

To Things Unknown and Without Bound: The Travels of William Wordsworth

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Introduction

Wordsworth was a remarkable traveller. 'Itinerancy' at the turn of the nineteenth century suggests both travel for leisure and 'travel in connection with some employment or vocation' (*OED*). This paper explores Wordsworth's itinerancy in both senses: his tours in Britain and on the continent as ends in themselves, and in relation to his 'vocation' of poet. The paper surveys the factors that shaped his lifelong itinerancy: love of walking and travel; avoidance of a conventional career; pecuniary need; sociability; intellectual curiosity; employment; and romantic love. Wordsworth was an itinerant on a local, national, and international scale. Sometimes he planned his travels; sometimes he travelled impulsively; and sometimes he was forced to travel. From his schoolboy ramblings to his late 'Grand Tour' of Italy, travel affected Wordsworth's intellectual, social and poetic development. This paper gives a chronological overview of Wordsworth's major travels outside England, and explores connections and contrasts between different tours. The paper relates the biographical and historical materials of his travelling and tours to some of the poetry that originated from them, in order to provide a spatial and temporal map for the poetic and philosophical development of Wordsworth's itinerant verse.

The paper will argue that early travel determined not only central aspects of Wordsworth's poetic philosophy, but also the choice of his career as poet. Wordsworth the poet is inextricably connected to Wordsworth the traveller, but not always in the ways we might expect. Thanks in part to the literary and cultural legacy of the 'spirit of the age' of

Romanticism in the nineteenth century, we are used to thinking that travel inevitably broadens the mind, develops skills, and opens new possibilities for life and work.¹⁾ In Wordsworth's case, the first two effects are clear. His travels helped to form his democratic and republican ideologies in the late eighteenth century, developed his skills in languages, and gave him the materials for much of his early mature poetry.

On the other hand, instead of opening new possibilities for his career, Wordsworth's travels often resulted from him having no other option. Furthermore, his early travels often did not create new opportunities, but limited them to few or none. Before 1800, the effects of these travels on his life and financial position were often drastic. In contrast, after about 1803, Wordsworth's travels largely conformed to the model of the tourism of an increasingly established and successful gentleman. Wordsworth wrote an abundance of 'tour poetry' based on his later travels, especially his continental tours of 1820, 1828, and 1837, and his Scottish tours of 1831 and 1833. However, this later, itinerary-based tour poetry demonstrates the important difference between poetry written while travelling, and poetry written about leisure tourism. The former represents Wordsworth's struggles for identity, freedom, security, and artistic development. The latter—with important exceptions—represents the self-confidence and establishment values typical of the pre-Victorian verse of Wordsworth's late years.

Childhood Travels

Wordsworth's travels began in his childhood, and carried him increasingly far from home; sometimes travel substituted for having a home itself. His first travels were on foot in the Lake District, exploring the landscapes of Hawkshead, fifty kilometres from his childhood home in Cockermouth. In

1) For the phrase 'spirit of the age', see, William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age: or Contemporary Portraits* (London: Colburn, 1825). Hazlitt's collection of portraits is itself an early nineteenth-century construction of Romanticism with its own agenda. For Hazlitt's brilliant but misleading portrait of Wordsworth and his poetry, see pp.231–50.

The Prelude, Wordsworth describes how he returned to Hawkshead during his summer holidays from Cambridge University. There,

in the public roads at eventide
I saunter'd, like a river murmuring
And talking to itself...²⁾

Travel in *The Prelude* is repeatedly associated with feelings of freedom and independence; to the creative imagination, symbolised as a river or breeze; and to the physical process of Wordsworth's poetic composition. The image of the 'public road' recurs, and in Book 12 assumes a central role in Wordsworth's perception of his education and experience:

Few sights more please me than a public road:
'Tis my delight; such object hath had power
O'er my imagination since the dawn
Of childhood, when its disappearing line,
Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep
Beyond the limits which my feet had trod,
Was like a guide into eternity,
At least to things unknown and without bound;
Even something of the grandeur which invests
The Mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness early in my mind
Surrounded, too, the Wanderers of the Earth,
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more... (Reed, *Prel-13* 12.145-57)

Wordsworth would not sail the roaring sea until he was twenty, but was a 'Wanderer of the Earth' from his childhood.

Before his first tour of the Alps in 1790, Wordsworth's travels centred

2) *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, by William Wordsworth, ed. Mark L. Reed (Ithaca and London: 2 vols., Cornell University Press, 1991), 4.109-11. Hereafter *Prel-13*.

on the Lakes, then expanded to include Cambridge and London. He spent long periods away from the family home in Cockermouth, living unhappily with his maternal grandparents the Cooksons in Penrith. His mother died in March 1778, and in May 1779 Wordsworth entered the grammar school at Hawkshead. The journey from Hawkshead to Cockermouth, past Grasmere and Keswick—a long day's walk for an adult—was a significant distance for a nine-year-old boy. Wordsworth delighted in the freedom of his school years and recalled at the end of his life that he had 'spent half of his boyhood in running wild among the Mountains'.³⁾

Walking and exploration dominate the memories of these years, and local adventures provide key episodes for *The Prelude*. Readers must remember that this poem, Wordsworth's autobiographical epic, conflates or alters the chronologies and facts of some of his travels, whether intentionally or not. Yet the biographical and poetic record of Wordsworth's childhood clearly demonstrates his proclivity for exploration and travel; his fearless, occasionally reckless, attitude towards it; and his constant exploration of his environment through long-distance walking, climbing, swimming, ice-skating, rowing, and horse-riding. The first example Wordsworth gives of the 'spots of time' in *The Prelude*—one of the cornerstones of his poetic philosophy—is a memory of riding 'At a time/ When scarcely (I was then not six years old)/ My hand could hold a bridle' (Reed, *Prel*–13 11.279–81).

The death of John Wordsworth on 30 December 1783 gave a further impulse to his son's itinerant tendencies. Wordsworth left the Lake District for the first time in October 1787 to matriculate at Cambridge. Although he spent the long vacation of 1788 (and likely that of 1789 also) in Hawkshead and Penrith, and was briefly reunited with his sister Dorothy at Keswick in 1794, he would not call the Lakes his home again for more than twelve years. The poet whom British literature now associates most strongly with

3) *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, eds. Ernest De Selincourt et al., 2nd ed. (Oxford: 7 vols., Clarendon Press, 1967), 4: 733. Hereafter *WL*.

the Lakes and the Romantic-period 'Lake Poets' wrote about this landscape from memory, rather than daily experience, until he was almost thirty. By this time, his mature style had settled. Wordsworth's confidence in his poetry developed through personal and poetic crises centred not on the Lakes but in southern England, Wales, and in France and Germany.

Cambridge and the Alps, 1790

Wordsworth's Cambridge years mark the beginning of his international travels. Lack of enthusiasm for his studies, combined with his passion for walking and a desire to see revolutionary France, likely motivated his audacious plan of a walking tour of France and the Alps in the summer of 1790 with fellow student Robert Jones. Jones became a lifelong friend, and lamented his inability to return to the continent with Wordsworth in 1820, when the poet retraced his steps. The pair's itinerary suggests (perhaps deceptively) no direct interest in revolutionary politics; they arrived in Calais on 13 July 1790, but did not go to Paris. Nevertheless, they were in France on the first anniversary of the revolution:

'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.
Bound, as I said, to the Alps, it was our lot
To land at Calais on the very eve
Of that great federal Day, and there we saw,
In a mean City, and among a few,
How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy of tens of millions. Southward thence
We took our way direct through Hamlets, Towns,
Gaudy with reliques of that Festival,
Flowers left to wither on triumphal Arcs,
And window-Garlands. (Reed, *Prel-13* 6.352-64)

Their route took them from Calais to Lyons, then to Lake Geneva and

the vale of Chamonix.⁴⁾ Their itinerary reflects an interest in antiquarianism as well as nature; on 4-5 August, they visited the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse (Reed, *CEY* 103; *WL* 1: 30). They crossed the Alps at the Simplon Pass, without realising they had done so until they began their descent (*WL* 1: 31-2; Reed, *Prel-13* 6.512-24). This experience of disappointment produced a pivotal moment in Wordsworth's ideas on the imagination when transformed into verse in 1804:

Imagination! lifting up itself
 Before the eye and progress of my Song
 Like an unfathered vapour; here that Power,
 In all the might of its endowments, came
 Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,
 Halted, without a struggle to break through.
 And now recovering, to my Soul I say
 'I recognise thy glory'. In such strength
 Of usurpation, in such visitings
 Of awful promise, when the light of sense
 Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
 The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode,
 There harbours whether we be young or old.
 Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
 Is with infinitude, and only there;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be. (Reed, *Prel-13* 6.525-42)

The key point about this passage is that it was written in 1804; Wordsworth did not have the philosophical knowledge or poetic skills to express this revelation in 1790. Then, as a university student, his descriptions of

4) Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: a Chronology of the Early Years 1770-1799* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 99-105. Hereafter *CEY*.

landscape (as we have them from his letters) follow the main trends of eighteenth-century thought, from poets such as Gray and Thompson, and writers on the artistic schools of the picturesque and the sublime, such as Thomas Gilpin. It took Wordsworth fifteen years to transform his vivid memories of travel into the permanence of a new kind of autobiographical and philosophical verse.

Wordsworth and Jones continued southeast to Lake Maggiore, through Lakes Lugano and Como, then circled back north to Lucerne. Heading northwest, they reached Lake Constance, and proceeded into Germany. On 8 September they visited the Schaffhausen Falls on the Rhine, then returned to Lucerne. For the final leg of the tour they walked northwest to Basel, then travelled almost the entire length of the Rhine by boat to Cologne. In 1821, Wordsworth recalls this leg of the tour in 'Author's Voyage Down the Rhine (Thirty Years Ago)' (Curtis, Denny-Ferris, and Heydt-Stevenson 363). The two men returned home from Belgium, rather than France, via Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) and Ostend, arriving at Dover around 11 October.

The physical achievement of this tour was remarkable. The total distance of the three-month journey was almost 4,800km, of which at least 3,200km were completed on foot. They walked in mountainous terrain, on average more than 45km per day, and sometimes more than 62km. According to an 1821 letter from Jones, they 'generally walked 12 or 15 miles before breakfast'.⁵⁾ They completed the tour 'having spent not more than twelve pounds' (about £500 today) from a budget of £20 (*WL* 1: 32). Wordsworth's physical abilities as a walker would remain strong even in his final continental tour of 1837. Similarly, while not parsimonious, he remained diligent in minimizing travel expenses throughout his life, even when he could afford more luxurious transport and accommodation.

Despite the details of Wordsworth's letters, and the reconstruction of the tour in verse in 1804, the portrait of Wordsworth and Jones in the Alps in 1790s remains incomplete. We know that the two young men carried

5) Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 45.

their clothing in 'bundles... upon our heads, with each an oak stick in our hands'. But as Stephen Gill asks:

What kind of boots did they wear? Were they shaved from time to time by a village barber, or did they grow beards? How did schoolboy French stand up and how much of his pocket copy of Ariosto did Wordsworth find time to read? There is so much that one would like to know... (Gill 45)

London and Wales, 1791

Shortly after returning from his first escape to the continent, Wordsworth lived temporarily in London, for four months in 1791 (likely late January to late May). Although London was never a proper home to Wordsworth, he spent a great deal of time in the city over the course of his life. Wordsworth's detailed description of living in London in Book 7 of *The Prelude* conflates his experiences of 1791 with other visits he made to the capital in 1793, 1795, 1796, and 1802.⁶⁾ The poetry combines impressions and experiences from all of these visits, making an exact chronology of Wordsworth's life in 1791 difficult to determine.

Nevertheless, Book 7 of *The Prelude* provides a memorable portrait of a city in its ascendancy at the turn of the nineteenth century. As *The Prelude* was not published until after Wordsworth's death in 1850, it could have had no effect on pre-Victorian or Victorian portraits of London prior to that year (so in the case of Charles Dickens, it could have influenced nothing earlier than *Bleak House*, serialised 1852-3). Wordsworth's depiction of London is therefore significant, both for the power of its poetry, and its prescient imagery of Victorian urban literature. He describes a teeming globalised city, a city of continual travellers like himself:

Briefly, we find, if tired of random sights,

6) See Gill 49, 50, 51, 52, 53–56 (1791); 89–90 (1795); 104–5 (1796); and 210 (1802).

And haply to that search our thoughts should turn,
 Among the crowd, conspicuous less or more,
 As we proceed, all specimens of man
 Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
 And every character of form and face;
 The Swede, the Russian; from the genial South
 The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote
 America the Hunter Indian; Moors,
 Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese,
 And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.
 At leisure let us view from day to day,
 As they present themselves, the Spectacles
 Within doors, troops of wild Beasts, birds and beasts
 Of every nature, from all Climes convened:
 And, next to these, those mimic sights that ape
 The absolute presence of reality,
 Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
 And what earth is, and what she hath to shew...

(Reed, *Prel*–13 7.233–51)

Wordsworth left London around the end of May 1791 to visit his friend and travelling companion Robert Jones at the parsonage of Plas-yn-Llan in the village of Llangynhafal (*WL* 1: 49). The two young men completed a tour of North Wales of which ‘Much of the itinerary... remains in doubt’, but probably included ‘Conway Castle and the Penmaenmawr area, the Aberystwyth-Devil’s Bridge area, [and] the upper portions of the river Dee’ (Reed, *CEY* 119, 317 and Appendix 7). The Dedication to *Descriptive Sketches*, published before Wordsworth’s 1793 walk through Wales, mentions highlights of the 1791 itinerary (Birdsall 34).

Most significantly, the 1791 tour of Wales includes Wordsworth’s ascent of Mount Snowdon, an experience put into verse in late February 1804 as the intended climax of the five-book *Prelude* (J. Wordsworth, Abrams, and Gill 458). This passage and its ‘perfect image of a mighty

Mind' lie at the heart of Wordsworth's philosophy (Reed, *Prel-13* 13.69). To address only its implications for his itinerary verse, it is noteworthy that in this experience, 'The Soul, the Imagination of the whole' is lodged in a 'thorough-fare'—the 'breach' in a cloud-ocean 'Through which the homeless voice of waters rose' (*Prel-13*, 13.64, 62, 63). The words 'thorough-fare' and 'homeless' attest respectively to Wordsworth's perception of travel as a central source of inspiration to his creative mind, and to the instability this realisation was causing in his life in 1791.

The tour covered about 450km (Hayden, *Wales* 15). It likely included a visit to Devil's Bridge, about which Wordsworth would write in 1824—another example of his storing up experiences for decades while they ripened into verse. Wordsworth returned to London by 14 September, in order to refuse the offer of a position in the clergy offered by his cousin John Robinson (Reed, *CEY* 120). In a letter to his friend William Mathews from this time, Wordsworth expresses not only his passion for travel, but also his desire to find his independence through it:

I see many charms in the idea of travelling, much to be enjoyed and much to be learnt, so many that were we in possession of perhaps even less than an hundred a year apiece... I would set out with you this moment with all my heart... not entertaining a doubt but that by some means or other we should be soon able to secure ourselves... independence... and what is more with minds furnished with such a store of ideas as would enable us to enjoy it. (*WL* 1: 69)

Wordsworth achieved this goal over the next decade, though not as he could have imagined, and not without much suffering and sacrifice.

France 1791-2

As mentioned above, despite the central importance of the 1790 walking tour and the 1791 Welsh tour to the philosophy of *The Prelude*, these travel experiences could not find adequate expression in Wordsworth's verse until 1804. In the meantime, Wordsworth's first published volumes were

also itinerant verse, but annotated loco-descriptive poetry. Although they represent Wordsworth's developing talents rather than his best mature verse, *An Evening Walk* (1793) and *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) make invaluable contributions to any study of Wordsworth's travel writing.

The former, composed during Wordsworth's long vacations from university in 1788-9, gives a topographical description of a walk through the Lake District. Wordsworth writes explicitly from the perspective of a tourist, a returning prodigal in search of his lost youth: 'Fair scenes! with other eyes, than once, I gaze...' (Averill ll.17). Using the familiar metaphor of life as journey, the poem opens with a plea to the landscape:

Return Delights! with whom my road begun,
When Life reared laughing up her morning sun... (Averill ll.27-8)

Later walking tours and travels would produce poetry (including 'Tintern Abbey' and long sections of *The Prelude*) that directly engages with memory and experience, but without the distortions of the eighteenth-century Claude glass of sensibility, which in this poem allows sentimental lines such as, 'While, Memory at my side, I wander here,/ Starts at the simplest sight th'unbidden tear...' (Averill ll.43-4). The other key difference between *An Evening Walk* and subsequent itinerant poetry is Wordsworth's decision not to describe a specific route:

the plan of [the poem] has not been confined to a particular walk or an individual place; a proof (of which I was unconscious at that time) of my unwillingness to submit the poetic spirit to the chains of fact and real circumstance. The country is idealized, rather than described in any one of its local aspects. (Curtis 15)

Later tour poetry will reverse this proposition and reveal to Wordsworth how the 'chains of fact and real circumstance' are not chains at all, but an opportunity for a new kind of topographical poetry that 'grips the reader because of the specificity with which experience of many kinds is

rendered' (Gill 239).

In contrast to *An Evening Walk, Descriptive Sketches* developed out of more recent experience: Wordsworth's return to France, and life there from November 1791 to December 1792. If the 1790 walking tour was an escape from his student responsibilities, then Wordsworth acknowledged that his 1791 travels must either serve as only a temporary delay to the life of a clergyman, or build towards a different career. He now felt that the former path was impossible.⁷⁾ Thus his second visit to France would have to result in 'some little improvement, which God knows I stand in sufficient need of' (*WL* 1: 69). Despite his increasing involvement in London's radical circles through Samuel Nicholson and Joseph Johnson, 'improvement', rather than politics, remained Wordsworth's *stated* motivation behind his return to the continent. His later account of the tour supports this view (Reed, *Prel-13* 9.45–9; C. Wordsworth 1: 15).

Wordsworth borrowed £40 from his Uncle Richard Wordsworth of Whitehaven in November 1791 to finance his travel (*WL* 1: 61, n1; Reed, *CEY* 122). He reached Dieppe on 27 November, and travelled to Paris via Rouen. Wordsworth stayed in Paris from the night of 30 November to 5 December. *The Prelude* ticks off the sights of revolutionary Paris as on a tourist's itinerary:

Through Paris lay my readiest path, and there
I sojourned a few days, and visited
In haste each spot of old and recent fame—
The latter chiefly—from the field of Mars
Down to the suburbs of St. Anthony,
And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,

7) 'I am doomed to be an idler throughout my whole life. I have read nothing this age, nor indeed did I ever... what must I do amongst that immense wilderness [of Asian languages], who have no resolution, and who have not prepared myself... by any sort of discipline amongst the Western languages?' (*WL* 1: 62).

I saw the revolutionary power
 Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
 The Arcades I traversed in the Palace huge
 Of Orleans, coasted round and round the line
 Of tavern, brothel, gaming-house, and shop,
 Great rendezvous of worst and best... (Reed, *Prel-13* 9.40–53)

Wordsworth was not just a tourist, but a tourist 'In haste'. Nevertheless, he involved himself in revolutionary politics by visiting the National Assembly and the Jacobin Club, and associating with the 'Girondins' – neither a formal political party, nor a particularly moderate group, though later represented as such by Robespierre. Moorman hazards that Wordsworth's contact at the National Assembly was one of the Girondins, since that faction bore philosophical sympathies close to Wordsworth's own, due to 'the heady influence of Rousseau' (*WL* 1: 71; *Moorman* 1: 172; *Roe* 43, 53).

The descriptions of France in both *Descriptive Sketches* and *The Prelude* point, directly and obliquely, to Wordsworth's personal and political crises of the early 1790s. Wordsworth arrived in Orléans on 6 December and remained there until at least February 1792, then moved to Blois (Reed, *CEY* 129). His political interest in the revolution may date from his Cambridge years and his 1790 tour, but the 'distinct political identity' of his republicanism formed at Blois in the spring and summer of 1792 (*Roe* 49–59; Reed, *Prel-13* 9.294–437, 511–34).

The bulk of *Descriptive Sketches* must have been composed at Blois, after mid-May 1792; Wordsworth later records the experiences of Orléans and Blois directly and allegorically in *The Prelude*, Books 9 and 10. The creative impulse for *Descriptive Sketches* lay not only the beauty of the river Loiret and its environs around La Source at Orléans, but the emotional context of the spring of 1792. Likely through his friends the Dufours at Orléans, Wordsworth had met Paul Vallon of Blois and his sister Marie Anne (called Annette). Annette was a Catholic royalist, four years older than Wordsworth. They seem to have quickly fallen in love. Wordsworth was

with Annette at her home in Blois, southwest of Orléans, throughout the spring, until 3 September. The tone of *Descriptive Sketches* suggests this transformation in Wordsworth's life, with his joyful descriptions of the Loiret contrasting with the 'fainter pang of moral grief' of the poem's conclusion (Birdsall 1.754).

Wordsworth was either in Paris, or already back in London, when his daughter was born in Orléans. The only fact we know is that he could have married Annette, but did not (Gill 65). Annette's love letters clearly suggest that she expected Wordsworth to marry her.⁸⁾ Caroline was baptised on 15 December 1792, and her father recorded as 'Williams Wordswodsth, Anglois' (Legouis 25).

Wordsworth likely left France only because he ran out of money and could not borrow more from his family (Moorman 1: 201–2). He returned to England in mid-to-late December, probably intending to accept the offer of a job from his uncle William Cookson and then bring Annette and Caroline to England (Reed, *CEY* 139; Moorman 1: 186). But this road to security had closed (Moorman 1: 212–3). Wordsworth was 22 years old, and almost the archetype of an itinerant: he had his university degree, but no parents, no home, and no income. He was the father of an illegitimate child. Furthermore, with the bloodshed of the revolution turning the English government and people against France, Wordsworth was 'an alien in his own country' (Gill 70). In May 1792 he had written from France that England was 'a free country, where every road is open' (*WL* 1: 77). Only six months later, his opinion had changed dramatically.

8) 'Come, my love, my husband, and receive the tender embraces of your wife, of your daughter... She grows more like you every day. I seem to be holding you in my arms. Her little heart often beats against my own; I seem to feel her father's... I shall say to her: "Caroline, in a month... in a week... you are going to see the most beloved of men, the most tender of men"' (Moorman 1: 180–1; Legouis 125–33). Wordsworth never received this letter, or any of Annette's other letters from 1792; they were seized by the French authorities.

England and Wales, 1793

Without a fixed home or a job, Wordsworth did one of the only things he could do: he travelled. He borrowed five guineas from his older brother Richard, and went on a tour of the west of England and the Isle of Wight with William Calvert (*WL* 1: 97–8). In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth records his ‘spirit overcast’ and ‘thought of woes to come,/ And sorrow for mankind, and pain of heart’ while looking at the sea from the Isle of Wight (Reed, *Prel*–13 10.304, 305–6). The English naval fleet—a ‘brood of gallant creatures’—was gathering in the Solent, preparing for the ‘unworthy service’ of war with France (Reed, *Prel*–13 10.294, 291).

Wordsworth and Calvert left the Isle of Wight in late July or early August, and travelled into Dorset. At some point, Calvert’s horse bolted and destroyed the carriage (*WL* 1: 109). Calvert rode his horse home, although ‘It is strange that the two friends went on separately’ (Gill 74). Wordsworth walked across Salisbury Plain to Bath and Bristol, and crossed the Severn to the banks of the Wye. On foot, he then followed an uncertain route that took him past Tintern Abbey, Goodrich Castle, Hay, and Builth Wells, then across north Wales, to Robert Jones at Plas-y-n-Llan (Reed, *CEY* 315–6).

Wordsworth travelled approximately 500km, of which he walked about 370km (Hayden, *Wales* 78). This solitary tour gave Wordsworth some of his most powerful experiences of nature and human life, and influenced the composition and revision of his verse until 1842. According to *The Prelude*, it took Wordsworth three days to cross Salisbury Plain on foot. Exhausted and probably without sufficient food or water, he fell asleep among the megaliths of the ancient monument of Stonehenge. Later, he was caught in the open during a ferocious thunderstorm, with hailstones up to fifteen centimetres in diameter (Gill 74). His imagination created powerful impressions—possibly hallucinations—of ancient Britons and Druids (Reed, *Prel*–13 12.318–36). These experiences inspired his third long poem, *Salisbury Plain*, and passages for *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* (Bushell, J. A. Butler, and Jaye 3.141–52).

The tour also marked Wordsworth’s first visit to Tintern Abbey,

recalled in his 'Poem Upon the Wye' of 1798 (now called 'Tintern Abbey'), and in lines in *The Tuft of Primroses* (1808) (Kishel 53, ll.478–92). At Goodrich Castle, Wordsworth spoke with the little girl who became the subject of 'We Are Seven'. Finally, Wordsworth shared the road between Built Wells and Hay-on-Wye with a tinker, who told him 'strange stories', and formed the basis for Wordsworth's character of Peter Bell (Curtis 70; Hayden, *Wales* 20, 22).

France, 1793

We have no clear idea how long Wordsworth stayed with Robert Jones. He might have lived with him for four months, until Christmas 1793, or only a few weeks, in which case he may have returned to France in September or October 1793 (Reed, *CEY* 147). Evidence for his return to France rests largely on a single comment from about 1840, when Wordsworth told the historian Thomas Carlyle that he had witnessed the execution by guillotine of the Girondin journalist A. J. Gorsas on 7 October 1793 (Carlyle 303; Roe 40–2).⁹ As an expert on the French Revolution, Carlyle would not have misheard the name of Gorsas. Similarly, in 1840, Wordsworth had no reason to lie in order to impress Carlyle or to defend his own personal history; by then, Wordsworth was an internationally acclaimed poet and soon-to-be Poet Laureate (from 1843). His affair with Annette Vallon was known to his family, but would not become public knowledge until 1922.

All English people in Paris were arrested on 10–14 October, so Wordsworth would have been reckless indeed to travel to the city (Alger 145). He had not been in Paris for the September Massacres of 1792, but witnessed the aftermath of the carnage before he returned to London (Reed, *Prel-13* 9.38–82). Possibly Wordsworth managed to borrow money surreptitiously from friends such as the Calverts or Robert Jones. He might have been able to land in France under the protection of the Girondins. But

9) Carlyle, one of the most significant Victorian historical writers, was already the author of the famous three-volume *The French Revolution: A History* (1837) when he spoke to Wordsworth in 1840. (This was the main historical source used by Charles Dickens to write his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.)

either on the coast, or in Paris, he would have learned that Robespierre's control of Paris was total. Wordsworth would not have survived a trip to Blois to see Annette.

Wales, 1798

After the murky years of 1790-3, more documentary evidence substantiates Wordsworth's travels. From May 1794 to March 1798, Wordsworth made a relatively stable life in England, although he changed his home three times in four years. His stay with Dorothy at Windy Brow, Keswick, was always temporary, as the farmhouse was a loan from William Calvert. For their first proper home together, William and Dorothy lived rent-free at Racedown (between Crewkerne and Lyme, Dorset) from September 1795 to July 1797. Dorset therefore serves as the setting for the first drafts of *The Ruined Cottage* and other poems that become a part of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth's move from Racedown to Alfoxden in summer 1797 was motivated by his desire to live near the journalist, poet, and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge at Nether Stowey. Nevertheless, the 'large mansion' of Alfoxden itself was almost motivation enough for the move, as it provided superlative accommodation at a rent the Wordsworths could afford (*WL* 1: 190). The loss of Alfoxden less than a year later—after local gossip suggested that Wordsworth and Coleridge were political radicals or French spies—was an unpleasant shock.

Yet once again, forced itinerancy proved a stimulus for Wordsworth's creativity. From late June 1798 to April 1799, his accommodation depended on his travels, and his travels produced significant poetry. The first 'tour' of this period was the return to the Wye valley. Wordsworth and Dorothy left Alfoxden on 25 June, and spent time at Nether Stowey (Coleridge was probably absent); with Wordsworth's future publisher Joseph Cottle in Bristol; and with their friend James Losh in Shirehampton. They then made a four- or five-day tour of the Wye, including Tintern Abbey and Goodrich Castle, likely from 10-13 July (Reed, *CEY* 241-4; Griggs 1: 413-4). Wordsworth probably began composing 'Tintern Abbey', one of his most significant short blank-verse poems, on departing the abbey on 11 July,

and finished the poem on 13 July as he walked down the hill from Clifton to Bristol (Reed, *CEY* 243). He composed the poem entirely in his head while walking, and wrote it down only after his return to the city. The poem begins with the memory of his first visit to the Wye, alone in 1793:

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky. (ll.1–8)

‘Tintern Abbey’ explores Wordsworth’s belief in the power of nature to restore the human heart, and its power to let us ‘see into the life of things’. It also makes the argument that, while the influence of the ‘aching joys’ of nature diminishes as we grow old, this loss is replaced by a deeper understanding of nature and human life—an ability to hear what he calls ‘The still, sad music of humanity’ (l.92).

Apart from the poem’s lyricism and philosophical depths, ‘Tintern Abbey’ serves as an excellent example of Wordsworth’s process of poetic composition, particularly in the context of his travels.¹⁰ A great amount of time separates some of the greatest experiences of his life (many of them from his travels) from the periods when he wrote about these experiences. Sometimes an equally large gulf of time separates the date of composition and the date of publication. Wordsworth thought about his experiences deeply, and took time to turn them into poetry. Furthermore, he continually revised his poetry. As Stephen Gill explains:

10) For details of Wordsworth’s methods of composition, see Andrew Bennett, *Wordsworth Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45–50.

...in revising Wordsworth was bringing his past work into conformity with his present thinking. To Wordsworth poems were not discrete objects, to be published and then later classified as 'early', 'middle period', 'later poems', and so on, but emanations of a mind which needed to register its evolution not only in new work but in continued contact with old. His continual rewriting stems from a determination to treat his poems as living presences and to change or discard whatever seems adequate. (Gill 81)

One consequence of this continual revision—whether intended or unintended—is that it frequently alters the facts of Wordsworth's most important experiences. As a result, we cannot rely on his poetic descriptions of his travels as accurate autobiography.

Shirehampton remained the Wordsworths' 'headquarters' for the next five weeks, while Wordsworth and Coleridge's joint volume of poetry, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), was in the press (Moorman 1: 408). Sometime in early or mid-August, Wordsworth and Dorothy returned into Wales for a short tour of the Usk and Wye valleys, and visited John Thelwall at Llyswen Farm near Brecon. According to Mary Wordsworth, this tour provided the incident for another poem in *Lyrical Ballads*, 'Anecdote for Fathers' (Moorman 1: 327; Robinson 1: 443–4; J. Butler and Green 71).

Germany, 1798-9

The loss of the lease on Alfoxden led to one of Wordsworth's most extraordinary stays on the continent at the end of 1798. The idea to move to Germany came from Coleridge, although both households had likely discussed the scenario before, at least in the abstract (*WL* 1: 220–1). Dorothy reported the definite loss of the Alfoxden lease on 5 March 1798 (*WL* 1: 199–200). Wordsworth's bewildered letter to James Tobin contains phrases that resonate with Wordsworth's life through the whole decade 1790–1800:

What may be our destination I cannot say... I am at present utterly

unable to say where we shall be. (*WL* 1: 215–6)

Apart from forced itinerancy, positive motivations for the move to Germany chime with Wordsworth's stated reasons for visiting France in 1791-2. The rapid development of his travel plans also attests to Coleridge's ability to strengthen Wordsworth during these years. Just two days after Coleridge's arrival at Alfoxden on 9 March, Wordsworth wrote to James Losh in a completely changed tone from his letter to Tobin:

we purpose to pass the two ensuing years in order to acquire the German language, and to furnish ourselves with a tolerable stock of information in natural science. Our plan is to settle if possible in a village near a university... (*WL* 1: 213)

Dorothy's letter to Richard Wordsworth reiterates this plan, focusing on the financial benefits: the current profitability of translating from German, and the lower cost of living on the continent (*WL* 1: 215–6). Thus language study and self-improvement, rather than politics and poetry, make a refrain in Wordsworth's stated goals for his early travels.

Wordsworth, Dorothy, Coleridge, and John Chester of Stowey (a young disciple of Coleridge's) sailed from Yarmouth to Hamburg on 16 September (Reed, *CEY* 248). Due to a lack of funds, the Wordsworths decided against travelling to Ratzeburg with Coleridge and Chester. The friends parted on 30 September; Wordsworth and Dorothy headed south on 3 October and arrived in Goslar on the evening of 6 October (Reed, *CEY* 255). They found lodgings with the widow Frau Deppermann at 107 (now 86) Breite-Strasse, and lived there until 23 February 1799 (*WL* 1: 245; Hayden, *Europe* 1: 28–30).¹¹⁾ Today a plaque commemorates the house where Wordsworth and his sister nearly froze to death.

Finances not only dissolved Wordsworth and Coleridge as travelling

11) For details of residence in Germany, see Gill 15–63; Moorman 1: 409–36; Hayden, *Europe* 1: 23–40.

companions, but led to material hardships for the Wordsworths. Even in the less expensive town of Goslar, the Wordsworths' living conditions were arduous, especially given the severe winter of 1798-9: 'the cold of Christmas day has not been equalled even in this climate during the last century' (*WL* 1: 243). Decades later, Wordsworth joked morbidly:

I slept in a room over a passage which was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night... (Curtis 112-3)

A combination of financial and social considerations also hampered their ability to study German. Goslar offered no intellectual society, especially for an unmarried man travelling with a woman (*WL* 1: 247; Griggs 1: 459). Wordsworth lamented: 'I acquired more French in two months, than I should acquire German in five years living as we have lived' (*WL* 1: 254-5).

Faced with these hardships, William and Dorothy depended upon each other for company. Wordsworth wrote to Coleridge: 'As I have had no books I have been obliged to write in self-defence' (*WL* 1: 236). This letter of December 1798 included copies of some of the new work that Wordsworth had produced. Wordsworth carried few or no books in Germany, but he did carry almost thirty years of memories and memorised verse. Displacement in time and space, and a desire to make his childhood live and breathe to Dorothy—who had been denied from sharing it—must have motivated the shaping of the new work.

Poetry composed in Goslar includes the seeds of the 1799 *Prelude* (in DC MS. 19-20), including the passages on birds-nesting (1.50-66) and woodcock-snaring (1.28-49), apostrophes to 'beings of the hills' and 'powers of earth' (1.130-41, 186-98), and the boat-stealing episode (1.82-129). The letter to Coleridge includes drafts of two of the 'Lucy' poems ('She dwelt among th'untrodden ways', and 'Strange fits of passion I have known'); the skating and boat-stealing episodes for *The Prelude*; and 'Nutting' (*WL* 1: 235-43). Other new material produced in Goslar included poems for the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) (in DC MS. 15-16) (J.

Butler and Green 17–19). The catalyst for this work was the hardship—including the physical and linguistic isolation—of foreign travel.

Wordsworth and Dorothy resolved to leave Germany in early February 1799, and make a tour of no more ‘than a couple of months’ (*WL* 1: 244). They were icebound in Goslar, and ‘so frightened’ by the cold and the ‘dreadful roads’ that they could not escape the town by open cart (*WL* 1: 243–4). On Saturday, 23 February, they did what Wordsworth could always do in a crisis: they walked out on foot, with only the ‘chance equipment’ of their pockets, having sent their luggage on by post (Reed, *CEY* 236; Reed, *Prel*–13 1.100).

Their tour took them south through the ‘Hercynian forest’ (Harz Forest) past the Brocken to Nordhausen, where letters from Coleridge were waiting; Wordsworth writes that he ‘could almost have kissed them in the presence of the post-master’ (*WL* 1: 254). Their reply to Coleridge of 27 February 1799 is the last record of their tour until 20 or 21 April (Reed, *CEY* 264–6). They met Coleridge in Göttingen and spent one day with him; Coleridge remarked that the Wordsworths were ‘melancholy and hypp’d’ (Griggs 1: 490).¹² They continued their return journey north to Hamburg by diligence, arriving about 25 April, and then proceeded to Cuxhaven by boat, where they sailed to Yarmouth, arriving around 30 April or 1 May 1799 (*WL* 1: 265–6; Reed, *CEY* 266–7).

Calais, 1802

Whether or not he went to France in late 1793, Wordsworth did not see his former lover Annette Vallon again until August 1802, when the brief Peace of Amiens made travel possible. English tourists descended on Paris in droves, but Wordsworth and Dorothy saw Annette at Calais, perhaps a safer choice given Annette’s Royalist connections. William and Dorothy stayed at Calais for a month; here Wordsworth met his daughter Caroline, now nine years old, for the first time (Gill 207–8). Almost a decade had passed since Wordsworth had last seen Annette, and now he had come to

12) ‘Hypp’d’: low-spirited; morbidly depressed. See also *WL* 1: 258–9, 265.

tell her that he was marrying another woman, his childhood friend Mary Hutchinson. Dorothy's single journal entry gives the facts of the visit but no details of the relations between the two families.¹³⁾

Wordsworth transformed his experiences of the 1802 trip into verse immediately, using the poetic form with which he 'took fire' on 21 May, when Dorothy read him some of Milton's sonnets (Curtis, *FN* 73). Like Dorothy's journal, Wordsworth's 1802 sonnets give little insight into the phase of his life that was closing at Calais. The bulk of the sonnets were composed from May to late 1802; Wordsworth composed seven in Calais (Moorman 1: 565–6). Wordsworth published the sonnets in two groups in *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807): twenty 'Miscellaneous Sonnets' followed by 25 'Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty' (Curtis, *PITV* 131–74). Only 'It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free' hints at Wordsworth's feelings about meeting Caroline:

It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun
 Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
 The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea:
 Listen! the mighty being is awake
 And doth with his eternal motion make
 A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
 Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
 If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
 Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
 And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
 God being with thee when we know it not.¹⁴⁾ (Curtis, *PITV* 150–1)

13) *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (London: 2 vols., Macmillan, 1941), 150–4. Hereafter *DWJ*.

14) 'Abraham's bosom': see Luke 16:22.

In this sonnet, the 'dear Girl' seems to be both his daughter Caroline, and his sister Dorothy. Wordsworth and Dorothy had been separated since their father's death in 1783. Dorothy was sent to live with relatives at Halifax, Penrith, and finally Forncett rectory, near Norwich, where her uncle William Cookson lived. Like her brother, Dorothy had been uprooted for most of her life. If the poem addresses Dorothy at all, its emotional tone may anticipate Wordsworth's feelings about his approaching marriage to Mary Hutchinson, and what this event will mean for Dorothy's role in her relationship to her brother. In a further connection to Wordsworth's travel poetry, the sonnet's images of sunset and an evening 'quiet as a Nun' establish a motif that recurs in Wordsworth's later tour poetry, such as 'Incident at Brugès' (1828).

Scotland 1803

Marriage to Mary, and the birth of their first child John, settled Wordsworth at Town End, Grasmere firmly for the first time in his life; nevertheless, his urge to travel did not diminish. Anticipation of the Lonsdale settlement—the end of a long legal battle for payment owed to Wordsworth's father by his employer—gave Wordsworth and Dorothy enough financial security to make the 'unquestionably selfish' decision to reunite 'the Alfoxden trio' for a five-week tour of Scotland in August–September 1803 (Gill 214). (Wordsworth had first visited Scotland in 1801 for the wedding of Basil Montagu, and toured there from about 1 September – 22 September 1801.¹⁵) Wordsworth and Dorothy set off from Keswick with Coleridge on 15 August, leaving behind Mary and Joanna to care for the three-month-old. As in Saxony in 1798, the Wordsworths eventually parted ways with Coleridge, returning without him on 25 September.¹⁶

Dorothy's journal, *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland A.D. 1803*, is a substantial literary work, perhaps 'her masterpiece', and surpassed in

15) See Hayden, *Scotland* 1–8.

16) For a detailed itinerary of the tour, see Hayden, *Scotland* 9–30.

length only by her journal of the 1820 continental tour (*DWJ* 1: vii, 195–409). Dorothy continued to write and edit the journal until 31 May 1805, a process of reflection and composition that paralleled Wordsworth's work to complete his first epic, the thirteen-book *Prelude*. Wordsworth composed nine poems based on the 1803 tour, and published them in *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807).

The 1803 tour marked the beginning of Wordsworth's friendship with Walter Scott, a deep attachment that lasted until Scott's death in September 1832. Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802) testified to the similarity of the two poets' approaches to creating or reviving a type of poetry free of 'refined sentiment' (Scott i.xcv–xcvi). At Jedburgh, Wordsworth and Dorothy heard Scott recite the first four cantos of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; after their return to Grasmere, Wordsworth sent Scott 'Sonnet. (Composed at [Needpath] Castle.)' and 'Yarrow Unvisited'.¹⁷ Although Wordsworth and Scott soon discovered differences in their approaches towards composition and the marketplace, the 1803 tour marked the beginning of a deep personal affection that runs through some of Wordsworth's most significant itinerant verse, including 'Yarrow Unvisited', 'Yarrow Revisited' and 'On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford, for Naples' (published 1835), and *Musings Near Aquapendente* (published 1842).

The Continent, 1820

Although Wordsworth travelled frequently in England from autumn 1803 to 1820, his movements were somewhat restrained by a growing family and increased responsibilities—both in his efforts to write and publish, but also in his work as Commissioner of Stamps, and his political activities. Wordsworth made a second Scottish tour with Mary, his son John, Mary's sister Sara Hutchinson, and a Miss Alms, from 18 July – 9 September 1814

17) Wordsworth made the invitation—unprecedented for such a new acquaintance—for Scott to 'emend place-names in the text' (Gill 218; *WL* 1: 530).

(Hayden, *Scotland* 31–48). In part, the tour was to help Mary recover from the deaths of two of their children, Catharine and Thomas, in 1812.

By 1820, Wordsworth was finally beginning to achieve the security he had so long sought, both for his family and his poetic reputation. He could now travel as he did in 1790: for the pleasure of it, rather than out of necessity, or for ostensible self-improvement in languages that would help him secure a career. His 1820 continental tour marked the beginning of two decades of frequent travel in his later years, and the production and publication of abundant tour poetry.

The 1820 tour took place from July-September; the party consisted of William, Dorothy, and Mary Wordsworth, Mary's cousin Thomas Monkhouse, the new Mrs. Monkhouse, her sister Miss Horrocks, and their maid Jane. Henry Crabb Robinson, an important friend in Wordsworth's later years, joined them at Lucerne on 16 August.

The 1820 tour was always intended as a retracing of Wordsworth's steps in 1790. In general the tour followed the 1790 route, but in the reverse direction: the party arrived at Calais, and crossed southeast through Belgium, then up the Meuse River in a straight line through Namur, Liège, and Aachen, to Cologne. They followed the Rhine south and crossed into Switzerland, then proceeded south through Switzerland and crossed into Italy at Lake Maggiore, and travelled as far south as Milan. They returned to Switzerland across the Simplon Pass in the opposite direction in which Wordsworth had crossed with Jones in 1790; they entered France from Geneva on 25 September and proceeded northwest to Paris via Dijon.

In Paris, Wordsworth revisited the Palais Royale for the first time since 1792-3, and also saw his French family members: Annette, Caroline, Caroline's husband Jean Baptiste Badouin, and their two daughters Louise Marie Caroline Dorothée and the infant Anne Léonide (Legouis 100). The company returned home from Boulogne rather than Calais, finally managing to find a place in a packet on 7 November, and arriving at Dover on the eighth.

This tour furnishes scholars with a substantial prose context for the poetry; as Dorothy notes: 'Journals we shall have in number sufficient to

fill a Lady's bookshelf,—for all, except my Brother, write a journal'. Only the substantial work of Mary, Dorothy, and Crabb Robinson remains extant (Burton 81).

Wordsworth was 50 years old, but writing with renewed confidence; as in 1798, he began the 1820 tour with the assurance that a new volume of his work had just come from the press—in this case, *The Miscellaneous Poems of William Wordsworth* (4 vols.). When the party retraced Wordsworth's footsteps through the landscapes of 1790, they experienced them through his eyes, and his poetry. Outside Martigny, they passed through the 'aboriginal vale' described in *The Prelude* Book 6, and William told Dorothy: 'I find that my remembrance for thirty years has been scarcely less vivid than the reality now before my eyes!' Staying at the Union Inn in Chamonix, Dorothy writes:

The names of many of our Friends and acquaintances were discovered [in the hotel album]; and quotations from my Brother's poems—'Matthew' and 'Yarrow Visited' with 'Sad Stuff!' affixed to the latter by way of comment, in another handwriting.

Similarly, at Chillon Castle, they found a copy of Byron's poem *The Prisoner of Chillon* in one of the sitting rooms.¹⁸⁾ Romantic-period poetry that had been inspired by the landscapes of the continent had now become an intangible part of those landscapes.

The tour party crossed the Alps again to re-enter Switzerland, this time at the Simplon Pass on 10 September. As in 1790, Wordsworth crossed the pass on foot. They saw the towered Spittal where Wordsworth and Jones had eaten lunch before becoming separated from other walkers and losing their way. Mary's response to the crossing of the Simplon Pass sums up the complexities of assessing the Wordsworths' responses to revisited landscapes on their nineteenth-century tours:

18) George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Prisoner of Chillon, and Other Poems* (London: John Murray, 1816).

I think the *sentiment* of this Pass was most grateful to us... but so much depends upon our associations that it is hard to say how far our delight was heightened by the flashes that now and then told us 'this *certainly* is the very road William came'...

Even the language of Mary's description ('flashes') draws on the language of Wordsworth's description of his 1790 experience in *The Prelude* (Reed, *Prel-13* 6.533–6).

Wales, 1824

From 1798-1824, Wordsworth often travelled in Wales, to stay with Mary's brother Thomas in Radnorshire (Hayden, *Wales* 39). In 1824, William, Mary, and Dora made a three-week tour of Wales between 25 August and 15 September (Hayden, *Wales* 51; Burton 116–8). The party sailed from Liverpool and landed in Bangor, probably on 27 August (*WL* 4: 275; Hayden, *Wales* 41). The tour took them south to Caernarfon and then counter-clockwise to Llangollen, north to Conwy, and south again through Dolgellau and Aberystwyth and finally to Devil's Bridge. Robert Jones, now a portly curate, joined the tour with his carriage and servant between Llanrwst on 31 August and Devil's Bridge on 14 September (*WL* 4: 276, 273). At the bridge, Wordsworth composed a sonnet that contrasts the experience of 1824 not with his visit to the bridge in 1793, but with his memory of the Viamala in the Swiss Alps in 1790: 'There I seem to stand/ As in Life's Morn...' The tour produced two other sonnets. One of them, the excellent 'Composed among the Ruins of a Castle in North Wales' likely refers to Caernarfon or Conwy (Moorman 2: 433; Hayden, *Wales* 42).

Belgium, Holland, and the Rhine, 1828

Wordsworth made his third of four later tours to the continent in 1828.¹⁹⁾ The 1828 tour is significant in that it reunited Wordsworth and Coleridge as travellers for the first time since their 1803 tour of Scotland. This tour was also the first and only visit to the continent for Wordsworth's daughter Dora. The plan formed suddenly—so suddenly that Mary referred to the trio as 'Vagabonds' in her letter of 23 June (Burton 124). Wordsworth borrowed his friend Crabb Robinson's carpet bag, and departed with Dora and Coleridge from the Tower Stairs on 22 June 1828. They travelled for almost seven weeks, making the return journey from Ostend to London on 5 August.

In part, the tour sated the pent-up wanderlust of Wordsworth's three frustrated attempts since 1825 to make a tour of Italy with companions such as his patron Sir George Beaumont, his friend Crabb Robinson, or the poet Samuel Rogers.²⁰⁾ The family even dreamed of living on the continent (Italy and Switzerland) for a year or more (*WL* 4: 373). Despite the unfairness of leaving Mary and Dorothy behind, the 1828 tour proved a success. Although seven weeks abroad inspired only two poems by Wordsworth and some incidental (and comical) verses by Coleridge, the two Wordsworth poems ('Incident at Brugè' and 'A Jewish Family') are at least as fine as any of the poems of the 1820 tour.

Apart from these poems—and the effects of other experiences on Wordsworth's later compositions—the 1828 tour remains significant for providing evidence of the renewed closeness between Wordsworth and Coleridge three decades after their first summer together at Nether Stowey and Alfoxden. Although most of the details of the 1828 tour come from

19) The second was a brief tour in May 1823, during which Wordsworth and Mary travelled alone in Belgium, and made their first visit to Holland. Wordsworth's eyes were in particularly bad condition (he had suffered from attacks of eye inflammation since January 1805), perhaps one reason that this tour resulted in no poetry. The couple left Dover on 17 May 1823 and returned there 11 June. For details, see Hayden, *Europe* 2: 1–17.

20) See *WL* 350, 404, 445, 495, 499, 511, 538–9, 544, 556, 613.

Dora's unpublished journal (DC MS 110), the memoirs of two men who spent time with the travellers—the Irish writer Thomas Colley Grattan, and the future minister Julian Charles Young (son and biographer of the actor Charles Mayne Young)—give us colourful descriptions of the two poets and comparisons of their styles of observation.²¹⁾

Grattan's memoir is less sentimental than Young's. His description of the tour party's visit to the battlefield of Waterloo notes a contrast in the interests of the two poets:

At both Waterloo and Quatrebras, while Wordsworth keenly inspected the field of battle, insatiably curious after tombstones, and spots where officers had fallen... Coleridge spoke to me of the total deficiency of memorable places to excite any interest in him unless they possessed some *natural* beauty. He called this a defect.

(Grattan 2: 114–5)

Similarly, at Namur, Grattan describes the difference between Wordsworth and Coleridge's styles of observation. The party walk to view the Meuse by moonlight. Arriving at the river, Wordsworth shows more of an interest in the bridge (rebuilt in the sixteenth century) than in the overall scene:

Coleridge advanced towards the river, with quiet expressions of enjoyment at the beauty around him. Wordsworth stepped quickly on, and said aloud, yet more to himself than to us—
'Ay, there it is—there's the bridge! Let's see how many arches there are—one, two, three,' and so on, till he counted them all with the accuracy and hardness of a stone-cutter. (Grattan 2: 116)

Mary's 'Vagabonds' arrived back in London on Wednesday, 6 August

21) Thomas Colley Grattan, *Beaten Paths and Those who Trod Them* (London: 2 vols., Chapman and Hall, 1865), 2: 107–45; Julian Charles Young, *A Memoir of Charles Mayne Young* (London: 2 vols., 1871), 1: 173–5.

1828. The tour had cost them £91/16s/6d of which Dora calculated Coleridge's share as £30/12s/2d. Wordsworth's letters to Quillinan and Robinson later in the year evince both his conscientious attention to discharging the tour debts, and—despite the family's improved finances—his enduringly spendthrift nature (*WL* 6: 637–8).

Scotland 1831, 1833

Wordsworth made two tours of Scotland late in his life: in 1831 (with Dora) and 1833 (with Crabb Robinson). Both produced significant amounts of poetry (25 and 45 poems, respectively). Compositions from the two tours appeared in the volume *Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems*. The first edition of 1835 sold out, and a second was printed in 1836, bringing Wordsworth 'at age 65, unexpected success' (Gill 372). The collection's title poem makes a superlative example of Wordsworth's lifelong ability to revisit and rework his poetic materials, both published and unpublished.²² Travel in both space and time permeates the feeling of 'Yarrow Revisited', in which 'Past, present, future, all appeared/ In harmony united,/ Like guests that meet, and some from far...' (Jackson 490–4, ll.29–32). The poem is a double travel poem: Wordsworth was revisiting Newark Castle and the Yarrow, but the purpose of the visit was to bid farewell to Walter Scott, embarking on his own final tour. Scott had recently suffered a debilitating stroke, and was departing to convalesce in Naples. The two men would not meet again.

The collection *Yarrow Revisited* also evinces Wordsworth's late preoccupation with the 'Motions and Means' of travel, and the dangers of changes to the landscape that will 'mar/ The loveliness of Nature' (Jackson 604, ll.4–5). Poems including 'The Pibroch's note...', 'Nunnery', 'Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways', and 'Stanzas Suggested in a Steam-Boat off St. Bees' Heads' explore Wordsworth's uneasiness about the

22) For a detailed analysis of how Wordsworth's 'Yarrow Revisited' draws together ideas and published and unpublished poetic materials from decades earlier, see Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth's Revisiting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter 5.

triumph of 'straight-lined progress' over tradition, but also admit that 'Nature doth embrace/ Her lawful offspring in Man's art' (Jackson 604, ll.10–11).

Ireland, 1829

In September 1829, Wordsworth made a comprehensive, if rapid, five-week tour of Ireland, accompanied by John Marshall and his son James (*WL* 4: 490). This was Wordsworth's only visit to Ireland. The three men departed the Lakes on 27 August 1829; Wordsworth apparently returned to Rydal on 11 October (*WL* 5: 154). His letters suggest that he was in Ireland between 30 August and 3 October 1829 (*WL* 5: 155; Hayden, *Wales* 74). Fresh experiences accumulated over multiple layers of memory as Wordsworth passed through Llangollen, and then on to Holy Island and Anglesey, recalling both his 1824 Welsh tour and his travels with Jones in May 1791. The Irish tour began in Dublin, and followed a clockwise route around the country.²³ This tour developed Wordsworth's friendship with William Hamilton, whom Wordsworth named, along with Coleridge, one of 'the two most wonderful men, taking all their endowments together', that he had ever met (*WL* 4: 542–3, n2; 545). The day of his arrival in Dublin, Wordsworth visited its astronomical observatory. He then spent three evenings with Hamilton and his sisters, discussing poetry and science, and reading aloud to Hamilton from *The Excursion* (Moorman 2: 437–8).

Wordsworth's Irish tour produced only two self-acknowledged allusions in Wordsworth's poetry: lines in the late ode 'On the Power of Sound', and two half-lines in the sonnet 'Eagles', published in *Yarrow Revisited* (Curtis, *FN* 69–70, 134). Wordsworth's pronouncement on why the Irish tour produced no poems—despite his improved eyes and vigorous health—makes a good warning for all travel writers: 'the speed with w^h. we travelled (in a carriage & four)' was the main reason the tour 'supplied my memory with so few images that were new, & with so little

23) For details, see Hayden, *Wales* 53–75.

motive to write' (Curtis, *FN* 134, 69).

The Continent and Italy, 1837

Wordsworth finally achieved his dream of a tour of Italy with Crabb Robinson in 1837, although none of his family members could accompany him. The tour took place between 19 March and 7 August 1837, with passage to and from the continent via London and Calais. Wordsworth's new publisher, Edward Moxon, accompanied Wordsworth and Robinson from London, as far as Paris. As with the 1798 and 1820 travels on the continent, Wordsworth departed Britain having just published a new edition of his work—in this case the monumental six-volume *Collected Works of William Wordsworth* (1836).

En route to Italy, Wordsworth and Robinson passed south through France, visiting Lyons, Avignon, Nismes, St. Remi, Marseilles, and Toulon.²⁴⁾ Their itinerary in Italy followed a V-shape, first southeast from Genoa and Savona to La Spezia, Pisa, Siena, and finally Rome. Unable to proceed on to Naples due to quarantine restrictions imposed following an outbreak of cholera, Wordsworth and Robinson backtracked north to Arezzo and the vale of the Arno, then on to Florence, Bologna, Milan and Lake Como, Bergamo, Lake Garda, Verona and Venice. They returned through Austria, Germany, and Belgium, stopping for several nights each at Salzburg, Hallstatt, Munich, and Heidelberg.²⁵⁾

Like the 1820 continental tour, and the 1831 and 1833 Scottish tours, the 1837 tour produced a significant amount of poetry, though Wordsworth wrote only one poem on the tour itself ('The Cuckoo at Laverna') (*WL* 6: 422n; *Morley* 2: 528; *Sadler* 3: 138–9). The 1837 tour poems generally follow the tour itinerary, and take historical objects and incidents for their subjects. In contrast, Robinson's diary portrays Wordsworth as more animated by natural scenery than by historical sights and objects.

24) *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Thomas Sadler (London: 3 vols., Macmillan, 1869), 3: 116–7.

25) For a detailed account of this tour, see Hayden, *Europe* 2: 49–110.

Although 'sufficiently impressed' by the Coliseum, and 'more impressed' than Robinson expected by St. Peter's, Wordsworth reserved his greatest delight for natural beauty including Vaucluse, the cascade at Terni, and Lakes Iseo and Garda (Sadler 3: 118, 125, 131). However, Robinson's comment in Rome that 'Wordsworth is no hunter after sentimental relics' and that he is 'never thoroughly happy but in the country' must be read against a detailed context of antiquarian observation and poetry, at which Wordsworth excelled (Sadler 3: 118, 129).

The greatest poetic achievements of the 1837 tour are Wordsworth's last long blank verse poem, *Musings Near Aquapendente*, and several shorter poems including 'The Cuckoo at Laverna', the two Thrasymene sonnets, and the sonnet 'Composed on May-morning, 1838'. The two blank-verse poems (the *Musings* and 'The Cuckoo at Laverna') are some of Wordsworth's finest late work. The *Musings* sets Wordsworth's response to Italy's landscapes and antiquities against the power of his native lakes and mountains; the poem also serves as a eulogy to Walter Scott, thus linking the travel poems of 1837 to those of the Scottish tour of 1831 and *Yarrow Revisited*.

Wordsworth published 'Memorials of a Tour in Italy' in his last volume containing new and unpublished material: *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842). This volume finally brought before the public some of Wordsworth's work written between forty and fifty years earlier, including *Guilt and Sorrow*—the heavily revised, first published version of *Salisbury Plain* (composed 1793).

Wordsworth and Robinson's accounts of the 1837 tour in prose and poetry reveal Wordsworth's highly individual tastes and responses to Italian antiquities and landscapes. Above all he loved the port city of Savona, and even dreamed of living there (Curtis, *FN* 178–9). He similarly delighted in the landscape of the coast between Genoa and Pisa—a taste he shared with Shelley, who had lived, and died, at Lerici (Little 33–4).

The 1837 tour also marks the last time that Wordsworth set foot in France, and the last time he saw Annette Vallon and her family: in Paris on 22 and possibly 23 March (Morley 2: 516). Finally, Wordsworth's visit to

Rome marks a late connection between Wordsworth and Keats; Wordsworth and Robinson met Joseph Severn on 6 May and discussed Keats' last days (Sadler 2: 119). Although no record of the conversation exists, the meeting was apparently not brief; Wordsworth met Severn again for breakfast on 16 May, and sat for his portrait (Morley 2: 521). Wordsworth's poem 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' shares stylistic and thematic qualities with Keats' blank verse and odes. It is therefore interesting to consider whether Keats exerted any posthumous influence on the elderly Wordsworth, whose own poetry had once inspired the younger man.

Wales, 1841

After the 1837 tour, Wordsworth continued to travel in England and Wales until the end of his life. One late visit to Wales occurred in 1841, in order for Wordsworth and Mary to attend Dora's marriage to Edward Quillinan in Bath on 11 May. Wordsworth and Mary met Isabella Fenwick and Dora at Tintern Abbey, crossed to Bristol by steamboat, and proceeded to Bath by rail: 'just by the Watch 23 minutes!' (Robinson 1: 431). Travelling had changed, but in many ways the traveller was the same. At the age of 70, Wordsworth was still exact in his observations, and still ready to take to the road on foot or by any of this new 'independence upon oar and sail' that sped his passage through landscapes that had shaped his verse, and were now in part shaped by it.²⁶⁾

Conclusion

Throughout his life, 'change, stimulus, and sensation' furnished Wordsworth with 'the raw material of poetry' (Gill 214). Wordsworth was not only a significant travel writer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but a poet whose verse fundamentally affected how future generations would see the landscapes through which he passed. Later sequences of poems—such as those from his 1820 and 1837 continental tours and his 1831 and 1833 Scottish tours—constitute clear 'itinerant

26) 'Stanzas Suggested in a Steam-Boat Off St. Bees' Heads' (Jackson 620, l.11).

verse' or 'tour poetry'; but in general, it is difficult to separate Wordsworth's experiences of travel from the poetry stimulated by these travels. The Salisbury Plain poems, the *Lyrical Ballads* and *Peter Bell*, a large part of *Poems, in Two Volumes* ('Poems Composed During a Tour, Chiefly on Foot', the 1802 sonnets, the 1803 Scottish tour poems), *The Prelude*, and *The Excursion*—all contain itinerant verse that does not attempt to transcend the idea of being a tourist at home or abroad, yet vocalises complexities of thought and feeling that little travel writing before or after Wordsworth has been capable of expressing. Thus the 'raw materials of poetry' in this sense constitute not only memories of pleasure and hardship gathered from travels across Britain and Europe, but new ways of seeing nature and human life, developed through, and tested against, this continual travelling.

In addition to aiding our understanding of Wordsworth's overall poetic development, his travels give us memorable images of the poet other than the familiar likenesses of his extant portraits. We should remember Wordsworth wearing a 'pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's-skin bonnet' to walk the ramparts of Goslar, in the company of a solitary kingfisher during the terrible winter of 1798; Wordsworth in 'striped duck trousers' and 'fustian garters' in Brussels in 1828; Wordsworth treading everywhere 'for softness sake' on the field of 'mountain or sea-pink' on the summit of Carrantuohill in Ireland in 1829; and Dorothy travelling with a water can playfully dubbed 'Kubla' (Grattan 107; *WL* 5: 138–9). The anecdotes of Wordsworth's travels, recorded in poetry and prose, lend valuable depth of human feeling to analyses of poetic and philosophical issues in his poetry.

Finally, we can hope that the years to come may still bring to light new documentary evidence of Wordsworth's travels. We still know little about his life in London in 1791, or his early Welsh tours of 1791 and 1793. We know essentially nothing about his likely presence in France in 1793, during the height of the Terror. Dorothy Wordsworth's journal of life in Germany in 1798–8 ends with their arrival in Goslar, yet she almost certainly kept a detailed journal of three of the most pivotal months in

Wordsworth's poetic development; we understand enough of her character to know that, trapped in a freezing house with no books, she would have written to occupy herself while Wordsworth wrote poetry. Dora Wordsworth's letters to her mother from the continent in 1828 have similarly disappeared (we have only quotations from them in Mary's own letters) but may yet come to light. Wordsworth's life from childhood to his last days was one of constant motion, even in the process of poetic composition. The dotted lines of his travels crisscross Britain and Europe; many of these lines require tracing in much greater detail in order to fully understand the poet's life and works.

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Abstract

William Wordsworth was not only a significant traveller of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but a poet whose verse fundamentally affected how future generations would see the landscapes through which he passed. This paper explores Wordsworth's frequent travels outside England, from his childhood to 1841, in relation to his poetic output. The paper surveys the factors that shaped Wordsworth's lifelong itinerancy including his avoidance of a conventional career in the church, and his desire to shape an independent life that would furnish material for thought and writing. The paper gives a chronological overview of Wordsworth's major travels in continental Europe, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, bringing to light new connections and contrasts between different tours. The paper relates the biographical and historical materials of his travelling and tours to some of the poetry that originated from them, in order to provide a spatial and temporal map for the poetic and philosophical development of Wordsworth's itinerant verse. The primary purpose of the paper is to provide a concise overview of six decades of Wordsworth's travels, in order to identify patterns of movement, writing, and publication that will provide a context for future biographical and critical scholarship on the poet. Additionally, the paper argues that early travel determined not only central aspects of Wordsworth's poetic philosophy, but also the choice of his career as poet, often through negative, rather than positive, personal circumstances.