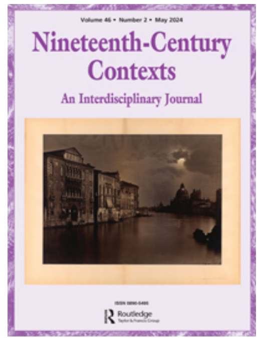

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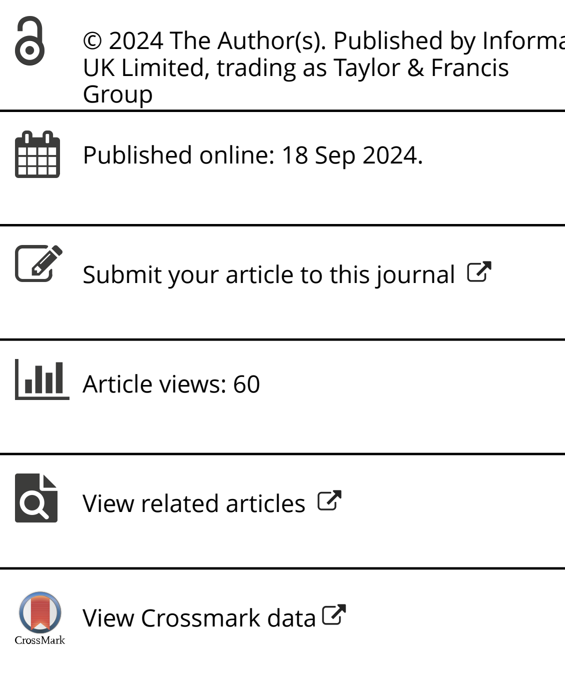

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Planting for “posterity”: Wordsworthian tree planting in the English Lake District

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Throughout his life, William Wordsworth was a keen planter of trees and an advisor on tree planting, both within and beyond the environs of the Lake District. In his *Guide to the Lakes*, published in several editions between 1810–1835, the poet expounds upon the planting of particular species in this region and directs the reader on which species might thrive on the fells and gardens therein. In this lengthy discussion, Wordsworth advises on the planting of specific trees next to Lakeland homes, and in isolating the Scots pine, suggests that:

> The Scotch fir is less attractive during its youth than any other plant; but, when full-grown, if it has had room to spread out its arms, it becomes a noble tree; and, by those who are disinterested enough to plant for posterity, it may be placed along with the sycamore near the house. (2022, 62)

To Wordsworth’s mind, to plant a “Scotch fir” is to know that it will become a “noble tree”, but also to acknowledge that you, as the planter, might not live to see it reach that mature stature. To plant this tree requires an acceptance of this fact, and for one’s proximate, personal interest to be superseded by a desire to plant for the benefit of others in the future. Whilst Wordsworth certainly writes advice about planting in his *Guide to the Lakes,* he does not record details regarding the diversity or significance of his own plantings in this text. However, as this article puts forward, the concept of planting “for posterity” defines the impulse behind, and evolution of, the poet’s own tree planting, cultivation, and caretaking, more broadly. In using a variety of written evidence to affirm this position, this study is also the first extended consideration of Wordsworth as a tree planter in his own right, and by extension, its significant and interrelated connection with his family, reputation, and perceived sense of self in this Lakeland region.[1]

To plant a tree is a multi-temporal act. As Owain Jones and Paul Cloke state, “Trees are planted for the *future* … for the making of symbolic moments of the *present* … and to establish a *permanence* through time” (2020, 223–224). Trees can be planted for the future, for memorial purposes, and to venerate and restore past landscapes, and it is possible that all of these can be true at once. Building on this assumption, this article

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considers Wordsworth's contemporary and ongoing reputation as a tree planter, and how actual trees at Dove Cottage, Rydal Mount, and Grasmere Churchyard were planted as and/or became ecological memorials for the Wordsworth family in the Lake District. Through a network of accounts and writings of the Wordsworths and their Lakeland circle – through anecdotes from family, acquaintances, and local inhabitants, letters, poetry, and contemporary guides to the region, some of which have not yet received much critical attention – this study pieces together a broad understanding of William Wordsworth's, and by extension, the Wordsworth family's tree-planting practice and reputation. In focussing on Wordsworth's multiple, familial, and intergenerational tree plantings of place, the discussion connects with and builds on pre-existing scholarship that links the poet with Romantic and environmental cultures of posterity, simultaneously.

Just as scholars have argued that there are two Wordsworths – that we must reflect on the poet in Heather Jackson's terms, as "the young and the old man" – we must also consider Wordsworth as at least two kinds of tree planter in his lifetime (2015, 35). At the homes of the Wordsworth circle and Lakeland community, he planted trees in his thirties and forties that he might have expected to witness growing into maturity, but he also planted trees in the later years of his life that we can consider to be part of a Wordsworthian project for environmental "posterity" and the survival of familial and/or individual memory. The significance of individual plantings can be seen to shift in accordance with life events and experiences; notably, as this article suggests, in the lives and deaths of family and friends. In *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity*, Andrew Bennett states that, "[to] survive, for Wordsworth, means, fundamentally, to live on in the lives of others", through his children, his poetry, and by extension, those who read his work (1999, 95). In an analysis of "The Ruined Cottage", Jonathan Bate suggests that even though the central sympathetic figure of the poem dies, her connection to the trees that shade the cottage means that "since [this] vegetation … lives on, her spirit somehow survives too … Humanity only survives in nature. Human survival and the survival of nature are therefore co-ordinate with one another" (2013, 34). Wordsworth's ecological view, as exemplified through his writings, shares similarities with his perceived opinions on the longevity of his own memory; survival of the individual is bound up not only with his written and familial legacy, but with ecological and arboreal prosperity in the environment around him too. Tree planting becomes an organic extension of Wordsworthian place-making, taking a persistent, rooted, and branching form in the Lakeland landscape.

Taking root and familial plantings

In 1799, the Wordsworths moved to Dove Cottage, and the planting and caretaking of the garden and orchard there was soon central to their development of this home. As William famously writes in "To A Butterfly", "[t]his plot of orchard-ground is ours; / My trees they are, my Sister's flowers" (2011, lines 10–11); the cottage garden-orchard was at once an individualised project ("my") and a shared ecology ("ours").[2] The conceptualisation of this space was a communal process; and as part of this, and in line with his own later advice in the *Guide*, William planted two yews at the front of the house and tucked some Scots pine behind the building, whilst Dorothy cultivated a variety of

plants, and John Wordsworth planted and cared for trees in the orchard. It should not be overlooked that the Wordsworths' tree planting was not in itself unique, as it was undertaken at a time of extensive arboreal cultivation across the Lake District. In the early nineteenth century, ornamental and commercial planting was taking place around the shores of many lakes, such as Derwentwater, Ullswater, and Loweswater, to name a few. In addition to this, owners of Cumbrian estates were developing the tree coverage on their properties, and this extended to several of the Wordsworths' neighbours and acquaintances.

In *The Tourist's New Guide,* William Green refers to the contemporary planting happening in the Lakes around this time, and Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, is described as one of the most "enlightened landowners" in the region as the management of his woodland unites "utility with beauty" (1819, 32). However, Nicholas Mason makes the case that the Bishop of Llandaff "took no pains to conceal that his arboreal endeavours were first and foremost about securing intergenerational wealth for his family"; and in his *Guide to the Lakes,* Wordsworth criticises Llandaff's "recurring testimonials about this modern-day money tree, [and] warns his fellow Dalesmen not to be 'carried away by flattering promises from the speedy growth of this tree', countering the bishop's facts and figures … with empirical observations of his own" (2022, 445). I have argued elsewhere that Wordsworth's perceptions of the larch are somewhat complex and dependent on the altitude at which they are planted, but as Mason and other scholars have demonstrated, Wordsworth certainly took issue with the indiscriminate, large-scale planting of these trees – this "vegetable manufactory" – for vast reaching monetary gain (Wordsworth 2022, 61). Whilst Llandaff is concerned with planting trees for "intergenerational wealth", from their early residence at Dove Cottage, the Wordsworth family came to associate the planting of trees with place-making, ecological stewardship, familial memory, and intergenerational connectedness.

Through looking at Wordsworth's early poetry, we can also see this process of intergenerational and arboreal connection at work in his contemporaneous writings. Between 1800–1804, William composed the poem, "When first I journeyed hither", which centres on William and John's fondness for the fir grove up the hill from the cottage. The speaker of the poem, presumably William, notes that his brother had an attachment to the grove, and "repaired [there] / With daily visitation" (Wordsworth 2011, lines 52–53). After the speaker's brother goes away to sea, he states that he calls the grove by his brother's name and "love[s] the fir grove with a perfect love" in his absence (line 94). Personal and familial association transforms the Wordsworthian speaker's perceptions of this arboreal place. As Bate suggests in response to Wordsworth's "Poems on the Naming of Places", the poems "inscribe, guard, protect, and preserve secluded bowers and sacred places [for the family]. [The] moments associated with their naming may be lost, and in the case of John so is the person, but the place remains" (2013, 107). Even in the absence of the individual family member, personal connections (and familial interconnections) with that person persist and are ever-present at the designated site.

This idea finds an echo in Wordsworth's 1829 poem, "A Tradition Of Oker Hill In Darley Dale, Derbyshire"; though it is not a Lakeland poem, in sentiment it might be seen as something of a transplanted partner poem to "When first I journeyed hither". In the text, two brothers climb a hill, and "each planted on that lofty place / A chosen Tree"; then like "two new-born rivers", the pair go in "opposite directions", and "ne'er

again / Embraced [upon] earth's wide plain" (Wordsworth 1889, lines 4–5, 6, 7, 10–11). In fraternal absence, the poem's speaker remarks that, "the trees grew, / And now entwine their arms"; the planted trees mark their final parting place, and their subsequent growth into the future becomes an organic extension of the brothers' continued relationship, from afar (lines 9–10). The manifestation of an arboreal embrace comes to signify brotherly connection, and due to this, "[no] blast might kill / Or blight that fond memorial" (lines 8–9). Commemorative association with the trees past, present, and future, means that the planted specimens transcend an existence as mere organic matter; they become symbolic as well as physical substitutions for their human counterparts. The Wordsworth family correspondence reveals that a similar impulse was bound up with the planting of trees as a shared and valued experience in actuality; for the Wordsworths, planted trees become intergenerational landmarks of mutual feeling and familial attachment.

In 1805, Dorothy Wordsworth remarked in a letter to Jane Marshall that her recently deceased brother, John, "loved our cottage, he helped us to furnish it, and to make the gardens – trees are growing now which he planted" (Wordsworth and Wordsworth 1967, 559–560). As Dorothy states here, the trees at Dove Cottage were a living reminder of the brother who had passed, a growing memento of the person who had planted them during his lifetime. The garden, orchard, and trees at Dove Cottage held significant value to the family even after they moved out of the property in 1808. In a letter from 1811, Sara Hutchinson records that "[Dorothy] is so hurt and angry" as the next resident, Thomas De Quincey, had "polled the Ash Tree" and "pruned" the apple trees right back (Hutchinson 1954, 36). William Wordsworth's sister-in-law then offers her own remarks on De Quincey's alterations at Dove Cottage, stating that "it was a most unfeeling thing when we know how much store they Let by that orchard" (1954, 36–37). It is reasonable to assume that the Wordsworths set "store" by these trees collectively, because these specimens were living reminders of their Lakeland homemaking; the trees were markers of the interrelated lives that were lived there.

With the eventual move to Rydal Mount, newly planted trees in the gardens of this home then became bound up with the lives of the Wordsworth children; and there is a sense that this was also a conscious process on the family's part.[3] For instance, with the sum of £10 – gifted by Lady Beaumont on the event of Dora Wordsworth's birth – the family planned to "lay out the money in planting a small plot of ground which is to be Dorothy's [Dora's] Grove" on their settlement at the house (Wordsworth and Wordsworth 1967, 501). As Dorothy (senior) states in an 1804 letter to Lady Beaumont, "the trees are to be the Child's, her own", but they will also be "a lasting memorial of you"; the trees will mark the generous gift by Dora's godmother and will commemorate both her as an individual and her relation to the child (1967, 502, 501). In this letter, Dorothy continues to envision Dora's life as one that will be interconnected with the trees in the Grove:

> They will grow up *with her* at first, as brethren, with whom she may measure and compare herself from year to year, but if sun and wind prosper them they will be a shelter and a shade for her by the time she has lived twenty years, and who knows but they may be the nursery of her tenderest and best thoughts! (1967, 502)

The "brethren" trees will grow up to a similar height as Dora at first, and, if the climate allows them to prosper, they will then grow above her and form a kind of "shelter". In

turn, if the trees grow as Dorothy predicts they will, they might nurture Dora's mind and provide inspiration in their proximity. Tree time is projected and supersedes the human at a faster pace here, as it is imagined that the trees grow into an arboreal and notional refuge around Dora. This was not simply a figment of Dorothy's imagination, but the Grove was then planted and named accordingly when the family lived at Rydal Mount.

This imaginative impulse to graft the growth of a tree with the timeline of a family member – notably Dora – is evident from the writings of extended family members too. Dora's husband, Edward Quillinan, writes in a poem, "Stanzas", to mark her death that "[the] last her mortal eyes were doom'd to see / Were roses clustering at her lattice pane, / The blossoms from her brother's funeral tree" (1853, lines 34–36). In a note to the poem, Quillinan writes that this refers to the "rose-tree that climbs up the front wall of Rydal Mount to the windows of the room where she breathed her last [and] was planted there in memorial of her brother Thomas's death, and is called Thomas's tree" (1853, 264). Of course, in botanical terms a "rose-tree" is not a tree but a shrub; nevertheless, Quillinan's note suggests that it was planted and referred to as a "funeral" or "memorial" tree by the family for Dora's brother, who died in 1812. For Quillinan, "Thomas's tree" then also becomes associated with Dora's passing thirty-five years later because of its vicinity to her in death. The "rose-tree" becomes layered with meaning over time, it is memorialised not just for one Wordsworth, but two simultaneously. Just as trees mark Dora's birth and early life, they also mark her death at Rydal; and just as the trees in the Grove mark the relationship between god-daughter and godmother, in turn, this "tree" memorialises the Wordsworth siblings together.

The Wordsworths were fond of naming Lakeland places (not just trees) during the life and after the death of friends and family members. However, in the instances noted above, individual specimens and groups of trees were planted by the family, in some cases as memorials, and other Wordsworthian trees would become commemorative entities afterwards. They are not simply named after a family member but embody the ongoing existence of that person in nature, and their interconnected familial relationships in organic terms. Moreover, as the next section will consider, for William as an individual, planting trees as a form of personalised memorial also became a public-facing gesture and an extension of his written legacy.

Planting as "publick utility" and personal commemoration

Despite William's detestation of the Allan Bank house when the family moved there in 1808, at least a year earlier, there is evidence to suggest that he planted trees in the gardens there at the request of the landlord. In a letter to Catherine Clarkson in 1807, Dorothy writes that "Mr Crump [wanted William's] advice respecting the laying out of his grounds [and] the planting is all left to him" (1969, 141). Dorothy concludes the correspondence by stating that she "consider[s] the appointment of William as planter of the trees is quite a publick benefit" (1969, 141). Dorothy's assessment of her brother's planting suggests that the poet had a particular expertise in the process; that might be related to the selection of trees, their placement, the success in their growing and thriving, or all these factors at once. This statement also draws attention to the fact that, for William and Dorothy, as much as tree planting could be an intensely personal and

familial endeavour, it could also be a "publick" venture for ongoing and future generations to witness. In William's plans for the yews in Grasmere Churchyard, tree planting can be seen as both, simultaneously.

Before their respective deaths, William Wordsworth and Sir George Beaumont were conscious that they wanted to create a shared arboreal memorial that would continue to grow in their absence. In the *Fenwick Notes,* Wordsworth recorded that after the sale of Beaumont's land at Loughrigg Tarn, he was left to use "the purchase money [of] £20 at my disposal for any local use which I thought proper" (1993, 84). The pair then decided on planting a tree near St. Oswald's Church, as Beaumont's letter to Wordsworth in 1816 reminds the poet to "fix upon some 'spot' in Grasmere Churchyard for our yew tree – [and] a good fence is absolutely necessary – will you consider of a plan?" (Beaumont and Beaumont 2021, 146). Wordsworth was then left to enact this scheme; in the *Fenwick Notes*, he continues that he intended to "set [a number of trees] down by way of memorial" for Beaumont, but it is clear that this planting became an act of self-memorialisation too (Wordsworth 1993, 84). Wordsworth recalls that he

> resolved to plant Yew Trees in the Church Yard & had four pretty strong large oak enclosures made, in each of wh. was planted, under my own eye & principally if not entirely by my own hand, two young trees, with the intention of leaving the one that throve best to stand. Many years after Mr. Barber, who will long be remembered in Grasmere, Mr. Greenwood, the chief landed proprietor, & myself had four other enclosures made in the church-yard at our own expence. (1993, 84)

William planned for four enclosures in which two yews were planted at a time, and in the hope that he would see one of each pair thrive. In this note, he places emphasis on his own physical role in the process, the trees being planted "principally if not entirely by [his] own hand". Wordsworth and local acquaintances develop these plantings in the churchyard "[m]any years later" by doubling the number of enclosures "at [their] own expence". This is more than the one yew tree envisioned by Beaumont in the first instance, and the original "memorial" to Wordsworth's friend develops in physical and financial terms over a longer period.

The yews in St. Oswald's became more than a "memorial" to Beaumont, as they were transformed through their association with Wordsworth, their planter, and with the entire Wordsworth family. In the *Fenwick Notes*, Wordsworth concludes his meditations on the yews by imagining their future:

> May the trees be taken care of hereafter when we are all gone & some of them will perhaps at some far distant time rival in majesty the Yew of Lorton & those which I have described as growing in Borrowdale where they are still to be seen in grand assemblage. (1993, 84)

The longevity of the tree species is vital here, as the yews might "at some far distant time rival in majesty" the Lorton and Borrowdale Yews, the actual ancient trees made famous within and through his own poetry. This planting endeavour is more than a "memorial" for one or two individuals, the yews are planted for the present (for the Beaumonts and the Wordsworths), for the future (those who will come "hereafter"), and, to quote Jones and Cloke, to "establish a permanence through time" (2020, 224). Wordsworth aligns these specimens with the long-living Lorton and Borrowdale Yews, and then envisions their lifespan beyond these venerable specimens. In response to Wordsworth's "Yew-Trees", Geoffrey Hartman has argued that the longevity of the "yews make a ghost of

the speaker", and he adds that "the sense of human time [in the poem] is phantomized by the ancient yews" (1983, 133, 134). The human speaker is made ghostly because they are inevitably outlived by the ancient span and future possibility of these trees. An analogous process can be seen at work in Wordsworth's anecdote about the yews that he planted; and this is emphasised by his admission that they will not only outlast him (and his present community), but humans and trees alike, hereafter.

In his "Essays Upon Epitaphs", Wordsworth defines an epitaph as "a record to preserve the memory of the dead"; it is "exposed to all" and it asserts "the worth of private life" (Wordsworth 1974, 53, 59, 61). He builds on this definition in tree-terms, arguing that through an epitaph the character of an individual "is not seen, no – nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a tree through a tender haze or luminous mist, that spiritualises and beautifies it" (1974, 53, 58). An epitaph, like a tree in mist then, reveals a part or essence of the individual in question's character. Epitaphs can be likened to trees, and trees can be a substitute or a medium for an epitaph in Wordsworthian writings.[4] The trees in Grasmere Churchyard become epitaphic through Wordsworth's writing – they mark Beaumont's contribution and life, in the first instance – but they also become literal epitaphs for William and his family. As William Knight notes in his Lakeland guide, "one of [the trees in the churchyard] shelters his own grave" (1878, 84). The gravestone itself is simply inscribed with a name and death date, and as Samantha Matthews suggests, because of this sparse detail, "the burden of making meaning shifts to the grave-visitors, who are thrown back onto their own associations"; the grave becomes a "contemplative text" for the visitor to generate "a Wordsworth of their own imaginative construction" (2014, 163). However, when we view this alongside the yews he planted there, through physical association, the trees also become part of the making of place and generation of subsequent epitaphic meaning on the site.

In this public-facing process, Wordsworth's planting and cultivation of the churchyard trees also becomes an act of posterity.[5] By the time that Wordsworth came to plant the churchyard, it is important to note that two of his children, Catherine and Thomas, had died a few years earlier in that same decade. After these deaths, Andrew Bennett suggests that, for Wordsworth, "the writing of a poem [must] supplement familial or personal survival in other lives" (1999, 115). When viewed in light of these anxieties, the family's interconnected relationship with the trees that they planted, and their concern that such specimens "live", it is not unreasonable to conjecture that from the outset, Wordsworth was planting the Grasmere yews to ensure his own ecological and memorial continuation in the public eye, but also to prolong a shared and intimate form of familial posterity through the shaping of place in the churchyard. For Wordsworth, the planting of these trees becomes an extension of writing poetry to "supplement" familial survival, and much more than this, this gesture is further consolidated in the final decade of his life.

Planting for "posterity"

To plant trees was "a matter of importance" in Wordsworth's later years; at least, this is related to the reader of William Knight's Lakeland guidebook through its third-hand retelling of one of the poet's visits to Lancrigg (1878, 111). As the anecdote details, on

visiting friends at the Easedale estate in 1841, Wordsworth took a handful of berries from a holly-tree and then planted them with Lady Richardson behind the house; and "on completing the task, it is recorded that 'He said, 'I like to do this for posterity. Some people are selfish enough to say, What has posterity done for me? But the past has done much for us''" (1878, 111, 111–112). For Wordsworth (or the version of Wordsworth recalled here) the trees are bound up, not just with his memory or person, but presumably the persistence and proliferation of that memory too; he knows that he will not see the trees on the terrace thrive, but that he is planting them for a time yet to come. Tree planting was part of a concerted attempt at place making for posterity in Wordsworth's final years; he was leaving an organic legacy as an extension of his own life and alongside his poetic output, and it was no longer a collaborative or familial process, but an individualised one. In part, this interpretation is possible because the very nature of the planting anecdotes changes. These moments are no longer the product of Dorothy's personal correspondence or his own records, but they appear as part of guides and biographies by other writers after his death; the anecdotes in themselves shift from personal writing to public dissemination of the poet's Lakeland legacy. The concluding section of this article will chart this final Wordsworthian planting development, and what it might suggest about the poet's reputation and living heritage in the Lakes.

In building her Ambleside home, The Knoll, in 1845–1846, Harriet Martineau "asked Mr Wordsworth whether he would plant a tree for [her], and he had said he would" (2002, 62). Whilst the gardener had been sent for a "young oak", Martineau recalls that "Mr Wordsworth objected that an oak was too common a tree for a commemorative occasion – it should be something more distinctive" (2002, 62–63), and so two stone pines were planted by the poet accordingly. Here, the species of the tree is important to the level of commemoration taking place; Wordsworth believes that Martineau requires something more "distinctive" than an oak to mark the establishment of her home and garden. In Samuel Hays's *A Practical Treatise on Planting and the Management of Woods and Coppices,* a book owned and read by Wordsworth,[6] the author refers to a stone pine as being "[of] a considerable [height] with a great branching head [and gives a] scene an appearance of what we may find in some of the landscapes of Poussin and Claude Loraine [*sic*]" (1794, 132). With this in mind, the stone pine would provide picturesque scale and gravitas to Martineau's garden. Moreover, there is a sense that something more "distinctive" than a local broadleaved specimen is chosen to mark what Martineau refers to as the "most important planting of all" (Martineau 2002, 62). This tree does not mark the life of an individual, but a moment and place in time, instead. As much as the tree needs to be a notable specimen as a marker of the new home, something more "distinctive" is chosen for this "important" moment, simply because it is Wordsworth planting it.

Wordsworth's tree-planting reputation of the 1840s is captured in a neglected sonnet written by Edward Quillinan, entitled, "Field-Foot Cedar Planted by Wordsworth, September 18, 1849". In the year before his death, Wordsworth planted a cedar at Field-Foot in Grasmere, and for the speaker addressing the tree in the poem, the young specimen achieves an elevated status through its planter:

> Muse-favoured Scion, flourish like thy peers
> The solemn growth of orient peaks sublime,

And trust thy glorious destiny to Time:
For, though thy lot may lowlier seem than theirs,
The man who plants thee, one of Nature's seers,
Above their height has built enduring rhyme.
Among these rocks thou canst not choose but climb.
And prosper, hallowed by his fourscore years.
Man's life, extended to its utmost length,
Is shorter than the crescent youth of trees;
Not so the life of genius, by the strength.
Of virtue cherished in the sun and breeze.
When thou art old, his name will cling to thee,
And awe the spoiler, – thou art Wordsworth's Tree!
(Quillinan 1853, 64)

The cedar is advised by the speaker-as-onlooker to "trust" its "glorious destiny to Time". As much as it is an act of faith to plant a tree, it is also an act of faith for this "Scion" to grow. Nevertheless, as the speaker suggests, the "lowl[y]" cedar gains stature beyond its more ancient peers, because it is planted by "one of Nature's seers", William Wordsworth. The profound and spiritual nature of Wordsworth's poetry has "built enduring rhyme", and just as Dorothy Wordsworth envisions Dora being nurtured by the trees that are planted in the Grove, Quillinan imagines the cedar being embowered by and "prosper[ing]" under Wordsworth's poetic stature. The speaker then meditates on tree time in comparison to human time, and though "Man's life" is shorter, the "life of a [Wordsworthian] genius" is of more than temporal value. In a Shakespearean couplet, the speaker puts forward that when the tree is "old", the endurance of Wordsworth's poetry and reputation "will cling" to this cedar; and in this, anyone trying to destroy the tree will be stopped in awe through this association. The specimen is protected by this relation and is designated as "Wordsworth's Tree"; and in this gesture, it is no longer simply a cedar, but an organic extension of the poet's written and cultural heritage.

Similarly, Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley's poem "A Tree Planted by William Wordsworth at Wray Castle" records Wordsworth's planting of a mulberry tree on this Lakeland estate in 1845:

Grow slowlier old: the hand that planted thee,
The heart that knew thy secret well, is dust;
Unto thy veins he did his life entrust,
And thou wilt honour him, Immortal Tree!
(Rawnsley 1881, lines 9–12)

There is an almost supernatural transference of life and corporeality into the tree as Wordsworth plants the sapling and infuses his "life" into its "veins". Moreover, in the designation of immortality, Rawnsley evokes John Bernard Burke's account of the event, wherein it is stated that after Wordsworth "honoured" Wray Castle by planting the mulberry, "a gentleman repeated and applied the lines addressed to the mulberry tree planted by Shakespeare: 'Bend to thee, blest mulberry! / Matchless was he who planted thee, / And thou, like him immortal shalt be'" (1853, 148). In both texts, the utterance and/or inscription of poetry alongside the planting casts a spell and forms an interrelated lyrical-organic link between poetic tradition and planted tree. Much like Martineau's anecdote and Quillinan's sonnet-account, these texts also establish that it is the association of Wordsworth's literary

reputation (rather than familial connection) that will ensure the tree's future prosperity, in physical and notional terms. However far we might attribute such a conscious notion to the poet himself, in the final years of his life, to plant a tree became a means to an ensure an organic continuation of Wordsworthian "genius".

In the decades following Wordsworth's death, his legacy in the landscape is recorded in subsequent biographical writings and regional guides in a similar manner. In *Black's Shilling Guide*, it is noted that the "valley of Grasmere … teems with memorials of Wordsworth. There is scarcely a crag, a knoll, or a rill which he has not embalmed in verse"; there is a sense that he has preserved these environs into a fixed state through poetic association (1853, 18). In Rawnsley's *Reminiscences of Wordsworth Among the Peasantry of Westmoreland* (1882), local Lakelanders recall how Wordsworth was "'a great critic at trees'", with one local remarking that "'efer a time fwoaks began to tak his advice, ye kna, aboot trees, and plantin' and cutting'" (1968, 27, 28). Wordsworth is not simply remembered for arboricultural place-making through poetry, but he is also recalled for his "'plantin'" expertise by the local community. Equally, the domestic spaces that he shaped became lasting evocations of his character; as Knight continues in *The English Lake District*:

> In the grounds of Rydal Mount every walk – the trees, the rocks, the terraces, the views on every side … all suggest, in one way or another, the work and the personality of Wordsworth, the life he lived there, and what he has done for posterity. (1878, 172)

The gardens and the living objects in them became reminders of the poet's life, work, and persona. Such accounts inspired further visitors to Grasmere and to the gardens more specifically; as Saeko Yoshikawa reveals, these tourists often tried to "sense his spirit lingering among the trees and flowers", and to perhaps even "pilfer" plants, leaves, branches or pinecones, to take home (2015, 91, 110). It is in the vegetal afterlives of the poet wherein the nineteenth-century reader might capture and connect with Wordsworth's "spirit". Moreover, in this specific description, Knight recalls what "he has done for posterity"; and in an echo of the Lancrigg anecdote, these spaces and plantings are envisioned for futurity too. In particular, planted trees and their cultivation within and beyond the gardens became bound up with Wordsworth's posthumous celebrity, alongside, and as a continuation of, his literary work.

Conclusion

Over the years, trees that have survived and become associated with Wordsworth and his circle have now become what Seth Reno and Crystie Deuter refer to as an "eco-literary" link in Wordsworthian and Lakeland tourism (2018, 95). As Wordsworth himself envisioned, the epitaphic yews in Grasmere Churchyard continue to thrive alongside the family graves, and they still serve as a physical means to connect the tourist to literary and vegetal aspects of the poet's heritage. Nicola J. Watson writes of how writer's house museums allow the visitor to connect with the "once-but-no-longer presence of the [author]"; comparably, these planted trees offer a closeness with Wordsworth and his work, shortly after his death and now, not just because they were once existing in near proximity to the poet, but because they are a growing extension of a direct, physical, and imaginative act of the writer himself (2020, 11). In Rawnsley's terms, planting is an act in which the living force of the poet is "intrust[ed]" to another entity, and this

exchange bears fruition in the present moment through the physical presence of the living tree (1881, line 11). The visitor's ability to see, touch, and even shelter under that same tree allows for a direct and organic connection with its planter.

However, attribution of these trees is now a curatorial concern at both of Wordsworth's main homes. At Rydal Mount, for example, recent tree surveys of the specimens on site have been undertaken to determine when they were likely planted, but curators cannot confirm by whom they were cultivated. In addition to this, tree age and climatological factors are an ongoing threat to future posterity; at the time of writing, Rydalian cedars thought to be planted by the Wordsworths have fallen in high winds in the last few years. Due to the changes of ownership over time at Dove Cottage, Jane Roberts puts forward that with respect to the yews and Scots pine that are currently in situ at Town End, we can only conclude that they "are *thought* to have been planted by Wordsworth" (2022). The gardens that the trees exist in are a living record, yet in most cases, their planters cannot be verified by curators with absolute certainty, due to the successive developments in caretaking and communicating Wordsworth's legacy. Nevertheless, as long as it cannot be proved that such specimens *were not* planted by the author, it is difficult to distinguish between fact and folklore in some of these instances. Wordsworth was a proficient and enthusiastic planter across his life in the Lakes, and archival limitations and curatorial decisions aside, there is enough evidence to establish a direct connection between his written work and the trees that he cultivated in situ.

Whilst these trees cannot last for as long as some material objects preserved in an archive, the value of their planting should not be dismissed. It is important to understand that tree planting, as a Wordsworthian pursuit, developed across his lifetime and familial timeline; planting trees would become an organic intermediary between surviving through his poetry and/or his family and children. From a variety of nineteenth-century sources, one can build a picture of William's and the Wordsworth family's tree planting endeavours in the Lake District. It was a process of marking family members and familial connection in the places that they helped to shape. It was a conscious and ongoing process of memorialisation and commemoration, and for Wordsworth as an individual, a family member, and a Lakelander, it was a living and growing extension of his place-bound poesis. Knowledge of the public and personal purposes that these collaborative plantings served sheds further light on the Wordsworthian biography and connection to place; it also makes way for a greater understanding of what living heritage in the Lakes might have meant to the poet and those around him, and what it might continue to mean to his multigenerational readership.

Notes

1. There is a significant body of scholarship that explores Wordsworth's gardens, his responses to larch planting, and studies of trees in Wordsworth's poetic output. This article is in dialogue with these works – notably, Peter Dale and Brandon C. Yen's *Wordsworth's Gardens and Flowers* (2018) and *Versed in Living Nature: Wordsworth's Trees* (2022); Saeko Yoshikawa's *William Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism, 1820–1900* (2015); and Carol Buchanan's *Wordsworth's Gardens* (2001) – but this work builds on existing discourse through its specific focus on tree plantings. For Wordsworth and the larch, see Anna Burton, "'Tree Mountaineers': Arboreal Materiality on the Fells in the Lakeland Guides of

William Wordsworth and Harriet Martineau" (2022); Andrew Hazucha, "Neither Deep nor Shallow but National: Eco-Nationalism in Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*" (2002); Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (2012); and Ian H. Thompson, "William Wordsworth, Landscape Architect" (2007). For trees in Wordsworth's poetry, refer to Dale and Yen's *Versed in Nature*, and Tim Fulford, "Wordsworth's 'Yew-Trees': Politics, Ecology, and Imagination" (1995) and on "The Haunted Tree" in *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1815–1845* (2019).

2. In Lucy Newlyn's terms, it was a "collaborative tribute from the Wordsworths to the Vale" (2013, 165).
3. Childhood plays an integral role in William's understanding of his own connection with the natural world. For James McKusick, Wordsworth's "poetry of place" is "rooted … in the significance that attaches to places as a result of childhood memory" (2000, 53). Seth Reno demonstrates how the poet's "love of nature" in *The Prelude* is bound up with "cognitive and neurological development [that] begins in infancy" (2016, 38).
4. Similarly to Jonathan Bate's reading of Margaret's trees in "The Ruined Cottage" as a continuation of her humanity in nature, in a reading of the same "shady elms", Dale and Yen suggest that, in Wordsworth's poetry, such trees can become "epitaphic memorials" to mark the life of an individual (2022, 266).
5. The term "posterity" recurs through Wordsworth's correspondence. For instance, in a letter to Robert Montgomery in 1835, he writes that "Posterity will settle all accounts justly; … works which deserve to last will last; and if undeserving this fate, the sooner they perish the better" (Wordsworth and Wordsworth 1969, 731).
6. In *Wordsworth's Reading 1800–1815*, Duncan Wu states that though the date of acquisition is "unclear", the appearance of Wordsworth's signature suggests that it was obtained in the 1810s (1995, 103).

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