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"Companions of Nature Were We". A Dialogue Through Memory in the Wye Valley

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ABSTRACT

The 19th century saw growing interest in walking tours. Among these wanderers were Dorothy and William Wordsworth who embarked on many journeys together. However, one profoundly impacted both their lives and English Literature: the Wye Valley. This experience inspired one of English Literature's most renowned meditative poems, "Tintern Abbey" (1798), which I thoroughly examined, interpreting it as a hidden dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense culminating in William's meaningful address to Dorothy. Specifically, the last 48 lines constitute the most heartfelt tribute Wordsworth ever made to his sister, framed as a plea to memory. Contrary to most scholarly views of Dorothy as a phantom or a self-projection of the Bard, I emphasised how these lines reveal the depth of their relationship. I provided direct literary support, noting that Dorothy embraced this tribute 34 years later in "Thoughts on My Sick-Bed" (1832-3) and further enriched the dialogue through memory in "Loving and Liking: Irregular Verses Addressed to a Child" (1832).

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ABSTRACT

The 19th century saw growing interest in walking tours. Among these wanderers were Dorothy and William Wordsworth who embarked on many journeys together. However, one profoundly impacted both their lives and English Literature: the Wye Valley. This experience inspired one of English Literature's most renowned meditative poems, "Tintern Abbey" (1798), which has been thoroughly explored as a hidden dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense, culminating in William's meaningful address to Dorothy. Specifically, the last 48 lines constitute the most heartfelt tribute Wordsworth ever made to his sister, framed as a plea to memory. Contrary to most scholarly views of Dorothy as a phantom or a self-projection of the Bard, these lines can be read as revealing the depth of their relationship. Direct literary support for this reading emerges in Dorothy's own work, as she embraced this tribute 34 years later in "Thoughts on My Sick-Bed" (1832–3) and further enriched the dialogue through memory in "Loving and Liking: Irregular Verses Addressed to a Child" (1832).

KEYWORDS: Dorothy Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey, Memory, Gender Studies, Romanticism

No other holiday that the brother and sister embarked on together "left a deeper mark either upon their own memories, or upon English poetry"(De Selincourt 1923, 88). Thus, wrote Ernest De Selincourt with reference to the Tour of the Wye Valley that Dorothy and William Wordsworth undertook between 10th and 13th July 1798. De Selincourt was indeed right. This experience is etched into English literature as an emblem of the bond between brother and sister, their connection with nature, and their place within a universal, timeless dimension. Although both documented their experiences, Dorothy's account was lost due to the original manuscript of her *Alfoxden Journal* being mishandled during William Knight's editorial practices. As admitted by Knight "a sentence or paragraph, or several sentences and paragraphs [...] are left out"(Knight 1904, viii), leaving us without Dorothy's direct testimony, which would have been intriguing. However, her brother's work has reached us, and his "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"[1] is indeed one of the most significant meditative poems ever produced in the course of English Literature, and what is further significant is that he paid a heartfelt tribute to what Dorothy had been to him ever since she moved with him at Racedown in 1795.

Memory holds a central and dual role in "Tintern Abbey", in fact, as Heidi Thomson puts it, Wordsworth created a "myth of memory"(2001, 535). In the opening stanza, William reflects on his visit to the Wye Valley five years earlier, as indicated in the first lines. Although Dorothy was standing beside him, she is initially excluded from the narrative, as he speaks in the first-person singular. However, despite her absence, Dorothy is the heart of "Tintern Abbey", as will be later explored. Supporting this view, Marks argues that she "emerges as the most significant individual in "Tintern Abbey"" (2004, 47). Almost equally significant is Nature which not only permeates the layers of Wordsworth's being but also shapes the lines of his poem, whose rhythm follows a wavelike motion (Hartman 1971) that rolls through all natural things, mirroring the ebb and flow of memory. This motion becomes particularly evident in the first section, where, through the repetition of the adverb "again", Wordsworth "sets into motion the waves of the poem"(Marks 2004, 49), coherently linking each natural element to the preceding one: "again I hear / These *waters*"(2-3), "again / Do I behold these steep and lofty *cliffs*"(4-5), "I again repose / […] and view / These plots of *cottage-ground*"(9-11) and "again I see / These *hedge-rows*" [2](15-16). The use

[1] Direct quotations to the poem are drawn from *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*. Chatham, Kent. Wordsworth Editions Ltd. From now on, I will refer to the poem as "Tintern Abbey".
[2] my italics to highlight the connection of the natural (and artificial) elements in the landscape.

of "again" evokes the act of recollection–each repetition suggesting a memory slowly resurfacing, like an elusive recollection that begins to emerge but slips back into oblivion just before reaching full clarity, mimicking the act of meditation. This interplay between memory and nature is further emphasised by the spatial and temporal distance between Wordsworth and the landscape. However, while standing on a steep cliff alongside the silent figure of Dorothy, Wordsworth gazes at the valley from a distance; yet, he offers a vivid description of details, such as "these orchard-tufts, / Which at this season, with their unripe fruits" (11–12), that he could not plausibly observe from such a vantage point. Thus, what his sight could not reach, his imagination could, and I would infer his memory too. Yet this wavering rhythm, like memory itself, is elusive: just as it approaches a powerful climax, Wordsworth interrupts its force, a mechanism that simultaneously sustains and subdues the poem's emotional *momentum*. As a quasi-climactic point is reached, Wordsworth introduces an understatement to relax the rhythm–or perhaps to temper his own internal turmoil. This delicate balance is at play in lines 36-38: "Nor less, I trust, / To them I may have owed another gift, / Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,", here the semi-colon breaks the solemnity of the assertion, it tempers it, creating a contemplative pause. Moreover, all throughout the poem, the use of commas is strategic as by breaking the flow into smaller contemplative units, it mimics the process of recollection as it unfolds, inviting us to linger on the significance of each phrase; thus, enhancing the meditative tone of the poem.

Reading further, Wordsworth mentions "These beauteous forms"(23), which he was now seeing again after five years. They had sustained him through the weary hours of city life. The beauty of nature, or more precisely the memory of it, gave him "sensations sweet / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart"(28-29). Beyond this solace, these memories deepened his understanding of life and his sense of the interconnectedness of all things. He further asserts that these memories held an even greater significance, as they represent what he called "spots of time", moments of intense emotional or spiritual experience that have a regenerative power, allowing the Poet to reconnect with his past and find meaning in the present. Those spots of time "retain / A renovating virtue" and, while amidst "trivial occupations" or ordinary life, they allow our minds to be nourished, and said virtue "enables us to mount, / When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen." (Wordsworth 1969, 577). This idea is reflected in the poem, since Wordsworth writes:

> To them I may have owed another gift,
> Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul: (37-47)

However, through the final assertion and the use of the adverb "perhaps" (32), it becomes apparent that Wordsworth is not in control, highlighting a lack of individual poetic autonomy. This idea aligns with Marks' claim that being "laid asleep" in body and becoming a "living soul" suggests "how little control the poetic subject has"(2004, 52). Marks further argues that although Wordsworth might desire these powerful moments and insights, he simultaneously loses control as a subject. Dorothy, however, is present, ready to prevent his fragmentation and to guide him out of his internal turmoil. I would further infer that, although unmentioned, Dorothy is not only physically beside him, but also present in his thoughts. She rescues William, she establishes his poetic identity and, surpassing Nature, she is his "most beneficent force"(Marks 2004, 53). Indeed, William's personal and poetic stability was due to Dorothy, as proven by their intertwined lives. Dorothy served as his first and favourite critic to whom he submitted his drafts[3] and the person he relied on most. She provided him with an unconditional support, boosting his (at times) faltering self-confidence and accompanying him throughout the journey of life. Endorsing Marks' assertion, I would further add that he was dependant on Dorothy in present, past and future dimensions. He needed her approving gaze to understand the value of his perceptions and to pursue his ideals. Marks has observed that "Dorothy chooses to establish William" (2004, 53); this perspective may be extended to suggest that Dorothy played a crucial role in shaping William's identity as the great Romantic poet recognized

[3] In De Selincourt's edition of the *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, there are many examples of the influence Dorothy had in the drafting of William's works. The earliest example is in the *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805),* and it dates back to 16th February 1793; in this letter to her bosom friend Jane Pollard, Dorothy remarkably points out the strengths as well as the faults of the poems "The Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches", which Wordsworth later amended, following Dorothy's suggestions.

today.

"We see into the life of things"(50); thus, culminates Wordsworth's transcendent elaboration on memory and nature. This statement emphasises the pivotal role these memories of the Wye Valley played in helping him endure "the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world" (40-41), emphasising the restorative and transformative power of nature. Revived through memory and imagination, this power becomes even more significant, deepening the Poet's appreciation of the intrinsic beauty and significance of the world. Returning to a fearful "empty now"(Quinney 1997, 146), Wordsworth expresses concern that the natural scenes previously described may no longer evoke in him the same sensations that once sustained his inner life during periods of separation from those landscapes. However, once again on the steep cliff "the picture of the mind revives again(63), and his fear instantly disappears, replaced by relief: nothing has changed. Wordsworth not only finds comfort for his "half-extinguished thought[s]"(60) and for "the sense / Of present pleasure"(64-65), but also a recognition of the moment's significance for his future memories. He asserts that the "pleasing thoughts" of the present will provide "life and food / For future years"(65-67), illustrating a shift in his perception of nature: what he once experienced as youthful "dizzy ruptures" has matured into a profound "sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused". Nature's influence penetrates all the layers of his being, leading him to an even more profound realisation of its universal force as "A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things"(102-104). The power of nature is amplified by the mind and imagination, which rework sensory perceptions, thus blending it with creative interpretation to reshape how we experience the natural world. Wordsworth suggests that through imagination and the power of memory, nature's beauty can be elevated to a higher level of sublimity. It is the recollection at a later stage, through memory, joined to imagination which ascends the perception of nature to a higher level of intensity and power. Hence, nature is to Wordsworth "The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being"(111-113). The concept of wavelike motion I mentioned earlier is reinforced by Wordsworth's use of the word "anchor". He desires not to be at the mercy of these waves; rather, he wishes for his past experiences and future legacy to remain firmly anchored. He expresses a need for something that provides stability. And who, besides Nature, served as a stable presence in his life? Surely Dorothy who finally enters the narrative framework.

Almost at the conclusion of the poem, Wordsworth finally reveals that he is with his sister, Dorothy, and he introduces the second significance that memory holds within the poem: the fear for the loss of memory which brings to a simultaneous creation of a future memory in the person of Dorothy. His sister is in the Wye Valley for the first time and The Bard finds in her voice "the language of my former heart"(120), reading in the light of her eyes his "former pleasure"(121) when he used to look on nature as under the influence of the already mentioned "dizzy ruptures". Now he perceives in her what he once embodied, and discerns in the disparity between them what she will become. Dorothy is regarded as William's strength as she had a profound influence in his literary production and in his spiritual and emotional growth. At present, his sister holds a significance for him similar to that which Nature possessed five years earlier, before he attained the level of maturity in which he now finds himself. This idea is conveyed through a parallel apostrophe to the sylvan Wye in the third stanza – "O sylvan Wye!"(58) – and the one addressed to Dorothy in the final stanza – "My dear, dear Sister!"(124). While asking Dorothy for assistance in recapturing the past, he also assures her of a future even richer than his present maturity, thus intertwining past, present, and future in a wholly human context of mutual support. He also wishes that Dorothy experiences nature at its fullest: "Therefore let the moon / Shine on thee in thy solitary walk; / And let the misty mountain-winds be free / To blow against thee"(137-140) before the maturity he is now living will reach her, and those "dizzy ruptures" will turn into "sober pleasure"(142) and her memory will "be as a dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies"(144-145), hence she should remember him and his exhortations. A further plea to memory is expressed in the closing lines of the poem:

> If I should be where I no more can hear
> Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
> Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
> That on the banks of this delightful stream
> We stood together; and that I, so long
> A worshipper of Nature, hither came
> Unwearied in that service: rather say
> With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
> Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
> That after many wanderings, many years
> Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
> And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake! (150-162)

He pleads with Dorothy for the gift of memory, earnestly asking her to remember him and their visit to the Wye Valley as one of the most cherished events in his lifetime. He emphasises that this visit, occurring five years later than the first one, held profound significance for him, but the experience was even more precious because Dorothy accompanied him. He designates her as the custodian of past, present, and future memories. As Langbaum argued, in these last five lines, Wordsworth connected "in one concrete vision himself, his sister and the landscape, their love for each other and for nature, nature's love for them, and past, present and future, time and timelessness"(1957, 45).

However, "disagreement about Dorothy's place in the poem encapsulates the positions of the major critics of romantic poetry" (Soderholm 1995, 309). Most contemporary scholars disagree with Langbaum, as they consider this address to Dorothy merely fictitious, serving as a functional purpose to elicit the reader's sympathies. Consequently, they perceive William's address to Dorothy as lacking authenticity, even suggesting that it stems from his masculinist perspective and narcissism. According to this view, William projected his own self-image onto Dorothy, regarding her merely as a medium for conveying a powerful message to posterity through the redemptive agency of memory. Elizabeth Fay claimed that Wordsworth portrays the woman solely as a supportive companion, since he addressed to Dorothy, not expecting a dialogue with her (1992) and perceiving her only as a "second or prior self […] [who] repeats and sustains the primary self through a doubled voice"(Fay 1995, 25); thus, not granting Dorothy her own voice. John Barrell argues that William's address to Dorothy is a way of stating his superiority over her, otherwise "Dorothy's growth to autonomous subjectivity will not […] simply recapitulate Wordsworth's own; it will precipitate, in him, a less comfortable subject-position than he now claims to occupy"(Barrell 1988, 162). Bromwich adopts a harsher stance and asserts that William "has not the slightest intention of making Dorothy a gift of her own experience" since he "was jealous of the strength Dorothy could enjoy without his wisdom. He took his revenge by proving how much she would need his wisdom when at last her childlike powers gave out like his"(1991, 23).

Deviating from the opinions expressed by the aforementioned scholars, I would argue that William's "Tintern Abbey" can indeed be seen as a dialogue, though a hidden one. Wolfson, in *The questioning presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the interrogative mode in Romantic poetry,* suggests that the poem might be described

as a "radically lyricized version of interrogative dialogue: not a monologue but half of a dialogue with a questioning voice that, though silent, affects the way the poet speaks as if he were answering, or answering back"(1986, 61). Building on Wolfson's assertion, I turned to Bakhtin's theory of hidden dialogicality, which I believe offers a richer and compelling framework for understanding the invisible, yet deeply influential, dialogue in "Tintern Abbey":

> Imagine a dialogue of two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are omitted, but in such a way that the general sense is not at all violated. The second speaker is present invisibly, his words are not there, but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker. We sense that this is a conversation, although only one person is speaking, and it is a conversation of the most intense kind, for each present, uttered word responds and reacts with its every fiber to the invisible speaker, points to something outside itself, beyond its own limits, to the unspoken words of another person. (2013, 197)

This dynamic closely parallels that of *Tintern Abbey*, where Wordsworth's meditative reflections are shaped by the implicit presence of an interlocutor, namely his sister Dorothy, who is only explicitly addressed in the concluding section of the poem. Although Dorothy's voice is not directly articulated, her presence permeates the text, guiding its emotional and philosophical unfolding. Wordsworth's reflections on nature, memory, and time appear influenced by her, albeit implicitly.

Moreover, it may be argued that the poem functions as a form of homage to Dorothy, who, as Marks observes, "filters all memory, experience, and recapitulation of memory and experience for William," such that he "not only asserts the necessity of her presence, but depends on it"(Marks 2004, 49). Considering the biographical facts and the close familial and artistic bond between them, supported by the evidence provided by a lifetime spent together, I am convinced that addressing Dorothy was a heartfelt dedication. This view is supported by Thomson who claims that "this address is invested with a degree of proximity, addressed as it is to a living, present person, and an intimacy which turns us as readers almost into voyeurs", we are intruders since the speaker "wants Dorothy, and not us, to hear and remember his exhortations"(2001, 539). In addition, I would also like to refute the accusations of masculinist interiority levelled against William, as the answer to such accusations lies within the poetry

itself. William wishes for Dorothy to "let the moon / Shine on thee in thy solitary walk" which in the 19th century was a rather odd statement, since a man would have never wished for a woman to continue taking solitary walks under the moon, as it was not permitted for women to go out alone, or rather, it was not well regarded, especially at night. In this regard, Wordsworth distinguishes himself from many of his contemporaries, revealing a perspective that may be considered ahead of its time. Although he could have held a misogynistic perspective, in line with the social and cultural norms of the era that viewed women as subordinate to men[4], he never compelled Dorothy to do anything (based on the information available to us today), not even to decide against asserting herself as a writer. Dorothy is not merely a static figure in William's life, but a dynamic one. It is thanks to her presence that William attained emotional stability and security, enabling him to compose his greatest works, including "Tintern Abbey", which remains one of the few poems William never revised or revisited from its initial publication as the climactic poem in *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, his *annus mirabilis*[5], through its final appearance in the collected edition of 1849-50. This demonstrates how Wordsworth was satisfied with his creation, as was rarely the case. In fact, Nabholtz underlines that "For a poet almost compulsively given to reviewing and revising his verses with each successive edition, it is perhaps not insignificant that Wordsworth let "Tintern Abbey" stand unchanged"(1974, 229). Endorsing the statement, I would infer that he was convinced of what he had written and that his tribute to Dorothy was truly heartfelt and genuine. One could say that he wrote it using the 'language of the heart', with which Dorothy

[4] According to coverture, a concept pertaining to the Anglo-saxon common law, women became legally subordinate to men; this meant that their legal existence as individuals was suspended under "marital unity", a legal construct in which the husband and wife were regarded as a singular entity—namely, the husband. Moreover "The husband exercised almost exclusive power and responsibility […] Coverture rendered a woman unable to sue or be sued on her own behalf or to execute a will without her husband's consent and, unless some prior specific provision separating a woman's property from her husband's had been made, stripped a woman of control over real and personal property" (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Coverture"), accessed 07/05/2024 https://www.britannica.com/topic/coverture. This subordination was not only applied to marital relationships, but also to familiar ones, hence why it is relevant for my purpose.

[5] Reading the letters of the Wordsworths, it becomes evident how Dorothy's presence influenced William's poetic production in 1798, a year that culminated in the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. In a letter dated March 5, 1798, Dorothy writes to Mary Hutchinson that William's faculties seem to expand every day — he composes with much more facility than he did, as to the mechanism of poetry, and his ideas flow faster than he can express them" (EY, 176). The abbreviation EY refers to *The Early Letters Of William And Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805)* edited by Ernest De Selincourt.

was intimately acquainted. I would like to further the argument and assert that "The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being" is not only referred to Nature, but also to Dorothy to whom Wordsworth owed much both personally and artistically. Among these reasons is his own acknowledgment that "she gave me eyes, she gave me ears."(Wordsworth 1807, 54)

These critics refuse to entertain the possibility that Dorothy and William were mutually gifting each other with their individual experiences, indeed, bestowing upon each other the very essence of their shared experiences through poetry or prose. If these critics were to devote more attention to Dorothy's life and writings, they would recognize that this was a gift she embraced, just as her brother accepted the gift of her journals to draw upon certain individuals and imagery for his poetry. As mentioned by Soderholm (1995, 314), Levinson and other critics perceive Dorothy only as a phantom figure (Levinson 1986, 49), and likewise, William is viewed solely as a reactionary egomaniac. They desire for "Tintern Abbey" to be more dialogic, suggesting that Dorothy should be granted an opportunity to contribute her discourse. She had the opportunity indeed, but her reply arrived many years later, quietly, yet leaving a significant imprint. Her brother, in the last 48 lines of "Tintern Abbey", had overtly (and covertly) asked her to appeal to her memory and remember him and that moment when together they observed the scenic beauty of the Wye Valley and this is exactly what she did years later, in her sickbed when she composed "Thoughts on My Sick-Bed" (1832-3), which deserves to be quoted in full:

> And has the remnant of my life
> Been pilfered of this sunny Spring?
> And have its own prelusive sounds
> Touched in my heart no echoing string?
>
> Ah! say not so—the hidden life
> Couchant within this feeble frame
> Hath been enriched by kindred gifts,
> That, undesired, unsought-for, came
>
> With joyful heart in youthful days
> When fresh each season in its Round
> I welcomed the earliest Celandine
> Glittering upon the mossy ground;

With busy eyes I pierced the lane
In quest of known and *un*known things,
—The primrose a lamp on its fortress rock,
The silent butterfly spreading its wings,

The violet betrayed by its noiseless breath,
The daffodil dancing in the breeze,
The carolling thrush, on his naked perch,
Towering above the budding trees.

Our cottage-hearth no longer our home,
Companions of Nature were we,
The Stirring, the Still, the Loquacious, the Mute
To all we gave our sympathy.

Yet never in those careless days
When spring-time in rock, field, or bower
Was but a fountain of earthly hope
A promise of fruits & the *splendid* flower.

No! then I never felt a bliss
That might with *that* compare
Which, piercing to my couch of rest,
Came on the vernal air.

When loving Friends an offering brought,
The first flowers of the year,
Culled from the precincts of our home,
From nooks to Memory dear.

With some sad thoughts the work was done.
Unprompted and unbidden,
But joy it brought to my *hidden* life,
To consciousness no longer hidden.

I felt a Power unfelt before,
Controlling weakness, languor, pain;
It bore me to the Terrace walk
I trod the Hills again; —

No prisoner in this lonely room,
I *saw* the green Banks of the Wye,
Recalling thy prophetic words,
Bard, Brother, Friend from infancy!

No need of motion, or of strength,
Or even the breathing air;
—I thought of Nature's loveliest scenes;

And with Memory I was there.[6]

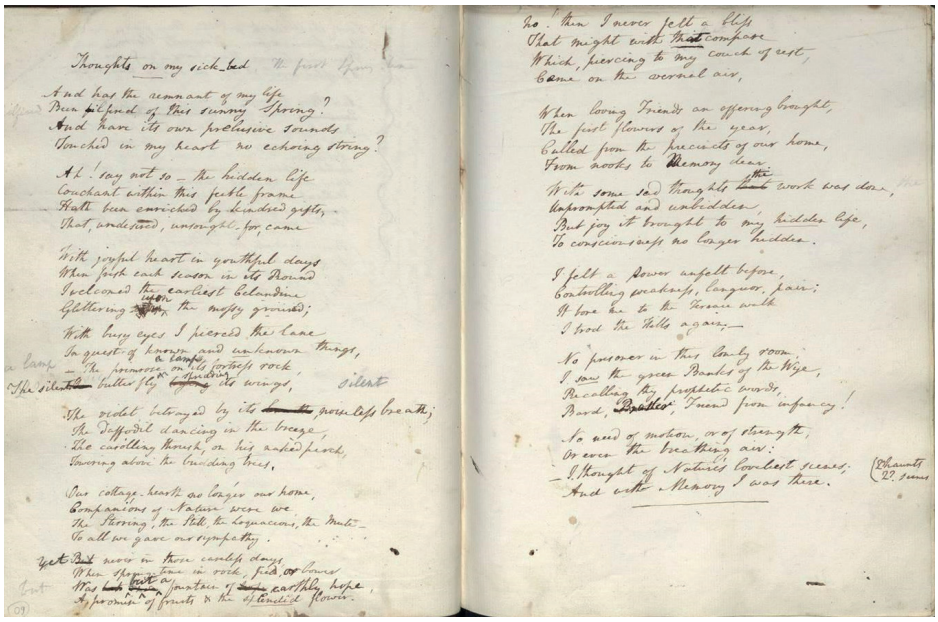

Image from Dove Cottage Manuscript 120, Courtesy of the Wordsworth Trust https://dorothywordsworth2019.byu.edu/item/dorothy-wordsworth-thoughts-on-my-sick-bed-1832/

The poem was written on her sickbed in Rydal, when, while her mind still allowed her to create, her body functions were compromised by severe internal inflammation and by serious swelling of the legs and ankles which deprived

[6] https://www.brinkerhoffpoetry.org/poems/thoughts-on-my-sick-bed

her almost entirely of the power of walking. Nonetheless, the power of her mind remained potent, if occasionally faltering; yet this poem, which through memory places her in direct dialogue with William's "Tintern Abbey", locates her once again on "the green banks of the Wye". The poem originated from the sight of spring flowers "culled from the precincts of our home" and brought to her by her family, which originated a journey through memory regarding her enjoyments of nature. Dorothy wonders if growing older has made it harder for her to enjoy the beauty of spring and nature. Her hopes are reignited by the redemptive power of memory, which transports her back to the gratifications nature once provided her. At present, through memory, and by engaging in what her brother termed a recollection in tranquillity[7], she enjoys them in a more mature manner, as she says "the hidden life / Couchant within this feeble frame / Hath been enriched by kindred gifts, / That, undesired, unsought-for, came". Thanks to the power of the mind, she goes back to past pleasures, remembering the joy of discovering spring flowers and observing nature's wonders. With her descriptive language and thoughtful introspection, Dorothy shows how nature has deeply influenced her life and memories across the seasons of life. What is significant is that she gives evidence that her outlook on nature has changed from the "dizzy ruptures" to "a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused", remembering William's reminder. Dorothy remembers some of the shared experiences which gave rise to some of William's masterpieces, whose inspiration was drawn from her own Journals or simply from experiences in childhood, as "the silent butterfly spreading its wings" or "the daffodil dancing in the breeze", respectively poetic images central to "The Butterfly" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud". She acknowledges the role she played in the creation of these poems. In the following stanza she indirectly mentions William including him in the statement "Companions of Nature were we". With the pronoun "we" it is evident how she refers to William and herself and establishes a dialogue (through memory) with him, since in the previous line she mentions the Cottage[8], the one they have always dreamt of sharing after many years of separation, which now is no longer their home. This statement may be interpreted in two ways:

[7] The poem originated from the sight of spring flowers, which prompted Dorothy to embark on a journey through memory, revisiting her past enjoyments of nature. From a present, tangible natural experience, she was led into a reflective process that rekindled a past pleasure, now experienced with greater emotional depth. In this way, she aligns with her brother's concept of "emotion recollected in tranquillity", engaging in a process of introspective reflection that enhances the intensity of her recollected feelings.

[8] Dove Cottage at Grasmere where they lived from 1800 to 1808.

on the one hand, as a literal reference to the loss of the Cottage following their departure; on the other, as a symbolic expression of her longing for reunion after years of separation, since for Dorothy, the attachment to the Cottage was fundamentally rooted in her desire to be with William. Therefore, the cottage could represent their life together, as a sort of metonym to represent the loss of the early times when they lived together before Mary came along. The last three stanzas are the most meaningful with regard to the dialogue initiated in *Tintern Abbey*. It is in these final stanzas that Bakhtin's theory of hidden dialogicality, finds its strongest resonance. The hidden interlocutor is finally revealed to be Dorothy, who explicitly gives voice to the exchange, initiated by William in 1798. Dorothy recalls the joy that memory "brought to [her] *hidden* life" and to her "consciousness", which is no longer "hidden". The repetition of the word *hidden* in two consecutive lines is particularly significant: it indicates that she vividly remembers her brother's exhortations, which flash upon her mind thanks to the enduring power of memory. This, in turn, reinforces her position as the hidden interlocutor of William's "Tintern Abbey". These memories made her feel a "Power unfelt before", helping her resist "weakness, languor, [and] pain", freeing her from the lonely confinement of her room, transporting her back to the Wye Valley, where she ultimately "*saw*[9] the green banks of the Wye". The stimulation of the mind through visual perception[10] is further elevated by the power of memory, which generates sensations even sweeter than those derived from direct sensory experience. She recalls the homage William paid her in 1798: Memory is helping her to go back in time to "Nature's loveliest scenes" without the need of "motion, or of strength". Everything lies in her mind and she is able to walk the untrodden ways, though incapacitated, thanks to the invigorating power of memory. Hence, I intend to state again that the dialogue started by William with his address to Dorothy is meant and meaningful to him. Furthermore, it is not a unidirectional dialogue as many scholars have argued because Dorothy's answer came and is equally powerful and significant, confirming the authenticity of said homage.

A further implicit response to William's call to memory is to be found in

[9] In italics because in the original Manuscript the word was underlined by Dorothy herself as can be seen by the image I provided.

[10] This is a reference to Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism* (1762), where he explores the various aspects influencing criticism and taste, including the role of pleasure. In discussing sensory pleasures, Kames asserts that responses derived from the eye and ear are more durable, as they stimulate the mind. He even considers such sensory experiences to be therapeutic, closely resembling intellectual pleasures.

"Loving and Liking: Irregular Verses Addressed to a Child"(1832) initially published by William in his *Poems* (1836) as "by My Sister". This poem, clearly addressed to children, deals with teaching them to love and like nature and their family and cherish them as a precious gift, as well as gratitude for blessings from God. The following lines are the ones worth discussing in relation to "Tintern Abbey":

> They lead you on to full content,
> And likings fresh and innocent,
> That store the mind, the memory feed,
> And prompt to many a gentle deed:
> But *likings* come, and pass away;
> 'Tis *love* that remains till our latest day:
> Our heavenward guide is holy love,
> And will be our bliss with saints above. [11]

"Loving and liking are the solace of life", they allow us to live every day of our life, however they "store the mind" and feed the memory for future years, contributing to its richness. Love and affection are portrayed as nurturing and essential for a fulfilling life. This theme is echoed in "Tintern Abbey" and Dorothy's subsequent response to it. In both, memory and love are intricately intertwined. William's plea to Dorothy to remember their shared experiences reflects the deep connection between memory and affection. Dorothy's eventual remembrance, 34 years later, further highlights the enduring power of their bond and the significance of memory in preserving moments of love and connection. This continuity of themes emphasises the profound impact of love and memory on their relationship and the narrative of their lives. In fact, as Dorothy claims "'Tis love that remains till our latest days" and it does indeed, for she and William were there for each other in times of need, especially when Dorothy fell ill and started to lose her memory, she still remembered her brother, her love for him and their early shared experience, as well as their earliest works. Therefore, love and memory are deeply intertwined: memory is driven by love, love is the primary force behind remembrance.

Once more, I would like to propose that Dorothy had been to William the personified embodiment of nature, as she was "The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral

[11] Wordsworth, Dorothy 1870. "Loving and Liking: Irregular Verses Addressed to a Child" in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. London. Moxon. pp. 335-337

being". Additionally, Dorothy did not want to assert her independence from "Tintern Abbey"'s lines or from her brother's works, which she clearly enjoyed remembering. I find it oversimplified to define Dorothy solely as William's projection, or to suggest that William imposes his identity onto Dorothy leaving her no room to establish her own poetic and personal identity. I firmly believe that William's numerous tributes to Dorothy were authentic; otherwise, he would have amended them, particularly in "Tintern Abbey". A further example which gives strength to this idea is to be found in a letter dated September 1848 to Reverend T.S. Howson, in which the Duke of Argyll recounts a visit to Rydal Mount where he witnessed Wordsworth, now an elderly man, passionately reciting "Tintern Abbey" in a voice that deeply impressed his listener as striking and beautiful. Although Mary Wordsworth was profoundly moved by the reading, Argyll himself felt somewhat uneasy in the presence of an intensity that almost seemed unnatural as the poet recited the lines addressed to his sister Dorothy. Only later he realized the significance of the words "My dear, dear friend" and "in thy wild eyes", which referred to Dorothy, now a frail woman on a wheelchair, whom he had seen earlier. The duke found it saddening to consider that the vacant, foolish gaze he had observed earlier belonged to the "wild eyes" of 1798[12]. This evidence strengthens the idea argued before, that the address was meaningful. Had it not been genuine, William's voice would have confidently continued reciting the verses mentioning Dorothy's "wild eyes"; that wilderness which had now shifted from her eyes to her mind, leaving her gaze empty. I am convinced that this projection of self was mutual, not unidirectional. Dorothy projected herself and her abilities into the writing of her Journals from which William drew inspiration. Additionally, in the constant help in drafting and copying William's poems, she often provided important suggestions and assistance, as evidenced by many manuscripts in which her corrections can be seen. Conversely, William contributed to Dorothy's education, he ensured she was free from any constraints imposed on her by previous guardians and provided patriarchal protection, allowing her to pursue activities she loved—reading, writing, and walking. He also granted her access to a literary world from which, as a woman, she would have otherwise been excluded. This concept of mutual exchange is also echoed by De Quincey, who witnessed it and remarked:

> his "Dorothy;" who naturally owed so much to the lifelong intercourse

[12] Letter from the Duke of Argyll to the Rev. T.S. Howson, September 1848. Portion of it is quoted in the Notes to De Selincourt's edition of Wordsworth's *Poetical Works Vol. II,* 517

> with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and the worshippers of this great poet, are become equally her debtors-that, whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendency, too stern, too austere, too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was—the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German charcoal-burners-that first couched his eye to the sense of beauty, humanized him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature, which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiness of its trunks. (De Quincey 1862, 135)

The depth of their relationship, both personal and artistic, was evident even to their contemporaries, as De Quincey's witness proves. Hence, William's address to Dorothy could not be considered fictitious or a self-projection; it was a tribute to the woman who stood by him, gave him eyes and ears, and shaped his poetic identity.

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