

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

After Wordsworth:

Global Revisions of the English Poet

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by

Katherine Lillian Bergren

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

After Wordsworth:

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Professor Saree Makdisi, Chair

After Wordsworth reads the fraught relationships between the English poet and his global Anglophone audience, for whom he was an inspiration and a burden—often at the same time. Where other scholars, both Romanticist and otherwise, have analyzed the afterlives of Romanticism in a teleological straight path from life to afterlife, my dissertation turns this path into a round-trip. By connecting the trajectory of life and afterlife in a circuit, I argue that William Wordsworth’s appearances in a variety of genres and locales—from political tracts to memoirs, from New England to the Amazon—do not just produce a reception history. Rather, they uncover the ambivalent Englishness of Wordsworth’s own writing.

The dissertation opens with a primal scene: the common childhood experience, especially in the colonies of the British empire, of memorizing and reciting Wordsworth’s “I wandered lonely as a cloud.” In Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* (1990), this experience inspires the title

character's immediate hatred for daffodils. But in chapter one I argue that rather than repudiating Wordsworth's poetry, Kincaid in *My Garden (Book)*: (1999) shares Wordsworth's struggle in his *Guide to the Lakes* (1835) to express the relationship between local stasis and colonial movement through the contested and artificial space of the garden. In chapter two I examine J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and contest the critical assumption that it uses Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1805) merely to indicate the irrelevance of what Coetzee calls in *White Writing* "the quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment." In chapter three I examine the abolitionist afterlife of Wordsworth in the political writings of antebellum activist Lydia Maria Child, who musters Wordsworth's *Excursion* (1814) in support of her comprehensive anti-slavery agenda—an agenda that Wordsworth seldom considered. In my concluding chapter I suggest that Wordsworth's representativeness, his ability to stand for moral, geographical, and national spheres beyond those which he actually inhabited in his writing, has in part a strange and paradoxical source: it has been constructed since the 1790s by the Wordsworth family. Both then and now, the Wordsworth family labors reveal that the poet's preeminence is a result of his representativeness, a quality that requires a familial infrastructure ready to subsume itself under the banner of Wordsworth.

The dissertation of Katherine Lillian Bergren is approved.

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For my parents, James Bergren and Nancy Vander Pyl

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Introduction. Those Same Daffodils

This dissertation is about the literary afterlives of William Wordsworth's writing, and the ability of those afterlives to act as a context for interpreting the writings they repurpose.

Wordsworth, who died in 1850, became a canonical writer as soon as the category of English canonical writing became available.¹ His works were circulated globally, throughout Great Britain, America, and the colonies of the British empire—this diffusion both a cause and later a result of canonicity. This wide dissemination is the foundation for what follows here, but my aim is not to record the reception histories, however diverse, that resulted from this export. Rather, I argue that these creative reuses are windows into Wordsworth's writing, windows that in their geographic and generic diversity reveal a body of work that has previously been viewed head on, from the perspective of the front door. These afterlives do not just tell us what Wordsworth meant to certain writers: they actually tell us about Wordsworth's poetry and prose. My selection of texts follows Wordsworth throughout the Anglophone world—from the mercantile colonies of the West Indies, to the settler colony of South Africa, to the former colony of the United States, and back to Great Britain. Together these texts reveal the fraught contingency of Wordsworth's Englishness: how he and his readers manufactured it; how his poetry confirms, complicates, and contests it; and how it fashions diverse contexts for his interpretation in the Anglophone world.

¹ Ian Reid discusses the institution of Wordsworth at length: how Wordsworth's poetry has affected the way we teach English literature, and on a more basic level, the way we conceive of English literature as a subject worth teaching at all. In England, the development of English as a field of study happened around the mid-nineteenth century and the field, as Reid points out, took its "normative shape from places unencumbered by Oxbridge traditions," such as the University of London. Ian Reid, *Wordsworth and the Formation of English Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), ix-x.

My students have never had to memorize William Wordsworth's most famous poem, the one about daffodils, and I have never made them. Most of them haven't heard of it. They are not in the habit of being coerced into reciting poetry from memory. Yet such compulsory memorization has been a significant technology in disseminating Wordsworth's poetry. In Jamaica Kincaid's bildungsroman *Lucy* (1990), the poem and its memorization thus play a key role. An au pair in New York, Lucy disagrees with her employer Mariah about the value of daffodils, physically and poetically: Mariah loves them, and how they signal the coming spring. Lucy does not. The power of this scene depends on geography, on the fact that daffodils don't grow in the West Indies where the protagonist Lucy was educated. She remembers being forced to memorize Wordsworth's poem "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and recite it at a school performance, thousands of miles from any place where daffodils might grow natively. (This experience is ubiquitous among students educated under the British colonial system: generations of children have memorized the poem about daffodils, to the extent that it has become shorthand for the hegemony of British education.²) Years later, Lucy tells Mariah about this primal scene, and although she remembers the experience clearly, the poem does not actually remain in her memory; as a child she had vowed to forget "line by line, every word of that poem" along with the flowers themselves.³

I read this scene with and against the poem that it reuses, because these two texts together demonstrate how Wordsworth's writings and their literary afterlives must exist in a sort of hermeneutic circle. Together they inspired the circular methodology that I use throughout the

² In recent years, for instance, *The Namesake* (both the novel and the movie) featured a scene where a young woman is asked to recite Wordsworth's poem to her future husband's family, seemingly as proof of her good breeding. Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 9.

³ Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 18. Subsequent references to the novel will appear parenthetically.

dissertation: Wordsworth acts as a context for understanding his afterlives, and the details of his afterlives serve as a context for rereading him. Lucy's willful forgetting of the daffodils is, as we might expect, only partially successful. When faced with Mariah's exultant description of daffodils, Lucy remembers memorizing the poem (though not the poem itself) along with a dream in which she "was being chased down a narrow cobbled street by bunches and bunches of those same daffodils that [she] had vowed to forget" (18). The dream is easy to parse: Lucy ends up "buried deep underneath [the daffodils] and was never seen again," with the unfamiliar but undeniably English flowers suffocating the non-English self. Equally significant, though, is how the dream records the activity of an image that for Lucy is purely imaginative: having never seen a daffodil, she remembers an image that is untied from the physical thing it represents. To remember daffodils then is not to remember the poem but to remember memorizing the poem; it is not to remember the flower itself but to remember a dream about a flower she has never seen. In this displacement, neither the poem nor the object are attached to Lucy's so-called memory of daffodils, a symptom of how, as Ian Smith explains in his reading of the scene, "colonialism...encourages a commitment to signs emptied out of any real content and cut off from observable reality."⁴ In other words, Lucy is always at a double remove from daffodils, a distance inversely related to the importance the daffodils assume both in experience and in memory. But what is perhaps most surprising about this divorce of sign and content is how its resulting effacement of Lucy's dream-self reveals a strikingly similar effacement in Wordsworth's original poem, where the relationship between sign and content has rarely been brought into question.

⁴ Ian Smith, "Misusing Canonical Intertexts: Jamaica Kincaid, Wordsworth and Colonialism's 'absent things'," *Callaloo* 25, no. 3 (2002): 816.

Ian Smith has connected Lucy's daffodils, objects "that have no material, botanical referents" for her, to Wordsworth's pronouncement in the 1802 "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* that a poet is a man with "a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present."⁵ To Smith, the connection supports the "salient irony" attendant upon reading Wordsworth's poem about daffodils in a climate where none can grow. (Another irony is the fact that for most of the year daffodils are themselves "absent things," immanent in their bulb form but hidden in the dirt.) But irony is not the only way to read the interplay between Kincaid's and Wordsworth's texts. Like most of his poems, "I wandered lonely as a cloud" went through many revisions throughout Wordsworth's life—very few poems were ever so finished that Wordsworth could leave them alone. But beyond the general truth of this instability, I want to suggest that we might locate a more profound decentering in the speaker himself, who by the end of "I wandered lonely as a cloud" has left the poet's couch to join the host of indiscriminate dancing daffodils—and who thus bears a marked resemblance to Lucy, buried among the daffodils of her dream and "never seen again."

Although the frequency with which it is recited by schoolchildren makes it seem untouchably reified, "I wandered lonely as a cloud" is textually volatile. Its name is one example: in 1807 the poem went by its first line, but in 1815 it was called "I wandered lonely" and now it is often dubbed merely "Daffodils." A more significant question for Wordsworth was where to catalog it in his complex categorical system of 1815. These thematic poetic categories captivated Wordsworth in the years leading to the publication of his first collected works, and though groupings like "Poems on the naming of places" or "Poems proceeding from sentiment and reflection" may seem pedantic today, the divisions were crucial to Wordsworth and he spent

⁵ Ibid., 806.

much of the volumes' "Preface" and "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" distinguishing one category from another. Perhaps unsurprisingly to Coleridge, who had been discussing theories of poetic inspiration with Wordsworth for almost twenty years, "Poems of the fancy" and "Poems of the imagination" were the most important of these categories, and Wordsworth could not decide in which of these categories the poem about daffodils belonged

Insistent pontificating in prefaces and essays did not sufficiently explain the difference between fancy and imagination, and though Wordsworth's placed "I wandered lonely as a cloud" in the category of imagination he felt compelled to qualify the decision in a footnote to the poem: "The subject of these Stanzas is rather an elementary feeling and simple impression (approaching to the nature of an ocular spectrum) upon the imaginative faculty, than an *exertion* of it."⁶ In distinguishing between an "impression" on the imagination and an "exertion of it," Wordsworth makes a grammatical distinction with philosophical implications: an impression makes the imagination into a passive object, while an exertion promotes it to the level of subject. (Many of the *Lyrical Ballads*, for instance, document the "wise passiveness" implied by impression, with the speaker "reclined" in "Lines Written in Early Spring" [2], or advocating a "heart / That watches and receives" in "The Tables Turned" [19-20].) What disrupts the daffodils' inclusion in its category, then, is the amount of agency that they afford the poet's imagination—and in the case of "Daffodils," that amount is not much.

How much we should care about Wordsworth's categorical caveat is not obvious. But to me the peculiar footnote to "I wandered lonely as a cloud" is important because it highlights the capacity of the object—the daffodils—to act upon their viewer. The note's interest derives not

⁶ William Wordsworth, *Poems (1815)*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, vol. 1 (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989). Geoffrey Harman glosses Wordsworth's explanation: the poem doesn't fully belong to the "Poems of the Imagination" because "the impact of the daffodils on his 'ocular spectrum' had been too strong." Geoffrey H. Harman, *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 28.

from its discourse with the categorical system, but from what it tries to say about the poem itself; we need not care much about the line between imagination and fancy in order to take seriously Wordsworth's claim that the "imaginative faculty" has been itself impressed by some more active object rather than exerting the power of impression that is its birthright.⁷ At its most literal, such impression suggests that this poem documents a moment when the imagination has been marked—that is, physically altered by an object that should bear the marks of impression itself, according to Wordsworth's scheme. (This is the same dynamic we see in "Expostulation and Reply," where the speaker insists that, contrary to his friend's suggestion that he read a book rather than daydreaming, "there are Powers / Which of themselves our minds impress" [21-2], even without the influence of books.) It is in this sense that the footnote helps to foreground what can be seen as the vacant center of one of the most seemingly cheerful poems of the Romantic period.⁸

Here it is worth quoting the poem's conclusion in its entirety.

The waves beside them danced, but they

Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:

A poet could not but be gay

In such a jocund company:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought

What wealth the shew to me had brought:

⁷ In contrast, David Joplin suggests that the speaker of "I wandered lonely" engages in "an intense activity, almost as if [he] were in a trance." David Joplin, "Wordsworth's 'I wandered Lonely as a Cloud,'" *The Explicator* 56, no. 2 (1998): 68.

⁸ John Milstead has also focused on the speaker's passivity, but his point is that this passivity reveals the poem's "stimulus-and-response mechanism." John Milstead, "The Two Selves of Wordsworth's Middle Lyrics," in *Approaches to Teaching Wordsworth's Poetry*, ed. Spencer Hall and Jonathan Ramsey (New York: MLA, 1986), 89.

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the Daffodils.⁹

It seems that the speaker has no choice here. He, as a poet, “could not but be gay,” as any poet would in such a situation. His gaiety is not individual but rather compulsory, one common to that type of man called poet. Although this line officially continues the poem’s tripping iambic tetrameter, its stack of monosyllables turns the meter into a mere technicality—aurally it has dissolved into a cluster of stressed consonants, and this structural failure provides a formal mirror to the dissolution of individuated selfhood that the line describes. It is difficult to imagine a line that clothes gaiety in a more shapeless uniform: the double-negative “not but,” the leveling indefinition of “a poet,” the stumbling sound of the consonants. The trope of conformist obedience escalates toward the poem’s end as we find the poet literally prone and passive, lying on his couch, thinking “little” about the daffodil show and waiting, “vacant,” for the flowers to get up and “flash upon that inward eye.” Although the homophonic eye/I trick wants to locate the individuated self “inward,” by the poem’s end this has become impossible: when the speaker’s heart “with pleasure fills / And dances with the Daffodils,” it gives up its human home to join the flowers’ uniform choreography. My reading is somewhat impeded by the fact that by this point the daffodils are located in “that inward eye”—in other words, the heart doesn’t have far to travel

⁹ *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by E. de Selincourt, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), 216, ll. 13-24. Subsequent references to the poem will refer to this edition and appear parenthetically according to line number.

to join the retinue of flowers. What seems important about this particular image, though, is that it applies to the poet's "heart": as the final lines conclude the poet's gently dismembering blazon, it becomes clear that the emotive and individual center represented by the heart is no longer located in the poet, but has run off to join the dance corps.

This escape is important because it suggests we read Wordsworth's daffodils poem as a meditation on the transformative power of context. In terms of plot, "I wandered lonely as a cloud" depends on the movement between the original scene by the lake and the setting of remembrance, with the speaker indoors and reclined on his couch. Although this passivity is, as other scholars have suggested, reminiscent of the "wise passiveness" that Wordsworth advocates in poems like "Lines Written in Early Spring" and "The Tables Turned," here passivity takes a different tack.¹⁰ The "pensive mood" and "solitude" that characterize the speaker on his couch make way for the imagistic "flash" responsible for relocating his emotive center. In other words, passivity turns the original scene by the lake into a context that is profoundly moveable, in spite of the literal roots that ground it locally. This movability and the accessibility it implies should affect how we read the poem's erosion of individuated selfhood because it gives that vacancy a democratizing tone. The indefinition of "a poet" becomes less a strike against the speaker's individuality and more a method of broadening—of radically augmenting the purview of the experience that the poem records. Whatever our doubts may be about Wordsworth's assertion in the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* that a poet is a "man speaking to men," we should understand the daffodils poem as an example of what that democratizing spirit looks like in poetic form (at least for men).

¹⁰ See Matthew C. Brennan, "Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,'" *The Explicator* 57, no. 3 (1999): 142. Brennan's point is to connect Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" with the sublime experience that he understands the poem to document.

“I wandered lonely as a cloud” has often been read next to Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal entry that inspired it, and this comparison is useful for what it tells us about William Wordsworth’s conception of a poem: not original (phrases are lifted directly from Dorothy’s journal), not communal (Dorothy’s reliance on the first person plural becomes William’s seven “I”s), and overtly hierarchical (the poet is as high as the clouds, observing how daffodils “out-did” their neighboring waves).¹¹ But in the face of what I have argued above, these characteristics, which exemplify the “egotistical sublime” that has clung to Wordsworth since Keats coined the term, seem dwarfed. At the center of a poem that for so many readers is a metonym for Wordsworth (as well as for English poetry at large) is a fast-dissolving poetic self, one whose heart belongs not to him but to the objects that inspired him in the first place. If the speaker’s vanishing into the crowd of daffodils sounds reminiscent of Lucy’s own imagined demise, there is good reason. Although their disappearances amidst the flowers have different valances—Lucy is buried alive while the speaker’s heart is inducted into the jocund dance—both are effaced by what Dorothy Wordsworth appropriately dubbed the “little colony” of golden flowers, a colony whose inability to establish a physically rooted outpost in the West Indies never hampered the profoundly global movements it assumed in the educational program of British colonialism.¹² The daffodil’s bulb, which always and invisibly suggests something about to be, even in the absence of the flower’s material proof, becomes the biological trope that binds Wordsworth’s poem to Kincaid’s novelistic interpolation: a root that signals contextual movability.

¹¹ Susan Levin provides the most extensive comparison of William’s poem with Dorothy’s journal entry. Susan M. Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth & Romanticism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), ch. 1. See also Susan J. Wolfson, “Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William,” in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

¹² Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Mary Moorman, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 109.

This similarity doesn't change the fact that for Lucy, daffodils remain malignant forms, and when she finally sees the spring daffodils with Mariah she reports that she "did not know what these flowers were" (29). Her immediate reaction, though, is destructive: "I wanted to kill them." On the one hand, Lucy is hedging when she claims not to know the flowers: what did the daffodils in her dream look like? are we to believe that her violent reaction reveals some occult pre-knowledge of the daffodil form? On the other, her statement makes literal an argument Kincaid posits in *My Garden (Book)* when she entitles a chapter about gardening and conquest "To name is to possess." Kincaid describes the Foucauldian "opportunity" that faced Carolus Linnaeus, originator of the Latin binomial system of naming plants, who realized "these new plants from far away, like the people far away, had no history, no names, and so they could be given names."¹³ Naming implies knowledge: not just one's own knowledge of the object at hand, but also the assumption of non-knowledge that others have of the object, the assumption that it is unnamed, and thus unstudied, without history.¹⁴ Lucy does not know daffodils—knowing their name might imply membership in Mariah's cult of springtime enthusiasts who love how the flowers "do a curtsy to the lawn" (17)—but bafflingly she knows the plant as one might recognize a face, subjectively and viscerally.

The knowledge Lucy has is enough: "I wished that I had an enormous scythe; I would just walk down the path, dragging it alongside me, and I could cut these flowers down at the place where they emerged from the ground" (29). Her wish combines the grandness of an

¹³ Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)*: (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 122.

¹⁴ In *The Order of Things* Foucault associates the same process with the development of natural history: "We must not see the constitution of natural history... as an experiment forcing entry, willy-nilly, into a knowledge that was keeping watch on the truth of nature elsewhere; natural history... is the space opened up in representation by an analysis which is anticipating the possibility of naming; it is the possibility of *seeing* what one will be able to *say*, but what one could not say subsequently." Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 130.

“enormous” weapon, the apathetic violence of “dragging” it through the flowers, and the specificity of a localized wound “at the place where they emerged from the ground.” The specificity seems the strangest of the three details, both because it uses a wordy, elongated turn of phrase to describe what is, after all, a speedy cut, and because it calls into question Lucy’s desire to kill the flowers for good. For although the scythe is a potent image of death, it is also a real tool, one for harvesting grain or mowing grass. Reaping flowers with such a tool is thus symbolically ambivalent, as readers of Robert Frost know well: the scythe as symbol moves perpetually between harvest and death, between a predictable marker of agricultural circularity and the proverbial end of the line. But as with any perennial, daffodils “killed” with a scythe will grow back the next year: successfully killing daffodils requires ripping them up by the bulb, an act no less satisfyingly violent than reaping them with a scythe. As a gardener who admits to growing daffodils herself, Kincaid knows this, and so the image of Lucy as the grim but ineffective daffodil reaper deserves attention: by mowing down the flowers, Lucy destroys their current growth—their iconic appearance—while leaving the bulbs intact. Like Wordsworth’s poem, which she does not remember but rather remembers memorizing, the mowed daffodil loses its earthly emanation while retaining its mode of reproduction. The act remains as its proof evaporates. But Lucy’s harvest is not just a symbol for the double-remove that characterizes her relationship to Wordsworth’s poem: its narrative logic also parallels that of the actual poem. As “I wandered lonely as a cloud” moves from the actual to the imagined, from lived experience in the first three stanzas to remembered experience in the fourth, so does Lucy’s harvest transform intact daffodils into invisible flower futurities, into a void with the ghostly potential for regeneration lurking beneath. The hidden bulbs that remain in her wake replay the intrusion of Wordsworth’s remembered daffodils into a “vacant mood” not dissimilar from the vacancy Lucy

leaves behind. In this fantasy where Lucy wields the power to replace the daffodils before her with a deathly lack, Kincaid constructs a structural echo in which Lucy's interaction with the flowers mirrors not only her history with Wordsworth's poem, but also the poem itself.

Although a variety of Wordsworth's poems were taught as part of Britain's colonial education program, it is "I wandered lonely as a cloud" that became the most notorious. But the alienation that students experienced when reading and reciting a poem about flowers they had never seen was a problem that colonial educators had in fact predicted. This alienation reveals a conflict central to Wordsworth's role in colonial education—central, in fact, to the task of colonial education in general: was Wordsworth (or any text) supposed to inculcate universal truths and lessons, or English ones? In this section I examine the logic underpinning (and the results of) Wordsworth's routine appearance in British colonial schools. Although only half of this project is about novels that we would call postcolonial, the context of colonial education is one with wide implications. As Gauri Viswanathan has argued in *Masks of Conquest* (1989), the dissemination of English literature throughout the British empire was not a result of the formation of English studies but rather a cause: the field was founded not in England but in the colonial schools of India.¹⁵ Thus the concept of a canonical English literature, one worthy of academic investigation, should be seen through the context of British colonial rule in the nineteenth century.

While Viswanathan traces the shift in educational policy from a decentralized Orientalism (teaching Indian students specific Indian languages and literatures) to an overarching Anglicism (teaching Indian students English as a medium for further instruction), the tension in

¹⁵ The Charter Act, which in 1813 renewed the East India Company's charter in India, compelled England "to undertake the education of the native subjects, a responsibility which it did not officially bear even toward its own people." Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 23. For more on the changing relationship between Orientalist education and Anglicism in India, see ch. 1.

the particular case of Wordsworth boils down to universalism as opposed to Englishness. The Madras Public Instruction Report for 1855-56 reasoned that making an Indian child read about “the natural phenomena of a northern climate” or “the habits of the animals of a northern country” was foolish—those climes and habits “are so dissimilar to those of the tropics, that the child would either not recognize the scenes described, or be taught facts, which, though correct as regards England, are not so as regards this country.”¹⁶ The report reasonably suggests that topics should not be too British, lest they confuse Indian students or, worse yet, teach them that British truths are universal and hold weight in “this country.” This concern is clearly borne out by Kincaid’s *Lucy*, for whom daffodils are not a local fact but a colonial indoctrination. And yet, on the other hand, Wordsworth’s morality was, as I suggest in chapter three, perceived as having a global applicability. Ian Michael, in his analysis of school anthologies from 1802 to 1870, mentions Joseph Hine’s selection of Wordsworth (1831), which “was meant as a classbook.” Hine chose Wordsworth for this pedagogical purpose because his poetry “has an uncommon sympathy with all that conduces to the formation and preservation of purity in youth.”¹⁷ Here his poems are both exemplary and inclusive, “uncommon” but germane to “all” that might inculcate purity. In these two examples taken together, though, Wordsworth’s poetry is alternately alienating and inclusive, just as capable of pushing readers away as it is intent on inspiring sympathy in them. There was no agreement on the subject of Wordsworth’s universality—on whether his poems could act as a unifying commonplace or rather contained an alienating specificity. This lack of agreement accounts for the diversity of responses to Wordsworth’s poetry that my dissertation examines, and this diversity is not merely a product of the project’s

¹⁶ John Murdoch, *Hints on Government Education in India; with Special Reference to School Books* (Madras: C. Foster, 1873), 32.

¹⁷ Ian Michael, *The Teaching of English: From the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 261-62.

global context. Jamaica Kincaid alone contains multitudes: she, like her character Lucy, remembers hating “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” but in recent years has reached an understanding with Wordsworth, now her “favorite”: “It’s not Wordsworth’s fault, mind you. It was only the way in which he was used. Poor man, he would have highly disapproved.”¹⁸ Whether Wordsworth would have hated Queen Victoria, as Kincaid goes on to suggest, is hard to say, but her shift encapsulates the tension of Wordsworth as an export: he became a commonplace, one seen as offering truths with universal application amid truths unique to England.

In his essay “Systems of Education and Systems of Thought,” Pierre Bourdieu argues that it is precisely such “commonplaces”—shared language, methods, and problems—that schooling provides: “educated people of a given period may disagree on the questions they discuss but are at any rate in agreement about discussing certain questions.”¹⁹ Education, more than simply providing knowledge, provides commonalities, not necessarily in opinion but certainly in awareness of what things one might have an opinion about. Rather than fostering individuality as one might expect (learning to “think for yourself”), education creates a community bound by shared attention to “certain questions.” Though community cannot efface individual difference—people “may disagree on the questions they discuss”—the differentiated self is more a byproduct of community than it is a result of education, whose real offspring is the commonplace, or “that general disposition... which may be termed cultured *habitus*.”²⁰

¹⁸ Kathleen M. Balutansky, “On Gardening: An Interview with Jamaica Kincaid,” *Callaloo* 25, no. 3 (2002): 799.

¹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Systems of Education and Systems of Thought,” in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, ed. Michael F. D. Young (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1971), 191.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

Bourdieu does not address what happens when the culture of the educational system differs from the culture of the people it purports to instruct. But the results of such a clash subtly emerge when he posits that

If it be accepted that...scholarly or academic culture, is a common code enabling all those possessing that code to attach the same meaning to the same words...and, conversely, to express the same meaningful intention through the same words, the same behaviour patterns and the same works, it is clear that the school, which is responsible for handing on that culture, is the fundamental factor in the cultural consensus.²¹

The school, and not the content it teaches, creates and passes on culture. But this dissemination depends on a “common code” without which the relationship between meaning and words falls apart. This “common code” is what distinguishes a Wordsworth who is universal from one who is too British to be easily understood by children outside the England. Gauri Viswanathan has argued that “[h]ow the native *actually* responds is so removed from the colonizer’s representational system, his understanding of the meaning of events, that it enters into the realm of another history of which the latter has no comprehension or even awareness.”²² And yet, these actual responses were a concern to some, like missionary John Murdoch, who in his report complains about a set of volumes published by the Calcutta School-Book Society in which “[t]he sentiments are good; but the scenes are too English.”²³ Without a common code, these “too English” scenes will carry alienation instead of meaning.

²¹ Ibid., 190-91.

²² Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, 12.

²³ Murdoch, *Hints on Government Education*, 36.

For many students, British education outside of England did precisely that. This result, however, was far from universal. Edward Said, in his reflections on his primary education in Cairo, seizes on the disjuncture between his culture and that of his school: “[t]he odd thing...was that we were all treated as if we should (or *really* wanted to) be English.”²⁴ But his contemporary Leila Ahmed recalls rehabilitating a seemingly useless education in the flora and fauna of England with her dual love for the landscapes of Cairo and Cambridge: “Different as they are, for me they share an underlying similarity.”²⁵ For her there was some value, not expressly English, to be gleaned from a geographically irrelevant education in English botany—and even the content that was expressly English held a complex appeal. Ahmed admits that “I knew ‘the enemy’—the imperialists—all too intimately. I was at home in English books, English ideas....There was no way that I could reduce what I knew to some cardboard caricature called imperialism and come to hate and reject everything English.”²⁶ Similarly, for Jean Said Makdisi the geographical specificity of much English poetry was extractable—applicable to settings beyond the shores of England. As diligently as her education in Cairo’s British imperial schools during the 1950s ignored the context of Egypt, it served a purpose, for

the study of Romantic poets extolling the beauties of the English countryside, which I had never seen, taught me to look at the yellow sands of Egypt, at the imposing cedar and pine-covered mountains of Lebanon, at the shimmering silver leaves of the olive trees, at the deep blue of Mediterranean fading into the lighter shade at the horizon.²⁷

²⁴ Edward Said, *Out of Place* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 39.

²⁵ Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America--A Woman's Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 181.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁷ Jean Said Makdisi, *Beirut Fragments: A War Memoir* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), 111-12.

Romantic poetry (and in particular, Wordsworth's—she mentions daffodils in an earlier passage) proved capable of teaching some students in the British Empire how to look at their own landscape.

The history of education in the British empire is clearly germane to Jamaica Kincaid's essays on gardening, which document the effects of Britain's botanical hegemony on her environmental thinking, and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, where the political role of English-language education in a complex settler colony is a subtle but important background. But this history is also germane to my discussion of American anti-slavery writing, which drew strength from an English literature that was becoming a canon, and to my interest in Jonathan Wordsworth, a twentieth-century literary scholar who not only was descended from William Wordsworth but also based his academic career at Oxford on his famous ancestor. As these examples suggest, the result of Wordsworth's central and stable position within the canon of English literature has been interpretive diversity rather than agreement. This diversity is important because as an interpretive context it reveals unexpected Wordsworths that have not yet been discovered by a straightforwardly historical approach. These Wordsworths are rarely divested of their Englishness, but that trait signifies differently throughout the world—and it is those significations that I argue serve as an essential context for reinterpreting Wordsworth's writing.

Chapter one builds on the relationship between Wordsworth's daffodils and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*. In that novel, the experience of memorizing Wordsworth's poem leads the protagonist to reject both the poem and the botanical life it represents. But I argue that in the novel and Kincaid's essays on gardening, this hatred does not translate to a repudiation of the poetry that provoked it. Rather, I see both Kincaid and Wordsworth, especially in his *Guide*

through the District of the Lakes (1835), struggling to express the relationship between localism and colonialism through the contested and artificial space of the garden. For Kincaid, this relationship means redefining localism as unrooted and movable, centered in her Vermont garden but composed of exotic plants from a colonial history she knows well. In turn, I analyze Wordsworth's *Guide* in light of the material history of Kew Gardens, which served as the hub for British botanic gardens across the globe, to show that the *Guide* is less defined by pastoral English nationalism than by anxiety about the movement of plants, soils, and people that characterized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialism.

The three chapters that follow build on this trope of movability, arguing that it's not enough to study Wordsworth's poetry in order to understand his afterlives, but rather that his afterlives are key to understanding him. In chapter two I examine J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and contest the critical assumption that it uses Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1805) merely to indicate the irrelevance of what Coetzee calls in *White Writing* "the quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment." By focusing on what *The Prelude* and *Disgrace* share—a concern over the methods and politics of pedagogy—I argue that Wordsworth does more than represent the diverse monolith of the European landscape tradition. For when David Lurie, the protagonist of *Disgrace*, fails to engage his students during his lesson on *The Prelude*, he is butchering a text that already envisions the wholesale failure of pedagogy on several levels. Both *Disgrace* and Coetzee's memoirs bring this strain of educational anxiety to light by associating Wordsworth's place in South Africa not just with a misplaced landscape tradition, but with faulty pedagogy. In turn, I consider South Africa's educational history before, during, and after Apartheid—particularly the place of English language education in a complex settler colony—in order to reexamine the place of David's daughter Lucy, both spatially, on the South

African farm, and literarily, as a harbinger of the doomed child from Wordsworth's Lucy poems. In my reading, Lucy Lurie does not just replay the trauma of Wordsworth's Lucy poems in a new context; rather, with her character Coetzee draws attention to the deciding role gender plays in the relationship between education and what Lucy calls "Mother Nature."

From post-Apartheid South Africa the project moves to antebellum America to examine the abolitionist afterlife of Wordsworth in the political writings of Lydia Maria Child. I was initially intrigued by the epigraphs from Child's *Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), which musters Wordsworth's *Excursion* (1814) in support of its comprehensive anti-slavery agenda. These epigraphs are perplexing because abolition was an agenda that Wordsworth seldom considered, especially in 1833. My archival research reveals that the *Appeal* and Child's editorial work in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* mobilized the very traits associated with Wordsworth's apolitical reputation in America—his literariness and his Englishness—to create a politically potent American Wordsworth. But I argue that this mobilization was not a misreading of Wordsworth, however politically apostate he may have been when Child evoked him. Rather, I see the precedent for Child's use in *The Excursion*, which pairs regional, English conservatism with a diffuse discourse of global concern capable of broadening the poem's import beyond the nation it represents. This chapter thus tells the story of how Wordsworth, a poet consistently associated with Englishness, became an expert on "how to live," as Matthew Arnold said. This vague "how-to" seems ripe for export—evidence of Wordsworth's suitability in a range of global contexts—but in Arnold's genealogy it becomes clear that an education in "how to live" is a particularly English offering.

These three chapters depend on Wordsworth's representativeness, on his ability to stand for moral, geographical, and national spheres beyond those which he actually inhabited in his

writing. In the concluding chapter I suggest that this representativeness has in part a strange and paradoxical source: it has been constructed since the 1790s by the Wordsworth family, many of whom contributed their labors to an edifice that could stand for them. By reading the labors of Jonathan and Richard Wordsworth, twentieth-century descendants of the poet who worked visibly at the family business by studying and impersonating the ancestor who lent them his name, I examine how Wordsworth was shared to become a more accessible global entity while remaining the visible property of a select, English cadre. William Wordsworth's *Home at Grasmere* (1800-1806) presages the labors of an extended family, celebrating the sibling bond between William and Dorothy Wordsworth while remaining profoundly skeptical of such a pair's stability or lasting power. In its logic, individual talent demands the support of a familial quorum that rallies behind one lustrous member. Taken together, the poem, Wordsworth's contemporary family members, and his latter-day descendants all question the idea of the isolated genius, but more importantly they reveal that his preeminence is a result of his representativeness, a quality that requires a familial infrastructure ready to subsume itself under the banner of Wordsworth.

Chapter 1. Localism Unrooted

Jamaica Kincaid never mentions William Wordsworth in her semi-autobiographical novel *Lucy* (1990). This fact has not diminished the critical attention paid to *Lucy*'s allusive relationship with the English poet, though—its reference to “an old poem” that inspires nightmares about animate daffodils is clear enough without Wordsworth's name.¹ The omission is a loud one, then, and it has inspired an ongoing conversation about Wordsworth's role in Kincaid's oeuvre, exemplified by Ian Smith's assertion that Wordsworth acts as “the sign of an unresolved relationship to English literary and cultural traditions that inform Kincaid's history.”² The ease with which Wordsworth is taken as a metonym for “English literary and cultural traditions” in this critic's account is typical of analyses of Kincaid's intertextuality, as is the fact that this relationship's value is assumed to lie in what it can tell us about Kincaid—and not what it can tell us about Wordsworth.

At odds with this critical trajectory, in which *Lucy*'s intertextuality proves a method of interpreting Kincaid's history, are Kincaid's own feelings about the novel's daffodil scene: “I hope it makes people read the poem.”³ Her hope suggests a different end, pointing us back to Wordsworth's 1800 lyric “I wandered lonely as a cloud” rather than her use of it, not just because, as she says, “You can't begin to understand me until you read certain things,” but more simply because Wordsworth “wrote beautiful things.”⁴ This appreciative backward glance—her

¹ Kincaid, *Lucy*, 17. Subsequent references to the novel will refer to this edition and appear parenthetically.

² Smith, “Misusing Canonical Intertexts: Jamaica Kincaid, Wordsworth and Colonialism's 'absent things',” 802.

³ Balutansky, “On Gardening: An Interview with Jamaica Kincaid,” 799.

⁴ *Ibid.*

clear aesthetic admiration for Wordsworth—has not been addressed by criticism on Kincaid, which tends to treat Wordsworth (and Brontë and Milton, some of Kincaid’s favorite writers) as ossified and symbolic givens rather than as producers of polyvalent texts in their own right. But if we take seriously her recommendation to look back at Wordsworth without concomitantly designating him as a mere signifier, it becomes difficult to ignore the similarities between the two writers, which should provoke a reinvestigation of Wordsworth’s relationship to his beloved local setting—and by extension to the colonial context that helped define what the “local” meant to Wordsworth in the first place. His well-known association with the English Lake District is clearly part of this story. But more pertinent is the very tangible relationship to the soil that he cultivated through his labors in the gardens at Grasmere and Rydal Mount and the writings these labors inspired. This occupation, far more than a hobby, is one that he shares with Kincaid—and one whose material effects makes these writers’ localisms practical as well as theoretical. In what follows, I read Wordsworth’s *Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England* (1835) as an impossible but germane reply to Kincaid’s *My Garden (Book)*: (1999) and *Among Flowers* (2005) in order argue that both writers construe the garden as constituted by natural material that signifies local belonging, even as that local rootedness is a paradoxical manifestation of the global forces of colonial movement and botanic possession. For Kincaid, this relationship means redefining localism as unrooted and movable, centered in her Vermont garden but composed of exotic plants from a colonial history she knows well. For Wordsworth, it means reading his *Guide* for Lake District tourists in light of the material history of Kew Gardens, which served as the hub for British botanic gardens across the globe. This chapter thus argues that the *Guide* is less defined by pastoral English nationalism than by anxiety about the

movement of plants, soils, and people that characterized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialism.

Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, which makes clear from the title its devotion to a local setting, has frequently been analyzed through the lens of eighteenth-century landscape design, and for good reason: like Humphry Repton, the prolific landscape gardener who advocated "imitat[ing] nature so judiciously, that the interference of art shall never be detected," Wordsworth idealized landscapes that appeared "natural."⁵ Even now, Wordsworth's gardens appear as such; a recent book on his gardens at Rydal Mount describes their rambling watercourse as "so naturalized with the surrounding terrain that it appears to have been original."⁶ For as John Barrell has argued, during this period the ideal garden was "no longer thought of as rigidly separated from the rest of nature"; in fact, garden and nature became so enmeshed that the gardener, "in manipulating and improving the landscape, was thus given a sanction from nature," not because he strove to imitate nature, but rather "because he saw nature as a copy of his own ideal."⁷ As Barrell, Donna Landry, and Simon Pugh have shown, this idealization mandated a persistent erasure of poverty and labor in both imagination and practice.⁸

⁵ Quoted in David C. Streatfield, "Art and Nature in the English Landscape Garden: Design Theory and Practice, 1700-1818," in *Landscape in the Gardens and the Literature of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. David C. Streatfield and Alistair M. Duckworth (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981), 68-69.

⁶ Carole Buchanan and Richard Buchanan, *Wordsworth's Gardens* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2001), 154.

⁷ John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 46, 47.

⁸ For instance, drifts of trees were often placed so that they obscured any view of adjacent property where farm laborers might otherwise be visible. Donna Landry's work on the countryside suggests compellingly that "[n]ot production, but consumption and pleasure, recreation and retreat, were the goods associated with the countryside." Similarly, Simon Pugh describes the garden's ability to hide the complicated means of its own production: "The ideological separation of rural exploitation (the nameless thousands who laboured to make the great gardens of England) and the money markets that have always sustained such grandiose schemes are subsumed into a 'landscape', value-free." In the realm of artistic representation, Barrell identifies "the constraints which governed how the labouring, the vagrant, and the mendicant poor could be portrayed so as to be an acceptable part of the

Nevertheless, this sanitized “naturalness” was a hallmark of English landscape design, and as a result of the association, the ideal landscape garden became not just natural, but also naturally English.

The Royal Gardens at Kew, created in 1759 and advised by Sir Joseph Banks from 1772 to 1820, are emblematic of these growing ties between landscape design, English gardening practices, and what Donal McCracken terms “botanic nationalism.”⁹ As a botanic garden, Kew broke with tradition: whereas earlier botanic gardens featured a collection of plants “overlaid upon a map of the world,” Kew appears “as an English ‘natural’ landscape with rolling, grassy slopes, picturesque clumps of trees, and meandering water—a setting attuned to the temper of liberal, self-confident, expansionary modern science.”¹⁰ And so although the theme of a botanic garden, according to John Prest, “is always the same—it is that of gathering the plants together from all over the world,” at Kew that theme took a different form.¹¹ A diverse, global collection appeared within an aesthetic frame that was coming to be recognized as both natural and distinctly English.

At Kew’s helm during this period was Joseph Banks—perhaps most famous for his association with Captain James Cook’s first important voyage in the Pacific—who was responsible for transforming Kew from “the summer retreat of the Royal Family” into a

décor of the drawing rooms of the polite.” The imaginative proximity of “garden,” “landscape,” and “nature” during this period has resulted in some slippage between the terms. Donna Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking and Ecology in English Literature, 1671-1831* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 2; Simon Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 1; John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5.

⁹ Donal P. McCracken, *Gardens of Empire: Botanical Institutions of the Victorian British Empire* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁰ Charles Willard Moore, William J. Mitchell, and William Turnbull, *The Poetics of Gardens* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 111, 113.

¹¹ John M. Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Recreation of Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 44.

braggart's repository of botanic specimens.¹² But for Banks the connection between nature and nation was not merely a one-sided relationship in which nature as represented and cultivated by Kew proved British prowess. Inversely, he also understood the nation in plant-based terms, where the healthy, functioning state resembled a tree: "its roots are the farmers, the lower branches traders, its upper branches manufacturers, and its fruit and flowers the nobility and gentry—if its roots are not manured, the tree will droop."¹³ Banks was not alone. As Simon Schama details, the oak tree served as a symbol for England's population during the eighteenth century; both were "tight-pored and tough-grained, inhospitable to pests."¹⁴ Thus this period, during which Banks and his plant-collectors imported seven-thousand new plants to Kew Gardens, witnessed the simultaneous naturalization of nationalism and the layering of a uniquely English identity onto a landscape design tradition that valued naturalness above all else.¹⁵

It is difficult, however, to understand the relationship between nation and nature without recourse to colonial histories of nature, which indicate how indebted this relationship is to imperial ideologies of appropriation, cultivation, and improvement. As Lucile Brockway, Donal McCracken, and John Gascoigne have argued, the gardens at Kew had "an important role in empire-building" as well as nation-building, for "it was there that plants that were considered to be potential sources of additional income for the British Empire could be cultivated and re-

¹² Ray Desmond, *The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew* (London: Kew Publishing, 2007), 65.

¹³ It is interesting to ponder the political implications of explicitly spreading manure onto agrarian laborers, as well as associating the nobility with the short-lived flowers a tree produces once a year. Quoted in Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 98.

¹⁴ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995), 172.

¹⁵ W. B. Turrill, *The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew* (London: H. Jenkins, 1959), 23-24.

distributed.”¹⁶ In other words, Kew inspired “botanic nationalism” not simply by housing an impressive collection, but also by serving as both the clearinghouse for plants, seeds, and soils from Britain’s colonies, and the model for those colonies’ own botanic gardens.¹⁷ Similarly, on a larger scale critics like Richard Drayton, Jill H. Casid, and Richard Grove have shown that phenomena such as improvement, cultivation, landscape design, and conservation are rooted not in an English tradition but an overtly imperial one.¹⁸ In light of these intersections, Schama’s discussion of England’s “Heart of Oak” takes on a different hue. The context of the English valorization of the oak tree was rampant deforestation; empire-building meant ship-building, and ships demanded ever more lumber.¹⁹

Into this matrix of landscape, nationalism, and colonial expansion comes Wordsworth’s *Guide*, a long prose handbook for tourists that is ironically worried about tourism (which it helped to generate).²⁰ Originally the *Guide* was almost surely written for financial gain;

¹⁶ Lucile Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 10; John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 130.

¹⁷ When Queen Victoria ascended the throne Britain had more colonial botanic gardens (either existing or established) than any other rival imperial power. McCracken, *Gardens of Empire*, 2-3.

¹⁸ In *Nature’s Government* Richard Drayton explains that improvements, usually thought of in tandem with British landscape practices, also applied in British colonies, and explores not just the aesthetic but also the moral and religious dimension of such improvements. Jill Casid argues that many landscaping practices developed as a means of colonial dominance: “The contested terrain of empire in the eighteenth century was constituted not just out of appropriated lands and claims of property or conquest but also out of its supposed opposite—the aesthetic, economic, and imaginative practices of ‘cultivation,’ or landscaping.” Richard Grove’s point about the development of conservation is especially important to a discussion of Wordsworth, whose writing is often read as proto-environmental: as Grove says, “the seeds of modern conservation developed as an integral part of the European encounter with the tropics.” Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, 89; Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxi; Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁹ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 153.

²⁰ The distinction between gardening and landscape design is not one that Wordsworth made with any consistency. What we might consider to be an issue of landscape—for instance, Wordsworth’s recommendation of “having our houses belong to the country”—is one that he proposes as a revision to “the modern system of gardening.” William

Wordsworth began it in 1809 as a companion to the engravings in Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire* (1810), an undertaking that he had refused a year earlier and probably only accepted because of financial hardship. But the project soon grew legs, and the appearance of expanded editions of the *Guide* in 1820, 1822, 1823, and 1835 suggests that Wordsworth treated it as he would have treated any of his poems, as a perpetually unfinished document open to revision. In its desire to memorialize and preserve a proximate geographic region, the *Guide* participates in what we might call localism, for as Ursula Heise reasons in her analysis of the contemporary American environmental movement, "the local as the ground for individual and communal identity and as the site of connections to nature... certainly fits broadly into a pattern of critique of modernity that has been repeatedly articulated in western Europe and North America for at least two centuries."²¹ But the critical tendency has been to treat the *Guide*'s localism as a function of Wordsworth's nationalism—to suggest, as Benjamin Kim does, that the *Guide* does not merely celebrate the local, but also acts as an "expression[] of nationalism" by "encompass[ing] the national through the local."²² Similarly, Andrew Hazucha's ecological approach suggests that in the rationale of the *Guide*, "foreigners who bring non-native flora into northern England... are contributing to the ruination of an ecosystem and, because of their ignorance of the way that ecosystem works, the ruination of a culture that in its previously insular condition has been for centuries a kind of Eden."²³ Indeed, as Alan Bewell has pointed

and Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805)*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 524.

²¹ Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

²² Benjamin Kim, "Generating a National Sublime: Wordsworth's 'The River Duddon' and 'The Guide to the Lakes'," *Studies in Romanticism* 45, no. 1 (2006): 50.

²³ Andrew Hazucha, "Neither Deep nor Shallow but National: Eco-nationalism in Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*," *ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment)* 9, no. 2 (2002): 69-70.

out, during this period the “traditional notion of a local nature, of a place whose plant and animal life...were isolated from the global movement of other natures, was quickly becoming a thing of the past.”²⁴ But while Wordsworth’s anxiety about exotic plants reads as “ecoxenophobia” to Hazucha, to me it seems important to note this anxiety is not merely about the permeability of national boundaries; it also worries the movement of people and plants within the United Kingdom. To focus on xenophobia and nationalism, then, is to construe Wordsworth’s anxiety too narrowly: he is concerned with both the global and the intranational migration of plants.

This essay engages with what Alfred Crosby terms “ecological imperialism” to investigate how the movement of plants inherent in colonialism shaped Wordsworth’s sense of local belonging. I am not suggesting that his anxiety about the Lake District can be read as concern for the botanic practices of British colonialism. Nevertheless, I maintain his gardens and landscape writing, as centered as they are on an ideal of English localism, must be understood as reacting to norms that depended not only on English tradition but also on British colonialism. This claim is rooted in a treatment of the garden that goes beyond its status as a metaphor or trope. Such a metaphorical status has resulted in a blind spot: what has interested critics is not that Wordsworth and Kincaid garden, but that they write about it, suggesting that gardens matter not as representations in their own right but as they can be represented by other means. In this essay I avoid treating the garden as purely textual, for the danger becomes seeing the garden as symbolically portentous and materially inert, revealing a stasis that is utterly foreign to any living garden. But my claim about localism is also more specifically dependent on Jamaica Kincaid, for her frequent references to Wordsworth reveal that the context of ecological imperialism is imperative to our understanding of Wordsworth’s localism—as well as Kincaid’s

²⁴ Alan Bewell, “Erasmus Darwin’s Cosmopolitan Nature,” *ELH* 76, no. 1 (2009): 40.

own. As much as we need Wordsworth to understand Kincaid, it is through the context of her repurposings that that we may fully grasp the scope of Wordsworth's ecological import.

Naturalizing the garden

“Naturalization” is a polyvalent term whose multiplicity helps to explicate the incursion of colonialism into Wordsworth's highly local *Guide to the Lakes*. On one hand, naturalization is the process by which a plant becomes “established so that it lives wild in a place where it is not native” (*OED*). But naturalization has another meaning in the gardening world, one that diverges from the process that turns non-native plants, or exotics, into native ones. A “naturalized” garden, as opposed to a formal garden (or even a front lawn), is one devoted to native plants that grow in the garden's climate without coaxing; such gardens usually reject mainstream gardening practices such as fertilizing and weeding. Naturalization thus signifies both inclusion and exclusion of non-native species, and can either amplify or minimize the difference that nativity makes. For on the one hand, the logic of naturalization suggests that the gulf between the exotic and the natural can be bridged once the plant is seen accepting its new climate. On the other hand, the naturalized garden esteems nativity above all else, suggesting that the gap between the local and the exotic is agonistic, and (rather confusingly) that naturalized plants have no place within the naturalized garden's walls, which contain only native plants. The interplay of nativity, foreignness, and movement raises the question of what counts as local, and in Wordsworth's *Guide* I believe the answer depends on the internal consequences that he sees colonialism as effecting on England itself.

The terms of this discussion are loaded. Raymond Williams has entries on both “native” and “nature” in his *Keywords* (both derive from the past participle of the Latin *nascor*, “to be

born”), and although “to naturalize” suffers from no dearth of precise definitions, its most basic meaning is its most troubling: “to make natural” (OED). Williams gets at the problem of negotiating artful fabrication with the innate and pre-existing implications of the “natural” when he traces the development of “nature” through the eighteenth century, when it becomes associated with the countryside: “nature is what man has not made, though if he made it long enough ago—a hedgerow or a desert—it will usually be included as natural.”²⁵ Williams can be nothing but up-front about the trickiness of “nature,” “the most complex word in the language,” acknowledging that although he can divide its meanings into three general categories, “precise meanings are variable and at times even opposed.”²⁶ “Nature” is that which is not man-made—except when it’s not. “Nature” provides the antidote for “an ‘artificial’ or ‘mechanical’ society,” except when it is itself made.²⁷ Wordsworth plunges headlong into this set of hazy indistinctions in his *Guide*, most notably when he issues his gardening imperative: “work, where you can, in the spirit of nature, with an invisible hand of art.”²⁸ The alliance he sees between nature and art is palpable but far from absolute. The gardener can only get so close, held back from nature by the distancing aura of its “spirit” and effaced from artistic creation by the necessary invisibility of art’s “hand.” Wordsworth’s recommendation doesn’t oppose art and nature, but it treats each of these terms so delicately that the details of their relationship become as invisible as the hand of art itself.

²⁵ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 223.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁸ *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 211-212. Subsequent references to Wordsworth’s *Guide* will refer to this edition (the 1835 version of the *Guide*) and appear parenthetically.

In short, the divergence in the definition of naturalization depends in part on the complexities Williams explores in his entry on nature, and in part on its unstable relationship to nativity. This means that one sort of naturalization sanctions the erasure of nativity by describing the exotic plant made locally wild, while the other sort reifies the difference of nativity by admitting local plants and banning exotic ones. The gap between the erasure and reification of difference is not just a product of naturalization, however; it is inherent in the term “native.” Like “exotic,” its use as a substantive refers to “the inferior inhabitants of a place subjected to alien political power or conquest,” and commonly “as a term for ‘non-Europeans’ in the period of colonialism and imperialism,” though such usage has clearly fallen out of favor.²⁹ Throughout the period of this use, though, “native” also carried a non-pejorative meaning and was “a very positive word when applied to one’s own place or person.” The vacillation between laudatory and derogatory, local and colonial, subject and subjugated, reveals the deictic nature of the term: its meaning depends on where you stand and where you’re pointing.

These terms are particularly apropos to my study of Wordsworth’s landscapes for two reasons. First, the height of these terms’ definitional instability coincides neatly with the Romantic era. This is not a coincidence, considering that the escalation of the British Empire between 1790 and 1830—which Saree Makdisi has argued must be understood in reference to Romanticism as an aesthetic movement—certainly intensified the vacillation of these terms.³⁰ Second, in their contradictions the terms begin to illuminate the mutual dependence of the local and the colonial. In both of these geopolitical realms, however vaguely defined they may be, the

²⁹ Williams, *Keywords*, 215.

³⁰ Makdisi makes this point trenchantly in the opening sentence of *Romantic Imperialism*, where he notes that over one hundred and fifty million people were brought under the rule of the British empire during the era of Romanticism. Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xi.

art of gardening depends on the ability to fabricate the natural and the native, and these are categories that as we have seen rely on a renounced “out there” for their meaning. This dependence is perhaps not surprising; it is an integral part of Edward Said’s argument that the invention of an Oriental other allows for a concomitant invention of a European self, that what defines “European culture” is a “comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.”³¹ What is different in the case of the local and the colonial is the potential absence of the national: it’s not that Englishness, for example, is defined in opposition to the colonized other (though this is true), but rather that defining the local depends on the colonial. In other words, praising the local “native” means rejecting the colonial “native.”³² For this reason, I want to resist interpreting Wordsworth’s focus on the local as a microcosm for the nationalistic fervor.³³ While the Lake District may exemplify the best England has to offer in Wordsworth’s eyes, to substitute the region for the nation risks flattening a great deal of nuance and ignoring the local on its own terms. As a governmental employee from 1813 onward—his position as the Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland made his family financially secure for the first time—Wordsworth had an understanding of the British state that went beyond the pastoral beauty of the Lake District. Focusing on Wordsworth’s implied construction of the nation, to the exclusion of his actual representation of the local, means ignoring the realm in which he saw the effects of colonialism most clearly in an effort to make the stakes of his observations more widely felt.

³¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 7.

³² The flip side of this dependence is clearly seen in Jill Casid’s point about “tropical” plants: “those species of flora most symbolically associates with the ‘tropics’ were precisely those plants by which the British grafted one idea of island paradise onto another.” Delineating the local in the colonies meant actually importing plants that could then be defined as local. Casid, *Sowing Empire*, 7.

³³ This synecdochal substitution underpins Andrew Hazucha’s argument about Wordsworth’s *Guide*, as well as Benjamin Kim’s.

One of the peculiar traits of Wordsworth's *Guide*, especially in light of his known love of gardening, is the overwhelming attention he pays to the appearance of buildings in the Lake District and the strict recommendations he outlines for these buildings. After all, this was a self-proclaimed guide, not an advisory pamphlet for residents. His rationale becomes clear, though, toward the end of the main text, where Wordsworth explains that his aim has been "to preserve the native beauty of this delightful place, because still further changes in its appearance must inevitably follow, from the change of inhabitants and owners which is rapidly taking place" (223). In other words, this is as much a guide for house hunters as it is for tourists. Ideally, it seems, Wordsworth's conservation should follow a straightforward path: he writes and publishes recommendations, which are read by new inhabitants who take his suggestions to heart and act in concert with the district's "native beauty." But Jamaica Kincaid's discussion of memory in the garden suggests another path: "Memory is a gardener's real palette; memory as it summons up the past, memory as it shapes the present, memory as it dictates the future" (218-9). In this context Wordsworth's desire "to preserve" might have no material outcome that exceeds the textual product in which he scrawled that very desire—insurance against the loss of memory.³⁴

For Wordsworth, the process of naturalizing exotics is not limited to the plant world. Like J. C. Loudon's *Suburban Gardener* (1838), which is as much about houses as it is about gardens, Wordsworth's *Guide* was significantly concerned with how man-made structures might complement the landscape so completely as to transcend their artificial origins. The ideal structure, in his eyes, was a cottage passed down "from father to son" and "inhabited by persons engaged in the same occupations"—a Burkean fantasy of establishment and order (202). Such cottages, white washed infrequently and expanded "without incongruity," tend to "remind the

³⁴ The Wordsworth industry that has sprung up in the Lake District underlines Kincaid's point. Wordsworth's memories of the District have shaped its current form more than he could have imagined.

contemplative spectator of a production of nature, and may (using a strong expression) rather be said to have grown than to have been erected;—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty.” To describe humble cottages as hardy plants that spring from the earth is to efface the labor that went into their construction and upkeep; it is also to suggest that the process of naturalization is so long in duration that it exceeds the realm of conceivable time. The rock from which these cottages seem to spring is, as Wordsworth explains earlier, a product of “Nature’s first great dealings with the superficies of the earth,” a designation he uses in reference to the sublime and one that gives that aesthetic category a temporal edge (181). Sublime landscapes are also sublimely old. These temporal indications make the actual construction of a house almost inconceivable: its nativity is so stalwart in Wordsworth’s account that it seems to have built itself out of ancient Cumbrian rock.

This timeline for naturalization is notable in its refusal to acknowledge human effort. But Wordsworth’s tendency here to aestheticize the working poor and overlook (or misunderstand) their labor is familiar: we see it, for instance, in *Lyrical Ballads* with the ruggedly distant blazon of the grieved “Old Man Traveling,” and visions of labor are similarly qualified in the landscaping traditions of the late eighteenth century.³⁵ On the next page, the humble cottages don “a vegetable garb” and in this clothing they “affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil

³⁵ Hills and drifts of trees were often constructed so that they obscured any view of adjacent property where farm laborers might otherwise be visible. Similarly, the “ha-ha,” a sunken fence delineating property lines, was invisible from the distance, making the property seem infinite. Although Wordsworth’s aestheticization seems typically Romantic (or at least typically Wordsworthian), Simon Pugh has aptly described the garden’s ability to hide the complicated means of its own production: “The ideological separation of rural exploitation (the nameless thousands who laboured to make the great gardens of England) and the money markets that have always sustained such grandiose schemes are subsumed into a ‘landscape’, value-free.” Similarly, John Barrell argues that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, “the art of rural life offers us the image of a stable, unified, almost egalitarian society,” despite the reality of social conflict between the rich and poor, and he focuses his attention on “the constraints which governed how the labouring, the vagrant, and the mendicant poor could be portrayed so as to be an acceptable part of the *décor* of the drawing rooms of the polite.” Pugh, *Garden, Nature, Language*, 1; Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840*, 5.

course of nature and simplicity, along which the humble-minded inhabitants have, through so many generations, been led” (203). The passive voice crops up again when Wordsworth dubs the scene “the representative idea of a mountain-cottage in this country so beautifully formed in itself, so richly adorned by the hand of nature.” While such a designation recognizes the cottage as fundamentally unreal, it also construes it as a hermetic structure, receptive only to Nature’s emendations. The cagey passivity of “formed” denies any specific agent of production; in fact, insofar as the cottage was formed “in itself” it seems almost self-propagating, as if its gestation occurred within its already existing walls, without any exertion of human effort. Paired with the implication that the ideal local cottage exists out of time, this self-sufficiency makes the process of naturalization seem, for lack of a better word, utterly natural—that is, free from human interference, even though any of the many definitions of naturalization implies human impact at some level.³⁶

If houses are subject to naturalization, then it is not surprising that they, like plants, can be exotics. Wordsworth refers to the appearance of inappropriately sized and colored houses in the Lake District as “the introduction of exotics in architecture,” and as a practicing gardener with strong ideas about the placement of exotics, he must be understood as using this term deliberately (217).³⁷ In this light, what’s unique about his use of the term is how he articulates the boundary of the exotic. A few pages earlier he regrets the influx of outsiders, saying “Persons, who in Leicestershire or Northamptonshire would probably have built a modest dwelling like those of their sensible neighbors, have been turned out of their course; and, acting a

³⁶ The *OED* does not help. One of the many definitions of “natural” is “not subject to human intervention.” *OED Online*, s.v. “natural, adj. and adv.,” <http://oed.com/view/Entry/125333?rskey=sM0fiR&result=3&isAdvanced=false> (accessed July 21, 2012).

³⁷ In his *Guide*, Wordsworth insists that exotics should be avoided in general, but makes an exception for a few exotics as long as they stay close to the house (219).

part, no wonder if, having had little experience, they act it ill” (211). Referring to them a breath later as “new settlers,” Wordsworth effectively redefines what it means to be an exotic in Cumbria: it means quite specifically to be not from Cumbria. In its common use, “exotic” refers to a plant of foreign extraction, one introduced from abroad, and although this is a broad definition it clearly does not signify plants (or buildings) from a few counties away. Adding to Wordsworth’s exoticization of the English midlands is his creation of a settler class, not merely a group of Englishmen from Leicestershire who have decided to relocate to another county, but rather a division of colonists infiltrating a place that, in this figuration at least, becomes the colony of the Lake District. Importantly, these midlanders are not innately colonialists. Had they stayed in Leicestershire they might have taken a cue from their neighbors and constructed a “modest dwelling.” Rather, it is the context of intranational movement that characterizes them as “new settlers.” Although Wordsworth attributes the settlers’ bad taste to the knowledge that their houses might be “looked at and commented upon” because the district is “an object of general admiration,” suggesting that bad taste springs from social anxiety rather than from their status as settlers, the fact remains that his diction involves him far more in the discourse of colonialism than national belonging. Thus, when Wordsworth uses “exotics in architecture” to describe the houses these settlers might build in Cumbria, he creates a world in which the local is so implicated in colonization that the colonizers are infiltrating from ever closer—England is being colonized by Britain. In other words, this is a schema in which colonialism occurs within the bounds of the nation in addition to without.

As Nicola Trott argues, even for the Wordsworth of the *Lyrical Ballads* “imperialist expansion appears as a contamination, not of the colonized, but of the colonizer and the old

country.”³⁸ Trott’s observation supports the work that James Chandler and David Bromwich have done on Wordsworth and Edmund Burke, who understood as early as the 1780s that colonial expansion was, as Uday Singh Mehta puts it, “doubly implicating”: “The oppression of India rebounds with similar effects on Britain; the British delinquents of India will become the commons of Great Britain.”³⁹ It’s easy to connect Burke’s so-called conservatism with Wordsworth’s own middle-aged political defection—and temporally, this is the connection I want to make. The explicitly colonial concerns of Wordsworth’s *Guide* make it clear that he “saw a Burke looking forward, as it were, toward him,” as Chandler suggests.⁴⁰ What distinguishes Wordsworth’s concern from Burke’s is its implication that the colonized experience is not limited to India, or the West Indies, but exists in the Lake District as well as an undeniable facet of colonialism rather than one of its effects. On the ground, this distinction merely looks like a difference of tense. In his speeches on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Burke locates the consequences of the trial in the future: “the credit and honor of the British nation will itself be decided by this decision.”⁴¹ Burke’s innovation, as he conceives it, is to suggest that British actions in India will have effects in Britain proper: the emphatic “itself” draws our attention to the imperiled “British nation.” But the future tense—Britain’s honor “will

³⁸ Nicola Trott, “Wordsworth’s Loves of the Plants,” in *1800: The New Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Nicola Trott and Seamus Perry (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 155.

³⁹ Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: a Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 170-71.

⁴⁰ James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 29. Importantly, though, Chandler (as well as Bromwich) situates the similarities between Burke and Wordsworth in an earlier era as well. Bromwich argues that “Wordsworth was a Burkean thinker already by the late 1790s,” as Trott’s argument about the *Lyrical Ballads* implies. David Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 63.

⁴¹ Edmund Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford, vol. 6 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 271.

be decided”—casts Burke’s argument as prophecy rather than testimony. In his theorization, the effects of colonization on Britain are just that: effects. In Wordsworth’s view, colonialism is at once internal and external, a formulation at odds with Burke’s sense of colonial cause-and-effect. It is not just that British colonialism weakens the social fabric of the British nation, but more explicitly that the appearance of colonialism’s outward expansion masks the fact that it has already claimed the center as its own. Where Burke’s worries stem from his sense of causality, from his belief that British meddling in India will cause domestic strife, Wordsworth’s formulation ceases to differentiate between colonialism within and without the bounds of Great Britain. One could not have caused the other because they are one and the same.

It is not only through Wordsworth’s references to “settlers” that he demonstrates his sense of a colonialism that clings ever closer to home. Worse than the settlers’ exotic houses is the district’s new crop of “plantations” (217), a term Wordsworth uses to describe tracts of cultivated trees. Plantations of larch trees receive the brunt of his rancor: he uses the term “plantation” only in reference to tracts of these trees and saves the pastoral “farm” for enclosures of land that he can call by name (the farm of Tarn Hows, the farm of Blowick). The lack of overlap between these two terms is significant at a time when, as Jill Casid argues, “The idea of colony as plantation and the plantation as farm mythicized empire as anticonquest by making empire as rooted and natural as rural England was supposed to be.”⁴² By distinguishing between farm and plantation, using the latter only to describe the unnatural “vegetable manufactory” that “thrust[s] every other tree out of the way,” Wordsworth suggests that the plantations he sees are not simply cultivated tracts of plant-life. Rather, the emphasis on mechanized production and

⁴² Casid, *Sowing Empire*, 8.

enforced monoculture aligns his use of the term with the sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations associated with colonial agriculture.⁴³

Later in his lengthy discussion of larch plantations, Wordsworth juxtaposes on aesthetic grounds the “native immeasurable forest” with the “artificial plantation,” making it clear how the importation and cultivation of economically viable exotics impinges upon “the sense of innumerable multitude” and “intense unity” that native growth provides (222). But in addition to insisting that the local must be defended against (and thus defined against) colonial influences, Wordsworth situates the local-colonial dynamic *within* England, effectively leveling the divisions that make “native” a bivalent political term. For at this point it becomes impossible to deploy two different sorts of nativity, a positive one that describes one’s own place and a negative one that represents conquered inferiors. In this sense, Wordsworth’s concerns echo those of Burke, who insisted that when the East India Company accepted the diwani, or the right to collect revenue, in 1765, “Great Britain made a virtual act of union with [India], by which they bound themselves as securities for their subjects, to preserve the people in all the rights, laws and liberties, which their natural, original Sovereign was bound to enforce.”⁴⁴ By dubbing the charter “a virtual act of union,” Burke implicitly compares Britain’s role in India to its role in Scotland, made part of the United Kingdom by the Act of Union in 1707. Burke’s attempt to situate India within Britain’s historical trajectory suggests an alternative to Sara Suleri’s assertion that colonial rule “is sequentially dependent on enactments of successive usurpation, with each usurping moment implying a singular and unprecedented logic”—an linear alternative to

⁴³ Although Wordsworth clarifies that some of the larch plantations were grown “for the sake of ornament,” it makes sense that at this moment a great number of them were developed “with a view to profit” (217). Richard Grove explains that by the end of the eighteenth century it became clear that timber resources were limited. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, 309.

⁴⁴ *Writings and Speeches*, 282.

colonialism's uprootings that never found expression.⁴⁵ The effect of his comparison between India and Scotland is that India suddenly seems improbably proximate—a Celtic periphery rather than a far-off holding—perhaps no better integrated into the United Kingdom than Scotland (and, a few years hence, Ireland) but far closer, with parliamentary representation to boot.

Burke's Act of Union, while leaving the cultural order of India intact, lessens the geographic distance on which the vacillating definitions of "native" depend. A century later, the historian J. R. Seeley would take Burke's recommendation to its apogee and argue for an empire ruled by "the family bond" rather than what Jamaica Kincaid has dubbed the "gun-to-the-head approach."⁴⁶ Reasoning that it didn't make sense to question the profits and losses of the colonies because they should be "regarded as simply an extension of the nation," he wondered, "Who ever thought of inquiring whether Cornwall or Kent rendered any sufficient return for the money which we lay out upon them, whether those counties were worth keeping?" Seeley's argument in one way represents the reverse of Wordsworth's concerns for the Lake District. While Wordsworth saw counties turning into colonies, Seeley argues colonies should be treated as counties.

But what Wordsworth's fears suggest is that by the time Seeley writes his imperial history there will be no "local" counties on which to model Britain's relationship to its colonies, that colonialism cannot turn its colonial holdings into members of the Albion family because it has already compromised the bonds that tie Britain's counties to the national whole. It is in this line of reasoning that Wordsworth's *Guide* argues that the native out there is the same as the native right here, and the reason why his impending sense of loss is so similar to the one Kincaid

⁴⁵ Sara Suleri Goodyear, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

⁴⁶ John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 63.

documents in *My Garden (Book)*: is because they both locate and implicate colonialism's botanic thefts and transfers within the very localism of the garden.

Botanic transfers

In my reading, Wordsworth's conservationist bent is less about a strictly environmental protectionism and more dependent on his fear that colonization would affect not just colonized lands but England itself. The global movement that provoked this fear is exemplified by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and Sir Joseph Banks, who advised the garden's development from 1772 until his death in 1820. During the reign of King George III (dubbed "Farmer George" for good reason), 7,000 new plants from overseas were imported into England, mostly thanks to Banks and his plant collectors.⁴⁷ In her chapter titled "What Joseph Banks Wrought," Jamaica Kincaid addresses the aftermath of this global movement in her native Antigua, detailing the plant life now common to the island and its diverse colonial provenance. But for Kincaid, as for Wordsworth, this botanic movement has implications that extend beyond the botanic garden into the backyard. For Kincaid's own garden is neither a *hortus conclusus* nor a retreat, and it cannot shut out the world by opposing its rooted localism against global incursions and colonial histories because these ideologies are not opposed, but rather entwined.

For Joseph Banks, Kew Gardens was evidence of Britain's superiority over other European nations. Banks guarded Kew's collection jealously, instructing his teams of plant collectors that "Plants should only be exchanged...when there was an advantage to be obtained."⁴⁸ Any exchange was designed to "ensure that it detracted as little as possible from

⁴⁷ Turrill, *The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew*, 23-24.

⁴⁸ Gascoigne, *Service of Empire*, 163.

Kew's superiority"—and part of this design craftily involved leaving labels off packages and trading only seeds of the "least curious & least beautiful Plants." The Imperial Gardens at Vienna represented the main threat to Kew's superiority and thus probably received many unlabelled packages full of mundane plant life, but Banks didn't want any advantage going to the Royal Gardens at Paris either. Plant collectors were reminded in their contracts that if any of plants they found for Kew appeared "in any circuitous manner whatever" at another garden, "your having parted with it will be deemed a breach of the fidelity you unquestionably owe to your employers."⁴⁹

The significance of this botanic nationalism is in its source: Kew was not known for its collection of English flora but for its colonial exotics. Thus, the pride that Kew inspired was self-consciously indebted to Britain's colonial holdings—which is to say that the term "botanic nationalism" only captures half the story, for during this period the study of botany was not separable from the colonial project that gave it fodder to study. Such an emphasis on botany makes Kew Gardens sound like an academic endeavor; indeed, the art historian James Elkins has categorized Kew as a garden of "historical condensation," "a garden that is a text, replete with cultural and historical information."⁵⁰ This is certainly the case. Banks was also president of the Royal Society, which "offered prize awards and gold medals for anyone who could improve the plant economy in the West Indies by importing consumable items."⁵¹ . But Kew's academic role was, as Elizabeth DeLoughrey suggests, also economic, because "it was there that plants that were considered to be potential sources of additional income for the British Empire could be

⁴⁹ Desmond, *Royal Botanic Gardens*, 114.

⁵⁰ James Elkins, "On the Conceptual Analysis of Gardens," *Journal of Garden History* 13, no. 4 (1993): 190.

⁵¹ Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Globalizing the Routes of Breadfruit and Other Bounties," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8, no. 3 (2007).

cultivated and re-distributed.”⁵² As a “clearing house” for the import, cultivation, and export of economically important plants, Kew’s role in the maintenance of British colonies is difficult to overstate.⁵³ Globally, this “additional income” was not rooted solely in plants’ status as food; as Alan Bewell explains, “gardening had become a fashionable leisure activity for all social ranks” by the late eighteenth century, and “the demand for new and fashionable plants reached new heights.”⁵⁴ Scientific inquiry, colonial expansion, and commerce during the late eighteenth century were thus deeply intertwined—and with Kew acting as centralized hub, England became the source for economically valuable exotics and, paradoxically, their new native home.⁵⁵ As Banks bragged, Kew Gardens “is the nursing mother of all the rest, who draw from England the greater part of the exotics they cultivate in their Botanic Gardens,” a boast that blurs the distinction between the Royal Botanic Garden and the nation that housed it.⁵⁶ The image of England as “nursing mother” of colonial exotics makes it easy to see how quickly the discourse of plants might broaden to encompass people as well, for indeed, terms like “exotic,” “native,” “improvement,” “cultivation,” and “hybrid” are not limited in their usage to the realm of flora.⁵⁷

⁵² Gascoigne, *Service of Empire*, 130.

⁵³ Toby Musgrave and Will Musgrave, *An Empire of Plants: People and Plants That Changed the World* (London: Cassell, 2000), 147.

⁵⁴ Bewell, “Cosmopolitan Nature,” 22, 23.

⁵⁵ The history of the cinchona tree (whose bark provided much-needed quinine to British colonies) is just one example of this hub-and-spoke model: though Jesuits had been using the remedy for centuries, when British plant collectors stole the tree from South America and resuscitated it at Kew after a long transatlantic journey, it meant that the remedy could be finally transported to India where it was most needed. Kavita Philip, *Civilizing Natures: Race, Resources, and Modernity in Colonial South India* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 183.

⁵⁶ Gascoigne, *Service of Empire*, 134.

⁵⁷ Richard Drayton has argued that the moral exigencies Britain felt toward its empire apply to plants as well as colonized subjects: “Both the varieties of the human conscience and the expanse of Creation were estates which those at the vanguard of reason had both a duty and a right to ‘improve.’” Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, 89.

But what Banks's image also achieves is the effacement of any more original "nursing mother," casting England as the unlikely natal source of economically important exotics.⁵⁸

The implication of this effacement is that exotics cultivated at Kew were effectively naturalized, imaginatively if not horticulturally. The plants retained the value of their exotic status—most of them could only survive in a hothouse—at the same time that they grew to be the adopted products of a new British mother. Reborn in England, these plants were then exported for use in the colonies or traded for new plants in deals with other nations' botanic gardens.⁵⁹ But they also went to Britain's colonial botanic gardens, which had sprung up all over the empire: as Drayton explains, "In Asia, the Caribbean, the Southern Indian and Atlantic Oceans, and the Pacific world, a cluster of botanic gardens arose in correspondence, via Sir Joseph Banks, with the Royal Garden at Kew."⁶⁰ Modeled on Kew, these far-flung gardens replicated Kew's collection, one renowned for its biological diversity. Thus, at the same time that Kew was scaling down the British empire into a highly controlled collection of specimens, it was reproducing itself across the world, in effect creating a codified canon of "exotics"—still exotic enough to qualify as such, but leveled by the cultivation they shared at the English nursery.

The tension between botanic diversity and global reproduction is further heightened by Kew's layout, which borrowed heavily from eighteenth-century English landscape practices in its naturalized geography. Like Milton's Paradise, Kew is unmistakably English, in contrast to earlier models of the botanic garden in which a collection of plants was superimposed on a map

⁵⁸ Henry Jones's poem "Kew Gardens" (1763) uses the same familial language to describe the collection of foreign, orphan plants nursed by an English mother. See Bewell, "Cosmopolitan Nature," 36.

⁵⁹ Desmond, *Royal Botanic Gardens*, 115.

⁶⁰ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 121.

of the world. Putting aside its pagoda, Kew was designed “as an English ‘natural’ landscape with rolling, grassy slopes, picturesque clumps of trees, and meandering water”⁶¹—in fact, during the 1760s the garden’s buildings were razed by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, who redesigned the grounds to fit his penchant for “undulating lawns” and man-made water features.⁶² This Englishness means that Kew’s reproducibility included more than the diverse collection of exotics that it replicated in botanic gardens across the empire; as the model garden Kew also offered up a stable picture of “natural” English beauty for the colonial gardens to follow. Such a dynamic serves as specific example of what Jill Casid terms “colonial intermixing and imperial picturesque”: “Plants were introduced [to the colonies] from all over the globe and yet arranged to seem like a mythic England in its much vaunted picturesque diversity and variety.”⁶³ However, what makes the example of Kew and its imperial subsidiaries especially pertinent is the scope of this diversity. For Kew promised more than *picturesque* diversity—that is, aesthetic diversity unified by an overarching plan. It also provided a botanic diversity that could be marketed as a distinctly English product, despite the distant and varied sources of the collection. By turning it into a reproducible and transferable product, Kew paradoxically transformed colonial diversity into a national export, replacing material nativity with the imaginary but potently English nursing mother. And so to say, as Casid does, that the colony was “a place at once radically transformed and yet conserved in its ‘difference’” is almost but not quite right, because that ‘difference’ is even more removed from reality than its scare quotes already imply: the botanic diversity that British colonialism imposed on its holdings was stripped of its

⁶¹ Moore, Mitchell, and Turnbull, *The Poetics of Gardens*, 113.

⁶² Desmond, *Royal Botanic Gardens*, 66.

⁶³ Casid, *Sowing Empire*, 14.

nativity.⁶⁴ Far from being composed of plants “from all over the globe,” the botanic diversity exported to the colonies had been repackaged as, somehow, native to Kew.

The history of Kew Gardens helps to contextualize not just Wordsworth’s anxiety at the encroachment of exotic plants in the Lake District. It also provides the fundamental backdrop to Kincaid’s extensive writings on gardening, plant life, and botanic theft, thus exemplifying the contextual movability that she and Wordsworth find so ambivalent, both in their non-fiction prose and in the intertextual relationship I explore in the introduction between *Lucy* and “I wandered lonely as a cloud.” Kincaid’s childhood visits to the St. John’s Botanical Garden in Antigua affirm the narrative of botanic diversity and prowess inherent in the development of Britain’s botanic gardens. Devoting a whole chapter to the St John’s garden in *My Garden (Book)*:, she describes it containing “plants from various parts of the then British Empire, places that had the same climate as my own; but as I remember, none of the plants were native to Antigua” (120). Here is the repackaged exotic diversity that characterized the relationship between colonial botanic gardens and the hub at Kew over a century earlier: the plants Kincaid saw as a child were from nowhere more particular than the “British Empire,” their variety leveled by a shared conqueror. In this formulation, the plants become a microcosm for Britain’s colonial holdings, distinct locations with dissimilar climates made uniform by their status as part of the British Empire.

This safe amalgam of diversity and sameness is not restricted by the walls of the St. John’s Botanical Garden, however: it spreads outward, overwhelming any knowledge of what once counted as Antiguan nativity. A botany enthusiast in school, Kincaid studied “the botany of the British Empire in Africa and Asia, some of the very same plants that are now widely

⁶⁴ Ibid.

cultivated in Antigua and must seem to most Antiguan (if they ever think about it) as typical of their native landscape” (138-9). As it progresses, the description of her studies condenses the wide expanse of “the British Empire” and its continental holdings to the “typical,” to what exemplifies the “native landscape” of a relatively small island. This condensation is in line with the homogenizing process that Ian Gregory Strachan emphasizes in his examination of Caribbean tourism by using pointedly reductive references to “the islands” and identifying the “paradise discourse” that clings to them as a whole.⁶⁵ What Kincaid’s memory of her studies traces is the process by which Antigua’s role as one of “the islands,” one of the former British colonies, helped to erase the knowledge of botanic nativity. It follows then that the power inherent in the movement of plants and the redefinition of a native landscape is as clear to Kincaid as it was to Joseph Banks. Even as a child, she explains, “The botanical garden reinforced for me how powerful were the people who had conquered me; they could bring to me the botany of the world they owned” (120). Banks might have preferred to hear this statement from the director of the Imperial Gardens at Vienna, but its content stands as an avowal of botany’s ability to prove national power, especially in the devastating specificity it uses to identify the conquered subject, “me.”

Although the subjugation of botanic movement seems particular to the norms of the colonial botanic garden, Wordsworth and Kincaid locate it far closer to home: their writings on their own gardens suggest not just that any theory of localism must recognize the association between local and colonial movement, but more importantly that the garden is a context whose hermeneutics depend on the garden’s intrinsic opposition to stasis—or to put it another way, its definitional commitment to movability. This quality—the movability that allows exotic plants to

⁶⁵ Ian Gregory Strachan, *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 1.

exist as such—is precisely the one that troubles Wordsworth when he argues against the importation of exotics in his *Guide to the District of the Lakes*. His fixation on the larch plantations in the *Guide* is, in the end, only a specific example of what he recognizes to be the dubious but “natural desire” to “gather round our dwelling a few flowers and shrubs, which from the circumstance of their not being native, may, by their very looks, remind us that they owe their existence to our hands, and their prosperity to our care” (*Guide* 218). Wordsworth may be talking about plants, but his concerns center on the first person, a self whose constitutive relationship with the local place is defined against and imperiled by his responsibility to the exotic incursions that set the local into relief. Although he insists that any gathering of non-native plants cannot change the fact that “the course of all has been predetermined by the spirit of the place,” there is a repetitive opposition structuring his claim that “they owe their existence to our hands, and their prosperity to our care,” one that emphasizes the boundary between those pronouns over all else. The possessive “their” is consistently trumped by the dominant “our” nipping at its heels, a structural reminder that exotics have no “existence” (let alone “prosperity”) if they are not in some way possessed.

Although I’ve suggested that comparing a botanic garden with one in the backyard is a problematic task, it becomes apropos given the visibility of exotics in even the most informal of gardens and, more significantly, these plants’ dependence on the colonizing mission of Kew and other national botanic gardens. In this light it is not surprising to see how quickly Kincaid moves from her discussion of the colonial botanic garden to a critical examination of her own backyard garden: in her view the aims and inspirations that might seem to distinguish one genre of garden from another are not very different. In general, Kincaid associates botanic gardens with objectification and subjection, with certain prospects making her think, “Oh, this is the back yard

of someone else, someone far away, someone's landscape the botanical garden can make an object" (148). Typically English "contrasting lawns and massed ornamental beds are signs of something...someone has been humbled, someone is on his knees wondering what happened, someone will have an eternal love of concrete" (140). The botanic garden succeeds in objectifying people as well as plants, in part because of the labor that the garden both perpetually demands and fastidiously hides and in part because the garden acts as a "shrine of Possession" that can turn a visitor into "an object, a mere thing, within it" (148). If these observations seem limited in their scope, Kincaid would disagree: all gardening is suspect. She insists quite broadly that "there is a relationship between gardening and prosperity" (138) and realizes with "bitterness" that she planned her own garden only out of desire and "knew the name, proper and common, of each thing growing in it" (121). Such prosperity and knowledge are reminders of Kincaid's own status as conqueror:

Just now the leaves in the shade bed are all complementary (but not in a predictable way—in a way I had not expected, a thrilling way). And I thought how I had crossed a line; but at whose expense? I cannot begin to look, because what if it is someone I know? I have joined the conquering class: who else could afford this garden—a garden in which I grow things that it would be much cheaper to buy at the store? (122-3)

However keenly Kincaid recognizes her status as upper-middle-class conqueror (the chapter originally appeared in the *New Yorker*), that status is in no way well defined by the passage above.⁶⁶ On one level, the passage coherently documents the movement from thrill to guilt, both of them wrapped up in Kincaid's recognition that even a backyard garden in Vermont

⁶⁶ Jamaica Kincaid, "Flowers of Evil," *New Yorker*, Oct. 5, 1992, 154.

depends on—and is thus complicit with—the history of colonial movement. Her emphasis on knowledge and taxonomy—“the name, proper and common, of each thing growing” in the garden—makes this connection clear, and draws Kincaid into the realm of Joseph Banks and scientific inquiry. However, Kincaid’s sense that she has “crossed a line” springs strangely from her admiration of her plants’ unpredictable growth and coloration: it’s not her self-aware manipulation of nature but rather her lack of power in the face of her capricious plant-life that inspires her guilt. Kincaid never makes the mistake of thinking herself in perfect control of her garden—as Susie O’Brien explains, she has little interest in gardens that have “achieved a perfect reconciliation between human desire and the physical world.”⁶⁷ But what Kincaid’s guilt makes clear is that colonialism’s botanic violence affects people as well as plants: as she says in a pointed non sequitur, Nina Simone’s autobiography is “an essential companion to any work of Vita Sackville-West’s. There is no mention of the garden in Nina Simone’s account of her life, as there is no mention of the sad weight of the world in Sackville-West’s account of her gardening” (83). As gardener designer, laborer, and writer, Kincaid is limited in her ability to reproduce the dynamic between subjugator and subjugated. But when she wonders “at whose expense” she admires her shade bed, she brings “the sad weight of the world” into that local realm, suggesting that the benefits of the local garden belong not to localism but to affluence: she admires the complementary leaves at the expense of those who cannot afford to grow plants for leisure. Where Wordsworth identifies the danger of gathering exotic plants as residing securely in the self, Kincaid locates it in the otherness of the world at large.

As her anxiety makes clear, Kincaid theorizes that the garden is, in O’Brien’s words, “as troubling to economic as it is to ecological models of environmental interaction” because its

⁶⁷ Susie O’Brien, “The Garden and the World: Jamaica Kincaid and the Cultural Borders of Ecocriticism,” *Mosaic* 35, no. 2 (2002): 177.

products supply no particular demand.⁶⁸ By opting out of a larger and more exacting system of exchange, her labor becomes a privilege, a reminder that she belongs to a class whose garden beds, however toil-filled, reveal that they needn't have labored in the first place. The economic realities of gardening lead Kincaid to wonder, "who else could afford this garden—a garden in which I grow things that it would be much cheaper to buy at the store?" Though Kincaid posits buying "things" at the store as a less expensive alternative to growing things in the garden, one assumes that much of her garden already originated at a store, in some form—opting out of capitalistic exchange is not an option.⁶⁹ And so there seems no way out of wondering "at whose expense," for the botanic movement that the garden demands is not a historical phenomenon unique to colonial rule. Even outside the bounds of colonialism, this transportability is inherently a thrilling and guilt-inspiring quality to those gardeners who exploit it in their backyard gardens.

Unrooting the garden

Kincaid, for whom set definitions are anathema, comes as close as she can to a static designation in her travel memoir *Among Flowers*: "in particular a gardener is a person who at least once in the gardening year feels the urge to possess completely at least one plant."⁷⁰

Although this definition is phrased as potential rather than actual possession—the gardener "feels the urge" but does not actually "possess completely" any plant—its repetitive understatements,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁹ The plants that Kincaid describes here are astilbe, hosta, and ranunculus, none of which are grown from seed (122). Though gardeners often trade their extra plants, establishing a system of exchange that relies on barter rather than capital, it seems just as likely that Kincaid purchased these plants at the store and transplanted them into her garden. Michael Pollan has written a lengthy analysis of different plant and seed vendors. Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* (New York: Grove Press, 1991), ch. 11.

⁷⁰ Jamaica Kincaid, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2005), 32. Subsequent references to the text will refer to this edition and appear parenthetically.

“at least once,” “at least one,” signal just how unbounded this potential desire for possessive stability is. Wordsworth locates stasis down a divergent but equally imaginary path, which terminates in an idealized landscape dotted with those uncouth structures that seem to “have risen, by an instinct of [its] own, out of the native rock.” These houses—so vivified and sovereign as to have instincts of their own—persistently resist the sort of static possession that Kincaid desires while stabilizing themselves even more obviously with their foundation of “native rock.” These opposing drives are not easily resolved for the mundane reason that these two writers do not find them easily resolvable. Both insistently describe the detrimental effects—ecological, aesthetic, and political—of botanic movement. But both take great joy in plant hunting, the importation of exotics—William and Dorothy Wordsworth routinely returned from walks with uprooted plants in hand; Kincaid went seed-hunting with botanists in China and wrote a book about it—and both overtly acknowledge the “thrill,” what Wordsworth calls the “natural desire” implicit in their joyful manipulations of plant-life (*Guide* 281). In examining Kincaid’s own experience as a plant hunter in her memoir *Among Flowers*, I want to close the chapter on this note of vexed joy, delving into the botanic exploration that is at the heart of the localism so important to both Kincaid and Wordsworth, an exploration that manages to narrow the boundary of what counts as local while making those boundaries harder and harder to discern.

Kincaid’s memoir came into being because she was asked to write “about any place in the world I wished and doing something in that place I liked doing” (1). She chose plant hunting. “I answered immediately that I would like to go hunting in southwestern China for seeds, which would eventually become flower-bearing shrubs and trees and herbaceous perennials in my

garden.”⁷¹ From the first page, the local depends on the vastly far-away for its material constitution—the trip’s value is located in what exotic specimens it can provide for Kincaid’s own garden in Vermont. It is difficult to tell if this dependency heightens or minimizes the distinction between the local and the global, between Kincaid’s backyard garden and everywhere else. On the one hand, plant hunting emphasizes geographic similarities: there is no point in collecting seeds that cannot be cultivated at home, so such a hunt attaches great importance to finding climatic intersections rather than disparities. Kincaid is most invested in the journey when she and her botanist companions reach an altitude where they can find “beautiful plants native to the Himalaya but that will grow happily in Vermont or somewhere like that” (112); this botanic transferability is a specific incarnation of her expectation that there would “be no border between myself and what I was seeing before me” (20) during these travels. The profound lack of boundaries in these moments should remind us, perhaps uncomfortably, of how colonial botanic gardens replicated the sanitized collection of colonial exotics curated from around the empire—a collection of plants whose native boundaries had been erased, plants that would grow happily in some place or another, “or somewhere like that.”

On the other hand, Kincaid can feign little interest in plants that she cannot grow in her own garden, suggesting that the power of plant hunting to level the geographic playing field is limited. A familiar refrain throughout *Among Flowers* is Kincaid’s indifference to most of the plants they encounter. She recalls habitually considering whatever plant was in front of her, “wondering if I was seeing something new, and always wondering if I could grow it—and when I realized I could not, I had no interest in the thing before me whatsoever” (95); a few pages

⁷¹ As Shelley Saguaro notes, “there is something more than a little ironic in Kincaid’s undertaking which echoes aspects she has often critiqued.” Shelley Saguaro, *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 227.

later, “I was not so very interested because almost none of it would thrive in my garden” (106). In the end, Kincaid’s virulent lack of interest in plants that cannot grow in her climate overpowers the memoir’s early embrace of permeability because it suggests that some borders she expected not to find do in fact persist—these plants are interesting, those are not; this climate is too warm, that one is not—and moreover that these borders delineate her botanic desire, without which her local garden would not exist.

In other words, Kincaid’s travels do not threaten to collapse the boundaries of localism. Her local garden is a context, however rooted, that she carries with her—one that conditions whatever she sees. During her hike defamiliarization is constant; once removed from her Vermont garden Kincaid cannot recognize even familiar plants because “when seeing it in a place that was new to me, I found it mysterious and foreign”—she finds this experience “most annoying” (114). Rhododendrons, a very common though exotic shrub in New England, grow natively in the Himalayas “with a trunk as thick as a pine and thirty feet tall, and with leaves almost as long as my lower arm,” and seem “as magical as seeing the mountain Makalu from a distance” (122). Vermont may stay right where it is, but as a context its ability to alter Kincaid’s perception of flora, familiar or not, is unshakeable. What Kincaid’s experiences suggest, then, is that while the local is not in danger of collapsing into the global, it is a highly transportable and clingy context. This complicated dynamic is also at play in Kincaid’s use of USDA hardiness zones to mark the stages of her travel in *Among Flowers*. Adopted by the USDA in 1960, the hardiness zone map currently divides the US into eleven regions primarily on the basis of temperature; although the system does not take other climate factors into account, many gardeners and nursery catalogs still use these zones to predict what plants will grow where (see figure 1). In some ways, then, it makes good sense for Kincaid to remark, as she and her

companions hike higher into the mountains, “Now we were on our way to collecting things I most definitely would be able to grow in my garden zone of USDA 5” (112). The hardiness zones provide a codified method for recognizing climatic similarities.

On the other hand, the zones are set by the United States Department of Agriculture, so Kincaid is using a decidedly bounded and American rubric (a governmental one at that) in order to describe the moment at which her travels transcend the boundary between Vermont and Nepal. Although a USDA map from 1990 included southern Canada and Mexico—the National Arboretum reasoned, “We share more than a common border”—an updated version from 2003 was considered “improved” because it removed these neighbors, making it “easier to read.”⁷² The 2012 version abides by these decisions, featuring only the fifty states and Puerto Rico.

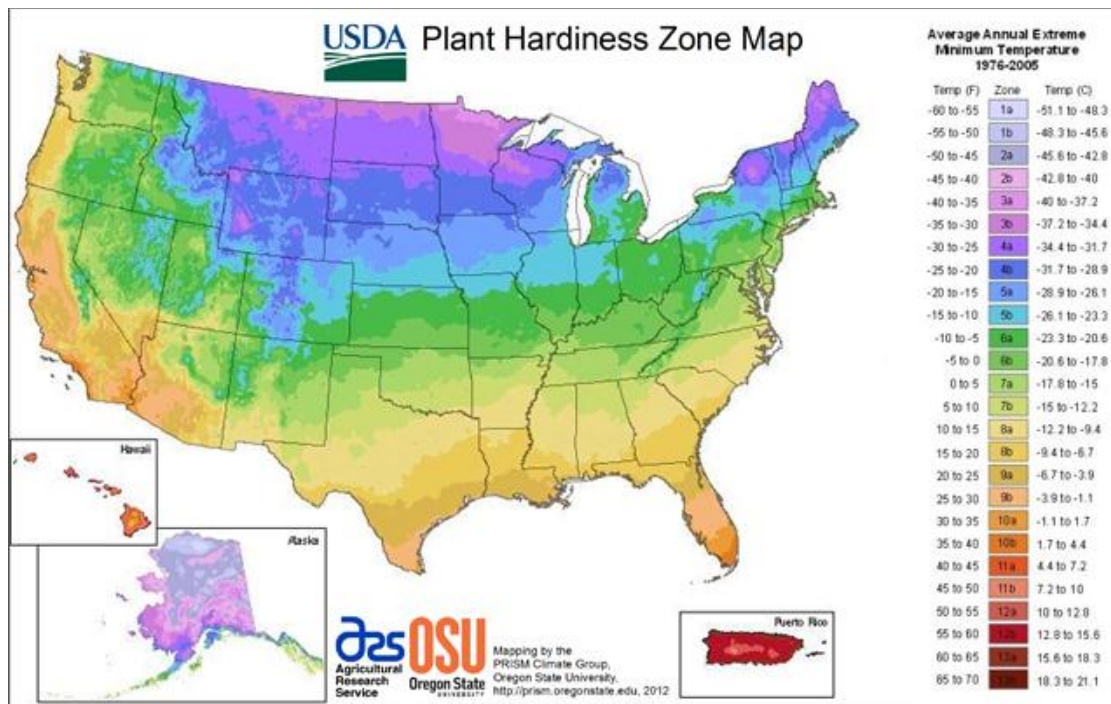


Fig 1. USDA Hardiness Zone Map (2012)

⁷² Henry M. Cathey, “USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map: Information,” *The United States National Arboretum*, March 2001, <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/hrdzon2.html>; David J. Ellis, “The USDA Plant Hardiness Map 2003 Edition,” *The American Gardener* 82.3 (May/June 2003): 30.

Using temperature data, it's easy enough to speculate about the correspondence of zones in other countries, as Kincaid does in *Among Flowers*. Europe has done this, producing its own map using the same scale as the USDA. But Australia, for instance, uses a different one, and even the West Coast of the United States cannot abide by the USDA zones, relying instead on a superior map established forty years ago by *Sunset* magazine.

Part of the hardiness zone map's appeal, especially for the layperson, is its novelty: it provides a radically different method of mapping the country. Instead of seeing the nation divided into familiar states we see it divided into striations of wavy, colorful bands. Parts of northern New Mexico suddenly become affiliated with northern Nebraska and Iowa; Cape Cod and Long Island share the same zone as much of Virginia and North Carolina. Carrying the zones into Nepal extends this novelty—without Kincaid we might never know the climatic similarities between New England and the Himalayas—but it also postulates that the localism described by hardiness zones is a transportable context. This is especially true in Kincaid's formulation, where zone five is “my garden zone of USDA 5,” a phrase that overwhelms the broad sweeping swaths of the zone map with the possessive locality of “my garden.” At the same time that she enters what she suspects to be a climate comparable to zone five, she narrows the term to designate not the shared climate of Vermont, Illinois, and Colorado but rather the climate of “my garden.” In other words, the zone is most rooted in its specific locale at the moment of its broadest use. *Among Flowers*, like Wordsworth's daffodils, suggests that the local, another trickily deictic term, possesses both a material foundation and a contextual movability, qualities that for Kincaid are not necessarily at odds.

What's important about the relationship between the local and the colonial is not that it exists for Kincaid and Wordsworth, but that they find it in the garden. For the garden, in the end,

is a representation: a fantasy of nature whose literal rootedness makes the exotic look local, whose construction makes hard labor look like nature. If these appearances strike us as slightly treacherous, there is good reason. I hope I have shown that Wordsworth and Kincaid—whom critics often assume to be at opposite ends of some ideological spectrum—both recognized this treachery and understood how the landscapes that signified their local belonging were in fact defined by and against colonialism's botanic incursions. The danger in my argument is that by attending to the garden's dark side we miss the joy that both writers found in their landscapes and in representing these landscapes, and this is a serious risk. Without joy, it is easy to interpret the colonial movement of plants and seeds solely as an exercise in bolstering nationalism, an erasure of previous forms of knowledge, a danger to the stability of ecosystems where plants are thoughtlessly introduced. For it was all these things. But Wordsworth's "natural desire" for exotics and Kincaid's "urge to possess," her seed-collecting expedition to the Himalayas and his plant-hunting hikes across the Lake District, demand that we bring more hermeneutic breadth to the table in order to account for the joy each found in the movement of plants—a movement whose dangers they knew intimately. For me this means interpreting the relationship between the colonial and the local in a manner consistent with the concomitant pleasure and trepidation each writer felt in moving and shaping nature. It means recognizing that colonialism's botanic movement creates a localism whose ability to produce joy stems from that localism's astonishing transportability as much as from its literal and figurative rootedness.

David Simpson has written compellingly on Wordsworth and empire, pointing out that in Wordsworth's verse, "The local is always permeated by the figures of those who have themselves been the servants or followers of empire and foreign wars, figures who have been

abroad and come home.”⁷³ Simpson’s point is important because it reminds us that the version of Wordsworth handed down by the tourist industry is a simulacrum, one so committed to associating the poet with Lake District localism that the complexities of that localism fall to the wayside. The polished front page of the Wordsworth Trust website, for instance, flips through images and quotations evocative of Dove Cottage and the Lake District, resting twice on daffodils as it moves through its rotation of paintings, poems, and stock photographs. What I hope to have demonstrated is that in light of Wordsworth’s *Guide* and Kincaid’s essays on gardening, those daffodils signify more than Lake District localism. They must signify movement—movement of context most directly and of plants, people, and seeds by extension. In challenging the persistence of local belonging that Wordsworth’s daffodils seem to imply, Kincaid’s *Lucy* affirms that poem’s dependence on transportability, thus insisting Wordsworth is kindred to Kincaid insofar as he understands the joys of rootedness to depend on the exigencies of movement. The pleasure of gardening inheres in these writers’ knowledge of the invisible runners that the colonial botanic garden has endlessly launched toward its humble counterparts in the backyard.

⁷³ David Simpson, "Wordsworth and Empire—Just Joking," in *Land, Nation and Culture, 1740-1840*, ed. Nigel Leask and David Simpson Peter de Bolla (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 192.

Chapter 2. Paying for Reciprocity

In between two scenes of sexual aggression in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) appears one of pedagogical impotence. The novel's protagonist, David Lurie, is an "adjunct professor of communications" at Cape Technical University, where he is permitted one elective course per year amid a swath of compulsory classes in communication skills.¹ The novel's plot moves from the city to the country—from the urban university to the South African farm—when Lurie's coercive sexual exploits with his student Melanie Isaacs go public, leading him to resign his position and flee the city. Aversion defines her role in their encounters: in one she disentangles herself, "[a]verting her face"; in another, "[a]ll she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes" (19, 25). In between these scenes of what the narrator calls "[n]ot rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless," Lurie meets with his Romantic poetry class, butchering his lecture on Wordsworth crossing the Simplon Pass in an attempt to communicate with Melanie. Having "never been much of a teacher," he is quick to fall off topic, comparing the speaker's dismay at Mont Blanc's "soulless image" to romantic infatuation: "Like being in love....If you were blind you would hardly have fallen in love in the first place. But now, do you truly wish to see the beloved in the cold clarity of the visual apparatus?" (4, 22). Knowing he's failed, Lurie becomes "sorry for [Melanie] too, having to listen to these covert intimacies," and his lecture on *The Prelude* trails off into generalities:

Wordsworth is writing about the Alps....We don't have the Alps in this country,
but we have the Drakensberg, or on a smaller scale Table Mountain, which we

¹ J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 3. Subsequent references to the novel will appear parenthetically.

climb in the wake of the poets, hoping for one of those revelatory, Wordsworthian moments we have all heard about. (23)

A consensus among many critics who have written on *Disgrace* is that this passage demonstrates how “[t]he European scenic tradition has come to seem irrelevant in the ‘new South Africa,’” how those “Wordsworthian moments we have all heard about” are not as universal as Lurie implies.² Coetzee would seem to agree with these conclusions. In *White Writing* (1988), he points out that “Wordsworth called sublimity ‘the result of Nature’s first great dealings with the superficialities of the earth,’ not considering that plains, as well as mountains and oceans, resulted from these dealings.”³ The seeming incompatibility of the South African geography with the European landscape tradition leads Coetzee to wonder in his essay, “Is the very enterprise of reading the African landscape doomed, in that it prescribes the quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment?”⁴ For both Coetzee and his readers, then, the landscape has proven fertile ground for interpreting the relationship between Africa and Europe, and in a larger sense between post-Apartheid, post-colonial South Africa and the Dutch and British empires that once ruled it.

In *Disgrace*, the relationship between landscape and its inhabitant is not “quintessentially” anything, but rather varied and ambivalent. In spite of his devotion to Wordsworth, Lurie “has never had much of an eye for rural life” (218). His students have not,

² Rita Barnard, “J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and the South African Pastoral,” *Contemporary Literature* 44, no. 2 (2003): 216. See also Zoë Wicomb, “Translations in the Yard of Africa,” *Journal of Literary Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (2002): 216; Kimberly Wedeven Segall, “Pursuing Ghosts: The Traumatic Sublime in J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*,” *Research in African Literatures* 36, no. 4 (2005): 42.

³ J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 52. Later in the essay Coetzee points out how his aesthetic judgment is in line with other non-Europeans like William Cullen Bryant, whose 1832 poem “The Prairies” opens by describing the Midwestern American prairies as “gardens of the desert” “[f]or which the speech of England has no name.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

judging by their silence, climbed the Drakensberg in search of revelation. His daughter Lucy reasons that her gang rape at the hands of passing intruders is “the price one has to pay for staying on” and farming her smallholding in the Eastern Cape (158). In contrast to this variety, the Simplon Pass episode in Book 6 of *The Prelude* is one of the most studied in Wordsworth’s oeuvre, and according to Alan Liu the result has been not variety but unity: “The readings we have of the Simplon Pass episode...are so powerful that the episode has become one of a handful of paradigms capable by itself of representing the poet’s work.”⁵ Indeed many of the passage’s themes are touchstones for Wordsworth’s poetry at large: the overwhelming sublimity of Mont Blanc, which the speaker and his travelling companion quickly abandon for the more ameliorative landscape of the Gondo ravine; the famous address to Imagination, which triumphs over the poet’s sense of being “lost; / Halted without an effort to break through”; the speaker’s preference for a “living thought” over the “soulless” ocular impression that displaces it.⁶ These paradigms are capable of not only “representing the poet’s work,” as Liu argues, but also epitomizing a “quintessentially European posture of reader vis-à-vis environment” that Coetzee queries in his essay on the South African landscape.

In this chapter I contest the critical assumption that *Disgrace* uses Wordsworth’s *Prelude* (1805) merely to indicate the irrelevance of this posture. By focusing on what *The Prelude* and *Disgrace* share—a concern over the methods and politics of pedagogy—I argue that Wordsworth does more than represent the monolith of the European landscape tradition, a tradition more varied and diverse than Coetzee’s formulation allows. For when David Lurie fails to engage his students in his lesson on the Simplon Pass, he is butchering a book of *The Prelude* that has

⁵ Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 4.

⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, 1799, 1805, 1850* ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979), bk. 6, ll. 596-7, 526-7. Subsequent references to the poem will refer to the 1805 version (unless otherwise specified) and appear parenthetically according to book and line number.

already envisioned the wholesale failure of pedagogy on several levels. Both *Disgrace* and Coetzee's memoir *Boyhood* bring this strain of educational anxiety to light by associating Wordsworth's place in South Africa not just with a misplaced landscape tradition, but with the failure of education.

Critics have studied intertextuality in *Disgrace* since its publication, paying particular attention to the opera Lurie writes about Lord Byron, as well as his lesson on *The Prelude* and his daughter Lucy, whose name evokes Wordsworth's Lucy poems. I think, however, that it is essential to see these two recourses to Wordsworth as synthetic, dual parts of an intertextual theme that is more invested in education, language, and gender than in the specifics of geographical landscape and its various representations. Thus I consider South Africa's educational history before, during, and after Apartheid—particularly the place of English language education in a complex settler colony—in order to reexamine the place of David's daughter Lucy, both spatially, on the South African farm, and literarily, as a harbinger of the doomed child from Wordsworth's Lucy poems. Lucy Lurie introduces the trauma of Wordsworth's Lucy poems to a new context, suggesting that a typically Romantic relationship between self and nature—a beneficent relationship whose ligaments are pedagogical and linguistic—is elusive for women, and is elusive in South Africa. But more broadly, Melanie and Lucy point us back to their Wordsworthian intertexts, in *The Prelude* and the Lucy poems, to reveal a Wordsworth for whom the vaunted relationship with nature is structurally inseparable from faulty pedagogy on the one hand, and sexualized violence on the other.

Cambridge and the Alps

Book 6 of *The Prelude* is titled “Cambridge and the Alps,” yet it is not clear (not have critics made it clear) what these two topics are doing in the same book. The only seeming explanation is chronological: Wordsworth and his friend Robert Jones took their tour of the Continent on a summer break from Cambridge. Beyond this chronology, readers have not been compelled to make a case for any unity between these two subjects; as Julia Sandstrom Carlson says, echoing Alan Liu, “the Simplon crossing has long captivated scholars, and criticism of the episode has come to define generations of Romantic scholarship”—and the same cannot be said for Wordsworth’s education at Cambridge.⁷ It is certainly a less impressive subject than the Alps, and Wordsworth as a student was also less than impressive. However, I want to make the case for a structural and dependent relationship between Cambridge and the Alps, the one a site of flawed pedagogy and mediocre performance, the other a font of overwhelming visuality and sublime disappointment, both yielding to abrupt assertions of imaginative, individual, and providential merit. It is not merely that one event, the Alps crossing, happened shortly after the other, another year at Cambridge. Rather both episodes share a disjointed thematic plot of disappointment and exultation, one that casts doubt on whether nature’s pedagogy, which *The Prelude* wants to laud, can be differentiated from the faulty pedagogy of Cambridge and the schoolhouse at large.

For all Wordsworth’s assurances that he was a “chosen son” of nature, *The Prelude* also subtly acknowledges that this mother pedagogue has the potential to be indifferent and ambivalent (3.82). In part this ambivalence becomes visible in the names Wordsworth gives to the specific books of *The Prelude*; for example, “Introduction: Childhood and School-Time” is a

⁷ Julia Sandstrom Carlson, “The Map at the Limits of His Paper: A Cartographic Reading of *The Prelude*, Book 6: ‘Cambridge and the Alps,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 49, no. 3 (2010): 376. There is only one sustained study of Wordsworth’s time at Cambridge, Ben Ross Schneider Jr., *Wordsworth’s Cambridge Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

perplexing title for a chapter that includes no scenes actually set in a school. If nature is the premier educator (or rather, the premier educator of Wordsworth), why should he mention the classroom at all? A simple answer might be that the classroom, both in this title and in expanded form in Book 6, provides an instructive counterpoint, with its inefficacy setting the superiority of nature into relief. This answer, however, doesn't account for the fact that four of *The Prelude*'s books—nearly a third, in the 1805 version—are named for institutional settings that Wordsworth means to discount.

The nominal presence of these educational institutions is one way in which the poem as a whole undercuts the distinction it seeks to make between good schooling—child-centered and at nature's hand—and bad—the vortex of Cambridge and the specter of routinization, favored by reformers like Maria and Richard Edgeworth.⁸ On one hand, *The Prelude*'s structure affirms the former, “the superiority of nature as an educative force”: as Alan Richardson argues, the strength of Wordsworth's educational theorization “inheres in its being developed in verse rather than in prose” because his arguments “resist the sort of reductive analysis the Edgeworths call for.”⁹ On the other hand, *The Prelude* is full of ambivalent landscapes that neither nurture nor reject. A famous example is the Boy of Winander, an accomplished birder from Book 5, who spends his evenings with “both hands / Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth / Uplifted,” blowing “mimic hootings” to the owls across the lake (5.395-7). The owls, however, are from their first appearance “silent owls,” and although “they would shout / Across the wat'ry vale, and shout

⁸ Alan Richardson has fully explored this tension, between Wordsworth's belief that a child should “be left by itself to confront gaps and limitations in its habitual thinking process” (which he shared with Coleridge), and his commitment to a hierarchical power structure in which authority is not questioned but rather displaced, “ultimately reversing the roles of adult and child while maintaining the hierarchical structure of their relation.” Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 57, 71.

⁹ Schneider Jr., *Wordsworth's Cambridge Education*, 4; Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, 58.

again, / Responsive to his call, with quivering peals, / And long halloos, and screams, and echoes
loud, / Redoubled and redoubled,” it’s never clear how the boy might distinguish between owl
call and echo, of his own voice or theirs (398-403). Eventually, silence falls:

And when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then sometimes in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake. (404-413)

The boy succeeds in interpreting this silence, in converting lack of sound into “the voice / Of
mountain torrents,” but the experience is strikingly similar to the “lone poet in empty space” that
Coetzee describes in the introduction to *White Writing*, who “[i]n the words he throws out to the
landscape, in the echoes he listens for, . . . is seeking a dialogue with Africa, a reciprocity with
Africa, that will allow him an identity better than that of visitor, stranger, transient.”¹⁰ Both these
vignettes feature male speakers whose attempts at dialogue—at a reciprocal, linguistic
exchange—are thwarted by nature’s silence. Their similarities suggest that the condition of
“visitor, stranger, transient,” is not unique to the relationship between white settler and African
landscape.

¹⁰ Coetzee, *White Writing*, 8.

Coetzee's introduction, like the collection, specifically addresses the problems of writing in South Africa, but the experience of constructing a dialogue out of indeterminate and capricious echoes is presaged by the Boy of Winander, whose success at interpreting nature's silence might have freed him from Coetzee's "visitor, stranger, transient," were that success not immediately interrupted by the boy's prompt death. The boy may be a paragon of childhood wisdom, but as Richardson points out he is "left stranded in an eternal childhood" and "isolated from his fellows."¹¹ Moreover, his interpretation is cut short; in being deprived of his life he loses the chance to learn passively from nature's silences. Death may serve here to valorize childhood—there is literally nothing beyond the age of ten—but the passivity of the boy's death, in which "he was taken from his mates," mirrors the method of his education, wherein the "visible scene" holds grammatical power over the mind as it receives imagery, rocks, and woods. It hardly matters whether it is the mind that is "unaware" or the entrance of the "visible scene" because both readings bolster the same passivity in the face of nature—a passivity that characterizes not just education but also death. The price of reciprocity with the landscape is adulthood.

This scene then, which depicts the ideal and sublime relationship between landscape and inhabiting student, also suggests that the educational success of that student depends not on nature's preference, or its care, but on its very ambivalence. Moreover, this is a lesson that Wordsworth thought warranted immediate publication, unlike *The Prelude*: the "Boy of Winander," which as a stand-alone poem goes by its first line "There was a boy," appeared in the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, while *The Prelude* was only published posthumously. By examining these moments in *The Prelude* where reciprocity with nature fails, I want to suggest

¹¹ Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, 106, 107.

that *Disgrace*'s classroom scene has an explanation, beyond Lurie's dubious pedagogy and the strangeness of the European landscape tradition. On one level, Lurie's failure builds upon *The Prelude*'s characterization of nature as an educator who can be silent and ambivalent—and whose effects are not guaranteed. On another, though, Coetzee's novel recognizes the dichotomy that Wordsworth wants to make between beneficial, natural education and faulty, institutional pedagogy, while insisting that for its characters—Melanie Isaacs and Lucy Lurie—and in its setting—post-Apartheid South Africa—this dichotomy will provide no model for effective education.

From the first moments of *The Prelude*, the characterization of nature as fickle rather than reliable is clear. Book 1 analyzes Wordsworth's choice of an autobiographical theme, pacing with agitation through other topics he could have chosen—"how Gustavus found / Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines; / How Wallace fought for Scotland" (211-213)—and concludes with a sentence that must seem uncomfortably familiar to anyone who's experienced writer's block.

This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting—so much wanting—in myself
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In indolence from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back. (263-71)

The syntactically awkward construction “see of absolute accomplishment” demotes that accomplishment structurally, drawing attention instead to the emphatic lack of “Much wanting—so much wanting,” a lament that with its pauses and repetitive stresses evades the neat, accomplished meter of the previous line. This lack is Wordsworth’s “lot,” a term that evokes the chance of casting lots and thus contradicts Wordsworth’s sense of having been “a chosen son” (3.82), or, in the language of the first book, a “favored being” of nature (1.364).¹² The language of election grates against the gambler’s vernacular and creates a logic in which some events—the good ones, presumably—spring from Providence while others owe their existence to the dumb luck of lots.

Wordsworth’s ruminations on his “lot” immediately evoke the cherished relationship with nature cultivated in his childhood, suggesting that the anti-logic of luck is never far removed from the seeming providence of nature’s favor. After worrying that he will “render nothing back,” Wordsworth asks

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse’s song,
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? (272-76)

In other words, how can it be that the education I received from nature—the “knowledge...of the calm / Which Nature breathes” that the river gave me—was for the sake of this—this sense of

¹² Mary Jacobus has shown that Wordsworth’s focus on providence, particularly in Book 6, is indebted to both John Newton, whose anti-slavery *Authentic Narrative* features a God who “personally oversees the redemption of a single sinner” and Isaac Newton’s *Principia*, “in which God oversees the entire universe.” Mary Jacobus, *Romanticism, Writing and Sexual Difference: Essays on The Prelude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 82.

plodding mediocly toward death (284-5)?¹³ Wordsworth's question frets over the possibility that despite having "much received" he will "render[] nothing back" and forfeit the reciprocal relationship with the natural landscape that he seeks to construct. But beyond this fear of failing to make good on his promise lies the tension between providence and luck—between the divine ordination of his education at nature's hand and the crass fortune of an uninspired lot. This is the tension that underlies Wordsworth's theory of education, the tension between election and reprobation, providence and accident, the singular and the universal. It is the tension that gives the lie to the poet who is just "a man speaking to men"; it is the tension that pits the broadness of his faith in nature against the exigent singularity of his own experience.

This tension makes Wordsworth in the first few books of *The Prelude* sound a little smug—his status as "chosen son" casts his descriptions of other students in a patronizing light, with the elected one looking down with pity and some complacency on the academic rat race. But the tension is important because it ties nature to Cambridge, giving both educations (one of them vaunted, one maligned) an equal dose of anxiety and ambivalence. At odds with the isolated singularity of his election is the totalizing language Wordsworth uses to describe the institution of Cambridge, which suggests that his isolation from that particular rat race was not quite as absolute as he says. On the one hand, he had no cause to worry about the fact that he "was not for that hour / Nor for that place" because he "was a freeman": "'twas enough for me / To know that I was otherwise endowed," even if "learning, moral truth, / Or understanding" fell by the wayside (3.80-91, 89-93). Even this assertion feels somewhat contradictory, the

¹³ As Keith Hanley points out, the deictic "this" in "Was it for this" is vague: "Is 'this'--this writing, and the project it is attempting--the appropriate upshot of his favoured experience?" In contrast, I see "this" as referring to the disappointments Wordsworth has just evoked, the experience of "travelling toward the grave" without producing a piece of writing that would justify the benefits he received from nature. Keith Hanley, "Crossings Out: The Problem of Textual Passage in *The Prelude*," in *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 110.

“freeman” made grammatically passive by his endowment—but the general meaning is clear. Cambridge’s offer of “learning, moral truth, or understanding” is obviated by Wordsworth’s already existing gifts. What to make, then, of Wordsworth’s description of the learning environment at Cambridge, itself couched in a refusal to describe:

Of college labours, of the lecturer’s room
All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
With loyal students faithful to their books,
Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
And honest dunces; of important days,
Examinations, when the man was weighted
As in the balance; of excessive hopes,
Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
Small jealousies and triumphs good and bad—
I make short mention. (3.60-69).

The periodic sentence structure (appropriately learned and Latinate for its scholarly content) delays the subject and verb until the last moment, when they are free to contradict the litany of objects that came before them. Perhaps to Wordsworth this list counts as “short mention,” but there are too many adjectives to make the description feel very short; too many commas, semi-colons and prepositional phrases to make the list brief. Far from being dismissed by Wordsworth’s “short mention,” the “idlers,” “recusants,” and “dunces” emerge from his description as worthy of attention, nameless as they are.

The attention that Cambridge demands in spite of Wordsworth’s protests is first apparent during his arrival, when the institution “seemed more and more / To have an eddy’s force, and

sucked us in / More eagerly at every step we took” (3.10-12). In comparison to the gentle “murmurs” of the Derwent, the “fairest of all rivers” from Book 1, Cambridge assumes a more violent power, pulling students farther into its whirlpool with each progressive step. This vortex intensifies in Wordsworth’s description of the classroom, which we see from his centralized viewpoint as he pans across “the lecturer’s room / All studded round” with fellow students. From this point, intensity and excess define the scene: the totality of “all studded round, as thick as chairs could stand”; the reiteration in “loyal students faithful to their books”; the drama of “important days” and “excessive hopes.” This language betrays Wordsworth’s investment in “the lecturer’s room” and what transpires there, suggesting that he is perhaps not so different from Coetzee’s younger self, who reasons in the memoir *Boyhood* that “if there were no examinations for him to be good at there would be little special about him.”¹⁴ For it is “the man” who is measured by examinations—not just the dunce or the loyal student but a masculine (and thus in the logic of *The Prelude*) a universal entity that includes Wordsworth in its span. In this light, the path from making “short mention” of the lecturer’s room at Cambridge to realizing that “I was a chosen son” a dozen lines later becomes an effortful transformation that, in the end, doesn’t seem to succeed fully, in spite of how famous that proclamation of election has become in *The Prelude*.

For Wordsworth wasn’t a very good student, and the statement “I was a chosen son” appears in the context this mediocrity and the anxiety that surrounded it. This context must affect how we read Wordsworth’s statement of election, which becomes less an example of overconfident predestination and more an attempt at casting out a profound sense of intellectual unsuitability. These are the thoughts that precede the famous statement:

¹⁴ J. M. Coetzee, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (New York: Viking, 1997), 131.

Things they were which then
I did not love, nor do I love them now:
Such glory was but little sought by me,
And little won. But it is right to say
That even so early, from the first crude days
Of settling-time in this my new abode,
Not seldom I had melancholy thoughts
From personal and family regards
Wishing to hope without a hope—some fears
About my future worldly maintenance,
And, more than all, a strangeness in my mind,
A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place. (3.69-81)

The parallel coordinating phrases that Wordsworth favors here—“I did not love, nor do I love them now”; “little sought by me, / And little won”; “not for that hour, / Nor for that place”—rhetorically extend his lack of belonging, giving equal value to all the manifestations that his intellectual and emotional failures take. For most readers, I suspect, these anxieties hit significantly closer to home than Wordsworth’s ruminations about his predestined status: what college student hasn’t had “some fears / About [his] future worldly maintenance”? But it is out of this mire that Wordsworth reasons, “wherefore be cast down, / Why should I grieve?—I was a chosen son” (81-82). Whether this realization manages to dispel the evenhanded anxieties that Wordsworth expresses a breath earlier is hard to say. The elevated diction would suggest success—“holy powers / And faculties” (83-84), “[a] higher language” even (107), outdo

“melancholy thoughts” and a vague “strangeness in my mind.” But the twenty lines that detail the excesses of Cambridge, as well as the sense of alienation they produced, make it hard to swallow Wordsworth’s conclusion that “‘twas enough for me / To know that I was otherwise endowed” (92-93).

This is of course not the only instance of Wordsworth proposing a conclusion that does not seem borne out by the evidence he provides. A particularly significant example of this trend occurs in Book 6 during the Simplon pass crossing, and I argue that the structural similarities between it and Wordsworth’s insistence that he “was otherwise endowed” despite his disappointments at Cambridge help to explicate the uneasy cohabitation of “Cambridge and the Alps” in Book 6. The well-known apostrophe to “Imagination” immediately follows Wordsworth’s realization that he and Jones had “crossed the Alps” without recognizing the success of their summit, and this exclamation interrupts the historical narrative of their journey (6.524). A great many scholars have lingered with this passage; their findings are somewhat beside the point here, but I want to emphasize that while some readers, like Harold Bloom, find nothing jolting about Wordsworth’s apostrophe, others see it as profoundly disruptive, a “geological fault and abrupt change of layer,” “a volcanic eruption.”¹⁵ Thomas Weiskel goes so far as to interpret the “Imagination” apostrophe and the verse paragraph that follows it as “dialectically confronted...the positive and negative poles of the Romantic sublime” all bound up within fifty lines of blank verse.¹⁶ The upshot of Wordsworth’s apostrophe is that out of the

¹⁵ Max Wildi, “Wordsworth and the Simplon Pass II,” *English Studies* 43, no. 5 (1962): 374, 375. In contrast, Harold Bloom sees nothing disjointed about the apostrophe: “Imagination usurps the place of the baffled mind, and the light of sense momentarily goes out.” Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 153.

¹⁶ In his view, the passage that follows “is simply not the way Wordsworth writes or thinks, not his kind of greatness,” emphasizing the disjointed nature of the passage. Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 204, 197.

“deep and genuine sadness” of having crossed the Alps unknowingly emerges a reflection on the self, an assertion of individual merit: to his soul Wordsworth says “I recognise thy glory,” a glory inherent in the Imagination and “the might of its endowments” (6.532, 528).¹⁷ This thematic structure, of finding (or fabricating) individual—even providential—distinction from out of a mire of disappointment and disillusion, is a structure that the Simplon pass episode shares with Wordsworth’s description of Cambridge.¹⁸ This yet unheralded similarity is important on several levels. On one level it helps to repair the rift in Book 6 between “Cambridge” and “the Alps”—both settings depend on the same underlying structure. But more significantly, this similarity solidifies the constitutive relationship for Wordsworth between ineffective, codified pedagogy on the one hand and nurturing, “natural” education on the other. My contention is that Coetzee draws upon this relationship in *Disgrace*. When Lurie botches *The Prelude*, he is not demonstrating the insignificance of a European landscape tradition, but is reiterating the distinction between bad learning in the school and good education in nature is not absolute.

My analysis is not meant to undercut Wordsworth’s sense of being “a chosen son,” a unique, discernible individual whose education he owes to nature rather than any institution. Rather, it suggests that Wordsworth’s election and his mediocrity are rather too close for comfort. The details of his years at Cambridge make clear that much was riding on his providential relationship with the landscape—without it he would have been one more nameless,

¹⁷ This section is significantly different in the 1850 version of *The Prelude*.

¹⁸ Keith Hanley notes a similarity between these two passages as well, but the similarity is on the level of diction, and Hanley doesn’t make much of it. The solace Wordsworth finds in his address to “Imagination!” shares a vocabulary with Wordsworth’s disappointing professors at Cambridge—both are “unfathered.” (121) While Imagination is an “unfathered vapour,” Cambridge represents a place where professors pore over their tomes “Like caterpillars eating out their way / In silence, or with keen devouring noise / Not to be tracked or fathered” (3.465-7). Hanley, “Crossings Out,” 121.

mediocre student. Moreover, this relationship, however confidently he describes it in Book 3, guarantees no results in Book 1 when the river's "voice / That flowed along my dreams" leads only to writer's block. Nature's good schooling and Cambridge's swirling vortex are sides of the same coin, and though nature predestines Wordsworth for a poet's life, its ambivalence is always a threat, not only to permanent children like the Boy of Winander, but to Wordsworth himself.

Pedagogical perversions in *Disgrace*

Scholars of Coetzee's *Disgrace* have not yet attended to the fact that the Simplon pass episode that the protagonist David Lurie endeavors to teach, without much success, belongs to a book of *The Prelude* named for an institution of higher learning where Wordsworth endeavored to learn, without much distinction. *Disgrace* is a frustrating novel to read, let alone analyze. The narrative is third-person and free indirect, mimicking in its ceaseless present-tense march the protagonist's verbal ticks, his polyglot slippages and his play with verb and adjective forms. (For example, Lurie, to no avail, distinguishes between "usurp" and the perfective "usurp upon" in his lecture on *The Prelude*; on a fantastical tangent into Flaubert, the narrator imagines Emma Bovary spying on Lurie's weekly appointment with his escort Soraya: "a moderate bliss, a moderated bliss" [21, 6].) As a South African academic, Lurie bears some resemblance to Coetzee, but the resemblance is a tease, not to mention a hallmark of Coetzee's writing (Elizabeth Costello from the *Elizabeth Costello* stories and Señor C. from *Diary of a Bad Year* are just two of Coetzee's doubles—not to mention the "John" of Coetzee's three memoirs and the "John" of *The Lives of Animals*). Additionally, the novel fictionalizes ground that Coetzee

has explicitly covered as an academic essayist.¹⁹ These postmodern features make it difficult to say anything about the novel that Coetzee's other writings, or even the novel itself with its formal peculiarities, have not already anticipated. Thus interpreting the scene where Lurie fumbles *The Prelude* is rather simple, in isolation, but correlating that interpretation with any comment that the novel—let alone Coetzee—wants to make about English literature in South Africa is far more challenging.

On one level it makes sense to conflate the novel's take on Wordsworth with the narrator's ventriloquism of Lurie's students: "A man looking at a mountain: why does it have to be so complicated, they want to complain?" Moments later, Lurie's question: "Where is the flash of revelation in this room?" (21). There is no flash; Wordsworth can mean very little to these students; it is not incorrect to assert, as Rita Barnard has, that this scenic tradition doesn't fit in South Africa, temporally or spatially.²⁰ But just as John Keats, not one of Coetzee's favorite writers but germane nevertheless, advocates remaining "in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason," what he calls an exercise of "negative capability," this scene in *Disgrace* demands the same, a consideration of what lies beyond the "fact and reason" of Wordsworth's irrelevance to these students, which I generally agree with.²¹

As I will show, this scene lashes together ineffective institutional pedagogy with a body of

¹⁹ As Imraan Coovadia accurately states in an otherwise controversial article, Coetzee "borrows the themes of his narratives from questions raised in contemporary theory about such matters as signification, subjectivity, and colonial subordination." It seems contradictory to suggest then, a few pages later, that Coetzee has "purposely estranged himself from those realities which are the source of even the most abstracted forms of literature;" however theoretical, the theme of "colonial subordination" that Coovadia sees as influencing Coetzee's fiction is surely based in one of "those realities" and not merely in "pure literature" or "pure theory." Imraan Coovadia, "Coetzee In and Out of Cape Town," *Kritika Kultura* 18 (2012): 109-111.

²⁰ Rita Barnard, analyzing Coetzee's Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech (1987), explains why "love" is an insufficient response to nature: "The land, Coetzee goes on to argue, cannot become a place of freedom without a more reciprocal kind of love—a love he names fraternity." This love can "only be enjoyed once the structures of power and inequality that defined the apartheid state have been dismantled." Barnard, "South African Pastoral," 200.

²¹ John Keats, *The Major Works*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 370.

students for whom a nurturing, educational relationship with nature is foreign, unimaginable. So if for Wordsworth the ideal equation is natural education over formal education, *a* but not *b*, in *Disgrace* this formula becomes a failure of natural education and a failure of formal education, neither *a* nor *b*. This shift is indebted to the dimensions of the “new South Africa,” both temporally (postcolonial, post-Apartheid) and spatially (a geography that favors plateaus over mountains).²² But it is no coincidence that the students left behind by this wholesale failure of education, Melanie Isaacs and Lucy Lurie, are female students. This failing formula, neither *a* nor *b*, is inseparable from gender in *Disgrace*.

This argument is based on Lurie’s status as a bad teacher of Wordsworth, a deficit about which both he and the narrator are explicit. The novel’s movement between the bedroom and the classroom requires Lurie to alternate between performing his role as teacher and transgressing it. But having “never been much of a teacher,” he lacks the skill necessary to make either his teacherly performances or transgressions very masterful, and furthermore fails to distinguish clearly between the two (4). Cajoling Melanie after she avoids his class, he realizes “he has forgotten how to woo”; meanwhile his class discussions inspire “Silence,” “Silence again” (20, 21). After quoting Shakespeare during his first interaction with her, the conversation promptly dies: “Not a good move....He has become a teacher again, a man of the book, guardian of the culture-board” (16). Within that realization is a stylistic reenactment of its content, with the role of “teacher” edited and re-edited with repetitious flourish into a vaunted honorific, “guardian of the culture-board.” Lamenting the gulf between teacher and pupil becomes a means of widening the very gap he seeks to diminish: teacher takes over for lover.

²² Coetzee, *White Writing*, 52.

In the classroom, it follows, the situation is reversed. Lecturing on Wordsworth, he is transported to “the moment on the floor when he forced the sweater up and exposed her neat, perfect little breasts. For the first time she looks up; her eyes meet his and in a flash see all” (23). Even Wordsworth cannot keep this sexual memory at bay, evidence of how the unlikeliest of English poets is capable of facilitating a mode of clandestine communication—of how teaching Wordsworth badly, cultivating “[b]lank incomprehension” in his students, becomes the most effective transgression of that teacherly role to date, with Melanie “see[ing] all” of Lurie’s “covert intimacies” (22, 23). In other words, this moment of ineffective teacher-student interaction is also the moment when Lurie finally manages to embody the role of lover. And as his class fails to see, mired in blank, unseeing confusion, Melanie achieves absolute sight. This is a loaded transformation in a class about “the limits of sense-perception,” about how “a soulless image, a mere image on the retina, has encroached upon what has hitherto been a living thought” (22, 21). Lurie, in becoming the lover at the wrong moment, teaches Melanie to see—in a perversion of his pedagogical role, he gives her the Wordsworthian experience that he is unable to teach, a sexualized rather than natural sublime that depends on the gap between teacher and student.²³ Whether Melanie is able to “see all,” as Lurie says, is a mystery; her silence and his narration emphasize that for this student of the sublime there is no according representational power, no recourse to the sort of apostrophe or proclamation that Wordsworth hurries toward

²³ This perversion is especially acute in light of the educational reforms in the post-Apartheid era. Lurie’s dismay at the institutional changes to the new Cape Technical University must seem familiar to anyone who has watched as departments are combined and programs cancelled in the name of making the university more streamlined and profitable. But *Disgrace* does not explicitly address other major policy changes to higher education in post-Apartheid South Africa that I think germane to Lurie’s pedagogy. Considering, for instance, the relationship that Lurie initiates with Melanie, a Coloured student he prefers to call “the dark one” (18), it’s significant that the Higher Education Act of 1997 (passed just two years before the publication of *Disgrace*) focused in part on “developing a new kind of ‘institutional culture’ which is learning centred, eschews racism and sexism, and guarantees the safety of all (but with special attention to women) on campus.” Teboho Moja and Fred M. Hayward, “Higher Education Policy Development in Contemporary South Africa” in *Implementing Education Policies: The South African Experience*, ed. Yusuf Sayed and Jonathan D. Jansen (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2001), 118.

after his own brush with sublimity in Book 6. The gap between Lurie and Melanie is one of gender, of power, of language.

Critics and teachers of *Disgrace* have not universally interpreted Lurie as an ineffective teacher. Gary Hawkins refers to Lurie's "dedicated," "valiant attempt" to prove to his students the "victory of transcendent literature over skilled communication."²⁴ To Hawkins, the moment when Lurie distinguishes between Wordsworth's use of "usurp upon" and the perfective form of that verb, "usurp," reveals a "joy" that stems "from the revelation which a minor but precise attention to language has the power to reveal." But if only this "minor but precise" distinction produced joy, in either Lurie or his students:

"...Let us start with the unusual verb form *usurp upon*. Did anyone look it up in a dictionary?"

Silence.

"If you had, you would have found that *usurp upon* means to intrude or encroach upon. *Usurp*, to take over entirely, is the perfective of *usurp upon*; usurping completes the act of usurping upon." (21)

To "usurp upon" is the ninth definition that the OED provides for the verb "usurp," and the most applicable definition it provides, "to encroach or infringe upon," is not radically different from the definition it provides for the perfective "usurp," "to appropriate wrongfully to oneself."²⁵

This is not to say that Lurie's distinction is false, or even beside the point, but that it is unlikely to inspire readerly joy in students who may not know what "usurp" means on its own, let alone

²⁴ Gary Hawkins, "Clerk in a Post-Religious Age: Reading Lurie's Remnant Romantic Temperament in *Disgrace*," in *Encountering Disgrace: Reading and Teaching Coetzee's Novel*, ed. Bill McDonald (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 154.

²⁵ *OED Online*, s.v. "usurp, v." <http://oed.com/view/Entry/220720?rskey=ntka9L&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed June 29, 2012).

that “usurp upon” is an unusual form of the verb. Lurie’s question alienates his students, not just because *The Prelude*’s content is remote but also because he expects students to divine a “minor but precise” linguistic distinction that would be difficult for many college students to grasp, let alone make themselves.

Daniel Kiefer, reflecting on his own experience teaching *Disgrace*, asserts that “as [Lurie] turns Wordsworth and Byron to his own purposes, mixing literary passion with sexual, he becomes a more effective instructor.”²⁶ Kiefer’s students tell him that Lurie’s attempt to use Wordsworth as a covert means of communicating with Melanie is “inept, or even treacherous,” but he counters that Lurie’s attempt “takes figurative language and deploys it figuratively, in the way professors often do.” This justification should be understood in light of title Kiefer gives his essay—“Sympathy for the Devil”—but nevertheless I don’t see Lurie’s lesson as a *mixture* of literary and sexual passion: the sexual supplants the literary when he compares Wordsworth’s Alps to “being in love,” a connection that he recognizes “is hardly in Wordsworth” (22). Passions are not mixed, but rather kept strictly separate: describing the gaze of a lover means covering ground that is not “in Wordsworth,” at least not here.

I want to be emphatic about Lurie’s dubious pedagogy because he is not the only bad teacher of Wordsworth in Coetzee’s oeuvre. For this reason Lurie’s lesson on Book 6 of *The Prelude* does not merely suggest that the tropes of English landscape writing continue to befuddle readers in current and former British colonies (though it does serve as an echo of the daffodils experience from the introduction to the dissertation). The scene also provides an example of how teachers—and the curricula they teach—reproduce the systems of power they rely on. This reproduction is a truism of educational discourse in general; the South African

²⁶ Daniel Kiefer, “Sympathy for the Devil: On the Perversity of Teaching *Disgrace*,” in *Encountering Disgrace: Reading and Teaching Coetzee’s Novel*, ed. Bill McDonald (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 265.

education scholar Jonathan Jansen recalls a parable about a Western consultant who, on arriving “in a Third World country he knew little about,” said, “Show me your curriculum and I’ll tell you who is in power.”²⁷ Jansen’s story draws upon Pierre Bourdieu’s theory that “any type of teaching must...produce a need for its own product and therefore set up as a value, or value of values, the culture that it is concerned with imparting.”²⁸ This production of value is the sticking point in Coetzee’s first memoir *Boyhood* (1997), in which the boy’s father suggests a reading program for his son:

One day his father comes to his room with the Wordsworth book. “You should read these,” he says, and points out poems he has ticked in pencil. A few days later he comes back, wanting to discuss the poems. “The sounding cataract haunted me like a passion,” his father quotes. “It’s great poetry, isn’t it?” He mumbles, refuses to meet his father’s eye, refuses to play the game. It is not long before his father gives up.²⁹

The father in *Boyhood* prefers a pedagogy of appreciation over Lurie’s attention to grammatical nuance, but the student bodies in *Disgrace* and *Boyhood* are quite similar. Like the students at Cape Technical, Coetzee’s childhood self responds to the assigned reading with aversion, a refusal to engage verbally or visually. The aversion has little to do with the content of Wordsworth—*Boyhood* offers no reading of “Tintern Abbey”—and everything to do with the pedagogue, whom the boy “cannot imagine...reading poetry”: “He cannot see how poetry fits into his father’s life; he suspects it is just pretence.” The father, an Anglophilic Afrikaner who

²⁷ Jonathan D. Jansen, *Knowledge in the Blood: Confronting Race and the Apartheid Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 170.

²⁸ Bourdieu, “Systems of Education and Systems of Thought,” 198.

²⁹ Coetzee, *Boyhood*, 105.

spends much of his time at the bar, fails insofar as his informal teaching does not “produce a need for its own product,” demonstrating the interpretive effects that corrupted sites of authority can have on the texts they seek to disseminate. And the relationship is a circular one, judging by the two examples that Coetzee presents: these bad teachers are disciples of Wordsworth, and in return they teach Wordsworth badly.

As Coetzee’s experience with Wordsworth in *Boyhood* suggests, the role of English language education in the colonies of the British empire is vexed, as I explain in the introduction. As a subject for non-English speaking students, English must necessarily stand alone rather than bolstering some other branch of knowledge, as algebra, for instance, bolsters calculus. In the colonial setting this becomes the “central challenge of teaching English,” according to Gauri Viswanathan: “English is asked to serve as an avenue to educational opportunity even as it creates a separate constituency.”³⁰ It creates educational opportunities in English, as well as other fields in which English can act as the medium, but this increase reads as deprivation to those who never learn the language. (This separate constituency is what Thomas Macaulay advocated with his “class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”³¹) The conflict between opportunity and separation is one between leveling and elevating, between the lateral and the hierarchical. (This “separate constituency” peeks out from Lurie’s lesson on *The Prelude* when he imagines the students wondering, “why does it have to be so complicated,” reluctant or unable to join the literary constituency that Lurie presents.) The Wordsworth lesson in *Disgrace* is not about the European landscape tradition in Africa, but about how the relationship Wordsworth presents between formal and natural education in *The*

³⁰ Gauri Viswanathan, “English in a Literate Society,” in *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies in India*, ed. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 34.

³¹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*, ed. G. M. Young (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 729.

Prelude must morph to fit a different geography, a different educational context, a different student. Even for Wordsworth, the pedagogical relationship between self and nature is tenuous, seemingly providential but tainted by its constitutive relationship with the faulty educational systems Wordsworth wants to discount but is compelled to detail. If in *The Prelude* the relationship between nature and pedagogy is constitutive, if nature is the best teacher, and its benefits are made visible by the specter of formal education, in *Disgrace* the relationship is opaque. Learning does not happen in the university classroom; it does not occur on Table Mountain. The relationship between nature and pedagogy depends solely on the recipients they share, though “recipient” is not the correct term: Melanie and Lucy receive little, for they will never be “chosen son[s].”

The *boervrou* and the South African farm

More than any other character in *Disgrace*, Lucy Lurie has an ambivalent relationship to the landscape. Unlike her father and his students, who simply don’t care much for “rural life,” Lucy cares deeply, reaps figurative and literal benefits from her georgic life, and simultaneously theorizes that her belonging exacts a precise and brutal cost (218). In order to make sense of Lucy’s relationship to the landscape and to her father, critics have plumbed the depths of allusion: “Around Lucy’s fate, intertexts cluster like coagulants at a wound,” says Pamela Cooper, who sees not just Wordsworth but hints of Yeats as well.³² Gayatri Spivak sees *King Lear*, with Lucy playing Cordelia to Lurie’s aging patriarch.³³ Most compelling for my purposes

³² Pamela Cooper, “Metamorphosis and Sexuality: Reading the Strange Passions of *Disgrace*,” *Research in African Literatures* 36, no. 4 (2005): 32.

³³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching,” *Diacritics* 32, no. 3/4 (2002): 20.

is Mike Marais's focus on Wordsworth's Lucy poems, which, as he points out, "signal the ambiguity at the heart of Romanticism, the fact that its aesthetic confidence is accompanied by a sense of inevitable failure."³⁴ For this reason it is essential to consider the Lucy poems (and not just *The Prelude*) when analyzing the role Wordsworth plays in *Disgrace*. In this section I pair my analysis of the Lucy poems with the historical realities of Lucy's position on the African farm. As I have said, I argue that the ambivalence of these poems is just as much a part of the Wordsworth that Coetzee invokes as is the landscape sublime. Moreover, I suggest that these poems echo the political charge to Lucy's return to the land in *Disgrace*, the valence of which depends on her status as woman and settler in a transitional, post-Apartheid South Africa.

When Lurie arrives at Lucy's farm, fresh from his disciplinary hearings at Cape Technical University, he finds his daughter "[c]omfortably barefoot" (59). After moving to the smallholding six years earlier and staying on far longer than her girlfriend or the rest of the commune, Lucy "had fallen in love with the place...she wanted to farm it properly" (60). Lurie, not having seen his daughter since this transformation, realizes she is "no longer a child playing at farming but a solid countrywoman, a *boervrou*"—and his recourse to Afrikaans is significant. Literally in touch with the land, with bare feet that "grip the red earth, leaving clear prints," Lucy is not a farmer but a *boer*, an Afrikaner, a farmer of Dutch descent (62). This characterization makes sense—Lucy's mother is Dutch, and after the attack Lurie offers to send her to Holland (161, 204). But here her status as *boer* has more to do with her comfort and stability than with her familial heritage, for the term evokes the generations of predominantly Afrikaner settlers who farmed in South Africa and who, a century earlier, had fought the British for that land in a

³⁴ Mike Marais, "J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and the Task of the Imagination," *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 2 (2006): 85-6.

series of wars named for them.³⁵ Lucy's ability to farm "properly" and her status as a "solid countrywoman" qualify her for inclusion in the long line of Afrikaner settlers who preceded her.

But she is a *boer* with a difference, as Lurie clarifies. She may be "this throwback, this sturdy young settler," but she is also "[a] frontier farmer of the new breed," and this newness leads Lurie to ruminate: "History repeating itself, though in a more modest vein. Perhaps history has learned a lesson" (61, 62). Against Lucy's old-fashioned movement to the frontier Lurie posits the possibility that history has done what he refused to do—it has accepted a "Re-education" (66). Lucy will not joined the ranks of the "hereditary masters" whom Coetzee derides in his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech (1987), whose "excessive talk, about how they love South Africa has been consistently directed toward *the land*, that is, toward what is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers."³⁶ Lucy, in contrast, exhibits the fraternity that Coetzee goes on to praise, making herself integral to a neighborly community composed of old-guard German Ettinger and the "dog-man" Petrus, an African farmer of the "new South Africa." But belonging is always tempered by her gender, which becomes increasingly clear in the aftermath of her gang-rape when she decides to carry her pregnancy to term and agrees to become Petrus's third wife, if only in name, in exchange for protection. This exchange is foreshadowed by the term *boervrou*, literally "farmer wife" or "farmer woman," and its attendant suggestion that Lucy cannot on her own be a proper *boer*. She

³⁵ Coetzee evokes the lasting power of the farm in *Boyhood* when he reckons, "The farm is greater than any of them. The farm exists from eternity to eternity. When they are all dead, when even the farmhouse has fallen into ruin like the kraals on the hillside, the farm will still be here." Coetzee, *Boyhood*, 96.

³⁶ J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 97. As he explains in *Boyhood*, "The secret and sacred word that binds him to the farm is *belong*," a word that leads him to think, "*I belong on the farm*," and then "*I belong to the farm*." This final iteration is the most dangerous because *belong* "is misunderstood so easily, turned so easily into its inverse: *The farm belongs to me*." These childhood memories reveal the difficulty in achieving a reciprocal relationship with the land; simply exchanging the nouns in a sentence like "*I belong to the farm*" quickly becomes an exercise in possession and ownership rather than reciprocity. Coetzee, *Boyhood*, 95-6.

is always also a woman, and regardless of her own unvoiced desires—as Lurie explains to Petrus, Lucy “[d]oes not want to marry a man”—her status as an inhabitant is so tenuous that she is willing to “be known as his third wife,” “sign the land over to him,” and “become a tenant on his land” (202, 204). But moments later the tropes of femininity seem capable of binding Lucy firmly to the land; Lurie observes “the gentle sun, the stillness of mid-afternoon, busy bees in a field of flowers; and at the centre of the picture a young woman, *das ewig Weibliche*, lightly pregnant, in a straw sunhat” (218). As Rita Barnard has explained, the recourse to German (“the eternal feminine,” from Goethe’s *Faust*) is both off-putting and “resonant...of outworn platitudes about the timeless allure of women.”³⁷ It also suggests that in the realm of aesthetics—for Lucy is “at the centre of the picture”—femininity is capable of underwriting the sense of belonging that Lucy wants.

The novel makes clear, though, that any beneficial power of Lucy’s gender exists in representation only, as a product of Lurie’s imagination. His recourse to “outworn platitudes” is one signal; his next sentence, in which he says that the “scene is ready-made for a Sargent or a Bonnard,” is another (218). Having already aestheticized Lucy as a georgic “picture,” he is quick to specify who might have painted it, moving further into representation and away from a reality that, for instance, made Lucy “lightly pregnant” in the first place. For against the trope of her pregnancy lie its very real consequences: Lucy’s future status as mother will add a final layer of complexity to her relationship with the South African land. As the daughter of an English professor and a Dutch mother, Lucy already embodies South Africa’s two dueling colonial traditions, both of which historically relied on tropes of motherhood for their defense. These tropes were perhaps most visible during the early twentieth century, when educational norms

³⁷ Barnard, “South African Pastoral,” 217-18.

centered around the question of language—or, as it was often framed, the question of “the mother tongue.”

Despite South Africa’s “brimming residual fund of identities” and eleven official languages, the question of language routinely boils down to a battle between Afrikaans and English.³⁸ The British may have claimed victory at the end of the South African War in 1902, but a virulent brand of Afrikaner nationalism became ascendant when the National Party was elected to power in 1948. Although South Africa remained part of the British Commonwealth until 1961, the cultural and political role that the British Empire played in the nation has not always been clear: “For much of the twentieth century, an exclusive form of white Afrikaner nationalism, with its explicit objective the capture of the state by the white Afrikaner ‘nation’, has confronted its counterpart, a pan-South African black nationalism, which has sought the incorporation of Africans into the body politic.”³⁹ It is against this balance—between Afrikaner nationalism on the one hand and black nationalism on the other—that British influence developed a niche. As Jonathan Jansen explains, “It is the memory of defeat at the hands of the English and the continued hegemony of English institutions and English power long after the South African War that in part explains the defense of the Afrikaans language” in the post-Apartheid era.⁴⁰ (The persistence of this tension between English and Afrikaner influence is in spite of South Africa’s demographics, which favor neither of these colonial European groups.⁴¹)

³⁸ Leon de Kock, “South Africa in the Global Imaginary: An Introduction,” *Poetics Today* 22, no. 2 (2001): 271.

³⁹ Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (New York: Longman, 1987), 1.

⁴⁰ Jansen, *Knowledge in the Blood*, 32.

⁴¹ “Unlike ‘settlers’ in certain other colonies... the South African ‘settlers’ of European origin have remained in the minority throughout the country’s history. de Kock, “South Africa in the Global Imaginary,” 272-3.

In light of the minority stake that English holds in South Africa's panoply of languages, it is remarkable that "the most visible corpus of South African writing occurs in the English language."⁴² Years after the end of Apartheid, and more than half a century after the Afrikaner Nationalist Party assumed power, English retains a cultural hegemony. But debates about the role of English in South Africa are not new by any means; education that emphasized the mother tongue was a priority for both early Dutch and British settlers.⁴³ Before the South African War, the Report of the Cape of Good Hope Education Commission had argued, "You are not trying to educate a child to learn English, but you are teaching it to read and write...If your object is to teach a child and get it educated, let it be in whatever language the parent decides."⁴⁴ This opinion seems to have been an anomaly, however, and by the conclusion of the war it was assumed that, as colonial administrator Alfred Milner expressed, controlling language also meant controlling "the values and traditions of which language is the medium." "Language is important, but the tone and spirit of the teaching conveyed in it is even more important."⁴⁵ In other words, the ideological intangibles that language could inculcate became more important than the language itself. It is this possession of "tone and spirit" that helps to explain the turn that language education took in the 1920s, when dual-language education (which emphasized both English and Afrikaans) began to fall out of favor, especially among Afrikaners, many of whom

⁴² Ibid., 265.

⁴³ For instance, confirmation in the Dutch Reformed Church was a social necessity for early Dutch settlers, one that "implied the ability to read the Bible, recite the catechism or articles of faith, and write one's own name." Similarly, for the British at Cape Colony, education was an imperative, and in 1822 English became the official language of the colony; teachers were to be employed "for the purpose of facilitating the acquirement of the English language to all classes of society." AL Behr, *New Perspectives in South African Education: A Review of Education in South Africa, 1652-1984* (Durban: Butterworths, 1984), 4, 6.

⁴⁴ Report of the Cape of Good Hope Education Commission (1892), in *Documents in South African Education*, ed. Brian Rose and Raymond Tunmer (Johannesburg: Donker, 1975), 152.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 161.

worried “that when the two language groups were together in the same school, one culture would be swamped by the other.”⁴⁶ The easy movement between “language groups” and the swamping “culture” they imply clearly belongs to the same line of thought that assumes language to inspire a distinctive set of “values and traditions.” In that formulation language may be a “medium,” but it is a medium for a cultural hegemony that inheres in the language itself.

That cultural power is perhaps most evident in the discourse of “the mother tongue,” a phrase that historically has served as a shorthand for many implications of language education in twentieth-century South Africa. It’s telling, for instance, that while “mother tongue” most obviously invokes one’s native language, it also has a more strictly pedagogical definition, one that has been particularly common in South Africa.⁴⁷ Historically, mother-tongue education—schooling that takes place in the student’s native language—developed as a reaction against the aftermath of the South African War. (In the final years of the South African War, the British removed tens of thousands of Boer women and children to internment camps, destroying family homesteads, killing livestock, and rendering the land non-arable.)⁴⁸ But subsequently, schools became the primary method of denationalizing the battered Afrikaner population in the Transvaal: “English was made the sole medium of instruction. The Dutch language was to be taught only at the request of parents and then for not more than three hours per week.” It’s from this policy that historians date “the determination to have the principle of mother-tongue

⁴⁶ Behr, *New Perspectives*, 25.

⁴⁷ *OED Online*, s. v. “mother tongue.” <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122678?redirectedFrom=mother+tongue> (accessed April 12, 2013). The third definition reads “Designating the teaching of, or teaching carried out in, the native or first language of students”: of the five records of this use that the *OED* includes, three are from South Africa.

⁴⁸ The British constructed many more camps for black Africans than they did for white Afrikaners, but the Boer concentration camps remain significantly more notorious.

instruction enshrined in the matrix of all educational endeavour.”⁴⁹ In the end, this determination found its way into the National Education Policy Act of 1967, which stipulated, among other things, that in state-run schools “the mother tongue, if it is English or Afrikaans, shall be the medium of instruction.”⁵⁰

The memory of British enormities became an integral part of Afrikaner identity in the aftermath of the war (and to a certain degree that history continues to inform Afrikaner culture in contemporary South Africa).⁵¹ Isabel Hofmeyr points to this memory when she discusses the cultural role Afrikaner women were called upon to play in the post-war era: “Women were after all the ones who were going to socialise children as Afrikaners, and it was not for nothing that Afrikaans was so frequently called “the mother tongue.””⁵² Hofmeyr’s statement further narrows the meaning of “mother tongue” in the context of South Africa—not just education in the child’s native language, but socialization in the Afrikaner tradition. In the twentieth century, then, English became less a potential mother tongue and more a requirement enforced from without. For “[t]he supreme importance to developing communities of an ‘access language’—a world language—unsettles the generally axiomatic proposition that a child should be educated in its mother-tongue.”⁵³ Of course, this dynamic is partly a product of how the British and Dutch empires developed and waned respectively in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries—of the

⁴⁹ Behr, *New Perspectives*, 15-16.

⁵⁰ The National Education Policy Act (1967), in Elizabeth Dean, Paul Hartmann, and May Katzen, *History in Black and White: An Analysis of South African School History Textbooks* (Paris: Unesco, 1983), 129.

⁵¹ Jonathan Jansen discusses the memory (or forged memory) of this treatment at length in his exploration of the Afrikaner university in the post-Apartheid era, *Knowledge in the Blood*.

⁵² Isabel Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924," in *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (New York: Longman, 1987), 113.

⁵³ Rose and Tunmer, *Documents*, 150.

fact that English became a “world language” and Dutch did not. But the dynamic between Afrikaans and English also owes its staying power to the Afrikaner nationalism that grew out of the South African War and the persistence of a British cultural hegemony, even in contemporary South Africa.

This history is important to *Disgrace* because it begins to explain what it might mean for Lucy, a product of both colonial traditions, to bear a mixed-race child—one who, as Lurie tells Lucy, will be “a child of this earth” (216).⁵⁴ As Jonathan Jansen makes clear, the linguistic battle between English and Afrikaans may be a product of colonialism, but it did not die with the end of Apartheid in 1994. Moreover, it is a battle inflected by two key relationships: between mother and child, and inhabitant and land. These are relationships that Lucy considers carefully throughout *Disgrace*, and they are the ones that tie her to Wordsworth’s Lucy poems. For all Lurie’s pontificating about Lucy’s status as *boer*, her understanding is far more nuanced: “This is not a farm, it’s just a piece of land where I grow things” (200). Though she might seem to be distinguishing between synonyms, the term “farm” carries a weight in South Africa that Lucy wishes to avoid.⁵⁵ The relationship she envisions is one based not on ownership, but on a sort of receptivity in which she “grows”—even nurtures—whatever the “piece of land” yields.

⁵⁴ The tension between Afrikaans and English informs Coetzee’s memoirs, not to mention early novels like *In the Heart of the Country* and his translations from the Afrikaans. As Rita Barnard argues, “one of the earliest of Coetzee’s doubles... is the Afrikaans boy and thus the Afrikaans man that he never became, but who nevertheless once presented himself as a shadowy alternative, as a subject position consciously refused—one that had to be refused, in fact, since in this refusal lay the possibility of a career as a cosmopolitan writer and intellectual.” Barnard’s argument is useful here in its juxtaposition of “the Afrikaans man” and the “cosmopolitan writer and intellectual”—English as an “access language” allowed Coetzee a cosmopolitanism that he could not have sustained in Afrikaans. Rita Barnard, “Coetzee in/and Afrikaans,” *Journal of Literary Studies* 25, no. 4 (2009): 87.

⁵⁵ It has its own genre too, the South African farm novel in English, or *plaasroman* in Afrikaans. As Coetzee has written, “For two decades of this century, the Afrikaans novel concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm and *platteland* (rural) society.” The association of the farm with the Great Trek of the nineteenth century—a mass emigration of Afrikaner farmers to the interior of South Africa, celebrated throughout the height of Afrikaner nationalism in the twentieth century—helps to explain Lucy’s aversion to the term. Olive Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm* (1883) is one of the few British contributions to the genre. J. M. Coetzee, “Farm Novel and ‘Plaasroman’ in South Africa,” *English in Africa* 13, no. 2 (1986): 1.

Similarly, the bond she imagines with her unborn child is open to revision, and based on receptivity. When Lurie asks his daughter if she loves the child, she responds: “No. How could I? But I will. Love will grow—one can trust Mother Nature for that” (216). Here too the operative word is “grow,” signaling the connection between these two relationships, both of which demand Lucy’s agency while depending on “Mother Nature.” But the natural landscape, in spite of Lucy’s optimism, is silent: Coetzee may suggest in *White Writing* that the desire for reciprocity with Africa is a masculine one, but *Disgrace* makes clear that reciprocity is just as elusive—if not impossible—for the female inhabitants of Africa who wish to transcend the status of “visitor, stranger, transient.”⁵⁶

With rocks, and stones, and trees

In his exploration of Lucy Lurie and Wordsworth’s Lucy poems, Mike Marais has helpfully focused on “Strange fits of passion have I known,” which ends with the line “‘O mercy!’ to myself I cried, / ‘If Lucy should be dead!’”⁵⁷ As Marais notes, these lines echo Lurie’s concern while Lucy is being raped that she may already be dead, as well as Lucy’s later statement, “I am a dead person and I do not know yet what will bring me back to life.”⁵⁸ Like Wordsworth’s Lucy, who in her silence remains an enigma to the reader, the Lucy of *Disgrace* is interpretively opaque; as Marais explains “the novel denies the reader direct access to Lucy” by “using Lurie as a focalizer.”⁵⁹ In his view, “It is exactly this representational tension between

⁵⁶ Coetzee, *White Writing*, 8.

⁵⁷ *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by E. de Selincourt, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), 29, ll. 27-28.

⁵⁸ Marais, “Task of the Imagination,” 86; *Disgrace* 161.

⁵⁹ Marais, “Task of the Imagination,” 84.

presence and absence that the allusions to the Lucy poems in *Disgrace* invoke.”⁶⁰ In my view, the allusions also invoke the unstable relationship that Lucy has to the landscape in Wordsworth’s poems, and this instability is the neglected counterpart to the narrative of natural education and belonging that *The Prelude* is generally assumed to proclaim. The Lucy poems are not just harbingers of some prosopopeial absence; they also model the ways in which Lucy Lurie’s gender and national background inflect her relationship to the environment. Insofar as Lucy is representative of a “new South Africa,” carrying to term a “child of this earth,” the education she fails to receive from nature as an inhabitant and worker of the South African landscape is precisely the lesson Coetzee imparts in *Disgrace*. There is no intrinsic relationship between education and nature; all they share a failure to engage, a failure that is disproportionately the plight of the novel’s female characters.

As Marais suggests, the lack of readerly access to Lucy Lurie is also a hallmark of the Lucy poems, in which the speaker is for the most part bewildered by her untimely death. But this sort of hapless Wordsworthian speaker is not unique to Lucy poems; he is, for example, the same confident peripatetic who misreads an old man in “Animal Tranquility and Decay” (“Old man travelling” in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 and 1802). In its earliest versions, this short poem dramatizes the inability of the speaker to bridge the gap between himself and an aging passer-by, whom the speaker interprets as “insensibly subdued / To settled quiet” and so patient that “patience now doth seem a thing of which / He hath no need.”⁶¹ In later versions, Wordsworth

⁶⁰ Ibid, 86. Marais’s focus is on death and what can be expressed by language; along those lines he points out that “the name Lucy is self-consciously prosopopeial,” for “[b]y linking their respective figures of alterity to death, both Wordsworth and Coetzee foreground the irony implicit in the name Lucy, a name that, despite its etymological associations with illumination and epiphany, only ever reveals its inadequate...relation to that which it promises to reveal. Marais, “Task of the Imagination,” 86.

⁶¹ *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 247, ll. 7-8, 11-12.

ended the poem with these confident and slightly condescending assumptions about the old man, but in the *Lyrical Ballads* the speaker is proven wrong when the man speaks: “Sir! I am going many miles to take / A last leave of my son, a mariner, / Who from a sea-fight has been brought to Falmouth, / And there is dying in an hospital.”⁶² The poem ends without further word from the speaker. The old man whom he understood to be “subdued” and peaceful is revealed—through the man’s own words—to be the opposite, to be in the midst of an arduous and mournful journey. In later versions of the poem this revelation disappears, and this textual shift between corrective speech and confirming silence is a helpful frame for the Lucy poems. In these short romantic elegies, Lucy’s relationship with the environment is always mediated by a speaker whose reliability and interpretive prowess are not guaranteed.

But Coetzee is drawing upon more than the speaker’s position, or Lucy’s presence and absence. With the Lucy poems he invokes a protagonist whose relationship with the environment is so contradictory as to be beyond the pale of ambivalence. Of course, this relationship is inseparable from the speaker’s position, which mediates it for the reader, and from Lucy’s disappearing act, which often seems to stem from this inconsistent relationship with nature in the poems. Nevertheless, the vexed relationship itself is integral to Coetzee’s systematic allusions. In “A Slumber did my spirit seal,” a stanza break separates living Lucy from dead Lucy. But it is in death that Lucy achieves her most reciprocal relationship with the natural environment:

No motion has she now, no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course,

⁶² Ibid., 247n. *After* 14 (I have quoted the concluding lines of the 1802 version).

With rocks, and stones, and trees.⁶³

The motion and force that Lucy lacks in death are supplied—somehow—by the earth that now surrounds her dead body. The speaker’s temporal “now” would suggest that previously Lucy had agency and activity, but the first stanza fails to represent any such movement. In fact, the only movement in the entire poem occurs in the grave, wherein Lucy is “Rolled round” as the days tick reliably by. The earth moves Lucy, and moves in lieu of her, tossing her “With Rocks, and stones, and trees” while achieving daily its “diurnal course.”⁶⁴ It supplies what she lacks, echoing Lucy Lurie’s belief that “Mother Nature” will supply her with the love she does not yet feel for her unborn child. In *Disgrace*’s terms, the price for this endowment is high.

In “Three years she grew,” that price is not just death, but also rape. Although “Nature” in this poem has a plan for Lucy that is relatively similar to the educational program Wordsworth enjoyed in *The Prelude*, the poem suggests that gender makes all the difference in that plan’s enactment. The only poem to feature nature’s voice, “Three years she grew” opens with seizure:

Then Nature said, “A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own...”⁶⁵

⁶³ *The Poetical Works*, 2:216, ll. 5-8.

⁶⁴ As Frances Ferguson explains, “Lucy is too integral a part of nature and too self-integrated for responsiveness.” She is “[n]ot like “rocks, and stones, and trees” but “with rocks, and stones, and trees,” fully enmeshed in a “diurnal course” that the speaker cannot access. Frances Ferguson, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 193.

⁶⁵ *The Poetical Works*, 2:214-5, ll. 2-6.

Nature's words make Lucy's tenuous existence even more shaky, metaphORIZING her into a flower whose life depends on a sower. Moreover, the negative construction of "was never sown" immediately calls the viability of that life into question, even beyond the eventual reaping that the poem narrates. And as Frances Ferguson powerfully suggests, "If Lucy is a flower, she has been sown to be reaped, in Nature's view; Nature's reaping and raping have moved so close to one another than human laments on the death of virgins become inevitable rather than extraordinary."⁶⁶ It might be beside the point to consider nature as "a child molester," but the proximity of reaping and raping in the poem casts nature's care in an undeniably creepy light.⁶⁷ In becoming the property of nature, Lucy reaps certain benefits: she will "feel an overseeing power / To kindle or restrain" and "lean her ear / In many a secret place / Where rivulets dance their wayward round."⁶⁸ If these advantages seem similar to the ones that Wordsworth receives from nature in the early books of *The Prelude*, then it becomes necessary to question just what is gained by achieving a reciprocal relationship with rivers and mountains—and whether, as the Lucy poems suggest, this valence of this relationship depends on the gender of the recipient. For these poems raise the specter of a natural environment whose fickle ambivalence has nothing to do with the traditional femininity of "Mother nature," for nature is no longer "a benevolent mother, but rather a Plutonic male."⁶⁹

Rape and death are the price Lucy pays for a relationship with the landscape around her. This is the opinion of the speaker of "Three years she grew," and it is the opinion of Lucy in *Disgrace*. It shouldn't follow that we take either of these interpretations as gospel; though

⁶⁶ Ferguson, *Language as Counter-Spirit*, 189.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁶⁸ *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 2:214-5, ll. 11-12, 26-28

⁶⁹ Ferguson, *Language as Counter-Spirit*, 189.

Coetzee is interested in the idea of “paying a price” in exchange for a bond with the land, I don’t think Lucy is speaking for him when she wonders, “what if *that* is the price one has to pay for staying on?”⁷⁰ But in concluding this chapter I want to emphasize that by alluding to the Lucy poems Coetzee is suggesting that the reciprocal relationship with the natural environment he advocates in his Jerusalem Prize speech will be hard-won in South Africa. For in Wordsworth’s poems Lucy can only achieve this relationship from the silent subject position of the child, and Lucy Lurie is no child. Indeed, as her father muses, “What does he want for Lucy? Not that she should be forever a child, forever innocent, forever his—certainly not that” (86). In a novel that, broadly speaking, makes a case for reciprocity and sympathy, the character best equipped to enact those edicts is left at the novel’s conclusion to muddle through her own violently uneven developments.

Lucy’s national status and its effects on this uneven relationship also have a correlate in the Lucy poems. In the only one to name a specific location, “I travelled among unknown men,” Lucy’s affiliation with England cannot save her from death—unsurprisingly. We see her in a perfect tableau of Englishness—“And she I cherished turned her wheel / Beside an English fire”—and that Englishness persists through her death, as the speaker addresses his beloved nation—“And thine too is the last green field / That Lucy’s eyes surveyed.”⁷¹ As in the other poems, it is not simply that Lucy dies despite her relationship with the natural environment, but rather that she dies as a result of it—England cannot save Lucy because it is indicted in her death. And if Lucy Lurie were simply a *boervrou* it would be tempting to see her as the South African analog of Wordsworth’s doomed child, condemned by her national affiliation to

⁷⁰ Barnard, “South African Pastoral,” 201n.1.

⁷¹ *The Poetical Works*, 2:30-31, ll. 11-12, 15-16.

metaphorical or literal death. But Lucy Lurie and her child belong to the “new South Africa”; they are the “brimming residual fund of identities” that characterizes the nation’s new chapter. Within this identity lurks the possibility that Lucy will achieve a relationship with the land that goes beyond the dubious love of her predecessors—that she will offer more than “excessive talk” and direct it beyond the “mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers” that cannot speak back. It is worth recalling, however, that the sources of this “residual fund of identities” include centuries of violent colonial history and a gang of rapists that stunned Lucy with their “personal hatred” (156). Lucy Lurie exceeds her namesake, replacing Lucy’s staunch Englishness with a mix of Dutch, English, and African influences. But the realities of her position in South Africa preclude a rewriting of Lucy’s fate.

Wordsworth’s poetry is very good at making itself seem obsolete in *Disgrace*, dumbfounding students with its reliance on a landscape tradition too geographically specific for exportation to the plateaus of South Africa. But it would be a mistake to think this is the only task that Coetzee sets for Wordsworth. Beyond Wordsworth’s alienation from the South African landscape lies his own fear in *The Prelude* that he will not be able to keep up his end of the bargain with a natural landscape that raised and educated him. Beyond the silence Wordsworth inspires in Lurie’s students lies nature’s own fickle silence and the possibility that this landscape, after nurturing him, will turn ambivalent, no matter how much his academic mediocrity makes that nurturing support indispensable. Beyond the opaque impenetrability of the Lucy poems lies the clear implication that a reciprocal relationship with nature exacts a deep price, all the deeper for a woman. These trends in Wordsworth’s poetry suggest nature is much more ambivalent and contradictory than the chosen son would have his readers believe. These uncertainties are the context for the relationship Wordsworth constructs between nature and education, which insists

that at their best they are immanent in each other: that nature at its most beneficent offers education to its inhabitants, and that the most intuitive and valuable education occurs within nature. *Disgrace* reminds us that Wordsworth doesn't always provide evidence for this relationship, that the context for Wordsworth's mingling of nature and education is demonstrable, universal facts but rather highly individual and uneven experiences. In *Disgrace*, this relationship is shown to be a perishable export. The possibility of achieving reciprocity with nature in the new South Africa exacts a price that we, following in Lurie's footsteps, deem too high.

Chapter 2. “How to live” in England and Beyond

One of the more surprising appropriations of Wordsworth’s words centers around his epic poem *The Excursion* (1814). Intended as the first part of *The Recluse*, a larger project that never came to fruition, *The Excursion* was easily Wordsworth’s most popular poem during the nineteenth century and even some of the twentieth: whatever Francis Jeffrey might have said about it in his scathing review (“This will never do”), the poem cemented Wordsworth’s reputation as the English poet, not only in England but in America and the British colonies as well.¹ During Wordsworth’s life *The Excursion* was read as a moral poem as well as a particularly English one, and in this light it makes sense that it came to hold a certain moral capital, with quotations from it mustering support of issues as diverse as abolition, unionization, and environmental protection. What makes less sense is that a poem so vocally concerned with specifically English matters should have made such moral capital available to the Anglophone world at large.

In this chapter I argue that the global appeal of *The Excursion* is not merely the result of Wordsworth’s wide dissemination as part of the British colonial canon. Rather, I understand *The Excursion* as laying the foundation for its own broad moral utility, a utility whose range flies in the face of the poem’s outward concern for the “native Briton,” the “English ground,” and the

¹ The association with Englishness was codified by Matthew Arnold his introduction to a selection of Wordsworth’s poems. Although Arnold is convinced of Wordsworth’s preeminent Englishness, a quality he associates explicitly with morality, as I discuss below, he sees *The Excursion* as one of Wordsworth’s many unfortunate poems rather than proof of his Englishness. In his view, only a “Wordsworthian,” a fan like himself, is capable of liking *The Excursion*—and this view is significantly more true now than it was in the nineteenth century.

scourge of industrialization that plagued both.² By examining the case of Lydia Maria Child, an American novelist, abolitionist, and pro-industrialist who made great use of Wordsworth in her political tracts, I trace the strange American afterlife of *The Excursion*, which became across the Atlantic an exemplar of Englishness and simultaneously a tool of American social progress that could be imaginatively divested of its national specificity. My point here is not that Child and other Americans misread Wordsworth, taking him out of context for their own political purposes, but that the text of *The Excursion* sets the precedent for this broadening with its vacillation between the regional language of English conservation and the diffuse discourse of earthly concerns. At the same time though, Wordsworth's strangely global Englishness is a story about reception, about the process by which his morality—what Matthew Arnold describes as his sense of “how to live”—became an English trait, one whose generality facilitated the slippage from Englishman to everyman. This chapter thus argues that while Wordsworth's global capital was certainly a product of his reception, its roots wind both explicitly and implicitly through the poems he wrote about England.

If Wordsworth's attention to “how to live” made Arnold think of England, it made abolitionists think of America. It is difficult to overstate the personal and professional changes that Lydia Maria Child experienced when she published her controversial *Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* in 1833. Her substantial audience, comprised of readers on both sides of the Atlantic who admired the romances, cookbooks, and home-economy manuals that had made her famous, viewed her first overt foray into national politics with something less than anticipatory zeal. Her Boston benefactors, scared off by their association

² *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), bk. 1, ll. 117; bk. 8, ll. 298. Subsequent references to the poem will refer to this edition and appear parenthetically according to book and line number.

with a newly-born radical, abandoned her. Her family and friends, many of whom did not share her abolitionist stance, avoided her company.³ From this point on, Child's career was defined by her participation in the anti-slavery movement, and though she continued to write romances they were overshadowed by her subsequent abolitionist monographs and her editorship of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. But even though readers both then and now have tended to see her *Appeal* as distinct from her own literary productions, its literary vestiges—its inclusion of poems, its penchant for narrative interpolations, its epigraphs from Coleridge, Cowper, Montesquieu, Sterne, and Shakespeare—belie such a distinction. Some epigraphs seem more apropos than others, however, and some of the least apropos selections come from *The Excursion*, a poem that appears twice in Child's anti-slavery text but which is not known for saying anything on the subject of slavery.

While Child argued in the *Appeal* that the burgeoning industrialization of New England would help to solve the problem of slavery and allow for total emancipation of American slaves, *The Excursion* is famously concerned with the destruction that industrialization brought to the English countryside. Such an incongruity raises the question of what purpose Child found in her references to Wordsworth, and thus, in a larger sense, of what use Wordsworth could have been to the American anti-slavery movement. Paradoxically, the very traits that provided the foundation for Wordsworth's apolitical reputation in America—his literariness and his Englishness—are the tools that Child mobilizes in her creation of a politically potent global Wordsworth. She emerges from this repurposing as an influential American critic of

³ For a more detailed account of the aftermath of Child's *Appeal*, see Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), ch. 8. Child has received much critical attention in the past twenty years, but most of this work addresses her romances, and only two articles examine her *Appeal* at length. See Robert Fanuzzi, "How Mixed-Race Politics Entered the United States: Lydia Maria Child's *Appeal*," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 56, no. 1 (2010); Carolyn Sorisio, "The Spectacle of the Body: Torture in the Antislavery Writing of Lydia Maria Child and Frances E.W. Harper," *Modern Language Studies* 30, no. 1 (2000).

Wordsworth, one whose understanding of his poetry went beyond the heartfelt but bland praise offered by the periodicals that helped popularize him in America—one who realized that for Wordsworth, the line between “England” and “the earth” at large was permeable, and even at some points imaginatively dissolute.

Although Joel Pace and Matthew Scott’s collection *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture* (2005) insists that Wordsworth’s influence on other poets and novelists “cannot be the whole picture” and extends its focus accordingly to “his wider social, political and artistic legacy,” his relation with the abolition movement remains unstudied.⁴ The reasons for this oversight are understandable: with the exception of a few sonnets, Wordsworth didn’t write much about slavery. (In terms of volume, he wrote much of his poetry after Great Britain had abolished the slave trade in 1807.)⁵ My intention is to build upon the foundation of critics like Pace and Scott by looking at what capital Wordsworth brought to the American anti-slavery movement, but it is also to go beyond their study’s scope by conceiving of the relationship between Wordsworth and Child as a reciprocal one: that is, one in which his poetry infused her writing, and her writing informed the Wordsworth of nineteenth-century America. Her repurposings demonstrate that morality was the lynchpin simultaneously of Wordsworth’s Englishness and his global utility.

⁴ Joel Pace and Matthew Scott, *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2. For example, *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture* includes Joel Pace’s essay on Wordsworth, race, and the “transatlantic gothic,” and Adam Potkay’s exploration of religious difference and the construction of various Wordsworths. Stephen Gill’s *Wordsworth and the Victorians* includes chapters on Eliot, Arnold, and Tennyson, but also discusses the marketing of Wordsworth in Victorian England and how he became a national institution through the formation of the Wordsworth Society. Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵ Most studies of Romanticism and slavery are interested in how the discourse of slavery influenced writers of the Romantic era, rather than the other way around. See, for example, Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

An “English English” poet

Analyzing Child’s use of Wordsworth means knowing what it meant to quote the English poet in America in 1833, and with that in mind, I turn to a question posed snidely in 1824 by the *Port-Folio*, a popular literary and political periodical established in Philadelphia some quarter century earlier: if, as the periodical surmises, good poetry gets quoted frequently, then “Who quotes Wordsworth?”⁶ Such a question can be seen as a distant cousin to Sydney Smith’s query from 1820, “who reads an American book?”, a question that, like the *Port-Folio*’s, silently offers up its own answer: no one.⁷ Like generations of readers piqued by Sydney’s disdain, I too hope to address a question whose author assumed the answer to be a foregone conclusion.⁸ While it was common for popular American periodicals in the early nineteenth century to quote Wordsworth, and while they were not all of one mind about the quality of his poetry, their selections tend to reveal a Wordsworth they saw as mystical, noble, and decidedly, if vaguely, English.

Important work on Wordsworth’s reception in nineteenth-century America has already been done, most notably by Annabel Newton, whose *Wordsworth in Early American Criticism* (1928) remains a standard-bearer for studies of Wordsworth’s afterlives and remarkably the only systematic study of his reception in America thus far. Newton traces Wordsworth’s popularity from its low point after the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in Philadelphia in 1802, through 1824,

⁶ “The North American Review,” *Port-Folio*, August 1824, 120. The article, a wry summation of reviews recently printed in the *North American Review*, takes issue with that journal’s recent praise of Wordsworth, who “does not interest, nor please his readers,” according to the *Port-Folio*.

⁷ Sydney Smith, Review of *Statistical Annals of the United States of America*, *Edinburgh Review*, January 1820, 79.

⁸ The *New York Times* takes on Smith in 1922 (Brander Matthews, “Answering Sidney Smith’s Questions,” 26 Mar. 1922: 2), and Richard Gravil reports that Americans were answering that question with all seriousness as late as 1929, when the first article of the first issue of *American Literature* posed its own response to the then century-old inquiry. See Richard Gravil, *Romantic Dialogues: Anglo-American Continuities, 1776-1862* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 48.

when he was first widely read and “favorably received” by a culture once “inimical to [his] poetry,” to the “Period of Full Appreciation,” which began with Wordsworth’s death in 1850.⁹ Less linear are the essays collected in Pace and Scott’s collection mentioned above, for the collection’s diversity cements the editors’ wonderment at “how such a writer can be seen to be key to the construction of a literary canon in America, while also exerting a wide-ranging and indirect influence upon education, theology, and counter-cultural movements like feminism and environmentalism.”¹⁰ The collection’s broad argument should thus help to dispel any static notion of Wordsworthian influence; after all, he “has always been a contested rather than a universally accepted author.”¹¹ Nevertheless, such contestation does not mean that there are no isolatable trends in Wordsworth’s American reception, and building upon the linear narrative of Newton’s studied genealogy I want to demonstrate that widely-read periodicals tended to fragment Wordsworth’s verse, emphasize its Englishness (a very nebulous and unstable category then as now), and characterize it as anything but political.¹²

American critics were often at odds about Wordsworth, a fact that did not escape their own notice; H. T. Tuckerman equitably reasoned in 1841 that it was “the fortune of Wordsworth, like many original characters, to be almost wholly regarded from the two extremes of prejudice

⁹ Annabel Newton, *Wordsworth in Early American Criticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928), 66.

¹⁰ Pace and Scott, *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture*, 15.

¹¹ David Simpson, “Wordsworth in America,” in *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff (Jersey City, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 290.

¹² For more on the reception and influence of Wordsworth in America, see Gravil, *Romantic Dialogues*, 62-7, 93-101, and ch. 8; Lance Newman, *Our Common Dwelling: Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politics of Nature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), ch. 7-8; Joel Pace, “Wordsworth and America: Reception and Reform,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

and admiration.”¹³ Many found that the *Lyrical Ballads* contained objectionable and ill-advised poems most notable for “[t]heir grossness, their childishness and their vanity,” a conglomeration that could only be enjoyed with a “qualified and temporary approbation.”¹⁴ But this review (along with several other scathing condemnations) appeared in the 1820s, two decades after the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared on American shelves and in American journals, suggesting that that the distaste for Wordsworth’s earlier and simpler productions sprang from the critics’ general preference for his subsequent blank verse creations: indeed, for many readers “Tintern Abbey” was the only good thing about the *Lyrical Ballads*. Only one American periodical was publishing Wordsworth at the turn of the century and that was the *Port-Folio*, established by Anglophile Joseph Dennie, a man “reactionary in politics, conservative in outlook, and intensely concerned with developing a national culture closely akin to that of England.”¹⁵ In the first month of the periodical’s existence, long before its contributors began wondering if anyone quoted Wordsworth anymore, Dennie reprinted “Simon Lee,” originally published in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and introduced it as belonging to “a collection remarkable for originality, simplicity, and nature, to which Mr. Wordsworth, of St. John’s college, Oxford, is a principal contributor.”¹⁶ That Wordsworth actually attended St. John’s College at Cambridge, not Oxford, is beside the point: for Dennie, both institutions seem to signify the same Englishness. (In

¹³ H. T. Tuckerman, “Wordsworth,” *Southern Literary Messenger*, February 1840, 105.

¹⁴ Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, *Atlantic Magazine*, March 1825, 339.

¹⁵ Leon Howard, “Wordsworth in America,” *Modern Language Notes* 48, no. 6 (1933): 360. Dennie’s Anglophilia is an example of the well-documented counterpoint to the standard narrative of anxious American literary nationalism, propounded in the earliest days of transatlantic studies by works like Robert Weisbuch’s *Atlantic Double-Cross*. For more on this counterpoint, which examines nineteenth-century writers who sought to emulate (rather than repudiate) English literary culture, see Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora, 1750-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ “Simon Lee,” *Port-Folio*, January 1801, 24.

England, Wordsworth's Oxbridge affiliation was rarely mentioned, even though he more than other major Romantic writers like Coleridge and Shelley earned the affiliation by actually taking a degree.)

Although such glowing recommendations did not persist after the Philadelphia publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802—one critic's "so truly worthless" will stand in here for many other critiques—Dennie's appreciation is remarkable not just for its rarity but also for its introduction of Wordsworth as a product of a markedly English educational system.¹⁷ In an editorial note of about sixty words, "St. John's college, Oxford" is the only biographical information offered up to interested readers, beating out any mention of his birthplace, current residence, or family. Such a focus is perhaps to be expected of an editor devoted to fashioning an American culture "akin to that of England," and indeed, as Leon Howard notes, "Dennie consistently identified Wordsworth with Oxford."¹⁸ But that the first man committed to reproducing Wordsworth for an American public should have been so intent on simultaneously reproducing (if inaccurately) his very English credentials establishes that from the beginning Wordsworth was presented in America as not just a poet of possible interest, but as, to borrow from black abolitionist Alexander Crummell, an "English English" poet.¹⁹

Crummell's designation is emphatic, of course, with the doubled adjectives in "English English" providing a corrective to terms like "Black Christian," which Olaudah Equiano proudly recalls as one of his monikers.²⁰ Crummell leaves no wiggle room; whereas Equiano subtly

¹⁷ "Critical Notices," *Literary Magazine and American Register*, February 1804, 336.

¹⁸ Howard, "Wordsworth in America," 360.

¹⁹ Quoted in Tamarkin, *Anglophilia*, 444.

²⁰ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 92.

distances himself from Christians at large, as he does from the English populace when he dubs himself “almost an Englishman,” Crummell’s repetition permits no such distance.²¹ Considering the frequent association of Englishness with whiteness throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is telling that Crummell leaves out his race in celebrating his “English English” status.²² That status, however, is just as hazy as the Englishness that American periodicals celebrated in Wordsworth’s verse—the emphatic repetition only succeeds in making the term emphatically vague. In my view this vagueness is the reason why Wordsworth’s Englishness so exportable. Of course, there are aspects of Wordsworth’s poetry that we could identify as especially and specifically English: *The Excursion* for example is overtly concerned with “Britons,” clearly takes place in England, and condemns a factory system that was at the time unique to Britain. But in America, Wordsworth’s Englishness was a circuit in which almost anything, and nothing in particular, was capable of ratifying it, in which its Englishness was simply “English.”

The Excursion fared better than the *Lyrical Ballads* in the hands of American periodicals. Full reviews of the poem were rare, though; while many American periodicals printed a notice, or in some cases, reprinted an English review, when *The Excursion* was first published in 1814, it was only in 1824 that the poem appeared in an American edition of Wordsworth’s collected works (the first since *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802), at which point only a few magazines stepped up to review a poem that had already received abundant critical attention in Great Britain.²³ Those critics who did feel compelled to comment on Wordsworth’s epic often focused on how much

²¹ Ibid., 77.

²² Trinidadian intellectual Lloyd Best coined the term “Afro-Saxon,” which provides a useful antidote to this association. Lloyd Best, “From Chaguaramas to Slavery?,” *New World Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1965): 2.

²³ Newton, *Wordsworth in Early American Criticism*, 99.

better it was than the “beggar-ballads and daffodilly-ditties” that preceded it, or else refuted the negative reviews of the poem that appeared shortly after its publication in Britain: in a belated repudiation of Francis Jeffrey’s condemnation, one critic insists “that it ought to do, and inevitably must do—in despite of the criticism.”²⁴ The *Atlantic Magazine* was so taken with the 1824 American collection that the review spanned two issues, with fifteen pages of “lucubrations” in each.²⁵ What American readers had disliked about the *Lyrical Ballads*—the proudly deliberate attention to low subjects, the simple diction and marked rhythms of the nursery—they did not find in *The Excursion*, and to them, the poem was better for it.

If many periodicals failed to publish an original review of *The Excursion*, they made up for it in excerpts, publishing small portions of the poem without introduction or editorial. In the years before Child’s *Appeal*, a page from *The Excursion* routinely appeared in journals both general and literary, and these excerpts not only testify to the poet’s popularity in America, but also signal the periodicals’ willingness to cut the epic into manageable, printable pieces. Such willingness is not necessarily remarkable—*Don Juan* was excerpted too—but it does help to illustrate how *The Excursion* was read in America. Without access to the full poem, many Americans read it piecemeal and out of its original context. In this mode the fragment generates its own context, a context free from a stable original, one that can send out roots and runners wherever it is printed. The *National Recorder*, printing excerpts in an article simply entitled “Excursion,” goes so far as to mash together verse paragraphs from books I, II, and IV. Though the editors acknowledge their selections to be “detached passages,” the layout makes the

²⁴ Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, *Atlantic Magazine*, April 1825, 340; Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, *United States Literary Gazette* December 1824, 245.

²⁵ Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, *Atlantic Magazine*, April 1825, 419.

fragments look like a linear poem.²⁶ The norm was thus different from what we might have expected. Though Emerson may have consumed *The Excursion* in its entirety, for those readers whose familiarity with Wordsworth came from widely disseminated periodicals rather than from a collection devoted solely to his verse, fragments were the rule. It is a commonplace of this project as a whole that context generates meaning, that it matters whether you read *The Excursion* for leisure in London or for a civil service exam in India. But in this case, *The Excursion* actually looked substantially different in different contexts; in reproducing the English poet the *National Recorder* made his poem unique to America.

This fragmentation is important because reviews rarely considered the possibility that in writing *The Excursion* Wordsworth had in mind social reform in addition to his aesthetic and philosophical goals (indeed, these three were inseparable to him).²⁷ The *Literary Gazette*, which in 1824 refuted the *Edinburgh Review*'s condemnation of the epic, acknowledged that *The Excursion*'s topics were "of a more solemn cast" than Wordsworth's previous work, but settled on a familiar refrain by quoting excerpts that feature his "religious musings," "the exquisite beauty of the poetry," and "the majesty of its versification."²⁸ The *Analectic Magazine* was able to recognize *The Excursion*'s "strange mystical morality," but neglected to specify what this morality entailed and ended its short appraisal by deeming the poem "full of eloquence and

²⁶ See "Excursion," *National Recorder*, March 1820, 156. This printing predates the 1824 publication of Wordsworth's collected works in America.

²⁷ This statement, from the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, makes clear how Wordsworth's aesthetic choices and his politicized subject matter are not distinguishable: "as much pains has been taken to avoid [poetic diction] as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart, is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry." *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 131.

²⁸ Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, January 1825, 247-8.

nature.”²⁹ The *National Recorder* thought the poem would delight the “lover of nature and the muses” and arouse “[t]he sympathies of the devotional reader,” while the *Atlantic Magazine* was convinced the poem would join “the other grave and seriously didactic poems of this author” and secure “his claims upon the admiration of posterity.”³⁰ One month earlier, the same periodical praised the poem’s “extraordinary beauty,” asserting that it included “more true and manly poetry, more beautiful embodying of pure and noble thoughts, more definite revealing of the secret influences which so wonderfully sway or complicated being” than any poetry since Milton.³¹ The reviews, though effusive, are far more impressed by what is “secret” and “mystical” about the poem than by what is explicitly condemnatory. If readers today are familiar with *The Excursion*, they usually know it for the conservationism—perhaps even the proto-environmentalism—that it espouses, but this facet of the poem did not find representation in the nineteenth-century periodicals that helped to make it popular in America.

This is not true of the verses that Child included in her *Appeal* or in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, where she proved herself familiar and comfortable with the blend of nature poetry and political verse in Wordsworth’s body of work. What Child did take from periodical culture was the freedom to fragment the “English English” poet. In the context of the periodicals I’ve cited, her willingness to sever Wordsworth’s verse from its surrounding context is not unique. How Child differed was in her manipulation of Wordsworth’s vague if reified Englishness, a designation that like his supposed mysticism made his poetry seem distant and elevated. For in Child’s transnational approach it is Wordsworth’s very Englishness that makes

²⁹ Review of *The State of Innocence and the Fall of Man*, *Analectic Magazine*, July 1815, 56.

³⁰ “Excursion,” *National Recorder*, March 1820, 156; Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, *Atlantic Magazine*, April 1825, 428.

³¹ Review of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, *Atlantic Magazine*, March 1825, 346.

his poetry germane to a treatise concerned with a distinctly American dilemma, suggesting that compared to her contemporaries Child had a very different sense of what it meant to be an English poet. She seems to have recognized that what other readers identified in Wordsworth's poetry as a particularly English morality was broad enough to warrant a much wider relevance.

The anti-slavery Wordsworth

Although dating from years after the *Appeal*, Lydia Maria Child's use of Wordsworth in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* hints at what British Romantic poetry might have to do with the American anti-slavery movement, providing a more transparent method for interpreting Wordsworth's appearance in the *Appeal*. On one level, to quote Wordsworth in an overtly anti-slavery newspaper is to insist that his poetry is useful to the cause—that political activism can benefit from literary production and thus demands a hermeneutic approach where literature, rather than being an isolable aesthetic category, becomes a permeable mode capable of participating in activism. Child assumed the editorship of the *Standard* on May 20, 1841, eight years after the publication of her *Appeal*. The newspaper was remarkably popular: during her two-year tenure the circulation rose from 2,500 to 5,000 subscribers, while during the same period William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery periodical *The Liberator*, founded in 1831, lost subscriptions.³² Such an increase stems from Child's manipulation of what had become the standard form of anti-slavery newspapers so that her paper might accommodate a wider readership. As editor, her aim was to produce a "family newspaper," one with a higher "proportion of literary and miscellaneous matter" on its back page.³³ This goal presents a

³² Karcher, *First Woman*, 273.

³³ Quoted in Karcher, *First Woman*, 273.

problem: if the *Standard*'s literary matter was included to entice a wider readership, then its connection to the newspaper's larger goal is far from given.

Some of the poetry, though, does easily reflect the newspaper's anti-slavery agenda. Lydia Sigourney's anti-slavery poems appeared frequently, as did Garrison's and Robert Southey's. But the newspaper also presented poems like William Cullen Bryant's "To a Waterfowl," which, strictly speaking, has little to do with the anti-slavery cause, among many now-forgotten apolitical verses of poets like Sigourney (whose "On visiting the grave of Sir Walter Scott, at Dryburgh Abbey" merited inclusion) and Southey (who was represented on one occasion by "On a picture by J. M. Wright, Esq."). While Wordsworth was in heavy rotation both before and after Child assumed her post, the newspaper's wide-ranging approach to poetry selection means that interpreting his inclusion is rather difficult. Clearly Child was an admirer (in the two months following her advancement to editor, poems by Wordsworth appear five times, far more often than in the whole of the previous year), but it remains hard to say if this flurry of Wordsworthian reprints signifies something other than an aesthetic appreciation of poetic style. After all, though a poem like "To a Waterfowl" and its assertion that "soon that toil shall end" would have a special meaning for abolitionist and slave alike, one could as easily argue for its inclusion as part of "the garland of imagination and taste" that Child intended to balance out some of the paper's drier material.³⁴ This example begs the question: was Wordsworth reprinted because his poetry was gaining popularity in America, or because it spoke to the newspaper's cause?

While it seems clear that the proliferation of Wordsworth in the *Standard* during Child's editorship signals her admiration of his poetry, this explanation is only part of the story, for the

³⁴ Ibid.

specific layout of poems in the *Standard* reveals the moral correspondence Child sees between American chattel slavery and English labor practices. What I find interesting—and on a more subjective level, likeable—about Child’s use of Wordsworth in the *Standard* is that it enacts this correspondence without diminishing Child’s own ability to participate in the emotional and philosophical responses to Wordsworth’s poetry that defined most American criticism. That is, her recognition of political fraternity coexists with her sheer enjoyment of the verse, with the power it has to inspire thoughts on the themes of memory, nature, imagination, and childhood that crop up in conversations that even some modern enthusiasts have on first encountering a poem like “Tintern Abbey.” This might seem like an overblown way of saying that for her the personal was political, but her catholic use of Wordsworth avoided characterizing the expressly political implications of *The Excursion* as essentially different and separable from the rest of his verse. A non-dualistic approach like hers is all the more remarkable in consideration of the binaries that have seemed—and still do seem, in some cases—so applicable to Wordsworth, some for good reason: the radical and the conservative, nature and the city, the boy and the man, the crowd and the self, the ballad and blank verse, even the good poetry and the bad.

Two examples will illustrate my point about Child’s fluid movement between the political and the philosophical Wordsworth (or, in other words, that category comprised of the “strange” and “mystical” bits of Wordsworth’s verse that American periodicals liked best)—a move whose ease suggests there is some folly in distinguishing between these categories too scrupulously. One year before Child assumed the editorship, she wrote a short article entitled “Thoughts” for the *Standard*. The piece begins with an epigraph from “Tintern Abbey,” where the speaker’s comparison of his boyhood appreciation of nature—immediate, physical, mingling pleasure with pain—with the more mature sense of “A presence that disturbs me with the joy /

Of elevated thought” (94-95), serves as the basis for Child’s musings on a species of false memory that makes the unfamiliar seem like home. In fashioning her own spot of time, Child begins as we might expect, describing how “[t]he day was closing in, and as I sat watching the scarcely moving foliage of a neighboring elm, my mind gradually sank into a state of luxurious repose, amounting to total unconsciousness of all busy sights and sounds of earth.”³⁵ In this isolation, she suddenly finds herself “seated by a calm, deep lake” and reports, “The landscape differed from any thing I had ever seen,” and yet “I felt *at home*; and could I see a painting of it, I should know it as readily as the scenes of my childhood” (emphasis original). Her conditional invocation of the painting, of a potential representation within the bounds of her own representation, mimics Wordsworth’s own nested representation in the second verse paragraph of “Tintern Abbey,” where he remembers remembering the landscape of the poem’s opening, “Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart” (28), repeatedly in the five years since the original impression. Child’s occult familiarity with the unknown landscape leads to a series of questions that forms the rest of the article: “Have we indeed formerly lived in a luminous and shadowless world, where all things were light as a garment?”; “Are not our soul’s [sic] wandering in the spirit land while our bodies are on earth?”; and to conclude, “Does Infancy owe to this angel crowd its peculiar power to purify and bless?” The article ends with five lines from Wordsworth’s “Immortality” Ode—“Heaven lies about us in our infancy!”—as if to suggest that Wordsworth might be helpful in answering questions about infancy and the shadowless world.

The second example appears in the *Standard* a year later, after Child had become editor. In the issue’s poetry column appears an excerpt from Wordsworth’s “Humanity” (1829), detailing his impassioned response to Cowper’s claim in *The Task* that

³⁵ Lydia Maria Child, “Thoughts,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 1840, 32.

“Slaves cannot breathe in England”—a proud boast!
And yet a mockery! if, from coast to coast,
Though fettered slave be none, her floors and soil
Groan underneath a weight of slavish toil,
For the poor many, measured out by rules
Fetched with cupidity from heartless schools,
That to an idol, falsely called “the wealth
Of nations,” sacrifice a people’s health,
Body and mind and soul; a thirst so keen
Is ever urging on the vast machine
Of sleepless labor, ‘mid whose dizzy wheels
The power least prized is that which thinks and feels.³⁶

Heroic couplets are not standard Wordsworthian fare, nor is palpable anger. Though the lines’ enjambment softens the insistent thrum of the couplet form, the movement from repeated exclamation to mocking quotation to the emphatic polysyndeton of “Body and mind and soul” sharpens the passage’s rhetorical fervor, revealing a province of Wordsworth’s poetic outpourings that is not often seen. These lines explicitly equate the experience of the “fettered slave” with the “slavish toil” of young factory workers, an equation that the *Standard* echoes by following these verses with a poem entitled “The Little English Factory Girl,” a rollicking trimeter ballad that ends with the death of the title character. The spatial proximity of these poems on the printed page yields a few insights. First, it recognizes and ratifies the comparison

³⁶ Excerpted from Wordsworth’s “Humanity,” in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 83-94. See the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 1841, 208.

Wordsworth makes between chattel slavery and English labor practices—the placement of one poem above the other in an anti-slavery newspaper points to the “Factory Girl” as proof of the similarity Wordsworth claims between the two conditions. Second, it argues that the comparison goes beyond identifying a shared vocabulary on which both of these critiques depend. It is not simply the case that Wordsworth’s diction is also well-suited to a discussion of American slave labor, or that Child is more interested in the pathos used to describe factory workers than with the details of their plight. Rather, the proximity of the two poems insists that readers of the *Standard* who sympathize with the condition of American slaves should also sympathize with the little English factory girl—the comparison is necessarily moral as well as linguistic.

Although it remains impossible to assert definitively that Child herself was responsible for the selection and placement of poems in this issue of the *Standard*, Child’s biographer Carolyn L. Karcher believes that “every department of the *Standard*—from the news on the front page to the literature and miscellany on the back page...—bore her impress and served to attract as broad a readership as possible.”³⁷ I pair this example with Child’s “Thoughts” from a year previous to argue that during a time when Wordsworth was thought to sate the palate of the “lover of nature and the muses” but was not widely recognized as germane to any sort of political advocate, Child herself was both of these readers.³⁸ She was the solitary nature-lover and the public political activist, and her singular embodiment of their supposedly heterogeneous tastes refuses to acknowledge the two as dualistically opposed. The Wordsworth she reveals is simultaneously a familiar one, solidly entrenched in the literary Englishness that was being constructed around him, and one that her readers would not yet have known.

³⁷ Karcher, *First Woman*, 277.

³⁸ “Excursion,” *National Recorder*, March 1820, 156.

It was not until 1879 that Matthew Arnold glossed English morality—a Wordsworthian morality—as the knowledge of “how to live,” and my point here is not only that Lydia Maria Child similarly grasped the prescriptive moral value of Wordsworth’s poetry, but that she did so in a text recommending specific political action. That is, she demonstrated that the ability to tell others “how to live” was just as much an American trait as an English one, while at the same time relying on Wordsworth’s reputation as an English sage to support her own explicit prescriptions. Her precision is significant because of the ambiguity that I argue was inherent in nineteenth-century definitions of both poetic morality and Englishness. In his chapter on C. L. R. James and the boundaries of culture, Ian Baucom quotes a former student from Eton, the English public school par excellence, who said “We are often told that they taught us nothing at Eton. It may be so, but I think they taught it very well.”³⁹ Baucom sees morality as the preeminent quality that the English public school wanted to “inscribe on the body of the schoolboy and, through this inscription, on the nation itself,” so the bon mots he includes from this former Etonian manage to implicate both Englishness and morality within the nothingness that was “taught very well.”⁴⁰

Not surprisingly, the same ambiguity clouds Matthew Arnold’s attempts to affiliate morality with English literary production. In the introduction to his selection of Wordsworth’s poems, Arnold establishes Wordsworth’s place in English and continental literary history; in “real poetical achievement” Wordsworth cannot be beat by Chaucer, Dryden, or Pope; Voltaire,

³⁹ Quoted in Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 141.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

Racine, or Hugo.⁴¹ But from this high point of adoration the path speeds downhill. Wordsworth's reputation—insufficient, in Arnold's opinion—has been marred not by a fluke of history or cultural dissemination, but rather by the quantity of bad writing he produced. Arnold's disappointment infests his diction: the “mass of inferior work” is responsible for “imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it” (336). Wordsworth has not been properly recognized and lauded because his good work has always been tainted by the proximity of the bad; extracting the worthy words from the clogged mire of “poetical baggage” is too much to ask of most readers. But Arnold has performed this cleansing chore, and the result is a collection that finally demonstrates Wordsworth's “powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life”—which is a long way of saying his morality (339). For in the opinion of Arnold, this morality is what makes English poetry great.

Borrowing from Voltaire, whom he quotes as saying that “no nation has treated in poetry the moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation,” Arnold makes a two-pronged argument (338). First, great poetry is moral—it tells us “how to live” without falling into overt didacticism. Second, “how to live” is a question that England as a nation excels at answering, at least poetically. Clearly, the question of “how to live” is a broad one, and that is part of my point. Arnold himself acknowledges that “[a] large sense is...to be given to the term *moral*” (338), and it is thus quite a coup to turn morality in this “large sense” into a particularly English asset. It follows that although Arnold provides examples from Keats and Shakespeare that support his argument, he never explains satisfactorily why the English poets are so good at telling their readers how to live, or what the effects of this facility might be. He does, however,

⁴¹ Matthew Arnold, *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 335.

build on Voltaire's praise to clarify that the English nation is not necessarily more moral than other nations, but that it rather "treat[s]" morality "with more energy and depth." In other words, the association of Englishness with morality depends on theory, not practice; on "the application of ideas to life," not life itself.⁴² This level of removal—one source of ambiguity, I think—is what makes English morality a particularly viable export whose value depends on the tension between its national cachet and its attendant ability to transcend national boundaries. While Child uses English morality's cosmopolitanism for specific political reform, Arnold's description of morality helps decipher Wordsworth's preeminent role in systems of colonial education: he could be used to instruct colonial subjects in how to live like Englishmen. Arnold's argument, however vague and unconvincing, proved hugely influential.

But the moral portability that Arnold insinuated proved the foundation for Child's repurposing of Wordsworth almost half a century earlier. For example, it might seem unexpected to find two poems explicitly concerned with the condition of England in a newspaper like the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* whose name announces in more than one way its strictly American concerns. But this is part of the point: her political agenda, though concerned with an American plight, was fed by a morality that had little interest in national boundaries. As her *Appeal* demonstrates, Child believed that by turning her eye to other countries she could best help America, and it is in this spirit that she invokes a poet whose solidly English reputation in America sets the vexed details of that reputation into relief; it emphasizes not the vagueness of his English morality, but also his inability to theorize consistently the distinction between Great Britain and the world that surrounded it.

⁴² This is the point Ian Baucom makes in his use of the Eton anecdote—the morality of the English may seem to be devoid of specific content, but "they taught it very well."

Planetary appeals, global incursions

As I have begun to suggest, I see Lydia Maria Child and William Wordsworth as strangely twinned figures, linked by a moral investment in their respective nations that spurred each to conceive of the nation-state as intellectually—even physically—permeable. This transnational morality emerges most obviously for Child in her *Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans*, whose epigraphy includes a quotation from Book VIII of *The Excursion*, where Wordsworth not coincidentally launches a critique of British industrialism that in spite of its national specificity cannot turn away from the transnational forces that bind England to the earth. In that book Wordsworth is most visibly concerned with the “native Briton”—so concerned that the phrase underwent subtle but significant revisions, settling into its nativity only after originally appearing as “a Briton born to these internal chains” (8.n298). But native or born, this Briton represents the pinnacle of Wordsworth’s interest in England proper, and from this point on the book attempts to disrupt the image of Albion, coddled and protected on all sides by isolating seas. This is a book that cannot mention England’s shores without doubling back to make that liminal space more and more substantial. That is, the book of *The Excursion* most concerned with Britons is the one most invested in testing the boundary between England and the rest of the world.⁴³

One of the many things the speakers mourn in Book VIII is how wide, “stately” roads have come to replace smaller paths:

The foot-path faintly marked, the horse-track wild,

⁴³ Wordsworth uses “Briton” throughout this section of *The Excursion*, which in itself could hint at his attention to Great Britain as a nation composed of Celtic peripheries and overseas colonies, in addition to England. However, in Book VIII “Briton” is the only term he uses for inhabitants of England, so it seems more likely to me that the term draws upon its ancient connotations (Britons as opposed to Romans). Similarly, the OED suggests that during this period “Briton” was “often used with allusion to qualities of bravery and fortitude.” Wordsworth is more scrupulous in his use of “Britain” and “England,” both of which appear in Book VIII in discrete contexts. *OED Online*, s.v. “Briton, n. and adj.,” <http://oed.com/view/Entry/23468?redirectedFrom=briton#eid> (accessed May 31, 2012).

And formidable length of plashy lane,
(Prized avenues ere others had been shaped
Or easier links connecting place with place)
Have vanished—swallowed up by stately roads
Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom
Of Britain's farthest glens. The Earth has lent
Her waters, Air her breezes; and the sail
Of traffic glides with ceaseless intercourse,
Glistening along the low and woody dale;
Or, in its progress, on the lofty side,
Of some bare hill, with wonder kenned from far. (105-116)

The Wanderer's distaste at broad roads that somewhat violently "penetrate the gloom / Of Britain's farthest glens" may remind us of Wordsworth's later attacks on the railroad, or of his cranky complaints about modish houses that I described in chapter one. But what strikes me here is how quickly the Wanderer expands his purview from "Britain's farthest glens" to "The Earth," who "has lent / Her waters, Air her breezes" to this nation. The binary here is between the glens, distant and emphatically British, and the boundless omnipresence of waters and breezes, which belong to the earth and the air. Wind and streams are as much totems of movement as roads are, but the Wanderer clearly prefers them over the sort of highway that allows for the "ceaseless intercourse" of "traffic." (At this historical moment "traffic" refers to commerce or trade rather than a line of coaches plugging the road—but the disdain is the same in either case.) It might seem a stretch to say that the affiliation the Wanderer creates between "Britain" and the maligned roadways that penetrate it paints that nation in a negative light, but it seems clear that

“Earth” and “Air” are the heroes of this passage, generously lending out their constitutive elements to a country in danger of losing “foot-path” and “horse-track” alike. For it is the existence of “farthest glens,” an expansive area Wordsworth associates with Britain, not England, that demands the bothersome roads. In contrast the earth, here in a catholic and planetary sense, is capable of supplying Britain with purer, ameliorative forces—forces that have no respect for national borders. This passage thus presents a typically Wordsworthian paradox: Britain’s “farthest glens” seem too far, too unwieldy, but the planetary “waters” and “breezes” which have themselves journeyed from afar provide solace to a nation that assumed too many lands.

But by a reciprocal logic Britain is capable of harming the earth that feeds it, making it disappear, somehow, from its grounds. A few lines later, the Wanderer continues his harangue against increase, watching as urban growth threatens the wilderness, with “some poor hamlet” becoming “a huge town, continuous and compact, / Hiding the face of earth of leagues” (8.119-21). The Wanderer here is explicitly not mourning the English countryside, but the vaguest incarnation of “earth”—made more vague by the lack of article. It might be that with this uncapitalized “earth” Wordsworth means ground or dirt, but why then “face of earth,” especially since the more metaphorical “face of *the* earth” had been in use since the sixteenth century?⁴⁴ What the lamentation makes clear is that while earth literally forms Britain’s foundation, it is being superseded by that nation’s unregulated productivity. Never a fan of such growth, Wordsworth goes on to describe “Abodes of men irregularly massed / Like trees in forests,— spread through spacious tracts,” and though the comparison to trees might seem positive, the loss of space is paramount (8.123-24). They might be irregularly massed like real trees, but

⁴⁴ *OED Online*, s.v. “face, n.,” <http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/67425> (accessed January 18, 2012).

Wordsworth likes these houses about as much as he likes the larch plantations in his *Guide to the Lakes*, which also play at being trees unsuccessfully. These critiques do not prevent Wordsworth from referring to this land as “the blessed Isle” a few moments later, but that admiring designation stands in opposition to Britain, which in this book of *The Excursion* remains part of and constituted by a larger, paranational network that he invokes with references to an earth that girds and supplies it. In passages that describe a plight that was at the time unique to Britain—a plight that Child heralds in her own work—Wordsworth cannot refrain from invoking a more planetary context.

At this point the question of Britain’s place in the world evokes the specter of colonialism. Alan Richardson in *Literature, Education, and Romanticism* has examined Wordsworth’s advocacy of the Madras system of education in *The Excursion*, concluding that for Wordsworth the system’s value would be realized when it was applied to Britain’s lower classes, whom the Wanderer terms “industrious bees” who can be sent off into “the wide waters, open to the power, / The will, the instincts, and appointed needs, / Of Britain.”⁴⁵ The similarities between this colonialist sentiment from Book IX and the following passage from Book VIII raise the question of what exactly the earth implies in what I’ve discussed so far: “—Hence is the wide sea peopled,—hence the shores / Of Britain are resorted to by ships / Freighted from every climate of the world / With the world’s choicest produce” (8.133-36). Here population growth appears as a blight that cannot be contained by Britain’s shores; having begun the verse paragraph with the exclamation “How quick, how vast an increase!” it is difficult to read the profusion of bodies here as positive. But in the Wanderer’s lament, the population boom brought on by British industrialization leads directly to a meditation on global transport, on how Britain

⁴⁵ Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, 101.

now enjoys the “choicest produce” from its colonies while being inundated with a “spectacle of sails / That, through her inland regions, to and fro / Pass with the respirations of the tide, / Perpetual, multitudinous!” (8.139-142). These boats may stage their incursions with the tides, but their presence is not natural; the Wanderer concludes the verse paragraph with an ode to the navy, a “dread arm of floating power” that will protect the nation from “those who would approach / With hostile purposes” (8.143-5). The connection between British industrialization and global, mercantile, and potentially hostile incursions is not clear from the Wanderer’s meditation, but what I want to emphasize here is the connection itself, not its rationale. While the ravages of industrialization were, as I will discuss, seen as exclusive to Great Britain at this time, the Wanderer here cannot discuss the British factory system and its effects without invoking a global context, one that is clearly colonial but not exclusively so. It is that global perspective that Child adopts in her own anti-slavery tome, and which I argue she recognized in Wordsworth’s own verse.

An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans, a text that developed out of years of research, has received almost no attention in current literary studies. When it was published, reviewers saw the *Appeal* as a stark departure from form: Child’s prior publications included the interracial romance *Hobomok* (1824), which, like most of her romances, has garnered much recent criticism, and the tomes of home economy, *The Frugal Housewife* (1829) and *The Mother’s Book* (1831). Child herself was aware of this generic shift, and in the preface to the *Appeal* she dares her reader to “Read it, from sheer curiosity to see what a woman (who had better attend to her household concerns) will say upon such a subject.”⁴⁶ However, the shift

⁴⁶ Lydia Maria Child, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 5. Subsequent references to the text will refer to this edition and appear parenthetically.

was not as momentous as readers (and even Child herself) made it out to be. *Hobomok*, the romance that launched Child into literary fame, features a headstrong protagonist bent on challenging patriarchal authority. Child's *Juvenile Miscellany*, a children's periodical that she founded in 1826, routinely made reference to the evils of slavery and did so with increasing frequency after Child met Garrison in 1831—indeed, “[m]any of the facts and arguments Child amassed for her juvenile readers would appear in her 1833 *Appeal*, often repeated verbatim.”⁴⁷ Fans of her novels may have seen her as a novelist; devotees of her home economy held her as a paragon of “good sense” and a “decided utilitarian.”⁴⁸ But for all these perceptions, Child had been a publicly political writer since 1828, when she published *The First Settlers of New England*, a tome that staunchly defended Indian rights.⁴⁹ The *Appeal* did not inaugurate Child's activism, but rather made it impossible to ignore.

The *Appeal* addresses the history, economics, and politics of slavery from a global standpoint, and although Child borrowed from anti-slavery precursors like Thomas Clarkson, David Walker, and Abbé Grégoire, her text is unique in its breadth: its chapters include a comparative history of slavery with its economic and political effects, an examination of the morality and intellect of slaves and the prejudices of white Americans, and a plan for peaceful emancipation. It is also unique in its rejection of the colonization movement, which in Child's words sought to end slavery “by gradually removing all the blacks to Africa,” for although Garrison's *Liberator* also argued for emancipation, the American Colonization Society still

⁴⁷ Karcher, *First Woman*, 158.

⁴⁸ “Works of Mrs. Child,” *North American Review*, July 1833, 142.

⁴⁹ Zoe Trodd's recent collection *American Protest Literature* includes Lydia Maria Child's writing on suffrage in its chapter on women's rights, but Child could just as easily appear in its chapters on abolition and antislavery or Native American rights, suggesting that Child's activism was more various than she and her readers let on—and that it defined her work before and after the *Appeal*. Zoe Trodd, *American Protest Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 139.

largely dominated anti-slavery discourse when the *Appeal* was published (117). Stymied by the objections of slavery apologists, Child undertook the research and writing of a treatise that would silence their previously unanswerable questions, and this undertaking resulted in a textbook—a decidedly unfeminine genre in the view of many readers, especially compared to her previous publications. In writing this textbook, Child was aware “of the unpopularity of the task” but insisted, “though I *expect* ridicule and censure, I cannot *fear* them” (5, emphasis original). Indeed, the *Appeal* received its fair share of ridicule and censure, but it also thrust her to the forefront of the abolitionist cause, “elevating her to a position of unparalleled political influence for a woman.”⁵⁰ The *North American Review*, which had dubbed Child “the first woman in the republic” just one month before the *Appeal*’s publication, did not foresee how apropos that honorific would become.⁵¹

In her *Appeal*, Child chooses epigraphs that are almost exclusively literary in origin, a fact that in itself is not surprising. What is surprising is that none of these epigraphs come from American authors: while Child describes slavery as a uniquely American problem, no American authorities appear in her epigraphs.⁵² Such selectiveness can be explained in part by the fact that the anti-slavery verses of Coleridge in “Fears in Solitude” (1798) or Cowper in “The Negro’s Complaint” (1788), both of which appear in the *Appeal*, had no contemporary American correlate: there were few famous American writers to choose from in 1833 and little widely-circulating American abolitionist poetry in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. But

⁵⁰ Karcher, *First Woman*, 192.

⁵¹ “Works of Mrs. Child,” 138.

⁵² It clearly was not a uniquely American problem: though Britain had abolished the slave trade in 1807, slaves throughout the empire did not receive emancipation until 1833, the year of Child’s *Appeal*. Nevertheless, by 1833 it was consistently described as an American crisis, and for Child as for other American abolitionists Britain represented a paragon of social reform in comparison to America.

Child's selectiveness also requires us to understand the relationship between body text and epigraph, a dynamic in which the paratext foreshadows and comments on the body text that follows, as a relationship that is national as well as textual—in which English and continental writers assume a visually authoritative position in regards to the examination of American policy and practice that follows.

Although the epigraph is, in Gérard Genette's words, "a mute gesture whose interpretation is left up to the reader," it is a gesture whose place on the page affords it an aura of influence, an authority that reframes the seeming passivity of its silence and isolation as textual power.⁵³ In appearance it is always fragmentary but can come garnished with quotation marks, or without, or in italics, or with the author's name in parentheses, or in capital letters, "and so forth," for as Genette admits, "I do not think a norm has been established for these matters, at least in France."⁵⁴ For all his irreverence, Genette takes seriously the "ways in which...paratextual devices can be both conventional in their form and highly original in their deployment," and this means taking seriously forgery and inaccuracy, two major sources of such originality.⁵⁵ Writers, after all, are free to fabricate quotations and attribute them to any author they choose, real or imagined.⁵⁶ Or, more subtly, an epigraph may be "authentic but inaccurate," either because the epigrapher remembers the source imperfectly or because he or she "wishes to make the quotation fit its context better." This "fit" is what we try to decipher when reading an epigraph, which, deprived of its original context, is supposed to comment on or even presage a

⁵³ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 156.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵⁵ Richard Macksey, forward to *Paratexts*, by Gérard Genette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xx.

⁵⁶ Genette, *Paratexts*, 151.

new, prosthetic context. So while forgery and inaccuracy are possible, decontextualization is guaranteed: as a fragment, the epigraph is always missing whatever text came before and after.

In its new context, the relationship between the epigraph and the text that follows is both paramount and mystifying—writers often neglect to mention the epigraph at all, let alone explain its place in the text as a whole. Rather, the epigraph (like the poetry selection in a newspaper) must grow its own context, propagating itself to turn a fragment into a totality. In light of the epigraph’s definitional and fragmentary silence, the ones from Wordsworth demand interpretation not because they too are decontextualized and unexplained, but because their absent context stands in opposition to the plan Child proposes for ending slavery in America: she chooses epigraphs that describe the suffering of factory workers in a treatise that advocates drastically increasing the number of factory workers. This disconnect is particularly thorny because the passages Child selects did not routinely appear in the periodicals that reviewed Wordsworth, suggesting that Child had read *The Excursion* in its entirety and was familiar with its condemnation of factory labor. Even so, she was not above altering epigraphs to fit her purpose and could have taken far greater liberties with Wordsworth: in the epigraph to her second chapter, she quotes from an epilogue to Irish playwright Isaac Bickerstaff’s *The Padlock* “written by a very worthy Clergyman” and published in *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*. The original says, “Then all nations in your code may see, / The British Negro, like the Briton, free”; Child switches out the last line for her own: “That, black or white, Americans are free.”⁵⁷ This willingness to replace the quotation’s British context with an explicitly and falsely American one not only recalls Genette’s reminder that the authenticity of the epigraph is never guaranteed, but also makes Child’s scrupulous treatment of *The Excursion* noteworthy. What use did Child find

⁵⁷ See “Epilogue to ‘The Padlock,’” *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*, October 1787, 914.

in a poet who had little to say about slavery and who abhorred the practice of industrialization that she championed?

One of the two epigraphs for the first chapter of the *Appeal* comes from Cowper, the other from Book VIII of *The Excursion*, in which the Wanderer, the Recluse, and the Vicar amble and discuss, among other things, the encroachment of industrialization. It describes the factory workers' predicament:

The lot is wretched, the condition sad,
Whether a pining discontent survive,
And thirst for change; or habit hath subdued
The soul depressed; dejected—even to love
Of her close tasks, and long captivity. (*Appeal* 7)⁵⁸

Spoken by the Wanderer, who is usually taken as Wordsworth's spokesman, these five lines betray nothing that might upset their inclusion in an abolitionist tract. In accordance with Child's topic, the "Brief history of Negro slavery.—Its inevitable effect upon all concerned in it," the epigraph details individual suffering: the potential for "pining discontent," the soul "dejected" by the influence of subduing "habit." However, arriving in *The Excursion* a few pages after the Wanderer's lament that

I have lived to mark
A new and unforeseen creation rise
From out the labours of a peaceful Land
Wielding her potent enginery to frame
And to produce, with appetite as keen

⁵⁸ Child's habit (a common one) is to cite the author of the epigraph, but to give no further information about the epigraph's location within a specific text.

As that of war, which rests not night or day,
Industrious to destroy!

the epigraph's anti-industrial context becomes clear (8.89-95). In Wordsworth's hands, industrialization has no products other than war and destruction: its ability "to frame / And to produce" has no object and is thus creepily unproductive, made more frightening by the latent femininity of "her potent enginery," which suggests a fecundity without end and a perverted mimicking of nature. As this context comes into focus, so too does Child's decision to crop the epigraph as she did: the image of the factory's destructive drive "as keen / As that of war" has no place in an argument for the peaceful emancipation of the American South.

The work of the epigraph in the *Appeal* becomes more mysterious considering Child's comparatively straightforward integration of a Wordsworth sonnet into the body proper of her *Appeal*. Joel Pace and Matthew Scott write that Wordsworth's poems were "a source of strength to the mid-century New England Federalist elite, as they were to certain feminists; they were worried by writers concerned with the Native American problem, and were a source of inspiration to the growing environmental movement and to educationalists," a claim to universal applicability that begins to explain Child's seemingly counterintuitive use of Wordsworth's verse.⁵⁹ But this explanation seems far more applicable to Child's inclusion of Wordsworth's sonnet to the Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture in the body of her text, where the sonnet merely suggests that we add "abolitionist" to Pace and Scott's list of activists bolstered by Wordsworth's stirring verse. In its location, the poem receives no comment from

⁵⁹ Pace and Scott, *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture*, 15. This universality should seem a little strange to readers familiar with Wordsworth's ambivalence toward slavery in *The Prelude*, where he avows that the "particular strife" of slavery "had wanted power / To rivet my affections; nor did now / Its unsuccessful issue much excite / My sorrow" (10.257-60). In 1833, Child would not have known Wordsworth's *Prelude* (published directly after his death in 1850), and his sonnets on Thomas Clarkson and Toussaint L'Ouverture would have established him as a sympathizer to the plight of slave and abolitionist alike.

Child. Its sole purpose is to support the warm biography she provides for L'Ouverture, and it is integrated with the barest of sentences: "Wordsworth addressed the following sonnet to Toussaint L'Ouverture" (159). Although current criticism does not always see this sonnet as proof of Wordsworth's abolitionist bona fides—Helen Thomas describes the poem as "an important example of the appropriation and concealment of abolitionist discourse contained within Romantic poetry"—Child's inclusion of it demands no further explanation than she gives.⁶⁰ Appearing in a chapter called "Intellect of Negroes," the poem's job is clear: it, like the other evidence arranged in support of the revolutionary leader, directly addresses L'Ouverture's role in the Haitian revolution and praises his influence. While it makes a case for the role of poetry in political reform, its clarity only sets into relief the epigraphs' inscrutable labor.

That said, the second epigraph from Wordsworth has an apparently clear job as well: to echo the disgust Child expresses with the duplicity of public discourse. To introduce chapter three, "Free labor and slave labor.—Possibility of safe emancipation," Child places a quotation from the book of Jeremiah alongside one from Book V of *The Excursion*:

Who can reflect, unmoved, upon the round
Of smooth and solemnized complacencies,
By which, on Christian lands, from age to age
Profession mocks performance. Earth is sick,
And Heaven is weary, of the hollow words
Which States and Kingdoms utter when they talk
Of truth and justice. (*Appeal* 72)

The meaning is clear enough: states and kingdoms are not to be trusted. Wordsworth's solution

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives*, 110.

differs politically from Child's—he recommends that we “[t]urn to private life / And social neighbourhood; look we to ourselves” in order to cope with the hypocrisy of political discourse (5.381-2), while Child is far more interested in public solutions to such hypocrisy. They share, however, a belief that “Earth is sick” and current political structures untrustworthy. More troubling is the fact that Child reaches similar heights of outrage during her impassioned defense of Northern manufacturing a chapter later, where she addresses the political tension between the North and the South and memorably asserts that “If one man were to knock another down with a broad axe, in the attempt to brush a fly from his face, and then blame him for not being sufficiently thankful, it would exactly illustrate the relation between the North and the South” on the subject of commerce and industrialization (109). Child goes on to describe how after protectionist tariffs were passed in 1816 and 1824, Northern manufacturing prevailed over the obstructionist efforts of Southern interests:

Neat and flourishing villages rose in every valley of New England. The busy hum of machinery made music with her neglected waterfalls. All her streams, like the famous Pactolus, flowed with gold. From her discouraged and embarrassed commerce rose a greater blessing, apparently indestructible. Walls of brick and granite could not easily be overturned by the Southern *lever*, and left to decay, as the ship timber had done. Thus Mordecai was again seated in the king's gate, by means of the very system intended for his ruin. (110, emphasis original)

This earth is not sick. Industrialization here is responsible for drawing nature out of her hiding spots and harmonizing with her in its own droning hum, a hum without which waterfalls are “neglected,” devoid not just of gold but also of human care. Similarly, Child's references to the Book of Esther and the myth of Midas elevate industrialization above its sheer materiality,

affiliating the factory with the higher influences of religion and mythology. In contrast, Wordsworth, with his renowned hatred of industrialization, would have difficulty conceiving of this landscape as anything other than sick, let alone capable of music. Child's outrage is piqued by hindrances to industrialization, a provocation that is not at odds with Wordsworth's own outrage at the failures of political systems, but rather with his belief that the proliferation of factories should be counted in the ranks of such hypocritical systems.

As jarring as this disconnect is, it would not have been apparent to American readers of Child's *Appeal*. American periodicals were not inclined to print the excerpts Child chose for her epigraphs before 1833; as I've shown above, they most often chose long natural descriptions or philosophical ruminations. So while readers may have been accustomed to a piecemeal appreciation of this English epic, those who did not own the American 1824 edition of Wordsworth's collected poems were most likely unfamiliar with the fragments that Child included in her *Appeal*, and thus also unfamiliar with their surrounding context. To these readers, there would have been no appearance of contradiction; out of the context of *The Excursion* none of the Wordsworth verses that Child quotes seem out of place in a tract that praises industrialization. Though it is difficult to generalize about the familiarity of Child's readers with the entirety of Wordsworth's epic, newspaper reviews suggest that the epic's political agenda often went unnoticed. The epigraphs from Wordsworth, then, would have demanded little more explanation than the explicitly anti-slavery epigraphs from Cowper and Coleridge.

More significantly, however, the disagreement between Wordsworth and Child owes less to a difference of opinion and more to the differing historical realities of factory labor in England and America. As Child's inclusion of "The Little English Factory Girl" in the *Standard* implies, industrialization in England was more advanced and more exploitative than factories in 1830s

New England. America lagged behind in its development of factories, in part because of England's stringent laws prohibiting both the export of machines and drawings and the emigration of skilled men who could potentially recreate the machines in a competing economy. But when factories did start opening their doors in New England in the 1820s, many of them thrived, and thrived without the conditions that made England's factories notorious.⁶¹ As Amanda Claybaugh notes, Harriet Martineau, whom Child discusses in her *Appeal*, confessed that "industrial workers in Britain were as oppressed, and agricultural laborers as ignorant, as slaves in the United States," echoing the comparison of the two plights that Wordsworth and others made.⁶² Though Child does not detail the conditions of New England's factories, the seeming disjuncture of her Wordsworthian epigraphs fades in light of the strikingly similar attitude she and Wordsworth share toward the alienation of their respective countries' poorest workers. Child quotes at length from the "Great Compromiser," statesman Henry Clay, who proposes "That labor is best, in which the laborer knows that he will derive the profits of his industry, that his employment depends upon his diligence, and his reward upon this assiduity" (74), and as if offering a mournful portrayal of what happens when "the profits of his industry" are seized, the Wanderer bemoans how "this organic frame, / So joyful in its motions, is become / Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead" (8.322-324), detailing how the textile factory, its workers dabbled "with cotton-flakes / Or locks of wool" (309-310) succeeds in transforming the "organic" into the "dull." Neither the slave nor the factory worker benefits directly from his labor, a divorce that deadens both workers to the "joy" of their motion. Thus in regards to

⁶¹ For an examination of the varying effects of industrialization in England and America see Walter Licht, *Industrializing America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), chs. two and three; for first-hand accounts of life in the Lowell, Massachusetts factories see Harriet H. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle: or, Life Among the Early Mill Girls*, Rev. ed. (Kailua, HI: Press Pacifica, 1976; reprint, New York: T. Y. Crowell).

⁶² Amanda Claybaugh, *The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the Anglo-American World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 4.

manufacturing as it was practiced in England, Child and Wordsworth were of one mind, despite the appearance of dissent—and both were similarly comfortable equating the experience of English factory workers with the suffering of American slaves.

Wordsworth in the tropics

Although the conflict between Child and Wordsworth is no more than a semblance of disagreement, in concluding this chapter I want to argue that such a semblance is significant: it reveals the nuance of Child's use of Wordsworth, in which she interprets his value to the American anti-slavery movement as dependent on the play between *The Excursion*'s solidly English concerns and its broadly global implications. The disjuncture between the two writers makes it impossible to say that Child merely co-opts the words of a famous poet in order to make her own point, or that she borrows his pathos without giving much thought to its source. Rather, the disjuncture allows Child to enlist Wordsworth's verse in her political agenda without subsuming *The Excursion*'s English plight within the anti-slavery movement. This balance—Child's ability to make a fraught comparison without eradicating difference—distinguishes her from American writers who tried to dissociate Wordsworth from the Englishness that had come to define him. Elizabeth Peabody, for instance, occasionally corresponded with Wordsworth beginning in 1825 and chided him once for failing to be “the poet not of the English nation but of the English language,” an indictment that wishes to claim some of Wordsworth for America.⁶³ While Peabody's admonition was private rather than published, it reminds us that during the period of Child's public entrance into the abolitionist movement, the desire to fashion Wordsworth as a poet of America instead of England was strong; twenty years later, this desire

⁶³ Quoted in Grivil, *Romantic Dialogues*, 64.

would morph into the bragging rights implicit in the swaggering assertion from the *North American Review* that “No country contains a larger number of intelligent admirers of Wordsworth’s than our own.”⁶⁴ Where his knowledge of “how to live” made him an exemplar of Englishness, his readership threatened to make him American. England might have produced him, but America loved him better. This literary power grab isn’t surprising for an era when the fledgling United States as trying to establish a literary culture of its own—toggling the switch that made Wordsworth American instead of English was easier than finding another Washington Irving to rally around. But the parameters of this desire for Wordsworth also suggest that his Englishness was relatively stable. Peabody sees him as a poet of “the English nation,” and the *North American Review* can only claim him on the grounds of his reception, not his poetry. The broad connotations of his Englishness made Wordsworth attractive to readers around the world, but that broadness was so completely inherent to the working definition of Englishness that readers were forced to construct novel means of claiming him for their own.

Child is not generally interested in such contests: rather, the transnational negotiations she stages within the literary convention of the epigraph bolster the political method she advocates in her *Appeal*. From the start of her treatise she gestures beyond America, reasoning in the preface that if the book advances for “one single hour, the inevitable progress of truth and justice, [she] would not exchange the consciousness for all Rothchild’s [sic] wealth, or Sir Walter’s fame” (5). It is not just in this avowal that the preface prefers metaphors of economy and exchange; Child also posits that her refusal to praise her country is justified by the desire to “supply what is most needed,” and since “the market is so glutted with flattery,” her truths will supply a demand. While the market in which she imagines herself is certainly American—her

⁶⁴ “The Life and Poetry of Wordsworth,” *North American Review*, October 1851, 494.

subject “admits of no encomiums on my country”—she hopes to create equal exchange between her own potential power and the riches of a French banker, or the celebrity of a Scottish writer, thus suggesting that her influence as an American writer bears comparison to the prowess of continental men. In other words, Child wants the context in which she is interpreted to be of a global rather than a national scale.

More palpable than the sense of her own position, however, is the potential relationship that Child identifies between America and other slave-holding cultures in her *Appeal*, a tie that locates the possibility of emancipation not within the hypocritical trajectory established by American democracy, which betrayed its foundational values by denying freedom to so many residents, but within the examples set by other countries. Carolyn L. Karcher claims that the *Appeal* filled an empty niche because British and French abolitionist theory was inapplicable to the United States “where slavery was practiced not in distant colonies, but in states that formed an indissoluble part of the nation and benefited from disproportionate political representation in congress,” and Child clearly recognizes this niche when she proposes to “supply what is most needed.”⁶⁵ America’s distinctiveness, however, does not demand a distinctly American solution. For example, in describing the American fear of educated slaves she claims, “The same spirit that dictates this logic to the Arab, teaches it to the European and the American” (11).⁶⁶ In supplying the American market with the criticism it lacked, the *Appeal* uses its transnational scope to condemn the American exceptionalism that hoarded “encomiums on [the] country” while dismissing any ameliorating influence from beyond its borders.

⁶⁵ Karcher, *First Woman*, 176.

⁶⁶ Similarly, her chapter on the “Possibility of Safe Emancipation” provides a global roundup of successful emancipation stories from England and the West Indies, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, and France.

In much the same way that Child's epigraphs create a space where the fragmented paratext can both gesture at its own missing context and refer to the lines of communication it bears to the body text, her insistence on a comparative policy that perforates national boundaries is radical enough to suggest, almost contradictorily, that difference can arise purely from geography, the influence of place:

Human nature is everywhere the same; but developed differently, by different incitements and temptations....If we were educated at the South, we should no doubt vindicate slavery, and inherit as a birthright all the evils it engrafts upon the character. If they lived on our rocky soil, and under our inclement skies, their shrewdness would sometimes border upon knavery, and their frugality sometimes degenerate into parsimony. We both have our virtues, and our faults, induced by the influences under which we live, and of course, totally different in their character. (29-30)

Her environmental determinism, in which the North's "rocky soils" and "inclement skies" forge personalities heavy on knavery and parsimony, casts nature as the ruler of human virtue and vice, suggesting that Child's emphasis on comparative politics cannot level the geographical distinctions that affect character, regardless of legislation and education. Though such faith in the influence of environment is not remarkable for the period, the transnational gaze Child advocates in terms of American policy becomes somewhat vexed in light of this faith. When she describes emancipation in other countries, it seems clear that her desire is for emulation—they did it, so why can't we?—a desire at odds with her recognition of the intranational boundaries isolating Americans from their fellow citizens. But despite this tension, she concludes her acknowledgement of Northern defects by asserting, "*Our* defects are bad enough; but they

cannot, like slavery, affect the destiny and rights of millions” (30, emphasis original), a prescription that strikes a tenuous balance between the unified nation and the pull of its constitutive parts. The intricacies of geographical place mean that Southerners should not be expected to exhibit the same faults as their Northern counterparts, but this desire for regional containment must be tempered by a trans- and intra-national permeability that allows correspondences to thrive without leveling distinctions between the North and South, or England and America. Comparison must not mandate sameness.

In this context, the seemingly strange mingling of landscape with industrial noise in Child’s sketch of the New England villages where “[t]he busy hum of machinery made music with her neglected waterfalls” morphs into a less off-putting portrayal, in which the promise of moral progress is aestheticized into notes forming the harmonic counterpoint to nature’s rediscovered song. Nature and politics (in the form of the social change that industrialization heralds) inhabit the same sphere for Child, as they did for generations of Americans after her. My favorite example is industrialist Henry Ford, a great fan of Wordsworth’s who saw no inconsistency in “celebrating the power of machinery and science while at the same time idealizing a lost past.”⁶⁷ Like Child, Ford believed that “mechanization marked not the conquest but the realization of nature’s secrets and thus the attainment of the pastoral ideal,” a particularly American philosophy of nature in which industrialization springs from rather than subduing the natural world.⁶⁸ And like Child, Ford (born in the year of the Emancipation Proclamation) saw his system of wage labor as the antidote to American chattel slavery.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*, 1st ed. (New York: Picador, 2009), 251.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

But while Ford may have sponsored “readings in Portuguese translation of Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and, ironically, William Wordsworth” at his rubber plantation in the Amazon, his industrial project is clearly odds with the condemnations of factory life that Wordsworth made throughout his life, both visibly and insidiously.⁷⁰ For example, the plight of factory workers communicating silently, using what they dubbed “fordization of the face” because talking was not permitted in Ford’s factories, sounds like an outrage from Book VIII of *The Excursion*.⁷¹ But perhaps more subtly, the project at Fordlandia reverses the logic of Wordsworth’s poetic activism, in which overt critiques of the changing English landscape provide the foundation for a much broader if quietly global theme. In Ford’s philosophy, that global theme is loud—but it is underwritten by a parochialism that assumed the world to be a larger version of Dearborn, Michigan. On the one hand, Henry Ford insisted on a sort of capitalistic cosmopolitanism “because a business man knows no country. He is born by chance in this or that country.”⁷² What mitigates national boundaries for Ford is not the recognition of moral or political contingencies between nations, but rather his individual status as a man of business. And this status proved to be an unstable basis for the realities of Ford’s globalism. In choosing the Amazon valley for his rubber plantation, Ford made the same error that Aldous Huxley attributed to Wordsworth: “A few months in the jungle would have convinced [Wordsworth] that the diversity and utter strangeness of Nature are at least as real and significant

⁷⁰ Ibid., 286, 8. Ford tempered his appreciation of Wordsworth with Emerson, whose emphasis on individualism provided “a useful corrective to the writings of other nineteenth-century pastoralists, who saw industry as a violation of nature.” Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 57.

⁷¹ Ibid., 81. The workers’ faces, molded by the rigor of their labor, remind me of Charles Lamb and his desk at the East India Company: “I had grown to my desk, as it were; and the wood had entered into my soul.”

⁷² Quoted in Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 81-82.

as its intellectually discovered unity.”⁷³ Grandin’s description of jungle-clearing—a litany of ticks, scorpions, hornets, ant swarms, and snakes—as well as the amount of time it took to perform the task, make it clear that Ford had not based his Amazonian proposition on a well-developed understanding of the landscape he chose to reform.⁷⁴ Instead, Ford understood the Amazon as an extension of America: he insisted, for instance, that American managers in Fordlandia set their watches to Detroit time, a sort of industrial Greenwich imposing temporal unity over a company of Amazonian laborers who had previously given little thought to money, let alone the measuring of time.⁷⁵

What the trajectory from Child to Ford suggests is that Wordsworth maintained his moral utility even as the disparity between his poetry and the realities of industrial capitalism became more and more entrenched. Child’s appeals to Wordsworth may appear to us more subtle because they are more numerous and we know more about them; the references to reading Wordsworth and Longfellow in the industrial jungle are fewer, and there is less said about them.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that what Child gleaned from Wordsworth was very different from what Ford did, and that together these examples demonstrate how Wordsworth’s moral capital became more and more separable from the details of the poetry from which it grew. To return to the botanical language of my first chapter, while Child’s use of Wordsworth seems like a transplantation, or a growth from a very long runner, Ford’s use is a graft, a cutting removed from a thriving plant and made to root onto a new species. But if Ford’s is a perversion

⁷³ Aldous Huxley, "Wordsworth in the Tropics," in *Collected Essays* (New York: Harper, 1971), 9.

⁷⁴ Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 139.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷⁶ The references to Wordsworth come from on-the-spot observers in journalistic articles. Greg Grandin, e-mail message to author, October 29, 2011.

of his poetry, it is a perversion whose roots I have located within the verse itself, within *The Excursion*'s insistence that Britain is comparable and permeable to the earth that surrounds it.

The years after the publication of the *Appeal* saw a proliferation of politically-driven articles in which Wordsworth's avowal that "Earth is sick, / And Heaven is weary of the hollow words / Which states and kingdoms utter when they talk / Of truth and justice"—the same avowal that Child includes in the *Appeal*—is the keystone.⁷⁷ This trajectory fashions Lydia Maria Child as an unheralded literary critic, one who recognized Wordsworth's political capital as both essential and essentially related to meditations on his work driven by philosophy and nature. Child holds nations in a similar balance, for instead of leveling the distinctions between England and America, she uses the formal qualities of her genre, from the epigraphs of the *Appeal* to the layout of the poetry column, to allow each text and each nation to exist both in solitude and in relation to the other. Unlike other American writers who "received Wordsworth upon their own terms by applying his social vision to their own circumstances," Child creates a space on the page where her "terms" and Wordsworth's coexist, where one "social vision" bolsters another without daring to speak for it.⁷⁸ Her strategic use of Wordsworth in her anti-slavery writing should be seen a manipulation of literary convention, and in this light the *Appeal*'s literary status emerges as central to the transnational scope that makes the treatise remarkable. Wordsworth never was a committed abolitionist writer, but in Child's work his own transnationalism is both echoed and brought to the fore. Child was correct to quote him not just

⁷⁷ See, for instance, "Pro-Slavery Democracy Tamed!," *The Liberator*, August 1838, 122; "To the Affiliated Unions," *Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress*, November 1847, 7; Rufus W. Clark, "What Is Patriotism?," *Advocate of Peace*, November/December 1847, 124; "State Reform School," *The Rural Repository*, September 1849, 1; and "From Our Regular French Correspondent," *The Independent*, July 1852, 111; all of which quote these three lines either as epigraphs or in the body text of the article, and none of which predate Child's *Appeal*.

⁷⁸ Pace and Scott, *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture*, 3.

because he wrote strong moral statements that, when excerpted, could generate their own context, but also because Wordsworth himself laid the foundation for such a use by setting Britain into play with earth at large. For both writers, furthering the moral progress of the nation necessitated a radical revision of the boundaries that helped define the nation in the first place.

Chapter 4. The Wordsworth Family Business

At least one former student of Jonathan Wordsworth saw a resemblance between his tutor and the great-great-great-grand-uncle who lent him his surname. John Walsh, in a short eulogy of Jonathan Wordsworth, the literary scholar who died in 2006, reports that “He had a noble forehead and a large nose,” as did the portrait of “William the Poet” that was displayed in his study. “Jonathan, in mid-lesson, would fall half-consciously into the same pose, hand on cheek.”¹ This is the sort of description that no one hazarded while Jonathan was alive, and that only a few resorted to after his death: the somewhat obvious issue of family connection arose only in obituary form. Seamus Perry, for instance, provides a genetic interpretation of Jonathan’s literary criticism in his addendum to Michael O’Neill’s obituary, noting that “Jonathan had an apparently native responsiveness to his great predecessor, perhaps because the mixture of public performance and private reticence that characterises Wordsworth’s verse spoke to something unacknowledged in his own make-up.”²

Both of these remembrances seem unsure about where to draw the line between familial predisposition and willful imitation. Walsh begins by noting the facial similarities between William Wordsworth and the descendant who studied him, but ends on a vague note of “half-conscious” posing.³ Perry hazards that William’s poetry resonated with “something” in Jonathan’s “make-up,” but subtly distances himself from the genetic implications of this lineage

¹ John Walsh, “Tales of the City,” *The Independent*, June 27, 2006, <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/columnists/john-walsh/john-walsh-tales-of-the-city-405610.html> (accessed Feb. 25, 2012).

² Michael O’Neill, “Jonathan Wordsworth,” *The Guardian*, July 25, 2006 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/jul/25/guardianobituaries.highereducation>> (accessed May 25, 2008).

³ To be fair, this similarity was not universally acknowledged.

by calling Jonathan's critical approach "*apparently* native." Michael O'Neill is perhaps most comfortable with the family connection, eulogizing Jonathan's "superbly Wordsworthian singleness, his innate hauteur" and dubbing him "a distinguished post-Romantic essayist, with the period's achievements in his bones."⁴ But even these honorifics manage to avoid characterizing Jonathan's "Wordsworthian singleness" as "innate" (that's just his "hauteur"), or claiming that William's achievements are in his blood (rather, it's the era, and in the bones). Meanwhile, the phrase "Wordsworthian singleness" is strange all on its own, for while "singleness" denotes a straightforwardness or intense focus, its connotations—"single"—are at odds with the number of people implied by "Wordsworthian."

Terms like "native," "innate," "make-up," "bones" guide this final chapter, which takes as its starting point the portrait of William Wordsworth that hung in Jonathan Wordsworth's study. That portrait, and its placement in the Wordsworth home, emphasize the contradictions of Jonathan's relationship to William, a relationship that was always visible, thanks to genetic inheritance and nominal patrilineage, but also for the most part ignored by both Jonathan and his colleagues. Although he was renowned for unearthing, editing, and publishing long-forgotten texts of William Wordsworth, Jonathan was largely silent about the family connection, perhaps because it was obvious from the title page of every article, monograph, and edition he put forth. In this chapter, I analyze the relationship—an overt familial tie that was simultaneously embraced and overlooked—in order to qualify William Wordsworth's status as the individual poet, the progenitor of the "egotistical sublime." It will not be surprising to hear that such a status is a myth, a construction of William as well as Dorothy Wordsworth. But in this final chapter I argue that the foundation for that myth goes beyond the efforts of the well-studied

⁴ Michael O'Neill, "Inspiration Is Inspiration": In Memory of Robert Woof and Jonathan Wordsworth," *European Romantic Review* 18, no. 2 (2007): 285, 295.

sibling pair; rather, the singular “Wordsworth” is an edifice that owes its stability to the many Wordsworths who paradoxically used the patrilineal family tie to bolster the independent status of one particular Wordsworth. In the context of my project, this structure—Wordsworth’s singular representativeness and the multiplicity that it both demands and effaces—underpins his global afterlives.

Few scholars take the entity of “Wordsworth” at face value. The dismantling of this author has been acute; Foucault’s question of “How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death?” is especially applicable to a writer famous for leaving behind more than his share of traces, revisions, and annotations.⁵ At odds with these multiplicities is William Wordsworth’s project, in *The Prelude* especially, which as Anne Mellor has described was “the construction of the individual who owns his own body, his own mind, his own labor, and who is free to use that body and labor as he chooses.”⁶ The masculine singularity emphasized in Mellor’s description is significant, especially in contrast to Dorothy Wordsworth’s Grasmere journals, which produce “a substantial record of *relatedness*” as opposed to individuated singularity.⁷ But according to Elizabeth Fay, Dorothy was also deeply invested in constructing William’s poetic self: “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.”⁸ In rejecting the common misunderstanding of Dorothy as a mere “note-taker and amanuensis for her brilliant

⁵ Michel Foucault, “What Is An Author,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 104.

⁶ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 147.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁸ Elizabeth A. Fay, *Becoming Wordsworthian: A Performative Aesthetics* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 3.

brother,” Fay places Dorothy and William on equal footing, crediting them both with the performative production of a poet who was not Wordsworth so much as “Wordsworthian.”⁹ We can see a double act of distancing in the term “Wordsworthian,” which is already, as an adjective, once removed from “Wordsworth” as a noun, man, poet. But by separating “Wordsworth” the poet from William the man, Fay also allows Dorothy part ownership of the “individual who owns his own body, his own mind, his own labor,” cementing that ownership by leaving off the specificity of the Christian name. The patronymic “Wordsworth” belongs equally to William and Dorothy.

This dissertation has depended on representativeness—the extent to which Wordsworth was able to (and was made to) represent moral, geographical, and national spheres beyond those which he actually inhabited in his writing. In concluding the project, I suggest that this representativeness has a more concrete source than Wordsworth’s reception. It has been constructed since the 1790s by the Wordsworth family, many of whom contributed their labors to an edifice that could stand for them. The process by which Wordsworthian edicts on “how to live” became an umbrella under which the everyman—the Briton, the American, and the colonial subject—could sit, or was compelled to sit, occurred first, and occurred continually, within the Wordsworth family. One unlikely and ultimately forgotten family member described this representativeness quite early in Wordsworth’s career, in terms that make gender central to the success of that representation. Annette Vallon, with whom Wordsworth fathered an illegitimate child in 1792, wrote to the man whom she would not see for a decade and envisioned a family

⁹ Ibid., 14. See also Kurt Heinzelman, who similarly insists on Dorothy and William’s equal footing in suggesting that they both used “their various writings as heuristic models for one another—William borrowing from Dorothy’s writings even as Dorothy’s *Journal* conditions her ideas of writings from the sight of William writing, which she cites and sites in her own daily entries.” Kurt Heinzelman, “The Cult of Domesticity: Dorothy and William Wordsworth at Grasmere,” in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 55.

composed of women who “ne respirerons que pour toi” and who “naurons [sic] qu’un même sentiment, qu’un coeur, qu’une âme.”¹⁰ In Annette’s proposal, a quorum of women becomes one, their plural verb subsumed into a list of singular nouns that are presumably coterminous with the feeling, heart, and soul that her addressee already possesses. In this equation gender is the determining factor; all feminine familial roles are collapsed in support of the masculine poet.

The same could be said of William Wordsworth’s *Home at Grasmere* (composed between 1800 and 1806), a poem that serves as a paean to companionate life with Dorothy, the poem’s “Emma.” But as Anne Wallace points out, in its conclusion “the narrator abstracts the male poet from the domestic collective,” replacing the role of brother “with that of rhapsodist on a figurative marriage of world and mind.”¹¹ Wallace focuses on the sibling bond between Dorothy and William in part to question assumptions about “fixed definitions of ‘family’” and these definitions’ role in the ideology of the isolated genius, and to a degree my analysis of *Home at Grasmere* has a similar purpose. However, I find the poem deeply skeptical about the stability of any companionate pair, sibling or spousal; rather, the poem’s interpolated stories suggest that the most stable and productive family is one composed of many. This poem’s preference for a familial plurality makes it clear that as much as “Wordsworth” depended on the sibling pair of William and Dorothy, its longevity and stability owes just as much to the dedication of an expansive, non-nuclear family that included Mary Wordsworth (wife), Sara Hutchinson (sister-in-law), Dora Wordsworth (daughter), Edward Quillinan (son-in-law), and

¹⁰ Quoted in Jonathan Wordsworth, review of *My Dearest Love: Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth, 1810*, ed. Beth Darlington, *Wordsworth Circle* 12, no. 4 (1981): 273.

¹¹ Anne D. Wallace, “Home at Grasmere Again,” in *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship*, ed. Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 103.

Christopher Wordsworth (nephew), among others.¹² In this chapter I pair my analysis of *Home at Grasmere* with the afterlives of Wordsworth nurtured by his latter-day descendents, Jonathan and Richard Wordsworth, to argue that this trans-generational and non-nuclear family business, in which many Wordsworths rallied behind the singular poet, is one of the ways that “Wordsworth” achieved a representativeness capable of creating and supporting the diversity of afterlives that this project has studied.

Collateral descendents

As Jerome McGann has it, “[p]roducing editions is one of the ways we produce literary meaning.”¹³ And according to Duncan Wu, “New editions are the lifeblood of literature.”¹⁴ But in the case of Jonathan Wordsworth, it’s necessary to be more explicit: producing editions is one of the ways we produce literature. The Norton edition of *The Prelude* that Jonathan Wordsworth edited with M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill has become the standard text; scholars cite Ernest de Selincourt’s five-volume collection *Wordsworth’s Poetical Works* for nearly every poem in Wordsworth’s corpus—except for *The Prelude*, which requires access to the Norton edition. But it is not just standard; it has also had standardizing effects. As one obituary of Jonathan

¹² Dorothy and William’s shared status as writers (of whatever sort) has led critics to analyze their literary relationship, focusing particularly on the differences between the siblings and the extent to which William relied on Dorothy’s journals, as evidenced by “I wandered lonely as a cloud” and Dorothy’s journal entry that gave it a vocabulary and arguably an existence. Susan Wolfson, for instance, writes that Dorothy’s “poetics of community, in being nonhierarchical, are materially threatened by exercises of egotism” like William’s. Similarly, Susan Levin suggests that William’s poetic habit “often involves a coming to a knowledge of the self through conscious appropriation of the object or through a pained recognition of the total otherness of the subject” while Dorothy “refuses to make connections,” especially in such an appropriative manner. Anne Wallace uses the classroom as her evidence, explaining that students, when faced with William’s daffodil poem and Dorothy’s journal entry, generally “transfer originary power to Dorothy” rather than questioning the “fundamental assumption that true artists work alone.” Wolfson, “Individual in Community: Dorothy Wordsworth in Conversation with William,” 155; Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth & Romanticism*, 7, 4; Wallace, “Home at Grasmere Again,” 100.

¹³ Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 33.

¹⁴ Duncan Wu, “Acts of Butchery: Wordsworth as Editor,” *Wordsworth Circle* 23, no. 2 (1992): 16.

Wordsworth claims, “No one is likely anymore straightforwardly to prefer the 1850 version of *The Prelude*.”¹⁵ Although the edition’s facing-page layout (an innovation of Ernest de Selincourt, with the 1805 text on the left side, the 1850 on the right), would seem to place the two versions on relatively equal footing, Jonathan’s advocacy for the 1805 text changed not just taste, as the obituary suggests, but also use. It is rare to see the 1850 version quoted at all, unless in an effort to contrast it with the 1805 text, and citations like my own that warn, “Subsequent references to the poem will refer to the 1805 version (unless otherwise specified),” run rampant through most contemporary criticism on *The Prelude*.

As the example of *The Prelude* suggests, Jonathan Wordsworth controlled what Wordsworth became canonical in the late twentieth century—what Wordsworth poems constituted “Wordsworth.” And as a rule, that “Wordsworth” was a young one. What Jonathan did for the 1805 *Prelude*, he also did for the 1799 version, which appears in the Norton edition before the facing-page section. “The two-part *Prelude* of 1799..., which I published in 1970 is now safely a part of the Wordsworth canon,” he states, adding in a footnote that the same is true of *The Ruined Cottage* and *The Pedlar*, “both of which appeared first in Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity*,” his first monograph, and both of which were written in the 1790s.¹⁶ If there had been an earlier *Prelude*, one assumes that Jonathan would have advocated for its place in the canon as well. We thus owe the frequent dismissal of most Wordsworth’s post-1807 writing to his descendant Jonathan, who as Jack Stillinger explains in a contentious article “is the

¹⁵ O’Neill, “Inspiration Is Inspiration,” 293.

¹⁶ Jonathan Wordsworth, “Revision as Making: *The Prelude* and Its Peers,” *Bucknell Review* 36, no. 1 (1992): 88, 108n.4.

principal discoverer and best expositor of some of the early texts he is promoting.”¹⁷ As discoverer, expositor, and promoter, Jonathan embodies all the potential roles, mustering his professorial status and his unique access to texts in draft in service of a familial connoisseurship that “changed for ever our understanding of Wordsworth.”¹⁸ But while Jonathan simultaneously embodied many professional roles, he also—in print especially—evoked many different Wordsworths, including the one whose texts defined his vocation and gave him a name. When I first bought the Norton *Prelude* in college, it seemed strange that someone named “Jonathan Wordsworth” had edited a poem by “William Wordsworth,” so strange that I assumed there must be several different Wordsworth families. This seemed more likely than the possibility that one of William Wordsworth’s descendents might be editing and publishing his ancestor’s texts 150 years after his death. To anyone not in the loop of Wordsworth criticism, a contemporary edition of William Wordsworth’s poetry published by a latter-day Wordsworth—one whose relation to the dead poet is clear from the names on the front cover—is jarring. The textual line where one Wordsworth ends and another begins is difficult to see.

On the one hand, we owe this confusion between writer and editor to William Wordsworth’s own editing practices—not only his persistent self-revision, but his openness to the emendations of outside editors. William Wordsworth acted both as editor and outsourcer, paving the way for that editing work to be outsourced to other Wordsworths. Duncan Wu interprets an acquiescent letter from Wordsworth to his editor Humphry Davy as “acceptance of an editor’s creative collaboration.”¹⁹ Though the letter addressed mainly issues of punctuation

¹⁷ Jack Stillinger, “Textual Primitivism and the Editing of Wordsworth,” *Studies in Romanticism* 28, no. 1 (1989): 13.

¹⁸ O’Neill, “Inspiration Is Inspiration,” 293.

¹⁹ Wu, “Acts of Butchery,” 157.

and Wordsworth's own difficulty with correct use, I think Wu is correct to interpret the exchange as creative rather than merely editorial. On the other hand, though, this obscurity is specific to Jonathan Wordsworth. In his discussion of a typographical error in the Norton *Prelude*, Wu (again) wonders, "Whose intention does the Norton text represent at this point? That of Jonathan Wordsworth, who nodded the error through while proof-reading, or that of some mute inglorious type-setter, who misread the copy in front of him?"²⁰ More interesting than the question of blame is the ownership of intention; in Wu's formulation it belongs either to Jonathan Wordsworth or the typesetter out of Gray's "Elegy"—and notably not to William Wordsworth. Editors are responsible for seeking, interpreting, and codifying an author's intentions, but they also have discrete motives and methods; editors edit the intentions of others while developing intentions of their own. The matter becomes doubly confusing if both author and editor are named "Wordsworth." For example, when an essay by Jonathan Wordsworth about William Wordsworth's *Prelude* includes this footnote: "For a detailed reconstruction of the intermediate *Prelude*, see Wordsworth (1977)," the reader might experience a moment of confusion.²¹ Who is Wordsworth 1977?

My own intention is not to play dumb; the answer is clear enough. But I want to point out that by becoming an editor and reviser of William Wordsworth, Jonathan brought his own sphere into a near eclipse with that of his great-great-great-grand-uncle, who was himself an editor and reviser of William Wordsworth. (In a helpful circular dubbing, Duncan Wu has called William

²⁰ "Editing Intentions," *Essays in Criticism* 41, no. 1 (1991): 2. After Jack Stillinger's article accused Jonathan Wordsworth, among others, of exercising "textual primitivism" in regards to Wordsworth's poetry, Wu penned two articles of his own in defense.

²¹ Jonathan Wordsworth, "'Into a Populous Plain': The Five-Book *Prelude*," in *The Five-Book Prelude*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), 167.

Wordsworth “the first Wordsworthian scholar.”)²² The obvious genetic relationship between Jonathan and William emphasizes this eclipse further. It is one thing for Ernest de Selincourt to have claimed that the ideal text of *The Prelude* “would accept those [changes] only which Wordsworth might have made (and some he would certainly have made), had he prepared the poem for the press in his greatest period.”²³ With this editorial edict, de Selincourt makes clear that the editor’s job is to embody the dead poet conditionally, to become a William Wordsworth who did prepare the poem for publication “in his greatest period” and alter the text accordingly. But the effect is quite different when a scholar named Jonathan Wordsworth performs the same labor, championing “a form of editorial archaeology...that represented Wordsworth’s ‘original intentions’”—that is to say, “the earliest attempts at those poems that the poet himself regarded as in some way ‘complete.’”²⁴ While this archeology is more objective than de Selincourt’s desire to reenact of the poet’s “greatest period,” the genetic bond hints that genealogical study, with its attention to archives, correspondence, and family papers, partially informs Jonathan’s scholarship. This genealogy lessens the distance between poet and distant nephew and legitimizes Jonathan’s divination of poetic intention.

Jonathan’s own attitude toward genetic legitimacy is harder to divine. As Nick Roe’s description of his methodology suggests, Jonathan was a careful and professional editor; the desire to respect an author’s “original intentions” and the preference for the first texts regarded by the author as “complete” is not unique to Jonathan, as Jack Stillinger has shown in his discussion of what he sees as a pervasive “textual primitivism.” But throughout his career

²² Wu, “Acts of Butchery,” 158.

²³ *The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926), xlv, quoted in Stillinger, “Textual Primitivism,” 9.

²⁴ Nick Roe, “Jonathan Wordsworth, 1932-2006,” *Coleridge Bulletin* 28 (2006): 101.

Jonathan insisted on the existence of multiple William Wordsworths, and within this multiplicity it was possible for him to become one of those Wordsworths whose existence he had highlighted. Though catty, Christopher Ricks's reported comment that Jonathan Wordsworth bore an Oedipal relationship to the poet, despite being only "a collateral descendant," provides one model for this Wordsworthian becoming.²⁵ Ricks's commentary is the Freudian variation on Wordsworthian eclipse. He sees Jonathan as attempting a substitution of son for father, a substitution not borne out by the distance of their relation. In a larger sense then, he casts doubt on Wordsworthian representativeness: the ability of a Wordsworth to stand for *the* Wordsworth. Throughout this project I've been interested in William Wordsworth's own representativeness, but Ricks reverses the formula. If Wordsworth's contemporary relatives rallied around him, constructing a poet who could unify and represent their familial efforts, the latter-day descendants enjoyed an about-face—the power of making themselves representative of Wordsworth.²⁶

Even beyond this realm of genealogy, though, the distinction between writer and reviser is still vexed. In a general sense, "the revising poet may be thought of as having a separate identity from the poet who composed in the first place"—a possibility that already calls the unity of William Wordsworth into question.²⁷ This is a possibility that de Selincourt himself raised in his seminal facing-page edition of *The Prelude*, the first of its kind, for in his narrative "Wordsworth...betrayed his own 'authentic self' with his successive revisions to *The Prelude*,

²⁵ Leo Robson, "From the fact-checking department: Let me count the ways," *New Statesman*, Nov. 18, 2011, <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/cultural-capital/2011/11/richard-bradford-amis-martin> (accessed Feb. 25, 2012).

²⁶ This reversal is also characteristic of Richard Wordsworth, whom I discuss later in the chapter.

²⁷ Stillinger, "Textual Primitivism," 3.

thereby generating misreadings of his life and poetry.”²⁸ As in Jonathan Wordsworth’s conception, there are many William Wordsworths, some of them more authentic than others. Measuring the authenticity of these Wordsworths became an integral and subjective part of Jonathan Wordsworth’s academic labor, for in editing his ancestor’s writing he considered not just William’s intentions, but also his hopes and wishes. In concluding his essay on Wordsworth’s revisions to *The Prelude*, Jonathan muses, “Whatever text, or texts, we read, there can be no doubt that this great long poem places Wordsworth where he wished to be, in a line of ‘poets, even as prophets, each with each / Connect’d in a mighty scheme of truth.’”²⁹ The echoes here are multiple: both William and Jonathan Wordsworth had a hand in producing the “text, or texts,” of *The Prelude*, and Jonathan ends the essay with a reminder that weeks after William’s death Jonathan’s own great-grandfather was promulgating “quite unwarranted revisions” alongside Christopher Wordsworth and Edward Quillinan, William’s son-in-law.³⁰ In this family tree, revision and male primogeniture go hand in hand, with descendants producing new Wordsworths in the process of editing and revising, while simultaneously embodying the singular Wordsworth’s poetic wishes and intentions. Jonathan Wordsworth is attuned not just to the textual proof of William’s intentions, but also to the subjective and nebulous view that William had of “where he wished to be.”

On one hand, if we accept that Jonathan Wordsworth’s editorial work “changed forever our understanding of Wordsworth,” then that changed understanding has succeeded in bringing us closer to the familial fold of William Wordsworth. Jonathan’s access to unpublished letters

²⁸ W. Michael Johnstone, "Toward a Book History of William Wordsworth’s 1850 *Prelude*," *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (2010): 68.

²⁹ Wordsworth, "Revision as Making," 108.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

and textual drafts, and his willingness to extend that access, at least in part, to the public, have produced a critical Wordsworth who could easily have remained knowable to his family and descendants alone. For example, one obituary remarks that Jonathan's tendency to "choose a passage surviving only in draft" for closer analysis is a technique "typical of his work."³¹ In producing new literary analysis, he offered new texts as well, transforming his own privileged access into a more public commodity. Similarly, a former student reports Jonathan farming out a particularly learned task to him over breakfast:

‘Go and make some coffee, John,’ he said, ‘and tell me which of the manuscripts on the floor is in Wordsworth’s writing.’ On the carpet were four photostats of handwritten poetry, sent to Jonathan by an American academy to be authenticated (or not) as the true hand of his ancestor.³²

The colloquial familiarity of the scene, with copies of handwritten poetic emanations drifting casually across the floor, makes the demand to exert authority—"tell me" which copy is authentic, John—all the more appealing. Despite the chore of making coffee, the anecdote highlights Jonathan's professional generosity, both in regards to his scholarly work and his students.

On the other hand, the story ends on a somewhat alienating note that reaffirms the distance between the Wordsworths and the rest of us. The point of the morning exercise is to recognize "the true hand of his ancestor," a task that requires not just experience reading handwritten script—experience that is increasingly rare—but more specifically an existing familiarity with the particular hand of William Wordsworth, who remains "his ancestor." As the

³¹ O'Neill, "Inspiration Is Inspiration," 290.

³² Walsh, "Tales of the City."

possessive pronoun implies, William belongs properly to the Wordsworth family, and it is the family's job to authenticate what qualifies as "Wordsworth." Similarly, the task of protecting and promoting Wordsworth falls to the family, often under the guise of the Wordsworth Trust, which maintained Jonathan Wordsworth at its helm from 1976 to 2002. Though not strictly a family enterprise, the Trust has a close relationship to the family that perpetuated its name and helped fill its libraries (and coffers, from time to time) with invaluable drafts and letters. In 1935 the family left the entire Wordsworth archive to the Trust, and that archive still comprises the heart of the Trust's collection.³³ Considering the relationship of the Trust with literary scholars, who need it to facilitate access to drafts and unpublished materials, the overlap of the Wordsworth Trust and the Wordsworth family is significant; that is to say, the Wordsworth Trust at Dove Cottage is a scholarly destination because of the Wordsworth family. I don't mean to suggest that this overlap is insidious; the Wordsworth family is and was completely dissimilar from the Joyce estate, a prime example of a dead writer's descendants wreaking havoc on literary labor. As Carol Loeb Schloss recalls from her battle with the Joyces, "it wasn't *what* I had to say...but instead a concerted effort to maintain the control that had been the underlying motivation all along."³⁴ The same cannot be said of Jonathan Wordsworth, who as I have demonstrated shared his textual discoveries with the academic community persistently, and with vigor. And the family's decision to share the archive with the Trust had the effect of increasing access to

³³ The Wordsworth Trust, "The Wordsworth Trust Collection," <https://www.wordsworth.org.uk/about-the-trust/the-collection.html> (accessed August 15, 2012).

³⁴ Carol Loeb Schloss, "Copyright and the Joyce Estate: Legal Issues, Moral Issues, and Unresolved Issues in the Publication of *Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake*," *Joyce Studies Annual* (2008): 27. The omniscience of the Joyce estate is impressive; when a geneticist replaced the DNA in a bacterium with synthetic DNA coded with famous quotations, including a slightly inaccurate one from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, he and his team received a cease and desist letter from the Joyce estate. David M. Ewalt, "Craig Venter's Genetic Typo," *Forbes*, March 14, 2011, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidewalt/2011/03/14/craig-venters-genetic-typo/> (accessed August 15, 2012).

documents formerly reserved for family perusal. But I do want to make clear that the body promoting Wordsworth for scholars and tourists alike was for twenty-six years chaired by a member of the Wordsworth family whose awareness of that genetic signifier tends to cloud the distinction between trust and family.

The overlap is easy to see in Jonathan Wordsworth's review of a collection of love letters between William and Mary Wordsworth, published in 1981 by the trustees of Dove Cottage (where the Trust is centered). From the outset Jonathan is clear: "As Chairman of the [Wordsworth] Trust, I must declare my interest at once. *My Dearest Love* is being sold to make money."³⁵ There is no obfuscation; Jonathan's bias is clear. As Chairman of the Trust that stands to profit from sales of the collection he is writing to promote, Jonathan has an ax to grind beyond mere appreciation of his ancestors' mutual love and affection. But that ax is sharpened by the legible family connection, which lends legitimacy to his review; who better than a relative to provide insight into these letters' value? In other words, these positions are interdependent: Jonathan's efficacy as a chairman and fundraiser depends on his status as Wordsworthian descendant. And similarly, though less overtly, the official position at the Trust bolsters Jonathan's status as a literary critic, suggesting that his connection to the dead poet is not genetically aspirational, but rather professional and codified. This circuit is completed by the fact that the profits from this collection are intended for a renovation of the Wordsworth Library at Dove Cottage; Wordsworth is being prepared, sold, and reviewed by another Wordsworth in order to make money for a better presentation of Wordsworth.

The Wordsworth confusion is especially acute because as the review progresses the Wordsworths who capture our attention are not William and Mary but rather their ancillary

³⁵ Wordsworth, *My Dearest Love*, 210.

ancestors, who produce a yarn more intriguing than William and Mary's love. Jonathan says the collection reveals "a new Wordsworth," but the story of the collection's provenance similarly reveals a new Wordsworth family—prone to doubts, quick to mobilize, and unified, finally, by the public labor of the Wordsworth Trust.³⁶ Although Jonathan reports with approval that "Sotheby's quite correctly refused to give the client's name" and thus protected the privacy of the letters' seller, this secrecy raises a tumult: "there was a period of dark speculations and long telephone calls as members of the family tried to work out where the collection came from, who could have a right to it, who was double-crossing whom." Jonathan's lurid diction suggests that part of this collection's appeal lies in its recent history rather than its content. Indeed, as Duncan Wu gleefully supposes in an essay defending Jonathan against accusations of "textual primitivism," "Whose disgust could fail at the thought of Jonathan Wordsworth and Stephen Gill tearing the heart out of *The Excursion* one dark night in the Wordsworth library?"³⁷ Whose taste for gossip could flag at the repast Jonathan lays for us, replete with private conversations and "dark speculations"? In the end this taste is not satisfied; the story ends with a hapless stamp dealer and a tangential foray into the distinction between "markings on letters that precede 1840" and "the modern attachable stamp."³⁸ As Jonathan apologizes, "The mystery remained; and to some extent it still remains." But though the mystery is unsolved, the letters achieve the rectitude of a marriage plot fulfilled when they eventually land in the hands of the Wordsworth Trust.

Though Sotheby's sold the letters, the Trustees lodged "a successful public Appeal" and bought the lot for the Wordsworth Library at Dove Cottage, where it rejoined "the archive from

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Wu, "Acts of Butchery," 156.

³⁸ Wordsworth, *My Dearest Love*, 210.

which it seems to have become separated at the death of the poet's son William in 1916."³⁹ Their rightful place regained, the letters became available to any scholar visiting the Wordsworth Library, much to the belated (and imagined) dismay of William Wordsworth, whom Jonathan imagines himself defying in making available "the inmost breathings of [his] heart."⁴⁰ If this defiance seems at odds with Jonathan's knowledge and respect of his ancestor's wishes, particularly in regards to *The Prelude* as I have discussed above, Jonathan's defense might be financial. The collection is pricey; only three hundred copies were printed, thirty-five of them "chastely bound in vellum" (£450) and the rest "in quarter green morocco" (£215).⁴¹ As one might expect at these prices, "[n]o expense has been spared" and the press "were asked to make the best facsimiles that have ever been made." But these books are more than pretty. They promise, for a fee, a more proximate experience of Wordsworth than most of us have experienced or sought. Jonathan closes his review by reaffirming the value of these "best facsimiles," reasoning that "Reading [the letters] would in any case be a moving experience; it is that much more so because the beautiful facsimiles of *My Dearest Love* take one back to the struggles and dashes and crossings-out of the writers that are lost in the printed page."⁴² This formulation places "struggles" on equal grammatical footing with "dashes and crossings-out," connecting the paraphernalia of hasty composition with a heightened access to the emotion of "struggles." In other words, this edition performs the same office as a trip to the archives: it impresses with its aura, suggesting that we have achieved a rarefied proximity to our subject-matter. But this proximity has a precise cost. If Jonathan, with his stories about familial intrigue

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 275.

⁴¹ Ibid., 210.

⁴² Ibid., 275.

and his speculations about Wordsworthian disapproval, presents a model for proximity to the poet, he also presents the means for achieving a version of that proximity, divulges how much it will cost, and discloses that the experience is being sold to make a profit for the Trust he heads. This dissertation has suggested that in the case of Wordsworth, drawing one's sphere into the gravitational pull of what he represents always carries a cost; in this case, the cost happens to be in sterling.

The case of Jonathan Wordsworth points to a mundane afterlife that William shares with thousands: his perseverance in the academy. It is in this sphere that Jonathan had an effect on the construction of "Wordsworth"; children around the world, for instance, will continue reading about daffodils regardless of what Jonathan said about the two-book *Prelude*. What I have suggested, however, is that his influence within this admittedly limited sphere is significant because it documents one of the ways in which Wordsworth became representative—and moreover, how he stayed that way. In the next section I analyze the efforts of William's contemporary relatives to enact this representativeness, and I see in *Home at Grasmere* a valorization of such extended familial labor, despite its focus on the famous pair of Dorothy and William. In the context of his family, then, Jonathan's innovation was to labor in support of *extending* his familial proximity, publishing drafts that he discovered, ensuring that family documents ended up in the hands of an accessible research library, sharing with his students the excitement of authenticating Wordsworth. But at the same time, his editorial work went beyond the old family business of constructing a singular Wordsworth who could stand for the clan. As an editor whose name lessened the distance between poet and collateral descendant, whose distinctive methodology depended on a supposed knowledge of intention and completeness, whose literary criticism was overtly tuned in to the literary aspirations of its subject, Jonathan

reversed the two vectors the family business: he came to represent William. This reversal is the antidote to the proximity to William Wordsworth that Jonathan cultivated and bestowed on the scholarly community throughout his career, for in the end, it was a white Englishmen endowed with the benefits of nominal patrilineage who retained the ultimate proximity, the ability to speak for, and thus represent, the English poet.

The families of *Home at Grasmere*

Home at Grasmere is a long poem, just over a thousand lines, and it is, according to one critic, “the only major ‘secondary’ work that Wordsworth was able to compose.”⁴³ Its subject, as Sally Bushell says with a mix of vagueness and specificity, is “Wordsworth’s decision to settle in a particular place at a particular time”—the place being Grasmere, and the time 1800, when William and Dorothy set up home at Dove Cottage together.⁴⁴ Criticism on the poem has tended to focus on a typical brand of Wordsworthian contradiction between the sense of stability the speaker attributes to settling “in a particular place at a particular time” and the poem’s consistent evocation of social alienation.⁴⁵ For my purposes though, William Ulmer’s attention to “Wordsworth’s authentic commitment to a communally grounded, communally oriented

⁴³ Peter Larkin, “The Secondary Wordsworth’s First of Homes: ‘Home at Grasmere,’” *Wordsworth Circle* 16, no. 2 (1985): 106.

⁴⁴ Sally Bushell, “The Making of Meaning in Wordsworth’s *Home at Grasmere*: (Speech Acts, Micro-analysis and ‘Freudian Slips’),” *Studies in Romanticism* 48, no. 3 (2009): 398. *Home at Grasmere* was not completed until 1806, and Wordsworth never published it during his life. For a thorough textual history of the poem, see Bushell, 399.

⁴⁵ Sally Bushell, for instance, understands the poet as ‘divided from those around him to a far greater extent than he is willing to admit,’ significant in a poem “concerned with social self-integration” (“The Making of Meaning,” 402.) Raimonda Modiano argues that “As a ‘stranger’ joining an alien and possibly hostile community, Wordsworth fears that he may become a sacrificial victim. Raimonda Modiano, “Blood Sacrifice, Gift Economy and the Edenic World: Wordsworth’s ‘Home at Grasmere,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 4 (1993): 483. See also Kenneth Johnston, *Wordsworth and ‘The Recluse’* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 217-34.

poetics”—a poetics that transcends death and thus ensures his immortality—is most pertinent.⁴⁶ For while Ulmer wants to affirm a sense in community where other critics have pointed out its instability, that community seems coterminous with—if not the same as—Wordsworth’s family.

This slippage between family and community is a hint that *Home at Grasmere* prefers the support of an extended family over the efforts of the sibling pair that serves as its ostensible subject. (The poem contains several apostrophes to “Emma,” a stand-in for Dorothy, and consistent reference to a pair of inseparable swans who serve as totems for the siblings.) For while Anne D. Wallace, for instance, sees “literary production as a family business,” one that employs only Dorothy and William in its performance of domestic and creative labors alike, Ulmer recognizes a larger sphere.⁴⁷ In his argument, a collective assembles around Wordsworth, “reflecting his inspiration back to him,” and this collective consists of “the family members and friends who fill the poet’s domestic circle: his brother John, . . . Mary and Sara Hutchinson, ‘Sisters of our hearts’: and Coleridge, ‘one, like them, a Brother of our hearts.’”⁴⁸ My intention is not to quibble with his implicit definition of a collective, or community, as consisting of “family members and friends.” But it is revealing that this community is explicitly “domestic” and private, and that these “friends” are quick to become “Sisters” and a “Brother.”

It’s clear that the poem celebrates the sibling pair and not the extended family; the moment of domestic settling that it documents is one defined by the co-presence of Dorothy and William. However, the interpolated vignettes in *Home at Grasmere* cast doubt on the stability of such a small quorum, and they thus presage the “genial labor” that the extended Wordsworth

⁴⁶ William A. Ulmer, “The Society of Death in *Home at Grasmere*,” *Philological Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (1996): 68.

⁴⁷ Wallace, “Home at Grasmere Again,” 119.

⁴⁸ Ulmer, “The Society of Death,” 78.

family performed for the poet who represented them.⁴⁹ The poem is undeniably celebratory, especially in its opening, which presents the poet as a schoolboy, admiring Grasmere from atop a hill: “What happy fortune were it here to live! / And if I thought of dying, if a thought / Of mortal separation could come in / With paradise before me, here to die.”⁵⁰ As in “Tintern Abbey,” we are in the realm of multi-perspectived experience; as Karl Kroeber describes, Wordsworth “stands at one spot and tells of different or reiterated impressions associated with that place on diverse occasions.”⁵¹ But unlike in “Tintern,” where the poet’s youth makes him an erratic traveler, here young Wordsworth is impressed in spite of his “haste,” and is able to conceive of his entire life, birth to death, if only conditionally (7). This set-up proves a happy one almost immediately. After a quick explanation of how the scene, like the host of daffodils, has been “As beautiful in thought as it had been / When present to my bodily eyes,” even in rare moments of “sorrow,” the speaker reveals in an apostrophe, “dear Vale, / One of thy lowly dwellings is my home!” (45-6, 48, 52-3). Fifty lines later “my Emma” (that is to say, Dorothy) makes her appearance, and Wordsworth begins to build the foundation for the sibling bond whose existence mandates the poem (98).

Wordsworth presents that bond as an unavoidable and immanent eventuality whose unquestioned, providential status girds its persistence. His language is absolute:

⁴⁹ I borrow this term from Alison Hickey, who uses it to describe Sara Coleridge’s work on the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Hickey terms these Sara Coleridge’s “efforts to ‘individualize’ her father.” Alison Hickey, “‘The Body of My Father’s Writings’: Sara Coleridge’s Genial Labor,” in *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship*, ed. Marjorie Stone & Judith Thompson (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 125.

⁵⁰ William Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere*, From Goslar to Grasmere, <http://collections.wordsworth.org.uk/GtoG/home.asp?page=HaGTEXTS2> (accessed September 6, 2012), 9-12. “From Goslar to Grasmere,” a collaborative project between Lancaster University and The Wordsworth Trust, uses MS B of *Home at Grasmere*, which can also be found in Beth Darlington’s edition (“*Home at Grasmere*,” *Part First, Book First, of “The Recluse,” by William Wordsworth* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977]). Subsequent references to the poem will refer to this manuscript and appear parenthetically according to line number.

⁵¹ Karl Kroeber, “Home at Grasmere!: Ecological Holiness,” *PMLA* 89, no. 1 (1974): 133.

Mine eyes did ne'er
Rest on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,
But either She whom now I have, who now
Divides with me this loved abode, was there
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
Her Voice was like a hidden Bird that sang;
The thought of her was like a flash of light
Or an unseen companionship, a breath
Or fragrance independent of the wind;
In all my goings, in the new and old
Of all my meditations, and in this
Favorite of all, in this the most of all. (104-116)

The first sentence presents an either/or situation in which the distinction hardly matters; Emma's proximity is guaranteed by both possibilities. Either "there" or "not far off," Emma shares in—perhaps even creates the possibility of—the speaker's "happy thoughts." The sentence presents these options, as well as the never/nor variations on "happy thoughts," only to insist that in each configuration the bonded pair is resolute. In every direction, in every combination of possible outcomes, Emma is implicit. This theme of expansiveness continues through the caesura with "Where'er," and goes on to detail Emma's omnipresence, which is intensified by her existence as sound and light rather than body: she is "hidden" and "unseen," reduced to light and air. As such she is diffuse but vagrant, well-suited to the speaker's roving "footsteps." And if the reader retains any doubt of Emma's presence by the end of this passage, the speaker assures us with

four repetitions of “all,” indicating that she not only is present in every physical and mental peregrination, but also is “Favorite of all,” to a superlative degree.

Wordsworth lays it on thick in establishing the significance and persistence of Dorothy’s presence, to the extent that he is willing to reduce her to intangibles like flashes and breaths. But this state is temporary; he soon turns both her and himself into birds who, while they are not human, still effectively model the familial companionship that he aims to emphasize. It has been “Long” since they settled on their companionship “like Birds / Which by the intruding Fowler had been scared, / Two of a scattered brood that could not bear / To live in loneliness” (171, 173-6). Lest the distancing powers of simile go too far though, the speaker quickly returns this pair to a human shape that can “walk abreast, though in a narrow path, / With undivided steps,” rather than flying (178-9). And so when Wordsworth later mourns the swan pair that has abandoned the “happy Valley,” he maintains the distinction between human and bird, listing similarities while keeping the sibling bond safe from the fantastical transformations of metaphor (378). Though the speaker toys with moral compunction when he complains, rather petulantly, that the swans “should not have departed,” the structure of his comparison carefully separates the species (342):

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. (338-41)

Each comparison is cordoned off by the semi-colon barricades after “abode” and “strangers”; each subject pair is sequestered by commas. The comparison with the swans thus intensifies the bond between the speaker and Emma without suggesting that they, like the swans, will fly off

and potentially perish.⁵² But like the breaths and flashes that Emma resembles, the swans have the potential to disrupt Wordsworth's project, to be the means by which he both establishes and subverts the stability of the sibling bond.

As much as *Home at Grasmere* affirms and celebrates the sibling pair, it sees that pair as necessarily situated within a larger community. The speaker concludes three local and sobering vignettes with a short ode to his and Emma's place within Grasmere, insisting that "we are not alone; we do not stand, / My Emma, here misplaced and desolate, / Loving what no one cares for but ourselves" (647-9). Later, a similarly emphatic clarification: "We do not tend a lamp / Whose lustre we alone participate, / Which is dependent on us alone, / Moral though bright, a dying, dying flame" (655-8). As much as the structure of the sibling couple guides the logic of the poem, it is one that cannot suffice in Grasmere itself, beyond the versified walls, and the speaker knows it. William and Dorothy, whether as speaker and Emma, presence and breath, or swan and swan, must support and receive support from a larger community. What I argue, however, is what critics have called "community" or "collective" is actually family, and the poem's interpolated vignettes agree. The first story comes out of nowhere—"There few years past / In this his Native Valley dwelt a Man"—and his story begins well (471-2). A "scholar" who finds "much delight from those few books / That lay within his reach," he has few complaints, and "with his consort and his Children saw / Days that were seldom touched by petty strife" (475-6, 482-3). His wife, however, proves not ideal, in what seems a very subtle way. Her industry apparently "tended more / To splendid neatness, to a showy trim, / And overlaboured purity of house / Than to substantial thrift" (492-5). The speaker does not specify what her incorrect

⁵² As William A. Ulmer has explained, "The death of Wordsworth's swans has proven an essential assumption for so many readings of *Home at Grasmere* that one feels a little churlish in insisting that they never literally die in the poem." Ulmer, "The Society of Death," 70.

housekeeping has to do with the husband's decision to try his hand with the "blooming girl" who works for the family—she yields to him, "unworthily"—but in the end the man dies from his guilt, an appropriate end to a tale of affiliation gone awry (502, 507).

It is notable that this family fails because of an outsider—"an Inmate of the house"—who is not part of the family and whom the man nevertheless woos (503). In contrast, the speaker presents another family, a widower with six daughters, whose shared happiness proves that in spite of familial loss, "He who takes away, yet takes not half / Of what he seems to take, or gives it back / Not to our prayer, but far beyond our prayer" (548-50). These daughters, who may be "budding" but are not yet "full-blown flower[s]" like the fallen inmate of the previous story, perform the right sort of household labor, what the speaker dubs "a studious work / Of many fancies and of many hands" (545-6, 560-1). As the repetition of "many" suggests, this family's success is defined by quantity. We learn nothing of the dead mother and wife, merely that her absence has been met "far beyond our prayer" with a plethora of daughters, and that the husband "is not gay, but they are gay, / And the whole House is filled with gaiety" (605-6). As the sentence structure suggests, his lack of gaiety is not worth discussing. His daughters' happiness trumps his dearth, altering the tenor of "the whole House." And in turn, this house looks "to have grown / Out of the native Rock," though with the distinction that the many hands and fancies have made it "not so grave in outward mien" as other, ruder houses (555-7). As I argued in chapter one, there is no greater compliment Wordsworth can pay to a residential structure than to suggest that it grew, magically, out of bedrock. Here that compliment reaches a communitarian pinnacle when the speaker distinguishes the house of six daughters from its neighbors, which are shaped by "Nature's care, / Mere friendless Nature's" (559-60). While "Nature's care" would

seem to be a benefit in most Wordsworth poems, in *Home at Grasmere* nature's loner status diminishes its clout; "many hands" provide better care.

But perhaps most significantly for a poet whose career was supported not just by a sister but also by a wife, brother, sister-in-law, daughter, son-in-law, nephew, and a host of descendants, among others, this vignette associates the visibility of individual talent with the proximity of a stable and sizable community of family members. One girl of the six stands out to the speaker as he spies on the family, for "she fears not the bleak wind; / Companion of her Father, does for him / Where'er he wanders in his pastoral course / The service of a Boy" (575-8). Here her help, though special in its boyish way, is still just filial duty; she is singled out for doing very well what all daughters should do. But as the speaker's spying continues—"who could help it?"—the daughter emerges fully from the backdrop of "the company within" (594-5). At her wheel she spins "again, as if to overtake / She knows not what," but she directs that energetic and aimless excess back to her family, "teaching in her turn / Some little Novice of the Sisterhood" the skills that "from her Father's honored hands, herself, / While She was yet a Little-one, had learned" (598-604). Two aspects of this description are remarkable. The first is the daughter's sheer heedless energy, which would seem to outstrip her rather mundane task. The second is that this distinctive and individualizing talent does not separate her from her family, but rather binds her to it. As she learned from her father, her sister learns from her; they are generationally "Bound each to each by natural piety," as Wordsworth says in "My heart leaps up." This family, in which the sanctified pair of man and wife has been replaced by a quorum of father and daughters, suggests that it is in this context of many that individual talent receives support and in return supports the continuance of the familial community.

Each of these Grasmere tales features death at its center, and each dramatizes a bond disrupted, a pair broken apart. In the third story, the speaker interviews a widow who remembers her life as one half of a pair, who

in the prime of wedlock with joint hands

Did plant this grove, now flourishing while they

No longer flourish; he entirely gone,

She withering in her loneliness. (639-42)

While the grove of trees suggests some perseverance beyond death, just lines earlier the speaker has characterized nature as “Mere” and “friendless,” denigrating the care it takes to build rude, rural houses. Presumably the old woman will soon join her husband in the grave, “withering” as she is, but for the moment they are separated by both death and a line break. Thus her “loneliness” is her defining trait, suggesting that while “death binds people together,” as Ulmer writes, death achieves this bond at the expense of the three married and lateral pairs that comprise the Grasmere stories.⁵³ No pair remains intact, and no remaining member is happy; the adulterer lives and dies in guilt, the widower raises many blooming daughters but is not himself “gay,” the widow “wither[s] in her loneliness.” And so for good reason the speaker reasons with Emma, insisting that they do “not tend a lamp /... / Which is dependent upon us alone,” because just ten lines earlier he has finished telling his Grasmere tales, which taken together argue that any lamp “dependent upon us alone” will fade, if that “us alone” is comprised of two.

If *Home at Grasmere* celebrates both the reunification of the sibling pair and its placement within the larger community of Grasmere, it is necessary to clarify that neither of these communal structures are shown to be stable within the poem, which, as critics like Sally

⁵³ Ibid., 80.

Bushell and Raimonda Modiano have argued, sees the need for a supporting cast of characters while remaining alienated from them. But I would add that the community the speaker and Emma choose is not one of kith, but of kin; of family, extended family, and friends in the guise of relatives. Tending a lamp becomes a task not communal so much as familial, and if that lamp is Wordsworth and his potential for poetic achievement, his luster was a boon cultivated not just by him and Dorothy, but rather by the family they began to assemble at Grasmere.⁵⁴ The poem eventually sees the siblings' home filled with family members of varying degrees of relatedness: John, their brother, "a Stranger of our Father's house, / A never-resting Pilgrim of the Sea"; the Hutchinson sisters, Mary and Sara, "Sisters of our hearts"; and Coleridge, "a Brother of our hearts, / Philosopher and Poet" (865-71). John Wordsworth, a blood brother, becomes a "Stranger" in this vision, his claim to kinship disrupted by the family's history of dispersal and his own sea-faring ways. And in turn, friends like the Hutchinsons and Coleridge are transformed by "our hearts" into siblings, some by marriage, like Mary, and some by willfulness, ensuring that the community remains guided by the logic of filiation. All told the house holds three blood siblings and three siblings "of our hearts," an equation whose balance lessens the difference between stranger-brother and chosen-sister.

In writing *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth could not have known how instrumental this family and its descendants would be in the production and publication of his poetry. Dorothy's role in her brother's literary production is well-known; her journals served as the outline for much of William's most famous poetry. And as Jonathan Wordsworth reports, all the copyists of

⁵⁴ As the poem continues, the lamp becomes a metaphor for Wordsworth's poetic inspiration, which is reflected back at him by his family-community: "Why does this inward lustre fondly seek / And gladly blend with outward fellowship?" (888-9).

The Prelude “are members of the family.”⁵⁵ William and Mary’s son, William Jr., negotiated with publishers throughout the later half the nineteenth century. One nephew, Charles Wordsworth, Bishop of St. Andrews, was elected the first president of the Wordsworth Society (established in 1880), and another, Christopher, wrote the *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (1851), and in its pages “emphasized that he was a member of the family writing with its *imprimatur*.”⁵⁶ Another Wordsworth had hankered for the task: Edward Quillinan, William’s son-in-law and a budding poet himself, “felt slighted not to have been asked and for a while it was questionable whether he would co-operate in gathering materials.”⁵⁷ As I have suggested in the case of Jonathan Wordsworth, these familial roles had a direct effect on the Wordsworth that emerged. In Christopher Wordsworth’s telling, for example, William Wordsworth is “near-obsessed with worries about Catholics,” an obsession that actually reflected Christopher’s own position as Canon of Westminster more than his uncle’s opinions.⁵⁸ In a historical cleansing approved by the entire family, Wordsworth becomes a man with no youthful indiscretions; Christopher suppressed information about Wordsworth’s daughter with Annette Vallon, a ploy that Stephen Gill refers to as the “family’s game-plan.”⁵⁹ And as a textual tinkerer, Christopher “made a few ‘improvements’ on those parts of *The Prelude* where he thought his uncle

⁵⁵ Wordsworth, “Revision as Making,” 86.

⁵⁶ Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 235, 32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

nodded.”⁶⁰ (It is no wonder that Jonathan Wordsworth regards Christopher as “the villain” of the early *Prelude*.)⁶¹

My aim here is not to read this family history back into *Home as Grasmere*. Rather, I argue that both the poem and the history demonstrate how the production of Wordsworth was a uniquely family business, one that subsumed not just Dorothy Wordsworth but many Wordsworths under the banner of William the poet. In summarizing criticism on *Home at Grasmere*, Anthony J. Harding emphasizes its participation in the *bildung* tradition, its focus on “one actual, heroic individual, who is in some sense a surrogate for others, for the whole human race.”⁶² Harding’s description is generic rather than particular to *Home at Grasmere*, but that surrogacy is the logic by which Wordsworth became a particularly exportable poet whose verses were thought edifying to “the whole human race.” This project has not needed to demonstrate the fallacy of that logic—many other global readers have done so—but it has provided examples of how and why that logic falls apart, in places like Antigua and South Africa, and how it gains strength, in contexts like antebellum America. Rather, my aim is to argue that this logic, global in its scope, is grounded in the particular history of the Wordsworth family, a history in which individualism, surrogacy, and conglomeration play out in microcosm. Duncan Wu has joked that “A new Wordsworth text is not unlike a haggis: we may enjoy it while remaining (and preferring to remain) unaware of how it was made.”⁶³ In delving into that manufacturing process, with its multiple Christophers, Williams, and Johns, I suggest that Wordsworth texts are made from other

⁶⁰ James A. Butler, "Christopher Wordsworth and the Text of *Home at Grasmere*," *Wordsworth Circle* 3, no. 3 (1972): 179.

⁶¹ Wordsworth, "Revision as Making," 108.

⁶² Anthony J. Harding, "Forgetfulness and the Poetic Self in 'Home at Grasmere'," *Wordsworth Circle* 22, no. 2 (1991): 109.

⁶³ Wu, "Acts of Butchery," 157.

Wordsworths, and moreover that this process models how the English poet began to achieve a representativeness that made him seem a viable global export.

Conclusion

In the first three chapters of this project I analyze writers who in their recourse to Wordsworth's poetry negotiate the vast distance, geographical and cultural, between themselves and the English poet. In this final chapter, the distance is not nearly so great; Jonathan Wordsworth, for instance, was not only a white Englishman associated with one of the most English of all institutions, Oxford, but was also a Wordsworth, a name that would seem to prepare one for a life in literary studies even if it did not already designate a canonical English poet.⁶⁴ Jonathan negotiated that lesser distance as an editor and critic and thus had a direct effect on what constituted William Wordsworth. However, the aim of this project has been to suggest that our "Wordsworth" is more than a collection of such direct effects, new textual variants, and critical essays: he is the readings that his afterlives unlock.

Jonathan Wordsworth's career as an editor, teacher, and interpreter of William Wordsworth is one of these afterlives, a genealogical legacy that helps us to recognize a poet whose individual talent, both in verse and in practice, depended on a larger community of readers and scribes who, across time, rallied themselves under the Wordsworth patronymic. But where Jonathan innovated the family business model to supplant and speak for the ancestor whose work he studied, his contemporary Richard Wordsworth, William's great-great-grandson, adhered to an older model of protectionism and memorialization—a model in which Wordsworth became a global entity while remaining the visible property of a select cadre. This equation is a

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Hartman gets at the resonance of the Wordsworth name with his chapter titled "Words, Wish, Worth." Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 90.

familiar backdrop for the chapters of this dissertation, and many forces contributed to its longevity, as I discussed in the introduction. But in turning to Richard Wordsworth, I want to conclude by emphasizing that this equation is also a product manufactured continually by the Wordsworth family, from the nineteenth through the twenty-first century. Wordsworth's place in the canon of English literature is defined simultaneously by the tension explicit in this equation and the influence of a temporally far-flung family bound by singular name.

Richard Wordsworth, a professional actor who died in 1993, is responsible for founding the Wordsworth Summer Conference, an international camp that convenes every year at Rydal Mount, where William Wordsworth lived with his family for most of his life. Richard conceived of the conference when he saw the familial property listed for sale in the *London Times*: “Wordsworth Home for Sale. Outstanding Tourist Possibilities, or Ideal Family Home.”⁶⁵ The National Trust had been wary of selling it to him, believing (correctly, it seems) that “we have enough Wordsworth shrines. Rydal Mount would make three, or four counting the grave.” But according to Marilyn Gaull, who helped organize the nascent conference, Richard envisioned not a shrine but rather “a center of creative, intellectual, and social activity, poetry readings, plays, lectures, concerts, even a flat for visiting scholars and writers.” (A shrine it became nevertheless, complete with a gift shop selling “daffodil pencils, post cards, book marks, ash trays, and recipe books.”⁶⁶)

On one hand, Richard's goal was merely to protect Rydal Mount; he feared that if he didn't purchase the estate it would become “a camping ground surrounded by car parks.”⁶⁷ He

⁶⁵ Marilyn Gaull, "'Abundant Recompense': A History of the Wordsworth Summer Conference," *Wordsworth Circle* 37, no. 3 (2006): 98.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶⁷ "For Richard Wordsworth: A Memorial," *Wordsworth Circle* 25, no. 2 (1994): 60.

fretted similarly about Grasmere, knowing that the village depended on tourists for its survival but regretting that “tourists treat as a tourist attraction what for him is a place of worship.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, he was clearly devoted to memorializing his ancestor; in celebration of Wordsworth’s bicentenary he took his dramatic monologue “The Bliss of Solitude” on the road, performing the collection of stories about Wordsworth and his contemporaries for audiences across America and the British Commonwealth. In this spirit he conducted the summer conference, insisting that the event be “carried off without visible effort and without rehearsals, like a great two-week theatrical improvisation.”⁶⁹ This sort of naturalized performativity accords with Richard’s desire to avoid turning Rydal Mount into a shrine, though as with the gift shop his performance of “The Bliss of Solitude” had that very effect.

Marilyn Gaull describes Richard’s dramatic monologue as “a poetical autobiography of William, whose resemblance he captured so powerfully in the Rydal drawing room where Wordsworth himself had read the poems that, at the end, when William dies, everyone cried, including Richard,” and this description falls prey to the same nominal confusion that plagues some of Jonathan Wordsworth’s work.⁷⁰ As a dramatic monologue, the performance separates Richard who composed the text from the speakers who appear in it; in Gaull’s version, however, this separation dissipates under the appearance of familial relatedness. Richard’s performances of “The Bliss of Solitude” enact a clear circular heredity: across Britain and the United States the poet’s direct descendant, one who looked much like his famous ancestor, pretended to be him on the stage, both in person and in poetic persona, while also voicing the roles of Dorothy

⁶⁸ Judith Davis Miller, “Home at Grasmere: A Conversation with Richard Wordsworth,” *Sacred Heart University Review* 8, no. 1/2 (1987): 69.

⁶⁹ Gaull, “Abundant Recompense,” 99.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Wordsworth and other family friends like Thomas De Quincey. This circularity deepens into a genetic vortex, however, when Richard Wordsworth assumes the role at Rydal Mount; at a conference he arranged in honor of the poet; on an ancestral estate he secured from the National Trust; in a room where William Wordsworth had read poems that his great-great-grandson later performed in his guise; in a performance that concluded with a break in character and the fourth wall as Richard the actor openly mourned the death of William the character (as well as William the person, perhaps) with the audience he had helped to assemble. In this moment of shared mourning and veneration Richard's living, crying body becomes separate from his ancestor's dead one in a final rejection of familial embodiment. In other words, Richard's highest evocation of pathos, the climax of his performance, arrives at the moment in the one-man show when the spell is broken, when Richard stops being William and weeps with his own contemporaries, his audience, his non-family.

Clearly, "The Bliss of Solitude" was viable as a performance because of Richard Wordsworth's family connections: the facial resemblance and the Wordsworth name. It also depended on Richard's aptitude as an actor, just as Jonathan Wordsworth's success as a scholar depended on his skills as a critic and editor. But unlike Jonathan, Richard's craft in this performance reaches its apex when he distinguishes himself from the forefather who made the performance viable, when the gendered norms that made Richard a Wordsworth and gave his performance credence fall away to reveal a man whose connection to William the poet is no different from those fostered by his audience members. And yet this leveling was the product of performance, one whose legitimacy depended on the visibility of Richard Wordsworth's genetic and nominal inheritance.

If it is difficult to separate Wordsworthian life from afterlife—does a minor death divide the *Lyrical Ballads* from *The Excursion*?—then in the case of Richard Wordsworth it is difficult to separate afterlife from life. In her obituary, Marilyn Gaull says that Richard’s “major legacy, a rare one few people achieve, is a living one, the conference, the occasion of meeting, the life of exchange, the activities and style that he created as the Wordsworth tradition.”⁷¹ The tension in this sentence is between “legacy”—something that takes over after death or departure—and “living” and “life.” In Gaull’s formulation Richard’s legacy was not to reanimate “the Wordsworth tradition” but rather to “create[]” it, to birth it, to fashion out of “activities and style” a tradition that does not clearly represent William over Richard Wordsworth, or Richard over William, but adheres to both. Now dead, Richard Wordsworth generated a living Wordsworthian tradition. In this circuit of life and afterlife Wordsworth resides, propelled along by descendants who shared his name and kept him alive.

Toward the end of *Home at Grasmere*, the speaker attempts to negotiate between his solitary genius and the expanding community in which he has been a new and tentative member:

Possessions have I, wholly, solely mine,
Something within, which yet is shared by none—
Not even the nearest to me and most dear—...
I would impart it; I would spread it wide,
Immortal in the world which is to come. (897-99, 901-902)

The speaker is insistent that he holds responsibility for distributing his now un-shared possessions—“I would impart it; I would spread it wide”—but the “immortal” life that his poetry achieved went far beyond a realization of his own efforts. The world which was to come fostered

⁷¹ “For Richard Wordsworth,” 61.

Wordsworths who created and reanimated their ancestor variously. The sum of those reanimations exceeds the labor of the Wordsworth family, clearly; the hegemonic “gun to the head” approach that Jamaica Kincaid describes in relation to the colonial dissemination of English ideology is not easily traceable to the efforts of any particular Wordsworth. But the same logic that made Wordsworth’s poetry a part of that ideology—a logic of collapse and representativeness—guided the Wordsworth family’s relationship to their figurehead and their textual, editorial, and collaborative efforts on his behalf. Since the nineteenth century the family business has been, for better or worse, to keep Wordsworth alive.

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