book, though she never wrote a line'. See 'A Century of Great Poets from 1750 Downwards. No. III: William Wordsworth', *LLA* 111: 1428 (21 October 1871): 143.

Romanticism. This sense of potential talent – what ‘might have’ been – is a recurrent trope that parallels the reception of Hartley and which makes us rethink the way in which we quantify poetic merit. As David Perkins states in *English Romantic Writers* (1995), ‘According to the Romantic idea, what defines the poet are mental powers, psychic endowments’ rather than ‘literary production’; ‘by this way of thinking’, Perkins declares, ‘Dorothy Wordsworth was one of the great poets of the age’ (Perkins 1995, 479).

When comparing Dorothy’s awareness of the ‘interest that man gives to nature, and still more the dignity that nature gives to man’, a feeling which is ‘so strong in her brother’s poetry’ (xl), Shairp is adamant that the gift was inherently hers too – it ‘is not less strongly felt by her’ – and was derived from a mutual source, not copied from William:

[...] in her prose are pictures quite akin and equal to many a one that occurs in her brother’s verse. [...] I cannot believe that she merely learnt it from him. It must have been innate in both, derived by both from one original source (xl).

Many early twentieth-century pre-feminist critics develop Shairp’s recognition that Dorothy’s poetic ability was at least equal to William’s: in *The English Spirit: Essays in History and Literature* (1945), A. L. Rowse calls her ‘a poet who wrote in prose [...] whose prose rendering of the same scene is [often] better than William’s verse’.⁴⁰² In one of two essays written on Dorothy in 1929, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch argues that William often impairs her journal entries with his use of ‘poetical clichés’, while Maurice Hewlett states simply: ‘She was the muse of those two [STC and William], and had perhaps more of the soul, or substance, of poetry in her than either’ (Quiller-Couch 1933, 62; Hewlett 1924, 229). Controversially, in the manner of the feminist critics a

⁴⁰² A. L. Rowse, *The English Spirit: Essays in History and Literature* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1945), 217.

century later, Shairp also implicitly criticizes William for presenting his great poetic achievement as entirely solitary. Twenty-four years after William's death, Shairp recognizes the extent of Dorothy's contribution to William's poetic identity. More credit, Shairp asserts, should have been bestowed upon Dorothy in her lifetime: 'his poems are sometimes little more than poetic versions of her descriptions of the objects which she had seen; and which he treated as seen by himself' (xxi). Shairp is accusing William of a form of intellectual plagiarism, or at least appropriation. William frequently professes his debt to Dorothy's *supportive* role, for her inspiration, emotional support, and cathartic influence – 'She in the midst of all, preserved me still / A Poet' (*The Prelude*, X, ll. 953). But Dorothy was more than just an imaginative prop – she had an *active* role too: the poetic 'I' of William's verse was often a collaborative identity which concealed the reality that the original literal vision was Dorothy's, an engulfing egotism from which Shairp attempted to disentangle Dorothy.

The Influence of Thomas De Quincey's Portrait on Dorothy Wordsworth's Reception

In his essay 'Lake Reminiscences', first published in *Tait's* in 1839, De Quincey, as we have seen above, gives an elaborate description of the inner turmoil which he perceived in Dorothy with regard to the expression of her intellect. According to De Quincey, Dorothy felt that her fiery and intense emotional constitution opposed expected modes of being and conduct for females, an anxiety which continually 'checked' full expression of her intellect. It is more likely, however, that the self-conflict which De Quincey perceived sprang from a tension between the desire to realize her own authorial autonomy, which her morbidly self-deprecating disposition continually checks, and the conflicting quest for self-affirmation through investment in William's poetic identity, a friction which we see played out sporadically in her *Grasmere*

Journals. De Quincey gives an astute description of the nature and complexity of self-conflict, but he was known to sensationalize events; as Peter Tomlinson states with regard to De Quincey's account of the Green tragedy, intense drama, rather than honesty of representation, was his primary aim: 'Fatality in itself was never enough for De Quincey; it needed heightening, even if truth should perish'.⁴⁰³ That Dorothy was conflicted as a writer is certain, but the impression that De Quincey gives (in the description quoted above at least) is of a writer who never even temporarily mastered or understood their internal conflict, a representation which risks hijacking the complexity of her self-evolution and nullifying a rigorous engagement with her work. Nineteenth-century reviewers were not so pessimistic in their view: contemporary reception of her Scottish journal (which is written after the tour itself) is adulatory and suggests that her authorial identity was most assured within the travel-writing genre, where she found a niche that liberated her from domestic tensions and her authorial duty to William. One 1890 review in *The Leisure Hour* finds *Recollections* to be unsurpassed in its genre, forming 'one of the most delightful books of the kind in the language'.⁴⁰⁴

The *Spectator* praises the tour's complete absence of any conscious hankering after aesthetic feeling. The reviewer suggests that it is exactly because Dorothy has no authorial reputation that she can write without inhibition: 'The journal is as simple and natural as if there were no poetic reputation either to gain or to keep up'.⁴⁰⁵ The *Spectator* goes on to distinguish between Dorothy's style and that of William's in an attempt to respect and present her autonomy to the reader. Dorothy's poetic inspiration and methodology, the reviewer asserts, spring from a separate source to that of William, the implication being that she is not – in this genre at least – fundamentally obstructed

⁴⁰³ Philip Tomlinson, 'A Mountain Tragedy: By Dorothy Wordsworth', review of *George and Sarah Green: A Narrative*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, *TLS* 1801 (8 August 1936): 644.

⁴⁰⁴ 'Dorothy Wordsworth', from *The Leisure Hour*, in *LLA* 184: 2375 (4 January 1890): 127.

⁴⁰⁵ Anon, 'Dorothy Wordsworth's Scotch Journal', from the *Spectator*, in *LLA* 122: 1578 (5 September 1874): 630.

by an ‘anxiety of influence’: ‘When any touch of poetry marks the journal, it is as plain that it comes there through the natural ardour of the writer’s own – not even her brother’s – feelings’ (630). Above all, the reviewer notes simplicity and honesty of representation – an ‘artless intensity’ (631) – as factors which distinguish Dorothy’s style from William. Dorothy kept to her own manner of seeing rather than conforming to William’s: ‘there is no effort in Miss Wordsworth’s diary to look at things with her brother’s eyes. She keeps her own eager, lively eyes on everything, [...] she does not attempt to Wordsworthize upon it [the scene], but just defines her own impressions, and there leaves it’ (631).

The *Spectator* reminds the reader that we should judge a writer by their texts rather than indulging in anecdotal speculation – a seemingly obvious reflection that does, however, appear to get overlooked in the study of intimate familial literary circles, as my studies of both Hartley and Dorothy have demonstrated. While the reviewer finds that the ‘bright, eager manner’ which De Quincey observes in Dorothy ‘penetrates many portions of her diary’, he or she finds no evidence in the work for the extreme self-conflict that De Quincey witnesses, and even proposes that Dorothy’s physical awkwardness may have been aggravated by De Quincey’s intense analytical glare: ‘there is no trace in it of the embarrassment or conflict of feeling of which De Quincey speaks, and which may very possibly have been more or less provoked by his own critical glances’ (631). In comparing passages from brother and sister the resultant verdict of the reviewer is that it was *Dorothy* who spoke in a language closer to the heart of real men: ‘Miss Wordsworth’s description conveys a far more distinct definition than [William’s] of the real manner portrayed’ (633).⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁶ The reviewer is comparing a poem by William with a passage from *SJ*, both accounts provoked by an encounter with a Highland girl.

De Quincey's account is a fatalistic one: it leaves no lee-way for self-development, ignores the possibility of self-expression through varying genres of Dorothy's work, and labels her as a terminally conflicted writer whose whole intellect was contained or aborted (his choice of diction centres on repression, the internal, and potential, rather than realization: 'burned within her', 'pushed forward', 'checked' (North 2003, 52). Again, as my analysis of Hartley's reception revealed, we witness the dangers of merging biography with text: how an entrancing portrait from an eloquent writer can be superimposed onto an author's text, causing readers to neglect the authorial voice itself. Many late twentieth-century critics, such as Levin, as I show below, are heavily influenced by De Quincey's portrait, just as critics find themselves imaginatively and critically imprisoned by the numerous portraits of the infant Hartley, (namely the Wilkie child portrait, 'Long time a child', and Derwent's *Memoir*). My study re-adjusts the dominance of De Quincey's account, which gives a sketch of Dorothy's authorial persona, in order to give a more nuanced and accurate representation of the evolution of her identity. As a contemporary reviewer for *The Leisure Hour* remarks: 'it will be well to turn to Miss Wordsworth's own writings for indications of her character [...] for they reveal far more of the real character of the writer than is to be gained from other sources' (*LLA* 2375 (4 January 1890): 124, 126).

The first full-length biography of Dorothy, *The Story of a Sister's Love*, was published in 1886 by Edmund Lee (later reprinted in 1894). *The Literary World* in 1887 commends the fact that Lee quotes freely from her letters and journals, believing, like the author of *The Leisure Hour*, that they give a better picture of her intellectual ability than the reductive portrait handed down by De Quincey (whom the reviewer quotes): 'The most truthful and attractive portrait of her mental qualities is, however, to be found in her letters and journals' which, *Literary World* notes, 'have a literary value

which will preserve them from the ravages of envious time'.⁴⁰⁷ Lee dedicates a whole chapter to the discussion of Dorothy's poems – very unusual for the time, as her verse is virtually ignored in the nineteenth century. With the exception of Sidney Gilpin's *The Songs and Ballads of Cumberland* (1866), which includes 'The Mother's Return' and 'The Cottager to her Infant', her verse receives scant attention until the publication of Levin's *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism* in 1987.⁴⁰⁸ Lee remarks that Dorothy 'was gifted with no less poetic soul' than her brother and extends the often-stated remark that William was indebted to his sister's writings; Lee goes further by proposing that because of the magnitude of her investment in William, we do, in fact, owe our enhanced vision of nature – what Hartley refers to as 'Nature's inner shrine' – to Dorothy too: 'we owe it indirectly to Dorothy Wordsworth that Nature has become to us so much more than she was to our forefathers, has been revealed in a clearer and brighter light' (68).⁴⁰⁹ William gave a voice to his sister's way of thinking and seeing; as Mrs. Oliphant in *Blackwood* notes: he was 'the spokesman to the world of two souls' (Lee 1894, 21). In this way, Lee suggests that Dorothy's influence is life-enhancing not just for William but for all readers of his verse: she typifies Hartley's notion of an 'unregarded ministry' ('Followed by Another', *NP*, 87, l. 9) and, as demonstrated in Chapter One, Hartley's theory of the diffusive and influential power of poetry beyond the boundaries of the text.

Arthur Quiller-Couch, writing in 1929, extends this notion that Dorothy indirectly rendered a great service to English poetry. Noting that the Romantics 'lacked that piercing eye for Nature, in the full Greek sense of the term, which could link up her

⁴⁰⁷ Anon, 'Dorothy Wordsworth', review of *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Story of a Sister's Love*, by Edmund Lee, *LW* (19 February 1887): 55.

⁴⁰⁸ See end of this appendix for anthology representation of her verse – she does appear sporadically in anthologies prior to Levin's collection of her verse.

⁴⁰⁹ See Hartley's 'To William Wordsworth' for this summation of William's divining of the internal mysteries of nature: 'Of Nature's inner shrine though art the priest / Where most she works when we perceive her least' (*CPW*, 10, ll. 13-14).

secrets with high philosophical generalisations’, he credits *both* Wordsworths with unlocking this vision of nature to us: ‘It was the Wordsworths, brother and sister, who discovered this secret’ (Quiller-Couch 1933, 91). Quiller-Couch’s ultimate bold assertion is that Dorothy influenced not only her brother, by giving him a means to express the inexpressible, but indirectly the whole movement of Romanticism, and later generations of poets who are influenced by William – an achievement which has not been fully recognized:

She touched his lips; and, through him she has left her benign influence upon all later Romantic poets, to this day.

She gave them eyes, she gave them ears (91).⁴¹⁰

Quiller-Couch’s implication is not just that Dorothy formed part of a feminine romanticism, as later feminists notice, but that she also feminized masculine Romanticism, a view which my analysis in Chapters Three and Four supports.

The first comprehensive attempt to publish Dorothy’s journals is William Knight’s *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* in 1897.⁴¹¹ While Knight pinpoints Dorothy’s merits as her ‘singular charm’, her travel-writing skill, and her ability to reflect ‘Scottish life and character’, he does not commit to a comprehensive aesthetic appreciation of her work, criticising the ‘numerous trivial details’ which he omits, believing it is not ‘desirable now to print them [the journals] *in extenso*, except in the case of the *Recollections*’.⁴¹² Knight’s edition highlights the fact that Dorothy, independently of her brother, and particularly with her travel writing, was consistently being critically appreciated and urged to publish; he notes that a Mr. Robinson urged

⁴¹⁰ Quiller-Couch is paraphrasing William’s tribute to Dorothy: ‘She gave me eyes, she gave me ears’ (‘The Sparrow’s Nest’, l. 17).

⁴¹¹ Knight’s *Journals*, later re-printed in a one volume edition in 1924, includes journals of Alfoxden, Hamburgh, Grasmere, Scotland (1803), Mountain Ramble Journal, Extracts from the tour of the Continent (1820), Extracts from the tour of Scotland (1822), Extracts from Mary Wordsworth’s Journal of Belgium tour (1823), and Extracts from Dorothy’s tour of the Isle of Man (1828).

⁴¹² *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. William Knight (London: Macmillan, 1930), xi, vii.

Dorothy to publish her Continental journals, praising simply her remarkable literal vision: ‘she saw so much more than I did’ (xiv). But Knight’s primary aim is to consolidate William Wordsworth scholarship, rather than to present Dorothy as an independent author. Unfortunately, many readers at this time came to Dorothy through Knight’s (mis)representation of her – in this journal edition, and in Knight’s editions and biography of William. While Dorothy’s first editor, J. C. Shairp, had done much to set the bar for a field of criticism which viewed Dorothy as a writer in her own right, at the close of the nineteenth century Knight has placed her in a more subordinate position, whose greatest value came from illuminating her brother’s life and work.

Twentieth-Century Reception: *The Greens of Grasmere*, 1936; *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 1941; *Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals*, 1958

In *Dorothy and William Wordsworth* (1927), a joint biography of the Wordsworth siblings, Catherine Macdonald Maclean heralds Dorothy as one of the greatest of English descriptive writers. Reviewing this book, Arthur Sydney McDowall questions Maclean’s accolade with his somewhat condescending claim that “‘great” does not seem the appropriate term of praise for Dorothy’.⁴¹³ Nonetheless, McDowall observes that Dorothy finds ‘the perfect words’ and believes that it is this faculty of accuracy for the ‘crystallizing moment’ that puts her writing on a par with the poetry of John Clare and the prose of William Hudson (405). McDowall concludes that ‘within her limits’ Dorothy is ‘the most perfect of such writers’ (405). Maclean provides the first real monograph of Dorothy five years later in *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years*, which offers a valuable treatment of Dorothy’s relationship with nature and sensitively articulates her acute, unrivalled sensory perception, which baffled even STC. Maclean

⁴¹³ Arthur Sydney McDowall, ‘Dorothy Wordsworth’, review of *Dorothy and William Wordsworth*, by Catherine Macdonald Maclean, *TLS* 1323 (9 June 1927): 405.

remarks that STC more than William appreciated the rarity of Dorothy's ability, recognising it to be more than just a youthful comprehension of the object in itself, as we have seen in Chapter Three: 'Her eyes were not lit up by the mere sensual preoccupation of youth. There was infinity in her gaze. But he could not learn her secret. [...] What did she see when she looked at a flower or a plant? Did her eyes pierce to the mystery of life itself?' (Maclean 1932, 52). Maurice Hewlett also takes this view of Dorothy as a visionary writer: 'She tells us much but implies more [...] she sees deeply into a deeper self than most of us can discern' (Hewlett 1924, 229). Such conjecture positions her within masculine Romanticism – particularly William's mode of 'see[ing] into the life of things' ('Tintern Abbey', l. 50) – rather than the picturesque tradition under which she is often bracketed, an argument which I develop in Chapter Three.

Maclean's novelistic biographical approach does, however, fictionalize and sensationalize Dorothy's life, which has the ultimate effect of compromising Maclean's acute critical perceptions of Dorothy's endurance and artistic merit. Irritatingly, Maclean paraphrases extensively where it would be better to quote directly from Dorothy's texts. By exerting a rigid linear narrative onto the journals, Maclean overlooks their omnitemporal and symbolic nature, an approach that does not present a sufficient aesthetic appreciation of Dorothy's prose – this is ironic and unfortunate considering that Maclean's preface shows her deep and personal connection to Dorothy and intuition of the depth of Dorothy's imaginative potential. Dorothy's 'capacity for intensity of living amounted to genius', Maclean states, 'to look upon her life is to gain something in knowledge of the nature of Life itself' (vii).

In the preface to his biography of Dorothy, Edmund Lee highlights her life as outstanding amongst the women of her time: 'it cannot be doubted that no name can more fittingly have a place in female biography than that of Dorothy Wordsworth' (Lee

1894, x). This statement concurs with De Quincey's assessment who moreover stresses that Dorothy achieved glory and worth independent of her brother: 'Miss Wordsworth would have merited a separate notice in any biographical dictionary of our times, had there even been no William Wordsworth in existence' (North 2003, 108). However, despite Lee's and De Quincey's certainty that Dorothy deserved a permanent and independent place in biographical history, at the beginning of the twentieth century Dorothy's reputation quickly became suppressed and misread. Charles Nowell Smith, reviewing Maclean's biography, remarks that '[Dorothy] is very far from receiving her due in our biographical literature'.⁴¹⁴ Smith notes the surprising fact that while Dorothy's niece Dora Quillinan has an article devoted to her in the *DNB* in 1932, Dorothy's article is merely appended to the entry on her brother. Quiller-Couch also notes this undeserved omission in 1933: 'In our *Dictionary of National Biography*, admittedly a comprehensive work, you will find no word on Dorothy Wordsworth – the spirit that, subservient always as an Ariel, took and shaped Wordsworth and Coleridge, made them' (Quiller-Couch 1933, 69). This biographical exclusion highlights the effacement of Dorothy's identity that has occurred following Knight's edition: her considerable independent and collaborative achievement is overlooked and she becomes increasingly relegated to a supporting role in her brother's life. Smith rightly argues that in order to halt this identity suppression, rather than *asserting* her significance, as critics and biographers (such as Maclean) frequently do, her importance must be *demonstrated* through an extensive analysis of her work, influences, and influence. Smith stresses the importance of a dedicated biographical approach rather than portraying her 'merely as the wonderful sister of William and quasi-sister of Coleridge' (347). Ultimately, Smith too is dissatisfied with Maclean's attempt: 'a few

⁴¹⁴ Charles Nowell Smith, 'Dorothy Wordsworth', review of *Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years*, by Catherine MacDonald Maclean, *TLS* 1580 (12 May 1932): 347.

of us will never be quite satisfied until all the letters and journals of Dorothy Wordsworth have been printed and published in full'; the implication being that until a full and thorough biographical examination is attempted we must search out Dorothy's voice for ourselves in order to appreciate fully a woman whom Smith praises as 'one of the most brilliant and original personalities in history' (347).

Despite the curious lack of rigorous biographical representation, Dorothy's *Journals* and 'The Green' narrative are both published in the first half of the twentieth century by De Selincourt. Dorothy's account of the orphaned Green children, *The Greens of Grasmere*, was widely praised for capturing the immediacy of the children's ordeal better than both her brother's and De Quincey's version of events (William wrote a ballad; De Quincey an article).⁴¹⁵ Peter Tomlinson notes that William's poem composed on the event 'does not comfort, nor does it burn with profound interpretation', and finds Dorothy's account to be 'better than De Quincey's elaboration of the incident, to which it supplies a corrective' (*TLS* 1801 (8 August 1936): 644). Whilst praising her skill for faithful journalism, De Selincourt, writing in 1936, also recognizes that the aesthetic coherence of her work is superior to both William's and De Quincey's: 'both as a trustworthy, vital document and as a coherent work of art it ranks higher than the other accounts of the disaster (Clark 1987, 33). Whereas William and De Quincey's accounts descend into pathos and focus on the sensational aspects of the story, Dorothy's narrative is more actively imaginative and raises awareness not only of the orphaned children's emotional plight, but of the state of their impoverished family and, by extension, the general predicament of deprived Grasmere families. Because they place their artistic purpose above the interests of their subject, De Quincey and William lack the integrity of Dorothy's work. Dorothy's empathy for the orphaned children is the prime generator of her account. In this way, her subject comes

⁴¹⁵ See William Wordsworth's 'George and Sarah Green' (1808).

to life far more vividly and realistically than William's as she reveals that her artistic ideals are integrally wrapped up with societal concerns: she will not profit in an artistic personal sense from another person's trauma.⁴¹⁶ As De Selincourt points out, *The Greens* provides 'further example of her gift for simple, vivid description, and her rare power of entering into the lives of those who crossed her path and making their experience an integral part of her own' (34-5).

De Selincourt's biography, *Dorothy Wordsworth* (1933; reprinted in 1965) has been widely accepted (until Frances Wilson's recently published *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth*) as the most reliable and scholarly biography of Dorothy as it makes use of new material that had been previously unavailable to Lee and Maclean.⁴¹⁷ De Selincourt's main agenda is to counter the notion that Dorothy was 'the victim of a tragic frustration': he credits her with being a writer with a 'rare gift of description and a transparent sincerity in speaking of herself' who 'was essentially happy'.⁴¹⁸ Reflecting on De Selincourt's work, Hugh l'Anson Fausset notes that Dorothy's sensitivity meant that the troubles of William's life became *her* troubles: 'one of the bonds between her brother and herself was that she came more and more to suffer the haunting anxiety which went with an intense susceptibility to feeling', a reading which is convincing when we consider the intense emotional anguish and tension that Dorothy

⁴¹⁶ See also 'The Wordsworths, the Greens, and the Limits of Sympathy', *Studies in Romanticism* 42: 4 (Winter 2003): 541-64, where Michelle Levy points out that Dorothy shows herself to be socially aware and forward thinking in her recognition of the ultimate limits of charity.

⁴¹⁷ Two biographies of Dorothy Wordsworth were published in the later half of the twentieth century, neither of which improve on either Maclean's or De Selincourt's presentation: *A Passion for the Particular* by Elizabeth Gunn in 1981, and *Dorothy Wordsworth* by Robert Gittings and Jo Manton in 1985. Biographers are more usually concerned as much with William and S. T. Coleridge as with Dorothy. See the following: Helen Ashton, *I had a Sister: A Study of Mary Lamb, Dorothy Wordsworth, Caroline Herschel, and Cassandra Austen* (London: L. Dickson, 1937), Frances Winwar, *Farewell the Banner* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1938), Frederika Beatty, *William Wordsworth of Rydal Mount* (London: J. M. Dent, 1939), Amanda Ellis, *Rebels and Conservatives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), Sean Manly, *Dorothy and William Wordsworth: The Heart of a Circle of Friends* (New York: Vanguard, 1974), John Worthen, *The Gang: Coleridge, The Hutchinsons and the Wordsworths in 1802* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), Kathleen Jones, *A Passionate Sisterhood: Women of the Wordsworth Circle* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

⁴¹⁸ Ernest De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), vii.

discloses in her letters and journals whenever William or STC – particularly STC – are troubled (*TLS* 1661 (30 November 1933): 853). Letters from STC literally make her ill with worry. The purpose of Fausset's observation is to suggest that perhaps De Selincourt is too simplistic in his summation of Dorothy's life: in his more earnest attempt to bury the proposition that her life was a tragic waste, he does not delve into the psychological complexity of her self-conflict.⁴¹⁹ Fausset believes that 'a more curious inquirer into human nature' than De Selincourt might discover 'a condition of inner conflict which she could not outgrow' (853). Fausset's observation is key to my study of her work, and it is one that I interweave with the theories of relational identity and collaboration put forward by Mellor, Fay, and Wolfson.

In addition to his Green edition and biography, De Selincourt became the first editor since Knight's 1897 work to provide a comprehensive edition of Dorothy's journals in 1941 (going through three later reprints). In *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, De Selincourt, like Knight, finds *Recollections* 'one of the most delightful of all books of travel [...] it is, undoubtedly, her masterpiece'.⁴²⁰ De Selincourt reminds us of the high regard in which Dorothy was held as an author by her male contemporaries: Samuel Rogers was 'anxious to see it [*Recollections*] in print', and Crabb Robinson urged her to publish her continental journal in 1824 (vii, xvii). De Selincourt concentrates on Dorothy's work rather than her relation to William and is unequivocal in his apprehension of her ability and publication potential: 'Dorothy Wordsworth is the most remarkable and the most distinguished of English writers who never wrote a line for the general public' (v). Peter Tomlinson, reviewing De Selincourt's edition, concurs with those nineteenth-century critics who turned to

⁴¹⁹ This state of 'inner conflict' is something that Frances Wilson does address in *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth* (2008).

⁴²⁰ *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1941), vii.

Dorothy's writings to truly find her identity: 'It provides the best material for revealing the writer herself. We are glad to have it all. History offers few such instances of affinity of mind of brother and sister persisting from childhood till the end'.⁴²¹

In the interim between De Selincourt's 1936 and 1941 editions, Hyman Eigerman made the controversial decision of presenting sections of Dorothy's journals in verse form in *The Poetry of Dorothy Wordsworth*, published in 1940 with a foreword by Hoxie Neale Fairchild. The title itself is misleading as we get none of Dorothy's verse itself, but rather cut and spliced 'images and cadences' of her journals.⁴²² By extracting and reshaping the latent poetry out of her verse, Eigerman is suggesting that Dorothy clearly suffered conflict over attempting to express herself in verse form, a battle which I examine further in Chapter Five. Eigerman's selective editorial act is somewhat counterproductive (and micromanaging) as it undermines, in part, the aesthetic merit of the journals: one of the original strengths of the *Grasmere Journal* lies in its fluidity and unconventional narrative structure – it famously lacks the separation of paragraphs and is held together by Dorothy's own idiosyncratic method of punctuation – frequently the dash. By selectively dissecting her work Eigerman destroys the natural continuity and spontaneity of Dorothy's prose and disturbs its essential integrity. It also, perhaps misguidedly, undermines the author's own authorial expression – this is not how Dorothy intended her prose to be presented to a readership, thus Eigerman robs her of authorial control.

But Eigerman's edition does much to not only distinguish the poetic nature of Dorothy's prose, and its value as more than just, as Fairchild puts it, a 'mass of footnotes to her brother's poems' (i), but also to recognize and promote the progressive

⁴²¹ Peter Tomlinson, 'Dorothy's Journals', review of *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, *TLS* 2108 (27 June 1942): 319.

⁴²² Hoxie Neale Fairchild in *The Poetry of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Hyman Eigerman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), ii, foreword by H. N. F. This edition has no page numbers so I am numbering the first page of the foreword and preface from i-ix.

nature of her style: Fairchild's foreword praises her as 'quite startling in her modernity' (ii). In Dorothy's ability to distil the essence of an image or object, and her abandonment of conventional prosaic forms of expression, Fairchild recognizes her as a (latent) pre-figure of imagism, which was, in fact, a rejection of the artifice of Romantic and Victorian poetry: 'she is amazingly like the best of those Imagist poets who have now become somewhat difficult to recall' (ii; D. H. Lawrence and Ezra Pound, for example).⁴²³ The paratactic mode of writing which Dorothy is deeply reliant on, where meaning is often embedded between two disconnected clauses, is another literary technique which aligns her with modernist writers such as Ezra Pound. Alec Bond, writing in 1984, states that Dorothy's style, typically her interest in 'the thing itself, in itself, and for itself', fits in better with the poets of the first half of the twentieth century: 'She might have felt quite at home among the Objectivist poets of recent times and with Whitman who, without moral reflection, could celebrate the common, the ordinary, for its own sake'.⁴²⁴ In Dorothy's avoidance of metaphor, simile, moral reflection, and egotism, Bond recognizes a 'more modern sensibility than either Wordsworth's or Thoreau's' (199).

In *British Poets of the Romantic Era* Paula Feldman finds this reading convincing: 'Dorothy Wordsworth seems to anticipate by many years the work of Wallace Stevens, Baudelaire, and Ezra Pound'.⁴²⁵ Eigerman goes so far as to state that 'scholars who come after the Imagists and free verse' have a 'duty as the literary executors of the past' to recognize Dorothy as a forerunner to modern poetry (Eigerman 1940, v). The suggestion from these twentieth-century critics is that Dorothy was out of tune with the poetic conventions of her time, which, as we have seen, Dorothy

⁴²³ Interestingly, as I show in Chapter One, Keanie notes that Hartley Coleridge's work, like Dorothy's, pre-empted aspects of Imagism and Modernism.

⁴²⁴ Alec Bond, 'Reconsidering Dorothy Wordsworth', *Charles Lamb Society Bulletin* (July-October 1984): 199, 200.

⁴²⁵ *British Poets of the Romantic Era, an Anthology*, ed. Paula R. Feldman (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 825.

herself intimated in her letter to Samuel Rogers regarding publication. The fact that she was intimately associated with a writer who typified that poetic era would have meant she was caught in a double bind from which it was extremely difficult for her to extricate herself. Like Shairp, De Selincourt, STC, and De Quincey, among others, Fairchild is also alert to Dorothy's unusually intense sensibility and honesty of vision which elevates her above the secondary poets of her time: 'among the minor poets of the period, I do not know a keener or more loving eye, a more responsive heart, a gentler, purer, truer utterance than hers' (i). Recognising that Dorothy is not receiving the artistic recognition that she is due, Fairchild believes that the fundamental point which Eigerman's work makes is long overdue: 'For the sake of Dorothy's fame, I could wish that Mr. Eigerman had done this good turn about twenty years ago' (ii).

Eigerman's edition succeeds in raising awareness of Dorothy's comparatively modern poetic vision: she rejects more conventional forms of Romantic expression, as typified by William, and searches for some other mode of expression which allows a poetic outlet through prose. Eigerman also alerts us to Dorothy's undeniable potential for the immediacy of free verse, had she pursued a poetic career. But Eigerman's work is rarely mentioned by critics and is often snubbed as an act of unnecessary violation of Dorothy's journals, even a maverick attempt at superimposing a poetic identity onto Dorothy.⁴²⁶ However, I see Eigerman's edition – or Fairchild's foreword at least – as perhaps one of the strongest attempts to present Dorothy by herself; as Fairchild states in the first sentence of his foreword, 'she deserves to be regarded as a poet in her own right' (i). Fairchild concentrates on identifying Dorothy's integral voice as a poet and what her authorial place is amongst literary tradition, and not merely in relation to William. He pin-points exactly what the poet Dorothy has to offer as being an

⁴²⁶ Beth Darlington in particular criticizes Eigerman's attempt. See 'Reclaiming Dorothy Wordsworth's Legacy' (Johnston and Ruoff 1987, 162-3).

‘immediate sensuous experience’, ‘breathless intentness’, ‘words of simple accuracy which move to a purely organic rhythm’, all delivered with a ‘total absence of self-conscious eloquence’ (ii). Fairchild alludes to the uniqueness within Dorothy’s time of this overlooked offering by pointing out that ‘we must pass onward for nearly a century before we find the same combination of qualities in English poetry’, by which he means early twentieth-century imagist poets, such as Richard Aldington and D. H. Lawrence (ii). It is interesting that both Hartley and Dorothy share Lawrence’s immediacy of vision and expression – a link which I examine further in my discussion of Dorothy’s journals, where I suggest that the immediacy of expression which characterizes the *Grasmere Journals* anticipates Lawrence’s usage of emotion or feeling as a structuring principle of his free verse.

The first half of the twentieth century anthologizes Dorothy primarily as a diary writer: Arthur Ponsonby, Elizabeth d’Oyley, and James Aitken all edit anthologies or reviews of diary writing where Dorothy figures strongly. This is significant as these editors are recognising her extraordinary descriptive powers and contribution to the art of diary writing independently of William; indeed, he is an irrelevance to the purposes of these editions and is hardly mentioned. As Ponsonby asserts, in *More English Diaries: Further Reviews of Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, ‘The value and importance of Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal does not rest on the careful accuracy with which she relates [William’s] doings’.⁴²⁷ Ponsonby, who had previously published *English Diaries, A Review* in 1924 but neglected to include Dorothy, admits that this was an oversight, but one which now allows him to include in his 1927 volume, ‘notice of one of the best diaries written by an Englishwoman’ (Ponsonby

⁴²⁷ Arthur Ponsonby, *More English Diaries: Further Reviews of Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen and Co., 1927), 153.

1927, 147). Dorothy heads the list of nineteenth-century diarists and Ponsonby repeatedly singles out Dorothy's diarist skill as the finest of its kind: he states that her ability 'to describe the sights and sounds of nature' surpasses that of Fanny Burney and Caroline Fox – two female diarists he had included as major diarists in his first volume (147). Ponsonby categorizes Dorothy as a writer of the senses (like Hartley) stating that her nature depictions 'make one feel, see, hear and smell' (147). But her distinctive skill is more than just descriptive – her ability to transform the quotidian into the atmospheric places her, Ponsonby argues, in the realm of poetic power. James Aitken likewise recognizes Dorothy as a supreme example of her particular art form in *English Diaries of the XIX Century 1800-1850*: 'few diaries offer more delightful reading than Dorothy Wordsworth'.⁴²⁸ Aitken's edition is interesting as he pre-emptively the feminist notion that the *Grasmere Journal* is, in fact, extremely self-revealing and, besides displaying her virtuosity for natural description, is a form of oblique auto-biography – 'putting herself down':⁴²⁹ 'most interesting it is to watch the personality of the diarist peeping through the interstices of his entries' (Aitken 1944, 95).

Most tellingly, in Geoffrey Grigson's *The English Year from Diaries and Letters*, published in 1967, out of thirty-one writers included (only four of them women) Grigson asserts that 'The master is Dorothy Wordsworth', a considerable accolade when we consider that she is bracketed in this anthology with some of the most illustrious and established writers of the past two centuries.⁴³⁰ Jane Austen, William Blake, STC, William Wordsworth, Thomas Hardy, John Ruskin, Tennyson, Samuel Pepys, William Cowper, Thomas Gray, and D. H. Lawrence all receive entries,

⁴²⁸ *English Diaries of the XIX Century, 1800-1850*, ed. James Aitken (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1944), 95.

⁴²⁹ See James Holt McGavran, 'Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals: Putting Herself Down', in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (London: Routledge, 1988), 230-53.

⁴³⁰ *The English Year from Diaries and Letters*, ed. Geoffrey Grigson (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), xiv.

but it is Dorothy that Grigson finds to be ‘the supreme Lyrical diarist’ (Grigson 1967, 185).⁴³¹ Dorothy has a total of eighty-nine entries in this anthology, a number exceeded only by Gilbert White (STC has thirty-one entries; William just one entry). Two significant prose anthologies published in the first half of the twentieth century concur with Grigson and Aitken’s representation: Herbert Reed’s *The London Book of English Prose* in 1931, and Russell Noyes’s *English Romantic Poetry and Prose* in 1956.⁴³² Noyes finds her *Scottish Journal* to be ‘a masterpiece for Dorothy and one of the most enjoyable of all books of travel’ believing that she ‘deserves an independent place in literary history as one of the finest of English descriptive writers’.⁴³³ This is a view which matches Maurice Hewlett’s belief that ‘more beautiful interpretation of nature hardly exists in our tongue’ (Hewlett 1924, 229). Thus we can see that by the mid-twentieth century, Dorothy’s independent place as a writer of nature and diaries is being firmly recognized.

Helen Darbishire’s 1958 *Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals* forms the first pre-feminist attempt to champion Dorothy persuasively as an independent writer, to the extent of starting to direct criticism towards William for restricting her independent creativity. Darbishire prints, for the first time, the passages which had been scored out (probably by Dorothy herself). In the very first paragraph of Darbishire’s introduction she stresses Dorothy’s autonomy as a writer: ‘Dorothy Wordsworth comes to us not only as the friend and companion of William Wordsworth, she comes as herself’.⁴³⁴ Darbishire goes on to promote her imaginative intellect: ‘Dorothy was not only the source of poetry in others, she was a creator in her own right’ (Darbishire 1958, xv).

⁴³¹ The other women that Grigson includes are Austen, Katherine Mansfield (who was an admirer of Dorothy), and Ann Radcliffe.

⁴³² Extracts from *SJ*, *AJ*, and *GJ*, and also occasionally one or two poems, are also included in many minor anthologies of the period – see list at the end of this Appendix.

⁴³³ *English Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. Russell Noyes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 448-9.

⁴³⁴ *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Helen Darbishire (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), x.

Colette Clark's 1960 *Home at Grasmere* communicates a somewhat more defeatist impression. Clark's book links extracts from Dorothy's 1800-1803 journals to the corresponding poems of her brother, her intention being to highlight the fact that Dorothy's prose was the primary source and inspiration of his verse. But Clark's book makes no attempt to recognize Dorothy's authorial independence concluding that she 'absorbed herself in her brother's life and work', which, Clark wrongly claims, 'was the only way in which she could fulfil herself, and through it she became an artist in her own right'.⁴³⁵ Clark does, however state in her introduction that her 'little' book is what it is and 'makes no claim whatever to be a work of scholarship or original research' (Clark 1960, 7). Taken in conjunction with other Dorothy Wordsworth scholarship, Clark's work is a valuable and worthy reference book; read in isolation it gives the misleading impression of Dorothy as *only* a devoted sister.

Marjorie Barber offers a more forthright perspective in her selection of Dorothy's Journals in 1965, where she considers Dorothy in relation to William and STC and counters the suggestion that her identity was usurped by William's more dominant authorial presence. Barber rightly notices that Dorothy maintained a consistent hold on her own poetic vision: 'one of the remarkable things about her was, that in spite of her deep humility, she held her own and remained herself, while in daily contact with two men of genius'.⁴³⁶ Barber recognizes Dorothy for her unique offering to literature, observing that 'there is something new in the writing of the [Alfoxden] journal'; an originality which Barber pin-points as 'impressionistic in style' (Barber 1965, xv; see Chapter Three for further discussion of this 'impressionistic' style). After 1965, as we will see, feminist critics become increasingly concerned with re-evaluating

⁴³⁵ *Home at Grasmere: Extracts from the Journal of Dorothy Wordsworth, written between 1800 and 1803, and from the Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Colette Clark (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 9.

⁴³⁶ *A Dorothy Wordsworth Selection*, ed. Marjorie M. Barber (London: Macmillan, 1965), xv.

Dorothy's literary position and this unique contribution begins to gain wider recognition.

Feminist Re-evaluation of Dorothy Wordsworth; 1971–1989

The 1970s and 1980s were the most significant decades for Dorothy Wordsworth criticism and biography as critics began to reevaluate her work on its own terms, as well as in relation to her female contemporaries. Ironically, it was also a time when Dorothy was at most risk of being misrepresented in the often overly aggressive feminist attempt to posit Dorothy as a writer who epitomized subordination due to gender difference. Mary Moorman's 1971 edition of Dorothy's *Journals* uses Darbishire's 1958 text with a number of corrections – the punctuation now conforms much more closely to the original manuscripts, so Moorman is clearly taking more care than previous editors to respect the aesthetics of Dorothy's work. Moorman also begins to draw attention to her verse by including two poems in an appendix, the first modern editor to do so (previously whenever Dorothy's poems had appeared in print it was in editions of William's poems). However, though Moorman's approach is revisionary, she holds back in her assessment of Dorothy as a poet, stating in her biography of William that Dorothy 'had not a creative intellect'.⁴³⁷ Moorman's assertion is challenged in Jonathan Wordsworth's introduction to *The Grasmere Journal*, a new preparation of the text by Pamela Woof in 1987. In comparing Dorothy's daffodil passage from the *Grasmere Journal* to William's daffodil poem Jonathan Wordsworth warns against underestimating Dorothy as the lesser creative of the two; 'to imply that she was

⁴³⁷ Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography, The Early Years, 1770-1803* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 344.

artless', he cautions, is 'to play down Dorothy's achievement', pointing out that her prose depends on the 'writer's imagination' just as much as William's verse.⁴³⁸

Margaret Homans analyses Dorothy against the comparatively high-profile female writers Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson in her 1980 study, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity*. Homans sets out by explaining that Dorothy's case 'demonstrates most effectively the difficulties challenging all women poets' citing her position as sister to a famous male writer as offering the 'best possible locus' for examining the significance of sexual difference in composing poetry, because their environments and so on are the same (Homans 1980, 41). This overly simplistic stance is immediately flawed as it overlooks the unique sibling psychological tensions, which complicate the customary difficulties posed by being a woman attempting to write within a masculine-defined society. Homans wants to argue that 'resistance to poethood originates in sexual difference', but her heavily gender-based approach leaves no room for recognition of the fact that the greatest tension in Dorothy's writing life was sibling-orientated, as Dorothy's letters and writings indicate (Homans 1980, 42). Homans' ultimate argument is that while a writer such as Emily Dickinson managed to detach herself from an inherited definition of poetry, a liberation which allowed her access to the composition of great poetry, Dorothy could not. If she had been able to, Homans argues, she could have been 'as brilliant as Dickinson' (9-10).

Homans, like many critics before her, concedes that Dorothy matched William in terms of poetic power: 'Her potential for language and vision appears to have been just as great as her brother's, as far as such faculties can be measured' (41). But Homans does not give enough credit for what Dorothy *did* achieve, misreading her construction of a fluid identity as a 'habitual fragmentation of identity', a condition

⁴³⁸ *The Grasmere Journal*, ed. Pamela Woof, intr. Jonathan Wordsworth (London: Michael Joseph, 1987), 12.

which Homans diagnoses as almost pathological and which governs and suppresses her entire writing self (70-1). Homans does not allow for more than one type of Romantic identity and, measuring Dorothy against the S. T. Coleridgean and William Wordsworthian theories of imagination, she finds her lacking. Thus Homans is guilty of the same harsh standards of judgement that Dorothy imposed on herself: comparing herself to a masculine writing tradition that was at odds with her own poetics of relationship.

The first full-length study of Dorothy is Susan Levin's seminal work *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*. This study offers a more comprehensive analysis of Dorothy's life and work and is most notable for Levin's attempt to collate and edit her verse for the first time: Levin prints thirty poems in an appendix entitled 'The Collected Poems of Dorothy Wordsworth'.⁴³⁹ Levin is fighting to counter the view that Dorothy has 'generally been seen as a background presence' among the writers of Romanticism (Levin 1987, 1). Levin solidifies the sense of Dorothy as an independent author with ideals that are separate from William's: 'generations of readers who have gone to Dorothy's journals and letters to find out about William Wordsworth and his circle have come away with a sense of the woman as herself an artist' (1). In this way, using models of feminist psychological theory, Levin posits Dorothy as part of an unrecognized movement of feminine Romanticism. In an article upon which her book is based, Levin, as my study does, asserts the importance of focusing on Dorothy's individual conflict and her texts, rather than 'apologizing for her as a typically repressed female', recognising the unsatisfactoriness of turning her 'complicated

⁴³⁹ This is still the only edition of Dorothy's verse in print, and there are many poems by Dorothy that remain unpublished, while no stand-alone edition of her verse exists.

history into a case history in the oppression of women' (as Homans and many others do).⁴⁴⁰

While more positive than Homans's assessment, Levin can, at times, oversimplify the case, especially with regard to Dorothy's later illness. Levin quotes heavily from De Quincey's description of Dorothy's self-conflict, particularly at the end of her book where she labours the point that the inner turmoil which De Quincey notes evinces itself in the constant physical complaints which pervade Dorothy's journals, and in her ultimate mental deterioration. This physical and mental deterioration, Levin argues, was a psychosomatic manifestation of suppressed artistic desire – a view which De Quincey states explicitly in his 'Lake Recollections'.⁴⁴¹ This speculation seems unhelpfully crude after the rigour of her book's analysis and Levin compromises herself critically by succumbing to the myth that De Quincey has created. As Lorna Sage observes in a *TLS* review, 'Celebrating limits ought to be much harder work, particularly for a feminist'.⁴⁴² Levin wants to argue that Dorothy carved out a niche in feminine Romanticism, but also that this liminal position drove her mad, a reductive and slightly misleading diagnosis which I seek to revise.⁴⁴³ Levin stresses the importance of Dorothy's contribution to William's art (putting a numerical measure on this contribution by noting that at least thirty-five of his significant poems were inspired by Dorothy (*MR* 21 (1980): 345)) and criticizes the view that Dorothy is linguistically dependent on her brother. Levin instead suggests that 'Often Dorothy works with words or subjects well before William' and was naturally 'equipped with the language her brother possesses' (Levin 1987, 14, 13). As Shairp asserts: 'I cannot believe that

⁴⁴⁰ Susan M. Levin, 'Subtle Fire: Dorothy Wordsworth's Prose and Poetry', *MR* 21 (1980): 345.

⁴⁴¹ I agree with Meena Alexander who warns that 'The temptation to read the end of her life as entirely symbolic of the female condition must be avoided' (Alexander 1989, 82).

⁴⁴² Lorna Sage, review of *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, by Susan Levin, *TLS* 4471 (9 December 1988): 1377-8.

⁴⁴³ Sage also makes this observation; see *TLS* 4471 (9 December 1988): 1378.

[Dorothy] merely learnt it from him. It must have been innate in both, derived by both from one original source' (Shairp 1874, xl). Levin concludes with the seemingly obvious, but rarely explicitly noted, statement that the 'poetic presence of her brother made it difficult for Dorothy to write poetry' – a view which I develop as being a primary obstacle to Dorothy's construction of an independent publishing poetic identity (Levin 1987, 113). Levin's work is evidently important and influential: from 1990 onwards Dorothy's poems are increasingly included in significant anthologies, both of Romantic writing and female writing (see the anthology list at the end of this appendix).

Levin's ultimate and worthy agenda is to provide a chronological study of the development of Dorothy's ego through an analysis of as much of her output as can possibly be accessed, with a particular emphasis on her verse – often overlooked but which offers vital insight into the final stage of Dorothy's self-realization and her relationship with her brother: 'The dialectical relation of her poems to her brother's poems produces some extraordinary moments that revoke the usual wisdom about her relationship as a writer to her brother' (10). Critics often state that in the act of poetic composition Dorothy was finally confronted with a state of loss, absence, or fracture with regard to her poetic self and in comparison to William's poetics. In my analysis of the poetic dialogue between Dorothy and William (Chapter Five), however, I argue that the dialectic between self-subordination and self-expression finds fullest articulation in her poetry, where, like Hartley, she asserts an independence from her brother, his literature and poetic agenda. I ascertain to what extent we can apply Susan Wolfson's theory that the threat to self which Dorothy discovers through writing poetry was in fact an 'otherness' in her own mind and an inevitable by-product of her poetics of relationship. Just as William's egocentric poetics ultimately confront the 'impotence of self', so Dorothy's community-grounded poetics generate what Wolfson terms its 'own countertexts and spectres of defeat' (Mellor 1988, 162). Meena Alexander also

counters Homans by assessing Dorothy's struggle with her poetic identity as a battle more with herself than with an external force: 'these poems play out a tension within the poet's feminine self, rather than confronting as Margaret Homans has suggested [...] a source of power external to her own', 'Dorothy is forging a trope for her own precarious poise rather than struggling with her brother's egocentric power' (Alexander 1989, 115). Alexander's perspective accords with Fausset who noticed the depth of her conflict from within, rather than without: she had 'a condition of inner conflict which she could not outgrow' (*TLS* 1661 (30 November 1933): 853); that is, the proposition that she was not alienated from a masculine tradition but suffered conflict from within her self and her poetics – a very Romantic confrontation and battle which supports Wolfson's theoretical interpretation.

Meena Alexander's sensitive reading of Dorothy in *Women in Romanticism*, like Levin, views Dorothy's poetics as a renunciation of male-identified power: 'she exemplifies at its finest one possible female response to the call of Romanticism (Alexander 1989, 16). Alexander makes the distinction that whereas a writer such as Mary Wollstonecraft had to exist in a public arena in order to feel that she was really alive, for Dorothy the prospect of becoming public property felt like self-annihilation. Alexander is, however, slightly extreme in her polarization of the two writers in her claim that Dorothy 'denied herself a public and autonomous existence as a writer' (58); as I have shown, Dorothy's autonomy has clearly been acknowledged and accepted as a travel writer, diary writer, and, in particular, writer of natural description. Alexander stresses that 'gender is crucial' in Dorothy's refusal to publish, arguing that 'the creative others closest to William often suffered an involuntary diminishment'; whereas STC chose 'self-dramatisation to cope with his enforced marginality', 'Dorothy chose public silence' (118). And Alexander believes that her refusal to publish was 'a refusal to enter the realm of authorship where the public and patriarchal worlds intersected', a

statement which is not the most definitive appraisal when we consider that Hartley Coleridge also withdrew from publication.

In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne K. Mellor provides one of the most positive assessments of Dorothy and her relationship with William by arguing against those critics who describe Dorothy as lacking self and identity – she states simply that the texts themselves reveal the opposite to be true: ‘Dorothy Wordsworth’s Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals are exceptionally revealing autobiographical self-writing’ (Mellor 1993, 144).⁴⁴⁴ Because Dorothy writes with honesty devoid of conscious artistry and intended her work to be seen only by William, her journals are, in fact, very self-revealing, offering what Mellor praises as ‘one of the most convincingly recorded subjectivities of the Romantic era’ (166). More than other critics, Mellor argues for the viability of a relational self as being a strong articulation of Romantic consciousness, rather than seeing it as a precarious refuge of the weak identity: ‘We need to be able to both recognize this alternative model of subjectivity and to grant it equal status with her brother’s if we are accurately to describe the range of “Romantic self-consciousness”’ (154). Mellor states that Susan Wolfson’s reading of Dorothy’s relational self as ultimately being a more visionary form of self is ‘surely right’ (156). In her attempt to promote Dorothy’s achievements, Mellor slightly under-reads the tensions that are clearly present in her journals – Dorothy’s reaction to William’s wedding, for example – but the primary case that Mellor makes for the acceptance of different modes of subjectivity, shared by men and women alike, is an important one for my comparative study. Dorothy has taught us to look on nature in a different way, Mellor argues: ‘Dorothy Wordsworth could articulate what she saw perhaps as vividly as any writer of English prose; only John Ruskin can equal her ability to teach us *how to see*’ (163).

⁴⁴⁴ Mellor is taking on Homans, James Holt McGavran Jr. – who claims that Dorothy’s relationship with her brother caused her to lose any sense of a strong personal identity – and even Levin, who ultimately finds that Dorothy’s self is unstable and ambivalent (see Homans 1980; Benstock 1988; and Levin 1987).

Paul Hamilton emphasizes further how central the relational self was to Dorothy's being and art in his *Selections from the Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*. Hamilton argues that her connection with William was so central to her being (most likely because of her orphaned state) that she consciously determined the course of her life, as one dedicated to service rather than self-promotion, very early on. As Dorothy states in a letter to Lady Beaumont: 'My only merits are my devotedness to those I love and I hope a charity towards all mankind' (Hill 1985, xiii). If we accept this notion, Hamilton argues, we begin to see her writings in a very different, positive light – in terms of interconnectivity and 'diffuse plurality of being', rather than refusal of subjectivity: 'this optimistic view which accepts Dorothy's own dismissal of fulfilment in marriage and recognises the alternative value she attaches to serving others, needs to be argued for. It crucially affects interpretation of her writings' (Hamilton 1992, xi). Hamilton's premise is linked to Fay's notion that Dorothy's conception of herself and her poetic duty was grounded in a performative aesthetic. Judged by this theoretical interpretation, Hamilton argues, Dorothy's ministry becomes elevated considerably: 'Dorothy's practical conception of her own role then becomes as Miltonic as her poet brother's. Her service couldn't be more poetically high' (Hamilton 1992, xii). As Edmund Lee puts it, 'while she was softening *his* mind she was elevating *herself*' (Lee 1894, 70). Fay's significant work *Becoming Wordsworthian: A Performative Aesthetics* examines the literary relationship between the two writers extensively and puts forward the notion that Wordsworth 'the poet' was an imaginative projection which Dorothy (willingly) inhabited as much as William – as the early *Blackwood's* reviewer noted, 'she was part not only of his life, but of his imagination' (Lee 1894, 20-21). Fay's understanding of their relationship, which I analyse in more detail in Chapter Four, accords with that put forward by Thomas De Quincey, STC, Shairp, and Lee, and is an argument that I promote as I believe it is closer to the truth than the more

aggressively feminist notion that Dorothy was a passive victim of her brother's imaginative appropriation.

Dorothy's *Second Tour of Scotland* was published in 1989, edited by Jiro Nagasawa, printing for the first time those passages which Knight and De Selincourt had seen fit to omit, while Helen Boden edited a new edition of her *Continental Journals* in 1995. Thus we can see that the feminist movement was responsible for bringing to publication Dorothy's previously unpublished travel journals and so building a more comprehensive picture of her as a writer. As Boden remarks: 'If a more comprehensive and representative understanding of [Dorothy Wordsworth] is to be reached, it is essential that both her longer and more "minor" works become more widely known'.⁴⁴⁵ After 1981 Dorothy's prose and verse is included in all the major anthologies of Romantic literature and British literature, but she is still, in part, presented as a figurehead for women's repression, and many resort to the De Quincey myth to provide a shorthand summary of her specific self-conflict as representative of female authorial conflict in general. Only a few late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century anthology editors commit to a sensitive analysis of her work, the most notable being David Perkins' introduction to Dorothy's entry in *English Romantic Writers* (1995) and the inclusion of a Virginia Woolf essay in *The Green Studies Reader* (2000). Perkins praises her original aesthetic achievement which manages to create vivid representations of the natural object that are embedded within intense, undeveloped emotion:

As a writer, Dorothy Wordsworth is unexcelled within her style of reticent natural description. Her phrases present the object vividly to the mind's eye and with an intense, though unexpressed emotion and suggestion (Perkins 1995, 479).

⁴⁴⁵ Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Continental Journals, 1798-1820*, ed. Helen Boden (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1995), v.

Perkins' concentration on what Dorothy withholds reads as a positive diffusion of the 'checked' sensibility which De Quincey saw within Dorothy. In this way, Perkins suggests that Dorothy achieves a pictorial and atmospheric verisimilitude which communicates nature's animism – her luminous descriptions seem palpably alive. It is this ability that Virginia Woolf noted as being 'the gift of the poet rather than of the naturalist, the power which, taking only the simplest facts, so orders them that the whole scene comes before us, heightened and composed' (Woolf 1935, 167). Importantly, Perkins also cites sibling rivalry as the key reason for Dorothy's inability to 'set herself up as an author': 'Having idolized William to the degree that she had, Dorothy could hardly place herself in competition with him' (479).

Laurence Coupe makes the important assertion in *The Green Studies Reader* that what has been overlooked is Dorothy's contribution to the 'green aspect of romanticism'.⁴⁴⁶ As early as the 1920s Virginia Woolf was recognising Dorothy's work as a pioneering example of the Romantic concern with the interaction between humans and nature: 'A sight or a sound would not let her be till she had traced her perception along its course and fixed it in words' (Woolf 1935, 167). Woolf was suggesting, Coupe proposes, 'what is now widely accepted in feminist scholarship, that the *Grasmere Journals* is as important a founding text of romanticism as is anything written by her brother, particularly in its imaginative response to natural scenes and the minute particulars of landscape' (Coupe 2000, 14). Thus by 2000, an ecocritical perspective finally values Dorothy's work on an equal footing to that of her brother and the whole of the Romantic movement. The most recent advance in Dorothy Wordsworth criticism is Kenneth Cervelli's 2007 study *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology*, the first full-scale analysis of her work since Levin's 1987 study. Cervelli is

⁴⁴⁶ *The Green Studies Reader, from Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, ed. Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000), 14.

attempting to fill the significant critical hiatus in recent ecocritical investigations of the Romantic period where, with the exception of Coupe's reader, Dorothy's work is overlooked; an omission which is all the more curious considering the emphasis that such investigations place on the relationship between ecocriticism and feminism. Even post-feminism, it seems that her position as sister of William causes her to be disregarded. Cervelli notes her unjust 'near absence of presence in [...] major ecocritical studies of Romanticism', critics such as Jonathan Bate, Karl Kroeber, and James McKusick mentioning her 'only in relation to William's "Tintern Abbey"' (Cervelli 2007, 7-8). Like STC and William, critics idealize Dorothy, but as Cervelli asserts, by 'not considering more closely the role she played in shaping an environmental awareness that has its origins in the nineteenth century' we do both William and Dorothy a disservice (8). Cervelli's book indicates the way in which Dorothy Wordsworth criticism is now directed: for the first time her prose and poetry is being analysed primarily for its relationship with, and imaginative response to, nature, re-focusing attention onto her independent endeavour and achievement.

Analysis of Dorothy Wordsworth's reception from her lifetime to the present day reveals that there is a consistent thread of criticism which views Dorothy as an independent writer. While the wave of feminist criticism widened access to her literary oeuvre and was the first time that her work was widely appreciated on its own merits, feminism was not solely responsible for recognising Dorothy as a writer worth reading, or even offering the most accurate interpretation of her authorial difficulties and achievements. With the notable exception of Knight, who views her predominantly in relation to her brother, most critics and editors who comprehensively engage with her work are struck by what she has to offer on her own terms. This positive appreciation is, as in Hartley Coleridge's case, often obscured by the more popular mythical notion of her in affiliation, as a devoted sister who 'lost herself' in the identity of her brother.

Publication History, Including Anthology Representation

(Titles in bold are significant editions of Dorothy Wordsworth's texts)

William Wordsworth, *Poems* (London: Longman, 1815).

Includes Dorothy's 'The Cottager to her infant. By a Female Friend', 'An address to a child in a high wind' (as by a 'Female Friend of the Author'), and 'The Mother's Return'.

William Wordsworth, *A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England* (London: Longman, 1822).

The 1822 edition includes Dorothy's account of an excursion up Scawfell Pike, while the 1823 edition added her account of an excursion to Ullswater – she is not credited with the authorship of either account.

Specimens of British Poetesses; selected and chronologically arranged by the Rev. Alexander Dyce (London: T. Rodd, 1827).

William Wordsworth, *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* (London: Longman, 1835). 'Loving and Liking', included as by a 'Female Friend of the Author'.

William Wordsworth, *Poems Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (London: Edward Moxon, 1842).

'The Floating Island at Hawkshead' is published as by 'D.W.' Although this is the fifth poem that reached publication while Dorothy was alive, it is the only poem to be published during her lifetime where she is credited with its authorship.

Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (London: Edward Moxon, 1851).

Includes fragments of Dorothy's *GJ* – first publication of the *GJ*.

The Songs and Ballads of Cumberland, ed. Sidney Gilpin (London: Routledge, 1866). 'The Mother's Return' and 'The Cottager to her Infant'.

Dorothy Wordsworth, *Recollections of a tour made in Scotland AD 1803*, ed. J.C. Shairp (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1874).

Goes through three editions by 1894.

Edmund Lee, *The Story of a Sister's Love* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1886). Reprinted in 1894.

Includes 'The Cottager to her Infant', 'Loving and Liking', 'An Address to a Child in a High Wind', and 'The Mother's Return' – all poems that William had published in various editions of his verse, without crediting Dorothy as their author.

William Knight, *Memorials of Coleorton: Being Letters from Coleridge Wordsworth and His Sister Southey and Sir Walter Scott to Sire George and Lady Beaumont of Coleorton, Leicestershire 1803 to 1834* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887).

William Knight, *The Life of William Wordsworth*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Patterson, 1889).

Includes substantial extracts of *AJ* and *GJ*.

William Knight, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, vol. VIII (London: Macmillan, 1896).

Knight includes 'Peaceful Our Valley, Fair and Green' (actual title is 'Grasmere: A Fragment'), 'Lines Addressed to Joanna H. from Gwerndovennant in June 1826', 'Holiday at Gwerndovennant', 'To my Niece Dora', and 'The Worship of This Sabbath Morn', all of which had never before been published. However, Knight's dating and transcription can differ to the original manuscripts.

***Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. William Knight, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1897).**

Knight omits what he calls 'numerous trivial details'.

Letters of the Wordsworth family from 1787 to 1855, ed. William Knight, 3 vols. (London: Ginn and Co., 1907).

Walter De la Mare, *Come Hither: A Collection of Rhymes and Poems for the Young of all Ages* (London: Constable and Co., 1923).

'The Cottager to her Infant'.

More English Diaries: Further Reviews of Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century, intr. Arthur Ponsonby (London: Methuen and Co., 1927).

A Winter Miscellany, ed. Humbert Wolfe (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1930).

GJ extract listed below William Wordsworth's entry of four poems. Dorothy is one of only two women included in a total of twenty writers.

English Diaries, ed Elizabeth D'oyley (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1930).

Includes selections from *AJ*, *GJ*, and *SJ*.

The London Book of English Prose, sel. Herbert Reed (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1931).

One *GJ* extract: Sunday 31 Aug-3 September.

The Bedside Book: A Miscellany for the Quiet Hours, arr. Arthur Stanley (London: Victor Gollancz, 1932).

Includes an extract from *SJ* and three extracts from *GJ*.

***The Early letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805)*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935).**

***George and Sarah Green: A Narrative*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).**

Literary Friendships in the Age of Wordsworth, ed R. C. Bald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936).

Bald prints extracts from her journals, and extracts from letters that concern her.

The Jackdaw's Nest: A Fivefold Anthology, ed. Gerald Bullett (London: Macmillan and Co., 1939).

A selection of stories, poems, essays and miscellanea excluding anything 'which earlier anthologies have made familiar to all the world'. Includes an 1824 letter, five extracts from *GJ*, and one extract from *AJ*.

The poetry of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. from the journals by Hyman Eigerman (New York, 1940).

***Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1941).**

Printed still with omissions.

English Diaries of the XIX Century, 1800-1850, ed. James Aitken (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1944).

Extracts from *GJ*.

English Romantic Poetry and Prose, ed. Russel Noyes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, 448-49).

Extracts from *GJ*, *AJ*, and *SJ*.

***Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).**

Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: The Later Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

Includes 'A Winter's Ramble in Grasmere Vale'.

The Poetry of Earth: A Collection of English Nature Writings, intr. E. D. H. Johnson (London: Gollancz, 1966).

Includes passages from *GJ* and *AJ*.

The English Year from Diaries and Letters, ed. Geoffrey Grigson (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Includes eighty-nine entries from Dorothy's journals.

***The letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, arranged and edited by the late Ernest De Selincourt, revised by Alan G. Hill, Mary Moorman and Chester L. Shaver, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-1988).**

***Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Mary Moorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).**

Appends 'Address to a Child' and 'A Winter's Ramble in Grasmere Vale'.

Susan Levin and Robert Ready, 'Unpublished Poems from Dorothy Wordsworth's Commonplace Book', *The Wordsworth Circle* IX, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 33-44. Publishes a number of previously unpublished poems.

Romantic Poetry and Prose, ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Selections from *GJ*.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature, ed. M. H. Abrams, vol. II (London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1986).

Selections from *GJ* and *AJ*.

***The Grasmere Journal*, intr. Jonathan Wordsworth (London: Michael Joseph, 1987).**

***The Greens of Grasmere*, ed. Hilary Clark (Wolverhampton: Clark and Howard Books, 1987).**

Susan Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

Collects and publishes thirty of Dorothy's poems for the first time.

Each Returning Day: The Pleasures of Diaries, sel. Ronald Blythe (London: Viking 1989).

GJ and *AJ* selections.

Poetry by English Women: An Anthology, ed. R. E. Pritchard (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1990).

'Grasmere – A Fragment', 'Floating Island', 'Thoughts on my Sick-bed'.

***Selections from the Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Paul Hamilton (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992).**

Women Romantic Poets: An Anthology, 1785-1832, ed. Jennifer Breen (London: J. M. Dent, 1992).

'Address to a Child', 'The Mother's Return', 'Floating Island', 'Loving and liking'.

***The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, vol. VIII: A Supplement of New letters*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).**

***The Continental Journals, 1798-1820*, ed. Helen Boden (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1995).**

English Romantic Writers, ed. David Perkins (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995).

Extracts from *AJ* and *GJ*, and seven poems.

British Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century, ed. Margaret Randolph Higginnet (New York: Penguin, 1996).

Four poems included: 'A Sketch', 'Grasmere – A Fragment', 'After-recollection at Sight of the Same Cottage', and 'Floating Island'.

The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

Eleven extracts from *GJ*; one poem: 'Peaceful our Valley, Fair and Green'.

British Literature, 1780-1830, ed. Anne K. Mellor and Richard E. Matlak (Harcourt Brace College, 1996).

Prints three poems: 'Floating Island', 'Irregular Verse', and 'Thoughts on my Sick-bed', together with extracts from the journals.

Nineteenth-Century Women Poets, An Oxford Anthology, ed. Isobel Armstrong and Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

'Thoughts on my Sick-bed' and 'When Shall I tread Your Garden Path'.

Women Romantics 1785-1832: Writing in Prose, ed. Jennifer Breen (London: J. M. Dent, 1996).

Prints two letters to Lady Beaumont, and an excerpt from 'Journal of a Tour on the Continent'.

***Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ed. Carol Kyros Walker (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997).**

The Longman Anthology of British Literature, vol. II, ed. Susan Wolfson and Peter Manning (New York: Longman, 1999).

Includes twelve *GJ* extracts, eight poems: 'Grasmere a Fragment', 'Address to a Child', 'Irregular Verses', 'Floating Island', 'Lines Intended for my Niece's Album', 'Thoughts on my Sick-bed', 'When Shall I Tread your Garden Path', 'Lines Written (Rather say Begun)', and six letters.

British Poets of the Romantic Era, an Anthology, ed. Paula R. Feldman (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

'Address to a Child in a High Wind' and 'To my Niece Dorothy, a Sleepless Baby'.

The Green Studies Reader, from Romanticism to Ecocriticism, ed. Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000).

Includes Virginia Woolf's essay on Dorothy.

New Penguin Book of English Verse, ed. Paul Keegan (Penguin, 2002).

'Floating Island'.

The Longman Anthology of British Literature, ed. David Damrosch, vol. II: 'The Romantics and their Contemporaries', ed. Susan Wolfson and Peter Manning (Longman, 1999).

Extracts from *GJ* and two poems: 'Thoughts on my Sick-bed' and 'Grasmere a Fragment'.

101 Poems by 101 Women, ed. Germaine Greer (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).

Greer's aim is to choose poems 'written from the point of view of a woman and most of them about being female'. Her main criterion: that 'all of these poems have a life of their own'. Greer includes 'Thoughts on my Sick-bed'.

Romanticism: An Anthology, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

Five extracts from *GJ*; seven poems: 'A Cottage in Grasmere Vale', 'After-recollection at sight of the Same Cottage', 'A Winter's Ramble in Grasmere Vale', 'A Sketch', 'Floating Island', 'Thoughts on my Sickbed', and 'When shall I tread your garden path'. Wu's 2005 edition includes just four poems.

The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals, ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

*Appendix II**Illustrations*

- I. Hartley Coleridge, aged ten, by Sir David Wilkie, 1806-7.
- II. Hartley Coleridge, aged forty-nine, four years before his death, from a portrait by Mr Tyson, 1845.
- III. Hartley Coleridge, aged forty-nine, 1845.



- I. Hartley Coleridge, aged ten, by Sir David Wilkie, 1806-7. Reproduced with permission from the Wordsworth Trust. This is the portrait most often associated with Hartley as it closely resembles his immortalization in STC's 'Christabel' ('A faery Thing with red round Cheeks'; Part II, l. 658) and William's 'To H. C., Six Years Old' ('Faery Voyager!'; 'Thou art a Dew-drop, which the morn brings forth', ll. 5, 27).



- II. Hartley Coleridge, from a portrait by Mr Tyson, 1845. As reproduced in *New Poems* (1942). First published in *Essays and Marginalia*, ed. Derwent Coleridge (1851). Reproduced with permission from Priscilla Coleridge Cassam.



- III. Unpublished print from the daguerreotype, taken in Keswick, Lake District, 1845. Reproduced with permission from Priscilla Coleridge Cassam. In Hartley's last recorded letter to his mother, dated Summer 1845, Hartley writes: 'You have probably seen my daguerreotyped likeness – and started with horror

to conceive yourself the Mother of such a hideous old Man' (*LHC*, 282). Griggs notes that the picture 'presents an old man, not of 50, but of 80' (282n).

Appendix III

Sonnet by Hartley Coleridge included in a letter to Mrs. Samuel Taylor Coleridge,

Downshire Place, Hampstead, October 28, 1836:

If, when you were a living man, my Sire,
 I shrank unequal from the task to praise
 The increasing worth of your successive days
 What shall I do, when your celestial fire,
 Its earthly fuel extinguished, higher, higher,
 Purged from the passionate subject of all lays,
 From all that Fancy fashions or obeys,
 And every breeze that eddies round the lyre
 Is altogether what I dreaded most?
 No genius could aright the likeness paint
 While upon earth an erring, suffering saint,
 The best of earth, was all that you could boast
 That best to honour if my will was faint,
 How shall I praise you in the heavenly host?

(LHC, 199).

PETER BELL

A satire upon the Poet Laureate's celebrated production.

COME listen, my friend, Stephen Otter,
 Pope and Dryden I mean to surpass
 With a tale of a wonderful potter
 And a very remarkable Ass.

For the potter his name it was Peter,
 Sure some of you know Peter Bell,
 But as for the Donkey poor *creatur*
 What they called it I never could tell.

Some poets begin in the middle
 And some by invoking a muse,
 But that's only like tuning the fiddle
 And in fact not of half so much use.

But you like to hear the beginning,
 Of a Life all the ins and the outs,
 And to go as far back as the pining
 Of the hero in swaddling clouts.

Of ancestry lineage and such like
 Their lengthy narration to swell
 Is a thing that Welch bards very much like –
 Of what family came Peter Bell?

If his lineage was Saxon or Norman
 Or Danish no annals record,
 His father might perhaps be a Carman
 He *possibly* might be a Lord.

A MOTHER most certainly had he,
 An itinerant dealer in delf,
 But she ne'er told him who was his daddie,
 For she wasn't quite certain herself.

Howso'er his existence began near
 A Hayrick, for there he was whelp'd;
 His cradle was nought but a pannier –
 'Tis low but it cannot be help'd.

You have heard of those wonderful Minors
 That were nursed by a Wolf, I dare say;
 So had Peter an ass for his drynurse,
 And she lull'd him to sleep with her bray.

Dame Nature will sometimes exhibit
 Prophetical marks in the skin,
 So Peter was mark'd with a gibbet,
 The sign of original sin.

For Peter no mortal was sponsor,
 For he never was christened, poor lamb;
 So *God-mother* sure he had none, Sir,
 Yet the first word he lisp'd was *god dam*.

Than Peter no lad cut be 'cuter
 Yet he often had wanted a meal,
 If the Tinker his travelling Tutor
 Had not trained his young genius to steal.

(*NP*, 99-100)

OH – why, my Brother, are we thus apart
 Never to meet, but in abortive dreams,
 That ever break away, in shuddering screams,
 Leaving a panting vacancy of heart?
 How often from my restless bed I start
 Thinking to find thee – not yet half awake
 Till sergeant Memory, with an angry shake

Tells me where I am; while alas! thou art
Conversing sweetly with night-warbling thought,
That makes thy every pulse an answered prayer
For her, the dear bird in thy meshes caught
Whom seeing not, tho feel'st to be most fair.
Come gently on my visions, bless my sight,
Let me not always be an Anchorite.

[Dale End, October 6, 1835.]

(*NP*, 71)

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