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# Does Medium Matter? Intertextualities in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*

Florence Widmer-Schnyder

Following the Enlightenment's Grand Tour that popularized travel as a means of gaining knowledge through experience, Britain's Romantics journeyed through Scotland, Wales and the Lake District in search of picturesque scenes and (mythical roots of) national identity. Amongst their travel narratives, Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1803/1874) stands out as a prime example of the contemporary endeavor to reproduce images of nature, the Self and the Other not only for pleasure but also for (poetic and political) inspiration.

A close reading of the *Recollections* traces the political-didactic subtexts of this female-authored narrative, while at the same time revealing the (proto-feminist) strategies Dorothy embraced to renegotiate the era's dominant aesthetic discourse. In a second step, a comparative analysis of scenes traces the textual ramifications between Dorothy's non-fictional travel narrative, William Wordsworth's fictional poetry, and S.T. Coleridge's notes to determine if, and to what extent, medium – or genre – influences content.

The history of travel is nearly as old as the history of mankind itself. In fact, the notion of traveling suffused human imagination long before the arrival of technological innovations allowed for longer journeys to far away places. This imaginary preoccupation with travel is reflected in the founding myths of most of the world's cultures and religions that depend on journey-based quest narratives and stories about exile and return: the two main Sanskrit epics at the basis of modern Hinduism, the *Ramayana* ("the travels of Rama") and the *Mahabharata*, for instance, are constructed around stories of exile; at the core of Judaism lies the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt; the spiritual growth of both the prophet Mohammad in Islamic tradition and Jesus Christ in Christian tradition hinge on travel that is tantamount to the spreading of their respective belief systems; and, in Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama's journeys through India provide inspiration for his spiritual quest to at-

tain Nirvana. Of long-reaching influence in Western literary culture, moreover, the ancient Greek epic poems the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* trace in great detail the impact of their respective heroes' journeys on the formation and destruction of (Greek) culture.

While from ancient times onward (fictionalized) travel has featured prominently in religions and myths from around the world, the European early modern period became increasingly defined by mankind's non-fictional travel in pursuit of a variety of goals: initially, to secure human subsistence (by finding arable land), then to acquire knowledge (through exploration) and to attain glory, power and wealth through encounters – ranging from friendly to hostile – and “exchanges” (of resources, goods, people from other geo-political settings). The joint efforts of Empire building and colonial expansion engaged in by the most powerful nations (including England, Spain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands) from the early seventeenth century onward provided ample political backing and economic motivation for journeys to the New World. At the same time, the Enlightenment's yearning for empirical data through exploring the world's phenomena made traveling a core virtue in the endeavor to increase that highly sought-after currency of human understanding. One of the era's most famous philosophers, John Locke, lent a particular justification to the act of traveling when he noted that knowledge is essentially derived from the impressions produced by the five human senses (in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690]). Traveling became desirable (at least for a gentleman-to-be) because it allowed all five senses to be immersed in new sensations of another socio-cultural setting and promoted the acquisition of a more “enlightened” state of mind.

During the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heyday of travel activity (English) travel for educational purposes culminated in the continental “Grand Tour” which, in turn, would open the sluice gates to nineteenth-century bourgeois travel and the twentieth-century phenomenon of mass-tourism.<sup>1</sup> The “Grand Tour” typically consisted of a visit to Paris, and possibly Geneva, crossing the Alps into Italy, seeing the ruins of classical Rome, admiring Italian art in Florence and Venice, and returning to Dover (with optional stops in Vienna and the German university towns of Berlin and Dresden) with memories and memorabilia to prove the experience. This is the type of journey Mary and Percy Shelley had in mind when they eloped to the continent in the summer of 1814, with Mary's half-sister Claire Clairmont in tow, and subsequently published their co-authored narrative *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817) about the experience.

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<sup>1</sup> For information on the “Grand Tour” see James Buzard.

The ceaseless conflicts between Britain and France in the roughly twenty-five years following the French Revolution (ca. 1790-1815) meant that during the Romantic period travel to France and the continent came to a near stand-still. As a consequence, Germany, Italy and Switzerland also saw fewer English travelers while, as Buzard notes (39 and 42-43), travel activity on British soil increased, with destinations such as the Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, the Scottish Isles, and Wales becoming most popular. These "Celtic fringe regions" offered breath-taking scenes of nature as well as glimpses of rural life relatively untouched by the social and technological developments of the early Industrial Revolution, observed by the Romantics with growing concern. At the same time, the proliferation of travel narratives (mostly from the Augustan age) – published by the likes of Sarah Murray, John Stoddart, Walter Scott, Samuel Johnson and his friend James Boswell – had established Scotland as a prime destination for Romantic travel.<sup>2</sup> Not to forget the work of James MacPherson, whose supposed "translations" of Ossianic epic poetry (that had appeared in the early 1760s) significantly aided in both fictionalizing and popularizing Celtic culture and Scotland itself (Stafford v).

Scottish tours, such as the one undertaken in 1803 by Dorothy and William Wordsworth together with, for part of the way, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, must be seen in the context of these recent political and literary developments. Another motivation for the Wordsworths' choice of destination can be located in the prevalent and quintessential Romantic ideology of individualization – the idea that each ethnic culture should look to its own social, cultural and linguistic past for artistic inspiration (voiced initially by the German Romantics and Herder, and later disseminated throughout Europe by Mme De Staël's seminal Romantic text *De l'Allemagne* [1810]).

In this essay I propose a close reading of Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1803/1874) side by side with contemporary texts that deal with travel experiences in the Scottish setting, including William Wordsworth's poetry collected in *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland I* (1803 [1807]), *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland II* (1814 [1827]),

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson published his *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* in 1775, his travel companion James Boswell published *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* in 1785, and John Stoddart's *Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners of Scotland During the Years 1799 and 1800* had become a standard guide book by the time the Wordsworths set out on their first Scottish tour – Dorothy cited it extensively in the third part of her journal. Also Sarah Murray's sensationalist "tour de force," the *Companion and Useful Guide* about, amongst other places, the Scottish Highlands, the Hebrides, parts of Yorkshire, and the Isle of Skye was published in 1810. For more details see Kyros Walker (*Recollections*) and Hubbard.



and Coleridge's *Scottish Notes* (*Notebooks*, 1794-1804 [1957]). In this case study about Romantic representations of Self and Other I am not concerned with the traditional genre distinctions between these texts nor, for that matter, am I overly concerned with the veracity of Dorothy Wordsworth's journal entries, or their relevance as biographical evidence for Wordsworthian scholarship. Rather, the aim of this essay is to outline how Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* constructs not only images of Scotland, but also of herself and, ostensibly, her brother William through the use of specific intertextual references and early instances of intermediality. I will therefore discuss instances of identity construction (of Self and Other) and representations of nature and culture in the *Recollections* in terms of their engagement with, or deconstruction of, a contemporary aesthetic discourse and the picturesque. To situate Dorothy's journal within its genre and gender expectations I will first look at the text as an example of Scottish travel literature written from a specifically English, female perspective. In a second step, I will trace the recurrent references to other texts – including the *Scottish Notes*, and the *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland I and II* – and to specific examples of visual art, and discuss these early instances of intertextuality and intermediality in terms of their effect on the reader, and on the images created of narrator/author, her companions, and the Other encountered.

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The intertextuality between Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections* and William Wordsworth's Scottish poems (in the two volumes of the *Memorials*) is clearly most apparent in the text passages extracted from Dorothy's journal that serve as explanatory notes or preambles to William's Scottish poems. There are cases where the site or scene evoked in the poem, or indeed the full meaning of the poetic lines in themselves, can only be gleaned from reading, side-by-side, Dorothy's preamble and William's lyrical text, as with, for instance, "Effusion: In the Pleasure-Ground on the Banks of the Bran, near Dunkeld" (1827) discussed below, or with "Stepping Westward" (1807). The extent to which ideas and tropes are exchanged and appropriated between the writings of brother and sister, however, is far greater and more complex than a cursory glance at the preambles and poems may suggest. A close reading of passages from Dorothy's journal and William's poems indeed provides compelling evidence of an ongoing process of cross-influencing between texts and collaboration between authors. This textual evidence speaks for itself, despite the efforts of numerous editors who eliminated

Dorothy's journal extracts from later editions in order to fashion William into a Romantic genius of exceptional talent whose lines were (supposedly) composed from poetic inspiration alone, rather than in response to the study of (women-authored) lines of prose.

Both Dorothy's *Recollections* and William's Scottish poems were written at a time when the activity of traveling had become concurrent with a search for the picturesque. The term "picturesque" was introduced into the English language in 1782 by the Reverend William Gilpin who, along with Mason, Gray, and Price, published several essays on the artistic value of the new aesthetic fashion gaining ground in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Yet the notion of the picturesque was also heavily influenced by Edmund Burke's ideas concerning the Beautiful and the Sublime, and by such eminent seventeenth-century landscape painters as Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa (Cuddon 666-667 and Dekker 36-37). These philosophers, poets, travel writers and painters shared a fascination with – and an urge to represent a vision of – landscapes, rural scenery, and nature, seemingly untouched by civilization and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. Travelers roamed the countryside in search of views that would provide sharp contrasts between soft shapes and dramatic, awe-inspiring sights, between light and shade, or between the old and the new in the hope of heightening their aesthetic and emotional experience. While Dorothy's *Recollections* acknowledge and simultaneously undercut this craze for an arranged and aestheticized view of nature, William's response to the picturesque tradition is both more serious and damning. In his *Guide to the Lakes* (1810) as well as in his poem "Effusion: In the Pleasure-Ground on the Banks of the Bran, near Dunkeld," (published in *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland II*) he criticizes the artificial framing of nature into a form of spectacle, and condemns its appropriation for an aesthetically and emotionally pleasing experience.

Dorothy's journal entry about their visit to the Duke of Athol's summer house – and the scene that inspired William's "Effusion" – is notable for the factual style used to record the appearance and effects of architecture, furniture, and interior decoration. Yet Dorothy's vocabulary use, seemingly playful and simple, contains slippages into an ironic tone that renders the passage more ambiguous and subversive:

Reached Dunkeld at about three o'clock. [. . .] Sent for the Duke's gardener after dinner, and walked with him into the pleasure grounds, intending to go the Falls [sic] of the Bran . . . we left the pleasure grounds, and crossing the river by a ferry, went up a lane on the hill opposite till we came to a locked gate by the road-side, through which we entered into another part of the Duke's pleasure-grounds bordering on the Bran, the glen being for a

considerable way – for ought I know, two miles – thriddled [sic] by gravel walks. The walks are quaintly enough intersected, here and there by a baby garden of fine flowers among the rocks and stones. The waterfall, which we came to see, warned us by a loud roaring that we must expect it; we were first, however, conducted into a small apartment, where the gardener desired us to look at a painting of the figure of Ossian, which, while he was telling us the story of the young artist who performed the work, disappeared, parting in the middle, flying asunder as if by the touch of magic, and lo! we are at the entrance of a splendid room, which was almost dizzy and alive with water-falls, that tumbled in all directions – the great cascade, which was opposite to the window that faced us, being reflected in innumerable mirrors upon the ceiling and against the walls. We both laughed heartily, which, no doubt, the gardener considered as high commendation, for he was very eloquent in pointing out the beauties of the place. (*Recollections* 173-174)

In this passage the repetitious mention of the Duke's pleasure grounds effects an identification of the aristocracy (the Duke) with groomed and well-maintained gardens (pleasure grounds) serving as a source of (artificial) pleasure that stands in stark opposition to the rural scenery of wild beauty favored by the Romantics and the Wordsworths. The Duke's "baby garden," while on a surface level referring to the beginning stages of the newly planted garden, also carries belittling overtones, evoking images of immaturity and perhaps incapability in correlation to its owner. Dorothy also notes that the gardener "desired [them] to look at a painting of the figure of Ossian" – a wording implying that the Wordsworths themselves did not notice the painting nor would they have chosen to dwell on its presence had they not been invited to do so. The mirrored room, in turn, could only be entered after the portrait of Ossian had "disappeared, parting in the middle, flying asunder as if by the touch of magic . . ." and, as a result of mirrors strategically mounted on the walls and ceilings of the viewing room, it "was almost dizzy and alive with waterfalls, that tumbled in all directions . . ." (*Recollections* 174). Here again, the vocabulary – "flying asunder as if by the touch of magic, and lo! we are at the entrance of a splendid room," – together with the recorded response of laughter, deconstructs the contrived picturesque appearance and instead paints a picture of ridiculous fair-ground entertainment. Bohls identifies this "'almost' . . . sublime" passage as an example of the "troubling continuity between the kitschy and the tasteful" that she observes in the Wordsworths' tone (185). Dorothy's entry, I contend, goes beyond a mere continuity in its negative evaluation of the Duke's propensity toward superficial, cheap, and exaggerated thrills. His love of "kitsch" rather than of "real," genuine nature has led him astray; the taste of the moneyed upper classes is not to be trusted.

William's "Effusion" takes Dorothy's factual yet subversive account as a starting point from which to launch into a bitter lament devoid of irony, directed at the placement of the house, an "intrusive Pile, ill-graced / With baubles of theatric taste . . ." (lines 119-120), the (mis-) appropriation of the figure Ossian, and the exaggerated effects of the viewing room:

What! Ossian here – a painted Thrall,  
 Mute fixture on a stuccoed wall;  
 To serve – an unsuspected screen  
 For show that must not yet be seen;  
 And, when the moment comes, to part  
 And vanish by mysterious art;  
 Head, harp, and body, split asunder,  
 For ingress to a world of wonder;  
 A gay saloon, with waters dancing  
 Upon the sight wherever glancing;  
 One loud cascade in front, and lo!  
 A thousand like it, white as snow –  
 Streams on the walls, and torrent-foam  
 As active round the hollow dome,  
 Illusive cataracts! of their terrors  
 Not stripped, nor voiceless in the mirrors,  
 That catch the pageant from the flood  
 Thundering adown a rocky wood.  
 What pains to dazzle and confound!  
 What strife of colour, shape and sound  
 In this quaint medley, that might seem  
 Devised out of a sick man's dream!  
 Strange scene, fantastic and uneasy  
 As ever made a maniac dizzy,  
 When disenchanted from the mood  
 That loves on sullen thoughts to brood!

O Nature – in thy changeful visions,  
 Through all thy most abrupt transitions  
 Smooth, graceful, tender, or sublime –  
 Ever averse to pantomime,  
 Thee neither do they know nor us  
 Thy servants, who can trifle thus;  
 ("Effusion" lines 5-36)

The narrator objects to the staging through first hiding and then revealing – “an unsuspected screen / For show that must not yet be seen” – the man-made reduplication of the waterfall through the contrived placement of mirrors (“A thousand like it”) and its dizzying effect – “what pains to dazzle and confound” – a move, he implies, that takes the picturesque tradition to its extreme. Rather than simply forcing nature to conform to expectations governing (motionless) landscape painting, the mirrors here redouble to the nth degree a sublime, motion-filled sight of falling water and render nature into both reflection and animated spectacle. Wordsworth feels disturbed by the transformation of an “extreme picturesque” into a continuous, redoubled “motion-picture” reflected in dizzying quantity all around the room and producing an effect not unlike modern day video installations that simultaneously film and replay images of the audience back to the audience.

In view of William’s criticism, Dorothy’s own ambiguous reading of picturesque conventions and the staging of nature, and the two writers’ continuous conversations about such topics reflected in their writings, we may well ask why Dorothy’s journal nevertheless is replete with descriptions of vistas that conform to picturesque expectations and whose details are described with the help of specific picturesque terminology. Descriptions of ruins are a case in point: as one of the quintessential picturesque features their crumbling walls and decayed structures were perceived, by artists and “tourists” in search of an aesthetic experience alike, as adding interest and atmosphere to a landscape. In some cases, artificial ruins – custom-built structures with broken walls – were even erected in private gardens to add a special touch to their owner’s landscape. The more philosophically inclined, in turn, saw ruins as a symbol for the finite nature of man-made constructs – material, philosophical, or political – and, ultimately, life; in other words, as a pleasing yet thought-provoking *memento mori*. After leaving the mining town of Leadhills, the travelers encountered one such ruin whose presence, according to Dorothy’s description, dominated and permeated the entire scene that opened up before their eyes:

At the lower end of this new reach of the vale was *a decayed tree, beside a decayed cottage* . . . the vale *seemed to partake of the desolation* of the cottage, and to *participate in its decay*. [. . .] But *all was desolate*, the one large field which filled up the area of the valley appeared, as I have said, *in decay*, and seemed to *retain the memory* of its connexion with man in some way analogous to the ruined . . . (emphasis added, *Recollections* 54)

This passage is striking because of the repetition of the term decay and the resulting emphasis on loss – of strength, of human society, of life:



the decayed tree and decayed cottage are reflected in the valley's overall appearance of desolation. The entire scene evokes a quintessentially Romantic connection to a (better, mythical) past, and a memory of the role man once played in (ruining) the place. This tangible correlation between decay, desolation, and memory pays tribute to the contemporary obsession with ruins as a visual representation of history and as a memorial to the (destructive) role played by human beings in it. Yet, the repetitious nature of the passage also seems to undermine the very picturesque agenda it draws on: one ruin is picturesque, two ruins are an exaggeration approximating either "kitsch" or satire, but the continuous insistence on decay in this passage – "decayed tree," "decayed cottage," a valley that seems to "participate in [the cottage's] decay," as well as a field "in decay" – results in exploding the picturesque trope from the inside out. Ultimately, the effect of such visual-verbal over-saturation on the viewer or reader is not unlike the effect so severely criticized by William in his lyrical commentary on the mirrored room at Dunkeld. While on a surface level Dorothy manages to satisfy contemporary expectations that travel literature should contain aesthetically pleasing and to some degree conventionalized landscape descriptions – such as (sublime) ruins within a (beautiful) landscape – the repetitious use of the term "decay" deconstructs those very expectations and succeeds in subverting the ruin trope at the center of the picturesque tradition.

Besides engaging with contemporary conventions governing landscape representations in late eighteenth-century travel literature, Dorothy also appropriates and playfully undermines those topoi that had become integral parts of Scottish journey narratives. The one heroic figure who loomed large in the collective imagination of armchair and actual travelers to the Celtic fringe regions alike was Ossian, the legendary Gaelic warrior and poet whose legacy had been reanimated in the 1760s with the help of James MacPherson's supposed translations of Ossianic epic poems. Despite the controversy over the authenticity of the translations (that turned out to be a collage of Gaelic ballad elements and MacPherson's own verse) any self-respecting travel writer to Scotland needed to include some reference to the mythic hero in their texts. Dorothy's quest for an Ossianic experience in Scotland is reflected in her observations of vast landscapes devoid of people (a practice of landscape representation popularized in the nineteenth century through a colonial discourse that habitually ignored the presence of native inhabitants in descriptions of colonial space) and in the way she insists on the *solitary* nature of valleys, people and huts encountered. In the continuation of the passage quoted above, for instance, Dorothy revels in the appearance of a lonely woman sitting in a field:



... we discovered a woman sitting right in the middle of the field, alone, wrapped up in a grey cloak or plaid. She sat motionless all the time we looked at her, which might be nearly half an hour. We could not conceive why she sat there, for there were neither sheep nor cattle in the field; her appearance was very melancholy. (*Recollections* 54)

As Linda Nochlin has usefully demonstrated for nineteenth-century European visual arts, a (male) artist's representation of – or gaze directed at – (female) models or human beings is invariably dominated by, and representative of, that artist's cultural (dominant, patriarchal, enfranchised) experience and values (Nochlin 1988). In the above passage from Dorothy's journal, her gazing at a "native inhabitant" similarly establishes a distinct power differential between the traveler subject (or observer) and the native inhabitant object (or observed) reminiscent of colonial discourse. The unequal power distribution between the participants in the scene described is emphasized by Dorothy's (prejudiced) comment that the travelers "could not conceive why [the woman] sat there" since "there were neither sheep nor cattle" close by to warrant – to their (English, hegemonically inclined) minds – such sitting in a field for an extended time. The solitary, seemingly immobile woman, together with the presence of the traveling party staring at her, transform the woman into a statue-like object, while her typical Highland garb – the "grey cloak or plaid" – identify her with Ossianic lore. In other words, Dorothy's representation of both Self and Other draws on (colonial) discourse as well as on standard or indeed stereotypical elements of Scottish travel narratives. The emphasis, however, lies on constructing a subject position for herself (as an English subject, and as a sensitive, educated female) that is considerably more empowered (through alignment with patriarchal power structures) than the position allocated to the lonely, objectified Scotswoman in the field.

And yet, despite this blatant objectification, Dorothy's representation engages, in mind if not in person, with the lonely female figure and ponders what motivation may have led to her solitary, melancholy situation. By contrast, Coleridge refers to the same woman only fleetingly in his notebook records of the Scottish journey:

... now the road climbs on the side of the Hill a 100 yards leaving the stream on one's right beneath it in its green ellipse of grassiness – a cottage at the end of this [hand sketch] A [sic] a gavel end wall upstanding, in ruin, the other part inhabited, 7 trees, three of them blighted *and one thin thing among Potatoes* – green turf fence. ... (my emphasis, Coleridge, *The Notebooks*, 1794-1804 note 1439)

Coleridge's factual and somewhat cold enumeration of landscape features places the trees, the fruit of the field, and the woman on the same level of importance. His misogynistic reference to the woman as "one thin thing among Potatoes" not only succeeds in objectifying, but also in denigrating her, as labeling her a "thin thing" effaces her humanity and being "among Potatoes" equates her with plant life instead. Unlike Dorothy who, however briefly, mentions the emotional state of the woman – her "very melancholy" appearance – and acknowledges her human nature if only through the expectation of a *reason* for her being alone in the field for an extended amount of time, Coleridge's wording places the native female Other on the same rung of the evolutionary ladder as any inert organic matter.

In the continuation of the passage describing the lonely Scots-woman, Dorothy takes note of the domestic situation of the woman, and even corrects her earlier judgment that there was no apparent reason for her presence in the field:

In the mean time our road carried us nearer to the cottage; though we were crossing over the hill to the left, leaving the valley below us, and we perceived that a part of the building was inhabited, and that what we had supposed to be one blasted tree was eight trees, four of which were entirely blasted; the others partly so, and round about the place was a little potato and cabbage garth, fenced with earth. No doubt, that woman had been an inhabitant of the cottage. However this might be, there was so much obscurity and uncertainty about her, and her figure agreed so well with the desolation of the place, that we were indebted to the chance of her being there for some of the most interesting feelings that we had ever had from natural objects connected with man in dreary solitariness. (*Recollections* 54-55)

Dorothy's corrective commentary – "No doubt, the woman had been an inhabitant of the cottage" – lends legitimacy to her presence in the field that Dorothy's previous assessment – "[w]e could not conceive why she sat there" (54) – had denied her. The emphasis on the "obscurity and uncertainty" surrounding the Scotswoman, as well as Dorothy's frank admission that "her figure agreed so well with the desolation of the place" betray again Dorothy's indebtedness to picturesque vocabulary. At the same time, these commentaries evidence Dorothy's ready willingness to record the sights seen and people observed not primarily to evoke compassion or gather information, but rather to serve the goal of providing aesthetic, romanticized images to her intended audience of family members and close friends. Her complicity in the process of (mis-) using (a however melancholy sight of) native inhabitants for the evocation of "interesting feelings" – or personal (pleasurable) sensations

– becomes most apparent in her closing commentary that she and her companions “were indebted to the chance of [the woman] being there for some of the most interesting feelings that we had ever had from natural objects connected with man in dreary solitariness.” By drawing on the imaginary resources that the landscape has to offer, the travelers are using nature and people in much the same way representatives of the English empire used the resources – human and material – they found in the colonies for their own enrichment. Dorothy’s comment thus emphasizes her participation – as a female English subject – not only in the dissemination of ideological propaganda underlying Empire building and colonization, but also in the process of poetic creation traditionally assigned to male writers of exceptional genius. Her description of the process whereby “natural objects” (are used to) evoke “interesting feelings” clearly harkens back to her brother’s definition of poetic creation as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” and “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (“Preface to the Lyrical Ballads” [1798]). Above and beyond recording sites and incidents encountered (ostensibly for her brother John, a Captain at sea who could not accompany them on their tour of Scotland) this slippage into a subtext about an imaginative-creative process suggests that the journal’s *raison-d’être* is that of a source text – or collection of impressions, or inspirational medium – serving her brother (and possibly Coleridge) as a springboard for poetic inspiration.

Interestingly, the opposite also applies; while serving as a medium for collecting and preserving impressions for others’ poetic creation, certain passages indicate that Dorothy inversely used her text as a medium to promote both a specific self image – marked by education, moral values and propriety – and an idealized image of her brother as creative genius and poet. One case in point is the surprise encounter with a Watt steam engine (Kyros Walker identifies this as the second steam engine built in Scotland in 1788 [*Recollections* 50]) near Wanlockhead:

Our road turned to the right, and we saw, at the distance of less than a mile, a tall upright building of grey stone, with several men standing upon the roof, as if they were looking out over battlements. It stood beyond the village, upon higher ground, as if presiding over it, – a kind of enchanter’s castle, which it might have been, a place where Don Quixote would have gloried in. When we drew nearer we saw, coming out of the side of the building, a large machine or lever, in appearance like a great forge-hammer, as we supposed for raising water out of the mines. [ . . . ] At all events, the object produced a striking effect in that place, where everything was in unison with it – particularly the building itself, which was turret-shaped, and

with the figures upon it resembled much one of the fortresses in the wooden cuts of Bunyan's "Holy War." (*Recollections* 49-50)

Dorothy describes the sight using sublime terminology, the "striking effect" of the engine and of the "turret-shaped" building, emphasizing how "everything" (i.e. the landscape and the building) "was in unison with it." Yet, side by side with this acknowledgement of picturesque convention that demands a pleasing harmony in representation and, ideally, reference to visual arts sources (hence the "turret-shaped" building reminiscent of medieval castles, and "the figures upon it" evoking a woodcut from Bunyan) Dorothy introduces a different value system for judging aesthetic experience. By referring to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* – comparing the building to "a kind of enchanter's castle . . . a place where *Don Quixote* would have gloried in" – she effectively replaces the visual arts-based picturesque with her own, literature-based value system, and the medieval woodcut with a scene from the quintessential picaresque novel. This amounts to a subversive change in the reference system: rather than paintings, prints and other visual artefacts (relatively inaccessible to the majority of the population because of their location in the houses of the wealthy and in museums located in large cities) Dorothy uses *literary* sources (that were becoming more and more accessible to women as well as the middle and lower classes through the printing press, the development of lending libraries and public education) as her chosen medium for conveying to her readers the sights and scenes encountered.

Similarly, while ascending a hill, Dorothy notes that "[t]here was a single cottage by the brook side; the dell was not heathy, but it was impossible not to think of Peter Bell's Highland Girl" (*Recollections* 47). Dorothy is referring to William's poem "Peter Bell" and the departure scene at the beginning of the young highland girl's desolate fate where she leaves her home to follow the irresponsible Peter Bell: "A lonely house her dwelling was / A cottage in a heathy dell, / And she put on her gown of green, / And left her mother at sixteen, / And followed Peter Bell" ("Peter Bell" lines 1081-1085). Although the "real" valley encountered on the Scottish tour – unlike its fictional counterpart in "Peter Bell" – is *not covered* in heath and *lacks* the presence of a "Highland Girl," Dorothy compares the view to her brother's poem. This move seems geared at promoting William's writing, while at the same time highlighting his creative foresight – he had imagined beforehand a scene they later encountered in reality.

Dorothy's agenda of using representations from literature to, as it were, paint a more vivid and accessible picture of reality, or to render

non-fictional scenes more like *fiction*, is also in evidence when the Cumberland mountains close to Robert Burns' house (visited by William, Dorothy and Coleridge earlier on their journey) remind her of a passage from Michael Drayton's famous topographical poem describing England and Wales entitled *Poly-Olbion* (1612):

I cannot take leave of the country which we passed through to-day, without mentioning that we saw the Cumberland mountains within half a mile of Ellisland, Burns's house, the last view we had of them. Drayton has prettily described the connexion which this neighbourhood has with ours when he makes Skiddaw say –

Scurfell from the sky,  
That Anadale doth crown, with a most amorous eye,  
Salutes me every day, or at my pride looks grim,  
Oft threatening me with clouds, as I oft threatening him.

These lines recurred to William's memory, and we talked of Burns, and of the prospect he must have had, from his own door, of Skiddaw and his companions . . . We talked of Coleridge's children and family, then at the foot of Skiddaw, and our own new-born John a few miles behind it . . . (*Recollections* 44)

The analysis of Dorothy's journal entries suggests that she was involved in an endeavor both more complex and more politically ambitious than that of merely writing a memoir about a leisurely summer tour. While traveling, she was observing her surroundings with set scenes in mind, representing the reality of what she saw through the lens of her own, or her brother's, reading. Not unlike the much-ridiculed "tourists" traveling through the Romantic landscape with a Claude glass in hand in search of picturesque scenery – scenery they hoped to "improve" through the darkening effect of the tainted glass held up to the eye – Dorothy is looking at the landscape and its inhabitants through a lens of her own. Hers, however, is one shaped by education, sophisticated reading, and philosophical-literary discourse. While the steam engine building reminds her of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a solitary cottage in a valley recalls a passage from "Peter Bell," and the sight of mountains brings to mind Drayton's famous Renaissance poem *Poly-Olbion*. In other words, she is seeking to have her (Romantic) literature-based ideas of a wild, rural (Scottish) landscape and its (tragic, Ossianic) inhabitants – shaped through fictional prose and poetry – confirmed in reality. Reality is bent and molded until it conforms to fictional representation; rather than art imitating life Dorothy endeavors to make reality mimic fiction. Yet her rewriting of scenes draws on the *literary*, rather than the visual tradition; by using literature references Dorothy reveals a more or less overt agenda of replacing a tradi-



tional, male vocabulary of aestheticism (which drew on visual arts, art criticism and philosophical discourse and was accessible more or less exclusively to the educated upper-class male population) with a vocabulary derived from a literature increasingly accessible, through public schooling and lending libraries, to men *and* women of the middle *and* lower classes alike. This view of reading and education as the basis for emancipation is also apparent in the recurrent observations in her narrative concerning the books in the houses visited, the interest in Scottish children's education and, particularly, in Dorothy's admiring discussion of the miners' lending library in Wanlockhead.

In addition, Dorothy indirectly acknowledges and undermines the one-sided aesthetic agenda of the picturesque tradition through observations of a more private and domestic nature. By commenting side by side on the beautiful landscape and on the people inhabiting it, by comparing sublime experiences of nature to the realities of children's upbringing and household chores, Dorothy is placing the private realm – traditionally considered a realm of female expertise – on an equal footing with an aesthetic experience traditionally considered an area of (exclusively) male expertise. Describing the huts surrounded by vegetable plots Dorothy thus switches abruptly from landscape description to a metaphor derived from sewing:

Every cottage seemed to have its plot of ground, fenced by a ridge of earth; this plot contained two or three different divisions, kail, potatoes, oats, hay; the houses all standing in lines, or never far apart; the cultivated ground was all together also, and made a very strange appearance with its many greens among the dark brown hills . . . it was indeed a wild and singular spot – to use a woman's illustration, like a collection of patchwork, made of pieces as they might have chanced to have been cut by the mantua-maker, only just smoothed to fit each other, the different sorts of produce being in such a multitude of plots, and those so small of such irregular shapes.

(*Recollections* 49)

As her self-conscious commentary "to use a woman's illustration" emphasizes, Dorothy's sudden switch from representing a sublime sight – of the village and its surroundings as a "wild and singular spot" – to the use of sewing references – comparing the fields to a "collection of patchwork" and "pieces as they might have chanced to have been cut by the mantua-maker" – is by no means an inadvertent slippage into domestic discourse. Rather, Dorothy is self-consciously using domestic language and female expertise to describe more accurately a sight the picturesque vocabulary is not capable of representing accurately enough. In other words, sensations derived from unfamiliar, spectacular views of



nature traditionally expressed in “high literature” are equated with sensations derived from the familiar, and the domestic, and conveyed in the “low” literary genre of the private journal.

Another means Dorothy employs to deconstruct patriarchal representations of Scotland’s inhabitants as backward-tending, uncivilized beings, is to re-fashion Scottish children into participants in an idealized, pastoral landscape that is both more Edenic – because unspoiled, original – and less compromised by the beginning of the Industrial Revolution than the “real” English countryside familiar to her readers:

Just as we began to climb the hill we saw three boys who came down the cleft of a brow on our left; one carried a fishing-rod, and the hats of all were braided with honeysuckles; they ran after one another as wanton as the wind. I cannot express what a character of beauty those few honeysuckles in the hats of the three boys gave to the place: what bower could they have come from? [ . . . ] Our little lads before they had gone far were joined by some half-dozen of their companions, all without shoes and stockings. They told us they lived at Wanlockhead, the village above, pointing to the top of the hill; they went to school and learned Latin, Virgil, and some of them Greek, Homer, but when Coleridge began to inquire further, off they ran, poor things! I suppose afraid of being examined. (*Recollections* 48)

In this encounter with three boys from the village of Wanlockhead, Dorothy uses distinctly pastoral symbols and vocabulary – fishing, honeysuckle, a bower, boys “all without shoes and stockings” running “as wanton as the wind” – to underline the ideal state of harmonious co-existence between nature and its inhabitants in Scotland. Yet she also mentions the boys’ knowledge of Latin and Greek – a degree of education that, in England, was accessible only to members of the upper classes and the clergy.<sup>3</sup> The passage draws on the Enlightenment ideal – popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his novels teaming with innocent, beautiful children (*La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Confessions*) – of native inhabitants and children as innocent beings in a pre-lapsarian state whose fundamental goodness has not yet been compromised by exposure to the corrupting influence of adults and civilization. Most striking, perhaps, Dorothy’s landscape is alive with native inhabitants who are both in a natural state, or closely associated with nature, *and* educated. This combination of nature and nurture also stands in stark opposition to reactions of contemporaries to the local inhabitants and their customs

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<sup>3</sup> Wanlockhead, the highest village in Scotland – whose literacy levels were surprisingly high owing to a Reading Society, a miners’ library (established in 1756) and children’s excellent schooling – produced around this time several surgeons, lawyers, teachers, ministers and clerks (Kyros Walker, *Recollections* 48).

perceived most commonly as “uncivilized.” And it contradicts both William’s Scottish poems and Coleridge’s notebook entries concerned with encounters with human beings. In William’s *Scottish Memorials I* and *II*, the countryside is either entirely devoid of human beings – such as in “Glen Almain” (1807) where Ossian’s grave is a “still place, where murmurs on / But one meek Streamlet,” and a “lonely spot” where “there cannot be / A more entire tranquillity” (lines 1-4, 15-16), or in “Address to Kilchurn Castle, upon Loch Awe” (1807) where the ruin of an abandoned castle resembles a “Skeleton of unfleshed humanity” (line 32) – or the countryside is peopled by a single, solitary figure only – such as the “solitary Highland Lass” who is “[r]eaping and singing by herself” (“Solitary Reaper,” lines 2-3). And while Coleridge does include people in his scenes, his preferred stance toward the Scots is marked by a sense of superiority (entirely absent from Dorothy’s journal) that manifests itself in his descriptions of the Scots as either backward and ridiculous, or lacking in common sense, courtesy and hygiene. On 16 August 1803 he notes:

Say what you will, “the naked feet” is disgusting more so in Scotland than in Germany, from the *tawdry* or *squalid* appearance of the bare-footed // In Germany there is a uniform Dress in the Class that go bare-footed & they always have their Shoes in their Hands or on their Heads / In Scotland Cabin Gowns, white Petticoat, all tawdry fine, & naked Legs, & naked Splaid-feet, & gouty ankles. (*The Notebooks, 1794-1804*, note 1437)

Contrary to Dorothy’s enthusiastic response to bare feet, Coleridge here condemns the fashion of going barefoot in the specific context of Scotland. The grounds he states for his negative response are that “naked Legs” and “gouty ankles” stand in stark opposition to the “tawdry fine” dress worn by the owners of the bare limbs. What upsets Coleridge, in other words, is the disharmonious appearance of fashion and foot cover, or the mixed indicators of middle class (white petticoats) with those of the lower working class (splayed feet and gouty ankles). In other words, he finds hybridity encountered in the Other suspicious. As Mary-Louise Pratt argues, the failure of any given creature – animal or human – to fit into the man-made categories by which a (Judeo-Christian) culture defines itself and the world around it invariably evokes distrust, disgust and, ultimately, phobia (Pratt 1992). The Scots, in their cabin gowns and “tawdry fine” white petticoats, similarly evoke Coleridge’s suspicion as their appearance transgresses the neatly drawn boundaries (of English society) between the (badly dressed, barefooted) lower class on the one hand, and the (prettily and cleanly dressed, shoe-clad) middle or upper class on the other hand. As Coleridge explains,

Germans going barefoot do not disgust him because the “uniform dress” marks the German lower classes clearly enough, while carrying their shoes with them at all times indicates that they are well aware of “proper” behavior (i.e. having their feet covered) and prepared to abide by the propriety rules at short notice – quite the reverse of the carefree, category-defying Scots who are not bothered in the least with (English) class distinctions or notions of propriety.

As a comparative reading of passages from Dorothy’s journal with passages from William’s and Coleridge’s writings evidences, the *Recollections* is a complex text subversively pushing the boundaries of a travel memoir supposed to recapture only tourist impressions from a few weeks of holiday. While Dorothy records impressions of nature and instances of sight-seeing, she does so as a mere starting point from which to renegotiate two categories of beings: the rural population of Scotland at the margins of hegemonic English culture on the one hand, and women’s marginalized position within patriarchal society on the other. By suggesting that instances of the Sublime and the Beautiful may be discovered as much in the private sphere as they are in the more public (and publicized) realm of nature, and by suggesting a (literature-based) vocabulary more commonly accessible to the non-patriarchal members of society as an equally adequate means for literary diegesis, Dorothy is simultaneously renegotiating the picturesque tradition and its primary medium. She replaces the traditional discourse derived from the visual arts at the basis of the turn-of-the-century aesthetic perception with a literature-based discourse more accessible to women and lower classes as a consequence of the spread of literacy – through increased public schooling – and the spread of the institution of lending libraries. Dorothy’s journal is thus inter-textual and inter-medial in more than one way; it positions itself in the tradition of earlier female voices offering social criticism directed specifically against the marginalization of women – such as the texts of the proto-feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, including her travel narrative *A Short Residence* (1796) – and it foreshadows validations of the every-day, domestic reality of women’s lives by later female writers, as modeled by Anna Letitia Barbauld in her poem “Washing Day” (1797) and by the Brontës and George Eliot in their great nineteenth-century novels centering on specifically female experiences.

This close reading of Dorothy’s *Recollections* in conjunction with contemporary prose- and poetic texts about travel evidences that the traditionally disparate genres of fictional and non-fictional literature are more closely related and, in some cases, even contingent upon each other, than literary scholarship has traditionally acknowledged. While William used Dorothy’s journal as inspiration for his poems, Dorothy

used William's poems side by side with other canonical texts (Bunyan, Cervantes, Drayton) to validate her own writing. As a matter of fact, including William's poetry in the collection of canonical texts used as references to better explain the sights seen in Scotland elevates William's poetry, ultimately suggesting that it, too, should form part of the traditional literary canon reserved for the works of the most outstanding creative minds only. Since both fictional and non-fictional texts about travel thus draw on the same or similar tropes and language, one might argue that the chosen medium – travel narrative or poetry – matters very little. However, medium *does* matter, when we consider that non-fictional travel literature draws on *fictional* texts to create lasting impressions of encounters with Others and nature, suggesting that fiction provides a more accurate vocabulary to describe non-fiction. By implication, then, fiction becomes more real than reality itself. This inversion of the traditional perception of the relationship between reality and fiction executed in the *Recollections* points ahead to Byron's *Childe Harold*, where the protagonist in Canto IV prefers the fictional representations of Venice – familiar to him from reading "Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art" that "had stamped [Venice's] image" in his memory – to the reality of the city's "woe." As Byron's narrator explains, fiction is the only means to "repeople with the past," or to reconnect with a bygone age that seems more real than the reality of life itself (*Childe Harold*, Canto IV, lines 158-159 and 163). Dorothy's intertextual endeavor, didactically executed in the *Recollections*, in turn, advises that the only way for England to reconnect with its glorious past is through improving its subjects', and specifically women's, qualities of mind. The way to achieving such improvement of mind, her journal suggests, is to reconnect with (an idyllic pastoral ideal of) nature and to promote sound education based on reading canonical literature that includes William's poetry.

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